

OMC Abstracts for the CENTRAL Workshop at Humboldt University Berlin: Communication with the Underworld: From Ancient Literature to Modern Children's and Young Adult Literature / Kommunikation mit dem Jenseits: Von der antiken Literatur bis zur modernen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur, organized by PD Dr. Daria Šterbenc Erker, Sept. 19–20.2019

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There and Back Again: The Underworld in Children's and Young Adults' Culture Inspired by Classical Antiquity

Katarzyna Marciniak

Unterwelt oder Untergrund: Vom Hades zum Goblin-König in Jim Hensons fantastischem Universum

Hades – der antike Herr des Todes – war tatsächlich zumeist unsichtbar, nicht nur, weil er die Unterwelt bewohnte und die erste Tarnkappe überhaupt besaß. In der griechischen Kunst gab es wenige Darstellungen des Hades. Von Seiten des Publikums, das sich sogar davor fürchtete Hades Namen auszusprechen, bestand keine große Nachfrage. Kann also dieser furchterregende Hades – Gott und Herr des Ortes, wohin die Seelen nach dem Tod gehen – ein geeignetes Thema für Kinder sein? Die Frage scheint rhetorisch zu sein, doch ein kurzer Überblick über die moderne Kinder- und Jugendkultur überrascht durch die große Popularität, die der griechische Gott der Unterwelt bei einem jungen Publikum besitzt. In meinem Vortrag lade ich die Zuhörer dazu ein, mit mir in die 1980er-Jahre zurückzukehren, deren Kultur Kultstatus genießt und deren Produktionen heutzutage immer häufiger zum Gegenstand von Remakes werden. Ich werde zwei in den 1980er Jahren entstandene Inkarnationen des Hades (eine direkte und eine allegorische) vorstellen – die Werke von globalem Umfang, aus dem fantastischen Universum von Jim Henson, dem Vater der Muppets. Dabei werde ich zeigen, wie diese Werke mit der Mythologie spielen und welche Botschaft sie vermitteln, indem sie das junge Publikum mit der Eschatologie konfrontierten.

Karolina Anna Kulpa

Have Fun with the Ancient Underworld! Some Examples of the Reception of Classical Antiquity on the Basis of the Products for Children and Young Adults

We now live in a time where pop culture has a great impact on different spheres of our life, practically since our childhood. Furthermore, since the 20th century the children and young adults have become an important group as the pop culture's consumers. For that reason the companies have outdone each other in their bids for trying to attract this group's attention as the customers, sometimes by creating the multimedia franchises connected with popular literature or film series (e.g. Wizarding World for the Harry Potter series). We could easily see that they also often refer in their products (like in books, films, games, and toys) to the

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history and mythology of ancient Greece and Rome. Maybe it could be surprise, but the ancient Underworld theme, more precisely our contemporary idea of them, is also present in those types of products. But is it possible that we could play to create Hades and become Cerberus or Persephone?

Adopting the Visual Culture Studies as my research perspective, I would like to present a few examples of products (the toys, games, and costumes), which are created or sold by global companies and associated with the Underworld's figures known from ancient literary sources. Their images will be approached as the paraphrases, which penetrated from the ancient, mostly literary, sources to works of art and through intertextuality became present in various manifestations of popular culture. The pop culture could be seen as prism, which, supported by global companies, has transformed this mythological figures to the easy to identify characters in stories for children and young adults. Maybe for that reason one of the contemporary images of Cerberus is Fluffy from Harry Potter series and when we think about Greek god of the death, our first guess could be temperamental Hades from Disney's *Hercules*.

This is a prelude for my further research.

Agnieszka Monika Maciejewska

Cleopatra Reactivated! The Classic Image of Cleopatra VII Transformed in Animations

Cleopatra went down in history as one of the most famous female figures from antiquity. She is known essentially for her courage, intellect, and also love affairs with illustrious Romans. There are also numerous myths and legends associated with Cleopatra – many have tried to reconstruct her appearance and the last moments before death. Despite her legendary death – still shrouded in mystery – the Queen has been typically portrayed as a living person. However, this changed in the 21st century, when the creators of animations for children and young adults decided to show the Egyptian ruler in her afterlife. This innovative treatment can be seen in three animations that I will be discussing here – the “Monster High” cartoon series and two movies: “Where’s My Mummy?” from the Scooby Doo universe and “Hotel Transylvania”. Cleopatra is featured in all of them. Each of these three manifestations of the Queen has, however, a different goal in her afterlife – one strives to become the most popular person in school, the second protects her treasure in the tomb, and the third is visiting her friend staying at a hotel in Transylvania. Some of her roles connect the past with the present – not only by being a ghost among the living, but also by following the modern fashion which results in some characters very originally stylized. The Queen’s portrayals can be an inspiration for the young viewer, but they also show how Cleopatra evolved in her afterlife compared to her image as a living ruler portrayed in ancient texts or in the 20th-century filmography.

Are you ready to meet Queen Cleopatra in her afterlife?



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Viktoryia Bartsevich

True Love? Hades and Persephone in Comic Books

Receptions of various mythologies are increasingly appearing in contemporary literature and pop culture. They inspire many authors. The most famous examples include a series of novels about Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling, novels about Egyptian, Nordic, Greek and Roman mythological gods and heroes by Rick Riordan, as well as works of audio-visual culture e.g., “Clash of the Titans” (2010), dir. by Louis Leterrier, and “Wrath of the Titans” (2012), dir. Jonathan Liebesman. All these works encompass a variety of motifs and offer rich material for research. Within my PhD studies at the Faculty of “Artes Liberales” of the University of Warsaw, I conduct research on the reception of Greek mythological Underworld in children’s and youth literature and audio-visual culture.

What and who is on the other side? These questions have been fascinating humanity since the beginning of history. In ancient civilizations, the places where people were sent after death were determined in various ways and were under the control of Hades/Pluto (Dis Pater) according to the beliefs of the Greeks and Romans, of Osiris according to ancient Egyptians, Ah Puch for the Maya, Velnias – the god of the dead for the Baltic tribes, and Weles – god of the Underworld for the Slavonic nations. Usually, visions of the afterlife have similar elements in different mythologies, but, for instance, not every ancient eschatology envisions the god of the dead as having a spouse.

I would like to focus here on four web comics: “Underworld Love Story” and “Hades & Persephone Shorts” by Gau Meo, “Hades’ Holiday” by Elvishness, and “The God in the Field” by VVBG. These comics are freely available on tapas.io (a creative Internet community). They are all inspired by the myth of Hades who kidnapped Kore. In their works, the artists have modified the well-known story of the Underworld. Can the relationship between Hades and Kore/Persephone be called true love? Is it possible to love your kidnapper? In my paper, I would like to analyze these web comics and try to answer the question: to what extent has the original myth changed and what caused it.



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