Katerina Volioti, "Entry on: Athena [Αθηνά (Athīná)] by ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Hanna Paulouskaya. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/203. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Athena [Αθηνά (Athīná)]

Greece (1965)

TAGS: Acropolis Alcibiades Aphrodite Apollo Argonauts Asclepius Aspasia Athena Briareus / Briareos Charites Crete Darius the Great Echo Enceladus Erechtheion Giants Hephaestus Hera Heracles Hermes Iris Marathon Medusa Minos Muses Odysseus / Ulysses Panathenaia Paris (Trojan Prince) Parthenon Pericles Perseus Persians Pheidias / Phidias Poseidon Sisyphus Socrates Solon Sophocles Tartarus Theseus Tiresias Trojan War Typhon / Typhoeus / Typhaon Zeus



We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.



General information	
Title of the work	Athena [Αθηνά (Athīná)]
Country of the First Edition	Greece
Country/countries of popularity	Greece
Original Language	Greek
First Edition Date	1965
First Edition Details	Unknown Author, *Αθηνά. Κλασσικά Εικονογραφημένα. Από την Μυθολογία και την Ιστορία της Ελλάδος. No. 216* [Athīná. Klassiká Eikonografiména. Apó tīn Mythología kai tīn istoría tīs Elládos, no. 216]. Athens: M. Pechlivanides & Son, 1965, 48 pp.
Available Onllne	*Αθηνά* at mycomics.gr (accessed: September 30, 2022).
Genre	Comics (Graphic works), Mythological fiction, Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Katerina Volioti, University of Roehampton, Katerina.Volioti@roehampton.ac.uk

This Project 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, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Hanna Paulouskaya, University of Warsaw, hannapa@al.uw.edu.pl

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Additional information

Summary

This comic book is about the goddess Athena. On the inside of the front cover, we read about Athena's temples on the Acropolis, her motherless status, and her many adjectives, which, we note, derive from Homer. Also, we learn about festivals honouring Athena. The book closes with Pericles praising Athena's virtues.

The story starts with young and beautiful Athena's presentation to the world. She stands in Zeus' hand as he sits on a throne surrounded by other Olympian gods, including Hermes, recognisable from a winged cap. There is no text in this part. Instead, we have action when we turn the page over. Natural disasters make the life of mortals difficult. Zeus, who is seriously concerned, suffers terribly from a swollen head. Hephaistos must fetch his tools and crack open Zeus' head. As Hephaistos does so, there is music and dancing. All glittering, Athena comes to life, and Zeus asks her to help him deliver the world from the Giants and bring people peace and happiness. This is her role throughout the comic.

Following Zeus' request, Athena takes over, fighting at the front line and giving orders. Athena has blue eyes and blond hair, wears a helmet, and carries a spear. Athena has very clever ways to overpower monsters. For example, she sends owls to eat Enkelados' eyes before pushing Enkelados to the sea and throwing a mountain over him. In addition, Athena helps people to cross a river by instructing them what to do and advising them to overcome their fears.

The mortals' lives will change for the better, as Athena teaches them to build boats, weave, and construct houses, castles, and temples. Sisyphos, whom Athena loves for his wit, is particularly good looking. Sisyphos is young and blond, just like Athena.

Next, we have a philosophical conversation between Zeus and Athena about the fate of mortals, who tend to become greedy and unrealistic because their lives are short and hard. With Athena's help, we read, Greece becomes civilised. Next, we see a walled town with a sanctuary in the centre. Then, we return to mythical action, as Athena helps Perseus, the Argonauts, and Herakles.

Zeus advises Athena not to compete with Aphrodite, but Athena disobeys him. Athena bathes in the Kastallia spring, and Teiresias is blinded because he sees her naked. The readers, however, do not see

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much nudity except for the back upper half of Athena's body. Teiresias, echoing Zeus, tells Athena that Paris will offer the golden apple to Aphrodite. When this happens, the Trojan War commences. Athena helps the Achaeans to win and Odysseus to return home. Athena complains to Zeus that people do not appreciate all her help, and she lacks a dedicated place of worship.

For her sanctuary, Athena chooses a seaside location that traders favoured. There is no mention of Athens at this point, and suspense is building up as to which location this place could be. Athena competes with Poseidon, and she wins. The city of Athens begins to grow, becoming richer and richer.

The Athenians build the Parthenon, and once in there, Athena does not leave the city. We have conversations between Athenians, as they all admire Athens' buildings and festivals. The book closes with Pericles giving a speech, parodying the funeral speech in Thucydides. Pericles, however, talks about the goddess Athena. In earlier times, Athena gave Athenians the olive tree and fought the Barbarians. Now, Athena stands (metaphorically, we wonder) for wisdom, progress, art, and peace.

The last two pages of the comic give a compact and insightful history of the Acropolis, from prehistoric times to the 1800s, when Lord Elgin removed "the best sculptures" and transported them to "the Museum of London," as we read. There is no moral judgement for Elgin's actions.

Analysis

In this comic book, Athena comes across as a superhero. She is a great helper to people so that they improve themselves. The positivism stemming from economic growth in the west after World War II may be apparent here.

Also apparent is a layer of nationalism. On the inside of the front cover, we read that Athena encapsulated brilliantly the Greek spirit: invention, knowledge, wisdom, peace, hard work, justice, freedom, victory, and civilization. Athena, therefore, stands as a role model for what the ancient Greeks achieved and what the modern Greeks can aspire to be. Athena's beautiful and admittedly western appearance does not seem to matter. Her looks could be what readers are used to in comics. What matters is Athena's wisdom.

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In the early part of the book, people are depicted as prehistoric savages, wearing hides and holding primitive stone implements. Any notion of Classical antiquity – and civilized living – is negated at this stage so that the contrast with later times becomes stronger. As mortals become more civilized and build cities, they have shorter hair and wear tunics, not hides.

Mythological action seems to take place (long) before the Classical period. When primitive hunters kill a buffalo - a species known in America where this series of comics originates but not in Greece – Athena is suspended in mid-air and encourages them to finish the killing. Her presence motivates teamwork. We may have connotations for the salience of male solidarity here, not least because the US army read the American version of this series. Perhaps the comic's adaptation and translation could have mentioned a wild boar and teamwork driven by a sense of pride (φιλότιμο), as these are more suitable for a Greek context.

Sisyphos is very ambitious, and Athena asks Zeus to forgive him for that. We encounter a compassionate and understanding Athena, resembling a caring, motherly figure. This may go well here, especially as there is no romance between Athena and Sisyphos.

We encounter Athena's grief as she complains to her father that people prefer Aphrodite's beauty and not hers. Her complaints make her very human-like and accessible to modern readers. Like a good father, Zeus explains to Athena that her beauty is of a different kind. We may draw a parallel to contemporary relationships between a father and an insecure teenage girl, although Athena does not look like a teenager. Zeus advises Athena not to compete with Aphrodite, but Athena disobeys him. Again, this is typical of a mid-20th-century view of young adults' psychology and their tendency to react against parental wishes.

Athena helps Theseus to free Athens from King Minos of Crete. Next, Athena inspires Solon to give laws to the Athenians. Finally, Athena helps against the war with the Persians at Marathon. Mythological and historical events here are intertwined, and time is compressed as we move swiftly from one event to another. Interestingly, at Marathon, Athena encourages "the children of Greece to strike against the Barbarians." The combination of words used here recalls mottos from the Greek fight against the Nazis in the 1940s, and a song by popular singer Sofia Vebo ("Παιδιά της Ελλάδος" in Greek)*.

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On the last page, we see Athena's golden-ivory statue inside the Parthenon, and we register a hymn praising her below the statue. The goddess seems to deserve all this praise for all she has done for humankind and her city. A parallel can be made with a modern public figure, such as an army officer or a philanthropist, who worked hard and excelled, contributed to the common good, and earned a good reputation. Athena's divine status is perhaps watered down here.

* See stixoi.info (accessed: July 31, 2018).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Acropolis Alcibiades Aphrodite Apollo Argonauts Asclepius Aspasia Athena Briareus / Briareos Charites Crete Darius the Great Echo Enceladus Erechtheion Giants Hephaestus Hera Heracles Hermes Iris Marathon Medusa Minos Muses Odysseus / Ulysses Panathenaia Paris (Trojan Prince) Parthenon Pericles Perseus Persians Pheidias / Phidias Poseidon Sisyphus Socrates Solon Sophocles Tartarus Theseus Tiresias Trojan War Typhon / Typhoeus / Typhaon Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Authority Child, children Disobedience Family Heroism Morality Parents (and children)
Further Reading	Information about the series at mycomics.gr (accessed: July 31, 2018). Information about the Publisher in Greece at comicdom.gr and ekebi.gr (accessed: July 31, 2018).
Addenda	The series *Classics Illustrated* first appeared in Greece in 1951, selling 100,000 copies of its first issue (no. 1) featuring Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* within a week. The term "Classics" refers to well-known pieces of world literature and not to Classical antiquity only. The series was published by Pechlivanides & Son. The Pechlivanides brothers, who were educated in Graphic Design in Germany, had

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owned a publishing house in central Athens since 1927. In the mid 1940s, the American Embassy in Athens is said to have encouraged the brothers to collaborate with American publishers and publish the series “Classics Illustrated” in Greece. It is an American series originally.

Pechlivanides Publishing is still run by the Pechlivanides family, but it is now called Atlantis Publishing.

Published in Greek, adapted and translated from an original version in American English.

ISBN: Not applicable

One of the 316 issues appearing between 1951 and 1970.

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