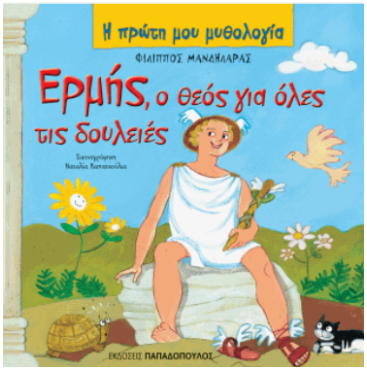
Katerina Volioti, "Entry on: Hermes. The god for all chores [Ερμής, ο θεός για όλες τις δουλειές (Ermîs, o theós gia óles tis douleiés)] by Natalia Kapatsoulia, Filippos Mandilaras ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/653. Entry version as of September 16, 2026.

Natalia Kapatsoulia , Filippos Mandilaras

Hermes. The god for all chores [Ερμής, ο θεός για όλες τις δουλειές (Ermîs, o theós gia óles tis douleiés)]

Greece (2011)

TAGS: Apollo Arcadia Hades Hermes Maia Nymphs Olympus Zeus



Courtesy of the Publisher. Retrieved from epbooks.gr (accessed: July 5, 2022).

General information	
Title of the work	Hermes. The god for all chores [Ερμής, ο θεός για όλες τις δουλειές (Ermîs, o theós gia óles tis douleiés)]
Country of the First Edition	Greece
Country/countries of popularity	Greece
Original Language	Greek
First Edition Date	2011
First Edition Details	Filippos Mandilaras, *Ερμής, ο θεός για όλες τις δουλειές* [Ermîs, o theós gia óles tis douleiés], My First Mythology [Η Πρώτη μου Μυθολογία (Ī prṓtī mou Mythología)]. Athens: Papadopoulos Publishing, 2011, 36 pp.
ISBN	9789604842568
Available Onllne	Demo of 6 pages available at epbooks.gr (accessed: October 13, 2021).
Genre	Illustrated works
Target Audience	Children (4+)
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.

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Creators

Natalia Kapatsoulia (Illustrator)

Natalia Kapatsoulia studied French Literature in Athens, and she worked as a language tutor before embarking on a career as a full-time illustrator of children's books. Kapatsoulia has authored one picture book *Η Μαμά πετάει* [Mom Wants to Fly], which has been translated into Spanish *Mamá quiere volar*. Kapatsoulia, who now lives on the island of Kefalonia, Greece, has collaborated with Filippos Mandilaras on multiple book projects.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the epbooks.gr (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Bio prepared by Katerina Volioti, University of Roehampton, Katerina.Volioti@roehampton.ac.uk

Filippos Mandilaras , b. 1965 (Author)

Filippos Mandilaras is a prolific and well-known writer of children's illustrated books and of young adults' novels. Mandilaras studied French Literature in Sorbonne, Paris. His latest novel, which was published in May 2016, is entitled *Υπέροχος Κόσμος* [Wonderful World], and it recounts the story of teenage life in a deprived Athenian district. With his illustrated books, Mandilaras aims to encourage parents and teachers to improvise by adding words when reading

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stories to children. Mandilaras is interested in the anthropology of extraordinary creatures and his forthcoming work is about Modern Greek Mythologies.

Sources:

In Greek:

Profile on EP Books' website (accessed: June 27, 2018).

i-read.i-teen.gr (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Public Blog, published 15 September 2015 (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Press Publica, published 28 January 2017 (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Linkedin.com, published published 6 May 2016 (accessed: February 6, 2019).

In English:

Amazon.com (accessed: June 27, 2018).

On Mandoulides' website, published 7 March 2017 (accessed: June 27, 2018).

In German:

literaturfestival.com (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Bio prepared by Katerina Volioti, University of Roehampton, Katerina.Volioti@roehampton.ac.uk

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Additional information

Summary

The book begins by explaining that Hermes is known for helping the thieves, for serving as the messenger of the Olympians, for befriending heroes, and for travelling to the underworld. Zeus fell in love with the nymph Maia, who gave birth in a cave. While Maia was asleep, we are told, baby Hermes stepped out of his cradle and started wandering in the forest. Inventive Hermes made a lyre out of a turtle's tortoiseshell. Soon, tired of singing, Hermes became hungry. In search for food, he walked up north until he reached a flock of cattle in Pieria. He stole fifty cattle, leading them south to Arcadia. Cleverly, he made the cattle walk backwards and wiped off their traces on the ground. Back in Arcadia, Hermes killed two oxen. He sacrificed one to the gods and ate the other. Then, he re-entered his mother's cave and fell asleep in her arms. Furious Apollo, because the stolen cattle were his, came to the cave. Maia did not believe that her one-day old baby could have been capable of stealing. Apollo smacked Hermes, his little baby-brother. We are then told that Hermes presented the lyre to Apollo, and Apollo, happy with music making, forgot all about the stealing. Zeus and Hades both liked Hermes, and invited him to Mount Olympus and to the Underworld respectively. So, in a split second, Hermes became a man. He got wings to fly with, and served as messenger, patron of travellers and merchants, and escort of dead souls on their journey to Hades (*psychopompos*).

The book closes by offering contextual information about "one of the most likeable gods of the ancient Greeks", including his role to protect the athletes. In the last two pages, children are asked to match text and image. The text covers six additional mythic episodes that feature Hermes.

Analysis

The book presents the god Hermes as a playful, clever, and misbehaving baby. Hermes' childhood is foregrounded in ancient literature, especially in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*.* The stealing of Apollo's cattle is an act that can take place only outside the realm of civilized society. The emphasis on family ties throughout the book, specifically the expressions of mother-to-son and brother-to-brother affection, seem to mediate Hermes' unfair actions. A key message appears to emerge. Older individuals (Maia, Apollo, Zeus, and Hades)

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can tolerate and forgive naughtiness, not least because Hermes meant well and is utterly entertaining and cute. For sure, Hermes is likeable, despite being mischievous. Kapatsoulia depicts him as a blond baby with his nappy on. Maia and Apollo are also blond, and this may strengthen visually the family connection between all three. Their blondeness resulted from sharing genetic material. A question may arise as follows. How can Apollo be angry at Hermes, when his baby-brother looks like Apollo in miniature? Even adult Hermes bears resemblance to Apollo. With the exception of his winged sandals and hat, which stand for his identifying attributes in ancient art, Hermes wears a white chiton and has curly blond hair like Apollo.

Hermes is depicted as adorable also for his quick thinking, which might remind readers of cunning Odysseus in the Homeric epics. At least three instances glorify the charm of ingenuity. First, Hermes constructs a musical instrument. The convex tortoiseshell can reflect well the sound of vibrating strings. The fact that there are seven strings to this instrument in the text and the illustration is an accurate representation, as this was the canonical number of the *chelys-lyra* in ancient Greece. Secondly, Hermes misleads others as to the direction in which the oxen walked. Judging from the animals' trails, one would expect them to have walked south-north, and not from Pieria in northern Greece to Arcadia in the Peloponnese. Third, Hermes uses bribery to escape punishment, in this case Apollo's smacking. Hermes, like a good negotiator, knows how to manipulate an older god, also through the apparently magical effect of music.

Indeed, the role of music is emphasised in the book. When he plays the lyre, Hermes sings like an angel, as we read in the text. The anachronistic reference to the Christian era is pertinent, not least because Hermes, with his blond curls, resembles an angel. Apollo's playing is even more impactful, and has an effect on Apollo. We read that the melody from Apollo's lyre spreads like light, and the god is so happy that he kisses Hermes and talks highly of music, having completely forgotten the theft of the oxen. Music-making, especially by the god of music *par excellence*, has a tremendously calming effect. Apollo, nonetheless, has been carried away by the sweetness of music to such an extent that justice for stealing, a universally condemnable act, is no longer required. There appears to be a warning here. Music can have a side-effect, that of forgiveness. Hence, it is not in Apollo's character to forgive, but his willingness to overlook Hermes' misconduct is the consequence of a sweet melody. The gods, like the

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mortals, can be deceived. Of relevance here could be the Sirens' song in the Odyssey, and, in fact, another book by Mandilaras and Kapatsoulia that covers Odysseus' adventures and the episode with the Sirens.**

Although elements in the illustrations, such as nappies and euro notes, resonate with contemporary consumer culture, the story, on the whole, is about the supernatural qualities of a baby. Hermes is too young to make a lyre, to lead the cattle across Greece (in one night), and to eat an ox all by himself. These extraordinary acts earn him divine status and the profoundly supernatural ability to fly. Hermes' mobility, however, is for the benefit of others, as he serves the gods and diverse groups of mortals, including thieves. The god is ever-present, which may account for his popularity. Hermes' many functions are reflected well in the book title, which reads "the god for all chores" [my translation]. The title may remind young and adult readers of comedy actor Thanassis Veggos, an extremely popular actor who usually impersonated hyperactive characters in black-and-white films of the 1960s, the golden era of Greek cinema.*** More specifically, the title seems to play with the title of a film from that period, starring Giorgos Kostantinou and other popular actors but not Veggos, which is entitled "The man for all chores" [Άνθρωπος για όλες τις δουλειές] (1966).****

* https://www.degruyter.com/view/product/178395 (accessed January 30, 2019).

** See *Odysseus' Journey [Το ταξίδι του Οδυσσέα (To taxídi tou Odysséa)]*.

*** http://www.veggos.gr/ (accessed January 30, 2019).

**** http://www.tainiothiki.gr/v2/filmography/view/1/226/ (accessed January 30, 2019).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and

Apollo Arcadia Hades Hermes Maia Nymphs Olympus Zeus

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Concepts

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Authority Character traits Child, children Disobedience Freedom Good vs evil Heroism Humour Integrity Intellect Justice Reconciliation Siblings Transformation Tricksters Values
Further Reading	On Hermes: https://www.routledge.com/Hermes/Allan/p/book/9781138805705 (accessed February 12, 2019) Information about the book: https://www.epbooks.gr/product/100529/hermes (accessed February 12, 2019)
Addenda	Published in Greek, 27 September 2011. Hardbound.

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