Michael Stierstorfer, "Entry on: Arcadia Awakens [Arkadien erwacht] (Arcadia, 1 [Arkadien, 1]) by Kai Meyer", peer-reviewed by Markus Janka, Susan Deacy and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/815. Entry version as of October 10, 2026.

Kai Meyer

Arcadia Awakens [Arkadien erwacht] (Arcadia, 1 [Arkadien, 1])

Germany (2009)

TAGS: Aesop Lamia Lycaon Metamorphosis

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

General information	
Title of the work	Arcadia Awakens [Arkadien erwacht] (Arcadia, 1 [Arkadien, 1])
Country of the First Edition	Germany
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	German
First Edition Date	2009
First Edition Details	Kai Meyer, *Arkadia erwacht*. Hamburg: Carlsen 2009, 414 pp.
ISBN	9783551582010
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Fantasy fiction
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Michael Stierstorfer, University of Regensburg, Michael.stierstorfer@ur.de
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Creators

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Kai Meyer , b. 1969
(Author)

Kai Meyer was born in 1969 and lives in Germany. After studying film and theatre at the University of Bochum, he worked as a journalist before devoting himself to writing novels full time. He has since published over fifty titles, including numerous bestsellers, and is recognised as one of Germany's most remarkable writers of fantasy. He focuses on fantasy topics like goddesses, angels, werewolves, Vampires and fairies. There are over 1.5 million copies of Kai Meyer books in print in his country alone. His works have been adapted as films, comics and radio plays, and have been translated into 30 languages.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: August 12, 2019)

Profile at amazon.de (accessed: August 12, 2019)

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Additional information

Translation	English: *Arcadia Awakens*, trans. Anthea Bell, Harper Collins/Balzer + Bray, 2012.
Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	Sequels: Kai Meyer, *Arkadien brennt* [Arcadia Burns] (2010). Kai Meyer, *Arkadien fällt* [Arkadia Falls] (2011).
Summary	A shy seventeen year old girl, Rosa Alcantara, comes from Brooklyn, New York, and is of Italian descent. After having been raped she had to undergo an abortion. One day, she travels by plane to Palermo in Sicily in order to attend the funeral of a leader of the mafia clan called Carnevares. Rosa's situation within her family is complicated: her father died several years earlier and her mother, who left Sicily a long time before that, does not want to have any contacts with her relatives, who are part of the mafia clan Alcantara. During the flight, Rosa gets to know a mysterious young man, Alessandro Carnevare, who also wants to attend the burial and whom she cannot forget. For a long time, there has been a truce between the two clans, which unfortunately will soon be broken. Rosa and Alessandro get more and more familiar with each other and embark on a big adventure in order to detect a secret of the two clans: both clans descend from the werewolf Lycaon, who ruled as a sovereign over Arcadia in mythical times. While the members of the clan Carnevares are able to transform into big cats such as panthers, the clan's women have the power to transform into big snakes called Lamia. Since the souls of all Arcadians move from their human bodies into animals after death, the soul of Lycaon will return one day, to resume his tyrannical rule. This must be prevented by Rosa and Alessandro. Whether the protagonists succeed or not, will be described in volume 2 and 3 of the *Arcadia* trilogy.
Analysis	In this first volume of the *Arcadia* trilogy, three key ancient themes or

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sources, obvious to a scholar, serve to evoke a story with fantasy elements. These are: the fables of Aesop, the Lycaon myth told in the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the Pythagorean tradition of metempsychosis in the fifteenth book of *Metamorphoses*. The mythical animals: Lamias, panthers and werewolves are set in a mafia-like context. Mafia has Sicilian origins and the members of the mafia in the novel are hybrids of mythical creatures from ancient times. In this way, the structure of the mafia correlates with myths of tyranny. Lycaon wants to re-establish his power by killing all his enemies. The mafia turns out to be very brutal: Rosa enters this highly problematic parallel world and falls in love with a boy from a rival clan. Since then, she is pursued by members of the Alcantara-clan, who want to torture her. A star-crossed love similar to that in the story of Pyramus and Thisbe (in the fourth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) or its reception in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* develops. Rosa takes the role of Thisbe/Juliet and Alessandro the role of Pyramus/Romeo. The couple are also forced to meet each other secretly. The story is a hybrid between a fable, a myth and a theatre play. Rosa is designed as an outsider, because she had an abortion and also has no friends. At the same time she is part of the mafia and is able to transform into a demonic snake. In this novel having an abortion correlates with crime and monstrosity, because after having the abortion she notices, that when angry, she is able to transform into a monster. A woman, who had an abortion, is demonised, although the pregnancy was the result of a rape. Ovid's myth of Lycaon is activated to create a boss of the evil side, who will soon be resurrected and cause violence and damage to Rosa and her clan. With this topic, an atmosphere of anxiety mounts, like in the *Harry Potter* series (1997–2007, Rowling) with the evil antagonist Lord Voldemort. The first volume ends on a cliff-hanger, because the reader doesn't know, if Lycaon will succeed in establishing his dark power. The mythical motives are used to embody a conservative ideology: a raped woman who interrupts the ensuing pregnancy is described as a snake. The author also shows the mafia clans as malevolent and aggressive beasts, intent on killing their enemies, and in this way warns the readers about the evils of mafia.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Aesop Lamia Lycaon Metamorphosis

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adolescence Coming of age Heroism Individuality Rape Transformation Violence

Further Reading	Anselm, Sabine, "Zeitgemäße Helden!? Überlegungen zur Rezeption von (antiken) Heldenbildern in einem (post)modernen Literaturunterricht" in Markus Janka and Michael Stierstorfer, eds., *Verjüngte Antike. Griechisch-römische Mythologie und Historie in zeitgenössischen Kinder- und Jugendmedien*, (Studies on European children's literature (SEKL), vol. 5, ed. by Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, Anja Müller and Astrid Surmatz), Heidelberg: Winter, 2017, 117–134. Stierstorfer, Michael, *Antike Mythologie in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der Gegenwart. Unsterbliche Götter- und Heldengeschichten?* [Ancient Mythology in Current Children's Literature. Immortal Stories of Gods and Heroes?], Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017, 180 pp.

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