

**Markus Janka (Hrg.) und Michael Stierstorfer (Hrg.). *Verjüngte Antike: Griechisch-römische Mythologie und Historie in zeitgenössischen Kinder- und Jugendmedien*. Universitätsverlag Winter, 2017. 1+392. ISBN 978-3-8253-6715-2.**

The beginning of the twenty-first century has seen an unprecedented boom of creative transformations and adaptations of themes and motifs from Ancient Greek and Roman mythology and history in literary works and media, intended primarily for children and young adults. This renewed fascination with classical antiquity has given rise to an emergent field of interdisciplinary inquiry at the intersection between classical reception studies and children's literature. The book under consideration is the latest scholarly attempt to further the academic study of this imaginative engagement with classical material by exploring new avenues of investigation and identifying opportunities for fruitful synergy with other disciplines.

The essays in the collection were first presented at the “Medusa und Co. Reloaded” conference, held at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich on 6-8 October, 2015. The innovative edge of the volume resides in its broadening of the scope of investigation in three directions. Unlike previous research in the field, the case studies in the collection expand the focus of analysis beyond children's literature in English to include works in German, French, Italian and Russian as well. This linguistic diversity is matched by the variety of genres and media manifestations, ranging from young adult adventure novels through picture books and comics to cartoons and films. The resultant kaleidoscopic wealth of material is interpreted through the prism of a wide spectrum of theoretical and methodological frameworks from classical reception studies, classical philology, children's literature, media studies, film studies, pedagogy and theology. Each case study offers an interdisciplinary approach specifically tailored to the complexities of the works under consideration.

The volume comprises an introduction and seventeen case studies thematically organized into four sections. The first section presents essays on the didactic aspects of the introduction of students to classical themes and history. Laura Zinn dwells on the representations and functions of schools within the narratives of three young adult mythic fantasy series. Another interdisciplinary investigation is delivered by Anita Schilcher and Michael Stierstorfer. Drawing on different theoretical views of the objectives of engagement with literary works within the school context, the authors make a compelling case for the educational potential of Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* pentalogy and argue for the inclusion of its German translation into German literature classes.

The second – and largest – section of the volume, which comprises six comprehensive case studies, focuses on postmodern adaptation and innovation of classical material in a variety of media contexts. The opening essay by the volume's editors Markus Janka and Michael Stierstorfer offers insightful exploration of the theme of fragmented families in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and its imaginative transformations in three contemporary works for young adult audiences. The first part of the study presents an in-depth analysis of Ovid's treatment of the myths of Perseus, Theseus and Hercules and recognizes the vast innovative potential inherent in his text. The second part explores the adaptation of the myths for the purposes of problematizing unconventional family configurations: the patchwork family in Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series, single parenthood in the German short feature film *Mia und der Minotaurus* (2012) and adoptive relationships in the film *The Legend of Hercules* (2014).

The third section is devoted to contributions drawing on methodological and conceptual input from the field of film studies. Volker Müller's essay opens with a comparative analysis of two of Plato's dialogues, *Timaeus* and *Critias*, in order to identify the distinctive elements of the myth of Atlantis. The author then traces the variation of the myth in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Silmarillion*, the German translation of Albert Uderzo's French comics *La galère d'Obélix*, Disney's animated feature *Atlantis: the Lost Empire* (2001) and its 2003 sequel, and the BBC *Atlantis* TV series. Another valuable contribution to the volume is Hanna Paulouskaya's exploration of the ideologically motivated engagement with Greek mythology in Soviet animated features between the 1960s and the 1980s. She combines a detailed cinematic analysis of three films with interviews with their directors to elucidate the way the sociocultural context of film production determined the myth variation. The author identifies a range of motivations for the adaptations – from conforming to Russian fairy tale models to the narratives' use as vehicles for state propaganda.

The final section of the volume is devoted to Roman history and comprises three case studies on the transformation of the figures of Cicero and Gaius Julius Caesar. Katarzyna Marciniak's contribution endeavours to piece together a comprehensive understanding of the reception of Cicero in contemporary children's literature by exploring its multifarious representations in literary works and popular culture in English, German, Italian and Polish. The author's diachronic analysis starts with an investigation of the narrative, ethical and didactic strategies of bringing Cicero closer to younger audiences in three novels from the first part of the twentieth century and traces their application in recent literary works.

In closing, the multifaceted nature of the volume makes it a compelling reading for scholars of a wide range of academic disciplines. It lives up to the introduction's promise to explore opportunities for synergetic collaboration between different fields. The book thus lays the foundation for future cross- and interdisciplinary research.

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**Plamen Gaptov, Maria Georgieva and Jonathan McCreedy, editors.**  
***Ireland-Europe. Cultural and Literary Encounters.***  
**St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2017. ISBN-978-954-07-4273-1**

The raising of questions about Ireland and Irishness at the heart of an international conference, held in 2015 at Sofia University, Bulgaria, is a certain prerequisite for cultural dialogue. The event seems instinctively synchronous with the current debates on UK and Europe's post-Brexit future. Thus, it can definitely be argued that the conference proceedings, collected under the title of *Ireland-Europe. Cultural and Literary Encounters*, came out at a time when the political, economic and cultural encounters between Europe and England-Ireland have been persistently redefined.

Tapping the rich repertoire of comparative studies, a discipline that has caught up with the current enhanced speed of cross-cultural mobility, the collected papers display a wide range of theoretical positions and techniques both within and across disciplines. Thematically structured in five sections, two of which pay tribute to W.B. Yeats and James Joyce, the spectrum of the discussions retracts and expands from literary and linguistic analysis to questions of a more precise contextual detail such as "multilingual language usage in Ireland" under EU legislation, or "nineteenth-century English visions of Ireland." One of the sections, "Ireland and Bulgaria: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Western-Eastern Postcolonial Struggles," intriguingly detects sites of cross-cultural encounter in literary works that project Ireland and Bulgaria as equally affected by processes of modernization. While Ludmilla Kostova argues that G.B. Shaw's play *Arms and the Man* represents a "conjectural history" of Bulgaria's post-liberation modernization, James Gallacher's article is concerned with contending visions of Irish modernity in a post-revolution generation of authors who challenge "the romantic narratives of the Literary Revival" (126) that had furnished its beginnings.

All of the articles in the collection consider, but also read beyond, the concept of a "national cultural space," locating Irishness both as a container of and an entity contained in a linguistic and cultural multiplicity. Exploring the nature of multilingualism and code-switching in *Finnegans Wake*, Jonathan McCreedy contends that Joyce's "dense dream language... – known within criticism as "Wakese" – incorporates the appearance of over fifty world languages and they are often used simultaneously" (65); Marina Sneseva analyses the challenged position of Dublin bilinguals, and Boryana Bratanova locates Irish and Bulgarian comparatively in the European Union's multilingual space.