



$\int f(x) dx = \lim_{\Delta x \rightarrow 0} (f(a)\Delta x + f(x_1)\Delta x + \dots + f(x_n)\Delta x)$

μιθολογία  $\rightarrow$  mitologia  $\rightarrow$  μυθολογία

$\sum a_i = a_1 + a_2 + \dots + a_n$   
 itan aye atijo

# OUR MYTHICAL EDUCATION

Edited by Lisa Maurice

神話  $\rightarrow$  mythologie  $\rightarrow$  mitologie

$(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) \begin{pmatrix} y_1 \\ y_2 \\ \vdots \\ y_n \end{pmatrix} = x_1 y_1 + x_2 y_2 + \dots + x_n y_n$   $\left(\frac{u}{v}\right) = \dots$

$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^n} = 2$   $\infty$  מיתולוגיה

$f(x) = \frac{1}{\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}} \exp\left(-\frac{(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right)$

$F(x) + C$   $y = \ln x$   $\int \frac{dx}{x} = \ln|x| + C$

μιθολογία  $\rightarrow$  Mythologie  $\rightarrow$  mitología  $\rightarrow$  μυθολογία

$N(\mu, \sigma^2)$   $C = \frac{n!}{\dots}$

# OUR MYTHICAL EDUCATION

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OUR MYTHICAL  
EDUCATION  
The Reception  
of Classical Myth  
Worldwide in Formal  
Education, 1900–2020

Edited by Lisa Maurice



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# CONTENTS

Katarzyna Marciniak. <i>In the Circle of Chiron's Pupils, or: A Foreword by the Series Editor</i>	11
Notes on Contributors	17
List of Figures and Tables	25
Acknowledgements by Lisa Maurice	31
Lisa Maurice. <i>Introduction</i>	33

## Part I: Our Mythical Education in Western Europe

Ariadne Konstantinou. <i>Modern Greek "Prehistory": Ancient Greek Myth and Mycenaean Civilization in Modern Greek Education</i>	49
Valentina Garulli. <i>Our Mythical Fascism? Classical Mythology at School during the Italian Fascist Twenty-Year Period</i>	69
Luis Unceta Gómez. <i>A Hundred Years of Classical Mythology in Spanish Educational Systems</i>	93
Markus Janka and Michael Stierstorfer. <i>Metamorphoses of Mythological Education: Ovid and his Metamorphoses as Subjects of Secondary Education in Germany</i>	123
Arlene Holmes-Henderson. <i>Developing Multiliteracies through Classical Mythology in British Classrooms</i>	139

## Part II: Our Mythical Education in Central and Eastern Europe

Hanna Paulouskaya. <i>Learning Myths in the Soviet School</i>	155
Elena Ermolaeva and Lev Pushel. <i>Classical Languages, Culture, and Mythology at the Classical Gymnasium of Saint Petersburg</i>	189
Janusz Ryba. <i>Greek and Roman Mythology in Classical Education in Poland after 1945</i>	209
Katarzyna Marciniak and Barbara Strycharczyk. <i>Macte animo! – or, The Polish Experiment with "Classics Profiles" in Secondary School Education: The Warsaw Example</i>	237

## Part III: Our Antipodean Mythical Education

Elizabeth Hale and Anna Foka. <i>Myths of Classical Education in Australia: Fostering Classics through Fabrication, Visualization, and Reception</i>	295
Babette Puetz. <i>Odysseus Down Under: Classical Myth in New Zealand School Education</i>	311



**Part IV: Our American Mythical Education**

- Emily Gunter and Dan Curley. *"The Greatest Stories Ever Told": US Classical Mythology Courses in the New Millennium*     **325**
- Alex McAuley. *Reconciling Catholicism with the Classics: Mythology in French Canadian Catholic Education*     **349**
- Ricardo Gancz and Pablo Silva Machado Bispo dos Santos. *The Contribution of Graeco-Roman Mythology to the Formation of Brazilian National Identity*     **377**

**Part V: Our Far-Flung Mythical Education: Africa, Asia, and the Middle East**

- Divine Che Neba and Daniel A. Nkemele. *Revisioning Classical Mythology in African Dramaturgy: A Study of Sophocles' Oedipus Rex and Ola Rotimi's The Gods Are Not to Blame*     **399**
- Claudia C.J. Fratini. *Crossing the Parallel Universe(s): An Experimental, Multicultural, and Interdisciplinary Approach to Using Mythology in the South African Classroom*     **419**
- Ayelet Peer and Marie Højlund Roesgaard. *The Emperor, the Sun, and Olympus: Mythology in the Modern Japanese Education System*     **443**
- Lisa Maurice. *Classical Mythology and the Israeli Educational System*     **465**
- Lisa Maurice. *Afterword: Some Concluding Thoughts*     **485**
- Bibliography     **493**
- Index of Names     **553**
- Index of the Main Concepts and Mythological Figures     **561**

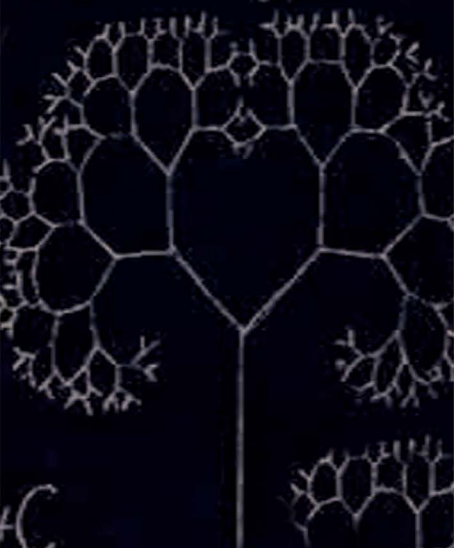
$$\dots + f(x_{n-1}) \Delta x$$

$$\dots + a_n \sin^2 x + \cos$$

МИФОЛОГИЯ

міфалогія

$$\left(\frac{u}{v}\right)' = \frac{u'v - uv'}{v^2}$$



mitologia

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{n!}{n^n}$$

Part II

OUR MYTHICAL EDUCATION  
IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN  
EUROPE



## LEARNING MYTHS IN THE SOVIET SCHOOL

### I. Introduction

Antiquity is often called the cradle of Western civilization.<sup>1</sup> It seems that this metaphor was understood literally in the history of the Soviet school. From 1934, when the chronological sequence was chosen as the organizing principle of historical education, the history of Ancient Greece and Rome (together with that of Mesopotamia and Egypt, India, and China) was studied in school in Grade 5, thus being taught to eleven- or twelve-year-old pupils. At this point they learned also the concept of history itself. A part of this learning was Greek mythology. The problem is that in their further school education Soviet pupils never returned to ancient history or ancient mythology. It remained only part of their childhood. Post-Soviet countries, Belarus and Russia included, have inherited this style of education, and so ancient history, in a way, still belongs to one's "mythical childhood".

In this paper I would like to examine textbooks on ancient history produced in the USSR for Russian-language schools, paying special attention to the representation of classical mythology and analysing what concepts were communicated during this study. In this way, we have an opportunity to look at knowledge transferred to all pupils across the USSR, as textbooks in other languages of the country were mostly translated from Russian. We may assume that often this was the only systematic knowledge of classical mythology readily available to children. Proper mythologies or books for further reading were obtainable to some degree – in fact, the book *Легенды*

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<sup>1</sup> A draft version of the text was presented at the conference *Soviet Antiquity – 4. Human History in the System of Soviet Science, Culture and Education* in November 2018 in Minsk (Belarus), and I would like to thank my colleagues for their notes and comments, being especially grateful to Sergei Karpyuk and Sergei Krikh.

и мифы Древней Греции [Legendy i mify Drevnei Gretsii;<sup>2</sup> Legends and Myths of Ancient Greece, ed. pr. 1914] by Nicholas Kuhn was reissued over and over again in thousands of copies,<sup>3</sup> and *Мифы Древней Греции* [Mify Drevnei Gretsii; Myths of Ancient Greece, ed. pr. 1941] by Lev Uspensky and Vsevolod Uspensky also gained considerable popularity. However, reaching for these books assumed some initiative and level of literary culture that was not necessarily common for the mass reader, especially in peripheral regions.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, programmes and textbooks on history as ideologically charged were of special attention for state and party authorities. School teachers were particularly sensitive to educational goals aiming at the standardization and universalization of knowledge. Information contained in textbooks often served as a basis for the perception of other texts of culture. The educational and cultural context of these textbooks will be presented in a historical perspective in order to outline the Russian and Soviet education policy concerning Greek mythology. As the topic may be less well-known to an English-speaking audience, please forgive me for including an extensive introduction describing earlier historical contexts.

## 2. The Beginnings of Soviet Education: Historical Contexts

The study of history aims not only at providing knowledge of major historical events or figures, but also at helping the students understand the contemporary world and often humanity itself by means of stories from previous epochs.<sup>5</sup> In early modern times, ancient history and mythology formed the

---

<sup>2</sup> Transliteration of Russian names and titles is given according to the system of the American Library Association and the Library of Congress, with minor modifications: I omit diacritic signs and use "-sky" for "-skii" endings. Well-known Russian names that have their traditional spelling are written according to it.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Elena Ermolaeva, "Classical Antiquity in Children's Literature in the Soviet Union", in Katarzyna Marciniak, ed., *Our Mythical Childhood... The Classics and Literature for Children and Young Adults*, *Metaforms: Studies in the Reception of Classical Antiquity* 8, Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2016, 243; see also in this volume Elena Ermolaeva and Lev Pushel, "Classical Languages, Culture, and Mythology at the Classical Gymnasium of Saint Petersburg", 189–208.

<sup>4</sup> About the formation of Soviet readers, see Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature*, trans. Jesse M. Savage, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997 (ed. pr. in Russian 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Compare the concept of "historical sense" defined by J. Carleton Bell and David F. McCollum in "A Study of the Attainments of Pupils in United States History", *Journal of Educational Psychology* 8.2 (1917), 257–274 (quoted by Irina Savelieva and Andrei Poletaev, *Социальные представления*

core of education itself, which focused on studying Latin and Greek and texts written in these languages. Ancient stories were used as a tool for moral and ideological education in Europe. They were also present in the Russian gymnasium education system established in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting that the interpretation of the ideological meaning of classical education changed radically in nineteenth-century Russia. Thus, when Minister of Education Count Dmitry A. Tolstoy boosted the influence of Latin and Greek, it was to placate the revolutionary society of the 1860s. A decade earlier, in 1849–1852, Latin was viewed as a highly dangerous subject and was to be reduced in order to have the same effect of calming society.<sup>7</sup>

After the Bolshevik Revolution and the establishment of the USSR, great attention was paid to education.<sup>8</sup> The system of classical gymnasiums was

---

*о прошлом, или Знают ли американцы историю* [Sotsial'nye predstavleniia o proshlom, ili Znaiut li amerikantsy istoriiu; Social Representations of the Past, or, Do Americans Know History], Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2008, 9).

<sup>6</sup> For more on the history of classical education in Russia, see Grigory Starikovskiy, "Men in Cases': The Perception of Classical Schools in Prerevolutionary Russia", in Zara Martirosova Torlone, Dana LaCourse Munteanu, and Dorota Dutsch, eds., *A Handbook to Classical Reception in Eastern and Central Europe*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017, 457–468; Eduard Frolov, *Русская наука об античности (историографические очерки)* [Russkaia nauka ob antichnosti (istoriograficheskie ocherki); Russian Studies of Antiquity (Historiographical Essays)], Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'skiy Tsentr "Gumanitarnaia Akademiia", 2006, 115–436; Svetlana Maksimova, *Преподавание древних языков в русской классической гимназии XIX – начала XX века* [Prepodavanie drevnikh iazykov v russkoi klassicheskoi gimnazii XIX – nachala XX veka; Teaching Ancient Languages in the Russian Classical Gymnasium of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century], Moskva: Greko-latinskii kabinet Iu. A. Shichalina, 2005; Aleksandr Nosov, "К истории классического образования в России (1860 – начало 1900-х годов)" [K istorii klassicheskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii (1860 – nachalo 1900-kh godov)]; On the History of Classical Education in Russia (from 1860 to the Early 1900s), in George Knabe, ed., *Античное наследие в культуре России* [Antichnoe nasledie v kul'ture Rossii; Ancient Heritage in Russian Culture], Moskva: Izdatel'stvo RNIi kul'turnogo i prirodnogo naslediiia, 1996, 203–229; Ivan Aleshintsev, *История гимназического образования в России (XVIII и XIX век)* [Istoriia gimnazicheskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii (XVIII i XIX vek); History of Gymnasium Education in Russia (the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries)], Sankt-Peterburg: Izdanie O. Bogdanovoi, 1912; Vladimir Grigoriev, *Исторический очерк русской школы* [Istoricheskiy ocherk russkoi shkoly; Historical Essay on Russian Schooling], Moskva: Tipografiia Mamontova, 1900, 294–587.

<sup>7</sup> Starikovskiy, "Men in Cases'", 458; Maksimova, *Преподавание древних языков*, 23; Nosov, "К истории классического образования", 206.

<sup>8</sup> For more on the system of education in the USSR, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921–1934*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; Lukian Bushchik, *Очерк развития школьного исторического образования в СССР* [Ocherk razvitiia shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovaniia v SSSR; An Essay on the Development of School History Education in the USSR], Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk RSFSR, 1961.



abolished almost immediately.<sup>9</sup> New forms of education were introduced, and new pedagogical theories were developed. For example, Anton Makarenko (1888–1939) was the author of a theory aimed at collective learning that paid close attention to self-government and collective labour. One of the main educational approaches developed by the Narkompros (People's Commissariat of Enlightenment) as early as in 1918 was the *kompleksnyi metod* (комплексный метод; complex method) intended to provide freedom in teaching and to cultivate democracy. This method abolished school subjects, eschewed textbooks, and diminished the significance of curricula themselves. It was based on the study of certain key topics (for example, the child, the village, the region, the USSR) from the point of view of three basic aspects: nature, society, and labour. The main types of lessons were class discussions and neighbourhood excursions for children.<sup>10</sup> The learning of grammar or mathematics was only peripheral.

The reforms were implemented in an atmosphere of civil war and a rise in the number of homeless children, as well as in the context of the campaign against illiteracy waged in the Soviet Union especially during the 1930s.<sup>11</sup> Polytechnic schools teaching basic professional skills were promoted by the state and the Komsomol (Communist Youth League), and for some time they provided the only gateway to enrolling in a university.<sup>12</sup> The teaching of Greek and Latin as well as mythology was regarded as too distant from the main educational courses. It was furthermore condemned, as it belonged to the bourgeois school system of the *ancien régime*.

At the same time, during the 1920s and early 1930s, most of the educational staff remained the same as in the pre-revolutionary gymnasiums, and they used old methods and knowledge to convey the new ideology. With time, the attitude to teachers changed and they were often considered class enemies.<sup>13</sup> However, the Narkompros and Anatoly Lunacharsky as its head tried to support the old intelligentsia, and at least until the purges of the 1930s most of them could teach at schools.

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<sup>9</sup> Despite the reforms, Latin was still taught in some smaller towns, in areas further from the authorities, cf. Iaroslav Isaievych, "Anti-Culture's War against Culture: Ukrainian Translators of Classical Literature as Victims of Political Repression", *Eos* 89 (2002), 346.

<sup>10</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 7–8, 19–22; Bushchik, *Ocherk razvitiia shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovaniia*, 103.

<sup>11</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 159.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, 50.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 30.

A revealing example of the coexistence of old and new cultures may be found in Grigory Belykh and Leonid Panteleev's novel *Республика ШКИД* [Respublika ShKID; The Republic of ShKID, ed. pr. 1926]. The novel depicts a newly organized boarding school for homeless children and delinquents, called Школа-коммуна имени Достоевского (Shkola-kommuna imeni Dostoevskogo – in short ShKID; Fyodor Dostoevsky Commune School for Difficult Teenagers), where the headmaster makes every effort to educate free, intelligent persons. The novel is autobiographical and was written by two former students of the school. The character of the headmaster is based on Viktor Nikolaevich Soroka-Rosinsky (1882–1960), called Vik-niksor in the novel. This model for the novel's protagonist was a Russian pedagogue and psychologist, a graduate of the history and classical philology department of Saint Petersburg University in 1906. He worked in the school together with his wife, Ella Liuminarskaia, a teacher of German. As we may see in the novel, though the students did not study classical subjects, they had self-government and formed a "republic". While composing their anthem, they choose a "[мотив] студенческой песни" (students' song)<sup>14</sup> – "Gaudeamus" – as its basis.<sup>15</sup> They even practised ostracism as a "средство от воров, патент на которое [...] взят две с половиной тысячи лет тому назад в Афинах" (measure to fight criminals [...] used 2,500 years ago in Athens).<sup>16</sup> In this way, the pre-revolutionary idealistic intelligentsia was building a new society of equality based on traditions of Athenian and Roman democracy. Self-government by pupils was welcomed by the Narkompros also in ordinary schools, and it was intended "to be a practising ground for democratic political participation".<sup>17</sup> However, in reality it often became a forum for exclusion of some members of the collective, and a culture of "denunciation" (*донос; donos*) was cultivated also at the school level. During the Thaw, the novel was adapted as a film (dir. Gennadi Poloka, 1966)<sup>18</sup> that revealed a post-Stalinist nostalgia for the "real revolution" and in a sense promoted classical education.

<sup>14</sup> Hereinafter the translation is my own if not stated otherwise.

<sup>15</sup> Grigory Belykh and Leonid Panteleev, *Республика ШКИД* [Respublika ShKID; The Republic of ShKID], Moskva: AST Astrel', 2012 (ed. pr. 1926), 68–69.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 363–364.

<sup>17</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Gennadi Poloka, dir., *Республика ШКИД* [Respublika ShKID; The Republic of ShKID], Leningrad: Lenfilm, 1966.

## 2.1. *A Textbook on Ancient History by Robert Wipper, 1924*

In the atmosphere of relative freedom given to teachers and schools in the early Soviet Union, some pre-revolutionary textbooks on ancient history continued to be used and published in new editions. I would like to mention *Учебник древней истории* [Uchebnik drevnei istorii; A Textbook on Ancient History]<sup>19</sup> by Robert Wipper (1859–1954).<sup>20</sup> This work saw at least six editions after 1917, including editions as a textbook for regular as well as vocational schools. Another of Wipper's textbooks was called *Древняя Европа и Восток* [Drevniaia Evropa i Vostok; Ancient Europe and the East] and was published in three editions before 1924,<sup>21</sup> being a reworking of the textbook with the same title written for younger gymnasium classes (the first edition appeared in 1914). Wipper adhered to a so-called sociological approach in history, and he paid special attention to economics and sociology in studying historical issues. This gave him the possibility of being published in the USSR. According to the Soviet historian of education Lukian Bushchik, this was the reason why Wipper's texts were not popular in tsarist Russia.<sup>22</sup> However, Wipper's *Учебник древней истории: С рисунками и историческими картами* [Uchebnik drevnei istorii: S risunkami i istoricheskimi kartami; A Textbook on Ancient History: With Illustrations and Historical Maps]<sup>23</sup> had nine editions between 1900 and 1913, which evidently

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Wipper, *Учебник древней истории* [Uchebnik drevnei istorii; A Textbook on Ancient History], *Учебники и учебные пособия для трудовой школы* [Uchebniki i uchebnye posobiia dlia trudovoi shkoly; Textbooks and Manuals for Vocational Schools], 4th ed., Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1924 (ed. pr. 1900).

<sup>20</sup> For more on textbooks by Wipper, see Artëm Frank, "Р. Ю. Виппер и развитие школьного исторического образования в первой четверти XX века" [R. Iu. Wipper i razvitie shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovaniia v pervoi chetverti XX veka; R. Iu. Wipper and the Development of School History Teaching in the First Quarter of the Twentieth Century], *Сибирский педагогический журнал* [Sibirskiy pedagogicheskyy zhurnal; The Siberian Pedagogical Journal] 2 (2014), 150–154; Mikhail Novikov and Tatiana Perfilova, "Р. Ю. Виппер и конструирование 'образа' античной истории в учебной литературе" [R. Iu. Wipper i konstruirovanie "obraza" antichnoi istorii v uchebnoi literature; R. Iu. Wipper and Designing the "Image" of Ancient History in Textbooks], *Ярославский педагогический вестник* [Yaroslavskiy pedagogicheskyy vestnik; Yaroslavl Pedagogical Bulletin] 4.53 (2007), 57–65.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Wipper, *Древняя Европа и Восток* [Drevniaia Evropa i Vostok; Ancient Europe and the East], *Учебники и пособия для школы I и II ступеней* [Uchebniki i posobiia dlia shkoly I i II stupenei; Textbooks and Manuals for School of the First and Second Levels], 3rd ed., Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1924 (ed. pr. 1914).

<sup>22</sup> Bushchik, *Ocherk razvitiia shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovaniia*, 62.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Wipper, *Учебник древней истории: С рисунками и историческими картами* [Uchebnik drevnei istorii: S risunkami i istoricheskimi kartami; A Textbook on Ancient History: With Illustrations and Historical Maps], 9th ed., Moskva: I. N. Kushnerev i Co., 1913 (ed. pr. 1900).

shows its acceptance. In 1922, Wipper was criticized by Lenin in the latter's work *О значении воинствующего материализма* [O znachenii voinstvu-iushchego materializma; On the Significance of Militant Materialism], and accused of "прислужничество господствующей буржуазии" (toadying to the ruling bourgeoisie).<sup>24</sup> In 1924, Wipper emigrated to Latvia to work at the university in Riga, but then "returned" to the Soviet Union with the annexation of Latvia in 1941. Obviously, in the USSR his textbooks were tolerated only for some time, as "[и]х идеалистическая сущность теперь бросалась в глаза" (their idealistic nature was blatant), as described by Bushchik.<sup>25</sup>

### 3. Ancient History Renewed: The 1930s

The 1930s brought changes to the system of education.<sup>26</sup> The reforms were organized by the Communist Party's Central Committee, with Stalin himself taking part. The main shift in education is described as a return to the old school model with proper subjects and defined programmes, and textbooks that were obligatory for all schools across the country. History was restored as a school subject and the chronological principle was chosen to organize the material. Classical mythology got its place in history classes in Grade 5 during the discussion of Ancient Greece and Rome.

The general approach to history was fundamentally revised according to Marxist thought. Socio-economic factors were considered to be the most influential, and the timeline was divided according to changes in social formations. Class struggle and slave rebellions were given a prominent place in the study of the history of different regions, Classical Antiquity included. This approach needed new textbooks. The Central Committee of the Communist Party issued a decree on 12 February 1933 entitled "Об учебниках для начальной и средней школы" [Ob uchebnikakh dlia nachal'noi i srednei shkoly; On Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools], which ordered

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<sup>24</sup> Vladimir Lenin, "On the Significance of Militant Materialism", trans. David Skirsky and George Hanna, in Vladimir Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 33, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972 (ed. pr. in Russian 1922), 227–236, available at Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/mar/12.htm> (accessed 2 April 2020).

<sup>25</sup> Bushchik, *Ocherk razvitiia shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovaniia*, 189.

<sup>26</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 209–255.

that they be ready by 15 July 1933. As a result, more than 100 textbooks on various subjects were published, and in over 50 million copies.<sup>27</sup>

### **3.1. History: Pre-Class Society by Nikolai Nikolsky, 1933**

The first school textbook on ancient history published in the USSR was *История. Доклассовое общество* [Istoriia. Doklassovoe obshchestvo; History: Pre-Class Society] written in 1933 by Nikolai Nikolsky (1877–1959). The textbook was published in 200,000 copies and translated into 15 languages,<sup>28</sup> but it was strongly criticized for being insufficiently Marxist.

Nikolsky was a Soviet and Belarusian historian and ethnographer, head of the ethnography department at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, and he had graduated from Moscow State University. As an ancient historian he specialized in Oriental studies. Working far from the centre of the Soviet Union gave him a possibility to produce and adhere to historical concepts that were not necessarily popular in Moscow.<sup>29</sup> As he was writing the textbook, he was also in opposition to Vasily Struve, an Orientalist and rival candidate for writing the text,<sup>30</sup> on the concept of defining the formations of the ancient world, as we will see shortly.

Nikolsky had only a few months to prepare the material. As this was the first Soviet textbook on ancient history, it had to define the social formations of the ancient states. Nikolsky made different judgements for different regions. He described Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China as feudal states, and Greece and Rome as slave-owning ones. The feudal interpretation was

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<sup>27</sup> Oleg Malyugin, "От большевистского Иловайского до учебника без авторов: Из истории создания школьного учебника по древней истории в 1930-х годах" [Ot bol'shevistskogo Ilovaiskogo do uchebnika bez avtorov: Iz istorii sozdaniia shkol'nogo uchebnika po drevnei istorii v 1930-kh godakh; From the Bolshevik Ilovaisky to the Textbook without Authors: History of the Creation of the School Textbook on Ancient History in the 1930s], in Mikhail Bukharin et al., eds., *Scripta Antiqua: Ancient History, Philology, Arts and Material Culture*, vol. 6, Moskva: Sobranie, 2017, 407.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, 411.

<sup>29</sup> Sergei Krikh, "Н. М. Никольский и рождение периферийной советской историографии древности" [N. M. Nikol'sky i rozhdenie periferiinoi sovetskoi istoriografii drevnosti; N. M. Nikol'sky and the Birth of a Peripheral Soviet Historiography of Antiquity], *Журнал Белорусского государственного университета. История* [Zhurnal Belorusskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Istoriia; Journal of the Belarussian State University: History] 4 (2017), 17–22.

<sup>30</sup> Another candidate for writing the textbook, Aleksandr Tiumentev, was also an Orientalist. See Malyugin, "Ot bol'shevistskogo Ilovaiskogo", 408.

criticized by Struve, who was an advocate of the slave-owning definition.<sup>31</sup> Soon Struve's concept would be the official position of Soviet historiography, but Nikolsky's textbook was, nevertheless, accepted. A new edition was drawn up in 1934, and it was commonly used until 1940, when a newer textbook appeared.

The language in this textbook is concise. It aims to transfer basic knowledge by simplifying it to some degree for a children's audience. It would be the prototype for the next variants of textbooks, and Sergei Krikh supposes that it was based on the ancient history of Wipper.<sup>32</sup> However, the description of Greek mythology in Nikolsky's book is not rooted in the pre-revolutionary model.

Nikolsky's book features black-and-white illustrations based on ancient depictions. Including visual material in Russian textbooks on history was an innovation introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century, and at first it was used only in books for small children.<sup>33</sup> Pre-revolutionary textbooks contained illustrations presenting famous pieces of art and historical persons. Pictures in the first Soviet books were chosen to show "social life" and "civil history".<sup>34</sup> As a result, Nikolsky's book does not include any portraits of a historical person, nor is the role of any one person emphasized in the main text. According to Krikh, twenty-five of the seventy-one pictures here present everyday life (agriculture, crafts, trade, shipping, etc.), eight war, seven architecture, and six religion (priests, rituals, and myths).<sup>35</sup> However, the sections depicting Greek religion and the Homeric poems include five pictures, not necessarily presenting rituals.

Mythical topics in the book start with Homer's epics, which are described in section 72.<sup>36</sup> This section is quite short, taking up only one page,

<sup>31</sup> Krikh, "N. M. Nikolsky", 18.

<sup>32</sup> Sergei Krikh, "Картинки в книжке: Изобразительный ряд в советских школьных учебниках по древней истории" [Kartinki v knizhke: Izobrazitel'nyi riad v sovetskikh shkol'nykh uchebnikakh po drevnei istorii; Pictures in the Book: Artistic Images in the Soviet School Textbooks on Ancient History], in Mikhail Bukharin et al., eds., *Scripta Antiqua: Ancient History, Philology, Arts and Material Culture*, vol. 6, Moskva: Sobranie, 2017, 362–363.

<sup>33</sup> Aleksei Vagin, *Методика преподавания истории в средней школе: Учение о методах. Теория урока* [Metodika prepodavaniia istorii v srednei shkole: Uchenie o metodakh. Teoriia uroka; Methods for Teaching History in Secondary School: A Study of Methods. Theory of the Lesson], Moskva: Prosveshchenie, 1968, 184.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, 185–186.

<sup>35</sup> Krikh, "Kartinki v knizhke", 369.

<sup>36</sup> It is section 82 in the 2nd ed. of the textbook. Nikolai Nikolsky, *История: Доклассовое общество. Древний Восток. Античный мир. Учебник для средней школы 5 год обучения* [Istoriia: Doklassovoe obshchestvo. Drevnii Vostok. Antichnyi mir. Uchebnik dlia srednei shkoly 5 god



including an illustration. It starts with an introduction to oral epic poetry and the Homeric question. The text says that the epics were composed at the courts of the aristocracy and were aimed at glorifying “военные и разбойничьи походы своих господ и их предков” (the military and predatory campaigns of masters and their ancestors).<sup>37</sup> This allows the narrative to explain the presence of gods in the texts as follows: “А так как каждый басилевс считал, что его род идет от какого-нибудь бога, то в качестве действующих лиц в песнях постоянно фигурировали и боги” (And since every basileus believed that his family derived from some god, the gods constantly appeared as characters in the songs).<sup>38</sup>

The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are presented as aristocratic poetry. The *Iliad* describes “military life” (*военный быт*) during the Trojan War. Contradictions between royal interests and those of “ordinary militants” (*рядового воинства*) are emphasized. The militants are presented as farmers who long “for their plough-lands” (*пашен*). They “took all the cattle of the Trojans” (*угнали весь скот троянцев*) among other spoils after the victory. The presence of gods and their “alleged” (*будто бы*) participation in the war is mentioned, but none are named.

The *Odyssey*, according to the textbook, presents the “adventures” (*приключения*) of one of the kings fighting at Troy, while on his way home. From among the exploits of Odysseus, Nikolsky lists Scylla and Charybdis, the Sirens, and the giant Cyclops. Scylla is explained to be “водоворот около теперешней Сицилии” (a whirlpool near contemporary Sicily),<sup>39</sup> thus providing a geographical location for it. The story of the Sirens (“злых духов в образе птиц-женщин *сирен*”; evil spirits in the form of female birds, *sirens*)<sup>40</sup> has an illustration based on the Siren Vase from the British Museum.<sup>41</sup>

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obucheniia; History: Pre-Class Society. The Ancient East. Antiquity. Secondary School Textbook, Grade 5], Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe uchebno-pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1933, 106–107; Nikolai Nikolsky, *История: Доклассовое общество. Древний Восток. Античный мир. Учебник для 5 класса средней школы* [Istoriia: Doklassovoe obshchestvo. Drevnii Vostok. Antichnyi mir. Uchebnik dlia 5 klassa srednei shkoly; History: Pre-Class Society. The Ancient East. Antiquity. Textbook for Grade 5 of Secondary School], 2nd ed., Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe uchebno-pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1934, 97.

<sup>37</sup> Nikolsky, *Istoriia: Doklassovoe obshchestvo* (1st ed.), 106.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, 107.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>41</sup> Museum no. 1843,1103.31; see “The Siren Vase”, The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=399666&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=399666&partId=1) (accessed 2 April 2020).

The caption under the picture emphasizes the reliability of its depiction of a ship. The textbook mentions that it was Athena who helped the main hero. Also in this case it underlines the importance of the poem as a source of knowledge of “как жили, вели хозяйство, управляли полисами сам Одиссей и другие басилевсы, к которым он заезжал по дороге” (how Odysseus and other basileis lived, cared for households, and governed the poleis).<sup>42</sup>

The poems are called “образцовы[ми] поэтически[ми] произведения[ми], которые] имеют мировую известность” (exemplary poetic works of world renown).<sup>43</sup> They are presented as historical sources for the social and economic history of Ancient Greece. The reality of Troy is confirmed by excavations.

The coverage of Greek religion<sup>44</sup> begins with Demeter and Dionysus, presenting them as gods popular among rural people. It seems to be natural for Nikolsky as an ethnographer to start with rural deities. The myth of Dionysus and the spring and autumn rituals in his honour are described. Dionysus is presented as a resurrecting god, alluding to Christ. The section finishes with a description of the autumn Dionysia as a holiday of “пляски, песни, хороводы и беспробудное пьянство” (dances, songs, and binge drinking)<sup>45</sup> and an illustration of a dance from a Greek vase. This aspect was probably used in antireligious propaganda, as it gave material for a comparison of the Dionysia with traditional Christian holidays. On the other hand, Dionysus was especially popular in early twentieth-century Russia, which was believed to be a place of the third, Slavonic Renaissance. Prominent philologists, such as Tadeusz Zieliński, as well as the men of letters of the Silver Age,<sup>46</sup> aimed to revive the Hellenic tradition through dithyrambs and Dionysian dances.<sup>47</sup> Most probably the textbook did not aim to continue this tradition, but it did so in a way.

<sup>42</sup> Nikolsky, *Istoriia: Doklassovoe obshchestvo* (1st ed.), 107.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>44</sup> It is section 90 in the textbook (103 and 104 in the 2nd ed.). Nikolsky, *Istoriia: Doklassovoe obshchestvo* (1st ed.), 129–131; Nikolsky, *Istoriia: Doklassovoe obshchestvo* (2nd ed.), 119–121.

<sup>45</sup> Nikolsky, *Istoriia: Doklassovoe obshchestvo* (1st ed.), 130.

<sup>46</sup> As mid-nineteenth-century Russian literature was considered to be its “Golden Age”, the next epoch is commonly called “Silver”.

<sup>47</sup> For more on the Slavonic Renaissance, see Nina Braginskaya, “Славянское возрождение античности” [Slavianskoe vrozozhdenie antichnosti; Slavonic Renaissance of Antiquity], in Sergei Zenkin, ed., *Русская теория, 1920–1930-е годы* [Russkaia teoriia, 1920–1930-e gody; Russian Theory, the 1920s and 1930s], Moskva: Rossiisky Gosudarstvennyi Gumanitarnyi Universitet, 2004, 49–80; Catriona Kelly, “Classical Tragedy and the ‘Slavonic Renaissance’: The Plays of Vjačeslav

The Olympic gods are presented as city patrons in the context of the Olympic Games. Only Athena, Zeus, and Apollo are mentioned. Athena is the goddess of Athens, who has her temple built by the famous artist Phidias. Apollo is presented as a god of prophecy, and the Delphic oracle is mentioned as a way of enriching the state treasury:

Так как у дельфийских жрецов были тайные корреспонденты во всех греческих полисах, то они хорошо разбирались в политических отношениях и в делах купцов и промышленников и давали ловкие ответы.<sup>48</sup>

Since the Delphic priests had secret correspondents in all the Greek poleis, they were well versed in political relations and in the affairs of merchants and industrialists, and gave clever answers.

The section finishes with strong antireligious emphasis, depicting the priesthood as a system of usury, and mentioning trials against atheists and freethinkers (*безбожников и свободомыслящих*), such as that against Socrates.

### **3.2. History of the Ancient World, edited by Aleksandr Mishulin, 1940**

Although Nikolsky's textbook was criticized, a new version was not prepared and published until 1940.<sup>49</sup> The writing of this textbook took six years during the harshest political era for the USSR, famous for Stalin's purges and

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Ivanov and Innokentij Annenskij Compared", *The Slavic and East European Journal* 33.2 (1989), 235–254; Katherine Lahti, *The Russian Revival of the Dithyramb: A Modern Use of Antiquity*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018; Nikolai Nikolaev, "М. М. Бахтин, Невельская школа философии и культурная история 1920-х годов" [М. М. Bakhtin, Nevel'skaia shkola filosofii i kul'turnaia istoriia 1920-kh godov; M. M. Bakhtin, the Nevel School of Philosophy, and the Cultural History of the 1920s], in Vitaly Makhlin, ed., *Бахтинский сборник* [Bakhtinsky sbornik; The Bakhtin Collection], vol. 5, Moskva: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2004, 259–268; Henry Stead and Hanna Paulouskaya, "Classics, Crisis and the Soviet Experiment to 1939", in Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson, eds., *Classicising Crisis: The Modern Age of Revolutions and the Greco-Roman Repertoire*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2020, 128–147.

<sup>48</sup> Nikolsky, *Istoriia: Doklassovoe obshchestvo* (1st ed.), 130–131.

<sup>49</sup> Aleksandr Mishulin, ed., *История древнего мира: Учебник для 5–6 классов средней школы* [Istoriia drevnego mira: Uchebnik dlia 5–6 klassov srednei shkoly; History of the Ancient World: Textbook for Grades 5 and 6 of Secondary School], Moskva: Uchpedgiz, 1940.

repressions.<sup>50</sup> The published textbook mentions only the name of its editor, Aleksandr Mishulin (1901–1948), an ancient historian, head of the ancient history department of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, editor-in-chief of *Вестник древней истории* [Vestnik drevnei istorii; Journal of Ancient History].<sup>51</sup> Its other authors were historian of Ancient Rome Sergei Kovalëv (1886–1960), the already-discussed Nikolsky, and the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Ancient History*, a graduate of the University of Jena and ancient historian of Georgian origin, Aleksandr Svanidze (1886–1941). Initially the group had been given time until the end of 1934, and the first version of the book was prepared before the deadline.<sup>52</sup> However, it was criticized because of its definition of the social formation of the ancient East (this part was again written by Nikolsky). The second version of the book attracted disapproval for its “популярный характер [...] и отсутствие иллюстраций” (popular character and lack of illustrations).<sup>53</sup> During further work on the textbook, two of its authors were arrested: Svanidze (a former friend of Stalin) in 1937 and Kovalëv in 1938. Also Nikolsky was replaced – by the scholar Struve, Nikolsky’s chief opponent in the debate on social formations. Ultimately, the textbook was published in 1940 without mentioning the names of the authors. It went through twelve editions before 1953 and was called “первым марксистским учебником для средней школы” (the first Marxist secondary school textbook [on history]) in the USSR.<sup>54</sup>

Greek mythology is described in section 30, which is devoted to Greek religion.<sup>55</sup> In the first version it was most probably written by Sergei

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<sup>50</sup> The difficult history of producing the textbook is described by Malyugin, “Ot bol’shevistskogo Ilovaiskogo”. For more on conceptualizing ancient history in the USSR in that period, see Sergei Kar-ruuk, “A posle byla voina: Diskussia 1940 goda o kharaktere krito-mikenskoj tsivilizatsii” [A posle byla voina: Diskussia 1940 goda o kharaktere krito-mikenskoj tsivilizatsii; Afterwards Was the War: The 1940 Discussion on the Nature of the Cretan-Mycenaean Civilization], *Вестник древней истории* [Vestnik drevnei istorii; Journal of Ancient History] 2 (2015), 195–205.

<sup>51</sup> Sergei Krikh, “A. V. Мишулин и его Спартак” [A. V. Mishulin i ego Spartak; A. V. Mishulin and His Spartacus], *Вестник древней истории* [Vestnik drevnei istorii; Journal of Ancient History] 1 (2015), 178–189.

<sup>52</sup> Malyugin, “Ot bol’shevistskogo Ilovaiskogo”, 413.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, 415.

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem, 411.

<sup>55</sup> Here and in what follows, I will base my survey on the 3rd ed. of the textbook: Aleksandr Mishulin, ed., *История древнего мира: Учебник для 5–6 классов средней школы* [Istoriia drevnego mira: Uchebnik dlia 5–6 klassov srednei shkoly; History of the Ancient World: Textbook for Grades 5 and 6 of Secondary School], Moskva: Uchpedgiz, 1943, 72–85.

Kondratiev (1872–1964), a classical philologist and translator.<sup>56</sup> This textbook contains much more information on mythology and religion than the previous one. From this point of view, it is more similar to pre-revolutionary gymnasium models. It starts by explaining the origins of myths as interpretations of natural phenomena. The first myth describes the origins of the world as arising from chaos. The story of the successive generations of gods is presented (with an illustration of the Titanomachy based on the famous bas-relief from the Pergamon temple), but the text does not contain graphic detail. For example, Zeus replaces his father Kronos “after a fierce war” (*после ожесточенной войны*),<sup>57</sup> and the episode of the swallowing of the children is not mentioned.

The main Olympians are briefly presented with a description of their areas of patronage.<sup>58</sup> Pictures of Athena (based on the Athena Giustiniani sculpture<sup>59</sup>), Apollo (Apollo Belvedere), and Artemis (Diana of Versailles) are found a few pages further,<sup>60</sup> providing the most famous images of the gods. It is also mentioned that people believed in many more gods, and the concepts of polytheism and anthropomorphism are introduced. Prometheus and the origins of the human race have their own subsection.<sup>61</sup> The creation of human beings out of clay as well as their gift of fire despite the will of Zeus are described, and also the punishment inflicted by Zeus (with a picture of the Zeus of Otricoli) and the steadfast sufferings of Prometheus. The description is summarized as follows:

В мифе о Прометее выражено преклонение греков перед мужеством и стойкостью героя, который не побоялся выступить против богов и принять на себя жестокие страдания.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Although in 1935 Mishulin declared that he would write the parts on the history of Greece, India, and China himself, cf. Malyugin, “Ot bol’shevistskogo Ilovaiskogo”, 414. Sergei Karpyuk (whom I would like to thank for this note heartily) assumes the author was Kondratiev, based on the materials of *Стенограмма заседания, посвященного памяти А. В. Мишулина* [Stenogramma zasedaniia, posviashchënnogo pamiati A. V. Mishulina; Transcript of the Meeting in Memory of A. V. Mishulin], 25 December 1948, Архив Российской Академии Наук [Arkhib Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk; Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences], 1577-2-198.

<sup>57</sup> Mishulin, ed., *Istoriia drevnego mira* (3rd ed.), 73.

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem, 73–74.

<sup>59</sup> A copy of this statue is located in the Peterhof near Saint Petersburg in the garden of Venus near the Marly Palace built in 1720–1723.

<sup>60</sup> Mishulin, ed., *Istoriia drevnego mira* (3rd ed.), 77.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem, 74.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem.

This myth shows how the Greeks admired the courage and fortitude of the hero that was not afraid to stand against the gods and accept cruel suffering.

That is, the textbook emphasizes the revolutionary character of the Titan. Pandora, on the contrary, is described as “женщина, известная не только своей красотой, но и крайним любопытством” (a woman, famous not only for how lovely she was, but also her extreme curiosity).<sup>63</sup> She is introduced as a “beauty” (*красавица*), and it seems that she was just an ordinary woman who found a box and caused all the misfortunes. Such opposition is openly antifemale. The idea of the origins of suffering is continued in the next subsection, where the myth of the Four Ages is mentioned.<sup>64</sup>

Even more space in the textbook is given to Greek heroes (compare sections 31–32).<sup>65</sup> It is emphasized that they “отдавали свои силы и способности на помощь людям” (gave their efforts and talents to help people),<sup>66</sup> which was especially important in ancient times, when people had to contend with wildlife. The first character to be presented is Heracles, called “настоящий народный герой, могучий труженик и страдалец” (a real people’s hero, a mighty worker and sufferer), who was enslaved “у ничтожного и корыстного царя” (by a paltry and selfish king).<sup>67</sup> Thus, Greek demigods obtain the features of proper “heroes”, which was especially important in the period during and after World War Two (the textbook was published from 1940 to 1953).

Among the labours of Heracles, the Nemean Lion, the Lernaean Hydra, and the Stymphalian Birds are mentioned. There is also a description of the rescue of Prometheus with a picture based on a vase from the Vatican Museum depicting the Titans Atlas and Prometheus. However, most of the attention (in its own subsection) is focused on the myth of Antaeus and Heracles. This was the myth mentioned by Stalin during his speech at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on 5 March 1937,<sup>68</sup> when Stalin compared Bolsheviks to Antaeus:

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>64</sup> Thus following Ovid (*Met.* 1.89–150), not Hesiod (*Op. et Dies* 108–201). Mishulin, ed., *Istoriia drevnego mira* (3rd ed.), 74–75.

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem, 75–80.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem, 75.

<sup>67</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>68</sup> It was the plenum that fully started the Great Purge in the Soviet Union.



Они так же, как и Антей, сильны тем, что держат связь со своей матерью, с массами, которые породили, вскормили и воспитали их. И пока они держат связь со своей матерью, с народом, они имеют все шансы на то, чтобы остаться непобедимыми.<sup>69</sup>

They, like Antaeus, are strong because they maintain connection with their mother, the masses, who gave birth to them, suckled them, and reared them. And as long as they maintain connection with their mother, with the people, they have every chance of remaining invincible.

Stalin calls Heracles an enemy (*враг*) in this fragment, and he speaks in favour of Antaeus. Mishulin's text does not have such a connotation, but he does call Antaeus "этим знаменитым героем" (this famous hero), expressing respect for him, and states that "он [...] поражал всякого чужеземца, приходившего в его страну" (he [...] defeated every outlander who came to his country).<sup>70</sup> Talking about Gaia, the author uses the phrase "mother earth" (*мать-земля*; *mat'-zemia*), a collocation that, while normal for retelling this myth,<sup>71</sup> also sounded especially familiar to readers at the time when the textbook was published, because "the Motherland" (*Родина-Мать*; *Rodina-Mat'*, literally "homeland-mother") was one of the most important concepts in patriotic propaganda during World War Two in the USSR.<sup>72</sup> The section features a picture of the hero based on the

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<sup>69</sup> Iosif Stalin, "Заключительное слово товарища Сталина на Пленуме ЦК ВКП(б) 5 марта 1937 г." [Zakliuchitel'noe slovo tovarishcha Stalina na Plenumе TsK VKP(b) 5 marta 1937 g.; The Last Speech during the Plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Bolsheviks on 5 March 1937], *Правда* [Pravda; Truth] 90 (1 April 1937), 3. This idea was repeated in the retelling of myths about Heracles by Lev Uspensky; cf. Lev Uspensky and Vsevolod Uspensky, *Мифы Древней Греции* [Mify Drevnei Gretsii; Myths of Ancient Greece], Leningrad: Detskaia literatura, 1976 (ed. pr. of this part as Lev Uspensky, *Двенадцать подвигов Геракла* [Dvenadtsat' podvigov Gerakla; The Twelve Labours of Heracles], Moskva and Leningrad: Detizdat, 1938), 136.

<sup>70</sup> Mishulin, ed., *Istoriia drevnego mira* (3rd ed.), 76.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Heinrich Wilhelm Stoll, *Мифы классической древности* [Mify klassicheskoi drevnosti; Myths of Classical Antiquity], vol. 1, trans. V. I. Pokrovsky and P. A. Medvedev, Moskva: Tipografiia Mamontova i Co., 1877 (ed. pr. in German 1860), 117.

<sup>72</sup> Oleg Riabov, "'Родина-Мать' в советском дискурсе сталинградской битвы: Военная пропаганда и коммеморация" ["Rodina-Mat'" v sovetskom diskurse stalingradskoi bitvy: Voennaia propaganda i kommemoratsiia; The "Motherland" in the Soviet Discourse of the Battle of Stalingrad: War Propaganda and Commemoration], *Лабиринт. Журнал социально-гуманитарных исследований* [Labyrinth. Zhurnal sotsial'no-gumanitarnykh issledovaniy; Labyrinth: Journal of Social and Humanities Studies] 1 (2017), 21–34.

Farnese Heracles<sup>73</sup> and Heracles' fight against Antaeus based on a vase painting from the Louvre.

The next character in the textbook is Theseus, the main hero of Attica ([г]лавны[й] геро[й] АТТИКИ), whose "подвиги во многом напоминают подвиги Геракла" (deeds resemble those of Heracles).<sup>74</sup> The myth of the killing of Procrustes is used to explain the expression "Procrustean bed". The main story in this section is the story of the Minotaur, the Labyrinth, and Ariadne. As one would expect from a textbook written during the war, the myth is explained as "освобождение своей страны от тяжелой и страшной дани" (the liberation of [Theseus'] country from a severe and terrible tribute).<sup>75</sup> Theseus' promise to change the sails of his ship to white is also described, as well as his forgetting about that promise, which leads to the subsequent death of Aegeus, who gave his name to the Aegean Sea. It is worth mentioning that these elements of the rich mythology of Theseus are almost the only ones present in a later Soviet animated feature *Лабиринт. Подвиги Тесея* [Labirint. Podvigi Teseia; Labyrinth: The Deeds of Theseus] by Aleksandra Snezhko-Blotskaia (1971).<sup>76</sup>

The textbook also contains myths about Oedipus<sup>77</sup> and the Argonauts.<sup>78</sup> The first one starts with the encounter of Oedipus and Laius and ends with the exile of the now-blind Oedipus. It includes the riddle of the Sphinx, which might be interesting for children to solve on their own. This section does not explain the possible meanings of the myth.

An introduction to the myth of the Argonauts includes familiar geographical names: the Caucasus and the Black Sea. From the many stories of the Argonauts, the editors choose only a few: how they rescued King Phineus from the Harpies ("спасли его от голода"; saving him from starvation),<sup>79</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Original in the National Museum in Naples, museum no. 280; see "Farnese Herakles", Museum of Classical Archaeology Databases, <http://museum.classics.cam.ac.uk/collections/casts/farnese-herakles> (accessed 24 June 2020). At least three copies of the statue were present in Leningrad at the time when the textbook was being produced.

<sup>74</sup> Mishulin, ed., *Istoriia drevnego mira* (3rd ed.), 76.

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>76</sup> Aleksandra Snezhko-Blotskaia, dir., *Лабиринт. Подвиги Тесея* [Labirint. Podvigi Teseia; Labyrinth: The Deeds of Theseus], Moskva: Soyuzmultfilm, 1971. See a description of the movie in *Our Mythical Childhood Survey*: Hanna Paulouskaya, "Entry on: Labyrinth. The Deeds of Theseus [Лабиринт. Подвиги Тесея] by Aleksei Simukov, Aleksandra Snezhko-Blotskaia", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Susan Deacy, *Our Mythical Childhood Survey*, Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018, <http://www.omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/55> (accessed 2 April 2020).

<sup>77</sup> Mishulin, ed., *Istoriia drevnego mira* (3rd ed.), 78–79.

<sup>78</sup> Ibidem, 79–80.

<sup>79</sup> Ibidem, 79.

how they sailed between the Clashing Rocks, and how they obtained the Golden Fleece with the help of an enchantress, Medea. In order to get the Fleece, Medea baked bread and gave it to a dragon, which then fell asleep after eating it. Jason took the Fleece and went home. Medea accompanied him because she had fallen in love with him. The other deeds of Jason in Colchis are not mentioned. Describing the way back, the story of Orpheus and the Sirens is provided: "Орфей заиграл и заморозил их своей игрой. Сирены забыли обо всем и пропустили аргонатов" (Orpheus started to play and charmed them with his music. The Sirens forgot about everything and let the Argonauts go).<sup>80</sup> The section concludes that this myth preserves ancient memories of the Greeks about their distant journeys in search of precious metals. The Golden Fleece is explained as a metaphor for the gold that was mined in Colchis. The text does not mention explicitly Georgia or the fact that what used to be ancient Colchis now belonged to the USSR, but this information might have been included in the teacher's own comments on the text.

A separate section is devoted to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The description starts with Homer, "a blind singer from Asia Minor" (*слепой певец из Малой Азии*).<sup>81</sup> It goes on to say that "[с]емь греческих городов спорили между собой из-за чести считаться родиной Гомера, но ни один из них не мог доказать, что Гомер родился именно в нем" (seven Greek cities fought for the honour of being Homer's native land, but none of them could prove that Homer was born in exactly this place).<sup>82</sup> The picture of Homer shown is based on the bust from the National Museum in Naples.<sup>83</sup>

The story of the *Iliad*<sup>84</sup> begins with the Apple of Discord and subsequently tells of the Trojan War, as well as about the anger of Achilles, the death of his best friend, Patroclus, and Achilles' revenge: "Храбро сражался Гектор с Ахиллом, но он не мог своим копьем пробить доспехов, выкованных Гефестом" (Hector fought bravely with Achilles, but he could not pierce his armour forged by Hephaestus).<sup>85</sup> Thus, the strongest warriors from both sides are presented with equal respect, but it was the gods' help and craft that was the reason for Hector's defeat. The scene of mourning on the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibidem, 80.

<sup>81</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>82</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>83</sup> Museum no. 1130; see "Head of Homer", Museum of Classical Archaeology Databases, <http://museum.classics.cam.ac.uk/collections/casts/head-homer> (accessed 2 April 2020).

<sup>84</sup> Mishulin, ed., *Istoriia drevnego mira* (3rd ed.), 80–82.

<sup>85</sup> Ibidem, 81.

walls includes “the father and the mother” of Hector, not Andromache. This appears natural in a book for children, where “family” means “parents” rather than “partners”.<sup>86</sup> Although the text does not contain any explicit reference to the war experience common to this generation of readers, the details of the story and the choice of words are typical of war narratives. The concepts most often mentioned in the chapter are “heroism”, “bravery”, “audacity”, “overcoming fear”, “cowardice”, as well as “rage”, “ruthlessness”, “friendship”, “help”, “death”, and “revenge”.<sup>87</sup> Contrary to Homer, Hector did not run from Achilles around Troy, he only “дрогнул, но, преодолев свой страх, лицом к лицу встретил Ахилла” (faltered, but, having overcome his fear, met Achilles face to face).<sup>88</sup> This story features no illustrations.

The description of the *Odyssey*<sup>89</sup> is also selective and brief. It includes the “adventures” (*приключения*) caused by the Cyclops Polyphemus, Aeolus’ winds, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, the Phaeacians, as well as the return of Odysseus to Penelope and Telemachus, and the killing of the suitors with the help of Athena. This retelling is narrated more in the style of an adventure story or a fairy tale. It starts as follows:

Однажды бурное море прибило Одиссея и его спутников к острову циклопов – одноглазых великанов. Одиссей с частью своих спутников забрел в пещеру самого страшного из них – циклопа Полифема.<sup>90</sup>

Once a stormy sea drove Odysseus and his companions to the island of the Cyclopes, who were one-eyed giants. Odysseus with some of his companions wandered into the cave of the most terrible of them, the Cyclops Polyphemus.

The words are more colloquial, the sentences are shorter, and superlatives occur often. The description of the poem includes two illustrations: Odysseus and the Sirens, based on the Siren Vase from the British Museum,

<sup>86</sup> Astyanax, the son of Hector, is also not mentioned, so Hector is presented as a son but not as a husband or father.

<sup>87</sup> The text is much more full of words with such meanings compared with other retellings of myths, cf. Nicholas Kuhn, *Легенды и мифы Древней Греции* [Legendy i mify Drevnei Gretsii; Legends and Myths of Ancient Greece], Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe uchebno-pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo Ministerstva prosveshcheniia RSFSR, 1954 (ed. pr. 1914), 324.

<sup>88</sup> Mishulin, ed., *Istoriia drevnego mira* (3rd ed.), 81.

<sup>89</sup> Ibidem, 82–85.

<sup>90</sup> Ibidem, 82.

similarly to Nikolsky, and Penelope and Telemachus at a loom, based on the vase from Chiusi.<sup>91</sup>

In conclusion, I would like to underline that the description of Greek religion significantly differs from the description of the myths or the poems. In the first part, the authors made a visible effort to prove that the Greek gods (and by extension the Christian god) did not exist. In the second part, they seem to be more relaxed, retelling the myths without adding corrective notes. However, not all the gods of the myths are included in the textbook, especially from the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. In any case, this textbook pays much more attention to mythology and contains many more details and illustrations. The sections described are printed over fourteen pages and feature eleven illustrations based on the most famous ancient sculptures or vase paintings.

#### 4. Wartime and Post-War Reforms

It should also be mentioned that an unusual move towards antiquity was made by, most probably, Stalin himself after World War Two.<sup>92</sup> For some time Latin was returned to school education, albeit not universally, being taught only in some secondary schools in larger cities.

This was part of a wider initiative of educational reform conducted by the new head of the Narkompros, Vladimir Potëmkin (1874–1946), in 1940,<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> "216789, ATHENIAN, Chiusi, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 63.564", Classical Art Research Centre, <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/XDB/ASP/recordDetails.asp?id=F322BAD4-652B-4E56-AFE7-E51A636F2E81> (accessed 2 April 2020).

<sup>92</sup> Alexander Gavrilov, "Jakov M. Borovskij: Poet of Latin in the Soviet Union", in György Karsai, Gábor Klaniczay, David Movrin, and Elżbieta Olechowska, eds., *Classics and Communism: Greek and Latin behind the Iron Curtain*, Ljubljana, Budapest, and Warsaw: Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts; Collegium Budapest Institute for Advanced Study; and Faculty of "Artes Liberales", University of Warsaw, 2013, 28; Solomon Lurie, "Из воспоминаний о Марке Наумовиче Ботвиннике" [Iz vospominanii o Marke Naumoviche Botvinnike; Reminiscing about Mark Naumovich Botvinnik], *Древний мир и мы* [Drevnii mir i my; The Ancient World and We] 1 (1997), 187. On the Stalinist reintroduction of Classics, see also Pamela Davidson, "Cultural Memory and Survival: The Russian Renaissance of Classical Antiquity in the Twentieth Century", Inaugural Lecture at University College, London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 2009, 17–18, <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/69111/1/Cultural%20Memory%20FINAL%20REVISED%20VERSION.pdf> (accessed 2 April 2020).

<sup>93</sup> Ann Livschiz, "Pre-Revolutionary in Form, Soviet in Content? Wartime Educational Reforms and the Postwar Quest for Normality", *History of Education* 35.4–5 (July–September 2006), 541–560.

aiming at restructuring the school system according to the pre-revolutionary system. In fact, these reforms had been planned during the 1930s, but were postponed for some time because of the war. The main aim was to continue work on improving administration and schools' disciplinary system. Some of the changes were initiated during the war, as an experiment on a smaller scale.<sup>94</sup> For example, single-sex education (Boys' Gymnasium and Girls' Gymnasium) started in some secondary schools in Moscow in the second semester of 1942/43, was expanded to 76 cities in the following year and to 176 cities in 1952.<sup>95</sup> In August 1943, the Rules of Conduct were introduced in schools, as well as other administrative laws strengthening discipline. Changes in the grading system brought in final exams and gold and silver medals for graduates. One of the most remembered effects was the introduction of fees for the upper grades in 1940. Not all of these reforms were appreciated by parents and/or children. However, as Ann Livschiz notes, "[n]either the supporters nor opponents of the revival appeared to focus on the humanist educational aspect, but rather on the socialising and disciplining aspect of the system".<sup>96</sup>

In January 1944, the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences was established. This body carried out comparative research on Western educational systems and pre-revolutionary gymnasia. One of the results was the introduction of Latin for pupils of the upper grades (8–10). As the school system and facilities were hugely destroyed during the war and the population faced poverty, proceeding to the upper grades was a very rare phenomenon. Thus, Latin courses similar to the bourgeois gymnasia became a part of elitist education. Nevertheless, new textbooks were prepared and published in multiple editions.<sup>97</sup> They were written by Sergei Kondratiev, the author of the Greek part of Mishulin's textbook, and Aleksei Vasnetsov. Thus, dozens of pupils got a chance to read about gods and heroes in Latin. In the course of these reforms, new textbooks on ancient history also appeared.

<sup>94</sup> Ibidem, 545–546.

<sup>95</sup> Evgeny Medynsky, *Народное образование в СССР* [Narodnoe obrazovanie v SSSR; Public Education in the USSR], Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii pedagogicheskikh nauk RSFSR, 1952, 85.

<sup>96</sup> Livschiz, "Pre-Revolutionary in Form", 550.

<sup>97</sup> Sergei Kondratiev and Aleksei Vasnetsov, *Учебник латинского языка: для 8–10 классов средней школы* [Uchebnik latinskogo iazyka: dlia 8–10 klassov srednei shkoly; Latin: Textbook for Grades 8–10 of Secondary School], Moskva: Uchpedgiz, 1948.

#### 4.1. *History of the Ancient World by Sergei Kovalëv, 1954*

Kovalëv was one of the authors of the previous textbook edited by Mishulin, but his name did not appear in the credits there because of his arrest. (His arrest was also something often left unmentioned in his biographies.)<sup>98</sup> Kovalëv was a specialist in Ancient Rome. He belonged to the first generation of Soviet ancient historians. Although he has not become one of the acknowledged figures in Soviet historiography, he was responsible for many important concepts.<sup>99</sup>

Kovalëv was the author of the outline of the previous textbook together with Nikolsky,<sup>100</sup> and he wrote a section on the history of Rome in the first version of Mishulin's book.<sup>101</sup> Already in 1925, Kovalëv wrote a popular "self-education" book on the history of antiquity entitled *Всеобщая история в популярном изложении для самообразования* [Vseobshchaia istoriia v populiarnom izlozhenii dlia samoobrazovaniia; Popular Universal History for Self-Education].<sup>102</sup> The textbook under consideration here, *История древнего мира* [Istoriia drevnego mira; History of the Ancient World] was published in 1954 and went through two editions before 1956. In its description of mythology it is very dependent on Mishulin's book, as we will see further.

Homer's poems are presented in section 40, "Общественный строй древнейшей Греции" [Obshchestvennyi stroi drevneishei Gretsii; The Social System of Archaic Greece].<sup>103</sup> Its title declares the way in which the

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<sup>98</sup> Sergei Krikh and Anastasiia Tarasova, "С. И. Ковалев и 'открытие' эллинизма в советской историографии" [S. I. Kovalëv i "otkrytie" ellinizma v sovetskoj istoriografii; S. I. Kovalëv and the Discovery of Hellenism in Soviet Historiography], *Вестник Омского университета* [Vestnik Omskogo universiteta; Herald of Omsk University] 1 (2014), 56; Bogdana Koprjiva-Lurie, *История одной жизни* [Istoriia odnoi zhizni; The Story of One Life], Parizh: Atheneum, 1987, 166.

<sup>99</sup> Krikh and Tarasova, "S. I. Kovalëv i 'otkrytie' ellinizma", 56.

<sup>100</sup> They presented it in the following article: Nikolai Nikolsky and Sergei Kovalëv, "Как преподавать древнюю историю в 1934–35 учебном году" [Kak prepodavat' drevniiu istoriiu v 1934–35 uchebnom godu; How to Teach Ancient History in the 1934–35 School Year], *История в средней школе* [Istoriia v srednei shkole; History in Secondary School] 3 (1934), 39–48. Cf. Malyugin, "Ot bol'shevistskogo Ilovaiskogo", 413.

<sup>101</sup> Malyugin, "Ot bol'shevistskogo Ilovaiskogo", 414.

<sup>102</sup> Sergei Kovalëv, *Всеобщая история в популярном изложении для самообразования* [Vseobshchaia istoriia v populiarnom izlozhenii dlia samoobrazovaniia; Popular Universal History for Self-Education], Leningrad: Priboi, 1925.

<sup>103</sup> Sergei Kovalëv, *История древнего мира: Учебник для 5–6 классов средней школы* [Istoriia drevnego mira: Uchebnik dlia 5–6 klassov srednei shkoly; History of the Ancient World: Textbook for Grades 5–6 of Secondary School], Moskva: Uchpedgiz, 1954, 59–65.

poems are interpreted, though it starts with a typical presentation of the text as “народные сказания о богатырях” (folk tales about heroes),<sup>104</sup> emphasizing the common character of Slavic *byliny* (былины – oral narrative epics) and Greek epic. The next sentence describes the Homeric poems as magical tales where “действуют боги, появляются страшные чудовища, герои совершают чудесные подвиги” (gods act, terrible monsters appear, and heroes perform wondrous feats).<sup>105</sup> Finally, the author emphasizes that even this fantasy narrative preserves a memory of the social life of the distant past. Contrary to the previous textbook, the author mentions the Homeric question and concludes that the poems were probably written by many authors.

The content of the *Iliad* is described very briefly, on one page, starting with the siege of Troy in the tenth year of the Trojan War. The text includes the main themes from the Greek epic and is written in a simple and concise way. The details of the text differ slightly from Mishulin’s edition (which does not always make them closer to Homer). For example, in Kovalëv’s version it is Achilles who sends his friend Patroclus into war. The wife of Hector is included in the narrative (as should be the case) and is present on the city walls together with Hector’s father and mother, witnessing the death of the Trojan hero and the desecration of his body. Contrary to Mishulin’s edition, the narrative does not end here but presents Patroclus’ funeral and the meeting of Achilles and Priam: “Растроганный Ахилл не в силах был отказать старику и отдал ему тело сына” (Achilles, being touched, was unable to refuse the old man and gave him his son’s body).<sup>106</sup> Thus, the emphasis is placed on “grief”, “empathy”, “forgiveness”, “pity”, and “friendship.” “Bravery” or “courage” are not mentioned once in the text, but the war is severe (ожесточенная), and “[с]ами боги принимали в ней участие. Одни помогали грекам, другие троянцам” (the gods themselves took part in it. Some of them helped the Greeks, others the Trojans). The Trojan horse and the defeat of Troy end the description of the *Iliad*.

In comparing the description of war with that by Mishulin, we notice that it is very similar in emphasizing problems that contemporary society was familiar with at the time. Although Kovalëv depicts war in an intense and

<sup>104</sup> Kovalëv, *Istoriia drevnego mira*, 59.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibidem*, 60.



thrilling way, his work also points to the problems of the post-war community that has to deal with forgiveness and pity.

The *Odyssey* is presented in the traditional way – as a story about the “adventures” of a hero “coming home” (“В ней говорится о необычных приключениях, которые испытал Одиссей, возвращаясь на родину”).<sup>107</sup> The main character is called “smart and brave” (*умный и храбрый*). The description of the poem includes all the episodes from the previous textbook, except Aeolus’ winds. The text does not mention Telemachus, similarly to the lack of Astyanax in the *Iliad*. It includes the same illustrations as in Mishulin’s book, namely Odysseus and the Sirens on the base of the Siren Vase from the British Museum,<sup>108</sup> and Penelope and Telemachus at a loom based on the vase from Chiusi.<sup>109</sup>

Unlike in Mishulin’s work, the section does not end here. It continues with a description of agriculture, cattle breeding, manufacture, trade, family and neighbour communities, slavery, etc., based on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. For example, Kovalëv includes Thersites’ speech to the assembly (*Il.* 2.212–270), and he praises the possibilities of democracy of that time and notes its consequences.<sup>110</sup> The statement might be influenced by the personal experiences of Kovalëv, who had to testify against his colleagues during Stalin’s purges.<sup>111</sup>

Section 41 talks about Greek religion,<sup>112</sup> referring to Homer frequently. It starts with the Olympic gods, omitting the creation of the world. In a similar way to Mishulin, the main Olympians are presented with their characteristics, as well as the “духи моря, рек, источников, лесов, гор и ветров” (spirits of sea, rivers, springs, woods, mountains, and winds).<sup>113</sup> The Greeks, like other ancient nations, are depicted as dependent on nature, which was the reason that they believed in gods. Kovalëv also mentions that the gods were thought to be very similar to humans, having “те же желания, те же чувства и те же недостатки” (the same desires, the same feelings, the same vices).<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>108</sup> Ibidem, 61.

<sup>109</sup> Ibidem, 62.

<sup>110</sup> Ibidem, 65.

<sup>111</sup> Koprjiva-Lurie, *Istoriia odnoi zhizni*, 166.

<sup>112</sup> Kovalëv, *Istoriia drevnego mira*, 66–70.

<sup>113</sup> Ibidem, 66.

<sup>114</sup> Ibidem.

The section includes only the myths present in Mishulin's book: about Prometheus, Heracles, and the Argonauts (omitting Theseus and Oedipus). It contains only one illustration, that is, the Farnese Heracles,<sup>115</sup> also known from the previous book. The myth about Prometheus is presented as an explanation of the "origins of culture". It does not mention the creation of human beings. Suffering Prometheus "не покорился Зевсу, не стал молить его о пощаде" (did not submit to Zeus, and did not beg for mercy).<sup>116</sup> The punishment of Zeus was to destroy the rock to which Prometheus had been chained and to throw him into the abyss – as in Aeschylus' interpretation in *Prometheus Bound*.

Among the labours of Heracles, Kovalëv describes all those from Mishulin's work (the Nemean Lion, the Lernaean Hydra, the Stymphalian Birds) but adds the capture of Cerberus from Hades. A deed that is described in detail is the journey of Heracles to Atlas for the Apples of the Hesperides, including the fight between Antaeus and Heracles. These episodes of the myth became the foundation of another animated film by Snezhko-Blotskaia, *Возвращение с Олимпа* [*Vozvrashchenie s Olimpa*; The Return from Olympus].<sup>117</sup> The section concludes as follows: "Миф о Геракле был самым любимым в Греции. Геракл изображается в нем, как великий народный герой" (The myth of Heracles was the most beloved in Greece. Heracles is presented in it as a great national hero).<sup>118</sup>

The myth of the Argonauts is also similar to Mishulin's. It is a little shorter, lacking the Phineus episode. The myth is presented in conventional fairy-tale narration. The ship is called "magical" (*волшебный*), the Fleece belonged to a "marvellous" (*чудесный*) sheep, Medea is an "enchantress" (*волшебница*, similarly to Mishulin), and the dragon is a "monster" (*чудовище*). Medea makes the dragon fall sleep with the help of "spells and magic potions" (*заклинаниями и волшебными снадобьями*). The section ends with an explanation of Greek religion and mythology as fictional stories:

<sup>115</sup> Ibidem, 68.

<sup>116</sup> Ibidem, 67.

<sup>117</sup> Aleksandra Snezhko-Blotskaia, dir., *Возвращение с Олимпа* [*Vozvrashchenie s Olimpa*; The Return from Olympus], Moskva: Soyuzmultfilm, 1969. See also Hanna Paulouskaya, "Entry on: The Return from Olympus [*Возвращение с Олимпа*] by Aleksei Simukov, Aleksandra Snezhko-Blotskaia", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Lisa Maurice, *Our Mythical Childhood Survey*, Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018, <http://www.omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/59> (accessed 2 April 2020).

<sup>118</sup> Kovalëv, *Istoriia drevnego mira*, 68.

Никаких богов в действительности не было, но греки представляли их похожими на людей, причем не на простых людей, а знатных. Семья олимпийцев с Зевсом во главе напоминает большую царскую семью. Боги по своему характеру и нравам также похожи на знать. Они жестоки, коварны, они любят насилие и не терпят никакого противоречия.<sup>119</sup>

There were no gods in reality, but the Greeks imagined them akin to people, and not simple people but nobility. The family of Olympians with Zeus at their head resembles the tsar's family. The gods by their nature and morals are also similar to the nobility. They are cruel, insidious, they love violence, and do not tolerate any opposition.

The inclusion of the tsar's family and the gentry refers to stereotypes produced in Soviet times. Readers of the textbook in 1954 had no possibility of knowing first-hand of the nobility from the previous epoch. It was a part of the mythical past, present in fairy tales and the Soviet official (or private, unofficial) narrative. The cruelty of the gods is confirmed by repeating the myth of Prometheus.<sup>120</sup> It seems that in this case the author alludes to Stalin, but he does not include the idea of the "wrong Soviet authority" in the text explicitly. The textbook contains only three illustrations, all used in the previous version.

## 5. The Late Soviet School

The Soviet school after the 1960s presented a totally new social reality. Although the school was still ideologically tense and aimed at forming true Soviet citizens, the implementation of this ideology as well as the common atmosphere in the post-Thaw society was significantly freer.<sup>121</sup> It is traditionally characterized as individualized and humanized. Maria Mayofis shows

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<sup>119</sup> Ibidem, 69.

<sup>120</sup> Ibidem, 69–70.

<sup>121</sup> For more on changes in the politics of school education from the late 1940s, see Maria Mayofis, "Предвестия 'оттепели' в советской школьной политике позднесталинского времени" [Predvestiia "ottepeli" v sovetskoi shkol'noi politike pozdnestalinskogo vremeni; Foretokens of the "Thaw" in Late Stalinist Soviet School Policy], in Ilya Kukulin, Maria Mayofis, and Pëtr Safronov, eds., *Острова утопии. Педагогическое и социальное проектирование послевоенной школы (1940–1980-е)* [Ostrova utopii. Pedagogicheskoe i sotsial'noe proektirovanie poslevoennoi shkoly (1940–1980-e)]; *Islands of Utopia: Pedagogical and Social Design of the Post-War School (1940–1980s)*], Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2015, 35–106.

how these changes had their roots in the aforementioned wartime reforms. Pedagogy as a science, along with psychology, gained a prominent place in school education. The programmes of education became child-centred, which influenced also the content and appearance of textbooks.

### **5.1. History of the Ancient World by Fëdor Korovkin, 1957, 1970, 1984**

The textbook on the history of antiquity by Fëdor Korovkin (1903–1981) was first written in 1957, and then it kept being revised and republished right up until the end of the USSR (it was still in print in 1993). In 1973, the textbook was awarded the USSR State Prize. For the first time, a textbook author had pedagogical experience, for Korovkin worked as a school teacher from 1925 to 1957. Afterwards, he worked at the Institute of Content and Methods of Education at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the USSR. Thus, contrary to the previous authors, who were theoretical scholars aiming to construct proper Marxist historiography, Korovkin concentrated on pedagogical methods of relaying knowledge.

I will analyse a version of the book published in 1984,<sup>122</sup> comparing it with previous versions (1957, 1970)<sup>123</sup> in order to give an example of later historical narration. The textbook is much more child-friendly. It starts with an introduction for children describing the text's structure and organization. It also refers to other books that are worth reading in order to understand history better. It has many illustrations, including small pictures in the page margins (even in the table of contents). Being more modern, the textbook is colourful. Some pictures are in the style of children's drawings. Quotations from original sources are also included, usually below the main text and in smaller type. Every section ends with questions and tasks for children,

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<sup>122</sup> It was the first ed. of the textbook after Korovkin's death, prepared by Vasily Kuzishchin, Olga Bakhtina, and others.

<sup>123</sup> Fëdor Korovkin, *История древнего мира: Учебник для 5–6 классов средней школы* [Istoriia drevnego mira: Uchebnik dlia 5–6 klassov srednei shkoly; History of the Ancient World: Textbook for Grades 5–6 of Secondary School], Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe uchebno-pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo Ministerstva prosveshcheniia RSFSR, 1957; Fëdor Korovkin, *История древнего мира: Учебник для 5 класса* [Istoriia drevnego mira: Uchebnik dlia 5 klassa; History of the Ancient World: Textbook for Grade 5], 9th ed., Moskva: Prosveshchenie, 1970; Fëdor Korovkin, *История древнего мира: Учебник для 5 класса средней школы* [Istoriia drevnego mira: Uchebnik dlia 5 klassa srednei shkoly; History of the Ancient World: Textbook for Grade 5 of Secondary School], 1st rev. ed., ed. Vasily Kuzishchin et al., Moskva: Prosveshchenie, 1984.

including creative ones (for example, to make up their own stories). Some of the Greek myths are quoted under the body of the text, and thus they do not appear only in the main text.

The history of Ancient Greece, like in the textbooks discussed earlier, starts with a description of nature and geography, and it includes a history of Crete and Mycenae. This section contains the myths of Daedalus and Icarus, and of Theseus.<sup>124</sup> Myth as a concept is introduced in the following way in section 25:

Древнейшая история Греции, однако, сохранилась в памяти народа. Сказители передавали устно из поколения в поколение древние мифы, добавляя к ним новые подробности. Поэты-певцы, подыгрывая себе на лирах, пели о "златообильных" и "крепкостенных" городах, о подвигах и приключениях героев, о великанах, о богах.<sup>125</sup>

The oldest history of Greece, however, was preserved in the memory of the people. The storytellers passed the ancient myths down orally from generation to generation, adding to them new details. The poet-singers, accompanying themselves on the lyre, sang of "gold-abundant" and "strong-walled" cities, of the deeds and adventures of heroes, of giants, and of gods.

Thus, the idea of oral tradition is presented, without referring to class struggle or antireligious propaganda. Archaic compound words are used in the text to introduce epic poetry. The author concludes by mentioning the importance of the songs as a historical source, stating that, alongside fantasy stories, the poems contain many details about everyday life and common beliefs. The text is illustrated with a picture of a bronze statue of a singer with a lyre from the Archaeological Museum in Heraklion, Crete.

Further, the section describes the myth of the Argonauts.<sup>126</sup> It differs from the narration of the previous textbooks. Although the journey of the Argonauts is less detailed (only the Clashing Rocks are present), the adventures in Colchis are more specific. For the first time we see the fire-breathing bulls, the ploughing of the field, and how it was sown with dragon's teeth, with all the consequences. As usually, an "enchantress" (*волшебница*), Medea, helps Jason and makes the dragon fall asleep, allowing the Greek hero to take the Fleece and go home. Medea's love or her accompanying Jason

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<sup>124</sup> Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st rev. ed.), 110–111.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibidem*, 114.

<sup>126</sup> In the earlier versions of the book the myth of Heracles precedes that of the Argonauts.

is not mentioned. The picture in the margin presents the departure of the Argonauts based on a Greek vase painting (the Talos vase from the Archaeological National Museum in Jatta).<sup>127</sup> It is interesting that in the earlier versions of the book Medea is not mentioned; however, Jason uses magic himself: "Ясон натер мазью свое тело, и оно приобрело нечеловеческую силу" (Jason rubbed the magic ointment into his body, and it gained super-human strength).<sup>128</sup>

Under the main text, the myth of Heracles is presented. In this case, we see the standard set of labours (the Nemean Lion, the Lernaean Hydra, the Stymphalian Birds,<sup>129</sup> and Atlas) with the addition of the Augean Stables, though the fight with Antaeus is omitted. The myth is presented in a dynamic way to retain the reader's attention. It has more imaginative details than in the previous versions. Traditionally, Heracles is presented in the manner of a Russian *bogatyr* (богатырь), a hero from among the people. The illustration provided is Heracles struggling with the Nemean Lion, based on a marble statue from a Roman sarcophagus of the second-third centuries AD from the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.<sup>130</sup>

The following section 26 presents the poems of Homer.<sup>131</sup> For the first time the text provides also excerpts from the poems. Although the manuals advised teachers to recite historical literature during classes, especially Homer and mythology, already in 1947,<sup>132</sup> only Korovkin's textbook includes it in the main text (at least from 1970). The reader is told that traditionally the poems are attributed to Homer, and an illustration is presented that is based on the bust from the Naples Museum, similarly to Mishulin's edition.

The description of the *Iliad* contains many details of social and economic life expressed in the poems. It does not only retell the main episodes of the poem, but it also provides some historical facts. For example, the

<sup>127</sup> Museum no. 1501; see "217518, ATHENIAN, Ruvo, Museo Jatta, 36933", Classical Art Research Centre, <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/XDB/ASP/recordDetails.asp?id=4A8E2FED-DC0D-4268-9142-0A6F55D1850F> (accessed 2 April 2020).

<sup>128</sup> Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st ed.), 71; Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (9th ed.), 98.

<sup>129</sup> The birds are omitted in the previous versions of the textbook.

<sup>130</sup> Museum no. 5600 (A. 498); see "Heracles Struggling with the Nemean Lion", *История Древнего Рима [Istoriia Drevnego Rima; History of Ancient Rome]*, <http://ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=2574> (accessed 24 June 2020).

<sup>131</sup> Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st rev. ed.), 116–119.

<sup>132</sup> Natalia Andreevskaja and Viktor Bernadsky, *Методика преподавания истории в семилетней школе [Metodika prepodavaniia istorii v semiletnei shkole; Methodology of Teaching History in the Seven-Year School]*, Moskva: Uchpedgiz, 1947, 81–82.

first episode described is the assembly and Thersites' speech (which was also present in Kovalëv's book). It depicts arms and armour, and provides illustrations of these. It is interesting that there is no mention of the rage of Achilles or about him not participating in the war. His friend Patroclus dies, but the text does not explain why.<sup>133</sup> The combat between Hector and Achilles is mentioned in the main text, as well as in a quotation from the *Iliad* in the translation of Vikenty Veresaev (1867–1945)<sup>134</sup> and in an illustration based on a Greek vase. However, there is no scene on the city walls – nobody is watching, neither the parents nor Andromache. On the other hand, in the edition of 1984 the funeral of Patroclus is described in detail, as well as the competitions held. Korovkin also describes animal and human sacrifices: "Ахилл сам зарезал двенадцать пленных юношей троянцев. Автор поэмы осудил этот кровавый поступок, сказав, что Ахилл `совершил нехорошее дело'" (Achilles himself stabbed twelve captured young Trojan men. The author of the poem condemned this bloody act, saying that Achilles had committed a "bad deed").<sup>135</sup> After the *Iliad*, the author describes the death of Achilles and the defeat of Troy with the help of the Trojan horse.<sup>136</sup>

The description of the *Odyssey* is more conventional but very concise, taking up less than a page plus a quotation of a classical translation by Vasily Zhukovsky (made in 1842–1846) about the Cyclopes' island (*Od.* 9.187–193). The text starts as a "fairy-tale narration", like in the other textbooks, but describes only misfortunes caused by winds and tempests. After arriving on Ithaca after ten years of wandering, Odysseus meets a slave: "Этот раб родился в свободной семье, но еще ребенком его украли финикийцы и продали в Итаку" (This slave was born to a free family, but as a child he was kidnapped by Phoenicians and sold to Ithaca).<sup>137</sup> Following this, a short description of Odysseus regaining authority in his house with the help of Athena is presented. Neither Penelope, nor Telemachus, nor any other character from the *Odyssey* is referred to. They were mentioned shortly in the first

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<sup>133</sup> In the previous versions of the textbook even Patroclus is omitted. However, he is mentioned in additional materials in the 1970 edition; cf. Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (9th ed.), 99–100, 111.

<sup>134</sup> *Il.* 22.306–316. The translation of Homer's poems was prepared in the 1940s and published only after the death of the author, the *Iliad* appearing in 1949 and the *Odyssey* in 1953.

<sup>135</sup> Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st rev. ed.), 117.

<sup>136</sup> Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st ed.), 73–74; Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (9th ed.), 100; Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st rev. ed.), 118.

<sup>137</sup> Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (9th ed.), 101; Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st rev. ed.), 119.

editions of the book,<sup>138</sup> but disappeared in the later ones.<sup>139</sup> The illustration alongside the text shows the already-known vase depicting the Sirens.

Section 28 presents the religion of the Ancient Greeks.<sup>140</sup> It starts with the fear of nature and continues with an introduction of the Olympic gods (Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, and Demeter), also describing Hades and the three-headed dog, as well as the satyrs and nymphs. As a literary example, a fragment from the *Odyssey* about the destruction of the last ship is quoted in Zhukovsky's translation (*Od.* 2.401–411, 415–419). Dionysus, Hephaestus, and Hermes are presented as patrons of agriculture, manufacture, and trade, respectively. It is said that the Greek religion reflects inequality among people:

Боги живут во дворцах, носят нарядные одежды, часто пируют. [...] Боги так же властолюбивы, жестоки и мстительны, как многие знатные люди.<sup>141</sup>

The gods live in palaces, wear elegant clothes, often feast. [...] Gods are as power-hungry, cruel, and vindictive as many nobles.

This description resembles in large measure that of Kovalëv. The only myth presented in the main text is about Prometheus<sup>142</sup> bound in the mountains of the Caucasus for bringing fire to the human race:

Несмотря на страшные муки, гордый и мужественный Прометей не примирился с Зевсом. В образе Прометея греки чтили борца с несправедливыми и злыми богами за счастье людей.<sup>143</sup>

Despite the terrible torments, proud and courageous Prometheus did not reconcile with Zeus. In the image of Prometheus, the Greeks honoured a fighter for the happiness of mankind against the unjust and evil gods.

The myth retold under the main text is more literary and tells the story of Demeter and Persephone. The section contains pictures of the Athena

<sup>138</sup> Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st ed.), 75.

<sup>139</sup> Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (9th ed.), 100–101.

<sup>140</sup> Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st rev. ed.), 123–125.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibidem*, 124–125; similar ideas are found in Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st ed.), 79; Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (9th ed.), 108.

<sup>142</sup> Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st ed.), 81; Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (9th ed.), 109; Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st rev. ed.), 125.

<sup>143</sup> Korovkin, *Istoriia drevnego mira* (1st rev. ed.), 125.



Parthenos by Phidias, a hierarchical depiction of the Olympians as well as satyrs and nymphs, Zeus in the temple at Olympia by Phidias, a model of a Greek temple, and a fresco of Demeter's head from Kerch, Crimea.

It seems that this textbook stood at the peak of the evolution of historical education on the subject of antiquity in the Soviet Union. It is clearly based on the previous models, for example, in the choice of myths and illustrations for them. At this stage, however, there was no need to wage fierce antireligious propaganda, since the problem was considered to have been mainly resolved. Also, the Marxist understanding of history was clearly defined, helping to construct an integral and coherent narration. Although the text is much simpler and has in mind an audience of small children, at the same time the readers are intelligent enough to read Homer or to learn about harsh details of ancient life. The Homeric issue, the functioning of orality, and the authenticity of historical sources are introduced, preparing children for independent historical research. The book is richly illustrated and contains pictures on every page, eight of them in the sections analysed.

## **6. Conclusions**

Although Greek mythology was covered only in a few sections and only during one of the earliest grades in the Soviet school, it was nonetheless present there. This early encounter with mythology drew children's attention to fantasy and mythic elements, which surely endowed all ancient history with a taste of fantasy and magic in the children's eyes. The presence of only a few myths and a few heroes left children with a feeling of dissatisfaction, but this feeling forced them to seek out further sources and to look for antiquity around themselves.

From the beginning, the textbooks aimed to present children with the main masterpieces of Greek art. It is also important that objects located in the museums and parks of Soviet cities were chosen for illustrations. This expanded the identity of Soviet children as belonging to a common Greek heritage, gave them pleasure when they came across the Greek gods on Soviet streets. The perception of Heracles or Prometheus as Soviet heroes and revolutionaries fighting for the people confirmed this identity in even greater measure.

It is striking how rarely the new textbooks appeared and how deliberate the narration was. It is especially true for the latest historical period that

is supposed to have been the freest and most progressive era. The textbook by Korovkin was re-edited for more than thirty years, having educated generations of pupils. However, at the same time various methodic manuals for teachers were published, as well as chrestomathies with quotations from literary sources. Paradoxically, the stability of the textbook also gave more freedom, and enabled creativity on the part of individual teachers, who were able to elaborate their own narrations during the classes over the entire period of their careers.

It seems that, officially, there were only a few main ideas concerning Greek mythology and religion transferred to pupils over the decades. The antireligious issue was probably the most constant. Emphasis on heroes and giving them the features of the ideal "Soviet" man was another important aspect. The descriptions of myths are very concise and often contain an explicit message. Thus, ancient mythology is simplified and lacks its most important characteristic – diversity and openness to interpretation. Nevertheless, the textbooks themselves are witnesses of their time and close reading of the texts proves their variety and the plenitude of ideas contained. And one will never know what stories were being told by the teachers during the lessons; how much magic, creativity, and openness of thinking was added by them in explaining the myths, and what *dei ex machinis* were on the alert to help pupils to create narrations of their lives.