

OUR MYTHICAL CHILDHOOD

OUR MYTHICAL HOPE

The Ancient Myths
as Medicine for the Hardships
of Life in Children's
and Young Adults' Culture

Edited by
Katarzyna Marciniak



OUR MYTHICAL HOPE

“OUR MYTHICAL CHILDHOOD” Series

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CONTENTS

Katarzyna Marciniak, *What Is Mythical Hope in Children's and Young Adults' Culture? – or: Sharing the Light* 11

Notes on Contributors 47

List of Figures 59

Part I: Playing with the Past

Véronique Dasen, *Playing with Life Uncertainties in Antiquity* 71

Rachel Bryant Davies, “*This Is the Modern Horse of Troy*”: *The Trojan Horse as Nineteenth-Century Children's Entertainment and Educational Analogy* 89

Part II: The Roots of Hope

Katarzyna Jerzak, *Myth and Suffering in Modern Culture: The Discursive Role of Myth from Oscar Wilde to Woodkid* 131

Marguerite Johnson, “*For the Children*”: *Children's Columns in Australian Newspapers during the Great War – Mythic Hope, or Mythic Indoctrination?* 145

Jan Kieniewicz, *Bandar-Log in Action: The Polish Children's Experience of Disaster in Literature and Mythology* 159

Simon J.G. Burton and Marilyn E. Burton, *Mythical Delight and Hope in C.S. Lewis's Till We Have Faces and Chronicles of Narnia* 179

Part III: Holding Out for a Hero... and a Heroine

N.J. Lowe, *How to Become a Hero* 193

Robert A. Sucharski, *Joe Alex (Maciej Słomczyński) and His Czarne okręty [Black Ships]: A History of a Trojan Boy in Times of the Minoan Thalassocracy* 211

Michael Stierstorfer, *From an Adolescent Freak to a Hope-Spreading Messianic Demigod: The Curious Transformations of Modern Teenagers in Contemporary Mythopoetic Fantasy Literature* (Percy Jackson, Pirates of the Caribbean, The Syrena Legacy) 219

Markus Janka, *Heraclēs/Hercules as the Hero of a Hopeful Culture in Ancient Poetry and Contemporary Literature and Media for Children and Young Adults* 231

Susan Deacy, *Hercules: Bearer of Hope for Autistic Children?* 251

Edoardo Pecchini, *Promoting Mental Health through the Classics: Hercules as Trainer in Today's Labours of Children and Young People* 275

Krishni Burns, *La Fontaine's Reeds: Adapting Greek Mythical Heroines to Model Resilience* 327

Part IV: Hope after Tragedy

- Sheila Murnaghan and Deborah H. Roberts, *New Hope for Old Stories: Yiyun Li's Gilgamesh and Ali Smith's Antigone* **345**
- Edith Hall, *Our Greek Tragic Hope: Young Adults Overcoming Family Trauma in New Novels by Natalie Haynes and Colm Tóibín* **371**
- Hanna Paulouskaya, *Turning to Myth: The Soviet School Film Growing Up* **387**
- Divine Che Neba and Daniel A. Nkemleke, *Ayi Kwei Armah's Two Thousand Seasons and Osiris Rising as Pan-African Epics* **413**

Part V: Brand New Hope

- Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, *The Utopia of an Ideal Community: Reconsidering the Myth of Atlantis in James Gurney's Dinotopia: The World Beneath* **433**
- Elizabeth Hale, *Mystery, Childhood, and Meaning in Ursula Dubosarsky's The Golden Day* **451**
- Babette Puetz, *When Is a Robot a Human? Hope, Myth, and Humanity in Bernard Beckett's Genesis* **471**
- Helen Lovatt, *Hungry and Hopeful: Greek Myths and Children of the Future in Mike Carey's Melanie Stories* **491**
- Lisa Maurice, *Percy Jackson and Israeli Fan Fiction: A Case Study* **511**
- Katerina Volioti, *Images of Hope: The Gods in Greek Books for Young Children* **531**
- Ayelet Peer, *Growing Up Manga Style: Mythological Reception in Yoshikazu Yasuhiko's Arion Manga* **555**
- Anna Mik, Et in (Disney) Arcadia ego: *In Search of Hope in the 1940 Fantasia* **577**
- Elżbieta Olechowska, *Between Hope and Destiny in the Young Adult Television Series Once Upon a Time, Season 5, Episodes 12–21 (2016)* **593**

Part VI: Behold Hope All Ye Who Enter Here...

- Jerzy Axer, *Kotick the Saviour: From Inferno to Paradise with Animals* **613**
- Krzysztof Rybak, *All Is (Not) Lost: Myth in the Shadow of the Holocaust in Bezsenność Jutki [Jutka's Insomnia] by Dorota Combrzyńska-Nogala* **629**
- Owen Hodkinson, *Orphic Resonances of Love and Loss in David Almond's A Song for Ella Grey* **645**
- Katarzyna Marciniak, *"I Found Hope Again That Night...": The Orphean Quest of Beauty and the Beast* **669**
- Bibliography **721**
- Index of Names **807**
- Index of the Main Concepts and Mythological Figures **819**

PART III

Holding Out for a Hero...
and a Heroine



*FROM AN ADOLESCENT FREAK
TO A HOPE-SPREADING MESSIANIC DEMIGOD:
THE CURIOUS TRANSFORMATIONS
OF MODERN TEENAGERS IN CONTEMPORARY
MYTHOPOETIC FANTASY LITERATURE
(PERCY JACKSON, PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN,
THE SYRENA LEGACY)*

In the present chapter I focus on the famous *Percy Jackson* series (2005–2009) by Rick Riordan, the popular *Syrena Legacy* series (2013–2014) by Anna Banks, and the film *Pirates of the Caribbean: Salazar's Revenge* (2017) directed by Joachim Rønning and Espen Sandberg. I argue that average human protagonists are presented in these works as holy Redeemer-like figures by amalgamating their characters with the god Poseidon from classical mythology. In this form of individual heroic development for higher ends, mythic motifs are intertwined with Christian values to create a modern kind of superhero giving young people a new sense of purpose in life. This superhero brings hope to a threatened humankind, something ever so important in dark times.¹

The Origins of Modern Superheroes

The transformation from an outsider and nerd to a celebrated hero in current fantasy literature employs ideas of empowerment as a means of giving hope

¹ On this subject of research I also wrote my PhD dissertation, under the supervision of Prof. Anita Schlicher and Prof. Markus Janka. For the publication, see Michael Stierstorfer, *Antike Mythologie in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der Gegenwart. Unsterbliche Götter- und Heldengeschichten?*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017 (= PhD dissertation, University of Regensburg, 2016).

to an imperilled humanity. These ideas of power are realized in the books discussed here, in which superhuman abilities play an important role, allowing the hero to master his endeavours to save humanity from the threats imposed by evil antagonists. In this context, Gudrun Stenzel points out that fantasy literature tends to be criticized because it can be seen as encouraging young readers to act out teenage dreams of omnipotence ("pubertäre Allmachts- und Größenfantasien"), instead of moderating them.² This element, which often appears in fantasy – as Reinbert Tabbert observes – was already recognized by Astrid Lindgren, the internationally successful author of numerous fantasy books. In her opinion, children like to identify with fictional characters who are powerful and more intelligent than others. She does not, however, regard this identification as negative or dangerous. Quite the contrary. According to Tabbert, Lindgren emphasizes that it makes it easier for readers to identify with the protagonists when they are characterized by "eine wünschenswerte Überlegenheit" (desirable superiority).³

Consequently, as Aleta-Amirée von Holzen points out, ideas of empowerment are especially prominent in fantasy. She states that supernatural abilities are necessary for heroes to gain the capacity to play an active role in the story.⁴ Furthermore, Petra Rueppel, focusing on the origin of such abilities, comes to the conclusion that this concept of power is derived from Graeco-Roman mythology.⁵ This hypothesis is confirmed by Almut-Barbara Renger, who examines supernatural heroes like Perseus.⁶ Manuela Kalbermatten, who focuses on female heroes, expresses the opinion that figures such as Hermione from the *Harry Potter* series (1997–2007) by J.K. Rowling are able to use magic spells as their supernatural abilities effectively because of their intelligence.⁷ In this

² Gudrun Stenzel, "Fantastische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur zwischen entwicklungspsychologischen und literarischen Funktionen – Anmerkungen zu Wolfgang Meißner", in Jörg Knobloch and Gudrun Stenzel, eds., *Zauberland und Tintenwelt. Fantastik in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, Weinheim: Juventa, 2006, 180.

³ Reinbert Tabbert, "Wie Eisberge in der Bücherflut. Erfolgreiche Kinderbücher", in Bernhard Rank, ed., *Erfolgreiche Kinder- und Jugendbücher. Was macht Lust auf Lesen?*, Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, 1999, 10.

⁴ Cf. Aleta-Amirée von Holzen, "Marvel-lous Masked Men. Doppelidentitäten in Superheldenfilmen", in Lars Schmeink and Hans-Harald Müller, eds., *Fremde Welten. Wege und Räume der Fantastik im 21. Jahrhundert*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012, 189.

⁵ Cf. Petra Rueppel, "Merlins neue Kleider. Mythologische Elemente in der Fantasy-Literatur der Gegenwart", *1000 und 1 Buch* 1 (2004), 9.

⁶ Cf. Almut-Barbara Renger, "Antike", in Hans Richard Brittnacher and Markus May, eds., *Phantastik. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2013, 5.

⁷ Cf. Manuela Kalbermatten, "Mit Wissen, Ehrgeiz und Magie", *Buch & Maus* 1 (2009), 3.

way mythical power, like magic, is combined with exceptional human intelligence as a typical characteristic of modern and emancipated women who achieve their goals in life. Finally, Oxane Leingang, who examines the *Starcrossed* trilogy (2011–2013) written by Josephine Angelini, stresses that young readers are able to extend their space of autonomy by reading fantasy based on motifs of empowerment: “Teenage readers, who are aware of their own powerlessness because of the strict rules of society, can experience in these novels visions of violence without physical, psychological or moral danger”.⁸ Thus, on the one hand Rueppel and Renger agree that supernatural power is essential for the plots and characters of fantasy literature. On the other hand, von Holzen, Kalbermatten, and Leingang point out that ancient mythology is a source of inspiration for authors to create heroes endowed with supernatural talents.

Prototypical Elements of Heroic Figures

In the following parts of the chapter I will examine how supernatural male and female heroes are shaped and characterized in current fantasy literature on the basis of Ancient Greek and Roman mythological sources,⁹ and I will argue that via such narratological features they become hope-spreading figures.

Heroes who are inspired by sources from Graeco-Roman mythology often have the ability to control water in order to save the world. This is the case in the *Percy Jackson* and *Syrena Legacy* series. In what specific ways does this refer to ancient myth? In Graeco-Roman mythology especially the god Poseidon has the power to control water. According to an encyclopaedia of myth – written by Edward Tripp – Poseidon is able to make use of the following particular powers: (1) drying out rivers, (2) flooding cities, (3) creating fountains, (4) changing his appearance in the water, (5) evoking seaquakes, (6) creating seahorses, (7) summoning sea monsters.¹⁰

⁸ Oxane Leingang, “The Trojan War Reloaded. Motiv- und Mythenkomprimationen in Josephine Angelinis *Starcrossed*-Trilogie (2011–2013)”, in Gabriele von Glasenapp, Ute Dettmar, and Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff, eds., *Kinder- und Jugendliteraturforschung international. Ansichten und Aussichten. Festschrift für Hans-Heino Ewers*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014, 374: “Jugendliche Leser, denen die eigene Ohnmacht durch Verbote nur allzu bewusst ist, können hier ihre Gewaltphantasien ohne physische, psychische oder moralische Gefährdung lesend mitvollziehen”. All translations are mine (M.S.), unless stated otherwise.

⁹ Cf. Stierstorfer, *Antike Mythologie*.

¹⁰ Cf. Edward Tripp, *Reclams Lexikon der antiken Mythologie*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012 (ed. pr. 1974), 446–451.

In the fantasy series I have chosen, the ideas of power are functionalized to show a messianic hero who defends humanity with the help of his/her special abilities against a demonic and evil creature that wants to enslave or get rid of all human beings in a particular society – or even in the whole world.

Demigod Percy as a Messianic Figure

In first three books of the *Percy Jackson* series the title protagonist can make use of the multifunctional power of water because he is the son of the powerful god Poseidon. In the last two volumes of the series, however, this ability is marginalized. In this series the qualities of the sea god Poseidon are transferred to the main character in order to create an attractive figure for identification. For example, in the first volume, *The Lightning Thief* (2005), Percy is able to get his unpleasant classmate wet by reviving a fountain that takes her inside (8–10).¹¹

Furthermore, the community of demigods adore Percy as the son of the sea god after a spear with three tips emerges as a hologram over his head as a sign of Poseidon (145–148). In this situation, Percy also experiences that water serves him as a medicine against a gaping wound. Indeed, he is able to heal his wounds with water during fighting practice, and this confirms the earlier hologram proof that he is Poseidon's offspring, while the trident as a symbol of power points to the fact that he is the son of one of the "Big Three", that is, Zeus, Hades, and Poseidon. Also his coach, Chiron, adores him like a god, but Percy does not want this at all, because he considers himself nothing special. This attitude already indicates Percy's exorbitant position as a rescuer of the world. In the following plot line Percy uses water especially as a weapon against his enemies, who conspired against Olympus, which is identified with Western civilization. For example, at the beach of Santa Monica he creates a wall of water in order to drown Ares, so that he spits out "a mouth full of seaweed" (330). Only after this victory can Percy restore Hades' helmet, which had been stolen by Ares, to the owner. To send it into the Underworld he hands it over to the Furies, who are servants of Hades (332–333). Because of this successful detection of the robbery, Hades allows Percy's mother, who has been abducted into the Underworld by the Minotaur, to come back to the world of the living

¹¹ Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, vol. 1: *The Lightning Thief*, London: Puffin Books, 2005. For all the subsequent mentions this edition is used.

(347–348). Therefore, controlling water helps Percy to save his mother, and it restores hope in his life.

In the second volume, *The Sea of Monsters* (2006),¹² Percy can rule over the current of the sea and the Hippocampi, and use them as a vehicle. Thus, he transports himself and his friends Annabeth, the daughter of Athena, as well as Clarisse, the daughter of Ares, back to their ship after defeating the Sirens, whose enchanting songs confront their audiences with deadly danger (186–191). Finally, Percy finds his way around in the open water, and he navigates to the island of the Cyclops Polyphemus without using a compass (192).

In the third volume, *The Titan's Curse* (2007),¹³ Percy dives deep down to the bottom of the sea and releases there a holy and fabulous animal, known as the Ophiotaurus, a mixture of a cow and a snake (106–114). This hybrid creature spreads hope at Olympus because due to its special abilities the Ophiotaurus functions as a very powerful weapon against the Titans (269–277). In the last two volumes, as I have already observed, the ability of controlling water is not the main focus of attention any longer. This is most likely due to the reason that always repeating the same paradigm could become boring.

In the series, Percy Jackson is presented as a hybrid character who combines the qualities of the hero Perseus (and other demigod heroes) and the god Poseidon. Altogether he shows two superhuman abilities, which refer to Poseidon and belong to the set of powers listed at the beginning of this chapter. At first, Percy can flood enemies just like Poseidon does with cities ("power" no. 2 according to Tripp) and is able to evoke mythical beasts (like the Hippocampi) as a vehicle ("power" no. 7). These are just two characteristics of the set. Percy does not seem to have abilities that would destroy people's lives, like causing a seaquake or drying out rivers to damage humans, because he is a friend of human beings, and his mother is one of them. Instead, Percy has another one of Poseidon's powers, not mentioned in the mythical elaborations: the control of the element of water in order to save human beings and to heal injuries with the help of water. In this way, his power is designed to be pacifist, and it spreads hope across the world by saving it, for example, from the cruel Titans. Therefore, it can cautiously be said that Percy is a messianic figure like Jesus Christ, who also saves the whole world from evil. The element of water is also closely

¹² Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, vol. 2: *The Sea of Monsters*, London: Puffin Books, 2006. For all the subsequent mentions this edition is used.

¹³ Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, vol. 3: *The Titan's Curse*, London: Puffin Books, 2007. For all the subsequent mentions this edition is used.

connected with the Gospel of Jesus, because Percy can walk on water, and the fish (which lives in it) is a very old symbol of Christ, Son of God and Saviour.

Percy Jackson's power over water is also emphasized in the films *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* (2010) and *Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters* (2013). It is there explained as an inheritance from his powerful father, Poseidon. The fact that he is this god's son is uncovered when Chiron gives Percy the opportunity to live in the hut for the descendants of Poseidon (*Lightning Thief*, 00:25:51–00:27:04). In both films Percy's power is portrayed in a messianic context and is visualized in an impressive way. With the help of the latest digital techniques, the *Lightning Thief* and *Sea of Monsters* productions evoke amazing effects.

In the first film, Percy's abilities emerge at the very beginning, when he can stay under water in a swimming pool for seven minutes. Thus, his friend Grover, who measures the time, is very proud of him (*Lightning Thief*, 00:00:05–00:00:50). In this way the audience gets used to Percy's supernatural abilities and finds out that he must be different from his peers, because no human being can stay that long under water without coming to physical harm. In the water Percy gains recognition. This setting is opposite to that at school, to which Percy and Grover return after their visit to the swimming pool. At school, Percy is a loser and a pupil with special needs; because of his dyslexia he is hardly able to follow the curriculum. In this way, water is for Percy an element of hope and relaxation. Also, in the film Percy can use water to heal his wounds during the "capture-the-flag" training. Because of that phenomenon Chiron recognizes him as a son of Poseidon and is very proud of him (*Lightning Thief*, 00:33:02–00:33:14). Similarly, after his fight with Medusa, Percy holds the wounded hand of Annabeth in a pool at the motel in which Percy and his friends spend the night. At once her bloody hand is healed by Percy's power (*Lightning Thief*, 00:55:31–00:56:40). During his adventures, the power over water is a strong weapon that Percy can use to defeat the bad and monstrous Hydra. The beast threatening its victims with a lot of dangerous and fire-breathing heads is damaged by Percy in the Parthenon temple of Nashville, where the Hydra lives in the *Percy Jackson* universe. Henceforth, the Hydra cannot spit her fire onto the teenage heroes any more (*Lightning Thief*, 01:06:15–01:06:42). By flooding the mythical monster, which is in this adaptation more like a dragon, the life-giving element of water defeats the life-destroying element of fire. As a consequence, the three protagonists, Annabeth, Grover, and Percy, gain new hope to defeat the dangerous reign of the Titans. At the end of the film, Percy fights against his archenemy, Luke, who has switched sides to help the Titans,

and eliminates him by evoking a big wall of water at the top of the skyscrapers in New York City. Percy then keeps Luke under the water until he is unconscious (*Lightning Thief*, 01:34:36–01:36:22).

The power of controlling water functions in the film as a symbol of the support Percy Jackson receives from Poseidon, because this ability stems from him and connects the son and the father. Because of the fact that Percy can win only with his father's help, this cinematic production allows the interpretation that children are not successful without their parents. Children like Percy's arch-enemy cannot be winners – Luke is left alone by his dad, Hermes, the messenger of the gods. Therefore, he must be defeated by Percy.

In the second film, Percy is named by the oracle at Delphi as the Redeemer in a vision that shows him coming out of a waterfall (*Sea of Monsters*, 00:23:10–00:23:20). Here, water is an element of hope in the *Percy Jackson* series. It stands in opposition to the element of fire, which is demonized by the correlation with the devilish Titan Kronos, who is banished to the Underworld, which in this scene resembles hell. Therefore, he consists of volcanic elements after his rebirth. Also, in the films we find two kinds of power of the prototypical set: Percy does not flood cities but enemies, like in the books ("power" no. 2 according to Tripp), and he is able to evoke a seaquake to defend himself against enemies ("power" no. 5).

Siren Emma as a Messianic Figure

In the *Syrena Legacy* trilogy by Anna Banks (*Of Poseidon*, 2013; *Of Triton*, 2014; and *Of Neptune*, 2014) there is another example of a messianic figure that spreads hope all over their community by using the power over water like Poseidon does. This series was a *New York Times* bestseller. The target group of readers are teenage girls aged about thirteen and older. The protagonist, Emma, who lives as a Siren from her eighteenth birthday, can talk to fish because of her metamorphosis into this mythical beast.¹⁴ Despite being a Siren, she lives with her parents in the coastal city of Jersey in Florida. In her human form, she is able to stay under water for more than twenty minutes – even longer than Percy Jackson. After her conversion into a Siren her legs are transformed into a big fin, and so she swims as fast as the fish. As the plot develops,

¹⁴ Anna Banks, *The Syrena Legacy: Of Poseidon*, New York, NY: Feiwel and Friends, 2013, 215–220.

Emma is informed by her love interest, Galen, whom she meets at school, that she is a descendant of the house of Poseidon. Once upon a time Poseidon had founded the kingdom of Atlantis. There he lived in peace with his brother Triton. As he wanted to unite the house of Poseidon with the house of Triton to prevent violence forever, the first-born children in every generation have to get married to each other. This is prescribed by an ancient law. That is the reason why Emma and Galen soon become a couple. But they are not allowed to marry, because Emma turns out to be only a half-blood.

In volume 2 of the series, Emma is able to evoke big waves in the sea to defeat her rival, Jagen, who is eager to destroy the empire of the house of Triton and establish his own totalitarian reign. Furthermore, she dominates a killer whale and shows that she is able to be the empress of the sea. In this way she proves that she is a powerful descendant of the god Poseidon. Finally, Galen and Emma are allowed to marry.¹⁵

At the happy ending of the story in volume 3, Emma and her husband, Galen, rule peacefully over the houses of Poseidon and Triton using their power over water in a humane way.¹⁶ To protect their kingdom, once again they have to fight against the mad scientist Mr Kennedy, who wants to show the Sirens to the humans. Consequently, people all over the world would know where the Sirens live and their kingdom would probably be destroyed. But because of Emma summoning other Sirens, like her mother, Nalia, for help, the enemy can be defeated. In this trilogy, of all of Poseidon's powers Emma can only call upon sea beasts ("power" no. 7 according to Tripp).

Henry Turner as a Messianic Figure

Finally, also in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Salazar's Revenge*, the fifth film of this globally successful series, the focus is upon a hero who saves the world from a dreadful threat. This threat is here personified by the Hispanic sailor Salazar, who was defeated long before by Jack Sparrow, the captain of the famous *Black Pearl*, by entering the dangerous Bermuda Triangle, in which Salazar and his crew died. They were killed by a devilish conflagration.

¹⁵ Anna Banks, *The Syrena Legacy: Of Triton*, New York, NY: Feiwel and Friends, 2014, 226–237.

¹⁶ Anna Banks, *The Syrena Legacy: Of Neptune*, New York, NY: Feiwel and Friends, 2014, 364–368.

Without finding peace, Salazar wanders the seas with the aim of killing Jack Sparrow and other sailors who cross his path. As a Christian death figure, Salazar is dressed in flowing black clothes and has a white, skull-like face. Even his body is incomplete and looks like a skeleton. In his fight against this bad man, Jack Sparrow is supported by Henry Turner, the son of the pirate Will Turner. Henry also wants to break the curse put on his dad, because he longs to be with him. Will Turner had been cursed in a fight against the pirate Hector Barbossa and eventually became – after he was killed by that pirate – a ghost-like figure and the new captain of the *Flying Dutchman*.

Therefore, Henry searches for the Trident of Poseidon, which is hidden in the grave of Poseidon in the middle of the sea.¹⁷ It can only be found by competent astrologers, as they are able to read the constellations of the stars. Thus, a smart girl named Carina Barbossa, the daughter of the pirate Hector, joins Henry and shows to him and Jack the way to Poseidon's Trident in order to save the world from evil (*Salazar's Revenge*, 01:06:34–01:07:40). When the stars are in a convenient, very rare constellation, which shows the way to the Trident, the sea is divided into two parts. In this way Henry and his crew are able to reach the seafloor, where they find the Trident (01:36:21–01:38:40). Unfortunately, Salazar, whose black hair often moves like that of snake-headed Medusa, comes first and grabs the magical item. The Trident looks like it is made of coral; it is dark blue in colour and in the middle of it a red fire burns, which represents the power of Poseidon. In this adaptation the god's power is linked not only with the element of water, but with fire as well, as his Trident destroys the life of human beings just as burning fire does. At once Salazar causes trouble, by evoking seaquakes with the Trident. But Henry attacks him and divides the Trident with his saber into two parts. Consequently, Salazar loses his power and the two parts of the sea flood over the Spanish captain and his dangerous companions (01:40:30–01:43:27).

This scene resembles the story in the Old Testament in which Moses, leading Israel out of Egypt, drowns his Egyptian enemies in the Red Sea by ending the division of the sea with the help of Jahwe. In the end, William's curse is broken and Henry, who saved the world as a quasi-biblical hero, can meet his father and hug him. In this film Henry takes on the role of Poseidon for a short time. He searches for the Trident to gain power over the sea and provides the reason for the division of the sea, but then he learns that excessive power is dangerous.

¹⁷ In this adaptation Poseidon seems to have died, even though he is a god. Perhaps the reason is that in a post-Roman world no one believes in him and worships him any longer.

That is, in my opinion, the reason why he destroys this powerful weapon. In this way he can save his father and his crew and at the same time destroy the power of mad Salazar and his robbers, like Moses saved his nation from the Egyptian persecutors in the Bible, by drowning them after having divided the sea with his rod.

In this adaptation only the ability of flooding ("power" no. 2 according to Tripp) emerges. Yet, instead of flooding cities, the Poseidon-like figure in the film drowns his enemies. Altogether the myth of Poseidon is mixed in this post-modern version with the Christian fable of the emancipation of Moses and the Israelites, who defeat the Egyptian persecutors. Thus, Henry is no demigod in the film, but fulfils the function of Poseidon, the ruler over the sea, for a short time by gaining his power. Ultimately, he rejects it forever.

Conclusion: Current Demigods as Secularized Martyrs

In the *Percy Jackson* series (books and films), in the *Syrena Legacy* trilogy, and in the film *Pirates of the Caribbean: Salazar's Revenge*, the abilities of Poseidon prevail, ones with which the protagonists can defend one another and even the whole world or community of demigods against the violent forces of tyrannical enemies.¹⁸ In mythology, Poseidon himself is in opposition to this philanthropic heroism, because he often uses his power against humanity or singular heroes, like Odysseus, whom he prevents from sailing home to his wife, Penelope, for ten years. In the postmodern fantasy genre, the power of the hero is instrumentalized for democratic purposes. In this way democracy can be protected and defended against evil tyrants. In this context, the protagonist is shown as a Redeemer, like Jesus Christ, saving the whole world from evil. Jesus, too, has power over water, as mentioned above. In particular, He saved His disciples in distress at sea by calming the tempest (Matt. 14: 22–33 and 8: 23–27).

¹⁸ See Markus Janka and Michael Stierstorfer, eds., *Verjüngte Antike. Griechisch-römische Mythologie und Historie in zeitgenössischen Kinder- und Jugendmedien*, "Studien zur europäischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur / Studies in European Children's and Young Adult Literature" 5, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2017. Another recent and famous example of a messianic Poseidon figure is the hero of Aquaman in the DC Universe film *Justice League* (2017). He is a king and rules over the sunken empire of Atlantis. He has a five-pronged trident, with which he is able to cause big waves when fighting against his tyrannical enemies, such as the Parademons. Aquaman looks like the Poseidon statues of Renaissance fountains: he has a beard, long and curly hair, and an athletic body. Moreover, with his bright, sea-blue eyes, blond-brown hair, tanned skin, and fish-scale tattoos all over his strong body, he is also modernized and hybridized to resemble a handsome surfer.

Discussing this theme, Leingang points out that postmodern demigods in fantasy can be recognized as secularized martyrs ("säkularisierte Märtyrer").¹⁹ Yet in contrast to Christian martyrs, they suffer a lot from the attacks of their enemies, but do not get killed in the end. After defeating their archenemies, they save the whole world from madness, begin a new life – often with their love interest – and start a family. In this way they spread hope all over the world by triumphing over evil. How useful would those protagonists be nowadays, in a world which is threatened by apocalyptic weapons and war?

¹⁹ Leingang, "The Trojan War Reloaded", 376.

The book is to be recommended for academics as well as graduate and post-graduate students working on the reception of Classical Antiquity and its transformations around the world.

David Movrin, University of Ljubljana
From the editorial review

Our Mythical Hope is the latest collection of articles by scholars participating in an ongoing collaboration to ensure that the beauty and profundity of Classical myth remain known, and (hopefully) remain part of our modern culture. The size of this compendium, the sweep of subjects considered, the involvement of leading experts from around the world, all testify to how important and extensive this initiative has become over the last decade. The project's continued commitment to engage all ages, especially the young, and to extend its outreach beyond the Academy merely, makes it a leading model for how research retains its relevance.

Mark O'Connor, Boston College
From the editorial review



Classical Antiquity is a particularly important field in terms of "Hope studies" [...]. For centuries, the ancient tradition, and classical mythology in particular, has been a common reference point for whole hosts of creators of culture, across many parts of the world, and with the new media and globalization only increasing its impact. Thus, in our research at this stage, we have decided to study how the authors of literary and audiovisual texts for youth make use of the ancient myths to support their young protagonists (and readers or viewers) in crucial moments of their existence, on their road into adulthood, and in those dark hours when it seems that life is about to shatter and fade away. However, if Hope is summoned in time, the crisis can be overcome and the protagonist grows stronger, with a powerful uplifting message for the public. [...] Owing to this, we get a chance to remain true to our ideas, to keep faith in our dreams, and, when the decisive moment comes, to choose not hatred but love, not darkness but light.

Katarzyna Marciniak, University of Warsaw
From the introductory chapter

