Anna Mik, "Entry on: The True Story of Sisyphus [Prawdziwa historia Syzyfa] by Jan Mazur, Unka Odya", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/229. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Jan Mazur , Unka Odya

The True Story of Sisyphus [Prawdziwa historia Syzyfa]

Poland (2013)

TAGS: Comedy (Ancient) Sisyphus





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

General information	
Title of the work	The True Story of Sisyphus [Prawdziwa historia Syzyfa]
Country of the First Edition	Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Poland
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	2013
First Edition Details	Text published online, 8 pages: komiks.gildia.pl (accessed: July 31, 2018)
Official Website	komiks.gildia.pl (accessed: July 31, 2018)
Awards	2013 – Truths and Myths about Non-Cash Trading. The International Contest of Comic Books and Games.
Genre	Alternative histories (Fiction), Comics (Graphic works), Mythological fiction
Target Audience	Crossover (Initially it was written for children, but some jokes might have been targeting adults as well)
Author of the Entry	Anna Mik, University of Warsaw, anna.m.mik@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk

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Creators



Jan Mazur , b. 1988
(Author)

Jan Mazur born in 1988, lives in Warsaw. A former journalist, he is currently a copywriter, and he is a graduate of the University of Warsaw. He co-created many zines and comic anthologies. For his works he has received several national awards, among them the First Award in the International Festival of Comics and Games in Łódź. Occasionally, he also draws.

His most important works are: T*am, gdzie rosły mirabelki [Where Mirabelles Used to Grow]* (2017), *Przypadek pana Marka [The Case of Mr. Marek]* (2015).

Source:

Official website (accessed: January 3, 2018).

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Unka Odya , b. 1986
(Illustrator)

Unka Odya was born in Elbląg, Poland on September 19, 1986. She graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. Unka is an illustrator, but also a script writer and comic book artist. Her works are (among others): *Słynni polscy olimpijczycy [The Famous Polish Olympians]* (2008) and *Sceny z życia murarza [Scenes from a Bricklayaer's Life]* (2010). She also writes a blog (accessed: November

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2, 2017).

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Additional information

Summary

*Prawdziwa historia Syzyf*a is a retelling of the classical story of Sisyphus. This time we accompany the main character on his way to conquer a new world of economics. Sisyphus-economist is presented as the best in his job – so good that even gods use his services in exchange for the benefits of the Olympian Bank Credit System and, not less useful, social gossips. Unfortunately, Sisyphus was not the best secret keeper – so the gods punished him with death. Again, regrettably, Sisyphus has a rule - no obols in his mouth. He hoped that he could pay Charon with a credit card. But the Underworld Cash System is obsolete, and Charon knows this, and he even sent a complaint about it to the gods. He allows Sisyphus to go back to the living world to gather the cash needed for transportation. Of course, Sisyphus uses this opportunity not to come back at all. In the meantime, Charon's economic reform succeeds, and he is ready to take credit cards from his clients. Sisyphus is eventually forced to come back to Hades, and this time he can pay with Pay Pass. The end of the story does not change - the stone still awaits our hero.

Analysis

Because of the specific combination of picture and text, comics seem to be one of the most attractive mediums for children. Cedric Cullinford states that: "Comics do not make any demands [...]" (Cullinford, 1977: 40) – especially on children. He adds: "Children are more likely to learn to ignore the printed word by scanning a comic than to learn to copy the bizarre events of the story" (Cullinford, 1977: 40). Maybe that is why the National Bank of Poland decided on this medium in the contest to promote non-cash trading in the Polish society – starting with children.

The winners of this competition, Mazur and Odya, show that even the old stories, like myths, can serve as examples for explaining or reintroducing modern topics to young people. What is more, even a dark myth, such as the one about Sisyphus, can be told amusingly, which might be more accessible to children. The style of illustrations and the particular atmosphere of the story has been preserved. Characters remind them of those painted on the antique vases, and the main motivation of gods and heroes have not really changed. What is definitely new is the language – adapted for modern times – and certain artefacts (like a credit card reader). This kind of postmodern

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	mix shows young readers the continuing topicality of "old" problems and the "utility" of myths as such. Most young Polish readers can easily relate to the story since they know the "original" one taught at school. But thanks to the comic book, with its illustrations, plot dynamic, and humour, this particular myth may seem more attractive to them and be relevant to the child of the 21st century, not only in Poland.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Comedy (Ancient) Sisyphus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Knowledge Learning Society
Further Reading	Cullingford, Cedric, "Comics and children", *Education 3–13. International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education* 5/1 (1977). Surbeck, Elizabeth, *Comics for Children?,* Honors Theses, Eastern Illinois University Publication "The Keep," 2012.
Addenda	*Prawdziwa historia Syzyf*a was created for the *Truths and Myths about Non-Cash Trading. The International Contest of Comic Books and Games* in 2013, organized in Łódź, Poland. It won the Grand Prix and the reward of 15 000 PLN. The contest was organized jointly with Narodowy Bank Polski [National Bank of Poland] as an economics education program.

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