Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: Icarus Swinebuckle by Michael Garland", peer-reviewed by Miriam Riverlea and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/300. Entry version as of November 12, 2026.

Michael Garland

Icarus Swinebuckle

United States (2000)

TAGS: Daedalus Icarus





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

General information	
Title of the work	Icarus Swinebuckle
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2000
First Edition Details	Michael Garland, *Icarus Swinebuckle*. Ill. Michael Garland, Park Ridge: Albert Whitman & Company, 2000, 32 pp.
ISBN	0807534951
Awards	Parents' Choice Foundation Silver Award for Picture Book in 2000.
Genre	Alternative histories (Fiction), Fantasy fiction, Historical fiction, Humor, Picture books
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
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Creators



Michael Garland , b. 1952
(Author, Illustrator)

Michael Garland was born in New York City in 1952, and lives and works in Patterson, New York. He studied for a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Pratt Institute He is an artist, illustrator and author of picture books, including the "Miss Smith" series of educational fantasy stories (*Miss Smith's Incredible Storybook*; *Miss Smith and the Haunted Library*; *Miss Smith Under the Ocean*), a number of Christmas-related picture books (*The Mouse Before Christmas*; *Christmas Magic*; *Oh What a Christmas*), board books for very young readers, and whimsical stories such as *King Puck*, and *Icarus Swinebuckle*. Garland has written or illustrated over thirty picture books, and illustrated for celebrity authors such as the singer Gloria Estefan (the *Noelle the Bulldog* series), and the crime novelist James Patterson (*SantaKid*). Garland's style is highly coloured and mixes whimsy with a hyperrealistic almost three-dimensional quality.

Source:

Official website (accessed: July 3, 2018).

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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Additional information

Adaptations

An ipad app of *Icarus Swinebuckle* was developed by Giant Atoms in 2011. It features animation of opening titles, and read-aloud and recording functions.

Summary

Set in East London in the late eighteenth century, *Icarus Swinebuckle* is a picture book about an eponymous pig who wishes to fly, and who proves everyone wrong by building himself a set of wings. The characters are animals familiar in Europe (pigs, sheep, goats, cows, wolves), intertwining the English phrase "pigs might fly" (an expression of impossibility) with the myth of Icarus, who flew too close to the sun and melted his waxen wings.

Icarus Swinebuckle is a portly cobbler with big dreams of flying. His wife does not share his dreams, but his son Robin does. He is working on a pair of wings, made of feathers attached with wax. This distracts him from his work as a cobbler. He is late with shoes for his bovine clients, Lady Holstein and her daughter); he is late with rent for his vulpine landlord, Mr Gnawbone. He is the talk of the town, and on the day he tests the wings, a crowd gathers. Icarus flies into the air, to their astonishment, and soars through the clouds and close to the sun. The wax on his feathers melts, and Icarus tumbles to earth. Though he is chastened, the crowds admire his attempt; his wife kisses him, his son praises him. Icarus begins designing a new flying machine to take him to the moon.

Analysis

A humorous adaptation of the myth of Icarus for young readers, *Icarus Swinebuckle* connects the phrase "pigs might fly" (an expression of impossibility) with the myth of Icarus into a picture book for young readers with a message of sticking to one's dreams, and not giving up. The illustrations are highly-coloured and meticulous, using a mixture of pencil and digital colouring to convey a three-dimensional effect. Anthropomorphic animals in eighteenth-century dress make up the cast of characters, and the story is set in the late eighteenth-century, in a nod to the period of the Enlightenment and its emphasis on scientific experimentation. Garland conflates Daedalus and Icarus into one character: Icarus Swinebuckle. Swinebuckle is a humble dreamer,

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	a cobbler with aspirations above his station (and in his dress is not unlike the American Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin). His flight follows a similar pattern to that of the mythical Icarus; flying too close to the sun melts the wax holding the feathers together, and he falls through the clouds into the river, where he is rescued.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Daedalus Icarus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Character traits Desires Humour Invention

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