Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Myths in Sicily: Thunderbolts 2 [I miti in Sicilia: I fulmini, 2] by Riccardo Francaviglia ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/807. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Riccardo Francaviglia

Myths in Sicily: Thunderbolts 2 [I miti in Sicilia: I fulmini, 2]

Italy (2015)

TAGS: Alpheus Arethusa Artemis Cocalus Daedalus Demeter Erice Hades Hephaestus Hera Heracles Hercules Icarus Labyrinth Minos Persephone Thetis





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

General information	
Title of the work	Myths in Sicily: Thunderbolts 2 [I miti in Sicilia: I fulmini, 2]
Country of the First Edition	Italy
Original Language	Italian
First Edition Date	2015
First Edition Details	Riccardo Francaviglia, *I miti in Sicilia: I fulmini*, vol. 2. Splēn edizioni, 2015, 96 pp.
ISBN	9788899268121
Genre	Adaptations, Myths
Target Audience	Children (Older children, 9–13)
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Creators



Riccardo Francaviglia (Author, Illustrator)

According to the back cover, Riccardo Francaviglia is a Sicilian author and illustrator. He is also an actor, narrator and puppet master. He teaches illustration techniques at the Academia delle Belle Arti in Catania.

Source:

Official website (accessed: July 19, 2019)

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Additional information

Translation

English: *Myths in Sicily: Thunderbolts*, trans. Letizia Martin.

Summary

This book (the second of a 2-book series) explores the Greek myths that are found in Sicily. The myths narrated in this volume are: the abduction of Persephone and the creation of the seasons; Arethusa and Alpheus; stories about Heracles: his birth and the creation of the Milky way when he bites Hera's breast, his struggle with Erice and his tasks to bring the golden apples and Cerberus; the birth of Hephaestus; the escape of Daedalus and Icarus.

The focus is on the Sicilian connections to the myths (places, natural phenomena). Each story is accompanied by an illustration and also includes extra information boxes at the bottom of the page which explain certain elements or names from the text.

Analysis

This volume, like the first in the series, focuses on the Sicilian connections to both known, and less known, Greek myths. Thus it combines more famous stories (such as Daedalus and Icarus) with less known ones, such as Arethusa and Alpheus or Heracles' wresting with Erice.

The myths are presented in a fluent language and so are easily read and understood. While the purpose of these myths is less morally didactic and more intended to emphasize the role of Sicily, the author does comment on the characters and their behaviour. For example, he notes, regarding Demeter, that she "loved her daughter and her love made her possessive, but aware of this side of her personality eventually she loosened her grip and let her go." (p. 8). Thus, the relations between Demeter and Persephone become approachable and easier for the reader to relate to, as they resonate with real-life experiences. Even Hades' motivations are explained in a way that creates some empathy for the god: "I'm tired of this life…among all the Gods, I am one of the most powerful and one of the least loved." (p. 11). This of course does not exonerate Hades from kidnapping Persephone, but at least it is an attempt to portray his image as more complex and vulnerable.

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However, the author does not similarly describe Persephone. All we know is that she was afraid of Hades and was then kidnapped. By the time Hermes meets her in the underworld she sits by Hades' side, where "she had a tired look and nibbled listlessly a pomegranate seed." (p. 19). Persephone appears traumatized and apathetic, probably as a result of her forced marriage. The author does not describe the reunion between the two gods as amorous or even friendly and Persephone's voice is not even heard. She has no say regarding her own circumstances while her mother, Hades and Zeus decide her fate. This is of course part of the original myth, yet the author did play with the myths in this series therefore he could have chosen to give Persephone a voice. Yet he seems more interested in the explanation of the myths (the creation of the seasons) than in exploring its moral complexities. In other stories in the book, the female voice is less emphasized than the male one, which could denote the author's greater interest in the male protagonists.

Violence against women is a great part of the Greek myths, as well as victim blaming. In one myth, the author relates more to this subject, when he narrates the myth of Arethusa and Alpheus. This time, we sympathize with Arethusa and feel her fear and distress when she is being chased by Alpheus as the author realistically notes: "in her run, with her eyes out of the socket for the fear, Arethusa felt like a prey for the first time…while Alpheus, like a skilled hound dog, smelled her and followed her scent." (pp. 31–32). This is a very vivid and alarming description of the chase and they readers are supposed to empathize with Arethusa's plight and her desperate call for Artemis for salvation. In the end, Arethusa is transformed into a spring. Artemis tries to help her and not punish her, but it feels like victim blaming, in the sense that Arethusa who did nothing wrong yet must lose her human form. Alpheus, however, is helped by Zeus and turned into a river so he can meet her. Even this forced metamorphosis does not save Arethusa from her pursuer, although she does comment that she is sad to leave Artemis but she loves the beautiful new environment in which she will become a spring; yet it is noteworthy that her comment relates more to the beauty of the Sicilian scenery than it attests to her true feelings. The author treats this episode as a loving affair and forgivingly recounts that after Alpheus was turned into a river, "in Sicily he could finally hug her and plunge with her in the warm waters to the sea." (p. 35). It is quite ironic that the ruthless hunting dog is now warmly caressing the maiden who was willing to lose her humanity in order to avoid him. The author is of course not

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	responsible for these original myths, but one should wonder if his tone could have been less forgiving. Sicily is highlighted as the place where the happy reunion can take place and this is the main focus of the author. As noted regarding the first book of the series, these myths are aimed at older children, however, they could be alarmed as well by the themes covered in this book, for example, abandonment. For example, in the myth about Hephaestus, Hera is described as throwing Hephaestus to the sea and forgetting about him, a story that could potentially be frightening for young children. Another example is the story of Minos' murder. Regarding Heracles, the author briefly relates Heracles' meeting with Pleasure and Duty and then he tells how Hera caused him to kill his family. This is not graphically told or illustrated. The author concisely mentions some of the labours in order to concentrate on Sicily-related adventures, such as his wrestling with king Erice. To conclude, this collection of myths focuses on their relation to Sicily. The myths are vividly explained and presented, although some of the myths may be too harsh or intimidating for young readers.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Alpheus Arethusa Artemis Cocalus Daedalus Demeter Erice Hades Hephaestus Hera Heracles Hercules Icarus Labyrinth Minos Persephone Thetis
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Death Friendship Love Nature Parents (and children) Rejection Revenge Violence
Addenda	The review refers to the 2016 reprint edition.

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