Michael Stierstorfer, "Entry on: Night of the Gods [Götternacht] by Anna Bernstein", peer-reviewed by Markus Janka and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/849. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Anna Bernstein

Night of the Gods [Götternacht]

Germany (2014)

TAGS: Centaur(s) Chiron / Cheiron Eros





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

General information	
Title of the work	Night of the Gods [Götternacht]
Country of the First Edition	Germany
Country/countries of popularity	Germany
Original Language	German
First Edition Date	2014
First Edition Details	Anna Bernstein, *Götternacht*. Köln: Bastei Lübbe, 2014, 397 pp.
ISBN	9783404170128
Genre	Fantasy fiction, Mythological fiction, Novels, Romance fiction, Teen fiction*
Target Audience	Young adults
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This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Anna Bernstein , b. 1988
(Author)

Anna Bernstein, a German writer for children, was born in Munich in 1988. She has always been very interested in art and music. Creative writing is her favourite artistic activity. Her stories are often situated in fantastic worlds in far away times. She find her topics in her own everyday life. Her daughter is for her a great source of inspiration. The love for her daughter helps her in describing emotions occurring in her novels and stories. Since she was a child, she wrote stories about friendship between horses and people. Also in her first novel, *The Night of Gods*, horses and Centaurs are key characters of her mystic plot. She focuses on writing historic and fantasy novels primarily for adolescent girls. She lives currently in Berlin with her partner and their daughter. Her other books include: *Sir Rubert und der bleihe Betrüger* and (with Shirley Waters, Emily Roth, and Nina Robin) *Mit Herz und Hund. Vier Kurzromane*, ed. by Carolina Winter, both are historical love stories and date from 2014.

Source:

Official website (accessed: October 22, 2019)

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Additional information

Summary

In a mystic ritual, the seventeen year old girl Leah, the daughter of the chieftain of the Uredos nation, is initiated into the world of adults. From a childhood meeting with centaur Chiron, the god of horses, Leah retained the gift of communicating with horses. The inhabitants of her village suspect her of being a witch and mistrust her. Leah's father wants her to soon marry Gael, a cruel and inconsiderate chieftain's son from another tribe. During an orgiastic ceremony of sexual initiation for teenage girls, she meets the centaur Eros, with whom she has first unconscious sexual experience. Aislinn, the priest of the Uredos, drugged her unconscious, in order to fulfill a contract Uredos have with the centaurs who have no females: every young woman has to give birth to a centaur once in her life. These children are then brought up by the centaurs. In exchange the live in peace with the Uredos and protect them. Leah falls in love with Eros, they both go to Chiron to ask him for permission to legitimate their relationship. While they are on their way to the god of horses, the jealous Gael looks for them and during his search kills a few centaurs. But Leah is a brave girl and skillful at archery. She defeats Gael with her arrows. Consequently, Aislinn heals Eros, who got bruised by an arrow of Gael. At that point, Aislinn confesses the truth about the pact with the centaurs. Leah enchants Eros so that he is no longer half horse. At the end, Leah and Eros live happily together and plan to have children.

Analysis

In this novel, the myth of the existence of hybrids, like centaurs is an element of the fantastic reality. In contrast to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (book 12), the centaurs don't rape and kidnap brides from the wedding of the king of the Lapiths, but as there are no female Centaurs, they need human girls to perpetuate their species, hence the agreement with the Uredos to drug adolescent girls during the initiation ceremony, impregnate them when they are unconscious, and once they give birth to baby centaurs, take the children to be brought up by centaurs and as centaurs. In a book for young adults rape is obviously not a preferred topic. The mythological origin of the Centaurs is not mentioned in the book. The readers understand the text without mythological explanations, and in any case, both Eros, as the name of the god of love and the centaurs as half-man, half horse are strongly embedded in the popular culture, similarly to Chiron,

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known from for instance, Disney movies and movies about Hercules. Chiron is not presented in the novel as a wise scholar, who educates young heroes like Achilles (Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 1), but he is the god of all horses and the leader of the centaurs. This change in comparison to the ancient sources is necessary to explain where Leah's magical gift to be able to talk to horses, comes from. Also Chiron himself talks to horses. Eros as the god of love plays an important role in this reception of the myth too. In the ancient sources (e.g., Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 1; 2 and *Met*. 1; 5) he is the little son of Venus and has the body of a young angel with a bow and arrows to make people fall in love. Here a Centaur is named Eros, because Leah falls in love with him and it is this Eros, to whom she owes her first romantic experience. The myth of the centaurs serves as a background to an unusual love story, full of conflicts and magic, between a woman and a hybrid creature. Except for the exterior appearance of the centaurs, the readers do not learn the mythical story about the centaurs. So the ancient myth remains just at the surface and offers the frame for a fantastic love story combined with a triangular relationship like in the *Twilight*-series (Meyer, 2008–2012), an archetypal theme of a love with obstacles – the lovers have to overcome their differences and lack of acceptance from both sides and an unhappy suitor who wants to prevent their union. The girls are described as passive victims. Only women who want to have power like the priest Aislinn are demonised as witches. Leah is in between a victim and a self-confident woman. But after marriage to Eros, she will become a wife and mother. From that point of view, the text carries traditional values.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Centaur(s) Chiron / Cheiron Eros
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Coming of age Diversity Love Parents (and children) Relationships Romance Sexuality

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Further Reading

Janka, Markus and Michael Stierstorfer, eds., *Verjüngte Antike. Griechisch-römische Mythologie und Historie in zeitgenössischen Kinder- und Jugendmedien*, Heidelberg: Winter, 2017.

Stierstorfer, Michael, *Antike Mythologie in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der Gegenwart. Unsterbliche Götter- und Heldengeschichten?* [Ancient Mythology in Comtemporary Children's Literature. Immortal Stories of Gods and Heroes?] Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017, 282 pp.

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