Michael Stierstorfer, "Entry on: The Wanderers [Die Irrfahrer] by Gerd Scherm ", 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/864. Entry version as of November 19, 2026.

Gerd Scherm

The Wanderers [Die Irrfahrer]

Germany (2007)

TAGS: Achilles Bible Crete Egypt Labyrinth Minos Minotaur Odysseus / Ulysses Theseus Trojan War

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

General information	
Title of the work	The Wanderers [Die Irrfahrer]
Country of the First Edition	Germany
Country/countries of popularity	Germany
Original Language	German
First Edition Date	2007
First Edition Details	Gerd Scherm, *Die Irrfahrer* (The Wanderers). München: Heyne/Random House, 2007, 447 pp.
ISBN	9783453522107
Genre	Fantasy fiction, Mythological fiction
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Michael Stierstorfer, University of Regensburg, Michael.stierstorfer@ur.de
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Markus Janka, University of Munich, janka@lmu.de Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators

Gerd Scherm , b. 1950
(Author)

Gerd Scherm was born in 1950, in Fürth in Bavaria; he works as a freelance writer and artist teaming up with his wife Friederike; they live among a lot of animals in an old farmstead in a nature park in Southern Germany. For many years, Gerd Scherm has been researching mythology and ancient symbols. He is a visiting professor of cultural studies and religious sociology at the Free University in Berlin. For his literary and artistic creations he was awarded many honours, e.g., the Friedrich-Baur-award for literature of the Bavarian Academy of the Fine Arts, and the 2018 Deutscher Phantastik Preis.

Source:

Official website (accessed: October 10, 2019)

Bio prepared by Michael Stierstorfer, University of Regensburg, Michael.stierstorfer@ur.de

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Prequels:

Gerd Scherm, *Der Nomadengott* (The God of the Nomads), 2006.

Sequels:

Gerd Scherm, *Die Weltenbaumler* (People Travelling through the World), 2008.

Summary

The prophet and scribe Seshmosis, who saved his nation, the Tajarim, from Egyptian bondage thanks to the support of the goddess GON, god without a name, leaves Byblos with his friends in order to travel to Crete. He intends to analyse a mysterious locket there, whose origins are Cretan, and which is inscribed in a secret language. Once arrived in Crete, the adventurers meet not only Minos, the king of Crete, but also his obliging daughter Ariadne and her lover Theseus who is eager to become himself the king of Crete. Because of a conspiracy engineered by Theseus, Seshmosis is captured and put into the Labyrinth. There he meets the Minotaur, who turns out to be a friendly vegetarian. Moreover, the prophet discovers that Theseus stole the mysterious locket because the owner of this magical object is supposed to rule Crete. After defeating Theseus with the help of the Minotaur, the crew of the Tajarim sail to Troy, where they help the Greeks to conquer the Trojans. At the same time, they, as merchants, sell a lot of useful goods to Greeks and when they reach their hometown of Byblos, they have plenty of money.

Analysis

Greek mythology is combined here with the biblical tradition in a kind of parody. The protagonist Seshmosis resembles Moses of the Old Testament, who leads his people out of the Egyptian captivity. GON is an equivalent of Jahwe and the Christian God the Father, who supports his nation, the Tajarim, who symbolize the Jews, seafarers and merchants of ancient times. The plot of the book contains a lot of mythical elements and entire myths. The changes to the traditional versions of the myths are made in the spirit of contemporary correctness: For example, the Minotaur is not a monster who devours

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young victims in the Labyrinth, but a nice guy, who lives as a vegetarian. In spite of that, his hybrid appearance frightened people, and they spread lies about him. Another interesting example: Icarus manages to escape from Crete and vanishes together with his father Daedalus. When king Minos realized they flew away, he was afraid that his authority would suffer and deceived his people with the story that Icarus fell into the sea and died because he dared to fly too close to the sun (cf. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* book 8). The common people believed Minos and accepted it as the standard version of the myth. This humorous deconstruction allows Scherm to create his own versions, full of jokes and adventures. Seshmosis develops from being a loser into an ancient hero, who follows the paths of Theseus, Odysseus and Achilles. By retelling the ancient version before establishing his own, the author tells the readers how the original myths have been (re-)told by Ovid and Homer. The ancient sources are also named in this novel. Mythology serves here to suggest that we cannot know how powerful ancient figures adapted the stories for their purposes. The message is that myths must not be taken at face value but analyzed from various perspectives.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Bible Crete Egypt Labyrinth Minos Minotaur Odysseus / Ulysses Theseus Trojan War
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Coming of age Friendship Survival

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*

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Heldengeschichten? [Ancient Mythology in Contemporary Children's Literature. Immortal Stories of Gods and Heroes?], Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017.

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