Sarah F. Layzell, "Entry on: Homecoming by Jack Baran , Christopher Carlson , Mark Jean , Shirō Sasaki , Cynthia Voigt ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/940. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Jack Baran , Christopher Carlson , Mark Jean , Shirō Sasaki , Cynthia Voigt

Homecoming

United States (1996)

TAGS: Aeolus Homer Odysseus / Ulysses Odyssey Penelope Polyphemus Scylla





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

General information	
Title of the work	Homecoming
Studio/Production Company	Merko Production, Showtime Networks and Hallmark Entertainment
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States od America
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1996
First Edition Details	*Homecoming*. Directed by Mark Jean. Screenplay by Christopher Carlson and Mark Jean. Based on the book *Homecoming* by Cynthia Voigt. Showtime, April 14, 1996. 105 min.
Running time	105 min
Format	Television
Date of the First DVD or VHS	VHS release date: Feb. 16, 1999
Genre	Drama, Made-for-TV movies
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Sarah F. Layzell, University of Cambridge, sarahlayzellhardstaff@gmail.com

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.

Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

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



Jack Baran (Producer)

Jack Baran is an assistant director and producer whose credits include *Single White Female* (1992). He appears in Bobby Roth's filmmaking masterclass documentary *A Director Prepares* (2016).

Bio prepared by Sarah Hardstaff, University of Cambridge, sflh2@cam.ac.uk



Christopher Carlson (Screenwriter)

Christopher Carlson is a screenwriter, playwright and novelist, who grew up in New Hampshire and Connecticut. The script he co-authored with Mark Jean for *Homecoming* received a 1997 Writers Guild nomination for Best Long Form Adaptation.

Source:

Official website (accessed: September 12, 2019).

Bio prepared by Sarah Hardstaff, University of Cambridge, sflh2@cam.ac.uk

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.



Mark Jean (Director, Screenwriter)

Mark Jean is a director and screenwriter who studied filmmaking at San Diego State University and attained a Master's degree in directing from the American Film Institute. The script he co-authored with Christopher Carlson for *Homecoming* received a 1997 Writers Guild nomination for Best Long Form Adaptation. The film was also nominated for a 1997 Young Artist Award in the category Best Family TV Movie or Mini-Series – Cable.

Source:

Official website (accessed: September 12, 2019).

Bio prepared by Sarah Hardstaff, University of Cambridge, sflh2@cam.ac.uk



Shirō Sasaki , b. 1939
(Producer)

Shirō Sasaki is a film and music producer known for his work on Japanese anime and music. A list of some of his work can be found on the Anime News Network's encyclopedia (accessed: September 12, 2019).

Bio prepared by Sarah Hardstaff, University of Cambridge, sflh2@cam.ac.uk

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.



Cynthia Voigt , b. 1942
(Author)

Cynthia Voigt is an American author best known for the Tillerman family novels. She is the author of 33 books for children and young people, and two books for adults, spanning a range of genres and audiences. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Voigt graduated from Smith College in 1963 and later became a secondary school English teacher. Her novels have won numerous awards, including the prestigious Newbery Medal for *Dicey's Song* in 1983. The first Tillerman novel, *Homecoming*, was nominated for a National Book Award in 1982.

Source:

Official Website (accessed: 04 September, 2019).

Bio prepared by Sarah Hardstaff, University of Cambridge, sflh2@cam.ac.uk

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.

Additional information

Casting

Anne Bancroft (Abigail). Nominee, Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a TV Movie or Miniseries, Screen Actors Guild Awards 1997; Nominee, Actress in a Movie or Miniseries, CableACE Awards 1996.

Kimberlee Peterson (Dicey). Nominee, Best Performance in a TV Movie/Mini-Series – Young Actress, Young Artist Awards 1997; Nominee, Best Performance in a TV Movie/Home Video – Young Ensemble, Young Artist Awards 1997.

Trever O'Brien (James). Nominee, Best Performance in a TV Movie/Home Video – Young Ensemble, Young Artist Awards 1997.

Hanna Hall (Maybeth). Nominee, Best Performance in a TV Movie/Home Video – Young Ensemble, Young Artist Awards 1997.

William Greenblatt (Sammy). Nominee, Best Performance in a TV Movie/Home Video – Young Ensemble, Young Artist Awards 1997.

Anna Louise Richardson (Liza),

Scott Michael Campbell (Windy),

Bonnie Bedelia (Eunice).

Summary

Based on the novel of the same name, *Homecoming* tells the story of four siblings – Dicey, James, Maybeth and Sammy Tillerman– who are abandoned by their mother. (Their father had already abandoned the family some years before.) Led by the eldest, Dicey, the children make their way mostly on foot down the east coast of the United States. At their lowest ebb, they meet a student called Windy who drives them to the home of their cousin Eunice. Eunice is willing to take Dicey and Maybeth in but starts to make arrangements for the boys to be fostered elsewhere. Determined to stay together, the children run away from Eunice's house and take a bus to Crisfield, Maryland, where their reclusive grandmother lives. The children must convince their grandmother, Abigail, that she should let them live with her on her farm, but she refuses the responsibility. The film ends with Abigail taking children to the bus stop to return to Eunice's house. The bus

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.

pulls away to reveal that the children are still with Abigail, who then introduces them as her grandchildren for the first time, to a local storekeeper. On the boat journey back to the farm, Abigail asks Dicey, “Ready to go home?” and Dicey replies, “Ready.”

Analysis

Homecoming is a heartwarming depiction of family bonds and determination. While it is relatively faithful to the novel, with some dialogue reproduced verbatim, the film is more sentimental, perhaps reflecting its more general target audience. For example, the appearance of the children on-screen emphasises their tender years more than in the novel, where they are presented as competent survivors. Frequent close-up shots of Dicey are used to amplify her helplessness, isolation and responsibility for the younger siblings, who are often framed as a group of three in contrast to Dicey. This shifts once Abigail takes on the role of responsible adult, with the children framed as a group of four in the final scenes. Shots of loving parents and children are used throughout the film to provide a contrast with the abandoned Tillermans.

Classical references in this adaptation are less obvious than in its source material. Voigt’s novel has been compared to Homer’s *Odyssey*, with Dicey filling the role of Odysseus and other characters filling other roles in the story (see Henke 1985, 48-51). In the film, the children reach Abigail’s hometown 35 minutes in, meaning that both the sense of an epic journey and some of the classical allusions have been lost. Those that remain are:

- Dicey’s encounter with the security guard (Polyphemus)
- Windy, the student who helps the children find Eunice’s house (Aeolus)
- The children’s stay at Eunice’s house (formerly Aunt Cilla’s house and thus interpreted as a stand-in for Scylla), although their stay seems to have been truncated to one night.
- The circus (Circe in Henke’s analysis) appears in the script but not the finished film.

The majority of the film’s running time is devoted to the children’s arrival at Abigail’s home and subsequent battle of wills to persuade their grandmother that they should be allowed to live with her. In both the novel and film, these scenes can be interpreted as representing Odysseus’s homecoming and trials to prove himself to Penelope.

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.

	Rather than focusing on the journey itself, the film's emphasis is on the difficulties of relationship-building and the right to a safe home.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aeolus Homer Odysseus / Ulysses Odyssey Penelope Polyphemus Scylla
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Abandonment Adolescence Adventure Adversity Child, children Coming of age Family Freedom Journeys Loss Orphans Parents (and children) Relationships Resilience Siblings Social class Society Survival Travel Youth
Further Reading	Carlson, Christopher, "Homecoming", www.christopherccarlson.com (accessed: September 11, 2019). Hardstaff, Sarah, "Economies of Childness in Cynthia Voigt's *Homecoming*", *Children's Literature in Education* 50.1 (2019): 47–59. Henke, James T., "Dicey, Odysseus, and Hansel and Gretel: The Lost Children in Voigt's *Homecoming*", *Children's Literature in Education* 16 (1985): 45–52. "Homecoming", IMDb (accessed: September 11, 2019).
Addenda	Trailer: christopherccarlson.com (accessed: January 22, 2020).

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.