

Classical Antiquity in Periodicals for Children and Young Adults in Polish People's Republic (PRL) – Classical Education, Promotion of Political Ideology, or Expression of Resistance? Changes in the Reception of Classics in the PRL from 1945 to 1989

Periodicals aimed at children and young adults in the PRL were used by the regime to shape Polish children to fit the patterns imposed by the communist authorities. The press was to serve a new ideological model by influencing values, thusly it was edited by national publishers and censored to ensure that no inconvenient contents are printed. Special focus was placed on children's education and forming youngsters as future socialist citizens. The press was used as a clever tool to educate and indoctrinate children and teenagers – contents in press refer to topics such as Marxism, dialectical and historical materialism, class conflict, utopian socialism or development of the labour movement. Among contents, however, also those concerning Greek and Roman Antiquity appeared, still considered relevant in education. Prima facie, antiquity was so distant in time that it could be treated as a neutral topic, but besides the literature which continued the pre-war trends, new texts were written, selecting elements of Greek and Roman antiquity usable for the propagandist purposes of the new system, like highlighting class struggle, mistreatment of "the people" (i.e. the working class) by oligarchs and latifundists (i.e. class of masters), or justifying agrarian reforms. Classical antiquity depicted in children's books in the Stalinist era was far from being neutral.

The aim of the project is to analyse the periodicals aimed at children and youths in terms of their references to classical antiquity. The period under investigation is from 1945 to 1989. In order to obtain vast and representative fieldwork, about 60 titles of periodicals will be analysed. These titles cover magazines of nationwide range and a few with a local reach, both generalist and themed ones, titles aimed at various age groups and at readers of different backgrounds, ephemeral ones that lasted a year or two and long lasting ones rooted in pre-war times and currently still in press. The main goal of this project is to fill the gap in research as the content of children's and young adults' periodicals of the PRL was examined in various contexts and regarding its various aspects, but classical occurrences and the way of presenting classical antiquity in short stories, poems, and comics which appeared in those periodicals have not been so far examined as a separate study. The preliminary research hypothesis assumes that the official view of antiquity in children's and YA magazines was instrumentalised according to the current propaganda but on the other hand some authors of short stories written to be published in the press also used classical themes to cover allusions to ideas not in line with the official discourse. Examples identified so far appear to have educational value and/or be used to hide contemporary contents from censorship under the cover of myths.

The proposed research will be conducted as a culture study. The content will be treated as a text of culture in categories of classical reception studies, and the research will focus mainly on how the Greek and Roman myths and other texts were translated, adapted, interpreted, re-interpreted or re-imaged and what antiquity means when related to the reality of the socialist state. The analysis of the collected contents will combine multidisciplinary methodologies. The classical references that occur in the press material will be studied in comparison with the entire content of particular issues and titles, in comparison with classical sources and their further reception, and with other media of the period when they were published. As the texts should be analysed in the wide context of the particular historical moments, the entire period of the PRL will be divided with respect to the changing situation in order to observe how the reception of Antiquity in periodicals changed along with the varying oppressiveness of the regime.

The project will contribute to research into global and East European reception of antiquity and will pioneer the study of the material of Polish children's and young adults' press of communist Poland in this context, as it has not been thoroughly studied in terms of reception of classical antiquity before. The main research question is how Antiquity was depicted during this period and how its reception evolved. References to antiquity in literature from the Stalinist era were used to highlight mostly inequality as seen by the prism of social matters and class struggle. A critical approach to imperialism, the mistreatment of "the people" by the rich class, the harsh fate of slaves, the moral decline caused by power and luxury were used for the propagandist purposes of the new system in books for children.

Similar tendencies are expected to be found in the press due to its higher popularity. Since the short texts in some periodicals for young readers contained topics aligned with ideological policy, it is possible that those topics were also incorporated into texts based on antiquity. If examples of reception of classics marked with values imposed by authorities of the PRL are found in periodicals, it would also suggest partial appropriation of Classical Antiquity for the purposes of the socialist state. On the other hand, examples of using themes taken from antiquity in order to lull the censors and to smuggle in values that contradict the official propaganda would document the nuances of playing with the imposed ideology.