

Appendix 1: Introducing Meg Cabot and the *Abandon* Trilogy

Meggin Patricia Cabot was born on the 1st February 1967 in the United States, in Bloomington, Indiana. Worldwide known as Meg Cabot, the author of the famous *Princess Diaries* series, she has become one of the most famous American writers of the 21st century. Over the years Cabot has made her own name, writing more than 80 books, both her adult and teenage novels including multiple #1 New York Times bestsellers and selling more than 25 million copies all around the world.

Growing up and graduating in her birth town, Cabot decided to get a bachelor's degree in fine arts from Indiana University. Afterwards she moved to Grenoble, France and Carmel, California, before she finally settled down in New York City with the desire to become an illustrator. However, she started her career as an assistant residence hall director at New York University. There she met her husband, financial writer and poet Benjamin D. Egnatz and married him April 1, 1993.

Working at the university for more than ten years really inspired her to start writing her *Princess Diaries* series, the novels that have brought her the fame. After the first book appeared in October 2000, the journey of Mia Thermopolis, the flighty young princess became so loved by both child and young adult readers that, as a sign of its popularity, the series spent 38 weeks on the New York Times Children's Series Best Sellers List and was sold to publishers in 37 foreign countries. Not long after the series was bought by Walt Disney and turned into two hit movies entitled *The Princess Diaries* and *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement* starring well-known actresses such as Anne Hathaway and Julie Andrews. Cabot herself talked about being extremely proud of her series, as she had received multiple letters from her fans thanking her for helping them overcome their dislike of reading.

Not only is the *Princess Diaries* endlessly liked by readers, but her dynamic life inspired *Heather Wells*, the *Mediator* series and its continuation the *1-800-Where-R-You?* series (which has been reprinted under the title *Vanished* and was made into the *Lifetime* series called *Missing*), the *All-American Girl* series, *Avalon High* series (again another sequence of novels bought by Disney and showed on big screens), *Boy Next Door* series etc. The first piece of her trilogy with strong mythological and philosophical roots, *Abandon* (*Abandon*, *Underworld* and *Awaken*) was

published in 2011; the following two books appeared in 2012 and 2013. The trilogy follows Pierce's story, the modern twin of the ancient Persephone, daughter of Demeter and Queen of the Underworld, starting from the moment she first meets John – personifying Hades – as a child until the day of her becoming an adult and taking her place on the throne of the kingdom of the dead.

The trilogy deals with the phenomenon of death, illustrated as a journey of self-search and self-finding. When Pierce first meets John in a cemetery, she is only a seven-year-old girl trying to help a dead bird. John sees some kind of light in her, a positivity he misses from his life, and as a gift, he resurrects the animal, but with his actions, he connects himself to Pierce for an eternity. The first book shows this strange relationship between John and Pierce based on love and hate, fear and solitude. The 15-year-old Pierce dying in her pool makes it possible for the two young people to meet again in the Underworld. However, Pierce is not able to accept her own death yet, nor John's hospitality and escapes from her own fate by tricking the boy and running away. The next chapters follow her own battle with her unconsciousness as Pierce tries to ignore John's memory, but they return from time to time as the girl seems to like to get herself in trouble and risk her own well-being and John feels the need to appear for Pierce. The sexual tension between them is undeniable. John's feelings are clear from the start and as Pierce begins to uncover his human-like sides, she herself falls for this dark, tall and mysterious man. The first book ends with the appearance of the great evils, the army of the Furies, and Pierce must return to the place she never wanted to see again, the Underworld.

The second book follows the first one with Pierce's life somewhere between Heaven and Hell as she tries everything to fit in and find something lovely in the kingdom of darkness while she has to fight the Furies who are about to do anything they can to destroy John and end his reign. Between family, friendship and love, Pierce needs to mature herself and find the right balance between her dreams and her reality. Not only as a girlfriend, daughter or cousin, but also as a ruler, she must realize that the world can be a very dark place and people need to fight if they want to keep the freedom of their souls.

The last part of the trilogy is the tautest point of the war between the forces of good and evil. Putting aside all kind of humanism, Pierce and her group want to efface the Furies once and forever, but the outcome gets risky when the enemy succeeds in hurting not only the mortal ones but the divinities as well. Now Pierce must put aside all her fears if she wants to save the love of her life and the world she lives in and needs to learn how to become greater than the immortals.

On her website, the author shared the exciting news of the possibility of making a movie or a series based on Pierce's and John's journey. Happy readers agree that Cabot's trilogy is a smart way of reusing Greek mythology in a trendy environment. The awards received by Cabot since the start of her writing career (the New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age, the American Library Association Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers, the Tennessee Volunteer State TASL Book Award, the Book Sense Pick, the Evergreen Young Adult Book Award, the IRA/CBC Young Adult Choice, and many others) prove that her style is able to catch the attention of the youth and entertain and educate them at the same time, making her worthy of the fame she gets every day. (<https://www.megcabot.com>)

Appendix 2: A Short Presentation of the Paper *New Clothes, Old Habits. Recreating Persephone's, Hades' and Demeter's Figures in Meg Cabot's Abandon Trilogy*

The paper entitled *New Clothes, Old Habits. Recreating Persephone's, Hades' and Demeter's Figures in Meg Cabot's Abandon Trilogy* is built on the idea of seeing popular fiction as a great method of mixing our heritage from past cultures with the modernity/postmodernity of the 21st century and show the outcome to the average readers. Cabot's teenage trilogy was a good starting point to work on presenting why popular fiction can be treated similarly – not the same way though – as canonic literature. One of my intentions was to show a possible method of analysing a non-canonical work on a higher level, using means that are more professional. Archetypes – as Bolen determines relying on Jung – have always been among us and live within us no matter the time or situation. Their heritage is that of a long-lost world that we carry within ourselves each day. Archetypes determine our behaviour and the way we see and understand our own being and the world around us. These archetypes are often mentioned as universal and as returning personality traits, which with a little work can be recognized in anyone. (Bolen 2008, 10-12)

Dealing with archetypes, the ancient images coming from the magical, mysterious world of Greek culture, mythology and religion and trying to find them in an average, everyday environment made my work even more exciting. Choosing texts that belong to popular fiction instead of a highly valued literary text was based on reasoning and curiosity to see if archetypes are really part of our basic lives. I believe I managed to prove that in fact what they consider low cultural world and popular fictional works are worthwhile challenges, which again proves that

even the least respected and noticed literary layers contain value that we need to observe. The most interesting part of my analysis was discovering the complex triangle between the author, adolescent literature and teenage readers. Books written especially for the youth under 21 have the responsibility of not only entertaining the readers but also of influencing their vision upon the world, themselves and other people. In this way, adolescent literature plays an important part in teenage psychology and is a good method of providing them with the necessary information to shape them in a positive way.

In my paper I gave two examples, one mentioning the theme of death and its possible metaphors in young adult literature, the other one being sexuality as a repetitive subject. Death is one of the themes that teenagers have to handle when growing up and developing, it is part of a self-search process. Even though human beings are described to be fragile mortals, imagining life after death, similarly to the biblical one, suggests the absolute infinity of the soul. Having both a religious and philosophical meaning, penance and the purification of the soul are mentioned in the books along with the message of living a life without regret or sinning. The idea of going to “Heaven” or “Hell” is associated with the thought of every action having its consequences. Pierce’s falling in love with John is not only a love story between two young people but can be understood as accepting the fact that we are not immortal, everything changes, everyone dies.

The protagonist’s battle with her enemies shows how adulthood is full of unpleasing situations and fights; yet, she still accepts her fate and grabs her “sword” to protect her world. Pierce wakes up from her dream of an ideal reality and meets the negative side of life, just as average teenagers and young adults do. Instead of rejecting the change life brought her, she decides to shape this new world and adapt herself to it. Putting away her ego, she learns how to become part of society, trying out new roles (girlfriend, wife and leader). What I believe is the most sympathetic in Pierce is the fact that she can be the role model of feminine individuality.

Maturity is another important theme I discussed in my paper. The maiden and the child archetypes show how one’s personality must go through a few trials of both the exterior and interior worlds. To fight the necessary battles, Pierce cannot remain her child self. Talking about these battles as the ordeals of adulthood, Pierce’s character represents the inner strain of a young person losing her comfort of being a child and of not finding her place in a new, unknown environment. Her story shows the process of growing up: separating from her previous self, she finds herself a new position, instead of being the one who needs help she becomes the one to help.

Sexuality on the other hand is also part of a teenager's life. Feelings and physical contacts are not only social relations, but also influence one's self. The more the adolescent learns about her own sexuality and sexual needs, the more s/he develops. Adolescent literature – and myths too – can help to diminish teenagers' sexual frustrations. I strongly reckon that physicality should not be considered a taboo, not even at young ages. It should be treated as a normal reaction of a maturing body. Young adult texts can serve as educational commentaries regarding the relationship between two people, love/hate, as much as the explanations of a sexual act. Comparing Cabot's version to the original myth also underlines the idea (the need) of consent and equality in a healthy and constructive relationship. The way I highlighted it before, John and Pierce cannot think of absolute commitment as long as one of them tries to be above the other one in the relationship. Only after John lets his dominant male pride go and Pierce accepts her role as female partner can they talk about seriousness and mention children, parenthood and marriage as the unity between the two of them.

Cabot's trilogy is worthy of our attention as it brought a completely new interpretation of the ancient myth. The author used both the Jungian archetypes and the feminist views upon Homer's epic poem and proved that even popular fiction can create a complex fictional reality. Cabot's talent shines through her style of talking to the younger generation in their language while talking about "adult-like" things, she still manages to build up a friendship of sympathy, be a mentor, a teacher, an idol and a confidant. Her literature shows that less complicated can still be well constructed and smartly formed. *Abandon* is a good example of using the knowledge we have in everyday life. Canonic and popular literature are two parallel worlds, one leaning on the other, with an imminent intertextuality always existing, which I think I succeeded to hint at and which I can develop in an upcoming paper.