

**REGRESSUS AD INFEROS – THE TINY MINER AND
MYTHOLOGY AS INTERPRETATION OF THE UNDERGROUND
WORKING HABITUS**

SUMMARY

The twofold nature of sub-surface mining derives from the fact that, although it is a source of relative economic prosperity and well-being, it is also accompanied by actualised fears in the form of accidents in almost all the communities in which the mining occupation is practised. Mythology, as a specific body of beliefs and practices, had the function in pre-industrial communities of alleviating the negative consequences for the miners through *interpretations* of the ore and the working habitat, while the emphasis in mythological interpretations in the industrialised communities is shifted to the underground workers and to their labour. Taking the example of the industrialised Raša coal mines, in this article I present two dominant examples of such visions of the workers in the 20th century. Although stemming from successive and opposing historical Fascist and Socialist orientations, the Bedeaux system and Stahanovism share the common characteristic of reducing the miners/workers to a mere means, without paying heed to the essential know-how of the mining occupation, steeped in traditional rhythms and the techniques for extracting ore.

Key words: sub-surface mining, mythology, *vagina dentata*, *Bedeaux*, *Stahanovism*