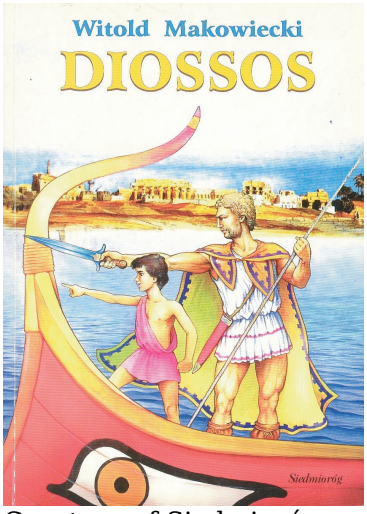
Summary: Karolina Kolinek, Analysis: Karolina Anna Kulpa, "Entry on: Diossos by Witold Makowiecki, Artur Łoboś", peer-reviewed by Katarzyna Marciniak and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/137. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Witold Makowiecki , Artur Łoboś

Diossos

Poland (1950)

TAGS: Ancient Slavery Ancient Warfare Argos (Dog) Caria Corinth Customs of Ancient Greeks Dionysia (Festival) Galleys Greece Greek Colonies Hipponax of Ephesus Marathon Miletus Olympic Games Solon Thales of Miletus



Courtesy of Siedmioróg.

General information	
Title of the work	Diossos
Country of the First Edition	Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Poland; Czech Republic (then Czechoslovakia)
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	1950
First Edition Details	Witold Makowiecki, *Diossos*. Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1950, 240 pp.
ISBN	9788377916438
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Fiction, Historical fiction, Illustrated works, Novels
Target Audience	Children (from the age of 10 years)
Author of the Entry	Summary: Karolina Kolinek, Univeristy of Warsaw, karolinakolinek@student.uw.edu.pl Analysis: Karolina Anna Kulpa, University of Warsaw, k.kulpa@al.uw.edu.pl
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Katarzyna Marciniak, University of Warsaw, kamar@al.uw.edu.pl Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators



Witold Makowiecki , 1902 - 1946
(Author)

Son of Zygmunt, editor at *Goniec*, and Zofia (née Wartałowska). At 17, immediately after finishing Mikołaj Rej High School in Warsaw, he enlisted in the army (205 Infantry Regiment) and came back after a short campaign with damaged lungs. Released from the army, he studied agriculture at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW) graduating as an agricultural engineer. He moved on to study mathematics and physics at the University of Warsaw, as well as painting at the Warsaw School of Fine Arts (since 1932 Academy of Fine Arts). Financial problems forced him to abandon further studies and work at the family estate (Wólka, near Skierniewice). He was married to Wanda (née Bendarzewska); the couple had two children, Adam and Anna. As the estate gradually fails, Witold starts working as a clerk at the Ministry of Rural Reforms and later at other similar government offices. He writes poetry in his free time and wins a prize in a contest organized by the famous Polish weekly *Wiadomości Literackie* in 1934. When WW2 breaks out, he comes back to what is left of the family estate and tries to cultivate the land; his uncompromising attitude soon leads to conflicts with the Germans and he has to leave the estate. He lives with his family in poverty in Skierniewice during the last two years of war. His illness returns and he spends the first post-war year in bed. His wife works as a teacher in Noworadomsk where the family experiences even more acute hardships. He dies at the beginning of 1946 and is buried at Powązki Cemetery. Makowiecki leaves two manuscript novels for young people (see the entries) and a volume of poetry. Written during two and a half years under German occupation, in poverty, ill health, and under the threat of rapidly approaching death, both novels are youthfully serene and full of optimism. They combine fast action with good characters presented with deep and sincere humanity.

Sources:

Bio based on an obituary written after the Author’s demise by his brother Tadeusz Makowiecki, an artist, literary critic, and art

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historian; a manuscript and its typewritten copies are preserved in the Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences, at the Stanisław Staszic Palace in Warsaw, Tadeusz Makowiecki's files. Witold Makowiecki's Niece, Elżbieta Makowiecka (a classical archeologist) kindly provided information on the obituary's existence and location. Karolina Kolinek scanned the documents; the English version by Elżbieta Olechowska.

More about the author: "Makowiecki Witold", in Krystyna Kuliczkowska and Barbara Tylicka, edd., *Nowy słownik literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży*, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1979, 341.

Bio prepared by Karolina Kolinek, Univeristy of Warsaw, karolinakolinek@student.uw.edu.pl



Artur Łoboś (Illustrator)

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Additional information

Translation

Czech:*Tři útěky z Korintu*, trans. Vera Jersáková, Praha: Státni naklad. dêtské knihy, 1961.

Summary

Based on: Katarzyna Marciniak, Elżbieta Olechowska, Joanna Kłos, Michał Kucharski (eds.), *Polish Literature for Children & Young Adults Inspired by Classical Antiquity: A Catalogue*, Faculty of "Artes Liberales", Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2013, 444 pp.

Ancient Corinth, Miletus and other cities upon Aegean Sea during the reign of Polycrates, tyrant of Samos (6th century b.c.). Diossos, a boy from a very poor family, tries to encourage Greeks who arrived for Olympics in Corinth to stay at his home. He meets Melikles and Polinik from Miletus (the main characters of the first Makowiecki's novel *Przygody Meliklesa Greka* [The Adventures of Melikles the Greek]) and they become his guests. Polinik wins the Olympics and falls in love with Eukleja – Diossos' sister. However, he has to leave Corinth immediately because of a quarrel he picked with a local notable. After his and Melikles' departure, the family of Diossos is imprisoned for debts but Diossos manages to escape. He decides to go to Miletus and ask Polinik to ransom his family. He wanders across mountains and forests with his huge dog Argos. With the help of highlanders living near Mount Parnassus and corsairs who sail near Samos and Miletus, he finally arrives at the house of Polinik. Greeks from Miletus, impressed by Diossos' bravery, decide to help the boy. They set off on an expedition to Corinth and using many devious means set free the whole family. Polinik marries Eukleja and brings her mother and brother to his home. However, because all Greeks involved in the rescue of Diossos' family are being pursued by the Corinthian officials, Melikles joins his companions and leaves Miletus on his ship with the intention to settle near the mountains of Persia and to assist in the trade between Miletus and Media.

Analysis

Like *The Adventures of Melikles the Greek*, the novel *Diossos* is also situated in ancient Greece, an exciting escape from the hardships under the German occupation of WW2.

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The author, breaking with the usage he established in the first novel, does not define people's behaviour by their origin and background. For example, being Greek does not mean being someone positive: we met an evil rich man Choreos from Corinth and a brave Polinik from Miletus, on other hand, the virtuous pirate Wejanus is from Etruria, the loyal main character Diossos is half-Carian, half-Greek. The topic of race comes up only in the context of the Isthmian Games when Polinik as a contestant has to prove his Hellenic origin. But we notice also the parallel between slavery in ancient Corinth and Nazi ideology. The slaves in the novel are people born outside of Greece or have, like Diossos, an "inferior" origin. We may assume that the author writes alludes to the contemporary situation of Poles and Jews in the occupied Poland of WW2. Germans the "master-race" treated Jews, Slavs and Gypsies as their inferiors, a race of slaves, or sub-humans. In one scene Makowiecki shows Choreos killing his young Syrian slave during a banquet because the boy spilt wine on him. The guests while disgusted do not otherwise react, except Polinik. A parallel to the situation during WW2, when for a German, taking the life of a Jew was not a punishable offence but a minor daily occurrence. Also, nobody seems to expect that Diossos and his family who are perceived as "outsiders" in Corinth, would receive any help.

The novel is about freedom, friendship, and loyalty, the most important values in our life. We find there various examples of people fighting for freedom. The main character, a young boy, runs away from slavery for debts and travels to the distant Miletus to rescue his loved ones. When he arrives to the farm of Kilon, who offers him shelter for a couple of days, Diossos hears a story about the fight with eupatridae, the well-born Athenian landowners for banning the slavery for debts which happened decades earlier during Dionysia. His canine friend, Argos, named after Odysseus' dog broke his chain and run away from the sadistic owner Terpnos. There are also several examples of loyalty and friendship. Melikles and Polinik from Miletus swear to the gods that they would rescue or avenge Diossos, who suffered and was jailed for helping them escape from Corinth. The pirate Wejanus helped to liberate Diossos and his family because when he was a galley slave, he was rescued by Melikles (see *The Adventures of Melikles the Greek*). Also the dog Argos is loyal to Diossos who once released him from a trap.

Between the two world wars, Latin was a compulsory subject in Polish secondary schools and Polish educational system emphasised the importance of classical culture.* So at the time the novel was written,

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the young readers were probably familiar with Latin words and references to ancient history and culture, such as the battle of Marathon, Dionysia and reforms of Solon. After WW2 the communist government began reducing the hours of Latin at school.** For the younger generation in 1950 when the book was published ancient names for objects and people (e.g. helot, krater) used by the author had to be explained in a glossary. Possibly, Makowiecki once more present the model for young readers how to behave under totalitarian rule, See the analysis of Makowiecki's *The Adventures of Melikles the Greek* in the Survey.

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* See Wanda Popiak, *Łacina i greka w polskiej szkole w latach 1919–1939*, Warszawa: Centrum Doskonalenia Nauczycieli im. Władysława Spasowskiego, 1990.

** More in: Barbara Brzuska, "Latin and Politics in People's Poland" in David Movrin and Elżbieta Olechowska, eds., *Classic and Class*, Warszawa: DiG, 2016, 229– 286.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Ancient Slavery Ancient Warfare Argos (Dog) Caria Corinth Customs of Ancient Greeks Dionysia (Festival) Galleys Greece Greek Colonies Hipponax of Ephesus Marathon Miletus Olympic Games Solon Thales of Miletus

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture

Adversity Animals Child, children Family Heroism History Love Morality Oppression Relationships Society Survival Travel

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Further Reading

Brzuska, Barbara, "Latin and Politics in People's Poland" in David Movrin, Elżbieta Olechowska, eds., *Classic and Class,* Warsaw: DiG, 2016, 229– 286.

Popiak, Wanda, *Łacina i greka w polskiej szkole w latach 1919–1939*, Warszawa: Centrum Doskonalenia Nauczycieli im. Władysława

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Spasowskiego, 1990.

Addenda

Entry prepared on edition: Witold Makowiecki, *Diossos*. Wrocław: Siedmiorόg, 1999, 240 pp.

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