Summary: Karolina Kolinek, Analysis: Karolina Anna Kulpa, "Entry on: The Adventures of Melikles the Greek [Przygody Meliklesa Greka] by Witold Makowiecki, Robert Pawlicki", 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/138. Entry version as of November 12, 2026.

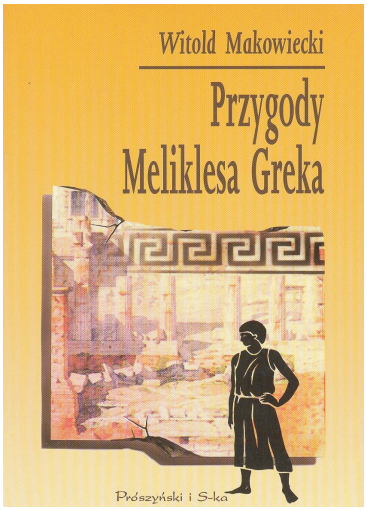
Witold Makowiecki , Robert Pawlicki

The Adventures of Melikles the Greek [Przygody Meliklesa Greka]

Poland (1947)

TAGS: Ancient Slavery Ancient Warfare Cyrene Egypt Egyptians Eleusinian Mysteries Greece Greek Colonies Greek History Medes Miletus Phoenicia Sparta Spartans Syracuse





Cover designed by the illustrator Robert Pawlicki; courtesy of Prószyński i Ska.

General information	
Title of the work	The Adventures of Melikles the Greek [Przygody Meliklesa Greka]
Country of the First Edition	Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Poland; Czech Republic (then Czechoslovakia)
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	1947
First Edition Details	Witold Makowiecki, *Przygody Meliklesa Greka*. Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1947, 288 pp.
ISBN	Unavailable for the first edition published before 1970 the date ISBN was introduced
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

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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

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brother Tadeusz Makowiecki, an artist, literary critic, and art 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



Robert Pawlicki (Illustrator)

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Additional information

Translation

Czech: *Přihody Řeka Melikla*, trans. Vera Jersáková, Praha: Státni naklad. dêtské knihy, 1959.

2nd ed. Praha: Albatros, 1974.

Slovak: *Dobrodružstvá Gréka Melikla*, trans. Hilda Holinová, Bratislava: Mladé Letá, 1989.

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.

The Mediterranean basin during the last years of the reign of the pharaoh Apries (ca 570 BC). Melikles, a 16-year old Greek from Miletus, is kidnapped by Phoenician corsairs and sold as a slave in Carthage. Kallias, a sailor from Syracuse, buys the boy with the help of Nehurabhed, a Median high priest. Nehurabhed heads for Egypt as an envoy to negotiate peace in the conflict between Greeks and Egyptians and brings Melikles with him. Unfortunately, Phoenicians who also interfere in Egyptian politics follow Nehurabhed and try to trap him on board of a Spartan ship on which he travels to Egypt. Melikles, resourceful and brave, and forever grateful to his saviour, helps Nehurabhed to escape. They have many adventures during their long journey; Melikles learns the customs of other cultures and grows wiser. As a sailor's son, he impresses his companions with his knowledge of marine navigation and ship-building. He also demonstrates his tenacity and sympathy for people who suffer. He saves the life of Nehurabhed and Kallias, and finally ends up in a Greek military contingent fighting deceitful Egyptians who kidnapped the children of the Greek soldiers. The Greeks conquered the Egyptian city of Sais where the children were imprisoned. Melikles fights bravely at the side of his new friend – Polinik, son of the Greek commander. A sister of Polinik, the beautiful Anyte is among the saved children; she falls in love with Melikles. The young hero, demonstrating his maturity and sense of responsibility, repairs an old ship on which he sails to Miletus. When he reaches his destination and is finally reunited with his family, the father of Anyte, who had been

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observing Melikles from his ship, agrees to the marriage of Melikles to his daughter.

Analysis

The author brings the readers to ancient times, so different from the dark, difficult years of WWII, when the text had been written. However, there are obvious parallels with people living in the twentieth century and those 2,500 years earlier, particularly between ancient slaves and people living under Nazi or Soviet occupation. The book is about freedom as the most important and universal value for humanity. Despite the fact that the characters live in different times and worship other goods, universal values of freedom and humanitas remain the same. The author highlighted these values in the makeup of his characters. In this world, seen as black and white, people's behaviour is defined by their origin and background. And so Phoenicians are evil, they enslave others and are intent on to taking over other nations using corruption and intrigues. Medes are wise, thoughtful and mysterious; Egyptians are week, almost overwhelmed by the incompetent rule of pharaoh Apries. In contrast, Greeks, e.g. citizens of Cyrene or Syracuse, are full of joy and happiness, they believe in "sunny gods" who are a better version of mortals. They are the only ones who know how to live a happy life and teach others, like the Egyptians, how to raise their civilisation from ruins.

There is one exception though among all Greek nations: the Spartans who are famous for their military prowess and bravery, in this novel are presented as cruel and merciless. When Melikles is in the house of Kalias during the feast, guests discuss which of the Greek polis is the greatest. Arkesilas, a crippled but talented artist, condemns the system of Spartan education which was the cause of his family's break up: his mother decided to rescue him and escape with him from Sparta. Like the Phoenicians, Spartan sailors are the villains of Makowiecki's novel. They use galley slaves, including other Greeks, which is unacceptable for Melikles and for that reason he helps several slaves to escape. He implies that he prefers to die fighting then become once again a slave. This young man had lost his father on the sea but still believes, that a sailor's life is synonymous with happiness and freedom. He is prepared to fight and die for the idea of freedom. Melikles tells his friend Polinik that a sailor can be truly free, get to know other countries and nations, become the helmsman of his own boat and life.

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	When the author uses ancient words for ancient objects (e.g. amphora and obol), they are explained in an enclosed glossary. Stereotypical images of ancient nations are used for didactic purposes. Makowiecki paints an interesting portrayal of ancient times, presenting different religions and customs, including Greeks holidays and Egyptian punishment for sacrilege. He shows on the example of Egypt, rulers overwhelmed by corrupt advisors. He also places the Greeks as an example of joyous people, ready to make a sacrifice for their loved ones. Possibly, it was meant to serve as a model for young readers how to behave under totalitarian rule, the Nazi occupation and later under the communist government and Soviet threat in Poland. Unfortunately, the author who died before the novel's publication had no opportunity to comment on this question.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Ancient Slavery Ancient Warfare Cyrene Egypt Egyptians Eleusinian Mysteries Greece Greek Colonies Greek History Medes Miletus Phoenicia Sparta Spartans Syracuse
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Family Freedom Friendship Gender expectations/construction Heroism History Love Oppression Society Survival Teenagers
Addenda	A fragment, entitled "Opowiadanie Arkesilaosa" [Arkesilaos' Tale] was published in *Płomień* 4 (1946): 105–110.

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