Summary: Magdalena Glinicka, Analysis: Marta Pszczolińska, "Entry on: The Adventures of Odysseus During his Return from the Siege of Troy [Przygody Odysseusza w powrocie do domu z pod Troi] by Aniela Orzechowska [Jan Oksza, Oksza] ", peer-reviewed by Katarzyna Marciniak and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1533. Entry version as of October 31, 2026.

Aniela Orzechowska [Jan Oksza, Oksza]

The Adventures of Odysseus During his Return from the Siege of Troy [Przygody Odysseusza w powrocie do domu z pod Troi]

Congress Poland, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria (1910)

TAGS: Homer Odysseus / Ulysses Odyssey Trojan War





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	The Adventures of Odysseus During his Return from the Siege of Troy [Przygody Odysseusza w powrocie do domu z pod Troi]
Country of the First Edition	Austro-Hungarian Empire, Congress Poland, Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria
Country/countries of popularity	Poland, Congress Poland, Austro-Hungarian Empire
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	1910
First Edition Details	Oksza, *Przygody Odysseusza w powrocie do domu z pod Troi,* "Bibljoteczka młodzieży szkolnej" 131. Warszawa: Nakład Gebethnera i Wolffa; Kraków: G. Gebethner i Spółka, 1910, 61 pp.
ISBN	Not applicable for editio princeps
Genre	Adaptation of classical texts*
Target Audience	Children (school children)
Author of the Entry	Summary: Magdalena Glinicka, University of Warsaw, muktaa.phala@gmail.com Analysis: Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl

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Creators



Oksza coat of arms. Zbigniew Leszczyc, *Herby szlachty polskiej.* T. 2, Poznań: Antoni Fiedler, 1908, 177 (accessed November 27, 2022).

Aniela Orzechowska [Jan Oksza, Oksza] , 19th cent. - 20th cent. (Author)

A poet, writer and essayist. Author of press articles on Polish Romantic poets. Her pen-name was borrowed from her family Coat of Arms: Oksza (in a red field, a battle-axe, with blade turned to the right).

Bio prepared by Małgorzata Glinicka, University of Warsaw, muktaa.phala@gmail.com

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Additional information

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 author presents the epic as an excellent introduction to the culture of Ancient Greece (customs, such as hospitality, beliefs, vision of the Underworld). The text provides a precise summary of Homer's *Odyssey*, interspersed with quotations from the poem, translated by Lucjan Siemieński (1807–1877), a Polish Romantic poet, writer and literary critic, published in 1873 under the title of *Odysseja*.

Analysis

The author prepared an interesting summary of the *Odyssey* in prose, aimed at school children within the series *Bibljoteczka młodzieży szkolnej* [School Children Library]. The series can be compared with the British *Books for the Bairns* (published by W.T. Stead) or the French collection *Les livres roses pour la jeunesse* (published by Librairie Larousse), first edited approximately at the same time. Such collections included school readers, excerpts/adaptations of "adult" literature, stories, tales and legends of various nations. The Polish series published by Gebethner & Wolff in Warsaw (these days Congress Poland, part of the Russian Empire) and Cracow (part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) targeted slightly older readers than its British and French equivalents and contained more history but achieved the same goal: to be a useful teaching tool, adapted to the readers' age.

The rendering of Homer's *Odyssey* (no. 131 in the collection) was published later than the summary of the *Iliad* (no. 129). The following issues also contained tales about Greek and Roman gods (no. 136), Greek demigods and heroes (no. 137), Greek tales according to Ovid (no. 138). Not many volumes deal with Antiquity, as the majority contain patriotic and historical topics; the editor decided that they are an important part of children's education, a must for the Polish child of that period.

The author abridged the entire *Odyssey* to only 60 pages, preserving most of the key subplots, allowing them various lengths and not the

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same importance as they have in the original. First of all, the author presents Odysseus' adventures in chronological order. This strategy eliminates flashbacks and retrospective tales within tales, characteristic of Homer's epic, to facilitate remembering events. Her intention here is not to faithfully follow the original but rather to show Odysseus' journey as the reflection of Greek customs, laws, ideas and concepts such as virtue, good and beauty; the reader learns about the Greek world through this fabulous story (p. 3). At the same time, she treats Homeric characters as examples of good or bad behaviour to be applauded or punished.

The adventures are divided into nine sections covering events from the fall of Troy to Odysseus' wise rule over Ithaca that brought prosperity to its inhabitants. *Telemachy* is placed in a separate chapter according to the timeline when the protagonist stays at Calypso's. The first adventures are described briefly: *nostoi*, the visits to the lands of Cicones, Lotophagoi, Cyclopes, Aeolus, Laestrygonians, and Circe are compressed into two short chapters (ten pages altogether). Similarly, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, the sacrilege at Helios' island, the tempest and the stay at Calypso's are shortened to only four pages. In comparison, the description of Odysseus meeting Nausicaa is eleven pages long, including eight long quotations.

The way other female characters, that Odysseus meets, are portrayed could be a reason for focusing on Nausicaa as a leading female character. Circe and Calypso are not highlighted probably because they do not fit the traditional family model – they are independent women living on their own and having extramarital romantic relationships. They are shown briefly among other encounters. Nausicaa, however, and her mother, queen Arete, are shown as examples of how a woman should behave. These noble women are devoted to family duties, including performing all chores, despite their royal station. The author points out that "married women [were] occupied with making fabrics, and girls of the household had the duty to clean the house and wash clothes. A royal daughter participated in these occupations, and from time to time, she went with the other maidens to spend the whole day doing laundry"* (p. 31). Orzechowska quotes Homer's description of the queen Arete who spins wool (p. 32) and of the royal laundry. The queen is respected by her husband, children, and their subjects and appears so influential in Phaeacia that the goddess Athena praises her womanly virtues and personal

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wisdom. The focus on the Phaeacian women is so strong that even Penelope appears less distinguished, although the events in Ithaca provide an opportunity to develop her character further. What is important, no female character, not even Circe, is described using pejorative epithets as “deceitful”, and no negative judgement can be found. On the contrary, Circe is described as “kind” and “hospitable”(p. 13) and Calypso as “friendly”. Even though she “imprisoned him [Odysseus] for nine years” (p. 23), nothing improper is suggested about her character. Similarly, the story of the Ithacan maids who were friendly with the suitors is softened: Odysseus, “having punished unfaithful servants, ordered the chamber cleansed and fumigated” (p. 59) avoiding the drastic details of the maids’ misdeeds and punishment. The author also glosses over the harshest and gorier details of the *Odyssey*.

The quotations from Homer introduce the epic rhythm and show the reader that Homer is relatively easy to read for young people, encouraging them to reach for his works in the future. The quotations are numerous and include dialogues between characters (Odysseus – the spirit of his mother, Athena – Nausicaa, Odysseus – Telemachus), descriptions of natural phenomena (sea storms), customs (laundry, hospitality), people (Arete, Eumaeus), places (Alkinoos’ mansion), or action (the final feast with the archery contest).

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* Jak bowiem zamężne kobiety zajmowały się wyrabianiem tkanin, tak dziewczęta domowe czuwać były obowiązane nad czystością i praniem szat. Córa królewska tak samo winna była o tem pamiętać i co pewien czas jeździła z dziewczętami na cały dzień do pralni …

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Homer Odysseus / Ulysses Odyssey Trojan War

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant

Adventure Adversity Death Homesickness Journeys Punishment

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for Children and Youth Culture

Further Reading

Homer, *Odyseja* (wybór), transl. by Lucjan Siemieński, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1981 (ed. pr. 1873).

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