Summary: Magdalena Łokieć, Analysis: Marta Pszczolińska, "Entry on: The Greece of Gods and Heroes [Grecja bogów i herosów] by Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak", peer-reviewed by Katarzyna Marciniak and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1388. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak

The Greece of Gods and Heroes [Grecja bogów i herosów]

Poland (2000)

TAGS: Achilles Actaeon Aethra Agamemnon Amphitrite Apollo Argos / Argus Panoptes (Giant) Ariadne Artemis Athena Atlas Cronus / Kronos Demeter Dionysus / Dionysos Gaia / Gaea Ganymede Hades Helen Hera Heracles Hermes Hesiod Hestia Homer Horae Io Jason Leto Medea Medusa Minos Minotaur Mnemosyne Moirai Muses Nemesis Niobe Odysseus / Ulysses Oedipus Ouranos / Uranus Paris (Trojan Prince) Persephone Perseus Poseidon Prometheus Rhea Themis Theseus Zeus



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General information	
Title of the work	The Greece of Gods and Heroes [Grecja bogów i herosów]
Country of the First Edition	Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Poland
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	2000
First Edition Details	Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak, *Grecja bogów i herosów*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2000, 48 pp.
ISBN	8370237916
Genre	Album
Target Audience	Crossover (school children, teenagers, young adults)
Author of the Entry	Summary: Magdalena Łokieć, University of Warsaw, magdalena.anna.lokiec@student.uw.edu.pl. Analysis: Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

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Creators



Photograph retrieved from the website of Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa im. J.A. Komeńskiego in Leszno, kronika.pwsz.edu.pl (accessed: February 9, 2013, no longer active).

Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak , b. 1957
(Author)

Classical philologist, translator of Latin poetry into Polish, promoter of Antiquity: wrote on neo-Latin literature (16th –17th century); his texts demonstrate continuity of the European culture through usage of ancient motifs in modern art; he is the author of a book on the Latin language and its function in Polish culture *Łacina w kulturze polskie*j [Latin in Polish Culture], 1998; until 2009 scientific director of Collegium Europaeum Gnesnense (Institute of European Culture), since 2012 Deputy-Rector for Scholarship and Development of Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa im. J.A. Komeńskiego [J.A. Komeński State School of Higher Vocational Education] in Leszno (west-central Poland).

Sources:

Aleksander Mikołajczak (filolog) available at: Wikipedia.org (accessed: February 13, 2013).

Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak available at: lubimyczytać.pl (accessed: February 13, 2013).

Prorektor ds. Nauki i Rozwoju – dr hab. Aleksander Mikołajczak, prof. nadzw., available at: pwsz.edu.pl (accessed: March 20, 2013).

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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.

A compilation of Greek myths, abundantly illustrated (photographs of mythology-inspired art, ancient and modern). In the beginning there was Chaos, from which Gaia, Tartarus and Eros emerged. Gaia gave birth to and married Uranos. They had many children, the youngest of which, Cronus, took over from his father after injuring him. Then, after wars and battles, Cronus' son, Zeus and his siblings became the rulers of the world. Zeus was married to Hera but had many lovers and many children – gods and heroes. One of his children, Athena, after defeating Poseidon became the patron of Athens. Another, Hercules, completed twelve arduous and miraculous labours. Hercules also met Theseus, Aegeus' son, who defeated the Minotaur and helped Oedipus in Athens. Oedipus reached Athens after leaving Thebes, where he had unwittingly lived with his mother as his wife, but fled when he found out the truth. Then, there are stories of Jason, Perseus, and the Trojan War. The War began after Paris kidnapped Helen, the queen of Sparta. The War was long and resulted in many victims, and after the defeat of Troy, another hero, Odysseus, could not return home for ten years.

Analysis

Grecja bogów i herosów is part of a general interest collection, *Tego nie ma w podręczniku* [You Won't Find This in a Textbook]. In the form of a richly illustrated album, the author presents 23 mythological chapters in a chronological sequence. Every two pages, there is a short story on the left and on the right and above the text-rich iconography relevant to the tale, including works of art, drawings, or photographs of important places associated with the story. A short supplementary text accompanies each illustration providing additional information. The author places the myths in "chronological" order, starting from the creation of the world, its origins, the genealogy and stories of particular gods and heroes, concluding with the Homeric epic and the Trojan cycle. Based on the most popular myths and the minor ones, the book, despite its modest size (only 48 pp.), contains

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plenty of information.

The content of the book corresponds to the title of the collection. Among many interesting details, which are rarely presented in school textbooks about Greek mythology because of their lower importance, immoral or too brutal elements, the author discusses subplots and details often omitted and reveals them according to ancient sources. This way, the motif of castration (and not "mutilation", or "injury") of Cronus appears, Aphrodite is told to be conceived of the semen from Ouranos' cut-off genitalia, Artemis' name is explained to have originated from *artamos* – a butcher. Zeus and Poseidon have countless love affairs, Heracles' madness makes him murder his family, and Pasiphae's lust for a bull is not glossed over either. Moreover, the works of art selected to illustrate the text show the drastic details explicitly, complementing the described situation and at the same time familiarizing the reader with the reception of Greek myths in art; for example, Vasari's fresco *The Mutilation of Uranus by Saturn* (Palazzo Vecchio, Firenze), and paintings – Goya's *Saturn Devouring His Son* (Prado, Madrid), Rubens' *Prometheus Bound* (Philadelphia Museum of Art) or Caravaggio's *Medusa* (Uffizi, Firenze).

In adapting Greek myths for school children, Mikołajczak selects tools which attract children's attention: interesting and witty titles of chapters, an abundance of trivia absent in pompous textbooks, a light narrative style (informal but informative), simple, clear and elegant language, and a deliberate choice of colourful images. What adds to the cognitive value of the book are illustrations of myths supported by many excerpts from ancient authors, such as Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Pindar, Herodotus, Euripides, Plato, Apollonius, Ovid and Pausanias. This allows the readers to familiarise themselves with the original sources (unfortunately, the translators' names are not provided). The author also quotes known writers, like Joachim du Bellay, Giambattista Marino, Percy Shelley, Jan Parandowski or Polish poets – Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Bolesław Leśmian and Bohdan Zadura. All the quotations, as well as philological and cultural explanations, fit the informative style of the book, and at the same time, preserve the coherence of the narrative.

Mikołajczak's extensive knowledge of Greek myths and literature, in general, allows him to select curiosities compatible with the title of the collection, *You Won't Find This in a Textbook* and makes the book

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	a valuable source of easily accessible knowledge of the Greek mythical world.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Achilles Actaeon Aethra Agamemnon Amphitrite Apollo Argos / Argus Panoptes (Giant) Ariadne Artemis Athena Atlas Cronus / Kronos Demeter Dionysus / Dionysos Gaia / Gaea Ganymede Hades Helen Hera Heracles Hermes Hesiod Hestia Homer Horae Io Jason Leto Medea Medusa Minos Minotaur Mnemosyne Moirai Muses Nemesis Niobe Odysseus / Ulysses Oedipus Ouranos / Uranus Paris (Trojan Prince) Persephone Perseus Poseidon Prometheus Rhea Themis Theseus Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Conflict Family Heritage Heroism Journeys Judgement Life Love Parents (and children) Punishment Relationships Siblings Violence
Further Reading	Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica*, (eBook based on: Seaton, R.C., ed., trans., *Apollonius Rhodius: Argonautica*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1912) (accessed: September 2, 2021). Hesiod, *Theogony, Works and Days*, trans. M. L. West, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988 (accessed: November 19, 2021). Homer, *The Odyssey with an English Translation by A.T. Murray, PH.D. in two volumes*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, London: William Heinemann, 1919. Avaliable online: Greek: perseus.tufts.edu (accessed: January 21, 2021). English: perseus.tufts.edu (accessed: January 21, 2021).

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