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Nicolas Presl

# Priape

*Switzerland (2006)*

TAGS: Anagnorisis Antigone Greek Homosexuality Greek Religion Oedipus Priapus Tragedy (Ancient)

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

| General information | |
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| *Title of the work* | Priape |
| *Country of the First Edition* | Switzerland |
| *Country/countries of popularity* | Poland, Switzerland |
| *Original Language* | - |
| *First Edition Date* | 2006 |
| *First Edition Details* | Nicolas Presl, *Priape*. Geneva: Atrabile, 2006, 208 pp. |
| *ISBN* | 9782940329274 |
| *Genre* | Comics (Graphic works), Graphic novels, Mythological comics, Myths |
| *Author of the Entry* | Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@student.uw.edu.pl |
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## Creators

**Nicolas Presl , b. 1976**
**(Artist)**

Nicolas Presl was born in Vendée in 1976. He graduated in Arts at Haute-Bretagne University in Rennes. He started his career as a stone mason, yet later became a well-known French author of graphic novels created with a very characteristic drawing manner – inspired, as he claims, by George Grosz, Pablo Picasso and Francis Picabia – with stories based on his outstanding erudition. His other works are: *Divine colonie* (2008) with the plot set in 15th-century Italy and an unnamed African colony; *Fabrica* (2009) situated in a huge military factory and *Les fils de l'ours père* (2010). In 2010 he also started collaborating as a teacher with the French Victor-Hugo High School in Sophia, Bulgaria.

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## Additional information

Translation

Polish (edition, not translation, as this graphic novel does not include text; only the title is translated): *Priap*, Kraków: Lokator, 2014.

Summary

The story is set in Greco-Roman times. A child is born to a family living in the city. It is a boy with an extremely large penis – the family is horrified. The father orders the newborn Priapus to be abandoned in the wild. A shepherd finds the boy and decides to raise him together with his son. Unfortunately for the boy, he is mistreated by his foster father and bullied by his foster brother. On top of that, the foster brother wins the heart of a girl that Priapus desires. In despair, he escapes to the city. He immediately becomes fascinated by the city's diversity, but he lacks the money to live there. An older wealthy man invites Priapus to live in his house and then initiates him to an intellectual circle that he belongs to. Priapus soon becomes the object of the homoerotic affection of his host, but he declines his sexual attention.

Meanwhile, Priapus' foster brother comes to the city as well and becomes a soldier. Shortly after, Priapus is attracted to another older man from the philosopher's circle, and he lets the man seduce him. It turns out to be a painfully short affair – among other things since Priapus' lover is married. Desperate, the boy decides to kill the man's wife. After the murder, a female servant recognizes Priapus as the child abandoned in the wild (thanks to a lock of hair she put in a small vessel years earlier). Unfortunately, Priapus' lover is his biological father – when he comes back home, he finds out that his wife is dead and that he had unwittingly committed incest with his son.

The next pages of the novel present a cathartic projection that seems to take place in Priapus' and his father's minds at the same time. At the theatrical stage, Priapus' father sees his wife giving birth to a boy who gets rid of her umbilical cord; meanwhile, Priapus experiences ridicule, scorn, and beatings by people.

Immediately after that, in the real world of the story, the father commits suicide; Priapus' foster brother, the soldier, arrives to arrest him; shocked and outraged, he gouges Priapus' eyes out. Finally, the man who took Priapus at the beginning of the story decides to care for



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| | the blind youth. They leave together and live as beggars not far from the city gates. |
| Analysis | The graphic novel retells Oedipus' story with a reversal: Priapus does not kill his father but his mother, and he does not marry his mother but becomes his father's lover. What is more, the man in love with Priapus is similar to Antigone in his decision to leave the city with the blind boy – this is just what Oedipus' daughter did for her father.<br><br>It is possible to raise doubts about whether Presl's story is an example of children's and young adults' literature, as it contains a great deal of sexual and violent content. However, it must be emphasized that the novel has the ambition of being educational in dealing with an issue that is typical for YA literature: distinguishing more superficial attractions from deeper affection and attachments. Also, like many narratives for children, the novel deals with the problem of how painful the process of growing up can be. |
| Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts | Anagnorisis Antigone Greek Homosexuality Greek Religion Oedipus Priapus Tragedy (Ancient) |
| Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture | Abandonment Coming of age Gaining understanding LGBTQI Love Maturity Orphans Rejection Violence |
| Further Reading | Xavier, Guilbert, *Nicolas Presl [interview]*, "du9: l'autre bande dessinée", February 2009, available online at www.du9.org (accessed: August 3, 2018).<br><br>Pindel,Tomasz, "Bez słów: trzy razy Nicolas Presl" [REVIEW], *Kultura Liberalna* 277(17/2014), 29.04.2014 (at *Kulturaliberalna.pl*, accessed: November 30, 2016). |



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