Summary: Adam Ciołek, Analysis: Marta Pszczolińska, "Entry on: Mythology [Mitologia] by Natan Glücksberg", peer-reviewed by Katarzyna Marciniak and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1137. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

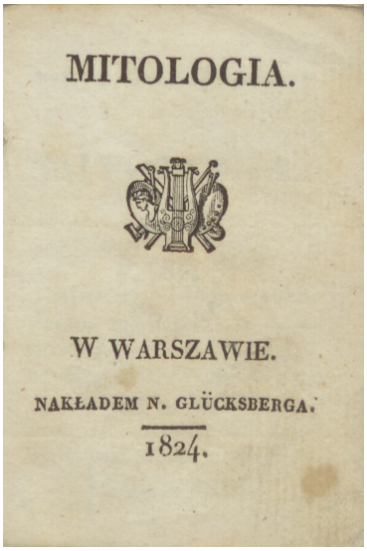
Natan Glücksberg

Mythology [Mitologia]

Congress Poland (1824)

TAGS: Aeolus Apollo Argonauts Ariadne Atlas Bacchus Cerberus Ceres Daedalus Diana Heracles Hercules Jason Juno Jupiter Mercury Minerva Minos Minotaur Nemesis Neptune Pan Pluto / Plouton Proserpina Sisyphus Themis Theseus Venus Vulcan





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General information	
Title of the work	Mythology [Mitologia]
Country of the First Edition	Congress Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Congress Poland, Poland, Russian Empire
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	1824
First Edition Details	[Anonymous], *Mitologia. Biblioteczka dla dobrych dzieci zawierająca historyą polską, historyą naturalną, jeografią, mitologią, powieści i teatr: w 9 małych tomikach: z 30 rycinami*. Warszawa: Nakładem N. Glücksberga, 1824, 93 pp.
Available Onllne	polona.pl (accessed: October 19, 2020)
Genre	Anthology*, Myths
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Summary: Adam Ciołek, University of Warsaw, adamciolek@student.uw.edu.pl Analysis: Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl
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Creators



Natan Glücksberg , 1780 - 1831
(Publisher)

Natan Glücksberg, a well-known publisher and official bookseller and typographer of the Royal Warsaw University (1816-1831), closed as part of the reprisals by the Russian government after the November Uprising. He published about 220 books, of which about one hundred titles of Polish *belles lettres*. He was a vocal champion of Jewish rights in Poland and took part in several formal requests to the authorities for civic and political rights for Polish Jews. In 1818, he obtained a rare royal privilege giving him the right to purchase real estate in all cities of the kingdom. While his sons and one daughter became members of the Evangelical Reformed Church and he himself favoured assimilation for Polish Jews, he never converted to Christianity. His publishing house and bookstore was dispersed after his death even though his sons remained active in the book industry. His youngest son, Gustaw Leon, opened a publishing house and bookstore in Warsaw in 1839 and among other titles continued the series *The Library for Good Children*.

Source:

Polski Słownik Judaistyczny, consulted October 19, 2020 at the website of the Jewish Historical Institute.

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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.

One of the oldest books in Polish about mythology designed specifically for children. It is part of *Biblioteczka dla dobrych dzieci* [A Library for Good Children] — a series of small format books (7,3 x 5,2 cm) presenting basic information about culture, history, geography, mythology and natural science. The goal of the publication about mythology is to explain mythical characters in literature and arts. Author states that proper knowledge of mythology is necessary because without it culture will be unintelligible. It includes a catalogue of about 40 deities and 3 heroes (Hercules, Theseus, and Jason). Every description of a deity presents its genealogy, scope of power and iconography. In some cases the most important myths connected with the deity are presented, e.g. the passage about Ceres relates the story of Proserpina's abduction; the one about Pluto describes the Underworld; and the account of Diana and her temple in Ephesus serves as an introduction to the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Besides major Olympian gods, the book describes also minor "rustic" deities, e.g. Pomona, Vertumnus, Terminus, as well as iconography of personifications, e.g. Glory, Fortune, Hope, Faith.

Analysis

The book presents a very short catalogue of ancient gods and deities to familiarize children with mythology, necessary to understand an important part of the art or the literature, incomprehensible without that knowledge. Published first in 1824, by Natan Glücksberg, a well-known publisher and official bookseller and typographer of the Royal Warsaw University (1816–1831), the booklet contains not only genealogical links between ancient characters, their attributes, portrayals (including 3 full page engravings) and domains of power/reign, but also reveals the attitude of early 19th-century society, and is a precious source for social and cultural studies of the period.

The unknown author (possibly Glücksberg himself?) presents his worldview in the short preface using a phrase at the beginning:

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"Mythology is a discipline which introduces us to deities worshipped by pagan Romans and Greeks."* (p. 5). First, the word used here: "bożek" (see here, accessed: October 19, 2020) is a diminutive of "bóg" – "god", but means a pagan god (or a false god) or a representation of one. Second, "pagan Romans and Greeks'' emphasize the non-Judeo-Christian character of their beliefs, even somehow marking the contrast to later, Christian Antiquity. The order "Romans and Greeks" indicates a preference for Roman onomastics, as Latin versions of names were more popular in Poland at the time of the publication.

Further information reveals the attitude of the author to customs and morality, for example towards women, illegitimate progeny or male infidelity. In this version of the myth, Saturn devours only his sons (was the author reluctant to talk about such ultimate aggression towards girls?). Rhea shows him Juno, Jupiter's twin, and gives him a stone to swallow instead. When Jupiter marries Juno, his sister (p. 15), a moral judgment is expressed, as the very next sentence states that this is the beginning of the Bronze Age and the decay of morals spreading over the earth, suggesting a causal connection between the incestuous marriage between siblings and moral decline. What is interesting, however, is that Jupiter is described as the father of many sons and daughters, there is no mention that some of them are born outside of wedlock. He made Juno his spouse "which he later regretted very much" (p. 19)**, as she proved to be malicious, proud and unrelenting in hatred and vengeance, she was annoying her husband with her jealousy (p. 19)***, apparently for no reason as the issue of Jupiter's continuous cheating is not mentioned in this paragraph as the cause of her behaviour. The fact of Jupiter siring illegitimate children is revealed when the author presents Apollo and the seduction of Latone (p. 25), and later the origin of the Hours (p. 27), the Muses (p. 30), Bacchus (p. 41), Mercury (p. 43), and Hercules (p. 81). Juno is again presented as wrathful and vindictive, as she doesn't want her husband's lover or illegitimate child to find a safe haven on earth. The image of Jupiter as *pater familias*, a ruler of children's lives, reaffirms the image of the 19th-century male-dominated world. It is not an accident, not Juno's acting, it's Jupiter, who is told to reject Vulcan, an "awful/ugly and shapeless child". Jupiter "forgets that he is his father; the push of his leg made the boy lame forever. He would have undoubtedly perished if people of Lemnos had not welcomed him." (pp. 45, 46)****. What is more, Venus, one of the most powerful Roman goddesses, a divine ancestor

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of Rome, is presented just as the goddess of love (not of beauty) in the shortest of all descriptions presented in the booklet, apparently the character was considered inappropriate for children.

Even the second, revised edition, is not free from certain mistakes. Saturn is said to have been the son of Ouranos and – curiously – Cybele; he has sons with his wife, Rhea. Then Jupiter is presented as the son of Saturn and Rhea, which is correct, but Juno, his twin sister, and the rest of their siblings all are children of Cybele. Also, the image of Ceres as possibly a woman of many breasts ("a feeder of all humans", p. 23) seems controversial, as most Roman representations on coinage or statues have as attributes a wheat-crown, wheat spray, garlands, poppies, fruits or vines, sometimes a torch or a caduceus. What seems to be also a clear departure from tradition is that Minerva wears armour with the head of Medusa, but there is no mention of her Aegis.

As a catalogue of the most important Roman gods, minor deities and heroes, including their powers, iconography and the relevant connections, it served the children readers as a starting point of understanding mythologically inspired art or references in literature and language usage of that time.

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* "Mitologia iest to nauka daiąca nam poznać Bożków, iakich czcili pogańscy Rzymianie i Grecy."

** "Jowisz wszedł z nią w ślubne związki, czego potém mocno żałował."

*** "Złośliwa, dumna i nieubłagana, w nienawiści i zemście, Juno przykrzyła się swoją zawiścią mężowi."

**** "Jowisz zapomniawszy że był jego oycem popchnięciem nogi uczynił go na wieki kulawym; zabiłby się nie wątpliwie, gdyby mieszkańcy wyspy Lemnos nieprzyięli go na swoie ręce." (original orthography)

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and

Aeolus Apollo Argonauts Ariadne Atlas Bacchus Cerberus Ceres Daedalus Diana Heracles Hercules Jason Juno Jupiter Mercury Minerva Minos Minotaur Nemesis Neptune Pan Pluto / Plouton Proserpina Sisyphus Themis Theseus Venus Vulcan

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Concepts

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

Further Reading

Boczar, Elżbieta, *Bibliografia literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży. Wiek XIX. Literatura polska i przekłady*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010.

Natan Glücksberg, pl.wikipedia.org (accessed: October 19, 2020).

Natan Glücksberg, jhi.pl (accessed: October 19, 2020).

Bieńkowska, Barbara and Elżbieta Maruszak, *Książka na przestrzeni dziejów*, Warszawa: wyd. Centrum Edukacji Bibliotekarskiej, Informacyjnej i Dokumentacyjnej im. Heleny Radlińskiej, 2005.

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