Summary: Zofia Górka, Analysis: Marta Pszczolińska, "Entry on: From Greek Legends: „Metamorphoses" According to Ovid [Z podań greckich: "Przemiany" podług Owidjusza] by Maria Dynowska", 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/1147. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Maria Dynowska

From Greek Legends: „Metamorphoses" According to Ovid [Z podań greckich: "Przemiany" podług Owidjusza]

Congress Poland (1911)

TAGS: Actaeon Amor Andromeda Apollo Arachne Arethusa Athena Bacchus Cadmus Ceres Daphne Deucalion Diana Echo Hubris Iris Juno Jupiter Metamorphoses (Ovid's) Narcissus Nemesis Neptune Niobe Ovid Perseus Phaethon Phoebus Pluto / Plouton Poseidon Proserpina Pyrrha Python Saturn Themis Thetis Zeus



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General information	
Title of the work	From Greek Legends: „Metamorphoses" According to Ovid [Z podań greckich: "Przemiany" podług Owidjusza]
Country of the First Edition	Congress Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Poland: Congress Poland, Austro-Hungarian Empire
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	1911
First Edition Details	Marja Dynowska, *Z podań greckich: „Przemiany" podług Owidjusza*, "Bibljoteczka Młodzieży Szkolnej" 138. Warszawa: Nakład Gebethnera i Wolffa; Kraków: G. Gebethner i Spółka, 1911, 41 pp.
Available Onllne	polona.pl (accessed: October 26, 2020)
Genre	Adaptation of classical texts*, Adaptations, Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (Children, teenagers)

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



Maria Dynowska , 1872 - 1938
(Author)

A philologist and author of many books for children. Born into a family of Warsaw intellectuals. Began her higher education at the Flying University, an underground teaching system for women under Russian Partition in Warsaw; then studied in Cracow and later returned to Warsaw and began teaching underground courses. During WW1, she moved again to Cracow where she remained until her death. She did not confine herself to writing books but was as well a social activist. Associated with the Polish Radio; member of Stronnictwo Narodowe [National Party].

Source:

"Dynowska Maria", in: Ewa Korzeniewska, ed., *Słownik współczesnych pisarzy polskich*, vol. 1: A–I, Warszawa: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1963, 476–477.

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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.

This book is an overview of Greek myths selected by the author from the first six books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It begins with the Four Ages of Man followed by the flood and the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha who repopulated the Earth after the deluge. The next story focuses on the transformation of Daphne during her escape from Apollo. Then the author presents the myths of Phaëton and his tragic fall; subsequently, the founding of Thebes by Cadmus. The next metamorphose is that of Actaeon (transformed into a stag), then Narcissus and Echo followed by a tale within a tale — the fate of Minyas' daughters combined with the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe told by the Minyads before they transformed into bats. The next story is that of Perseus killing the Gorgon Medusa and rescuing Andromeda, then, the rape of Proserpine and Arachne's transformation into a spider. The last story is the myth of Niobe, who boasts of having more children than Leto and as a punishment loses all of them. The myths are presented in strict accordance with Ovid's version and contain explanatory information for young readers.

Analysis

Dynowska prepared, for young readers, a short extract from the first six books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* choosing only a few myths. From over 250 myths told or mentioned by Ovid, she used the myths included in the summary above. In her choice she followed Ovid's order of appearance, although without the omitted myths the continuity of the narrative was broken, thus she tried to create cohesive chapters using stories, which are not connected or embedded in one another. For example, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is told here by the Minyads during spinning*, exactly as in *Metamorphoses*, but the myth of Perseus is told as a separated chapter with a linear action, not as a story within a story (embedded narrative) told with retardations and plenty of details, as in the Ovidian model. Similarly, since Dynowska omitted the myth of Jupiter and Europa, the opening of the chapter about Cadmus and the

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foundation of Thebes is accompanied by a short footnote about the abduction of Cadmus' sister, Europa, contained in the previous book of the *Metamorphoses*.

The author not only follows Ovid's order of presented myths but also uses his entire descriptions or even phrases** as if they were directly translated or literally adapted instead of being told in her own words and style.

What is interesting about this adaptation for children is that the myths from Ovid's first six books, which were excluded by Dynowska, concern famous love affairs, mostly but not exclusively Jupiter's (Jupiter and Io, Pan and Syrinx, Jupiter and Callisto, Apollo & Coronis, Jupiter & Europa, Jupiter & Semele, Venus & Mars) considered inappropriate for young readers in the early 20th century. At the same time, the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe, an even more tragic love story ending with the death of both young lovers is preserved with details. Perhaps the author chose this one because of the moral issues: none of the protagonists are married, the only rule they break is seeing each other against their parents' will. Neither desires or stalks the other, and their love is mutual, true, pure, and finally – stronger than death. Moreover, the story provides a model for the most famous star-crossed lovers – Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and for this reason is worth knowing.

Although the author censors Ovid's text regarding customs and moral issues, she does not treat the cruelty of the tragically ending ancient myths in the same way, even though she adjusts the language of storytelling for children and the book avoids particularly drastic descriptions. Despite using a Roman source, the author highlights the fact that the myths were Greek – not only in the title *Z podań greckich* – but by using some proper Greek names instead of Latin; the Ovidian onomastics is entirely Roman except in the case of characters known in the Greek version only, such as Deucalion, Pyrrha, Daphne, Phaethon, Actaeon or Cyane. For example, Ovid always uses the form Jupiter, Phoebus, Pallas or Neptune, while Dynowska favours Zeus, Apollo, Athena, and Poseidon interchangeably with their Latin equivalents. Another adjustment she makes with the young reader in mind is avoiding the use of multiple names not relevant to the main plot and potentially confusing, such as the names of Actaeon's dogs.

Dynowska achieved the goal of the series *Biblioteczka młodzieży*

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szkolnej – she brought the important topics of literature, history, culture etc., closer to Polish children as she popularized Metamorphoses through some of the Ovidian myths.

* Ovid: "utile opus manuum vario sermone levemus" (IV, 39).

Dynowska: "skróćmy godziny trudu i uszy nasze wątkiem nadobnych powieści ucieszmy" (p. 24).

** Ovid: "ver erat aeternum, placidique tepentibus auris / mulcebant zephyri natos sine semine flores" (I, 107–108).

Dynowska: "Wiosna trwała wiecznie, zefiry łagodnem tchnieniem pieściły kwiecie, bez posiewu wschodzące" (p. 4).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Actaeon Amor Andromeda Apollo Arachne Arethusa Athena Bacchus Cadmus Ceres Daphne Deucalion Diana Echo Hubris Iris Juno Jupiter Metamorphoses (Ovid's) Narcissus Nemesis Neptune Niobe Ovid Perseus Phaethon Phoebus Pluto / Plouton Poseidon Proserpina Pyrrha Python Saturn Themis Thetis Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Abandonment Adventure Adversity Animals Conflict Death Disobedience Heroism Life Loss Murder Punishment Rejection Revenge Siblings Transformation
Further Reading	"Dynowska Maria", in: Ewa Korzeniewska, ed., *Słownik współczesnych pisarzy polskich, vol. 1: A–I*, Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1963, 476–477. P. Ovidii Nasonis *Metamorphoseon libri XV*, Berlin: Rudolf Ehwald, 1903 (accessed: October 26, 2020).

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