Marta Pszczolińska, "Entry on: Donkey Ears [Ośle uszy] by Janina Krzemińska, Jadwiga Przeczek", peer-reviewed by Katarzyna Marciniak and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2026). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1581. Entry version as of October 07, 2026.

Janina Krzemińska , Jadwiga Przeczek

Donkey Ears [Ośle uszy]

Poland (1980)

TAGS: Apollo Marsyas Midas

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

General information	
Title of the work	Donkey Ears [Ośle uszy]
Country of the First Edition	Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Poland
Original Language	Polish
First Edition Date	1980
First Edition Details	Jadwiga Przeczek, "Ośle uszy", ill. Janina Krzemińska, *Miś* 13/14 (1980), removable insert.
ISBN	ISSN: 0137-7698
Genre	Adaptation of classical texts*, Picture books
Target Audience	Children (pre-school)
Author of the Entry	Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl
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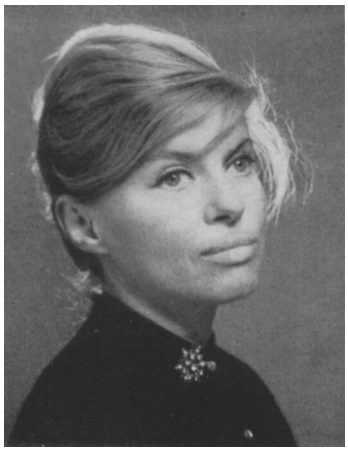
This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



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Janina Krzemińska , 1922 - 1996 (Illustrator)

Janina Krzemińska (1922–1996), Polish illustrator, painter and graphic designer. Having graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw she illustrated many books and magazines for children, such as *Iskierki* [Sparklings], *Świerszczyk* [Little Cricket], *Płomyczek* [Tiny Flame] and *Płomyk* [Little Flame]. From the beginning of the magazine *Miś* [Teddy Bear], aimed at the youngest audiences, and for many years, she was its artistic director. Her work for the magazine resulted in around 1 thousand illustrations for *Miś*. She also created scenography for puppet animation films produced by film animation studios.

Source:

Barbara Gawryluk, *Ilustratorki, ilustratorzy. Motylki z okładki i smoki bez wąsów*, Niezła sztuka 29 Oct. 2019 (accessed: March 17, 2026).

Bio prepared by Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl

Jadwiga Przeczek (Author)

Jadwiga Przeczek (dates of life unknown), was a translator from Czech and English into Polish, and author of a short text for children. Przeczek was member of editorial team of *Miś* [Teddy bear], a Polish magazine aimed at the youngest age group. She was there one of the most frequent authors in the 1980s, with 204 texts published (in total

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218 texts for the years 1957–1989). She also adapted a few fairy tales for use in popular slide-shows for pre-school children, such as *Złotowłosa królewna* [Gold-Haired Princess], *Baśń o srebrnorogim jeleniu* [The Tale of a Silver-Antlered Stag] or *Sól cenniejsza od złota* [Salt More Precious than Gold].

Source:

Michał Rogoż, *Czasopisma dla dzieci i młodzieży Instytutu Wydawniczego „Nasza Księgarnia" w latach 1945–1989. Studium historycznoprasowe*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, 2009.

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Additional information

Summary

Ośle uszy depicts the musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas and its consequences. When Midas disagrees with the rest of the audience and indicates his preference for Marsyas, angry Apollo punishes him for his offensive judgement by giving him donkey ears. As a king, Midas is ashamed to appear in public in this state and wears a special hat to hide his ears. Only his court barber knows the secret, but he promises not to tell anyone. However, after a while, he feels unable to keep the secret and whispers it into a hole in the ground. Reeds grow there and, their rustling in the wind reveals the secret to the public.

Analysis

Miś was targeting young pre-school children. Special colourful inserts appeared in many issues to attract readers and, at the same time, achieve an educational goal. These inserts, often made of cardboard, offered children additional activities to help them develop fine motor skills, such as cutting out and colouring, as well as provided enjoyment through play with cardboard figurines, memory games and so on. Sometimes mini-booklets with their own pagination were printed within an issue so that the pages could be cut out, brought together, and the story read repeatedly, and the mini-booklets saved, as a separate collection. The issue 13/14 (1980) introduced children to the myth of King Midas in the form of such a booklet.

As *Miś* appealed to the youngest children, the booklet is only twelve pages long, with only five containing some text. Despite its modest size, the adaptation successfully incorporates the relevant characters involved in the story alongside key elements of the myth. Explanations are provided where necessary; for instance, introducing the god Apollo, the author clarifies that the ancient Greeks believed in multiple gods and goddesses. Similarly, some information is simplified, for example, Marsyas is presented as a man rather than a satyr. This is done in order to highlight the divide between men and gods and to show that Midas judged a mortal man to be a better musician; as well as to explain the reaction of Apollo whose artistic pride and faith in his divine superiority were offended by a mortal daring to prefer a human song to the performance by the god of the art. In line with the sensitivity of young children, the subplot involving Marsyas ends with the contest: focusing on Apollo and Midas, the

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author leaves untold Marsyas' cruel punishment and subsequent death.

The moral lesson at the end highlights the didactic dimension of the story. The barber is presented as an example for children to learn from when it comes to confiding secrets to each other. Although he is sorely tempted to reveal Midas' secret, he does not gossip at court about what happened to the king. On the contrary, he gets rid of his burden discreetly. Thus, the moral of the story is that a reed is stigmatised as a gossip, and not the barber. The author emphasises the similarity between reeds and donkey ears to highlight the ugliness of gossiping about people's shameful secrets.

Illustrations by Janina Krzemińska depict the protagonists against a mythical background rooted in ancient Greek culture. The ochre-coloured cover features an image of King Midas with donkey ears, painted on an ancient vase. Other illustrations show: Apollo playing; the musical duel between Apollo and Marsyas; Midas wearing a laurel wreath and Apollo pointing to his ears; Midas having a haircut; Midas wearing a cap covering his ears; the barber whispering the secret into a hole in the ground; and reeds.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Apollo Marsyas Midas

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

Appearances Music* Punishment Transformation

Further Reading

Michał Rogoż, *Czasopisma dla dzieci i młodzieży Instytutu Wydawniczego „Nasza Księgarnia" w latach 1945–1989: studium historycznoprasowe*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, 2009.

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Addenda

The entry presents the result of research conducted within the project "Classical Antiquity in Periodicals for Children and Young Adults in Polish People's Republic (PRL) – Classical Education, Promotion of Political Ideology, or Expression of Resistance? Changes in the Reception of Classics in the PRL from 1945 to 1989," funded by the National Science Centre (Narodowe Centrum Nauki) Preludium grant no. 2022/45/N/HS2/00549, and led by Marta Pszczolińska at the Faculty of "Artes Liberales" at the University of Warsaw.

Three illustrations are available in *Clotho* 2 (2025): 48, 122.

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