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“OH, JOSEPH! WHAT DO YE WANT?” ‘OLD’ JOSEPH  
IN TRADITIONAL POLISH CAROLS AND PASTORAL SONGS.  
THE ORDINARY SAINT

**Summary:** St. Joseph, the husband of Mary and guardian of Jesus, is silent in all of the four gospels. In spite of (or perhaps due to) this fact, his veneration has been largely inspired by apocryphal imagery and folk piety. The article portrays St. Joseph as a character in old carols, pastoral songs and pastoral plays and addresses the problem of roles performed by St. Joseph at the manger. The author poses the question of whether Joseph is a good-natured old man or an ideal of masculinity, a man who submits himself to God’s plans. She also explores Christmas songs where Joseph is not merely a stock character. The paper is enriched by numerous quotations from the collection *Kantyczki karmelitańskie* [The Carmelite Canticles] and anthology *Staropolskie pastorałki dramatyczne* [Old Polish pastoral plays] edited by Jan Okoń. Last, but not least, the author makes use of the hitherto unpublished and unedited music manuscripts held at the Diocese Library in Sandomierz, believing that an analysis of Christmas songs should always incorporate their musical features.

**Key words:** Saint Joseph, pastoral song, pastorella, Christmas, Holy Family.

The wealth of the published research in josephology might intimidate a scholar who wishes to invoke the figure of St. Joseph, the husband of Blessed Virgin Mary and the guardian of Baby Jesus. The subject is a multifaceted one since one has to consider the iconography and iconology (especially the scenes related to the birth and childhood of Jesus) as well as biblical contexts and the history of the worship of the saint. The analysis of available literature shows that the distinction between purely academic papers and those which strike an evangelistic tone is blurred<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The evangelistic character is visible for example in the doctoral dissertation by Father Adam Mikulski, *Pobożność świętojózefowa w dziele nowej ewangelizacji. Studium józefologiczno-pastoralne* [St. Joseph’s piety in new evangelism. A study in josephology and pastoral studies], in: *Dolnośląska Biblioteka Cyfrowa* [online], access: 23.12.2016, <[http://www.dbc.wroc.pl/Content/30761/mikulski\\_doktorat.pdf](http://www.dbc.wroc.pl/Content/30761/mikulski_doktorat.pdf)>; another interesting book is *Cuda świętego Józefa. Świadcstwa i modlitwy* [St. Joseph’s

This sketch is aimed at highlighting a subject which so far has not been thoroughly investigated: the motif of St. Joseph in Old Polish pastoral songs, pastoral plays and pastorellas. The Christmas texts included in this naturally limited and subjective selection come from published collections, particularly *Kantyczki karmelitańskie. Rękopis z XVIII wieku*<sup>2</sup> [Carmelite canticles. A manuscript from the eighteenth century] and *Staropolskie pastoralki dramatyczne. Antologia*<sup>3</sup> [Old Polish pastoral plays. An Anthology], and a collection of musical manuscripts kept in the Diocese Library in Sandomierz.

“Oh, Joseph!” “What do ye want?” – cry the characters in an anonymous pastorella from the Sandomierz collection. We are tempted to paraphrase the irritated question of Joseph: what do we want from him? Do we not raise the same expectations over and over again? That he should be a paragon of virtue, unfailing guardian, the bridegroom, the grandfather with a staff and lily<sup>4</sup>, a helping hand in trying times... Whether Joseph does indeed play a secondary role in Christmas literature and music is a subject worth investigating. Is he a good-natured greybeard or an ideal of masculinity, a man who can submit himself to God’s plans? And last, but not least, are there any typical literary or musical modes of portraying St. Joseph in carols and pastoral songs? What happens when the saint ceases to be an object of worship and becomes a literary figure?

### The useless servant

“Saint Joseph is silent in all four gospels. He stands as a symbol of quiet and meek service. The gospels do not even mention when he passed away”<sup>5</sup>. His death is only described in the apocrypha and Church tradition, which assert that Joseph died in the presence of Mary and Jesus<sup>6</sup>. According to the canonical

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miracles. Testimonies and prayers] with texts of papal encyclicals *Quamquam pluries* and *Redemptoris custos*, which explore the figure of St. Joseph; it also contains information on testimonies, prayers and devotions to the saint; *Cuda świętego Józefa. Świadczenia i modlitwy*, coll. and ed. E. Polak, K. Pytlarz with the help of Bernardine Sisters of St Francis, Kraków 2013.

<sup>2</sup> *Kantyczki karmelitańskie*, ed. B. Krzyżaniak, Kraków 1980 (hereinafter *Kantyczki...*; incipits of pieces will be given).

<sup>3</sup> *Staropolskie pastoralki dramatyczne. Antologia*, ed. J. Okoń, Wrocław 1989 (BN I 269). Hereinafter *Staropolskie pastoralki dramatyczne...*

<sup>4</sup> J. Marecki, L. Rotter, *Jak czytać wizerunki świętych? Leksykon atrybutów i symboli hagiograficznych*, Kraków 2013, pp. 433–434.

<sup>5</sup> J. Augustyn, *Święty Józefie, wejrzyj na ojców, mężów i braci*, in: *Deon.pl* [online], access: 18.12.2016, <http://www.deon.pl/religia/duchowosc-i-wiara/zycie-i-wiara/art,600,sw-jozefie-wejrzyj-na-ojcow-mezow-i-braci.html>> [corrected spelling – A.K.].

<sup>6</sup> *Lives of the Saints for Every Day of the Year* [Żywoty świętych Pańskich na każdy dzień roku], ed. H. Hoever, transl. Z. Pniewski, ed. L. Kossobudzki, p. 103, Olsztyn 1995.

texts, St. Joseph was a descendant of David; in the Gospel of Mathew he is the son of Jacob, whereas Luke describes him as the son of Heli. Joseph was born in Bethlehem and worked as a carpenter. He was the husband of Mary, but not the father of the child she conceived through the Holy Spirit. He officially accepted the son as his own (truth be told, only after he saw an angel in his dream who dispelled all doubts) by giving him a name<sup>7</sup>.

Francis L. Filas lists six apocryphal sources from which the legends of St. Joseph originate. These are: *The Protoevangelium of James*, *The Gospel According to Thomas*, *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, *The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*, *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas (Treatise of the Boyhood of Jesus According to Thomas the Israelite)* and *History of Joseph the Carpenter*<sup>8</sup>. The figure of Joseph appeared for the first time in Polish literature in the *Rozmyślanie przemyskie (Rozmyślanie o żywocie Pana Jezusa)* [The Przemysł Mediation (The Meditation on the Life of our Lord Jesus)]. He is also a character in the 16th-century *Żywot Pana Jezusa Krysta*<sup>9</sup> [Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ]. “Joseph [...] is the best example of the “useless servant” of whom Jesus said: ‘So with you: when you have done all you have been told to do, say, “We are useless servants: we have done no more than our duty.”’ (Luke 17:10). The useless servant from the gospel is a synonym of a just man”<sup>10</sup>.

The role of Joseph in the mysteries of Christ is defined by the New Testament, which calls him ‘just’, and includes among “the poor and humble of the Lord” a small group of those who “confidently hope for and receive salvation” [...]; Mary and Joseph bridge the Old and New Covenant [...]; they both belong to God’s eternal plan, though each in a different way, and thus were called, prepared and gifted with special grace; they accomplished their mission to the fullest of their ability through their faith, obedience and acting in complete harmony with God’s will<sup>11</sup>.

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St. Joseph is mentioned more than seventy times in a selection of over 350 carols and pastoral songs edited by Barbara Krzyżaniak for the collection *Kantyczki karmelitańskie. Rękopis z XVIII wieku*. This shows that, besides Mary

<sup>7</sup> S. Szymik, *Józef oblubieniec* (1. Życie), in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, v. 8, ed. F. Gryglewicz, R. Łukaszyk, Z. Sułowski, Lublin 1973-, p. 124.

<sup>8</sup> F.L. Filas, *Joseph: The man closest to Jesus* [Święty Józef. Człowiek Jezusowi najbliższy], transl. F. Dylewski, J. Ożóg, D. Siuta, Kraków 1979, pp. 12–13.

<sup>9</sup> M. Kunowska-Porębna, *Józef oblubieniec* (VI. W literaturze polskiej), in: *Encyklopedia katolicka...*, c. 156.

<sup>10</sup> J. Augustyn, *Święty Józefie...*

<sup>11</sup> W. Hanc, *Józefologia* (III. Problematyka współczesna), in: *Encyklopedia katolicka...*, c. 185.

and the Infant, Joseph is an important figure in Christmas songs of the time. On the other hand, the fact that Joseph is usually mentioned only to complete the evangelistic and dramatic pattern of a carol or pastoral song points to the highly conventional character of these pieces. His presence is desired, though not requisite. In some songs, the presence of Mother and Infant was sufficient for the authors<sup>12</sup>.

The basic compositional structure of a pastoral song and a pastoral play includes the angel announcing the birth of Jesus, the commotion he causes among shepherds roused from sleep, their way to Bethlehem and prostration, followed by merrymaking by the crib and offerings of modest gifts<sup>13</sup>. During the frolicking, the shepherds usually play music for the Newborn and have a tendency to go beyond the limits of moderation. St. Joseph is forced to intervene, but it only provokes more merriment<sup>14</sup>.

Some pastoral songs present a very interesting and somewhat frivolous version of the story in which Joseph participates in the play initiated by shepherds to express unrestrained joy at the birth of Baby Jesus. Joseph emerges here as a quick-tempered character and is given a slightly grotesque portrayal:

Pastuszkowie Pasterzowi  
Na multankach grać gotowi (...).

Shepherds are ready before the Shepherd  
To play their panpipes for him (...).

Panna wesola i matka,  
a z nią stary Józef tatka.  
Graj pasterzu, graj,  
wesela dodaj!

The merry maid and mother  
and old papa Joseph with her.  
Play, shepherd, play,  
bring us more merriment!<sup>15</sup>

He behaves in ways we would not expect of him, and his happiness during adoration of Christ is evident:

Zagraliśmy skoczno aż Józef stary,  
nie mogąc się wstrzymać, skacze bez miary.

We've played so lively that the old Joseph  
cannot resist, is hopping wildly<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> For example: *Hej, pasterze, pasterze powiedzcie jeno szczerze*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 118.

<sup>13</sup> More on the modest gifts: see A. Komendzińska, *Świat wiejski w staropolskich pastoralkach dramatycznych*, in: *Wieś: miejsce, doświadczenie, opowieść*, ed. D. Kardaś, M. Sury, Z. Ulańska, Kraków 2016, pp. 149–154.

<sup>14</sup> S. Nieznanowski, *Pastoralka*, in: *Słownik literatury staropolskiej*, ed. T. Michałowska, 2nd edition, Wrocław 1998, p. 625.

<sup>15</sup> *Nieslychana to nowina, Panna porodziła Syna*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup> *Przy onej dolinie w judzkiej krainie*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 304.

Or:

Stary Józef płażał,  
siwą brodą strząsał  
od radości,  
ze oglądał Syna swego,  
jemu na świat zesłanego,  
nagiego.

Old Joseph was dancing,  
shaking his white beard  
from joy  
of seeing his Son,  
sent naked to this world,  
for him<sup>17</sup>.

Another example:

A gdy zagrali wesoło,  
stary Józef płażał w koło.  
Dziecina mała  
Wdzięcznie się śmiała  
cha cha cha.

And when they played merrily  
old Joseph danced around.  
The little Babe  
was laughing sweetly  
ha ha ha<sup>18</sup>.

Baby Jesus is also amused by the frolic at the manger, but eventually, as if he was an adult, rebukes his too frisky guardian (presently singing in German):

Józef stary, ten bez miary  
pełen radości  
wziąwszy Dziecię, nu z nim skacze  
przykładem gości.

Old Joseph, the immoderate,  
full of merriment,  
took the child and dances with him  
as the guests.

Śpiewał starzec jako łabędź  
pieśni rozliczne,  
schlofen, schlofen du main Lieben,  
Dzieciątko śliczne.

The old man sang like a swan  
many a song,  
schlofen, schlofen du main Lieben,  
pretty little Babe.

Pan się śmieje, główką chwieje,  
o tata, tata!  
Dosyć, dosyć, pomnij, proszę,  
na swoje lata.

The little Lord laughed, shaking his head,  
o daddy, daddy!  
Enough, enough, please remember  
your age<sup>19</sup>.

On the other hand, there are pastoral songs in which St. Joseph tries to shoo away the rather crude folk in reaction to their mischief. Sometimes he succeeds:

Hej hej hej! Nie koźdy się Panu kłaniał, hej... Hey hey hey! Not all bowed to the Lord, hey...  
Hej hej hej! bo ich Józef powyganiał, hej...; Hey, hey, hey! ‘Cause old Joseph sent them away, hey...<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Śpiewajmy dziś Panu wieczór i poranu z weselem*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 309.

<sup>18</sup> *Pastuszkowie przybiegajcie, wdzięczne głosy wygrywajcie*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 257.

<sup>19</sup> *Trzej Królowie w złotogłowie strojno wjeżdżają*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 161.

<sup>20</sup> *Hej hej hej! Weselmy się, radujmy się, hej hej hej!*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 128.

Józef do batoga  
skoczył, my dla Boga  
czym prędzej  
w nogi, w nogi, w nogi  
z Betleja,

Joseph rushed for his whip  
and we did run, dear God,  
as fast as we could  
away, away, away  
from Bethl'em<sup>21</sup>.

however, more often than not, he fails:

Mówi Józef stary: już dosyć tego,  
idźcie pastuszkowie do bydła swego,  
jużeście się naskakali,  
mnieście głowę skłopotali  
i Maryi.

Says old Joseph: that's enough,  
go, shepherds, back to your cattle,  
we've had enough of your dancing,  
you've been a nuisance to me  
and Mary<sup>22</sup>.

The shepherds, however, have been given the privilege of being with God, enjoy participating in the mysteries of salvation and have no intention of giving up their rights:

Józefie starszku, ojczu kochany,  
Jakże mamy odejść Pana nad pany,  
ledwie my się doczekali,  
żeśmy Boga oglądali  
w ludzki[m] ciele.

Dear old Joseph, beloved father,  
how shall we leave the Lord of lords?  
We have been waiting so long,  
to see God  
in a human body<sup>23</sup>.

The status of St. Joseph is not clear and unambiguous. He is described with many different expressions and given a number of roles. Joseph is the “bridegroom”<sup>24</sup>, the “guardian”<sup>25</sup>, the one who serves<sup>26</sup>, the one who feels “sadness welling up inside”<sup>27</sup> and who commands animals<sup>28</sup>. He is also a “good protector”<sup>29</sup>, “beloved father”<sup>30</sup>, “old papa”<sup>31</sup>, “supposed father”<sup>32</sup> – these are just a few from the variety of his nicknames.

<sup>21</sup> *Wesołe nowiny dziś rozgłaszajmy*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 319.

<sup>22</sup> *Narodził się w stajni Jezus ubogi*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 286.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> *Witaj o Jezu serc naszych ukochanie*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> *W Betlejem mieście Jezus się narodził*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 14, *Z Bożego narodzenia anieli się weselą*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 245; *Jezu śliczny kwiecie zjawiony na świecie*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 333. It is interesting that in contrast to traditional stereotypical images it is not only the mother who is portrayed as taking care of the child. Joseph is also able to cope perfectly well with putting the Baby to sleep.

<sup>26</sup> *Przy szerokim gościńcu mała stajenka*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 54.

<sup>27</sup> *Witaj Jezu ukochany na zbawienie nasze dany*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 251.

<sup>28</sup> *Lulaj, lulaj Jezu mój, Dziecię ukochane*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> *Jezu śliczny kwiecie zjawiony na świecie*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 333.

<sup>30</sup> *Betlejem podła mieścina*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 65.

<sup>31</sup> *Pasterze mili przy tej to chwili*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 95; *Idźcie zwierzątka, moje bydłątka*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 96.

<sup>32</sup> *Alleluja, chwalmy Boga*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 330. On supposed fatherhood see F.L. Filas, *Joseph: The man closest to Jesus*, p. 160.

Joseph is responsible not only for taking care of the Infant, but also for keeping order in the stable. One might argue that the two roles merge when he acts on behalf of the Newborn, passing gifts from the shepherds and kings who visit the stable. Joseph is always depicted as the one who acts in full cooperation and agreement with the Mother of God.

Na kolana padli,  
podarunki kładli,  
Panienka odbierała,  
Józefowi dawała.

They fell on their knees  
laid their gifts,  
which the maid received  
and handed to Joseph.

A pan Józef stary  
obaczywszy dary,  
z radością do torbeczki  
schował dla Dziecineczki.

And old master Joseph  
beheld the gifts,  
and happily hid them in a little purse  
for the sweet Babe<sup>33</sup>.

Interestingly, it is not only the Infant or the Infant and Mary who receive modest gifts from the shepherds – St. Joseph also receives his share:

Ty z naszej roty,  
gdzież twoje boty,  
daj staruszkowi,  
panu Józefowi  
zimno mu w nogi.

You, one of our lot,  
where are your boots,  
give them to the dear old man,  
master Joseph,  
for his feet are cold<sup>34</sup>.

The shepherds treat the host as someone of nearly the same status:

A dla Józefa  
wina wziąć trzeba,  
by się dziaduś napił.

And we need to take  
some wine for Joseph,  
a drink for grandpa<sup>35</sup>.

It is worth taking a closer look at the piece *W Betlejem sławnym, czasie niedawnym* [Recently in famous Bethlehem], whose lyrics may be found in *Kantyczki karmelitańskie*. A pastorella (vocal-instrumental piece) by the same title hosted in the collection of the Diocese Library in Sandomierz uses a slightly different version of the text<sup>36</sup>. It had its world premiere on 10 December 2016 in the Church of the Visitation in Warsaw<sup>37</sup>. It should be noted that only

<sup>33</sup> *Niebiescy duchowie, od Boga posłowie*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 164.

<sup>34</sup> *Pomaga Bóg Dziecię*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 167.

<sup>35</sup> *W Betlejem sławnym, czasie niedawnym*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 310.

<sup>36</sup> Source: *Biblioteka Diecezjalna w Sandomierzu* [online], access: 19.12.2016, <<http://www.bdsandomierz.pl/>>.

<sup>37</sup> The concert *Pastorelle z repertuaru kapel kościelnych dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* [Pastorellas from the repertoire of old church bands in old Republic of Poland] was held as part of the 2nd festival *Polska Muzyka Odnaleziona* [Polish Music Rediscovered].

a full performance with music and lyrics can truly express the character of the piece. Its most conspicuous element is folk stylisation: a bourdon bass, lively syncopated rhythms strengthened by accents and a composition based on verses with instrumental interludes. It is against this extremely vibrant and joyful musical background that we find a rather ridiculous image of Joseph:

Wziął Sobek Staszka,  
Kuba Walaszka  
– widząc Pańską łaskę,  
a w tej kompanii  
i lepszej fantazji  
dali wina flaszkę.  
A że Wawrzek nie miał pary,  
tańczył z nim Józef stary,  
wziąwszy sobie łaskę.

Sebbie took Stan  
and Jake took Val,  
seeing the Lord's grace,  
and in this company,  
being in very good temper  
they gave a bottle of wine.  
And since Laurie had no partner,  
old Joseph danced with him,  
now with his cane<sup>38</sup>.

Later the music changes its character, it slows down and becomes more melancholic:

Gdy skakał stary, podpiwszy sobie  
i zachorował na nogi obie.  
Śmieje się Jezus, mała dziecina,  
Dać rozkazuje jeszcze więcej wina.

As the old man jumped, a bit tipsy,  
both his legs began to hurt.  
The little Baby Jesus laughed  
and told them to give more wine<sup>39</sup>.

\* \* \*

Pastoral plays from the anthology by Jan Okoń use most of the motives that appear in pastoral songs or pastorellas, but they sometimes emphasise different elements. As a character, Joseph plays basically two roles: he is Mary's companion on the road to Bethlehem and then the guardian of the Mother and Infant in the stable, where he acts on behalf of the Newborn with the shepherds and the kings.

The search for lodging just before the birth of Jesus is another very important motif in pastoral plays that presents Joseph. Joseph, obliged to provide shelter for the Mother of God, leads Mary from inn to inn:

JÓZEF  
Oj, Boże Wszechmogący, któryś jest na niebie,  
Racz nas teraz wspomagać w tej naszej potrzebie!  
Ty mni, panno, najbardziej w tej drodze frasujesz,  
Gdy już pono bliski czas porodzenia czujesz.

JOSEPH  
O, Almighty God, who art in Heaven,  
We pray help us now in our need!  
You, maid, cause me most concern in this journey,  
Since you feel the time of birth coming anon.

<sup>38</sup> *W Betleem sławnym, czasie niedawnym*, in: *Biblioteka Diecezjalna w Sandomierzu* [online], access: 19.12.2016, <<http://www.bdsandomierz.pl/>>. Different version of text than in *Kantyczki karmelitańskie*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.



MARYJA

O mnie się nic nie turbuj, Józefie kochany,  
Oblubienicu wdzięczny, od Boga mi dany.

MARY

Do not be perturbed at me, dear Joseph,  
My beloved betrothed one that God hath given me<sup>40</sup>.

Joseph was made a guardian by God’s will and with God’s permission. Joseph accepts his role and works hard to cope with any difficulties he encounters on the way. Mary also asks him to take care of her and the Baby, indicating the reward awaiting him in Heaven:

Józefie, broń od zimna świętego ciążeczka,  
Nakry[j], jeśli masz trochę jakiego futerka.

Joseph, save the holy little body from cold,  
Cover it with fur should you have some<sup>41</sup>.

Mój Józefie, chciej o mnie mieć swoje staranie,  
A na boską odpłatę miej oczekiwanie!

My Joseph, I pray thee, take care of me,  
And expect to be paid back in Heaven!<sup>42</sup>

In pastoral plays, Joseph is no longer the silent character from the Gospels. Not only does he engage in conversations, but also recites lengthy monologues in which he contemplates the truths of faith or shares rather stoic moral thoughts („żaden sobie w świecie dni jednakich/ Nie może obieczować, bo kto dziś wesoły,/ Jutro śmierć nieużyta w podziemne padołu/ Płasza go”<sup>43</sup> [no one can expect his fortunes to remain the same forever, because those who rejoice today will tomorrow be driven by merciless Death into the grave]). In *Dialog o Narodzeniu Pańskim* [Dialogue on the Nativity of the Lord] Joseph speaks not unlike the poet Jan Kochanowski in *Czego chcesz od nas Panie...* [What wishest Thou for all the lavish gifts of Thine?]

### Saint or old?

In today’s Poland, the most popular piece which contains contrastive visions of Joseph is *Dzisiaj w Betlejem* [Today in Bethlehem]. Alternative versions of this carol that mention either “saint Joseph” or “old Joseph” must date back to earlier texts of Christmas songs, dramatic re-enactments and – at the

<sup>40</sup> *Dialog o Narodzeniu Pana Naszego Jezusa Chrystusa*, in: *Staropolskie pastoralki dramatyczne...*, p. 288. It is worth noting that Joseph undertook the almost 160-kilometre journey to Bethlehem because he had to be enrolled in his home town. He could not leave Mary at home as she was soon expecting the birth of her Son. Consequently, Mary accompanied Joseph along mostly the same ways she had gone to visit Elizabeth in spring (W.H. Carroll, *A History of Christendom: The Founding of Christendom* [*Historia chrześcijaństwa*, vol. 1, *Narodziny chrześcijaństwa*], transl. J. Morka, Wrocław 2009, pp. 312–313).

<sup>41</sup> *Dialog krótki na święto Narodzenia Pana Naszego Jezusa Chrystusa*, in: *Staropolskie pastoralki dramatyczne...*, p. 98.

<sup>42</sup> *Dialog na dzień Narodzenia Pana Jezusa Chrystusa*, in: *Staropolskie pastoralki dramatyczne...*, p. 115.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 111.

earliest stage – apocrypha. According to the *Protoevangelium of James* Joseph was already a very elderly man when he married Mary<sup>44</sup>. In reality, however, “he could not be old [...], it was Renaissance art (and our Polish carols) which unfairly turned him into a grandpa”<sup>45</sup>. It is very likely that on the day of the wedding ceremony Joseph was of the usual age of a man entering marriage, which would match the age of the bride and enable them not only to have issue but also work and make long journeys. This probably coincides with the vision of the Evangelists who call Joseph a husband, not an elder<sup>46</sup>.

Joseph’s age occasionally presented a dilemma, for example, to artists depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary’s wedding scene<sup>47</sup>:

All apocrypha claim he was an elderly man. Peter Canisius recommended portraying him as such and stressed the power of folk tradition. Depicting Joseph as an old man had a long-standing tradition and was practiced throughout most of Europe at the time, despite the fact that authors of iconographic treatises such as Molanus indicated how groundless it was and, like Stengalius, quoted the Prophetic scriptures of the Old Testament.

In Polish art of the 17th and 18th centuries, Joseph is most often painted with a beard, and presented as an at least middle-aged man. His attribute is a blooming shepherd’s staff, a symbol which has by now fallen into disuse in the West of Europe<sup>48</sup>.

Reading *Staropolskie pastoralki dramatyczne* and *Kantyczki karmelitańskie* leads to the conclusion that old age is one of Joseph’s major characteristics. What is more, it is often semantically intensified:

(...) a Józef stary, prawie zgrzybiały,  
Służy z pilnością i uczciwością

(...) and the old Joseph almost senile,  
Serves with diligence and honesty<sup>49</sup>.

Panienci w koło biegają,  
Na Dziecinę pooglądają,  
Józef od radości  
zapomniał starości,  
dyszkantem z Maryją śpiewają.

Sisters are running around  
looking at the Babe,  
Joseph, out of joy,  
forgot about his old age,  
they’re singing treble with Mary<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> „Joseph, St” in: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* [Encyklopedia Kościoła], vol. 1, transl. E. Czerwińska, eds. F.L. Cross, E.A. Livingstone, 3rd edition, Warszawa 2004, p. 1059.

<sup>45</sup> *Lives of the Saints for Every Day of the Year* [Żywoty Świętych Pańskich na każdy dzień roku], ed. H. Hoever, Olsztyn 1995, p. 102.

<sup>46</sup> F.L. Filas, *Joseph: The man closest to Jesus*, s. 344.

<sup>47</sup> M. Biernacka et al., *Maryja Matka Chrystusa*, Warszawa 1987, p. 117.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> *Przy szerokim gościńcu mała stajenka*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> *Betlejem podla miészcina, w niej się zjawila Dziecina*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 65.

The above fragment comes from *Betlejem podła miejscina* [The poor town of Bethlehem], a pastoral song with distinctive traits of a monastic song performed in female convents („Gdy tak wdzięczne plauzy były,/ mniszeczki śpiące wzbudziły” [The sound of merry music awakened the sisters] or „Rozpal nas w miłości,/ chowaj w zakonności”) [Strengthen us in charity,/ keep us in the monastery]. This song is a particularly interesting example due to the fact that the 19th-century version of lyrics preserved by Father Mioduszewski does not mention Joseph at all (*sic!*)<sup>51</sup>. Does it mean that he was such an insignificant and conventional character that he was freely discarded in the later version and replaced with another element, simply to preserve the regularity of rhythm? The figure of joyful Joseph, singing in a duet with Mary, matched the spirit of the lively and merry pastoral song in a triple metre that additionally underlines its dance-like character.

It is very likely that both the sanctity and seniority of Joseph found in the carols are meant to answer allegations that had been hurled at the silent hero of the Silent Night for centuries. Something had to be done to confirm the faithful in their belief that the gospels accurately portray the union of a young, and probably quite attractive Nazorean, a maiden mother, and her husband, who was not the child’s father. The image of ‘Joseph, the old’ prevents any allegations that would be inappropriate in the context of the story of redemption, whereas ‘Joseph, the saint’ additionally strengthens the view that God’s guardian was an unblemished man. One song, which begins *Drogi klejnocie, nie w świetnym złocie* [Precious gem out of a golden frame], actually contains an expression which combines the two visions: ‘saint old man’<sup>52</sup>. Therefore it is interesting to consider what type of masculinity is represented by St. Joseph. Old age coupled with sainthood often create an image of a good-natured old man, expressed in iconography and iconology, while the truly important features of Joseph to be found in the Bible are: valour, self-control, courage, prudence and responsibility. Joseph is a husband, a *vir*.

### Joseph in the foreground

“On icons of the Eastern Church devoted to the Nativity of Jesus, Joseph is presented (in a smaller size than the main figure) as preoccupied and pensive.

<sup>51</sup> See also *Pasterki wkoło biegają,/ Na dziecinę poglądają,/ A z wielkiej radości, i przy wesolości,/ Dyszkantem z Maryją śpiewają*, in: *Wikiźódla* [online], access: 19.12.2016, [https://pl.wikisource.org/wiki/Plik:Pastora%C5%82ki\\_i\\_kol%C4%99dy\\_z\\_melodyjami\\_czyli\\_piosnki\\_weso%C5%82e\\_ludu\\_w\\_czasie\\_%C5%9Bwi%C4%85t\\_Bo%C5%BCego\\_Narodzenia\\_po\\_domach\\_%C5%9Bpiewane\\_\(Mioduszewski\).djvu](https://pl.wikisource.org/wiki/Plik:Pastora%C5%82ki_i_kol%C4%99dy_z_melodyjami_czyli_piosnki_weso%C5%82e_ludu_w_czasie_%C5%9Bwi%C4%85t_Bo%C5%BCego_Narodzenia_po_domach_%C5%9Bpiewane_(Mioduszewski).djvu).

<sup>52</sup> *Drogi klejnocie, nie w świetnym złocie*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 58.

Amidst the preoccupation, pensiveness and confusion he develops a limitless devotion to Elohim, a purer affection for Miriam and unconditional love of his foster Son”<sup>53</sup>.

Such portrayal of Joseph shows that within the prevailing cultural pattern in carols, pastoral songs and pastoral plays he was a secondary character, someone to fill the Christmas backdrop, although undoubtedly playing an important role during the night in Bethlehem and, in a wider context, in the history of salvation<sup>54</sup>. Therefore, it should be interesting to consider those literary and musical works which feature Joseph as the main character. As there are relatively few of them, it is possible to analyse them in detail. Characteristically, in all the pieces Joseph is directly addressed by other characters, who initiate a dialogue. Moreover, the songs appeal to emotions and are invariably dynamic. These devices may emphasise Joseph’s participation in the events instead of merely indicating his presence.

*Pomału, Józefie*<sup>55</sup> [Slowly, Joseph] is a beautiful composition, in which the Mother of God asks her guide on the road to Bethlehem for understanding, as she is about to give birth. In *Zagrzmiała, runęła w Betlejem ziemia* [The earth shook and trembled in Bethlehem] the lyrical I asks: „Kędyżeś, kędyżeś Józefie bywał?” [“How have you travelled, Joseph?”]. Another pastoral song uses an anaphor, the shout: „O Józefie!” [“Oh, Joseph!”] and Joseph’s answer in the form of a question: „Czego chcecie?” [“What do ye want?”] being a compositional frame of the whole piece. The text to the latter song appears in the collection edited by Barbara Krzyżaniak and among the Sandomierz manuscripts, which means that it caught the eye of the future author of a vocal-instrumental composition (voices: canto primo and secundo; instruments: violino primo, violino secundo and basso) under the title: *Koncert na Boże Narodzenie: Gloria in excelsis Deo – Puer natus in Betleem – O Józefie, czego chcecie?* [Christmas concert: Gloria in excelsis Deo – Puer natus in Betleem – “Oh, Joseph, what do ye want?”], perhaps a misnomer<sup>56</sup>. The mistake in the title may stem from the presence of two folios in the manuscript, perhaps part of a different composition, that were copied by another hand.

<sup>53</sup> J. Augustyn, *Święty Józefie...*

<sup>54</sup> D. Kwiatkowski, *Święty Józef – patron Kościoła naszych czasów. Waloryzacja kultu św. Józefa w Diecezji Kaliskiej w świetle soborowego i posoborowego nauczania Kościoła*, Poznań 2011, p. 83.

<sup>55</sup> *Pomału Józefie, pomałuśku proszę*, in: *Kantyczki...*, p. 233.

<sup>56</sup> W. Świerczek, *Rękopiśmienne zabytki dawnej muzyki w Bibliotece Seminarium Duchownego w Sandomierzu*, „Kronika Diecezji Sandomierskiej” 1959, nr 7–8, p. 243.

## Conclusions

Although St. Joseph has already been widely discussed in subject literature as an object of veneration, further research on this saint is not a fruitless endeavour. The lyrics of carols, pastoral songs and pastoral plays are of particular interest in this context, not only because of the rich body of still unedited source material, but also potential benefits brought by an integrated analysis of both the textual and musical layer of a composition.

Joseph, as a literary figure, is entirely different from the Joseph described in theological works as an object of Christian worship. On the whole, music plays an important role at the manger and can be specifically connected with the figure of the guardian who nurses the Infant and dances with joy at His birth. The shepherds visiting the stable lend something of their crude and simple joy to Joseph, who ceases to be a stock character in the background, turning into a dynamic and often very colourful figure. At the same time, one has to bear in mind that pastoral songs sometimes simplify the image of Joseph the saint. They depict him as a jovial old man, even though his role in the history of salvation has been fundamental. However, maybe precisely because they are so naive, these songs help us to focus on St. Joseph and highlight his importance.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the Holy Family lies in the fact that it escapes every model or pattern and, as a matter of fact, does not feature any typical (or stereotypical) characters. The child, which due to its age should play the least important role within this social structure, is the true God and therefore the most important person, whose presence conditions the existence of everything and everyone. The roles of the spouses are also somewhat inverted in comparison with the patriarchal model. Mary, a woman, is the decision maker and deliverer of human salvation. Both in Christmas literature and in the history of Christianity she clearly dominates over her husband, whose merits do not seem significant enough while, in fact, they are simply different. On a painting by Józef Kaliski (ca 1630) little Jesus holds Joseph by the index finger of his right hand, “which pointed the way for the future Saviour of mankind”<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> J. Flik, J. Plota, *Obraz Świętego Józefa Kaliskiego*, Kalisz 2012, p. 15.

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## „O Józefie! – Czego chcecie?” Józef „stary” w dawnych kołędach i pastoralkach. Święty – nieświęty

**Streszczenie:** Święty Józef, mąż Maryi i opiekun Jezusa, jest postacią milczącą we wszystkich czterech przekazach ewangelistów. Mimo tego, a najprawdopodobniej dzięki temu – historia jego kultu w znacznej mierze czerpie z wyobrażeń apokryficznych i pobożności ludowej. Przedmiotem artykułu jest spojrzenie na św. Józefa jako na bohatera dawnych kołęd i pastorałek. W tekście podjęty zostaje m.in. problem ról, jakie odgrywa przy żłóbku św. Józef – autorka stawia pytanie, czy Józef to dobrotliwy starzec, czy też może pełen cnót wzór mężczyzny, który potrafi przedłożyć boskie plany ponad własne. Sięga także po utwory bożonarodzeniowe, w których Józef nie jest wyłącznie postacią drugoplanową. Pracę ilustrują liczne cytaty pochodzące z *Kantyczek karmelitańskich* opracowanych przez Barbarę Krzyżaniak oraz z antologii *Staropolskie pastorki dramatyczne* opracowanej przez Jana Okonia. Autorka sięga również do niewydanych jeszcze i nieopracowanych rękopiśmiennych muzykaliów przechowywanych w Bibliotece Diecezjalnej w Sandomierzu, ponieważ uważa, że nieodłącznym elementem analizy utworów o tematyce bożonarodzeniowej jest ich aspekt muzyczny.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Święty Józef, pastorka, pastorela, Boże Narodzenie, Święta Rodzina.