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**Ancient Forest Idols on Polish Soil.
Based on the Poem *Ja jestem satyr* [*I am a Satyr*]
by Waław Rolicz-Lieder
and the Painting *Hold sztuce i muzie*
[*Homage to Art and Muse*] by Jacek Malczewski**

**Antyczni bożkowie leśni na polskiej ziemi.
Na przykładzie wiersza Waław Rolicza-Liedera *Ja jestem satyr*
i dzieła Jacka Malczewskiego *Hold sztuce i muzie***

Słowa kluczowe: faun, satyr, nimfa, sztuka, muzyka, ojczyzna

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I

The poetic works of Young Poland feature a faun (Pan or satyr)¹, slightly simplified, in two roles: one who plays and one who loves; or possibly, one who wants to play and one who wants to love. Of course, his art and his love are expressed in various ways. Another possible classification also involves dichotomy. In those works, on one hand, the figure of a faun appears, always unsatisfied and unfulfilled, subordinated to the lapse of time – an idol that either plays the song of death or announces and brings death, or dies himself. On the other hand, this tragic character, as an expression of the awareness of death or an unrecognized drive for death, is accompanied by a carefree, intoxicated with life, goat-leg creature, finding satisfaction in playing the pipes to spiritualize nature, or in sensual love with nymphs. There is also another, third possibility of classification, which again, is also dichotomous: some texts present a motif of a faun, so to say, of flesh and blood, being half a man and half an animal, while others only feature its stone

¹ For many contemporary artists, the names “faun”, “Pan” and “satyr” were identical in terms of their meaning, and provided a convenient costume to express similar thoughts, although Pan, an ancient Greek idol, and ancient Greek satyrs, with their later ancient Roman equivalents – fauns, are different figures in mythology (although similar in their appearance).

figure, quite frequently damaged, a meaningful, although mute witness of history; a dead, but still living figure.

At the margin of these three main classifications, it is also worth trying to introduce an additional one. If we look at the scenery in which the character is situated, we can see two types of space and two time perspectives. Sometimes a faun occurs in his natural Mediterranean environment, in the mythical reality, beside other mythological figures, or in the real world, in the Greek-Roman times, among the local nature and ruins of ancient monuments (which, among others, is the effect of numerous journeys to Italy and Greece taken by our poets and writers). However, there is also a series of literary and art works in which a faun is transferred from the Mediterranean area into what would seem to be for him an alien world of other cultures (e.g. the Polish countryside) and into the contemporary times at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. This allows the figure of the idol to take on new meanings:

Paraphrased mythological motifs make up a characteristic feature of Symbolist iconography, taking away from ancient myths their pathos and dramatic nature, domesticating hybrid characters. Tritons, fauns, satyrs, mermaids, chimeras and harpies appear on canvas of symbolists in the scenery that is contemporary to them, common and raw, totally different from Greek or Roman landscapes. European modernists, following Arnold Böcklin, reached for the resources of classical motifs to free them from historical conditions and geographical affiliations, to make them independent from conventional associations with the antiquity and to insert them into an entirely new cultural context. In this way, they gave to them a universal, timeless and supranational character, discovered their archetypal features and their ability to be continuously reborn in a modified form (Kossowska, Kossowski 2010: 88).

Motifs derived from antiquity became in the literature and art elements of the “non-classic” poetics, syncretic imagination abandoning allegory for the sake of symbols. Glorification of the Dionysian element by Friedrich Nietzsche permitted combining certain ancient elements “with barbarian and folk nature”.

At the end of the 19th century, the relation to antiquity was radically redefined. Nostalgia for an ideal harmony of forms transformed into the desire to deeply experience the ancient world by reaching for its most secret foundations. The interest in mythology gained in intensity, but along with drawing attention to minor deities personifying the forces of nature, the religion of chthonic gods, mystery cults, orphism or Pythagorean mysticism. [...]

In the perspective of modernists, antiquity was therefore something more than one of the historical costumes with which they attempted to interpret their epoch, sometimes providing a way out the history. It was not only related to metaphorical interpretation of contemporary times, but also served as a kind of self-analysis. Its vision closely entangled with the then thought of art and culture, in which one of the fundamental roles was played by the notion of myth. Greece was perceived

as a state of culture of mythical foundations that had not yet been lost, still not disintegrated unity of reason and intuition, permitting to reach into the depth of individual and collective consciousness – a peculiarly “primitive” status of imagination (Nowakowska-Sito 1996: 6).

The Polish version of the modernistic antiquity does not always have a Classicism dimension. It can be a creative dialogue, introducing ancient motifs (in our analysis – faun-related elements) into more ambiguous, complex imaginary structures.

Intensified presence of faun-like figures in literature and art of the 19th century was related to a revised approach towards the myth. The myth slowly ceased to refer to “the primordial in the historical or cultural sense”, and started to refer to “the primordial in human nature” (Nowakowska-Sito 1996: 51), therefore to collective consciousness reserves. Myth and symbol came close: “Symbol expresses now [...] experience of mythical forces in the infinite depth of human self” (Hofstätter 1987: 33). As a result, the myth stopped to “be perceived only as reflection of a certain stage of ancient religious beliefs, becoming a universal mode of expression, analogous to the artistic expression” (Nowakowska-Sito 1996: 51).

Placing faun-like figures in the Polish scenery became a characteristic convention of the epoch, also present in literature (e.g. *Śmierć Fauna* [*Faun's Death*] by Tytus Czyżewski – first print in 1907, *Marcholt gruby a sprośny* [*Marcolf Fat and Bawdy*] by Jan Kasprowicz – first print of the full text in 1920), and in painting (works by Jacek Malczewski, Vlastimil Hofman, Wiesław Weiss, Antoni Piotrowski or Wincenty Wodzinowski). Some of the works applying this type of imagining feature patriotic accents. Wanting to prove their presence, we present below two different artistic realizations: a poem by Waław Rolicz-Lieder, *Ja jestem satyr* [*I am a Satyr*] (from his volume *Nowe wiersze* [*New Poems*], first print in 1903), and a painting by Jacek Malczewski *Hold sztuce i muzie* [*Homage to Art and Muse*] (created in 1910, oil on panel, National Museum, Warsaw).

II

The title character in the poem by W. Rolicz-Lieder *Ja jestem Satyr* slightly resembles the character presented in Leopold Staff's oeuvre *Faun podstarzały* [*An Old Faun*] (from the volume *Galz kwitnaca* [*Blossoming Branch*], first print in 1908), a text that was, however, created much later; he is also the subject of the narration, he is also old and he also lives with his memories. Nevertheless, his situation is different, just like the place where he is staying. Although the faun described in Staff's poem exists in the reality and mythology that is alien to him, the satyr presented by Rolicz-Lieder returns to Greece – yet, “kiedy cisza napływa na drzewa, / Wśród leśnej woni po sarmacku śpiewa” [When silence flows onto trees / amidst the forest aroma, he sings in the old Polish language] (Rolicz-Lieder 2003: 281). He used to walk along “Latin paths”, and now, although he again is following the roads known to him from his youth, he is living by what he experienced in the Slavic

world, alien to him. These experiences can be puzzling, since apparently, they do not differ from the life pursued by any other satyr chasing nymphs.

Śpiewam, com przeżył był, co przebolełem,
 I co prześniłem z nimfami o ciele
 Różanym, wieczór, i co naszeptalem
 Do uszu nimfom przy miłosnym dziele,
 I o tym, czegom im nie dopowiedział
 Wówczas, gdym jeszcze wszystkiego nie wiedział.

[I am singing about what I have experienced, what I have suffered,
 And what I have dreamed with the nymphs about the rosy body,
 In the evening, and what I have whispered
 To the nymphs' ears at my love work,
 And about what I did not tell them
 Then, when I was still not aware of everything.]

(Rolicz-Lieder 2003: 281)

The above confession can be interpreted as a relation between an artist and his listeners. The satyr recorded, processed and disseminated (“whispered”) in his “love work” (love = creation = pain) his volatile and changeable experiences shared with nymphs (among whom he was living). He created out of love, as if nymphs were muses, inspiration to start a dialogue with them or to seize their ethereal beauty, they fostered his dreams. The subject of artistic confessions remains a secret (it does not have to be love or creation, although those are the first associations). Therefore, it would be a poem about art, about artistic elation. In the opinion of Andrzej Nowakowski, Rolicz-Lieder’s satyr has some features close to the Young Poland stereotype of an artist (Nowakowski 1994: 307). The satyr exalts his own creation, developed and existing because of nymphs, for nymphs and about nymphs. It is only now, from the perspective of the time gone by and from another place, that he is able to look at it from the distance, in a reflective way. Perhaps the satyr is the mask of the author himself and this is the origin of this confession indicting that the character “is singing in the old Polish language”. Rolicz-Lieder was known for his inclinations for old Polish literature, which determined his distinctness among young Poland poets. He particularly respected Jan Kochanowski (see Podraza-Kwiatkowska 1966: 168–170), who wrote the poem *Satyr albo Dziki mąż* [*Satyr, or The Wild Man*] (published in 1564), in which the title character, banished from his hideaway in the forest, reviling the vices of Polish society, turns out to have been settled in the Polish lands for ages. Proof of Rolicz-Lieder’s idolization towards Kochanowski is, for instance, a poem [Kto mi zążegł misterstwo w duszy y kto sprawił] [Who launched mystery in my soul and who made it], opening the volume *Moja muza. Wierszów ciąg czwarty* [*My Muse. The Fourth Series of Poems*] (first print in 1896):

Gdybych wznioł Ci na polskich polach ołtarz s pieśni,
 Twé imię sosnowymi psalmami całował
 Ták, iżby sye faunowie popłákáli leśni –
 Ieszebych cnych Ianowych chwał nie wykwintował.

[If I built for you an altar of songs in the Polish fields,
 Kissed your name with pine psalms
 So that forest fauns burst into tears –
 Even then, I would not manage to praise Jan's merits enough.]
 (Rolicz-Lieder 2003: 192)

The mention about fauns inhabiting Polish forests does not seem here to be accidental. Most probably, this is an allusion to *Pieśń świętojańska o Sobótce* [Saint John's Eve Song on the Midsummer Bonfire], in which at the sound of the shepherd's pipe, "faunowie skaczą leśni" [forest fauns are hopping] (Kochanowski 1991: 245).

In such a situation, the return to Greece mentioned in the poem by Rolicz-Lieder *Ja jestem satyr* would mean the return to the tradition and former values, and the fact that the character "Bez postumentu siadł na leśnej ziemi" [Sat without the pedestal on the forest ground] (Rolicz-Lieder 2003: 281) – would be a manifestation of humbleness towards cultural heritage or an expression of objections towards setting artists on a pedestal, so fashionable at the turn of centuries. It is highly possible that these words hide the feeling of sorrow for underestimation of Rolicz's poetry in Poland, disfavour of critics towards it and the lack of appreciation on the side of the audience. Therefore, Greece should be understood here in a figurative way and should be interpreted as the return to the homeland² (Rolicz-Lieder returned to Poland in 1897) or the return from the world of dreams and imagination, populated by nymphs, into the reality. This helps to understand the final verse of the poem, in which the scenery brings associations rather with the Polish landscape than the Greek one:

A gdy koło mnie leśnymi drogami
 Idą powoli z szarymi dzbankami
 Smętne niewiasty i trzpiotne dziewczyny
 Nad źródła, kędy srebrna woda płacze –
 Krew moja kurzy się, jako kominy,
 Gdy z pól wieczorni ściągają oracze.

² Such perception of Greece was developed in Romanticism. To Romantics, Greece appeared to be, on one hand, the homeland of natural, spontaneous and sensitive people, while Homer was considered a true poet of the nature. On the other hand, the Hellenic world was perceived by them in the perspective of spiritual life of an individual and the nation. In Poland, the trend of historical reception of ancient tradition manifested itself in a figurative treatment of the historical costume, which permitted writing about Greece but talking about Poland. This costume also provided a material to formulate the attitudes of national Tyrticism. Greek and Roman heroes played an important role in developing Romantic moral and patriotic patterns; actually, they became the carriers of national and freedom ideals already in Classicism, which affected several Romantic phenomena.

[And when along the forest paths,
 with their grey jugs,
 wistful women and flibbertigibbet girls go slowly past me
 to the spring where silver water is crying –
 My blood gets dusted, as the chimneys,
 When evening ploughmen return from the fields.]

(Rolicz-Lieder 2003: 281)

The satyr sings about what he have experienced and dreamed, but he is sensitive to the environment in which he is staying. He is looking at people, as the old faun in Staff's poem at girls „na śliwach” [on the plum trees] and peasants with sickles, but his attitude is different. Although Staff's faun is characterized by passiveness, calmness and even boredom, the satyr from Rolicz-Lieder's work is excited, as if he discovered a new source of inspiration – something he did not notice before. Perhaps his old age should be put in inverted commas? The poem does not clearly state that he is old. His “old age” is inferred from his memories made by him the subject of his songs. The terms “przebolełem” [I have suffered], “prześniłem” [I have dreamed], “naszeptalem” [I have whispered], suggest a kind of experience. Perhaps the character is not old in the biological sense, but in the spiritual or artistic dimension. Maybe this is a satyr-exile, forced some time ago to leave the country that became his homeland, and where he lived from the Old Polish times, but now, led by love (“W łańcuchu z drobnych serduszek na szyi” [In a chain of tiny hearts at his neck], Rolicz-Lieder 2003: 281) and memory – against an atmosphere that is still unfavourable for him and the lack of acceptance (Kochanowski's satyr pointed out faults of the Polish society, for which he was scared off) – he returned to areas close to his heart, where he claims to “have suffered” so much.

III

The topic of art was often undertaken by J. Malczewski, who also used fauns for this purpose. “The general sense of the Faun series – as Kazimierz Wyka writes, distinguishing in the painting by Malczewski series of an iconographic nature and mythical-archetypal content – is quite evident: it is about art in general. It is about its ambiguous, evasive, but always superior position towards an individual condemned by faith to make artistic creations. Therefore, this series emerged the earliest, and almost simultaneously, with great compositions demarcating the access of Jacek Malczewski into the poetics of Young Poland” (Wyka 1971: 43). However, the branches “of this series reach far, towards the nodes possible to be identified: Dionysus – Christ – John the Baptist – St. Francis – Eros” (ibid: 50).

Leszek Libera argues with the conclusion by Kazimierz Wyka concerning the painting series titled “Faun – Syrena – Chimera” [Faun – Mermaid – Chimera], emphasizing that it should not be only about “art in general”, but first of all about the relation between love and death, in which “the love act is an initiation of the drive

for death”: “[...] after all, promiscuous satyrs of Malczewski, as if taken directly from the Bacchanalian madness, and chimeras, in their iconic-ideal shape much closer to maenads and Bacchantes, quite clearly accentuate the interests of the painter in orgiastic myths related to bloody rites, in which religious ecstasy was combined with scratching sex organs raw or tearing apart the victim” (Libera 1994: 48).



Photo 1. Jacek Malczewski, *Hold sztuce i muzie* [*Homage to Art and Muse*] (1910)

An expression of combining faun-like features with issues of artistic creation is, among others, the painting titled *Hold sztuce i muzie* [*Homage to Art and Muse*] (Photo 1). This painting shows two little fauns – they are accompanying a smiling girl situated in the centre of the composition, wearing a folk costume, with a bow in her hand, sitting at her sides and holding ends of branches, which behind the backs of those three figures prove to be a part of lush greenery forming the background³. It seems that branches make a kind of connection between the little fauns. The girl, as if a queen on the throne (perhaps the symbol of the national art or a symbol of life) receives the homage paid to her by two men holding flowers: one has in his hands single, sharp thistles, and the other – a little bouquet resembling a bunch of forget-me-nots. Both are placed in such a way that their respective little fauns are visible. This permits to obtain the effect of symmetry: the girl in the middle, and on her left and right side a little faun sitting at the pedestal and a man standing below. Flowers (gifts) are perhaps intended to be placed in small vases situated near the girl's legs.

Thistle is known in the Christian art as a symbol of martyrdom, hardship and pain, related to Christ and martyrs, and consequently, the symbol of redemption. In turn, a forget-me-not means first of all incessant, everlasting memory. In Young Poland poetry, it was related to a specific mental mood – to sadness, but also to ultimate matters.

The evocation of melancholic moods was always accompanied by symbolically interpreted blue colour of the flower. With this obvious, as it would seem, observation, there were sometimes combined conventional mentions about dream, which should be read as a metaphorical description of eternal dream – dead. It is worth mentioning here that the blue colour (the colour of the forget-me-not) often evoked in poet thoughts about infinity, deliberations on God, passing mysticising contemplations, etc. (Sikora 1992: 82; see Kuryłowicz 2012: 243–264).

The hallmark of divinity is given to forget-me-nots in the poem by Jan Kaspro-wicz *W turniach* [*At the peaks*]:

Tutaj roztacza swe wdzięki
Krzew niezabudki.
To pył z niebiańskiej swej szaty,
W barwy bogatej,
Między te cienie,
Gdzie śmierć po głazach płąsa,

³ Little fauns and little satyrs have long been present in art works. Even combining the Polish folklore with ancient mythology does not seem to be any pioneering idea in Malczewski's works, as Wyka himself revokes the relevant verse of *Pieśń świętojańska o Sobótce* by Kochanowski, mentioning forest fauns. Other artists did the same as Malczewski, introducing faun-like figures into a reality, culture and epoch that was alien to them (e.g. Franz von Stuck). This phenomenon of cultural syncretism, binding different worlds in the name of the myth connecting them, become more intense in the 19th century.

Sam Stwórca strząsa,
 Aby pokazać, że w swej dziedzinie,
 Jasnej, słonecznej,
 Pomni i o tej krainie
 Wiecznej,
 Lodowatej
 Grozy.

[It is here that the forget-me-not bush
 Oozes its charm.
 This is the dust shaken off,
 From His rich in colour heavenly gown,
 Among these thorns
 Where the death likes to dance over the stones,
 By the Creator Himself,
 To show, that in His domain,
 Sunny and bright,
 He will remember also this land
 Of eternal,
 Icy
 Fear.

(Kasprowicz 1997: 284)

In the painting by Malczewski *Hold sztuce i muzie*, the clothes of the man holding thistles already seem to indicate that he is a martyr, a penitent or a saint (a habit tied with a string), while the clothes of the other man, holding a bouquet of blue flowers – that he is a soldier (a greatcoat). It might mean that art immortalizes great deeds and thus dignifies and promotes certain attitudes and patterns? The men are standing opposite to each other, which can be interpreted as the contents that are contrasting or supplementing each other, for instance: holiness (purity) – boldness (crime), suffering – death, eternity – time, individual (single thistles) – community (bunch of forget-me-nots), universality – historicity. The clue is provided by little fauns, one with dark blue legs, and the other – with red. In the western Christian painting, both colours were present in the images of Christ and Mary:

[...] the bottom garment of Christ is very often blue, while the top garment covering it (a gown or a coat) is usually red or scarlet. [...] In the case of Mary, the trend concerning the selection of colours is different, although it is not possible to establish any general rules [...]. It is possible that “scarlet robe” (Mt 27, 28), put on Jesus to become the object of scorn was an ordinary soldier cloak, which, however, gained a symbolic meaning of the “Jewish king’s” clothes (Lurker 1994: 197, 202–203).

Blue is first of all the colour of sky (dark blue – infinite depth of the sky) and everything spiritual, while red turns out to be closer to what is earthly. Neverthe-

less, both colours are ambivalent as regards their meaning, and they complete each other in the bipolar image of the world. What can be said about Malczewski's work is that the artist tries to emphasize the connection between martyrdom, atonement, bloody sacrifice (red) and heavenly glory, soldier's loyalty, immaculacy, eternity, freedom, hope, and faith (blue, navy blue). He achieves that in two ways, reinforcing the effect: first of all, little fauns are holding branches that are connecting them, as if the thread combining both men paying a homage existed; secondly, the little faun with blue legs and hooves can be seen over the man with thistles, with a bleeding finger (but the faun is looking at the soldier and his flowers), while the little faun with red legs was placed over the men with blue flowers (yet, he seems to look at the martyr's thistles). Such colour "mixing" or "mismatch" of blue and red (the "blue" faun, if we want to logically link realistic and fantastic threads, should "provide patronage" to the character with blue flowers and the red one – to the one cut with the thistle), and crossed looks of little fauns indicate the relation between what is represented by both men. Red (as the colour of blood) can be associated both with martyrs and with soldiers – as if the men from Malczewski's painting were soldiers of God; likewise blue (as the colour of sky) – as if there existed two ways towards salvation (salvation of soul or homeland), both leading through blood: the way of humble martyrdom and the way of fighting. The presence of little fauns reveals what is apparently not visible, salvation is hidden behind what is held by the martyr (sharp thistle) – thus the "blue" faun is placed over him; and blood is hidden behind what the soldier is holding (blue flowers) – thus the presence of the "red" faun.

The issue here is not that everything that exists is underpinned with the faun-related nature, but that art commemorates blood (life and death), inspires or immortalizes dreams about salvation or freedom. It gives rise to faith and hope – this is the reason why the faces of the characters, looking at their flowers, show peace close to contemplation. The gentle smile of the girl adds a light-hearted tone to the entire scene. She accepts the homage, settling, as if the judge, contrary attitudes or desires, creating a kind of harmony. The female character (her figure) does not change, but her "outfit" can change. The subject of faith and hope depends only on the clothes she is wearing, therefore in the image we can see a soldier's coat that she was wearing and took off, which is now lying around her. This taken off item symbolizes freedom, without which there is no real art. It can also signal freedom (salvation) of the spirit, for which the man in the habit is thanking, or freedom (salvation) of the homeland, for which the man in greatcoat is thanking – while both types of freedom can be interlinked as those entangled branches held by little fauns.

IV

The works presented above – the poem by Rolicz-Lieder and the painting by Malczewski – are about art. Therefore, they undertake a topic that was crucial for the Young Poland movement. At the same time, they use the faun motif, fashiona-

ble at the turn of centuries. The difference between those works cannot be reduced only to the mode of the artistic expression (poetic vision – painter’s vision), in particular that the poem by Rolicz-Lieder is characterized by a certain picturesque quality (vividness), and the image by Malczewski – by the poetic mood of the depicted scene. Those works differ in the perspective applied. In the poem *Ja jestem satyr*, it is narrowed down to an individual (and his individual experience) – actually, this is the confession of a subject finding satisfaction in seeing what is native to him (the good point of leaving the country or exile is that you start to value it more, attach a higher value to it, perceive in it something so important that can be made the subject of one own creation). On the other hand, in the picture *Hold sztuce i muzie*, the perspective seems to be broader, more universal. When the satyr from Rolicz-Lieder’s poem “Bez postumentu siadł na leśnej ziemi” [Sat without the pedestal on the forest ground] (a sign of attachment to the homeland?), the female character in Malczewski’s painting is sitting like a ruler on the throne (manifestation of the sacralisation of art). The satyr of the poet could be one of the worshipers of art and thank it, in a similar way as the martyr and the soldier are thanking the figure in the picture (but the expression of his thanksgiving would be his song). However, he is thanking the place where he is situated, the environment (homeland) which disposes him to wail a song.

The composition of Malczewski resembles one of the manners used to represent Our Lady in old paintings – a sitting mother with a child, accompanied by two saints standing at her sides. The examples include early Renaissance works by Antoniazio Romano (born Antonio di Benedetto Aquilo degli Aquili): *Madonna degli Uditori di Rota* or *Madonna in trono fra i Santi Pietro e Paolo e gli uditori del Tribunale di Rota* (painted in 1474–1485, English title: *Madonna with St Peter and St Paul and 12 Members of the Rota*, tempera on wood, Musei Vaticani) and *Madonna con Bambino in trono tra san Paolo e san Francesco d’Assisi* (painted in 1487, English title: *Madonna with St Paul and St Francis*, tempera on wood, Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Antica di Palazzo Barberini, Roma). In the first of those paintings, Saint Paul is holding a book and a sword, and Saint Peter – a book and keys. In the second one, Saint Paul is also holding a book and a sword, but Saint Francis – a book and a crucifix. A similar setting can be observed in paintings by Francesco Francia (born Francesco di Marco di Giacomo Raibolini): *Madonna col Bambino in trono tra i santi Paolo, Francesco e Giovannino* (painted about 1495, English title: *Madonna Enthroned with the Infant Christ and St Paul, St Francis and the infant St John*, oil on wood, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna) (Photo 2). In this case, two standing saints are also exposed (the third one, presented as a child, is kneeling in the middle at the base of the throne). And two more examples: Piero di Cosimo (born Piero di Lorenzo di Piero d’Antonio), *Madonna col Bambino in trono e i santi Lazzaro e Sebastiano* (painted in 1481–1484, English title: *Madonna Enthroned with the Infant and St Lazarus and St Sebastian*, tempera on wood, Montevettolini, chiesa dei Santi Michele e Lorenzo) and

Paris Bordone (or Bordon), *Madonna con Bambino in trono e i santi Sebastiano e Rocco* (painted in 1535–1543, English title *Madonna Enthroned with the Infant Child and St Sebastian and St Roch*, oil on canvas, Valdobbiadene).



Photo 2. Francesco Francia, *Madonna col Bambino in trono tra i santi Paolo, Francesco e Giovannino* [*Madonna Enthroned with the Infant Christ and St Paul, St Francis and the infant St John*] (ca 1495)

In Malczewski's painting, the girl – as the highest holiness – is clasping, instead of a child, a bow to her bosom (the instrument is lying under her taken off coat – only the “head” of the neck is visible). The girl receives homage from the men, who owe to her play (or love or adoration of the girl) their brave attitude, faith, or freedom, or making a life choice. The bow (just like the violin) can indicate the harmony created. Raised, it produces an impression as if the girl was conducting everything surrounding her, creating the world. Music would be therefore inspiration for artists and “for various life situations (leadership, love, prayer, blessing)” (Lipka 2005: 94).

Sometimes, looking at self-portraits of Malczewski holding an instrument with his hand, it can be observed that this instrument replaces a pallet [...], and the bow – the brush. Finally, the instrument, the bow or the pallet and the brush are the same or at least similar tools. Another interpretation of the situation is that the brush is replaced with the bow, and the bow in turn replaces the baton – which can be indicated by those paintings at which the artist is a kind of conducting with the bow (or the brush). [...] Finally, the painting that he was practicing was obviously most important to Malczewski [...]. And when it comes to inspiration, when we talk about a leadership among arts or about conducting the issues of art, the Muse is holding in her hand not a brush, but the bow. She majestically rules the arts, and even, at least partially, the nature. There are also grounds to believe that Malczewski understood music as the art close to nature, or even perceived it as a substance or essence saturating nature (Lipka 2005: 93–94).

The poem of *Rolicz-Lieder* reveals what can be a source of inspiration for art, and the picture by Malczewski represents what can be inspired by art. Regardless of this direction of impact or effect, both works suggest the idea that art is culturally determined and has the right to bear the mark of “homeliness”.

V

Since ancient times, forest idols (Pan, fauns, satyrs) and related mythological deities have existed in literature and arts in various configurations. “From the sixteenth until the nineteenth century, Pan exists in numerous landscape presentations, typically as one of the mythological stewards, on the same rights as many figures of this type” (Nowakowski 1994: 295). The modernistic fashion to present a goat-legged character reveal subjects that were important for the epoch: love, death, art. Michał Głowiński observes that participants of the Dionysian procession (as, for instance Pan or satyrs) in many contemporary texts fulfil the function traditionally attributed to Dionysus (Głowiński 1994: 40). However, it does not mean to be the case every time and everywhere.

Referring to the work by Zygmunt Łempicki (1933: 23), Michał Głowiński introduces the notion of “cultural equation”, to which he relates the idea of cultural syncretism:

Dionysian creation of modernists is based on the phenomenon which could be described as cultural equation. A modernist was looking at similarities to his epoch in other times, was searching for the perspective from which he could observe the period in which he was to live. Regardless of whether he approved of [...], of negated his epoch [...] he was looking for parallels. He wanted to explain it through analogy [...].

Therefore, the idea of cultural syncretism, postulate of mixing cultures formulated; [...] sometimes equal to the idea of saving the culture from fossilization with an injection of barbarity, yet most fully expressed [...] in deliberations concerning the relationship between Christianity and paganism (Głowiński 1994: 8, 25, 27).

Cultural syncretism consisted in transferring Greek motifs to the Polish lands or in shaping Slavic legends and beginnings of the history of Poland (perceived fantastically) according to the Greek mythological and dramatic patterns. Hence, it was a type of talking about modern times through the prism of the past. The focusing on “barbarity” could be achieved, e.g. by turning to native folklore, to “national primeval nature”.

In a sense, people not making part of the history (just as a child) could become at the end of the 19th century one of the elements of the cultural equation – based on structural similarities – of primitive cultures and epochs. Trends and method of research of the then ethnography, anthropology or linguistics justified deriving artistic analogies on this ground. [...] It was emphasized that early phases of humanity development could be maintained until contemporary times – particularly among lower class people. [...]

Therefore, a tendency existed to perceive an ancient myth and a folk legend as an expression of a similar state of mind [...]. Following a similar principle, a faun, as a product of fantasy similar to the imagination of commonalty, could be associated with the folk context. It may seem that Słowacki was the first one to discover artistic attractiveness of using the analogy of cultures for reconstructing ancient epochs. This might be the reason why Polish Modernism, drawing extensively from his works, revealed a quite strong tendency to add a folk tone to ancient motifs (Nowakowska-Sito 1996: 42–43).

Juliusz Słowacki’s creative works are perceived as the source of Jacek Malczewski’s attempts to associate “mythological motifs with the folk context” (Nowakowska-Sito 1996: 19). A new phenomenon in art emerged, linking folk culture with the Dionysian element. This element was combined by F. Nietzsche “with the genesis of folk song and music”. Setting “fauns and satyrs belonging to Bacchanalian procession in rural scenery (this context even intensifying their barbarian, vital nature) cannot be therefore interpreted as a perverse negation of their ancient origins, as this fact is justified exactly on the grounds of a new look at the culture of antiquity” (ibid: 44).

Because of their hybrid, human-animal form, and consequently, belonging to two orders, nature and culture, a faun became a convenient means for Symbolism. He could represent biological vitality, unbridled instincts, but also internal experience and indecisions, the conflict of spirit with the matter, or spiritualization of the entire nature:

In the opinion of some specialists, the faun, fringing upon human spirituality and animal nature, symbolizes the unity of the world and a certain type of equality of rights for spirit and matter. At the same time, the faun indicates that only a rational reflection, but also surrendering to fantasy and instinctive impulses can be the source of art (Czerni, Szczerski 2003: 29).

Stanisław Stabryła, following the functional criterion, distinguished in his examined material (covering the 20th century post-war Polish literature) four principal methods for transforming ancient content:

1) revocations – repetitions, imitations and alterations of motifs, themes and topics derived from literature, myth, history, arts or antique philosophy, yet without a change to the basic meaning in relation to the prototype;

2) re-interpretations – transformations consisting in changing the sense or significance of the adopted content “according to one’s own idea and artistic intentions”, typically giving this content “universal, general human and timeless meaning;

3) pre-figurations – studies in which the relation between the ancient prototype and its contemporary realization is seen in the system of analogies “visible in the fate of main characters or the structure of the presented world”; myth creates a general frame, a type of “model shaping the situation of the lyrical subject – type of expressed feelings and the characters of the reflections spoken out”;

4) incrustations – embellishments, typical in particular for poetry (metaphors, allusions, comparisons, associations) creating “external stylistics of a certain group of literary works” (Stabryła 1983: 23–25, 76, 92, 136, 148).

The above researcher made it clear that the analysed material “does not contain many examples of ‘pure’, uniform functions: the multifunctionality of literary works somehow excludes beforehand the possibility of categorizing them into one stiff classification model” (ibid: 25). Therefore, what is taken into account is the prevalence of one of the tendencies, the most important features of a given text. In the chapter devoted to poetry, proper deliberations are preceded with an overview of the reception of antiquity in the Young Poland and the inter-war period. In case of Young Poland, Stabryła follows Mieczysław Jastrun, who refused to assign to Parnassians and symbolists “intimate and deep relations” with ancient culture, reducing the then fascination of poets with antiquity to a decorative function (Jastrun 1976: 42–43).

However, not everything can be reduced to decoration. Decorativeness occurs in many poems; it is most visible in texts by poets with an aestheticizing approach, ardent lovers of statutes and sculptures, but not exclusively.

Four ways in which the ancient myth can function in literature, as proposed by Stabryła, can, in practice, pose some difficulties when attempting to precisely consider a given work as evocation, re-interpretation, pre-figuration or mythological incrustation. There exists a risk of confusion between those references to antiquity (e.g. pre-figuration with incrustation), as a lot depends on the interpretation of the text.

However, adopting the classification of the above mentioned researcher, we propose that the works in which the characters from ancient myths are situated in Polish or Slavic landscape (the mythological theme is developed somehow in parallel to the “human” theme – as in Malczewski’s paintings) should be classified as mythological pre-figurations. Therefore, they could include the poem by Rolicz-Lieder *Ja jestem satyr*. To resume: the title character confesses that walking along “Latin paths” he returned to Greece and when the silence falls, “he sings in the old Polish language”. Greece can be here understood literally and figuratively (as Poland). In the first case, it is about memories related to nymphs, about tradition and old values, while in the other – about returning to the real world from the world of dreams and imagination, inhabited by nymphs. The scenery presented in the final verse of the poem resembles more the Polish landscape than Greece. The satyr seems to be here the pre-figuration of an artist, who finds in his homeland reality the source of excitation or inspiration.

However, while for Malczewski it was Słowacki who could be considered an “intermediary” in his attempts to combine Greek motifs with the Polish ones, in case of Rolicz-Lieder such a role might be fulfilled by Kochanowski.

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Summary

The works analysed in this paper – Wacław Rolicz-Lieder's poem *Ja jestem satyr* [I am a Satyr] (from the volume *Nowe wiersze* [New poems, 1903] and Jacek Malczewski's painting *Hold sztuce i muzie* [Homage to Art and Muse, 1910] – relate to the theme of art. They cover a subject of key importance to the Young Poland movement, simultaneously using the motif of a forest idol (faun, satyr) fashionable at the turn of the 20th century. The difference between these two works is not limited to the nature of artistic expression (poetic vision – the painter's vision). In the poem by Rolicz, it is narrowed to the individual (the individual's experiences) – basically, it is the confession of an individual finding satisfaction in the image of what is native. In the painting by Malczewski, the perspective seems wider and more universal. The former reveals what could be the source of inspiration for an artist, while the latter presents what art can aspire to. Regardless of this direction of influence, both works contain the suggestion that art is conditioned by culture and that it has the right to bear the mark of "homeliness".

