

University of Warsaw, Faculty of “Artes Liberales”
Centre for Studies on the Classical Tradition (OBTA)
and the Cluster The Past for the Present

Schools Endeavour
Educational Materials

“Strumienie” High School in Józefów
Bartłomiej Nowodworski I High School in Kraków
Mikołaj Rej XI High School in Warsaw



Naturae cognoscere causas...

Our Mythical Nature...
The Classics and Environmental Issues
in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture

Warsaw 2021

ERC Consolidator Grant (681202)

Our Mythical Childhood...
The Reception of Classical Antiquity
in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture
in Response to Regional and Global Challenges





*Naturae
cognoscere causas...*

Naturae cognoscere causas...: Schools Endeavour Educational Materials

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ERC Consolidator Grant (681202) *Our Mythical Childhood... The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*

Stage III *Our Mythical Nature: The Classics and Environmental Issues in Children's and Young Adults' Culture*

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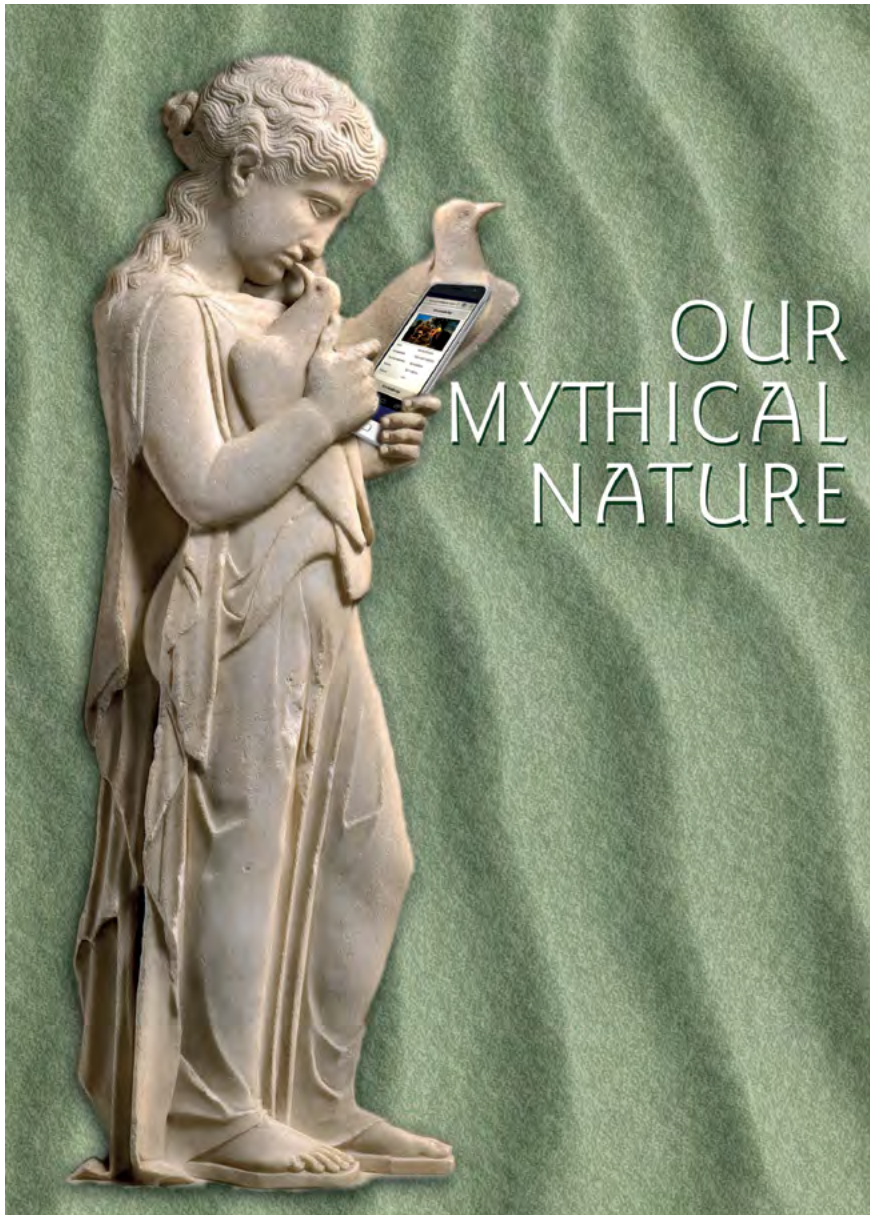


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III. 1: Zbigniew Karaszewski, *A Girl with Doves Googling Arcadia* (2020), based on the marble grave stele of a little girl, ca. 450–440 BC from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Public Domain. Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/130013380> (accessed November 25, 2021).

A Garden in the Library, or How the Classics Can Lead Us Back to Nature

In June 708 *ab Urbe condita*, that is 46 BC, Marcus Tullius Cicero declares his willingness to pay a visit to his friend Marcus Terentius Varro, if Varro is to further delay his visit to him. In a short letter, preserved until our times in the collection *Ad familiares*, Cicero defines his needs clearly. No, he does not expect any special reception, refined meals, drinks, or luxuries. *If you have a garden in the library, nothing more is needed*, he writes to Varro: *si hortum in bibliotheca habes, deerit nihil* (Cic. *fam.* IX, 4). Nature and books to enjoy together with one's near and dear – this becomes the definition of fulfilment for Cicero.

And not only for him. Varro must have shared his friend's view. He was a booklover too, and he wrote quite a few of them himself, including the treatise *Rerum rusticarum libri III* – on agriculture and life in the country. It is worth observing that the term 'agriculture' entered into English from Latin. It contains the notions of 'field' (*ager*) and 'culture' (*cultura*), where the latter comes from the verb *colere* ('to cultivate', 'to take care of') and is linked to the noun 'cult' (*cultus*) – one that we know mainly from the religious context. Indeed, it evokes associations with reverence and concern. Today we may be less sensitive to such etymological connections, but thinking about them helps make us aware of the feelings of respect and humility before Nature, and of the moral obligation to take care of her – a duty inscribed in human history, and one that can be gleaned from texts whether by Greek and Roman authors (the focus of our interest in the present volume), the Bible, and countless other works from nearly all cultural circles the world over.

The definition of fulfilment proposed by Cicero – maybe even of happiness, if we are not afraid of big words – was rediscovered by many of us in 2020 during

the coronavirus pandemic and the related lockdowns. Most people had probably never heard of Cicero's exchange of letters with Varro on the subject of libraries and gardens. Rather, they made this "biblio-hortological" discovery on their own, in trying circumstances. Nonetheless, this very fact demonstrates how timeless and modern the thoughts of the ancients are, and how fruitful it could be for us to lend our ears to the voices from the past and to search there for inspiration and guidance. This is precisely what we have been trying to do within the *Our Mythical Childhood* programme.

In 2015, while defining the main stages of the ERC Consolidator Grant project, Nature came to my mind in a *nomen omen* natural way, as the third basic element after Myth (in the *Our Mythical Hope* stage) and History (*Our Mythical History*). It was clear to me that environmental issues were vital for the reflections on childhood, youth, and the coming-of-age process, and that Nature should be included into our research. After barely a few years, however, the importance of this theme exceeded all our expectations and placed it among the absolute priorities for our world. All the more so, therefore, am I glad that we could address Nature and look at her from both the ancient and modern perspectives. Yet this happens not without serious obstacles. As mentioned above, the year 2020, for which our conference had been planned to sum up this stage – *Our Mythical Nature: The Classics and Environmental Issues in Children's and Young Adults' Culture* – verified all our dreams and intentions, and thus all the more powerfully revealed our human fragility and dependence on balance in the natural world. The pandemic that broke out in 2020 and is still ongoing as I write these words, disturbed this balance, but at the same time this disturbance is the result of previous actions (whether conscious or not) performed against Nature by us humans.

The students of three high schools in Poland: "Strumienie" High School in Józefów, Bartłomiej Nowodworski I High School in Kraków, and Mikołaj Rej XI High School in Warsaw, who decided to join with their teachers the Nature stage of the *Our Mythical Childhood* project,¹ had not initially known (just as none

¹ We started our regular collaboration with schools in 2012/2013 within the project *Our Mythical Childhood... The Classics and Children's Literature Between East and West* supported by a grant from the Loeb Classical Library Foundation (Harvard University), see: www.omc.al.uw.edu.pl. In

of us had) what a unique challenge we all would have to face, even if we had “challenges” *ex definitione* inscribed in the project, in fact in its very title (*The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*).

This school endeavour started in September 2019. The idea to try to understand Nature – *Naturae cognoscere causas* – was difficult in itself and demanded that we undertake the mission initiated by the Ancients. The pandemic added to this the necessity to face the painful question about humanity’s destructive influence on the Earth. The whole endeavour was conducted in the shadow of insecurity, under the subsequent lockdowns and while testing novel formats of remote education. We changed the time-frame of our collaboration repeatedly, adjusting its rhythm to the safety of participants, who precisely in such circumstances managed to develop the demanding skills of team work. In 2021, against all odds, *opus exegimus*, to paraphrase Ovid (*Met.* 15.871). We are pleased to present this publication of the high-school students’ works, in which both libraries and gardens are present (the pandemic has taught all to appreciate even the tiniest space on a balcony or the silhouette of a solitaire tree outside the window). Moreover, the authors lead us to Arcadia; they invite us to reflect on Nature in relation to measure and *decorum* as the guarantees of Beauty; they discuss the theory of Four Elements; they follow the bees, both in Nature and as an artistic motif; they offer a choice of creative stories, inspired by Nature and mythology, and the climate situation today. Also, they make us listen to the great ancient poet and admirer of the natural world, Virgil, tracing the motifs from his poetry in the Museum of King John III’s Palace in Wilanów – the amazing residence of that

2015/2016 we continued owing to the project *Chasing Mythical Beasts... The Reception of Creatures from Graeco-Roman Mythology in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture as a Transformation Marker* developed owing to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Alumni Award for Innovative Networking Initiatives, see: <http://mythicalbeasts.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/poster-presentation/>. The ERC Consolidator Grant project *Our Mythical Childhood... The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges* (2016–2022) has permitted us to propose a citizen-science endeavour each school year, see: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/ventures>. See also reportages and clips on our activities: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/meet-omc>, for example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RizUWYMW0Q> (all links accessed November 25, 2021).

Hercules Polonus who would surely agree with Cicero on the joy of reading in the midst of Nature. The penultimate section is devoted to the archetypical similarities between the Nature deities in Greek and Slavic mythologies. Last but not least, Cicero is present in the publication, too. The students focus on his reflections on the attempts at reading the future on the basis of observations from Nature. Cicero was rather sceptical in this respect and criticized the divination practices, but at the same time his dialogue *De divinatione*, chosen by one student team for analysis, reflects his great sensibility towards the natural environment. And precisely from this perspective does it become clear that we indeed *can* read the future from Nature – not in terms of fortune-telling, but in the most crucial sense of studying the shape of Nature to predict the future of humankind on Earth.

I wish to voice my highest respect to all the students-authors who at such a difficult time put so much passion into their works. I thank the teachers of the participants: Janusz Ryba (Nowodworski High School); Barbara Strycharczyk, who coordinated also the whole schools' endeavour, Anna Łukomska, Hazel Pearson, Agata Plotczyk, Maria Skibińska, and Agnieszka Żukowska ("Strumienie" High School), and Anna Wojciechowska (Rej High School). My gratitude also goes to the Headmasters: Ewa Korba ("Strumienie" High School), Jacek P. Kaczor (Nowodworski High School), and Małgorzata Wojtysiak (Rej High School), and to the parents and tutors of the participants for their faith in our endeavour. I am grateful to Elżbieta Olechowska, Maria Makarewicz, and Magdalena Andersen for all their support in the whole project, Olga Strycharczyk for her editorial contribution, to Marta Pszczolińska who controlled all the ancient sources, and to Angelina Gerus who prepared the index for the volume. Its layout is the work by Zbigniew Karaszewski (see ill. 1) and Janusz Olech, whom I thank deeply for giving the texts an artistic frame. This whole venture is possible owing to the support from the European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Grant and I am most grateful to all the ERCEA Staff involved in creating such marvellous opportunities for us, and from the "Artes Liberales Institute" Foundation supporting pioneering educational endeavours within the milieu of my home Faculty of "Artes Liberales" at the University of Warsaw. At this point I wish to thank deeply Prof. Jerzy Axer and Prof. Jan Kieniewicz for their constant faith in the *Our Mythical Childhood* programme.

The present publication appears in the series “OBTA Studies in Classical Reception” – as already the second volume in the educational cycle (“Educational Materials”) – after *De viris mulieribusque illustribus*, prepared in 2019 by the students participating in the *Our Mythical History* stage.² Both volumes are in dialogue with each other by showing the interests of the young people and by pointing to the chances offered by an education in the spirit of *artes liberales* with the method of interdisciplinary team projects. This volume is in a dialogue also with other elements of the *Our Mythical Childhood* programme: the third edition of the video competition for elementary and high-school students *Antiquity–Camera–Action!*, dedicated to the theme of ecology,³ and with the conference summing up the Nature stage and organized, because of the pandemic, online in the last week of September 2021, with the conference presentations placed on our YouTube channel and available for watching any time,⁴ thus widening the access to research results, which is one of the positive things we have learnt in this challenging period. And even if it was impossible to meet in the traditional way at the Faculty of “Artes Liberales”, we managed to maintain the tradition of the presentation of the schools’ endeavour by the participants themselves – they talked about their work and experiences in a short reportage prepared by Mirosław Kaźmierczak,⁵ who has accompanied us with his camera from the very beginning of the ERC Grant project.

² See Katarzyna Marciniak, ed., *De viris mulieribusque illustribus: Schools Endeavour Educational Materials*, authors and editors of the given parts: Barbara Bibik and the students from Nicolaus Copernicus University Academic Junior and Senior High School in Toruń; Janusz Ryba and the students from Bartłomiej Nowodworski I High School in Kraków; Barbara Strycharczyk and the students from “Strumienie” High School in Józefów; Anna Wojciechowska and the students from Mikołaj Rej XI High School in Warsaw; trans. Joanna Dutkiewicz, in the series “OBTA Studies in Classical Reception” 8, Warsaw: Faculty of “Artes Liberales” UW, 2019, Open Access: <http://www.omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/dvm>.

³ See the post with the results on the *Our Mythical Childhood Blog*: <https://ourmythicalchildhoodblog.wordpress.com/2021/06/22/antiquity-camera-action-the-results-of-the-movie-competition-3rd-edition-ecology/> and the website of the competition: <https://antykkameraakcja.wordpress.com/>.

⁴ See the conference’s website with the relevant links: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/our-mythical-nature>.

⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zniUgoBRK7k>.

Nature and books to enjoy together with one's near and dear – Cicero's idea, as the authors of the texts in this volume show, still works some 2000 years later. The students invite to this setting and community also the readers of the present publication. Of course, we can discover a lot on our own, independently, but the texts gathered here prove that the Classics may support us in this quest as our guides, *cicerones*, sensitizing us to many aspects of human life in the midst of a Nature we have left behind in the process of developing modern civilization – and helping us rediscover and rekindle the wisdom of Antiquity.

This volume is also an invitation for readers to reflect on *Naturae causas* and the definition of fulfilment. This is a true challenge, and so I traditionally wish to close my introduction with the motto of the Rej High School, which is also my own school, feeling thereby all the more honoured to share these words. They are in Latin, of course, and they come from a poem by Publius Papinius Statius having Virgilian echoes. In a free English translation this motto means: *Be brave! Have courage!*⁶ So this fits well, because we have a lot to do to be able to (re)construct for ourselves and future generations our world as a peaceful garden in a library or, if you prefer, a fascinating library in a garden – one to share and enjoy with other human and non-human beings. So, *Macte animo!*

Katarzyna Marciniak

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Principal Investigator of the *Our Mythical Childhood* Project

⁶ See Katarzyna Marciniak and Barbara Strycharczyk, “*Macte animo!* – or, The Polish Experiment with ‘Classics Profiles’ in Secondary School Education: The Warsaw Example”, in: Lisa Maurice, ed., *Our Mythical Education: The Reception of Classical Myth Worldwide in Formal Education, 1900–2020*, in the series “Our Mythical Childhood”, Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, pp. 238–291, Open Access: <https://www.wuw.pl/product-pol-14887-Our-Mythical-Education-The-Reception-of-Classical-Myth-Worldwide-in-Formal-Education-1900-2020-PDF.html>.

Mundus naturae et natura mundi: Thoughts on the World of Nature

Our Mythical Nature is a project encouraging a search for answers to a question that helps understand the ancients' perception of nature. Together with their project supervisors, school students analysed selected literary and philosophical texts as well as works of architecture and art, in which they sought the key to understanding and describing the mysterious world of nature.

The project's topic turned out to be extremely inspiring, which enabled us to base the research not only on popular authors who are read at school, but also on more difficult texts that are not part of the required reading. We also included modern-era and contemporary references to Antiquity offering interesting and original approaches to the world of nature.

We noticed that the interdisciplinary experience gained in the course of earlier projects⁷ was extremely useful. Our tasks went far beyond the limits defined by traditional school subjects, and included commenting on the iconography of King John III Sobieski's Palace in Wilanów while referencing Virgil's *Georgics* – the king's favourite read; using mathematics in reading Vitruvius' treatise *On Architecture* and investigating whether *decorum* can be calculated; looking at nature familiar from myths from the point of view of Romantic philosophy; analysing and presenting the role of nature signs that Cicero described in his treatise *On Divination*; examining the scenery of Greek and Roman bucolic poetry, in which we observe the joys and sorrows of shepherds shown against the

⁷ See, e.g., the project *Scraps of Memory* (2017/2018): http://www.omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/assets/images/present/4_School_project_booklet_English.pdf (accessed September 13, 2021); and the project *De viris mulieribusque illustribus* (2018/2019): http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/assets/images/history/ILLUSTRIBUS_book_2019.pdf (accessed September 13, 2021).

backdrop of an earthly paradise: the green and cheerful Arcadia. This extraordinarily interesting but also quite difficult research motivated the students working on the project as well as their teachers to reflect on the significance of the natural world surrounding us today, and to show it respect.

Barbara Strycharczyk

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Schools Endeavour Coordinator



STRUMIENIE

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- Third-year student (2019/2020): Alicja Dynowska

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- Anna Łukomska – teacher of Maths, tutor of the theme: *Does Measurement Guarantee Beauty?* – anna.lukomska@sternik.edu.pl

Collaborating teachers:

- Hazel Pearson – English
- Maria Skibińska – French
- Agnieszka Żukowska – Spanish

In Arcadia habitare: Joys and Sorrows of Arcadian Shepherds According to Virgil's Eclogues

The idyll is a genre whose source can be traced back to ancient Greece. It is a poetical work, lyrical in character, presenting an idealised portrayal of rural life amidst nature. The first famous idylls (or, from Greek, bucolics) were written by Theocritus, a Greek poet living on Sicily in the 3rd century BCE. Major themes of his poems included shepherds' singing contests and beautiful scenery depicted against the backdrop of Sicily's natural environment. The Roman poet Virgil (70–19 BCE), who followed Theocritus' example, situated the scenery of his bucolics in Arcadia, a pastoral land on the Peloponnese Peninsula, which, thanks to him, became the perfect land of shepherds and happiness close to nature.

What means does Virgil use to describe Arcadia as a paradise for the human soul and body? *Eclogue VII* depicts scenery typical of bucolic poetry.⁸ Two shepherds, whose melodious Greek names are Corydon and Thyrsis, lead their flocks to water around noon. They seek shade that will give them some respite and also to hold a singing agon on a love theme. Nature thus becomes the charming scenery for this impending pastoral performance: *si quid cessare potes, requiesce sub umbra. / [...] eque sacra resonant examina quercu* (*Ecl. VII*, 10–13: “And, if you have an idle hour to spare, / Rest here beneath the shade. [...] And from you

⁸ Wergiliusz, *Sielanka rzymska*, trans. Jan Sękowski, Warszawa: PIW, 1985, p. 42. All Latin excerpts from Virgil's *Eclogues* quoted in this chapter are taken from: Vergilius, *Ecloga VII*, [n.d.], *Project Gutenberg*, April 3, 2008, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/229/229-h/229-h.htm#ecloga07> (accessed September 13, 2021). All English translations of the excerpts from Virgil's *Eclogues* from: Vergil, *The Bucolics and Eclogues*, [n.d.], *Project Gutenberg*, March 10, 2008, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/230> (accessed September 13, 2021), translated into English verse by James Rhoades, originally published by Oxford University Press, London and New York in 1921 under the title *The Poems of Virgil*, available online at the Internet Archive website <https://archive.org/details/poemsofvirgi00virguoft/page/n5/mode/2up> (accessed November 8, 2021).

sacred oak with busy hum / The bees are swarming”, here: VII, 12–13, 17–18). The noontime quiet in the shade of trees and bushes is only disturbed by the noise of a bee swarm. The rustling oak, tender rushes, ash tree, pine, green grass, and mossy springs mentioned in the poem transport the reader into the world of green and bright Arcadia. What better place to rest than a meadow on a sunny day? *Locus amoenus* – a pleasant and happy place. Such scenery encourages time spent on blissful relaxation.

In the actual verses of the pastoral agon sung by Thyrsis and Corydon, the aforementioned elements of nature are presented as the backdrop for their contest and build the mood of the piece. The poet portrays the peaceful pastoral world, which also features animals: *huc ipsi potum venient per prata iuveni, / hic viridis tenera praetexit arundine ripas* (*Ecl.* VII, 11–12: “Hither the steers / Will through the meadows, of their own free will, / Untended come to drink. Here Mincius hath / With tender rushes rimmed his verdant banks”, here: VII, 13–16). Amidst green meadows, in the warmth and light of the noontime sun, the flocks are heading for the watering hole. This is happening against the backdrop of the previously mentioned rustling trees, green grass and sunlit meadow. The image of this bucolic reality is maintained in a blissful and lazy tone: *compulerantque greges Corydon et Thyrsis in unum* (*Ecl.* VII, 2: “Thyrsis and Corydon / Had gathered in the flock”, here: VII, 2–3). The poet brings the shepherds’ ordinary, one might even say routine actions into the idyll. Probably as they do every day, they are leading their flocks to drink, and once the animals are in the proper place, the shepherds sit down and pass the time on this sunny afternoon with singing: *et certamen erat, Corydon cum Thyrside, magnum. / [...] alternis igitur contendere versibus ambo coepere* (*Ecl.* VII, 16, 18–19: “no slight matter was a singing-bout / ‘Twixt Corydon and Thyrsis [...] they began to sing, voice answering voice / In strains alternate”, here: VII, 21–22, 24–25). In this charming, almost theatrical scenery, representing carefreeness and happiness and idealising the present moment, a trivial duel of pastoral songs takes place.

When we look at Virgil’s *Eclogue V*, we see that the idealised bucolic scenery undergoes a powerful change: *pro molli viola, pro purpureo narcisso, / carduus et spinis surgit paliurus acutis* (*Ecl.* V, 38–39: “For tender violet and narcissus

bright / Thistle and prickly thorn uprear their heads”, here: V, 46–47). The lovely vegetation disappears, and with it also the pleasant shade of trees, and the luscious greenery. The enchanting sight is disrupted. Instead of the eternally verdant Arcadia, we see a land that appears abandoned and neglected. However, the most noticeable changes take place in the pastoral life: *Non ulli pastos illis egere diebus / frigida, [...], boves ad flumina* (*Ecl.* V, 24–25: “to the cooling streams were none / That drove the pastured oxen”, here: V, 30–31). Ordinary actions, so natural for those living in Arcadia, no longer matter. The daily rhythm is different from that presented in *Eclogue* VII. Nor is fauna portrayed in the same way. The animals behave differently than they should: *nulla neque amnem / libavit quadrupes, nec graminis attigit herbam. / [...] ingemuisse leones* (*Ecl.* V, 25–27: “no beast / Drank of the river [...] then voiced the roar / Of [...] lions mourning”, here: V, 31–34). The harmony embedded in the idyllic way of life disappears. What is the cause of such chaos in this hitherto orderly and peaceful world?

The idyll as a metaphor of ideal human happiness is confronted with the inevitable end that awaits all humans. Daphnis the beautiful shepherd dies, and when death enters Arcadia, it destroys the joy of living in harmony with nature. The *locus amoenus* is completely transformed, and nature is no longer friendly to humans. These are the surroundings in which the characters from *Eclogue* V prepare Daphnis’ funeral. A brief elegy is dedicated to the dead shepherd and placed on his tomb: *Daphnis ego in silvis hinc usque ad sidera notus, / formonsi pecoris custos formonsior ipse* (*Ecl.* V, 43–44: “I, Daphnis in the woods, from hence in fame / Am to the stars exalted, guardian once / Of a fair flock, myself more fair than they”, here: V, 52–54).

This bucolic motif has served as an inspiration for centuries. The author of the aphorism *ET IN ARCADIA EGO* is Cardinal Giulio Rospigliosi, a philosopher and poet from the 17th century, later Pope Clement IX, who uttered these words after reading *Eclogue* V.⁹ He also commissioned French painter Nicolas

⁹ Latin: *Even in Arcadia, there am I*. A discussion on this motif and references to it can be found in: Mary Beard, John Henderson, *Kultura antyczna* (Polish edition of *Classics: A Very Short Introduction*), trans. Grzegorz Muszyński, Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 1997, p. 133.



Ill. 1: Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665), *Et in Arcadia Ego* (1638–1640), Louvre, photo by Directmedia, Public Domain. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nicolas_Poussin_-_Et_in_Arcadia_ego_\(deuxième_version\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nicolas_Poussin_-_Et_in_Arcadia_ego_(deuxième_version).jpg) (accessed September 13, 2021).

Poussin to paint *The Shepherds of Arcadia* (ill. 1) as an illustration for this piece by Virgil.

It is as if the painting were showing two sceneries. In the background, the painter has depicted an idyllic landscape under a blue sky receding into the distance. In the foreground, we see shepherds standing on treaded ground, leaning over a sarcophagus. Tracing the inscription with his finger, one of them does his best to find and read the words: *Et in Arcadia Ego*.

Are these the words of the deceased Daphnis, who is trying to tell the shepherds that even in the land of eternal happiness, you cannot escape death: “I, too, have been in Arcadia”? Or, are they words uttered by the mysterious woman standing next to the shepherds, her head bowed in compassion and sadness: “I, death, am even in Arcadia”?

Even in an idyll, then, death is an inherent element of human existence. The harmony of coexistence with nature helps humans to lead peaceful and blissful lives, but it does not protect them from departing this world:

Candidus insuetum miratur limen Olympi,
sub pedibusque videt nubes et sidera Daphnis.
ergo alacris silvas et cetera rura voluptas
Panaque pastoresque tenet, Dryadasque puellas. (*Ecl.* V, 56–59)

Daphnis stands rapt before Olympus' gate,
And sees beneath his feet the clouds and stars.
Wherefore the woods and fields, Pan, shepherd-folk,
And Dryad-maidens, thrill with eager joy. (*Ecl.* V, 71–74)

This excerpt tells us about the shepherd that “not all of him had died”.¹⁰ How are we to understand his presence among the Olympian deities? We return again to the scene familiar from *Eclogue* VII: a paradise for humans, who live in harmony and unity with nature. This time it is happening in the afterlife reality. This situation shows death as a transition from the earthly land of bliss to a place that is similar, but supernatural and immortal in character. Thus, bucolic happiness does not end with the end of life, but finds a continuation even after departure from the earthly Arcadia. An everlasting paradise becomes the most appropriate place for the immortal soul.

This image from Antiquity was adopted by Christianity. We can see it in early Christian Roman catacombs, on frescoes and bas-reliefs showing life after death. The cover of the Catechism of the Catholic Church features an illustration depicting a sepulchral bas-relief from the 3rd century CE, from the catacombs of Domitilla in Rome (ill. 2).¹¹ Antiquity is intertwined with Christianity in this image, and elements of idyllic scenery and pastoral props gain new meaning: “[...] the Good Shepherd who leads and protects his faithful (the lamb) by his authority (the staff), draws them by the melodious symphony of the truth (the

¹⁰ See the famous quote from Horace, *Odes*, 3.30: *Non omnis moriar*.

¹¹ *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*, Poznań: Pallottinum, 1994, p. 4.



III. 2: The Good Shephard emblem based on sepulchral stone from the catacombs of Domitilla (Rome), 3rd century CE, author unknown, Public Domain, coloured by Zbigniew Karaszewski. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Emblem_of_the_Catechism_of_the_Catholic_Church.jpg (accessed September 13, 2021).

panpipes) and makes them lie down in the shade of the 'tree of life', his redeeming Cross which opens paradise".¹² Christianity uses the bucolic image of paradise not only to show the nature of eternal happiness. It compares a peaceful life in harmony with nature to a cohesive life in harmony with the teaching of the Good Shepherd.

In Arcadia habitare – to live in Arcadia: how should we interpret this expression? The idyllic land is a symbol of the fullness of happiness and living at one with nature. This motif has been present in literature and in art throughout history. One might say that artists use it whenever they want to show that happiness and cheerfulness can be achieved by staying connected to nature, Arcadia being its symbol. But they also show, following in Virgil's footsteps, that even Arcadia

¹² Ibidem. English text from: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 2000, <https://www.catechism.ie/about-the-logo/> (accessed September 13, 2021).

is not free of death, which disrupts the carefree and peaceful character of the place. However, when humans leave the earthly paradise, they move on to the heavenly Arcadia or, like Daphnis, to the Arcadia on Olympus, where the soul *videt nubes et sidera* (*Ecl.* V, 57: “sees beneath his feet the clouds and stars”, here: V, 72), finding consolation and rest in nature after the troubles of mortal life.

References:

Beard, Mary, John Henderson, *Kultura antyczna*, trans. Grzegorz Muszyński, Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 1997 (Polish ed. of *Classics: A Very Short Introduction*, ed. pr. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Catechism of the Catholic Church, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 2000, <https://www.catechism.ie/about-the-logo/> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego, Poznań: Pallottinum, 1994.

Vergil, *The Bucolics and Eclogues*, *Project Gutenberg*, March 10, 2008, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/230> (accessed September 13, 2021), translated into English verse by James Rhoades, originally published by Oxford University Press, London and New York in 1921 under the title *The Poems of Virgil*, available online at the Internet Archive website <https://archive.org/details/poemsofvirgi00virguoft/page/n5/mode/2up> (accessed November 8, 2021).

Vergilius, *Eclogae*, [n.d.], *Project Gutenberg*, April 3, 2008, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/229/229-h/229-h.htm#ecloga07> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Wergiliusz, *Sielanka rzymska*, trans. Jan Sękowski, Warszawa: PIW, 1985.

Does Measurement Guarantee Beauty?

The project of the University of Warsaw's Faculty of "Artes Liberales" – *Our Mythical Nature* – helps us understand the connection between Classical Antiquity and nature, and to answer the question of how people approached the world of nature in ancient times. Our project group decided to use *The Ten Books on Architecture* by Vitruvius to analyse selected buildings, and to use the opinions of people living today to consider the topic: "Does measurement guarantee beauty?" Seeking an answer to this question, we have confronted selected architectural structures with Vitruvius' principles, paying special attention to dimensions and the resultant proportions, the perception of beauty, and references to nature.

Vitruvius and His Concept¹³

Vitruvius, or, more precisely, Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, was a Roman architect living in the 1st century BCE. His work *The Ten Books on Architecture* is a fundamental source of knowledge on the principles of building ancient structures as well as Greek and Roman cities.

In his treatise Vitruvius defines six main components of architecture:¹⁴ *ordinatio*, *dispositio*, *eurythmia*, *symmetria*, *decorum*, *distributio*, which determine the quality of architectural solutions. He describes temples, public edifices and private

¹³ All Latin excerpts from: Vitruvius, *De architectura*, ed. Valentinus Rose, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1889, *Project Gutenberg*, April 20, 2016, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/51812/51812-h/51812-h.htm> (accessed September 13, 2021). All English translations from: Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, London: Oxford University Press, 1914, *Project Gutenberg*, December 31, 2006, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20239> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, I, 2 (Vitruvius uses the term *decor*).

buildings, highlighting their proportions, “developed with a view to convenience, beauty, and strength” (*ad usum et ad speciem et ad firmitatem rationes habet explicatas*).¹⁵ Vitruvius lists specific dimensions of the elements of buildings with the help of modules, i.e. defined units (e.g. column thickness), which he uses to define a structure’s other measurements. This is what he writes about proportions:

Namque non potest aedis ulla sine symmetria atque proportione rationem habere compositionis, nisi uti ad hominis bene figurati <speciem> membrorum habuerit exactam rationem. (*De architectura*, III, 1[1])

Without symmetry and proportion there can be no principles in the design of any temple; that is, if there is no precise relation between its members, as in the case of those of a well shaped man.

Ergo si ita natura composuit corpus hominis, uti proportionibus membra ad summam figurationem eius respondeant, cum causa constituisse videntur antiqui ut etiam in operum perfectionibus singulorum membrorum ad universae figurae speciem habeant commensus exactionem. (*De architectura*, III, 1[4])

Therefore, since nature has designed the human body so that its members are duly proportioned to the frame as a whole, it appears that the ancients had good reason for their rule, that in perfect buildings the different members must be in exact symmetrical relations to the whole general scheme.

Nec minus mensurarum rationes, quae in omnibus operibus videntur necessariae esse, ex corporis membris collegerunt, uti digitum, palmum, pedem, cubitum, [...]. (*De architectura*, III, 1[5])

Further, it was from the members of the body that they derived the fundamental ideas of the measures which are obviously necessary in all works, as the finger, palm, foot, and cubit [...].

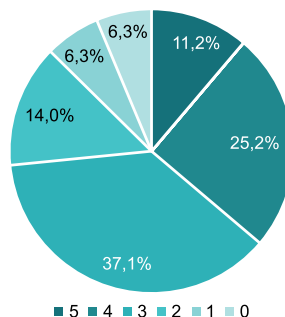
¹⁵ Ibidem, III, 3[6].

These words prove that for Vitruvius, nature, or specifically the human body, was the model for ideal proportions. The ideal human body proportions have been illustrated with a drawing known as the Vitruvian Man – a man inscribed in a circle and a square – produced by Leonardo da Vinci on the basis of Vitruvius' text.¹⁶

The Survey

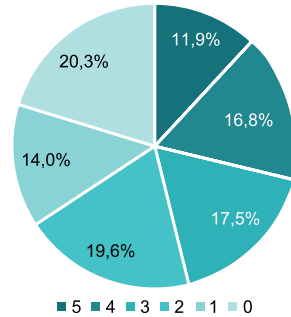
We conducted a survey to find out what beauty meant to people today, and how important Vitruvian principles were. The 144 participants represented different communities and age groups. Below are the questions we included in the survey, together with the replies presented in the form of diagrams we designed ourselves:

- Ques. 1: On a scale of 0–5, rate how much these buildings appeal to you?

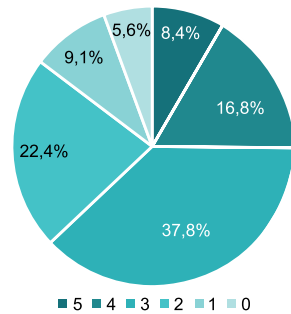


III. 1: The Warsaw Spire in Europejski Square in Warsaw (2011–2016), design by Jaspers-Eyers Architects in association with Projekt PBPA sp. z o.o., photo by ACC Glass Europe (2016), CC BY 2.0. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Warsaw_Spire,_Poland_22_June_2016.jpg (accessed September 13, 2021).

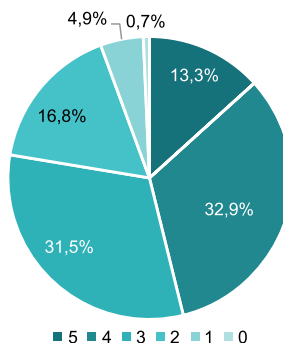
¹⁶ Ibidem, III, 1 [2–3]; see also “Witruwiusz” [Vitruvius], *Imperium Romanum*, <https://www.imperiumromanum.edu.pl/biografie/witruwiusz/> (accessed September 13, 2021).



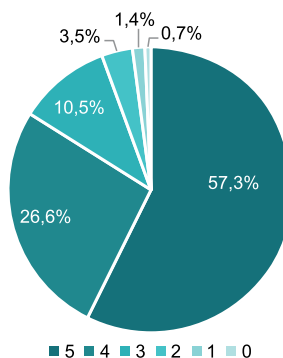
III. 2: Genesis restaurant in Europejski Square in Warsaw (2017), design by Massive Design and Przemysław Stopa, photo by Marta Gałężowska (2021), used with the Author's permission.



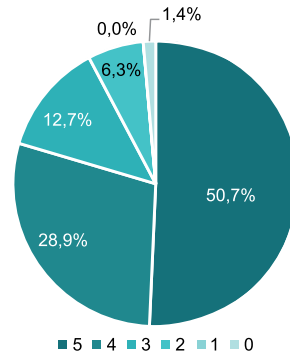
III. 3: Polish manor house in Józefów (Otwock county), photo by Anna Stefaniuk (2020), used with the permission of the Author and the house's Owner.



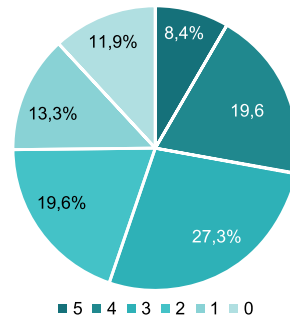
III. 4: Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Kawęczyńska Street in Warsaw (1907–1923), design by Łukasz Wolski (1878–1948), photo by Adrian Gryczuk (2018), CC BY-SA 3.0 PL. Source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Bazylika_Najświętszego_Serca_Jezusowego_w_Warszawie_2018b.jpg (accessed September 13, 2021).



III. 5: Tempietto in the courtyard of the Church of San Pietro in Montorio in Rome (1502), design by Donato Bramante (1444–1514), photo by Peter 1936F (2016), CC BY-SA 4.0. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_Pietro_in_Montorio:_Tempietto_del_Bramante.jpg (accessed September 13, 2021).



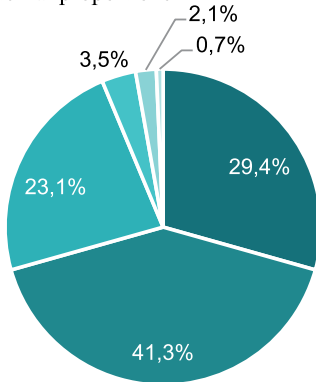
III. 6: Teatr Wielki – Grand Theatre – Polish National Opera in Teatralny Square in Warsaw (1825–1833, 1953–1965), design by Antonio Corazzi (1792–1877), expansion design by Bohdan Pniewski (1897–1965) and team, photo by Fred Romero (2015), CC BY 2.0. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Warszawa_-_Teatr_Wielki_Opera_Narodowa.jpg (accessed September 13, 2021).



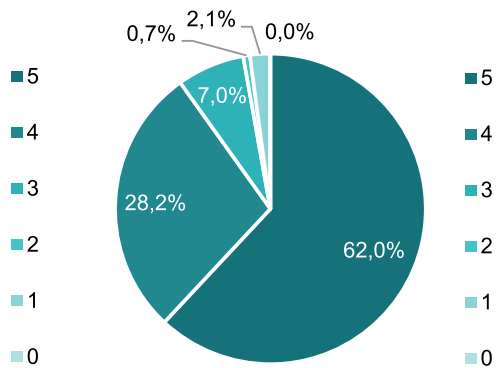
III. 7: Temple of Divine Providence in Rzeczypospolitej Avenue in Warsaw (2002–2016), design by Wojciech Szymborski and Lech Szymborski, visualisation by the designers (2007), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:WidokI_cob.jpg (accessed September 13, 2021).

- Ques. 2: If you were to build your own house, how important would the following elements be to you, on a scale of 0–5?

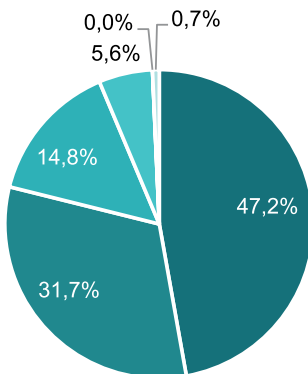
External proportions



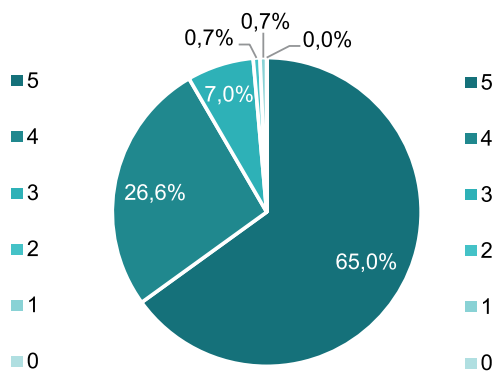
The building's plan, composition



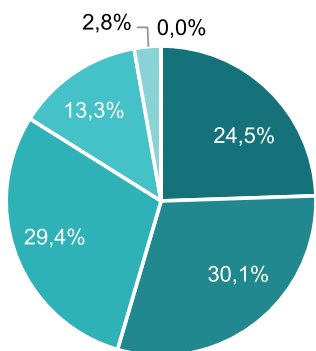
Internal proportions



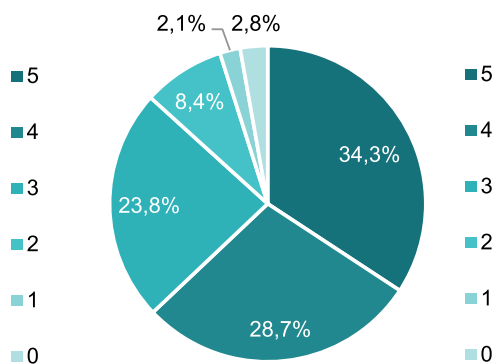
Quality of building materials

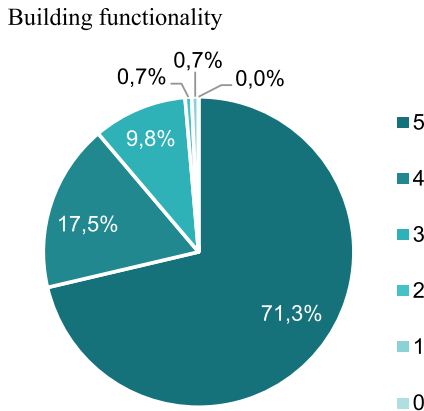


Decorative elements



Optimisation of construction costs





- Ques. 3 (open-ended): What do you think guarantees beauty? What makes you consider a building beautiful?

The respondents' replies juxtaposed with the characteristics of architecture specified by Vitruvius:

Reply	% of respondents mentioning this	Characteristic of architecture specified by Vitruvius	Our perception of the characteristic specified by Vitruvius
external appearance, shape, classical style or a break with canons	21,70%	<i>ordinatio</i>	external proportions
cogency, plan, composition, style	14,15%	<i>dispositio</i>	composition, plan, arrangement of elements
harmony, inscription into the landscape, symmetry	30,19%	<i>eurythmia</i>	harmony, rhythmicity reproducing the order found in nature (also of humans and the world)
proportions, simplicity	23,58%	<i>symmetria</i>	commensurability, a set shared unit used to define the relevant measurements of elements, proper moderation
details, colour, moderation	22,64%	<i>decorum</i>	imitating reality (natural details) taking appropriateness into account

Reply	% of respondents mentioning this	Characteristic of architecture specified by Vitruvius	Our perception of the characteristic specified by Vitruvius
functionality, workmanship, aesthetics, materials, proper care	25,47%	<i>distributio</i>	household management, economics

Expressions offered by respondents without equivalents in the characteristics of architecture specified by Vitruvius:

Expression	% of respondents mentioning this		Remarks
originality, imaginative idea, surprise	21,70%		these result from the artist's creativity, so one might classify them as <i>dispositio</i> , but they are impossible to describe through rules (Vitruvius' work is largely a textbook)
producing positive emotions and impressions	16,04%		a non-measurable and subjective characteristic
something hard to describe, elusive	5,66%		proves the non-measurability of the notion of beauty

Conclusions from the Survey

As regards the rating, on a scale of 0–5, of how much appeal the buildings in the photos had for the respondents, a certain regularity became noticeable. Symmetrical, orderly and well-proportioned buildings, like the Teatr Wielki – Grand Theatre – Polish National Opera in Warsaw (Ill. 6) and the Tempietto in Rome (Ill. 5), received very high marks. More contemporary buildings, like the Genesis restaurant (Ill. 2) and the Warsaw Spire (Ill. 1), received varied opinions from the respondents, with an almost even distribution.

Open-ended question 3: “What do you think guarantees beauty? What makes you consider a building beautiful?” was answered by 106 people. The

expressions appearing in the responses were possible to classify according to Vitruvius' principles, which means that these principles are still relevant today. This is also confirmed by the responses to the closed-ended question (No. 2 in the questionnaire), which referred directly to the features of architecture described by Vitruvius. The biggest group of respondents, 30.19%, wrote about harmony and symmetry. This matches Vitruvius' notions of rhythmicality, symmetry, the proportions of everything, which he believed made a building beautiful. The search for positive emotions and impressions in architecture mentioned by the respondents might be compared to Vitruvius' search for aesthetic values.¹⁷ Originality, inventiveness and surprise, which 22% of the respondents indicated, stem from an artist's creativity and is that artist's contribution to cultural heritage. At the same time, Vitruvius also encouraged inventiveness as well as respect for fundamental rules.

Vitruvius and Contemporary Architecture

The principles outlined by Vitruvius, which he believed would guarantee beauty, continue to inspire many contemporary architects. This is noticeable in distinctive modules, columns, decorative elements, and less obvious things like proportions. We will try to illustrate this with examples of familiar structures located in Warsaw as well as single-family housing in Józefów near Warsaw.

- **Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Kawęczyńska Street, Warsaw** (ill. 4), built in the years 1907–1923 to a design by Łukasz Wolski (1878–1948)

This is an example of a modernist-classical replication of an early Christian basilica. This type of structure (*basilica christiana*) was created from a combination of elements of a Roman law-and-commerce building (*basilica*) and the largest space in a Roman house (*atrium*).

¹⁷ Witruwiusz, *O architekturze*, VI, 2[4]; VI, 3[11].

The plan seen in this church was described by Vitruvius as *prostylos*,¹⁸ having a ten-column front portico with corner columns and antae, topped with a tympanum. The width of the intercolumns is equal to two and a half column widths, the same as in one of the five kinds of prostyle: the eustyle, considered the most ideal of all the types of temple.¹⁹ Such proportions were meant to ensure not just durability and practicality, but also a temple's attractive appearance. It is thus possible that it is due to these proportions that as much as 78% of the people taking part in our questionnaire gave the appearance of this basilica positive marks.

- **Temple of Divine Providence in Rzeczypospolitej Avenue, Warsaw**

(ill. 7), built in the years 2002–2016 to a design by Wojciech and Lech Szymborski

It features a few deviations from Vitruvius' widely accepted rules for building round temples encircled by a colonnade. Most of the proportions have been maintained. The diameter of the temple's *cella* should equal the column height, while the column diameter should equal 1/10 of the height. The main nave of the Temple of Divine Providence has been built on a circular plan with a diameter of 68 metres, surrounded by pylons forming squares with sides of 80 metres, according to the Vitruvian system of proportions, i.e. those of the Vitruvian Man.²⁰ The walls of the *cella* have been moved back to the intercolumns, thus increasing its space. This is a form that Vitruvius called *pseudoperipteros*.²¹ The

¹⁸ Ibidem, III, 2[3].

¹⁹ Ibidem, III, 3[6].

²⁰ Vitruvius, *De architectura*, III, 1[3]: *Namque si homo conlocatus fuerit supinus manibus et pedibus pansis circinique conlocatum centrum in umbilico eius, circumagendo rotundationem utrarumque manuum et pedum digiti linea tangentur. Non minus quemadmodum schema rotundationis in corpore efficitur, item quadrata designatio in eo inuenietur. Nam si a pedibus imis ad summum caput mensum erit eaque mensura relata fuerit ad manus pansas, inuenietur eadem latitudo uti altitudo, quemadmodum areae quae ad normam sunt quadratae* ("For if a man be placed flat on his back, with his hands and feet extended, and a pair of compasses centred at his navel, the fingers and toes of his two hands and feet will touch the circumference of a circle described therefrom. And just as the human body yields a circular outline, so too a square figure may be found from it. For if we measure the distance from the soles of the feet to the top of the head, and then apply that measure to the outstretched arms, the breadth will be found to be the same as the height, as in the case of plane surfaces which are perfectly square").

²¹ Ibidem, IV, 8[6].

ancient architect also emphasised that changes adapting a building to the type of worship were even recommended. The structure is supported on pillars evenly spaced around a circle, with the exception of the entrance and the exit to the presbytery, and the height of the pillars is very similar to the inner diameter of the main nave, just as Vitruvius suggested. However, the number of pillars and the distances between them are incompatible with the principles outlined in his treatise, but this is due to structural needs. Designing the Temple of Divine Providence, the architects also made use of the “golden ratio”²² (the ratio of the height of the dome’s shell to its glazed part, the ratio of the height to the length of the portal façade, the ratio of the vertical dimension of the chapel to the vertical dimension of the façade, the ratio of the full rotunda wall segment to the glazed part),²³ which Vitruvius does not mention.²⁴ The Temple of Divine Providence was given positive marks by about 55% of the respondents.

- **Teatr Wielki – Grand Theatre – Polish National Opera in Teatralny Square, Warsaw** (ill. 6), built in the years 1825–1833 to a design by Antonio Corazzi (1792–1877), expanded in the years 1953–1965 according to the concept of Bohdan Pniewski (1897–1965)

Vitruvius states that appropriate proportions and symmetry are essential for any structure to be built. They should be based on the body proportions of a well-built man – the ideal created by nature. For example, the head (from the chin to the highest point of the skull) is equal to 1/8 of the total body length. The hand (from the wrist to the tip of the middle finger) equals 1/10 of the total body length, and the foot is 1/6.²⁵ The composite style of the Teatr Wielki – Grand Theatre – Polish National Opera building combines three architectural orders. The

²² The “golden ratio” is a division of a segment such that the ratio of the longer part to the shorter one is equal to the ratio of the whole segment to the longer part. This ratio is equal to the number $\frac{\sqrt{5}+1}{2}$, approximately equal to 1.618. The term “golden rectangle” denotes a rectangle with proportions of its sides such that removing a square leaves a rectangle similar to the original one.

²³ Data received from the architects of the Temple of Divine Providence.

²⁴ At the same time, especially in private buildings (*atrium*), Vitruvius proposes dimensions close to the “golden ratio”, *O architektury*, VI, 3[3].

²⁵ *Ibidem*, III, 1[2].

columns supporting the portico are Doric. Their thickness is equal to 1/8 of their height. Above them there are Corinthian columns, whose thickness is equal to 1/10 of their height. In the Ionian columns placed at the sides, the proportion between the column thickness and height is 1:6.²⁶ The ratios between the measures of particular elements of the theatre building are thus taken from nature. In the survey, this building received the highest marks, with as much as 92% of the respondents giving it a positive rating.

- **Warsaw Spire Skyscraper in Europejski Square, Warsaw** (ill. 1), completed in the years 2011–2016 to a design by Jaspers-Eyers Architects in association with Projekt PBPA sp. z o.o.

When we look at the silhouette of one of Warsaw's most recognisable skyscrapers, its unusual shape draws our attention. The body of the building narrows towards the middle and then widens upwards. It might be compared to the Corinthian column described by Vitruvius, the base of which is equal to one and three-eighths times the column thickness.²⁷ If we inscribe the column capital's downward projection in a square, its diagonal should equal twice the column width. In the case of the Warsaw Spire, the building's width at the base is about 40 m, and around 44 m at the finial.²⁸ An enlargement effect is also visible here. Vitruvius explains that a column standing next to air appears thin and disproportionate.²⁹ To prevent this, and to restore its proportional appearance, the shaft should be made wider. This is why the Warsaw Spire is as much as 34 m thick in its narrowest place. The respondents' replies indicate that about 73% of them like the look of this building.

- **Single-family housing in Józefów near Warsaw**

It is hard to compare the private buildings described by Vitruvius with those of today,³⁰ since Roman houses were completely different from modern-day homes.

²⁶ The calculations were based on photographs and are only estimates.

²⁷ Witruwiusz, *O architekturze*, IV, 1.

²⁸ The calculations were based on photographs and are only estimates.

²⁹ Witruwiusz, *O architekturze*, III, 3[1 I].

³⁰ Ibidem, VI, Introduction [7].

We can only compare the proportions of whole building shapes and individual details, such as columns. For our analysis, we chose single-family houses featuring columns as well as houses representing wooden holiday-home architecture, common in Józefów from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, in the style popularly known as *świdermajer* [a play on the words Biedermeier and Świder, which is a locality and river in the area],³¹ a name coined by the famous 19th-century graphic artist, Michał Elwiro Andriolli.

After calculating the dimensions, we can see that in Vitruvius the ratios between the lengths and widths of rectangular surfaces: the house footprint, individual rooms and external walls, range from 2:1 to 1.4:1. The principle is the same as in the “golden ratio” (1.618:1) known since Antiquity and in today’s popular A4 paper size (1.4:1). An analysis of single-family houses in Józefów shows that these buildings follow the Vitruvian proportions in the front walls and the porch fronts, inscribed in a rectangle together with the triangular finial.³² The ratio of column height to width is also similar to the Vitruvian suggestion: Vitruvius recommended about 9.5:1, while our measurement of the contemporary buildings yielded 9.2:1.³³ The ratios most often found in houses built in the *świdermajer* style are 2:1 (which Vitruvius proposed for rectangular temples and in the triclinium) and the “golden ratio”.³⁴

Summary

The survey confirms that compliance with the classical principles that Vitruvius encouraged gives a very strong guarantee of a positive response to architecture. Though largely expressed in specific numbers, these rules are not limited

³¹ Pracownia Architektoniczna Marka Przepiórki, “W stylu świdermajer – neoświdermajer”, <https://www.swidermajer.pl/pracownia-architektoniczna-marka-przepiorki.html> (accessed September 13, 2021).

³² The calculations were based on photographs and are only estimates.

³³ The calculations were based on photographs and are only estimates.

³⁴ On rectangular temples: Witruwiusz, *O architekturze*, III, 4[8]; on the *triclinium*: ibidem, VI, 3[13]. The cited *świdermajer* building proportions are based on the building documentation provided by an architect specialising in designing houses in this style.

to measurable quantities alone. Alongside appropriate proportions, the beauty of architecture is affected by things like the right details (*decorum*), harmony with the surroundings (*eurythmia*), the architect's original idea. The ultimate judges are people – their eyes and sensitivity.³⁵ It is the architect's job to make sure everything is done right.³⁶ That is why we cannot give an affirmative answer to the question that is the topic of our paper. Measurement in itself is not a guarantee of beauty, though it does shape it to a significant extent.

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Witruwiusz, *O architekturze ksiąg dziesięć*, trans. Kazimierz Kumaniecki, Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 1999.

³⁵ Witruwiusz, *O architekturze*, III, 3[13]: *Venustatem enim persequitur visus, cuius si non blandimur voluptati proportione et modulorum adiectionibus, uti quod fallitur temperatione adaugeatur, vastus et invenustus conspicientibus remittetur aspectus* ("For the eye is always in search of beauty, and if we do not gratify its desire for pleasure by a proportionate enlargement in these measures, and thus make compensation for ocular deception, a clumsy and awkward appearance will be presented to the beholder").

³⁶ See also *ibidem*, VI, 2[1].

On the Soul of Nature and the Essence of Humanity

Myths show us an extraordinary world in which humans, animals, vegetation, and even gods undergo numerous miraculous transformations. Depicting these transformations in his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid (ill. 1)³⁷ also conveys the strong bond that connects humans and nature. That is why this poem was taken as the starting point for the short stories presented below.³⁸ Four mythological characters were chosen: Talos, Pygmalion, Daphne, and Narcissus (ill. 2–5). The students traced their stories as told by Ovid. They expanded their knowledge by seeking information in mythologies written by Wanda Markowska, Jan Parandowski, Zygmunt Kubiak, and Robert Graves. They also analysed works of art and interpreted symbols to gain an understanding of the essence of a given character. Finally, they considered what kind of message the mythological character could have for people in the 21st century.

The perception of nature has been taken from the Romantic philosophy of Friedrich Schelling,³⁹ to whom it is vibrant and creative, has a life of its own, and even a personality, while humans can learn, interpret and understand the voice of nature thanks to their intellect.

The characters in the stories have mastered this unusual skill. Their searches take them to places where you can hear the fleeting voice of nature. It is where they seek advice, inspiration, answers, comfort. Will they find them?

³⁷ Owidiusz, *Metamorfozy* (Polish edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), trans. Anna Kamieńska, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2004.

³⁸ The stories are offered in English, but also in the original Polish versions for their literary features.

³⁹ Friedrich W. J. Schelling, "Dwa bieguny wiedzy" [Two Poles of Knowledge], in: Barbara Markiewicz, *Od Locke'a do Jamesa. Wybór tekstów*, trans. K. Krzemieniowa, Warszawa: WSiP, 1999, pp. 159–161.

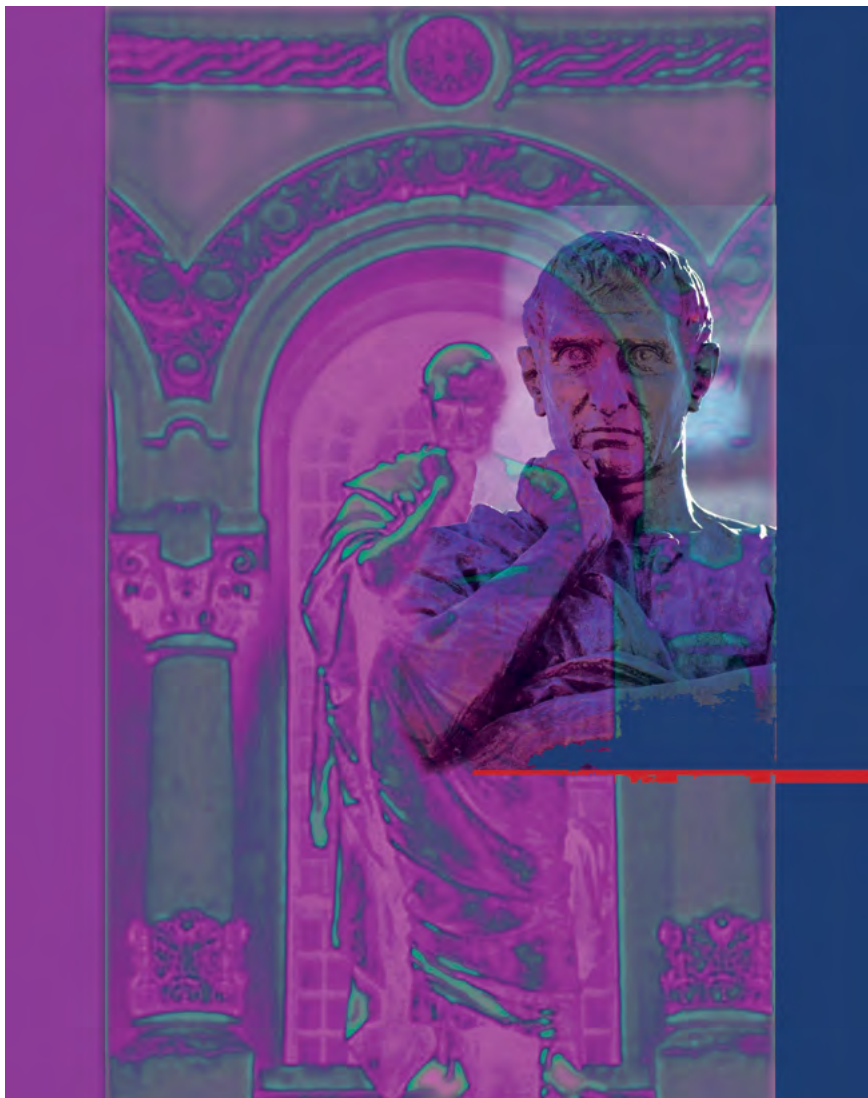


III. 1: Ettore Ferrari (1848–1929), *Ovidius* (1887), statue in Ovid Square in Constanța, photo by MobyDick (1990), Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ovidiu03.jpg> (accessed September 13, 2021). On the next page: *variatio* on this image by Zbigniew Karaszewski.

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Talos

Wziął głęboki oddech. Jego płuca wypełniło palące powietrze. Spojrzał na niebo, na którym już dawno nie widział słońca, lecz jak zwykle chmury, wiszące nisko nad jego miastem. Ponownie odetchnął, czując w ustach posmak spalin, i ruszył przed siebie.

Patrzył, jak po obu stronach odstępy między domami robią się coraz większe. Przy starej, białej kamienicy skręcił w ukrytą za krzakami brukowaną dróżkę, która prowadziła do wyjścia z miasta i dalej na rozległe pola. Idąc w głąb uliczki, dostrzegał coraz mniej śmieci leżących bezładnie na poboczach, a za to więcej i więcej kępek trawy, które zdawały się rosnąć na wyścigi do słońca, aby zawałczyć o jego drogocenne promienie. Tu nikt ich nie wyrwał, więc gdyby spojrzeć na tę alejkę z daleka, to jej koniec zdawał się zlewać z zielenią okolicznych łąk. Wkrótce bruk pod jego stopami zaczął ustępować ubitej ziemi. Uliczka zwężała się, aż w końcu przemieniła się w wąską ścieżkę, widoczną tylko dzięki jego częstym spacerom. Szedł nią dalej, aż doszedł do samotnie rosnącego dębu. Drzewo było stare, miało gruby pień i rozłożyste gałęzie. Ogromne i majestatyczne, sprawiało wrażenie króla tych ziem. Jego koroną były piękne, soczystozielone liście, gęsto rosące na potężnych gałęziach. Gdyby ktoś zobaczył je z dużej odległości, to mógłby stwierdzić, że wygląda, jakby chciało otoczyć swoimi ramionami całą tę krainę, a uginające się od liści i żołądzi gałęzie zdawały się chylić do ziemi, jakby chciały podzielić się z nią swoją obfitością.

Tutaj wśród natury powietrze nie miało już drażniącego zapachu benzyny, ale przyjemną woń kwiatów i zielonych roślin, które wieloma barwami swych płatków zdobiły okolicę. Wszędzie dało się słyszeć ciche brzęczenie pszczół. Co jakiś czas rozlegał się również koncert świerszczy, które radośnie rozmawiały ze sobą, jakby chciały się podzielić jakąś wielką tajemnicą, niezrozumiałą dla ludzkich uszu. Niebo, słysząc te dźwięki i czując unoszący się wszędzie zapach, postanowiło przyozdobić to miejsce i, zsyłając łagodny wietrzyk, obudziło

Talos

He took a deep breath. His lungs filled with scorching air. He looked at the sky, in which he had long not seen the sun, only the usual clouds hanging low over his city. He breathed once more, feeling an aftertaste of exhaust fumes in his mouth, and set off.

He watched the gaps between houses on both sides getting wider and wider. At an old, white tenement, he turned into a cobbled track hidden behind some bushes and leading to the exit from the town and onwards into vast fields. Walking deeper along the route, he could see less and less litter scattered haphazardly along the verge, and more and more tufts of grass, which seemed to be racing one another to grow towards the sun, to fight for its precious rays. No one pulled them up here, so if you looked at the lane from afar, its end seemed to merge with the greenery of the nearby meadows. Soon the cobbles under his feet started making way for hard-packed ground. The track got narrower, finally turning into a narrow path visible only thanks to his own frequent strolls. He continued onwards until he reached a solitary oak. The tree was old, it had a thick trunk and wide-stretching branches. Enormous and majestic, its impression was that of the king of these lands. Its crown was formed by beautiful, vividly green leaves growing densely on mighty branches. If anyone saw them from a great distance, they might think it looked as if it wanted to embrace the entire area with its arms, while the branches heavy with leaves and acorns seemed to bow to the earth, as if wanting to share with it their plenty.

Here, amidst nature, the air no longer had the acrid smell of petrol but the pleasant fragrance of flowers and herbal plants, which graced the area with their many-coloured petals. The quiet buzzing of bees could be heard everywhere. A cricket concert also resounded from time to time, the crickets talking cheerfully to one another as if they wanted to share some great secret incomprehensible to human ears. Hearing these sounds and sensing the fragrance floating everywhere, the sky wanted to decorate this place and, sending down a mild breeze, awoke the dozing grasses, which started swishing quietly. This breeze

drzemiące dotąd trawy, które zaczęły spokojnie szumieć. Powiew ten przegnał również ciemne chmury, odsłaniając niewidoczny dotychczas błękit i złote, jaśniejące słońce. Ożywiła się cała okolica.

Zatrzymał się i zamknął oczy. Wszystkie te dźwięki zdawały się tworzyć jakąś piękną melodię. Brzmiała delikatnie, ale nieustępliwie, jakby chciała przekazać słuchaczowi ważną wiadomość. Ale tylko nieliczni mogą ją zrozumieć...

Zszedł ze ścieżki i schował się w łagodnym cieniu królującego dębu. Położył się wśród traw i spojrzał w górę, gdzie białe promienie słońca przebijały się przez listowie, a te, które nie znalazły drogi ku ziemi, oświetlały zieleni i sprawiły, że całe drzewo zdawało się świecić. Po chwili usłyszał dziwny szelest dochodzący spośród traw. Odwrócił w tamtą stronę głowę i zobaczył, że coś się zbliża. Pobliskie trawy rozchyliły się i wyjrzała spośród nich mała, złotobrzowa główka ptaka o czarnych, przenikliwych oczkach. Ptak wyszedł z traw. Miał szarawy tułów, brązowe skrzydła, a z przodu charakterystyczną rdzawą plamę w kształcie podkowy. Była to kuropatwa.

Znieruchomiał. Nie chciał wykonać najmniejszego ruchu, aby nie przestraszyć zwierzęcia. Przemknęło mu też przez głowę, że może położył się zbyt blisko gniazda, które te ptaki zakładają na ziemi wśród traw, i teraz czujna matka próbuje go odstraszyć jako potencjalnego przeciwnika. Lecz ptak nie wyglądał na przerażonego ani zdenerwowanego. Z jego małych ciemnych oczu biła ciekawość. Kuropatwa drobnymi krokami zbliżała się do niego i gdy znalazła się na wyciągnięcie ręki, przechyliła głowę i usiadła na trawie, moszcząc ją pod sobą.

Leżący pod drzewem odwzajemnił ciekawe spojrzenie ptaka i powoli podniósł się do pozycji siedzącej, aby lepiej mu się przyjrzeć. Zwierzę patrzyło na niego spokojnie, sprawiając wrażenie, jakby na coś czekało.

– Pewnie jesteś tu samotna, prawda? – odezwał się, jakby oczekując odpowiedzi. Kuropatwa jednak tylko patrzyła. Nie słysząc żadnej odpowiedzi, westchnął i położył się z powrotem pod drzewem. Zamknął oczy i wsłuchał się w szum liści zwisających nad jego głową. Im dłużej to trwało, tym bardziej odczuwał, że nie jest to jedyny dźwięk, jaki go otacza. Coś mówiło. Skupił się na tym cichym głosie i wtedy zrozumiał słowa...

– Widziałem cię często, jak tu przychodzisz i przyglądasz się drzewu, kwiatom i zwierzętom – odezwał się głos. Brzmiał jak głos młodego chłopca, mimo że

also scattered the dark clouds, uncovering the hitherto invisible blue and the golden, shining sun. The whole surroundings sprang to life.

He stopped and closed his eyes. All of these sounds seemed to form a lovely melody. It sounded gentle but insistent, as if wanting to give the listener some important news. But only few could understand it...

He stepped off the path and hid in the gentle shade of the kingly oak. He lay down among the grasses and looked upwards, to where the sun's white rays broke through the leaves, and those that failed to find their way to earth lit up the greenery and made the whole tree appear to shine. After a while he heard a strange rustling coming from amidst the grass. He turned his head that way and saw there was something approaching. The grass nearby parted and the small, golden-brown head of a bird with penetrating black eyes appeared. The bird stepped out from the grass. It had a greyish trunk, brown wings, and a distinctive rust-coloured horseshoe-shaped mark on its front. It was a partridge.

He froze. He didn't want to make the slightest move so as not to frighten the creature. It also occurred to him that he may have lain down too close to a nest, which these birds build on the ground in the grass, and now the watchful mother was trying to scare him away as a potential enemy. But the bird looked neither terrified nor upset. Its small dark eyes expressed curiosity. Taking small steps, the partridge approached him, and when it was within arm's reach, it cocked its head and sat down in the grass, snuggling down into it.

Lying under the tree, he reciprocated the bird's curious glance and slowly raised himself to a sitting position to get a better look at it. The creature watched him calmly, giving the impression that it was waiting for something.

"You're probably lonely here, aren't you?", he spoke, as if expecting a reply. But the partridge only kept looking. Not hearing any response, he sighed and lay down under the tree again. He closed his eyes and listened to the rustle of the leaves hanging above his head. The longer this lasted, the more he felt it was not the only sound around him. Something was speaking. He concentrated on the quiet voice, and was able understand the words...

"I have seen you often, coming here and observing the tree, the flowers and the animals", the voice said. It sounded like the voice of a young boy, even

leżący na trawie był pewien, że jest na łące sam. Zaintrygowany słuchał dalej. – Zda-
wałeś się być bardzo zainteresowany otaczającą cię przyrodą. Twój wyraz twarzy
zawsze mi mówił, że pragniesz, aby ona do ciebie przemówiła, aby przekazała ci to,
co w sobie chowa. Dlatego pomyślałem, że może będziesz chciał posłuchać mojej
historii i może wyciągniesz z niej jakieś wnioski. Słuchający kiwnął głową, mając na-
dzieję, że kimkolwiek jest ten, który mówi, zrozumie jego gest i rozwinie swoją myśl.



III. 2: Crispijn van de Passe Starszy (1564–1637), *Atena zamieniająca Talosa w ptaka* (1602–1607), Rijksmuseum, fot. autor nieznany (1991), Domena Publiczna. Źródło: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Minerva_verandert_Perdis_in_een_vogel.jpeg (dostęp 13.09.2021).

– Jestem Talos – przedstawił się nieznanemu. Byłem kiedyś człowiekiem, jak ty, wynalzcą, kochającym naturę i czerpiącym z niej inspirację. Skonstruowałem na przykład piłę, której wzór dostrzegłem w kręgosłupie ryby. Zapewne znasz mojego wuja, Dedala. On, również inspirując się naturą, zrobił skrzydła, które przyniosły jemu i jego synowi wolność. Po śmierci mojej matki, Dedal zaopiekował się mną i uczynił mnie swoim uczniem. Dzięki niemu bardzo się rozwinąłem. Ale przez to, że natura podsuwała mi coraz więcej pomysłów, wuj miał wrażenie,

though he who lay in the grass was sure he was alone in the meadow. Intrigued, he listened on. “You seemed very interested in nature around you. The expression on your face always told me that you wanted nature to speak to you, to show you what it was hiding. That’s why I thought you might want to hear my story and maybe draw conclusions from it”. The listener nodded, hoping that whoever was speaking would understand the gesture and elaborate on what he had said.



III. 2: Zbigniew Karaszewski's *variatio* on Crispijn van de Passe the Elder (1564–1637), *Athena Changing Talos into a Bird* (1602–1607), Rijksmuseum, photo by author unknown (1991), Public Domain. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Minerva_verandert_Perdix_in_een_vogel.jpeg (accessed September 13, 2021).

“I am Talos”, the stranger introduced himself. “I used to be a human, like you, an inventor who loved nature and drew inspiration from it. For instance, I built a saw based on a pattern I saw in a fish’s spine. You are sure to know my uncle, Daedalus. He, too, took inspiration from nature and built some wings that brought him and his son freedom. After my mother’s death, Daedalus took care of me and made me his pupil. I developed greatly thanks to him. But because nature gave me more and more ideas, my uncle got the impression that the pupil

że uczeń zaczyna przerastać mistrza. To wzbudzało jego zazdrość. Posunął się nawet do tego, że próbował mnie zabić, spychając z Akropolu. Zginąłbym na pewno, gdyby natura nie odwzajemniła mojej miłości do niej i nie uratowała mi życia, zamieniając w ptaka. W żyjącą na wolności kuropatwę. Zapewne fakt, że byłem człowiekiem, istotą popełniającą błędy, wpłynął na to, że jestem ptakiem, który posiada skrzydła, ale nie może latać.

Odpoczywający pod drzewem podniósł głowę i spojrział na siedzącą tuż obok kuropatwę. Zdał sobie sprawę, że to, co jakimś cudem słyszy, jest głosem odpoczywającego koło niego zwierzęcia.

– Niestety, współcześni ludzie porzucili naturę już dawno temu – kontynuował Talos. – Odwrócili się od niej, przestali jej ufać. Chowają się w swoich metalowych i szklanych miastach bez żadnych drzew, oddychając zanieczyszczeniami, które sami wytworzyli. Zamykają się w pomieszczeniach bez okien, jakby bali się tego, co może ich spotkać na zewnątrz. Boją się prawdziwej rozmowy. Odwracając się od siebie, zagrażają sobie nawzajem, tracą również możliwość dostrzegania prawdziwego piękna. Ludzie zachwycają się zdjęciami, które widzą na ekranach swoich komputerów, mimo że to samo mogą zobaczyć, gdy przejdą się przez chwilę po pobliskim parku lub gdy wyjadą z miasta. Dumni i pyszni, myślą, że mogą być lepsi od natury, a przecież są jej elementem, a nie kreatorem. Produkują rzeczy, które są obce przyrodzie i nie mogą z nią w pokoju współistnieć. Chociażby „najlepszy” wynalazek człowieka – plastik. Owijają nim wszystko, co tylko się da, a gdy nie jest już im potrzebny, to zostawiają go gdzieś, gdzie nie będzie już ich problemem. W ten sposób trafia on do mórz, do ziemi czy do lasu. Odchodząc od natury, człowiek szkodzi sam sobie. Na szczęście są nieliczni, którzy, widząc katastrofy, wszechobecne śmieci i choroby, zaczęli zdawać sobie sprawę z tego, co robią. Zobaczyli swoje błędy i zamiast tworzyć własne materiały, patrzą na to, co natura już wymyśliła i z czego korzysta od początku świata. Natura chce uratować to, co ludzie zniszczyli, i przemawia do nich, przekazując swoje tajemnice, tak jak ja teraz mówię do ciebie. Wszyscy ludzie powinni wrócić do natury.

Ptak nagle poderwał się na nogi i uciekł w wysokie trawy łąki. Słuchający wstał i popatrzył w skupieniu na miejsce, gdzie jeszcze przed chwilą siedział Talos. Wiedział już, co należy robić.

was starting to surpass the master. This made him jealous. He even went so far as to try to kill me by pushing me off the Acropolis. I surely would have died if nature had not reciprocated my love for it and saved me, changing me into a bird, into a partridge living in the wild. It must be due to the fact that I was a human, a being that makes mistakes, that I am a bird with wings but cannot fly”.

He who was resting under the tree raised his head and glanced at the partridge sitting right next to him. He realised that what he was hearing by some miracle, was the voice of the creature resting beside him.

“Unfortunately, contemporary people abandoned nature a long time ago”, Talos continued. “They turned their backs on it, stopped trusting it. They hide in their metal and glass cities with no trees, breathing the pollution they themselves have produced. They shut themselves away in rooms without windows, as if they were afraid what might befall them outside. They are afraid of real conversations. Turning away from one another, they become a threat to one another, also losing the possibility of noticing genuine beauty. People enthuse about photos they see on their computer screens, even though they can see the same things if they take a short walk in a nearby park or if they leave the city. Proud and arrogant, they think they can be better than nature, whereas they are its element, not its creator. They make things that are alien to nature and cannot coexist with it peacefully. Take the ‘best’ human invention: plastic. They wrap everything they can in it, and once they no longer need it, they leave it somewhere where it will no longer be their problem. That’s how it gets into the sea, the soil or the forest. Forsaking nature, humans are harming themselves. Luckily there are those few who, seeing disasters, ubiquitous rubbish and disease, have begun to realise what they are doing. They have seen their errors and, instead of inventing their own materials, are looking to see what nature has already devised and has been using since the beginning of the world. Nature wants to save what humans have destroyed, and speaks to them, passing on its secrets, just like I am speaking to you right now. All humans should return to nature”.

Suddenly the bird hopped to its feet and fled into the tall grass of the meadow. The listener stood up and looked thoughtfully at the spot where Talos had been sitting just a moment before. Now he knew what had to be done.

Pigmalion

Był bardzo wyczerpany całym dniem spędzonym w mieście, nie mógł jednak wytrzymać wszechogarniającej go w hotelu nudy. Nie pamiętał już, dlaczego zdecydował się zatrzymać w tym małym miasteczku, oddalonym o godzinę drogi od Mediolanu. Może miał nadzieję, że w tak sielankowym miejscu odnajdzie upragniony od tak dawna spokój. Niestety, było to tylko złudzenie.

Firmę założył już dawno temu. Wtedy, jeszcze jako młody, ambitny projektant, inspiracje znajdował wszędzie i nie brakło mu pomysłów. Nie zniechęcały go nawet początkowe niepowodzenia. W końcu jego projekty zyskały popularność i przychylną krytykę, stał się szanowany i doceniany, a firma rozrosła się i produkowała ubrania na skalę światową. Teraz jednak czuł się zupełnie wypalony, dlatego właśnie przyjechał do Włoch. Od miesięcy nie dostrzegał w niczym inspiracji, nic go nie pociągało, nie ciekawiło. Był bezradny, a cały zespół współpracowników oczekiwał z niecierpliwością na jego decyzje i wskazówki dotyczące nadchodzącego sezonu.

Przechadzał się teraz wąskimi uliczkami i przypatrywał małym kamieniczkom znajdującym się po obu stronach drogi. Niespodziewanie, jego uwagę przykuła stara, zarośnięta winoroślą furtka. Na wpół otwarta, znajdowała się w pewnej odległości od wszystkich zabudowań i nie wyglądała, jakby była częścią ogrodu, któregoś z kamienic. Za nią ciągnęła się wąska ścieżka prowadząca najprawdopodobniej do czegoś ukrytego za drzewami. Domu? Ogrodu? Dróżkę otaczały drzewa cytrynowe, a przez murek przy furtce przebijały się na zewnątrz gałązki oliwek. Zawahał się. Poczuł, jak rośnie w nim pragnienie, aby zobaczyć, co kryje się za tymi drzewami. Zdawał sobie sprawę, że wchodzi na czyjąś posesję, lecz ciekawość wzięła górę nad obawami i przeszedł przez furtkę.

Coraz śmieiej przedzierał się przez zarośla. Po chwili znalazł się w rozległym ogrodzie. Ścieżka w tym miejscu kończyła się, a zaczynał się płaski grunt, tu i ówdzie porośnięty makią i drzewkami oliwnymi. Nie to jednak było najbardziej

Pygmalion

He was really exhausted after a whole day spent in the city, but he couldn't handle the overpowering boredom he felt at the hotel. He couldn't remember why he had decided to stop over in this small town, about an hour's distance from Milan. Perhaps he had hoped such an idyllic place would enable him to find the peace he had craved for so long. Unfortunately, it was only an illusion.

He had founded the business a long time before. Back then, still a young, ambitious designer, he had found inspiration everywhere and never lacked new ideas. He wasn't even discouraged by the initial failures. Ultimately, his designs won popularity and the approval of critics, he became respected and appreciated, while the business expanded and made clothing on a global scale. Now, however, he felt completely burned out, which was why he'd come to Italy. For months now he hadn't found inspiration in anything, nothing attracted him, nothing interested him. He was helpless, and the entire team of his associates waited impatiently for his decisions and guidelines for the upcoming season.

Now he was strolling along the narrow streets and looking carefully at the little tenements along both sides of the road. Unexpectedly, his attention was drawn to an old gate overgrown with vines. Half open, it stood at some distance from all the buildings and didn't appear to be part of the fence of any of the tenements. Behind it there stretched a narrow path, most likely leading to something hidden behind the trees. A house? A garden? The track was lined with lemon trees, and olive branches crept over the wall at the gate. He hesitated. He felt a growing desire to see what was hidden behind those trees. He realised he was entering someone's property, but curiosity got the better of his fears and he stepped through the gate.

He forced his way through the thicket more and more boldly. Soon he found himself in an extensive garden. The path ended here and flat ground began, overgrown here and there with maquis and olive trees. But that wasn't the most

z dumiewające. W ogrodzie znajdowało się kilkanaście marmurowych rzeźb, pośrodku zaś była nieduża, także marmurowa fontanna. Figury przedstawiały ludzi w różnych pozach, parami i osobno. Rzeźby oplecione były winoroślą, nie odbierało im to jednak ani trochę wdzięku, raczej dodawało piękna i tajemniczości. Wszystkie tworzyły jakby marmurowy korowód. U jego szczytu znajdowała się figura wyróżniająca się na tle innych. Od razu zauważył, że jest wyjątkowa.

Była niedokończona... Z bloku jasnego marmuru wylaniała się postać kobiety. Jej oczy były spuszczone, ręce skrzyżowane na piersiach, włosy w falach spływały na ramiona i okrywały całą jej postać. Miała subtelne i łagodne rysy. Była bardzo piękna. Pomyślał, że chyba nigdy w życiu nie widział tak pięknej kobiety. Cała jej postać także obrosła winoroślą, która oplatała jej włosy, układając się na nich we wspaniałe wieniec.

Nagle usłyszał za sobą cichy spokojny głos:

– Czyż nie jest piękna?

Odwrócił się i zobaczył siedzącą na ławce starszą kobietę. Może przyszła tak cicho, że nawet tego nie zauważył... A może była tu już wcześniej? Miała na sobie fartuch, w ręce trzymała sekator, którym zapewne przycinała znajdujące się w ogrodzie rośliny. Teraz dopiero zwrócił uwagę, że ta część, w której się znajdował, była ładnie utrzymana i wcale nie wyglądała na zapomnianą.

– Tak, jest przepiękna – potwierdził.

– Byłaby jeszcze piękniejsza. Niestety, jej twórca zmarł przed ukończeniem swego dzieła – powiedziała nieznajoma.

– Kto to był? – zapytał.

– Według legendy to sam Pigmalion wyrzeźbił tę kobietę. Najwybitniejszy rzeźbiarz starożytności.

– Przepraszam, ale chyba nigdy o nim nie słyszałem – dodał lekko zakłopotany.

– Pigmalion był królem Cypru, ale poświęcił swoje życie sztuce. Przez długie lata poszukiwał ideału kobiety. Gdy stracił już nadzieję na jego odnalezienie, postanowił sam wyrzeźbić najpiękniejszą kobietę na ziemi. Wykorzystał cały swój talent, a stworzona przez niego figura była tak piękna, że... zakochał się w niej bez pamięci. Przesiadywał przed nią całymi tygodniami, dotykał, żeby

amazing thing. In the garden, there were a dozen or so marble sculptures and a small, also marble fountain in the centre. The statues were of people in various poses, in couples or alone. The sculptures were covered in vines, but this in no way detracted from their charm; rather, it added to their beauty and mystery. All of them together formed a kind of marble procession. The figure in the lead stood out from the rest. He noticed immediately that it was special.

It was unfinished... The figure emerging from the block of marble was that of a woman. Her eyes were lowered, her arms crossed on her chest, her hair falling to her shoulders in waves and covering her whole figure. Her features were subtle and soft. She was very beautiful. He thought he probably hadn't seen such a beautiful woman in his life. Her whole figure was also overgrown with vines, which covered her hair, forming a splendid wreath.

Suddenly he heard a quiet, calm voice behind him:

"Isn't she beautiful?"

He turned around and saw an elderly woman sitting on a bench. Perhaps she had approached so quietly that he hadn't even noticed... Or, maybe she'd been here all along? She was wearing an apron and holding a pair of secateurs, with which she must have been pruning the plants in the garden. It was only then he noticed that the section where he was now was well maintained and did not look forgotten at all.

"Yes, she is very beautiful", he agreed.

"She would have been even lovelier. Unfortunately, her creator died before finishing his work", the stranger said.

"Who was it?", he asked.

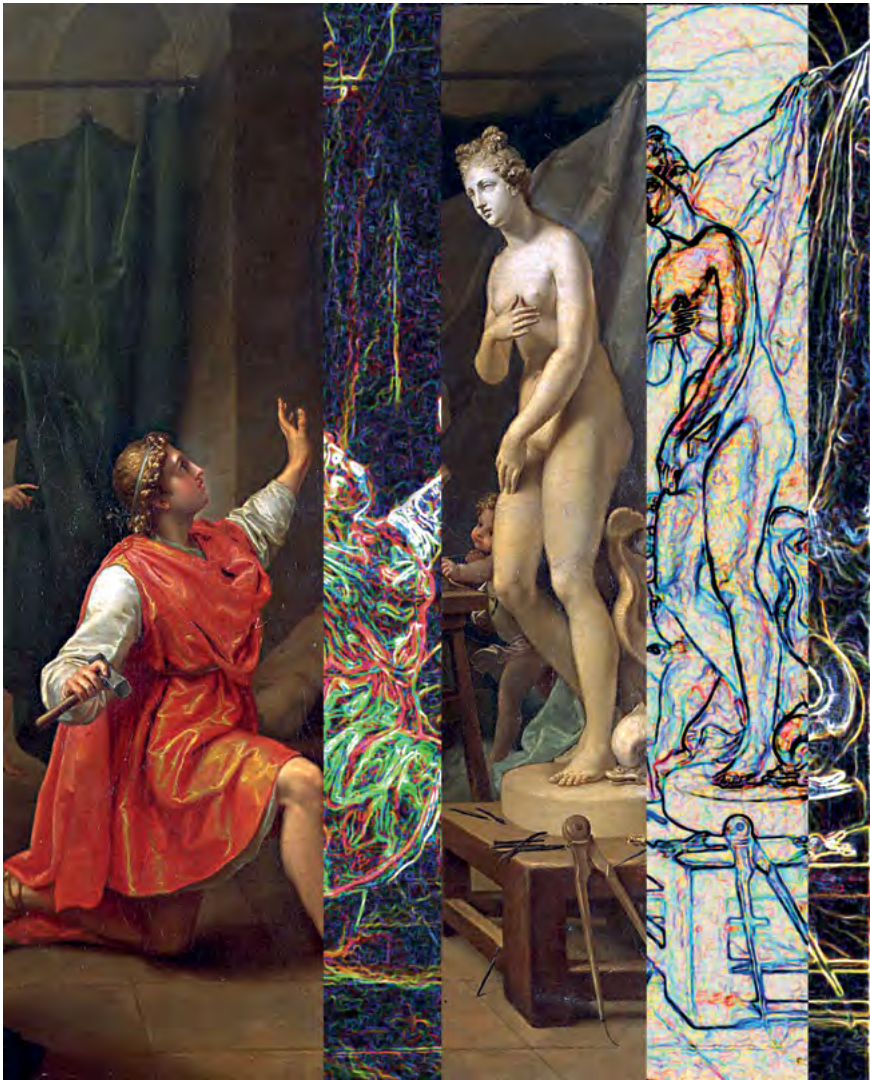
"According to legend, Pygmalion himself carved this woman. The greatest sculptor of Antiquity".

"Forgive me, but I don't think I've heard of him", he said, a little disconcerted.

"Pygmalion was the king of Cyprus, but he dedicated his life to art. He sought the ideal female for many long years. When he had lost hope of ever finding her, he decided to sculpt the world's loveliest woman himself. He used all his talent, and the figure he created was so beautiful that... he fell madly in love with her. He would sit before her for weeks on end, touching her to check



III. 3: Laurent Pécheux (1729–1821), *Pygmalion i Galatea* (1784), Ermitaż, fot. Ermitaż, Domena Publiczna. Źródło: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pygmalion_and_Galatea_\(Pecheux\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pygmalion_and_Galatea_(Pecheux).jpg) (dostęp 13.09.2021).



III. 3: Zbigniew Karaszewski's *variatio* on Laurent Pécœur (1729–1821), *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1784), Hermitage Museum, photo by Hermitage Museum, Public Domain. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pygmalion_and_Galatea_\(Pecœur\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pygmalion_and_Galatea_(Pecœur).jpg) (accessed September 13, 2021).

sprawdzić czy na pewno nie jest żywa. Niestety, pod palcami czuł tylko zimno marmuru. Jednak pewnego dnia Afrodyta zlitowała się nad Pigmalionem i nieziemską piękność ożyła w jego rękach. Szczęśliwy król nadał jej imię Galatea, poślubił ją i mieli syna, Pafosa. Po śmierci swego ojca, Pafos założył miasto, nazywając je swoim imieniem, a w nim – jako wyraz wdzięczności – wybudował najwspanialszą świątynię Afrodyty.

– Galatea... piękna, doskonała – powiedział po namyśle.

– Tak, bo choć zrodzona z łona marmuru, jest jak wyrwana naturze. Idealna, bo żywa, pochodząca z natury.

– Jak to? – zdziwił się.

– Ludzie tworzą piękne i wspaniałe rzeczy. Jednak czym jest to wszystko wobec piękna natury, widoku słońca przebijającego się przez korony drzew, lśniących wód w jeziorach, zachodów czy wschodów słońca, potęgi gór i delikatności kwiatów, widoku gwiazd na niebie w pogodną noc... To, co pochodzi z natury, będzie piękne, bo natura jest piękna sama w sobie. Kiedyś ludzie lepiej to rozumieli, potrafili objąć rozumem otaczający ich świat i żyć z nim w zgodzie. Teraz jednak zatracili tę zdolność i walczą z naturą, nie rozumieją już jej słów ani jej potrzeb – urwała kobieta.

– Nigdy nie zdawałem sobie z tego sprawy – powiedział z trudem projektant, wciąż wpatrzony w niezwykłą, marmurową postać.

Nie usłyszał już odpowiedzi. Gdy się odwrócił, zrozumiał, że został sam. Nieznajoma odeszła tak samo cicho, jak się pojawiła.

Długo wpatrywał się w figurę, która w świetle zachodzącego słońca wydawała się jeszcze piękniejsza. Zaczynał rozumieć, że prawdziwe piękno nie kryje się w tym, co może stworzyć człowiek, choć przecież patrzył na dzieło ludzkiej ręki. Prawdziwego piękna nie są w stanie podkreślić najpiękniejsze nawet stroje czy stylizacje. Prawdziwe piękno wypływa z wnętrza, z samej natury i tylko natura może mu coś dodać.

Przez te wszystkie lata, gdy za wszelką cenę dążył do osiągnięcia szczytów swojej kariery zawodowej, nie zwracał uwagi na to, ile zanieczyszczeń produkują jego fabryki, skąd pochodzą ani jak produkowane są materiały. Miały być ładne, użyteczne, proste w obróbce. Nigdy nie myślał o tym, że ubrania przez niego

whether she really wasn't alive. Unfortunately, all he felt beneath his fingers was cold marble. But one day Aphrodite took pity on Pygmalion and the heavenly beauty came to life in his hands. The happy king named her Galatea, married her, and they had a son, Paphos. After his father's death Paphos founded a city, which he named after himself, and there – as an expression of gratitude – he built the most magnificent temple to Aphrodite”.

“Galatea... beautiful, perfect”, he said thoughtfully.

“Yes, because though born from the bosom of marble, she is as if torn from nature. Perfect, because she is alive, originating from nature”.

“What do you mean?”, he said in surprise.

“People create beautiful and magnificent things. But what are they all compared to the beauty of nature, the sight of the sun pushing through tree branches, waters glistening in lakes, sunsets and sunrises, the power of mountains and the softness of flowers, the sight of stars in the sky on a clear night... Anything that comes from nature will be beautiful, because nature in itself is beautiful. There was a time when people understood this better, they were able to embrace the surrounding world with their minds and live in harmony with it. Now, however, they have lost that ability and fight against nature; they no longer understand its words or its needs”, the woman broke off.

“I never realised this”, the designer said with some difficulty, still gazing at the unusual marble figure.

He never heard a reply. When he turned around, he noticed he was alone. The stranger had left as quietly as she had arrived.

He took a long time gazing at the figure, which seemed even more beautiful in the light of the setting sun. He was beginning to understand that true beauty was not to be found in things that humans could create, even though he was looking at the work of human hands. True beauty cannot be highlighted by even the loveliest outfits or styles. True beauty comes from within, from nature itself, and only nature can add something to it.

Throughout all those years when he had strived to attain the peak of his career at any cost, he had overlooked how much pollution his factories were producing, where the fabrics came from and how they were made. They were

sprzedawane nadają się do użycia przez maksymalnie dwa sezony, a potem są wyrzucane.

Wiedział już, co powinien zrobić. Przede wszystkim zadbać o to, aby w jego zakładach zaczęto używać naturalnych materiałów takich jak len, bawełna, jedwab. Zapragnął też, aby ubrania były szyte w taki sposób, aby mogły być noszone przez kilka lat. Aby świat, który znał, świat mody, wybiegów i reflektorów, zatroszczył się wreszcie o to, z czego przecież zawsze korzystał: o naturę.

Odchodząc, spojrzął po raz ostatni na marmurową postać i na cały ogród. Był spokojny, odnalazł to, czego poszukiwał.

meant to be pretty, useful, simple to process. He had never considered that the clothes he sold were usable for a maximum of two seasons, after which they were thrown away.

He knew what he should do now. First of all, make sure his factories started using natural fabrics like linen, cotton, silk. He also wanted the clothes to be made in such a way as to be wearable for several years. He wanted the world he knew, the world of fashion, runways and spotlights, finally to start caring for what it had always been using: nature.

As he was leaving, he took a last look at the marble figure and the whole garden. He was at peace; he had found what he'd been looking for.

Dafne

Zatrzymała się dopiero przed drzewem. Mimo zwyczajnego wyglądu, w jakiś sposób przykuło jej uwagę. Sama nie wiedziała, dlaczego. Wszystkie przytłaczające myśli, które dręczyły ją do tej pory, nagle zniknęły. Drzewo wawrzynu było trochę wyższe od niej, a z jego kształtów emanowała tajemnicza delikatność. Lekko poskręcany pień, wiotkie gałązki zwrócone ku górze oraz aromatyczne liście dodawały mu filigranowości, a nawet... kobiecości. Musnęła korę koniuszkami palców i wtedy drzewo jakby... odetchnęło. Liście zaczęły falować, choć nie wiał wiatr. Wydawało się, że cała roślina ożyła: pień zaczął szybciej przewodzić życiodajne soki, a korzenie wrosły jeszcze głębiej w ziemię.

– Jak udało ci się tu trafić? – usłyszała niespodziewany głos i zdumiona aż podskoczyła. Przecież była pewna, że jest tu zupełnie sama. Rozejrzała się wokół, ale nikogo nie zobaczyła. Chyba że... Nie, to niemożliwe! Powiodła wzrokiem ku drzewu. Między konarami dostrzegła unoszącą się postać młodej kobiety, zbudowaną z delikatnej poświaty. Dziwna zjawa i drzewo zdawały się być jednością, wzajemnie się uzupełniającą, nierozzerwalną.

Postać była piękna, nie można było temu zaprzeczyć. Miała smukłe, zwienne kształty, rozplywające się w powietrzu, oraz długie włosy, powiewające na wszystkie strony na nieistniejącym wietrze, niknące gdzieś w liściach. Jednak najbardziej przykuwała uwagę jej twarz. Była wręcz idealna. Zdawała się wpisywać w każdy kanon piękna znany człowiekowi, we wszystkich częściach świata. Lekko przechylona głowa, rozchylone usta i przenikliwe oczy patrzące w znaczący sposób, jakby czekały na odpowiedź. Dziewczyna dopiero teraz uświadomiła sobie, że nadal nie odpowiedziała na pytanie.

– Ja... nie wiem – wyszeptwała. Czuła, że serce bije jej mocniej i trudno było jej zebrać myśli. – Po prostu szłam przed siebie.

– Naprawdę? – Nimfa zrobiła zdziwioną minę. – Tylko nielicznym chce się wychodzić z miasta. Ja nie wytrzymałabym tam ani minuty.

Daphne

She didn't stop until she reached the tree. Despite looking ordinary, somehow it had attracted her attention. She didn't really know why. All the overwhelming thoughts that had tormented her until now suddenly disappeared. The laurel tree was a little taller than her, and its shape emanated a mysterious gentleness. A slightly twisted trunk, pliable branches pointed upwards, and aromatic leaves added an element of daintiness, or even... femininity. She brushed the bark with the tips of her fingers and the tree seemed to... breathe. The leaves started rippling although there was no wind. The entire plant seemed to have come alive: the trunk started transporting life-giving juices more quickly, and the roots grew even deeper down into the ground.

"How did you find your way here?", she heard an unexpected voice, and jumped in surprise. She'd been sure she was here completely alone. She looked around, but saw no one. Unless... No, that's impossible! She turned her eyes to the tree. Among its boughs she saw the floating figure of a young woman, built from a delicate glow. The strange apparition and the tree seemed as one, complementing each other, inseparable.

The figure was beautiful, there was no denying it. Her shape was slim, ethereal, dissipating in the air, and her hair was long, flowing in all directions on a non-existent wind, disappearing in the leaves somewhere. However, her face was the most eye-catching. It was absolutely perfect. It seemed to be compatible with every canon of beauty known to humanity, in all parts of the world. Head slightly tilted, lips parted, and piercing eyes that gazed meaningfully, as if waiting for a response. The girl only now realised that she had not given an answer yet.

"I don't know", she whispered. She felt her heart racing and found it hard to collect her thoughts. "I was just walking aimlessly".

"Really?" The nymph's expression was one of surprise. "Only the very few bother to leave the city. I wouldn't be able to stand even a minute there".

Dziewczyna mimowolnie zwróciła głowę w stronę wysokich budynków wystających gdzieś w oddali wysoko ponad linię drzew. Z tej odległości wszystkie wydawały się szare i smutne, a między nimi rozciągała się złowieszczo gęsta chmura smogu. Z tej perspektywy miasto wydawało się miejscem nieprzyjaznym i obcym. Aż się zdziwiła, że nigdy wcześniej tego nie zauważyła. Poczula, jakby jej gardło ścisnęła niewidzialna ręka, a z jej oczu popłynęły łzy. Sama nie wiedziała, czy to ze smutku, żalu, a może z powodu złych wspomnień. Tak, to przez niego...

– Nie płacz – nimfa przerwała ciszę. Chociaż dziewczyna zdążyła się szybko uspokoić, nadal miała lekko zaczerwienione oczy i mokre policzki. – To przez jednego z ludzi?

Dziewczyna w odpowiedzi kiwnęła tylko głową.

Nimfa zmarszczyła brwi:

– Ludzie potrafią wszystko zniszczyć. Trudno wśród nich być sobą. Próbuja nas ograniczać schematami i krytyką, są tak toksyczni, jak spaliny, które wytwarzają ich współczesne pojazdy. Tak było zawsze. Sama tego doświadczyłam... – nimfa spuściła oczy. Z całej jej postaci bił smutek. Zamilkła.

– Proszę, opowiedz – dziewczyna poczuła nagle niewypowiedzianą potrzebę poznania historii zjawy.

– Nazywam się Dafne – zaczęła nimfa. – Żyłam za czasów świetności Hellady, wiele stuleci temu. Świat był wówczas szczęśliwy. Ludzi otaczała bujna, nienaruszona natura. Nawet bogowie często schodzili na Ziemię, tak była wspólna. Mój ojciec był jednym z nich, co prawda raczej nisko postawionym w boskiej hierarchii. Sprawował opiekę nad rzeką, ale upodobał sobie towarzystwo ludzi. Szczerze mówiąc, mnie także bliższa była ludzka połowa mojej natury. Przynajmniej do czasu.

Część mnie, pochodząca ze świata bogów, zaczęła się przebudzać. Tym, czego najbardziej na świecie zapragnęłam, to przyłączyć się do orszaku Artemidy – bogini leśnych gonitw i łowów. Ale los nimfy nie jest prosty, rozpięty gdzieś pomiędzy dwiema połówkami jej duszy. Mój ojciec był zdruzgotany, gdy wyjawiałam mu swoje plany. W gniewie zakazał mi ich realizacji. Twierdził, że jestem zbyt piękna, aby pozostać dziewicą, i że koniecznie musi znaleźć mi męża. Nie

The girl involuntarily turned her head towards the tall buildings far away, sticking out high above the line of trees. From this distance they all seemed grey and sad, and a thick cloud of smog stretched ominously between them. From this perspective the city seemed an unfriendly and alien place. It gave her a jolt to realise that she had never noticed this before. She felt as if her throat were being squeezed by an invisible hand, and tears spilled from her eyes. She wasn't quite sure if it was from sadness, regret, or maybe because of bad memories. Yes, it was because of him...

"Don't cry", the nymph broke the silence. Though the girl managed to pull herself together quickly, her eyes were still a bit red and her cheeks wet. "Is it because of some human?"

The girl only nodded in reply.

The nymph frowned:

"Humans know how to ruin anything. It's hard to be yourself among them. They try to restrict us with schematic thinking and criticism, they are as toxic as the exhaust fumes their modern-day vehicles produce. It was always like this. I have experienced it myself...", the nymph lowered her eyes. Sadness emanated from her whole figure. She fell silent.

"Please, tell me about it", the girl suddenly felt an indescribable need to hear the apparition's story.

"My name is Daphne", the nymph began. "I lived in the times of Hellas' glory, many centuries ago. The world was a happier place then. Humans were surrounded by luscious, pristine nature. Even the gods often came down to Earth, it was so magnificent. My father was one of them, albeit rather low in the divine hierarchy. He was the guardian of the river, but he came to enjoy the company of humans. Frankly speaking, the human half of my nature was always dearer to my heart, too. At least for a time.

The part of me that came from the world of the gods began to awaken. What I came to desire most in the world was to join the retinue of Artemis, the goddess of forest chases and hunting. But a nymph's fate is not simple, stretched somewhere between the two halves of her soul. My father was devastated when I told him of my plans. In his anger he forbade me to pursue them. He claimed

myślałam wcześniej o mężczyznach, uważałam ich po prostu za jeden z wielu wytworów natury. W tym momencie jednak zaczęłam odczuwać do nich głęboką niechęć. Stali przecież na drodze do spełnienia moich marzeń!

Wkrótce wielu młodzieńców zaczęło zabiegać o moje względy. Zaślepieni moją urodą, zdawali się nie dostrzegać niczego poza nią, nawet piękna otaczającej przyrody, przy której moje piękno było niczym! Oczywiście zbywałam ich zaloty. Wkrótce zaczęto nazywać mnie złośliwie *łamaczką serc, kokietką*. Kłamstwa i oszczerstwa zawistników! Nie zliczę nawet, ile wymyślono historii o tym, jak rzekomo rozkochiwałam w sobie do nieprzytomności niewinnych pasterzy, po czym okrutnie ich wyśmiewałam i zostawiałam zrozpaczonych. Nie mogłam znieść tych niedorzecznych plotek, a dopiero miałam się przekonać, do czego zdolni byli mężczyźni, także ci z grona bogów. Wkrótce padłam ofiarą kolejnej z ich intryg.

Eros, po błahym sporze z Apollem o to, który z nich celniej strzela z łuku, postanowił zabawić się jego kosztem. Umyślił sobie, że w samo serce boga trafi strzała miłości, zaś w serce jego pięknej wybranki – strzała nienawiści. I to ja miałam ponieść konsekwencje boskiego kaprysu! Pamiętam dobrze ten moment... Przeszywający ból, trwający przez ułamek sekundy, i ostrze grotu nienawiści, jakby osuwające się po sercu skamieniałym już wcześniej na męskie wdzięki. Nie mogłam znieść widoku Apolla, który, trafiony strzałą miłości, próbował zdobyć moją przychylność. Czułam, że kierują nim porywczoność i brutalna siła. Nie mogąc się od niego uwolnić, zaczęłam uciekać. Długo biegłam przed siebie, ale on był ode mnie szybszy i bardziej wytrzymały. Wiedziałam, że nie ucieknę. Całym moim ciałem wstrząsały zimne dreszcze, tak bardzo się bałam! Byłam już na skraju wyczerpania. Łzy bezsilności i rozpacz same napływały mi do oczu, tak, że prawie nie widziałam, w którym kierunku biegnę. Usłyszałam szum rzeki. Zdesperowana dopadłam brzegu, upadłam na kolana i, zanurzając dłonie w wodzie, zaczęłam błagać mojego ojca i wszystkich bogów Olimpu, aby przyszedli mi z pomocą. Wątpiłam jednak, czy odpowiedzą.

Nagle coś zaczęło się ze mną dziać. Jakaś niewidzialna siła popchnęła mnie do przodu i postawiła na nogi. Chciałam biec dalej, ale nie mogłam oderwać stóp od ziemi. Zorientowałam się, że nie mogę ruszyć żadną z części ciała.

I was too beautiful to remain a virgin, and that he absolutely had to find me a husband. I hadn't thought much about men before, I simply considered them to be one of nature's many creations. In that instant, however, I started feeling an intense dislike of them. After all, they were standing in the way of my dreams!

Soon many young men began wooing me. Blinded by my beauty, they seemed not to notice anything beyond it, not even the beauty of surrounding nature, next to which my beauty was nothing! Of course I rejected their advances. Soon people spitefully started calling me 'heartbreaker' and 'coquette'. Lies and slander of the jealous! I cannot even count the number of invented stories about how I allegedly made innocent shepherds fall madly in love with me and then mocked them cruelly and left them in despair. I couldn't stand this preposterous gossip, but I was yet to discover what men, including those among the gods, were capable of. I soon fell victim to more of their scheming.

After a minor quarrel with Apollo over which one of them was more accurate with a bow and arrow, Eros resolved to have some fun at his expense. He decided that a love arrow would pierce the god's heart, and an arrow of hatred the heart of his beautiful beloved. And it was I who was to suffer the consequences of this godly whim! I remember the moment well... Searing pain lasting a fraction of a second, with the arrowhead of hatred seeming to slide across a heart already impervious to male charms. I couldn't stand the sight of Apollo, who, hit by the arrow of love, tried to win my favour. I sensed that he was guided by impetuosity and brute force. Unable to shake him off, I started running away. I ran for a long time, but he was faster and more resilient. I knew I couldn't escape. My whole body was racked with cold shivers, I was so scared! I was on the verge of exhaustion. Tears of powerlessness and despair welled up in my eyes, so that I could hardly see where I was running. I heard the murmur of the river. Desperate, I rushed to its bank, fell to my knees and, plunging my hands in the water, started begging my father and all the gods of Olympus to come to my aid. But I doubted if they would respond.

Suddenly, something started happening to me. An invisible force pushed me forward and stood me on my feet. I wanted to continue running, but I couldn't lift my feet off the ground. I realised that I couldn't move any part of my body. The

Najstraszniejsze było to, że poczułam, jak serce przestaje mi bić, ale to wszystko działo się tak szybko, że nie miałam czasu na przemyślenia. Przez moje żyły zaczęła płynąć nowa, słodka substancja, której zapach wypełnił powietrze. Czułam się oszołomiona, cały świat dookoła mnie zwolnił i przestał wydawać jakiegokolwiek dźwięki. Słyszałam tylko mój oddech. Oddech, który już po chwili współgrał z rytmem szumu rzeki i lasu. Byłam drzewem.

Apollo wyglądał na naprawdę zrozpaczonego. Osunął się na kolana, obejmując mój pień i płacząc. Po chwili podniósł głowę, odrzucił w tył złote loki i popatrzył na mnie. Nie wiem jak, ale patrzył mi prosto w oczy. Przepęlnym bólem głosem zapytał cicho:

– Dlaczego mnie to spotkało, Dafne?

Wstał, otarł łzy. Zerwał gałązkę. Poczułam ból. Dopiero teraz zobaczyłam, jakim rodzajem drzewa jestem. Apollo zręcznymi ruchami splótł gałąź i włożył powstały wieniec laurowy na głowę. Podobno potem każdy poeta taki nosił, a moje imię wiązało się odtąd ze słowami *natchnienie i poezja*. Wtedy dosięgnęły mnie wątpliwości. Młody bóg był piękny i zdawał się być tak autentyczny w swoich uczuciach... W głębi duszy wiedziałam jednak, jaka jest prawda. Uczucie Apolla było wynikiem zabawy Erosa. Dziwiłam się, że moje imię, mimo to, ciągle pojawiało się w pieśniach Apollina. Nie przypuszczałam, że takie nieszczerze zakochanie może trwać tak długo.

W postaci drzewa czułam się szczęśliwa. Nareszcie stałam się nieodłącznym elementem natury, żyłam dzięki niej i razem z nią, w spokoju, trwając w niezłamczonym poczuciu bezpieczeństwa, podczas gdy na świecie toczono wojny. Przez wieki widziałam chyba wszystkie rodzaje okrucieństwa, jakie wyrządzali sobie nawzajem ludzie. Widziałam strach i śmierć. Mnie ocaliła natura. Ale ludzie się jej boją, pogardzają nią, zamykają się w swoich miastach. Głupcy!

Pochłonięta opowiadaniem nimfa nie zauważyła, że dziewczyna od dłuższego czasu nie słucha jej opowieści. Jej myśli były zajęte czymś innym. Czyżby znowu myślała o nim? O tym, co ją spotkało w ostatnich dniach?

– Gdyby tylko ludzie nie koncentrowali się tak bardzo na sobie, potrafili wyjść poza swój egoizm! – mówiła dalej wzburzona Dafne, drżąc z emocji. – Ale ty – zwróciła się do dziewczyny – ty jesteś inna. Inaczej nie uciekłabyś z miasta...

most dreadful thing was that I felt my heart stop beating, but it all happened so quickly that I had no time for reflection. A new, sweet substance started flowing in my veins, its scent filling the air. I felt bewildered, the whole world around me slowed down and stopped issuing any sounds. All I heard was my own breathing. Breathing that soon harmonised with the rhythm of the swishing river and forest. I was a tree.

Apollo looked truly distraught. He dropped to his knees, hugging my trunk and weeping. After a while he raised his head, flung back his golden curls and looked at me. I don't know how, but he was looking straight into my eyes. In a voice filled with pain, he asked quietly: 'Why has this befallen me, Daphne?'

He got up, wiped away the tears. He broke off a branch. I felt pain. It was only then that I saw what kind of tree I was. His movements skilled, Apollo wove the branch together and placed the laurel wreath on his head. Apparently after that every poet wore one, and my name was always associated with the words 'inspiration' and 'poetry'. That's when I grew doubtful. The young god was beautiful and seemed so genuine in his feelings... Deep down, however, I knew the truth. Apollo's feelings were the effect of Eros' game. I was surprised that despite this, my name kept appearing in his songs. I never thought such an insincere infatuation could last so long.

I felt happy being a tree. I had finally become an inseparable element of nature, I lived thanks to nature and together with it, in peace, continuing in an undisturbed sense of security, whereas the world fought wars. Over the centuries, I probably saw every type of cruelty that humans did to one another. I saw fear and death. I had been saved by nature. But people are scared of nature, they despise it, shutting themselves away in their cities. Fools!"

Absorbed in telling her tale, the nymph hadn't noticed that the girl had not been listening to her story for some time. Her thoughts were busy with other things. Could she be thinking about him again? About what had happened to her in recent days?

"If only humans weren't so focused on themselves, if they could move beyond their selfishness!", the agitated Daphne continued, shaking with emotion. "But you", she turned to the girl, "you are different. Otherwise you wouldn't



III. 4: Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), *Apollo i Dafne* (1622–1625), Galeria Borghese, fot. Int3gr4te (2007), CC BY-SA 3.0. Źródło: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ApolloAndDaphne.JPG> (dostęp 13.09.2021).



III. 4: Zbigniew Karaszewski's *variatio* on Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), *Apollo and Daphne* (1622–1625), Galleria Borghese, photo by Int3gr4te (2007), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ApolloAndDaphne.JPG> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Poza tym, on cię skrzywdził, prawda? – dodała po krótkiej chwili ciszy, już spokojniejszym tonem. Dziewczyna z początku nie reagowała. Stała w bezruchu, jakby zaskoczona przenikliwością nimfy.

– Tak – powiedziała po chwili słabym głosem.

– Ludzie nie rozumieją takich istot jak ja czy ty – stwierdziła Dafne. – Zostań tu ze mną. Doświadczysz tego, na co większość ludzi nie jest gotowa – całkowitej harmonii z naturą, wiecznej młodości. Dojrzysz to, co zdarzy się w kolejnych wiekach, i to, co już się stało. Chwyć mnie! Czy czujesz jak natura twojej duszy cię do tego nawołuje?

Dziewczyna nie ruszyła się z miejsca. Spuściła tylko głowę. Nie była gotowa. Pomyślała, że lepiej będzie, jeśli wróci do niego, wybaczy i od tego czasu nie będzie mu się sprzeciwiać. Może nie będzie szczęśliwa, ale przynajmniej będzie bezpieczna. Będzie miała co jeść, on zapewni jej dach nad głową. Czowała się zbyt młoda i niedoświadczona, aby mogła sama sobie poradzić, zbyt słaba, aby coś zmienić. Brakowało jej odwagi, aby zaufać ulotnej nimfie i jej opowieści.

Dafne jakby wyczytała to wszystko z jej twarzy. Blask w jej oczach momentalnie zniknął, a cała postać jakby przygasła.

– Proszę, chwyć mnie... Nawet nie wiesz, ile mogłabyś zmienić... – wyszeptała po raz ostatni słowa zachęty, ale dziewczyna trwała w bezruchu.

Nimfa zniknęła. Przed dziewczyną stało zwykłe drzewo. Wyciągnięta jeszcze przed chwilą ręka zmieniła się w nową, wiotką gałązkę bez liści. Kolejną, jedną z wielu, zwyczajną...

have fled the city... Besides, he hurt you, didn't he?", she added after a moment's silence, in a calmer tone. The girl did not respond at first. She stood still, as if startled by the nymph's perceptiveness.

"Yes", she said weakly after a while.

"People don't understand creatures like me or you", said Daphne. "Stay here with me. You'll experience something most people are not ready for: complete harmony with nature, eternal youth. You'll be able to see what will happen in successive centuries and what has already happened. Grab hold of me! Can you feel the nature of your soul calling you to do this?"

The girl didn't move. She only lowered her head. She wasn't ready. She thought it would be better if she went back to him, forgave him, and then never opposed him. Maybe she wouldn't be happy, but at least she'd be safe. She would have food to eat, and he would keep a roof over her head. She felt too young and inexperienced to cope on her own, too weak to change anything. She lacked the courage to trust the ethereal nymph and her story.

Daphne seemed to read all this from her face. The radiancy immediately vanished from her eyes, and her whole figure became subdued.

"Please, grab hold of me... You have no idea how much you could change...", she whispered her words of encouragement for the last time, but the girl stayed motionless.

The nymph disappeared. It was an ordinary tree standing before the girl. The arm outstretched just a moment before had turned into a new, supple branch with no leaves. Another one, one of many, ordinary...

Narcyz

Na skraju lasu pojawiła się postać. Był to młody mężczyzna. Miał na sobie ciemny, dobrze skrojony garnitur. Mimo tego stroju poruszał się szybkim, zdecydowanym krokiem w kierunku gaju. Zatrzymał się dopiero przy pierwszych drzewach. Stojąc na granicy lasu, wydawał się niezwykle mały, mimo swojej dość krzepkiej budowy. Jego ramiona opadły, kiedy rozglądał się, poddenerwowany. Widząc jednak, że otaczają go tylko drzewa i krzewy, ustępujące wydeptanej ścieżce, wziął głęboki oddech i powoli wkroczył w gęstwinę.

Drzewa, które mijał, zdawały się skłaniać swe liściaste korony, by lepiej przyrzec się obcemu. W istocie, czuł się niemal jak złoczyńca, intruz wśród obecnejokoło natury. Drogę zarastały liczne pokrzywy i cierniste krzewy, gotowe do obrony. Próbuując je ominąć, poruszał się teraz skrajem ścieżki. Gąszcz zaczął się rozrzedzać, a ciernie przy drodze stopniowo ustąpiły miejsca kwiatom, im głębiej w puszcę, tym piękniejszym, okazalszym i bardziej kolorowym. Do jego uszu doleciał świergot ptaków, które – ciekawe przybysza – obsiadły gałęzie przydrożnych drzew. Droga prowadziła prosto, jedynie czasami łagodnie skręcając, by ominąć stare konary.

Idąc tak od dłuższego czasu, wędrowiec skupił swoją uwagę na kwiatkach, studiując je dokładnie. Najpierw jego uwagę przyciągnęły duże okazy o pięknych płatkach, mieniące się wszystkimi kolorami tęczy, jednak potem zauważył wśród nich jedną, wyjątkową roślinę. Był to niewielki kwiat o małym złotym środku i śnieżnobiałych płatkach. Wydawał się bardzo kruchy, a mimo to dumnie prostował swoją łodygę, przeciwstawiając się nawet mocniejszym powiewom wiatru. Wędrowiec aż przystanął z wrażenia. Roślina wyróżniała się pięknnością na tle innych kwiatów. Doleciała do niego także zniewalająca woń, niemal odbierająca zmysły swoją niezwykłą słodyczą. Skupił wzrok na kwiecie. Nigdy nie widział nic tak pięknego! Zauroczony wyciągnął dłoń, chcąc dotknąć świeżą bielą kwiatu, jednak uniemożliwił mu to niespodziewany

Narcissus

A figure appeared at the edge of the forest. It was a young man. He was wearing a dark, well-cut suit. Despite his attire, he moved with rapid, determined steps towards the grove. He didn't stop until he reached the first trees. Standing at the forest's boundary, he seemed extremely small despite his quite burly build. His shoulders sagged as he looked around nervously. Seeing he was only surrounded by trees and bushes that made way for a well-trodden path, he took a deep breath and slowly stepped into the thicket.

The trees he passed seemed to bow their leafy crowns to take a better look at the stranger. In fact, he felt almost like a villain, an intruder amidst the nature present all around him. There were numerous nettles and thorny bushes growing along the way, ready to put up a defence. Trying to avoid them, he was now moving along the path's edge. The thicket started thinning out, and the thorns by the wayside gradually made way for flowers; the deeper he went into the forest, the more beautiful, resplendent and colourful they became. The chirping of birds reached his ears; curious about the newcomer, they had settled in the branches of the roadside trees. The track led straight ahead, only sometimes curving gently to bypass old boughs.

Walking for some time now, the traveller focused his attention on the flowers, studying them carefully. First, his attention was drawn to large specimens with lovely petals, shimmering with all the colours of the rainbow, but then he noticed one unique plant among them. It was a small flower with a little golden centre and snow-white petals. It seemed very fragile, but proudly straightened its stem nevertheless, even resisting stronger gusts of wind. The traveller was so stunned he stopped in his tracks. The plant was distinguished by its beauty among the other flowers. Its captivating scent also reached him, almost driving him mad with its extraordinary sweetness. He gazed at the flower. He had never seen anything so beautiful! Enchanted, he stretched out his hand, wanting to touch the shining white bloom, but he was prevented by an unexpected strong

silny podmuch wiatru. Spróbował ponownie, jednak i tym razem się nie udało. Usiadł więc naprzeciw rośliny i podziwiał jej piękno z oddali. Nawet nie zauważył, kiedy zaczęło się ściemniać. Wstał i ruszył z powrotem. W drodze uważnie się rozglądał, szukając rzeczy, która mogłaby dorównać pięknem niezwykłej roślinie, którą widział. Bezskutecznie. Biel płatków, którą miał cały czas w pamięci, przyćmiewała wszystko inne. Kiedy po powrocie do domu zamknął oczy, kładąc się do snu, wciąż miał utrwalony pod powiekami obraz niezwykłego kwiatu. Zасыpiając, zadawał sam sobie pytanie: Skąd mogło się wziąć takie piękno?

* * *

Nad małym chłopcem pochylają się trzy postaci. Młody mężczyzna w królewskich szatach, kobieta o łagodnych rysach i zielonych włosach oraz starzec. Z ust tego ostatniego padają dziwne słowa:

– To dziecko zaprawdę dożyje błogosławionych i szczęśliwych lat, o ile nigdy nie zobaczy własnego oblicza...

Mężczyzna wymienia zaniepokojone spojrzenie z kobietą. Ta po chwili podnosi dziecko i przytula je do piersi. On natomiast kłania się z szacunkiem starcowi i cicho dziękuje.

Powietrze, drgające delikatnie wokół zgromadzonych, niesie piękny zapach.

* * *

Młody chłopak biegnie przez las. Jego długie, złote włosy powiewają na wietrze. Na plecach ma kołczan ze strzałami, a w ręku mocno trzyma długi łuk. Pędzi, przeskakując korzenie drzew i małe krzaki. W biegu wydaje się być bardziej rączy niż jeleniem, poruszając się zwinniej i szybciej niż jakikolwiek człowiek. Za jego plecami słychać głosy.

– Narcyzie, poczekaj! Nie potrafimy biec tak szybko!

Chłopak nie zwalnia, potrząsa tylko złotymi lokami i radośnie się śmieje. Nagle przed jego nogami przemyka zając, a on zatrzymuje się, by napiąć łuk. Jednak zanim wypuści strzałę, zauważa, że jest to matka z młodymi i natychmiast opuszcza broń. Ta chwila wystarczyła, by jego towarzysze do niego dołączyli.

gust of wind. He tried again, but failed this time, too. He therefore sat down opposite the plant and admired its beauty from a distance. He didn't even notice when it started getting dark. He got up and turned back. On the way, he looked around him carefully, seeking anything that could match the beauty of the unusual plant he had seen. To no avail. The white of its petals, which he remembered so well, outshone anything else. Having returned home, when he closed his eyes as he was going to bed, he still had the image of the extraordinary flower fixed under his eyelids. Falling asleep, he asked himself a question: where could such beauty have come from?

* * *

Three figures are leaning over a little boy: a young man in royal robes, a woman with a kind expression and green hair, and an old man. The last one says some strange words:

“This child will truly live to see blessed and happy years, as long as it never sees its own countenance”.

The man exchanges worried glances with the woman. After a while, she picks up the baby and hugs it to her breast. He bows respectfully to the old man and quietly thanks him.

The air gently vibrating around the gathering carries a lovely scent.

* * *

A young boy is running through the forest. His long golden hair is flowing in the wind. On his back is a quiver with arrows, he is holding a longbow firmly in his hand. He rushes along, jumping over tree roots and small shrubs. Running, he appears more like a swift deer than a human being, moving more nimbly and speedily than any man. Voices can be heard behind him.

“Narcissus, wait! We can't run so fast!”

The boy doesn't slow down, only shakes his golden mane and laughs joyfully. Suddenly a hare flashes past his feet, and he stops to draw his bowstring. But before he shoots the arrow he notices it is a mother with young ones, and immediately lowers his weapon. That moment is enough for his companions

Widząc sytuację, która właśnie miała miejsce, patrzą się na niego pytająco. Narcyz, czując ich zdziwienie, mówi:

– To była zajęczyca z młodymi. Żaden szanujący się myśliwy nie atakuje matek. Nie jesteśmy mordercami!

Otoczający go młodzieńcy wpatrują się w niego z niemym podziwem. Spostrzegając to, Narcyz uśmiecha się ciepło i dopowiada:

– Chodźmy dalej, podobno ostatnio w okolicy pojawił się spory niedźwiedź. Przy odrobinie szczęścia, będziemy dziś wracać do domu z jego skórą!

Wykonuje ręką zachęcający gest i znów rusza naprzód. Tym razem zwalania trochę tak, że chłopcy są w stanie dotrzymać mu kroku. Cała grupa oddała się, po chwili znikając w gęstwinie.

* * *

Grupa młodych ludzi stoi na polanie. Wyglądają na pograżonych w gorącej dyskusji. Po chwili Narcyz odłącza się od nich i wchodzi w las. Przez chwilę idzie przed siebie, ale w końcu zatrzymuje się pod wielkim drzewem z rozłożystą koroną z liści. Nie musi czekać dłużej niż dwie minuty, gdy zza otaczających go drzew i krzewów z gracją wylaniają się zaciekawione driady i hamadriady. Widząc, kto stoi pod drzewem, wydają z siebie podekscytowane chichoty. Natychmiast otaczają Narcyza wianuszkami, starają się zająć miejsce jak najbliżej. Wszystkie wpatrują się w niego z uwielbieniem, gotowe spijać każde słowo z jego ust.

– Witajcie! – uśmiecha się Narcyz, jednak jego oczy pozostają chłodne.

Nimfy odpowiadają uśmiechami, nie przestając się przepychać. Widząc, że są gotowe wszcząć bijatykę o miejsce najbliżej niego, Narcyz odzywa się prędko:

– Chciałbym z wami pomówić o pewnym incydencie, który miał dzisiaj miejsce.

Zapada cisza. Wszystkie pary oczu wpatrzone są prosto w niego. Młodzieńiec wzdycha ciężko i kontynuuje:

– Muszę was poprosić, żebyście przestały chodzić za mną i moimi towarzyszami. Naprawdę nas to rozprasza, w dodatku nierzadko odstraszaście nam zwierzyne.

Natychmiast rozbrzmiewa chór głosów i lamentów. Każda nimfa zaklina się, że kocha tylko jego, że przebywanie w jego obecności sprawia jej radość.

to catch up. Seeing the situation that has just unfolded, they look at him questioningly. Feeling their surprise, Narcissus says:

“It was a doe with her young. No respectable hunter attacks mothers. We’re not murderers!”

The young men surrounding him gaze at him in mute admiration. Seeing this, he smiles warmly and adds:

“Let’s continue onwards, they say a fair-sized bear appeared in the area recently. With a little bit of luck, we will be returning home with his hide!”

He makes an encouraging gesture with his hand and sets off again. This time he slows down a little so that the boys following him are able to keep up. The company moves on, disappearing in the thicket.

* * *

The group of youngsters is standing in a clearing. They seem to be deep in a heated discussion. After a while Narcissus wanders off and goes into the forest. He walks straight on for a moment, but finally stops at a giant tree with a vast crown of leaves. He doesn’t have to wait longer than two minutes before some curious dryads and hamadryads float gracefully from among the trees and bushes around him. Seeing who is standing under the tree, they start giggling excitedly. Immediately surrounding Narcissus in a circle, they try to get as close as possible. They all gaze at him adoringly, ready to drink in every word leaving his lips.

“Greetings!”, Narcissus smiles, but his eyes remain cold.

The nymphs respond with smiles, never stopping their jostling. Seeing that they are prepared to start a fight over the spot nearest to him, Narcissus quickly says:

“I’d like to talk to you about a certain incident that took place today”.

Silence falls. All eyes are fixed on him. The young man sighs heavily and continues:

“I have to ask you to stop following me and my companions. It’s really distracting, and you often scare away the game as well”.

At once a chorus of voices and laments is heard. Every nymph swears that she loves only him, that being in his presence gives her joy. They tighten their

Zaciskają swoje palce na ramionach i torsie chłopaka. Narcyz czuje, że coraz ciężej mu oddychać, czuje jakby zaraz miały rozerwać go na strzępy! Zaczyna więc siłą odrywać ich ręce od siebie. Ale nimfy, widząc jego opór, przyjmują bardziej agresywną postawę i po chwili, mimo niechęci Narcyza, wywiązują się między nimi walka. Młodzieniec stara się być delikatny, ale nimfy już nie przypominają filigranowych postaci sprzed chwili i młodzieniec naprawdę musi walczyć o każdy oddech. W końcu udaje mu się wyrwać z objęć natrętnych istot. Natychmiast rzuca się do biegu, z powrotem na polanę. Słyszy za plecami padające w jego kierunku przekleństwa, a jedna z nimf krzyczy wyjątkowo donośnym głosem:

– Jesteś doprawdy okrutny, odrzucając te, które prawdziwie cię kochają! Oby dotknął cię gniew bogów, nieczuły Narcyzie!

Chór głosów wyraża swoją aprobatę licznymi okrzykami. Młodzieniec tylko przyspiesza biegu, aż wszystko przed jego oczami się rozmywa.

* * *

Biegnie przed siebie. Wracają powoli spokój i rozsądek. Gdy zaczyna odczuwać zmęczenie, zwalnia. Zdaje sobie sprawę, że nie znajduje się na polanie, gdzie mieli czekać na niego przyjaciele. Zamiast tego, otaczają go gęste krzewy. Musiał w nie wbiec, kiedy nie uważał. Zaczyna przeciskać się przez rośliny, ignorując drapiące go kolce. Po chwili przed jego oczami pojawia się piękna łąka. Narcyz, przechadzając się wśród kwiatów, oddycha ciężko, zmęczony wysiłkiem. W końcu zauważa, że znajduje się tuż nad wodą. Jej widok przypomina mu o męczącym go już od dłuższego czasu pragnieniu. Klęka na wilgotnej ziemi i wyciąga ręce, by zaspokoić palącą potrzebę. Jednak w chwili, gdy widzi tafelę wody, natychmiast zapomina o pragnieniu. Odbija się w niej najpiękniejsza twarz, jaką widział w życiu. Zdaje się ona tajemniczo uśmiechać, sprawiając, że Narcyz mimowolnie wstrzymuje oddech. Natychmiast cofa ręce, bojąc się, że mógłby zniszczyć to cudne zjawisko. Dokładniej przygląda się twarzy. To oblicze młodzieńca o złotych włosach i zielonych oczach, w których zdają się skrywać wesołe ogniki. Teraz tajemnicza osoba przybiera zaciekawiony wyraz, marszcząc lekko brwi, jakby była zamyślona.

– Czyżby ona mnie też obserwowała? – zastanawia się Narcyz.

fingers on the boy's arms and torso. Narcissus feels it's getting hard for him to breathe, he feels as if they are about to rip him to pieces! He therefore tries to tear away their hands by force. But seeing his resistance, the nymphs take a more aggressive stance, and after a while, despite Narcissus' unwillingness, a fight breaks out among them. The young man tries to be gentle, but the nymphs no longer resemble the filigree figures from moments before, and he really has to fight for every breath. Finally, he manages to break from the persistent creatures' grasp. He sets off at a run, back to the clearing. He hears curses thrown at him from behind, and one of the nymphs cries in an exceptionally loud voice:

"You are truly cruel, rejecting those who really love you! May the anger of the gods fall on you, cold-hearted Narcissus!"

A chorus of voices expresses approval with many cries. The young man runs all the faster, until everything becomes a blur before his eyes.

* * *

He runs onwards. Calmness and sensibility are slowly restored. Starting to feel tired, he slows down. He realises he is not in the clearing where his friends were supposed to be waiting for him. Instead, he is surrounded by dense bushes. He must have run into them when he wasn't paying attention. He starts pushing through the vegetation, ignoring the thorns that scratch him. After a while, a lovely meadow appears before his eyes. Strolling amidst the flowers, Narcissus breathes heavily, tired from his effort. Finally, he notices that he is right by some water. Seeing it reminds him of the thirst that has afflicted him for some time. He kneels on the damp ground and stretches out his hands to satisfy his urgent need. But as soon as he sees the water's surface, he forgets his thirst. The reflection is that of the most beautiful face he has ever seen. It seems to smile mysteriously, making Narcissus involuntarily catch his breath. He withdraws his hands immediately, afraid he might destroy this wondrous vision. He looks at the face more closely. It is the countenance of a young man with golden hair and green eyes that seem to glimmer happily. Now this mysterious person has a curious expression, frowning slightly, as if deep in thought.

"Could he be observing me as well?", Narcissus wonders.

Pochyla się mocniej nad strumieniem i pyta:

– Kim jesteś?

Nie otrzymuje jednak żadnej odpowiedzi. Niezrażony, na wiele sposobów próbuje dalej dowiedzieć się, kim jest ta przecudna istota. Na próżno.

– Czy to możliwe, żeby była niema? – przemyka mu przez myśl.

Sfrustrowany, znowu pyta:

– Czemu nie odpowiadasz?!

Wpatruje się intensywnie w oblicze, dopiero teraz zauważa, że usta postaci się ruszają, jakby próbowały coś powiedzieć. Przeszywa go nagła fala smutku. Czyżby nie dane mu było porozmawiać się z tą przepiękną istotą? Samo delektowanie się widokiem pięknej twarzy nie wystarcza! Nigdy nie doświadczył tak intensywnego uczucia, pragnął zanurzyć swoje ręce w złotych lokach postaci, policzyć z bliska długie rzęsy, objąć ramionami sylwetkę, poczuć zapach! Próbuje jeszcze raz porozumieć się z zapierającym dech w piersiach obliczem, ale bez skutku. Wzdycha zawiedziony...

* * *

Mimo upływu wielu godzin, Narcyz nadal siedzi pochylony nad strumieniem. Z jego ciała uleciała cała energia, plecy ma zgarbione. Nieudane próby rozmowy z nieziemsko piękną istotą pozbawiły go resztek sił. Ciągłe wpatruje się w oblicze, które wygląda na coraz słabsze i bardziej wychudzone. Widząc cudowny byt w takim stanie, Narcyz wydaje z siebie okrzyk i łapie się za głowę. Wpląta dłoń w gęste loki i zaczyna ciągnąć. Jednak natychmiast przestaje, ponieważ wodna twarz, widząc, co robi, powtarza jego ruchy. Straszliwa prawda rzuca mu się w oczy. Nie chce jednak tak szybko w nią uwierzyć. Powoli podnosi dłoń przed własne oblicze, a osoba w tafli czyni to samo. Macha ręką, ona też. Wtedy dopiero to do niego dociera! Twarz odbita w wodzie należy do niego!

Narcyz znów wydaje z siebie jęk, tym razem umęczony. Jego uczucia się nie zmieniły, ale ich obiekt już tak! Od początku pragnął samego siebie! Nagła fala emocji wezbrała w nim jak sztorm na morzu, więc rzuca się w przód, tłukąc rękami wodę, zaślepiony gniewem, frustracją i smutkiem. Nad jego głową zbierają się ciemne chmury, delikatny dotąd wiatr przybiera na sile. Drzewa

He bends over the stream even further and asks:

“Who are you?”

He receives no answer. Not discouraged, he tries many different approaches to find out who this loveliest of creatures is. To no avail.

“Is it possible he might be dumb?”, the thought comes to him.

Frustrated, he asks again:

“Why don’t you answer?!”

He looks intently at the countenance, and only now notices that the person’s lips are moving, as if he were trying to say something. A sudden wave of sadness shoots through him. Could it be that he is not destined to talk with this lovely being? Delighting in the sight of the beautiful face is not enough! He has never experienced such an intense feeling, wanting to plunge his hands into the person’s golden curls, count the long eyelashes from close up, embrace the figure, feel the scent! He tries to communicate with the breathtaking beauty once again, but it’s no use. He sighs, disappointed...

* * *

Though many hours have passed, Narcissus is still sitting bowed over the stream. All the energy has left his body, he is slumped down. The unsuccessful attempts at conversation with the heavenly-looking creature have stripped him of all his strength. He keeps gazing into the countenance that appears to be getting weaker and thinner. Seeing the wondrous being in such a state, Narcissus utters a cry and grabs his head. He sinks his hand into the thick curls and starts pulling. He stops at once, for the water face, seeing what he is doing, repeats his movements. The terrible truth becomes obvious. However, he doesn’t want to believe it so quickly. Slowly he raises his hand in front of his own countenance, and the person in the water does the same. He waves, the other person does, too. That’s when it finally hits him! The face reflected in the water belongs to him!

Narcissus utters another moan, one of exhaustion this time. His feelings haven’t changed, but their object has! From the beginning, he has desired himself! Suddenly a wave of emotion has mounted within him like a storm at sea, so he drops forward, churning up the water, blinded by anger, frustration and sadness. Dark clouds gather

zaczynają szumieć, a ich gałęzie objijają się o siebie nawzajem, wydając głucho dźwięki. Ich jęki przeplatają się z tymi Narcyza, który wydaje się niemal tracić zmysły z rozpacz. W szale nie widzi już, co atakuje, i często, zamiast w wodę, uderza samego siebie. Na jego torsie pojawiają się liczne zadrapania, jednak nie zważa na to. Widząc burzące się wody strumienia, opamiętuje się na chwilę, by krzyknąć do odbicia:

– STÓJ, NIE ODCHODŹ!

Woda burzy się, nie pozwalając odbiciu powrócić na jej taflę. Młodzieniec krzyczy ze złości, nie przestając płakać:

– WRÓĆ!

Jest oślepiiony rozpaczą i nie może racjonalnie myśleć. W jednej chwili sięga ręką w głąb wód i chwyta ostrzejszy z kamieni leżących na dnie. Jednak, kiedy ma zadać sobie cios, szalejący dookoła wiatr jeszcze przybiera na sile i porywa Narcyza do góry, wytrącając kamień z jego dłoni. Młodzieniec znajduje się w samym sercu wichury, wokół niego świszczą wiatry, pod nim woda wylewa się z brzegów.



III. 5: John William Waterhouse (1849–1917), *Echo i Narcyz* (1903), Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, fot. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, domena publiczna. Źródło: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_William_Waterhouse_-_Echo_and_Narcissus_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg (dostęp 13.09.2021).

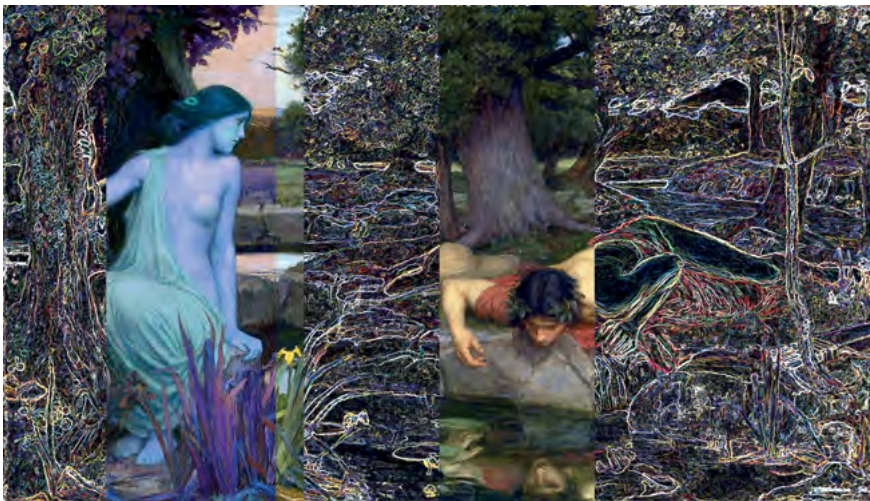
over his head, the previously gentle wind intensifies. The trees start rustling, and their branches toss against one another, issuing hollow sounds. Their moans intermingle with those of Narcissus, who almost seems to be losing his mind from despair. In his frenzy, he no longer sees what he is attacking and, instead of the water, he hits himself. Numerous scratches appear on his torso, but he ignores them. Seeing the churning water of the stream, he comes to his senses for a moment, to cry out:

“STOP! DON’T GO!”

The water is churning, preventing the reflection from returning to its surface. The young man shouts in anger, crying all the time:

“COME BACK!”

He is blinded by despair and unable to think rationally. Suddenly, he reaches deep into the water with his hand and grabs a sharp rock lying on the bottom. But as he is about to deal himself a blow, the wind raging around him grows even stronger and carries Narcissus upwards, striking the rock from his hand. The young man is in the very heart of the gale, the wind whistling around him, the water leaving its banks.



III. 5: Zbigniew Karaszewski's *variatio* on John William Waterhouse (1849–1917), *Echo and Narcissus* (1903), Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, photo by Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, Public Domain. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_William_Waterhouse_-_Echo_and_Narcissus_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg (accessed September 13, 2021).

Zawieszono w powietrzu Narcyza nagle otula kojąca woń. To ten zapach sprawia, że młodzieniec przestaje się rozpaczliwie rzucać, a jego oczy powoli się zamykają. Czuje, jakby otaczający wiatr trzymał go w silnych objęciach. Młodzieniec bierze głęboki wdech, próbując się uspokoić. Wtem chmury rozpraszają się i na las spada strumień słonecznego światła. Najsilniej świeci wokół Narcyza, zatapiając jego postać w złotym blasku. Widoczna staje się jedynie ludzka sylwetka i zmęczony uśmiech na twarzy młodzieńca. Po chwili jednak jego wyciągnięte szeroko ramiona rozciągają się jeszcze bardziej, a jego dłonie zrastają się i rosną, formując liście. Jego ciało wydłuża się, przypominając łodygę. Złote włosy otaczają się białymi płatkami. W mgnieniu oka Narcyz przemienia się w kwiat. Jest spokojny, nie boi się. Czuje, jakby po raz pierwszy znajdował się we właściwym miejscu. Las stopniowo cichnie. Wody przestają się burzyć, wiatr się uspokaja. Wszystko zdaje się powracać do dawnego porządku. Można by nawet pomyśleć, że nic z tego, co działo się przed chwilą, nigdy nie miało miejsca. Las wydaje się pogrążony w głębokim śnie. Jednak wprawny obserwator zauważyłby nowy kwiat na pobliskiej łące. Piękniejszy i okazalszy od pozostałych. Jego zapach zdaje się hipnotyzować, uniemożliwiając oderwanie od niego uwagi. A gdyby ktoś próbował go dotknąć, z gracją uchyli łodygę, unikając muśnięcia.

* * *

Młodzieniec poderwał się ze snu, z mokrymi od łez policzkami. Słońce dopiero wstawało. Późnym rankiem wrócił do lasu. Odnalazł kwiat i znów zatopił się w jego woni. Dziś nie próbował go zerwać. Skoro wiatrowi się nie udawało, co dopiero jemu, zwykłemu człowiekowi? Poddął się więc woli małej roślinki, wpatrując się w nią z podziwem. Godzina za godziną...

Hanging in the air, Narcissus is suddenly enveloped in a soothing fragrance. It is this scent that makes the young man stop flailing desperately, and his eyes shut slowly. He feels as if the surrounding wind were holding him in a strong embrace. The young man takes a deep breath, trying to calm down. Suddenly the clouds scatter and a stream of sunlight falls upon the forest. It shines the strongest around Narcissus, sinking his figure in a golden brightness. Only a human silhouette is visible, and the tired smile on the boy's face. A moment later, however, his arms, already spread wide, stretch out even more, and his hands meld together and grow, forming leaves. His body grows longer, resembling a stem. His golden hair is surrounded by white petals. In the blink of an eye, Narcissus changes into a flower. He is calm, he is not afraid. He feels as if he were in the right place for the first time. The forest gradually grows quiet. The water stops churning, the wind dies down. Everything seems to be returning to the old order. One might even think that none of the things that happened a while ago actually ever took place. The forest seems to be plunged in a deep sleep. However, the skilled observer would notice a new flower in the nearby meadow. Lovelier and more magnificent than the others. Its scent seems to hypnotise, making it impossible to turn away. And if someone tried to touch it, it would gracefully bend away, avoiding being brushed.

* * *

The young man awakened with a start, his cheeks wet with tears. The sun was only just rising. Late in the morning, he went back to the forest. He found the flower and immersed himself in its scent once more. Today he did not try to pick it. If the wind couldn't do it, then how could he, an ordinary human? He therefore succumbed to the small plant's will, gazing at it with admiration. Hour after hour...



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Secundum naturam vivere

Virgil's *Georgics* are among the most beautiful texts describing *amor terrae* (love of nature). According to some, they are also the greatest work of Latin literature, and no one besides Maro has described the landscapes of Italy so wonderfully, with such longing for peace and love of nature. The Romans believed that working the land had been the source of their ancestors' virtues: decency, stamina and fortitude, industriousness, piety, modesty, and honesty. Virgil contained this belief in his poem.

The *Georgics* were often read in early Poland, especially since a Polish national epic poem (Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*) did not appear until the 19th century. King John III Sobieski was a special admirer of Maro's poem, having tied the ideas and iconography of his palace in Wilanów to the *Georgics*. This palace was intended both as the king's residence and as a home for his family, a space for *negotia* and *otia*. There, Sobieski was able to live close to nature, because despite a great many public duties, he enjoyed being amidst nature, was an enthusiastic gardener and beekeeper, took care to maintain the parks within his estates, and planted trees and shrubs, also in Wilanów (ill. 1). Perhaps, being a king, he had "the wealth of a king in his heart": *regum aequabat opes animis* (*Georg.* IV, 132).

Working on this year's project, the second-year students of the Polish-Classical profile at the Mikołaj Rej High School decided to find traces of the *Georgics* at the residence of Sobieski – king, soldier, avid reader of ancient literature, and gardener. They also strove to understand why Phoebus Apollo (or, rather, Sobieski Apollo) had become the guardian of the Wilanów "cosmos", and to discover the meaning of the symbols of the elements – water, earth, air, and fire – placed in the palace's Grand Vestibule. Valuable inspiration and reflection was also provided by the Nobel Lecture of Olga Tokarczuk, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature for 2019.



III. 1: Klementyna Sip, *King John III Sobieski as a Bee* (2020), used with the Author's permission.

Nature in Virgil's *Georgics*

Publius Vergilius Maro (ill. 1) lived in the 1st century BCE, when the Roman Republic fell. This was a period filled with infighting and social unrest. The Poet's life was also a time when a new political and social system was formed and then stabilised. Despite this being such a stormy era, it did not fulfil the Roman proverb: *inter arma silent Musae*,⁴⁰ since the arts developed without hindrance. The period is called the golden age of Roman literature and arts for a reason. Culture flourished during the reign of Octavian Augustus. This was due in part to the ruler himself, who supported gifted artists. Virgil was among them.



Ill. 1: Author unknown, *Portrait of Virgil*, 19th century, photo by author unknown, Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17237420> (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁴⁰ *Inter arma silent Musae* (Latin) – “In times of war, the Muses are silent”, a saying linked to Cicero (after his famous speech *Pro Milone*).

His most important works include the *Bucolics* – a collection of eclogues on rural and pastoral themes, the *Georgics* – a poem about agriculture (the work on which our project focuses), and the *Aeneid* – the Romans' epic poem, the story of Aeneas, the progenitor of the Romans.

The *Georgics* is a didactic poem that Virgil wrote in the years 37/36–29 BCE. It comprises four books. Book one extols work on the land, book two – the cultivation of trees, book three is about cattle breeding, and book four focuses on bee-keeping. The Poet's main aim is not just to educate his readers. First and foremost, the poem is meant to awaken their admiration and love for Italy's natural resources, and also to draw attention to the great importance of agriculture in everyone's lives. The Poet does not avoid digressions of various character, whether mythological, or historical, or geographic. Virgil's superb descriptions of nature and references to contemporary times also have a strong impact on the reader's impressions. The title itself might be translated as "poems about working on the land".

Already in book one of the *Georgics*, Virgil praises Jupiter, acknowledging him as the inventor of labour. It was he who had ended the golden age for humans so they could improve and develop thanks to arduous labour.⁴¹

Of course, the poem is not devoid of the patriotic character typical of Roman literature. In book two we find a digression filled with ardent love for the homeland, an adoration of Italy, a land endowed with all possible gifts of nature, birth mother of great men. The same book also offers praise for the peaceful life of a farmer:

At segura quies et nescia fallere vita,
dives opum variarum, at latis otia fundis –
speluncae vivique lacus, at frigida Tempe
mugitusque boum mollesque sub arbore somni –

⁴¹ Verg. *Georg.* I, 125–146, Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. James Rhoades, [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co, 1891], *Project Gutenberg*, March 10, 2008, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/232/232-h/232-h.htm> (accessed September 13, 2021). In the work on this chapter also the following Polish edition of *Georgics* was used: Wergiliusz, *Georgiki*, trans. Anna Ludwika Czerny, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1956, II, 467–474.

non absunt; illic saltus ac lustra ferarum
et patiens operum exiguoque adsueta iuventus,
sacra deum sanctique patres; extrema per illos
iustitia excedens terris vestigia fecit.⁴² (*Georg.* II, 467–474)

[...] untroubled calm,
A life that knows no falsehood, rich enow,
With various treasures, yet broad-acred ease,
Grottoes and living lakes, yet Tempes cool,
Lowing of kine, and sylvan slumbers soft,
They lack not; lawns and wild beasts' haunts are there,
A youth of labour patient, need-inured,
Worship, and reverend sires: with them from earth
Departing Justice her last footprints left.⁴³ (*Georg.* II, 466–474)

Why did Antiquity yield such unique works about agriculture as the *Georgics*? The theme of work on the land had already been raised in ancient literature before: in *Works and Days*⁴⁴ by Hesiod⁴⁵ and in *On Agriculture*⁴⁶ by Cato the Elder.⁴⁷ What set the *Georgics* apart from other works on this subject was not just the

⁴² All Latin excerpts in this chapter: Vergilius, *Georgica*, ed. James Bradstreet Greenough, Boston: Ginn Co., 1900, *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0059%3Abook%3D3%3Acard%3D284> (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁴³ All English translations of excerpts from Virgil's *Georgics* are taken from the Project Gutenberg, March 10, 2008, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/232/232-h/232-h.htm> (accessed September 13, 2021). This translation, by James Rhoades, was originally published by C. Kegan Paul Co, London, in 1891 under the title *The Georgics of Virgil* and is also available online, at the Internet Archive website, <https://archive.org/details/georgicsvirgil00rhoagoog> (accessed November 8, 2021). The numeration of the verses does not always correspond to the Latin original, hence separate data are offered.

⁴⁴ *Works and Days* – Hesiod's didactic epic poem; Hesiod believed labour to be a human duty.

⁴⁵ Hesiod – next to Homer, the greatest Greek poet of the archaic period (ca. 7th century BCE); he spent his whole life in his native village, working on the land and writing poetry; author of works including the *Theogony*.

⁴⁶ *De agri cultura* – the oldest remaining complete prose work in Latin, a manual on running a farm.

⁴⁷ Marcus Porcius Cato (234–149 BCE) – statesman, rhetorician and writer, promoter of Roman virtues; his works were the first specialist texts written in Latin.



III. 2: Author unknown, *Augustus of Prima Porta*, 1st century CE, Vatican Museums, photo by Till Niermann (2007), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=388210> (accessed September 13, 2021).

poem's beautiful and artistic style, but the fact that it praises the dignity of every person's labour and communing with nature, praises *amor terrae* – love for the land, a virtue and duty of every Roman. Virgil merged the theme of agriculture with poetry, *utile* with *dulce* – the useful with the enjoyable, work with entertainment. He was also aware of the economic and social value of both agriculture and the people involved in it. The *Georgics* contain an easily identifiable message related to the social policy of the ruler of the time, Octavian Augustus (ill. 2). It aimed to revive the ancient Roman *virtus* – virtue – and *mores maiorum* – the ways of the ancestors. In this period, poetry portraying a love of nature, work on the land, and animal breeding was thus the perfect reading material. The book was also addressed to ordinary Romans, to awaken a love of nature in them and to remind them what their purpose was and where they originated from: through hard work on the land, their ancestors had been able to create a powerful empire.

Virgil's communing with nature in childhood, his love of nature, his sensitivity and the nostalgia he felt, meant that his bond with the surrounding world is intimate and personal. The poet describes methods of land cultivation (ill. 3) and animal breeding as well as justifying why these occupations are so very important. He glorifies nature, presenting its importance in the lives of humans, and underlines the harmony they create together. He points to the balance and collaboration between nature and humans. Described like this, nature appears as a gift



Ill. 3: Jerzy Eleuter Siemiginowski (1660–1711), *Preparation of Agricultural Tools* (1683), fresco from the interior of Wilanów Palace, Museum of King John III's Palace at Wilanów, photo by Wojciech Fijałkowski (1986), Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9380789> (accessed September 13, 2021).

sent down by the gods, and the possibility of collaborating with it as an honour and a distinction.

After all, labour is a gift from Jupiter himself, who – knowing that by working hard, humans develop – created labour so that people would not fall into stagnation and idleness:

Pater ipse colendi
haud facilem esse viam voluit, primusque per artem
movit agros curis acuens mortalia corda
nec torpere gravi passus sua regna veterno. (*Georg.* I, 121–124)

The great Sire himself
No easy road to husbandry assigned,
And first was he by human skill to rouse
The slumbering glebe, whetting the minds of men
With care on care, nor suffering realm of his
In drowsy sloth to stagnate. (*Georg.* I, 146–151)

In the *Georgics* Virgil has thus turned agriculture into an art, its main theme being divine nature itself as a guide and mother. Real life is about harmony with nature, which ensures humans peace and fulfilment.

In ancient times a lot of attention was paid to the bond between humans and nature. However, the attitude towards nature changed over the centuries. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, nature was a synonym of God as the creator of the beautiful world and an artist creating his own image. For example, the patron of our school, writer and poet Mikołaj Rej,⁴⁸ wrote about this in his work *On the Life of a Good Man*: a good man finds joy in daily duties, which he performs in accordance with God's will and the harmony of the world around him. In the Romantic period, nature was a mystical, mysterious and inaccessible force. Polish literature from this period includes a work whose content corresponds

⁴⁸ Mikołaj Rej (1505–1569) – one of the greatest Polish writers of the Renaissance, considered the father of Polish literature.

to the *Georgics* as well as the *Aeneid*, and draws a lot from them: Adam Mickiewicz's epic poem *Pan Tadeusz*,⁴⁹ which shows strong ties to the Greek and Roman epic traditions, praising the manorial life – in harmony and collaboration with nature. Later, 19th-century naturalism described the world in a realistic way, fashionable themes of the period including instincts and the struggle for survival. Nature was stripped of its beauty, becoming cold and brutal. A drastic change occurred in the 20th century, when humans placed themselves on an equal footing with the world, and later – even higher. The era of exploitation began – and continues to this day – in which humans are mindlessly destroying their planet.



III. 4: Olga Tokarczuk, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature for 2018 (announcement in 2019), photo by Martin Kraft (2017), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=58367604> (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁴⁹ Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) – one of the most important Polish writers of the Romantic period, author of the national epic poem *Pan Tadeusz*.

However, many people are starting to realise the consequences of previous generations' actions. Among them is Polish Nobel Prize winner Olga Tokarczuk (ill. 4), who drew attention to nature's impact on our lives in her Nobel lecture *The Tender Narrator*.⁵⁰ She started from an account of the Little Ice Age, which drastically changed daily life and the economy in 16th-century Europe. Tough conditions forced people into radical actions and behaviours. The numerous wars of the time included the "Swedish Deluge",⁵¹ which was triggered not only by political conflicts, but also by hunger and crop failure in Scandinavia. Citing this story, Olga Tokarczuk highlighted nature's importance not just in terms of beauty, but also the economy. The message of her lecture corresponds to themes considered in Antiquity, including in the *Georgics*, which only serves to underline the timeless character of Virgil's poem as well as the issue itself. *Exempli gratia*, Enlightenment-era descriptions of nature, suffused with harmony, are the perfect opposite of their Romantic, mystical counterparts. These differences in the perception of the surrounding world in different periods give nature its universal character.

References:

Tokarczuk, Olga, *Czuły Narrator* [The Tender Narrator], Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2020, *Wydawnictwo Literackie*, <https://tokarczuk.wydawnictwoliterackie.pl> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Tokarczuk, Olga, *The Tender Narrator* (Nobel Lecture in Literature delivered on 7 December 2019 at the Swedish Academy in Stockholm), The Nobel Foundation: 2019, *The Nobel Prize*, <https://www.nobelprize.org/uploads/2019/12/tokarczuk-lecture-english-2.pdf> (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁵⁰ Olga Tokarczuk, *The Tender Narrator* (Nobel Lecture in Literature delivered on 7 December 2019 at the Swedish Academy in Stockholm), The Nobel Foundation: 2019, *The Nobel Prize*, <https://www.nobelprize.org/uploads/2019/12/tokarczuk-lecture-english-2.pdf> (accessed September 13, 2021); Olga Tokarczuk, *Czuły Narrator* [The Tender Narrator], Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2020, *Wydawnictwo Literackie*, <https://tokarczuk.wydawnictwoliterackie.pl> (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁵¹ The war between Sweden and Poland in the years 1655–1660.

Karolina Kacprowicz, Julia Popławska,
Barbara Wdzięczna, Agnieszka Dunin-Borkowska

Vergilius, *Georgica*, ed. James Bradstreet Greenough, Boston: Ginn Co., 1900, *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0059%3A-book%3D3%3Acard%3D284> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. James Rhoades, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co, 1891, *Project Gutenberg*, March 10, 2008, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/232/232-h/232-h.htm> and <https://archive.org/details/georgicsvirgil00rhoagooog> (accessed November 8, 2021).

Wergiliusz, *Georgiki*, trans. Anna Ludwika Czerny, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1956.

QUOD VETUS URBS COLUIT, NUNC NOVA VILLA TENET:

What Rome Worshipped, the New Villa Has

The fundamental law governing beauty in art was harmony. Standing in front of the Royal Castle on Wawel Hill in Kraków, the façade of Wilanów Palace or the Teatr Wielki in Warsaw today, we can see many elements that these buildings share. It is not just the columns, decorative capitals, massive cornices, or arches. Viewing the inner arrangement of forms, we can nearly always notice a consistent, mathematical and coherent concept of harmony between sizes.⁵² This is an inviolable rule of organising space in architecture, while in art – next to the harmony of forms and meanings – we also have symbols, allegories and codes, their origins strongly rooted in Mediterranean culture.

Looking at the façade of the Baroque palace of King John III Sobieski, who worshipped old virtues and ideals, we will notice many elements of Graeco-Roman heritage. Sobieski's villa is "caked" with ancient decorations. Golden rays light up its central part, whose iconography "follows the sun", as Barbara Milewska-Ważbińska, an expert on the secrets of Wilanów Palace, has put it.⁵³ And rulers and their empires have considered the sun to be a symbol of greatness since time immemorial.⁵⁴ The sun shining over Wilanów is the sun of Roman

⁵² See also Marta Gałęzowska, Barbara Przepiórka, Anna Stefaniuk, Kalina Szulec, *Does Measurement Guarantee Beauty?* in this volume.

⁵³ Barbara Milewska-Ważbińska, *Słońce na tarczy, czyli tajemnice pałacowej fasady*, Warszawa: Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, 2008.

⁵⁴ Jarosław Krawczyk, "Europa Jana Sobieskiego: barok i Polska", in: Krzysztof Chmielewski, Jarosław Krawczyk, *Wilanowski widnokrąg. Szkice o pałacu i sztuce europejskiej*, Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, Warszawa 2010, p. 21, *Pasaż Wiedzy Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie*,

emperors, the sun of the great Aurelian, the sun of Constantine the Great and – naturally – the sun of Louis XIV. John III Sobieski, revering the sun from Versailles, thus ordered that its rays be reflected in his own coat of arms.

The golden sun right above the palace's main entrance throws rays to both sides, which are reflected in the Sobieski coat of arms – slightly convex and curved shields held up by two pairs of putti. Of course, this coat of arms symbolised the protection that John III Sobieski extended over the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Besides fuelling this motif with a great set of ancient traditions, the palace's designers also made sure to include references to the Old Testament. Above the shields is the inscription *REFULSIT SOL IN CLYPEIS*, from the Book of Maccabees: "When the sun shone on the gold and brass shields, the hills looked like they were on fire from their reflection and glowed like burning torches".⁵⁵ Thus, the Sobieski shield does not shine with its own light alone, but also with the light of the words of the Bible, which only serves to underline the power of King John III.⁵⁶

The façade of the main entrance featured a statue of Minerva looking downwards. The Roman goddess, identified with the Greek Athena, enjoyed intellectual pastimes but was also a mighty warrior.⁵⁷ Sobieski the warrior and intellectual, who protected the entire state with his aegis, could not have found a more appropriate patron for himself.

The side entrances are in the form of triumphal arches. The southern, male arch, which led to the king's apartments, is decorated with depictions of King John's triumphs. We can also see Alexander the Great as Hercules nearby. The long-time director of the Museum of King John III's Palace at Wilanów, Wojciech Fijałkowski, believed that the king himself had been portrayed in this way: "both as a second Alexander, famous monarch, excellent leader and fearless warrior, and

http://www.wilanow-palac.pl/download.php/27095/j_krawczyk_wilanowski_widnokrag_fragm.pdf (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁵⁵ I Maccabees 6:39, English quote from <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Maccabees%206:38-40&version=CEB> (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁵⁶ Krawczyk, "Europa Jana Sobieskiego", p. 22.

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

as a Polish Hercules, whom the fiery virtue of valour has elevated to heaven”.⁵⁸ The figures placed in the niches also invoke Hercules, the favourite of Athena/Minerva.⁵⁹

The first thing to catch the eye on the façade from the garden side is a statue of Apollo, corresponding to the statue of Minerva. Apollo, a symbol of power, excellence and strength, was endowed with an acute mind and – again – symbolised John III. Apollo also rules within the palace walls of this king whose favourite reading was the *Georgics* by a Roman poet of Augustus’ times, Virgil. At the centre of the palace is the Grand Vestibule, its ceiling once boasting a painting of Apollo overcoming the darkness of night. Only the allegories of the four winds and the four elements: water, air, earth, and fire, remain of the original decoration. The royal apartments were situated on both sides of the Grand Vestibule, and were decorated with plafonds depicting the four seasons. Thus, the harmony of the Wilanów “cosmos” was guarded by the god of sunlight, power, excellence and strength, patron of the arts. He once looked down from the palace façade, and the change of seasons occurred under his watchful eye. The palace’s iconographic programme was subordinated to Virgil’s *Georgics*, which will be discussed further. However, the designers might also have been inspired by this excerpt from book two of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*:

Purpurea velatus veste sedebat
in solio Phoebus claris lucente smaragdis.
A dextra laevaue Dies et Mensis et Annus
Saeculaque et positae spatiis aequalibus Horae... (*Met.* II, 23–26)⁶⁰

Arrayed in a purple garment, Phoebus was seated on a throne
sparkling with brilliant emeralds. On his right hand, and on

⁵⁸ Wojciech Fijałkowski, *Wilanów. Rezydencja króla zwycięzcy*, Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza 1983, p. 36, cited by Krawczyk, “Europa Jana Sobieskiego”, p. 23.

⁵⁹ Krawczyk, “Europa Jana Sobieskiego”, p. 23.

⁶⁰ Latin excerpts from: Ovidius, *Metamorphoses*, ed. Hugo Magnus, Gotha: F.A. Perthes, 1892, *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0029%3Abook%3D2%3Acard%3D1> (accessed September 13, 2021).

his left, the Days, the Months, the Years, the Ages, and the
Hours were arranged, at corresponding distances...⁶¹

Ver

The ceiling of Queen Mary's chamber features the *Allegory of Spring*. The painting depicts Flora (ill. 1) sprinkling plants symbolising earthly delights and joys (this was an allusion to the queen's beauty and charm). The flower that appeared after Narcissus' death is in bloom, with swallows flying above it, accompanying Flora as she rises on the wind. Nature is awakening to life in the picture; we can see the birth of a swarm, bulls fighting, and springtime jobs being performed on the farm. Under a tondo in the queen's bedchamber depicting tree grafting, we read: *exsilit ad caelum ramis felicibus arbos, / miraturque novas frondes et non sua poma* (*Georg.* II, 81–82: "To heaven upshot with teeming boughs, the tree / Strange leaves admires and fruitage not its own").⁶² This excerpt, which comes from the *Georgics*, shows the effect of the work described by the poet. From it we learn how much effort has to be put into the springtime care of trees.

Under a tondo depicting the birth of a swarm of bees, we see another excerpt from the *Georgics*: *ante novis rubeant quam prata coloribus, ante / garrula quam tignis nidum suspendat hirundo* (*Georg.* IV, 306–307: "Ere flush the meadows with new tints, and ere / The twittering swallow buildeth from the

⁶¹ In the work on this chapter the following Polish edition was used: Owidiusz, *Przemiany*, trans. Bruno Kiciński, Warszawa: Unia Wydawnicza „Verum”, 1995, pp. 40–41. All English translations of excerpts from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are taken from: Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Vol. I, Books I–VII, trans. Henry Thomas Riley, London–New York, NY: Georg Bell Sons, 1893, *Project Gutenberg*, June 8, 2007, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/21765/21765-h/21765-h.htm>, available also at https://archive.org/details/metamorphosesof00ovid_0/page/n5/mode/2up (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁶² Verg. *Georg.* II, 80–81. In the work on this chapter also the following Polish edition was used: Wergiliusz, *Georgiki*, trans. Anna Ludwika Czerny, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1956. Latin excerpts in this chapter are from: Vergilius, *Georgica*, ed. James Bradstreet Greenough, Boston: Ginn Co., 1900, *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0059%3Abook%3D3%3Acard%3D284> (accessed September 13, 2021). English translations in this chapter are from: Vergil, *Georgics*, trans. James Rhoades, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co, 1891, *Project Gutenberg*, March 10, 2008, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/232/232-h/232-h.htm> (accessed September 13, 2021).



III. 1: Jerzy Eleuter Siemiginowski (1660–1711), *Spring* (1680s), plafond in the Queen's Bedchamber at Wilanów Palace, photo by Museum of King John III's Palace at Wilanów (2005), Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10413910> (accessed September 13, 2021).

beams”).⁶³ This and subsequent lines suggest that when the beekeeper wants to replenish the swarm, he must proceed cautiously and spare no effort. Punctuality and diligence are very important in his work.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ibidem, IV, 306–307.

⁶⁴ Barbara Strycharczyk, “Georgiki Wergiliusza – źródło cytatów w Wilanowie”, *Pasaż Wiedzy Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie*, https://www.wilanow-palac.pl/georgiki_wergiliusza_zrodlo_cytatow_w_wilanowie.html (accessed September 13, 2021).



Ill. 2: Jerzy Eleuter Siemiginowski (1660–1711), *Summer* (1684–1686), plafond in the King's Bedchamber at Wilanów Palace, photo by Museum of King John III's Palace at Wilanów (2005), Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9387033> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Aestas

In the king's bedchamber (ill. 2), the plafond depicts the fulness of a sunny and warm summer, where Apollo together with Astraea (the personification of justice) look towards the earth where Demeter is receiving the wheat harvest. We can also see farm work typical of this season: honey collection, shearing, horses and harvest dances; an apiary and beekeepers on a summers' day are

also depicted – all the frescoes come with relevant excerpts from the *Georgics*, in which the poet advises what should be done when the restless bees leave the hive in search of a new place: *Hi motus animorum atque haec certamina tanta / pulveris exigui iactu compressa quiescent* (*Georg.* IV, 86–87: “Such fiery passions and such fierce assaults / A little sprinkled dust controls and quells”). Apparently, powdered fragrant herbs were used for centuries to control such a swarm. The meaning of Virgil’s words is clear: like the beekeeper subdues the bees, so a good king should know how to rule over his citizens. Sobieski, who loved nature, most certainly spent a lot of time in his apiaries and orchards, and knew very well how to keep agitated bees in the hive.⁶⁵

Autumnus

In the queen’s antechamber, autumn is plentiful in fruit (ill. 3). The plafond features a pair of deities: Vertumnus – patron of change, plant growth and harvests, and Pomona – the goddess of fruit. They are in the vineyard, happy with the good crop. More quotes from the *Georgics* are found under the tondos; in one, the poet speaks of honey collection and the grape harvest, and in another gives advice related to working on the land in autumn: *Rara sit an supra morem si densa requies – / altera frumentis quoniam favet, altera Baccho* (*Georg.* II, 227–228: “Dost ask if loose or passing firm it be – / Since one for corn hath liking, one for wine”).⁶⁶

Another quotation in the queen’s antechamber comes from book four of the poem. It is found under a tondo depicting the process of honey collection: *dulcia mella premes, nec tantum dulcia, quantum / et liquida et durum Bacchi domitura saporem* (*Georg.* IV, 101–102: “thou shalt strain / Sweet honey, nor yet so sweet as passing clear, / And mellowing on the tongue the wine-god’s fire”).⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Strycharczyk, “Georgiki Wergiliusza”.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.



III. 3: Jerzy Eleuter Siemiginowski (1660–1711), *Autumn* (1681–1682), plafond in the Queen's Antechamber at Wilanów Palace, photo by Museum of King John III's Palace at Wilanów (2005), Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9024270> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Hiems

Windy winter reigns in the king's antechamber (ill. 4): it is not only a time of rest from the work that filled the past three quarters or of celebrating the winter solstice, but also of preparation of the body and tools for the work that approaches with the spring. The walls of the king's room feature scenes of hunting, sheep shearing, people warming themselves at a fire, and also celebrating the festivities in honour of Bacchus. Here we find a particularly famous excerpt from the *Georgics*: *tum variae venere artes. Labor omnia vincit / improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas* (*Georg.* I, 145–146: “Then diverse arts arose; toil conquered all, / Remorseless toil, and poverty's shrewd push / In times of hardship”). It has been

placed under a tondo portraying farmers repairing tools at a fire. In this excerpt, the poet has probably expressed his poem's most important message – *labor omnia vincit* – work conquers all. Virgil describes it as making people nobler, as arduous toil that makes them stronger and rewards their patience.⁶⁸



Ill. 4: Jerzy Eleuter Siemiginowski (1660–1711), *Winter* (1683), plafond in the King's Antechamber at Wilanów Palace, photo by Museum of King John III's Palace at Wilanów (2005), Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19728493> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Although Virgil wrote the *Georgics* 2,000 years ago, his fascination with a peaceful life filled with hardship still constitutes food for thought. This trend is nothing new. Virgil is also read in the 21st century. To find this out, it is enough

⁶⁸ Ibidem.

to visit Wilanów Palace and take a close look at the interior design of the rooms filled with tourists visiting the residence of King John III, a great admirer of ancient literature.

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The Garden as a World, the World as a Garden

How does one live in harmony with nature? This is a question people must have always asked themselves. From the dawn of history, humans had to work together with nature to survive. It was not until later that it became a kind of luxury. Today we hide away in places filled with vegetation, like gardens, parks and forests, to rest, ruminate or escape from the world around us. Contrary to what you might think, we are not the first. The images of Arcadia, the Golden Age, the times of Saturn or the Fortunate Isles, familiar from Greek and Roman literature, express human longing for peace, quiet, nature, happiness, harmony and balance. The ancient Greeks and Romans also needed free time away from work or duties. They found solace in the space of gardens. They established many of them, both private ones forming part of their homes, i.e. peristyle gardens, and public ones. We should follow their example.

Contemporary cities need gardens. We live in times of haste, and the small number of places where we might rest from the ever-present hubbub only serves as another reminder. American writer Richard Louv has even said that “the more human life is immersed in the high-tech urban-industrial culture, the more we need contact with nature in order to achieve balance and stay healthy”.⁶⁹ Interestingly, many think that if people turn away from nature, it will cause them both mental and physical pain. This idea has been expounded by Australian professor Glenn Albrecht under the term *solastalgia*,⁷⁰ meaning nostalgia for the home

⁶⁹ Kinga Tucholska, “Jaki wpływ ma przyroda na organizm ludzki”, *Polityka*, May 10, 2016, <https://www.polityka.pl/jamyoni/1659966.1.jaki-wplyw-ma-przyroda-na-organizm-ludzki.read> (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁷⁰ Solastalgia – from the Latin *solacium* (solace) or *solus* (alone), and also the Greek ἄλγος (pain, ailment).

that we are losing before our very eyes, namely Earth itself.⁷¹ Edward O. Wilson, an American biologist, zoologist and sociologist, thinks similarly, noting that mere mortals grow weaker when they lose touch with nature.⁷²

We must not forget that nature is a fundamental element of our lives – with a positive impact on our health and general state. As Kinga Tucholska points out in her article about nature's influence on the human body, research conducted by psychology professor Richard Ryan shows that “contact with nature serves to increase people's sense of wellbeing and vital forces, or physical and mental energy. [...] Other research indicates that walking in a forest or park stimulates the immune system, regulates the pulse and blood pressure, and has a beneficial effect on the nervous system”.⁷³ People's awareness of how much we gain from contact with nature is thus increasing, and besides, we even associate the colour green with health and youth.

Gardens enable us to escape from reality, to forget about the ever-present tumult and problems. Time stops there, it flows more calmly, slowly and pleasantly, which is definitely a nice change from ever-flying time, as noted by Virgil in the *Georgics*: *Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus* (*Georg.* III, 284; “fast flies meanwhile the irreparable hour”, here: III, 346).⁷⁴

This famous poet spent his childhood amidst rural landscapes, which had a huge impact on his oeuvre. As an adult he often liked to leave Rome, preferring life close to nature. He spent a lot of time in Parthenope, right by Naples, where his tomb is today, attractively located in the Park of Piedigrotta (ills. 1 and 2).

⁷¹ Richard Louv, “Ten Reasons Why We Need More Contact with Nature”, *The Guardian*, February 13, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/13/10-reasons-why-we-need-more-contact-with-nature> (accessed September 13, 2021); Zoë Schlanger, “A philosopher invented a word for the psychic pain of climate change”, *Quartz*, October 13, 2018, <https://qz.com/1423202/a-philosopher-invented-a-word-for-the-psychic-pain-of-climate-change> (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁷² Edward O. Wilson, *Przyszłość życia* (Polish edition of *The Future of Life*), Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 2003.

⁷³ Tucholska, “Jaki wpływ ma przyroda”.

⁷⁴ Latin excerpts from: Vergilius, *Georgica*, ed. James Bradstreet Greenough, Boston: Ginn Co., 1900, *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0059%3Abook%3D3%3Acard%3D284> (accessed September 13, 2021). All English translations of excerpts from: Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. James Rhoades, [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co. 1891], *Project Gutenberg*, March 10, 2008, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/232/232-h/232-h.htm> (accessed September 13, 2021).



III. 1: Bust of Virgil at the Park of Piedigrotta in Naples, photo by Armando Mancini (2010), CC BY-SA 2.0. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16548990> (accessed September 13, 2021).



III. 2: Park of Piedigrotta; vegetation known from the *Georgics* is planted along the paths, photo by Mentnafunangann (2014), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=32354400> (accessed September 13, 2021).

In the *Georgics* themselves, the poet actually included a fragment encouraging gardening. The story of the old man from Corycus shows that even without hard labour, nature can reward us with magnificent gifts:

Corycium vidisse senem, cui pauca relict
iugera ruris erant, nec fertilis illa iuvenis
nec pecori opportuna seges nec commoda Baccho.
Hic rarum tamen in dumis olus albaque circum
lilia verbenasque premens vescumque papaver
regum aequabat opes animis seraque revertens
nocte domum dapibus mensas onerabat inemptis.
Primus vere rosam atque autumnno carpere poma,
et cum tristis hiems etiamnum frigore saxa
rumperet et glacie cursus frenaret aquarum,

ille comam mollis iam tondebat hyacinthi
aestatem increpitans seram Zephyrosque morantes.
Ergo apibus fetis idem atque examine multo
primus abundare et spumantia cogere pressis
mella favis. (*Georg.* IV, 127–141)

An old man once I mind me to have seen –
From Corycus he came – to whom had fallen
Some few poor acres of neglected land,
And they nor fruitful 'neath the plodding steer,
Meet for the grazing herd, nor good for vines.
Yet he, the while his meagre garden-herbs
Among the thorns he planted, and all round
White lilies, vervains, and lean poppy set,
In pride of spirit matched the wealth of kings,
And home returning not till night was late,
With unbought plenty heaped his board on high.
He was the first to cull the rose in spring,
He the ripe fruits in autumn; and ere yet
Winter had ceased in sullen ire to rive
The rocks with frost, and with her icy bit
Curb in the running waters, there was he
Plucking the rathe faint hyacinth, while he chid
Summer's slow footsteps and the lagging West.
Therefore he too with earliest brooding bees
And their full swarms o'erflowed, and first was he
To press the bubbling honey from the comb;
Lime-trees were his, and many a branching pine.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ In the work on this chapter the following Polish edition was used: *Wergiliusz, Georgiki*, trans. Anna Ludwika Czerny, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1956, p. 77. English translation by James Rhodes *The Georgics of Virgil*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner Co. Ltd, 1891, pp. 99–100, available at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/232/232-h/232-h.htm> and <https://archive.org/details/georgicsvirgil00rhoagoog> (accessed November 8, 2021).

But what did those Roman gardens look like? They were built in such a way as to use the surrounding landscape to the best advantage. Of course, a peristyle garden surrounded by a row of columns was slightly different from a public one – the former was linked to the worship of the gods, the latter was for rest and activity. However, it is worth remembering that both were devised under the influence of Greek culture.

Initially, private gardens were used for growing vegetables and herbs; their purpose was to provide food. Flowers only started being grown later. In the times of the empire, gardens featured elements like flower compositions, shrubs such as boxwood, and small trees, like yews and cypresses. Over time, shrubs and trees were pruned into various shapes. Sculpted elements also appeared in gardens; these were most often statues of Bacchus, the god of wine and fun, patron of theatre and wild nature, and also water as an essential element of any garden. Many consider it to be one of the factors deciding about a garden's beauty. In Roman gardens (ill. 3) it appeared in all sorts of features, like pools, ponds and fountains. Standing amidst them were sculptures depicting a water spirit that watched over them: this was the *aquarius*, a mythological creature living underwater.⁷⁶

Public gardens were reminiscent of the Greek *gymnasion*. They were most often set up near *thermae*; together, they became a place for many of the city's citizens to meet and relax. They included elements familiar from private gardens: fountains and statues as well as paths for strolling. The rest of the space, of course, was taken up by trees, shrubs and flower compositions. Romans often went there to spend their *otium*, or leisure time intended for favourite pastimes, such as thinking, discussions, reading, literary creativity as well as physical exercise or meetings with friends or family. These moments of relaxation were connected with complete withdrawal from active public life and enabled the Romans to enjoy some spiritual and physical rest.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Longin Majdecki, *Historia ogrodów*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1978, pp. 47–48.

⁷⁷ According to Cicero, vide: Janusz Ryba, Elżbieta Wolanin, Aleksandra Klęczar, *Podręcznik do języka łacińskiego i kultury antycznej Homo Romanus I*, Kraków: Draco, 2017, p. 53.



III. 3: Peristyle garden, reconstruction from Pompeii, photo by Sailko (2007), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ricostruzione_del_giardino_della_casa_dei_vetii_di_pompei_\(mostra_al_giardino_di_boboli,_2007\)_01.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ricostruzione_del_giardino_della_casa_dei_vetii_di_pompei_(mostra_al_giardino_di_boboli,_2007)_01.JPG) (accessed September 13, 2021).

Alongside these two kinds of garden, Rome also had imperial gardens. Similar to a public garden in size but lavishly decorated, instead of an ordinary pool these gardens might feature an artificial lake where *naumachiae*, or staged naval battles, took place.⁷⁸ Some emperor gardens became public property.⁷⁹ Julius Caesar himself transferred his gardens to the citizens' use before his death. His adopted son Octavian Augustus did likewise, donating his garden, set up in 28 BCE in the Campus Martius, to the people. The Roman garden evokes associations

⁷⁸ In the work on this chapter the following Polish edition was used: Swetoniusz, *Żywoty cesarów*, trans. Janina Niemirska-Pliszczyńska, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1965, p. 348.

⁷⁹ Ibidem, p. 95; Jérôme Carcopino, *Życie codzienne w Rzymie w okresie rozkwitu cesarstwa* (Polish edition of *La vie quotidienne à Rome à l'apogée de l'Empire*, ed. pr. 1936), trans. Maria Pąkcińska, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1960, p. 284.

with the Italian garden (*giardino secreto*) on which 17th-century French gardens were based.⁸⁰ Its qualities, such as symmetry, geometry and imposing order upon nature, were copied in Renaissance, Baroque and neo-classical gardens.

The appearance of gardens changed over time. In the Middle Ages a great deal of importance was given to the allegorical meaning of the vegetation: roses and lilies were planted, symbolising martyr blood and purity of faith.⁸¹ This is when gardens used for leisure appeared. They were usually set up near castles, and a flower meadow was one of their distinctive elements. During the Renaissance, gardens were merged with living quarters to form one composition. The geometrisation of the space was typical of these gardens, which were most often divided into square-shaped sections. This period marked a return to building pools and grand fountains. Varied terrain inspired designers to create complex water features. Geometry continued to play a major role in the Baroque. Gardens of this period were characterised by grandeur, large size as well as an inclination for contrasts within individual arrangements. They often featured orangeries.⁸² The garden at Wilanów is an example of such a garden in Poland (ill. 4).

It was commissioned by John III Sobieski, king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the years 1674–1696, victor of the Battle of Vienna (1683) in the war with the Ottoman Empire. Sobieski was brought up in the tradition described in Virgil's *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*. As was fitting for an heir of the Romans and the Sarmatians, he was thus taught that a good farmer and administrator was a good ruler and king. When at Wilanów, which was both a residence and a home, the king pursued farming and gardening, personally cultivating plants, delighting in their beauty, spending many long hours among them.

The garden itself took a lot from ancient, Renaissance and, of course, Baroque forms, and its character was that of the Italian garden mentioned earlier (ill. 5). To this day, we can stroll among its trees, shrubs, flower compositions, sculptures and fountains. However, many changes have been made. For example, the North Garden where Sobieski grew fruit trees, vegetables and herbs has been

⁸⁰ Majdecki, *Historia ogrodów*, pp. 116, 118.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 233.



III. 4: Bernardo Bellotto (Canaletto 1722–1780), *Wilanów Palace (1777)*, Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, photo by Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, Public Domain. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bellotto_Wilanów_Palace.jpg (accessed September 13, 2021).

turned into an ornamental garden,⁸³ with variety provided by boxwood, lawns, fountains and flower compositions. The lower garden features trimmed hedges forming a wall of greenery, and also many specimens of old hornbeams, lindens, ashes, Vistula poplars and elms.⁸⁴ The Morysin nature reserve is also part of the Wilanów park.

Wilanów Palace, its gardens and parks are extremely popular not only among Warsaw residents. Today people come here – like the ancient Romans during their *otium* – for the purpose of taking a stroll, contemplating or getting

⁸³ Kamila Domańska, Nela Kokoszka, Jacek Kuśmierski, Łukasz Przybylak, “Co można zobaczyć w parku”, *Pasaż Wiedzy Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie*, https://www.wilanow-palac.pl/co_mozna_zobaczyc_w_parku.html (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁸⁴ “Ogród w Wilanowie”, Wikipedia, https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ogr%C3%B3d_w_Wilanowie (accessed September 13, 2021).



Ill. 5: Garden at Wilanów, Museum of King John III's Palace at Wilanów, photo by Kgbo (2019), CC BY-SA 4.0. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Upper_Baroque_Garden_in_Wilanów_Park,_2019,_08.jpg (accessed September 13, 2021).

some peace and quiet. They try to escape from everyday reality, and this amount of green space definitely makes it much easier. Here, you can live *secundum naturam* – according to nature, whether for better health, an improved general state, or simply to forget about the world.

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Apes melliferae: Bees in Ancient Literature

Writing the *Georgics*, Virgil decided to devote the entire fourth book of this agricultural poem to bees. The way he writes about beekeeping enables us to notice the fascination that the author has for these hard-working insects. This interest, which stemmed from careful observation, and the impression that stories either heard or read had made on him, which he even cites in the poem, mean that the world of the bees appears mysterious and intricate also to us, his readers. In book four we find these words from the poet:

Nunc age, naturas apibus quas Iuppiter ipse
addidit, expediam, pro qua mercede canoros. (*Georg.* IV, 149–150)

Come, then, I will unfold the natural powers
Great Jove himself upon the bees bestowed. (*Georg.* IV, 192–193)⁸⁵

The bees in the *Georgics* are therefore virtually divine creatures. Virgil points out that their virtues have been rewarded by Jupiter himself:

⁸⁵ In the work on this chapter the following Polish edition was used: Wergiliusz, *Georgiki*, trans. Anna Ludwika Czerny, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1956. All Latin excerpts taken from: Vergilius, *Georgica*, ed. James Bradstreet Greenough, Boston: Ginn Co., 1900, *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0059%3A-book%3D3%3Acard%3D284> (accessed September 13, 2021). All English translations of excerpts from Virgil's *Georgics* are taken from: Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. James Rhoades, [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co, 1891], *Project Gutenberg*, March 10, 2008, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/232/232-h/232-h.htm> (accessed September 13, 2021), see also the Internet Archive website: <https://archive.org/details/poemsofvirgi00virguoft/page/n5/mode/2up> (November 8, 2021). The numeration of the verses does not always corresponds to the Latin original, hence separate data are offered.

[...] esse apibus partem divinae mentis et haustus
aetherios dixere. (*Georg.* IV, 220–221)

[...] unto bees a share is given
Of the Divine Intelligence, and to drink
Pure draughts of ether. (*Georg.* IV, 287–289)

There is no doubt that bees played a major role in the culture of the ancients (ill. 1). They produced honey, which was used to sweeten dishes and wine, and was drunk in a form similar to today's mead. It was also used as a medicine for powerful diseases, but also for embalming bodies. Honey was also often considered a gift from the gods. Interestingly, Aristotle believed it was not made by bees, but only collected by them. He wrote in *Historia animalium* that “the honey falls from the air, principally about the rising of the stars, and when the rainbow rests upon the earth. [...] We argue that wax is made, as I said, from flowers, but that the bees do not make honey, but simply collect that which falls”.⁸⁶



Ill. 1: Drachma from Ephesus with a depiction of a bee, ca. 550–500 BCE, photo by Classical Numismatic Group LLC, CC BY-SA 2.5. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=27946426> (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁸⁶ Arystoteles, *Zoologia (Historia animalium)*, trans. Paweł Siwek, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1990. All English translations of excerpts from Aristotle's *History of Animals* are taken from: Aristotle, *History of Animals in Ten Books*, trans. Richard Cresswell, London: George Bell Sons, 1887, *Project Gutenberg*, March 14, 2019, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/59058/59058-h/59058-h.htm> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Just how important bees were to the ancients is shown by bee myths of a religious nature, such as the ritual of *bugonia*, which Virgil describes in the fourth book of the *Georgics* and which involved the bee swarm being renewed from the cut belly of cattle:

Hic vero subitum ac dictu mirabile monstrum
adspiciunt, liquefacta boum per viscera toto
stridere apes utero et ruptis effervere costis,
immensasque trahi nubes, iamque arbore summa
confluere et lentis uvam demittere ramis. (*Georg.* IV, 554–558)

But sudden, strange to tell!
A portent they espy: through the oxen's flesh,
Waxed soft in dissolution, hark! there hum
Bees from the belly; the rent ribs overboil!
In endless clouds they spread them, till at last
On yon tree-top together fused they cling,
And drop their cluster from the bending boughs. (*Georg.* IV, 710–716)

Bugonia originated from Egyptian culture, and its name comes from the Greek words βούς, or cattle, and γονή, or offspring – so it means birth from cattle. The process itself varies depending on the culture, but stems from the perception of bees as the souls of ancestors, hard-working farmers.⁸⁷

The life cycle of bees reminded the ancients of the life cycle of humans, and a flying bee was considered a symbol of life. Hence also their thinking about bees as creatures worthy of respect, obeisance. Ancient beekeepers therefore made sure to treat bees with respect. Roman encyclopaedist Pliny the Elder (23–79) advises that it “is particularly recommended also that the person who takes the honey should be well washed and clean [...]. When the honey is taken, it is the best

⁸⁷ Rachael Hopley, *Bees in Greek and Roman Thought*, BA-thesis, Department of Classics, University of Reading, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/36402872/Bees_in_Greek_and_Roman_Thought (accessed September 13, 2021).

plan to drive away the bees by means of smoke, lest they should become irritated, or else devour the honey themselves. [...] On the other hand, if they are smoked too often, they will become tainted; the honey, too, a substance which turns sour at the very slightest contact with dew” (Plin. *Nat.* 11.15: *in primis ergo praecipitur, lauti ut purique eximant mella. [...] cum eximantur mella, apes abigi fumo utilissimum, ne irascantur aut ipsae auide vorent. [...] rursus fumo nimio inficiuntur, quando iniuriam celerrime sentiunt mella, vel minimo contactu roris acescentia*).⁸⁸

Virgil also praises the diligence of the bees, encouraging everyone to admire it. He also highlights their readiness to give their lives as long as they are able to complete the task entrusted to them:

Saepe etiam duris errando in cotibus alas
attrivere utroque animam sub fasce dedere:
tantus amor florum et generandi gloria mellis.
Ergo ipsas quamvis angusti terminus aevi
excipiat. (*Georg.* IV, 203–207)

[...] and ‘neath the burden yield
Their liberal lives: so deep their love of flowers,
So glorious deem they honey’s proud acquist.
Therefore, though each a life of narrow span,
Ne’er stretched to summers more than seven, befalls,
Yet deathless doth the race endure. (*Georg.* IV, 265–270)

⁸⁸ Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, Vol. 3, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855, p. 15, online at <https://archive.org/details/naturalhistoryof03plin/page/n35/mode/2up> (November 8, 2021). In the work on this chapter the following Polish edition was used: Plinius, *Historia naturalna. Wybór*, trans. Irena and Tadeusz Zawadzki, Wrocław–Kraków: Ossolineum, 1961, p. 152. All English translations of excerpts from Pliny’s *Natural History* are taken from: Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, Vol. 3, trans. John Bostock and Henry T. Riley, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855, *Project Gutenberg*, March 26, 2019, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/59131/59131-h/59131-h.htm> (accessed September 13, 2021). Latin here and thereafter from: Pliny the Elder, *C. Plini Secundi Naturalis Historiae Libri XXXVII*. Vol. 2, Karl Mayhoff, ed., Leipzig: Teubner, 1875, https://archive.org/details/bub_gb__ohMAAAAMAAJ/page/n3/mode/2up and (ed. 1906) at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0138%3Abook%3D11%3Achapter%3D15> (accessed November 8, 2021).



III. 2: Title page of *Naturalis historia* by Pliny the Elder, edition from 1669, Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=256045> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Bees thus live and breathe work, it is the main meaning of their lives, and it would seem that the poet praises this kind of existence and recommends it, believing it to be the way for society to develop better.

To the ancient Romans, bees became a model of hard work leading to development and prosperity. Therefore, it is not surprising that many authors devoted time to writing detailed descriptions of these insects' activity. Pliny in *Naturalis historia* (ill. 2) enthuses over the organisation of the bee swarm and how it functions. He portrays bees as a distinctive symbol of a model citizen: already upon waking they never waste a minute, they are busy, making honey, bringing in nectar from flowers, they are not idle. All of their administration is based on cooperation. Pointing this out, Pliny underlines the importance of collective work, which integrates society and, above all, enables any goal to be achieved more quickly and efficiently. The division of labour is also important. Weaker individuals are active outside the hive, while stronger ones go about their duties at its centre. The insects form a kind of production line where everyone has a specified task: "some are engaged in building, [...] others again are occupied in passing on the materials, and others in preparing food from the provision which has been brought" (Plin. *Nat.* 11.9: *aliae struunt, [...] aliae suggerunt, aliae cibum comparant ex eo quod adlatum est*).⁸⁹ For the "state" to develop continually, work must progress smoothly. There is no room in the swarm for idlers and layabouts: "It is wonderful what strict watch is kept upon their work: all instances of idleness are carefully remarked, the offenders are chastised, and on a repetition of the fault, punished with death" (ibidem: *mira observatio operis: cessantium inertiam notant, castigant, mox et puniunt morte*).⁹⁰ One might say that the bees' ethos is based on constant and intensive labour. Using numerous idealisations and descriptions of hard-working insects, Pliny wanted to persuade the Romans to start imitating them, to change the organisation of the Roman state.

Virgil notes the great similarity between bee society and human society at the very beginning of book four of the *Georgics*:

⁸⁹ Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, vol. 3, p. 9.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 9–10.

Admiranda tibi levium spectacula rerum
magnanimosque duces totiusque ordine gentis
mores et studia et populos et proelia dicam. (*Georg.* IV, 3–5)

A marvellous display of puny powers,
High-hearted chiefs, a nation's history,
Its traits, its bent, its battles and its clans,
All, each, shall pass before you, while I sing.
Slight though the poet's theme, not slight the praise. (*Georg.* IV, 4–8)

And further on in the same book:

Solae communes natos, consortia tecta
urbis habent magnisque agitant sub legibus aevum,
et patriam solae et certos novere penates. (*Georg.* IV, 153–155)

Alone of all things they receive and hold
Community of offspring, and they house
Together in one city, and beneath
The shelter of majestic laws they live;
And they alone fixed home and country know. (*Georg.* IV, 197–201)

In this, he holds them up as an example to follow. A moralising tone is noticeable in his remarks and descriptions when he underlines how bees function in a group and what principles guide them. He notes that the swarm is driven by the common good, that bees are prepared to risk their lives to complete their work, they put a lot of effort into raising successive generations and maintain unity, even in the face of danger.

The ancients were seldom fascinated with other animals like they were with bees. This fascination probably stemmed from the analogies they saw between the swarm and the state. It was therefore natural that the Romans put them on a pedestal, since they believed that the amazingly excellent organisation of the

bee community was not random. It is most likely also significant that bees were believed to possess an element of divine nature. These two factors made the bees more similar to humans socially than other animals. This in turn, thanks to their excellently organised “state”, enabled many different authors to compare the two communities with the aim of improving human constructs: the state and the society living within it.

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Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. James Rhoades, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co, 1891, *Project Gutenberg*, March 10, 2008, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/232/232-h/232-h.htm> (accessed September 13, 2021).

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The Four Elements in Mythology

Myths have always been the foundation of human awareness, opening people's minds to understanding and accepting events from daily life. Weather phenomena and processes occurring in nature were explained as interventions of the supernatural powers of deities in the life of the human community. Water, earth, fire and air became the foundations of the mythological world – it is from them that the gods originated, one example being Aphrodite born from sea foam.

Water was perceived as the source of life, a powerful element ruling over nature and humankind, a precondition of the rise and development of civilisation. It was always considered a mysterious combination of good and evil. A response to the unexplained puzzle of this element's changeability was contained in myths about the good Nereids and the Oceanids who lived in the salty sea waves – goddesses who were helpful, both by providing nourishment to plants and animals and by treating the injuries of shipwrecked sailors. Thanks to them the world was adorned with colourful flowers, and people who used clean water had fewer health problems. The ruler over human fate was Poseidon (ill. 1), who could spare lives by calming the turbulent waves or punish with death by stirring up a storm.

Unremarkable water, which could not become a useful building material, was necessary for existence but sometimes became a dangerous trap. The Greeks thus prayed when they entered rivers (which they actually portrayed as enraged bulls), and believed that all rivers were connected to the sea and remained under the care of the descendants of Oceanus or Poseidon. Rivers also existed in the Underworld: the Styx, in which Thetis bathed Achilles, the Cocytus – river of wailing, the Acheron – river of woe, the Lethe – river of forgetfulness, and the Phlegethon – river of fire.

Nor can life exist without earth. It is on earth that plants grow (ill. 2) and animals live. We humans were born on the earth and will be buried in it.



III. 1: *Triumph of Neptune*, mosaic from the 3rd century CE, Bardo Museum in Tunisia, photo by Asram (2004), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1415896> (accessed September 13, 2021).

It is an intrinsic part of both the animate and inanimate world. This role was ascribed to earth from the beginnings of human history, but it was subsequent civilisations that expanded their knowledge about the soil: how to cultivate it depending on its type, how to use it to build houses or tools. The ancient Greeks and Romans had many deities connected with the earth and its crops: gods of land, fields, forests. The order of the seasons of the year stemmed from the myth of the Greek goddess of grains and the harvest, Demeter, and her daughter Persephone. When Kora arose to the earth from Hades, spring came; when she returned to the Underworld, winter took control of the earth. The Roman goddess of spring, Flora, was the guardian of flowers. The Romans celebrated the



III. 2: Jean-François de Troy (1679–1752), *Pan and Syrinx* (1722–1724), J. Paul Getty Museum, photo by J. Paul Getty Museum, Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=835002> (accessed September 13, 2021).

festival of Floralia in her honour, when citizens took part in games and theatre performances.⁹¹ Also today we celebrate festivities for the end of winter and the coming of spring. This is a way of underlining the magnitude and power of the earth element.

Greek myths link the third element, fire, to the beginning of civilisation, which is illustrated by the story of Prometheus. In one version of the myth, this Titan used a reed to carry a spark from the chariot of Helios to the earth; in another, he stole fire from Hephaestus' forge and gave it to humans so it would help them and serve them as a good tool. The god ruling over the fire element

⁹¹ Pierre Grimal, *Słownik mitologii greckiej i rzymskiej* (Polish edition of *Dictionnaire de la mythologie grecque et romaine*), Wrocław: Ossolineum, 2008, p. 104.



Ill. 3: *Hephaestus and Thetis*, Attic red-figure kylix, 490–480 BCE, photo by Bibi Saint-Pol, Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3957273> (accessed September 13, 2021).

is Hephaestus the blacksmith. His home was the volcano Aetna or the isle of Lemnos. He is said to have been the most hard-working of the gods, for he did not like to rest, he did not need to. Hephaestus (ill. 3) was famous for his constant work, which yielded elaborate and wonderful objects: weapons, body armour, jewellery, thunderbolts which he forged for Zeus, or the chariot he made for Helios.⁹²

⁹² Jan Parandowski, *Mitologia. Wierzenia i podania Greków i Rzymian*, Londyn: Puls, 1992, p. 71.

The figure of Hephaestus the craftsman, god of fire, draws attention to the enormous creative possibilities offered by fire, thanks to which creation is possible. In the beginning, though, people appreciated other properties of fire, unknown or unnecessary to the gods. Fire gave them light and warmth, although they owed the brightness during the day to Helios, the deity of the sun. According to the beliefs of the ancient Greeks, he travels across the sky every day in his golden chariot, from east to west, which we see as the wandering sun. This is an excellent example of how people explained the world around them through myths. Thus, fire is an element associated with many possibilities. It can be good: providing warmth, light, scaring off animals, it is used in metallurgy and for preparing food. It can also be very dangerous: you have to handle it carefully, it can be used to destroy and kill. Nowadays, fire is a symbol more of life, energy and fervour, which is best illustrated by the Olympic flame without which no Olympic Games can be held.

Air was the element on which a successful harvest depended, and also the safety of human life. In his anger Zeus, the ruler of Olympus and the heavens, sent down lightning and thunderbolts that could kill a man or destroy his possessions. The ancient Greeks also believed in gods of the winds, who were responsible for individual directions of the world. Boreas, god of the north wind, violent and uncontrollable, ruled over the cold wind, he was capable of doing great damage. Hot weather and droughts which destroyed crops were brought by Notus, god of the south wind. Eurus, god of the east wind, brought damp and rain. Zephyrus, god of the west wind, was the calmest, known for his gentleness (ill. 4). People also believed that air brought contagious diseases like the plague or cholera; they called such air “noxious”. To this day in Polish Church tradition, people sing the supplication *Holy God, Holy Mighty* during solemn feast days or funerals. Its words “from air, hunger, fire and war, save us Lord” contain an expression of people’s fear of natural disasters.

Unusual phenomena and the mysteries of nature were explained in myths as the will and actions of gods. Due to their extraordinary character, they led to the development of a collection of stories about deities endowed with mighty powers. Myths are proof that the world of nature: water, earth, fire, air and all



III. 4: Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510), Zephyrus and the nymph Chloris, detail from the painting *The Birth of Venus* (1485), Uffizi Gallery, photo by Web Gallery of Art, Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15384631> (accessed September 13, 2021).

vegetation was treated with deep respect by humans. In our times we can rationally explain all natural phenomena, but despite our knowledge we have not lost our respect and admiration for nature.

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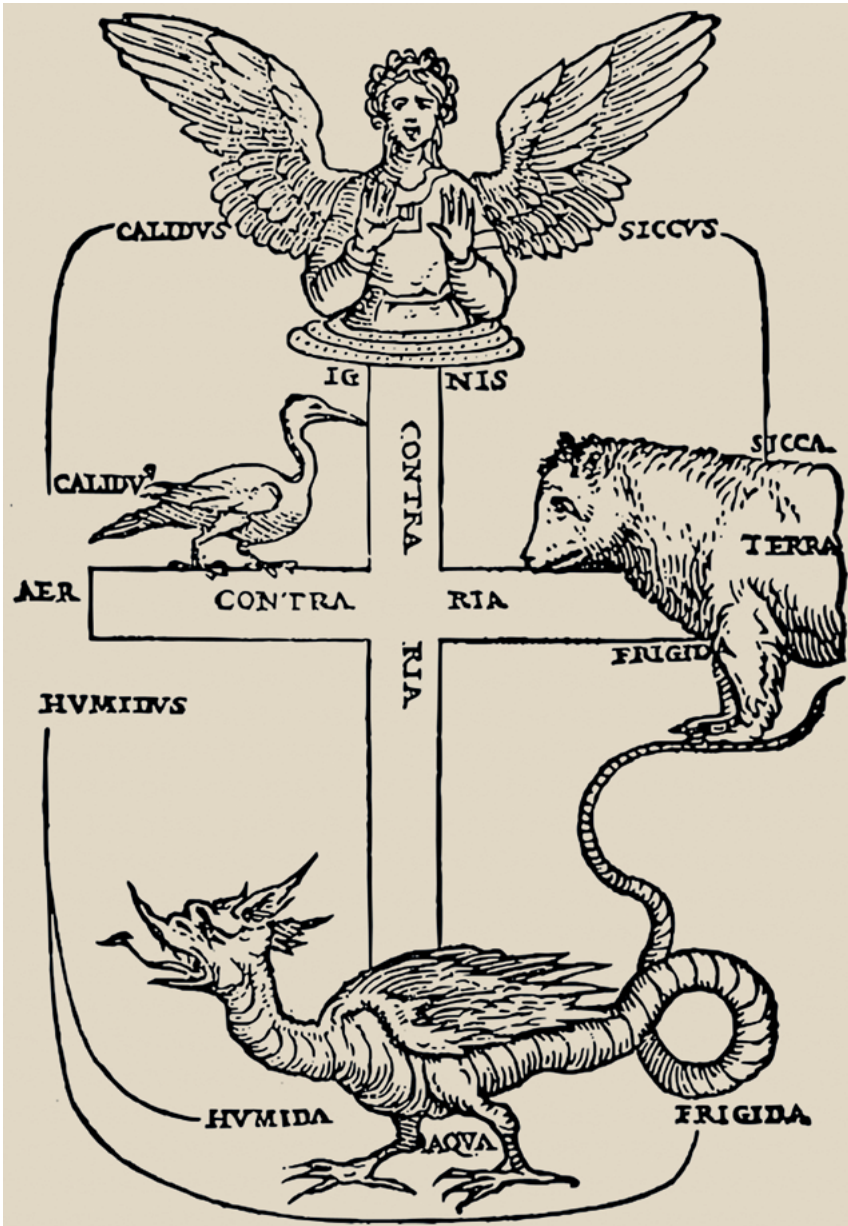
Philosophical Beginnings of the Theory of the Elements

A certain Latin adage encapsulates human nature in these words: *est innatus in nobis cognitionis amor et scientiae* (“love of learning and knowledge is innate to us”).⁹³ Some believe that discovering new truths about the world is assigned to humans and makes them rational beings. The drive to find the meaning of all things has brought many discoveries from the realm of nature. Curious to know, at some point humans came up with the question: “Where did I, others, and nature around me come from?” This resulted in the following series of events: a search began for a source that might be the foundation of everything (Greek: ἀρχή). This was sought in those aspects of nature that the ancients considered to be its elementary particles and that contrasted with one another. These elements included boundlessness, water, fire, earth and air (ill. 1). The ancients believed that the world was composed of one of the aforementioned elements, while the other four were its derivatives. The first element was ultimately abandoned and the others underwent synthesis. This was the origin of a set of four elements corresponding to four states of matter, which co-create reality through appropriately chosen proportions. Today we know this as the concept of the four elements. The first people to show an interest in them were ancient thinkers from Ionia.⁹⁴

Describing the way of thinking of their predecessors, Aristotle wrote: “Some think that the earlier humans who lived a long time before the present generation

⁹³ Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, ed. Theodor Schiche, Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1915, V, 48, *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0474.phi048.perseus-lat1:5.48> (accessed September 13, 2021).

⁹⁴ Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, Vol. 1: *Filozofia starożytna i średniowieczna*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1978, pp. 22, 23.



III. 1: *Allegory of the Four Elements*, author and date unknown, photo by Liberal Freemason, Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1935282> (accessed September 13, 2021).

had the same perception of nature. For, according to them, Oceanus and Tethys were the parents of all that came into being”.⁹⁵ Speaking of the cosmogonic theories of early people, he used the names of Oceanus and Tethys, Titans of the waters, thus claiming that people considered deities to be the building material of all things. The first sages, who sought answers to the question of the beginning and the matter of the world, abandoned mythological thinking and directed their efforts towards science.

This was the path followed by the first of the Ionian philosophers, Thales. Observing nature, he concluded that water was the primary element. He noticed that it was the source of life-giving force: dead things were dry, while germ cells and food were moist; moreover, living beings died without access to water. He explained the existence of other beings, those that were not water in pure form, by a process of transformation of one element into another, emphasising that the starting point among them was always water. He claimed that the whole world originated from water and it should resolve itself in water, and everything was to dissolve over the years and centuries, returning to its origin.⁹⁶

A different theory on this topic was put forward by Anaximenes, a student of Anaximander, who believed the mother of everything to be that which is unlimited (Greek: ἄπειρον). Whereas Thales saw water, Anaximenes saw air as the catalyst of life. He motivated his idea with the fact of the existence of the soul, identified with breath and thus also with air. The non-physical part of humanity, equalised with the gases surrounding us, gave the strength for existence. Anaximenes chose air also because of its boundlessness, which enabled it to fill Anaximander's apeiron. Also, the form of air offered many possibilities of pondering its derivatives. Being intangible, it could be arranged in different ways, forming other elements. Through condensation, air becomes a cloud, water, and, finally, stone, and could be rarefied with fire.⁹⁷ With this theory, the Greek philosopher laid the foundations for contemporary physics.

⁹⁵ Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, Vol. I: *Filozofia starożytna i średniowieczna*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1981, p. 24.

⁹⁶ Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, 1978, pp. 23–26.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

Anaximenes' successor (but not his student) was Heraclitus, author of the words "everything flows" (Greek: πάντα ῥεῖ) and the theory of becoming. In his view, due to fire as the building material for everything, the whole world is in constant movement. He explained the existence of other elements with a process occurring cyclically upwards and downwards. First, fire descended from above, transformed into air, then condensed and landed on the earth as water, after which it was soaked up by the ground, and then returned to its original place. As the author put it, "the way up and the way down is one and the same". The process took place ceaselessly, in a cycle that can be illustrated by a circle.⁹⁸

The foundation created by Anaximenes was also used by his student, Xenophanes. He based his reasoning on the view that the main matter is earth; he claimed that it was the origin from which all objects we know came, and considered it the principle of nature. However, his understanding of ἀρχή differed from the interpretation of the Ionian philosophers. He reduced it only to apply to the perception of earthly beings, thus excluding the main principle of the cosmos and reality from this concept.⁹⁹

The moment finally came to reconcile all the contradictory concepts. Combining the thinking of Xenophanes, Heraclitus and the Ionian philosophers, Empedocles concluded that the variable world could be made of unchangeable components. These could be interchanged and could not undergo dematerialisation. As Empedocles verbalised it: "There is no growth of any mortal things, nor any end in destructive death. There is only mixture and interchange of that which is mixed".¹⁰⁰ All that was left for the philosopher to resolve was the selection of the appropriate elements of nature. This was not complicated; Empedocles took advantage of the achievements of his predecessors and established four elements: water, air, fire and earth. He called them "the roots of all things" and later used them in all kinds of studies involving nature and in describing the nature of beings and the proportions of individual kinds of body contained in human

⁹⁸ Ibidem, pp. 30, 31.

⁹⁹ Ibidem, pp. 3, 34.

¹⁰⁰ Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, 1981, p. 41.

life. This idea constituted the seed of chemical thinking, and to Empedocles himself we owe the notion of an “element”, used to this day, though in a slightly different meaning.¹⁰¹



III. 2: Daria Maksimenko, *Plato and the Symbols of the Elements* (2020), used with the Author's permission.

¹⁰¹ Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, 1978, p. 44.

Empedocles' ideas were developed by Plato, who added a cosmogonic theme. He believed that the world had come into being out of necessity persuaded by reason. He saw the beginning of the universe in a chaos comprising the elements mixed together and then organised by a god. The Athenian philosopher believed the whole of reality to be a synthesis of the four elements (ill. 2). Each of them had its own specific qualities and the three-dimensional shape of a geometric solid formed out of equilateral triangles (the ideal figure). Earth, the most malleable element, while also being static and secure, was given the form of a cube. Water, the least vigorous element, was assigned the figure of an icosahedron. Considered the most vigorous and the smallest, fire was illustrated as a tetrahedron, which reflects its sharpness, penetrating power and force. During his deliberations, Plato decided that the systematics he had developed was incomplete, that it lacked a dodecahedron. This opened the way to a search for the fifth element.¹⁰²

Aristotle followed in his teacher's footsteps, acknowledging Plato's elements as the four fundamental elements and recounting his theory on their existence in his work *On Generation and Corruption*. He described the four elements as the proper elements, which could be shaped and transformed one into another without impediment. Alongside the fundamental elements, Aristotle distinguished one more, aether, which – in his reasoning – was responsible for the movement of the celestial spheres and was associated with the soul. Aetheric matter reigned in the more perfect of the two realms distinguished by Aristotle, celestial and terrestrial. Motion in the celestial region was perfect, regular and uniform, i.e. circular, and the circle itself was identified with things eternal. In the terrestrial region, where changeability and transience ruled, motion was normal and linear. Aristotle thus put the heavenly realm above the earthly one in which matter, according to his views, was built of the aforementioned four elements.¹⁰³

The concept of the four elements changed with the development of human culture and civilisation. Many different and contradictory theories emerged,

¹⁰² Platon, *Timajos* (Polish edition of Plato's *Timaeus*), trans. Władysław Witwicki, Kęty: Antyk, 2005.

¹⁰³ Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, 1978, p. 116.

which later developed into a unity that laid the foundations for contemporary science and gave the basis for construing the world in the way followed by contemporary humanity.

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Allegories and Symbolism of the Four Elements

Language is a product of culture, but at the same time culture is a fruit of language. We can thus say that the way we perceive the world is coded in our speech, and the other way round: the development and usage of a given vocabulary is influenced by our environment. Apart from its dictionary definition, every word (lexeme) describing a given entity (designatum) involves many expressions that go beyond encyclopaedic phrasing. This wider meaning can be described with the words “symbol” and “allegory”. The more strongly a given word is rooted in a specific environment, the richer its non-dictionary meaning will be. One omnipresent aspect of our reality, though a little forgotten in favour of contemporary scientific theories, is the four elements. As components making up the universe, they enjoy popularity in such products of culture as the arts, architecture and literature. In works of literature, they are usually used to construct forms of parabolic meaning, rich in periphrases.

In culture, water invokes connotations full of contrasts, as it is associated with both life and earth, with good and with evil. Moreover, its linguistic image is filled with some rather abstract concepts: resurrection, purification of the spirit, healing and instability. It is also linked to fertility and virtue. That is most likely why water as an element is often associated with the image of a naked woman, clad only in a scrap of blue fabric, often sitting at the foot of a rock emerging from the raging sea waves. She clutches a sceptre in her right hand, but her most important attribute is an urn from which water flows together with a host of small marine fish.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Cesare Ripa, *Ikonomia* (Polish edition of *Iconologia*), Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych „Universitas”, 1998, p. 221; Ernest Niemczyk, *Żywioły w architekturze*. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 2008, p. 11.



III. 1: Daria Maksimenko, *Allegories of the Elements* (2020), used with the Author's permission.

The symbolism of air is connected with its insubstantiality, with incorporeal phenomena: eternity, divinity and memory. According to Roman encyclopaedist Pliny the Elder, air is like a young woman sitting upon the clouds. Her loose hair is blowing in the wind, and her hand supports a peacock, the bird dedicated to Juno (goddess of the air). The picture is made complete by birds gliding in the clouds and a chameleon sitting at the woman's feet; the ancients believed that it only fed on air. Another allegory portrays air as a woman dressed in a light blue robe and holding a rainbow or the heavenly arch.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Ripa, *Ikonomia*, p. 220; Niemczyk, *Żywioty*, p. 11.

Earth has been associated with mother images, being identified with the great mother, fertility, wealth and femininity. The allegory of earth depicts a woman dressed in a robe decorated with flowers and herbs, which also adorn her head. The figure holds a horn filled with fruit in her right hand, symbolising a plentiful harvest.¹⁰⁶

Fire, like water, assumes contradictory values. It symbolises warmth, love, enlightenment, masculinity, divinity and hell. Allegories portray it in the form of a woman holding a vessel with fire, accompanied by a phoenix and a salamander emerging from the flames, or a woman dressed in red with a fiery phoenix sitting on her head and Jupiter's thunderbolt in her hand.¹⁰⁷

Representations of the elements go beyond their dictionary definitions. Each of the elements evokes specific associations and images (ill. 1). Allegories describe the world symbolically, and thus consolidate the importance of symbols in culture, but understanding their meaning requires knowledge and experience.

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Niemczyk, Ernest, *Żywioły w architekturze*, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 2008.

Ripa, Cesare, *Ikonologia*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych „Universitas”, 1998.

¹⁰⁶ Ripa, *Ikonologia*, p. 221; Niemczyk, *Żywioły*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁷ Ripa, *Ikonologia*, p. 220; Niemczyk, *Żywioły*, p. 11.

The Four Elements in Architecture

Humans have long wondered about the most fundamental phenomena, and this reflection dates back to Antiquity. When they first started asking themselves about the beginning of all things, they left the safe area of Greek mythology and religion, venturing onto the uncertain ground of the philosophy of nature. From this search emerged the theory of the four elements. Their particularly distinctive and impressive image, however, can be found in architecture, especially religious architecture. The ancient concept of the elements was meant to help organise the ornamental motifs on buildings, symbolism and the metamorphoses of forms and their meanings. Architecture is thus an art in which the elements operate through the monumental nature of a structure and its decorativeness.

Belonging to the element of fire, the sun's light, its energy and heat were generally considered an emanation of the god Helios. It permeated architectural interiors through the open spaces of temples, then through their porticos. The spatial composition of a temple was usually oriented towards the sun – the Greeks built their temples along an east-west axis. For example, this was how the temple to Athena Parthenos was designed.¹⁰⁸

The fires of homes, altars, and temples symbolised community and the unity of cities and states.¹⁰⁹ One example might be the *templum Vestae* (ill. 1) from the 7th century BCE (its ruins can still be viewed in the Forum Romanum), where an eternal fire burned as a symbol of the great empire's enduringness.

The sheen and brightness of elements of buildings was already valued in Greece during the Homeric period. Descriptions of palace fronts and interiors

¹⁰⁸ Mary Beard, *Parthenon* (Polish edition of *The Parthenon*), Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, 2017, p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ Ernest Niemczyk, *Żywioły w architekturze*, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 2008, p. 26.



Ill. 1: Temple of Vesta in the Forum Romanum, photo by Wknight94 (2008), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5164405> (accessed September 13, 2021).

underlined their shine, which was compared to the shining of the moon and the sun.¹¹⁰ It was no different in Roman architecture from the imperial period. Buildings made from Augustus' favourite marble made a great impression, but all this was eclipsed by *Domus Aurea*, i.e. Nero's Golden House, which even had domes

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 36, 192–194.

made of gold as well as many rich decorations, as mentioned by the biographer of Roman emperors, Suetonius: *In ceteris partibus cuncta auro lita, distincta gemmis unionumque conchis erant; cenationes laqueatae tabulis eburneis versatilibus* (Suet. *Nero* 31.2: “In the rest of the house all parts were overlaid with gold and adorned with gems and mother-of-pearl”).¹¹¹

The element of air – the wind – is very ephemeral, delicate, airy, it can be almost nothingness or materialise in catastrophic weather phenomena like storms, gales or hurricanes. This element’s distinctive quality is its invisibility, although it permeates the whole surroundings. Thanks to relations with the other elements, air acquires qualities accessible to perception. It can be felt after being heated, it sometimes appears as smoke, incense or scent. In combination with water it becomes mist, cloud or steam.

Winds have been given particularly visual allegories in art. On the walls of the Tower of the Winds, built to a design by Andronicus of Cyrrhus (flourished ca. 100 BCE), Notus the south wind is depicted as a winged young man holding a vessel in his hand. His wings enable him to soar and break through the surrounding expanse with the wafting wind.¹¹²

In cities we can find bas-reliefs depicting human heads blowing into a shell, horn or pipe. The artists have captured the exhalation of the stream of air collected in bulging cheeks or hands cupped around lips. One example might be the Roman altar of wind (Latin: *ara ventorum*) standing in the Forum Romanum under the rostrum. It features a young god of wind floating in the air and blowing away into a triton shell horn.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Latin excerpt from: Suetonius, *Nero*, ed. Max Ihm, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1908, XXXI, 2, *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0061%3Alife%3Dnero%3Achapter%3D31%3Asection%3D2> (accessed September 13, 2021); in the work on this chapter also the following edition was used: Swetoniusz, *Neron*, in: Swetoniusz, *Żywoty cesarów* (Polish edition of Suetonius’ *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*), trans. Janina Niemirska-Pliszczyńska, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1965, p. 348. English translation from: Suetonius, *The Life of Nero*, in Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, Vol. 2, trans. J.C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 38, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914, *Bill Thayer’s Web Site*: https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/suetonius/12caesars/nero*.html (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹¹² Niemczyk, *Żywioły*, p. 154.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*.

The presence of the element of air is also visible on the capitals of columns of the Corinthian order, which were decorated with acanthus leaves. Originally such leaves were only placed on grave steles.¹¹⁴ As a sacrificial gift, balsamic oils were poured over the leaves, the scent then floating in the air.¹¹⁵

The lightness and independence of wind enable it to combine with the third element, water, which often changes its mood: sometimes we perceive it as being calm and peaceful, and sometimes as aggressive and turbulent. Despite this, it is an element essential for humans to live. That is why it was necessary to tame water in such a way as to provide access to it for as many people as possible. Symbols of the struggle with the element of water can be seen in Greek and Roman aqueducts, which are not hard to find in Europe. The ancients went to great lengths to bring water down from distant mountain springs, and spared no means or time to build their watercourses. The huge arches and pillars of the aqueducts, standing since time immemorial and often tens of kilometres long, show the Greeks' and Romans' victory over the element of water. It is a powerful force, giving life wherever it appears. The Romans and the Greeks also used it as an ornament in their cities, e.g. in the form of pools and fountains. They underlined the appearance and behaviour of this element, its mobility and changeability, contrasting with sculptures and architecture.

The element of water has been well illustrated in the sculpture *Nike of Samothrace* (ca. 190 BCE, ill. 2). The goddess is wearing a wet chiton with numerous folds, which clings to her body underlining her figure. The element of water enabled the divine body of the goddess of victory to be shown in a way that was both realistic and idealised. The sculpture was discovered in 1863, on the small rocky island of Samothrace, by French archaeologist Charles Champoiseau.¹¹⁶ Following further exploration, stone blocks were found in the same place, from which the bow of a ship, probably a Greek trireme, was reconstructed. The goddess originally

¹¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 174.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem, pp. 174–175.

¹¹⁶ Ryszard Kulesza, *Słownik kultury antycznej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2012, p. 352; Maria Ludwika Bernhard, *Historia starożytnej sztuki greckiej. Sztuka hellenistyczna*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993, pp. 296–298.



III. 2: *Nike of Samothrace* (ca. 190 BCE), Louvre, France, photo by Shonagon (2018), Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=81325360> (accessed September 13, 2021).

stood on a rocky slope beneath which was the auditorium of a theatre. Why was so much effort put into finding an appropriate base and site on which to position her? This was connected with the function of the fourth element, earth.

The element of earth was an important factor in construction: it comprised the ground as well as natural building materials, e.g. clay, stone or marble. Natural conditions and features of the terrain were taken into consideration, and the location of buildings was fitted to them, which today is called architectural space. One good example might be temples (e.g. the Erechtheion on the Acropolis), most often built on natural hills and within the space of unusual landscapes. Such a combination was meant to symbolise the simultaneous existence of the temple (Heaven) and nature (Earth).¹¹⁷ Architectural structures were often supplemented with various kinds of natural features, e.g. a garden (Latin: *hortus*) and a place for bathing forming part of a private home (House of the Vettii in Pompeii). The external appearance of ancient buildings was often highlighted with the help of plant motifs (e.g. the Corinthian capitals on the Olympieion in Athens) – they thus combined two elements: earth and air; the latter was symbolised by plant motifs like acanthus leaves.¹¹⁸

It is worth adding that the building material itself played a special role in Graeco-Roman culture. The ancients believed that stone was linked to the Underworld.¹¹⁹ The aesthetic value of this material was noticed and appreciated in subsequent times. It was later used on an even greater scale. Stone bridges (ill. 3) were especially useful and also beautiful, as they combined two elements: earth and water, and sometimes also air. Wandering around Rome, we often admire two very old bridges: one in Trastevere (*Pons Cestius* from 46 BCE), the other in the Forum Boarium (*Pons Fabricius* from 62 BCE). Their pillars are supported on foundations immersed in the water and going deep into the ground, and easily withstand the force of the Tiber's current as well as earthquakes.

In our times the four elements have started being used to produce alternative energy sources and for environmental protection. Eco-friendly buildings have

¹¹⁷ Niemczyk, *Żywioty*, p. 230.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 202.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 164, 174.



Ill. 3: Cestius Bridge in Rome (46 BCE), photo by Blackcat (2012), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19483176> (accessed September 13, 2021).

gained popularity (e.g. Waldspirale in Darmstadt), and are supposed to imitate natural structures. One often-used option is to cover them with various vegetation (e.g. Singapore's pavilion for Expo 2020, design by WOHA, ill. 4). Solar panels, small hydroelectric and wind power plants are fitted on roofs with the aim of gradually replacing traditional power generation methods with clean, "green" energy.¹²⁰

The ancients valued utility, durability and beauty, and also designers' drawing upon tradition and culture, as the most important qualities of architecture.¹²¹ Nowadays, we pay increasing attention to the functionality of designs and to architects' concern for the environment, rather than just the look of a building.

¹²⁰ Ibidem, p. 236.

¹²¹ Witruwiusz, *O architekturze ksiąg dziesięć* (Polish edition of Vitruvius' *Ten Books on Architecture*), trans. Kazimierz Kumaniecki, Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka SA, 2004, p. 32.



III. 4: Building of the School of the Arts in Singapore (2005–2010), design by WOHA studio, photo by Katmorro (2012), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18762978> (accessed September 13, 2021).

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Mundus naturae, natura mundi

*Ego non quaeram quae sint initia universorum? Quis rerum formator? Quis omnia in uno mersa et materia inerti convoluta discreverit? Non quaeram quis sit istius artifex mundi?*¹²²

“May I not ask what are the beginnings of all things, who moulded the universe, who took the confused and conglomerate mass of sluggish matter, and separated it into its parts? May I not inquire who is the Master-Builder of this universe?”¹²³

Nature has always fascinated humans. The first Greek philosophers sought the beginnings and first principle of the world (ἀρχή) in the elements and nature; the ancients tried to explain the origins of natural phenomena and the rules governing the world around them through myths. Nature was thus a medium to them, something linking the world of the gods and humans. According to the beliefs of the Greeks and the Romans, the angered gods punished humans with the help of the elements and forces of nature. The ancients also used their observations to try to guess and ascertain the will of the gods, discerning prophetic signs and interpreting natural phenomena occurring in the surrounding world.

¹²² Seneca Minor, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, ed. Richard Mott Gummere, Cambridge–London: Harvard Heinemann, 1917–1925, LXV, 19, *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:latinLit:phi1017.phi015.perseus-lat1:65.19> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹²³ Seneca the Younger, *Ad Lucillum epistulae morales*, trans. Richard Mott Gummere, Loeb Classical Library, London–New York, NY, William Heinemann, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917–1925, *Wiki-source*, May 10, 2019, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Moral_letters_to_Lucilius/Letter_65 (accessed September 13, 2021).

Finally, sources of inner peace and harmony were sought in a life according to nature and based on the rules of nature. Humans were perceived not as creators but as elements of the natural world, and were subject to its laws. It was nature that defined the rhythm of human life, while its gifts and fruits ensured humans a prosperous and happy life.

With a quote from Seneca's *Letter LXV* as their starting point, students of the I High School in Kraków decided to consider the role of nature in the mythology and beliefs of our ancestors. This was how the *Mundus naturae, natura mundi* project was born, comprising two components. One of them involved comparing Greek and Slavic mythology. It turns out that even though the two worlds seem very far apart, the beliefs of the Greeks and the Slavs have many things in common, especially in the context of nature deities, which are mainly present in folk tales and legends. This indicates that, regardless of the conditions they lived in, our ancestors tried in similar ways to learn about the world around them, understand phenomena occurring in nature, and attribute them to the competence of nature deities. The other part of the project comprises an analysis of the role of nature in Roman divination. The ancients, as Cicero wrote in *De divinatione* (I, 95–97), attached great importance to divination, and the reading and interpretation of prophetic signs was a regular part of both private and public life. The common element of the project's two parts is thus the mythological and religious context of nature and its role in the beliefs of the Graeco-Roman and Slavic worlds.

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Nature Deities in Greek and Slavic Mythology

Even before philosophers of nature appeared, the ancient Greeks tried to explain phenomena and cataclysms around them. The ancient Slavs could also boast many hypotheses of their own, as evidenced in the intriguing Slavic mythology. Neither group had the tools of observation that contemporary people have. Nor did they know scientific terminology, so the descriptions of their observations did not emanate any special complexity; they were mostly simple, or even “down-to-earth” in a way. Why did we choose the mythology of the Slavs? The reason was very simple: this mythology is familiar to us, among other things thanks to the lasting presence of Polish sayings that have a connection to Slavic mythology, such as: *klepać biedę* (literally “to hammer poverty”, meaning to live in poverty), *czort [jeden] wie* (“the devil [only] knows”), or *lichy kogoś niesie* (“an evil spirit has brought someone”). Due to our limited knowledge about them, the beliefs of our ancestors seem more mysterious. We also think that the mythology of the Greeks, rich in nature deities, can be found to contain many similarities to the mythology of the Slavs, filled with forest, field, and water demons.

Greece is a country situated in the south-east of the European continent. It occupies the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula and, contrary to Slavic lands, Greece is surrounded by seas from almost all sides. The territory of the former Hellas has a Mediterranean subtropical climate, which is different from Slavic lands, which lie in the temperate transitional climate zone. There are no frosty winters, and summers are very hot. Greece is also distinguished by its landforms: its territory is mountainous, as opposed to Poland, for example, which is predominantly

lowland. As we might guess, these and other factors caused different systems of beliefs to develop in the two cultures, although we can identify a surprisingly large number of similarities between them.

Earth

Our ancestors came up with all kinds of deities in order to explain the surrounding reality to themselves. The element closest to them was earth. This was where people were born, lived and died. Their existence depended on mother nature: they had food and clothing thanks to its gifts. Despite the fact that the Greeks and the Slavs lived in completely different climates, it is possible to notice a great many similarities between their nature deities, and especially in the need to explain the same natural phenomena.

The Earth as a Mother

Both for the ancient Greeks and the Slavs, the worship of the Earth as a mother was particularly well developed. In Greek mythology she appears as Gaia, or the mother of all the gods. In Slavic mythology we have Mokosh – the fertile Earth Mother. Both Gaia and Mokosh were the guardians of women. Gaia was one of the *protogenoi*, the primordial deities that were born directly from Chaos.¹²⁴ Without assistance, Gaia gave birth to the mountains, the sky and the sea, and together with her son Uranus produced Titans, including Oceanus, Themis, and Cronus.¹²⁵ Gaia was a loving and patient mother, supporting her sons also in plotting against their father. Cronus' deposing of Uranus marked the symbolic separation of the sky from the earth. After this fact, Gaia became independent.¹²⁶

Contrary to Gaia, Mokosh did not give birth to gods, but to crops. Nor did she enter into a relationship with the sky. As Aleksander Brückner wrote about Mokosh: "Women are afraid of her, recognising her in the rumbling of the

¹²⁴ Hezjod, *Narodziny bogów (Theogonia)* [Polish edition of Hesiod, *The Birth of the Gods (Theogony)*], trans. Jerzy Łanowski, Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2004, p. 36, lines 116–117.

¹²⁵ Hezjod, *Narodziny bogów (Theogonia)*, p. 36, lines 126–138.

¹²⁶ Zygmunt Kubiak, *Mitologia Greków i Rzymian*, Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2003, pp. 52–53.

spinning wheel and in the rubbed hair of sheep; people went to her for divination; her name might be the source of the verb *mokshit'*, meaning to obtain something by prayer, pestering, pleading".¹²⁷ This excerpt shows that, contrary to Gaia, Mokosh was a goddess strongly bound to spinning and wool, which were areas of exclusively feminine activity. The Slavic people treated her with great respect, especially in early spring. Ploughed land had a particularly strong tie to Mokosh. The Slavs swore on it and offered sacrifices to it.

Both Gaia and Mokosh were important elements of those ancient cultures. Regardless of their place of birth, people readily cultivated their faith in Mother Earth as a goddess of fertility and the harvest.

Mother Nature

The next important deities are incarnations of mother nature. In Greek mythology we have Demeter, and in Slavic belief it is Marzanna (ill. 1). Both goddesses are credited with watching over the mechanisms that govern nature, but there are differences.

Marzanna was also known as Marzana, Mora, Morena, Mamuriena, Marena, Mara, Marinka, Morana and Marena.¹²⁸ This goddess was responsible for phenomena like frosts and death. Hence the "drowning of Marzanna" – a ritual performed to mark the end of winter and the arrival of spring.¹²⁹ The end of winter means the start of a new growing season, which is why Marzanna also watched over crops, water and the harvest. The goddess thus had two different facets.

Demeter, meanwhile, is portrayed as a serious and good woman. She was the guardian of the earth and crops. Thanks to her love for her daughter Persephone, with whom she had a strong bond, people saw her as the ideal mother. According to ancient beliefs, when her daughter returns to her, there are six

¹²⁷ Aleksander Brückner, *Mitologia słowiańska*, Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska, 2014, p. 114, wolnelektury.pl, <https://wolnelektury.pl/katalog/lektura/mitologia-slowianska.html> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹²⁸ Kamil Goldowski, "Marzanna – Pani śmierci i ponurego oblicza", *Sławosław*, <https://www.slawoslaw.pl/marzanna-pani-smierci-i-ponurego-oblicza-natury/> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹²⁹ "Drowning of Marzanna" – a folk custom; a ritual during which a rag doll is made and then thrown in a river at the first thaw. This was meant to help winter leave, or even to drive it away.



III. 1: Ivana Rezek, *Marzanna and Spring* (2008), CC BY-SA 2.5 SE. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Morana_%26_Vesna.jpg (accessed September 13, 2021).

months of warmth and plenty, everything blooms. But when Persephone descends into Hades again, it is winter on earth.

As we can see, the goddesses are different. They were responsible for the same phenomena in nature, but their worship was different. It is worth noting that both goddesses also had a link to death.

Girls of Nature

The Greek Leimoniads (Λειμωνιάδες) and Slavic rusalki (ill. 2) were remarkably similar in terms of appearance. However, their origins were different: the Leimoniads emerged directly from Nature, whereas rusalki were the ghosts of girls who had died before marriage. Both groups came in the form of beautiful young girls. The Leimoniads were dainty, agile and delicate.¹³⁰ Rusalki had pale skin, black eyes burning with passion, and lovely long hair.¹³¹ They were very lively: they danced all night in the moonlight, in a meadow or at the water's edge. The Leimoniads, on the other hand, preferred to sleep their days away, although they, too, ran around meadows or picked flowers. Both groups had a special liking for marshy meadows, which were few in Greece and common in Slavic lands. They also differed in their personalities; the Greek nymphs were gentle while the Slavic ones were extremely mean and dangerous. Rusalki were in the habit of drowning people, in which they showed cruelty. The Leimoniads, on the other hand, did not interfere with the life of humans, because it was too tempestuous for them.

Forest Deities

Whereas Greece had few forests, the Slavs had always lived amidst impenetrable woodlands and forests. These differences in environment also affected the significance of forest deities. The Greek Pan, mainly associated with guardianship over forests, was also responsible for meadows, fields, shepherds and their flocks, while Artemis – alongside forests, hunting, animals and vegetation – was also the

¹³⁰ Jan Parandowski, *Mitologia. Wierzenia i podania Greków i Rzymian*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1989, p. 97.

¹³¹ Paweł Zych, Witold Vargas, *Bestiariusz słowiański*, Vol. 1: *Rzecz o skrzatach, wodnikach i rusalkach*, Olszanica: BOSZ, 2018, p. 156.



Ill. 2: Konstantin Makovsky (1839–1915), *Rusalki* (1879), Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rusalki.jpg> (accessed September 13, 2021).

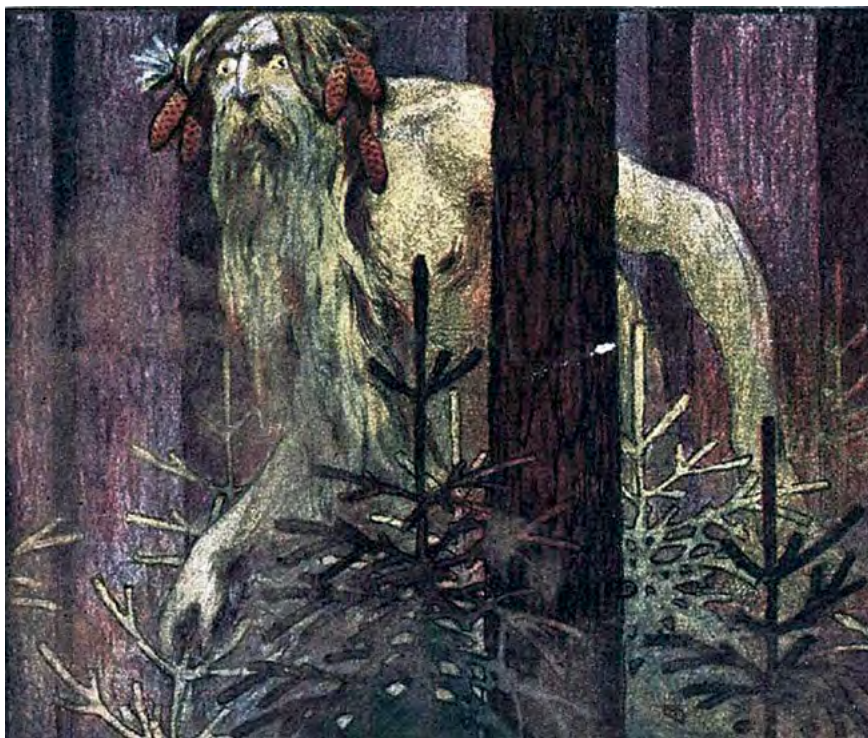
patron of mountains, fertility, women in labour, the moon (standing in for the goddess Selene) and, finally, death. The Slavic Leshy, also known as Borovy or Boruta, usually dealt with forest fauna, while Dobrokhochy watched over vegetation, and both were strict judges, rewarding goodness and punishing wickedness or negligence.¹³²

As far as looks are concerned, the Greek and Slavic forest deities had little in common. Pan looked like a hairy man with goat horns, a tail, a beard and horn-like protrusions. Artemis was portrayed as a young woman with a bow, arrows and a crescent moon tiara. The Slavic Leshy's form was that of a very tall man with an unnaturally white face, with pine needles in place of hair and a skin resembling bark (ill. 3). He was often incarnated as various animals, especially

¹³² "Leszy i Dobrochoczy", *Demony słowiańskie*, <https://demonyslowianskie.pl/leszy-dobrochoczy/> (accessed September 13, 2021).

bears, wolves and owls. He could imitate the sounds of animals as well as the wind, which meant it was not hard for him to hide from curious human eyes. Dobrokhochy often mimicked trees.¹³³ The Greek gods were of a gentle disposition, similarly to Dobrokhochy. Only Leshy is described as an arrogant and spiteful god.

Over time, the gods of the ever-shrinking forests diminished in importance. Leshy was preserved in folk beliefs in the form of the devil Boruta.



III. 3: N.N. Brut, *Leshy*, drawing on the cover of *Leshy* magazine (1906), Public Domain. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leshy_\(1906\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leshy_(1906).jpg) (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹³³ "Dobrochocy", *Wikipedia*, <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dobrochocy> (accessed September 13, 2021); Zych, Vargas, *Bestiariusz słowiański*, Vol. 1, p. 66.

Air

Omnipotent

Among their gods, both the Slavs and the Greeks had one that was the most important, whom they considered the creator and lord of all the world. For the Slavs it was Perun, for the Greeks – Zeus, the king of Olympus.

Perun was the father of all the gods, but, importantly, he was also the god of storms, the sky, lightning, thunderbolts. This god's attributes were a hammer and an axe (ill. 4).¹³⁴ Zeus, on the other hand, ruled over lightning, and his defence was an aegis made from the skin of Amalthea's goat. Both gods had an eagle (royal bird) and an oak (ruler of all trees) as their identifying symbols. Rock was also considered an incarnation of the god of lightning. The famous Zeus, father of gods and men, was mainly worshipped in Olympia and Dodoni, but people believed in him and offered him sacrifices all over ancient Greece. In the same way, Perun was worshipped in all of Slavdom, while Kiev was a special place of worship where oxen were sacrificed to him.¹³⁵

Perun's father was Svarog, the god of the sky, fire, and smithery, creator of the sun. Perun's brothers were Dazhdbog, Svarozhits, and Veles, the last one being the age-old opponent and opposite of Perun. Zeus' parents are said to have been Cronus and Rhea. As one of the most powerful gods, Zeus took part in many wars of the gods. His birth is connected with the famous myth about Cronus swallowing his children. Aleksander Gieysztor writes: "As his main position, Perun occupies the same place as Mitra, Ahura Mazda, Zeus, Jupiter, Odin or Taranis, all of them endowed with patriarchal features. He is, so to speak, the father image transferred to the sacred sphere, an archetype of the leader of a great family, tribe, ensuring prosperity for the community, shaping its attitude towards the surrounding world and the recognition of certain norms. He is the father and also the ruler of lightning, capable of defending the community and also

¹³⁴ Mateusz Wrona, Jakub Bobrowski, *Mitologia słowiańska*, Olszanica: BOSZ, 2017, pp. 7, 11.

¹³⁵ Brückner, *Mitologia słowiańska*, pp. 48, 58.



III. 4: Max Presnyakov, *Perun* (1998), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Перун.1998г.смеш.,тех.,бум.40,5x27,5.jpg> (accessed September 13, 2021).

extending its reach”.¹³⁶ It is similar in the case of Zeus, who ruled over the entire world of the gods and thus had influence on everything that happened on the earth through their doing.

Air Riders and Winds

In ancient Greece winds were said to be of divine origin. Their homeland was Thrace, a land of tall mountains, covered in snow. The worship of winds spread as they started being worshipped as gods, mainly by sailors and farmers. Roosters and black rams were sacrificed to them, and temples were built to them, mostly on the seashore.¹³⁷ In Slavic mythology “wind riders” were an important element linked to the sphere of air. They were the personification of winds and whirlwinds. Being malicious beings, they destroyed fields, crops and farms. The Greek god Boreas acted in the same way. He was the personification of the strong, stormy north wind that was dangerous to sailors. One example of his violence might be the abduction of Orithyia, an Athenian princess, whom he was said to have wrapped in his clouds as she was dancing by a stream, taken her away and made her his wife. She gave birth to twin sons with golden wings – Calais and Zetes, both known as the Boreads, who were the embodiment of a gentle though unexpected gust of wind. Both the “air riders” and Boreas caused substantial damage. When the “riders” carried off a man, people believed he would never come back to earth, remaining with the “riders” for ever. According to the Greeks’ beliefs, it was Boreas who caused the damage to the Persian invaders’ fleet in the years 492 and 480 BCE. In art, he was portrayed as a bearded man, sometimes with two faces.

Another god just as violent as the two aforementioned deities was Eurus, the personification of the stormy south-east wind.¹³⁸ In Slavic mythology storms

¹³⁶ Aleksander Gieysztor, *Mitologia Słowian*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2006, p. 114.

¹³⁷ Parandowski, *Mitologia*, p. 79.

¹³⁸ See also Paulina Kaczyk, Justyna Kluczyńska, Martyna Markuszewska, Alicja Piątek, *Cztery żywioły w architekturze* in this book.

were brought by Propnastyk, the evil air demon.¹³⁹ He lived in faraway forests, from where flew in, bringing violent storms with him. His slaves were ghosts originating from humans who had fallen into his magic air traps. This spirit did a lot of damage, including destroying farms, crops and forests, killing people, bringing droughts. Eurus also brought fire to the earth (his name comes from the Greek for “he who burns”).¹⁴⁰ In art, he is portrayed slightly differently than his brothers (Zephyrus, Boreas, and Notus) – as an older man with wings.

Writing about strong winds appearing in mythologies, one must also mention Apeliotes (Greek: “from the Sun”), who was the personification of the blustery east wind. Apeliotes had a brother, Kaikias, the embodiment of the cold north-eastern wind bringing heavy clouds into the sky.¹⁴¹ That is why he is depicted in art holding a shield filled with hailstones.¹⁴² According to Slavic mythology, adverse clouds, rain, hailstorms and tempests could be chased away by Pokhvist. He thus deserved proper respect, otherwise Pokhvist could batter or abduct a person and take revenge on the whole area, bringing down a destructive gale.¹⁴³

Water

Water is one of the most precious and at the same time most common substances in the world. It is extremely important for the proper functioning of the human body, and is also the foundation of all life on Earth. It was perceived as the source of life already from ancient times, and also as a threat, for example in the form of floods. That is why it should not come as a surprise that both Greek and Slavic mythology features many deities and beings linked to the element of water.

¹³⁹ Zych, Vargas, *Bestiariusz słowiański*, Vol. 2: *Rzecz o biziach, kadukach i samojadkach*, Olsztyn: BOSZ, 2016, p. 160.

¹⁴⁰ *Mała encyklopedia kultury antycznej*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990, pp. 794–795.

¹⁴¹ “Anemoi”, *Theoi Greek Mythology*, <https://www.theoi.com/Titan/Anemoi.html> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹⁴² Kubiak, *Mitologia Greków i Rzymian*, pp. 188–189.

¹⁴³ Zych, Vargas, *Bestiariusz słowiański*, Vol. 2, p. 145.

Ruler of Waters

For the ancient Slavs as well as the ancient Greeks, seas were an important element of life, among other things because of their connection with trade and fishing. In Greek mythology the ruler of the seas was the son of Rhea and Cronus, Poseidon, whereas in Slavic mythology it was Wodo-Wełm, Lord of the Great Water. Both these beings were portrayed with a distinctive trident (*tryzub* in Slavic mythology). Poseidon was accompanied by water nymphs, i.e. naiads, while Wodo-Wełm's companions were nymphs called *topielice*.

Poseidon took power over the kingdom of the seas when his brother Zeus defeated the ruling Cronus. Due to his lack of commitment and support in the fight of the Titans, Oceanus, who had played the role of the god of the seas until then, was banished to Tartarus and then made lord of the rivers. According to the Greeks' beliefs, Zeus' brother was firm and quick-tempered; he was also responsible for earthquakes, which were caused by his anger and strong emotions. He lived on Atlantis, surrounded by sumptuousness and riches as well as dolphins and other marine creatures. One of the dolphins often helped him, and to this animal Poseidon owed his marriage to Amphitrite, daughter of Oceanus (or Nereus).

Similarly to Poseidon, Wodo-Wełm (also called Wodo-Bełt) lived in his own palace at the bottom of a body of water, wore emerald robes and, as the Lord of the Great Water, ruled over salt waters and everything in them.¹⁴⁴ Contrary to Poseidon, we know nothing about his marriage, but we do know a few of his descendants, to mention Vodnik (or Vodyanoy), one of the most popular mythical characters in all of Slavdom (ill. 5).

The biggest difference between these two characters is the extent of their power, duties and privileges. Poseidon is one of the most important and recognisable representatives of Greek mythology. On the other hand, the Slavs split the scope of power in the water kingdom among more beings, each of them having specific abilities and watching over individual elements of all the waters.

¹⁴⁴ "Bóg Wodo-Wełm", *Słowianie – Wiara Przyrodzona*, April 10, 2015, <https://wiaraprzyrodzona.wordpress.com/2015/04/10/bog-wodo-welm/> (accessed September 13, 2021).



Ill. 5: Ivan Bilbin (1876–1942), *Vodyanoy, the Water Sprite* (1934), Public Domain. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vodyanoy.jpg> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Thus, falling water, i.e. rain, was governed by the goddess Śląkwa-Dżdża,¹⁴⁵ lakes and small bodies of water by Wąda-Węda,¹⁴⁶ and rivers by the aforementioned Vodnik.¹⁴⁷

Besides ruling over the rivers, Vodnik was also the demon of the forests. He was most often depicted as an old man with green fish eyes. Wherever he went, he left a puddle of water behind. He lived in lakes, rivers, and also ponds all over Slavdom. He would often drag adventurers who showed him disrespect down into his home. That is why, if bypassing these places was impossible, people won the demon's graciousness with an appropriate sacrifice (once a year, in a proper ceremony, an animal would be drowned, sometimes even as large as a horse).¹⁴⁸ Vodnik is often described interchangeably with Utopiec, an evil Slavic water demon originating from the souls of people who died drowning. This demon pulled animals and people standing at the edge of a body of water down into the water and drowned them. He sometimes did this personally, but might also provoke the wretches to go into the water by themselves.

In Greek mythology the one who watches over all kinds of rivers is Oceanus, who was stripped of the throne of the kingdom of the seas and forced to hand over power to Poseidon. Considered the eldest son of Uranus and Gaia, he was among the oldest generations of the Titans. The ancients believed that even the smallest river was connected to the Underworld kingdom and had as its deity one of the many children of Oceanus and Tethys the Titanide (ill. 6). As the god of waters, Oceanus mainly helped fishermen and sailors, but sometimes also birds. He could trigger a sea storm with a wave of his hand. According to Homer, Oceanus is treated as the superior god – “the parent of everything”.

¹⁴⁵ “Bogini Śląkwa-Dżdża”, *Słowianie – Wiara Przyrodzona*, June 20, 2015, <https://wiaraprzyrodzona.wordpress.com/2015/06/20/bogini-slakwa-dzdza/> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹⁴⁶ “Bogini Wąda-Węda”, *Słowianie – Wiara Przyrodzona*, April 17, 2015, <https://wiaraprzyrodzona.wordpress.com/2015/04/17/bogini-wada-weda/> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹⁴⁷ Zych, Vargas, *Bestiariusz słowiański*, Vol. 1, pp. 198–199.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 202–203.



Ill. 6: *Oceanus and Tethys*, Zeugma Mosaic Museum in Gaziantep, photo by Klaus-Peter Simon (2011), CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ZeugmaMuseum3.jpg> (accessed September 13, 2021).

Creatures

All kinds of creatures were also believed to exist in nature. Elaborately devised beings were used by the ancient Slavs and Greeks to explain the most mysterious phenomena around them. Believing in beasts helped them to understand not only intriguing changes in nature, but also changes occurring in human characters and personalities.

Dragons

Dragons appear in the beliefs of people from almost the whole globe. Both the Greeks and the Slavs believed in their existence. Greek and Slavic monsters looked similar, and defeating them brought great fame.

Slavic mythology also had dragons that helped humans (though they were few), and Žmij (or Zmei) was one of them. Mighty, winged and three-headed, it assumed various forms. It influenced the growth cycle, protected waters and brought life-giving rain. It fought with air dragons that caused natural disasters.

According to South Slavic beliefs, it also entered into relationships with women, from which men of extraordinary strength were born. It was associated with meteorites and comets or falling stars, hence falling stars were a harbinger of good fortune. People also believed (mainly in Rossoszyca, a village in the Sieradz region) that Źmij was the king of snakes and meted out justice to criminals.¹⁴⁹ In Lusatia it was believed to steal various goods from farms and bring them to the farmer who fed it and kept it under his roof. Depending on the kind of loot it brought, different types of *zmij* were distinguished: the Money Źmij (Lusatian: Peńeżny Zmij), the Milk Źmij (Lusatian: Mlókowy Zmij) and the Rye Źmij (Lusatian: Źitny Zmij).¹⁵⁰ According to some researchers (like Vyacheslav Ivanov or Vladimir Toporov), Źmij is a zoomorphic incarnation of Veles, who assumed its form to fight against Perun, and also to guard the entrance to Vyraj and a great treasure. This theory also has its critics (e.g. Leo Klejn or Igor M. Diakonoff).¹⁵¹

In Greek mythology dragons play a major role in many myths, but none is distinguished as the most powerful and most important. Cadmus, brother of Europa, who failed to find his abducted sister and, by order of his father, could not return to his homeland, founded a new city after destroying a dragon. Then, warriors sprang up from the dragon's teeth which he had sown, and, after fighting among themselves, became Cadmus' new companions. There is also a dragon in the myth about the Argonauts' expedition organised by Jason, whose uncle wanted to get rid of him and sent him on what was to have been an impossible mission, to find the Golden Fleece. The king of Colchis, Aeëtes, did not deny Jason the treasure, but obligated him to perform a number of tasks, including sowing a dragon's teeth and defeating the warriors who sprang from them, in addition to the dragon itself.

¹⁴⁹ "Źmij", *PlWiki*, <https://plwiki.pl/Leksykon/%C5%BBmij> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹⁵⁰ "Źmij – jedno z wcieleń boga Welesa", *Słowiański bestiariusz*, April 8, 2019, <https://blog.slowianskibestiariusz.pl/bogowie/zmij/> (accessed September 13, 2021); Kamil Goldowski, "Źmij – słowiański smok", <https://www.slawoslaw.pl/zmij-slowianski-smok/> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹⁵¹ Milorad Ivanović, "New Insights on Slavic god Volosъ/Velesъ from a Vedic Perspective", *Studia Mythologica Slavica* 22 (2019), <https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/sms/article/view/7597/7081> (accessed September 13, 2021); "Veles (god)", *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veles_\(god\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veles_(god)) (accessed September 13, 2021).

Witch and Oracle

Many similarities are noticeable between Slavic witches and ancient oracles. Let's take a look at the witch first. She was a woman with supernatural powers that she had received after entering into a pact with dark forces, for example the god of the Underworld, Veles. Both oracles and witches lived in isolation. Local people came to both of them for advice on how to proceed in certain situations. A witch was described as "she who knows" – knows how to help, knows the future of the asker. Witches, like oracles, foretold the future. They told fortunes with stones covered in blood and with bird bones.¹⁵² It was best to maintain good relations with a witch, as she could fulfil peasants' requests to lift the spells and curses put upon them.

Half Human, Half Goat

In Slavic mythology, Chort was blamed for all sorts of plagues and misfortunes; he was also able to take possession of human minds and persuade people to commit wicked deeds (for example, drunkenness, suicide or murder). He lived in the marshes, in forests or in bodies of water. According to one myth, he once got into a fight with one of the gods, as a result of which he was injured in the leg or was thrown from heaven and broke a leg in the fall.¹⁵³ He could also assume various zoomorphic forms, such as a snake, a dog, a cat or a pig. He was blamed for all kinds of damage to homesteads and barns during a gale. With time and the spread of Christianity, he started being identified with Satan.

In the mythology of the Greeks, meanwhile, Pan was the guardian of forests, nature, shepherds and their flocks (identified with the Roman Faun or Silvanus). His attributes were a syrinx, a shepherd's crook, a wreath of fir or a fir held in his hand (ill. 7). The story of his birth is described in one of the *Homeric Hymns*,

¹⁵² Zych, Vargas, *Bestiariusz słowiański*, Vol. 1, p. 51; Wrona, Bobrowski, *Mitologia słowiańska*, p. 70.

¹⁵³ "Czym jest Czart", *Mity Słowian*, March 9, 2015, <https://mityslowian.blogspot.com/2015/03/czym-jest-czart.html> (accessed September 13, 2021); Staniq, "Słowiańska mitologia, wierzenia, duchy i demony", *Paranormalne*, <http://www.paranormalne.pl/tutorials/article/657-slowianska-mitologia-wierzenia-duchy-i-demony/> (accessed September 13, 2021).



III. 7: Francesco Mancini (1679–1758), *Fight between Eros and Pan* (1719–1756), Pina-coteca, Vatican Museums, photo by Zeno.org, Public Domain. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francesco_Mancini_Kampf_zwischen_Amor_und_Pan.jpg (ac-cessed September 13, 2021).

according to which he was the son of Hermes and the nymph Dryope, daughter of Dryops.¹⁵⁴ The nymph rejected him after birth, and his father took him to Olympus, where Pan won the favour of the gods. One of the most popular myths connected with him is the story of the origin of the panpipes.

Basilisk

The basilisk is an interesting creature found in both Greek and Slavic mythology. In Slavic mythology it was described as a small creature living in cellars, underground passages and dungeons. The Slavic basilisk hatched from a rooster's egg brooded by a toad on a dung heap.¹⁵⁵ The basilisk had the body of a rooster, a snake tail, and protruding froglike eyes with which it could kill any living being it looked at (ill. 8).

The basilisk was presented a little differently in Greek mythology, but it does share many features with its equivalent from Slavic mythology. According to Pliny the Elder, this creature lived in North Africa. Like the basilisk from Slavic mythology, it hatched from a rooster's egg, but brooded by a snake. In Greek mythology the basilisk was depicted in various ways: sometimes as a dragon with a rooster's head, sometimes with a reptile's head but bird's wings, and sometimes as half rooster, half dragon. There were also some descriptions very similar to those from Slavic mythology, showing the basilisk as a creature with the body of a reptile, the neck of a turkey, the head of a rooster, and the eyes of a frog. Like the Slavic basilisk, it could kill with its glare.¹⁵⁶

Conclusion

Analysing Greek and Slavic nature deities, we can see many similarities. They are mainly the consequence of the deities' professions and their scope of competence.

¹⁵⁴ *Homeric Hymn XIX*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text.jsp?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0137:hymn=19> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹⁵⁵ "Bazyliszek: Mitologia i kultura popularna", *Ruarrioseph*, <https://pl.ruarrioseph.com/obrazowanie/80788-vasilisk-mifologiya-i-populyarnaya-kultura.html> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹⁵⁶ Bartłomiej Grzegorz Sala, *Bestie i potwory mitologii greckiej*, ill. Błażej Ostojka Lniski, Olszanica: BOSZ, 2018, p. 19.



III. 8: Václav Hollar, *Basilisk* (1567). Oppenbare Bibliotheek Brugge, Public Domain. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Marcus_Gheeraerts_I_-_Fable_of_the_basilisk_and_weasel.jpeg (accessed September 13, 2021).

These gods are subject to some level of anthropomorphism in both mythologies. There are similar kinship relations between them, and similar conflicts (for example, between Uranus and Cronus in Greek mythology, and Veles and Perun in Slavic mythology). In both Slavic and Greek mythology, the god of lightning is the highest-ranking of the gods. There are also many differences. For example, the god of waters plays one of the key roles in Greek mythology, but the corresponding deity in Slavic beliefs plays a marginal role. The characters of the gods, secondary deities, demons and beasts are completely different, too. In the mythology of the Greeks they were full of dignity, a peculiar charm, but also brutality and ruthlessness worthy of a superbly trained warrior. The beings from

Slavic mythology were much cruder, it is impossible to find beauty and nobleness in them; rather, they aroused fear and disgust.

However, it must be admitted that in the case of almost every deity, we can find an equivalent from a different part of the globe. This is evidence of a certain universality of beliefs, which is a consequence of living on the same planet and observing similar or the same natural phenomena. After all, the Moon we see is exactly the same Moon that people in Greece see. Does this indicate a lack of originality in the two mythologies? Absolutely not! Both have their unique features, while similarities are especially noticeable for deities linked to nature.

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The Role of Nature in Ancient Divination in the Light of Cicero's *De divinatione*

What is Divination?

Divination is the practices and beliefs related to finding out the causes of current life situations or the course of future events. It originates from magical and religious beliefs in the existence of supernatural forces at play in the universe. It is a belief in the possibility of reading and interpreting, for one's own benefit, signs passed on by the gods (according to the beliefs of the ancient Greeks and Romans) through the appearance and arrangement of objects or through natural phenomena, the behaviour of animals or the look of their internal organs.¹⁵⁷ The present work aims to present the role of nature signs in ancient divination in the light of Cicero's thoughts contained in the work *De divinatione*, i.e. *On Divination*, from 44 BCE. This text is in the form of Cicero's conversation with his brother Quintus, in which they offer various ideas on the nature of divination.

When, in what circumstances, did people resort to divination? An answer to this question might be provided by augurs, haruspices as well as ordinary citizens of Greece or Rome. The truth is, explanations were sought on matters of daily life as well as at more serious moments, such as wars. Then, divination might be based on an animal found in an unusual place or position, or on a strange sound. People would ask what actions needed to be taken to win, or what the ultimate outcome of a battle would be. Advice was also sought when an important decision needed to be made, for example on founding a city. In summary, the

¹⁵⁷ "Wróżbiarstwo", *Encyklopedia PWN*, <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/wrozbiarstwo;3998284.html> (accessed September 13, 2021).

ancients often resorted to divination – when they wanted to find out something, when they faced a tough choice, or when they came upon incomprehensible or difficult phenomena. We might say that divination was something natural in ancient times, accompanying daily life or even guiding it. Cicero mentions this in the following passage: *Quam vero Graecia coloniam misit in Aevoliam, Ioniam, Asiam, Siciliam, Italiam sine Pythio aut Dodonaeo aut Hammonis oraculo? aut quod bellum susceptum ab ea sine consilio deorum est?* (Cic. *div.* I 1.3: “And, indeed, what colony did Greece ever send into Aeolia, Ionia, Asia, Sicily, or Italy without consulting the Pythian or Dodonian oracle, or that of Jupiter Hammon? Or what war did she ever undertake without first seeking the counsel of the gods?”).¹⁵⁸

The Romans adopted divination from the Greeks, with the difference that they were more pedantic about it, for they also found inspiration in Etruscan culture. Roman seers were divided into haruspices and augurs. Haruspices practised divination from the entrails of sacrificial animals.¹⁵⁹ They also purified sites hit by the anger of the gods, i.e. places where lightning had struck. Augurs were the most important group of seers. They belonged to a Collegium that initially had three members, but later gradually grew to sixteen. They based their divination on thunderbolts and lightning, animal behaviours, the line of flight of birds and bird voices, and the way specially bred chickens fed on grain.¹⁶⁰ A divination procedure called *auspicia* was held before every Roman undertaking. It took place in a sacred circle marked with the augur's wand called a *lituus*. Augurs played a major role in society. They accompanied commanders on wars and officials

¹⁵⁸ In the work on this chapter the following edition was used: Cyceron, *O naturze bogów. O wróżbiarstwie. O przeznaczeniu* (Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods, On Divination, and On Fate*), trans. Wiktor Kornatowski, Warszawa: PWN, 1960, here p. 232. All Latin excerpts from: Cicero, *De divinatione*, ed. Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Müller, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1915, *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://data.perseus.org/texts/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0474.phi053.perseus-lat1> (accessed September 13, 2021). All English translations from: Cicero, *De senectute, de amicitia, de divinatione*, trans. William Armistead Falconer, Loeb Classical Library 154, Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press, 1923, pp. 224–225, *Bill Thayer's Web Site*, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/I/Roman/texts/cicero/de_divinatione/home.html, available also at (ed. 1971) <https://archive.org/details/cicero-in-28-volumes.-vol.-20-loeb-154/mode/2up> (accessed September 13, 2021).

¹⁵⁹ Zygmunt Kubiak, *Mitologia Greków i Rzymian*, Warszawa: Świat Książki, 1997, p. 537.

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem.

in fulfilling their duties. They had to be present at the appointments of new officials and priests. The completion of official actions depended on them. They decided if something could be done on a given day or, if the signs were unfavourable, commanded postponement to a different date by saying: *alio die*, i.e. “another day”.¹⁶¹

In his treatise Cicero writes about the division into two main kinds of divination: natural and artificial.¹⁶² Natural divination includes prophetic dreams caused by divine powers and predictions spoken by seers in a prophetic frenzy, such as Pythia’s prophecies at the Delphic Oracle. The artificial kind includes foretelling from the alignment of celestial bodies, various phenomena occurring in nature, animal behaviours, animal entrails, or by drawing lots. In our project we will focus on observation, interpretation, and divination from nature.

Interpretation of Natural Phenomena

Ne Pherecydes quidem, ille Pythagorae magister, potius divinus habebitur quam physicus, quod, cum vidisset haustam aquam de iugi puteo, terrae motus dixit instare.

“Not even Pherecydes, the famous teacher of Pythagoras, will be considered a prophet because he predicted an earthquake from the appearance of some water drawn from an unfailling well.”¹⁶³

In his treatise *On Divination* and in the *Prognostics*, Cicero also mentions certain phenomena that cannot quite be considered a part of divination, namely various predictions based on experience.¹⁶⁴ These include predicting a storm on the basis of observations of nature: “The heaving sea oft warns of coming

¹⁶¹ *Alio die*, i.e. another day; vide: Kubiak, *Mitologia Greków i Rzymian*, p. 537.

¹⁶² Cic. *div.* I 49, I 12. See also Cyseron, *O naturze bogów*, p. 238.

¹⁶³ Cic. *div.* I 49, I 12. Trans. Falconer, op. cit., pp. 344–345. See also Cyseron, *O naturze bogów*, p. 292.

¹⁶⁴ *Prognostica* – a Greek poem translated by Cicero into Latin.

storms, / when suddenly its depths begin to swell; [...] / or when from lofty mountain-peak upsprings / a shrilly whistling wind, which stronger grows with each repulse by hedge of circling cliffs” (*atque etiam ventos praemonstrat saepe futuros / inflatum mare, cum subito penitusque tumescit [...], aut densus stridor cum celso e vertice montis / ortus adaugescit scopulorum saepe repulso*).¹⁶⁵ The use of plants and substances that are known to be effective in treating all kinds of ailments, but no one knows why it is so, may also be counted among this group of predictions: “I see the purgative effect of the scammony root and I see an antidote for snake-bite in the aristolochia plant [...], I see their power and that is enough; why they have it I do not know” (*Quid scammonae radix ad purgandum, quid aristolochia ad morsus serpentium possit [...] rationem quam habeant, non satis perspicio; vim et eventum agnosco, scio, approbo*).¹⁶⁶

Animal Behaviours

An, dum bestiae loquantur exspectamus? hominum consentiente auctoritate contenti non sumus?

“Are we not satisfied with the unanimous judgement of men, and do we wait for beasts to give their testimony too?”¹⁶⁷

One of the most frequent opportunities for soothsaying was the appearance of animals in various places and the possibility of observing their behaviours. Such occurrences were treated as prophecies having an impact on human fate. This might seem absurd, but the ancients believed in it and attached great importance to the words of augurs and haruspices. It is hard not to agree with Cicero here, as he considered such foretelling artificial. Why artificial? Because it was actually based on the interpretations and decisions of seers. This is illustrated by the story according to which the Lacedaemonians at Lebadeia prayed to the god

¹⁶⁵ Cic. *div.* I 8, 13. Trans. Falconer, op. cit., p. 237. See also Cyceron, *O naturze bogów*, p. 239.

¹⁶⁶ Cic. *div.* I 10, 16. Trans. Falconer, op. cit., p. 240. See also Cyceron, *O naturze bogów*, p. 240.

¹⁶⁷ Cic. *div.* I 39, 84. Trans. Falconer, op. cit., p. 317. See also Cyceron, *O naturze bogów*, p. 278.

Trofonius, and the roosters started crowing so frenziedly that they made not the slightest break in their noise. In this case the Greek augurs concluded that victory would belong to the Thebans, because a defeated rooster is silent, it crows to announce its victory. Did they make this claim on the basis of knowledge and science? It is doubtful; after all – as Cicero states – such soothsaying is based mainly on guesses, and sometimes even on plain fraud.¹⁶⁸ Who knows if a different augur would not have offered the opposite interpretation? However, the worst prophecy for the Spartans in those times was the behaviour of a monkey, which scattered the tickets collected in an urn to find out from Zeus what would be the result of an anticipated military clash. The oracle's guardian predicted they would lose.

Many of Cicero's contemporaries would have believed this kind of story. Gaius Flaminius allegedly suffered defeat during the Second Punic War because he had little regard for divination. When the consul was performing the *tripudium*,¹⁶⁹ a soothsayer watching the chickens as they refused to eat commanded that the battle be postponed, at which Flaminius cried out: *Praeclara vero auspicia, si esurientibus pullis res geri poterit, saturis nihil geretur!* ("Fine auspices indeed! [...] for they counsel action when chickens' crops are empty and inaction when chickens' crops are filled").¹⁷⁰ We would not err if we said that our contemporaries would likely share this politician's attitude. Imagine that whether you accept a new job depends on the appetite of a chicken. Doesn't it seem nonsensical, or even comical?

Bees were animals that were thought to portend success in two cases mentioned by Cicero. Together with the rescued horse of Dionysius,¹⁷¹ these small insects, which appeared above the animal's head as it stood on the shore, though its owner thought his steed had disappeared for ever in the waters of the river they had been crossing, were believed to foretell Dionysius' rise to royal power (ill. 1). Bees were alleged to have had something to do with Plato's gift of eloquence,

¹⁶⁸ Ibidem, p. 323.

¹⁶⁹ *Tripudium* – a victory war dance.

¹⁷⁰ Cic. *div.* I 35, 77. Trans. Falconer, op. cit., p. 309. See also Ciceron, *O naturze bogów*, p. 273.

¹⁷¹ Dionysius – tyrant of Syracuse.



Ill. 1: Zuzanna Serwin, *Dionysius' Horse with Its Head in a Swarm of Bees*, used with the Author's permission.

because when he was still in the cradle, they settled on his lips (ill. 2). He was not the only one whose future was foretold on the basis of animals appearing in his childhood. Apparently ants carried grains of wheat into the mouth of the young Phrygian Midas, which was supposed to portend his future wealth. The infant Roscius, meanwhile, had snakes coiled around him as he slept, which the haruspices announced to mean that the boy would be a very famous and eminent man. These examples show how important a role animals played in divination. However, it needs adding that much more could be read from them.



III. 2: Zuzanna Serwin, *Plato, Midas, Roscius*, used with the Author's permission.

Divination from Animal Entrails

[...] *enim omnes fere utuntur*.¹⁷²

“[...] nearly everybody employs entrails in divining.”

Divination from the entrails of sacrificial animals was a normal thing for the Romans. They often resorted to this method, one that also gave the priests a great opportunity to display their skills. In a way, the divination already began with the choice of the animal to be sacrificed, but the proper effects did not come until the carcass was opened (ill. 3). This marked the stage of interpretation, study, inspection of almost every organ in the dead animal's body. The liver was considered especially interesting, or rather its part or system enigmatically called the “head of the liver” (ill. 4). This was the part looked out for the most, because its lack was a very inauspicious sign, as Cicero writes: *caput iecoris ex omni parte diligentissime considerant; si vero id non est inventum, nihil putant accidere potuisse tristius* (“If, perchance, the liver's head should be wanting they regard it as the most unpropitious sign that could have happened”).¹⁷³

¹⁷² Cic. *div.* I 10, 16. Trans. Falconer, op. cit., p. 241. See also Cyclopedia, *O naturze bogów*, p. 324.

¹⁷³ Cic. *div.* II 13, 32. Trans. Falconer, op. cit., p. 405. See also Cyclopedia, *O naturze bogów*, p. 283.



III. 3: Zuzanna Serwin, *Divination from a Sheep's Entrails*, used with the Author's permission.

We thus know how important the liver's head was for divination, but it is worth mentioning that a lot more could be read from this organ. Just as much attention as to the "head" was given to any kind of crevices, fibres and distinguishing features on the liver, and the signs thus obtained were interpreted in every possible way. People believed there was a bond and harmony between the organs of sacrificial animals and the divine supernatural world. This made it possible to explain, for example, that a certain crevice foretold future wealth.



III. 4: Zuzanna Serwin, *Liver of a Sacrificial Animal*, used with the Author's permission.

Another organ important for divination and mentioned by Cicero is the heart, or rather its lack, as in the case of Caesar described in the treatise.¹⁷⁴ The ox he offered up as a sacrifice apparently turned out not to have a heart. But is it possible for an animal to live without one of its vital organs? Cicero asks a similar question in his deliberations. It is obvious that an animal without a heart is unable to function. This conclusion leads to further questions: how did the heart suddenly disappear during the sacrificial beast's killing? Was it the doing of divine powers? Or did the ox simply lose it when he saw Caesar, who, as Cicero suggests with irony, was also "heartless"?¹⁷⁵ It will probably remain a mystery to us.

Despite its popularity, divination from entrails was extremely unstable. One day a dead animal's entrails portended imminent disaster, the next day they foretold incredible good fortune and wealth. An animal sacrificed on the same day concerning the same matter, but on a different god's altar, also revealed different results. There are two options of interpretation here. Either the gods are extremely unstable, indecisive, and change their minds every few minutes, or it is all a matter of chance. Cicero is definitely inclined to back the latter hypothesis.

Hampered by randomness, predictions often did not come true, although, of course, this might only have been a symptom of the gods' indecisiveness mentioned earlier. The smarter soothsayers found a way to offer predictions that very often came true and were not subject to the emotional vacillations of divine beings. However, can we actually call them soothsayers? According to Cicero, they were, rather, investigators of nature.¹⁷⁶ It is nothing new that the environment we live in has a significant impact on our condition. The same could be said for animals: all environmental conditions affected their bodies, including the liver so "loved" by seers. Thus, the colour and condition of entrails could help identify the quality of air or crops. According to Democritus, these were the kind of observations that were the original reason for inspecting entrails, which later transformed into a very lucrative method of prophecy.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Ibidem, p. 327.

¹⁷⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁷⁶ Ibidem, p. 323.

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem.

Divination from the Flight of Birds: Ornithomancy

Omitto nostros, qui nihil [...] sine extis agunt, nihil sine auspiciis...

“Passing by our own countrymen, who do nothing [...] without taking the auspices...”¹⁷⁸

Observation of birds in flight was very important to the ancients (ill. 5). In Cicero we read that in the olden days, virtually nothing was undertaken without divination from these animals.¹⁷⁹ It was even done on private matters. Imagine having a passing kingfisher decide about who you are going to spend the evening with tonight. Preposterous, right? But it was such predictions that played an enormous role in all well-organised states. After all, according to legend, the actual decision to build Rome was made on the basis of observations of vultures, and there could be a grain of truth in saying that Romulus seeing more birds, even though Remus saw them first, decided about the fact that today we can stroll along the Via Appia in Roma and not in Remor.

One famous person that Cicero mentions as doing nothing without divination from birds was King Deiotarus. One day, warned by an eagle's flight, he turned back from a planned expedition. The place where he had intended to stay collapsed the next night. Apparently he turned back like this many times, even after several days' journey. However, the most unusual thing is that when Caesar stripped him of the title of tetrarch, royal power and wealth, he allegedly did not regret having followed the prophecies that had favoured his switching to Pompey's side, and said that the birds had advised him well because he valued a good reputation more highly than dominions. To underline just how important divining from eagles, ravens, vultures or crows was to the ancients, it is worth noting that, in this context, Cicero several times makes mention of the people of Umbria as well as the Phrygians, Pisidians and Cilicians, who had the greatest respect for ornithomancy.

¹⁷⁸ Cic. *div.* I 43, 95. Trans. Falconer, op. cit., p. 327. See also Cycleron, *O naturze bogów*, p. 241.

¹⁷⁹ Ibidem, p. 283.



III. 5: Zuzanna Serwin, *Divination from the Flight of Birds*, used with the Author's permission.

Divination from Natural Phenomena

Quid? de fulgurum vi dubitare num possumus?

“Is it possible for us to doubt the prophetic value of lightning?”¹⁸⁰

Very often various phenomena occurring in nature provided a basis for augury. For example, during the war with Veii the Romans found out there was a prophecy saying that Veii would not be conquered as long as Lake Albano was full of water, and that if the waters were to overflow along the natural way towards the sea,

¹⁸⁰ Cic. *div.* I 10, 16. Trans. Falconer, *op. cit.*, p. 241. See also Ciceron, *O naturze bogów*, p. 362.

this would be unfavourable for the Romans. However, if the waters were removed in a way preventing them from reaching the sea, this would be propitious for the Romans. Thus, the Romans soon built a special system for diverting the water from the lake and drained it without allowing it to flow to the sea. They seized Veii not long afterwards.¹⁸¹

One of the most important divine signs on which the ancients based their divination was lightning, which was believed to be sent by Jupiter himself. For example, one perfectly clear day a thunderbolt suddenly came down from the sky and struck a man, who died instantly. Some time later numerous flashes of lightning started striking Capitoline Hill and the statues there, damaging the statue of Natta and of the she-wolf who had suckled Remus and Romulus. Soothsayers saw these events as a prophecy of a great civil war and a terrible massacre that would soon take place in Rome.¹⁸² Here we also find an explanation for why oaks were considered a sacred tree: lightning most often struck oaks, so these trees were considered particularly strongly marked by divine powers.

Divination from Celestial Bodies

*Etiamne urbis natalis dies ad vim stellarum et lunae
pertinebat?*

“And was the city’s natal day also subject to the influence of the moon and stars?”¹⁸³

Astrology, or predicting the future from the arrangement of celestial bodies, was a widespread type of divination in many different ancient communities. One of the best examples of such divination is a ritual described by Heraclides of Pontus and practised by people on the island of Ceos, who watched the rising of the star Canicula (Sirius) in order to decide, on the basis of their observations,

¹⁸¹ Ibidem, p. 285.

¹⁸² Ibidem, p. 242.

¹⁸³ Cic. *div.* II 47, 99. Trans. Falconer, *op. cit.*, p. 481. See also Cyceron, *O naturze bogów*, p. 362.

whether the coming year would be healthy and favourable or not. If the star appeared dimmed and blurry, it meant that the air was dense and heavy, and thus breathing it would be unpleasant and unhealthy; if it rose bright and shining intensely, the air was light and pure, and thus healthy.

Astrology was especially popular among the Chaldeans, a Semitic people, who foretold a person's fate from the date of their birth.¹⁸⁴ They believed that the circle formed by the signs of the zodiac included a force thanks to which each sign had a different impact and changed the sky differently. Depending on how the stars were arranged in given signs, a child received special mental abilities and a temperament on the day of its birth, after which its body build, personality, habits, life, all fortunate and unfortunate events were shaped. For example, a conjunction of Jupiter or Venus with the Moon was considered a good sign for those being born, while a conjunction of Saturn or Mars with the Moon was considered a bad omen. Any unusual phenomena in the sky were also subject to interpretation by astrologers. Thus, when two suns appeared, or when people saw three moons, comets in the sky, the sun at night, or when the sky seemed to split and strange spheres became visible, soothsayers predicted great wars and destructive pleasures.¹⁸⁵ Once there was an eclipse of the moon just before sunrise in the sign of Leo, which meant that Darius and the Persians would be defeated by Alexander and the Macedonians in an armed clash, and Darius himself would be killed.¹⁸⁶

The Perspective of Cicero and Quintus

Reading Cicero's treatise, one can conclude that divination is a superstition that is unacceptable in a society of enlightened people. He rejects the intervention of divine providence, and is in favour of a natural-science interpretation of phenomena occurring in nature. In addition, he thinks it is only possible to foretell, or, rather, try to predict the future on the basis of in-depth factual knowledge.

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem, p. 356.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem, p. 284.

¹⁸⁶ Ibidem, p. 297.

experience and logical reasoning, and the only foundation on which the art of prediction could be based is knowledge. When Cicero speaks of foretelling the future, he means scientific predictions, which have nothing in common with mythological divination. He states that "divination is compounded of a little error, a little superstition, and a good deal of fraud".¹⁸⁷ His brother Quintus only acknowledges prophecies made in a prophetic frenzy and the interpretation of dreams.

Summary

The opinion of Marcus Tullius Cicero, who did not believe in divination and questioned the existence of divine inspiration in such cases, is still relevant today. Few modern-day people believe in clairvoyance or horoscopes; most see them as superstition. Faith in divination was very common in ancient times. Among many different kinds of divination, divining from nature was especially popular, accompanying the ancients for most of their lives, guiding their decisions. Our project aimed to familiarise readers with this kind of divination, and we hope we have managed to produce a good presentation of the fascinating world of ancient natural divination.

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¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 229.

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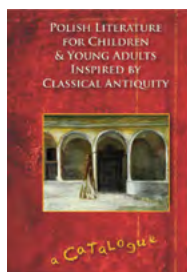
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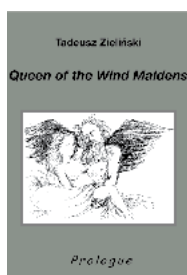
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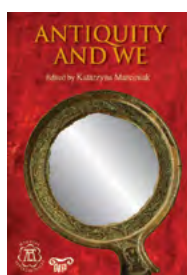
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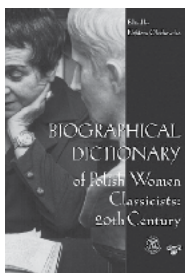


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From the review by Caroline Bristow
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Faculty of Language and Literature Studies
Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

