

Tadeusz Zieliński

Queen of the Wind Maidens



Prologue

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Introduction

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Tadeusz Zieliński, *Queen of the Wind Maidens. Prologue.*

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Introduction

Tadeusz Zieliński's *Irezyona. Attic Tales*, a series of mythological stories, focus on the legendary origins of the Athenian state, starting from the rule of king Pandion I and ending with the times of Theseus. The first Polish edition — translated from the Russian by a “friendly hand” — began appearing “in installments” in 1922: individual tales were being published separately in newspapers and magazines. These installments continued until the end of 1923 and were printed in eight different press outlets (some of them today almost inaccessible, like “Gazeta Administracji i Policji Państwowej” [State Administration and Police Gazette]). Two of the original tales were not translated into Polish and were not published at that time. Also in 1922, the Jakub Morkowicz Publishing Society in Warsaw printed two small volumes entitled *Irezyona. Klechdy attyckie*,¹ containing altogether eight tales. Fourteen years later, the same publishing house, so important for Polish literary culture, printed the whole cycle in four series,² including the tales until then unknown, translated specially for the need of this edition by the poet Włodzimierz Słobodnik.³

The rarely used word “irezyona” figuring in the title (variants include: irezjona, irezjon, ejrezjone, ejresjone) appears in the *Attic Tales* in four

¹ T. Zieliński, *Irezyona. Klechdy attyckie*, Warszawa: J. Morkowicz Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1922, series 1, 170 pp.; series 2, 130 pp. The date of publication figuring on the cover of this edition (1912) is erroneous.

² Idem, *Klechdy attyckie*, Warszawa: J. Morkowicz Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1936, series 1, 170 pp.; series 2, 130 pp.; series 3, 180 pp.; series 4, 152 pp. When quoting from this edition, I use the abbreviation KA, indicating also the series number, the tale's title and the page number.

³ Włodzimierz Słobodnik (1900–1991), a poet and well known Polish translator of Russian and Soviet poetry and prose.

different contexts: 1) as the title of the whole cycle functioning as a symbol, 2) as the name of the main female character in the somewhat autobiographical tale *Kamienny Łan* [Stony Cornfield], 3) as a particular olive branch, and finally, 4) as a characteristic song performed in conditions rather precisely defined by tradition. The ancient Greek word εἰρεσιώνη Polonized by Zieliński had originally a triple meaning. First, it was an olive branch hung with fruit, cakes, rolls, etc., wound round with ribbons of white wool and carried by young singing boys during festivals of Pyanopsia and Thargelia and later hung up at the house-door, where it remained until the next harvest when it was burned and replaced by a new one. It occurs in this sense in Plutarch's *Lives*.⁴ The second meaning relates to the song performed during the carrying of the branch. Several versions of the song survived; among them the one preserved in the *Life of Homer* by Pseudo-Herodotus (this version was Zieliński's source). The word also meant a wreath, especially funeral, usually made of olive branches, sometimes of laurel. The symbolic meaning of the title *Irezyona* is chiefly connected to the cult of Demeter and Persephone, but also to the cult of Apollo and Plutus. The whole cycle of the *Tales* was designed as a collection of truths known to Greeks already in the archaic period, recalled by Zieliński for his contemporaries as his own olive branch. Branch of peace, harmony, and understanding, gradual enrichment through honest work, folk traditions presented as carriers of deepest truths, of faith in gods (God) giving hope for eternal life.⁵

The authorship of translations remains uncertain because of the lack of information in the various editions and of the scarcity of sources related to Zieliński himself. There is nothing useful either in the periodicals where individual tales were printed before the book edition was published. Bolesław Dudziński notes in one of the reviews: "*Klechdy* were written in Russian, during their author's stay in St. Petersburg. Two among them were translated into Polish by the poet Wł. Słobodnik but these transla-

⁴ Plutarch, *Theseus*, 22.5. The word occurs also in Aristophanes, *Equites*, 729; *Vespae*, 399 and *Plutus*, 1054; in Pausanias Grammaticus, fr. 157, as well as in Homer (*Epigrammata*) and in Eupolis.

⁵ Cf. W. Klinger, *Do znaczenia pieśni Eiresione*, "Eos," 14, 1908, pp. 77–82.

tions are hardly satisfactory.”⁶ The differences between the translations and the original are quite clear. While there is hope that all translations were authorized by Zieliński, doubts still remain. Even if he reviewed the translations, possible inaccuracies could not have been resolved for obvious and natural reasons — while Zieliński was continuously exposed to the classical Polish literature, for the greater part of his life, he did not use Polish as his main language. It took him a long time after his return to Poland to become truly familiar with the subtleties of the Polish language. Adam Grzymała-Siedlecki⁷ wrote in 1934 when the second part of *Religia Rzeczypospolitej Rzymskiej* [Religion of the Roman Republic] was published: “it would be reprehensible to hide the fact that what among his books belongs to literature: language and writing style, does not keep pace at all with the finesse of his research methodology, or with the rich scope of his erudition.” And later: “Prof. Zieliński’s Polish sounds as if his writings were translated by those ladies who work for our mass publishers and do it free of charge or even pay for the privilege themselves. The rather Russian way of using preposition is difficult to stomach, and so is the syntax, only so very occasionally Polish.” Hence a clear need for a new Polish translation of the entire collection of the *Tales*.

This “donnish literature” was troubling for readers and critics alike. While for some it was a fascinating journey into the land of knowledge and life, dazzling with erudition, others saw it as fuddled and boring academic wish–wash. And yet, the author himself considered the *Tales* very important. He wrote in his 1924 *Autobiography*:

A professor, who dabbles in fiction, has poor reviews as a rule: they call him a bungler. My *Irezjon* also did not avoid this fate. Even if it was not fiction in the usual sense of the word but rather a product parallel to my studies of religion. It was a dynamic complement to the static opus *Religia starożytnej Grecji*

⁶ B. Dudziński, *Nowe książki*, “Gazeta Polska,” 31.12.1936, no. 397 (6881), p. 5. Bolesław Dudziński (1892–1976), a Polish author of WWI memoirs and a literary critic from Łódź.

⁷ Adam Franciszek Józef Grzymała-Siedlecki (1876–1967), a Polish author, playwright, theatre director and literary critic.

[Religion of the Ancient Greece]; I wanted to present the old Greek — and most of all — Attic religion as an elemental and influential force. I think I succeeded, and the time for *Irezyon*⁸ is still to come.

He confirms this view in the preface to the 1936 edition; in his *Religion of the Roman Empire* and in *Ancient Christianity*, he recalls the *Attic Tales* as an illustration of his scholarly theories. *Irezyona* resurfaces also in his late diary written at the end of his life, from the departure from Warsaw in November 1939 until his death. There are very few other informations about this work. Several press reviews focus only on the edition of the mythological stories without going into any interpretation.⁹ Tadeusz Sinko,¹⁰ in his discussion of literature inspired by antiquity, mentions the *Tales*, but only by title, mistakenly stating that some of them were included in a later cycle *Świat antyczny* [The Ancient World].¹¹ The daughter of the publisher, Hanna Mortkowicz-Olczakowa, notes in her memoirs that Zieliński published at her father's company "Attic tales of his own design and idea."¹² These few skimpy sources have to be enough for an equally modest reconstruction of the origins of the *Tales*. They remain closely connected to their theme.

⁸ T. Zieliński, *Autobiografia. Dziennik 1939–1944*, podali do druku Hanna Geremek, Piotr Mitzner, Warszawa: OBTA–DiG, 2005, pp. 181–182.

⁹ B. Dudziński, *Klechy attyckie* [review], "Robotnik," 200, 1936; idem, *Klechy attyckie, ser. III i IV* [review], "Naprzód," 1, 1937; idem, [review], "Robotnik Warszawski," 397, 1936; [Author unknown], *Irezyona, klechy attyckie, ser. I i II* [review], "Lud," 22, 1923, pp. 147–148; R., *Klechy attyckie* [review], "Kurier Literacko–Naukowy," 9, 1937, p. XIII (133).

¹⁰ Tadeusz Sinko (1877–1966) was a prominent Polish classicist, Latinist and Hellenist, author of over 800 publications and mentor of many famous classical philologists, e.g. Kazimierz Kumaniecki, Jerzy Kowalski, Mieczysław Brożek, Marian Plezia, Anna M. Komornicka.

¹¹ T. Sinko, *Hellada i Roma w Polsce. Przegląd utworów na tematy klasyczne w literaturze polskiej ostatniego stulecia*, Lwów: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Książek Szkolnych, 1933, pp. 383–384.

¹² H. Mortkowicz-Olczakowa, *Wspomnienie o Tadeuszu Zielińskim*, "Meander," 8–9, 1959, p. 430.

In view of the shortage of information and documents about the life of Zieliński himself, it would be useful to scrutinize an episode of his childhood, crucial — as it seems — to Zieliński the writer: “I know that donnish fiction is not exceedingly popular among readers and especially critics; that is why I tried to highlight in this introduction these characteristics of my tales that show their links to scholarship. And yet, I would be ungrateful to the Muse, if I were to keep silent about her participation in the content of this book. I wrote it with great delight and would love to share at least part of this delight also with the reader!”¹³

Composition of the *Attic Tales* is based on three pillars. Among them two are temporal, the third is spatial. Chronological order of the tales is set according to the rule of consecutive mythical Athenian kings. “I strung them, like beads, on the thread of genealogy of mythical Athenian kings, starting from the most remote times and ending with a view on the Trojan war, thus creating a *sui generis Attid*, or mythical history of Attica”¹⁴ — wrote Zieliński. This temporal axis is crossed by another – the axis of seasons and annual calendar of Greek festivals. From this point of view, the order of tales would be naturally quite different, yet, as a whole, they form a roster of successive feasts and rituals that go with them, dressed in turning colours of nature, dependent on the season of the year. Zieliński places the entire collection with extraordinary precision within geographic realities of the Attic Peninsula — from the plain of Marathon in the north to Cape Sounion in the south, from Eleusis in the western part of the Peninsula to Brauron on the east shore. Occasionally, he strays beyond the confines of Attica, sketching a map of the world as it was then. That is why to accurately understand the *Attic Tales*, a pocket Baedeker guide needed to navigate the text should include first a genealogy of Athenian kings, then a calendar of Greek religious festivals, and finally, a map of Attica.

The *Tales* were written as a substitute for traveling to Greece, the pilgrimage Zieliński made annually before WW1. Descriptions are quite accurate and detailed, all important geographical places on the Peninsula

¹³ T. Zieliński, *Posłowie*, KA 4, after p. 152.

¹⁴ Ibid.

are there. Hagnon, the main character of the *Enchanted Mansion*, takes his blinded son to a small island in the Saronic Gulf, the hero of the last tale *Daughter of Nemesis* looks from the island of Makronisos (called by the ancients Helen's Island) towards the east, at his beloved Attic lands, towards the west — at the ship going away and taking captive Helen in the direction of famous Troy. Princess Procris, expiating her arrogance towards Artemis, journeys to serve king Minos on the island of Crete; heroes of *At the Mother-Earth* descend deep into the Laurion Mountains, Alcifron with his son Cleomedes from the *Wisdom of Daedalus*, reaches African shores and finds there a new community modelled on Greek *poleis*. Civilized and spiritual Attica is lively contrasted with barbarian, frigid and mysterious North. It is obvious that Zieliński alludes to the country of his Polish and Russian readers. In the *Prologue* to the *Queen of the Wind Maidens*, Boreas explains to Oreithya her mission — designed by Hera — of civilizing the world of the barbarians:

— My kingdom is the boundless, northern country of frozen rivers and impenetrable forests. The rivers swell during the thaws of spring and flood all the neighbouring fields; but even wider and higher waves of suffering and hopeless misery flood the hearts of my wretched people. Oreithya, in the time of your grandfather, Triptolemos, your compatriot, Demeter's ward, brought us the gift of wheat, since then we also have green, waving cornfields; but our cold country has never known the taste of spiritual bread, you will bring it to us, my sweet flower, caressed by the breath of the warm sea.¹⁵

Such expeditions were part of the annual routine for Zieliński until the first years of WWI. "The war put an end to these excursions, leaving behind a longing for the beloved Attic lands; from this longing sprung, one after another, these tales of mine"¹⁶ — he wrote in the book indicating the most significant impulse for the creation of the cycle; this longing is

¹⁵ Idem, *Królowa wichur. Prolog*, KA 1, p. 132.

¹⁶ Idem, *Posłowie*, KA 4, after p. 152.

also shared by the heroes of the *Tales* who for various reasons also had to abandon their homes in the Attic Peninsula.

Critics highlighted this eruption of longing and love for the Greek lands, readers appreciated it. Kazimierz Czachowski,¹⁷ exceptionally astute in his analysis, was able to notice this talent of Zieliński of bringing the heart closer to far away and often unknown places: “Another time Zieliński takes us to urban and rural settlements of ancient Greeks, to show them in their daily existence. These are instances of sheer literary mastery. When the platform heels of historic greatness fall off, it is easier to unravel the secrets of the author’s writing style and recognize in Zieliński an uncommon narrative talent.”¹⁸

Zieliński wrote the *Attic Tales* during his research on ancient Greek religion, in particular during his work on volume 1, *Religions of the Ancient World* which dealt precisely with the Greek beliefs from the legendary period to the beginning of Hellenism. At that time, Zieliński did not know he was creating a monumental six-volume synthesis, but the principles of the cycle were even then clearly defined and constant, as well as quite different from generally used scholarly methodology. “I tried to feel deeply this religion, experiencing on myself the emotions it was generating in its followers”¹⁹ — noted Zieliński in the 1936 edition of the *Tales*. From our, contemporary perspective, different from that of Zieliński, this strategy clearly appears closer to the creative process of literature than to scholarly methodologies applied in religious studies today.

The *Attic Tales* were written in St. Petersburg during the times of the February, later October, Revolution and the whole cycle could not be published in Russia.²⁰ During the interruption of classes at the university, i.e.

¹⁷ Kazimierz Czachowski (1890–1948), a Polish literary critic, historian and translator active during the inter-war period.

¹⁸ K. Czachowski, *Sylwety Akademików Literatury. Tadeusz Zieliński*, “Gazeta Polska,” 25.12.1933.

¹⁹ T. Zieliński, *Postowie*, KA 4, after p. 152.

²⁰ The 1st Russian edition of only six tales, in separate booklets (*Tajna dołgich skał* [The Secret of Long Rocks], *U matieri–ziemli* [At the Mother–Earth], *Sołowinyje piesni* [Nightingale’s Songs], *Tierem Zari* [Aurora’s Mansion], *Kamiennaja niwa* [Stony Cornfield], *Carica w’jug* [Queen of the Wind Maidens]) under one title *Iresiona*.

also in receiving regular pay, Zieliński wrote essays focused mainly on the fight for this larger part of classics that did not meet the revolutionary expectations, the part destined for eradication from mentality. Surprisingly, both events, outbreak of revolution and “revolutionary” essays are faithfully reflected in the *Tales*.

The *Irezyona. Attic Tales* are composed of fifteen stories published eventually in Polish, in four series, in 1936. Three of them while bearing the same title: *Queen of the Wind Maidens* (*Królowa Wichur*), present separate plots and exist independently from each other, according to the chronological key adopted by the author. They have the same mythological background connected to the family tree created by the union of Oreithyia and Boreas. The present edition contains side by side English and Polish versions of the *Prologue* to the *Queen of the Wind Maidens*, the last of the three tales and the shortest of the cycle. Katarzyna Tomaszuk translated the Russian original into Polish and Elżbieta Olechowska based her English version on the new Polish translation. It may be the first small step towards more research into Zieliński’s forgotten opus and towards its new, complete edition. Facing such challenges requires a huge effort, because — as Kazimierz Czachowski said with awe in 1933 — “you need prof. Zieliński’s exceptional competence and knowledge not to damage — in the process of working on it — the beauty and meaning of the originals, and from splinters and precious remnants reconstruct a stylistically harmonious whole, bringing the world of the ancient Hellas closer to the reader without smudging its characteristic charms and blunting its traits. Very few people now would be able to complete such a task, to deal with it like Prof. Zieliński managed to do.”²¹

Atticheskie skazki [Iresyone. Attic Tales] was published in Petrograd, at Brothers M. & S. Sabashnikov, in 1921–1922. Cf. T. Zieliński, *Autobiografia*, op. cit., p. 181 and idem, *Posłowie*, op. cit.

²¹ K. Czachowski, op. cit.



Boreas & Oreithyia by Marek Olechowski, charcoal on paper, 2013

Tadeusz Zieliński

QUEEN OF THE WIND MAIDENS

PROLOGUE



— Trust me, my lady — said the traveler, washing down the large meal with even more wine — what I will tell you will be no prophecy, but the voice of long experience: quite a few of you maidens went through my hands. All tells me that you’re going to have a daughter, again...

— May your tongue wither! — exclaimed angrily Polymela, the old nurse who used to care for princess Procris¹ in her infancy. — That’s our reward for hosting all the crazed tramps that lurk around Acropolis?

— Leave her be, — came a stern rebuke from the queen Praxithea², — is it her fault? Tell me, rather, honoured traveler, and this time as a clairvoyant: how could I regain the gods’ favour so they grant me a prince?

¹ Procris, daughter of Erechtaeus, king of Athens and his wife Praxithea.

² Apollodorus (3.15.1): “Erechtheus married Praxithea, daughter of Phrasimus by Diogenia, daughter of Cephisus, and had sons, to wit, Cecrops, Pandorus, and Metion; and daughters, to wit, Procris, Creusa, Chthonia, and Orithyia, who was carried off by Boreas.” (*The Library*. With an English Trans. by Sir J.G. Frazer. *Loeb Classical Library*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921, <http://www.theoi.com/Text/Apollodorus3.html#15>, accessed: 09.03.2013).

Tadeusz Zieliński

KRÓLOWA WICHUR

PROLOG



— Uwierz mi, pani — rzekła podróżna, obfity poczęstunek jeszcze obficiejsz zapijając winem. — Nie mówię teraz jako wieszczka, lecz dlatego, że doświadczona. Bo czy to mało was, młódek, przewinęło się przez moje ręce? Wszystko wskazuje na to, że znów będziesz miała dziewczynkę...

— A żeby ci tak język usechł! — wmieszała się zagniewana Polimela, sędziwa piastunka maleńkiej królewny Prokrydy. — I warto było przygarbiać te wszystkie nawiedzone włóczęgi, szwendające się wokół naszego Akropolu?

— Dajże jej spokój — surowo odezwała się królowa Praksytea — ona tu bogu ducha winna. A ty, czcigodna pątniczko, powiedz mi, i tym razem już jako wieszczka, jak mam odzyskać łaskę bogów i sprawić, by

The traveler drank some more wine and sank into a reverie. A solemn silence fell. Polymela, even she, instinctively held her breath.

— Tell me first, queen, after your wedding, did you go on a pilgrimage to Hera, to the Mount Cithaeron?³ The queen blushed. The woman looked at Praxithea with her large eyes, sadly nodding her head.

— Gods do not need worship from mortals, — she continued — but mortals should sanctify their life through frequenting the gods; pious kings on the other hand should give example to their people.

Polymela, unhappy again, moved to speak but was silenced by a stern look from the queen.

— Do not forget then, on the next feast of the heavenly queen — in a month — go to her on the Mount Cithaeron and beg her forgiveness.

— But... — Praxithea attempted to argue.

— I know your “but”; thank gods, I’m not a little girl. Still, I tell you, go. Do not fear, I will be there.

— Oh, they couldn’t do without you! — said Polymela unable to resist,

³ The *Daedala*, a festival for Hera celebrated on Mount Cithaeron in Boeotia; it commemorated marital reconciliation between Hera and Zeus. The story is told by Pausanias (9.3.1–2): “Hera, they say, was for some reason or other angry with Zeus, and had retreated to Euboea. Zeus, failing to make her change her mind, visited Cithaeron, at that time despot in Plataea, who surpassed all men for his cleverness. So he ordered Zeus to make an image of wood, and to carry it, wrapped up, in a bullock wagon, and to say that he was celebrating his marriage with Plataea, the daughter of Asopus. So Zeus followed the advice of Cithaeron. Hera heard the news at once, and at once appeared on the scene. But when she came near the wagon and tore away the dress from the image, she was pleased at the deceit, on finding it a wooden image and not a bride, and was reconciled to Zeus.” (*Description of Greece*. Trans. by W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod. *Loeb Classical Library*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918. <http://www.theoi.com/Text/Pausanias9A.html>, accessed: 09.03.2013).

pobłogosławili mnie królewiczem.

Podróżna znów napiła się wina i zamyśliła głęboko. Zapadło uroczyste milczenie, nawet Polimela bezwiednie wstrzymała oddech.

— Powiedz mi najpierw, królowo, czy po swym ślubie udałaś się z pielgrzymką do Hery Kitajrońskiej? Zarumieniła się królowa. Jej rozmówczyni ze smutkiem pokiwała głową i spojrzała na Praksyteę wielkimi oczami.

— Bogom niepotrzebne są hołdy śmiertelnych — mówiła dalej — ale śmiertelni powinni uświęcać swe życie obcowaniem z bogami, lud zaś — mieć przykład w bogobojnych władcach.

Polimela znów poruszyła się z niezadowoleniem, lecz napotkawszy surowe spojrzenie królowej, nie wyrzekła ani słowa.

— Nie zapomnij tylko w następne święto królowej niebieskiej — a to już za miesiąc — udać się do niej na Kitajron, by wybłagać przebaczenie.

— Ale... — chciała zaprotestować Praksytea.

— Wiem, co chcesz powiedzieć, chwała bogom, nie jestem małą dziewczynką. Mimo to powiadam ci: idź. Niczego się nie lękaj, i ja tam będę.

— Bez ciebie przecież się nie obejdzie! — nie wytrzymała Polimela.

— such a beauty, nothing to add! Have a care only not be noticed by Zeus, Hera is jealous, and before you know, you'll grow a pair of horns, like Io.⁴

— So, we'll meet there. Come without fail. And now, thanks for your hospitality; and as you have no other questions, I'll go.

— You'll go, if you manage to get up! — Polymela could not stop herself. — Easy to say. She drank two jars.

— And you, Polymela, — Praxithea interrupted her, — why don't you rather assist our guest and accompany her to the gates?

And what nobody expected, happened. The traveler got up nimbly and, saluting everybody with a nod of her head, moved gracefully towards the door. She even appeared taller, and they all looked amazed at the sudden creamy glow of her shoulders. Polymela on the other hand, tried hard but could not budge from her seat.

⁴ Apollodorus in his *Library* (2.1.3) tells the story of Io: "Zeus seduced her while she held the priesthood of Hera, but being detected by Hera he by a touch turned Io into a white cow and swore that he had not known her; wherefore Hesiod remarks that lovers' oaths do not draw down the anger of the gods. But Hera requested the cow from Zeus for herself and set Argus the All-seeing to guard it. (...). He tethered her to the olive tree which was in the grove of the Mycenaeans. But Zeus ordered Hermes to steal the cow, and as Hermes could not do it secretly because Hierax had blabbed, he killed Argus by the cast of a stone; whence he was called Argiphontes. — Hera next sent a gadfly to infest the cow, and the animal came first to what is called after her the Ionian gulf. Then she journeyed through Illyria and having traversed Mount Haemus she crossed what was then called the Thracian Straits but is now called after her the Bosphorus. And having gone away to Scythia and the Cimmerian land she wandered over great tracts of land and swam wide stretches of sea both in Europe and Asia until at last she came to Egypt, where she recovered her original form and gave birth to a son Epaphus beside the river Nile." (Apollodorus. *The Library*. With an English Trans. by Sir J.G. Frazer. *Loeb Classical Library*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Apollod.+2.1.3#note1>, accessed: 09.03.2013).

— To ci panna na wydaniu, co się zowie. Szkoda słów! Bacz tylko, byś Dzeusowi nie wpadła w oko. Hera jest zazdrosna, ani się obejrzysz, a dostaniesz rogów jak Io.

— Tam się zatem spotkamy. Bądź na pewno. A teraz dzięki ci za gościnę. Pójdę już, jeśli nie masz innych pytań.

— Pójdziesz, o ile wstaniesz — Polimela nie mogła się powstrzymać.
— Powiedzieć łatwo. Dwa dzbany wysączyła!

— Lepiej — przerwała piastunce Praksytea — pomogłabyś pątnicy i odprowadziła ją do bramy.

Zdarzyło się jednak coś, czego nikt się nie spodziewał. Podróżna wstała z lekkością i pożegnawszy wszystkich skienieniem głowy, płynnym krokiem ruszyła ku drzwiom komnaty. Wydawała się nawet wyższa niż przedtem. Wszystkich zdumiała biel jej pełnych ramion, której wcześniej nikt nie zauważył. Tymczasem Polimela, choć bardzo się starała, w żaden sposób nie mogła dźwignąć się z miejsca.

— Polymela, what did I ask you to do?

— I don't understand myself, oh queen, you saw, I did not even touch the cup. And all the wine this crazed tramp drank...

She stopped in mid sentence as suddenly the hall filled with light. The traveler stood framed by the door, her dress blazing now with golden fire, the ringlets of her hair flowing down her head like molten gold. It lasted barely for a blink of an eye; then the gates banged shut, and the grey mist of winter dusk returned to the hall again.

Everybody instinctively stood up, only Polymela stumbling and thrashing around still could not get up from her ill-fated stool.

— I will have to sit for as long as it pleases Dionysus, — she sighed.
But nobody took any notice of her.

— Polimelo, co ci powiedziałam?

— Sama nie pojmuję, królowo, wszak widziałas, nawet nie tknęłam pucharu. A całe wino, które wysączyła ta nawiedzona...

Nie dokończyła. Nagle komnatę zalało światło. W drzwiach stała podróżna, ale teraz jej szata jakby płonęła od złota, a z głowy złotą strugą spływały pukle włosów. Trwało to ledwie chwilę; drzwi zatrzasnęły się i komnatę znów wypełniła siwa mgła zimowego zmierzchu.

Wszyscy odruchowo wstali i tylko Polimela, choć kręciła się i szamotała, nie dała rady opuścić swego niefortunnego krzesła.

— Widać przyjdzie mi tu siedzieć tyle, ile spodoba się Dionizosowi — westchnęła.

Ale nikt już nie zwracał na nią uwagi.

❧ II ❧

The night ritual of Cithaeronian Hera was drawing to an end. A huge bonfire having consumed fourteen wooden effigies⁵ of the goddess, was dying; the sickle of the new moon appeared, sailing like a boat, on the winter blue sky.

Praxithea with her hostess, Asopis,⁶ the queen of Tanagra,⁷ were returning to their tent, where two Tanagraean women holding torches stood before the entrance. One lifted up the curtain to let in the two women. But they did not enter yet; a sound of far away thunder made them turn their heads and look behind.

The last flames of the bonfire died out; the summit of Cithaeron was already deserted. But above Hera's altar, you could see strange white figures, glowing with pale, ghostly light. Women, or rather birds, huge birds, with shining wings. The figures turned round with wild speed, descending lower, closer: the silvery twang of their wings was becoming more audible. Praxithea feverishly squeezed her hostess' hand.

— What is the meaning of this? Who are they?

⁵ According to Pausanias (9.3.1–8) images made of ritually selected Boeotian oak were burned during the festival of Daedala in honour of Hera and in memory of Zeus' and Cithaeron's successful ruse.

⁶ One of the twelve daughters of the Boeotian river-god, Asopos and his wife the nymph, Metope.

⁷ A city in Boeotia, famous for terracotta figurines manufactured there. Historically, the site of an Athenian defeat during the 1st Peloponnesian War, in 457 B.C. (Thucydides, 1.108; Pausanias, 1.29.6). In modern popular culture: a mythical island figuring in a purely metaphorical language of the Tamarians, an alien race encountered by the USS Enterprise. The expression: *Darmok and Jalad at Tanagra* is a metaphor for two warriors forced to fight together against a dangerous beast, who become friends and allies. The Epic of Gilgamesh is quoted as comparable to the story behind the Tanagra metaphor (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*, DVD 2002, vol. 5, disc 1, sel. 2).

❧ II ❧

Nocne obrzędy święta Hery Kitajrońskiej miały się ku końcowi. Doga-
sał olbrzymi stos, którego płomienie pochłonęły czternaście drewnianych
wizerunków bogini; widać już było sierp księżyca na nowiu, płynący jak
łódka po sinym zimowym niebie.

Praksytea i królowa Tanagry Asopis, która ją gościła, wracały do swego
namiotu. U wejścia stały dwie Tanagryjki z pochodniami w dłoniach. Jedna
z nich podniosła zasłonę, aby wpuścić królowe do środka.

Lecz one nie weszły od razu: jakiś odgłos dochodzący z oddali sprawił,
że spojrzały za siebie.

Zgasły już ostatnie płomienie ogniska i szczyt Kitajronu opustoszał,
lecz nad ołtarzem Hery można było dostrzec przedziwne białe postacie
świejące bladym, widmowym światłem. Ni to kobiety, ni ptaki, ale ptaki
przeogromne, z połyskującymi skrzydłami. Krążyły w szalonym tempie,
coraz to niżej, coraz to bliżej, i coraz wyraźniej słychać było srebrzysty
odgłos ich skrzydeł. Praksytea ścisnęła kurczowo dłoń swej gospodyni.

— Co to znaczy? Kto to?

But Asopis herself was shaking all over with fear and even the purple light of the torch could not add colour to her deathly pallid face.

— I don't know... Every year I come to the celebrations of the esteemed lady who rules on Cithaeron but it is for the first time that I see these figures; I fear that it could be the last.

— They are the Wind Maidens — said unexpectedly a deep, ringing voice from within the tent. And while there was no comfort in the words themselves, Praxithea felt an immediate relief. She recognized her clairvoyant.

— The Wind Maidens, the unruly nymphs of Boreas,⁸ king of the North — she continued. They visit us at a wrong time, the days when Alcyone⁹ makes her nest are not yet over; but this is but a caprice of the old one. Come in, queens, and fear nothing.

They entered. The clairvoyant took them both by the hands and pulled them towards her — with superhuman strength; it seemed to them.

⁸ Boreas, king of the North wind and bringer of winter. Herodotus (7.189) discusses the Attic cult of Boreas: "According to the Hellenic story, Boreas had an Attic wife, Orithyia, the daughter of Erechtheus, ancient king of Athens. Because of this connection, so the tale goes, the Athenians considered Boreas to be their son-in-law. They were stationed off Chalcis in Euboea, and when they saw the storm rising, they then, if they had not already sacrificed to and called upon Boreas and Orithyia to help them by destroying the barbarian fleet, just as before at Athos. I cannot say whether this was the cause of Boreas falling upon the barbarians as they lay at anchor, but the Athenians say that he had come to their aid before and that he was the agent this time. When they went home, they founded a sacred precinct of Boreas beside the Ilissus river." (*The Histories*. With an English Trans. by A.D. Godley. *Loeb Classical Library*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1920, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0125%3Abook%3D7%3Achapter%3D189>, accessed: 09.12.2013).

⁹ Seven (or fourteen) days at the time of the Winter Solstice when winds are restrained by Eolus who wants his daughter Alcyone (who was transformed with her husband Ceyx into a pair of kingfishers) to lay her eggs on the beach in safety. See Ovid, *Met.* 9.410–748; Hyginus, *Fab.* 65.

Lecz Asopis sama drżała ze strachu i nawet czerwone światło pochodni nie zdołało zarumienić trupiej bladości, jaką powlokła się jej twarz.

— Nie wiem... Co roku tu jestem na święcie czcigodnej pani Kitajronu, lecz widzę je pierwszy... i chyba ostatni raz.

— To Wichury — z namiotu rozległ się niespodziewanie głos dźwięczny i głęboki. A choć słowa te nie niosły żadnej pociechy, Praksytea poczuła nagle spokój. Rozpoznała swą pątniczkę.

— Wichury, swawolne nimfy władcy Północy, Boreasza — mówiła dalej tamta. — Nie o zwykłej zawitały do nas porze, wszak dni, kiedy Alkione wije swoje gniazdo, jeszcze się nie skończyły. Ale to jeden z kaprysów starego. Wejdźcie, królowe, i niczego się nie lękajcie.

Weszły. Wieszcza wzięła je za ręce i pociągnęła ku sobie z nadludzką, jak im się zdawało, siłą.

But this strength had also a calming effect. The thunder sounded louder and louder, accompanied by a deafening din.

— They are rioting, — explained the clairvoyant. — snatching the half-burned logs from the fire, they throw them like in a ball game. They ruined the entire bonfire,¹⁰ and look, they covered the whole plain with snow.

She saw everything, as if the canvas of the tent had become transparent.

Even louder, even closer — the clangour, the shrieking and the howling. The tent is folding, tilting towards the ground. How long will it endure? But the queens are not afraid. The clairvoyant holds Asopis' hand and keeps her arm around Praxitheas' waist, gently hugging her a bit closer.

— Do not be afraid, daughter; they are very near, I know, but have no fear!

The tent stretches, the wooden poles creak; laughter and clatter erupt all around. Here one line breaks, then a second, and a third. The tent collapses, buries underneath, wraps around those inside, envelopes them in its shroud. The Wind Maidens catch the tent, laughing they begin to twist it around the last pole.

¹⁰ Pausanias (9.3.7) explains how the fire was prepared: "On the peak of the mountain an altar has been prepared, which they make after the following way: they fit together quadrangular pieces of wood, putting them together just as if they were making a stone building, and having raised it to a height they place brushwood upon the altar." (*Description of Greece*. Trans. by W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod. *Loeb Classical Library*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918, <http://www.theoi.com/Text/Pausanias9A.html>, accessed: 09.03.2013).

Ale i ta siła niosła uspokojenie. Odgłos był coraz donośniejszy, a towarzyszył mu ogłuszający trzask.

— Szaleją — tłumaczyła wieszczka. — Schwyciły niedopalone polana i zabawiają się nimi jak piłką. Rozrzuciły cały stos. I, patrzcie, cały plac zasypały śniegiem.

Widziała wszystko, jakby płótno namiotu było dla niej przezroczyste.

Jeszcze głośniej, jeszcze bliżej — i łoskot, i świst, i skowyt. Gnie się namiot, kłoni do ziemi. Długo jeszcze wytrzyma? Ale królowe nie czują strachu. Wieszczka wzięła za rękę Asopis i otoczyła ramieniem kibić Praksytei, delikatnie pochylając ją ku swej piersi.

— Nie lękaj się, córko. Wiem, są już bardzo blisko, ale ty się nie lękaj!

Namiot ugina się, trzeszczą pale, zewsząd słyhać śmiech i łoskot. Pękła jedna lina, i druga, i trzecia. Runął namiot, pogrzebał, otulił sobą swe mieszkanki. Pochwyciły go Wichury i dalejże okręcać ze śmiechem wokół ostatniego pala.

Finally, they pull out the last one and fly up into the air with their loot; bring it high above the mountain slope, above the valley of Kykloboros.¹¹

...When Praxithea wakes up, the morning sun is smiling gently from the clear sky. She feels whole and sound, Asopis stands next to her, also unhurt. In her arms, swaddled in a piece of canvas from the torn tent, an infant slumbers — a little girl, just as the traveling woman predicted. She herself is nowhere to be seen.

The newborn is named Oreithyia. It means — “she who rages on the mountains.”

¹¹ A torrent in Attica used in literature as a point of comparison to people with loud voices, e.g. Aristophanes, *Ach.* 381, speaking about Kleon.

Wreszcie i ten wyrwały, a potem wzleciały ze swą zdobyczą w powietrze i poniosły ją wysoko ponad zboczem góry, ponad doliną Kykloboru.

Gdy Praksytea obudziła się, poranne słońce uśmiechało się łagodnie z jasnego nieba. Była zdrowa i cała, obok zaś, również nietknięta, stała Asopis. Na jej rękach, zawinięte w płótno porwanego namiotu, drzemało niemowlę — dziewczynka, tak jak przepowiedziała podróżna. Jej samej już nie było.

Nowonarodzonej dano na imię Orejtyja, to znaczy „Szalejąca w Górze”.

❧ III ❧

Seventeen years passed. Oreithyia could already have been a bride. There has been no shortage of suitors, and she herself was not averse to marriage. But the courting never led to betrothals.

— Father, — the girl was answering Erechtheus' complaints — is it my fault? I will marry whom you chose, whether a prince, or a lumberjack from Parnethus¹²; I only ask that my betrothed love me sincerely and declare his love for me. Is it so hard?

Erechtheus could not disagree with his daughter; yet no young man dared to declare. It seemed as if all the fear that Praxithea did not feel during the Wind Maidens' wild dance, was overcoming those who courted the girl "raging on the mountains." When one of them was alone with her, when she looked at him with expectant and searching eyes, right away he would feel as if struck by lightning, his hands would hang nerveless, his breathing would slow down to a stop. The princess would stand for a moment, for another, both remaining silent, and – she would leave, angrily slamming the door. The young man would not find his courage soon.

— Oh, no! Easier to woo the Cithaeronian Hera herself than to declare for this girl!

— Listen, daughter, — said once to her Praxithea: — I had a prophetic dream about your wedding. She appeared in my dream, you know, she whose blessed hands welcomed you to this world that night. And she said to me: — The feast of Artemis of Delos¹³ is approaching, show her to the goddess. From there she will come back betrothed, and, to a royal suitor.

¹² Mount Parnethus is situated in Attica, North West from Athens.

¹³ Artemis and her twin Apollo, born on Delos, were both worshipped there.

III

Minęło siedemnaście lat. Mogła już być Orejtyja panną młodą. Zalotników nie brakowało, a i ona sama nie wzbraniała się przed małżeństwem. Ale do zaręczyn nigdy nie dochodziło.

— Ojcie mój — odpowiadała Orejtyja na pretensje Erechteusa — czy to moja wina? Wyjdę za każdego, kogo mi wybierzesz, czy to będzie królewicz, czy drwal z Parnetu. Chcę tylko jednego: żeby kochał mnie mój narzeczony i żeby wyznał to przede mną. Czy to trudne?

Nie mógł Erechteus nie zgodzić się z córką, żaden jednak młodzieniec nie odważył się na takie wyznanie. Jakby cały ów strach, którego nie zaznała Praksytea podczas szalonego tańca Wichur, ogarniał teraz zalotników „Szalejącej w Górze”. Wystarczyło, że został taki z nią sam na sam, wystarczyło, że obrzuciła go wyczekującym, badawczym spojrzeniem, a jego zaraz jakby piorun trafił: ręce miał jak skute, dech mu w piersiach ustawał. Postoi królowna, postoi, pomilczą oboje, i odchodzi Orejtyja, z gniewem trzaskając drzwiami. A młodzieniec nie od razu odzyskiwał dawną śmiałość.

— O nie! Łatwiej wyznać miłość samej pani Kitajronu niżli tej dziewczynie!

— Posłuchaj, dziecko — odezwała się pewnego razu Praksytea. Miałam proroczy sen o twym ślubie. I ona w nim się zjawiała — wiesz, ta, której błogosławione ręce przyjęły cię owej nocy na świat. I powiada mi: „Zbliży się święto Artemidy Delijskiej, pokaż ją bogini. Wróci od niej jako narzeczona — narzeczona królewskiego oblubieńca”.

❧ IV ❧

Yet, even this hope seemed to be failing. Delos never witnessed such a magnificent festival; as if the youth from the whole of Hellas gathered on the gentle shores of the Round Lake¹⁴ to set eyes on the second Artemis¹⁵ — as they called her — and try their luck. But the result was always the same.

And again the Athenian ship was cutting through waves on its return journey, stealing through the labyrinth of the Cyclades towards the land of Pallas Athena. Praxithea and her daughter, deep in gloomy thoughts, were sitting under the cooling breath of the evening wind.

The sun went down; the night came — a fragrant spring night. An idyllic moon was bathing its round face in the blue waves.

And suddenly...

— What is it, Mommy? — asked Oreithyia anxiously.

The mother just hugged her closer.

— Look!... Look!...

— Some white clouds; surely, nothing to be afraid of?

— You do not know them but I do. Daughter, we're lost; it is them again...

— But who?

— The Wind Maidens! Oh gods! And here, at sea, among sharp rocks! We would have perished then and there, if not for her. But here...

Indeed, the familiar thunder resonated again. Cries of despair answered

¹⁴ The Sacred Lake on Delos was round in shape, the sacred swans and geese were kept there.

¹⁵ Artemis, beautiful, virginal and unattainable was also unsuccessfully pursued by gods and men.

❧ IV ❧

Ale i ta nadzieja, jak się zdawało, okazała się daremna. Nigdy jeszcze Delos nie widziała wspanialszego święta. Można by pomyśleć, że młodzież całej Hellady zebrała się na łagodnych brzegach Okrągłego Jeziora, aby ujrzeć drugą — jak ją zwano — Artemidę i spróbować szczęścia. Ale wynik był zawsze ten sam.

I znów ateński statek pruł fale, przedzierając się przez labirynt Cyklad ku krainie Pallady. Praksytea i jej córka siedziały pogrążone w smutnych rozmyślaniach, chłodząc się podmuchem wieczornego wiatru.

Słońce zaszło, nastała noc – wonna noc wiosenna. Okrągły księżyc pławiał się beztrósco w błękitnych falach.

I nagle...

— Co ci to, mateczko? — spytała z troską Orejtyja.

Matka tylko przycisnęła ją gwałtownie do siebie.

— Patrz! Patrz!

— Jakieś białe obłoki. I cóż to strasznego?

— Ty ich nie znasz, ale ja znam. Córko moja, przepadłyśmy, to znowu one...

— Ale kto?

— Wichury! O, bogowie! I to tutaj, na morzu, wśród tych ostrych skał... I tam byśmy zginęły, gdyby nie ona! A tutaj...

Rzeczywiście, znów dał się słyszeć znajomy odgłos. Ze statku odpowiedział mu krzyk rozpacz. A po nim rozległy się modlitwy i przekleń-

from the ship. First prayers, then — curses. The Wind Maidens with great speed rushed together on the sailors; somebody ran to shorten the sails but it was already too late. One of the Wind Maidens laughing uproariously tore the sail in half, while another broke the mast and threw its top into the sea.

— Tritons! Tritons!¹⁶

From far away came a protracted sound, as if someone was blowing a horn; soon the high waves were full of young men riding on all sorts of sea monsters.

— How are you, sisters! What can we do for you? Hurl, flood, drown?

— Go ahead, hurl, flood — but don't you dare drown! Know one thing: you are carrying our queen.

¹⁶ Pliny the Elder mentions various sightings of Tritons in *Naturalis Historia* (9.4): "A deputation of persons from Olisipo [Lisbon], that had been sent for the purpose, brought word to the Emperor Tiberius that a triton had been both seen and heard in a certain cavern, blowing a conch-shell, and of the form under which they are usually represented. Nor yet is the figure generally attributed to the nereids at all a fiction; only in them, the portion of the body that resembles the human figure is still rough all over with scales. For one of these creatures was seen upon the same shores, and as it died, its plaintive murmurs were heard even by the inhabitants at a distance. The legatus of Gaul, too, wrote word to the late Emperor Augustus that a considerable number of nereids had been found dead upon the sea-shore. I have, too, some distinguished informants of equestrian rank, who state that they themselves once saw in the ocean of Gades a sea-man, which bore in every part of his body a perfect resemblance to a human being, and that during the night he would climb up into ships; upon which the side of the vessel where he seated himself would instantly sink downward, and if he remained there any considerable time, even go under water." A footnote to the 'sea-man' in this passage says: "Or 'mer-man,' as we call it. Dalechamps, in his note, with all the credulity of his time, states that a similar sea-man had been captured, it was said, in the preceding age in Norway, and that another had been seen in Poland, dressed like a bishop, in the year 1531. Juvenal, in his 14th *Satire*, makes mention of the 'monsters of the ocean, and the youths of the sea.'" (*The Natural History*. Trans. by J. Bostock, H.T. Riley, London 1855, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D9%3Achapter%3D4>, accessed: 09.03.2013).

stwa. Rozpędzoną zgrają zwały się Wichury na żeglarzy. Ktoś rzucił się do spuszczenia żagli, ale było już za późno. Jedna z Wichur, śmiejąc się rozgłośnie, rozerwała żagiel na pół, druga przełamała maszt i strąciła jego wierzchołek w morze.

— Trytony! Trytony!

W oddali rozległ się przeciągły dźwięk, jakby ktoś dął w róg, a zaraz potem wzburzone fale zaroily się tłumem młodzieńców na grzbietach morskich stworów.

— Witajcie, siostry! Co rozkażecie? Miotać, zalewać, topić?

— Chcecie miotać — miotajcie, chcecie zalewać — zalewajcie, ale nie ważcie się topić. To tylko wiedzcie: wieziecie naszą królową.

Oreithyia stood on the prow, all alone, her sure hand lightly holding the rail; at her feet her mother was lying senseless, and the crew was being tossed between the ribs of the ship.

The Wind Maidens were caressing her with their fluffy wings, shielding her from the raging waves. A smile wandered on her lips, in her eyes an expectation: now, now something decisive, something truly great must happen!

— I'm here, waiting for you... Where are you? Show yourself, show, my promised one, the one I so longed for!

Orejtyja sama jedna stała na dziobie statku, pewną ręką przytrzymując się burty; u jej stóp leżała w omdleniu matka, a między wręgami przewracała się załoga.

Wichury delikatnie głaskały dziewczynę puszystymi skrzydłami, osłaniając ją przed naporem fal. Na ustach Orejtyi błąkał się uśmiech, oczy patrzyły z wyczekiwaniem: teraz, teraz wszystko się rozstrzygnie, teraz musi wydarzyć się coś naprawdę wielkiego!

— Tu jestem, czekam... Gdzieś ty? Ukaż się, ukaż, mój obiecany, mój upragniony!

❧ V ❧

White from head to toes, he was floating on a black cloud under the dome of his dark wings: snow was falling from his white hair and white beard; his thick brows sparkled with frost; but the fire of passion burned even brighter in the depth of his eyes.

— Oreithyia, I love you! I chose you in the hour of your birth and I branded you with my mark. You are my gift from the queen of heaven herself. Do you want to follow me?

— If you love me, I'll follow you: you're the first and the only one who declared love to me. But she whom you spoke of told us you were a king, where is then your kingdom?

— My kingdom is the boundless, northern country of frozen rivers and impenetrable forests. The rivers swell during the thaws of spring and flood all the neighbouring fields; but even wider and higher waves of suffering and hopeless misery flood the hearts of my wretched people.

Oreithyia, in the time of your grandfather, Triptolemos,¹⁷ your compatriot, Demeter's ward, brought us the gift of wheat, since then we also have green, waving cornfields; but our cold country has never known the taste of spiritual bread, you will bring it to us, my sweet flower, caressed by the breath of the warm sea.

— If you need me, I'll follow you; gladly and with joy, I will sow the

¹⁷ The name Triptolemos means 'he who pounds the husks.' Apollodorus (1.5.2) says that "for Triptolemus, the elder of Metanira's children, she [Demeter] made a chariot of winged dragons, and gave him wheat, with which, wafted through the sky, he sowed the whole inhabited earth." (*The Library*. With an English Trans. by Sir J.G. Frazer. *Loeb Classical Library*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918, <http://www.theoi.com/Text/Apollodorus1.html#5>, accessed: 09.03.2013).

❧ V ❧

Biały od stóp do głów, unosił się na czarnej chmurze pod kopułą swych ciemnych skrzydeł; śnieg sypał się z jego siwych włosów i siwej brody, na gęstych brwiach skrzył się szron, lecz jaśniej jeszcze skrzył się żar namiętności w jego głębokich oczach.

— Kocham cię, Orejtyjo! Wybrałem cię w godzinę twych narodzin i naznaczyłem swym piętnem. Dała mi ciebie sama królowa niebios. Pójdiesz za mną?

— Skoro mnie kochasz, pójdę za tobą: pierwszy jesteś i jedyny, który mi to wyznał. Lecz ta, którą wymieniałeś, mówiła nam, żeś król, gdzież więc twoje królestwo?

— Królestwo moje to niezmierzona północna kraina lodowatych rzek i nieprzebytych lasów. Wzbierają rzeki w czas wiosennych powodzi, szeroko zalewają okoliczne pola, ale jeszcze szerszą i wyższą falą boleść i zgryzota, na które nie ma rady, zalewają serca mego nieszczęsnego ludu.

Orejtyjo, za czasów twego dziada, krajan twój, Tryptolemos, wychowanek Demetry, przyniósł nam w darze ziarno i od tej pory i u nas kołyszą się zielone łąny. Ale duchowego chleba mój zimny kraj jeszcze nie skosztował, ty nam go przyniesiesz, mój słodki kwiatuszku, pieszczony tchnieniem ciepłego morza.

— Skoro jestem wam potrzebna, pójdę za tobą. Z ochotą i radością będę

seeds of Pallas into the soil that already nurtures our Demeter's grain.

— Oreithyia, my unenlightened, unhappy people do not know and do not recognize what is sacred for you. I ask you to come to us, but I refuse to lie to you: it is cold in our land, and you will miss the white gleam of temples, the aroma of groves, the warmth, and the joyous vistas of your Hellas!

— The warmth and the joy I will bring with me. I'll give them as my dowry to your people. If you need me, I'll follow you.

— Oreithyia, I cannot promise you even the gratitude of those whom you will shower with your gifts. Remember, my people — from time immemorial — know only outbursts of anger and mortal hate that drown them in an even more dreadful misery; they do not know surges of joy and raptures of love. I know well that their hate will also strike against you and your teaching — of joy and love. Are you ready also for such a trial, even harder, even crueler?

— My destiny — is to give, not take. I'm ready to make sacrifice for your people; ready to love, not be loved, but still love...¹⁸

¹⁸ Ancient versions of the story of Oreithyia and Boreas relate an abduction of an unwilling young girl. Zieliński's presentation of Oreithyia's feelings for Boreas is quite original. Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 229 b–c; Apollodorus, 3.15.2; Pausanias, 1.19.5; Ovid, *Met.* 6.683–727.

rzucać ziarna naszej Pallady w rolę, która już żywi ziarno naszej Demeter.

— Orejtyjo, mój ciemny, nieszczęśliwy lud nie zna i nie uznaje tego, co dla was święte. Proszę, byś do nas przyszła, ale nie chcę cię okłamywać: zimno u nas, zatęsknisz za bielą świątyń, za wonnymi gajami, za ciepłem i radosnym obliczem twojej Hellady!

— Przyniosę i ciepło, i radość. Dam je w wianie twojemu ludowi. Skoro jestem wam potrzebna, pójdę za tobą.

— Orejtyjo, nie mogę obiecać nawet tego, że ci, których ty obsypiesz darami, obdarują cię wdzięcznością. Pamiętaj, lud mój — i nigdy nie było inaczej — zna tylko uczucie gniewu i zabójczej nienawiści, która pogrąża go w jeszcze straszliwszej nędzy; nie zna on porywów radości ani miłosnych uniesień. Dobrze wiem, iż gniew swój skieruje przeciw tobie i twojej nauce — radości i miłowania. Czy jesteś gotowa i na taką próbę, jeszcze cięższą, jeszcze okrutniejszą?

— Moim przeznaczeniem dawać, a nie brać. Jestem gotowa ponieść ofiarę dla twego ludu: kochać, nie być kochaną, a jednak kochać...

❧ VI ❧

— Did the sun go down already?

The queen Praxithea was lying alone in her solar next to an open window: she rested on her bed, prostrated by her pain at the death of her elder daughter, princess Procris. There, in the next chamber, the nurse was putting to bed the queens' youngest, Prince Cecrops and Princess Creusa. Praxithea was waiting for the healing draught and soothing caresses of her middle daughter, the tower of strength for the family — princess Oreithyia.

— Did the sun go down already?

Lifting her head with an effort, she strained her eyes in vain: thick clouds were covering the sky on the side of Parnethus; it was dark in the valley but whether it was the darkness of twilight or of the rainy weather, she could not tell.

Oreithyia, still at noon, when the sky was clear, went with a girl friend to the hill of Ardettos,¹⁹ at the shore of the river Ilissos²⁰; she told her mother she had to complete a certain pre-nuptial ritual honouring Artemis of Delos: but what ritual and what nuptials, that she did not say. While loving her dearly as before, and even more than that, she was now keeping from her many things.

But she went and did not return yet; and the sun, surely, hid already behind the black summit of the Mount Aegaleo.²¹

— Pst... someone is coming... No, it is not her. The doors open, and in

¹⁹ A hill in Athens, on the west side of the Panathenaic Stadium.

²⁰ A river in Athens, close to the hill Ardettos. The river god Ilissos was worshipped at a temple on the hill. In modern times, the stream has been almost entirely redirected through an underground tunnel.

²¹ A rocky mountain west of Athens, north-east of Piraeus.

❧ VI ❧

— Czy słońce już zaszło?

Królowa Praksytea leżała samotnie w swej komnacie przed otwartą okiennicą. Leżała na posłaniu, do którego przykuła ją zgryzota po śmierci starszej córki, królowny Prokris. W sąsiedniej izbie piastunka kładła do snu młodsze, maleńkie jeszcze, dzieci — królewicza Kekropsa i królownę Kreuzę. Praksytea czekała na uzdrawiający napój i kojącą pieszczotę swej średniej córki, podpory domu — królowny Orejtyi.

— Czy słońce już zaszło?

Uniósłszy głowę, daremnie wpatrywała się w dal; od strony Parnetu niebo zasnuwały gęste chmury, w dolinie panował mrok, ale czy był to mrok wieczoru, czy mrok niepogody, tego rozpoznać nie umiała.

Orejtyja jeszcze w południe, gdy niebo było jasne, wyruszyła z przyjaciółką na wzgórze nad Illissosem. Mówiła, że powinna jeszcze dopełnić jakiegoś przedślubnego obrzędu ku czci Artemidy Delijskiej, lecz tego, jaki to obrzęd i jaki ślub, już matce nie powiedziała. O wielu rzeczach jej teraz nie mówiła, choć kochała ją czułą miłością, jak dawniej, albo i jeszcze bardziej.

Wyszła więc i wciąż nie wracała, a słońce pewnie już skryło się niepostrzeżenie za czarny wierzchołek Ajgaleo.

— Cyt... Czyjeś kroki... Nie, to nie ona. Drzwi się otworzyły i stanęła w nich...

the doorway appears...

Praxithea half rose and lifted her hand in greeting. The lady traveler! The same she met during the night of the Citheronian festival, and whom she has not seen since.

And, as fear and pain vanished then, now all concern and worry instantly faded away under her gaze and the touch of her hand.

— Is it you, oh esteemed lady? But where are my daughter and her friend?

— Her friend? — said the traveler guardedly. — In dumb pain she stands motionless on the slope of Ardetos and dissolves, dissolves in tears, disappearing little by little with each passing moment. And when tomorrow, the Athenian women go to the shore of Illissos, a new spring of healing water will remind them of the maiden who disappeared and of the reason for her despair: the abduction of Oreithyia by Boreas, her betrothed.

Then, she sat on the bed of the sick queen and hugged her with her white arm, keeping anguish and worry from invading her heart. The queen looked at her; boundless trust shone in her eyes.

— Abducted, you say? And I'll never see her again?

— No, you will... you'll see her once more.

She pushed the second window pane with her free hand; a wide sky appeared in front of the queen's eyes. In the middle of a dark cloud, as if the crater of a volcano, burned a scarlet glow; fantastic white shapes sparkled now and again against the glow, moving fast, one after the other.

— Do you recognize the retinue of the Northern King? — asked the traveler. — They fly to announce to Boreas' people the coming of their

Praksytea uniosła się nieco i wyciągnęła rękę na powitanie. Podróżna! Ta sama, którą widziała w świąteczną noc na Kitajronie i której później już nie spotkała.

I jak wówczas strach i ból, tak teraz smutek i zgryzota zniknęły w jednej chwili od jej spojrzenia i od dotknięcia jej dłoni.

— To ty, czcigodna pani? A gdzie córka moja i jej przyjaciółka?

— Przyjaciółka? — odrzekła wymijająco podróżna. — W niemym bólu stoi nieruchomo na zboczu Ardetu i roztapia się, roztapia we łzach, z każdą chwilą niknąc coraz bardziej. A kiedy jutro przyjdą Atenki nad Ilissos, nowe źródło uzdrawiającej wody przypomni im o pannie, która znikła, i o przyczynie jej rozpacz: o porwaniu Orejty przez Boreasza, jej narzeczonego.

I powiedziawszy to, siadła na posłaniu chorej królowej i objęła jej kibić białym ramieniem, nie pozwalając, by żałość i frasunek wcisnęły się do serca Praksytei. Królowa patrzyła na nią oczami, w których lśniła bezgraniczna ufność.

— Mówisz, że porwana? I już nigdy jej nie zobaczę?

— Nie, zobaczysz ją..., raz jeszcze zobaczysz.

Wolną ręką pchnęła drugą okiennicę. Przed oczami królowej odsłonił się szeroki pas nieba. Pośrodku czarnej chmury, niby czeluść gorejącego wulkanu, płonęła szkarłatna luna, przed nią raz po raz błyskały przedziwne białe postacie, mknęły w dal jedna za drugą.

— Poznasz orszak króla Północy? — spytała podróżna. Pędzą, aby obwieścić ludowi Boreasza, że oto zbliża się jego królowa.

queen.

And now you will see her.

After the white shapes, came a fast moving cloud... no, not a cloud but a giant with dark wings and white body: in the red light his white head was clearly visible. And even clearer was a white form held in the powerful arms. The white figure lifted her right hand in the last salute to the rock of Pallas,²² to Erechtheus' home and to the mother who waited there for Oreithyia. Another blink and all disappeared. Praxithea closed her eyes.

— Will she find happiness there? — she whispered.

— She will give happiness, — replied the traveler. Praxithea smiled, her head fell to rest heavily on the comforting arm. The lady laid her down on the white bed bathed in the scarlet glow.

— Let my sister, queen of the blessed fields, show kindness to you!

²² Attica, the land of Pallas Athena.

A teraz zobaczysz ją samą.

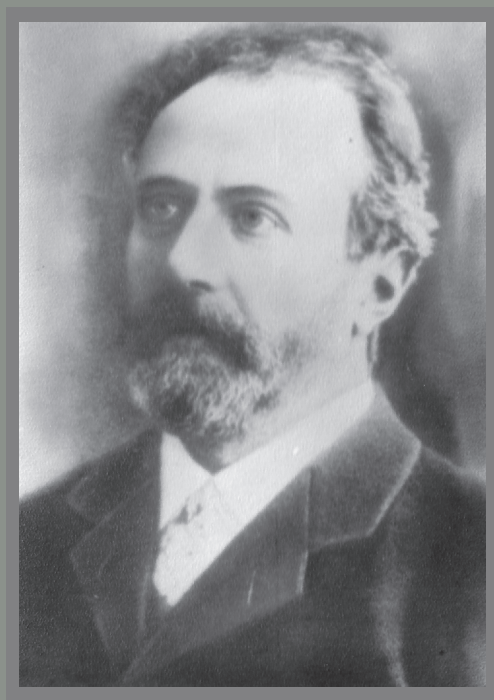
Za białymi postaciami mknęła chmura... nie, nie chmura, lecz olbrzym o czarnych skrzydłach i białym ciele. W czerwonym świetle widać było wyraźnie jego siwą głowę, a jeszcze wyraźniej – białą sylwetkę podtrzymwaną przez potężne ramiona. Biała postać wyciągnęła prawą rękę, by po raz ostatni pozdrowić skałę Pallady, dom Erechteusa i tę, która wyczekiwała tam Orejty. Jeszcze chwila i wszystko znikło. Praksytea zamknęła oczy.

— Czy zazna tam szczęścia? – spytała szeptem.

— Ona da szczęście — odpowiedziała podróżna.

Praksytea uśmiechnęła się, a potem oparła ciężko głowę na ramieniu swej pocieszycielki. Ta ułożyła królową na białym, spowitym szkarłatnym blaskiem posłaniu.

— Niech moja siostra, pani pól błogosławionych, będzie ci miłościwa.



[...] The *Irezyona. Attic Tales* are composed of fifteen stories published eventually in Polish, in four series, in 1936. Three of them while bearing the same title: *Queen of the Wind Maidens* (*Królowa Wichur*), present separate plots and exist independently from each other, according to the chronological key adopted by the author. They have the same mythological background connected to the family tree created by the union of Oreithyia and Boreas. The present edition contains side by side English and Polish versions of the *Prologue* to the *Queen of the Wind Maidens*, the last of the three tales and the shortest of the cycle. Katarzyna Tomaszuk translated the Russian original into Polish and Elżbieta Olechowska based her English version on the new Polish translation. It may be the first small step towards more research into Zieliński's forgotten opus and towards its new, complete edition.

(From the *Introduction*)

