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## WANDA – BETWEEN THE MYSTERY AND THE LIBRETTO\*

Operatic filiations of Norwid's works are a topic still not fully researched, which hides some so far untouched interpretational trails of his writing – especially his rich dramaturgy. Elżbieta Nowicka indicated that gap as worthy of filling, as she investigated the mystery of the libretto which Norwid was supposed to write to Antoni Kątski's music. The researcher even stated that there existed

a huge disproportion between the rich research on Norwid's work and lack of reflection on his connections with the opera. [...] Early hearing loss and the poverty which accompanied Norwid all his life seemed to have placed a seal of silence over that issue. [...] opera traces [...] are just as difficult to find [as the theatrical ones – M.S.]. And still you come across them quite often, even if it is hidden presence [...]<sup>1</sup>.

One of the arguments in favour of a closer look at the issue is, in Nowicka's view, "the musicality of the sung parts of *Wanda* and *Krakus*"<sup>2</sup>. That mention in itself seems enough encouragement to follow the trail. However, complex research on the topic would have to cover very broad material and naturally change into a synthetic approach<sup>3</sup>, which would significantly add to the panorama of opera inspirations in 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature. Definitely, a large dose of caution would be

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<sup>1</sup> E. NOWICKA, *Zapiskane w operze*, Poznań 2012, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the topic has been partly explored before in E. Lijewska's paper *Norwid idzie do opery* ("Studia Norwidiana" 33: 2015), pp. 161-169). It is also worth referring to I. Sławińska's paper systematising the issue of Norwid's attitude towards theatre through the theatrical lexis he used. See I. SŁAWIŃSKA, *O terminologii teatralnej Norwida. Szkic problematyki badawczej*, "Pamiętnik Literacki" 1968, No. 4, esp. pp. 75-76.

necessary in that search for Norwid's connections with opera. In contrast with the open character of the flirt with operatic theatre as presented by Adam Mickiewicz, Zygmunt Krasiński or Juliusz Słowacki – in clear references to specific works, comments on those in letters, or at least in the mentions of the authors' attendance in operatic theatres<sup>4</sup> – evidence of such a relation with Norwid is rather circumstantial in nature<sup>5</sup>. It is for that reason that for this comparative attempt, I decided to choose a text which seems to bear the least risk of an error, as it had already been indicated as one having something in common with opera. Moreover, *Wanda* opens yet another interesting venue of interpretation to the researcher: it is possible to compare it to 19<sup>th</sup>-century librettos adapting the well-known Kraków legend for the needs of the opera. It must be stated that the material is quite extensive, although also quite specific. Despite the clear popularity of the legendary Wanda among authors of 19<sup>th</sup>-century librettos<sup>6</sup>, despite the near-obstinacy with which the topic recurred in the opera planes of further generations, that popularity of the topic did not translate into either stage fame or, unfortunately, artistic success of the adaptations.

Among works related to operatic theatre and devoted to Wanda, the following have to be mentioned: a non-surviving *Wanda*, likely unfinished, with a libretto by Ludwik Adam Dmuszewski and Karol Krupiński's music (1819)<sup>7</sup>; *Wanda. Opera poważno-tragiczna w 4ech aktach z fantastycznym baletem i chórami ukrytymi*, which exists only in a manuscript of the libretto by Gustaw Olizar, and the music thereto was to be written by Stanisław Moniuszko, but finally it was not created (before 1858)<sup>8</sup>; the Czech 5-act *Vanda* with a libretto by Vaclav Beneš-Šumavský

<sup>4</sup> For more on the topic see M. SOKALSKA, *Opera a dramat romantyczny. Mickiewicz – Krasiński – Słowacki*, Kraków 2009.

<sup>5</sup> E. NOWICKA, *Zapisane*, p. 205.

<sup>6</sup> It ought to be remembered that the popularity of Wanda as a libretto heroine was not born spontaneously, but was a result of the former fame of the character in tragedy (as shall be mentioned further in this paper) and epic. See R. DĄBROWSKI, *Epopcja w literaturze polskiego oświecenia*, Kraków 2015 (esp. chapter “«Wanda, królowa sarmacka»” – próba epopei”). All works inspired by the legend are discussed by H. Mortkowicz-Olczakowa in: *Podanie o Wandzie: dzieje wątku literackiego*, Warszawa 1927.

<sup>7</sup> Fragments of the libretto were published in “Pamiętnik Lwowski” 1 (1819), No. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Bolesław Łopuszański notes that in 1857 Olizar started working with the music-focused periodical “Ruch Muzyczny”, which resulted in him getting closer to Moniuszko – who also happened to be his far relative – whose libretto to *Halka* he translated in Italian, and that started the idea of working together on an opera about Wanda. See B. ŁOPUSZAŃSKI, *Gustaw Olizar*, PSB, vol. XXIII/4, issue 99, Kraków 1979, p. 809. Detailed circumstances of that cooperation, which, however, remained only a plan, can be reconstructed on the basis of marginal notes dispersed in the monograph on Moniuszko by Witold Rudziński. The proposal to write an opera about Wanda

and František Zákřeš and music by Antonín Dvořák (1876) – the only work in this group which was completed, performed and even recorded, although it enjoyed quite moderate popularity with the audiences<sup>9</sup>. This list should be further extended to include the musical arrangement for Franciszek Weżyk's tragedy *Wanda córka Krakusa*, composed by Kazimierz Hofman in the same year as Dvořák's opera, and the still manuscripted *Wanda. Opera w 4 aktach* with Władysław Belza's libretto and Henryk Jarecki's music (1881)<sup>10</sup> as the last position on the list.

Although none of these Polish librettos on Wanda had a chance to prove themselves as the basis for an opera performed on stage – even if that fact partially proves the weakness and secondary character of the discussed works – it should not discourage their consideration as context for Norwid's mystery play. Actually, the very fact that they were written as librettos but did not undergo the trial of opera practice, were not verified by music, vocal interpretation and stage production, makes them the perfect comparative material. After all, they were written as texts meant for singing, following the rules which their authors believed essential for

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– who stood in contrast to Halka, being a pure, virgin and idealised heroine who sacrifices her life (dying in the same manner as Halka, in a suicidal jump into the river) for higher aims – was first given to Moniuszko by his friend and correspondent from Vilnius, Seweryn Römer. See W. RUDZIŃSKI, *Stanisław Moniuszko*, part 1: *Studia i materiały*, Kraków 1955, p. 160. The topic of Wanda returned to Moniuszko with a ready-made libretto which he received from Gustaw Olizar in the Warsaw times (Rudziński does not give the exact year when the composer received the libretto, giving just that general remark on timing; see *ibid.*, p. 252, fragment of note 42). Moniuszko met with Olizar during the former's trip abroad in 1858; it is possible that it was then that the idea of an opera about Wanda took some shape. It can be concluded from their correspondence that Olizar was a collaborator whom the modest composer saw with little pleasure – he imposed himself on Moniuszko, was ready to give the very same libretto to a different musician (there is a mention of possible existence of a composition by Ignacy Feliks Dobrzyński), and finally, he was pushy about the composer publicly announcing his work on *Wanda*. See W. RUDZIŃSKI, *Stanisław Moniuszko*, part 2, Kraków 1961, p. 173. It is very likely that Moniuszko did work on music to *Wanda* in the final years of his life, but that was a still different piece, a four-act drama in verse by the title *Wanda (Krakusowa córka)*, written by Józef Grajner. See *ibid.*, pp. 174 and 211, note 21.

<sup>9</sup> Piotr Kamiński wrote of it that “Dvořák's wonderful symphonic artistry can be heard in the overture, which makes promises not kept by the opera”. P. KAMIŃSKI, *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, vol. I, Kraków 2008, p. 386.

<sup>10</sup> The libretto to that opera can be found in the archives of Ossolineum in Wrocław. In an article written after the composer's death, Stanisław Niewiadomski listed *Wanda* with Belza's libretto as a score remaining in manuscript and never performed. See S. NIEWIADOMSKI, *Henryk Jarecki (wspomnienie pośmiertne)*, “Gazeta Muzyczna” 1919, No. 7, p. 53. The manuscript of the libretto has Belza's introduction, where the author describes the circumstances of starting collaboration with Jarecki in more detail. The information is further expanded by Julian Maślanka as he outlines the action of the libretto and notes its unusual construction. See J. MAŚLANKA, *Literatura a dzieje bajeczne*, Warszawa 1990, chapter “Opera i dramat o Wandzie”, pp. 323-325.

an opera libretto, and at the same time they remained texts existing only on paper, half-but-neither literary works or elements of a syncretic work. Only Hofman's *Wanda* ought to be excluded from the group; its status of an opera work requires a brief comment important from the perspective of the features of musical theatre in the times when Norwid created his version of the legend. *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN* notes in the entry on the composer that "[...] at that time, his opera *Wanda córka Krakusa* (1876, lyrics by F. Wężyk) was also played"<sup>11</sup>. Concerning Hofman's activity as director of the Kraków operetta, Jan Michalik stated that "Franciszek Wężyk's tragedy *Wanda* [...] he so saturated with music that he shaped it into an opera"<sup>12</sup>. Yet it must be noted that the practice of adding musical illustration to, or even musicalisation of particular parts of a drama (especially choirs and monologues fit for arias or recitatives) was common in that era, and works included in that group cannot be automatically considered operas. Recently, Anna Wypych-Gawrońska provided a broad analysis of the issue<sup>13</sup>. Thus, despite some modifications introduced to the text, the drama basis for Hofman's work should only be viewed as a variation of Wężyk's work and not as an independent libretto, since the text never appeared as such.

Norwid's *Wanda* can thus on one hand be located within interdisciplinary research, when viewed as a "musical" work related to the aesthetics of operatic theatre, with the encouragement to search for the hidden traces of opera, as mentioned by the above-cited Nowicka. On the other hand, the background for this reading is a rich representation of the topic in opera librettos, which supplements the most obvious context for *Wanda* – the classicistic tragedy<sup>14</sup>. Indirectly – and this being

<sup>11</sup> Hoffman Kazimierz, [in:] *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN*, vol. IV, Warszawa 1967, p. 712.

<sup>12</sup> J. MICHALIK, *Dzieje teatru w Krakowie w latach 1865-1893. Instytucja artystyczna*, Kraków 2004, p. 522. Earlier, the researcher also uses *Wanda* as an example to illustrate a specific practice of the then operetta theatre: "A particular thing happened to Franciszek Wężyk's *Wanda*; a tragedy was made into a popular historical performance, with songs and music". *Ibid.*, p. 463. Zofia Chechlińska describes the music written by Hofman for the stage as simple, catchy, kept within unsophisticated musical scales and referring to the melodic and rhythmic of Polish national dances. It is thus easy to imagine *Wanda* as a collection of cracoviennes, kujawiaks and polonaises. See Z. CHECHLIŃSKA, *Hofman Kazimierz*, [in:] *Encyklopedia muzyczna PWN. Część biograficzna*, vol. hij, E. Dziębowska (ed.), Kraków 1993, p. 261.

<sup>13</sup> See A. WYPYCH-GAWROŃSKA, *Muzyka w polskim teatrze dramatycznym do 1918 roku*, parts 1-2, Częstochowa 2015 (on *Wanda* see part 1, pp. 201-202) and EADEM, *Opera w polskim teatrze dramatycznym od końca XVIII do początku XX wieku*, [in:] *Opera w kulturze*, M. Sokalska (ed.), Kraków 2016.

<sup>14</sup> The topic was broadly commented in Polish studies. See e.g. M. INGLÓT, *Norwida chrześcijańska reinterpretacja legendy o Wandzie na tle polskiego dramatu pierwszej połowy XIX*

an entirely different story – the stability of that connection between the character of Wanda and an opera libretto might be proven with the first successful dramatic attempt at it by Stanisław Wyspiański, *Legenda I*, which was written as a libretto of an opera imagined by the artist. In that way, thanks to Wyspiański, Wanda had a chance in late 19<sup>th</sup> century to speak with Wagner's voice of a new opera aesthetics, to appear in the light of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* idea.

In Norwid's *Wanda*, it is relatively easy to indicate the elements which allow to speak of its musicality, and in the perspective of the work's dramatic shape – of the possible inspirations with an opera libretto. It is enough to look at the list of personae, which holds as many as eight choirs and two professional singers: the skald and Bojan. And if it be obvious that the artist meant to stylise the drama about Wanda into an antique tragedy<sup>15</sup> – the beginning of the text develops in the rhythm of a dialogue between the choir leader and the choir itself, between the coryphaeus and the collective persona accompanying the action on stage – it occurs as equally striking that in this compact whole of six images, the choir loses its tragic homogeneity, and thus moves away from the antique pattern. The collective termed “choir” divides and specialises at different layers: nationally (the German choir of writers and the Polish choirs of peasants, medicine people, etc., which are even separated in the list of personae), socially (e.g. peasants and prefects) and professionally (e.g. sowers, shepherds, hunters). The peculiar nature of that division is particularly striking when you realise the tautological character of isolating a choir of peasants next to choirs of wheelwrights, sowers, shepherds and commune prefects – all of them fitting within peasantry. In the sixth image, for which all of those choral communities have been created, other groups also appear, such as women, children, travellers, maids, prophets. Here one can also see traces of the antique persona of the choir leader – that function belongs to the First-old-man, who announces the idea of raising a mound, and then recounts the appearance of Wanda. Yet despite a tragic choir, one should rather imagine a diverse, polyphonically composed mix of voices (high and low, old and young, male, female and childish). That choral plurality creates not only the acoustic environment of Wanda's final speech, but the choirs are mainly used – in a manner reminiscent of the then opera effects – to create the dramaturgy of the whole

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wieku, [in:] IDEM, *Drogami pielgrzymia. Studia i artykuły o twórczości “czwartego wieszczą”*, Lublin 2007, pp. 127-153. It is worth stressing that the separate nature of tragedy as a genre – to mention just Węzyk's work, already indicated above – is at least doubtful, since today's researchers, and likely a large part of 19<sup>th</sup>-century recipients considered his *Wanda* with its musical additions a *quasi*-opera.

<sup>15</sup> That was mentioned already by Z. Szmydtowa in her study *O misteriach Cypriana Norwida* (Warszawa 1932, pp. 31-34) when considering the sources of inspiration for *Wanda*.

scene, with gradation of tension and a strong climax<sup>16</sup>. It is also worth mentioning that there is no final stage-leaving song of the choir at the very end, which would normally appear in a tragedy.

When Norwid's mystery play is compared to the early classicist tragedies about Wanda by Tekla Łubieńska (1806) and Franciszek Wężyk (1826), it can be noticed that in both the latter dramas, the choir plays a very limited role. Collective personae appear only incidentally and are most often limited to a decoration. With Łubieńska, for instance, the third act holds a *quasi*-Parliament debate; the scene lists the Council Men, the Women, and the Queen's Servants as the characters present, yet none of those collectives has a speaking part. Rytygier<sup>17</sup> appears in front of Wanda in the company of German Knights, but they do not speak as a collective character, either. The situation with Wężyk is analogous; in his tragedy, the protagonists are accompanied on stage by retinues of servants or knights, yet those groups remain mute and their function is not even close to the one assigned to the choir by the antique tragedy<sup>18</sup>. And yet it is the collective scenes which turn out to be the common feature of the librettos to operas about Wanda, the aesthetic dominant locating it within broadly understood tradition of the grand opera. In the only published fragment of Dmuszewski's libretto, there develops a great collective scene, where Wanda's statements are supported with a choral voice. The choir has even its own parts, which make it to an important element in

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<sup>16</sup> In the beginning of the scene, the choirs are presented separate as they list the gifts they bring for the ritual mound. Each group offers their own goods, the fruit of their work. Later, as stated in the stage directions, the songs of the particular groups are to continue as the mound is raised, just quieter and more distant. Against their background, further collective characters say short, unfinished lines to reflect the bustling nature of a gathering where everyone speaks of something else.

<sup>17</sup> In nearly every discussed text, the name of the German prince is used in a different form. For that reason, in each case I use the variation from the particular work.

<sup>18</sup> For instance in scene IV of act I, which is clearly of a collective nature (with Wanda, Skarbimir, Władysław, Archpriest, Priests, Elders, Knights, Peasants, Envoy of Samomir the king of Great Moravia with his retinue, and Envoy of Rytygier with his retinue), Wężyk uses the opportunities given by such a large gathering only once, when he has a "Common voice" say: "Dla Wandy żyć i ginąć wszyscyśmy gotowi" [We are all ready to live and to die for Wanda]. After that, the floor is taken by One of the Priests, and the other characters present are mute observers. F. WĘŻYK, *Wanda. Tragedia w 5 aktach*, Kraków 1826, p. 15. It is worth recalling here an important opinion stated by B. Czwońnóg-Jadczak as she discusses the circumstances in which Wężyk's drama originated. She indicates that particular scene as proof of the implied performance value of the work, which is her view is a trace of... opera inspirations! See B. CZWÓRNÓG-JADCZAK, *Twórczość Franciszka Wężyka (1803-1830) – konteksty środowiskowe: Kraków; tragedia o Wandzie "co chciała Niemca"*, [in:] *Z problemów preromantyzmu i romantyzmu. Studia i szkice*, A. Aleksandrowicz (ed.), Lublin 1991, pp. 86-87, 94-95. The researcher wrote of the performance value of Wężyk's dramas also in *Klasyk aż do śmierci. Twórczość literacka Franciszka Wężyka* (Lublin 1994, pp. 82-83, 85-86).

the confrontation between the queen and Rytygier. One may see here the obvious manners of shaping choral parts based on the pattern of repeated refrains – something found also later with Norwid<sup>19</sup>. What is more, the scene has not one, but two choirs, and their contrast – with full formal analogy and even repetition of some of the words – is used to give closure to the scene: the Poles sing a stanza about patriotic defence of the country (“Królowo, za twym rozkazem / Uzbroidm piersi żelazem. / Niech zadrży napastnik srogi, / Co znieważył nasz naród i słowiańskie Bogi!” [“Oh Queen, give your order / And we’ll arm our chests with iron. / May the fierce enemy quake / Who insulted our nation and Slavic Gods!”])<sup>20</sup>, and the Marcomanni declare their desire to destroy the Polish nation (“Książę, za twoim rozkazem / Zbrojni zwycięskim żelazem, / Przez bój i krwawy i srogi, / Zniszczymy ten dumny naród i słowiańskie Bogi!” [“Oh Prince, give your order / And our chests armed with iron / Through a fierce and bloody battle / Will destroy that proud nation and Slavic Gods!”])<sup>21</sup>.

Choir scenes also have a considerable share in the librettos by Olizar and Bełza. Both works open with folk customs. With Olizar, it is the celebration of the Cracovian Rękawka holiday, and the stage directions indicate that music be accompanied there with distinct Kraków folk stylisation<sup>22</sup>. In Bełza’s libretto, in turn, act I opens with a scene of Kupala (*Midsummer*) celebration on the Vistula and ritual songs of male and female choirs. Even Dvořák’s opera starts with a collective scene – a choir of girls collects flowers on a meadow by the Vistula and accompany Wanda, as they sign a song of the shining May sun<sup>23</sup>.

That custom of opening the work with choral scenes<sup>24</sup>, apparently typical of librettos about Wanda, finds its reflection in Norwid’s mystery play: in the first

<sup>19</sup> The choir sings twice “Napastnika i tyrana / Wolna Polska nie uzna za swojego Pana!” [An aggressor and tyrant / Free Poland shall never accept as a Ruler!] L.A. DMUSZEWSKI, *Wanda*, (fragment), “Pamiętnik Lwowski” 1(1819), nrb, act I, scene 8, p. 528.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 530

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 530-531.

<sup>22</sup> The banter of the choirs is planned as a dialogue which first shows their opposite positions, but finally uniting in a song encouraging enjoyment of the event which is also to celebrate the memory of the late Krak.

<sup>23</sup> “Slunko svítí, slunko hřeje, / Svantovít dal máj, / zelený se pažit skvěje, / v srdci blahý ráj“ V. BENEŠ-ŠUMAVSKÝ, F. ZAKREJŠ, *Vanda* (libretto), <http://www.antonin-dvorak.cz/en/vanda-libretto1> [accessed: 17.07.2016].

<sup>24</sup> In all the librettos mentioned, collective entertainment scenes are followed by a change in atmosphere. With Olizar, solemnity is introduced in scene II with a speech by the Archpriest, who reminds Wanda of the symbolic oath which she had taken for the good of her people and which she must keep in order to avoid anger of the gods. With Bełza, the scene of conversation between Wanda and Dziwa outlines future love action: Dziwa betrays that she is in love with Walter the

scene, where the choir, the folk group, asks for news from the Wawel castle and for explanation of Wanda's strange behaviour. The fact is significant for two reasons. It is related to the rules of opera libretto construction, where an opening with a choral *tutti* was a common occurrence, as the beginning of the opera – like the final – had a special function, and to have the audience focus such collective scenes were often used to exhibit the action in a most effective way<sup>25</sup>. However, not all operas started like that, and here the second reason for the significance of the said fact needs to be indicated. Using a choir from the very first scene stresses its significance as a collective persona. In an opera, that results mainly from the usual convention<sup>26</sup> and is also frequently found in works of historical themes; however, in the case of Norwid's drama, that formal custom hides many important meanings, used by the poet to stress the communitarian aspect, important both in the national and the mystery plane of the work.

Not only the presence of choirs, but also the plan of scenes in Norwid's drama reminds the reader of the layout of an opera libretto. It is about the division of scenes into the collective ones with strongly present choral parts, and the solo ones. In all the examples of Wanda librettos discussed here – and that is a broader tendency, lasting practically throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to Wagner – librettists tried to maintain a relative balance between the solo and the collective scenes. However, due to the necessary dynamics of the opera, where the factors maintaining the audience's focus are e.g. contrast and change (dialectics of arias and recitative, solo and collective singing, stage motion and moments of inaction), a major element is the alternation of various forms of singing and the cast. Such stereotypical features of an opera libretto construction at the time included also distinct finals of particular acts, with events climactic for the action and often using the possibilities given by collective scenes. Obviously, with Norwid it is difficult to speak of finals of the drama's scenes, yet the clear alternation of scenes of various nature in *Wanda* (solo and collective ones), and first of all, making the

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German, and Wanda mentions that she had loved once, but that the sentiment is forbidden to her as a queen. Dvořák's *Wanda* complains about her female loneliness, orphanhood and weakness. Thus in all those cases Wanda's loneliness as a queen and deprivation of the right to love become the element confronted with the spontaneous liveliness of collective vices and topics of the choral songs.

<sup>25</sup> A dialogue of choirs, or a choir and individual characters, which explains the circumstances and setting of the action, is a typical solution. Examples of such a dramatic solution could be multiplied – it can be found e.g. in many operas by Gaetano Donizetti (*Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Parisina*, or *Lucia di Lammermoor*).

<sup>26</sup> With that, I also mean convention understood strictly technically, in the context of the balance of the operatic form where the weight of the solo element is balanced with collective scenes. The above listed operas can hardly be viewed as displaying the role of collectivity (differently than typical grand operas, like G. Meyerbeer's *Robert diabeł* or D.F.E. Auber's *Niemowa z Portici*).



final scene to a climax in quite a stereotypical understanding for an opera (e.g. the apogee of choral effects), allow to indicate that element of the drama's construction as inspired by solutions typical for an opera libretto.

It is also worth stressing that not only the choral parts but also the solo ones in the discussed work are written with obvious care for musical effects. A closer look at the poetic means employed allows to see the wealth of effects used by Norwid to musicalize the language of the drama<sup>27</sup>. This function is realised to the largest degree by repetitions, which clearly organise the rhythmic structure of whole scenes. One of the examples is the first scene, located before the city, where both single words (pra-wielmożna, serce, słowo, płacz [pre-mighty, heart, word, cry]) and (mainly) sentence structures are repeated – be they some of the numerous anaphors<sup>28</sup> or whole phrases, repeated in choruses<sup>29</sup>. The rhythm of chorus repetitions is the dominant of the poetic language of that mystery play. In such a brief and concise work as *Wanda* is, repetitions divert attention from the purely communicative function of language. More likely, one may speak in this case of ritual treatment of the word, which somehow enforces a melodeclamatory manner of vocal production, such as would emphasise all repetitions and choruses. It was not accidental that the larger part of *Wanda* is written in a manner aiming at an effect different from classic tragedy declamation. The potential staging

<sup>27</sup> The remarks clearly and inevitably lead us to the topic of the musicality of Norwid's poetic language. See e.g. W. RZOŃCA, *Muzyczność typu modernistycznego*, [in:] IDEM, *Premodernizm Norwida – na tle symbolizmu literackiego drugiej połowy XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2013; W. STRÓŻEWSKI, *Cyprian Norwid. O muzyce*, Kraków 1997; K. WYKA, *Cyprian Norwid. Poeta i sztukmistrz*, Kraków 1948.

<sup>28</sup> "PACHOL

Albo ziolo gorzkie a zbawienne,  
Albo jaką dziwną rzecz rozumie,  
Albo o tym miał poczucie senne;  
Niechaj zbiega, a niech zbiega skoro,  
Niech przynosi, a przynosi sporo..."

(C. Norwid, *Wanda*, DW V, 138).

<sup>29</sup> "PIERWSZY Z CHÓRU

Grodny niechaj wyjdzie i odpowie  
Czekającym u progu jak stokrotki,  
Kiedy słońce skryje się w dąbrowie...

CHÓR

Czekającym u progu i przed bramą  
Niech odpowie jasno i toż samo..."

(C. NORWID, *Wanda*, I, DW V, 137).

of Norwid's work should thus be imagined as a performance filled with various sounds, requiring half-singing solo, group and choir performances, composed in a distinctly acoustic manner, more reminiscent of a libretto than traditional drama.

Beside formal matters, the motif of love seems to be the element most strongly present in the practice of adapting the legend of Wanda in opera librettos. It is impossible to imagine an opera work deprived of that motif, whereas the traditional version of the story, taken from the medieval annals written by Wincenty Kadłubek and Jan Długosz<sup>30</sup>, requires an absolutely extreme attitude from the heroine: steadfast fortitude, willingness to bear the highest sacrifice, and finally, maiden revulsion towards the love advances of the foreign prince. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Wanda's fortitude grew less steadfast<sup>31</sup>, and the emotional distaste towards the German ceased to be a necessary element of the character. The motif of love between Wanda and Rytygier was first introduced by Tekla Łubieńska in her tragedy<sup>32</sup>. That modification undoubtedly caused tragedy to inevitably drift towards a melodrama both in her work and in that by Wężyk<sup>33</sup>. The strategies of introducing a love story between Wanda and the German are various, and intriguing in all cases. Łubieńska moves the moment of the protagonists meeting into the past, and the length of their relationship seems to strip the queen's heart of the odium which she would inevitably meet in the light of the original legend. Wanda and Ryty-

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<sup>30</sup> On the legend of Wanda see e.g. K.F. KUMANIECKI, *Podanie o Wandzie w świetle źródeł starożytnych*, "Pamiętnik Literacki" 1925/1926, No. 22-23; P. ŚNIADAŁA, *Kim jest Wanda, co Niemca nie chciała? Próba reinterpretacji mitu o Wandzie zawartego w "Kronice Polskiej" Mistrza Wincentego zwanego Kadłubkiem*, "Napis" 2011, series XVII: "Jawne i ukryte w literaturze i kulturze".

<sup>31</sup> A. Witkowska indicates that in her discussion of the iconography of the motif of Polonia when she states that "Romanticism, so sensitive to any figural relations between the past and the future, had a particular liking for Wanda as a legendary character which «contained» the future fate of Poland and the essence of its history. That is likely why the literature of the time, familiar with Wagner's experiences already back in 1850s, had so few Valkyrie Wandas – powerful amazons". A. WITKOWSKA, *Śmierć Polonii*, "Teksty" 1979, No. 3 (45), p. 183. It is worth mentioning that the problem of lack of courage, the problem of weakness which does not allow the heroine to lead her faithful people into the fight, organises the action of Wyspiański's *Legenda*, as well.

<sup>32</sup> See J. UJEJSKI, *Wstęp*, [in:] T. Z BIELIŃSKICH ŁUBIEŃSKA, *Wanda. Tragedia w 5 aktach*, Warszawa 1927, pp. 16-22. Ujejski mentions some German realisations of the topic and suggests possible use of the love motif therein. At the same time, he is not familiar with the first two works, earlier than Łubieńska's tragedy, and *Wanda. Königin der Sarmaten* by Friedrich Ludwig Zacharias Werner, staged in Weimar, was written later, after 1807, as Ujejski rightly notes.

<sup>33</sup> The features of non-classic solutions to the intrigue in Łubieńska's, Wężyk's and Jan Maksymilian Fredro's works on Wanda – which are classicistic in assumption and in their formal elements – are indicated by D. Ratajczakowa IN: *Wanda w świątyni dziejów* ("Studia Polonistyczne" 1981, vol. 8, pp. 106-107).

gier met at the Czech court of another daughter of Krak: Libusza<sup>34</sup>. It was back then, in the words of the queen in the tragedy's exposition, that "jego wejrzenie / Wieczyste zostawiło w mej duszy wrażenie. – / Odtąd miłość wzajemna do serca się wkradła"<sup>35</sup> ["his look / Left an eternal imprint on my soul. – / Mutual love has then crept into the heart"]. If she feels forced to reject Rytygier's marriage plans, it is because of the demands of the nation which in making her their queen imposed on her a duty to defend their sovereignty – endangered by the potential marriage with a foreign prince.

Also with Wężyk, the love between Wanda and Rytygier becomes an element substituting for the tragic conflict<sup>36</sup>. In this case, Wanda falls prey to her own pride: even though she does not have to do that, and no one expects her to, she pledges purity to the gods – she will remain single, married only to her nation. However, once Rytygier comes to Kraków in the guise of a German envoy to see with his own eyes the monarch famous for her beauty, she immediately falls in love with him. Having tarnished her pledge with a mere thought of a man, Wanda feels obliged to sacrifice her own life.

Classicist Wandas are clearly ruled by a paradox: the heroine dies not because she did not want the German, but because she actually fell in love with him, which forces her to sacrifice her own life, as promised to either the nation or to gods. Obviously, all librettos to operas about Wanda develop the love story, as well, and although that occurs in different manners, they all have the same reason therefor. That reason was explicitly stated by Władysław Bełza in his notes in the manuscript of his libretto to *Wanda*: "I understood clearly that the motif of the old song of Wanda who «did not want the German» on its own would have been too meagre, and – to be honest – too trite. Other reasons needed to be found for the death of our princess than refusal of Ryttiger's marriage offer"<sup>37</sup>. Thus for the opera, the major idea of the legend – the death which allows Wanda to save the nation and herself from the German aggressor – turns out too meagre and trite. Of course, this is meant mainly in the sense that the legend limited to its original story would not fill several acts of a drama with turns of action. Moreover, it would not give much opportunity for such integral elements of the then operatic

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<sup>34</sup> The similarity to Libusza seems intentional. That cultural contamination appears in a quite interesting manner in Bedřich Smetana's *Libuše* (Prague, 1881). The father of the legendary Czech princess who is the protagonist of the Czech national opera was named Krok.

<sup>35</sup> T. Z BIELIŃSKICH ŁUBIEŃSKA, *Wanda*, p. 70.

<sup>36</sup> For more on the topic see B. CZWÓRNÓG-JADCZAK, *Twórczość Franciszka Wężyka*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>37</sup> W. BELZA, *Wanda. Opera w 4 aktach*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław, MS 4717/I. <http://www.dbc.wroc.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=7604> [accessed 13.04.2016] All further quotations come from the same source.

form as a soprano-tenor duet, the bass part of the adversary, or dialogue of two sopranos or a soprano with a mezzosoprano (e.g. the heroine with her faithful companion). Since the story of Wanda did not provide the material to justify the devices and formula typical of a libretto, the legend had to be suitably coloured to give an opportunity to use them; the pattern of that the librettists could find with the above discussed authors of tragic *Wandas*.

Dmuszewski introduces the thread of an amorous relation between Ryttyger and Wanda the fastest, but also cuts it most drastically. In one statement, the queen reveals that the German has inspired love in her heart and immediately announced that as a monarch, she cannot follow the emotion:

Pierwszyż w tych piersiach tkliwe rozniecił płomienie,  
I dowiódł, że królowa ma serce kobiety.  
Wzmógł się ten ogień luby, wzmógł się najgoręcej,  
Kocham ciebie, okrutny... lecz mój naród więcej.  
Już nie kochanka... potężna królowa  
Walczyć za lud swój gotowa!<sup>38</sup>

The libretto closest to the common picture of the legend about Wanda remains Bełza's version, where it is not Wanda but her companion Dziwa who is part of the love scheme with a German named Walter. Dziwa loves the young man with sincere emotion, risking her countrymen's disapproval. Yet eventually, when it is revealed that the originally noble Walter, deeply in love with the girl, is merely an obedient executor of the ideas of the power-thirsty prince, Dziwa takes the appropriate, patriotic stand. Wanda remains unwavering since the beginning of the libretto and uses one stratagem after another to deceive the invaders, delay Ryttyger's attack and avoid bloodshed. It is also Bełza who stresses in the highest degree the Germans' villainy; they are portrayed stereotypically, almost in a caricature. Ryttyger is not only arrogant and overbearing, he is also less than intelligent, since Wanda is able to deceive him with predictable subterfuges. Unintentionally comic are also the linguistic epithets thrown at the Poles by the Germans in the libretto, betraying the clearly contemptuous attitude of the aggressors, full of unjustified superiority<sup>39</sup>. In that way, Bełza's *Wanda* accentuates the primary

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<sup>38</sup> L.A. DMUSZEWSKI, *Wanda*, p. 530.

<sup>39</sup> Ryttyger: "To zgniołę, / Powalę mieczem tę hołotę. / Słowiańska psiarnia raz przestanie wyć!" ["I shall crush, / I shall fell that vermin with my sword. / The Slav dogs will finally stop howling!" – act II, scene 2] Walter: "Jak psa wypędzasz mnie, / Słuchaj słowiański psie, / Odemszczę się!" ["You chase me out like a dog, / Listen, Slav dog, / I shall find my revenge!"] and further "Oh, pomszczę się, pomszczę się! / Zniewagi i rozpaczy! / Poznasz ty stary psie, / Co zemsta moja znaczy!" ["Oh, I will avenge, avenge myself! / Oh the outrage and despair! / You will see, you

message of the legend, which in turn is strongly marginalised by the other librettos discussed here, or – in particular – by Norwid’s mystery play. Yet that is done in a simplifying manner lacking in artistic finesse.

The most interesting love plot seems to be the one in Olizar’s libretto. Wanda and Rytyger are mutually, deeply and sincerely in love (having met, like with Łubieńska, back in times when Krak was alive). Their love is sabotaged by the formidable Archpriest-bass, adopted to the libretto from the rich opera tradition. He holds undivided control over Wanda, disallowing her to break her vows<sup>40</sup>. Yet the action of the opera makes it known that he could release the queen from her vows, thus giving her the right to build private happiness and save her nation from a bloody war peacefully, through a marriage which would give the state a (likely) ideologically improper, but stable alliance with the German neighbour. The priest remains unbendable, and the spiral of Polish-German dislike is additionally aggravated by the intrigue of the Silesian princess Ryksa. Considering complication of the action and the melodrama, Olizar’s libretto is unequalled by any of the other variations on the theme, although it ought to be stated that Dvořák’s librettists also cared to add colour to the basic plot of the legend by adding Sławoj, a knight with whom queen Wanda is in love, and by whom she is loved. In the Czech opera, Roderik the German is the conventional villain – even more negative than in the Polish versions<sup>41</sup>. Since the very beginning, he is ignored by Wanda as a candidate for marriage, and when he is bested by Sławoj in a duel, the German seeks the help of a witch<sup>42</sup>.

The manner of introducing Rytyger in Norwid’s drama, as well as discreet inclusion of an emotional link in the relationship of the German with the princess, obviously have many counterparts in the tradition of the theme. With Norwid,

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old dog, / what my revenge is like!” – act IV, scene 3]. German choir: “Jezus, Maryja! / Prowadź nas ty! / Niech miecz twój zabija / Słowiańskie psy!” [“Jesus, Mary! / Lead us forth! / You sword shall slay / The Slavic dogs!” – act IV, scene 6].

<sup>40</sup> That complication of the libretto and emphasis on the role of the Archpriest, who becomes Wanda’s true adversary (and yet at the same time her supporter in the armed conflict with the Germans), distinctly links Olizar’s *Wanda* with such operas as Vincenzo Bellini’s *Norma*, Leo Delibes’s *Lakmé*, Georges Bizet’s *Les Pêcheurs de perles*, and in Poland – Stanisław Moniuszko’s *Paria*. All of them include the motif of a priestess breaking her chastity vows (even if just potentially).

<sup>41</sup> Even with Belza, despite the German prince being presented as impulsive and ready to start a war due to Wanda’s lack of compliance, there is a feature which softens that clearly negative portrait: the consistency with which he applies for the queen’s hand, and the naively proud male conviction that he is worthy of her love and that her agreement to marry him is only a matter of time.

<sup>42</sup> Finally, Wanda’s love submits to class prejudices. The Archpriest imputes the whole evil of the war to her wrongful love to Sławoj, who had no right to reach for Wanda’s hand as he did not come from a royal line. As she promises the gods a sacrifice of her own life in return for victory of Germans, Dvořák’s Wanda seals her fate.

Rytyger comes to the Wawel castle in the guise of a bard; a similar motif was used by Wężyk<sup>43</sup>. Also Olizar uses the motif, so obvious for an opera, in his libretto. With him, the prince comes to Wawel under the name of Rupert, together with the German envoys who are bringing the prince's gifts to Wanda. In the procession with gifts, he is the one to carry symbols of the love of the German prince to the queen. The scene of offering gifts in the second act of the libretto is composed in a particularly dynamic manner. Rytygier wants to hand to his love a pair of turtle doves and a golden crown, as a symbol of love and joint rule. As if forgetting about her vows to gods, Wanda is ready to accept those gifts, but is held back by the Archpriest at the last moment. Wanda faints, and once she awakens, she has to defend her lover from being exposed; thus in order to calm the people present, she confirms her declaration of remaining unshakenly faithful to her pledge of purity. Rytygier becomes embroiled in arguments with the queen's entourage and eventually war is declared by both sides. Thus the gifts of love and peace are the seeds of conflict. With Norwid, the scene of the ritual gift offering to Wanda is just as important, although it is placed elsewhere and has a different function: it is the final of the whole play, symbolically representing the forming of Wanda's mound. Both scenes show surprising similarities in many respects, especially formal ones (as scenes of high dramatic tension, choral, focused on Wanda and her decision on the sacrifice – not necessarily through her immediate presence on stage).

The symbolic gift of love from Rytygier in Olizar's text, in the form of (turtle) doves, is an interesting common aspect of various librettos to operas about Wanda. In particular in Belza's version, the birds become a lexical *leitmotif*. Dziwa calls herself a dove numerous times, and compares her maiden yearning to a bird which dreams of flying away into freedom. In the trio from scene 2 of the second act, Dziwa, Walter and Ryttyger call Wanda a dove, and the German prince a falcon, referring thereby to the tradition of folk love songs. Also in the monologues of Norwid's Wanda there appear recollections concerning doves (scenes II and IV), which sound like a typical sentimental motif<sup>44</sup>, but may also

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<sup>43</sup> It indicates that already in this classicistic version of the theme, the idea of musical composition of selected scenes was included; naturally, a German skald would have to sing a song. Rytygier's companion, Ullo, sings several stanzas "wziąwszy kilka akordów na ręcznej harfie" [upon taking a few chords on a hand-harp] (F. WĘŻYK, *Wanda*, pp. 34-35). Those elements were used by Hofman in his version of theatrical music to Wężyk's drama.

<sup>44</sup> "Niech wyfrunę, oj! jak gołąbeczka..." ["May I fly, oh!, like a dove..."] (C. NORWID, *Wanda*, II, PWSz IV, 136). A fragment of Dziwa's aria in Belza's libretto states: "A dziś, a dziś, serce się rwie. / Jak z sideł ptak! / Wskoczyć chce i pęknąć chce! / Dobrze mu tak!" ["And today, today, my heart escapes / Like a bird from a snare tight! / It wants to run, it wants to break! / Serves it right!"] (W. BELZA, *Wanda*, act II, scene 3).

be interpreted in the categories of Christian symbols. Combining the melancholic mood of the heroine with the sentimental images of doves, one may find in those words a trace of the specific emotional relationship in which the queen and Ryttygier are entangled.

The source of that merely suggested, poetically sketched motif is with Norwid the description of the powerlessness consuming Wanda, her worldview crisis, the torment that her destiny as a queen became. The distress of the queen is the topic of the first conversations of her subjects and a source of deep concern of her court, who wish to find a cure to their ruler's spiritual malady. Hence, singers are invited to the castle, so that they can help the queen with their songs to free the emotions which are stifling her. Yet among the singers, Ryttygier also slips into the castle to see Wanda. His feelings are purposeful and masculine, which is very reminiscent of his counterpart in Bełza's version. In the libretto, Ryttygier behaves in a courtly manner towards Wanda and tries to win her favour with chivalrous conduct, yet his true, impetuous face glimpses every now and again from behind that curtain of gallantry. In scene 6 of the second act, the librettist placed a recitative of the prince, filled with emotions, just before his duet with Wanda:

W sercu mem ciągle wrą niepokoje.  
 Miłość niem targa, to znowu żal.  
 Strzeż się! Choć gładkie są lica twoje,  
 Gładszą jest miecza mojego stal.  
 [...]  
 Nie każ mi sięgać przez krwi jezioro,  
 Rycerskim prawem po rękę twą!<sup>45</sup>

Ryttygier sings to Wanda about his desire of love and delight (“miłości i rozkoszy”), seeing her as a passive object of either. Similarly definite and masculine are the character's desires in Norwid's drama. More than the physical aspect of fulfilment, as presented in Bełza's libretto, the German is intent on conquering the queen as a monarch<sup>46</sup>; yet he desires her, again, like you would an artefact, planning the wealth to surround her with, and seeing her as a war talisman to bring luck to his people, and glory to himself<sup>47</sup>. In both librettos, he plainly declares his

<sup>45</sup> W. BELZA, *Wanda*, act II, scene 6.

<sup>46</sup> “Królowę wezmę... i lud rozpierzchniony...” [“I shall take the queen... and her scattered people...”] (C. NORWID, *Wanda*, III, DW V, 143).

<sup>47</sup> “Jako cię kochać będzie wojsko całe / [...] / Ty! – skoro uścisk dasz – wyprawę zrobię / [...] / Mur Alp skrzącymi młotami przeżłobię, / Rzym spalę [...]” [“The whole army will love you / [...] / You! – embrace me once – I'll set out on a mission / [...] / Will furrow the Alps with hammers, / I will burn Rome [...]”] (C. NORWID, *Wanda*, III, DW V, 144).

love despite the queen's dislike, as if he did not allow for the possibility of a refusal, or, perhaps in particular, the subjection of the lady to other values, foreign to his own worldview.

Analysis of the location of scene V in Norwid's play and its functions against the librettos of Wanda-themed operas – as well as the opera traditions of early 19<sup>th</sup> century – indicates a significant similarity between the dialogue of the two protagonists and the duet of lovers (or antagonists, as Belza has them), which was a necessary element of the then opera. It is a moment of confrontation – in opera, it serves as the reason for the most emotional scene, where the two declare the fervour of the emotions uniting (or separating) them, with the joint power of lyrics and music. Often, the love duet (at least one of them) is placed just before the moment of a disaster which separates the characters, thus building an emotional climax after which the action climax will be the more powerful. That specific prediction of the plot with the use of emotions helps establish the hierarchy of values important for the opera: the avowal of feelings, declaration of mutual desire has precedence over interest in the intrigue and the peripeteia tangling the fate of the lovers. Gustaw Olizar composed act IV of his libretto in exactly that manner, and he used all possible resources of dramatic means, suggesting a happy ending to the conflict between Wanda's vows to gods and her love to Ryttyger. Right before the very long, highly solemn and ritual scene of Wanda's death, the queen and her love sing a love duet. That duet, however, is peculiar – and quite reminiscent of Norwid's scene in that respect – because the lovers sing each of something else. Wanda hides from the prince her decision which would separate them and shatter their dream of sharing their lives on earth; in raptures of love, he expresses joy in the expected end to the time of trial and the perspective of attaining joint happiness<sup>48</sup>.

WANDA

Bogów śluby, wprzód mam złożyć,  
Grzech ten, świętą wodą zmyć;  
By mi wolno było ożyć,  
Wolno, z Tobą, wiecznie żyć!!

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<sup>48</sup> In the said scene of a duet of Wanda and Ryttyger (ending of scene 6, act II – and also the ending of the whole act), Belza also has such a semantic shift between the lines of the two protagonists. As she has him agree to postpone the final decision until morning, she turns to the night to hearten her up, and her lines, stylised like a prayer, quite clearly suggest the solution she will find to avoid a fate which seems unavoidable (“oczy moje / Na sen wieczysty zmrzuż” [“close my eyes / For eternal sleep”]; W. BELZA, *Wanda*, act II, scene 6). At the same time, he asks that same night to pass faster and lead him thus into the desired victory.



RYTTYGER

Ileż trzeba trudu łożyć,  
 By rozplątać szczęścia nić  
 Gdym mógł takiej chwili dożyć...  
 Umieć czekać... trzeba chcieć!...<sup>49</sup>

In the excitement of the love declaration, Ryttyger even announces that he will withdraw his army<sup>50</sup>. That orientation of both characters towards different spheres: earthly love and marital satisfaction with him, the idea of sacrifice and need thereof with her, shows the most fully the similarity of the scene to the dialogue of Wanda and Ryttyger in Norwid's scene V<sup>51</sup>. It is not incidental in either work that the ritual procession on the Vistula comes as the next and at the same time final scene. In Norwid's play, it is the choral scene of raising the mound and of Wanda's sacrifice, discussed above, and with Olizar it is the "ablution" ritual which in Ryttyger's expectation exempts Wanda from her pledge to the gods, and in reality takes her life as a sacrifice.

The last scene of Olizar's libretto is preceded with a significant technical note in stage directions, saying that a fragment of a popular polonaise should be inserted there: "[...] dla dania czasu do przygotowania się na pochod mostowy, oraz, dla wypoczynku słuchaczy, po najszczytniejszym duecie (Tenora z Sopranem) a przed poważną orkiestrą muzyką, towarzyszącą pochodowi zamkowego orszaku"<sup>52</sup> [to give time to prepare for the bridge procession, and to let the audience rest, after the climactic duet (Tenor and Soprano), and before solemn orchestra music to accompany the procession of the court]. Thus the librettist is well aware of the functions of the duet of protagonists and its consequences for the dramaturgy of the work. After that *quasi*-duet, Norwid puts a strong statement by Ryttyger, who

<sup>49</sup> G. OLIZAR, *Wanda*, act IV, scene 3.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. "Twą miłością ja miłuję! / Twojém czuciem i ja czuję! / Wojsko, wycofam moje - / Niech mi szczęścia zdroje / Z Twojej płyną duszy!..." ["I love with your love! / I feel with your feeling! / I'll withdraw my army - / May I drink springs of happiness / From your soul!..."]

<sup>51</sup> "WANDA:

[...]

– Mnie nie czas... lud mię postawił na szczycie  
 Jako najbielszy śnieg... [...]

RYTTYGER

Więc cóż?... to lud twój chce, ażebyś w bieli  
 Stojąca płaczem rozciekała wiecznym [...]"

(C. NORWID, *Wanda*, V, DW V, p. 155)

<sup>52</sup> G. OLIZAR, *Wanda*, act IV, scene 3.

speaks of declaring a war in that very place, in response to Wanda's refusal of him<sup>53</sup>.

The last issue to discuss when analysing Norwid's *Wanda* against the practice of opera librettos of the same topic is the idea organising the work and making it to a mystery play. It is known what roads led the poet to merge the legend of Wanda with the holy history, to attain that capital identification of the legendary time with the time of Christ's sacrifice, which allows the heroine in her final monologue to experience the vision of "cień Boga" ["God's shadow"], His pierced hand and torn body<sup>54</sup>. Obviously, that places the whole scene of Wanda's death in a completely different order than in the traditional take on the legend. Wanda's death must be read in the categories of a Sacrifice<sup>55</sup> with a quite different sense than it had in the numerous presentations of the motif in which, while the sacrifice of the queen's gesture is stressed, it is presented almost exclusively as payment (e.g. for divine help in combatting the German danger, as it was with Dvořák<sup>56</sup>) or as a form of escape for the queen, hounded by having no other options to defend her country. The latter is how Bełza composed the scene in his libretto: when it seems to Rytygier that he is getting close to winning Wanda, she escapes him by choosing the embrace of death and at the same time forcing the prince to withdraw his army. The scene was to end with a living image, Wanda's apotheosis, staging a famous painting by Aleksander Lesser.

Norwid's Wanda is not paying any pagan gods for their support. Neither is she escaping a physical force impossible to combat in open fight. Her last words are: "A co jest we mnie, dam wam..."<sup>57</sup> ["And I shall give you what is in me"]. In that way, the idea of her sacrifice is unified with the idea of Christ's death on the cross,

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<sup>53</sup> That motif – as a total contrast to the above mentioned declaration by the German in Olizar's libretto to withdraw his army – is one of many common elements between the compared scenes, which thus become very specific mirror images: in both of them, analogous motifs and means are used for an opposite purpose and with the opposite result.

<sup>54</sup> J.W. Gomulicki gives a concise list of the particular birth stages; see *Wstęp*, [in:] C. NORWID, *Miniatury dramatyczne*, introduction and preparation by J.W. Gomulicki, Warszawa 1968, pp. 20-29.

<sup>55</sup> W. Szturc interprets Norwid's drama from a mythocritical and symbolic perspective (*Mit fundacyjny narodu w „Wandzie” Cypriana K. Norwida*, [in:] IDEM, *O obrotach sfer romantycznych. Studia o ideach i wyobraźni*, Kraków 1997).

<sup>56</sup> At the very beginning of act V, the Archpriest says that gods demand a holy sacrifice of Wanda ("[...] ó, kněžno má, / oběť tvoje svatá. / Bohové žádají, kněžno, / žertvu tvou"), which Slavoj protests to no avail ("[...] oběť ta hrozná nikdy se nesmí stát"). V. Beneš-Šumavský, F. Zakrejš, *Vanda* (libretto). In his version, S. Wyspiański develops the motif of payment with Wanda's life for gods' help.

<sup>57</sup> C. NORWID, *Wanda*, VI, DW V, 161.

the Vistula bank and the mound transform into the space of the Passion playing out at the foot of Golgotha, and the sources of national history are inscribed in the soteriological order of the history of the world<sup>58</sup>. It is worth returning here for the last time to Gustaw Olizar's libretto, as it presents the motif of Wanda's sacrifice in a manner closest to its understanding by Norwid. First of all, through language alone, the librettist placed Wanda's final act in an order of values which is foreign to the original spirit of the legend. In the above quoted love duet from act IV, words about sin and the need to expiate it are repeated several times. Perhaps Wanda's sacrifice is only expiatory in nature, but the placement of the fragment in a broader context of the libretto allows to speak of the idea of redemption. Earlier, the Archpriest convinces Wanda of the need for the sacrifice, saying

Gdzie ofiara z Miłością w wiecznej spójni żyją!...  
 Tam, gdzie się tajemnice przyszłych losów kryją  
 Twojego Ludu – śmiało! Śmiało idź Dziewico!  
 Bogów! Twej ziemi! Jego... Ty Oblubienico!! –<sup>59</sup>

The semantic connection of sacrifice and love (written with capitals), calling Wanda a virgin and bride (also with capitals) – all that inevitably leads the libretto into a seemingly foreign circle of Christian thought. The heroine sings – aside, so that Rytyger cannot hear – “Że wprzód śmiercią winnam ożyć, / Aby wiecznie móżdż z niém żyć!”<sup>60</sup> [“That I should first come alive with death / To be able to live with him forever!”] Even if the vision of the pagan world presented in different *Wandas* is usually quite schematic and limited to naming a few Slavic gods, there is actually no doubt that the legend is rooted in pre-Christian times, and its heroine is a polytheist. Yet the weak libretto by Olizar, with all his numerous clichés and calques, shows a surprising feature in the creation of Wanda, thanks to which the ending of the work comes close to the idea expressed in Norwid's drama. The gesture of Wanda's suicidal death, interpreted not in the categories of helpless escape or fatalist necessity but voluntary sacrifice with a higher sense and aim, requires the use of language which is not neutral as concerns the worldview. It has to – and does – evoke associations with the Christian doctrine, which in the final parts of the libretto conjures an unexpected vision of religious syncretism that even the author may not have been fully aware of. Whether or not this was the intended outcome, it still proves that even in a libretto variation it is possible

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. W. SZTURC, *Mit fundacyjny*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>59</sup> G. OLIZAR, *Wanda*, act IV, scene 1.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, act IV, scene 2.

to link a Kraków legend and the idea of Christ's Passion. Of course, Olizar does not reach the depths typical of Norwid, but his Wanda – judging her own actions and obligations in the categories of sin and atonement, putting her hopes for happiness in eternal life (“Więc śmierć moja kraj ten zbawi! / I miłego ujrzę tam!”<sup>61</sup> [“And thus my death shall redeem this country! / And I will see my love there!”]) – still becomes a heroine Christian in spirit, even if clothed in a traditional pagan costume.

The above conclusions and comparisons allow to prove that it is justified to interpret Norwid's *Wanda* in the perspective of its relation to an opera libretto – either considering formal closeness (choral scenes, structure of solo and collective parts, dramaturgy of the whole work and construction of the climax), the common theme (ambiguous relationship between Wanda and Rytyger, creation of the heroine which escapes the simplicity of the legend), or finally the perspective of ideological senses (the issue of sacrifice, connection with Christianity). Reducing the work to that context only would certainly misrepresent the sense of the drama, yet disregarding it seems equally harmful. The opera was, in fact, an important phenomenon in shaping 19<sup>th</sup>-century aesthetic sensitivity, and in particular the theatrical imagination of the then dramatists. Elements linking *Wanda* with the operatic form and the practice of adapting the Kraków legend for a libretto allow to notice the richness and diversification of sources of inspiration which helped Norwid weave one of his early dramatic works, and their traces are also found – quite independently – in the librettos to operas about Wanda. Indicating the value of the opera context does not take away from the values of the drama itself, which – as the title of this paper suggests – could be situated half-way between a mystery play and a libretto.

*Translated by Agnieszka Gernand*

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., act IV, scene 5.

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## WANDA – MIĘDZY MISTERIUM A LIBRETTEM

### S t r e s z c z e n i e

Artykuł „*Wanda*” – między misterium a librettem poświęcony został operowym filiacjom twórczości Norwida. Z jednej strony są to zapożyczone z formy operowej formy, które wpłynęły na strukturę dramatu (jak chóry i konstrukcja scen zbiorowych, partie solowe o charakterze quasi-recytatywnym lub aryjnym, kompozycja finałów aktów), z drugiej jednak Norwidowskie dzieło zinterpretowane zostało w szerokim kontekście XIX-wiecznych librett operowych, których bohaterką jest Wanda. Oprócz zrealizowanych oper (*Vanda* A. Dvořáka), legendę o krakowskiej księżniczce adaptowano w licznych librettach (fragmenty w opracowaniu L.A. Dmuszewskiego, całe libretta G. Olizara i W. Bełzy, operowa przeróbka tragedii F. Wężyka). Fakt, że większość z tych tekstów nie została nigdy opracowana muzycznie, zachęca do namysłu nad ich pogranicznym i niedookreślonym statusem dzieła literackiego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *Wanda*; libretto; adaptacja operowa.

*WANDA* – BETWEEN THE MYSTERY AND THE LIBRETTO

## S u m m a r y

The article discusses the operatic filiation of Norwid's works. On the one hand, these are forms borrowed from opera, which influenced the structure of the drama (e.g. choirs and the construction of collective scenes, solo parts of a quasi-recitative character or similar to arias, the composition of the finales of acts); on the other hand, Norwid's work was interpreted in a broad context of 19<sup>th</sup>-century opera libretti, whose protagonist is Wanda. In addition to the produced operas (*Vanda* by A. Dvořák), the legend about the Krakow princess was adapted in numerous libretti (fragments in the work by L.A. Dmuszewski, the entire libretti by G. Olizar and W. Belza, an operatic remake of the tragedy by F. Wężyk). The fact that most of these texts have never been musically elaborated encourages reflection on their borderline and indeterminate status as a literary work.

**Key words:** *Wanda*; libretto; opera adaptation.

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