

Folk beliefs and fairy tales as a source of experience in fantastic worlds of Bolesław Lesmian and Jan Brzechwa

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Putting the poems of Jan Brzechwa and Bolesław Lesmian together may seem very surprising. What things are common for 'the epigone of Young Poland literary period'¹ and 'a poet for children'²? We should also remember that the writers were cousins. Both of them had also a degree on law³. Is it enough to be tempted to compare the works of these poets taking into consideration their kinship and the same professional career?

Brzechwa in his poetic portfolio has not only famous poems for children but also other lyrical poems. They were created at the beginning of his artistic career (in the interwar period) and also at the end of his life. In many of these poems Lesmian's influence can be found as the critics of the interwar period have emphasized⁴. In the first phase of his work Brzechwa not only uses imagery typical for Lesmian but also his poetic intellectualism. As

1 In a letter to Zenon Przesmycki in 1913 the poet complains that he is considered as 'the epigone Young Poland literary period' (Lesmian B., *Utwory rozproszone. Listy*, Warsaw 1962, p. 332). Antoni Potocki helped to formulate such an opinion as he understood the term 'epigonism' as not only the continuation of literary models considered obsolete, but also any secondary nature and poets belonging to the secondary generation (*Polska literatura współczesna*, Warsaw 1912, part II, p. 324).

2 This is the contemporary reception of Jan Brzechwa (see: Szóstak A., *Od modernizmu do lingwizmu. O przemianach w twórczości Jana Brzechwy*, Cracow 2003, p. 7).

3 Both of the cousins had finished law. Lesmian was a notary and Brzechwa became the best expert on copyright law and he codified it in Poland. It is worth noting as a curiosity that the case which brought him the greatest fame was the winning in the case on the legacy of Cyprian Kamil Norwid. He represented Miriam Przesmycki, who along with his publishers entitled to the exclusive rights of copyright to publish works of C.K. Norwid. The customer of Brzechwa sued Tadeusz Pini for infringement of these rights (see: Szóstak A., op. cit., p. 48, note 34).

4 See: N.M.S. [Nela Milkowska-Samotychowa], *Z ksiązek*, 'Bluszcz' 1926, no. 26, p. 865; Janowski J., *Nowe wiersze*, 'Głos Narodu' 1926, no. 72, p. 2; S.K., 'Kurier Literacko-Naukowy' 1926, no. 20, p. 8; Janowski J., 'Czas' 1936, no. 60, p. 8; ARNO [Arnold Beniamin], *Uczeń Lesmiana*, 'Tygodnik Ilustrowany' 1932, no. 29, p. 470; Huszcza-Winnicka H., *Trzy światopoglądy poetyckie (Brzechwa – Słobodnik – Bał)*, 'Gazeta Polska' 1936, no. 102, p. 14.

Antoni Marianowicz sums up aptly: 'In the first of his volumes he remains heavily influenced by Leśmian [...]. His fantasy is gradually taking a break from Leśmian's pessimism and becomes cheerful and mischievous one'⁵.

Although we can see references to the works of Leśmian in Brzechwa's poems it cannot be said for certain that the poet by mimicking his famous cousin was going to equal with him⁶. It must be noted here that at the time when Brzechwa was publishing his first volume of poetry in 1926 Leśmian had only two volumes published [*Sad rozstajny* (*Crossroads Orchard*) and later famous *Łąka* (*Meadow*)] and his position was not too significant yet.

Leśmian while creating his world of fantasy deposits it deeply in nature. There is no place for descriptions of the achievements of civilization and urban agglomeration. This reality is like a garden but not the Eden one. Human being often experiences there contradictory emotions. He or she feels not only enthusiasm but also despair due to the transience of human life and being affected by the awareness of death. His or her existence is not only marked by euphoria but also sadness⁷.

The places where events are taking place in the poems are: orchard, forest and garden. At the first glance, these places are very different from each other. However, Leśmian uses them interchangeably. In his poetry they seem to be the same magical space in which numerous miracles and wonders are taking place.

In the volume *Łąka* the poet somehow enters the world created by himself and becomes one of the participants of the described situations. Thanks to him we are familiarized with the creatures that live there such as: Dusiołek, planetnicy and a bane who has a waist alike a saw.

The inspiration for the 'miracles and wonders' present in his poetry is often a collection of well-known fairy tales. The poet takes into account native creativity and motifs characteristic for the Slavic culture. Using the folk imagination he often changes characters and mixes events. As a result, a whole new story emerges from his pen which is thematically different from that one which was a source of inspiration.

The poet gives new properties to creatures created by himself which were not present according to common beliefs and moreover he extends the field of their operation. Ghosts from beliefs are different from those created by Leśmian's imagination. They seem to be pieced together from several entities. It happens that the lyrical narrator focuses on a key event of

5 Marianowicz A., *Jan Brzechwa*, 'Nowiny Literackie i Wydawnicze' 1957, no. 5, p. 5.

6 Brzechwa alone said about himself that he is the author of creation with capital 'cre' (see: Sikirycki I., *Wspomnienie serdeczne*. 'Odgłosy' 1982, no. 13, p. 8).

7 Stelmaszczyk B., *Istnieć w dwoistym świecie*, Łódź 2009, p. 68.

the given folk story but in such a way that causes confusion and helplessness in the reader. As a result, the reader does not know how to interpret words of the creator of the new ‘fairy tale’. For instance the well known poem *Piła* in which we have to deal with a bane. Already in the initial verses we read: ‘Through the forest there that bane is going who has saw-like waist’.

In the work of Aleksander Gieysztor who investigates Slavic mythology the bane is a copy of a living human. It is also called the dead man or a ghost⁸. As Bohdan Baranowski writes, in areas inhabited by Slavs and, therefore, also on the Polish soil there was a regular belief in malicious demons that suffocated or even sucked the blood of both humans and domestic animals. That kind of creature was called an incubus.

Such customs of the incubus as sucking blood or suffocation were only a tip of the iceberg. This character maltreated the man in different ways — it could, for example, ride the encountered victim like a horse⁹. Most often it assumed figures of an animal: cat, ferret, frog, mouse, rat, fish and even items: straw, thread and needle¹⁰. In the Leśmian’s poem mentioned above the incubus becomes a saw which does not torture a peasant just like that but she is trying to charm him. She wants the act of love to which she is leading to become a deadly ordeal for the boy:

Poszarpala go pieszczotą na nierówne części:
Niech wam, moje wy drobiażdżki, w śmierci się poszczęści¹¹.

In none of the dictionaries and research on Slavic beliefs known to me I found information about amorous pursuits of the incubus. It seems to me that Leśmian connected here the beliefs about the incubus with other ones (about the witches). What’s more, both witch/hag and the incubus are classified as half-demonical creatures¹². It is possible that in some regions these concepts and entities are equal.

The witch was not only a servant to the devil devoted to him physically and mentally but also had magical powers. One of the spells that she cast was just a love spell. It could cause someone to lose happiness and success in love. The witch could affect men who, by the use magic or love potion, fell in love with her. As a contrary to a popular belief witches did not satisfy with the intercourse with the devil. They also liked to indulge in the pleasures with

8 Gieysztor A., *Mitologia Słowian*, Warsaw 2006, p. 259.

9 Moszyński K., *Kultura ludowa Słowian*, vol. II, Warsaw 1967, p. 627.

10 Baranowski B., *W kręgu upiórów i wilkołaków*, Łódź 1981, pp. 65–80.

11 Leśmian B., *Piła*, [in:] *Poezje wybrane*, Wrocław 1983, p. 79.

12 *Mitologia słowiańska*, [online], [access: 14.07.2014], <fronsac.republika.pl/mitologiaslowianska/leksykondemonow.htm>.

ordinary mortal men. It seems that the Leśmian's incubus-saw who allured boys living in the village had the characteristics of a witch:

Idzie lasem owa z mora, co ma kibić pily,
A zębami chłopców nęci i zna czar mogily¹³.

The saw from the title knows some secret ways to arouse desire, interest, and even admiration. In addition, she knows how to cause death of her victim. Words that she speaks to the peasant can be read as a kind of love spell:

Oczaruj się tym widokiem, coś go nie widywał,
Ośniż się tym snami, coś ich nie wyśniwał!¹⁴

What is more, maybe she wants, as a servant of the devil, to sell him the souls of charmed boys. When the peasant is in her possession, the saw says 'Hey, not one soul I will fancy from you to the afterlife!'¹⁵. From the words of the incubus it is evident that the man pays with his life for love moments as he is going to be torn into pieces. The heroine of the poem tortured the man in an unusual way as for the incubus. She achieved her goal by using magic like a witch.

While creating one creature from two Leśmian bestowed in he saw a much greater range of measures to cruelty to humans than is usually available for incubuses or witches. As a result of this contamination of demonic entities torments to which the man is administered become more severe.

Jan Brzechwa also draws his inspiration from the tradition. However, there are no characters from Slavic beliefs in his poems. Strange creatures so typical for Leśmian are lacking here. The author of *Liryki mego życia* (*The Lyrics of My Life*) creates space based on the popular imagination but also — into the higher degree — on rituals and magical properties attributed to objects. He creates characters who are more characteristic for fairy tales than for Slavic myths. World created by him, as Leśmian's one, is sometimes a mysterious space like, for instance, the forest¹⁶. The author, referring to folklore, uses a ballad — a genre that stems from folk dance songs¹⁷. He used the ballad form for example in the cycle *Legends* (*The Legends*). We will find here, among other works, the poem *Burza* (*The Storm*) in which an entity similar to the well-known Leśmian's incubus is plaguing

13 Leśmian B., *Pila*, op. cit., p. 77.

14 Ibidem, p. 78.

15 Ibidem.

16 The forest as a mysterious place is present in many religions, legends and fables (see: *Las*, [in:] Kopaliński W., *Słownik symboli*, Warsaw 1990, p. 190).

17 *Ballada polska*, ed. Zgorzelski Cz., Opacki I., Wrocław–Warsaw–Cracow 1962, pp. X–XII.

the terrified hero. The narrator is accompanied by a sense of the presence of something undefined and anxiety waking:

Czy to duch, czy to cień
Chodzi za mną dzień w dzień,
Na łożu moim siadłszy,
Z pode łba na mnie patrzy,
A leb ma jak kaganiec,
A oczy jak różańce,
Zapada ze mną w ciszę,
Nie widzę, go nie słyszę...¹⁸

In this particular case the form of incubus is portrayed by ordinary fear that haunts lunatics accursed by God and men. They are accompanied by a feeling of helplessness and the conviction that they are sentenced for doom.

Pewnie nam od tych burz
Nie uchronić się już,
Szaleńcy bez natchnienia
Nie żądają zbawienia —
[...]
My szukamy na morzach zagłady,
My łakniemy pozgonnej biesiady,
Czarnej głębi bez dna, bez imienia,
Gdzie już pieśniom nie trzeba natchnienia¹⁹.

At one point, the narrator loses the consciousness of who he is. He does not know if he is still alive or became a shadow or perhaps gone into oblivion:

Czy to duch, czy to cień ku mnie kroczy,
Czyli sam jestem duchem i cieniem,
Że już własnym nie władam wspomnieniem?²⁰

Up to this date only one thing kept him alive — a belief in the love of his beloved:

Ona jedna rozpacza w komorze,
Ona jedna zapomnieć nie może²¹.

This poem, as all belonging to the *Legendy* cycle, is sometimes described as the remainder of the convention of ‘close to Leśmian’s ballad’²².

18 Brzechwa J., *Burza*, [in:] op. cit., p. 62.

19 Ibidem.

20 Ibidem, p. 64.

21 Ibidem.

22 Szóstak A., op. cit. p. 29.

The protagonists of Brzechwa's ballad poems apart from wretched madman's damned spirit are: the Holy Pre-Rat²³ who wants to dominate over sycamore people from the top of Glass Mountain²⁴, Szalawila²⁵ the ghost-knight hunted by death and yet wishing to restore the glory (more permanent than himself), the spirit of the cottage²⁶ granted with legs²⁷ which she pleaded from God in order to liberate herself from the evil spell. It is worth mentioning that in the poem *Chalupa* (*The Cottage*) in which the last of the characters listed here appears, we will see references to the cycle of *Pieśni kalekujące*²⁸.

Brzechwa uses magical objects repeatedly. He benefits from the secret properties of plants (which was also characteristic for Leśmian²⁹) and evokes the magic power of numbers. We notice the reference to the unusual features in the title of a volume *Piotun i obłok*³⁰ (*Wormwood and Cloud*). Items with magical powers are bound to be found in the poem *Siedmiu braci śpiących* (*Seven Sleeping Brothers*):

Przynoszę oto w dłoniach szafran, krzemień i brąz
Przynoszę wszystkie zaklęte talizmany³¹.

In the title of this poem appears the magic of numbers³². The number seven also occurs in the poem *Magia* (*Magic*). In addition, in the poem a black cat is

23 Brzechwa J., *Święty Szczęsur*, [in:] op. cit., pp. 65–68.

24 In Russian fables Iwan Carewicz climbs the mountains of glass to find his mother (*Trzy królestwa — Miedziane, srebrne i złote*, [in:] *Baśnie rosyjskie*, transl. Morycińska-Dzius E., Warsaw 2013, pp. 97–103).

25 Brzechwa J., *Szalawila*, [in:] op. cit., pp. 59–61.

26 Idem, *Chalupa*, [in:] op. cit., pp. 69–72.

27 The shack perhaps is to remind us of Baba Yaga's house, which, in accordance with the fable, was standing on a chicken leg (see: *Finist-Jasny Sokół*, [in:] *Baśnie rosyjskie*, op. cit., pp. 38–48.)

28 Leśmian B., *Pieśni kalekujące* (cycle), [in:] op. cit., pp. 95–101.

29 For example, in the poem *Dąb* the knowledge of the magic properties of the tree has been used. It was believed that it is sacred. It could not be cut because it was thought that it would start to bleed. When it fell by the forces of nature it was allowed to rot quietly (see: Kowalski P., *Kultura magiczna. Omen, przesąd, znaczenie*, Warsaw 2007, pp. 76–80). Oak had to have the properties of mediation and this is why Leśmian uses it in his poem. The tree happened here to be a mediator between the earthly world and God — 'A on w piersi wszem dudom nastawił, po rycersku / a w organy od ściany uderzał po siekiersku! / [...] Wyszli święci z obrazów, bo już mają w zwyku, / Że się garnął śmierciami do śpiewnego okrzyku... / i Bóg przybył skądinąd, niebywały w tej porze, / Niebywały, lecz zasłuchany! O, Boże!' (Leśmian B., *Dąb*, [in:] op. cit., pp. 83–84).

30 Wormwood is bitter in taste and has a very intense aroma but above all it has narcotic properties, what associates this plant with death. It is also associated with suffering, barrenness which also evokes the images of the land of the dead (see: Kowalski P., *Kultura magiczna. Omen, przesąd, znaczenie*, Warsaw 2007, pp. 448–449). And the cloud is the symbol of heaven, truth and beauty (see: *Chmura (Obłok)*, [in:] Kopaliński W., op. cit., p. 43). The words wormwood and the cloud included in the title might suggest bitter poems and a set of beautiful texts characterised by a poetic artistry.

31 Brzechwa J., *Siedmiu braci śpiących*, [in:] *Talizmany*, Warsaw 1929, p. 11.

32 The number seven has a rather positive connotations. It is a symbol of the cosmos, creation, space, time, fate; divinity, holiness, (seven degrees) excellence; balance, stability, rest, peace, light; safety,

mentioned which strengthens associations with supernatural powers. His presence next to the number seven in the text is surprising a little bit as this number is supposed to bring good luck. In fairy tales the cat³³ is mostly a companion of a wicked witch. It is sometimes also identified with Satan with which, as you know, the witch is constantly connecting. Furthermore, it is a personification of darkness, danger and death³⁴. Appearing in the poem he raises anxiety:

Wybija zegar siódmy rok
I siedzi czarny kot na stole,
Przez czarne szyby płynie mrok,
I siedzi czarny kot na stole³⁵.

Both Leśmian and Brzechwa appeal to magic practices. It is not only the presence of spells in their texts but also the presence of magical rituals. From the second stanza of *Magia* we learn, for example, that the lyrical narrator tied the hero of the poem and closed him in a chalk circle. Putting someone in a vicious circle is known from folk fairy tales. You cannot get out of it if you do not know the appropriate spells³⁶:

Spowilem cię w jedwabny sznur,
Zamknąłem cię w kredowym kole³⁷.

In the poem entitled *Białoksięstwo* (*White Magic*) there are also references to the ritual of producing the circle. Only this time it becomes a magic circle of protection³⁸. It has to defend against evil spirits:

Kredą koło zatoczę
Nieodzowne, warowne³⁹.

Magic ritual that occurs frequently in Leśmian's poems is also the dance. It is worth mentioning a few words about the presence of dance in culture.

security, health, wisdom, perseverance, intelligence, strength, fulfillment; victory, happiness; adventure; eternal life (see: *Siedem*, [in:] Kopaliński W., op. cit., p. 376). The number seven is peculiar to fairy tales (e.g. The Seven Dwarfs in the story of Snow White), each of which begins with the words: 'Behind the seven mountains, the seven rivers'.

33 Cat in the culture is a symbol of sin; witchcraft, devil; unhappiness; darkness and death (black cat) (see: *Kot*, [in:] Kopaliński W., op. cit., p. 164).

34 From: *Czarny Kot*, [in:] Kopaliński W., op. cit., p. 164.

35 Brzechwa J., *Magia*, [in:] *Piolun i obłok*, Warsaw 1935, p. 16.

36 *Koło*, [in:] W. Kopaliński, *Słownik mitów i tradycji kultury*, Warsaw 1985, p. 503.

37 Brzechwa J., *Magia*, op. cit., p. 16.

38 *Koło*, [in:] Kopaliński W., *Słownik mitów i tradycji kultury*, op. cit., p. 503.

39 Brzechwa J., *Białoksięstwo*, [in:] *Trzęci krag*, Warsaw, 1932, p. 35.

It played a very important role in rituals. It allowed to replace the powers of speech when it turned out to be unreliable⁴⁰.

In the poem *Strój (Attire)* the girl is surrounded by a circle of *planetnicy*:

Otoczyli ją kolem, nie szczędząc okrzyków.
Podawali ją sobie z rąk do rąk, jak czarę:
„Pójmij duszę tym miodem, co ma oczy kare!”⁴¹.

We can discern here a reference to the ancient dance performed in a circle popular in areas inhabited by the Slavs. This kind of dance of wore different names and was performed on the occasion of various folk rituals. There were also dances associated with the cult of fertility. Dancers were grouped according to gender. Each circle consisted of separate group. At one point they were connected and formed a procession. In some cultures the climax of the dance was simulated or actual sexual act⁴².

The poet could be inspired to write *Strój* by these particular rites. It is possible that implemented also another aspect of folk dance mainly: circling someone or something around was aimed at taking the possession of his, her or it. Circling of the girl by *planetnicy* could be that ritual⁴³. The closed circle precluded from the internal world. It did not allow anything outside to penetrate the center of the circle.

In Leśmian's poem the force of the dancing 'planetnikes' lies in the number of involved dancers. Roderyk Lange writes: 'while dancing group of people feel stronger when united ideologically [...]. It generates a sense of collective responsibility absorbing the entity into the activities of the whole group'⁴⁴. That power of 'planetnikes' made it possible to absorb the girl by the group which then forced her to have 'fun' together.

Dancing in the poetry of Leśmian is also sometimes associated with rite of passing from one world into another. It is possible that this procedure is shown in the poem *Ballada dziadowska (The Ballad of an Old Man)* from the volume *Łąka*. We see in the poem an old man who sits on the grass 'as if he danced a squat-dance'. A water nymph who is accompanying him wraps him in such way that he is doing pirouettes. The goddess wants the grandfather to dance with her:

Parskał śmiechem dziadyga w kark poklekłej uludy,
Aż przysiadł na trawie, jakby tańczył przysiudy.
[...]

40 Kowalska J., *Taniec drzewa życia. Uniwersalia kulturowe w tańcu*, Warsaw 1991, p. 34.

41 Leśmian B., *Strój*, [in:] *Poezje wybrane*, op. cit., p. 81.

42 Kowalska J., op. cit., pp. 106–107.

43 Ibidem, pp. 111–112.

44 Lange R., *O istocie tańca i jego przejawach w kulturze*, Cracow 1988, p. 93.

Spowila go ramieniem, okręciła jak frygą!
„Pójdźże ze mną, dziadoku – dziaduleńku – dziadygo!”⁴⁵.

Pirouettes usually enrich the choreography. In this individual case, however, what matters is the confusion of a person caught to dance. The water nymph dancing around wants to lead astray the old man in order to kidnap him and then to drown him. These actions are combined with love magic in Leśmian's poems. Thanks to them the goddesses' partner has to be obedient to her.

The love magic can be found also in Brzechwa's poems. In the poem *Lalka* (*A Doll*) the lyric narrator has a doll made of wax which is a substitute for a lover. We suspect that the hero is left by his beloved one. The betrayal of the woman made him to consider her as a dead person and to 'transfer' his feelings on a doll:

Lalko, moja lalko, powleczona woskiem,
Kocham rozpaczliwie ręce twoje boskie⁴⁶.

An object which is such worshipped by the hero can also be a symbolic *voodoo*⁴⁷ doll representing the ungrateful lover. Thrusting a needle into her chest is an act of symbolic revenge:

Wierzę w twoje serce zawczasu wystygłe,
W piersz woskową wbijam nieomylną igłę⁴⁸.

The lyrical narrator explains that this brutal act was done to the doll-lover to keep him in her heart.

According to *voodoo* practice the its follower creates a wax doll as a symbol of a person who he or she wants to hurt. In order to let the victim suffer the doll should be pierced with needles. Then the magic object is melted in the fire starting with the part of the body which should bring death to the victim⁴⁹. In the poem there is no evidence of melting the doll pierced with needles. However, the magical rite brings results. As we can see from subsequent verses:

Milczą blade wargi zabitej kochanki;
Urok czarnoksięski zaskoczył ją we śnie,
Sen niedokończony urwał się boleśnie⁵⁰.

45 Leśmian B., *Ballada dziadowska*, [in:] *Poezje wybrane*, op. cit., p. 67.

46 Brzechwa J., *Lalka*, [in:] *Liryka mego życia*, Warsaw 1968, p. 47.

47 Such practice in this case was to inflict pain and then causing death (see: Owusu H., *Rytuały voodoo*, Katowice 2003, p. 105).

48 Brzechwa J., *Lalka*, [in:] op. cit., p. 47.

49 Owusu H., op. cit., p. 105.

50 Brzechwa J., *Lalka*, [in:] op. cit., p. 48.

The above poem was probably inspired by Leśmian's verse *Panna Anna* (*Miss Ann*). Here, the main heroine suffers from the lack of true love. The source of love and ecstasy for her is a wooden 'Lover'. Once again Leśmian was inspired from folk tales to write the poem according to which love will be able to transform a wooden puppet to a man of flesh and blood. However here there is no 'real' magic. Puppet is a puppet. No supernatural power does intervene to change the reality. The only source of 'magic' is the main heroine or her erotic desire to be more precise. The woman believes that God has forgotten about her because He did not send her anyone that she could truly love:

Bóg zapomniał w niebie,
Ze samotna ginę w śnie!⁵¹

In the absence of the object of love the puppet becomes a substitute lover:

Kogoż mam prócz ciebie?
Pieść, bo musisz pieścić mnie!⁵²

Although the beloved is made of wood he meets the wishes of his mistress as good as he 'can':

Pieści ją bezdusznie,
Pieści właśnie tak a tak –
[...]
Śmieszny i niezgrabny,
Swą drewnianą tężąc dłoń,
Szarpie włos jedwabny,
Miażdży piersi, krwawi skroń⁵³.

Although the puppet's fondling are painful to her she seems to be satisfied with pleasure. Even this substitute for love is better than its total absence. However, she is ashamed of her nocturnal excesses. When dawn rises, she hides the 'lover' into the box:

A gdy świt się czyni –
Panna Anna dwojgiem rąk
Znów zataja w skrzyni
Drewnianego sprawcę mąk⁵⁴.

51 Leśmian B., *Panna Anna*, [in:] *Poezje zebrane*, Toruń 1995, p. 401.

52 Ibidem, p. 402.

53 Ibidem.

54 Ibidem.

Although the poem is saturated with erotic perversion, the author does not aim in shocking the reader but he rather wants to show the tragedy of unloved human beings.

It is possible that the source of inspiration for both of these poems was the children's folk song *Krakowiaczek jeden* written by Zygmunt Gloger in 1892⁵⁵. One of the verses of the song reads as follows:

Krakowianka jedna
miała chłopca z drewna
i dziewczynkę z wosku
Wszystko po krakowsku!⁵⁶

The poets knowing the song could rely on its words and refer them to its heroes in their poetry.

Both of the poets create their own worlds in their literary works. Each of them do it in his own unique way. Leśmian uses beliefs based on the mythology of the ancient Slavs to a much greater extent when inventing fantastic beings and causes mixing them with beings already present in folklore, such as incubus, nymphalidae and other ghosts. On the other hand, Brzechwa uses rituals known not only from Slavic beliefs. He also benefits from the religion of African people blending it into his poems.

Each of the mentioned authors creates his own original reality. Despite of the obvious differences, fantasy worlds of both of the poets share many similarities. Both of them extracted from superstitions of the Polish folk culture with the whole richness of beliefs, rituals, magic messages and a significant number of fantastic events and characters. By introducing them to their poetry they always left a mark of primitive culture thus preventing the forgetfulness of the sources of Slavic beliefs.

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55 *Krakowiaczek jeden*, [on-line], [access: 24.06.2014], <www.sylwek.efbud.com.pl/www/php/show-song.php?id=983>; Z. Gloger, *Pieśni ludu*, Cracow 1982, p. 321.

56 Ibidem.

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