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THE MOTIF OF ARBOREAL METAMORPHOSIS IN THE NEO-LATIN PASTORAL. THE CASE STUDY OF JACOPO SANNAZARO'S *SALICES* AND PIERRE-DANIEL HUET'S *VITIS*

The aim of this article is to analyse two examples of the motif of arboreal metamorphosis in the Neo-Latin bucolic, present in the poems by Jacopo Sannazaro (*Salices*) and Pierre-Daniel Huet (*Vitis*). In *Salices*, nymphs fleeing from the deities are transformed into willows, repeting the fate of Ovid's Daphne, Syrinx and the Heliades. In *Vitis* the poet creates a story about a nymph, named Vitis, on the basis of the love story of the satyr Ampelos and Dionysus. For betraying Bacchus, she is turned into a vine and her lover Ulmus into an elm. Their fate is similar to Ovid's Myrrha and Philemon and Baucis. In the history of Vitis, particularly in the description of the lovers' metamorphosis, one can see borrowings from Sannazaro. Both bucolic poems are linked by the ambiguity of the ontological status of the newly created plants. They differ in their moral interpretation of metamorphosis. The turning of the nymphs into trees can be understood as some kind of punishment for the rape that had been committed on them. On the other hand, Vitis, who committed treachery, is in fact rewarded and by the will of Jupiter she remains united with her lover forever.

Keywords: Neo-Latin bucolic, metamorphosis, Jacopo Sannazaro, *Salices*, Pierre-Daniel Huet
Słowa klucze: bukolika nowołacińska, metamorfoza, Jacopo Sannazaro, *Salices*, Pierre-Daniel Huet

IL MOTIVO DELLA METAMORFOSI ARBOREA NELLA PASTORALE NEOLATINA. IL CASO DI STUDIO DI *SALICES* DI JACOPO SANNAZARO E *VITIS* DI PIERRE-DANIEL HUET

L'obiettivo di questo articolo è analizzare due esempi del motivo della metamorfosi arborea nella bucolica neolatina, presente nelle opere di Jacopo Sannazaro (*Salices*) e Pierre-Daniel Huet (*Vitis*). In *Salices*, le ninfe che fuggono dalle divinità sono trasformate in salici, ripetendo il fato

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di Dafne, di Siringa e delle Eliadi. In *Vitis* il poeta crea la storia di una ninfa di nome Vite sulla base della storia d'amore del satiro Ampelo e di Dioniso. Per aver tradito Bacco la ninfa viene trasformata in una vite e il suo amante Olmo nella pianta omonima. Il loro destino è simile a quello di Mirra e di Filemone e Bauci in Ovidio. Nella storia di Vite, in particolare nella descrizione della metamorfosi degli amanti, si possono notare diversi prestiti verbali da Sannazaro. Entrambi i poemi bucolici sono collegati dall'ambiguità dello status ontologico delle piante create. Diversa invece è l'interpretazione morale della metamorfosi. La trasformazione delle ninfe in alberi può essere intesa come una sorta di punizione per lo stupro che era stato commesso su di loro, mentre Vite, che aveva commesso un tradimento, viene di fatto premiata e per volontà di Giove rimane unita per sempre al suo amante.

Parole chiave: bucolica neolatina, metamorfosi, Jacopo Sannazaro, *Salices*, Pierre-Daniel Huet

Introduction

The Greek Presocratics believed that plants had a status equal to that of animals. According to Anaxagoras and Empedocles, they were moved by desire and were supposed to feel and experience both pain and pleasure.[1] These philosophers, as well as Democritus, believed that plants had mind (*nous*) and knowledge (*gnosis*). Some Presocratics even maintained that plants were endowed with souls (Zatta 2016: 114–116 and the note 50):

> Some maintain that plants have souls because they have watched them born, being fed and growing, be young and go green and perish through old age on the ground that no soulless thing shares these experiences with plants.
>
> ([Aristot.] *De plant*. 1. 815a31-4, trans. by Hett, Aristotle 1955)

It is possible that such an understanding of plants: as entities capable of feeling and thinking, and even, to some extent, understood as autonomous subject, is the basis of the transformation motif of a human or demigod into a tree, a widespread theme in Greco-Roman literature (Zatta 2016). In the ancient Latin literary heritage, most examples of this type of transformation can be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Apart from Daphne, who became an archetype of arboreal metamorphoses, we can find, for example, the story of Myrrha, whose impure love for her father, was the reason for her transformation into a myrrh bush, or the story of unhappy lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe (the prototypes of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet), who were transformed into a mulberry tree.

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[1] [Aristot.] *De plant*. 1. 815a14-21: "Anaxagoras and Empedocles maintain that plants are moved by desire, epithymia, and they assert emphatically that they can feel, aisthanesthai, and experience both pain and pleasure, lypeisthai kai hēdesthai. Anaxagoras says that plants are animals and feel both pleasure and pain, concluding this from the fall of their leaves and from their growth; Empedocles supposed that the two classes (males and females) were mixed in plants." Trans. by Hett, Aristotle 1955. *Cf*. Zatta 2016.

The transformations described by Ovid, both in *Metamorphoses* and in his slightly later work, *Fasti*, constituted an almost inexhaustible reservoir of literary ideas, motifs, and tropes. We can compare the process of their reception to Deleuze's image of a rhizome that is growing new rootlets,[2] or, the more traditional concept of an exuberant tree sprouting new branches. Once in a while, on this tree of reception, a branch of another species grows, like a pear shoot on an oak tree. This is exactly what happened to the *Metamorphoses* – an epic poem that in the early modern period produced several branches of pastoral works.

The pastoral, placed in the atemporal, semi-mythical space of Arcadia, is a genre to which mythological motifs can be particularly easily adapted. In Neo-Latin literature, perhaps the most popular manifestation of this process was the inclusion of metamorphosis as a particular kind of myth in the plot of the idyll.[3] The reader will most often encounter a plant or animal metamorphosis, as these can be the most easily inscribed into the idyllic world. The most characteristic type of these metamorphoses is transformation into a tree, a plant symbolic of bucolic poetry. The image of a shepherd resting in the shade of a spreading oak, which opens Virgil's *Eclogues*, would become a generic description of the idyllic *locus amoenus*, making the tree the most significant element of the bucolic landscape. In pastoral, the tree is also intertwined with the theme of shepherd's song and the concept of poetic memory, as love confessions are carved on its bark.

Jacopo Sannazaro's *Salices*

Jacopo Sannazaro (1458–1530), one of the greatest writers of the Italian Renaissance, was particularly fond of the pastoral genre. Although he is mainly known as the author of *Arcadia*, a masterwork of prose poetry written in *volgare*, Sannazaro composed his other pastoral works in Latin, such as fishermen's eclogues (*Eclogae Piscatoriae*) and the short idyllic work, *Salices* (*The Willows*).[4]

Salices is a bucolic poem about the transformation of nymphs into willows, composed in the spirit of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[5] Willows were one of the more frequently mentioned idyllic trees in Virgil's *Eclogues*, but it was not until the bucolic poetry of Giovanni Pontano, Sannazaro's friend, that this tree

[2] On Deleuzian rhizome theory in the context of (among other things) Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, see Kelley 2019.

[3] For more on the motif of metamorphosis in the Neo-Latin pastoral see Grant 1965: 248–257.

[4] On the idyllic works of Sannazaro, see e.g. Borghini 1943, Kennedy 1983, Nash 1996.

[5] The work was first published in Naples in 1526, together with Sannazaro's other Latin works (Borghini 1943: 85). Sannazaro also took up the theme of the metamorphosis of the nymph into a tree in the elegy *In morum candidum* (II 4), in which he depicted the transformation of the nymph Morinna into a mulberry tree. Also epigram I 48 (*De Cyparisso puero*) is devoted to the metamorphosis of the young Cypress into a tree of the same name.

became a symbol of the genre. Pontano often returned to the image of willows shading the banks of the river Sebeto, which was a literary symbol of Naples (Salemme 2018: 17–18).

Sannazaro's work begins with a dedication to Troiano Cavaniglia,[6] in which the poet asks his colleague to look favorably on the offered work (v. 1-13). It is only a simple idyll (*tenues... Camoenae*, "delicate Camenae", 13), but the author's thoughts are already reaching for more momentous themes (*maiora*, "loftier things", 12). The proper narrative begins with a description of the *locus amoenus*, as is characteristic of bucolic poetry. By the lazily flowing waters of the river Sarno, in the shadow of groves moved by gentle zephyrs, the Satyrs, Panes, Fauns, and Sylvans play bucolic songs on their rustic pipes among nymphs, who hide behind the green oak trees in fear of the forest gods. After a while, however, they give in to their kind encouragement and come closer to start dancing across the meadow. The sight of the lovely nymphs arouses the gods' lust and they want to satisfy their selfish desires immediately. They throw themselves at the dancing nymphs who flee in terror but cannot find a way to escape. In their desperation, they seek salvation through help from the river god Sarnus, but despite their pleas, he is bound by fate and cannot help them. The distraught goddesses then make the drastic decision to throw themselves into the flowing waters, however, before they can do so, their bodies are transformed into willows:

> Ergo defectae cura auxilioque deorum,
> ac coelum pariter Nymphae lucemque perosae,
> unum illud, rebus tandem quod restat in arctis,
> finem optant, iamque in fluvium se mergere adortae
> membra reclinabant et aquas prono ore petebant,
> cum subito obriguere pedes lateque per imos
> exspatiata ungues radix fugientia tardat,
> adfigitque solo vestigia. Tum vagus ipsis
> spiritus emoritur venis, indignaque pallor
> occupat ora: tegit trepidantia pectora cortex.
> Nec mora: pro digitis ramos exire videres,
> auratasque comas glauca canescere fronde,
> et iam vitalis nusquam calor, ipsaque cedunt
> viscera paulatim venienti frigida ligno.
> Sed quamvis totos duratae corporis artus,
> caudicibusque latus, virgultisque undique septae,
> ac penitus salices, sensus tamen unicus illis:
> silvicolas vitare deos, et margine ripae
> haerentes, medio procumbere fluminis alveo.
> (Sannazaro, *Salices* 95-113)

[6] Troiano Cavaniglia (Traiano Cabanillo, 1479–1528) was the Count of Montella and a member of the Accademia Pontaniana.

Sannazaro's poem is intricately woven with numerous intertextual allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The main sources, directly referred to by the poet himself, are the stories of the attempted rape of two nymphs – Daphne, transformed into a laurel tree after being pursued by Apollo (Sannazaro, *Salices* 27-28, *cf*. Ov. *Met*. 1. 452-567) and Syrinx, who was transformed into a reed after fleeing from Pan (Sannazaro, *Salices* 28-35, *cf*. Ov. *Met*. 1. 689-712).[7] In Sannazaro's poem, the nymphs are familiar with these stories,[8] and thus know to be wary of the forest deities. Another detail that ties Ovid and Sannazaro's stories together is the motif of the rivers as a necessary component of their metamorphosis, as Syrinx became a reed on the riverbank of Ladon and Daphne's father Peneus, the god of the river, was responsible for her arboreal transformation.

Syrinx's tale is especially similar to the fate of the Sannazaro's nymphs and is briefly summarized within the poem. The poet devotes one line to the description of the metamorphosis of the nymph into an alluvial plant, which foreshadows the fate awaiting the Renaissance nymphs (*nodosa tenerum mutarit arundine pectus*, 34), however, the comparison is not direct because instead of reeds, Sannazaro's nymphs transform into willows.

The very image of willows hanging over the riverbank, in the shape of which has been preserved the terror and desire of immersion into the river's waves accompanying them in their last moments, we can discern an allusion to Ovid's Heliades (*Met*. 2. 344-366). The sisters have been transformed into black poplars while mourning their tragically deceased brother Phaethon (Peters [2018]: 440, Salemme 2018: 47). The wood shape immortalizes their suffering and sorrow for their dead brother (as Ovid writes, the poplars "weep" with resin leaking from their trunks). It must be remembered that Syrinx, too, after being transformed into a reed, retains a feeling of grief, as a breath of air produces in her a sound similar to a complaint.[9]

The allusions to the stories of Daphne and Syrinx, bring a sense of anxiety and tension into the bucolic work, which intensifies as the action unfolds. When the forest deities invite the nymphs to come closer and to enjoy with them idyllic pleasures, the nymphs, distrustful, prepare to flee and look around for a safe haven (...*celeri sed nuda parabant / crura fugae, tutosque agitabant*

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[7] *Cf*. Nash 1996: 91; Salemme 2018: 36–37.

[8] *nam saepe labores / audierant, Peneia, tuos, et qualibus olim / infelix eheu virgo Nonacria fatis* (27-29). The allusion to the stories heard (*audierant*) by the nymphs, on the one hand, draws attention to the memory of the heroines of Sannazaro's poem, preparing the reader for the impending danger. On the other hand, it makes use of the genre memory of the epic, integrating the Renaissance work into an uninterrupted literary tradition.

[9] *dumque ibi suspirat, motos in harundine ventos / effecisse sonum tenuem similemque querenti* (Ov. *Met*. 1. 707-708). In the description of the metamorphosis of the nymphs into willows, we also find minor echoes from other Ovidian transformations, including Myrrha and Dryope, as well as from the transformation of the nymph Coryle in the fifth eclogue of Pontano (Salemme 2018: 47–49).

mente receptus, Sannazaro, *Salices*, 45-46). The vigilance of the nymphs brings to mind the behavior of an animal that senses the threat of a predator. This image is developed in the scene of the flight when the nymphs are compared to a flock of lambs into which a bloodthirsty wolf falls. This passage echoes the words of Apollo, who compares the fleeing Daphne to a sheep fleeing from a wolf, a doe from a lion, and a dove from an eagle (Ov. *Met*. 1. 505-506: *sic agna lupum, sic cerva leonem, / sic aquilam penna fugiunt trepidante columbae*).[10] The nymphs are thus likened to a frightened animal looking for a way to escape.[11] Leo C. Curran (1978: 229–230), writing about the motif of rape in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, points out that the metamorphosis of a woman who has been raped or is running away from her rapist into an object standing lower in the hierarchy of beings (a plant, an animal, an object) is a natural consequence of the earlier objectification of the victim, her degradation and dehumanization, turning her into an object of sexual desire . The comparison of nymphs to runaway sheep in Sannazaro's poem can be read as the first stage of their transformation, a metamorphosis of the "first order". From nymphs, they are transformed into animals, driven by fear and the desire to survive, before eventually embodying their final form as plants.

Some of the former experience of the nymphs, namely the fear of rape by male deities, is preserved in the willow form: "to elude the woodland gods and, clinging to the edge of the bank, to lean out over the mid-channel of the stream" (Sannazaro, *Salices*, 112-113). The metamorphosis of Daphne into a laurel is usually interpreted as a kind of imprisonment of a woman in a wooden body.[12] Some see in this imprisonment a kind of trauma causing a kind of catatonic stupor (Curran 1978: 230, Zamir 2011: 447–448). Similarly, the nymphs of Sannazaro are enclosed in the form of the willows, as if in a trap.[13] The roots of the trees stopped the nymphs on the same riverbank to which the gods of the forest had lured them (*Quid procul adstatis? Potius succedite ripae*, 40). In doing so, they prevent the nymphs from throwing themselves into the river waves that were supposed to be a kind of liberation for goddesses. Thus the nymphs not only lose the freedom to decide their fate, but, transformed into trees, they also lose their humanity, degraded forever to the role of the objects of sexual assault.

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[10] A little further to a hare fleeing from a dog (Ov. *Met*. 1. 533-538). The description of wolves kidnapping sheep is itself a fairly faithful reproduction of Turnus' famous comparison to a wolf ambushing a sheepfold (Verg. *Aen*. 9. 59-64) (Salemme 2018: 40–41).

[11] *Cf*. Curran 1978: 233.

[12] Daphne is characterized by her agility and speed, which she loses with her transformation into a tree (Feldherr 2006: 172). One should also remember that a typically feminine feature in Roman culture is silence, preserved in the form of a tree incapable of expressing grief with a human voice (Sharrock 2006: 100).

[13] The foreshadowing of the nymphs' numbness is visible in the scene of their escape where the epithet *adtonitae* appears ("stunned", "paralysed" [*Salices* 84]).

Pierre-Daniel Huet's *Vitis*

We will now move to 17th century France to examine one little-known eclogue written by the eminent humanist Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630–1721), *praeceptor* of the dauphin Louis Bourbon. Huet gained particular recognition for philosophical treatises and his editorial work, such as a *Commentary on the Gospel of St Matthew* by Origen. His output, however, was much more extensive: with technical treatises (in Latin and Greek), and even a novel.[14]

Huet's poetic output is less known. He published an extensive collection of works written in Latin, entitled *Carmina*, which contains elegies, odes, epigrams, and bucolic poems. Huet was a great admirer of Theocritus (Shelford 2006: 56)[15] and a translator of the famous Greek pastoral romance – *Daphnis and Chloe*, and was thus perfectly familiar with the tradition of ancient bucolic poetry. However, it was not the idyll, but Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* that had the greatest influence on the final shape of Huet's eclogues. All ten works are based on the pattern of metamorphosis,[16] where humans and minor gods, mostly at fault with immortals, are transformed into animals, plants, atmospheric phenomena, and inanimate objects. We will take a closer look at only one of these transformations, around which the plot of the first eclogue entitled *The Grapevine* (*Vitis*) is set.[17]

The work takes the form of a neat, slightly humorous story about the transformation of the nymph Vitis (Latin: "grapevine") and the shepherd Ulmus (Latin: "elm") into the plants, that bear these names. The reader is informed at the onset how the story will end: "We shall tell the story of the unhappy love of Vitis, of how the shapely breast of a girl who, dazed, was cuddling up to the young man Ulmus, was enclosed in tree weaves".[18] The image of vine and elm tree joined together like lovers was extremely popular with the Romans,[19] as it stemmed from the agrarian practices of the time. In Roman agriculture, the elm tree provided convenient support for luxuriantly growing vine. We find a reference to this image

[14] Broadly on Huet's poetic output in Shelford 2006.

[15] Huet expresses his admiration for the works of Theocritus in a letter to Iacobus Larius, where he writes that he used to devote every May month to rereading the idylls of the greatest Greek bucolic writer: *Nam fatebor tibi, fuisse illud tempus, cum nullum Majum mensem abire sinerem, quo non refricerem animum repetita totius Theocriti lectione*. P.D. Huetius, *Dissertations sur diverses matières de religion et de philologie* (Paris 1712), 400.

[16] I quote the titles of the first five eclogues after the Paris edition of 1709: *Vitis*, *Iris*, *Magnes*, *Aparine*, *Picus*, while the next five, composed in 1710–1711, after the Amsterdam edition of 1723: *Lampyris*, *Galerita*, *Salamandra*, *Mimus*, *Melissa*.

[17] All quotations from *Vitis* come from the 1694 edition (P.D. Huetius, *Petri Danielis Huetii Poemata Latina & Graeca quotquot colligi potuerunt*, [Utrecht 1694]). *Vitis* was first published in 1653, but was revised by the author and appeared in 1694 anthology (Shelford 2006: 208).

[18] *Et nos infaustum Vitis referamus amorem, / Quoque modo juvenem dum caeca amplectitur Ulmum. / Formosum torta mutaverit arbore pectus*. (Huet, *Vitis*, 1-3).

[19] *Cf.* e.g. Ov. *H*. 5, 47-48; Cat. 61, 106-109.

in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Vertumnus, the god of crops, was courting the goddess Pomona. He praised the elm tree growing nearby and the vine that was entwining it, and in these words admonished the goddess of orchards:

> "at si staret" ait "caelebs sine palmite truncus,
> nil praeter frondes, quare peteretur, haberet;
> haec quoque, quae iuncta est, vitis requiescit in ulmo:
> si non nupta foret, terrae acclinata iaceret;
> tu tamen exemplo non tangeris arboris huius
> concubitusque fugis nec te coniungere curas.
> (Ov. *Met.* 14. 663-668)

In the *Fasti* Ovid mentions, in addition, the story of the demigod Ampelos (Greek: "vine"), the beloved of Bacchus, but does not connect it with the transformation into a plant:

> Ampelon intonsum satyro nymphaque creatum
> fertur in Ismariis Bacchus amasse iugis.
> tradidit huic vitem pendentem frondibus ulmi,
> quae nunc de pueri nomine nomen habet.
> dum legit in ramo pictas temerarius uvas,
> decidit: amissum Liber in astra tulit.
> (Ov. *Fast.* 3. 409-414)

The idea of the metamorphosis of man into a vine, however, appears in the late antique Greek epic *Dionysiaca* by Nonnos of Panopolis. In books 10, 11 and 12, the story of the love between Dionysus and the satyr Ampelos is told. By the will of the fatum, Ampelos is transformed into a vine after his death. Following the Christian spirit of the time, Huet decides to replace the traditional male lover with an Oread, a mountain nymph,[20] and creates a full-scale work based on this idea barely sketched upon by his predecessors.

Vitis, a mountain nymph, lived in the bucolic surroundings of Parnassus. Once, when she and her companions were dancing on the flowery meadows, Bacchus, the king of wine and vines, saw her and fell in love with her. The nymph accepted the divine advances and returned the fiery affection. The lovers enjoyed each other until Jupiter sent his son Bacchus on an armed expedition to India. Before embarking on the long journey, the god obliged the nymph to remain faithful. The Oread, abandoned by god, wandered in the woods to find solace. Her desperate cries were heard from afar by the shepherd Ulmus, who rushed to her aid. Delighted by the girl's beauty, he offered her shelter in his own home. The nymph accepted the shepherd's proposal and in time fell in love with him, preferring the

[20] This idea was not at all alien to Greco-Roman mythology, according to which trees were the dwelling of nymphs. The vine as one of the tree nymphs, Hamadryads, is mentioned among others by Athenaeus in *Deipnosophistae* (I 78a).

shepherd's love to that of the god Bacchus, who remains somewhere in the Far East. When the god returned from a victorious war expedition he expected the Oread to be waiting for him, but instead he caught the lovers intertwined: "Bacchus' somber gaze fell on the girl as she cuddled up to the young man somewhere in the distance and embraced him with a soft arm".[21] Outraged by the nymph's infidelity, Bacchus asks his father Jupiter to punish the lovers. As punishment, the father of the gods turns Vitis into a vine and Ulmus into an elm tree:

> Continuo amborum terrae vestigia figit.
> Tum vero ramos digitis exire videres,
> Et viridi comptos involvi fronde capillos.
> Iamque suum sentit nodoso cortice pectus
> Nympha tegi, et rigido mutari viscera ligno.
> Tu quoque supplicio, Pastor, damnatus eodem,
> Pro capite excelsum tollis super astra cacumen,
> Pro pedibus lenta radice in Tartara tendis,
> Emoriturque vagus procero in corpore sensus.
> Sed quamvis duro septi sint undique libro,
> Lumine cassi ambo, penitusque sit arbor uterque,
> Una tamen semper miseris sententia restat;
> Haec Ulmo aeternum dum vult haesisse marito,
> Hic tenuisse inter dilectam brachia Vitem.
> (Huet, *Vitis* 130-143)

The metamorphosis of Vitis into a vine and Ulmus into an elm is presented in terms of punishment for the sin committed by both of them. Vitis was obliged by Bacchus to preserve her chastity, so by her union with Ulmus, she broke her oath of fidelity to the god. The shepherd Ulmus was an accomplice in this crime (*comes* [...] *turpi in crimine*, 128), hence he also receives a deserved punishment. The betrayal of Vitis can therefore be understood as a transgression of a law established by a god. The punishment for this transgression was crossing the boundaries of a divine (nymphical) and human being, as flesh turned to leaves and vine to immortalize the wrongdoing of the lovers.

Again, as in *The Willows* of Sannazaro, a transformation is not complete. The new form into which the bodies of the lovers have been transformed retains essential traces of their former existence. They lose their human senses (*sensus*)[22] – the ability to touch or to taste and smell, but the common *sententia* – the desire, wish, intention expressed in a rational way – does not die. Transformed into trees, they remain in a state of suspension not only between the world of humans and nymphs and the world of plants but also between death (nothingness) and

[21] *Cum procul haerentem juveni, mollique foventem / Complexu, torvo respexit lumine Bacchus* (*Vitis*, 117-118).

[22] In the same way as Myrrha in her transformation (*quae quamquam amisit veteres cum corpore sensus*, Ov. *Met*. 10. 499). On Myrrha see also below, p. 206.

immortality (eternity). Describing the metamorphosis of Ulmus into an elm tree, the poet writes about its head, which, turned into the top of a tree, goes towards the stars, and about its roots, which head towards the underworld of Tartarus. These lines are a clear reference to the cosmic vision of the bay-oak from *Georgics*, which is similarly stretched between both realities:

> Aesculus in primis, quae, quantum vertice ad auras
> aetherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.
> Ergo non hiems illam, non flabra neque imbres
> convellunt; immota manet, multosque nepotes,
> multa virum volvens durando saecula vincit;
> tum fortis late ramos et bracchia tendens
> huc illuc, media ipsa ingentem sustinet umbram.
> (Verg. *G*. 2. 291-297)

Huet took from Virgil not only the uncertain ontological status of the newly created plant, but also the vision of its immortalization. Ulmus, though he died as a human being, does not reside in the hereafter: his roots keep going towards the realm of the dead, but they cannot reach it. Similarly, he was not transferred to the sky in the form of the constellation and does not dwell in the sky,[23] although his top rises above the stars. In a certain, similar to Virgilian sense, the elm tree becomes an idyllic *axis mundi*, a kind of link between two opposing realities. Half-dead (woody), it retains the desires of its former life, which are to a certain extent immortalized through the plant metamorphosis. Perhaps we will not go too far if we suggest that this uncertain ontic status of the transformed into plants lovers explains their way of existence in the essentially extra-dimensional space of the pastoral Arcadia. There is also a resemblance to Ovid's story of Myrrha, who, at her own request, was transformed into a myrrh tree and thus, as it were, suspended between two worlds: that of the living and that of the dead:

> "o siqua patetis
> numina confessis, merui nec triste recuso
> supplicium, sed ne violem vivosque superstes
> mortuaque exstinctos, ambobus pellite regnis
> mutataeque mihi vitamque necemque negate!"
> (Ov. *Met*. 10. 483-487)[24]

However, in contrast to the unhappy girl who burns with an unworthy love for her father, the lovers transformed into elm and vine become a kind of monument to true love which lasts even when everything else is dying. Just like the bay-

[23] It is worth remembering that Ampelos, in a version in Ovid's *Fasti,* was transformed into a celestial constellation.

[24] For more on the transformation of Myrrha in the context of the ontological status of the newly created myrrh bush see Veres 2019: 83–92.

oak from *Georgics* "it stands undaunted, outlasting lives of sons and grandsons, a vanquisher of ages" (2. 294-295, trans. by Fallon 2006). This is also why, when describing the metamorphosis of Ulmus, the poet writes about his head, which as "a highly exuberant crown of a tree reaches above the stars" (*Pro capite excelsum tollis super astra cacumen*, *Vitis*, 136). The verse echoes a line from Virgil's *Eclogues*, which refers to the apotheosis of the model hero of the bucolic, the shepherd Daphnis: "and exalt your Daphnis to the stars. Daphnis I will exalt to the stars" (*Daphnimque tuom tollemus ad astra;* / *Daphnim ad astra feremus* [Verg. *Ecl*. 5, 51-52], trans. by Fairclough 1916). The state of Ulmus is thus in some way similar to that of Daphnis, raised towards the stars: after death, they both have the honor of crossing the threshold of the land of the gods.[25]

Let us also note that the poet describes the lovers' affection in terms of conjugal love, which is the most perfect one: Vitis' desire is "to remain united to her *husband* Ulmus for eternity" (*Ulmo aeternum dum vult haesisse* ***marito***, *Vitis*, 142). This image evokes a passage from Catullus' *Carmen nuptiale* (Cat. 62, 49-55), where the association of the elm with the vine appears in a somewhat sacred dimension, as a symbol of marriage.[26] Why is the romance between the nymph and the shepherd so exceptionally ennobled? After all, the nymph has committed a betrayal whose significance is strongly emphasized. Not only did the Oread, being the personification of the grapevine, fail to remain faithful to the god of wine and the vine, but also the object of her love became a human being, i.e. a being lower in the hierarchy of beings than both Bacchus and herself.

To answer this question, one must go back to the beginning of the romance between Vitis and Ulmus, when, abandoned by her god-lover, Vitis wanders in the woods, unable to find comfort. Ulmus describes the girl's condition as akin to a wild beast living in the dark thickets of the forest (*Sed nunc in sylvis vitam quid transigis atris,* / *More ferae?...*, 82-83). Entering into an amorous relationship with Ulmus, the nymph leaves the shadowy forest and moves to a shepherd's hut located at its edge, i.e. in an exemplarily bucolic place. Ulmus, characterized as the ideal bucolic shepherd,[27] presents the nymph with a vision of the Arcadian delights: tables laden with platters[28] and the songs played on a shepherd's pipe – the same that are sung on Mount Lykaion by the most bucolic of gods, Pan. Ulmus

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[25] Although, as we mentioned, in relation to Ulmus, the possibility of dwelling in the sky is only partial.

[26] Cat. 62, 49-55: *Ut vidua in nudo vitis quae nascitur arvo,* / *numquam se extollit, numquam mitem educat uvam* / *sed tenerum prono deflectens pondere corpus* / *iam iam contingit summum radice flagellum;* / *hanc nulli agricolae, nulli coluere iuvenci:* / *at si forte eadem est ulmo coniuncta marito,* / *multi illam agricolae, multi coluere iuvenci.*

[27] Ulmus, "the most beautiful of shepherds" (*Inter pastores longe pulcherrimus*, *Vitis*, 57) lazily grazes his flocks in the flowered meadows (*Florea dum lentus pecudes per gramina pascit* [*Vitis*, 56], a reference to the famous *lentus in umbra* from the beginning of Virgil's first eclogue, see *Ecl*. 1, 4).

[28] The abundance of village viands is a traditional argument with which shepherds try to entice their beloveds. *cf*. e.g. Verg. *Ecl.* 2, 19-22.

thus offers the nymph a world of peaceful bucolic existence, in which she will no longer suffer from abandonment by her lover. Ulmus' proposal is the opposite of what is embodied by Bacchus,[29] who is waging an anti-bucolic war somewhere in the East, far from the "hereness" of bucolic space. Ulmus' love is therefore a bucolic *amor tutus*, "safe love"[30], bringing calm and harmony. On the other hand, the love of Bacchus is a Dionysian love, associated with unbridled wildness and rage, and he introduces into this bucolic landscape a cruelty of war which is alien to this space. Additionally, Bacchus' victory in war is combined with his defeat in love. The nymph, who ultimately chooses Ulmus over Bacchus, decides to have a relationship with the personification of a tree, the symbol of bucolicity, sealing the triumph of the genre. The transformation into plants does not, therefore, constitute a degradation of the lovers to lower forms of existence, but emphasizes the very naturalness of their bucolic romance. After all, they are transformed into plants, entities most closely related to the space of the country.

Finally, it is worth noting the similarity of the story of Ulmus and Vitis to Ovid's story of Philemon and Baucis (Ov. *Met*. 8. 611-724). They were an elderly couple who took under their roof and hosted two gods in human form, Jupiter and Mercury. As a reward for their piety, Jupiter allowed them to serve as priests in his temple, and to eventually depart for the underworld so that one would not have to see the other's grave. At the moment of death, Philemon and Baucis are transformed into two trees with fused trunks that commemorate their love for each other. It is possible that Huet's decision to make Jupiter the cause of the metamorphosis of the nymph and the shepherd was in some way inspired by the story of Philemon and Baucis.

Huet's intertextual dialogue with Sannazaro

The attentive reader has probably already noticed that the description of the transformation of Vitis and Ulmus is largely modeled on Sannazaro's description of the metamorphosis of nymphs into willows. Several precise textual borrowings

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[29] The poet writes that the nymph at first loved both the god and the shepherd, but in time she forgot Bacchus (Huet, *Vitis*, 92-95). However, it is worth noting the difference in the way the love for the two lovers is described: *Bacchum* ***amat*** *illa quidem, sed et Ulmum* ***diligit*** *illa*, "The nymph *desires* Bacchus, but yet she also *loves* Ulmus" (92). The verb *amare* has a purely erotic meaning in Latin (*cf*. e.g. Cat. 72, 8), while the verb *diligere* is usually referred to the love in a spiritual sense, for example the love of children to their parents.

[30] This is how, in Ovid's Heroid 5, the nymph Oenone describes her bucolic love for Paris, contrasting it with Paris' dangerous love for Helen, which causes war, see Ov. *H.* 5, 89-90: "Remember, too, *my love can bring no harm*; it will beget you no wars, nor bring avenging ships across the wave." (*Denique* ***tutus amor meus*** *est; tibi nulla parantur* / *bella, nec ultrices advehit bella rates*.) Trans. by Showerman, Ovid 1931.

can be enumerated. The feet of Vitis are fixed to the ground,[31] her toes are growing branches[32] and her hair is braided with foliage,[33] just like in Sannazaro's nymphs. Huet used two lines from *Salices* to describe how Vitis' breast is covered with knotty bark, one from the description of the metamorphosis of the nymphs themselves, the other from the description of Syrinx's transformation at the beginning of the poem. In this way, the continuity of literary tradition is emphasized to convey the inexorability of fate. Just as the nymphs in Sannazaro were turned into willows in the image of Syrinx, so now a fate similar to her literary predecessors has befallen Vitis as well.[34] Huet also borrowed verses from Sannazaro in which he describes the interior of the nymph turning into the wood[35] and the life-giving force escaping from Ulmus' body.[36] Finally, the very idea of preserving in the wood form an essential feature of past existence is expressed in Sannazaro's verses.[37]

Vitis was the first published poetic work of the French poet, in accordance with the literary practice of the time, which usually made idyllic works the fruit of a first penning. When composing them, the young poet was only learning the poetic craft, and thus was often inspired by works that had already been written. *Salices* was the most famous Renaissance bucolic work to use the motif of metamorphosis (Grant 1965: 248) and later idyllic writers referred to Sannazaro as often as to Ovid.[38] A closer comparative analysis of the two poems, however, reveals that Huet uses Sannazaro's poem in a way that goes far beyond a mere imitative practice.

Huet, as presented, draws from *Salices* in the final description of the metamorphosis, but allusions to Sannazaro are much richer and scattered throughout the work. At the very beginning of the work, the poet follows in the footsteps of the Neapolitan, explaining in a dedication addressed to a friend his poetic choice of the bucolic genre. "Do not despise, Claudius", Huet writes, "with these simple

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[31] *Vitis,* 130: *terra* ***vestigia figit***, *cf. Salices*, 102: ***adfigit*** *solo* ***vestigia***.

[32] *Vitis*, 131: ***ramos digitis exire videres***, *cf. Salices*, 105: *pro* ***digitis ramos exire videres***.

[33] *Vitis*, 132: *Et viridi comptos involvi* ***fronde*** *capillos*, *cf. Salices*, 106: *auratasque comas glauca canescere* ***fronde***. Note also the similarity in sound of the third foot of both verses: *comptos* and *comas*.

[34] *Vitis*, 133-134: *Iamque suum sentit* ***nodoso cortice pectus*** / *Nympha* ***tegi***, *cf. Salices*, 35: ***tegit*** *trepidantia* ***pectora cortex***, *Salices*, 104: ***nodosa*** *tenerum mutarit arundine* ***pectus***.

[35] *Vitis*, 134: *rigido mutari* ***viscera ligno***, *cf. Salices*, 107-108: *ipsaque cedunt /* ***viscera*** *paullatim venienti frigida* ***ligno***. Note also the similarity in sound of *rigidus* and *frigidus*.

[36] *Vitis*, 138: ***Emoriturque vagus*** *procero in corpore sensus*, *cf. Salices*, 102-103: *Tum* ***vagus*** *ipsis* / *spiritus* ***emoritur*** *venis*.

[37] *Vitis*, 139-141: ***Sed quamvis duro septi*** *sint* ***undique*** *libro,* / *Lumine cassi ambo,* ***penitusque*** *sit* ***arbor*** *uterque,* / ***Una tamen*** *semper miseris sententia restat*, *cf. Salices*, 109-111: ***Sed quamvis*** *totos* ***duratae*** *corporis artus,* / *caudicibusque latus, virgultisque* ***undique septae,*** / *ac* ***penitus Salices,*** *sensus* ***tamen unicus*** *illis*.

[38] Daniele Cereto (1460–1528) is the author of the poem *Salix*, which is a kind of loose paraphrase of Sannazaro's *Salices* (Grant 1965: 249). The tenth idyll of a Polish bucolic poet, Szymon Szymonowic, entitled *Wierzby* [*The Willows*] is also inspired by the Italian poet's idyll (Cytowska 1962: 276–278).

games ("tenues ne despice lusus", *Vitis* 8): the time will come when I reach for a more worthy epic genre".[39]

A moment later, while describing the dancing nymphs in the meadow, the poet recalls the image of dancing nymphs from Sannazaro's *Willows*, just before the attempted rape.[40] Such a clear reference to Sannazaro introduces an atmosphere of anxiety into the idyll, yet instead of the expected misfortune, the poet draws before the reader a vision of a happy love affair between Bacchus and a nymph. In a similar, perverse way Huet refers to Sannazaro once again in the scene of the meeting of Ulmus and Vitis. Enchanted by the beauty of the nymph, the shepherd asks the reason for her despair. In response, Vitis asks how the shepherd found this hiding place and why he is secretly listening to her complaints. In the meantime, she searches in her mind for an escape route ("Sic ait, atque alios agitabat mente receptus", *Vitis*, 75), exactly like the nymphs in Sannazaro reaction to the words of the forest deities ("...tutosque agitabant mente receptus", *Salices*, 45). It is clear that Vitis expects to be raped by the shepherd. The reader, reading the allusion to Sannazaro and knowing the ending of the Italian poet's work, recognizes the nymph's fears as justified. However, Vitis awaits a fate completely different from that of her willow sisters, and a vision of a fulfilled love is drawn before the reader's eyes. In the arms of the shepherd the nymph finds peace and shelter and she is somehow saved, in contrast to the nymphs of Sannazaro who did not live to see the expected rescue. The black irony permeating Huet's text gains a climax in the final verses of the work: *Haec Ulmo aeternum dum vult* ***haesisse*** *marito*, / *Hic tenuisse inter dilectam brachia Vitem* (*Vitis*, 143-144). Those final verses constitute the subtle intertextual game with a work of Sannazaro, who as well uses the verb *haerere* (to cling, adhere): *Silvicolas vitare deos, et margine ripae* / ***Haerentes****, medio procumbere fluminis alveo* (*Vitis*, 112-113). Willows are fixed to the river bank in fear of another rape attempt, while Vitis lovingly clings to her beloved. Sannazaro's cruel fate does not allow the river gods to save the innocent nymphs. Their turning into trees can be understood as some kind of punishment for the rape that had been committed on them. On the other hand, Vitis, who committed treachery, is in fact rewarded and by the will of Jupiter she remains united with her lover forever.

Conclusions

Tzachi Zamir sees in the transformation into a tree a kind of motif that captures the complex relationships linking thought, body and mortality (Zamir 2011: 439). This network of relationships is revealed in the two Neo-Latin idylls we

[39] *Vitis*, 9-12, *cf. Salices*, 11-12.

[40] *Vitis*, 18-19: *Et* ***simul implicitis manibus per gramine festas / Exercet choreas****…*, *cf. Salices*, 60-61: *Tum* ***manibus simul implicitis per gramine festas / exercent choreas****.*

have analyzed. The metamorphosis into a tree in Sannazaro and Huet is each time incomplete and a reflection of the old consciousness is preserved in the new being. The newly created plants are thus presented as mediating between the world of the dead and the living, the world of plant organisms, and the world of men and goddesses: on the one hand passive, associated with death and dying, and on the other brought to life by characters enclosed in woody weaves. The ontological status of trees appearing in the works is therefore fluid and ambiguous, and the boundaries between what is plant and what is human become blurred, which is most clearly visible in the anthropomorphic resemblance of the most important feature of the figure to the form of a tree. The nymphs in Sannazaro's work, despairing of their tarnished virtue, bend their arms to the ground like a grieving human being, while Vitis and Ulmus cling to each other like lovers. Metamorphosis, therefore, means a change of form (from human/nymph to tree), but in addition, it also amplifies a specific *human* attribute, which becomes petrified in it. Let us add that Sannazaro's *Salices* and Huet's *Vitis* are etiological poems, that depict how the eponymous plants came into being. This means that the willows and vines described in them were able to come into existence only at the moment of transformation into them another organism, a being of a higher rank. The perspective adopted by the poets is therefore primarily human. It is worth noting that the whole description of metamorphosis is presented from the perspective of nymphs and humans, and the retention (to some extent) by the newly created plants of mental powers is an expression of the conviction that cognition is possible only with the help of the human mind. Finally, it is worth emphasizing the question of memory, which appears in both works, and which is related to the matter of the (im)mortality of the trees created as a result of metamorphosis. In the ancient prototypes of the idyll, trees were linked to poetic memory, because shepherds wrote their songs on their bark, just like on papyrus.[41] The trees of Sannazaro and Huet are also linked to memory. Firstly, the figures transformed into plants are associated with poetic memory. In the Renaissance, willows, elm and vines take root in Arcadia, which since antiquity has been overgrown with laurel and reeds. Into those plants, unfortunate Daphne and Syrinx were once, in the genre past, transformed. Secondly, by preserving traces of a past existence, they very literally create a kind of *monumentum* that commemorates a story that has been told. In the case of the willows, it is a kind of statue of warning, while in the case of Ulmus and Vitis, it is a triumphant monument.

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[41] *cf*. e.g. Verg. *Ecl*. 5, 13-14; 10, 53-54, Calp. 1, 19-88; 3, 43-91. Thomas Hubbard has written extensively about the motif of writing songs on tree bark in the context of poetic memory (Hubbard 1998).

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