Let us start from the end, since such was the logic of writing this text. Around 1750, on the south-eastern territory of the former Polish Commonwealth, today forming part of Ukraine, there appeared an outstanding but very mysterious sculptor, Johann Georg Pinsel. Although his œuvre was the object of lively discussions since the 1930s, the researchers could not for a very long time find any data concerning his biography. Even his first name remained unknown, being replaced by the term »Master«. Only recently has this obstacle been overcome and the artist’s Christian names established as well as his family relations and the approximate date of his death – 1761 or 1762. However, still nothing is known about the date and place of Pinsel’s birth or the centre in which his extraordinary art was shaped. During about ten years of his documented activity in Poland, Johann Georg Pinsel lived at Buczacz, a small town in Podolia, which belonged to Mikołaj Potocki, a great eccentric and patron of Late Baroque art. Everything indicates that Pinsel was his court artist, though he also carried out other commissions, mainly in Lvov and its environs. His artistic output is relatively well known despite its disastrous devastation in the period of the domination of Soviet barbarism.

Among the works unanimously associated with the hand of Johann Georg Pinsel we find two groups very much alike, representing a hero tearing a lion apart with his hands. The first of them, carved in stone, dated to c. 1750, decorated the attic of the town hall at Buczacz. As a result of a fire which damaged the building in 1865 and the destructive effect of weather conditions only a fragment of the sculpture has survived. The other (ill. 1), carved in wood, polychromed and partly gilded, was executed c. 1758, forming part of a »multimedial« altar composition created by the architect Bernard Meretyn and Johann Georg Pinsel in the village church at Hodowica near Lvov. This real gem of Rococo art is a ruin today, but most of its sculptures have fortunately been rescued and are kept in the Picture Gallery in Lvov. While the Buczacz sculpture may represent either Samson or Hercules, the one from Hodowica is definitely a Samson. The depiction of his deed constituted an element of the intricate Passion-Eucharistic programme of the altar, as a prefiguration of the Sacrifice of the Cross.

The composition of the group in the first case is almost identical with that in the second. The differences discernible on the basis of photographs are of secondary importance, concerning the position of the hero’s left leg and the drapery covering his body. The knee of the Buczacz figure was much more bent than that of the sculpture from Hodowica. This was probably due to a different technology. While working on the decoration of the Buczacz town hall, the sculptor had to take into account the...
shape of the blocks of stone at his disposal, whereas he could shape the wooden sculptures at Hodowica practically as he liked. Also the second of the above-mentioned differences was not the result of the artist's fully conscious choice: the much ampler drapery covering the body of the Hodowica Samson was added at a later date to the finished sculpture, clearly for the sake of decorum in a holy place; it is made from thick fabric stiffened with plaster and gilded. The figure of the hero is rendered in a fleeting movement, in a very characteristic stance. With his right knee he is pressing to the ground a lion fallen on its side, while with his hands he is forcing its mouth open. His chest and shoulders are turned strongly to the left and his head to the right (in the Hodowica church – towards the congregation in the nave). In view of the con-

considerable damage to the sculpture from Buczacz, only the Hodowica Samson can be appraised in terms of style and artistic quality. For all its elaborate composition as well as its decorative and expressive values, it certainly is not Pinsel’s most outstanding work. Among the sculptures from the same church it is surpassed in dynamism and formal beauty by such works as Abraham’s Sacrifice or Our Lady of Sorrows. The artist, who had evidently received only a traditional technical training, had difficulty in rendering the anatomy of Samson’s half-naked figure with very strongly emphasized musculature but at the same time looking singularly ascetic. In his desire for maximum expression he plunged into considerable intricacies of composition. The convulsively writhing lion is an almost abstract bundle of flamelike forms stylized under the influence of the aesthetic of the rocaille.

As regards the sources of the extremely characteristic composition of Pinsel’s Samson, David by Bernini has so far been hypothetically indicated. This statement is not untrue, considering the similarity of the upper parts of the two figures and especially a puzzling resemblance between their physiognomies. However, thorough
investigations permitted the indication of a closer model for Pinsel’s whole composition and the reconstruction of the history of this motif in European art.

The characteristic rendering of a hero wrestling with an animal is well known from the art of classical antiquity. It appears often on the Roman sarcophagi decorated with the scenes of the deeds of Hercules (*Hercules and the Keryneian hind*), and has been copied in hundreds of objects representing the canonical image of *Mithra killing a bull*. These ancient precedents alone would sufficiently explain the origins of the Buczacz and Hodowica sculptures. However, the early 17th century saw the beginning of a new stage in the development of the motif in question, constituting the direct genealogy of Pinsel’s works. The series opens, in a way typical of innumerable similar cases, with an engraving from Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia*. It illustrates the idea...
of *Ardire magnanimo e generoso.* The episode chosen by Ripa as a basis for his personification refers to the deed of Lysimachus, the future king of Thrace and Macedonia, who was said to have in his young days, in the presence of Alexander the Great, defeated a lion, using no weapon save his armoured right arm. Ripa describes fairly precisely how the hero ought to be represented – with his knee he should press the beast to the ground and with the right hand tear its tongue out of its mouth. The illustrators of the *Iconologia* followed these instructions faithfully, at the same time being clearly inspired by classical models similar to those described above and offering a solution which won considerable popularity. A woodcut from the Roman edition of as early as 1603 presents the arrangement of the hero’s hands and legs familiar to us from Pinsel’s sculpture, although the figure is not yet strongly inclined – thus lacking
The element responsible for the dynamism of his composition. This element is more conspicuous in an illustration from the Paduan edition of 1611 (ill. 2). Here the resemblance to the sculptures from Buczacz and Hodowica is so evident that the woodcut might be accepted as their immediate prototype, were it not for the fact of the existence of still closer precedents.

The allegory of Ardire magnanimo e generoso was used almost instantly by artists, and outstanding artists at that, for the depiction of the Old Testament and mythological heroes. The principal feature of its composition can be found in Samson by Guido Reni, dating from the years 1607–1608, which decorates the vaulting of the Sala delle Nozze Aldobrandini in the Vatican, and in David by Pietro da Cortona from c. 1630 in the Pinacoteca Vaticana.

For us, however, it is a terracotta bozzetto (in fact a modello on account of the degree of its finish) representing Hercules killing the
Nemean lion (ill. 3), executed in 1621 by Stefano Maderno (1576–1636), that is of crucial importance, as it contains the next element to be found in Pinsel – the arrangement of the body of the lion lying on its side and convulsively waving its legs in the air. Maderno surely knew Ripa’s illustrations, albeit he must also have drawn directly on the ancient prototype. His Hercules and the Lion belongs to a series of three similar sculptures – together with the groups Hercules and Cacus (1621) and Hercules and Antaeus (1622). All of them come from the former collections of the Archaeological Museum in Venice and today are in the Ca’ d’Oro in that city.15 Similarly as Stefano Maderno’s entire œuvre they have so far been rather poorly investigated. There are only references to them in the literature, emphasizing their high quality combined with a conservative approach, lagging behind the rhythm of stylistic development imposed by the young Bernini.16
There is no doubt that Maderno’s *Hercules and the Lion* is the actual prototype of Pinsel’s sculptures, although they are not its slavish copies. With the most characteristic elements of the composition retained, the directions have been reversed here. Pinsel’s *Samson* differs from the prototype in the turn of his head and in the details of his nonclassical and highly expressive anatomy and physiognomy. The lion, not very dangerous in Maderno’s sculpture, has turned under Pinsel’s chisel into an almost fantastic monster.

It could hardly be expected that Johann Georg Pinsel knew the original terracotta at the Ca’d’Oro from direct examination; nevertheless, we could try to reconstruct the links in the chain of repetitions leading from Rome to Buczacz and Hodowica. In Maderno’s lifetime, his bozzetti depicting the deeds of Hercules did not meet with great success, surely eclipsed by the rising star of Bernini. To the best of our knowledge only the *Hercules and Cacus* group was carved on a large scale in marble, whereas bronze casts were made after *Hercules and Antaeus*. Nor can I point to any examples of the influence of Maderno’s modelli on 17th century Italian art, perhaps except the composition of the upper part of the figure of Bernini’s *David*. It was not until well over a hundred years later that they won considerable popularity, and that – as it seems – not in Italy but above all in Central Europe. They must have presented an attractive model to the contemporary artists, owing to their heroic iconography and stylistic features combining a strong classicist factor with a dynamic composition. At the same time it is not unlikely that they were considered copies of antique sculptures. Plaster casts of terracotta originals must have spread fairly widely as valuable technical aids to 18th century sculptors. Two such casts after *Hercules and Antaeus*, once belonging to the studio equipment of Ignac František Platzer (1717–1787), can be seen today in the Prague collections. Another cast of the same sculpture is discernible in the background of the portrait of the sculptor Charles de Grof of 1766, painted by the court artist Peter Jakob Horemans (Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen). Some role may also have been played by drawn copies and possibly graphic reproductions (especially with regard to repetitions in mirror reflection, as in Pinsel’s case).

All three compositions by Maderno were known in Munich. In addition to the above-mentioned modello of *Hercules and Antaeus* one can point to a faithful repetition of the upper part of the *Hercules and Cacus* group in Simon Troger’s sculpture showing *Cain killing Abel* (dated to the 1740s or 1750s, Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum). There are, however, above all two works in the capital of Bavaria that were directly inspired by the sculpture *Hercules and the Lion*. In 1753 the aforesaid Peter Jakob Horemans painted a series of pictures representing *Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, which decorate the Church of the Holy Spirit in Munich. The background of the painting devoted to *Fortitudo* reveals Samson struggling with a lion (ill. 4), the scene being a faithful rendition of Maderno’s sculpture, probably from a cast kept in one of the Munich sculptors’ workshops. The second example also refers to *Samson and the Lion*, but this time it is a fully three-dimensional sculpture of ivory and wood, dated to the 1740s or 1750s (Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, ill. 5). It was executed by Simon Troger, a virtuoso in this difficult technique, who remained aloof from the main current of Bavarian art. Troger rendered the group in mirror reflection, at the same time replacing a youthful hero by an athlete in his prime,
whose face is framed by a bushy beard and whose naked body is covered by drapery. All the same the resemblance between the two sculptures is so striking as rather to exclude the possibility of a graphic reproduction as an intermediate form, since a print does not contain enough information for copying a three-dimensional group.

Besides, signs of familiarity with all three Maderno modelli can be traced in Prague, first of all in the circle of Ignac František Platzer. In addition to the already mentioned casts there have survived two drawings of the Hercules and Antaeus group, once belonging to the equipment of his studio, while his drawing and model of the Fighting Giants group from the period 1767–1769 (Prague, Národní Galerie) are clearly based on the sculpture of Hercules and Cacus. The author of a monograph on the Platzer family supposes that in the latter case the role of an intermediary may have been played by the Viennese sculptor Lorenzo Mattielli. There is one more element in Ignac František Platzer’s work, hitherto not associated with Maderno’s influence, which constitutes an important link in our considerations. The collections of the Národní Galerie in Prague include a drawing by the artist, depicting Hercules and the Lion, dated as about 1747 and defined as a study for a sculpture in the Czernin Palace in Prague (ill. 6). This is unmistakably a free repetition of Maderno’s (or Troger’s) group rendered in mirror reflection and with certain modifications in the arrangement of the lion’s figure.

Only one of Maderno’s sculptures could be found in Vienna, this being Hercules and Antaeus which had served as a model for a porcelain figurine executed in the imperial manufactory in that city. This is a free reversed copy dated as about 1749, bearing the signature of Johann Josef Niedermayer. In the literature one can find the assertion that the Viennese porcelain figurines include a copy of Hercules and the Lion, which, however, has turned out to be untrue. On the other hand, a ceramic version of the composition was produced c. 1770–1780 in the Ludwigsburg manufactory.

We can finally point to an example of the hero and the lion composition – of interest here – in a work by a Polish artist; this is an academy drawing by Szymon Czecchowicz, dating from 1716, surely based on the illustration from Ripa’s Iconologia.

The present considerations did not aim at a full presentation of the fate of Stefano Maderno’s three composition concepts carried into effect in the terracottas in the Ca’ d’Oro. Nevertheless, they permitted the statement that in the 18th century these works were known in Munich, Prague, and Vienna, thus in the main centres of Central European Late Baroque sculpture. It is almost unthinkable for a sculptor of Pinsel’s quality not to have stopped at least in one of those cities during his peregrinations as a journeyman. In fact, he did not necessarily have to see a cast of the Hercules and the Lion group there. The relation of his Samson to Maderno’s prototype is loose enough for a two-dimensional model to have afforded sufficient information for the execution of the sculpture.

There is no doubt that in his sculptures from the attic of the Buczacz town hall and the church at Hodowica Johann Georg Pinsel made use of the composition conceived some 130 years earlier by Stefano Maderno. We do not know whether he had any chance to become acquainted with its three-dimensional copy, but even if he had it is rather unlikely that he would have known anything about the author of the original or the place and time of its execution. In the Baroque sculptor’s studio a modello like this was an object used in his daily work.
Unfortunately, by outlining the artistic genealogy of the Samson group we did not come closer to the determination of the place of Pinsel’s education. All main centres that may be considered here offered similar possibilities in this respect. Nevertheless, a thorough study of the migration of the characteristic motif permits us to draw a certain conclusion that goes beyond the problems concerning the creative work of a single artist or one branch of art – the recalling of the fact, usually ignored, that the artistic unity of Baroque Europe extends to places far removed from great art centres, such as Buczacz or Hodowica. It is well worth while searching for these places on a detailed map.

Notes

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2 Piotr Krasny, Jan K. Ostrowski, Wiadomości biograficzne na temat Jana Jerzego Pinsla, »Biuletyn Historii Sztuki« 57, 1995, pp. 339–342. A reconstruction of Pinsel’s biography on the basis of all available archival data along with an analysis of rules and customs regulating the lives of Central European artists in the Baroque period are given by Jan K. Ostrowski, Jan Jerzy Pinsel – zamiast biografii, [in:] Sztuca kresów wschodnich, vol. 2, ed. Jan K. Ostrowski, Kraków 1996, pp. 361–373. The hitherto known transcriptions of Pinsel’s names are in Latin (Johannes Georgius). However, in the present study their German versions were adopted in view of the fact that the artist was most probably an ethnic German. Likewise his surname appears in documents in a few more or less distorted variants.

3 Almost the whole of Pinsel’s preserved œuvre forms part of the Picture Gallery in Lvov. In 1996 its permanent exhibition was arranged in the former church of Poor Clares in Lvov, cf. B. Возницкий, Творчество Ивана Георгия Пинселя, Львов [1996].

4 The most complete documentation concerning the church at Hodowica can be found in Jan K. Ostrowski (ed.), Materiały do dziejów sztuki sakralnej na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej, part. I, vol. 1, Kraków 1993, pp. 29–37.


9 Cf. e. g. Leroy A. Campbell, Mithraic Iconography and Ideology, »Études Préliminaires aux Religions Orientales dans l’Empire Romain«, vol. 11, Leiden 1968.

10 This episode is mentioned in various ancient sources, though it is not certain whether it took place in such extraordinary circumstances, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, Real-Enzyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, vol. 27, Stuttgart 1928, S. 1.
15 Albert Erich Brinckmann, Barockbozzetti, vol. 2, Frankfurt a. Main 1924, pp. 26-31, ill. 11-13 (Brinckmann’s iconographic identification of the sculptures is different from the generally accepted one); Gino Fogolari, Regia Galleria Giorgio Franchetti alla Ca’ d’Oro in Venezia, Roma 1936, p. 18; Antonia Nava Cellini, Stefano Maderno, Milano 1966, p. [7], No. XII, XIII, XVII; Francesco Valcanover, Ca’ d’Oro. La Galleria Giorgio Franchetti, Milano 1986, p. 73.
17 Wittkower, Ein Werk...; this sculpture is in the Skulpturensammlung in Dresden.
18 I succeeded in tracing three copies of the cast: in the Albertinum in Dresden (Brinckmann, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 30), in the former collection of the Comtesse de Béarn in Paris (Ian Robertson, Three works attributed to Stefano Maderno (1576-1636), »The Burlington Magazine«, 69, 1936, pp. 176-181), and in the Wawel Royal Castle, Cracow.
20 Wilhelm von Bode (Die italienischen Bronzestatuetten der Renaissance, Berlin 1907, vol. 2, pl. CIII) still described Hercules and Antaeus from the collection of the Comtesse de Béarn as »Nachbildung nach der Antike«.
21 Zdeňoka Skořepová, O sochařském díle rodiny Platzerů, Praha 1957, p. 81.
27 Such a suggestion was advanced by Berliner, op. cit., p. 106, No. 508.
28 Skořepová, op. cit., pp. 80-81, ill. 49, 88, 96.
31 Folenics, Braun, loc. cit.
32 The figurine is actually a free copy of an ivory group by Georg Petel in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum.