

Bilingualism

in the Writings of Jan Kochanowski

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Throughout all of Europe from the early medieval period to the beginning of the sixteenth century, literatures in Latin and in the local vernacular developed independently from one another, with their mutual interaction occurring only in a very limited range of contexts. Latin remained for a long time the domain of liturgy and works relating to religious ceremonies. Only in the fourteenth century did the first works of lyric poetry on religious themes begin to appear in Polish (the first among these, breaking open their path, was “*Bogurodzica*” [Mother of God], dating from the end of the thirteenth century), as well as the oldest books of sermons in Polish (among others, *Kazania świętokrzyskie* [the Holy Cross Sermons]). Hagiographies and historiographies, as forms demanding a more precise language, using a more abstract lexicon, were written and published almost exclusively in Latin even in the late medieval period. Many writers knew both languages, and used each to develop a different set of conventions and themes. That was the practice, for example, of Władysław of Gielniów, author of, among other things, a Polish alphabet primer and a Latin handbook for priests—also alphabetically ordered, but written in hexameter. The development of early Renaissance poetry in neo-Latin, which offered a form of intellectual entertainment, in no way undermined the separation between the literatures emerging in these languages. Latin remained the domain of humanists, focused on rhetoric and poetry, while Polish became the sphere of popular narratives and a burgeoning wealth of both works that were medieval in spirit and others reflecting the new post-reformation ethos.

An educated dweller in Old Poland could switch without difficulty from one code to the other, depending on the cultural situation in which he found himself or what was appropriate to the literary convention within which he had chosen to work. In a way that was typical for the phenomenon of bilingualism, the user’s competencies remained narrowly defined: each language had a different, specialized purpose and had reference strictly to the particular sphere of the

bilingual author's life (or, for our purposes, creative activity) assigned to it.¹ Interference – the peculiar mutual interaction and influence between languages – took place at that time mainly through the influence exerted by Latin upon Polish (for example, in syntax), while there was almost no impact in the reverse direction. In Latin works of the Middle Ages, one sees little or no Polish influence; the works employ conventions that were universally established at that time, with very little penetration of cultural or linguistic interference.² In humanist poetry of the early renaissance, neo-Latin texts remain securely established in Polish culture, which had a considerable influence on the description of local elements, but one manifestation of the two systems' superimposition was the use of proper names, introduced into many works by Andrzej Krzycki or Konrad Celtis. Jan Kochanowski succeeded in joining the two currents together and giving expression in Polish to humanist thought that had hitherto been fully formulated only in Latin.³

The poet grew up in an aristocratic family that valued education and was keenly attuned to verbal culture. His mother, Anna of the Odrowąż line, was mentioned in Łukasz Górnicki's *Dworzanin Polski* (Polish Courtier) as a pacific-natured person with a good sense of humor ("a sedate lady and very salty"). The poet's father, Piotr Kochanowski, planned to send his sons away to get a university education, though like a typical merchant of Sandomierz he had consistently accumulated worldly goods, multiplied through marriages of convenience, prudent transactions and successful legal actions.⁴ Among Jan's numerous siblings, Mikołaj translated Plutarch and was the author of *Rotuły* (minor elegies; the title comes from the Latin *rotulus mortuorum*), Andrzej translated the *Aeneid*, and one sister became "the inspiration and more or less co-author" of *Dziewostąb dworski* (Matchmaker of the Manor).⁵ There was no lack of talent in the next generation of Kochanowskis either – Jan's nephew Piotr became an outstanding poet and translated Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

Before Jan Kochanowski arrived at university, he had certainly mastered the basics of Latin grammar and knew how to read and write. We do not know whether he was taught with his brothers by the family tutor or went to the school run by the Benedictines in Sieciechów, but he must have already made his first attempts to read the classical Roman authors.⁶ He had undoubtedly also encountered the folklore of the peasantry and the nobility, with the Polish-language oral literature of the sixteenth century, which coexisted harmoniously with the printed word. Janina Abramowska writes about the youthful literary experiences of Jan Kochanowski, citing the works he might have been acquainted with from an early age:

Besides the "stories told by peasant women" there could have been threads that were literary in origin, from the *Stories of Rome* and Jan of Koszyczek's *Poncjani* to *The Life of Ezop Fryg* and a Polish

¹ E. Kraskowska, "Dwujęzyczność a problemy przekładu" (Bilingualism and the Problem of Translation) in the anthology: *Miejsca wspólne* (Common Places), ed. E. Balcerzan and S. Wyśłouch, Warszawa 1985, p. 195.

² See E. Kraskowska, "Dwujęzyczność a problemy przekładu," p. 185.

³ J. Abramowska, *Kochanowski*, Poznań 1994, p. 16.

⁴ Ibid., p. 9. J. Pelc suggests that Piotr Kochanowski was a "moderately wealthy landowner, a shrewd businessman." J. Pelc, *Jan Kochanowski poeta renesansu* (Jan Kochanowski, Poet of the Renaissance), Warszawa 1988, p. 23.

⁵ See J. Abramowska, *Kochanowski*, p. 10.

⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

version of Till Eulenspiegel called *Sowiżrzał*. All of these works had been published in Polish versions, available for sale or on loan, and no doubt the most memorable parts were retold orally. [...] It is therefore possible that Kochanowski already in boyhood knew humorous stories from having heard or read them, and he was doubtless no stranger to neighborly anecdotes and ribald facetiae. Thus he early on found himself in the realm of ludic culture, which knowledge, later increased in Kraków inns and Italian taverns, would play such an important role in his work.⁷

At the Academy in Kraków, whose years of greatness were then already behind it, Kochanowski deepened his knowledge of Latin language and culture – he attended lectures on Cicero's treatises, became acquainted with the works of Virgil and Horace, got access to the latest publications in the area of neo-Latin poetry, and awakened his yearning for further studies.⁸ In Padua he chose the faculty of the humanities (*universitas artistorium*), rejecting law and medicine. He did not receive academic degrees but focused on widening his horizons and deepening his erudition, aware of the demands that the era placed on writers of literature, and seeking to embody the ideal of the *poetae docti*. Janina Abramowska writes thus on his reading habits of that time:

Kochanowski's reading in the literature of antiquity encompassed mainly Roman writers: Cicero, Virgil, Seneca, Ovid, Lucretius, and above all, the poets: Horace, Propertius, Catullus. Greek literature he presumably knew more through Latin translations, though he did have some Greek, as his later works of translation demonstrate (Homer, the *Greek Anthology*, Euripides, Cicero's supplement to Aratus's *Phaenomena*). He most certainly read Renaissance humanists writing in Latin such as Girolamo Vida, whose heroic-comic poem *Scacchia Ludus* (The Game of Chess) he paraphrased in *Szachy* (Chess).⁹

There is no doubt that while studying in Padua, Kochanowski mastered Italian and read the poetry of Petrarch. The tribute he pays to the poems written in honor of Laura in his two Latin epigrams illustrates how highly Kochanowski esteemed the development of national literatures. In Renaissance Europe, Petrarch was famous chiefly as an author of Latin works, but he nevertheless decided to immortalize the *Canzoniere*, written in Italian, in the epigrams carved on his tombstone.¹⁰

The development of national literatures that was taking place in Europe must have suggested the idea to Kochanowski of introducing elements taken from classical antiquity into works written in Polish. This effort was to help raise Polish literature to the level of Greek and Roman literature, as well as to enrich the Polish language and develop its possibilities. The principle of *imitatio* – mimicry of antique works or style – was fundamental to the culture of that time and was perfectly complemented by the postulates of *mimesis*. Ludwika Szczerbicka-Ślęk reminds readers:

One way to recover antiquity, besides searching for ruins, their accumulation, conservation, examination, and in the case of literature, circulation in print-- the invention of the printing press being a great helper of Renaissance striving—was the imitation of literature written by the mas-

⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰ J. Pelc, *Jan Kochanowski poeta renesansu*, p. 35.

ters of antiquity– *imitatio*. The philosophical foundations of imitation were laid by the theory, developed by Plato and Aristotle, of *mimesis*, according to which art arises from the imitation of nature (though both philosophers defined nature and the results of its imitation differently). In the Renaissance, nature began to be understood as the world created by the poets of antiquity and their world became “second nature.” It was likewise observed that as a result of a similar process, the Romans had, in their time, created great works of art by imitating their Greek predecessors.¹¹

In implementing these principles, Kochanowski sought– as Janusz Pelc has written – to take on the role of

a great and recognized, flawless poet, a new Orpheus, the creator of splendid works of his national literature, the equals of the masterpieces of antiquity, composed in his mother tongue.¹²

One of the means that was to aid him in obtaining that goal was the translation and paraphrasing of Roman poetry. Kochanowski’s translations of Horace – published in his collection *Pieśni* (Songs) without attribution to the original author, in keeping with the convention of the time – did not help to overcome the communication barrier or to assimilate the achievements of Roman literature into Polish culture. Potential readers of these translations, educated people with a command of Latin, would certainly already be familiar with the songs of Horace, fundamental works of European classicism. The poet, in paraphrasing the ancient master, practiced his Polish phrasing and tested the possibilities of his native language, in order to lead the poetry of his land toward the heights of literary Parnassus. He frequently adapted the works he was translating to the realities around him and to his own biography. Sometimes he changed their tone, adjusting Horace’s meaning to fit his own ideas. He always looked for bold translation solutions and was not afraid to translate even texts that, considering cultural differences, would appear untranslatable.

The most famous paraphrases of Horace’s poetry include two of Kochanowski’s works: *Pieśń XXIV* (Song XXIV) from the *Second Books*, beginning “Niezwykłym i nie leda piórem opatrzo-ny...” (Equipped with an unusual and powerful pen...), and the fragment “Pieśń świętojańska o Sobótce” (Saint John’s Eve Song About a Saturday Night Feast).¹³ In the first of these, declaring the apotheosis of poetry and picking up the theme of *non omnis moriar*, the accomplished translator replaced the proper nouns designating tribes living outside the territory of the Roman Empire (Gaetulians, Colchians), used by Horace, with the names of contemporary nationalities, and invoked Myszkowski instead of addressing Maecenas. That passage differs from the lofty style of the work as a whole, as the reference to Myszkowski by name is informal and personal.¹⁴ Likewise, the Saturday Night Song of the Twelfth Maiden is a fairly free translation of Horace’s second epode (beginning “Beatus ille qui procul negotiis...”). The lines in praise of the countryside in the original and the translation are almost identical, with both poets enumerating the same virtues of country life and describing them in a similar fashion.

¹¹L. Szczerbicka-Ślęk, Introduction to: Jan Kochanowski, *Pieśni* (Songs). Wrocław 1998, p. lvii.

¹²J. Pelc, *Jan Kochanowski poeta renesansu*, p. 38.

¹³I here use the terms “translation” and “paraphrase” interchangeably, because in the works under discussion the boundary between these categories is effaced.

¹⁴L. Szczerbicka-Ślęk, Introduction, p. lviii.

Where Horace's poem concludes with an ironic punchline, however, completely changing the work's tone, Kochanowski appears to have missed the joke; in any case, he omits the twist. The lyrical persona of the Roman epode is not a country bumpkin praising the charms of village life in all sincerity, but the money-lender Alfius, who has left the city only because his business is in a stagnant phase, and who is ready to abandon provincial peace and quiet as soon as he sees a chance at some quick income.¹⁵

One of Kochanowski's most masterly paraphrases remains *Pieśń III* (Song III) from his *Księga Pierwsza* (First Book), beginning "Dzbanie mój pisany..." (My Fated Pitcher), a translation of Horace's famous ode whose first line is "O nata mecum consule Manlio." Piotr Wilczek defines this achievement in the following terms:

a translation of a work which is untranslatable due to the depth of the differences between the two cultures. The set of cultural signs present in Horace's song [...] is so deeply and exclusively rooted in the mythology, poetics, history, and customs of the ancient Romans, that all attempts at translation of this song undertaken in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries successively documented the failure of the (often skilled) translators.¹⁶

Kochanowski left out playful allusions to the hymn to Bacchus, omitted mythological references, substituted the more generic "philosophers partial to wine" for "Cato the lover of mero," and in place of the friend whom Horace mentions by name put simply "guests." A glazed, decorated clay pitcher whose contents are not precisely defined took the place of the Roman amphora, filled with Massic wine. Yet in spite of these significant changes, the work manages to convey Horatian themes.

For Kochanowski, perfecting the poetic capabilities of his native language did not conflict with writing poems in Latin, nor did it imply making a radical choice of which language would dominate his work. Janina Abramowska, describing the bilingual nature of his works, notes the poet's consistent engagement, no matter at what stage in his career, with both forms of writing:

Throughout his life, the poet joined the creation of humanistic poetry in the vernacular with writing poems in Latin, often writing parallel cycles (for example, *foricoenia* and *fraszkas*), developing his favorite themes in both languages [...]. It would be a mistake either to perceive this as either inconsistency or to attempt to find a line of development leading from Latin to Polish in Kochanowski's work. His Polish and Latin works are not only not in contradiction to each other, but they constitute the fulfillment of one and the same literary program, which represents a synthesis of goals of the first Polish-Latin humanists and those of the defenders of Polish language.¹⁷

The Latin writings of Kochanowski – in addition to a few disparate, singular works – are: *Lycorum libellus* (published in Kraków in 1580), *Elegiarum libri IV* (Kraków 1584), and *Fori-*

¹⁵The final lines of the epode are more faithfully translated by Józef Birkenmajer: "Thus spoke the money-lender Alfius. Now the village is fragrant to him / But the Ides have come, time to get paid! / So he plundered every penny from his debtors, in order to somewhere / Find it again."

¹⁶P. Wilczek, *Dyskurs - przekład - interpretacja...* (Discourse - Translation - Interpretation...), p. 62.

¹⁷J. Abramowska, *Kochanowski*, p. 28.

coenia sive Epigrammatum libellus (Kraków 1584). The earliest works in Latin were rewritten and re-edited many times over – among others, the poems written in Padua were included in the *Elegii* (the two first books of Elegies probably appeared around 1559-1561), the *Lyrice* (Lyrics) contain later works, and the *Foricoenia*, containing fraszkas in Latin, appeared both during his studies in Padua and in later years.¹⁸ His juvenilia written in Latin predate by only a short time his first Polish-language works, the poems *Zuzanna* (1561), *Szachy* (Chess, 1564), and *Satyr albo Dziki maż* (The Satyr, or Wild Man, 1564). Kochanowski's first attempts to write poetry in Polish may have begun while living in Padua. His earlier poems include the hymn that begins "What Do You Want Of Us, Lord," which may have been written while in France in the late 1550s.¹⁹ In subsequent decades, Kochanowski's most distinguished works appeared: *Odprawa posłów greckich* (The Dismissal of the Greek Envoys, 1578), *Psałterz Dawidów* (David's Psalter, 1579), *Treny* (Laments, 1580), and the fraszkas and songs written over the course of his entire life, which came out in separate volumes in the years 1584 and 1586.

Kochanowski treated Latin and Polish works as two equal currents in his artistic output. Literary scholars have concentrated their efforts mainly on examining his Polish works, devoting much less attention to his Latin writings. Aside from the studies made by Alfreda Fej,²⁰ the sketches by Aleksander Brückner²¹ and Wiktor Weintraub²², and the work of Zofia Głombiowska²³ and Albert Gorzkowski,²⁴ there are few critical analyses or elaborations of the Latin poetry of the sage of Czarnolas and the issues raised by it, or of the relations between the two linguistic currents, their similarities, differences, or interdependence.²⁵

The Latin poems of Jan Kochanowski enjoyed great popularity among his fellow Poles at the university in Padua and were known to people of other nationalities affiliated with that renowned seat of learning as well. One proof of such recognition is the fact that Kochanowski was entrusted with writing the epitaph for Kretkowski, carved on his headstone in the basilica of St. Anthony in Padua. Back in his motherland, too, Kochanowski longed to come into his own as a neo-Latin poet – an author of occasional works of a political nature, such as for example his Latin elegy celebrating the triumph of King Sigismund II Augustus in the Duchy of Inflanty (present-day Latgale, in Latvia—TDW).²⁶ When he returned to Poland in 1559, Kochanowski had already authored many poems in Latin, such as the nearly-finished collection of elegies entitled *Ioannis Cochanovii Elegiarum libri duo*. He did not stop writing neo-Latin humanistic poetry either, how-

¹⁸J. Ziomek, *Renesans* (Renaissance), Warszawa 1996, p. 256.

¹⁹J. Pelc, *Jan Kochanowski poeta renesansu*, p. 62.

²⁰A. Fej, *Kochanowski polski i łaciński* (Polish Kochanowski and Latin Kochanowski), *Pamiętnik Literacki* (Literary Monument) R. XXXII 1935, 3/4.

²¹A. Brückner, *Księga miłości Jana Kochanowskiego* (Jan Kochanowski's Book of Love), *Pamiętnik Literacki* (Literary Monument), R. XXIX, 1933.

²²W. Weintraub, "Polski i łaciński Kochanowski: dwa oblicza poety" (The Polish and the Latin Kochanowski: Two Faces of the Poet) in Weintraub, *Rzecz czarnoleska* (Czarnolas Composition), 1977.

²³Z. Głombiowska, *Łacińska i polska muza Jana Kochanowskiego* (The Latin and Polish Muses of Jan Kochanowski), Warszawa 1988.

²⁴A. Gorzkowski, *Bene atque ornate. Twórczość łacińska Jana Kochanowskiego w świetle lektury retorycznej* (Bene atque ornate. The Latin Works of Jan Kochanowski in a Rhetorical Reading). Kraków 2004.

²⁵Z. Głombiowska presents the state of existing research in her monograph *Łacińska i polska muza Jana Kochanowskiego* (The Latin and Polish Muses of Jan Kochanowski), Warszawa 1988, p. 5.

²⁶J. Pelc, *Jan Kochanowski poeta renesansu*, p. 34.

ever; in 1569 he wrote an elegy for the occasion of Filip Padniewski's accession to the bishopric of Kraków, dedicated an ode to Henryk Walezy, and in his long poem *Gallo crocitanti* answered the lampoon written by the fleeing king's court poet; in 1580 he prepared the book *Lyricorum libellous* for print, and in 1584 – a book containing the new edition of his *Elegii* (Elegies) as well as *Foricoenia*.²⁷ These hefty collections of poetry had an enormous influence on the reception of Kochanowski's work and on the perception of him by his contemporaries. Earlier, the poet had published single works and small collections of poetry, in which he dealt with occasional topics, chiefly political ones.²⁸ The concepts of the nation and the citizen, inscribed in similar ways in the Latin and Polish works of that period, indicate a level of coherence in Kochanowski's political views, his ethos of virtue and concord as the basis of a well-functioning society.

In the long poem *Zgoda* (Harmony, 1564) he appealed for national unity, assuring readers that harmony was the “guardian of republics” (line 3),²⁹ and that its absence brought ruin on a nation, thwarting the healthy functioning of the courts and weakening borders.³⁰

Niech się miasto otoczy trojakimi wały,
Trojakimi przekopy i mocnymi działały:
Kiedy przyjdzie niezgoda, unią się mury
I wnidzie nieprzyjaciel nie szukając dziury.
(Though a city be walled with ramparts threefold, / Threefold tunnels fortified to hold: / When
discord comes, the walls will fall like sand / And the enemy enter without lifting a hand.)

(J. Kochanowski, *Zgoda*, lines 7-10)

He expressed similar views in the song “Ad Concordiam,” published in the collection *Lyricorum libellus* in 1580, praising the titular goddess as the giver of nation-state organization and the protectress of already existing nation-states.

Tu salus rerum, dea, publicarum,
Sola casuris inimica regnis
Fata propulsas, tribuisque longam
Prospera vitam.
(You are the salvation of republics, goddess, / Only you spare kingdoms from their fall / And push
back fate, granting / Long life.)

(*Ad Concordiam*, lines 25-28)³¹

In Kochanowski's Sixth Ode “In conventu Varsoviensi” (also in the collection *Lyricorum libellus*), as in the Polish-language “Satyra” (Satire), the poet expressed his view that achieving

²⁷Ibid., pp. 54, 58, 62.

²⁸In 1579 *Psalterz Dawidów* (David's Psalter), inarguably a hefty volume, but perceived as a translation rather than an original work, was released. Z. Głombiowska, *Łacińska i polska muza Jana Kochanowskiego*, p. 10.

²⁹Quotes from Polish-language works are taken from the following source: J. Kochanowski, *Dzieła polskie* (Works in Polish), ed. J. Krzyżanowski, Warszawa 1969.

³⁰Z. Głombiowska, *Łacińska i polska muza Jana Kochanowskiego*, p. 11.

³¹Quotations from Kochanowski's Latin works are cited from J. Kochanowski, *Dzieła wszystkie* (Complete Works), vol. 3, Warszawa 1884. English translation based in part on Głombiowska's Polish translation. Z. Głombiowska, *Łacińska i polska muza Jana Kochanowskiego*, p. 217.

harmony in a nation depends to a great degree on the rulers' stance and linked his notion of harmony with the concept of virtue. A virtuous person is capable of rejecting his emotions, defined in the Satire as "strange viragos" (line 357): excessive impulsiveness, desire, fear, sorrow, and immoderate joy. The Stoic origins of this reasoning are beyond any doubt and their influence can also be observed in his Latin works, such as the elegy addressed to Mikołaj Firlej.³² Virtue defined in this way joins the good of the individual with the good of society and the nation. Zofia Głombiowska clarifies:

The individual cannot achieve perfection in isolation from the nation, the individual's good [...] arises as a result of action on behalf of the nation's good and only thus. The individual thus is subordinated to the nation. [...] this theory of Kochanowski's exists not only in the world of abstraction, on the contrary, it is the basis of his assessment of the concrete reality of Polish life and his program for reforming the Republic.³³

This coherent political conception is visible in both Kochanowski's Polish and Latin works; conscious of the constantly changing political situation, he saw the nation-state (in his time, the Rzeczpospolita, or Republic) – as the highest common good.

Kochanowski's first extensive collection of lyric poems, *Elegiarum libri duo*, dating from 1562, follows Roman models in telling a story of unrequited love. The focal character in the cycle, Ligia, first returns the lyrical persona's affection, before later perfidiously and treacherously bringing their romance to a decisive end. Elements borrowed from Roman love elegies are also found in Kochanowski's Songs, for example in Song XI from the First Book, consisting of a paraphrase of Horace's famous ode to a girl leaving a man.³⁴ In the *Pieśni* (Songs), as in the Elegies, love poetry is interwoven with civic and patriotic poetry, and the lyrical subject takes on various roles, like the poet's beloved Proteus, assuming the form of a lover, a patriot, a virtuous citizen, a Catholic, a poet, and Epicurean, or a Stoic.

Kochanowski found himself a student in Padua at the time when the theory of the literary genre was developing and solidifying, on the one hand firmly rooted in tradition, on the other subject to innovations of the period.³⁵ Mastering the conventions of the elegy, then already fully formed, made it possible for him to express his views on literary theory and his attitude toward

³²The relevant poem is Elegia (Elegy) IV 3, see Z. Głombiowska, *Łacińska i polska muza Jana Kochanowskiego*, p. 17.

³³Ibid., p. 56.

³⁴The popularity of this theme in ancient and Old Polish love lyrics, the humorous representation of a woman's flight from a man and the presentation of the final capture of the pursued woman as inscribed in the natural order and harmony of things, offers a powerful summons to contemplate the accepted ways, in the culture of that time, of overcoming amorous rejection (expressed toward a single man or all of his sex). A proof of this acceptance is the fact that the theme from Horace's erotic poem beginning "Vitas hinuleo misimilis, Chloe" (*Carmina* I 23), beginning in Włodzimierz Tetmajer's translation with the lines "Jako sarenka za matką trwożną / Uciekasz, Chloe, przede mną w bór" (Like a small doe fearful with its mother / You run away, Chloe, from me into the woods), paraphrased by Jan Kochanowski in Song XI from his First Book as "Stronisz przede mną, Neto nietykana, / By więc sarneczka, kiedy obłąkana / Macierze szuka po górach ustronnych, / Nie bez bojaźni i postrachów płonnych" (You avoid me, Neto untouched, / The way a small doe, when she loses her reason / Looks for her mother in secluded mountains / Not without fear and useless terrors) was also used in baroque religious poetry. In a poem by Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, the lyrical person, longing for a mystical feeling of union with Christ, says "Ty mnie unikasz, Chryste, jak płochliwa / Sarenka leśna..." (You avoid me, Christ, like a timid / Forest deer; *Lyrice* [Lyrics] II 17).

³⁵T. Michałowska, *Poezja i poetyka* (Poetry and Poetics), Warszawa 1982, pp. 99-101.

elegiaca poesis through his poetic practice.³⁶ In his Latin works Kochanowski united two Roman models of the elegy – the Propertian and Ovidian – joining the lyric and epic natures of the two conventions. That allowed him to bring into high relief the melancholy tone of longing or contemplation of a described love object and also enabled him to transfer the ancient Latin phraseology and lexicon into a new context. In a Polish elegy (examples of which include some of the Songs, such as Song XXI or XXV from the First Books) it was impossible to maintain the stylistic properties of the Latin elegy, to a large extent bound up with its specific meter. In Polish elegies of a decidedly lyrical nature, the poet dealt almost exclusively with love themes, in a two-part composition revealing the happy past and sad present of the protagonists of his romance.³⁷

The Polish language had not, by the time of the Renaissance, yet reached the stage of affording such sublime descriptions of lovers' games as Kochanowski proposed in his collection of Latin Elegies. The images of different types of love – sensual, tender, rapturous, transported by joy or ecstasy – were displayed in a series of deft comparisons and metaphors. For example, placing the magic of intimacy with his beloved above any material gain, the poet writes:

Sed licet adverso carpentibus oscula rostro

Indulgere omni tempore coniugio.

Ah, lapis est, lucro quisquis mutavit amorem:

Me socium facit non habet ille sui.

(Two doves with beaks entwined enjoy a kiss, Tasting the fullness of conjugal bliss; That man's a stone, who would for lucre trade love; We'll not consort, nor my hand touch his suede glove.)

Elegia 4, Księga pierwsza, 19-22)

The existing state of Polish at that time was optimal, however, for creating festive poetry, connected with the native tradition, whose beginnings are found in Przemysław Słota's poem "O chlebowym stole" (At the Bread Table). Anacreontic themes, present in the collection of fraszkas and *Foricoenia*, are evoked differently in the Latin and Polish texts, acquiring a more subtle and balanced quality in the Latin verses, where in Polish they are presented in a coarser, somewhat colloquial vein. For example, in his fraszka "Do Anakreonta" the poet writes:

Anakreont, zdrajca stary,

Nie masz w swym łotrostwie miary!

Wszystko pijesz, a miłujesz

I mnie przy sobie zepsujesz. [...]

Dobra myśl nigdy bez ciebie.

(Anacreon, back-stabbing friend, / Your roguery is without end! / You drink and drink, and love like the devil, / Bringing me down to your level. [...] A good thought never without you.)

(Do Anakreonta [To Anacreon], lines 1-4, 7).

A similar theme has a completely different function in the foricinium "Ad Philippum Padnevium," where the poet refers to Anacreontic verse in a more serious tone:

³⁶A. Gorzkowski, *Bene atque ornate*, p. 81.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 87.

Et nos, Philippe, Theiam

Anacreontis ad lyram

Non invenusta lusimus

Dictante Phoebus carmina.

(And we, Philip, on the lyre / Of Anacreon rhymes declaimed, / Not banal ones; to inspire, / Phoebus whispering to us came.)

(*Ad Philippum Padneviem*, w. 5-8)³⁸

Albert Gorzkowski, evaluating the rhetorical beauty of Kochanowski's Latin poems, writes with enthusiasm of the artistry of his *Foricoenia*:

It is a rhetorically colorful work and a really well-developed (*eleborata*) one, a testament not only to the considerable craftsmanship of the poetic author of *Odprawa* (Dismissal)..., but also his excellent mastery of theoretical principles, whose practical implementation finds a reliable match in his dozens of inventive and eloquent *colores*, "flowers in the garden" to paraphrase Cicero, transparent, concise and sparkling speech.³⁹

Kochanowski's bilingualism is both functional and creative.⁴⁰ The Sage of Czarnolas was fluent in Latin, the language of scholarship and the university; he translated Horace's poetry, translated *foricoenia* and elegies with rhetorical verve, moving freely within the framework of the genre. His knowledge of classical models made it possible for him to develop a modern model of lyric poetry in Polish as well. The interaction between the both languages and the collision of the two poetic systems finally gave birth to so many innovations in Polish poetry that it led to the formation of a new model of Polish poetic practice. The new face of Polish poetry, the multiplicity of options offered by its first numerical system, the introduction into Polish literature of many ancient genres and simultaneous adaptation of particular conventions to the needs and capabilities of Polish, modern themes expressed through a wealth of metaphors and similes: all of these developments were partly made possible by the poet's bilingualism. Thus not only did bilingualism become a fundamental part of Kochanowski's individual progression, but the mutual interaction of classical and neo-Latin culture with Polish humanistic thought had a considerable influence on the countenance of the Polish Renaissance and played a decisive role in the development of Polish literature.

³⁸The poem quoted is *Foricoenium* 38. Leopold Staff's translation can be found in J. Kochanowski, *Z łacińska spiewa Słowian Muza. Elegie, foricoenia, liryki w przekładzie Leopolda Staffa*, Warszawa 1982, p. 161. Głombiowska offers a comparative interpretation in *Łacińska i polska muza Jana Kochanowskiego*, p. 157.

³⁹A. Gorzkowski, *Bene atque ornate*, p. 171.

⁴⁰See E. Kraskowska, "Dwujęzyczność a problemy przekładu."

KEYWORDS

neo-Latin poetry

foricoenia

f r a s z k a s

ABSTRACT:

Jan Kochanowski was a bilingual artist– he wrote poems in both Latin and Polish. The choice of language in his work is determined by the circumstances in which particular works arose (in his Paduan period he wrote in Latin, after his return to Poland he turned to his native language) as well as the subject matter he deals with in different texts. A comparison of his foricoenia and fraszkas or Latin elegies and Polish songs demonstrates that he uses both languages to express a range of emotions and both allow him to employ diverse literary conventions.

BILINGUALISM

Kochanowski

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