

WHEN 16TH-CENTURY POLISH POETRY MEETS MODERN DANISH SYNTAX

A STUDY OF AN ODD CASE

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0. THE UNDERLYING STORY

Throughout the four years of my PhD-program at AMU in Poznań professor Witold Maciejewski was more than helpful to me, providing insight and good advice at linguistic seminars held at the Department of Scandinavian Studies, as well as questioning my aspect-related ideas when necessary. It included asking me a lot of questions that were particularly hard to answer. After an exam in modern Danish syntax (the very last step before my viva), the Professor asked me, off the record, whether a certain Polish sentence that he identified as a direct quotation from Mikołaj Sęp-Sarzyński's "Pieśń V o Fridruszu...", a 16th-century Polish poem, could be fitted into Poul Diderichsen's Danish sentence scheme. Somewhat astonished and unable to provide an eligible answer right away, I politely promised I would look into the matter, although the very idea seemed, to say the least, odd. The present article is an attempt at answering professor Maciejewski's question and fitting the sentence in question into a post-Diderichsenian Danish sentence model.

1. THE SENTENCE IN QUESTION¹

The sentence that the present article is aimed at analyzing comes from Mikołaj Sęp-Szarzyński's "Pieśń V o Fridruszu..." and can be found in the poem's fourth stanza (verse 13 and 14). It reads as follows:

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Agnieszka Słoboda at Adam Mickiewicz University's Institute of Polish Philology for the assistance she has provided me in the process of writing this paper.

- (1) Farbę Bugowej, widziałem, krew wody
Nasza zmieniła, (...)²

colour.SING.ACC Bug.ADJ.FEM.GEN see.PR.ET.1SING.MASC blood.SING.NOM water.SING.GEN
our.1SING.FEM.NOM change.PR.ET.1SING.FEM

‘I saw, that our blood (had) changed the color of water in the river Bug.’

At first glance the sentence in (1) strikes as hard to comprehend due to its unconventional syntactic composition – the missing formal subject, the supposedly incomplete nominal phrase in the sentence-initial position and a generally disturbed word order.

The first of the above problems is in fact not a problem, since Polish sentences do not require formal subjects – their logical subjects can with no significant difficulties be identified thanks to the verbs’ inflexion system. In this case the verb’s ending (*-alem*) clearly points at a masculine, 1st person singular subject.

The sentence-initial NP, on the other hand, does indeed seem incomplete, as connotation rules require adjectives to open up slots that must be filled by nouns (cf. Wierzbicka 1964:16), and thus the adjective *Bugowej* calls for an obligatory noun:

- (2) Farbę Bugowej _____
N + Adj + [open slot]

Unless the phrase in (2) is actually incomplete and thus the entire sentence grammatically incorrect, the missing noun is to be located somewhere within the given sentence. This calls for an attempt at filling the NP’s empty slot with one of the sentence’s remaining nouns. Consider the following:

- (3a) *Farbę Bugowej krew, widziałem, wody nasza zmieniła.

- (3b) Farbę Bugowej wody, widziałem, krew nasza zmieniła.

Since nominal attributes form government relations with main constituents of NPs, only one of the sentence’s two remaining nouns fits the incomplete NP. The phrase’s head, *farbę*, connotes a noun in the genitive, which is why the noun *krew* (NOM) cannot be fitted into the phrase, cf. (3a) above. The noun *wody* (GEN), on the other hand, meets the criteria for filling the NP’s empty slot. The sentence-initial NP in (1) therefore turns out not to be incomplete, but merely split. We are dealing with an instance of what Śliwiński (2006) might call an EXPANDING INVERSIVE PERMUTATION of the NP, which involves disrupting the continuity of an NP by means of shifting parts of it to distant preposition or

² Mikołaj Sęp-Szarzyński. 1957. “Pieśń V o Fridruszu...”. In: *Rytmy albo wiersze polskie*. Opracowała i wstępem opatrzyła Jadwiga Sokołowska. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 57.

postposition³ (ibid.). In such cases, structures separating a split NP's constituents do not form any syntactic relations with them⁴ (cf. Śliwiński 2006:104). Such splitting is "common in *variable-word-order languages* and the elements of such a split NP are called DISCONTINUOUS CONSTITUENTS" (Covington 1990a:234).

As regards the sentence in (1) and its disturbed word order, it must at this point be sufficient to remark that it is an instance of inversion, namely an 'abnormal' word order – one that is perceived as atypical or at least differs from the neutral word order, recognized as primary in a given language (cf. Karolak 2003:262). In the sentence in question the inversion's nature is quite specific as it is the object of the subordinate clause that has been moved to the sentence-initial position of the superordinate clause.⁵

Being a language of extensive word order variation, alongside, among others, Russian, Latin and Korean⁶, Polish has a lot of capacity for inversion. This is due to the fact that word order is as such redundant in Polish as far as the communicative function of a sentence is concerned, which encourages the application of word order for stylistic purposes (cf. Wierzbicka 1964:14). This is indeed the case in the sentence in (1), as the applied inversion is rhetorical rather than grammatical. According to Karolak (2003:263), the poetical value of rhetorical inversion can be measured based on how difficult it is to reconstruct a given inverted sentence's neutral word order. In the case of (1) one can therefore without any doubt speak of a high-end case of rhetorical inversion, as the sentence is at first glance barely comprehensible and calls for a series of extensive deciphering operations in order to be fully understood.

The sentence in (1) is cited in numerous works on Sep-Szarzyński's poetry, where it is described as a perfect illustration of the poet's individual style that includes a quite unique dynamism, frequent application of the rhetoric of paradox, oxymoronic expressions and antitheses (Skubalanka 1984:94). Apart from that Sep-Szarzyński is also known for his numerous syntactic experiments, including, amongst many others, placing conjunctions and adverbs in fairly unexpected sentence positions and using inversion for stylistic purposes. The sentence in question is said to be a *locus classicus* of the last of the above (Weintraub 1977:46). Only a frequent and abundant application of inversion in Polish seems to allow it to achieve its ornamental goal and Sep-Szarzyński's poetry is indeed "a true orgy

³ At this point I shall not decide whether it was *Farbę Bugowej* that has been shifted to preposition or *wody* has been placed in postposition. It will become clear as the analysis proceeds in sections 3 and 4.

⁴ Śliwiński's analyses are based on inversive permutations within simple sentences or single clauses within complex sentences, but Słoboda (2005:387ff.) points at instances of NPs separated by more than one sentence constituents or even 2 subordinate clauses in Polish 15th-century legal documents.

⁵ A more detailed analysis of the sentence's word order follows in section 4.

⁶ Cf. the four-degree ranking of languages based on the amount of word order variation they allow in Covington (1990b:3).

of inversion”, as “no word order in Polish poetry is more artificial” [than Sęp-Szarzyński’s – MS] (Błoński 2001:118, my translations, MS).

The abundance of inversion, although characteristic for Sęp-Szarzyński, can also be found in the works of other Polish poets of the baroque era⁷, such as Jan Andrzej Morsztyn⁸. In this context it seems worth mentioning that this kind of inversion is as such not a typical construction of 16th-century Polish, but a deliberately applied stylistic mechanism, the purpose of which is that of boosting the text’s decorative style and pompousness.

2. THE DIDERICHSEN TRADITION IN A NUTSHELL

A model accounting for word order is of utmost importance in any comprehensive grammar of Danish due to the fact that the language of interest does not allow much variation as far as word order is concerned. Such a model was provided by Paul Diderichsen in 1946 and has since been applied in various analyses of sentences in Danish as well as Norwegian, Swedish, Icelandic, Faroese and other languages (see Jørgensen 2009:1).

The model offers a two-level analysis of the Danish sentence structure, which basically consists of three fields⁹, two of which are further divided into three slots each. Here is how Jørgensen (2009:4f.) presented Diderichsen’s (1946:162, 186) original schemes of main clause and dependent clause structure (4a and b, respectively):

- (4) a. Conjunctive field Foundation field Nexus field (central field) Content field
 ks F v n a V N A
- b. Conjunctive field Nexus field (central field) Content field
 ks ku n a v V N A

Diderichsen’s original slot classification (1946:161f.) is word class-dependent, and thus the slots can accommodate the following content: ks – conjoining conjunctions, ku – subordinating conjunctions, F – nominal or adverbial phrases, n and N – nominals, a and A – adverbials, v and V – verbal forms. Diderichsen (1946:186) also provides a set of function-based slot admission criteria, in which n becomes the slot of subject, N – the slot of objects, v – the slot of the finite verb, V – the slot of non-finite verb forms, a – the slot of nexus adverbs¹⁰ and A – the slot of adverbs of content.

⁷ Actually, Sęp-Szarzyński’s works are usually classified as belonging to *mannerism* – a period of transition between renaissance and baroque (Skubalanka 1984:93, Pelc 1992:142).

⁸ Cf. Śliwiński (2006) for a detailed analysis and classification of Morsztyn’s inversions.

⁹ Most English equivalents of Diderichsen’s original Danish terms have been taken over from Bjerre/Engels/Jørgensen/Vikner (2008) as well as Jørgensen (2009).

¹⁰ In present-day grammars of Danish they are known as central adverbs (*centraladverbier*).

Some of the model's slots allow more than one element (V, N, A), while elements belonging to different word classes and having different functions can be fitted into F, which may be some of the reasons why numerous attempts have been made to develop Diderichsen's model.

One of the most prominent early post-Diderichsenian models was put forward by Hansen (1970). He provided his version of the original sentence scheme with additional slots for unstressed pronominal objects (L), predicatives (P), valency-dependent adverbials (Adv) and adverbials not determined by the verb's valency (a1, a2) as well as separate slots for direct and indirect objects (Od and Oi, respectively). Here is Hansen's model of main (5a) subordinate clauses (5b), as rendered by Jørgensen (2009:7):

- (5) a. ks F V S L a1 Oi Od P Adv a2
 b. ks ku S a1 V Oi Od P Adv a2

Togebly (2003), on the other hand, produced what Jørgensen (2009:10) calls "the most complex sentence model in the history of the Diderichsen tradition." One cannot help but agree with Jørgensen, as Togebly's sentence scheme can not only be applied to both main and subordinate clauses, but it also contains 17 different slots. Apart from the slots added in the earlier models (e.g. Hansen's), Togebly's scheme contains, among others, separate slots for verbal particles and prepositional complements – both objects and adverbials (MR), adverbs of manner (M), infinitival constructions and subordinate clauses functioning as objects (OR) and a slot for direct objects, logical/existential subjects and subject predicatives (DR). Togebly's sentence scheme is special due to the fact that it contains a system of some slots' mutual dependencies, enabling some slots to be filled when certain other slots have been filled and vice versa – making it impossible for some slots to be filled if certain other slots have not been filled.¹¹

The above models are but two out of numerous sentence schemes inspired by Diderichsen's. As the two above, the remaining ones differ vastly from one another with regard to the number of fields and slots as well as classification criteria. Nevertheless, even a short glance at Hansen's and Togebly's models allows the reader to spot their authors' inclination towards providing a more detailed system than Diderichsen's, in which each slot would only accommodate one element or elements with the same type of function. It is by no means the only tendency in post-Diderichsenian syntax. Some sentence models are kept simple, the only addition being that of special slots for extraposed sentence elements located to the left of F and to the right of A (e.g. Jacobsen/Skyum-Nielsen 2000). The last of the mentioned models shall be used in the following sections.

¹¹ Jørgensen (2009:12) suggests that some of these interdependencies can be challenged empirically, but that shall not be dealt with in this paper.

3. SENTENCE INTERTWINING (SI) IN DANISH

Natural languages use various mechanisms to mark the importance of certain sentence elements. One of them is FRONTING, i.e. altering a sentence's word order so that the element to be emphasized is moved to the sentence-initial position, in the case of Danish to the sentence scheme's Foundation field. Compare the three Danish sentences in (6), (a) having a neutral SVO word order, (b) and (c) having a fronted object and adverbial, respectively:

- (6) a. De skulle sælge huset sidste år.
 they shall.PRAET sell.INF house.SING.DEF last year.SING
 b. Huset skulle de sælge sidste år.
 c. Sidste år skulle de sælge huset.

Whereas fronting in Danish main clauses is rather uncomplicated, it is a somewhat problematic operation in subordinate clauses, which as a rule do not have a Foundation field. Jacobsen and Skyum-Nielsen (2000:110) suggest, however, that in spoken Danish subordinate clauses may sometimes have the structure (i.e. word order) of subordinate (7a) as well as main clauses (7b):

- (7) a. Kaj sagde || at || n de || a (ikke) | v skulle || S¹² sælge bilen nu ||
 b. Kaj sagde || at || F de || v skulle | - | n | a ikke || S sælge bilen nu ||

Applying the word order of the main clause in (7b) allows for other solutions to the problem, as it is now possible to front the object of the originally subordinate clause within its boundaries simply by locating it in the Foundation field, as suggested by the two scholars (*ibid.*, p. 113):

- (8) (Kaj sagde) at || F bilen || v skulle | de | - || n | a ikke || S sælge nu ||

Yet another way of tackling the issue of fronting, as put forward by Jacobsen and Skyum-Nielsen (*ibid.*), is to *borrow* the Foundation field of the main clause and place the emphasized object there (9a). In this scenario the subordinate *at*-clause preserves its 'proper' word order (knavVNA) as showed in (9b):

- (9) a. F Bilen || v sagde n Kaj | - || at de skulle sælge nu || S
 b. k n a v V N A
 at || de | (ikke) skulle || sælge | - | nu ||

¹² S = final field (*slutfelt*) looked at globally, without distinguishing between V, N and A.

The mechanism presented in (9a) is an extraordinary type of fronting, as the object of the subordinate noun clause is extracted from its original position and inserted in the initial position of the superordinate clause (in this case the sentence's main clause). Following Poulsen (2005:44ff.), I shall call the extracted element a DISLOCATED CONSTITUTENT (DISCON) and the slot that is left after a DISCON's extraction – a GAP. Thus *bilen* in (9a) is the DISCON, while the scheme's N slot is the GAP, formed as a result of the performed fronting.

A fronting that involves "extraction across one or more clause boundaries from a subordinate clause to a superordinate clause of the clause with the gap is called SENTENCE INTERTWINING" (ibid. p. 45) and is also known as an ISLAND PHENOMENON or an UNBOUNDED DEPENDENCY (Jensen 2001:156). SIs can be found in Danish as well as the remaining Scandinavian languages and are characteristic of their spoken variants (cf. Jørgensen 2000:99). Poulsen (2005:47f.) distinguishes, after Jensen (1998), between four types of SIs in Danish, the classification being based on the type of clause that a DISCON has been extracted from. These include complement subordinate clauses, predicative relative clauses (i.e. presentational relative constructions), modifying clauses (i.e. restrictive relative and attributive infinitival clauses) and adverbial clauses. Regardless of type, the main function of SIs is to topicalize¹³ a given constituent of the subordinate clause.

4. MAKING THE UNFITTABLE FIT

In this section I shall return to the sentence in question presented in (1) and rewritten in a slightly adapted version in (10):

(10) *Farbę Bugowej, widziałem, krew wody Nasza zmienila.*

The meaning of the sentence has been roughly deciphered in section 1. In order to be able to explain its meaning and structure in detail as well as illustrate my main point, I shall no longer treat the sentence in question as a poetic expression with rhetorical inversion. Instead I will transform it in accordance with Polish syntactic rules so that it is grammatically correct.

It has been established that the seemingly incomplete phrase *Farbę Bugowej* is in fact a split phrase and belongs with the noun *wody*. Since it is the adjective *Bugowej* that opens up an empty slot for a noun and the noun *wody* does meet the criteria for filling that slot, let me now bring the split elements together in the sentence-initial position. Due to the Polish language's extensive word order variation, there are two possible results of this operation:

¹³ I am aware of the fact that Danish DISCONS can have the function of topicalization or focalization. I deliberately use the term *topicalization*, since, according to Jensen (1998) and Poulsen (2005:48), Danish DISCONS are most often topical, and the distinction between the two is often unclear.

- (11) a. *Farbę Bugowej wody, widziałem, krew nasza zmieniła.
 b. *Farbę wody Bugowej, widziałem, krew nasza zmieniła.

Both underlined versions of the phrase in question in (11) are equally correct, the difference between them being purely stylistic. My further investigation will, however, continue based on (11a).

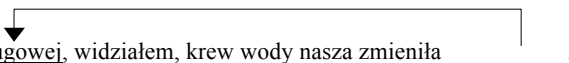
There are two reasons for my having marked the sentences in (11) with asterisks. Firstly, the verb *zmienić* ('to change') requires an object (unless it occurs in its reflexive variant), which it lacks in (11). As the verb connotes nouns or NPs whose heads are in the accusative, the empty slot can be filled with *Farbę Bugowej wody* with the following outcome:

- (12) *Widziałem, krew Nasza zmieniła farbę Bugowej wody.

The above sentence has also been marked with an asterisk for a reason. This is due to the fact, that another minor modification to the sentence in (12) needs to be made for the sake of clarity and grammatical correctness. In present-day Polish the verb *widzieć* ('to see') can occur followed by a subordinate clause introduced by the conjunction *że* ('that'). Such clauses are roughly equivalent to English *that*-clauses (otherwise the mentioned verb can be followed by a direct object or a prepositional phrase). In (12) the verb *widziałem* is clearly followed by a subordinate clause, though one lacking a conjunction. This calls for the insertion of *że*.

- (13) Widziałem, że krew Nasza zmieniła farbę Bugowej wody.

This way I have obtained a perfectly grammatical complex sentence with a *że*-subordinate clause. Comparing (13) to (10), I can easily visualize how the word order of Sęp Szarzyński's sentence may have become what it is. This can be illustrated in the following way:

- (14) Farbę Bugowej, widziałem, krew wody nasza zmieniła _____.
- 

A part of the subordinate clause's object, namely *Farbę Bugowej*, has been extracted across the boundaries of the subordinate clause and placed in the initial position of the main clause. On top of that the remaining element of the object has been moved from its original position.

The word order in (14) resembles that in (9a). *Farbę Bugowej* can thus be treated as a DISCON, while the connotation slot to the right of the verb *zmieniła*, which has been left open as a result of the performed extraction, is but a GAP. The object of the subordinate clause is split. A part of it (*wody*) remains located in the subordinate clause, but this is due to stylistic reasons (cf. section 1 above) and therefore does not concern the point about to be made.

The sentence in question shows several features of a Danish SI, as presented by Jacobsen and Skyum-Nielsen (2000) and Poulsen (2005). First of all, it appears to be the outcome of a cross-boundary extraction, resulting in the occurrence of a DISCON and a GAP. Secondly, it can easily be transformed into a regular complex sentence with a main clause followed by a subordinate clause¹⁴. Yet another similarity between the Polish and the Danish construction is that Danish SIs are said to be characteristic for spoken language¹⁵, and the Polish sentence in (1) is indeed ‘said’ in the original context, as it appears as the exact words of Fridrusz¹⁶.

To confirm my point I would like to present a juxtaposition of (1) and (9a):

- (15) F v n a S
 ||Bilen_{DISCON} || sagde | Kaj | - || at de skulle sælge _____{GAP} nu ||
 ||Farbę Bugowe_{JDISCON} || widziałem | (ja) | - || (ze) krew wody nasza zmieniała _____{GAP}||

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to answer the question of whether a certain 16th-century Polish sentence can be fitted into Poul Diderichsen’s Danish sentence scheme. The sentence in question turns out to share the Danish SENTENCE INTERTWINING constructions’ (SIs’) word order and can therefore be fitted into a Diderichsen-inspired¹⁷ sentence scheme for SIs put forward by Jacobsen and Skyum-Nielsen (2000). Needless to say, the fact that this fitting has been possible is to the best of my knowledge purely coincidental, for Diderichsen’s model was created some 400 years after Sęp-Szarzyński had written his poem, not to mention that the model was created to describe the word order of Danish. Nevertheless, the performed fitting gives me hope to have achieved at least one of the two goals included in the call for papers to this volume, namely that of intriguing professor Witold Maciejewski with a topic of my choice and/or amusing him on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

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¹⁴ Compare (7) and (9) with (1) and (13).

¹⁵ A point made by Jørgensen (2000:55) and already mentioned in section 3 of this paper.

¹⁶ This is, however, a coincidence. As mentioned above, Sęp-Szarzyński’s text is an artistic one, and it is by no means my intention to suggest that by using the sentence in question the poet intended to illustrate the Polish spoken language of his time.

¹⁷ Diderichsen himself did mention SIs (1946:214f), but did not analyse them further.

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