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Renaissance

The Renaissance period in Poland coincides with the reign of the Jagiellonian dynasty. The period saw its beginnings during the times of Kazimierz Jagiellończyk (Casimir the Jagiellonian), but the true flowering came after the short reigns of Jan Olbracht and Aleksander, once the throne was ascended by Kazimierz's last son, Zygmunt I Stary (Sigismund the Elder). The "Zygmunt age" – as the times of the last two Jagiellonians, Zygmunt Stary and his successor Zygmunt August (Sigismund Augustus, d. 1672), are usually termed – was a golden age of Polish culture. This was to a considerable degree a result of particularly strong cultural ties to Italy: Zygmunt Stary's second wife, Bona of the Sforza family, was Italian. These times left their mark on Wawel Castle in Kraków, which was rebuilt in the new Renaissance style, with the "Zygmunt Chapel," a gem of this style. The kingdom's relatively stable relations with its neighbors, cautious foreign policy, and sense of its own real power and security promoted its internal consolidation and spurred economic growth. The most important political events of this period brought changes in the structure of the state, especially the emergence of the noble democracy, with a democratically elected Sejm (Diet), an elected king, and a Senate consisting of secular and church oligarchs. This system emerged via a long-term process, important stages of which were marked by the famous Nihil Novi statute in 1506, which granted great powers to the noble estate, and next by the decades-long internal battle over the so-called "execution of rights," ending in the

resolutions of the “executionist” Sejms of 1563-1567. Another no less crucial process was the consolidation of the multiethnic state entity, which culminated in the Polish-Lithuanian union signed by the Sejm in Lublin in 1569, giving rise to the “Republic of the Two Nations” (*Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów*), a uniform state sharing a common ruler, Sejm, Senate, and currency, and pursuing a single foreign and military policy. This Union of Lublin, enacted on the eve of the Jagiellonian dynasty’s extinction, was of fundamental significance for the further history of Poland, as it established a federative state with no equal in Europe at that time. Relations between the state and religion were a third factor that shaped the Republic. Unlike other countries, Poland managed to avoid the excesses of religious wars sparked by the Reformation. While remaining a Catholic country, it did not pose resistance to the spread of the reformed churches, Lutheranism and Calvinism. The latter gave rise in the Polish lands to the radical movement of the Arians, called the “Polish brethren.” The fullest expression of irenic tendencies in this sphere was the “Warsaw confederacy” signed at the Sejm in 1573, guaranteeing “eternal peace” between those who differed in terms of faith, maintaining that every nobleman had the right to religious freedom. The Warsaw confederacy was signed by the Sejm after the death of Zygmunt August, the last of the Jagiellonian line, when the Polish and Lithuanian nobility, mindful of their rights, proceeded to choose a new ruler. The first such elected king was Henry Valois, the son of French King Henry II and Catherine de Médici. His mere half-year of reign, which ended with his flight to France upon receiving the news that the French throne had been vacated, made its mark in Polish history chiefly in terms of the “Henrician Articles,” in which the gentry, fearing that absolutism might be instated, set forth the most important principles of the polity of the Republic. Both Henry and all successive royal electees were forced to swear by these articles and uphold them. After Valois’s departure, Transylvanian prince Stefan Batory was elected king. His ambitious political plans led the Republic to a victorious war against Moscow under Ivan IV the Terrible, resulting in the acquisition of Polotsk and the recovery of Inflanty (Livonia). Stefan’s death in 1586 interrupted plans for further eastward expansion and postponed a clash with the rising Ottoman empire. The next

king was to be Zygmunt August's nephew, the Swedish Prince Zygmunt of the Vasa dynasty. His long reign (1587-1632) was preceded by a civil war between the backers of Vasa and those of Maximilian Habsburg, concluded at the battle of Byczna when Jan Zamoyski took the Austrian claimant captive and cleared Zygmunt's path to the Polish throne. The approaching turn of the century portended the arrival of times of war and internal unrest.

I. The birth of an epoch – Elites

The Renaissance epoch in Polish literature begins when the ideas and literature of the Western European (chiefly Italian) Renaissance and humanism begin to filter in to the Polish lands. This was a long-term process that evidenced itself in the intellectual and literary life of the latter half of the 1400s, during a half-century that can be considered the developmental apogee of late medieval culture in Poland. One of the fundamental conditions necessary for the appearance of such new ideas was the emergence of an intellectual community capable of accepting and nurturing these ideas. The formation of such an intellectual elite receptive to the ideas of humanism lasted until the beginning of the 16th century. This process was spurred by direct contact with Rome and Italian universities, and was also reinforced by close ties to the nascent humanistic movement to the south, chiefly in Hungary.

The hallmark of this emerging elite, acting as a kind of visa to the Renaissance world of Europe, was humanistic Latin – the Latin language as resuscitated by the humanists, in the form that it had been used in the works of Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, and Horace. Acquiring and using this tongue represented part of the Renaissance concept, which was also construed as a rebirth of classical culture. Only Latin facilitated a link between the classical world and the contemporary one, a link that involved the creative imitation of models. The Latin language was also the foremost instrument for expressing the notions, experiences, and artistic endeavors of the new epoch, as it offered the fullest range of lexical, phraseological, and syntactic capabilities for expressing this new age, which did not want to be inferior to

ancient times. And so it is natural that the Latin language completely dominated the beginnings of Renaissance literature in Poland. Only achievements in this direction could subsequently encourage the accelerated development of the Polish literary language in the 16th century, especially in its latter half.

In Poland under Kazimierz Jagiellończyk, this new, humanistic Latin, shaped according to Roman models, appears as the language of a new elite only just emerging. A great role was played here by the excellently prospering University of Kraków and its professors, such as Jan of Ludzisko (ca.1400-before 1460), who greeted the king arriving to his coronation with his laudatory address to philosophy (*Oratio de laudibus et dignitate philosophiae*), written in the new style. An important figure whom the new elite rallied around was Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki (1389-1455). Himself an excellent speaker, drawing upon the models of Ciceronian style and maintaining correspondence with Italian humanists that included Enea Silvius Piccolomini (1405-1464), the subsequent Pope Pius II, Oleśnicki brought together enlightened individuals who were receptive to Italian novelties. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the first poem in Poland written in the Renaissance manner, the anonymous Latin work *Dialog at the Death of Zbigniew Oleśnicki*, written in 1455, was linked to the cardinal. Our list of prominent mid-15th-century precursors of the Renaissance must also include Jan Ostroróg (ca.1430-1501). The style of his writings, bearing clear humanistic traits, is worthy of note, as are the ideas that he propounded in them. Out of the Conciliarist spirit, the idea of strengthening the state by centralizing authority and rendering it autonomous of Rome, came *Memorandum on the Organization of the Republic (Monumentum ... pro Reipublicae ordinatione ... congestum* – after 1450).

Amongst the church and state dignitaries, Grzegorz of Sanok (1407-1477), bishop of Lwów (Lvov), stood out. His court gave refuge to Filippo Buonacorsi (1437-1496) known as Callimachus, an Italian humanist who had been accused, together with other members of the Rome Academy, of plotting against the life of Pope Paul II. Callimachus' arrival to Kraków in 1470 (or at the end of 1469) is sometimes considered to be a symbolic date marking the onset of

Renaissance literature in Poland. In Dunajów, where the bishop's seat was located, Callimachus composed a collection of love elegies that were wholly novel in Polish Renaissance literature, both in terms of their metrics and vocabulary, and in terms of their topic. Among them we find the famous elegy *To Fannia Sventhoca* (*Ad Fanniam Sventhocam*), containing the poet's *curriculum vitae*. Callimachus' works also included many motifs, such as his description of the harsh Sarmatian winter modeled after Ovid, that would be reproduced in Renaissance poetry written in Latin, and subsequently in Polish. Worthy of special note is his biographical panegyric *Life and Morals of Grzegorz of Sanok* (*Vita et mores Gregorii Sanocei* – 1476). And although it is hard nowadays to ascertain how much exaggerated praise there is in this portrayal of the humanist-bishop and epicurean-poet, and how many of the traits are actually drawn from Callimachus' own views, it remains the first work in the spirit of Renaissance humanism that constructed a parenetic image of a man of the new epoch.

No meager contribution to the birth of Polish Renaissance literature was made by intellectuals and poets of various nations, who formed an elite humanist community in this part of Europe – Poland, Germany, the Czech lands and Hungary. The German poet Conradus Celtis spent several years in Kraków (1488-1491), founded the Sodalitas Litteraria Vistulana literary society here, and devoted several of his poems, frequently none too flattering, to frosty and harsh Sarmatia. Lauretius Corvinus (true name Lorenz Rabe – 1465-1527), a friend of Copernicus and the author of *Sapphic Ode on Poland and its Capital*, spent a longer time in Kraków. Paweł of Krosno (ca.1470-1517), who was German by birth (with the true surname Procler), called himself a “Ruthenian” by origin, and was closely tied to the Hungarian protectors of humanists Stanisław Thurzon and Gábor Perényi, was a student and lecturer at the Kraków Alma Mater. Among Paweł of Krosno's abundant writings, which can be generously parceled out for both the Hungarians and Poles to claim, we should note his *epitalamium* written to commemorate Zygmunt Stary's wedding to Barbara Zapolya, where he endeavored to sparkle with mythological erudition drawn from Virgil and Ovid. At the event of this ceremony, there was now a retinue of Polish poets that could rival

each other. Aside from Paweł, verses in honor of the royal couple were also written by Krzycki and Dantyszek, writers belonging to the next generation of humanists.

II. Latin poetry – Christian humanism

An intellectual movement termed Christian humanism was very prominent within the North European Renaissance at the outset of the 16th century. This current eschewed idolatrous attachment to the literary tradition of antiquity, and opposed the neo-paganism of the humanists. This movement was patronized by Erasmus of Rotterdam, and included such neo-Latin poets as Crinitus, Mantuanus, Sabellicus, and Sebastian Brant. The generation of Paweł of Krosno's pupils, which included Jan of Wiślica, Jan Dantyszek, and their contemporary Mikołaj Hussowczyk, grew up within an atmosphere of Christian humanism.

Jan of Wiślica (ca.1458-1520) made his mark in the history of poetry as the author of the first attempt at creating a historical epic. His *Prussian War (Bellum prutenum)* was conceived as a poem about Władysław Jagiełło's war against the Teutonic Knights. And although the initial intention grew blurred amongst panegyric praise of the Jagiellonians, this work set the stage for the development of old Polish epic poetry, which confined itself, after the model of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, to versified relations of historical events. In Jan of Wiślica's Christian laudation of the dynasty, mythological gods are replaced by St. Stanislaus, the patron saint of the Jagiellonians, while the invocation to the muses is replaced by an entreaty to the Virgin Mother.

An even stronger break with pagan traditions, programmatically and ostentatiously rejecting all mythological ornaments, was made by Mikołaj Hussowczyk (ca.1475/1485 - after 1533) in a poem entitled *Song on the Appearance, Savagery and Hunting of the Bison (Carmen de statura, feritate ac venatione bisontis)*. This work arose when the poet was in Rome with the court of Erazmus Ciołek, bishop of Płock, who decided to make Pope Leo X, one of the most illustrious patrons of Renaissance culture, the gift of a stuffed bison plus an accompanying poem. Nevertheless, the poem would ultimately be

addressed to Queen Bona, since both Leo X and Bishop Ciołek would die in the interim prior to its completion in 1523. The undoubtedly political message of the work, intended to lend support the papacy's anti-Turkish policy, is overshadowed by its exceptionally graphic and suggestive portrayal of the primeval Lithuanian forest in the wintertime, of the European bison itself, and of the culminating scene in which the beast is put to death. Mikołaj, doubtlessly drawing upon the late classical hunting poems just then being discovered, managed to write a work that surpassed these models in many regards; the Polish author imbued the work with rich detail and dynamic images, which were both realistic and approached an almost Baroque sensualism. Neither does the song lack personal threads and tones, such as the prayer to the Virgin Mother that closes the work, one of the most beautiful such supplications in old Polish religious poetry.

Nevertheless, Christian humanism would have its most outstanding Polish champion in the Gdańsk native Jan Dantyszek (1485-1548) – although this is not the only context for his work, nor a sufficient one. Dantyszek was a man of the world, a European humanist, who dabbled at the profession of diplomat in the service of Jan Olbracht and Zygmunt Stary. As a result of his diplomatic missions, including to the courts of Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I and Charles V, and the years he spent at the Spanish court, he maintained contacts, both in person and through correspondence, with most of the prominent figures of his times, such as Thomas More, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Ferdinand Cortez, Baldassare Castiglione, Martin Luther, and Philipp Melanchthon. Dantyszek's huge body of correspondence, which has only partially been published, should be recognized as one of the most outstanding monuments of the Polish Renaissance. His elegy *To Grinea (Ad Grineam)*, to a lover he left behind in Vienna, was written in an earlier period, prior to the author's conclusive return to the country in 1532, still in the manner of mythological erudition. Yet his body of work closes with an elegiac *curriculum vitae*, entitled *The Life of Jan Dantyszek (Vitae Ioannis de Curiis Dantisci)*, the poet's final reckoning with the world at large, which is already devoid of antiqueness, written at the end of his life, expressing the hope of eternal life with Christ. The final years of Dantyszek's life, which he

spent surrounded by books in Lidzbark as bishop of Warmia, produced a collection of passion hymns *Hymni aliquot ecclesiastici* published in 1548, which programmatically rejected the diction of learned humanist poetry. In his poem to the reader (*Ad lectorem*) he explains that “the holy marks of the bleeding wounds of Christ” should replace the Hippocrene source of the muses. This ostentatious reversion to medieval Passion hymns provides perhaps the strongest indicator of the overthrow, in the name of tradition, of the *imitatio antiquorum* principle that heralded the forthcoming times of Church reform.

III. Latin poets: individualists

As a result of humanism, at the beginning of the Polish Renaissance there was already a trend towards expressing concrete human fortunes and individual experiences, thereby confirming the role that the Renaissance epoch ascribed to mankind in the universe, underscoring man’s dignity and exceptionality. This is evidenced by Renaissance biography, portrait painting, and above all poetry. The poetic work becomes to a significant extent a personal document of the writer’s fate, an attestation of his sensibilities and internal experience. The works of the two undoubtedly most outstanding poets of Latin literature in the Polish Renaissance, Andrzej Krzycki and Klemens Janicius, are expressions of such trends, which can be termed Renaissance individualism.

The biographies of these two writers differed vastly. The life of Andrzej Krzycki (1482-1537) was a model of a successful career. He was abetted by his kinship with Piotr Tomicki, a bishop, chancellor, and minister under Zygmunt Stary. After studying in Bologna, he quickly climbed the rungs of a courtly and clerical career, becoming bishop of Przemyśl in 1522, of Płock in 1527, and archbishop of Gniezno and primate of Poland in 1535. Klemens Janicius (1516-1542), in turn, belongs to a younger generation. His father was a peasant from the Wielkopolska village of Januszkowo, who sent his son to be educated first in Żnin, and later in the Poznań college founded by Bishop Lubrański. Due to his humanistic interests and

early manifested talent, Janicius ended up at Krzycki's court. Unfortunately, Krzycki died a year later, but the poet found his next safe haven at the court of Kraków voivode Piotr Kmita. It was Kmita who in 1538 enabled Janicius to travel to Padua – a target of peregrinations for several generations of Poles. Studying at the philosophical faculty there, breathing in the atmosphere of Italy, maintaining contacts with the circle of Padua humanists, led by Pietro Bembo himself, and engaging in friendship with Lazzaro Bonamico – all of this was interrupted by the onset of a grave illness that augured speedy death. Owing to help from his friends he was awarded the doctor of philosophy degree at an expedited pace, and also received his poetic laurels. In autumn 1540 he returned to Poland, but no longer enjoyed the support of his former sponsor. He spent the last two years of his life in a rectory near Olkusz, trying to put his poetic works into order and publish them. The publication of Janicius' *Book of Laments* and other verses (*Tristium liber I, Variarum elegiarum liber I, Epigrammatum liber I*) would coincide with the author's death in late 1542 (or early 1543). He was then 26 years old.

If there is anything that the works of two writers with such different biographies might have in common, it is chiefly the fact that they poured their own selves into their works. Everything that is most valuable in their works bears the distinctive mark of each of the authors, it constitutes a record of their personalities, which were otherwise wholly different. In Krzycki's case this is an extraverted record, with clear emotional reactions to the world. Things are the reverse for Janicius, who is concentrated upon himself, treating the world around him as an element of his own story.

Krzycki is absorbed in his courtly, state, and church career. As a courtier, he recorded events and people. He wrote *epithalamia* for the wedding celebrations of Zygmunt I, demonstrating his inborn talents: wit, brilliance, skill at paying compliments. This is the first poet in Polish literature who knew how to be, with such suppleness, a dexterous panegyrist, a subtle connoisseur of women, music, and wine, as well as a ruthless scoffer; always on a level that proved him to be an experienced verbal craftsman, and very frequently an artist. He was a master of the short form, the epigram, which he learned

from Martial and the Italian poets of the 15th century. His verses are full of mockery, rumors, and even impetuous insults leveled against his secular and clerical political opponents. And so, we encounter the image of Bishop Latałski, from whose nighttime windows a female companion was lowered in a net; we encounter an unctuous epitaph of Bishop Konarski, whose greatest achievement was allegedly the fact that he had stepped down from the Kraków bishopric; we encounter a whole gallery of fools and hypocrites – yet above all we encounter Krzycki, somewhat as a cynical opportunist casting blows both left and right, somewhat as a wise man brandishing a copy of Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Praise of Folly* instead of a breviary.

Krzycki's *oeuvre* is not devoid of love poems, some refined and elegant, others simply obscene. He wrote love verses in imitation of the Italian Petrarchists, but he also gave us a verse in praise of womanly beauty that represents a travesty (perhaps even a parody) of a hymn to the Virgin Mother. Krzycki accustoms us to unexpected clashes both in his thematic development and in his employment of poetic tradition. Alongside *Hymn of the Drunkard Brothers at Corybut's Funeral* (*Hymnus fratrum geneae in funere Corybuti*), which parodies the songs of medieval canticles and is written – to the horror of the purists of the time – in rhymed medieval Latin, we find a poem in praise of music (*In laudem musicae*) couched in elegant distiches, revealing the poet to be a subtle connoisseur of art. What is most interesting in Krzycki's extensive work is what we would recognize as a kind of demonstration, in a manifold sense. It is a demonstration of poetic skill, of freedom of movement within the medium of Latin and its literary tradition, considered to be the natural, not just learned language of poetry. It is a demonstration of an open attitude towards all that is human. And finally, it is a demonstration of the independence and individualism of a professional man of letters, conscious of the fact that he might be remembered by posterity not as a bishop, but rather as a poet.

After perusing the poems of Krzycki, who modified themes with characteristic irreverence and felt at home gliding his way through literary tradition, the works of Janicius might seem monotonous, especially since they were essentially all composed in elegiac distich. Like

Ovid's elegies written in exile in Tomi, Janicius' verses most often take the form of letters to his friends or sponsor; the most frequent subject in both cases is the poet's own condition: the former pining in exile, while the later is as if suspended between life and death.

This pertains in particular to 10 elegies which Janicius himself collected into the cycle called *Book of Laments*. This selection did not include the elegies he wrote in Padua, registering his joyful sojourn in the land of the "great Maros," where time passes "in the service of the sweet arts." The world of *Book of Laments* is suspended between two imperatives: engrossing oneself in humanist culture, and facing inevitable, imminent death. Life in the cultural realm encompasses both the past – the distant antique past, as well as the proximate Padua past – and the creative present. Janicius maintains a sense of being constantly present within this realm, but at the same is aware of growing distant from it, in pace with the escalating attacks of his mortal disease. The background of *Book of Laments* is seemingly filled with a tumult of political events, but this world is in fact filled with the author's autobiography. The topic of illness appears almost as a leitmotif, described with unprecedented realism in Elegy II. Of particular significance in the cycle is Elegy VII, called *Elegy on Myself for Posterity* (*Elegia o sobie samym do potomności*), where Janicius presents his *curriculum vitae*, without pathos or stylistic effects, seemingly confining himself to the artistic refinement of the elegiac distich itself. He maintains a distance to his own story; consciously and methodologically sharing his privacy with readers, those both close at hand and temporally distant. This is a manifestation of a mature poet aware of his own worth, who understands the role of poetry as a source of glory and immortality.

IV. Popular literature – The medieval tradition

There is no question that all the important roles on the main Renaissance stage in Poland in the first half of the 16th century were occupied by devotees of the Latin muse – by intellectuals who felt at home within the diction imposed by Italian, and later North European humanism. But in this theater of verbal art we call the Renais-

sance, there was also a secondary stage, smaller and more modest from our perspective, yet enthusiastically frequented by the 16th-century audience, especially by those for whom Latin was an inaccessible language. This native scene had to draw upon a repertoire that was familiar and dear to readers fond of tradition.

The roots of this movement that developed alongside humanism – which was dominant as an intellectual movement, but remained consistently elitist – stretched back to the medieval literary tradition, from which genres were adopted and artistic substance were drawn. Even antiquity was referenced via the impressions of it that had been cultivated in medieval times.

One relict of the Middle Ages present in the literary culture of the 16th century involved pseudo-historical “histories” or fictional tales that had arisen as far back as in the first millennium AD, had since been repeatedly transfigured, and were now being printed as popular stories intended for a wide audience. Such stories with traditions stretching back many centuries include tales about Alexander of Macedonia, which had already been known in Poland during the times of Vincent Kadłubek, and were now being printed as *Story of the Life and Illustrious Deeds of Alexander the Great, King of Macedonia* (*Historyja o żywocie i znamienitych sprawach Aleksandra Wielkiego, króla Macedońskiego* – 1550), or tales woven around the Trojan myth that had long been circulating Europe, the Polish compilation of which (1563) was given the title *The Very Beautiful Story... of the Ruin and Destruction of the Famous and Illustrious City and State of Troy* (*Historyja barzo piękna... o zburzeniu a zniszczeniu onego sławnego a znamienitego miasta i państwa trojańskiego*). Published even earlier, for example, were *Various Stories Selected from Roman and Other Sources* (*Historyje rozmaite z rzymskich i z innych dziejów wybrane* – we now know an edition from 1544, which is presumably not the first one), which was a translation of a collection called *Gesta Romanorum* of moralist stories, fables, and anecdotes that had been passed around Europe.

The popularity of stories of medieval provenience swelled further in the second half of the 16th century. Also derived from the *Gesta Romanorum* was *A True Story that Occurred in the German Town of*

Land, With Separate Lessons, Rendered in the Polish Language (*Historyja prawdziwa, która się stała w Landzie mieście niemieckim, z osobnymi naukami, polskim językiem wyprawiona* – 1563), a story sometimes ascribed to Rej, that develops the old-man motif known from Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. The affinities to German literature are also worth stressing here in particular; a whole slew of French medieval stories were assimilated via this avenue. These include the 13th-century *Story of the Emperor Otto* (*Historyja o cesarzu Otonie* – pub. 1569), the 14th-century tale of a man who married a water-sprite that was fashioned into Polish by Marcin Siennik as the *Story of Melusine* (*Historyja o Meluzynie* – pub. 1569), and the 15th-century *Story of Magielona* (*Historyja o Magielonie* – 1570), relating the adventure-filled tale of a love affair between the knight Piotr and the Neapolitan queen Magielona. A late-medieval German story from the early 16th century relating the adventures of a young Cypriot in possession of a magic purse and cap, was translated as the *Story of Fortunatus* (*Historyja o Fortunacie* – pub. ca. 1570).

A separate category of medieval tales that enjoyed stunning success in Renaissance times consists of knavish tales, or perhaps more aptly the “life stories” of boorish jokesters. The first such scapegrace to appear seems to have been Marcholt, in a work translated from Latin by Jan of Koszyczki first published in 1521 (and subsequently in 1526 and 1536). Immediately thereafter followed Aesop; probably in 1522 Biernat of Lublin (ca.1465-ca.1529) translated his “life story”. The third such protagonist to appear, in 1540, was Dyl Sowizdrzał, assimilated into Polish literature by a unknown translator.

Jan of Koszyczki’s work, the full title of which was *Conversations Wise King Solomon Had With Marcholt, the Coarse and Vulgar, Yet, So They Say, Very Well-Spoken, With Very Amusing Figures and Riddles* (*Rozmowy, które miał król Salomon mądry z Marcholtem grubym a sprosnym, a wszakoż, jako o niem powiedają, barzo zwymownym, z figurami i zgadkami śmiesznymi*), is a translation of one of the many versions of this story, whose roots stretch back to apocryphal Jewish literature, and which flowered in the 12th century as a humorous dialog between the biblical wise man and a simpleton. Jan of Koszyczki was one of few writers of his times able to differentiate the state-

ments of his protagonists stylistically, and he demonstrated exceptional lexical inventiveness in his description and portrayal of Marcholt's physical ugliness. In this stressing of the ugly, we can perceive an undoubted aesthetical provocation.

The figure of Aesop, whom Polish readers could encounter thanks to the versified translation by Biernat of Lublin, is constructed based on the same principle. *The Life of Aesop the Phrygian, A Virtuous Sage, Together With His Fables, and Also With Certain Peculiar, Very Amusing, and Also Facetious Examples From Other Famous Wise Men, etc.* (*Żywot Ezopa Fryga, mędrca obyczajnego, i z przypowieściami jego, z niektórymi też inych sławnych mędrców przykłady osobliwymi a bardzo śmiesznymi i też krotochwilnymi, etc.*), as Biernat's work was titled, was probably first published in 1522, although the earliest surviving edition is from 1578. This work of impressive length (with 3,144 lines of *The Life of Aesop* plus 210 fables, encompassing a total of 5,678 lines) on the one hand holds a place among such popular jokester stories, yet on the other it marks the onset of the fable in Polish literature. Indeed, this is something more than just the tale of a knave. The essence of Aesop's biography lies in debunking false appearances, stupidity concealed under the guise of authority, and the habit of judging people by their outward traits. There is an element of intellectual and aesthetic provocation in this, as well as a diagnosis of the world's shallowness and cruelty.

Unlike Marcholt and Aesop, who could boast ancient genealogies, Dyl Sowizdrzał was a child of the late Middle Ages, and his adventures were first described in the 15th century (originally as the German "Till Eulenspiegel," eventually to become known as "Owl-Glass" in English). Although the Polish "Sowizdrzał" first appeared in print in Poland in the years 1530-1540, the oldest preserved printed copy, bearing the title *Owl-Glass the Facetious and Amusing; His Birth, Life, Misdeeds, and Strange Feats* (*Sowizdrzał krotofilny i śmieszny, urodzenie, żywot, postęпки i dokonanie jego dziwne*) unfortunately only dates from the first half of the 17th century, as earlier editions had simply been wiped out by such frequent reading – a fact that attests to the popularity of this Polish version of Owl-Glass the dandy and scoundrel, wandering about German towns and playing pranks.

At the root of such “histories,” which became the prime Polish-language reading material in the 16th century, lay the traditional treatment of all stories as presenting morally useful examples. This was coupled with the characteristically late-medieval passion of collecting examples of this sort, as well as all other information about people, objects, events, a tendency that is sometimes referred to as medieval encyclopedism. One characteristic product of this fondness in Polish literature is to be found in the works of Marcin Bielski. In 1535, he published the impressively-sized *Lives of the Philosophers* (*Żywoty filozofów*), followed soon thereafter, in 1551, by an even more ambitious work: *Chronicle of the Whole World* (*Kronika wszytkiego świata*). His *Lives of the Philosophers*, based on a compendium from the beginning of the 14th century, is a kind of biographical dictionary, encompassing the “life stories” of ancient and medieval philosophers and writers, composed as examples of Christian ethical values. Such examples are also dominant in *Chronicle of the Whole World*, a work that is just as impressive in terms of its volume as it is surprising in its hybrid nature, comprising retellings of facts, legends, anecdotes about particular individuals and events – in short, everything that could be included within a depiction treated as a “history of the world,” from Creation until the year 1550. It makes no sense to underscore Bielski’s lack of any sort of criticism. A similar sort of pseudo-historic creativity in the Polish language is to be found in the later heraldic compendia of Bartłomiej Paprocki (ca.1543-1614): *The Squire* (*Panosza* – 1575), *Nest of Virtue* (*Gniazdo cnoty* – 1578) and *Coats-of-Arms of Polish Knights* (*Herby rycerstwa polskiego* – 1584). His melding of heraldic legends with common fictional motifs, the histories of noble families with anecdote and facetiae, was not far removed from Bielski’s writing methods, but it did portend new phenomena associated with the nascent Sarmatian mentality.

The morality play, which was one of the chief genres of drama in northern Europe in the 15th century, and is indeed still being successfully developed, appeared in Polish literature only after a delay, in the 1540s. The vitality of the genre’s convention and its moral molding of the world portrayed are best evident in the first works of Mikołaj Rej (1505-1569), widely hailed as the father of Polish litera-

ture. *The Life of Joseph of the Jewish Tribe, Son of Jacob, Composed in Dialogs, Expressing Many Virtues and Good Morals* (*Żywot Józefa z pokolenia żydowskiego, syna Jakubowego, rozdzielony w rozmowach person, który w sobie wiele cnót i dobrych obyczajów zamyka*) appeared in 1545, followed in 1549 by *The Merchant, or the Nature and Likeness of the Last Judgment* (*Kupiec, to jest Kształt a podobieństwo Sądu Bożego ostatecznego*).

The former work is very difficult to pin down definitively in terms of its genre. The biblical story of Joseph is presented here in a dialog-drama, which makes use of the medieval simultaneous-scene technique characteristic of mystery plays and modern humanist pedagogical drama. The overarching compositional principles, for both plot and character portrayal, nevertheless derive from the morality play, and the story of Joseph is above all an example of how “virtue struggles against non-virtue.” The same combination of the antipodes of learned humanist literature is more clearly evident in the second work, which is undoubtedly a morality play, with the Everyman hero that typifies the genre. Rej adapted a Latin work *Mercator seu iudicium* by a German Lutheran, Thomas Naogeorg (Kirchmeyer), and adopted its anti-Catholic, Reformational message. The drama is centered around Judgment Day, to which Christ summons a Priest, a Bishop, a Monk, and a typical sinner: Merkator the Merchant. Of course, the Merchant alone proves to be worthy of salvation, “expectorating” all the prayers, chaplets, and indulgences advised by the Catholic Priest. Under Rej’s pen, the individual episodes take on such a dose of genre and playfulness that it disrupts the rigors of the morality play, transforming the drama of moral arguments into sharp satire, into comic scenes immersed in actual 16th-century reality. Where Naogeorg produces moderation and reflection befitting the topic, Rej bursts out with his typical unrestrained element of blunt, frequently crude language. Due to its genre nature, due to scenes borrowed from the real customs and language familiar to both the author and the reader, the Latin *tragoedia docta* not only ceased to be a *docta* under Rej’s pen, it also bulged from 3,000 to 9,000 lines.

Rej’s fondness for large compositions based on the structure of morality play and allegory manifested itself once again in *A Faithful*

Image of an Honest Man (*Wizerunek własny żywota człowieka poczciwego*), published in 1558. The concept for this work was drawn from *Zodiacus vitae*, whose author, Pietro Angelo Manzoli a.k.a. Palingenius, a prominent Italian humanist and an authority in the field of philosophy, expounded various ethical concepts in 12 chapters named after the signs of the zodiac. In Rej's work, however, instead of an elegant treatise we find an allegorical poem of some 12,000 lines, the most voluminous in all of 16th-century Polish poetry. Rej chose as his hero a young man (the morality play's Everyman) who wanders from philosopher to philosopher and comes to know the "traits of the mad world." In each of the chapters, the protagonist experiences something, sees something, and in each such case someone appears (most often a philosopher) who instructs him as to the true significance of what he has encountered. And so, in the third chapter entitled "Epicurus," the young man meets this philosopher (a negative character), and with him visits the Garden of Delight. Immediately thereafter, however, he encounters Minerva, the "goddess of reason," who in a lengthy commentary "deduced harmful things into delight." In the eleventh chapter, entitled Solon, the young protagonist wanders to Hell, where his guide is the condemned braggart Abioron, and he learns "about the nature and power of the devil's God-granted power" from the "philosopher Solon." In the final chapter, entitled "Aristotle," the protagonist makes his way to Paradise, where his guide is the prophet Elijah, who "instructed him even more amply about the immortality of souls and how we should endeavor to ensure we can achieve such joys." Composed in this way, a poem about the adventures of a young man, a "decent person," becomes a multilevel construction. The places and images that form the allegorical plot are overlaid with moral commentary that constitutes *allegoresis* – a lesson in and explanation of allegory. We can recognize this as one of the key characteristics of the work, linking it with the magnificent tradition of medieval allegorical poems, from *Roman de la Rose* to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Rej's work alludes to many of them (such as Jean de Hauteville's well-known 12th-century poem *Architrenius*) and these allusions were indeed legible to his contemporaries – seeing as Andrzej Trzeciecki, in a Latin verse attached to

the *Faithful Image* and situated under a woodcut portrait of Rej, wrote: “*Noster hic est Dantes*” – this is our Dante.

V. Disputes: religion and state

Mikołaj Rej made his appearance in 16th-century literature with *A Short Conversation Between Three Persons, a Squire, a Bailiff and a Priest* (*Krótko rozprawa między trzema osobami, Panem, Wójtem i Plebanem*), produced by the Szarfenberg printing house in 1543. It takes the form of a dialog, a genre frequently cultivated in politically and religiously oriented writings. *Rej's Short Conversation* is a political dialog addressing the dominant topic of the day, the so-called “execution of rights.” This slogan served as the front for a movement initiated and pursued by the nobility in the years 1520-1578, initially aimed against Zygmunt I's domestic policy and against the secular and clerical oligarchy represented by the Senate. Rej's dialog voices the postulates of the nobility camp, and from this standpoint it attacks the clergy, state officials, the taxation and justice systems, as well as the way the military was organized and financed. This is complimented by Rej's grumbling about the nobility's depraved morals, which makes up the fourth part of the dialog.

Rej inserts these topics into the mouths of the Squire, Bailiff, and Priest, members of three estates, who here serve more frequently as masks for the author himself than as representatives of the antagonized sides in the dispute. Only the initial passages of the dialog, devoted to criticism of the parochial clergy, can be considered a kind of polemic clash between the Priest and the other two figures. Aside from this, it is rare that concrete arguments are leveled against each other, instead leaving space for longer tirades of a patently satiric nature, evincing Rej's way of viewing the affairs of the world and the state.

What does this view involve? First and foremost, a method of portrayal that could be called the perspective of a noble landowner, who sketches genre scenes almost from first-hand experience, be it an image of a parish church fête, or an episode depicting the “*gamrat*,” meaning freeloaders, poor noble youths living at others' expense. The things that Rej – a landowner, but also a socially active nobleman, as well as

a delegate to the Sejm with great experience in public affairs – set forth with satirical panache were chiefly what he had personally had occasion to observe. We can at the same time assert with full conviction that as an observer he had an ingenious memory for detail and skill at reconstructing situations through language. The style of the *Short Conversation*, its linguistic fabric, nowadays presents the most difficult barrier to understanding the work and evaluating it artistically. In the rhythm of irregular octameter, Rej captured the vivid, colloquial language of the mid-16th century. The utterances of the three debaters consist in large part of colloquialisms, phraseological combinations, proverbial expressions, and proverbs then in use. A key feature is how they blur the borders – something characteristic of live speech – between narration and citation, between direct and reported speech. This is coupled with the brevity, bluntness, and vividness typical of colloquial language, through which the humor and irony inseparable from Rej's style shine.

Mikołaj Rej's *Short Conversation* can be read as a statement in the disputes then underway over the political shape of the Republic. The greatest Polish publicist who championed a reform agenda in this regard was Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski (1505-1572). His chief work, entitled *Meditations on Reform of the Republic in Five Volumes* (*Commentariorum de Republica emendanda libri quinque*), appeared in print only after some difficulty. Due to preventative censorship, the title page of its first issue (produced in 1551 at the Kraków printing house of Łazarz Andrysowic) promises five volumes, but only contains three: "On Mores," "On Laws," and "On War." The fourth and fifth volumes, "On the Church" and "On Schools", were withheld by the censors, and the work would only appear in full in 1554 in Basel. It also gained considerable prominence in humanistic Europe, as is evidenced by the renewal of the Basel edition (1559) and its translation into several languages, including a Polish translation produced amongst the Arian movement (1577, without the "On the Church" volume).

Frycz Modrzewski's difficulty in publishing his *Meditations on Reform* might come as a surprise, given the authentic freedom to express one's religious convictions under the latter Jagiellonian rulers.

The problem was, however, that his work was written with a profound sense of belonging to the Catholic Church, and responsibility for this Church. And as such, it could not be approved by the Church. It was especially the author's independence that could not be approved, as the earlier independence of Erasmus of Rotterdam could not.

The volumes of the *Meditations on Reform* comprise a close-knit and coherent composition, in terms of both content and artistic form. The whole of the work is underlain by the first volume, "On Mores." Here we encounter a moralist author who subjects the morality of specific social groups to harsh judgment, complains about the degradation of morals, and proposes oftentimes drastic punishment and scrupulous scrutiny of behavior. More important, however, are his views about the overall notion of morals, and their significance for society. It was in such ethical deliberations that Modrzewski couched a general outline of his concept of the state, the prosperity of which depends on the morality of its citizens. This morality stems not just from the observance of laws, but also from the kindness of human nature, which he perceives and emphasizes in opposition to the concepts professed by Martin Luther and by Machiavelli, who related human nature to a lust for possessions and power. Yet on the other hand, the state "is a human agglomeration and commonwealth bound by law..., established for a good life." Such a republic, or *res publica*, "a thing common to all," is what he set as the target of reform. "The good and dignity of the Republic," he asserted, "seem to rest upon three things: honesty of morals, harshness of judgment, and military art."

The volumes "On Law" and "On War," which expand upon this very notion, present a kind of continuation of the first volume's deliberations. The law set forth in regulations is a necessary condition for preserving the morality and good of the Republic, as well as justice – as confirmed by the Divine Word, not as implemented in the laws of the Republic. Just as the law and the related constraints are the result of society's ethical imperfection, wars are the result of imperfection in the relations between countries. Like Erasmus of Rotterdam, Modrzewski is an opponent of wars, but nonetheless draws a distinction between unjust warfare and just warfare in defense of one's borders. He considers the latter to be the only permissible kind,

and devotes his detailed deliberations of the system of state defense to it.

The volumes “On the Church” and “On Schools” constitute a supplement to the previously expounded theory of social life. Frycz Modrzewski’s deliberations about the Church stem from the role that he ascribed to religion: by propounding the principle of love for one’s neighbor, religion stands guard over morality and plays an important role in state life. And so, these are not deliberations of dogmatic issues. Frycz, declaring that he belonged to the Catholic Church, seeks ways of achieving accord for the sake of the unity of the Christian world. This irenic tone, appealing for compromise, is the keystone of Modrzewski’s project, but was nevertheless not adopted by the Ecumenical Council of Trent, then in session. Rather, it was treated as a statement against the institutions of the Church. His “conciliatrist” views, ascribing the paramount role within the organization of the Church to a general synod rather than to the Pope, were unacceptable. Also hard to accept was his proposal, maintained in this conciliatrist spirit, of setting up a national Church to support the quest for religious concord within the state.

Frycz portrays his proposed organizational structure of the Church in detail, as a republican and democratic arrangement, in today’s sense. Priests should be promoted in their clerical careers not by right of their bloodlines, but rather their virtue and knowledge. Bishops should be chosen by the community of the Church, including secular electors that would include representatives of all the “estates,” the upper and medium nobility, the burgers and peasants, on equal footing. Similarly, the pope should be selected by electors representing all of the faithful. This notion of the estates’ equality is also perceptible in the deliberations “On Schools”, calling for equal access to knowledge and effective organization of education, to be overseen by the state but financed with Church revenue (a notion that could not fail to spark protest from the Church).

Modrzewski’s adversary and antithesis was Stanisław Orzechowski (1513-1566), initially a zealous opponent of the Roman Church who later came out even more zealously against the heretics. Orzechowski was a writer who did not eschew conflicts, who was gifted with an

exceptional sense of readers' needs and of the current political situation, and the author of dialogues that constitute, in their ideological layer, a kind of inverse of Frycz's concepts. In 1563 he printed *Conversation or Dialog on the Execution of the Law of the Polish Crown* (*Rozmowa albo Dyjalog około egzekucyjnej Polskiej Korony*), followed one year later by *Quincunx, or a Design for the Polish Crown Arranged in a Pyramid* (*Quincunx, to jest wzór Korony Polskiej na cynku wystawiony*). These two dialogues, plus an unfinished treatise meant to compliment them, *The Polity of the Polish Kingdom Portrayed in the Image of Aristotelian Politics* (*Policyja Królestwa Polskiego na kształt Arystotelesowych Polityk wypisana*), championed the arguments of the Catholic camp and of the author himself, who came out violently against the "executionist" program, while at the same time propounding Orzechowski's own almost theocratic agenda for reforming the Republic. The "quinqux" of his second work's title is a geometric figure denoted by the five corner points of a pyramid, representing the ideal state. The four points of king, priest, altar, and faith form the foundation of the pyramid, while the fifth, the summit raised above them, is the Catholic Church. "The Kingdom of Poland is the sole state in Sarmatia; subject, at God's grace via the priest, to its own king; vouchsafed by the altar of the Cross; enlightened by Christian faith from God; and contained and enclosed within the sole, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church." In this Kingdom, there is a place for free Poles, among whom, thanks to their nobility, "the highest is equal to the lowest in Poland" and everyone enjoys "freedom equal to his king," "without owing the king, his superior lord, anything more than this: ensured support for the succession, two pennies from the feud, and the *en mass* levy." ("*nie będąc nic królowi, panu swemu zwierzchniemu, innego winien, jedno to: tytuł na pozwie, dwa grosza z lanu a pospolitą wojnę*"). By advocating a model of a religious state, a model upon which the myth of noble Poland as a nation chosen by God would later be built, Orzechowski at the same time drafted a plan for the noble liberties that would become the norm beginning in the 17th century. In so doing, he was not sparing in presenting catastrophic visions of the demise of the heresy-ridden Republic. His prophetic tone was coupled with his conviction of his own role as a writer and oracle.

The Sejms convened 1561-1562 and 1563-1564, and the disputes then unfolding over the shape of the Republic, provoked Jan Kochanowski (1530-1584), younger by an entire generation, to speak out. At the outset of his career Kochanowski came into contact with various circles, although he associated himself more strongly for a certain duration with the leaders of the Reformation in Poland and Lithuania, Jan Firlej and Mikołaj Czarny Radziwiłł. His penchant for religious novelties, most evident in his early works, nevertheless subsided after his decision to attach himself to high-ranking church and state dignitaries, deputy chancellor Filip Padniewski and his future successor Piotr Myszkowski. In his Latin elegy to Padniewski ("Elegy V" from volume III), Kochanowski included a sentence that excellently illustrates the poet's stance in this time of political and religious ferment: "Because peace is the work of God, and all discord comes to man from hell."

The poet expressed these words via the personified Vistula River, and such poetics would become his favorite method of speaking about socially important issues. He applied a similar technique in *Harmony* (*Zgoda* – 1564), where the entity speaking is the prosopopeial Harmony, alluding to the *querelas* (after Latin *querela* – compliant) popular during the Renaissance, the most famous of which was probably *Complaint of Peace* (*Querela Pacis*) by Erasmus of Rotterdam. Analogously constructed was Kochanowski's *The Satyr or the Wild Man* (*Satyr albo Dziki mąż* – 1564), a work in which the eponymous Satyr delivers a speech reminiscent of parliamentary address in the Sejm. Here it is noteworthy that *The Satyr* gave rise to genre that was extremely popular in Poland in the 16th and 17th centuries, useful in political discussions and disputes, called the "satyr poem."

Kochanowski was not original in the views he professed. He was neither a learned publicist like Frycz Modrzewski, nor even less so a very fervent combatant, of Orzechowski's ilk. He was a poet that spoke in favor of accord within the state, on behalf of harmony, which should penetrate the "domestic quandaries," following the design of universal harmony. He appealed in *Harmony* to all sides of the dispute, he rebuked both the Catholic clergy and the heretics, and the politically-minded nobility, who had forgotten the chivalrous tradi-

tions of their forebears. His *Satyr* addressed the nobility in a similar spirit, although it must be admitted that some of the *Satyr*'s statements, such as his negative view of foreign study or disdainful assessment of rafting grain down the Vistula, fly in the face of the views we know from other sources the poet himself actually held, and we can surmise that Kochanowski composed the figure of the *Satyr* – part Greek god, part figure from village folklore, but with ties to the tradition of Plato and Erasmus – slightly ironically, from a critical distance.

Yet the *Satyr* does speak entirely seriously, and without Kochanowski's characteristic irony, when he addresses bitter words to the political elite, whom he reminds – citing the authority of Chiron, Achilles' teacher – of what virtue and wisdom entail for those who wield power. Such admonishments are also strongly involved in the ideological message of *The Dismissal of the Grecian Envoys* (*Odprawa posłów greckich*), a tragedy that was probably written soon after *The Satyr*, although it was performed on the stage and issued in print only in 1578. *The Dismissal*, the plot of which draws upon an episode in the Trojan War and abides by the formal characteristics of regular classical tragedy, is a wholly original drama. Within the rigorous framework imposed by tradition, Kochanowski created a specific type of tragedy, which might be termed a "tragedy of arguments," of political arguments determining the destiny of the kingdom. This is a work about responsibility for the state, about the clash between private ambitions and wise concern for the common good. The chief notion is illustrated by a moving hymn sung by a chorus of Trojan maidens, who appeal to those who "govern the public thing," i.e. the *res publica*, the Republic.

VI. Models – Parenetic literature

Within the din of religious polemics and political disputes that fomented noble society under the reign of Zygmunt August (d. 1572), two works can stake a claim to being the greatest achievements of Polish prose during the Renaissance of the Jagiellonian era. The first of these is *The Life of an Honest Man* (1568) by Mikołaj Rej, while the second is *The Polish Courtier* (*Dworzanin Polski* – 1566) by Łukasz Górnicki (1527-1603).

The two appeared in print almost simultaneously, from the same printing house of Maciej Wirzbięta, but they occupied different slots within the biographies of their authors. *The Life of an Honest Man*, written by Mikołaj Rej towards the close of his life, was the culminating work of nearly 30 years of creativity, while *The Polish Courtier* represented a belated debut by Górnicki, a man a generation younger who had already successfully climbed the rungs of a courtly career, leading to his ennoblement (1561) and his installment in the post of trusted royal librarian. Zygmunt August's library, gathered in Wilno (Vilnius) and later in Tykocin, was among the most eminent book collections in 16th-century Poland and formed an excellent intellectual resource base for Górnicki the educated humanist.

The two books also differed in terms of their domain of inspiration. *The Life of an Honest Man* is an original work, which draws copiously on the writer's life experiences and the reality of the Polish landowner lifestyle, and is deeply rooted in the traditional system of values in place within the society of the 16th-century Republic. *The Polish Courtier*, on the other hand, was an adaptation of an Italian original: the dialog *Il Cortegiano* written by the prominent writer and humanist Baldassare Castiglione and published in 1528. Rooted in the culture of the late Italian Renaissance, his *Courtier* portrayed, within the Polish reality, an image of the intellectual elite emerging in the middle of the century, and was intended for this very elite. But if these two different works share anything, it is the fact that they can be included into the voluminous chapter of European writing called parenetic literature (from Latin *pareneo*, I recommend), literature that recommends and propagates personal models. And in such a classification, these two works should also be accompanied by Wawrzyniec Goślicki's treatise *The Accomplished Senator* (*De optimo senatore*, 1568).

The Polish Renaissance mirrors of Rej and Górnicki appeal to different layers of the tradition of parenetic writings, and do so in distinct ways. *The Life of an Honest Man*, following the model of medieval "histories," begins with the creation of the world and stories about Adam and Eve, and then incorporates the biography of an "honest man," a virtuous and simple nobleman, into this universal and

holy order. The story's structure is designed with pedantic scrupulousness, spread across three volumes that relate the three stages of a man's life: youth, maturity, and advanced age. Each volume consists of chapters dubbed *capitula*, after the Latin, within which the story's substance has been broken down into points and particularly highlighted in notes in the margins. The reader was also aided in navigating the extensive material by a detailed table of contents.

Such concern for order is coupled with Rej's truly encyclopedic endeavor, characteristic of his works, to encompass all of human experience. The first volume is dominated by the topic this "young man's" education, at every moment embellished with various remarks: now about Biblical history, now astrology combined with the science of temperaments, now theological deliberations associated with religious education. Rej strives not to leave anything out. And so, in the first volume of *The Life of an Honest Man* we find guidelines for the hygiene and nutrition of children, as well as a *capitulum* devoted to the nature of military service – although the author does not praise "soldiering," he does consider it worth portraying at the point the young man faces his choice of path in life. A similar encyclopedic digressiveness characterizes the remaining volumes. The main topics of the second volume are marriage and founding a family, and enjoying a "moderate and devout household" in the countryside. Aside from this, we find extensive remarks on the issue of political life and civil duties, especially those for members of the Sejm and Senate, plus moral and ethical deliberations drawing upon the Bible, ancient history, and current philosophical views. Relatively speaking, the greatest uniformity is displayed by the three volumes that concentrate on the topic of old age and death. Into this parenetic image of the "honest man" bearing old age with dignity and calmly awaiting his own end, the author incorporated *capitula* containing moral teachings aiming to stave off fear and aid the reader to comprehend the eschatological dimension and the "duty of death."

The best fragments of *The Life of an Honest Man*, and the ones most frequently cited today, are those where the image of human life portrayed by the moralist evolves into an image of a Małopolska nobleman from the second half of the 16th century, rich in close-ups de-

picted not so much by a realist painter, as by verbal artist able to name and portray concrete experiences, generously spreading details encountered firsthand throughout the entire work. The description of manor-house chores and pleasures during the four seasons of the year contained in *capitulum* XVI of the second volume are a true display of artistry.

This natural view of the landowner's world from the perspective of nature's cyclical changes makes enables Rej to seek a natural explanation for why human life must expire. There is a kind of harmony in seeing nature subordinate to man, but yet man surrendering to nature, whereby Rej's work maintains the same distance to the fragility and fleetingness of worldly life, as to placing man at the center of the universe. The world as seen through the eyes of Rej, who does not probe the subtleties of philosophical discourses, never becomes a stage of dramatic destinies and difficult choices. It is like a book that delights with rich detail, that provides examples and models useful for the honest man. The author's greatest merit, perhaps, is that when reading this book to us, he from time to time "forgot" about his calling as a moralist, as if enchanted and astounded at the diversity and copiousness of the world.

The reality of 16th-century Poland manifested itself entirely differently in Łukasz Górnicki's *Polish Courtier*, a paraphrase of one of the most important literary works of the late Italian Renaissance. The original was a treatise in the form of a dialog, consisting of four volumes successively devoted to: the physical and moral virtues of an ideal courtier, his behavior at court, women and their role in the life of the court, and the issue of the ruler's behavior, combined with a lecture on the Platonic theory of love. All of these topics were discussed in the original by prominent personages gathered together at the court of Prince Guidobaldo in Urbino – a gem of Renaissance architecture.

Górnicki's *Polish Courtier* is not a translation, but rather an extensive paraphrase. The author explained his reasons for rendering it in Polish and the manner in which he did so in his introduction to the first volume, which acts as a foreword to the reader and represents one of the most important statements about old-Polish translation

practice and theory. In it, Górnicki speaks of the need to transplant the action of the dialog to Polish reality, to choose Polish protagonists to take part in the discussion, and also to exclude women: “As it was not fitting for me to include them into the Polish dialog, since neither are our Polish women as learned as the Italian ones, nor could their ears bear other things that are included.” Górnicki also explains why he omitted many topics. Among other themes, he left out the deliberations on imitation, “as this wise discourse will do service but to the educated Pole,” as well as ponderings over which art is “finer”: painting or sculpture. He justifies the need for such changes by citing cultural difference: “In our land, people do not woo at the window. In our land, neither comedies nor tragedies are to be had, of the sort for Poles to be able to know... what *histrío* [actor] denotes. In our land, the custom of masquerade processions is not practiced. In our land, the nobility do not play the violin or reed-pipes, or if someone does, it is very rarely.” The translator frequently emphasizes his compliance with morals, using this to justify his prudish attitude as a censor: “Let quite everyone know that I, writing for Poles, wanted to indulge Poles; for this reason I left out many a thing which either did not suit Poland, or might have complicated matters and offended decent ears. Especially in the third volume, where he mentions the problem of why the ladies are commonly gracious to those who deprive them of their *florem virginitatis* [flower of virginity]...” Górnicki offers similar justification for his restrictions and omissions where the substance of the debate, such as in the fourth volume, entered more subtle avenues of philosophy and aesthetics, where the Polish language, still poor in its conceptual apparatus, proved to be an insurmountable barrier.

This limitation of the issues under discussion becomes more understandable once we notice the extent to which Górnicki did introduce Polish reality into the work. As the location for the conversational game, Górnicki chose the Renaissance villa of Bishop Bernard Maciejowski in Prądnik, in the vicinity of Kraków. Like Castiglione, he set the action at an earlier time, at the very outset of Zygmunt August’s reign. He reduced the number of participants to nine, and selected them carefully, noting that such a group could

never really have convened at such a place and time. The leader of this distinguished gathering is the bishop's brother, Lublin castellan Stanisław Maciejowski, accompanied by Stanisław Wapowski and Wojciech Kryski, who performs the chief function in the conversational game, and as the most educated individual plays *inter alia* the role assigned in the original to the scholar Bembo. Aleksander Myszkowski and Andrzej Kostka, cast as a particular authority as regards the fair sex, are also men of the world. Górnicki assigned the role of humorists and jokers to the gentlemen Derśniak and Bojanowski, while the last of those present, the majordomo Lupa Podlodowski – who, incidentally, was Jan Kochanowski's father-in-law – was portrayed as a representative of the “domestic” nobility, opposed to Italian novelties. These diverse and quite expressive portrayals of the individuals involved in the conversation are set against a backdrop of Polish reality, especially in terms of the anecdotal material, which was in large part changed from the original, as a result of which *The Polish Courtier* is an exceptionally rich source of old Polish facetiae.

However, the “Polishness” of Górnicki's work is not just limited to this at any rate outward tableau. The rationale behind his transplantation of *Il Cortegiano* becomes most readily apparent where the Polish humanist has his interlocutors deliberate matters of Polish substance. The best example of this is provided by the first volume, by its discourse about language – a defense of the Polish tongue and its purity, the first of its kind in Polish literature, essentially almost a tractate on the origin, nature, and enrichment of language, about the oral style that befits a courtier and will protect him from excessive affectation (rendered in Polish as “*wydworzenie*”). The remarks about the Polish language voiced by the gentleman Kryski in *The Polish Courtier* stemmed from a wider, foregrounded problem of humanist aesthetics: the notion of grace (the Italian *grazia*) promoted by Castiglione, which should be accompanied by an outward nonchalance (Italian *sprezzatura*) concealing any effort. Górnicki renders such grace in Polish with the term “*przystalność*,” and quite deftly coins the word “*nizaczmienie*” to cope with the Italian *sprezzatura*. And so, this parenetic work intended as “just” a portrayal of the courtier be-

came one of the most important texts that led our literature to the doctrine of Renaissance Classicism.

VII. Renaissance Classicism

Beginning in the 1560s, at the appearance of works by Jan Kochanowski, which were received as a kind of common national heritage from the outset, the formerly sharp contrast between highbrow literature written in Latin and vernacular literature intended for the so-called general reader began to vanish. One of the most difficult tasks faced by today's literary historian is to explain the phenomenon and universality of Kochanowski's poetry, which soared to artistic heights pioneered by the ancient tradition and Renaissance poetics, yet was at the same time received by readers-at-large as "their own."

There is no question that upon his appearance Kochanowski was a poet shaped by the ideas of Renaissance humanism, with its philological and inquiring attitude towards the ancient tradition. Neither is there any question that his philological studies, the works he read, and his initial poetic attempts pointed him in the direction of models and aesthetic choices encompassed within the scope of Classicist doctrine – a natural consequence of Italian humanism, a doctrine that had many fathers, such as Alberti, Bembo, and Castiglione, where the notion of harmony (*concinntitas*) was key.

One undoubted manifestation of Kochanowski's Renaissance Classicism is the hymn *What Wilt Thou, O Lord, in Return for Your Bounteous Gifts* (*Czego chcesz od nas, Panie, za Twe hojne dary*) written in 1560, a laudation of God the creator and artist, the maker of all-pervasive harmony. The prayer's image of God, the world, and man cultivated in this spirit and its religious optimism were expressed through the stylistics of moderation and regularity, which offered no room for anything that might disrupt the clarity of the message. The elegance of the *tropes* and the refined simplicity of the work superbly manifested the "*nizaczmienie*" (nonchalance or *sprezzatura*) so desired by the Classicists.

Both the poet's early Latin works, collected in *Elegiarum libri duo*, and his philological research into classical tragedy that gave rise in

the 1560s to *The Dismissal of the Grecian Envoys* should likewise be read from the standpoint of Classicist aesthetics. Kochanowski's choice of the Horatian model for the characteristic meter of lyric poetry written in the vernacular language was an aesthetic decision of fundamental significance for all of Renaissance and later Polish poetry. The adoption of this model entailed not just the form and stylistics of Horatian hymns, but also the philosophy of life propounded by the Roman poet. One consequence the adaption of this philosophy was the decision the poet made about 1570 to retreat to the "calm village" of Czarnolas, a decision that symbolized the ideas of Cicero's Tusculum or Horace's Sabinum transferred to Małopolska. Worthy of attention is the rich poetic "documentation" of this decision, recorded in the verse *Marshal (Marszałek)*, in *Trifles (Fraszki)*, such as in "On My House of Czarnolas" ("Na dom w Czarnolesie"), in the Latin elegies of *Elegiarum libri IV* (elegies III,2; III,14; and III,15), and in hymns, especially the Horatian "Song of Maiden XII" in *Song of St John's Eve About Sobótka (Pieśń świątogańska o Sobótce)*. The latter, like the above-cited hymn *What Wilt Thou, O Lord...*, can be considered a manifesto of a philosophy of life and an esthetic attitude.

Kochanowski's Classicism gave Polish poetry two great works that had an impact on its history: *Songs (Pieśni)* and *David's Psalter (Psalterz Dawidów)*. Both collections were written over the course of many years, and were composed in parallel, although they were published at different times. The first in print was the *Psalter* (1579), while the editing of *Songs* was interrupted by the poet's death, and they only appeared in print in 1586. The two collections' distinct natures stem from certain differences: *Songs* was composed under the patronage of Horace, although it was not to the slightest degree a translation of Horace's collection, but rather an emulative imitation of it. Work on the *Psalter*, on the other hand, required the skill of a translator, who had to navigate the tradeoffs between the necessity of remaining faithful to holy writ and the creative act of the poet-creator. Kochanowski described this dilemma in a letter to Fogelweder as a struggle between two goddesses: *Necessitas* and *Poetica*. To live up to both David and Horace – such an agenda could only have been conceived by a writer conscious of his own greatness and the value of his skill.

The task of today's historian of literature must above all be to portray the *Psalter* as a work of huge significance for Polish Renaissance poetry, a pioneering work for the development of Polish lyrical language, a model that shaped Renaissance Classicism. We should accept without question the view that the *Psalter* is the most outstanding work of Renaissance lyric poetry in the Polish language. No other work can compare with it in terms of its multiplicity of poetic personae, the scale of the emotions and emotional tonalities it expresses. We should also precisely scrutinize the scope of the "Czarnolas poet's" innovations with regards to the Biblical original and its Renaissance paraphrases (chiefly its reworking by the Scottish humanist George Buchanan): the persona of God and the persona of David the poet, the supra-denominational ideological nature of the psalms, Kochanowski's artistic invention that enabled the harmonious coexistence of both richness and simplicity of artistic means, in keeping with the spirit of Classicism.

Another task of equal importance involves identifying the crucial characteristics of Kochanowski's Horatianism. The author of *Songs* managed to draw upon the very principles whereby *Carmina* were composed. Armed with this knowledge, the Renaissance poet was able to imitate the topical diversity (*varietas*), and above all to rework and generalize the individual experiences; he was able to build a collection with an analogous level of relations between what is individual and what is general, within an absolute harmony of topic and style. Nowadays it is impossible to sort the songs into chronological order of composition date. It is likewise not easy to divide them up topically, although certain groups of works can be distinguished, ones we might classify as civil-patriotic, love, or philosophical-reflective songs, as well as those that address the topic of poetry and the poet. Among the latter group there of course appeared the Horatian motif of the permanence and immortality of poetry; another manifestation of the poet's creative self-awareness can be found in the last song in the collection, "Endowed with a pinion that is mighty and rave..." ("Niezwykłym i nie leda piórem opatrzoney..."), which reiterates the motif of poetic flight, the dual nature of the artist that enables him to rise above what is corporal and worldly. The

Songs also portray an image of a poet striving to gain his bearings in a world governed by capacious Fortune, strenuously seeking a way whereby man might retain his independence, dignity, and happiness. Like Horace, Kochanowski finds a moral support in the principle of moderation (*mediocritas*) and the ability to be satisfied with little. He included a manifesto of such a lifestyle, among other works, in the cycle *The Song of St John's Eve*. Printed together with *Songs*, it consists of songs sung by 12 maidens. The song of Maiden XII ("Beatus ille qui procul negotiis"), imitating Horace's *Epode II*, is sung in praise of life in the countryside, in full harmony with the surrounding world.

In juxtaposition to *David's Psalter* and the two volumes of the *Songs* are Kochanowski's collections of Latin *Foricoenia* and Polish *Trifles*, written without the adhesive agent of a single model. Their ostentatious stylistic plurality and topical diversity, harking back to the classical epigram and the *Greek Anthology*, plus the author's simultaneous willingness to register biographical and social events, cause historians of literature considerable difficulties in identifying a single formula, a single heading, under which the trifles could be classified. At the same time, everyone concurs on the issue of not relegating these works to the fringes of the poet's *oeuvre*, something he seems to encourage by employing the term "trifles" (Polish "*fraszki*," after the Italian *frasca*), signifying something of little worth. It can be easily noted, after all, that amongst these trifles, amongst these casual rhymes, there are indeed verses of exceptional weighty genre, setting forth the poet's stance towards God, the world, man, and finally towards himself. Upon closer reading, the trifles prove to be a kind of camouflage concealing the Proteus-poet and the Chiron-poet, another persona, like in the *Psalter* and the *Songs*, but this time one that does not lend itself easily to description. The only acceptable generalization here seems to be a poetics of keeping one's distance towards the world in each instance, a distance that is already evident in the very word "trifle," because "trifles are everything we do." When twice writing a trifle-poem about man, "God's plaything," and portraying an image of a laughing God, Kochanowski must have noticed the analogy that suggests itself here, an analogy between God and a poet who is toying with what he himself has wrought.

VIII. *Threnodies* – the breakdown of Renaissance Classicism

The last chord of Renaissance Classicism was struck by the editions of the three main Polish collections of Kochanowski's work: *David's Psalter*, *Trifles*, and *Songs*, plus his Latin *Foricoenia*, elegies and lyrics. This poetic "harvest," partially completed after the poet's death in 1884, was preceded by his publication of *Threnodies* (1580) – a work that cannot fit within an optimistic, harmonious vision of the world. While the poet dedicated this cycle of 19 threnodies to his deceased daughter Urszula, in essence it constitutes a philosophical poem that calls into doubt the system of values professed by Kochanowski the Renaissance humanist.

The *Threnodies* have no equivalent in European literature. Compared to Petrarch's *Sonnets* and Ronsard's cycle *Sur la mort de Marie*, they are outstanding in terms of the content of the compositional arrangement, reminiscent of the classical and Renaissance *epicedium*. Yet they are only reminiscent, because in essence they constitute a single great philosophical monologue in parts, written against, or perhaps above the rules of poetics. The threnodies address the topic of the death of a child, but their hero is the poet himself, who as a result of this death loses his faith in the purposefulness and order of the world. The harmonious beauty of the world we encounter in the hymn *What Wilt Thou, O Lord...* is juxtaposed against the image of an olive sapling cut down by the "zealous gardener." Death that runs counter to the laws of nature transforms harmony into chaos and disorder. Nonetheless, this crisis chiefly affects the poet's faith in the power of man himself, in his ability to resist suffering. The stoic ethic's credibility is undermined; stoic virtue loses its power when smitten with suffering, faith in wisdom turns out to be vainglorious.

Can a defense be put up against such chaos; is it possible to revive one's lost faith in the harmony of the world? This is the fundamental question the *Threnodies* pose. An answer lies in the final, conciliatory threnody, when Kochanowski's deceased mother appears to him bearing Urszula in her arms, an Urszula happy in heaven, which offers eternal peace. The mother shores up his lost faith, reminds him of man's eternal fate, which is subject to "many sorts of lots." In her

admonishment: “Bear the fate of man like a man! Just one Lord is the source of grief and joy,” contains a formula and signpost, meant to renew the lost order. But is this really a conclusive answer that draws the problem to a close?

Kochanowski’s last works are perhaps the epitaphs published in the posthumous *Fragments (Fragmenty)*, the so-called “Radziwiłł Fragments.” This is evidenced by their kinship to *Threnodies*, especially to the conciliatory Threnody XIX. However, these poems do not contain an iota of optimism; the fate of man is determined by divine verdict, while man himself ceases to be an active entity with regards to the “eternal divine word.” Perhaps these epitaphs demonstrate that the response to the existential crisis, the response contained in the consolation of the *Threnodies*, does not signify that it is overcome. The world of Renaissance harmony is now but a recollection, and the poet remains alone with the most difficult questions.

IX. Mikołaj Sęp-Szarzyński

When Jan Kochanowski, a known and recognized poet, was ostentatiously settling down in the village of Czarnolas in the late 1560s or early 1570s, the unusual talent of Mikołaj Sęp-Szarzyński was just flowering outside of Lwów. Sęp-Szarzyński’s biography, like his work, is full of puzzles. He was born sometime between 1545 and 1550. While he did study at Wittenburg, there is nothing else to indicate he was of the Protestant confession, although the hypothesis that he converted to Catholicism does have many advocates. He died in 1581, and the world would probably have forgotten him if it were not for a little tome entitled *Rhythms (Rytmy)*, published 20 years after his death through his brother’s efforts, a book that has indeed only been preserved in a single copy. In addition to this, there are also manuscripts bearing a collection of love poems, which we are now inclined to ascribe to the same poet. They constitute an exceptional phenomenon in Polish Renaissance poetry, which the wave of Petrarchism, together with its penchant for poetical analysis of the internal experience of love, had passed by. Sęp-Szarzyński’s guide is the Roman po-

etry of Catullus and Ovid, love for him is an affliction, torment, an overwhelming awareness of dangers lurking on all sides. Love poems addressed to Kasia, Zosia, and Anusia represent a kind of record of “difficult love” such as we cannot find in the poetry of the Polish Renaissance, a record that is more legible against the backdrop of European love poetry. In terms of their subtlety of analysis and above all their anxiety in the stylistic layer, these poems exceed the bounds of shallow convention, as is evidenced by the superb verse “To Kasia” (“Do Kasie”), which draws upon the tragic story of Narcissus and the nymph Echo. But it is hard to believe that these love poems were composed at the same time as the lyrics of Czarnolas, from which they differ fundamentally.

Even more different from Kochanowski are Sęp-Szarzyński’s known verses from *Rhythms*. The anxiety of the love poems was only a signal of the dramatic existentialist discourse recorded in his psalm paraphrases, songs and sonnets. It might seem that Sęp-Szarzyński, choosing George Buchanan as the patron of his psalms, or drawing upon Horace, traveled paths similar to Kochanowski’s. But this is only on the surface. Cited phrases, well-known *topoi*, and ostensibly evident references to tradition merely constitute Sęp-Szarzyński’s raw materials for building a completely new text, enmeshing the reader in a kind of game, in which he is constantly surprised at the multiplicity of meanings, forced to be intellectually active and to react to the complicated structure of the verse, which is full of apparent meanings and conceals sense in inversions, enjambments, and homonyms. Concealed behind this poetic skill, refined and virtuosic, is the drama of a man attempting in this world full of illusory values to find a direction towards the true values: God and salvation. The religious verses that set the tone of *Rhymes* pose the most important questions: about man’s relationship to God, and subsequently about the nature of man, the boundaries of human freedom, and the capabilities of cognition. There is a fundamental contradiction between the stylistically composed discourse, and the simplicity of the truth this discourse unveils. Truth lies in God and love; God is “true happiness,” while love is the “true course of our existence.” Truth emerges from the stylistic chaos in almost the same way as it emerges from the complex tangle

of life's paths and the chaos of the world, where "the turning spheres and swift Titan rush the fleeting seasons."

For years there has been dispute over whether Mikołaj Sęp-Szarzyński should be interpreted in the context of the Renaissance or Baroque epoch, or whether the esthetics of literary mannerism can be discerned in his poetry. While the verses of *Rhymes* are undoubtedly precursors to the esthetics and anthropology of the 17th century, they were engendered by the ferment of Renaissance times, the crisis of values man faced in this epoch, the need for absolute norms and values fundamentally different from the voluntarism of humanist religiosity, the same need that caused people to follow Louis of Granada or Ignatius of Loyola.

X. The Jesuits

The closing stage of the epoch belonged to the Jesuits. Brought to Poland by Cardinal Stanisław Hozjusz (Hosius), they took their battle for people's souls to the field of literature as well. Among the first generation of Polish Jesuits, there was no lack of illustrious individuals who left a lasting mark on the culture of the late Renaissance. These undoubtedly included Jakub Wujek (1541-1597). As a religious polemicist, he published collections of sermons in 1573-1580 (*Postilla catholica*), intended to knock heretical books out of readers' hands. At the request of the order's superiors, he undertook a translation of the whole of the Scriptures. His *New Testament* appeared in 1593, followed by *David's Psalter* in 1594, while the whole of his Bible was printed in 1599, after his death and after modifications were made by a monastic commission appointed for this purpose. Wujek's translation displaced the earlier Catholic translation into Polish called the *Leopolita Bible (Biblia Leopolicy)* in 1561, and could firmly compete with the Protestant translations: the Calvinist *Brest Bible (Biblia brzeska)*, Lutheran *Gdańsk Bible (Biblia gdańska)* and the Arian movement's *Nieśwież Bible (Biblia nieświeska)*. The text produced by Wujek remained in constant use until the appearance of the 20th-century *Millennium Bible (Biblia tysiąclecia)*, and its impact on Polish language and literature cannot be overestimated.

The second great Jesuit of those times, Piotr Skarga (1536-1612), also made a permanent place for himself in culture. He participated in public and religious life to a much greater degree than Wujek, supporting the activities of the Catholic Church with his pen, and probably considered his greatest success to have been the establishment of the Greek Catholic Church, otherwise known as the Uniate Church, confirmed at the synod of Ruthenian bishops in Brześć (Brest) in 1596 (the Union of Brest). In the history of literature, he is known for two works. The first of these is *Lives of the Saints* (*Żywoty świętych*), first published in Wilno (Vilnius) in 1579, and further supplemented in subsequent traditions, of which there were at least 7 during the author's lifetime. This monumental work, the first Polish hagiographic collection of its size, became for a long time the most well-read book in Polish, remaining obligatory reading in Catholic homes until the end of the 19th century. In the time of Romanticism, no less fame was gained by Skarga's collection of eight sermons entitled *Sermons to the Diet* (*Kazania sejmowe*), which appeared in print for the first time in 1597 as a supplement to *Sermons for Sunday and Feast-Days* (*Kazania na niedziele i święta*). In it, Skarga presented a political and social agenda that appealed to the earlier writings of Stanisław Orzechowski. The author's ideal is a strong state under a Catholic monarch. Not far away from professing absolutist concepts, Skarga argues against the recent achievements of the "executionist movement," routs the noble estate as being responsible for anarchy, and in a lofty tone adopted from the prophetic books of the Old Testament he augurs the downfall of the Republic as a consequence of leniency toward heretics and deviations from the true faith. The stylistics of these sermons, their prophetic tone that fits in well with the convention already known from Orzechowski but here implemented in a masterful way, would later, during the age of lost independence, contribute to the legend of Skarga-the-prophet, as preserved in a 19th-century painting by Jan Matejko.

XI. Towards the Baroque

The Renaissance epoch in Polish literature did not draw to a close at death of Kochanowski in 1584; the final years of the 16th century and

the first years of the next century did manifest a continuity with the artistic culture and worldview that developed during the times of the Renaissance flowering of literature. Among the generation of writers born after 1540, i.e. the contemporaries of Jakub Wujek and Mikołaj Sęp-Szarzyński, we find some such as Sebastian Grabowiecki (1540-1607), Stanisław Grochowski (1542-1612), and Kasper Miaskowski (ca.1550-1622), whose works fit within the oncoming Baroque epoch, as well as some such as Sebastian Fabian Klonowic (1542-1602), or the significantly younger Jan Rybiński (ca.1560-after 1608) and Andrzej Zbylitowski (ca.1665-ca.1608), who remain within the realm of Renaissance tradition. One can assemble an entire procession of writers from the end of the 16th century who treat their own, native Renaissance literature on equal terms with classical literature; the former becomes a common heritage that could be drawn upon liberally. The aforementioned Klonowic was a Lublin burgher, and among his works, which are highly varied and frequently continue Rej's type of moralizing, we should mention his descriptive poems: *The Raftsmen (Flis)*, whose Sapphic stanzas in Polish portray the rafting of grain down the Vistula river, and his Latin poem *Roxolania* about the lands of Ruthenia. A different sort of literature was practiced by Rybiński, a poet who worked in the bourgeois environment of Gdańsk and Toruń, and who, in his lyric collection entitled *Rhyming Zither (Geśle różnorymne)* felt himself to be heir to Jan Kochanowski's Horatian muse. Zbylitowski, in turn, was above all a nobleman, the author of verses extolling the ideals of burgher life.

Among the writers of the transitional period, one worthy of distinction was Szymon Szymonowic (1558-1629), a Lwów-born poet associated with the chancellor Jan Zamoyski, who eagerly acted as a patron of the humanists. For his contemporaries, Szymonowic was chiefly a Latin poet. Most highly valued were two of his poems: the first being a cycle of 19 odes published in 1588 as *Flagellum Livoris*, devoted to Zamoyski's victories over the Austrian Prince Maximilian, a claimant to the Polish crown, while the second is *Aelinopean*, written a year later and appealing in terms of style to the Greek poet Pindar, portraying Zamoyski defending the Republic under threat from the Turks. If we mention these two works here, it is not by right

of their panegyric tone, nor out of regard for their addressee, but rather in order to identify Szymonowic as the last outstanding Latin poet in the Polish Renaissance – as well as an exceptional poet in every regard, one who understood poetry in large part as the consequence of philological searching, who surpassed his contemporaries in philological erudition, and in his work tried to complement Kochanowski's achievements. Such a high appraisal of Szymonowic's Latin works is confirmed by the dramas he wrote, today almost forgotten: *Castus Ioseph* (1587), based on the Biblical story of Joseph, and *Penthesilea* (1618), a tragedy about the queen of the Amazonians fighting at Troy. For the history of literature, however, it was not Szymonowic's Latin muse that made him the greatest poet of Renaissance humanism after Kochanowski. His chief work is *Idylls* (*Sielanki*), written in Polish, was published only in 1614. It was this work that disseminated the word "*sielanka*" (derived from "village girl") as the term for this genre in the Polish language, replacing earlier words derived from the classical terms "eclogue," "bucolic," and "idyll."

In his dedication to this collection of 20 poems, Szymonowic declared himself to be an imitator of Theocritus, but in actuality, with the finesse of an erudite humanist, he drew upon the entire tradition of pastoral poetry: from antiquity, through Sannazaro, all the way to Kochanowski. The Polish poet also skillfully managed to combine various conventions, availing himself of both classical accessories and the reality of the noble world and peasant culture – an example of which can be found in the idyll "The Harvesters" ("Żeńcy"), which composes a genre scene of harvesters in the field. This idyll, without question the best work in the entire collection, can be interpreted as a reversal and repudiation of the optimism expressed by Maiden XII in *The Song of St John's Eve*, and it also differs from the Czarnolas poetry in the vision it manifests of the world, a world in which harmony is now but a recollection.

By introducing the genre of the idyll into the repertoire of Polish poetry, Szymonowic brought to completion the plan initiated by Kochanowski, of generating models and conventions of poetic expression that would be employed by successive generations of poets. And indeed, *Idylls* ushered in the history of a genre that would flower

exceptionally lushly in the 17th century. Still, this does not mean that the ambitions of the Polish humanist poets were fully satisfied. They were not successful, despite attempts made by Kochanowski and others, at establishing a model of the *épopée* in the Polish language. This task would be left to the writers of the Baroque age. Four years after Szymonowic's *Idylls* were published, an already fully Baroque Polish version of Torquato Tasso's chivalrous epic would appear in print, translated by Piotr Kochanowski (1566-1620), the nephew of Jan, as *Godfrej or Jerusalem Delivered (Gofred abo Jeruzalem wyzwolona)*.

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