



FORTUNE AND MISFORTUNE OF ITALIAN CHIVALRIC LITERATURE IN THE EARLY MODERN POLAND

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Two masterpieces of the chivalric epic literature, *Orlando Furioso* of Lodovico Ariosto and *Gerusalemme Liberata* of Torquato Tasso, have had their Polish versions of rare beauty and value thanks to the translator of genius, Piotr Kochanowski. The fate of their reception is, however, very different. The reasons for the absence of *Orlando Furioso* remain still inexplicable, while the number and diversity of the editions of its original version in Polish libraries could prove the contrary. Anyway, only detailed provenance research would establish the real origin of these books.

The evolution of the reception of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* during the whole 17th c. is an interesting example of a fusion of both foreign and domestic motives, and of an attractiveness of the Renaissance patterns in the new times.

In 1618, the printing house of Franciszek Cezary in Cracow published a 600 page quarto book. The book appeared in the best years of the printing house, and was released with other 13 editions (7 in Polish and 6 in Latin).

Albeit the publishing house of Cezary's family had been operating only for a 2 years' time then, it was anyway predestined to be ranked among the most important and dynamic printing houses in the capital. It issued more than 750 publications. Nevertheless, only one of them was of particular

importance¹, viz. *Goffredo* by Torquato Tasso, translated into Polish by Piotr Kochanowski, which proved to be one of the most notable books in the Polish literature of all times. It is known that although the first edition was considerable in size, the second one appeared as early as in 1651. It was an octavo targeted at “noble knighthood” (“gwoli Szlachetnemu Rycerstwu zabawie przedrukowana”). Those words could have expressed the editor’s intention to widen the audience of the poem². Indeed, the popularity of the *oeuvre* must have been exceptional or at least sufficient for its editor to create demand for new copies and to take a risk to publish another edition in 1687 following exactly the form of the previous one³.

Those facts will become even more meaningful if we remember that chivalric epic literature was previously scarcely present in the Renaissance Poland – not more than 4 romances, all written in prose, were published before the Tassian translation (*Octavian – Oton, Meluzyna, Magiolona* and *Fortunat*)⁴.

The Polish translation which came out in 1618 must be ranked among the first in Europe. It is unlikely to compete with the two French translations, viz. of Jean de Vigneau, in verses, and with the second one – in prose – of

¹ For the history of the printing house see: *Drukarze dawnej Polski od XV do XVIII wieku*, ed. J. Pirożyński, Cracow 2000, vol.1, part 2, p. 78-120, especially p. 81-82 and 98. For the analysis of his inheritance see: M. Malicki, *Repertuar wydawniczy drukarni Franciszka Cezarego Starszego*, Cracow 2010, n° 39, p. 165-166.

² Ibidem, n° 743, p. 765-767. See: R. Ocieczek, *O różnych aspektach badań literackiej ramy wydawniczej w książkach dawnych*, [in:] *O literackiej ramie wydawniczej w książkach dawnych*, Katowice 1990, p. 12-19; *Historia literatury i historia książki. Studia nad książką i literaturą od średniowiecza po wiek XVIII*, ed. P. Buchwald-Pelcowa; P. Buchwald-Pelcowa, *XVII-wieczne i XVIII-wieczne edycje polskiego ‘Goffreda’*, Cracow 2005, p. 385. Also J. Pirożyński, *Gofred abo Jeruzalem wyzwolona :przekładania Piotra Kochanowskiego. Z zagadek pierwodruku (1618)*, ‘Biuletyn Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej’, 1970, p. 140.

³ See: P. Buchwald-Pelcowa, op. cit., p. 380-384.

⁴ J. Krzyżanowski, *Romans polski wieku XVI*, Warsaw 1962, p. 23, 56-87, 209.

Blaise de Vigenère, both published already in 1595⁵. The English *Godfrey* of Edward Fairfax from 1600 did not have the same impact⁶. However, the efforts of both translators to render their translations perfect are similar – there is a testimony provided by one of the British Library’s Fairfax copies where we find a handwritten correction, which is of significance⁷. Yet, the Polish translation and its reception is much more similar to the German version compiled by Diederich von dem Werder which appeared few years later – in 1626⁸. Neither in Germany nor in Poland can we find any sign of a bigger popularity of the poem before the printed edition of its translation was released⁹.

When speaking about the reception in Poland, all printed editions can provide us with some interesting information. In fact, the name of its Italian author as well as that of the translator appeared on the title page of the first edition mentioned. Nonetheless, the name of Tasso disappeared completely

⁵ W. Weintraub, *Recepcja ‘Jerozolimy wyzwolonej’ w Polsce i na Zachodzie*, [in:] *W kręgu ‘Goffreda’ i ‘Orlanda’*. *Księga pamiątkowa sesji naukowej*, ed. St. Pigoń, Wrocław 1970, p. 67 and B Ch. Beall, *La Fortune de Tasse en France*, Oregon 1942, p. 7-29.

⁶ In 1749 we can find about him in a verse by William Collins: ‘Previling poet, whose undoubting mind / Believ’d the magic wonders which he sung!’.

⁷ ‘The sacred armies and the godly knight / That the great sepulchre of Chris did free/ I sing [...]’. And Kochanowski: ‘Wojnę pobożną śpiewam i Hetmana, / który święty grób Pański wyswobodził [...]’.

⁸ About these similarities see: W. Weintraub, op. cit., p. 72-73. Also about romantic reception of both: poems and biographical legend of Tasso, quite different than in Western Europe.

⁹ Von dem Werder translated *Orlando Furioso* too, even if he had no time to finish this work and even if he altered original octavas.

¹⁰ one of Polish copies from 1618 we can find illustrations of the German version printed in Frankfurt in 1626 (Ossolineum, XVII, 1357). The owner must have been acquainted with illustrated edition and must have sent their lack in the book provided by Cezary printing house. About the lack of illustrations in all Polish editions of the poem see: P. Buchwald-Pelcowa, op. cit., p. 385-391. The form of these editions is very simple and gothic initials referring to prints of the seventies of 16th are the only ornamental elements.

from the second edition of 1651. However, readers in 1651 could see a new and original element, a subtitle ‘historia obozowa’ meaning ‘a military camp story’. Is it still the camp of Goffredo, Balduin and Tancredi, the Christian camp by the Jerusalem city walls? The process of appropriating the poem actually began as soon as the Polish version had appeared, and the editorial modification to that second edition stated clearly what had happened to the poem. *Goffredo* was becoming then an entirely Polish poem and in the paratext, from the 2nd edition onwards, the emphasis was laid on the historical context of the plot.

To the average reader, the history of the first crusade should be worth remembering, or rather worth teaching¹⁰. The parallel with the Polish reality of the time, with Poland plagued by wars against the Ottoman Turkey, the permanent conflict on its east borders, the danger present even during (short) periods of official, apparent peace should be easily noticed by readers themselves.

To become ‘entirely Polish’, the translation itself was of a great importance, too. Its author, Piotr Kochanowski, was the nephew of Jan, the greatest Renaissance poet of our language. He was also the nephew of Andrzej and the son of Mikołaj. The first was a translator of *Eneida* in verses, and the other – of Plutarchus’ writings¹¹. Piotr Kochanowski is considered by Polish literary historians to have been the greatest translator of our language of all times. His *Goffredo* appears, however, to be something different and something more: a *rifacimento*, an adaptation, a recast. A fine analysis and detailed studies of the linguistic proceedings of the translation as well as some investigations into stylistic similarities and differences between the Italian and the Polish versions that have been done reveal an outstanding

¹⁰ P. Buchwald-Pelcowa, *ibidem*, p. 379-391.

¹¹ *Aeneida, to jest O Aeneaszu ksiąg dwanaście*, published in Cracow in 1590, 1640 and 1753.

Moralia, [in:] *Rotuly*, Cracow, 1585.

character of that literary achievement¹². It should certainly be emphasised here that the Polish language was suitable then for rendering the abundance of Tassian expressions. Or, it was rather Piotr Kochanowski himself to have made it possible¹³.

In the same 1618, in Cracow, there was published the translation – made by Sebastian Petrycy from Pilzno – of Aristotelian *Ethics*, followed by *Libri omnes, quibus tota moralis philosophia [...]*, scholia (*Moralia Nicomachia*) and original comments¹⁴. This is one of the first translations of Aristotelian writings into a national language (unfortunately, not from the Greek original, but from Latin)¹⁵. The coincidence that the years of edition were identical may have been pure chance. But it cannot have been pure chance that at the same time our language succeeded in expressing philosophical terms in an

¹² The literature on the subject is very rich indeed; among the most important publications: R. Pollak, *Wśród literatów staropolskich*, Warsaw 1966, p. 198-224, 225-241; idem, *Od renesansu do baroku*. Warsaw 1969 (reprint of 1928); idem, *Goffred Tassa – Kochanowskiego*, Wrocław 1973; B. Chlebowski, *Przekład 'Jeruzolimy' Tassa*, [in:] *Pisma*, vol. 3, Warsaw 1912, p. 34-49; M. Dłuska, *Dookoła Piotra Kochanowskiego przekładu 'Jeruzolimy wyzwolonej' (Sprawa oktawy)*, [in:] *W kręgu 'Goffreda'*, op. cit., p. 169-194. Also: J. Krzyżanowski, *Piotr Kochanowski i jego dzieło*, [in:] *Przekład artystyczny. O sztuce tłumaczenia księga druga*, ed. S. Pollak, Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow-Gdańsk 1975, p. 149-154. However, it is worth reminding that since 1973 no recent work has been published even if the translation would deserve a new inquiry, done through modern tools. Nevertheless see: B. Niebelska, *Metamorficzne 'theatrum mundi'. O przeobrażeniach, maskaradach i żudzeniach w 'Jeruzolimie wyzwolonej' Tassa-Kochanowskiego*, [in:] *Wokół słowa*, ed. J. Pechman, W. Czaplewski, J. Koźmiński, Kołobrzeg 2005, p. 131-145.

¹³ See: Z. Szymdtowa, *Czynniki rodzime i obce w przekładzie literackim*, [in:] *O sztuce tłumaczenia*, ed. M. Rusinek, Wrocław 1995, p. 112-113.

¹⁴ Based on models of Francesco Piccolomini's *Universa philosophia de moribus*, first ed. Venice 1583 and of John Casus (*Speculum quaestionum moralium*, first ed. 1585).

¹⁵ His translation was based on the edition of Giovanni Bernardo Felicianus (Paris 1545 or Lyon 1580). He added also his own original commentaries – 'przydatki'.

elegant artistic prose and Tassian poetry – viz. the heritage of a long and sophisticated tradition.

Kochanowski himself was aware of how hard his task was – and I dare say – of how unexpected or even how avant-garde the result was. He spoke about it while addressing directly lecturers in the first edition:

There find, noble leader, the poems of the fine Italian poet, Torquato Tasso, interwoven with octavo rhymes – as he wrote them and as Italians, Spanish people and another refined nations write their heroics – there in Polish language translated, not entirely being an easy fruit of pastime. The verses in our language are awkward and, supposedly, to Polish not accustomed ears – especially until a man does not pore over it – tasteless. However, to prove that our language is not poorer than others and to set a way through for fancier wit to enhance it, therefore I send this poem to your judgment, if it is suitable. Keep well, dear friend, and if you find something to like, adopt it with favor¹⁶.

Piotr Kochanowski was an attentive reader of his uncle Jan's poetry. To state that his translation stands for the foundation of later Polish literature, remembered should be Jan Kochanowski's statement about the translation where: 'Necessitas clavos trabales et cuneos manu gestans ahena and Poetica, nescio quid blandum spirans'. When I see these two beside me, I don't know what I shall do, said Jan Kochanowski. 'Formido quid aget, da Venus consilium [...]'¹⁷. However, this is not only the question of language.

¹⁶ 'Masz, czytelniku łaskawy, partum otii non omnino otiosi, poema przedniejszego włoskiego poety Torquata Tassa przeplatane ośmiorakiem rymem – jakiem je on pisał i jakim Włoszy, Hiszpani i insze narody polerowańsze swoje heroika piszą – po polsku przełożone. Wiersz w naszym języku przytrudniejszy i podomno uszom polskiem, jako nieprzywykłem – zwłaszcza poki się weń kto nie wczyta – niesmaczny; jednak aby się pokazało, że język nasz nie jest nad inszy uboższy i aby się szczęśliwsem dowcipom do ubogacenia go dalsza podała droga, atoc go posyłam, abyś osądził, jeśli ujdzie. Zdrów bądź, a najdziesz-li co do smaku, z łaską przyjmi.'

¹⁷ Cit. from: T. Ulewicz, *Tradycje poetyckie Jana Kochanowskiego w twórczości Piotra*, [in:] *W kręgu...*, op. cit., p. 221.

Jan Kochanowski created a language of lyrics, whereas Piotr let the Polish literature enter the world of epics. It was the first time that Polish language treated love affairs in such a fine way. Thanks to Tasso, Kochanowski taught how to speak about the glittering of eyes, about the beauty of the neck and the breast and the softness of a shirt and a dress. It was much more difficult for him than speaking about a horse ride, a duel or even about a war council, which is revealed by the translation in a very clear way.

At this point, there is no need to reconsider or to provide a detailed analysis of the extremely important impact that his translations have had on the development of our literary language. Apart from the examples of particular interest to us which we already know, let us just mention some more cases: half a dozen of Biblical translations and the adaptation of *Il libro di cortegiano* by Castiglione by Łukasz Górnicki¹⁸.

Paying attention only to a successful translation – adaptation of the Tassian *Goffredo*, means, however, seeing only half a truth. At the same time, Piotr Kochanowski translated also almost the entire *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto. It might be astonishing to translate both poems when the literary polemics around the superiority of one or of the other author were so vivid. But, in fact, translating both of them would not imply that the debate was ignored,

¹⁸ See: I. Winiarska-Górska, *Język, styl i kulturowa rola szesnastowiecznych protestanckich przekładów Nowego Testamentu na język polski: między nowatorstwem a tradycją*, [in:] *Polszczyzna biblijna. Między tradycją a współczesnością*, eds. St. Koziara, W. Przychyna, Tarnów 2009, p. 279-312.

¹⁹ means also to reconsider the place of translation in the history of (our) literature. See: *Słownik literatury staropolskiej*, art. Oryginalność, ed. T. Michałowska, 1998. Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow, 1998, p. 602-610.

but on the contrary, that it was commenced¹⁹. Literary polemics focused on which one of them deserved more attention as a model to be imitated. Tasso's modernity – which put away the mythological background – adapted the plot to Aristotelian exigencies, matched a new religious atmosphere, had to compete with Ariosto who was an inheritor of the pure chivalric tradition with its rich imagination and linguistic accuracy. Translating the *Furioso*, he selected some Lodovico Dolce's allegories and Girolamo Ruscelli's summaries of cantos, i.e. the most popular, though not the most modern paratexts²⁰. A former Calvinist Polish nobleman, a converted translator – as if he were a converted poet²¹ – clearly considered essential to provide his compatriot readers with both masterpieces of chivalric literature. Thanks to a fine stylistic analysis we can know something about the process of those translations. Probably, *Orlando* was the first attempt, but when the translator became more experienced, he came back to his previous works and tried to make them perfect. Therefore, the first 25 cantos of *Orlando* are often considered as the absolute masterpiece among Kochanowski's compositions. His

¹⁹ J. Pietrzak-Thébault, *Translacja – kontaminacja – interpretacja. Przekłady Piotra Kochanowskiego w świetle współczesnych mu wydań 'Orlanda Szalonego' i 'Jerozolimy Wyzwolonej'*, [in:] *Sarmackie Theatrum V. Między księgami*, eds. M. Barłowska, M. Balińska, Katowice 2012, p. 76-77. See also: J. Ślaski, *Polski 'Orland' i 'Goffred' wobec włoskiego sporu o Ariosta i Tassa*, 'Barok' II/2, 4, 1995, p. 87-98.

²⁰ J. Pietrzak-Thébault, *Miłość w czasach Soboru. Alegoryczne klucze lektury 'Orlanda Szalonego'*, 'Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce', LII, 2008, p. 173-176.

²¹ For the biography of Piotr Kochanowski see: H. Barycz, H. 1971. *Studia i wędrówki włoskie Jana Kochanowskiego*, [in:] *Z epoki renesansu, reformacji i baroku. Prądy – idee – ludzie – książki*, Warsaw 1971, p. 195-207. Also: J. Pelc, *Przełom wieków XVI i XVII. Perspektywy polskie europejskie*, [in:] *Barok, epoka przeciwnieństw*, Cracow 2004, p. 15-16.

acquaintance with both poems made them also very close to each other²². We know that in 1622 also the Ariosto's poem was ready to print in the same publishing house of Franciszek Cezary²³. But the book would never appear. Even if we are unable to make any final ascertainments in this matter, it must have been rather the death of the translator who could have not overseen any longer the editorial proceedings that prevented that publication than any problems linked to the bishops's Marcin Szyszkowski's censorship²⁴.

In fact, we had to wait for as many as 180 years to see fragments of this poem edited by Jacek Idzi Przybylski, who was an extremely prolific editor, and published in 1799 by a Cracow publisher²⁵. He did not, however, intend to compete with Piotr Kochanowski – nor could he even imagine such a

²² R. Pollak. 1916. *Ze studiów nad 'Goffredem' Tassa-Kochanowskiego. Przebudowa przekładu*, 'Pamiętnik Literacki' XIV, 1916, p. 248, 250-254; idem, 1952. *Ze studiów nad staropolskim przekładem 'Orlanda szalonego'*, 'Pamiętnik Literacki' XLIII, 1952, p. 270-274; idem, *Od renesansu...* op. cit., p. 40-51.

²³ Idem, Preface to his edition of *Orlando Furioso*, Wrocław 1965, p. LXXXI. See also: M. Brahmer, *La fortuna dell'Ariosto in Polonia*, 'L'Italia che scrive' n° 10 1933, p. 275 and R. Pollak, *Problematyka polskiego baroku*, [in:] *Zjazd Naukowy Polonistów*, Wrocław 1960, p. 364-365.

²⁴ P. Buchwald-Pelcowa. *Cenzura i walka z cenzurą w epoce baroku*, [in:] *Barok w Polsce i w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Drogi przemian i osmozy kultur*, eds. J. Pelc, K. Mrowcewicz, M. Prejs, Warsaw 2000, p. 169-170. The thesis about censorship was expressed by L. Marinelli, *O rękopiśmiennym i anonimowym charakterze poezji polskiego baroku: cenzura jako hipoteza konieczna*, [in:] *Staropolska kultura rękopisu*, ed. H. Dziechcińska, Warsaw 1990, p. 43-66. See also: J. Ślaski, op. cit., p. 278-285. About Szyszkowski see: R. M. Grześkowiak, *Przypowieść na dzień św. Marcina*, [in:] *Literatura polskiego baroku w kręgu idei.*, eds. A. Nowicka-Jeżowa, M. Hanusiewicz, A. Karpiński, Lublin 1995, p. 111-113. Though, the *Furioso* was not a poem to have problems with the censorship and only very few verses were pointed by the Spanish index of 1617 (XIV, 75-79, XVIII, 26-28, XXVII, 35-39, XXXIV, 30). See G. Fatini, *Bibliografia della Critica Ariostea (1510 - 1956)*, Florence 1958, p. 78.

²⁵ Ed. Jan May, Cracow, 1799.

competition²⁶. It was not until 110 years later, in 1905, that the entire translation was printed²⁷.

However, this fate of the non-printed literary writings was nothing exceptional at the time: the same happened also to Jan Andrzej Morsztyn's translation of *Amintas* of Tasso (printed only in 1840), as well as to the one by Daniel Naborowski's of Petrarca's sonnets, and to the translation of an anonymous author of *L'Adone* by Marino, which was published only a few years ago²⁸ (!). All that puts the absence of the printed *Orlando* in a less dramatic light. But does the absence of the edition of *Orlando Furioso* really mean that the poem was totally unknown? If we look attentively through Polish libraries, we can find numerous copies of *Orlando* in Italian. As many as fifteen different editions, mostly published in the 16th and early 17th century, can still be found there. Taking account of the manuscript literary circulation

²⁶ 'Ktoby się z teraz żyjących odważył poprawiać lub dopełniać Przekładanie Piotra Kochanowskiego, nie mógłby być ani szczęśliwym dosyć w naśladowanie naturalnej prostoty [...] ani dosyć cierpliwym w zostawieniu za piękność współczesnym piękności odległych naddziadów, a rzadko kto znalazłby się, coby ięzyk owego wieku bez poszlakowania affektacyi potrafił, a zatem reczeyby przelał Aryosta i według swego wieku przestroił, i odarłby z niego poważny, choć staroświecki kontusz, i jakim go Piotr Kochanowski odział', See W. Weintraub, op. cit., p. 73 and in nota *Orland Szalony*, ed. Jan May, Cracow, 1799, p. 2, (BUW, 61142, 4.19.5.121 XVIII/II). However, some attempts of a new translation were undertaken in the late 18th and in the 19th centuries. (Stanisław Trembecki, Euzebiusz Słowacki, Józef Lipiński) but they did not succeed.

²⁷ Ed. Jan Czubek, Cracow, 1905, 3 vol. About this edition see: R. Pollak, *Miscellanea staropolskie*, 'Archiwum Literackie' vol. VI, 1962, p. 32-54.

²⁸ The modern scholar edition is quite recent, Jan Andrzej Morsztyn, *Utworthy zebrane*, ed. L. Kukulski, Warsaw 1971. *Adon*, an anonymous translation, ed. L. Marinelli, K. Mrowcewicz, K. Rome, Warsaw 1993. It was the first European translation of the poem, accomplished as soon as between 1625 and 1647.

See: P. Buchwald-Pelcowa, *Losy edytorskie arcydzieł włoskich w polskim baroku*, [in:] P. Buchwald-Pelcowa, *Historia literatury...* op. cit., p. 359-366, 374-377. Also: J. Pelc, *Przełom wieków...* op. cit., p. 265-267, 300 and A. Karpiński, *Tradycja tekstu w 'wieku rękopisów'*. *Uwagi o rękopiśmiennym funkcjonowaniu dzieła literackiego*, [in:] H. Dziechcińska, op. cit., p. 27-32.

in Poland can also make us wonder about the presence of *Orlando* among the Polish readers. Even if a barely noticeable presence of other chivalric Italian poems in Polish collections and scarce mentions of Pulci, Boiardo or others can make us think that this literature was quite unknown, that it did not interest a Polish reader at all, it is difficult to determine it with absolute certainty.

The difference between fortunes of both poems, however, is striking: the same initial situation, the same author of translation, the same highest artistic level, the same preparative tasks regarding printing... Therefore, we suppose that the editorial decision to print the *Goffredo* translation first must have been influenced by Kochanowski's principal – count Jan Tęczyński. However, in order to better understand this astonishing difference of reception, it seems necessary to look once more at the title page of the book. *Goffredo* was actually announced there as a 'history of a military camp'. In fact, the Jerusalem camp was situated somewhere on eastern borders of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the continuous fights and wars with the Turkish enemy could, as we've already mentioned, easily be compared with the chivalric adventures during the siege of Jerusalem in 1096. The Polish wars against Muslims were realistic, present and really dangerous. Polish chivalry, which did not really have time to participate in the crusades, had a kind of crusade offered by the cruel history of their country six centuries later. So, the poem could be read not because it referred to actual events and thus created a new image of religious spiritual fight, but because it gave an ideal perspective of a well-known fight, experienced or heard about. The Polish readers of the chivalric Tasso's verses did not dream of becoming Goffredo or Tancredi – but on the contrary, Tancredi and Goffredo were so similar to them²⁹! Probably it was not so important, or not

²⁹ This change of perspective will come back more than once, even in future centuries. Przybylski would, in his edition of 1799, dress Tasso in 'kontusz', the traditional dress of Polish noblemen and the late romantic poet, Teofil Lenartowicz, would invite him to seat in the Polish parliament, shoulder to shoulder with deputies

important at all, to see the rebirth and new actuality of chivalric adventures, it was however astonishingly pleasant to find a literary work that fitted so well to the political and war-time reality of the country. The details of this reality added the touch of actuality. Kochanowski, a Polish nobleman, and a secretary of a high royal official, was familiar with the details of weaponry, sets of horse tack, fencing technique and battle strategies. Literary associations were becoming secondary, the primary purpose being to express the well-known context. In the Italian original, the war was distant, somehow artificial – in the Polish version it becomes vivid, naturalistic, it reveals a direct contact with the Muslim world.

Even if it is the Polish translation of the Tassian poem that certainly determined the level and scope of its reception, we must not underestimate its probable popularity also in its original version. A strange, even a little bit funny document found in the collections of the Warsaw University Library, teaches us a lot on it. This in folio: on twenty separate pages there is a complete list of allegories – Italian octavas introducing each canto of Torquato Tasso's *Delivered Jerusalem* by Orazio Ariosti³⁰. The octavas are ornamented with engravings by Bernardo Castello, coming from one of Tasso's earliest editions, published in Genoa in 1590. The title page was also cut out of this printed edition, but the verses are a manuscript and the octavas are the ones which had appeared most frequently in different editions of the Tassian poem. If poetic commentaries of such poor value were considered worth copying, it was certainly because the poem itself must have been read, must have been popular and probably circulated not only as printed, but also copied.

of the Sejm (poem *T. Tassowi na S. Onorfio*: 'I byłbyś, zacny poeto śród braci / Śród karmazynów w senacie zasiadał, / Jako się godzi po króla połąci; / I może byś się Polsce naszej nadał, / Jakoś był słuszny z nauk i postaci, / Że też i błogo na cię wzrok upadał: / Hiszpańskie stroje, a zaś kolor włoski, Jakoby wtóry pan Piotr Kochanowski'.

³⁰ BUW, Sd 602.1670.

The document itself, once property of a Capuchin convent in Warsaw, is a testimony evoking at least two important tendencies of the Polish literary life in the early 17th century. It is a ‘come back’ of a manuscript circulation, strangely able to compete with the printed diffusion of literary works³¹ on one hand, and the frequency of poetic introductions inseparable from the Tassian poem – on the other³².

This, as well as the presence of as many as 30 *Orlando Furioso*’s 16th century copies in Polish libraries, might not entirely confirm the traditional statement according to our historians of literature. It is only studies of provenances, accurate as well as difficult, that could prove the real diffusion of the poem at that time. It is even more difficult, if even simply impossible, to establish the level of circulation of the manuscripts of this kind of literature.

Only 3 years after the first edition, the victory of Chocim added even more actuality to the Polish version. The popularity of the poem was also sufficient to make Ivo Gundulić change his mind. The Croat poet abandoned a translation of *Goffredo* that he wanted to dedicate to the Polish king, and decided to write his own poem, *Osman*. It became the first epic translation in the Croat literature, just as the *Goffredo* of Kochanowski was in the Polish one (Croatian poem remained not finished and was not published until 1826). In the work of Gundulić, the adventures of the western and Polish ‘knights’ of the 17th century became the adventures of the Balkan ones, fighting against the Ottoman Empire and looking with hope at the Polish victories. It was another literary expression of the actuality of Christian-Muslim fights and a creation of the political utopia, where Poland becomes a kind of an ideal country, thanks to the Chocim victory³³. The fights against the Muslim enemy

³¹ Cf.: P. Buchwald-Pelcowa, *Losy edytorskie...*, op. cit., p. 360-368; J. Pelc, *Przełom wieków...*, op. cit., p. 265-267; A. Karpiński, op. cit., p. 27-42.

³² J. Pietrzak-Thébault, *Translacja...*, op. cit., p. 85-86 and in nota.

³³ M. Ratković, *O pierwszym przekładzie chorwackim ‘Jerozolimy wyzwolonej’ dedykowanej królowi polskiemu*, [in:] *W kręgu...*, op. cit., p. 151-154, J. Rapacka,

must have been attractive for people living in a large border zone going from the Polish southeast frontier towards the Balkan territories, where the danger was real. And they definitely were, as another *oeuvres* of Hungarian and Croat language prove. It is just enough to mention the epic poems of István Gyöngyösi, who surely read Kochanowski, as he did not know Italian, as well as those written in Hungarian and in Croat by Miklós Zrinyi / Nikola Zrinski: *The siege of the Szigeti Castle (Szigeti veszedelem)*³⁴.

The *Goffredo* of Tasso-Kochanowski had also its particular continuation in Poland. We can see how Kacper Twardowski, a really ‘converted poet’, the author of erotic compositions, appeared capable just one year later of adapting a lay chivalric romance into the spiritual allegorical poems, the meditation books where Cupid strikes only with the arrows of love of God, and where the only beautiful female mentioned is Virgin Mary³⁵. Spiritual exercises here are those of St Ignace of Loyola, but they are presented through the language of Tasso and Kochanowski. Thus, names, expressions, rhymes and elements of plot are borrowed directly from Kochanowski’s translation.

However, the most important achievement in this field were epic poems. Considered in the 17th c. as the most noble genre, there was no need for them to justify their importance, and taking account of historical context, no need to look for a subject. Moreover, historical and chronicle traditions of the Polish literature easily turned the readers’ attention to the events almost

‘Osman’ Ivana Gundulica, [in:] *Dawna literatura serbska i dawna literatura chorwacka*, Warsaw 1983, p. 113-115 and idem, *Osman: Ivana Gundulicia. Bunt świata przedstawionego*, Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow-Gdańsk 1975, p. 24, 29-33.

³⁴ E. Angyal, *Torquato Tasso, Piotr Kochanowski i tradycja epiki barokowej u Słowian i Węgrów*, [in:] *W kręgu...*, op. cit., p. 155-159.

³⁵ I mean here *Łódź młodzi z nawałności do brzegu płynąca* (‘*The Boat of Youth...*’, 1618) and *Pochodnia Miłości Bożej* (‘*The Torch of God’s Love*’, 1628). See: K. Mrowcewicz, *Dwie Jerozolimy. Kacpra Twardowskiego lektura ‘Goffreda’, ‘Barok’*, II/2(4), 1995, p. 99-108.

contemporary, but presented already from a historical angle³⁶. Therefore, new ‘camp stories’ were written – from Cossack-Ukrainian borderland, from the area of Chocim and from the walls of Jasna Góra. The Chocim victory over the Turks (1621), commanded by the sultan Osman II (the same who became the title character in Gundulić’s epic)³⁷, the long battle full of breathtaking twists, the critical disease and death of the Polish commander in the camp, *hetman* Chodkiewicz, seemed a perfect basis for ‘new Goffredo’. The author of epic *Transakcja wojny chocimskiej (War of Chocim)*, Waclaw Potocki, decided to highlight the historical side of events in the first place, writing what was in fact a kind of chronicle in verses about the true war-time facts. Potocki chronicled and described not only the important fights and minor clashes, marches and baits, but also the camp’s everyday life, and even the peace treaty with the Turks was presented in detail in verses, item by item. Once again, the epic written contemporarily with readers met the expectations and was to the audience liking. The poem brilliantly reflected the needs of the Polish society, which in 1670 had experienced many defeats and longed for comfort coming from recollection of quite recent and so glorious, although difficult, victories (the second Chocim victory under the command of Jan Sobieski was coming soon, namely in 1673). The popularity among contemporary readers and political timeliness of the epic are probably

³⁶ C. Backvis, *Szczególna próbka historycznego eposu: Wojna chocimska Waclawa Potockiego (1670)*, [in:] *Szkice o kulturze staropolskiej*, ed. A. Biernacki, Warsaw 1975, p. 253-255; M. Prejs, *Erotyka i religia. (O warstwie romansowej w ‘Oblężeniu Jasnej Góry Częstochowskiej’)*, ‘Poezja’ XII n°138-139, 5-6, 1977, p. 179-180.

³⁷ Backvis considers Gundulić’s work closer to the idea of chivalric epic, with interspersing the plot courtly, almost fairylike tales about Amazons and their love affairs, as well as about loves of the protagonists – knights, and states its high cultural rank, but Potocki’s poem, however deprived from love stories, considers prevailing over Croatian work ‘as epos itself’. *Ibidem*, p. 287.

proving the poem's biggest value nowadays³⁸. The opinions about the artistic level of the epic vary, but today its importance is undoubtedly growing.

Nearly at the same time, as in 1673, the anonymous poem *The Siege of Jasna Góra* was written, recalling the similar, actual events from a few dozen years before. This time the plot concerned the siege of Jasna Góra monastery in Częstochowa by the Swedish army of the king Karol Gustaw in 1655. Fighting back the enemy forces had its military significance there, triggering off the resistance against the Swedish forces, as well as a symbolic side: the invaders were Lutherans, so it meant the 'heretics' attempted to capture the monastery with the miraculous image of the Heavenly Mother. The defense was led by the heroic prior, Father Kordecki, presented on the pages of the poem. Once again, a religious thread appears in the plot: the opposing armies practiced different religions, however at that time the Lutherans took place of the Muslims. Both war and love plots at the walls of Częstochowa were influenced by the poem about Jerusalem, and there are also numerous evident references to the Polish *Goffredo* in the language of this anonymous, yet very clever author. Even if it was not published for the first time until 1930³⁹, its fame in the 17th c. Poland is evident⁴⁰. Paradoxically, even though the artistry, the beauty of language and style are ranked below the literary standard observed in *War of Chocim*, *The Siege of Jasna Góra* is a more vivid work, lighter, closer to the perfect translations of Kochanowski. The love affairs (as a matter of fact, only one love story is presented as a part of the poem's plot, because the affections of other characters, especially numerous women, are usually only being spoken of), the presence of realistic elements in the account of warfare (excellent scene with monks running on the roofs of the

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 259-265, 287.

³⁹ See supra about a manuscript circulation of literary oeuvres in Poland at that time.

⁴⁰ C. Backvis, 'Oblężenie Jasnej Góry Częstochowskiej'. *Drugorzędny przykład barokowej epepei*, op. cit., p. 291-293.

monastery and trying to put out the fire, under the hail of bullets and grenades!), their combination with the interference of supernatural forces in the events, as well as the atmosphere of a constant erotic tension accompanying all the characters, caused difficulties to the modern literary interpreters and historians. Those particular ‘flaws’ and inconsistency of the poem in comparison to the classical idea of chivalric epic, were considered specific features and a sign of uniqueness of the Polish baroque in its old, prevailing form, characteristic of the gentry⁴¹.

However, the significant presence of heroines from the fantasy world: Liobe or Lidora, or from real world: Renata, Ludgierda, the wife of Stefan Czarniecki, or the ghost of the late fiancée of the Swedish general Horn – Krystyna, being certainly a feature distinguishing this poem from other Polish works of the genre of the time, is not only an effect of desire to make the historical plot attractive, but is exactly the source and core of a new harmony. Through the exposition and introspection of individual feelings and love memories, the poem touched the deeply hidden religious emotions, with the intention of highlighting their most personal aspect. Similarly to the emotions that our modern sensibility treats as solely physical, and that in their true nature are close to the experience of genuine faith, only through individual ‘conversion’ can the nation raise from disaster and find the power to win victories. That seem to tell us the Polish epic poems of 17th c., and *The Siege of Jasna Góra* in particular⁴². In the background of the struggles of the new characters, we always perceive the walls of Tasso’s Jerusalem and the camp of crusaders besieging it.

Without Torquato Tasso and Piotr Kochanowski, this new, crucial tendency in the literature of the Polish baroque, where the chain of religious and

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 296-306.

⁴² M. Prejs, op. cit., p. 180-187. S. Nieznanowski, *Warsztat epicki ‘Oblężenia Jasnej Góry Częstochowskiej’*, [in:] *W kręgu...*, op. cit., p. 162.

historical issues turned out to be so strong, would surely never have emerged. Seemingly, being founded on the knowledge of only one poem about Goffredo, on its imitation and transformation, utterly new creative activity emerged and developed, which through extremely rhetorical expression and vivid, remarkably suggestive images built a new kind of presented reality. A reality transformed poetically, sophisticated in depiction, and at the same time very close to the readers, to their common, material experience (of war) and their understanding of the spiritual reality of love and faith.

Also, a political timeliness is still obvious, when in 1685, in the Jesuit theatre and in Kochowski's *Songs of Vienna Redeemed*, the winner of Vienna battle, king Jan Sobieski the III, previously a 'Polish Hercules', becomes a 'Polish Goffredo'⁴³.

Therefore, if the famous patterns fitted so well to the needs, it was much more reasonable to use them, than create completely original structures. Knowing the similarity, the inner relation of Kochanowski's translations of Tasso and Ariosto, I may rather say that under the surface of the new verses throbbed with life Piotr Kochanowski's *przekładania* of *Orlando*⁴⁴. The special status of translation in the Polish culture, initiated in 16th c., was, thanks to the works of Kochanowski, not only established in the next century, but rather placed on the highest level, as an artistic achievement, and as having the status of literary work. The translation became a rightful part of Polish original artistic works. If the previous tradition of translating had not existed in Poland and if, in early time of printing, the importance of translator taking over the role of author with *auctoritas* had not grown, it

⁴³ J. Pelc, *Bohaterowie literaccy a wzorce osobowe w czasach polskiego renesansu oraz baroku*, [in:] *Problemy literatury staropolskiej*, Warsaw 1978, vol. III, p. 21 and 43-44. About Sobieski's Herculean image see: J. Pietrzak-Thébault, *Herkules na rozdrożu – między ideałem rycerza a 'męża szlacheznego' i monarchy nowych czasów*, [in:] *Prace Herkulesa – człowiek wobec wyzwań, prób i przeciwności*, eds. M. Cieśla-Korytowska, O. Płaszczewska, Cracow 2012, p. 19.

⁴⁴ See: M. Prejs, op. cit., p. 188.

would probably not have been possible⁴⁵. If the three editions of the Polish *Goffredo* had not been issued in publishing house of Franciszek Cezary in Cracow, the legacy of Italian chivalric epic would not have lived its own life in the 17th century Poland.

Fortune and Misfortune of Italian Chivalric Literature in the Early Modern Poland

Two masterpieces of the chivalric epic literature, *Orlando Furioso* of Lodovico Ariosto and *Gerusalemme Liberata* of Torquato Tasso have had their Polish versions of rare beauty and value thanks to the translator of genius, Piotr Kochanowski. The fate of their reception is, however, very different. The reasons of the absence of *Orlando Furioso* remain still inexplicable, while the number and diversity of the editions of its original version in Polish libraries could prove the contrary. Anyway, only detailed provenance research would establish the real origin of these books.

The evolution of the reception of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* during the whole 17th c. is an interesting example of a fusion of both foreign and domestic motifs, and of an attractiveness of the Renaissance patterns in the new times.

Keywords: translation, chivalric epic, editions, octave verses, reception.

⁴⁵ E. Podhajecka, *Rozważania nad sytuacją przekładu artystycznego w pierwszej fazie ery druku. Na materiale XVI-wiecznego romansu polskiego*, 'Pamiętnik literacki' LXXI, 1980/1, p. 24-28, B. Nadolski, *Dokoła prac przekładowych w XVI wieku*, [in:] *Europejskie związki literatury polskiej*, eds. J.Z. Jakubowski, J. Kulczycka-Saloni, Z. Libera, Warsaw 1969, p. 475-487. The same subject has recently been treated also by A. Nowicka-Jeżowa, *Formative Role of Translation in Polish Baroque Culture*, [in:] *Polish Baroque, European Contexts*, ed. P. Salwa, Warsaw 2012, p. 31-44.



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