



JAN KOCHANOWSKI

SELECTED
WORKS:

POETRY, DRAMA, PROSE

TRANSLATED BY
CHARLES S. KRASZEWSKI

GLAGOSLAV PUBLICATIONS

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by Jan Kochanowski

Translated from the Polish and introduced by
Charles S. Kraszewski

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G L A G O S L A V P U B L I C A T I O N S

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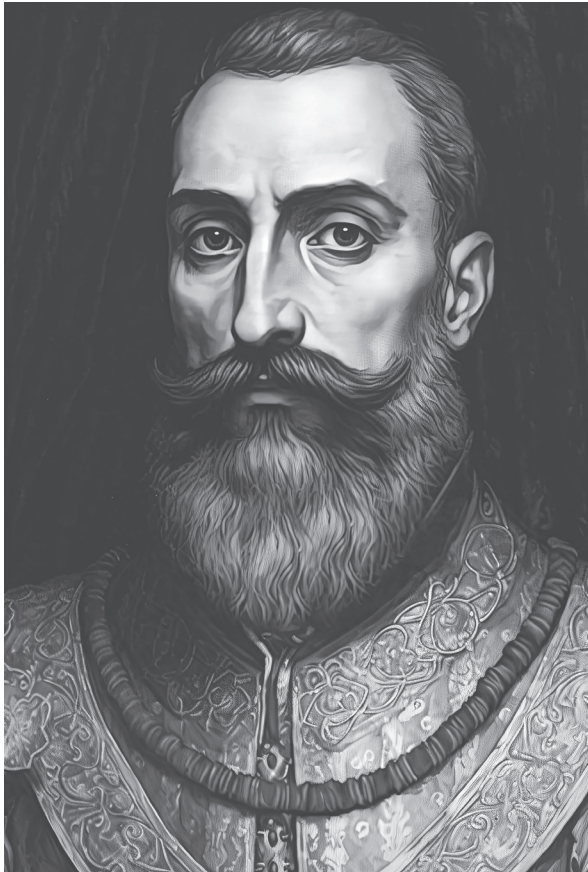
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JAN KOCHANOWSKI

(1530 – 1584)

JAN KOCHANOWSKI:
POLAND'S SHAKESPEARE... AND MARLOWE,
AND JONSON, AND DONNE...

Charles S. Kraszewski

This title is something of a retreat. In June, 2022, I used it to introduce the poet to the crowd assembled at the Guildhall in Stratford-upon-Avon following the dedication of Kochanowski's statue in the garden of Anne Hathaway's cottage. It is helpful and problematic at the same time. Helpful, because Jan Kochanowski is hardly a household name outside Poland — what name of any Polish poet, however deserving, is? — and it helps locate the bard from Czarnolas in period and significance for those coming across him for the first time. Kochanowski did have the same, if not greater, influence on the modern Polish literary idiom as Shakespeare had on the English; like Jonson, he was a *poeta doctus*, arguably a humanist of even wider horizons than Ben, given his university studies and travels; you might place him among the university wits of Marlowe and Greene and Nashe, and his Horatian pastorals smack of both Marlowe and Raleigh, while the often bawdy *Trifles*, especially those that sparkle with brilliant wordplay, simply beg comparison with Jack Donne. Problematical, not only because comparisons are odious, but it sets the bar of our expectations entirely too high. Unlike Shakespeare, for example, Kochanowski is the author of only one work for the stage — albeit a brilliant one — *The Dismissal of the Grecian Envoys*, and whereas he literally redefined the dry genre of the lament in his one work of truly pan-European significance — the *Threnodies*, written on the death of his little daughter Orszula — he left behind a rather modest collection of works. Of course, he died relatively young himself, at age fifty-four, and so, to continue with our British comparisons a few ages on, you can't expect the output of a Thomas Hardy from a person who lived only slightly longer than a Gerard Manley Hopkins.

It would be unjust to call Kochanowski a ‘dabbler.’ It is true that he set his hand to many literary genres, without concentrating his efforts in a single field; to continue our odious comparisons with the Elizabethans, whereas Shakespeare begins his career as a narrative poet and creates that noble series of sonnets, his fame rests upon thirty two-works for the stage, and in Marlowe’s case, passing by Ovid and his few lyrics, he too is best known and justly lauded for seven great tragedies. Kochanowski, on the other hand, flitted from drama to Socratic dialogue, jocular trifle to lament, translations from the classics and the Bible to erudite prose (both what we might term cultural anthropology in his consideration of the myth of Czech and Lech to a treatise on Polish orthography). Of course, the great variety of his output testifies to an amazing breadth, a voracious intellect interested in every sort of literary expression. What is more worth noting: he excelled in them all. Who knows what later years would have brought, had death not stifled that restless artistic intellect before his sixth decade was quite passed? Of course that is an unanswerable question. We can only speak of what he’s left behind — and most of that is magnificent.

It has become a commonplace to speak of Jan Kochanowski as the foremost Slavic poet of the Renaissance. Józef Magnuszewski, the great Polish comparatist, put this shorthand to a test: ‘The statement that Kochanowski is the earliest creative talent of first-class quality in all Slavdom appeared rather late [here he cites a work by B. Chlebowski from 1883], and was repeated thereafter without more detailed development. Today, it has become common currency, although it still lacks a fuller foundation.’¹ In his short overview of the Slavic Renaissance poets, he finds that the closest to approach him, perhaps, is that ‘most remarkable Czech latinist-poet Bohuslav Hasištejnský z Lobkovic,’ who flourished a little earlier than Kochanowski (he died in 1510), the ‘most personal character of whose lyrics express bitterness, sadness, and disenchantment, which tend towards Stoicism.’ Yet, as he sees it, ‘the Czech humanist had no desire of “becoming a national poet,” but confined himself to the ambit of creativity in Latin.’² And so, despite the vibrant

1 Józef Magnuszewski, ‘Twórczość Jana Kochanowskiego na tle poezji słowiańskiej XVI wieku,’ in *Jan Kochanowski i Kultura Odrodzenia*, ed. by Zdzisław Libera and Maciej Żurowski (Warszawa: PWN, 1985), p. 121.

2 Magnuszewski, pp. 124–125.

Renaissance traditions in Bohemia and Croatia, there truly is no individual Slavic poet who attains a pan-European rank in many genres, although he is mainly known in the West for one work, the *Threnodies*.

Jan Kochanowski was born in Sycyna, which is located a bit east of centre in today's Poland. His father was a judge, and his mother, Anna Białaczowska, was well-known enough as a person of refinement as to be described in Łukasz Górnicki's *Dworzanin polski* [Polish Cour-tier, 1566] as a 'stately and very amusing lady.' The family was refined indeed. Two of Kochanowski's brothers — Mikołaj and Andrzej — were to enrich Polish literature with translations from the classics, *Plutarch's Lives* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, respectively. His nephew Piotr (Mikołaj's son), was to bring over Ariosto and Tasso into Polish.

Kochanowski was widely educated at universities both at home and abroad. He attended the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and Prince Albrecht's Academy at Königsberg (Królewiec, at the time), and the University of Padua, where he served as *consiliarius* for the Polish 'nation' studying there.³ Although he remained faithful to the Catholic Church at a time of religious controversy, he became familiar with Protestantism in Königsberg⁴ and — it seems — at Wittenberg, and his hymns have been used by both denominations. He had powerful patrons, including the magnate Jan Zamoyski, Bishop of Kraków Piotr Myszkowski, and the aforementioned Albrecht, who, according to Jan Pilař, funded his studies in Padua.⁵ He also served for a while as royal secretary to King Stefan Batory. But it is his estate in Czarnolas, which he praises so often in his *Songs*, where he most enjoyed being — as he mentions more than once in his works — and it is here where he accomplished that for which

3 Jadwiga Pietrusiewiczowa and Jadwiga Rytel, 'Jan Kochanowski,' in Zdzisław Libera, et al., *Literatura Polska od średniowiecza do oświecenia* (Warsaw: PWN, 1988), p. 91. Records of his time in Königsberg are sketchy. Although his brothers attended university there, Kochanowski may have been less officially associated with the school. He was, however, appreciated and patronised by Prince Albrecht.

4 Perhaps the fullest discussion of Kochanowski's reported stay in Königsberg can be found in: Janusz Mattak, 'Jan Kochanowski in Königsberg,' *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1988), pp. 341–349.

5 Jan Pilař, *Má cesta za polskou poezji* (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1981), p. 143. Mattak (pp. 344–345) gives a fuller account of the still-extant correspondence on this topic between Kochanowski and Albrecht in the spring of 1556; Albrecht granted Kochanowski a stipend of fifty Prussian marks for the Italian journey.

we are most grateful: his poetry, and it is that poetry which lifted his Czarnolas out of the geographical atlases and into common parlance as a metaphor of poetic excellence.⁶

It is frequently mentioned that Kochanowski made the acquaintance of Pierre Ronsard. Czesław Miłosz posits their meeting in Paris, before the Polish poet's return to his homeland in 1559.⁷ This should not surprise anyone who remembers that Milton was for many years arguably better known in Italy than in his homeland, or that Sarbievius, whom we mention below, went on to influence poets as far afield, both nationally and confessionally, as Coleridge and Isaac Watts. Latin was the lingua franca of educated Europe — much as English is today. For those who like to speak of influence, there is a tantalising fragment from poem I.15 of the *Songs*:

Place not your trust in smooth cheeks, fondling hands —
That were to build your house on shifting sands.
The sun that shines at dawn at dusk will set,
And as the wrinkles grow, so does regret.

You'll age, decline, you blink, and... have you died?
With so few to lament at your graveside?
Ah, such a friend I wished to be for you,
Except that your tears should my grave bedew.
(21–28)

The reader of Ronsard might catch an echo of the similarly elegiac 'Quand vous seras bien vielle,' with its gentle remonstrance of the woman who spurns the narrator in her youth, only to remember him with longing in her lonely old age. Did Kochanowski know this poem? It seems unlikely — Ronsard's sonnet first saw the light of day in print in 1578, while Kochanowski had returned from his student years in Europe almost twenty-five years before. But the spirit blows where it lists, and

6 In Polish, when a young poet is mentioned as being 'on his way to Czarnolas,' it means the same as having him ascend Mount Helicon.

7 Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 61.

there is no reason to wonder at similar ideas occurring to born poets of the same time period, and the same general humanistic background.

POETA DOCTUS

Whether poets are born or made, they cannot help but be formed by their experiences and education. In the case of Jan Kochanowski, born into a well-to-do and refined family of the lesser aristocracy, and educated throughout Europe, this means being formed by the classical, and especially Horatian, tradition.

Allusions to classical myth are sprinkled throughout his poems. In song 5 from book I of the *Songs*, for example, he makes an unforced allusion to Alexander the Great in a musing on the benefits of moderation:

The King of Macedon,
For a brief moment won
The world entire. Yet still he thought it rough
To have so little — one world was not enough,
(15–16)

expecting his reader, quite reasonably, to be familiar with the same stories he is. Speaking of mythological allusions in the *Threnodies*, Ray J. Parrott, Jr. makes this very point:

Through the use of mythological and classical allusions, Kochanowski has succeeded in identifying his mental anguish with a series of classical figures who experienced similar grief. This poetic association, again, reinforces his own image of grief to an emphatic degree for the reader. The reader ‘perceives’ and can empathise with the poet’s emotion of grief through the common medium of the mythological or classical allusion. Heraclitus, Simonides, Niobe, and Orpheus: these names evoke a specific response in the sensitive reader acquainted with the rich classical and mythological traditions, and serve to realise Kochanowski’s grief upon the reader through a transferral of associations.⁸

8 Ray J. Parrott Jr. ‘Mythological Allusions in Kochanowski’s *Laments*,’ *The Polish Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1969), p. 14.

Although, as I reckon, more than one college professor of today would confirm, such things cannot be taken for granted of the students ranged before him, Kochanowski comes from a time that unabashedly and naturally assented to ideas such as Christendom — modern Europe emerging from the Mediterranean past, accepted and transformed by Christianity. Trifle 95 from book II, ‘On Rome’ is written, not so much in praise of the old Empire itself — Kochanowski is satisfied with his Poland as a political entity; he does not mourn the fall of unified Imperial authority as, for example, Dante did — as it is in praise of Latin culture, the glue that bonds together the nations of the continent. For him, the great gift that has been, and must be, preserved, is the Latin language:

As every nation bowed before the right
Of Rome to rule — as long as she had might —
So now, tripped up, she shivers and she frets,
Perceiving on all sides new mortal threats.
Much better fares her tongue, which men still praise;
Ash yields spear-shafts; the best fruit — comes from bays.

This poem is something of an amplified confirmation of Horace’s claims to immortality in Ode III:30, where he (again, quite rightly) asserts that his fame will endure *dum Capitolium / scandet cum tacita virgine Pontifex*⁹ [as long as the Pontifex will ascend the steps of the Capitol along with the silent virgin] — which proved a modest boast, as it still endures today, long after the fall of Roman religion and Rome itself and even — alas — a universal familiarity with Europe’s common tongue.

And so, Kochanowski the *poeta doctus* makes frequent and easy allusions to the Greek and Roman classics in his work. Reuel K. Wilson makes an interesting comment in regard to the naturalness of Kochanowski’s erudition: ‘Although he too wrote “learned” poetry, Kochanowski’s imagination was less bookish than Ronsard’s.’ Whatever the case may be (and here Wilson is referring to Kochanowski’s talent in recreating translated texts so that they ‘sound Polish’)¹⁰ he is fairly ‘bookish’ in his lyrics: in I.6 he tries to convince a girl to stay

9 Horace, Ode XXX, Book III, ‘Exegi monumentum...’, 8–9.

10 Reuel K. Wilson, ‘Kochanowski and Ronsard: Contemporaries and Kindred Spirits,’ *The Polish Review*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1977), p. 22.

with him by rehearsing the fate of Europa; in I.21 and II.2 he compares himself to the legendary poets Amphion, Orpheus, and Arion; in the *Threnodies* he refers to Heraclitus, Simonides, Orpheus, Sappho, Cicero, and the ever-brooding myth of Persephone. He enriches the Polish language with translations from the Latin and the Greek. Trifles II.32 and III.25 are translations from the Greek Anthology; he also translates Anacreon (fittingly, for the *Trifles*), a portion of Homer in the ‘Monomachia of Paris and Menelaus’ (to say nothing of his reworking of a small segment of *Iliad* III into an entire play, *The Dismissal of the Grecian Envoys*); and even began a translation of Euripides’ *Alcestis*, which, to our eternal regret, he abandoned after just one hundred lines.

As we say above, this is neither pompous nor forced; it is natural for a poet composing in an age when his readers emerged from the same educational background as he. As Waclaw Walecki states in his discussion of the *Dismissal of the Grecian Envoys*, ‘the spiritual atmosphere of the era prompted Kochanowski to write a tragedy that refers to a well-known historical theme in order to give it a universal, human, timeless meaning.’¹¹ Kochanowski is no mere devotee of tradition. In his long narrative poem *The Satyr*, we come across this passage speaking of pedagogy. Following a long dissertation on proper behaviour, both political and personal:

‘You didn’t learn
That in the woods!’ You’ll say, but I in turn:
‘No, you’re mistaken.’ For indeed I did!
All this I have from Chiron, strange hybrid
Of man and horse, tutor of Achilles,
Whose school was a cave sunk amidst the trees —
Rustic academy, for sure! And yet
He lagged behind no professor in wit.

(330–337)

11 Waclaw Walecki, ‘Aus der Geschichte des altpolnischen Dramas (I. “Die Abfertigung der griechischen Sendboten” von Jan Kochanowski),’ *Wiener Slavistisches Jahrbuch*, Vol. 33 (1987), p. 169.f.

POEMS

Songs

Trifles

Threnodies

The Satyr, or The Wild-Man



SONGS (1586)

selections

I.2

Swells the heart in Springtime's warm embrace!
Not long ago these woods were barren wastes
With snow piled near our elbows; waggon-teams
Creaked safely over the ice-covered streams.

But now each tree has clothed itself anew,
The blossomed meadows brave a brilliant hue,
The ice is thawed, and on the pristine rill
Both barge and skiff new-carved disport at will.

Now from both wold and wood there echo laughs;
The corn breaks soil, coaxed by the western draughts;
The clever birds entwine sturdy abodes
And start to sing before the dawn is old.

Yet no rejoicing surpasses the supreme
Tranquility of him with conscience clean,
Who, searching through his heart no shame there finds
With which to call to fault a reckless mind.

You needn't spill for him the wine's red flood
Nor sing, nor strum on lutes to prop his mood:
With water he might well contented be
For he is drunk on heady liberty.

But he whose heart's tormented by the beast
Of guilty funk relishes no rare feast.
No song will gladden him, no verses move
Whose ears are stoppered fast with self-reproof.

Good thought, whose company no man can lure
Though he have silk-hung walls and golden door,
Contemn not this my shady bower-plot
Though I be sober, or by drink besot.

I.5

Whoever has bread
Enough to be fed
On lucre needn't cast an envious eye,
Cares not for village, town, or castle high.

A true lord, God wot!
Happy with what he's got.
Whoever seeks more to puff up his pride
Gives proof that he'll be never satisfied.

The man who would hoard
Serves a fiercer lord
Than he who must pay tribute to the Turk
Or breast incessant Tatar raids. Hard work!

The King of Macedon,
For a brief moment won
The world entire. Yet still he thought it rough
To have so little — one world was not enough!

What are they worth: your realms,
Armed might that overwhelms?
They win the heart of no girl true and fair;
No treasure overcomes one nagging care.

For death — today remote,
Soon grabs all by the throat:
The richest magnate and the meanest slave
Settle accounts outstanding in the grave.

And yet the greedy man
Would snatch all that he can.
Though piling sacks of gold on golden sacks
The fevered miser always thinks he lacks

Something. But soon you'll find
You'll leave it all behind:
Of all you've scrounged through your skimped life bereft;
And who knows to whom it all will be left,

The swung-wide armoured doors
Admitting to your stores
Your boorish heir. And all your choicest wine...
He'll use to rub down horse-flesh till it shine.

I.6

Although your departure, sweet girl, makes me ill,
I would not hold you here against your will.
All happiness go with you. This I pray,
Wherever through the world your steps may stray.

You see yourself what angry winds arise
To pummel the dark clouds across the skies.
I've seen what storms can do when gales rave
And lash relentlessly the salty wave.

Let savage pagan wives and children test
The dangers of the swelling ocean's breast
As wind-whipped billows shatter ship and pier
And make the very cliffs shiver in fear.

Learn from Europa's hard fate, the poor fool
Who thought to lark a short ride on the bull:
No sooner seated on his back, the strand
Vanished from her sight. Far from solid land,

What was the terror she felt, to espy
Nothing on either hand but sea and sky,
Bobbing amidst the plumbless, frothy tide
With no one near — except her devious guide!

At last, when crumpled on the Cretan shore,
With wild hands at her fair locks she tore,
Sobbing: 'O, Father dear! Gentlest and best,
Whom I've abandoned through my recklessness,

'On this far shingle, how may I begin?
One death is meagre penance for such sin!
Am I awake? Or do I merely seem
To sob so? Is this but some guilty dream

'Flickering through deceptive gates of bone,
Strange images to make me weep and groan?
What was it worth to cross the broad-backed sea?
Was it not better, on the spangled lea

'Among the flowers? If only I could get
That bull in these two hands, I'd make him sweat!
The horns would droop upon that shameless steer
For all I ever lately held him dear!

'I had no shame — abandoning my home;
Nor have I now that thus my death postpone.
O God, if Thou heed'st when a wretch entreats
Thy pity — set me naked among beasts!

'Before the mould of age befoul my face,
Depriving this flesh of its charm and grace —
Set wolves to ravage smooth flesh, lap hot blood,
And scatter my young bones about the wood!'

Villainous girl! He presses near, your father —
This fir will bear your weight; or if you'd rather
Smash to the sharp rocks, look: those cliffs are high;
Leap to your death! Surely you wish to die?

Entrust your body to the burly wind
Since you spurn distaff, and decline to spin;
O, royal maiden — soon yourself to fling
Away to pagan mutt — though worth a king.

I.10

Who's lifted me above the clouds, a-wing
To skim and soar gazing on everything,
The whole world spread below me, as I fly
Through Heaven on high?

Is that the globe of the eternal fires,
The golden sun, which racing, never tires
To pull the seasons through the aether clear
Year after year?

And there — that disk of changing light I see,
Queen of the stars, and earth's fecundity!
The music of the spheres... A voice, it seems...
Or are these mere dreams?

Through regions by no fog obscured I sail;
No snow swirls here, nor freezing swarms of hail,
No: around me summer blooms — long, sunlit days,
Warm, bright always.

Palaces fit for Thy omnipotence
My Lord, virtue's cosmic magnificence
I see with mortal eye, for here reside
Saints at Thy side!

I recognise you, Lech, Slav, who first gazed
Upon this country in dim, ancient days;
Whose manliness and power led you forth
To rule the North!

And there sits Krak the king, enthroned on high,
Who on his city trains a loving eye;
Who left to Wanda a strong, wealthy land,
O, upright man!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

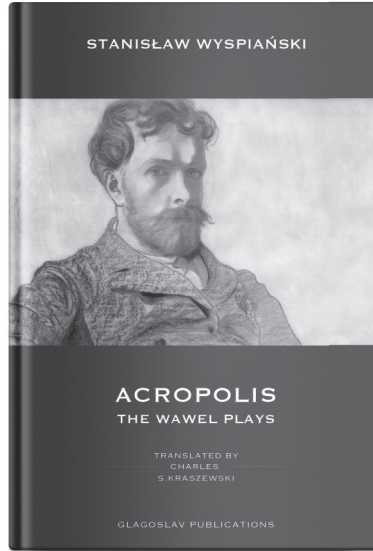
Jan Kochanowski (1530–1584) is widely regarded as the greatest Slavic poet of the Renaissance period, and the greatest Polish poet until the advent of Adam Mickiewicz in the nineteenth century. Friend of Pierre Ronsard, widely travelled in Europe, Kochanowski created the modern poetic idiom in Polish, striving, like Horace before him (on whom he modelled his *Songs*), to achieve immortality through composing in his native language — although he also achieved a widespread fame in Europe for his Latin poems. He was creative in nearly all literary genres, and succeeded splendidly in each he attempted: lyric poetry, such as the *Songs* and the *Trifles*, drama (the humanist tragedy *The Dismissal of the Grecian Envoys*), translation (fragments of Euripides, the Greek Anthology, and Latin poets), narrative poetry (*The Satyr*), and prose. His greatest claim to fame is a cycle he never wished to write: the *Threnodies*, a cycle of laments written in honour of his daughter Orszula, who died not quite aged three.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Charles S. Kraszewski (born 1962) is a poet and translator, creative in both English and Polish. He is the author of three volumes of original verse in English (*Diet of Nails; Beast; Chanameed*), and two in Polish (*Hallo, Sztokholm; Skowycik*). He also authored a satirical novel *Accomplices, You Ask?* (San Francisco: Montag, 2021). He translates from Polish, Czech and Slovak into English, and from English and Spanish into Polish. He is a member of the Union of Polish Writers Abroad (London) and of the Association of Polish Writers (SPP, Kraków). In 2022 he was awarded the Gloria Artis medal (III Class) by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Poland. In 2023, he was awarded the ZAIKS prize for Translation into a Foreign Tongue by the Polish Author's Association (ZAIKS).

Acropolis – The Wawel Plays

by Stanisław Wyspiański

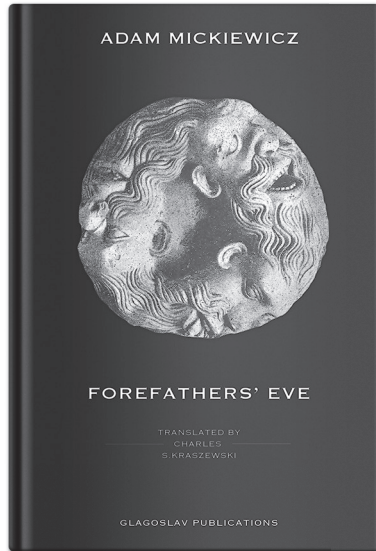


Stanisław Wyspiański (1869-1907) achieved worldwide fame, both as a painter, and Poland's greatest dramatist of the first half of the twentieth century. *Acropolis: the Wawel Plays*, brings together four of Wyspiański's most important dramatic works in a new English translation by Charles S. Kraszewski. All of the plays centre on Wawel Hill: the legendary seat of royal and ecclesiastical power in the poet's native city, the ancient capital of Poland. In these plays, Wyspiański explores the foundational myths of his nation: that of the self-sacrificial Wanda, and the struggle between King Bolesław the Bold and Bishop Stanisław Szczepanowski. In the eponymous play which brings the cycle to an end, Wyspiański carefully considers the value of myth to a nation without political autonomy, soaring in thought into an apocalyptic vision of the future. Richly illustrated with the poet's artwork, *Acropolis: the Wawel Plays* also contains Wyspiański's architectural proposal for the renovation of Wawel Hill, and a detailed critical introduction by the translator. In its plaited presentation of *Bolesław the Bold* and *Skalka*, the translation offers, for the first time, the two plays in the unified, composite format that the poet intended, but was prevented from carrying out by his untimely death.

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FOREFATHERS' EVE

by Adam Mickiewicz



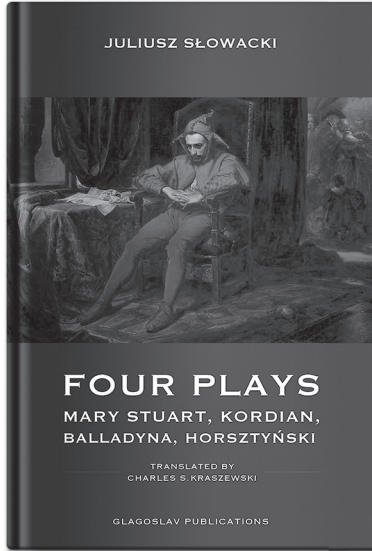
Forefathers' Eve [*Dziady*] is a four-part dramatic work begun circa 1820 and completed in 1832 – with Part I published only after the poet's death, in 1860. The drama's title refers to *Dziady*, an ancient Slavic and Lithuanian feast commemorating the dead. This is the grand work of Polish literature, and it is one that elevates Mickiewicz to a position among the “great Europeans” such as Dante and Goethe.

With its Christian background of the Communion of the Saints, revenant spirits, and the interpenetration of the worlds of time and eternity, *Forefathers' Eve* speaks to men and women of all times and places. While it is a truly Polish work – Polish actors covet the role of Gustaw/Konrad in the same way that Anglophone actors covet that of Hamlet – it is one of the most universal works of literature written during the nineteenth century. It has been compared to Goethe's *Faust* – and rightfully so...

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Four Plays:

Mary Stuart, Kordian, Balladyna, Horsztyński



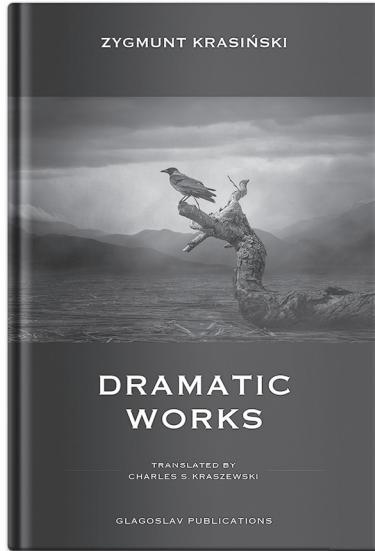
The dramas in Glagoslav's edition of *Four Plays* include some of the poet's greatest dramatic works, all written before age twenty-five: *Mary Stuart*, *Balladyna* and *Horsztyński* weave carefully crafted motifs from *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in astoundingly original works, and *Kordian* — Słowacki's riposte to Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve*, constitutes the final word in the revolutionary period of Polish Romanticism.

Translated into English by Charles S. Kraszewski, the *Four Plays* of Juliusz Słowacki will be of interest to aficionados of Polish Romanticism, Shakespeare, and theatre in general.

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Dramatic Works

by Zygmunt Krasiński



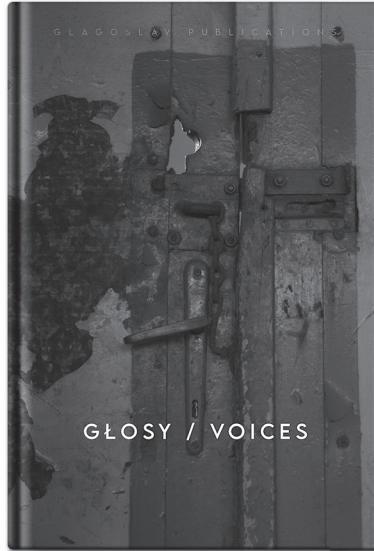
“God hath denied me that angelic measure / Without which no man sees in me the poet,” writes Zygmunt Krasiński in one of his most recognisable lyrics. Yet while it may be true that his lyric output cannot rival in quality the verses of the other two great Polish Romantics, Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki, Krasiński’s dramatic muse gives no ground to any other.

The Glagoslav edition of the *Dramatic Works* of Zygmunt Krasiński provides the English reader, for the first time, with all of Krasiński’s plays in the translation of Charles S. Kraszewski. These include the sweeping costume drama *Irydion*, in which the author sets forth the grievances of his occupied nation through the fable of an uprising of Greeks and barbarians against the dissipated emperor Heliogabalus, and, of course, the monumental drama on which his international fame rests: the *Undivine Comedy*...

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GŁOSY / VOICES

by Jan Polkowski



In December 1970, amid a harsh winter and an even harsher economic situation, the ruling communist regime in Poland chose to drastically raise prices on basic foodstuffs. Just before the Christmas holidays, for example, the price of fish, a staple of the traditional Christmas Eve meal, rose nearly 20%. Frustrated citizens took to the streets to protest, demanding the repeal of the price-hikes. Things took an especially dramatic turn in the northern regions near the Baltic shore — later, the cradle of the Solidarity movement, which would eventually spark the fall of communism in Poland and throughout Central and Eastern Europe — where the government moved against their citizens with the Militia and the Army. Forty-one Poles were murdered by their own government when militiamen and soldiers opened fire with live rounds on the crowds in Gdańsk, Gdynia, Szczecin and Elbląg.

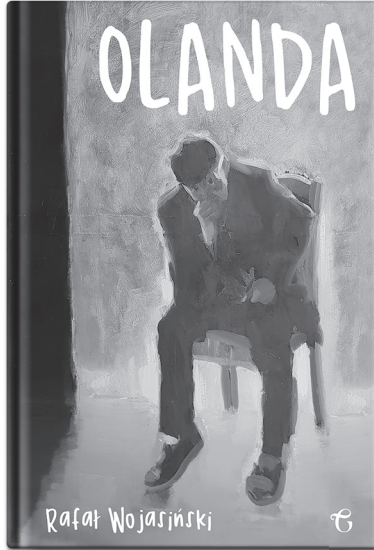
Jan Polkowski's moving poetic cycle *Głosy* [Voices], presented here in its entirety in the English translation of C.S. Kraszewski, is a poetic monument to the dead, their families, and all who were affected by the 'December Events,' as they are sometimes euphemistically referred to.

A BILINGUAL EDITION

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OLANDA

by Rafał Wojasiński



I've been happy since the morning. Delighted, even. Everything seems so splendidly transient to me. That dust, from which thou art and unto which thou shalt return — it tempts me. And that's why I wander about these roads, these woods, among the nearby houses, from which waft the aromas of fried pork chops, chicken soup, fish, diapers, steamed potatoes for the pigs; I lose my eye-sight, and regain it again. I don't know what life is, Ola, but I'm holding on to it. Thus speaks the narrator of Rafał Wojasiński's novel *Olanda*. Awarded the prestigious Marek Nowakowski Prize for 2019, *Olanda* introduces us to a world we glimpse only through the window of our train, as we hurry from one important city to another: a provincial world of dilapidated farmhouses and sagging apartment blocks, overgrown cemeteries and village drunks; a world seemingly abandoned by God — and yet full of the basic human joy of life itself.

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Jan Kochanowski (1530–1584) is not only the greatest Polish poet before Adam Mickiewicz, he is also one of the great figures of the European Renaissance. Over the space of his rather brief life, he excelled in every literary genre he attempted: secular lyric poetry and religious hymns, drama, pithy satires in the vein of Martial, and translations from both the Bible and classical literature. While being the first major voice to shape the modern idiom of Polish, he also wrote in Latin, for which he was recognised abroad by literary lights of the calibre of Pierre Ronsard. Although little known today outside his country, this anthology of his works translated by Charles S. Kraszewski brings the English reader a wide selection of his literary output in verse, drama, and prose. Generous selections from the Horatian *Songs* and satirical *Trifles* accompany the full text of his great humanist drama *The Dismissal of the Grecian Envoys*, which had its English premiere in 2019 on the boards of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London. Kochanowski is mostly famed for a work he wished he had never written. These are the *Threnodies*, a cycle of poems mourning the loss of his little daughter Orszula. It has been said that in this cycle, in which a grieving father so eloquently gives vent to his sorrow at the loss of his child, Kochanowski re-invented the genre of lament, which by his time had become a pallid, formal exercise in writing, devoid of the heartbreaking emotions introduced here by the Polish master. The full cycle of the *Threnodies*, in Kraszewski's completely new translation, is here printed for the first time.

