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The Arcadian Myth in Jan Kochanowski's *Saint John's Eve Song About the Festive Night* as a Synthesis of Cultural Heritage

Mit arkadyjski w *Pieśni Świętojańskiej o Sobótce*
Jana Kochanowskiego jako synteza dziedzictwa
kultury

Abstract

The Arcadian myth has always represented the concept of an ideal human life. This article shows that the Arcadian model unites many humanistic trends and traditions vividly manifested in idyllic writing. The Arcadia presented by Virgil, Theocritus, Sanazzaro, and Kochanowski showed a codified, universal system of values. This is clearly seen in *Saint John's Eve Song About the Festive Night*. This series of poems deals with the relationship between the Arcadian space and Kochanowski's work. This relationship significantly contributes to the myth of the common cultural heritage while showing the reinterpretation of the Arcadian vision in Old Polish literature. The topic of Arcadia relates to the *locus amoenus* and the relationship between classical pastoral poetics and Polish landowning culture, recorded in the native idyllic tradition. The most significant of the textual examples presented was *Sobótka*, which can be interpreted

in various ways. In conclusion, the following discourses are included in the work: Christian, classicist, folk, pagan, and mythological which make us treat the Renaissance poet's work as a synthesis of various humanistic ideas that guided by the University of Padua since its inception.

Keywords: Arcadia, cultural heritage, *locus amoenus*, Jan Kochanowski, *Saint John's Eve Song About the Festive Night*

Abstrakt

Mit arkadyjski od zawsze opisywał koncepcję idealnego życia człowieka. Istotą artykułu było wykazanie, iż model arkadyjski stanowi spoiwo dla wielu nurtów i tradycji humanistycznych, które żywo przejawiały się w twórczości sielankopisarskiej. Arkadyjskość przedstawiana przez Wergiliusza, Teokryta, Sanazzara czy też Kochanowskiego prezentowała skodyfikowany oraz uniwersalny system wartości. Wyraźnie widać to w *Pieśni świętojańskiej o Sobótce*. Ten cykl poetycki traktuje o związkach przestrzeni arkadyjskiej z twórczością poety z Czarnolasu, które istotnie wpisują się w mit wspólnego dziedzictwa kulturowego, przy okazji ukazując reinterpretację wizji arkadyjskiej w literaturze staropolskiej. Zagadnienie Arkadii jest powiązane z topiką *locus amoenus*, a także zależnościami pomiędzy klasyczną poetyką pastoralną a polską kulturą ziemiańską, ukazaną w rodzimej tradycji sielankowej. Najważniejszą z przedstawionych egzemplifikacji tekstowych była właśnie *Sobótka*, którą można wielorako czytać i interpretować. W konstatacji – zawarte w utworze dyskursy: chrześcijański, klasycystyczny, ludowy, pogański, mitologiczny etc. każą traktować dzieło renesansowego poety jako syntezę rozmaitych idei humanistycznych, jakim przyświeca od początku swojej działalności Uniwersytet Padawski.

Słowa kluczowe: Arkadia, dziedzictwo kulturowe, *locus amoenus*, Jan Kochanowski, *Pieśń świętojańska o Sobótce*

Landscapes depicting the life of shepherds appeared long ago in Hellenistic wall paintings. Over time, the theme of the pastoral Arcadia¹ was adapted by painting, which helped it to transpose into poetry and constitute a literary convention. During the Renaissance, many paintings depicting idyllic landscapes, for instance: *Pastoral Concert* (1509) attributed to Titian, and earlier his teacher Giorgione, or *Et in Arcadia Ego* (1638–1640) by Nicolas Poussin, inspired by the poem *Arcadia* by Jacopo Sanazzaro. Who, if not an Italian, could write in such a beautiful way about the charms of Arcadian land?

1 The author will be using the term „Arcadia” written with a capital A.

Sogliono il più delle volte gli alti e spaziosi alberi negli orridi monti dalla natura prodotti, più che le coltivate piante, da dotte mani espurgate, negli adorni giardini, a' riguardanti aggradare; e molto più per li soli boschi i salvatichi uccelli sovra i verdi rami cantando, a chi gli ascolta piacere, che per le piene cittadi, dentro le vezzose ed ornate gabbie non piacciono gli ammaestrati².

The etymology of the word „Arcadia” has its roots in Greek mythology. Owes its name to Arkas, the son of Zeus and Callisto, and the grandson of Lycaon, the former king of those lands, who was punished by Zeus for giving him human flesh. The mythical Arcadia, known from legends, was not located on any map of the world. Its creation is the result of fusing historical awareness with social myths. Ancient poets who enriched the Arcadian myth with their own creative invention, developed it and perpetuated it. As a result, it led to the development of features of the literary topos of the Arcadian land. Among the attributes of Arkadia there should be abundant nature, atmospheric conditions such as in spring, which include: vegetation coming to life, increasing temperature, blooming flowers, as well as an ambience full of mutual respect and love. The poetic Arcadia is also a place where all duties take place in the pleasant atmosphere of the farmhouse, work is not tiring, and people have no worries.

The Arcadian topic is connected with the conventional vision of the pastoral world, arisen on the basis of Arcadian myths and the associated pastoral worldview. Indian literary scholar, Sukanta Chaudhuri, said that the term „pastoral” should be treated as a mode. This mode has been initiated by Theocritus on the 3rd century BC. Greek poet provided a model that others followed³. This pattern was also useful to Virgil, who initiated the subject of Arcadia in literature with his *Eclogues*. As a result, the literary image of the Arcadia developed on the basis of the pastoral mode penetrated into theoretical findings, co-creating the process of species conventionalization of pastoral literature. Arcadian-pastoral topos easily penetrated into culture, as a result of which the elements of Arcadia created separate literary mini-pictures. These pictures were characteristic especially in the art of the European Renaissance and Baroque. Therefore, the theme of Arcadia influenced the process of transformations of the idyll from the moment when the boundaries of her poetics were blurred, and genre determinants were still not established, so that

2 Jacopo Sanazzaro, *Arcadia* (Milano: La Società Tipografica de' Classici Italiani, 1806).

3 Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Pastoral Poetry of the English Renaissance* (Manchester: University Press, 2016).

they were applicable and compatible with structure recognized as the model and final. The „Arcadian component” was extremely important to the genology of the idyll. Idyllic concept taken from Roman literature, it marked the beginning of a much deeper formalization of the genre. However, the direct reference to the concept of Arcadia in ancient texts was not seen in the works of Virgil or Theocritus.

Idyll of the author of *Aeneid* tells about the life of a specific social group, *id est* about shepherds who live in that ideal land called Arcadia. Virgil's Arcadia was located in Sicily. This place was connected with the scenery of Mantua's nature. Nevertheless, before this name was spoken in the literary text, Virgil in *Eclogue IV* resurrects the legend of the Golden Age that was passed on by Hesiod to Greek poetry. Obviously, this eclogue, otherwise considered to be one of the most controversial works in the history of literature, differs significantly from Rother bucolics of Virgil's⁴. This work was written in 41 or 40 BC – in Rome or in Naples. *Eclog IV* contains the so-called „the messianic prophecy of Virgil”. The poet announced that the virgin would give birth to a child. This child will erase the crimes of mankind and will bring peace to the world, ushering in a new era. This is the story of the Golden Age as translated by the English translator A.S. Kline.

Muses of Sicily, let me sing a little more grandly.
Orchards and humble tamarisks don't please everyone:
if I sing of the woods, let the woods be fit for a Consul
Now the last age of the Cumaean prophecy begins:
the great roll-call of the centuries is born anew:
now Virgin Justice returns, and Saturn's reign:
now a new race descends from the heavens above.
Only favour the child who's born, pure Lucina, under whom
the first race of iron shall end, and a golden race
rise up throughout the world: now your Apollo reigns.
For, Pollio, in your consulship, this noble age begins,
and the noble months begin their advance:
any traces of our evils that remain will be cancelled,
while you lead, and leave the earth free from perpetual fear.
He will take on divine life, and he will see gods
mingled with heroes, and be seen by them,
and rule a peaceful world with his father's powers.
(Virgil, *Eclogue IV: The Golden Age*, 4–17)

4 Wilfried Stroh, *Łacina umarła, niech żyje łacina! Mała historia wielkiego języka*, transl. Aleksandra Arnd (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2013).

This eclogue, together with the presented vision of Arcadia, differs in terms of structure and subject matter from other parts from the *Bucolic* collection. As it follows from the introductory invocation to the Muses, Virgil emphasized that in this song he would sing about sublime matters – called from Latin *paulo maiora canamus* (in Italian: *cantiamo cose un poco più nobili*). This phrase was first used by Virgil and is an invitation to discuss nobler issue or to express an intention to change the topic to something more important. While the theoretical interpretation of this, poetic and somewhat self-workshop phrase was made by Cicero in his *De Optimo Genere Oratorum*.

Philip Ford and Andrew Taylor refer to the research of Sukanta Chaudhuri:

In his essay, *Paulo maiora canamus: The transcendence of pastoral in the neo-Latin eclogue*, Sukanta Chaudhuri draws on a wide range of poets and critics to explore the importance and consequence of the „double argument” of pastoral, the sense that „under the cover of trifling fictions, pastoral dealt with graver matters”⁵.

Virgil maintains a balance between shepherd simplicity and metaphorical seriousness. The shepherd takes on the role of a sage, is equipped with the vocabulary of a philosopher. He breaks away for a moment from guarding the sheep and turns to the Muses to express his concern about the essence of human existence and the fate of the world. Anna Krzewska explained that the theme of the idyllic Golden Age mentioned by Virgil in the *Eclogue IV* appeared through the image of universal peace and prosperity, which coexisted with the restored order of the original creation⁶. Inborn goodness was to reconcile the sphere of duty with the sphere of nature, as well as compulsion with freedom. We read further in the text of Virgil that the Arcadian space remains in the sphere of unrealized desires, but also of hope for lasting peace and the arrival of a Golden Age in the history of Rome and the whole world.

The author of *Bucolic* did not associate the legend of the Golden Age with Arcadia, which did not yet exist at the verbal level. We owe these merits to Seneca, who in the choirs of his tragedies affiliated the Arcadian space with the ancient historiography of the cyclical and moralistic

5 Philip Ford, Andrew Tylor, „Introduction: Neo-Latin and the Pastoral”, *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 1-2, vol. 33 (2006).

6 Anna Krzewska, *Sielanka staropolska, jej początki, tradycje i główne kierunki rozwoju* (Warszawa–Poznań–Toruń: PWN, 1979).

understanding of history. Therefore, Arcadia was a hope in the Iron Age to return to natural kindness and universal happiness⁷. Virgil returned to his dreams of Arcadia in *Eclogue X*, which he filled with the vague belief that once, in past centuries, people were happy even in love. After all, doubts as to the existence of the space of unconditional happiness were present from the very beginning of the history of literature. First of all, the expression of Arcadia itself grew out of a culture based on idealistic-epistemic philosophy. Therefore Arcadia was not the subject of reality, but the concept describing its alternative version. Such treatment of the topos allows it to be included in the concept of the Greek *kalokagathia*, that is moral perfection.

When analyzing the cultural properties of Arcadia, it should be assumed that this topos has always manifests a tendency to the general conception of the ideal of human and life. On the other hand, as regards to the birth of Arcadia and its subsequent transformations, this model of human existence must have existed in the imagination of idyllic writers and it was based on some codified and universal system of values. The Renaissance and Baroque exhibited the Arcadian topics quite freely. A manifestation of this is thematic and ideological the stratification of the petrified, ancient version of the land of happiness, which took place as a result of the inevitable verification of this vision by reality. Consequently, the issue of Arcadia was connected with various literary inclinations that penetrate into the program of different cultural fields.

Particularly useful in this aspect is the popular distinction between the Arcadia of the Iron Age and the Golden Age. The Arcadia of the Iron Age, in opposite to the Golden Age, is a conventional spatial enclave, the boundaries of which are leaky, therefore: impurity, death, suffering, beauty, goodness, harmony and love – all these feelings and values come from the same fractures and arrive the same way. Some non-obviousness of human nature also penetrated through its gaps. For instance the „Iron Arcadia” was a meeting place for poets, who believed, that their souls, according to the Platonic symbiosis of poetry, would be fed by love. As a result, this combination of events was giving vent to artistic expression. Another time, Arcadia fitted into Christianized pastoral scenes from medieval Christmas mysteries. As Teresa Michałowska explicated: the patronage over this version of Arcadia was exercised by the Bible, Franciscan legends, apocrypha, folk tales. Furthermore in the Virgil's *Eclogue IV* we can see a clear connection between prophecy about the birth of a child and return of the Golden Age. The vision of Arcadia in

7 *Ibidem*.

Bethlehem appeared as irresistible harmony, that came with the advent of Christ.

This distinctive Arcadian space, located in a shed, was a place where in which shepherds presented gifts, asking Jesus for eternal salvation. Although they knew that in the world they would return to after a short celebration in Bethlehem, nothing will change, the shepherds expressed their worries about the fate of the unattended flocks, fearing the anger of owners if the cattle were hurt⁸. Arcadia in this sense takes on Christian character and is part of the biblical liturgy, because the Bethlehem motif in pastoral genology is closely related to a pastoral song and Christmas carol. Contemporary research about Arcadia complicates the definition of this space a bit more. Eric Haywood wrote that a hundred years ago, anyone who would go to pasture, would go to Arcadia⁹. For instance, a place described in the poem by Sanazzaro, which then became Arcadia for us, is not „Arcadian” in the sense in which the word is used today. Currently, it is impossible to discuss the concept of Arcadia without separating it from the social, political, worldview crisis, which made this land no longer seem so „golden”.

Moreover, human thinking about perfect Arcadia, passed through the filter of „mythical meditation”, is indispensable part of everyday human life. In a sense there is a belief that „that one” Arcadia is still present „today” in our understanding of the world. It is close to us, because it is a remnant of this happy „once”¹⁰. Therefore, the considerations that it can not be ruled out that there may be such a place somewhere in the world is too deeply rooted in human consciousness. For this reason, it is so difficult for us to part with it. We miss subconsciously what has been lost. We dream of a perfect place that does not fit into the real life that we lead. The imperfection of the idyllic world clearly divided the presence of the Arcadian myth in literature into „before” and „after”, because it was based on diverse reading experiences. In Virgil's *Bucolics* there is something like an analogous division into two Arcadia:

(...) in Virgil's „Bucolic” there was a preview of two Arcadia: one of them, that gone to the past, and the other, which retained some reflection of its significant predecessor only in the supernatural perfection of nature.

8 *Ibidem*.

9 Eric Haywood, *Rinascimento e barocco. Roma, Napoli e altri viaggi Per Mauro de Nichilo*. ed. Davide Canfora, Claudia Corfiati (Bari: Cacucci Editore, 2017).

10 Dariusz Śnieżko, *Mit wieku złotego w literaturze polskiego renesansu. Wzory – warianty – zastosowania* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 1996).

However inhabitants of Arcadia began to encounter various natural and social limitations of human life¹¹.

The dominant belief is that the differences in understanding Arcadia as a place in a universal sense are clearly visible in the context of different historical, cultural, religious and territorial conditions. The researcher of the myth of the golden age in literature, Dariusz Śnieżko, came to conclusion that while the golden age extended to the entire generation of the first mortals, the range of Arcadia is more limited. Arcadia is isolated and specifically topographically located: or it is separated by mountains – Virgil's Peleoponnese Arcadia, or by the water element – Sicily by Theocritus¹². The Arcadia of ancient Greece presented a specific set of „components of the represented world”. Historical Arcadia, located on the Peloponnesian Peninsula, is much more often cited in the literature. It was a mountainous place with forests and lakes. The local inhabitants dealt mainly with cattle breeding and hunting, for this reason they paid special tribute to Artemis and Pan – deities who were given patronage over these areas of human activity:

(...) we know about the inhabitants of the real Arcadia thanks to Polybius, a Greek historian from the 2nd century BC, that they were shepherds and they dealt with hunting, that they were hospitable, brave and pious, they were lovers of songs and playing the flute, but they were troubled by know-nothingness and poverty¹³.

Accordingly the people of Arkadia had some worries. However, poetry liked to camouflage it, exposing only the advantages of this place. Arcadian literature presents an idealized land of eternal happiness. The image of this Arcadia consisted of several model, permanent elements that allowed to place the Arcadian myth in the topos category. The permanent factors that make up the image of Arcadia also constitute a common ground with the description of the place of action, which is typical for the genres of pastoral literature. One of the most important aspects is that the pastoral landscape should be created by friendly nature, expressed in the convention *locus amoenus* (this name comes from Latin), that is, the so-called „pleasant place”. Common place *locus*

11 Teresa Michałowska, *Słownik literatury staropolskiej* (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Ossolineum, 1979).

12 Śnieżko, *Mit wieku złotego w literaturze polskiego renesansu*.

13 Krzewińska, *Sielanka staropolska, jej początki, tradycje i główne kierunki rozwoju*.

amoenus is related to the image of Arcadia as a culture-creating concept. We should agree with the thesis that the source of *locus amoenus* is precisely the Arcadian myth. It is best realized by genres of pastoral literature, due to the ancient and pastoral origin of this topos. It is about the stories of shepherds, people who are closest to nature. By adding to that a love theme, the concept of an ideal land takes on a universal meaning. „Place” is a principal story condition, that is an element of the presentation of the represented world, as well as a criterion in qualifying other genres to the broadly understood Polish, landowning literature. This is especially visible in the first lines of the *Saint John's Eve Song About the Festive Night* by Jan Kochanowski (the Polish title is *Pieśń świętojańska o Sobótce*).

When the sun's rays from Cancer pour
And the nightingale sings no more,
Saturday fires, at Time's behest,
Were lighted in the Black Forest.
Both visitors and the household
Rushed promptly towards the bright glow;
Three bagpipes played in unison
And the orchard echoed their song.
(Jan Kochanowski, *Saint John's Eve Song About the Festive Night*, 1–8)

The first words of this poetic song, which deal with the falling darkness in the land of Black Forest (In Polish „Czarnolas” – is the author's village and hometown), refer to the topos *loci amoeni*, in which the space plays the role of an Arcadian myth, situating Kochanowski's land in a timeless rural life. In the series by Jan Kochanowski the apotheosis of the countryside and landed gentry are the most important structural elements of the literary work. In Polish Renaissance poetry the *locus amoenus* has realistic characteristics, because it describes the image of a human, who lived by the work of his own hands. The events presented in the text were usually located among the common people, in the farms, in the meadows, on agricultural fields, where prosperity is due to honesty and a peaceful conscience. The inhabitants believed in the saying: happiness comes from giving up dreams of great fortune and starting cultivation in the native fields. *Saint John's Eve Song About the Festive Night* becomes a praise of living in harmony with the rhythm of nature. In these poetic songs, we can distinguish the convention of the anthropological myth of an idealized land, taken from the *Epod II* by Horace. The suggestive anti-urbanist incipit: „Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis”, which means „Happy, who is far from doing business”, gives reality very

detailed values¹⁴. Nevertheless, this is not a place, where people can enjoy the endless rest. *Locus amoenus* in the *Saint John's Eve Song* by Kochanowski was present out in the form specific of a decalogue of rules for dealing with the blessings of nature. Nonetheless, in this Arcadia people have to work. The heritage of the work of one's own hands is the bond between human and the ground.

The Arcadian myth appears in each country's literature as its own cultural heritage. The similarity of some elements makes the Arcadia a universal space. In Mediterranean culture, it was a tradition of a Golden Age, a happy pastoral land. In Poland the Arcadian myth was expressed in attachment to the Mother-Earth, about what the nineteenth-century Slavophiles wrote: Kazimierz Brodziński and Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski¹⁵. The most convincing literary realization of the Arcadian myth in Old Polish literature was presented exactly in *Saint John's Eve Song*. Sobótki is a folk holiday celebrated during the summer solstice. These were old, magical practices that were supposed to ensure health and fertility. During the Sobótki made a bonfires, through which people were jumping. Moreover fortune-telling took place, girls released wreaths with lit candles on the river.

The songs in *Saint John's Eve Song* are sung by appointed performers. All this text has been arranged in a cycle in such a way that it is entirely a poem about singing. Each successive part of the poem, which is called „Panna”/Maiden¹⁶, presents in its singing landowning, folk, antique or Renaissance motifs and co-creates a specific rule of mixing conventions. This, considered a masterpiece, text shows the legacy of many cultural fields, folklore, religion, art, which are combined into one common and understandable mythical inheritance. The activity of all the Maiden was described by Jerzy Ziomek, for instance: the First Maiden sings with joy at the end of her job, the Second and Third Maiden praise the dance, the Fourth and the Fifth sing folk love songs, the Sixth and Twelfth – theirs chants resemble the Arcadian myth of the happy plowman. The Seventh Maiden criticizes hunting. Maiden Eight is a shepherdess, the Ninth tells the Ovid myth of Philomela turned into a bird, Maiden

14 Ludwika Szczerbicka Ślęk, w Jan Kochanowski, *Pieśni*, ed. Ludwika Szczerbicka-Ślęk (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1970).

15 For instance: Kazimierz Brodziński, *Pisma estetyczno-krytyczne* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Gabinetu Filologicznego Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego, 1934); Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski, *O Słowiańszczyźnie przed chrześcijaństwem* (Warszawa: PWN, 1967).

16 The word „Panna” appears in the original, while the translator Michael J. Mikoś suggested the word „Maiden”.

Tenth, paraphrasing Tibullus, rebukes the war for which her beloved has gone. The Eleventh Maiden sings about the beautiful Dorothy¹⁷. She should be identified with Dorothy Podlódowska, the wife of Jan Kochanowski. This multitude of folk elements is combined at many different levels of cultural heritage. In his poetry series, Jan Kochanowski referred to various topics of pastoral literature, including the cult of landowners' work, the Arcadian myth, pastoral customs and rituals, and a love confession. As explained by Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, „Sobótka” connect with biblical content with influences antique and contemporary poetry, both erudite and popular. In addition, the researcher mentions signs of humanistic ideas, as well as rituals from the pre-Christian period. It is all integrated into the native folk song. The syncretism of various literary and cultural categories that make up this masterpiece sets two lines of research for all songs in this cycle. Firstly: the classical formula, secondly: own tradition, which can be associated with Polish Sarmatian culture¹⁸. Sarmatism seems to be the universal bond for all the literary contexts contained in this literary work. The cult of Sarmatism in Poland in the 16th and 17th centuries was extremely lively. In 1535 Maciej Miechowita wrote about it. In his *Treatise on two Sarmatians, Asian and European*, Miechowita proved the similarities between Poland, Lithuania and Russia and the former Iranian shepherd-nomadic peoples (called Saurmaci) and Scythians, who for centuries were considered the ancestors of the Sarmatian peoples¹⁹. The most dynamic development of the Polish Sarmatian tradition took place during the activity of Polish first idyllic poets. This tendency has heightened general awareness of the native nature of species idyllic in terms of habit and origin. The Polish nobility used the term „Sarmacja” as willingly as „Rzeczpospolita”. The Sarmatian has become synonymous with the Pole. Due to the principle of equality of the nobility and according with the Sarmatian ideology, the entire noble community of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, including Lithuanian and Ruthenian magnates, was called Sarmatians.

Literary works that were written during the heyday of Polish Sarmatism referred to the tradition of a noble backwater and peasant homestead, which proves a sense of identification with all manifestations of Slaviness, so unique for the Polish nation. Nevertheless, Sarmatism was

17 Jerzy Ziomek, *Renesans* (Warszawa: PWN, 2012).

18 Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, *Spotkania w labiryncie. Szkice o poezji Jana Kochanowskiego* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2019).

19 Maciej Miechowita, *Opis Sarmacji azjatyckiej i europejskiej*, introd. Henryk Barycz, transl. Tadeusz Bienkowski (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1972).

not the only worldview option in Kochanowski's poem. On the contrary. This is one of the equivalent of the Arcadian-Slavic vision of cultural heritage. The *Saint John's Eve Song* is a meeting place of many influences, including the Christian tradition, present in the culture of Polish Sarmatism, as well as pagan elements that shaped the Scythian peoples. Nowicka-Jeżowa concluded that even God seems to be a supra-denominational notion in this poetry cycle. Therefore, these poetic songs should be treated as a synthesis of cultural heritage that is independent of changing historical factors. Moreover, we can call it an integrated synthesis of cultural heritage, that reflects the belief in the unity of culture as the essence of the identity of human experience²⁰. As previously mentioned, during that magical night, girls danced with magic herbs and flowers, cleansing fires were lit, and water baths were taken. Mirosław Hanusiewicz wrote in the introduction to the translations of Kochanowski's works by Michael J. Mikoś that:

This tradition, well known all over Europe, had its Slavic and Polish incarnation, though Kochanowski probably alluded not only to the domestic customs, but also to certain Italian folk performances called *maggia* with which he might have been acquainted during his studies in Padua²¹. These folk inspirations mix with the motifs from Roman literature – the song of the Ninth Maiden refers to Ovid's *Tristia* and *Metamorphoses*, the song of the Tenth Maiden alludes to the elegy by Tibullus, and the song of the Twelfth Maiden, concluding the whole idyll, is a paraphrase of Horace's famous epode „Beatus ille qui procul negotiis...”, yet because it does not include the original's ironic conclusion, is interpreted simply as a praise of the joyful life in the countryside (Hanusiewicz, in: Mikoś, 2018).

This extensive intertextuality create in this text the formula of love props, which are the suitable composition for a folk song. In „Sobótka” we also have very similar behavior patterns that we know from the Arcadian myth: respect for tradition, gratitude to nature, gentleness and simplicity in interpersonal relations. The universalisation of the ethos of the philosophy of rural life in this work is complemented by the idea of justice and care. In this life nothing is waste. The housewives are self-sufficient, always have something to feed their household members and are ready to welcome the guests.

20 Nowicka-Jeżowa, *Spotkania w labiryncie*.

21 Janusz Pelc, *Kochanowski. Szczyt renesansu w literaturze polskiej* (Warszawa: PWN, 2001).

Then the housewife, working with zeal,
 Busies herself with evening meal,
 She has at home such big supplies;
 At market stalls she never buys.
 (Kochanowski, *Twelfth Maiden*, in *Saint John's Eve...*, 45–48)

The poet has created an Arcadian reality, a dream space to live that we want to keep forever. Human takes from nature and gives to nature. This world is beyond the boundaries of history and time. The idyll model of praising life in the countryside makes us treat Kochanowski's poems as an attempt to transfer the fascination with ancient works to Poland. It was often questioned whether the song cycle of the Czarnolas poet was classified as „pastoral”. It was thought to be a text closer to landowners' poetry than to bucolic poetry. Even if, from the genological point of view, „Sobótka” does not fit the model of the traditional, old idyll, these songs were considered in the context of a cyclical whole, just like the later poetry volumes of idylls.

Ziomek wrote about the implications of the poet from Czarnolas to ancient cycles: „Kochanowski referred to Horace in a special way”. The cycle ends with Song XII, the so-called „Maiden Twelve”, is key to understanding of the Arcadian idea of this masterpiece.

„Peaceful village, joyful village” is a paraphrase of the second epode *Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis*. (...) Kochanowski abandons these humorous words and constructs the type of a happy peasant who ‘feeds without any usury’ – fairly, because he is far from trade, shipping and war”²².

The very beginning of this song is expressed through rhetorical questions. Twelfth Maiden leaves no illusions to the reader as to rightness escapist intentions. There is no land more beautiful and better to live in than the countryside. Nowhere else, but only here, you will feel at home – seems to be talking Twelfth Maiden.

Peaceful village, joyful village,
 Who can speak of your advantage?
 Who can recall your comforts, gain,
 Who can recall them all again?
 (Jan Kochanowski, *Twelfth Maiden*, in *Saint John's Eve...*, 1–4)

22 Ziomek, *Renesans*.

This place combines features and values, suitable for every person, regardless of origin, religion or culture. That is why, in all its simplicity, it is the most sacred space, which makes it so similar to the distant ideal of Arcadia. This thought was later repeated in the form of a poetic buckle in the last four lines of this song:

It is daytime, but the bright glow
 Into the sea once more would flow,
 Before my voice could tell again
 Of village comforts and its gain.
 (Kochanowski, *Twelfth Maiden*, in *Saint John's Eve...*, 57–60)

„Sobótka” can be read in many ways. Each of them is interesting. Undoubtedly, the reasons for this we can find in Kochanowski's great knowledge, his erudition and travels to Italy, of course. His Arcadian myth becomes a cosmopolitan link between many cultures. This is understandable and common code for the folk culture, which in national versions is present in almost every latitude.

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