

Andrzej Niemojewski's *Kocham* and Its Japanese Translation by Futabatei

Shimei

Zofia KURZAWIŃSKA

Nicolaus Copernicus University

The aim of this paper is to conduct a comparative analysis between the narration *Kocham* by Polish writer Andrzej Niemojewski (1864-1921), and its Japanese version *Ai* 愛 (love) translated by one of Japan's greatest Russian linguists Futabatei Shimei 二葉亭四迷 (1864-1909), also known as the "father of the modern Japanese language". The existence of the above-mentioned translation is closely connected to the partnership of Futabatei and his friend, Polish cultural anthropologist Bronisław Piłsudski (1866-1918). Both scientists joined forces in order to deepen relations between Poland and Japan by establishing an intercultural association under which they hoped to publish translations of impactful texts from their respective countries. This event was of great significance for Polish culture, because at that time Poland did not exist as an independent country.¹

One of the translated works was Niemojewski's *Kocham*, entitled "Ai" in Japanese. "Ai" does not ideally correspond to the Polish title *Kocham*, since it is a noun, whereas the original is a verb in the first-person singular form, directly meaning "I love". Nevertheless, this translation seems more appropriate and compatible for Japanese literature, than for example *suki da* 好きだ would have been. The term *suki da* means "I love" and is used to confess feelings of infatuation, but also has less emotional depth than *ai*. The language from which Futabatei translated the text is unknown, but

¹ Ciesielska 1994: 29–31.

considering his educational background it is fairly rational to believe it was Russian. The author of *Kocham*, Niemojewski, is said to have been fluent in many languages, which helped him devote to his passion of esoteric research. He practiced ancient Greek, Latin, Sanskrit and Hebrew and spoke Russian, French, German, Italian and English.² He also engaged in many translation projects and published a Polish version of Ernest Renan's French book *Vie de Jesus* (Life of Jesus, 1863). It could have been possible for Niemojewski to translate his own writings to Russian or that Piłsudski had translated them for Futabatei. However, this could also have been done by a third person, unconnected to those mentioned above.

Kocham is a short narration about longing for the past and experiencing deep pain. It is divided into three parts. The first one focuses on the reminiscence of the narrator's pure, joyful and abundant childhood. The narrator states that in the first years of his life he used to be one with joy. If he was just a body, then joy was the soul that inspired it. But childhood faded away like a short, tender song and aside from partial reminiscences it is now unreachable and inaccessible.

The second part of the story describes dynamic changes connected with stages of life: prepubescence, puberty, adulthood and senility. The narrator is shown as an odd-one-out preteen boy. When other children enjoy their freedom, he bears a stigma of disdain and receives contradictory information about his identity from the community. He is lost in thought and does not know whether this stigma is a curse or a gift. Then he describes his transition into a teenager and calls it a time of Satanic temptations full of happiness and sacrifice. Those have mainly become lessons of remorse for the narrator due to the hardships and misery he had been through, as well as the heroism these situations required him to impose on himself. But he and his fellows chose to walk their own life paths regardless the scrutiny it brought upon them.

It was not the people, but the inescapable adulthood which made the narrator close to inhuman. He bent under the pressure of responsibilities, burned out emotionally and lost hope as well as his

² Niemojewski 1983: 15.

memories of the past. The burden of knowing life made him neither a warm nor a cold person. He began to feel as if adulthood approached him in order to detest him and spit into his face.³ The narrator compares adulthood to a thief who enchains someone to a big barrow of burdens, then scoffs at one's emotions, spits into their face and burns out any memories or affection with fire. This builds an image of uncontrolled sadism, which cannot be overcome with mere will and preparation to fight. It seems the narrator succumbs to a tragic destiny and learns he is powerless in the view of bigger outside events which surround him and influence his actions, decisions and lack of emotional stability. The third part of the story presents in which point of life and state of mind is the narrator in the "here and now". After a tiring and sleepless night, he tidies his hair and discovers grey ringlets on the comb, then continues to examine himself by asking inner questions:

Who shall I become as a senile man? For whom am I doing my best? For whom did my hair turned grey so early? Why am I in a rush to grow old?⁴

While experiencing the cost of anxiety and fear by noticing the flow of time the narrator desperately tries to recall the reason that brought him to sacrificing his happiness and youth. What he discovers as his motivation for action are the fields and villages that lay before his eyes as a reminder of what he loves and treasures the most. Surely the described terrain is no accidental area, but a precious land, maybe a homeland. The image of these surroundings brings the narrator back to his yearning for joyful childhood and the nostalgic, cheerful melodies from that time start to play in his thoughts yet again. As a result, he feels deep love which transcends the weight of his emotional burdens. However, these present feelings are not those of excitement and affection, but of grief and despair. This fatality, how he defines it, is ominous and inexorable, nevertheless anyone who holds a heart that is not of stone shall succumb to it, even if it can only bring eternal destruction and devastation.⁵ It is the second time the narrator clearly admits he is driven by an

³ Niemojewski 1896: 128–131.

⁴ Niemojewski 1896: 130.

⁵ Niemojewski 1896: 131.

inevitable passion which exceeds his emotional limits and is stronger than his will and individual choices. It is the outside circumstances that brought him this destiny and he faces it bravely, for he cannot let his heart become a cold stone. It seems the narrator knows non-repenting, cold, stone-like people and despises the road they have chosen.

For Futabatei this story is unquestionably about Polish lands under foreign rule and he introduces it as such to the Japanese reader. As a fact, in Niemojewski's lifetime the Polish were divided between Prussia, the Austrian and the Russian Empires. This was a huge trial for Poles, who – deprived of independence – put much effort into upholding their language and culture. Especially under Russia's reign, repressions meant Russification in every aspect of daily life. New political parties of various worldviews were created at that time. They either aimed at gaining some autonomy by cooperating with the invaders or at fighting their way to full independence. Some planned to abolish any borders and introduce socialism as the only proper way to live.⁶

Of course, Niemojewski, known as a passionate rebel keen on criticising anything worth the critique, had his own take and role in these newly established political movements. Especially as from the beginning he had a deeply patriotic background. Niemojewski's grandfather Józef, was a Napoleonic general who fought in the Kościuszko Uprising against Imperial Russia in 1794. His son Felix took over the Napoleonic tradition, but have not participated in the January Uprising in 1863-1864 for religious reasons (he belonged to the sect of tobianists, who worshipped God's will over the independence of the country).⁷

Nevertheless, Andrzej Niemojewski's most politically active period starts in 1904,⁸ a year before riots broke out in result of the Russian 1905 revolution, whereas *Kocham* was first published in 1896, in a compilation of stories entitled *Listopad* (November). It was long before Niemojewski fully devoted himself to political activism, but during the period of his fascination with socialism

⁶ Makowiecki 1981: 13–16.

⁷ Piechrzała 1972: 8–14; Basara-Lipiec 1988: 10–11.

⁸ Pierzchała 1972: 5–73.

and the fight for workers' labour and social rights. It must be noted that the name *Listopad* could refer to the November Uprising of 1830–1831, especially as the narrations echo a motif of separation from one's origins with no way to return to one's core, but critical literature on Niemojewski's works does not acknowledge his early works as evidence of patriotic devotion at all.

Niemojewski developed his interest in socialism while working as a secretary in the management of the Society of Carbon Mines and Metallurgical Plants Sosnowice (Towarzystwo Kopalń i Zakładów Hutniczych Sosnowieckich) from 1892 to 1898. He decided to be part of this industry because of financial problems, which started when he married Stanisława Mikiewiczówna in 1888 regardless of his family's will. He came to Sosnowiec in a very chaotic and dangerous period, abundant in riots of angered workers, where even bomb attacks on the mine's administrators were used. Through these attacks the workers demonstrated their desire to fight for colleagues who were massively laid off.⁹ During his stay, Niemojewski experienced countless encounters with distraught workers and began to compose realistic poems about the pain and dangers of working in a mine. He drew up images of poverty and misery, hardship and human exploitation by using strong and drastic language. He wrote not only about labour, but also created poems on riots, occupational accidents causing disability, exemptions and bloodshed. His works were then published in a compilation called "*Polonia irredenta*" (1895–1896), featuring titles like *Podziemia* (undergrounds), *Łuny* (afterglows) and *Ziemia obiecana* (promised land).

The facts from Niemojewski's biography and his artistic focus of that time, suggests that the compilation *Listopad* from 1896 is ought to touch upon a topic similar to the poems mentioned above. The narrations from *Listopad* are more metaphorical than the openly rebellious poems exhorting workers to seek their rights. However, some parts of the compositions indicate the dreadful plight of workers. For example, in the narration called *Starowina* (old granny), a man looks upon a steel mill in the evening, where the red aura surrounding the place is the only bright spot of

⁹ Pierzchała 1972: 5–73

light on the horizon. Suddenly, a poor, nearly blind old granny, covered in dust, approaches him. She is looking for her only son, who worked in the steel mill, but due to an accident he is now in pain, so the management called upon his mother to take care of him. Not knowing the right directions, she walked three days to find the mill. The narrator feels like in a story or dream, as he strolls through the haze, moisture and plants to encounter an old granny, whose problems seems worlds apart from his. “Like in a fairy tale!” – he says, feeling the romantic atmosphere of the evening while glancing at the back of the woman, who hurries towards the steel mill.¹⁰ This narration depicts the drama of physical workers through a comparison with the relaxed life of the narrator, who is just a by-stander, watching their painful experiences from a distant place.

Another, more abstract example of Niemojewski’s writings from *Listopad* is a narration entitled *W przestworzach* (in the sky). It portrays a universe in which the Sun, surrounded by planets tired of being in motion, flies through silent and dark skies. The planets fly behind the Sun as their only leader for millions of years, weary and unsure of what their goal is. Even if a star appears on their way, the Sun ignores it and eventually the star disappears. The planets are in despair, so they ask the Sun to let them rest and to show them their goal, but the Sun just replies: “Go forth! Go forth!” and the planets have no choice, but to silently obey what the Sun orders.¹¹ Judging from Niemojewski’s experiences from that time, this narration could be a metaphorical picture of a mine or steel mill owner ordering around tired, lifeless and defenceless workers. Or could it possibly be a portrait of a political invader, unaffected by the powerlessness of its victims? There is such probability, although there is also a danger of committing a misinterpretation based on misleading assumptions in this case.

In comparison with these two texts, *Kocham* seems different, since it focuses mainly on depicting the passionate emotions of an individual. It is not someone else who is in pain, but the

¹⁰ Niemojewski 1896: 22–26.

¹¹ Niemojewski 1896: 11–13.

narrator, who bears a burden of an outsider. His joyful childhood ended right after realizing he is different than the others and his sorrowful journey through life continuous until today. As mentioned before, Futabatei thought of this narration as a story of a Pole deprived of his country, nevertheless there is a possibility, that Niemojewski meant to present the life of a physical worker through it. A man who could celebrate his childhood as any child could, but as time passed, he learned that he was not born free like other boys and at a young age he was already despised by his surroundings. Then came poverty and misery, then an absolute, complete emotional burnout, and at a young age he has already become an old man. When he asks himself why all this painful work is worthwhile, the answer is one: because in the end, I love to live. I see fields, I see villages and I love them, but this loving also puts the burden to try to survive for this love on me.

The language Niemojewski uses is quite sophisticated for someone who ought to be a physical worker, but this interpretation is valuable, because it explains why would Piłsudski provide Futabatei, who was deeply interested in workers' rights, socialism and Russian revolutionists, with this type of text. Of course, there is also a probability that Niemojewski intended to write an autobiographic narration, but at that time he was thirty-two years old and a very prolific author. In this case the hardships mentioned in the text would refer only to his rebellious decision to marry Stanisława, and the financial crisis that they have been through ever since. All in all, Niemojewski was unable to earn enough money for them merely as a writer.

The compilation *Listopad* also features some characteristics which suggest the narrations do not require fitting them into biographical or historical facts and can be viewed as separate, autonomous works. There is a lot of abstract situations present, especially connected to a personification of nature, which brings to mind romantic traditions and motifs of a fatal fate on anything else. For example, in the narration *W górze* (up in the air) a cloud flies in grief above Earth. It sends down tears in form of rain, then becomes a scary thundercloud, tossing lightnings to the ground. Next it

escapes, scared of the silence and passivity of Earth.¹² As in *Kocham*, it is a symbolic portrait of hopelessness of a single individual in this world, which fits the main concepts of the decadent Polish modernist period called Young Poland (1890–1918), and treating it only as a cry for political independence would probably diminish its meaning.

The fact that Futabatei decided on translating *Kocham* to Japanese is a great research opportunity for Polish humanities, so a few remarks on Futabatei's translation ought to be made. As it is widely known, Futabatei was a great linguist and one of the reformers of Japanese literary language, who introduced modernized, colloquial forms of writing as a new solution, as the classical-styled texts became outdated and did not reflect actual life at all. The movement demanding this change bore the name of *genbun-icchi* 言文一致 (lit. unification of words and sentences). The challenge of introducing European literature to the Japanese reader was not an easy task for Futabatei. Often there were no terminological equivalents and a very different Japanese word had to be chosen in order to depict an occurrence correctly. However, Futabatei aimed for precision as much as he could. When translating Ivan Turgenev's novel *Rudin* (1856), he even selected fourteen synonyms of "love" in order to properly characterize the variety of emotions appearing in the book.¹³ No doubt the translation of *Kocham* was also a big challenge to him. What is clear at first glance at both the original Polish text and the Japanese translation is that the person of the *I* narrative shall be less visible in the second text. The source says: "dzieciństwo moje przebrzmiało mi jak piosenka rzewna" (this childhood of mine has passed by me like a tender, short song),¹⁴ defining the narrator of this sentence very precisely. However, in Japanese it is:

Shimeyaka na, itsumademo itsumademo natsukashii mijikai uta no yō ni, osanai toki wa sugisatta

しめやかな、いつまでもいつまでも懐かしい短かい歌のように、幼い時は過ぎ去った

¹² Niemojewski 1896: 14–15.

¹³ Ciesielska 1994: 61–63.

¹⁴ Niemojewski 1896: 128.

(like a quiet, forever dear, short song, the childhood has ended).¹⁵

In comparison, the Japanese sentence draws attention to the subject of childhood, but hides the announcer of this statement. He is then revealed in specific grammatic forms in sentences to follow.

The Polish narrator speaks about the ability to hear the song of childhood from time to time in the “*bojowa wrzawa życia mego*” (battle uproar of my life).¹⁶ Nevertheless, however “militaristic” this adjective might seem in Polish, Futabatei chooses to use a dissimilar term *ukigoto* 憂事, which means “misery; bitter experience”. The whole phrase *ukigoto shigeki wagasei* 憂事繁き我生,¹⁷ which can be translated to English as “my life of frequent miserable occurrences”, sounds as derived from Buddhist teachings about suffering. Futabatei’s choice is very surprising in this case, for he could have easily borrowed words from the samurai warrior culture.

It is very important to underline the way Futabatei express the feeling of love, which is the main topic of the narration. This phrase appears throughout the original story in the same form as in the title. For example, in the sentence: “Ileż razy mówiłem wtedy: Kocham!” (how many times did I then say: I love!)¹⁸ it is cited as direct speech. However, in Futabatei’s translation, only the title says “love” (愛). The word appearing further throughout the text is *natsukashisa* 懐かしさ, which means “nostalgia; longing” or *itoshisa* 愛しさ. The whole Japanese translation of the above-mentioned sentence is: “*natsukashisa ni koe o ageta no mo mō ikutabi ni ka naru*” 懐かしさに聲を揚げたのも最う幾度にかなる (How many times have I raised my voice to express longing).¹⁹ This translation uses description rather than direct speech, and has more poetic value than the

¹⁵ Futabatei 1985: 493.

¹⁶ Niemojewski 1896: 128.

¹⁷ Futabatei 1985: 493.

¹⁸ Niemojewski 1896: 128.

¹⁹ Futabatei 1985: 493.

original. What is missing in comparison to the source text is the act of confessing love. The narrator expresses yearning instead, which might be considered a little less heroic than a written confession.

There is a discrepancy between the two texts in terms of the reason the joyful childhood came to an end. The Polish source says: “I przyszła młodość pacholęca i zabrała mi wszystką wiosnę z nieletniego oblicza, a wszelką szczęśliwość z serca” (and then my youth as a lad came and took away all of the spring of my juvenile self, and all happiness from my heart).²⁰ In this version it is the kind of youth experienced by the narrator that took his wonderful childhood away. On the other hand, the Japanese translation states:

Sono osanai toki mo sugisatte, waga mi o terasu haru no hikagewa kie waga mune ni himeta kōfuku mo ubawareta

その幼い時も過ぎ去って、我身を照らす春の日影は消え我胸に秘めた幸福も奪われた

(childhood times have passed, the spring sunshine that shone on me have disappeared and all of the happiness sealed in my heart has been taken away).²¹

In this sentence, the end of childhood brought negative consequences. However, there is no blame on youth expressed here and this is what differs the text from the original.

There are only two parts in Futabatei’s translation which greatly change the meaning of the source text and both are connected to elements interpreted by Futabatei as related to the partition of Poland. Of course, it is unsure if Futabatei have interpreted them himself, or has been given an explanation by someone else, for example Piłsudski. He could have also owned a version of the text which clearly stated that the author meant to write about the liberation of Poland. This would suggest the translation was part of a bigger plan to make Japanese intelligentsia aware of the situation in Poland. Either way, Futabatei’s translation does not meet with the original in two cases. First of all, the narrator sees other young boys “którym było wolno żyć życiem radości i swobody” (who can live their life of joy and freedom).²² The Japanese version describes them as

²⁰ Niemojewski 1896: 128.

²¹ Futabatei 1985: 493.

²² Niemojewski 1896: 128.

“*Jiyū no tenchi ni kiki toshite kono shō o tanoshimu*” 自由の天地に嬉々としてこの生を楽しむ
(they enjoy their joyful lives on the land of freedom).²³

The Polish version sounds like a matter of the boys’ individual freedom, whereas the Japanese one directly points at the problem of the country’s liberation. Moreover, at the ending, the Polish narrator asks: “Czemu ja jednak nie czułem wtedy tej miłości tak, jak ją dziś czuję, choć sam byłem miłością?...” (why haven’t I, at that time, felt this love as much as today, although my whole self was love?...).²⁴ However, in the Japanese version the narrator makes a statement: “*Osanai toki ni wa ima no yō ni kō kono kokudo o itoshii to wa omowanakatta. Naze de arō?*” 幼い時には今のやうに斯う此國土を愛しいとは思はなかつた。何故であらう？(in childhood I haven’t thought of this country as so dear to me. Why is that?).²⁵ Once again, the translator interprets the narrator’s love as longing for his beloved homeland.

Besides these changes, Futabatei’s work is indeed a translation of a linguistic genius. Many sentences are translated with almost one hundred per cent of accuracy. In his work he shows precision, vigilance and concern for detail. The narration gains a new depth in Japanese.

The objective of this paper was to compare the Japanese translation of *Kocham* with the original text. In the wider view, this would create a deeper understanding of the forms the Polish-Japanese cultural cooperation took in the twentieth century. During the process of analysis, it came to light that in Polish sources critics do not see Niemojewski’s first writings as demonstrations of patriotism, which is the exact opposite of what Futabatei writes about. It also emerged that although most of Futabatei’s translation is very precise, there are parts connected to the differences in languages or fact interpretation, which creates distance between the two texts.

²³ Futabatei 1985: 493.

²⁴ Niemojewski 1896: 130.

²⁵ Futabatei 1985: 494.

There are still unknown aspects of Futabatei and Piłsudski's project, on which only finding proper reference materials would shed some light. For example, what language was the narration translated from? Was Futabatei right to interpret this writing only as a cry for liberty? Why did Piłsudski choose this narration regardless of the existence of others? The author of this publication hopes to find some valuable sources on these matters in future research projects.

Bibliography

Basara-Lipiec, Eugenia 1988. *Niepodległa myśl. Rzec o Andrzeju Niemojewskim* [Independent thought. Essays on Andrzej Niemojewski]. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Rzeszowie.

Ciesielska, Małgorzata 1994. *Bronisław Piłsudski i Futabatei Shimei w świetle korespondencji Bronisława Piłsudskiego do Futabatei Shimei* [Bronisław Piłsudski and Futabatei Shimei in the light of the former's letters to the latter]. Stęszew: IIEOS (International Institute of Ethnolinguistic and Oriental Studies).

Futabatei Shimei 二葉亭四迷 1985. *Futabatei Shimei zenshū dai san kan* 二葉亭四迷全集第三卷 [The collected works of Futabatei Shimei, volume 3]. Tōkyō: Chikuma Shobō. pp. 493–495.

Pierzchała, Jan 1972. "Andrzej Niemojewski – piewca Zagłębia Dąbrowskiego (1864–1921)" [Andrzej Niemojewski – eulogist of Zagłębie Dąbrowskie (1864-1921)]. In: Andrzej Niemojewski. *Polonia irredenta*. Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich: 5–69.

Majewicz, Alfred F. 2010. "Bronisław Piłsudski – globalni hit polskiej orientalistyki" [Bronisław Piłsudski – a global hit of Polish oriental studies]. In: Tadeusz Majda (ed.). *Szkice z dziejów polskiej*

- orientalistyki* [outlines of the history of Polish oriental studies]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego: 141–219.
- Makowiecki, Andrzej Z. 1981. *Młoda Polska* [Young Poland]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne.
- Niemojewski, Andrzej 1896. *Listopad* [November]. Lwów: Księgarnia Polska.
- Niemojewski, Andrzej 1983. *Wybór wierszy* [Poem selection]. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Sawada, Kazuhiko 沢田和彦 and Kōichi Inoue 井上紘一 (eds.) 2010. *A Critical Biography of Bronisław Piłsudski Vol 1–2*. Saitama: Saitama University Faculty of Liberal Arts.