Chapter 20

Translation as Resistance: Three Centuries of *Paradise Lost* in Polish

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While the first Polish version of *Paradise Lost*, Jacek Przybylski's *Miltona Ray utracony*, was published in 1791, John Milton's name had already appeared in Polish handbooks of poetics before that date, suggesting that eighteenth-century literary scholars in Poland would have already been familiar with some of his works. The most important handbooks of the period—by Franciszek Karpiński (1782), Filip Neriusz Golański (1786), and Franciszek Ksawery Dmochowski (1788)—mention Milton in the context of the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns.[1] *Paradise Lost* serves as a model of a modern epic, alongside Torquato Tasso's *La Gerusalemme liberata* (1581), in which mythological subject matter is replaced with Christian content. As Dmochowski's handbook—written entirely in verse— avers, the time had come when a Christian framework should replace the pagan and mythological one of ancient epic poems so that poets could address the pressing questions of the struggle between good and evil, sin and damnation, salvation and redemption. He praised Tasso and Milton for their innovative approach:

Tass i Milton szczęśliwie okazali światu,   [Tasso and Milton successfully showed to the

world,

Jak się duchy piekielne siliły na zdrady,   How the hellish spirits attempted their treason,

A jak Najwyższy dumne zawstydził ich rady.[2] And how they were put to shame by the

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[1] Karpiński, '*O wymowie*'; Golański, *O wymowie i poezji*; Dmochowski, *Sztuka rymotwórcza*.

[2] Dmochowski, *Sztuka rymotwórcza*, p. 50. Translations from Polish are mine unless

Highest.]

Yet while the Polish translation of Tasso's epic was published in 1618, within forty years of that work's first publication, the Polish translation of Milton's appeared in 1791, more than a century and score after its first publication.[3] One of the reasons for this delay could be the placement of its Italian translation, *Il Paradiso perduto. Poema inglese, tradotte in nostra lingua de Paolo Rolli*, on the Roman Catholic Church's Index of Prohibited Books in 1732.[4] Even though the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was ethnically diverse and characterised by considerable religious freedom in the eighteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church played an important cultural and political role. Translating publications listed on the Index could be considered a subversive political act: not only did it break the ecclesiastical prohibition to own and read banned books, but it also promulgated prohibited texts by making them accessible to a wider audience that would not have been able to read them in their original languages.[5]

It is against this background that the first Polish translation of *Paradise Lost* must be

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otherwise indicated.

[3] For the context of Piotr Kochanowski's 'extremely popular' Polish adaptation of 'Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*' and other epics, as well as other matters described in this chapter, see 'Polish tradition' in Baker, *Routledge Encyclopedia*, pp. 527.

[4] *Index librorum prohibitorum*, p. 406. See also Kenrick, '*Paradise Lost* and the Index of Prohibited Books', pp. 485–500. For a discussion of Rolli's and others' Italian translations of Milton's works, see Chapter 13 of the present volume.

[5] For a detailed discussion of how late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Polish scholars and translators challenged the church censorship, see Bednarska-Ruszajowa, '*Książki zakazane*', pp. 38–57.

considered. Jacek Przybylski (1756–1819) graduated from Kraków Academy (now

Jagiellonian University) with a doctorate in philosophy in 1775 and soon took holy orders.

After five years, however, he left the priesthood to become a lecturer in classics and the head

librarian of Kraków Academy. Przybylski must have been aware of the implications of

translating prohibited authors.[6] In the 1780s he anonymously published his translations of

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[6] Soon after Przybylski joined the Kraków Academy, one of its lecturers in poetics, Andrzej

Cyankiewicz, translated John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and

published it in 1784 as *Logika czyli Myśli z Lokka o rozumie ludzkim*. It was met with hostile

reaction from Michał Jerzy Poniatowski, Bishop of Płock and Primate of Poland, King

Stanisław August Poniatowski's brother, and the head of the Commission of National

Education (the central educational authority of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

established in 1773). Michał Jerzy Poniatowski, most likely aware that Pope Clement XII

placed the French translation of Locke's work on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1734,

deemed the Polish translation heretical and prohibited its circulation. Cyankiewicz learned his

lesson and anonymously published his next translation, Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*

(1788), and dedicated it to King Stanisław August Poniatowski. In the foreword to the

translation, he pleaded: '*Pope pisze jak filozof, nie jak teolog, ale filozof chrześcijański, który

przez światło rozumu usposabia dusze do przyjęcia łagodnie świateł wiary i tam właśnie

kończy, gdzie teolog powinien zaczynać. . . . nie należy tłumaczyć surowo i po teologicznemu

wybiegów imaginacji*' [Pope writes as a philosopher, not a theologian, and (what is more) a

Christian philosopher who, with the light of reason, makes the souls ready to accept the lights

of faith, and ends where a theologian should begin. . . . the creations of imagination should

not be understood in a strict and theological way]. Quoted from Bednarska-Ruszajowa,

'*Książki zakazane*', p. 44.

Candide, *Le monde comme il va*, *L'Histoire d'un bon Bramin* and *Memnon* by Voltaire, whose works had been placed on the Index in the 1750s. Fake printing-house addresses appeared on their title pages in order to protect himself and his publisher. He dedicated *Candide* to Ignacy Potocki, a well-known patron of writers, who rewarded Przybylski with a precious ring and is said to have bought out all the copies of the book to avoid problems that could have been caused by their wider circulation.[7]

Przybylski's translation of *Paradise Lost* was not anonymous.[8] Perhaps in an attempt to protect himself, he opened the translation with a dedicatory poem to King Stanisław August Poniatowski, whose brother, Michał Jerzy Poniatowski, was from 1784 the Archbishop of Gniezno and Primate of Poland, the highest religious authority in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In his twelve-stanza dedication, Przybylski describes the relationship of his work to king and country:

Naśladowco Wszechmocności	[O you, Follower of Omnipotence
Nim stworzyłeś ziemian plemię	Before you created landed gentry
Wprzódeś rozpędził Ciemności	First you dispersed Darkness
A Światłem objaśnił Ziemię	And brought Light to Earth
Już świetny Polak w swym kraju	The noble Pole in his country
Pod prawem Trzeciego Maja	Under the Third of May law

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[7] Grychowski, *Lublin i Lubelszczyzna*, p. 73. A similar protective process occurred with William Tyndale's English translation of the Bible: Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall 'arranged for an English merchant to buy the entire printer's stock of Tyndale's Bibles, which he promptly burned' (Campbell, *Bible*, p. 13).

[8] Milton, *Miltona Ray Utracony*, trans. Przybylski.

Jak Adam i Ewa w Raju,	Like Adam and Eve in Paradise
Ciesząc się szczęście podwaja.	Joyfully multiplies his bliss.
Jego nagroda sowita,	His prize will be generous,
Jeśli powinność wykona;	If he fulfils his obligations;
Lecz, by nie zgrzeszył, niech czyta	But, so that he avoids sin, let him read
Raj utracony Miltona.[9]	Milton's *Paradise Lost*.]

Przybylski aligns God's creation of humankind with the king's creation of landed gentry; and the bliss Eve and Adam experienced in Paradise to life in Poland after the Constitution of 3 May 1791, designed to transform the country from a state ruled mainly by affluent nobility into a more democratic constitutional monarchy. In addition to that, Przybylski characterises his publication of *Ray utracony* as a didactic act, intended to show Polish readers the dire consequences of the first sin and thus make them loyal subjects to their sovereign.

Many of Przybylski's translational choices also work to reduce the perception that the poem was radical. He translated Milton's hendecasyllables into thirteen-syllable lines and, perhaps surprisingly, Milton's blank verse into rhymed couplets. Consequently, Przybylski also omitted Milton's introductory renunciation of rhymed verse as 'the invention of a barbarous age'.[10] Przybylski's choice of the thirteen-syllable rhymed couplet is a conservative and understandable one within Polish literary tradition at the time: it was the standard epic metre in Polish literature. Dmochowski used it in his translation of the *Iliad* (1791–1801) and Lucjan Siemieński employed it in his translation of the *Odyssey* (1873).

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[9] Milton, *Miltona Ray Utracony*, trans. Przybylski, pp. [3–4].

[10] Milton, *Paradise Lost,* ed. Lewalski, p. 9. All quotations of *Paradise Lost* are from this edition.

Another feature of Przybylski's translation, however, was quite progressive and reflective of Milton's original. Przybylski coined new words that would most faithfully resemble Milton's language. The fact that some of these neologisms sounded too foreign for Polish readers was the major source of criticism that Przybylski faced. The anonymous *Zakus nad zaciekami Wszechnicy Krakowskiej* [An Essay on the Scholarship of Kraków University] (1789) fiercely attacked Przybylski's translations.[11] The work accuses the polyglot Przybylski of damaging the Polish language by introducing into it an excessive number of coinages:

> *Autor, który umie siedem języków, powinien o tym wiedzieć, że nie masz żadnego, który by się dał na drugi słownie tłumaczyć, że co się w tym języku jednym, to w innym kilkoma wyrazami opisywać musi. Za cóż przy tak wielkiej w językach biegłości, psuje ojczystą mową, i wyraz grecki, łaciński, angielski, francuski, niemiecki, włoski jednym wyrazem polskim, choćby i*

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[11] Przybylski was a prolific translator. Apart from Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, he translated several works by Voltaire (1780–95), Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* (1790), Hesiod's collected works (1790), the *Iliad* (1790–3, 1814), the *Odyssey* (1815), and the *Batrachomyomachia* (1789). The original Polish title of the pamphlet mocking Przybylski consists of neologisms coined by him. It was intended to satirise his linguistic innovation. Its authors were later identified as Franciszek Siarczyński and Franciszek Ksawery Dmochowski. Many of Przybylski's coinages have never entered mainstream language. However, some of them are still in common use today, for instance the word *wszechnica* in the title of Dmochowski and Siarczyński's pamphlet is used for 'university', and *pomnik* is the standard word for 'monument'. See Dmochowski and Siarczyński, *Zakus Nad Zaciekami Wszechnicy Krakowskiey*.

sześciołokciowym wydaje?[12]

[The author who knows seven languages should know that there is none that could be translated into another in a literal way, (and) that what is in one language one word, in another language needs to be conveyed in several words. Why—being so proficient in languages—is he damaging the Polish speech and translating a Greek, Latin, English, French, German, or Italian word by a single, yet even twelve feet long, Polish word?]

Przybylski addressed these accusations in a mock-heroic satire *Heautoumastix czyli Bicz na siebie samego* [Heautoumastix, or a Whip for Oneself] (1789), written in imitation of Alexander Pope's *Dunciad.* Despite the severe censures of Przybylski's translations of Milton, the first Czech translator of *Paradise Lost*, Josef Jungmann, used Przybylski's version while working on his own.[13]

Dmochowski's criticisms of Przybylski's translation could be personally motivated. Dmochowski had begun translating *Paradise Lost* himself as early as 1786, yet political events prevented him from finishing his translation before Przybylski. From 1788, he took part in the Four-Year Sejm, a special session of the parliament of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth aimed at radical political and economic reform, and in 1794 he fought in the Kościuszko Insurrection against Imperial Russia. Parts of Dmochowski's translation appeared in 1801–2 in *Nowy Pamiętnik Warszawski* [New Warsaw Journal] edited by Dmochowski

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[12] Dmochowski and Siarczyński, *Zakus*, pp. 83–84.

[13] On the influence of Przybylski's version on Josef Jungmann's translation, *Zdraceného ráje* (1811), see Szyjkowski, *Polská účast*, pp. 190–197. For more on Jungmann, see Chapter 18 of the present volume.

himself.[14] He translated excerpts from Books 1 to 4. Dmochowski did not translate from

Milton's original English, but rather from Louis Racine's French prose version, *Le Paradis*

perdu de Milton (1755).[15] Dmochowski put the content back into verse form using, like

Przybylski, thirteen-syllable rhymed couplets.

   A third Polish version of *Paradise Lost*, an anonymous translation of a large part of

Book 1, appeared in *Dziennik wileński* [Vilnius Daily] (1827). Stanisław Helsztyński asserts

that its author is likely Leon Borowski, professor at Vilnius University, who published his

translations of Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* in the same journal in 1819.[16] In 1820, he

published *Uwagi nad poezją i wymową* [Remarks on Poetry and Rhetoric], an attempt at

drawing a historical account of the development of European culture and literature. This

subject bore particular relevance for Borowski and his contemporaries. After Poland lost its

political sovereignty in 1795 and was partitioned among the Austrian Empire, Prussia, and

the Russian Empire, many Poles believed that it was only through nourishing Polish language

and cultural identity that the Polish nation could survive. Thus Borowski devotes

considerable attention to the way translations of works from other cultures and languages can

enhance the development of Polish literature and significantly enrich its language.

Anticipating the argument that in light of the threats to many aspects of Polish cultural

identity one should focus solely on subjects related to Polish history and tradition, Borowski

writes:

   Uważają wprawdzie niektórzy naśladowanie za rodzaj przymusu i

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[14] Milton, *Raj utracony*, trans. Dmochowski, pp. 112–116.

[15] Helsztyński, 'Milton in Poland', pp. 145–154. For more on Racine's and others' French

translations of Milton's works, see Chapter 8 of this volume.

[16] Helsztyński, 'Milton in Poland', p. 149.

poddaństwa, mniemając, że gasi przyrodzoną dzielność duszy i odbiera

własnorodną żywość myśli. . . . W istocie zaś najszczęśliwszy talent, żeby się

mógł rozwinąć i wzmocnić, potrzebuje wsparcia. . . . Dodać należy, że każda

prawie literatura nowożytna musi mieć swoją epokę naśladowania . . . .[17]

[Some may consider imitation a type of restriction and servitude, thinking that

it extinguishes naturally given courage of the soul and takes away one's own

liveliness of thought. . . . In fact, however, the finest talent—in order to

develop and grow stronger, needs some support. . . . One needs to add that

almost every modern literature has to have its own age of imitation . . . .]

Borowski positions translations of Milton and other European poets as part of his wider

cultural programme of sustaining and enriching Polish culture, which was being suppressed

in the Russian-dominated Kingdom of Poland created by the Congress of Vienna Treaty in

1815. In his translation, Borowski used the traditional Polish epic metre of thirteen-syllable

rhymed couplets as the most appropriate measure for the given subject matter. Adam

Mickiewicz, one of his students at Vilnius University whose poetic talent Borowski is said to

have been the first to recognise, would use the same metric frame a few years later to write

the most celebrated epic poem of Polish Romanticism, *Pan Tadeusz* [Sir Tadeusz] (1834).[18]

Audience played a major factor in a partial translation of *Paradise Lost* of about the

same time. In her work on the reception of Milton in the Polish Enlightenment, Zofia Sinko

mentions yet another translation that appeared in 1822 in the magazine *Warszawianin:*

Tygodnik Mód [Varsovian: A Fashion Weekly]: the opening part of Book 5 rendered into

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[17] Borowski, *Uwagi nad poezją i wymową*, pp. 103–105.

[18] Chodźko, '*Leon Borowski*', pp. 115–151.

Polish by Jakub Frey.[19] The translated excerpt includes the scene in which Adam wakes Eve and admires her beauty, and seems to have been chosen to attract the magazine's target audience: females appreciative of the considerable amount of sentimental literature published in the journal.

The nineteenth century also saw the publication of a Polish rendering of Evariste de Parny's French parody of *Paradise Lost*, published in France in 1805 as *Le Paradis perdu, poème en quatre chants* [Paradise Lost, A Poem in Four Books] (1805). Paweł Czaykowski translated Parny's comic epic, with God as a despotic tyrant, into Polish in 1809.[20] An anonymous reviewer of *Pamiętnik Warszawski* [Warsaw Journal] recommended it to readers, stating that '*Parny do najwyższych obrazów Miltona, przydał właściwą sobie samemu wesołość*' [Parny added some of his own gaiety to Milton's greatest images]. Yet, perhaps aware of the scandal that Parny's other mock epic, *La Guerre des Dieux* [The War of the Gods] (1799), caused in France, the reviewer adds with some caution: '*Przyjemna żartobliwość milejby nas bawiła, gdyby jej cel był inny*' [We would find this pleasant playfulness more agreeable if its intention were different].[21]

While no new translations of *Paradise Lost* were published for the rest of the century, major Polish Romantic poets, such as Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, and Zygmunt Krasiński mention Milton in their essays and letters. As Zofia Sinko notes, it is very probable that they knew *Paradise Lost*, as it was part of the literary curriculum at certain universities,

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[19] Milton, '*Ustęp z Raiu utraconego*', trans. F[rey], pp. 142–144.

[20] de Parny, *Ray utracony*, trans. Czaykowski.

[21] Review of Evariste de Parny, *Ray utracony*, pp. 278, 281. For a detailed analysis of Parny's works, see Robertson, *Mock-Epic Poetry*, Chapter 9.

for instance at Vilnius University.[22] However, they did not translate Milton, choosing to render into Polish more contemporary English-language authors such as Lord Byron, the most popular among Polish Romantics.[23]

The second full Polish translation of *Paradise Lost* appeared in 1902.[24] While we possess very little information concerning the life and career of the translator, Władysław Bartkiewicz, we know that he was a layman and a devout member of the Roman Catholic Church, which he makes explicit in the introduction to his version of *Paradise Lost* and considers a justification for the significant changes he makes to the poem.[25] His name can

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[22] Sinko, *Twórczość Johna Miltona*, pp. 133–134.

[23] Adam Mickiewicz translated several of Byron's works, including *The Giaour*, 'Darkness', 'Euthanasia', and passages from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Zygmunt Krasiński rendered *Parisina* into Polish. Juliusz Słowacki imitated Byronic imagery in some of his works, and Cyprian Norwid, who referred to Byron as 'the Socrates of poets', translated his 'Farewell'. For a comprehensive discussion of the enthusiastic reception of Byron in Polish Romanticism, see Modrzewska, 'Pilgrimage or Revolt?', pp. 305–315.

[24] Milton, *Raj utracony*, trans. Bartkiewicz. For a comparative analysis of Przybylski's and Bartkiewicz's translations, see Phillips, 'Epic Poem or Adaptation to Catholic Doctrine?', pp. 349–365.

[25] Stanisław Helsztyński mentions Bartkiewicz's name only in passing in his three articles on Polish translations of Milton ('English Literature in 18th-Century Poland', '*Polskie przekłady Miltona i Pope'a*', and 'Milton in Poland'). Zofia Sinko also does not provide any background information on him (*Twórczość Johna Miltona*, pp. 29–30). More recently, Ursula Phillips wrote that her 'efforts to uncover biographical information on Bartkiewicz have drawn a blank' ('Epic Poem or Adaptation', p. 351).

also be found among the authors of the thirty-three volume *Encyklopedja Kościelna* [Church Encyclopaedia] (1873–1933).[26] The entries Bartkiewicz wrote show that he possessed detailed knowledge of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious controversies in England, which he describes for instance in his entry on Robert Browne and the Brownists.[27] It is likely that Bartkiewicz was familiar with Milton's theological views and his treatises, and perhaps considered them too revolutionary and subversive to be published without any alterations.

It is possible that his decision to censor Milton's epic and remove the passages that were explicitly critical of the Roman Catholic Church was connected to the fact that his translation was published during the fifty-year period when Poland did not exist as a sovereign state. After the Russian Tsar Alexander II crushed the January 1863 Uprising, the Kingdom of Poland—created in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna Treaty—was officially incorporated into the Russian Empire.[28] Polish universities were closed, Russian was introduced as the compulsory language of instruction in primary and secondary schools, and censorship was introduced to 'control all knowledge and all sources of information',

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[26] Michał Nowodworski and Stefan Biskupski, eds., *Encyklopedja Kościelna*. Bartkiewicz is listed among the contributors to the encyclopaedia up to volume 15, which was published in 1883.

[27] Nowodworski and Biskupski, eds., *Encyklopedja Kościelna,* vol. 2 (1873), pp. 605–606.

[28] After the two failed Polish uprisings that erupted in the Russian-occupied lands in 1830 and 1863, Russian Tsar Alexander II abolished the Congress Kingdom created at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Within a few years, the Polish Kingdom was deprived of its autonomy and transformed into a Russian province, *Privislinkiy kray* (Vistulaland). Poland disappeared from the map of Europe for over fifty years, regaining sovereignty only in 1918.

effectively banning non-authorised works on Polish history, politics, literature, culture, and Catholic theology.[29] A number of Roman Catholic churches were closed or turned into Russian Orthodox churches, and many monasteries were dissolved.[30] Historian Norman Davies offers an apt description of how this strategy of Russification affected the lives of Poles who found themselves under Russian rule:

> If a person continued to speak Polish, to practise the Catholic religion, and to cultivate Polish friends, he was automatically suspect in the eyes of the political authorities. In order to prove an acceptable degree of reliability and to qualify for a responsible position, a Pole had to abandon his native language, even in his home, to reject Catholicism or Judaism for Orthodoxy, and to shun his relatives and friends. . . . the central government in St. Petersburg increasingly sought, not to thrash the Poles into submission in the Prussian fashion, but rather to wear them down by depriving them of all the spiritual and cultural resources which make life tolerable.[31]

The political context in which Bartkiewicz's translation originated can, at least partly, explain

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[29] Davies, *God's Playground*, vol. 2, p. 73. Davies characterizes the primary goal of the Russian Tsars in relation to their Polish subjects to be 'ultimate assimilation, integration, conformity, and standardization' (p. 61). See also Lewitter, 'The Partitions of Poland', pp. 333–359.

[30] See Davies, *God's Playground*, vol. 2, ch. 2: 'Rossiya: The Russian Partition (1772–1918)'.

[31] Davies, *God's Playground*, vol. 2, p. 80.

the changes he made to Milton's poem.[32] In his introduction, Bartkiewicz openly acknowledges that he removed several passages containing explicit criticism of the Church. He explains his decision to do so as follows:

> *gdy Chrystyanizm napastowany jest w podstawach swoich, miło jest słuchać poetę, mocno przejętego wiarą w Objawienie Boskie. Drobne, w kilku miejscach, wycieczki przeciw Kościołowi usunąłem lub zatarłem, co tem łatwiej mi przyszło, że owe napaści, pisane pod wpływem namiętności stronniczych, religijnych i politycznych, jakie wówczas miotały Anglją, nie łączą się organicznie z całością utworu.*[33]

> [when Christianity is being attacked in its fundamentals, it is pleasant to listen to a poet who takes belief in the Divine Revelation seriously. In a couple of places, I erased small sallies against the Church. It came to me all the more easily, as those attacks, written under the influence of subjective vehemence, religious and political, that tossed contemporary England, are not organically linked with the work as a whole.]

Bartkiewicz suggests that in a situation in which Roman Catholicism was persecuted by the Russian Empire, Milton could bring Polish readers real Christian nourishment, provided that his satirical remarks directed against the Roman Catholic Church were erased.

The reviewers of Bartkiewicz's translation, Ignacy Chrzanowski and Stanisław

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[32] As Michael H. Bernhard points out, historically, the Roman Catholic Church 'was often the only institution that had a Polish character. Thus Polish national consciousness came to be strongly tied to a Catholic religious identity' (*The Origins of Democratization in Poland*, p. 136). For a fuller discussion of this topic, see Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland*.

[33] Milton, *Raj utracony*, trans. Bartkiewicz, p. ix.

Tarnowski, were of a different opinion. These literary scholars harshly criticised

Bartkiewicz's decision to censor Milton. Chrzanowski wrote disapprovingly:

> *Nie! Nie godziło się posypywać pudrem twarzy purytanina-Miltona, aby ją*
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> *rumieńców pozbawiać . . . W wieku dwudziestym*—editio castrata, *to doprawy*
>
> *co najmniej dziwne zjawisko!*[34]

> [No! It was not honourable to put powder on the face of the Puritan Milton so
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> as to deprive it of its natural healthy colour . . . *Editio castrata* (castrated
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> edition) in the twentieth century, this is a curious thing, to say the least!]

The passages that Bartkiewicz chose to remove include parts of Book 3 (ll. 451–97) in which

various monastic orders are treated satirically, and a dozen lines of Book 12 (ll. 518–30) that

describe the gradual corruption of the Church and, as Barbara Lewalski points out, allude to

'what Milton saw as the revival of "popish" superstitions in the English Church after the

Restoration'.[35]

Bartkiewicz was also the first Polish translator who refrained from using the thirteen-

syllable rhymed couplets and instead attempted to find a metrical pattern that would resemble

the decasyllabic blank verse of the original poem. In his introduction, he criticised previous

translators for using rhymed couplets and ignoring Milton's rejection of rhyme. Bartkiewicz,

in contradistinction to Przybylski and Dmochowski, chose an eleven-syllable unrhymed line.

His reviewers in general approved of this choice, saying: '*czyta się dobrze i wrażenie dobre*

robi' [it reads well and makes a good impression].[36]

The tercentenary of Milton's birth saw the publication of Bartkiewicz's translation of

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[34] Chrzanowski, Review of John Milton, *Raj utracony*, trans. Bartkiewicz, pp. 121–122.

[35] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Lewalski, p. 328, note to lines 12.515–37.

[36] Tarnowski, Review of John Milton, *Raj utracony*, trans. Bartkiewicz, pp. 136–137.

Samson Agonistes (1908), followed soon thereafter the first monograph on Milton in Polish,

Roman Dyboski's *Milton i jego wiek* [Milton and His Age] (1909). Dyboski describes the

political context of Milton's works at length and devotes considerable space to Milton's

political and theological treatises. For the first time, Milton is presented to Polish readers not

only as a great epic poet, the modern Homer, but also as a contemporary thinker interested in

the political and religious controversies of his age. Dyboski also predicts that the reception of

Milton in the twentieth century would differ from the way he was read until then, since

'*nowożytna nauka zburzyła ową zewnętrzną skorupę, odgraniczającą ptolemejski świat*

Miltona od chaosu, i otwarła wyobraźni ludzkiej całą nieskończoność przestrzeni' [modern

science has demolished the outer shell that separated the Ptolemaic world of Milton from

chaos and made the endless space open to human imagination].[37] This thought would be

continued half a century later by another translator of Milton, the 1980 Nobel Prize in

Literature laureate Czesław Miłosz.

As the influence of French culture and literature began to diminish in twentieth-

century Poland and as interest in English-language literature grew stronger, more and more

poets started to translate Milton's verse. Among the twentieth-century poets and authors who

translated shorter or longer passages of *Paradise Lost* are Jan Kasprowicz, Aleksander

Mierzejewski, Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, Jerzy Pietrkiewicz, Czesław Miłosz, and

Maciej Słomczyński.[38] The last two are particularly important, as they have garnered

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[37] Dyboski, *Milton i jego wiek*, pp. 104–105.

[38] Kasprowicz, *Obraz poezji angielskiej*, vol. 3, pp. 9–11; Miłosz, *Kontynenty*, pp. 16–18;

Milton, *Raj utracony,* trans. Słomczyński; Kasprowicz's, Mierzejewski's, and Miłosz's

translations can also be found in Krzeczkowski, Sito, and Żuławski, eds., *Poeci języka*

angielskiego, pp. 557–632. In his introduction to Słomczyński's translation, Jan Strzetelski

exceptional critical acclaim. In 1939, when World War II erupted, both Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004) and Maciej Słomczyński (1922–98) were young aspiring poets. The War found them in a Warsaw almost completely demolished by Nazi troops after the failure of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. In 1943–4, when the Nazis burned the Warsaw ghetto, Miłosz began translating T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922). As he later recollected, working on Eliot's poem about the 'Unreal City' in which death has 'undone so many', struck a peculiar note. Of his translation of parts of *Paradise Lost*, Miłosz remarked:

> *Był smak w tłumaczeniu Miltona latem 1945 roku w Krakowie. . . . byliśmy* in
> partibus daemonis, *a przy tym do swego losu przywiązani. Kosmiczne*
> *Miltonowskie wizje odpowiadały przeżyciu, powiedziałbym, kluczowemu.*[39]
> [There was a taste for translating Milton in the summer of 1945 in Kraków. . .
> . we were *in partibus daemonis* (demons' provinces), yet at the same time
> attached to our fate. Milton's cosmic visions answered, I would say, our
> crucial experience.]

While Miłosz translated only short passages from Books 1 and 12 (1.242–63; 12.632–49), Miltonic imagery kept reappearing in his prose reflections and essays until the end of his life. He emphasised how important all the works he translated were for his development as a poet.[40]

Milton's compelling manner of expressing the theme of exile constantly recurs in

refers to earlier translations by Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński and Jerzy Pietrkiewicz, yet I have not been able to locate these two translations.

[39] Miłosz, *Kontynenty*, p. 16.

[40] For an in-depth discussion of Miłosz's work as a translator, see Heydel, '*Gorliwość tłumacza*', which contains a summary in English (pp. 279–284).

Miłosz's work and becomes one of the central themes of his writing. Miłosz's personal exile consisted in first leaving the multi-ethnic region of Szetejnie (now in central Lithuania) of his birth and childhood, and second, in leaving Poland after World War II.[41] In 1951, he defected and obtained political asylum in France, and in 1960, he immigrated to the United States. His works were banned in Soviet-controlled Poland. These circumstances can explain at least partly why the theme of exile, both external and internal, became a recurring leitmotif in Miłosz's writing. He frequently wrote about the pain and misunderstanding that exiles experience. In the introduction to Joseph Koudelka's album *Exiles,* Miłosz movingly records:

> an archetypal exclusion from the Garden of Eden repeats itself in our lives . . .
> Centuries of tradition are behind the image of the whole earth as a land of
> exile, usually presented as a desertic, sterile landscape in which Adam and Eve
> march, their heads despondently lowered. They were chased from their native
> realm, their true home where the same rhythm has ruled over their bodies and
> their surroundings, where no separation and no nostalgia has been known.
> Looking back, they may see fiery swords guarding the Gates of Paradise.
> Their nostalgic thinking about a return to the once happy existence is
> intensified by their awareness of prohibition. And yet they will never
> completely relinquish the thought of the day when their exile will end. . . . The

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[41] Miłosz describes his childhood in Lithuania in the novel *Dolina Issy* (1955) and in the memoir *Rodzinna Europa* (1959). They were published in English as *The Issa Valley*, trans. Iribarne and *Native Realm*, trans. Leach. For a comprehensive account of Miłosz's life, see Franaszek, *Miłosz: Biografia*. A number of biographical essays can be also found in the recent English-language collection by Haven, ed., *An Invisible Rope*. For Milton and exile, see Martz, *Milton: Poet of Exile*.

biblical image is that of a movement in space from the Gates of Eden or,
translating this into modern notions, from the borders of a state guarded by
armed soldiers. However, distance may be measured not only in miles, but
also in months, years, or dozens of years.[42]

Exile understood as a displacement in time is connected in Miłosz's writing with the
difficulties of conceiving of transcendence and sustaining belief in what he called 'hidden
reality' for people of the twentieth century. He thus regularly addresses the religious
imagination of the previous ages now perceived as obsolete and irrelevant. In his prose piece
'*Opowieść o nawróconym*' [A Tale of a Convert], Miłosz in a mildly ironic way describes
Paweł (whose Polish name is the equivalent of the biblical Paul) searching for 'the truth'.[43]
Paweł converts to Roman Catholicism and attempts to rebuild a direct connection with the
centuries-old religious tradition. He considers how seriously Dante, Goethe, and Milton
treated their subject matter and becomes dismayed by his contemporaries' attitudes towards
belief: 'The horror felt by Paul was understandable, for suddenly he realized that mankind
had entered a new phase, in which the notions of transgression and punishment, of Salvation
and Damnation, had disappeared. More and more people did not believe in anything, even in
the truth of science'.[44] Thus, from translating Milton, Miłosz moves towards a reflection on
how twentieth-century audiences can possibly approach and comprehend the deeply spiritual
dimension of Milton's poetry. His suggestion is that, while the language of theology has
become far too removed from everyday human experience, poetry can help readers retain a

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[42] Miłosz, 'Foreword', in *Exiles: Photographs*, by Koudelka, p. [2].

[43] Miłosz, *Piesek przydrożny*, pp. 291–301; published in English as *Road-side Dog*, pp. 183–
195.

[44] Miłosz, *Road-side Dog*, p. 187.

certain religious sensibility in the contemporary world: 'What is deepest and most deeply felt in life, the transitoriness of human beings, illness, death, the vanity of opinions and convictions, cannot be expressed in the language of theology, which for centuries has responded by turning out perfectly rounded balls, easy to roll but impenetrable'.[45]

The author of the most recent and most popular full translation of *Paradise Lost*, first published in 1974, also knew the experience of exile.[46] Initially, Maciej Słomczyński had not planned to become a translator at all. Having fled from Poland in 1945, when Soviet troops entered Warsaw, he moved through Austria and Switzerland to France, where he joined the Third United States Army as it was heading eastward from Germany to Czechoslovakia. Officers in command realised that Słomczyński was perfect material for their translator, as he had been raised bilingual by his English mother, Marjorie Crosby.[47] Years later, Słomczyński would describe his experience of war in literary terms:

> Deutschland
>
> *Świat w płomieniach—miałem kiedyś książkę o tym tytule.*
>
> *Szosy obramowane ogniem. Płoną maleńkie miasteczka z piernika, najczystsze*
>
> *i najpiękniejsze na świecie, chociaż niemieckie. Płoną wsie, płoną czołgi. . . .*
>
> *A oto i jesteśmy zaopatrzeni w poezję płomienia i muzykę wybuchów. A*

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[45] Miłosz, *Road-side Dog,* p. 21.

[46] Milton, *Raj utracony*, trans. Słomczyński. The second edition was published in Kraków by Wydawnictwo Literackie in 1985 and reprinted in 1986. Subsequently, it was reprinted by the publisher Zielona Sowa in 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, and 2011.

[47] A detailed account of Słomczyński's life can be found in a memoir published by his daughter: Słomczyńska-Pierzchalska, *Nie mogłem być inny.*

lejtmotywem jest przerażenie.[48]

[*Germany*

The world in flames—I once had a book with this title.

Roads surrounded by fire. Little gingerbread towns, the purest and the most

beautiful in the world, even though German, are on fire. Villages are on fire,

tanks are on fire. . . . And here we are, equipped with the poetry of flame and

the music of explosions. And our leitmotif is horror.]

Słomczyński returned to Poland in 1946, determined to become a writer. By the end of the

year, he had finished his first novel, *Lądujemy 6 czerwca* [We Are Landing on 6 June], based

on his wartime experience. It became very popular. After a year, it was banned by Soviet

censorship. As Słomczyński remarked, the Iron Curtain drastically changed the political and

cultural situation in Poland. Art and culture were supposed to serve the political cause, and

writers who wanted to see their works published had to follow the principles of the state-

approved socialist realism's aesthetic.

As Słomczyński remarks ironically, in those circumstances, becoming a translator

seemed a natural choice for him:

Nadszedł czas Armii Czerwonej, jedynej tryumfatorki w II wojnie światowej. I

w ogóle nadeszły nowe czasy. Próbowałem przystosować się do nich, jak

umiałem, ale nie bardzo mi to szło, więc zostałem tłumaczem.[49]

[The time of the Red Army, the sole victor of World War II. And generally,

new times have come. I tried to adjust to them as much as I could, but it didn't

go too well, so I became a translator.]

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[48] Słomczyński, *Krajobraz ze skorpionem*, p. 31.

[49] Słomczyński, *Lądujemy 6 czerwca*, p. 4.

Translation allowed Słomczyński to keep writing and publishing at a time when his own works were banned by Soviet censorship and he could not publish in his own name. He did not, however, treat translation as a secondary literary activity. He insisted on the fact that for him translation involved an act of identification with the original author and thus certain responsibilities and obligations towards the author. When asked in an interview what translation provides him personally, he answered: '*Świadomość, że uchwyciło się prawdę. Nie przybliżenia, spolszczenia i parafrazy, ale maksymalna uczciwość wobec żywych i umarłych*' [Awareness that one has grasped the truth. Not any approximations, Polish adaptations, nor paraphrases, but the utmost fidelity towards the living and the dead].[50]

Słomczyński became a prolific translator from English. In 1969, he came to real fame as the first Polish translator of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). He spent eight years working on the novel and, in order to gain a stable income in that period, began writing crime fiction under the pseudonym Joe Alex. His detective stories became exceedingly popular among Polish readers as well as in the other countries of the Soviet Block. In 1972, Słomczyński received the ZAiKS (Polish Society of Authors and Composers) Award for outstanding translations of literature in English. In 1974, the tercentenary year of Milton's death, his translation of *Paradise Lost* was published, and the following year, it won him the Polish PEN Club's Award.

Słomczyński's translation of *Paradise Lost* does not attempt to adapt Milton's poem to Polish readers' tastes as much as the previous versions by Przybylski and Bartkiewicz. While Przybylski employed the Polish epic metre that his readers would have expected and Bartkiewicz erased certain passages that he considered offensive to Polish religious sensibility, Słomczyński does neither. He is the first Polish translator to include 'The Verse'

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[50] Krzemień, '"*Bóg mi powierzył honor tłumaczy . . .*"', pp. 3–4.

in his version. He uses an eleven-syllable unrhymed line. Moreover, the afterword by literary scholar Jerzy Strzetelski provides instructive information about Milton's life and poetic development, as well as his theological, philosophical, and political views.

Looking back at all the Polish translations of *Paradise Lost* from the present point of view, one cannot help but notice the crucial role of the specific historical and political contexts in which they originated. Historicising these translations enables us to reach a fuller understanding of the specificity of the very choice to translate and the particular choices made by the translators in a given cultural and political milieu. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a time when Poland lost its political sovereignty and when Polish culture and literature were suppressed, epic poetry was seen as a genre that could help sustain Polish identity. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, therefore, was considered a model for a modern Polish epic poem. This shifted with twentieth-century translations of *Paradise Lost*, which did not focus as much on the form of the poem as on its rich imagery, affective power, and spiritual dimension. It was especially the poets who lived through the First and Second World Wars that found Milton's exploration of the themes of vanity, destruction, and exile— understood both in a physical and a spiritual sense—particularly compelling.

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