

## The long journey of Milton's "Paradise Lost" into the Slavic world

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The biggest language in the world is not  
English, Mandarin, or Spanish  
but translation.

Jon Fosse, 2016, 136

This statement by Jon Fosse, a Norwegian playwright and writer, indicates the role of translation in intercultural communication. While we may assume that larger language cultures usually have the core of the canon translated, we can still find gaps in such translations in smaller ones. The reasons may be subjective (e.g. a lack of skilled translators) or objective ones (the developmental level of the language; the impact of ideology in a country). This paper stems from the personal experience of its author with translating John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* into Slovak. It has led me to posing a logical question: What was the journey of *Paradise Lost* into other Slavic languages? \*

### RUSSIAN

Unsurprisingly, the first translations of *Paradise Lost* into Slavic languages were Russian, despite the fact, as Clarence A. Manning states,

[u]ntil the early part of the 18th century, Russia was not interested in the artistic production of the West, and when the new literature was established after the reforms of Peter the Great, most of the translations that appeared from English were hack work, incorrect translations of French and German translations of the English authors (1934, 173).

In the 18th century, three complete Russian translations of *Paradise Lost* were done, all of them in prose. The earliest was the unpublished 1745 version by the Russian baron Aleksandr Grigorevich Stroganov (1698–1754) under the title *Погубленный рай* (Paradise destroyed). Stroganov translated the French edition of Nicolas Dupré de Saint-Maur and his effort came during times of discussion about literary language in Russia. Šárka Kühnová (2012, 369) states that Stroganov “blends Church Slavonic with the vernacular to match Milton's sublimity”. Stroganov also wrote the “Foreword

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to the Well Disposed Reader” to “disarm hostile critics among his countrymen” (Boss 1983, 28) and for that purpose, he insists in it that there are no “pagan elements” in *Paradise Lost*.

The first complete published Russian translation of *Paradise Lost* (*Потерянный рай* – adopted by all other Russian translations) was made by the Prefect of the Moscow Academy and later Archbishop of Ekaterinoslav **Amvrosiy Serebrennikov** (1745–1792). Published in its first edition in 1780, followed by a second in 1785, it was also in prose and based on Dupr e’s French translation (1729). In accordance with his position as a high official of the Russian Orthodox Church, Serebrennikov criticized Milton for his radical religious views, especially his Arianism. Certainly, with its reductions, explanations and corrections of Milton, Serebrennikov’s version does not meet contemporary standards for translation.

During the period of Romanticism, Milton found ardent supporters amongst the leading Russian poets of the time, Aleksandr Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov. One of Pushkin’s teachers, **Efim Liutsenko** (1776–1864), who translated both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* from French translations in 1824, may have contributed to the fact that Pushkin was often called a very Miltonic poet. Lermontov’s tutor in the late 1820s, and professor of Moscow University, **Aleksej Zinoviev** (1801–1884), undertook the first translation of both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* into Russian directly from the original and his rendering is still considered one of the best Russian prose translations.

The first complete poetic translation of *Paradise Lost* (and also *Paradise Regained*) into Russian can be attributed to **Sergey Pisarev** (c. 1819–?), who published it in 1871 in St. Petersburg. Pisarev used a quite common type of verse – the 12-syllable alexandrine (unrhymed) – but within the less common, amphibrachic metre. By blending English elements (an unstressed initial syllable and unrhymed verse) with French ones (12-syllable verse, feminine endings), Pisarev placed himself somewhere between the poetic tradition of both nations.

The late 19th and the early 20th centuries brought several translations in verse by **Olga Chiumina** (1858–1909) in 1899, **Elikonida Kudasheva** (1868–?) in 1910, and **Nikolay Kholodkovski** (1858–1921) in 1911. By that time, Nikolay Dobrolyubov’s requirement to translate only from the original had taken root in Russian translational practice, so all three renderings were done from the English original and used regular iambic verse.

Since the first Soviet edition of *Paradise Lost* translated by **Sergey Protasyev** (1890–1940) in the mid-1930s remained unpublished, Milton’s epic had to wait for a new version until 1976 when **Akradiy Shteinberg** (1907–1984) published his poetic and acclaimed translation of *Paradise Lost*. Shteinberg, influenced by Chiumina, did most of his work during his eight-year stay in a gulag in 1944–1952. It remains the last completed Russian translation of the poem and was republished in 1999 and 2006.

Shteinberg’s translational method shows his effort to save as much meaning as possible while retaining iambic blank verse that led to a substantial extension of the whole poem from 10,565 to more than 14,000 lines. While the presence

of a movable stress in Russian enabled him to use two-syllable words with the stress on the last syllable at the end of the line, he can hardly be blamed for the overall extension. The considerably higher semantic density<sup>1</sup> of Russian (average word length of 3.0 syllables) than English (1.4 syllables) left him no other choice if he did not want to reduce the poem in meaning.<sup>2</sup>

## POLISH

Polish was the second Slavic language and the first Western Slavic one into which *Paradise Lost* was translated: as early as 1791, **Jacek Przybylski** (1756–1819) published his translation in Krakow with the title *Raj utracony*, later adopted by all other Polish translators. In the same year the Sejm of the Kingdom of Poland passed the Polish Constitution recognizing the Roman Catholic religion as dominant but guaranteeing tolerance to other religions. It is most likely that religious differences and the fact that Milton was a Puritan caused that he was not well-known in Poland before the end of the 18th century.

Unlike the early Russian translations, Przybylski translated directly from English and in verse. He used a traditional verse of the Polish heroic epic, a syllabic verse of 13 syllables in rhymed couplets with the constant word stress falling on the penultimate syllable. As Stanislas Helsztyński (1929, 146) states, he “succeeded in faithfully conveying the very spirit of the original poem”. This rendering was often quoted but also criticized for frequent neologisms, few of which found their way into usage, “provincialisms, bad rhymes as well as encroachments on the rules of flexion and syntax” (146). Like Shteinberg, Przybylski coped with the higher semantic density of the Slavic language by enlarging the text, his version running to 13,132 lines. Zofia Sinko (1992, 13) claims that “Przybylski undertook a task that was beyond his abilities as a poet”.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, she highlights his rich vocabulary as an effort to emulate the original.

The next Polish version is that of **Władysław Bartkiewicz** (1829–1910) published in 1902. Bartkiewicz, who was a great admirer of Milton (he later also translated *Samson Agonistes*), produced a version that “strives to imitate in style and outward form the original” (Helsztyński 1929, 153) by using blank verse with an added syllable at the end of the line, making it feminine. In his Preface, Bartkiewicz also deals with previous translations by Przybylski and **Franciszek Ksawery Dmochowski** (1762–1808; his incomplete translation was published in 1803)<sup>4</sup>, rejecting their option of a 13-syllable verse which he finds too different from the 10-syllable original, and rhyme, arguing that Milton preferred rhythm to rhyme as being responsible for beauty in poetry. Bartkiewicz also extended the epic to 11,792 lines.

However, his rendering was highly influenced by his ardent Catholicism that led him to “correct” Milton, and to omit or distort some parts of the text. One of Milton’s sharpest attacks on the Roman Catholic Church comes in Book III when Satan, coming from hell to earth, “in his way lights on the barren plaines / of *Sericana*” (PL, III, 437–438). Here, Milton introduced his vision of limbo where “from the earth / up hither like aerial vapours flew / of all things transitorie and vain” (PL, III, 444–446). Among them, Satan sees “Idiots, Eremites and Friars / White, Black, and

Grey, with all Thir Trumperie” (PL, III, 474–475), clearly suggesting Catholic orders and the colors of their robes. Later, Milton is wry about the opinion that putting on a friar’s habit at the time of death helps a person get to heaven: “And they who to be sure of Paradise / Dying put on the weeds of Dominic, garments / Or in Franciscan think to pass disguis’d” (PL, III, 478–480). Finally, this passage culminates in Milton’s mocking of both dresses of Catholic orders and various grants the Church used to enable sinners to redeem themselves from their punishment: “then might ye see / Cowles, Hoods and Habits with thir wearers tost / And flutterd into Raggs, then Reliques, Beads, / Indulgences, Dispenses, Pardons, Bulls, / The sport of Winds” (PL, III, 490–493). We can find nothing of this in Bartkiewicz’s translation. The colors as synecdoches for Catholic orders are replaced by “gymnosophists, augurs or bonz-es” (“Gimnosofiści, augurzy, bonzowie”, 104), and the names of orders are changed to the general “those who count on apotheosis at the hour of death” (“tych, co licząc na apoteozę / W godzinie śmierci”, 104). We cannot find any indulgences, dispensations, pardons, or Bulls, only “loads of talismans, amulets, idols and their eulogisers swarming” (Tłum talizmanów różnych, amuletów, / Bałwanów i ich wielbicieli roje”, 104). Bartkiewicz’s translation still plays a role in Polish culture, however – in 2020, it was published in a new edition, both in printed form and as an e-book.

The third and most recent complete Polish translation of *Paradise Lost* by **Maciej Słomczyński** (1920–1998) was published in 1974 and, according to Joanna Rzepa, (2017, 360), “it won him the Polish PEN Club’s Award”. A bilingual native speaker of both Polish and English, Słomczyński was the first man in the world to translate the complete works of Shakespeare. Like Bartkiewicz, Słomczyński opted for a Polish variation of blank verse, an 11-syllable unrhymed line with feminine endings, often using a run-on line like Milton in the original. In total, his translation is nearly 13,000 lines in length.

Even though Słomczyński met with some criticism for inaccuracies related to religious matters (Philips, 2012), he is far from correcting Milton in the manner of Bartkiewicz or omitting passages for religious reasons. For instance, he translated the abovementioned passage from Book III accurately and with no loss of meaning. Despite reservations about religious inaccuracies in Słomczyński’s translation, his rendering has proved respected and popular in Poland with new editions appearing in 1986, 2002, and 2006.

## CZECH

Both complete Czech translations of *Paradise Lost* have a special standing in our survey, since Czech is the closest Slavic language to Slovak and has thus played an important role in Slovak cultural history.

The first one was made by the prime representative of the Czech National Revival, **Josef Jungmann** (1773–1847). It was published under the title *Ztracený ráj* in 1811, the second edition coming out in 1843. His work falls into the broader context of language creativity in the formation of the modern Czech language. For Jungmann, it was a hard struggle not only to find an equivalent to Milton’s sublime style but also to find equivalents to particular terminology from various spheres of life not

yet developed in the Czech language. One of the achievements of his translation was that the terms from philosophy which he coined were later helpful in creating Czech philosophical terminology. On the other hand, he did not hesitate to omit passages he could not translate. Owing to non-existent astronomical terminology, for example, he left out the six-line passage in Book X. Jungmann did not omit parts of *Paradise Lost* for subjective reasons of faith like Bartkiewicz but for more objective ones – corresponding terminological equivalents simply did not exist in Czech at that time. Even though Jungmann was born Roman Catholic and was educated in a Piaristic school to become a priest, his private opinions, influenced by the Enlightenment and especially by Voltaire, were close to deism and remained hidden from the public. Emanuel Chalupný (1912, 392) claims that he praised *Paradise Lost* more for its aesthetic qualities than for its religious aspect. One of the issues scholars have shown different opinions on is to what extent Jungmann translated *Paradise Lost* from the original, since he also used German and Polish translations. Chalupný (388) speaks of his “thorough command of both English and Czech”. Felix Vodička (1960, 242–243) argues that Jungmann “did not have a reliable command of English and he used German translations and the Polish one by Przybylski as intermediary”. Later analyses (i.e. Cejp 1958) clearly showed that Vodička was closer to the truth. They proved that Jungmann’s English was far from perfect, and probably poorer than his German or Polish. Today we know which translations he had at his disposal: the German by Samuel Gottlieb Bürde (1793) and Justus Friedrich Wilhelm Zachariä (1765), and the Polish by Przybylski (1791). Scholars have identified many places in his translation where he misinterpreted the original or was inspired by Przybylski. The latter is visible in the Argument of every Book – these are shortened and translated from Polish. However, translating from foreign languages by way of Polish translations was not uncommon at that time in Czech literature.

Jungmann chose an 11-syllable verse of trochaic meter (occasionally varying from 9 to 12 syllables), adding one syllable at the beginning of the line. Thus, he gained more space (although his translation still has 11,826 lines) and adapted the rhythm to Czech prosody. By leaving the end of the line masculine, Jungmann achieved a kind of compromise between the natural tendency of Czech rhythm, which is trochaic and descending, and Milton’s ascending blank verse.

With his translation of *Paradise Lost*, Jungmann laid the foundations of modern Czech literary translation and brought many new words into the Czech language. But the influence of Jungmann’s translation upon Czech literature was far greater. Firstly, it inspired a whole generation of poets in their writings; secondly, it led to further translations of English literature. Jungmann’s translation also had an impact on Slovak poets of the time, such as Bohuslav Tablic and Pavol Jozef Šafárik. The latter chose lines 23 and 24 from Book VII in Jungmann’s translation<sup>5</sup> as a motto for his only book of verse *Tatranská múza s lýrou slovanskou* (The Tatra Muse with the Slavic Lyre, 1814).

One century after Jungmann, in 1911, *Paradise Lost* returned to Czech literature in a new translation. Its author, a teacher of English at a business school, **Josef Julius David** (1871–1941), proudly announced in the title that the poem was trans-

lated “in the form and exact extent of the original” (1911, 5). According to Šárka Tobrmanová (2017, 323), David translated it as early as in the 1890s and “completely revised his rendition” for publication in 1911. Even though his translation came one century after Jungmann’s, it did not meet with the same attention. One of the reasons for this could lie in his decision to keep the verse form of the original, which put enormous pressure on the translator to reduce the number of words due to the different semantic density of the two languages. David often reduced words and syntax to the brink of understandability in an effort to retain the form of the source text. This makes his rendering very faithful to the original semantically but also very difficult to read due to its archaic words and phrases, shortened forms, and frequent inversions.

An interesting fact about David is that as early as 1893, he published his translation of *Paradise Regained* (under the pseudonym of A. Zvičinský), and this version has remained its only Czech translation until now.

During the existence of Czechoslovakia (1919–1992), there appeared to be no attempt to translate *Paradise Lost* or even parts of it either into Czech or Slovak. Tobrmanová (2017, 324) explains the lower interest of contemporary Czech translators in Milton by a “loss of interest in religious poetry in our secular times and the difficulties posed by his epic”.

As dated as both Czech translations of *Paradise Lost* may seem, they are still read and have both come out in new editions very recently, David’s in 2015 and Jungmann’s in 2018. Yet a need for a new Czech version in the language of the 21st century is evident.

## BULGARIAN

*Paradise Lost* has also been translated twice into Bulgarian. The first Bulgarian rendering, undertaken and published by former Metropolitan Bishop **Theodosius of Skopje** (1846–1926), an ethnic Macedonian, in 1898, was translated from French into prose with the title *Изгубений рай*. However, it had to wait for its modern translation in verse until the late 20th century: in 1981, a university teacher of English philology in Sofia, **Aleksandar Shurbanov** (1941–), published his *Изгубеният рай*, later reprinted in 2008. In 2018, he added his translation of *Samson Agonistes*.

Aware of the fact that retaining the original blank verse and overall number of lines would lead to significant reductions in meaning and style, Shurbanov rejected reducing the word count and instead decided to extend the iambic verse from five to seven feet, alternating masculine line endings and feminine (with an added syllable).

Shurbanov also justified his decision not to extend the line count of the whole poem by referring to the many numeric symbols in its structure that could otherwise be lost. One example he supported his argument with comes in line 631 in Book XI where Adam speaks about fainting. The line is exactly in the middle of the passage from line 423 and 839 where Raphael shows Adam the story of the human race from its beginning to the flood. The decision of whether to keep or dismiss this feature of *Paradise Lost* in its translation lies solely with the translator and the character of the given target language.

## SERBO-CROATIAN, SERBIAN, CROATIAN

There have been several attempts to translate *Paradise Lost* into the South Slavic languages since the early 19th century, but most of them were only extracts. The first complete one – *Raj zgubljen* – is credited to the parish priest of Marija Bistrica, **John Krizmanić** (1766–1852), who finished his prosaic translation into the Kajkavian dialect (one of the Croatian dialects) in 1827, using German and French translations.<sup>6</sup> The only complete Serbo-Croatian translation of *Paradise Lost* in verse was done by **Milovan Đilas** (1911–1995), the former Yugoslav communist politician who fell into disgrace for his criticism of Tito's regime and was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. It was during his next stay in prison between 1962 and 1966 that he translated *Paradise Lost* using just a pencil and toilet paper. Managing to sneak out his translation, he had it published in 1969 in New York as *Izgubljeni raj*, a revised version coming out in Belgrade in 1989. Đilas, aware of the differences between inflected Serbian with its mainly polysyllabic words and English, decided to replace the blank verse of the original with a more traditional, 12-syllable trochaic verse with a caesura after the sixth syllable ("dvanaesterac"). While this traditional Serbian meter is usually rhymed, Đilas approached the original by using its unrhymed version. Even though he added two syllables to each line, however, it was not enough to convey the whole meaning without adding extra lines. This is why his translation comprises 13,041 lines.<sup>7</sup>

Whether we take the decision of Đilas as an act of rebellion against the totalitarian system, as Jelena Gavrilović did in her commentary (2019), or ascribe to him other motives, he deserves credit for the first complete artistic translation of *Paradise Lost* in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

In the same year as the revised Đilas translation, a new Serbian version of *Paradise Lost* was published in Belgrade. Translated by **Darko Bolfan** and **Dušan Kosanović**, it came out in two volumes together with *Paradise Regained* under the title *Izgubljeni raj* and *Raj ponovo stečen* and was reprinted in 2002, 2013, and 2017. Its basis was a translation into prose first done by Bolfan, which Kosanović then transformed into verse. Unlike Đilas, his verse is looser metrically and uses more syllables per line (14 rather than 10). This rendering was criticized for its many semantic deviations from the original and mistakes in elementary words. Veselin Kostić (1998, 220) calls their translations of both epics "very poor".

In 2013, the first complete Croatian translation of *Paradise Lost* (*Izgubljeni raj*) by **Mate Maras** (1939–) was published in Zagreb. Maras, a teacher of mathematics, also deserves to be mentioned for another unique achievement: he was the first person to translate the complete works of Shakespeare into Croatian. In translating *Paradise Lost*, he had to deal with a similar dilemma to that of many other translators into Slavic languages, one related to the semantic density of the original and the limited confines of blank verse in conveying all meaning in translation. He thus opted to compromise: he kept an iambic meter with accents falling on even syllables and at the same time added from one to five syllables. On the one hand, he avoided artificial shortening of words and distortion of syntax; on the other hand, blank verse, a typical trait of English poetry – is less visible. Maras's translation was highly acclaimed in Croatia and he won the Kiklop Award for translator of the year in 2014.

## MACEDONIAN

The first Macedonian translation with the title *Загубениот Рај* appeared in 1996 (reprinted in 2007) thanks to the work of the writer and educator **Dragi Mihajlovski** (1951–). He opted for a similar method to the Croatian Mate Maras but goes even further – his lines sometimes include up to 20 syllables, which gives him comfortable space to transfer the meaning.<sup>8</sup> Naturally, this solution represents a marked shift away from the blank verse of the original, however; the principle of domestication very much prevails here.

## SLOVENIAN

Even though Slovenian was one of the official languages in the former Yugoslavia and widely used in many areas, *Paradise Lost* had to wait for its translation till the era of independence. It ranks among the great translational achievements of the poet and translator **Marjan Strojan** (1949–). Published as *Izguljeni raj* in 2003, it was reprinted in 2011. Strojan retains the meter and overall number of lines, but the prosody of the target language does not allow him to use solely masculine line endings, which is why he often adds one syllable to change them to feminine. He described his translational method as follows:

Like all South Slavic languages, Slovenian is a synthetic language, and a translation of verse forms of more isolating languages like modern English can present difficulties. But I was fortunate in that, by the time I came to Milton, the corpus of translated English works of poetry was already substantial and most of the metrical difficulties resolved, some of them by the best Slavic poets, in my case, the great Slovenian France Prešeren (1800–1849) who, following the initial efforts of the previous generation, brought the syllabo-tonic system of versification to its technical perfection and artistic maturity (Strojan 2017b, 389).<sup>9</sup>

For his translation that Irena Samide (2009, 19) called “similarly ingenious” to the original, Strojan was awarded the highest Slovenian annual prize for the best book translation “Sovretova nagrada” in 2004.

## UKRAINIAN

It can seem surprising at first sight that such a populous nation did not see its first translation of *Paradise Lost* until the 21st century. One of the reasons may have been the dominant position of the Russian language in the Soviet Union, where Russian translations often served as a substitute for national ones.

The independence that came with the break-up of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s also brought a need for Ukrainian translations of previously untranslated works. One of them was *Paradise Lost*, which came out as *Утрачений рай* in 2019. Unfortunately, its translator, the literary critic and educator **Oleksandr Zhomnir** (1927–2018), did not live to see its publication, having passed away one year before. As Taras Shmihor (2020, 933) writes in his review, “[t]he regained religiosity after the fall of communism opens the door wide for guessing and acquiring the emotional overtones of Christian associations by ordinary Ukrainian readers”. The reviewer’s point that by “translating this literary piece into Ukrainian, the translator contributes

to the Ukrainian linguistic culture by stimulating searches for highly formal vocabulary” (935) also holds for other Slavic languages.

In his version, Zhomnir keeps a blank verse including its iambic rhythm, but the masculine endings of the lines are often changed to feminine with an added syllable at the end of the line. With its movable stress, the Ukrainian has no problem in keeping an iambic rhythm of the poem; however, with substantially longer words at his disposal, Zhomnir had no other choice than to increase the overall number of lines. The translation combines “haughty lexis and everyday vocabulary” and “has absorbed a great amount of that of the Ukrainian recension of Church Slavonic (‘муж’, ‘небеса’, ‘всевидящий’, ‘вражий’)” (Shmiher 2020, 934), coming closer to the symphony of Baroque tonalities and associations, as Zhomnir himself called Milton’s epic in his Introduction.

## SLOVAK

It would certainly be inappropriate for a translator to comment on his own translation in any axiological terms, therefore these few notes on the latest Slavic translation of *Paradise Lost* in 2020 under the title *Stratený raj* will mostly touch on its context and translational method. Perhaps the first question that comes to mind is why there had been no noticeable attempts to translate it into Slovak before. A part of the answer is that the Slovak language was only codified in the 1840s and leading figures of the Slovak National Revival usually became acquainted with *Paradise Lost* by way of Jungmann’s Czech translation. Also, the fact that until 1900, the book had been prohibited by the Roman Catholic Church may have held sway in a country whose population mostly professes the Catholic faith.

Like other Slavic languages, Slovak has a higher semantic density than English, therefore the translation of *Paradise Lost* is a constant fight for space if we decide to retain the original meter and length of the poem. The translator is also greatly challenged by Milton’s sublime style: since some means of expression like inversion do not conform with modern Slovak well, it was necessary to look for others on various levels of the text. A contemporary reader expects a text that is easy to read with most Latin-influenced structures filtered out. On the other hand, Milton’s expression should retain the grandeur that goes hand-in-hand with the poem’s sublime theme.

## CONCLUSION

As our research shows, *Paradise Lost* has undergone a long and diverse journey into Slavic literatures from the mid-18th century until today. Its first translations appeared in major cultures such as Russian and Polish. Certainly, they bore the stamp of their times and their translational paradigm. The most visible features of the earliest Slavic renderings are the usage of an intermediary language (mostly French), their prosaic form, and adding elements not present in the original in translations in verse (such as the rhyme used by Przybylski). Milton’s controversial religious opinions that meant the ban of the work by the Catholic Church for more than one and a half centuries also had a certain impact on the character of some earlier translations

of *Paradise Lost* and led to omissions, corrections and explanations of the text (Serebrennikov in Russia; Bartkiewicz in Poland).

Also, the circumstances under which particular translations came into existence were not always ideal, as the example of Serbian Milovan Đilas shows. In some Slavic cultures, translations of *Paradise Lost* helped create the modern national language – this is mainly the case of Jungmann’s translation and its importance in the development of the Czech language. In comparison with earlier efforts, modern translations are characterized by the fact that they are usually done directly from the original, and by applying contemporary translation theory, they try to convey all aspects of the original, including the retention of the meter and the overall number of lines (depending on the prosodic qualities of the particular language). In modern translations, there is certainly no place for omissions or corrections by the author. The translator is obliged to ensure the reader receives the text in its complete form.

However, the journey is not over yet. There are Slavic languages (like Belarusian) that are still waiting for their own translation of *Paradise Lost*, whereas in some others (such as Czech), a need for a new version is becoming urgent due to the fact that the last one is now more than a century old.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The term adopted by Jiří Levý in *Umění překladau* (*The Art of Translation*, 1963; Eng. trans. 2011) into translation studies indicates the number of semantic nuclei the given type of verse contains in various languages, i.e. while an English ten-syllable line usually contains four semantic nuclei, German, Czech and Russian ones have only three. That is why “German, Czech and Russian translators have considerable difficulty in accommodating the content of an English poem within the bounds of its original metre” (Levý 2011, 196).
- <sup>2</sup> Surprisingly, there is no chapter about Russian translations of *Paradise Lost* in the book *Milton in Translation* (Duran, Issa, and Olson 2017) summarizing translations of *Paradise Lost* all over the world. There are only small references to some Russian renderings as an inspiration for translation into other languages (i.e. Bulgarian).
- <sup>3</sup> All translations from the Polish, Czech and other languages were made by the author of the study unless stated otherwise.
- <sup>4</sup> Fragments of *Paradise Lost* were also translated into Polish by Antoni Lange and Czesław Miłosz.
- <sup>5</sup> Original: “Standing on Earth, not rapt above the Pole, / More safe I Sing with mortal voice, unchanged.” Jungmann: “Stoje na zemi, ni nad os znešen jsa, / zpívám bezpečněji hlasem smrtedlným.”
- <sup>6</sup> However, it did not come out until 2005 in Zagreb.
- <sup>7</sup> Major credit for the final shape of the translation, as Đilas conceded himself, goes to Professor Jelica Marković (Strojan 2017a, 366).
- <sup>8</sup> Strojan (2017b, 388) claims that “Mihajlovski’s translation is essentially a rhythmically ordered prose poem that is modern in its aspect and true to the original”.
- <sup>9</sup> Much of what Strojan wrote about the circumstances of his translation holds true in relation to my situation in translating *Paradise Lost*.

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John Milton. Epic. Translation history. Slavic languages. Comparative view. Verse. Prosody. Meaning. Semantic density.

The paper attempts to map translations of Milton's *Paradise Lost* into Slavic languages and its place in their cultures from the first Russian and Polish editions to the latest Ukrainian and Slovak ones. The survey shows the shift in the translation method from the earliest prose renderings, usually from other translations, to newer editions with translations in verse. Due to typological differences between languages, especially in semantic density, some translations were substantially longer in comparison with the original. Various types of verse as a replacement of Milton's blank verse were adopted, depending on the tradition of the target language. From the point of view of contemporary translation studies, corrections of Milton or omissions from the text due to the personal denomination of the translator, as we can see in some earlier Russian or Polish editions, are unacceptable. Attention is also paid to two Czech translations by Josef Jungmann (1811) and Josef Julius David (1911) that have served as a substitution for the non-existing Slovak translation up to the present. Stemming from a typological difference between English and Slavic languages, the paper raises prosodic, semantic, and semiotic problems of translation.

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