

RECENZJE

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John Milton, though a renowned epic poet in his lifetime and beyond, was to become a part of Ukrainian literature much later through his translated writings: initially via Russian-language translations (by the Ukrainian writer Petro Hulak-Artemovskiy in 1817), later the greatest Ukrainian literatus Ivan Franko started translating Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and published the full Ukrainian translation in 1913 (remaining the only one to this day). Despite the time span between the then publication and today's reader, this translation does not sound outdated, and it can satisfactorily perform all the informative and aesthetic functions needed. Twentieth-century translations of Milton's writing were neither numerous, nor scarce, but nobody managed to perform a deed for Ukrainian literature in translating *Paradise Lost*.

Only after 30 years of translational labour was the task completed thanks to the talents of Oleksandr Zhomnir (1927-2018), a native of the Rivne Region in Ukraine, an alumnus of the Ivan Franko University (Lviv) and the Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages (Kyiv), *candidate of linguistics* (equal to a PhD) at the Mykola Hohol Pedagogical Institute (Nizhyn). The span of the translator's life was dedicated to teaching and translating, so Ukrainian readers can enjoy masterpieces by British and American authors such as William Shakespeare, Somerset Maugham, Emily Dickinson and John Steinbeck. The area of his academic interests was the poetical and stylistic issues of translating Taras Shevchenko's poetry into English. This is why his understanding of verse translation is deep and most insightful.

This is no surprise that the translator approached his task with numerous and enormous precautions and obtained most excellent results. Milton's text sounds like a symphony of Baroque tonalities and associations (this is mentioned in the Translator's Notes (p.7)). Simultaneously, it elucidates some reasons why some textual strategies of Milton's writings stay untranslatable for the Ukrainian lingual poetics of today. The 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.

This strategy shows how subtle some religious genres are and what delicate strategies they can demand to be rendered to the full extent of their interpretative potential.

Mainly untranslatable has remained the ‘Royal’ English style, as Ukraine has millennia-old republican traditions which cherished verbal culture focusing on individual and national freedom, but neglecting the importance of the stately and social hierarchy. Partially this is visible at the beginning of Book 2:

High on a Throne of Royal State, which far
 Outshon the wealth of *Ormus* and of *Ind*,
 Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
 Shows on her Kings *Barbaric* Pearl and Gold,
 Satan exalted sat, by merit rais’d
 To that bad eminence; and from despair
 Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
 Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
 Vain Warr with Heav’n, and by success untaught
 His proud imaginations thus displaid.

Powers and Dominions, Deities of Heav’n,
 For since no deep within her gulf can hold
 Immortal vigor, though opprest and fall’n,
 I give not Heav’n for lost. From this descent
 Celestial vertues rising, will appear
 More glorious and more dread then from no fall,
 And trust themselves to fear no second fate.

Високо на врочистому Престоли
 У блиску срібла, злата й самоцвітів,
 Що геть потьмарили б усі скарби
 Країн Ормузу й Инду чи палаців,
 Де осипає перлами владик
 В пишноті варварській застиглий Схід, –
 Сів Сатана. Піднявшись гордовито
 З безодні безнадії та відчаю
 В нестримнім пориванні щонайвище,
 Не зрікшись боротьби проти Небес,
 Зневаживши жахне падіння в Пекло, –
 Він гордо мовив так: «Небесні сили!
 Хоча пригнічені ми, се ім’я
 За правом – наше. Бо нема тюрми,
 Щоб небожителів замурувала.
 Достойна доблесть вирветься відсіля
 Іще славніша й неподолання,
 Ніж до Війни, і наша честь і слава
 Яскравіше засяє, ніж було
 Колись. Тепер нам нічого втрачати.»

The point is not only in rendering terms like ‘Royal State’ or ‘Powers and Dominions’, but even the collocations ‘exalted sat’, ‘high uplifted’, ‘displaid his proud imaginations’ to evoke aristocratic or kingly associations. The lexeme ‘Barbaric’ may not show the derogatory, uncivilised nature of remote lands, but stress their otherness and non-possession to ‘our’ realm. The Ukrainian text is more frivolous by incorporating formulaic folklore phrases (cf. “срібла, злата й самоцвітів”, “честь і слава”) and low colloquial senses (“геть” vs. Eng. “far”). Thus, translating this literary piece into Ukrainian, the translator contributes to the Ukrainian linguistic culture by stimulating searches for highly formal vocabulary.

However, this text is much more hero-centered. In this aspect, it does correlate with Milton’s view of the main conflict in *Paradise Lost* where the battlefield is not the place for struggle between Evil and Good, but between the Hero and the Conditions. England’s knightly culture is not so vivid in the original as the Ukrainian heroic Cossack-like poetic style in the translation. The idea of heroic deeds and hopes is reiterated too frequently: “піднявшись гордовито з безодні безнадії та відчаю”, “не зрікшись боротьби”, “зневаживши жахне падіння”.

Ivan Franko used to remark that *Samson Agonistes* is more patriotic, than religious. Similarly, *Paradise Lost* is more than a religious poem: it mirrors England's struggle between Republic and Monarchy in the mid-17th century. That is why extended commentaries to this writing are so critical. They should show the informative background now lacking among today's readers and the emotional supremacy of the images selected.

The Ukrainian edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost* contains all the necessary introductory and commenting parts and is published in a handsome edition: this is a valuable gift both for Ukrainian readers and for Ukrainian literature itself.

Тарас Шмігер

Львівський національний університет імені Івана Франка