



## On the Stylistics and Translation Techniques of Mikołaj Rej's Metrical Psalms\*

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**ABSTRACT:** This analysis focuses on three of Rej's earliest metrical translations of the psalms, composed before 1543: Psalm 85, Psalm 113 and Psalm 116, which were originally published as loose prints. The study aims to identify the characteristic features of Rej's translation approach, with particular attention to those passages in the metrical psalms where the translator introduces semantic changes compared to the original text of the Vulgate. The article highlights the primary directions of these modifications, especially in relation to Rej's subsequent work on

the prose paraphrase of *Psalterz* (the Psalter). Comparative lexical analysis reveals that Rej frequently makes semantic alterations to update the content of the psalms. He also introduces amplifications to render the texts more concrete and to evoke a stronger emotional response from the readers. These techniques are similarly evident in his later prose paraphrase, *Psalterz Dawidowy* (the Psalter of David) (1543). The analysis thus illustrates the development and evolution of Rej's editorial techniques as a translator.

**KEYWORDS:** Mikolaj Rej, metrical psalms, translation techniques, stylistics.

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The subject of the analyses undertaken in this article is the metrical translations of psalms made by Mikołaj Rej, which were published as loose prints. Until now, scholars' attention has primarily focused on Rej's complete prose translation of *Psalterz*, which was published in 1543 in Kraków by the Maciej Szarffenberg publishing house [hereinafter RPD]. However, the history of research on Rej's *Psalterz* reveals that the fates of both types of translations—the prose paraphrase and the metrical psalms—have been intertwined since the earliest times.<sup>1</sup>

The psalms translated into verse, along with a large group of devotional hymns, are among Mikołaj Rej's earliest works, undoubtedly written before 1543, during the time when the writer was still at Andrzej Tęczyński's court. These brief literary texts were published in Kraków as standalone editions, most often in the form of pamphlets, and were accompanied by music for four voices. It is assumed that, due to their practical nature, which was connected with liturgy, they may have been worn out from extensive use, necessitating multiple reprints. Over time, some of these texts were incorporated into so-called hymnals [see Nowak 1970: 30]. Today, it is impossible to determine the exact number or even an approximate chronology of this collection of Rej's writings. Fragmentary information found in various bibliographic records and surviving hymnals allows us to trace only a few of these texts or references to them.

At present, we have three metrical psalms, published as loose prints and attributed to Rej.<sup>2</sup> These are:

- 1 According to Aleksander Brückner, it was the paraphrases of individual psalms that initiated the tradition associated with the existence of a complete metrical translation of *Psalterz* by the writer from Nagłowice. This led scholars, until the early 20th century, to search in vain for this text and neglect the anonymously published prose translation of *Księga Psalmów* (the Book of Psalms) [Brückner 1902: 75].
- 2 Before 1547, Rej also published seven penitential psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143) at Maciej Szarffenberg's printing house, commonly known as "septem psalms". In the list, alongside the title *Septem psalmi*, Rej's name is included as the translator. These psalms were mentioned in the inventory of Maciej Szarffenberg's printing house, compiled after the printer's death in July 1547 [see Maciuszko 2002: 230–231]. These texts were published before *Psalterz*, possibly even shortly after 1533 [see Janik 1923: 14, 36]. The fact that no copies have survived to this day led Maciuszko to speculate that "the booklets were either read to pieces, or the work was not successful enough to warrant a large print run or more frequent reprints" [Maciuszko 2002: 232]. The scholar further emphasised that, with the current state of knowledge, it is difficult to verify Tadeusz Witczak's assertion that the "septem psalms were either 'excerpts from the work' or a 'self-contained cycle'" [quoted from: Maciuszko 2002: 232]. At the same time, the Warsaw theologian noted that we cannot be absolutely certain that this collection of penitential psalms was in metrical form—this belief was primarily reinforced by the statements made by linguistic authorities such as Stanisław Windakiewicz and Aleksander Brückner [see Maciuszko 2002: 230].

- a) the metrical Psalm 85 (86) *Inclina Domine aurem tuam* [Rostkowska 1970: 62–63, nos. 47–48], a lamentation of the psalmist persecuted by enemies, who appeals to God for help;
- b) the rhymed and rhythmically structured prose of Psalm 113 (114) *In exitu Israel de Egypto* [Rostkowska 1970: 65–66, Nos. 49–51], a hymn in praise of Yahweh, extolling His deeds during the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt;
- c) the strophic Psalm 116 (117) *Alleluja* [Rostkowska 1970: 73–74, Nos. 61–62], which calls for the worship and praise of God.

The latter is listed in Irena Rostkowska's *Bibliografia* under the category of uncertain and disputed authorship, although scholars such as Michał Wiszniewski [1844: 454] and Maria Kossowska [1968: 145] attributed this text to Rej. However, it should be noted that they did not provide conclusive evidence of authorship. According to Janusz Maciuszko, the metrical Psalm 85 is known from two loose editions published in Kraków, dated around 1556 and 1558 [Maciuszko 2002: 234]. Rostkowska's *Bibliografia* lists as many as 61 old Polish reprints of this text in Protestant hymnals and religious books containing a song section. These prints were published from 1563 (Nieśwież *Katechizm zborów ewangelickich i litewskich* by Daniel of Łęczycza) up until 1800 [see Maciuszko 2002: 234]. Psalm 113 most likely had three editions as loose prints: around 1556, around 1558 and after 1565 [see Maciuszko 2002: 234]. It had only four reprints in hymnals, from Bartłomiej Groicki's hymnal (1559) to 1646. Rostkowska's *Bibliografia* lists 15 reprints of the psalm, from Daniel of Łęczycza to *Kancjonał Wschowski* (1782) [see Maciuszko 2002: 234–235]. Psalm 116 is known from two editions: from 1556 and 1558 [Rostkowska 1970: 73–74, Nos. 61–62]. We do not know whether these three surviving psalms are the only texts published by Rej outside of the complete *Psalterz*. It cannot be ruled out that there were more loose psalms authored by Rej. Feliks Jezierski included Psalms 114, 115 and 133 among them [see Jezierski 1878: 180–181], while Alodia Kawecka identified two more in a 1563 hymnal: Psalm 71 and Psalm 86 [see Kawecka 1926: 134]. Additionally, in the preface to the Evangelical *Kancjonał, to jest Księgi psalmów...*, published in Gdańsk in 1646,<sup>3</sup> there is a note indicating that it also includes reprints of psalms authored by Rej. The identification

3 *Kancjonał: To jest, Księgi Psalmow, Hymnow y Piesni Duchownych, Na Chwale Boga W Troycy S[więtej] Jedynego, Oyca Syna y Ducha Swietego, Za zgodą wszystkich Zborow Ewangelickich [...], z dawniejszych Kancjonałow, Psalterzow y Katechizmow zebrane, y kwoli jednostaynemu używaniu wydane*, Gdańsk 1646. Copy from the collections of the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN): <https://tinyurl.com/9rhsbfhf> [accessed: 15 July 2023].

of these texts, given the insufficient research material, seems nearly impossible today. They would have to be sought among the twenty psalms of uncertain authorship. The intentions of the translator himself also remain unknown—we do not know whether these individually published psalms were meant to be part of a larger work or if they were intended for hymnals [see Maciuszko 2002: 233]. It is noteworthy that Psalm 113 was adorned with a woodcut dated 1533, and according to Bronisław Chlebowski [1906: 22] and Michał Janik [1923: 14–15], all of the discussed psalms were printed around 1540, thus predating the publication of the prose paraphrase of the entire Psalterz. Scholars of Rej's work have emphasised that the metrical translations of psalms, alongside church hymns, represent “the earliest examples of Rej's literary engagement with the Reformation” [Nowak 1970: 30–31]. As Maciuszko has argued, this might be indirectly evidenced by the woodcut on the title page of Psalm 116 from the Kraków edition of 1558, taken from the Zamoyski family hymnal,<sup>4</sup> depicting the Descent of the Holy Spirit [see Maciuszko 2002: 235]. Of course, it cannot be ruled out that the author did not have control over the graphic design, and that it was added later during the printing process. The woodcut depicts a centrally placed female figure, most likely Mary, with an open book on her lap. Flanking her on the left and right, as well as near her knees, are 11 male figures (presumably the apostles, excluding Judas). Above them, in a cloud surrounded by rays of light, there is a dove. All the figures have tongues of fire above their heads but lack both a nimbus and a halo. While a modern viewer might perceive the woodcut as having a somewhat Catholic character, Maciuszko points out that, in a sixteenth-century context, the overall depiction does not carry such strong connotations, mainly due to the omission of traditional elements of Catholic iconography [see Maciuszko 2002: 235].

Therefore, the focus of my analysis is on the three surviving metrical translations of Rej's psalms: Psalm 85, Psalm 113 and Psalm 116. The objective is to identify the most characteristic features of the translation techniques employed by the translator from Nagłowice, particularly by examining those passages in the metrical psalms where the translator introduces semantic changes compared to the source text, i.e. the Vulgate<sup>5</sup>. I aim to highlight the most significant direc-

4 Copy at the National Library, call number XVI.O.274.

5 The basis for comparison is the Latin translation of the Bible, edited by Robert Weber and published in Stuttgart in 1975 under the title *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem* (hereinafter abbreviated as V). It should be noted that in 1532, a Latin paraphrase by Campensis titled *Psalmorum omnium iuxta hebraicam veritatem paraphrastica interpretatio* (hereinafter abbreviated as C) was published in Kraków, from which Rej extensively drew when translating the entire *Psalterz* in 1543. However, Campensis' work did not serve as a source

tions of these modifications, especially in the context of the translator's later work on the prose paraphrase of the entire *Psalterz*.

A comparison of the lexical layer of the metrical adaptations of the loose psalms with St. Jerome's translation allows us to conclude that the Vulgate served as the basis for Rej's translation. The numbering of the psalms faithfully reflects the numbering of the Latin text. Clearly, this is not a faithful and literal translation, but rather a free adaptation in which not all verses of the Latin text receive an identical equivalent. However, it should be emphasised that Rej relatively faithfully adhered to the order of the themes and thoughts of the source text and did not omit any significant biblical content. Among the psalms analysed, Psalm 113 (114) and the original Psalm 115 connected to it maintain the greatest fidelity to the Vulgate, a fact that is evident even from a cursory comparative analysis. What stands out is the surprising conciseness of expression for Rej, especially when compared with the very elaborate, almost verbose, prose paraphrase in which the influence of Johannes Campensis is apparent:

Psalm 113,3

- V: Mare vidit et fugit  
Iordanis conversus est retrorsum.
- R: Woda w morzu wnet sie im rozstąpiła,  
A w rzece Jordanie wspak sie obrociła.
- RPD: Tak iż morze, oglądawszy przy nich moc Boską, uciekało przed  
niemi,  
a Jordan i inne rzeki musiały sie wspak obracać
- C.: Mare sensit praesentiam divini numinis et fugit,  
Iordanis abiit retrorsum

Psalm 113,4

- V: Montes exultaverunt ut arietes  
Colles sicut agni ovium.
- R: Gory sie rozradowały jako owieczki,  
a jako jagniątka insze pagórki.
- RPD: A oni, przyszedszy na rozkoszne gory, rozkochawali sie jako stado  
owiec na rozkosznych pastwiskach, skacząc po pagorkoch, radowali  
sie jako bujne jagnięta.

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of inspiration for the writer from Nagłowice during his work on the metrical translations of the psalms, as even a brief comparison of the texts reveals. Therefore, in the comparative analysis, I refer solely to the text of the Vulgate.

C: Montes subsilierunt tanquam arietes  
et colles veluti agni ovium.

The conciseness of expression proved particularly effective in the passage where the psalmist contrasts the God of Israel with the gods of other nations, who are mere creations of man. Rej skilfully manipulates the arrangement of lexemes within individual sentences, not only emphasising syntactic parallelism and constructions based on antithesis but also drawing out the unique melody of the sentence, its rhythm, which is further highlighted by grammatical rhymes:

RP<sub>Ps113</sub>

Aleć ich bałwan ze srebra, ze złota,  
Fałszywi bogowie, ludzkich rąk robota.  
Mówić nie mogą, chocia usta mają,  
Z oczyma stoją, a nie patrzą.  
Uszy mają, a nic nie słuchają,  
Nozdrze mają, wonności nie znają.  
Ręce mają, nic nie działają,  
Nogi mają, a kroku nie znają,  
A głosem swym nigdy nie śpiewają.  
Bodajże tacy byli, którzy je działają,  
A owszem ci, co w nich nadzieję mają.

V: Ps. 113 (114), 12–15

12. Simulacra gentium argentum et aurum  
Opera manuum hominum.
13. Os habent et non loquentur  
Oculos habent et non videbunt
14. Aures habent et non audient  
Nares habent et non odorabuntur
15. Manus habent et non palpabunt  
Pedes habent et non ambulabunt  
Non clamabunt in gutture suo.

C: Ps. 115, 4–7

4. Vestrae autem statuae, quas pro diis habetis,  
Nihil quam argentum sunt et aurum, opera hominis manu facta.
5. Formam oris insculpsit illis artifex, sed usum addere non potuit,  
nihil enim fonare quaerunt: Oculos praetera ab artifice datos habent,  
sed quibus nihil omnino videre possint.

6. Aures insuper quibus nihil audiant, nares quibus nihil olfaciant.
7. Manus etiam, sed quibus palpare nequeant,  
sedes quibus incedere non valeant,  
guttur quo nullum sonum edere possint.

This vivid, dynamic and compelling imagery crafted in Psalm 113 (114), rich in content, engaging the imagination of the reader, and easily memorable, contributed to the popularity of this text. It was utilised, among others, by the translators of the *Gdańsk Bible*, where Psalms 114 and 115 show numerous dependencies on Rej's rendition [see Maciuszko 2002: 236].

The analysis of the lexicon, particularly the amplifications found in the psalms under study compared to the Latin source text, offers intriguing insights into the translator's craft. Expanding the Polish text with structures absent in the Vulgate was one of Rej's favoured strategies, particularly characteristic of his prose *Psalterz*. This technique was intended to help the reader feel a connection to the events described, seeing in them not distant realities, but themselves and their surrounding world. It should be noted that in the prose paraphrase, amplifications constitute as much as one-third of the lexical layer of the entire *Psalterz* [Kowalska 2013: 52]. In the metrical psalms, this technique is used more sparingly; amplifications are discreet, sometimes barely noticeable, especially when Rej paraphrases the psalmist's thoughts. Their presence was likely determined by rhythmic considerations (the need to maintain an equal number of syllables in the verses) and practical reasons, stemming from the desire to make the challenging psalmic poetry more accessible to the reader and to imbue it with universal qualities. There are relatively numerous examples where verses are enriched with additional lexemes, concretising the psalmist's expression or moderately expanding its context. This is well illustrated by Psalm 117, the shortest one in the entire *Psalterz*, consisting of only two verses. It is a hymn in praise of God, calling upon all the nations of the earth to worship Him, with a succinct justification for this call. In the source text, both verses are constructed chiasmatically [see Łach 1990: 492]. The name of the Creator appears in the first and last verse, while in the two middle stichs, the names of God are replaced by the appropriate pronouns (*eum*, *eius*):

V: Ps. 117,1–2

1. Laudate **Dominum**<sup>6</sup> omnes gentes  
Laudate **eum** omnes populi

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6 All emphases within the quotations—D.K.

2. Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia **eius**  
Et veritas **Domini** manet in saeculum.

In his metrical translation, Rej modifies this structure: in his rendition, the verses take the form of two rhymed quatrains in ten-syllable lines, which inevitably resulted in an increase in the lexicon:

RPs116

Chwalcie Pana **Boga wszechmocnego**  
Narodowie wszytcy **świata tego**,  
A wielbicie imię święte Jego  
Ludzie wszytcy **stanu wszelakiego**.  
Alleluja.

Abowiem sie nad nami **zjawila**  
miłość Pańska i wielce umocniła.  
Zmocniła sie prawda **święta** Jego,  
A będzie trwać do czasu wiecznego.  
Alleluja.

In the first verse of the psalm under analysis, alongside the expected lexeme *Pan* corresponding to the Latin *Dominus*, there appears an additional designation identifying the Supreme Being, along with a value-laden epithet, forming a three-part expression: *Pan Bóg Wszechmocny*. Meanwhile, another name referring to God, which in Rej's version takes the form of an adjective rather than a noun, does not appear in the final verse but instead in the opening sentence of the second stanza (*Pańska*). In this way, the references to God (*Pan Bóg Wszechmocny*—*miłość Pańska*) intertwine with the pronoun *Jego*, emphasising the rhythm of the verse and highlighting the parallel structure of the sentence. The remaining amplifications, as one might assume, stem from the need to maintain the ten-syllable meter of the individual verses. Such is likely the origin of the phrase *świata tego*, added to the expression *narodowie wszytcy*, as well as the parallel phrase *ludzie wszytcy stanu wszelakiego*, where the phrase *stanu wszelakiego* also has no counterpart in the Vulgate. From a semantic standpoint, Rej's additions are tautological and may seem redundant; however, they align with the writer's typical tendency to concretise and specify content, which is clearly evident in his prose paraphrase, where such techniques were frequently employed. A similar origin can be attributed to the amplified adjective *święta* preceding the noun *prawda*; its introduction



does not significantly alter the message, although one might consider whether emphasising the obvious attributes of God constitutes a form of hyperbolisation, which would also be consistent with the tendency observed in the prose-translated *Psalterz*. It is also worth examining the second stanza of the psalm under analysis, which was significantly modified compared to its Latin model. In the Vulgate, it corresponds to two sentences, where in the first, the psalmist expresses the conviction that God's mercy is strengthened over us (*confirmata est super nos misericordia eius*). There is one passive verb (*confirmata est*). In Rej's translation, we have three sentences with three active verbs: *zjawiała—umocniła—zmocniła* (fortified). It is clear that these verb forms in the same grammatical form serve primarily as rhythm and rhyme creators, but another aspect of Rej's translation technique is also revealed here, one widely observed in his later comprehensive translation of the *Psalterz*: his skilful use of parallelism and amplification to build parallel structures—often of a synonymous nature. In the analysed verse, the parallel structures revolve around two synonymous verbs: *umocniła—zmocniła*. The genesis of the additional verb form *zjawiała* can be linked to the effort to concretise the content, an attempt to depict the processual nature of the phenomena described: since *miłość Pańska się nad nami wielce umocniła*, it must have first occurred, or *zjawić się*. The presence of verbs adds dynamism to the content and enhances its imagery. The other changes in the analysed psalm are subtle and usually involve paraphrasing. For instance, the pronoun form *eum* is rendered as *imię święte Jego*, and the concise Latin expression *in saeculum* is paraphrased by Rej as *do czasu wiecznego*, which may have been motivated by the need to find a rhyme for the pronoun form *Jego*, which concludes the preceding verse.

Similar tendencies can be found in the other two metrical psalms, where an increase in epithetical expressions is noticeable. These are most often tau-tological epithets, which do not add new value but draw attention to a characteristic that the context does not necessarily require to be emphasised, thus serving a hyperbolic function. Rej emphasises that the rock from which God brings forth water is *sucha* (dry): *Który przemienia jeziora z opoki,/ a z suchej skały wypuszcza wody* (Ps. 113, 8), that hell is *gorące* (hot): *Wydarłeś mię z piekła gorącego* (Ps. 85, 13), that the psalmist's heart is *prawe* (righteous): *Abowiem iście z serca **prawego**,/ Muszę wyznać możność bóstwa Twego* (Ps. 85, 12), and that God's name is *święte* (holy): *A wielbiecie imię **święte** Jego,/ Ludzie wszyscy stanu wszelakiego* (Ps. 117, 1). The writer also expands the psalmic verses with adverbial forms, which further exaggerate and intensify the described attribute of the Creator: in Rej's interpretation, God is ***dziwnie** prawdziwy*, and the faithful people are ***prawie** umocniony od niego*:

RPs85

Lecz Ty, iżeś jest Bóg miłościwy,  
Na wszem możny a **dziwnie** prawdziwy

V: Ps. 85, 15

Et tu Domine Deus miserator et misericors Patiens  
et multae misericordiae et verax.

RPs113

Stał sie lud wierny poświęconym Pana swego,  
A **prawie** umocnionym od niego

V: Ps. 113, 2

Facta est Iudaea sanctificatio eius  
Israhel potestas eius.

It should be noted that both adverbs have a very high frequency in the prose-translated *Psalterz*, constituting characteristic vocabulary of this work [see Kowalska 2013: 431–432].

The amplifications present in the metrical psalms are also connected to the polite framing of speech acts, serving to emphasise the asymmetry of roles between the participants in the dialogue with God, particularly by lowering the status of the speaker, who is a sinful human. This tendency is a distinctive and very pronounced stylistic feature of the prose-translated *Psalterz*, but as the comparative analysis shows, it can also be observed in Rej's earlier translation efforts, including the metrical psalms. The texts under study reveal that Rej, on the one hand, consciously constructs the image of a great, powerful and omnipotent God by selecting expressions that serve to hyperbolise the Creator. On the other hand, he devalues the second person in the dialogue, altering the nature of the relationship between them. The supplicant stands before God in the role of a servant, a wretched human being, and thus addresses God from a position of deep humility and submission. This is evidenced by the introduction of amplifications in the form of expressions not motivated by the text of the Vulgate, such as *nędznik* (*wretch*), *nędzny* (*wretched*), *śługa* (*servant*), *zawszqd upadły* (*entirely fallen*), *żałosne prośby moje* (*my pitiful pleas*), and *jestem prawie zawszqd opuszczony* (*I am almost entirely abandoned*):

RPs85

Nakłoń, Panie, ku mnie ucho Twoje,  
Wysłuchaj **żałosne prośby** moje. Re.  
Abowiem nędzny i utrapiony

Jestem **prawie zewsząd opuszczony**.  
 Rozwesel mię, Boże mój, w radości  
 K Tobie woła(m) głosem mym w żalości. [...]  
 Przyjmiż prośby **sługi swego**,  
 Boże mój, k Tobie wołającego. [...]  
 Bo możności świata tego  
 Ogarnęły mnie **nędznego**,  
 Ciężko czyniąc duszy mojej,  
 Boże mój, która jest w opiece Twojej. [...]  
 Weźrzy na mię **nędznika swojego**,  
 A wyzwól mię **zewsząd upadłego**.  
 A okaż znak mocy swojej,  
 Pomóż **nędznej** duszy mojej,  
 Aby się ci zawstydzili,  
 Boże mój, co się Tobie sprzeciwili.

V

1. Inclina Domine aurem tuam  
 Et exaudi me  
 quoniam inops et pauper sum ego.
2. Laetifica animam servi tui  
 Quoniam ad te Domine animam meam levavi. [...]
6. Auribus percipe Domine orationem meam  
 et intende voci orationis meae. [...]
14. Deus iniqui insurrexerunt super me  
 Et synagoga potentium quaesierunt animam meam  
 Et non propesuerunt te in conspectu suo. [...]
16. Respice in me et miserere mei,  
 Da imperium tuum puero tuo  
 Et salvum fac filium ancillae tuae.
17. Fac mecum signum in bono  
 Et videant qui oderunt me et confundantur,  
 quoniam tu Domine adiuvasti me et consolatus es me.

RPs<sub>113</sub>:

Acześ niebo ku swej chwale sprawił,  
 Aleś nam **nędznym** tu ziemię zostawił.

V: Ps. 114,24

Caelum caeli Domino,  
 Terram autem dedit filiis hominum.

The comparative analysis also shows that the translator shapes the nature of the psalmist's relationship with Yahweh differently, making it more direct. The psalmist's dialogue with God resembles a friendly conversation, emphasised by the use of second-person singular forms. In addressing God, vocative phrases based on the constituent *Pan* dominate, which suggests a Christological stance on the part of the author. There is a noticeable tendency to complement the name of God with an additional element in the form of the possessive pronoun *mój*. Amplifications also introduce conventional forms of the verb *raczyć*—both imperative and personal—rooted in the courtly and noble traditions, serving as markers of the text's polite framework. As Marek Cybulski notes, in the Middle Polish period, the lexeme *raczyć* was a “verb of superiority”, signalling the higher status of the addressee in the act of communication [Cybulski 2003: 129]. Undoubtedly, its presence softened the directive nature of the request, potentially giving it a particularly courteous character, with its fulfilment dependent on the will of the addressee [see Wojtak 1999: 134]. This technique is also very common in the prose *Psalterz*, where the verb *raczyć* is one of the most frequent terms, appearing in the text as many as 180 times [Kowalska 2013: 404].

RP<sub>s113</sub>

Bowiem Ty, Panie, **nie raczysz** przepomnieć żadnego,  
A owszem błogosławisz każdego.

V: Ps. 113 (114), 20

Dominus memor fuit nostri et benedixit nobis.

RP<sub>s85</sub>

**Racz** być strażem dusze mojej,  
Wszakem ja w opiece Twojej.  
I wyswobodź sługę swego,  
Boże mój, w Tobie ufającego.  
**Racz** mi być, mój Panie, miłościwy,  
K Tobie wołamy zawsze pókim żywi.

V: Ps. 85, 3–4

Custodi animam meam quoniam sanctus sum  
Salvum fac servum tuum  
Deus meus sperentem in te.  
Miserere mei Domine quoniam ad te clamabo tota die.

In the psalms under study, we also find examples of Rej's interventions in the semantic layer of the psalm, likely motivated by his tendencies towards

updating the text and his efforts to ensure that the culturally conditioned connotations of the original would be comprehensible to the reader. The translator sought to make the foreign, culturally bound imagery resonate with the readers, allowing them to see not the distant realities of the biblical world, but themselves and their surrounding community in the text. This type of modification in imagery and substitution of realities is evident in Psalm 113, where the author clearly avoids terms that indicate a connection between God and the Israelite nation. Rej makes lexical choices designed to convince the reader that the God described in the psalms is not merely the biblical God of Israel but, above all, the God of Christians. This explains his consistent decision to replace terms like *Israhel*, *Iudea*, *Domus Israhel*, *Domus Aaron* with universal expressions that encompass all of humanity, such as *przodkowie nasi* (*our ancestors*), *lud wierny* (*faithful people*), *ci wszyscy* (*all these*), *naród każdy* (*every nation*), *kożdy wierny* (*every faithful*), and to omit the Latin phrase *Deus Iacob*:

RPs<sub>113</sub>

Gdy **szli przodkowie** nasi z Egiptu,  
Naród Jakubów z ludu pogańskiego [...].

V: Ps. 113,1

In exitu **Israhel** de Aegypto,  
Domus Jacob de populo Barbaro [...].

RPs<sub>113</sub>

Stał sie **lud wierny** poświęconym Pana swego,  
A prawie umocnionym od Niego.

V: Ps. 113, 2

Facta est **Iudaea** sanctificatio eius,  
**Israhel** potestas eius.

RPs<sub>113</sub>

Wszystko sie to dzieje przed oblicznością Pana tego [...]

V: Ps. 113,7

A facie Domini mota est terra,  
A facie **Dei Iacob**.

RPs<sub>113</sub>

Abowiem **tych wszystkich**, co sie boją Ciebie,  
Zupełna nadzieja tam w Tobie na niebie.

V: Ps. 113,18

**Domus Aaron** speravit in Domino,  
Adiutor eorum et protector eorum est.

RPs<sub>113</sub>

Błogosławże, Panie, **narodowi każdemu**,  
Błogosławże **kożdemu wiernemu**.

V: Ps. 113, 20

Benedixit **domui Israhel**,  
Benedixit **domui Aaron**.

Indeed, in the Polish version of Psalm 113, we do find the expression *naród Jakubów* (nation of Jacob) used twice, but it was introduced within an updating context created by the preceding verses:

RPs<sub>113</sub>

Gdy szli przodkowie nasi z Egiptu,  
**Naród Jakubów** z ludu pogańskiego [...].

V: Ps. 113,1

In exitu Israhel de Aegypto  
**Domus Jacob** de populo Barbaro [...].

RPs<sub>113</sub>

**Naród Jakubów** miał nadzieję w Tobie,  
Ale i my nie wątpimy o Tobie.

V: Ps. 113,17

**Domus Israhel** speravit in Domino  
Audiutor eorum et protector eorum est.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasise that the metrical translations of psalms by Rej, despite employing a paraphrastic translation technique, retain to some extent the stylistic features of the Latin source text. These are characteristics traditionally associated with the biblical style, such as expressions like *mieć nadzieję* (to hope), *serce prawe* (righteous heart), *wołać głosem* (to cry out with a voice), *rozweselić w radości* (to rejoice with joy), as well as the postpositional order of adjectives, particularly pronominal ones. It should be noted that Rej uses pronominal forms to enhance the rhythm of the text, placing similar-sounding pronouns at the end of verses (e.g. *ucho Twoje—prośby moje* (Ps. 85), *dusze mojej—opiece Twojej* (Ps. 85), *sługę swego—Tobie ufającego*

(Ps. 85), *drogi swoje—serce moje* (Ps. 85), *serca prawego—Bóstwa Twego* (Ps. 85), *miłosierdzia swego—piekła gorącego* (Ps. 85), *Bóg miłościwy—dziwnie prawdziwy* (Ps. 85), *Pana swego—umocnionym od Niego* (Ps. 113), *imię święte Jego—stanu wszelakiego* (Ps. 117), *prawda święta Jego—do czasu wiecznego* (Ps. 117), etc.). A significant portion of these pronominal forms are amplifications.

In summary, it is important to emphasise that the metrical psalms under study, despite their relatively high fidelity to the biblical text, already reveal certain characteristic features of Rej's translation technique, which would fully manifest in his later prose *Psalterz*. Chief among these are the shifts in semantic planes to update the content of the psalms, as well as efforts related to the concretisation of content and the need to exert a stronger emotional and affective impact on the reader. The surviving individual metrical psalms are a testament to the early stages of Rej's work as a translator and may have laid the groundwork for the much more ambitious and time-consuming task of paraphrasing the entire *Psalterz*. They are therefore of great value to contemporary scholars, as they allow us to observe the process of shaping and evolving the writer's editorial techniques.

For Maciuszko, the relative fidelity to the Vulgate and the conciseness of expression were arguments supporting the Protestant nature of the metrical psalms [see Maciuszko 2002: 236]. He also interpreted the metrical form of the psalms—suggesting they were translated for church music—and the selection of works praising God and offering thanksgiving as expressions of Rej's Evangelical stance. However, these conclusions seem somewhat too far-reaching, especially since the content of the psalms themselves does not provide any basis for drawing conclusions that verge on dogmatics.

*Translated by Ewa Kisiel*

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