



A R T I C L E

Translating Blake's *Jerusalem*
into Polish

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¹ A notice in the online news section of *Blake* in September 2011 informed about an in-progress translation of *Jerusalem* into Polish by Rafał Stankiewicz and me. Going against the Polish tradition (which has by now become a habit) of publishing *Jerusalem* only in the form of selected fragments, we desire to present to the Polish-speaking public the entire "golden string" giving this string as Blakean a gloss as possible and building a *Jerusalem* that will be a faithful replica of the original. The purpose of this essay is to elaborate upon these metaphors. I would like to explain the motivation behind our project, speak about the obstacles, and share the encouragements, establishing a context

for this testimony of a builder of a replica with some reflections concerning the history of Polish Blake translations.

- 2 It will be fair to begin by stating that Blake's name sounds relatively familiar to Polish ears and by acknowledging that popularizing Blake in Poland has been and remains his translators' job.¹ Over the decades, Blake's poetry has attracted many Polish people of talent, including poets of the highest esteem, such as Leopold Staff, Jan Kasproicz, Czesław Miłosz, Zygmunt Kubiak, and Stanisław Barańczak. Their translations have been published in anthologies (of English poetry, or English and American poetry, or romantic poetry, or religious poetry) as well as in volumes dedicated to Blake alone.² As a result, a great number of works have been given Polish versions.
- 3 In fact, some of Blake's works have received more than one version. This applies particularly to shorter pieces, including *Poetical Sketches* and *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, as well as several minor prophecies, such as *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *The Book of Thel*, and *The First Book of Urizen*. A similar profusion of translations has been generated by selected passages from Blake's major prophecies. The most notable example is the preface to *Milton* (pl. 1).³ In the anthology edited by Puławski (1997), the preface, translated by Jolanta Kozak, is followed by her translations of pls. 2-4 (144-55), and, curiously enough, preceded by another version of "And did those feet ..." (143), by Puławski himself. In other words, in an anthology which gives no samples of *The Four Zoas* or *Jerusalem*,⁴ and only a very brief sample of *Milton*, there are two translations of the preface's famous lyric. The same is true of Kubiak's anthology (1991), which gives no passages from *The Four Zoas* or *Jerusalem* and no extracts from *Milton*, with the ex-

The image in the header is a detail of *Jerusalem* copy I, pl. 77 (Library of Congress), courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

1. One may object that perhaps this modest popularity derives partly from the fact that, due to the political changes of the last decades, more and more Poles know English. But most of them certainly do not know it well enough to cope with poetry, and those who do have invested their time and money in learning English for social and economic reasons, very often in order to obtain jobs that leave them no time for poetry. More often than not, genuine poetry readers begin with translations. It is acquaintance with a Polish version, sometimes a variety of Polish versions, that eventually provokes those readers who have some command of English to reach for the original text, to confront the challenge that faced the translators.

2. For details, see references under Krzeczkowski et al., Miłosz, Pietrkiewicz, Kubiak (1991 and 1993), Barańczak (1992 and 1993), Puławski, and Fostowicz (1998 and 2007).

3. Plate numbers and quotations from Blake's works follow Erdman, unless otherwise indicated.

4. The lack of any passage representing *Jerusalem* is particularly striking in this anthology, as its introduction begins with a reference to the work: the first sentence states, "In his *Jerusalem*, Blake writes the words that could be regarded as a motto for his entire work: 'I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans'" (5; my translation of the Polish text).

ception of “And did those feet ...” (147). Again, the lyric, along with the rest of the preface, is the only extract from *Milton* included in a more recent selection from Blake’s poems and writings, compiled and translated by Polish artist and Blake scholar Michał Fostowicz (87-88 [2007]).

- 4 The situation of *Milton* changed radically in 2001, when Wiesław Juszczak, one of the most distinguished Polish critics and Blake scholars, published his translation of the whole prophecy. It is a brilliant work, though it has one questionable feature: Juszczak seems to have attempted to render Blake’s sublime and pathos by imitating the style of one of the leading Polish romantic poets, Juliusz Słowacki. The result is that the Polish *Milton* sounds more like Słowacki than Blake, though this weak point may also be seen as a strong point: it refers the reader to the epoch when the original was created and, apart from that, it constitutes an integrated stylistic choice, whose greatest appeal is its beauty. However, no matter how one assesses the content and form of Juszczak’s translation, the very fact that he decided to translate and publish the entire work cannot be overestimated. It has value in itself, because every post-Juszczak translator of a fragment from *Milton* is no longer involved in the fragmentation of the prophecy. After Juszczak, a new translation of a fragment (such as Fostowicz’s version of the preface from 2007) becomes simply a new example of how *Milton*’s idiom can be rendered; it enriches the ways in which Blake can be naturalized into Polish without disintegrating his thought.
- 5 The same applies to *The Four Zoas*, which was translated and published in its entirety in 2006 by one of the most respected Polish translators, Maciej Słomczyński (who had earlier translated, among other things, all the theatrical works of Shakespeare, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, and Joyce’s *Ulysses*). Again, with the entire text available in Polish, publication of fragments, such as the selection offered by Fostowicz in 2007 (68-85), no longer means that the translator carries on the work of fragmentation. His work becomes a new instance of how individual phrases or paragraphs or pages could or should be understood. In brief, publication of a translation of the whole opens up a field for debate.
- 6 Unfortunately, no such field has been opened up to now as far as *Jerusalem* is concerned. No interpretative or artistic dialogue relating to what Blake called his “consolidated” work is possible, because it exists in Polish only in the form of pathetically disheveled fragments. Probably the first poet to publish a translation of a fragment was Kubiak, whose version of pls. 34[38].7-35[39].3 was included in *Poeci języka angielskiego [Poets of the English Language]* (Krzecz-

kowski et al. 151-54 [1971]). Miłosz, the first Polish poet to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature (1980), included a large part of “To the Christians” in his volume of translations entitled *Mowa wiązana [Poetic Speech]* (1986). The last decade was a little more favorable for *Jerusalem* (though not as constructive as it was for Blake’s other major prophecies), especially thanks to Fostowicz, who included in his *Wiersze i pisma Williama Blake’a [Poems and Writings of William Blake]* (2007) the largest selection so far: pls. 1, 3, 10.7-15.20, 16.61-69, 27, 38[43].1-54, 42.19-46, 52, 70.1-71.9, 74.1-13, 77 (in its entirety), 84.29-85.13, 90.1-91.30, and 94.1-99.5 (90-136).

- 7 Apart from this, dozens or indeed hundreds of lines have been translated to illustrate books about Blake written in or translated into Polish. During the last, most fruitful decade, a great number of minute quotations from *Jerusalem* were included in Fostowicz’s latest (and last) book, *Boska analogia [Divine Analogy]* (2008); more than fifty percent coincide with those selected for his *Wiersze i pisma Williama Blake’a*, published a year earlier, while the rest are translations of other bits and pieces from the prophecy. More fragments, or sometimes other translations of the same fragments, can be found in a massive book published in 2001, *U-bywać. Człowiek, świat, przyjaźń w twórczości Williama Blake’a [The Man, the World, and Friendship in the Work of William Blake]*,⁵ by probably the most recognizable Polish Blake scholar, Tadeusz Sławek. Another group appears in one of the very few translations of Blake-related books into Polish, Peter Ackroyd’s *Blake*, which was translated by Ewa Kraskowska and published in 2001. To read these fragments is the most disheartening of experiences. In choosing extracts for his Blake anthology, Fostowicz could at least claim that he “tried to select key ... fragments of bigger wholes [including *Jerusalem*] and put them together in a way that will make it possible for the uninitiated to understand the basic ideas [of Blake’s thought] and walk efficiently along his labyrinth” (foreword, p. 5 [2007]; translation mine). But, understandably, no such claims can be made in his *Boska analogia* or any other critical book; the fragments are of course random, they follow the critic’s argument, not *Jerusalem*’s, and they are, naturally, meant to guide the reader along Fostowicz’s, or Sławek’s, or Ackroyd’s labyrinth, not Blake’s.
- 8 One of the outcomes of this situation is that Blake’s thought gets explained for the Polish reader without the reader’s having any real chance to know Blake himself. Another is the false impression that the reader may derive from encountering *Jerusalem* in the form of a disorganized mass. Now and then, for example, the reader will find in this

5. The main title, *U-bywać*, is a pun suggesting contact with others (bywać u) as a means of the annihilation of the self (ubywać).

jumble of fragments quotations saying that “Jerusalem lies in ruins,” and indeed there is nothing to counteract the impression that she/it really does. A third consequence is that no tradition of translating *Jerusalem* into Polish has a chance of taking root in such ground. A telling illustration is Kraskowska’s translation of Ackroyd. Undertaking the rare job of translating rather than writing a Blake-related book, she uses translations that existed at the time, quoting, for example, Kubiak’s translations of fragments of “To the Evening Star” (68), *An Island in the Moon* (105), and *The Book of Thel* (134), as well as the entire “The Chimney Sweeper” of *Innocence* (143) and all of “The Tyger” (168),⁶ available in Kubiak’s anthologies of 1991 and 1993. As I said above, Kubiak also translated pls. 34[38].7-35[39].3 of *Jerusalem*, from which Ackroyd quotes several times. Yet this time the translator does not use Kubiak but translates the lines she needs herself, probably because the passage, for some reason not included in Kubiak’s anthologies from the 1990s, exists only in the form of a disconnected fragment in *Poeci języka angielskiego* of 1971 (Krzczkowski et al. 151-54) and is too short for her to bother to recover the translation. If the translation of Ackroyd’s book were made now, ten years later, the translator would be in a much more comfortable position; apart from the shorter pieces which were available in 2001, she would have the entire text of *Milton* and *The Four Zoas* to take from. But as far as *Jerusalem* is concerned, she would probably take the passages collected by Fostowicz in his *Wiersze i pisma Williama Blake’a* and translate all the other passages herself, rather than scan Fostowicz’s critical *Boska analogia* (which, by the way, provides translations of much higher quality than those in his anthology of 2007) or *U-bywać* by Sławek (a hugely competent Blake scholar and a poet to boot) in the hope that, perhaps, there is some coincidence in the fragments that a Polish critic and the English author needed to illustrate their arguments.

9 All in all, putting together the fragments scattered in selections from Blake and in Blake criticism, well over a thousand lines of *Jerusalem* have been translated into Polish, about a quarter of the text (roughly the equivalent of one chapter). Some lines have been translated more than once, and thousands have never been translated. Having invested several years in the task of creating the first Polish translation of the entire prophecy along with Rafał Stankiewicz—a Polish poet and philologist, and a devoted Blake student—I could provide a long catalogue of challenges, very often frustrations, on the translator’s way. But let me limit myself to a handful of examples.

10 Polish words tend to be longer than English. For instance, Life, Love, Good, Hate, Form, Wheel, Shell, Void, Space, Earth, Sun, Moon, Man, Heart, Womb, One, Lamb, and hundreds of other one-syllable keywords of *Jerusalem* are two- or three-syllable words in Polish, and in certain grammatical cases or in the plural they often become three or even four syllables. This is, of course, bad for the rhythmicity of the text, and it is even worse for its length. As a result, though the translator must repeat after Blake the assertions of “To the Public” concerning the “cadences” and “number of syllables,” there is very little chance that there will be correspondence between the original and the translation in this respect. In a different text you might consider removing individual words for the sake of rhythm and brevity, but you dare not do this in a text that, in the same paragraph of “To the Public,” asserts that “every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place.” You can likewise experiment with synonyms, searching for a Polish word whose rhythm and length will be nearer the English original. But it is exactly when you start doing this that you appreciate how direct Blake is in his choice of vocabulary. He is not Milton, he does not rely on Latinate diction or rhetoric; his words cannot be translated with the use of less obvious synonyms, with something of foreign derivation, or something slightly more archaic. Once this is done what gets affected is the most vital feature of the original: its directness, its fiery energy, its elemental power.

11 Even more crucially, the rhythm—the palpable beat of English, its play between the strong and the weak, the stressed and the unstressed—is an attribute that does not have an equivalent in Polish. The Polish language has stressed and unstressed syllables, but what is stressed is not that strong, what is unstressed not so weak and, as a result, even if the translator manages to recreate the rhythm, it will never attack the Polish ear as much as the original attacks the English ear. Of course these difficulties confront every translator of English verse into Polish, but the specific difficulty of *Jerusalem* is that the beat is part of the meaning. Los is a blacksmith, his sense is the ear, his tool is the hammer (“The blow of his Hammer is Justice. the swing of his Hammer: Mercy. / The force of Los’s Hammer is eternal Forgiveness,” 88.49-50). When a fragment is translated, it is not as obvious as when the whole is approached that one of the works of this hammer is *Jerusalem* itself, and that its beat must be heard throughout. Los would be as effective and efficient in Polish as he is in English if his instrument were one of the harps to which he is singing in *The Song of Los*, or if he went on singing the cradle song, or the watch song, or if he limited himself to operating the plow and running

6. A curious detail is that Kraskowska does not limit herself to one translation of the poem, quoted by Ackroyd at the beginning of chapter 14, but provides as many as four (168-69): Kubiak’s version is followed by Barańczak’s, and then by two translations from Puławski’s anthology, one by Puławski and the other by Kozak.

the winepress, or if he were an engraver drawing lines “upon the walls of shining heaven.” As a smith, Polish Los must remain inferior to the English original, because there is less force in the swing and the blow of his hammer.

- 12 Moreover, Blake’s punctuation causes immense difficulty. For example, Erdman’s pl. 16.3-7 reads:

in the Forests

The Oak frowns terrible, the Beech & Ash & Elm enroot
 Among the Spiritual fires; loud the Corn fields thunder
 along
 The Soldiers fife; the Harlots shriek; the Virgins dismal
 groan
 The Parents fear: the Brothers jealousy: the Sisters curse

Should these lines be interpreted like this,

in the Forests

The Oak frowns terrible, the Beech & Ash & Elm enroot
 Among the Spiritual fires; loud the Corn fields thunder
 along.
 The Soldiers fife, the Harlots shriek, the Virgins dismal
 groan,
 The Parents fear the Brother’s jealousy, the Sister’s curse

or, perhaps, in the following way?

in the Forests

The Oak frowns terrible, the Beech & Ash & Elm enroot
 Among the Spiritual fires; loud the Corn fields thunder
 along
 The Soldier’s fife, the Harlot’s shriek, the Virgin’s dismal
 groan,
 The Parent’s fear, the Brother’s jealousy, the Sister’s curse

As a Blake scholar, I have always found Blake’s punctuation not really erratic, as it has so often been named (or, indeed, misnamed), but polyphonic. For this reason, as a critic, I rely on Erdman’s edition, because only in this edition is it possible to get what Blake’s original really offers: to see, for example, not only “the Parents fear” but also “the Parent’s fear” and “the Parents’ fear.” But the critic’s exhilaration becomes the translator’s frustration. Where the critic has the freedom to enjoy the activity and passivity, singularity and plurality combined into one brief phrase, the translator must constantly consult Keynes, Stevenson, Paley, or Solomon for their opinions and then reduce the original’s multitude and polyvocality, because certain reductions must be made: Polish, being a flecional language, has cases, and its genitive sounds totally different from its plural; it has no coincidence of verb and noun, etc. The on-

ly thing the translator can do is make a decision and follow one line of interpretation, and then, perhaps, account for the reduction in poetry in the prose of a footnote.

- 13 Of course, this type of frustration is also the experience of Blake’s editors. What remains the vexation of the translator alone is the need to make certain indeterminacies determinate. To provide another—the last—illustration: on pl. 14.16-20, Blake writes:

And Los beheld his Sons, and he beheld his Daughters:
 Every one a translucent Wonder: a Universe within,
 Increasing inwards ...
 ... and they every one in their bright loins:
 Have a beautiful golden gate

Does “every one” refer to the daughters and sons of Los, or to the daughters alone? This interpretative decision must be made because all possible Polish equivalents of “every one” will take one form when they refer to females alone, and another when they refer to a female-male group. Blake’s editors are of no help in this case, because they do not need to decide. Here, critics and commentators must become the translator’s guides, and the frustration comes when you need to weigh, for example, Paley’s and Doskow’s opinions (that the lines refer to the sons and daughters) versus Stevenson’s and Damon’s (that they refer to the daughters alone).⁷ Even more frustration comes when the only conclusion you can draw from reading and rereading Damon, Paley, Wicksteed, Dortort, Curran and Wittreich, Otto, Bloom, Doskow, Beer, and others is that nobody says anything about a given line or phrase or word. Of course, there is nothing surprising about it; there are hundreds of lines that have never received an illuminating commentary because, quite understandably, scholars focus on what is vital for their arguments. The difference between a critic and a translator is that for the latter each word, every minute particular, is vital.

- 14 Nevertheless, despite these and hundreds of other difficulties, the frustration turns back to exhilaration when it transpires that, after all, Blake’s thought does yield to the Polish language. Juszczak and Słomczyński have demonstrated how effectively the type of difficulties enumerated above can be overcome and how vivid and suggestive, full of sublimity and pathos “Polish Blake” can be. Though the language does not have certain features which constitute the English language’s specificity and appeal, it does have attractions of its own, in particular immense musicality, flexibility, and openness to syntactic and semantic experiment. Perhaps the lines must remain slightly longer, but assonance, for example, by the vocal association of one word

7. See Paley, *William Blake* 152, Doskow 56, Stevenson 686 (note to 14.16-24), and Damon 244.

- with another, will make them feel shorter. The modulation of Polish does not resemble the modulation of English, yet it makes a music of its own. The hammer of Los may need to become a slightly more musical hammer in the hand of a slightly more musical smith, yet it is capable of beating out a rhythm which pulsates powerfully enough to make the whole vibrant and energetic, fiery and passionate.
- 15 Still, despite this, *Jerusalem* exists only in the form of fragments. Poles have had no chance to wind the “golden string” into a ball, because the string is badly torn. Symptomatically, when translating pl. 77 (“To the Christians”), Miłosz started from “I know of no other Christianity”; in other words, he excluded the “golden string” motto, probably because it makes no sense when only a fragment is given. Fostowicz, on the other hand, did translate the motto along with the rest of the plate, but he made what seems a deliberate mistake by changing the tense; in his translation (as well as in the first paragraph of his foreword, where he quotes the “golden string” piece again), the motto reads not “I give you the end of a golden string” but “I will give you the end of a golden string” (5, 118 [2007]).
- 16 Although Fostowicz changed the original’s present tense into the future, it is quite doubtful, however, whether he really planned to give his audience the entire golden string sometime in the future. Before his death in 2010, he had conducted extensive correspondence with my collaborator, Rafał Stankiewicz. Fostowicz discussed every question and uncertainty with the fire of an artist and the patience of a scholar, yet never offered to join the project. Of course, one of his reasons might have been his involvement with other projects, including writing his massive *Boska analogia*. But another possible reason why he was not willing to engage in translating the entire text and why he chose to publish fragments rather than working on the whole may be recovered from a careful examination of the selection he offers in *Wiersze i pisma Williama Blake’a*.
- 17 He begins with the frontispiece, pl. 1, which is duly followed by pl. 3, “To the Public.” Pl. 3, however, is not followed by pls. 4 and 5, etc., but by pls. 10.7-15.20, which he puts together under the title “Golgonooza.” As noted, Fostowicz claims in the first paragraph of his foreword that he “tried to select key ... fragments of bigger wholes and put them together in a way that will make it possible for the uninitiated to understand the basic ideas [of Blake’s thought] and walk efficiently along his labyrinth” (5). The question that arises is why the translator who wanted to acquaint his reader with Blake’s “basic ideas” excluded the theme of *Jerusalem*, given in the opening of pl. 4. Even more importantly, why did he exclude the statement of Blake’s great task (“To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes / Of Man ...”) in pl. 5, which explains everything that follows, including Golgonooza? My guess is that Fostowicz’s intuition told him that what qualifies as a fair selection, fit to be offered to the Polish reader, are fragments which are not over-English.
- 18 *Jerusalem*’s theme is specified in pl. 4, which is quite heavily loaded with English and Welsh place-names (“The Malvern and the Cheviot, the Wolds Plinlimmon & Snowdon,” etc.). Even more radically, Blake’s great task is formulated in a paragraph that incorporates the list of the sons of Albion (“While I write of the building of Golgonooza, & of the terrors of Entuthon: / Of Hand & Hyle & Coban, of Kwantok, Peachey, Brereton, Slayd & Hutton”), which is followed by a list of four other sons (“Scofield! Kox, Kotope and Bowen”), and then by the catalogue of Albion’s daughters (5.41-45). By contrast, in 10.7-15.20, the longest uninterrupted passage in Fostowicz’s selection, there are only a handful of references to the individual sons and daughters (Sabrina and Ignoge in 11.19, Ragan and Scofield in 11.21, and Hand, Hyle, and Skofeld in 15.1-2). What is more, in this passage of 276 lines, London is the only conspicuous English place-name; apart from London, there are just brief references to Tyburn, Paddington, and Lambeth in the description of the building of Golgonooza.
- 19 To give a few more examples, this passage is followed by a pitifully brief extract (16.61-69), which the translator entitles “Los’s Halls.” Significantly, what is omitted is the highly English remainder of pl. 16, which begins “Hampstead Highgate Finchley Hendon Muswell hill” and then, after Humber and Trent, Tweed and Tyne, along with Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire, and Norfolk, progresses to the enumeration of the counties of Wales, England, and Scotland. This elimination of the better part of the plate and the decision to give only its concluding paragraph as a fragment seem to be dictated by the same rationale that informs other choices and selections. Thus, the preface “To the Deists,” pl. 52, is followed by what Fostowicz calls “Plates 70-71.” The heading is misleading, however, as only the first nine lines of pl. 71 are given, and the thoroughly English remainder, beginning “And these the Names of Albions Twelve Sons, & of his Twelve Daughters / With their Districts,” is not translated. Pls. 94-99, on the other hand, are translated, and form the second-longest uninterrupted passage of *Jerusalem* in Fostowicz’s anthology. In this passage of 176 lines, there is just one line that has English place-names (“Cornwall & Derbyshire” in 94.8), and the sons and daughters of Albion are referred to only as a group. Preceding this relatively long extract is a passage entitled “Los’s Lament,” pls. 90.1-91.30. Pl. 90, translated in its entirety, is more English than most of the other passages in this selection. Among other things, line 40 contains a reference to four sons of Albion: “While in Selfhood Hand & Hyle & Bowen

& Skofeld appropriate / The Divine Names.” In Fostowicz’s translation, however, four become three, as he removes Bowen—a faithful translator for no apparent reason omits one of the four: “Samozaptrzeenie w postaci Handa, Hyle’a i Skofelda ...” (“Selfhood in the form of Hand, Hyle, and Skofeld ...”; translation mine). One last telling detail is that a Blake dictionary that Fostowicz provides at the end of his book (287-97), while explaining the important places and characters of Blake’s myth—Allamanda, Beulah, Cathedron, Entuthon-Benython, Erin, Luban, Ahania, Bromion, Enion, Fuzon, Leutha, Oothoon, Orc, Palamabron, Rintrah, Theotormon, and many others—contains only Albion, Hand, Scofield, and Tyburn for English proper names. In other words, the selection from *Jerusalem* has been made in such a way that there is no need to explain any other English names.

- 20 In sum, a study of the most extensive collection of fragments from *Jerusalem* translated into Polish so far, particularly the logic behind what has been selected and what has been excluded, leads to the conclusion that *Jerusalem* might have been considered too English to be translated as a whole. Indeed, certain passages, such as the fixing of the counties in pl. 16, cannot be effectively naturalized into Polish. The way that Blake translates the map of the British Isles into rhythmic verse will never have the same effect on the Polish audience as it has on the British, because the names will remain largely unknown and because the ear of a Polish person who does not know English will not catch the rhythm (reading, for example, “-shire” not as a one-syllable but as a two-syllable word). The eye of a Polish reader, even one quite well acquainted with English, may spot the missing “w” in “Glasgo” in 16.57, but will probably not grasp all the other abbreviations that give this incantation the feel of a dictation hastily put down in shorthand. This may be explained in a footnote, but too many footnotes usually lead to a situation where none is read, which means in effect that a Polish person seeing the missing “w” in “Glasgo” will regard it as an editorial mistake.
- 21 On the other hand, similar catalogues are part of the biblical and of the epic conventions, which are as familiar to the educated Polish reader as to anybody. The reader will probably not grasp the specificity of Blake’s catalogue, but will understand enough to accept it as part of the entire prophecy. Besides, the proportion of such lines is so tiny that the text does not deserve to be fragmented only to spare the reader the difficulty of coping with such passages. In fact, the key to *Jerusalem*’s characters and places is largely to be

found in *Jerusalem* itself; Damon’s *A Blake Dictionary* is, for the most part, a collection of quotations from Blake himself, both when it explains purely Blakean terms and when it defines Blake’s use of the names “Hand & Hyle & Bowen & Skofeld,” etc. Then again, the names Cambel or Gwinefred, when heard for the first time, probably sound as empty to the ear of an English reader as they do to the Polish reader. Gwiniverra, on the other hand, sounds familiar (Hollywood productions know no national, cultural, or linguistic borders), and so do the names of Cordella, Gonorill, and Ragan (fortunately, Shakespeare knows no borders either). Thus, the first encounter with those characters may not be as perplexing for the reader as one might fear, and with each and every subsequent appearance of the daughters of Albion it becomes apparent that familiarity with the Arthurian romance or with *King Lear* does not offer much help in understanding their functions in *Jerusalem*, because they assume a narrative life of their own, they become part of the myth, very much like Ahania, Enion, Vala, or Enitharmon, or like Milton in *Milton*.⁸ As a matter of fact, it is only if *Jerusalem* is offered as a whole that it can explain why it contains such a multitude of English references. It is only when it is allowed to tell its narrative that it can reveal that, on one level, the record of Los’s fight for his friend Albion is a record of Blake’s artistic fight for the country and the culture in which he lived and worked. And only when *Jerusalem* is allowed to unwind its story without interruption does it have a chance to disclose that, on another level, Los’s fight is universal, Blake’s Albion, the sleeping giant, is an Everyman, and, despite the multitude of English place-names, Albion is an everywhere, very much like Joyce’s apparently (and literally) thoroughly Irish Dublin.

- 22 In brief, my conviction is that *Jerusalem* seems much more confined within British culture, history, and geography when it is fragmented than when it is a “consolidated” work. A fragment that may be considered untranslatable becomes translatable when it stops being a fragment and has a chance to function as part of the whole.
- 23 Will Polish people take up the challenge that Blake’s *Jerusalem* offers? Of course I hope they will. However, hoping is a dubious thing in Polish; we do have an equivalent of the English “while there’s life there’s hope,” but there is also a nasty Polish proverb that says “hope is the mother of fools.” Let me therefore conclude not on what I hope for but on what I know: it is impossible to determine whether Poles will take up the challenge of *Jerusalem* until the challenge of the entire text is offered.

8. Actually *Milton*, which has been translated into Polish, requires much more background. To understand what Blake’s Milton does and says presupposes acquaintance with John Milton’s thought, attitude, and religious convictions, as well as with the style of *Paradise Lost*. But what Blake’s daughters of Albion say and do in *Jerusalem* will be perfectly understood without any acquaintance with Milton’s *History of Britain*, one of the sources from which Blake derived their names.

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In Polish

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