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The Psalm in the Poetry of the Late Baroque: Reinterpretations and Redefinitions of the Genre

Great popularity of psalm paraphrases and travesties, both in Latin and in vernacular languages, is a cultural phenomenon of the early modern period.¹ Not surprisingly, then, one can find a number of them in the Polish-language literature of the late Baroque, too.² The novelty of their form or creative strategies is non-too tantalizing; they mostly reproduce models and solutions known from the previous epochs, and attempting to find in their lot a masterly work matching that of *Psalmodia polska* by Wespazjan Kochowski, for instance, would be an exercise in futility. The poetic pieces falling within the purview of the present essay seem noteworthy mostly insofar as they bear testimony to the tastes and spiritual needs of the epoch which produced them. From this point of view, talking about late-Baroque reinterpretations or redefinitions of the psalm or psalmistry calls for some qualifications. The phrase appearing in the title is not meant to imply that all the cases to be analyzed here refer to some generally accepted approach to the psalm as a literary genre which would be somehow canonical or representative of the previous epoch. Reconstruction of such an exemplary model, problematic in itself and requiring a liberal dose of idealism, might moreover prove inadequate in reference to the views held by particular authors in question. The goal set for this essay is therefore much more modest: it is merely to present various late-Baroque psalms in such a way as to bring our sights to bear on the sources of particular solutions and the category of psalm they imply.

For obvious reasons, theoretical reflection on the poetry of psalms has its origins in theological and biblical discourse rather than in traditional poetics or rhetoric. The Church tradition usually emphasized the connection

¹ See A. Modlińska-Piekarz, *Votum Davidicum. Poetyckie parafrazy psalmów w języku łacińskim w XVI i XVII w.* (Lublin, 2009), pp. 61–66.

² For the purposes of this study, “the late Baroque” shall be synonymous with “Baroque literature of the Saxon period.”

of the psalm with instrumental music. St Hilary of Poitiers (4th cent.) explained the qualifications appearing in the headings of the book of Psalms as follows:

*Psalmus est, cum cessante voce pulsus tantum organi concinentis auditur. Canticum est, cum cantantium chorus libertate sua utens, neque in consonum organi adstrictus obsequium, hymno canorae tantum vocis exultat. Canticum autem psalmi est, cum organo praecinente subsequens et aemula organi vox chori cantantis auditur, modum psalterii modulis vocis imitata. Psalmus vero cantici est, cum choro ante cantante, humanae cantationis hymno ars organi consonantis aptatur, vocisque modulis praecinentis pari psalterium suavitate modulatur.*³

The terminological distinctions drawn by St Hilary were taken over by St Augustine, who, however, considered psalm to be subordinate to the concept of canticle. Nonetheless, the issue of unnecessary musical accompaniment taken aside, it seems there is no discernible difference between the two. Thus, St Augustine is somewhat hesitant about his terminology:

Discreverunt quidam ante nos inter Canticum, et Psalmum; ut quoniam Canticum ore profertur, Psalmus autem visibili organo adhibito, id est psalterio, canitur ... et liber ipse Psalmorum dicitur, non Canticorum ... cum potius secundum istam differentiam, Cantica dici debuisse videantur; quoniam Canticum etiam sine Psalmo esse potest, Psalmus vero sine Cantico esse non potest.⁴

And singing psalms to music was by no means viewed as the only conceivable way of performing them. According to Isidore of Seville:

Primitiva autem ecclesia ita psallebat, ut modico flexu vocis faceret resonare psallentem, ita ut pronuncianti vicinior esset, quam canenti. Propter carnales autem in ecclesia, non propter spirituales consuetudo cantandi est instituta: ut, qui verbis non compunguntur, suavitate modulaminis moveantur.⁵

In modern times, attempts to find a psalm counterpart among classical genres deriving from the Greek and Roman tradition usually pointed to the ode or the hymn.⁶ According to a widely held opinion, “Graeci canticum hymnum vocant, item psalmum. Sed proprie hymnus dicitur, qui voce naturali sit, psalmus cum aliquo musico instrumento.”⁷ It seems that the equating

³ Hilarius, *Prologus in Librum Psalmorum*, in *Opera*, vol. I (Veronae: apud Antonium Bernum et Iacobum Vallarsium, 1730), 19, col. 13.

⁴ Augustinus, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus*, J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 36 (Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1845), col. 813. See also *ibid.*, 4, 1, col. 78: “[Cantica] Psalmi autem dicuntur, qui cantatur ad psalterium.”

⁵ Isidor, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, in *Opera omnia*, ed. F. Arevalus, [vol. 6] (Romae: apud Antonium Fulgonium, 1802), I, 5, p. 368.

⁶ See Modlińska-Piekarz, *Votum Davidicum*, pp. 27–30.

⁷ *Florilegii magni seu polyantheae floribus novissimis sparsae libri XXIII. Opus ... a Iosepho Langio ... meliori ordine dispositum, ... locupletum atque perillustratum*, vol. I (Lugduni: sumptibus Ioannis Antonii Huguetan, 1681), col. 419.

of the hymn with the canticle was an oversimplification for one more reason: not every psalm, or canticle, had to be a praising song. St Augustine wrote:

Quid est, 'Defecerunt hymni David, filii Jesse?'.⁸ Hymni laudes sunt Dei cum cantico Si sit laus, et non sit Dei, non est hymnus: si sit laus, et Dei laus, et non cantetur, non est hymnus. Oportet ergo ut, si sit hymnus, habeat haec tria: et laudem, et Dei, et canticum.⁹

Whilst commenting on the same passage from the book of Psalms, Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino, one of the most influential authors of the post-Tridentine period, contended:

Hinc enim liber Psalmorum inscribitur Hebraice ... *sepher tehillim*, id est liber hymnorum, sive laudum divinarum. Et post finem Psalmi 71 ... legimus: defecerunt ... *tephillot* David, id est orationes Davidis. Psalmi enim, ut plurimum continent vel Dei laudes, vel orationes ad Deum, vel utrumque simul, quamvis etiam nonnulli sint, qui in cohortandis hominibus ad virtutem toti consumantur...¹⁰

If we bring the conceptual apparatus of classical poetics to bear, then, as the above-cited opinion rightly suggests, biblical psalms turn out to be instances of varied genres of poetry, and furthermore, if we apply the categories of rhetoric to the psalms, we are bound to assign them to various genera dicendi. Consequently, if we attempted to incorporate the concept of psalm into the early modern body of knowledge about poetry, it would not define any poetic genre or kind of oratory in particular, but, at best, indicate a broadly understood poetic model or paradigm. We are inclined to reach a similar conclusion when we read Athanasius Kircher's opinion in his *Musurgia universalis*: "Certum est Davidem lyricum, tragicum, comicum, satyricum, heroicum, dramaticum, epithalamicum, elegiacumque poetam in omnibus se exhibere, iuxta exigentiam materiarum."¹¹

People in early modernity must have perceived the poetry of ancient Hebrews as a largely familiar phenomenon that yielded to comparisons with classical literature and to some extent could be analyzed with the conceptual tools of rhetoric and poetics, yet it still felt culturally distant. We can assume that the awareness of this otherness was a stimulus affecting the development of biblical philology and studies into the culture of the ancient East. On the other hand, however, there was a tendency, evident since the ancient times, to assimilate it, for example, by employing the conceptual apparatus of rhetoric for commenting and analyzing biblical psalms—the most telling instance of this was the *Exposition in Psalterium* by Cassiodorus. The practice

⁸ Ps. 71:20.

⁹ Augustinus, *Ennarationes*, col. 914.

¹⁰ R. Bellarmino, *Explanatio in Psalmos...* (Lugduni: sumptibus Horatii Cardon, 1612), f. a₄v.

¹¹ A. Kircher, *Musurgia universalis sive ars magna consoni et dissoni...*, vol. I (Romae: ex Typographia Haeredum Francisci Cabelleti, 1650), p. 62.

of providing examples taken from both classical authors and the Scriptures to illustrate points in treatises and popular handbooks of rhetoric dealing with tropes and figures would be an analogous phenomenon.¹² Yet, at the same time, there was much confusion when it came to characterizing biblical meters. Kircher denounced the opinions of older authors, like St Jerome, who had read hexameters or Sapphic stanzas into the Psalms. Nonetheless, in his own opinion on the subject, Kircher did not venture beyond saying that this poetry had a different arrangement and order of feet, among which some role could be assigned to dactyls and spondees.¹³

Difficulties in grasping the essential features of biblical poetry notwithstanding, David's Psalms were almost unanimously considered to be an ideal of poetry. Naturally, the assessment involved ethical rather than aesthetic criteria. As Roberto Bellarmino put it, "ita rapit animos in amorem et laudem Dei, ut nihil dulcius, nihil salutaris cani audirive possit."¹⁴

The psalms of King David would therefore appear to be a somewhat paradoxical model: appreciated and worthy of emulation in all respects, yet at the same time eluding precise description. This goes some way to explain why there is a large degree of arbitrariness to its imitations. Perhaps it would be pertinent to note here that the category of psalm was broadened because of a medieval form of prayer that emerged in the twelfth century and was called *Psalterium Beatae Mariae Virginis*. In its original form, it differed from the traditional psalter only in that the antiphons preceding each psalm were replaced with new, Marian ones. Later on, the Marian psalter gave way to the practice of repeating the "Angelic Salutation" multiple times, which gradually evolved towards the rosary.¹⁵ In time, psalters made up of Marian psalms whose content or incipits referred to respective biblical canticles began to appear, like *Psalterium Divae Virginis Mariae* by Stephen Langton (12th/13th cent.) or a much more widely known Marian psalter by St Bonaventure, to give just a few examples. The new Marian psalters were theologically warranted, *inter alia*, by the typological reading of the Scriptures. A fifteenth-century Blackfriar, Alan de Rupe, explained why he called the rosary prayer that he had introduced "The Psalter of Jesus and Mary": "[hoc suffragium] Sic dictum a Psalterio Davidico, quod figura Angelicae fuit Salutationis. Cantica enim veteris legis figura novae fuerunt."¹⁶

¹² e.g. J. Smith, *The Mysteries of Rhetorique Unveil'd...* (London: E. Cotes, 1665).

¹³ Kircher, *Musurgia universalis*, vol. 1, p. 63.

¹⁴ Bellarmino, *Explanatio in Psalmos*, f. a₃v.

¹⁵ See B. Kochaniewicz, "Nowe spojrzenie na początki modlitwy różańcowej," *Salvatoris Mater*, 5/4 (2003), esp. pp. 300–304.

¹⁶ *Apologia B. Alanus de Rupe pro praedicatione sua de psalterio Christi et Mariae eiusdemque fraternitate rosarii*, in: *B. Alanus de Rupe redivivus... auctore R.P.F. Ioanne Andrea Coppenstein* (Coloniae Agrippinae: sumptibus Petri Henningii Bibl. Colon., 1624), p. 3.

Medieval Jesus psalters, as well as Petrarch's *Psalmi poenitentiales* and the *Psalmi confessionales* attributed to him, modified the features of the biblical psalm in yet other ways. Incidentally, the last two cycles, exuding an air of quiet reflection, seem to have played a pivotal role in setting the example for what would become penitent poetry.

So the term "psalm" has started referring not only to biblical texts but also to pieces of poetry devoted to Jesus and Mary, as well as to penitent and meditational reflection back in the Middle Ages. Broadly understood psalms included texts used in liturgy or other forms of religious service, as well as those meant for private reading. Among later embodiments of the genre that bear testimony to its capaciousness, at least two need to be mentioned: *Psalmodia polska* by Kochowski and *Kühlpsalter* by Quirinus Kuhlmann. Kochowski's cycle inscribes the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of noblemen and its history in a sacred order of things, whereas the "cooling psalter" constitutes a summa of the poetic, religious, and life experience of the author, a chiliastic mystic, Kuhlmann. Each of the works expresses a comprehensive vision, and calling them a psalter or psalmody serves only to emphasize their grounding in the sacred order.

The extra-biblical examples that have been cited point to a tendency whereby the scope of the psalm category gradually broadens over time. As a result, providing a synthetic definition of the psalm *sensu largo* becomes problematic to a point where one is tempted to paraphrase the title of one of Stanley Fish's famous essays: "How to recognize a psalm when you see one?" So it seems reasonable to distinguish several possible cases defined depending on the relation that holds between a given work and the biblical archetype. In the strict sense of the word, Psalms are the texts that comprise the book of Psalms (and their various paraphrases), as well as all other biblical canticles. The second group would include works that do not belong to the Scriptures but have been called psalms by a reading community or by their authors, and they usually make a clear reference to the biblical prototype or engage in intertextual play with it, as exemplified by the Marian psalms by St Bonaventure or the penitent works by Petrarch. Some works belonging to this group may even lack such reference altogether; Anna Kamińska, an ex-wife of the Polish politician Mariusz A. Kamiński, has recently supplied a striking—albeit bizarre—example of the kind: "Psalm żony niezłomnej w wierze" (A Psalm of a Wife Unwavering in Her Faith) with the incipit "Mariusz, wracaj do domu" (Mariusz, come back home).

Additionally, we should also take into account texts that are not called psalms but do refer in various ways to the biblical book of Psalms. In their case, one could talk about realizations of some poetic paradigm at the most. An easily distinguishable subset of them features the character of a repenting King David or makes reference to biblical penitent psalms at least at the

level of phraseology.¹⁷ There are numerous instances of such poetry among penitent elegies, which enjoyed much popularity in the Baroque.

The typology that has just been presented certainly has its shortcomings, but it enables us to provisionally organize the empirical literary material, which for the purposes of this essay is limited to the Saxon period. Among the psalm paraphrases, one needs to mention two smaller poetic cycles from *Krótki zbiór duchownych zabaw* by Wojciech Stanisław Chrościński: “Pięć psalmów na imię Jezus,” and “Pięć psalmów na imię Maryja.”¹⁸ The poet paraphrases subsequent psalms so that their initial letters—as in the Latin originals—are arranged to form the names of Jesus or Mary. The poet thus made it his aim to provide a translation for the kind of devotional practice that had thus far employed the Latin text. A seventeenth-century expert on liturgy, Cardinal Giovanni Bona, observed in one of his treatises:

Sunt qui quotidie hoc nomen venerentur, recitatis quinque Psalmis, quorum literae initiales Mariae nomen efficiunt, praemissa singulis Angelica salutatione. Psalmi sunt isti: *Magnificat, Ad Dominum cum tribularer, Retribue servo tuo, In convertendo, Ad te levavi oculos meos.*¹⁹

The Marian worship described here, as well as the act of saying biblical psalms whose initial letters formed the name of Jesus, had been known, at least, since the beginning of the sixteenth century. Such devotional practices were approved by the bull “Pro coronis Domini nostri et Dominae nostrae” issued by Pope Leo X on September 14, 1517. The bull specifies:

Tertia [corona] continet quinque Psalmos, habentes quinque literas in principio, quibus nomen Iesus scribitur, in honorem nominis Domini Iesu, primus Psalmus: *iubilate parvum*,²⁰ secundus: *exaudiat te Dominus in die tribulationis*, tertius: *salvum me fac, Domine, quoniam defecit sanctus*, quartus: *usquequo, Domine, oblivisceritis*, quintus: *saepe expugnaverunt*, et in fine: *in nomine Iesu omne genu flectatur*,²¹ versus: *sit nomen Domini benedictum in saecula*. Oratio: *omnipotens sempiternae Deus, dirige actus nostros in beneplacito tuo, ut in nomine dilecti Filii tui etc.*²²

In both of the cycles, symmetrical to one another, Chrościński faithfully follows the original text. One thing which he could not, or simply would not, reproduce is a certain succinctness of the biblical source. The poet almost completely refrains from introducing motifs that do not come from the paraphrased psalms

¹⁷ The seven penitent psalms usually taken into account are Pss. 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, and 142.

¹⁸ W.S. Chrościński, *Krótki zbiór duchownych zabaw...* (Częstochowa: w drukarni Jasnej Góry Częstochowskiej, 1710, f. K₂v–L₄r).

¹⁹ G. Bona, *De Divina Psalmodia*, in *Opera omnia quotquot hactenus separatim edita fuere* (Venetiis: ex Typographia Balleoniana, 1764), p. 421. [Luke 1:46–55; Pss. 119, 118; gimel, 125, 122]

²⁰ Viz. Ps. 99, not to be confused with Ps. 65, which has the same incipit.

²¹ Phil. 2:10.

²² Leo X, “De coronis Domini nostri et Dominae nostrae,” in *Nova collectio et compilatio privilegiorum apostolicorum...*, ed. E. Rodríguez, vol. 1 (Venetiis: apud Societatem Minimam, 1611), p. 305. [Pss. 99, 19, 11, 12, 128.]

but stretches the text so much that the reader's patience is put to the test. It frequently involves going into more detail than the biblical original does. As a result of elaborating on the realities of the original, the second psalm of "Psalmy na imię Jezus," which paraphrases the biblical Psalm 19, mentions cannons (*armaty*). In Jakub Wujek's translation of the Bible, the pertinent verse reads as follows: „Jedni w woziech, a drudzy w koniach: ale my imienia Pana Boga naszego wzywać będziemy.”²³ [Douay-Rheims Bible (Challoner rev.): “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God.”] Chrościński, on the other hand, puts it this way:

Którzy w przestronnych szyk mający błoniach,
w liczbie, w armatach ufają i koniach:
nam imię Twoje, niezwalczony Boże,
za sto tysięcy wojska dopomoże.²⁴

The mention of artillery weapons should not be overestimated,²⁵ even though it could signal a figurative interpretation of the psalm, which would then be a manifestation of providential thinking that was typical for the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mentality of Polish nobility. In "Psalm trzeci" the biblical verse: “Na grzbiecie moim budowali grzesznicy, przedłużali nieprawość swoją”²⁶ [Douay-Rheims Bible (Challoner rev.): “The wicked have wrought upon my back: they have lengthened their iniquity.”] was replaced with a more developed and concretized image:

Zaczyn na grzbiecie i na moim plecu
jako więc kowal przy kuźniczym piecu
żelazo grzeje i młotem obija,
tak pod ich ręką zostawałem i ja.
Kłęb ciała mego swym warsztatem mieli:
na nim złoczyńcy robili, co chcieli,
złość okazując i gry dość żalosne
przez moc katowską, przez roboty sprosne.²⁷

²³ Ps. 19:8. Wujek's rendition of the Bible is quoted from J. Frankowski (ed.), *Biblia w przekładzie księdza Jakuba Wujka z 1599 r. Transkrypcja typu „B” oryginalnego tekstu z XVI w.* (Warszawa, 2000), Prymasowska Seria Biblijna, vol. 10. All Polish quotes from the Bible come from this edition unless indicated otherwise.

²⁴ “Those who stand in ranks across expansive fields / have faith in their numbers, their cannons, and horses: / Thy name, invincible Lord, will aid us / more than an army one hundred thousand strong.” Chrościński, *Krótki zbiór*; f. K₃v.

²⁵ Back then, the word *armata* could also mean “weaponry,” but it would have to be in the singular form.

²⁶ Ps. 128:3.

²⁷ “For on my back and on my shoulders / like a blacksmith by his forge / heats the iron and hammers it out, / so I remained in their hands. / The withers of my body were the workshop of their trade; / the sinners did on them what they pleased, / their iniquity showing through their foul games / and torture, through their dirty works.” Chrościński, *Krótki zbiór*, f. K₄r.

It is, however, worth noting that this is the only instance in the whole cycle of “Psalmy na imię Jezus” where the poet drifts away from the literal meaning of the Scriptures that far. In “Psalmy na imię Maryja” such deviations are even less pronounced. Only in “Psalm drugi,” Chrościński provides the gimel stanza of the biblical Psalm 118 with thematically related motifs from subsequent stanzas.

Another example of the late-Baroque psalm paraphrase would be *Lutnia Dawida*—published twice, in 1752 and 1755²⁸—that contains seven penitent psalms by the Blackfriar Cyprian Mikołaj Zakiewicz. The title page reveals that they are translations from Latin, and the psalms themselves bear numerous phraseological resemblances to Wujek’s translation. In terms of content, Zakiewicz’s psalms unerringly follow the biblical text, only now and then introducing subtle references to the New Testament, like in the plea for absolving the soul by way of blood: “krwi droga,” in “Psalm I” (viz. the biblical Psalm 6).²⁹ Such allusions, however, ought to be treated as consequences of a typological interpretation of the biblical text. In “Nauka do nucenia *Lutni* chęć ciekawą lub pobożną przysposabiająca,” which precedes the psalms, the author says:

Jak masz zaczynać pokutnych nucenie
psalmów, ażebyś nigdy nie spadł z tonu
i w nich pieśń wdzięczną śpiewał dla Syjonu?
Ton ci podaje Zbawiciel zmęczony,
na krzyżu niby struna wyciągniony,
gdy siedm słów takim altem intonuje,
aż duch w nim ustał, serce ranę czuje.³⁰

The poet wanted to make his paraphrases as melic as possible: he employed varied stanzas, which is reminiscent of Old Polish song-making. The fact that he used the phrase “nucenie psalmów” [cantillating psalms] a couple of times is evidence that he perceived psalms as being strongly related to singing and music.

Neither *Lutnia Dawida* nor the psalms by Chrościński can be viewed as occasioned by a deeper reflection on the biblical text or as an attempt whereby a scholarly poet-philologist comes to grips with the undeniable, though elusive, beauty of the original. It is not only that Zakiewicz, as he declared, worked using not the original but the Latin translation, and Chrościński

²⁸ See K. Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. 34 (Kraków 2000), pp. 91–92 (on the issue of authorship of *Lutnia Dawida* as well).

²⁹ C.M. Zakiewicz, *Lutnia Dawida do brzmienia przyjemnej Bogu, wdzięcznej aniołom, milej całemu Niebu melodyi sztucznie nastrojona...* (Poznań: w Drukarni Akademickiej, 1755), f. A₃r.

³⁰ “How are you to begin cantillating penitent / psalms so that you never fall out of tune / and sing them as a grateful song to Zion? / The tone is set by the exhausted Savior, / stretched on the cross like a string / when he is intoning seven words in alto, / until his spirit has stopped, [and] his heart feels the wound.” Zakiewicz, *Lutnia Dawida*, f. A₄r.

probably did not venture beyond it either. It seems, moreover, that both of them had a practical goal in mind: they wanted to make a poetic rendition of the text that was very useful in specific devotional practices.

In later times, during the Enlightenment, the tradition of paraphrasing penitent psalms was carried on by Waław Rzewuski (1706–1779). The poet worked on his translation of psalms while being imprisoned by Nikolai Repnin in Kaluga, in a situation analogical to that of Michał Serwacy Wiśniowiecki, who had been doing similar work sixty years earlier when he was detained at Głuchów. Rzewuski published his *Wiersz na siedm psalmów pokutnych* in 1773, shortly after returning from exile. In the poem “Do kochanej Ojczyzny,” intended to serve as preface to his translation, the author proposed a figurative interpretation of the penitent psalms:

W okropnych czasach, w pośrzodku dni smutnych
bierz się, Ojczyzno, do psalmów pokutnych.
A gdy cię gniewny Bóg chłosta swym biczem,
płacz, jęcz, upadaj przed Jego obliczem.

Wszak Bóg, jak ojciec, gdy dziecię swe otnie,
cieszy je potém i głaszcze stokrotnie.
Po srogich klęskach, po morze, po bitwie
da Bóg szczęśliwy los Polsce i Litwie.³¹

Rzewuski’s poetic gesture whereby the author presents himself as a man of stature who, despite his personal misfortunes, is concerned mostly about the fate of his Fatherland and at the same time devotes himself to religious meditations has a clearly political and propagandist import. His psalms are composed in hendecasyllables with paired rhymes; the memory of its melic, and also ritual, character is expressed in the ending used repeatedly in all the penitent psalms as well as in the paraphrases of “Magnificat” and Psalm 90, which were appended to the collection:

Niech słynie wszędzie i o wszystkich dobach
pan świata, jeden Bóg we trzech osobach,
Ojciec, Syn i Duch Święty. My go chwalmy,
śpiewając psalmy!³²

³¹ “In terrible times, amid days of sorrow, / apply yourself, Fatherland, to penitent psalms. / And when the angry God is flogging you with His whip, / cry, moan, [and] fall down before Him. // For God, like a father who has whipped his babe, / consoles and caresses it a hundred times. / After the grave defeats, after the deaths, after battle, / God will grant Poland and Lithuania a happy fate.” [W. Rzewuski], “Do Kochanej Ojczyzny” (s.l., s.d.). The print was probably circulated with W. Rzewuski, *Wiersz na siedm psalmów pokutnych ... w Katudze pisany* (Wilno: w drukarni J.K.Mci i Rzeczypospolitej Akademickiej Soc. Iesu, 1773).

³² “May He be celebrated everywhere and at all times, / the master of the world, one God in three persons, / the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Let us praise him / by singing psalms!” Rzewuski, *Wiersz na siedm psalmów*, f. B₄r.

While we are at figurative readings of psalms, it might be worth to mention paraphrases by a Lutheran priest and historian of the Reformation, Sylvius Wilhelm Ringeltaube.³³ The author sent them to Heinrich Zerneck in Danzig in November of 1734. The enclosed letter suggests that the works in question ought to be treated as political poetry. The first of them, “Psalm XLVI,” was to commemorate the victims that had been executed in the aftermath of the Tumult of Toruń ten years prior. The second, “Psalm XLIV,” referred to the recent Siege of Danzig by the forces of Field Marshall Münnich. It is, however, important to note that both pieces are in fact close paraphrases of respective psalms from the Danzig Bible. The only deviation from the biblical text can be spotted at the close of “Psalm XLIV,” where the words of verse 27: “Powstańże na ratunek nasz a odkup nas dla miłosierdzia twojego,”³⁴ [Arise for our help and redeem us for thy mercies’ sake] have been replaced with: “Ach, dla miłosierdzia, Boże, Twojego / Na ratunek powstań w Gdańsku ludu swego” [Ah, for thy mercies’ sake, O God, / Arise for help of the townsfolk of Danzig] (or alternatively, in the second version: “ludu toruńskiego” [the townsfolk of Toruń]).³⁵ This kind of psalm paraphrase had already been known in the Renaissance. At the level of the text, it remained true to the biblical original while at the same time presupposing its figurative interpretation, signaled at the metatextual level, for example, by an appropriately formulated title.³⁶ Yet political poetry in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries was much more frequently based on travesties of religious pieces: “The Lord’s Prayer,” “Angelic Salutation,” “Dies irae,” but also of psalms.³⁷

Among extra-biblical psalms composed in the Saxon period, “Quinque psalmi in detentione Głuchoviensi compositi” by Wiśniowiecki constitute an interesting example. The whole cycle, provided with an anagram of the author’s name, appeared in print in Chrościński’s *Krótki zbiór duchownych zabaw*. All the poems are composed in hendecasyllables with paired rhymes, a meter not especially indicative of their melic qualities. The first psalm, subtitled “Actus humilationis peccatoris coram Deo,” is of penitent character. The second is a kind of hymn in praise of the God almighty; the third is a confession of the poets’ faith; and the fourth is called “Akt miłości ku

³³ For the text itself along with editor’s commentary, see Z. Mocarski, “Psalmy polskie Sylwiusza Wilhelma Ringeltaubego,” *Zapiski Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu*, 7/4 (1926), pp. 112–117.

³⁴ *Biblia święta to jest księgi Pisma Świętego ... podług gdańskiego egzemplarza przedrukowane* (Amsterdam: w Drukarni Chrysztoffa Cunrada, 1660), p. 573.

³⁵ S.W. Ringeltaube, “Psalm XLIV,” in: Mocarski, “Psalmy polskie,” p. 117.

³⁶ Modlińska-Piekarz, *Votum Davidicum*, p. 76.

³⁷ Cf. J. Nowak-Dłużewski, “Formy religijne staropolskiej poezji politycznej,” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 35 (1938), pp. 104–122; P. Pietrzyk, “‘Chleba naszego powszedniego zbawiłeś nas za panowania swego...’ – o parodiach tekstów religijnych w literaturze XVII i XVIII stulecia,” *Napis*, 14 (2008), pp. 57–69.

Bogu” [An act of love towards God]. The cycle concludes with “Rezygnacja Bogu własnej woli” [A resignation of one’s will in God’s favor]. Thus, the composition of the cycle is founded upon the threefold scheme: *via purgativa*—*via illuminativa*—*via unitiva*. To cite the opinion of Marek Prejs, “‘Quinque psalmi’ by Wiśniowiecki constitute a kind of compendium of the Baroque religious lyric in general; that is how they had been conceived, and that is how they were written.”³⁸ Following the lead indicated by Prejs, one easily comes to the conclusion that for Wiśniowiecki, psalm is synonymous with religious lyric as such, especially in view of the fact that “‘Quinque psalmi’ contain numerous biblical quotes and reminiscences, but they do not explicitly mention, for example, King David.

Yet different is the case of *Psalmy spowiedne* by Chrościński. Prejs has deemed these poems to be exemplary products of a poetic technique that he has styled “agglutinary.” He explains that it consists in “gluing to the ‘native’ penitent psalm some material from its biblical ... surroundings.”³⁹ The phenomenon is said to be characteristic for a much larger group of texts which could be subsumed under a broadly understood paradigm of psalm poetry, with the inclusion of Baroque penitent elegies. On this view, it is most of all indicative of the extent to which the religious poetry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was rooted in an oral tradition that goes back to the biblical archetype and is, naturally, susceptible of various interpretations. On this reading, the psalm would be defined based on the presence of recurrent formulas drawn from a repository characteristic for this literary genre. From the standpoint of poetics, such a pragmatic definition has its merit, especially since it would be difficult to characterize the modern, or biblical, psalm with reference to the criteria of versification, meter, or theme.

In *Psalmy spowiedne*, the formulas characteristic for the residual oral tradition are said to coincide with Chrościński’s tendency to infuse the biblical content with local, that is, Sarmatian, color.⁴⁰ Without deflating the foregoing findings altogether or rejecting the far-reaching conclusions drawn from them, one needs to stress that the intertextual situation of said texts is a tad more complicated, and the local flavor perceived by the scholar might be deceiving. This is due to the fact that Chrościński’s poems were a paraphrase of *Psalmi confessionales* attributed to António, prior of Crato. Numerous biblical motifs supposedly added to the texts of the paraphrased penitent psalms by way of agglutinary technique, as well as via the oral memory of the genre, were, in fact, taken directly from the literary original. These include the image of

³⁸ M. Prejs, *Oralność i mnemonika. Późny barok w kulturze polskiej* (Warszawa, 2009), p. 248.

³⁹ Prejs, *Oralność*, p. 219.

⁴⁰ Prejs, *Oralność*, p. 228–232.

a sparrow that serves as an exemplification of local color in “Psalm V.”⁴¹ Its counterpart in the Latin original is a quotation of verse 7 of Psalm 123 that is only slightly altered by the replacement of plural forms of pronouns with singular ones: “Anima nostra sicut passer erepta est de laqueo venantium: laqueus contritus est et nos liberati sumus.”⁴²

The *Psalmi* attributed to the prior of Crato first appeared in print in Paris in 1595.⁴³ They form a cento in prose—a mosaic consisting mostly of biblical quotes, but including also excerpts from the writings of St Augustine or St Bernard, as well as fragments from earlier Petrarchan psalms, which they clearly reference. They gained much popularity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A Polish translation of them, completed by Marcin Kuczwarczewicz, was published in Warsaw in 1667.⁴⁴ The second edition of the translation, appended with seven penitent psalms from Jan Kochanowski’s *Psalterz Dawidów*, was published in Słuck seven years later.⁴⁵

Psalmy spowiedne by Chrościński do not, however, exhibit any traces of reliance on the antecedent translation by Kuczwarczewicz. They do, on the other hand, contain varied—albeit, non-too radical—modifications of the Latin original. Most notably, the Polish poet has introduced some autobiographical details. Thus, in the opening verses of “Psalm drugi” there is mention of Chrościński’s age: “pięćdziesiąte już dociąga lato.”⁴⁶ And in “Psalm piąty,” the verse: “Inhiavi sibi inextinguibili honoribus ac lucris et in his cupiditatibus saevissimas pastus sum difficultates,”⁴⁷ rendered by Kuczwarczewicz as: “Godności, zyski, lubo z fatygą i pracą, / niewymowną w me serce chciwością kołącą,”⁴⁸ is transformed through details added by Chrościński into an act of contrition of a converted courtier:

Smakowały mi, zwłaszcza u dworów,
nienasycone pragnienia honorów.
Uwodziłem się, choć często z uciskiem
bliźnich mych, lichwą i nieprawym zyskiem.

⁴¹ Prejs, *Oralność*, p. 232.

⁴² Ps. 123:7. All quotes from the Latin translation of the Scriptures come from the following edition: *Biblia sacra vulgatae editionis iuxta exemplaria ex typographia apostolica Vaticana Romae 1592 et 1593*, ed. V. Loch, 4 vols (Ratisbonae, 1895).

⁴³ See J.A. de Freitas Carvalho, “D. António, Prior do Crato, Príncipe Penitente. Os *Psalmi Confessionales*: do Exemplum à devoção. 1595–1995,” *Via Spiritus*, 2 (1995), esp. pp. 73–78.

⁴⁴ M. Kuczwarczewicz (trans.), *Siedm psalmów spowiednych jednego księżęcia luzytańskiego...* (Warszawa: w drukarni Elertowskiej, 1667).

⁴⁵ See information in the *Wiadomości literackie* column, *Biblioteka Warszawska*, 23/3 (1863), pp. 370–372.

⁴⁶ “The fiftieth summer already approaching.” Chrościński, *Krótki zbiór*, f. C₂r.

⁴⁷ A. de Crato (attrib.), *Psalmi confessionales...* (Gandavi: typis Petri de Goesin typographii, 1738), p. 24.

⁴⁸ “Privileges, [and] profits, though with strain and work, / knock on my heart with unspeakable greed.” Kuczwarczewicz (trans.), *Siedm psalmów*, p. 20.

Lubolim ciężkich doznawał trudności
w żądach i mojej zbytecznej chciwości,
przecież tak długo dopinałem kresu,
ażem wyrobił skutek interesu.⁴⁹

The tendency to elaborate on the original text by supplying additional details, which can be observed here, is typical of Chrościński's psalm paraphrases in general, though only on rare occasions such concretizations can be linked with the poet's actual life.

One should also note another kind of modification. For instance, in "Psalm II" by Prior António of Crato, there is the following passage: "Ex utero matris meae egressus non fueram, et iam peccator eram."⁵⁰ Almost certainly it has been taken from the anti-Pelagian *Hypomnesticon* attributed to St Augustine,⁵¹ and specifically, from the commentary to verse 7 of Psalm 50, which provides an argument for the conception of the original sin: "Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum, et in peccatis concepit me mater mea" ["For behold I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me." – Douay-Rheims Bible (Challoner rev.)] Kuczwarczewicz renders the passage thus:

Jeszcze w żywocie matki grzeszny byłem,
na świat wychodząc, na grzechy kwiliłem.⁵²

The paraphrase in *Krótki zbiór duchownych zabaw* is much more elaborate and, which also ought to be stressed, somewhat risky from the theological point of view, because it entails that the man is brought into this world in a state of primitive grace and becomes sinful only after birth:

Wiek niedojrzały uprzedałem złością,
bo ledwie, słońca okryty jasnością,
wyszedłem na świat z mej żywota matki,
zaraz mię grzechów uwikłały siatki,
w których mię moi spłodzili rodzice.⁵³

⁴⁹ "I had a taste, especially at court, / for unsatiable desire of honors bestowed upon me. / I strayed, though often with detriment to my neighbors, with usury and unjust profit. / And when I was hindered gravely / in my desire and greed, / I kept at it for as long / as it took to secure my interests." Chrościński, *Krótki zbiór*, f. G₁r.

⁵⁰ de Crato, *Psalmi*, p. 7.

⁵¹ Cf. Augustinus (attrib.), *Hypomnesticon contra pelagianos et coelestianos* V, 1, in *Patrologiae cursus completus...*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 45 (Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1865), col. 1648: "Ille [David] enim, cum adulterium defleret et homicidium, quod Bersabeae causa commisit, hanc veritatem in suae confessionis gemitu eructavit, tanquam diceret, non quod ex hoc solo facinore perpetrato peccator sim, qui antequam id facerem, sine peccato non eram; imo iam peccator ab utero matris meae eram."

⁵² "I had already been sinful in my mother's womb; / going out into this world, I wept at [my] sins." Kuczwarczewicz (trans.), *Siedm psalmów*, p. 4.

⁵³ "I anticipated my immature age with rage, / for once, covered with the sun's light, / I came into the world from my mother's womb, / I became entangled in the nets of sins / in which my parents had conceived me." Chrościński, *Krótki zbiór*, f. C₃r.

It would be hard, however, to impute some hidden agenda to Chrościński, especially since the collection of his works left the printing house at Jasna Góra with an imprimatur of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet the passage that has just been quoted does show that the poet approached theological issues without unwholesome pedantry, treating his psalmistry as a strictly literary activity.

The distinction applied for the purposes of this discussion between psalms, on the one hand, and pieces referring to a broadly understood psalm paradigm, on the other, does seem a little superficial, because it is predicated on somewhat arbitrary decisions of a reading community or, most often, of the author of a particular text. Such arbitrariness may be demonstrated in reference to other texts inspired by the *Psalmi confessionales* attributed to the prior of Crato, such as *Siedm psalmów pokutnych* composed by Józef Andrzej Załuski, which, though belonging to the same kind of penitent literature as Chrościński's paraphrases, would nevertheless have to be excluded from the psalm genre by virtue of the criteria thus adopted. The methodological proposal put forth by Prejs whereby one should rather talk about a certain kind of psalm paradigm which would encompass forms such as penitent elegies, does seem warranted, even if the phenomena characterized by the scholar have little in common with oral tradition. This in turn raises the question about the extent of the paradigm's actual operation. After all, the character of King David lamenting his sin, though highly evocative of the psalm, can hardly be said to appear in penitent elegies exclusively.

Let me illustrate further discussion of this issue with one of the better-known literary works of the Saxon Baroque, namely *Wójsko serdecznych nowo rekrutowanych na większą chwałę Boską afektów* by Hieronim Fałęcki. The work mentions the repenting David on numerous occasions. And what is of the essence, Fałęcki clearly assumes that the virtual reader of *Wójsko* is supposed to identify with David: "teraz z upokorzoną Dawidową duszą niziusieńkim aż do pawimentu najniższego uniżaj się Bogu upokorzeniem, *adhaesit pavimento anima mea*"⁵⁴ [Now repent falling down with the contrite David's soul to the lowest pavement before God, *adhaesit pavimento anima mea*]. In another place, the author writes, among other things:

Bo Bóg na ekspresyją niepojętej miłości swojej za małe rzeczy a świątobliwe, serdeczne
często daruje kryminały wielkie.

Jako Dawidowi,

kiedy się specyjałem Bersabei bawi,

za jedno mu darował grzech słówko: *peccavi*.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ H. Fałęcki, *Wójsko serdecznych noworekrutowanych na większą chwałę Boską afektów...* (Poznań: w Drukarni Akademickiej, kosztem Wojciecha Wolńskiego, introligatora, 1746), p. 294.

⁵⁵ "For God, in expression of his unfathomable love, for things small but righteous, often times forgives / great crimes. / Like with David, / as he helps himself to Bathsheba's treat, / [God] has pardoned his sin, upon [hearing] one little word: *peccavi*." Fałęcki, *Wójsko*, p. 303.

This *peccavi*, treated as synonymous with true repentance, is a recurrent motif of the whole *Wójsko*. It also serves as a formula whose function is to evoke the context of the king of Israel confessing his guilt:

Mówże z tych każdy:

„Peccavi!

Pokawiłem. Strawiłem wiek niemowlęcy nierozumnie,
wiek młodzieński bezwstydnie,
wiek dojrzalszy łakomie”.⁵⁶

Repetition constitutes the basic principle that governs the composition of *Wojna serdecznych afektów*. The same sentences, similes, or conceits are repeated in Fałęcki's work even a dozen times or more. Generally, such prefabricated parts have half-finished and largely set elocutionary form. In principle, they ought to be understood as formulas in the sense of the term argued for by Walter Ong.⁵⁷ Some of the pieces comprising *Wójsko* are built exclusively, or almost exclusively, of them. The striking resemblance of this phenomenon to the agglutinary technique deemed by Prejs to be constitutive for the psalm seems to be no accident. Even the irregular verses into which large parts of *Wójsko* are organized may be interpreted not only in the context of the Baroque *elogium* but also as a quality of the psalm in the broad sense of the word.

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The examples of eighteenth-century, mostly late-Baroque, psalm poetry cited in the course of this discussion constitute a heterogeneous set. Some authors, like Zakiewicz or Rzewuski, attempted to infuse their compositions with the melic element, emphasized by the Church tradition, whereas others, like Chrościński, remained largely indifferent to it. The brief overview that has been presented here suggests a large popularity of penitent psalms. For Wiśniowiecki, on the other hand, the psalm seems to have been synonymous with religious lyric as such. The observations that have been made here might also serve as a starting point for conceptualizing the psalm paradigm as typical for all standpoints and creative strategies that shun or mistrust the pagan standard of beauty in poetry. Such a stance had already been suggested by St Jerome, who wrote in his letter to Eustochium:

⁵⁶ “Say each of them: / ‘Peccavi! / I have bungled it. I have wasted my childhood unwisely, / my youth shamelessly, / my more mature years greedily.’” Fałęcki, *Wójsko*, p. 227.

⁵⁷ W.J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London, 2005), p. 34.

“Quae enim communicatio luci ad tenebras? Qui consensus Christo cum Belial?”⁵⁸ Quid facit cum Psalterio Horatius? Cum Evangeliiis Maro? Cum Apostolo Cicero?⁵⁹

The foregoing statement, however, needs to be taken with a grain of salt: it had probably been expressed in such radical terms for the sake of the addressee who strived at attaining Christian virtue and not at gaining expertise in the liberal arts or philology. Moreover, practical usefulness of such sharp distinctions seems dubious, even given the tempting, yet deceiving, simplicity of dichotomy.

Translated by Jan Hensel

⁵⁸ 2 Cor. 6: 14–15.

⁵⁹ Hieronymus, *Epistolae secundum ordinem temporum digestae*, XXII, 29, in *Patrologiae cursus completus*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 22 (Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1864), col. 416.