

ZYGMUNT WĘCLEWSKI UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF NINETEENTH CENTURY THEATRE AND LITERATURE

by

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ABSTRACT: Zygmunt Węcłowski was the first Polish translator of all extant Greek tragedies. He did not win renown as a good translator, but his priority was to be faithful to the original, not beautiful in translating it. And it appears that not only was he faithful, but he was also greatly influenced by the literature and theatre of the 19th century.

Zygmunt Węcłowski (1824–1887) was not the first translator of Greek tragedy into Polish. As we know, as early as the 16th century Jan Kochanowski translated the prologue of Euripides' *Alcestis*, a passage that is often considered one of the most beautiful translations into Polish, and Walenty Jakubowski¹ translated Sophocles' *Antigone*, but in prose. But after that the Polish public had to wait until the 19th century to read any translation of Greek tragedy. Until 1856, when Węcłowski started to publish his translations, the list of Polish translations of Greek tragedies is not as limited as we may think. It includes a dozen or so translations, mentioned in the literary journals of that time, among which we find *The Phoenician Women* and *Orestes* by Jan Mihanowicz², *Antigone* and *Medea* by Alfons Walicki³, Sophocles' *Antigone*⁴ and *Electra*⁵ by Antoni Małecki, *Oedipus the King* by Franciszek Wężyk⁶, *Prometheus Bound* by J.G. Biernacki⁷, *The*

¹ Mentioned in P. CHMIEŁOWSKI, [review of:] *Tragedye Sofoklesa. Przekład Z. Węcłowskiego, Poznań. Nakładem Biblioteki Kórnickiej 1875, str. XXVII, 589, Ateneum 1876, vol. III, no. 9, p. 659.*

² Mentioned in Euripides, *Tragedie*, transl. by J. ŁANOWSKI, vol. 3, Warszawa 2007, pp. 105, 182.

³ Mentioned in K. ESTREICHER, *Bibliografia polska XIX stulecia*, vol. 5, Kraków 1880, p. 10.

⁴ Mentioned in R. ZAWILIŃSKI, *O polskich przekładach tragedyi Sofoklesowych*, Biblioteka Warszawska 1881, vol. III, p. 378.

⁵ Mentioned in CHMIEŁOWSKI, *Tragedye Sofoklesa...* (n. 1), p. 662.

⁶ Mentioned in CHMIEŁOWSKI, *Tragedye Sofoklesa...* (n. 1), p. 660; R. ZAWILIŃSKI, *O polskich przekładach tragedyi Sofoklesowych*, Biblioteka Warszawska 1881, vol. IV, p. 105 (Wężyk's translation was published in 1878).

⁷ Mentioned in AISCHYLOS, *Prometeusz skowany*, transl. by J. KASPROWICZ, introduction by S. WITKOWSKI, Kraków [1921], p. 155.