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## Marie Corelli in Poland. On the Centenary of Her Death

**Abstract:** This article discusses the Polish reception of the Victorian writer, Maria Corelli. Polish literary criticism and translations are examined to demonstrate the scope of Corelli's presence in Polish literature, culture and the Polish press. Corelli's absence from the women's press is highlighted. The article includes a chronological list of her translations in Poland. The centenary of Corelli's death is a good opportunity to recall her Polish reception.

**Keywords:** Maria Corelli, Polish reception, Polish translations, Polish literary criticism.

Mary Mackay (1855–1924), publishing under the pseudonym Marie Corelli, was one of the most widely-read English authors of the late Victorian era. However, her immense popularity did not translate into high ratings for the artistry of her works.<sup>1</sup> These contradictions were well illustrated by Mariusz Misztal, who stated that Queen Victoria was very fond of Corelli's writings. Still, her daughter had a completely different opinion of the writer's value.<sup>2</sup> The dichotomy of the royal family's assessments reflects Corelli's po-

<sup>1</sup> Thomas F.G. Coates, Robert Stanley Warren Bell, *Marie Corelli: The Writer and The Woman* (Philadelphia: George Jacobs & Company 1903), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Mariusz Misztal, "Literackie fascynacje królowej Wiktorii" [The literary fascinations of Queen Victoria], *Prace Komisji Neofilologicznej PAU X* (2011): 51–52.

sition in her contemporary literary world. On the one hand, She was the “idol of the crowds”.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that Herbert George Wells was probably right when he said: “No one will learn English to read Maria Corelli in the original”.<sup>4</sup> Analogous contrasting assessments of the author of *A Romance of Two Worlds* can be found in Polish criticism. Where some saw the “originality of novelistic ideas,” others could only discern “nonsensical ranting”. Interestingly, in recent years, English-language literary studies have revisited Corelli as an example of a popular culture author with an unduly neglected literary biography. The centenary of the writer’s death is an excellent opportunity to reassess her Polish reception.

## Literary Reception

Research on the presence of Corelli in Poland inscribes itself into the general issue of comparative literature,<sup>5</sup> with particular attention given to literary reception, generally perceived as a promising research area.<sup>6</sup> Jerzy Madejski calls for a widening of perspectives and including other disciplines in the reception area.<sup>7</sup> Its leading theoreticians are Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jauss, Robert C. Holub, and Stanley Fish. Holub points out that German and American scholars highlight the necessity of including the implied reader in research.<sup>8</sup> A literary work is perceived as a collaboration between the author, the reader, the culture and the language.<sup>9</sup> Recent American con-

<sup>3</sup> Frank Harris, *W pogoni za pełnią życia* [My Life and My Loves], trans. Stefan Pomian, introduction by Paweł Hulka-Laskowski (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze “Rój”, 1937), 253. Cf. Teresa Ransom, *The Mysterious Miss Corelli: Queen of Victorian Bestsellers* (Stroud: Sutton 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Herbert George Wells, *Wizje przyszłości czyli o wpływie rozwoju wiedzy i mechaniki na życie i myśl ludzką* (*Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought*, 1901), trans. Jan Kleczyński (Warszawa: Gebethner i Wolff, 1904), 126.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Remak, “Comparative Literature, Its Definition and Function,” in *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective*, eds. Newton P. Stallknecht, and Horst Frenz (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press 1961), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Katarzyna Chmielewska, “Ukryte założenia i aporie teorii recepcji” [Hidden Assumptions and Aporias of Reception Theory], *Pamiętnik Literacki* 4 (2001): 5.

<sup>7</sup> Jerzy Madejski, “Recepcja literatury: przedmiot, zakresy, cele badań” [Reception of Literature: Subject Matter, Scopes, objectives of Research], in *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze* [Contentious and Uncontested Problems of Contemporary Literary Knowledge], eds. Włodzimierz Bolecki, and Ryszard Nycz (Warszawa: IBL PAN 2002), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Robert C. Holub, “Trends in Literary Theory: The American Reception of Reception Theory,” *The German Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (1982): 80–96.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Sullivan, “Reception Moments,” *Modern Literary Theory, and the Teaching of Literature*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 45, no. 7 (2002): 568.

cepts perceive literary reception in the broader context of (and make a connection with) cultural studies.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, special attention is devoted to the reader/recipient. Scholars perceive him/her as the “virtual recipient”, who can decipher the literary text fully and correctly or the “implied recipient”, who is created on the basis of particular texts.<sup>11</sup> Studies on the presence of a foreign writer in Poland demonstrate the importance of such research and its promising outcomes.<sup>12</sup> The perception of Corelli’s work is a progression, a widening circle of the recipients of culture – from elite to egalitarian.

## Translations

Edmund Naganowski’s prediction that, because of their sensitive religious subject matter, Polish readers would have to wait many years for Polish translations of Corelli’s novels did not come true.<sup>13</sup> Translations of Corelli’s novels in Poland focus on a few years at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were printed as books, stories in instalments in the press, and free weekly supplements to magazines, which were published as separate books after being condensed. The number of Polish titles signed with the name Marie/Maria/Marya Corelli does not correspond to the number of novels by the author that were translated, as some translations were printed under different second or third titles. Translation work was already under way from 1894.<sup>14</sup> Here is a chronological list of translations:

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- <sup>10</sup> Patrocínio Schweickart, “Understanding an Other: Reading as a Receptive Form of Communicative Action,” in *New Directions in American Reception Studies*, eds. Philip Goldstein, and James L. Machor (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008) 3–22; Jack Bratich, “Activating the Multitude: Audience Powers and Cultural Studies,” in *New Directions in American Reception Studies*, eds. Philip Goldstein, and James L. Machor (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008), 33–56.
- <sup>11</sup> Chmielewska, “Ukryte założenia i aporie teorii recepcji,” 9–10. Cf. P. Widdowson, *Hardy in History. A Study in Literary Sociology* (London–New York: Routledge (1989).
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. Mirosława Ziaja-Buchholtz, *Reflections of the Master: The Reception of Henry James in Poland (1877–2000)* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika 2002); Marta Skwara, “Polski Whitman”. *O funkcjonowaniu poety obcego w kulturze narodowej* [‘Polish Whitman.’ On the Functioning of a Foreign Poet in National Culture] (Kraków: Universitas 2010).
- <sup>13</sup> Edmund Naganowski, “Poetka neo-chryścianizmu w Anglii Maria Corelli” [The poet of Neo-Christianism in England Maria Corelli], *Biblioteka Warszawska* 4 (1894): 47.
- <sup>14</sup> Anon a, “Z literatury,” *Kurier Warszawski* 329 (1894), 2. “Maria Corelli’s English novels have already found a translator into Polish in the person of Mrs M. W.”. The code name refers to Maria Wentzl (1859– 1931), translator, daughter of the historian Józef K. Plebański, from 1883 wife of Adolf, owner of Kraśnicza Wola.

- *Troski szatana* [The Sorrows of Satan], translated by M. Dz. [Maria Dzierżanowska], by the editors of *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, printed by Emil Skiński, Warszawa 1896; next edition (no translator's name), Warszawa: Biblioteka Romansów i Powieści, 1927.
- *Romans dwóch światów* [A Romance of two Worlds], translated by Maria Wentzl, vol. 1–2, Warszawa: T. Paprocki, 1897.
- *Bez Boga* [The Mighty Atom], translated by Eugenia Żmijewska, *Słowo*, no. 212–248, 242–252 (1897).
- *Księżna Ziska. Z tajemnic bytu pozagrobowego* [The Duchess of Ziska. The Problem of a Wicked Soul], translated by Cecylia Niewiadomska, Warszawa 1897; second edition: Warszawa, Alfa-Wero, 1994.
- *Morderca* [The Murder of Delicia], translated by C. Niewiadomska, a weekly addition to *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1897, a separate edition: Warszawa: Gebethner i Wolff, 1897.
- *Zabójca Delicji* [The Murder of Delicia], translated by Maria Finklówna, *Gazeta Narodowa*, no. 1–50, 52–55 (1898).
- *Zdradziecka miłość pięknego gwardzisty* [The Murder of Delicia], anonymous translation from the English, Warszawa, 1927.
- *Boy. Szkic powieściowy* [Boy. A Sketch], translated by E. Żmijewska, an issue added to *Słowo* (1900), separate translation: Warszawa: printed by Noskowski, 1900.
- *Doczesna potęga* [The Temporal Power. A Study in Supremacy], translated by C. Niewiadomska, a weekly issue added to *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (1903); separate translation published as *Doczesna potęga*, Warszawa: Towarzystwo akcyjne S. Orgelbranda, 1903.
- *Bez czego żyć nie można* [The Mighty Atom], translated by Wanda Tomaszewska, *Rekord: Świat Kobiecy*, no. 13 (1924), no. 21 (1925).

It is known that a translation of Corelli's famous novel *Barabbas* was undertaken in Warszawa,<sup>15</sup> but the Polish translation did not appear. *Troski szatana*, published in 1927, is a copy of the 1896 edition. *Zdradziecka miłość pięknego gwardzisty* is a slightly rewritten version of *Morderca*, translated by Cecylia Niewiadomska, who died in 1925 (she was the sister of Eligiusz Niewiadomski, the assassin of the Polish President Gabriel Narutowicz). The translations of *The Mighty Atom* by Żmijewska and Tomaszewska differ significantly. The publishers' decisions to print Corelli's translations between 1924 and 1927 were probably due to the occasional reappearance of interest in the writer (press publications after her death and news stories in connection with the screen adaptation of *The Sorrows of Satan*). None of the critics

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<sup>15</sup> Edmund Naganowski, "Gawędy londyńskie" [London Storytelling], *Gazeta Lwowska* 8 (1895): 2.

pointed out that *Troski szatana* (*The Sorrows of Satan*) and *Zdradziecka miłość pięknego gwardzisty* (1927) are repetitions of earlier translations, while *Bez czego żyć nie można* was previously published as *Bez Boga* [Without God], which leads to the conclusion that the earlier versions had been quickly forgotten (the first translators – Niewiadomska and Żmijewska – had already died. The periodicals that published these translations had large circulations; the catalogues of public reading rooms printed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century contain these titles. The above indicates that Corelli had a certain presence on the Polish book market, but she failed to conquer the Polish reader. Her reception in Poland was short-lived and rather superficial.

The translations of Corelli's books were not particularly popular with buyers – this is the conclusion that emerges from analyses of overpriced titles (some of which languished in bookshops for several years<sup>16</sup>). Decisions to print some translations were probably accidental – *Gazeta Narodowa*, which came out in Lviv, decided to publish *Zabójca Delicji* in Finklówna's translation from January 1898 onwards; the inhabitants of Galicia under Austrian rule did not have easy access to Warsaw publications (the Russian partition), but the book version of this supplement was available in Krakow bookstores as early as March 1898.<sup>17</sup> All the renditions into Polish were undertaken by female translators. While a feminist background has been a contributing factor, a more plausible hypothesis is that there was a significant numerical preponderance of female translators of bestselling books in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Poland.

The most common translation was *The Mighty Atom*. In 1870s Poland, it was a voice against positivist scientism, as is evident from the dedication addressed to "progressives"<sup>18</sup> (Corelli 1899). This dedication had become obsolete by 1924 and was dropped in the new translation, but the idea of the novel took on a new sense of warning against Bolshevik atheism. *The murder of Delicia* was translated a number of times. It was a conventional melodrama about a noble writer and her despicable husband against the background of the upper classes' gossipy lives and the dishonest world of journalism. It was a gentle psychological version of feminism.<sup>19</sup> The Polish reader

<sup>16</sup> For example, *Romance of Two Worlds*, published in 1897, was still available for purchase at a reduced price in 1912 (*Kurier Polski*, no. 58 (1910): 5; *Kurier Polski*, no. 76 (1912): 4).

<sup>17</sup> Anon b, "Księgarnia G. Gebethnera i Spółki w Krakowie poleca," *Nowa Reforma* 72 (1898): 4.

<sup>18</sup> Maria Corelli, *The Mighty Atom* (London: Hutchinson and Co 1899): "To those self-styled progressivists who by precept and example assist The Infamous Case of Education without Religion and who, by promoting the idea, borrowed from French Atheism, of denying the children what? in board-schools and elsewhere, The Knowledge and Love of God, as the true Foundation of Noble living, are guilty of a Worse Crime than Murder".

<sup>19</sup> Elaine Showalter, *A literature of their own: British women writers from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999), 226.

could learn about exotic lands, customs, as well as alien and inaccessible beliefs from translations of Corelli. Like other novelists of the late Victorian era – Mary E. Braddon or Humphry Ward – she was the star of the season. These literary stars shone brightly but briefly. Given the number of Polish translations of their works, it must be acknowledged that female authors from England had some merit in pushing French literature out of Polish soil in favour of Anglo-Saxon authors.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, Corelli's influence on Polish literature was minimal, at least as measured by the frequency of allusions, associations, or comparisons.

### Voices of Criticism

Almost all Polish translators of Corelli's novels were professionals, some with serious writing and translation credits to their names (Żmijewska had an impressive record of approximately a hundred translations under her belt). Given that this was a famous author whose works were rendered into dozens of languages immediately after printing, one might have expected critics to address the question of the excellence of the translations. However, nothing of the sort occurred. Critics repeatedly commented on the art of translation, sometimes arguing for years. Still, the focus of their attention was on works in verse or drama (for example, M. Wentzl was the author of an exhaustive and expert study of the English translation of Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*, a famous Polish Romantic poem<sup>21</sup>). Only in exceptional cases, as with the celebrated works of Charles Dickens, did the reviews notice the art of the translator itself in the novels. Consequently, Opinions on the artistry of Corelli's Polish translations are unknown.

What is surprising (in the context of the anti-masculinity attributed to the author and her association with suffragettes<sup>22</sup>) is Corelli's absence from the women's press (a few minor mentions in the weekly magazine for women *Bluszcz*,<sup>23</sup> the failure to note the death of the famous writer, while

<sup>20</sup> Adolf Nowaczyński, "Kronika literacka" [Literary Chronicle], in *Kalendarz literacki* (Warszawa: Drukarnia Polska 1917), 91.

<sup>21</sup> Maria Wentzl, "Master Thaddeus, or the last Forey in Lithuania by Adam Mickiewicz, a Historical Epic Poem in XII books, trans. from original by Maude Ashurst Biggs, with a Preface by W.R. Morfill, M. A. and Notes by the translator and Edmund Naganowski. London 1885," *Biblioteka Warszawska* 1 (177) (1886): 120–127.

<sup>22</sup> Eugenia Żmijewska, "Trzecia Duma i "sprawa kobieca"" [Third Pride and the 'women's cause'], *Słowo* 60 (1908): 3.

<sup>23</sup> Anon c, "Kronika działalności kobiecej" [Chronicle of women's activities], *Bluszcz* 16 (1892): 127; S., "List z Anglii" [Letter from England], *Bluszcz* 2 (1897): 16; Anatol Krzyżanowski [Natalia Korwin Szymanowska], "Kobieta angielska, jej cele i dążenia" [The English woman, her goals and aspirations], *Bluszcz* 37 (1898): 294.

the exceptions included a posthumous translation of *The Mighty Atom* in *Świat Kobiety*, a short posthumous sketch in the women's supplement of the periodical *Postęp*.<sup>24</sup> Some interest in Corelli's oeuvre, limited to the first phase of reception, was shown by the democratic-left press (*Przegląd Tygodniowy*; *Prawda*). Her recognition and popularity in Poland were cemented by conservative periodicals and dailies (*Biblioteka Warszawska*; *Słowo*; *Gazeta Lwowska*; *Gazeta Polska*) or even conservative-clerical ones (*Przegląd Katolicki*; *Przegląd Polski*). However, here, too, we observe a paradox – the duplicate titles first praised Corelli, then sharply criticised her from the position of religious dogmatism.

If we consider reviews as a form of reception,<sup>25</sup> we should discuss the extent to which Polish reviewers evaluated Corelli's novels in the Polish press. These texts fall into two groups: those based on readings of the original English texts were more extensive, more profound, and more appreciative of her talent, and those based on readings of the translations, which tended to be more trivial and stereotypical, sometimes condemning the ideology of the novels. The originals in Poland (they were also available in public reading rooms) were rarely consulted. For example Anna Lisicka who wrote an extensive review of *The Murder of Delicia* to show accentuated the nobility and hardworking nature of a female heroine from the novel contrasted with male brutality and immorality. One of the characters, Carlyeon – in the critic's opinion – was a "moral murderer of Delicia." Lisicka saw a flaw in the novel's artistry in that the heroine launches into long tirades against..., even though the psychological truth should steer her towards experiencing despair. Still, she did not hide her fascination with "the lovely novel".<sup>26</sup>

The reviews of Polish press correspondents from Great Britain, such as Edmund Naganowski, Mściław Edgar Nekanda-Trepka, Maciej Wierzbński, and Leon Winiarski, were more insightful because they summarised the voices of English criticism. According to Wierzbński, Corelli's *Barabbas* was the best English novel since Rudyard Kipling's debut.<sup>27</sup> The critic, however, gradually lost interest in Corelli's fiction/work writing because of its incomprehensible mysticism and "neo-Christianism"; he placed Robert L. Steven-

<sup>24</sup> Anon d, "Rozmaitości. Marie Corelli" [Variety. Marie Corelli], *Gazeta dla Kobiet: dodatek „Postępu”* 22 (1924): 4.

<sup>25</sup> Douglas Barbour, "Re: Viewing: Giving and Receiving in Canadian Poetry, or The role of reviewing in the reception of poetry in English Canada in the 20th century," in *Problems of literary reception/ Problèmes de réception littéraire*, eds. Edward Dickinson Blodgett, and Anthony George Purdy (Alberta: University of Alberta 1988), 55.

<sup>26</sup> Anna Lisicka, "The Murder of Delicia, by Marie Corelli," *Przegląd Polski* 4, 10 (1898): 162.

<sup>27</sup> Maciej Wierzbński, "Z beletrystyki angielskiej" [From English Fiction], *Przegląd Tygodniowy* 18 (1894): 209.

son much higher.<sup>28</sup> Another critic, Edgar M. Nekanda-Trepka, did not value Corelli and consistently wrote of her as a celebrity of one season.<sup>29</sup> He had a low opinion of the intellectual level of her novels (the naïve ideas of social reform in *Temporal Tower* being an example). The critic also accused them of “insulting attacks” on the Pope and marvelled at the English reading such “trivia”; moreover, he wrote ironically about the autobiographical basis of the ideal of the female writer in *The Murder of Delicia*.<sup>30</sup> Trepka was clearly prejudiced against the author, thus echoing the reluctant voices of London criticism. In Leon Winiarski’s article *British Literature. A different attitude can be observed in Maria Corelli: A Romance of Two Worlds*. As a publicist who had published a series of papers on contemporary English literature in *Prawda*, he was well-versed in both the cultural phenomena of importance and the transitory fashions that reflected the current moods and emotions of the crowds. He subjected *A Romance of Two Worlds*, *The Soul of Lilith*, *Barabbas*, and *The Sorrows of Satan* to a combined analysis. He concluded that Corelli represented “a bold and restless mind”.<sup>31</sup> In his opinion, Corelli’s creation of Satan is innovative:

Her Satan, despite his fall, does not stop dreaming of reconciling with God, who has spurned him, seeing that the worm of envy towards man has hatched in his heart. But despite this, Satan is still in love with God and hates man all the more. He is torn apart by two conflicting feelings: harming people and reconciling himself to God. Contradictory because the latter cannot materialise precisely because of the presence of the former. But such is the usual logic of human passions.<sup>32</sup>

In Corelli’s attempts to rehabilitate Satan and Judas, the critic saw the author’s Christian struggle against materialism and moral corruption. On the sidelines of reflections on the novel’s hflaws, Winiarski interjected remarks on music and dance as potential virtues of her works<sup>33</sup> and mocked her theory of electricity, creating the human soul as something absurd.

<sup>28</sup> Maciej Wierzbński, “Z literatury angielskiej” [From English Literature], *Przegląd Tygodniowy* 48 (1896): 541.

<sup>29</sup> Edgar Nekanda-Trepka, “Z beletrystyki Zachodu. III. Robert Ludwik Stevenson i jego utwory z dziedziny powieściopisarstwa, krytyki, podróżnictwa etc.” [From the Fiction of the West. III. Robert Ludwik Stevenson and His Works of Novelism, Criticism, Travel etc.], *Ateneum* 4, 10 (1892): 13.

<sup>30</sup> Edgar Trepka, “Listy z Londynu” [Letter from London], *Kurier Warszawski* 335 (1902): 2–3.

<sup>31</sup> Leon Winiarski, “Literatura angielska. Maria Corelli: *A Romance of two Worlds*. *Barabbas*. *The Sorrows of Satan*,” *Prawda* 28 (1897): 333.

<sup>32</sup> Winiarski, “Literatura angielska. Maria Corelli: *A Romance of two Worlds*. *Barabbas*. *The Sorrows of Satan*,” 333. All translations from Polish are mine [A.B.].

<sup>33</sup> Winiarski, “Literatura angielska. Maria Corelli: *A Romance of two Worlds*. *Barabbas*. *The Sorrows of Satan*,” 334.

The most significant credit for informing Polish readers about Corelli's novels goes to Naganowski. He wrote about her frequently in periodicals and dailies in the Warsaw and Lviv press. Therefore, his voice reached a broad audience. Naganowski encouraged translations of the works in question and had a reputation as a true expert, so Democrats and conservatives alike reckoned with his opinions. He introduced Corelli into Polish literary thought with the label of neo-Christianism. On the basis of several works (*Ardath*, *A Romance of Two Worlds*, *The Soul of Lilith*, *Barabbas*), he described the author's attitude to the problem of "the relation of creation to the Creator".<sup>34</sup> He argued that Corelli's novels have unusual forms and personal effusions. The author claimed that Corelli is an ardent Catholic, who is critical of religious tradition; someone who reads the Bible while also studying spiritualism and Buddhism. The protagonists of her works have an excellent knowledge of philosophy. Naganowski summarises the plots of the novels in detail, and he adds some quotations from the novel in his translation. In *Ardath*, he highlights an experiment proving the non-existence of a boundary between psyche and matter. After the death of the body, there occurs a merging of the mind with the intelligent human self and a return to God. Naganowski argues that Zygmunt Krasiński (a famous Polish Romantic poet) preached similar views, so he does not doubt the sincerity of Corelli's religious feelings, claiming that she "places faith in the deity of Christ as the first condition for perfecting man's spirituality".<sup>35</sup> The writer's neo-Christianism is based on two assumptions: electricity as the "divine presence" of all existence (the theme of *A Romance of Two Worlds*) and the theory of human pre-existence on earth and re-existence in the future. He believes that the following moral teaching flows from this:

Our ego in the present life is the result of the ethical imperfection of our ego from the previous existence; it is, at the same time, the cause of our being in the next period. [...] Our end will be either fusion with the fire of God's presence or annihilation. The more perfect man becomes, the more clearly the flame of God is revealed in him.<sup>36</sup>

Although Naganowski wrote sceptically about the intellectual arguments of the new movement and even made fun of its attempts to rationalise religious experience, he valued Neo-Christianism's attempts to "unite all Christian denominations in a church of the One".<sup>37</sup> Information on a parallel neo-Christianism developing in France exposed its links with the "nervous age"

<sup>34</sup> Naganowski, "Poetka neo-chryścianizmu w Anglii Maria Corelli," 44.

<sup>35</sup> Naganowski, "Poetka neo-chryścianizmu w Anglii Maria Corelli," 60.

<sup>36</sup> Naganowski, "Poetka neo-chryścianizmu w Anglii Maria Corelli," 60.

<sup>37</sup> Edmund Naganowski, "Neochrześcijaństwo i katolicyzm w Anglii" [Neo-Christianism and Catholicism in England], *Kurier Warszawski* 248 (1894): 4.

and the role of the “religious mood” in experiencing the world.<sup>38</sup> Corelli can be considered a link in the crisis of Catholicism that emerged as so-called Catholic Modernism at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Naganowski often recalled his impressions of Corelli’s novels, but his criticism of the author grew over time. He regretted, for example, the time wasted on reading *Cameo*, which he regarded as a collection of unpleasant statements and the writer’s complaints about unfair criticisms of her work critics.<sup>39</sup> He was irritated by some of the cruder expressions of the author’s popularity, such as the carnivalesque burning at the stake of a puppet representing the hero of *The Sorrow of Satan*<sup>40</sup> and the description of a chariot with Rimanez sitting in it.<sup>41</sup> To him, *The Romance of Two Worlds* was “religious faith in electricity” and reduced the writer’s ambitions to scandalous descriptions of the upper classes and high royalties.<sup>42</sup> Some years later, he found Corelli’s divagations in *Temporal Power* incredibly naïve and argued that by attempting to combine Catholicism with occultism and Buddhism, the writer had become an enemy of Christian tradition and science:

And since she stood and always stands based on an exclusively feminine notion of general human love, with a loss of faith in any religious seriousness, she embraced the doctrinaire extremes of demagoguery in all directions of human endeavour and dreams.<sup>43</sup>

The Polish Catholic press was consistently critical of Corelli. The translation of *Romance of Two Worlds* became an occasion for the attack on the “mon-

<sup>38</sup> Maria Paprocka, “Nerwowa religia” [Nervous Religion], *Niwa* 14 (1895): 316–317.

<sup>39</sup> Edmund Naganowski, “Gawędy londyńskie” [London Storytelling], *Gazeta Lwowska* 182, (1896a): 4.

<sup>40</sup> Edmund Naganowski, “Londyn, d. 15 listopada (Błazeństwa ulicy)” [London, 15 November (Street Clowning)], *Gazeta Narodowa* 326 (1896b): 1.

<sup>41</sup> Edmund Naganowski, “Gawędy londyńskie” [London Storytelling], *Gazeta Lwowska* 265 (1896c): 4.

<sup>42</sup> Edmund Naganowski, “Listki londyńskie. Londyn 29-go grudnia” [London Letters. London 29th December], *Gazeta Polska* 4 (1897): 1.

<sup>43</sup> Edmund Naganowski, “Najnowsza powieść Marii Corelli” [Maria Corelli’s Latest Novel], *Gazeta Polska* 258 (1902): 2. Naganowski elaborated on these thoughts a year later, adding criticisms of the anti-Jesuit writer’s “monomania”: Edmund Naganowski, “Felieton literacki (‘The Temporal Power’ by Marie Corelli),” *Gazeta Narodowa* 83 (1903): 3. The advice to rulers formulated by Corelli in *The Temporal Power* was in time considered to be a statement addressed to King Edward – J.B., “Rządy króla Edwarda” [The Reign of King Edward], *Dziennik Kijowski*, no. 111 (1910): 1. Naganowski’s dismissive opinion was not shared by politically active students in Lviv, who purchased her translation for the library. See *Sprawozdanie Czytelni Akademickiej we Lwowie za rok administracyjny 1903/4* [Report of the Academic Reading Room in Lviv for the Administrative Year 1903/4] (Lwów: Drukarnia “Słowa Polskiego” 1904), 121.

strous doctrine" of electricity; under the guise of occultism, the writer introduces "electric pantheism". Ignacy Charszewski claimed that Corelli writes, "in a Catholic package, under a Catholic label, smuggles a forbidden commodity across the Catholic border".<sup>44</sup> The literary review became a warning against religious heresy. On the other hand, *The Duchess of Ziska*, in the Polish translation, which allegedly fights / challenges materialism and atheism, in fact smuggles Anglicanism into Catholic Polish souls.<sup>45</sup> Both reviews end with unambiguous warnings to female translators of Corelli into Polish. Perhaps this is why the translation of *Barabbas* was never completed. "The Catholic Review" was a militant journal – in the same year of 1898, it came out strongly against Bishop Karol Niedziałkowski on the issue of confessional secrecy.

The translation of *Doczesna potęga* marked the end of Corelli's reception in Poland. This reception was, in fact, limited to the Russian and Austrian annexed territories and not read in Poznań (in the Prussian partition) since there, even as late as 1909, the author was still being presented as a celebrity of English literature who had "not yet been translated into Polish".<sup>46</sup> Literary journals did not announce posthumous publications in 1924; some dailies, however, did.<sup>47</sup> The film adaptation of *The Sorrows of Satan*, directed by David W. Griffith, failed to enhance the popularity of the novel itself or its author, although there were one-sentence mentions in the press.<sup>48</sup> Corelli's views on religion and the women's question quickly alienated Polish readers, and these were the main reasons why the author was forgotten. She was too radical in her views on religion and too traditional in her attitude to the

<sup>44</sup> Ignacy Charszewski, "Sic itur ad astra!," *Przegląd Katolicki* 24 (1898a): 381 (the whole text was published in numbers 23 and 24 of the journal).

<sup>45</sup> Ignacy Charszewski, "Droższa przyprawa aniżeli potrawa" [More Expensive a Spice Than a Dish], *Przegląd Katolicki* 31 (1898): 488–489. Even after the publication of *Barabbas*, Polish critics assumed that the author exemplified a "strangely deep and undoubtedly sincere faith in Christ, the Son of God and Redeemer of the world". See J.B., "Londyn, 20 kwietnia" [London, 20 April], *Dziennik Polski*, no. 114 (1894): 1. An identical expression was used by Naganowski (Naganowski, "Londyn, 17 kwietnia" [London, 17 April], *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 110 (1894): 3). Apparently, it was a quotation or paraphrase of an article from the British press, as it also appeared in a slightly modified form in other Polish dailies ("Nowe powieści angielskie" [New English Novels], *Gazeta Lwowska*, no. 97 (1894): 4).

<sup>46</sup> S., "Romantyzm w nowszej powieści angielskiej" [Romanticism in the Newer English Novel], *Literatura i Sztuka: dodatek do Dziennika Poznańskiego* 15 (1909): 233.

<sup>47</sup> Anon e, *Kurier Polski* 115 (1924): 8; anon f, *Kurier Wieczorny* 101 (1924): 4; anon g *Przegląd Wieczorny* 102 (1924): 4.

<sup>48</sup> Anon h, "Kronika filmowa krajowa i zagraniczna" [National and International Newsreel], *Comœdia*, no. 26 (1926): 4; anon i, "Zza ekranu (Kronika filmowa)" [From Behind the Screen (Newsreel)], *Kurier Warszawski*, nr 16 (1927): 7. The film was played in Polish cinemas in 1928, but it failed to attract critical interest.

problems of feminism. After the Great War, her work was not revisited; journalists sometimes used the disparaging term “a well-known novelist, the English Helena Mniszek”,<sup>49</sup> while literary critics classified her among the literati of *minorum gentium*. Considered an academic textbook, *Wielka literatura powszechna* [Great World Literature] no longer mentions her.<sup>50</sup> Later, literary historians only occasionally referred to Corelli. Juliusz Kleiner recalled Karol H. Rostworowski’s attempt to rehabilitate Judas as an interpretative parallel for Judas Iscariot.<sup>51</sup> Joanna Gniady’s study devoted to Corelli’s descriptions of unusual mental states in *Wormwood* provided a new interpretative impetus.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps the comparative perspective is the right place for assessing an author who died a century ago.

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<sup>49</sup> Anon j, “G.B. Shaw o strojach kobiecych, przemówienie pisarza na konferencji w sprawie przytułków” [G.B. Shaw on Women's Clothing, Writer's Speech at Conference on Shelters], *Kurier Poranny* 144 (1927): 7. Helena Mniszkówna (1878–1943) was a Polish author of keenly read romances of aristocratic life and a symbol of bad taste.

<sup>50</sup> Władysław Tarnawski, “Literatura angielska” [English Literature], in *Wielka literatura powszechna, Tom trzeci. Literatury celtyckie i germańskie, kraje bałtyckie – literatura węgierska* [Great Universal Literature, Volume Three. Celtic and Germanic Literatures, Baltics – Hungarian Literature], ed. Stanisław Lam (Warszawa: Trzaska – Evert – Michalski, 1932), 67–242.

<sup>51</sup> Juliusz Kleiner, “Judas Rostworowski a Judasz M. Corelli” [Rostworowski's Judas versus M. Corelli's Judas], *Tygodnik Powszechny* 50 (1948): 2. This idea was later on recalled by Plisiecka (cf. Danuta Plisiecka, “Judas w dramatach Karola H. Rostworowskiego i Marcela Pagnola” [Judas in the Dramas of Charles H. Rostworowski and Marcel Pagnol], *Roczniki Humanistyczne* vol. XXXIV, 54 (1986): 54)

<sup>52</sup> Joanny Gniady, “‘Pozwólcie i być szalonym, szalonym w szaleństwie absyntu’. Gaston Beauvais i jego mentalny zamęt w ‘Wormwood’ Marie Corelli” [‘Let and be mad, mad in the madness of absinthe.’ Gaston Beauvais and his mental confusion in Marie Corelli's “Wormwood”], in *Zjawisko szaleństwa w kulturze* [The Phenomenon of Madness in Culture], eds. Maciej Kopyciński, Marta Kasprowicz, and Sławomir Drelich (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2010), 143–154.

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## Marie Corelli w Polsce. W setną rocznicę jej śmierci

**Abstrakt:** Artykułu poświęcony jest polskiej recepcji pisarki wiktoriańskiej Marii Corelli. Przeanalizowano polską krytykę literacką i przekłady, aby pokazać zakres obecności angielskiej pisarki w polskiej literaturze, kulturze i prasie. Podkreślono nieobecność Corelli w prasie kobiecej. Artykuł zawiera chronologiczną listę jej przekładów w Polsce. Stulecie śmierci Corellii jest okazją do przypomnienia jej polskiej recepcji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Maria Corelli, recepcja w Polsce, tłumaczenie na język polski, polska krytyka literacka.

## Marie Corelli in Polen. Zum hundertsten Jahrestag ihres Todes

**Abstract:** Das Thema des Beitrags ist die polnische Rezeption der viktorianischen Schriftstellerin Maria Corelli. Polnische Literaturkritik und Übersetzungen werden untersucht, um den Umfang von Corellis Präsenz in der polnischen Literatur, Kultur und der polnischen Presse aufzuzeigen. Die Abwesenheit Corellis in der Frauenpresse wird hervorgehoben. Der Beitrag enthält eine chronologische Liste ihrer Übersetzungen ins Polnische. Der hundertste Jahrestag von Corellis Tod ist eine Gelegenheit, an ihre polnische Rezeption zu erinnern.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Maria Corelli, polnische Rezeption, polnische Übersetzung, polnische Literaturkritik.