FOLIA ORIENTALIA—BIBLIOTHECA 2 (2025)
DOI 10.24425/for.2025.156879

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# How to Translate an Epic Text Metrically When You Are Neither a Poet Nor a Professional Translator? A Few Remarks on Difficulties in Translating Book 9 (*Śalyaparvan*) of the *Mahābhārata*

**Abstract** This article offers a series of reflections on the author's experience translating extensive portions of the *Mahābhārata* into Polish, with particular attention to metrical challenges encountered in rendering Book 9 (*Śalyaparvan*). The discussion explores the impossibility of reproducing the quantity-based Sanskrit metres—such as *śloka*, *triṣṭubh*, and *jagatī*—within the Polish stress-based prosodic system, and proposes rhythmical equivalents drawn from Polish poetic traditions. These include trochaic octosyllabic lines, three-footed dactylic metres, and the eleven- and twelve-syllable verse patterns characteristic of Polish Romantic and children's poetry. By tracing metrical correspondences between classical Sanskrit verse and Polish literary rhythms, the author reveals how the act of translation becomes both a linguistic experiment and a cultural rediscovery, bridging ancient Indian poetics with deeply familiar patterns of Polish verse.

**Keywords** *Mahābhārata*, *Śalyaparvan*, Sanskrit metrics, Polish prosody, metrical translation, rhythmic equivalence, trochee, dactyl, amphibrach, Polish poetry, translation studies

## 1 Introduction

This article constitutes a series of reflections on my relatively brief and limited experience with translating the *Mahābhārata* (MBh) into Polish rather than a formal research study on the subject. It could even be described as a form of a research anecdote or a philological jest, particularly when considering certain Polish literary texts to which I will refer. Nevertheless, these texts have proven valuable in my efforts to produce a metrical translation of three books of the great ancient Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata* (around 4th Century BC—around 4th Century AD).

As part of a collaborative project focused on preparing a Polish annotated translation of the so-called battle books of the *Mahābhārata*, also known as the Kurukṣetra books (MBh, Books 6–11), my specific responsibility was to translate approximately two-thirds of Book 9 (*Śalyaparvan*), encompassing chapters 1–32 and 54–64 (with the middle section, chapters 33–53, translated by Andrzej Babkiewicz). Additionally, I translated shorter Books 10 (*Sauptikaparvan*; 18 chapters) and 11 (*Strīparvan*; 27 chapters).

I initially began my work with a prose translation of Book 11. However, upon learning that Andrzej Babkiewicz had embarked on a metrical translation of his assigned sections of Books 6, 7, and 9, I found this approach both intriguing and intellectually stimulating. Recognizing the challenge it presented, I decided it was a worthwhile endeavour. Consequently, after some time, I abandoned my prose translation and restarted my work from the beginning, this time attempting to render the Sanskrit text metrically. This decision was made in a largely intuitive manner, despite my limited prior experience with translation.

It is worth noting that the initial inspiration for both Babkiewicz and, to some extent, for myself was Maria Krzysztof Byrski (1985), who rendered his Polish translation of the *Manusmṛti* (an ancient Indian legal and moral code) in eight-syllable lines, aiming to replicate the Sanskrit śloka of the original text.

## 2 Polish metrical translations of Sanskrit literature

In the course of the reflections presented in this text, it is worth noting that among Polish translations of Sanskrit literature, there already exists a number of metrical renditions. The authors of these translations—undoubtedly aware of the inherent difficulties arising from the impossibility of rendering the original metres of a quantity-based language into Polish—have made deliberate efforts to base their translations on rhythmic equivalents suited to the Polish language. This has primarily been achieved by ensuring a consistent number of syllables in each line of the translation, while also drawing on Polish accentual patterns. A few examples may serve to illustrate this point.[1]

In the early 20th century, Antoni Lange employed a paired line of eight and nine syllables (i.e. $8+9$ syllables $\times 2$) as a Polish equivalent of the Sanskrit eight-syllable śloka metre (*anuṣṭubh*; i.e. $4\times 8$ syllables or $2\times 16$ syllables) in his rhymed translation of the famous poem about Nala and Damayantī (*Nalopākhyāna*), which formally constitutes an episode of the *Mahābhārata* (MBh 3.50–78) (Lange 1906).[2]

Using a 9-syllable, 11-syllable, and (in the case of one canto) 12-syllable metre, characterised by a simple yet elevated language that preserves the melody and

[1] A **survey** of Polish translations of Sanskrit literature is available on the website *Antologia literatury sanskryckiej*. Accessed 8 October 2025. http://www.indika.pl.

[2] See also Mejor (2007: 231–290).

reflective tone of the originals, Andrzej Gawroński translated substantial portions of two classical Sanskrit *mahākāvyas* (i.e. great epic poems) by Aśvaghoṣa: *Buddhacarita* ('The Life of the Buddha') and *Saundarananda* ('The Handsome Nanda') (Gawroński 1926).[3] In the Polish translation, these metrical forms replace either the śloka (*anuṣṭubh*)—the most commonly employed metre in the Sanskrit originals—or, less frequently, the 11-syllable *upajāti*, or else 12-syllable *jagatī* metre.[4]

Selected excerpts from pre-war educational materials, such as Stanisław Schayer's *Indian Literature* (1936), also contain Polish translations from Sanskrit literature that illustrate discussions of particular literary works; among these, a number are likewise metrical translations.[5]

In his translation of seventy selected hymns from the *Ṛgveda*, Franciszek Michalski (1972) sought to convey the character of the original Vedic metres—such as *gāyatrī*, *anuṣṭubh*, *triṣṭubh*, and *jagatī*—by employing Polish metrical equivalents. To this end, he drew upon familiar patterns from the Polish literary tradition, using well-established syllabo-tonic verse forms, most notably lines of eight, eleven, and thirteen syllables.

Among the more than ten Polish translations of the *Bhagavadgītā*—most of which are rendered in prose or rhythmised prose—the translations by Anna Rucińska (2002), Babkiewicz (2011), and part of the translation by Byrski (songs 1–3; 2011) have been composed in metrical form.[6] In these, the original eight-syllable *śloka* is rendered using the Polish octosyllabic line, while the eleven-syllable *triṣṭubh* is translated with an eleven-syllable Polish verse, with careful attention paid to rhythm and regular syllabification. Joanna Sachse (2020), in her second translation of the *Bhagavadgītā*, consistently rendered the eight-syllable *śloka* in Polish nine-syllable lines, and the eleven-syllable *triṣṭubh* in thirteen-syllable lines, all while preserving the original four-*pāda* structure of each stanza.[7]

Using a consistent eight-syllable metre with a regular distribution of stresses, Rucińska (2014) translated Book 1 of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (known as the *Bālakāṇḍa*), thereby rendering the original śloka form.

Mariola Pigoniowa, in turn, rendered Canto I of Kālidāsa's *Kumārasaṁbhava* into rhythmic Polish hendecasyllables, echoing the dominant metrical form of the original—*upajāti*, which consists primarily of eleven-syllable lines. Notably, the final

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3 See also Mejor (2007: 435–476).

4 In *Saundarananda*, Aśvaghoṣa also makes use of other metrical patterns such as *vasantatilakā*, *mandākrāntā*, and other more ornate lyrical metres.

5 See, for instance, the translation of selected hymns from the *Ṛgveda* (2,12; 5,85; 6,64; 3,33; 10,129) and from the *Atharvaveda* (6,136; 6,131), with certain variations in syllabic structure.

6 See also *Bhagavadgītā. Analiza gramatyczna i syntaktyczna, tłumaczenia, komentarze*. Accessed 8 October 2025. http://www.bhagavadgita.eu.

7 Szuwalska (2005) rendered the entirety of the *Bhagavadgītā* into Polish using a thirteen-syllable metrical line. This approach resulted in a systematic reduction of the original four *pādas* (metrical quarters) of the Sanskrit stanza—whether composed in the *śloka* or *triṣṭubh* metre—to predominantly three lines in the Polish rendition.

verse (stanza 60) was translated using a fifteen-syllable line, reflecting the Sanskrit original's use of the *mālinī* metre, which likewise comprises fifteen syllables (Pigoniowa 2021: 30–46).[8]

These and other instances of Polish translations of Sanskrit literature may serve as sources of inspiration for future translators.[9] In my own experience, however, I have encountered them (not only through deliberate research but also—perhaps more frequently—through the subconscious recognition of their echoes) in other works of Polish literature, i.e. in works that are now considered classics of Polish literature, as I shall examine below.

## 3 Metrical structures of the *Mahābhārata's* Book 9

In Book 9 of the *Mahābhārata*, which serves as an illustration of my metrical challenges, the text is composed in three distinct metrical forms:

1. The most prevalent epic metre, the *śloka*, a thirty-two-syllable stanza consisting of four *pādas* (quarters), each containing eight syllables.
2. The less frequently used *triṣṭubh* stanza, composed of forty-four syllables, with four *pādas* of eleven syllables each.

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[8] Among Polish scholarly works, there exist research studies addressing issues related to the translation of Sanskrit literary texts into Polish—both of a general (theoretical) and specific nature—although their number remains relatively limited. Translational reflections occasionally appear in the introductions to individual translations of Sanskrit works. Marlewicz (2002) presents personal reflections on the challenges faced by the Sanskrit translator. She notes that translating from Sanskrit is not merely a linguistic operation but rather an attempt to reconstruct a distant and often incomprehensible world. The translator must strike a balance between fidelity to the source text and the need to produce a communicative work in the target language—frequently without theoretical support or the possibility of consultation (and often without formal training in translation within the framework of Oriental studies). Using examples from three types of texts—hymns from the *Atharvaveda*, a philosophical treatise, and the love poetry of Amaru—she observes that translating Sanskrit requires not only linguistic competence but also intuition, imagination, and cultural awareness. The Sanskrit translator—often working in isolation—must independently shape their approach to the text, becoming both its interpreter and the author of a new version in the target language. See also Czekalska and Marlewicz (2005). Borowski's article (2022) offers an attempt to present alternative, non-European concepts of translation, using India as a case study. The author analyzes the differences between the understanding of translation in the Indian cultural context and in Western, Eurocentric models. He highlights the need to 'provincialize' translation studies—that is, to take into account other traditions of thinking about translation without imposing Western conceptual frameworks on them. Heszen (2024) provides an insightful analysis of the translation of ancient Greek and Latin metre into Polish, a language that lacks quantity-based prosody. The author proposes the concept of 'metrical transposition'—the translation of rhythm through its functional equivalents in the target system—and outlines a typology of translational strategies: generic, isometric, mimetic, and adaptive. Although the article focuses on classical metrical patterns, the issues and strategies discussed are analogous to those encountered in Sanskrit. Sanskrit metres are also highly rhythmical and difficult to reproduce directly in Polish. The article offers useful tools for reflecting on rhythm, musicality, and types of translation, thus supporting conscious translational choices between fidelity and idiomatic expression.

[9] See Mejor (2007).

3. The rarely occurring stanza *jagatī*, which consists of forty-eight syllables, structured in four *pādas* of twelve syllables each.

Each of these metrical stanzas consisting of four *pādas* has its origins in Vedic prosody. The *śloka*, the dominant stanza in the epic, is derived from the Vedic *anuṣṭubh*, while *triṣṭubh* and *jagatī* retain their Vedic names and general structures. Typically, the length of a given stanza dictates the length of a sentence or statement. Each complete metrical unit is divided into two halves, with each half further subdivided into two *pādas*. In simplified terms, the *śloka* follows an eight-syllable pattern, the *triṣṭubh* an eleven-syllable pattern, and the *jagatī* a twelve-syllable pattern.

Since Sanskrit is a quantitative language in which vowel length plays a crucial role, its metrical system—similarly to that of ancient Greek and Latin poetry—is based on syllable length. However, the prosodic structure of the epic *śloka* is relatively flexible. The first four syllables of each *pāda* are metrically free, meaning they may be either long or short. The most commonly occurring metrical pattern follows this scheme:[10]

⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏒ – – ⏑ ' ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏒ – ⏒ ⏑ /
⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏒ – – ⏑ ' ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏒ – ⏒ ⏑ //

The opening two stanzas of Book 9 serve as an illustrative example of the *śloka* metre.

(*janamejaya uvāca:*)
*evaṁ nipātite karṇe samare savyasācinā /*
*alpāvaśiṣṭāḥ kuravaḥ kim akurvata vai dvija //*
*udīryamāṇaṁ ca balaṁ dṛṣṭvā rājā suyodhanaḥ /*
*pāṇḍavaiḥ prāptakālaṁ ca kiṁ prāpadyata kauravaḥ //* (MBh 9,1.1–2)

It can be observed that the epic *śloka* is a highly flexible metrical form, to the extent that it does not always strictly conform to its own loose structural pattern. The only consistent element is the adherence of the final four syllables of each hemistich, or of the even *pādas*, to the expected scheme. However, a detailed analysis of Sanskrit metrics falls beyond the scope of this paper.

My Polish metrical translation is, of course, merely an attempt—successful to varying degrees—at imitation, aiming to encourage the reader to perceive the rhythm of Sanskrit epic poetry in an approximate and highly conventional manner. Unlike Sanskrit, Polish is no longer a language in which vowel length serves as a fundamental phonetic feature. Instead, its accentuation is based on the stronger pronunciation of stressed syllables, achieved through a pressive or expiratory approach, which involves increasing the force of exhalation when articulating a syllable within a word or

[10] See, e.g., van Buitenen (1973: XXXVIII) and Sellmer (2015: 28–31).

sentence. Consequently, it is not possible to precisely replicate the rhythm of Sanskrit metre, despite its relative flexibility in the epic. A Polish stanza must, by necessity, be structured according to the metrical conventions of the Polish language, and Polish metric verses are classified as syllabotonic ones.

## 4 Searching for Polish rhythmic equivalents: trochaic pattern

While searching for a Polish equivalent of the octosyllabic metre, I was surprised to discover it most prominently in a vast number of children's poems, particularly those by renowned Polish poets such as Aleksander Fredro (1793–1876), Maria Konopnicka (1842–1910), Julian Tuwim (1894–1953), and Jan Brzechwa (1898–1966), and moreover in the works of Poland's national bards, Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) and Juliusz Słowacki (1809–1849). The recollection of childhood memories and repeated readings of these widely popular poems surfaced almost involuntarily. Large portions of these texts are not only familiar to me but are also deeply embedded in the collective memory of many Polish adults of my generation and beyond, passed down through successive generations. Many individuals likely still recall these poems quite well, with some even remembering entire passages by heart.

Recognizing in adulthood that a significant portion of these beloved poems were composed in octosyllabic verse was as astonishing to me as the revelation experienced by Monsieur Jourdain, the protagonist of Molière's comedy *The Bourgeois Gentleman* (*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*), upon realizing that he had been speaking prose for over forty years of his life without knowing it. As I further examined this metrical pattern, I found that the majority of Polish octosyllabic lines in children's poetry are structured according to the Polish equivalent of the ancient Greek and Latin metrical foot known as the trochee (Gr. *trochaios*, Lat. *trochaeus*). In classical Greek and Latin metrics, the trochee consists of two syllables: a long (heavy) syllable followed by a short (light) one (¯ ˘). In Polish prosody, this metrical foot is realized as a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one (ˊ – / Ss). A sequence of four such trochees forms an octosyllabic line.

It is likely due to the inherent simplicity of this trochaic-based metre that it has become so prevalent in Polish rhyming and rhythmic poetry for children. Among the numerous inspirations I drew from children's poetry for my translation, I will highlight a few of the most well-known examples.

Rada małpa, że się śmieli,
Kiedy mogła udać człeka,
Widząc panią raz w kąpieli,
Wlazła pod stół – cicho czeka. […][11]

[11] Aleksander Fredro, 'Małpa w kąpieli' ['Monkey in the Bath'], vv. 1–4. https://wolnelektury.pl/. See also 'Osiołkowi w żłoby dano', 'Dwa koguty', 'Wieczerza z gwoździa (Cygan i baba)'.

O większego trudno zucha,
Jak był Stefek Burczymucha.
– Ja nikogo się nie boję!
Choćby niedźwiedź ... to dostoję! […][12]

„Żeby kózka nie skakała,
Toby nóżki nie złamała"
Prawda!
Ale gdyby nie skakała,
Toby smutne życie miała.
Prawda?[13]

Biega, krzyczy pan Hilary:
„Gdzie są moje okulary?"
Szuka w spodniach i w surducie,
W prawym bucie, w lewym bucie. […][14]

Samochwała w kącie stała
I wciąż tak opowiadała:
– Zdolna jestem niesłychanie,
Najpiękniejsze mam ubranie,
Moja buzia tryska zdrowiem,
Jak coś powiem, to już powiem, […][15]

Na straganie w dzień targowy
Takie słyszy się rozmowy:
– Może pan się o mnie oprze,
Pan tak więdnie, panie Koprze.
– Cóż się dziwić, mój Szczypiorku,
Leżę tutaj już od wtorku! […][16]

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12 'Stefek Burczymucha' (Konopnicka 2018). See also 'Podróż na bocianie', 'Pranie', 'Krasnoludki są na świecie', 'Parasol', 'Staszek w lesie', 'Skrucha Józi', 'Zamiary Staszka', 'Pan Zielonka', 'Sposób na laleczkę', 'O Janku wędrowniczku'.

13 'Skakanka' ['Jumping Rope'] (Tuwim 2024).

14 'Okulary' ['Spectacles'] (Tuwim 2024). See also 'Taniec', 'O panu Tralalińskim', 'Warszawa', 'Ptasie plotki'. Also, some fables (treated as a literary genre) by the prominent 18th-century Polish poet Ignacy Krasicki (1735–1801) are composed in eigth-syllable metre. Among them is a fable titled 'Czapla, ryby i rak' ['Heron, fish and Crayfish'], which has its origin in an Indian tale included in the Sanskrit fable collection *Pañcatantra* (see Urbańska 2016: 284–292).

15 'Samochwała' ['A Braggart'] (Brzechwa 2022).

16 'Na straganie' ['At a market stall'] (Brzechwa 2022). See also 'Skarżypyta', 'Kłamczucha', 'Kwoka', 'Koziołeczek', 'Opowiedział dzięcioł sowie', 'Chrząszcz', 'Hipopotam', 'Sum', 'Grzebień i szczotka', 'Tańcowała igła z nitką', 'Wielbłąd', 'Małpy', 'Kłótnia rzek', 'Atrament', 'Szelmostwa Lisa Witalisa'. See also Juliusz Słowacki, 'O Janku, co psom szył buty'.

The eight-syllable metre based on the trochee, occasionally featuring single rhythmic variations, is not exclusively found in children's poetry. It is also employed in poetry intended for adults. Several notable examples serve as compelling illustrations of this phenomenon and are particularly significant for Polish reader, for example: Mikołaj Rej, *Krótka rozprawa między trzemi osobami, Panem, Wójtem a Plebanem*; Fredro, *Zemsta*; Mickiewicz, 'Pani Twardowska', or Adam Asnyk, 'Między nami nic nie było'.

> […]
> Miły wójcie, cóż się dzieje,
> Aboć się ten ksiądz z nas śmieje!
> Mało śpiewa, wszytko dzwoni,
> Msza nie była jako łoni. […][17]
>
> Między nami nic nie było!
> Żadnych zwierzeń, wyznań żadnych!
> Nic nas z sobą nie łączyło —
> Prócz wiosennych marzeń zdradnych; […][18]

Polish eight-syllable poetry is structured around both rhythm and rhyme. In contrast, poetic texts from ancient India, including Sanskrit epics, do not rely on rhyme. Consequently, when approximating the mood of an epic stanza in translation, the primary challenge lies in preserving its rhythmic qualities. In my translation of the *Mahābhārata*, specifically Books 11, 10, and parts of Book 9 (translated in this order), the eight-syllable structure was primarily rendered using four Polish trochaic equivalents, although occasional rhythmic variations occur within this framework. These variations may arise due to the necessity of selecting appropriate vocabulary or may stem from the translator's own limitations in experience and poetic skill. For instance, in a smaller number of cases, the Polish equivalent of a spondee (originally: — — ) appears instead of the expected trochaic pattern (Pol. ˊ – / Ss), resulting in two consecutive stressed syllables (Polish equivalent: ˊ ˊ = SS). The following example is taken from the beginning of my translation of Book 9.

> *janamejaya uvāca*
> *evaṁ nipātite karṇe samare savyasācinā /*
> *alpāvaśiṣṭāḥ kuravaḥ kim akurvata vai dvija //*
> *udīryamāṇaṁ ca balaṁ dṛṣṭvā rājā suyodhanaḥ /*
> *pāṇḍavaiḥ prāptakālaṁ ca kiṁ prāpadyata kauravaḥ //*
> *etad icchāmy ahaṁ śrotuṁ tad ācakṣva dvijottama /*
> *na hi tṛpyāmi pūrveṣāṁ śṛṇvānaś caritaṁ mahat //*

[17] Mikołaj Rej, *Krótka rozprawa między trzemi osobami, Panem, Wójtem a Plebanem* [*A Short Discourse between Three Persons, the Lord, the Village Head, and the Parish Priest*], vv. 31–34. https://wolnelektury.pl/.

[18] Adam Asnyk, 'Między nami nic nie było' ['There Was Nothing between Us'], vv. 1–4. https://wolnelektury.pl/.

*vaiśaṁpāyana uvāca*
*tataḥ karṇe hate rājan dhārtarāṣṭraḥ suyodhanaḥ /*
*bhṛśaṁ śokārṇave magno nirāśaḥ sarvato 'bhavat //*
*hā karṇa hā karṇa iti śocamānaḥ punaḥ punaḥ /*
*kṛcchrāt svaśibiraṁ prāyād dhataśeṣair nṛpaiḥ saha //*
*sa samāśvāsyamāno 'pi hetubhiḥ śāstraniścitaiḥ /*
*rājabhir nālabhac charma sūtaputravadhaṁ smaran //* (MBh 9,1.1–6)

Dżanamedźaja rzekł:
1: Kiedy Karnę w taki sposób Leworęczny zabił w starciu,
cóż, braminie, uczyniła niewielka Kaurawów resztka?
2: Gdy zobaczył Sujodhana król, że armię swą zbierają
Pandawowie, cóż przedsięwziął Kaurawa w stosownej chwili?
3: Przedstaw mi to, pragnę wiedzieć, o najlepszy wśród braminów,
nie mam bowiem dość, gdy słyszę o mych przodków wielkich czynach.
Waiśampajana rzekł:
4: Po zabójstwie Karny, królu, Sujodhana, Dhrytarasztry
syn wpadł w wielkie morze smutku, nadziei nie mając znikąd.
5: Lamentując w taki sposób stale: „Karno, och, ach, Karno!”,
z trudem dotarł do obozu z władcami ocalałymi.
6: Choć koili go królowie opiniami z ksiąg prawości,
nie znalazł pociechy myśląc o woźnicy syna mordzie.

## 5 Dactylic inspirations

During my work on the translation—specifically, after completing the translations of Books 10 and 11 but before beginning Book 9—I recalled a poem from my childhood that I believe was widely known among children of my generation. This poem, ‘Pan Maluśkiewicz’ [‘Mr. Maluśkiewicz’] by Tuwim, frequently employs a distinct rhythmic pattern. In this structure, two equivalents of the ancient Greek dactyl (Gr. *dáktylos*; Lat. dactylus; ¯ ◡ ◡) appear consecutively, followed by a single equivalent of a trochee. In metrical theory, this form is classified as three-footed dactylic catalectic verse (in Polish: *trójstopowiec daktyliczny katalektyczny*), in which the first, fourth, and seventh syllables are stressed (´ – – ´ – – ´ – / SssSssSs). As illustrated by ‘Pan Maluśkiewicz’, it is not always necessary to adhere rigidly to this pattern when selecting words to maintain the poem’s rhythm; however, this structure predominates.

Był sobie pan Maluśkiewicz
Najmniejszy na świecie chyba.
Wszystko już poznał i widział
Z wyjątkiem wieloryba.
Pan Maluśkiewicz był – tyci,
Tyciuśki jak ziarnko kawy,

A oprócz tego podróżnik,
A oprócz tego ciekawy. […][19]

A highly significant work in Polish literature—though often underestimated by high school students—is one of the most renowned masterpieces of Polish Romanticism: *Konrad Wallenrod*, a poetic novel by Adam Mickiewicz (first published in 1828). A section of this work, titled 'Powieść Wajdeloty' ['Wajdelota's Story'], served as an important source of rhythmic inspiration for me. 'Powieść Wajdeloty' follows the structure of three-footed dactylic catalectic verse in the second part of each line, while the first part is composed in a seven-syllable metre followed by a caesura.

Skąd Litwini wracali? [' 7] Z nocnej wracali wycieczki [8],
Wieźli łupy bogate, ['] w zamkach i cerkwiach zdobyte.
Tłumy brańców niemieckich z powiązanemi rękami,
Ze stryczkami na szyjach, biegną przy koniach zwycięzców:
Poglądają ku Prusom – i zalewają się łzami,
Poglądają na Kowno – i polecają się Bogu. […][20]

When composing 'Powieść Wajdeloty', Mickiewicz deliberately sought to evoke the epic metre of ancient Greek and later Roman/Latin literature—namely, dactylic hexametre—thus drawing inspiration from such literary masterpieces as the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*. In doing so, he became the first poet to introduce the so-called Polish hexametre into Polish poetry. This same metre was later employed by another distinguished 19th-century poet, Cyprian Kamil Norwid (1821–1883), in his renowned work *Bema pamięci żałobny-rapsod* [*A Funeral Rhapsody in Memory of General Bem*]. Bearing this literary tradition in mind while translating Book 9 of the *Mahābhārata*, and wishing—however symbolically and imperfectly—to pay homage to both the great poets of antiquity and the masters of 19th-century Polish literature in my metrical rendering of the epic *śloka*, I chose to translate a significant portion of Book 9 using octosyllabic, three-footed dactylic catalectic verse. However, as was also the case in earlier instances, various constraints—most often the demands of vocabulary selection and my own limited experience as a translator—prevented me from adhering strictly to this metre, leading to occasional rhythmic variations.

*saṁjaya uvāca*
*tataḥ sainyās tava vibho madrarājapuraskṛtāḥ /*
*punar abhyadravan pārthān vegena mahatā raṇe //*
*pīḍitās tāvakāḥ sarve pradhāvanto raṇotkaṭāḥ /*
*kṣaṇenaiva ca pārthāṁs te bahutvāt samaloḍayan //*
*te vadhyamānāḥ kurubhiḥ pāṇḍavā nāvatasthire /*

[19] Julian Tuwim, 'Pan Maluśkiewicz', vv. 1–8. https://wolnelektury.pl/.
[20] Adam Mickiewicz, 'Powieść Wajdeloty'. In *Konrad Wallenrod*. https://wolnelektury.pl/.

*nivāryamāṇā bhīmena paśyatoḥ kṛṣṇapārthayoḥ //*
*tato dhanaṁjayaḥ kruddhaḥ kṛpaṁ saha padānugaiḥ /*
*avākirac charaugheṇa kṛtavarmāṇam eva ca //*
*śakuniṁ sahadevas tu sahasainyam avārayat /*
*nakulaḥ pārśvataḥ sthitvā madrarājam avaikṣata //*
[…]
*tataḥ samabhavad yuddhaṁ saṁsaktaṁ tatra tatra ha /*
*tāvakānāṁ pareṣāṁ ca saṁgrāmeṣv anivartinām //*
*tatra paśyāmahe karma śalyasyātimahad raṇe /*
*yad ekaḥ sarvasainyāni pāṇḍavānām ayudhyata //*
*vyadṛśyata tadā śalyo yudhiṣṭhirasamīpataḥ /*
*raṇe candramaso 'bhyāśe śanaiścara iva grahaḥ //* (MBh 9,15.1–5, 8–10)

Sańdźaja rzekł:

1. Armia twa wówczas, o mężny,[’] z dowódcą swym, królem Madrów,
   znów popędziła na Parthów [’] z wielkim zapałem bitewnym.
2. Choć naciskane, twe wojska pijane bitwą pędziły
   i Parthów w mig rozbijały dzięki przewadze liczebnej.
3. Przez Kurów dziesiątkowane nie mogły trwać wojska Pandów,
   choć Bhima ich powstrzymywał na oczach Kryszny i Parthy.
4. W gniewie więc Skarbów Zdobywca Krypę i Krytawarmana,
   a także ich sprzymierzeńców zasypał strzał całą chmarą.
5. Wraz z wojskiem swym Sahadewa naprzeciw szedł Śakuniemu,
   na flance stojąc Nakula na króla Madrów spoglądał.
   […]
8. Wszędzie toczyła się walka wojsk twoich i wojsk ich wrogów,
   i nikt z nich w pobliżu wroga stojąc, nie stchórzył w tych starciach.
9. Oglądaliśmy w tej walce Śalji nadludzkie wyczyny,
   gdy walczył sam jeden przeciw wszystkim żołnierzom Pandawów.
10. Śalja wyglądał w tej chwili – gdy blisko był Judhiszthiry –
    jakby to Saturn przyćmiewał księżyc, znajdując się przy nim.

As a brief aside, it is worth mentioning that the oldest Polish religious song—and simultaneously the earliest known Polish poetic work—‘Bogurodzica’ [‘God's Mother’], dating from approximately the 13th century, holds particular interest in this context. ‘Bogurodzica’ served as Poland’s earliest national anthem for several centuries. Without delving into a detailed analysis of this foundational work of Polish literature, it is noteworthy that the first two lines (excluding the first quarter of the second line) along with several subsequent lines, are composed in eight-syllable verse. Furthermore, in its recited form—given that the poem was frequently sung—the first two lines follow a metrical pattern of two dactyls and one trochee, while a few other octosyllabic lines consist of four trochees. Thus, this religious poem or song exhibits two distinct rhythmic patterns, both of which I reference in my translation of the *Mahābhārata*.

Bogurodzica dziewica, Bogiem sławiena Maryja.
U twego syna, Gospodzina, Matko zwolena, Maryja!
[…]
A na świecie zbożny pobyt,
Po żywocie rajski przebyt.
Kyrieleison.[21]

## 6 Translating the *triṣṭubh* and the *jagatī*

For both content-related and stylistic reasons, more complex verse structures occasionally appear in Book 9. One such structure is the *triṣṭubh*, a stanza consisting of 44 syllables divided into four quarters (*pādas*) of eleven syllables each. In the *Mahābhārata*, the *triṣṭubh* (the most prevalent and significant metre of the Ṛgvedic hymns, particularly those dedicated to Indra) most commonly follows the pattern outlined below:[22]

⏑ – ∪ – – ∪ ∪ – ∪ – ∪
⏑ – ∪ – – ∪ ∪ – ∪ – ∪ /
⏑ – ∪ – – ∪ ∪ – ∪ – ∪
⏑ – ∪ – – ∪ ∪ – ∪ – ∪ //

See, for example:

*saṁdrāvyamāṇaṁ tu balaṁ pareṣāṁ*
*parītakalpaṁ vibabhau samantāt /*
*naivāvatasthe samare bhṛśaṁ bhayād*
*vimardamānaṁ tu parasparaṁ tadā //*
*tataḥ prabhagnā sahasā mahācamūḥ*
*sā pāṇḍavī tena narādhipena /*
*diśaś catasraḥ sahasā pradhāvitā*
*gajendravegaṁ tam apārayantī //*
*dṛṣṭvā ca tāṁ vegavatā prabhagnāṁ*
*sarve tvadīyā yudhi yodhamukhyāḥ /*
*apūjayaṁs tatra narādhipaṁ taṁ*
*dadhmuś ca śaṅkhāñ śaśisaṁnikāśān //*
*śrutvā ninādaṁ tv atha kauravāṇāṁ*
*harṣād vimuktaṁ saha śaṅkhaśabdaiḥ /*
*senāpatiḥ pāṇḍavasṛñjayānāṁ*
*pāñcālaputro na mamarṣa roṣāt //* (MBh 9,19.7–10)

[21] ‘Bogurodzica’, vv. 1–2, 9–11. https://wolnelektury.pl/.
[22] See van Buitenen (1973: XXXVIII–XXXIX).

As observed, *triṣṭubh* verses in the *Mahābhārata*, similar to śloka, do not always adhere strictly to the aforementioned 'theoretical' pattern, as metric variations can occur within individual *pādas*.

The primary inspiration for employing the rhythm of eleven-syllable metre in my Polish translation stemmed from a poem by the 19th-century master of comedy, Aleksander Fredro, titled 'Paweł i Gaweł' ['Paweł and Gaweł']. This poem was widely popular during my childhood and was included in the primary school curriculum as a required reading. A further association soon emerged—namely, a poem that extended beyond primary school education: 'Niepewność' ['Uncertainty'] by Mickiewicz, which gained popularity in Polish culture through a popular musical adaptation by Marek Grechuta.

Moreover, it became evident that the eleven-syllable verse was highly favoured by Polish poets, particularly in the 19th century, as exemplified by two major works of Polish literature: *Konrad Wallenrod* (for the most part) by Mickiewicz and *Beniowski* by Juliusz Słowacki (1809–1849).[23] The structural arrangement of Polish poems in this metre typically features a caesura after the fifth syllable, followed by six additional syllables.

Paweł i Gaweł ['] w jednym stali domu,
Paweł na górze, ['] a Gaweł na dole;
Paweł spokojny, nie wadził nikomu,
Gaweł najdziksze wymyślał swawole. […][24]

Gdy cię nie widzę, ['] nie wzdycham, nie płaczę,
Nie tracę zmysłów, ['] kiedy cię zobaczę;
Jednakże gdy cię długo nie oglądam,
Czegoś mi braknie, kogoś widzieć żądam;
I tęskniąc sobie zadaję pytanie:
Czy to jest przyjaźń? czy to jest kochanie? […][25]

Za panowania króla Stanisława
Mieszkał ubogi szlachcic na Podolu,
Wysoko potem go wyniosła sława;
Szczęścia miał mało w życiu, więcej bolu; […][26]

In Book 9 of the *Mahābhārata*, passages composed in *triṣṭubh* stand out from other battle descriptions, serving as a formal distinction at the climax of significant battle narratives. One such instance is the final confrontation between Yudhiṣṭhira and

[23] See also Słowacki, 'O języku'.
[24] Fredro, 'Paweł i Gaweł', vv. 1–4. https://wolnelektury.pl/.
[25] Adam Mickiewicz, 'Niepewność', vv. 1–6. https://wolnelektury.pl/.
[26] Juliusz Słowacki, 'Beniowski', vv. 1–4. https://wolnelektury.pl/.

Śalya—the commander-in-chief of the Kaurava army on the eighteenth and final day of the great battle—which culminates in Śalya's death (MBh 9,16.7–51, 86–87). The use of this metre, distinct from the more commonly employed śloka, imbues the description of the final battle with a sense of uniqueness and solemnity.

Shortly thereafter, another passage in *triṣṭubh* describes the heroic struggle of Śālva, the commander of the *mlecchas* (non-Aryan or barbarian warriors), who fought atop a massive elephant, wreaking havoc upon the Pāṇḍava forces. However, he was ultimately struck down, along with his elephant, by Dhṛṣṭadyumna (the commander-in-chief of the Pāṇḍava army) wielding his club, after which Yuyudhāna Sātyaki immediately decapitated the *mleccha* commander (MBh 9,19.3–26). Likewise, the final moments of another struggle of great warriors, i.e., Sahadeva's battle with Śakuni, culminating in Śakuni's fall, are also rendered in *triṣṭubh* (MBh 9,27.55–63). Furthermore, this metre is employed in the depiction of the barbaric act of kicking Duryodhana in the head after he had been felled in an unchivalrous manner by Bhīma during their club duel (MBh 9,58.9–13), with the metrical choice accentuating the gravity of the moment.

See, for example:

*tatas tu śaktiṁ rucirogradaṇḍāṁ; maṇipravālojjvalitāṁ pradīptām /*
*cikṣepa vegāt subhṛśaṁ mahātmā; madrādhipāya pravaraḥ kurūṇām //*
[…]
*tāṁ sarvaśaktyā prahitāṁ sa śaktiṁ; yudhiṣṭhireṇāprativāryavīryām /*
*pratigrahāyābhinanarda śalyaḥ; samyag ghutām agnir ivājyadhārām //*
*sā tasya marmāṇi vidārya śubhram; uro viśālaṁ ca tathaiva varma /*
*viveśa gāṁ toyam ivāprasaktā; yaśo viśālaṁ nṛpater dahantī //*
*nāsākṣikarṇāsyaviniḥsṛtena; prasyandatā ca vraṇasaṁbhavena /*
*saṁsiktagātro rudhireṇa so 'bhūt; krauñco yathā skandahato mahādriḥ //*
*prasārya bāhū sa rathād gato gāṁ; saṁchinnavarmā kurunandanena /*
*mahendravāhapratimo mahātmā; vajrāhataṁ śṛṅgam ivācalasya //* (MBh 9,16.40, 48–51 [the fall of Śalya)

40. I wówczas włócznię ['] z jasnym, mocnym drzewcem,
zdobną w klejnoty ['] i koral, błyszczącą,
cisnął z impetem, mocno wielki duchem
w przywódcę Madrów najwspanialszy z Kurów.
[…]
48. Śalja tę włócznię potężnie rzuconą
przez Judhiszthirę z niewstrzymaną siłą
chcąc chwycić i odrzucić głośno syknął,
jak ogień masło ofiarne przyjmując.
49. Ta przebijając pancerz jego lśniący,
jego wnętrzności oraz pierś szeroką,
przeszyła ziemię gładko jakby wodę,
niszcząc potężną chwałę pana ludów.

50. Krwią zlane było całe jego ciało,
cieknącą z nosa, oczu, ust i uszu,
z ran się sączącą, jakby wielka góra
Kraućća przez Skandę była poraniona.
51. Ręce rozłożył, z wozu padł na ziemię,
pancerz rozcięty miał przez chlubę Kurów,
ów wielki duchem jak wielki słoń Indry,
był jak szczyt góry rozcięty piorunem.

Relatively few short passages in Book 9 of the *Mahābhārata* were composed in the *jagatī* metre, a verse form of Vedic origin that ranks third in frequency in the *Ṛgveda*. This metre consists of 48 syllables, divided into four *pādas* of 12 syllables each. The general structure of a single *pāda* follows this pattern (Kiparsky 2018: 91–92):

⏑ – ⏑ – / ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ – / ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ / (x 4)[27]

As I sought to render the twelve-syllable Sanskrit metre into Polish twelve-syllable verse, I once again discovered a suitable rhythmic pattern in Polish children's poetry.

Entliczek-pętliczek, czerwony stoliczek,
A na tym stoliczku pleciony koszyczek,
W koszyczku jabłuszko, w jabłuszku robaczek,
A na tym robaczku zielony kubraczek. […][28]

An even more effective distribution of accents—and thus a superior source of metrical inspiration—can be found in the twelve-syllable metre employed by Julian Tuwim in the final section of his well-known poem 'Lokomotywa' ['Locomotive', 'Train engine'], a staple of Polish children's literature. While the poem's initial and middle sections are composed in a ten-syllable metre, the twelve-syllable verse is used to depict the train first accelerating and then reaching full speed. Occasionally, an eleven-syllable variant appears, where a pause replaces either the first or last of the twelve syllables. The metrical scheme of this part of the poem follows a structure based on four dactyls, with the final one catalectic. This results in a four-foot dactylic catalectic verse ('czterostopowiec daktyliczny katalektyczny' in Polish), preceded by an additional unstressed syllable that functions as a pre-tact:

( – ⏑́ – – ⏑́ – – ⏑́ – – ⏑́ – )
(s S s s S s s S s s S s).

[27] Arnold (1905: 13) divides the three 'members' of one *jagatī* pāda as follows:
/ x – x – / x ⏑ ⏑ / – ⏑ – ⏑ x
x – stands for either short or long syllable.

[28] Jan Brzechwa, 'Entliczek-pentliczek'. https://wolnelektury.pl/.

The second, fifth, eighth and eleventh syllables are stressed (accented).

> […] Najpierw powoli jak żółw ociężale, (11 syllables)
> Ruszyła maszyna po szynach ospale, (12 syllables)
> Szarpnęła wagony i ciągnie z mozołem,
> I kręci się, kręci się koło za kołem,
> I biegu przyspiesza, i gna coraz prędzej,
> I dudni, i stuka, łomoce i pędzi,
> […]
> Tak to to, tak to to, tak to to, tak to to! ...[29]

The twelve-syllable metre was also used in the composition of the beautiful Polish poem 'Deszcz jesienny' ['Autumn Rain'] by Leopold Staff (1878–1957). This poem maintains a consistent accentual pattern, with stresses falling on the second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh syllables.

> O szyby deszcz dzwoni, deszcz dzwoni jesienny,
> I pluszcze jednaki, miarowy, niezmienny,
> Dżdżu krople padają i tłuką w me okno...
> Jęk szklany... płacz szklany... a szyby w mgle mokną
> I światła szarego blask sączy się senny...
> O szyby deszcz dzwoni, deszcz dzwoni jesienny... […][30]

The metrical structure of the aforementioned poem is more accurately interpreted as being based on a trisyllabic metrical foot known as the amphibrach (Gr. *amphíbrachys*, Lat. *amphibrachus*, literally 'short on both sides'; ˘ – ˘). In classical Greek and Latin metrics, this foot originally consisted of a long syllable between two short ones, whereas in Polish, it comprises a stressed syllable positioned between two unstressed syllables ( – ˊ – / sSs). Each line of the poem, therefore, consists of four successive amphibrachs, forming what is known as an amphibrachic verse or a four-foot amphibrachic metre (Pol. 'wiersz amfibrachiczny' or 'czterostopowiec amfibrachiczny').[31]

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29 Julian Tuwim, 'Lokomotywa'. https://wolnelektury.pl/.

30 Leopold Staff, 'Deszcz jesienny', vv. 1–6. https://wolnelektury.pl/.

31 Cf. also
Puch czarny, puch miękki pod głowę podłóżmy,
Śpiewajmy, a cicho – nie trwóżmy, nie trwóżmy. […] (Adam Mickiewicz, 'Kołysanka duchów nocnych' ['Lullaby of the Night Spirits']. In *Dziady*, *Część III*, vv. 94–95. https://wolnelektury.pl/.
Po morzach wędrował, był kiedyś Farysem,
Pod palmą spoczywał, pod ciemnym cyprysem,
Z modlitwą Araba był w gmachach Khaaba, […] (Juliusz Słowacki, 'Duma o Wacławie Rzewuskim' ['A Ballad about Wacław Rzewuski'], vv. 1–3. https://wolnelektury.pl/.

In Book 9 of the *Mahābhārata*, eight stanzas composed in the twelve-syllable *jagatī* metre conclude Chapter 56 (MBh 9,56.60–67).[32] This passage occurs in the midst of the depiction of the intense club duel between two formidable warriors and adversaries, Bhīma and Duryodhana. The narrative at this point approaches the moment preceding Bhīma's act of unchivalrous and dishonorable conduct—striking his opponent below the belt and crushing his thighs—an event that is recounted in the following chapter (MBh 9,57).

Within the twelve-syllable stanzas concluding Chapter 56 (MBh 9,56.60–67), Bhīma initially strikes Duryodhana with his club, causing him to collapse. However, after a brief interval, Duryodhana regains his composure, rises, and retaliates, inflicting injuries upon Bhīma and shattering his armour. Bhīma then falls to the ground, eliciting terror among the Pāṇḍava warriors. Ultimately, Bhīma too rises once more, and both warriors stand poised for the decisive confrontation.

*tato gadāṁ vīrahaṇīm ayasmayīṁ; pragṛhya vajrāśanitulyanisvanām /*
*atāḍayac chatrum amitrakarśano; balena vikramya dhanaṁjayāgrajaḥ //*
*sa bhīmasenābhihatas tavātmajaḥ; papāta saṁkampitadehabandhanaḥ /*
*supuṣpito mārutavegatāḍito; mahāvane sāla ivāvaghūrṇitaḥ //*
*tataḥ praṇedur jahṛṣuś ca pāṇḍavāḥ; samīkṣya putraṁ patitaṁ kṣitau tava /*
*tataḥ sutas te pratilabhya cetanāṁ; samutpapāta dvirado yathā hradāt //*
*sa pārthivo nityam amarṣitas tadā; mahārathaḥ śikṣitavat paribhraman /*
*atāḍayat pāṇḍavam agrataḥ sthitaṁ; sa vihvalāṅgo jagatīm upāspṛśat //*
*sa siṁhanādān vinanāda kauravo; nipātya bhūmau yudhi bhīmam ojasā /*
*bibheda caivāśanitulyatejasā; gadānipātena śarīrarakṣaṇam //*
*tato 'ntarikṣe ninado mahān abhūd; divaukasām apsarasāṁ ca neduṣām /*
*papāta coccair amarapraveritaṁ; vicitrapuṣpotkaravarṣam uttamam //*
*tataḥ parān āviśad uttamaṁ bhayaṁ; samīkṣya bhūmau patitaṁ narottamam /*
*ahīyamānaṁ ca balena kauravaṁ; niśamya bhedaṁ ca dṛḍhasya varmaṇaḥ //*
*tato muhūrtād upalabhya cetanāṁ; pramṛjya vaktraṁ rudhirārdram ātmanaḥ /*
*dhṛtiṁ samālambya vivṛttalocano; balena saṁstabhya vṛkodaraḥ sthitaḥ //* (MBh 9,56.60–67)

60. A wtedy brat starszy Zdobywcy Bogactwa,
kat wrogów, pochwycił maczugę żelazną,
morderczą dla wojów i grzmiącą jak piorun,
i nią swego wroga zuchwale uderzył.

[32] In the central section of Book 9, translated by Babkiewicz (MBh 9.33–53), individual stanzas composed in the twelve-syllable *jagatī* metre also appear, serving to introduce and conclude selected descriptive passages (see MBh 9.52.1–2, 20–21; 9.53.34–35; 9.40.35). These passages occur within a broader account dedicated to numerous sacred pilgrimage sites (*tīrthas*), which Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, is said to have visited. The translator rendered these sections into Polish using a twelve-syllable metre, employing various rhythmic strategies to adapt the translated passages.

61. Twój syn uderzony tak przez Bhimasenę
przewrócił się, mięśnie na ciele mu drżały
jak gdyby był śalą z pięknymi kwiatami
trzęsącym się w lesie, gdy wiatr mocno wieje.
62. Krzyczeli, cieszyli się Pandu synowie
spostrzegłszy, że syn twój upada na ziemię,
lecz on już niebawem odzyskał świadomość
i powstał jak gdyby słoń powstał z jeziora.
63. Pan ziemi, któremu nieznany jest spokój,
waleczny rydwannik, wspaniale kroczący
uderzył Pandawę, gdy stanął tuż przed nim,
i ciężko go ranił, aż padł ów na ziemię.
64. I wydał Kaurawa jak lew ryk donośny,
gdy Bhimę swą siłą powalił na ziemię,
a gdy upadała maczuga tak lśniąca
jak piorun, roztrzaskał mu zbroję ochronną.
65. I z niebios donośne słyszano wołania
krzyczących apsaras i istot niebiańskich,
a z góry opadał zsyłany przez bogów
cudowny, rzęsisty deszcz kwiatów przeróżnych.
66. A wówczas twych wrogów strach wielki ogarnął,
gdy Bhimę widzieli, jak upadł na ziemię,
Kaurawę wśród mężów najpotężniejszego,
choć w zbroi masywnej rozciętej od ciosu.
67. Lecz zaraz, po chwili odzyskał świadomość,
oczyścił swą twarz całą we krwi skąpaną,
znów pełen dziarskości rozszerzył swe oczy,
wróciła odwaga i trwał Wilczobrzuchy.

## 7 Conclusion

In this article, I have presented several reflections on the rhythmic inspirations that emerged during my translation of extensive passages from the so-called Kurukṣetra books of the *Mahābhārata*. A direct reproduction of Sanskrit metre—which is based on syllabic quantity—is, of course, impossible in Polish, a language governed by dynamic stress. Instead, a translational strategy grounded in rhythmic equivalents has been proposed. The selection of Polish metres (such as the trochaic octosyllable, the three-footed dactylic catalectic verse, the eleven-syllable line with a caesura after the fifth syllable, the four-footed dactylic catalectic, or the four-footed amphibrachic metre) does not precisely correspond to the Sanskrit forms (*śloka*, *triṣṭubh*, *jagatī*). Nevertheless, it appears to allow for a reconstruction of their rhythmic effect within the framework of Polish poetics. My approach was thus based on a search for rhythmic equivalents within the Polish poetic tradition—among eight-, eleven-, and twelve-syllable lines.

In my translation process, I sought to embed the *Mahābhārata* passages within the Polish literary tradition of rhythmic verses (*tout proportions gardées*). In my search for rhythmic sources of inspiration, I frequently—often intuitively—drew upon the Polish poetic tradition, particularly the poetry of Polish Romanticism. This literary period is highly recognised both within the broader literary canon and the Polish educational system, where a substantial portion of its works has been incorporated into the mandatory reading curriculum for high school students.

However, an equally significant source of metrical inspiration came from Polish children's poetry composed by poets of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries—works that were widely familiar to my generation. Many of these poems have not only held a special place in cultural memory for many decades but also exhibit considerable poetic merit.

The final part of the conclusion—of a text that is, above all, a personal record of a translator's journey—the one delivered half in jest, half in earnest—seems almost self-evident, no matter how trivial or banal it may appear. There is a well-known saying that money is lying in the street—one simply has to bend down to pick it up. By analogy, one might modify this adage: eight-syllable, eleven-syllable, and even twelve-syllable verses are all around us, embedded in Polish children's poetry as well as in rhythmic and rhyming literature intended for slightly older audiences. Thus, one potential approach to rendering the great Sanskrit epic metrically and rhythmically—particularly when you are neither a poet nor a professional translator—is to revisit childhood memories, perhaps even asking your parents and grandparents for research consultations (in case of the latter it is, unfortunately, a relevant approach for younger generations of researchers and translators). Additionally, it may require a reconciliation with certain school readings that perhaps were once perceived as burdensome. Ultimately, the appropriate metre and rhythm may be found within these recollections, discussions, and renewed engagements with the masterpieces of Polish literature—and perhaps, in the end, within ourselves.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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