

Thomas Power
(1660-1700)

PREFACE TO
LATIN TRANSLATION OF *PARADISE LOST* I
(CAMBRIDGE, 1691)

I present to you, learned Reader, the first of the twelve books of our countryman, Milton, translated into Latin: as far as my abilities have allowed, he comes forward for your approval in the Roman dress I have given him by right of citizenship. To retain the purity of his diction, I have brought out of the treasure-houses of Vergil and Lucretius practically everything that is customary in this type of literature. I did not translate like a mere hack, rendering word for word (although, when I could do it conveniently, I did so with due regard to the poetic spirit); but paying particular attention to the sense of the author, I kept close to his matter and mode of expression, using the words customary in Latin. If the two texts are compared, my fidelity can be examined; but if my text alone is read, I am a poet by his genius. In naming idols and the places in which they are worshipped, there occur certain names whose sound is somewhat difficult and which I have softened to some extent. In place of *Beelzebub* I have used *Belus* from his usual name, ???, which the Greek borrowed as ???, and in Latin becomes *Belus*. I have cut the adjective, ???. My precedent comes from the works of ancient poets who used *Caesar* for Iulius, Augustus, Nero quite indiscriminately.

In a few words, my dear Reader, these are what I want to warn you about, and similarly I hope that the following lines will be read not only with interest but also with some pleasure. There is no need to make this author known to the English. But if this book should wander outside England, it is not beside the point to print Dryden's eulogy. I append its six lines translated almost word for word from English:

*Tres magnos vario florentes tempore vates
Graecia cum Latio, et terra Britannia tulit.
Grandia Maeoniden, distinguit lenta Maronem
Majestas; noster laude ab utrâque nitet.
Tendere non ultra valuit natura; priores,
Tertius ut fieret, junxerat ergo duos.*

(Original)

Three poets in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy and England did adorn.
The First in loftiness of thought surpass'd,
The next in majesty, in both the last;
The force of Nature could no further go;
To make a third, she join'd the former two.
