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Religious and Sacred Poetry : An International Quarterly of Religion, Culture and Education 2/1, 61-78

2014

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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De-Clawing the Christian Horace: The Suppression of Sarbiewius' Roman Catholicism by His British Translators

Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595-1640), or Sarbiewius, is generally considered the greatest neo-Latin poet of the Baroque age¹. Widely read all over the continent, he was feted as the "Christian Horace" during his lifetime, and crowned poet laureate by Pope Urban VIII at Rome in 1623. Sarbiewski's poems are among the most frequently translated Latin poems in the English language. His translators have included Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Sir Edward Sherburne, Henry Vaughan and Isaac Watts — the great English hymnodist, author of "Our God, our Help in Ages Past" and "Joy to the World, the Lord is Come". The most extensive translation of Sarbiewski's verse in English remains to this day the *Odes of Casimire* by George Hils, which appeared in London in 1645. It is this collection of translations that we will concentrate on.

In their new and important anthology of English translations of Sarbiewski through the centuries, Krzysztof Fordoński and Piotr Urbański make the bold statement that "Hils's translations are considered the truest to the original among all the English translations of Sarbiewski"². Now, the Anglophone reader does come away with a high estimate of Hils' work upon reading his elegant renderings of odes such as nr. 12 of Book III, "To Aurelius Fuscus, that all humane things are fraile and uncertaine":

If the first barke, *Fuscus*, thou would'st but pare
From empty things, the rest will flow,
And vanish quite like vernal snow;
Which melts away, with the mild breath o' th' ayre.
Valour from beauty sever'd, slowly moves.
Meere outsides please: had *Paris* scene

¹ A previous version of this paper was presented at the Pacific Coast Conference on British Studies at the University of San Diego, March, 2009.

² Krzysztof Fordoński and Piotr Urbański, *Casimir Britannicus: English Translations, Paraphrases, and Emulations of the Poetry of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski*, Modern Humanities Research Association, London 2008, p. 22.

Faire *Helens* heart, how foul 't had beene,
 How ill requiting to the *Trojan* Loves,
 Ne'er, through the midst of *Nereus* broyles, had hee
 On the winds anger, borne away
 O' th' Grecian bed that beauteous prey.
 But Nature's Lord the mutuall yoke, we see,
 Of things hath ord' red well, that black with white,
 Sad things with joyfull cov' red lye.
 And from this various mixture, hee
 The best would choose, from Heav'n must learne the right³.

A pleasing Baroque lyric, which places Hils among those writers called “good writers without salient qualities” by Ezra Pound in his *ABC of Reading*. Such he defines as:

Men who were fortunate enough to be born when the literature of a given country is in good working order, or when some particular branch of writing is “healthy”. For example, men who wrote sonnets in Donne’s time, men who wrote short lyrics in Shakespeare’s time or for several decades thereafter, or men who wrote French novels and stories after Flaubert had shown them how⁴.

This is about all that we can say concerning Hils’ talent. We certainly can’t bring ourselves to agree with the editors of *Casimir Britannicus*, as they continue their paeon with:

They [i.e. Hils’ translations] differ from later renderings as he did not attempt to use the originals to fill them with new meanings or treat them as a point of departure for discourse with the Polish poet⁵.

Rather, we contend the exact opposite. While Hils may be adequate, or even inspired, in his handling of Sarbievius’ innocuous, moralizing odes, not only does he eviscerate the “Polish poet” of his deepest, most pronounced poetic personality by suppressing all odes which hint towards his Catholic faith (and consequent perspective on the world), but more than “seeking discourse” with Sarbiewski by “filling his translations with new meanings”, Hils tosses down an ideological gauntlet by radically skewing the English text at times so that it comes to mean something quite different from what was originally intended.

³ G Hils, *The Odes of Casimire*, ed. Maren-Sofie Roestvig (1646), University of California/The Augustan Reprint Society, Los Angeles 1953. All citations from Hils’ translation refer to this facsimile edition.

⁴ Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading*, New Directions, New York 1960 (1934), p. 39.

⁵ Fordoński and Urbański, pp. 22-23.

Let us begin with some numerical data. The table below presents a side-by-side comparison of the poetic corpus of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, and its presence in the *Odes of Casimire* as translated by G Hils.

WORK	%OF POEMS	%TRANSLATED	%of WORK TRANS- LATED
ODES I	23	3	13%
ODES II	28	7	25%
ODES III	32	3	9%
ODES IV	38	13	34%
TOTAL ODES	121	26	21%
EPODES	20	3	15%
EPIGRAMS	254	6	2%
TOTAL WORKS	395	35	9%

Sarbiewski's odes are collected into four volumes, totaling 121 poems in all. Of these, Hils chose only twenty-six for translation, meaning that he translated only 21% of the available stock. Percentage-wise, Book IV is best represented, with thirteen out of thirty-eight rendered into English (34%), with Book III coming up last with three out of thirty two, i.e. 9% translated. As far as the epodes are concerned, Hils translated three out of twenty, while translating six epigrams out of 254⁶. All together, this gives us thirty-five out of 395 possible poems, meaning that Hils chose to translate only 9% of the entire poetic oeuvre of the Christian Horace — hardly a representative collection.

⁶ This raises the question of what original text was Hils working from. In the case of the odes, as we explain later on, it is obvious that he had the entire canon, in the established order found in Fr. Wall's definitive Mathias Casimirus Sarbiewski, *Poemata omnia*, Collegium S.J., Staraviesiae MCCCXCII. That text is the product of a painstaking *variorum* process, and provides us with an exhaustive collection of all of Sarbiewski's poetic works, complete, incomplete, including even *dubia*, from the first editions through the end of the nineteenth century. Comparing Hils' text with the publication history provided by Walls, it is possible that, while Hils had the complete *Odes* in front of him, and an edition of the epigrams consonant with the established canon at least up to nr. 110, he may not have had a complete edition of the *Epodes*, from which to make his selection. Of the nine editions of Sarbiewski's works available to Hils before 1645, assuming that he was translating from one, and not several, texts, it would seem on the basis of content that he was either using the 1643 Rome edition, or that published in Antwerp in 1632. Both of these texts contain all of the epodes that Hils translated, but not others that he overlooked — allowing at least the possibility of his not knowing of their existence. Again, the same cannot be said of the odes themselves, or the first half (at least) of the epigrams, all of which were available to him.

The reason we are mentioning this should be obvious. The selection of poems to be translated is no less a creative act than translation itself. What does a particular translator choose to translate, and what to leave out? The matter is all the more pressing when we consider such a slim representation of an author's works as Hils presents us with. If we were to bring over Shakespeare into another language, and were to include *Hamlet*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Henry V* and *The Tempest*, we would be giving our reader a better, if attenuated, idea of who the Bard of Avon was, of his range of interest and creativity, than a translation including only *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *The Winter's Tale*. And would the redactor of that second volume have the temerity to bestow upon his product the deceptively inclusive title *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*?

Yet that is just what Hils is doing with his *Odes of Casimire*. A glance at what Hils left out of his work proves that his view of who Sarbiewski was — the view he imposes upon his readers — is that of a harmless bucolic sage spouting classical platitudes; a modern-day Horace reclining by his own Fons Bandusiae.

Before we proceed, we must point out that, as far as the Latin odes are concerned, Hils was working from a complete text of the four volumes. This is proven by the numbering of the odes selected, which corresponds perfectly to the order of the accepted Sarbiewski canon. No excuse, therefore, such as exclusion based on ignorance of a given poem's existence, is possible. Thus, of the ninety-five odes not chosen for translation we find a preponderance of poems with specifically Catholic themes. Seventeen of them are either addressed to, or written in praise of, Catholic hierarchs, ecclesial as well as secular. Most frequent among these are Pope Urban VIII (who patronized Sarbiewski and crowned him poet laureate), his nephew Francesco Cardinal Barberini, and two Polish bishops, Stanisław Łubiński of Płock and Eustachy Wołłowicz, of Vilnius. None of these gentlemen would enjoy much of an heroic aura in a Protestant nation such as seventeenth-century England, nor would the most commonly mentioned secular addressee, the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II, devout Catholic and devoted counter-reformer, who suppressed Protestantism in Bohemia and waged tireless battles against the Protestant camp during the Thirty Years' War.

Catholic saints are the topic of twelve overlooked poems. These include St. Elizabeth of Portugal (canonized by Urban VIII), St. Mary Magdalen, and the Polish Jesuit St. Stanisław Kostka, but the majority of these hagiographic verses are dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary — anathema for most Protestants. Six verses with a Jesuit theme are excluded, as is IV:17, a Catholic devotional verse with the Child Jesus as its subject. A full thirteen hortatory verses, in which Sarbievius appeals to the knights and nobles of Poland and Europe in general to renew their crusading zeal to win back the Holy Places of the Middle East, or the Christian

territories of Constantinople and Greece lost to the Islamic forces, are similarly suppressed.

To this number might be added others, such as IV:27, “Noë vaticinium”, possibly passed over as in it Noah prophesies religious strife and castigates Protestant iconoclasm; another such verse might be IV:9, “Ad Romam, eam bonarum artium nutricem esse”, perhaps too kindly disposed toward the eternal city of the Popes.

While some of the odes passed over by Hils have general, rather neutral subject matter, such as the series III:21-23⁷, which deal with moral platitudes found elsewhere among the translated verse, the fact that *no* Catholic verse written by Sarbiewski is included in Hils’ slim, if elegant, volume argues strongly for their exclusion having its basis in religious, ideological grounds⁸.

So much for what he left out — for the nonce. Turning to what he brought in, we find that, in most cases, the Latin original with which Hils faces his English translations agree in the main with their appearance in the Sarbievian canon. His punctuation may differ⁹, as may his spelling¹⁰, but these minor discrepancies, along with variations in capitalization and enjambment, and even typographical errors¹¹, are no great matter. Much more significant is Hils’ decision to wrench an original verse loose from its original meaning so as to make it more consonant with his own, the translator’s, culture and world-view. We find a blatant example of this strategy at the very beginning of Hils’ collection. His translation of Ode 1 of Book 1, celebrating the withdrawal of Turkish forces from east-central Europe, is entitled “When the hatefull forces of the Thracians departed out of Pannonia”. This is a very proper translation of that part of the original Latin title, given by Hils on the facing page: *Cum infestae Thracum copiae Pannonia excessissent*. The only problem is that this is only half of the title. Hils actually presents us with only the subtitle of the original poem, which reads in full: *Ad Urbanem VIII. Pontificem Maximum, cum infestae Thracum copiae Pannonia excessissent*.

⁷ *Ad principem quemdam ad thermas proficiscentem jucundam et honestam vitam fructuosae et anxiae esse praeponendam; Ad Caesarem Pausilipium Ne nimium adolescentiae fidet; Ad Julium Arminum solis animi bonis nos belluis praestare.*

⁸ Hils does not completely eschew Sarbiewski’s specifically Christian odes. Those that he does choose for inclusion, however, are such as have a scriptural basis, and thus are descriptive of persons or events that a Protestant would have little problem in acknowledging. Such are, for example, Sarbiewski’s meditations on the Song of Songs (cf. II:19, 25) or II:24, “Dirae in Herodem”.

⁹ Such as in lines 2 and 5 of I:13, where question marks are replaced with colons.

¹⁰ He constantly lengthens the final syllable of accusative plurals into a diphthong. For example, in his edition of II:2, “Vitae humanae brevitatem benefactis extendam esse,” *valles* in line 1 is lengthened to *valleis*, and *montes* in line 2 to *monteis*. Yet such variations play no significant role in the construction of meaning, and are to be found in other editions of Sarbiewski’s works as well — to mention just the Dijon edition of 1647.

¹¹ Such as *Balthiri* for *Balthici* in line 30 of IV:32.

This willful suppression of the identity of the addressee of the poem — Urban VIII, Pontifex Maximus — raises questions much more serious than the redactional choices we mention above. It is one thing to choose not to bring into one's collection verses which one finds, for some reason or other, distasteful or objectionable. It is quite another, to present an original poem in a disfigured, mutilated form, as Hils does here. That is nothing less than intellectual dishonesty, the falsification of an historical document, in order to deceive the unwary reader into thinking that one's manner of presenting the poem in English is a mirroring of its form in the Latin. The translator is not merely engaging in dynamic transfer, here, which is his prerogative as a translator. Rather, he is disfiguring the original, making Sarbiewski say what he would have him say. He is, ironically, translating backwards, pulling the original in line with his translation, rather than the other, logical and expected, way round.

This suppression of the title seems to be unique to Hils¹². Other editions of the Latin original offer a different version of the title, but in those cases, the Papal significance is augmented, not diminished: *Describit bona, quae summum Urbani VIII. pontificatum universo orbi commendatura sunt*¹³. And such an augmentation is more than justified by Sarbiewski's address to the Pope in stanza ten of the ode, which reads:

Te Ceres flavis redimita culmis,
Magne pacati Moderator orbis,
Te suis Aestas opulenta circum-
fundit aristis.

(41-44)

¹² He does the same thing in at least two other places. The title of Epode III, in the original and accepted Latin editions, reads: *Laus otii religiosi. Palinodia ad Horatii Epod. II. "Beatus ille qui procul negotiis." Cum amoenam collegii Societatis Jesu Vilnensis Nemecinae villam per Sextiles ferias inviseret.* Hils' titles, in Latin and English, read: *Palinodia. Ad secundam libri Epodon Odam Qu. Horatii Flacci. Laus otii Religiosi. Ode 3. Lib. Epod.*; "A Palinode To the second Ode of the booke of Epodes of Q. H. Flaccus. The praise of a Religious Recreation. Ode 3. Lib. Epod." Hils inverts the title in both Latin and English, and omits, not surprisingly, the attribution in time and place to the Jesuit college and its academic calendar. Likewise, Ode 19 of Book IV reads in the original Latin *Ad Jesum Opt. Max. Ex sacro Salomonis Epithalamio. Indica mihi, quem diligit anima mea, ubi pascas, ubi cubes in meridie.* (Cant. I. 6). Hils gives this correctly in his text, with the exception merely of a missing comma. Still, his English title reads: "Out of Solomon's sacred Marriage Song. Chap. 1.7. Tell me (o thou whom my soule loveth) where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noone, etc." Why he should object to the adscription to Jesus Optimus Maxiumus is anyone's guess. Mine would be that it has too Catholic a ring to it.

¹³ See: "Loci variantes", Wall, p. 541.

“Great governor of the pacified world”, so Sarbiewski addresses Urban. In Hils’ edition of these lines, we read:

*Ceres with yellow Chaplet, and
The Summer rich with eares doth stand,
Great Prince of our appeased Land,
Thee to encompass round.*

Whether or not Urban deserved the title bestowed upon him by Sarbiewski, it is clear that the poet intended to laud him as something more than the prince of a narrow strip of the European continent between the Tatras and Balkans. “Great governor of the pacified world”, hyperbole or not, suits well the world-reaching, international sway, theoretical and real, of the Vicar of Christ. By rendering this “Prince of our appeased Land”, Hils is misdirecting the reader’s attention away from the Pope and insinuating, falsely, that Sarbiewski’s address is to a temporal prince, the ruler of a nation, to whom the poet himself is subject.

The very interesting thing about this sleight of hand is that, technically speaking, Hils is not mistranslating. The Latin original reads *Magne pacati Moderator orbis*. *Orbis*, the word in question, has a wide application. Its meanings stretch from anything round, like a circle or a dish, to the universe itself. Its use as “land” or “country”, Hils’ use, is found in classical authors like Cicero, Virgil and Livy. Still, the patriotic meaning of the term, so to speak, is secondary to its usual, grandiose usage. What is more, the Polish king — if the reader is able to get past the first Chinese box set out for him by Hils and correctly identify the poet’s homeland, which is not the Pannonia of the title, Zygmunt III — played no role in the historical event described in the poem. Sarbiewski is most likely referring to the stalemated Battle of Chocim, which took place in the early Autumn of 1621. There, Polish troops and their allies stopped the advance of Osman II, who had designs on invading the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth following his victory at Cecora in 1620; the peace imposed after Chocim was to last until 1633. The only possible “noble” name associated with this battle is that of hetman Jan Karol Chodkiewicz. This successful general, patron of the Jesuits in Lithuania and addressee of more than one panegyric from the pen of Sarbiewski, while certainly a hero, cannot be termed a prince, whether in the practical sense of the term as a viable pretender to the throne, or in its metaphoric sense in seventeenth-century English usage, in which “prince” often stands for “monarch”.

What is more, this slim possibility is cancelled out by the final stanzas of the ode, in which the poet locates his addressee firmly in Rome:

*Quaeque formosus sedet inter ignes,
Sedulam pro Te miserata Romam
Virgo, quam circum glomerantur albis*

Astra choreis,

Curet effusas Latii querelas :
Virginum castas juvenumque voces
Curet, et votis procerum reclinem ac
Commodet aurem.

(57-60)

Two things are to be noted in these Latin stanzas. First, now that peace has been secured in Pannonia, the poet expresses a pious wish that she who has cure over Rome might smooth over the troubles menacing, or already erupted, in that part of the world particularly associated with its addressee: Latium, i.e. Italy. Second, the prayer, which the poet earlier raised to God on high:

Siderum praeses, dominusque terrae
Lucida Romam speculatus arce,
Regna tranquillet, cupidoque Patrem
Te velit orbi.

(41-52),

is made through the intercession of a virgin mediatrix who can only be identified as the Virgin Mary. What was Hils to do here? What else but ignore the term *Virgo* completely, and replace those specific geographical terms with the misleading “our country”:

May shee amidst those glorious fires,
For thy sake, pitying our desires,
'Bout whom the beauteous stars in quires,
And flowing measures swim;

May shee, I say, our Country's grieffe
Cure, and the chaste complaints relieve
Of all our youth, and willing eares
Apply to th' praiers of all our Peeres.

Now, given the long-standing Christian tradition, which stretches from intimations in the Apocalypse through the concrete images in Dante's *Paradiso*, of picturing the Virgin Mary as a woman surrounded by choiring stars¹⁴, we might soft-pedal our criticism here and assume that the British reader of the time might well make the proper identification, even in Hils' work. There is no earlier referent to the pronoun she — unless we picture her as one of the Fates to whom the poet

¹⁴ See: Apocalypse 12:1; Dante's description of the Empyrean, where the Virgin Mary is seated in the midst of the celestial Rose and choirs of angels and saints surround her, flashing like a hive of bees made of light, begins in Canto XXX of the *Paradiso*.

directs a wish several lines earlier¹⁵. But, try as we may to wriggle around the transformation of Latium to Poland or Pannonia, there is really no other way of speaking of Hils' choice here, save conscious, confessional-based falsification of the original image. This is clearly seen, too, in his re-working of lines 49-52 quoted above. Where Sarbiewski has God gazing down from His tower upon Rome, this all-too-blattant sign of divine concern for what many in England considered Babylon, entices the translator to misguide his readers with:

Hee that o're Stars and earth hath powre,
Beholding us, from his bright Towre,
Calms all, and sets thee father o're
The covetous world below.

As can be seen, Hils can't quite overcome clumsiness in his misdirection. In the last line of this stanza, he slips into an attribution of far more than a single land to the governance of whomever he is addressing. Still, for him the general term "world", which is bland enough to admit of as many meanings as *orbis*, like the nebulous first person plural in line 50, is a world of comfort better than the particular effluence of divine Grace upon the Papal city, so clearly marked in the original, "unacceptable" Latin¹⁶.

Nothing, however, tops the transformation that occurs in Hils' translation of Epigram XLVIII. This one of twenty-four short poetic meditations on the life of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, the relatively contemporary Jesuit saint¹⁷, reads thus in the accepted Latin original version:

Lilia manu praeferat Aloysius

Haec, quae virgineis nituntur lilia culmis,
Unde verecundas explicuere comas?
Non generant similes Paestana rosaria flores,
Nec simile Pharius messe superbit ager:
Non haec purpureis mater Corcyra viretis,

¹⁵ Cf. 53-56: *Laurus annosum Tibi signet aevum: / Fata Te norint, properentque Parcae / Nescium carpi Tibi destinatos / Stamen in annos.*

¹⁶ Again, this is a tendency, rather than an exceptional slip. Hils' panicky fear of the word "Rome" seems to have been so great, that he excises it from his translation of the title of Epode II, where it is used merely as a geographical marker. The Latin title reads: *Ode II. Ad fontem Sonam. In patrio fundo, dum Roma rediisset.* Hils gives the Latin correctly, in this instance, but unwilling to corrupt the eyes of those dependent on his English version, he records the title there as "To the Fountaine Sona, When hee returned," leaving it up to our imagination, where he was returning from.

¹⁷ Student of St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Aloysius was born in 1568 and died in 1591, aged 23. He was beatified by Urban VIII's predecessor Gregory XV in 1621 and canonized a saint by Benedict XIII in 1726.

Nec parit aequoreis pulsa Carystos aquis.
 Cum nullas habeant natales lilia terras,
 Quis neget, e casta lilia nata manu?

There was only one way for Hils to get around the taboo subject of a Catholic saint, and a Jesuit to boot, once he had, for whatever obscure reason, chosen to translate this poem out of the two hundred forty-five he could have selected: by ignoring the poet's original intent completely. His version is entitled: *To — bearing Lillyes in her hand*, and it reads:

These Lillyes which on virgin stalks doe bend,
 From whence do they their chaster leaves extend?
 The *Paestan* beds such flowres did ne're bring forth,
 Nor *Pharian* fields e're gloried in such worth:
Alcinous purple banks, ne're teem'd with these,
 Nor rich *Carystos* watered by the Seas.
 Since then these flow'ers no native place do know,
 Who can deny from her chast hand they grow.

(To — bearing Lillyes in her hand)

And thus, from a spiritual meditation on the heroic virtue of a male consecrated life, imitating in visible attribute St. Joseph, we have something approaching a sonnet of courtesy. Hils' version may be read equally well as a lover's paean to the purity of his beloved as an encomium to female consecrated chastity — though with the Protestant aversion to the cloistering of women, this would itself seem odd — but there is no mistaking the fact that the unhinging of the original meaning was undertaken to mask the Catholic, hagiographical envoi — the only possible meaning of the original as the male poet sings the praises of another male.

In order to carry out his strategy of misdirection, Hils had to contaminate the English translation with a gender marker. In line eight, he misidentifies the subject of his poem as a woman by declaring that the lilies grow from "her" chaste hand; whereas due to the manner in which the Latin poem is written there are no gender-marking pronouns descriptive of the person praised, whether masculine or feminine. One might say, as Luther defended his insertion of *allein* into the text of Romans 3:28, that the grammar of the receptor language demands a gender marker here. If this is true, then, in accord with the commonly accepted translatorial imperative of faithfulness to the original, Hils could only have chosen the masculine marker — *his* chaste hand. His conscious decision to introduce the feminine here is a dishonest misleading of the reader.

It gets worse.

Whereas in the above-cited translation of Ode I:1 Hils suppressed the Papal identity of the dedicatee by excising that portion of the title identifying Urban VIII, here he goes further: he boldly mutilates the title, changing it from *Lilia manu praeferit Aloysius* to “—— *Lilia manu praeferenti*”. This is a slick Latin handsaw, taking advantage of the dative singular of the present active participle, the form of which is identical for masculine and feminine subjects. Nonetheless, it is an inexcusable and unwarranted invasion of another person’s copyright, and a violent abuse of the reader’s trust. As a final insult, by transforming the neutral, simply descriptive original Latin title of Sarbiewski’s verse into a dative construction, Hils makes of Sarbiewski’s poem a love-letter of sorts to a female addressee, who never, as we have seen, even existed. We wonder if the shade of the Jesuit priest had a sense of humor and chuckled at his phantom betrothal at the hands of his sly literary matchmaker!

We have admittedly been pretty hard on George Hils in our assessment of his translations of Sarbiewski. Coming to the end of our discussion, it might be wise to step back from the product of his pen, and consider what it was that induced him to his drastic suppression of the Catholic elements of the Jesuit poet’s odes and epigrams, elements so central to the identity of the Latin poet he cared about enough to imitate¹⁸.

First of all, we must remember that Hils was working within the constraints of a governmental system, and an established church, neither of which were particularly concerned with the free-speech rights of dissidents. At the very end of his book, we see that the *imprimatur* was received on February 10, 1645, from a certain “Na. Brent”. Although we are still nominally in the reign of Charles I, and Archbishop Laud’s protégé, William Juxon, was still to head the Diocese of London for four more years, the licenser in question, Nathaniel Brent, was no sympathizer of Catholicism or the Catholicizing tendencies of the latter Stuarts and Laud. As a matter of fact, Brent, as former warden of Merton College, was to testify against Laud at the latter’s trial, swearing to the Archbishop’s nefarious meetings with Catholics¹⁹. Is it possible that such a man would have passed a translation with

¹⁸ Not all of Sarbiewski’s seventeenth-century English translators were so fastidious about his Catholic content. The most unabashedly honest versions of his Catholic-themed odes is to be found in the *Miscellany Poems and Translations by Oxford Hands* brought out in the university city by Anthony Stephens in 1685. For more information on this, and other seventeenth-eighteenth century English translations of Sarbiewski, see: Kraszewski Charles, *Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski — the Christian Horace in England*, “The Polish Review”, LI: 2006, vol. 1, p. 15-40.

¹⁹ With the Printing Ordinance of June, 1643, Parliament took dynamic control of the press and publishing community in London in a manner that, Michael Mendle suggests, dwarfed even Laud’s attempts at controlling the printed word. Brent was one of the more famous and active “licensors” of the time, having lived in London from 1642 after abandoning Oxford, notorious at the time for its royalist sympathies. Before going over to the Parliamentarian side, Brent (1573-1652) had been commissary of the diocese of Canterbury and vicar-general to Archbishop Laud. He was deposed from his position at

strong Catholic overtones, of originals written by a Jesuit priest no less, from the shop of the royalist sympathizer Humphrey Moseley, no friend of the Puritans himself due to his association with the theater? It seems hardly likely. We therefore stand before the following question: Granted, G Hils' *Odes of Casimire* constitutes an indisputably diluted English presentation of the original Latin works. By a careful selection of only innocuous verses for translation, the intentional mistranslation of Catholic terms and references, and finally the mutilation of the original Latin texts printed alongside his works, Hils transforms the character of the Jesuit poet beyond recognition. Did he do this on his own, because of his own religious sympathies? Was he perhaps pressured into doing so, by Brent, Moseley, or others unknown, who convinced him that only in such a bowdlerized version could Sarbiewski appear on the streets of parliamentary London? If the latter is the case, perhaps we should not cry down Hils as a villain, but consider his *Odes*, rather, as an act of heroism, which salvaged for the British reader as much of the Christian Horace as was at the time possible²⁰?

Questions like this touch upon sensitive issues such as the rights of free speech vs. the oversight and suppression of texts deemed dangerous to the public order, translatorial ethics, and the compromising of the same for the sake of appearing in print. These questions were easier to answer — if not satisfactorily, according to our lights — in seventeenth century Britain, than they are today. One might even suggest that, back then, they didn't exist. However, Hils' misleading translations of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski are still relevant in our own academic context. They exemplify perfectly the danger well known to comparatists, presented to researchers working with foreign authors whom they are unable to read in the original; they call into question the advisability and efficacy of using translations in the classroom without an adequate exegetical ability on the part of the instructor, familiar with the works in the original and able to clarify obscure and even misleading passages introduced by the translations. While it goes without saying that translations are indispensable in our classrooms, and in our societies in general,

Merton in January of 1645 — the same month of Laud's judicial murder at the hands of Parliament — for having abandoned his Oxford post for three years running. For more information on licensers and the regulation of the press during Brent's lifetime. see: Mendle M., *Grub Street and Parliament at the Beginning of the English Revolution* [in:] *Media and Revolution*, ed. by Jeremy D. Popkin, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington 1995, pp. 31-47.

²⁰ Thanks to the patient research of Fordoński and Urbański, who have unearthed so much English Sarbieviana in print and manuscript, it seems that only the print versions of the *Odes of Casimire* have survived to our day. Without access to Hils' working drafts, we have no way of knowing what his original approach to the poems was — Did he prepare translations of other poems not included in the work? Did he first translate the works “honestly”, only to introduce the confessional variations later, under the pressure of a third party? If so, when did he knuckle under to the demands of censorship? Without such manuscripts, we are forced to focus on the final print version of the *Odes*, and Hils' own “*imprimatur*” expressing his approval of the final, bowdlerized, version of his work.

Hils' translations clearly demonstrate just how dependent we are on the translator's work, and how grave a responsibility the translator takes upon himself when he takes pen in hand. Each time we read a translation, we express the same implicit faith in another's honesty and ability as we do when we board an airplane. In both cases, not only do we trust in the pilot's ability to successfully handle the machinery at his fingertips, but we have faith in his ability to safely and honestly deliver us to our desired destination. And in both cases, we are equally, helplessly, completely, at his mercy.

Summary / Abstract

Comparative / explicative analysis of G Hil's English translations of the Latin poems of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (Sarbievius). The thesis of the article is as follows: Sarbiewski (Sarbievius), a Jesuit priest and neo-Latin poet, was arguably the most visible and influential neo-Latin poet of Baroque Europe. Widely published throughout Europe, he was also translated into many vulgar tongues, including English. The one published translation into English which takes most account of the widest range of Sarbiewski's work is *Odes of Casimir* by G Hils. Given the anti-Catholic animus obtaining in England at the time, it is striking that the works of a Jesuit priest could pass the government imprimatur. The article proves that, in order to do this, Hils resorted not only to completely masking the Catholic, not to say Jesuit, character of the author (palpable in the poems themselves), but also masking his traces by, in some instances, revising the Latin originals printed side by side with the translations. In so doing, Hils not only shows himself to be a cavalier translator, he shows himself to be a dishonest editor who does violence to another author's intellectual property. The author of the article used a comparative method (comparing the translations to the originals) as well as *explications de texte* (close readings) of both the original Latin, and translated English, poems. Main results: A cogent comparison of translations based on concrete examples, which also has ramifications for the ethics of translation in general. The results are limited to one translator. It would be interesting to see if such "masking" of the author was carried out on a wider scale in Baroque Britain. Practical implications of the article. The results of the analysis can be applied to practical didactics: i.e. the teaching of British literature, Polish literature, neo-Latin literature or literature in general; they also might lie in the area of translation theory, cultural transfer, and the ethics of translation/interpretation. Social implications of the article: The rights (or lack thereof) of translators to heavily skew the texts they are interested in, so as to make their work more acceptable to the powers that be, or more reflective of their own concerns and beliefs. The novelty of the article resides in the fact that until now no one has conducted a thorough evaluation of Hils' work.

Up until now, their “quality” has been unquestioned; this article proves just how faulty they are.

Key words

Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595-1640), Matthias Casimirus Sarbievius (1595-1640), Motiejus Kazimieras Sarbievijus (1595-1640), Casimir Britannicus (1595-1640), Mathias Casimirus Sarbiewski (1595-1640), Sarbievius (1595-1640), Casimir (1595-1640), Baroque poetry, Catholic poetry, Jesuit poetry, Hils George (17th century), Translation Theory, Baroque, Poland, Baroque England

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