

Introduction

Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski

The name of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, in Latin Matthias Casimir Sarbievius, once so famous that the poet was recognisable throughout Europe by his middle name alone (i.e. Casimir or Casimire), means very little to contemporary readers either in Poland or abroad. Even university students of Polish literature may not be familiar with it unless they show an extraordinary interest in Baroque poetry and poetics. And yet among Polish writers Sarbiewski was one of the first to enjoy a truly international fame which did last for over two centuries. His popularity abroad cannot be compared to that of any other Polish author before the twentieth century. He was justly considered one of the greatest Latin poets of his time.

This single adjective 'Latin' explains his disappearance from contemporary histories of Polish literature. Sarbiewski wrote no poems in Polish that we know of, only a single sermon has survived from his Polish works, and it is doubtful that he wrote any poetry in his native language at all. He belonged to the European movement which started at the beginning of the Renaissance – Neo-Latin poetry. Humanists all over the continent attempted to revive the language of the ancient Romans, not only as a means of scholarly and scientific communication, but also as the language of literary creation. In the sixteenth and the seventeenth as well as the early eighteenth century Latin was a medium of expression used not only for such works as More's *Utopia* or Copernicus' *De revolutionibus*, but also for the composition of original works of poetry and drama.

Although it did not take long for literatures in national languages to develop, Neo-Latin literature remained quite lively until the beginning of the eighteenth century when French became the language of the educated European elites.

Poland alone could boast a number of internationally recognized Neo-Latin poets such as Klemens Janicki (Clementius Ianicius), Szymon Szymonowic (Simon Simonides), and Jan Kochanowski (Ioannes Cochanovius). Sarbiewski, however, was by far the most famous.

This outstanding Neo-Latin poet and theorist of literature was born in 1595 in Sarbiewo, a village in the central Mazowsze province. The Jesuits from the college in nearby Pułtusk, where he was sent as a twelve year old boy, soon recognised his extraordinary talents; at the age of seventeen he became a novice. He was sent first to continue his education in Vilnius and later to Braniewo in Pomerania where he studied philosophy at the Collegium Hosianum. When he completed his course of studies, Sarbiewski taught poetics and rhetoric at Jesuit colleges, starting in Kroża (now Kraziai in Lithuania), in Samogitia, then going on to Polotsk (now in Belarus). This was also the period of his first literary attempts; his debut, a Latin laudatory poem dedicated to Jan Karol Chodkiewicz, was published in 1619. In 1620 he began further studies in philosophy at the Vilnius Academy which he continued at the Collegium Germanicum in Rome from 1622 to 1624.

The time spent in Rome was extremely important for Sarbiewski's literary career. Although his fellow Jesuits had recognized his literary talents, they found him most useful as a teacher, not a poet. Their order's main task at the time was to combat the Reformation and their tool in the fight was education. Away from his teaching duties Sarbiewski had an opportunity not only to study and write, but also to get to know personally scientists, scholars, and men of letters who gathered at the court of Pope Urban VIII. Many such contacts survived long after his return to Poland. It was also in Rome that he met the Polish Crown Prince Vladislas Vasa. Sarbiewski's talents were recognized by the literary Pope Urban VIII himself who awarded the young Polish poet a poetic laurel and gold medal in 1625. In the same year a large collection of his poems was published in Cologne, Germany.

The awards came in the last months of Sarbiewski's stay in Rome. It is not known why he was forced to return to

Poland. Some sources claim that he had enemies at the papal court who hastened his departure. It is much more probable, however, that the Jesuits needed him back in Poland to continue his educational work. Sarbiewski returned from Rome in 1625 and he was almost immediately sent again to teach in Polotsk where he worked for three more years. In 1628 he was transferred to the Vilnius Academy where he lectured in rhetoric, philosophy, and theology. In this academy, he acquired his doctor's degrees in philosophy in 1632 and theology in 1636.

It was during his stay in Vilnius that an enlarged collection of lyrics composed in Rome was published, first locally, under his supervision (1628), and then in Antwerp (1630) and Leiden (1631). In 1632 a new edition of *Lyricorum libri IV* was published once again in Antwerp, this time with the title-page designed by Peter Paul Rubens. The volume soon sold out and was reissued in 1634 in an impressive print-run of five thousand copies. Sarbiewski lived in Vilnius until 1635; in 1633 he was made the Dean of the Philosophy and Theology Department at the Jesuit Academy there.

He was ordained a priest in 1623, and took his last holy orders in 1629 in Vilnius. In 1635, the former Crown Prince Vladislas, now King Vladislas IV Vasa, who apparently had not forgotten their meeting in Rome, summoned Sarbiewski to Warsaw to appoint him court preacher, the post once held by a fellow Jesuit Piotr Skarga (1536–1612). The new job turned out even more arduous than teaching duties, not only because it required preaching daily. As the king was a keen huntsman, Sarbiewski was forced to spend weeks on end with him on hunting expeditions. In March 1640 Sarbiewski resigned from his post. He died suddenly in April 1640 in Warsaw.

Author of over 130 odes (collected in four books like the odes of Horace) and 145 epigrams, Sarbiewski also wrote an epic poem *Lechias*, an imitation of *Jerusalem Delivered* by Torquato Tasso. It was never published and only a fragment of the eleventh book has survived. For over a century he was credited with writing *Silviludia*, a court masque for the King, but the text was ultimately discovered to be merely a free adaptation of a Neo-Latin work of Mario Bettini.

The odes of Sarbiewski, characterised by erudition and a deep understanding of poetry, especially ancient poetry, bear the mark and influence of Horace. Many are paraphrases or parodies, as they were called then, of Horace's poems. Some of his contemporaries claimed that Sarbiewski not only equalled but surpassed Horace in his poetry and he was known in his lifetime as the Christian or Sarmatian Horace, as the famous Dutch humanist Hugo Grotius called him in 1625. In his epigrams Sarbiewski follows Martial in his art of conciseness, concepts, and punch-lines.

Sarbiewski was also the author of several works in literary theory, such as *Praecepta poetica* and *De perfecta poesi sive Vergilius et Homerus*, none of which, however, was published before the middle of the twentieth century. A treatise which deals with basic concepts of Baroque poetics was entitled *De acuto et arguto [...] sive Seneca et Martialis*. Originally written in Polotsk, it was first presented in Rome in 1623 as a lecture and later corrected by the author. Another treatise, *De perfecta poesi sive Vergilius et Homerus*, addresses the issues of the epic. Sarbiewski also left an unpublished mythographical treatise *Dii gentium*.

Sarbiewski in England

It may seem strange when we bear in mind the popularity that Sarbiewski enjoyed throughout Europe (we know of at least sixty Latin editions of his lyrics, of which fifteen were prepared in Poland) that the number of available translations into modern languages is far from impressive. In his native Poland Sarbiewski was only occasionally translated by such of his contemporaries as Jan Andrzej Morsztyn or Samuel Twardowski. His fellow Jesuit Franciszek Bohomolec edited in 1767 a small collection of existing Polish translations by over ten different poets. The first complete edition of Sarbiewski's lyrics in rather inaccurate Polish renderings by Władysław Syrokomla appeared in 1852. A more critically acclaimed edition prepared by Tadeusz Karyłowski in the late 1920s was published as late as 1980. A selection of the

most recent Polish translations by Elwira Buszewicz appeared in 2003, a more complete edition is still in progress. Many poems were also translated into numerous European languages such as Italian, Flemish, Lithuanian, French, Czech, and German.

The mystery is not difficult to solve. As long as his fame lasted, Sarbiewski was popular among the educated elite who knew Latin and did not need translations to access his works. Furthermore, the conciseness of his poetry makes it rather difficult to render both its form and content in translation. The gradual disappearance of Latin as the common European language coincided with a change of literary tastes as new generations of readers were not interested in Baroque poetry or Neo-Stoicism any more. What made Sarbiewski a poet known and recognized by the European cultural community of the seventeenth and eighteenth century - the choice of Latin, the universal language - brought him lack of recognition in later times.

The country where Sarbiewski enjoyed the greatest popularity outside his native Poland, as measured by the number of known translations, was, rather surprisingly, England. Sarbiewski, a Jesuit priest, might have seemed there a much more appropriate candidate for an arch-enemy than for a revered master of poetics. Nevertheless, he enjoyed a long-lasting popularity there for three reasons. The first was his fascination with Horace's poetry which was quickly taken over from him by the English poets of the early seventeenth century, replacing an earlier interest in poetry fashioned after Pindar. The second was that his poetry became widely known through being introduced into the grammar school curriculum, where it was read and translated. Last but not least, Sarbiewski's poetry was for the English a means of getting acquainted with contemporary intellectual fashions of the Continent. It was attractive because it was saturated with influences from a variety of different circles of cultural traditions (Stoicism, Ignatian spirituality, Platonism, Hermeticism, etc.). Some of these traditions could have been used to contest the official culture as happened, for example, in the case of the Dissenters and Nonconformists.

Quite obviously, these influences could at least to some degree be accepted without the existence of translations. Although the Church of England was separated from Rome during the reign of King Henry VIII and no longer used Latin as its language of liturgy, fascination with antiquity and interest in the Latin language and literature did not entirely disappear in Great Britain. Quite the contrary, Latin remained an important part of school curricula until the second half of the nineteenth century. There seemed, consequently, little actual necessity for preparing and publishing translations. There was, however, a longstanding tradition of using translation of Latin poetry as a means of teaching the language. Some of the surviving English translations of Sarbiewski's poems were probably the result of such exercises. We must not, however, suppose that all the translations that we know are merely student linguistic exercises.

It was not always the case that a fascination with Sarbiewski's lyrics resulted in translations or imitations, especially in Latin. In many instances poets such as the Neo-Latin author Anthony Alsop 'knew Sarbievius but did not choose to follow him closely' (Money 1998: 12). The list of poets in whose works influences of the Polish Jesuit can be traced is quite impressive and includes such authors as Joseph Addison and Dr. Samuel Johnson. We can find references to Sarbiewski in the poems or studies of George Daniel of Berwick, Isaac Watts, Samuel Taylor Coleridge or the last major English Neo-Latin poet, Walter Savage Landor.

Although lasting for over two hundred years, the interest of the English in Sarbiewski's poetry was by no means a fixed part of the literary landscape. It was more likely a recurrent theme. Sarbiewski would become fashionable again and again whenever his poetry responded to some needs of English poets and readers or when it could be used for some purpose of theirs. We can indicate six such waves of popularity.

The first wave of interest appeared almost immediately after Sarbiewski's death when his poetry became fashionable among the Royalists. On the one hand numerous of his odes

are saturated with the spirit of Neo-Stoicism, very fashionable at that time. On the other hand his works in translation could be used to express Royalists sentiments in disguise, the translators felt free to choose original poems which suited their intentions and alter the original content. The first to employ Sarbiewski for the purpose was most probably Richard Lovelace who translated one of his odes as an expression of grief after his brother's death in a battle. Two poems by Sir John Denham and John Hall from the volume *Lachrymae Musarum* (1649), allegedly intended as mourning the late Lord Hastings but actually commemorating the execution of Charles I, also belong to this group. The most impressive testimony of the fashion is the first edition of Sarbiewski's poems in English translation which appeared in 1646. It was also the first published collection of translations of his works in the world. The edition of thirty-five poems was signed simply 'G.H.', but the dedication gives a more complete name of George Hills.

The second wave of interest in Sarbiewski's poetry appeared a quarter of a century later in the Restoration period and ended before the 17th century was over, leaving behind approximately eleven translations. John Norris was probably the most famous of the translators acting in the period although their number is large and includes Lucy Hutchinson, Lady Mary Chatwin, Thomas Brown and the anonymous group of translators of the volume *Poems by Oxford Hands* (1685).

The third wave of interest originated among the Dissenters in the early years of the 18th century. The most numerous and interesting translations in the period are those of the dissenting minister and hymn writer Isaac Watts for whom Sarbiewski was 'the noblest Latin Poet of modern ages'. It is truly striking that Watts, famous as the author of religious hymns and spiritual songs, used Sarbiewski's poems as material for his works. Nonconformists who translated or imitated Sarbiewski included other preachers such as Samuel Say and Watts' disciple and biographer Thomas Gibbons together with Anne Steele, a religious poet of some stature known under her pseudonym Theodosia, and Robert Proud, an American Quaker. However,

Nonconformists by no means had a monopoly on translations of his works. Successful clergymen in the Church of England such as William Mason, James Hervey, and Thomas Yalden, also translated his poems in the period.

The fourth group which overlaps the former chronologically are (mostly minor) Augustan poets whose interest in Sarbiewski starts in the second quarter of the 18th century. We do not find here any memorable names although opera lovers may recognize that of Aaron Hill. This period was characterized by the increasing popularity of magazines and several translations appeared in the magazines of the period such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* and *The London Magazine*.

The fifth wave of Sarbiewski's popularity seems to have been prompted by a reprint of the Barbou edition (the first in 1759 and the second in 1791, both in Paris) of his poems, copies of which arrived in Great Britain with the French émigrés in the early 1790s. We witness the sudden appearance of seventeen translations between 1794 and 1796 alone, approximately one in ten of all we know. Coleridge explicitly presents the Barbou edition as his source. This wave seems to foretell the arrival of Romanticism, as could be guessed from the participation of Coleridge, but actually ends before the beginning of the new literary period and inasmuch as we can talk of translations of Sarbiewski produced in the Romantic period, only two or three poems can be described as Romantic translations.

The sixth wave spans the first half of the 19th century and includes mostly late Romantic and early Victorian curiosity seekers. Their interest in Sarbiewski has little to do with fascination with his poetry or sharing his views. For most of the representatives of this group Sarbiewski is no longer an important presence, a poet speaking on current topics. He is treated rather as an interesting but quite ancient exhibit, his works worthy of inclusion e.g. as an illustration in a collection of Polish (Bowring), Latin (Kitchener, Crosse), or Jesuit (Mahony) poetry or simply in a collection of translations (de Crespigny). It is quite telling that Caroline de Crespigny could not translate Sarbiewski's poems from

the originals and apparently mistook the poet for a more famous Pole, King John III Sobieski.

Naturally, this division is not fully exclusive. In every period we can find authors who were drawn to Sarbiewski regardless of or even against the contemporary fashion. For Abraham Cowley Sarbiewski is the master of the Horatian form, for John Pinkerton he is a master of Latin verse in general, while for John Sheehan Sarbiewski is primarily a religious poet, a fellow Roman Catholic. However, the vast majority of the translators and translations included in the volume, fits into one or other of the six waves mentioned above.

The Romantic and early Victorian poets were the last to show an interest in Sarbiewski's poetry. The change was caused on the one hand by the new literary tastes brought by the later nineteenth century, and on the other by educational reforms of the period. Latin ceased to play such an important role in the school curricula (although it remained for decades an important part of university education) and Neo-Latin poetry was soon afterwards largely forgotten. Nevertheless, in the late Victorian period some major English poets continued to write at least some of their verse in Latin, including especially the prolific poet and prose writer Walter Savage Landor (1775–1864) and the Jesuit priest, scholar, and visionary poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889).

The English translators of Sarbiewski's poems exhibit a great variety of attitudes towards the original which we have attempted to suggest in the title of the present volume. George Hils is generally praised for the fidelity of his translations to the original. The opposite end of the spectrum may be exemplified by the translations of Mary Masters which were characterized by Robert Cummings as 'elaborations, ineptly handled, [which] renders [them] ridiculous' (2005: 500), even though they were allegedly corrected by her much more famous friend Dr. Johnson. Benlowes's *Theophilia* falls completely beyond the scope of translation criticism as this English poet rather freely treated his source as a store of phrases and images which he inserted in his work.

The range of English authors whose interest in Sarbiewski's works resulted in translations or emulations is truly amazing; we have managed to locate forty-three authors of one hundred and fifty-one translations, and twenty-five anonymous translations. The present collection includes translations of fifty-six out of Sarbiewski's one hundred and thirty-three odes and epodes, most in multiple versions. This makes it the largest collection of Sarbiewski's poetry in English translation published since the first ever publication of Hils' volume in 1646. A ratio of two out of five may not be too impressive but we should bear in mind that three groups of Sarbiewski's poems - Marian poetry, poems addressed to various Roman Catholic religious and political leaders (such as the pope Urban VIII - I 1, I 3, I 5, I 10, I 21, I 22), and fellow Jesuits, and finally those commenting on current events of the 1620s, for various reasons could hardly appeal to an English reader. If we count them out, almost every poem of Sarbiewski which could find an audience in Great Britain was actually translated and usually in several versions.

Each of the chapters opens with a biographical note on the translator or, in the case of anonymous works, the source. As the poets in question range from such world-renowned names as those of Coleridge and Burns, through such people who were famous in their times but now are known to few such as Cowley and Bowring, to virtually unknown and never published authors such as Wodehouse and Chatwin, the content of the notes reflects their relative fame. Those notes which refer to the best-known authors include little if any purely biographical material, which may be found quite easily in generally accessible sources. Rather, they concentrate on issues more directly connected with the relations of a given author and Sarbiewski. The less known the author, the more biographical information offered; naturally, this is not always the case as some of them are truly unknown or forgotten. This material, however, has usually been limited to purely introductory issues intended to help locate a specific translator and translation within its historical and literary context. A more complete presentation of the history of the English fascination with the 'Christian

Horace' and his poetry will be the subject of a separate study by Krzysztof Fordoński *Sons of Casimir. British Translations of the Poetry of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski.*

On Editing Sarbiewski

Some remarks on the edition of the following poems are necessary, as a closing part of the present introduction. The present edition was prepared for all readers interested in the works of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, and more broadly in Neo-Latin, Baroque, and religious poetry, to mention but a few possible interests. Such readers for whom English is not necessarily their first language cannot be expected to approach these poems with a knowledge of the peculiarities of old vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling; consequently, a certain degree of modernization seemed advisable. We have also taken into consideration the most recent development of the Internet. A reader interested in the original spelling will quite easily find most of the source texts in various databases accessible online.

Naturally, it was not our intention to give these translations, dating from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, a uniformly modern outlook. On the contrary, we aimed at retaining as much as possible of their original form and character. Furthermore, there is no single governing norm as to how such modernization should be applied throughout the volume. The changes have thus been strictly limited to those we felt were necessary. This means that they apply predominantly to the earliest translations, while in the eighteenth- and the nineteenth-century texts only obvious mistakes and errors have been corrected.

We had to take into consideration the fact that the texts we included came from very many different kinds of sources, ranging from critical editions, private editions, newspapers and magazines to private manuscripts, and consequently on occasion they were rather imperfect. In the case of the three manuscripts, Sir Philip Wodehouse, Lucy Hutchinson, and John Chatwin, this is the first time they are published, hence our original intention to include them

without any emendations. Wodehouse, however, wrote in such a peculiar style and language that, after long consideration, we decided to modernize the spelling and publish the original version in a separate critical edition. The three poems of Hutchinson and Chatwin are included without any changes.

Grammar has not been altered, on the assumption that any reader of poetry should be acquainted with the grammatical forms which English poetic language retained until the end of the nineteenth century, such as the second person singular verb endings and pronouns. The use of capital letters and original punctuation was also left intact wherever possible. One change made consistently is a space added before and after a dash as it could otherwise be mistaken for a hyphen, and before or after an apostrophe which replaces an omitted letter beginning or ending a word e.g. 'bout for *about* and o' th' for *of the*.

Omitted letters are all marked with apostrophes. We generally avoided filling such gaps. This may at times make reading somewhat more difficult but such alterations would destroy the rhythm of a given line. Naturally, omissions caused by neglect rather than by intent were corrected. Original shortenings such as *w'are*, *w'have* or *y'have* were replaced by modern *we're*, *we've* and *you've* respectively, as they do not alter the syllable count. However, 's for *his* was retained. In numerous places erroneous *it's* were replaced with *its* and vice versa as appropriate in the given context.

Spelling has been modernized with moderation, mostly in such instances where retaining the original orthography might result in a misunderstanding, for example, *waste* replaces *waist*, or where words might be incomprehensible, for example, *oaks* for *okes* or *choir* for *quire*. Various spellings of the same word, for example, *to day*, *to-day* and *today* were replaced by one modern form. The ending *-ie* when it should be pronounced as a diphthong is uniformly rendered as *-y* (e.g. *sky* replaces *skie*). No such changes apply in the case of words at the end of lines forming a rhyme, which would be destroyed by such an alteration. In such cases modern spelling is given in the footnotes. A similar policy has been adopted in relation to old spelling forms which differ from

the modern ones but do not obscure the meaning (e.g. *Affrick* for *Africa*), however, this old orthography suggests a different number of syllables in pronunciation. The most profound changes have been introduced in the translations of George Hils (e.g. the removal of devoiced *e* at the end of words culminating in a consonant) but we felt justified by the fact that the original version of the text is readily available in a 1953 reprint.

All chapters end in notes in which is given the source, providing information about the original publication. Naturally, such lists of sources are seldom exhaustive; we tried to concentrate on those we actually used, sometimes giving an alternative which might be more easily accessible or an earlier edition in a magazine which preceded publication in book form which we most often quote.

We realize that regardless of all our continued efforts this collection is still incomplete and we will be extremely grateful to hear of any other English-language translations of Sarbiewski's œuvre which we may add to a subsequent edition of this work.

Krzysztof Fordoński, Piotr Urbański