The classical ideal of approaching source text in the Renaissance was expressed in three Latin words – *translatio, imitatio, aemulatio*. A poet was expected to start with translating, if he could do so he would imitate, and, ultimately, emulate (in the sense of outdoing) the original. Sometimes, however, translators diverged from so defined a path, pushing the boundaries of imitation so far that instead of moving further to emulate an admired author they committed forgeries, altering both the contents and form of the original in a way quite contrary to the author’s original intentions.

An example of such behaviour is *The Odes of Casimire*, an edition of translations of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski’s Latin lyrics with facing originals which appeared in London in 1646, published by Humphrey Moseley. The little volume seems at first glance an exemplary case of literary translation. The translator presents himself with utmost modesty, stressing his subservient position:

> I ingenuously acknowledge that I am not worthy to blow a coal of that divine fire, which spreads such glorious flames through every Ode (Sarbiewski 1646: unnumbered page).

Furthermore, the reader is offered an opportunity to control the quality of translations by comparing them immediately with the originals, an opportunity extremely rare in 17th and 18th century England.

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1 Full text of the volume is available in a 1953 reprint (Augustan Reprint Society Publication Number 44) and included in Fordoński – Urbański 2010: 35-74.
A closer reading, however, reveals that the translator, George Hils, not only carefully selected texts for his collection but also approached some of the originals taking great liberties. He would move as far as to alter the original Latin texts included in his book in such a way as to suit his, most often political, designs. The paper aims at presenting the case, the strategies employed by the translator and suggesting some of his possible motives.

The choice of Sarbiewski as the subject of translation is very telling if we consider the position of the Polish poet among the English royalists in the 1640s. He belonged to a group of authors whom the royalist writers of the period used in their “literary borrowings” in order to “generate and retain a coherent sense of identity while under extreme pressure” (Clarke 2005: 119). Lois Potter discussed this phenomenon in her Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature 1641-1660 (1989: 113-155), however, she failed to mention Sarbiewski, it was only Clarke who added the Polish poet to the list. As she claims:

A number of other royalist writers published translations of Casimire’s work during this period, indicating that Casimire had indeed achieved status as an accepted voice of royalism. At least seven of his odes appear in Sir Edward Sherburne’s 1651 Poems and Translations. ... Henry Vaughan also published attributed translations of seven of Casimire’s odes in Olor Iscanus, which appeared in 1651 but parts of which were ready for publication in 1647, while Edward Benlowes borrowed extensively from Hills’s translation for Theophila (1652) (Clarke 2005: 123-124).

Consequently, the very choice of Sarbiewski’s lyrics as the source text was quite politically telling (Fordoński 2013: 387-390). Hils, however, did not stop at that.

The scarce available details of George Hils’ (1606?-1655?) biography have been quite recently unearthed by Piotr Urbański (2000: 204-206). We know thus that he was born in Newark-upon-Trent in Nottinghamshire, either in 1606 or 1607, and studied at Trinity College, Cambridge (BA
1627). He apparently moved in the literary circles of the Caroline London but, except for the discussed volume of translations, his currently known literary output is limited to three liminary verses (two in English and one in Latin) included in the editions of Poems & ca. by James Shirley (1646), whom Hils seems to have known personally, and Comedies and Tragedies by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher (1647). After the end of the war of three kingdoms he retired to his native Newark where he was appointed the headmaster of Thomas Magnus School, a post which he held until 1655 after which date nothing is known of his life (Urbański 2000: 204-209; Money 2006: 160-174).

The edition of Hils, the collection of twenty-nine odes and six epigrams out of the total of 141 odes and 122 epigrams written by Sarbiewski, was published in 1646 in London by the royalist publisher Humphrey Moseley. It did not attract unnecessary attention of the censorship, receiving the imprimatur of Sir Nathaniel Brent on February 10th, 1645 (1646 but the year would not begin until March 25th) (Urbański 2000: 206-208). Sir Nathaniel apparently was either unaware of the fact the poems had been originally written by a Jesuit and enjoyed a special status among the royalists or chose to turn a blind eye to these facts. The bilingual edition in itself is remarkable as it is one of extremely few which appeared in the period. Urbański (2000: 209) mentions only three other such editions in the 17th and the 18 centuries.

The frontispiece of the volume engraved by William Marshall allegedly shows Sarbiewski sitting on a rock and facing Horace. An anonymous liminary poem explains it is “the Muses two-topp’d hill” (Sarbiewski 1646), that is Mount Parnassus. It seems that there is nothing wrong with the Polish poet dressed in a fur coat, which probably was intended as indicating his provenance from the Eastern Europe. The problem is, however, that Marshall’s portrait of Casimir e bears a striking resemblance to King Charles I. It is rather impossible to treat this similarity as purely coincidental even though few people in England could
at the time know what Sarbiewski really looked like. Marshall was well-known for his involvement in royalist publishing, most notably as the engraver of the frontispiece to *Eikon Basilike*, the King’s Book of 1649 (Clarke 2005: 122).

The introductions to the volume (there are two, one in Latin and one in English, I concentrate here on the latter, there is also a dedication in Latin and an anonymous liminary verse in English) also sound like a warning to the reader. Hils writes:

> I confesse I have not been so precisely carefull in every Ode, as to render line for line (a thing so strictly stood upon by some late translators) for indeed the exuberante torrent of Elegancie came so fast upon me, that I was forced to make my banks larger; choosing rather to make fault in the excesse then defect (Sarbiewski 1646: unnumbered page).

As we shall learn later on from a selection of examples taken from the volume it was not only “Elegancie” that prompted the translator to change the originals while the changes actually very seldom meant increasing the number of lines, although, especially in the longer poems, this tendency is quite visible.

The poem which opens the collection is a translation of Sarbiewski’s *Lyr. I I*, *Ad Urbanum VIII Pontificem Maximum. Cum infestae Thracum Copie Pannonia excessiment* (“To Pope Urban VIII. When the Enemy Thracian Army Left Hungary”)\(^2\), translated by Hils as *When the hatefull forces of the Thracians departed out of Pannonia*.\(^3\) The poem sets the royalist tone of the book published in the year the first Civil War ended. In the original the ode is a panegyric poem addressed to the pope Urban VIII which commemorates the Hapsburg victory over Gabor Bethlen of Transylvania,

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\(^2\) The Barbou edition proposes an even longer version of the title: „Ad Urbanum VIII. Pontificem. Describit bona quae summum Urbani VIII. Pontificatum universo commendatura sunt” (Sarbiewski 1759: 1).

\(^3\) Parts of the following analyses have already been published in Fordoński 2013: 391-392 and Fordoński 2012: 143-152.
Hils turns it into a message of hope addressed to royalists after their failure in the first Civil War.

The threats of cruell Warre now cease:
In stead of them safety and peace,
Banish’d th’ unhallowed earth, doe please
’Returne in their white Waine (Sarbiewski 1646: 3).

White was the Stuart colour and Charles I, who famously wore white coronation robes, was known popularly as the ‘White King’. From his youth, he was associated with ‘Charles his Wain’, the constellation now known as the Plough or Ursa Major (Clarke 2005: 123).

To add to the poignancy of the passage the first line of the original “Iam mine saevi cecidere belli” (Sarbiewski 1759: 1) is quoted from Seneca’s tragedy Thyestes describing a civil war between kinsmen. It is taken from a speech following a truce which in the play should soon be broken when one cousin serves the other his own children as the main course during the celebratory feast (Urbański 2000: 101; Buszewicz 2006: 221). It is quite probable that Hils was aware of the connection. Even though his translation does not show any similarity to the contemporary translation of Seneca’s Thyestes by Jasper Heywood, Hils quite probably read it in the Latin original. It could have made the source poem an even more valuable and interesting material for translation. This literary allusion allowed Sarbiewski to express his attitude towards the war between two Christian rulers – the emperor Ferdinand II and the duke of Transilvania Gabor Bethlen – which he considered fratricidal. It was consequently a situation at least in part similar to that which his English translator witnessed two decades later.

The changes in further part of the long poem consist foremostly in the removal of any references to the pope which are, at least in part, replaced with further allusions to England and the English monarch.
Consequently, the addressee of the poem disappears from the title of which only the subtitle is left. Urban VIII is not mentioned by name in the text of the original Latin poem. There are, however, three references to Rome (Sarbiewski 1646: 6, ll. 46, 54 and 57). They are all missing in Hils' translation, “Roma” is replaced respectively with pronouns “us” – l. 46 - and “our” – l. 54 – while “Latium” is replaced by “our Country” (Sarbiewski 1646: 7-9). The alteration suggests that the real subject matter of the English poem are not, as it is in Sarbiewski’s original, victorious campaigns of the imperial army against Gabor Bethlen, supported by Turkey, and the treaty of Nikolsburg which ended the war, but rather the war of the King and the parliament which recently came to an end.

Hils’ translation of Epigram 110 Christi in Cruce Vox. Sitio (“Christ’s Voice from the Cross. I Thirst”) entitled The voyce of Christ upon the Crosse (Sarbiewski 1646: 140-141) deserves attention for the same reason. The translation of this minor lyric is very precise even by the high standards generally maintained by Hils (the reader of the present article should by no means conclude that Hils translations are in general inferior, quite on the contrary, they belong to the best English translations of Sarbiewski’s poems ever, any discussed alterations are made on purpose) thus the change of two words only may escape the attention of an unsuspecting reader. Where in the Latin original the poet addresses Christ as “Princeps pulcherrime” (‘the most beautiful prince’), Hils proposes “great King” (l. 1). The change does seem major, after all the phrase “Christ the King” can be found in various forms in the Bible, e.g. in John 18:36-37, Mt. 27:42, or Mark 15:32. Consequently, the phrase sounds quite natural in an English religious poem.

And yet in this specific case the alteration must be read within the context of the tendency which is characteristic for Hils (see Clarke 2005: 122-123) to introduce in the texts of his translations the figure of the English monarch, King Charles I. The figure of Christ suffering on the cross merges (especially in the eyes of the bilingual and meticulous reader
who cares to compare the original with the translation on the facing page and notices the difference) with the figure of the monarch for whom the rebellion of his subjects must be a source of suffering. The translation closes Hils’ selection which can be quite simply explained by the fact that its order follows the order established by Sarbiewski and yet Epigram 110 is not the last of the Polish poet’s selection of 122. Consequently, its place as the coda of the selection strengthens the suspicion of a purposeful alteration.

Politics is by no means the only reason of alterations introduced by Hils. Another reason, of almost equal gravity, was religion. One of the odes which made Sarbiewski’s poems “have considerable currency among English royalists during the middle years of the seventeenth century” was his reworking of Horace’s famous Epode 2, Beatus Ille (“Happy the Man”), Epode 3 entitled Laus otii Religiosi “which praises rural retirement and ... [in which] Casimire reflected on a key area of royalist intellectual debate at the time” (Clarke 2005: 121). According to Marien-Sophie Røstvig:

Casimire’s palinode to Horace’s second Epode transforms the Horatian Husbandman into a solitary religious contemplator of the world, a Platonic or Hermetic exile from the stars (the world of pure mind), whose chief purpose is to achieve union with the deity (1962: 78).

Hils’ translation is remarkable as it is quite impossible to guess from it that the original praises not the country life (as it is in Horace’s ode) but religious life, more precisely the life in the holy order which is clearly stated in the subtitle Laus otii Religiosi cum amoenam Collegii Societatis Jesu Vlnensis Nemencinae villam per Sexiles ferias invisert (“In Praise of Religious Peace, When During Summer Holidays [the Poet] Visited the Charming Manor of the Vilnius Jesuit College Located in Niemenczyn”) (Sarbiewski 1759: 266).

Hils begins by cutting out the subtitle, leaving only the first three words of the original title which he translates on the opposite page as The
Praise of Religious Recreation (Sarbiewski 1646: 124-125). The translation introduces slight changes to the original content, yet, as a result the religious ideal turns into the ideal life of an English country squire, probably, one with some inclination towards Neo-Stoicism. Hils either does not realize that his “translation” is actually a reversal of the main concept of Sarbiewski’s poem or consciously renders it against the original meaning, proposing instead one of his own devising. The Polish poet opposes Horace, he responds to the Roman’s claims concerning “a happy man” by stating in the beginning “At ille, Flacce, nunc erit beatior” (Sarbiewski 1646: 124) (“But today, Flaccus, he is happier who...”). In the English translation contemporary setting is retained (and expanded) but the meaning is largely that of Horace, the happy man is one who lives quietly and modestly in the country.

A large number of Sarbiewski’s poems is dedicated to various Christian saints. Hils skilfully avoids such poems in his selection (he does, however, translate a number of Sarbiewski’s Latin variations on the themes taken from the biblical Song of Songs), choosing not to touch upon a potentially explosive material. He does, however, include the translation of epigram 48 entitled Lilia manu praefert Aloysius (“Aloysius Carries Lilies in his Hand”). Saint Aloysius, dear to Sarbiewski as a Jesuit saint, appears only in the title of the Latin poem, he is not mentioned in the text. Hils, however, removed the saint from the title as well which in his volume is given as --- Lilia manu praefertenti (“--- Carrying Lilies in the Hand”) and translated on the opposite page as To --- bearing Lillyes in her hand.

The only change in this otherwise very precise translation echoes that made in the title. Hils introduces feminine possessive pronoun absent in the original:

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4 This is not the only example of Hils altering the titles and subtitles of Sarbiewski’s poems in his translations. In Lyr I 13 the original subtitle is not given (Sarbiewski 1646: 12), in Lyr. IV 30 the name of the deceased wife is missing, and in Epode 2 the translation of the subtitle is “when hee returned” even though in the original it is clearly stated that the poet returned from Rome, and the full original title is quoted (Sarbiewski 1646: 120-121).
Cum nullas habeant natales lilia terras,
Quis neget e casta lilia nata manu?

Since then these flow’res no native place do know,
Who can deny from her chast hand they grow (Sarbiewski 1646: 138-139).5

The white lilies of the poem which are (along with cross, ducal cap, and a skull) the attributes of St Aloysius Gonzaga turn consequently into much more conventional symbols of girlish innocence6. It remains a mystery why Hils chose to include the epigram in his collection. It could have been because of the white colour of the lilies, the colour of the House of Stuart and the King Charles I.

Many of Sarbiewski’s poems are addressed to his contemporaries, predominantly eminent representatives of the Roman Catholic church, starting from the Pope Urban VIII and cardinals, through various bishops to fellow Jesuits. Except for Lyr. I 1 discussed above, only three such poems were included in Hils’ volume, Lyr. IV 32, IV 35 and Epig. 51 which are dedicated to two Polish Jesuits Wojciech Turski and Paweł Kozłowski, as well the Cardinal Juan de Lugo. The subject matter of the poems is not connected directly with their religious addressees. It is quite probable that Hils did not recognize contemporary characters in Latinized names or, if he did, at least hoped that his readers would not. Whatever the reason there is only one minor alteration which suggests Hils’ awareness of who the addressees of the poems were. In epigram 51 Sarbiewski addresses Cardinal de Lugo as “pater” which Hils replaced with the far more neutral “thou” (Sarbiewski 1646: 140-141).

5 Bold mine.
6 Charles S. Kraszewski was the first to notice the absence of St. Aloysius from the poem (Kraszewski 2006: 34).
The conspicuous absence of poems addressed to Roman Catholic personalities leads us to a broader conclusion, a fact which must have been quite obvious to any reader acquainted with the editions of Sarbiewski’s poems imported at the time mostly from the Netherlands (Antwerp and Leiden). Hils pruned the original collection down almost exclusively to the Neo-Stoic poems only. He left out not merely the majority of the religious poems but also the political ones, touching upon the raging Thirty Years War and the Polish (or in the eyes of Sarbiewski Christian) wars against Turkey. The selection thus was a forgery in itself, creating an image of Sarbiewski which was quite far from the actual oeuvre of the Polish poet.

The influence of the alterations described above went quite far as Hils’ translations remained through the 17th and the 18th century an important means of approaching (and imitating) Sarbiewski in Great Britain. It should be noted that access to the original in the British Isles was quite limited and the first complete edition of Sarbiewski’s poems appeared there only in 1684. In his extensive study Jerzy Starnawski indicates examples of such influence in the works (both translations from Sarbiewski and original poems) of Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, John Denham, John Norris etc. (Starnawski 2007: 220-241) while Hils’ influence on Benlowes has been mentioned above. It was often so that the phrases and even thoughts they picked up were actually not Sarbiewski’s as they thought but Hils’.

Hils’ collection is consequently quite far from what its translator promises to be with some false modesty. Even though he claims in the English introduction that

The young Thing was never intended for the Press, but the violence of some friends ravish’d her from me, in her virgin bloom (Sarbiewski 1646: unnumbered page).
it is the result of an immense conscious effort – aimed both at altering the original content in translation and at hiding the alterations and their traces both in the Latin and English texts.

Hils’ work is successful in a number of ways, as Urbański correctly notices, it is often the case that the commemorative, occasional poems of Sarbiewski gained a more general currency in Hils’ translation (2000: 208). After all, although Hils introduces changes in some of the translations, he includes the complete texts of the originals (with the few incomplete or altered exceptions quoted above), allowing his bilingual, educated readers to see the changes he introduced. The alterations may be consequently seen as an intellectual game with the reader and/or the censor.

In a more general sense, the volume may serve as warning to the contemporary readers, showing what caution must be exercised when we approach old translations. Many of them are not what they seem or purport to be but follow hidden agendas which we must uncover and analyse in order to discover their full meaning.

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7 The very peculiar position of Sarbiewski in the British Isles resulted in a number of such consciously "manipulated" translation. Some other examples are presented in Fordoński 2011 and Fordoński (in press).
Bibliography


Abstract

The Odes of Casimire, an edition of translations of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski’s Latin lyrics with facing originals appeared in London in 1646, published by Humphrey Moseley. The little volume seems at first glance an exemplary case of a most proper and correct literary translation. The reader is, after all, offered an opportunity to control the quality of translations by comparing them immediately with the originals, an opportunity extremely rare in 17th and 18th century England. A closer reading, however, reveals that the translator, George Hils, not only carefully selected texts for his collection but also approached some of the originals taking great liberties, moving as far as to alter the original Latin texts included in his book in such a way as to suit his, most often political, designs. The paper aims at presenting the case, offering also an analysis of several of the more characteristic examples of alterations introduced by Hils.