TERMINUS
doi: 10.4467/20843844TE.11.004.0034 R. XIII (2011) z. 24

KRZYSZTOF FORDOŃSKI (UW, Warszawa)

MACIEJ KAZIMIERZ SARBIEWSKI AND ENGLISH DISSENTING POETS OF THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY: A STUDY IN RECEPTION OF NEO-LATIN POETRY IN GREAT BRITAIN

The interest in the works of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595–1640)[1], the Polish Neo-Latin poet known in the British Isles since the early 17th century, was an important element of British literary life during almost two centuries. The most lasting testimony to Sarbiewski's popularity are numerous translations of his poems (at least 150 such translations are known) and his presence in studies in history of literature and literary criticism of the period[2]. This popularity was not a constant element, it would be more precise to describe it as recurrent; it returned every time when the subject matter of Sarbiewski's poetry became more current for British authors. It is possible to indicate six waves of such interest in Sarbiewski's works[3], the

[1] Sarbiewski was generally known under the Latin name of Matthias Casimir Sarbievius, in the British Isles he was usually referred to as Casimir or Casimire.

[2] Piotr Urbański presents some of them in *Theologia fabulosa. Commentationes Sarbievianae*, Szczecin 2000, pp. 196–204.

[3] The first such wave took place during the Civil War and immediately afterwards – 1640–1660. The second one coincided with the final decades of the Restoration period – 1680–1700. The third wave took place in the early 18th century, mostly among religious dissenters, the fourth one comprises the latter part of the Augustan Age. The fifth wave coincided with the early Romanticism – 1790–1815, while the sixth one spans the end of the Romanticism and the early Victorian Age. A more detailed presentation of these ways is included in the preface to K. Fordoński and P. Urbański, *Casimir Brittanicus. English Translations, Paraphrases, and Emulations of the Poetry of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski. The*

subject of the present study is the third of them which took place in the first half of the 18th century when such English religious dissenters as Isaac Watts (1674–1748) and Thomas Gibbons (1720–1785) discovered and started to translate Sarbiewski's poems.

After the turbulent 17th century, in the early years of the 18th century the situation of English religious non-conformists was still rather difficult although far more safe and stable than during the previous five decades. The extreme Protestant churches lost the influence upon state politics they had enjoyed during the Wars of Three Kingdoms and in the Commonwealth period, however, with the Glorious Revolution the period of persecutions which followed the Restoration also ended to a large extent. The changes introduced after the Glorious Revolution divided members of various Christian churches in England (the situation in Scotland was quite different, yet its description exceeds the scope of the present study) into the following three groups. The first, the most numerous, were members of the Church of England, personally headed by the current monarch. The second group consisted of representatives of numerous and quite various Protestant churches, usually more extreme in their religious views, which refused to conform to the official line represented by the Church of England. The third and smallest group consisted of Roman Catholics.

Inasmuch as for representatives of the first group all career paths were open, members of the two other groups faced certain limitations. It is quite obvious that they could not seek employment in the Church of England, their presence in public life was often frowned upon, also academic education was not available to them. The range of these limitations was not identical for both groups. Members of the independent Protestant churches could hold post in the state administration, however, their participation in the parliament depended on the taking of oath of allegiance to the monarch which many preferred to avoid. Roman Catholics not only faced limitations in their ability to practice their religion, choose political activity or employment, but also in their choice of place of residence. They were forbidden to settle down in cities, especially London[4], and, although their situation slowly improved, last such laws were abolished only in 1829.

Second Enlarged and Corrected Edition, London 2010, pp. 22–25. The volume includes also the texts of all the translations from Sarbiewski mentioned in the present study.

[4] These regulations were rather seldom enforced, however, the Roman Catholic poet Alexander Pope chose to settle down in Twickenham rather than in London to avoid possible persecution.

Interestingly enough, many of these regulations did not apply to the aristocracy. Roman Catholic peers kept their seats on the House of Lords and many of them held various state offices. It is important to point out here that a large part of the abovementioned regulations was soon abandoned and forgotten even though they were not immediately revoked. The wars and revolutions of the 17th century gave the English a painful lesson which was apparently learned and successfully limited the more extreme actions directed against the non-conformists.

This legal situation of the religious minorities led to the creation of independent religious structures which began to flourish in the period immediately following the Glorious Revolution[5]. On the one hand, a network of dissenting congregations was created which offered spiritual support for the believers and employment for priests. The more extreme Protestants (such as Presbyterians) rejected the structure which the Church of England had inherited from the Roman Catholic Church. They were especially against the institutions of bishops and dioceses. They were opposed to the idea of appointment of priests by owners of the living confirmed by bishops, choosing elections instead. Their congregations needed preachers. In the early days they could count on dissenting priests rejecting Church of England, as well as graduates of Cambridge and Oxford who joined the congregations or left the Church of England with them, refusing to take the oath required by the Act of Conformity from 1662.

This situation, however, could not last forever and soon new solutions had to be implemented. As early as in the last quarter of the 17th century, the first dissenting academies were established, aimed at educating candidates for priesthood. Gradually, the network of dissenting education system expanded and elementary schools were established by congregations for their children. The schools served a double purpose, providing also employment for graduates of the academies. It was fairly common for preachers to combine the duties of a priest and a teacher, it was so in the cases of Watts and Gibbons.

The level of the education offered by the academies was very high, sometimes even higher than that offered by the universities, for which

[5] The following description is, quite obviously, rather simplified. It is difficult to provide a more detailed overview as the dissenting milieu was hardly coherent and often torn apart by new divisions leading to the creation of new, usually smaller, congregations.

the 18th century was a period of noticeable crisis[6]. The students became acquainted not only with theology but also philosophy and philology. The best academies were certainly places of lively intellectual exchange where one could get to know both the classical tradition and the current state of culture and literature. The academies did not have the right to give their graduates scholarly degrees, yet after 1725 the graduates solved the problem by seeking to continue their education (and obtain necessary degrees) at Scottish and later American universities. It sometimes happened so that the degrees were granted later in life of their holders in recognition of their exceptional achievements. Watts received the degree of doctor of divinity from the universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen in 1728. Gibbons was first granted M.A. by New Jersey College (now Princeton University) in 1760, and then D.D. by Aberdeen University in 1764[7].

As it has already been stated, the basic aim of the academies was formation of future preachers. However, among their students one could find young members of dissenting families who chose to continue their education on the academic level without any plans connected with divinity in mind. One may mention here the examples of Daniel Defoe (1660–1731), the author of the first English novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), a graduate of the dissenting academy in Newington Green, and the poet John Hughes (1678–1720), a school friend of Isaac Watts.

It was in this particular milieu that a group of English poets became interested in the works of Sarbiewski[8]. Their most eminent representative was decidedly Isaac Watts. The group included Samuel Say (1676–1743), John Hughes, William Duncombe (1690–1769), Anne Steele also known as Theodosia (1717–1778), and Thomas Gibbons. Today these names sound familiar only to specialists in English literature of the early 18th century, yet in their times they were famous and respected authors whose works enjoyed immense popularity as measured by the number of pub-

[6] Cf. *The History of the University of Oxford: Volume V: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell, Oxford 1986; and V. Morgan (with contribution by C. Brooke), *A History of the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge 2004.

[7] I. Parker, *Dissenting Academies in England*, Cambridge 2009.

[8] In further part of the study I concentrate upon those poets in whose oeuvre there are translations from Sarbiewski's poems, excluding such authors close to Watts as e.g. Jabez Hughes (John's brother) or John Duncombe (son of William). Translators of Sarbiewski's poetry who did not belong to Watts' circle active in the discussed period shall be mentioned briefly in the final part of the study.

lished volumes and their re-editions. Only some of the religious hymns written by Watts and Steele have survived the test of time, they were sung universally until the early 20th century but even today they may be found in hymnbooks. The most popular of them is the Christmas carol *Joy to the World*, written by Watts. The diaries of Gibbons and Say are valuable sources for historians interested in the period.

Isaac Watts not only became fascinated with Sarbiewski, a poet coming from a different culture and a different religion, whom he called "that noblest Latin Poet of modern ages"[9], but he also shared this fascination with his friends. David K. Money describes Watts as "a man for whose conscience even the Protestant Church of England was far too Popish"[10] and there are no reasons to doubt it as Watts refused to accept a scholarship offered by John Speed, doctor from his native Southampton, as going to a university would require religious conversion[11]. Money goes as far as to claim that "for the chief inspiration to become a religious poet, in what was to prove a phenomenally successful career, the young dissenter looked to a Polish Jesuit"[12].

Watts became acquainted with Sarbiewski's works quite early when he attended King Edward VI public school in Southampton where he was taught Latin, Greek, French, and Hebrew by John Pinhorne. Watts expressed his gratitude to his teacher in a lengthy Latin ode published in 1694. In 1690, Watts began his studies in Thomas Rowe's academy located in Little Britain in the City of London. The studies conducted under Rowe's supervision proved as fruitful as those in Pinhorne's school. The academy was the place where Watts made new friends and the friendships were to last for many years. From our point of view the most important of these new school friends were Say and Hughes; we shall deal with literary effects of these friendships later on.

---

[9] I. Watts, *The Works of The Late Reverend and Learned Isaac Watts, DD. Published by himself and now collected in Six Volumes ... Now first published from his manuscripts, and, by the Direction of his Will, revised and Corrected by D. Jennings, D.D. and the late P. Doodridge, D.D.*, London 1753, vol. 4, p. XIX.

[10] D.K. Money, *Aspects of the Reception of Sarbiewski in England: from Hils, Vaughan, and Watts to Coleridge, Bowring, Walker, and Coxe*, [in:] *Pietas Humanistica. Neo-Latin Religious Poetry in Poland in European Context*, ed. P. Urbański, Frankfurt am Main 2006, p. 157.

[11] I. Rivers, *Isaac Watts*, [in:] *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28888 (accessed online 16 April 2009).

[12] D.K. Money, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

Although constantly suffering from poor health, Watts was an extremely hard-working man. He was not only a preacher but became involved in poetry, education, and philosophy, he was also an avid letter writer. The major part of his poetic oeuvre was written before 1709 when the second, enlarged edition of his collection *Horae Lyricae* (in three volumes, the first edition in two volumes had been published in 1706) as well as the expanded and corrected second edition of the collection *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (the first edition had been published in 1707) appeared. His later volumes include much less poetry, although some poems can be found e.g. in *Sermons on Various Subjects* published in 1721[13]. Although after 1709 Watts wrote few lyrical poems, he would constantly return to his earlier works which he continuously expanded and corrected. It would be very interesting to compare their various versions published within the period of almost fifty years, it would be the more interesting as out of his thirteen translations from Sarbiewski, ten appeared in the first edition of *Horae Lyricae*.

The introduction to the 1709 edition of *Horae Lyricae* (reprinted in all subsequent editions) is of special interest. Watts shares there his views on poetry, including the works of Sarbiewski. The text is quite intriguing as Watts apparently sees no reason whatsoever to provide any introductions to Sarbiewski's poetic work. Instead, Watts concentrates on excusing his own short-comings, especially the fact that he failed to retain the conciseness of the original and he has

> often taken the freedom to add ten or twenty lines, or to leave out as many, that [he] might suit [his] song more to [his] own design, or because [he] saw it impossible to present the force, the fineness, and the fire of his expression in our language[14].

Actually, this is a major understatement if we consider e.g. his translation of Lyr. IV 4[15] which expanded from 92 lines of the original to 227 lines of the translation. In this case the poet warns his readers, adding to the original title the following words: "with large Additions"[16].

---

[13] I. Rivers, *op. cit.*

[14] I. Watts, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. XIX.

[15] Most Sarbiewski's poems have long, typically Baroque titles, consequently, they are conventionally referred to by numbers preceded by "Lyr." (odes with number of the book, I to IV), "Ep." (epodes) or "Epig." (epigrams).

[16] I. Watts, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 164. Some more information on this interesting text may be found in the article K. Fordoński, *Przedmurze chrześcijaństwa widziane z Albionu.*

This lengthy poem deserves some more attention. Sarbiewski adapted a situation taken from Virgil's *Georgics* (II 490–497)[17], while Galesus, the narrator of the poem, inherited his name from one of the characters of Virgil's *Aeneid*, of which Watts was apparently unaware as he replaced the name with Gador[18]. Virgil's text, referring to the battle of Philippi, is the point of departure for Sarbiewski's vision of fairly recent events, the battle of Chocim. Watts also departs from Sarbiewski's poem and, although he does not alter the subject matter significantly, he fills the battlefield with numerous characters he invented himself. While Sarbiewski describes the battlefield in most general terms and concentrates rather on the general description of the battle itself, Watts summons several highly individualized descriptions of fallen warriors, of which the following is probably the most striking:

> I moved not far, and lo, at manly length
> Two beauteous youths of richest Ott'man blood
> Extended on the field: in friendship join'd,
> Nor fate divides them: hardy warriors both;
> Both faithful: drowned in show'rs of darts they fell,
> Each with his shield spread o'er his lover's heart,
> In vain: for on those orbs of friendly brass
> Stood groves of javelins; some, alas, too deep
> Were planted there, and through their lovely bosoms
> Made painful avenues for cruel death'[19].

A possible Virgilian parallel may be detected here as well, the death of the two Ottoman youths on the battlefield shows some common elements with the death of Nisus and Euryalus[20]. And yet this particular quotation

---

Tematyka wojenna w angielskich przekładach, naśladownictwa i parafrazach ód Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego [in:] *Wojny, bitwy i potyczki w kulturze staropolskiej*, ed. W. Pawlak and M. Piskała (in press).

[17] A brief analysis of the original poem can be found in: E. Buszewicz, *Sarmacki Horacy i jego liryka. Imitacja – gatunek – styl. Rzecz o poezji Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego*, Kraków 2006, p. 260.

[18] Francis Mahony, another British translator of the poem, also missed the allusion and called the narrator "Galeski". Father Prout [F. Mahony], *Modern Latin Poets. (From the Prout Papers. – No. XVI.) Chap. II. – Casimir Sarbiewski, S. Sannazar, Jerome Fracastor*, "Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country", September 1835, p. 318.

[19] I. Watts, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 406–407.

[20] *Aeneid* IX 182–234.

is even more interesting as Watts (subconsciously?) refers to the image of Orient popular in the West since the 17th century[21]. Perverse sensuality is one of its important elements, also, as it is in this case, of homoerotic character, which Watts apparently can find even among the fallen on the battlefield.

Watts translated thirteen poems from Sarbiewski (Lyr. I 4, I 19, II 2, II 5, II 15, IV 4, IV 7, IV 12, IV 13, IV 15, IV 28, Ep. 5, Epig. 100). There is no room here to analyse them all in detail, however, one deserves special attention. One of the translations was not published in the volume of lyrical poetry but in the second book of hymns as Hymn 4 *Salvation in the Cross*. Watts' decision to make the ode into a hymn seems well justified. The atmosphere of the poem is very belligerent, the poem declares adamant faith in Jesus which cannot be altered by tyrants or Satan. The poem was thus very appropriate for those dissenting congregations which tended to see themselves as the only just standing against the oppression, possibly also that of the British monarch[22]. It is quite interesting, however, that Watts did not reveal the source of his inspiration. Consequently, the singers could not know that the song they performed was based on a poem written not only by a Roman Catholic, but their arch-enemy, a Jesuit father.

Salvation in the Cross forms a water-shed for the influence of Sarbiewski upon Watts, separating poems published as translations with clear indication of the source texts from the original works of Watts. Piotr Urbański states that "inspiration with [Sarbiewski's] poetry can be traced in many lyrical poems, some poems about the divine love, and almost all poems on moral issues addressed to famous people"[23]. J.C. Arens sees such influences in the following poems: *True Riches*, *The Heroe's School of Morality*, as well as *Christ's Amazing Love and My Amazing Coldness*. The latter is the more interesting as in the original it is a Marian epode from which Watts removed all traced of Marian cult, unacceptable for Protestants[24]. Contemporary readers were well aware of these influences. The anonymous translator publishing under the initials UU (probably a pseudonym) his

[21] E. Said, *Orientalism*, Harmondsworth 1991, p. 190.

[22] The reading seems the more justified as the poems was written most probably during the reign of Queen Anne, a monarch much more inclined to support the Church of England than her predecessor William III or her successor George I, and under a Tory government.

[23] P. Urbański, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

[24] J.C. Arens, *Sarbiewski's Ode Against Tears Imitated by Lovelace, Yalden and Watts*. "Neophilologus", no. 3 (1963), p. 238.

eight renderings of Sarbiewski's poems in "The Gentleman's Magazine" between May 1794 and June 1816, added footnotes to three of them, indicating where in Watts' poems one can find allusions to the texts which UU translated[25].

As it has been stated above, friendship with Watts inspired also other poets to read and translate Sarbiewski. The first poet-friend to do so was Samuel Say. Say, however, soon gave up writing poetry, concentrating (initially without success although the situation soon altered) on his duties as a preacher. He did not pay any attention to popularity and published only some of his sermons[26]. The three translations from Sarbiewski which are known today (Lyr. II 3, II 10, IV 23) appeared in the posthumously published collection edited by William Duncombe. They differ from other translations from the period in the fact that *To his Harp: In Imitation of the Ode of Casimire* and *Occasion'd by the Tenth Ode of the Second Book of Casimire*, his translations of Lyr. II and II 10 respectively, are written in unrhymed verse like Sarbiewski's originals while other translators preferred to use rhymes.

John Hughes, four years junior but much more adventurous in his literary undertakings, weakened somehow Watts' fascination with Sarbiewski. Hughes drew his school-friend's attention to Sarbiewski's "shortcomings and first of all his – in Hughes' opinion – bad usage of imagination"[27]. Watts and Hughes parted their ways when the latter gave up his career in the church, and soon became a well-known and respected poet and playwright, also the author of lyrics written to the music of such composers as John Christopher Pepusch or George Frederic Handel. Nevertheless, Hughes himself found Sarbiewski sufficiently attractive to attempt to translate two of his poems, both of which were published relatively late in his life. The first, Lyr. II 5 published as *The Ecstasy*[28], appeared in 1720, the year Hughes died. The second, Lyr. II 3, appeared only in 1735, in

---

[25] E.g. UU, *Casimir Book IV Ode 23*, "The Gentleman's Magazine" 5 (1795), p. 422 and UU, *Casimir's Epigram XIV*, "The Gentleman's Magazine" 4 (1796), p. 325.

[26] A. Gordon (S.J. Skedd rev.), *Samuel Say*, [in:] *Oxford Dictionary...*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24765 (accessed online 16 April 2009).

[27] P. Urbański, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

[28] Hughes' biographic note mentions this publication, stating that his "two religious odes, *An Ode to the Creator of the World* (1712) and *The Ecstasy* (1720), in their enthusiasm and rapture are only vaguely Christian" (T. McGeary, *John Hughes*, [in:] *Oxford Dictionary...*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14077 (accessed online 16 April 2009).

the posthumous volume edited also by William Duncombe, who in 1726 married Hughes' younger sister, Elizabeth.

The name of William Duncombe has already been mentioned twice here, as the editor of posthumous collections of poems written by his friends. Duncombe was also attracted by the poems of Sarbiewski and, in 1753, he published his only one, quite conventional, translation of Lyr. II 2 as a liminary poem in one of the many volumes of poetry he edited, partly with the assistance of his son John. The choice of Sarbiewski as the source of inspiration was not casual, as in the volume, entitled *Miscellanies in Verse and Prose. By George Jeffreys, Esq.*, we find a poem entitled *Translation of a Latin Epigram on Casimire* (by an unknown author). George Jeffreys (1678–1755), poet, playwright, and translator, did not, however, attempt to translate any original poems of Sarbiewski.

The translator's output of Anne Steele, hymn writer and translator of the psalms who published her works under the pseudonym Theodosia, also includes only one poem by Sarbiewski, Lyr. II 5, formerly translated by Watts, Hughes, and Gibbons. One can hardly speak here about personal influence of Watts. Steele never left her native Hampshire and most probably never had a chance to meet the poet but she spoke openly about his inspirational influence[29]. Although Steele was known to be well read, mostly in contemporary poetry, it is rather improbable that she knew Latin well. Consequently, her poem can be more precisely called a free interpretation (Urbański uses a term derived from Roman law, *specification*)[30] of earlier translations of this poem, extremely popular in the 17th and 18th century (eleven different translation are known).

The last poet, whose interest in Sarbiewski was personally inspired by Watts, was Thomas Gibbons, his student and the first biographer. Gibbons, some forty years junior, befriended the aging Watts, with whose works and personality he was clearly fascinated. The best expression of this fascination was the biography published in 1780, entitled *The Memoirs of the Rev Isaac Watts DD*, based on Watts' papers, letters, and memoirs inherited by Gibbons. Fascination with Watts could bring quite unpleas-

---

There is no mention, however, that the latter is a translation from Sarbiewski, even though Hughes made it clear in the introduction to the first edition.

[29] J.R. Watson, *Anne Steele*, [in:] *Oxford Dictionary...*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26343 (accessed online 16 April 2009).

[30] P. Urbański, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

ant results at times e.g. "Gibbons' hymns showed Watts's influence if not his art, and like the poetry attracted a measure of satirical criticism from outside his circle"[31].

Also in his approach to Sarbiewski Gibbons was far from being very original, both in his style and choice of translated texts. Three out of six poems he translated (Lyr. I 2, I 19, II 5, II 15, III 4, III 22) had been formerly translated by Watts. Similarities between Watts' and Gibbons' translation can be quite striking as the following opening lines of Lyr. I 19 prove:

The beauty of my native land
Immortal love inspires;
I burn, I burn with strong desires,
And sigh, and wait the high command[32].

The Beauty of my native Land
My gazing Sight admires:
I feel the warmest Wishes rise,
Enkindled by its Fires[33].

The case of Gibbons is the more interesting as the preacher apparently had serious problems with following the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal". In June 1769, Gibbons published in "The Universal Magazine", under the pseudonym T.G., which he used when publishing his translations in various magazines, a translation of Lyr. I 2 entitled *Vicissitude, or the Mutability of Human Things. Casimir, B. I. Ode 2. To a Friend*[34], which he three years later reprinted in his book without one of the two original footnotes[35]. There was nothing striking about the translation apart from the fact that it had been the work of Mary Masters (1694–1771),

---

[31] J.H. Thomson, *Thomas Gibbons*, [in:] *Oxford Dictionary...* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10600 (accessed online 16 April 2009).

[32] I. Watts, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 367.

[33] T. Gibbons, *The Christian Minister, in Three Poetic Epistles to Philander. To which are added, I. Poetical Versions of several Parts of Scripture. II. Translations of Poems from Greek and Latin Writers, And, III. Original Pieces, chiefly in Verse, on various Occasions, By Thomas Gibbons, D.D.*, London 1772, p. 107.

[34] T. G[ibbons], *Vicissitude, or the Mutability of Human Things. Casimir, B. I. Ode 2. To a Friend*, "Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure" 308 (1769), p. 321.

[35] T. Gibbons, *The Christian Minister...*, p. 105.

who had published it in 1755 in her volume *Familiar Letters and Poems on Several Occasions*[36]. It is the more thought-provoking that Gibbons plagiarized the poem while the poetess was still alive, although well advanced in years, and they could actually have known each other. They most certainly had common friends, including Dr Samuel Johnson himself[37].

The selection of poems chosen by the poets listed above emerges as surprisingly uniform and most certainly it was not a matter of chance. The majority of them, eleven out of nineteen original poems by Sarbiewski, had been translated earlier during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms (1642–1649) by such Royalist poets as George Hils, Henry Vaughan, and Richard Lovelace[38]. The common element which these poets found so attractive was their Neostoicism, a philosophy which saturates a large part of Sarbiewski's oeuvre. The political situation in which victories were soon followed by failures, and conflict lasting for fifty years ended in a *de facto* truce fitted perfectly the vision of the world presented by the Neo-Stoics. The Royalists as well as the dissenters wrote their translations immediately after their defeats and both groups sought consolation in the Neostoic works of Sarbiewski[39].

The poets were especially interested in escapist texts, with particular attention paid to descriptions of ecstatic experiences, such as leaving the Earth and flying towards Heaven in Lyr. I 19 and II 5. The latter long poem seemed especially attractive as four out of six poets (Watts, Hughes, Steele, and Gibbons) attempted translations. It should be noted here, however, that the popularity of the poem greatly exceeded Watts' circle, we know four more translations from the same period, written by John Norris (1657–1711), Aaron Hill (1685–1750), Joshua Dinsdale (died c. 1750), as well as an anonymous translation published in the November issue of "The London Magazine" in 1738.

---

[36] M. Masters, *Familiar Letters and Poems on Several Occasions*, London 1755, pp. 167–170.

[37] Plagiarism was actually an important issue in 18th century England, cf. R. Terry, *The Plagiarism Allegation in English Literature from Butler to Sterne*, Basingstoke 2010, pp. 10–45.

[38] Their translations were discussed by Urbański (*op. cit.*, pp. 193–196), Money (*op. cit.*, pp. 160–174), and Fordoński *The Subversive Power of Father Matthias. The Poetry of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski as Vehicle for Political Propaganda in England of the 17th Century*), [in:] *Crossroads in Literature and Culture*, ed. J. Fabiszak, E. Urbaniak-Rybicka and B. Wolski (in press).

[39] P. Urbański, *op. cit.*, pp. 97–114.

The image of the ideal, or at least desirable, world which can be found in the dissenting translations of Sarbiewski is first of all keeping constancy (*Constantia*) worthy of a sage[40]. We can find examples in such poems as *Seeking a Divine Calm in a Restless World*, a translation of Lyr. IV 28 and *To the Discontented and Unquiet*, a translation of Lyr. IV 15 by Watts, as well as *Fortitude*, Gibbons' translation of Lyr. III 4, initially entitled *Constance*. The purpose is opposing inconstancy symbolized e.g. by the cicada from Say's translation of Lyr. IV 23 *An Emblem of the Shortness of Human Pleasure: To the Grasshopper*. The only consolation is hope for the posthumous glory and recognition which can outlast us. It is presented in the poem *To William Blackbourn, Esq*, Watts' translation of Lyr. II 2 which ends in the following words:

> The man that has his country's sacred tears
> Bedewing his cold hearse, has lived his day;
> Thus, Blackbourn, we should leave our names our heirs;
> Old time and waning moons sweep all the rest away[41].

In Duncombe's translation the same lines are as follows:

> Long has he liv'd, around whose Urn
> His friends with pious Sorrow mourn.
> To Memory your Fame convey;
> All else the greedy Moons will snatch away[42].

The only true hope awaits man only after death when they can leave the Earth and move to their "native land" as both Watts and Gibbons, in their translations of Lyr. I 19 quoted above, call Paradise. A temporary consolation can be achieved by a dream vision of Paradise such as that presented in Gibbons' adaptation of Lyr. I 19 entitled *The Nocturnal Elevation*.

Watts ended the passage on Sarbiewski in his introduction to the 1709 edition of *Horae Lyricae* with the following words: "I wish some English pen would import more of his treasures, and bless our nation"[43]. The examples mentioned above prove that he actively propagated Sarbiewski's

---

[40] It must be noted here that the range of subject matters of the Polish poet is much broader.

[41] I. Watts, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 390.

[42] G. Jeffreys, *Miscellanies in Verse and Prose*, London 1753, p. XII.

[43] I. Watts, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. XX.

poetry among the circle of his friends and associates. The fruit of his efforts are twenty-six translations of nineteen various odes of Sarbiewski written by six poets. Watts probably wished for more but concentrated himself on writing religious hymns (he is credited with writing as many as 750), philosophical treatises, and school manuals. Say did not continue writing any poetry in his adult life. Hughes, probably the second best candidate after Watts to translate Sarbiewski, on the one hand did not respect the Polish poet sufficiently, while on the other hand preferred to concentrate on literary texts more likely to bring him the fame and fortune he desired. Among the remaining three dissenting poets only Gibbons attempted to accept Watts' challenge, yet he apparently lacked either talent or time to "import [for the English nation] more of [Sarbiewski's] treasures".

It is quite obvious that the effects of Watts' efforts greatly exceeded the circle of his friends and fellow dissenters. After very few translations from Sarbiewski published in the last three decades of the 17th century, the beginning of the 18th century was surprisingly bountiful in this respect. Watts was generally read and respected, his fame as a poet and philosopher was by no means limited to the dissenters. We can mention at least seven translators who were not connected to the dissenting circles (John Norris, Thomas Yalden, Aaron Hill, Mary Masters, and Henry Price, however, there were also several anonymous translators publishing their works in various magazines and collections), who left numerous translations of Sarbiewski. Also among the dissenters Watts' influence seems to have had surprisingly long-lasting effects which can be proven by two anonymous translations published in the "Methodist Magazine" in March 1809.

The translations written in Watts' circle are far from being of uniformly high quality. Among their authors there are both first rate poets and quite mediocre writers. The translations may not meet the standards of our times, they depart both from the content and form of the originals that it is quite difficult to see many of them as translations. They are rather emulations, imitations, or paraphrases. The translators themselves often made it clear in their very titles by adding to them such words as "imitated", "translated with large additions", "imitated partly", "in imitation of", "occasioned by", or "imitated and enlarged". Watts openly confessed to his tendency to shorten or, more often, lengthen the original poems. Other poets did not leave any comments on their work but they generally followed suit, giving us additional information on the conventions applied by

translators in the early 18th century but not really making Sarbiewski more readily accessible to British readers of our times.

All these reservations should not change the fact that apart from their literary merits, all these texts are an important source of knowledge about the era, milieu, its spiritual needs, intellectual pursuits, as well as, which may be the most surprising if we consider the conventional image of English dissenters, their openness to influences coming from seemingly most distant and alien sources.

Summary

The article presents historical, literary, religious and political context in which interest in the poetry of the Baroque Neo-Latin poet Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595–1640) appeared in the first half of the 18th century among English dissenters and non-conformists. The article concentrates on the best known and most prolific of the six dissenting translators of Sarbiewski Isaac Watts (1674–1748) and his pupil and biographer Thomas Gibbons (1720–1785). The article includes a brief presentation of the translated poems of Sarbiewski and their translators.

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia historyczny, literacki, religijny i polityczny kontekst zainteresowania, jakim cieszyła się twórczość Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego (1595–1640) wśród dysydentów i nonkonformistów w Anglii w I poł. XVIII w. Autor skupia się na najbardziej znanych i płodnych spośród sześciu dysydenckich tłumaczy Sarbiewskiego: Isaaku Wattsie (1674–1748) oraz jego wychowanku i biografiście Thomasie Gibbonsie (1720–1785). Artykuł zawiera krótkie omówienie przekładów wierszy Sarbiewskiego oraz sylwetek tłumaczy.