

Elwira Buszewicz

Declassicization of the Horatian Ode in the Polish-Latin Poetry of the Seventeenth Century

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The Latin Horatian ode seems to be a supremely classical genre. Is it then possible—and if so, then how—to declassicize it? Or, to put it another way, did the tendencies to deviate from generic rigor that were evident in the literature of the seventeenth century in many regions of Europe encompass the Polish-Latin lyric poetry as well? And if that is the case, then what symptoms of that divergence can we pinpoint? And, furthermore, in what way—if any—is this tendency in lyric poetry associated with an evolution or transformations of the genre itself?

In her canonical book on the early modern ode, published more than half a century ago, Carol Maddison argues that such tendencies did in fact exist. The scholar shows these changes in the case of English literature, dating them as far back as the end of the sixteenth century. She identifies their most characteristic feature in favoring eccentric forms, that is: those that are extravagant and surprise us with some modification rather than being typical.¹ As a prime example, Maddison cites the *Poematum liber* collection by Richard Willis (or Willes). The first important phenomenon here seems to be a shift towards pattern poetry: the poems by Willis at the beginning of the collection take a variety of shapes, including numerous maze poems; they are followed by an overview of “illustrative” forms of lyric poetry and verse, which towards the end give way to a presentation of “epimicton,” a kind of composition enabling the poet to stray from the classical form

¹ “Perhaps the most important characteristic of the late developing Anglo-Latin lyric is its preoccupation with eccentricities of form.” C. Maddison, *Apollo and the Nine. A History of the Ode* (Baltimore, MD, 1960), p. 331.

of the ode through various meter combinations, that is by mixing distinct kinds of verse schemes within a single poem:

Willis's *Poematum Liber* (1573) begins with a series of poems in symbolic shapes, altars, wings, swords, pastoral pipes, etc. Then there are illustrations of the various types of lyric poetry, odes, hymns, dramatic choruses, etc., and of the various appropriate metres, hexameters, sapphics, iambics, hendecasyllabics, glyconics, different kinds of couplets, sapphic and alcaic stanzas, and riming verse. The book concludes with a description of "epimicton" and examples of mixed metres in Greek and in Latin, e.g., a dactylic hexameter coupled with a dactylic pentameter and an iambic senarius.²

The last proposal indicates a shift towards "declassicization" of the ode, which thus becomes less restricted by form: it may now comprise various meters characteristic for Horace's *Odes* that are, however, used in non-Horatian stanzas; it may even take a kind of Pindaric-Horatian form as can be seen in John Milton's last Latin poem, "Ad Ioannem Rousium." The ode addressed to John Rouse, the librarian of the Bodleian, combines the structure of the strophe, antistrophe, and epode characteristic for Pindar with a large degree of freedom and variety of versification.³

Another possibility for the development of non-classical Latin odes that Maddison points out encompasses strophic poems made up of stanzas that combine verses structured according to classical rules but in ways unknown to Horace's poetic practice, and therefore lacking the stamp of his authority. Some translators of Edmund Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* into Latin employed this technique.⁴

To get a better perspective on the Latin ode in the seventeenth-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, we will take a look at the printed cycles of Latin odes exclusively. We have at least four such corpora: a clearly Horatian collection by Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, a compositionally innovative volume by Albert Ines, a volume by Andrzej Kanon that harks back to the Venusian poet's compositions, and a collection by a lesser known Carmelite poet, Eliseus of St Mary, which follows the same model only apparently.⁵

² Maddison, *Apollo*, p. 331.

³ "It is an experimental ode of consummate art and originality in which Milton sought to imitate the mixed formalism and freedom of Pindar while retaining the strophe-antistrophe-epode structure"—see M. O'Neill (ed.), *The Cambridge History of English Poetry* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 247.

⁴ "The second type of non-classical Latin verse is made up of a series of identical stanzas, the stanzas themselves being composed of novel combinations of correct classical lines. Such verse was used in the Latin translations of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*." Maddison, *Apollo*, p. 333.

⁵ We still know little about him. He dedicated his volume to Jerzy Lubomirski. Anna Nowicka-Struska has reminded us recently of an old opinion regarding him: "In lyrics he sings praises to the most efficient benefactors and church founders of his religious order; in the epigrams—the life of St Teresa, and at the end, there are praises that poets of the Cracow Academy wrote about

2. IN WHOSE FOOTSTEPS? AUTHORS AND MASTERS

It seems that “classicality” necessarily involves a genre-focused approach and entails the choice of a model worthy of imitating. This was how the problem was presented in school poetics, as it was taught at the Vilnius Academy and Jesuit schools. Thus, we can read, for example:

Imitatio supponit lectionem Authorum quae si defuerit, tam poeta quam orator nihil praeter nomen habebit. Iam vero ad lectionem fructuose instituendam ante omnia supponimus eligendum esse talem Authorem qui nullis scateat erroribus. Quales sunt in poemate Virgilius, Lucanus, Claudianus, Statius, in elegia Ovidius ... in epigrammate Martialis, Ines, in lyricis Horatius et noster Sarbiewius.⁶

As we can see, Sarbiewski has been named a “classic of the genre” of Horatian ode. And clearly the Christian Horace, caught in-between classicism and conceitism, did gravitate towards classicism despite being later criticized for “aberrations of exaggeration,” fits of “barbaric madness,” or unnecessary borrowings from “some Statius, or some Claudian.”⁷ But Sarbiewski certainly tried in his odes to adhere to the rigor demanded by the principles of *varietas* (both metric and thematic) and *brevitas* (the bounds of which, however, he occasionally overstepped). His adherence to the Horatian model was likewise expressed in his vocabulary, including the names of addressees, which were often stylized to sound like Latin or fictitious ones and were accompanied, more often than not, by some suggestion as to how they ought to be interpreted.⁸ As far as versification was concerned, Sarbiewski also remained faithful to Horace’s metric structures: nearly all metric schemes used by the Jesuit poet had been employed by his ancient predecessor. Moreover, Sarbiewski even tried to retain similar preferences and proportions. He rarely experimented; for example, he transposed the stanza structures of Horace’s epodes onto odes. The only exception was Epode 7, which he composed using meters he took from Claudian.⁹

the author. He had a gift for poetry, and had it not been for the tiresome monotony of nothing but praises on just one subject, the poet could have put his talent to some better use, choosing other topics for his works. Nevertheless, the verse is smooth and easy. He wrote a palinode referring to Jan Kochanowski’s Song 10 of Book I.” M.H. Juszyński, *Dykejonarz poetów polskich*, vol. 1 (Kraków, 1820), p. 74. See A. Nowicka-Struska, *Ex fumo in lucem. Barokowe kaznodziejstwo Andrzeja Kochanowskiego* (Lublin, 2008), p. 165.

⁶ The excerpt comes from an anonymous manuscript treatise on poetics in the collection of the Vilnius universiteto biblioteka, Vilnius, N° F-1395, f. 58b.

⁷ Such criticisms were leveled by abbé J. Delaporte; an excerpt from the French original is quoted by J. Starnawski, “Z dziejów sławy Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego,” in *W świetle barokowym* (Łódź, 1992), p. 49.

⁸ See E. Buszewicz, *Sarmacki Horacy. Imitacja – Gatunek – Styl. Rzecz o liryce Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego* (Kraków, 2006), p. 157.

⁹ Buszewicz, *Sarmacki Horacy*, p. 94.

The issue of incorporating a book of epodes into a book of odes involves a kind of “hyper-classicism” stemming from the need of adhering to the model of four books of songs, a book of epodes, and *Carmen saeculare*. In practice, it meant that, firstly, some epode meters passed into the books of lyrics and *vice versa*, and, secondly, it opened up some room for experimentation in the book of epodes, even though, as we have seen, the experimentation in Sarbiewski’s case was limited to just a single epode.

A clear tendency among Sarbiewski’s successors to declassicize their collections of Latin lyrics becomes apparent in their declarations of abandoning the model set by the master.

The first author to be aware of the difficulties of attempting to put together a collection of lyrics “after Sarbiewski” was Kanon. He gave a traditional title¹⁰ to his collection of lyrical poems (with a minor alteration as a result of which the part consisting of lyrics and epodes was supplemented not only with epigrams, as it had been in Sarbiewski’s case, but also with longer hexametric poems, elegiac pieces, etc.).

Kanon declares his admiration for Sarbiewski and the poetic model he has set for neo-Latin lyric poetry, but he clearly admits that he cannot match this ideal. In other words, Kanon asks both his readers and his patron, Bishop of Przemyśl, Aleksander Trzebiński (d. 1644), for forgiveness that, for various reasons, it may be difficult for his lyrics to measure up to the classical model of excellence. Firstly, as he explains to Bishop Trzebiński, the star of the poet of Sarbiewo has faded out too quickly,¹¹ and his poetic brilliance, reinforced by the authority of Pope Urban VIII, has left all his imitators lost for words. Using a bird metaphor, Kanon juxtaposes the traditional tropes of a great poet and his inept epigones (a screeching flock of birds in comparison with a singing swan):

Sedens tristi super aggere, caram libo animam et *magni tumulis accanto Magistri*.¹² Neque tamen me meae tenuitatis coepit oblivio, ut non perspiciam, quam longe absim ab illo apice lyricorum neque tam immodicus et pertinax rerum mearum aestimator sum, ut non sentiam importuno me clangore obstrepere vocalissimo olo, qui de Vaticani iam pridem Oraculi securus iudicio, omnem deinceps curam et cogitationem audendi quidpiam in eo genere caeteris eximisse visus est, iniecto dumtaxat desiderio imitandi.¹³

¹⁰ A. Kanon, *Lycorum libri IV, Epodon liber unus et alter poematum continens Lechica Admiranda ceteraque miscellanea* (Cracoviae, 1643).

¹¹ “Quem utinam Tibi diu incolumem laudare fruique consuetudine, mihi colere, venerari ac suspicere licuisset, mihi inquam qui quae olim de suo Papinius Marone, idem aequius de Casimiro Sarbievio parentantis more occinam,” Kanon, *Lycorum libri*, f. [+2v].

¹² Cf. Statius, *Silvae*, IV, 4: “en egomet ... /... ubi Ausonio se condidit hospita portu / Parthenope, tenuous ignavo pollice chordas / pulso Maroneique sedens in margine templi / sumo animum et magni tumulis adcanto magistri.”

¹³ Kanon, *Lycorum libri*, f. [+3].

The stress is put on the difficulty of equaling the achievements of the great poet who has reached pure perfection; such awareness usually results in rejecting the model of unattainable excellence, but the poet seems to be wittingly and willingly taking the path of epigonism, which, as we are about to find out, can also be seen in his lyrics.

Another Jesuit, Ines published his volume of lyrics fifteen years after Sarbiewski's death. For this reason, he felt obliged to justify his own creative choices, namely the limits he set for his poetic imitation. He did so by employing a familiar and beautiful bird metaphor, adapting for his purpose the words of Rupert of Deutz about St Augustine:

Velut grandis aquila praevolavit ... Sarbievius; nos eadem quidem via, sed non omnino iisdem (addo ego ex meae tenuitatis conscientia: omnino non iisdem) vestigiis subsequenitemur.¹⁴

The decision to take a different path influenced, among other things, the title of the collection, which had nothing to do with the Horatian tradition and instead belongs to the language of military metaphors favored by the Baroque:

Titulum tot iam calamis et ingeniis nobilitatum opellae meae praefixi maluique in centurias lyricorum quam in 4 lyricorum libros et quintum epodon odas meas compingere, tum ut ita longius ab invidiosa praesidentis aemulationionis suspicione abessem, tum ne viam mihi praecluderem ad ea, quae adhuc supremam manum expectant lyrica, tuae humanitati, si haec non improbaveris, postmodum afferenda. Immo toto regno, dum haec typis aptantur, bellicis delectibus circumsonante, ne ipsa quidem poesis, nisi militari nomine centuriata, tuto prodiret in lucem.¹⁵

Ines justifies his choice, on the one hand, with the topos of modesty (a feeble quill is ill-fitted for flying where eagles fly; moreover, an attempt at rivalry might appear ridiculous). But, on the other hand, it is precisely this decision that opens up some room for freedom and makes it possible to put forth the claim that the author's own—and not his predecessor's—conception is more in tune with the spirit of the times, and with society's expectations. Yet another margin for freedom opens up through a non-committed declaration of willingness to produce a subsequent, perhaps more mature and more classical, collection if this one gains the readers' approval.

¹⁴ A. Ines, *Lyricorum Centuria I. Politicis, Ethicis, Poeticis axiomatibus ac problematibus instructa* (Dantisci, 1655), f. 5r. See also A. Borysowska, "Poezja Alberta Inesa," in K. Meller (ed.), *Klasycyzm. Estetyka – doktryna literacka – antropologia* (Warszawa, 2009), pp. 197–200. For a broader study on Ines, which touches on this subject as well, see A. Borysowska, *Jezuicki vates Marianus. Konterfekt osobowy i literacki Alberta Inesa (1619–1658)* (Warszawa, 2010).

¹⁵ Ines, *Lyricorum Centuria*, f. 5r.

The Carmelite poet Father Eliseus of St Mary published his volume of lyrics some time before Ines and also employed Sarbiewski's solutions in his poetry.¹⁶ He did not, however, think it appropriate to define his poetry in relation to this model; instead, he chose the persona of St Teresa of Avila as a thematic dominant of his collection and backed his choice of meter, as such necessarily related to the concepts of number and measure, with a conceited justification, which was indeed quite surprising:

Equidem fateor erga Matrem Theressiam, innumera Dei beneficia, me numeris meis limitatis minime comprehendere valuisse neque ipsum id attentasse; numerice tamen procedure volui, quoniam Dei ter maximi Universum hoc (iuxta Platonis arbitratum) ad numeros fabricantis primum opus mensura est et numerus, ipsa Dei Sapientia attestante Deum Praepotentem in mensura, numero ac pondere disposuisse omnia, produxisse. Perinde numerus admirabile Dei opus est, infinitatem redolens, ordinem, rerum animam, visceribus suis introcludens.¹⁷

Based on this, one might gather that the only "classical" authority in poetry referred to therein is the Wisdom of God, the first Creator of numerical principles. As we are about to find out, the "number and measure" are the strongest binding components that tie the cycle (though not in its entirety) to the tradition of Horace and Sarbiewski.

3. THE PATHS OF DECLASSICIZATION. A HANDFUL OF EXAMPLES

Let us then show how the authors of the lyric collections enter "the paths of declassicization," so to speak.¹⁸ When it comes to Kanon's poetry, even the first ode in his collection belongs to the "repetition with a difference" category. The Jesuit poet begins with an ode addressed to Pope Urban

¹⁶ Eliseus a S. Maria, *De Vita, gestis ac miraculis S. Matris nostrae Theressiae a Jesu Seraphicae Virginis Lyricorum Libri IV, Epodon Liber unus Duoque Epigrammatum* (Cracoviae: in Officina Christoph[ori] Schedelii S[acrae]. R[egiae]. M[aiestatis]. Typogr[aphi], 1650).

¹⁷ Eliseus, *De Vita*, f. *3r.

¹⁸ Among phenomena indicating declassicization of the ode, I count every feature that deviates from the formula devised by Horace and from its Christian imitation, or "parody," which constituted the epitome of classicality for the seventeenth-century poets of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This includes, among other things, excessive length of particular poems, disturbance of clarity and harmony, metric experiments, and visual effects. Another aspect of this process is manifested by innovations in the composition of lyric collections, i.e.: divergence from the required four books of odes, one book of epodes and *Carmen saeculare*, or a seeming adherence to the model, coupled, however, with the practice of including into the collection some pieces of verse metrically incompatible with the Horatian tradition. As far as subject matter is concerned, I see symptoms of declassicization in the abandonment of the *varietas* principle and providing a collection with some dominant theme instead; as well as in any definite preference for local problems over universal ones.

VIII. The poem is reminiscent of some of Sarbiewski's work; for example, "[cetui hospitioque divum] Urbane quondam debite, Maxime"¹⁹ echoes the first line of Sarbiewski's: "Urbane, regum maxime, maxime [Urbane vatum]."²⁰ Even a cursory reading of the ode reveals that it does not add much to the panegyric imagery of a Christian monarch that was coined in Sarbiewski's times. Moreover, the ode steers away from universal contexts towards narrower and more specific ones: Maffeo Barberini's pontificate is seen from the perspective of the centennial of the Jesuit order (*Loiolianae felicitatis*), and the Bishop of Rome is being portrayed mostly as the order's benefactor; praise for the generous patronage is coupled with a declaration of loyalty and obedience made on behalf of the Order. The four books of odes do not venture beyond the limits of panegyric and occasional verse, consisting mostly of panegyrics extolling dead or living luminaries of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Christian world—particularly the Jesuits (the books feature mini cycles on consecutive superior generals of the Order and Ignatius Loyola's companions). Interestingly enough, the collection also includes laudatory portrayals of pious women of powerful houses, benefactresses of the Society of Jesus. The book of epodes does not stand out thematically from the rest and, apart from poems metrically similar to Horatian iambic compositions, contains lyrical stanzas as well. The principle of thematic *varietas* is clearly suppressed, and the poet does not employ the wide array of rhetorical functions found in Horace's or Sarbiewski's poetry. He is, however, rather consistent in using Horatian meters,²¹ adapting many proper nouns in accordance with the rules of Latin prosody, which sometimes results in constructions that are impossible to read for someone without any command of Polish (e.g. *tellus Leszczynia*). The collection by Kanon, in many respects extraordinarily interesting for today's philologist or cultural historian, is evidence of the process described by Agnieszka Borysowska: "As time went by, Jesuit authors trying their hand at modern lyric poetry in the Horatian vein lost direct link with Horace's poetry and limited themselves just to metric rules."²²

In the volume by Ines, compositional innovativeness is combined with metric variety. The century of odes includes, for instance, poems composed in epodic distichs. Ode LII "Ad Virginem Matrem Auroram suam" belongs to this group. Additionally, the poet also uses Claudian's metric model, called

¹⁹ Kanon, *Lycorum libri*, f. Ar.

²⁰ M.K. Sarbiewski, *Lycorum libri quattuor, Epodon liber unus alterque epigrammatum*, I:3 (Antverpiae, 1632), f. 5.

²¹ He is rather consistent, but not without exception. See e.g. "Ode" 8 of Book I, written in elegiac couplets and addressed to the Abbot of Tyniec, Andrzej Leszczyński.

²² Borysowska, "Poezja Alberta Inesa," p. 200.

“dithyramb” in Sarbiewski’s work.²³ In Ines’s collection, the dithyramb is represented by Ode LXXVII devoted to the Virgin Mary. Nonetheless, the leeway that Ines allows himself for experimentation is somewhat limited; solutions characteristic for Horace decidedly dominate here. Thematic variety, even though the poet declares himself to be a *vates Marianus*, seems much closer to the scale of Sarbiewski than to Kanon’s. Yet although it is difficult to put one’s finger on it, one occasionally gets an impression that the measured structures of Ines’s odes show strain from internal pressure.²⁴ It may have something to do with the subject matter implying a specific vocabulary, as a result of which some odes acquire a distinctly local coloring, referring to what is local and specific rather than to broad European horizons. This is what happens, for example, with Ode XCI, which promotes traditional Slavonic names,²⁵ full of symbolic meanings and resounding with the glory of olden heroes (“In eos qui exoticis ac inusitatis nominibus delectantur”), and with Ode XV “In Aquilam Polonam,” where a pantheon of national heroes has been squeezed into Alcaic stanzas:

Hinc palma duplici digna ZAMOSCIUS
 Stringat laurigero tempora vinculo
 Hinc ZOLKIEVIUS ipsas
 Inter vividior neces.
 Quid CHODKIEVICIIS patria Gryphibus
 Quantum SRZENIAVIO Lechia flumini
 Et KONIECPOLIANO
 Marti debuerit, cane.²⁶

Some of the strains on the classical structures are even more difficult to pinpoint; some poems do seem, however, “permeated with an air of ennui, shadowed by melancholy.”²⁷ Thus, for example, in Ode LXXXVII, which tells of longing for a nap that might bring some respite after a tiresome [?] theological lecture, the lyrical “I,” which to a large extent can be identified with the poet, falls at the feet of the Holy Virgin and begs the Divine Child in her lap for the gift of sleep; a parenthetical interjection repudiating pagan worship, even in the symbolic sphere, breaks up a collocation, and the “sweet”

²³ See Sarbiewski, *Lyricorum libri*, f. 224: “Aquilae Radiviliae nuptialis pompa. Ad Praesulem Vilmensem dithyrambus.”

²⁴ I discussed it in E. Buszewicz, “Klasycyzm w literaturze staropolskiej,” in K. Meller (ed.), *Klasycyzm. Estetyka – doktryna literacka – antropologia* (Warszawa, 2009), pp. 94–95.

²⁵ MIECISLAUS, VLADISLAUS, PRAEMISLAUS, LESCUS, PIASTUS, ZIEMOMISLUS, and so on. See Ines, *Lyricorum Centuria*, pp. 153–155.

²⁶ Ines, *Lyricorum Centuria*, p. 31. The names are originally in capitals. The ode also includes: CHMIELECIO, VISNIEWECIO, KAZANOVII, TYSZKIEWICII, OSTROROGOS, LANCKORONIOS, KORECIOS, GASIEVIOS, SIENIAVIUM.

²⁷ Buszewicz, “Klasycyzm,” p. 95.

exaltation of style characteristic for Jesuit religious poetry, and reminiscent of some of Sarbiewski's work, evokes perhaps even more forcefully the style of Jacobus Pontanus or of his Neapolitan master:²⁸

O qui liligero Virginis in sinu
 Blandum, pupe, cubas, tu mihi languida
 (Virgam Mercurii temno) oculi vitra
 Dulci sparge papavere.²⁹

As has already been mentioned, Father Eliseus of St Mary published his volume a few years before Ines's *Centuria*. He decided on a "classical" title (*Lycorum libri quattuor, epodon liber unus duoque epigrammatum*), complementing his collection of lyrics with epigrams just as Sarbiewski had done. But the first part of the title clearly indicates that we are dealing with a "unified unity" rather than with a "multiple unity" here.³⁰ The poet declares Teresa of Avila to be the patron of this cycle, and when we take a closer look at the pieces of verse it contains, we can see that the ones that do not refer directly to the saint deal, at least, with the Carmelite order and its activity in Poland and Europe; and if the odes happen to belong to the *genus demonstrativum* and celebrate dead or living monarchs then it is added, at least in passing, that the monarchs in question should be regarded as protectors of the Carmel. The subject matter has thus been narrowed down in much the same way as in the case of Kanon's work: just as his collection can be called "Jesuit," this volume can be considered "Carmelite." Some exceptions may be found, especially in Book I, where particular odes refer to the Christian tradition in general, like the ode honoring St Jerome, which I will analyze in detail further on. Nonetheless, the first book of lyrics is a much more ambitious undertaking: it sketches out a political and religious cosmos, setting up the stage onto which representatives of the order will enter.³¹

²⁸ Sometimes the Jesuit poetry of the 17th century draws directly from *Naeniae* by Giovanni Pontano rather than from the author of *Floridorum*. It is clear in the case of a collection of elegies by Bartolomeo de Rogatis, *Elegiarum libri III* (Romae, 1641). See e.g. Elegy III 28 "Salix": "Ut lacrimas, bone Pupe, tuas bibit arida tellus / ... Quidquid dulce fluens mortales irrigat agros / Dulcescit lacrimis, Pupule blande, tuis" (pp. 252–253). What is interesting, the sleep inducing power of poppy is mentioned here as well, in Elegy III 8 I "Papaver": "Necte soporiferum, Puer, ad tua sarta papaver / Grata soporiferum dona papaver habet" (p. 210).

²⁹ Ines, *Lycorum Centuria*, p. 147.

³⁰ See J. Pelc, *Barok – epoka przeciwieństw* (Warszawa, 1993), p. 38. The scholar is referring to Heinrich Wölfflin's well-known distinction between Renaissance and Baroque art.

³¹ The *carmen saeculare* is addressed to Jesus and Mary. Other odes are about Pope Innocent X (I 1); St Joseph (I 2); St Teresa (I 3); Elijah and Eliseus (I 4 and I 5); St Stanislaus (I 6 and I 7); St Casimir (I 8); St Hyacinth (I 9); St Adalbert (I 10); St Wenceslaus (I 11); St Jerome as representing the Slavs among the Doctors of the Church (I 13); Blessed Salomea and St Kinga of Poland (I 14); Emperor Ferdinand II Habsburg (I 15); King Sigismund III Vasa, under whose reign the history of the Discalced Carmelites in Poland has begun, (I 16); King Vladislaus IV Vasa, who had died before the collection was published, (I 17); King John Casimir (I 18); and

Despite its seemingly classical composition, the volume by Father Eliseus turns out to be much more open to experimentation and prone to venturing down the paths of “declassicization.” Firstly, the odes by the Carmelite poet are usually very long—if written in Alcaic verse, they comprise not just a few, but a dozen or more stanzas. Secondly, they are often peppered with multi-syllable theological terms, defying both clarity and harmony. In consequence, an Alcaic strophe may take the following shape:

Concordialis discrepat unitas
Disiunctioni; Christus Hypostasi
Una coarctans utra, signum
Dividiae dedit interemptae.³²

The lyrical part of the collection contains some experiments as well. Not only do we encounter epodic distichs, but they can also be rhymed. This is exemplified by the Ode on St Jerome (I 13):

Salve, Slavina gente famosissimum
Decus iubarque maximum!
Salve, lucerna christiani nominis,
Columna solitudinis!
Splendore mentis qui iuvas Ecclesiam,
Lucemque reddis perviam!
Lechis propinquus intima propagine
Stygi ferox indagine!
Divinus ore, natione Dalmata
Tuus Liturgus Sarmata!³³

Further in the poem, Jerome is praised as a peace-giver (*Irenarcha*), magnificent orator, and great scholar. Rhymed epodic distich can also be found in other parts of the collection, for example in Ode II 16 that eulogizes the late Agnieszka Tęczyńska Firlejowa.³⁴

Ode III 16, which commemorates the establishing of the Warsaw monastery of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and of St Joseph, consists of epodic distichs as well, this time without rhymes, but it contains instead a visual pun on the eponym of Warsaw:³⁵

Mary who is the addressee of the final prayer for quelling the civil war raging on as a result of the Cossack uprising.

³² Eliseus, *De Vita*, p. 135 (Ode III 19).

³³ Eliseus, *De Vita*, p. 21.

³⁴ Eliseus, *De Vita*, pp. 55–57.

³⁵ Alliterations, paronomasias, and other sound effects do belong in the Horatian formula of the ode, but I take conceits based on the graphic shape of letters to be a “de-Horatizing factor,” thus leading to declassicization of the genre.

Ubi perenne Wars tenet nomen; biceps
 Inverte gramma,³⁶ MARS erit.³⁷

The fourth book of Father Eliseus's lyrics, which opens with a poem dedicated to King Philip III of Spain, is where the declassifying of the ode really gains momentum, especially when it comes to meter. Devoted in whole to St Teresa of Avila, it consists of hymnodical³⁸ poems (in iambic dimeters with the ABAB rhyme scheme) that elaborate on her life and virtues (it also features poetic paraphrases of "golden thoughts" by various theologians about the saint). It suffices to read the first of them (IV 34) aloud to find out just how battle-like and chant-like it sounds. It glorifies St Teresa as a kind of fortress that may protect a Christian against any danger coming from Satan or the world, and she can even be conceived of as a caryatid or pillar that supports both the micro- and macrocosm:

Ruat, ruat cupressina
 Taeda rebellis machina,
 Crux, ardor, enses, bestiae,
 Carnis ruant molestiae!
 Morbi, neces, detractio,
 Deartuata fractio,
 Depressio censoria,
 Ruat Stygis protervia!
 Theresa caelo firmior,
 Atlante forti fortior
 Theresa culmen seriae
 Laudis, columna gloriae.³⁹

The poem has been devised as a poetic commentary on the opinion about St Teresa that is said to have been expressed by Cardinal Gaspar de Borja y Velasco: "Invicti animi exemplum Theressia, divinae caritatis viva ac spirans fax, sanctissimorum dux virorum, muliebris denique virtutis culmen."⁴⁰

Let us quote another such "hymnody," this one praising Teresa's wisdom and bestowing a "doctoral wreath" on her. It is Ode IV 11 "Corolla doctoratus." What is striking about the poem is its outright rejection of pagan authorities: they must stand down and fall silent when faced with the

³⁶ Obviously, "W" is the two-headed letter in question. A similar concept reappeared a few centuries later in "Abecadło" by Julian Tuwim: "W stanęło do góry dnem / I udaje, że jest M." [W has stood upside down / And pretends to be M].

³⁷ Eliseus, *De Vita*, p. 109.

³⁸ The author calls this cycle "Hymnodiae seu metroprosaе" (Eliseus, *De Vita*, p. 138).

³⁹ Eliseus, *De Vita*, p. 162.

⁴⁰ Eliseus, *De Vita*, p. 162.

enormity of divine knowledge. Even hermetic writings, so often appreciated by the clergy, are discredited here:

Magistra virgo! Surgite,
 Quot estis arte caelica
 Praeoccupati! Cedite,
 Phalanx sophorum cepphica!
 Mutesce Sappho garrula,
 Speusyppe frugalis, tace,
 Platonis ora blandula
 Sistant, quiesce Pittace!
 An, Trismegiste, mussitas
 Coram scabrosa commata?
 Theses pudoris inclytas,
 Lauda salutis dogmata!
 Nugae Pelasgorum, satae
 Uliginoso Socrate,
 Integriori cedit
 Arti, Pelasgis abditae!⁴¹

Let us take note of the overarching contrast between the luminosity of St Teresa's heavenly teachings and the muckiness of the earthy teachings of the pagan world. Even respected authorities must admit their defeat, because they are just blunderers in comparison with true wisdom. Between the lines, one can almost hear the question posed by St Paul: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"⁴² as well as its antithetic complement: "For the word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness."⁴³ Obviously, transforming the ode into a medium of Christian persuasion does not necessarily entail relinquishing its classical form. Here, however, the ideas, rhetoric, and versification form a whole that hardly resembles the Horatian lyrical formula; it is closer to the Ambrosian model, only much more exalted and enriched with the precision of rhyme.

Examining the composition of the two "hymnodies," we can see that the poet is liberal in applying various rhyme schemes: in Ode IV 34, he uses rhyme couplets exclusively; in Ode IV 11, only the ultimate four lines of verse are set in pairs, whereas all the other rhymes are alternate.⁴⁴ The book contains sixty-eight poems in total (not counting the dedication poem, which is not numbered and has a different structure). It appears to be

⁴¹ Eliseus, *De Vita*, pp. 144–145.

⁴² 1 Cor. 1:20 (Douay Version).

⁴³ 1 Cor. 1:18 (DV).

⁴⁴ These are not all the combinations we can find. For example, Ode IV 40 has alternate rhymes only, and a few of them are imperfect. Ode IV 68 has the following rhyme scheme: XAAAXBBBXCXC, where "X" stands for no rhyme.

a separate collection within a collection; it stands out both in form and in subject matter. The author did not, however, publish it separately; instead he chose to “smuggle in” his poetic experiment as the fourth book of lyrics. It is worth noting that Eliseus combines his need for innovation with a desire to show off his dexterity in employing various Horatian versification schemes so that the first three books contain, among others, Hipponactean verses, greater sapphics, or *ionicus a minore*.

4. TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

This discussion is merely a report of a few observations that corroborate an intuition that I have had for some time. Presumably, the issue is much more complex and requires that the scope of investigation be broadened. So far we have just taken a look at three large lyric cycles from the mid-seventeenth century. The pieces of verse cited, and subjected to cursory analysis, are meant to serve as a kind of litmus test. Nevertheless, they do suggest that there were indeed some transformations within the “classical” genre, especially as far as cycles of lyrics are concerned, and these point to a process that we can tentatively call “declassicizing.” They also allow a preliminary generalization. The seventeenth-century lyrical poets were aware of the existence of some classical model, which they most often, sometimes even at the level of theoretical reflection, identified with the poetry of Sarbiewski, yet by lauding it with topoi of unattainable ideal they hinted that this model had become unproductive. Sometimes, like Kanon, they declared themselves to be self-aware epigones of the Jesuit master and turned away from his universalistic point of view, neither trying to achieve his excellence nor searching for new solutions. Sometimes, like Ines, they avoided epigonism by searching for a new way of organizing their collections of poems or by changing stylistic features of specific poems. And sometimes they pushed the boundary even further by composing, like Father Eliseus, a whole book of odes that were distinctly “non-classical” and very much unlike the work of the Venusian poet and by adding it to three initial books that were clearly Horatian, at least in terms of versification.

Translated by Jan Hensel