Marta Pszczolińska, "Entry on: Impluvius and Compluvius among Sarmatians [Impluvius et Compluvius apud Sarmatas] by Jerzy Ciechanowicz, Barbara Milewska-Waźbińska", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Katarzyna Marciniak. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1152. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Jerzy Ciechanowicz , Barbara Milewska-Waźbińska

Impluvius and Compluvius among Sarmatians [Impluvius et Compluvius apud Sarmatas]

Poland (1991)

TAGS: Architecture Gladiator Games Horace Latin (Language) Laurel Wreath Neptune Ovid Roman Empire Rome Virgil





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Impluvius and Compluvius among Sarmatians [Impluvius et Compluvius apud Sarmatas]
Country of the First Edition	Poland
Country/countries of popularity	Poland
Original Language	Latin
First Edition Date	1991
First Edition Details	Barbara Milewska, Jerzy Ciechanowicz, *Impluvius et Compluvius apud Sarmatas*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1991, 84 pp.
ISBN	8302045306
Genre	Comics (Graphic works)
Target Audience	Crossover (young adults, people who read and/or study Latin)
Author of the Entry	Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com Katarzyna Marciniak, University of Warsaw, kamar@al.uw.edu.pl

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Creators



Jerzy Ciechanowicz, photograph courtesy of Marta Pszczolińska.

Jerzy Ciechanowicz , 1955 - 1999
(Author, Illustrator)

Jerzy Ciechanowicz (1955–1999) was a classical philologist and Mediterranean archaeologist, alumnus of University of Warsaw. He translated from Greek, Latin and Italian. He translated Latin poetry – as well as classical and humanistic Neo-Latin (e.g., Marco Girolamo Vida *Chess*). He was a keen traveler, journalist and author of many books, short stories, essays, and other publications designed to increase awareness of the classical Greek and Roman culture. His historical essays were based on the archeological and historical interests of the author, published in the press and as independent books which were very popular among the readers (the first edition of *Rzym – ludzie i budowle* [Rome – People and Buildings] was printed in 20 000 copies and then reprinted after two years and again after another year – which is impressive for a non-fictional book about ancient Rome).

Books:

- *Rzym – ludzie i budowle* [Rome – People and Buildings]. Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1987,
- *Medea i czereśnie* [Medea and Cherries]. Warsaw: Krąg, 1994,
- *Cień Minotaura* [The Shadow of the Minotaur]. Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1996,
- *Wędrówki śródziemnomorskie* [Mediterranean Journeys]. Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1999 (see: audiobook, accessed: October 27, 2020).

Sources:

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Profile at sppwarszawa.pl (accessed: October 27, 2020).

humanizm.net.pl (accessed: October 27, 2020).

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Jerzy Ciechanowicz wspomnienie o przyjacielu Halina Postek, Marek Łukasik, Andrzej Dominiczak, youtube.com (accessed: October 27, 2020).

Jerzy Ciechanowicz, *Itaka*, wiw.pl (accessed: October 27, 2020).

Bio prepared by Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl



Photograph courtesy of the Author.

Barbara Milewska-Waźbińska (Author)

Barbara Milewska-Waźbińska is a classical philologist, an alumna of the University of Warsaw. For many years now, she has been associated with the Institute of Classical Philology at the University of Warsaw, where she currently teaches and conducts research as a professor in Renaissance Studies. Her interests include Neo-Latin literature, classical tradition, reception of Antiquity in modern times, as well as comparative aspects of arts in culture. She has published numerous books, also co-edited texts (e.g. *Owidiusz. Twórczość – recepcja – legenda* [Ovid. Works – Reception – Legend] 2006) and scholarly papers. She also publishes popular science articles in the quarterly RSK. *Rynek – Społeczeństwo – Kultura* [Market – Society – Culture]. For over a decade she has been engaged in popularizing Antiquity and its reception among the elderly in the *Wars i Sawa* club in the Old Town Community Centre in Warsaw. She also sits on the committee of the interdisciplinary competition in the knowledge of Classical Antiquity for secondary schools. She also participates in the Annual Science Fair in Warsaw.

Her books include:

- *Sebastiani Fabiani Sulmircensis Acerni "Victoria deorum"*, ed., Wrocław–Warsaw–Cracow etc: Ossolineum, 1986;
- *W kręgu bohaterów spod Wiednia. Rzecz o dwóch łacińskich eposach staropolskich* [In the Circle of Heroes from Vienna. On

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Two Old Polish Epics in Latin], Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki UW, Instytut Filologii Klasycznej, 1998;
- *Owidiusz. Twórczość – recepcja – legenda*, ed., with Juliusz Domański [Ovid. Works – Reception – Legend], Warszawa: Instytut Filologii Klasycznej, 2006;
- *Ars epitaphica. Z problematyki łacińskojęzycznych wierszy nagrobnyc*h [Ars epitaphica. The Issues Related to Latin Poetic Tomb Inscriptions], Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2006;
- *Słońce na tarczy, czyli tajemnice pałacowej fasady* [Sun on the Shield, or the Secrets of the Palace Façade], Warszawa: Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, 2008;
- *W teatrze życia i sławy Jana III Sobieskiego, czyli widowisko wilanowskie*, with Magdalena Górska [In the Theater of Life and Fame of Jan III Sobieski, or a Wilanovian Spectacle], Warszawa: Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, 2010;
- *Poesis artificiosa. Between Theory and Practice*, ed., Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2013.

For a full list of publications, see: ifk.uw.edu.pl (accessed: October 27, 2020) and here: bibliografia.uw.edu.pl (accessed: October 27, 2020).

Sources:

The Institute of Classical Philology UW website (accessed: October 27, 2020).

Interview with the Author.

Bio prepared by Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw, m.pszczolinska@al.uw.edu.pl

Questionnaire

1. What drew you to writing/working with Classical Antiquity, and what challenges did you face in selecting, representing, or

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adapting particular myths or stories?

Everything, I strive to convey, also in popular science form, is associated with my education – I am an alumna of classical philology.

2. Why do you think classical/ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

They are universal themes, connecting generations, as well as people of different nationalities.

3. How do you use your background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University)? What sources are you using? Scholarly work? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

A comic book consisting of Latin text employs a tool directly linked to Antiquity, i.e., the language.

4. What was the pattern of choosing particular quotations and references to certain specific classics and looser interactions with them (I spotted quotations from Horace, Virgil, Caesar, Socrates via Plutarch) – was that an attempt to show the students that the Latin language is still relevant and that, when interwoven into common dialogue, does not have to be a torture of translation, but rather an interesting complement to common speech?

Using quotations from the classical authors is one of the long-established ways of reception of the ancient culture. Introducing this traditional measure of referencing the heritage of the Ancients seemed natural. Besides, it was a lot of fun!

5. Did the inspiration result from your passion for didactics and your care for it to always be at a high level and at the same

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time pleasant for the student?

Together with the Co-Author, we entertained a hope that our joy of writing and drawing would translate into the joy of reading and viewing pleasure.

6. How concerned were you with "accuracy" or "fidelity" to the original? (another way of saying that might be — that I think writers are often more "faithful" to originals in adapting its spirit rather than being tied down at the level of detail — is this something you thought about?). How far were you inspired by the French *Astérix and Obelix*?

What I believe to be valuable in the texts of culture is their multidimensionality, multifunctionality and polysemy. I will not deny that the heroic Gauls were in fact, my inspiration. Alluding to models that have proved themselves to be good is after all the basis of the cultural phenomenon that we call tradition. I am glad to have been able to show my respect to the creators of Astérix and Obelix.

7. Could you say a few words about the cooperation between philologists who share their passion for the ancient culture, the Latin language and a great sense of humour?

Sometimes, I am under the impression that classical philologists are a separate group in the society. We are connected by our particular reception of “ancient time” and “ancient space”. We experience time and space through the language – when we commune (and struggle) with Greek and Latin. We work with the text and primarily strive to understand the sense of any statements, and then, according to them, we judge the ancient authors, heroes as well as the recipients of these works. Reading the classical works in the original language is an inter-generational cooperative experience, which implies respect, but also consideration, equally for the ancient and the contemporary people.

Prepared by Marta Pszczolińska, University of Warsaw,
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Additional information

Summary

Impluvius et Compluvius apud Sarmatas is an amusing story about the journey of two brave Roman soldiers, Impluvius and Compluvius, from Rome to Sarmatia and back again, on the order of Tiberius Claudius Maximus – a fictional emperor of their contemporary world.

On their way to the barbarian Sarmatia, outside of the civilized oikoumene known to Romans, they pass through Assisi, Ancona, Padua, Budapest, go outside the Limes, traverse the Tatras, reach Cracow, and eventually, Warsaw, where they discover that the Polish sovereign is Tiberius Claudius Minimus – the emperor's adversary vanquished in a civil war. He looks very much like Julius Caesar, adores everything Roman, especially poetry, and lives according to Roman fashion in luxury that he hides from his people. The two protagonists meet with extraordinary adventures that they could have never experienced in Rome. They become acquainted with yet unknown realms, both within the Imperium as well as beyond the Limes, but also with interesting characters and their foreign, incomprehensible cultures and customs, so alien in comparison to their own.

Eventually, Minimus influences the protagonists to convince the emperor that Sarmatia is not worthy of becoming a Roman province. Being back in Rome, they describe Sarmatia as a beautiful land, with the inhabitants lazy and slothful, but brave in battle, thus worth trading with, not conquering. So, following the advice of Impluvius and Compluvius, the Roman legions have never attacked Sarmatians.

Analysis

Impluvius et Compluvius apud Sarmatas is a Polish comic book written in Latin, a publication without precedent. Rarely before has anyone come up with the idea of resurrecting the Latin language as the tongue of everyday speech and casual dialogue by publishing an entertaining comic book.

The target audience is young readers, who have already begun learning Latin at school and are at an intermediate level. Yet, even those with a more advanced command of Latin should also enjoy the book. The authors use a relatively simple language, aided by the context provided by illustrations; there is also a short glossary with

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the vocabulary, phrases, expressions, and grammatical structures. Despite the use of genuine quotations from ancient authors, the phrases do not come across as complicated excerpts, such as one could have been forced to suffer during a Latin class at school – instead, they seem to mingle with the plot naturally. The reader, recognizing the famous, familiar phrases, achieves a sense of accomplishment and pride of knowing them beforehand and being able to identify their source or reference. Moreover, the authors' sense of humour allows the reader to overcome the language barrier and give oneself up to the pleasure of reading.

Classical Antiquity showcased by the authors is a natural background for the fictional characters and was described in a typical comic book convention. It is full of wonderful details characteristic of comic drawings (for example, graffiti in Latin or mythology-inspired floor inlays), which add authenticity, entertain, and educate at the same time. Despite overemphasis typical to the genre, Antiquity is still well-established and real in the story, as it relies on the authors' undeniable knowledge and awareness of ancient Rome.

In the first part, before Impluvius and Compluvius embark on the journey, the reader acquires a good idea of Rome, its urban planning and architecture: the Mausoleum of Hadrian, meticulously drawn in its contemporary shape, Palatium Mons, Trajan's Column, Roman temples, basilicas, villas, insulae, taverns and streets. As the travelers proceed with their journey through the Imperium, there are some images of Roman roads and towns, buildings and landmarks. In Assisi (Assisium) – Minerva's temple and amphitheatre, in Ancona – the harbour and the Arch of Trajan, in Padua (Patavium) – a private suburban villa, in Budapest (Aquincum) – amphitheatres with gladiator games taking place and a prefecture of the municipal police. Towards the end, the protagonists traverse the Limes Wall in order to enter the Barbaricum.

Soon after publication, the authors were faced with allegations that their comic book was a Polish version of the *Astérix* series and that it strongly relied on its French predecessor. This similarity, however, is only superficial – the representation of the demarcation between Rome and the neighbouring countries is similar, as is the idea of a pair of main characters – two soldiers, one of whom is small and the other one large. Those are the only aspects linking the two works, and they only demonstrate a kind of conscious inspiration and tribute to

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	Asterix. The originality of the book is undeniable, especially that the narrative arc of the comic events in Sarmatia is also based on the Polish, late-communist reality, in a world of Polish historical and cultural myths (e.g., Poles as the Sarmatians' descendants, Ovid's tomb being situated in Sarmatia, the myth of the Mermaid of Warsaw).
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Architecture Gladiator Games Horace Latin (Language) Laurel Wreath Neptune Ovid Roman Empire Rome Virgil
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Friendship Humour Journeys Propaganda
Further Reading	See the comic books database on the website alejakomiksu (accessed: October 27, 2020). Jerzy Ciechanowicz, *Wędrówki śródziemnomorskie* [audiobook], www.youtube.com (accessed: October 27, 2020). Jerzy Ciechanowicz, *Itaka*, wiw.pl (accessed: October 27, 2020).
Addenda	Before the book was published, a part of the comic was printed in 1988 (in installments) in the now-defunct *The Polish Weekly – Christian and Socio-Cultural Magazine* [Tygodnik polski – chrześcijański tygodnik społeczno-kulturalny] – issues 14/88–22/88. Each published installment was coupled with a contest for the best translation of the Latin text sent to the editor.

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