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Polish-language political prose of the Baroque era: a question about the genre

Summary: The article analyzes the genre features of selected Polish-language political prose from the Baroque period. It examines works of Tomasz Młodzianowski, Szymon Starowolski, Łukasz Opaliński, Eugeniusz Galiatowski, Melecjusz Smotrycki and other writers of that time. The general and individual characteristics of political writings are presented in a form of brochures, sermons, orations, teachings, dialogues etc. The author pays special attention to their thematic diversity – from anti-Turkish literature to Moscow imperial propaganda and examples of the Sarmatian ideology.

Key words: Political brochure, sermon, booklet, baroque period, Sarmatian ideology.

Polskojęzyczna proza polityczna epoki Baroku: pytanie o gatunek

Streszczenie: Artykuł analizuje cechy gatunkowe wybranej politycznej prozy polskojęzycznej z okresu baroku. Poddane badaniu zostały dzie-

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Svitlana Sukhareva, *Polskojęzyczna proza polityczna epoki Baroku: pytanie o gatunek*

ła Tomasza Młodzianowskiego, Szymona Starowolskiego, Łukasza Opalińskiego, Eugeniusza Galatowskiego, Melecjusza Smotryckiego i innych pisarzy tamtych czasów. Ogólne i indywidualne cechy pism politycznych są przedstawiane w formie broszur, kazań, oracji, nauk, dialogów itp. Autorka zwraca szczególną uwagę na ich różnorodność tematyczną – od literatury anty-tureckiej po moskiewską propagandę imperialną i przykłady ideologii sarmackiej.

Słowa-klucze: broszura polityczna, kazanie, broszura, okres baroku, ideologia sarmacka.

Польскоязычная политическая проза эпохи Барокко: к вопросу жанра

Аннотация: В статье представлены жанровые особенности политической польскоязычной прозы барочного периода. Исследованы труды Томаша Млодзяновского, Шимона Старовольского, Лукаша Опалинского, Иоанникия Галятовского, Мелетия Смотрицкого и других писателей того времени. Изложены общие и индивидуальные черты политических писаний, представленных в виде брош.р, проповедей, ораций, поучений, диалогов и т. п. Особое внимание обращено на их тематическое разнообразие – от антитурецкой литературы до московской имперской пропаганды и образцов сарматской идеологии.

Ключевые слова: политический памфлет, проповедь, брошюра, барочный период, сарматская идеология.

Introduction

The discussion presented in this article should open with the clarification of terminology used in research covering the problem stated in the title. The expression "Polish-language literature" is used not without a reason. In previous publications we pointed out the integral character of Baroque prose that appeared in the historic Republic of the Two Nations:

...It is about Polish-language literature rather than exclusively Polish, and these two meanings are not synonymous similar. [...]¹.

The Baroque literature of the bordering nations constituted a united Polish-speaking intertextual system where the national factor played a secondary role. An important part of this system was political prose.

Such scholars as Zenon Kogut, Volodymyr Pylypenko, Czesław Hernas, Piotr Pirecki, Kazimierz Przyboś, Edward Winkler etc., engaged in the research of Polish and Ukrainian literature of Polish-language political prose of the Baroque era, but until now it has not been analysed in generic terms.

Political speeches as a genre developed in the 17th Polish-language prose along with sermons, letters and theological treatises, and let writers and preachers step down from pulpits and to make use of oratory skills elsewhere. Appearances of such type were divided into certain kinds, depending on the political situation of the country and the addressee of the message that would be gentry, members of the royal court, military leaders, magnates of local and national level, known patrons, other politicians and ordinary citizens.

The historiography of the 17th century embraces memorials, political treatises, short stories about wars, sieges, diplomatic disputes, political discussions and chronicles. Typical motifs of the Baroque political prose were discussed by Baronius, Starowolski, Famiano Strada, and Agostino Maskardi, whilst original samples of political speeches were presented in Kazimierz Wojsznarowicz's "Orator polityczny. Weselnym i pogrzebowym służący aktom" (1648). The answer to the question why the title of this work combines two seemingly incompatible domains – the public and the private (funeral and wedding home ceremonies) – is obvious. Politicians, given the oratory weapon that was previously kept in churches, eagerly made use of it whenever there was an occasion to speak before people and discuss current issues. Such occasions quite often arose outside the royal court or senate. A generally accepted and most popular places for political discussions were home-held get-togethers that usually gathered different

¹ S. Suchariewa, *Trójkąt polemiczny: Kasian Sakowicz – Piotr Mohyla – Pachomiusz Wojna Orański*, „Bibliotekarz Podlaski” 2014, nr 29, s. 91.

people not necessarily belonging to a certain family². At the same time, the Polish-language political prose developed in Poland and Ukraine due to the fact that the incorporation of national element into a typically social context was beginning to catch on.

Despite the diversity of the literary make-up of Baroque political prose, the genre as a whole was to a great extent influenced by Piotr Skarga's political treatise "The eight sermons before the Sejm" (pd. „Kazania Sejmowe”). Interestingly, Skarga's "Sermons" went almost unnoticed in his own lifetime, but after his death the sermons became so extremely popular that they outshone all of his other, no less valuable works.

Rev. Piotr Skarga, a Jesuit preacher and writer, advocated strong royal power in Poland, based on the model of the absolute power of God and postulated that the classes (especially the gentry) should be totally subordinated to the king:

A well-known theoretician of counter-reform culture and an initiator of public changes used combined, rather than personality-focused criteria and concentrated on a question who a new Christian knight must become³.

With his symbiosis of politics and divinity guised in the literary version of Biblical rhetoric, Piotr Skarga expressed his enlightening views not only in sermons but also in numerous brochures.

In this context it seems obvious to mention the vision of the state and social system presented in the speeches of Tomasz Młodzianowski. Młodzianowski was aware that the political role of a preacher has a great power. In particular, he noticed that the 17th century Commonwealth resembled the Biblical story of prophet's Daniel interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon. The head of gold represents the king, silver arms – senate, brass body – gentry, iron legs – the army, and his feet of clay symbolize the current condition of the state. The thing is that the legs, supporting the whole figure, are partly iron and partly clay so the whole is partly strong but may easily get broken. In one of his next sermons, Młodzianowski drew the attention of the

² M. Broniewski, *Apokrysis abo odpowiedź na książki o synodzie brzeskim 1596*, red. J. Byliński i J. Długosz, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1994, s. 159.

³ Cz. Hernas, *Literatura baroku*, Warszawa 1999, s. 101.

audience to the fact that the common folk was oppressed cruelly and in miserable condition, the gentry was not able to find a common language with the officials, and the monarch did not deserve trust and devotion of his citizens.

Political views of Młodzianowski fitted squarely into the Baroque system of values, questioning and analysing everything, and claiming the supremacy of the transcendental over the earthly aspect of human life. However, Kazimierz Przyboś noticed the following:

The foundation of Młodzianowski ideas about public structure is postulating its divine origin, based on the Bible, studies of the Church and historical tradition. It was God's will to create the sons of Adam and Eve as not being equal. From the Biblical times this inequality developed and strengthened, however it constantly represented the Divine plan in it – every person could deserve salvation within the limits of their own state⁴.

Polish preachers of the 17th century addressed their speeches to the privileged class of gentry – an active center of community development, grounded in the Sarmatian culture, the tradition of the Polish Crown and religious freedom. For example, Tomasz Młodzianowski underlined the old age of their noble status and its knightly character. In his opinion, the Polish gentry should live “nobly” and follow the chivalric ideals, in which it would serve its basic social function. According to Młodzianowski, a sin against Motherland was the most severe crime. In response to Sarmatian postulates for the improvement of the existing laws, the royal preacher claimed that past customs should be given respect equally to codified regulations. During the coronation of a new candidate to the throne, the laws were modified within the legislative competence of the Sejm (“free” royal elections etc.), but to a certain extent they remained unchanged. It was important that modified legislation should not limit the gentry's privileges, rights or customs.

There emerged two directions of public opposition. The first gravitated towards the Eastern culture that Ukrainians took from *Rzeczpospolita*, while the other was influenced by Moscow. So ‘*Synopsis*’ (1674), whose authorship

⁴ K. Przyboś, *Tomasza Młodzianowskiego SJ wizja państwa i społeczeństwa*, [w:] *Jezuicka ars educandi*, Kraków 1995, s. 199-211.

is by many attributed to Inokentiy Gizel became “the signature phenomenon in the process of «all-Russian» ideology”⁵, as Zenon Kogut had it. Iryna Zhylenko questions the political meaningfulness of this work, seeing continuation of annalist traditions of Kyev-Pechersk Lavra. To her mind, the author of ‘*Synopsis*’ could be Josyf Tryzna. The author of this article supports Zenon Kogut in his claim that ‘*Synopsis*’ was not a Moscow political treatise⁶.

A clear Moscow policy was characteristic of the works and public activity of Joanikiy Galyatovsky and other orthodox writers of the Baroque period. In our opinion, the formation of his views was ideologically affected by the Chernihiv theological seminary Galyatovski belonged to. After the liberation of Europe from Ottoman Turks, the writer saw Moscow as the “saviour” of people. Due to the privileges he was given by Muscovy monarchs, Galyatovsky traditionally dedicated his Polish-language works to them. Symeon Polotskiy, Antoni Rudyvylivskiy, Dmytriy Tuptalo (Dmytro Rostowskiy) and others developed their literary and political activities in the same pro-Moscow way.

Another feature of political preaching was the collaboration with the Cossacks that engaged, for example, an Orthodox theologian Andriy Muzhylovsky, an opponent to Meletiy Smotrytskiy. Importantly, when a Cossack army launched an attack on local Roman Catholics in an attempt to force them to convert to Orthodoxy, prince Konstantin Ostrogsky summoned anti-union synod in Brest in 1596. Ostrogsky was accompanied by a large Cossack army that created a threatening situation for the Union supporters. We can only be surprised by the courage of Piotr Skarga, who under such circumstances dared to come to this convention and contributed to the ratification of the Union.

As might be seen, the Sarmatian and the Sarmatian-Roxolani (Cossacks and Muscovian) public ideals were not identical but they had an influence on the development of Polish-language political prose of the 17th century. Treatises, sermons, texts representing epistolary style, political (more frequently soldierly) chronicles, social-political speeches developed as a result of the political activity of the clergy and prominent Polish and Ukrainian nobles of the Commonwealth.

⁵ З. Когут, *Вплив політики на Інокентія Гізеля та видання кийвського «Синопсису»: нове осмислення*, Гізель І. Вибрані твори: у 3-х т., т. 3, Львів 2010, с. 9.

⁶ Там же, с. 10.

Because of the two basic directions of the development of political Polish-language prose of the Baroque period, it is necessary to focus more closely on the role of author's perspective and stance in the development of this genre and its varieties.

Political dialogue was a special literary form of social character represented by, for example, "Rozmowa Plebana z Ziemianinem" by Łukasz Opaliński (1641).

Political awarenessness of the citizens of the Commonwealth was diversified. On the one hand, the idealization of monarchy and the power of the gentry prevailed over other viewpoints, but on the other there always were brave artists and public figures who pinpointed political misdoing and double-dealing. Opaliński held a different position. Piotr Pirecki, a researcher on Opaliński's works, highlights his distinctiveness in taking up current social motifs⁷.

A similar view on the political landscape can be found in the works of Szymon Starowolski (Simon Starovolscius). Starowolski's writings stand out due to a variety of problems he managed to touch on, as well as to his multifaceted artistic expression. Since most of his works are in Latin (and as would require a separate research), it must be emphasized that what he wrote in Polish is no less valuable. Sadly, Starowolski remains almost unnoticed by Ukrainian scholars.

Starowolski, as a historical figure, is well remembered thanks to the famous painting by Jan Matejko "Szymon Starowolski and Charles Gustav" before the grave of Władysław Lokietek. The painting refers to the period of the Deluge, when the royal court, headed by king John Casimir, was forced to leave the capital. As the legend goes, Szymon Starowolski was one of the few people who stayed in Wawel after Swedish conquerors had entered the city. During the conversation with Charles Gustav, he pointed out the tomb of king Władysław Lokietek ("the Short") and commented: "thrice an exile, thrice returned". Charles Gustav responded bitterly, saying that that "this king [John Casimir] would never return". The canon replied in Latin: "Fortuna variabilis,

⁷ P. Pirecki, *Szlacheckim i ludowym piórem. Szkice o literaturze polskiej doby renesansu i baroku*, Łódź 2013, s. 172.

Deus immutabilis” (“Fortune is variable, God is immutable”, or “Fortune is capricious, God is not”). Individual responsibility for the future of the state, radical views, simplicity and accuracy of expression that was contrary to the common Baroque tendencies of that period would always characterize Starowolski’s writing. At the same time, his works squarely fitted into the literary tradition of political literature of the 17th century.

The main motif in Starowolski’s literary activity was Sarmatia with its political ideal of “golden liberty” that is most noticeable in his speech “Monumenta Sarmatarum, Viam universae carnis Ingressorum”, written in Latin at the end of the writer’s life (1655). Polish-language prose of Starowolski is not less patriotic or less dedicated to Polish Sarmatian ideas. At the same time, the writer criticized social injustice: “Every poorer person is a slave to a richer person” („Paradoksa koronne publice i privatim potrzebne szlachcicowi polskiemu”, 1626).

Starowolski influenced Polish public opinion through his speeches, the most famous of which include “Prawy Rycerz”, “Pobudka albo rada na zniesienie Tatarów Perekopskich”, “Poprawa niektórych obyczajów polskich potocznych wszelkiego stanu i kondycji ludziom wielce potrzebna”, “Reformacja Obyczaiów Polskich. Wszystkim Stanom Ojczyzny naszej, terażniejszych czasów zepsowanych bardzo potrzebna”, and other works published as brochures.

As noticed by the author of this study the main motif of Starowolski’s speeches (or sermons) were two factors – the military capability of Poland and the national and internal security within its territory. Szymon Starowolski postulated the construction of fortresses upon the frontiers and providing troops to man them. The preacher often mentioned slackness infecting the Polish army that lost its chivalric spirit. He took the side of the oppressed peasants by criticizing the lack of discipline and looting among officers and troops, too often engaged in plunder and rape⁸.

Starowolski distinguished four main virtues of a true knight: justice, courage, obedience and moderation. These virtues, as he claimed, should be pursued by all citizens. Patriotism and faith are another two pillars on which he based the public spirit of the Commonwealth. The aforementioned ideological framework defined all speeches written by Szymon Starowolski.

⁸ S. Starowolski, *Prawy Rycerz*, Kraków 1858, s. 20.

Starowolski's work "Dyskurs o monecie" touched on another political topic and showed the economical situation in the country. It mentioned the need for economic balance of the state and stable local currency within its whole territory: "the money made in Lithuania had the same value as the Crown money"⁹. Starowolski also warned against counterfeiting money and proposed solutions that would improve border management and ensure security of internal trade. Special attention should be paid to the reformatory aspects of Szymon Starowolski's works, his participation in the formation of the royal council (king's court) and his influence on the gentry. Szymon Starowolski always remained an orator an outstanding historian, a scholar and a prolific writer. Always in service of his Motherland, he visited the courts of many magnates, including the Chancellor Jan Zamoyski and Bishop Jakub Zadzik. While in the service of the Ostrogski family, he travelled through Western Europe, then he studied and taught at the Kraków Academy (Jagiellonian University).

As a secretary to Hetman Jan Karol Chodkiewicz, he accompanied the commander at the Battle of Khotyn (Chocim) in 1621. Starowolski had connections with many powerful magnate families, i.e. the Ostrogski, the Zamoyski, the Sapieha, the Potocki or the Koniecpolski, and was a tutor to many young nobles.

The question that needs separate discussion is the anti-Turkish attitude in Starowolski's writings ("Polska albo opisanie położenia Królestwa Polskiego", "Discurs o Wojnie Tureckiej", "Dwór Cesarza Tureckiego i Residencia jego w Konstantynopolu" etc.). The writer's interest in the anti-Ottoman policy was to some extent motivated by personal reasons. In his Latin work "Monumenta Sarmatarum...", Szymon Starowolski admits that his brothers fought in the Polish-Ottoman war. Another factor that fuelled the writer's anti-Ottoman attitude was his own war experience: he assisted the Grand Hetman of Lithuania, Jan Karol Chodkiewicz, in the Battle of Khotyn, during which Chodkiewicz lost his life. Starowolski ridiculed the Turkish oppressor, depicted the Ottoman sultan Osman as a tyrant and the most bitter enemy of Christianity, dubbing all Ottomans an "Asian dragon" that would smash Europe.

⁹ Tegoż, *Wybór pism*, przeł. I. Lewandowski, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1991, s. 152-153.

Lamentation motifs in Starowolski's works ("Lament Utrapionej Matki Korony Polskiej, już już konającej na Syny wyrodne, złośliwe i niedbające na rodzicielkę swoją" – "Lament of the Distressed Mother, the Crown, Over her Heartless, Nasty and Uncaring Sons") differ from the laments written by other authors in the fact that they have political implications. In his "Lament", Starowolski deals not only with the traditional image of Mother-Church weeping after the death of her sons, but first of all with Mother-Polonia, the Polish Commonwealth bemoaning her plight whereby the wellbeing of the free republic is compromised by private interests¹⁰. Although Starowolski was preceded by many writers of the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries (including Piotr Skarga, Meletij Smotrycki and the Clergyman (*Kliryk*) of Ostroh in the development of lament as a literary form in the poetry of the epoch, it was Skarga with whom Starowolski shows literary affinity: they both raised political questions. In this, Starowolski followed political writings of Józef Wereszczyński, the Catholic Bishop of Kiev. However, there is a considerable difference between Starowolski and Smotrycki or Kliryk in terms of the semantic structure of a lament.

The central idea of amor patriae in Szymon Starowolski's "Lament..." is expressed in the prologue, in the words mouthed by king Alexey: "To a good citizen, Motherland is valued above life, so he puts public above his private interests". In her comparative study on the Polish-language laments of the Baroque, Monika Nowikow wrote:

Starowolski worries about the future of the Motherland, calls all classes to change their mindsets, to correct their behaviours, he sharply and openly criticizes the Polish nation, the noble class in particular¹¹.

What follows from the above is that Starowolski's objective was an effective social reform rather than political polemics and fruitless confrontation.

¹⁰ Tegoż, *Lament Utrapionej Matki Korony Polskiej, już już konającej na Syny wyrodne, złośliwe i niedbające na rodzicielkę swoją*, Biuletyn Fundacji «Quomodo» im. Króla Stanisława Leszczyńskiego, 2009, Vol. 1. URL: <http://www.quomodo.org.pl/dane/biuletyn/Fides/200901-LAMENT-Starowolski.pdf>. [dostęp: 15.10.2019 r.].

¹¹ M. Nowikow, *Trenos Meletija Smotryckiego i Lament Szymona Starowolskiego*, „Warszawskie Zeszyty Ukrainoznawcze” 1999, z. 8-9, s. 393.

In “*Lament...*”, the Polish gentry is criticized not by an observer representing the author’s views, but by the Crown herself. At the beginning, the dying Mother mournfully refuses her maternal blessing to the malignant and disrespectful sons. She formulates her own epitaph:

Tu Polska leży, złością wyrodków zgubiona, przy niej i złota wolność oraz po-grzebiona. W tymże dole i święta katolicka wiara zakopana i cnota przodków naszych stara. Obłuda i niestworność, swawola zbyteczna, pycha, nieposłuszeństwo i chciwość wszeteczna, wszystkich stanów obłuda i herezje sprośne, a przy tym opresje żołnierskie nieznośne utrapioną Ojczyznę gwałtem umorzyły, jaszczurcza prepotomstwo, matkę swą zabiły. Ty co przemijaszą tędy Czytelniku miły, jeśli cnotę miłujesz, proszę tej mogiły nie mijaj bez wiernych łez, westchnienia gorzkiego, a uzał się serdecznie upadku mojego¹².

The writer used personification and prosopopoeia to give the image of the despairing Mother a new artistic dimension. According to Sergiy Babych, this figure of speech was used in describing moments that were tragic or crucial¹³. Mother-Polonia wants her credits to be seen and valued, as if she spoke before a court of law demanding justice. She founded universities to give her children more than home education, opened schools of chivalry for the Ukrainian gentry, fostered spiritual growth, to mention but a few. What her heartless, nasty and uncaring sons did was disperse throughout Europe to study at Protestant universities, and disregard their Catholic faith. They rejected chivalric virtues and opted for hypocrisy, self-interest, drunkenness, extravagance, greed and inhumane treatment of peasants. Such gross sins would inevitably deserve divine punishment. This was the warning Starowolski wanted to give to his fellow citizens, whom he lovingly called *moi Lachowie*. The piece presents Starowolski’s worst scenarios of the future of the Commonwealth – he predicted the fall of Poland, and his words came true:

¹² S. Starowolski, *Lament Utrapionej Matki...*, dz. cyt.

¹³ С. Бабич, *Модус літературної містифікації в поезії Треносу Мелетія Смотрицького*, „Warszawskie Zeszyty Ukrainoznawcze”, 1999, z. 8-9, s. 379.

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Rozproszą się jako mrówki Lachowie moi, po Szląsku, po Węgrzech, po Wołoszech, po Siedmiogrodzkiej ziemi, a ziemia ich pójdzie na szarpaninę różnym narodom¹⁴.

Composed as a jeremiad, the “*Lament...*” shows clear reference to Biblical prophetism interweaving with lamentational elements. It seems that Starowolski’s standpoint coincided with the position represented by the Old Testament prophets, and for this reason Biblical quotes served as a backdrop to his political vision. Szymon Starowolski believed that the revival of preaching would put the degenerating society back on track, encouraging people to assume the attitude driven by the fear of God. He also stressed the importance of linguistic tradition and criticized the trend of substituting Polish Christian names by fancy names of foreign origin:

Polacy, którzy dobrą przedtem sławę miłując, nazywali się Bogusławami, Władysławami, Strzeżysławami, Stanisławami, Waclawami, etc, a teraz jako się chrzcić imiony cudzoziemskimi poczęli, Maxymilianami, Fryderykami, Ferdynandami, Karolami, tak i wzrostem karłami się rodzić poczęli, i w sławę dobrą zdrobniawszy, już nie swemi zasługami, ale ojcowskimi się dziełami szczyjąc, samych siebie za ludzi godnych i wielkich rozumieją, a drugimi, lubo bogatszymi w cnoty, dla ich chudoby pogardzają, i ich qualitates tłumią, podłyimi je subjektami nazywając, iż nie są tak koło dobrego mienia ciekawi jako oni. Nie pomnią co Paweł święty powiedział¹⁵.

Starowolski’s belief in the improvement of the existing social and political situation, along with the amendment plan that he proposed, were addressed to the noble class, on whom he imposed public responsibility. “*Lament...*” was written in sophisticated style and language that reflected the educational and intellectual level of both the writer himself and his readers. However, he attempted to write lighter, more approachable works in Polish (“Świątница Pańska zamykająca w sobie Kazania na uroczystości świąt całego roku”), but these tackled political issues only to a limited degree.

¹⁴ S. Starowolski, *Lament Utrapionej Matki...*, dz. cyt.

¹⁵ С. Бабич, *Модус літературної містифікації в поезиці Треносу Мелетія Смотрицького*, *Warszawskie Zeszyty Ukrainoznawcze*, T. 8-9, Warszawa 1999, s. 379.

Conclusions

We can determine the main generic features of Polish political prose of the 17th century on the basis of the rhetoric used by Szymon Starowolski and other political writers of the day. All these works are characterized by topics including current state-related issues: duties, privileges, relations with other countries, the Sarmatian ideal, the satiric tone in presentation of national vices, the reasons for lamentation, and the radical image of social hiatus between the classes.

The writers of different Christian denominations or nationalities used similar artistic devices to express their political views and communicate them to the public, but they did that for different reasons and for different purposes.

They oscillated between political dialogues, sermons and speeches, brochures, or prose intermingled with verse – always with a mission in mind. This variety of form, if understood as a quest for the most effective method of representing reality of that time, sheds a light on the history of the country.

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