

BILINGUAL OCCASIONAL POETRY
IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA
(BASED ON THE WRITINGS OF MICHAEL KORYCKI)*

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Bilingual occasional literature of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is a small and little explored part of literary heritage. Parallel texts in Polish were naturally adjoining occasional literature in Latin and lived alongside it from approximately last quarter of the sixteenth century. Bilingual writings are those that along Latin original also carry their Polish versions. The Polish version would usually be a literal translation of the Latin text, however we were also interested, and this became our research subject, in those cases when a work in Polish, called by the author *Toż samo po polsku* (The Same in Polish) or simply *Toż samo*, would actually be different from the Latin text in vocabulary, phraseology or artistic imagery.

The research of the literary genre of the eighteenth century literature in Latin revealed that such parallel texts were most common in epigrams, slightly less in other genres – odes, elegies or epitaphs. Speaking about the authorship of bilingual occasional literature it is noteworthy, that both linguistic versions might have been written either by the same or by different authors, although this did not fundamentally affect semantic or artistic identity.

The article explores bilingual occasional literature of the late eighteenth century using works of Lithuanian born poet, Jesuit Michael Korycki (Michał Korycki, 1714–1781), namely his collection called *Carmina*, compiled and published in Polock in 1871 by the Belarusian Jesuits. The posthumous appearance of the collection was not a random phenomenon. Creative talent of Korycki was highly appreciated during his lifetime; however the publication did not make it in time. For the great literary style the King Stanislaw August Poniatowski presented him with the golden medal of *Merentibus*. The majority of poetry in this collection is written in Latin. Writings only in Polish, or Latin and Polish in parallel, comprise small, but more or less even parts. Comparative study of bilingual poetry enabled to notice that content of the primary text (usually in Latin) in its Polish version could be modified by additions, qualifications or simpler renditions. In other words, differences in vocabulary and style do appear (e.g. ancient imagery

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is replaced with analogies more relevant to current cultural context or more common phrases are used). This change in artistic devices or phraseology often alters emotional atmosphere of the parallel text.

The very existence of the bilingual literature, and its nature, presuppose that the author had an *a priori* idea of writing a text which could be understood by a person of another cultural make-up – perhaps a noble without the classical education, or the wider public. The need to convey the same content in another language is also a witness to vitality of occasional literature and its universally perceived purpose.

Keywords: the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, eighteenth century occasional literature in Latin, bilingual occasional literature, epigram, Michael Korycki.