

Bogumiła Kopec, *The literary of Walenty Gurski*

The late Enlightenment literary of Walenty Gurski, the owner of several villages near Rzeszów city, who, as a side note, was recognized by modern researchers as one of, so called, „forgotten poets”, has not yet been a matter of serious diagnosis research. His artistic achievements consist of six volumes of works published between years 1785 and 1827 in Warsaw, Krakow and Lviv. They contained poems „różne”, epigrams, idylls, odes, fairy tales and comedies of manners, which had its premieres at the Bogusławski and Kaminski theaters both in Warsaw and Lviv between years 1797 and 1800.

The Galician author had tried to break through the mainstream of national culture in a variety of ways, looking for the own style of expression, using native encouragement and inspiration from the West. Nevertheless, his output was forgotten. My dissertation which is an attempt of monograph to the poetic and dramatic works of Walenty Gurski is a try, at least in a modest range, of fulfilling this deficiency in the literature of Enlightenment.

The first chapter of the work of Gurski entitled „*Oświeceniowa komedia obyczajowa i jej dynamika*” (The Enlightments’ comedy of manners and its dynamic) raises issues related to the „*komedię obyczajowa warszawska*” (Warsaw comedy of manners), which was an important component of Gurski dramas and harmonized with its overall character. A lot of attention has been paid to the intellectual and literary life in the Austrian annexation, as well as the activity of the Lviv and Warsaw theaters working under two extraordinary individuals: Wojciech Bogusławski and Jan Nepomucen Kaminski, where Gurski's plays had its premieres.

In the second chapter of comedy written by Walenty Gurski, entitled *Dole i niedole życia małżeńskiego* (the ups and downs of married life), discussion over five comedies have been provided: „*Rozwód w masce*” (The divorce in the mask), „*Rycerz zakochany, czyli miłość prowadzi do odwagi i sławy*” (The Kinght in love – how love leads to courage and glory), „*Tryumf cnoty*” (The triumph of virtue), „*Areszt ślubu*” (The wedding arrest), „*Zemsta pięknej kobietki*” (The revenge of a beautiful miss). In all works, the element of marriage is based on economic considerations. The author praises the nobility as well as attitudes based on feeling, righteousness and virtue. He raises judgement over submissive misses that were not able to escape from guardianship of their possessive parents. On the other hand, young jesters that flirt with naive noblewomen and unfaithful wives. Gurski’s arts introduce reader to the circle of native problems and humorous observation of noble reality, accompanied by a tolerant understanding of its disadvantages. They were confronted with the work of other playwrights of the period in question to show the similarity of themes

with leading artists and prove that they are original works, which are part of the tradition of the Warsaw comedy of manners.

The subject of the discussion of the last chapter, entitled „*Wiersze liryczne, bajki, przekłady*” (The lyrical poems, fairy tells, examples) are lyrical works that form the part of „name-days” poems. The structural determinant for next texts was circumstance with the dominant meaning of flattery (panegirism). It was related with the stylistics of praise and focused on the personal qualities of the addressees, exposing their high social position and important social role in public life (The Prince and General of the Podolski lands - Michał Granowski, Aleksander Zamoyski, the President of the Court in the Kingdoms of Galicia and Lodomeria - Piotr Krukowiecki). Among „the different” poems the interesting ones are those that present the religious attitude of the poet. The personal tone harmonizes with rhetorical sublimity, emotional fervor and the contrast between their combinations. They show an extraordinary relation between a human and the Supernatural Being. The poet used various arguments to justify the fact that God exists and marks his presence everywhere.

Undoubtedly, a fairy tale is a genre in which Walenty Gurski finds himself well. Seventeen poems of this type were published in the third volume of „*Różne dzieła*” (The Various Works) and more than a hundred and twenty novels in the series of „*Nowe bajki i powieści*”. (The new fairy tells and stories). The works are differentiated in terms of genre, mood and style. In addition to the short fairy tale epigrams written as the even, thirteen-syllable rhymes divided into four, six or eight verses, there are longer narrative fairy tales. Some of them are drawn-out stories, stylized for an idyllic or mock-heroic poems.

The author exhibited a lot of creativity through reference to the tradition of the genre, deeply rooted in poetry. Some of the motives were borrowed directly from the Prince of Poets, while the others were guided by his own poetic instincts. In his apologues, the author formulated or suggested informative morals. Some of them are full of bitter cynicism and doubt in people and the world order. The works were divided into political-patriotic and socio-cultural ones, based on the kinds of problems they refer to. Gurski's political fairy tales placed him in the same row with authors such as: Niemcewicz, Krasicki, Kniaznin or Fredro. Because of their subject matter, they are important source of knowledge about the social and political life in the époque.

What is extremely interesting is the understanding and poetic paraphrase of the „*Inkasy*” – the eighteenth century, French literature, written by Jean François Marmontel – by the poet, who was settled in the Supcarphian province of Poland. This is a valuable testimony of the interest of Walenty Gurski in the conquest of Peru. In the adaptation of the French model, the author proved a high degree of national recognition and patriotism of the

Incas. He would like to see same advantages in compatriots during the captivity of annexation.

As noted by the famous researcher¹ the works are written in varied and rich polish language, which clearly demonstrates his literary culture and abilities to a certain extent. According to those arguments, Walenty Gurski deserves a decent place in Parnassus poetry.

¹T. Kostkiewiczowa, *Walenty Gurski (zm. 1832)*, [w:] *Pisarze polskiego Oświecenia*, red. T. Kostkiewiczowa i Z. Goliński, t. 2, Warszawa 1994, s. 462.