

*“Finis epigrammatis est anima eius”:  
Transformations of the Content of the Latin Epigram  
in the Epoch of the Baroque*

ŽIVILĖ NEDZINSKAITĖ

**Abstract.** After the flowering of the epigram in Ancient Greece and Rome, greater attention to this genre was paid at the beginning of the Renaissance, and the epoch of the Baroque (the 17–18<sup>th</sup> centuries) could be called one of the brightest periods of epigram revival and prosperity in all Europe. In the 16–18<sup>th</sup> centuries literary theorists in their works discussed the place of the epigram in the hierarchy of literary genres, determined their functions, form, defined the possibilities of content. By suggesting that the form of the epigram had not been settled in Antiquity, theorists gave most attention to the content of the epigram and explained how, when in imitating the most famous ancient authors, the epigram could be given Christian features. The article, using comparative methods, will analyze how epigrams of Martial were imitated by the poet of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Grand Duchy of Lithuania M. C. Sarbievius.

**Keywords:** epigram, Baroque, poetics, rhetoric, Neo-Latin Literature

## Introduction

In the epoch of the Baroque, especially great attention was paid to the small poetic genres – the epithalamium, emblem, etc. Most popular and flourishing was the epigram which was considered to be the basis of all small literary forms and was treated as the genre demanding the highest poetical technique from the author as well as mature talent and artifice. The peculiarity of the public life of the 17–18<sup>th</sup> centuries also contributed to the popularity of the epigram. At that time, the most important moments in the public life of the higher estates – weddings, funerals, celebrations on the occasion of taking up positions of worldly or church authority, meetings of the lords, their family members, war leaders, etc. – were celebrated in texts which were recited, written on occasional decorations, were printed in special publications. Most of such texts were epigrams and their derivatives (Patiejūnienė 1998: 13).

Epigrams were also an important part of the work of the most famous poets of the 17<sup>th</sup> century who wrote in Latin. In Europe, there came into

being the Olympus of the authors of epigram poetry, and mostly the members of the Society of Jesus (*Societas Iesu*) belonged to it. In Germany, famous for the epigrams were Jacob Bidermann (Jacobus Bidermanus, 1578–1639), in Belgium – Bernard van Bauhuysen (Bernardus Bauhusius, 1575–1619), in France – François Remond (Franciscus Remondus, 1558 or 1562–1631), in England – John Owen (Ioannes Audoenus, 1563–1622), in Italy – Emanuele Thesauro (Emanuel Tesaurus, 1591–1675), in Poland – Albert Ines (Albertus Ines, 1619–1658), Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (Mathias Casimirus Sarbievius, 1595–1640).

### Theoretical resources of the epigram

After the flowering of the epigram in Ancient Greece and Rome, greater attention to this genre was given at the beginning of the Renaissance, when intensive copying of collections of antique epigrams, looking for unknown texts and comprising new anthologies came into fashion. Precisely in this epoch, the epigram and its cognate genre forms also started to be explained and analysed in the works of the most famous literary theorists. The following epoch of the Baroque (17–18<sup>th</sup> centuries) could be called one of the brightest periods of epigram revival and flourishing in the whole of Europe.

In the 16–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, literary theorists in their works discussed the place of the epigram in the hierarchy of literary genres, determined its functions, form, defined the possibilities of content. Considering the form of the epigram as having been settled, the focus was on the content and how this could be made Christian.

### Epigram in Scaliger's *Poetices libri septem*

The most famous theorists of literature of the Renaissance, Julius Caesar Scaliger, whose typology of genres and poetry was in use for the subsequent two hundred years, in the work *Poetices libri septem* (1561) offered the definition of the epigram, which in the course of time has become a classical one and was almost literally repeated by other theorists: “So, the epigram is a short poem, usually evaluating a thing, person or event, or making a conclusion from the given statements.” (Scaliger 1586: 430)

In his work Scaliger presented the classification of epigrams as well, distinguishing two main types: the simple one (*simplex*) and the compositional one (*compositus*). The simple epigrams describe a certain event. The purpose of the compositional epigrams is different – their content, i.e. the depicted

events, is only the first stage in a more complex interpretation of the chosen topic, which sometimes can be contrary to the reader's preconceived notions (Scaliger 1586: 431).

Scaliger also named the main features of the epigram which already in Antiquity had become "the visiting card" of the genre. First of all, he indicates the brevity (*brevitas*) of the work, and as another, but not less important feature, the vividness or flexibility (*argutia*). For the authors of the epoch of the Baroque, the most important feature of the epigram was flexibility (*argutia*), which was especially emphasized by Scaliger as well, calling flexibility the soul and the form of the epigram (*anima ac forma*) and indicating that it can best be achieved through a sudden or unanticipated end of the work (Scaliger 1586: 431).

Discussing the variety of kinds of epigrams, topics, ways of versification, Scaliger emphasized that even for the most talented author it is very difficult to comprehend and reveal all the nobility and dignity codified in the genre. The theorist warned that only a few are able to match and ingeniously combine many different and usually controversial things in one short work: word elegance with the validity of the chosen topic, sharpness of idea with the grace of expression, perfect rhythm with proper sound. Also a difficult task of the author is to grip the listeners since the first till the last word and not to forget to reveal what is most important – the truth (Scaliger 1586: 433).

The main ideas of Scaliger's poetics were absorbed by other famous theorists of literature in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and in the course of literary and cultural change, with minor literary forms becoming more popular, the genre of the epigram in literary works was discussed more consistently and comprehensively.

### Theory of Epigram in Pontano's *Poeticarum institutionum libri tres*

Scaliger's work was continued by one of the most famous Jesuit philologists Jacob Pontano. His book *Poeticarum institutionum libri tres* (1594), published as the textbook for Jesuit school, was not only the first, but also one of the most popular Jesuit poetics, which was the basis for many literary theorists of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Considering Scaliger an unquestioned authority and having taken his model of literary genres, Pontano considered the new tendencies of

<sup>1</sup> Later Pontano's work was supplemented and arranged by John Buchler (Ioannes Buchlerus, 1570–1640). Pontano's work was often printed as the addition to the

that time as well. Therefore in his work, most attention is given to emerging popular minor literary genres, which were shortly discussed by Scaliger.

According to the language structure, Pontano distinguished three kinds of poetry, considering the genres fully subordinate to them. But not limiting himself to such a scheme, in the second and third parts of his work he presented to the readers many different forms of poetry, beginning with the epic, tragedy, comedy, and finishing with the epigram and epitaph.<sup>2</sup>

It should be noticed that the genre of epigram was analysed by Pontano in more detail than Scaliger. At the beginning sharing Scaliger's definition of the epigram and epigram distribution into the simple and complex ones, stating that epigrams have to be written gracefully, sharply, exquisitely and briefly (*elegantier, acute, urbane, breviter*) (Pontanus 1609: 80), Pontano later discussed a more elaborate classification of the epigrams, referring to different criteria.

Firstly, a formal distribution of epigrams is presented according to their direct purpose: some are used for making records of things, others contain appraisals or the defects are indicated, and the third ones flexibly tell what is unexpected, new, surprising or what is imagined by the author of the work himself (Pontanus 1609: 83).

One more distribution of epigrams in Pontano's work concerns features that are borrowed from the tragedy, the comedy and the epic. Pontano stated that epigram has taken from the epic the appraisals for famous men, cities, rivers, ports, places, sources, monuments etc. The environment of the fairy-tale and miracle is also borrowed from the epic, as in the epigram "unbelievably beautifully there speak God or nymph, satyr, etc." (Pontanus 1609: 84). Tragedy, as it was stated by Pontano, is characteristic of the depiction of important and magnificent things that ennoble the listener or reader through sufferings and sympathy. The tragedy is also characteristic of wonder which is first of all caused by unexpected vicissitudes (*fortuna*), and still more surprising are the things which result from each other unexpectedly. The epigrams, written on the topic of death, are also related to tragedy because death in itself is a tragic event. In the comedy, one is blamed for improper and immoral behaviour, somebody's bad acts and works are presented or ridiculed. Therefore the epigram too, according to Pontano, has taken that material form

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Buchler's rhetoric work *Thesaurus phrasium poeticarum*, thus the work *Poeticarum institutionum libri tres* is sometimes called Pontano-Buchler's poetics.

<sup>2</sup> The following chapters are in the second part of Pontano's poetics: *De epopoeia, De comoedia, De tragoedia, De bucolica poesi, De elegiaca poesi, De lyrica poesi, De hymno, De iambea poesi, De satyrica poesi*. The third part is comprised of *De epigrammate* and *De epitaphio seu funebri poesi*.

the comedy which is cynical and ridiculous, and the authors of the epigrams condemn and ridicule the defects of others. The epigram has also inherited the witticism (*sales*) from the comedy as well as.

Pontano presented one more classification of the epigrams, taken directly from the rhetoric – according to three types of languages. He distinguished judicial (*iudicium*), deliberative (*deliberatio*) and complimentary (*exornatio*) epigrams. Each of the three is distinguished by specific features. In judicial epigrams, one depicts the defects, crimes and bad deeds of the people, therefore the author can scold, blame, complain or wonder. In deliberative epigrams, one has to give advice, encourage, make requirements, offer prayers or consolatory words. In complimentary epigrams, people or any other things are not praised but can also be blamed or not crossly mocked (Pontanus 1609: 85).

Pontano indicated that the epigram has three main features: the first two are salt (*argutia*) and brevity (*brevitas*), and the third one – pleasant sound (*suavitas*). The first two – salt and brevity – were considered by Pontano to be the most important ones and he poetically called them the soul and life of the epigram, also the power, juice and blood (*anima, vita et tanquam spiritus, nervi, sucus, sanguis*). Pontano emphasized that the end of the epigram has to be unexpected or totally contrary to what is expected, it must surprise and evoke the listener's or reader's feelings with concept, unexpected evaluation, joke, novelty or other tricks (*vel acumine, vel pondere, vel lepore, vel novitate, vel alia quaequam illecebra*) (Pontanus 1609: 113).

### Reflections of Possevino in *Tractatio de poesi et pictura*

Much attention to the genre of the epigram was given by the Italian Jesuit, Antonio Possevino, who has contributed much to the formation of the Jesuit teaching system. In the part *Tractatio de poesi et pictura* (1593) of his most famous work *Bibliotheca selecta*, he explained how to combine the image, word and symbol into one allegorical work, how to create Christian poetry by imitating ancient authors (Bieńkowski 1970: 186). Not omitting any of literary genres, Possevino discussed the epigrams as well. Having discarded many ancient authors for having written indecent poetry (Possevinus 1594: 199), Possevino enumerates the features of good, permissible and observable epigram: brevity (*brevitas*), salt (*argutia*) and grace (*venustas*). Brevity means that the epigram cannot be longer than five distiches. Salt is related to what is unprecedented, new, causes astonishment, and grace is attained when the sound and the rhythm of the work fit together. Possevino stated that by only strictly keeping to these three things can one write good epigrams (Possevinus 1594: 200).

Possevino was almost the first one who clearly named the main integral parts and kinds of the epigram, discussed them in detail and explained the peculiarities of their composition. The theorist decided that the epigram is comprised of two main parts: enunciation (*expositio*) and clause, or the end (*clausula sive conclusio*). Enunciation is also divided into the simple (*simplex*) and the complex one, which is made of several parts (*multiplex*). In a simple enunciation, one is limited to the description of one thing or place, and the complex one combines many examples, reasons and situations from the similarity or dissimilarity of which the conflict rises. The end of the epigram has to be unexpected and effective, ending with the sentence or graceful idea related to enunciation (Possevinus 1594: 201).

According to the laws of rhetoric, Possevino also distinguished three kinds of epigrams: serious and magnificent (*grave et magnificum*), temperate and consonant (*temperatum atque concinnum*), beautiful and joyful or ingenious (*tenue ac festivum*). The first one is characteristic of expressive words and sound sentences. The second kind requires the poet to use the sharp-cut and ornate language, beautiful and sound words, and flexible as well as graceful sentences should fit the words and the ideas which somebody desires to express. The third kind is simple, therefore it is characteristic of pure Latin language and clarity of ideas, and the poet, after rejecting all unnecessary ornaments, should focus on the fact that, narrating funny things, not avoiding humour and concepts, he should be able to teach the listener (Possevinus 1594: 202).

The definitions of the epigram and its classification as well as explanations presented in the works of the most famous literary theorists of the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Scaliger, Pontano and Possevino, undoubtedly formed the attitude of the later theorists towards this genre. One of these was German Jesuit Iacob Masen.

### Masen's work *Ars nova argutiarum*

Masen did not keep to the hierarchic model of literary genres presented by Scaliger. He gave the main attention not to traditional genres (epic, tragedy, comedy), but to already popular, favourite epigram poetry which had already found its place and which was widely used (Patiejunienè 1998: 65). These changes are reflected the most important work of Masen, *Ars nova argutiarum epigrammatica et epigraphica* (1649).<sup>3</sup> The main epigram features by Masen

<sup>3</sup> The author of the article used the later publication of this work *Ars nova argutiarum eruditae et honestae recreationis, in duas partes divisa. Prima est epigrammatum, altera inscriptionum argutarum. Autore R. P. Jacobo Masenio e Societate Iesu. Coloniae Agripinae: Apud Joannem Antonium Kinckium, 1660.*

were considered salt (*argutia*) and concept (*acumen*), which he emphasized in his work.

Masen distinguished two kinds of epigrams: comic and funny (*comicum seu ridiculum*) as well as tragic and serious (*tragicum seu grave*), emphasizing that each of these two kinds has to be subtle and flexible. The tragic epigram is more related to important events, therefore it is characterized by the sharpness of words and ideas. The comic epigram does not depict important events, therefore it, revealing the habits of the people and describing various events, should be characterized by esprit (Masenius 1660: 12).

Masen named various epigram writing possibilities (*fontes*) as well, which had not been mentioned by the authors of earlier poetics. They are comprised of contradictions (*repugnantia*) or various connections of the contradictions (*oppositum coniunctio*), comparisons (*comparationes*), word play (*lusus verborum*) and allusions (*allusiones*) (Masenius 1660: 25–101). Every possibility was by Masen proved and illustrated not only with examples brought from Antiquity, but also with the poetic fragments of the most famous poets of the time (Bauhusius, Bidermann).

### New ideas in Sarbievius' treatise *De acuto et arguto*

Salt, as one of the main epigram features, was indicated by the poet and literary critic in the 17<sup>th</sup> century living and working in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, Mathias Casimirus Sarbievius. His work *De acuto et arguto* (*About acute and flexible style*, 1626), in which he analyses a new tendency of literature and aesthetics of the 17<sup>th</sup> century – conceptualism (Nedzinskaitė 2011: 81–82; Daukšienė 2006: 53), was not published but circulated in manuscript in Jesuit colleges. Sarbievius was famous for a new definition of acute style: “acute style is a language connecting in itself disharmony and harmony, in other words, as it is in the saying *peaceful disagreement or non-peaceful agreement*” (*Acutum est oratio continens affinitatem dissentanei et consentanei, seu dicti concors discordia vel discors concordia*) (Sarbievius 2009: 7).

It is interesting to notice that the theory of acute style was by Sarbievius visually illustrated with the figure of the triangle. He explained that like two opposite sides present in such a triangle, distant from each other at the base, and joining at the top, the amalgamation of two opposites having a common basis, produce the severity of the language: “rhetoric severity is necessarily composed of the unity and close relationship of harmony and disharmony of the same material which is spoken about” (Sarbievius 2009: 8), and both components of acute style – harmony and disharmony – have to be equivalent (Sarbievius

2009: 9). Thus, the essence of the concept, according to Sarbievius, is the ability of envisaging in the same phenomenon something that is simultaneously universal and unique.

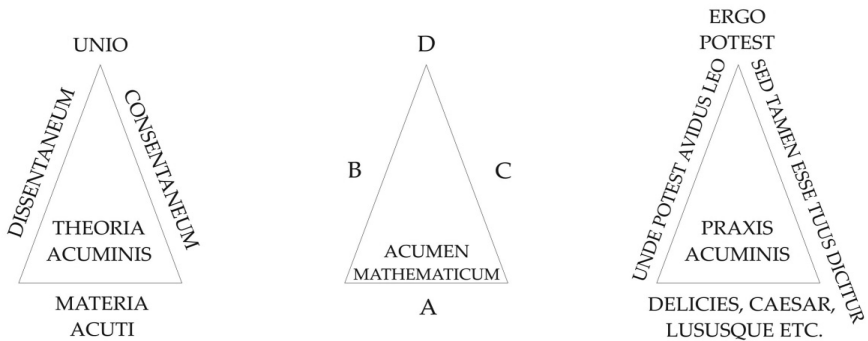


Fig. 1. Theory of acute style by Sarbievius, illustrated by the figure of the triangle (Sarbievius 2009: 8)

With the intention of explaining more precisely the essence of acute style, Sarbievius illustrated the scheme of the isosceles triangle (Sarbievius 2009: 8) with the last lines of the epigram (I. 14) of the famous poet of Antiquity, Martial (Marcus Valerius Martialis, 40–104):

Delicias, Caesar, lususque iocosque leonum  
 Vidimus – hoc etiam praestat harena tibi –  
 Cum prensus blando totiens a dente rediret  
 Et per aperta vagus curreret ora lepus.  
 Unde potest avidus captae leo parcere praedae?  
 Sed tamen esse tuus dicitur: ergo potest.

[The pastimes, Caesar, the sports and the play of the lions, / We have seen: your arena offers you / The additional sight of a captured hare often returning from the gentle tooth, / And running free through the open jaws. / How is it that the greedy lion can spare his captured prey? / He is said to be yours: thus he can.]<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Translations of Latin quotes by Ž. Nedzinskaitė.



The epigram tells about a hungry lion, which, after being released to the arena, did not kill its victim. Therefore, the basis A of the mathematical triangle is the material of the acute style (*materia acuti*). One side B of the triangle expresses disharmony (*dissentaneum*) – the hungry lion sparing the victim. Another side C expresses harmony (*consentaneum*) – the lion is the beast of a merciful emperor. Both sides B and C of the triangle make contact in point D, which connects disharmonious and harmonious ideas (*unio*) – the lion of the merciful emperor is merciful itself, thus it does not tear apart the hare. In this way, the unity of disharmony and harmony is reached in the work.

It is interesting that Sarbievius did not consider the genre of the epigram perfect<sup>5</sup> and even did not consider the best epigrams real poetry (Sarbievius 2009: 271). According to the poet, only the Greeks have created perfect epigrams, thus they should be followed, they should be the teachers (Sarbievius 2009: 272). The genre of the epigram, as stated by Sarbievius, is not restricted by any limitations (Sarbievius 2009: 273), but demand a special effort from the author and reader (*modus ratiocinationis*). Comparing the ode with the epigram, he emphasizes that the soul and essence of the ode is the beginning of the work but the end is the soul and essence of the epigram (*initium animam esse odae, ut, e contrario, finis epigrammatis est anima eius*) (Sarbievius 2009: 156–157).

The transformations of the epigram in the epoch of the Baroque

**Argutia, brevitās et venustas.** In the epoch of the Baroque, the most emphasized feature of the epigram is salt (*argutia*). Other two – brevity (*brevitas*) and soundness (*venustas seu suavitas*) – were already treated as secondary. But there was no poet who scrupulously kept to all three requirements. The English poet John Owen tried in one distich to bring together several ideas and present them in one sentence. This is how he realized the idea formulated by the Roman writer and politician Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (62–113) that the words should be few and the idea spacious (*non multa, sed multum*). The best example of such an epigram is about three theological virtues:

Non est in verbis virtus, at rebus inhaeret;  
Res sunt, non voces, spes, amor atque fides. (III, 96)<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> One of the chapters of *De perfecta poesi* is titled *Species imperfectas poeseos esse elegiacam et ferme lyricam, epigrammata vero penitus non esse speciem poeseos* (*Elegy and often lyrics are imperfect poetic genres, and the epigram is not really a genre of poetry*).

<sup>6</sup> The author of the article used: *Joannis Oweni, Cambro-Britanni Oxoniensis, Epigrammata, editio postrema et correctissima*. Basiliae: Apud Joannem Schweighauser, 1766.

[Majesty lies not in words, but in works; / Works, not mindless sounds, are hope, love and faith.]

**Admiratio.** Nevertheless, the greatest attention while creating epigrams was given to salt (*argutia*), its most various conceptions and expression possibilities. One of such possibilities of salt expression is aiming to astonish (*admiratio*). It should be in the second part of the epigram – in the end (*conclusio*) and is related to concept, idea, contingency. As an example of such an epigram we can present a piece by St. Ignatius of Sarbievius – one of the most famous Latin-writing European poets of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> It is written with reference to the scheme of the already cited epigram by Martial about a hungry lion not tearing apart the hare, but filled with a totally different – Christian – content:

Aurea in Ignati fulgent cognomina corde:  
 Hic tua tu tecum Nomina, Christe, locas.  
 Sparserat effuso martyr cor sanguine: de quo  
 Aurea te referens litera facta fuit.  
 Unde potest fulvum mutari sanguis in aurum?  
 Sed tamen est Sanguis Martyris: ergo potest. (*Epigr.* 111)

[Golden names shine in Ignatius' heart: / here you, Christ, reside together with your name. / The sufferer sprinkled the heart with spilt blood, from which / there emerged golden letters referring to you. / How can blood be turned into shining gold? / But the blood is that of a sufferer, therefore it can.]

<sup>7</sup> In Latin Mathias Casimirus Sarbievius, in Polish Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595–1640), one of the most prominent European poets writing in Latin. Born in [Mazovia], Poland, he entered the Society of Jesus at the age of sixteen, studied at Vilnius University, later at *Collegium Romanum* in Rome. After graduating he taught rhetorics, philosophy, theology and other subjects in various colleges of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and at Vilnius University. He spent his last years at the court of Wladyslaw Vaza, King of Lithuania and Poland, as his personal preacher. Sarbievius is best known for his poetry. After his first selection of poetry was published in 1625 in Cologne he became known as “the Sarmatian and Christian Horace” (*Horatius Sarmaticus aut christianus*). His poetry, complete with epigrams (*Lyricorum libri quattor, epodon liber unus alterque epigrammatum*, see fig. 2), was repeatedly published in various European countries (e.g. in Antwerp in 1630 and 1632) and was included into the curricula of the universities as a paragon of poetry. This is why the author of this article has chosen this poet's work as the best reflection of the changes in the epigram during Baroque period.

Sarbievius's epigram tells about the martyr Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, who in about 107 was by the emperor Trajan dropped into the Coliseum for the lions to tear apart. It is said that people who approached to see the body of the bishop after execution saw the name of Jesus written in golden letters in his heart. A somewhat different version of the story of St. Ignatius was presented by Jacobus de Voragine. He stated that the bishop was tortured in many ways at the emperor's command to make him refute his faith. During torture he called the name of Jesus Christ. When the torturers asked him why he was calling that name so often, the bishop answered that he kept this name written in his heart. So, after the bishop's death prying people took his heart out and after cutting it in half found that it was inscribed with the words "Jesus Christ" in golden letters.



Fig. 2. M. C. Sarbievius, *Lyricorum libri quattuor, epodon liber unus alterque epigrammatum*, Antverpiae, 1632 (Vilnius University Library)

A summary of the lectures of poetics and rhetoric of the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by an unknown author presents a comprehensive analysis of this epigram by Sarbievius. It is necessary to emphasize that it is almost the only such detailed analysis of the epigram found in the manuscripts (VUB RS<sup>8</sup>, F 3–2277: 85), perfectly well revealing the criteria used by the professor for choosing this epigram by Sarbievius as the perfect example of the genre. The lecturer distinguishes four main moments of the epigram. First of all attention is given to the fact that the epigram is based on a historic narration, i.e. the narration about the heart of St. Ignatius, in which people found the name of Jesus incised with golden letters. Such historic narration is as if the basis of the whole epigram, the source of harmony and disharmony, expressed in the first four words of the epigram. The second important moment is disharmony rising from the narration, expressed by the question “How can?” (*unde potest*). The third stage of the epigram reveals harmony rising from the same narration and manifesting in that “the blood is the sufferer’s” (*est sanguis Martyris*), as only from his love for God, purified through suffering, the blood of St. Ignatius turned to gold. The fourth important moment of the epigram is culmination, when in the last lines unexpectedly the disharmony, which showed itself in the narration (blood turns to gold), is unified with harmony (the sufferer’s blood turns to gold). Precisely this connection between opposites (thus it can – *ergo potest*) is the essence of the acute style which gives rise to the reader’s astonishment. Therefore both Martial and Sarbievius end their works in a similar way: in Martial’s epigram, a hungry lion did not tear the hare apart as it was the beast of the noble emperor, and in the work of Sarbievius, blood turns to gold as it is the sufferer’s blood. Only the content of the epigrams differs – Sarbievius, evoking the model of the antique epigram, fills it with the history of Christian martyrology.

Keeping to the similar model, another epigram was created by Sarbievius about the martyr Mamet, who was not torn up by hungry lions in the arena:

Parvus in extremam Mammes descendit arenam;  
 Squalebant tenui pallida membra fame.  
 Horruit hanc praedam venantum turba ferarum,  
 Et potuit sese vincere longa fames.  
 Unde protervorum jejunia victa leonum?  
 Sic docuit Martyr: sic dedicere ferae. (*Epigr. 5*)

<sup>8</sup> Vilnius University Library, Manuscripts Department.

[Young Mamet entered the arena of death; / thin, pale limbs stiffened from hunger. / Crowd of wild animals became afraid of this prey, / and was able to overcome its long hunger. / Why was hunger defeated by wild lions? / This is how the Sufferer taught, this is how the animals abstained.]

It is obvious that the work by Sarbievius is the Christian variant of the aforementioned epigram by Martial. The innocent little hare in Martial's epigram was by Sarbievius changed into a young sufferer Mamet. As the little hares in Martial's epigram, Mamet in Sarbievius's work is given for the hungry lions to tear up. In both epigrams, lions have pity for their victims. Martial explained this strange phenomenon with the fact that lions belong to a merciful emperor, therefore they are merciful themselves. Sarbievius emphasized Mamet's belief and devotion to his aim: he taught Christian truths that even the animals sensed and "learned". Structurally, the end of the poem by Sarbievius is most of all similar to Martial's epigram. The similarity is especially emphasized by the almost identical question asked in both epigrams: *Unde potest avidus captae leo parcere praedae?* (Martial's) and *Unde protervorum jejunia victa leonum?* (Sarbievius's). In both answers, the concept is made of an unexpected conclusion, connecting the epigram's disharmony and harmony.

**Lusus verborum.** One more possibility of giving rise to astonishment widespread in the works of the epoch of the Baroque is word and name play (*lusus verborum*). An example of such an epigram could be the work by Sarbievius, devoted to the Lithuanian hetman, Jan Karol Chodkiewicz (1560–1621). Here is manifest the maturity of Sarbievius's talent, poetical technique and artifice, also a wide historic context is revealed. The key axis of the epigram is made of the play with the letter *W* which is present in the coat of arms of Chodkiewicz. By turning it upside down or looking at it from above or from the sky, as the poet imagines, one gets the twelfth letter of Latin alphabet:

Magnus Alexander, Magnus Pompeius habetur:  
 Magnus hebebaris, Carole, Magnus Otho.  
 Scilicet hos magnos magni fecere triumphi:  
 Te major magnum, Carole, palma facit.  
 Perlege stemma tuum: Vincis te, vincis et hostem;  
 Hic quae terra legi non putat, astra legunt.  
 Si dubitas, hoc ipse Deo da stemma legendum:  
 De coelo magnum Maximus ipse leget. (*Epigr.* 72)

[Alexander is considered the Great, the Great is Pompey as well: / Great, Karol, you were considered, great [you as well], Otto. / Obviously, they were made great by great triumphs. / Great glory made you, Karol, greater. / Read your

coat of arms: Defeat yourself, defeat the enemy; / here, what the earth cannot tell is read by the stars. / If you doubt, give the coat of arms to God to read: / from heaven the Greatest will read that you are great.]

The concept of this epigram is related to “the turnover of the image”. The whole epigram is based on the transformation of the letter *W* present in the coat of arms of Chodkiewicz into *M*. Letter *M* is interpreted as the symbol of magnitude (*Magnitudo*), therefore in the epigram, one plays with various meanings of the words beginning with *m*, *magnus* (great), *major* (greater), *maximus* (the greatest). The most famous ancient generals, mentioned at the beginning of the epigram, Alexander, Pompey, Otto, gained glory (*magni*) with unusual victories (*magni triumphi*). Jan Karol Chodkiewicz is also compared to these generals. The Lithuanian hetman distinguished himself in the wars with the Swedes: in 1605, on September 27, he led the most famous battle with the Swedes by Kirchholm (Salaspilis) near Riga, in which the Swedish army of 14,000 soldiers was defeated in four hours by the army of only 4000 Lithuanians (Wisner 1987: 57). This achievement made Chodkiewicz famous not only in Lithuania, but also in all Western Europe (Podhorodecki 1976: 145).

Thus the epigram speaks about the fact that Chodkiewicz, after contending many victories, gains a much greater glory (*major palma*), therefore, like ancient generals, is great (*magnus*). If this fact is still not understandable for the inhabitants of the earth, it is suggested we look at Chodkiewicz’s name from above and see the overturned letter *W*, which becomes *M* and symbolizes the general’s glory (*magnus*). The epigram ends with the concept which is also made of the words beginning with the letter *M*: *Maximus* (the Greatest) himself, i.e. God, for the leader’s worthiness, equal to the victories of famous ancient generals, will announce Chodkiewicz *magnum* (great).

**Memento mori.** Totally different, especially reflecting the spirit of the Baroque and as if warning about the inevitable death waiting for everyone (*memento mori*) (Ulčinaité 2001: 130), is the epigram of Sarbievius about a noble youth who was unhappily killed during the holidays:

Saltantes nuper Mors viderat atra Lupercos,  
 Et se festivis miscuit ipsa choris:  
 Ebria perque domos saltabat perque plateas,  
 Morborum longo praeveniente choro.  
 Hic uni juvenis dum forte resistere vellet,  
 Ebria non meritum messuit ense caput.  
 Tollite de lautis, juvenes, convivia mensis;  
 Quis scit, an ex vestris non bibat illa scyphis? (*Epigr.* 119)

[The Black Death was recently seen dancing at the feast of Lupercalia, / And joining in festive dances: / He danced, drunk, through houses and streets, / Accompanied by a host of diseases. / Here, a young man who would boldly resist, / he drunkenly beheaded with a scythe. / Young people, make the guests leave the plentiful tables, / who knows if that one is not drinking from your cups?]

The narration of the epigram is started with the description of the pagan feast of *Lupercalia* which in ancient Rome was devoted to the honour of Faunus. The culmination of the feast was the ritual running of the college of *luperci* (“brothers of the wolf” – the Roman priests) around the Palatine hill. Running *luperci* had the belts, cut out of the sacrificed goat skin, and beat the women who believed that such beatings blessed their marriage and helped with fertility. Thus in the first lines of the work, evoking the analogy with *Lupercalia*, one creates a careless carnival atmosphere and the image of frenzied pagan festivals during which people in the streets and squares have fun, eat, drink and dance. It makes the background for further events depicted in the epigram. The main character of the work is drunk (*ebria*), but nevertheless it is an inexorable Death (*atra Mors*). The epigram emphasizes that the manifestation of Death and its further acts are as if provoked by the festival happening in the city, there Death unnoticed together with its attendant diseases (*morbi*) and all participants of the festival has fun and travels from one yard to the other. Sarbievius verbally presents Death which is especially often depicted dancing in art (*dance macabre*) – a skeleton with a scythe which reminds one that everyone is inevitably condemned to die. In the festival, the personified drunk Death cuts the youth’s, who did not expect such an end of his life, head off with the scythe. The author as if states that in the place of the unhappy youth there could be anyone from among the participants of the festival. Especially interesting are the last lines of the epigram, into which can be read a warning for everyone who does not regard measure. If Death tastes human food or drink, it as if marks and chooses the victim which it takes with itself. Therefore the author encourages to clearing of the tables. Not accidentally, the last line mentions the cup which could be understood as the cup of wrath, embodying God’s punishment and court, the symbol and the opposite to the cup of the Saviour. The end of the epigram perfectly well expresses the motif of contingency and death, especially popular in the pictorial art and literature of the epoch of the Baroque, which often sounded a warning that everyone has one and the same destiny (*memento mori*).

## Conclusions

The theorists of the Baroque literature posited strict requirements for the genre of the epigram. The following features of the epigram were considered most important: brevity (*brevitas*), grace (*venustas*), salt (*argutia*). The latter was especially appreciated and was often related to evoking astonishment and surprise (*admiratio*), as well as word play (*lusus verborum*). In general, it can be said that the epigram was the literary genre which almost in the best way reflected the tendencies of the epoch of the Baroque. Also, in the Latin epigrams of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the ancient form was filled with new, Christian content.

### **Živilė Nedzinskaitė**

zivile.nedzinskaite@gmail.com

Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas

Antakalnio g. 6

LT-10308 Vilnius

LIETUVA

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