

# Were there adjectival adverbs ending in *-a* in Middle Polish?

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# Sentences in question

- Sentences existing in Middle Polish (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century)
- With non-nominative (infinitival or clausal) subjects
- With predicates in form of a nominative singular feminine adjective, ending in *-a*, e.g. *trudna*, *pewna* (hereinafter: *-a* forms)
  - *To jest trudna decydować.* [It is difficult (ADJ.NOM.SG.F) to decide.]
  - *To pewna, że wyjeżdżam.* [It is certain (ADJ.NOM.SG.F) that I'm leaving.]

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# Material

- Electronic Corpus of 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century Polish Texts
  - Cryptonym: KORBA (KORpus BARokowy ‘baroque corpus’)
  - Two stages of the project: 2013-2018, 2019-2023
  - Funding: Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, National Programme for the Development of Humanities grant (project number 0036/NPRH2/H11/81/2012 and 0413/NPRH7/H11/86/2018)
  - Contractors: Institute of Polish Language, Polish Academy of Sciences and Institute of Computer Science, Polish Academy of Sciences
  - [www.korba.edu.pl](http://www.korba.edu.pl)

# Endings of adjectives and adverbs in Polish

Adjective (in singular nominative)			Adjectival adverb
masculine	feminine	neuter	
miły chłopiec [a nice boy]	miła dziewczyna [a nice girl]	miłe dziecko [a nice child]	miło [nicely]
dobry obiad [a good dinner]	dobra kolacja [a good supper]	dobrze śniadanie [a good breakfast]	dobrze [well]

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# Predicates in sentences with non-nominative subjects in contemporary Polish

- Infinitival subjects

- Dobrze jest mieć przyjaciół. [It is good (ADV) to have friends.]

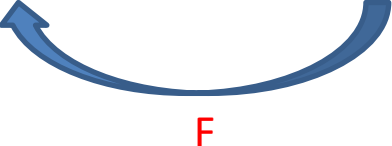
- Clausal subjects

- To miło, że przyszedłeś. [It is nice (ADV) that you have come.]

- To miłe, że przyszedłeś. [It is nice (ADJ.NOM.SG.N) that you have come.]

# The origin of *-a* forms as predicates in sentences with non-nominative subjects

To	jest	<b>trudna</b> (F)	<b>rzecz</b> (F)	decydować.
[It	is	a difficult	thing	to decide.]



To	jest	<b>trudna</b> (F)	decydować
[It	is	difficult	to decide.]

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# Traces of adverbization of *-a* forms in texts

## – coordination with adverbs

- ...nam i **niepodobna**, i **niebezpieczno** było pod kondemnatami zostawać...

[It was both **impossible** (ADJ.NOM.SG.F) and **dangerous** (ADV) for us to be sentenced for failure to appear in court.]

- ...**miła** bo bywa podróżnemu/ gdy w nocy światło się pokaże; a barziej **milej**/ gdy światło dusze oświeci boskie.

[It is **nice** (ADJ.NOM.SG.F) for a traveler when the light appears at night, but it is **nicer** (ADV.COM) when the divine light illuminates souls.]

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# Other syntactic criteria of adverbization of *-a* forms

- Forms of the verb *być* 'to be'
- The status of the form *to* 'it'



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# Feminine and neuter forms of the verb *być* 'to be' in contemporary Polish

Ta decyzja **była** / **byłaby** trudna.

[This decision (F) was (F) / would be (F) difficult (ADJ.F).]

To postanowienie **było** / **byłoby** trudne.

[This resolution (N) was (N) / would be (N) difficult (ADJ.N).]

Trudno **było** / **byłoby** podjąć taką decyzję.

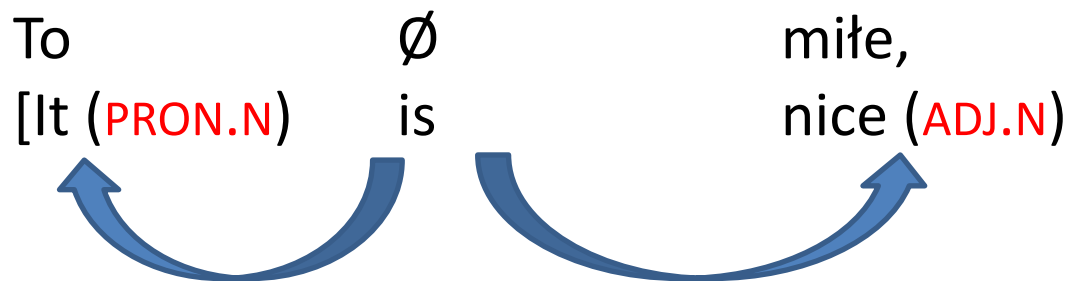
[It was (N) / would be (N) difficult (ADV) to make such a decision.]

# Combinations of *-a* forms and feminine or neuter forms of the verb *być* 'to be'

- ...do rzeczy jednak przystąpić jeszcze **nie słuszna była**...  
[It **was** (F) **not right** (F) yet to begin the matter.]
- ...bez zezwolenia Króla Angielskiego **nie słuszna to było** czynić...  
[It **was** (N) **not right** (F) to do it without the English king's permission.]
- ...**trudna by była** szukać ich po obozie...  
[It **would be** (F) **difficult** (F) to look for them in the camp.]
- ... tak wielkiej potędze nieprzyjacielskiej wytrzymać **przytrudniejsza byłoby**...  
[It **would be** (N) **difficult** (F) to repel such a mighty enemy.]

# Constructions with *to* and adjectival/ adverbial predicates in contemporary Polish

To                       $\emptyset$                       miłe,  
[It (PRON.N)      is                      nice (ADJ.N)]



że przyszedł.  
that he came.]

To                      miło,  
[It is (VERB)                      nice (ADV)]




że przyszedł  
that he came.]

# Syntactic differences between two types of sentences with *to*


- The form of the verb *być* 'to be'
  - To **jest** miłe, że przyszedł. [It is nice (ADJ.N) that he came.]
  - ?To **jest** miło, że przyszedł. [It is nice (ADV) that he came.]
- The inversion
  - **Miłe jest to**, że przyszedł. [It is nice (ADJ.N) that he came.]
  - \***Miło jest to**, że przyszedł. [It is nice (ADV) that he came.]
- The semantic role of an experiencer
  - To **dla mnie** miłe, że przyszedł. [It is nice (ADJ.N) for me that he came.]
  - \*To **dla mnie** miło, że przyszedł.  
[It is nice (ADV) for me that he came.]

# Possible interpretations of “to + a-form” constructions in Middle Polish

To                      Ø                      pewna,  
[It (PRON.N)                      is                      certain (ADJ.F)]                      że wyjeżdżam.  
that I’m leaving.]



To                      pewna,  
[It is (VERB)                      certain (ADV)]                      że wyjeżdżam.  
that I’m leaving.]



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# Weak points of the adverbial interpretation

- The form of the verb *być* ‘to be’
  - ...to **jest** pewna, że nie żyjemy bez duszy... [It is certain that we can’t live without souls.]
- The inversion
  - I **pewna to**, że tam byli diabli główni. [And it is certain that the main devils were present there.]
- The semantic role of an experiencer
  - ...pewna to **u wszystkich** była/ że do Francji się wrócić mieli... [It was certain for all that they would come back to France.]

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# Conclusion:

## -*a* forms as an intermediate category

- Status of –*a* forms depends on:
  - The context (cf. connectivity with both feminine and neuter forms of the verb *być* ‘to be’)
  - The aspect taken into account (cf. syntax ambiguity of the constructions with *to* ‘it’)

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Thank you!