

# The meaning of the author's biography in studies on the literature of Polish Enlightenment – the case of Cyprian Godebski

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These days, there is likely no need to convince anyone that an author's biography is important for literary studies. This is how Janusz Sławiński addressed this extremely complex issue in his classic study published in 1975, *Myśli na temat: biografia pisarza jako jednostka procesu historycznoliterackiego* [*Thoughts on the subject: a writer's biography as a unit of the historical-literary process*]:

It is almost embarrassing to repeat this cliché: everything writers experience is a potential topic for their works. One can't help but assume that a characteristic feature of the ways in which authors experience everything is their readiness to topicalise those experiences as possible building blocks of the literary world, as an opportunity for articulating such experiences. An "opportunity" is something feasible, therefore it follows the patterns and conventions of literary works, which are alive in a given time and place. Authors view their experiences, as well as those of other people entangled in their biography, in terms of potential for new works. This means, more or less, that

the authors merge what they have seen and heard following the stereotypes of literary tradition. Their “lives” enters the historical-literary process even before any work has begun to crystallise<sup>1</sup>.

Sławiński's text, which postulates a break with anachronistic practices of biographical writing of the “life and works” type, was one of the most interesting voices in the debate on the relationship between the “self” of the creator and the “self” of the narrator, and as such it was nothing exceptional, contrary to what is sometimes written about structuralism-inspired literary reflections. One of many similar examples is Stefan Sawicki's essay *Między autorem a podmiotem mówiącym* [*Between the author and the narrator*], published in 1977 in “Pamiętnik Literacki”. Sawicki insisted on such restoration of the “human perspective” in literary studies which would protect “the achievements of contemporary methodology, with its predominantly structural and semantic orientation”<sup>2</sup>.

Musings on the importance of an author's biography in literary-historical studies do not, of course, signify an attempt to return to old methodological perspectives<sup>3</sup>. However, looking back, especially given a quick succession of subsequent turns in the (post)humanities<sup>4</sup>, in the long run might offer a chance to contemplate and organize issues of the relationship between life and work as an important problem mainly for the researcher of the literature of the past. Notably, for the editors of *Pisarze polskiego oświecenia* [*Authors of Polish Enlightenment*] stressed in the first volume of this fundamental publications for the researcher of Polish Enlightenment:

regardless of methodological orientation, a literary scholar is obliged to take into account the fact that authors exist, they have names, participate in different ways in social life, they have individual fates, and above all – while under different circumstances, with different motivations and goals – they create unique literary works of their own<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Janusz Sławiński, *Myśli na temat: biografia pisarza jako jednostka procesu historycznoliterackiego* [Thoughts on the subject: a writer's biography as a unit of the historical-literary process], in his: *Prace wybrane*, t. 4: *Próby teoretycznoliterackie* [Selected works, vol. 4: Literary theoretical trials] (Kraków: Universitas, 2000), 168 (first printed in: *Biografia – geografia – kultura literacka* [Biography – geography – literary culture], ed. by Jerzy Ziomek, Janusz Sławiński [Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1975]).

<sup>2</sup> Stefan Sawicki, „Między autorem a podmiotem mówiącym” [“Between the author and the speaking subject”], *Pamiętnik Literacki* 2 (1977): 113, 121.

<sup>3</sup> Due to the nature of this publication I was unable to present, even briefly, the most important concepts and research ideas concerning the meaning of the author in literary reflections. The difficult task of synthesising views on the role of the author in Polish literary studies was taken up by Tomasz Bilczewski in his „Subjekt – obiekt – abiekt: «pajęczno-wiotka tkanina»” [“Subject – abject – «a spider's web-fragile fabric»”, in: *Wiek teorii. Sto lat nowoczesnego literaturoznawstwa polskiego* [A century of theories. A hundred years of modern Polish literary studies], ed. by Danuta Ulicka (Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2020), 161–230 (this work also contains a list of the most important works).

<sup>4</sup> A distinct, if related issue concerns the position of reflections concerning relations between (auto)biography and literature in modern (post)humanities. It is meaningful that this is the starting point for the expert in the field, Małgorzata Czermińska, who postulates the thesis about the “critical stage” of autobiographism. Małgorzata Czermińska, „Autobiografia i metafory” [„Autobiography and metaphors”], in: *Projekt na daleką metę. Prace ofiarowane Ryszardowi Nyczowi* [A long-term project. Works dedicated to Ryszard Nycz], ed. by Zdzisław Łapiński, Anna Nasiłowska (Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2017), 99.

<sup>5</sup> „Od redakcji” [„From the editors”], in: *Pisarze polskiego oświecenia*, t. 1 [Writers of Polish Enlightenment, vol. 1], ed. by Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, Zbigniew Goliński (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1992), 5. The „personalistic aspect” of this publication was noticed and appreciated by Barbara Wolska, „Pisarze polskiego Oświecenia”, vol. 1, ed. by Teresa Kostkiewiczowa and Zbigniew Goliński, Warszawa 1992”, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 3 (1994); see. esp. 209, 219.

Expressed in the first volume of the publication from thirty years ago in response to the challenges of literary studies at the time, this remark is only superficially a cliché. In fact, the conviction that a special relationship between a work and its creator only started with Romantic literature is not at all exceptional. Let us quote Tomasz Kunz:

The perception of a literary work as an expression of creative genius, characteristic of the Romantic era, and the belief in the “organic” unity of the work and the creator naturally led researchers to be interested in the author and his or her biography and personality. It was developed, first of all, as a response to classicist normative poetics, which considered literature in terms of strictly codified rules and references to the concept of imitating ancient models of poetry<sup>6</sup>.

The above-quoted passage features in the introduction to the book *Wielec niż słowa. Literatura jako forma istnienia* [More than words. Literature as a form of existence], which - in keeping with the poetics of this type of statement - provides general remarks and observations before considering Polish poetry of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It is therefore hard to expect a nuanced, in-depth reflection on authorial presence in old texts in a piece whose goals and cognitive ambitions are concerned with other issues. However, one can assume that Kunz's declaration reflects a common way of looking at the pre-Romantic eras, which can also be noticed in the works of scholars who do not deal with old literature. A radical consequence of this perspective may be Mirosław Strzyżewski's problematic remark:

A handful of facts salvaged from the lives of Jan Kochanowski, Jan Andrzej Morsztyn, as well as Ignacy Krasicki and Stanisław Trembecki, is enough and there is no need for interpretation or overt exposure of their biographies as the little there is fits perfectly in the space of domestic Renaissance, courtly Baroque and the period of Enlightenment [...]. Literary values and senses in the old periods are integral to, and stem from tradition and convention; they are unaffected by the creation of the author's subjectivity<sup>7</sup>.

And yet there is no doubt that reflection on the ways in which the self is manifested, pursued both by Old Polish and Enlightenment writers (often bearing the stamp of the personal author), is often a necessary part of an interpretation which takes into account the anthropological ideas of the era. Here, it is references to traditions and conventions, whose recognition plays a significant role in the reading of the works of past eras, that make up

<sup>6</sup> Tomasz Kunz, „Wstęp” [„Introduction”], in his: *Wielec niż słowa. Literatura jako forma istnienia* [More than words. Literature as a form of existence] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2019), 7–8. See also Anna Nasiłowska, „Historia modernistycznego podmiotu” [„A history of the modernist subject”], in her: *Persona liryczna* [The lyrical persona] (Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2000), 21–22. The (definitely coincidental) similarity between Kunz's subtitle and Dariusz C. Maleszyński's phrase seems interesting: *Człowiek w tekście. Formy istnienia według literatury staropolskiej* [The man in the text. Forms of existence according to Old Polish literature] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Mirosław Strzyżewski, „Model «biografii typowej» romantyka” [„A model of a Romantic's «typical biography»”], in: *Biografie romantycznych poetów* [Biographies of Romantic poets], ed. by Zofia Trojanowiczowa, Jerzy Borowczyk (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2007), 109. See also Michał Kuziak's remarks on Strzyżewski's concepts: Michał Kuziak, „Biografie romantycznych poetów”, ed. by Zofia Trojanowiczowa, Jerzy Borowczyk, index by Barbara Hajdasz, Poznań 2007”, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 3 (2009): 230–231.

what Strzyżewski calls “the creation of the author’s subjectivity.” As one of the many possible cases exemplifies, Janina Abramowska’s dissertation devoted to the muse of Czarnolas highlights the role of Renaissance personal models in Jan Kochanowski’s lyrical autobiography<sup>8</sup>. Earlier, a similar strategy was adopted by Teresa Kostkiewiczowa in her monograph *Kniaźnin jako poeta liryczny* [*Kniaźnin as a lyrical poet*]. From the perspective of this theme, it is worth emphasising that “observing the relationship between the categories of the personal author, the literary subject and the “I” speaking, is one of the ways in which one can study the meanings of the work in its relationship with the totality of literary phenomena from which it grows”<sup>9</sup>.

Following from these clues, let us try to consider the case of Cyprian Godebski, not only because it is necessary to narrow down the complex issue of the relationship between “life” and “works” to just one author. The works of Godebski, who is typically described as a poet-legionary or a poet-soldier, dividing his time between Mars and Minerva<sup>10</sup>, include such texts whose interpretation requires taking considering the biographical aspect<sup>11</sup>. This is clear from studies on his literary legacy, written in different periods by researchers implementing differing methodologies, to mention but Mieczysław Smolarski<sup>12</sup>, Zbigniew Kubikowski (primarily as the author of introductions to editions of Godebski’s selected texts<sup>13</sup>), Ryszard Przybylski<sup>14</sup>,

<sup>8</sup> Janina Abramowska, „Kochanowskiego biografia kreowana” [„A created biography of Kochanowski”], *Teksty* 1 (1978). The specificity of autocreationist mechanisms of Renaissance poetry (also in relation to Kochanowski’s works) was also pointed out by, e.g. Jerzy Ziomek. See: Jerzy Ziomek, „Autobiografizm jako hipoteza konieczna («Treny» Jana Kochanowskiego)” [„Autobiographism as a necessary hypothesis”. Jan Kochanowski’s («Laments»)], in: *Biografia – geografia – kultura literacka* [Biography – geography – literary culture], 41–60 (Abramowska cited this article in the text quoted above); Jerzy Ziomek, „Poeta jako źródło historyczne. Glosa do referatu Wiktora Weintrauba” [“The poet as a historical source. A gloss to Wiktor Weintraub’s paper”], in: *Dzieło literackie jako źródło historyczne* [The literary work as a historical source], ed. by Zofia Stefanowska, Janusz Sławiński (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1978), 166–175.

<sup>9</sup> Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, *Kniaźnin jako poeta liryczny* [*Kniaźnin as a lyrical poet*] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1971), 188. The scholar, returning after many years to *Kniaźnin*’s poetry, noted earlier interest in the topic of subjectivity. See: Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, „Problematyka podmiotowości w liryce *Kniaźnina*. «Do Piotra Borzęckiego»” [“The issue of subjectivity in *Kniaźnin*’s poetry. «To Piotr Borzęcki»”, in: *Czytanie *Kniaźnina** [Reading *Kniaźnin*], ed. by Bożena Mazurkova, Tomasz Chachulski (Warszawa: Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna, IBL PAN, 2010), 131–132.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g. O... (L. Osiński), „Wiadomość o życiu i pismach Cypriana Godebskiego” [„A notice about the life and works of Cyprian Godebski”], *Pamiętnik Warszawski* 1 (1809): 91.

<sup>11</sup> Godebski’s case is not, of course, unusual. The inevitability of triggering the biographical context is relevant also in reference to, say, Laurence Sterne’s novels, in which the author purposefully ascribes to his protagonists features and characteristics which pointed to a personal author (see e.g. Robert Huntley Bell, *Sterne’s Autobiographical Personae*, in his: *The Rise of Autobiography in the Eighteenth Century: Ten Experiments in Literary Genre* – Augustine, Bunyan, Rousseau, Locke, Hume, Franklin, Gibbon, Sterne, Fielding, Boswell [Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2012]). In Polish Enlightenment this phenomenon is illustrated by, e.g. Maria Württemberg (see e.g. Alina Aleksandrowicz, *Twórczość Marii z ks. Czartoryskich ks. Wirtemberskiej. Literatura i obyczaj* [The works of Maria Czartoryska duchess of Württemberg. Literature and custom] [Warszawa: DIG, 2022]; especially the chapter *To także powieść z kluczem* [This is also a Roman à clef]).

<sup>12</sup> Mieczysław Smolarski, *Poezya legionów. Czasy, pieśń i jej dzieje* [The poetry of legions. Times, hymn, its history] (Kraków: Akademia Umiejętności, 1912); see especially 14–19, 28–33.

<sup>13</sup> See footnotes 23 and 35.

<sup>14</sup> Ryszard Przybylski, *Klasycyzm, czyli prawdziwy koniec Królestwa Polskiego* [Classicism or a true end of Congress Poland] (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1983); especially the chapter *Dusza zamordowanego Królestwa* [The soul of a murdered Kingdom]).

Rafał Rippel<sup>15</sup>, Łucja Ginkowa or Artur Timofiejew<sup>16</sup>. These scholars' partiality to biographical information can be explained by the importance of events in which Godebski participated and which he witnessed. However, one should also consider "suggestions of autobiographism"<sup>17</sup>, scattered throughout his texts, which are present not only in his *Wiersz do Legiów polskich* [A poem to Polish Legions] or *Grenadier-filozof* [Grenadier-philosopher], forcing the reader who interacts with "creativity" to take a closer look at "life." It should be noted that the formula "suggestions of autobiographism" was borrowed from Jacek Lyszczyzna, who used it for describing selected biography-related phenomena in Romantic literature. Presumably, the term is likewise applicable to issues of the Enlightenment era. Lyszczyzna points to suggestions of autobiographism, among others, in the texts of Adam Mickiewicz or Juliusz Słowacki, whose works include the names and sometimes surnames of real people, they reflect the realities of specific places or depict authentic events. Similar elements can also be found in the literary legacy of Godebski, as well as other authors of past eras, for example, Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin, who was the subject of Kostkiewiczowa's<sup>18</sup> work.

These suggestions were particularly important for extratextual elements framing the literary work, which perform important functions in the literature of Polish Enlightenment. *Wiersz do Legiów polskich*, to begin with Godebski's most popular text, was accompanied by a preface and explanatory notes. *Krótką wiadomość o Legiach polskich* [A short notice concerning Polish Legions], in turn, provides a coherent picture of the author fulfilling the obligations imposed on him by his writing. Thus, the reader is being prepared to read a text that requires certain background knowledge, particularly historical. It is worth recalling that among the types of prefaces in texts of the Enlightenment, distinguished by Bożena Mazurkowa, one can find prefaces highlighting the historical, cultural and geographical contexts of the works in question<sup>19</sup>. As her findings show, these were not popular themes in prefatory texts of Polish Enlightenment. However, they deserve a mention because of their importance: one may assume that they initiated a custom of opening works with commentaries purporting to be "scientific"<sup>20</sup>. At the same time, Mazurkowa points to the practice of supplementing editions of the works of deceased poets with their biographies, which often adopt the format of "a notice on...", "the life of...". Significantly, this type of publication also appeared in periodicals, as illustrated by the biographies of Godebski<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Rafał Rippel, „Między konwencją a odmiennością. O konstrukcji narratora w «Grenadierce-filozofie» Cypriana Godebskiego” [„Between convention and difference. On the structure of the narrator in Cyprian Godebski's «Grenadier-philosopher»], *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Opolskiego. Filologia Polska* 38 (1997): 27–36.

<sup>16</sup>See especially Artur Timofiejew, *Legiony i vitae lex. Problemy twórczości literackiej Cypriana Godebskiego* [Legions and vitae lex. Issues in Cyprian Godebski's literary works] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2002).

<sup>17</sup>Jacek Lyszczyzna, „Romantyczna sugestia autobiografizmu tekstu” [„A Romantic suggestion of textual autobiographism”], in: *Biografie romantycznych poetów* [Biographies of Romantic poets], 139–146.

<sup>18</sup>Kostkiewiczowa, *Kniaźnin jako poeta liryczny*, 178–181.

<sup>19</sup>Bożena Mazurkowa, *Literacka rama wydawnicza dzieł Franciszka Dionizego Kniaźnina (na tle porównawczym)* [Literary frame of Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin's works (against a comparative background)] (Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 1993), 75.

<sup>20</sup>Mazurkowa, 75. See also Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, „Krytyka literacka w Polsce w epoce oświecenia” [Literary criticism in Poland of the Enlightenment era], in: Elżbieta Sarnowska-Temeriusz, Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, *Krytyka literacka w Polsce w XVI i XVII wieku oraz w epoce oświecenia* [Literary criticism in Poland of the 16th and 17th centuries and in the Enlightenment period] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1990), 283–294.

<sup>21</sup>Kostkiewiczowa, „Krytyka literacka w Polsce w epoce oświecenia”, 283–294.

quoted in this article. This preference for commemorating not only “work” but also “life” can be explained, according to Tomasz Bilczewski, by reference to the historical context and an obvious sense of responsibility to preserve national identity in the absence of an independent state<sup>22</sup>.

In the case of *Krótką wiadomość...* the need to comment on recent events (let us remember that the work in question was published in 1805) does not, as already noted, stem from their total absence in public awareness. However, the history of the legions is “badly present” – it is full of understatements and misrepresentations. That did not change, as Godebski points out, even with the return of the legionaries to lands which were once part of the Republic of Poland: “without any accurate information concerning the legions, the citizen accepted everything in good faith, on account of historical trials. Hence those misleading and bizarre stories not only about the beginning of the legions, but even about their condition, deeds, numbers [...]”<sup>23</sup>. *Krótką wiadomość...* is a (partial) answer to this problem, “before the pen of a noble fellow citizen and erstwhile colleague bestows upon his countrymen an accurate sketch of the history of their brethren” (Ww 3). The commemoration that the legionary deed deserves must meet certain conditions. In other words, the memory of the legionaries must be truthful. While the preface in question does not make references to the author’s own experiences as an authenticating device, it seems unlikely that the then reader, who knew the name of the poem’s author (as it featured on the title page of the 1805 print), did surrender to the suggestion of autobiographism. Moreover, the title page included two lines of *Wiersz do Legiów polskich* (“Unable to do a different service to my brothers, / Gratitude, as far as it is possible, should pay the debts”), followed by the source of that quote<sup>24</sup>. The term “brothers” attracts the reader’s attention, as it suggests that the author is part of the community he is addressing. The conviction that the author was also a witness and participant in the described events is reinforced through the passage preceding the quote, which concerns the death of Godebski’s brother and the consolation provided by his friend (and his superior) – Franciszek Rymkiewicz (Ww 21)<sup>25</sup>.

It should be noted that one of the goals of *Krótką wiadomość...* was also to free the reader “from frequently perusing the footnotes” (Ww 3). The authorial presentation we have witnessed here is reminiscent of the Enlightenment concept of the writer-teacher, who recognises his own activity in the literary sphere as a necessary obligation to the community; an obligation which must be fulfilled. Godebski’s abandonment of the soldier’s path (which proved to be

<sup>22</sup>Bilczewski, 180–182.

<sup>23</sup>Cyprian Godebski, „Krótką wiadomość o Legiach polskich” [„A short notice about Polish Legions”], in his: *Wybór wierszy* [Selection of poems], edited by Zbigniew Kubikowski (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1956), 4 (henceforth, “Ww” followed by page number; this edition will be used here as a source for quotations from Godebski, unless stated otherwise;). An interesting reading strategy for *Krótką wiadomość...* was introduced by Danuta Zawadzka, for whom Godebski’s foreword is a product of acute awareness that „the process of losing the memory of legionaries is directly proportional to the popularity of their legend”. Danuta Zawadzka, „Pokolenie 1812” [„Generation 1812”], in her: *Pokolenie klęski 1812 roku. O Antonim Malczewskim i odludkach* [Generation: debacle 1812. On Antoni Malczewski and the recluses] (Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2000), 86.

<sup>24</sup>Łucja Ginkowa, „Cyprian Godziemba Godebski (1765–1809)”, in: *Pisarze polskiego oświecenia*, vol. 3, ed. by Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, Zbigniew Goliński (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1996), 103.

<sup>25</sup>Łucja Ginkowa, „Cyprian Godziemba Godebski (1765–1809)”, in: *Pisarze polskiego oświecenia*, vol. 3, ed. by Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, Zbigniew Goliński (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1996), 103.

temporary), motivated by the Treaty of Lunéville (1801)<sup>26</sup>, was not, after all, tantamount to renouncing his *pro publico bono* activity. There was no question of the importance of the word as a tool of social communication, for the co-founder of the “Dekada Legionowa”<sup>27</sup> journal (he announced it in footnote 13 to *Wiersz do Legiów polskich*; Ww 36-37) and – later still – to “Zabawy Przyjemne i Pożyteczne” [“The Games of Business and Pleasure”]. By founding the first periodical in the history of Polish culture which was intended for soldiers, Godebski (to use Józef Kalasanty Szaniawski’s term) “contributed [...] significantly to the dissemination of military news, patriotism and moral principles in [...] the newly founded settlement of the Polish nation”<sup>28</sup>. In a letter to Ksawery Kossecki dated March 4, 1799, he informed his friend of his publishing activities:

“And in order not to be idle, I am publishing “Dekadowe Pismo”, that is, a legion magazine for every decade. I cannot, therefore, offer any consolation that I am of any service to the people. Now you know all about your Cyprian, who knows how to value and love you”<sup>29</sup>.

The imperative of social utility, recurring in the speeches of the author of *Wiersz do Legiów polskich*, is closely related to ethical issues and anthropological ideals he promotes. Therefore, in *Pochwała Konfucjusza, filozofa chińskiego* [In praise of Confucius, the Chinese philosopher] Godebski introduces a peculiar typology of fame. In addition to “vainglorious fame”, whose splendor “fades with time”, one should mention “reliable fame” - its foundation is virtue and “making others happy”<sup>30</sup>.

A shared element that unites Godebski’s writing and his educational activity, therefore, is a specific (and purposeful) creation of the speaker’s “self”, featuring strong echoes of the Enlightenment (mostly classicist) concept of the poet as a teacher of a given community. This creation is reconcilable with the new role of the writer-*proto-intellectual*, shaped under the influence of economic, social and political factors. This new writer is convinced of the need to “enlighten” fellow citizens (including rank-and-file soldiers). The effectiveness of this creation is proven not only confirmed by Szaniawski, quoted earlier. This is what Michał Janowski wrote about the author of *Wiersz do Legiów polskich* in his monograph on the birth of Polish intelligentsia:

<sup>26</sup>For the aftermath of the Treaty of Lunéville see e.g. Jan Pachoński, *Korpus oficerski Legionów Polskich 1796–1807* [Officer corps of Polish Legions 1796-1807] (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 1999), 17–18. See also Przybylski, 240–44.

<sup>27</sup>About „Dekada Legionowa” see, e.g. Leon Zieleniewski, „Dekada”. *Pismo legionów polskich w 1799 r.* [The Decade. A journal of Polish Legions in 1799], foreword by Stefan Krzywoszewski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Polskiego Związku Wydawców Dzienników i Czasopism, 1938).

<sup>28</sup>Józef Kalasanty Szaniawski, „Pochwała Cypriana Godebskiego” [„In praise of Cyprian Godebski”], in: Cyprian Godebski, *Dzieła wierszem i prozą, cz. 1* [Cyprian Godebski. Works of poetry and prose, part 1] (Warszawa: wyd. K. Godebski, 1821), 21–22. The educational aspect of the Legions’ activities was studied, e.g. by Pachoński (esp. chapter.: *Kształcenie ogólne, Wkład korpusu oficerskiego do nauki i kultury* [General education, The impact of the officer corps on science and culture]).

<sup>29</sup>Quoted from Maria Józefacka, „Listy Cypriana Godebskiego do Ksawerego Kosseckiego i innych osób” [„Cyprian Godebski’s letters to Ksawery Kossecki and others”], *Archiwum Literackie. Miscellanea z lat 1800–1850* [Literary Archive. Miscellanea for 1800-1850] 11 (1967): 160.

<sup>30</sup>Godebski, *Dzieła wierszem i prozą*, 51–52. Przybylski, among others, wrote about the concept of fame in Godebski’s works, 231–233.

The Legions were important for yet another reason. Among their organizers was a group of intellectuals, former conspirators and insurgents, who, through their decision to participate in an armed struggle, consciously situated themselves outside the old structures of the state. Perhaps their fate was best embodied by the soldier and writer, Cyprian Godebski [...] - a freemason, conspirator and legionary. In Italy he edited the legionary periodical "Dekada Polska", and when he returned to Prussian Warsaw after the legions were disbanded, he became a member of the recently founded Society of Friends of Sciences. Godebski's most popular work, *Wiersz do Legiów Polskich* (1805), is an excellent piece of evidence on the state of mind of a Polish "proto-intellectual" at a time when there was yet no indication that the political system established in the Polish lands as a result of the Third Partition might soon collapse<sup>31</sup>.

Janowski's depiction of Godebski's biography as the embodiment of the fate of a legionary proto-intellectual evokes, only seemingly contradictory (given Godebski's re-entering the military path 1806), Romantic legend of poet-soldiers following a certain code of ethics, an essential element of which was total devotion to the "Polish cause"<sup>32</sup>. The author of *Wiersz do Legiów polskich* would not object to this model, an excellent example of which is *Grenadier-filozof* (1805), with an evocative subtitle: *A true story extracted from a travelogue for the year 1799*. Its autobiographical aspect was pointed out by the already quoted Szaniawski in his eulogy in honor of Godebski, delivered at a formal meeting of the Society of Friends of Science in 1809<sup>33</sup>. Later commentators on his work also exposed this "personal element," consisting, as Konstanty Wojciechowski noted, "not only in the fidelity of the events depicted and experienced, but also in the tendentious colouring of the novel, and in its emotional aspect"<sup>34</sup>. As in the case of *Wiersz do Legiów polskich*, here too we witness the author's care for the trustworthiness and accessibility of his account. The first chapter contains a description of the tragic surrender of the fortress in Mantua (1799), and the "footnotes" include, among other things, information on various localities mentioned in the work. A slightly different function is performed by footnote 25, with information about Major Kamiński's chivalrous actions at Cortona (1799), with a noteworthy comment:

Worthy Kaminski! you remind us of the once brave Kowalski Korabczyk, and if the deed of that one is testified to by ancient histories, yours is supported by the testimony of living colleagues. Our forefathers decorated their history with similar works; I decorate with your deed

<sup>31</sup>Maciej Janowski, „W służbie państwa (1807–1809)” [“In the service of state (1807-1809)”], in his: *Narodziny inteligencji 1750–1831* [The birth of intelligentsia 1750-1831] (Warszawa: Neriton, 2008), 118.

<sup>32</sup>See e.g. Zawadzka, 126–128.

<sup>33</sup>Szaniawski, 23. It seems to me that the conventionalized description of Godebski in the above-mentioned foreword, highlighted by Kostkiewiczowa, has an exemplary function and remains consistent with the project of a man-citizen, which can be discerned from the papers of the author of *Wiersz do Legiów polskich*. Kostkiewiczowa, *Krytyka literacka*, 287–288.

<sup>34</sup>Konstanty Wojciechowski, *Historia powieści w Polsce. Rozwój typów i form romansu polskiego na tle porównawczym* [A history of the novel in Poland. Development of types and forms of the Polish romance in a comparative context] (Lwów: Księgarnia Gubrynowicza i syna, 1925), 87. See also Grzegorz Zająć's interpretation, which includes Godebski's *Pamiętnik oblężenia Mantui* [The diary of the siege of Mantua]. Grzegorz Zająć, „Dziennik podróży czy prawdziwa powieść? O «Grenadierze-filozofie» Cypriana Godebskiego”, [„A travelogue or a real novel? On Cyprian Godebski's «Grenadier-philosopher»], *Ruch Literacki* 6 (1996): 685–698.



a small work, which is worthy of some merit only because it was inspired by friendship and civic feelings<sup>35</sup>.

The quoted passage proves that the value of the work lies in the fact that it can be treated as a testimony to the deeds of the Legions. Suggestions of autobiographism in *Grenadier-filozof* which appear, among other things, in the subtitle, dedication, analogies between the fate of the narrator and the author, are a necessary element of the story which can save the past both from oblivion and from falsification (which was expressed explicitly in *Krótką wiadomość* ... cited above). What remains to be considered is the comparison of Kamiński to “the once brave Kowalski Korabczyk,” which was described by Wespazjan Kochowski in *Roczniki* [*Annals*] and recalled at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Jan Paweł Woronicz in *Rozprawa pierwsza o pieśniach narodowych* [*The first treatise on national songs*] (1803) as one example of the valour of Polish knighthood<sup>36</sup>. Concern for preserving the history of a nation deprived of a state, which is a constant element of metapoetic authorial statements in the post-partition era<sup>37</sup>, in the text under discussion bears a trait of sentimentality, supplemented by a “personal element”. The narrator, who is asked by a host in Pont-de-Beauvoisin about an old comrade, major K..., relays the information he has heard about his serious condition due to wounds received at Cortona (Gf 49-50). This tendency always to reminisce about other legionaries and friends is characteristic of all of Godebski's work. *Grenadier-filozof* is dedicated to Kossecki, after all:

Whatever the custom of dedicating his work to someone is, it brings the author no shame, when he is led by noble motives. Mine are gratitude and friendship. [...] If this work of mine is not received by my countrymen with what self-love would demand, I will be rewarded enough if you receive it with the kind of affection with which your constant friend C. Godebski dedicates it to you (Gf 3-4).

Gratitude and friendship, possibly reconcilable with “true” fame, which can be achieved - as stated in *Pochwała Konfucjusza*... - through bringing happiness to others, are the basis of the ideal model of human relations and thus, more broadly, of a dignified life. In his interpretation of *Grenadier-filozof* Artur Timofiejew points out that the novel's protagonists “form [...] a ‘republic of friends’ united by a community of worldview, morality; by living ‘according to virtue’, following their inner convictions, they fully realize their humanity”<sup>38</sup>. Thus, the “suggestions of autobiographism” that interest us here lend credibility to the characters presented, indicated as worthy of emulation, and ones who are guided by feeling, which allows them to establish a bond with others and themselves. The work, inspired by gratitude and friend-

<sup>35</sup>Cyprian Godebski, *Grenadier-filozof. Powieść prawdziwa wyjęta z dziennika podróży roku 1799* [*Grenadier-philosopher. A true novel extracted from a travelogue of 1799*], edited by Zbigniew Kubikowski (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1952), 74–75 (henceforth, Gf followed by page number).

<sup>36</sup>Zob. Jan Paweł Woronicz, „Rozprawa pierwsza o pieśniach narodowych” [„The first treatise on national songs”], in his: *Pisma wybrane* [Selected essays], introduction, selection and commentary by Małgorzata Nesteruk, Zofia Rejman (Warszawa: Open, 1993), 237, 671.

<sup>37</sup>Hanna Jurkowska is one of the authors writing about the actions for saving the memory of the nation's past. See her *Pamięć sentymentalna. Praktyki pamięci w kręgu Towarzystwa Warszawskiego Przyjaciół Nauk i w Puławach Izabeli Czartoryskiej* [*Sentimental memory. Practices of memory in the circle of Warsaw Society of the Friends of Learning and in Izabela Czartoryska's Puławy*] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2014).

<sup>38</sup>Timofiejew, 113.

ship and dedicated to friendship, could not therefore have been written by someone devoid of feeling. Once again it is appropriate to recall *Krótką wiadomość...*:

He who wishes to look for art, ornament and charm in my rhyme, let him not begin a poem in vain: he will find there scattered thoughts, dull repetitions; in a word, the image of a demented lover, who in a disorder of elation mourns the loss of a favorite object. I have written for my countrymen with that feeling with which the unhappy one folds his sufferings into the bosom of those similar to him (Ww 11).

The quoted passage recalls the aesthetic and literary declaration of a writer influenced by sentimentalism, treating his own works as an act of self-expression. This peculiar pattern of the poet "being himself," finds an important incarnation in the Enlightenment of king Stanisław Poniatowski era, primarily in the lyricism of Kniaźnin. It seems to require "suggestions of autobiographism", which guarantee the implementation of a specific project, the success of which, however, depends on the opinions of other people (in this case, "suggestions of autobiographism" perform the function of authentication).

Summarizing the analyses presented so far, one may be tempted to distinguish two main reasons for the reveal of the personal author in the text. The first one relates to satisfying the need to give a "true" testimony of the legionary deed, and the second - to the expressive functions of literature. The proposed typology, the purpose of which is to provide a preliminary ordering of certain phenomena, does not, of course, exhaust the problem of the relationship between "life" and "creativity" in the study of the literature of Polish Enlightenment, even if we limit this issue to the literary legacy of Godebski (only a small proportion of which has been presented here). Indeed, in light of the works cited above, *Wiersz do siebie samego* [*A poem to myself*] causes cognitive confusion. In addition to geographical terms (the Styr, the Pina, the Horyń), which are clear indications of autobiographical elements, the aforementioned work also describes the war experience and provides comments on the cultural and social life of the time (e.g., echoes of the disputes around Józef Bielawski or remarks on the Society of Friends of Sciences). The astonishment mentioned above is mainly brought by passages of a metapoetic nature:

Jam niegdyś wśród szczupłego zagonu  
Ledwo o górach słyszał Helikonu,  
Próżnom pasterzy nad Styrem i Piną  
Pytał, gdzie zdroje kastalijskie płyną,  
Na próżnom zwiedzał lasy i strumienia  
Ciekawy faunów i satyrów pienia;  
Wszędzie milczenie panowało głuche.  
[.....]  
Zamiast Orfeja czarującej liry –  
Drzewa runęły pod ciosem siekiéry.  
Jeszcze albowiem wtenczas śpiewak nowy  
Nie natchnął życiem nadbrzeż Horyniowy;  
(Ww 40–42)

(I once, in the midst of a slender homestead  
 Barely heard of the mountains of Helicon,  
 To the vanity of shepherds on the Styr and Pina rivers  
 Asked where the springs of Castalian flow,  
 In the vacuum he explored forests and streams  
 Curious about the fauns and satyrs' song;  
 Everywhere silence reigned deafening.  
 [...]  
 Instead of Orpheus' charming lyre -  
 The trees collapsed under the blow of the axe.  
 For yet at that time the new singer  
 Did not inspire the Horynian waterfront with life;)  
 (Ww 40-42)

The distance from common literary themes expressed here can be taken as proof of a break with classicism and formed within this current ways of talking about the world and the role the poet plays in it. This is what Timofiejew wrote about the analyzed poem in a monograph devoted to Godebski's work:

The ironic dialogue between the subject-poet and the subject-advisor (an expert in the classicist conception of poetry) is intended to criticize the Enlightenment view that considers the utilitarian character of expression as a condition for becoming a poet. [...] The poet does not want to express himself in a socially engaged manner [...] and therefore, according to the advisor, he does not deserve to be called a poet, he ceases to be one<sup>39</sup>.

The quoted statement is part of a chapter on Godebski's aesthetic and literary outlook, which, as Timofiejew notes in the conclusion, was marked by an eclecticism typical of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>40</sup>. Thus, *Wiersz do siebie samgeo* becomes an example of the search for new ways of expressing the self. The status of a poet is to be determined by "the inner voice, the heart, the feeling, not the mere knowledge of the poetic craft"<sup>41</sup>.

Undoubtedly, the above-cited passage from Godebski's work reveals a distance from literary conventions, highlighted by Timofiejew, as well as acute disappointment with reality. The image of the search for inspiration is reminiscent of the trope of a meeting with the Muses and their divine guardian, familiar from ancient literature. That trope was also exploited, among others, by Klemens Janicki in his autobiographical elegy *O sobie samym do potomności* [About myself to posterity] or, much later, by Książnin in his work *Do Ignacego Bykowskiego* [To Ignacy

<sup>39</sup>Timofiejew, 22–23.

<sup>40</sup>Timofiejew, 49.

<sup>41</sup>Timofiejew, 25.

Bykowski]<sup>42</sup>. Thus, *Wiersz do siebie samego* stands in opposition to traditional, “classical,” as it were, realizations of the motif of the muses or the closely associated trope of the lute<sup>43</sup>.

The poem in question, however, opens with a motto from Juvenalis’ *Satire I*, which represents an important genre in classicist poetics. The phrase quoted by Godebski - *Facit indignatio versum* (“Indignation gives birth to a poem”) - was often used by writers of earlier eras (e.g., Krzysztof Opaliński, Jan Górczyczewski) as a justification for poetic activity, especially if the fruits of this activity were satires<sup>44</sup>. Let us remember that the above-quoted passage from *Satire I* is preceded by a peculiar disclaimer - “Si natura negat”, translated as: “If nature refuses to respond”<sup>45</sup>, “If talent refuses”<sup>46</sup>. Thus, a creator, even one lacking innate dispositions (developed, as recommended by most classical theorists, through painstaking exercises), can reach for the pen. The prerequisite is an emotion - in this case a negative one - that does not allow the poet to be indifferent to the surrounding circumstances. Such a mode of reading would be in line with Timofiejew’s proposal. However, it should be borne in mind that *indignatio* is a rhetorical concept. As Jerzy Ziomek pointed out, “Affect can contain or be achieved by *indignatio* (indignation) or *conquestio* (complaint).”<sup>47</sup> The speaker’s indignation should arise a reaction from the audience and convince them of a certain position. Thus, the classical heritage, so important for the literature of the late Enlightenment, is not in opposition to the emotional sphere and can be reconciled with the ways used by the poets to express the self.

<sup>42</sup>One should deal separately with this poem by Godebski in relation to other metapoetic works, which feature a definitive poetic “I, especially those from the Enlightenment period (although both ancient and Old Polish traditions need to be included too),” e.g. Adam Naruszewicz’s *Zabawa moja* [My game] (see e.g. Agata Ročko, „Poetyckie i filozoficzne credo: «Zabawa moja»” [“Poetic and philosophical credo: «My game»”], in: *Czytanie Naruszewicza* [Reading Naruszewicz], vol. 1, ed. by Barbara Wolska, Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, Bożena Mazurkowska [Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2015]) or Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin’s *Z Anakreonta. Sam do siebie* [From Anacreon. Me to myself] (see e.g. Tomasz Chachulski, „Między «Krotofilami i miłośnikami» a «Zalami Orfeusza nad Eurydyką» „Z Anakreonta. Sam do siebie” [„Between «Games and flings» and „Orpheus’ laments over Eurydice». “From Anacreon. Me to myself”], in: *Czytanie Kniaźnina*). I thank professor Teresa Kostkiewiczowa for this suggestion.

<sup>43</sup>It is worth remembering about the lines quoted above: „Jeszcze albowiem wtenczas śpiewak nowy / Nie natchnął życiem nadbrzeż Horyniowy”. According to Kubikowski (Ww 42, footn. for verse 25), they refer to Alojzy Feliński, who, like Godebski, was a graduate of the Piarist school in Dąbrowica (on the Horyń river). In early 19th c. he was already a well-known translator of Delille. If the author’s words were not meant as ironic, then Godebski’s distance towards „classical” realisations of topos might be an expression of his disappointment in his own poetic capabilities.

<sup>44</sup>Józef Tomasz Pokrzywniak, „«Satyra prawdę mówi», czyli rzecz o fałszywych przesłankach” [„«Satire tells the truth», or a thing about false premises”] *Pamiętnik Literacki* 4 (1984): 91–93 (the article was expanded into a chapter *Satyryk wśród konwencji gatunku* [A satirist amongst conventions of the genre], published in his monograph *Ignacy Krasicki wśród pisarzy polskiego oświecenia* [Ignacy Krasicki amongst the writers of Polish Enlightenment] [Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2015]). Information on satire and the concept of writer-satirist are reconstructed on the basis of that article, unless stated otherwise.

<sup>45</sup>See Tomasz Sapota, *Juvenalis* [Juvenal] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2009), 82. Writers of the Antiquity are ambiguous towards what was referred to as *indignatio*. On the one hand, especially in stoic ethics, „indignation” was valorised negatively, on the other – it constituted an important element of reflections on the rhetoric and stance of the speaker (also in reference to the speaker’s rhetorical skill. See, e.g. Catherine Keane, „Anger Games”, in her: *Juvenal and the satiric emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 26–67; Sapota, 31–38, 79–87).

<sup>46</sup>Juvenal, „Satyra I” [„Satire I”], transl. by J. Sękowski, in: *Trzej satyrycy rzymscy* [Three Roman satirists], introduction and edition by Lucyna Winniczuk (Warszawa: PIW, 1958), 119.

<sup>47</sup>Jerzy Ziomek, *Retoryka opisowa* [Descriptive rhetoric] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1990), 116. The meaning of affect in Old Polish literature, likewise important for the people of Enlightenment, was studied by Barbara Otwinowska, „Afekty” [“Affects”], in: *Słownik literatury staropolskiej* [The dictionary of Old Polish literature], ed. by Teresa Michałowska, Barbara Otwinowska, Elżbieta Sarnowska-Temierusz, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 2002), 12–16.

At the same time, although this would require an in-depth reflection on the various realizations of the genre of the work in question, one should consider whether “suggestions of autobiographism” scattered in the text, as well as comments on the realities of the time, are not motivated by what the satires refer to as the need to take an active stance towards reality. This would justify the creation of texts by authors who do not belong to the group chosen by the divine guardians of art. The most important duty of a satirical writer is, therefore, to make a stance on reality, especially when that reality is disappointing. It is significant that in many interpretations of satires (both ancient and modern) researchers have exposed the relationship between “life” and “creativity,” which corresponded with the concept of the satirical poet writing under the influence of difficult events and situations<sup>48</sup>. Thus, “suggestions of autobiographism” present in the poem, including primarily the exploitation of events, themes, or situations related to the cultural, literary and moral life of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, could be explained not only as a need to express disappointment with the surrounding reality but also as the realization of a certain concept of the poet and poetry, in this case – satirical. Thus, the relationship between life and creativity could be most described by emphasizing their mutual conditioning. Not only would “life” determine “creativity,” but it would itself also be created reciprocally - in the act of creation, subsequent reading, and functioning of “creativity” in specific reading circles<sup>49</sup>.

translated by Justyna Rogos-Hebda

<sup>48</sup>The dangers of treating satire exclusively as evidence of the author's reaction to reality, to the exclusion of the meaning of literary conventions and traditions of the genre, have been discussed, e.g. by Sapota, 28–30.

<sup>49</sup>Including the author's „life” in the interpretation of their „works”, while affording a distinction of various reading strategies related to the mental atmosphere of a given era, allows one to pose questions related both to individual and collective experiences. Yet, it poses dangers, too, especially when appropriate sources are unavailable. A relevant example of this threat is information on the origins of *Dumania żołnierza polskiego w starożytnym zamku Maurów nad Tagiem* [The musing of a Polish soldier in the ancient castle of the Moors on the river Tagus] by Kantorbery Tymowski. The work was supposed to be a record of the poet's soldier experience, but, as proven by Elżbieta Z. Wichrowska's painstaking research, Tymowski did not participate in Napoleon's Spanish campaign. Elżbieta Z. Wichrowska, *Kantorbery Tymowski w świetle nowych źródeł* [Kantorbery Tymowski in the light of new sources] (Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2002); see esp. 11–32.

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# KEYWORDS

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**ABSTRACT:**

The article discusses the importance of a writer's biography for studies on old literature. The topic has been the focus of research for long but hitherto largely limited to 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-c. literature. Given the expansive nature of the issue the author has concentrated here on the works of Cyprian Godebski, who participated in the Napoleonic wars and was author of, among others, *Wiersz do Legiów polskich* [A poem for Polish Legions]. In her analysis of Godebski's literary works the author has pointed to the manners in which they deal with the biographic context, which proved to be an important element of the reading process.

*"life and works"*

## OLDER LITERATURE

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