

A POET EDITING A POET EDITING A POET*

By

MIKOŁAJ SZYMAŃSKI

Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin (1749 or 1750–1807) owes his fame to his Polish poems, but his Latin verse certainly merits more attention than is usually given to 18th century Latin poetry. In his *Elegies* he returns to the Renaissance tradition of Polish Latin elegy, made known in Europe by Klemens Janicjusz and Jan Kochanowski. Kniaźnin's fascination with the Renaissance can be seen even more clearly in his Latin paraphrasis of Kochanowski's most famous cycle of Polish poems, the *Threnes*. Among his five *Odes*, mostly modelled on Horace's *Odes* and *Epodes*, the fifth poem stands out as something unusual: it is an amply expanded version of Hadrian's poem *Animula vagula, blandula*. Some of Kniaźnin's Latin poems bear the stamp of sentimentalism, which was then the dominating trend in Polish poetry. The *Threnes*, though based on a two centuries old original, fit this new current very well and are dedicated to Franciszek Karpiński, the most outstanding sentimentalist poet. The same spirit of sentimentalism pervades the *Erotopaegnia*, paraphrases of Greek poems by Musaeus, Bion and Moschus¹. Both the *Threnes* and the *Mors Adonis* (*Erotop.* 2) are in their mood similar to Kniaźnin's cycle of Polish poems *Żale Orfeusza nad Eurydyką* (*Orpheus' Lamentations on Eurydice*)².

Until recently, Kniaźnin's Latin poems, in spite of their considerable value, evoked the interest of no more than a few scholars. The only attempt at a thorough analysis was made by Piotr Chmielowski, a distinguished historian of Polish literature, in his article in "Eos"³. Much more has been done in this domain in the

* The following discussion on the text of Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin's Latin poems has been inspired by their most recent edition: Anna Elissa Radke, Franciscus Dionysius Kniaznin: *Carmina selecta*, Edition mit einem Kommentar, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 2007 (Studien zur klassischen Philologie 155), 160 pp.

¹ These four cycles will be henceforth abbreviated: *El.*, *Thr.*, *Od.* and *Erotop.*

² Cf. Kostkiewiczowa 1984.

³ Chmielowski 1903.