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**‘NOTEBOOK’ LYRICISM OF ZYGMUNT KRASIŃSKI  
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POEM “BÓG MI  
ODMÓWIŁ TEJ ANIELSKIEJ MIARY” (“GOD HAS  
DENIED ME THE ANGELIC MEASURE”)**

**1. ‘Notebook Romanticism’ and Lyricism**

The notion of ‘notebook Romanticism’ is an interpretative category I have formulated which covers *inedita* of the Romantic period (texts, which have not been published in their authors’ lifetimes, and which had not been intended for publication). Polish Romanticism acquires a new image when we look at it from the perspective not of texts published, but from the perspective of texts unpublished (because of the authors’ decisions). Texts which were published created aesthetic canons and paradigms of the period. Different Romanticism is hidden in texts left in the ‘drawers’ of Romantic writers. The theme of *inedita* has been dealt with in many papers by Zofia Stefanowska, who has stressed that the unfinished character of such texts, their artistic ‘roughness’, and intimacy of confessions should be treated as possessing values and advantages which may become important for contemporary readers.<sup>1</sup> ‘Notebook Romanticism’ allows us to approach what was private and intimate in this period, not only in biographical or autobiographical contexts, although these issues should not be left out, but also in the context of deeper meanings; that is in the context of expressing and looking for one’s own identity and

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<sup>1</sup> See Zofia Stefanowska, *Mickiewicz – tradycja i nowatorstwo*, in Eadem, *Próba zdrowego rozumu. Studia o Mickiewiczu*, Warszawa 2001, 347.

meaning of reality. Lyric poems by Zygmunt Krasiński not published during his lifetime belong to the category of 'notebook Romanticism'.

The creative process connected with Krasiński's lyric poetry seems to be very important for the attempt to understand these poems, and the nature of Krasiński's lyricism, conceived as a sphere of expressing experiences of 'deep' character. Most of his lyric poems were not published during his lifetime. They were not prepared for publication or in any way collected or put in archives, and that is why they may be defined as belonging to the 'notebook' category. The notebook character has more aspects, however, than the one which might be called 'editorial'. The notebook character reveals a set of features (sketchiness, unfinished and intimate character) of these poems, and also of Krasiński's lyricism.

Many of these poems were included in letters (to different addressees), and also in the poets' entries in many people's friendship books. An important source of autographs of Krasiński's lyric poems are (or rather were, because they are considered to have been destroyed during WWII) the so called 'albums' of Delfina Potocka. They are an important source (although we know them only from editors' more and less detailed commentaries) which could be used to research Krasiński's creative process and his lyricism. These albums, although they are usually referred to in history of literature as *Albumy Delfiny Potockiej* (*Albums of Delfina Potocka*), were *de facto* Krasiński's albums. They can be defined as his specific notebooks in which he wrote down new ideas, outlines of new works, and also literary texts and projects for them. Delfina Potocka also collected in these albums autographs and copies of literary works which came from different sources. It is interesting that Krasiński would take them with himself when he was travelling and also kept 'notes' during his meetings with Delfina Potocka. Tadeusz Pini, who saw these autographs, wrote about them.<sup>2</sup> Pini, as well as other editors who prepared for publication different texts from these albums, reported that they resembled to a larger extent poets' notebooks than Romantic

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<sup>2</sup> Tadeusz Pini, *Albumy Delfiny Potockiej*, „Pamiętnik Literacki” 1903, (4).

friendship books. What survived from Potocka's albums is poems, as well as documents such as editorial comments, and therefore it may be claimed that certain 'layers' of these albums survived; important contexts of Krasiński's lyric poetry.

The sources of these poems, their original contexts, are important in the research on Krasiński's lyrics and lyricism. This type of research on Romantic lyric poetry has already been done before, and it is of paramount importance. It should also be undertaken with Krasiński's lyric poetry. The fact that some of these poems have been published obscures their notebook character. The ways in which poems were transcribed, the specific aspects of his workshop, are undoubtedly important when we want to understand or evaluate Krasiński's lyric poetry. It seems that Krasiński wrote lyric poetry differently than other Romantic poets like Mickiewicz or Słowacki. Many of the autographs of Mickiewicz's or Słowacki's texts survived, while Krasiński's ones did not—but there exist commentaries of editors, important facts, which at least to a certain extent allow us to reconstruct and evaluate many issues. Krasiński's lyricism has a notebook character to a very high degree, not only because there are no surviving autographs, notebooks *sensu stricto*, but also because these poems were never published by the poet, and therefore they were not intended for publication, which means that they were not final versions. The notebook character here takes on the category of techniques of creative works as a dynamic way of thinking and organizing ideas, enclosed within the private (intimate) sphere or of a relationship with a concrete person (an addressee).

Krasiński's work is characterized by a phenomenon which may be described as 'pan-lyricism', because he did not 'care' about genres, wrote his poems inside letters, and lyricism became a feature of his prose, such as letters or other texts traditionally not regarded as lyrical. Grażyna Hałkiewicz-Sojak used the term 'pan-literariness' and explained:

For a historian of literature Krasiński's poetry is a variant of the Romantic paradigm, which cannot be excluded, and its

specificity is based on the ‘mellowing’ of oppositions constitutive for Romanticism (mediating function) and on non-literariness. What happens here is Schlegel’s type of poetry’s ‘devouring’ of other texts (letters, treatises) and of existence as such. Or, perhaps, it is the other way round: philosophical traits, religious themes, political queries destroy the uniformity of literary compositions. Anyway, this is a type of poetry in which the aesthetic function, as an autonomous quality, is in the background. Therefore, paradoxically, Schlegel’s type of non-literariness can be perceived as pan-literariness, and when everything becomes poetry it is impossible to perceive it only from the perspective of the art of words.<sup>3</sup>

For Krasiński, lyricism was a trans-generic way of communicating with others or with himself. Notebook poetry is different from works which were published during this period. The aesthetic tendencies of this period imposed literary themes and ‘literary behaviour’. Texts which were published during this period, ways of reading them, readers’ opinions (we look at them from the perspective of the period) provided a type of natural censorship for poets of this period. Authors’ decisions concerning their own works (published and not published) are worth considering because they were often important decisions. Texts which were not published during this period (mostly lyric poetry and personal writings such as letters) form a separate type of Romanticism, dynamic and fervent, internal and intimate.

Notebook poetry was unpublished, and this fact forces us to adopt a different model of reading, and makes editorial commentaries highly important. The issues of Krasiński’s lyric poetry and lyricism are particularly potent when we try to reconstruct meanings. How should we publish poems which are included in letters, added to gifts, or entangled in different types of communicative relations? Other questions arise: are we allowed to ‘remove’ a poem from a letter, even

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<sup>3</sup> Grażyna Halkiewicz-Sojak, *Poezja Krasińskiego – martwy czy godny nowego odczytania fragment romantycznego paradygmatu*, in *Zygmunt Krasiński. Pytania o twórczość*, ed. by B. Kuczera-Chachulska, M. Prussak, E. Szczeglacka, Warszawa 2005, 18.

though it is a part of this letter? Should we publish a letter without a poem, and indicate in a footnote that the original letter contained a poem? Should we publish a lyric poem which was an integral part of a gift? Should we publish such poems in the traditional way (within one volume, in genealogical fashion)? Many doubts remain. Then, we have other issues, not necessarily connected with the texts themselves.

Kraśiński wrote many of notebook poems, 'epistolary poems' (included within letters) in an atmosphere of more or less intense intimacy, relationships with concrete people; he really cared about friendships. These poems were parts of his personal, intimate relationships and he consistently did not publish them; he wrote them, but very often did not correct or improve them. In these poems he freely referred to many different literary traditions with no obligations towards his readers.

## 2. The creative process and ways of understanding texts

Kraśiński's poems cannot be read anew from autographs or in notebooks, so we cannot apply notebook analysis *sensu stricto* (autographs have probably been lost), but all attempts at reconstruction of the original, genetic context seem to be very important.<sup>4</sup>

The reconstruction of non-existing autographs, the reconstruction of the notebook character of poems' notation in the case of Kraśiński's poem is extremely difficult. Despite such important deficits, ways of thinking about a text, which in the light of genetic criticism might be called a pre-text (that is a text written down in a specific notebook) seem to be noteworthy. In the case of texts unpublished by a poet (that is the majority of these texts) a specific function should be given to detailed editorial commentaries. They have the character of source documents, allowing us to approach the reconstruction of the creative process. Genetic criticism deals with the research of pre-texts, that

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<sup>4</sup> Genetic criticism has been recently presented in a book by Olga Dawidowicz-Chymkowska, *Przez kreślenie do kreacji. Analiza procesu twórczego zapisanego w brulionach dzieł literackich*, Warszawa 2007. The book includes a very extensive bibliography.

is notebooks and notes preceding a 'published edition'. How does genetic criticism approach a text without a notebook with knowledge about this notebook? A notebook (a document of an author's creative work) does not exist as a manuscript, and therefore all indirect information about it becomes particularly precious. In our case the notebooks (here I am referring to knowledge about albums) do not exist. However, there exists something which might be defined as a reconstruction of a pre-text, created on the basis of editorial comments, letters published from autographs which still existed at the time poems from albums were published. Could these descriptions be called adequate? Doubts remain, but they are the only clues; clues which are very important to understand the specific character of Krasiński's lyricism, because what we call and publish as poems today were very often parts of other texts which had just one (in most cases) version, which we would rather call a notebook version than a final version.

Knowledge about a notebook is important, not so much because of the textual decision about the final version of a text, but because of the research of a 'genetic' nature taking into account, and stressing the importance of all contexts, which might be called 'notebook contexts'. In the case of poems included by the poet in letters, a private context of lyrical content should be taken into consideration, which means the person to whom the letter was sent, its themes, etc. Researchers agree on this: problems appear when practical attempts of analysing these poems begin.

Friendship books, epistolary texts, albums, etc., reveal other meanings, other research perspectives. When these poems are placed in one volume, without detailed commentaries close to the text, they seem to be different texts. Commentaries bring back the proper status and meaning to a concrete, individual lyric poem, because the way of treating poems (lyricism) by the poet is specific. For Krasiński lyricism became a type of a complex, open structure of communicating senses and meanings to a different concrete person, and indirectly also to himself, which is important in the case of this poem, because he was 'thinking' with his hand, which was holding a pen.

Kraśiński's lyric poems are parts of bigger, patchy narrative webs. They are the result of uncurbed freedom of expressing and looking for ideas. This is the original feature of the poet's lyric works. Therefore, it is difficult to attempt a unified reading of all these different lyric poems. Editorial tradition and rules of publishing works according to genres influence reading and perception, sometimes moving away from Romantic syncretism in the direction of classical order, moving away from the notebook openness of Kraśiński lyric poems (particularly of the epistolary type, although not exclusively).

The reading of 'Romanticism' was, has been, and is influenced by photo-typical autographs of Romantic texts. They have proved to be important in the research on Romantic lyricism. Jacek Brzozowski and Zbigniew Przychodniak, editors of the new edition of poems by Juliusz Słowacki, modified earlier schemata, because they 'integrated' commentaries with literary texts (commentaries are placed directly under the text of a given poem).<sup>5</sup>

Kraśiński's poems are rough, unprepared for printing; they are of an intimate nature (directed to concrete people), and create non-linear, open structures. They demand a multi-dimensional reading of a spatial character, that is they demand contextual reading, genetic, multi-thematic, unclosed, because these poems themselves are unclosed. Can we say that these poems are openly edited? If the word 'edited' is at all appropriate here. The evaluation of Kraśiński's lyric poems should take into account the genetic conditioning of concrete poems, should also take into account the poet's own attitude to these poems and, in more general terms, his attitude to lyricism. There exists a deep hiatus between the texts which he prepared for publishing and the texts in notebooks. The texts he published were carefully edited, and he often returned to them, adding corrections and alterations.

Kraśiński's lyricism is not connected with the distinction between prose and poetry; it is the supra generic way of expression, revealing itself in some specific fragments, in breaks, in incompleteness, in prose

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<sup>5</sup> See Juliusz Słowacki, *Wiersze. Nowe wydanie krytyczne*, ed. by J. Brzozowski, Z. Przychodniak, Poznań 2005.

genres and non-literary texts. The research on it has so far been very limited. The above mentioned qualities are these poems' strengths, not weaknesses. Krasiński was a lyric poet beyond the standard division into lyric and non-lyric, the division still adhered to by most researchers. Romantics, however, re-evaluated this distinction.

### 3. "God Has Denied Me the Angelic Grace" as a Notebook Lyric Poem

The importance of a genetic context of a lyric poem and its influence on the sense and understanding of Krasiński's poems can be seen in the example of a well-known poem "God Has Denied Me Angelic Grace". The importance of the context (particularly in the reading I call a notebook reading) allows us to understand this poem not as a trial on oneself 'for posterity', but differently, as an open text of changing meanings, entangled in 'genetic' contexts. In the light of Krasiński's letters, this poem is not a self-fulfilling prophecy, but a perverse statement on the theme of the traditional understanding of the aesthetics of lyricism.

Bóg mi odmówił tej anielskiej miary,  
Bez której ludziom nie zda się poeta,  
Gdybym ją posiadał, świat ubrałbym w czary,  
A że jej nie mam, jestem wierszokleta.  
Ach! w sercu moim są niebiańskie dźwięki,  
Lecz, nim ust dojdą, łamią się na dwoje.  
Ludzie usłyszają tylko twarde szczęki,  
Ja dniem i nocą słyszę serce moje!  
Ono tak bije na krwi mojej falach,  
Jak gwiazda, brzęcząca na wirach błękitu,  
Ludzie nie słyszą jej w godowych salach,  
Choć ją Bóg słyszy od zmroku do świtu.  
etc., etc., etc.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Zygmunt Krasiński, *Listy do Konstantego Gaszyńskiego*, ed. by Z. Sudolski, Warszawa 1971, 127-128. The poem was translated into English and published by Michael Mikoś, *Polish Romantic Literature: An Anthology*, ed. by Michael J. Mikoś. Slavica, Bloomington, Indiana, 2002. The poem translated and published by Mikoś

I quoted this poem from the edition of letters to Konstanty Gaszyński. Perhaps it should have been quoted with the sentence preceding the poem and the statement following it, because they are strictly connected with the poem. Krasiński placed this poem in the letter dated 7 July 1836 (from Kissingen), and this was the first time this poem appeared. Most probably, although it is impossible to confirm, the poem, according to editors, was written for Joanna Bobrowa. Maybe Bobrowa was the first reader of this poem, although its context and theme are not directly connected with Krasiński's relationship with her, at least not to the degree with which Krasiński's other lyric poems are connected with the themes of his letters to Konstanty Gaszyński,

I have selected—quite perversely—the version which was written and republished in letters to Konstanty Gaszyński and not in the editions of Jan Czubek or Paweł Hertz (based on the edition of Piwiński v. XI, 28-29). Seemingly, these poems are almost identical (apart from some details of punctuation), with one difference, in the letter we have “etc.” repeated three times. This is not a meaningless detail, because it contains important information from the author, a communiqué to a reader, in this case, to Gaszyński, the expression of his attitude to the poem. The abbreviation “etc.” is a signal that the notation is not finished, not closed, only sketched. In other words, that it is a notebook version. It seems that these are important signs for attempts of interpretation. They have been made by the poet himself.

This is one of the first lyric poems by Krasiński and is very often quoted, particularly because of the elegant, two verse punch line which opens the poem as the author's declaration. The two opening

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does not have the final line (etc., etc., etc) which is so crucial for the author of this paper. Here is this poem in Mikoś's translation: “God has denied me the angelic measure/That makes a poet in the minds of people/Had I possessed it, I would excite wonder,/But since I lack it, I can only scribble./Ah, in my heart heavenly music resounds/Yet, ere it reaches my lips; it breaks apart;/People will hear nothing but heavy sounds,/While every day and night I hear my heart!/It beats with the waves of my blood as a star,/That rings in the sky turning around;/People don't hear it in festive halls afar,/Though from dusk till daylight God hears its sound.”

lines form a very strong semantic accent (a dominant). Krasiński sentenced himself in this poem. He wrote that “God has denied him the angelic measure”, that “he can only scribble”, and this ‘stigma’ has had an impact on the ways his poems have been treated. This poem, as if it was a sentence, has been generalized onto all his lyric poems. Because this poem was so important in Krasiński’s history, it requires a particular type of analysis, the type of reading which I refer to as notebook reading (open). The poem was not attached to the letter to Gaszyński as a separate poem, but was entangled with the letter. It was also entangled with Krasiński’s relationship with Gaszyński and with various circumstances, which are worthy of note. The poem should be treated as an integral part of the letter (together with “etc.” repeated three times). The poem is a kind of a deal struck with the reader (Gaszyński) assuring him that he will receive the message in the proper way. It can be said that this poem ‘extracted’ from the context, placed somewhere at the beginning of the volume with Krasiński’s poems, becomes a different text, has a different meaning, a different sense than the one revealed in the relationship with Gaszyński. This was not a poem for a large audience. This was a poem entrusted to a friend, and maybe it was Gaszyński himself who ‘provoked’ the writing of it.

From this perspective the ‘history’ of this poem is interesting: Paweł Hertz, in his commentary, referring to the conclusions of Jan Czubek wrote:

The poem was probably written in June 1836. Czubek (VI 304) states that according to Janicki it was written in June 1836. For the first time it appeared in the letter to Gaszyński dated “Kissingen, 7 [July] 1836. (See LG 127 and also footnote 1, 128). It is difficult to confirm in which of the duplicates of the poem Janicki added the month of June as the date when the poem was written. Czubek does not give information on whether the date was given in manuscript number 32 or 33 [...] Both contain copies of the poem made by Janicki.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Paweł Hertz, *Noty i uwagi*, in Z. Krasiński, *Dzieła literackie*, ed. by P. Hertz, Warszawa 1973, vol. 3, 290.

Hertz accepted the findings of the earlier editors. For obvious reasons he could not have reached the autographs or duplicates himself. He published it in the version of Piwiński (v .XI, 28-29). Hertz used the findings of Jan Czubek to give the key information.

Duplicates of the poem were located according to Czubek (VI, 304) on page 8 of manuscript number 32 and page 17 of the manuscript, on page 86 of the text in the manuscript entitled: *Zygmunt Krasiński i moje z nim stosunki. Wspomnienia spisane przez Konstantego Gaszyńskiego (Zygmunt Krasiński and My Relationships with Him. Recollections written by Konstanty Gaszyński)*.

The poem was published for the first time in *Listy Zygmunta Krasińskiego do Konstantego Gaszyńskiego (Letters from Zygmunt Krasiński to Konstanty Gaszyński)*, Lwów 1882, 86 .The shortened version of the poem was published by :P. A. Rys, *Ze spuścizny bezimiennego poety, „Życie”* (Warszawa) 1888, no.44, . 641.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, it is the poem which was published on the basis of documents of Konstanty Gaszyński. The poem is a part of a concrete letter. It is also a fragment of a larger whole, because it refers to the motive of their correspondence dealing with Krasiński's lyric poetry. The poet in an earlier letter (dated 12 June 1836) also sent Gaszyński his other lyric poems: "O biedna! Czegóż ja mam życzyć tobie..." ("O poor me! What could I wish you..." and "Jeśli mi kiedy przewodniczyć miały" ("If They Were Ever to Lead Me"). This is important information, because these poems were written for Joanna Bobrowa. They were about this relationship. These poems, or more specifically opinions on these poems which Gaszyński must have expressed, inspired Krasiński, or simply gave his lyric answer in the shape of the poem "God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure".

Krasiński sent Gaszyński poems written for Bobrowa. They were discussed by them in letters together with opinions about Krasiński's poetry, more specifically, about his first lyric poems. Krasiński sent these poems to Gaszyński, a close friend, but also to Gaszyński,

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<sup>8</sup> Paweł Hertz, *Noty i uwagi*, op. cit., 291.

the poet Gaszyński, on the one hand a confidant of Krasieński's love life, on the other, a man of unusual sense of humour, who assumed the role of reader and critic; with honesty and with his characteristic humour he would give opinions about Krasieński's poems (also as a poet). Gaszyński was an editor (of Warsaw's bi-weekly *Pamiętnik dla Płci Pięknej* (*Memoirs for Ladies*)). Neither of them ever mentioned in any way this private exchange of opinions, even though, as was the case of Krasieński, this exchange took the form of a lyric poem. According to standards of this period (the theme which Krasieński referred to many times in his letters), texts should not be published without their authors' agreements. Gaszyński, therefore, considered Krasieński's opinions as private and he did not change this position even after Krasieński's death. He did not do it even as an editor, when in 1860 he published in Paris *Wyjątki z listów Zygmunta Krasieńskiego* (*Fragments from Letters of Zygmunt Krasieński*). Although this selection contained a fragment from the letter from Kissingen (dated 12 June 1836), he took from it only a short paragraph about Spinoza's pantheism. He did not publish any poems sent by Krasieński, not because he considered them imperfect, but—in my opinion—mostly because he would be breaking some norms of intimacy; these poems were personal, connected with the concrete person, and also Krasieński himself did not publish them.

The notebook versions of the poem "God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure" were in Gaszyński's hands, and therefore, together they were published in collected editions as final 'editions' (the inverted commas seem necessary). It should be mentioned that both love lyrics written for Joanna Bobrowa as well as "God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure"—as Hertz stated—"belong to a group of lyric poems which the history of literature has traditionally connected with the person of Mrs. Bobrowa".<sup>9</sup> This is a controversial opinion. Was "God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure" also written for Bobrowa as were the other two love poems? Maybe it was an answer to Gaszyński to his specific opinions about these two poems.

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<sup>9</sup> Paweł Hertz, *Noty i uwagi*, op.cit., 291.

The content of the poem seems to support the latter option. The proof for this could be found in the context of this exchange of letters, tone of sentences and themes dealt with by these two close friends during this period. Such a statement, assigning to contacts with Gaszyński the character of sources, must remain on the level of hypothesis.

The epistolary context was referred to by Hertz in his commentary to the poem "God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure":

It could only be stated that in the first edition, the poem, included in the letter dated 7 July 1836 is preceded by the sentences: "It was a very good statement of yours about these poems [two poems which Krasieński had sent earlier "O poor me! What could I wish you..." and "If They Were Ever to Lead me"] that they "can't stand on their own; how very true: *Titubant semper* as Sylen, the drunk". While after the poem he wrote: "Admit that if the first two were tipsy, this one is dead drunk".<sup>10</sup>

Hertz comments on these epistolary 'circumstances' in the following way:

It seems that a humorous context should be noted, the context which in the letter accompanies tragic and very evocative, unique in the history of Polish literature and honest confession of creative weakness, and also of such a personal reference to the poems from Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* included in Konrad's so called small improvisation, to which Krasieński was undoubtedly referring.<sup>11</sup>

Hertz quoted Mickiewicz's words from Mickiewicz's long poem: "Nieszczęsny, kto dla ludzi głos i język trudzi..." ("Miserable is the One Who Strains His Voice and Language for Other People") and referred to Krasieński's reading of *Forefathers' Eve*, of which he wrote to Gaszyński in the letter dated 16 December 1833. Hertz noticed the "humorous context", but did not pay much attention to it. In the text *O poezji Krasieńskiego (On Krasieński's Poetry)* he

<sup>10</sup> Paweł Hertz, *Noty i uwagi*, op. cit., 290.

<sup>11</sup> Paweł Hertz, *Noty i uwagi*, op. cit., 291.

wrote that “this is perhaps the most dramatic, as far as Polish poetry is concerned, document of artistic self-knowledge”.<sup>12</sup> He also stated that Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Krasiński,

each of them in his own way, in different periods of their literary careers and in different ways, expressed this drama which is constantly played between the consciousness of each artist and the conviction of limited possibilities of preserving its contents in forms or words, between the need to formulate thoughts, ideas and emotions and the lack of means to make it concrete.<sup>13</sup>

The poem not only reveals the poet’s self-consciousness, but it is also a kind of personal declaration of poetic rules he accepts as his own. The poem is also about the awareness of the expectations and lyric ‘schemata’ preserved in the literary tradition, and therefore it deals with issues of an aesthetic character, styles of readers’ reception, relationships between authors and readers. Krasiński was aware of readers’ expectations, of existing styles of reading poetry.

He was aware of how easy it is to qualify and define something as lyric, and aware also of ‘mental schemata’. Of ways of understanding lyric poetry by readers in this period.

Paweł Hertz, while writing about Romantic artists’ dilemmas, about “the drama of being not understood”, quoted in the context of the poem “God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure” a fragment from *Forefathers’ Eve*. Between Krasiński’s reading of *Forefathers’ Eve* (he wrote about it in his letters from 1833) and the year 1836 many important things happened, both in the ‘private’ and ‘writerly’ life of Krasiński, such as the publication of *Un-divine Comedy* and *Irydion*. Is Krasiński’s poem an “evocative and honest confession of creative weakness”, the awareness of the lack of talent for poetry? I would venture a hypothesis that it is rather an evocative confession of one’s own difference, otherness, uniqueness of lyric skills, difference from readers’ expectations; expectations shaped by certain conventions and

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<sup>12</sup> Paweł Hertz, *O poezji Krasińskiego*, in *Świat i dom*, Warszawa 1977, 127.

<sup>13</sup> Paweł Hertz, *O poezji Krasińskiego*, op. cit., 127-128.

traditions of lyricism, which became dominant in this period. In the first two lines Krasiński directly referred to readers' expectations:

God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure,  
That makes a poet in the minds of people [...]

This is a kind of a perverse declaration that the poet perceives lyricism differently than readers of this period, that he is not writing lyrically, as others did at that time, that he does not write according to certain conventions, which might be called 'obligatory' and 'received'. The value of lyricism was raised only during the period of Romanticism. The poem is proof of Krasiński's self-awareness. It seems that in the centre of Krasiński's statement there is an understanding of his own lyric identity, and not of his weakness, lack of talent, etc.

The evaluation of his own lyric poetry was influenced by his acquaintance with Juliusz Słowacki; the poets met a few times in Rome in 1836 and it is not an accident that Krasiński started writing his own lyric poetry at that time. This context has been pointed out by, among others, Józef Kallenbach and Bronisław Chlebowski.<sup>14</sup> Słowacki made a huge impression on Krasiński, particularly because of his lyricism, that is of his way of perceiving reality and its place in it, and his extraordinary imagination and individualism. I have written: "Słowacki", not "Słowacki's works" because Krasiński perceived some unbreakable wholeness created by the poet and his works, as if these works had been Słowacki's quintessence and Słowacki the quintessence of his own works. Very often opinions about Słowacki as a person merged with opinions about his works, and this is a characteristic feature of his early and also of his late works.

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<sup>14</sup> These are the sources referred to by Paweł Hertz: J. Kallenbach, *Zygmunt Krasiński*, t. II, Lwów 1904, 401-402; Bronisław Chlebowski, *Wiek XIX. Sto lat myśli polskiej*, Warszawa 1909, 149. DL III, 291.

It is meaningful that Krasiński called Słowacki, when the latter was very ill, 'King-Spirit' [the title of Słowacki's late long poem].<sup>15</sup>

The contact with Słowacki forms a crucial basis for the understanding of this poem. Krasiński wrote about a meeting with Słowacki in a letter to Konstanty Gaszyński dated 22 May 1836, and in the next letter of 12 June 1836, already mentioned in this text, he sent his first lyric poems: "O poor me! What could I wish you..." and "If They Were Ever to Lead Me". This is a very interesting letter. In it, Krasiński admired Słowacki's talent and his imagination. He referred to lyrical beauty as preserved in the literary canon (in this respect he praised mostly Mickiewicz). He was thinking hard about Słowacki. He tried to curb his admiration by critical reflections, adopting a supra-personal perspective, that is relying on the aesthetic canons of this period. While evaluating Słowacki's works, Krasiński very often referred to the Romantic tradition, to the aesthetics of perception, to Mickiewicz and the ways he wrote his lyric poetry. It made him suspicious of this admiration, and while giving Słowacki pieces of advice about writing, he tried to 'reform' Słowacki, appealing to the existing canons and literary traditions.

In the letter from 22 May 1836 Krasiński wrote this about his meetings with Słowacki:

Juliusz Słowacki is here, a nice man, gifted by Heaven with a huge amount of poetic talent. When his poetry achieves a harmonious balance, he will be great. *Kordian* is a long poem full of enthusiasm and madness. It contains delightful expressions and strangely true ideas. *Mary Stuart* is also very good. Even Mickiewicz himself does not have such a colourful and flexible imagination. However, it is necessary that these elements in Słowacki should attain musical harmony, so that he is even more artistic to join dissonances with true sounds. Sometimes he lacks seriousness, without which poetry may be a nice toy, but will never become a part of the world. He will achieve these because such strong capabilities do not cease, do not

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<sup>15</sup> I wrote about this in the book: *Romantyczny homo legens. Zygmunt Krasiński jako czytelnik romantycznych poetów*, Warszawa 2003.

slacken, till they go the way destined to them and bear all types of fruit inherent in them as seeds. Garczyński did not have a third of his spirit, although he was so highly praised by Mickiewicz.<sup>16</sup>

Kraśiński admired Słowacki's imagination and élan, some kind of lack of seriousness to literary conventions and canons of writing. He was also moved by Mickiewicz's unjustness. We can discern in Kraśiński's opinions some inner conflict between personal admiration for new texts by Słowacki and certain established norms of perception of poems, expectations. Kraśiński tried to evaluate Słowacki from such perspectives. The characteristic phrase that Słowacki should learn to be more "artistic", "to join dissonance with true sounds" means that he should do it according to art's canons. This conflict of tradition and Słowacki's opposition to it, that is of his novel ideas, will be used by Kraśiński not only when dealing with Słowacki, but also with himself. Słowacki made this position (of the opposition of things received in art) the fundament of his writing. In his notebook poems he did not try to write according to canons. In texts he prepared for publication he was faithful to them, although he did it in an original way. The best proof of Kraśiński's admiration for Słowacki is the fact that in his own lyric poetry he used Słowacki's phrasing, his poetic style.<sup>17</sup>

In the next letter to Gaszyński, Kraśiński again wrote about Słowacki, and what he wrote there is important in the context of the poem we are dealing with here.

Say, what you may, but Juliusz Słowacki is a poet, and one day his name will be famous. I have lately written some poems, the first ones in my life; I am sending them to you to be assessed.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Zygmunt Kraśiński, *Listy do Konstantego Gaszyńskiego*, op. cit., 120-121.

<sup>17</sup> These influences and similarities between individual poems were pointed out by Bernadetta Kuczera-Chachulska, *Kraśińskiego „instynkt” wieczności*, w: *Zygmunt Kraśiński. Pytania o twórczość*, red. B. Kuczera-Chachulska, M. Prussak, E. Szczeglacka, Warszawa 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Zygmunt Kraśiński, *Listy do Konstantego Gaszyńskiego*, op. cit., 124.

This is an important letter because it shows that Krasieński started writing poems under Słowacki's influence. He sent his poems and waited for Gaszyński's opinions. After the poems Krasieński, in a way characteristic for him, changed the topic and wrote humorously:

Suspecting that in Aix, as everywhere else on our globe, the bills of apothecaries must be pretty steep, I am sending you one hundred francs. *Addio* my dear and please write back quickly.<sup>19</sup>

As early as 7 July 1836 Krasieński was answering the next letter of Gaszyński, which included his friend's opinions about the poems sent to him. It was exactly under the influence of these opinions, equally critical and humorous, that Krasieński sent a lyric answer in the form of the poem "God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure". The poem is a part of the dialogue with Gaszyński. As it seems from the tone of the letter, Gaszyński must have answered Krasieński in a free, humorous way. Maybe he was surprised by the lyric poems; perhaps by Krasieński's affair with Bobrowa, although Gaszyński himself was in a similar emotional situation. In the ending of the letter from 7 July 1836, which contained the poem we are dealing with here, Krasieński referred, knowingly, to his friend's emotional problems. This fragment could be easily skipped, because Krasieński treated Goszczynski's love problems perfunctorily, referring to them enigmatically and knowingly: "All this". In one of the letters to Słowaczynski. Gaszyński wrote that he had fallen in love with "the wife of one marquise".<sup>20</sup> Krasieński, referring to this, wrote:

<sup>19</sup> Zygmunt Krasieński, *Listy do Konstantego Gaszyńskiego*, op. cit., 125.

<sup>20</sup> Zbigniew Sudolski refers to letters of Gaszyński to Andrzej Słowaczynski: In the letter dated 10 August 1836 he wrote: "You should know, sir, that I have a good time here and visit the best homes, *choyé par le beau sexe, comme un homme de lettres bien listingu!!!*" While in the letter from the beginning of 1837 he added: "I was in love with the wife of one marquise, a young and beautiful woman, and because she does not live in Aix, we wrote to each other under the pretexts of some petty things and friendship, but love was seeping out of it all the time, so I wrote a fiery letter to her in which I said openly that I love her. This letter alarmed her so

Konstanty, I am also not very good with all this. I understand you,  
I love you, and I cannot bear the thought that you, in many petty,  
every day circumstances of life, cannot do what love wants you to do.<sup>21</sup>

And so, did Gaszyński assess Krasieński's first lyric poems objectively, or—which is very probable— was he influenced by Krasieński's love affair with Bobrowa? Krasieński perfunctorily referred to Gaszyński's opinion about poems, because the proper answer to the opinion of his friend was the poem "God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure". This poem is preceded by the sentence, which refers to Gaszyński's words:

"It was a very good statement of yours about these poems [...] that they "can't stand straight on their own; how very true: *Titubant semper* as Sylen, the drunk".<sup>22</sup> What followed was the poem "God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure". This poem is different when placed next to other poems in chronological editions. It becomes a different text when taken out of its genetic context; its tone is different. This poem is part of the letter, part of the dialogue with a friend, but indirectly also with Słowacki, who impressed Krasieński so much. It is not surprising that we can see and hear influences of Słowacki in Krasieński's two 'love poems'. This is the example of his lyricism, of his way of creating moods, of his metaphors and imagery. It is not the only example of Słowacki's influence on Krasieński. Similar poems were included in the letter dated 20 November 1836 from Vienna: "Mogłem być z tobą na ziemi szczęśliwy" ("I Could Have Been Happy with You on Earth") and "Chciałbym anioła widzieć na mym grobie" ("I Wish to See an Angel on My Grave"). They were preceded by reflections on Słowacki's works, which had broken all literary conventions.

After the poem "God Has Denied Me..." Krasieński perversely and consistently closed the lyric theme: "Admit that if the first two were tipsy, this one is dead drunk". Gaszyński had written that Krasieński's

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much that she has not answered yet, although three months have already passed. Eugeniusz Sawrymowicz.", op. cit., 433-434.

<sup>21</sup> Zygmunt Krasieński, *Listy do Konstantego Gaszyńskiego*, op. cit., 127.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 128.

poems “can’t stand straight on their own”. This charge might have referred to the lines piled together, extended metaphors and lyric narrations. On the other hand, Krasieński was quoting these poems with some nonchalance, carelessness, although this might be a risky statement, as we do not have notebooks. Anyway, both in the letter and in other editions after the third stanza of the poem “O poor me...” there is a line of dots. It is difficult to say what these dots signify. Did Krasieński leave some fragment? Or did he merely mean that this poem is not finished? We can also speak about ‘nonchalance’ and freedom while looking at the ending of the poem sent in the letter. Krasieński repeats the first verse: “O poor me! What could I wish you...”, and in the next verse he writes: “etc., etc.” It is because of this “etc.” (meaning the lack of an ending, and also circularity and parentheses), which does not appear in any editions of Krasieński’s poetry and which appears in the letter, that Gaszyński thought that these poems “can’t stand straight on their own”. Krasieński summed up Gaszyński’s opinion, with a humorous, although critical, statement: “how very true: *Titubant semper* as Sylen, the drunk”. “Staggering” poems. That was Krasieński’s opinion about his first poetic attempts. This comic effect is important and original, because it was after these words that he placed his lyric answer: the poem “God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure”. The poem is a lyric complement to his bawdy self-assessment, but the tone is really different. In the book of recollections about Krasieński (written after his death), Konstanty Gaszyński commented on Krasieński’s reaction to his critical remarks about Krasieński’s first poems:

Obviously, he was piqued by my criticism, but he has not stopped being friendly towards me. This could be illustrated by the fact that he kept sending me his poems and I kept pointing at their little faults.

In the letter from Vienna dated 9 January 1837 he wrote to me in this way about it. By the way, he wants to be on the safe side and always speaks about himself as if he was someone else.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Konstanty Gaszyński, *Zygmunt Krasieński i moje z nim stosunki*, ed. by Z. Sudolski, Opinogóra 2009, 54-55.

In this fragment of his memoirs Gaszyński quotes Krasiński who, using the third person, writes about his own poetry, which is also a commentary on Gaszyński's critical words:

As far as his 'rhyme making' is concerned, I absolutely agree with you! I hope we will dissuade him from these funny whims, but I know that it often makes him sad, that he does not have talent for rhymes and music. He tries as hard as he can to give rhythm to his prose, but he suffers most when he starts playing the clavichord. He is not able to create sound from keys, and show to himself all heart's desires; he strikes only false accords, even though he wants harmony. Sometimes, by accident, a true sound appears, a deep sound, and it is his reward for the thousands of harsh and sour sounds.<sup>24</sup>

That is an interesting, 'private' definition of lyricism by Krasiński and a private 'defence' of his lyric poetry: "rhymed prose". In a way, this is a 'technical' remark. Was Konstanty Gaszyński objective in the assessment of his friend's poetry?

It is difficult to state unequivocally. It seems that Gaszyński treated Krasiński's lyricism as something incidental, and, at least in the beginning, connected with his love affair. He wrote condescendingly:

In the year 1836, in the spring month of May, when nightingales sang, while violets and roses bloom, Zygmunt for the first time tried to write poetry. But beginnings happen to be difficult in all professions, and each art requires long work and skill. This first attempt at rhyme making was not very successful, and the person who was to acquire such mastery, musical and artistic, of rhyme making in *Przedświt* (*Before Dawn*), in *Ostatni* (*The Last*) and in *Psalm przyszłości* (*Psalm of the Future*) had to cope, for almost five years, with mechanical problems of measure and rhythm! Mickiewicz said somewhere: "The smile of a mistress has made a poet out of me". The first poem by Krasiński is about love [...]

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 55.

It should be stressed that Krasiński's relationship with Joanna Bóbr-Piotrowicka lasted from 30 March 1834 till the beginning of 1838, so it seems that the more probable cause for his poetry was his meeting with Słowacki, not his personal emotions. When Gaszyński was making his assessments much later he was referring to late texts of Krasiński, to his published texts.

The humorous and self-ironic epistolary context, the exchange of sentences transferred to a lyric poem, allows us to see this poem from different layers of meaning. It is not a poem which should be read in a tragic mood, although it shows a lot of self-awareness. Krasiński did not drop this lyricism, but consistently reserved for it 'notebook spaces', connected with specific people, and not with the wide, or even narrow, audience.

This light, humorous tone is intensified by the earlier fragment, which opens the letter from 7 July 1836, in which the poem "God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure" was included. Krasiński wrote there also about *Un-divine Comedy* and *Irydion* (about publishing issues). The tone of this fragment is different as he was writing about published works, which made a difference for Krasiński. It seems that this fragment of the letter concerns the potential translations of his two dramas:

As far as *U[n-divine Comedy]* is concerned, the person to whom I wrote about it refused to try it, maybe suspecting my trap. But you must have received *I[rydion]* by now. The translation of it would not be worthwhile. I dissuade you from engaging in such a boring and useless job. *I[rydion]* is a work which will be met by the great majority of the illustrious audience with contempt, because it is moved by ideas, and not by people. You will judge for yourself if this is true.<sup>25</sup>

Krasiński wrote differently about texts he published after very diligent editing. The notebook sphere has its own rules, making space for new lyric values. It forces us to consider the sense of his poems,

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<sup>25</sup> Zygmunt Krasiński, *Listy do Konstantego Gaszyńskiego*, op. cit., 127.

not only those poems which were rounded off and finished and put together by editors, but also those never closed notebook texts of his.

#### 4. A perverse manifesto

Scholars very often refer to the poem "God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure", particularly to its two opening lines. These lines were used to formulate general opinions about Krasiński's lyric output. Zofia Szmydtowa wrote:

He wrote unusual plays, he was a connoisseur of poetry, he was a thinker vividly reacting to the new trends of contemporary philosophy, but he was not a leading lyric poet.<sup>26</sup>

And elsewhere:

The author of *Un-divine Comedy* was not a good poet. While in traditional forms he was correct, his short poems, when he was using masculine rhyme, were not rhythmical and not melodious. He was very well aware of this fault, confessing that he did not possess "this angelic measure that makes a poet in the minds of people".<sup>27</sup>

The poem "God Has Denied..." included a lyric statement of the poet

God has denied me his angelic measure,  
That makes a poet in the minds of people, [...]

This is an often quoted fragment, but when we read it literally, then the words which become important and equivocal are: I lack "angelic measure, "that makes a poet in the minds of people". According to these words, it is readers who 'decide' that certain measures are poetic or not. Krasiński was not a poet of these conventions or canons. He did not use measures considered in Romantic perception as poetic. His words with his important declaration are rarely stressed. The process of perception established aesthetic norms of poetry and lyricism,

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<sup>26</sup> Zofia Szmydtowa, *Liryka romantyczna. Mickiewicz – Słowacki – Krasiński – Norwid*, Warszawa 1947, 31.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

and it is according to these measures that Krasiński calls himself a “rhyme maker”, writing in careless, colloquial Polish, with some sarcasm and humour, which were maybe the result of Gaszyński’s opinions. To be more precise, he did not use norms established in the rhetorical tradition. At the same time—which he showed many times in his letters—he felt that he was a poet, even a lyric poet (in his own aesthetic project, he summarized it as “giving rhythm to prose”). He worked on this project using his own measures, his own order, separating what was official from what was unofficial. He used lyricism for communication which was so important to him. It can even be stated that ways of reading are one of the topics of the poem “God Has Denied Me His Angelic Measure”. Here, Krasiński consistently referred to potential readers, whose perception he easily predicted, and whose canons of beauty he contrasted with his own, personal canons. “People will hear nothing but heavy sounds/While every day and night I hear my heart”:

It beats with the waves of my blood as a star,  
That rings in the sky turning around  
People don’t hear it in festive halls afar,  
Though from dusk till daylight God hears its sound.

In the second and third stanzas, two first lines refer to the poet himself (lyric ‘I’), and two following ones refer to features of potential readers. Krasiński undertook the theme of the ‘aesthetics of reception’. In the quoted stanzas he opposed the canons of lyricism established in this period with his individual approach, which belongs to the inner sphere, to the sphere of one’s own identity. In other words, which belongs to the ‘poetry of the heart’. What was lyric for him was inexpressible; it was the thing which constitutes ‘I’. It seems that it is exactly what is inexpressible which becomes important and true. Krasiński’s lyricism is a kind of agreement with himself and with what is external; it is an organic process (connected with “waves of blood”), and being, in some natural way, a part of man, of the cosmos, of the music of the spheres (the heart is metaphorically connected to “ringing like a star turning round”). This music of “waves of blood”

is to be listened to by God. This poem was written when Krasiński was twenty-four years old. He was aware then of the hiatus about the process of creation and the ways of expressing it in the established literary rules. The poem reveals the conviction that inner creation is inexpressible in words. There is some lack of connection between norms established by people and the thing that is referred to in the poem as "my heart". There were different norms of intimacy and possibilities of expressing it in this period, and Krasiński found different norms in his works directed to people close to him, which was an attempt to communicate and to express his identity.

The main topic of the poem is the hiatus between the expectations of the poet and of readers, who make judgements according to defined criteria. The poem has a regular construction, it is logically consistent and built on the opposition: I, the poet—they, readers. Krasiński hypothetically assumes that if he had "this angelic measure", which is identified by people as poetic, then, he "would excite wonder", but he does not have such skills, and therefore he does not want to 'decorate' the world, to write about its beauty. He listens to and understands himself, which becomes the source of his writing, and as it cannot be expressed, it becomes the essence of art. Krasiński wrote in the first verse: "God has denied me his angelic measure"; in the last verse he wrote (or, at least in the verse considered to be the last, we should remember these "etc."): "Though from dusk till daylight God hears its sound". What he means is the star "that rings in the sky turning round", the star, to which his heart is compared ("while day and night I hear my heart"). People do not hear this star. They have their "festive halls" (filled with noise). God hears it, God hears the individual star (continuously "from dusk till daylight"). We have a poetic analogy here: beating heart, the poet who hears the heart, which is like a star, which God hears. Krasiński seems to be defining lyricism and creation in a mental context. He calls himself a rhyme maker because he does not use poetic measures considered by people to be poetic, but in his own judgement he is a lyric poet.

Krasiński sent his lyric poems in many letters to Gaszyński. For example, in the letter from 9 November 1839 from Vienna he sent this

poem: “My heart is breaking, Light is running away”, and underneath he explained:

My dear! I am sending you again weak poems, but as they left my head, as if on their own at the moment I was in despair, I am sending them to you as a souvenir of a man, of a friend, not of a master! They will tell you how deeply, how sourly I am unhappy.<sup>28</sup>

Lyricism, therefore, becomes a space of relationship with oneself and with relations of a ‘deep’ character. It should also be added that theory of poetry, to which Krasin’ski devoted so much attention in his letter, is not theory of notebook poetry, the type of poetry he did not give up till the end of his life.

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<sup>28</sup> Zygmunt Krasin’ski, *Listy do Konstantego Gaszyn’skiego*, op. cit., 174.