

ІСТОРИЯ ТА МЕТОДОЛОГІЯ ЖУРНАЛІСТИКИ

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THE PORTRAIT OF ALOJZY FELIŃSKI. A FORGOTTEN FIGURE – A MEMOIR FROM «GAZETA LWOWSKA»

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This article is an attempt to reminisce the commemorative profile drawn up by Wiktor Hahn, a professor at the Lviv University, and a literary scholar. It was published in three parts on February 23–25, 1920 in «Gazeta Lwowska».

The interpretation conducted is aimed first and foremost at presenting a somewhat less typical portrait of Alojzy Feliński. Before, the writers of anniversary works focused on discussing only the most outstanding works of the Volynian dramatist, completely ignoring his early attempts at drama – early adult works, often with a sensational plot, stimulating the imagination of the young artist.

The author of this article attempts to show that the said portrait on the one hand is of an informative nature (the family home of the poet is recalled, his education and youthful contacts with contemporary writers are pointed out), but also is not devoid of valorizing elements, since next to a notification about the poet's life and work is included an evaluation of Feliński's works, a professional historical-literary commentary, which is combined with a colorful, sometimes quite common, way of putting the content of the discussed works across. Ultimately, the result is a portrait of a creative person.

Key words: Alojzy Feliński, profile-commemoration, anniversary work, press, «Gazeta Lwowska».

When in February 1820 the deceased Alojzy Feliński was mourned, people saw in him Volyn's best, prematurely departed poet, the protector of young artists. The authors of funeral speeches and poems [cf. 13, pp. 97–109; 12, pp. 81–100] emphasized the poet's relationship with Tadeusz Czacki and also praised his merits as a translator (the translation of Jacques Delille's *L'Homme des champs, ou les Géorgiques françaises*, Vittorio Alfieri's *Virginia* and Prosper Crébillon's *Rhadamiste et Zénobie*), but above all, they admired the artist for the creation of the original tragedy entitled *Barbara Radziwiłłówna* – the work that remains the main claim to fame for Feliński. In addition, they often emphasized the merits of the playwright regarding the school in Krzemieniec. They often supplemented the image of the landowner with very human traits, portraying him as a member of a loving, dignified family.

The situation did not change significantly in the case of the portraits of the artist created in the 19th century and early 20th century (e.g. the profiles by Michał Rolle, 1896, or Bronisław Chlebowski, 1901).

The profile-commemoration by Wiktor Hahn entitled *Alojzy Feliński w setną rocznicę śmierci (1820–1920)* is all the more worthy of attention, which is virtually omitted and not recognized by researchers dealing with Feliński's work. The anniversary portrait was published in three February issues (No. 44–46) of «Gazeta Lwowska» on the front pages of the daily [6–8]. Published from 1811 to 1939, the official newspaper, as Jerzy Łojek wrote, played a major role in almost all of Galicia [10, p. 40]. The author of the anniversary portrait is a student of the Lviv schools, a literary historian, professor at Lviv University, an expert in the works of Juliusz Słowacki and Józef Ignacy Kraszewski [cf. 1].

Bearing in mind the form of expression presented in the article, it should be pointed out that Maria Wojtak, who enjoys unquestioned academic authority in the field of press genres, points to two types of profiles-commemorations. The first are statements where authors report the death of a given person while presenting their profile, and the other refers to portraits printed on the anniversary of death [17, p. 123].

The picture painted by Hahn represents the latter of the types mentioned above. In the title, we obtain information about the 100th anniversary of the death of Feliński. The first part of the profile, according to the classic version of the discussed genre, provides information (alluding to the biogram convention) concerning the place and time of birth of the Volhynian, as well as his education. From the very beginning there are both informative and evaluative elements, which is why at the outset, the literature historian tries to embed the presented artist in the Volyn landscape. Thereby he starts the anniversary work with the words Alojzy Feliński wrote in *Oznajmienie o wydać się mającym dziele pod tytułem «Pisma własne i przekładania wierszem»* on April 8, 1815 in Wołosów:

I take pride in being a Volhynian. It will be nice for me to confess out loud that what other writers owed to monarchs nurturing the sciences, I will owe to the citizens among whom I was born, with whom I live and to whom I dedicate my first works [4, c. 21].

Then Hahn talks about the artist's place of birth – Lutsk («the seat of Lutskans and Drochiczans» [6, p. 1]), claiming that «[the poet – M.P.K.] drew most of his inspirations from the Volyn land, which shaped his character and mentality» [6, p. 1]. Thus, the reader receives not only information about Feliński's birthplace, but there is also a patriotic element marked in the statement: the homeland and its inhabitants shape a human's and an artist's profile. And so, when graduating from the school attended by most of the landowners in Volyn (the Piarist school in Dąbrowica), the future author of *Barbara Radziwiłłówna* was quite proficient in French, and the theater plays presented in the Piarist school resulted in the young man developing an interest in drama. According to the researcher, it is worth to also point out the Volodymyr episode, when Feliński came in contact with Fr. Julian Antonowicz, an English teacher. To a certain extent, the Volhynian education set the direction of literary activity that the poet would soon decide to take.

We should add that in this part of the profile-commemoration, the names of teachers, patrons and friends of the later landlord of Osowa will become evaluative terms. Apart from the previously mentioned author of *Gramatyka dla Polaków chcących się uczyć angielskiego języka...* Hahn mentions Tadeusz Czacki, starost of Novgorod, whom Feliński

met as a boy in Porycko. He held him in high regard since this is what he wrote in the poem *Do Franciszka Wiśniowskiego*:

Czacki, co chęcią sławy zagrzany szlachetną, (Czacki, feeling a noble hunger for fame)
 Na usługach krajowych spędził młodość świetną, (Spent his glorious youth serving the
 country)
 Przykładem mi do pracy dodając ochoty (He was my example, he encouraged me to work)
 Kierował moje kroki do nauk i cnoty (He directed me towards the sciences and virtue)
 [2, c. 3].

In addition, the founder of the school in Krzemieniec was paid a poetic homage by the artist in the poem *Do Tadeusza Czackiego*. As a side note, it should be added that the vice-chancellor of the author of *Barbara Radziwiłłówna* is often cited in portraits dedicated to the artist. Taking into account the stylistic values of the discussed profile-commemoration, it can also be added that according to the classical structure of anniversary speeches, it recommended to the authors to talk about the homeland of the praised person and remind about his famous ancestors (*laudatio gentis*), which supported the thesis that the presented hero inherited the greatest virtues from his ancestors (*kalokagathia*) [11, p. 32].

A supplement for this part of the portrait of the Volyn-based poet would be to point out the sincere friendship he made with Michał Wyszkowski, Franciszek Skarbek Rudzki and Konstanty Tyminiecki. What the young artists had in common was «a rare, close friendship that could be compared to the Filaret Association» [6, p. 1], as evidenced in Wyszkowski's poem addressed to Alojzy Feliński, written in 1793 on the poet's name day:

Nie przez płochej przysięgi wymuszona pęta, (No forced binding commitment,)
 Nie ślepy losu obrót, nie interes podły, (No blind fate, no vile business,)
 Ale do niej jednakie skłonności nas wiodły – (But identical tendencies drew us towards
 it -)
 Owa ufność bez granic, chęć nawzajem szczerą, (That endless trust, mutually sincere
 eagerness,)
 Która jedna prawdziwych przyjaciół obiera (Which lets you find true friends) [18, p. 25].

When profiling the group, Wiesław Pusz emphasized that the most information about the circle of friends is included in Klementyna Hoffman nee Tańska's memoirs, an author closely connected with the capital's literary community. In the early 1890s, young poets gathered to read only masterpieces and make written comments on them. In this way, they perfected languages and acquired real taste [15, pp. 49–50].

In contrast, when writing about the group of friends, Hahn emphasizes their efforts to create a repertoire for the Warsaw national scene, resulting in the translation attempts made by young artists, among which he points to Terence's comedies (Tyminiecki's translation), Voltaire's *Triumvirate* (Feliński's translation), Pierre Corneille's *Cinna* and *La Mort de Pompée*, Jean Baptiste Racine's *Bajazet* and *Bérénice* (Wyszkowski's translation). This part of the profile-commemoration is, in a way, a prelude to the development of the anniversary portrait, a discussion of Feliński's dramatic work. The introduction does not only provide information on the education and the acquaintances of the translator of *L'Homme des champs* but, first and foremost, Hahn lists the places and people thanks to which the Volhynian

poet mastered his art to become a mature and good artist, in whom, as the Lviv literary historian writes, «[...] there is an affinity for drama» [6, p. 1]. The Lviv literary historian also indirectly describes the personality of the translator of *Virginia*, pointing to the friendly ties between Feliński and the people of Warsaw at that time.

It is worth pointing out that up to that point the discussed profile-commemoration concentrated on, to a lesser or greater degree, works created in remembrance of Feliński. Hahn, at the end of the first part of his portrait, introduces a kind of novelty, namely a detailed characteristic of the Volynian's early dramas created while he was still at school. It is interesting that both the historians of literature and the friends or acquaintances reminiscing the translator of *Rhadamiste et Zénobie* generally ignore this work or make relatively laconic remarks about it. This was primarily due to the fact that Feliński had a poor opinion of his «childish ramblings» (he destroyed them), only considering his stay in the capital as the true «university», «when he had the opportunity to get to know our finest writers and experts of that time» [4, c. 20]. In the previously mentioned *Oznajmienie...* he wrote:

[...] when I became better at understanding and feeling foreign works, I found out how far Polish literature, despite the apparent superiority of our language, was from being comparable to French, English, Italian literature, and in many genres, it was completely void [4, c. 20].

From that moment on, the playwright would stick to the Horatian rule that a work should wait nine years before the author decides to publish it. [cf. 4, c. 20; 16, p. 175].

At the beginning of the profile-commemoration, the Lviv professor provides some exposure to *Kora i Alonzo*, a tragedy that was inspired by Jean François Marmontel's poem *Les Incas* (1773). Hahn, on the one hand, focuses on the genesis of the work, and on the other hand attempts to disprove the trite claim (taken over by the researchers through Klemens Kantecki [9, p. 13], and uttered by Feliński himself, concerning the originality of *Kora i Alonzo* [4, c. 21]. The historian of literature writes:

When reminiscing about this work, later on, he forgot the content, and thus mistakenly called his first attempt an original one. The title itself must arouse serious doubts because both foreign names indicate foreign content, therefore one may not discuss the originality of the tragedy without some reservations [6, p. 1].

Further on, the Lviv researcher presents the plot of the tragedy, highlighting the spicy details of the love affairs of the priestesses of the sun and Don Alonzo Molina, which not only stimulated Feliński's youthful fantasy but also the fantasy of the twentieth-century reader of the portrait (published in the «Gazeta Lwowska»). Incidentally, Hahn emphasized that Feliński «was to a great extent influenced by foreign works, and [...] as a classicist he was embarrassed with his play, differing from classical works: as a renowned classicist, he could not make claims towards the ideas that he introduced into the play» [6, p. 2].

It is worth adding that such a starting point in the presentation of the artistic output of the author of *Virginia* turned out to be partly innovative (a discussion on the work was completely omitted in Feliński's portraits) and interesting, since it allowed to look at the playwright not only through the prism of a serious national tragedy, which the widely

known *Barbara Radziwiłłówna* undoubtedly was, but also the work about the exotic Incas, worshipping the god of the sun.

Equally interesting is the choice of the next work that the Lviv professor wants to present to his contemporary readers. He refers to the work entitled *Kodrus*, which remains only as a plan of a tragedy, written according to the rules of French drama [3, c. 16–18]. Once again, the researcher decides to include in the anniversary profile a longer summary of the drama, also stimulating the readers' imagination. For example, he writes:

The content [...] gives the impression of some intrigue taking place in the French royal court, where the ministers, the king's fiancée and Eteocles are involved. But the choice of the theme is very characteristic for the young poet: the hero of the tragedy is the king, who does not hesitate to die for the sake of saving the country; it was the first time a Polish tragedy introduced such a sublime motif [7, p. 1].

In addition, Hahn cites a surviving fragment of the aforementioned drama. The author of the portrait mentions this work probably because it was conceived in the trend of the contemporary classic tragedies. It is interesting to note that the researcher has cited larger fragments of his strictly scientific essay, published 16 years earlier in «Pamiętnik Literacki» [5, pp. 294–298] in the official daily newspaper.

Describing the first stage of Feliński's work, the professor of Lviv University also mentioned fragments of the translation of the 1794 English drama [cf. 14, p. 467–474], regretting that unfortunately neither the title of the drama nor the name survived in the manuscript. However, following the current course in the presentation of the Volhynian's output, Hahn once again reconstructs the somewhat sensational content of the drama; its protagonist is Lord Belton, a debaucher, who caused the death of his mother, first wife and father with his behavior. He has two sons, Charles, the elder (who imitates his father's behavior) and the younger, George, who is righteous and noble. The central conflict of the drama revolves around Lord Belton and his elder son's passionate love towards Henrieta, Duling's daughter. However, both paramour's attempts for the girl's virtue fail. Charles, wanting to kidnap the lady, hurt his father. This unfortunate incident would result in both the protagonists, having experienced a tremendous event, probably choosing the path of virtue. Hahn emphasizes that this is an example of a typical weepy eighteenth-century drama, breaking the classical rules, and thus he considers this work to be an interesting part of the path of the poet's output, who was not recognized as a classic immediately; he adds, however, that «his characteristic hesitation between the two directions: one respecting the sacred models of French tragedy authors, and the other, introducing new elements, breaking away from the embarrassing rules of the French theoreticians. The first direction prevailed» [7, p. 1].

Moving on to remind the most important works of the playwright, the Lviv professor appreciates the beautiful and poetic translation of Delile's *L'Homme des champs*, in which «some of the pictures [...] are true little masterpieces, reminiscent of the descriptions of nature in *Pan Tadeusz*» [7, p. 1].

However, the final part of the profile-commemoration is filled with the presentation of the work, which the researcher describes as «the cornerstone of Feliński's fame» [8, p. 1]. Here, he emphasizes the hard work of the playwright who, despite not always writing the truth in *Barbara* ..., underwent conscientious historical studies while preparing to write

the tragedy. Once again he praises the exquisite language and beautiful verse of the work. He also points out that thanks to Feliński, Poles still succumb to the sentiment towards the figure of Barbara Radziwiłłówna and her idealized image. The tragedy is defined as the best Polish play created in the classic French style.

To complete the portrait of the playwright, Hahn mentions the translation of *Virginia* and *Rhadamiste et Zénobie*. He believes that Feliński's work is inspired by accurate and very apparent passions. Finally, he dares to argue that just before his death, the Volhynian began to drift away from the views of French theorists, showing an active interest in Friedrich Schiller or Shakespeare. Furthermore, he emphasizes that the work of the author of *Virginia* became an inspiration for Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki or Zygmunt Krasiński. However, when culminating the portrait of Alojzy Feliński, he observes that the work that will always remain in the memory of Poles will surely be the hymn *Boże, coś Polskę (Hymn na rocznicę ogłoszenia Królestwa Polskiego)*.

To sum up, we should emphasize that the profile-commemoration of Wiktor Hahn is certainly distinguished by the pragmatic aspect, characteristic of the discussed genre, highlighted by a set of fixed intentions, including the announcement of the death anniversary of the person being presented, presentation of their life, their merits, and paying them respect. The anniversary portrait not only provides information about the deceased artist but also makes an attempt to evaluate his accomplishments. The Lviv professor makes sure of the attractiveness of the message, evoking little-known works while expanding the content of these works, which are characterized by a sort of sensation. Thus, one can notice the creativity typical for the profile-commemoration. In addition to the notification, there is an evaluation, and the professional literary history elaboration is combined with a colorful, sometimes quite colloquial, conveyance of the content of the discussed works.

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ПОРТРЕТ АЛОЗІЯ ФЕЛІНСЬКОГО. ЗАБУТА ПОСТАТЬ – СПОГАДИ В «GAZETA LWOWSKA»

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Стаття є спробою нагадати про історичну постать Алозія Фелінського, спогади про якого написав Віктор Ган, професор Львівського Університету, літературознавець. Спогади було опубліковано у трьох частинах, 23-25 лютого 1920 року, в «Газеті Львовській» («Gazeta Lwowska»). Здійснена в цій статті інтерпретація показує перш за все нестандартний портрет Алозія Фелінського. До цього часу автори творів з нагоди ювілею митця зосереджувалися на обговоренні лише найвидатніших справ волинського драматурга, цілком оминаючи його перші спроби в сфері драми – юнацькі твори молодого артиста із сенсаційною фабулою.

Авторка статті прагне показати, що згаданий портрет, з одного боку, має інформаційний характер (згадується «сімейне гніздо» поета, вказується на його освіту, а також юнацькі контакти з тодішніми літераторами), але також він не є позбавлений інших елементів. Адже окрім хроніки його життя і творчості зроблено оцінку справ А. Фелінського, тобто фаховий історико-літературний висновок, який поєднується з барвистим переказом змісту творів, розглянутих в статті. Внаслідок цього ми бачимо образ творчої і креативної особи.

Ключові слова: Алозія Фелінський, силует-спогад, твір з нагоди ювілею, «Gazeta Lwowska», преса.