

Painful experiences in woman's life.

Na śmierć Juluni by Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin

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The poem of Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin entitled *Na śmierć Juluni* was published in the second volume of *Poezje. Edycja zupełna* (*The Poetry. Complete Edition*, 1787). This issue can be partly considered as a guide of Puławy. Through the description and presentation of events, entertainment and people staying in Czartoryski's Court the poet initiates readers into little things of intimate, private world of the inhabitants of the mansion¹. The discussed poem had to be important for the author because he also took it into account (what is important, in a very similar form²) in a manuscript entitled *Poezje Franciszka Dionizego Kniaźnina ręką własną pisane* (*The Handwritten Poetry of Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin*) forthcoming in the nineties of the eighteenth century and constituting his literary testament.

The poem starts with an apostrophe to Julunia who died shortly after her birth. The poet uses here a surprising solution as after stating in what mental state the girl's parents are, he concludes this situation in a very unexpected way:

Juluniu! Zgłasłaś. Matka cię żaluje,
leje lzy ociec; a ja ci wińszuję.
Przeszłaś do grobu z samego powicia,
nie znając śmierci, nie znając i życia³.

1 More about this in: Guzek A.K., *Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin (1750–1807)*, [in:] *Pisarze polskiego Oświecenia*, vol. I, ed. Kostkiewiczowa T. i Goliński Z., Warsaw 1992, pp. 573–575.

2 Kniaźnin throughout his life sought perfection in his work. He continually edited the poems already released, often changing them beyond recognition (usually corrections not only came down to interfere in the selection expression; the poet gave new titles to poems and other overtones, he limited or increased the number of stanzas). In the case of this poem changes are small.

3 All quotations come from the last version of the poem; see: Kniaźnin F.D., *Na śmierć Juluni*, [in:] *Poezje Franciszka Dionizego Kniaźnina ręką własną pisane*, vol. I, Cracow 2006 (Biblioteka Tradycji, no. 57), pp. 134–136.

These words are the beginning of considerations on which in the subsequent stanzas the lyrical narrator ponders: human life which is, in his opinion, a ‘bandwidth’ of endless afflictions and misfortunes⁴ primarily resulting from the discrepancy between what the poet describes as the ‘heart’ and what has been called ‘acute mind.’ The same approach is evident in the poem *Rozwaga nad rozumem i sercem*⁵ (*Consideration of Mind and Heart*) which in accordance with the opinion of Teresa Kostkiewiczowa ‘neatly introduces us to the problems and the poetics of reflexivity of this author’⁶. According to the poet, human existence is primarily filled with sorrow, grief and pain. Surprisingly, these pessimistic statements are bound to bring consolation. In the eyes of the lyrical narrator Julunia appears as a ‘happy shadow’ who do not know life and therefore will not experience the suffering associated with it. Furthermore, if she was alive she would have to face many adversities and often experience pain as a woman:

Na więcej cierpień dosyć było i tą
trapić się dołą; być jeszcze kobieta.
O wieleż więzów ta plec na się wzięła!
Rzuciłaś wszystkie, nimeś je przyjęła.
(w. 13–16)

It is the fate of the beautiful sex what is, in fact, the dominant topic of this poem — in its main part the lyrical narrator describes the various stages of women’s lives in an empathetic manner first of all, taking into account their raging emotions and exposing their dramatic situations. The lyrical narrator wants to visualise to Julunia that her death spared her the pains of life and to talk to her about what was not given to her experience. This poem can be partly considered as a kind of reflexion on emotional experiences and problems of women living in the time of the Stanisław.

According to the poet, the first years of life are already very difficult for women mainly by ‘giving shape to the soul and body.’ These were two basic elements of education of girls in the age of enlightenment. Improving the soul was mainly connected with practical education, care of faith in God, good manners, sociable culture⁷ and the sophistication of sensitivity within young ladies (‘To feel tenderly, that reason seeks’). Książnin mentions the latter of expectations towards women also in the poem *Do księżcia Adama*

4 The same reflexion was put by Książnin in the initial stanzas of the poem *Do Ignacego Ciepelińskiego* (*To Ignacy Ciepeliński*), [in:] *Poezje. Edycja zupełna*, vol. I, Warsaw 1787, p. 123, v. 1–3.

5 See: Książnin F.D., *Rozwaga nad rozumem i sercem*, [in:] *Poezje. Edycja...*, op. cit., vol. I, p. 57, v. 1–8.

6 Kostkiewiczowa T., *Książnin jako poeta liryczny*, Wrocław–Warsaw–Cracow–Gdansk 1971, p. 130.

7 Berdecka A., Turnau I., *Życie codzienne w Warszawie okresu oświecenia*, Warsaw 1969, p. 200.

*Czartoryskiego, generałowicza podolskiego*⁸ (*To Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, the General of Podole*). The knowledge that was passed to them, first of all ‘was [...] focused on the formation of the specific characteristics of femininity’⁹. When it comes to the physical development it consisted mainly of providing desired shapes of the silhouette. Hubert Vautrin — a foreigner residing in the eighties of the eighteenth century in our country described his observations on this subject as follows:

Jak wszędzie, i w Polsce panuje zdanie, że jedynym przeznaczeniem kobiet jest podobanie się plci brzydkiej i że sama przyroda nie ukształtowałaby ich tak, aby zadowolily mężczyzn. Wobec tego mają ograniczoną swobodę ruchów, teren ich zabaw zamyka się w czterech ścianach domu, a mięśnie rozwijają się jak w pudle. Sprowadza się z Paryża zabójczy futerał zwany gorsetem i z braku rzemieślnika, który umiałby go przystosować do dziecięcego ciała, zakłada się go taki, jaki jest. Figura ma się ukształtować według tej sztywnej formy. Niewygoda i bóle, których doznaje nieszczęsne stworzenie skrópowane w swym rozwoju, nie wzruszają nawet matki¹⁰.

The next step included in the poem is the entering into teenage years called ‘May’ by the poet. Describing this period of woman’s existence Książnin refers to the symbol of youth and beauty well-known since ancient times — he depicts young girl as a rose¹¹ which ‘flashes and lures’ and thus, due to its fragility and delicacy is exposed to many dangers so as a young girl who starts to participate in social events. It seems that the woman is powerless against fate and cannot actually affect her life and manage it in order to avoid unpleasant situations¹²:

Jakiż los onej? Lub upał ususzy,
owad obśiedzie albo wicher skruszy;
lub gdy się na to zachowa oszczędnie,
dzień jej zaszczytu: rozkwita i więdnie.
(w. 25–28)

Introduction of maturing girls to the ‘salons’ involves primarily the threat from men who continue to compliment ladies and who are called

8 See: Książnin F.D., *Do księcia Adama Czartoryskiego, generałowicza podolskiego*, [in:] *Poezje. Edycja...*, op. cit., vol. I, p. 170, v. 45–46.

9 Bogucka M., *Gorsza pleć. Kobieta w dziejach Europy od antyku po wiek XXI*, Warsaw 2006, p. 217.

10 Vautrin H., *Obserwator w Polsce*, [in:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. I, ed. and introduction by Zawadzki W., Warsaw 1963, p. 791.

11 Kopaliński W., *Słownik symboli*, Warsaw 2012, pp. 362–364.

12 Interestingly, a completely different stage of adolescence Książnin describes as far as men are concerned. He pays attention primarily to the choice of path in life. Such an approach to the subject is found in the next line dedicated to pupil of the poet, prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski: *Herkules młody. Do księcia Adama Czartoryskiego, generałowicza podolskiego*.

‘the enemies of the soul’ in the poem. It is the most common cause of the first feeling which Książnin shows here according to the rococo tendencies as the battle between man and woman, which is achieved mainly through the introduction to the poem the terminology related to a fight¹³. He also uses the motif of burning with love which is present in the poetry of the Baroque¹⁴. Much space is devoted by the author to the description of the emotional state of the person who experiences youthful infatuation which combines not only the fascination of object of affection but also the fear of the new and unknown (at the same time the girl feels ‘the weakness of the heart and charm, and awe’ and also ‘she is afraid [...] and wobbles as a leaf’). It is not surprising that the poet focuses on the issue of youthful love. According to Friedrich Schulz, who describes eighteenth-century, Warsaw coquetry was in fact largely a matter of beautiful and young women¹⁵. Interestingly, Książnin emphasizes here an important aspect of the convention and the awareness of the existing rules of the ‘game’ and remaining in good taste: modesty and shyness which force the women not to show their feelings openly¹⁶:

Tai się skłonność, ale wstyd na twarzy
 im bardziej tłumi, bardziej ogień żarzy.
 Grać rolę cnoty ostrość przymuszona,
 pomiata jawnie, nad czym skrycie kona.
 (w. 49–52)

Such state of things was lamented by Franciszek Salezy Jezierski in his works, where he wrote about the contemporary situation of women:

Uciążliwie niewiasta okryta powinnościami skromności, obowiązki warunkowe wstydu ma bez stosunku do potrzeb swego jestestwa; stworzona do kochania, będąc i pomocą, i zamiarem rozkoszy, nie godzi jej się powiedzieć, że kocha albo że jej się ten mężczyzna podoba, los więc dla niej tak w smutnej dostał się doli, aby odpowiadała na zapytanie, gdy kto z nią o tym mówić będzie; jedna więc połowa rodzaju ludzkiego, pleć męska, panuje w królestwie

13 Klimowicz M., *Literatura Oświecenia*, Warsaw 1990, p. 107.

14 Ibidem, pp. 106–107.

15 Schulz F., *Podróżę Inflancką z Rygi do Warszawy i po Polsce w latach 1791–1793*, [in:] *Polska stanisławowska...*, op. cit., p. 585.

16 Hiding feelings and thoughts of women was one of the important issues, but also sometimes mocked in the era of social customs of enlightenment. As a witness the following text popular in the eighteenth century, whimsical song *Rys młodej piękności* cited by Antoni Magier in his notes as accurate picture of contemporary women’s behavior (see: idem, *Estetyka miasta stołecznego Warszawy*, introduction Morawiński J., ed., preface, commentary, indexes Szwankowska H., Wrocław–Warsaw–Cracow 1963, pp. 250–251, 413).

miłości, mając prawo oświadczenia swojego uczucia, a druga polowa, plec żeńska, zostaje na milczenie i tajemie skazana¹⁷.

In a statement addressed to Julunia the lyrical narrator notes that for the young and, therefore, inexperienced girl pretending initial indifference is virtually impossible. Once betrayed liking is quickly used by men not necessarily faithful and generally an could be the reason of later suffering and humiliation. A good observer knows that the initial, momentary pleasure and following desire most often bring disappointment.

One of the most difficult experiences in a woman's life which is mentioned by Kniaznin is the first heartbreak. It is worth mentioning here that the abandonment by the lover is a topic discussed by the poet from Puławy in many poems. Already in *Erotyki* (1779) there are poems in which he makes the lyrical narrator an abandoned, betrayed woman in order to present her situation and capture thoughts, feelings and emotional state most accurately. As an example we can quote *Pasterka* I, 12¹⁸ (inc. 'Halina sitting on the banks of Vistula...') and *Pasterka* I, 31 (inc. 'Whence this frivolity and this fickleness?...')¹⁹. Also in *Wiersze* (1783) and *Poezje. Edycja zupełna* appear poems which are dealing with the unpleasant love experiences of women, for example *Pasterka* (inc. 'There is no Likon! How tears i poured...'), *Glicera w rodzaju pasterskim*, *Żal pasterki* and *Na śmierć Juluni*. In several verses of the latter the poet focuses on the feelings of a heroine named Nice describing the changing condition of her heart and soul in the subsequent stages of acutely experienced suffering.

Initially, what dominates is the belief that good things take the turn. The girl does not care about her dignity, honor and urges her lover to return:

Uwiódl niestatek. Przed zdrajcą i głazem
ściele się tkliwym żalości obrazem.
Błaga go, miękczy, korzy mu się, modli;
a ten znieść może, że ją tak upodli.
(w. 65–68)

Then comes a time of grief which 'penetrates the heart, tears and broods', weakness, tears and insomnia intensified by human envy and slander which does not allow to forget the misery. The woman feeds on hatred, anger and desire for revenge but these negative feelings turn against her. Attempts to

17 Jezierski F.S., *Niektóre wyrazy y porządkiem abecadla zebrane i stosownymi do rzeczy y uwagami objaśnione*, [in:] *Wzbyór pism*, ed. Skwarczyński Z., preface Ziomek J., Warsaw 1952, p. 191.

18 In *Erotyki* Kniaznin published many works entitled simply *Pasterka*. Therefore, in order to distinguish them, i give the title of the book marked with Roman numerals, the track number within it in Arabic numerals and the incipit.

19 See: Wolska B., *Skarga porzuconej kobiety. 'Pasterka' ('Siedząc Halina nad brzegiem Wisły...')*, [in:] *Czytanie Kniażnina*, ed. Mazurkowska B., Chachulski T., Warsaw 2010, pp. 33–34.

take revenge on the lover usually end with failure and the abandoned girl not only realizes her own helplessness but also deprives herself of internal goodness. It destroys her completely and leads to despair and even suicidal thoughts. Over time this condition passes but then the woman feeling shame and remorse has yet to face memories and humbly endure the expositions of family and friends and come to terms with the fact that she is alone in her tragedy. Poignant feeling of loneliness makes the heroine only desire to escape from the misery ("Runs our Nice, whither the fate leads"). We see the similar pattern in *Pasterka* IV, 17 (inc. 'My Franek died, oh dear Franek...') from *Erotyki* which is a monologue of a woman mourning her dead beloved. Nice, one of the heroines of the poem *Na śmierć Juluni* experienced by bad luck feels disgraced and battered. Following her own destiny is a journey through grief and misery from which she can be released only by luck:

Przebywa smutku i nędzy koleje,
całą w przypadku złożywszy nadzieję.
A nuż poruszy kogo twarz jej ładna?
Ale nie każda w świecie Aryjadna.
(w. 97–100)

In the part of the poem devoted to the period of youth and first heart-break Książnin uses familiar plots of mythological stories twice. The first of these themes is a kind of confirmation of the thesis that it is impossible to resist love. The poet cites her an example of Danae closed in a tower seduced by Zeus in the form of golden rain²⁰. In the stanza cited above this procedure is used to contrast reality with illusions to which the woman is fed by literature and tradition. Not all of them will be as lucky as Ariadna — princess abandoned by Theseus with whom god Dionysus fell in love and later after the marriage took her to the Olympus²¹. Książnin emphasizes that mostly new love does not appear so quickly and about the previous dramatically experienced it is not easy to forget. For an abandoned person maidenhood is usually an emotional slavery which gives pain and generates loneliness.

Książnin also takes into account the situation in which a woman gets married. He presents another example of painful experiences of a woman: the story of Eliza — wife of a handsome Lindor which is 'the successful formula of happiness.' Initially, it seems that it is a fairly unique case in those times because the couple got married with love. As it turns out later it

20 Grimal P., *Słownik mitologii greckiej i rzymskiej*, scientific ed. Łanowski J., transl. Bronarska M. et al., Wrocław–Warsaw–Cracow 2008, p. 20.

21 Ibidem, p. 41.

is typical eighteenth's century relationship because soon after the wedding the 'moments of the first fires past' in the life of a seemingly happy woman worries start to appear. At the beginning they are associated with the first pregnancy. On the one hand, expectant mother feels joy while carrying under the heart the 'fruit of love [...] that came true'. On the other hand, she is very afraid of pain and death during the childbirth. These concerns were of course entirely justified. Roman Kaleta notes that commenting on some sources of customs compiled by him:

O ile [dawniej — B.P.] męska połowa narodu ryzykowała zdrowie w kwiecie swojego wieku na polach bitew lub w ferworze dawnych awantur, o tyle pleć piękna narażała się na niebezpieczeństwo utraty życia w przypadku macierzyństwa. Kobiety przygotowywały się do wydania na świat dziecka z największą trwogą. Obfite żniwo zbierała wśród nich śmierć na skutek gorączki połogowej²².

At some point the calmness in the marriage is also disturbed by jealousy and suspicion of spouse's treason ('What a monster disturbs a noble house? / Disbelief pierced the heart like dagger' v. 123–124) which becomes another source of suffering. Perhaps the poet indicates here in a subtle way the existence of a fairly spread problems in the second half of the eighteenth century — pregnancies resulting from adultery. Jędrzej Kitowicz in his unusual memoir being a record of historical events and facts drew attention to this phenomenon:

Niech to będzie w sekrecie u czytelnika, co dalej powiem, ale to jest prawda wiele dowodów mająca, że między wielkimi panami mało jest prawdziwych Polaków z ojca; są to synowie rozmaitych cudzoziemców, metrów, tancmistrzów, fehmistrzów, langwistów, nareszcie kamerdynerów, fryzjerów, hajduków i turczynów²³.

Książnin emphasizes that marital problems associated with unknown paternity pass away but mutual resentments and regrets cool down the feelings and love turns into a neutral friendship. This situation is typical for the Enlightenment era when the custom was that 'each of the spouses were living their own lives and did not disturb each other'²⁴. This usually resulted in boredom leading to finding a new passion which can also be seen on the example of Eliza. Lonely woman feeling 'her ties full of fierce boredom' falls in love with someone else. Initially, she is struggling with this feeling as she

22 Kaleta R., *Sensacje z dawnych lat*, Wrocław–Warsaw–Cracow–Gdańsk 1980, p. 125.

23 Kitowicz J., *Pamiętniki czyli historia polska*, ed. and preface Matuszewska P., Warsaw 1971, p. 477.

24 Pauszer-Klonowska G., *Pani na Pulawach. Opowieść o Izabeli z Flemmingów Czartoryskiej*, Warsaw 2010, p. 14.

remembers the vow before God and the consequences of failure to fidelity to her husband. She is experiencing deep perplexity and at the same time she feels desire and need to preserve the integrity of the marriage. In the end, however, she gives up and cheats on her husband. In the eighteenth century it was by no means an unusual situation. It is certified by both literary²⁵ and source documents including various records, letters and reports of nosy journalists setting off their written newspapers²⁶ into circulation. It is worth to quote here an opinion of Nathaniel William Wraxall who while characterising the Poles from the perspective of a foreign eighteenth century traveler primarily draws attention to women's infidelity:

[...] trudno się spodziewać, by pleć piękna była wolna od wad cechujących mężczyzn. Tu już nie galanteria, lecz po prostu wyuzdanie rządzi bez żadnych hamulców. Samo słowo „dyskrecja” jest wyśmiewane jako nonsens; za ryzykują nawet twierdzenie, że kobiety dobrze urodzone czerpią tu więcej zaszczytów z pozycji swych kochanków niż mężów²⁷.

Such vision of social life in the Enlightenment era dominated also thereafter. While describing Warsaw during the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski, Zygmunt Kaczkowski emphasizes that romances were a very common phenomenon:

Z małymi bardzo wyjątkami, można powiedzieć, że nie było tam prawie męszatki, która by nie prowadziła otwarcie intryg miłosnych; nie było małżonka, który by wiernym był żonie²⁸.

It should be noted that the *Kniaźnin* does not evaluate Eliza of committing adultery just as there is no mention of carelessness or naivety of Nice abandoned by her lover. When describing the experience of the heroines mentioned above he does not remain a neutral observer, however, he does not try to justify them. The poet showing empathy for the dramatic experiences of women in many of his works tries to show the point of view of

25 It is worth to mention here a fable by Ignacy Krasicki entitled *Małżeństwo*, the satire *Małżeństwo* by Adam Naruszewicz and his other works: *o małżeństwie, Na akt weselny Józefa Niesiołowskiego... Z Katarzyną Massalską...*, *Do Ignacego Zapolskiego*, poems by Tomasz Kajetan Węgierski (for instance *Żona, Sen*) and Jan Ancuta (for instance *Nie masz zgody, Skarga Kupidyna, List z Warszawy*).

26 Sources of this kind presents and discusses Roman Kaleta in the book described in the footnote no. 24, as well as in an extensive work: *Oświecenie swawolne w świetle nieznaney satyry bibliograficznej*, [in:] idem, *Oświeceni i sentymentalni. Studia nad literaturą i życiem w Polsce w okresie trzech rozbiorów*, Wrocław–Warsaw–Cracow–Gdansk 1971, pp. 202–328.

27 Wraxall N.W., *Wspomnienia z Polski*, [in:] *Polska stanisławowska...*, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 538–539.

28 Kaczkowski Z., *Kobieta w Polsce: studium historyczno-obyczajowe*, vol. II, with preface and commentary by Chmielowski P., Petersburg 1895, p. 356.

the woman and fully reflect her feelings, emotional state and motivation for activities.

The lyrical narrator highlights that at the end each tragedy fades away even if initially it seems impossible. In the case of Nice surprisingly ‘the heart persevered’ while in the home of Eliza everything ‘subsided with time.’ As it turns out after committing adultery after numerous domestic quarrels there is still the possibility of happiness — thanks to motherhood which should be treated as another life experiences of women described by Książnin. Love towards children is always a comfort and in a sense it is a compensation for all the wrongs and failures but also this aspect of life is often associated with suffering:

Niestety! Ręka śmierci zazdrościwa
Najmilszy Florze kwiat nagle porywa...
Temiro! Dotąd żal nad uchem kwili,
Gdy wspomnę na zgon Twojej Teresyli.
(w. 153–156)

The fragment containing an apostrophe to Temira is a reference to a family tragedy which for a long time covered with mourning the house of Isabella and Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski²⁹. It is about the death of their eldest daughter (almost fifteen years old) Theresa and newborn Gabriela. The dramatic event happened on one frosty day in winter of 1780 in the Blue Palace in Warsaw. When Princess Theresa was warming up in the evening by the fireplace the hem of her muslin dress lit up and after a while the fire engulfed her totally. Terrified, she began to run ahead screaming and ‘still more inflamed herself’³⁰. The girl was not alone in the room but no one was able to give her immediate help. It was Jan Norblin who was staying in the next room and who seized the princess and extinguished the fire with his

29 Książnin was not the only one who in his poetry alluded to this sad event. The dead princess also commemorated in: a poem by Johann Kaspar Lavate (a scientist from Zurich and a friend of Isabella) entitled *Therese Czartoryska*, written toward gratitude and emotion of aching mother, in addition in the poem by Józef Szymanowski *Nagrobek księżniczce Teresy Czartoryskiej*, in the poem by Kazimierz Nestor Sapicha *List do Arysta z okoliczności śmierci Jaśnie Oświeconej Księżniczki Teresy Czartoryskiej*, in a poem of less known poet, Teodor Lutyński *Zalobne brzmienie na śmierć Teresy Czartoryskiej*, in an anonymous poem *Nagrobku Teresie, księżniczce Czartoryskiej*, and also in the poem of Franciszek Karpiński entitled *Rocznica imienin zmarłej księżniczki Teresy Czartoryskiej, generalównej ziem podolskich, która w Powązkach obchodzona była dnia 15 października 1780 roku*. See: *Wiersze imiennowe poetów z drugiej połowy XVIII wieku*, preface, selection and ed. Wolska B., Mazurkowska B., Chachulski T., Warsaw 2011, pp. 206, 250 (information valid in the case of the namesday of the princess Theresa); Karpiński F., *Historia mego wieku i ludzki, z którymi żyłem*, Warsaw 1987, p. 102; Pauszer-Klonowska G., *Pani na Puławach...*, op. cit., pp. 62–64.

30 See: F. Karpiński, *Historia mego wieku...*, op. cit., p. 102.

coat. At first it seemed that Theresa would improve and her wounds would be healed but in a short time at the 13th of January 1780 she passed away³¹.

At that time Duchess Isabella was very weak after just giving birth to her daughter — Gabriela. The girl lived only for a few days³². On this occasion, initially, the death of the next oldest child was concealed to Czartoryska. She was told that Theresa is sick for some time and cannot get out of bed. After five weeks came the time to reveal the truth³³. The Duchess 'on this message was smitten with paralysis of the one side and had to walk on crutches for a long time and only thanks to electricity regained power in the leg.'³⁴ After the illness from which sunken in despair woman 'could not and did not want to raise'³⁵ time was filled with mourning and remembering. Theresa's brother — Adam Jerzy Czartoryski remembers this period as follows:

Chata mojej nieboszczki siostry [w Powązkach — B.P.] została w całości posunięta do lasu i tam jako pomnik zachowana. Czwartek — dzień jej śmierci — długo pozostał dniem smutku, pobożnego rozmyślenia i jakiegoś dobroczynnego uczynku mojej matki³⁶.

The Duchess could not be reconciled with this painful loss and 'long [...] was she in inconsolable grief'³⁷. Years later Franciszek Karpiński recalled that it was only after a year of being in Powązki when he had the opportunity to talk with the wife of the General of Podolian lands who 'at that time did not want to see people and lived in utmost loneliness'³⁸.

Książnin was perfectly aware of the fact that the death of a child is one of the worst experiences in life for a woman. In the description of that event he is referring to Flora, life force, governing everything that flourishes³⁹ and equals children with flowers — beautiful but fragile creatures who quickly disappear from the world. In the poem *Na śmierć Juluni* he compiled the Duchess Czartoryska's situation with the grief and suffering of Octavia the Younger (sister of Octavian Augustus) after the loss of her son Mark Claudius Marcellus. Recalling of these two examples on the one hand was to serve as a form of ennoblement of Isabella Czartoryska and

31 Czartoryski A.J., *Pamiętniki i memoriały polityczne 1776–1809*, Warsaw 1986, p. 83.

32 Ibidem.

33 Niemcewicz J.U., *Pamiętniki czasów moich*, ed. Dihm J., vol. I, Warsaw 1957, p. 126.

34 Czartoryski A.J., op. cit., p. 83.

35 Dernalowicz M., *Portret Familii*, Warsaw 1982, p. 260.

36 Czartoryski A.J., op. cit., p. 83.

37 Niemcewicz J.U., op. cit., p. 126.

38 Karpiński F., op. cit., pp. 114–115.

39 Grimal P., op. cit., p. 104.

on the other — emphasizing that the death of a child for a loving mother is always — regardless of time and place in which she lives and her social situation — a huge tragedy making everything else to lose its importance: “The most sensitive mother hurt by dour arrowhead. / regardless of the fact that she rules the world?”(v. 159–160).

In the discussed poem *Kniaźnin* with his characteristic sensitivity, empathy and understanding presented the worries and the survival of an average woman living in the eighteenth century. The existence of feminine sex is shown here as a series of unpleasant, sometimes tragic experiences that cannot be avoided. The poet gradually introduces the reader to the world of women’s experiences related primarily to the difficulties of parenting, debut in the big world, first love, abandonment by her lover, marriage, betrayal, motherhood and the loss of a child. By reading of next verses it seems that each of the described events full with tears and suffering is only a prelude to the next, desperate, much worse situation and happiness seems to be an elusive and quickly elapsing state. However, we should remember that this is a largely biased image. The poet wishing to comfort does not take account of moments which bring joy or eighteenth-century pleasures which included: interest in fashion, passion for theater, music, literature, travel, planting gardens, or even a membership in Freemasonry⁴⁰. *Kniaźnin* focuses on a little bit stereotypical ideal of femininity which in the age of enlightenment was slowly dying and which was tagged with: passivity, helplessness against hostile fate, lack of self-will, humility and modesty and which brought the representatives of the feminine sex mainly the role of a good wife and mother. Meanwhile, in the second half of the eighteenth century, other patterns were also developed and thus “[...] Poland was flooded by literate, emancipated women who were conductive at the royal court and the salons of aristocracy [...]”⁴¹. Women began to act as patrons of culture, manifest a keen interest in science, art and history, stand out and demonstrate patriotism and political activity even by their presence in the halls of the Parliament or involve in activities during the Kosciuszko’s Uprising⁴². Of course, the author of *Matka Spartanka* was well aware of all this things as evidenced by his other poetry dedicated to women showing a variety of

40 More about this in: Stasiewicz K., *Kobiece przyjemności w XVIII wieku*, [in:] *Przyjemność w kulturze epoki rozumu*, ed. Kostkiewiczowa T., Warsaw 2011, pp. 125–146.

41 Bogucka M., *Białogłowa w dawnej Polsce. Kobieta w społeczeństwie polskim XVI–XVIII wieku na tle porównawczym*, Warsaw 1998, p. 164.

42 Chachaj M., *Postać Kobiety-Polki w dramatach historycznych Juliana Ursyna Niemcewicza*, ‘Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska’ 1999, vol. XVII, p. 100.

patterns⁴³. However, in the case of the funeral poem *Na śmierć Juluni* due to the objectives and circumstances of its creation the most important for the poet was to show the emotional sphere and to arrest our attention to situations and problems with which the women of his time have to deal with during their lives.

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43 See remarks on this topic: Kostkiewiczowa T., *Kobiety w liryce Kniaźnina*, [in:] *Kobieta epok dawnych w literaturze, kulturze i społeczeństwie*, ed. Maciejewska I., Stasiewicz K., Olsztyn 2008, pp. 75–88.

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