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Signatures in letters in terms of shaping the space for a good conversation (based on the private correspondence of Alojzy Feliński)

Research material consists of selected excerpts from the private correspondence of Alojzy Feliński, a poet who lived at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries and served as the director of a high school in Krzemieniec (in the Tarnopol Circuit). The analysis focuses on letters sent from 1795 until the epistolographer's premature death in 1820 to nine recipients from the circle of friends, as well as from the social and public spheres, including individuals active in Warsaw, Galicia, and Petersburg. The aim of the study is to analyze the letter signatures presented in various contexts. At times, it delves into issues of epistolary etiquette, at other times it relates to the matter of eutotics, and occasionally it considers the process of rhetorical persuasion.

Keywords: signature, 19th-century private correspondence, Alojzy Feliński, Krzemieniec, epistolary etiquette

Introduction

The subject of this article is limited to a review of formalized signals marking the end of epistolary discourse, with the aim of analyzing the letter signature. During the research observation, depending on the presented letters, I delve into various contexts; for example, at times I seek them among issues of epistolary etiquette, other times I refer to the matter of eutotics (“good speech”), and occasionally I consider the process of rhetorical persuasion. I believe that the study, on one hand, will bring the exposed issue closer in the context of the correspondence presented in the article (which has not yet been presented), and on the other hand, it will complement studies in the field of epistolography from the Enlightenment-Romantic period, contributing to further research still resting in the archives of letter blocks. The research material was extracted from the

private correspondence of Alojzy Feliński, a poet and director of a high school in Krzemieniec. I have used seven sets of correspondence dating from 1795 to 1820, as well as one letter addressed to Franciszek Ksawery Dmochowski and a letter directed to Ludwik Osiński. This is a legacy of manuscripts or prints from the 19th century, consisting of a total of 105 letters. I would like to remind that from 1795 to 1820, Feliński established an epistolary bond with scattered colleagues from Warsaw; from the circle of friends (Michał Wyszkowski,¹ Franciszek Skarbak Rudzki,² Gustaw Olizar,³ Jan⁴ and Waleri⁵ Tarnowski); from the social and public sphere (Łukasz Gołębiowski,⁶ Franciszek Ksawery Dmochowski,⁷ Ludwik Osiński,⁸ and Adam Jerzy Czartoryski⁹). Besides the correspondence with Prince Czartoryski, it is necessary to mention the one-sided nature of the correspondence, which is not a significant issue for the researcher, as within Feliński's letters, there are numerous references and allusions that enable the reconstruction of the other side of the letter dialogue.

All the aforementioned recipients of Feliński's correspondence constituted an intellectual community of contemporary creators and reformers operating in Warsaw, Galicia, and Petersburg. On one hand, they represented those who brought honor to the Stanisławian era through their activities (like Dmochowski), and, on the other hand, they mostly belonged to the fourth generation of Enlightenment thinkers following them. They all felt a connection

¹ Listy Felińskiego do Michała Wyszkowskiego [Letters of Feliński to Michał Wyszkowski] [in:] A. Feliński, *Dzieła. Wydanie nowe*, vol. 2, Wrocław 1840, p. 260–279.

² „Listy” Alojzego Felińskiego [do Franciszka Skarbka Rudzkiego] [„Letters of Alojzy Feliński to Franciszek Skarbak Rudzki], published by J. I. Kraszewski, „Na Dziś”. Pismo zbiorowe poświęcone literaturze, naukom, sztuce, gospodarstwu krajowemu, handlowi i przemysłowi [A collective publication dedicated to literature, sciences, arts, domestic economy, commerce, and industry] 1872, vol. 3, p. 171–195.

³ „Proza. II. Do Gustawa Olizara”, 1818–1820 [in:] *idem*, *Pisma i listy Alojzego Felińskiego przepisane z jego autografów*, rkps Ossol. 2097/I, p. 58–65.

⁴ „Korespondencja Jana Feliksa Tarnowskiego w układzie alfabetycznym wg nadawców: Bogucki–Muczkowski”, 1817–1819, rkps Arch. Nar. w Krakowie 300, p. 109–122.

⁵ „Korespondencja Walerii Tarnowskiej w układzie alfabetycznym wg nadawców: Antonowicz–Mycielska”, 1813–1819, rkps Arch. Nar. w Krakowie 317, p. 101–144.

⁶ „Proza. III. Do Łukasza Gołębiowskiego”, 1809–1819 [in:] *idem*, *Pisma i listy Alojzego Felińskiego przepisane z jego autografów*, rkps Ossol. 2097/I, p. 65–67.

⁷ „Proza. IV. Do Franciszka Dmochowskiego”, 1803 [in:] *idem*, *Pisma i listy Alojzego Felińskiego przepisane z jego autografów*, rkps Ossol. 2097/I, p. 67–68.

⁸ A letter to Ludwik Osiński [in:] E.A. Iwanowski, *Wspomnienia lat minionych*, vol. 1, Kraków 1876, p. 9.

⁹ Książę A. Czartoryski, „Correspondence V–F. Korespondencja ks. Z J. Fabbroniem, A. Felińskimi Frankami głównie w sprawach Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego i Liceum Krzemienieckiego”, in the years 1803–1824, rkps MKCzart. 5454 [in:] A. Feliński, „Wiersze, przeróbki utworów dramatycznych, przekłady, mowy, prace publicystyczne i korespondencja...”, p. 43–96.

with the era and the classical style of the 18th century; they shared a common value system, a community of patriotic goals and aspirations, as well as an identical cultural awareness, similarity in ideological and moral authorities, and similar patterns and programs of actions. This is important when considering the rhetorical audience, whose knowledge and experience, shared by both sides of the communication, form the basis of mutual understanding. Michał Rusinek, considering the argumentative space that connects the interlocutors, finds an analogy for it in architecture or building. According to the researcher:

You can't hang a brick or an argument in the air. You need at least a line (in our case, it would be a straight line connecting the sender and the receiver), and ideally a plane (it's better when arguments stand stably rather than hanging like on a string). In rhetoric, such a plane is defined by common ground (...), which includes sentences, issues, common opinions, patterns, and images that are equally understood and accepted by the speaker and the audience.¹⁰

The intellectual and emotional community created a sense in Feliński's correspondence¹¹ that his recipients felt noticed and valued. He took into account the circumstances accompanying the correspondence, addressing his recipients with a mixture of respect and collegiality, reflecting the prevailing strict conventions of Enlightenment-era epistolary writing. This reflects the specific values of 18th-century noble culture, including a sense of community, chivalry, honor, and equality, as well as religiousness, hospitality, and gallantry towards women. It also involved linguistic etiquette, such as established grammatical forms, titles, and formulating texts appropriate to specific conversational situations, be it conversation or correspondence. Additionally, in the communication convention, social relations between communicators, rules related to the genre of discourse, and the sender's intentions were considered.¹²

Taking into account the genre of the letter, it's worth noting the contributions of many researchers in this field, including Stefania Skwarczyńska,¹³ Janusz Sławiński,¹⁴

¹⁰ M. Rusinek, *Po czym poznać, do kogo się mówi?* [in:] M. Rusinek, A. Załazińska, *Jak się dogadać, czyli retoryka codzienna*, Kraków 2018, p. 121.

¹¹ Feliński took into account the principles regarding letter-writing formulated by Stanisław Szymański in a well-known eighteenth-century guide titled *Wzory biletów, listów i memorialów w różnych materiach z przydatkiem uwag w powszechności o stylu listowym* [The patterns of billets, letters, and memorials in various materials with the addition of remarks on the universality of letter style] [in:] *Ludzie oświecenia o języku i stylu*, oprac. Z. Florczak i L. Pszczółowska, ed. M.R. Mayenowa, vol. 1, Warszawa 1958, p. 518–527.

¹² M. Wojtak, *Wybrane elementy staropolskiej etykiety językowej*, „Język a Kultura” 1992, vol. 6, p. 33–34.

¹³ S. Skwarczyńska, *Teoria listu*, based on the Lviv first edition, ed. E. Feliksiak and M. Leś, Białystok 2006.

¹⁴ J. Sławiński, *List* [in:] M. Głowiński, T. Kostkiewiczowa, A. Okopień-Sławińska, J. Sławiński, *Słownik terminów literackich*, edition 3, extended and revised, ed. J. Sławiński, Wrocław 2000, p. 281–282.

Izabella Adamczewska,¹⁵ and more recently Anita Całek,¹⁶ the author of the monograph “Nowa teoria listu” [New Theory of the Letter]. In their studies, they emphasized the specific composition of the letter and its “internal communicative rules”, describing it as an independent communication with a closed and conventionalized structure, where the role of significant phrases and formulations typical for correspondence is highlighted. Considering the strong formalization of the 18th-century letter, determined by rigid genre and etiquette rules, it is also worth mentioning research on the structure of letters (including the analyzed *petitio*) conducted by scholars such as Krystyna Data,¹⁷ Agnieszka Janiak-Jasińska,¹⁸ Marek Cybulski,¹⁹ and Katarzyna Sicińska.²⁰

Due to the previously mentioned works that detailed the significant parts of the discussed genre, I will focus solely on the somewhat marginal final element of the epistolary text, namely the signature that precedes the closing formulas of the letter. These closing elements often play a strategic role because as the contact between the writer and the recipient diminishes, the sender expresses feelings connecting them with the recipient, yields to their favor, conveys wishes, greetings, or requests. Moreover, as noted by Katarzyna Czarnecka, the delimiters of the end (including the signature) allow for the genre identification of the discourse.²¹

The extended signature can be seen as a way to define the relationship between the sender and the recipient of the correspondence

Here are some signature forms commonly used by Feliński in letters addressed to Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski:

- With genuine and utmost respect forever;
- Most devoted and humble servant;

¹⁵ I. Adamczewska, *List* [in:] *Słownik rodzajów i gatunków literackich*, ed. G. Gazda, edition 2, revised, Warszawa 2012, p. 531–533.

¹⁶ A. Całek, *Nowa teoria listu*, Kraków 2019.

¹⁷ K. Data, *Struktura tekstu listowego*, „Język Polski” 1989, issue 69, p. 142–152.

¹⁸ A. Janiak-Jasińska, *Wyznaczniki sztuki epistolograficznej w świetle listowników z drugiej połowy XIX wieku* [in:] *Sztuka pisania o liście polskim w wieku XIX*, ed. J. Sztachelska and E. Dąbrowicz, Białystok 2000, p. 259.

¹⁹ M. Cybulski, *Formuły nawiązania i zakończenia kontaktu w dawnej polszczyźnie (w XVI–XVIII wieku)* [in:] *Studia historycznojęzykowe*, ed. A. Kowalska, O. Wolińska, Katowice 2001, p. 29–35.

²⁰ K. Sicińska, *Formuła wyrażania szacunku w strukturze osiemnastowiecznego listu polskiego*, „LingVaria” 2019, no 2, p. 107–119.

²¹ K. Czarnecka, *Epistolarne konwencje grzecznościowe w listach do redakcji czasopisma religijnego «Miłujcie się!»*, „Napis” 2004, serial publication X, p. 342.

- Humble servant, Al. Feliński;
- The most benevolent and humble servant, Al. Feliński (most common form);
- With respect, gratitude, and dedication for life, your humble servant, Al. Feliński.

(the letters of A. Feliński to A.J. Czartoryski, 1803–1824, p. 43–96).

It has to be mentioned already at the beginning that the way Feliński shaped his signature signifies a particular kind of purposiveness related to rhetorical ethos.²² In the correspondence between Feliński and Czartoryski, rhetorical means of persuasion become evidence ethical proofs, related to the sender's attitude and behavior. To be precise: these are among the most important goals of rhetorical persuasion.²³ Through the mentioned way of shaping the content, the epistolographer draws attention to his subordination and dependence on Prince Czartoryski (from 1803 the curator of the Vilnius scientific district). It should be noted that Feliński began his tenure as the director of the Krzemieniec Lyceum on September 1, 1819, ultimately gaining the support²⁴ of most professors of the school, the University of Vilnius, and the citizens of Volhynia. He owed his approval largely to the efforts and position of Prince Czartoryski,²⁵ who valued Feliński as a poet and a prominent academic figure,²⁶ also appreciating his service to his compatriots and diligent fulfillment of duties. Thus, by using expressions such as “najniższy sługa” [most humble servant], “najprzysiężony sługa” [most loyal servant], “najzyczliwszy sługa” [most benevolent servant], “największe uszanowanie” [kindest regards], etc., in letters addressed to Czartoryski, the epistolographer articulates his own humility towards the distinguished recipient but also, in a way, persuades him to accept the content (views and actions) included in the correspondence. The newly appointed director of the Krzemieniec Lyceum, appointed by the prince-curator, articulated his sense of civic duty through the described formulations. On one hand, he expressed his gratitude for any advice and instructions received from him. By characterizing his signature in this way, he created a specific image of

²² On the subject of three types of persuasion see: Arystoteles, *Retoryka. Poetyka*, Warszawa 1988, p. 67.

²³ M. Korolko, *Sztuka retoryki. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny*, Warszawa 1990, p. 46.

²⁴ The reluctance on the part of the professorial staff primarily stemmed from Feliński's deficiencies in professional competence (lack of education and experience in the context of the profession and functions carried out at the Krzemieniec school).

²⁵ List A. Felińskiego do A.J. Czartoryskiego [A letter of Feliński to A.J. Czartoryski], 30 April 1819, p. 49.

²⁶ It mainly happened after the success of the reading of “Barbara Radziwiłłówna” at the Warsaw Society of Friends of Science meeting (see: D. Ratajczakowa, *Alojzy Feliński (1771–1820)* [in:] *Pisarze polskiego oświecenia*, ed. T. Kostkiewiczowa, Z. Goliński, vol. 3, Warszawa 1996, p. 181–183).

full respect as a subordinate, expressing admiration and honor for Czartoryski (*pro homine*) as an advocate of important matters common to both interlocutors.

In nineteenth-century private correspondence, showing respect was indeed a constant feature of epistolary texts; however, in the case of the discussed letters, it also served as a testimony to sincere respect and acknowledgment of one's superior. Evidence for this statement can be found, for example, in the content of the letters mentioned here. Here are a few significant examples:

I hasten to express to Him my most heartfelt thanks, wishing that my letter will reach Him while still in Sieniawa. The most pleasing way to show my gratitude will surely be to the heart of His Highness, the Benefactor, as I will strive to fulfill my duties to the best of my ability.²⁷ (a letter of A. Feliński to A.J. Czartoryski, 30 April 1819, p. 49)

The more the Prince does for me, the more He expects from me, the holier I feel it to be my duty not to disappoint such high trust. (a letter of A. Feliński to A.J. Czartoryski, 17/19 May 1819, p. 54)²⁸

I humbly ask that His Grace will graciously protect me even from significant mistakes or, at the very least, swiftly guide back onto the right path someone straying from it. (a letter of A. Feliński to A.J. Czartoryski 14/16 July 1819, p. 57)

It can be assumed that Feliński perceived linguistic etiquette as a component of an axiological triad, in which goodness, beauty, and truth in communication collectively form the ideal of absolute values (*eudaimonia*). Therefore, he used language skillfully to achieve intended but genuine communicative goals: he respected and accepted his addressee, formulated aesthetically pleasing and correct texts, and finally addressed them truthfully and sincerely.²⁹ However, it is worth noting that according to Małgorzata Marcjanik, "politeness behaviors are not subject to verification, neither in terms of truthfulness nor should they be verified in terms of the speaker's sincerity".³⁰

In his relationship with Czartoryski, the epistolographer, positioning himself as a humble person, somewhat took a backseat, lowering his sender status in favor of highlighting the position of his recipient, thus yielding space to the prince-curator. Feliński's approach can be considered a clear and deliberate communication strategy aimed at gaining favor from the letter recipient, which the sender undoubtedly sought in his correspondence, as evidenced in the content of the letters:

²⁷ All print discrepancies in the quoted excerpts from letters in this article are introduced by the author of the present article.

²⁸ The discrepancies in daily dates are the result of the difference between the Gregorian and Julian calendars.

²⁹ M. Marcjanik, *Grzeczność w komunikacji językowej*, Warszawa 2007, p. 11.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

[...] I will be pleased to work under such an enlightened and beloved Leader, to whom not only our provinces but the entire nation owe so much. How happy I would be if I could always work under His supervision. (a letter of A. Feliński to A.J. Czartoryski, 6 September 1818, p. 45)

The unanimous choice, overcoming many difficulties, appeasing those who think differently, and thereby removing obstacles to fulfilling my future duties, in short, I owe everything to the constant and prudent kindness of Your Serene Highness. (a letter of A. Feliński to A.J. Czartoryski, 30 April 1819, p. 49)

Of all the proofs of Your Serene Highness's kindness towards me, the greatest and dearest to my heart is the letter of June 30th of this year, which I am receiving at this moment. Instead of orders from the Chief, I find in it teachings, warnings, and advice from the most tender of Fathers. All of these are truly needed by me in this new profession. [...] (a letter of A. Feliński to A.J. Czartoryski, 14/16 July 1819, p. 57)

Commenting on the above-mentioned excerpts from the letters addressed to Prince Czartoryski, one can also see in them an example of eutoric actions, which serve to build the intended image of the writer, consequently positively received by the recipient of the epistolary expression, as evidenced in one of the letters written by Czartoryski:

I sign this letter with joy [request for acceptance of a position in Krzemieniec – comment by M.P.K.], as I see significant benefit for national education in this arrangement, as well as added prestige to the Krzemieniec school, and the opportunity for more frequent and closer relations with Your Excellency. (a letter of A.J. Czartoryski to A. Feliński, 1 September 1818, p. 73)

Returning to the issue of the signature in letters, it can be noticed that in the case of the discussed letters, the signature, although conventionally limited, presents its owner in a broader sense, and importantly, it also evokes positive emotions (joy) and hope for the opportunity of close meetings with the addressee.

It should be added, considering the presented way of shaping the signature, that for example Ewa Horyń, referring to the word 'sługa' [servant] present in epistolary writing, considers it "characteristic of the contemporary official correspondence, through which the actual relationship between the sender and the recipient was also expressed".³¹ According to the researcher, this lexeme is often enriched with adjectival epithets used in the superlative (like 'najniższy' [most humble]³²). Their purpose is to emphasize respect and subordination to the addressee of the epistolary text. However, it is worth remembering that such

³¹ E. Horyń, *Językowy obraz więzi między nadawcą a odbiorcą utrwalony w listach biskupa kamienieckiego Adama Stanisława Krasińskiego do Urszuli z Morsztynów Dembińskiej (1789–1790)* [in:] *Epistolografia w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. P. Borek, M. Olma, vol. 7, Kraków 2017, p. 303.

³² On the subject of greetings developed through adjectival and adverbial epithets see: H. Wiśniewska, *Zachowania grzecznościowe w listach rodzinnych Ignacego Krasickiego*, „Pamiętnik Literacki” 2000, issue 3, p. 166.

shaped correspondence often features emotional detachment, stemming from the distance between the sender and the recipient.³³

It should also be noted that in the case of letters addressed to Czartoryski, the final expressions contain the most strongly conventionalized phrases ('pełen uszanowania' [full of respect], 'z uszanowaniem' [with respect], 'z poświęceniem' [with devotion]), undoubtedly influenced by the formality of the relationship between the interlocutors, namely the subordinate (Feliński as the school director) and the superior (Czartoryski as the education curator). However, the discussed nature of the signature not only specifies the type of relationship between the writers but above all, through etiquette, allows them to achieve practical intentions.³⁴ Here are examples taken from the content of the presented letters, illustrating the above statements:

I hope that through your dedication to learning and zeal for the public good, you will undertake this service. (a letter of A.J. Czartoryski to A. Feliński, 1 September 1818, p. 73)

Your Highness's kindness towards me, and His conviction that I can be useful in Krzemieniec, revive my zeal and strengthen my courage. With eagerness, I accept the important duties that you are pleased to entrust to me. (a letter of A. Feliński to A.J. Czartoryski, 6 September 1818, p. 46)

[...] Therefore, I would advise, before Your Highness departs abroad, to have the honor of receiving your orders and instructions, as I feel that with greater confidence and enthusiasm, I will execute everything entrusted to me by Your Highness himself... (a letter of A. Feliński to A.J. Czartoryski, 30 April 1819, p. 50)

Considering the discussed correspondence, the expanded signature also appears in letters addressed to Waleria Tarnowska. This time, interestingly, it mainly signals close ties between the sender and the recipient of the letters because its function in this case is to express the emotional relationship between the correspondents. While in the case of letters addressed to Czartoryski, through the signature, Feliński aimed to express respect and esteem,³⁵ now he additionally signals a kind of intimacy and warmth, which connect him with Countess Tarnowska. Therefore, through the letter's signature, one can recognize the character of their relationship.

³³ More on the subject of the discussed expression see: M. Wojtak, *Wybrane elementy staropolskiej etykiety językowej...*, p. 35.

³⁴ Further on the role of polite atmosphere allowing for the realization of practical intentions, see: M. Olma, *Językowo-kulturowy obraz arystokratycznej rodziny polskiej drugiej połowy XIX wieku na podstawie korespondencji rodzinnej Heleny i Mieczysława Pawlikowskich*, Kraków 2014, p. 270 and K. Sicińska, *Formuła wyrażania szacunku w strukturze osiemnastowiecznego listu polskiego...*, p. 108.

³⁵ About expressions of respect in the structure of an eighteenth-century Polish letter, see: *Ibidem*, p. 107–119.

Following Zbigniew Kuchowicz's perspective, it is worth recalling that the Enlightenment is considered the first period of emancipation, with the caveat that women's influences, and at certain times even their hegemony, were limited to aristocratic spheres.³⁶ Women began to emerge from the shadows of men and despite social and cultural limitations, they took on new roles. Their activity is observed primarily in the realm of creating and enjoying cultural goods,³⁷ which is also evident in the discussed correspondence where Feliński asks Tarnowska for corrections of his own translations of works by Vittorio Alfieri d'Asti and Prospero Jolyot de Crébillon (e.g., Feliński's letters to Tarnowska dated January 6, 1816, p. 105, or February 27, 1816, p. 107).³⁸

It is worth analyzing some examples of expanded final formulas characteristic of letters addressed to Waleria Tarnowska:

- Most benevolent servant – A. Feliński;
- Ever devoted admirer – A. Fel.;
- I kiss Your feet, Madam, most humble servant, Feliński;
- Always full of gratitude and respect – A. F.;
- Seeing officials frowning or grimacing at You, I repeat: with You, Madam, it is better to rule in a village hut than to serve in a castle, A.F.;
- My dear wife and Helena are grateful for Your kind remembrance of them and join in offering You their kindest respect – I have always had the same respect for You – A.F.;
- Madam, do not forget the one who is most benevolent towards You – A. Fel.;
- I kiss Your hands, Madam – A. Fel.;
- Respects and regards – A. Fel.;
- I wish to offer the greatest, truest respect – A. Fel.

(letters of A. Feliński to W. Tarnowska [in:] „*Korespondencja Walerii Tarnowskiej...*” 1813–1819, p. 101–144).

This time, in addition to the ethical evidence discussed earlier, we can also observe pathos in the argumentation. In Feliński's letter signature, the focus is

³⁶ See: Z. Kuchowicz, *Obyczaje staropolskie*, Łódź 1973, p. 191–205.

³⁷ Further on the position and role of women in the Enlightenment, see: M. Bogucka, *Białogłowa w dawnej Polsce. Kobieta w społeczeństwie polskim XVI–XVIII wieku na tle porównawczym*, Warszawa 1998; R. Ryba, „*Jej portret*” – postaci kobiet w osiemnastowiecznych listach dedykacyjnych [in:] *Dedykacje w książce dawnej i współczesnej*, ed. R. Ociecek, A. Sitkova, Katowice 2006, p. 113–125; K. Stasiewicz, *Kobiece przyjemności w XVIII wieku* [in:] *Przyjemność w kulturze epoki rozumu*, ed. T. Kostkiewiczowa, Warszawa 2011, p. 125–146.

³⁸ Given that Waleria Tarnowska may not be recognized today, it is important to remind of her competencies. Her numerous contacts with poets, writers, painters, and professors broadened her cultural interests considerably. Among them was also dramatic art, and the countess had the opportunity to witness stage productions of dramas during visits to theaters abroad and in Poland, as evidenced in her journal *Mon* journal, where she analyzes their literary and scenic value. See: K. Grottowa, *Zbiory sztuki Jana Feliksa i Walerii Tarnowskich w Dzikowie (1803–1849)*, Wrocław 1957, p. 19.

on expressing emotions (mainly kindness, attachment, sympathy). Based on the aforementioned closing fragments of the epistolary texts, one can reconstruct the bond between the writer and the addressee, where the emphasis is placed not on facts but rather on the way they are experienced. Moreover, it is worth noting that the letter sender expects Tarnowska to respond to the matters he writes about (“do not forget the one who is most benevolent towards you”), which primarily concern the emotional sphere.³⁹

In the case of the analyzed signatures, attention is also drawn to the rhetorical moment (*kairos*), which in the context of correspondence signifies the final position, providing the opportunity to utter pleasant words that enhance the value of the dialogue partner, mainly emphasizing joy from the encounter (even if only through the act of writing). This is an important and favorable moment in epistolary conversation when something pleasant should be expressed, bringing joy not only to the sender but especially to the recipient of the letter. Gestures also come into play, providing additional confirmation for the words spoken earlier on one hand, and supporting them while evoking the scenario of a typical conversation on the other. Hence, in the above-quoted phrases, the presence of the verb ‘to kiss’ stands out (beyond the boundaries of *petitio* in the discussed correspondence, other verbs also appear, e.g., ‘to wish’, ‘to hug’, ‘to greet’). As Anna Kałkowska asserts, this type of predicates realizes a kind of act called ‘behavitive’.⁴⁰ According to Kamila Klepacka, such expressions reflect non-verbal behaviors undertaken by correspondents; Neda Pintarić refers to them as ‘gesture-words’ [gestosłowa] based on Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt’s research.⁴¹ Croatian linguist, drawing from Eibl-Eibesfeldt’s work, observes that greetings primarily receive non-verbal expressions (kissing, patting, handshake, falling at one’s feet, and many others), through which three fundamental communication phenomena manifest: winning over, initiating bonds, and an intriguing way of presenting oneself.⁴²

Continuing along this line, it should be added that a significant group of phrases present near the letter’s signature are those previously indicated,

³⁹ More on linguistic devices conveying feelings and emotions in letters, see: V. Machnicka, *Korespondencyjne dzieje pewnej miłości, czyli środki językowe oddające uczucia i emocje w „Listach do narzeczonej i żony” Bolesława Prusa* [in:] *Wyrażanie emocji*, ed. K. Michalewski, Łódź 2006, p. 538–550.

⁴⁰ A. Kałkowska, *Struktura składniowa listu*, Wrocław 1982, p. 64.

⁴¹ K. Klepacka, *Formuły inicjalne i finalne w „Listach na wyczerpanym papierze” Agnieszki Osieckiej i Jeremiego Przybory* [in:] *Epistolografia w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. P. Borek, M. Olma, vol. 7, Kraków 2017, p. 342.

⁴² N. Pintarić, *Gestosłowy pozdrowieniowe w języku chorwackim i polskim* [in:] *Język, literatura, kultura Słowian dawniej i dziś*, ed. J. Świdziński, T. Zdancewicz, Poznań 1991, p. 153–154; see also: I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Miłość i nienawiść*, Warszawa 1987, p. 154–224.

calling or commenting on courteous gestures,⁴³ which Pintarić also refers to as ‘gesture-words of respect’ [gestosłowa szacunku].⁴⁴ All of these signify an emotional bond between Feliński and Tarnowska, but they also demonstrate the poet’s creative abilities. Furthermore, in relation to the notable recipient, they indicate – similar to the letters addressed to Czartoryski – the respect, humility, and deference expressed toward her.⁴⁵ Additionally, about the intensity and sincerity of feelings, friendship, kindness, or attachment, linguistic intensifiers-amplifications (e.g., ‘most benevolent’ [najżyczliwszy], ‘kindest’ [najczulsze], ‘most humble’ [najniższy]) speak volumes in this correspondence⁴⁶ Dorota Korwin-Piotrowska, emphasizing gestures, describes them as one of the pillars of eutoric communication. She notes that they contribute to effective communication, combining both verbal and non-verbal behaviors.⁴⁷

Extracted from Feliński’s correspondence and complementing his final signature, the courteous texts (greetings, requests, thanks, wishes) also make it possible to reconstruct the etiquette of addressing aristocratic women at that time. The basic title here is the term ‘Madam’ [Pani], and in the signature, there are no honorific epithets observed, but rather words expressing subservience and avoiding excessive familiarity, such as ‘najżyczliwszy sługa’ [most benevolent servant], ‘najniższy sługa’ [most humble servant], ‘uszanowanie i ukłony’ [respects and regards]. This was related to the courtesy of the Enlightenment era, known as gallantry.⁴⁸ It is worth mentioning that when addressing Czartoryski or Countess Tarnowska, terms of dignity, personal pronouns, or certain nouns directed at them or their close ones were written in uppercase letters by Feliński. This was another way, stemming from etiquette, to show a particular kind of respect and reverence to the recipients of the correspondence. Expressions of respect were therefore consistently integrated

⁴³ More on polite behaviors in eighteenth-century letters, see: H. Wiśniewska, *Zachowania grzecznościowe w listach rodzinnych Ignacego Krasickiego...*, p. 161–176.

⁴⁴ N. Pintarić, *Gestosłowy pozdrowieniowe w języku chorwackim i polskim...*, p. 154.

⁴⁵ More remarks concerning the discussed issue: M. Cybulski, *Obyczaje językowe dawnych Polaków. Formuły werbalne w dobie średniopolskiej*, Łódź 2003, p. 123.

⁴⁶ More on the topic of linguistic intensifiers and amplification: M. Olma, *Językowo-kulturowy obraz arystokratycznej rodziny polskiej drugiej połowy XIX wieku na podstawie korespondencji rodzinnej Heleny i Mieczysława Pawlikowskich*, Kraków 2014, p. 296–302.

⁴⁷ Por. D. Korwin-Piotrowska, *Eutoryka. Rzecz o dobrej (roz)mowie*, Kraków 2020, p. 143.

⁴⁸ More on the subject of the Middle Polish period letters and their etiquette-driven headers, greetings, farewells, and signatures: K. Mroczek, *Tytułatura w korespondencji staropolskiej jako problem stosunku między nadawcą a odbiorcą*, „Pamiętnik Literacki” 1978, issue 2, p. 27–148 and H. Wiśniewska, *Tytułowanie i nazywanie kobiet w listach rodzinnych Ignacego Krasickiego*, „Annales Academiae Paedagogicae Cracoviensis Folia 6 Studia Linguistica” 2002, vol. 6, p. 433–450. See also: K. Handke, *Język a determinanty płci*, „Język a Kultura” 1994, vol. 9, p. 15–29.

into the syntactic structure of the sender's signature, with the noun 'uszanowanie' [respects] being the primary component used by the epistolographer, signifying reverence.

The signature enriched with a possessive pronoun serves as confirmation of the close bond between the sender and the recipient of the letter

Letters addressed to friends abound in signatures complemented with possessive pronouns such as 'twój' or 'wasz' [your/yours], which most likely indicate a close bond between the writers, but also denote devotion and attachment to the recipient (thus primarily aiming to persuade on an emotional level, seeking to create a pleasant impression on the recipients).

Here are some significant examples:

- in letters addressed to Michał Wyszkowski:

Always yours with all my heart (a letter of A. Feliński to M. Wyszkowski) [in:] Feliński 1840, p. 260–279);

- In letters addressed to Franciszek Skarbek Rudzki:

I'll be yours until death;

Tout à vous;

Your old and lifelong friend;

Always yours;

All yours;

Everywhere and always all yours; (letters of A. Feliński to F.S. Rudzki) [in:] „*Listy*” *Alojzego Felińskiego* 1872, p. 171–195);

- In letters addressed to Gustaw Olizar:

Tout à vous;

I am yours until death; (letters of A. Feliński to G. Olizar) [in:] Feliński 1818–1820, p. 58–65);

- In letters addressed to Jan Tarnowski:

Always yours with all my heart until death; (a letter of A. Feliński to J. Tarnowski) [in:] „*Korespondencja J.F. Tarnowskiego...*” 1817–1819, p. 109–122).

Using possessive pronouns⁴⁹ in the signature helps define the boundaries of mutual closeness (in this case, related to friendship); it bridges the distance between the sender and the recipient of the letter, allowing them to converse on an

⁴⁹ On the subject of possessive pronouns in establishing relationships see: K. Czarniecka, *Epistolarne konwencje grzecznościowe w listach do redakcji czasopisma religijnego «Miłujcie się»!*..., p. 343; V. Machnicka, *Korespondencyjne dzieje pewnej miłości, czyli środki językowe oddające uczucia i emocje w „Listach do narzeczonej i żony” Bolesława Prusa...*, p. 548; M. Czachorowska, *Stylistyka listów Bolesława Prusa do żony*, „*Studia Językoznawcze*” 2020, vol. 20, p. 23.

equal footing, “like equal with equal”. As Książek notes, “this approach promotes the direct expression of feelings by the sender, thereby prompting the recipient to declare reciprocity”.⁵⁰ Furthermore, it is worth adding that in Feliński’s letters, alongside possessive pronouns, there are often prepositional phrases, adjectives, adverbs, and generalizing expressions using exaggerated quantification (mostly general quantifiers like ‘always’, ‘everywhere’), which through hyperbole indicate the magnitude of dedication to the friend and reflect the enduring strength of the correspondents’ friendship (e.g., ‘with all my heart’, ‘always’, ‘until death’, ‘all’, ‘everywhere’, etc.). This was related to the Enlightenment’s characteristic understanding of friendship, which, following the Stoics, placed it higher than love (often seen as selfish, self-interested, often bringing anxiety, storm, and frenzy of feelings). Against this background, the assessment of friendship is very favorable; it is a stronghold of virtue, a synonym for constancy, as well as peace and order in the hearts of those who share it. It provides a sense of security and brotherhood.⁵¹

It is also worth mentioning that the possessive pronoun within *petitio* implies the sender’s belonging to their correspondent; diminutives of names serve a similar function within the entire correspondence.⁵² Furthermore, the diversity of formulations likely contributes to diversifying the monotony of correspondence conversations.

Name and surname, name abbreviation, initials as a type of sender identification in a letter

The least common group of signatures in letters consists of those signed with the full name (*Alojzy Feliński*) or name abbreviation (*Al. Feliński*; *AFeliński*).

⁵⁰ E. Książek, *Tekst epistolarny w świetle etykiety językowej*, Kraków 2008, p. 135.

⁵¹ Further elaboration on the category of friendship during the Enlightenment-Romantic transition period can be found in: A. Witkowska, *Rówieśnicy Mickiewicza. Życiorys jednego pokolenia*, Warszawa 1998, *passim*; J. Kowal, *Droga na Parnas. O twórczości poetyckiej Antoniego Goreckiego*, Kraków-Rzeszów 2008, p. 88–91; B. Mazurkova, *Poetycki tryptyk moralny z osobistą zadrą w tle: „Do Zazdrości”* [in:] *Czytanie Naruszewicza*, vol. 1, ed. B. Wolska, T. Kostkiewiczowa and B. Mazurkova, Warszawa 2015, *Czytanie Poetów Polskiego Oświecenia*, vol. 3, p. 361–371; M. Patro-Kucab, *O wartościach będących wynikiem przyjaźni – na podstawie serdecznych relacji Alojzego Felińskiego i Gustawa Olizara* [in:] *Dulce et utile. Prace ofiarowane profesorowi Romanowi Doktorowi*, ed. A. Seweryn, M. Król, Lublin 2023, p. 61–75. B. Mazurkova provides bibliographic references of works in which Polish writers depicted and celebrated friendship: *Poetycki tryptyk moralny z osobistą zadrą w tle: „Do Zazdrości”* ..., p. 366, the author’s note 48. See also: *Przyjaźń w kulturze staropolskiej*, ed. A. Czechowicz, M. Trębska, Lublin 2013, vol. 2.

⁵² On manifestations of colloquial language in eighteenth-century letters, see: H. Wiśniewska, *Przejawy potoczności w listach rodzinnych Ignacego Krasickiego* [in:] *Język w przestrzeni społecznej*, ed. S. Gajda, K. Rymut, U. Żydek-Bednarczuk, Opole 2002, p. 229–238.

It is almost unheard of in the discussed correspondence for the signature to consist only of the surname. The full name is often used in official correspondence addressed to recipients from social and public circles, especially to Ludwik Osiński and Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. In this case, the signature mainly serves as sender identification. Feliński often uses signatures consisting of the first letters of the name and surname (*Al.Fel*; *AFel.*), indicating a particularly close relationship with the recipient. He does so most often in letters to friends. This type of signature suggests the directness of the relationship and indicates its strengthening, which is why it is probably completely absent in correspondence with Prince Czartoryski.

Undoubtedly, the most common way of signing is using initials – *A.F.* (indicating his presence in correspondence with J. Tarnowski, F.S. Rudzki, G. Olizar, and also Ł. Gołębiowski). Explaining the use of such abbreviations within *petitio*, Katarzyna Mroczek emphasizes that “most often, a person signing with initials was closer to the recipient, but it was always a person equal to or higher than him who wanted to emphasize their particularly close relationship with the recipient in this way”.⁵³ In the case of correspondence that Feliński conducted with people very close to him, including Michał Wyszowski and Gustaw Olizar, the sender completely omits the conventional part, such as the signature, believing that “agreement of hearts and souls” exempts them from etiquette rules, and perhaps even distorts the sincerity of their mutual intentions. In this way, the epistolographer also emphasized feelings of warmth towards his colleagues. I think we can also observe here one of the principles of linguistic economy, which is the tendency to shorten expressions.

Summing up, we can draw on Maria Wojtak’s observations, who believes that “the 18th century brought simplification to the old Polish etiquette and reduction of many of its forms, but the directive stating that ‘politeness is due to everyone, but to each differently’ remained in force”.⁵⁴ Wojtak’s remarks are complemented by Michał Rusinek’s observations about conventional expressions in the context of addressative forms (here, of course, we refer to forms indicating finality), where he notes that a message free from them “could be misunderstood”. Rusinek compares them to a mysterious substance found in medications called *massa tabulettae*, which, while lacking “any healing properties, is necessary because the medicine must have the right volume to be swallowed”.⁵⁵

⁵³ K. Mroczek, *Tytułatura w korespondencji staropolskiej jako problem stosunku między nadawcą a odbiorcą...*, p. 145.

⁵⁴ M. Wojtak, *Wybrane elementy staropolskiej etykiety językowej...*, p. 38; see also: A. Leska-Dorenda, *Werbalne formuły grzecznościowe w epistolografii (od połowy XVIII do połowy XIX wieku)*, „Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Litteraria Polonica” 2008, vol. 10, p. 79–104.

⁵⁵ M. Rusinek, *Po czym poznać, do kogo się mówi?...*, p. 63.

Conclusion

Analysing Alojzy Feliński's correspondence reveals a variety of forms his signature takes, mostly determined by social or pragmatic considerations. However, it is undoubtedly conditioned by the principles of prevailing etiquette and persuasive eutoric techniques, whose aim is to foster favorable linguistic communication with others. The observations presented in the outline makes it possible to note that each epistolary encounter and its subject require the writer's engagement and ingenuity in utilizing the capabilities offered by language. In this case, even the seemingly conventional signature serves a purpose.

This final element of letter-writing allows the recipient to get as close as possible to understanding the sender (appealing to ethos). Furthermore, the writer often expresses their emotional state, consciously revealing (and reinforcing) the character of the unique bond that connects them with the letter's recipient. Each of the rhetorical strategies used becomes useful not only in persuading others about oneself, actions, or views but also importantly plays a significant role in the communicative process of shaping a space for good conversation.

Taking into account the analyzed signature, I attempted to observe that the expanded form of the signature is most often used in letters addressed to women (Countess Tarnowska), with whom the sender shares extremely warm and heartfelt bonds. However, when enriched with additional elements, the signature also appears in relationships with superiors (Prince Czartoryski), where mutual contact carries the marks of formality. The expressions and phrases used in the aforementioned correspondence are aimed at reflecting the distance between the sender and the recipient and expressing the writer's respect for the letter's recipient. Therefore, within *petitio*, Feliński tries to emphasize his own humility and modesty, refraining from presenting himself prominently and instead preferring to fade into the background so that the distinguished recipient of the correspondence can take the lead role. Such signatures typically have an official and dignified character.

Interestingly, a significant portion of the signatures is limited to simple forms within the realm of the sender's name and surname, through various forms of abbreviation, even down to using initials. In this case, they typically serve the identifying function of the message's author or reveal a close relationship between the correspondents/interlocutors.

It is worth noting, as Elżbieta Książek also pointed out, that the linguistic and stylistic maneuvers undertaken by the letter's sender within the *petitio* reveal a kind of politeness game with the recipient, "a game based on certain rules dictated by the prevailing language etiquette in epistolary texts. It largely obliges the sender (...) to use the appropriate formula, as it would be inappropriate not to

use it”⁵⁶ which could result in offending the recipient. Therefore, the signature in an epistolary text both identifies its sender and reveals their attitude toward the recipient. Moreover, it often serves as a repository of knowledge about both the writer and the recipient of the letters. The signature is considered an essential addition that complements the presented image of the corresponding interlocutors, their world, and the emotions they experience in life. Importantly, the signature gives the sender of the epistolary text the last opportunity (if there is no *postscript* in the letter) to express emotions toward the correspondence partner, becoming a natural way of articulating emotional expression and a testament to the bond between the sender and the recipient of the letter.

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Listowy podpis w aspekcie kształtowania przestrzeni do dobrej rozmowy (na podstawie prywatnej korespondencji Alojzego Felińskiego)

Streszczenie

Materiał badawczy stanowią wybrane fragmenty prywatnej korespondencji Alojzego Felińskiego, poety tworzącego na przełomie XVIII i XIX wieku oraz dyrektora liceum w Krzemieńcu (w obwodzie tarnopolskim). Do analizy wyselekcjonowano listy, kierowane od 1795 roku, po przedwczesną śmierć epistolografa w roku 1820, do dziewięciu adresatów; z kręgu przyjaciół oraz z kręgu towarzyskiego i publicznego; osób działających w Warszawie, Galicji i Petersburgu. Celem szkicu jest analiza listowego podpisu, zaprezentowana w rozmaitych kontekstach. Raz poszukuje się ich pośród zagadnień z zakresu etykiety epistolarniej, innym razem odnosi się do materii eutoryki, niekiedy zaś uwzględnia proces retorycznego przekonywania.

Słowa kluczowe: podpis, prywatna korespondencja dziewiętnastowieczna, Alojzy Feliński, Krzemieniec, etyka epistolarna