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WOMEN AND CULTURE IN POLAND
IN EARLY MODERN TIMES

The division of culture into high “learned” culture and folk mass culture was as sharp in the 16th–18th centuries as in the Middle Ages but there was, of course, an interaction between the two all the time; the problem has been discussed extensively by P. Burke in Great Britain, R. Muchembled in France, B. G. Geremek in Poland and many other scholars. Women played a greater and more diversified role in folk culture than in high “learned” culture, their access to the latter being restricted. However, the question of folk culture is such a vast and — in Poland — an inadequately researched subject that we shall have to leave it out in our reflections, for it would have to include women’s role in handing down the folk knowledge of magic (allied with witchcraft), in popular medicine as well as in the structure of rural customs. All these questions are still waiting to be researched and they require large-scale work in archives, which exceeds the capacity of a single person. In our reflections we will therefore confine ourselves to “learned” culture, frequently identified with culture in general, in any case in many studies on women’s place in culture.

The question: women and culture should be examined from the point of view of “consumption”, that is, their share in the reception of cultural goods, as well as from the point of view of creation, that is, their participation in the creation of culture, whether by patronage or creative work. Both forms depend on the degree of education a person has acquired. Let us therefore start with education.

In the epoch in question access to education depended on the social and financial situation of an individual as well as on gender. Polish peasants, especially females, were excluded from literacy, contrary to what was the case in England, Germany and France¹. In Poland access to education was open mainly to the sons of burghers and noblemen.

Heated discussions on whether it was advisable to educate females were held in the 16th–18th centuries. Erasmus of Rotterdam and many humanists (J. L. Vives, Thomas More, Agrippa von Nettesheim) held the view women should be given access to education, be it only on the elementary level. In the 17th century these demands were raised again by the famous pedagogogue Johann Amos Komenský (Comenius) — who was also active in Poland, and the German Pietists. In France the idea was propagated by such authors as Georges de Scudéry, Jacques Du Bosc, Pierre le Moyné and Nicolas Caussin. In England Mary Ward, a Catholic nun, presented a comprehensive programme of female education and at the beginning of the 17th century organised schools for girls in the Low Countries and Germany. At the end of the 17th century, another English woman, Mary Astell, regarding intellectual development as an important element of woman's life, proposed the establishment of female communes and put forward far-reaching educational ideas.

Opposite views were, of course, also proclaimed. In the 16th century an English writer, Richard Mulcaster admitted that girls should be given some, but not excessive knowledge. In his opinion, women were equal to men intellectually, but since their tasks in life were different and consisted in self-fulfilment in marriage, all they needed to learn was how to direct the household. The Frenchman Theodore Agrippa d'Aubigné warned his daughters not to show off their education in conversations with their husbands lest this should destroy their marriage harmony. In a pamphlet *Qu'il est bien séant que les filles soyent sçavantes*

¹ Cf. D. Cressy, *Education in Tudor and Stuart England*, London 1975; P. Petschauer, *The Education of Women in Eighteenth Century Germany. New Directions from the Female Perspective*. Studies in German Thought and History, vol. 9, Lewinston-Lampeter-Queenston 1989; R. Engelsing, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Lesens in Deutschland zwischen feudaler und industrieller Gesellschaft*, Stuttgart 1973; F. Furet — J. Ozouf, *Lire et écrire. L'alphabetisation de Français de Calvin à Jules Ferry*, Paris 1977, 2 vols.

(Paris 1600), Artus Thomas asserted that education only spoiled girls; it was enough, if they knew housekeeping and women's work. In his view, a woman's honour was better defended by silence than by erudition.

Discussions on the advisability of female education were also held in Poland. In the 16th century girls' education was advocated by Andrzej Glaber of Kobylin, who demanded full equality of both genders in this respect², and by Łukasz Górnicki, who maintained that a woman should be able "to read and perform music"³. In his commentaries to Aristotle written at the beginning of the 17th century, Sebastian Petrycy from Pilzno also expressed the view that woman's mind was fit to learn. But Polish society was distrustful of these demands and in the 16th century the people kept repeating the adage:

She who reads, sings and plays
Will seldom be virtuous⁴.

Some parents categorically denied their daughters the right to education. Magdalena Mortęska (b. 1556), a great Polish mystic who reformed the Benedictine nuns' order, learned to read and write in her childhood from her father's scribe but without her parent's knowledge⁵. At the beginning of the 18th century the diarist Marcin Matuszewicz wrote in his diary that Mrs. Potocka, wife of the voivode of Poznań, was very strict in the upbringing of her girls. "They say that she worries her daughters in various strange ways and does not allow them to sing even religious songs, and if a daughter shows a liking for a book, she takes it away, be it even a moral book"⁶. One of the 17th century noblemen's records contains a significant note: *lingua latina non est lingua foeminarum*; this was a commentary to the news that Queen Christina of Sweden had not been greeted in Rome in

² A. Glaber of Kobylin, *Gadki o składności członków czlowiecznych (Stories about the Construction of Human Limbs)*, 1535, ed. J. Rostafiński, Kraków 1893, p. 4.

³ Ł. Górnicki, *Dworzantin Polski (The Polish Courtier)*, 1566, pub. Warszawa 1914, p. 59.

⁴ K. W. Wójcicki, *Niewiasty polskie. Zarys historyczny (Polish Women. Historical Outline)*, Warszawa 1845, p. XI.

⁵ K. Górski, *Od religijności do mistyki. Zarys dziejów życia wewnętrznego w Polsce (From Religiousness to Mysticism. An Outline of the History of Inner Life in Poland)*, part I, Lublin 1962, p. 72.

⁶ M. Matuszewicz, *Diariusz życia mego (A Diary of My Life)*, ed. B. Królikowski, Warszawa 1986, vol. II, p. 106.

Latin⁷. In his sermons (second half of the 17th century) Father Aleksander Lorencowic developed the popular idea that education might even be harmful to women. According to him, a wise woman was one who knew how to run the house well and not a woman "wise in Latin and foreign languages, familiar with philosophical discourses and endowed with profound knowledge, for wisdom of this kind is less useful and can sometimes even be harmful to this gender"⁸.

Nevertheless, there was a growing understanding of the girls' needs in this respect and at the end of the 17th and especially in the 18th century parents (in any case magnates, rich noblemen and prosperous burghers) were interested in giving their daughters some education. In 1730 a noble woman Franciszka Różycka, née Sendzimir, recommended in her last will that her daughters be placed in Cracow's St. Joseph Convent of Bernardine nuns who ran a school for girls, so that "fearing God, they should learn all kinds of occupation and be taught to play an instrument of their choice; they should also learn the German language, for all this is useful"⁹. In his last will written in 1773 the Cracow chamberlain Stanisław Łętowski asked that his daughter, Marianna, be given a proper education "as befits her gender"¹⁰. Examples of parental care for their daughters' education could be multiplied.

But, of course, not all women had the luck to be given education, even elementary one. Literacy was much rarer among women than among men, not only in Poland but in the whole of early modern Europe. In England (London) in 1600 only 10 per cent of women were able to read, and write and about 20 per cent in 1640¹¹. According to some researchers, the Reformation and the consequent dissolution of convents led to a fall in the number of schools for girls and consequently made access to education

⁷ Quoted after J. Krzyżanowski, K. Żukowska, *Dawna facecja polska (Old Polish Jokes)*, Warszawa 1960, p. 310.

⁸ *Kazania na niedziele całego roku X. Aleksandra Lorencowica Prowincjalego Polskiego Societatis Jesu (Sermons for the Sundays of the Whole Year by Father Aleksander Lorencowic, Provincial of the Polish District Societatis Jesu)*, Kalisz 1671, part III, p. 147.

⁹ A. Gradowska, *Testamenty szlachty krakowskiej w XVII-XVIII w. (The Last Wills of Cracow's Nobility in the 17th-18th Centuries)*, Kraków 1997, p. 79.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 132.

¹¹ D. Cressy, *Education*, pp. 119, 128, 145.

for females more difficult¹². In Germany female education fared a little better, but even there the closure of convent schools had negative results, especially in the initial period¹³.

Poland did not experience such a drastic retreat in this respect, but no genuine progress was achieved in female education until the end of the 16th century. According to W. Urban's research, 50–67 per cent of the men and only about 20 per cent of the women in Cracow could sign their name in 1575–1580. In the 1630s, the percentage of literate women in Cracow increased to 36 per cent, but after 1665 it dropped again to 20 per cent¹⁴. This drop was probably connected with the general decline of Cracow in the second half of the 17th century and was not a sign of a national regression in female education. Noblemen's daughters received a much better education in Poland than the daughters of burghers. According to W. Urban's calculations, nearly 90 per cent of magnates' wives and about 50 per cent of rich noblewomen could read and write in the Cracow and Lublin regions at the end of the 16th century¹⁵. In his study on education in 16th century Poland, A. Wyczański estimates on the basis of signatures on taxation receipts that some 62 per cent of prosperous noblemen and 16 per cent of poor nobles put down their signatures themselves. He found 58 women's taxation receipts (of both noblewomen and townswomen) and he estimates that only 15 of them show that the woman probably could write, not only sign her name, that is, about 24 per cent¹⁶. W. Urban has a higher opinion of noblewomen's literacy; in his view, the percentage of literate women increased considerably in the first half of the 17th century and amounted to 70–80 per cent among

¹² A. Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel. Woman's Lot in 17th Century England*, London 1989, pp. 152 ff.

¹³ P. Petschauer, *The Education*, pp. 47 ff.

¹⁴ W. Urban, *Umiejętność pisania w Małopolsce w II połowie XVI w. (The Ability to Write in Little Poland in the Second Half of the 16th Century)*, "Przegląd Historyczny" 1977, № 2, pp. 245 ff.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 247; *idem*, *Sztuka pisania w woj. krakowskim w XVII i XVIII w. (Writing Skill in Cracow Voivodship in the 17th and 18th Centuries)*, "Przegląd Historyczny" 1984, № 1, pp. 231–257.

¹⁶ A. Wyczański, *Oświata a pozycja społeczna w Polsce XVI stulecia. Próba oceny umiejętności pisania szlachty woj. krakowskiego w drugiej połowie XVI w. (Education and Social Position in 16th Century Poland. A Tentative Appraisal of the Cracow Voivodship Nobility's Ability to Write in the Second Half of the 16th Century)*, in: *Spoleczeństwo staropolskie*, vol. I, Warszawa 1976, p. 48.

the rich nobility and 30–50 per cent among the middle nobility¹⁷. Even if we regard these estimates as too optimistic, it seems to be beyond doubt that the turn of the 16th century marked a turning point in the education of Polish women (excluding peasant women, of course), and that steady though slow progress took place from that time on. This resulted in changes in the proportions of literate men and women, previously very disfavoured to women. As a result of the fall of male education in the second half of the 17th and early 18th centuries and the general decline in the level of noblemen's culture (the notorious Saxon times), women began to play a greater role in Polish culture; in many cases women were on the same, or even a higher, level of intelligence and knowledge as their husbands.

Girls were educated mainly in convent schools or private educational establishments that began to be set up in towns. The number of these schools began to increase at the end of the 16th century. A large number of girls' schools existed in Gdańsk, where knowledge of the three Rs was widespread in the 17th and 18th centuries not only among women of the upper classes but also among those of the middlestrata, i.e. in shopkeepers' and craftsmen's families¹⁸. The daughters of Gdańsk patrician families, even though they were Protestants, were often sent by their parents to school run by Benedictine nuns (Żarnowiec)¹⁹. The tradition of convent education for girls originated in the Middle Ages but it was greatly extended in the 17th and 18th centuries, partly because of the establishment of new religious orders dedicated to pedagogical work. Schools for girls were run by Bernardine, Dominican, Cistercian, Carmelite (discalced and calced) and Benedictine nuns as well as by nuns of the Order of St. Clare, Bridgettines, Sisters of Charity, nuns of the Order of the Holy Sacrament, nuns of the Visitation and of the Presentation. Cracow had 9–10 convent schools, Lublin and Lwów four

¹⁷ W. Urban, *Sztuka pisania*, pp. 251–252.

¹⁸ M. Bogućka, *Życie w dawnym Gdańsku (To Live in Old Gdańsk)*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 139, 195 ff.; J. Janiszewska, *Wychowanie dziewcząt w dawnym Gdańsku (The Education of Girls in Old Gdańsk)*, "Gdańskie Zeszyty Humanistyczne". Prace Pomorzoznawcze", 1970–72, N^o 20, pp. 65–80.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

each²⁰. In Warsaw the education of girls was in the hands of Bernardine nuns (from 1500), Discalced Carmelites and Sisters of Charity (from 1652), nuns of the Visitation (from 1654), Bernardine nuns in the Praga suburb (from 1666) and nuns of the Order of the Holy Sacrament (from 1687)²¹. In Poznań, schools for girls were run by Dominican, Bernardine, Benedictine and Cistercian nuns²². These were mainly schools for daughters of noblemen and prosperous burghers, but poor girls and even orphans were also admitted. It is difficult to estimate the number of school girls. In the years 1655–1680, 60–90 girls graduated every year from the school run by nuns of the Order of the Visitation in Warsaw; most of them were noblemen's daughters but some were poor non-resident pupils from the city²³. Unfortunately, we do not know the number of pupils at the best known boarding-school for girls founded in Cracow at the beginning of the 17th century by the rich noblewoman Zofia Czeska and run by the Order of the Holy Presentation²⁴. Most convent schools could provide education to no more than 30–50 girls at a time.

The majority of the teachers at convent schools were nuns, but some lay teachers were also employed when the need arose. The women engaged as teachers had to have predilection for pedagogy, distinguish themselves by "fear and love of God, be devoted to maidenly chastity" and have the required knowledge²⁵. The curriculum usually included reading and writing in Polish (less often in Latin) and the rudiments of arithmetic. The girls were also taught to sing, play on various instruments and paint; they learned foreign languages and good manners. Stress was laid on religious and moral education and on various practical

²⁰ Cf. A. Karpiński, *Kobieta w mieście polskim w drugiej połowie XVI i w XVII wieku (Woman in Polish Towns in the Late 16th and 17th Centuries)*, Warszawa 1995, p. 286.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ B. Fabiani, *Warszawska pensja panien wizytek w latach 1655–1680 (The Boarding School Run by the Nuns of the Visitation in Warsaw in 1655–1680)*, in: *Warszawa XVI–XVII wieku*, No 2, ed. A. Wawrzyńczykowa and A. Sołtan, Warszawa 1977, pp. 171–198.

²⁴ H. Barycz, *Kartka z dziejów staropolskiego wychowania dziewcząt (A Page from the History of Girls' Education in Old Poland)*, "Nasza Przeszłość", vol. IV, 1948, pp. 157–177.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

"womanly" skills, such as sewing, spinning, embroidery and weaving.

In the middle of the 16th century educational institutions for girls were set up by Lutheran, Calvinist and Bohemian Brethren's churches²⁶. The teaching was done by the wives of pastors and by chanters, and the curriculum was more or less the same as in convent schools²⁷.

In private schools which began to be set up in larger towns, the curriculum usually included reading, writing, arithmetic, sometimes foreign languages and, first and foremost, practical occupations useful in housekeeping and important for gaining trade qualifications (shopkeeping, assistance in craftsmen's workshops). The level of these schools varied; the teaching was done mostly by school owners or itinerant teachers and craftsmen. The pupils were mostly girls from the town's middle class, daughters of craftsmen and shopkeepers²⁸.

Many daughters of rich burghers and especially of the nobility and magnates were taught at home. In this field, too, great progress was achieved in the 17th and 18th centuries. The teaching was in the hands of organists, priests and sometimes professional governesses, often foreigners, who were good at teaching foreign languages. It is not surprising therefore that in the 17th century knowledge of foreign languages, especially French and German, sometimes also of Latin, was widespread among Polish women, of course only in the circles of prosperous burghers, noblemen and magnates²⁹. Girls often took part in their brothers' lessons, which were given by professional teachers.

An important role in education was played by royal courts (of Anna Jagiellon, Marie-Louise, Marie Casimire) and magnates' courts, where a kind of "academies" for girls came into being. The girls who lived at a court as ladies-in-waiting, maids of honour or servants not only learned good manners but also received a comprehensive education, had access to books, saw theatre performances and even took part in them, developed good taste

²⁶ A. Karpíński, *Kobieta*, p. 292.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Cf. K. Targosz, *Sawantki w Polsce XVII wieku. Aspiracje intelektualne kobiet ze środowisk dworskich (Savantes in 17th Century Poland. The Intellectual Aspirations of Women from Court Circles)*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 174 ff.

and acquired the habit of availing themselves of cultural pleasures³⁰. The role played by courts was not specific to Poland; courts played a similar role also in Bohemia before the battle of White Mountain³¹. When they got married, the girls who went through a court school passed the knowledge and habits they had gained to noblemen's houses in the provinces.

This was of great importance because the daughters of poor noblemen, of the middle class and poor burghers usually had to content themselves with the knowledge they gained from their mothers or with scraps of knowledge they acquired from their school-attending brothers. The knowledge acquired at home dated back to the Middle Ages and its scope was only slowly enlarged. Peasants furnished their daughters with a similarly traditional scope of knowledge and skills. In towns the daughters of craftsmen and shopkeepers acquired some skills in the shops and workshops of their parents. School education was a privilege of the rich, of people on higher rungs of the social ladder.

A certain idea of the mental horizons of Polish women can be gained from their correspondence, though not many letters have survived and those which have are mostly from noblemen's and magnates' circles; in this respect town archives are very poorly equipped.

We know that in the 17th and 18th centuries many Polish noblewomen carried on extensive correspondence; in their letters they usually concentrated on family and home events, but sometimes they also wrote about essential economic matters, the education of their children and political events (especially in the 18th century)³². Some authoresses of these letters had a keen

³⁰ Cf. M. Bogucka, *Anna Jagiellonka (Anna Jagiellon)*, Wrocław 1994, pp. 130, 137–138; M. Miśiorny, *Listy miłosne dawnych Polaków (Love Letters in Old Poland)*, Kraków 1971, p. 15; A. Sajkowski, *Staropolska miłość (Love in Old Poland)*, Poznań 1981, p. 314; K. Targosz, *Sawantki, passim*; eadem, *Uczony dwór Ludwika Marli Gonzagi 1646–1667 (The Learned Court of Marie-Louise Gonzaga 1646–1667)*, Wrocław 1975, pp. 330 ff.

³¹ J. Janaček, *Białogłowy rozważnej żywot w czasie burzliwym (A Prudent Woman's Life in Stormy Times)*, Warszawa 1982, pp. 113 ff.

³² Cf. H. Malewska, *Listy staropolskie z epoki Wazów (Old Polish Letters from the Vasa Epoch)*, Warszawa 1959, *passim*; M. Miśiorny, *Listy miłosne dawnych Polaków*, pp. 18 ff.; A. Sajkowski, *Staropolska miłość*, in particular pp. 281 ff.; W. Urban, *Korespondencja kobiet ze średnioszlacheckiej rodziny Kanimirów z przełomu XVI i XVII wieku (The Correspondence of Women from the Kanimir Family of Middle Nobility from the Turn of the 16th Century)*, "Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce", vol. 33, 1988, pp. 239–244.

sense of perception and a knack for evaluating events and persons³³. Most women confined their interests to household questions, family life, contacts with neighbours, but this does not mean that they knew nothing about the world, and their knowledge of it developed with every passing decade. Nor were women mere home-birds afraid of undertaking a journey, though they were, of course, far less mobile than men. As early as the 16th and early 17th centuries some women made long journeys to visit their relatives, supervise an estate which lay in a distant corner of the country or fulfil a devout pledge (pilgrimages to sanctuaries and holy places in Poland and even abroad).

In the 17th century journeys to watering places for medical purposes and soon also tourist trips and political journeys became popular. The women's growing mobility was criticised by moralists. In 1697 Daniel Bratkowski wrote *The World Seen in Part* in which he complained about women of fashion (they dress their hair high above the head) and women "who are sweet with guests and bad-tempered with their husband"; he also criticised women travellers: "women of more prosperous houses have begun to travel abroad to breathe in warmer air, which of course entails a needless waste of money"³⁴. As early as the beginning of the 17th century (1601) Anna Radziwiłłowa, née Kettler visited German and Italian spas with her sick daughter³⁵. In 1633 Anna Radziwiłłowa, née Kiszka went to Cieplice (Bad Warmbrunn) in Silesia and complained that her husband did not give her enough money for the journey³⁶. When in 1638 King Ladislaus IV went to Baden for a cure he was accompanied by his wife, Queen Cecilia Renata, his sister Anne Catherine and three ladies: Anna Przerębska, wife of the voivode of Łęczyca,

³³ *Ibidem*. Especially characteristic are the letters of Teresa Straszycówna from the first half of the 18th century, cf. A. Sajkowski, *Staropolska miłość*, pp. 302 ff., and Teofila Morawska, née Radziwiłł, from the same period, *ibidem*, pp. 322 ff. Very interesting are *Listy brata do siostry (A Brother's Letters to His Sister. Cardinal Denhoff's letters to the wife of the voivode of Kąty)*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warszawa 1905, which show the range of questions raised in these letters and the emotional ties between the brother and sister.

³⁴ K. W. Wójcicki, *Niewiasty polskie*, p. 135.

³⁵ She also made pilgrimages to Rome, Loreto and sanctuaries in Germany. Cf. her biography by H. Lulewicz in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny (Polish Biographical Dictionary)*, 1987, vol. 30, No 2, p. 384.

³⁶ U. Augustyniak, *Dwór i klientela Krzysztofa II Radziwiłła (The Court and Clientele of Krzysztof II Radziwiłł)*, "Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce", vol. 38, 1994, pp. 71-72.

Elżbieta Kazanowska, wife of the castellan of Sandomierz, and Beata Przyjemaska, wife of the court marshal, as well as the maids of these ladies³⁷. In the middle of the 17th century Helena Lubomirska, née Ossolińska made several trips to Italy and Austria, even though her parents and husband disapproved of her journeys. Lucrezia Radziwiłłowa, née Strozzi went to Italy to see her native country and have a cure. Teofila Sobieska, née Daniłowicz, mother of John who later became Poland's king, made a pilgrimage to Italy after the death of her son Marek³⁸. In 1653 Krzysztof Opaliński and his wife went to Bad Warmbrunn near Jelenia Góra (Hirschberg) in Silesia for a cure and then proceeded to Italy to meet their son who had completed his studies there³⁹. In 1676 three ladies, Zofia Konarzewska, Franciszka Tarłowa and Teofila Rejowa visited Italy⁴⁰. Their journey, like that of Mrs. Sobieska, resulted in the introduction of Italian style in Polish architecture⁴¹. During their journeys the Polish ladies not only had fun (carnival in Venice) and went sightseeing (in Naples they climbed Mount Vesuvius) but also visited famous buildings and later used what they had learned in their patronage of the arts.

In 1674 Konstancja Wielopolska, née Komorowska stayed in Italy together with her husband. Three years later Katarzyna Radziwiłłowa and her husband Michał Kazimierz visited Italy (after a cure at Bad Warmbrunn). They enjoyed the opera performances, which they saw in Venice so much, that on their return to Poland they organised an opera theatre in their estate⁴².

At the end of the 17th century even more women visited Italy, Austria and France, some of them on a diplomatic mission. The 18th century witnessed a new wave of foreign trips. A. S a j k o w s k i writes: "Polish women's trips to Italy, which were sporadic in the 16th century, became more frequent in the 17th and a nor-

³⁷ J. Sobieski, *Peregrynacje po Europie (1607-1613). Droga do Baden (1638) (Peregrinations across Europe, 1607-1613. The Road to Baden, 1638)*, ed. J. Długosz, Wrocław 1991, pp. 224 ff.

³⁸ K. Targosz, *Sawantki*, pp. 154, 155.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 155.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ The Dominican church at Żółkwia was modelled after a Neapolitan church and the church of St. Phillip's order built by Konarzewska at Gostyń was a copy of the Venice church of Santa Maria della Salute.

⁴² K. Targosz, *Sawantki*, p. 155.

mal event in the 18th⁴³. Another destination of Polish women's journeys was France, which was visited by many magnates, among them Julia Potocka⁴⁴ and Teofila Morawska, who went there on a secret mission conceived by her brother Karol Radziwiłł; Morawska also wandered about Germany, Austria and Italy⁴⁵. Izabela Czartoryska and Anna Teresa Potocka went to Germany, Austria, France, Holland and England in the second half of the 18th century. But it was the famous Regina Rusiecka who broke a record in women's foreign travels, roving about from her native Nowogródek region to Istanbul, from Kamenets Podolski to St. Petersburg, from Kiev, Lwów and Jassy to Carinthia, Ljubljana, Vienna and Breslau⁴⁶.

Rusiecka's journeys show that it was not only magnates' wives who travelled. We know that great ladies were accompanied on their long journeys by their maids of honour and servants, who were usually noble girls of moderate means, if not poor. Traces of such peregrinations can be found in Teresa Strażycówna's correspondence with her fiancé Kazimierz Wiśniowiecki⁴⁷. Patrician women from large towns, such as Cracow, also travelled abroad, though not so often. Many townswomen took part in pilgrimages⁴⁸. As a matter of fact, it was only peasant women who (like their husbands) did not move beyond their village, unless they went to a fair in a neighbouring town or, exceptionally, on a pilgrimage to a painting or statue famous for having the power to work miracles⁴⁹. Let us stress that pilgrimages were an extremely popular form of women's travels. According to A. Witkowska,

⁴³ A. Sajkowski, *Włoskie przygody Polaków, wiek XVI–XVII (The Poles' Italian Adventures, 16th–17th Centuries)*, Warszawa 1973, p. 204.

⁴⁴ Cf. Z. Kuchowicz, *Wizerunki niepospolitych niewiast staropolskich XVI–XVIII w. (The Pictures of Extraordinary Women in Old Poland, 16th–18th Centuries)*, Łódź 1972, pp. 341 ff.

⁴⁵ A. Sajkowski, *Staropolska miłość*, pp. 341 ff.

⁴⁶ Cf. Z. Kuchowicz, *Wizerunki*, pp. 298 ff.

⁴⁷ A. Sajkowski, *Staropolska miłość*, pp. 281 ff.

⁴⁸ K. Targosz, *Sawantki*, pp. 156–157. Townswomen's pilgrimages are mentioned by A. Karpiński, *Kobieta*, pp. 231–232, in particular fn. 92; they are also discussed by A. Witkowska, *The Cult of the Jasna Góra Sanctuary in the Form of Pilgrimages till the Middle of the 17th Century*, "Acta Poloniae Historica", vol. 61, 1990, pp. 84–85.

⁴⁹ Cf. A. Witkowska's article and also the collective work *Peregrinationes. Pielgrzymki w kulturze dawnej Europy (Peregrinationes. Pilgrimages in the Culture of Old Europe)*, ed. H. Manikowska and H. Zaremska, Warszawa 1995, in particular pp. 204–209, 210–220, 242–251.

women accounted for nearly threefifths of all pilgrims visiting Cracow's sanctuaries in the 15th and 16th centuries⁵⁰.

To sum up: women's mobility, insignificant in the 16th century, increased in the 17th to become a widespread phenomenon in the 18th. At first these journeys were motivated by religious reasons, in addition to family matters. Thanksgiving and grace-seeking pilgrimages were one of the first and most frequent of women's travels. Religious practice gave women a larger scope of freedom, allowing them to leave their homes without violating the unwritten laws. But soon women found new reasons for their travels: in the 17th century they began to travel to well known spas in order to improve their health or consult a famous physician, later also to have fun or see places of interest (sight-seeing, participation in famous carnivals), and finally to settle various, also political, matters. This was connected with their increased activity in various fields, with improvement in their education. From their foreign trips Polish women brought home not only models of latest fashions but also knowledge of art, architecture and artistic currents and used this knowledge at home in their activity as patrons of the arts.

It was mainly women of the élite, great ladies, who travelled, but their suites included noble women of moderate means, or even poor women. Some townswomen were not averse to travelling either, but peasant seldom left home because of the system of serfdom in Poland, and if they did, it was mainly to take part in a pilgrimage. Polish women travelled not only to European states (especially Italy, France and Austria) but also to overseas countries: the Holy Land (when visiting Christ's sepulchre in 1583 Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł met a Polish noblewoman, Dorota Siekierzecka, who had been living in Jerusalem for a few years)⁵¹ and the Middle East (the destination of one of Regina Rusiecka's journeys).

These were not always voluntary journeys; from the 16th to the 18th century it was not a rare occurrence for Polish women in the eastern borderland to be taken captive by Turks or Tartars.

⁵⁰ A. Witkowska, *Kulty pątnicze piętnastowiecznego Krakowa (Pilgrims' Worship in 15th Century Cracow)*, Lublin 1984, p. 150.

⁵¹ Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł "Sierotka", *Podróż do Ziemi Świętej, Syrii i Egiptu 1582-1584 (Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł "the Orphan", Journey to the Holy Land, Syria and Egypt 1582-1584)*, ed. L. Kukulski, Warszawa 1962, pp. 59-60.

Not all captive women sent to Istanbul made such a fantastic career as did the peasant girl from the Ukraine who, in the middle of the 16th century, became Roxana, the beloved wife of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and exchanged letters with Queen Bona and Bona's daughter Isabela, Queen of Hungary⁵². Most women seized by Turks or Tartars were kept in dreadful humiliating slavery from which it was difficult to free oneself. But such happy events did sometimes occur. Helena Niemiryczowa, née Krasicka and her little son, taken captive by Tartars in 1680, returned home after several years of endeavours⁵³. Some women travelled to Istanbul of their own free will in order to find and liberate members of their family. One of them was Anna Błocka, née Meleniewska who at the end of the 17th century went to Turkey to find her husband, Jan; after a few years both managed to return to Poland⁵⁴. This shows that Polish women's journeys were of a diverse character, from voluntary journeys to enforced ones, from pilgrimages to journeys they were forced to make as captives. Such drastic differences were unknown to females living in the countries of Western Europe.

The 16th–18th centuries were a period when learned women came into view in the whole of Europe. They were laughed at by playwrights (Molière, Tirson de Molina, Lopez de Vega, Calderon and others) but the satire was a response to the scale of the event which embraced more and more countries. In 16th century England it was not only the Tudor princesses, Mary and Elizabeth, who were famous for their erudition but also the daughters of Sir Thomas More; one of them, Margaret, made a successful translation of Erasmus' treatise from Latin into English when she was 19 years old; she wrote her own works too, but these were never published. Lady Jane Grey was also famous for her wisdom. In the 17th century Margaret Duchess of Newcastle, a poetess and philosopher, and Lady Elizabeth Hastings, a polyglot who knew French, Latin and Italian, were renowned for their erudition. Katherine Philips and Anne Killigrew were poets, and Lucy Hutchinson and Margaret Cavendish won fame by writing biographies of their husbands. In the second half of the 17th century, England had

⁵² M. Bogucka, *Bona Sforza d'Aragona*, Warszawa 1989, pp. 198–199.

⁵³ A. Machczyńska, *Kobieta polska (Polish Woman)*, Lwów 1912, p. 25.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

her first "professional" woman author and journalist, Aphra Behn, who was also a playwright and poet⁵⁵. Many women never published their works and some printed them anonymously. After all, only 1.2 per cent of the publications brought out in England in 1640–1700 were penned by women⁵⁶. But a breakthrough was made and women joined the circle of writers.

Many learned women won fame in Spain; they were polyglots, played many instruments, wrote poems and dramas, took part in theological and philosophical discussions (e.g. Catalina de Mendoza, Anna Giron Boscan, Luiza Siega, Cecilia Marrillas, Olivia de Sabuco, Juana Morella, Mariana Carvajal y Saavedra, Maria de Zayas)⁵⁷. In Italy Isotta Nogarola and Cassadra Fedele gained renown for their erudition, and Veronica Gamba, Vittoria Colonna and Gaspara Stampa were outstanding writers⁵⁸. In France Marguerite de Navarre, authoress of *Heptameron* and also the female writers Louise Labé, Madelaine and Catherine des Roches were well known as early as the 16th century⁵⁹. In the 17th century in France a numerous circle of women writers emerged alongside the well known Madame de Scudéry⁶⁰. Anna Maria van Schurman, a poetess and thinker, came into prominence in the Low Countries and Germany⁶¹.

At the end of the 17th century women intensified their endeavours to get access to university studies. In England Mary Astell organised a college for women, and Elizabeth Elstob was active (for a short time) in Oxford⁶². In the 18th century Dorothea Christine Leporin was the first woman in Germany to gain a doctor's university diploma; Laura Bassi was a lectu-

⁵⁵ M. E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 163 ff.

⁵⁶ P. Crawford, *Women's Published Writings 1600–1700*, in: M. Prior, *Women in English Society 1500–1800*, London–New York 1985, pp. 211–265.

⁵⁷ M. Mc Kendrick, *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age*, Cambridge 1974, pp. 20 ff.

⁵⁸ M. E. Wiesner, *Women*, pp. 163 ff.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*. Cf. also F. Rigolot, *Louise Labé Lyonnaise ou la Renaissance au féminin*, Paris 1997.

⁶⁰ M. E. Wiesner, *Women*, pp. 163 ff.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

⁶² A. Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel*, pp. 373, 375.

rer at Bologna University⁶³. In the same century Catherine Macaulay published an eight-volume history of England; Madame de Châtelet translated Newton's *Principia* from Latin into French and wrote books popularising the ideas of Newton and Leibnitz⁶⁴. Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, wrote not only literary works but also scientific treatises discussing motion, the vacuum, the atom, etc.⁶⁵

In Poland, as well as in Bohemia⁶⁶, the situation did not look so well. Women's reading habits were not yet developed in the 16th century, to say nothing of their activity in the field of literature. Even those women who could read confined their reading to prayer and hymn books; they even seldom read the Bible (which was much more popular with the Protestants than with the Catholics). It was only in the 17th century that more and more Polish women began to read secular books, in particular French romances; but these were read mainly in circles linked to the royal court⁶⁷. Townswomen too began to read; speaking of Barbara Langówna of Cracow, Father Szymon Wysocki said that "there was not a single book (published in Cracow at the turn of the 16th century — M. B.) which she had not read from cover to cover"⁶⁸.

It is difficult to establish when women began to write in Poland. Scholars used to put the beginning of women's literary attempts at the mid-16th century and regarded two women from Little Poland, Zofia Oleśnicka and Regina Filipowska, as pioneers in the writing of poetry. Filipowska's poem *A Brief Prayer* (1556) has not survived; in *A New Song*, a poem attributed to Oleśnicka, the poetess thanks God for revealing His secrets to ordinary men (Cracow 1556); the poem begins with the words "With a willing heart I praise Thee, Lord" and is an acrostic. The

⁶³ M. E. Wiesner, *Women*, p. 169.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁶ J. Janaček says that in the 16th century the education of townswomen was rather of a practical nature and that of noblewomen simple, but he adds that there were some learned women; one of them was Katarzyna Elżbieta, daughter of Mikołaj Albrecht from Kamenek, professor at Prague University; she knew ancient Greek, Latin and German and corresponded with humanists from all over Europe, J. Janaček, *Żywot białogłowy*, p. 127.

⁶⁷ K. Targosz, *Sawantki*, pp. 172 ff.

⁶⁸ A. Karpiński, *Kobieta*, p. 297.

question is whether the acrostic denoted the author or the lady to whom the poem was dedicated⁶⁹. The anonymous devotional poem *Reflectons on the Passon of our Lord Jesus Chrst*, dedicated to Anna Jagiellon (the authoress must have been linked to Anna's court), was written in 1594⁷⁰. A moving little devotional poem on prayer, beginning with the words "Somebody has called prayer a key to heaven"⁷¹, was written several years later; it is also an acrostic and is attributed to Margareta Ruarówna because the first letters of each line spell the name of Ruar's daughter.

The Latin poems of "the Polish Virgin" — this is how Anna Memorata, daughter of Jan Memorat, pastor of *Unitas Fratrum* in Great Poland signed her poems — come from the same period (mid-17th century). The family came to Poland from Bohemia in the middle of the 16th century. Anna was well educated (in addition to Polish, she knew German, Latin and ancient Greek) and moved in a highly intellectual society in Leszno. In keeping with the fashion of the time, she wrote occasional poems and was decorated with a laurel wreath for her work⁷². Another author of occasional poetry was Zofia Corbiniana-Bernitzowa, of German descent, daughter of a Königsberg physician; she also wrote her poems in Latin and dedicated them to various persons connected to the Vasas' court⁷³. She married Marcin Bernitz, a well known natural scientist and royal courtier, and became lady-in-waiting to the queens Marie-Louise and later Marie-Casimire, thanks to which she joined the "learned court" of these two queens. In 1689 Father J. Kwiatkiewicz, writing about women known for their erudition, mentioned Bernitzowa (*et*

⁶⁹ B. Chlebowski, *Udział kobiet polskich w życiu duchowym narodu (The Participation of Polish Women in the Spiritual Life of the Nation)*, in: *Pisma*, vol. I, Warszawa 1912, pp. 78–83; A. Sajakowski, *Staropolska miłość*, p. 11.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁷¹ W. Sobieski, *Modlitewnik arianki (The Arian Woman's Prayer Book)*, "Reformacja w Polsce" vol. I, 1921, pp. 58–63.

⁷² T. Wierzbowski, *Anny Memoraty "dziewicy polskiej" łacińskie wiersze z lat 1640–1644 (The Latin Poems of Anna Memorata, the "Polish Virgin", from 1640–1644)*, Warszawa 1895.

⁷³ Cf. her biography in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. I, 1935, p. 467, written by A. Birkenmajer, and what K. Targosz says about her in *Uczony dwór Ludwiki Marli Gonzagi 1646–1667 (The Learned Court of Marie-Louise Gonzaga 1646–1667)*, Wrocław 1975, pp. 347–348, 363–365.

nuper in Polonia Sophta Corbiniana) and quoted the beginning of her ode which depicted the beauty of the rainbow⁷⁴.

The rhymed diary of Anna Zbąska, née Stanisławska overshadowed all these poems and aroused sensation, not so much by its form as its drastic content; in historiography Zbąska is often called the first Polish woman writer. Her autobiography entitled *A Transaction or a Description of the Whole Life of an Orphan Written by Her in Plaintive Threnodies in 1685* was published only in 1935 by Ida Kotowa⁷⁵. Poor as it is in its literary form, it is noteworthy for its apt psychological analysis, excellent genre scenes and abundant information on family relations, on the customs and mentality of rich Polish noblemen and magnates. Anna Stanisławska, who as a 15-year old girl inherited a large fortune, was married to Kazimierz Warszycki, a degenerate, but she managed to free herself (the union was annulled) and contracted two more marriages, this time successful (both were however, short-lived because of the death of her husbands)⁷⁶. Her diary written after the death of her beloved third husband is not only an interesting example of female writing but also an extremely valuable document of a woman's inner development in old Poland. Katarzyna Siemiotkowska-Chodorowska's earlier composition *A Homely Service Written in Godly Rhythm* (Wilno 1670) cannot match Stanisławska's diary. This rather weak paraphrase of prayers and church songs is a return to women's religious writings with nothing new or original in it. It was simply a manifestation of the devout authoress's good intentions.

In the 17th century, especially in its second half, more and more women put pen to paper, not because of their literary ambitions but because they felt an inner need to record their thoughts and experiences. It became a popular habit to record important family and domestic events and information that might be useful in everyday life or was worth being handed down to future generations⁷⁷. Women began to make notes at the end of

⁷⁴ J. Kwiatkowiec, *Eloquentia reconditor*, Posnaniae 1689, pp. 507–508.

⁷⁵ *Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskich (Polish Writers' Library)*, № 85.

⁷⁶ A. Sajkowski, *Staropolska miłość*, pp. 21 ff.

⁷⁷ J. Partyka, *Książka rękopiśmienna na dworze szlacheckim (Handwritten Books in Noblemen's Homes)*, "Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce", vol. 38, 1994, pp. 79–89.

calendars, on empty pages of their prayer books, of the Bible and other books, and sometimes kept their own chronicles (as did Elżbieta Orzelska at the turn of the 16th century). Family matters and such events of special importance for females as weddings, births of children and deaths of family members dominated in women's records and diaries. King John III's mother, Teofila Sobieska, née Danilowicz wrote *Recollections of My Wedding and the Birth of My Children*. Konstancja Sanguszkowa, née Sapieha and Anna Radziwiłłowa, née Sanguszkowa kept diaries in which they recorded all important domestic events. These personal notes, not meant to be published or popularised, reflected the thoughts and private feelings of Polish women of that time.

The most interesting were probably the compositions written in convents, but they have not yet been adequately researched. Freed from the yoke of household duties and child bearing, nuns had time to improve their minds and reflect on life. Extensive chronicles with information not only on the life in convents but frequently also on the nuns' contacts with the outside world and events taking place in that world were written in many convents e.g. by Benedictine nuns in Poznań and Chełmno and Carmelite nuns in Cracow, Lwów and Warsaw⁷⁸. Nuns also penned religious and moral treatises. Magdalena Mortęska, a reformer of the Benedictine nuns' order, wrote soulful *Meditations on the Passion of Christ* and enjoined the nuns subordinated to her to regularly note their spiritual experiences and reflections, thus inaugurating an extremely rich and interesting current of reflective religious works, a current defined by scholars as Mother Mortęska's school⁷⁹. Autobiography writing also thrived in convents. In the middle of the 17th century, Anna Maria Marchocka, known as Mother Theresa of Jesus in the Carmelite Order, wrote her life story full of mystic visions, modelled on the writings of St. Teresa of Avila⁸⁰. Autobiographies were also written by Carmelite nuns in Przemyśl and Wilno⁸¹. Prioresses wrote what was known as

⁷⁸ A. Sajkowski, *Staropolska miłość*, pp. 22 ff.

⁷⁹ Cf. K. Górski, *Od religijności do mistyki. Zarys dziejów życia wewnętrznego w Polsce (From Religiousness to Mysticism. An Outline of the History of Inner Life in Poland)*, part 1, 966–1795, Lublin 1962, passim, and also M. Borkowska, *Życie codzienne*, part 1, 296 ff.

⁸⁰ A. Sajkowski, *Staropolska miłość*, pp. 14 ff. Marchocka's autobiography was published by K. Górski in: *Pisarze ascetyczno-mistyczni Polski*, Poznań 1939.

conferences, that is, instructions concerning various matters of monastic life⁸². Many little works, frequently original in their content and not devoid of literary values, were produced in convents.

The galaxy of women of letters, which quickly expanded in the 18th century, opens with the "Polish Sappho", Elżbieta Drużbacka, author of sentimental romances (*Ortoban's Story, A Marriage Exemplary by Faithful and Staid Love*) and rhymed life stories of great women penitents (*The Penance of St. Mary Magdalen, The Penance of St. Mary the Egyptian*) as well as many small panegyrical and occasional works; she was a very prolific but controversial writer and has been criticised for her naiveté, vulgarity and flat jokes, but these were characteristic of all works written during the period of decadent Sarmatism. Nevertheless, many of Drużbacka's poems still impress the reader (*Description of the Four Seasons, The Four Elements*) by their suggestive portrayal of nature. The beauty of the Polish landscape, the serene charm of the Polish countryside and the whims of ever changing weather depicted by Drużbacka make her an outstanding representative of Polish literature, especially if we compare her works with other literary works of Saxon times.

In addition to Drużbacka, several other women took up writing in the 18th century. Franciszka Urszula Radziwiłłowa, née Wiśniowiecka composed poetic letters to her husband in 1727–1732, wrote epithalamia, travestied psalms, gave rhymed advice to her daughter (*Beneficial Warnings*), and composed love dramas (*Witty Love, 1746, Love, the Self-Interested Judge, 1747, Love Is Born in the Eyes, 1750, Love, the Perfect Mistress, 1752*)⁸³. Writing was also practised by Antonina Niemiryczowa, née Jełowicka (frivolous but also metaphysical pieces), Anna Dziatyńska, née Radomicka (collected prayers entitled *Spiritual summa, 1759*), Konstancja Benisławska (*A Song Sung for Myself, Wilno 1776*), Anna Radziwiłłowa, née Mycielska (her poems were described as "not bad" by Marcin Matuszewicz) and

⁸¹ A. Sajkowski, *Staropolska miłość*, p. 16.

⁸² M. Borkowska, *Życie codzienne polskich klasztorów żeńskich w XVII–XVIII w. (Everyday Life in Polish Female Convents in the 17th and 18th Centuries)*, Warszawa 1996, p. 301.

⁸³ The dramas were published at Nieśwież in 1754. Cf. A. Sajkowski, *Miłość staropolska*, pp. 205–262.

Józefina Potocka, née Mniszech (poems, epigrams, short stories). Notes of the type of engagement books rather than genuine diaries (Teresa Działyńska, née Bielińska, Zofia Zamoyska, née Czartoryska) and convent chronicles (e.g. of the Bernardine convent at Brest Litovsk in 1726–1830) continued the current which started in the 17th century⁸⁴. Anna Radziwiłłowa, née Mycielska, lamenting the death of her beloved husband, wrote a rhymed autobiography in 1751. But the 18th century also saw the appearance of two outstanding diaries. One of them, *The Journeys and Adventures of My Life*⁸⁵ by Regina Pilsztynowa, née Rusiecka was what we would now call a thriller; it described the experiences of an 18th century adventuress (several husbands, many travels) but also the histories of the people she met, including well known personages (Prince Golitsyn, Mazepa, the princes Dolgorukis, Prince Kiril Razumovsky, etc.). Adventures intertwine with love stories in the book, but the wealth of information and a keen observation of customs testify to the authoress's sharp mind. Pilsztynowa was an adventuress but she was also a woman of character, brave and independent, successfully competing with men in her profession (medicine), and she was undoubtedly endowed with literary talent⁸⁶. Her personality and her diary testify to the new opportunities opened to women in the 18th century and their changed situation; two hundred and even a hundred years earlier such a way of life would probably not have been possible and the heroine could not have made such a colourful and bold description of her experiences.

Wirydianna Fiszerowa's slightly later memoirs *My Own and Outsiders' History*⁸⁷, written ex post in 1823 but covering the years 1766–1815, are regarded as an outstanding work by researchers. They portray a broad panorama of Poland's history in the second half of the 18th century (the Confederation of Bar, the Four Years' Sejm, the partitions, the Kościuszko Insurrection)

⁸⁴ Cf. A. Cieński, *Pamiętnikarstwo polskie XVIII w. (Diary Writing in 18th Century Poland)*, Wrocław 1981, pp. 54, 59, 147.

⁸⁵ It was published by R. Pollak, Kraków 1957.

⁸⁶ R. Pollak, *Od renesansu do baroku (From the Renaissance to the Baroque)*, Warszawa 1969, pp. 292–327, and A. Sajkowski, *Staropolska miłość*, pp. 27 ff.

⁸⁷ It was translated from the French and published in London in 1975 by E. Raczynski.

and are remarkable for their shrewd wise evaluation of people and events and their abundant information on the everyday life and mentality of the nobility, especially the nobility of Great Poland, in that dramatic period⁸⁸. Fiszerowa's story is not only an important source to the history of the epoch but also a testimony to the changes which occurred in the mentality, horizons and attitude of Polish women; the memoirs prove that a female intellectual élite did exist at that time and that it was on a par with the male élite as regards education, knowledge of the world, patriotism and the ability to evaluate things and formulate opinions.

As this survey shows, the literary work of women was mainly the produce of women from magnates' circle as well as noblewomen. The townswomen were poorly represented in literature (Anna Memorata, Bernitzowa). It is interesting that no literary works were written by women in Gdańsk, which was a great cultural centre. Gdańsk patrician women were educated, well read women, they could play on various instruments and sing, but they did not write⁸⁹. On the contrary a large group of women dabbled at writing in Silesia in the 17th century⁹⁰. This was probably connected with the existence of princes' courts, which had an impact on the position of noble women and women in the towns. Gdańsk was a centre of urban culture and the situation of women was there probably especially difficult, making it impossible, or in any case difficult, for them to expand their activity and take up activities reserved for men under the urban patriarchal system. Hence the lack of women's literature in Gdańsk.

However, it was in Gdańsk that the first women scientists appeared in the 17th century, Hevelius's two wives, Catherine née Rebeschke and Elisabeth née Koopmann helped the astronomer in his observations of stars and calculations. It is worth recalling that a female astronomer Maria Cunitia was active in Silesia at that time⁹¹. But in general science was developing

⁸⁸ A. Cieński, *Pamiętnikarstwo*, pp. 182 ff.

⁸⁹ M. Bogućka, *Życie w dawnym Gdańsku (To Live in Old Gdańsk)*, Warszawa 1997, in particular pp. 134 ff.

⁹⁰ Cf. M. Czarniecka, *Die "verse-schwangere" Elyste. Zum Anteil der Frauen an der literarischen Kultur Schlesiens im 17. Jh.*, Wrocław 1997.

⁹¹ K. Targosz, *Sawantki*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 427 ff, 398 ff.

slowly in Poland and women played an insignificant role in it. The only exception was King Sigismund III's sister, Anna Vasa, who took a serious interest in botany and physiotherapy. She carried out scientific experiments, drew up a list of medicinal plants (unfortunately, it got lost at the end of the 18th century), financed the publication of *Syrenius' Herbartum* in 1613 and was said to make very effective medicinal preparations. Marie-Louise, wife of two Vasa kings, was also interested in science, especially astronomy and physics, but personally she did not conduct research. There were, however, many scientists at her court (the Queen's secretary Pierre Des Noyers, Izmael Boulliau, V. Magni, H. Pinocci), the Queen organised scientific discussions, kept a sharp eye on scientific experiments, but this was an activity of a patron and sponsor rather than that of a researcher. The title of scientist can with greater accuracy be applied to the Queen's lady-in-waiting, wife of an outstanding naturalist, Zofia Bernitzowa, who shared her husband's scientific interests and perhaps helped him in his work; she accompanied him on his travels and after his death kept an eye on his collection of curiosities which contained various natural exhibits. The Scottish physician Bernard O'Connor, who visited Warsaw, wrote that she had taken him round the collection, explaining everything in Latin⁹².

Medicine was a discipline of science favoured by women and many of them had great experience in this field, not so much in theory as in practice. In a book on herbs Hieronim Spiczynski wrote as early as the middle of the 16th century: "When doctors lose their confidence in science, a poor woman will help a sick man better by her simple herbs than the best physician"⁹³. In all households it was women who looked after their family's health, using the knowledge which for generations had been handed down from mother to daughter. The best known Polish woman who professed to be a physician (without a university diploma) and practised ophthalmology was Regina Pilsztynowa, née Rusiecka mentioned above. She successfully attended many patients in Poland, Turkey and Russia, looked, as she herself says, after a sultan's harem for some time, gave advice to Hungarian, Polish and Russian princes. She definitely had some knowledge,

⁹² K. Targosz, *Uczony dwór Ludwika Marii*, p. 370.

⁹³ H. Spiczynski, *O ziołach tutejszych i zamorskich i o mocy ich (Local and Overseas Plants and Their Power)*, Kraków 1556, leaf 216v.

which she acquired at the side of her first husband, the physician Jakub Halpir, and must have had great intuition, but, first and foremost, a lot of courage. There were also other women doctors enjoying a good reputation. Marcin Gruneweg from Gdańsk, who travelled a lot on business, says in his memoirs that in 1586 he sought advice from "a well known female doctor" in Lwów, called Dorota, who prescribed him medicines and a cure⁹⁴.

Let us stress that as in other countries, women entered the field of science in Poland mainly thanks to their husbands whom they helped in their scientific work, just as craftsmen's wives helped their husbands in workshops. Independent scientific work was at that time impossible for women, although many of them had considerable scholarly knowledge and definite interests in science. For instance, Anna Eufemia Radziwiłłówna (b. 1628) was said to be well versed in mathematics, economy and politics⁹⁵. Zofia Opalińska (b. 1642), daughter of the learned magnate Łukasz Opaliński and wife of the poet and philosopher Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski, had been "well trained in arithmetic and music" from her earliest years⁹⁶. Gryzelda Zamoyska, daughter of the chancellor Tomasz, was taught together with her brother, Jan, and together with him studied all subjects, including philosophy⁹⁷. Antonina Niemiryczowa, a poetess and translator of French literature, was renowned for her thorough education (the Bernardine nuns' boarding-school in Lwów and lessons given at home to her and her brother Franciszek by an "enlightened" teacher brought from Warsaw). She knew many books by heart, spoke French, German and Italian fluently, played on various instruments and also composed⁹⁸. Teresa Załuska, wife of the starost of Rawa, was known for her knowledge of law; she herself conducted a lawsuit for restitution of an estate which had been wrested from her (1732–1740), made speeches in law courts, one of which is included in T. Dąnejkowi cz's collection *Polish Fluency of Speech* (1745)⁹⁹. Another woman famed for her erudi-

⁹⁴ *Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Gdańsk*, MS 1300, leaf 1403.

⁹⁵ K. Tar g o s z, *Uczony dwór Ludwika Marti*, p. 374.

⁹⁶ R. Pollak, *Od renesansu do baroku*, pp. 248 ff.

⁹⁷ K. Tar g o s z, *Uczony dwór*, p. 374.

⁹⁸ Cf. the biography written by E. Rabowicz in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 23, N^o 1, 1978, pp. 1–2.

⁹⁹ B. Chlebowski, *Udział kobiet*, p. 82.

tion was Anna Jabłonowska, née Sapięha, who after the death of her father was brought up by her stepfather, Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski, writer and founder of the famous Jabłonowski Academy in Leipzig; thanks to him, she received a very good education which enabled her to carry on a broad economic and political activities. She assembled a magnificent library, set up a natural history collection, one of the largest in 18th century Europe¹⁰⁰. We could go on multiplying these examples. The famous French savante, Mademoiselle Julie de Lespinasse, a friend of the Encyclopedists, is reported to have said in the second half of the 18th century: "Poland is probably the only country where women are superior to men"¹⁰¹.

Women, however, felt much more at ease in the arts than in science. Singing and music were extremely feminised. Women performers (e.g. the famous Konstancja Zirenberg of Gdańsk, called the Mermaid of the Motława) and even composers (Antonina Niemiryczowa, Anna Radziwiłłowa, née Mycielska) reached a high level of perfection. "Helicon is surprised when she strikes the strings with her lily-like hand", wrote Sęp-Szarzyński in his epithalamium for Jadwiga Tarłówna¹⁰². The musical artistry and wonderful voice of Helena Radziwiłłowa, née Przeździecka, could "move stones" in the 18th century¹⁰³. This was a field reserved almost exclusively for women (apart from professional musicians and singers), for since the 16th century the Polish nobility had regarded music and singing as occupations below the dignity of a well born man. This attitude changed in the 18th century (some magnates, for instance, Szcześny Potocki, played on various instruments), but women definitely outnumbered men in the field of music. In addition to the royal and magnatial courts, convents were important centres of music and singing¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. the biography written by J. Berger-Mayerowa in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 10, N° 2, 1963, p. 216.

¹⁰¹ Quoted after Ł. Charewicz, *Kobięta w dawnej Polsce (Woman in Old Poland)*, Lwów 1938, p. 91.

¹⁰² M. Sęp-Szarzyński, *Rytmy oraz anonimowe pieśni miłosne z wieku XVI (Rhythms and Anonymous Love Songs from the 16th Century)*, ed. T. Słnko, Kraków 1928, p. 57.

¹⁰³ S. Wasylewski, *Westalka z Arkadii (The Vestal from Arkadia)*, in: *Twarz i kobięta*, Kraków 1960, p. 28.

¹⁰⁴ M. Borkowska, *Życie codzienne*, pp. 287 ff.

In the middle of the 17th century a new field of artistic activity, the theatre, opened up to women mostly under French influence. Under the first kings of the Vasa dynasty, Sigismund III and Ladislaus IV, the royal theatre was, to a large extent, monopolised by men, who also played women's roles. Nevertheless, following the example of Western Europe, where the monarchs participated in ballets performed at the court, the Polish kings' sisters, daughters and wives as well as their ladies-in-waiting took part in the ballets staged in Cracow and Warsaw as early as the reign of the first Vasa king. This custom was promoted by Poland's two French Queens, Marie-Louise and Marie-Casimire, under whose auspices comedies and tragedies performed by ladies-in-waiting became a regular event at the royal court. Magnates followed this example, their wives and daughters as well as maids of honour and friends taking part in the performances. Even little girls, e.g. Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł's daughters as well as John III Sobieski's children, frequently appeared on the stage¹⁰⁵. No expense was spared to make the performances a success. For instance, a special hall for performances was built at the Radziwiłł's castle at Nieśwież in 1748 to enable Franciszka Urszula Radziwiłłowa, a great theatre lover, to stage spectacles. Another Radziwiłł woman, Anna née Mycielska, frequently appeared on the Nieśwież stage together with the Radziwiłł children. In the second half of the 18th century the beautiful Julia Potocka, née Lubomirska, frequently amused herself by acting; she took part in the famous performance of the *Marriage of Figaro* in Warsaw, a performance which preceded the Paris premiere. In 1767-68, another Potocka woman, Anna Teresa née Ossolińska, was active in an amateur theatre circle which was set up in Warsaw by society ladies. After leaving for Paris (in about 1775) she continued her theatre hobby on the Seine, performing in an amateur theatre together with the famous female novelist S. F. de Genlis. At the very end of the 18th century, shortly before the second partition of Poland, Książni's play *The Spartan Mother* was performed at Puławy, the role of the mother who sends her sons to the field of glory was played by Izabela Czartoryska.

Peasant women could also sometimes be seen on the stage. Young serfs of both sexes from the Radziwiłł estates were trained

¹⁰⁵ Cf. K. Targosz, *Sawantki*, pp. 193 ff.; A. Sajkowski, *Staropolska mitość*, p. 314.

as dancers, musicians and singers for the needs of the Nieśwież theatre. Slightly later, the treasurer Antoni Tyzenhaus organized a theatre and ballet school in Grodno and Postawy to train talented young people of both sexes from his estates¹⁰⁶. One of the school's pupils was Marianna Adolska, a very good performer, who later became a leading dancer in the royal "national company" which acted under the auspices of King Stanislaus Augustus¹⁰⁷. In large towns, such as Gdańsk and Cracow, the daughters and wives of burghers personified allegorical figures, virtues and antique goddesses in the *tableaux vivants* and performances organised on the occasion of the king's visits¹⁰⁸. From the very beginning the theatre offered many opportunities to women of various social groups. It is worth mentioning that many female convents, e.g. those of the nuns of the Visitation and the Benedictines, also staged theatre performances in which both the pupils and the nuns took part¹⁰⁹.

In addition to these amateur performers, professional actresses appeared in Poland in the late 18th century (to mention only Agnieszka Truskolaska, Teofila Marunowska, Franciszka Pierożyńska and Marianna Morawska; Adolska should also be included in this group). This was an extremely important development for it meant the opening of a new way of life to women. Professional acting made it possible for talented noblewomen of moderate means, townswomen and even peasant women to become independent financially, and gave them a profession in which they could realise their intellectual and artistic aspirations. In the West, in Italy and France, professional actresses (and singers) appeared even earlier, in the 17th and even as early as the 16th centuries.

Acting was all the more important as Polish women did not yet have similar possibilities in other fields. Despite the development of the theatre under Stanislaus Augustus, the career was open to but a small group of women who had to be not only

¹⁰⁶ B. Mamontowicz-Łojek, *Szkoła artystyczno-teatralna A. Tyzenhausa 1774–1785 (A Tyzenhaus's Art and Theatre School 1774–1785)*, Wrocław 1968.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. the entry in the *Biographical Dictionary of the Polish Theatre 1765–1965*, Warszawa 1973, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ M. Bogucka, *Żyć w dawnym Gdańsku*, pp. 222 ff.; M. Rożek, *Uroczystości w barokowym Krakowie (Celebrations in Baroque Cracow)*, Kraków 1976.

¹⁰⁹ M. Borkowska, *Życie codzienne*, pp. 319 ff.

talented but also enterprising and know how to overcome prejudices and stereotyped behaviour.

It was artistic handicrafts, a traditional female occupation, in which women could find an excellent outlet for their energy. Artistic embroidery flourished mostly in convents, for they supplied churches with altar-cloths, chasubles and other requisites¹¹⁰. But the royal court as well as the courts of magnates and rich nobility, were, even at the turn of the 16th century, also embroidery centres, especially of artistic embroidery with pearls and other jewels; these were usually gifts for a church¹¹¹. The custom began to disappear in the second half of the 17th century when the queens and great ladies began to favour the book at the expense of the needle. But artistic handicraft continued to thrive among townswomen¹¹². The importance of this kind of work as a form of an artistic creation wide open to women and giving them an opportunity to realise their artistic aspirations has been dealt with by J. J a n a č e k¹¹³.

Painting was a different matter. Very few Polish women took the brush into their hand. This was probably due to the weak development of painting in Poland. In such countries as Italy or the Netherlands, where painting thrived in the modern era, many women took to painting as early as the 16th and 17th centuries, some of them rising to eminence¹¹⁴. In the first half of the 17th century women painters appeared, however, in the Polish towns which were the centres of this branch of art: Dorota Baczkowska

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 124 ff.

¹¹¹ Anna Jagiellon loved embroidering and made many altar cloths for churches. M. B o g u ć k a, *Anna Jagiellonka*, Wrocław 1994, p. 136.

¹¹² "She loved best to make things for churches, to embroider precious chasubles", wrote A. M a k o w s k i, haglographer of the Cracow townswoman Barbara Langówna. "She could beautifully adorn purses, custodials and vela with silk, gold and pearls and sew magnificent corporals, albs and altar-cloths. Her artistry could be seen on the monstrances which she made for many churches in Cracow, adorning them with pearl crowns and precious stones". Quoted after A. K a r p i Ń s k i, *Kobieta*, p. 31. Maria Schuman from Gdańsk was famous all over 17th century Europe for her embroideries.

¹¹³ Janaček says that in the palace at Velké Meziříčí (Meserittum) in Bohemia which at the beginning of the 17th century belonged to Ładysław Borek and his wife Eliza from Žerotín, the *Frauenzimmer* was engaged in manufacturing decorative tapestries, curtains, pillow-cases and table cloths and in embroidering coats of arms with great artistry. J. J a n a č e k, *Żywot biatogłowy*, p. 123.

¹¹⁴ For instance, Caterina van Hemessen, Clara Peeters, Rachel Ruysch, Sofonisba Anquissola, Lavinia Fontana, Fede Galizia, Artomasia Gentileschi, Judith Leyster, cf. M. E. W i e s n e r, *Women*, pp. 150 ff.

and Agnieszka Piotrkowczykowa were active in Cracow, Konstancja Zirenberg and other rich patrician women (including the two aunts of Daniel Chodowiecki) in Gdańsk. In the 18th century great ladies, Antonina Niemiryczowa and, first and foremost, Józefina Amelia Potocka took to painting. Under the direction of Antoni Albertrandi Potocka is said to have painted St. Philip Neri's picture which hung in Warsaw in the Piarists' church for some time and later in Świętojańska Street. Another teacher of Potocka was Giovanni Battista Lampi under whose direction she copied a portrait of her husband¹¹⁵. Polish women, however, did not equal such famous women painters of Western Europe as the French paintress Elisabeth Lebrun-Vigée (who stayed in Warsaw for some time) or Angelica Kaufmann, a Swiss paintress who lived in Rome.

Women in Poland played a much greater role as patrons of culture than as creators. Women's cultural patronage was mostly inspired by their piety and religious zeal, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries. Women founded many churches and generously decorated their interiors with works of art, ordering altars, sculptures, paintings, Mass-requisites and votive offerings. As regards secular culture, many women granted salaries and allowances to artists and writers, financed publishing houses, purchased books and works of art, erected and equipped magnificent residences and laid out gardens (it was Bona Sforza and Anna Jagiellon who pioneered gardening in Poland; the tradition was continued by Anna Vasa). Culture was sponsored by women of various social groups, by queens (Bona¹¹⁶, Anna Jagiellon¹¹⁷, Marie-Louise¹¹⁸, Marie-Casimire¹¹⁹), great ladies, rich noblewomen and prosperous representatives of the urban society. The fact that as early as the 16th century writers dedicated many of their works to women testifies to females' interest in literature, their social position and ability to support men of letters. The

¹¹⁵ Cf. the biography by M. Czeppe in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 27, № 4, 1983, pp. 740-742.

¹¹⁶ M. Bogucka, *Bona Sforza d'Aragona*, Warszawa 1989, pp. 101 ff.

¹¹⁷ M. Bogucka, *Anna Jagiellonka*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 131 ff.

¹¹⁸ K. Targosz, *Uczony dwór Ludwika Marii Gonzagi 1646-1667 (The Learned Court of Marie-Louise Gonzaga 1646-1667)*, Wrocław 1975, *passim*.

¹¹⁹ M. Komarzyński, *Piękna królowa Marta Kazimiera d'Arquien-Sobieska (The Beautiful Queen Marie-Casimire d'Arquien-Sobieska)*, Kraków 1995, pp. 131 ff.

writers expected a return service, a financial equivalent or protection; this is why so many works were dedicated to queens and great ladies. Mikołaj Hussowski addressed his poem about the bison to Queen Bona, who was also the addressee of works by A. Krzycki and M. Rej. In 1584 Andrzej Głogowczyk dedicated a poem which sang the praises of wise women to Anna Jagiellon, and Piotr Skarga dedicated the first edition of his *Lives of the Saints* (1579) to her. In the third decade of the 16th century Father Walenty Wróbel from Poznań wrote a prose exegesis of David's *Psalter* for Katarzyna Górkowa from Szamotuły. In the 1630s Andrzej Glaber from Kobylin offered his *Stories about the Construction of Human Limbs* and his translation of the *Psalter* to Jadwiga Bonerowa from Kościelec. In 1581 Jan Leopolda wrote his *Picture of a Christian Life* for Krystyna Opalińska. Three authors dedicated their works to Dorota Barzyna: Father Jakub Wujek offered her *The Life of Jesus Christ* (1591), Piotr Skarga his *Spiritual Economy* (1606), and Marcin Paszkowski *A Sinful Man's Conversations with Angels about the Passion of Our Lord* (1612); Piotr Zbylitowski dedicated his *Disapproval of Women's Fanciful Attire* (1600) to Zofia Czarnkowska. We could go on quoting other names almost *ad infinitum*. Women also financed the publication of important works. Anna Vasa financed the printing of Syrenius' *Herbarium* at the beginning of the 17th century, and Kasper Niesiecki's armorial was published in 1728–1743 at the cost of Maria Tarłowa, née Branicka, wife of the voivode of Lublin.

Great ladies and rich noblewomen had the greatest possibilities of sponsoring culture because of their financial abilities. But cultural patronage was also exercised, frequently on a large scale, by townswomen, as A. Karpiński has recently shown¹²⁰. Rich townswomen, for instance Zuzanna Amendówna in Cracow and Zofia Henłowa in Lwów, spent large sums on the construction of churches; the latter founded St. Sophie's church called after her patron saint¹²¹. Many townswomen founded altars¹²², altar cloths and other church requisites¹²³. Religious patronage prevailed over secular patronage in townswomen's

¹²⁰ A. Karpiński, *Kobieta*, pp. 236 ff.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 255 ff. Also Z. Kuchowicz, *Wizerunki*, p. 148.

¹²² A. Karpiński, *Kobieta*, p. 237.

¹²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 238–239, 299.

activity¹²⁴, and was really exercised on a large scale. An analysis of the origin of liturgical requisites delivered to the treasury of St. Mary church in Cracow in 1591–1703 shows that 33 per cent of the donors were women¹²⁵. Patronage was not confined to a gift of money: some townswomen gave detailed instructions on how to decorate a chapel; sometimes they designed chalices and chasubles¹²⁶, which testifies to their good taste, expert artistic preferences and independence in the field of culture. Another type of townswomen's patronage was the founding of epitaphs and tombstones, one-third of which were paid for by women; it was frequently women who decided what a tombstone should look like¹²⁷. The practice of collecting paintings, books, expensive tapestries and numismatics was the main forms of secular patronage. The impressive collections assembled by the rich women of Poznań, Lwów, Warsaw and especially Cracow were not inferior to those initiated and owned by men¹²⁸.

The patronage extended by women of the middle nobility (foundation and refurbishing of village churches, foundation of family tombstones and epitaphs) was similar to townspeople's patronage, but it was only the wives of magnates who were able to conduct large-scale activity in many fields. In the 17th century they patronised mainly sacral art and the construction of churches, their activity stemming from religious motives, from their ardent piety and the wish to secure salvation after death. In 1607 Elżbieta Sieniawska, née Gostomska founded a church at the Jesuits' college in Lwów, offering an enormous sum of 40,000 złotys for this purpose¹²⁹. When the church had been built, Gostomska laid out large sums to decorate it with a typically Baroque splendour. Another pious lady, Anna Alojza Ostrog-ska¹³⁰, founded Jesuit churches in Ostróg and Jarosław in the first half of the 17th century. At the beginning of that century,

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 299.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 300.

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 300; cf. also Michał Rożek, *Mecenat artystyczny mieszczaństwa krakowskiego w XVII w. (The Cracow Townspeople's Patronage over the Arts in the 17th Century)*, Kraków 1977, p. 128.

¹²⁷ A. Karpiński, *Kobieta*, pp. 302, 305.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 305.

¹²⁹ Z. Kuchowicz, *Wizerunki*, p. 175.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 186.

Anna Radziwiłłowa née Kettler built a church at Olwita and adorned it with a picture of Our Lady of Loretto which she had brought from Rome; she also generously endowed other churches¹³¹. In the second half of the 17th century Teofila Sobieska, née Daniłowicz erected a Dominican church at Żółkwia and founded tombstones for her husband and her son Marcin¹³². At the same time Zofia Konarzewska founded a church for the Oratorian order at Gostyń; it was built in the Venetian style which she came to know during her visit to Italy¹³³.

Many religious foundations were set up by Katarzyna Radziwiłłowa (*primo voto* Zasławska–Ostrogska), née Sobieska. At Biała she built a monastery and a church for the Order of the Reformists (the latter according to a design by A. Locci the Younger) and she also settled Basilian monks at Biała, building a church and a monastery for them (in the 1690s). She founded an altar for the parish church at Biała which she restored (the interior was decorated with paintings). In the 1680s she erected a parish church at Sławatycze to replace a Protestant church. At Nieśwież she offered 40,000 złotys to the Jesuits' church for a great marble altar and floor, for "goldened brass railings" and many gold liturgical requisites. She had copper coffins with silver tablets made for the Radziwiłłs buried in the vaults of the church. She offered large sums to hospitals and monasteries; the latter received from her not only money but also paintings, altars and expensive objects (e.g. in 1693 she bought a lead coffin for the remains of Father Piotr Skarga).

Katarzyna Radziwiłłowa also supported literary and publishing initiatives of a religious character. She inspired Z. Morsztyn to write *Emblemata* and gave money to S. Piśkorski to publish a translation of St. Jerome's *Vitae Patrum* in 1688. At Radziwiłłowa's request an unknown Jesuit drew up a list of saints for each day of the year, supplementing each name with a brief life story.

She also exercised secular patronage. Being a book lover, she renovated and greatly expanded the library at Biała. She spared no expense to renovate and decorate the interiors of the Radziwiłł

¹³¹ Cf. the biography by H. Lulewicz in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 30, N° 2, 1987, p. 384.

¹³² K. Targosz, *Sawantki*, pp. 154–155.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, pp. 154–155.

residences at Biała and in Warsaw. She asked the famous architect G. Bellotii to build a palace in the garden at Biała and a summer residence in neighbouring Cicibor; she also initiated the establishment of a hunting centre (a little palace, pheasantry, zoological garden) at Rozkosz, a small locality near Biała¹³⁴.

In the 18th century great ladies were mostly interested in promoting the construction of palaces and magnificent residences. Elżbieta Sieniawska, née Lubomirska rebuilt Puławy which had been burned by Swedes in 1706 and which then belonged to the Sieniawskis. From 1722 on the building work was directed by the architect F. M. Mayer, the interiors were decorated by Italian stucco-workers, P. I. Comparatti and F. Fumo, brought from Warsaw. Sieniawska also rebuilt and splendidly decorated the palaces at Łubnice, Laszki and Oleszyce (where she employed the Italian painters C. de Prevo and J. Rossi). After buying Wilanów in 1720, Sieniawska set to rebuild and decorate it, employing the prominent architect J. Fontana, the stucco-workers Comparatti and Fumo, the painter Rossi and the sculptor J. J. Pleresch. In addition to reconditioning the palace and enriching its interiors, she had side wings built. She also exercised sacral patronage, restoring the Warsaw Czerniaków church and Bernardines' monastery in 1715–1723, erecting churches at Sieniawa, Cracow (for Piarists), Lwów (Capuchins) and Lublin (Discalced Carmelites). She founded a new church dedicated to St. Aloysius Gonzaga for the nuns of the Visitation in Warsaw, enriched the interior decorations of churches in Jarosław, and contributed to the construction of a church at Włostowice near Puławy. She was also a collector and amassed valuable books, calendars and newspapers from all over the world, creating impressive libraries at Puławy and Łubnice¹³⁵.

At the same time Anna Radziwiłłowa, née Sanguszko carried out a large-scale programme of reconstruction of the palaces at Biała, Warsaw and Gdańsk. The palace at Biała was decorated in the Rococo style and furnished with portraits of the Radziwiłłs

¹³⁴ D. Garbusińska, *Katarzyna z Sobieskich Radziwiłłowa — kobieta dwóch epok (Katarzyna Radziwiłłowa, née Sobieska, a Woman of Two Epochs)*, in: *Studia z dziejów epoki Jana III Sobieskiego*, ed. K. Matwijowski, Wrocław 1984, pp. 167–173, and also the biography by J. Jaroszuk in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 30, № 3, pp. 392–396.

¹³⁵ Cf. the biography by A. K. Linczowski and B. Popiołek in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 37, № 1, 1996, pp. 90–96.

and mural paintings glorifying the family. In the neighbouring localities of Sławacinek and Rozkosz she had recreation palaces built. Her house in the suburb New Gardens in Gdańsk and the Radziwiłłs' palace in Warsaw were completely rebuilt; the latter became a magnificent residence surrounded by an artistically arranged garden. She engaged the Italian architect Domenico Cioli as well as many other specialists (including stucco-workers and wood-carvers) brought from Prussia, Saxony and Italy. Anna Radziwiłłowa was also a collector. She bought books, greatly enlarging the libraries at Biała and Nieśwież, collected documents and put the Radziwiłł archives in order. She financed the publication of prayer books (*St. Mary's Week*, 1724 and *A Nobleman's Play with the Lord*, 1726). There was a painters' atelier at her court (J. Fulchi, Karol Gadomski, Ksawery Dominik Heski, Józef Wilkowski); this shows that she created a permanent, not only a temporal, patronage over painting. But the atelier was worth the money she spent on it for the artists worked out models and designs for her factories.

Radziwiłłowa also sponsored some sacral undertakings, though on a smaller scale. She founded churches in small localities, at Hanna, Niehniewicze, Naliboki, Piszczac, Sławatycze and Delatycze. Her help made it possible to complete the construction of the basilica of the Congregation of the Oratory at Studzianna and to decorate its interior. She founded expensive crowns and dresses for St. Mary's picture in the Paulites' church at Leśna and generously defrayed the cost of the coronation of St. Mary's icon in the Greek Catholic church of the Basilians' monastery at Żyrowice near Słonim¹³⁶.

From the 1740s on, the great ladies' patronage was of an increasingly lay character; this was connected with the improvement in women's education and consequently, broader range of their interests.

The Lubomirski ladies, Urszula née Branicka and Zofia née Krasińska, were well known art patronesses. Urszula's residence,

¹³⁶ See the biography by W. Karkucińska in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 30, No 3, 1987, pp. 385–387, and also J. Bartoszewicz, *Zamek biały (The Castle at Biała)*, Lwów 1881; Z. Kamińska, *Fachowcy cudzoziemscy w manufakturach magnackich (Foreign Specialists in Magnates' Factories)*, "Przegląd Historyczny" 1952, No 3–4; E. Łopaciński, *Zamek w Białej Podlaskiej. Materiały archiwalne (The Castle at Biała Podlaska. Archival Materials)*, "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki" vol. 19, 1957, pp. 27–48.

Retyrada, described by poetess Elżbieta Drużbacka, brought Romantic residences into fashion in Poland. Urszula cosponsored also the construction of Collegium Nobilium in Warsaw in the 1740s. In the middle of the 18th century Zofia engaged the famous architect Jakub Fontana to rebuild the Lubomirski palace in Warsaw and then remodelled the residence in Opole in neo-classical style. Such prominent architects as Jakub Fontana, Domenico Merlini and Ferdinand Max were engaged by her to carry out the work. In the Opole residence she arranged a natural history collection, an impressive library and a mineralogical cabinet. She was interested in the publishing movement and supported printing initiatives and writers. Knowing that she took a great interest in science, Józef Rogaliński and Antoni Wiśniewski dedicated their works to her.

Helena Radziwiłłowa, née Przeździecka, a great art lover and collector of antiquities, refurbished the Radziwiłł palace at Nieborów sumptuously and, in line with the fashion of the epoch, arranged a "sentimental park" at Arkadia near Łowicz, erecting many small palaces and buildings (Diana's Temple, Amphitheatre, etc.). She employed the best architects, sculptors and painters, including Sz. B. Zug, H. Ittar, J. Staggi, J. P. Norblin and Bacciarelli's disciple Wojciech Jaszczold¹³⁷. The learned Anna Jabłonowska, in keeping with her scientific interests, assembled an impressive library and an excellent collection of natural history objects¹³⁸. One of the most prominent patronesses at the end of the 18th century was Elżbieta Lubomirska, née Czartoryska, a woman of great artistic culture. She reconstructed the Wilanów palace, renovated its interior (architect Szymon Bogumił Zug), built a residence in the Mokotów suburb of Warsaw (the same architect) and the suburban villa "Delight" (in what is now the Ursynów quarter of Warsaw). Together with her husband, Stanisław Lubomirski, she carried out the reconstruction of the Lubomirski palace in Warsaw in the 1770s; several years later they renovated the palace in Krakowskie Przedmieście Street which she inherited from her father (architect of the interior — J. Ch. Kamsetzer). She initiated the construction of a neo-classical palace at Raj near Brzeżany and the rebuilding

¹³⁷ See the biography by A. Ryszkiel in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 30, № 3, 1987, pp. 390–392.

¹³⁸ See fn. 100.

of the palace at Winiary near Wiślica. But first and foremost, Lubomirska was the creator of the splendid residence at Łańcut, the construction of which started in the 1770s and continued until the beginning of the 19th century. Lubomirska purchased objects of art (antique sculptures and vases, modern sculptures, paintings, drawings, china-ware, clocks, silver-ware) all over Europe and placed the collection she had assembled in the Łańcut palace, thus adding splendour to the residence¹³⁹.

Another prominent patroness at the end of the 18th century was Izabela Czartoryska. She laid out a wonderful park at Powązki near Warsaw on the model of Trianon in Paris, with "peasant cottages" (in fact luxuriously equipped pavillions) and artificial "Romantic" ruins scattered amidst luxuriant vegetation in the French fashion. The beautiful Powązki park became a favourite place for meetings and amusements of the Polish Rococo élite. But the tragedy of the partitions of Poland soon changed Izabela from a woman of the world into an ardent patriot ready to sacrifice herself for her country. Thanks to her patronage, a museum of national relics, tacit witnesses of Poland's great past, was set up at Powązki. It was due to this uncommon lady that a unique centre of national culture was organised on the threshold of the 19th century; it helped Polish national consciousness to live on in the most difficult times when Poland did not exist as a state¹⁴⁰.

The data presented above are only a brief survey of the most significant events, facts and personalities. In addition to religious life, cultural activity was another gate opening broader fields of freedom to women. Great progress was undoubtedly achieved in this respect in the 16th–18th centuries. Access to education, be it only elementary, was recognised as an indispensable element

¹³⁹ W. Fijałkowski, *Łazienka wilanowska marszałkowej Lubomirskiej (The Wilanów Bathroom of the Wife of Marshal Lubomirski)*, in: *Muzeum i twórca. Studia ku czci S. Lorentza*, Warszawa 1969; B. Majewska-Maszkowska, *Architektura w mecenacie artystycznym Izabeli z Czartoryskich Lubomirskiej (Architecture in the Patronage Extended by Izabela Lubomirska née Czartoryska)*, in: *Klasycyzm. Studia z Historii Sztuki*, vol. 11, 1968; Z. Kossakowska-Szajnajca, B. Majewska-Maszkowska, *Zamek w Łańcutcie (The Castle at Łańcut)*, Warszawa 1964; the biography by J. Michalski in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 17, No 4, pp. 625–629.

¹⁴⁰ See the biography by H. Waniczkówna in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. IV, 1938, pp. 241–246, and also S. Wasylewski, *Portrety pań wytwornych (Portraits of Refined Ladies)*, Lwów 1924, and Z. Kuchowicz, *Wizerunki*, pp. 377 ff.

of girls' upbringing, and its scope was gradually extended. The intellectual level of Polish women rose considerably between the 16th and 18th centuries; from shy silent beings whom Górnicki had to exclude from his dialogue in the *Courtier*, they developed into resolute well read witty ladies with considerable knowledge of the world in the 18th century. Their mobility increased visibly and its forms changed from pilgrimages to travels for medical, tourist and even political purposes. Women began to take an ever greater part in cultural life (increase in reading habits, various forms of literary and artistic work, large-scale patronage).

At first their participation in cultural life was confined to devotional activity (women's first writings were of a religious character and their patronage was of a sacral character throughout the 16th and 17th century); later it broadened and assumed various lay forms. Women learned to express their own experiences and emotions by pen (Zbąska, Rusinowa, writing diaries and letters). They were perturbed by the lot of their dying country, and at the same time were able to wisely analyse the events they witnessed (Fiszerowa). Susceptibility to beauty and a growing individual artistic taste, an increasing interest in art and science, and acquaintance with these fields turned many women into prominent patrons of architecture, sculpture, painting, into great collectors and art asponsors. Without the Radziwiłł, Sieniawski, Lubomirski and Czartoryski ladies, and many other women of lesser social position, there would have been no Polish rococo, neo-classicism and enlightenment. Nor would conditions have been created during the partition period for making Polish culture a guarantor and a form of survival of national identity.

(Translated by Janina Dorosz)