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‘MONUMENTS LONGER LASTING THAN BRASS’? RECOLLECTION OF FUNERARY TEXTS AND THEIR FEMALE HEROES: EDITION OF FRAGMENTS FROM THE ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS OF THE MUSEUM OF DISTINGUISHED POLISH WOMEN IN LVIV, 1929–39*

The texts proposed in this section belong to their own specific historical and literary category, particularly given the circumstances of how they came about. They are memoirs possessing a strong didactic character, not devoid of individual identity, and boasting creative and affirmative traits. The authors of both texts, and their protagonists, were women: they represented the privileged classes in Polish society (they belonged to the gentry and the intelligentsia). They possessed appropriate cultural and economic capital for their writing endeavours, were engaged in pedagogical and civic work, and participated in the independence movement. Through their activities and positions, both the authors and the protagonists were also points of reference, models for the positions and attitudes taken by women, and vanguard adherents of the women’s movement, who espoused causes such as education, grassroots activity, independence and emancipation. The texts aimed to persuade society of the merits and sacrifices of their protagonists. An important thread in these memoirs is, of course, the collective experience: the struggle for the independence of Poland and women’s participation in historical events. This collective experience was also assigned a cultural code: the fulfilment of the roles of mothers, home carers and advocates of national culture.

Both texts are held in the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv¹ and are a part of the legacy store of the Museum of Distinguished

* This text was prepared as part of the project “Patriotki jutra? Działania niepodległościowe, postawy obywatelskie i praca edukacyjna Polek we Lwowie (1863–1939) w świetle materiałów zebranych przez Muzeum Zasłużonych Polek we Lwowie oraz Ossolineum. Edycja i komentarz” (National Programme for the Development of the Humanities, no. 11H 18 0367 86).

¹ Up until 1940, the archive functioned as Archiwum Grodzkie i Miejskie Lwowa, and retained the name after the incorporation of Lviv into the Ukrainian

Polish Women [Muzeum Zasłużonych Polek], which are in turn a part of the files of the Union of Polish Christian Women's Societies [Akta Zjednoczenia Polskich Chrześcijańskich Towarzystw Kobiety].² The archival resource of the Museum of Distinguished Polish Women is the result of the activities carried out by this same institution in the years 1929–39. The archive is made up of collected memories, recollections and personal accounts, ego-documents and other forms that commemorate the achievements of Polish women.³ The two biographies presented in this volume were collected as part of a campaign to publicise the goals of the Museum of Distinguished Polish Women, carried out by female activists from Lviv just before the opening of the institution. In the press and during occasional social gatherings, museologists called for a compilation of the testimonies of these women's lives, their activities and heroism; and for these materials to be shared with the newly established initiative. The texts submitted to the Museum were of various length, written in various languages, and were characterised by a varied literary phrase and haptic (typescripts vs manuscripts, the cheapest paper vs letterheads with coats of arms, etc.) – and at the same time, they had one goal in common: to collect, edit and store the remembrances of deceased female citizens, the inhabitants of Polish lands, most often representatives of the gentry and the intelligentsia. The Museum's task was to create an almost national pantheon of Polish women, to include their lives and achievements in a universal narrative about patriotism, service on behalf of the country and civic attitudes.

The activity of the Museum of Distinguished Polish Women covers the last decade of the Second Polish Republic (1929–39). It is related to Lviv's traditions of women's emancipation and the organisation of the women's movement in this

Soviet Republic; whereas after 1990 it carried the title Центральний Державний Історичний Архів України, м. Львів (ЦДІАЛ). Its English title is the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv.

² About the union and its characteristics, see Lidia Michalska-Bracha, 'Akta Zjednoczenia Polskich Chrześcijańskich Towarzystw Kobiety w Lwowie (1913–1939) w zbiorach lwowskich', in Lidia Michalska-Bracha and Magdalena Przeniosło (eds), *Znani i nieznanie międzywojennego Lwowa. Studia i materiały* (Kielce, 2007), 111–22.

³ The very name of the umbrella organisation for women's initiatives in Lviv, i.e. the Union of Polish Christian Women's Societies, contained a specific assumption pertaining to the homogeneity of the 'Polishness' of distinguished Polish women (Christian, meaning Catholic). Lviv's multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity, also in the women's movement and organisations has been addressed by contemporary historians such as Dietlind Hüchtker, *Geschichte als Performance. Politische Bewegungen in Galizien um 1900* (Frankfurt–New York, 2014); Angélique Leszczawski-Schwerk, *Die umkämpften Tore zur Gleichberechtigung. Frauenbewegungen in Galizien (1867–1918)* (Wien, 2014).

city. Initiatives looked to commemorate the heroism of women during wars and uprisings, as well as their contribution to educational work in society. The direct originators of the establishment of the institution were two activists connected with Lviv. The first was Antonina Machczyńska (1837–1919), who prepared the groundwork for establishing the Museum at the beginning of the twentieth century, and who left behind an archive of collected materials.⁴ The continuator of her legacy was Maria Bruchnalska (1869–1944),⁵ a scholar and activist, who, with the cooperation and academic assistance of Łucja Charewiczowa (1897–1943) and the financial and local support of Eleonora Lubomirska, managed to found the Museum of Distinguished Polish Women, which was officially opened in January 1930.⁶ The unicameral exhibition space consisted mainly of portraits, busts or photographs of women with short biographical descriptions and objects related to Poland's past; artefacts that belonged to or had been made by women. In this way, in one room of the museum, the iconic female soldier Emilia Plater⁷ and the poetess Maria Konopnicka⁸ were displayed, as well as the images of women whose biographies were considered by the

⁴ Antonina Machczyńska (1837–1919) – teacher, social and independence activist, involved in the struggle for women's access to education; see S. Konarski, 'Antonina Machczyńska', in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* (hereinafter: PSB), xviii (1973), 626–7; Lidia Michalska-Bracha, 'Pamięć przeszłości własnej. Wokół idei Muzeum Zasłużonych Polek we Lwowie', in Marek Przeniosło and Katarzyna Sierakowska (eds), *Pamięć historyczna kobiet* (Kielce, 2007), 25–38 (here 28–36).

⁵ Maria Bruchnalska (1869–1944) – social and educational activist, writer and journalist, initiator of memorial publications and museum founder. See Lidia Michalska-Bracha, 'Maria Bruchnalska i jej badania nad udziałem kobiet w powstaniu styczniowym', in Leonid Zaszkilniak and Jerzy Maternicki (eds), *Wielokulturowe środowisko historyczne Lwowa* (Rzeszów, 2004/5), 435–48.

⁶ *Poświęcenie i otwarcie Muzeum Zasłużonych Polek we Lwowie 19 stycznia 1930 roku* (Lwów, 1930).

⁷ Emilia Plater (1806–31) – participant of the November Uprising of 1830–1, commemorated and made famous for posterity in a poem by Adam Mickiewicz. Emilia Plater enjoys a place of remembrance for the participation of women in war and insurrectionary struggles. Stories about her were strongly popularised in the 19th century, and maintained throughout the 20th century. See Dietlind Hüchtker and Karsten Holste, 'Die bewaffnete Heldin 1813–1913–2013: Wahrnehmungen, Deutungen und Gedächtnis', in Maria Dmitrieva and Lars Karl (eds), *Das Jahr 1813. Ostmitteleuropa und Leipzig: Die Völkerschlacht als (trans)nationaler Erinnerungsort* (Wien–Köln–Weimar, 2016), 47–67.

⁸ Maria Konopnicka (1842–1910) – poet and writer, who touched upon the themes of independence, and featured national and social motifs. Needless to say, Konopnicka in her lifetime was one of the icons of the 'patriotic' education of young people.

museum's employees to be in line with the goals of the Museum. In other words, these women were 'deserving of their place'.⁹ Most of the women featured were educational activists, who had participated in the independence movement and uprisings or wars. They were often writers, but most were teachers – a specific role model for those generations of women. The exhibition of the Museum of Distinguished Polish Women was a part of the larger Lubomirski Museum at the Ossoliński National Institute.

The Museum of Distinguished Polish Women was both the product and producer of a specific 'remembrance policy' (that is: a historical, archival, and scholarly activity aimed at locating in museums a past that belonged to women), which many activists of social movements, including women's emancipation movements looked to activate and implement from the end of the 1920s. The women's movement in Europe, including Poland, was a breeding ground for ideas and projects. As a result, treatises, pamphlets and articles were published relating to the production of knowledge and the storage of the memory of one's own past, aimed at inscribing women's history into the universal circulation of thought.¹⁰ In the Polish context, attention was paid primarily to publications closely related to the participation of women in the independence movement and their roles in uprisings and during the First World War. Two such publications were *Ciche bohaterki. Udział kobiet w powstaniu styczniowym* and *Wierna służba* [*Silent Heroines. On the Participation*

⁹ Anna Nowakowska-Wierzchość, 'Zasłużona Polka, czyli kto? Biografie kobiet zebrane przez Muzeum Zasłużonych Polek we Lwowie (1930–9)', in Joanna Getka and Iwona Krycka-Michnowska (eds), *Kobiety w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej* (Warszawa, 2020), 217–27.

¹⁰ One of the most important promoters of women's history was the co-founder of the Museum, Łucja Charewiczowa, who, among others, at the forum of the 7th International Congress of Historians in Warsaw in 1933, delivered a lecture entitled 'Est-il fondé d'écrire une histoire spéciale de la femme?', in *La Pologne au VII-e Congrès International des Sciences Historiques. Varsovie 1933* (Warszawa, 1933). In contemporary humanities, many works have been written on feminist memorial sites, historicising the past of women, see Sylvia Paetschek and Sylvia Schraut, 'Erinnerung und Geschlecht – auf der Suche nach einer transnationalen Erinnerungskultur in Europa', *Historische Mitteilungen*, xix (2006), 15–28; Katarzyna Sierakowska and Marek Przeniosło, *Pamięć historyczna kobiet* (Kielce, 2007); Angelika Schaser, Sylvia Schraut, and Petra Steymans-Kurz, *Erinnern, vergessen, umdeuten? Europäische Frauenbewegungen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main–New York, 2019); Francisca de Haan, 'Archive Fever, Resistance, and Loss: A Rereading of the IAV's Early History', *Yearbook of Women's History: Gender and Archiving. Past, Present and Future*, xxvii (Amsterdam, 2017), 21–38.

of Women in the January Uprising' and 'Faithful Service'].¹¹ Such publications revealed women's forgotten or unrecorded participation in these events. Here the aim was not only educational; the authors wanted to place these heroines within the frameworks and rituals of the jubilee celebrations of these events in the Second Polish Republic, as well as to give a voice to the participants of those events. Therefore, the authors or editors themselves played a unique role in these editions: Aleksandra Piłsudska played such a role in terms of her faithful service. Through her activities, coupled with the role played by her family, she defined the legitimacy of the merits and personal war experiences of women. In addition to recording the memories of the participants of war-time events, an important role in shaping the landscapes of remembrance of women was the series 'The Biographies of Distinguished Women', under the patronage of the Women's Civic Work Union [Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet], one of the largest women's organisations of the Second Polish Republic, as well as the smaller Polish Association of Women with Higher Education [Polskie Stowarzyszenie Kobiet z Wyższym Wykształceniem]. The series 'Biographies of Distinguished Polish Women', like the 'bibliographisation' of the contribution of women to the development of science, culture and society, was a 'wandering idea' specific to the women's movement in Europe, wherein particular contexts were variously implemented.¹² This series of commemorative, jubilee and exhibition initiatives represented an interesting example of the construction of a past and of an attempt to enter a narrative into wider circulation. It referred to the achievements of other institutions with the tasks of civic (patriotic) education and the creation of national awareness, such as the Polish Museum in Rapperswil or the Polish War Archives in Vienna.¹³

¹¹ Maria Bruchnalska, *Ciche bohaterki. Udział kobiet w Powstaniu Styczniowym (materjały)* (Miejsce Piastowe, 1934); Aleksandra Piłsudska et al. (eds), *Wierna Służba: Wspomnienia uczestniczek walk o niepodległość 1910–1915* (Warszawa, 1927); Aleksandra Piłsudska et al. (eds), *Służba ojczyźnie. Wspomnienia uczestniczek walk o niepodległość 1915–1918* (Warszawa, 1929).

¹² Dietlind Hüchtler and Alfrun Kliems (eds), *Überbringen – Überformen – Überblenden. Theorietransfer im 20. Jahrhundert* (Böhlau, 2011), 7; Iwona Dadej, *Beruf und Berufung transnational. Deutsche und polnische Akademikerinnen in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Osnabrück, 2019), 162–85.

¹³ On social and private archives as places of remembrance, see Magdalena Wiśniewska, 'Archiwum jako miejsce pamięci', *Archiwa-Zbiory-Kancelarie*, iv, 6 (2013), 137–48; Waldemar Chorażyczewski, 'Archiwa i pamięć. Z dziejów polskich archiwów', *Archiwa-Kancelarie-Zbiory*, i (Toruń, 2005), 23–4; Wanda Roman, 'Aby Polska nie zginęła. Polskie Archiwum Wojenne (1915–1921) i jego zbiory', *Archeion*, 120 (2019), 185–202.

The protagonists of the published memoirs and recollections are women associated with education and the independence movement. They were also writers and journalists:

Felicja Wasilewska-Boberska (1825–89) was a teacher and educational activist, a writer and an ‘ambassador of education’.¹⁴ She was closely associated with Lviv, where she established a boarding school for girls, around which a group of female alumni was formed, who continued the educational and social activities of their mentor. Boberska based her teachings on the achievements of the historian Joachim Lelewel¹⁵ and the pedagogical treatises of Klementyna Hoffmanowa.¹⁶ The reference to figures of merit for the Polish nation was the foundation of Boberska’s historical and patriotic educational approach. When educating girls, she recalled the women participants of the November Uprising, presenting them as models of virtue and true patriotism, women who claimed their rightful place next to men. She wrote that Polish women “had also fulfilled their duty, as they deserved their homeland and countrymen to no less a degree”.¹⁷ She emphasised the importance of belles-lettres in education, which shaped the spirit and awareness of one’s identity. She was a valued figure in the Lviv community, not only for her educational activity, but also for having played a foundational role in the city’s cultural and intellectual life. The biography of Boberska edited in this volume was written by Aniela Witosławska-d’Abancourt.¹⁸

Emma Jeleńska-Dmochowska (1864–1919) in her literary work, using her maiden name Jeleńska, was hailed as the ‘Polish Jane Austen’, she made

¹⁴ Aniela Witosławska-d’Abancourt de Franqueville, ‘Felicja Boberska’, in *PSB*, ii (1936), 145; the term ‘ambasadorka wychowania’ [ambassador of education] is taken from: Joanna Falkowska, *Ambasadorki wychowania. Poglądy pedagogiczne polskich kobiet w II połowie XIX wieku i początkach XX wieku* (Toruń, 2018), cf. also Joanna Falkowska, ‘W służbie edukacji kobiet. Działalność Felicji Boberskiej z Wasilewskich (1825–89)’, *Studia Paedagogica Ignatiana*, 3 (2016), 131.

¹⁵ Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861) – historian, Slavist, numismatist, bibliographer and politician; regarded as one of the founders of Polish historiography, who was open to comparative studies, the extensive use of sources, and incorporating research on less privileged social groups. Cf. Stefan Kieniewicz, ‘Joachim Józef Benedykt Lelewel’, in *PSB*, xvii (1972), 21–5.

¹⁶ Klementyna Tańska-Hoffmanowa (1798–1845) – educational activist, considered to be the precursor of educational thought for girls in Poland.

¹⁷ Felicja Boberska, *O Polkach, które szczególnie zasłużyły się Ojczyźnie w powstaniu listopadowym* (Lwów, 1893), 1.

¹⁸ Aniela Witosławska-d’Abancourt (1862 or 1870–1928) – educational activist, involved in supporting the People’s School Society.

her debut in the daily *Kurier Codzienny* in 1898 with the short story *Panienka* ['A Young Maiden'] for which the editorial office awarded her the Bolesław Prus prize. Jeleńska-Dmochowska in her writings was interested in social change and the transformation of social roles for women. She was associated with the Vilnius Circle of Polish Women's Equality [*Koło Równouprawienia Polek*], she also co-founded the Ladies Patriotic Circle [*Koło Patriotek*], the aim of which was to create a 'national awareness among women of the working classes' by educating them and linking them with emergent Poland, minimising the impact of slogans about the break-off or future independence of Lithuania. The edited biography also includes the figure of Emilia Węławska (1863–1921), a teacher, an educational activist, a children's writer, and a translator associated with Vilnius – she produced the first Polish translation of *Lord Jim*, and her biography was also included in the collection of the Museum of Distinguished Polish Women. In the interwar period, the writer's biographical profile was featured in the widely read series 'Biographies of Distinguished Polish Women', initiated and created by the sympathisers and members of the women's movement. In 1951 her work was censored and withdrawn from libraries. Today Jeleńska-Dmochowska is a forgotten figure and known only to a small group of researchers on the era.¹⁹ The author of *Emma Jeleńska's* biography was Maria Reutt, whose professional and social work in many cases resembles the protagonist's life.²⁰

While editing the texts, we followed the methodology as set out by Ireneusz Ihnatowicz.²¹ The persons or events (known and reconstructed) featured in the text have been provided with footnotes. In the English version, we decided to excise text fragments that were too detailed in terms of their descriptions of events, landscapes, people, etc. We marked the editorial intervention (text abbreviations) with an ellipsis ..., while restating in the footnote what the

¹⁹ Ludwika Życka and Wanda Niedziałkowska-Dobaczewska, *Emma Jeleńska-Dmochowska: strażniczka kresowa* (Kraków, 1932); Zdzisława Mokranowska, 'Emma Jeleńska-Dmochowska dzisiaj. Między Rodziewiczówną a harlequinem?', in Krzysztof Fiołek (ed.) *Literatura niewyczerpana. W kręgu mniej znanych twórców polskiej literatury lat 1863–1914* (Kraków, 2014), 126.

²⁰ Maria Reutt (1862 or 1867–1942), writer, author of novels for young people, journalist, and dramatist, educational activist, co-founded a network of Polish secret schools and libraries in the Russian partition, activist in women's organisations, including the Women's Equality Club. For many years she worked in the libraries and primary schools section of the Polish School Society in Vilnius, co-organised by Emma Jeleńska and her husband, Kazimierz Dmochowski.

²¹ Ireneusz Ihnatowicz, 'Projekt instrukcji wydawniczej dla źródeł historycznych XIX i początku XX wieku', *Studia Źródłoznawcze. Commentationes*, vi (1962), 99–124.

deleted fragments referred to. Both texts are located in the collections at the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv, as Files of the Union of Polish Christian Women's Societies. A text about Felicja Boberska by Aniela Witosławska-d'Abancourt is kept under the reference number 841/1/122, pp. 32–7); the typescript contains corrections: punctuation, misprints and errors handwritten in black ink. The text about Emma Jeleńska-Dmochowska by Maria Reutt has the reference number 841/1/122, pp. 76–80; it is a typescript, and also contains handwritten corrections of misprints and errors in black ink.

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I

ANIELA WITOSŁAWSKA-D'ABANCOURT, *BIOGRAPHY OF FELICJA WASILEWSKA-BOBERSKA*

In the middle of the last century, one of the most distinguished women was undoubtedly Felicja Boberska, née Wasilewska. She shone for all. Her merits in the field of education and the mentoring of girls were all the greater because our Polish nation, following unsuccessful attempts to gain freedom through armed uprisings, had begun to flag in spirit. Many had fallen into apathy, whereas others had so lost their way that they condemned military actions, reconciling themselves to the existing state of affairs. Teaching in schools in a foreign language did not improve education, but rather impeded it; the mother tongue was forbidden; any dissemination of the emerging works of our great national poets was punished with imprisonment. Only stories by the hearth could fan the flames of national feeling. In response to these times, for 33 years she kindled spirits, awakening feelings of love for the homeland and showing a willingness to devote herself to this ideal: inspiring battalions of young Polish women in the process.

Madame Felicja, as she was commonly called, was the eldest daughter of Tadeusz and Antonina (née Radwańska) Wasilewski. Born in Lviv in 1825, and brought up in the countryside, she retained a deep feeling for nature and a love of the country folk. Her father was the last Marshall of the Crown and a deputy to the Galician States. He was a highly educated man, gifted with a talent for writing, and blessed with a devotion to his homeland. He was behind the establishment of many beneficial institutions that exist to this day, such as the [Galician] Economic Society, the [Galician Society] Savings Bank, and the [Galician] Gentry Savings Banks. He devoted himself in particular to the abolition of serfdom. He was devoted to the upbringing and education of his eldest daughter Felicja, selecting teachers and governesses, who could scarcely comprehend her abilities and enthusiasm for learning: Felicja learned geography from Wincenty Pol; whereas Jan Dobrzański, a well-known journalist and national activist, taught her Polish history, literature, aesthetics and philosophy.

In the home of the Marshall, the elite of Lviv society, characterised by their patriotism, talent, and education, would gather. Attending the weekly *soirées* of Madame Felicja's father, were such luminaries as Waclaw Zaleski, Agenor Gołuchowski, prince Leon [Ludwik] Sapieha,

Karol Szajnocha, Aleksander Fredro and many others.¹ Important national matters were discussed on such occasions. More than one idea for the salvation of our homeland was proposed here and was put into action.

It was in such a climate that the future nurturer of Polish women's education came of age and flourished. From early on she was drawn to pedagogical work, helping her mother in the raising of her younger siblings. And not only that, she gathered a group of young ladies around her, teaching them for no payment Polish and ancient history. Soon the harsh realities of life confirmed her resolve to pursue her chosen path. After the premature death of her father, who had left his family in a difficult financial situation as a result of the sacrifices he had made for his country and his fellow countrymen, Felicja started giving paid lessons, and in 1853 she opened a place of learning, which became a boarding house that was indeed the best of its kind to be found in Lviv. Girls from all parts of Poland and from all echelons of society gathered there; and after completing their studies, they departed keenly aware of their duties as Polish citizens. For Madame Felicja's influence on young minds was beyond measure, her words conveyed strange solemnity and sublimity, and she herself, burning with a great love for the homeland, kindled this enthusiasm in the hearts of her students. Whatever the lesson or talk, she always spoke about her homeland; and her faith in the imminent re-emergence of the Polish nation was prophetic. She revealed the path to this goal by ennobling her own spirit, ridding herself of all selfish thoughts; and becoming a shining beacon of virtue for others.

Madame Felicja had her own approach to teaching. There were no school textbooks back then, so she would deliver talks and lectures. She was in the possession of a fine memory, and what is more, she had a commanding and pleasant voice, and combined with a gift for storytelling, each lecture of hers would be engaging, and inspirational. The students would only receive notes with dates and the more important facts. These lectures were written down by the students, and then transcribed and passed from hand to hand, so serving everyone's didactic and learning purposes. When teaching the history

¹ The mentioned representatives of the Lviv elite co-founded, like the protagonist's father, the societies mentioned earlier in the text: financial and land credit.

of Poland, Madame Felicja drew on [Joachim] Lelewel² and [Jędrzej] Moraczewski;³ in other areas, she looked to the works of foreign writers, as she knew French and German thoroughly. Of the poets, she placed [Adam] Mickiewicz on the highest of pedestals. She knew almost the entirety of *Pan Tadeusz* by heart, she also recited other poets from memory, thus adding some colour to her talks on literature. She highly valued Klementyna Tańska-Hoffmanowa, implementing her strictures. Deeply religious in both outlook and demonstration, she placed the spiritual good, self-denial, and work for others above all else. She taught not only by word but by example – by denying herself of everything, with her work she supported her mother and helped nurture and raise numerous siblings. Her pedagogical belief was to develop qualities, and not to eradicate defects that fade in any case as the virtues increased. Punishments in her institution were not applied or were applied sparingly. She was accessible at all times. She inspired boundless trust. To speak with her was to know the power of inspiration. And being so enthused, hearts would leap, and spirits would soar. The scholarly footing of her school was strong. She taught many subjects herself, such as Polish history, Polish and world literature, pedagogy with the psychology of aesthetics. She knew how to choose a group of teachers composed of the most enlightened and learned people. Her attitude towards them was marked by seriousness and a delicacy. Under her influence, the students founded a secret society headed by Zofia Romanowiczówna,⁴ named *Klaudynki* in honour of Klaudyna Potocka.⁵ The purpose of this society was to awaken and raise the national spirit and spread education among the people. This society became the nucleus of a minor active and distinguished organisation working in the cause of the 1863 uprising.

When the moment of great hopes and even greater fears and sufferings came, the moment when the [1863] uprising broke out,

² See fn. 15 above.

³ Jędrzej Moraczewski (1802–55) – historian, representative of the Lelewel historical school of thought.

⁴ Zofia Romanowiczówna (1842–1935) – writer, educational activist, participant in the January Uprising, student and custodian of the memory of Felicja Boberska.

⁵ Klaudyna Potocka (1801–36) – she took care of the wounded during the November Uprising of 1830/31; while in exile in Dresden and Paris she was a guardian and patron of the Polish diaspora.

Felicja belonged to the women's committee⁶ and was one of its most active members. She made appeals to women, collected money, tended to the prisoners and the wounded, and facilitated the escape of the more endangered; in short, she did everything within her means, and which was not beyond the scope of her femininity, to answer the call of the hour. Two of her brothers took part in the uprising, and she herself was imprisoned for her activities, although not for long; but on leaving prison, she was deprived of the possibility of partaking in further educational work – the Austrian government closed her school. Together with her mother and sister, she went to live with her brother in the countryside, remaining there for three years, caring for her sick mother, and taking a keen interest in the locals and their affairs. When time allowed, she devoted herself to the writing of her *Historja literatury polskiej* [History of Polish Literature], and she would live to see its publication.⁷

As a result of the general amnesty, she returned to Lviv, and having obtained the government's permission, Felicja reopened the school in 1867, enhancing it with evening lessons for a wider group of older students. The lectures on pedagogy, Polish and world literature, and aesthetics were attended by a broad spectrum of Polish women eager for knowledge. Sometimes, when asked by the Pedagogical Society, she gave lectures in the town hall, which was always full to the brim. She always distributed the takings from these public talks for charitable purposes. We even have a record of her having made a donation to the 'Brotherly Help' [Bratnia Pomoc].⁸

She prepared for these lectures with the greatest care, compiling the threads of what she would say from a wide range of sources. Apart from these pedagogical and literary activities, she worked closely with

⁶ Komitet Niewiast Polskich – a women's organisation (with its headquarters in Cracow) helping the wounded and arrested insurgents of 1863. The work of the Committee of Polish Women was regulated by an instruction issued by the National Government in June 1863.

⁷ Felicja Boberska, *Historja literatury polskiej ofiarowana młodym uczącym się Polkom* (Lwów, 1870).

⁸ 'Bratnia Pomoc' or Towarzystwo 'Bratnia Pomoc' [Association for Brotherly Help] existed in the Lviv Polytechnic from 1861. It was originally aimed at helping less affluent students by providing them with loans and scholarships. In addition, its members also organised cheap cafeterias for those who could not afford more expensive food.

the poor. She had a compassionate heart and a devotional hand. She did not refuse anyone either support or succour. She did not give the poor alms but tried to alleviate their poverty by finding jobs and pursuits for them; and places in institutions for the children. When students attended her school for free, only she herself knew about the arrangement. Following the example of her guiding light, the students formed charity associations, collecting small donations from families and friends, handing them to Madame Felicja, who every month, accompanied by older students, distributed these donations among the poor who could not bring themselves to beg. Even this innocent association was forbidden by the Austrian authorities. Thrifty herself, she always had funds to support every noble cause: for emigrants, for the persecuted Uniates; and she sent donations to Rapperswil [Polish Museum]. She supported the initiative of each individual engaged in useful work, and the Women's Labour Association owed her a great deal.⁹ She wholeheartedly welcomed the Polish Women's Society, established by her students, aimed at awakening the national spirit and collecting donations for national purposes. She belonged to it until the time that she departed Lviv. Students leaving the school were admitted to the Polish Women's Society in order to spread education and raise the national spirit among their coteries.

At a late age, when she was almost fifty, Madame Felicja married Alojzy Boberski, who met and fell in love with her when a guest in her parents' house. Forced to leave the country, as one of the heads of the secret society preparing the revolution in 1846, he had fought in the Hungarian Uprising and then fled to Turkey, and from there to England. For many years he worked as an accountant in a steel factory in Sheffield, and on returning to Poland, he got a job in the Galician Society Savings Bank.¹⁰ The relationship did not stand in the way of her dedicated educational work, indeed Mr Boberski, with high regard for the great merits of his wife, supported her in her all interests.

Mrs Boberska looked after her young lodgers in a special way; they were like an extended family, into which her husband entered as the head of the household. They all dined together, and during the meals, Mr Boberski spoke about the customs prevailing in England, and he

⁹ Stowarzyszenie Pracy Kobiet, established in 1874 by Zofia Romanowiczówna.

¹⁰ Alojzy Boberski (1822–87) – he served as a second lieutenant in the 1st Polish Legion in Transylvania.

was keenly interested in the progress of the young ladies when it came to them learning English. Older school girls participated in the Sunday *soirées* attended by representatives of science, fine arts, and the luminous figures residing in Lviv, thus acquiring social graces and etiquette. I will quote here the words of one of the attendees of these evening gatherings, to be found in an obituary in *Nowa Reforma*:¹¹

The moral influence that Mrs Boberska exerted on young people – the nobility and solemnity of feelings which inspired conversation in her company – protected many from the dangers that threatened young people, and offered them a serious direction.

And of the students, the writer continued:

One girl, a student of Madame Felicja, became an apostle of the Polish spirit in the way she conducted herself at home. In her country manor, her customs changed in terms of the way she dealt with her servants, and in her attitudes towards her peasants. Conversation in French and German became less frequent. French romances disappeared from the table, being replaced by Polish literature. This missionary attitude arising from her time with Madame Felicja did not manifest itself in the giving of speeches or sermons but could be seen through her ardent feelings of love for her homeland, and ardour which gave warmth to her surroundings.

This was the work of Madame Felicja: a maker of transformative miracles through work that was quiet and patient; a work that was full of tact, understanding and love.

The year 1879 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of her school, and teachers and students took this opportunity to pay tribute to Felicja and express their gratitude for her work, which had been so dedicated in its outlook. ...¹²

Her death [January 15, 1889]¹³ resounded sonorously throughout Lviv, and the gathered schoolgirls and admirers chose to place a marble plaque with her bust in the Carmelite Church in order to commemorate

¹¹ *Nowa Reforma* – a daily newspaper, published in Cracow. It featured Boberska's lectures, delivered at the Pedagogical Society of Lviv.

¹² The excerpt about her husband's illness and death and about moving to the countryside, accompanied by the farewell to friends and Lviv's cultural society, has been omitted.

¹³ Boberska died on 15 January 1889, aged 65, in Rudenko Lackie, and not in Lviv.

her merits and perpetuate her memory. The inscription reads: “Felicja Boberska née Wasilewska, educator of several generations, in the spirit of love for God and Homeland. Eternally grateful Polish women”. It was also decided to publish her writings already circulated in manuscript form; and finally, from the rest of the funds raised for this purpose, to buy and distribute works among young and old, popularising the spirit of her teaching, and therefore with God’s purpose, and for the love of the homeland.

Juliusz Starkel,¹⁴ a well-known journalist, collected the writings; unfortunately, not all of them were published in 1893. The writings were preceded by a biography penned by Zofia Romanowiczówna, from which, with the author’s permission, these details were taken.¹⁵ The merits of distinguished people are too soon forgotten, and the next generation will always bury them. In order to prevent such an occurrence, in 1905, as on the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of her school, the students of the late Madame Boberska established a small fund and then gave consideration to the kind of monument that they could erect in memory of their beloved teacher, which would permanently commemorate her activities and represent a continuation of her ideas. Unfortunately, a lack of funds did not allow for more ambitious plans, but this thought remained with her students, especially Zofia Romanowiczówna, one of her most beloved and devoted students, who would go on to become a teacher at the establishment. In a meeting with Anna Lewicka,¹⁶ a distinguished teacher and editor of *Mały Świat*, and at the time the chairwoman of the Women’s F[olk] S[chool] S[ociety], they raised both these issues, and then it was thought that together with the Women’s Society, they should build a dormitory, where the girls of poor families who wanted to learn could be offered rooms and be nurtured in the principles espoused by F. Boberska. A committee was formed, consisting of students and members of the Women’s Society Board, and work began on the

¹⁴ Juliusz Starkel (1840–1918) – writer and social and educational activist from Lviv. He was an advocate of teaching the national cultural heritage in Polish schools and of creating public reading rooms.

¹⁵ Felicja Boberska, *Pisma Felicji z Wasilewskich Boberskiej, wydane staraniem Komitetu, tworzącego fundację ś.p. Felicji z Wasilewskich Boberskiej* (Lwów, 1893).

¹⁶ Anna Lewicka (1852–1932) – writer, journalist, author of geographical and natural science publications for children and teenagers; founder of a school and a wooden toy factory in Kuliki near Lviv, where rural youth studied and worked.

raising of funds. Thanks to the efforts of [Maria] Łomnicka, Aniela d'Abancourt and Argasińska,¹⁷ the chairwoman of the FSS Women's Society after Mrs Lewicka stepped down, a free plot of land was obtained for the construction of a dormitory. The architect-engineer, Mr Żychowicz, oversaw the plans, seeking no payment. The Savings Bank granted the committee a significant loan, and fairs, concerts and other events were organised, which raised substantial funds, and within 6 years a magnificent building was erected. Soon the school was echoing with the sounds of young girls, who would after several years leave only to be replaced with another batch of wide-eyed girls, each of whom would take from their time in the school, a spark that would be a tinder flame of love for the homeland. The same flame had burned in the heart of the unforgettable Felicja Boberska. [...] ¹⁸

II

MARIA REUTT, *EMMA DMOCHOWSKA NÉE JELEŃSKA*. A SOCIAL ACTIVIST AND WRITER

One of the most outstanding women in our homeland in the post-uprising era did not live to see her country rise once more. It is the tenth anniversary of the passing of Emma Dmochowska née Jeleńska, who died in Vilnius on January 24, 1919, when the Bolsheviks were entering the city. Born in 1864, she spent her childhood and youth in great luxury and happiness, growing up in her native Komarowicze¹⁹ in the Polesie district of Mozyr. She was educated to a high degree, privately at both home and abroad. She was Europeanised in her mind but did not take to the currents of cosmopolitanism, so at odds with the aristocratic spheres from which she, the granddaughter of a castellan, hailed. Neither did she succumb to the red cosmopolitanism taking hold. But Europe did not hide Poland from her eyes. Her strong

¹⁷ Perhaps this refers to Ludwika Argasińska, a teacher.

¹⁸ The edition does not discuss Boberska's literary output – it features biographies of figures important from the perspective of educating young people such as Klementyna Hoffmanowa, Emilia Szaniecka, and Tadeusz Kościuszko, as well as summaries of Joachim Lelewel's oeuvre or the educational concepts of John Locke and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. This fragment also refers to lesser known figures and contains many observations about the discussed works of the author of the biography.

¹⁹ Komarowicze – a village which today is situated in Belarus.

individuality made her realise from her earliest years that she was a Pole living in the borderlands [Kresy], and that being so, she would perform the duties assigned to her. She decided to get to know the region at close quarters, and began collecting folk songs, tales and the proverbs of the people of Polesie; and, so encouraged by Jan Karłowicz,²⁰ published an ethnographic description of her homeland, entitled *Wieś Komarowicze* [The Village of Komarowicze].²¹ She also worked for the *Wisła*²² journal, publishing articles related to folklore. These were her earliest attempts at the literary endeavour.

In addition, she began an educational activity by organising two secret Polish schools on her estates in Komarowicze and Łuczyce, in Polesie. These schools taught, apart from the children of the court servants, also the youth and children of Silesia, colonised in those times in the areas of the Russian partition. Several of the Silesian insurgents, in recent times characterised by patriotic activity, owed to these schools a deepening national consciousness. At the same time, realising that there would be no national revival without an economic one, Emma Jeleńska opened a village shop to protect the people from exploitation and often sold goods herself to get to know the people more closely.

Family circumstances forced her mother, Amelia Jeleńska née Oskierka, to sell all her worldly possessions. It was the first rupture in Emma Jeleńska's life, one where she bid farewell to the family home.²³ The love of the Polish land and the need to defend it against

²⁰ Jan Karłowicz, renowned Polish ethnographer, folklorist and musicologist associated with the Vilnius region; co-creator of the *Słownik Języka Polskiego* [Dictionary of the Polish Language] and the *Encyklopedia Staropolska* [Old Polish Encyclopedia].

²¹ Emma Jeleńska, *Wieś Komarowicze* (Warszawa, 1892). First printing: *id.*, 'Wieś Komarowicze w powiecie mozyrskim', *Wisła*, v (1891), 488–9; Prof. Grażyna Borkowska considers Jeleńska's book to be a solid contribution, whilst also accusing the author of having been too credulous with respect of the accounts and stories told to her by the inhabitants of Polesie. See Grażyna Borkowska, 'Daleko od mitu. Kresy według Obrębskiego', *Prace filologiczne. Seria literaturoznawcza*, lv (2008), 126–7.

²² *Wisła* – a geographic and ethnographic monthly journal published in Warsaw. In 1888–9, when Jeleńska's text about Komarowicze was published, the editor of *Wisła* was Jan Karłowicz. It seems that Jeleńska only cooperated with the monthly, and did not work in the editorial office as a permanent employee.

²³ After the January uprising, Poles were forbidden to buy land, so it ended up mainly in the hands of the Russians. The selling of Polish land was perceived as a national betrayal.

indolence and profligacy was conveyed in the short story entitled *Panienka* [A Young Maiden],²⁴ which depicted Polesie in wonderful colours and hues. She won a prize for this story from the newspaper *Kurier Codzienny*,²⁵ and this award found the author already settled in Vilnius from 1890 as the wife of Kazimierz Dmochowski.

Her active nature, complemented by her broad social views, put her on a path to working for the poorest and most disadvantaged. She was involved in organising secret Polish educational activities in Vilnius and in the countryside. She held this outpost for 28 years, up until January 24, 1919, when the Bolsheviks entered Vilnius. Their amazement was boundless when they saw the crowds of children and the poorest of the poor following her coffin. The ‘guardians of the proletariat’ could not understand that someone before them had already concerned themselves with education and the people in general. She did not live to see the days when Poland was proclaimed a free state once again, but she sensed and knew that this dawn was not far off. She was one of those who signed the first appeal to Warsaw concerning the linking of the Vilnius region with Poland. If various federation, minority and separatist measures²⁶ did not prevent our population from voting to join the Motherland, the conditions themselves had primarily been created by Emma Dmochowska, who inculcated a national awareness in generations over a span of 28 years.

In the era of the continuation of the Muravyev²⁷ system in Vilnius, during the rule of [Ivan] Kahkanov,²⁸ she managed to find a group of like-minded people to open Polish schools in the countryside and the city. She taught Polish history to children in basements and attics. She committed these lessons to paper, writing a textbook published in Vilnius with the title *Material for Talks with a Woman of the People*.²⁹ The Russian censors condemned the work, and initiated court proceedings against the publishing house, which was run by another

²⁴ Emma Jeleńska, *Panienka*, i–ii (Warszawa, 1899).

²⁵ Nagroda im. Bolesława Prusa [Bolesław Prus Prize].

²⁶ This is how Maria Reutt describes the independence aspirations of the Lithuanian people.

²⁷ Mikhail Muravyev – General-Governor of Lithuania during the suppression of the January Uprising of 1863–5.

²⁸ Ivan Kakhanov – General-Governor of Lithuania in 1884–93.

²⁹ *Podręcznik pogadań z kobietą z ludu*, ed. Emilia Węśławska, collective work of the Koło Równouprawnienia Kobiet w Wilnie (Wilno, 1910).

national activist, Emilia Węśławska. An amnesty manifesto after 1905 acquitted both ladies of accountability.³⁰ However, the persecution of Emma Dmochowska did not end there. In 1908 she became an editor of the popular weekly *Zorza Wileńska*,³¹ working there alongside her husband. The Russian authorities closed the paper, accusing it of corrupting people's minds and discouraging children from attending an Orthodox school. The editor was put on trial and sentenced to two months in prison, which she served in Lukishki [Lit.: *Lukiškių tardymo*] in November and December of 1910. On leaving prison, she and her husband reopened the same weekly under the changed title of *Jutrzenka*, filling most of it with her own writing. With this publication, she issued a small supplement for children [Nasza] *Grządka*, printing all materials that rural and urban children could learn from and enjoy. In *Jutrzenka*, an extensive section overseeing correspondence with readers gave advice on textbooks and cheap books for self-taught people. In addition, at her own expense, she founded popular libraries, lending book collections to the countryside and monitoring the preferences of readers. In the city she worked [shifts] as a librarian in the Mickiewicz Reading Room, the first such reading room opened to the general public after 1905. Not only did she visit the village schools herself, supervising the teaching, and selecting the teaching staff, but she also educated the staff in Vilnius at secret seminars for the so-called 'commoners'. To facilitate this communication with Vilnius, she would call on several inns where girls and villagers could congregate safely.

In the end, she acquired a magic lantern³² and travelled with it around numerous villages on country carts, showing and explaining with words and faded pictures, scenes from Polish history; the heroism and the culture of the nation. The people were eager to learn, and she wholeheartedly devoted herself to the task. The police never found out about her trips to the countryside. Sometimes secret schools were found, teachers were dragged around the courts, sentenced to fines

³⁰ According to Węśławska's biography, in the collection of the Museum of Distinguished Polish Women, the case was discontinued after several years.

³¹ *Zorza Wileńska. Tygodnik dla wszystkich z rysunkami* – a socio-cultural journal, it began to be published in Vilnius in 1906.

³² *Laterna magica* – a simple projector projecting an image from glass slides onto the screen.

or imprisonment, but none of them ever betrayed the identity of the headteacher. The fines were paid by the 'Education' Association,³³ officially disclosed after 1905, and it was paid for by a group of people who embraced this financial burden. The schools would then open up again in another village in the countryside, or in another district of the city. Emma Jeleńska-Dmochowska understood the importance of vocational and practical schools; and that is why she founded two scholarships at the editorial office of *Jutrzenka* and used all her influence to send rural and city youth to study at agricultural and economic schools in places such as Pszczelin, Krzyżew, Mieczysławów, Kruszynek and Mołodowo.³⁴ In January 1913, she organised an inter-district convention for the educators of these schools in Vilnius. This convention took place without the knowledge of the police and nurtured an economic and national awareness amongst the broad strata of our people.

The Great War came and with it the German occupation of the Vilnius region.³⁵ The 'Education' Association was renamed the Educational Committee, the most active member of which was Emma Dmochowska. She immediately organised a spirited and accelerated preparation of local teachers, providing six-week, eight-month and eighteen-month training courses. The establishing of the schools and their oversight became very arduous. The occupiers watched over her every step, exposing Emma to the unwanted attentions of the German authorities. At the time, there was no transport to be found, not even those rickety carts that had once encircled the villages; the Germans had taken all the horses. You had to walk between the watchful German patrols. The strain eventually drained her of strength and health. She passed from this life to the sorrow of all on January 24, 1919. ...³⁶

transl. Barry Keane

³³ Towarzystwo 'Oświata' (The 'Education' Society) was established in Vilnius in 1890 on the initiative of the local intelligentsia to coordinate the activities of Polish underground education.

³⁴ There were agricultural schools in these places, founded by representatives of the gentry, which contributed to the introduction of innovative farming methods in Poland.

³⁵ From July 1915.

³⁶ The edition does not include the incomplete and imprecise list of Emma Jeleńska-Dmochowska's literary works prepared by the author of the biography.