

RICHARD BUTTERWICK

Polite liberty or l'esprit monarchique?
Stanisław August Poniatowski,
Jean-Jacques Rousseau,
and *politesse* in England*

THE account in the memoirs of the last king of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski (1732-1798), of his voyage to France and England in 1753-1754 contains one of the most insightful and challenging interpretations of European culture written in the eighteenth century. It is relevant to many *dix-huitiémistes'* interest in the links between manners, gender and political culture.¹ These connections can hardly be considered without taking into account the controversies provoked by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Although the king explicitly mentioned Rousseau in his memoirs only in a musical context, I believe that not only did he view these relationships in a manner at odds with the self-styled citizen of Geneva, but that the key passages in his analysis of English political culture were written partly in response to the author of the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* and the *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*. In taking issue with Rousseau, Stanisław August was privately following the public example of his namesake and predecessor, Stanisław I Leszczyński (1677-1766). Poniatowski's observations and arguments deserve attention both as a key to understanding his policies as king of Poland and in their own right. Yet his account has been underestimated by historians of eighteenth-century Poland, and has passed almost unremarked by historians of eighteenth-century France and England.²

1. The latest substantial contribution to this debate is Philip Carter, *Men and the emergence of polite society 1660-1830* (London 2001).

2. *Mémoires du roi Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski*, ed. Sergei Goryainov, vol. 1 (St Petersburg 1914), i.79-132. I have checked Goryainov's edition against the section concerning England in the manuscript text as established by Dr Dominique Triaire for a new critical edition of the *Mémoires*, for which assistance I extend him my thanks. Most Polish historians have recognised the importance of the voyage itself, but not the account of English education and manners. See Julian Nieć, *Młodość ostatniego elekta. St. A. Poniatowski 1732-1764* (Cracow 1935), p.70-101; Jean Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski et l'Europe des 1732-1764* (Cracow 1935), p.70-101; Jean Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski et l'Europe des 1732-1764* (Cracow 1935), p.70-101.

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Stanisław II August Poniatowski was elected king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania at the behest of Catherine, called the Great, in 1764. At her behest he also abdicated, sealing the Third Partition, in 1795. He died in St Petersburg in 1798. He began to write his memoirs in the early 1770s, following the shattering of his early hopes to reform Poland-Lithuania by the interference of Catherine II and Frederick II, the revolt of a large part of the nobility in defence of its Catholic faith and 'golden liberty' – the Confederacy of Bar – and the First Partition in 1772. A marginal note and the internal evidence of the text indicate that he wrote the section dealing with his voyage in 1775.³ The character of the first part of the memoirs, carrying his story as far as his two missions to Russia and his affair with Catherine in 1755-1758, differs greatly from the later sections. Whereas the latter are dry compilations of facts and documents, intended to serve as a political *apologia*, the former is a sparkling literary performance, blending burlesque anecdotes, subtle irony and searching self-reflection.⁴ It is precisely the literary and anecdotal character of these passages which, I believe, has prevented their being taken sufficiently seriously by political, and even literary historians.⁵

I

Poniatowski was despatched on his travels in the spring of 1753, partly in order to forestall a family row concerning his romantic attachment to his fabulously eligible cousin Izabella Czartoryska, and partly so that he might complete his education by observing the best of what western Europe had to offer. After progressing through Vienna, Hanover and The Hague, he arrived in Paris in late September 1753. After an autumn and winter spent there and at nearby Versailles and Fontainebleau, he proceeded to London in February 1754. In England, unlike in France, he took the opportunity, in the company of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke's son Charles Yorke, to visit the countryside, travelling as far from London

lumières: étude de cosmopolitisme (Paris 1952), p.186-204; Zofia Libiszowska, *Życie polskie w Londynie w XVIII wieku* (Warsaw 1972), p.37-42; Andrzej Gawerski, 'Stanisław August Poniatowski w Paryżu', in *Francja – Polska XVIII-XIX wieku* (Warsaw 1983), p.50-61; Adam Zamoyski, *The Last king of Poland* (London 1992), ch.4; and Richard Butterwick, *Poland's last king and English culture: Stanisław August Poniatowski, 1732-1798* (Oxford 1998), ch.5. Paul Langford, *Englishness identified: manners and character 1650-1850* (Oxford 2000), cites Poniatowski's opinion on the manners of schoolboys on p.45.

3. *Mémoires*, i.125.

4. Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski*, p.4.

5. Andrzej Lipoński, 'The influence of Britain on Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski's education and political activity', *Polish Anglo-Saxon studies* 1 (1987), p.33-67, here at p.38, and Poniatowski's most recent biographer, Krystyna Zienkowska, *Stanisław August Poniatowski* (Wrocław 1998), p.83-84, 123, are dismissive about these passages. Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski*, p.196-97, seems preoccupied by their 'pittoresque' literary merit.

as Bath, Salisbury and Stowe. He departed, via the Netherlands, in July 1754. Thereafter his only journeys abroad were to Russia.

Stanisław August's recounting in his memoirs of his reservations concerning the excessive irregularity of the English garden led him into a reflection on his 'disposition sincère où j'étais à révéler et à aimer les Anglais et presque tous leur manière d'être, disposition qui ne m'empêchait pas de remarquer cependant bien des choses en leur façon de voir et de sentir qui ne se rencontraient pas avec la mienne'.⁶ Foremost among these things was their attitude to education. In English boarding schools, while the classics were efficaciously flogged into the pupils' memories, the cultivation of a sense of honour was entirely neglected as a pedagogical method. When lessons were over, the boys did as they pleased. No attempt was made to teach them even the most elementary manners, and their parents complacently excused them with the words 't'is a true rough school boy'. Stanisław August had heard the English maintain that to teach youths the precepts of civility, as was done in other countries, was to deprive them of their individuality, which would lead to an irreparable loss of originality. Originality, he continued, *appeared* to be more common in England than elsewhere.⁷

The following paragraphs of the memoirs explain why he underlined the words '*en apparence*'. The liberty of school was augmented by Oxford or Cambridge, before young men departed on the Grand Tour with a feeling of immense national superiority, only to discover that their utter lack of manners made them savages in continental society – unable even to enter or leave a room politely. Some sank into gambling, debauchery and alcoholic stupor; others applied themselves to bizarrely selective reading, while a small minority took, belatedly, to learning French, dancing, and the common accomplishments of a gentleman – to the point of fatuity, since their English pride would allow nothing else. Most arrived back in England considerably improved in deportment and knowledge, but convinced of the merits of their own singularity.⁸

They then made their political débuts. Unable to rival the erudition and expertise of older members of the two houses of Parliament, they won easy popularity through opposition to the court. There follows an *exposé* of English political culture:

Je reviens à dire que tant que ces jeunes républicains soutiennent ce rôle patriote, ou soi-disant tel, ceux qui font l'éloge des true rough school-boys s'applaudissent de leur éducation; mais ils sont embarrassés de répondre quand on leur demande pourquoi tant de ces mêmes Anglais, en apparence si originaux et si différents les uns des autres, se ressemblent pourtant sur un point, qui est de dire: 'La république est une belle chose', mais j'entends néanmoins qu'avant tout mon individu y soit placé de la manière dont il me convient; mon originalité dont je ne

6. *Mémoires*, i.120.

7. *Mémoires*, i.120-21.

8. *Mémoires*, i.121-23.

prétends pas me départir m'a donné des goûts bizarres et coûteux; il me faut des moyens d'y subvenir, embrassons ceux qui se présentent; la faveur populaire me rendra considérable et nécessaire à la cour; après que j'en aurai bien médité à tort et à travers, elle finira par m'acheter, et je me moquerai alors de l'idole populaire que j'aurai paru avoir d'abord encensée; car je ne suis pas assez simple, j'ai trop appris à penser d'après moi-même, j'ai trop secoué les préjugés, pour me croire ridiculement asservi aux lieux communs appelés devoirs dans les vieux livres: *Primo mihi*, voilà notre devise.

Stanisław August asked those who had been in England fifteen or twenty years later than himself if they had not heard this moral professed publicly.⁹

He blamed this general egoism on 'cette même éducation, qui au lieu de guider et contenir ses élèves, semblait leur dire: "Chacun pour soi, Dieu pour tous, faites votre chemin comme vous voudrez". Peut-être m'objectera-t-on qu'il y aurait bien de la légèreté et de l'injustice à attribuer des effets si graves à une cause aussi peu importante que l'omission seule de ce qu'on appelle les *manières*.' If these were lacking in England, nowhere was 'bonhomie (good-nature)' so frequently talked of, or indeed practised. Stanisław August's (eminently Lockean) reply would be that a child taught no complaisance or obligation to anyone but governed solely by pleasure and fear of the lash, would act only in accordance with its own interests.¹⁰ To the objection that, if that were so, England would long since have been sold and lost, he would respond that the life of states is longer than that of men, but that the rapid decline of England from its apogee of glory and consideration only twelve years previously (at the Peace of Paris in 1763) confirmed the existence of 'quelque vice radical'. To the objection that if Mr Pitt was still at the head of affairs England would still be the first power of Europe, he would answer that Pitt had egoistically stirred up the American colonists. If Pitt was not the nation, it was because the ancient national virtues, and the events in English history, retained some vestigial effect on the nation, 'comme les principes de religion, reçus dans la jeunesse, contiennent parfois un libertin avancé en âge'. By this 'impulsion primitive' the political machine still turned.

At this point, Stanisław August changed tack. 'Je suis bien éloigné de dire qu'elle ne puisse se rétablir, peut-être même une chose, que bien des Anglais regardent comme un symptôme de détérioration, servira justement à les améliorer.' He referred to the manners of Englishwomen:

9. *Mémoires*, i.123-24. One of the king's principal sources of information about English manners when he wrote his memoirs would have been his nephew, Prince Stanisław Poniatowski (1754-1833), who visited England in 1771-1773. See n.51 below.

10. See Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the creation of the modern world* (London 2000), ch.15, especially p.341. For an introduction to the reception of Locke's educational thought in Poland, see Butterwick, *Poland's last king*, p.70, 238-42.

Il y a vingt ans qu'à peine une femme anglaise sur quarante daignait parler français; communément toutes, et les rousses mêmes, allaient sans poudre et sans rouge; elles ne soignaient pas leurs dents, leur habillement et leurs manières étaient en tout l'opposé des Françaises. Aujourd'hui, non seulement elles sont très fort rapprochées, sur tous ces articles, de leurs voisines, mais elles ont déjà opéré un changement très notable dans la manière d'être des Anglais. Les rigoristes de ce pays ne veulent voir en cela qu'une approximation vers l'esprit monarchique, j'oserais penser au contraire que ces deux nations, en se fréquentant plus que par le passé, se feront mutuellement du bien: les Français sont devenus un peu plus penseurs et moins légers, et les Anglais, croyant n'adopter que par complaisance pour les femmes de leur pays une partie des manières françaises, corrigeront peut-être insensiblement le défaut de leur éducation nationale, qui en les affranchissant d'abord trop, les rend ensuite par un effet de plusieurs conséquences trop dépendants de leurs passions.¹¹

Such was Stanisław August's opinion of English education and manners. These pages can be read in a variety of ways – from an assault on the English pedagogical tradition to fastidiousness à l'égard des anglaises. The contrast between French *légèreté* and English gravity was a stock-in-trade of travel writers. His belief that the education of Englishmen subordinated reason to passion was also echoed by later visitors, some of whom connected it to suicide.¹² He was not the only foreigner to find the anti-social potential of 'originality' disturbing.¹³ However, I think that the textual context reveals that his chief destination was the political culture of the English and the consequences of its corruption for Britain's international standing.¹⁴ In essence he argued that the Gallicisation, softening and perhaps even feminisation of manners do not promote political corruption, but might actually strengthen both a sense of honour and political virtue.¹⁵ His polemic was overtly directed at Englishmen of a 'republican' persuasion. These remarks can and will be considered in the context of eighteenth-century English debates on politeness, gender and virtue. They will also be related to his policies as king of Poland. First,

11. *Mémoires*, i.124-26.

12. Langford, *Englishness identified*, p.44-45, 54-64. The king attributed Charles Yorke's (probable) suicide in 1770 to 'un excès de sentiment' (*Mémoires*, i.109).

13. Langford, *Englishness identified*, p.293. The English too became concerned, but reacted semantically. Beginning in the 1770s, 'potentially anarchic' 'originality' was recast as harmless 'eccentricity' (Langford, *Englishness identified*, p.300-11).

14. A strong Britain might make a further partition of Poland less likely, and for this reason, rather than for any lack of sympathy with their principles, he hoped that the rebel American colonists would soon be defeated (Zofia Libiszowska, *Opinia polska wobec rewolucji amerykańskiej w XVIII wieku*, Łódź 1962, p.37, 40, 68-69, 94, 127).

15. Honour and virtue were the respective principles of monarchical and republican governments according to Montesquieu, as Stanisław August well knew (*De l'esprit des lois*, Book 3, ch.3-8). Perhaps he considered that in a mixed form of government, such as those of England and Poland, the principles were also mixed. On the reception of Montesquieu in Poland see Jerzy Lukowski, 'Recasting utopia: Montesquieu, Rousseau and the Polish Constitution of 3 May 1791', *Historical journal* 37 (1994), p.65-87, which contains pointers to the literature in Polish.

however, I shall advance some evidence suggesting that he was responding to the opinions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

II

Rousseau's fullest and most critical comments on England are to be found in the *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*, commissioned by the anti-Poniatowski and anti-Russian Confederacy of Bar in 1770, mostly written in 1771, circulated in manuscript from 1772, posthumously published in 1782, and translated into Polish in 1789. Rousseau claimed that the anarchic Polish nation had preserved the spirit of liberty that in most others had been crushed by despotism and in England eaten away by corruption. He criticised the stupidity of the English for electing Members of Parliament for seven years and for not binding them with imperative mandates, and argued that in England, as elsewhere, an hereditary throne was incompatible with freedom.¹⁶ On these points, Stanisław August disagreed profoundly both with Rousseau, and the Polish republican tradition whose principles Rousseau found so compatible with those he had set out in the *Contrat social*.¹⁷

More pertinent here is Rousseau's analysis of the underlying reason for the corruption of the English. At one level, there are points of contact with Poniatowski's verdict: 'Un François, un Anglois, un Espagnol, un Italien, un Russe, sont tous à-peu-près le même homme: il sort du college déjà tout façonné pour la licence, c'est à dire pour la servitude.'¹⁸ Licence was contrasted with the liberty that comes from a common existence under the law. However, the main thrust of the argument was directed against the cosmopolitan manners to which even the English had, alas, succumbed:

Il n'y a plus aujourd'hui de François, d'Allemands, d'Espagnols, d'Anglois même, quoiqu'on en dise; il n'y a que des Européens. Tous ont les mêmes goûts, les mêmes passions, les mêmes mœurs, parce qu'aucun n'a reçu de forme nationale par une institution particulière. Tous dans les mêmes circonstances, feront les mêmes choses: tous se diront désintéressés, et seront fripons; tous

16. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne et sur sa réformation projetée*, ed. Jean Fabre, in Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. iii (Paris 1964), p.951-1041, here at p.954, 975, 979, 991-92.

17. Those commentators who have postulated a retreat from the principles of the *Contrat social* in the *Considérations* have mostly been ignorant of the Polish context. Apart from Fabre's introduction and notes to the above edition, iii.ccxvii-ccxlv, iii.1733-1804, the essential work on the *Considérations*, based on the manuscripts and relating Rousseau to eighteenth-century Polish political theory and practice, is Jerzy Michalski, *Rousseau a sarmacki republikanizm* (Warsaw 1977). In English, see Lukowski, 'Montesquieu, Rousseau and the Polish Constitution', with further references to the Polish literature. On Stanisław August's alternative political vision, see Butterwick, *Poland's last king*, ch.7, 11 and 12, *passim*.

18. Rousseau, *Considérations*, iii.966.

parleront du bien public et ne penseront qu'à eux-mêmes; tous vanteront la médiocrité, et voudront être des Cresus. Ils n'ont d'ambition que pour le luxe, ils n'ont de passion que celle de l'or. Sûrs d'avoir avec lui tout ce qui les tente, tous se vendront au premier qui voudra les payer. Que leur importe à quel maître ils obéissent, de quel Etat ils suivent les loix? Pourvu qu'ils trouvent de l'argent à voler et des femmes à corrompre, ils sont partout dans leur pays.¹⁹

He then counselled the Poles to avoid French manners and customs, and to cultivate Polish national traditions. He fulminated against 'les amusemens ordinaires des cours, le jeu, les théâtres, comédies, opera, tout ce que effemine les hommes, tout ce qui les distrait, les isole, leur fait oublier leur patrie et leur devoir'. The antidote to the 'plaisirs efféminés', he continued, was physical exercise, and in particular, public games. Where they were neglected, 'plus ceux qui nous gouvernent s'efféminent et se corrompent impunément'. And pursuing his polemic against luxury, he urged 'que tout parure efféminée soit en mépris, et si l'on n'y peut faire renoncer les femmes, qu'on leur apprenne au moins à l'improver et dédaigner dans les hommes'.²⁰

Of all Rousseau's later works, perhaps the *Considérations* came closest to the extreme anti-civilisational message of the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* of 1750.²¹ But where the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* was essentially a lament, the later work expressed the hope that a nation that has not yet much cultivated the arts and sciences might yet be restored to its pristine, manly purity. The *Considérations* hinted at the effect of women on the manners and tastes of men. Rousseau had already spelt it out in his first Discourse. Accusing artists, especially Voltaire, of creating shallow, frivolous and popular works to please the public rather than posterity, because 'les hommes ont sacrifié leur goût aux tyrans de leur liberté,* où l'un des sexes n'osant approuver que ce qui est proportionné à la pusillanimité de l'autre', in the accompanying footnote he set out the essence of his views on gender.

* Je suis bien éloigné de penser que cet ascendant des femmes soit un mal en soi. C'est un présent que leur a fait la nature pour le bonheur du Genre-humain: mieux dirigé, il pourroit produire autant de bien qu'il fait de mal aujourd'hui. On ne sent point assez quels avantages naîtroient dans la société d'une meilleure éducation donnée à cette moitié du Genre-humain qui gouverne l'autre. Les hommes seront toujours ce qu'il plaira aux femmes: si vous voulez donc qu'ils deviennent grands et vertueux, apprenez aux femmes ce que c'est que grandeur d'âme et vertu.²²

He repeated the argument in a private letter in 1758, 'Par tout pays les hommes sont ce que les femmes les font être', confirming that this was the

19. Rousseau, *Considérations*, iii.960. See Fabre's note on iii.1749-50.

20. Rousseau, *Considérations*, iii.962-65.

21. 'Il règne dans nos mœurs une vile et trompeuse uniformité' (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, ed. F. Bouchardy, in Rousseau, *OC*, iii.1-30, here at iii.8).

22. Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, iii.21.

main theme of his *Lettre à d'Alembert sur le théâtre*.²³ He later worked out the implications for the education of women in *Emile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Effeminacy reduced the dependence of men upon women; they were therefore less susceptible to the potentially beneficial effects of female sexual power. The effeminate man, not recognising his dependence upon women, was less likely to recognise his dependence on society, and was thus unfit for citizenship. The answer was to maximise differences and separation between the sexes, so that masculine virtue was associated with public spiritedness, and feminine virtue with domesticity and modesty. With females attracted to those males who most differed from themselves, and *vice versa*, as wives and mothers women would raise generations of virtuous patriots.²⁴

Poniatowski and Rousseau diagnosed identical symptoms of corruption, 'licence' and 'servitude' in English political culture, but advanced *almost* diametrically opposed explanations of and remedies for the malady. For the latter, Gallicisation and effeminacy in manners were the cause, and should be combatted by a rigorously national education; for the former, Gallicisation and feminisation of manners were part of the solution to the problems created by an excessively individualistic national education. I write *almost* because as we shall see, there are points of contact in their arguments, and indeed in their solutions, proposed by Rousseau for Poland and propagated by Stanisław August there.

Everything said thus far might be considered a moderately interesting comparison, that proves simply that Poniatowski's views on manners contrasted with those of Rousseau. But then so did those of many educated Europeans in the eighteenth century. Both Rousseau and Poniatowski, along with many other commentators, agreed that women were responsible for the refinement of civilisation, culture and manners in history. One belonged to the tradition that deplored this tendency, the other to that which welcomed it.²⁵ The inter-textual relations, striking as they are,²⁶ are not so close as to require no further proof. We may read these texts as we choose, but we cannot make convincing judgements on what motivated one of their authors without more evidence.

The first point to make is that two or three years before Stanisław August wrote these passages, he had read the *Considérations* and penned a series of reflections to Friedrich Melchior Grimm, Catherine II's pet

23. Rousseau to Toussaint-Pierre Lenieps, 8 Nov. 1758, *Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. R. A. Leigh, vol. 5 (Geneva 1967), no. 730, p.213. See Robert Wokler, *Rousseau* (Oxford 1995), p.100-103.

24. See Joel Schwartz, *The Sexual politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Chicago 1984), ch.3. Judith Still, *Justice and difference in the works of Rousseau: bienfaisance and pudeur* (Cambridge 1993), prefers 'pudicity' to 'modesty'.

25. See Sylvana Tomaselli, 'The Enlightenment debate on women', *History workshop journal* 20 (1985), p.101-24.

26. For example, the use of 'je suis bien éloigné de dire/penser...' in discussing the influence of women upon men.

philosophe, and editor of the *Correspondance littéraire* which he circulated among a few European crowned heads. In the summer of 1772, the king added a paragraph to an essay he had written about two years earlier on the sad condition of Poland and its monarchy:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau a formé un Plan de Legislation pour le Royaume et l'a communiqué à plusieurs Polonais qui sont en France, on dit que c'est le plus beau Roman politique qui est encore paru, une Education Nationale en est la base. En suivant ce Plan, la noblesse s'était divisée en trois classes et aurait chaque une une marque distinctive, et l'on tiroit au soit du Corps des Senateurs; trois Sujets dont l'un serait du Roi. Il y a bien de la difference entre ce Plan et celui de former le Gouvernement sur le Modèle du Gouvernement de la Grande Bretagne.²⁷

In the context of the possibility of modelling the Polish form of government on the British mentioned elsewhere in the essay, and his well-documented admiration of the British constitution (despite everything quoted earlier) from all periods of his life, the contrast is expressive.²⁸ At this stage, he had not yet read the *Considérations*. The suggestion that while England commanded his head, Rousseau tugged at his heart, is borne out by the following letter to Grimm in April 1773, after Grimm had sent him the work, denouncing its author as 'un barbouilleur de papier, quelque éloquent qu'il puisse être' and the king had read it:

C'est au milieu de ces funestes effets de nos dernières confédérations que me sont parvenues les considérations de J.-J. Rousseau sur notre gouvernement. En y voyant les confédérés qualifiés de gens qui ont actuellement sauvé l'Etat, il m'a fallu sentir avec douleur combien nos philosophes modernes sont atteints du vice de la flatterie. Rousseau n'a voulu voir ni reconnaître d'ennemis ni de dangers pour la Pologne que dans la personne de son roi, parce qu'il adresse son écrit à l'agent des confédérés [...] Mais au moins Rousseau ne flatte que des gens qui sont eux-mêmes dans le malheur, peut-être il n'a cru être que poli ou consolateur. Mais que dire des philosophes qui prodiguent l'encens à l'oppresseur heureux, sur l'objet même de ses injustices! [...] Mais pour revenir à l'ouvrage de R[ousseau], la feuille de février a presque épuisé tout ce qu'il y aurait à en dire, il n'est même presque pas susceptible d'une analyse ou d'une réfutation exacte. Cet ouvrage me paraît être en politique ce que les grotesques de Raphaël aux galeries du Vatican sont en peintures. Cet artiste sublime en y rassemblant mille objets qui ne paraissaient devoir jamais se rencontrer, des couleurs même qui se choquent et blessent l'œil du spectateur, a pourtant semblé vouloir lui dire ça et là dans cette

27. 'Extrait d'un lettre des frontières de Pologne sur l'Etat du royaume du 6^e aout 1770', Warsaw, Archiwum Dawne Akt Dawnych (henceforward AGAD), Zbiór Popielów 177, f.185-87, quotation at f.187. I have discussed the relationship of this text to Stanisław Leszczyński's *La Voix libre du citoyen* (1749) in 'Two views of the Polish monarchy in the eighteenth century: the polemic of Stanisław August Poniatowski with Stanisław Leszczyński', *Oxford Slavonic papers*, new series, 30 (1997), p.21-39. The fact that Stanisław August had taken on Leszczyński so recently adds weight to the argument made here that he was responding similarly to Rousseau in his memoirs.

28. On 21 March 1791 he told Filippo Mazzei that Gabriel Mably's *Observations sur les lois et gouvernement de Pologne* (completed in 1771, first published in 1782) were 'un peu moins romanesque' than Rousseau's *Considérations* (quoted in Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski*, p.576, n.46).

composition: 'Reconnaissez Raphaël!' Quelques figures, quelques contours semblent trahir son déguisement et il y a à apprendre et à profiler dans cet ouvrage bizarre. Je regarde du même œil celui de Rousseau sur la Pologne. Probablement aussi que s'il eût puisé dans d'autres sources, ses notions sur notre histoire, nos lois et nos mœurs, il eût écrit tout différemment.²⁹

Fabre argued that Grimm had tried to elicit a put-down from Stanisław August which he might then use to discredit Rousseau, and that the Polish king nobly refused to supply it, pointing out instead the hypocrisy of the *philosophes* (D'Alembert was busy congratulating Frederick the Great on the partition). However, we should note Jochen Schlobach's revelation that Fabre traduced his sources in order to cast Grimm in a negative light.³⁰ For our purposes, what it shows is that not long before he wrote the above passages in his memoirs, Poniatowski revealed both a profound emotional attachment to Rousseau and a near total disagreement with the arguments set forth in the *Considérations*.

Stanisław August's sentiments for Rousseau may also be deduced from the fact that around 1770 he hung in his study opposite portraits of three representatives of enlightened Catholicism in Poland – Fathers Stanisław Konarski, Piotr Śliwicki and Antonio Maria Portalupi – pictures of Voltaire, Montesquieu and Rousseau. Needless to say, the papal nuncio was not amused.³¹

What we know about the contents of his libraries certainly indicates that Rousseau was one of his favourite authors. The 1783 catalogue of the library in the Royal Castle at Warsaw lists an eleven-volume and a seventeen-volume set of Rousseau's works. Still more convincingly, in the library at the royal hunting lodge at Kozienice, where belles-lettres predominated over more serious fare among the 149 works catalogued in 1785, Rousseau, with nine works or collections in 29 volumes, was the best represented author, surpassing even Voltaire with six in 19. The old ex-king even took three volumes of Rousseau's works with him to his exile in St Petersburg in 1797.³²

29. Grimm to Stanisław August Poniatowski (henceforward SAP), 31 Dec. 1772, SAP to Grimm, 27 Jan. 1773, Grimm to SAP, 22 Feb. 1773, Grimm to SAP, 26 Mar. 1773, SAP to Grimm, 17 Apr. 1773, AGAD, Zbiór Popielów 221, f.372-83v, quotations at f.375 and f.381v-83. I have used the texts as established by Professor Jochen Schlobach in his forthcoming edition of the correspondence. I am grateful to him for providing me with the texts and for permission to quote from them. The details given here correct those in *Poland's last king*, p.249-50.

30. Jochen Schlobach, 'Lumières en France, princes éclairés et le roi Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski', *Kwartalnik neofilologiczny* 12 (1995), p.93-107, here at p.100, shows how Fabre hardened his criticism of Grimm under the influence of the Second World War. Compare Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski et les hommes de lettres français* (Cracow 1936), p.18-31, with *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski*, p.331-52.

31. Emanuel Rostworowski, 'Religijność i polityka wyznaniowa Stanisława Augusta', in *Życie kulturalne i religijność w czasach Stanisława Augusta Poniatowskiego*, ed. M. M. Drozdowski (Warsaw 1991), p.11-24, here at p.11.

We should also note Fabre's conviction that the memoirs are suffused with the example of Rousseau's *Confessions*, *Emile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which provided Stanisław August with a literary model of self-analysis. Fabre's belief in 'une sympathie secrète' might be suspect, given his own predilection for both Poniatowski and Rousseau, were it not well supported by numerous and convincing cross-references.³³

The final kind of evidence is the critical reception of Rousseau's *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* in Poland.³⁴ Between 1769 and 1773, two periodicals – *Monitor* and *Zabawy przyjemne i pożyteczne* (Pastimes pleasant and useful) – both founded by the king, published several essays on the subject, the great majority of them demonstrating the usefulness and necessity of the arts and sciences. The discussion continued in other places into the 1780s. Stanisław August had himself contributed a few articles to *Monitor* between 1765 and 1767.³⁵ By 1771, although he was no longer so closely involved with *Monitor*, he was the patron of *Zabawy* and its editor, his historiographer Father Adam Naruszewicz. Royal propaganda depicted the king as the patron of the arts and sciences. Their revival was an essential part of his ambitious cultural project, expressed in his catchphrase 'a new creation of the Polish world' (*nowe światła polskiego tworzenie*).³⁶ Writers close to the king clearly viewed Rousseau's ideas as a threat to that project, and there seems no reason to doubt that the king did likewise. At the very least, the Polish discussion would have been a relatively recent memory while he was writing his memoirs.

Perhaps by now the claim that Poniatowski had Rousseau in mind while writing these sections of his memoirs is at least plausible. Even if he was not replying directly, I would still argue that Rousseau's ideas had influenced his perspective. The connection between the *Considérations* with the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* could easily have been made by Stanisław August. As a young man he visited Paris at the height of the *querelle des bouffons*, during which Rousseau made himself the *bête noire* of

32. 'Catalogus Bibliothecae [...] 1783', AGAD, Archiwum Księcia Józefa Poniatowskiego i Marii Teresy Tyszkiewiczowej, 268, f.135. J. Wojakowski, 'Biblioteka kozienicka Stanisława Augusta', *Z badań nad polskimi księgozbiorami historycznymi. Szkice i materiały* 5 (1981), p.99-137. *Biblioteka Stanisława Augusta na zamku warszawskim. Dokumenty*, ed. Jadwiga Rudnicka, *Archiwum literackie* 26 (1988), p.139.

33. Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski*, p.162 and *passim*.

34. See Irena Stasiewicz, *Poglądy na naukę w Polsce okresu Oświecenia na tle europejskim* (Wrocław 1967), p.130-72; Zofia Sinko, 'Russoizm', in *Słownik literatury polskiego Oświecenia*, 2nd edn, ed. T. Kostkiewiczowa (Wrocław 1996), p.536-43 (with further references); and Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, 'Autour du *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* de Rousseau: article publié dans la revue *Polak Patriota*', in *Le Siècle de Rousseau et sa postérité: mélanges offerts à Ewa Rządowska*, ed. I. Zatorska and A. Siemek (Warsaw 1998), p.83-89.

35. Elżbieta Aleksandrowska, 'Na tropie autorstwa króla w "Monitorze"', *Pamiętnik literacki* 82:2 (1991), p.184-94.

36. On the king's cultural ambitions, see Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski*, *passim* and Emanuel Rostworowski, *Ostatni król Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw 1966), p.45-46, 107-113; and in English, Zamoyski, *The Last king of Poland*, *passim*, and Butterwick, *Poland's last king*, p.4, 122, 162, 165-68, 172-244, 315-16.

French public opinion for asserting the inherent unmelodiousness of the French language, thereby eclipsing the exile of the *Parlement* of Paris as the talking point of the day.³⁷ It was in this context that Stanisław August mentioned Rousseau in his memoirs. He recorded that the partisans of Italian opera showed an enthusiasm and zeal appropriate to a new sect and that 'les écrits de Jean-Jacques Rousseau sur cette manière fournissaient les arguments et une autorité alors dans toute sa force' to the principal

encyclopédistes, qu'on ne désignait point encore habituellement alors du nom de philosophes, mais que bien des gens accusaient déjà d'irrégion et d'avoir des maximes trop républicaines, cela fit qu'imperceptiblement les haines théologiques et l'esprit des différents partis plus ou moins monarchiques influèrent dans la discussion de ce procès musical qui servit beaucoup, pendant mon séjour à Paris, à distraire les têtes de l'attention que, sans cela, elle eussent donné peut-être à l'exil du parlement.³⁸

He implied his irritation that this triviality had obscured a matter of greater magnitude, but he did so shortly after an even more serious struggle between the French Crown and the *parlements* in 1770-1774. Even at that stage, he does not appear to have shared Rousseau's own conviction that the publication of the *Lettre sur la musique française* had averted 'une révolution dans l'État'. Poniatowski's impression was closer, however, to the distraction from the political struggle discerned by Grimm, than to the subversive possibilities of musical debate of which D'Alembert wrote in *De la liberté de la musique* (1759).³⁹ It offers evidence in support of Tim Blanning's contestation (in this very context) of the Habermasian axiom that public discussion of culture leads to public discussion of politics.⁴⁰ Perhaps the *querelle* seemed to him, in retrospect, evidence of that excessive Gallic lightheadedness, which he hoped to see weighed down by English influence. In 1753, when asked his opinion by

37. See Maurice Cranston, *Jean-Jacques: the early life and work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1712-1754* (Chicago 1991), p.275-91.

38. *Mémoires*, i.90.

39. Cf. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, in *OC*, vol. i (Paris 1959), p.1-666, here at p.384, and *Correspondance littéraire*, 1753, vol. 1 [2], p.258-59, 313-14, both cited in Robert Wokler, *Rousseau on society, politics, music and language: an historical interpretation of his early writings* (New York and London 1987), p.284-86.

40. T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of power and the power of culture: old regime Europe 1660-1789* (Oxford 2002), p.12-14, 357-74. Jürgen Habermas expounded this argument in *The Structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*, first published in German in 1962, translated by T. Burger (Cambridge, MA 1989), p.29-43, 51-56, and reiterated it in 'Further reflections on the public sphere', in *Habermas and the public sphere*, ed. C. Calhoun (Cambridge, MA 1992), p.421-61, here at p.423-24. Wokler's verdict is more nuanced: 'In an age when disputes about culture and taste divided men as much, and often in the same way, as did quarrels about justice and law, the *Lettre sur la musique française* was promptly recognized as a political tract, its reception as a political event, and its author as the leader of a party' (*Rousseau on society, politics, music and language*, p.286-87).

Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, he could only reply that the one French opera he had so far managed to see had been universally derided, but that a reputedly better one was soon to be performed.⁴¹

Poniatowski spent a good deal of time in the salon of Madame Geoffrin, who became his adoptive *Maman*. Thanks chiefly to the *querelle*, the conversation there almost certainly included the discussion of Rousseau's outrageous views on culture.⁴² The storm around the *Discours* would still have been fresh in the memory. One of the most prominent published responses was that of the duke of Lorraine and titular king of Poland, Louis XV's father-in-law Stanisław Leszczyński – a natural topic of conversation on which to engage a Polish visitor. Moreover, it was precisely in the salons that women, to paraphrase Rousseau, made influential men what they were (or are).⁴³ The final section of this essay will relate Poniatowski's views to eighteenth-century English and Polish debates on women, manners and liberty. In both cases, much of the stimulus for change came from France.

III

In Paris, Madame Geoffrin corrected Stanisław's youthful *faux-pas*,⁴⁴ and finally, after overcoming the diffidence of his debuts, formed him into the young gentleman that charmed Parisian society, as this testimonial, proudly inserted into his memoirs, demonstrates: 'Sa conversation est agréable et bien au-dessus de celle de la plupart de nos Français. [...] il est également bonne compagnie pour un ministre, pour un général d'armée, pour un académicien, pour une vieille dame d'honneur, et j'entends dire que nos jeunes et belles dames croient qu'il ne sait que plaire et qu'il y est généralement parvenu.'⁴⁵ Stanisław's comments on Frenchwomen, in two contemporary letters and repeated in his memoirs, therefore deserve notice. Despite 'la première apparence de leur extrême futilité', and their sublime, unintelligible jargon,⁴⁶ they turned out to be well-educated, spirited, and possessed even of a tincture of *philosophie*, which was,

41. SAP to Williams, Fontainebleau, 2 Nov. 1753, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT (henceforward LWL), CHW 57-10904, f.159-61.

42. 'Le célèbre d'Alembert, tout géomètre qu'il est, ne dédaigna pas de contrefaire devant moi très gaieusement et très plaisamment les bouffons italiens' (*Mémoires*, i.101).

43. Jolanta T. Pękacz attributes a greater role to the *salonnières* in the formation of manners and taste than of political and religious views ('The salonnières and the philosophes in old regime France', *Journal of the history of ideas* 60, 1999, p.277-99). More far-reaching claims are made by Dena Goodman, 'Enlightenment salons: the convergence of female and philosophic ambitions', *Eighteenth-century studies* 22 (1989), p.329-50, and *The Republic of Letters: a cultural history of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY 1994).

44. *Mémoires*, i.86-89, 99. SAP to Filippo Mazzei, 21 July 1790, Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa (henceforward BN), Akc./ 11 356, i.335-8.

45. Madame de Brancas to countess Brühl, *Mémoires*, i.82.

46. These were common stereotypes, especially applied (most devastatingly by Molière) to *précieuses* (Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning masculinity: national identity and language in the eighteenth*

perhaps, only the effect of their *libertinage*. Moreover, he wrote at the time, 'les femmes en général valent beaucoup mieux que les hommes'. The real merit that existed beneath the apparent superficiality of French society and which, as he wrote in his memoirs, won him over, was due chiefly to elegant and educated women.⁴⁷

In 1754, Poniatowski was more resistant to the charms of English-women. Several young ladies had been disappointed not to have been better acquainted with him.⁴⁸ His fastidiousness in 1754 makes sense in the context of the reformation of female manners that proceeded over the course of the eighteenth century. In the name of 'delicacy', the ideal of a woman became altogether less corporeal. She ceased to sweat, let alone fart. She paid more attention to personal cleanliness and dressed more carefully. It became *de rigueur* for an 'accomplished' female to speak French (although even here, moralists were raising the alarm). The process was underway by the middle of the century, but towards the end of it even the *Spectator* seemed coarse to refined female minds.⁴⁹ Stanisław August's comparisons provide both a geographical and chronological point of reference for mapping the transformation. They explicitly associate female refinement with education, and in both cases a prime criterion is the degree of Gallicisation: French manners and the French language.

Stanisław August's memoirs identify further trends in English society between the 1750s and 1770s that have attracted attention recently. These included intense arguments over patriotism. He had conversed with veterans of the political battles of the 1730s and 1740s, notably Chesterfield, Lyttelton, Temple and Granville, which, along with the information derived from Williams and the Yorkes, formed the basis for the account of the 'patriotic' opposition to Sir Robert Walpole and its subsequent dissolution in his memoirs.⁵⁰ We may read more than a hint of 'patriotism unmasked' (a famous caricature of William Pulteney) into

century, London and New York 1996, p.20-25). As Cohen explains, this pejorative term could denote *savantes*, prudes and coquettes.

47. *Mémoires*, i.100. SAP to August Sułkowski (?), Fontainebleau, 6 November 1753, Paris, 4 Jan. 1754, Biblioteka XX. Czartoryskich, Cracow, 798, f.52-54, 43-44.

48. As he was informed by Lord Chesterfield in a letter of 25 Sept. 1754, AGAD, Zbiór Popielów 173, f.300-301. One who experienced a continuing 'passion' for him was Lady Mary Capell, sister-in-law to Sir Charles Hanbury Williams's daughter Frances, Countess of Essex. F. Essex to Williams, 14 Sept. 1754, LWL CHW 66-10926, f.29. Also see the letters of Williams's younger daughter Charlotte Hanbury Williams to her father, 24 Aug. 1754 and 31 Oct. 1754, LWL CHW 10926, f.16, 76.

49. G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of sensibility: sex and society in eighteenth-century Britain* (Chicago 1992), p.287-96; Porter, *Enlightenment*, p.370; Cohen, *Fashioning masculinity*, p.71-73, 83-87; Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Harmondsworth 1972), ch.5, p.59.

50. *Mémoires*, i.115-20, 130-31, discussed in Butterwick, *Poland's last king*, p.117-19. On 'patriotism' see Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot opposition to Walpole: politics, poetry and national myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford 1994), and Robert Harris, *A Patriot press: national politics and the London press in the 1740s* (Oxford 1993).

both this account and into the passage (cited above) that concludes with *primo mihi*. Yet his initial reaction may have been less jaundiced. A letter written in 1771 to his nephew, asking him to pass on greetings to Lyttelton, one of the original 'patriot boys', indicates that while in 1754 he cast himself enthusiastically as a 'patriot', over the years he had developed a more sceptical attitude to the possibility of practising an unsullied patriotism.⁵¹

Gallicisation was problematic for English 'patriots'. Poniatowski arrived in England during a period of intense polarisation between Gallophiles (or Gallomaniacs) and Gallophobes, who were reluctant on principle to speak French. The Seven Years War reinforced the latter.⁵² Thus Chesterfield, the eternal foe of awkwardness, informed Stanisław that he employed a correspondent in Paris to inform him of the expressions and fashions of the moment, whereas the austere Lord Strange, who took Stanisław to see his first play by Shakespeare and a cock-fight, considered himself dishonoured if he uttered a word in French.⁵³ The 1760s and 1770s saw the rise of 'Macaroni manners'.⁵⁴ But besides the sexually ambiguous fashions and extravagant vice decried by contemporary moralists, some historians have also detected an easing of xenophobia and more cosmopolitan tastes among the polite public. This took place especially, but not exclusively, among the aristocracy.⁵⁵

Gallicisation was inextricable from feminisation, for France has ever been linked in the English imagination with effeminacy.⁵⁶ Effeminacy might refer to the 'molly' (which over-rigidly translates as 'homosexual').

51. He asked Prince Stanisław to tell Lyttelton 'que dans le tems où il voulut entendre les recits et les Sentimens d'un Patriote de 22 ans qui parlait avec l'ardeur de son âge, ce jeune homme alors ne croyait pas possible de se voir jamais réduit à des demi roles, à faire ce que les Anglais expriment si bien par le mot de "trimming". Situation en plus contraire à la nature de mon âme active et généreuse, lorsqu'il en faut constamment soi-même amortir l'énergie; situation dans laquelle on ne peut avoir de Juges trop compétens que sur le lieu même de la scène, trop compliquée pour être seulement aperçue de loin' (25 Dec. 1771, Paris, Archives nationales 340, Archive des Poniatowski 1, f.2, quoted by Zamoyski in English translation, *The Last king of Poland*, p.227). I owe my knowledge of the original to the kindness of Miss Gertrud Seidman.

52. John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the imagination: English culture in the eighteenth century* (London 1997), p.82-87. For the commercial context of rising Gallophobia in the mid-1750s see Robert Harris, 'Patriotic commerce and national revival: the Free British Fishery Company and British politics, c.1749-1758', *English historical review* 114 (1999), p.285-313.

53. *Mémoires*, i.111-13, 129-30.

54. See Miles Ogborn, 'Locating the macaroni: luxury, sexuality and vision in Vauxhall Gardens', *Textual practice* 11 (1997), p.445-61, esp. 447-50; Paul Langford, *A Polite and commercial people: England 1727-1783* (Oxford 1989), p.576-78; and A. S. Turberville, *English men and manners in the eighteenth century* (Oxford 1926), p.83-100.

55. Brewer, *Pleasures*, p.84. See Robin Eagles, *Francophilia in English society 1748-1815* (London and Basingstoke 2000). Langford, *Englishness identified*, p.223-25, links the phenomenon to increased decorum.

56. For examples dating from the Hundred Years War, see *Historical poems and songs relating to English history*, 2 vols, ed. T. Wright (London 1859-1861), i.79-81, and *Historical poems of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries*, ed. R. H. Robbins (New York 1959), p.30-39.

but it was probably more widely applied to those whose social conduct was thought 'unmanly'.⁵⁷ From the late seventeenth century this problem was posed more acutely by the *entrée* into English society of the fop – a vain, vacant gentleman who aped the manners of women – and, having learnt all the wrong things during his Grand Tour, of the French.⁵⁸ The fop represented a political as well as a moral danger, for at Versailles, politics was conducted not by free public debate among gentlemen of independent means (the Country ideal), but by a jockeying among courtiers and place-seekers for physical proximity to the king, his mistresses, the queen and scores of lesser patrons and patronesses.⁵⁹ Here, it was feared, the fop came into his own. Yet to a great extent French manners were, by the 1750s, no longer formed (if they ever had been) by rampant sexual intrigues at the court of an arbitrary monarch, as the English stereotype had it.

Instead, as Stanisław August's account illustrates, the French cultivated their manners in polite conversations conducted in the salons, the opera and some other spaces of what has come to be termed the 'public sphere'. It was, however, in the salon of Mme Geoffrin, and not in the male-dominated taverns or coffee-houses that Poniatowski had encountered those considered to hold 'maximes trop républicaines'. Although 'republican' in the French context meant rather less than in the English or Polish, we should be cautious in attributing to the *salonnières* the *philosophes*' more subversive political and religious opinions. Diderot was actually excluded from the salons of Mme Geoffrin and Mme Du Deffand, possibly in part for his views, and it has been argued that only d'Holbach's salon (where the host's wife was utterly unobtrusive) provided an uncensored environment for airing the most radical thoughts.⁶⁰ The most that we can safely conclude is that the sway of the *salonnières* over manners and taste did not make fawning courtiers of the *philosophes*.

'Man would not only be an unhappy, but a rude unfinished Creature, were he conversant with none but those of his own Make', wrote Joseph Addison in the *Spectator*.⁶¹ Women, as 'sovereigns of the Empire of

57. Philip Carter, 'An "effeminate" or "efficient" nation? Masculinity and eighteenth-century social documentary', *Textual practice* 11 (1997), p.429-43, here at p.430.

58. Cohen, *Fashioning masculinity*, p.37-41, 58-60, and 'Manliness, effeminacy and the French: gender and the construction of national character in eighteenth-century England', in *English masculinities, 1660-1800*, ed. T. Hitchcock and M. Cohen (London 1999), p.44-61, here at p.49-53.

59. For more on the idea of a polycentric court, see John Adamson, 'The making of the ancien-régime Court', in *The Princely courts of Europe, 1500-1750*, ed. J. Adamson (London 1999), p.7-41, here at p.12. See also Olivier Chaline, 'The Valois and Bourbon courts, c.1515-1750', in the same collection, p.66-93.

60. See Jolanta T. Pękacz, 'Gendered discourse as a political option in pre-revolutionary France', in *Progrès et violence au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. V. Cossy and D. Dawson (Paris 2001), p.331-46.

61. *Spectator*, n° 433, quoted in Cohen, *Fashioning masculinity*, p.4.

Conversation', as David Hume put it, thus took an increasingly prominent part in shaping taste.⁶² While some commentators, such as Hume, Edmund Burke and John Gilbert Cooper, broadly welcomed the softening and civilising trend, others, such as Sir Joshua Reynolds, sought (in his case, fairly unsuccessfully) to reconfine the modern female within the costume of chaste antiquity.⁶³ The feminisation of manners and taste through the increase in opportunities for mixed conversation (even without a direct English equivalent of the salon) gave rise to male anxieties about gender-blurring.⁶⁴ They expressed themselves in phobias, about both effeminacy among men and cross-dressing 'Amazons'. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, the reaction seems to have gained strength. Stanisław August wrote his memoirs too early to have picked up a trend of the 1780s discerned by Linda Colley – the British aristocracy's cultural reinvention of itself. Out went the 'effeminate' finery of the Macaronis and in came exquisitely cut coats in sober colours, long boots and breeches, in an effort to look manly, virile and heroic.⁶⁵ It is possible, too, that the trend towards mixed company halted soon after he wrote his account, and that characteristically tongue-tied Englishmen increasingly avoided the company of reserved and 'frigid' Englishwomen.⁶⁶

Stanisław August's contribution to this debate – had it been communicated in a form more public than any hints which he may have given to visiting Englishmen and Englishwomen such as William Coxe and Lady Craven⁶⁷ – would have been to deny that Gallicised manners were effeminate, conducive to political corruption, and consequently, to the rise of 'the monarchical spirit'. On the contrary, he criticised the rough schoolboy manners and bizarre eccentricity which self-proclaimed 'republicans' took to be a guarantee of English freedom. He could do so all the more convincingly, first, because his stay in Paris directly preceded his sojourn in London, and second, because he had

62. Hume, *Of essay writing*, quoted in Robert W. Jones, *Gender and the formation of taste in eighteenth-century Britain: the analysis of beauty* (Cambridge 1998), p.83. See especially ch.2 and 5.

63. Jones, *Gender and the formation of taste*, p.190-98. Significantly, Cooper's *Letters concerning taste* were published in 1755, Burke's *Philosophical inquiry into the sublime and the beautiful* in 1757, whereas Reynolds' *Discourses* began to appear in 1769. See also Carter, 'An "effeminate" or "efficient" nation?' and Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of sensibility*, p.206-208.

64. Porter, *Enlightenment*, p.324-26. Lawrence E. Klein, 'Gender and the private/public distinction in the eighteenth century: some questions about evidence and analytic procedure', *Eighteenth-century studies* 29 (1995), p.97-109, questions the applicability of a private-female/public-male dichotomy in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Cohen, 'Manliness, effeminacy and the French', p.57-61, argues that later efforts to domesticate female politeness were a reaction to these anxieties.

65. Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation* (New Haven 1992), p.165-72. See also Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of sensibility*, p.351-59.

66. Langford, *Englishness identified*, p.159-203; Cohen, 'Manliness, effeminacy and the French', p.48-49, 55-58.

67. Butterwick, *Poland's last king*, ch.6.

himself grown up within – and simultaneously at odds with – a culture of robust republican liberty.

As an aspiring young politician, Poniatowski had been revolted by the ignorance, drunkenness and dirtiness of the provincial Polish nobility, gathered together at its local assemblies or *sejmiki*.⁶⁸ It jarred with his own refined and cosmopolitan upbringing. His dazzling grandmother, Izabella Czartoryska, née Morsztyn, had grown up in late seventeenth-century France, and on returning home, founded Poland's first salon. While all of the Poniatowski and Czartoryski 'Familia' were proficient in Polish, among themselves they preferred to write in French.⁶⁹ If, as Michèle Cohen suggests, the English had mistranslated the French *art de plaire* as 'foppery', then Poniatowski grasped the original meaning.⁷⁰ Yet he was also able to understand and apply the English idea of polite liberty.

As king, Stanisław August attached great importance to the idea of *polor*, which can be translated literally as polish, and more idiomatically as politeness – or *politesse*. He expressed his aims in a letter written in the shadow of the partition in 1772: 'As long as Poland remains Poland, even if only in part, always among her most precious advantages will be counted the resolution tending to the polishing and enlightening of the nation, for, until we have light [*światło*, i.e. *lumière*] and well formed people, we can have no hope of a fundamental improvement of our situation.'⁷¹ The polishing of the manners of the nobility was perhaps the main aim of *Monitor*. It was certainly the aspect in which it was closest to its model, Addison and Steele's *Spectator*, which the king knew well.⁷² His observation of the utter lack of social skills or civility among English youth is strikingly similar to the position worked out by the third earl of Shaftesbury in *Characteristicks* (1711), and popularised in the *Spectator* and other essay periodicals. Shaftesbury had taken the accomplished manners of Renaissance courtiers and recast them as polite sociability, in which the rough corners of individuals were rubbed off by the requirements of mutual civility. The civil person aimed to derive and give pleasure from conversation, during which prejudice would be overcome by rational persuasion. Because sociability was public, civility would not degenerate into the fawning manners of courtiers. Unimpeded conversation

68. *Mémoires*, i.59-60; Zamoyski, *The Last king of Poland*, p.33-34.

69. Butterwick, *Poland's last king*, p.73-85.

70. Cohen, *Fashioning masculinity*, p.41.

71. SAP to Aleksander Sapieha, 14 Dec. 1772. Quoted after Zdzisław Libera, 'Stanisław August Poniatowski – opiekun i miłośnik literatury', in *Życie kulturalne i religijność*, ed. Drozdowski, p.85-99, here at p.87. My translation from Polish.

72. Zofia Sinko, '*Monitor*' wobec angielskiego '*Spektatora*' (Wrocław 1956), shows the extent to which *Monitor*, even in the minority of its essays which were directly derived from the *Spectator*, adapted the message to Polish conditions. I discuss the issue of the king, *Monitor* and manners in *Poland's last king*, p.166-68, 186-89.

depended upon freedom of speech and association. Politeness was thus a function of liberty – one that improved it – rather than its enemy.⁷³

Stanisław August was, as we have seen, a master practitioner of polite sociability. From his point of view, the potential of such a concept was enormous. A polite and enlightened nobility would use its freedom more moderately and reasonably. Instead of the conflict *inter maiestatem ac libertatem* which had progressively paralysed the politics of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for more than a century, he postulated a new partnership between king and nation, grounded in mutual dependency and trust. This would balance effective government and civil freedom. He would later contrast the moderation of the English with the popular tyranny of revolutionary France.⁷⁴ The problem he faced for most of his reign was that the rural suspicion of the court and Warsaw as a den of vice and corruption, not dissimilar to the divide between 'court' and 'country' in later seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, was extremely powerful.⁷⁵ For most of Stanisław August's reign Warsaw was synonymous with the royal court, only really coming alive for a few weeks every two years during meetings of the *Sejm* (parliament). The Polish capital did briefly exhibit some of the characteristics of a mature 'public sphere' – several newspapers, a flood of pamphlets, coffee houses, restaurants, political clubs, masonic lodges, pleasure gardens and shops – in 1788-1792, when the Four Years *Sejm* deliberated almost continuously and the population rose to about 115,000.⁷⁶ That, however, was the exception. It was harder in Poland than in England for the polite 'town' to bridge the gap between the virtuous 'country' and the maleficent 'court' and 'city'. Moreover, whereas the advocates of politeness in

73. It is difficult to establish whether the king knew *Characteristicks* at the time he wrote his memoirs. He is known to have acquired Shaftesbury's *Works* in 1783 (*Biblioteka Stanisława Augusta na zamku warszawskim*, p.112). See, essentially, Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness: moral discourse and cultural politics in early eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge 1994), especially ch.1. On the dissemination of politeness, see Brewer, *Pleasures*, p.99-113; for an exposition of its ideology, see Porter, *Enlightenment*, p.188-204, and Klein, 'Liberty, manners and politeness in early 18th-century England', *Historical journal* 32 (1989), p.583-605.

74. SAP to Filippo Mazzei, 11 Aug. 1790, 25 Sept. 1790, BN Akc./ 11 356, i.347, 379.

75. Jerzy Michalski, '"Warszawa" czyli o antystolecznych nastrojach w czasach Stanisława Augusta Poniatowskiego', *Studia Warszawskie* 12 (1972), p.9-78.

76. See *Warszawa w wieku Oświecenia*, ed. Andrzej Zahorski (Wrocław 1986), especially p.51-52, 107-94. The applicability of Habermas's concept of the public sphere to Stanisławian Poland has been questioned by J. IJ. van der Meer, *Literary activities and attitudes in the Stanisławian age in Poland (1764-1795): a social system?* (Amsterdam and New York 2002), p.191-206, because of the failure of bourgeois-dominated reading societies to appear before political clubs. I would add that although usages of 'publicum' as a tribunal of opinion can be found (e.g. *ibid*, p.54, 148), the older meaning of 'publicum', as synonymous with the common good, continued to be more frequent. As in classical antiquity, the idea of a 'public sphere', mediating between private individuals and the state is inappropriate to a republican polity, in which hundreds of thousands of individual noble-citizens were the state.

England won their initial victories while memories lingered of the perils of 'enthusiasm' during the civil war,⁷⁷ in Poland Poniatowski had to contend with the rise of romantic sensibility, in which, of course, an enormous role was played by Rousseau. The liberation of the passions, which the king so distrusted, only accentuated the nobility's traditional anti-metropolitan prejudices.⁷⁸ The king himself promoted the kind of emotional and virtuous patriotism advocated by Rousseau in the *Considérations* in his own educational ventures.⁷⁹

This difficulty is exemplified when we consider the role of women. Stanisław August evidently believed that educated women had an important role to play in promoting the kind of reasonable and moderate liberty he associated with England by requiring civility of their menfolk. However, moralists blamed empty-headed women for the rise of Gallomania and moral corruption among the wealthier nobility.⁸⁰ Most Polish noblewomen had only a rudimentary education, and were brought up to perform their domestic and religious duties. However, Polish aristocratic ladies were among the most cultured in Europe. Leading magnates spared no expense on importing tutors for their daughters and occasionally even persuaded visiting diplomats to teach them the more exotic foreign languages – such as English.⁸¹ In 1750 Sir Charles Hanbury Williams told Henry Fox that 'the Ladys are handsome & Polite to a high degree, and tho' educated at home in the forests of Lithuania have the noblest carriage and are as accomplishd persons as ever I met with'.⁸² Lady Craven's impressions after passing through Warsaw in 1786 were very similar: the ladies 'seem to have much taste – magnificence – spirit and gaiety – they are polite and lively – excessively accomplished – partial to the English'.⁸³ Among them Stanisław August

77. J. G. A. Pocock, 'Clergy and commerce: the conservative Enlightenment in England', in *L'Età dei Lumi. Studi storici sul Settecento europeo in onore di Franco Venturi*, ed. R. Ajello et al. (Naples 1985), i.523–62.

78. Zamoyski captures this mood well in *The Last king of Poland*, ch.17.

79. Fabre, notes to Rousseau, *Considérations*, iii.1754. The king's own cadet school, founded in 1765, is the subject of an exemplary monograph by Kamila Mrozowska, *Szkoła Rycerska Stanisława Augusta Poniatowskiego* (Wrocław 1961). For a modern overview of the work of the Commission for National Education, see Mrozowska, *By Polaków zrobić obywatelami* (Cracow 1993), but Ambroise Jobert, *La Commission d'Education nationale en Pologne (1773–94): son œuvre d'institution civique* (Paris 1941) remains unsurpassed.

80. Fabre, notes to Rousseau, *Considérations*, iii.1754. A good example is the character of the starosta's wife in Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz's play *Powrót posta* [The Envoy's return] [1791], ed. Z. Skwarczyński (Wrocław 1950), an enthusiast for *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, who encourages her prospective son-in-law, the fop Szarmancki, who is utterly indifferent to public affairs.

81. Izabella Lubomirska received some English lessons from Viscount Stormont (Bożenna Majewska-Maszkowska, *Mecenat artystyczny Izabelli z Czartoryskich Lubomirskiej 1736–1816*, Wrocław 1976, p.24–25).

82. Warsaw, 22 Aug. 1750, British Library Add. MS 51392, f.123–24.

83. *A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople in a series of letters from [...] Elizabeth Lady Craven to [...] the margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach and Bareith* (London 1789), p.115–22.

could count many supporters (and admirers). He was delighted to hear the manners of his nieces praised.⁸⁴ In sharp contrast to Rousseau, he did not seem to be unduly worried about the power of women over men. If he felt that way, personally and politically, about Catherine II, he concealed it well enough. He was evidently confident enough in his power over women not to discourage their involvement in politics.⁸⁵

The king may have come to change his mind as a number of aristocratic ladies orchestrated opposition to him. His enemies included his two cousins (and, pertinently, jealous former lovers), Izabella Lubomirska, née Czartoryska, and Izabella Czartoryska, née Flemming. Both were devotees of Rousseau. The first (whose sentiments for Poniatowski had occasioned his departure in 1753) recreated the architecture described by *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in one of her gardens, placed Rousseau's marble 'tomb' inside one of her palaces (and bedecked it with flowers), named her youngest daughter Julia and called her ward, Henryk Lubomirski, 'her Emile'. The second, who met Rousseau in 1761, and toured the Swiss locations of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in 1789, bringing home Rousseau's reputed stool, took to heart his thoughts on education and made it her mission to bring up her sons, and as a cultural patron, the Polish nation, in the spirit of Rousseauvian patriotism. She took the title role in her court poet Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin's opera *Matka Spartanka* (the Spartan mother, 1786), influenced stylistically by Metastasio and ideologically by *Emile*, telling her own eldest son (Adam Jerzy Czartoryski) to return from battle with his shield – or on it.⁸⁶

Here Stanisław August had an image problem that magnified his political difficulties *vis-à-vis* Russia. His refined, Gallicised manners and taste initially grated on an uncouth nobility. In the later 1780s and 1790s he came to seem outdated and unheroic. He had difficulty in achieving the standard of 'refined manliness' to which he aspired.⁸⁷ His philandering could not compensate for his lack of martial prowess. When Russia invaded Poland in May 1792, he did not even return from the battlefield shieldless; he failed to set out for the camp, before he capitulated to Catherine II's demands on 24 July. It is this image of him that continues to dominate the popular imagination.⁸⁸

84. See Butterwick, *Poland's last king*, p.134-37.

85. The king's relationships with women are discussed by Zamoyski, *The Last king of Poland*, p.39-40, 52, 55-70 (Catherine), 77-78, 85, 125-26, 258, 261-62, 274-77.

86. Majewska-Maszkowska, *Mecenat Izabelli Lubomirskiej*, p.63-64, 176-86. The late author informed me that the dovecote at Mokotów was modelled on the tower of the church at Vévey. See Alina Aleksandrowicz, *Izabela Czartoryska. Polskość i europejskość* (Lublin 1998), p.139-52, and 'Sejm Czteroletni i Konstytucja 3 Maja w kręgu Puław', in *Rok Monarchii Konstytucyjnej. Piśmiennictwo polskie lat 1791-1792 wobec Konstytucji 3 Maja*, ed. T. Kostkiewiczowa (Warsaw 1992), p.195-249.

87. See Carter, 'An "effeminate" or "efficient" nation?', p.438-40.

IV

The controversies that envelop the last king of Poland, particularly the ignominious termination of his reign, have perhaps contributed to the eclipse of his stature as a crowned *philosophe*.⁸⁹ The bigwigs of the French Enlightenment tended to patronise him for political, rather than intellectual reasons, yet, as the example of Rousseau demonstrates, he was capable of a response to them as insightful as, if less waspish than, the ripostes penned by Frederick II. Stanisław August was, of course, first and foremost a monarch rather than a *philosophe*. No historian has questioned his intelligence, but charges of dilettantism and superficiality are often made against him. Naturally, he was not equally expert in all aspects of his cultural activity – and neither were Frederick and Catherine. As a political thinker, however, I believe that his achievement was at least as substantial as theirs, although he expressed his thoughts via mouthpieces such as his historiographer Naruszewicz,⁹⁰ in semi-private correspondence, anonymous pamphlets and essays, and, more elliptically, in speeches to the *Sejm*, rather than in openly published works such as Catherine's *Nakaz* (1767) and Frederick's *Essai sur les formes du gouvernement et les devoirs des souverains* (1777). Stanisław August's memoirs, like his letters and speeches, certainly have literary merit.⁹¹ The apparently light-hearted critique of English manners also yields perhaps the subtlest defence of polite liberty, and of women's role in nourishing it, that Rousseau, and like-minded English 'republicans', never read.

88. For Stanisław August's reputation, see Andrzej Zahorski, *Spór o Stanisława Augusta* (Warsaw 1988).

89. The phrase is the title of part II of Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski*. On Poniatowski's espousal of the ideal of an enlightened monarch, see Schlobach, 'Lumières en France, princes éclairés'.

90. The king would typically outline a political or historical concept for Naruszewicz to express in verse or prose. See '*Zabawy Przyjemne i Pożyteczne*' (1770-1777). *Wybór*, ed. J. Platt (Wrocław 1968), introduction, p.xxxii-xlv. For an example (the suppression of the Jesuits) see SAP to Naruszewicz, after 10 September 1773, *Korespondencja Adama Naruszewicza 1762-1796*, ed. J. Platt (Wrocław 1959), p.9-13.

91. Jerzy Michalski, 'Stanisław August Poniatowski', in *Pisarze polskiego Oświecenia*, ed. T. Kostkiewiczowa and Z. Goliński, vol. 1 (Warsaw 1992), i.371-98.