SUMMARY

The starting point of the doctoral thesis was the preparation of the edition of Helena Krukowiecka’s personal journal from 1831-1833. The author was not a public figure, she was known virtually only as the wife of general Jan Krukowiecki, a military officer who was commander of the Warsaw garrison during the 1830-1831 November Uprising. The work on the edition of her diary was an opportunity to retrieve this individual biography. I recreated the diarist’s life on the basis of unpublished archives of the Krukowiecki and Wolski families.

The basis of this work I made the considerations of 19th century women’s diaries. The main question and the point of origin of further questions I asked was: why Krukowiecka wrote her journal? Was it a widespread practice? (To what extent? How many similar diaries were preserved?) Does Krukowiecka’s life prove that she was familiar with the existing genres of autobiographic writing? Did this personal journal break with the tradition of women’s personal journals, or – on the contrary – did it reaffirm these past patterns?

The aim of the thesis is to show the main trends in 19th century diary-writing, to portray the relationships between specific discovered women’s diaries and to identify outstanding examples of such writing.

Women’s diaries are rooted in the traditions of ego-documents; traces of the tradition of family notebooks can also be seen in surviving personal journals. The genealogy of the genre manifests itself clearly in journals-letters, which betray closest affinity with correspondence (a particular example of such diary-writing were diaries written by mothers for their children). Apart from this close connection with the recipient, this practice had also other aspects, showing that it was as frequent to make one’s notes confidential as it was to reveal them. Diary-writing was part of everyday life for girls and women, a ritual or a compulsion. It belonged to a family tradition (and therefore was an obligation) or it was undertaken as a popular form of personal literature, often serving as a replacement for correspondence, if it was by some reason difficult to exchange letters.

In 19th century, journals were written by unmarried women, fiancées, wives, widows and mothers; women coming from all backgrounds: aristocracy, noble class (called the szlachta), landowners, townspeople. In case of some of the authors (such as Symforoza
Krzyżanowska, Tekla Ważyńska, Anna Beck, Anna Oskierczanka, Wanda Borowska, Malwina Oskierczyna or Wanda Brandt) no other personal documents besides the journals survived, therefore no detailed biographical information was available, except for some rudimentary data collected from the diaries or from the sources regarding the authors’ relatives. At the opposite end, there are noted diary-writing women, especially writers and publicists. Among them were: Józefa Bąkowska, poet, short-story writer, and editor-in-chief of the “Bluszek” [“Ivy”] magazine; Naryza Żmichowska, writer and publicist (her journals were published several times); Iza Moszczeńska, publicist and social activist; Klementyna Hoffmanowa, writer and publicist (her husband published her journals); Helena Modrzejewska, actress (her journals were published as well). However, between the celebrated women of letters and the completely unknown authors there were mothers, daughters and wives, usually mentioned in connection with their more famous relatives. Thanks to their preserved diaries, it is possible to read their stories as they themselves told them. To this group belong: Emilia Wróblewska (born Beniowska, mother of Tadeusz Wróblewski and Augustyn Wróblewski), Konstancja Łubieńska (born Ossolińska, wife of general Tomasz Łubieński), Helena Krukowiecka (born Wolska, wife of general Jan Krukowiecki, mother of Aleksander Krukowiecki), Cecylia Ożarowska (born Plater, daughter of Józef Plater, general of the Lithuanian army; wife of Kajetan Ożarowski, general of the Polish army, mother of Wiktor Ożarowski, clergyman and missionary), Maria Hornowska (born Schaaf, fiancée of the poet Tymon Zaborowski), Magdalena Cieńska (born Jordan, wife of the politician Ludomir Cieński; mother of Tadeusz Cieński, lawyer and politician and Leszek Cieński, member of parliament), Emilia Abramowska, later Waryńska (born Andronowska, wife of philosopher Edward Abramowski, after his death in 1918 married Tadeusz Waryński, son of socialist theoretician Ludwik Waryński), Romualda Baudouin de Courtenay (born Bagnicka, wife of linguist Jan Baudouin de Courtenay).

We are dealing with a vast field of women’s literary activity adjacent to published literary works, in other words: literature in the strict sense. Important for such practices was the materiality of the journals, as well as the acts of rereading and rewriting the notes. In my analyses I focus on the journal as an object whose dimensions were associated with the manner of writing (unbound sheets of letters-journals; small notebooks used in travels). I also take into account the circulation of text; the authors read their notes, then rewrote them themselves or their journals were rewritten in later generations; otherwise, they put fragments of these journals in their (retrospective) memoirs – quoting or maybe editing these fragments. The journal was
not so much an auxiliary genre for the autobiography as it was an element of it, allowing for a
greater fragmentation of past time, which was presented in the diary as current time.

I am inclined to consider a journal as a structure consisting of a finished number of
elements (regardless of the perspective from which we make the classification; the classification
should be adjusted to the journal). The journal allows the reader to spread it out to the first parts.
And it allows questions to be raised: why exactly these elements appeared in the diary? In such
a way I disassembled the journal of Helena Krukowiecka; the analysis included in the last
chapter of my thesis is a selection from the journal as a composition of elements. The analysis
shows how particular topics allude to earlier habits of correspondence. The context of letters
proves that there existed a relationship between genres, that these daily notes were treated as if
they were a dialogue. The context of diaries, however, induces me to see in Krukowiecka’s
journal traces that explicitly show her struggles with this particular genre as well. The diarist’s
biography, post-November Uprising, cannot be placed in the field of emancipation – the fact
that Krukowiecka administered a part of her mother’s, Tekla Wolska’s, estate, does not prove
that she acquired new willpower due to being in a difficult financial situation after the uprising,
but that she continued what she was doing before 1830. It was commonly accepted that a woman
from the szlachta had to efficiently perform a housekeeper’s role. In Krukowiecka’s case, I
would consider that the writing of the journal and the crossing of genre limitations were
instances of breaking social restrictions: I describe her habits in correspondence silenced by
self-censorship, as well as her attitude to the November Uprising as an identity-forming
experience, remembering that the historiography of the epoch deals mainly with biographies of
women of action. To expand our understanding of the post-November Uprising fortunes of
women, we still lack the figures of melancholic anomads, who took over the responsibilities of
men who emigrated of were sent to exile.