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Challenges, Opportunities, Academic Outcomes: Findings of the Project *Ego-documents of the Family of the Pomeranian Voivode Piotr Jan (1685–1736) – a Philological and Historical Study and Edition*[1]

Wyzwania, szanse, naukowe efekty. Wnioski z realizacji projektu *Egodokumenty członków rodziny wojewody pomorskiego Piotra Jana (1685–1736) – opracowanie filologiczno-historyczne i edycja*

Keywords: Czapscy, 18th century, ego-documents, letters, autobiographical genres, edition
Słowa kluczowe: Czapscy, XVIII wiek, egodokumenty, listy, gatunki autobiograficzne, edycja

Abstract

This article offers an overview of the project entitled *Ego-documents of the Family of the Pomeranian Voivode Piotr Jan (1685–1736) – a Philological and Historical Study and Edition,* carried out with the support of the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities.

[1] This publication was co-financed by the state as part of the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities implemented by the Minister of Education and Science, grant No. 11H 20 0343 88; project entitled *Źródła do dziejów Czapskich w XVIII wieku. Egodokumenty członków rodziny wojewody pomorskiego Piotra Jana (1685–1736) – opracowanie filologiczno-historyczne i edycja* [*Sources for the History of the Czapski Family in the Eighteenth Century. Personal Documents of Members of the Family of Piotr Jan (1685–1736), Voivode of Pomerania – philological and historical study and edition*]; project funding: PLN 723,814; total project value: PLN 723,814.

The aim of the project was to collect, study, analyse, and publish personal documents of the Czapski family – the voivode's wife, Konstancja née Gnińska, and their four children: sons Tomasz and Paweł Tadeusz, as well as daughters Rozalia, *primo voto* Chodkiewicz, *secundo voto* Czapska, and Magdalena Radziwiłłowa. The sources, dating mainly from the first half of the eighteenth century, include an extensive collection of letters and an autobiographical account of Tomasz Czapski's stay abroad, primarily in Paris. As a result of extensive research, the interdisciplinary team uncovered vast source material, enabling them to demonstrate developments in eighteenth-century Polish epistolary writing, partly as a result of women's increased participation, to show how autobiographical writing evolved, and illustrate an important stage in the development of the Polish language. Drawing on Jacob Presser's findings concerning ego-documents, the Czapski texts were characterised as sources that vividly convey the author's "self." Further aspects examined as part of this project included methods of self-creation, communication strategies and literary and cultural influences. The material published as a result is likely to prove valuable to historians studying the eighteenth century and the family that gained an increasingly prominent political, economic, and social status throughout the period.

This paper presents reflections from research and the conclusions drawn from a five-year research project funded by the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities (NPDH), which enters its final phase in 2026. The grant presumed a scholarly edition and publication of the surviving personal documents authored by the family of Piotr Jan Czapski of the Leliwa coat of arms (1685–1736), voivode of Pomerania, specifically his wife Konstancja née Gnińska, his two older sons – Tomasz and Paweł Tadeusz – as well as his eldest daughter Rozalia, *primo voto* Chodkiewicz, *secundo voto* Czapska. During the work, it was decided – after obtaining the NPDH Council's consent – that the edition would also include unpublished letters by her younger daughter, Magdalena Radziwiłłowa.

Since February 2022, the project has been carried out by an interdisciplinary team of seven researchers from various institutions: two literary scholars, two linguists, two historians, and an art historian. Such a diverse composition was dictated by the needs and scholarly opportunities offered by the source material. Originating predominantly in the so-called Saxon period (the reign of the two kings of the Wettin dynasty in Poland), it reflects the complex history of a prominent family in Royal Prussia, which in previous centuries branched into the Smętów, Bąków, and Swarożyn lines (Mikulski 1993: 253–365). The first two would rise to political and economic significance in the eighteenth century (Tomaszewski 2023: 24–59). Piotr Jan Czapski, a member of the Bąków line, first served as the castellan of Chełmno and, in 1726, as the voivode of Pomerania. Together with his wife Konstancja née Gnińska, he became involved in politics in the 1730s, supporting Stanisław Leszczyński in his dispute over the throne with Frederick Augustus of

Wettin, which the former ultimately lost (Tomaszewski 2025: 19–31). This certainly influenced the future careers of the voivode's sons, who, having had their parents side with the losing party, had no chance of holding significant offices (ibid.: 31).

However, the fact that the sources in this research reflect contemporary political events is not the main reason why they are so scientifically compelling today. Their value stems from other factors that affect the nature of the preserved material. At this point, one should recall the definition of ego-documents that the Dutch philologist and historian Jacob Presser proposed in 1958. According to the scholar, it is characteristic of such texts that "the author tells us about his feelings, about his private life; these are 'documents' in which their creator, intentionally or inadvertently, reveals his ego" (Chorążyczewski, Pacevičius, Roszak 2015: 7). An analysis of sources penned by members of the Pomeranian voivode's family shows that they quite conspicuously show the "self" of the writer. This applies both to the fairly numerous surviving letters and to the account by the future starost of Knyszyn, Tomasz Czapski, of his several-year stay abroad, which – given the travelogues written by the then nobility – was by no means the norm (Kucharski 2024: 29–33). Undoubtedly, the authors' strong personalities shaped the ego-documentary character of the material. They frequently behaved in ways that defied social and established norms, often inviting trouble. Despite this, they engaged in lengthy legal and property disputes while also passionately pursuing their interests – such as collecting, the arts, or scholarship. One should add that the value of the sources in question varies, being largely determined by the individual linguistic abilities and competencies of the various members of that family.

For the most part, the analysed letters have survived in their original form, as has Tomasz Czapski's autobiographical text. The collection of ego-documents for this edition is supplemented by twentieth-century typewritten copies of the letters. The travel diary of the eldest son has not yet been published, despite pre-war efforts (including the preparation of a copy) by Father Alfons Mańkowski, who was interested in the family's legacy (Mańkowski 1946: 93–95). Ultimately, the text was not released due to the researcher's death in a concentration camp. In 1980, Ludmiła Kaczmarska completed her master's thesis, written under the supervision of Władysław Odyniec; it was a transcription of the source, which, besides certain errors, lacked the necessary philological and historical commentary (Maciejewska 2025b: 10–11).

Some members of the team preparing the grant proposal in 2019 – Iwona Maciejewska, Mikołaj Tomaszewski, Katarzyna Zawilska, and Jerzy Dygdała – were well-versed in both the archival materials related to the topic and their authors, to whom they had dedicated their earlier publications. Thus, they were aware of the

material's potential and the scholarly prospects it offered. Two of them had previously published papers about the letters of Konstancja Czapska and her daughter Magdalena (Maciejewska 2013a, 2014, 2016b, 2017, 2018; Maciejewska, Zawilska 2014, 2015). Additionally, as part of a project funded by the National Science Centre, they published a collection of Magdalena's letters to her fiancé and later husband, Duke Hieronim Florian Radziwiłł (Maciejewska, Zawilska, introduction and ed. 2016). Meanwhile, works by historian Mikołaj Tomaszewski focused on the sons of the Pomeranian voivode: Tomasz and Paweł Tadeusz (e.g., Tomaszewski 2017a, 2017b, 2017d), with the elder brother also the subject of his doctoral dissertation, which later gave rise to a monograph (Tomaszewski 2023a). The most experienced member of the team – historian Jerzy Dygdała – has long engaged with the history of the nobility of Royal Prussia in the eighteenth century, including the Czapski family (e.g., Dygdała 1979, 1984, 1992, 2003), while simultaneously publishing sources from the Saxon period. This group of researchers was joined by linguist Magdalena Majdak, literary scholar Sabina Kowalczyk-Wesołowska, and art historian Bartłomiej Łyczak. In 2026, Katarzyna Zawilska was replaced by Iza Matusiak-Kempa, who specialises in the history of language and dialectology.

The team's work began with lengthy, painstaking research aimed at locating and procuring additional sources – beyond those previously known – relating to the Czapski family. Here, the goal was to supplement the collection, the largest part of which consists of letters held at the Central Archive of Historical Records in Warsaw, specifically in the Warsaw Radziwiłł Archive, the Roś Archive, and the Zamoyski Archive. The second source of the family's correspondence was the Library of the Poznań Society of Friends of Science. This library holds copies of letters lost during World War II, including the only known letters from Konstancja née Gnińska to her husband, who died in 1736, and to her son Tomasz. This body of material was further supplemented by finds made at the National Museum in Kraków (Czartoryski Library), the National Archive in that city (Młynów Chodkiewicz Archive), the Ossolineum Library in Wrocław (Mniszech Archive), the Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kórnik, as well as abroad – at the Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden in Germany and the Universitätsbibliothek Basel in Switzerland, where, among other things, three letters from Paweł Tadeusz Czapski to the eminent mathematician and physicist Johann Bernoulli were discovered. The researchers involved also examined material relating to the Czapski family held at the Jagiellonian Library, specifically at the Pusłowski Archive, which contains copies of letters currently held at the Central Archive of Historical Records, written in the same hand, likely that of Zygmunt Pusłowski (Zlot 2017: 85). They were used as a reference thanks to which some of the poorly preserved originals could be more easily deciphered.

Regrettably, not all planned research proved feasible. Ongoing since 2022, the Russian-Ukrainian war precluded a visit to Lviv, where, for understandable reasons, archival collections are not accessible. A trip to Minsk was also cancelled due to tense political relations between Poland and Belarus. Also, archival and library investigations did not always yield new materials. This was the case with Paris and Nancy, where no previously unknown letters from members of the Pomeranian voivode's family were found, even though the Czapskis had long actively supported Stanisław Leszczyński, the father-in-law of King Louis XV, in his contest for the Polish throne, all the while receiving a salary from the French court. In 1734, the eldest descendant of Piotr Jan Czapski brought letters from the monarch to his daughter Maria and his wife, Katarzyna née Opalińska, from Königsberg to Paris. While in the French capital, Tomasz Czapski was a guest at the court of Louis XV, as well as at Leszczyński's residence in Nancy, where the latter had settled temporarily after leaving Poland for good. Importantly, the former king took a personal interest in the fate of the son of the Pomeranian voivode, whose antics and affairs caused quite a stir at the court. He also sought to persuade Tomasz to come to Lunéville, Leszczyński's final residence. However, although the presence of the future starost of Knyszyn in France is abundantly attested, the research team was unable to locate previously unknown archival evidence of that stay or any accompanying correspondence. Even so, the research in Paris helped develop a commentary for the edition of the notes from the foreign travels of the Knyszyn starost as well as pertinent illustrative material.

Although the quest for sources involved a certain degree of disappointment, the collected body of personal documents is extensive, with over 330 letters written by Konstancja née Gnińska alone. Unfortunately, it was impossible to obtain a complete picture of the family's correspondence, as we do not have the replies to the letters we dispatched, and, in effect, the epistolary dialogue cannot be reconstructed. For example, not a single letter from Piotr Jan Czapski to his wife has survived. As regards the voivodess, her letters to her daughter, Magdalena and her son-in-law, Hieronim Florian Radziwiłł, are the most numerous. For obvious reasons, the Radziwiłł Archive does not contain replies from those addressees, but the collection is sufficiently extensive to enable an in-depth characterisation of the epistolary skills of the author who, following her husband's death, remained at the helm of the family's strategy for over two decades, for instance, striving to secure advantageous marriages for her descendants. This is evidenced by the union of Tomasz Czapski and Maria, *primo voto* Potocka, daughter of the grand treasurer of the Crown Jan Ansgary Czapski from the Smętów line. Rozalia married the voivode of Brześć Litewski, Adam Tadeusz Chodkiewicz, and after the latter's death, the treasurer of

Prussia Jakub Czapski. Perhaps the most prestigious of those marriages brought together her daughter, Magdalena, and Duke Hieronim Florian Radziwiłł, cupbearer and subsequently grand standard-bearer of Lithuania. Several years later, the union was declared invalid in Rome, thus ending in what was commonly referred to at the time as *rozwód*, or divorce (Kulesza-Woroniecka 2002: 31). Matrimonies of this kind undoubtedly served to elevate the status of the family, which in the eighteenth century belonged among the magnates of Royal Prussia.

Thanks to such ties, as well as contacts with the representatives of other major families who likewise supported Leszczyński, Konstancja built a wide social network that required her to maintain regular correspondence. Through political acquaintance with the voivode of Lublin Jan Tarło and his wife Elżbieta née Branicka, as well as being the heiress to the Knyszyn starosty that her father Władysław Gniński had held, Konstancja established relations with Białystok – which bordered her estate in Dobrzyniewo – and its powerful owner, field and later grand hetman of the Crown Jan Klemens Branicki, full brother of the aforementioned Elżbieta Tarłowa. A small number of Czapska's letters are also found in the Mniszech Archive at the Ossolineum Library, and their content suggests that they were addressed to Konstancja Mniszchowa née Tarło, sister of the aforementioned Leszczyński supporter Jan Tarło, and simultaneously the wife of grand marshal of the Crown Józef August Mniszech, a supporter of Wettin.

Even this brief list of addressees demonstrates that the voivodess was a prolific letter-writer, and her activity in this regard was likely even more extensive. After all, the author would frequently mention to various correspondents that she had just written to someone else, received a reply from someone, or that she was passing on someone's letter for them to read. It may be surmised that Konstancja Czapska spent many hours each day with a pen in her hand and, as some of her remarks suggest, she corresponded even in unfavourable circumstances, e.g. while traveling or without the necessary writing materials, often at inconvenient times, or in poor health. It sometimes happened that she wrote to a particular person twice on the same day. Importantly, nearly all of the autograph letters available today include the abbreviation of the Latin phrase *manu propria* – with my own hand – confirming that she dispensed with the services of a secretary. Her distinctive handwriting enabled the researchers to determine that one of the letters at the National Museum in Krakow had been misattributed, and that Konstancja Czapska, née Gnińska, was its actual author. It may be argued that, beyond a doubt, the letters preserved in copies were written personally by the voivodess. Most were addressed to her closest ones, while their content was, in many instances, not intended for anyone outside the family.

The abundance of the correspondence and – which should also be emphasised – the length of many letters to her daughter Magdalena, her husband Piotr Jan, her son Tomasz, or his wife Maria, prove that Konstancja Czapska thoroughly deserves the title of a penwoman (Partyka 2004), while her talent for letter-writing appears exceptional. She was a worthy representative of a generation of women who, during the Saxon era, became increasingly active as authors of literary texts, both original and inspired by other works, translators (mainly from French), diarists or, as in this case, extraordinary correspondents (see, e.g., Rudnicka 1996: 285–296, Stasiewicz 2001, Judkowiak 2013, Roćko 2013: 444–468, Maciejewska 2015: 157–170). Although Konstancja née Gnińska can hardly be called a woman of letters (in the literary sense), she did compose an extensive verse-and-prose blessing for Magdalena Radziwiłłowa and her husband (Maciejewska 2018: 14–18), reciprocated by her son-in-law with a poetic reply. That being said, an analysis of the epistolary output that spanned so many years demonstrates the undeniable talent of the voivodess, who skilfully took advantage of the power of words as well as cultural and literary contexts, to enhance her turn of phrase and win the attention and favour of those to whom her letters were addressed (Maciejewska 2024b: 27–40).

Being so abundant, the material in question offers much better insights into the language used by women during the Saxon period and, more broadly, into the Polish language of that period, since the lexicon compiled during the work on this edition adds to the index of entries in the *Electronic Dictionary of the Polish Language in the 17th- and 18th-Century*. The letters of the younger daughter of the voivodess, Magdalena née Czapska, constitute a similarly valuable source, as their author clearly inherited her mother's talent for letter-writing. It should be stressed that both women adeptly drew on the conventions of the genre, employing the formulae typical of the letters of that time[2] – including panegyric patterns that they occasionally modified in quite an interesting fashion. At the same time, particularly in the letters to their closest ones, they cultivated a "family language" (Handke 1995) that was replete with intimate content, colloquialisms, diminutives, and highly subjective assessments (Maciejewska 2024a: 181–194) and also employed a variety of idioms and cultural references.

However, a comparison of their letters with those written by Rozalia Czapska readily shows that the aesthetic value of epistolary writing depends considerably

[2] Selected formulae were discussed by team member Magdalena Majdak in Evolution of Formulaic Expressions Referring to God in the History of the Polish Language: Analysis of Constructions from the 17th and 18th Centuries Based on the Correspondence of the Czapski Family, an article based on a paper delivered at an international conference in Helsinki.

on the individual predispositions of the correspondent. The eldest daughter of the Pomeranian voivode lacked the same ability to express her thoughts in writing; moreover, she struggled to write down certain words or sounds. Unlike her mother and sister, she was quite often aided by a secretary or a person who, in her opinion, was more skilled in writing, which is why a significant proportion of her letters are formulaic and adhere to the Old Polish letter-writing conventions. This is particularly conspicuous in the correspondence which conveys occasional greetings or best wishes, reminds a higher-ranking noble addressee of one's respectful services, or requests their patronage. In most instances, Rozalia would only add her own signature to such letters. Her individual style is revealed solely in the musings addressed to her beloved son from her first marriage, Jan Mikołaj Chodkiewicz, written in her own hand. The author was aware that, in her contacts with her closest ones, she should manage without the help of third parties, as it followed from the sporadic remarks in which she explained to family members that she was not writing the letter herself at that moment. Rozalia realised that her abilities in this regard did not match those of her younger sister, for example, whose relationship with her own son might have been a source of envy.

It should be noted that correspondence is a conversation at a distance, and it very often palpably reflects such a dialogical nature. The few surviving letters from Magdalena Radziwiłłowa (née Czapska) to her nephew show that it was his aunt who acted as a confidante and advisor to the voivode of Brześć, and that she was able to forge an emotional bond with him. Here, her communication skills proved a major factor. The information found in the course of research suggests that, as a young woman, she attended a boarding school at the Sacramentine convent in Warsaw, where she also sought refuge years later after leaving her husband and filing for divorce. Tomasz Czapski notes in his diary that one of his sisters (whose name is not stated)[3] stayed there, as he himself spend time in the capital in 1738[4] after returning from abroad (Czapski 2025: p. 222). It is certain that he did not mean Rozalia who, as the newlywed wife of Adam Tadeusz Chodkiewicz, was staying with her mother in Dobrzyniewo at the time. The school experiences of Magdalena Czapska are hinted at in a letter of 21 May 1746 by her youngest brother, Jan Wit Czapski, who was studying in Warsaw. Jan stated that his sister was well acquainted with "student […] frolics at the convent boarding school"

[3] Another daughter of the Pomeranian voivode, about whom little is known, is referred to in Konstancja Czapska's letters to her husband from 1736. Her name was Teresa, but she presumably died in childhood, as she is no longer mentioned in later correspondence. In 1736, Piotr Jan's wife mentions an illness of hers, which was to be treated by a certain Pękowski (BPTPN, ref. no. 1548: 42).

[4] Magdalena Czapska was 14 years old at the time.

(AGAD, AR, vol. V, ref. no. 2496: 4–5). The final piece of evidence suggesting that Radziwiłłowa had received more than just a home education is her relatively good command of French, even though she had never been to the country on the Seine, unlike her brothers. Teresa Giermak-Zielińska, a Romance language expert who collaborated with the research team, found that the younger daughter of the Pomeranian voivode was fluent in French and actually made fewer mistakes in spelling or conjugation than Paweł Tadeusz Czapski who, among other places, studied at the cadet school in Lunéville, France (Gaber 1998: 195) and far fewer than his elder brother Tomasz, who spent over three years in Paris. It was she who was asked by the mother – whose letters also contain interjections in French – to translate a supplication to the queen; Hieronim Florian Radziwiłł most likely entrusted his wife with a similar task as well.

The above observations demonstrate that the Saxon period heralded the apparently gradual but significant changes in the language regarding the role of Latin, which had long been vitally important in Old Polish. Macaronic expressions were typical of Baroque autobiographical documents written in prose, such as letters or diaries; the memoirs of Jan Chryzostom Pasek offer an eloquent example in this respect. Dating from the early eighteenth century, the few surviving letters of the Pomeranian voivode Piotr Jan Czapski show that he also readily employed macaronic language. In contrast, Latin is virtually absent in the diary of a representative of the next generation, Tomasz, who was born in 1711. Admittedly, the starost of Knyszyn avoided written French as well – save for minor interjections – even though he claimed to know the language perfectly. However, he was prone to creating Gallicisms, which, incidentally, did not become permanently established in the Polish language. One of such terms is *szesza pocztowa*, which he derived from the French *chaise de poste*. Still, French does not feature to any substantial degree in his letters, but neither does Latin. Meanwhile, his younger brother Paweł Tadeusz – who spent several years abroad, also in England (Tomaszewski 2017: 203) – employed French much more frequently in his correspondence, whether writing to relatives or major nobles outside the family. Like most women of the nobility, their mother valued fluency in foreign languages, including German, but she did not really know Latin, and when she occasionally used legal or medical terms, she often struggled to spell them consistently and correctly. Her daughter Magdalena Radziwiłłowa, who had a command of German, did begin one of her letters to her husband in Latin, but quickly switched to Polish, revealing her lack of proficiency in this regard. Representing the next generation, the daughters of the starost of Knyszyn, Tomasz Czapski, the young ladies Urszula and Konstancja wrote to their parents in French, practicing their skills. It is no wonder that such

diverse source material enabled the identification of changes in the use of, e.g., Latin and French in the first half of the eighteenth century.

It would also be legitimate to surmise that the alternative letter-writing preferences among the representatives of the upcoming Enlightenment (Matuszewska 1999: 121–156) owed substantially to the female correspondents, who had not been educated at Jesuit or Piarist colleges, i.e., institutions which for decades had perpetuated paradigms of highly rhetorised language, which often followed the panegyric rules informed by Baroque concepts. Although they were able – like Konstancja or Magdalena Czapska – to emulate the traditional pattern of epistolary communication found in the letters they received, they lent their missives an individual, more emotional and intimate quality.

Regarding the research value of the ego-documents studied in this project, historian Jerzy Dygdała noted that the Czapskis' involvement in high politics was not tangibly reflected there. Naturally, one should take into account that most of the letters written by voivode Piotr Jan Czapski, a very active supporter of the king, have been lost forever, most likely including the epistles in which this ally of Leszczyński exchanged views on current public issues. However, according to Dygdała, the surviving material possesses other merits in that it delves into the daily life of the nobility who aspired to join the ranks of the magnates. The Czapskis sought to advance their position not only through highly advantageous marriages, but also by defending their estate and honour, for instance, through litigation. This specific issue was explored by Mikołaj Tomaszewski, who has extensively studied the lawsuits involving Tomasz Czapski, a man of a very difficult and quarrelsome nature (Tomaszewski 2023a: 137–200; ibid. 2023b: 61–75). Among others, the latter engaged in a contest with one of the foremost magnates of the First Republic, grand hetman of the Crown Jan Klemens Branicki. The holder of Białystok, known as the Versailles of the North, wished to take over the Knyszyn starosty, which bordered his estates; hence, he skilfully exploited and fuelled the disputes between the son of the Pomeranian voivode and the local nobility or his own subjects. Konstancja, née Gnińska, was very actively involved in this long-running contention, which culminated in the harsh conviction of the starost of Knyszyn. Her letters reveal that many meticulous and persistent efforts were made – including corrupt practices – to address both her son's predicament, as well as her own, as she was sentenced to a heavy fine at one point. Besides exposing the degeneracy of the judiciary, the letters also testify to the emotional approach to the main adversary – the "old codger" and "Machiavel" Branicki – as well as her own son, whose unbridled character she tried to temper (Maciejewska 2023: 299–315, ibid. 2025: 129–142).

As already noted, no member of that family was a diffident personality, which is fully corroborated by the sources that they authored. Acting contrary to the broadly accepted mores, they caused their mother grief on the one hand, but simultaneously they pursued their own desires and emotional needs. For instance, Magdalena Radziwiłłowa sought divorce from her husband, a man of an exceptionally troublesome and domineering nature. Moreover, they were also no strangers to intra-family disputes, as evidenced by property-related conflicts between the brothers or between Magdalena and Tomasz (Tomaszewski 2023a: 200–210).

A vivid testimony to following one's own path may be found in the latter's autobiographical text, published as *Connotation of My Journey, Begun in 1734 on 21 December from Königsberg* (Czapski 2025). Apparently, this is yet another account of an educational tour that numerous sons of magnates and nobles embarked on in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Kucharski 2013). In this case, however, Tomasz departed from the established convention. Admittedly, having set out abroad at the age of twenty-three, the author attempted to follow the pattern of the travel diary in his notes, but managed to do so for only three and a half months. During that time, he made regular daily entries, recounting the meetings he had attended, briefly describing the sights he had seen, and so on. However, the narrative as a whole constitutes a peculiar genre hybrid, dominated by a diary-like narrative in which the author presents the events from a synthetic standpoint, only to highlight an issue that he finds crucial (Maciejewska 2022: 50–62). Specifically, he focused on his romance with a certain Miss Morin, whom he met shortly after arriving in France. The story of that acquaintance was constructed in the spirit of the sentimental-adventure romances, which enjoyed quite a popularity in Saxon-era Poland (Maciejewska 2025c: 61–78) and influenced the autobiographical writings of that period (Dziechcińska 1999, ibid. 2003, Maciejewska 2013b: 21–52). Numerous motifs from those fictional narratives were included and deliberately accentuated by the author. At the same time, the account had one chief goal – to place oneself at the centre as a clever, cunning, and courageous man who, in the name of his feelings for his beloved – otherwise conveyed with remarkable restraint – is ready to take on any challenge. Czapski wrote openly about his deception and intrigues designed to outwit Leszczyński's men, who wished to send the indebted young man home and put an end to his scandalous affair. If this account is to be believed, the diarist's every stratagem succeeded, while his beloved, disguising herself as various characters – including men – arguably accompanied him to Poland.

In their efforts to study, compile and publish this interesting text, the team faced a very difficult task. First, the very reading proved problematic as the source

has been preserved in poor condition, partly due to faded ink. The author's handwriting and his peculiar spelling also posed a challenge. Rendering Czapski's distinctive language and its idiosyncratic forms, including dialectal ones, called for the formulation of meticulous, individualised transcription rules. Moreover, since this was a joint editorial project involving Polish-language experts and historians, one had to agree on how to modernise the spelling to reconcile differing publishing practices. The volumes of letters that are being prepared this year will require the same approach. During the work on *Connotation*, art historian Bartłomiej Łyczak was not only instrumental in resolving multiple mysteries surrounding Czapski's Parisian escapade, but also selected the iconographic material to reflect the realities of Paris in the first half of the eighteenth century, showing the works of art that the author had seen or social events and official ceremonies he had attended. A comparison with other similar accounts of the grand tour demonstrated that Czapski followed in the footsteps of many Polish travellers but, unlike them, remained attentive to certain details which the others had omitted, such as the titles of the plays he had seen (Łyczak 2025: 85–96). Just as his younger brother, Paweł Tadeusz, the starost of Knyszyn, would later pursue his artistic passions. He collected artworks and coins (Ajewski 2004: 9–20), built a fairly large library, and owned two bookplates (Tomaszewski 2024: 29–53).

It should be stressed that the above outcomes of the project by no means exhaust all the research opportunities associated with the personal documents of the Czapski family. Publications from recent years have explored a range of interesting issues, not always relating exclusively to the narrowly defined family of Piotr Jan Czapski, but also concerning their relatives, such as Jan Ansgari Czapski, father-in-law of Tomasz, starost of Knyszyn (Łyczak 2024: 183–217). Findings from such partial studies have also been presented in conference papers, which were subsequently expanded into scholarly articles, some of which still await publication. It may also be assumed – given the academic community's response to the project – that making these sources available in printed form and as digital files on a website whose launch will mark the culmination of this undertaking will provide further inspiration for scholars from various disciplines studying the eighteenth century.

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