

Preface

It is the aim of the present book to describe the literary activities and literary views and attitudes in Poland during the reign of King Stanisław August Poniatowski (1764-1795). Linking up with similar studies in a number of West-European literary fields, including S.J. Schmidt's study of the history of the rise and development of the social system 'literature' in Germany in the eighteenth century (cf. Schmidt 1989), I will try to establish whether Poland witnessed the rise of a more complex and (relatively) autonomous literary field or, as Schmidt calls it, a functionally differentiated literary system in this age. Functionally differentiated literary systems - systems in which an increased number of literary agents and institutions produce, sell, buy, and criticize literary works according to capitalist principles - are the literary systems of today. As most scholars believe, the origins of these modern literary systems are to be found in most European nations in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the Polish modern literary system dates from the years of the rule of Stanisław A. Poniatowski, the so-called Stanisławian age.

The first part of the book deals with the activities of the different literary agents. The rising Polish system is introduced in a European context and the necessary methodological tools to investigate it are provided in the first chapter. The second chapter describes literary production, mediation, criticism and reception. In each section of this chapter, the same pattern is followed: firstly, the numbers of producers, mediators, critics, and recipients are estimated and, when possible, compared to those of the same groups of agents in the Pre-Stanisławian years. Secondly, one modernizing aspect of their activities is discussed in further detail: in Section 2.1.2, the process which caused some of the producers who used to depend on patrons to become professional writers; in Section 2.2.2., the new market strategies used by booksellers, printers, etc., which gradually entered into rivalry with each other; in Section 2.3.2., the founding of journals and papers containing literary reviews and the differentiation of views dividing reviewers and other types of critics into camps; and in Section 2.4.2., the growing role of new social groups, such as women and adolescents, in the reception of literary genres. Thirdly, one activity of each literary agent is examined throughout the age: the production of the novel; the advertisements placed by booksellers and printers in the biggest newspaper of the age, the *Warsaw Gazette*; a specific type of theatre criticism common in printed and handwritten newspapers; and reading societies. In the case of the latter two, the literary system is discussed in relation to the political one: in Section 2.3.3., the

impact of politics on the pieces written about the theatre, and, in Section 2.4.3., the relation between reading societies and political clubs is discussed. Conclusions from the findings in the second chapter are drawn in the last chapter of Part I.

The second part is concerned with literary views and attitudes. They are described in three sub-periods: the early years of the age (1764 -75), the middle period (1775 - 90), and the last years (1790-5). In Chapter Five, I discuss the views and attitudes of the literary 'centres' of the early years, including the centre which scholars normally tend to deal with separately, as if it did not form a part of the literary movements of the Stanisławian Enlightenment, i.e., the literary wing of the group of Bar Confederates. The views and attitudes of the middle period are described in the sixth chapter. This chapter also contains more detailed studies of two events which, in my view, mark the beginning and the end of the middle period in which the Stanisławian literary system was most differentiated. These are the reception of Węgiński's epigrams about the five Elżbietas distributed in 1776 and the polemics written by an anonymous group of critics against Krajewski's novel *The Podolian Girl* in 1784-6. The literary views and attitudes of the last years of the age are the subject of Chapter 7.

Parts of this book are altered versions of articles published previously in the following journals: *Zeitschrift für Slawistik* (the part about the Muchowski letter in Section 5.1), *Balagan* (5.2), *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie* (2.3.3), *Die Welt der Slaven* (2.3.2 and 6.2), *Österreichische Osthefte* (2.4.3), *Essays in Poetics* (6.3), and *Russian Literature* (2.1.1., 2.2.1, 2.3.1). Chapter 7 is a re-written version of my contribution to the Fifth Bochum-Cracow Symposium on Theatre Studies in Bochum in 1997. The earlier version was published in the volume *Theatre and Religion*, edited in 1998 by G. Ahrends and H-J. Diller.