

***The cultural influence and artistic patronage of Queen Bona Sforza in
early 16th century Poland-Lithuania.***

By

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Abstract:

This thesis examines the various aspects of artistic patronage and cultural influence of Queen Bona Sforza of Poland-Lithuania (1494-1557). While some scholars claim that Bona's artistic and cultural interests were limited, there is considerable evidence – even in secondary literature – that in fact, both Bona and her husband, King Zygmunt the Jagiellonian had considerable passion for the high arts and they were willing to spend considerable sums of money to acquire tapestries, medallions and jewelry as well as patronize poets and musicians at court. All of this had an influence upon their son, King Zygmunt August, whose interests – especially in tapestries from Flanders – remains legendary. This thesis is based primarily on Polish sources; and through this, it also highlights the fact that English-language scholarship on the Polish Renaissance is still quite sparse. In the end, by examining the effect that Bona and her Italian entourage had on social customs at court, as well as an examination of many fields of artistic endeavor which Bona and the royal family patronized, it is hoped this thesis provides a coherent picture of courtly culture in early 16th century Poland.

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Finally, I want to acknowledge the debt that I owe to my friends at both the CEU as well as at the University of Toronto and outside of school. Through countless discussions, they helped me to better understand a lot of historical concepts. Most importantly, they were always reliable friends. Thanks are also due to my cousin, Jakub Siuta, was a gracious host during my research trip to Warsaw.

Of course, it must be stated that all these people contributed to the positive and praiseworthy aspects of this work – and I alone accept full responsibility for all shortcomings of this present text.

INTRODUCTION

In 1989, in the introduction to his English-language monograph on the literary history of Renaissance Poland, Harold Segel indicated that the Renaissance as a period of historical study has been perceived so deeply as a uniquely western-European phenomenon that as a result, Western academics do not give adequate credit and attention to the fact that Polish, Hungarian, Bohemian and Croatian scholars of the 15th and 16th centuries were very much active participants in the cultural revival of humanism.¹ Only a few months before Segel's publication, a volume of essays edited by Samuel Fiszman further emphasized the point that English-language scholarship on the multi-faceted topic of the Polish Renaissance was scant – and it was his hope that intellectuals would begin to address this imbalance.² A generation later, slight progress on that front has been achieved, but the disparity remains quite visible. This problem is equally apparent in the fields of cultural history as well as with biographical case studies of important historical figures of Eastern Europe. Thus, while it is likely that many Anglophone university students will consult biographies of such western European figures as Cosimo de Medici or King Phillip II and conclude that they were culturally-significant figures, the Eastern European contemporaries of the latter, such the Hungarian King Matthias Corvin and the Polish Queen Bona Sforza remain quite forgotten. Seeking to redress, however modestly, the overall lack of English-language materials on the Polish Renaissance, this thesis will examine the broad cultural patronage of Bona Sforza and demonstrate that she had a significant impact upon the cultural life and the artistic interests of the Jagiellonian royal court during the first half of the 16th century.

¹ Harold Segel, *Renaissance Culture in Poland: The Rise of Humanism, 1470-1543*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp.1-16.

² "Introduction" by Samuel Fiszman, in Fiszman, ed., *The Polish Renaissance in its European context*. (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Polish Studies Center and Dept. of Slavic Language and Literatures, 1988), p.X.

Queen Bona, however, remains one of the most controversial figures of Polish history. Despite the ‘black legend’ of Bona as someone truly evil, deceitful and ready to use poison against her detractors, she was a pioneering queen: none of her predecessors, and few – if any – of the women who occupied the post after her, are remembered for being so active on so many fronts. Yet, the negative image of Bona was propagated with such vigour within general society over so many centuries that Polish soldiers fighting in Italy during World War II wanted to vandalize her catafalque in Bari in retribution for all the “bad things” that Bona supposedly brought to Poland.³

While it is neither possible nor desired within the scope of this thesis to give an exhaustive rehabilitation or re-evaluation of Bona and all her activities in Poland, the aim here is to demonstrate that in fact, the queen had a positive effect on Polish high-culture, especially at court. This analysis will demonstrate that Bona helped to propagate some of the notions and styles of the Italian Renaissance, even if we must acknowledge the statement by one of Bona’s most successful recent biographers: that she is not to be treated as a “Kulturträger”. In other words, while we can be certain that Bona had a prominent role in propagating Renaissance Italian and European high culture, we must be aware of the fact that many aspects of Renaissance culture were already present in Poland before Bona’s arrival and we cannot consider her as the initiator or the ‘importer’ of some of these traits into the country.⁴ This latter point will be further discussed in chapter 2, seeking to contextualize Bona’s arrival in early 16th century Poland.

This work is divided into four main chapters. The first one is a historiographical analysis of the major texts, all secondary sources, which were used in the preparation of this thesis and which are cited throughout the present work. Multiple constraints made it

³ Marcelli Kosman, *Królowa Bona*. (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), p.10.

⁴ Maria Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*. (Warszawa: Ossolineum, 1998), p.76.

impossible to consult primary sources and archival materials from the 16th century. While some of the reasons for this are discussed further in chapter 1, it is also logical to state that more seasoned historians already have read through all the extant primary documents connected with Bona that would be accessible in either Polish or Italian archives. This seems all the more plausible given the fact that we are dealing with a monarch – and not with some lesser-known figure forgotten by mainstream history. Thus, I have decided to concentrate mainly on historiographical questions in order to provide a diachronic view of the study and appreciation of Bona Sforza in historical scholarship, first of all, in Poland. Accordingly, the first chapter will compare and contrast between several of the source materials, discussing each book's strengths and weaknesses.

The second chapter will consist of several major sub-sections. Broad background and contextual information on several key topics is provided here. At the start, there is a brief biographical sketch, focusing on Bona and her early years in Italy as well as her 1518 wedding to the Jagiellonian monarch, Zygmunt Stary. Thereafter, there is a critical analysis of the Polish-Lithuanian state in this era as well as a discussion about the city of Kraków. The latter will highlight the city's pre-existing and continuous cultural and economic connections with Italy and the rest of Europe. Another sub-section will help further with contextualization: it will analyze some of the queens who preceded Bona on the throne so as to better understand what role she was expected to play – or what role she, in fact, refused to play. And then, the final point of this chapter will be connected precisely with the idea that Bona had chosen to create her own model of queenship: I discuss here how she was an adamant and tireless economic reformer, seeking to centralize the estates that were accorded to her. Yet, even if it is now not possible to admire her work in this respect, her policies in this matter yielded significant fruit: her son inherited royal estates that furnished him with

significantly higher revenues. Therefore, he could fulfill more amply the cultural desires and passions that had been implanted into him by his rather strong-willed mother.

The third chapter, the heart of this thesis, will address the cultural influence of Bona by examining several key examples through which it will be possible to state that she (as well as her husband Zygmunt) sought to culturally modernize the Wawel and the Jagiellonians it into a true Renaissance court. Besides looking at how Bona and Zygmunt patronized jewelry makers, ordered new tapestries and used such products to demonstrate their heritage as well as their legitimacy, a portion of the third chapter will discuss Bona's impact on such matters as culinary culture and hygiene. This chapter has several subsections as well – all of them demonstrating that although such luxury and high art consumption took place almost exclusively at the royal court, it certainly is worth a closer analysis.

Chapter 4 will continue the same overall topic as chapter three. Although this final chapter will contain some analysis of how Bona's court affected the young Zygmunt August, the main interest here is to look at the musical culture of Bona's court. This examination will demonstrate that although there is rather scant information about this topic, it should not be dismissed, because it is upon this base that the more significant examples of late 16th century Polish music develop.

In conclusion, this multi-thematic analysis seeks to demonstrate that regardless of the negative black legend that has been attached to Bona's name for so many centuries, her cultural patronage (as well as her influence upon the cultural tastes of Zygmunt August and the other nobles frequently present at court) should be appreciated because as a whole, it made a significant contribution to the Polish Renaissance.

Chapter 1 – A Historiographical review.

This first chapter of the thesis examines the scholarly sources that were consulted and which are cited throughout this work. The aim here is to assess the level of scholarship, essentially all from the second half of the 20th century, with respect to Polish Renaissance history and historiography as it pertains to Bona, the Jagiellonian dynasty and the history of Polish Renaissance culture. Though all attempts have been made to conduct very thorough research, this thesis does not pretend to be exhaustive and acknowledges that even other extant secondary literature could have made useful additions to the present examination.

Almost all the texts are in Polish, and publications dates vary: some books were written before or during World War II and published still in the 1940s. Other books are recent publications, even from 2006. The general impression made by these sources is that despite the difficulties of studying a distant era for which there are at times scant archival sources, essentially all these scholars have been able to produce high quality works. That being said, there are several other notions which must be mentioned here: the first is that in some cases, scholars writing even in the first few years of the 21st century will provide footnote citations to articles or books which were published nearly a century ago. There are also substantial amounts of citations to materials published in the inter-war period. While there are obvious and significant drawbacks in citing such dated literature, it is almost certain that significant amounts of archival materials on a whole range of issues – which were consulted by a scholar in the 1920s or 1930s – are no longer extant, having been destroyed in World War II. Therefore, faced with the impossibility of subjecting primary archival materials to modern methods of enquiry, present-day scholars must rely that much

more heavily on the results produced by the older generation of academics. In the end, while the works of these inter-war researchers is valuable, it contains several significant shortcomings that are impossible to ignore.

While we know that many Polish professors perished during World War II, there were some excellent scholars who survived and – regardless of any Communist ideological interference – educated a new post-war generation of very capable research historians. The result is that these two groups engaged in significant research and publication that began in the mid-1950s and remained active for at least a quarter century. The result of this is evident: this body of work is heavily-cited by many subsequent scholars such as Maria Bogucka, Mieczysław Morka and Wojciech Tygielski – all of whom published first-rate scholarship on the Polish Renaissance at the start of the 21st century.

Equally, one must give due credit to a small group of Anglophone historians of Poland. While in English there are only a handful of monographs specializing on particular topics in Polish Renaissance history, texts by Harold Segel and F.W. Carter are praiseworthy and they are discussed below. However, at this point, it is important to state the for obvious geo-political as well as linguistic reasons during the 20th century, there have been relatively few scholars of US, UK or Commonwealth origin writing on Eastern Europe. In this respect, the Renaissance history and culture of countries like Italy, France and Spain has been much more fortunate.⁵ To a great extent, this last sentence explains the reasons for the discrepancy mentioned on the first page of this thesis.

Also, it must be stated that over the course of my research for this thesis at the Polish National Library in Warsaw, I located a text by Halina Auderska, published in Warsaw in

⁵ Yale University Press has an entire series of monographs with titles such as Jonathan Brown's 1998 text *Painting in Spain, 1500-1700*. There are similar texts on French art in the same series. Rosemarie Mulcahy in 2004 published a monograph entitled *Philip II of Spain, Patron of the Arts*. During the last 50 years, the history of Spain has been studied particularly well by English-language historians such as J.H. Elliott and Henry Kamen. In fact, the latter scholar has published extensively on various topics in Spanish history; and in May 2010, his latest text, *The Escorial: Art and Power in the Renaissance* was published.

1989, but clearly written over the course of that previous decade. It must be stated that while a number of books consulted for this thesis that might be called “popular academic” (by authors such as Danuta Wójcik-Góralaska or Joanna Olkiewicz) in the sense that while they contained very useful information and solid analysis, they were not purely scholarly monographs (such as those which were doctoral dissertations in their first incarnation), Auderska’s book, entitled *Smok w Herbie: Królowa Bona (Dragon on the crest: Queen Bona)* was even more unique: it was a novel of historical fiction. Due to obvious limitations, it was not possible to read this text in its entirety (over 500 pages), but over the course of several dozen pages, it was interesting to see how this author had created dialog and prose using the historical persons and events presented in this thesis. Regrettably, like the novel genre, this book did not have an index, thus it was not possible to consult it on any specific issues. Equally this text lacked chapter titles. These difficulties made it impossible to assess more broadly the historical accuracy of the text. However, it is clear that the book was written after some historical research by the author. Also, the main characters, such as Bona herself, are described performing tasks that are associated with common activities of the Renaissance era – in one particular example the young queen is noted for having visited astrologers. However, no precise details on the matter are given.⁶ In conclusion, while it would seem Auderska’s book would be of some value to the average Polish reader with a passing interest in Renaissance history (if not necessary a deep knowledge of the matter), a more in-depth analysis of this text, or even a portion thereof, would require a background in literary theory and philology.⁷

⁶ Halina Auderska. *Smok w Herbie: Królowa Bona*. (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1989), p.8.

⁷ Maria Bogucka, in her book *Bona Sforza*, pp.243-244, indicates that Auderska initially sought to portray Bona in a negative way as an evil queen, but that in the end, she opted to present Bona through the prism of Władysław Pocięcha – the first author who has done his best to “rehabilitate” the image and historical veracity of Bona.

In terms of historical scholarship concerning Bona Sforza, it is prudent to begin the assessment with a discussion about the works of Maria Bogucka. Active as a historian of Renaissance and Early Modern Poland since the early 1950s, Bogucka is credited with having written (during the late 1980s) the most concise and yet the most lucid monograph biography of Bona Sforza. This book was initially published in 1989; the second edition, consulted in preparation of this thesis was printed in 1998 – and most recently, a hard-cover edition was issued in 2009. It would seem reasonable to state that three editions of such a book attest to its overall popularity and historiographical value.

On an ancillary historiographical note, it should be indicated that although in the last paragraph of her text, Bogucka states clearly the aim of her monograph was not to rehabilitate Bona, the entire last chapter is devoted to an examination of how the negative ‘black legend’ of Bona was created and propagated throughout Polish academic history as well as in general society. As will be indicated in another chapter of this thesis, dark rumours about Bona began to spread while she was still alive. Though we know that they were un-founded, such opinions caused Bona’s reputation such significant damage that by the time that the historian Michał Bobrzyński wrote his works in the last quarter of the 19th century, he considered Bona’s supposed ‘moral corruption’ as the initial principle cause of Poland’s eventual decline and ruin. As Bogucka makes clear, this over-simplified interpretation, based on the view that Bona’s actions helped to weaken royal power, had a prominent place in Polish historiography for a very long time.⁸ Although it is not possible in this thesis to discuss the vast topic of 19th century Polish historiography in any adequate detail, one must remember that the formulation of opinions such as the one above were

⁸ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.235.

influenced by the fact Poland did not exist as a sovereign country and positivist historians surely felt some obligation to explain such a state of affairs.⁹

That being said, Bogucka's inclusion of these matters only further substantiates the claim that her book is solidly comprehensive, even if it is only 270 pages long (including end-notes). Moreover, it is written in a clear, approachable style and while it does not have chapter sub-sections, the chapter division is logical and allows the thematic analysis to flow in good coherence. There are relatively few significant flaws or errors that could justify major criticisms of this text; and surely this is the reason why it has gone through several editions. Also, Bogucka does not neglect the cultural details of court life. These latter are very much a part of chapter 5 of the book (and are amply cited in this thesis).

One critique of Bogucka's monograph is that at a few points she finishes analyzing a particular subject or topic too quickly – a few more extra lines of discussion would have been welcome so as to provide a more comprehensive treatment. Yet, this is really a minor point; and the positive appraisal of Bogucka's book can be supported further by citing Anna Sucheni-Grabowska (the author of the biography of Bona's son, Zygmunt August). In the opinion of this scholar, Bogucka's book is balanced and provides a realistic assessment of the queen.¹⁰ The implied contrast here is to the text of Władysław Pocięcha (who is discussed below). Thus, while there are some minor issues with Bogucka's monograph, one can state without hesitation that an English translation of this book would help to offset the current scarcity of English-language materials about the Polish Renaissance – and in particular about Polish Renaissance royalty.

⁹ Marek Wrede. *Królowa Bona: Między Włochami a Polską*. (Warszawa: Zamek Królewski w Warszawie, 1992), p.6.

¹⁰ Anna Sucheni-Grabowska. *Zygmunt August: Król Polski I Wielki Książę Litewski, 1520-1572*. (Warszawa: Krupski i S-ka, 1996), p.9.

The suggestion that Bogucka's monograph be translated, even though it would interest only scholars (and possibly students) of European history does not seem unreasonable – especially since at least one other book by Bogucka has been published in the UK in 2004. Given the rising interest in feminist historiography and in the history of women, Bogucka's book entitled *Women in Early-Modern Polish Society, against the European Background* is certainly a welcome addition since it provides easily accessible analysis of how women lived and contributed to society during the 16th to 18th centuries in an important country in Eastern Europe. From the consulted sections of this monograph, it is clear that it seeks to give voice to the history and experience of women from the queen all the way to ordinary members of society.

Bogucka's further interest in the history of Polish women is demonstrated by the fact that she has also written a monograph on one of Bona's daughters: the book title is the actual name of the person in question *Anna Jagiellonka* (who actually had not been able to marry as a young woman; and just before turning 53, she married the second elected Polish King, Stefan Bathory). The first portions of this second monograph by Bogucka were consulted in order to see if it contained supplementary information about Bona as a mother to the young princess and the atmosphere at the court. There is no apparent difference in terms of overall quality between this book and the biography of Bona – both texts are well-written and informative. Moreover, one should note that given important people such as royalty, it is possible to write multi-volume biographies examining very minute details; however, quantity automatically does not imply quality and certainly books such as the Bogucka titles mentioned above find a proper balance between scholarly-informative and stylistically-approachable and thus useful.

Finally, we should also mention that Bogucka contributed a short essay, in 2004, to an edited volume entitled *Artyści włoscy w Polsce (Italian artists in Poland)*. In fact, Bogucka's essay opens the collection in that text; and she indicates (as also cited in chapter 3 of this thesis), that Bona's role in the cultural history of the Polish Renaissance deserves closer study and appreciation. Thus, it is clear that Maria Bogucka has been a centrally-important scholar on Bona Sforza, the history of Polish women as well as the Polish Renaissance.

Five other biographical monographs on Bona Sforza were consulted: Władysław Pocięcha, Gerrardo Cioffari, Marcelli Kosman, Danuta Wójcik-Górska and Marek Wrede. The first of these is the magnum opus of Władysław Pocięcha. This scholar started working on his Bona biography many years before 1939 and continued the task during the war. In the end, from 1949 to 1958, four volumes were published; and citations from his text can be found in Bogucka as well as in many other books consulted here. Reading all four volumes of *Królowa Bona (1494-1557)*, written in an academic Polish prose still harking back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, would have been a major undertaking not necessarily relevant or helpful to this thesis. However, several chapters, especially from volume 2, were consulted. Bogucka stated that Pocięcha's text was written in a hagiographical manner; and while replete with details about Bona's activities, we are informed that Pocięcha was not able to discuss the history of Bona in Poland after the year 1539.¹¹ Therefore, Pocięcha's text, running about 1500 pages over four massive volumes fails to discuss the last 17 years of Bona's presence in Poland in any detail. Yet, to the modern reader even this last fact does not appear to be the most significant problem with Pocięcha's work. The matter that the text appears to have very few citations (in end-note format) seemed quite odd. It appears that Pocięcha was able to provide precise dates and details for

¹¹ Maria Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, p.248.

very minor events or names of truly obscure minor characters, yet give no indication as to the source of this information. Thus, one cannot know whether Pocięcha obtains a certain item of data from an archival source or another book – although Bogucka clarifies for us that Pocięcha scoured Polish as well as foreign archives. Also, in Bogucka's estimation, Pocięcha's desire to correct the entrenched negative image of Bona caused him to refrain from stating criticism of her – even in cases and episodes where through the assessment of a professional historian, such censure was warranted.¹² Therefore, while one should not (and cannot) dismiss Pocięcha's text, it must be used with caution.

Gerrardo Cioffari appears to be the only Italian biographer of Bona – and he is a Catholic cleric active in Bari. While my reading ability in Italian is basic, I am able to make a few remarks on this text. The book very much accomplishes what surely must be its main task: to be a basic biography of an ex-patriot Italian and someone who is surely forgotten by mainstream Italian historiography – despite the fact that Bona returned to Italy and died there. That being said, Cioffari does not appear to be offering any fresh interpretations. In fact, one can note that despite the recent publication date of this text (2000), Cioffari very often cites Pocięcha as well as many sources dating even to the mid-19th century. Thus, one might state that although this book is not without some general merit, Italian readers would be better-served by a translation of Bogucka's book.

Marceli Kosman's book *Królowa Bona* is interesting in the sense that it was published in a pocket-book format and for the non-specialist reader, although it runs 340

¹² Op. Cit., p.240. (At this point, it is also important and appropriate to record a bizarre admission found on page 131 of the second volume of *Królowa Bona (1494-1557)*: Pocięcha here states that a whole series of archival documents – which would shed much fuller light on the activities of Bona's court – are lost. This claim is itself problematic, especially when coming from a scholar who had access to archives prior to World War II. It stands to reason that in terms of quantity, he and his generation of historians would have had a much greater amount of materials available to them than post-1945 scholars. Moreover, even if we agree with Pocięcha's problematic pre-supposition that such documents actually existed, one can pose another equally important question: would he have provided adequate citations for such documents given the fact that in general, his work lacks adequate acknowledgment of sources?)

pages. Thus, given the different page size, it would appear to be roughly about the same length as Bogucka's book. Kosman also has a clear aim: to present Bona in a somewhat positive light for the broader reading public – or at least to dispel the idea that Bona deserves a “black legend” image. His text, very much like that of Bogucka, seeks to portray Bona within a broader European context. One might be permitted to state that Kosman's style, prose and analysis are “one notch” below Bogucka in terms of quality; but overall, the book is an interesting introductory read.

Very similar opinions can be expressed about Danuta Wójcik-Górska 1987 monograph entitled *Niedoceniania Królowa (The Un-appreciated Queen)*. Here, again, despite a very informative and well-structured text, we are given a bibliography of sources consulted by the author, but no precise footnotes. However, the one very commendable point of this book is that at the end of the volume, it gives a “dramatis personae” – in other words, a list of all the major personalities connected with Bona and the royal court as well as three or so lines of information about each ones of them. This list is very useful.

Wrede's biography of Bona, published in 1992, is another short text, seeking to appeal to the same audience as Kosman. While there are some timely citations and useful clarifications given by Wrede's text, it attempts to show Bona in a much more negative light. In the end, while a critical approach is healthy, Wrede's book is simply too severe and disregards some other very plausible explanations and examinations. Thus, in the end, in terms of a biographical monograph, Bogucka's analysis of Bona should be considered as the most useful, although none of them should be read in exclusivity.

The two most recent Polish-language publications used in this thesis are worthy, if also weighty, volumes. Tygielski's 2005 book entitled *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII Wieku (Italians in Poland during the 16th and 17th centuries)* is impressive and quite

comprehensive. The bibliography of this 640-page book (which I estimate lists about five-hundred different sources)¹³ demonstrates that this author has consulted literally all possible extant primary and secondary sources that could connect Italy and Poland during those centuries. A good portion of his analysis concerns the 17th century, but the analysis of the Italian-Polish connections during the time of Bona is no less reliable. While Tygielski's advanced academic prose and style is not easy to read, it does not lead to confusion as there is solid thematic organization. By way of example, some facts and analytical points given by this scholar are worthy of citation here: we are told, quite correctly, that the Italian artists and scholars most deeply cherished in Poland, such as the architects Bartolomeo Berrecci (who worked on the Wawel and the Zygmunt chapel for about 20 years) or Bernardo Morando (the architect of the artificially-planned late 16th century Polish town of Zamość), are essentially forgotten figures in Italy.¹⁴ Thus, in a way, they owe their fame to having left their native country. Indeed, one might even speculate that this was the case with Bona: had she married into some other Italian ducal family, she might have been relegated to relative obscurity instead of being a centuries-long topic of historical controversy in a large European country. In the same vein, Tygielski states that the fact that Bona had chosen to return to Italy after 38 years in Poland further strengthened the popular belief that she was always a foreigner who did not care about her adoptive country.¹⁵ Today, we know that this belief has no basis in fact (in fact, we know that in many political situations, Bona actually led the faction seeking to strengthen royal authority and thereby the integrity of the state).¹⁶ One more fact lifted from Tygielski's book will suffice as a final demonstration of its quality – and it is actually squarely-relevant to our analysis: we are told that there was no

¹³ Wojciech Tygielski. *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII Wieku: Utracona Szansa na Modernizację*. (Warszawa: Biblioteka "Więzi", 2005), pp.647-679.

¹⁴ Op. cit., p.28.

¹⁵ Op. cit., p.193.

¹⁶ Maria Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, p.97.

Italian painter active in Poland (among the royalty and nobility) before Zygmunt III Vasa; and even the Italian painters in Poland during the 17th and 18th centuries were figures of secondary talent and importance.¹⁷ The important thing to note here, of course, is that Bona was not able to “import” or attract any major Italian painter to Poland.¹⁸ From all of this, it is clear that Tygielski’s book is an excellent monograph that provides a comprehensive overview of Polish-Italian contacts in the late Renaissance and Early Baroque eras.

Mieczysław Morka, as we learn from the back-cover of his book, has been an active and even controversial Polish art historian over the past 25 years. His book *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe (The art of the Court of Zygmunt I “The Old”: political and propaganda notions)* is also over 600 pages, although it contains 300 small illustrations. While this book is well-researched, it looks like Morka did not consult any archives – he does, however, cite older texts: everything from Biblical passages to Erasmus and Vasari. However, the list of secondary literature and especially journal articles cited by Morka is vast. Overall, while the book is informative and offers many fresh interpretations on important matters, it has a few significant flaws mostly in relation to the structure of the book. Each chapter is 150 pages or more and chapter sub-sections should facilitate a coherent flow of analytical notions. Despite their inclusion, in many parts of the text it was hard to avoid a sense of thematic confusion. That being said, at many other points, the analysis from this text was very useful and therefore, Morka is cited at many points throughout this thesis.

¹⁷ Wojciech Tygielski. *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII Wieku: Utracona Szansa na Modernizację.*, p.239.

¹⁸ We know that Titian (born 1477), Michelangelo (born 1475) and even Raphael Sanzio (born 1483) were all only a decade or two older than Bona – and that with the exception of Raphael, they all outlived Bona. Of course, we know that by the time Bona became queen, these top masters were all engaged in projects. However, one might be permitted to speculate that even if an under-study or assistant from any of these ateliers had come to Bona’s court, he might have gained wider recognition, but this did not happen. Thus, indeed, as per the Tygielski citation directly above, it is possible that different climatic conditions, a different approach to fine art appreciation as well as other difficult-to-define factors contributed to the fact that indeed, there was no Italian painter active in late Jagiellonian Poland.

Several other Polish-language texts were consulted for this project – from a very impressive biographical dictionary of the Jagiellonian dynasty prepared by Małgorzata Duczmal and a new book about the jewelry of the Polish monarchy by Ewa Letkiewicz, all the way to a Polish-Italian collection of papers presented at a 2004 Milan conference dedicated to Bona and texts on Renaissance music. Useful data and analysis was lifted from all of these texts. The same must be said for the catalogs which detailed the two museum exhibits dedicated to Bona that took place in 2000 – appropriately one was staged in Bari, the other in Kraków. In fact, the first of these latter texts provided very useful information on early court tapestries.

However, before ending this overview of sources, some analysis should be made of the English-language sources. Chief among these are books by F.W. Carter, Harold Segel and Daniel Stone. Carter's book *Trade and urban development in Poland: An economic geography of Cracow from its origins to 1795* is one of the most informative books that surely could have been written on the topic – and strangely, it is done by a British scholar. While this book was only consulted for a small portion of this thesis, it gives an ample contextual discussion of the city of Kraków and then, it discusses trade through the city dedicating a chapter sub-section to each individual commercial product. Thus, we can find sub-sections discussing trade in such materials as metals, fish or textiles. In fact, one significant chapter discusses these matters in the period 1257-1500 and a second chapter goes from 1500 to 1795. Carter's analysis is thorough and his book would be extremely useful for anyone interested in a more in-depth analysis of Polish economic history.

Segel's book, as stated by Stone, takes a "biographical approach" to the history of the Polish Renaissance.¹⁹ Indeed, each chapter in Segel's book is an in-depth analysis of a

¹⁹ Daniel Stone. *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795*. (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001), p.344.

major figure in Polish Renaissance history. In all the cases, these were humanists and poets, therefore, there is a solid internal coherence to the book – and all major historical figures, from royalty to nobles as well as foreigners, such as Pope Leo X, are very well inter-woven into the narrative. Segel underlines the universal importance of Latin – stating that it was this language that made these humanists a part of the greater European Renaissance. As a result, there are many Latin poems directly quoted within the body of his text (English translations are all provided). It is clear that for those who do not read Polish, this monograph remains the best source of information about the culture of the Polish Renaissance.

Daniel Stone's book *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795* is a survey text aimed at giving an overview to the late Medieval, Renaissance and Early Modern eras of Polish history. While the aim of this book is not to offer any new interpretations, it has very useful chapter sub-divisions that address a given topic like the history of peasants under a particular king; the history of Jews; or a brief discussion of the Polish navy. Clearly, this book would be useful for an introductory undergraduate course on Eastern European history. Stone even provides a chapter sub-heading for Bona Sforza. Yet, there is one minor problem that one finds in Stone's book directly connected with Bona. While we know that initially, during the marriage negotiations, her true age was lowered (in Poland, it was reported to be 18 or 19 whereas in reality, she was 23; and 24 upon arriving in Kraków in 1518), Stone's book does the opposite: he states Bona was 35 at the time of marriage to Zygmunt.²⁰ This is an obvious mistake, but overall, the book remains useful. It also provides a good list of suggested further readings. Finally, it should be noted that De Lamar Jensen's easily-readable book *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation* provided general Renaissance contextual information.

²⁰ Op. Cit., p.37.

In conclusion to this chapter, it must be stated that there are many excellent secondary sources on various aspects of Polish Renaissance history – though they are mostly written in Polish. However, from a critical reading of them, it is possible to construct a coherent picture of Bona's cultural interest and the patronage that took place at the Wawel court. However, in order to appreciate more fully the cultural analysis contained in chapter 3, one requires the proper contextual setting and background information as provided by the following chapter.

Chapter 2 – The contextual setting: Bona, Renaissance Poland and the Jagiellonians.

2 – 1: Bona’s early life, family origins and education.

This second chapter will feature six main themes, all of which aim to provide background and contextual information about Bona as well as Renaissance Poland. This information should be useful in order to better appreciate and understand Bona’s cultural interests and her patronage. The first section will provide basic biographical information on Bona; followed by a critical examination of some aspects of early 16th century Poland.

Bona Sforza was born in the same year that essentially marks the cultural end of the Italian Quattrocento: 1494 is also the year that a massive French army entered the Italy and the peninsula became a battle ground among the French and Hapsburg dynasties. Yet, the Sforza dynasty had very humble origins – those of condottiere: hired mercenary soldiers. This was the case a half-century before Bona’s birth. The first Sforza duke of Milan, Bona’s great-grandfather Francesco, had been employed as a mercenary by the previous and rather tyrannical rulers of Milan, the Visconti, to wage war against other Italian states. However, Francesco Sforza, due to his marriage into the Visconti family, was able to become the ruler of Milan (in 1450) after the main hereditary line of the Visconti died out a few years earlier.²¹

Bona’s mother, Isabella of Aragon, had descended from a line of Neapolitan rulers who were themselves descendants of Aragonese royalty from eastern Iberia: these dynastic links were established a few generations before Bona’s birth.²² Isabella was 24 when she

²¹ De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation*. (Lexington and Toronto: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992), p.69; and Marcelli Kosman. *Królowa Bona.*, p.13.

²² Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.246; and De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation.*, p.437.

gave birth to Bona in Vigevano, near Milan, on February 2, 1494. Bona had not known her father, Giangaleazzo Sforza, who died only eight months after Bona's birth – he was only 25. Furthermore, it must be noted that although Bona's father was officially the duke of the Milan since 1476, after the murder of his father Galeazzo Maria, he never held any actual political power. At the time of his accession to the title, Bona's father had only been a child. Therefore, the regency in his name was carried out by his uncle (Bona's great-uncle) Ludovico *il Moro* Sforza.²³ This man not only held all the political power in the duchy, but also, he helped to raise his nephew in such a manner that Giangaleazzo, even as an adult in his early twenties, would never be an actual political rival.²⁴ Although Jensen cites a letter from Ludovico giving the impression that he has very warm and cordial relations with Giangaleazzo and his wife²⁵, another source informs us that the dictator had caused the family considerable hardship – not the least by having them removed from the main city. Bona's mother had to plead with Ludovico in order to be provided the basic necessities such as children's clothing and adequate housing. Also, this latter source informs us that in fact, Giangaleazzo's death on October 21, 1494 might have been caused by poison on orders from Ludovico.²⁶ Therefore, while Bona came from an elite family of Italian dukes, her infancy was far from stable and secure.

Ludovico il Moro, although initially permitting the widow Isabella and her family to return to Milan, perhaps realized the political risk posed by them in his vicinity. As a result, in the summer of 1499, Ludovico decided to send Isabella, Bona and her remaining siblings off to Bari – in southern Italy. As Duczmal states, the city of Bari had been given to the

²³ De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation.*, pp.74 and 299.

²⁴ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1996), p.161.

²⁵ De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation.*, p.74.

²⁶ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.22.

Sforzas as a fiefdom (although there are no other details given here).²⁷ The same author further informs us that before the family could leave Milan, there were other complications, including a direct French invasion of Milan and the purposeful separation of Bona's older brother Francesco from the rest of the family. Eventually, early the following year, Bona, her one remaining sister and their mother left Lombardy and headed south – not to Bari, but to Naples. Tragedy struck the family here as well: Bona's sole surviving sister, eight-year old Ippolita, died in 1501. Thus, as Duczmal informs us, by the spring of the following year, Bona and her mother now took up residence at the fortress castle of Bari. Bona considered this very medieval (almost crusader-like) fortress as her home until she left for Poland 16 years later. Bona and her mother would make periodic visits to Naples; and on one such visit, in 1506, 12-year old Bona most likely met her distant family relative, the Spanish King Ferdinand the Catholic (who was visiting a city that was now his domain).²⁸ From this same source, we learn that Bona was equally a family relative to Beatrice of Aragon, the widow of the Hungarian King Matthias Corvin; and from Jensen, we learn that through marriage, the Sforzas were also family relatives to Lucrezia Borgia – the daughter of the infamous Pope Alexander VI.²⁹ Besides confirming this, Bogucka makes an observation that appears quite appropriate: even as a child, having had a natural bond with the siblings who one by one vanished from her life; and observing the turbulence of life in Italy (being moved around all the time), Bona might have realized that life is really tough and truly profound emotional connections with even those closest to you can be shattered or become a source of bitter disappointment.³⁰ Even if one cannot be certain of this statement – as we do not have a diary of the young Bona (which would surely have been quoted in

²⁷ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, pp.161-162.

²⁸ Op. Cit., p.162.

²⁹ De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation.*, p.76.

³⁰ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.26.

sources had such a document existed) – it certainly seems quite plausible. However, it also goes a long way in helping to explain Bona’s attitude to politics and towards the men who engage in this domain. Thus, we can state that Bona was neither evil by nature nor corrupt by her passions – rather, she was prudent, cautious and cynical due to her experiences.

Both Bona’s contemporaries towards the mid-16th century in Poland as well as subsequent historians who chose to pronounce opinions would quickly declare that indeed, Bona was “Machiavelli in a skirt”.³¹ While it is not possible here to discuss Machiavelli’s views of human nature in any detail, it would seem that such pronouncements ignore a much more complex reality – one that Machiavelli, and surely Bona as well, understood to a greater extent since they had to endure hardships and disappointments that had affected deeply their psyche and their outlooks on life.

However, if we re-focus this analysis back to Bona’s biography, then we can state that the future queen of Poland was fortunate to have a caring mother who sought to provide her only daughter with a good education. While Wrede is quite correct in stating that a general humanist education was not unusual for a young woman from noble or ducal origins³², Duczmal is the only source consulted which calls Bona’s tutor from 1506, Christoforo (Christosomo?) Colonna a “mediocre” humanist.³³ Bogucka is quick to point out, however, that he was not connected in any way to the famous Roman Colonna family.³⁴ While indeed, this tutor was not a famous Roman or Florentine scholar, we know that he was thorough as Bona’s educator: she had mastered Latin, a good amount of literature from

³¹ Op. Cit., p.227.

³² Marek Wrede. *Królowa Bona: Między Włochami a Polską.*, p.5.

³³ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, p.163. (Harold Segel’s book, p.205, gives us more information of this man: Christoforo Colonna, born in 1460 was a secretary to the local duke of Calabria and a poet of Petrarchan persuasion who had also come to Poland before Bona’s wedding to finalize the negotiations on this matter. His date of death is listed as 1539. Segel does not appear to make any final pronouncements on Colonna’s intellect.)

³⁴ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.30.

antiquity as well as even a considerable amount of theological writings.³⁵ There are two other factors that one ought to remember: first, that Bona's mother was finally given investiture as the ruler of the town of Bari in 1507.³⁶ The importance of this is that Bona, still being close to her mother, could grow up as a teenager observing the practical machinery of political administration. This provided a good balance to the lectures on ancient political theories that were part of Bona's curriculum. The second matter is no less important: even though southern Italy could not pride itself on the same level of collective humanist scholarship as Tuscany, Isabella in 1513, on the local level as ruler of Bari sought to improve the municipal educational system (by asking the town priors to exempt teachers from taxes). Bona, already as a young woman might have seen this as a very methodical and constructive policy: consolidate and build upon the resources that are available to you and make sure to appear as a pragmatic leader. Equally, it appears that Isabella did not disregard the humanist trends of her era and as a result, a few humanist figures and poets were welcomed in Bari.³⁷ It stands to reason that Bona, especially once she was an educated teenager would have conversed with, and learned from, these individuals.

Given all this, the following observation from Bogucka is absolutely accurate: there is nothing remotely 'improper' in Bona's upbringing that could be considered as a root of her supposed 'moral degeneracy'.³⁸ In fact, it would appear that the opposite is very much true: the turbulent years of childhood had now passed and Bona had become an attractive and articulate young woman. These facts began to be noticed on her periodic visits to Naples – so much so, that given the Spanish cultural influence in that city, she was

³⁵ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, p.163.

³⁶ Op. Cit., p.162.

³⁷ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.27. (It must be noted here that although most of these figures located in Bari would have been relatively second-rate humanists, one name given by Bogucka as a humanist protégé of Isabella stands out – that of Jacobo Sannazaro. De Lamar Jensen, in his text, on p.139, states that he was a poet and writer of some considerable talent and the author of a pastoral romance epic entitled *Arcadia* which combined both prose and poetry.)

³⁸ Op. Cit., p.36.

addressed by the diminutive Spanish version of her name “Bonita” (which appropriately means “pretty”).³⁹ This matter was taken even a step further: besides the fact that minor local poets were inspired by Bona’s beauty and wrote sonnets in her praise, Bona was the inspiration behind an anonymous Spanish-language love-story entitled *Question de Amor* that was written circa 1508-1512. As Bogucka informs us, this book was published in the Spanish city of Valencia in 1513; and it had several reprints for the remainder of the 16th century all over Spain, Italy and even France.⁴⁰ In the story, names are somewhat-poorly disguised: Bona is renamed Belisena and instead of Naples, the action occurs in an imaginary town called Noplesano. The plot is a tragic love story whereby Belisena is the love interest of a gentlemen named Flamino. However, in the end, he is not only rebuffed, but then tragically, he also is mortally-wounded in battle. Belisena’s name is on his lips as he expires.⁴¹ At this same point, Bogucka informs us that the real identity of Flamino remains unknown – just as the identity of the story’s author. However, Bogucka further postulates that the story would have been written most probably by some young Spanish (possibly Italian) nobleman who had an interest in Bona. One might further speculate that the real Bona either did not return the advances of this budding novelist – or quite simply rejected them outright. It might even be said that whoever this author was, he did exactly what many artists would do (and have done) when their affection remains unrequited: he channeled those negative emotions into his art. The other, rather very important, matter here is that we should take note of the revolution within society that was taking place at this era. Only two or three generations before Bona, and thus before the invention of the printing press, books would have to be copied by hand. As a result, amusement stories and

³⁹ Krzysztof Zabolicki. *La Regina Bona E La Sua Corte (Królowa Bona i jej dwór)*. (Pessano: Mimep-Docete, 2004). (A paper presented in Milan on May 8, 2004 at a conference dedicated to Bona), p.30.

⁴⁰ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, pp.34 and 253.

⁴¹ Op. Cit., p.35.

novellas of this type would have to remain orally-transmitted. However, by 1513, copies could be printed and distributed widely and relatively cheaply. Jensen points out facts that are relatively well-known: the printing press was a rapid revolution and within 50 years of the movable type being invented in Germany, circa 1445, millions of texts had been printed all over Europe.⁴² Given that the Italian city-states were very keen on printing books, by the time that Bona would have been taught to read larger texts, at around the age of 12 in 1506, some of the major books of civilization (such as Aristotle) would have already been available to her in print.

2 - 2: The search for a proper husband and Bona's wedding to Zygmunt Stary.

While above we noted that Bona had rejected the romantic advances of a nobleman writer, by the time of her teenage years, there arose the need to find her an appropriate husband. There were many potential candidates, including some of her Sforza relatives as well as the younger brother of the Medici Pope Leo X, Giuliano de Medici.⁴³ This idea, however, came to nothing since Jensen informs us that this latter candidate, also known as the 'duke of Nemours' had died in 1516.⁴⁴ However, Bona's mother was very much active in trying to find Bona a good husband – and to this end, she had sent letters as well as envoys (such as Bona's tutor Christosomo Colonna) to various European courts seeking a potential positive answer. One such court was that of the Hapsburg Emperor Maximilian I (who like Bona had some Aragonese royal blood and was therefore a very distant relative.)⁴⁵ Maximilian, however, was also the best example of how monarchs gain power and influence

⁴² De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation.*, pp.218-222.

⁴³ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, p.163

⁴⁴ De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation.*, p.307 and 441.

⁴⁵ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, p.164.

through timely marriages: a scion of a Hapsburg-Portuguese alliance, his own marriage connected him with the wealthy territories of Burgundy and his grandsons (the famous Charles V and Ferdinand) were the products of an alliance with Spain. Maximilian had also met, in 1515, with Zygmunt Stary and his brother Ulászló II of Bohemia/Hungary and contracted marriage alliances with the Jagiellonians: in fact, Ulászló's daughter Anna married the above-mentioned Ferdinand. Anna (1503-1547) had given birth to 15 children including the subsequent emperor Maximilian II.⁴⁶

Given that Maximilian I already had such success in arranging dynastic unions – and knowing that Zygmunt's first wife, the young Barbara Zapolya, had died in late 1515 – the possibility of the uniting Bona and Zygmunt arose in 1516. Although here, this matter is simplified, many texts detail the diplomatic negotiations in this matter. It should also be noted that although Isabella had some problems with paying her daughter's dowry in full, it amounted to an impressive 100,000 ducats.⁴⁷ By the autumn of 1517, the marriage contract was signed and Zygmunt dispatched Jan Konarski (one of his private secretaries) and Stanisław Ostroróg (the governor of the city of Kalisz) to escort the future queen back to Poland.⁴⁸ The proxy wedding, which was to take place in Vienna, had actually occurred in Naples at the insistence of Isabella on December 6, 1517.⁴⁹ Early in the New Year, Bona departed Bari in the company of a large retinue. This group of 287 people, while containing a few Italian humanists and Bona's own chef, surely made the journey rather slow and long. While in the next chapter we shall discuss also some of the possessions (including items of high culture) that Bona brought to Poland, it is clear that they only made the convoy that much longer and slower. As a result, they arrived in Vienna on March 19 and ten days later,

⁴⁶ Op. Cit., p.54.

⁴⁷ Ewa Letkiewicz. *Klejnoty w Polsce: Czasy Ostatnich Jagiellonów i Wazów*. (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2006), pp.55-56.

⁴⁸ Marceli Kosman. *Królowa Bona*, p.30; and Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.42. (it should be noted that Ostroróg's official title was "Kasztelan" in Polish).

⁴⁹ Marceli Kosman. *Królowa Bona*, pp.35-36.

they were met by more Polish envoys in Moravia who had brought with them a new, gold-decorated, red-velvet interior carriage to be pulled by 8 horses. Supposedly, this had made the last leg of Bona's journey much more comfortable.⁵⁰ On April 11, 1518, Bona entered Polish territories near the town of Oświęcim.⁵¹

Bona's wedding to Zygmunt on April 18, 1518 and her subsequent coronation upon arriving in Kraków were events of truly historical proportions and significance. While we know that the wedding celebrations of Zygmunt's parents, Kazimierz and Elżbieta Habsburżanka in early 1454 lasted nearly a week⁵², the proportions of the 1518 events were truly extravagant. In fact, they were a cultural event that had never been repeated again in all of Polish history.⁵³ This can be attested to by the fact that simply to serve the meals to all the guests, 31 field kitchens had to set up.⁵⁴ Despite this (obviously a lot of meals would be cooked on open flames); and despite the fact that Bona had been given a 70-canon salute upon entry into the city⁵⁵, there were no reported accidents or fires. Bona was accompanied by such illustrious Italians as Cardinal Ippolito D'Este (who was specifically asked to escort Bona)⁵⁶ as well as the humanists Ludovico d'Alifio (who would become her chancellor) and Prosper Colonna – (this latter was neither connected with neither Bona's former tutor nor with the famous Roman family: he was the viceroy of Naples.)⁵⁷ These men were matched by first-rate Polish humanists, especially Andrzej Krzycki. The important thing to note here is that besides food, drink, jousting, music and dancing, the wedding was an occasion for

⁵⁰ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, pp.52-53.

⁵¹ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, p.165.

⁵² Op. Cit., p.202.

⁵³ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.60.

⁵⁴ Op. Cit., p.58.

⁵⁵ Sławomir Radoń. "Kilka Uwag na temat Działalności Królowej Bony w Polsce." pp.279-295 in *Bona Sforza: Regina di Polonia E Duchessa di Bari: Catalogo della Mostra a cura di Maria Stella Calò Mariani.* (Roma: Nuova Comunicazione; Edicom S.p.a. Editore, 2000) p.279.

⁵⁶ Tadeusz Ulewicz. "Polish Humanism and its Italian Sources: Beginnings and Historical Development." pp.215-235 in Fiszman, ed., *The Polish Renaissance in its European context.* p.229.

⁵⁷ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.273. (As per the same source, page 63, Cardinal D'Este and Prosper Colonna were the last two foreign guests to depart.)

both Italian and Polish humanist poets to write commemorative verses. Krzycki (known also in Latin form of his name as Andreas Cricius) wrote and presented a 351-verse “Epithalamium” to celebrate the wedding.⁵⁸ While the Italian humanists were not outdone and also provided beautiful Latin poems, one might postulate that the most important pronouncement made was that of the Polish Primate, Jan Łaski: it was obvious to all that Zygmunt was the last living monarch of the Jagiellonian dynasty and so, the Primate’s wish was for the quick birth of a male heir to the throne.⁵⁹ We know that Bona’s wedding party lasted a week.⁶⁰ It is equally certain that the foreign visitors did not just enjoy the celebrations, but also, that thanks to them the rest of Europe had received reports of these events. Indeed, as stated already, the city of Kraków was never again to have royal wedding celebrations of the same caliber. Given this fact, one is correct in stating that Bona, by simply arriving in Poland, contributed to a unique cultural event in Polish history. This statement can be supported by the mere fact that biographies of Bona, especially by Bogucka and Kosman, dedicate several pages to simply listing all the details of the ceremonies and the poetic skills of the participants.

2 – 3: The family of Bona and Zygmunt.

For obvious reasons, Zygmunt did not delay in consummating the union; and by January 1519, Bona gave birth to their first child – a daughter named Isabella (in honour of her maternal grandmother, who never saw her grandchildren despite setting out and having

⁵⁸ Harold Segel. *Culture in Poland: The Rise of Humanism, 1470-1543.*, p.206.

⁵⁹ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.55. (Equally, we should note two other facts: As per Bogucka’s *Bona Sforza*, page 97, we know that Primate Łaski had become a political ally of Bona since he sided heavily with an anti-Hapsburg worldview. Secondly, as per pages 33-34 of Jan Białostocki’s *The Art of the Renaissance in Eastern Europe*, Oxford, Phaidon Press, 1976, Łaski had been a friend of the Hungarian Primate Tamas Bakocz and had seen his chapel at Esztergom. In fact, Łaski ordered a similar mausoleum to be built for him in Poland, but this building was destroyed in 1778 and no schematics or drawings of it are extant.)

⁶⁰ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, p.165.

to abandon a journey to Kraków to assist Bona during the first pregnancy⁶¹). Although Bona did not manage to get such help from her own mother, in the next chapter, we will demonstrate that she was in fact willing to provide it to others. However, the most important fact to note is that on the August 1, 1520, Bona finally gave birth to the long-awaited and long-desired son and royal heir: Zygmunt August.

However, at this point, it is important to cite several other facts. The first of these is that although officially, Bona was considered a “Queen-Consort” with no official legal rights to take part in government, many people knew that she would be active in politics.⁶² At the end of this chapter, there will be some analysis of previous Polish queens, demonstrating that indeed, their involvement in politics was not as profound as was the case with Bona.

Bona, as was surely the custom all over Renaissance Europe, was to have her own court at the Wawel. While at other points in this thesis, this division will be highlighted again, here we should note the explanations provided by the musicologist Elżbieta Głuszczyńska. We are informed that the ‘court of the king’ and the separate ‘court of the queen’ were not institutions of the central state. Rather, they were assemblies of servants and loyal friends of each monarch; and the money for the daily expenses and upkeep of the court was to come from the monarch’s own purse. Therefore, while we know that the group of servants at a given court would disband upon the death of the monarch⁶³, at the start of her reign, it was important for Bona to receive estates and land-grants in order to generate revenues for her retinue and staff. To this end, a week after the wedding, Zygmunt Stary officially signed over to his wife the income that would be generated by several towns and

⁶¹ Władysław Pociecha. *Królowa Bona (1494-1557): Czasy i ludzie Odrodzenia*. Vol. II (Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 1949), p.107.

⁶² Marek Wrede. *Królowa Bona: Między Włochami a Polską*, p.33.

⁶³ Elżbieta Głuszczyńska. *Muzyka Nadworna Ostatnich Jagiellonów*. (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1988), p.11.

estates. Duczmal provides a list of these – and although even today most of these towns are relatively small, some like Radomsko⁶⁴ (to the south-west of the town that was usually the meeting place of the Polish Sejm – Piotrków Trybunalski) are still easily identified.

Maternal duties and pregnancies kept Bona very much in Kraków or its vicinity for at least the first decade.⁶⁵ Indeed, although Duczmal's biographical dictionary itself does not provide footnotes, this source tells us that Zygmunt was very happy with his wife's good health and fertility.⁶⁶ Besides Isabella and Zygmunt August (born in 1519 and 1520 respectively), Bona gave birth to three other daughters: Zofia in 1522, Anna the following year, and Catherine in 1526. The older king's joy with respect to his growing family, however, was not to last.

We know that Bona loved to go out hunting with falcons on horseback. She had learned to do this while still young in Bari, where her mother had kept a stable of the finest stallions.⁶⁷ Although Bona was prevented from taking any long trips to Lithuania for the first decade, it is logical to assume that she would still take pleasure in being able to leave Kraków from time-to-time. The family would often go to relax at a hunting lodge located at nearby Niepołomice. On many occasions, Bona would hunt all types of animals here, but her decision to pursue this activity in September 1527 was a tragic mistake. The queen, still very healthy at 33, was in the advanced stages of her latest pregnancy. While hunting, she fell from a horse – and the accident induced labour. In the end, Bona survived and would live another 30 years, but she became infertile as a result of her injuries. Even worse, she gave birth to a premature infant son, who was promptly baptized as Olbracht, but died

⁶⁴ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, p.165.

⁶⁵ Władysław Pociecha. *Królowa Bona (1494-1557): Czasy i ludzie Odrodzenia.* Vol. II. p.107.

⁶⁶ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, p.165.

⁶⁷ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.27. (Here we are told that even Henry VIII of England was given some of these horses as gifts by Bona's mother).

within a few hours.⁶⁸ In conclusion to this section, it must be stated that although all sources are generally in agreement that Bona's children were well-provided for and they were given such amusements as caged birds as well as chessboard during their childhoods⁶⁹, the new reality (that no other son would be born) forced Bona to be extra-protective of the one surviving male heir of the dynasty.

The next section of this chapter, before discussing further details about Bona and her political activities, presents some general information about the social, economic and cultural milieu in which she operated.

2 – 4: 16th century Poland in a broader context.

It is not easy for the purposes of a chapter sub-section to summarize and analyze the broad outline of Polish history during the reign of Zygmunt Stary; and also to include therein a discussion of Bona's economic activities. However, the following attempt is made in order to demonstrate that Poland-Lithuania was a country in socio-political regression towards the second serfdom. Furthermore, as stated above, Bona became politically-active in both domestic politics as well as in foreign affairs. While the following examinations are over-simplifications of a more complex reality, it can be said that in internal matters, Bona's aim was to buttress further the power of the crown which her son stood to inherit, and to try and make sure that the manor estates owned by the royal family were more productive as a revenue source. Internationally, Bona also had two broad aims: the first was to slow-down Hapsburg dynastic and political expansion in central Europe (as this came at the expense of the Jagiellonians); and second, she had sought to bring her dynasty into an alliance with the

⁶⁸ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, pp.169-170.

⁶⁹ Maria Bogucka. *Anna Jagiellonka*, (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1994), p.9.

Valois of France, hoping to solidify this connection through an inter-dynastic marriage. In the end, she was not successful on either one of these aims.

Soon after arriving in Poland, Bona was shocked to learn the true nature of the country's political system and to realize how the powers of the crown were being eroded. While in the following chapter, Bogucka is cited stating that the prerogatives of the Jagiellonian monarch were still quite significant in this era, it is true that the nominal (or even tyrannical) leaders of relatively-small Italian states usually had much greater leverage in being able to enact their political objectives.⁷⁰

While below I mention the Italian merchants of Kraków; and Tygielski makes it clear that they were never able to monopolize any single industry⁷¹, the important thing to note here is that in general, city burghers and urban artisans were a segment of society that was rapidly losing political power and importance.⁷² While Bogucka does make a salient point of analysis that many townsfolk were not of Polish stock, the reality is that the Polish crown (and that includes Bona) did not actively and continuously seek out allies among the wealthier merchants so as to counter-balance the growing political powers of the noble classes.⁷³ This point is valid, although only to an extent: after all, with the overall decline in urban economic wealth and political power in Eastern Europe, even the wealthiest merchants might have been able to offset only partially the powers of the nobles – and we know that the economic wealth as well as the political leverage of this class was on a rapid ascent. The owners of these latifundia now understood that they stood to make great profits by exporting agrarian products. The grain and timber would be produced for them by peasant labour. The noble class now sought to increase their political influence so as to

⁷⁰ Marcei Kosman. *Królowa Bona*, p.107.

⁷¹ Wojciech Tygielski. *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII Wieku: Utracona Szansa na Modernizację.*, p.57.

⁷² Marcei Kosman. *Królowa Bona*, p.108.

⁷³ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.68.

legislate into law a system that functioned according to these principles. The peasantry, which constituted around 74% of the population within the realm of the crown⁷⁴ (it was surely even a greater percentage within the Lithuanian territories), were now collectively being reduced into a state of servitude. They essentially became the property of the nobleman – in some way no different from the soil terrain which they had to till. From the venerable Norman Davies, we know that this system had been progressively getting worse for the peasantry, certainly over the course of the 16th century, to the point that under the reign of Zygmunt August, a nobleman who had one of his peasants killed would simply receive a monetary fine of 10 złoty.⁷⁵ This was an insignificant amount in the larger context, especially if we remember that the nobility would have been exempt from regular taxes. One other point of interest is that Bogucka states that the urban merchant class in Kraków did not develop a mindset and a system for cultural patronage along the same lines as had been the case with the Italian city-states.⁷⁶ While this latter fact only further underlines the necessity to look at the cultural patronage supported by the royal court, it would seem quite logical that if the burgher classes were not in a financial position to gain greater political power, then it is unlikely that they could undertake any steps to support the work of first-rate artists as it was the case in Venice, Florence or Rome. Moreover, it stands to reason that only a portion of foreign merchants residing for a longer period of time in Poland would choose to invest any superfluous revenues in cultural projects. Merchants who would only be assigned to Poland for a specific period of time would then invest any earnings into further business ventures or artistic patronage closer to their actual home.

⁷⁴ Krzysztof Baczkowski. "Polska i Litwa za czasów Królowej Bony Sforzy." pp.183-191 in in *Bona Sforza: Regina di Polonia E Duchessa di Bari: Catalogo della Mostra...*, pp.183-184.

⁷⁵ Norman Davies. *God's Playground: A history of Poland. Vol. 1, The Origins to 1795.* (New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 2000), p.182.

⁷⁶ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.67.

At this point, having discussed to some extent already the declining socio-economic situation of Poland in this era, one can present here some of the analytical notions provided by Morka, since he (by citing several other scholars) further underlines the fact that though the art of the Jagiellonian court can be impressive, the Polish-Lithuanian state was not the powerful and successful country that popularly-portrayed especially to Polish high-school students. In the same chapter location where this previous statement is made, Morka also mentions the analysis of the above-mentioned positivist historian Bobrzyński (who argued that Poland had begun its decline by acquiescing to mediocrity and essentially in-action in all aspects of political life). However, one senses (as it does not appear to have been made clear by Morka), that he aims to argue that Bobrzyński's analysis is simply emotional. It appears that Bobrzyński blames foreign elements such as Bona and especially the Hohenzollern dynasty that led to the creation of Prussia, rather than to look at the hard evidence.⁷⁷ While above, we have already stated that Bobrzyński's analysis and censure of Bona is simply incorrect, Morka, by citing Andrzej Wyczański, appears to be arguing a case on actual evidence. The argument posits that Polish society of the 16th and 17th centuries – surely due to some of the factors in our analysis above like the development of the second serfdom – is itself to blame for the general state of decline and mediocrity. The core of the presented argument is the fact that Poland's overall population during the time of Zygmunt Stary was quite small (no more than 4 million in the territories of Poland proper). This meant a population density of less than 17 persons per square kilometer, whereas in western Europe, it was at least double that figure. Worse, we are informed that in some areas of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy, there were less than 2 persons per square kilometer. The argument is summed up by notion that agriculture in a feudal manner, especially in a

⁷⁷ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe*. (Warszawa: ARGRAF, 2006), pp.13-14

country as vast as the Jagiellonian state was a very poor and terribly inefficient policy. Indeed, although Wyczański wrote his text under the communist regime in 1973, the citation given by Morka not only highlights the benefits of a capitalist economy, but also makes the argument that 16th and 17th century Poland were totally by-passed by such developments. Urban artisans and motivated agriculturalists will be the ones to pay taxes and to give true value to the measurement of national wealth. One might equally suppose that such people would be the ones seeking to increase their population since this would provide more domestic consumers and ultimately more willing tax-payers. Empty swaths of land and a population kept essentially in chains cannot lead to prosperity and stability⁷⁸ – yet, the argument is that Poland’s political elites methodically led to such a state of affairs and even chose to propagate the idea that it was a powerful country instead of seeing their serious error and weakness.

One must conclude that this is quite an interesting (and indeed a very valid) interpretation of Poland’s history. Moreover, components of it can be linked with Bona’s overall political activities, since as we know Bona received significant grants of land – and the proceeds from these estates would pay for her court expenses, including her cultural patronage. Thus, before examining the culture of the royal court, there are still three main themes to be discussed in this chapter. The first one is a brief sketch of Bona’s political activities in connection to the analysis presented above. Broadly speaking, the aim here will be to show that although Bona was not able to arrest or reverse the overall trend in Polish society towards the second serfdom (no sources indicate that she even contemplated such an idea), she nevertheless managed to enact some reforms and improvements directly on her estates. Although the results of this work cannot be seen today, it is clear that through such policies, she sought to prevent the royal household from being a poor entity as had been the

⁷⁸ Op. Cit., pp.14-15.

case with Zygmunt at the start of his reign. Thereafter, this chapter will discuss the Italian connections to Poland before Bona's arrival in 1518. This will substantiate the idea that Bona was indeed not the first Italian to make a significant cultural impact in the country. Finally, in order to create a sense of contrast and thereby highlight Bona's significant role in Polish Renaissance cultural history, we will examine briefly some biographies of the queens who preceded Bona in her post.

2 – 5: Bona and her land estates.

It was stated several pages above, that Bona, shortly after being crowned, received several towns and latifundia within the territories of the Polish crown from which to income. While given the Wyczański interpretation of the Polish economy as cited above by Morka; and in general the statistics cited by him (showing that the state treasury was in significant deficits and debts even before Bona arrived in Poland)⁷⁹ one might conclude that the crown held very little land and had relatively insignificant powers to tax and levy tolls, it is most likely that although the holdings would have been significant in size, they were poorly-administered and therefore, of little or no economic value. While this thesis cannot give any greater analysis to these aspects of economic history, it is clear that Bona would not allow such poor management to continue on her own lands.

There were several pragmatic reasons for this, and coming from the turbulence of Italy, Bona understood the true importance of money – and that regrettably, financial stability provided a much greater sense of security than even close family bonds. Also, it is wholly appropriate to assume that as a young queen, and especially one who had a difficult

⁷⁹ Op. Cit., p.468 (Morka's analysis is very confusing in these matters. When citing financial data from this era, he mixes up currencies such as ducats, florins and złoty. His attempts to provide some conversion estimates really only make the matter worse, but if I understood his analysis correctly, it would seem that between the 1530s and 1540s, the state treasury was running an annual deficit of about 40,000 ducats – which converted to about 61,000 złoty. The implication here, however, is the fact that these later years were much more peaceful than the first two decades of the 16th century when Jagiellonians still had to wage war against the Teutonic Order – and the expenses of that conflict would have made it impossible to balance the state treasury.)

childhood, she would wish to have the opportunity to indulge in luxuries and in cultural patronage. Third, and very much connected to her rational mind, she understood the power that money had in the political sphere. Even Auderska's novel makes it clear that Bona had an understanding of paying bribes – even “buying the peace” by coming to financial terms with state enemies.⁸⁰ Due to such opinions, some would call Bona corrupt, but it is unlikely that her contemporaries would accuse her of this. After all, it is a fact known to many history students of the Renaissance that Charles, the King of Spain had to bribe the electors in order to accede to the Imperial title.

That being said, we can be certain of the Bona sought to have a steady revenue stream. Yet, she understood that dilapidated estates where peasants can barely grow and earn enough for their basic survival could not provide revenues. Moreover, coming from Italy, where there was an inherent understanding of the needs to transport goods to market, Bona knew that there was a need to have roads, bridges and mills in order to have a functioning economy. In response, we know that Bona had provided her estates with considerable administrative oversight. While it is unlikely that she ever visited or inspected the actual estate grounds, we can be quite certain that her secretaries would receive written reports outlining general operations as well as problems at each manor. Replies with precise instructions would have been passed down to administrators on the ground and failure to execute such orders would have been punished.

While we know that Bona had received lands within Lithuanian territory as well, the important analysis is provided again by Bogucka: Bona ordered to have a general census carried out in each estate.⁸¹ This was done in order to find out what actual human resources are available and how to spread the tasks more equally – and also to indentify what

⁸⁰ Halina Auderska. *Smok w Herbie: Królowa Bona.*, p.37.

⁸¹ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.194.

infrastructure repairs would be necessary. Equally, on the same page, Bogucka informs us that more in line with western Europe, Bona would prefer to receive rent and feudal dues in cash rather than in kind. Obviously, while material goods, especially those of agrarian origin could be sold, Bona would have preferred to simply receive the money – one might suppose that she thought her estate administrators would have to spend extra time and energy trying to convert such goods into cash and this would introduce a precedent which would eventually lead to great inefficiency.

Bona was also in favour of setting up new villages – and here, the three-field rotation system and precise field measurements were introduced. And while Bogucka does not provide any specific examples, she does indicate that with such general improvements, and with labour divided up more evenly, the revenues from some estates doubled – and in rare cases, even increased four-fold.⁸² There are two more facts worthy of mention here: first, in terms of historiography, Bogucka states that Pocięcha interpreted these improvements as a sign that Bona was truly a benevolent monarch seeking to enact rural reforms.⁸³ While it is not totally improbable that Bona had remembered some of her mother's activities in Bari – trying to enact policies that are popular and useful while at the same time securing greater political stability – Bogucka makes it clear that Bona's aim was purely rational: coming from a land of merchants, she simply wanted to make sure that such improvements are treated as investments which will yield greater returns. The second point is equally interesting: in 1556, Bona now aged 62 – and considerably worn out from politics as well as from a long-standing dispute with her now adult and reigning son – chose to return to Italy. Officially, Bona's departure was for health reasons; and as everyone feared she would not return, she had to sign away her estates and could only take with her movable

⁸² Op. Cit., p.197.

⁸³ Op. Cit., p.195.

assets. The interesting citation, however, is the fact that even though preparations for this departure had been on-going for weeks and as soon as she would cross the border, her estates would become the property of the other members of the ruling dynasty, on the day before officially leaving Poland (she had moved to Warsaw in her later years), she still was engaged in administering her estates. As proof, her last day “in office”, there is a letter that Bona wrote ordering the careful reparation of a bridge on one of her estates.⁸⁴

Thus, in conclusion, to this topic, we can mention the following items. We know that Bona had over the course of many years consolidated her estate holdings (in some cases, buying out estates from nobles who went into default or who could not even produce the adequate documents attesting to their rightful ownership of a given parcel of land).⁸⁵ One of the biographies of Bona states rather curtly that in undertaking such action, Bona did not purposefully seek to deprive any nobleman of his holdings, but rather, she simply wanted the law of proper ownership to be applied.⁸⁶ In other words, she simply did agree to allow a chaotic status-quo to continue. Despite those noble intentions, such moves as well as her growing and well-managed revenues made Bona enemies amongst the nobles – partially because they never expected such inspections. Also, we know that her estates had at one point produced annual revenues of 50,000 złoty.⁸⁷ This is a great amount: for perspective, we should mention that the total cost of creating an elaborately-carved marble

⁸⁴ Op. Cit., p.204.

⁸⁵ Marceli Kosman. *Królowa Bona*, p.159.

⁸⁶ Danuta Wójcik-Góralaska. *Niedoceniana Królowa* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1987), p.200.

⁸⁷ Sławomir Radoń (author of chapter, pages 9-27) in *Bona Sforza: Królowa Polski, Księżna Bari (Wystawa na Zamku Królewskim na Wawelu. 14/09 to 19/11 2000)*. (Kraków: Zamek Królewski na Wawelu/Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie, 2000), p.13. (It should be mentioned here that while this sum of 50,000 złoty is a really substantial amount of money and one that should have permitted for significant cultural patronage – which did happen to an extent – it is equally important to remember that Bona would have spent a significant portion of estate revenues back on infrastructure improvement, administrative costs and upon continuous purchasing of new estates and territories to enlarge her holdings. On top of that, there would have been significant expenses to maintain her chancery and her contacts with Italy.)

sarcophagus and an appropriate nave would cost only 940 złoty.⁸⁸ This price would include the materials, the commission fee of the sculptor as well as any salaries of his assistants. In fact, this amount was to cover all the expenses of a two-year project; and Bona advanced 400 złoty upon signing this commission in September 1545. One must also state the following details: the tomb in question can be found today at Wawel Cathedral. It was created by the talented Renaissance Italian sculptor Gianmaria Mosca (known as Padovano) as the final resting spot of one of Bona's greatest political allies and supporters of a strong central monarchy, Piotr Gamrat, the bishop of Kraków and archbishop of Gniezno.

Whereas cultural patronage and Bona's interest in such artworks like tapestries and medallions is discussed in chapter 3, the brief mention of Padovano above can serve as an introduction into the next sub-section of this chapter, which appropriately discusses the Italian colony in Kraków and the city's connections to the peninsula.

2 – 6: *Italians in Poland during the Renaissance and previous Queen-consorts.*

It is worthwhile to mention the Italian mercantile and intellectual connections in Kraków. Tygielski informs us that as early as 1306 (and so before the reunification of Poland from its medieval Piast family partitions), the future king Władysław Łokietek agrees to allow a merchant from Genoa to become an official in the salt-mine town of Wieliczka near Kraków. We are informed this is specifically in order to counter-balance against German interests; and that this man, Niccolò Manente, remained on such good terms with Łokietek that in 1324, he was sent as an official envoy to the Avignon Pope. On the same page, we are told that there many Genoese were active in the salt-mine leasing

⁸⁸ Anne Markham Schulz. *GianMaria Mosca, called Padovano: A Renaissance Sculptor in Italy and Poland.* (University Park: Penn-State Univ. Press, 1998), vol.1, pp.101-102.

business under the last Piast, Kazimierz Wielki in the middle of the 14th century.⁸⁹ Over the course of the next century, there were several other Italian connections to this industry. There is even mention that someone named Albizio de Medici who was active in the capital.⁹⁰ In fact, from Anne Markham Schulz, we know that there was a branch of the Medici bank in early 15th century Kraków and that it also served a role as a tax collector for the Papacy.⁹¹ Though there is no indication in this source whether this Medici office continued to exist into the first half of the 16th century, this same author informs us that during the reign of Bona, the Italian ex-patriot colony in Kraków would number around 900 persons and that this amount was relatively constant: it would increase somewhat under the reign of Zygmunt August.⁹²

Thus, while below, I discuss in some detail the one Italian humanist – Callimachus – whose impact was crucial to the Polish Renaissance, here, it is imperative to mention that besides Medici connections to Poland, two other very prominent Florentine family names had business contacts with Kraków. The first name is that of the Guicciardini family. Yet, while Bona was roughly of the same generation as Francesco Guicciardini (she was only 9 years younger than him), this one source only informs us that the family owned a nicely-decorated building in Kraków⁹³: one can only surmise that some distant relatives of the great scholar had some interests in Poland. Yet, Tygielski then informs us that a builder from Florence, named Galeazzo Guicciardini (1522-1557), was active in the city – and even was contracted for some work at the Wawel.⁹⁴ Although in this source, we are not told whether this member of the family ever had contacts or discussions on any artistic or

⁸⁹ Wojciech Tygielski. *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII Wieku: Utracona Szansa na Modernizację.*, p.169.

⁹⁰ Op. Cit., p.171.

⁹¹ Anne Markham Schulz. *GianMaria Mosca, called Padovano.*, vol.1, p.89.

⁹² Op. Cit., p.91.

⁹³ Marcin Fabiański (author of chapter, pages 29-45) in *Bona Sforza: Królowa Polski, Księżna Bari (Wystawa na Zamku Królewskim na Wawelu. 14/09 to 19/11 2000).*, p.41.

⁹⁴ Tygielski, Wojciech. *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII Wieku: Utracona Szansa na Modernizację.*, p.230.

cultural matters with either Francesco back in Italy or with Bona in Poland, the fact remains that all these persons were mutual contemporaries – and therefore, there exists at least a theoretical possibility for this.

The other established Italian name is that of the Soderini family. We know, of course, that one of their members, Piero, was a prominent republican in early 16th century Florence. The Polish connection of this family appears to be from the time of Zygmunt August, but the link appears to be both important and interesting. Tygielski informs us that Bernardo and Carlo Soderini, as merchants and bankers, arrived in Kraków in 1546 and entered royal service (that of Zygmunt August) a decade later – the same year that Bona left Poland. While both of them returned to Florence, apparently folding their Polish bank operations, they had supposedly even played a role (again, un-clear here what role exactly) in connection to the election of Henri of Valois as the King of Poland after the death of Zygmunt August.⁹⁵ Given that they were commercial merchants with connections to Italy, it is possible that they would have supplied imported Italian luxury goods (or even delicacies) to the royal family. The community of 900 Italians would have also generated regular customers; thus it seems certain that being an Italian merchant in Poland during the time of Bona Sforza was a profitable enterprise.

Two more topics remain in this contextual chapter: the first is a quick examination of Callimachus Experiens, the great Italian humanist who was Kraków's most important link to the Italian Quattrocento. Thereafter, some quick biographical sketches of previous queens of Poland will demonstrate how significantly different Bona Sforza was in terms of courtly culture.

In English, the best source on Filippo Buonaccorsi (known as Callimachus) remains the informative chapter by Harold Segel. Buonaccorsi (1437-1496), who was from

⁹⁵ Op. Cit., pp. 143 and 158.

the Tuscan town of San Gimignano near Florence, actually arrived in Poland as a fugitive. After an education in Venice, he lived in Rome and was associated with the humanists at the Accademia Romana. In 1467-68, there was a conspiracy in the Eternal City to assassinate the Pope Paul II and the Curia. While Segel makes it clear that we cannot be certain that Buonaccorsi was the leader of the conspirators and postulates that this might have been a youthful rebellion or indeed a humanist plot against a Pope seen as hostile to the new learning, the important thing to note is that Buonaccorsi had to leave Italy – and very quickly in order not to be arrested (and almost certainly put to death).⁹⁶ Eventually, he arrived in Istanbul and there, he met a relative of his mother's family – Jacopo Tedaldi and through him, another relative Arnolfo. This latter, like the previous Italian merchants mentioned above, was a trader in salt. Besides suggesting to Buonaccorsi that he come to Poland, he would also ask an influential Polish cleric, the Bishop Gregory of Sanok, to try and intercede on behalf of the fugitive humanist. Eventually, though his name was cleared, Buonaccorsi realized the opportunities of staying on Polish soil. Due to his education and his contacts with such people as the above-mentioned Gregory, Buonaccorsi was introduced to the highest officials at court and he became a royal secretary (to Kazimierz Jagiellończyk, the father of Zygmunt Stary) in 1472.⁹⁷ For the next 20 years, he was the top diplomat of the Jagiellonians, a correspondent of such Florentine humanists as Marsilio Ficino and also a tutor to the royal family. It should be also stated that while Zygmunt (born 1467) was the youngest son of Kazimierz, it is quite certain that he had been given elements of a humanist education by Callimachus. In this respect, he was a good “intellectual partner” for someone like Bona and we know that on some cultural matters (especially tapestry orders) both monarchs acted in unison.

⁹⁶ Harold Segel. *Renaissance Culture in Poland: The Rise of Humanism, 1470-1543.*, pp.37-43.

⁹⁷ Op. Cit., p.55

Finally in this contextual chapter, after having discussed Bona's early years in Italy as well as her economic affairs in Poland; and after having looked at the Italians active in Renaissance Kraków, it is important to give a quick overview of some of the previous queens of Poland during the Renaissance. Three of the women who occupied this post are discussed here. The aim of this section is to demonstrate that indeed, Bona had a much more significant cultural impact upon Polish Renaissance culture than any of these three immediate predecessors.

The first of these queen-consorts is actually Zygmunt Stary's mother, known in Polish as Elżbieta Rakuszanka (or Habsburżanka). Born most likely in Vienna circa 1436, she was the last surviving member of the Albertine line of the Hapsburg dynasty. While we know that she was a devoted wife and caring mother, reading her biography in Duczmal's encyclopedia, it would appear that her upbringing was quite medieval and there is no mention of any interest in culture and its patronage.⁹⁸ One might also make the following interesting observations: Queen Elżbieta drew her royal income from some of the same towns which were later the property of Bona. In fact, Duczmal even informs us that some of these same territories then supported Barbara Zapolya during her brief reign as the first wife of Zygmunt Stary.⁹⁹ Therefore, one might plausibly conclude that certain towns and estates were habitually pre-destined (either by custom or by statute – as this is not made clear) to support the expenses of the queen-consort and her court. However, the important factor to note here is the following: Bona, as the active politician and with considerable expenses for cultural patronage, sought to modernize these holdings and increase her revenues from them. Queen Elżbieta, lacking both political inclinations as well as cultural interests, did nothing noteworthy with respect to these estates. It appears that she was

⁹⁸ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, pp.195-212.

⁹⁹ Op. Cit., p.139.

pleased with whatever revenues they would provide. It is also quite possible that given her upbringing, she simply could not comprehend the same type of ‘capitalist’ notions that motivated Bona to invest in the continual amelioration of her latifundia. One can, therefore, conclude this biographical sketch with two remarks. First, if the estates that were habitually assigned to support the queen-consort had been exploited and essentially neglected by Bona’s predecessors, then it is likely that the revenues they furnished Bona would have been grossly insufficient for her needs. As a result, she would seek to gain more estates in order to increase her immediate revenues – and this probably explains why she sought to have holdings within Lithuanian territories as early as 1519. Once she had sufficient revenues, Bona would be the first queen to engage in a methodical re-investment with the aim to improve the efficiency of those estates. Second, it is clear that Queen Elżbieta had no major impact upon the cultural atmosphere at court.

Another very interesting predecessor of Bona was Zygmunt’s sister-in-law (and a woman that he personally had come to know): Helena of Muscovy (circa 1476-1513) who was the wife of Zygmunt’s predecessor, King Alexander. Although Bona was a foreigner, she was a Catholic and so, she had been of the same faith as the royal house as well as the nobles (assuming that Protestantism did not start to spread in Poland until the early 1520s). Helena, however, was born into the Orthodox faith and refused to even consider conversion to the Church or Rome. In the end, though she was a loyal wife, she spent very little time in Poland.¹⁰⁰ Both this latter factor as well as her origins made it impossible for her to have had any cultural impact upon the court or the country.

¹⁰⁰ Op. Cit., pp.245-261. (As an ancillary fact, it is interesting to note the information provided by Paweł Jasionica in his book *Polska Jagiellonów*, published in Warsaw in 1992 by the Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy. On page 274, we learn that a French princess nearly became the Queen of Poland. Jasionica informs us that at the same time as Władysław/Ulászló II of Hungary planned to marry Anne de Foix-Candale, there were plans to marry the Polish king Jan Olbracht – the brother of both Władysław and Zygmunt – to Anne’s sister, Germaine. However, these plans were not realized – possibly due to the fact that Jan Olbracht died un-expectedly in 1501).

Finally, we come to Bona's immediate predecessor, Barbara Zapolya (circa 1495-1515). Duczmal makes clear that Barbara was young and did not really develop an adult disposition at the time of marriage in 1512. Therefore, she was a relatively quiet queen-consort. She was pious and good-natured, but did not have any deeper cultural interests or political inclinations. Moreover, we know that Zygmunt was himself devoted to his wife and deeply mourned her passing. The other person who was deeply affected by her passing was her private secretary – the above-mentioned Andrzej Krzycki. In fact, his biography as compiled by Leszek Barszcz informs us that Queen Barbara died in Krzycki's hands – and as a poet, he wrote a Latin "Deploratio" poem to commemorate her death.¹⁰¹ Harold Segel also relates that Krzycki's respectful friendship with the young queen induced him to write other small Latin poems.¹⁰² Segel provides some of these verses and English translations in his book. Thus, this small collection of poems that Krzycki wrote either out of his own volition or in response to requests from the young queen constitute her modest, albeit direct, cultural patronage.

Indirectly, popular Polish historical interpretations give Barbara a significant posthumous credit. It was believed that her death, so deeply shocking to Zygmunt, induced the monarch to build his famous Renaissance funerary chapel at Wawel Cathedral.¹⁰³ This chapel, called in Polish *Kaplica Zygmuntowska*, fortunate to have survived intact over the last 500 years, is one of the greatest specimens of Renaissance architecture anywhere in Europe. It stands as the crowning achievement of the Florentine architect Bartolomeo Berrecci (circa 1480-1537); and it took nearly 16 years to be built: Zygmunt had begun

¹⁰¹ Leszek Barszcz. *Andrzej Krzycki: poeta, dyplomata, prymas*. (Gniezno: Oficyna TUM, 2005), p.61.

¹⁰² Harold Segel. *Renaissance Culture in Poland: The Rise of Humanism, 1470-1543.*, p.200.

¹⁰³ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, p.201.

consultations on this project in 1516 and 1517 – and the chapel was consecrated (in Bona’s presence) on June 18, 1533.¹⁰⁴

The chapel has been the subject of countless studies and doctoral dissertations. Therefore, it is not possible in these few lines to adequately examine the minute architectural and artistic aspects of the building. However, it is important to note one analytical conclusion provided by Morka: he states that Zygmunt’s initial purpose for the chapel was his own final resting place – and that the initial designs did not allocate a space for the remains of Barbara, even though her coffin was moved and given a proper burial at the chapel less than a week after consecration.¹⁰⁵ One might, however, see good reasons for such an analysis as well as for the initial credit given to Barbara. First, Zygmunt in late 1515, upon the death of Barbara might have temporarily lost hope of re-marrying and therefore, perhaps believing his dynasty would end, he might have thought it worthy to leave behind a building to commemorate his reign. The second component of this possible interpretation is even more important. Although Barbara Zapolya is not deeply remembered in Poland, giving her popular credit for inspiring such a magnificent creation at the same time highlights the fact that Bona – the ‘evil’ queen – was never a potential candidate for such an honour. Yet, as is made clear in the following chapter, Bona’s patronage and contributions to Polish Renaissance culture were very profound.

¹⁰⁴ Op. Cit., p.203.

¹⁰⁵ Op. Cit., p.208.

Chapter 3 – Bona, Zygmunt and their artistic patronage.

After having done a historiographical overview of our sources as well as having contextualized several aspects of Renaissance Poland; and after having presented the basic biography of Bona and details about her splendid wedding in 1518, we can now proceed to discuss the matter of Bona's patronage over culture. In fact, here, we aim not only to discuss artistic high culture, but the analysis begins with an examination of elements of social culture such as cuisine and personal hygiene as well as court behaviour and clothing fashion.

It would appear that in Polish popular opinion over the past few centuries, Bona's negative reputation was tamed somewhat by the credit that most Poles give her in terms of having had an influence on local cuisine. In fact, through the analysis below and with the support of at least one Bona biographer, it shall become clear that while Bona's actual influence over Polish culinary culture was most likely of little if any wider importance, we should not dismiss her patronage over artistic high culture. This is despite the fact that scholars remain divided as to the topic of Bona's overall artistic patronage.

Wrede has stated succinctly that Bona cannot be considered a patron of culture. In fact, according to this author, even the praise and support that Bona extended over Latin-language poets at court, (especially Andrzej Krzycki or Jan Dantyszek), is exaggerated. These two humanists were, in Wrede's view, her servants and had to perform their assigned tasks to earn royal favour.¹⁰⁶ In the same vein, the famous Polish art historian Jan Białostocki stated that Bona had no profound interest in the arts.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Marek Wrede. *Królowa Bona: Między Włochami a Polską*, p.41.

¹⁰⁷ Jan Białostocki. *The Art of the Renaissance in Eastern Europe.*, p.25.

Even before citing scholars with a more nuanced opinion, it must be stated that such statements are excessively severe and cannot be taken at face value. While we have already mentioned the fact that various obstacles prevented both Bona and Zygmunt from being cultural patrons on a scale equal to that of other European monarchs, we do know that both of them had received a thorough humanist education; and that other monarchs, even Ferdinand and Charles of Hapsburg – adversaries of the Jagiellonians – accorded them due respect.¹⁰⁸ Thus, it is reasonable to state that the royal couple would patronize the high arts to whatever extent possible, because they would understand the fact that beyond any emotional and aesthetic gratification that they would gain from this patronage, such actions would also serve to highlight the intellect, power and benevolence of the monarchs. Morka further buttresses this notion: his analysis, citing many theorists, makes it clear that all monarchs sought to use art for political propaganda purposes. Whether the audience for such messages was a broad swath of society or just a smaller group of people is of secondary importance.¹⁰⁹

Furthermore, the idea of an artist as a servant should not be seen in derisive terms as this was not an era of successful freelance artists. Many painters, architects, poets and musicians were eager to obtain court positions during the Renaissance and Early Modern era. Despite the fact that employment on such terms would necessitate the artist to subjugate his originality and creative talents to the specific tastes and demands of the patron (and Morka makes it very clear that during the Renaissance, the patron was never a passive recipient, but rather a deciding force behind the nature of the commission¹¹⁰), it is clear that many artists were able to create art of the highest order. It is logical to assume that in many circumstances, the patron and the artist would exchange ideas with respect to the artwork

¹⁰⁸ Anna Sucheni-Grabowska. *Zygmunt August: Król Polski i Wielki Książę Litewski, 1520-1572*. p.52.

¹⁰⁹ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, pp.42 and 48.

¹¹⁰ Op. Cit., p.129.

being created. In support of this, we have records to indicate that King Zygmunt had downright interfered in the work of his architects.¹¹¹ However, even more important, Morka states that there is justifiable reason to believe that Bona had played an active consultative role to the architect Bartolomeo Berrecci during the design of the coffered ceiling of the audience hall with the famous carved heads.¹¹² According to sources cited by Morka, Bona had seen similar designs in several Italian palaces in Ferrara and Mantua, therefore, her input seems simply logical. Given what we know of Bona, there is no reason to dispute this assertion.¹¹³ Yet, it is equally interesting to note that Berrecci most likely prepared only the coffers and the ceiling design – the actual carved heads were the work of a German artisan, Sebastian Tauerbach.¹¹⁴ It is very possible that Bona discussed the details of this project with both of them.

Due to this latter fact, we can see how according to Bogucka, Bona's role in Polish cultural history remains open, maybe even un-clear and certainly under-appreciated.¹¹⁵ In fact, the sub-title of Bogucka's brief article contributed to a 2004 anthology about Italian artists in Poland reads "*Spory o Bonę*" (Disagreements/Disputes about Bona). Also, although Daniel Stone does not provide any substantial discussion on the matter, he does

¹¹¹ Adam Miłobędzki. "Architecture under the Last Jagiellons in Its Political and Social Context", pp.291-300 in Fiszman, ed., *The Polish Renaissance in its European context.*, p.291.

¹¹² Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, p.152.

¹¹³ However, it must be stated that Morka at the above-stated point does not inform us precisely what palaces in Italy are in question and what sort of ceiling decoration is in question. In a September 1979 article by Charles M. Rosenberg entitled "The Iconography of the Sala degli Stucchi in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara", published in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3049910>), I have been able to find a picture of the ceilings of the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara. However, without further precisions, I can only surmise that this is one of the buildings in question. The ceiling and the decoration of this palace – even with black-and-white photos – appears extremely ornate, however, given the poor quality of the photos in question, it is difficult to see actual carved heads in the ceiling partitions.

¹¹⁴ Op. Cit. (Morka), p.122. (On p.123, this same author informs us that the present state and design of the coffered ceiling at the Wawel, dates from the 1920s. At that time, conservation and restoration work was done – and despite the fact that the present design does provide an overall "Renaissance atmosphere", we are told that the original design, into which Bona had an input, was significantly different from what we can see today.)

¹¹⁵ Maria Bogucka. "Z dziejów Stosunków Polsko-Włoskich: Spory o Bonę", pp.17-24 in *Artyści Włoscy w Polsce XV-XVIII Wiek.* (Warszawa: Instytut Historii Sztuki UW, Wydawnictwo DiG, 2004), p.17 and 23.

state that Bona's cultural influence was significant.¹¹⁶ Further supporting these views, and even seeking to re-dress Bona's image is Jerzy Petrus, who has been the deputy director of the Wawel Castle museum in Kraków for at least the past decade. In a book detailing an exhibit dedicated to Bona that took place at Wawel in autumn 2000, Petrus clearly stated that despite all the historical controversies about Bona, there has not been a solid assessment of her cultural contributions. The two exhibits, in Kraków and Bari, were an attempt to fill that lacuna to some extent.¹¹⁷

However, there is substantial evidence against those who dismiss Bona's role as a patron of culture. While we have already stated that that Bona is not to be treated as the primary character bringing advanced Italian Renaissance culture into Poland, in some respects, we can assign both direct as well as indirect influential cultural agency to her. While at a later point, this thesis will discuss in greater detail the cultural milieu in which Zygmunt August was raised, we can state that he not only inherited from both his parents a deep appreciation for artistic culture, but also, scholars emphasize that he found the arts, especially tapestry and music, particularly therapeutic.¹¹⁸ This latter comment should also be understood within a proper context: although Bona was very much a political animal, Zygmunt August understood from childhood that he would have ultimate royal power and so, he did not have a very profound interest in learning "the ropes" of statecraft and politics.¹¹⁹ Since he knew his power was secure, he therefore could spend much more time and money on further satisfying the artistic passions that had been implanted in him from his youth – mostly by Bona.

¹¹⁶ Daniel Stone. *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795.*, p.41.

¹¹⁷ Jerzy Petrus (author of "Introduction") in *Bona Sforza: Królowa Polski, Księżna Bari (Wystawa na Zamku Królewskim na Wawelu. 14/09 to 19/11 2000)*, p.5.

¹¹⁸ *Arrasy Wawelskie* (Catalog of Wawel tapestries under the collective authorship of Jerzy Szablowski, Anna Misiąg-Bocheńska, Maria Hennel-Bernasikowa and Magdalena Piwocka). (Warszawa: Arkady, 1994), p.34.

¹¹⁹ Anna Sucheni-Grabowska. *Zygmunt August: Król Polski I Wielki Książę Litewski, 1520-1572.*, p.23.

However, before discussing Bona's influence on such cultural matters as daily court behaviour, her interests in tapestries, medallions and interior decoration, her appreciation of poetry and scholarship as well as her love of music, we shall quickly examine the popularly-held belief that Bona had significant influence upon the broadening of Polish cuisine. Subsequently, and only in passing, this chapter shall also examine a few points with respect to hygiene at the court.

3 – 1: *Bona and her influence on cuisine and on hygiene.*

Cuisine, though it is not high art like painting or music, is a very important aspect of cultural identity since it is reasonable to posit that until quite recently, people in any given society would consume almost exclusively foodstuffs of local origin. The abundance of a certain food item meant that it would become identifiable with that particular region. National cuisines developed upon such a base and there are many examples of this phenomenon: in the case of 16th century Poland and Eastern Europe, we know that the staple of the diet would have included mushrooms, protein sources like beans and peas as well as products (such as bread and beer) from grains like rye and wheat.¹²⁰ The opposite of these last two sentences is equally true: the rarity and thereby the expense of a certain food item would make it a delicacy to be only enjoyed by the rich elites or only during certain holidays. Thus, while we know that Bona and those at court could often enjoy roasted game meat, 16th century Polish peasants would consume such foods very sporadically. While we know that some basic foodstuffs of Meso-American or Asian origin (such as maize or

¹²⁰ Marcelli Kosman. *Królowa Bona*, pp.213-214; and F.W. Carter. *Trade and urban development in Poland: An economic geography of Cracow from its origins to 1795*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.153.

rice¹²¹) became known in Europe relatively long ago, it remains sensible to state that regular mass consumption of products from a distant territory and a foreign culture is a very recent phenomenon brought about by cheap modern transportation technology and the visible rise of multi-cultural societies especially in urban settings.

That being said, the issue of how Bona had influenced Polish cuisine is a legendary topic in Polish popular culture. The tour-guides at Wawel, when leading groups through the royal apartments, will point out a large chest and indicate that it was used by Bona to transport her court's food provisions – especially her vegetables. Virtually all the books consulted repeat the popular supposition that credits Bona with the introduction of several new food items to Poland.¹²² Chief among these we find oranges and citrus fruit¹²³ as well as cauliflower, cabbage, celery, leeks¹²⁴ (in Polish, this vegetable medley is popularly called “*włoszczyzna*” which translates as “Italianate”).

There are, however, several questions and problems that arise from such assertions. Even if we disregard Pietro Aretino's letter from 1539 in which he praises Bona for teaching Poles civilized manners as well as to eat vegetables (since we know that Aretino was seeking a reward for such compliments)¹²⁵, are we forced to assume that earlier Italian residents of Kraków, such as all the merchants discussed in the previous chapter, would have never sought to diversify their diets with the above-mentioned vegetables? By roughly the same time, as Bogucka makes clear, there were rising numbers of Poles matriculating at

¹²¹ Maria Bogucka, in the first chapter of her biographical monograph on Bona (p.12) states that until the 15th century, rice was considered a luxury food item in European society – mostly used for desserts.

¹²² Marcei Kosman's text (pp.215-216) dismisses this entire idea: he states Bona simply could not have had any major role in altering or enriching the deeply-entrenched culinary culture of 16th century Poland.

¹²³ Danuta Wójcik-Góralaska. *Niedoceniana Królowa*, p.74.

¹²⁴ Sławomir Radoń (author of chapter, pages 9-27) in *Bona Sforza: Królowa Polski, Księżna Bari (Wystawa na Zamku Królewskim na Wawelu. 14/09 to 19/11 2000)*, p.26.

¹²⁵ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.89. (Tygielski, p.192, further confirms that this was just a formulaic complement of little substantial value).

universities in Italy.¹²⁶ Thus, not only is it logical to assume that Callimachus would have been familiar with all these vegetables prior to his arrival in Poland, but also, that both he as well as these Polish students would have had ample opportunity to bring the necessary seeds back to Kraków (since we know that Callimachus was sent on diplomatic journeys back to Italy).

The other matter to consider is this: even if we do not condemn the idea as totally implausible and we choose to assign Bona some credit for enriching Polish culinary culture, we must remain selective both in terms of the food items in question as well as who consumed them. Several texts fail to be so selective and precise; and thus one might be able to conclude this is the reason why Kosman dismisses the entire idea despite the fact that the broad supposition remains a part of popular culture. Bona could have only introduced to Poland vegetables that could be cultivated in the colder climate. The seeds for celery, cabbage and leeks could easily take root in Polish soil, but certainly not citrus fruit. This point must be taken one step further. Even if Bona enjoyed oranges in Italy, one can be certain they would be essentially un-obtainable in 16th century Poland even by import. The closest source for citrus fruit would be the Balkans. Given that large distance, the lack of modern roads and transport equipment as well as the inability to store goods under refrigeration en route would make it rather unlikely that any oranges could survive a donkey-cart journey of several weeks and arrive fresh in Poland. This latter timeframe (about 3 weeks) for transporting merchandise over a similar distance is confirmed by F.W. Carter's text on trade and commerce in Renaissance and Early Modern Kraków; and this text does not appear to mention citrus fruit being brought into Poland.¹²⁷ Yet, Bogucka herself mentions that the royal family sought to import oranges to raise their spirits at a time

¹²⁶ Op. Cit., (Bogucka), p.76.

¹²⁷ F.W. Carter. *Trade and urban development in Poland: An economic geography of Cracow from its origins to 1795.*, p.107.

of emotional difficulty.¹²⁸ Thus, the only plausible explanation of this matter is that this would involve candied or pickled fruit – and only Letkiewicz’s modern text clarifies and confirms this fact.¹²⁹ One might suppose further that such fruits would have been glazed in honey, which is mentioned by Bogucka as a delicacy at court.¹³⁰ Honey is known for its preservative qualities. However, it stands to reason that both the cost of candied citrus fruit and honey would be very high – so much so that they would be considered an occasional treat for royalty (and the magnate elites at court). One might even state that while such costly delicacies remained un-obtainable by the vast remainder of society, the royal family might have procured them from traders like the Soderini family, who were mentioned in the chapter above as traders in Poland.

The reason that credit is assigned to Bona for these matters would rest most probably in the fact that she is the most easily-identifiable Italian “immigrant” to Poland. Moreover, one can state that even if Bona regularly ate these vegetables after growing them in a garden on the grounds of the Wawel (which we know she had created),¹³¹ this would not mean that they would be widely-eaten by Poles precisely because of Bona’s agency in introducing them to the country. As already noted above, Bona and Zygmunt, had separate courts with separate palace rooms and servants.¹³² From this, it is logical to suppose that Bona’s own court chef prepared meals, possibly using these vegetables, to be served mostly to Bona and her ladies-in-waiting as well as those at her court – not necessarily Zygmunt who had his own kitchen and staff. Therefore, Bona might have brought some vegetables to Poland and used them strictly at her court, but she cannot be credited as a direct agent of significant

¹²⁸ Maria Bogucka. *Anna Jagiellonka*. (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1994), p.22.

¹²⁹ Letkiewicz, Ewa. *Klejnoty w Polsce: Czasy Ostatnich Jagiellonów i Wazów.*, p.56.

¹³⁰ Maria Bogucka. *Anna Jagiellonka.*, p.11.

¹³¹ Maria Bogucka. *Women in Early Modern Polish Society, Against the European Background*. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2004), p.153. (Krzysztof Zabolicki’s text, p.39, further confirms this: vegetables for the queen’s table were grown from Italian seeds right on castle grounds).

¹³² Marcelli Kosman. *Królowa Bona*, p.208.

changes in broader Polish culinary culture. In conclusion, it is most likely that the vegetables in question had arrived in Poland before Bona, but their wider popular acceptance took place in the 17th century or later and was not connected with the queen.

This thesis will only give passing analysis to the issue of the royal couple and early 16th century hygiene, partially because this matter can be treated only as a curiosity. It is well known, that in Europe during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, personal cleanliness and public health standards were quite low: the average European, regardless of social standing, bathed less frequently than his counterpart in the Islamic world (which remains famous for its bath-houses). Most Europeans at this time did not connect the idea of poor hygiene with a decline in health – in fact, they believed the opposite: that the dirt clogging the pores of the skin would prevent disease from entering the body. Thus, washing away that dirt was seen as endangering one's health.¹³³ Zygmunt, and most likely Bona, were different in this respect. We know that Zygmunt started taking regular baths while living in Hungary, where he took advantage of its thermal springs. We even know that he would swim in the Danube during the summer; and that he continued these bathing habits after returning to Poland.¹³⁴

Interestingly, the same source informs us that Bona and her ladies-in-waiting would use henna for cosmetic purposes.¹³⁵ Logically, use of this material eventually would entail washing it off from one's skin and hair. There are also records to indicate that among many expensive possessions that Bona brought with her from Italy to Poland, there were 20 towels and several large silver-plated jugs and wash-basins.¹³⁶ Also, while one can remain

¹³³ Joseph P. Byrne. *Daily life during the Black Death*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), pp.50-51.

¹³⁴ Danuta Wójcik-Górska. *Niedoceniana Królowa*, p.35. (The fact that Zygmunt Stary frequented the thermal baths in Buda is also confirmed by Joanna Olkiewicz's book, *Polscy Medyceusze*. Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1985. p.108).

¹³⁵ Op. Cit., (Wójcik-Górska), p.63.

¹³⁶ Letkiewicz, Ewa. *Klejnoty w Polsce: Czasy Ostatnich Jagiellonów i Wazów.*, pp.54-55.

doubtful as to the regular use of soap or such cleansing products, we do know that certain elites and middle-classes of the Renaissance had installed some basic washroom-like infrastructure in their residences.¹³⁷ Letkiewicz also informs us that Zygmunt had ordered his goldsmith to create for him some sort of an implement to clean teeth, although details on this matter are rather scant.¹³⁸ From all of this, it can be inferred that Bona and Zygmunt might have been aware of some hygiene principles – but one can be quite certain that even these basic ideas did not affect the vast portion of the society.

3 – 2: The culture, behaviour and dress at court

Contrary to the praise that popular opinion accords Bona for introducing new foodstuffs to this part of Europe, Poles chide Bona as the person who introduced moral degeneracy and Italian-style intrigue to the Kraków court.¹³⁹ Again, while the aim of this present thesis is not to rehabilitate Bona (a task that would be too big for even a seasoned historian), it must be stated that this latter condemnation is equally without foundation. In fact, Bona had greatly modernized the daily routines of court behaviour. Through this, she laid the foundation for the reception of intellectual entertainment and Renaissance culture.

Before the reign of Zygmunt, the broad cultural outlook of the Polish court was oriented east – in a way reflecting the origins of the Jagiellonian dynasty. This was not just the case with Zygmunt Stary's grandfather, King Władysław Jagiełło (who died in 1434), but also Zygmunt's father Kazimierz Jagiellończyk (ruled 1447-92).¹⁴⁰ We know that this latter monarch's education was very basic: it is not likely that he himself knew how to

¹³⁷ De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation.*, pp.115-116.

¹³⁸ Letkiewicz, Ewa. *Klejnoty w Polsce: Czasy Ostatnich Jagiellonów i Wazów.*, p.38.

¹³⁹ Marcei Kosman. *Królowa Bona*, p.6.

¹⁴⁰ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.58.

write.¹⁴¹ Thus, his interest and direct patronage of intellectual high culture was limited. However, we know that Kazimierz loved to wear exquisite robes with golden threads – and that both he and his wife, Elizabeth, had imported fine dresses and jewels with the direct assistance of Lorenzo the Magnificent in Florence.¹⁴²

However, as soon as Zygmunt was crowned in Kraków, he became dissatisfied with both the cultural situation and the fact that the royal treasury was empty. He immediately sought a substantial loan and cash infusion from Jan Boner, whose family had been powerful local bankers.¹⁴³ And while this situation demonstrates the shameful inefficiency of royal estates in terms of potential income and administration circa 1507, the important thing to note here is that Zygmunt, who had surely spent many years at Wawel as a child and youth, now found the design and the state of the royal residence as simply unacceptable. Thus, the money lent by Boner was to be spent on building a new Wawel residence.¹⁴⁴ The project took nearly a decade, 1508-1517, but the north-wing of what is now the castle was executed in a modern Renaissance style.¹⁴⁵

Upon arrival in Kraków, Bona must have surely taken note of this attempt at cultural modernization; and we know that she was pleasantly surprised by the high intellectual level of the humanists who were regularly present at court.¹⁴⁶ For the queen, as well as her Italian ladies-in-waiting, these facts surely lessened the feelings of isolation in quite foreign socio-

¹⁴¹ Daniel Stone. *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795.*, p.23.

¹⁴² Letkiewicz, Ewa. *Klejnoty w Polsce: Czasy Ostatnich Jagiellonów i Wazów.*, p.36.

¹⁴³ Kenneth F. Lewalski. "Sigismund I of Poland: Renaissance King and Patron", pp.49-72 in *Studies of the Renaissance*, Vol.14 (1967). (Accessed on JSTOR 25/010/2010. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2857160>), p.59.

¹⁴⁴ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, p.69.

¹⁴⁵ Op. Cit., pp. 65 and 67. (It is interesting to note here that although essentially all other scholars say that Francesco della Lora – known in Polish as Franciszek Florentczyk, the Florentine architect who had come to Poland from Hungary on the request of Zygmunt – was essentially in charge of this entire project until his death in October 1516, Morka and the sources he cites imply that he was only one of several people in charge of the project: he was responsible for the stonework. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the Italian name of this architect, Francesco della Lora, is most easily found in Gerardo Cioffari's *Bona Sforza: Donna Del Rinascimento Tra Italia e Polonia*. Bari: Centro Studi Nicolaiani; Levante Editori, 2000. p.105.)

¹⁴⁶ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.77.

linguistic surroundings. Moreover, it is possible to state that Bona took such developments as an important signal: a new Renaissance palace ought to be inhabited by a court with modern Italian social and cultural customs.

While we must be cautious not to assume that socially-entrenched gender differences of that era and their symbolic importance were somehow disregarded or forgotten, Bogucka's two books provide several points of timely analysis. Bona clearly understood her unique status – that there was no woman in the entire realm equal to her in rank and power. Therefore, the queen did not collaborate with any other women in political matters.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, Bogucka clearly states that most local (Polish or Lithuanian) women at court, even those of rank, were usually nearly silent; the men at court would seek pleasure and entertainment through large quantities of food and alcohol as well as through various sexual liaisons – although it would seem that these latter were treated as open secrets. However, on the same page, we are informed that as a result of Bona and her ladies-in-waiting, there were subtle, but quite visible, changes in the daily routines and behaviour at court: most visible was the desire of these Italian women to participate in meaningful conversations with men, very frequently on intellectual, literary or even philosophical matters.¹⁴⁸ While Bogucka concludes that point of analysis with the mention that traditionalists were aghast by the behaviour of these women, one can be quite certain that they, as a group, were to an extent similar to Bona in their upbringing. These would have been the daughters of well-to-do mercantile and noble Italian families. These young women would have been taught how to read and write as well as artistic skills such as music. With the proliferation of printed materials, including texts such as love stories and the previously-

¹⁴⁷ Maria Bogucka. *Women in Early Modern Polish Society...*, p.164.

¹⁴⁸ Maria Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, p.85. (Besides Bogucka, Kosman's text, pp.76-78, indicates that many of these regulars at court would eat drink and make merry to the point that it would exceed acceptable norms of decency. However, since Zygmunt Stary considered them good friends and solid civil servants, he would frequently pardon their excesses – or maybe even turn a blind-eye to them.)

mentioned *Question de Amor*, the above-cited conclusion would appear to be quite valid. Besides, it stands to reason that Bona herself would have been an active discussion participant and initiator – and so these women would simply follow her example.

Despite their education, many of the men at court were not accustomed to such social demands and were taken aback by the change in the atmosphere. Wrede attributes this Polish-Italian misunderstandings at court, especially soon after Bona's arrival, to the very different manners and cultural backgrounds.¹⁴⁹ These two latter statements can be better understood if we remember the fact that the noble elites of Poland in large part demonstrated their open and clear opposition to any major modernizing trends, especially in socio-cultural terms.¹⁵⁰ Such conservative stubbornness would lead to the eventual creation of the Sarmatian identity amongst the men of Poland's elite. Stanisław Kot provides another sensible observation: in a good number of cases, the education and socio-cultural refinement gained in Padua or Paris by a young Polish nobleman would vanish upon his return to his Polish estates and his rural residence.¹⁵¹ It is plausible that even if the educated nobleman would have brought some books to his manor, there would be few, if any, people with whom he could converse upon the intellectual topics contained in them – and so, most likely, the books would be set aside quite soon. Eventually, one would suppose that even meetings of several such nobles at the royal court could rekindle the intellectual spark only to a limited extent.

Now, it stands to logic that the arrival of intelligent Italian ladies as well as several highly-educated humanists could and did bring out the best in these Polish nobles at court, but it is also plausible that the above-cited misunderstandings arose precisely out of the fact

¹⁴⁹ Marek Wrede. *Królowa Bona: Między Włochami a Polską*. p.9.

¹⁵⁰ Tygielski, Wojciech. *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII Wieku: Utracona Szansa na Modernizację*, p.34. (In fact, here, he merely indicates that an entire section of his book is dedicated to the discussion of this rejection.)

¹⁵¹ Stanisław Kot. *Polska Złotego Wieku A Europa: Studia i Szkice*. (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1987), p.162.

these noblemen had difficulty accepting women as conversation partners even in that milieu. There could be several reasons for this, but it is most plausible that after a stint at his manor estate where he would engage in hard drinking and perhaps some morally-questionable activity, the average nobleman would become rather ‘rusty’ at polite conversation. All that being said, however, we should not posit such a dark and broad interpretation on this issue.¹⁵² While we are aware of the fact that some of these humanist nobles transgressed from proper behaviour, we equally know that many of them had welcomed Bona to Poland and were able to serve the court and as well as sharpen their intellects thanks to conversations with Bona’s female entourage as well as the accompanying humanists such as Ludovico Alifio and Prosper Colonna. After all, we have stated already that Bona was pleased by the fact that she could easily converse with both the Polish noblemen and the king in Latin and Italian.

The last two inter-connected topics discussed in this sub-section had also effectuated significant changes in the day-to-day cultural atmosphere at the Jagiellonian court: the first of these concerns the fashions and the dresses that Bona and her female entourage would wear. The second topic is a discussion of how Bona herself behaved with respect to some of the changes that she had caused within her new environment.

Although above, we stated that a few previous queens would seek to obtain expensive robes and jewels, Bona was the first queen to introduce fashionable female dresses to the court and turn them into a cultural factor. This was surely due to two factors:

¹⁵² The decline of the Polish nobility into their corrupt and rigid Sarmatian mentality became much more pronounced towards the end of the 16th century as it was clear that the noble class and their Sejm were now more powerful than the central monarchy and as it also became evident that the nobles in charge of the grain trade simply amassed great wealth. To highlight this fact, we know that the “adapted translation” of Castiglione’s *Il Cortegiano* by Łukasz Górnicki (published already after Bona’s departure from Poland) was, however, not well-received by the literate Polish nobles. (p.81 in *An Outline History of Polish Culture*. Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1983. Edited by Bolesław Klimaszewski). While some of these nobles surely understood the need to be well-educated and graceful gentlemen, others probably saw such cultural demands as too taxing and too artificial.

she was aware of the fact that she was genuinely a beautiful woman and thus had to dress appropriately; and what's more, she came from Italy – which already then stood at the forefront of innovation in attire.¹⁵³ Several facts further clarify this point: the first is of course, that the Italian city-states, especially Florence, were the centers of fine cloth production – and so, it stands to logic that such cities would not just export rolls of cloth, but that they also would produce finished garments of high aesthetic value. Moreover, we know that in Italy – especially in Venice and Lucca – one could obtain highly-prized silk and lace cloth.¹⁵⁴ Zygmunt Stary, aware of these facts, had instructed his envoys to procure such gifts for Bona already as they went to southern Italy to escort their future queen back to Poland.¹⁵⁵

Thus, we know that Bona had a long-term interest in fashionable wardrobe and a style that was considered quite bold by the standards of early 16th century Poland.¹⁵⁶ Jensen informs us that in Italy, plunging neck-lines on dresses “exposing the bosom” to quite an extent became relatively normal by this era.¹⁵⁷ In Kraków, however, we can be certain that Bona and her female entourage were setting a precedent – and one that quickly became the source of negative, yet un-substantiated, gossip. While again, we must not stress this factor beyond reasonable limits, one might conclude that just as women at court previously remained relatively quiet and passive, so too, their attire did not draw any special attention.

Bona, however, brought with her 21 richly ornate dress gowns made from some of the finest-quality fabrics and velvets embroidered and decorated with gold threads and many pearls and other precious stones. Letkiewicz informs us that even one of these dresses had

¹⁵³ De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation.*, p.109.

¹⁵⁴ Op. Cit., p.95.

¹⁵⁵ Marcei Kosman. *Królowa Bona*, p.34.

¹⁵⁶ Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, p.85.

¹⁵⁷ De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation.*, p.110.

been appraised at several thousand ducats in value.¹⁵⁸ The cut and style of these dresses was surely also in line with the above-mentioned Italian custom, thus the surprise (maybe even the shock) of the Kraków court. Also, one might surmise that although Bona's ladies-in-waiting would have slightly less-ornate gowns and dresses, their sense of style would have also been at a high level. Given all this, one can begin to better appreciate the nature of the changes brought about by Bona's arrival: besides the queen, there came more than a dozen exquisitely-dressed, educated and skilled young women who could not (and would not) become silent background objects. The men at court, Zygmunt included, now would have to reduce rather uncouth behaviours such as excessive gluttony so as not to offend the queen and her entourage. Thus, while above we have discussed already the foodstuffs eaten at court, it is important to state that indeed, as a result of Bona, dinner meals were shortened.¹⁵⁹ Also, one might conjecture wishfully that some type of table etiquette also began to take root as a result of these changes. This, however, appears unlikely: Jensen informs us that while the fork was invented in Renaissance Italy, both the utensil and the table manners associated with its use spread rather slowly into the rest of Europe.¹⁶⁰

However, if we return to the issue of dress and clothing, then the Letkiewicz citation given above provides a more ample inventory of what Bona had brought to Poland besides the formal dress gowns: the list includes more than a hundred undershirts, a dozen bathrobes and a huge quantity of bed linens. However, in this era, the quantity of such basic household items was very important and was in itself a status symbol.

Furthermore, even though depictions of the queen ten to fifteen years after her arrival in Poland show us a woman who had started to dress in a much more conservative manner – mostly due to significant weight gain and the “aging” effect on the body, caused

¹⁵⁸ Letkiewicz, Ewa. *Klejnoty w Polsce: Czasy Ostatnich Jagiellonów i Wazów.*, p.54.

¹⁵⁹ Marcei Kosman. *Królowa Bona*, p.213.

¹⁶⁰ De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation.*, p.116.

by several pregnancies as well as the stress of political life – we know that Bona maintained a keen interest in fashionable wardrobe. This can be best demonstrated by Bona’s reaction in 1545 to the arrival in Poland of Zygmunt August’s first wife: Elizabeth of Hapsburg. The daughter of Bona’s long-time adversary Ferdinand (thus the grand-daughter of Ulászló II of Hungary and also the great-niece of Zygmunt Stary) was a shy and rather un-attractive 17-year old who suffered from acute epilepsy.¹⁶¹ While it is clear from reading Duczmal’s informative biographical entry on Elizabeth that she was a pawn in the great game of European dynastic matchmaking; and that she died in a state of deep loneliness only two years later, the important thing to note here is the fact that she had arrived in Kraków wearing exquisite gowns, which were surely prepared for her by the best seamsters of Vienna. In response, Bona, who had three of her teenage daughters reared at court, now ordered that similar sets of elegant gown dresses be made for each of them. The highest quality cloth and four types of pearls were to be used by the best seamster/tailor of Kraków, Sebold Linck. Although one can assume that Bona would have dressed her children in a fashionable manner, the elder queen had indicated that that no expenses are to be spared on this project.¹⁶² This is a clear indication that Bona, even now as queen-mother in her fifties, never forgot the symbolic importance of high fashion.

There are other items worthy of mention with respect to this topic: the first that Pocięcha’s text gives us the names of the tailors and seamsters that supposedly were most frequently employed by Bona. Yet, on this list, it is interesting that the above-mentioned Sebold Linck does not appear, but rather three Italians Maestro Stefano, Maestro Alessandro and finally Pietro Patriarch. The last of these men served Bona and her court for over 30

¹⁶¹ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny*, p.219.

¹⁶² Maria Bogucka. *Anna Jagiellonka*, pp.9-10.

years, between 1524-1556.¹⁶³ Besides the fact that no details of their actual work contracts are provided here (for example did they also work for other members of the royal family?), it is interesting to see that no Poles are mentioned as serving in this capacity. Even if it is possible that Linck was a long-term resident of Poland, it is quite certain that he was of German stock. Interestingly, it would seem that even Zygmunt was aware of how large Bona's wardrobe was, and one of his statements further validates the last sentence of the previous paragraph. In 1538, he said that the amount of dresses in Bona's wardrobe would not just suffice for "several queens", but also, that they represented royal wealth and financial collateral.¹⁶⁴

Indeed, this latter statement was made by Zygmunt in response to criticisms of Bona from various social segments. However, one must point out that while at times, the queen had been the subject of criticism for such expenses, we can assume that many high-ranking women who had the chance to visit the court would subsequently seek to update their own wardrobes following the examples that they had seen at the Wawel. This can be best understood if we remember that many women from Bona's original Italian entourage of 1518 would seek now to marry Polish noblemen.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, new ladies-in-waiting had to be brought to Bona's court and they would require appropriately-elegant gowns for this service. Thus, it seems very likely that many young adult daughters of Polish nobles would now purchase and wear such latest fashions, possibly not just when at the royal court, but when hosting gatherings at their residences. It is highly unlikely that any previous queen had such an effect upon a segment of Polish society. In fact, one might state that an acute

¹⁶³ Władysław Pocięcha. *Królowa Bona (1494-1557): Czasy i ludzie Odrodzenia*. Vol. II (Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 1949), vol. 2, p.82.

¹⁶⁴ Ewa Letkiewicz. *Klejnoty w Polsce: Czasy Ostatnich Jagiellonów i Wazów.*, p.59.

¹⁶⁵ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.84.

sense of high fashion spread much faster among Polish noblewomen than any appetite for celery!

Bona, it seems, was aware to an extent of the changes in the court milieu that she had brought about. She knew that as a foreigner, many of her moves and actions (as well as those of her ladies-in-waiting) were being observed – and that any mis-steps or perceived faux pas could give rise to scandal.¹⁶⁶ In fact, while Bona wrongly has been blamed, even by her contemporaries, with introducing a new level of intrigue to the Polish court, it actually stands to reason that coming from the turbulent lands of Italy, she knew the danger that such gossip could generate and so, she actively sought to prevent it. Thus, we have several interesting points of analysis – the most important of these is the fact that Bona actually kept her ladies-in-waiting well-disciplined.¹⁶⁷ The queen might have had good reasons for such a stand: first, although she was monarch and therefore a person of authority, she knew that actual extent of her power would be tested and possibly questioned if she needed to assist any of these women out of a compromising social situation; and second, if Bona sought to set an example of proper behaviour and thereby influence the men at court, she obviously would have needed to not have anyone associated with her accused of poor conduct.

Bogucka then provides us the names of some of these Italian women from her entourage and their new Polish husbands. In fact, given that some of these marriages were celebrated nearly 20 years after Bona's arrival in Poland (as for example that of Laura Effrem and Stanisław Lubomirski in 1537)¹⁶⁸, one would think that Bona's court continued to attract and employ young Italian women. It is quite possible that some of these women might have been members of some wealthy Italian mercantile families that had branches of

¹⁶⁶ Marcelli Kosman. *Królowa Bona*, p.6; and Maria Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, p.84.

¹⁶⁷ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.83.

¹⁶⁸ Op. Cit., p.84.

their enterprise in Poland. One would think that these Italian ladies would serve the queen alongside some local noble ladies who would be brought to court.

The discipline stated above, however, appears to have had a positive effect – and one that was noticed even Bona’s contemporaries. Evidently, negative rumours about Bona’s activities must have been sufficiently wide-spread that they necessitated Stanisław Górski, (one of Bona’s secretaries from 1535-48), to write a 1538 letter to the poet Klemens Janicki. In this letter, Górski makes it clear that there is absolutely no basis to any accusations – and that the queen behaves not just properly, but also, she is kind and caring towards her ladies-in-waiting, to the point that they are brought back to the Wawel near the end of their pregnancies in order to have the queen’s personal doctors assist in childbirth.¹⁶⁹ While one can be certain that the recipient of this letter would divulge its contents amongst his associates, the important thing to note here is that the defense of the queen came from a man who was himself a personal and political adversary of Bona¹⁷⁰, yet held a position at her court for over a decade.

Thus, in conclusion to this sub-section, it stands to reason that if a man like Górski, who had a profound dislike of Bona wrote a personal letter in her defense, then the overall effect that she had on the atmosphere and the culture of the court must have been profound and very visible. Bona and her Italian compatriots did not introduce intrigue and corruption to Poland – quite the opposite, they brought in the art of polite Renaissance intellectual conversation and an active interest in wardrobe fashions.

¹⁶⁹ Op. Cit., p.84.

¹⁷⁰ Op. Cit., p.79; and Joanna Olkiewicz. *Polscy Medyceusze*. p.168. (Górski had been very close to vice-chancellor Piotr Tomicki, a clear enemy of Bona. Given the fact that he was himself a cleric and had been connected professionally with some of the highest persons in the land, one can suppose that he had sufficient wealth and personal safety that he would not have needed to write a letter shedding positive light on the queen in order to gain either protection, favour or a financial recompense. Thus, one can conclude that his opinion in this letter was genuine.)

3 – 3: Tapestries, jewels and painting – Bona’s and Zygmunt’s interest in the high arts.

It is common knowledge that after the final partition of the Rzeczpospolita, the Austrian Hapsburgs incorporated Kraków into their empire. The Wawel, which had ceased to be the seat of the monarch under the reign of Bona’s grandson, king Zygmunt III of the Swedish Vasa dynasty, was now destined to be used as a military barrack.¹⁷¹ Both this episode, as well as the subsequent history of Poland, has taken a toll on the Wawel and its interior. As a result, the tour-guides mention that very few objects of furniture in these apartments are originals – in most cases, they are either modern copies or period-furniture replicating the overall aesthetic atmosphere. Thus, it can be stated that perhaps the most valuable – and the most authentic – items on display are the huge and artistically awe-inspiring tapestries attributed to Bona’s son. In Polish, these tapestries are called “*arrasy Zygmunta Augusta*”, implying their connection to the Franco-Flemish town of Arras and the king who ordered them. Indeed, the history of these tapestries is as impressive as their artistic value: they were dispersed all over the Russian Empire during the 19th century some, of course, being lost in the process. Evacuated all the way to Canada during World War II, the extant tapestries arrived back in Poland only in 1961.

However, Zygmunt August’s life-long interest for such works of art was the direct result of his mother; and Bona’s ownership of tapestries pre-dates even her arrival in Poland. Beyond being decorative and potentially serving as artworks sending a specific message to the observer, tapestries, serve a practical purpose: they are essentially insulation that can keep a room at a more pleasant temperature. There is also indication that some less-ornate versions of tapestries were becoming common items in the homes of the

¹⁷¹ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, pp.77-78.

European urban classes.¹⁷² Thus, it is quite possible that the previous monarchs of Poland, as well as members of the clergy and high nobility, might have owned such items. However, it does not appear that any of them were sufficiently important or artistically valued to merit a significant historical record.

Yet, it is interesting to read from Hennel-Bernasikowa that such items were widespread in late Quattrocento Italy and could easily be found in all the major palaces. This would itself attest to a vibrant commercial and luxury goods trade between Italy and Flanders in that era, since this same author informs us that Italian tapestry production did not begin until well into the 16th century.¹⁷³ At first, this statement would seem rather strange given the expertise that cities like Florence had with cloth industry. Upon reflection, however, it seems quite accurate: it is one thing to turn coarse wool into a dyed roll of fabric to be used by a tailor – it is another to have a specialist atelier with many workers able to weave delicate silk and gold-laced threads into elaborate designs.

In fact, the source cited above is where we can find the most detailed information about Bona's own tapestries. Here, we read that Bona and her mother already owned several such items several years before 1518. Another text in the same volume of essays provides us with photos of the interiors at Bari castle¹⁷⁴ – a building that Bona knew intimately before coming to Poland and where she took up residence again in 1556. The important thing to note from these photos is that they show a very stark castle: it is not a

¹⁷² De Lamar Jensen. *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation.*, p.116. (It should be recorded here that in a footnote on page 351 citing work by a scholar identified as “A. Bochnak”, Stanisław Mossakowski, in his essay entitled “Treść dekoracji renesanowego pałacu na Wawelu”, pp.349-380 in *Renensans: Sztuka i Ideologia*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976, makes mention that it is possible – though rather un-certain – that Zygmunt himself already owned a few tapestries while living in Hungary. Even if this was the case, it is clear that any such works owned by Zygmunt before he became king in 1507 were relatively insignificant. Indeed, given the ancillary and ambiguous nature of this matter, we can assume that Zygmunt's true interest in tapestries only began after he saw first-rate Flemish examples brought to Poland by Bona in 1518.)

¹⁷³ Maria Hennel-Bernasikowa. “Arrasy Królowej Bony.” pp.271-277 in *Bona Sforza: Regina di Polonia E Duchessa di Bari: Catalogo della Mostra a cura di Maria Stella Calò Mariani.*, p.274.

¹⁷⁴ Giuseppe Dibenedetto. “Powody Organizacji Wystawy.” Introduction in *Bona Sforza: Regina di Polonia E Duchessa di Bari: Catalogo della Mostra a cura di Maria Stella Calò Mariani.*, p.XLVIII

luxurious palace like the Alhambra, but rather a true defensive fortress with thick and plain walls of stone. The interior walls are equally cold and bare. Therefore, one can see how decorative tapestries would have made such an interior much more welcoming for Isabella and her daughter.

We are told that beyond the silverware, the ample amounts of clothing and linens, Bona brought with her to Poland a total of eight Flemish tapestries from Bari.¹⁷⁵ On the same page, it has been noted that although they did not contain any gold yarn, they were made with the finest quality silk threads. The other very important item to note is given on the following page: all efforts to locate and identify these eight original tapestries of Bona have failed therefore we cannot subject them to a modern enquiry.¹⁷⁶ We can be quite certain that some of these works were lost in a fire at the Wawel on October 18, 1536.¹⁷⁷ Hennel-Bernasikowa states that four of these tapestries went back to Bari with Bona, but they had vanished from records only a year after Bona's death.

Given that we have neither precise records about these works, nor the actual tapestries, this author provides an interesting, and partially heuristic, analysis that includes some of the above-stated facts. She states that these original tapestries most likely would have been created sometime between 1500 and 1515 in Tournai or Brussels; and we know that they would have depicted scenes of Christian mercy and social benevolence, such as the giving of alms. Such representations were popularly known in Italian as *Opere di Misericordia*.¹⁷⁸ There are two other sets of such depictions extant; and this author argues

¹⁷⁵ Maria Hennel-Bernasikowa. "Arrasy Królowej Bony.", p.271. (Jerzy Miziołek, in his article *La Cultura Artistica Della Corte Reale Di Cracovia Nei Tempi Di Bona Sforza*, Pessano: Mimep-Docete, 2004. on p.56, mentions that there were 14 tapestries brought by Bona to Poland. In the end, whether there were 8 or 14 of them does not matter as the main two points of analysis remain equally valid: Bona was the initiator of true artistic tapestries at the Polish royal court; and Miziołek equally confirms that all of these works have vanished.)

¹⁷⁶ Op. Cit. (Hennel-Bernasikowa), p.272.

¹⁷⁷ Małgorzata Duczmal. *Jagiellonowie: Leksykon Biograficzny.*, p.509.

¹⁷⁸ Maria Hennel-Bernasikowa. "Arrasy Królowej Bony." p.271.

they are most likely thematically similar to the actual tapestries brought to Poland by Bona. One of these depictions is actually a set of small paintings now located in Amsterdam and dated to 1504. Perhaps the implication here is that such paintings were sent to the tapestry atelier so that the image could be accurately reproduced? The other portrayal of this theme is an actual set of tapestries kept at the Belgian National Library in Brussels and dated to an earlier period: 1468-77.¹⁷⁹ In both these cases, the depicted late Gothic urban scenery, the dress and portrayal of the figures indicates a late medieval design. If indeed Bona's tapestries were executed in such a style, then to an extent, they depicted a city that would have resembled Kraków in terms of urban design. We can speculate that this fact was probably not lost on the new queen and her entourage, since we know that more recent Renaissance architectural styles were only arriving in Poland at roughly the same time as Bona.

The key point of analysis, however, is the apparent notion that Bona was the first Polish monarch to collect systematically and display tapestries of a truly high artistic value. The importance of this must be presented within a broader context that goes beyond even the impact that such works would have had upon the development of Zygmunt August's artistic interests. Although we have already mentioned above that there was a fire at the Wawel in 1536 and that as a result, some artwork treasured by the royal family had been lost, we know that only a few years earlier, (in 1533), the royal couple sent a request for new tapestries to be made for them in Bruges and Antwerp.¹⁸⁰ Morka's text does not mention the year 1533, but does indicate a large order of tapestries was sent in June 1531.¹⁸¹ While one cannot establish here whether these were distinct orders or whether there is

¹⁷⁹ Op. Cit., p.272.

¹⁸⁰ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.87.

¹⁸¹ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, p.153. (In fact, Miziołek – see footnote 174 – on p.57, provides another date at which Bona had supposedly ordered some more tapestries – in 1526.)

confusion as to the precise date of this request, the important item to note here is the fact that significant orders for Flemish tapestries were already made in the 1530s, implying that both their artistic and rhetorical value was clearly understood by the royal family. Bona, as shall be discussed below, had very profound reasons – both political and practical – to support this activity.

Now, although rare in art history, we know that a skilled artist could realistically complete a large canvas painting in a matter of days, certainly in a matter of weeks. However, we know that weaving intricate patterns with several dozen possible thread crossings in every square centimeter would require a much longer amount of time. In most cases, at least several months (most likely several seasons) and even several years would pass before a finished tapestry would leave the atelier and be delivered to its buyer. Yet, it stands to reason that the Polish monarchs were frequent customers of these ateliers, since Bogucka informs us that by the 1530s, the royal collection comprised an impressive 114 tapestries.¹⁸² The problem is that she does not make it clear whether that number applies to the amount of tapestries before the fire and how many of them were lost. In fact, as Letkiewicz states giving the example of jewels owned by Zygmunt Stary, there are some significant gaps in the records concerning the exact details as to what smaller items were owned and/or disposed of through various means.¹⁸³ It is thus very likely that the same problem applies to the inventory of these tapestries: Bogucka can cite only this one number, but it is logical to assume that she would provide further precisions if there was adequate data.

However, for the purposes of this present analysis, we can remain positive and not condemn all 114 of these tapestries to the flames. We can further buttress this decision with

¹⁸² Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.87.

¹⁸³ Ewa Letkiewicz. *Klejnoty w Polsce: Czasy Ostatnich Jagiellonów i Wazów.*, p.53.

the analytical notion that if the royal family had lost their entire collection, then they might have sent an urgent request to Bruges in late 1536 so as to start the collection anew from zero. Although above we stated that at times records are patchy, we can posit that a requisition of such high importance would have been documented more amply than any of the previous ones, simply because it would entail a substantial dedication of money. As a result, we can be certain that all the major scholars consulted here would be citing such a fact, but this is not the case.

Thus, we can believe that even after the 1536 fire, Bona and her court were still in possession of a significant collection of tapestries and this collection would have expanded as well as contracted somewhat in the following years. Among these, one surely would find some tapestries with the depiction of the Sforza and the Jagiellonian coat of arms (since we know that such depictions had been a part of the above-stated 1531/1533 order). We know that even today, monarchies employ heraldic symbols and strict regulations govern their use. In this respect, the Renaissance was no different: the symbolic purpose and political importance of these tapestries would have been to serve as a reminder to everyone that there is a clear hierarchy present at court and the head of state (in this case, the monarch) commands respect of those in his presence.

Two specific groups of court visitors would have been clear targets for such powerful messages: magnates and nobles, despite their considerable wealth, would have been reminded by these crests that the king still has prerogative powers by virtue of his position. From Bogucka, we know that the executive powers of Zygmunt were still considerable: he alone could decide when to convene the Sejm. Equally, the king had the power to control the legislative agenda and exclude topics which the monarch considered too vital to be subjected to debate. Finally, Zygmunt had considerable powers to finalize

debate and make his own significant imprint on the shape and substance of bills and laws passed.¹⁸⁴ Given that tapestries could be taken down easily, transported and un-rolled in other locations, it is quite reasonable to state that such displays of royal insignia would have served as gentle reminders to various magnates that the king's very person and his powers were still to be accorded due deference.

The other group who could not fail to see these crests would be foreign diplomats visiting the court. The tapestries would serve to highlight the power of the monarch and the grandeur of the state he represented. The implied effect would be that the diplomatic discussions and negotiations ought to be considered as relations between two equal and sovereign states. We can be certain that Bona saw matters in this manner, especially when dealing with the Hapsburgs, since she considered herself an adversary of the Austrian dynasty. Thus, it is certain that beyond actual political demands and negotiations, she would use artwork such as tapestries to further press the legitimacy and importance of her claims. After all, she would not be the first Renaissance monarch to employ such methods: we can list countless other examples of how art served to underline and demonstrate sovereign political power during the Renaissance – especially in Bona's native Italy.

In fact, given the importance of Bona's tapestries and the political message they sought to send, including her legitimate claim to the territory of Milan¹⁸⁵, it is worthwhile here to quickly discuss Hapsburg contacts with the Jagiellonian court during this era.

We know that the house of Austria sent diplomats to the Polish court with regular frequency: Sigismundus von Herberstein (1486-1566) is mentioned on several occasions. He came to Vilnius in early 1517 to induce Zygmunt Stary to marry Bona; and more than 20 years later, in 1538, he came again to Poland negotiate the terms of marriage between

¹⁸⁴ Maria Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, p.72.

¹⁸⁵ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, p.153.

Zygmunt August and Elizabeth of Hapsburg.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, it must be remembered that while other sources frequently mention his name and diplomatic activities, the Hapsburgs also had many paid collaborators spying for them at the Jagiellonian court.¹⁸⁷ In fact, this latter citation is just one of many possible ones: Morka even wonders why Zygmunt Stary did not punish officials, such as Krzysztof Szydłowiecki, whose actions within the royal chancery were quite simply treasonous.¹⁸⁸ He further states that the king must have become aware of these matters, because they were not isolated incidents with negligible consequences, but rather they were on-going practices with far-reaching effects. The comment above is not to be seen as sentimental: although Morka does not suggest this at this very point, we know that there were several other wealthy humanist-educated nobles who would have taken over royal secretarial functions if previous occupants of these posts were to be disgraced and dismissed. Furthermore, at another point in his text, Morka makes clear that Zygmunt Stary's contemporaries in Europe – from Henry VIII of England all the way to Suleiman the Magnificent – would imprison or even execute high ranking state officials for poor performance in their job or treason.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, had the Polish king taken such actions, they would have been perfectly in-line with accepted protocols. While all sources mention that Szydłowiecki was a childhood friend of Zygmunt and so perhaps he was not affected by the displays of royal insignia and the power implied by them, we can assume that any new chancery staff, who owed their rise to the monarch's grace, would not be equally as dismissive of the heraldic tapestries and their message. We know that this was not the case with Bona: as Daniel Stone mentions, Bona used her wealth to create her own

¹⁸⁶ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, pp. 41 and 124; and Harold Segel. *Renaissance Culture in Poland: The Rise of Humanism, 1470-1543.*, p.171. (It should be noted here that there is a 1998 Polish monograph by Jacek Wijaczka that amply discusses the details of diplomatic and international relations between the Jagiellonians and the Hapsburgs in this era: *Stosunki dyplomatyczne Polski z Rzeszą Niemiecką w czasach panowania cesarza Karola V (1519-1556)*).

¹⁸⁷ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.159.

¹⁸⁸ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, p.508.

¹⁸⁹ Op. Cit., p.467.

political faction.¹⁹⁰ These men were surely respectful of the heraldic tapestries and the messages implied by them.

Thus, in conclusion to this section, one ought to mention and reiterate several facts. First, although there were some painters active at the court and in early 16th century Poland – and they will be discussed below – it must be stressed that tapestries appear to have been the most important demonstrative and decorative art form at the Wawel court during this era. Also, given the numerous orders for such works – and their subsequent deliveries to Poland – during the 1530s, it stands to reason that the teenage Zygmunt August grew up having first-hand familiarity with both the aesthetic qualities of these works as well as a profound understanding of their ability to bolster the legitimacy of royal power. Neither these facts, nor the process through which tapestries are procured, were forgotten by him. This would be important, since although one of our sources indicates that Bona and Zygmunt had a profound attachment to their tapestries,¹⁹¹ (and surely understood their broader importance), Morka informs us that essentially all of these tapestries from the collection of the elder monarchs were parts of their daughters' dowries.¹⁹² When the princesses married and left Poland, they took portions of this collection with them (in very much the same manner as was the case with Bona in 1518). Also, we know that Bona's allies at court (such as Bishop Gamrat)¹⁹³ were sometimes given individual tapestries as rewards. Both these facts underline the fact that tapestries were seen as valuable commodities. Thus, for the reasons given above, Zygmunt August did not inherit his parents' actual tapestry collection. However, as the analysis above has demonstrated, Bona's on-going interest in tapestries, as well as the initial collection that she brought from

¹⁹⁰ Daniel Stone. *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795.*, p.39.

¹⁹¹ Danuta Wójcik-Górska. *Niedoceniana Królowa*, p.73.

¹⁹² Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, p.153.

¹⁹³ Maria Hennel-Bernasikowa. "Arrasy Królowej Bony.", p.274.

Bari, had profound effects on subsequent developments in Polish cultural history and royal patronage. Despite the fact that we are un-able to examine and appreciate the tapestries which were the direct fruits of her patronage and in Bona's own collection, we should not neglect to give her due credit in this matter. Equally, we should not forget the fact (as stated by several scholars, most recently Jerzy Miziołek) that it was thanks to her influence that Zygmunt August became one of the greatest customers of the Flemish ateliers in the second half of the 16th century.¹⁹⁴ Without Bona, one can be quite doubtful that the beautiful tapestry designs of Michael Coxcie (himself deeply influenced by the style of Raphael Sanzio)¹⁹⁵ would grace the Wawel interiors.

According to scholars, Bona had one other very significant impact upon the interior designs of the Wawel castle: arriving from Italy, she brought with her 48 sets/rolls of what is known in Polish as “*Kordoban*”, which are large sheaths of specially-prepared leather hides that are then used as decorative wall upholstery.¹⁹⁶ Large sections of Kordoban leather are still prominently visible inside the Wawel apartments. One older scholar, Stanisław Mossakowski, very reasonably, indicates that dynastic crests had been imprinted onto larger sections of this leather décor.¹⁹⁷ Morka (citing Pociecha) adds one further interesting point of analysis: besides crests, he posits that the image of an artichoke was a common imprint on the Kordoban brought by Bona.¹⁹⁸ However, there is no discussion here as to the symbolism of this vegetable, except Morka's statement that it is unlikely that the artichoke was the equivalent of a modern tag on an item of clothing – thus identifying

¹⁹⁴ Jerzy Miziołek. “Kultura artystyczna na dworze królewskim w Krakowie w czasach Bony Sforzy”, pp.43-80 in *Bona Sforza: Una principessa italiana sul trono di Polonia*. (Pessano: Mimep-Docete, 2004. A paper presented in Milan on May 8, 2004 at a conference dedicated to Bona.), p.61.

¹⁹⁵ Daniel Stone. *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795*, p.115. (Coxcie, or alternatively spelled Coxie, was the painter who supplied the designs for some of the vast tapestries from the Zygmunt August collection).

¹⁹⁶ Danuta Wójcik-Górska. *Niedoceniana Królowa*, p.61; and Ewa Letkiewicz. *Klejnoty w Polsce: Czasy Ostatnich Jagiellonów i Wazów.*, p.54.

¹⁹⁷ Stanisław Mossakowski. “Treść dekoracji renesanowego pałacu na Wawelu”, p.355.

¹⁹⁸ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, p.399.

the firm or atelier of origin. Yet, in this dismissal, one is not provided an answer as to what ultimate purpose did this imprint serve? Is there a semiotic message implied here – since we know that only the heart of the artichoke is an edible part of this vegetable? In the end, while the sources consulted are not able to furnish a precise answer, it is more important to note that the name Kordoban, as a type of décor clearly implies its Andalusian origins. One might suppose that Bona had seen examples of it in southern Italy, which as we know had close cultural and political ties to Spain in that era. After all, we know that even Bona had Aragonese royal blood. Therefore, while it seems quite plausible to give Bona credit for introducing this type of décor to the Wawel, further in-depth research on the history of interior décor would be necessary to discuss this matter in greater detail.

Before continuing the analysis and examining Bona's interest in jewelry, we can take stock of the topics discussed above: our examination has demonstrated that in terms of culinary culture, Bona's impact was of no great importance – vegetables of Mediterranean origins were most surely already present in Poland even if they were still relatively unknown to the general population. In fact, this would further demonstrate the importance of the chest extant at the Wawel: if the court was away from the palace, Bona's kitchen staff would have to bring their own supply of these vegetables from the royal garden in order to serve them to the queen. Thereafter, our analysis focused on Bona influence upon court behaviour and concluded that she and her ladies-in-waiting had an impact upon local wardrobe styles and they introduced an atmosphere of polite intellectual conversation and light entertainment. Subsequently, the thesis demonstrated how Bona was an avid collector of tapestries and that through this use of art, she not only sought to legitimize her political views, but also, she had a profound impact upon the artistic tastes of her son – and Zygmunt August's patronage of tapestry shops gave Poland some of its most treasured artwork. All

these factors make it clear that Bona's cultural impact upon Renaissance Poland cannot be dismissed.

Jewelry has always been a sign of wealth and rank, thus it makes sense that a queen would own significant jewels and patronize the makers of such objects. Zygmunt's interest in purchasing expensive jewels pre-dated his accession to the Polish throne, and Letkiewicz informs us that even though we know his revenues as the ruler of Głogów were small, he chose to purchase several rings and large gold chains. From 1502, Zygmunt had his own goldsmith named Marcin Marcinek.¹⁹⁹ The same source then informs us that Zygmunt wasted no time in building up a sizable collection of jewels: a special treasury room at the Wawel was even designated to store this wealth. Moreover, we are told that Zygmunt, on the morning after consummating his marriage with Bona, gave his new wife many items of jewelry encrusted with diamonds, sapphires, rubies and pearls.²⁰⁰ Bona, of course, had jewels of her own – and now, her collection expanded significantly.

The extent of some of the details provided by Letkiewicz is truly impressive. Reading sections of her book, one is left with the impression that Bona and Zygmunt were the first Polish monarchs to truly see jewelry as a fine art and not merely objects of high value and demonstrations of royal wealth. Moreover, we see here that Bona, after coming to Poland had a succession of goldsmiths at her service. The first one, Pietro (perhaps also known as Pietro Neapolitano) served her for the first four years, 1518-22, and thereafter, he was rewarded by Bona with a land-grant near the town of Grodno. His post was filled from 1523 by Giovanni Battista de Fonte.²⁰¹ It is regrettable that there are no further details available here on these men. First, for example, were they exclusively employed by Bona –

¹⁹⁹ Ewa Letkiewicz. *Klejnoty w Polsce: Czasy Ostatnich Jagiellonów i Wazów.*, p.37. (It should be stated here that Głogów was a province/principality of the Bohemian crown. Today, this town is in western Poland, but before he became King of Poland, Zygmunt was put in charge of Głogów by his older brother, Władysław of Bohemia and Hungary. Zygmunt ruled this principality between 1500 and early 1507).

²⁰⁰ Op.Cit., p.41.

²⁰¹ Op.Cit., pp.86-87.

or did they also have clients amongst the nobles at court or even wealthy townsfolk? These are essentially the same questions as were posited above in the case of tailors/seamsters. Furthermore, one might assume that the land granted to the first of these gentlemen was a parcel owned by the queen, although it is possible that perhaps it had been repossessed from someone in default – and was the grant given to Pietro in perpetuity or under some conditions? Moreover, did this land and its resources provide Pietro with sufficient revenue for retirement – or did he continue with his profession and the land was merely supplemental income? Yet, given all these questions, we are reminded that Letkiewicz herself stated (as per citation several pages above) that archival records on several key topics contain very inadequate data. Thus, perhaps simply there is no extant material to provide definitive answers to these questions.

Yet, for those shortcomings on the life of a court servant, we are informed that Bona spent large amounts of money on purchases of jewels from as far away as Ottoman Turkey.²⁰² On this same page, Letkiewicz provides footnote clarifications that very much confirm the analysis of Bona's economic and land-consolidation policies that were outlined above (in chapter 2) of this thesis. Given some of the financial data that we examined above in terms of Bona's annual revenue from prudently-managed estates, it should come as no surprise that Bona had been able to purchase around 250 rings. Many of these had been decorated with precious stones such as diamonds and sapphires. Other rings and jewelry items also had insignia designs made of precious stones, especially those of the Sforza crest.²⁰³

It is true that such small items like jewelry are for personal enjoyment and potentially for decorative purposes on the body (items like chains or ear-rings), but their

²⁰² Op.Cit., p.57.

²⁰³ Op. Cit., p.59.

design and manufacture require (today as they did in the 16th century) skilled artist-like craftsmen. Moreover, impressive or innovative jewelry designs could equally be topics of conversation – no different than any other works of art like tapestry. One can be certain that Bona had understood all these factors – as did Zygmunt – since they were both eager collectors of such items. Of course, jewelry also had (and still has) several other qualities – and these were equally important to the royal couple. The most important quality of such jewels is their ability to indicate either emotional attachment or gratitude. Thus, we are told that Bona, who was a faithful wife, treasured very much the first ring that was given to her by Zygmunt. In fact, this one ring seems to have had such a connection to the family that it was returned to Zygmunt August after Bona's death.²⁰⁴

Bona also owned portraits of herself in miniature amulets and intaglios. Several of these works, requiring the hand of a true master, were created for Bona by a Veronese immigrant to Poland: Gian Giacomo Caraglio. In fact, he was such a versatile artist that he would be retained by Zygmunt August as well.²⁰⁵ It is interesting to note that a few of these intaglios have survived: the most precious one of them, capped off at the bottom by a beautiful pearl is displayed today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Regrettably, Letkiewicz informs us that other items of Bona's jewelry, some of which was in possession of museums or even private high-ranking citizens of Poland was lost during World War II.²⁰⁶

Medallions were another form of jewelry, even if not really intended to be worn. Although we know that Bona had several medallions made, Morka informs us that initially, the court of Zygmunt did not patronize this art form, despite the fact that other monarchs, such as Maximilian I had long understood the usefulness of such objects in helping to

²⁰⁴ Op. Cit., p.60.

²⁰⁵ Wojciech Tygielski. *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII Wieku: Utracona Szansa na Modernizację.*, p.241.

²⁰⁶ Ewa Letkiewicz. *Klejnoty w Polsce: Czasy Ostatnich Jagiellonów i Wazów.*, pp.62 and 64.

familiarize the viewer with the face of the monarch.²⁰⁷ From the general tone of Morka's analysis, there is an implication that medallions were also useful in this respect, since they were easy to transport and yet certainly not so easy to damage. Thus, we are told that in 1532, Bona had ordered sets of medallions from the same artist as the Gamrat tomb more than a decade later: Gian Maria Mosca (called Padovano). While it is not possible to know how many individual pieces were ordered, we are told that a set of them would contain 4 medallions – each one representing Bona, Zygmunt, Zygmunt August and the first royal daughter, Isabella (one might guess that the other daughters would have been too young to merit such depictions, especially since due to their very young age, their facial features would not yet have developed properly).

Only one such full set of bronze medallions is extant today – at a museum in Modena.²⁰⁸ The reverse of the medallion with Bona's image, curiously enough, also has depictions of artichokes (similar to the Kordoban leather décor discussed above). On the same page as the citation above, Morka cites scholars who stated that this was a symbol of fertility. Given the fact that Morka's own analysis here is not clear, it is difficult to establish whether he is in agreement with this notion. While there is value in the interpretation of these scholars, it seems that neither they, nor Morka, indicate the idea already posited above about the possible semiotic message of this vegetable. Indeed, it is the heart of the artichoke that is the one useful (and delicious) part of the vegetable. The leaves are to be cut off after boiling as they cannot be eaten – yet they serve another clear purpose: they envelop and protect completely the heart of the vegetable. The heart of the artichoke is protected just like the heart (or the soul) of the person is protected by the outer body – and while this body eventually will be discarded, the soul of the person is eternal. Is it not possible that

²⁰⁷ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, pp.312-313.

²⁰⁸ Op. Cit., p.397.

especially with medallions depicting royalty, such a message could have been implied and understood? While I have not formally studied semiotic theory and I am not a specialist on Renaissance medallions, would there not be some value in this interpretation?

The final topic of analysis in this chapter concerns paintings and painters serving the royal court. Indeed, already above, we have indicated that Bona was not able to bring any major Italian painter (or even an understudy) to work for the court. Thus, while we know that the Hapsburg and Valois dynasties had much greater success in bringing in Italian artists and even cultivating their domestic talent in this field of art, the Jagiellonian realms had no significant major domestic painters and the court was also served by very minor, second-rate, artists of German origins. The disparity is quite significant: while we know of famous portraits of Charles V by Tiziano Vecellio and François I by Jean Clouet (or even the famous Albrecht Dürer portrait of Maximilian I with the pomegranate), some of the portraits of Zygmunt and Bona remain un-attributed or were the works of artists, such as Hans Suess from Kulmbach, who were forgotten even in Poland.²⁰⁹ However, we know that in some cases, portraits were created in order to be sent as gifts – and it would appear that commissions of such works were much less expensive than tapestries. Thus, for example, Morks informs us that in 1525, Bona sent 3 portraits to the court of the Emperor Charles V. It might also be valid to state the following: besides the different social, economic and even climate conditions that are given by Tygielski and cited above, (and one might assume that therefore tapestries able to keep a room warm and decorated are a better choice than a painting which would only perform the latter of these functions), it is equally possible that neither Bona nor Zygmunt were “photogenic” and did not seek to have a great amount of realist portraits created. While the image of the monarch would be important to display in order to reinforce his authority, a royal or dynastic crest on a tapestry or an engraved image

²⁰⁹ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, pp.156-161.

on a medallion or even a coin might equally well serve that purpose. There are some valid reasons why both monarchs would only choose to pose infrequently for full-size portraits: first, in the case of Zygmunt, he might have realized that he was truly “old” and in fact was a generation older than most of his contemporary European monarchs. By the time that Zygmunt August was born, the Polish monarch was 53, whereas Emperor (and King of Spain) Charles was barely 20, François I was Bona’s age – 26, Henry VIII of England was only 29. Even though the monarch could have afforded many portraits, he might have not wished to be surrounded by visible reminders of his own age, even if he could claim to be an experienced elder statesman. This might be the reason why tapestries with dynastic insignia were so dear to both Zygmunt and Bona.

Also, Bona might have been rather shy. Although she was much younger and had been considered as very attractive, it is possible that multiple pregnancies and the stress of her involvement in politics had taken a quick toll on her image. In short, she as well might have become self-conscious, even though we know that with her feudal revenues, she would have been able to hire a first-rate portrait artist. Thus, the analysis presented above might account for the reason why there was no significant court painter. Equally, it might explain the attachment the monarchs had tapestries depicting either crests or scenes from classical mythology or the Bible.

There is, however, one type of painting and visual arts that the monarchs did patronize, although clearly to a limited extent: miniature paintings such as those that decorated their personal prayer-books. We know that both Bona’s and Zygmunt’s personal prayer-books are extant: one is at the Bodleian Library at Oxford; the second one is at the British Library.²¹⁰ Both of them contain miniature paintings by a Polish Cistercian Monk, Stanisław Samostrzelnik (circa 1480-1541) who had been connected to the king’s friend and

²¹⁰ Op. Cit., p.373.

chancellor Krzysztof Szydłowiecki. Here, of course, the art serves a strictly private purpose and until the monarch in question relinquished (usually through death) their own prayer-books, not many other people would have had the opportunity to admire this artist and his work. However, it is quite probable that the monarchs were pleased with the results of this artist and might have rewarded him (or his monastery) with a payment.

If one examines the works of Samostrzelnik (as reproduced in full size colour photographs in Morka's book), it is evident that Samostrzelnik was an artist of some talent. While the depictions of some figures, most notably Christ, the Virgin Mary and Saint Jerome are not as purely Renaissance in style, and they are still much more basic than high Italian Renaissance painters (like Sandro Botticelli and Raphael Sanzio – the latter would have been Samostrzelnik's near contemporary), they remain very effective and poignant. Also, as opposed to the few portraits of the monarchs in which dark colours (and in fact black) are very prevalent, the Samostrzelnik miniatures are full of bright colours. In fact, while Bona is not depicted on these miniatures, Zygmunt is depicted receiving communion in both bread and wine/blood right from Christ. Here, the monarch, who would have already been in his late 50s is shown with a youthful expression and dressed in bright red and purple velvets. His crown, symbolically, is next to his knees as he stands in front of a bleeding depiction of Jesus.²¹¹

Thus, we have come to the end of chapter three of this thesis. From the analysis presented in the preceding pages, it is clear that Bona Sforza, the Italian princess who became Queen of Poland was both a patron and supporter of the high arts as well as an entity that brought about an intensification of Renaissance cultural trends to Poland and especially its royal court. While not a "Kulturträger" since we know that Poland was already opening up to some Renaissance trends, Bona and Zygmunt were the first Polish

²¹¹ Op. Cit., p.375.

monarchs to espouse new styles of art and utilize them for purposes of political legitimacy as well as decoration.

The following and final chapter of this thesis, besides giving a quick overview to some aspects of Zygmunt August, will look at two more high art forms: poetry and music at the Jagiellonian court. Both Bona and Zygmunt eagerly patronized poets and musicians and while none of these figures became internationally-significant for their artistic achievements, they were nevertheless important contributors to the atmosphere of Renaissance Kraków.

Chapter 4 – Bona’s effect on her son; the poetry and the music at Bona’s court.

It must be stated openly that there are several aspects of Bona’s and Zygmunt’s cultural patronage that cannot be included in this thesis: for example, we cannot discuss the matter of books that might have been purchased and read by either Bona or Zygmunt. Equally, an examination of the doctors and diplomats who served the Jagiellonians has been excluded; and of course, no in-depth mention was made here of the actual political and military history of Poland-Lithuania during this period. It is clear that vast topics such as Poland’s conflicts with the Teutonic Order or its wars against Muscovy – or even the 1537 noble rebellion against the monarchy – could not be given an adequate examination within a chapter sub-section.

However, here, we will undertake three more case studies – essentially three more artists who made an impact upon the cultural milieu of the royal court. In doing this, we should highlight that Bona’s son and the future king had been deeply affected by these cultural developments since he had spent a significant amount of his time (even as a teenager) at the court of his mother.²¹² In fact, before examining these three artists (one poet and two musicians), one should provide here a few analytical remarks about the last reigning Jagiellonian king.

Bona’s cultural influence on Zygmunt August was significant – yet, her influence on his political outlook was equally important. While he was not a despot or an absolute ruler (such notions were impossible given the continued political rise of the noble classes), he surely accepted some of his mother’s inherent views that the monarchy should be beyond

²¹² Anna Sucheni-Grabowska. *Zygmunt August: Król Polski i Wielki Książę Litewski, 1520-1572.*, p.18.

popular reproach in many respects. As a result, at times, he found it difficult to find a common language with his subjects – even those of the magnate classes.²¹³

Sucheni-Grabowska provides a few other interesting point of analysis, chief among them being the fact that in 1537, several persons of rank were publicly voicing concerns about the future of their monarch. Officially, they were fearful that he would become “corrupted” from having spent already too much time at his mother’s court instead of learning the theories of military or political matters.²¹⁴ To an extent, this is true since we know Zygmunt August had a passion for music – and as will be analyzed below, his mother’s court was rarely melodically-silent. Equally, we know that as a youth, he detested long lectures.²¹⁵

Yet, one might see another aspect to this above-cited criticism. It would seem that the nobles already were seeking a future weak monarch, since it stands to reason that being present at Bona’s court on a daily basis would have given the young Zygmunt August a chance to observe the practical day-to-day operations of a well-functioning administrative machine. One might posit that if the young prince chose to be observant and critically-analytical of his surroundings, then he would have learned many practical and very useful things about human nature, politics and administration. In fact, if the noble classes would have desired in earnest to have a future king who would be a strong and charismatic political leader, then it is possible that they would have supported his upbringing in a result-driven environment. However, it would seem that those same nobles, angry and in rebellion against Bona’s successes (which they considered excesses) were therefore actually fearful that he could become a strong and capable ruler. It is logical that they would not have wanted that – and so, they chose to voice their criticism by stating that the culture of Bona’s

²¹³ Op. Cit., p.9.

²¹⁴ Op. Cit., p.20.

²¹⁵ Op. Cit., pp.23-24.

court, and surely some of her young ladies-in-waiting, would have a negative effect on Zygmunt August. In the end, it would appear that Zygmunt August inherited a lot more of his Italian mother's cultural interests rather than her skillful political acumen. Indeed, one might see here a clear difference as a result of upbringing: Bona had a turbulent and difficult youth – her eventual 'success' in a completely foreign country was greatly the result of a lot of effort; her son, however, was born into absolute privilege (and a great deal of maternal protection). Therefore felt no need to subjugate his passions to hard reason. As a result, despite seeing the mechanics of a successful operation, he could not fully comprehend it and therefore could not replicate it.

However, even if it is quite correct to state that Bona failed to groom a strong future king – something that she surely realized as her son became an adult, she did pass onto him a great love for high culture. As had been mentioned in the previous chapter, this had a great effect on the future tapestry collection and on many other aspects of Renaissance Polish culture.

While there were several Polish poets and humanists at Bona's court, one of them deserves some further discussion – the already-mentioned Andrzej Krzycki who had earlier been so deeply attached to the young Queen Barbara. Krzycki has been the subject of a new – 2005 – biographical monograph (again, only in Polish) by Leszek Barszcz. While I am not a literary scholar and my ability to understand poetry is only somewhat developed, I will make a few remarks on Krzycki's poetry after citing some interesting facts from both the above-stated Barszcz biography (and it should be mentioned that Segel's book contains a whole chapter dedicated to Krzycki, including some translations of his Latin poems into English). Leszek Barszcz states that first, many scholars fail to appreciate the multi-faceted nature of Krzycki: yet he purposefully chose to balance his poetic endeavours with his

ecclesiastical and political careers: literary scholars should not blame Krzycki for not dedicating himself more to honing his poetic abilities – and likewise, historians should not forget that he was not just a primate and politician.²¹⁶ On the next page, Barszcz informs us that Krzycki was still a true Renaissance figure: a senior cleric who also would write erotic poetry full of allegory. While it is likely that such poems were written for personal expression as opposed to public recitation, we are told that Krzycki was quite unique in this – and even with him, the phase did not last long.²¹⁷

Both Segel as well as Joanna Olkiewicz mention the fact that Krzycki was frequently at Bona's court – and that the Queen would very much appreciate the compliments that Krzycki would send her way through poems.²¹⁸ However, Krzycki could equally express disapproval of the Queen through verse – especially when Bona had refused to help him advance in the Polish church hierarchy. The poem composed in response to this episode is certainly terse and plays on the allegory between the traditional and legendary icon of the city of Kraków – the dragon – and the serpent dragon that was found on the heraldic crest of the Sforzas.²¹⁹ There were two poems that Krzycki wrote in reply to the above-stated rejection. The second one is just two lines long and thus, it is worthy of citation here: “When the dragon was beneath the castle, only Cracow was ruined. But after it went inside the castle, the whole country was finished.”²²⁰ Evidently, this is not a poem of praise and one can only guess that if and when Bona read it, the implied message was very clear. Yet, above, we have already mentioned that Krzycki wrote a whole poem of more than 300 lines praising Bona upon her arrival in Poland. Thus, in the end, it can be said that while

²¹⁶ Leszek Barszcz. *Andrzej Krzycki: poeta, dyplomata, prymas.*, p.15.

²¹⁷ Op. Cit., pp.33-35.

²¹⁸ Joanna Olkiewicz. *Polscy Medyceusze*, p.103.

²¹⁹ Harold Segel. *Renaissance Culture in Poland: The Rise of Humanism, 1470-1543.*, p.209.

²²⁰ Op. Cit., p.210 (As Harold Segel indicates in his introduction, he himself was responsible for all the translations in his book from Latin in English.)

Krzycki's relationship had been much better with the young Barbara than it was with Bona²²¹, his talent was recognized and appreciated. Moreover, it would seem that he had relative ease in being able to compose verse in Latin on some very strange topics: for example, he wrote a poem in which the main character – essentially the voice reciting the verse – is a rabbit that Bona had caught on the hunt. The poem is rendered into very profound literary Polish, but it appears that the poor animal is pleased to have been caught, since it was the object of a hunt by a woman of great stature.²²² Thus, in the end, one must state the following: Krzycki was a figure of great importance at royal court over many decades, both in a capacity as a chancery secretary and as a poet. Given Barszcz's appraisal of him and a new monograph, it is likely that indeed, he should not be seen as merely a servant at court (as per Wrede's opinion in the previous chapter). Despite his cordial and occasional disagreements with Bona, his talent was very much respected. Moreover, it must be remembered that beyond any poetry that Krzycki might have composed to praise the Queen, we know that Zygmunt immortalized this poet with a great honour: Krzycki was the humanist who wrote several of the Latin inscriptions that were carved into the walls of the Zygmunt Chapel.²²³ Yet, despite the fact that in modern times, his poetry can really only be appreciated to its full extent by literary scholars able to read the Latin originals, we even have a citation that Krzycki had attempted to arrange his poetry so that it could be sung – although there is no clear indication as to the poem (or poems) in question.²²⁴ However, the

²²¹ Op. Cit., p.208.

²²² Andrzej Krzycki. "Zając Upolowany Przez Królową Bonę – O Swoim Losie." (A rabbit caught by Queen Bona – on his own fate), p.67 in *Poezje* (Translated into Polish by Edwin Jędrkiewicz). (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1962).

²²³ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, p.205.

²²⁴ Elżbieta Głuszczy-Zwolińska. *Muzyka Nadworna Ostatnich Jagiellonów.*, p.33. (It can be added here that on page 7 in a 1974 article entitled *Muzyka na Wawelu* – "Music at the Wawel" – Jadwiga Prus indicates that Krzycki actually wrote a poem as an ode to music, implying that he had also enjoyed this form of art. Jadwiga Prus. "Muzyka na Wawelu", pp.5-19 in *Nasza Przeszłość*, Vol. 41, issue 489. Kraków: Instytut Wydawniczy Nasza Przeszłość, 1974).

indication that there was an attempt to put his words to music allows this thesis to come to its final theme of analysis: the music at the court of the late Jagiellonians – especially Bona and her husband King Zygmunt.

It must be stated that with the book by Elżbieta Głuszczyńska as well as other articles in Polish journals, there is certainly some easily-accessible materials on the music of the Jagiellonian court. Moreover, there have been some recordings made of Polish Renaissance music – and while some of it was recorded during the communist era, certainly the last few years have seen many more recordings.

And while there is some very useful information in Głuszczyńska's book, this discussion here will again focus on case studies – especially of two musicians who have been documented as having had a presence at Bona's court. The first of these is an Italian named Alessandro Pesenti. He appears to be a bit of a problematic figure for several reasons. First, it must be said that his name as a musician at Bona's court (more precisely in the capacity as an organist) can be found in almost every book consulted for this thesis. Yet, despite the fact that his name is so commonly-associated with Bona's court, and we have some biographical information on him, there are equally very significant questions that remain un-answered. First, we should state here that what is known about this person: he was from Verona and had come to Poland in 1518 as he had been a musician in the service of the Cardinal Hippolito d'Este.²²⁵ Morka in the index of his book, gives Pesenti's date of death circa 1554; and the Grove Dictionary of Music does not appear have an entry on him. Yet, he appears to have been so central to Bona's courtly culture that he was the subject of a 1539 medallion by Caraglio.²²⁶

²²⁵ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.86; and Wojciech Tygielski. *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII Wieku: Utracona Szansa na Modernizację.*, p.243.

²²⁶ Mieczysław Morka. *Sztuka Dworu Zygmunta I Starego: Treści polityczne i propagandowe.*, pp.402 and 651.

However, despite the fact that Bona had assured him various other sources of independent revenue²²⁷, there are many important questions that were left un-answered by so many of these sources – even by the musicologist Głuszczyńska-Zwolińska. Thus, here, I state some of these un-answered questions and hypothesize as to a plausible answer. First, if we assume that he had remained in Poland from 1518 onwards until his date of death as given above, then we should first attempt to establish his age and possible date of birth. Given that he was already in the service of a high-ranking cleric by 1518, it is most likely that he would have been around 16 years of age, and therefore, he could have been born circa 1502 (possibly a few years earlier, but certainly, it is not likely that he was younger than 14 by the time of his arrival in Poland). Second, although quite peculiar for a musician of the Renaissance, especially one providing services at a court of a high cleric and then monarch, it appears that Pesenti was not a composer – there is no indication of him having actually created musical compositions (in many cases, even if the music manuscripts are no longer extant, there would have been some circumstantial evidence to indicate that it existed at some point in the past). This is not the case with Pesenti. However, this then raises the question of what sort of repertoire did Pesenti perform on the organ? In fact, while choral music was much more developed in this era (and it is discussed below), we do know that there were some composers of the early Renaissance writing music for the organ. However, given the total lack of details, any attempts to draw up such a list would be purely speculative.

On top of an unknown repertoire list and a lack of his own compositions, there are no indications as to what type of instrument did Pesenti play? In fact, we might even be able to make a link between these two factors, since some instruments might not have had the range necessary for certain compositions. However, one might assume that if he was at

²²⁷ Maria Bogucka. *Bona Sforza*, p.189.

court, then he would have had a small portative organ and secular compositions: he would play the larger church instruments and sacred music only if requested to do so for mass. Thus, in the end, while Pesenti is a clear and long-term recipient of Bona's cultural patronage, he remains a problematic figure at Bona's court. Clearly, we must give him due credit for his long service to Bona – and surely Zygmunt, the royal children and all at court must have heard him and acknowledged his artistic talents. But certainly the lack of details, especially with respect to someone who had been at court for several decades, is puzzling.

The other musician who was in Bona's service was a Polish composer by the name of Krzysztof Borek. While we have very little information about him, we do know that he was a composer who left a small amount of extant works – one of which was even recorded. What we know is that he was a cleric active with the Rorantist Capella – an all-cleric choral group that Zygmunt Stary had set up in 1540 to perform services at the small Zygmunt Chapel.²²⁸ Pocięcha informs us that Borek's first appearance at the royal court was in 1521.²²⁹ whereas the *Encyclopedia Muzyczna PWM* states that he died circa 1570.²³⁰ The problem arises, however, from the fact that on the sleeve of the record containing Borek's *Missa Te Deum Laudamus*, the date provided – assuming that it implies the date of composition – is 1573.²³¹ While it is possible that Borek did live three extra years; and it is even possible that he composed this work shortly before his death, although one would ask why a composer with the privilege of contact with the royal court would leave the composition of such a work until near death? Of course, it is possible that this composition was his last work and since only one other one is extant, we do not any means to create a

²²⁸ Jadwiga Prus. "Muzyka na Wawelu", p.8.

²²⁹ Władysław Pocięcha. *Królowa Bona (1494-1557): Czasy i ludzie Odrodzenia*. Vol. II, p.39.

²³⁰ "Borek Krzysztof", pages 364-365 in Vol. 1, *Encyclopedia muzyczna PWM*. (ed. Elżbieta Dziębowska). (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1979).

²³¹ Sleeve of LP-45 record *Antiquae Poloniae Opera Musica*, Label and catalog number: Veriton SXV-760. Recording of Borek's *Missa Te Deum Laudamus*, performed by the Cantilena Male Chorus directed by Edmund Kajdasz)

chronology of compositions. In the end, while such biographical information would have been useful to create a more comprehensive picture of the music at the Wawel court, the important thing to note is that Borek's music shows a good understanding of the compositional craft and technique. In my opinion, however, this is not a first-rate mid-16th century choral work through which one can conclude that Borek was a talented composer. Given that he was at court as early as 1521 and lived well into the second half of the 16th century, he would have been a contemporary of such composers as the Spaniard Cristobal de Morales (who was born in Seville around 1500 and was active in his native city until his death in 1553). However, there is no adequate comparison between the Borek composition and a true masterpiece of Renaissance choral music like Morales's Requiem from 1544. The latter is clearly a superior work – even in simple terms of things like harmonic structure. Interestingly, however, Głuszczyńska-Zwolińska does inform us that the Rorantists did have a score of a mass by Morales in Kraków, although she does state the date as to when this work might have been acquired.²³² Although somewhat unlikely, it is, however, possible that this work might have been performed by the Rorantists in the mid- or late-1540s; and if this was the case, then it is entirely possible that Bona heard this work. As for Krzysztof Borek, we can be quite certain that Bona had known him at the royal court and if he composed anything before early 1556, it is quite probable that Bona had heard it. Regrettably, however, given the analysis of Borek and that of Pesenti above, it is clear that the Ewa Letkiewicz's statement as cited in the previous chapter applies equally well to the music of the Jagiellonian era: there simply is a significant amount of information that was either never recorded – or documents with this information have gone missing over the course of the last 450 years.

²³² Głuszczyńska-Zwolińska. *Muzyka Nadworna Ostatnich Jagiellonów.*, p.74.

CONCLUSION:

The aim of the present thesis was to examine the influence of Bona Sforza upon the cultural atmosphere of the Polish royal court during the first half of the 16th century. Although this was not an attempt to rehabilitate a Queen-consort who only recently has been given fair credit in Polish historiography, it is quite evident from the preceding analysis that Bona Sforza had given significant impetus to some of the Renaissance cultural trends that were present in Poland by 1518. While Bona's main contributions were connected with high artistic culture and had only an effect on a small number of the crown's subjects, the overall historical legacy is impossible to ignore, since it is clear that Bona had significant agency in many fields of Polish culture. While she might not have made celery a regular staple in Polish cuisine, without her, the dress-code of the social elites would have remained rather un-interesting and – much more importantly – Poland would not have had a fantastic tapestry collection. This latter statement has a double-meaning: Bona's son would not have had the desires to purchase such luxuries if his mother had not set a precedent; and more importantly, he would have lacked the financial resources for such a project if he had not managed to secure higher incomes from landed estates that were made productive and efficient by his mother.

In the end, while historians might disagree as to the extent of agency Bona is to be accorded within the framework of Polish Renaissance cultural history, one thing is certain: her role cannot be dismissed. Bona's cultural patronage – from having commissioned the tomb of Bishop Piotr Gamrat and medallions from Padovano all the way to her support of Latin Renaissance poets such as Andrzej Krzycki – was significant and it requires further scholarly attention.

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