

The influence of the ‘Garden Realm’ at Dessau-Woerlitz extended far beyond its region. The English garden art could be experienced there without paying a visit to England. The Garden Realm had the most significant impact on Central and Eastern Europe, particularly on Poland. All Polish authors of dissertations on the garden art had visited Woerlitz. Fryderyk August Moszyński (1731–1786), who had published his *Essay sur le jardinage anglois* as early as in 1774, came to Dessau in 1777; he also probably visited Woerlitz. The latter was visited by Princess Czartoryska (1746–1835) in June 1785 and by Ignacy Krasicki (1735–1801)¹ in 1794. Other aristocrats, e.g. Stanisław Poniatowski² and Atanazy Raczyński,³ also paid a visit to Woerlitz and were enchanted with its gardens.

Foreign designs influenced the development of landscape gardens in Poland to a greater extent than the creation of its own gardening schools.⁴ A relatively close distance to the Garden Realm of Dessau-Woerlitz and the ease with which it could be reached made it particularly important. The present paper focuses on Ignacy Krasicki, the prince-bishop of Varmia, who – in addition to many works of belles-lettres, theology, homiletics, heraldry and other disciplines – wrote *Listy o ogrodach* [Letters on gardens] and whose garden in Szmolajny influenced garden art in Royal Prussia.

During his five-week journey from Dessau to Royal Prussia in 1787, Duke Leopold III Frederick Franz of Anhalt-Dessau (1740–1817) must have met Krasicki and talked with him about their common love of gardens.

COMMUNICATION

DUKE LEOPOLD III OF ANHALT-DESSAU AND IGNACY KRASICKI*

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* Due to the content of the text in accordance with the profile of the volume, the material was adopted in the language version proposed by the author, despite the fact that Polish is not the author’s native language.

1 Cf. I. Pfeifer, *Leopold III. Friedrich Franz von Anhalt-Dessau und seine Kontakte zur polnischen Aufklärung und Aristokratie*, in: *Das Leben des Fürsten. Studien zur Biografie von Leopold III. Friedrich Franz von Anhalt-Dessau (1740–1817)*, ed. H. Zaunstöck (Halle, 2008), pp. 121–27; I. Pfeifer, *Osteuropäische Besucher im Luisium* in: J. Kittelmann, M. Niedermaier, A. Thiele, *Über Gärten im Gespräch. Wechselwirkungen zwischen Landschaftsgärten des 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhunderts in Mittel- und Osteuropa* (Halle 2023), pp. 117–128.

2 *Stanisława księcia Poniatowskiego Diariusz podróży w roku 1784 w kraje niemieckie przedsięwziętej*, ed. J. Wijaczka (Kielce, 2002), p. 102.

3 Cf. A. Raczyński, *Dziennik*, vol. 2: *1831–1866*, trans. and eds A. Wit, M. Mencfel (Poznań, 2019). I am grateful to Prof. Michał Mencfel from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań for pointing this out to me.

4 Cf. M. Jagiełło, W. Brzezowski, ‘Najwcześniejsze polskie ogrody krajobrazowe w świetle materiałów źródłowych (opisów, traktatów i poematów) / The earliest Polish landscape gardens in the light of source materials (descriptions, treatises and poems)’, *Architectus*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2018, pp. 41–52. In this text, the authors made note of the Polish aristocrats’ journeys to France and England (p. 42), but German gardens, which were geographically closer, had an identical influence.

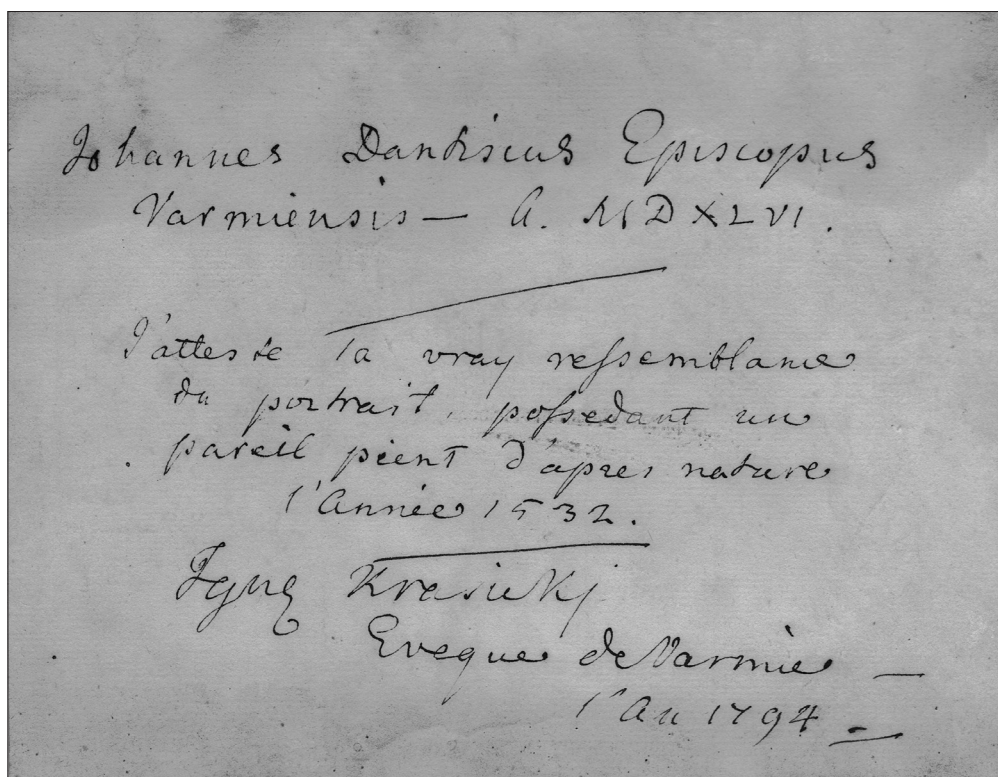


Fig. 1

Handwritten signature of I. Krasicki on the back of the painting from the collection of Leopold III von Anhalt-Dessau

This can be the only explanation for the fact that in the next year, in February, the duke asked his trusted architect and art advisor Friedrich Wilhelm von Erdmannsdorff to seek information on the most convenient method of transporting plants. The duke's letter to Erdmannsdorff has not survived, but the latter's answer dated 1 March 1788 is extant and it leaves no doubt:

Your Grace, Hofmann will recommend to Your Grace his opinion that, if the parcel of plants for the Bishop of Warmia is not too big, it will be best to send it with the mail to Prussia. If this method is too expensive, he asks Your Grace to send it to him to Berlin and he will try to deliver it to Prussia by cart as soon as possible.⁵

The package sent by Duke Leopold III must have been huge even if its recipient exaggerated. Ignacy Krasicki described the delivery of plants in two letters. On 8 April, he wrote to his brother Antoni Krasicki, 'My Duke of Dessau sent so many flowers, 80,000 trees, 1,200,000 flowers'.⁶

5 Landeshauparchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Abt. Dessau, signature Abt. Dessau A 10, no. 187, letter from Friedrich Wilhelm von Erdmannsdorff to Duke Leopold III dated 1 March 1788, fol. 244 (English translation based on the author's own translation into Polish; the original is in German).

6 Letter from Ignacy Krasicki to Antoni Krasicki dated 8 April 1788, quoted after: *Korespondencja Ignacego Krasickiego*, from L. Bernacki's papers, selected by Z. Goliński, M. Klimowicz, R. Wołoszyński, ed. T. Mikulski, vol. 1–2 (Warszawa, 1958), vol. 2: 1781–1801, letter no. 493, p. 379.

Two weeks later, in his letter to Ernst Ahasver Henryk von Lehndorff he was more precise: ‘Le Prince de Dessau m’a comblé des bienfaits, il vient de m’envoyer 120 différentes arbres, plantes, arbustes exotiques, et beaucoup des fleurs. J’orne come, je peut mon jardin et cela m’amuse beaucoup’.⁷ Interestingly, in the Dessau archives there is no trace of Krasicki’s letter of thanks or even of any correspondence between the bishop and the duke. The same is related to the Archdiocese archive in Olsztyn.⁸ According to information obtained therefrom, the archive does not contain any correspondence with the duke or any of his middlemen, e.g. Erdmannsdorff, Rode or Hoffmann. Since at the time of writing this article it was impossible for the author to gain access to Krasicki’s heritage which had been held by the German National Library in Berlin until 1945 and now is stored in Cracow as a special collection, it cannot be stated whether it contains any related records. The language of the correspondence and conversations must have been French as Krasicki did not speak German.⁹

At that time, Krasicki took care of his gardens in Lidzbark Warmiński and Smolajny and he very often wrote to Lehndorff about them.¹⁰

Duke Leopold III and Krasicki must have stayed in contact. In 1794, Krasicki went on a journey to Karlovy Vary. On his way back, he stayed in Dessau and Woerlitz for eight days. On 19 August, he and his physician Tomasz Twardochlebowicz were recorded in the list of foreigners.¹¹ Four days later, he was a guest of Duke Johann Georg at Georgium.¹² He described this visit in the garden in an expressive letter to his brother:

7 Letter from Ignacy Krasicki to Antoni Krasicki dated 8 April 1788, quoted after: *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 379.

8 Written information from Prof. Andrzej Kopiczko PhD, head of the Archdiocese of Warmia Archive conveyed to the author on 19 February 2005 and 23 January 2006. Similarly, the published letters contain no mention of such correspondence.

9 The issue of Krasicki’s command of the German language has various interpretations. His long sojourns in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany permit the hypothesis that he knew German at least at the basic level. However, in contacts among members of the gentry it was customary to use French. Krasicki’s knowledge of German is ruled out by Anneliese Triller, ‘Das Tagebuch des Michael Fox vom Heilsberger Bischofshof 1790–92’, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte und Altertumskunde des Ermlands*, vol. 28, 1942, pp. 117–24.

10 *Korespondencja Ignacego Krasickiego*, vol. 2, pp. 295–96.

11 It was a list of persons received at the court in the given year, introduced most probably by the Hofmarschallamt. Unfortunately, it does not record all persons who visited Dessau or Woerlitz. The names are written following their sound. Cf. I. Pfeifer, ‘Osteuropäische Besucher im Luisium’, a paper given at a meeting of the Dessau-Woerlitz-Kommission, University of Halle, in 2021.

12 ‘Frühstück auf Georgenhaus mit dem Fürst Bischof v. Ermland’, quoted after: W. Hosäus, ‘Georg Heinrich von Berenhorsts Tagesbemerkungen’, *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Anhaltische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, vol. 1 (Dessau, 1877), p. 218.

I am writing from the place of flowers, trees and plants, having come back from Woerlitz which is the most beautiful garden in Germany and probably exceeds all the English ones. Its size is more than four miles and the whole land is wonderfully sited on the Elbe River. My host, my beloved friend Duke of Anhalt-Dessau arranged the most beautiful events and performances for eight days.¹³

From Woerlitz, Krasicki also sent his brother a poem, in which he sceptically reflected whether what one reaps is what one has sown.¹⁴ In the winter, Krasicki visited Berlin again and, following long persuasion of the King Frederick William II, he accepted the episcopal ordination and thus became the Archbishop of Gniezno in April 1795. In his new residence in Skierniewice in central Poland he wrote a short dissertation entitled *Listy o ogrodach* [*Letters on Gardens*], which he probably completed only shortly before his death in 1801.

In order to complete the picture, it is also worth mentioning that Krasicki admired England despite the fact that he had never visited the British Isles, and his translation of *The Poems of Ossian* into the Polish language contributed to its popularisation in Poland.

As has already been mentioned, from the year 1795 Krasicki was writing *Listy o ogrodach*. Although this dissertation is not considered an important or frequently read Polish text about gardens, it is nevertheless worthy of attention, as it was printed and made available to a wider group of readers as early as in 1803.¹⁵ Krasicki's *Listy o ogrodach* is a work about the history of gardens rather than a collection of practical hints on gardening.

Krasicki's concept of a garden made it a rationally motivated and necessary part of a household. In his opinion, a garden did not need a lot of effort yet it was always profitable, especially in a city and in the mountains.¹⁶ Features of the Garden of Paradise: the voices of animals, its usefulness and good location were mentioned in the Bible as important, and they were usually the features of any garden.¹⁷ Krasicki probably knew the essay *Of Gardens* written by Francis Bacon in 1625, whose author extolled gardens as being an earthly paradise.¹⁸ Krasicki's knowledge of this essay should not be surprising, as Bacon's writings were rather commonly known.

13 *Korespondencja Ignacego Krasickiego*, vol. 2, p. 379.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 338.

15 *Dziela Ignacego Krasickiego. Edycja nowa i zupełna*, ed. F. Dmochowski, vol. 5 (Warszawa, 1803), pp. 357–95.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 358.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 360.

18 Cf. also J. Dobai, *Die Kunstliteratur des Klassizismus und der Romantik in England*, vol. 1: 1700–1750 (Bern, 1974), p. 553ff.

A half of Krasicki's dissertation is devoted to the ancient times. In addition to his own poems, he placed there his translations of letters by such Roman and Greek authors as Pliny the Younger, Herodotus, Strabo and Quintus Curtius Rufus.¹⁹ Krasicki mentioned them as the oldest resources related to the history of gardens and considered the Hanging Gardens of Babylon to be the first artificial gardens, while he claimed that the Garden of the Hesperides was a myth.²⁰ He supposed gardens to have been a part of Plato's school at the Athenian Academy.²¹ To confirm that the citizens of ancient Rome highly appreciated the military art but also created gardens, Krasicki quoted Horace and Cicero.²² In addition, he wrote, the newly discovered wall paintings in Pompeii and Herculaneum showing gardens and fountains suggested that gardens had been very important in ancient Rome.²³ In Krasicki's opinion, the situation changed under the rule of Marcus Aurelius (161–180).²⁴

The early-medieval Arab caliphs in Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo, Krasicki continued, erected magnificent buildings, but they did not create gardens.²⁵ In his view, the first garden was created by the Caliph Harun ar-Rashid (786–809). The traces of Arab gardens could still be found in Spain under the Arab rule, in Cordoba and Alhambra.²⁶ Krasicki approached the modern era with Lorenzo il Magnifico, described in the seventh letter.²⁷ Here, he mentioned the plants he knew from the poem of Alessandro Bracci.²⁸ He also mentioned greenhouses, which had been



Fig. 2

Anton von Maron, *Portrait of Prince Leopold III Franz von Anhalt-Dessau*, oil on canvas, 1765; Woerlitz Palace

19 *Dziela Ignacego Krasickiego*, vol. 5, A letter of Pliny the Younger to Gallus, pp. 369–373; *ibid.*, a letter of Sidonius Apollinaris to Domitius, pp. 375–78.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 363.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 364.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 365–66.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 368.

24 *Dziela Ignacego Krasickiego*, vol. 5, p. 374.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 378.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 379.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 381.

28 He mentions ebony, myrtle, balsam, spikenard, sweet flag and lemon; *ibid.*, p. 382.

known and used for six centuries. In the eighth letter he described Polish gardens and in the ninth – the Chinese gardens, the first information about which had been provided to Europe by the Jesuits,²⁹ and the English ones, about which he said: ‘The Englishmen deserve praise for the arts once lost in gardening; they were the first in Europe that freed Nature from artifice’.³⁰ Concerning Polish gardens, Krasicki wrote that the Sarmatians, the legendary ancestors of the Polish nation, had no gardens and that the art of gardening was brought to Poland by Italian monks at the beginning of the fourteenth century.³¹ However, this art did not develop, he wrote, as palaces did not exist yet: there were mainly defensive castles, and those were mainly located in rocky mountains.³² The first changes, as Krasicki emphasised, appeared after the Polish victories over the Rus’ and the Teutonic Knights.³³ He attributed the implementation of artistic gardens in Poland to Queen Bona, who missed her Italian homeland.³⁴

A striking omission in Krasicki’s dissertation is the absence of any mention of modern German gardens in spite of the fact that the writer knew them: as had already been mentioned, he lived in Berlin for a few years and he knew Potsdam and Woerlitz. What is more, he mentioned at the beginning of the dissertation that his own journeys were an important source of the view he presented therein, that in Germany gardeners from England and France were employed, while local gardeners were retrained as carpenters.³⁵

In his last letter, Krasicki summed up all critical comments and mentioned again the errors that might be committed while creating a garden. In his opinion, the most frequent ones were the achievement of an improperly understood splendour³⁶ (i.e. introducing too many components of a garden) and putting in flower clocks, since experiencing the pleasures offered by a garden required leisure.³⁷

Flowers and boxwood should not imitate velvet, and a common mistake made in German and Dutch gardens was changing trees into columns,

29 Ibid., p. 387.

30 „Angielczykom należy się chwała z zagubnionych przysad w ogrodnictwie; pierwsi oni w Europie oswobodzili z kunsztu przyrodzenie”; *ibid.*, p. 394.

31 *Dzieła Ignacego Krasickiego*, vol. 5, p. 384.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 385.

33 Elsewhere Krasicki mentions the Lithuanians, the Rus’ and the Teutonic Knights as those who did not give the Polish nation enough time to develop its own garden art; *ibid.*, p. 385.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 387.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 393.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 392.

37 *Ibid.*

obelisks or pyramids.³⁸ However, the garden in Woerlitz avoided such errors; this may explain why Krasicki was so delighted with it. At the end of his dissertation, he stated that gardens were often created well, but later inappropriately tended or unnecessarily expanded. He also wrote that the English gave freedom to the 'green art' in Europe.

Krasicki, the admirer of landscape gardens, praised the English design similarly as Izabela Czartoryska had, but he included only small comments on the method of creating gardens and shaping the landscape; hence, his dissertation contains no guidelines about what should be done in gardens. Contemporary texts on landscape gardens pointed to a close relationship between the Middle Ages and the creation of such gardens.³⁹ This relationship is also evident in Krasicki's works.⁴⁰

Searching for garden-related issues in Krasicki's works, one quickly finds the novel *Pan Podstoli* [*Mr. Deputy Pantler*, referring to a honorary court office]. The following citation is based on its 1778 edition:

While I was in England (he further said), that was the place where I learnt what gardens should be like. In English gardens, there are no paths, no parterres, no canals, no fountains; well-nigh whatever is in other gardens, it does not exist there; but they are excellent, admirable, beautiful gardens. What are these gardens like? [...] it is only nature, essential and without any exaggeration, a wood, a meadow, shrubs, hillocks, streams, and wheat sown here and there. Every regularity (he continued) is contrary to the simple works of nature, it constrains the eye and prevents thoughts from expanding. Noticing this, the English cut down the espaliers, pulled out boxwoods and privets, removed the parterres; they instantly planted pines, spruces, oaks, firs, limes, simply all kinds of trees, and all this with no ingenious symmetry, but in the way nature itself determines their places in forests and shrubs. They reaped great benefits of this change and all others are copying them now, and for the better to everybody.⁴¹

This favourable description of English gardens is not surprising, since it shows the appearance of Krasicki's own gardens.

In his *Żona modna* [*Fashionable Wife*], published in a collection of satires in 1779, we read:

And the garden? – Hedges of boxwood and privet:
– Throw them out! We need no assumed glitz.
It is in the German taste. Let there be cypress groves,
Streams here and there, murmuring on stones,

38 Ibid., p. 393.

39 A. von Butlar, *Der Landschaftsgarten. Gartenkunst des Klassizismus und der Romantik* (Köln, 1989), p. 233.

40 M. Cieński, 'Krajobraz w „Wierszach różnych” i w „Wierszach z listami” Ignacego Krasickiego', *Pamiętnik Literacki*, vol. 111, 2020, pp. 51–68.

41 I. Krasicki, *Pan podstoli*, part 1 (Warszawa, 1778), pp. 27–28; all passages from Krasicki's works are translated into English solely for the purpose of the current article.

Here a kiosque, and there a mosque, Dutch basins,
 Here a cell of a hermit, there – a shrine to Dianne;
 And all of that casually, as if for disport,
 A minute belvedere, and cages for songbirds.

Krasicki mentions here the components of a landscape garden, but in his description they appear as if they had been arranged in an accidental and irregular manner. However, it cannot be forgotten that this text is a satire and not an objective description or an invitation to shape a garden.

A characteristic feature of all dissertations on the art of creating gardens – that is, the Polish and German ones – is the fact that they contain only information about plants and the rules of their shaping; they do not mention animals that may appear in gardens. Small birds, nightingales or pigeons are sometimes mentioned, but larger birds, such as swans or peacocks, which could be found in Woerlitz and other gardens, were not taken into consideration. Yet it is known that these animals had a symbolic role in gardens. In Woerlitz, there were also white deer, which were kept by the Gothic House,⁴² but they are not mentioned in contemporary dissertations on gardens, either. However, this issue lies outside the present discussion.

Summing up, it can be stated that both the gardens in Woerlitz and Polish gardens were modelled on the English garden designs no matter how diverse these designs might have been. Ignacy Krasicki did not mention any particular garden, possibly because he worried that some of his readers might know that garden too well.⁴³ As Krasicki had never visited England, he obviously gained his knowledge from literature and from experience gained during his travels in Germany, with the ‘Garden Realm’ in Dessau and Woerlitz in the first place. It would be very good to gain more information about Krasicki’s correspondence partners some time in the future, and to learn about the substance of the conversations he held in Dessau and Woerlitz. Yet this will probably never happen...

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42 Cf. C.A. Boettiger, ‘Reise nach Wörlitz 1797’, ed. E. Hirsch (Wörlitz, 1988), p. 68.

43 Imitation is rarely good, as we read in Krasicki, *Dziela Ignacego Krasickiego*, vol. 5, p. 394.

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