Olga Mastianica, *Pravėrus namų duris: Moterų švietimas Lietuvoje XVIII a. pabaigoje – XX a. pradžioje*, Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2012. 344 p. ISBN 978-9955-847-62-5

The monograph by Olga Mastianica *Pravėrus namų duris: Moterų švietimas Lietuvoje XVIII a. pabaigoje–XX a. pradžioje* [After Opening the Door of Houses: The Education of Women in Lithuania from the Late 18th to the Early 20th Century], prepared in 2011 on the basis of a defended dissertation, presents the development of the institutional education of women from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century. The title of the book indicates what the author says in her Foreword: this work is a contribution to studies of the history of Lithuania's women. The author's introductory words and the review of the research conducted on women's history and the certain history of them show that it was not necessary for Mastianica to show anew the possibilities of and necessities for such research. At the same time, this book supplements the research work on the long 19th century carried out in the whole period of independence. In the Foreword, the narrative axis of the historiographic work carried out is briefly outlined: to tell and explain why and how the education of women became an instrument of their socialisation, perceived as their going out of private homes and into public spaces.¹ The starting point of the research anchors the provision, which is unquestionable, that the institutional education of women is a form of socialisation. A separate object of discussion (and research) could be the question, does the history of women not testify to the fact that the models of women's socialisation were frequently alternatives to the dominant and not always chosen supervision (we would hold this as the starting point for the research in this monograph), it is difficult for us to detect what really interests us, how did women go from the private space to the public. Reviewing the historiographic research on women's education, Mastianica distinguishes at least a few of the possible prospects of research into the education of women; for example, surveys of public opinion and 'reflection',² an analysis of the formation of women's education system, and the development

¹ O. Mastianica, *Pravėrus namų duris: Moterų švietimas Lietuvoje XVIII a. pabaigoje–XX a. pradžioje* (Vilnius, 2012), p. 7. Henceforth, only the page number will be shown for references to this book.

² In fact, it is not clear what in this case is considered to be the 'reflection' – is it a reflection of the education system or something else?

of their processes (p. 12). The author holds these two directions as 'the initial stage of research'. The second, as one can understand, which is not possible without the first, would be a comparison of the home and the institutional development of women of different social strata, as well as an interpretation of how institutional education affected the moral values of women and their self-image (p. 13). Acknowledging that she does not yet have sufficient historiographic work, the scholar chooses to stop at the initial stages of the investigation, to reconstruct a consistent system of the formation and development of the system of female education during the view 'of the long 19th century' and most likely leaves the question for the future, how did institutional education affect the self-perception of women and their self-representation (p. 14).

In the monograph, education is perceived as a means in a modernising society to create new social relationships, to integrate various social groups into the life of society (p. 10). So basically, in this research, the development of the system of the reconstruction of women's education is based on the assumption that in this way you can see not only the evolution of public attitudes towards the place of woman in society, i.e. what roles were foreseen for her in the socio-cultural and socio-political processes, but also what measures were actually taken, with what practices it was attempted to implement the changing approach. Or, vice versa, how do the changing social practices reveal the changing attitudes towards the place and role of women in society. Hence, the importance given to education can be reconstructed from public speeches (an analysis of the public discourse), and to the actually carried out transformation of the education system. It must be recognised that one very important and in no way circumvented fact immediately complicates this approach to the education of women, that the investigated institutional education system of Lithuania's women through the entire period from the end of the 18th century until the beginning of the 20th century was controlled by the government of Imperial Russia. Therefore, the first objective of the study, formulated in the first sentences, to explain 'why the attitude of society towards women's education changed, what society affected by the conditions of modernisation and the national policies of the Russian Empire thought about the education of women, what goals and objectives were raised for it, what social and ethnic values were provided, and how they were to be achieved' (p. 7), immediately provides a road direction approach to the investigated object. On one hand, it is immediately clear that the story is wrapped in the broader narrative of the formation of modern nations: on the other hand, another storyline also becomes apparent, and it is the general education policy formed by the government of Imperial Russia, which was generally part of the national policies of the imperial government, carried out with respect to non-dominant ethnic groups. Therefore, the scholar's decision to construct the study as if in two parts seems quite reasonable:

first, to discuss what the public thought about the education of women, what values it bestowed, how it reacted to the reform of education carried out by the government, and so on; the latter aspect of the study is based on an analysis of public statements ('public discourse'). The second part of the study presents the education policy carried out by the Russian government, particularly under reconstruction from the practices, the actually carried out policies of education. It would seem that the scholar's choice to speak about the education of women as a field of battle between the government and the public is a solution integrating this bi-directional view. Since it goes without saying that after the last partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth the society of Lithuania could have had and promoted one kind of approach to the education of women, possibly different from the actually occurring reconstruction of the education system by the government of Imperial Russia, so the answers to the question raised at the beginning of the book, what values were provided for the education of women throughout the 19th century, may be two at the very least. On the other hand, the introduction of the author's approach to education expressed as a field of battle presupposes the variance of the two reconstructed approaches. Looking at the whole research, we can generally see that trying to define the values for the education of women submitted by the government of Imperial Russia basically relies most on practice, the actual education policies carried out, and the public (and/or official³) discourse of representatives of the government of Imperial Russia devoted to discussing the problems of the education of girls remain almost offside. It is most comprehensively represented in the second section of the book, in which the national policies of the Russian government are discussed. Similarly, in discussing the attitude of the Lithuanian public towards the education of girls, only public statements by the main players in society find themselves at the centre of the research, and speeches; while the existing real practice, secret schools, especially elementary schools, due to the lack of sources, as the author of the book claims, remain essentially beyond the borders of the research (p. 154). After all, it would be quite reasonable

³ D. Staliūnas, discussing the values of Russification, makes the distinction between official and public discourse, attributing to the official the statements of officials or the Emperor. (D. Staliūnas, *Rusinimas: Lietuva ir Baltarusija po 1863 metų* (Vilnius, 2009), p. 99). So, if we adhere to this distinction, we have two public discourses – official and unofficial. Then the question arises where to assign the public statements of teachers working in the public schools (A. Kulakauskas includes them in his research, see: A. Kulakauskas, *Kova už valstiečių sielas: Caro valdžia, visuomenė ir pradinis švietimas XIX a. viduryje* (Kaunas, 2000), pp. 49–73): do we assign these people to Lithuania's societies? If so, are their statements part of the public discourse of Lithuania's society, or of the discourse of the official government?

to assume that the secret policy of founding schools was the real fight⁴ carried out against Imperial Russia.

The part of the study conducted by the scholar in which, based on very extensive archival data, the development of the system of girls' education is presented, appears the most impressive and raises the fewest questions. Relying on material held in the fund of the curator of the chancellery of Vilnius education district, the reports of the Vilnius education district guardian (stored not only in archives in Lithuania, but also in Belarus and Russia), the accounts of the agency of the Empress Mary to the Emperor, as well as other documents regulating the activities of the system of girls' education and reflecting the completed reconstructions, Mastianica reconstructs the whole picture of the development of institutional education from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century. One must emphasise that this tremendous work carried out by the scholar is the only work in Lithuania using archival material on such a scale devoted to the history of the education system. In the Foreword, the author of the book says that she divides the study into two chronological periods: the end of the 18th century to the mid-19th century, and the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. However, after glancing at the contents of the book, it appears that the principle of material grouping is in part disrupted by the author's choice of thematic analysis of the material. The first chapter deals with the public discussion of the question of women's education, and the chronological limits of this debate are the end of the 18th century to the first half of the 20th century. The second chapter is devoted to presenting the formation and evolution of the system of general education of women in Lithuania: again the chronological borders of the discussed development of the education system are second half of the 18th century to the 1910s. The third chapter is devoted to presenting the development of the general education system in the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, looking only at the contents, it would seem that the author's selected periodisation of the study does not work; it is most paradoxical that the third chapter partially duplicates or overlaps part of the research covered in the second chapter. Also, the separation of the narrative of the fourth chapter from the rest of the monograph is based on different logic: here, the development of the possibilities of women's professional development are discussed. The natural question arises whether it was not possible to integrate this material into the second or third chapter, for although the designated chronological limits of this chapter are the second half of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century, it basically presents the beginning and development

⁴ M. Lukšienė mentions the dispute in the middle of the century between the church (of Valančius) and state schools. See M. Lukšienė, *Lietuvos švietimo istorijos bruožai XIX a. pirmoje pusėje* (Vilnius, 1970), p. 242.

of professional women's education in Lithuania in the early 20th century. Another matter worth mentioning, related to the precision of the concept used and the defined chronological limits: the Foreword mentions that the geographical boundaries of the research presented in the monograph encompass the provinces that comprised the Vilnius education district, while the titles of the book and the chapters indicate that the development of girls' education in Lithuania is investigated. Mastianica's book belongs to research when, according to D. Staliūnas, one turns from ethnocentrism to civil history, i.e. not one ethnic group is studied, but the whole of society, Lithuania, as contemporaries understood it.⁵ Therefore, this study also pays attention to Jewish education and Protestant women. Since the chronological boundaries of the monograph's research include all of the long 19th century, it is not quite clear what Lithuania is meant? The authors of Volume VIII of the 'History of Lithuania' devoted an entire chapter⁶ to discussing how during this whole period the concept of Lithuania changed, i.e. what the former residents of the Commonwealth understood as historical Lithuania. Therefore, the author's laconic definition of the geographical boundaries of the research from this perspective becomes complicated: because it is obvious that the former Commonwealth population did not perceive all the provinces that were included in the Vilnius education district as being historical Lithuania. There is also a serious lack of explanation as to how the chronological limits of the research were defined, because the starting point of the geographical boundaries of the selected study varies: the Vilnius education district (founded in 1802), and the time of the beginning of the research, the end of the 18th century. The truth is that here again, for the sake of precision, one should note that at times, the end of the 18th century is mentioned, and in other places the second half of the 18th century, therefore, one would have wanted the author, assisting the reader, to explain why the chronological borders of the research were changed. The separation of the first and second sections appears to be the clearest: the first presents an analysis of the public discourse, the second the development of the system of girls' education. However, even here some duplication and lack of clarity is inevitable. Since from the second half of the 18th century until the 1831 uprising the power to shape the official education policy and to argue public statements were essentially in the hands of the same people: in the context of the Education Commission the statements of these people are discussed in the first and second chapters. The question also arises immediately as to whether one can call the discussions occurring up to the 1831 uprising and the actually created system of girls' education as a field of battle? Are the public statements of

⁵ D. Staliūnas, *Rusiniškas*, p. 25.

⁶ See: *Lietuvos istorija*, t. VIII, d. I: T. Bairašauskaitė, Z. Medišauskienė, R. Miknys, *Devynioliktas amžius: visuomenė ir valdžia* (Vilnius, 2011), pp. 34–55.

the members of the Education Commission, with their power to influence institutional education, close to the official public discourse to which the statements of the officials of Imperial Russia are assigned?

The chosen direction of research in the analysis of the public discourse should answer the question how the change in society, from old feudal to the most recent modern times, affected the view of women's education. One has to admit, this is proven by the study conducted by Mastianica, that society's created visions of women's education were never an end in themselves, they were always part of a broader political programme. Therefore, almost an object of separate research could be the question, how was the transformation of the national consciousness of the country's social elite, when the modern ethno-linguistic conception changed the nobility concept of the nation,⁷ accompanied by the changing attitude towards the role of women in society, linked with the change of the vision of women's education and its actual reconstruction? After all, it would be reasonable to assume that the place of woman in society was imagined in one way when the idea of the restoration of the Commonwealth was still alive, or later being enlivened and quite differently, when the emerging modern nations in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania began to create visions of cultural and also later of political autonomy. Historians almost unanimously agree that in the 19th century in Lithuania's Polish society (meaning the noble part of society), from the very end of the 19th century until the creation of national states, the concept of historical Lithuania was alive, forming the basis for their political programmes. So first and most comprehensively, the monograph presents namely the public discourse by this part of society. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, it would be very important for the author of the monograph, nevertheless, to describe more specifically who in this part of the created vision of women's education were the women who were to become the protectors and installers of civic and national identity (61)? Because it is totally obvious that the concept of 'national identity' in the discourse of Polish-speaking noblemen in the late 18th and early 19th century had a different content than the writings by the Lithuanian intelligentsia in the second half of the 19th century. Likewise, it also remains unclear why the scholar refuses to state clearly what mother tongue⁸ and native history, which the women should begin to be taught, were spoken in the public discourse in the late 18th and early

⁷ In the opinion of Staliūnas, such a history has not yet been written, so research on representing various aspects could contribute to the recreation of a more complete picture of this process. See: Staliūnas, *Rusiniškas*, p. 48.

⁸ M. Lukšienė mentions the fact that the nobility even used two terms to denote their native language: 'J. Chodzko wrote that every member of the intelligentsia had to speak the language of his **'fathers'** (*ojczystym językiem*), i.e. Polish, while the peasants teach children their **'mother's'** (*macierzyńskim językiem*) native language, i.e. Lithuanian.' M. Lukšienė, *Lietuvos švietimo istorijos bruožai*, p. 26.

19th century. One would also want greater clarity about what content is placed in the image of a virtuous woman being formed at that time, how similar or different it is, let us say, from the image of the ideal woman formulated by conservatives in the middle of the century. Discussing the formation of the latter image,⁹ Z. Medišauskienė reveals its direct connections with Catholic tradition; meanwhile, one can imply that the image of the virtuous woman formed under the influence of the Enlightenment and promoted in the writings of Commonwealth educators must have had a different content. It must have been much more secular. It is obvious that with the author refusing to go deeper, to relate the created projects of women's education to trends in the development of Lithuania's society, a significant part of the concepts (national identity, native language, history, virtue, etc) remain without a clearly defined content.

It should be noted that the ideas generated by intellectuals mostly from Samogitia in the first half of the 19th century remain beyond the limits of the research of the monograph.¹⁰ As is mentioned above, the most represented view in the book towards the education of girls was of people belonging largely to the world of the Education Commission in this period. We see a similar selection when the public discourse in the second half of the 19th century is discussed, the statements printed in the illegal Lithuanian press at that time (it should be mentioned that the statements of women on the issue of education are not covered), get most attention. The Polish society of Lithuania, primarily composed of the Polonised nobility of Lithuania and the intelligentsia of Polish culture, fostering visions of the restoration of historic Lithuania, fall out of the purview of the research. So in the book, we can say that only part of the public discourse is represented, but nowhere is it mentioned how the selection of texts was made, what principle was followed. One can only surmise that for the scope of the research, the scholar chose to present the prevailing ideas, and that is totally understandable, but it would be very important to state somewhere what did not fall into the field of research, or was intentionally left outside its borders.

Concluding the presentation of Mastianica's book, one wants to ask: is the narrative of this book really about the struggle between society and government? The third part of the book, in which even the word 'fight'

⁹ See: Z. Medišauskienė, 'Moters idealas Lietuvos konservatorių akimis (XIX a. vidurys)', *Feminizmas, visuomenė, kultūra*, 3 (2001), pp. 118–127.

¹⁰ E. Aleksandravičius and A. Kulakauskas, presenting the cradles of Lithuanian culture in the middle of the 19th century, mention a group in Petersburg formed of Lithuanian players in which issues of education were discussed. (E. Aleksandravičius, A. Kulakauskas, *Carų valdžioje: Lietuva XIX amžiuje* (Vilnius, 1996), p. 259). It remains unclear whether the author simply did not find any statements on the issue of women's education, or simply due to the scope of the research the educational ideas of this group of society remain not discussed.

appears in the titles of subsections, in reality tells about what efforts the Imperial government made even while fighting with the Polish element to expand the system of girls' education, adapting it to the needs of the non-dominating national groups, in this way attracting ever more students to the public schools. And if Lithuania's society opposed the national policy conducted by Imperial Russia, part of which was the reform of the education system, it appears mainly in this study only as a discursive practice, the real actions (secret elementary schools, home education) remain beyond the limits of the study. In conclusion, I want to emphasise that all the comments in this review are mainly for the construction of a scholarly narrative, so they do not at all impugn the enormous research work of Mastianica.

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