

Winckelmann in Poland: An Eighteenth-Century Response to the 'History of the Art of Antiquity'

Carolyn C. Guile



Figure 1 Anton Graff, *Stanisław Kostka Potocki*, 1785

Oil on canvas, 68x55cm, Warsaw: The Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów. Photo: Zbigniew Reszka.

'It is not my intent either to be silent or to explicate broadly the works which made Winckelmann famous, for the world knows them enough; for the first among them will always be his history of art, a classic despite its shortcomings, because it pointed the scholarship of antiquity towards its proper direction, it gave it back its utility and dignity, which were until him tainted with pettiness and excessive learnedness. He enlightened the shadows of antiquity with the light of his system, and his genius set one of those torches on fire which will forever light the way of scholarship and time.'

— Stanisław Kostka Potocki, *On the Art of the Ancients, or The Polish Winckelmann*¹

¹ Nie jest moim zamysłem ani przemilczeć, ani szeroko rozbierać dzieła, które Winkelmana wslawiły, dosyć one są światu znanymi; wszakże na ich czele zawsze będzie jego historia sztuki, dzieło klasyczne mimo niedokładności swoich, bo ono nauce starożytności prawdziwy jej wskazało kierunek, przywróciło użyteczność i godność, dotąd drobnostkami i szkolnością skażoną. Rozwidnił

Stanisław Kostka Potocki's translation into Polish and interpretation of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity* (1764) constitutes a little-known albeit important 'afterlife' of the *Kunstliteratur* from which it draws its inspiration, and heralds the arrival of Winckelmann's legacy to the eastern borderlands of Europe. A first in the Polish language, *On the Art of the Ancients or the Polish Winckelmann* (*O Sztuce u Dawnych, czyli Winkelman Polski*) begun in the late eighteenth century and published in 1815, constituted a 'global' history of art that confronted the question of whether aesthetic response could be universal. Polish scholars Jan Ostrowski and Joachim Śliwa, in their four-volume edition of the text published in 1992, claim that *The Polish Winckelmann* was completed well before its publication date, adding that the reasons for this delay are unclear.² It is possible that Potocki's intense political involvements, including his activity during the Four Year Sejm (1788-92), preoccupations with the political catastrophe that was the partitions of Poland, and later, his duties as the President of the Council of State under the Napoleonic administration of the Duchy of Warsaw (1807-1815) contributed to the delay. The initial hope and optimism among Polish *szlachta* that accompanied the formation of the Congress Kingdom (1815-1846) for the eventual re-establishment of the Republic, and the reassertion of the Polish language as the official language may have emboldened Potocki's national literary aims, or at least provided him with an inspired rationale to publish a text that self-consciously articulated these national interests. During the years of the Congress Kingdom, he would also head the Commission for Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment (not without controversy for his proposals to dissolve the Catholic teaching orders) modelled in part on the former National Commission for Education,³ established in 1773 under King Stanisław August Poniatowski (r. 1764-1795), and led by (among others) Stanisław Kostka Potocki's own brother, Ignacy Potocki. A didactic text that was global in scope and nationalist in tone could help advance the educational goals of Potocki and his cohort.

Like Winckelmann, Stanisław Kostka Potocki (1755-1821, fig. 1) insisted on the first-hand study of art objects as the best method for learning about their position within the development, as he would have it, of artistic form and expression. In the vein of his cousin, Jan Potocki or Herder, he also promoted universalist approaches to history, bringing together the study of European, Near

starożytności cienie światły Winkelmana systemat, a jeniusz jego zapalił jedną z tych pochodni, co wiecznie drogę nauk i czasu oświecać będą.' Stanisław Kostka Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych, Czyli Winkelman Polski*, Janusz Ostrowski and Joachim Śliwa, eds, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1992 [1815], 4 vols, 1: 57. The author would like to thank the Colgate University Research Council for funding support, as well as colleagues and reviewers who offered helpful comments and suggestions at various stages of the manuscript. Anna Wellisz also offered invaluable assistance with this stylistically and syntactically difficult text. Translations are the author's unless otherwise indicated.

² See Maria Ludwika Bernhard, "O Sztuce u Dawnych, Czyli Winkelman Polski' Stanisław Kostki Potockiego", *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 1, 1956, 514-21. Ostrowski and Śliwa propose that Potocki completed the entire project between 1807-10, but do not provide a rationale.

³ *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Im. Ossolińskich, 1984, 47 vols, 28:166.

and Far Eastern art and architecture. With this work he was able to capture the attention of a German publishing house; G.M. Walther, the Dresden publisher of Winckelmann's text, considered publishing a German translation of Potocki's writings on Near and Far Eastern arts, and ultimately published them in part.⁴ Undoubtedly with a German (as well as a Polish) audience in mind, Potocki connected his *On the Art of the Ancients* to German antiquarian scholarly traditions by framing his opening discussion as an engagement with the deceased Winckelmann — an authority he respected and admired — and responding to those who had attacked Winckelmann, in particular the renowned Göttingen antiquarian, Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812). The work represents Potocki's response to particular positions articulated in the literature of continental connoisseurship and antiquarianism at a time when art history itself was an emergent discipline. More than a direct translation, Potocki's project assessed the utility of Winckelmann's method and discussed the notions of universal aesthetic values on the one hand, and cultural difference across geographies on the other, refuting Heyne along the way — as if to ensure that Winckelmann would properly be understood in relation to the more important historiographical issues that in Potocki's view eluded antiquarians and their method of studying the past. In *On the Art of the Ancients*, as in his other writings, Potocki's embrace of the Greek tradition as the source of broadly European ones by extension secured for Poland a place in relation to that common point of reference. Written by a thinker at home in the Republic of Letters, one deeply suspicious of revolution and who at the same time expressed strong anticlerical positions, *The Polish Winckelmann* reads as a work in progress, an art history of considerable heft informed by close consultation with primary sources and several trips to Italy from a terrain that was difficult to traverse and deemed both remote and, in ways, uncivilized by continentals. The achievement for Poland in his view resided in the expression of these ideals in the Polish language, through which he could facilitate a local enlightenment. The importance of the text extends far beyond local 'Polish' issues, however. In Winckelmann's *History*, Potocki felt he had found the key to understanding principles that were supranational for their proclaimed universality and that could cross cultural lines where politics itself did not. It therefore contains the possibility of expanding an understanding of the trajectory and reach of enlightened ventures, and by extension of necessarily broadening enlightenment studies beyond traditional boundaries.

Addressing the need for an art historical work of such importance as Winckelmann's in the Polish language where there existed a conspicuous lacuna, Potocki aimed to underline the connection between the Commonwealth's cultural identity and Greco-Roman artistic heritage, and to reflect on the differences between and among cultures both within and outside the borders of the Christendom that visual heritage so profoundly and variously shaped, so as to demonstrate that taste

⁴ Jolanta Polanowska, *Stanisław Kostka Potocki, 1755-1821: Twórczość architekta amatora, przedstawiciela neoklasycyzmu i nurtu picturesque*, Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki PAN, 2009, 63 n.43.

and judgment were fundamental to the apperception of aesthetics in lands touched—or conversely passed over—by 'progress' at disparate moments in history. The result is a simultaneously scholarly corpus and connoisseurial manual that thrust the faculty of judgment to the fore. Within its pages, he offered his views on the uses of systematic art criticism as both an interpretive tool and an instrument for gauging the relative progress or decline of civilizations across time and place. Written when the political entity, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had been absorbed by the ascendant empires of Prussia, Russia and Austria, and into the years encompassing the Napoleonic Duchy of Warsaw, the work expounded universal principles that could by extension educate and improve the Polish citizenry—permanent in spirit if not in political reality—through the analysis and appreciation of plastic beauty. Potocki's political activity renders it impossible not to understand his language on the subject of culture as one promoting reform in a broad sense as he argued for the social benefits of the study of Greek art and aesthetic values. Further, such knowledge could yield a new sensitivity and vocabulary for recovering the Commonwealth's fundamental connection to a shared tradition, a common point of reference distinctly Greco-Roman in shape, taste and origin. For knowledge of the arts, he claimed, necessarily led to good judgment in all realms of life, public and private. Undoubtedly influenced by the reconstruction dialogues Potocki and his associates shaped during the post-partition era, he presented publicly the introduction to the work under the aegis of the Society of the Friends of Learning (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk*)⁵ in Warsaw in 1803. In the company of the Society, convened at the Staszic Palace on Krakowskie Przedmieście street, he included a statement about his interest in engaging Polish amateurs and intellectuals in the continental conversation about historical and geographical patterns of culture, and shared traditions. The message and tone of the text promoted his idea that knowledge of the arts necessarily led anyone, anywhere to good judgment. That imperative and initial impetus might be understood in relation to the specific political and cultural environment within which Potocki flourished—that of the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the period of the partitions, and their aftermath.

It is not surprising that the rapid decline and fall of a once-powerful realm would elicit a deliberate and self-conscious debate among its intellectuals. At the end of the eighteenth century, the heirs to the defunct Commonwealth engaged in an intensive post-mortem. The study of waning power and its ultimate loss, of a drastic shift from centrality to marginality, appears in the literary and intellectual output of the period. Stanisław Kostka Potocki witnessed the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth following the Partitions of 1772, 1793 and 1795 and participated in the ensuing debate over that state's disappearance that mark the

⁵ See Alicja Kulecka, Małgorzata Osiecka and Dorota Zamojska, '*...którzy nauki, cnotę, Ojczyznę kochają*' *znani i nieznanii członkowie Towarzystwa Królewskiego Warszawskiego Przyjaciół Nauk*, Warsaw: Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, 2000.

writings of the Commonwealth's thinkers c.1800-1815. Unable simply to accept the status quo, Potocki and others seemed to embrace one of two positions: the nation could either cleave to a sense of its former political greatness, or re-examine itself and reconstruct its cultural relevance and place within European tradition. His text, 'Thoughts on the General Reform of the Government of Poland' written in 1789, just prior to the Second and Third Partitions, drew on the Commonwealth's political failures of the preceding decade as a means of warning the citizenry dangers of a system too vulnerable to take-over by foreign powers.⁶ Notably, they chose to perform this post-mortem through arts and letters. In effect, the Commonwealth would become a state of mind, in the absence of statehood.⁷

The conflicting positions taken by two friends, intellectuals and co-founders of the Society of the Friends of Learning are instructive; each conceived of the road to restoration in an entirely different way. According to Potocki,⁹ the Poles should examine their past, present and future in terms shared by their European neighbors, with whom they could identify common values and from whom could be taken the historical lessons revealed in the cyclical models of rise and decline. For Potocki, the history of ancient art could offer a utilitarian corrective for a citizenry deprived of the right to exist politically and culturally. In contrast to Potocki's vision, the priest-scientist and politician Stanisław Staszic (1755-1826) advocated a domestic position that drew upon a more glorious past history as well as the very soil of the territories itself for the germination, growth and sustenance of an early nationalist vision. By extension, Staszic's criticism that the nobleman of the time lacked a distinctive cultural identity contrasted strongly with Potocki's views that exposure to foreign cultures could only strengthen knowledge and experience, and provide a new vocabulary for those engaged in recovering and reasserting the Commonwealth's culture in relation to a common past.

Potocki's writings on art, architecture, and linguistic reform prove invaluable for a consideration of an evolving paradigm shift – one in which a country that had once been a point of reference had found itself in a marginal position and ultimately eradicated – that carried progressive overtones.

While both Potocki and Staszic considered themselves patriots who sought in their public political lives to reinforce and rescue the sovereignty of the nation from foreign aggression and occupation, their views about the role and position of foreign traditions in the ever-changing – and for some, confused – cultural

⁶ Stanisław Kostka Potocki, *Pensées sur la Réformation Générale du Gouvernement de Pologne, par Mr. Le Comte Stanislas Potocki Chevalier des Ordres de Pologne, Nonce du Palatinat de Lublin, Varsovie 1789*, Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa, Zbiór Specjalnych, W.1.3791.

⁷ Importantly, this process of reconstruction emerged gradually, beginning in the 1730s, i.e. well before the Partitions, and continued into the early nineteenth century.

⁹ See Kazimierz Michałowski, 'Stanisław Kostka Potocki Jako Archaeolog', *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 1, 1956, 502-13; Juliusz Starzyński, 'Stanisław Kostka Potocki Jako Historyk i Teoretyk Sztuki', *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 1 (1956) 424-32; Elżbieta Skierkowska, 'Warsztat Pracy Stanisława Kostki Potockiego', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 34:2, 1972, 178-92.

landscape of the Commonwealth nonetheless represent different ideas about how to rejuvenate patriotic ambitions and respect for the fatherland (*ojczyzna*) within the populace. Staszczyński's distrust of foreign influence on that culture was pronounced; Potocki on the other hand embraced what could be learned from foreign examples (the Italian and ancient Greek in particular), applying those precepts to a vision of national reform that included establishing the tenets governing beauty and good taste in the arts, and emphasizing the necessity for basic knowledge of art and architecture. Borrowed traditions and the recognition of a common cultural language in turn demanded the cultivation of aesthetic taste and even of architectural knowledge. This attitude is manifest in a collaboration with his close friend the architect, Christian Piotr Aigner (1756-1841) for the design of the façade of St. Anne's church in Warsaw, modelled directly on the Venetian churches of the Redentore and San Giorgio Maggiore by Andrea Palladio.¹⁰ Six trips to Italy between 1765 and 1797¹¹ provided Potocki with the opportunity for direct encounters with those works of art and architecture that would shape his taste and serve as his visual and intellectual models. His library contained treatises by some of the most important writers on architecture such as Palladio (the London edition of *The Four Books on Architecture*, 1715) and Scamozzi (also an eighteenth-century edition, printed in Vicenza),¹² knowledge that would in turn influence the architectural writings by the Jesuit, Sebastian Sierakowski who drew freely from that literature and relied heavily on Potocki's personal encouragement.¹³

The person of Potocki is not widely known in Anglophone scholarship beyond specialist circles, largely owing to language barriers and the general accessibility of relevant materials. A critic of art, amateur practitioner of architecture and archaeology, and later one of the most active members of the Society of the Friends of Learning, Potocki had risen from his own financially humble roots to marry Aleksandra Lubomirska née Czartoryska on June 2, 1776, a union that guaranteed his place of influence among the Polish political and cultural elite. Potocki later used this influence to advance publicly his interest in the arts and architecture, areas of study that he believed could improve the knowledge and

¹⁰ See Stanisław Mossakowski, 'Potocki, Palladio, e la facciata della chiesa di Sant'Anna a Varsavia', *Napoli Nobilissima* 37, 1998, 57-62.

¹¹ Mossakowski, 57.

¹² Mossakowski, 58. For a discussion of the inventories pertinent to the Potocki interests in art and architecture, see Elżbieta Skierakowska, 'Księgozbiór z Dziedziny Sztuki Stanisława Kostki Potockiego na tle Polskich Bibliotek XVIII Wieku', *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 8, 1981, 171-202.

¹³ Sebastian Sierakowski (1743-1824) published his two-volume, *Architektura obejmująca wszelki gatunek murowania i budowania* in 1812, which drew heavily on Italian sources and included over 100 engraved illustrations. See for example Leszek Olzowski, 'Księgozbiór ks. Sebastiana Sierakowskiego SJ i jego 'Opus vitae': architektura obejmująca wszelki gatunek morowania i budowania', *Analecta Cracoviensia* 43, 2011, 329-40. The architectural writings of Sierakowski are the subject of a forthcoming article by the present author in Robert Maryks and Jon Wright, eds, 'Sebastian Sierakowski, S.J. and the Language of Architecture,' *Jesuit Survival and Restoration: 200th Anniversary Perspectives*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014.

mores of the Polish noble citizenry. His work renders him the most prominent intellectual active in the realms of art history, art criticism, and amateur architecture in Poland during the late eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century.

Potocki emerged as a product of the Piarist education system shaped earlier in the century by reformers such as Stanisław Konarski (1700-73). In 1762 Potocki attended the Piarist Collegium Nobilium in Warsaw, together with his brother Ignacy (1750-1809) who would later become a member of the National Commission of Education (*Komisja Edukacyjnej Narodowej*, est. 1773), the director of the Society for Elementary Textbooks (*Towarzystwo Książ Elementarnych*) and a co-author of the 3 May 1791 Constitution. After the death of his parents when he was thirteen, Stanisław was raised by his father's sister, Katarzyna z Potockich Kossakowskiej, who in 1772 sent him to the Academy in Turin for two years to study a variety of subjects such as logic, architecture, history, and fencing.¹⁴ So that he would not forget his native language, his aunt corresponded with him regularly in Polish. While abroad, he visited Switzerland and France (Lyon, Marseilles and Paris) and began touring Italy systematically in 1774. His growing interest in Italy would shape his aesthetic judgment and taste throughout his life. While in Italy he became a member of the Arcadian Society in Rome; he also made his first contacts with intellectuals and antiquarians in Turin, Rome and Naples.¹⁵

After serving as an envoy to the Parliament (Sejm) in 1778 – his introduction to public life – Potocki obtained a post with the Crown in 1781. The following year he was again elected to the Sejm, becoming a Marshall and soon thereafter, Chancellor. During the Four Year Sejm (1788-1792) he aligned himself with the side of the Patriots (*Stronnictwa Patriotycznego*) and was a supporter of reform.¹⁶ Access through marriage to the Czartoryski *latifundia* and to almost unparalleled wealth enabled Potocki to aggrandize his art and book collections, as well as develop multiple properties across the Commonwealth's frontier. In 1799 he became the legal owner of Wilanów, the former residence of King Jan III Sobieski (r. 1674-96), and chose the estate as his burial place. The acquisition of Wilanów gave Potocki an ideal space for the organization and display of an art collection and library rivaling that of the King.¹⁷ In 1787 Potocki acquired Colin Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus*,¹⁸ as well as the Comte de Caylus' *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques et romaines* (vol. 1-7, Paris 1761-1776).¹⁹ He also owned an eighteenth-century London edition of Alberti's *De Re Aedificatoria*, an English edition of Palladio's *I Quattro Libri* (1715), the 1570 edition of Vignola's *Regola delle Cinque ordini Architettura* and a variety of other architectural treatises, editions and handbooks issued during the

¹⁴ *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* 28, 158.

¹⁵ *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* 28, 158.

¹⁶ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, xvi-xviii.

¹⁷ See the exhibition catalog, *Grand Tour: The Birth of the Collection of Stanisław Kostka Potocki*, Warsaw: Pałac Muzeum w Wilanowie, 2006.

¹⁸ See Skierkowska, 'Księgozbiór z Dziedziny Sztuki Stanisława Kostki,' n.9, 172.

¹⁹ Skierkowska, 'Księgozbiór z Dziedziny Sztuki Stanisława Kostki,' n.10, 173.

sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.²⁰ His collection reflects his awareness of the transmission and relevance of Italian architectural theory and practice to other regions in Europe. Both Stanisław and his brother Ignacy were keen to raise awareness of these sources to Poland, both in print and in actual practice. The probable author of the 'Lettre d'un étranger sur les salons de Paris' (1787),²¹ Potocki also ran a literary salon from his Warsaw home. Populated by libertine patriots, the participants included the poet Tomasz Kajetan Węgierski and others distinctly outside of the aegis of royal patronage. From within this social milieu, he also tirelessly promoted the purification and improvement of the Polish language through the history of art, using Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity* as his model.

While some have stated that Potocki's project adopts a relativist stance toward the history of art²² for its inclusion and assessment of the art of distant cultures (such as the Chinese, Persian, and Indian), Potocki's desire in introducing these topics seems to have been to continue Winckelmann's project as well as to demonstrate that Winckelmann had devised a system for the analysis of art that could be applied to any region and any historical period.²³ While maintaining the primacy and supremacy of Greek art, Potocki would show that through its application to other areas the system was durable. Winckelmann himself had established a hierarchy among regional arts, writing that, 'The discussion of the art of the Egyptians, the Etruscans, and other peoples can broaden our conceptions and lead to correct judgments; but the discussion of Greek art should seek to ground itself in unity and truth, to supply a rule for judgment and practice.'²⁴

What truths or models did Potocki attribute to Winckelmann's text and how did he transform it to serve the needs not only of scholars but also of amateurs of the arts? Winckelmann's *History*, Potocki wrote, was replete with useful material for those who already had a familiarity with and fluency in the arts; its weakness was that it did not present 'easy directions for those just looking to familiarize

²⁰ Skierkowska, 'Księgozbiór z Dziedziny Sztuki Stanisława Kostki,' n.64, 178.

²¹ See Helena Żmijewska, 'Stanisław Kostka Potocki, Critique du Salon du Louvre', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 39, 1977, 344-54 and M.E. Ziółtowska, 'Stanisław Kostka Potocki, David, Denon, et le Salon de 1787, ou la première critique d'art écrite par un polonais', *Antemurale Romana* 24, 1980, 9-65.

²² Polanowska, *Stanisław Kostka Potocki, 1755-1821*, 63.

²³ Alex Potts notes that 'the *Geschichte* became a container for an ever-expanding body of evidence and new thinking on the subject as it was extended and modified in successive editions to incorporate developments in antiquarian scholarship within the framework Winckelmann had established. In this manifestation, it was a text in perpetual transformation that could never achieve definitive form.' Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, Harry Francis Mallgrave, trans, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006, 15. Daniel Orrells also notes this passage in 'Burying and Excavating Winckelmann's *History of Art*', *Classical Receptions Journal*, 3:2, November, 2011, <http://crj.oxfordjournals.org/content/3/2/166.full#fn-18> accessed 9/23/2013.

²⁴ Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 186.

themselves with [art].²⁵ He warned that the uninitiated, discouraged by its difficulty and complexity, might not have the patience to read it. It was the matter of accessibility and clarity, and in turn the conviction that Winckelmann's text actually could be broadly instructive that inspired Potocki; as the self-appointed 'Polish Winckelmann' he would attempt a new work about the arts that would be as easy and simple as he believed them to be. While on the one hand he revered the high standards and authority of real scholarship, he also deliberately drew a distinction between the needs of the amateur and that of antiquarians, stating that he wrote it from the perspective of an 'arts expert' and therefore opened it to the potentially wider audience Winckelmann's ideas deserved. Potocki's ability to see the applicability of Winckelmann's ideas to amateurs indicates his conviction about the centrality of a more broadly relevant, popular message in the work that was an important part of Winckelmann's mission. 'An antiquarian', such as Winckelmann,

discovers the secrets of the ages, explains them and sheds the light of scholarship on their dark monuments. An art expert simply looks for beauty in the arts by using his perfected sense of taste and by being used to comparing art works. The first explains what art is meant to show, the second judges the way it has shown it.²⁶

The scholarly undertakings of the antiquarian, Potocki asserted, should be separate from the attainment of knowledge concerning beauty in art, knowledge that results from a developed combination of direct experience with objects, and good taste. Respecting Winckelmann's goals, he revised the *History* by cutting out everything that he felt could distract the reader from the appreciation of the whole, adding new material about peoples and places Winckelmann did not include, precisely in order to demonstrate the applicability of the system across cultural and geographical boundaries.²⁷ He also undertook to limit Winckelmann's expressions of excess imagination, to clarify errors, and to endow the text with a new order without moving too far away from the route suggested by his predecessor.²⁸ Thus Potocki aimed to preserve Winckelmann's system while modifying aspects of the text so that it also might serve as a lengthy manual for the education of the nobleman in the on the subject of ancient art and the cultures that produced it.

²⁵ 'Otoż przyczyny, dla których nazwać go raczej można użytecznym materiałóm składem, dla ludzi już w sztuce biegłych, niż łatwą skazówką dla tych, którzy dopiero oswoić się z nią szukają.' Potocki, 1: 14-5.

²⁶ Starożytnik odkrywa tajemnice wieków, tłumaczy je i światłem erudycji oświeca ciemne ich pomniki. Znanawca sztuk szuka w nich tylko piękności za przewodnictwem wydoskonalonego smaku przez nawykłość porównywania. Tamten wyjaśnia, co sztuka wyobraża, ten o sposobie wyrażenia sądzi.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 14.

²⁷ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 15.

²⁸ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 15.

In this introspective manner Potocki turned his attention to the imperative of self-improvement for a culture that endeavoured to persist without a nation. Pre-empting the criticism of potential sceptics, Potocki stated that it was not difficult in the end to write about the arts in Polish; he claimed to have created new terms without difficulty, adding that other words could be easily substituted owing to the 'flexibility' of Polish. As a result, the reader might not even notice that the work dealt with a topic otherwise foreign in method to the native tongue; but even if he should notice, 'he will find how straight-forward are the rules of the language for which nothing is strange or difficult. It would be sad', he continued, 'if with the ability of our language and with the wit which nature gave the Pole, his language stayed mediocre and would not reach the level it was meant to reach!'²⁹ Hence Potocki's concerns fall into two main categories: the broadly aesthetic and art historical, concerned with the judgment of beauty in art and the understanding of the relationship of beauty to epochal change; and the linguistic – that of introducing that system in his native tongue and the attendant benefits of doing so. The study of art, then, was in itself literally a constructive endeavour, its appreciation an aspect of regeneration and good judgment, and by extension self-sufficiency for a readership deprived of its political autonomy by 1795.

Writing *The Polish Winckelmann*, Potocki worked from the French edition by Michael Huber, the *Histoire de l'art de l'antiquité* (1781), printed in Leipzig.³⁰ In aiming to move beyond the mere copying or translation of a seminal work, Potocki ultimately raised questions about what he envisioned the role of intellectual borrowing and originality to be. Potocki's choice of title is also instructive. Changing Winckelmann's 'History of the Art of Antiquity' to 'On the Art of the

²⁹ 'Spodziewam się, że czytający niniejsze dzieło nie spostrzeże się nawet, że mówi o rzeczy, o której dotąd polski nie mówił język, a jeżeli na to wspomni, niech się przekona, jakimi rzetelnie są władze języka, dla którego nic obcem, a nawet nic ciężkiem nie jest. O, jakże smutną byłoby rzeczą, gdyby przy dowiedzionej do wszystkiego mowy naszej zdolności, gdyby przy tej dowcipu bystrości, którą natura udarwała Polaka, miał się język jego w dobrowolnej pozostać mierności i nie dojść to tego wysokości stopnia, który mu same, że tak powiem, zamierzyło przyrodzenie!' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 24.

³⁰ In 1766 the English classified, *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* printed an excerpt in translation of a letter Winckelmann himself had written with the hope of reaching an English audience. In the excerpted letter, Winckelmann protested the unauthorized translation of his work into French in 1766 by an 'unknown author', citing gross inaccuracies, a misrepresentation of his position toward English attitudes, the insertion of related ideas he had never articulated, and the failure of the translator to contact Winckelmann directly on matters needing clarification. See *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, London, Issue 11 856, Thursday, March 5, 1767. In announcing the release of the 1781 translation into French by Michel Huber, the *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* and other English classifieds were careful to differentiate the new translation from the earlier, objectionable one. See *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, London, Issue 1668, Monday, February 11, 1782. In his introduction Potocki makes it clear that he is using Huber's 1781 translation, but does not mention the 1766 translation that outraged Winckelmann.

Through the agency of A. Sagatyński, a Polish resident of Leipzig, the Walther publishing house undertook a translation into German of the first part of Potocki's adaptation of Winckelmann, but never finished the project. Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, xxiii.

Ancients', he stated: 'I allowed myself to give it the name 'Polish Winckelmann' since, as most of the work is mine, I don't want to attribute new mistakes to Winckelmann...I would like to obtain a new honour for my nation in a branch of literature previously untouched by it.'³¹ He argued that Winckelmann's work was not really a history but rather a work that developed a system of ancient art – and therein resided the primary reason it captured his imagination and interest.

The distinction between a history and a system also served as the basis of his engagement with the writings of Winckelmann's critic, the professor and classical philologist Christian Gottlob Heyne. Active in Göttingen during and after Winckelmann's lifetime, Heyne proved a vocal if not inconsistent commentator on the value and importance of Winckelmann's *History* to antiquarian studies. Heyne in his day had also been in contact with Adam Czartoryski, Potocki's close associate and his wife's uncle, and it is reasonable to assume that Potocki would have come to Heyne's work both through academic and familiar means. Where on the one hand Heyne essentially praised Winckelmann's *History*, he also attacked him for historical inaccuracies and an overly expressive, even dramatic writing style. Heyne's reviews of Winckelmann appeared first in the 1760s while he was the editor of the *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*; they were at that point laudatory.³² 'Thanks to Winckelmann', he wrote, 'the knowledge of classic art among the general public has noticeably increased.'³³ However, in the period 1771-81, when the *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* published reviews of translations and editions of Winckelmann's letters, Heyne's opinion of Winckelmann was much more negative, citing shaky conclusions and historical inaccuracies.³⁴ In some sense Heyne seems to have begrudged Winckelmann his success; he quipped that it was fortunate for the deceased that he did not have to live in his native land, and criticized him for snobbishness.³⁵ At that point in time, Heyne had become 'perhaps [Winckelmann's] severest critic'; his article, 'Über die Künstlerepochen bey Plinius' has been called 'the most devastating attack of the period upon Winckelmann's scholarship and historical method.'³⁶ Heyne had claimed that Winckelmann's *History*, although a classic text, was riddled with historical inaccuracies, and uncharitably remarked that evidently Winckelmann felt himself above the painstaking work required for

³¹ Pozwoliłem sobie dołączyć do niego imię Winkelmana polskiego, bo kiedy część wielka, że nie powiem większa pracy, którą publiczności przedstawiam, jest moją, nie chcę na Winkelmana narzucać obce jemu błędy, jeżeli w nie wpadłem, a w przeciwnem zdarzeniu pragnę zyskać dla narodu mojego nowy zaszczyt w gałęzi literatury, dotąd od niego nie tkniętej.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 23.

³² See Henry Caraway Hatfield, *Winckelmann and His German Critics, 1755-1781. A Prelude to the Classical Age*, New York: King's Crown Press, 1943, 32-3.

³³ *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1768, 147 as quoted by Hatfield, *Winckelmann and His German Critics*, 34.

³⁴ This point is made by Hatfield, *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, 32-4 and 124 n.42, 126-8.

³⁵ *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 1779, 6 and 1781, 661.

³⁶ Hatfield, *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, 125. Christian Gottlob Heyne, *Sammlung antiquarischer Aufsätze*, 1, Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1778-1779, 165-235.

performing the job correctly.³⁷ Further, he had said that Winckelmann's work was not based on what had happened in the past, but merely on what Winckelmann presumed had happened; hence the entirety of the historical portion of the work in Heyne's view was erroneous and therefore useless. The danger here, he asserted, was that over time Winckelmann's errors and enthusiastic judgments would be inherited and transmitted as unassailable fact. First, a chronology of the artists mentioned in the work needed to be written, and the primary sources needed to be checked for their veracity. Without those confirmations, Heyne said, the judgments therein are merely built on thin air. He included a caveat that one forgets that even Pliny was a collector of data that he had himself taken from a variety of authors.³⁸

In a somewhat contradictory vein, as H. C. Hatfield had noted, Heyne simultaneously published the laudatory essay, *Lobschrift auf Winckelmann* (1778). In sharp contrast to the scathing 'Über die Künstlerepochen bey Plinius', he praised Winckelmann for having directed antiquarian studies to the realm of art, and congratulated him on the application of the interpretive method.³⁹ Most likely familiar with both of these essays, Potocki could only conclude that Heyne often misunderstood Winckelmann completely. Heyne did not entirely reject Winckelmann's system, Potocki observed, but deemed it inaccurate. Because Heyne's objective had been to explain or correct Winckelmann's work⁴⁰ – in order, in Potocki's eyes, to topple Winckelmann and usurp his prestige for himself – Potocki felt that it was his duty to summarize Heyne's position and 'objectively judge its value.'⁴¹ Pausing on Heyne's critique of Winckelmann's division of art historical time into epochs according to Pliny's Olympiads, he paraphrased:

The history of art of the ancients by Winckelmann, says Mr. Heyne, in its novelty made such an impression among the Republic of Letters that there was no time to notice that this work, although a classic, often commits the sin of historical inaccuracy...When it comes to subjects that do not rely heavily on the accuracy of details, one can show off one's erudition; but you can never be too careful with history, where we want to judge facts. In history, it is imperative to examine the most minute details, carefully consider them, and never allow any glib statement.⁴²

³⁷ 'Rubige Untersuchung und Forschung schien das Geschäfte nur von trägern Köpfen zu senn.' Heyne, *Sammlung*, 1: 165.

³⁸ Heyne, *Sammlung*, 1: 166-8.

³⁹ Hatfield, *Winckelmann and His German Critics*, 127.

⁴⁰ Heyne, *Sammlung*, 1: 167.

⁴¹ Potocki, 1: 30.

⁴² 'Historia sztuki Winkelmana u dawnych, mówi pan Heyne, sprawiła w nowości swojej takie wrażenie w rzeczypospolitej uczonych, iż nie miano czasu dostrzec, że to dzieło, acz klasyczne, grzeszy często niedokładnością historyczną...Kiedy idzie o przedmioty nie wyciągające ścisłej dokładności w szczegółach, można poszczycić się niewczesną nawet erudycją; lecz nie można być zbyt baczny w historii, gdzie z czynów chcemy ciągnąć wnioski. Wtedy należy w najdrobniejsze

Potocki did not disagree with Heyne that Winckelmann's system contained historical inaccuracies, but he objected to Heyne's designation of the work as 'useless' on account of these errors.⁴³ Rather, classical erudition that differentiated Winckelmann from antiquarians gave him the tools to produce something different – art history. The work

facilitat[ed] the comprehensive systematization of the entirety of [ancient] art...The time is forever gone when a stone signifying nothing, or a little figure of bronze, a knife, an old key or some such tool, would bring to itself the attention of all scholars to such a degree that their often hilarious pontificating over some subject gives [those objects] a value that they never inherently had.⁴⁴

He continued, 'it is a very easy thing for a hothead to focus on Winckelmann's ardor and consider his [own] conclusions to be infallible.'⁴⁵ Potocki felt strongly that Heyne's work served largely as an exercise in self-promotion, and complained that Heyne attacked Winckelmann as a pretext for explaining the work he wanted to write himself. Heyne seemed to think that Winckelmann had not done the requisite research,⁴⁶ and articulated the desire to write his own so as to 'bring the entire history of art in antiquity down to the events that are certain and proven, separating opinions from that which is solidly proven by the ancient writers and demonstrating the degree of trust each of them deserves.'⁴⁷ Heyne intended for his history of art to be a document-based, antiquarian history free of bias and constructed around truths he saw as verifiable chiefly in ancient texts; what he termed objective analysis of this sort would be the only standard by which to judge the work of art and when it was created. Potocki, however, distrusted the sincerity of Heyne's position and found him lacking in Winckelmann's authenticity. It is possible that Potocki would have read about the plot conceived by Giovanni Casanova to impart forgeries to Winckelmann for unwitting use in his *History*, in order to embarrass Winckelmann and undermine his reputation as an antiquarian. The incident had provoked Winckelmann to defend himself against charges of incompetence in a caustic letter dated January 4, 1766, addressed to Heyne and

wchodzić szczegóły, pilnie je wyważać i nie dopuszczać się lekko żadnego twierdzenia.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 30-1.

⁴³ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 31.

⁴⁴ 'ułatwiają im objęcie całkowitości systematu sztuk. Mniął czas, kiedy kamień nic nie znaczący lub niezgrabny brązowy bałwanek, nóż, stary klucz lub podobne narzędzie, ściągly ku sobie do tego stopnia baczność uczonych, że ich nad nimi często śmieszne urojenia nadawały im wartość, której w sobie nie miały.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 28.

⁴⁵ 'jest przeciwnie łatwą bardzo rzeczą zapalanej głowie zająć się uniesieniem Winkelmana i poczytywać wnioski jego za niezaprzeczone prawdy.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 31.

⁴⁶ Heyne, *Sammlung*, 1: 167.

⁴⁷ Heyne as paraphrased by Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 31.

published at Winckelmann's request in the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*.⁴⁸ Perhaps Potocki wished to prevent negative critique from damaging Winckelmann's reputation through such debased means as *ad hominem* attacks that merely diverted attention from what he deemed his true accomplishments.

In sum, Potocki had marked Heyne's critique as the most important amidst the body of vindictive writing that Winckelmann's work would attract, adding that Heyne's work included all of the merits of the criticisms levelled later by others.⁴⁹ But Heyne's inconsistent opinions and pedantry also irritated Potocki, and his critique illuminates the view that Heyne accused Winckelmann both of begging the question and of comparing his approach to the way one approaches religious faith.⁵⁰ Potocki referred to Heyne's concession: 'in his ardor of writing, [Winckelmann] didn't always remember exactly what he read, or that he meant to double-check his citations at a later time, which premature death prevented him from doing.'⁵¹ The solution to Heyne's criticism of Winckelmann's method was to side-step the use of Pliny's epochs as defining the strata of the study; this Potocki did by extracting the references to Pliny from the body of Winckelmann's work, attaching them to the end as an appendix, and including a biographical summary of Winckelmann's life in the first section of the project. He then invited the reader to return to Winckelmann's text to see for himself if it were truly without merit; Potocki felt it stood muster even without reliance upon Pliny's epochs as the determining historical framework. One of Potocki's interests as an historian was to ensure that Heyne would not get away with either becoming the authority on the matter at Winckelmann's expense, or rewriting the story.

Potocki's choice of title also indicates his approach to Winckelmann's project, contradicts Heyne's understanding of Winckelmann's goals, and by extension calls into question the true range of Heyne's authority as a judge of Winckelmann's work. He suggested that Winckelmann's somewhat misleading title, the *History of Art of the Ancients*, rendered him vulnerable to Heyne's fundamental criticism; it was clear that Heyne had been expecting a history proper of the art of the past, and objected when he did not find one. In general, Potocki viewed historical accuracy in the strict sense as secondary to the *History's* value.

Heyne's apparent indifference to the art object itself struck Potocki as a significant and over-arching problem; after all, given the enormity of the historical period that Winckelmann's work encompassed, the finer points about chronology were lost on the reader for whom it did not matter whether a work of art or an artistic epoch happened a few years earlier or later than was assumed. Absolute

⁴⁸ See Thomas Pelzel, 'Winckelmann, Mengs and Casanova: A Reappraisal of a Famous Eighteenth-Century Forgery', *Art Bulletin* 54:3,1972, 300, 314.

⁴⁹ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 30.

⁵⁰ See Heyne, *Sammlung*, 1: 167-8.

⁵¹ 'Jest także rzeczą do wiary podobną, że w zapale pisania nie zawsze dokładnie pamiętał, co czytał, lub że na inny czas odkładał sprawdzenie przytaczań swoich, czego mu dopełnić niewczesna śmierć nie dozwoliła.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 32; see also Heyne, *Sammlung*, 1: 167.

certainty, he stated, would be impossible to attain anyway.⁵² Artists do not flourish at the same time, Potocki noted, and differences between and among them in age and talent were so great that taking any broader period of art into account would merely yield more artists, further complicating the dating of their numerous works that could be separated by dozens of years. The definition of precise epochs was thus an exercise in scholarly folly. Winckelmann's two main deficiencies, on the other hand, were that he was incorrect in associating the onset of a new epoch with a concomitant period of artistic flourishing, and that the historical accuracy of his subjects was somewhat dubious.⁵³ Potocki gave qualified support to Heyne's criticism that, contrary to Winckelmann's position, freedom did *not* guarantee artistic achievement; but what more noble reason, he asked, could Winckelmann have come up with to explain the elevation of the arts to the pinnacle of perfection in Greece than the inspiration of freedom?⁵⁴ In Athens, the arts reached their highest level of perfection because

the city married the possibility of creating beautiful works of art with the spirit of noble freedom. This marriage gave such impetus to the arts that even the most powerful monarchs, the masters of the world such as the Roman Caesars, despite their greatest efforts, never equaled free Athens in art... Therefore freedom has a quality that is conducive to the arts, a greater tendency towards creating them than enslavement whenever that tendency is allowed to develop by other aspects necessary for the blossoming of the arts.⁵⁵

He nonetheless granted that the theory was difficult to prove. Freedom could be an important but not exclusive factor for art's blossoming: 'Free land is more fertile for the birth of great art than the enslaved one.'⁵⁶ Though Heyne had admitted that the coincidence of peace with the Plinian epochs could be solidly proven, he criticized Winckelmann for taking as a rule the correlation between periods of peace with periods of artistic achievement. Potocki did not deny that Winckelmann may have

⁵² Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 41.

⁵³ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 41.

⁵⁴ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 43.

⁵⁵ Lecz zaprzeczyć równie tego nie można, że one doszły do wyższego jeszcze stopnia doskonałości w Atenach z przyczyny, że to miasto łączyło do możności dokonania dzieł znakomitych ducha szlachetnej wolności. To połączenie dało taki popęd sztukom, że najpotężniejsi monarchowie, że panowie świata, jakimi byli rzymscy cesarze, mimo największych usiłowań nie wyrównali sztukami wolnym Atenom, których cała posiadłość punktem, że tak powiem, była niezmiernego ich państwa i w niem prawie ginęła. Ma tedy w sobie wolność własność sprzyjającą sztukom, dzielniejszy ku nim popęd niżli niewola, ile razy rozwinąć się tej skłonności pozwalają inne stosunki do kwitnienia sztuk konieczne.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 43.

⁵⁶ 'przy równej ku temu zamożności, bujniejszą w wyborne sztuk płody, każda wolna jak niewolnicza okaże się ziemia.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 43.

put too much trust in that general rule, but nevertheless he disdained Heyne's objection to it:

If the blessing of peace does not seem capable of elevating the arts, what could possibly accomplish that? What will we put in its place? I am learning from Mr. Heyne that not even this basic rule cannot be generalized...But I, too consider an epoch of peace and fortuitous circumstances in every country as the friendliest towards the arts which are in that country, and for those who participate in the arts.⁵⁷

If generalizations could not be made from Winckelmann's observations, the system would be of little use to anyone but other antiquarians. Potocki added wryly that Heyne announced he would offer deeper research on further epochs, but never followed through; therefore, he continued, Winckelmann's (or Pliny's) should remain as the standard for readers and researchers for the time being – deeming the sequence alone to be sufficient, and obviating the need for 'the vain chase after specific dates.'⁵⁸

Both Potocki and Heyne accepted, to some extent, the suggestion that climate contributed directly to the flourishing of the arts; all three writers sought explanation for artistic change and accomplishment in the convergence of a variety of factors. However, some exerted more influence than others. Potocki remarked that if Italy, like Greece, had 'fallen under the all-annihilating Turkish yoke', the 'smartest' European countries would then have surpassed the Italians in art; competition between fundamentally different cultural paradigms and political circumstances played some part in determining the progress or decline of culture, but the Idea of perfection in the arts would not necessarily be made vulnerable. Winckelmann was therefore justified in having given not one, but several reasons for the superiority of the Greeks in the arts, some of them cultural, others political, historical, geographical and even racial.

⁵⁷ 'Wymawia i to p. Heyne Winkelmanowi, że na szczęśliwych okolicznościach, które towarzyszyły sztuce, mianowicie zaś na pokoju, gruntuje on jej epoki. Poszedł w tem Winkelman za zdaniem Pliniusza i pójść za szanowniejszem nie mógł. Do tego, jeśli błogosławieństwo pokoju nie zdaje się zdolnym do wzniesienia sztuk, cóż tego dopiąć zdoła? Cóż na to miejsce położymy? Wszelako, że i tej tak gruntownej zasady za ogólną mieć nie należy, tego mnie tylko uczył dostrzeżenia pana Heyna.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 46-7.

⁵⁸ 'And since it is something in which mathematical certitude cannot be demanded, it is enough for us to talk about the sequence of centuries and not one year, not one Olympiad, but to be certain that in this or another time period art soared, and these or other masters blossomed. It is still enough to know about them in sequence, enough to know how much the great [ones] contributed to the perfection of art, without the vain chase after specific dates of their works which with them, were lost forever.' ('a gdy w tem matematycznej pewności wymagać niepodobna, dosyć nam jest w biegu tylu upłynionych wieków, nie o roku, nie o Olimpiadzie, lecz być pewnemi, że w tym lub w owym czasie zakresie wygórowały sztuki, i ci lub tamci kwitli ich mistrzowie. Dosyć ich ciągle znać następstwo, dosyć wiedzieć, ile się najznakomitsi przyłożyli do wydoskonalenia sztuki, nie ubiegając się próżnie za datami ich dzieł, co wraz z niemi wiecznie zagnięły.') Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 47-8.

What, then, was Winckelmann's sin? Potocki presumed that 'excessive but noble ardour' inspired Heyne's negative criticism. He recommended that one could moderate but not necessarily debunk Winckelmann's ideas, particularly where the analysis of the possible causes for artistic development was concerned:

Mr. Heyne in the end seems to ascribe everything to change, the influence of which on human affairs is as undeniable as it is unlimited. But affluence and poverty, freedom and enslavement, though most often the results of chance, are nonetheless solid reasons for the development or shortcomings of the arts, and that is how they should be viewed.⁵⁹

At the same time, Potocki states that Winckelmann's own storehouse of information sometimes obstructed his own way. He knew too much, he said, and sometimes strayed too far from what was most important: 'Whenever he pursues the erudition alien to art's beauty, he interrupts the explication of the matter at hand, bothers the reader, and stands in the way of allowing him to understand his system with ease.'⁶⁰ On the other hand, sometimes his excessive enthusiasm led him to a 'lyrical, prophetic tone' also not entirely appropriate to the task of discovering and presenting Truth. Winckelmann's opening statement, echoed by Potocki, nonetheless reminds the reader that it was the essence of art, not the historical details of lives of the artists themselves ('which have been compiled by others'), that served as the foundations for the project: 'The history of the art of antiquity that I have endeavoured to write is no mere narrative of the chronology and alterations of art, for I take the word 'history' in the wider sense that it has in the Greek language and my intention is to provide a system.'⁶¹ By extension, Potocki aspired to present Winckelmann's system according to Winckelmann, in order to demonstrate that the additions to the work were undertaken in the spirit of the original project and represent a 'fulfilment of its will' and system. He lauds Winckelmann for being the first to attempt the systematic analysis of works of art, for accumulating an astonishing amount of information and evidence, and for backing up his claims with the authority of primary sources Winckelmann had studied in Rome.⁶² The emphasis on the first-hand examination of objects stands out; Rome had possessed and known its own monuments for a long time, but it was Winckelmann, he said, who 'knew how to use them to discover the secrets of ancient art and to explain the

⁵⁹ 'Pan Heyne ostatecznie wszystko przypadkowi przypisywać zdaje się, którego wpływ na rzeczy ludzkie jest równie niezaprzeczonem, jak nieograniczonym. Lecz dostatki i ubóstwo, lecz wolność i niewola, choć najczęściej dzieła przypadku, są rzetelnymi przyczynami wzrostu lub niedoleżności sztuk i za takie liczonemi być powinny.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 46.

⁶⁰ 'Ubiegając się za obcą piękności sztuki erudycją, przerywa osnowę rzeczy, trudzi nią czytelnika i objąć mu z łatwością nie dozwala systematu swojego.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 49.

⁶¹ Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 71.

⁶² Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 55.

true rules that inform it to the extent the ruins of time and Man, obscured by the night of so many centuries, allowed.'⁶³ A reiteration and paraphrase of Winckelmann's conceptual framework and methodology follows, in which he underlines the importance of understanding the different components of art and its materials, as well as the necessity of studying objects first-hand; so long as the Idea stood as the goal of art, the comprehension of its iterations in material form as patterns of nascence, progression, change, perfection, decline and fall to the point of stasis or extinction was possible. For only direct observation of plastic form itself and all it could reveal reduced the possibility of misidentifying or misattributing the work of art, i.e. as compared to a judgment based on its inscription alone. He cited Maffei's misattribution of Giambologna's sculpture of Mars in the Villa Medici as an antique, 'a mistake made by many an antiquarian', such as Montfaucon.⁶⁴ Potocki argued unequivocally for an object-based classification of art, praising Winckelmann for not relying solely on textual descriptions of works for the reason that a text decoupled from an object could do more to obfuscate than to illuminate.⁶⁵ Potocki ended his presentation and critique of Heyne's ideas by conceding that the work, while boring, deserved objective engagement; but likewise, Winckelmann should be excused for the apparent shortcomings in his own. Unfortunately, Potocki had written, Heyne fell into so petty a spat about chronology with Winckelmann's opus that 'even if he proved his point, the discovery would not have rewarded such a dry read.'⁶⁶

Potocki likened Winckelmann's historical observations not to 'a chain in which links form a succession without a doubt, but a thread which can take you out of a labyrinth.'⁶⁷ A singular, linear approach to the history of art was impossible; rather, the writer should acknowledge the simultaneity of events, the imprecision of dating, the relative distance between and among periods, individual lives, and individual successes and failures, each with its own narrative and each subject to circumstance and chance. This admission is not necessarily at odds with the permissibility of generalization; a succession of incontrovertible evidence could yield a general sketch of patterns and tendencies that could then be employed comparatively across time and space. Putting the discussion of chronology to rest, he then turned Winckelmann's discussion of beauty and the judgment thereof.

Whereas Potocki, like Winckelmann, sought an explanation for the reasons

⁶³ 'Winkelman był pierwszy, który ich użyć umiał ku odkryciu tajemnic sztuki dawnej i wyjaśnieniu jej prawdziwych zasad, ile mu tego dozwoliły ruiny czasu i ludzi, nocą tylu wieków okryte.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 55.

⁶⁴ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 53; see also Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 72.

⁶⁵ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 54.

⁶⁶ The full sentence reads, 'Lecz wpada on dalej w tak uczone, tak rozwlekłe, tak drobne chronologiczne swary, że gdyby nawet dowiedział to, co dowieść mniema, jeszcze by to odkrycie nie wynagrodziło tęsknoty czytania tak suchego wywodu.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 40.

⁶⁷ 'Zgoła nie jest to łańcuch, którego ogniwa składają zapewnione pasmo, lecz nitka wywikłać z labiryntu zdolna.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 48.

that art developed in a cyclical, uneven manner across cultures, and that art itself provided the visual evidence for the progress, stasis, and decline of culture with standards of beauty and habits of innovation serving as evidence, Potocki seemed most interested in beauty as the object of art, and Beauty in the Platonic sense - not relative but rather comprehended to a greater or lesser degree from one region to the next. In certain regions, he held, art never progressed beyond a certain point. The division was for him a clear one between western and eastern art, whose character was completely different: 'while one - that is the Western - aims at perfection, the Eastern, having stopped at a certain point, stand still at this point, immobile, and so they remain today as they were thousands of years ago.'⁶⁸ In other words, cultures did not develop at the same rates alongside one another; cultural stagnation was observable and measurable in art itself. At the same time it is impossible, he notes, to deny that

The East was first in art...From the most ancient times, the science and wisdom of the east was well known. Nations polished and powerful blossomed there, when Europe was covered in forests and under their shadows it fed its inhabitants with nuts and acorns. It is therefore impossible not to admit that eastern people were the first to create patterns of art for imitation.⁶⁹

But he reserved the perfection of art for the West 'as though nature wanted to make it up to the West for this handicap.'⁷⁰ Chapter one, 'On the Beginnings of Art and Reasons for Difference Between the Arts of the Occidental and Oriental People' translates and paraphrases Winckelmann's first chapter, 'Origin of Art and Reasons for its Diversity Among Peoples.' Art, explains Potocki, 'defined the measure and limit of human perfection which human understanding could not exceed.'⁷¹ Winckelmann's work introduces the art of ancient Egypt before discussing that of the Greeks; he returns to the subject of the transmission of art to the Greeks by the Phoenicians and then the Egyptians, and closes the section on the cultural transmission of forms across geography with an explanation for the similarity between Egyptian and early Greek figures. Here, Potocki followed Winckelmann's

⁶⁸ 'jedne, to jest zachodnie, dążą do wydoskonalenia, wschodnie stanąwszy na pewnym punkcie, na nim nieruchome stoją i takimi dziś są, jakimi przed lat tysiącami były.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 78.

⁶⁹ Przeciż Wschodowi zaprzeczyć w sztukach pierwszości niepodobna...Od najdawniejszych czasów sławną była Wschodu nauka i mądrość. Kwitnęły tam narody wypolerowane i potężne, kiedy Europa lasami okryta, pod ich cieniem żołądzią dzikich karmiła mieszkańców. Nie można więc nie przyznać ludom wschodnim, że one pierwsze światu znane, pierwsze nam sztuk zostawiły wzory.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 77.

⁷⁰ 'Lecz jakby chciała natura wynagrodzić Zachodowi to upośledzenie, jemu ich wydoskonalenia przeznaczyła zaszczyt.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 77.

⁷¹ 'Miała [sztuka], jak ma wszystko, zakresloną miarę i granice stanowiące jej doskonałość, których przestąpić pojętności człowieka danym nie było.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 73.

model for the general principles of the birth, growth, decline, and death of art as a kind of life cycle, positing that art declined once it became superfluous and detached from necessity. Potocki further explained that excess and abuse in art provide the visual evidence for their contamination ('spoiling') and fall.⁷²

Taking the model further, Potocki was fascinated by the idea the Chaldeans retained nothing of their ancient splendour, and became burdened with poverty, slavery, plunder, 'the iron hand of a barbarian government crushes everything in them.'⁷³ Where there was submission to oppression excessive imagination prevailed, evident in Chaldean writing. Art could not reach the levels it had reached at Babylon and Nineveh because those governments 'kept those old oriental forms which until today we recognize as similar to the oldest forms of the east.'⁷⁴ Change (or lack thereof) in visual form stood as evidence of progress, stagnation, or decline. He added,

Persians of today have nothing in common with the Persians of old who created the Persepolitan ruins. Along with everything else, their government, religion, and even customs changed. For the Persian art retained many of the forms of the ancient, except its permanence, and did not take a single step toward perfection.⁷⁵

In a longer chapter devoted exclusively to the art of the Persians, Potocki again took Winckelmann's system further; he probed the question of the relationship between the enormity and permanence of the monuments and what they could reveal about customs, ways of life, and ways of thinking. His sources included Engelbert Kämpfer and Cornelis de Bruijn,⁷⁶ as well as sources to which Winckelmann did not have access, such as Carsten Niebuhr's 'even more fresh and more detailed' *Beschreibung von Arabien* (1772) and *Reisebeschreibung von Arabien und anderen umliegenden Ländern* (1774, 1778).⁷⁷ He connected his observations to the relationship of freedom and climate to art forms explicated in his earlier chapters devoted to those thematic issues. Further, he used conclusions about Persian art to illuminate Chaldean art, as 'the ruins of Persian cities could help us imagine the art of the Chaldeans, and direct us to the taste with which the Babylonian monuments were decorated, as the greatness and size of the Persian ruins brings them closer to the

⁷² 'Uniosła go za nie żąda nowości i wprawiała w zbytek i nadużycie, widoczne zepsucia i upadku przyczyny.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 73.

⁷³ The full sentence reads, 'Ludy chaldejskiej krainy nic nie zachowały z starożytnego blasku swego, cięży nad niemi nędza, spustoszenie i niewola, przytłumia w nich wszystko żelazna ręka barbarzyńskiego rządu.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 78.

⁷⁴ 'A sztuka, jeśli dziś nie tworzy tych gmachów, które Babilon i Niniwę wslawiły, dla braku potęgi i niedołężności rządu, dochowała te dawne orientalne formy, które do dziś dnia podobnemi na Wschodzie do najdawniejszych dostrzegamy.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 78.

⁷⁵ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 78.

⁷⁶ Cornelis de Bruijn, *Voyages de Corneille le Brun par la Moscovie, en Perse, et aux Indes Occidentales*, 1718.

⁷⁷ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 103.

monumental sizes of those in Babylon.⁷⁸ It is notable that Potocki analyzes the art of east and west extensively and with deliberate attention to his perception of cultural fault lines.

To demonstrate further his views concerning the superiority of broadly western art, he presented expanded analyses of the art of civilizations outside a western purview not treated by Winckelmann; for example, the Chinese and the Indian are given discreet chapters. Potocki's assessment of Chinese art was that it had reached a point of stagnation and had not changed much over time. He held this observation as general, visible proof of the lack of progress in the arts that he deemed particular to eastern peoples. By extension, this was for him the key that separated and distinguished the east from the west in general.⁷⁹ Interestingly, the discussion of Chinese art addresses the technology of art as it relates to the concept of imitation and mass production, as well as to borrowing and originality. Where the imitation of Nature served as the foundation for western art, the fabrication of copies per se was China's habit, and characterized Chinese arts, Chinese curiosity, and Chinese patterns of behaviour.⁸⁰ On Indian arts, Potocki declared that they showed evidence of stasis:

The Indians of today do not sculpt in the rocks those amazing edifices called the pagodas, of which you can find ancient traces because their beautiful and rich country for a long time now has been the booty of the Mohammedan and European conquerors. But their art will always be a part of their whole. This country civilized for a thousand years has not taken a single step in art; though less enormous in its production, it is by many measures what it used to be.⁸¹

Europe, by contrast, underwent a drastic change beginning in the fifteenth century, 'waking up from a long period of barbarity' and 'stepping rapidly toward perfecting itself.'⁸²

Potocki in effect adopted Winckelmann's system in order to demonstrate its wider applicability. That the existence of cultural fault lines interested Potocki and his colleagues greatly is critical to understanding his point of view. His deliberate

⁷⁸ 'Stąd mniemać wypada, że persopolitańskie ruiny mogą nam niejako służyć za naoczne wyobrażenie sztuki chaldejskiej i wskazać smak, w jakim babilońskie gmachy przyozdobione były.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 101.

⁷⁹ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 79.

⁸⁰ Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 135-85.

⁸¹ 'Indianie dzisiejsi już nie kują w skałach tych zdumiewających gmachów, pagodami zwanych, jakich się u nich odwieczne znajdują ślady, bo piękna i bogata ich kraina stała się od dawna łupem mahometańskich i europejskich najezdników lecz sztuka ich co do innych części zawsze jest jedną.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 78.

⁸² 'Od XV wieku Europa z długiego oczucona barbarzyństwa, śpiesznym krokiem ku udoskonaleniu dążyła.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 79.

concentration on the differences perhaps stemmed in part from the fact that as a Pole, he had a particular understanding of what it meant to live on those fault lines, with the Ottomans directly to the south-east (the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at one point shared a border with the Ottoman Empire), the Muscovites in close proximity (indeed then within his former state), and the continental Europeans to the west (not to mention the Austrian and Prussian occupations). Geographical proximity to these neighbors and a history of military and political engagement with Moscow and the Ottomans in particular thus made the question of cultural difference pressing and real rather than merely theoretical for Polish men and women of letters.

At a public meeting of the Society of the Friends of Learning on 7 May 1824, after Potocki's death, Stanisław Staszic paid tribute to Potocki's contribution to his native language through his scholarly endeavors. The eulogy described the Polish Winckelmann as having been 'a great admirer [of] and person who knows the arts quite well',⁸³ someone who wished to 'contribute to...public enlightenment to make it easier for the Poles to shape their mental faculties.' To this end, he aimed to 'perfect the arts of their age, to broaden their taste for things beautiful, and in Polish youth, to enrich the developing mind with the sense of what is beautiful, true and great, both in arts and science, and in nature and ethics.'⁸⁴ Staszic also acknowledged that Winckelmann's work provided a collection of materials for those 'already quite proficient in artistic knowledge, as well as for the people who still have some difficulties understanding art and looking for their own tastes.'⁸⁵ Potocki wished to make it easier for people to learn about art than Winckelmann had done, through a process of simplification. Therein resided a key contribution to his contemporaries.

In conclusion, Potocki desired that *The Polish Winckelmann* would appear to have been written not by an antiquarian, but by an amateur and connoisseur. The introduction of Winckelmann's work to Polish speakers, Staszic added, likewise

⁸³ Stanisław Staszic, *Pochwała Stanisława Potockiego, Czytana na Publicznem Posiedzeniu Towarzystwa...Dnia 7 Maia 1821 przez Stanisława Staszica...*, Warsaw, Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 21:51. Staszic's text was published one year later: 'Pochwała S. Potockiego', *Rocznik Towarzystwa Warszawskie Przyjaciół Nauk*, 18, 1825 and separately as 'Żywot uczony śp. S. Potockiego,' Warsaw, 1825. I have consulted the 1824 manuscript.

⁸⁴ '[Potocki] chciał i w tej części publicznego oświecenia ułatwić polakom kształcenie władz umysłowych, chciał zaszczyć w narodzie chęć doskonalenia sztuk swojego wieku, rozszerzyć smak pięknych rzeczy, a w młodzieży polskiej rozwiaiający się rozum z bogactw uczuciami tego, so iest pięknem, prawdziwem i wielkiem tak w naukach i sztukach jak w naturze i w moralności.' Staszic, *Pochwała SKP*, 52.

⁸⁵ 'Wzorowe Dzieło Winkielmana o historyi sztuki u starożytnych podało mu do tego wielki zbiór materyałów, użytecznych dla ludzi już w sztuce biegłych, łączących się z wielu trudnościami dla tych, którzy dopiero z nią swoje się szukają.' Staszic, *Pochwała SKP*, 53.

resulted in the introduction of the subject to the Polish 'nation' (which by this point no longer existed) and constituted a real addition to Commonwealth literature.⁸⁶ It thus served as an artefact of culture that further aggrandized a long-standing and important European literary tradition. As a stated goal of the Society of the Friends of Learning had been 'to save and perfect the mother tongue, keeping the memory of the history of the Polish nation',⁸⁷ Potocki's project was significant and of its time. Linking wartime destruction with Potocki's goal to preserve his native culture, Staszic was compelled to mention that, 'Poland had beautiful works of art. Of those, some by wars destroyed, others by misgovernment squandered. Only the Lord's temples, the tombs of kings and heroes were spared.'⁸⁸ From here emerged Potocki's struggle, namely 'to keep and protect at least this remainder of national souvenirs.'⁸⁹ Staszic noted ironically that 'during this time, being free from the duties of a citizen, he was often thinking about the depth of the damages and the contamination that the spirit of feudalism left on the hearts and minds of people.'⁹⁰ Preparations for a catalog of drawings of all Polish monuments, supervised by Potocki himself and executed by artists of his selection, were also underway but were never completed.

Undoubtedly the political realities of the time as well as Potocki's ideological convictions shape his approach to the legacy or fate of 'the beautiful' that is his first purpose; he is consistent in his approach to art. While he may have embraced a return to the 'pure' forms of classical Greek art, as Winckelmann had done, he had also stated that a return to simple beginnings or origins would be by nature false, regressive and even impossible. The problems of modern society, Potocki complained, were more easily criticized than corrected. Advocating in his introduction an examination of society 'as it is, and not as it should be',⁹¹ he attacked what he called the source of opposition toward art and science. He identified that opposition as the desire of individuals to change the world around them for the sake of philosophical novelty, all performed under the guise of a solipsistic quest for personal happiness. Generally maligning the *philosophes* as hypocrites, Potocki declared that these thinkers, 'hidden in a temple of evil...attacked the very sacred rules of society' and only 'ruined blossoming cities' at the hand of their

⁸⁶ Staszic, *Pochwała SKP*, 55.

⁸⁷ 'Pod rządem Pruskim Potocki był jednym z pierwszych założycieli Towarzystwa przyjaciół nauk, którego głównym zamiarem było ocalenie i doskonalenie oyczystey mowy, zachowanie i udokładnienie dziejow narodowych.' Staszic, *Pochwała SKP*, 34.

⁸⁸ 'Miała o [sic!] Polska pięknych kunsztow u siebie twory. Z tych iedne wojen [?] stały się, drugie nierządu przypadkami roztrwonione i zniszczone zaginęły; Uszły tego losu Świątynie pańskie, groby królów, i sławnych wojownikow.' Staszic, *Pochwała SKP*, 56.

⁸⁹ Staszic, *Pochwała SKP*, 56.

⁹⁰ 'Usiłowaniem Potockiego było zachować od zatracenia przynajmniej tę resztę pamiątek narodowych.' Staszic, *Pochwała SKP*, 56.

⁹¹ 'Patrzmy więc na świat i ludzi, jacyemi są, nie jacyemi być by powinni...' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 8.

Carolyn C. Guile Winckelmann in Poland: An Eighteenth-Century
Response to the 'History of the Art of Antiquity'

revolutionary zeal.⁹² The only benefit, he claimed, was the eternal warning trumpeted before the attentive ears of future generations. He desired that the arts and sciences 'keep us from such terrible impulses... [L]et that alone convince us that in today's state of things, many societies depend on them and their improvement.'⁹³ With his desire to simplify Winckelmann's text to abet general comprehension, the scholar in Potocki paid a great deal of attention to the learned apparatus informing the work and tested it himself. Others, like Heyne, had not understood Winckelmann's project, he argued. Potocki clearly saw himself as a liberator and spokesman for Winckelmann's text, both a conduit for and an advocate of Winckelmann's ideals that would bring to a population a canon that was at once universalizing and familiar.

Carolyn C Guile is Assistant Professor of early modern European art history in the department of Art and Art History at Colgate University. Her forthcoming publications include a study of the Polish architect, Sebastian Sierakowski, as well as essays on architecture in the Polish-Lithuanian borderlands. She has published on the art theoretical writings of the eighteenth-century Venetian art critic, Francesco Algarotti, and is editor of Reviews for the quarterly, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*.

cguile@colgate.edu

⁹² 'Lecz błąd twój, który w cnotcie miał swój początek, tyle jest szlachetnym, ile obmierzła obłuda tych poczwara, co pod cieniem twojej cnoty i wymowy targnęli się na wzruszenie świętych społeczności zasad (mniemani filozofowie rewolucyjni), ukryci w świątyni złoczyńcy! Prawość twoja stała się dla nich występków nasieniem, bo nie przyjmuje zbawiennych roślin ta ziemia, co ma rodzić trucizny.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 8.

⁹³ 'Ćwiczmy się więc w naukach i sztukach, jakiegokolwiek mogą być ich nadużycia, kiedy nas od tak okropnych wstrzymują zapędów; i to jedno niech nas przekona, że w stanie dzisiejszym rzeczy wiele społeczności na ich utrzymaniu i wydoskonaleniu zależy.' Potocki, *O Sztuce u Dawnych*, 1: 9.