

ABSTRAKT: W 1786 roku Stanisław Kostka Potocki wraz z Izabelą [Elżbietą] Lubomirską przebywali w Królestwie Neapolu, gdzie Potocki prowadził wykopaliska archeologiczne w miejscowości Nola. Miasto to, w przeszłości podlegające jurysdykcji Władysława IV Wazy, w XVIII wieku było dobrze znane mieszkańcom Rzeczypospolitej nie tylko z historycznych przekazów, lecz także jako cel coraz liczniejszych wypraw, w ramach których poszukiwano cennych attyckich waz.

Stanisław Kostka Potocki do Noli wyruszył z Neapolu. Niedługą podróż oraz pierwsze wrażenia dotyczące zarówno krajobrazu, jak i dostrzeżonych na miejscu ruin, opisywał zgodnie z ówczesną konwencją literatury podróżniczej w swoim – niedokończonym – rękopiśmiennym dzienniku podróży *Voyage de Nola*.

Rozczarowanie Potockiego widokiem współczesnego miasta Nola, które zachowało jedynie część dawnej świetności, porównywalne jest z doświadczeniem innych europejskich arystokratów odwiedzających wówczas włoskie miasta, w tym Anny Potockiej, synowej Stanisława Kostki. Artykuł przedstawia znaczenie Noli jako stanowiska archeologicznego w omawianym okresie, a przede wszystkim rysuje tło wizyty Potockiego oraz czynniki, które składały się na jego złożoną ocenę tego miasta.

ABSTRACT: In 1786, Stanisław Kostka Potocki and Izabela [Elżbieta] Lubomirska stayed in the Kingdom of Naples, where Potocki conducted archaeological excavations in the town of Nola. This city, which in the past lied under the jurisdiction of Władysław IV Vasa, in the 18th century was well known to the inhabitants of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth not only from historical sources, but also as the destination of increasing number of expeditions in search of valuable Attic vases.

Stanisław Kostka Potocki travelled to Nola from Naples. The short journey and first impressions of both the landscape and the ruins noticed on the site were described in accordance with the contemporary travel literature convention in his – unfinished – handwritten travel journal *Voyage de Nola*.

Potocki's disappointment with the view of the modern city of Nola, which has only retained some of its former glory, is comparable to the experience of other European aristocrats visiting Italian cities at the time, including Anna Potocka, Stanisław Kostka's daughter-in-law. The article presents the importance of Nola as an archaeological site in the period in question, and, above all, outlines the background of Potocki's visit and the factors that made up his complex assessment of the city.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Nola, Stanisław Kostka Potocki, wazy attyckie, Neapol, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, odkrycia archeologiczne w XVIII w., Anna Potocka

THE CITY OF NOLA IN CAMPANIA (ITALY) IN STANISŁAW KOSTKA POTOCKI'S MANUSCRIPTS

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Introduction

In the last fifteen years, moving from the fundamental studies of M. L. Bernhard¹ and W. Dobrowolski,² I have several times dealt specifically with the excavations that the Polish count Stanisław Kostka Potocki has conducted in Nola in 1786, when, according to his own testimony, he visited the Kingdom of Naples with his mother-in-law Isabella Lubomirska.³ It is my intention now to try to place Potocki in Nola of the second half of the eighteenth century, in its social and cultural context, and to understand why in two of his texts, both written in French,⁴

- 1 M.L. Bernhard, 'Stanisław Kostka Potocki – kolekcjoner waz greckich', *Meander*, vol. 6, 1951, no. 8–9, pp. 431–49; ead., 'Amfora Malarza Edynburskiego w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie', *Archeologiae*, vol. 5, 1955, pp. 170–76. For Potocki as an archaeologist, see also K. Michałowski, 'Stanisław Kostka Potocki jako archeolog', *Rocznik Historii Sztuki*, vol. 1, 1956, pp. 502–09; T. Mikocki, 'Kolekcja rzeźb i waz antycznych Stanisław Kostka Potockiego w Wilanowie na tle współczesnych jej zbiorów starożytności w Polsce', *Studia Wilanowskie*, vol. 8, 1982, pp. 55–63; id., 'Stanisław Kostka Potocki's collection of ancient sculpture and vases', *Studia Wilanowskie*, vol. 8, 1989, pp. 75–76. For Potocki's travels to Italy, especially to Vesuvian cities, see B. Biliński, 'Viaggiatori illuministi polacchi sul Vesuvio e nelle città vesuviane', in: *La regione sotterrata dal Vesuvio. Studi e prospettive. Atti del Convegno internazionale 11–15 novembre 1979*, ed. A. De Franciscis (Napoli, 1982), pp. 54–60; T. Mikocki, *A la recherche de l'art antique. Les voyageurs polonaise en Italie dans les années 1750–1830* (Varsovie, 1988), pp. 70–74 and 116.
- 2 W. Dobrowolski, *Stanisław Kostka Potocki's Greek Vases* (Warsaw, 2007). See also W. Dobrowolski, *Podróż do Włoch Elżbiety Lubomirskiej i Stanisława Kostki Potockiego* (Warszawa–Toruń, 2020).
- 3 M. Cesarano, 'Stanisław Kostka Potocki e gli scavi archeologici a Nola', in: *Archeologia, Letteratura, Collezionismo. Atti delle Giornate di studio dedicate a Jan e Stanisław Kostka Potocki – 17–18 aprile 2007*, eds E. Jastrzębowska, M. Niewojt (Roma, 2007), pp. 174–202; id., 'Stanisław Kostka Potocki: dalle "tombe etrusche" di Nola al "Winckelmann Polacco"', *Archeologiae*, 2005, vol. 3, no. 1–2, pp. 83–112; id., 'Stanisław Kostka Potocki e Nola: antiquaria e oltre', in: *Scambi e confronti sui modi dell'arte e della cultura tra Italia e Polonia. Esperienze significative ed occasioni di riflessione. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Varsavia, Istituto Italiano di Cultura 5 marzo 2010 – Nola, Chiesa dei SS. Apostoli 24/25 giugno 2010*, ed. S. Napolitano (Nola, 2010), pp. 87–115; id., 'La collezione dei Potocki oltre la "Ragione"', in: *Roma e Varsavia. Tradizione classica e educazione artistica nell'età dei Lumi e oltre, Atti del convegno internazionale (Varsavia, 9–12 ottobre 2017)*, ed. J. Miziolek (Roma, 2019), pp. 303–31.
- 4 Casimir Stryeński wrote about the use of the French language in the introduction to the *Memoires* of Countess Anna Potocka, daughter-in-law of Stanisław Kostka (C. Stryeński, *Memoires de la Ctesse Anna Potocka: 1794–1820* [Paris, 1897], p. i): 'Son éducation aristocratique, son entourage, son goût pour notre littérature, tout portait la comtesse Potocka à rédiger ses souvenirs en une langue qu'on parlait constamment autour d'elle et qu'elle avait apprise dès son enfance. Depuis longtemps, du reste, le français était à la mode dans toute l'Europe et particulièrement en Pologne, où, dès le seizième siècle, s'établirent des relations diplomatiques avec la France et où, pendant quelques mois, régna celui qui fut depuis Henri III'. A few lines later Stryeński cited an anonymous text from the late eighteenth century (*ibid.*, p. ii): 'Les femmes jouissent de la réputation d'être les mieux élevées de l'Europe : toutes parlent français ainsi que les hommes; rien de plus ordinaire qu'un Polonais de vingt ans parlant purement trois ou quatre langues sans le moindre accent'.

he apparently gave two clearly differing judgements regarding the city. The first of those judgements is found in the three-page manuscript entitled *Voyage de Nola* in which Count Potocki described Nola in a clearly depressed tone ‘La petite ville bien qu’assez propre ne conserve que le souvenir de son ancienne splendeur’.⁵ The second one comes from the letter he sent from Naples to his wife Aleksandra in Warsaw on 14 January 1786: ‘Tu me parles revenir en Italie, c’est bien le mon projet, dans lequel il entre autre de m’etablir a Nola qui est un endroit charmant pour quelques semaines’.⁶

A prelude to the encounter between the city of Nola and the eighteenth-century Polish travellers

At the outset, it is necessary to assess what knowledge of Nola Stanisław Kostka Potocki had before going there and what motivated him to go.

In spite of the absence of a certain proof, it must be assumed that to members of the most noble and powerful families in Poland who were certainly familiar with the history of their country, as Stanisław Kostka Potocki was, the name of Nola was not entirely unknown, since between 1640 and 1642 sixteen of the villages belonging to the city of Nola, known as *casali*, were under the civil and criminal jurisdiction of Władysław IV Vasa, the king of Poland, to whom they had been alienated by Philip IV the Catholic, king of Spain. Furthermore, at the time when archaeology was not yet a science, knowledge of the past was based only on historiographic sources, which since the outset of Humanism constituted an essential reading in the cultural formation of European scholars and nobles – and one of the most widely read ancient historians, Livy (Titus Livius), often mentioned Nola in his account of the Second Punic War: Nola had withstood the siege of Hannibal three times and was never conquered by the Carthaginians, who were defeated by the Roman consul Marcellus in front of the city walls. For this reason, in 1594 the Polish writer Stanisław Reszka, known in Europe as Rescius, in a letter in which he exhorted his compatriot, the poet Szymon Szymonowicz, to go to Italy to refresh and enrich his soul, wrote that he could visit *Marcellum Nolae*.⁷

5 Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, Public Archive of the Potockis (hereinafter: AGAD, APP), MS 249, pp. 306–08.

6 AGAD, APP, MS 262, p. 270, p. 143.

7 S. Reszka, *Stanisłai Rescii Epistolarum liber vnus. Quibus nonnulla eiusdem auctoris. Pia exercitia pijs lectoribus non indigna pij quidam viri adiungenda putauerunt* (Neapolis, 1594), p. 498. See also B. Biliński, ‘Laudes Campaniae e interviste agli antichi nella lettera dell’umanista polacco Stanisław Reszka-Rescio dell’anno 1594’, *Rivista Storica Salernitana*, vol. 8, no. 15, 1991, pp. 89–110; A. Masłowska-Nowak, K. Topmaszuk, *Stanisław Reszka, List do Szymona Szymonowica* (Warszawa, 2014).

Nola and the *Etruscheria*

Starting from the second half of the eighteenth century, however, the reason why many Italian and foreign travellers had been going to Nola was the abundance of Attic figured vases from its ancient necropolis. A fashion for the so-called ‘Etruscan’ figured vases spread like wildfire among the nobles and scholars from over the entire Europe after 1726, when *De Etruria Regali*, a manuscript of the Scottish writer Thomas Dempster which had remained unpublished for more than a century, was printed in Florence in two volumes at the expense of the young English nobleman Thomas Coke.⁸ It was the beginning of the so-called *Etruscheria*,⁹ from then on, no European gentleman worthy of that name could renounce having a library containing the most important books on Italy and a collection of ancient Etruscan finds. The main protagonists in this movement were experts in antiquities, united by a constant collaboration, often based on correspondence, aiming at communicating the existence and consistency of collections of antiquities and new discoveries throughout Italy. Many of those experts took the Florentine antiquarian Francesco Gori as their reference. Their research was based on Livy’s testimony that the Etruscans had once ruled all of Italy; hence they considered all figured pottery found in the necropolises of Italy to be Etruscan, even though many of the collectors and antiquarians from Campania since the previous century had been claiming that the figured pottery was Greek.¹⁰

8 Thomas Dempster wrote *Etruria Regalis* between 1616 and 1619, when he was a full professor of civil law at the University of Pisa, on behalf of Cosimo II, Grand Duke of Florence, with the aim of linking the claimed hegemony of the Medici family over Tuscany to their descent from the Etruscans who reigned over the region in ancient times. Dempster fell out of favour at the Florentine court, however, moved from Florence to Boulogne and his work remained unpublished. Then, when the Treaty of London of 1718 foreshadowed the end of the autonomy of Tuscany with the passage of power from the last of the Medici, Gian Gastone, to Don Carlos, son of King Philip V of Spain and Elisabetta Farnese, some eminent exponents of Florentine politics and culture, including Tommaso Bonaventuri, Giovanni Bottari and Filippo Buonarroti, thought of entrusting the claims of Florentine political autonomy to the work of Dempster, called to demonstrate the ideal continuity between ancient Etruria and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. It was Buonarroti who involved the Englishman Thomas Coke in the publication of the book. During his cultural journey all throughout Italy between 1714 and 1717 with his tutor Thomas Hobart, Coke had visited the richest private libraries, including that of the powerful and famous Florentine, with whom he conceived the project, never completed, to publish Livy’s *History*.

9 On the origin and spread of the *Etruscheria*, with a specific reference to southern Italy, see M. Cesarano, ‘Il MANN che non c’è. Le antichità campane nel mondo’, in: *Gli Etruschi e il MANN, Catalogo della mostra (Napoli, 12 giugno 2020 – 31 maggio 2021)*, ed. V. Nizzo (Milano, 2020), pp. 220–33.

10 The first important collection of antiquities in Naples, annexed to a rich library, was formed already in the seventeenth century in the home of the lawyer Giuseppe Valletta (1636–1714). He divided his library into four sections: statuary, numismatics, epigraphy, ceramics. The vases in his collection came mainly from the necropolis of Puglia, a region

In a short time, painted pottery became one of the main sources of knowledge of the ancient world along with sculpture, epigraphy and numismatics. In his *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, published in 1764 in Dresden, Johann Joachim Winckelmann recognized the essential role of figured ceramics in the study of the art of drawing among the ancients and he was among those who argued that most of the figured pottery found in Italy came from Greece. Hundreds of Attic black-figure vases and even more red-figure vases have been found in the necropolises of Campania – in Capua, in Nola, in Cuma, in Sant’Agata dei Goti, in Calvi. Winckelmann was one of those who wrote about the generous yields of the excavations in Nola: ‘Among the painted vases of Campania, I also include all the so-called Etruscan ones, since most of them were brought to light in Campania, especially in Nola’.¹¹

A notice relating to excavations of antiquities conducted in the late fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century in Nola, in the area of the necropolis, was provided by the Nolan humanist Ambrogio Leone in *De Nola*, published in Venice in 1514 (Fig. 1). But it is with the *Etruscheria* that the necropolises of Nola were literally attacked by antiquity-hunters and thousands of tombs were emptied of all their objects, especially red-figure vases.

It is probable that Marcello Venuti was referring to figured vases when in 1740 he stated that various testimonies had been found in Nola relating to the domination ‘that the ancient Tuscans had in the coasts of that country which today is called the Kingdom of Naples’.¹² In 1741, Francesco Ficoroni wrote to Francesco Gori:

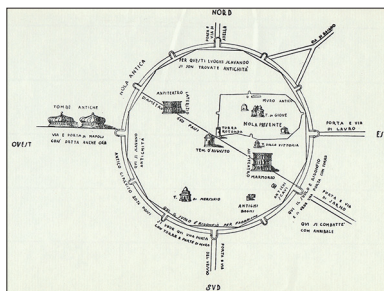


Fig. 1

A drawing with the hypothetical wall circuit of the Roman Nola and the medieval city inside

in southern Italy (M.E. Masci, ‘La collezione di vasi antichi figurati riunita da Giuseppe Valletta: identificazione parziale dei pezzi raccolti e ricostruzione della dispersione’, *Annali della Scuola Superiore Normale di Pisa*, vol. 4, 1999, no. 2, pp. 555–93). His house became a meeting place for Italian and foreign scholars and travellers. One of his collaborators, Domenico Ferrari, was a Protestant and moved to London as a teacher of Thomas Coke. In the eighteenth century, the collections of vases excavated in Campania were increasingly numerous. In 1734 Giovanni Bottari wrote that he was discouraged from drawing vases having seen hundreds of them in the private homes of nobles, lawyers, clergymen and musicians.

- 11 J.J. Winckelmann, *Die Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (Dresden, 1764), p. 118: ‘Unter den Campanischen gemalten Gefäßen begreife ich hier zugleich alle fogenannte Etrurische, weil die mehresten in Campanien, und sonderlich zu Nola, ausgegraben find’ (all translations in the article have been made for the purpose of the current publication).
- 12 M. Venuti, ‘Conferenza sul dominio che gli antichi Toscani ebbero sulle coste di Napoli, e sui vestigi di ciò trovati in Resina, Nola e Capua’, *Novelle Letterarie* (Firenze), no. 47, 18 November 1740, col. 739: ‘il dominio che gli antichi Toscani ebbero nelle coste di quel paese che oggi si chiama Regno di Napoli’. See also A. Castorina, ‘“Copia grande di antichi sepolcri”’. Sugli scavi delle necropoli in Italia meridionale tra Settecento e inizio Ottocento’, *Rivista dell’Istituto nazionale di archeologia e storia dell’arte*, vol. 3, 1996–97, no. 19–20, p. 311.

A new correspondent asks me from that city for imperial silver medals, and since I know he has his estates in Nola, where usually those vases are unearthened, yesterday I told him I would get him some if he got me some beautiful decorated vases, then I hope get some of them. I know they are in Naples, but in the hands of gentlemen who do not want to sell them, and when I was there and I bought for 600 ducats in the Valletta Gallery on behalf of the late Cardinal Gualtieri, I tried with others, but they told me the vases were of their Greeks.¹³

Francesco Gori's 'new correspondent' was the Nolan marquis Felice Maria Mastrilli. He personally wrote to Gori that he have started collecting antiquities in 1742.¹⁴ Initially he set up his private museum in his palace in Nola, but when it grew too large, he decided to move it to Naples, to another of his palaces. Many visitors to his museum testified that it contained nearly a thousand Etruscan vases.

The museum of the new Episcopal Seminary was instituted in Nola between the seventeen-forties and fifties, on the initiative of Bishop Troiano Caracciolo del Sole. The management of the museum was entrusted to Father Gianstefano Remondini from Somasca. Giovan Battista Passeri wrote about him and his museum to Cardinal Spinelli of Naples, saying that he collected 'antiquities of all kinds from everywhere, he dug out a large number from the ground from more than a thousand corpses, which after so many centuries he has stripped back of their sepulchral pagan ornaments to enrich it, he put them in order and arranged them in their due classes'.¹⁵

All scholars of the time claimed that figured vases of Nola were excellent in terms of quality of painting and draughtsmanship. As some ancient authors wrote that Nola was founded by the Etruscans, in the eighteenth century it was for many decades believed that the figured vases were Etruscan in origin and produced precisely in Nola. Winckelmann,

13 Biblioteca Marucelliana di Firenze (hereinafter: BMF), MS B VII 11, fol. 207: 'Nuovo corrispondente mi richiede da detta città delle medaglie imperiali d'argento, e come so che ha li beni a Nola, dove ordinari si scavano detti Vasi, gli ho ieri risposto, che gli ne avrei procurate, se egli mi avesse procurato degli belli Vasi istoriati, onde spero d'averne. So che a Napoli ve ne sono, ma in mano de' Signori che non vogliono vendere, e quando fui colà e che comprai per ducati 600 nella galleria del Valletta per il Defunto Signor Cardinal Gualtieri, provai così altri, e mi rispondevano che erano delli loro Greci'.

14 BMF, Carteggio Gori, n. 637. See also C. Lyons, 'Il museo "nolano" di Felice Maria Mastrilli e la cultura del collezionismo a Napoli (1700–1755)', in: *Nola e il suo territorio dal secolo XVII al secolo XIX. Momenti di storia culturale e artistica*, ed. T.R. Toscano (Castellammare di Stabia, 1998), pp. 69–108, and 79 fn. 28.

15 The passage is taken from a letter that Passeri addressed to the archbishop of Naples, Cardinal Spinelli, and which is reported in G. Remondini, *Dissertazione del padre D. Gianstefano Remondini sacerdote della Congregazione de' CC.RR. di Somasca. I. Sopra una singolare iscrizione osca* (Genova, 1760), p. 23, fn. 13: 'd'ogni parte antichità d'ogni sorta, ne cavò gran copia di sotterra presso a più di mille cadaveri, che dopo tanti secoli ha rispogliati de' genitileschi sepolcrali ornamenti per arricchimelo, egli ordinò, e dispose nelle dovute lor classi'.

however, relying instead on the quality of the vases and following the early Neapolitan scholars who relied principally on the Greek inscriptions of the vases, began to argue that they were Greek. In this, he followed the tradition of Silius Italicus and Iustinus, according to whom Nola had been founded by the Chalcidians,¹⁶ the same Greeks who had founded Pithekoussai (today isle of Ischia) and Cuma (in reality, Nola had been founded by the indigenous population in the eighth century B.C.¹⁷ and the large amount of Attic pottery in its necropolis was due to the close cultural and commercial relations that the city had with Athens in the fifth century B.C.). In any case, however, at the time of Stanisław Kostka Potocki's travels in Italy Nola was already the most important quarry of ancient figured vases in the whole Italian peninsula.¹⁸

***Voyage de Nola* by Stanisław Kostka Potocki**

A perusal of the *Voyage de Nola* clearly indicates that Stanisław Kostka had already been infected by a feverish desire for Etruscan vases and that he was well aware of the fame of those found in Nola: 'Il y avait long tems que je progettait une course a Nola, les fouilles de vases Etrusques qui s'y font atireyent ma curiosité, je voudrais puiser dans la source, et examiner par moi meme les lieux et la maniere dont elles se font'.

The long awaited trip to Nola was delayed by a winter more rainy and cold than was usual for Naples. But, taking advantage of a clear day, Potocki left home 'd'apres bon matin' with the intention of getting his project of going to Nola organised:

J'entrais en ma promenant dans une boutique, dont le propriétaire me fit voir quelques petits vases Etrusques, c'était à ce un'il disait de ceux de Nola. Le mot réveille ma curiosité, je fis sur le champ le projet d'y aller. Mon homme qui etait connui dans l'endroit propose de m'y accompagner, j'acceptai son offer ... Je appris en outre qu'il avait accompagné le Pr. Poniatowsky dans une ... course, m'assura que S. A. avait été tres contente de lui, que j'avais été tres heureux ... de tomber entre les mains d'un aussi galant homme que lui, ... et finit pour offrir les services desinterise en tout et pour tout.

16 Silius XII, 161–166; Iust. XX 1,13.

17 M. Cesarano, 'Nola "polis degli Ausoni" nella Periagesi di Ecateo di Mileto alla luce della documentazione dalle necropoli', *Incidenza dell'Antico*, vol. 9, 2011, pp. 143–68; id., 'Nola. La "città nuova" della mesogaia', in: *Pompei e gli Etruschi*, eds M. Osanna, S. Verger (Milano, 2018), pp. 173–77.

18 For the excavations of antiquities in Nola in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see M. Cesarano, 'Nola e gli scavi (e i non scavi), i musei e il commercio di antichità in età borbonica. I protagonisti, i luoghi e le ragioni alla luce di nuovi dati d'archivio e di recenti indagini sul campo', in: *Archeologie borboniche: la ricerca sull'antico a Capri e nelle province di Napoli e Terra di Lavoro (Atti del Convegno di Capri 11–12 ottobre 2019)*, eds R. Bosso, L. Di Franco, G. Di Martino, S. Foresta, R. Perrella (Roma, 2020), pp. 451–93.

Since Nola lies northeast of Naples, he and his guide left the city through

Porta Capuana:

Nous sortimes par la porte de Capoue, a un mil de la nous vîmes les ruines de la maison de campagna de la Reina belle et galante, qui etrangla, dit-on, son mari, se fit ... par le papa, au quel elle vendit la comté d'Avignon, qu'il ne lui paye pas, regna lors tems ... Duras, le nomma son heritier, et fut assassiné par lui ... couvrent ces mures gothiques temoins muets de tout d'evenements, de tout le crimes fameux.

The queen referred to by Potocki was Joanna I of Naples or of Anjou (1326–1382);¹⁹ yet there exist no records of her residence along the road that leaves Porta Capuana. Taking into account the distance of one Italian mile mentioned by Potocki, the ruins he saw were those of a well-known royal residence built by Alfonso II of Aragon on the site named Poggio Reale. Information about it comes from the account of the journey from Naples to Taranto published by Henry Swinburne in 1783: 'On the twelfth of April 1777, I set out with S.T.G. from Naples by Porta Capuana. ... At the distance of one mile from Naples, we passed by ruins of Poggio Reale, a villa built by Alphonsus the Second, while Duke of Calabria'.²⁰ Potocki's misidentification was due to the fact that a villa of Queen Joanna I of Aragon was known to have existed in the same area. It is likely that the antiquarian who accompanied him on his trip to Nola indicated the ruins as those of the villa of a queen of Naples named Joanna and Potocki thought of Queen Joanna I of Anjou because he knew her story as being intertwined with the history of Poland (her husband Andrew was the son of Elizabeth of Poland, daughter of Ladislaus the Elbow-High). At the same time it must be taken into account that Potocki had studied the history of Naples, together with the history of all his other Italian destinations, before arriving there.

19 Joanna I (1326–1382) was the daughter of Charles, the duke of Calabria, and Marie of Valois. When Pope John XXII supported Charles I of Hungary, who claimed he had the right to the throne of Naples, Joanna was forced to marry his son Andrew (1327–1345), the pope granting the necessary dispensation for the marriage in November 1333. The marriage remained unconsummated for years, most probably because of Andrew's youth, but it gave rise to conflicts between the various branches of the House of Anjou. Both contemporaneous and later authors were convinced that Robert of Anjou, the king of Naples, initially wanted to appoint Andrew as his successor, but finally named Joanna as his sole heir to throne of kingdom of Naples. Upon his death on 20 January 1343, Joanna, then sixteen, was crowned queen by Pope Clement VI in Rome, while Andrew obtained only the title of the duke of Calabria. Joanna and Andrew were spouses and enemies at the same time, the faces of a conflict that involved the most powerful nobles of Europe, including the pope. Contrary to the pope's orders, Joanna was always opposed to the idea of Andrew's coronation. On the night of 18 September 1345 the duke of Calabria was assassinated, strangled with a cord by aristocratic conspirators, in the Angevin castle of Aversa. While her husband was being killed, Joanna was in her own bedroom; her involvement in his assassination has never been proven.

20 H. Swinburne, *Travels in the Two Sicilies in the years 1777, 1778, 1779 and 1780* (London, 1783), p. 95.

This, in fact, was the custom of all the aristocratic foreign travellers in Italy. According to Stryiński, in a letter to Countess Sophie Wodzicka, who travelled to Italy in 1846–1848, Countess Anna Potocka wrote: ‘Vous avez les deux choses essentielles à quiconque parcourt ce beau pays : instruction et imagination; sans ces deux richesses, il est inutile de voir l’Italie, où l’on doit vivre dans le passé’.²¹ Thomas Coke, in turn, wrote that ‘one of the greatest ornaments to a gentleman is a fine library’.²² This observation became a guideline for aspiring gentlemen from over the entire Europe. When a Grand Tour of Italy turned into a status symbol among the European nobility, it also became essential for a man of culture to have books on history, art and places of Italy in his library, because, as Victor Delpuech de Comeiras wrote, ‘Il nes aut guèr conter sur l’exactitude des anciens ... Rien n’est plus propre à développer cette précieuse connaissance, que des livres de voyages qui décrivent la situation, l’étendue, la qualité du sol et des productions des différens pays, le génie, les mœurs, la religion, le commerce, les sciences et les arts de tous les habitans de l’univers’.²³

Potocki, in cooperation with his wife Aleksandra and the architect Chrystian Piotr Aigner, designed and set up in the Wilanów Palace a library worthy of his rank. He not only acquired and read the most known and appreciated books by travellers who had written about Italy,²⁴ but he also aspired to be one of them. The rules of travel literature were defined in the course of the eighteenth century, drawing largely on the studies of geography, which produced geographical dictionaries of an encyclopaedic style, where alongside the physical description of the places, accompanied whenever possible by geographical maps, there was space for historical facts on the resident populations and on everything that could be observed in a given location.²⁵ Thus, Potocki, being familiar with

21 C. Stryiński, *Comtesse Anna Potocka, Voyage d’Italie (1826–1827)* (Paris, 1899), p. v.

22 W.O. Hassel, ‘Portrait of Bibliophile II. Thomas Coke, Earl of Leicester, 1697–1759’, *Book Collector*, vol. 8, 1959, pp. 249–60, here: p. 249.

23 V. Delpuech de Comeiras, *Abregée de l’Histoire générale des voyages fait en Europe* (Paris, 1803), p. 8.

24 A. Kwiatkowska, ‘The Grand Tour of Italy’, in: P. Jaskanis, A. Rottermund, A. Kwiatkowska, A. Ekielska-Mardal, *Grand Tour. The Birth of a Collection of Stanisław Kostka Potocki* (Warszawa, 2006), pp. 55–56.

25 C. Hofmann, ‘La genèse de l’atlas historique en France (1630–1800): pouvoirs et limites de la carte comme “oeil de l’histoire”’, *Bibliothèque de l’école des chartes*, vol. 158, 2000, no. 1, pp. 97–128. On p. x of the *Avertissement du traducteur* in the first tome of *Histoire Générale des voyages ou Nouvelle Collection de toutes les relations de Voyages par Mer et par Terre, qui ont été publiées jusqu’à présent dans les différentes langues de toutes les nations connues*, published in Paris in 1746, Abbot Prevost wrote: ‘Quoique les Auteurs promettent avec raison, dans le Recueil de tous les Voyageurs connus, un systeme complet d’Histoire & de Geographie moderne, ils n’ont pas fait assez remarquer que leur objet n’est pas l’Histoire des Pais où les Voyageurs ont pénétré, mais seulement l’Histoire de leurs Voyages & de leurs Observations; de sorte que s’il en résulte effectivement de grandes

the basic rules of this literary genre, in his *Voyage de Nola* used its conventional format and first described the landscape along the road from Naples to Nola, then the arrival in the city, the most interesting historical events related to it, and finally its appearance and the vestiges of its past. But, what is more significant, following the rules of contemporary comparative geography, he compared ancient Nola to that of his time.

Nola is located in the heart of the Campanian plain, about 30 kilometres northeast of Naples. Potocki and his companion travelled in a one-horse carriage with only one driver. The trip from Naples to Nola took about three hours. The count described the landscape he observed along the way:

Bien que le chemin fut très dégradé nous parcourions assez rapidement une plain fertile recouverte d'une forêt d'arbres ... cette campagne était à l'œil le riche carpet d'un triple culture ... Un milieu des coteaux que la bordent, l'on découvre le Vesuve, qui a des fermes proprement dans coté opposé à celui que l'on voit de Naples. Nous la parcourames au moins de trois heures de Naple à Nola. Notre petit cheval fournit cette course lestement sans se fatiguer, qui est à peu près de 12 miles d'Italie (au de 3 mils de Pologne). Il était près de midi lors que nous arrivames à Nola. C'est une petite plaine couverte d'arbres, bordé de coteaux ..., qui offre une voitrage tranquile. La petite ville bien qu'après propre ne conserve que le souvenir de son ancienne splendeur. Auguste y meurt dans la meme chambre ou espira son père, ce fait consacre par l'histoire, ne fait un des monuments les moins interessants de Nola. Ne resta quelques inscriptions, de grand belles pierres eparus, un bel entablement dorique qui semblait appartenir à un edifice d'une grand magnificence, les vestiges d'un amphitheatre de pierre et d'un theatre de marbre. Tels sont les monuments qui rendent Nola interessante, tels sont les traces de l'ancienne Nola.²⁶

The format of the text is very close to that of the description of Nola in Henry Swinburne's account of his journey from Naples to Taranto.²⁷ In addition, a perusal of Swinburne's entire report reveals that Potocki's description of landscape seen along the way from Naples to Nola and the reference to the death of Augustus are an abridgement of a well-known French translation of the English writer's text. Swinburne's work was published in English in London in two volumes, the first (which includes the journey from Naples to Taranto) in 1783 and the second in 1785. Having been translated into French and issued in Paris by Jean-Benjamin de La Borde in 1785, the book was very successful.²⁸ A part of Swinburne's description of Nola

lumieres pour la Géographie & l'Histoire en général, c'est par accident, si j'ose employer ce terme, & parce qu'en visitant divers Pais les Voyageurs n'ont pu manquer de recueillir ce qui s'est attiré leur attention'.

26 The text is transcribed from Potocki's manuscript, where the accents are used incorrectly.

27 Swinburne, *Travels in the Two Sicilies*, pp. 91–103.

28 J.-B. de La Borde, *Voyage de Henri Swinburne dans les deux Siciles en 1777, 1778, 1779 et 1780, traduit de l'Anglois par un voyageur François* (Paris, 1785). The French translation was essential to the success of travel literature. Around the year 1745, some English intellectuals wished to start a publishing project for the publication of volumes



Fig. 2

Façade of the Orsini Palace in Nola, built with stone from the ancient Roman theatre in the second half of the fifteenth century

in the French translation appeared in the second edition of Mentelle's *Géographie comparée* in 1785.²⁹

In the French edition of Swinburne's text, we read: 'Nous tournâmes à gauche pour nous rendre à Nole, ville très peu digne de l'attention d'un observateur, toutes les ruines de ses anciens édifices étant presque effacées. Il ne reste, de deux amphithéâtres, que quelques pans de murs en briques, le marbre dont ils étoient revêtus ayant été enlevé par un comte de Nole pour servir à la construction de son palais' (Fig. 2).³⁰ There are some differences between Potocki's text and Swinburne's one, precisely in the description of the remains of ancient buildings in Nola. The Polish writer additionally mentioned some ancient inscriptions, some of which can

in English that would collect all the descriptions of the journeys made by travellers from all over the world and written in various European languages. Abbot Prevost chose to make a French translation, which was much more successful than the original work and which, as La Harpe wrote, 'se répandit dans toute l'Europe' (J.-F. La Harpe, *Abrégé de l'histoire générale des voyages*, vol. 1 [Paris, 1780], p. iii). In 1785, a German translation by J.R. Forster was published at Hamburg. The second edition of the English version appeared in London in 1790; its abridged version was included by Victor Delpuech de Comeiras in his *Abregée de l'Historie générale des voyages fait en Europe*, vol. 11 (Paris, 1804), pp. 276–322.

29 E. Mentelle, *Géographie comparée ou Analyse de la géographie ancienne et moderne des peuples de tous les pays et de tous les âges*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1788), p. 112.

30 La Borde, *Voyage de Henri Swinburne*, p. 69.



Fig. 3

Fragments of Doric friezes at the base of the fourteenth-century Albertini Palace in Nola

today be seen as *spolia* reused in the city's historic buildings. Then he referred to 'un bel entablement dorique qui semblait appartenir a un edifice d'une grand magnificence'. This was a group of fragments of two different Doric friezes that were reused as building material at the base of the fourteenth-century Albertini Palace, which can still be admired near one of Nola's central squares (Fig. 3).³¹ Finally, Potocki mentioned the remains of a stone amphitheatre and a marble theatre, whereas Swinburne, as well as all other writers who described them in the same period, spoke of two amphitheatres. The starting point for all those who wrote about Nola in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was *De Nola* by the Nolan humanist Ambrogio Leone, published in Venice in 1514 and reprinted five times until 1735. The knowledge of this book among the authors of books concerning travels to Italy is revealed by the Lalande's remark about its author in his *Voyage d'un François en Italie, fait dans les année 1765 & 1766* issued in Paris in 1769.³² This book was a must-have in the libraries of the nobility; it was well known among European travellers and much desired by Potocki, who in the letter to Aleksandra dated 16 December 1785 from Naples wrote that he was eagerly awaiting the arrival of Aigner, who would bring him a copy of Lalande's eight-volume work, which in the meantime he had had the opportunity to consult in a private library. According to the canons of *laudatio urbis*, Leone painted the history of Roman Nola with glory and mentioned its remains as still

31 Other fragments of same Doric friezes were reused at the base of the cathedral's medieval bell tower. See C. Capaldi, 'Severo more doricorum'. *Espressioni del linguaggio figurativo augusteo in fregi dorici della Campania* (Pozzuoli, 2005), pp. 65–88 and 122–29.

32 J. de Lalande, *Voyage d'un François en Italie*, vol. 7 (Venise, 1770), p. 60.

visible in the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries.³³ He described two amphitheatres, mistakenly identifying the ancient Roman theatre as a ‘marble amphitheatre’, and based on his text, all subsequent writers made the same mistake. In 1890 Beloch still spoke of two amphitheatres, although he referred to Nissen’s



Fig. 4

Part of the Roman amphitheatre of Nola unearthed so far

proposal to identify one of them as a theatre.³⁴ Only in 1902, however, in the second volume of his *Italische Landeskunde*, Nissen wrote that in Nola, ‘an amphitheatre is still recognizable, temples and a theatre have been identified earlier’.³⁵ Thus, Potocki appears to have been the first to have correctly identified the ancient Roman theatre. After him, only Frederik Münter, who made an excursion to Nola from Naples in October 1786, correctly identified the theatre, reporting that the stones for the construction of the Orsini Palace had been taken from its remains.³⁶

The *amphitheatre de pierre* is the Roman amphitheatre located at the north-western end of ancient Nola (Fig. 4).³⁷ The building is today preserved in its entire ellipse, but it has been only partly unearthed in the last twenty years by regular excavation campaigns conducted by the Ministry for Cultural Heritage. It was built after Romans conquered Nola at the end of the *bellum sociale* (90–87 B.C.). With the length of 138 metres and the width of 108 metres, it must have been one of the largest in Italy. According to Gianstefano Remondini, archaeologist

33 See B. de Devitiis, F. Lenzo, L. Miletti, *Ambrogio Leone’s De Nola, Venice 1514. Humanism and Antiquarian Culture in Renaissance Southern Italy* (Leiden–Boston, 2018).

34 J. Beloch, *Campanien* (Breslau, 1890), p. 460.

35 H. Nissen, *Italische Landeskunde* (Berlin, 1902), p. 756: ‘ein Amphitheater ist noch kenntlich, früher sind Tempel und ein Theater nachgewiesen worden’.

36 F. Münter, *Efterretninger om begge Sicilierne, samlede paa en Reise i disse Lande i Aarene 1785 og 1786*, vol. 1 (Kiøbenhavn, 1788), p. 86. See also M. Nielsen, ‘Frederik Münter og brødrene Vivencio i Nola: vaser, kontekster og lag’, *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 2007 (2010), pp. 107–48.

37 G. Tosi, *Gli edifici per spettacoli dell’Italia romana* (Roma, 2003), pp. 153–54; M. Cesariano, ‘Il disegno dell’anfiteatro di Nola in alcune pergamene aragonesi di Napoli’, *Symbolae Antiquariae*, vol. 4, 2012, pp. 49–82; id., ‘Studiare la “villa di Augusto” nell’ager nolanus’, *Amoentis*, vol. 8, 2019, pp. 24 and 45; id., ‘Nola e gli scavi’, pp. 480–86.

and director of the museum of antiquities of the Episcopal Seminary of Nola, in the second half of the eighteenth century it was still possible to see only some parts of its walls: ‘And now, even if from the cultivated soil nothing comes out, in that area you can see the earth swollen by the presence of its foundations, and in several parts around you can still see the ruins of its ancient walls, so that there is no doubt that this is the real site of the brick Amphitheatre, and if you dug a little, you would get even more exact information’.³⁸

The *theatre de marbre*, in turn, is the ancient Roman theatre built in the south-eastern part of Nola, most likely in the Augustan age, in a place known since the Middle Ages as *Castello Rotto* (Broken Castle) due to the presence of its remains (Fig. 5). What of it had survived to the present day was investigated in the nineteen-nineties, but today is no longer visible.³⁹ His correct identification of the ancient theatre makes it very likely that Potocki saw what he wrote about with his own eyes. His reference to a frieze in the Doric style, not mentioned by other writers, can

be considered as another proof of that. Today’s scholars assume that the Doric friezes were some of the stones that, according to Ambrogio Leone, were taken from the theatre by Count Orso Orsini in the second half of the fifteenth century to build his palace in Nola and also used for other private buildings.⁴⁰ The Nolan humanist, however, did not specify that they were Doric-style metopes and triglyphs. Not even Remondini did that in his *Della Nolana ecclesiastica storia* of 1747:

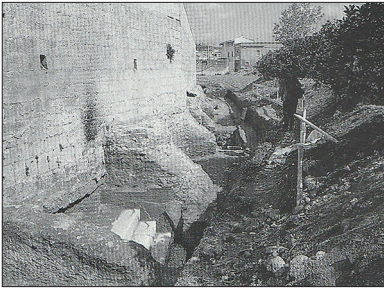


Fig. 5

Remains of the Roman theatre of Nola no longer visible. From M. Cesarano, *Studiare la “villa di Augusto” nell’ager nolanus*, ‘Amoenitas’, 8, 2019

Many of their remains are still visible throughout the city, and especially in the bell tower of the Cathedral, which up to a height of 80 palms is entirely built with these marble squares, and at least for three sides there is a series of them, since the fourth side is joined to that of the Church and is not visible, and it is built with pieces of similar very noble and spacious marble variously carved with military insignia both Nolan and Roman, with weapons of various kinds, crests, and hauberks, men on horseback, or fighters on the ground, griffins, elephants, and others animals, and monsters; and these very similar pieces can be seen built for the walls of various palaces.⁴¹

38 G. Remondini, *Della nolana ecclesiastica storia*, vol. 1 (Napoli, 1747), p. 102–03: ‘Ed or sebben nulla più ne sorvanza al coltivato terreno, si scorge nulla di manco in mezzo a quel territorio la terra alquanto alzata per le sotto rimastevi fondamenta, ed in più parti all’intorno veggonsi ancor rovine dell’antiche sue mura, si che dubitar non si può esser questo il vero luogo dell’Anfiteatro de’ mattoni, e per poco, che vi si cavasse, a trar se ne verrebbe anche più esatta notizia’.

39 Tosi, *Gli edifici*, p. 154; id., ‘Studiare la “villa di Augusto”’, p. 28.

40 L. Ambrosius, *De Nola* (Venezia, 1514), cap. VIII, p. xii.

41 Remondini, *Della nolana ecclesiastica storia*, p. 104: ‘Molti di lor segni ancor si veggono per la Città, e specialmente nel Campanile della Cattedrale, il quale fino all’altezza di LXXX. palmi è tutto di questi quadrati marmi fabbricato, ed evvi un’ordine per tre lati

At this point, I believe that Potocki's *Voyage of Nola* must have been written after the first edition of Swinburne's work in 1783, perhaps after its French translation, published in 1785, collecting information from the description of Nola by the English traveller and the notes Potocki had personally taken during his visit to the city. The tone in which it was written is not the confidential one used by Potocki in the letters to his wife, but that typical of travel literature, which indicates that Potocki planned to include it in the second *Voyage d'Italie*,⁴² which was, however, never written. If so, it cannot be ruled out that there had been a considerable time gap between his trip to Nola and the writing of the report from it. Potocki may also have written it after reading the 1803–1805 printed edition of the abridgement by Delpuech de Comeiras of the French translation of Swinburne; he would have read it in Warsaw, where Delpuech's *Abregée* must have been well known since it was dedicated to Catherine II of Russia and its first volume began with the description of a journey to Poland in 1778 by English William Coxe. Therefore, considering that the journey described was Potocki's first visit to Nola and that he conducted excavations in the necropolis of the city in February 1786, it is certain that *Voyage de Nola* is the account of the journey that Potocki made to Nola at the time of his stay in Naples in the winter of 1785–1786 and not of his previous visit of Kingdom of Naples in 1775, as is accepted today by the majority of scholars.⁴³

Disappointed expectations

Potocki was neither the first nor the last to point out in his writings the evident contrast between the splendour of the ancient city and the decadence of the contemporary one. In the sixth volume of his *Voyage d'un François en Italie* Lalande, describing the city of Naples, mentioned a gate 'appelée porta Nolana, parce qu'elle conduit à cette ville ancienne & célèbre de Nola'.⁴⁴ But as early as in 1619 Stephanus Ritter had written about Nola that 'ambitus eius olim fuit maximus ... Hodie est exiguum oppidum, haud procul a Neapoli situm'.⁴⁵ Then in 1783

almen disteso, posciachè il quarto è unito al muro della Chiesa, e non si vede, e formato da pezzi di nobilissimo, e spazioso consimil marmo vagamente intagliato a militari 'nsegne sì Nolane, che Romane, ad armi di varie sorte, cimieri, ed usberghi, ad uomini a cavallo, o combattenti a terra, a grifi, ad elefanti, ed altri animali, e mostri; ed a questi similissimi altri pezzi se ne veggon fabbricati per le mura di varj palazzi'.

42 A ten-page manuscript in French entitled *Voyage d'Italie en 1774* by S.K. Potocki is kept in AGAD, APP, MS 245.

43 W. Dobrowolski, *Stanisław Kostka Potocki's Greek Vases* (Warsaw, 2007), p. 58, fn. 22.

44 J. de Lalande, *Voyage d'un François en Italie*, vol. 6 (Venise, 1769), p. 32.

45 S. Ritter, *Cosmographia prosometrica* (Marpurg, 1619), p. 900.

Swinburne defined it as ‘a city that affords little scope for observation’⁴⁶ and Potocki wrote that ‘la petite ville ne conserve que le souvenir de son ancienne splendeur’.⁴⁷ In 1790, in his *Descrizione geografica e politica delle Sicilie*, Giuseppe Galanti described it as a very poor-looking city. Having noted that the population of Nola was 8345 inhabitants and narrated its historical events, he wrote:

Nola today is very different from ancient Nola. Of its ancient grandeur, only the name remains. Few and miserable jobs for the needs of life, and great beggary are the things that distinguish it today; Then it abounds in monasteries, because there are nine for men, four for women, as well as two conservatories. The present city is located upon the ancient one, which remains covered by the earth brought by the alluvial floods up to 50 palms in height. To the east, south and west it is surrounded by stagnant streams and vegetable gardens of fertilized land, only because of the looseness of the inhabitants. The streets are ugly and paved with limestone, to which the vasoli of Vesuvius should always be preferred. The cathedral, which is a Gothic remnant, protrudes with its façade above a very unfortunate square. Near the small door, from which you go down to the chapel of the dead, in an ignoble and hardly visible site, there is a marble bas-relief of S. Girolamo, the only monument of Girolamo Merliano that his homeland preserves. There is still a wooden pulpit worked with many other materials. The underground church is said to contain the body of Bishop S. Felice, and it said from the place where he rests a certain liqueur, called manna, flows, the scarcity or abundance of which is, for the Nolans, a sure indication of the scarcity or abundance of the harvest. According to Ambrosius Leo, this church was built on the ruins of a temple of Jupiter and the floor that is currently seen there had been part of the ancient temple. The church with the atrium of the nuns of S. Chiara is a design by Sanfelice. There are three paintings on the ceiling, and two paintings in the chapels, one of St. Anthony of Padua, the other of an Ecce Homo with St. Francis Xavier and St. Francis de Sales, all painted by Sanfelice himself, which are highly esteemed. The churches of S. Vittoria and S. Salvatore were built on the ancient temples of Vittoria and Jupiter the Servator. The church of the Purgatory was modernized by Domenicantonio Vaccaro, who made the main altar in marble and painted two paintings of Saint Michele Arcangelo and Saint Gennaro. The palace of the ancient counts of Nola is perhaps the only building worth seeing. It was built with stones removed from the ancient marble amphitheatre that was in Nola in the place which today is called the Broken Castle. According to Ambrosius Leo, this amphitheatre could be compared to the famous amphitheatre in Capua. The palace is located above a beautiful square, where the market takes place: it became a Jesuit college, then a conservatory of arts, finally barracks for the cavalry. Outside the city there are other cavalry barracks of great size and magnificence. There was also another amphitheatre in Nola in the place known today as the Murara, but much less magnificent than the first, Leo tells us that the marbles of this last amphitheatre, as well as those of the temple of Augustus and Mercury, were transported to Naples and used in the palace which today is of the princes of Colabrano. In Nola there is a seat for the nobility. This building is very petty.

⁴⁶ Swinburne, *Travels in the Two Sicilies*, p. 97.

⁴⁷ AGAD, APP, MS 249, p. 307.

Outside the city there is a Seminary with a large, poorly executed structure, where 300 young men are taught not only theology, ecclesiastical law and the classics, but also civil law and physical sciences with machines; this is a rare quality in an episcopal seminary. Finally in Nola I saw many women who have goitre.⁴⁸

The presence of many places of interest, especially churches with many works of art of some value, however, seems to have drawn a positive judgement from Abbot Francesco Sacco, which he expressed in *Dizionario geografico istorico fisico del Regno di Napoli* published in 1796. He basically repeated Galanti's text, but with a tone of admiration for the city, its churches and its works of art. He defined Nola of his time as a 'mediocre city' of the Kingdom of Naples, referencing to number

48 G. Galanti, *Descrizione geografica e politica delle Sicilie*, vol. 4 (Napoli, 1790), pp. 160–62: 'Nola presente è molto diversa da Nola antica. Della sua vetusta grandezza non ne resta che il nome. Poche arti per il bisogno della vita e cattive, e gran mendicizia sono le cose che oggi la distinguono; Di monasteri poi ne abbonda, perchè ve ne sono nove di uomini, quattro di donne, oltre due conservatori. La città presente è situata sull'antica, la quale resta ricoperta dalla terra portatavi dalle alluvioni fino 50 palmi di altezza. Ad oriente, a mezzogiorno e ad occidente è cinta da canali di acque stagnanti e di orti di terre concimate, per sola scioperaggine degli abitanti. Le strade sono cattive e lastricate di pietra calcarea, alla quale sono sempre da preferire i vasoli del Vesuvio. La cattedrale ch'è un avanzo gotico sporge colla facciata sopra di una piazza molto infelice. Presso alla porta picciola, dove si scende alla cappella de' morti, in un sito ignobile e non visibile vi è un S. Girolamo in basso rilievo di marmo, solo monumento di Giovanni Merliano che conserva la sua patria. Vi è ancora un pulpito di legno lavorato con molt'altro. Nella chiesa sotterranea dicesi esservi il corpo del vescovo S. Felice, e dal luogo dove riposa scorre un certo liquore, detto manna, la di cui scarsezza o abbondanza è per li Nolani un sicuro indizio della scarsezza o dell'abbondanza della raccolta. Questa chiesa, secondo l'avviso di Leone, è stata edificata sulle rovine di un tempio di Giove, ed il pavimento che attualmente vi si vede, egli vuole che fusse stata parte del tempio antico. La chiesa coll'atrio delle monache di S. Chiara è disegno del Sanfelice. Vi sono tre quadri nel soffitto, e due quadri nelle cappelle, uno di S. Antonio di Padova, l'altro di un Ecce Homo con S. Francesco Saverio e S. Francesco di Sales, tutti dipinti dal medesimo Sanfelice, che sono molto stimati. Le chiese di S. Vittoria e di S. Salvatore sono state edificate sugli antichi tempi dedicati alla Vittoria ed a Giove Servatore. La chiesa del Purgatorio è stata rimodernata da Domenicantonio Vaccaro, il quale vi ha fatto l'altare maggiore di marmo, e vi ha dipinti due quadri di S. Michele Arcangelo e di S. Gennaro. Il palazzo degli antichi conti di Nola è forse l'unico edificio che sia degno di vedersi. E' stato fabbricato colle pietre tolte dall'antico anfiteatro di marmo che era in Nola nel luogo, che oggi dicesi il Castel rotto. Questo anfiteatro, dice il Leone, potea paragonarsi al celebre anfiteatro di Capua. Il palazzo è sito sopra una bella piazza, dove si tiene il mercato: divenne collegio de' Gesuiti, indi conservatorio di arti, finalmente quartiere di cavalleria. Fuori della città vi è un altro quartiere di cavalleria di grande estensione e magnificenza. Vi era anche in Nola un altro anfiteatro nel luogo detto oggi la Murara, ma molto meno magnifico del primo, Leone ci dice che i marmi di quest'ultimo anfiteatro, egualmente che quelli del tempio di Augusto e di Mercurio, furono trasportati in Napoli ed impiegati nel palazzo oggi de' principi di Colobrano. In Nola vi è un sedile per la nobiltà. Quest'edificio è molto meschino. Fuori della città vi è un Seminario con una gran fabbrica male eseguita, dove s'insegnano a 300 giovani oltre la teologia, il dritto canonico e le lettere umane, anche il dritto civile e le scienze fisiche colle macchine; pregio raro in un seminario vescovile. Finalmente in Nola vi ho vedute molte donne che hanno il gozzo'.

of its 8781 inhabitants, but then he wrote that it was ‘full of nobility, convenient to lodge in, and abundant in food’.⁴⁹

Modern travellers, however, drew the idea of ancient Nola’s glorious past from the enthusiastic tones in which Ambrogio Leone spoke about it. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the remains of Roman buildings proved that in the Roman times Nola was more than double the size of the medieval and modern city.⁵⁰ This was indicated by the data from fifty years’ worth of excavations. The disappointment arose from the fact that, as Swinburne wrote, ‘the ruins of its ancient edifices are almost obliterated’,⁵¹ or, as noted by Potocki, ‘la petite ville bien qu’assez propre ne conserve que le souvenir de son ancienne splendeur’, or finally, as Münter put it, ‘In [Nola] itself there are no remains of the ancient time, except some Doric architectural fragments walled in in the walls of the houses, such as cornices with triglyphs’.⁵² Foreign travellers who arrived in the city would have liked to see the places where Augustus had stayed before he died and where Tiberius had consecrated a temple to him, and they would have liked to see the walls never conquered by Hannibal, where the victor Marcellus had fought; few inscriptions, some broken walls of the amphitheatre and fragments of a Doric frieze could not help but cause a great disappointment.

It was a feeling many travellers experienced not only in Nola, but also in Rome and other largest and most famous cities of Italy. This disappointment is known also from the *Voyage d’Italie* by Anna Potocka, Stanisław Kostka Potocki’s daughter-in-law, published by Casimir Stryeński in 1899 in Paris.⁵³ Stryeński wrote about her that ‘elle paraît avoir compris les mystères de l’art antique et la beauté des ruines’ and that ‘elle est avide de tout voir et de tout comprendre’.⁵⁴ In her *Memoires*, published by Stryeński in 1897 in Paris, Anna wrote about her father-in-law⁵⁵: ‘Le comte était un des hommes les plus remarquables de cette époque, si fertile en gens d’esprit et de coeur ... Le comte Stanislas possédait, de plus, des connaissances artistiques que je n’ai jamais rencontrées au même degré chez aucun amateur. Plusieurs séjours

49 F. Sacco, *Dizionario geografico istorico fisico del Regno di Napoli* (Napoli, 1796), pp. 422–23.

50 See above, Fig. 1.

51 Swinburne, *Travels in the Two Sicilies*, p. 97.

52 Münter, *Efterretninger om begge Sicilienne*, p. 86: ‘I den [Nola] selv er ingen Rest af Alderdommen, uden nogle i Husenes Vægge indmuurede doriske Architekturstykker, saasom Gesimser med Triglypher’.

53 Stryeński, *Comtesse Anna Potocka*.

54 *Ibid.*, p. vii.

55 Stryeński, *Memoires de la Ctesse*, pp. 41–42.

en Italie avaient contribué à développer en lui ce noble amour du beau qui constitue, pour ainsi dire, un sens de plus ... Je lui dois tout ce que je sais en fait d'architecture ; il se plaisait à développer en moi cette passion pour les arts qui, depuis, a fait le charme de ma vie et que ma mère avait cherché à m'inspirer'. Thus, I believe, we can see with Anna Potocka's eyes as if with Stanisław Kostka Potocki's; and the words she used to describe the remains of the ancient Roman aqueducts seen upon entering Rome, as well as in her impressions from the Eternal City, are a synthesis of the spirit with which foreign travellers of her time judged the cities they visited in Italy: 'Ceux mêmes de ces aqueducs qu'on a négligés semblent fiers de leur beauté devenue inutile, et le lierre qui les couronne, tantôt en épais taillis, tantôt en légères guirlandes, ajoute encore à l'effet qu'ils produisent dans cet incomparable paysage'.⁵⁶

In a letter to Countess Wodzicka, Potocka wrote: 'Les modernes ont mis tant d'acharnement à détruire les vestiges de la grandeur romaine, qu'on la cherche souvent en vain ... Mais pour une pauvre pécheresse qui a longtemps vécu dans la société de ces scélérats de païens, qui rêve d'Auguste et de Mécène, qui n'est pas sans avoir un petit faible pour Julie et pour Livie, il y a mille désenchantements!'.⁵⁷ Then she added about Rome:

Rien de ce que je voyais ne répondait à mon attente ... Je m'attendais à un arc de triomphe du style le plus noble, je ne trouvai qu'une construction italienne qu'on me dit être de Vignole. Nous traversâmes une grande et belle place qui semble déserte. Gare à ceux qui jetteraient un oeil observateur sur les fontaines avoisinantes, – un nouveau désappointement les y attend, – c'est encore l'art moderne dans toute son inertie.⁵⁸

And further on:

Hélas! qu'est devenu ce Capitole qui, de loin, exalte l'imagination? Où sont ces trophées, ces sièges consulaires, ces portiques? Qu'est devenue la statue de Pompée? Où César a-t-il reçu le coup fatal? Tout a disparu : rien n'est là pour guider le souvenir. Rome moderne me poursuit partout, partout l'architecture italienne a remplacé la simple magnificence des constructions antiques. Tout est richesse, rien n'est grandeur, rien ne révèle le passé. Rome a vaincu le monde, et le temps a vaincu Rome.⁵⁹

Only the Colosseum did not disappoint her expectations:

C'est par une matinée sombre et pluvieuse que le 16 novembre j'entrevis le Colisée. Cet édifice vaut à lui seul le pèlerinage à Rome. Ce n'est point un de ces monuments dont l'amateur peut seul apprécier les beautés. Ce n'est point un de ces vestiges de l'antique qui appartient au seul savant. C'est un souvenir encore palpitant de la grandeur des Romains, c'est un débris de leur magnificence. Tout étonne et charme l'oeil, –

⁵⁶ Stryenski, *Comtesse Anna Potocka*, p. 56.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. viii–xix.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 44–45.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

élégance et simplicité, harmonie et beauté des lignes. L'imagination reste confondue en songeant qu'une seule génération vit commencer et finir cette construction colossale... Tant de criminels efforts et de barbares attentats n'ont pu renverser l'œuvre puissante d'un seul homme. Le Colisée est encore là, il regarde passer les siècles et semble avoir sa part d'immortalité. On rendrait un grand service aux voyageurs de les mener les yeux bandés jusqu'à ce quartier éloigné du centre de la ville. La Rome moderne est peu faite pour préparer à la vue de cet antique édifice, – des rues sales, des maisons mal bâties, partout la négligence et la malpropreté, la misère d'aujourd'hui à côté de la magnificence d'autrefois.⁶⁰

Reading Anna Potocka's travel diary, it is easy to notice that she was disappointed by all the Italian cities and that what excited her soul was only the sight of the remains of ancient palaces or masterpieces of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.⁶¹ This explains why she deemed Pompeii to be 'le lieu le plus intéressant de la terre'.⁶²

Anna Potocka's passionate words convey to us the feeling with which foreign travellers arrived in Italy: their main purpose was to experience the past.

The ancient vases as a redemption for Nola

At the end of his *Voyage de Nola*, Stanisław Kostka Potocki wrote: 'Un seul monument le plus fragile de tous a survécu, à ces marbres détruits, à ces temples renversés, à ces bâtiments qui semblaient traverser les temps, je veux parler de ces vases de terre communément connus sous le nom de Vase Etrusques'. This was because Potocki, like many other travellers, collectors of antiquities and scholars of his time, found another way to immerse himself in the past: to surround himself with ancient vessels, the so-called Etruscan vases.

In a letter to his wife Aleksandra dated 21 January 1786 from Naples, Potocki wrote: 'Je suis toujours à la recherche de mes vases, c'est la seule chose qui me fasse vivre à Naples, il y a longtemps je serais mort sans elle'.⁶³ Nola was clearly his Eldorado, the perfect place to satisfy his desire. In a letter to Aleksandra dated 14 January 1786, he wrote that he had no time to respond to her letters because he was constantly travelling between Naples and Nola: 'Mon malheur est de n'avoir pas le temps pour répondre, car tu sauras que je ne fais que de revenir de Nola où j'ai fait fouiller en ma présence sans la poste j'y serais encore...'.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 45–47.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 21, for her judgement on Venice; p. 25 – on Bologna; p. 132 and pp. 126–27 – on Naples; pp. 42–43 – on Lake Trasimeno and the ruins of ancient city of Spello.

⁶² Ibid., p. 139.

⁶³ AGAD, APP, MS 262, pp. 278–79

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 270.

Yet Potocki wanted not only to collect many excellent Etruscan vases from Nola, but also to know in depth the experience of digging them up, as he wrote at the beginning of the *Voyage de Nola*: ‘... les fouilles de vases Etrusques qui s’y font atireyent ma curiosité, je voudrais puiser dans la source, et examiner par moi meme les lieux et la maniere dont elles se font’. He therefore conducted excavations, financed from his own purse, in the Nola countryside. He wrote about his endeavour in *O sztuce u dawnych czyli Winkelman Polski*, published in 1815 in Warsaw: ‘During my stay in Naples, I collected over a hundred Etruscan vases, in which the ease of digging in Nola that even foreigners had at that time helped me’.⁶⁵

In the letter to Aleksandra dated 6 January 1786, Potocki expressed his discontent at not being in Rome; but the next day he went to Nola and wrote to his wife:

Je revenais de Nola ou se font les fouilles des Vases Étrusques, j’avais fait travailler pour mon compte, le hazard me servit a souhait je detrais les choses du monde les plus intéressantes et ce qui plus ai j’ai eu le plaisir de les enlever de mes propres mains d’un tombeau qui les enferma au moins de puis deux mil ans. Figure-toi une grosse bière de pierre de taille ensevelie a 30 au quarante pieds sous terre, car telles sont les Tombeaux Étrusques, le squelette d’un mort parfaitement conservé, entre ses gambes tout plein de petits lachrimatoires, derniers présents de ses amis, vers la tête un jolie vase de terre noire, plus grand que les autres, et aux pieds un vase de dix au douzes pouces de hauteur d’une beauté unique, aparement consacré au mort par sa famille, l’on voit de chaque côté, deux guerriers armés de pieds en cappe qui combattent, ce qui fait juger que le mort était un homme de métier. Je m’emparai de vase, je respectai la cendre du défunt que je fis recouvrir de terre dans sa bière. Ce petit detail te fera connaitre quel est la manière dont on trouve ces vases. Le mien passe en beauté tout ce que l’on connait dans ce genre a Naples.

Thus, the sad and depressing contemporary Nola that retained only a memory of its ancient splendour became a beautiful place when it gave him the opportunity to descend into the earth to carry the ancient vases out of the tombs with his own hands (Fig. 6). In the letter of 14 January 1786, he wrote to his wife: ‘Tu me parles revenir en Italie, c’est bien le mon projet, dans lequel il entre autre de m’etablir a Nola qui est un endroit charmant pour quelques semaines. Madame la Gouverneuse Don Gaudentio et Don Vichioni avec lesquels j’ai passé ma soirée d’hier qui sont les gens de Nola les plus aimables, he te metrai dans cette société. Tout cela pour avoir le plaisir d’ouvrir de tombeaux et de voler les morts’.⁶⁶

65 S.K. Potocki, *O sztuce u dawnych, czyli Winkelman Polski* (Warszawa, 1815), part 2, p. 55: ‘Ja sam pod bytność moją w Neapolu zgromadziłem przeszło sto wazów Etruskich, do czego mi łatwość jaką wtedy mieli nawet cudzoziemcy kopania w Noli niemało postużyła’.

66 For the identification of ‘Don Vichioni’ with the priest Ignazio Vecchione, see Cesarano, ‘Stanislaw Kostka Potocki e Nola’, pp. 87–115.



Fig. 6

An Attic black figure
amphora found in Nola by
Stanisław Kostka Potocki
in 1786

Ultimately, neither of Potocki's two judgements on Nola, the depressing or the enthusiastic one, took the royal city into account. In both cases he observed the city with the eyes of an aristocrat imbued with the classical training he had received at the Collegium Nobilium in Warsaw, of a gentleman as described by Thomas Coke, and of a traveller eager to retrace the footsteps of the ancients and absorb their greatness.

When the world of the antiquarians was living its last moments and travellers in Italy were no longer pushed from one place to another by their desire to feel at one with the ancients, the *Nouveau guide en Italie* in 1864 gave some information about Nola useful to travellers but no judgement:

Nola: très ancienne ville, peuplée aujourd'hui de 6,000 habitants, où l'on retrouve une quantité notable d'antiquités étrusques et romaines. Son dôme est remarquable surtout par une colonne, décorée de bas-reliefs, oeuvre de Masaccio II, érigée par Robert d'Anjou, en mémoire de son entrevue avec André de Hongrie, en 1333. C'est sur le territoire de Nola qu'Annibal fut deux fois vaincu par le consul Marcellus. Ce sont aussi des fondateurs de Nola qui inventèrent les cloches.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ *Nouve guide en Italie* (Paris, 1864), p. 368.

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