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**COUNT MICHAŁ JAN BORCH AS PATRON AND
COLLECTOR: ART BETWEEN ITALY AND THE INFLANTY
VOIVODESHIP IN THE AGE OF PARTITION**

**INTRODUCTION:
MICHAŁ BORCH AND ARTISTIC PATRONAGE IN
POLAND-LITHUANIA DURING THE AGE OF PARTITION**

‘Together with the text of a new speech that I presented when I was received by the Academy of Sciences in Dijon, I have the small honour of also adding a few copies of my *Lythographie Sicilienne* [*Sicilian Lythography*] [...] I am now making some final touches to a quite considerable work, which I hope will do me some honour, but I don’t think I’ll have it printed at all because the printing costs are a bit too high and I haven’t the means, all the more so because I don’t want

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to leave Rome without having my portrait done by Pompeo Battoni [sic], and at least a cameo by [Giovanni] Pichler. As these are things which can hardly be done without being there in person, I would thus dare to ask you my Dear Father for some small pecuniary aid, all the more because since last October I have only received from you 500 Dutch ducats, and I had made for myself in Naples a dual carriage for traveling and city driving that cost 880 Neapolitan ducats (which are 300 Dutch ducats). My debts are mounting [...].¹

In October 1777 twenty-four-year-old Count Michał Jan Alois Antoniusz Borch (or von der Borch-Lubeschitz und Borchhoff, 1753–1810/11) wrote the above passage in a letter from Rome.² His missive was directed to his father in Warsaw, Jan Jędrzej (or Andrzej) Józef Borch (1713–1780), at this time the Lithuanian Grand Chancellor (later Crown Chancellor) of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a conglomerate polity also referred to as *Rzeczpospolita* consisting of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Crown Kingdom of Poland ruled by a common elected monarch.³ Michał and his father were members of a high-ranking family amongst the upper echelons of the Polish-Lithuanian *szlachta* (nobility). The Borch were Baltic Germans descended from Westphalian lineage holding the titles of Counts of

1 Vasyl Stefanyk National Academic Library of Ukraine [VSNALU], Fund 13, 'Archiwum Borchów z Warklan', file 90, 291r-92v (28 Oct 1777). For Borch's account of his Grand Tour in his personal correspondence see materials in *ibid.*, file 90. The entire Borch archive preserved in Lviv has been digitized and is available online through the Ossolineum (Wrocław), Poland at http://bazy.oss.wroc.pl/kzc/view_fond.php [accessed 17.07.2021]. On this Lviv archive see Tadeusz Lutman, 'Archiwum Borchów z Warklan (Uratowane zbiory)', *Archeion*, 6/7 (1930), 64–66. Given limitations of space, archival sources cited in this article could not be included in full transcription. However, transcriptions and translations may be freely obtained from the author via email.

2 For Borch see Tadeusz Turkowski, 'Borch Michał Jan', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [hereafter *PSB*] (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1936), 2: 311–315. Whenever possible the online source from *PSB* will be cited. See also 'Graf von der Borch (Michael Johann)', *Allgemeines Schriftsteller- und Gelehrten-Lexikon der Provinzen Livland, Esthland und Kurland*, vol. 1: A–F, ed. by Johann Friedrich von Recke, Karl Eduard Napiersky, Theodor Beise (Mitau [Jelgava]: Johann Friedrich Steffenhagen, 1827), 219–223. Borch officially received the title of Count of the Holy Roman Empire only in 1783, but he used the title already from 1774. Regarding his date of death, typically given as 1810, Borch's will was prepared in December 1810, but he died only in the first days of 1811. For his will and testament see Riga, University of Latvia Library, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Ms. 1157, no. 2. See further bibliography below regarding specific aspects of Borch's career, patronage, and collecting strategies.

3 Władysław Konopczyński, 'Borch Jan Jędrzej Józef', *PSB*, <http://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/jan-jedrzej-jozef-borch> [accessed 17.07.2021]. For overviews of Poland-Lithuania in this period see especially that work of Jerzy Lukowski, including *Liberty's Folly: The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1991); *Disorderly Liberty: The Political Culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

the Holy Roman Empire, and had immigrated north centuries earlier in the medieval Teutonic crusades. By the later seventeenth century they were both Catholicized and Polonized, espousing the Roman Church and elite Polish culture.⁴ Michał began in May 1774 an eight-year Grand Tour that culminated in five years in Italy, where he divided much of his time between the papal court in Rome and the Habsburg-Bourbon court in Naples, inaugurating a life-long career as patron and collector of especially Italian and Italianate art and architecture.⁵

In reality, Borch's departure for his Grand Tour and start of his career coincided with the reversal of his family's fortunes, coming in the aftermath of the forcible integration of their vast land estates into the Russian empire in the first of three so-called Partitions of Poland-Lithuania (1772, 1792, 1795), territorial divisions perpetrated by Russia, Prussia, and Austria that progressively fractured the Commonwealth until the state ceased to exist altogether.⁶ In 1770 Russian soldiers pillaged Borch estates concentrated in the Commonwealth's north-eastern borderlands, plundering furniture, libraries, and other goods.⁷ Borch longed to be free from 'the dictatorship of the Russians [...] whom I detest, whose friendship I despise more than I fear their enmity.'⁸ This article

4 For the Borch family genealogy see VSNALU, Fund 13, file 2, fol. 2-6. On the Catholicization of the Borch clan see Paweł Artur Jeziorski, 'Z dziejów luteranizmu w *Łatgalii* w tzw. czasach polskich (1561–1772)', *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, 63 (2019), 119–154. See also Richard Butterwick, 'How Catholic Was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Later Eighteenth Century?', *Central Europe*, 8 (2010), 123–145.

5 Bronisław Biliński, 'L'Italia dei viaggiatori illuministi polacchi (Michele Mniszech, Gregorio Piramowicz, Michele Borch)', *Convegno Internazionale L'Illuminismo Italiano e l'Europa: (Roma, 25–26 Marzo 1976)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale Dei Lincei, 1977), 7–52; Aija Taimiņa, 'Borchiana versus Siciliana. Grafa Borha Sicilijas celojums un ta reminiscences literatura un maksla', *Makslas Vesture un Teorija*, 16 (2013), 5–17; for his travel account of southern Italy see Eleonora Nicolosi, *Les représentations de la Sicile au XVIIIe siècle chez les voyageurs français, britanniques et germaniques*, PhD Thesis (Quebec: Université Laval, 2020). See further citations below on specific aspects of Borch's travels and career.

6 See Jerzy Lukowski, *The Partitions of Poland 1772, 1793, 1795* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2014).

7 See family correspondence in VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 14r-15r, 29r-30v. For Chancellor Borch's registry of losses, compiled in 1771 and entered into the land records of the Duchy of Inflanty in 1772, see Latvian State Historical Archive [LVVA], f. 712-1, nr 119, k. 8–15v; in *Szlachta polsko-inflancka wobec przelomu: materiały z dyneburskich akt grodzkich i ziemskich z lat 1764–1775*, ed. by Bogusław Dybaś, Paweł Artur Jeziorski, Tomasz Wiśniewski (Torun: Towarzystwo Naukowe and Polska Akademia Nauk. Instytut Historii im. Tadeusza Manteuffla, 2018), 367–380 and fig. 11.

8 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 390r-395r.

examines how despite persistent financial shortcomings and political difficulties, Borch staked for himself a strategic position as patron and collector during the Age of Partition (c. 1750–1810) in the midst of the instability and ultimate dissolution of the *Rzeczpospolita*, negotiating the process of transition from the Commonwealth's political system of autonomous noble estates to Czarist Russian administrative frameworks within the new state's distinct linguistic, social, political, cultural and religious structures.⁹ As a case study in period self-fashioning, the article is structured around four portraits of Borch and his family executed at crucial inflection points in his life and career.

What follows explores against the backdrop of the Age of Partition how Michał Borch's lifetime of collecting and commissioning art and architecture staged a renovation of the present by engaging with late baroque, rococo, and neoclassical Italianate forms that inflected Italy and the antique not as fixed entities but as a malleable or notional fragments that could be arbitrated, reassembled and transformed through the intermediating agency of persons and objects, and related to the past in form, style and language, thematizing the temporal passage between venerable and modern in a way that reanimated the grandeur of the past in honour of Borch's re-envisioning of his restored homeland. On one hand we might view Borch's attention to ruins and vestiges of the once-glorious imperial past as a reflection of an Enlightenment antiquarian interest shared by grand tourists and aristocratic collectors of the period, and endorsed by antiquities dealers, artists, and the Apostolic Chamber in Rome to promote the papal city and the papacy (whose finances and powers were in rapid decline) as international arbiter of taste and the Greco-Roman past.¹⁰ Such culture was no less strong

9 On the nobility in Polish Livonia during the crucial transitional period of the First Partition see *Szlachta polsko-inflancka wobec przelomu*.

10 See relevant studies including Jeffrey Collins, *Papacy and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Rome: Pius VI and the Arts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Carole Paul, *The Borghese Collections and the Display of Art in the Age of the Grand Tour* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Heather Hyde Minor, *The Culture of Architecture in Enlightenment Rome* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); *Benedict XIV and the Enlightenment: Art, Science, and Spirituality*, ed. by Rebecca Messbarger, Christopher M. S. Johns, Philip Gavitt (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2016). For the Italo-Polish perspective see Tomasz Mikocki, 'Polish Artists and the Emergence of Archaeology in Eighteenth-Century Rome', *The Rediscovery of Antiquity: The Role of the Artist*, ed. by Jane Fejfer, Tobias Fischer-Hansen, Annette Rathje (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2003), 397–422; *Roma e Varsavia: tradizione classica e educazione artistica nell'età dei lumi e oltre*, ed. by Jerzy Miziołek (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2019).

in Habsburg-Bourbon Naples, where foreign visitors and statesmen like British envoy Lord William Hamilton fuelled an avidity for antiquities that posited the far south of the peninsula as a repository of the past alternative to the *urbe*.¹¹

On the other hand, we might see in Borch's engagement with fragments of Italy's illustrious past a thematization of the circumstances affecting his own homeland and the locus of his family's power and prestige inflected through what art historian Aleksander Musiał recently termed a 'poetics of fragmentation' whereby 'remembrance becomes a means of resistance' to the dissolution and occupation of the Polish-Lithuanian state.¹² This recourse to an aesthetic engagement with a hermeneutic of relics, ruins, and remains would be shared by other elite *szlachta* patrons and collectors during this period, who assembled nostalgic museums, gardens, and displays that neglected the formal language of classical antiquity with vestigial visions of the *Rzeczpospolita's* culture and history.¹³ A reformatory current might also be detected in the particular antiquarianism practiced by Borch and his noble contemporaries, insofar as such efforts to ascertain the details behind the downfall of the past empire might enable the identification of 'the causes of the weakness of the Polish nation that led to the partitions, as well as how those maladies should be cured.'¹⁴

11 *Vases & Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and His Collection*, ed. by Ian Jenkins, Kim Sloan (London: British Museum Press, 1996); Eloisa Doderò, *Ancient Marbles in Naples in the Eighteenth Century: Findings, Collections, Dispersals* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

12 Aleksander Musiał, 'Mentem mortalia tangunt – Fragments and Fetishes in Puławy Landscape Garden (1794–1831)', *Oxford Art Journal*, 42 (2019), 355–372, at 361 and 365, respectively.

13 On this tendency see especially the work of Tomasz Mikocki, including *À la recherche de l'art antique les voyageurs Polonais en Italie dans les Années 1750–1830* (Wrocław: Wydawn. Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1988); *Collection de la Princesse Radziwill. Les Monuments Antiques et Antiquisants d'Arcadie et du Château de Nieborow* (Wrocław/Warsaw/Krakow: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1995); *Et In Arcadia Ego. Muzeum Księżny Heleny Radziwillowej*, ed. by Tomasz Mikocki, Włodzimierz Piwkowski (Warsaw: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 2001). For an overview of Mikocki's oeuvre see also Monika Rekowska, 'European identity and Polish culture – Tomasz Mikocki's studies on tradition of ancient art', *Archeologia Polona*, 50 (2019), 111–147.

14 Carolyn C. Guile, *Remarks on Architecture: The Vitruvian Tradition in Enlightenment Poland* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 22.

**BORCH BETWEEN ITALY AND THE INFLANTY VOIVODESHIP:
CRISTOFORO DALL'ACQUA'S PORTRAITS, ART, AND
INTERCULTURAL AGENCY ON THE GRAND TOUR**

Michał Borch's nearly decade-long Grand Tour took him through the Austrian Empire (Vienna and Munich), Switzerland (Geneva and Lausanne), southern France (Dijon), and Italian realms (Rome and the papal territories, the Grand Duchy of Florence and Duchy of Milan, the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily), and would have entailed further travel through Paris, London, the Netherlands, northern Germany, and Saxony, were it not cut short by his father's death in 1781.¹⁵ Proud that his great-grandfather died a Royal Hussar in the 1683 siege of Vienna, the count often dressed while on tour in the uniform of the Company of the Noble Cavalry of Lithuanian Royal Hussars, where he held the title of captain (and later major-general).¹⁶ Magnates like the Borch owned and actually governed much of Poland-Lithuania, a conglomerate polity subdivided into a patchwork of patrimonial latifundia – large autonomous estates with private towns, private armies, trading privileges, and proprietary currencies, linked by familial alliances.¹⁷ Michał also departed for his Grand Tour with the title of Starost of Ludza (Polish: Lucyn), a parish received as a gift from his father in the historical territory of the Inflanty Voivodeship (Polish: Województwo inflanckie), also known as Polish Livonia or Inflanty, a geographic area corresponding to Latgale in present-day eastern Latvia.¹⁸ Though the Borch maintained a palace in Warsaw, their territorial holdings were concentrated in Inflanty at the Commonwealth's north-eastern borderlands, including the parishes of Varakļāni (Polish: Warkland), Preiļi (Polish: Prely), Galēni (Polish: Galany) and Marinceja (Polish: Marynsey).¹⁹

15 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 246v.

16 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 390r-395r.

17 For an introduction to the culture of Polish latifundia see Paul McLean, 'Patrimonialism, Elite Networks, and Reform in Late-Eighteenth-Century Poland', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 636 (2011), 88–110.

18 On Polish Livonia see studies in *Comparative Studies: Latgale as a Cultural Border Zone*, ed. by Valentina Liepa (Daugavpils: Saule, 2009); Krzysztof Zajac, *Absent Culture: The Case of Polish Livonia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013).

19 For Varakļāni see *Varakļāni un varakļānieši. Kultūrvēsture, atmiņas, apcerējumi*, ed. by Aloizs Strods, Arturs Garančs, Konrāds Sondors (Rēzekne: Latgales Kultūras Centra Izdevniecība, 2003).

Polish Livonia drew cultural, diplomatic, and economic potential on the one hand from its geographic location along the Daugava river, an important trade thoroughfare linking Russia with the Baltic sea ports, and on the other from its delineation of the easternmost frontier of 'civilized' Europe from the lands of Russia that were increasingly construed in Enlightenment period discourse as a barbaric realm of exotic and uncivilized 'otherness'.²⁰ Inflanty's strategic position situated its resident magnates as powerful and wealthy patrons who took an active interest in cultivating their cultural and political horizons, building up their estates as centres and satellite courts as the Bulwark of (Catholic) Christendom, and fashioning for themselves the role of scions and sentinels of the widening discursive interstices of European conceptual geography, becoming active agents of cultural exchange and fusion.²¹ The Borch numbered amongst *szlachta* who held numerous honours and posts in the *Rzeczpospolita*, enjoyed international educations, were fluent in multiple languages, maintained vast correspondence networks, travelled abroad, and authored works of literature, science, and history.²²

Together with his dispatch from the *urbe* cited above, in 1777 the Count shipped northward to his homeland copies of erudite texts, including a catalogue (*Sicilian Lythography*) he published in Naples of the various types of minerals and stones found in Sicily, indicating

20 See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

21 For case studies in these period dynamics see Aistė Paliušytė, 'Dailininkų Mobilumas XVIII A. Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje: Jeronimo Florijono Radvilos Dvaro Pavyzdys', *Menotyra*, 22 (2015), 273–289; and Tomasz Grusiecki, 'Uprooting Origins: Polish-Lithuanian Art and the Challenge of Pluralism', *Globalizing East European Art Histories: Past and Present*, ed. by Beáta Hock, Anu Allas (New York: Routledge, 2018), 25–38 and Carolyn C. Guile, 'Reflections on the Politics of Portraiture in Early Modern Poland', *Globalizing East European Art Histories: Past and Present*, 83–97. See also my forthcoming essay: Ruth Sargent Noyes, 'Translatio reliquiae and translatio imperii between Italy and north-eastern Europe in the Age of Partition (c. 1750–1800): The Case of the Plater in Polish Livonia', *The Migration of Artists and Architects in Central and Northern Europe 1560–1900*, ed. by Anna Ancāne (Riga: Art Academy of Latvia, forthcoming).

22 On Borch's scientific activities see Antoni Gawęł, 'Memoriał Michała Borchy z roku 1780 jako pierwsza w Polsce próba geobiochemicznych poszukiwań kruszcowych', *Prace Muzeum Ziemi*, 8 (1966), 31–48; Kazimierz Maślankiewicz, 'Michał Jan Borch (1751–1810) and his Activity in Mineralogy and Geochemistry', *Actes du XI Congrès International d'Histoire des sciences. Varsovie, Torun, Kielce, Cracovie, 24–31 Août 1965*, ed. by Bogdan Suchodolski (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1968), 4: 284–286; Jānis Stradiņš, 'Michał Jan Borch – polski przyrodnik XVIII w.', *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki*, 25 (1980), 481–499; Ignacy Z. Siemion, Alicja Szastyńska-Siemion, 'O eksperymentach Michała Jana Borchy (1753–1811) dotyczących chemiluminescencji', *Wiadomości Chemiczne*, 67 (2013), 361–368; Ignacy Z. Siemion, Alicja Szastyńska-Siemion, 'Hrabiego Michała Jana Borchy analizy wód mineralnych Sycylii', *Analecta. Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki*, 24 (2015), 7–21.



FIG. 1. JOSEPH PITTARELLI D'ASTI AFTER DESIGN BY MICHAŁ BORCH, CARTE DE LA SICILE MODERNE FAITE D'APRÈS DE NOUVELLES OBSERVATIONS EN 1778 (ETCHING AND ENGRAVING, 1780). IN *SICILIAN LETTERS* (TURIN, 1782). PHOTO: UNIVERSITÄTSBIBLIOTHEK BERN, MUE RAR ALT 8632, [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.3931/E-RARA-36574](https://doi.org/10.3931/E-RARA-36574) / PUBLIC DOMAIN MARK.

an avid interest and growing expertise in the natural sciences and mineralogy on one hand and Italy on the other, which would become dual hallmarks of his scholarly output and collecting habits.²³ In

23 Michał Borch, *Lithographie sicilienne ou catalogue raisonné de toutes les pierres de la Sicile. Propres à embellir le Cabinet d'un Amateur* (Naples: [s.n.], 1777). A second volume (or reedition) of this work was published in in Naples in 1778: *Lithographie Sicilienne, ou Catalogue raisonné de toutes les pierres de la Sicile propres à embellir le cabinet d'un amateur* (Naples: [s.n.], 1778). He published a third related volume in Rome: *Lythologie sicilienne ou connaissance de la nature des pierres de la Sicile suivie d'un discours sur la Calcara de Palerme par Monsieur le comte de Borch* (Rome: ches Benoit Francesi, 1778); and a fourth work in Turin: *Minéralogie sicilienne docimastique et metallurgique ou connaissance de tous les mineraux que produit l'ile de Sicile....* (Turin: chez les freres Reycends, 1780). See also Jānis Stradiņš, 'Michał Jan Borch – Polski Przyrodnik XVIII w.', *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki*, 15 (1980), 481–499.

the same letter, he mentioned another larger work he had prepared but lacked the necessary funds to publish: this was his two-volume opus *Lettres sur la Sicile et sur l'île de Malthe* (*Letters about Sicily and the island of Malta*; hereafter *Sicilian Letters*), an illustrated account of his travels through the peninsula's southernmost islands.²⁴ That his works were published in French bespeaks his elite education with private tutors and at the Collegium Pium in Warsaw, with Polish as a first language, fluency in French, proficiency in Italian, and German, and knowledge of Latin, Russian, Latvian, and English.²⁵

In the course of his travels, he engaged in epistolary exchanges with some of the leading savants of the period (Bernoulli, Voltaire, Buffon).²⁶ He was admitted to at least seventeen French and Italian academies, primarily for his work in the natural sciences – including mineralogy, mycology, volcanology, and geobotany – but also for his poetry, which Voltaire especially praised, soliciting two poems from the young Count, whom the famous Frenchman hosted overnight at his chateau in Ferney.²⁷ That some of the illustrations in *Sicilian Letters* were etched and engraved after drawings by Michał himself bespeaks both his personal artistic aptitude and his knowledge of artistic currents on the peninsula.²⁸ (Fig. 1.)

24 Michał Borch, *Lettres sur la Sicile et sur l'île de Malthe de monsieur le comte de Borch de plusieurs academies a m. le c. de n. écrites en 1777. Pour servir de supplément au Voyage en Sicile et a Malthe de monsieur Brydonne ornées de la carte de l'Etna, de celle de la Sicile ancienne et moderne avec 27. estampes de ce qu'il ya de plus remarquable en sicile*, 2 vols (Turin: chez les freres Reycends, 1782).

25 On the education and grand tour of Borch see Paweł Jeziorski, 'Podróże edukacyjne zamożnej szlachty z województwa inflanckiego w XVIII wieku. Przykład Borchów i Hylzenów', *Miscellanea Historico-Archivistica*, 24 (2017), 11–24; on the phenomenon of the Polish-Lithuanian Grand Tour in this period see also essays in *Polski Grand Tour w XVIII i początkach XIX wieku*, ed. by Agata Roćko (Warsaw: Regionalna Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2014).

26 For Borch's correspondence with period savants see Alexandre Stroev, 'À la recherche de la correspondance savante du comte Michał Jan Borch', *Correspondances d'érudits au xviiiie et xixe siècles: France, Pologne, Lituanie*, ed. by Marie-France de Palacio (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), <http://books.openedition.org/pur/55374> [accessed 17.7.2021].

27 On his academic memberships see VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fols. 140r- 149v, 241r-248r, 291r-292v, 327r-28v, 358r-367r, 441r-442v, and Marek Zgórnjak, 'Francophile et Patriote. Michel Borch à L'Académie de Lyon en 1775', *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne*, 98 (1992), 137–148; Marek Zgórnjak, 'Il Conte Borch dalle Diciannove Accademie e le sue "Lettres sur la Sicile" (1782)', *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego MCXXVIII, Prace Historyczne*, 110 (1994), 183–196. For Borch's meeting with Voltaire see VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fols. 104r-111v (letter of 27 January 1775 from Lyon) and Kaspars Kļaviņš, 'Michael Johann Borch's Meeting with Voltaire: A Page from Latvia's European Cultural History', *Humanities and Social Sciences*, 21 (1) (2013), 31–40.

28 On dall'Acqua see Francesca Lodi, 'DALL'ACQUA, Cristoforo', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* [hereafter *DBI*], 1985, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cristoforo-dall-acqua_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ [accessed 17.7.2021].

These qualities are likewise illustrated in his above-cited letter, which mentions his ardent wish to have his likeness painted by Tuscan portraitist Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787), the most celebrated painter in Rome in his day and especially sought-after by Grand Tourists in Rome, and a cameo (likely also a portrait) by Neapolitan glyptic artist Giovanni Pichler (1734–1791), also active in Rome and popular with wealthy travelers seeking souvenirs in the antique style.²⁹

Borch, however, had his portrait done by a somewhat lesser artist, Ludwig Gutenbrunn (on which more below). He also had fictive medallion portraits engraved by Italian painter-engraver Cristoforo dall'Acqua (1734–1787) that appear as trompe-l'oeil pseudo-antiques on the title pages of his works published in Italy.³⁰ (Fig. 2.) This suggests that his taste in and desire for art were outpaced by his financial limitations. These circumstances are likewise indicated in the above letter, which mentions the delay of printing *Sicilian Letters* for lack of funds (eventually the printer covered the costs and Borch paid only for the engraved plates, still a considerable sum), and solicits more pecuniary support from his father.³¹ For the duration of his travels and his adult life, the count's ambitions would be restricted by a persistent lack of funds, the result of a combination of his personal habits and socio-political situation. During his Grand Tour, this reached such an extent that his father complained of the family needing to mortgage properties and sell off goods to support Michał's insatiable appetite for medals, minerals, paintings and pictures while traveling, and he faced court proceedings and possible arrest over his debts in France and Italy.³² Later in life, after

29 For Batoni see *Pompeo Batoni: Prince of Painters in Eighteenth-century Rome*, ed. by Edgar Peters Bowron, Peter Björn Kerber (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); on Pichler see Gertrud Seidmann, 'The Grand Tourist's Favourite Souvenirs: Cameos and Intaglios', *RSA Journal*, 144 (1996), 63–66. On Borch's numismatic interests see Andrzej Abramowicz, 'Zainteresowania numizmatyczne Michała Jana Borchy w czasie podróży na Sycylię i Maltę w 1776/7 roku', *Wiadomości Numizmatyczne*, 28 (1984), 106–111. See further citations below on specific acquisitions during his Grand Tour.

30 See also the title page to *Sicilian Letters*. It is, however, possible that these engraved title pages reproduced actual pieces made for Borch.

31 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 429r [sic]-451v (December 1779).

32 *Ibid.*, fol. 266r-269r. Borch's claim to his father in 1778 that 'he had never bought a painting in his life' was likely disingenuous (fol. 358r-367r). Throughout Borch's correspondence with his father while traveling are exchanges regarding his constant debts and insufficient funds; six months into his travels his father expressed surprise that his funds were already spent (82r-v); in 1776 he was forced before a judge in Lyon regarding unpaid debts (154r-155v); creditors in France and Italy threatened his arrest (443r-446); in 1778 his father accused him of spending all his money on paintings (358r-367r) and medals (362r-367r). Grognard, Michał's principal creditor in France, after dispatching an agent from Lyon to Rome to try unsuccessfully to collect Borch's outstanding debts in 1778 (341r-42v), went bankrupt in 1779 (441r-442v). See further discussion below.



FIG. 2. CRISTOFORO DALL'ACQUA AFTER DESIGN BY NISTRÌ, TROMPE-L'OEIL MEDALLION PORTRAIT OF BORCH (ENGRAVING). IN *MINÉRALOGIE SICILIENNE DOCIMASTIQUE ET MÉTALLURGIQUE* (TURIN: CHEZ LES FRÈRES REYCENDS, 1780). PHOTO: ETH-BIBLIOTHEK ZÜRICH, RAR 8504, [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.3931/E-RARA-35896](https://doi.org/10.3931/E-RARA-35896) / PUBLIC DOMAIN MARK.

protracted litigations with his mother and then brother-in-law over issues of inheritance, Borch was forced to take loans from friends and financiers, and on the advice of his wife they retrenched their finances to avoid leaving their children in poverty.³³ Borch's financial troubles while traveling resulted in part from the fact that he was a prolific author, presenting a variety of writings during the course of his travels at various Academies and audiences, publishing at least ten works in Italy, all during a period when authors typically assumed the costs of publication, or else secured patronage to this end.³⁴

That Borch's interest in art predated his Grand Tour is suggested by his remark in a 1778 letter to his father regarding the pleasure he drew from past private tutelage from Polish court artist Antonio Albertrandi (c. 1732–1795), the Polish-born son of an Italian émigré. Michał counted Albertrandi amongst his favourite tutors, and wrote to the artist informally in Italian during his Grand Tour, seeking out materials for the painter, gifting him antique medals, and soliciting sketches.³⁵ Borch's own skill in the visual arts as an aristocratic amateur is underscored by his membership in the artistic *Accademia di San Lucca* (*Academy of St Luke*) in Rome and his signature as the designer of a number of etchings that illustrated his own publications.³⁶ These included highly naturalistic studies of Piedmontese truffles executed by Milanese artist Louis Charles Gautier-Dagoty in mezzotint for his 1780 book on the subject.³⁷ In *Sicilian Letters* these ranged from

33 In 1791 Borch traveled to Berlin and Amsterdam in need of loans (Bronisław Zaleski, 'Korespondencja krajowa Stanisława Augusta z lat 1784 do 1792', *Rocznik Towarzystwa Historyczno-Literackiego w Paryżu. Rok 1870–1872* (Poznań: Księgarnia Jana Konstantego Żupańskiego, 1872), 147–402, at 338–339); in 1807–1810 Borch has debts with multiple creditors and on the advice of Borch's wife they retrenched their finances to avoid leaving their children in poverty (see her letters in VSNALU, Fund 13, file 95, fol. 38r, 80r, 159r, 167r-v 9, 207r-208r). See also further discussion below.

34 For a partial list of Borch's publications see Taimiņa, 'Borchiana versus Siciliana', 15. See also citations of specific works in this article.

35 See VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 358r-367r ('...as for painting, having under ... Albertrandi conceived the first principles of this great art, I have followed these lines with pleasure'). For his contact with Albertrandi see *ibid.*, 396r-397v (23 March 1779); for letters about Albertrandi see *ibid.*, 278r-279v (12 July 1777), 325r-326v (28 May 1778), 362r-367r (15 November 1778), 470r-471v (5 June 1780). On Albertrandi see Zygmunt Batowski, 'Antoni Albertrandy', *PSB* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1935), 1: 44–45.

36 Borch also gifted a landscape painting by his own hand to his father in 1776: see VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 160r-161v (15 September 1776).

37 *Lettres sur les truffes du Piémont écrites par mr. le comte De Borch en 1780* (Milan: chez les freres Reycends libraires sous les arcades de Figini, 1780). See Ignacy Z. Siemion, Barbara Latko, 'Michała Jana Borchy rozprawa o trufiach piemonckich', *Analecta. Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki*, 22 (2013), 7–37.



FIG. 3. CRISTOFORO DALL'ACQUA AFTER DESIGN BY MICHAŁ BORCH, *DANSE DE PAISANNES SICILIENNES* (ETCHING AND ENGRAVING, c. 1778). IN *SICILIAN LETTERS*. PHOTO: UNIVERSITÄTSBIBLIOTHEK BERN, MUE RAR ALT 8632, [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.3931/E-RARA-36574](https://doi.org/10.3931/E-RARA-36574) / PUBLIC DOMAIN MARK.

renderings of southern flora, picturesque vignettes of peasants, views of architectural ruins, mathematically precise architectural plans and elevations of ancient structures, to reproductions of ancient inscriptions and statues, and maps of both ancient and contemporary Italian sites. (Figs. 1, 3.)

Overall, the prints in *Sicilian Letters* overwhelmingly illustrate ancient vestiges of the far south of the peninsula, with thirteen depictions of antique subjects compared to six contemporary and five natural historical subjects. The plate by dall'Acqua of a romanticized view of the ruins of the Sicilian Temple of Juno (Hera) Lacinia (460–450 BCE) at Agrigento was after a design by painter Jakob Philipp Hackert (1737–1807), who in addition to being a favourite artist of Russian Czarina Catherine the Great and Pope Pius VI, was court painter to King Ferdinand IV in Sicily.³⁸ (Fig. 4.)

The scene in Borch's book of the monument shares striking commonalities with Hackert's c. 1778 oil painting of the same subject in the Hermitage, with a similar *di sotto in sù* perspective looking up towards the dramatically towering ruins, axonometric rendering of the temple, and rustic vegetation and goats.³⁹ (Fig. 5.)

This suggests on one hand that Borch's print was modelled after a similar work by Hackert, who produced numerous studies of the temple site, and on the other a possible connection between the count and the artist, as both were in Naples, Sicily and Rome 1777–78.⁴⁰ Equally likely is an association between Borch and English travel writer and amateur artist Henry Swinburne (1743–1803), who furnished landscape drawings for two plates in *Letters on Sicily and Malta* and would go on to publish his own work, *Travels in the Two Sicilies* (1783).⁴¹

38 *Lettres sur la Sicile*, 2:22–23. For Hackert's Italian oeuvre see Cesare de Seta, Claudia Nordhoff, *Hackert* (Napoli: Electa Napoli, 2005).

39 See also discussion in Taimiņa, 'Borchiana versus Siciliana', 8.

40 St Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, Inv. No. ГЭ-7381, <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/01.+Paintings/38582> [accessed 17.7.2021].

41 *Lettres sur la Sicile*, 2:112–113, 198–199; Taimiņa, 'Borchiana versus Siciliana', 9. On Swinburne see Alexander Lock, 'The Grand Tourism of an English Catholic', *Catholicism, Identity and Politics in the Age of Enlightenment: The Life and Career of Sir Thomas Gascoigne, 1745–1810* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 56–94. For examples of Swinburne's drawings see New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, 'Collection of Sketches by Henry Swinburne', [https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/?ff\[title_collective_ss\]\[\]=Collection%20of%20Sketches%20by%20Henry%20Swinburne](https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/?ff[title_collective_ss][]=Collection%20of%20Sketches%20by%20Henry%20Swinburne) [accessed 17.7.2021].



FIG. 4. CRISTOFORO DALL'ACQUA AFTER DESIGN BY JAKOB PHILIPP HACKERT, *RUINES DU TEMPLE DE JUNON LUCINE À AGRIGENTE* (ETCHING AND ENGRAVING, 1779). IN *SICILIAN LETTERS*. PHOTO: UNIVERSITÄTSBIBLIOTHEK BERN, MUE RAR ALT 8632, [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.3931/E-RARA-36574](https://doi.org/10.3931/E-RARA-36574) / PUBLIC DOMAIN MARK.



FIG. 5. JAKOB PHILIPP HACKERT, *VIEW OF AGRIGENTO* (OIL ON CANVAS, C. 1778). ST PETERSBURG, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, INV./CAT.NR ГЭ-7381. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

BORCH AT THE ITALIAN COURTS: GUTTENBRUNN'S C. 1778 PORTRAIT BETWEEN ROME AND NAPLES

Evidence from his correspondence and publications, and in the form of surviving images and objects, paints a vivid picture of how well Michał was connected in the Italian socio-political and artistic-cultural networks of the era. This was despite the reality that he was neither a noble nor a diplomat of the highest rank, which he deplored in letters to his father and the king soliciting greater titles, funds, and prestige.⁴² It was likely in Rome that Borch had his portrait painted not by Batoni, but instead by another painter specializing in Grand Tour souvenirs, the young Austrian Ludwig Guttenbrunn (1750–1819.) (Fig. 6.) Guttenbrunn was active in the papal city from 1772 through the 1780s; his works likely commanded a lower price than those of the more famous Batoni.⁴³ Comparing Borch's portrait to another by Guttenbrunn done in Italy in 1777 of the wealthy British tourist and amateur artist Charles Gore (1729–1807) – whom Borch may have met in his travels – and a slightly earlier 1770 double portrait by Scottish painter David Allan (1744–1796) of William Hamilton and first wife Catherine Barlow – a work Borch probably saw in person in Hamilton's villa in Naples – gives a sense of the artist's points of reference and the subject's connections and ambitions.⁴⁴ (Figs. 7–8).

His portrait should thus be viewed in the category of 'souvenir' portraits in vogue during the 18th century among wealthy participants of the Grand Tour and in the context of Borch's individual ambitions as an aspirant agent of Polish-Lithuanian interests on the peninsula. Michał conferred with Guttenbrunn regarding the composition, which posed the young Polish noble as an Enlightenment erudite

42 See e.g. VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 390r-395r (23 March 1779), 299r-304v (December 1777): 'Ah! My Dear Father [...] do you not think the Granowski, the Szydłowski, the Woyna, the Kraiowski, the Ortowski, the Staniszewski and so many others who are habituated to frippery, and who subsist only by stealing crumbs from the grand tables, to not speak of worse still.'

43 The work today is in Moscow, Tretyakov Gallery, <https://www.tretyakovgallery.ru/collection/portret-grafa-mikhaila-ioganna-fon-der-borkha/> [accessed 17.7.2021]. On Guttenbrunn's Italian career see Andrea Busiri Vici, 'Su un pittore austriaco a Roma nel Settecento: Ludwig Guttenbrunn', *Studi romani*, 24 (1976), 524–529.

44 Guttenbrunn's portrait of Gore is currently in the Klassik Stiftung Weimar (Germany), Inv. No. KGe / 00705: <https://www.klassik-stiftung.de/digital/fotothek/digitalisat/70-2010-0579/>. On Gore see Peter D. Fraser, 'Charles Gore and the Willem Van De Veldes', *Master Drawings*, 15 (1977), 375–469. The Hamilton portrait is presently in the collection of Compton Verney, Warwickshire (UK): https://www.comptonverney.org.uk/ev_collections/sir-william-and-the-first-lady-hamilton-in-their-apartment-in-naples/. For Hamilton see Jenkins, Sloan, *Vases & volcanoes*.

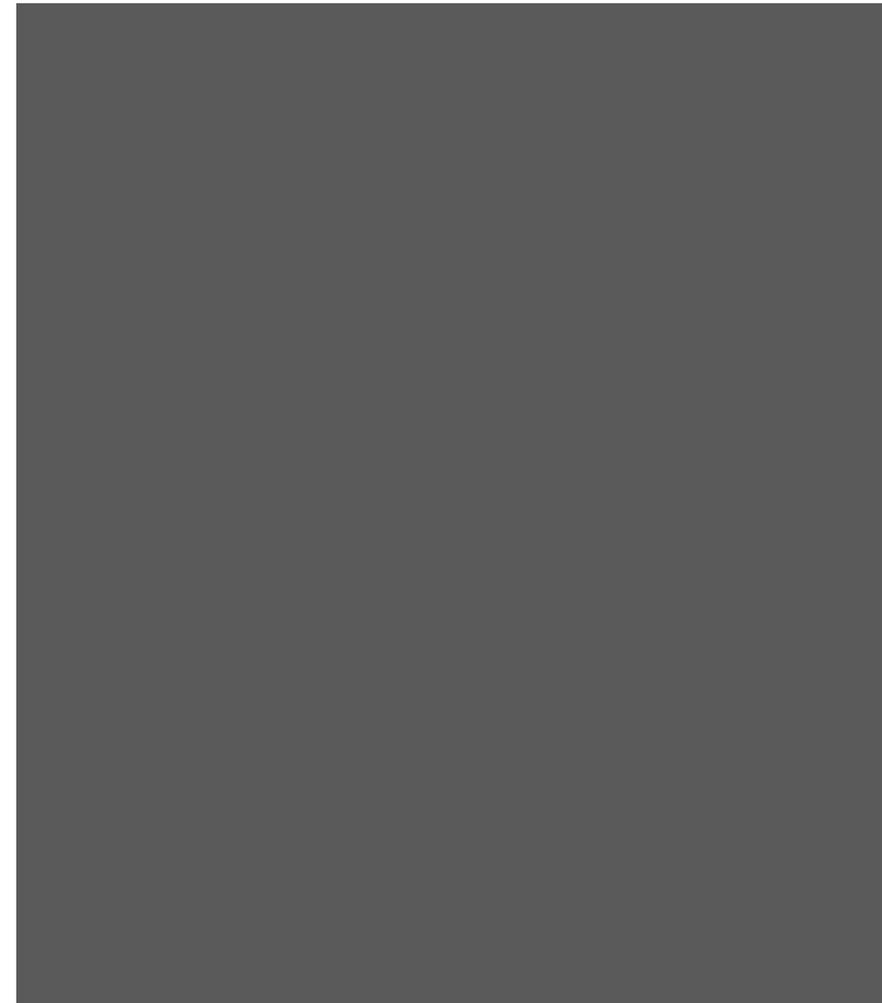


FIG. 6. LUDWIG GUTTENBRUNN, *PORTRAIT OF MICHAŁ BORCH* (OIL ON BOARD, C. 1778). MOSCOW, TRETYAKOV GALLERY. PHOTO: THE STATE TRETYAKOV GALLERY, MOSCOW.

surrounded by the material culture of his intellectual landscape. He sits nonchalantly at an antique-style stone inlay table composed of square tiles of vividly coloured marble and other hardstones, manufactured using either the *pietre dure* (actual panels of cut stone) or *scagliola* (imitation marble) technique, both practiced in Italian workshops and popular throughout Europe, signalling his good



FIG. 7. LUDWIG GUTTENBRUNN, *PORTRAIT OF CHARLES GORE* (1777). KLASSIK STIFTUNG WEIMAR, INV. NUMBER KGE / 00705. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

taste and mineralogical and antiquarian interests.⁴⁵ Borch would later acquire intarsia tables for his estate in Polish Livonia (in 1802 he bought a scagliola table in St Petersburg for 250 rubles).⁴⁶ Two examples have reportedly survived from his dispersed collections in

45 For the history of scagliola in the Grand Duchy see *Spalvų alchemija: skaljolos meno kūriniai iš Bianco Bianchi kolekcijos Florencijoje*, ed. by Daiva Mitrulevičiūtė (Vilnius: Išleido Nacionalinis muziejus Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės valdovų rūmai, 2015).

46 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 55, fol. 148v.



FIG. 8. DAVID ALLAN, *SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON AND WIFE CATHERINE BARLOW* (1770). COMPTON VERNEY, WARWICKSHIRE (UK). PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Latvian museums today.⁴⁷ During his Grand Tour he shipped multiple trunks and cases of mineralogical specimens to his family's Warsaw palace, maintaining that his so-called natural-historical *Cabinet* was worth 10,000 ducats, but that 'at least 9/10s of these collections are gifts from sovereigns and others or else lucky finds'.⁴⁸ He left his substantial collection to his male heirs, but this was eventually dispersed and lost.⁴⁹

Against a Neapolitan landscape revealed by a monumental curtain and marked by the smoking Vesuvius volcano recalling his scholarly

47 According to Taimiņa, 'Borchiana versus Siciliana', 14, specimens are preserved in the Eduards Smilģis Theater Museum (Riga) and 'Billītes' Memorial Museum of E. Virza and E. Stērste (Salgale parish).

48 E. g. VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 160r-161v (September 1776), 381r-387v (March 1779), 388r-389v (March 1779), 404r-412r (May 1779).

49 Taimiņa, 'Borchiana versus Siciliana', 14; Maślankiewicz, 'Michał Jan Borch (1751–1810) and his Activity in Mineralogy and Geochemistry'.

interest in volcanology, he gestures to souvenirs of his Italian sojourn: his left arm rests on a stack of his own published and anticipated volumes on Sicilian geology, mineralogy and volcanoes, published in Naples in 1777 (*Sicilian Lythography*) and Rome in 1778 (*Sicilian Lythology*), with a third book *Théorie des Volcans* (*Theories on Volcanoes*) projected but never published.⁵⁰ The vase with flowers, though too generic to be precisely identified, may refer to another intended volume (also never published) on the flora of Mt Etna.⁵¹ This motif could also metonymize his works in geobotany, the analysis of certain plants and vegetation as indicators of minerals in the soil, which was the subject of the ‘new speech’ delivered to the Dijon Academy mentioned in Borch’s letter cited at the opening of this article.⁵² After returning to Poland years later, the count also proposed further geobotanical research with royal support, with the goal of mining precious Commonwealth salt reserves, but royal advisors dismissed his ideas as fanciful.⁵³ His left-hand perches beside a piece of glittering Sicilian iron pyrite, a brass-yellow mineral with a metallic lustre sometimes mistaken for gold and synonymous in Borch’s mineralogical writings with Sicily itself, where pyrite was so ubiquitous and abundant that ‘every stone is, so to speak, full of it,’ which he associated with the region’s plentiful ‘volcanic emanations’.⁵⁴

He wears a vibrant green uniform trimmed with sable fur of the Company of the Noble Cavalry of Lithuanian Royal Hussars and the cross pendant of the Order of Malta, which he received during his stay in Malta, and for which he would become an early representative in the Baltics, underscoring the count’s Baltic self-fashioning and

50 Nicolosi, ‘Les représentations de la Sicile au XVIIIe siècle’, 91.

51 In *Sicilian Letters*, 2: 195, Borch listed his intended future publications: ‘I hope to soon publish a *Lythographie*, *Lythologie*, *Minérolgie Docimastique Métallurgique*, followed by *Minérhydrologie Sicilienne*, *Théorie des Volcans*, and *Botanicon Etnense*.’

52 In 1776, Borch presented at the Academy of Dijon his *Mémoire sur l’indication des minéraux par les plantes* et *Analyse de deux sources ferrugineuses découvertes dans le Forez à la suite du Mémoire sur l’indication des minéraux par les plantes*. See his manuscript text in Krawkow, Princes Czartoryski Library, f. IV, n. 816, fol. 15-50; Gawel, ‘Memoriał Michała Borchy z roku 1780’.

53 Gawel, ‘Memoriał Michała Borchy z roku 1780’.

54 See his mention of pyrite in *Sicilian Lythography*, 48; *Sicilian Lythology*, 11; *Sicilian Letters*, 1: 212; and especially *Minérolgie sicilienne docimastique et metallurgique ou connaissance de tous les minéraux que produit l’île de Sicile, avec les détails des mines et des carrières, et l’histoire des travaux anciens et actuels de ce pays. Suivie de la minerhydrologie sicilienne ou la description de toutes les eaux minerales de la sicile par l’auteur de la Lythologie sicilienne* (Turin: chez les frères Reycends, 1780), 147–149, 209–210.

role as mediating intercultural agent at the Italian courts.⁵⁵ Some of the items that he asked his father to have delivered by ship from Riga for the royal court in Naples include: three live moose, a lynx, and a bear, eight Courland hunting hounds, 100 pounds of Moka coffee, a Polish *karabela* sabre, a Russian or Tatar servant, and his own 14-year-old brother Józef Henryk Borch (1764–1835).⁵⁶ Back to his homeland, the count dispatched paintings, drawings and prints, crates of oranges, barrels of wine, plants and rare seeds, silkworms, Neapolitan hunting rifles, Maltese and Bolognese lapdogs, women’s dresses, as well as numerous antiquities and natural historical objects, including more than 400 medals that he gave to the Polish King.⁵⁷

The count’s reasons for remaining so long in Italy and especially Rome and Naples were likely manifold: besides the fact that Michał lacked the monetary means to continue his travels to Paris and northern Europe (and faced arrest in France for his debts), he not only found the artistic and intellectual scene in Italy welcoming and stimulating but also managed despite his lack of official diplomatic credentials to contrive some political inroads for himself at the papal and Neapolitan courts, where he attempted to manoeuvre on behalf of his family and the Polish nation. Guttenbrunn’s portrait can be dated to circa 1778, a crucial point in Borch’s travels and career. In letters to his father and the Polish king he claimed to enjoy a very favourable position at the Naples court as friend and protégé of the new Prime Minister Giuseppe Beccadelli di Bologna e Gravina, the Marquis of Sambuca (1726–1813), ‘who loves me and treats me as a brother,’ and to whom Borch dedicated his 1777 *Sicilian Lythography*.⁵⁸

He further intimated he was a favourite and potential lover of Queen Maria Carolina of Austria (1752–1814), sister of Queen Marie

55 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 241r-248r (29 April 1777): ‘Finding myself in Naples in the month of November, I formed the plan to go to Sicily and Malta to seek out the Cross for myself. [...] Received everywhere with distinction, I believe I did honourably for myself, my parentage and my country, without incurring debt or extraordinary expense. The Grand Master of the Order of St John of Jerusalem gave me a most flattering welcome, gave me the patent of Knight of Malta, and the day before my departure the cross of honor, which is a large Maltese cross with a golden trophy very well-fashioned on a black ribbon.’

56 See e.g. VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 261r [sic]-265v (June 1777), 270r-271v (July 1777), 272r-73v (June 1777),

57 Ibid., 358r-367r (November 1778), 362r-367r (November 1778), 388r-389v (March 1779).

58 See e.g. VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 249r-254v (May 1777) and 261r [sic]-265v (7 June 1777). On Sambuca see Vittoria Fiorelli, ‘SAMBUCA, Giuseppe Beccadelli di Bologna e Gravina marchese della’, *DBI* (2017), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe-beccadelli-di-bologna-e-gravina-marchese-della-sambuca_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe-beccadelli-di-bologna-e-gravina-marchese-della-sambuca_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) [accessed 17.7.2021].

Antoinette of France and de facto ruler of the Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily: 'I find myself in the same position as the [Polish] King [Stanisław August Poniatowski] found himself in St Petersburg, and possibly even a little more flattering.'⁵⁹ Given what Borch viewed to be his very propitious position, at 25 years of age he anticipated an illustrious diplomatic career in Italy. In summer 1777 he proceeded despite mounting debts to establish himself in Naples in a rented palace with staffage, requesting that the monarch of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth King Stanisław August Poniatowski (1732–1798) make him Plenipotentiary Minister for Poland to the Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily.⁶⁰ His preferential treatment at the court increased and he attended upon the Queen at ceremonial functions, advised the Prime Minister on military accoutrements, and accompanied the king on hunting and swimming excursions, until he found himself outpaced by court intrigues, denied the diplomatic title by the king, and finally, his father threatened to cut off all funds in October 1777 unless he left Naples immediately.⁶¹ After moving temporarily to Rome, Michał returned for supposed health reasons to Naples two months later, where he provoked a scandal by arranging a Grande Entrée for himself at court with the rank of general major against the prime minister's wishes but with the queen's support.⁶² This event apparently triggered his definitive departure from Naples.

In Rome, thanks to his father's connections Michał was not without contacts at the papal court, where former nuncio to Poland Cardinal Antonio Eugenio Visconti (1713–1788) appears to have acted as kind

59 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, 255r-258v (10 May 1777). See also *ibid.*, fol. 259r-266v (31 May 1777): 'The whole court here, who do not yet suspect the reasons for the consideration towards me, treat me with great distinction, when they see how the Sovereigns treat me. Lately I nearly burst out laughing seeing the Monkeys at Court shower me with caresses, because the Queen ordered her son [Prince Carlo, Duke of Calabria, b. 1775] to salute me, a distinction accorded here only to ambassadors. From this you may judge my Dear Father the role that I play.' On Maria Carolina see Cinzia Recca, 'The Reversal of Dynasties During the Bourbon Era in the Kingdom of Naples', *Dynastic change: Legitimacy and Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Monarchy*, ed. by Ana Maria S. A. Rodrigues, Manuela Santos Silva, Jonathan Spangler (London: Routledge, 2020), 141–158.

60 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 261r [sic]-265v (June 1777), 266r-269r (June 1777).

61 *Ibid.*, fol. 270r-271v (July 1777), 272r-273v (June 1777), 278r-279v (July 1777), 280r-282v (July 1777), 283r-286v (September 1777), 299r-304v (December 1777).

62 *Ibid.*, fol. 317r-320v (February 1778).

of agent on behalf of Borch family interests and protector to Michał.⁶³ Visconti intervened to arrange for the young count an audience with Pope Pius VI in Autumn 1777. Borch 'wanted to be presented to the Pope by Cardinal Albani the Cardinal nephew as Protector of Our Nation [Poland-Lithuania], and having moreover for him a letter to this effect on behalf of Our Great Chancellor of the Crown.'⁶⁴ But he was dismayed at being called a 'nobody' and being forced by court etiquette to cede his place to Gaetano Ghigiotti (1728–1796), Polish royal secretary and advisor.⁶⁵ That his papal audience was eventually granted is testified in Guttenbrunn's portrait, where Borch proffers a folio inscribed 'à Sa Sainteté Pie VI' (to His Holiness Pius VI), a record of his interview with the pope and dedication to the pontiff of *Sicilian Lythology*, which received its imprimatur from the Vatican Master of the Sacred palace on 9 June 1778.⁶⁶ His dedication framed his own natural historical expertise against Pius's many initiatives and strategies to systematize, valorize, and extract profit from natural resources under the papal aegis in a bid to refill disastrously depleted Vatican coffers.⁶⁷ This detail adumbrated another petition delivered to Pius VI and undoubtedly facilitated by Cardinal Visconti, who performed various duties on the Vatican Congregation for Indulgences and Sacred Relics: Borch's solicitation of prestigious catacomb relics, formally made in an autograph supplication submitted to a representative of the Cardinal Vicar of Rome on 30 April 1778.⁶⁸

The count's petition for 'the Holy Body [*Corpo Santo*] of some soldier' to be baptized with the name of ancient martyr-saint Victor – a name and identity Borch chose himself according to established custom – is today preserved in the Archive of the Custodian of

63 'Cardinal Antonio Eugenio Visconti', <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bvisca.html> [accessed 17.7.2021]. See his letter to Jan Borch of 28 November 1777 in VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 309r-v.

64 For Borch's account see VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 311r-314v (January 1778).

65 See also Paweł Zajac, 'Le impressioni sulla Polonia nella corrispondenza del Nunzio Apostolico Giovaani Andrea Archetti (1775–1784)', *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*, 49 (2011), 91–121.

66 Borch, *Sicilian Lythology*, v–x.

67 For many of these initiatives see Hanns Gross, *Rome in the Age of Enlightenment. The Post-Tridentine Syndrome and the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

68 Rome, Archivio Storico della Diocesi di Roma, Archivio Storico del Vicariato di Roma, Archivio del Custode delle SS. Reliquie, Volume 77 (1737–1783), 'Custodia delle S.S. Reliquie dell'Imo Sigr Card. Vicario di N.S. [Corpi, e Reliquie de' SS. Martiri Donati] Tomo I. Dall'anno 1737-al 1783 [Giacinto Ponzetti Custode]', 30 April 1778, 2 fols, r-v (folios are unnumbered).



FIG. 9. CORPOSANTO RELIC-SCULPTURE OF ST AURELIUS, FRONTAL VIEW (HUMAN REMAINS [SKELETAL FRAGMENTS], METAL WIRE, WOOD, WAX, TEXTILE, POLYCHROMY, LAID PAPER, AND MIXED MATERIALS, C. 1789). CATHEDRAL OF PORTO, PORTUGAL. PHOTO: JOANA DO CARMO PALMEIRÃO, *IMAGEM-RELICÁRIO DE SANTO AURÉLIO MÁRTIR PERTENCENTE À SÉ CATEDRAL DO PORTO. ESTUDO E CONSERVAÇÃO INTEGRADA DAS RELÍQUIAS*, MA THESIS (PORTO: UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA, 2015), 153, FIG.1.

Sacred Relics and Cemeteries in Roman Diocesan Archives, together with hundreds of other such petitions from Catholic supplicants from all corners of the globe made between 1737 and 1783.⁶⁹ Under the purview of Pope Pius VI, perhaps best remembered today for presiding over the dissolution of the territory of the Papal States specifically and Catholic hegemony more generally, the Apostolic Chamber, facing a centuries-long Papal dominion under threat as never before, mounted an Enlightenment counter-reform campaign to renovate the papal image, reaffirm the illusion of integral empire, and replenish needed funds, to this end exploiting to an unprecedented degree the fragments of ancient Roman martyrs in the catacombs, in addition to other natural resources.⁷⁰

However, when Victor travelled by ship from Rome to Riga and then overland to the Borch estates, what the young count received were not the first-class relics of an intact saintly body, but rather a so-called *corposanto* (Italian: holy body; pl. *corpisanți*) catacomb relic-sculpture. This distinct class of multimedia objects incorporated friable bones from the Roman catacombs within a life-size anthropomorphic

69 Massimiliano Ghilardi, 'Le custode des reliques et des cimetières', *Reliques politiques*, ed. by Albrecht Burkardt, Jérôme Grévy (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2020), 145–157.

70 Massimiliano Ghilardi, 'La fabbrica dei martiri nella Roma di fine Settecento', *Studi Romani*, 1 (2019), 307–342.

assemblage imitating an integral beatific corpse.⁷¹ As Victor was all but destroyed in the early 20th century (see below), an illustration of another period example will suffice, as the serial production of *corpisanți* in Roman workshops meant that relic-sculptures were almost identical.⁷² (Fig. 9.)

These numinous sculptures eliding relic and reliquary were produced from the second half of the century in the hundreds if not thousands as a global luxury export.⁷³ The *corpisanți's* mode of recontextualizing fragmentary ancient originals within a palimpsestic assemblage inflecting ancient, baroque, and rococo and neoclassicizing forms echoed period artistic and antiquarian sensibilities, resonating with the self-representational mode captured in Guttenbrunn's portrait.⁷⁴ Correspondence suggests that the military rank indicated by the vibrant green Hussar uniform might not have been officially granted; indeed, Michał reported his own uniform was in tatters and he was without funds, so the dazzling emerald jacket may have been painted after a sketch from Albertandi instead of the genuine article.⁷⁵ Moreover the elaborate intarsia table may or may not have been counterfeit stone, and his pyrite could be mistaken for gold. Together bespeak period attitudes towards notions of authenticity in the arts, history, and science, as well as the elegant dissimulations essential to period courtly self-fashioning account for the ascension and the undoing of the young Count in Italy. The portrait and its subterfuges should be read against Borch's own forgery in 1778 of a counterfeit letter from his father in Warsaw to Roman financier Francesco Barazzi, whom Michał owed a breathtaking 5000 *scudi* (a full-length portrait by

71 On *corpisanți* see especially the work of Massimiliano Ghilardi, including 'Le Simulacre Du Martyre: Fabrication, diffusion et dévotion des corps saints en céroplastie', *Archives Des Sciences Sociales Des Religions*, 183 (2018), 167–187; *Il Santo Con Due Piedi Sinistri: Appunti Sulla Genesi dei Corpisanți in Ceroplastica* (Citta Di Castello: LuoghInteriori, 2019); 'Antonio Magnani and the invention of corpisanți in ceroplastica', *Ceroplastics: The art of wax*, ed. by Owen Burke, Francesco Maria Galassi (Rome: L'erma di Bretschneider, 2019), 59–66.

72 On Victor's fate see further discussion below.

73 Ruth Sargent Noyes, Radosław Budzyński, Dzianis Filipchuk, Melchior Jakubowski, Dzmitry Marozau, Vika Veličkaitė, "Baltic catacombs." Translating *corpisanți* catacomb relic-sculptures between Rome, Polish Livonia, and the Lithuanian Grand Duchy circa 1750–1800' [version 1; peer review: 5 approved], *Open Research Europe*, 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.13259.1> [accessed 17.7.2021].

74 Collins, *Papacy and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Rome*.

75 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 325r-326r (May 1778).

Batoni cost 200 *scudi*), and a relic of the True Cross he procured in the papal city later determined a fake only after the count's death (see below).⁷⁶

BORCH ON THE BRINK: LAMPI'S C. 1789 PORTRAIT AND THE ISSUE OF REFORM

The Borch family's changing fortunes following the First Partition, shifting political conditions, and debts incurred by Michał Borch's Grand Tour can be surmised from circumstances following his father's death and return from Italy in 1781. In 1777 the young count recalled having refused the marriage offer tendered by Count George Browne (1698–1792), an Irish soldier of fortune, imperial Russian General, and Governor of Livonia (a Baltic governorate of the Russian Empire covering a territory today divided between Estonia and Latvia). Borch had rejected a union with Browne's first daughter Martha Philippine, thinking the match beneath him.⁷⁷ However, in 1783 Borch ended up marrying Browne's second daughter Eleonore Christina (1765–1844), eventually publishing a laudatory biography of his father-in-law.⁷⁸ Their marriage may have also helped the Borch to shore up their Inflanty estates, threatened by increasing Russian hegemony.

In the 1780s he composed further works, including in 1785 a projected 36-volume magnum opus never published due to financial constraints and the Polish monarch's refusal to subsidize the

76 For the forged letter see *ibid.*, fol. 353r-354r (16 October 1778). See also Borch's message to his father concerning the fake letter: 'Not knowing where to go, without money, without credit [...] I went to [Barazzi] with a letter, of which I include here a copy, as if you yourself had written it to him. I do not know yet what will be the result of this [...]. You see most beloved Father what I am driven to by poverty and misery....' *Ibid.*, fol. 351r-v (undated; December 1778). Sincere thanks to Dr. Melchior Jakubowski for assistance in accessing this material.

77 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 261r [sic]-265v (June 1777). Martha Philippine instead married Livonian voivode Johann Thaddäus von Syberg zu Wischling.

78 Michał Borch, *Histoire de la vie de George de Browne, comte du Saint-Empire, gouverneur général de Livonie et d'Esthonie, général en chef des armées de Sa Majesté l'impératrice de toutes les Russies, chevalier des ordres de St. André, St. Alexandre Newski et St. Włodimir de Russie, de l'aigle blanc de Pologne, et de Ste. Anne de Holstein, seigneur héréditaire des terres de Smilten, Segewold, Palkmar et Galenhoff etc. etc.* (Riga: Hartknoch, 1794).

project.⁷⁹ In 1786 he self-published the text of a speech he delivered as envoy of Polish Livonia on the duties of the nobility to state and king at the meeting of the General Sejm (Polish: Sejm walny) or bicameral parliament of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in Warsaw.⁸⁰ It should be noted that there is no evidence from Michał's personal correspondence, where he often complained of ill health and professed his loyalty and service to Stanisław August, that the count had played any role in rescuing the king from abduction by the Bar Confederates on 3 November 1771 and thereby incurred personal injury; nor is there evidence of his being entrusted with diplomatic state negotiations of any significance on his Grand Tour.⁸¹ Although Borch and King Stanisław August Poniatowski maintained cordial relations, the monarch refused many of the Count's requests for patronage, and their correspondence suggests a kind of definitive falling out around 1792.⁸²

While establishing himself in married life, continuing travels abroad to Germany, the Netherlands, and Britain, and litigating against family members regarding issues of inheritance, Michał sought to establish himself as patron and promotor of Italianate artistic currents in the Commonwealth, continuing the decoration of the Borch palace in Warsaw that his father had bought in 1768 and rebuilt under the direction of Italo-Polish architect Domenico

79 For Borch's unpublished 36-volume collected works which he planned in 1785, see Krakow, Princes Czartoryski Library, Manuscripts Department, BCzart rkps 696, 111–120. This work was to have included *Journaux des voyages* (vol. 1–3), *Mémoires académiques présentés par l'auteur aux plus célèbres Académies de l'Europe et dont l'aplas part ont eu l'honneur d'être couronnés* (4–6), *Lithographie* (7), *Lithologie* (8), *Minérolgie metallurgique* (9), *Les lettres sur la Sicile* (10–11), *Théories de volcans* (13–14), *Botanicum Aetnaeum ou description de la vegetation du mont Etna* (34–35). See also discussion in Biliński, 'L'Italia dei viaggiatori illuministi polacchi', 47–48; Jolanta Polanowska, 'Michał Jan Borch and his Residence in Varakłāni: Genesis and Ideological Programme', *Mākslas vēsture & teorija*, 16 (2013), 18–32, at 29–30/n36.

80 *Głos Jasniew Wielmożnego Imci Pana Michała Hrabiego Borchy, Oboźnego W. Xtwa Litewskiego, Jako Posła z Xięstwa Inflantskiego w Izbie Poselskiej na Dniu 28. Sctobra R. 1786* [*The voice of the Honorable Name of Mr. Michał Count Borch...as an envoy from the Livonian Duchy in the Chamber of Deputies on 28 October 1786*] (Warsaw: [s.n.], 1786).

81 This is in contrast to assertions, for example, in certain versions of Borch's biography, see e.g. Polanowska, 'Michał Jan Borch and his Residence in Varakłāni', 20, and Taimiņa, 'Borchiana versus Siciliana', 6.

82 Bronisław Zaleski, 'Korespondencja krajowa Stanisława Augusta z lat 1784 do 1792', *Rocznik Towarzystwa Historyczno-Literackiego w Paryżu. Rok 1870–1872* (Poznań: Księgarnia Jana Konstantego Żupańskiego, 1872), 339.

Merlini (1730–1797).⁸³ Records show that under Michał, Italian artisans continued work on the palace through the 1780s and 90s,⁸⁴ but in 1800 he sold the palace to Ludovico (Ludwik) Nesti, likely to gain needed funds (the structure was since destroyed and rebuilt).⁸⁵

These events coincided with Borch's withdrawal from politics in the 1790s after he failed to win from the king the position of Voivode of Livonia in 1791, concurrent to the failure of the reform-minded Constitution of 3 May 1791, and the Second (1793) and Third (1795) Partitions that brought about the total dissolution of the *Rzeczpospolita*.⁸⁶ Just prior or concurrent to his withdrawal from state affairs, the Count recorded his career's second apogee, as it were, in a portrait (since presumably lost) by Austro-Italian painter Giovanni Battista Lampi the Elder (1751–1830). Lampi largely specialized in aristocratic portraits and sojourned in Warsaw in 1788–1789 before moving on to the Russian court, during which time Borch's likeness was probably recorded.⁸⁷ (Fig. 10.) The attribution to Lampi, confirmed by premier Lampi scholar Roberto Pancheri,⁸⁸ is sustained by the strict resemblance between this portrait and another dated c. 1794 that depicts the Grand Chancellor of the Russian Empire Prince Alexander Andreyevich Bezborodko (Russian: *Князь Алекса́ндр Андре́евич Безборо́дко*,

83 Jarosław Zieliński, 'Pałac Borchów/Dom Arcybiskupów Warszawskich', *Atlas dawnej architektury ulic i placów Warszawy. Vol 11. Miechowska–Myśliwiecka* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Towarzystwa Opieki nad Zabytkami, 2005), 185–186.

84 See payments in VSNALU, Fund 13, file 11, fol. 25-27 (1784 contract with Ferdinando Galluzzo and Tommaso Rivelli for work on the palace; 1785 record in Italian of work done); 26v, a Latin and Polish contract signed by 'Petrus Romani'; file 48, fol. 105-08 (1788–1791); file 97, fol. 43v (1789: letter from superintendent of Warsaw palace mentioning architect D. Merlini). Further documents pertaining to the Warsaw property can be found in *ibid.*, file 28.

85 Zieliński, 'Pałac Borchów', 185; Juliusz A. Chrościcki and Andrzej Rottermund, *Atlas architektury Warszawy* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Arkady, 1977), 93.

86 See his letter of resignation to Stanisław August in Krakow, Princes Czartoryski Library, Manuscripts Department, BCzart rkps 722, fol. 807.

87 According to the Marburg Bildarchiv, the painting was last recorded in Berlin before 1937 in the Schmidt collection. On Lampi see Roberto Pancheri, 'LAMPi, Giovanni Battista', *DBI*, 2004, [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-battista-lampi_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-battista-lampi_(Dizionario-Biografico)) [accessed 2.7.2021]; *Un Ritrattista nell'Europa delle corti: Giovanni Battista Lampi, 1751–1830*, ed. by Fernando Mazzocca, Roberto Pancheri, et al. (Trento: Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Servizio Beni Culturali, 2001). For his activities in Russia see Roberto Pancheri, *Giovanni Battista Lampi alla Corte di Caterina II di Russia* (Trento: Società di Studi Trentini di Scienze Storiche, 2011).

88 Personal email exchange 12 July 2021. Sincere thanks to Dr. Pancheri for insights into Lampi's work.

1747–1799), and evinces striking compositional similarities and nearly identical pose.⁸⁹ (Fig. 11.)

Lampi portrayed Borch in his late 30s wearing the Major General uniform of the Noble Cavalry of Lithuanian Royal Hussars. Around his neck he wore the red-and-white Maltese cross of the Polish Order of Stanislas (awarded 1780), and across his chest the blue sash of the Polish Order of the White Eagle. Both covered the cross of the same order, which he received in 1789 when this is estimated to have been painted.⁹⁰ That the artist (and likely the sitter, too) conceived of this portrayal as a sort of pendant to Guttenbrunn's portrait from a decade earlier is suggested by the numerous formal and iconographic parallels between the two paintings: both depict the subject from the waist up with torso *en face* and head slightly turned and are set against a balustrade and landscape vista. The subject of each painting wears a powdered wig and uniform and is wearing the Maltese cross of a particular noble order. Each subject is inclined against an antique-style marble-top table, holding and gesturing to the fruits of his intellectual labour and distinguished role as collector of *mineralogica* and arbiter of this knowledge.

In the later portrait, the count is imagined at work in his natural historical cabinet (or study) poised with quill pen in his right hand and cradling an open notebook in his left, perched at a marble or scagliola table with sphinx-shaped sculpted legs, as if captured by the artist *in medias res* composing his next opus. The sphinx's gaze meets the tip of his quill, suggesting at once the operations of authorial inspiration and the disclosure of esoteric knowledge at work. His left arm perches on two books, presumably his own works. In the lower right a drawer is scarcely visible that seems to protrude into the viewer's space, disclosing a glimpse of its contents including lithological specimens and a piece of coral, which are presumably the subject of his writing and a source of intellectual inspiration equal to that of his sphinx muse.

89 St Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, Inv. No.: ГЭ-8382, <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/01.+paintings/38461> [accessed 2.7.2021]. A copy is in the Hillwood Museum (Washington, DC), Catalog number: 51.69, <https://hillwoodmuseum.org/collection/item/51.69?r=/collection/search?filter=Place%20made:RUSSIA&p=91> [accessed 2.7.2021].

90 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 84, fol.102v.



FIG. 10. GIOVANNI BATTISTA LAMPI THE ELDER, *PORTRAIT OF MICHAL BORCH* (C. 1789). PHOTO: BILDARCHIV FOTO MARBURG.

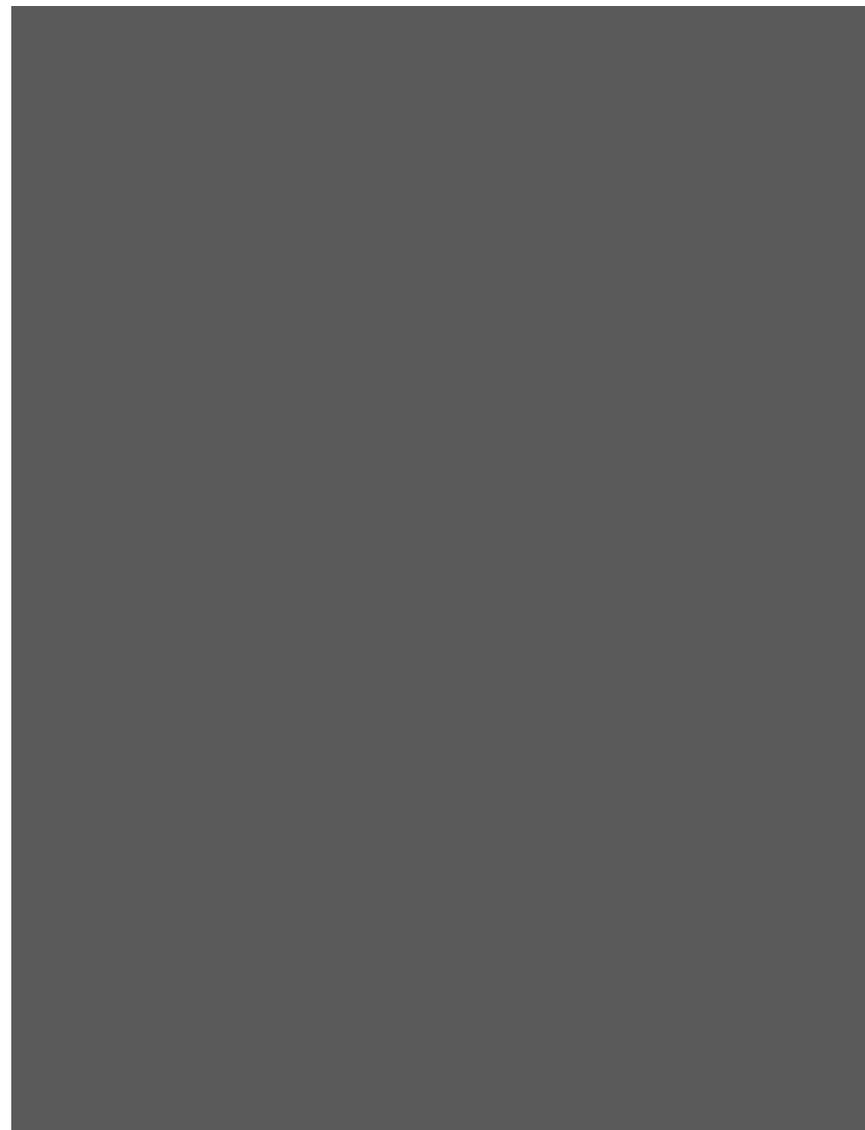


FIG. 11. AFTER GIOVANNI BATTISTA LAMPI THE ELDER, *PORTRAIT OF ALEXANDER ANDREYEVICH BEZBORODKO* (OIL ON CANVAS, C. 1794). HILLWOOD MUSEUM, WASHINGTON (DC), CATALOG NUMBER 51.69. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Guttenbrunn's painting squarely sited Michał in the Neapolitan milieu and projected the young Count's optimistic aspirations to diplomatic and courtly preeminence. In contrast, Lampi's rendering of the count at middle age is marked by an unsettling lack of well-defined place (or indeed space) and a general disquietude, enhanced by the artist's application of chiaroscuro, representative of the subject's uncertain horizons and those of his homeland. Although thoroughly divested of any sense of geographic belonging in this image, at the point of the painting's conception Borch was tethered his growing family and decreasing resources to a fragmented domain (split between Poland-Lithuania). His prestige and prospects were shrinking with those of the state – and Russified Livonia (in the newly dubbed region White Russia), where his family's holdings faced an uncertain future from imperial hegemony. His elusive gaze away from the viewer into the compositional void gestures to another place and time, capturing a sense of introspective nostalgia for the cultural, courtly, intellectual, and scientific pursuits that had first launched his career on the Italian peninsula.

Dating this work to the cusp of the Second Partition and Borch's retirement would situate it at a moment when national reformation of monarchy and citizenry remained possible, and the task of reassembling fragments of the *Rzeczpospolita* was not yet a foregone impossibility. We witness in this painting's rendering of Michał as a collector and theorizer of disparate fragments a visual thematizing of Borch and his *patria* on the brink. On one hand, it is a vision of a lingering possibility (albeit fading like the background light) that he might participate in the restitution of his homeland through intellectual and political labour. This is symbolized by his scientific objects, uniform, and medals. On the other, his contrapposto pose, echoed in his counterbalanced notebook, embodies the precarious position of the Commonwealth and its monarchy, as well as the count who professed to serve them, while simultaneously maintaining Russian imperial favour in order to preserve his Inflanty estates. Both state and statesman are assumed to be on the threshold of irrevocable loss – the former through foreign annexation and civil war, the latter by relinquishing public and state duties with an attending diminution of political and geographical prospects, turning inward to individual and familial rather than national reform.

The portrait became an allegory of Michał's embodiment of the Enlightenment Polish-Lithuanian nobility's multifaceted reform ideals, inflected through and mediated by imported Italian styles, morphologies, and concepts. Lampi's sensitive and enigmatic portrait should be considered against the architectural and artistic environment created at Borch's primary estate in Varakļāni (today in eastern Latvia).⁹¹ Here he ultimately retired and undertook reconstruction of the countryside manor palace in the style of a neoclassical villa ensconced within extensive gardens, and development of the village centre including a church and family burial chapel.⁹² While his religiosity has not been seriously investigated in the scholarship, his family demonstrated devotion to and support of the Catholic Church. Additionally, his Grand Tour correspondence demonstrates their connections to high-ranking members of the Roman curia; surviving family archives further testify to the family's Catholic piety, recording church foundations, daily mass observed in the Varakļāni palace private chapel, and a small collection of saints' relics granted by prestigious Roman ecclesiasts.⁹³

The *corposanto* relic-sculpture of Victor was initially kept in the chapel in Varakļāni palace, surrounded by vestiges of the count's Italian travels, together with the family's older relics, a precious relic of the True Cross that Michał had likewise brought back from Rome (on which more below), and a gallery of family portraits in the dining room 'under which genealogical and heraldic sketches shine with golden paint the praise of the ancestors.'⁹⁴ In this highly suggestive context, St Victor elicited the Borch's origins in Livonia among pious Medieval crusaders under the papal aegis, forging a connection with the first victorious Christian martyrs of the past and devout champions of Roman Catholicism amidst religio-political and cultural upheaval in his homeland. The relic-

91 The parish had belonged to his family since 1561.

92 See below for further citations on the manor, palace and gardens.

93 See file 84, fol. 100r-v. Michał Jan's father was benefactor of the Jesuit mission in Varakļāni and Preiļi, the so-called *Missio Borchiana*: see Polanowska, 'Michał Jan Borch and his Residence in Varakļāni', 20; Kristine Ogle, 'The Evidences of the Activity of the Jesuits in the Architectural Heritage of Polish Livonia', *Stan badań nad wielokulturowym dziedzictwem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. by Wojciech Walczak, Karol Łopatecki (Białystok: Instytut Badań nad Dziedzictwem Kulturowym Europy, 2012), 437–450.

94 Gustaw Manteuffel, *Inflanty Polskie, poprzedzone ogólnym rzutem oka na siedmiowiekową przeszłość całych Inflant* (Poznań: Księgarnia Jana Konstantego Żupańskiego, 1879), 127.

sculpture embodying an ancient soldier martyred for the true faith disinterred from Roman earth reified Borch's devotion to and defence of Catholicism in Polish Livonia, which the First Partition transformed into a contested interconfessional borderland between Russian imperial and Roman papal prerogatives.⁹⁵

The precarious position of Victor as a diplomatic avatar for the Roman Church amidst tense religio-political struggles is attested by the conditions of the eventual ritual translation of the *corposanto* relic-sculpture in April 1783 from Borch's palace to an eponymous chapel inside the parish church in the centre of Varakļāni.⁹⁶ Plans for the St Victor chapel included an altarpiece (apparently never realized) depicting the martyr before the Roman Emperor Diocletian.⁹⁷ The Count's translation of Victor and the saint's annual festival indulging him can be linked to contemporary negotiations between Russian imperial and Roman papal authorities regarding the status of the Archdiocese of Mohilev. Varakļāni was not only newly subject to these, but was also directly predicated on Pius VI's recognition of Mohilev in April that same year.⁹⁸ The jumbled and heavily edited draft of the inscription for St Victor's eponymous chapel suggests confusion or conflict over the status of the Roman Church in the region.⁹⁹

At this time, the Varakļāni parish church was a wooden structure. However, plans were being drawn up for a new and grander masonry basilica church fitted with a neoclassical temple facade by (perhaps)

95 See André Arvuldīs Brumanis, *Aux Origines de la Hiérarchie Latine en Russie: Mgr Stanislas Siestrzenciewicz-Bohusz, Premier Archevêque-Métropolitain de Mohilev (1731–1826)* (Louvain: Bureaux du Recueil, 1968). For Russo-Roman Catholic relations over the longue durée see Dennis J. Dunn, *The Catholic Church and Russia: Popes, Patriarchs, Tsars, and Commissars* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

96 Borch's testament of 1810 mentions the *Trumna Szo Wiktorego* ('Coffin of St Victor') in the Varakļāni parish church. See Riga, University of Latvia Academic Library, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, ms. 1157, no. 2; Polanowska, 'Michał Jan Borch and his residence in Varakļāni', 28.

97 See an undated autograph document in Lviv, VSNALU, Fund 13, file 102, fol. 243: 'Notice of the subjects to be represented in the 7 paintings that I wish to be painted in Dresden for my parish church in Warkland: on the high altar: 1. The Communion 13 Rhinish feet high, 9 ft wide. 2. Birth of Christ, 12 ft by 8 ft. 3. The Baptism 12 ft. × 8 ft. 4. The Resurrection 12 × 8 ft. 5 The Ascension 12 × 8. 6. St Michael the Archangel defeating the Demon 12 × 8 ft. 7. St Victor the Martyr before Diocletian.'

98 LVVA, 2598.f., 1.apr., 138, fol. 2. Sincere thanks to Reinis Norkārklis for assistance in accessing these materials. See Joseph Lins, 'Mohileff', *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 10 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10428a.htm> [accessed 9 February 2021].

99 LVVA, 2598.f., 1.apr., 138, 5.

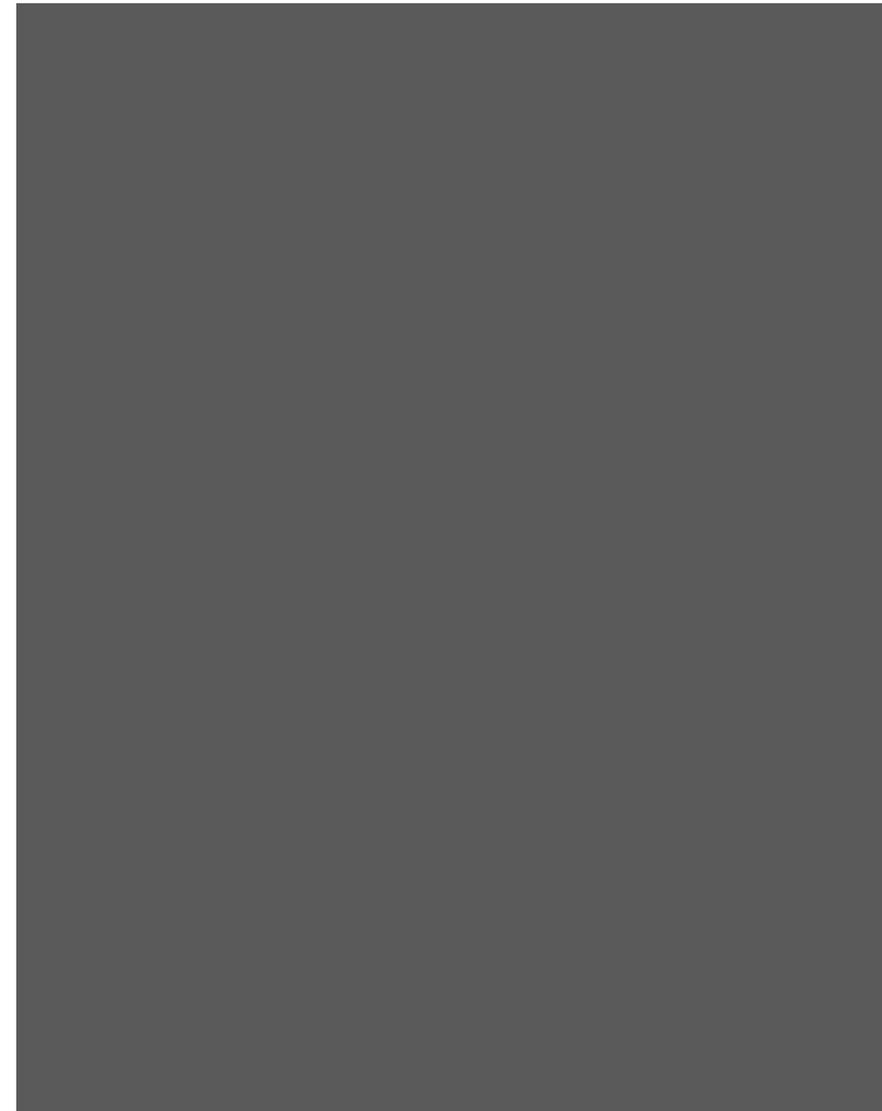


FIG. 12. VINCENZO DE MAZOTTI, VARAKĻĀNI PARISH CHURCH (C. 1783–1854). VARAKĻĀNI, LATVIA. PHOTO: RUTH SARGENT NOYES.

Roman architect Vincenzo de' Mazotti (1756–1798). The architect was Michał's personal friend credited with designing the principal architecture of Varakļāni (palace, church, and Borch chapel).¹⁰⁰ (Fig. 12.) Due to limited financial resources, however, the church

100 For Mazotti see further discussion below.



FIG. 13. VINCENZO DE MAZOTTI, BORCH FUNERARY CHAPEL, C. 1783-1816. VARAKĻĀNI, LATVIA. PHOTO: RUTH SARGENT NOYES.

was not completed during Borch's lifetime, but only in the mid-19th century c. 1839–1854 by the count's wife Eleanore Browne Borch and heirs.¹⁰¹ The masonry domed family mortuary chapel, designed as a miniature translation of the Roman Pantheon, was also erected after Borch's death in the second decade of the 19th century under

101 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 77, fol. 52-111.



FIG. 14. RELIQUARY COFFIN CONTAINING REMAINS OF ST VICTOR RELIC-SCULPTURE (METAL [LIKELY BRASS], EARLY- OR MID-20TH CENTURY). VARAKĻĀNI PARISH CHURCH, LATVIA. PHOTO: RUTH SARGENT NOYES; COURTESY OF VARAKĻĀNI PARISH CHURCH.

the remit of his wife c. 1816. (Fig. 13.) The present-day name for this structure, Sv. Viktora kapela (St Victor Chapel), indicates that the *corposanto* may have been installed there.¹⁰² Sadly, the relic-sculpture was irrevocably damaged in the violent conflicts during the early-to-mid-20th century, and all that remains today are contained within a small locked reliquary casket in Varakļāni parish church.¹⁰³ (Fig. 14.)

Initially situated in the Borch palace in proximity to minerals, stones, and gems unearthed from Italian soil, Victor realized the Pauline metaphor in First Peter 2:4 of the bodies of saints as precious 'living stones' in luxurious textiles and bric-a-brac.¹⁰⁴ This

102 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 77, fol. 47-48.

103 Sincere thanks to Father Česlavs Mikšto, Jānis Mickevičs, and the staff of Varakļāni Regional Museum for facilitating access to the relics in their current situation.

104 On the Pauline metaphor of 'living stones' see Ruth Sargent Noyes, 'Living stones: Reinterpreting cultic spaces and structures and their description in hagiographic literature c. 1600', *Ein Dialog der Künste. Neuinterpretation von Architektur und die Beschreibung in der Literatur von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Barbara von Orelli-Messerli (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2020), 54–72.

imbrication of imported and translated spiritual and lithological treasures moreover recollected corporeal and petrological notions of historical truth established by Catholic Counter-Reformation scholars. This truth theorized the work of historical reformations in terms of assembling an integral body from members and limbs, or a mosaic from semi-precious stone fragments.¹⁰⁵ The marriage of petrological and corporeal methods of generating historical knowledge in Michał Borch's collection techniques became more convoluted by the acquisition of another relic he collected in the papal city and translated to Varakļāni. This consisted of wood of the True Cross. The Count's avid desire for such a holy fragment is evident in his petition for the *corposanto* of Victor. In the petition he requested 'some other Relic, particularly that of the Holy Cross, with their authenticating documentation,' which Pope Pius VI had supposedly promised him. This was highly irregular, if not unique, in the context of such catacomb relic petitions. That Borch did manage to obtain such a relic, complete with a validating parchment diploma or so-called Authentic dated 1777, signed and sealed in the name of the pontiff himself, is demonstrated by family correspondence from the mid-19th century. At this time, his sons Count Alexander Anton Stanislaus Bernhard von Der Borch (1804–1867) and Karol Jerzy Jan Borch (1787–1861) circulated a copy of the certificate – kept together with the relic in Inflanty inside a box inscribed *Romae 1777* – in hopes of having the document and relic verified by the Vatican under Pope Pius IX.¹⁰⁶

The Counts Borch submitted their query to the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology (Italian: Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra), the official Vatican board founded in 1852 by Pius IX for the purpose of overseeing the Roman catacombs and safeguarding their contents. The Commission's founding brought to a close the traffic in relics and *corpisanti* from which the Borch had benefitted. However, the Commission's reaction communicated by an agent in 1861 delivered a scandalous report.¹⁰⁷ Having reviewed a facsimile copy of the Authentic from the Borch collections, the

105 See further discussion and bibliography in Ruth Sargent Noyes, *Peter Paul Rubens and the Counter-Reformation Crisis of the Beati Moderni* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 56.

106 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 2, fol. 197-210.

107 Massimiliano Ghilardi, 'The Roman Catacombs in the Nineteenth Century. "Cradle and Archives of the Catholic Church"', *Nineteenth-Century European Pilgrimages. A New Golden Age*, ed. by Antón M. Pazos (New York: Routledge, 2020), 46–61.

Commission determined on the basis of the parchment's anomalous format and egregiously erroneous Latin that it was 'apocryphal' and 'a heap of lies'. They recommended that the Authentic together with the supposed relic it certified both 'should be burned with caution'.¹⁰⁸

These circumstances suggest that either the young count had procured a purported relic of the True Cross through an agent in the *urbe* that he believed to be genuine, and lacking the appropriate documentation forged the Authentic (or had it forged); or, that he procured through an agent the purported relic and the Authentic previously forged, believing both to be real; or, that he procured a sliver of wood knowing it to be inauthentic and proceeded to have the attending accoutrements fabricated. While engaging with history and historical methods (for example from the nascent field of archaeology), this retrospective, restorative mode of marshalling the past was decoupled from constraints associated with Enlightenment historiography such as chronology and authenticity, espousing what literary scholar Erich Auerbach defined as a typological, figurative view of history. The engine of history may have been made to operate in reverse to reimagine the reality of a phony relic or the Commonwealth's revival (or survival), counterfeiting the veracity of an ancient numinous fragment of the Church's history or a reformed Poland no less 'truthfully' than if these had 'actually' been.¹⁰⁹

BORCH AT VARAKĻĀNI: PESZKA'S C. 1808 PORTRAIT AS POETIC REFUGE

Even as Michał ensconced his precious stones and sacred relics inside his palace in the heart of Inflanty, the territory itself existed only in collective memory as a relic of what had been one of early modern Europe's largest and most diverse states, translated from an administrative division within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to part of a Czarist Russian administrative-territorial area administered from Vitebsk. Against this historical background, Borch's activities should be read in concert with those of noble Polish-Lithuanian contemporaries like Count Roman Ignacy Potocki (1750–1809), a

108 Letter from Luigi Ghilardi to Count Alexander Borch, 13 April 1861. In VSNALU, Fund 13, file 2, fol. 208r-v.

109 Erich Auerbach, 'Typological Symbolism in Medieval Literature', *Yale French Studies*, 9 (1952), 3–10.

member of the influential Polish magnate Potocki clan whose brother Count Stanisław Kostka Potocki (1755–1821) travelled together for a short time with Michał on the Grand Tour in 1774.¹¹⁰ Ignacy Potocki (as he was known) ‘saw a direct relationship between the survival of the Commonwealth and the cultivation of architecture and the arts.’¹¹¹

Art historian Carolyn Guile’s analysis of Ignacy Potocki’s efforts to theorize architectural knowledge in the service of social and political reform for the survival of the *Rzeczpospolita* demonstrates that Potocki’s promotion of what he considered the paradigmatic Italian canon of Vitruvian design and building in Poland-Lithuania espoused the notion that ‘architecture could signify and embody cultural values, bearing the traces of the ideals and principles of their practitioners and of the writers on architecture who formulated the relationship between form and content,’ representing ‘the outward expression of identity and allegiance to theoretical, practical, and aesthetic norms.’¹¹² Potocki co-authored the failed Constitution of 3 May 1791. He also authored a treatise, *Uwagi o Architekturze Przez Ignacego Potockiego (Remarks on Architecture)* that circulated in the late 18th century in manuscript, which he described as a ‘mosaic’ assimilating and recombining references to other predominantly Western and Italian sources constituting an increasingly institutionalized canon informed by the classical tradition.

After the Partitions, Potocki and his brother settled in south-eastern Poland between Warsaw and Lublin very close to Puławy estate, the former Commonwealth’s premier site of magnate cultural patronage and political activity. Puławy was owned by Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski (1734–1823), whose wife Izabela Fleming Czartoryska (1746–1835) from the 1780s cultivated a renowned garden and assembled on the palace grounds a ‘hagiographic’ collection of relics, artefacts, and images relevant to Polish national history and patriotism. Without strict regard for chronology or modern historiographical notions of veracity, her collections constituted a quasi-public proto-museum with a pronounced moralizing didactic and pious missive. This was aimed especially at her own children,

110 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 84r-85v (October 1774).

111 Guile, *Remarks on Architecture*, 2–3.

112 *Ibid.*, 3.

whose education and upbringing Izabela closely attended to according to emergent philosophies on child-rearing promoted by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.¹¹³

The efforts of Borch’s elite *szlachta* contemporaries furnish context for the Count’s own efforts begun during the mid-1780s and continued through his death to reform the architecture, décor, and landscape within and surrounding his family’s remaining principal estate in Varakłāni. Here, his reconstruction of selfhood in service to his heirs through engagement with Italianate forms reminiscent of his early travels oscillated between a clinging to a sense of former greatness and a translation of transformed cultural relevance within the broader European tradition, ultimately capturing the reality that ‘the Commonwealth, absent statehood, would become a state of mind.’¹¹⁴ The Varakłāni palace appears rather loosely as a less grand version of Verkiiai Palace (Vilnius, Lithuania), the latter rebuilt circa 1780 for Prince Bishop of Vilnius Ignacy Jakub Massalski (1726–1794) after designs by architects Marcin Knackfus (c. 1742–c. 1821) and his student Wawrzyniec Gucewicz (c. 1753–1798), who was in Italy to study architecture on a royal scholarship around the same time Borch was there on tour.¹¹⁵ (Fig. 15.)

Borch was likewise in contact with Bishop Massalski, who in 1779 mediated Michał’s potential appointment as Correspondent of the Polish Commission of National Education (Polish: Komisja Edukacji Narodowej), which the count considered analogous to the *Académie Française*.¹¹⁶ As noted above, the design for Varakłāni palace is traditionally given to the Roman architect Vincenzo de’

113 Musiał, ‘Mentem mortalia tangent’. See also recent scholarship by Agnieszka Whelan, including ‘The rebirth of Poland and the growth of trees. Politics in the garden at the time of the partitions’, *Art and Politics*, ed. by Piotr Paszkiewicz, Francis Ames-Lewis (London: Birbeck College, 1998), 45–60; ‘Izabela Czartoryska and the designed landscape in Poland, 1772–1831’, *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, 28 (2008), 281–302; ‘The collection of Princess Izabela Czartoryska and issues of its reception’, *The International Journal of Arts in Society*, 2 (2008), 93–98; ‘On the statuary in the garden of Puławy’, *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, 29 (2009), 57–71; ‘Izabela Czartoryska and Catholic devotion in the eighteenth-century Polish garden’, *Women, Enlightenment and Catholicism: A Global Biographical History*, ed. by Ulrich L. Lehner (New York: Routledge, 2017), 216–228.

114 Guile, *Remarks on Architecture*, 28.

115 Irena Szybiak, ‘Ignacy Jakub Massalski’, *PSB* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo PAN, 1975), 20: 135–139. For the architects see Vladas Drema, ‘Materiały do działalności architekta Marcina Knakfusa’, *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 26 (1964), 197–207.

116 Massalski had been the Commission’s first chairman until 1776. Borch’s father, however, opposed the appointment, considering it dishonourable and unrespectable. See VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 398r-399v (March 1779), 404r-412r (May 1779).



FIG. 15. VINCENZO DE MAZOTTI, BORCH MANOR PALACE (C. 1783–1810). VARAKĻĀNI, LATVIA. PHOTO: RUTH SARGENT NOYES.

Mazotti, whom Borch supposedly met in Warsaw circa 1783, and we can imagine Borch and Mazotti composing the Varakļāni plan in consultation with Massalski and his architects.¹¹⁷ However, 1783–1784 letters from Michał to King Stanisław August soliciting court titles on Mazotti's behalf made no mention of the Italian being an architect, but rather described him as a member of the Roman nobility, personal friend, fellow Knight of the Order of Malta, and 'close relation' of Veronese nobleman Marquis Scipione

117 On Mazotti and the palace design see Pēteris Savickis, 'Arhitekts Vincenzo macotti (1756–1798)', *Varakļāni un varakļānieši*, 192–193; Jolanta Polanowska, 'Ogrod w Warklanach - dzieło właściciela Michala Jana Borchy i architekta Vincenza de Mazottiego', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 74 (2012), 551–599; Polanowska, 'Michał Jan Borch and his Residence in Varakļāni'; Jānis Zilgalvis, 'Varakļāni - muiža un tas saimnieki gadsimtu gaitā', *Mākslas Vēsture un Teorija*, 16 (2013), 33–36; James Stevens Curl, Susan Wilson, *The Oxford Dictionary of Architecture* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 474. See further citations below regarding manor's the landscaped park and gardens.

Maffei (1675–1755).¹¹⁸ Mazotti at the time had immigrated to Poland-Lithuania and was about to marry into a local family; the King conceded him the title of *Conseiller de Cour* (Court Counsellor), and Borch recorded many payments associated with Mazotti for travels together to Warsaw, perhaps to inspect architecture.¹¹⁹

Archival records further suggest that Michał borrowed substantial sums from his Italian friend (repaid only after the latter's death to his heirs) and played the role of executor or witness for his will.¹²⁰ This all raises first that Borch and Mazotti had most likely met in Italy during the count's Grand Tour, and second that Mazotti was not professionally trained architect, but instead an aristocratic amateur like Borch. Recalling Michał's own study of architecture in Italy, a picture emerges wherein the pair of like-minded nobles contrived the plans for Varakļāni together, and then entrusted their 'paper architecture' to professional builders, who translated these plans into concrete reality. Mazotti and Borch possibly brought skilled masons from Warsaw, or employed local professionals, such as the descendants of the Paracca, a family of northern Italian architects who settled in Inflanty in the 1760s and worked for area magnate families.¹²¹

That the relationship between Mazotti and Borch was one of Enlightenment homosocial friendship between two equal peers, rather than that of superior patron and subservient client, can be

118 Krakow, Princes Czartoryski Library, 'Korespondencya Jego Krolewskiej Mości. Polska ('Ad Stanislaum Augustum Regem...'), nr inw. MNK 17-rkps-655-IV, fol. 401-403; MNK 17-rkps-696-IV, fol. 101-102. On Maffei see Gian Paolo Romagnani, 'MAFFEI, Scipione', *DBI*, 2006, [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/scipione-maffei_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/scipione-maffei_(Dizionario-Biografico)) [accessed 17.7.2021].

119 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 55, fol. 38-52.

120 Ibid., file 55, fol. 172 (1802 payment to Mazotti heirs of 1922 gold ducats); file 84, fol. 99, inventory of Borch papers mentions a 'Packet containing all the papers relative to the effects and inheritance of Court Counsellor Vincent [sic] Mazotti, up to and including the complete payment of everything to his successors with receipt.'

121 On the Paracca and their activities in Polish Livonia see Rūta Kaminska, 'Krāslavas katolu baznīcas un klostera buvvesture novada vēsturisko liktenu kopsakarības', *Materiali Latvijas mākslas vēsturei*, 5 (2006), 9–23; Rūta Kaminska, 'Construction History of Krāslava St. Louis Church in the Historical and Artistic Context of the Region', *Tridento visuotinio bažnyčios susirinkimo (1545–1563) įtaka Lietuvos kultūrai. Susirinkimo idėjų suvokimas ir sklaida Vidurio Europos rytuose*, ed. by Aleksandra Aleksandravičiūtė (Vilnius: Publishing House of the Lithuanian Academy of Science, 2009), 90–112. See also Rūstis Kamuntavičius, Ruth Sargent Noyes, 'Lugano lake artists in the northernmost heart of eighteenth-century Catholic baroque art', *Review of Institute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*, 1 (2021), 25–44; Rūstis Kamuntavičius, Ruth Sargent Noyes, "An innovation in this territory." the Paracca family of architects in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Polish Livonia during the Age of Partition', *Interpreting Italians Abroad*, ed. by Sarah Lynch (Milan: Officina Libraria, forthcoming).

confirmed by the lack of surviving contract between them, and more importantly by the cenotaphic memorial in the form of a pyramid (since destroyed) that the count raised to commemorate his Italian friend on the grounds of Varakļāni (where Mazotti was also buried): 'To the holy and eternal memory of Vincentio de Mazotti, born in Rome, from a noble family and of noble character, court advisor to the Polish King in the office of Chamberlain, excellent builder of edifices educated in various sciences, experienced in horticulture and agriculture, to a man of generally admired virtues, the best of all friends, tested in friendship over 20 years, having honoured him, they raised this monument as a symbol of gratitude in the field and in the very garden that he himself shaped from the marshes. Born in Rome on 1 May 1756, died on 25 May 1798, he was buried at the Warklany estate.'¹²²

The patriotic tone and edifying functions shared by architecture and garden landscape designs sponsored by leading Polish-Lithuanian aristocrats in this period clearly resonated at Varakļāni, where the palace exterior was ornamented with the Latin phrase, *virtute duce, comite fortuna* (virtue your guide, fortune your comrade). This was adapted from Cicero's *Epistulae ad Familiares* (*Letters to Friends*), a collection of the Roman statesman-philosopher's correspondence documenting the dissolution of the Roman Republic.¹²³ Surrounding the palace Mazotti and Borch conceived of an extensive park furnished with classicizing monuments reminiscent of Puławy, and contextualized in the scholarship in relation to other period gardens such Stowe in England, and manor gardens today in Latvia at Alūksne (Vidzeme region), and Meženieki, Vormsāti, and Izriede (Kurzeme).¹²⁴

The gardens were thematized in the count's poem *Jardin sentimental du château de Warkland dans le Comté de Borch en Russie Blanche* (*The Sentimental Garden of Varakļāni Palace at the Borch Estate in White Russia*; hereafter *Sentimental Garden*), a work composed in the final decades of the century, circulated in manuscript in French, Latin, and Polish,

122 Quoted from a translation in Polanowska, 'Michał Jan Borch and his Residence in Varakļāni', 29/n9.

123 For the phrase see Rudolf Wittkower, 'Chance, Time and Virtue', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 1 (1938), 313–321.

124 On the garden and landscape design program see Polanowska, 'Ogrod w Warklanach'; Polanowska, 'Michał Jan Borch and his Residence in Varakļāni'.

and published by the author in Warsaw in French in 1795.¹²⁵ Rather than furnishing a precise description or ekphrasis of the Varakļāni landscape design, *Sentimental Garden* instead functioned in the tradition of devotional literature. The text provided the reader's inner vision with a mythologized ideological, aesthetic, and moral exegesis of the park. By interacting with the actual landscape in concert with meditative engagement with the text, the edifying potential as well as broader national and cultural significance in Partition-era Poland-Lithuania of the whole ensemble might be revealed to the mind's eye, for the dual purpose of cultivating individual ethical improvement and patriotic sensibilities.¹²⁶ Borch's poem made recourse to an imagined landscape of Italianate antiquity marked by temples, statues, and ruins as the enlightened and idealized re-envisioning of what his Varakļāni park aspired to signify, the significant role of Italy as a reformatory heuristic in Borch's artistic production and patronage. That *Sentimental Garden's* mode of direct address to its hypothetical reader posits its protagonist as a young man learning from life's experiences, joys and travails as instantiated by the garden environment and its manmade features. This bespeaks the shared didactic aim of poem and garden, whose immediate audience was Michał's own growing family (on which more below).

Family and Italy were likewise interwoven in the interior decoration of Varakļāni palace, where the walls were ornamented with a gallery

125 The work is recently available in translation, including 'Jardin sentimental du château de Warkland dans le Comté de Borch en Russie Blanche. Mihaels Johans fon der Borhs. Varakļānu pils sentimentālais dārzs, Borhu grāfistē, Baltkrievijā', trans. by Valda Jēkabsone-Valtere, *Cultural Landscape: Content, Perception, Transformation. The Baltic States in European Garden Culture: Riga, Turaida, September 14.–19. 2019*, ed. by Ojārs Spārītis, et al. (Riga: Nacionālais apgāds, 2019), 41–75; *Varakļānu pils Jūtu dārzs: Borha grāfistē Baltkrievijā. Michał Jan Borch. Jardin sentimental du chateau de Warkland*, ed. and trans. by Māris Salējs, Simona Sofija Valke, Renāte Berga (Riga: Latvijas Nacionālā bibliotēka, 2019).

126 On the relation between the Varakļāni landscape and *Sentimental Garden* see Ojārs Spārītis, 'Romantisma tēlu sistēmas semantika Latvijas muižu parku arhitektūrā un tēlniecībā', *Romantisms un neoromantisms Latvijas mākslā*, ed. by Elita Grosmane (Riga: Izdevniecība AGB, 1998), 28–41; Teresa Rączka-Jeziorska, 'Romantyczne mapowanie przestrzeni ogrodu według Polskiego Inflantczyka Michała Jana Borcha z Warklan (1753–1810)', *Przestrzeń – literatura – doświadczenie. Z inspiracji geopoetyki*, ed. by Tomasz Gęsina, Zbigniew Kadłubek (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2016), 110–123; Māra Grudule, 'Mihala Jana Borha dzejojums "Varakļānu pils jūtu dārzs" (Jardin sentimental du château de Warkland, 1795) apgaismības literatūras kontekstā', *Baltu filoloģija*, 29 (2020), 63–72; Ojārs Spārītis, 'Three Sources of Michael Johann von der Borch's Poem "The Sentimental Park of Varakļāni Palace"', *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 20 (2020), 109–144.



FIG. 16. MURAL PAINTING OF LANDSCAPE *VEDUTA* (C. 1783–1810). BORCH MANOR PALACE, VARAKĻĀNI, LATVIA. PHOTO: VARAKĻĀNI REGIONAL MUSEUM.



FIG. 17. MURAL PAINTING OF LANDSCAPE *VEDUTA* (C. 1783–1810). BORCH MANOR PALACE, VARAKĻĀNI, LATVIA. PHOTO: VARAKĻĀNI REGIONAL MUSEUM.



FIG. 18. MURAL PAINTING OF *GROTTESCHI* (C. 1783–1810). BORCH MANOR PALACE, VARAKĻĀNI, LATVIA. PHOTO: VARAKĻĀNI REGIONAL MUSEUM.

of family portraits.¹²⁷ There were also mural paintings (recently rediscovered and restored) of Italianate landscape *vedute* – featuring mountains and grottos that echoed his expertise in lithology – and classicizing *grotteschi* in imitation of ancient imperial Roman palaces, which he likely saw first-hand when visiting Roman excavations during his Grand Tour.¹²⁸ (Fig. 16–18.)

While the landscapes could have been copied from prints commonly collected by grand tourists to record their travels or from sketches by Michał himself, the *grotteschi* may have been adapted from or inspired by collected prints on the theme after designs by Polish-

127 An inventory of the palace collections prepared c. 1890 records ‘#353. Портреты фамилии Графов Борхов в позолоченных рамах 4 штуки. В простых рамах 28. Всего 32 штуки’. (Portraits of the family of Counts Borch in gilded frames 4 pieces. In simple frames 28. A total of 32 pieces.) Sincere thanks to Dr. Dzmitry Marazou for assistance accessing this archival material.

128 On the mural paintings see Taimiņa, ‘Borchiana versus Siciliana’, 11; Polanowska, ‘Michał Jan Borch and his Residence in Varakļāni’, 31/n92; Vija Strupule, ‘Reflections of antique art in the interior paintings of residences and manor houses in Latvia’, *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 3 (2011), 253–280.

Lithuanian painter Franciszek Smuglewicz (1745–1807), who was in Rome 1763–1784 as a specialist in reproductions of ancient art and portraits of foreign travellers, thereafter returning to Warsaw in 1784 and settling in Vilnius in 1797.¹²⁹ Smuglewicz furnished drawings after numerous antique wall paintings from the *Domus Aurea* (Emperor Nero's Golden House) for the 1776 illustrated volume *Le antiche camere delle terme di Tito e le loro pitture* (*The ancient rooms of the Baths of Titus and their images*), a work especially successful with grand tourists and collectors.¹³⁰ During the artist's Roman sojourn he almost certainly met Borch, as both resided in the zone around *Piazza di Spagna* (today the Spanish Steps), a haven for tourists and those who catered to them.¹³¹ Some of the Vārakļāni murals may have been painted by an otherwise unknown migrant Bohemian artist, Franz Carl Graf von Bubna und Littiz (Czech: Bubnové z Litic, also written as Bubna von Lititz), whom Michał apparently engaged in 1783 to paint at the Inflanty palace. Bubna und Littiz lived at Vārakļāni for several months with his wife while completing the work; the surviving contract and letters from the artist to his patron regarding disagreements over payment and purportedly ill treatment of the artist's wife, unfortunately, offer no details regarding what paintings he may have completed.¹³²

Vārakļāni as an evocation of Italy as a notional site of retreat and a mode of preserving memories of lost empire and safeguarding the vision of a restored *Rzeczpospolita* served as the setting for the

129 Andrzej Ryszkiewicz, 'Franciszek Smuglewicz', *PSB*, 1999–2000, <http://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/franciszek-smuglewicz> [accessed 7.7.2021]. On Smuglewicz's long career in Italy see Mikołaj Baliszewski, 'Polski Artysta W 'tempio Del Vero Gusto'. Uwagi Do Rzymskiej Biografii Franciszka Smuglewicza', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 79 (2017), 705–776; Mikołaj Baliszewski, 'Franciszek Smuglewicz. Ancora una volta sotto le volte di Roma', *Roma e Varsavia*, 335–359. His Italian works have also featured in recent exhibitions: 'Under Italian Skies. Lithuanian artists' works from the 18th – first half of the 20th centuries', 1 December 2017 – 26 August 2018, Lithuanian Art Museum, Vilnius Picture Gallery; and 'Franciszek Smuglewicz. From ancient Rome to Vilnius University', 13 May 2021 – 6 October 2021, Lithuanian Art Museum, Vilnius Picture Gallery.

130 Giuseppe Carletti, *Le antiche camere delle terme di Tito e le loro pitture restituite al pubblico da Ludovico Mirri romano delineate, incise, dipinte col prospetto, pianta inferiore, e superiore e loro spaccati descritte dall'abate Giuseppe Carletti romano ...* (Rome: per Generoso Salomoni, 1776). On this volume see Pinot De Villechenon and Marie Noëlle, *Domus Aurea: La Decorazione Pittorica Del Palazzo Neroniano Nell'album Delle 'Terme Di Tito' Conservato Al Louvre* (Milan: Franco Maria Ricci, 1998).

131 According to Borch in VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, fol. 247v, he stayed 'At Monsieur Damon, Officer of His Holiness, who maintains a hotel near the Piazza di Spagna'. For Smuglewicz see Baliszewski, 'Polski Artysta W 'tempio Del Vero Gusto'', 16–18.

132 VSNALU, Fund 13, file 11, fol. 47-57.



FIG. 19. JÓZEF PESZKA, *PORTRAIT OF ELEANORE BROWNE BORCH AND CHILDREN* (OIL ON CANVAS, C. 1808). NATIONAL MUSEUM, KIELCE (POLAND), INV. NO. MNKI/M/119. PHOTO: NATIONAL MUSEUM, KIELCE.

depiction of Borch's wife Eleanore Browne Borch and six of their seven children by Polish artist Józef Peszka (1767–1831).¹³³ (Fig. 19.) The work is commonly identified as a portrait of the family of Michał Borch's younger brother Józef Henryk, showing his wife Anna Bohomolec Borch and children.¹³⁴ However, a number of factors support the re-identification of this work as a portrait of Michał's

133 Today in Kielce (Poland), National Museum, Inv. no. MNKI/M/119, which bought the picture in 1964 from the private collection of Catholic priest, Father Walerian Meysztowicz, who lived in Rome. Sincere thanks to Magdalena Silwanowicz of the National Museum Kielce for kind assistance and invaluable images of the painting. On the portrait see Andrzej Ryszkiewicz, 'Z twórczości Franciszka Smuglewicza i jego kręgu: (Portrety zbiorowe)', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 19 (1957), 3–26, at 16.

134 For this attribution see Teresa Rączka, *Polsko - inflancka literatura romantyczna*, PhD thesis, (Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 2013), 110–111. See also Elżbieta Jezewska, 'Polskie malarstwo rodzajowe XIX wieku w zbiorach Muzeum Narodowego w Kielcach', *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Kielcach*, 25 (2010), 169–194, at 171.



FIG. 20. ALEXANDER MOLINARI, *PORTRAIT OF ELEANORE BROWNE BORCH* (GOUACHE ON IVORY, C. 1783). NATIONAL MUSEUM, WARSAW (POLAND), ID NUMBER MIN.594 MNW. PHOTO: NATIONAL MUSEUM IN WARSAW.

family, Eleanore Browne Borch, and children. First, the question of a small paper label affixed to the canvas's reverse with a French inscription identifying the sitters as 'Countess Borch *née* Bohomolec' (i.e. Józef Henryk Borch's wife) with names of their children can be explained by the fate of Michał Borch's Varakļāni collections: Józef Henryk also lived in Inflanty at the nearby estate of Preiļi; as Borch family fortunes changed in the 19th century Preiļi became the



FIG. 21. DETAIL, JÓZEF PESZKA, *PORTRAIT OF ELEANORE BROWNE BORCH AND CHILDREN* (OIL ON CANVAS, C. 1808). NATIONAL MUSEUM, KIELCE (POLAND), INV. NO. MNKI/M/119. PHOTO: NATIONAL MUSEUM, KIELCE.

primary Borch residence and in 1868 furnishings and collections of value were removed from Varakļāni to the Preiļi estate, after which point the label could have been written and the identities confused.¹³⁵

Second, there is a strong resemblance between the woman's likeness in Peszka's portrait and an earlier identified miniature portrait of Eleanore Browne by Alexander Molinari (1772–1831), likely made around the time of her engagement or marriage.¹³⁶ (Fig. 20–21.) Her round dimpled chin, oval face, wide-set eyes, long ears, and general expression are all quite similar, allowing for the fact that when the Peszka portrait was made, she was about 42 years old and had given birth relatively recently, so her aspect would have naturally changed. Thirdly, is the issue of the six children depicted: Józef Henryk Borch and Anna Bohomolec Borch had only five children, and even allowing

¹³⁵ Gustaw Manteuffel, 'Warklany', *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, 15 vols (Warsaw: Filip Sulimierski i Władysław Walewski, 1880–1902), 12: 957.

¹³⁶ National Museum, Warsaw (Poland), ID number Min.594 MNW.

for the possibility that a child might have died, all those depicted here are old enough to have had their births registered in family records. Michał and Eleonore had seven children, including their last son when she was 41 years old in November 1807. The ages of their children correspond to those shown in this image: their eldest child Karol Jerzy Jan Borch (1787–1861), whom his parents called ‘Monsieur Charles,’ was already at least 20 years old when the portrait was made and living quite independently in Riga. He attended church on his own and seriously considered marriage.¹³⁷ Thus he was not depicted; a separate portrait may have been executed and was since lost.

Proceeding thereafter from the eldest through youngest child, the following are portrayed, each engaging in some age-appropriate activity: eldest daughter Zofia Borch (1795–1880) gracefully plays the piano (or similar instrument); Eliza Luiza Izabella Borch (1796–1870) reads diligently at the table; Izabela Amelia Marianna Borch (1799–1862) playfully entertains pet parrots; Anna Klara Julia Borch (1801–1869) shyly caresses the dog; Aleksander Antoni Stanisław Borch (1804–1867), in a long dress-like garment typically worn in the early 19th century by children regardless of gender until the age of five, timidly clings to his mother’s skirts; Józef Kazimierz Piotr Borch (1807–1881), about 9–18 months old when painted, sits proudly cradled in his mother’s arms in a recreation of the Madonna and Child. This raises a fourth point of chronology: Eleanore and Michał were together with their younger children at the Varakļāni estate in the summers of 1808 and 1809. Peszka was traveling c. 1807–1810 in the region around Vitebsk and Mogilev and could have come to Varakļāni, whereas correspondence suggests that Józef Henryk Borch and his wife Anna Bohomolec were both in St Petersburg at this time.¹³⁸ In 1810 Eleanor mentioned the ‘marriage of Prehca [or Prehca, sic]’ which her husband had recently attended or heard news, raising the possibility of a personal connection between the count and the artist.¹³⁹ This would hardly be surprising, given that Peszka’s teacher was Franciszek Smuglewicz, whom Borch probably met in Rome.

137 See e.g. VSNALU, Fund 13, file 95, fol. 274r (November 1810).

138 Ibid., fol. 89r and 91r (November 1807), 253r (April 1810).

139 Ibid., fol. 275r (5 November 1810): ‘You tell me nothing about the marriage of Prehca [or Prehca, sic], I would like to know all the details.’

The painting’s general tone and spirit of classicizing culture and emphasis on landscape are likewise worth considering: Michał Borch as we have seen had a special taste for Italian culture, art, architecture, as well as music, and a particular interest in garden design. His brother Józef, younger by eleven years, did not have the same exposure to Italian culture, nor the same interests. Correspondence shows that Józef’s education was rather neglected, and although at the age of fifteen he did join his older brother on the Grand Tour in April 1779, Michał complained of the teenager’s embarrassing manners and atrocious hygiene. He refused to take him out in public, and by August had young Józef shut away in a boarding school in Siena for the remainder of the trip.¹⁴⁰

Another important factor supporting a re-identification is that of the portrait’s setting, which evokes an idealized view from the back of the Varakļāni palace overlooking the estate’s extensive park complete with small lake, trees, and a classical temple. On the southern-facing rear facade of the Borch palace there was a central *avant-corps* or risalite (since lost) in the form of a raised porch with a portico composed of large columns in the giant order. Each column supported on a plinth platform, which likely inspired the architectural backdrop for the composition.¹⁴¹ (Fig. 22.) It should be noted that the painting, like Borch’s poem *Sentimental Garden*, offers not so much a realistic snapshot of an actual landscape, as it does an idealized – even mythologized – visual exegesis and meditation on

140 See e.g. VSNALU, Fund 13, file 90, 419r-426r (20 June 1779): ‘I don’t know who had charge of my brother until now, but they took as little care of his health as they did his upbringing and studies. A leaden yellow mien, dry lips, feeble hands, continual headaches, poorly digesting stomach, feeble legs, languorousness, general laziness in all his actions—such is the state of my brother. Add to this a very foul-smelling breath, head full of vermin and pustules, a habit of speaking through the nose, and still worse the pronunciation not of ‘Kan’ but always ‘ka-kan’, a kind of stutter. Without being uselessly horrified by the multiplicity of these ills, and without despairing over their remedy, I tried above all to understand the origin and cause of it all, which are these. Left to himself or to servants, which is still worse, or to so-called Governors, which is the same thing, my brother grew up in ignorance, misery and abandon... My brother’s maintenance is the most gauche: he knows neither how to dance, salute, walk, nor even sit as one should. Blushing that anyone might see his rustic hands, he’s always looking for a place to hide them, scratching himself, squinting, and speaking through his nose with an occasional stutter. Is this the beautiful little puppy that my mother promised in her last letter? In truth he is quite disgusting....’ See also *ibid.*, fol. 299r-304v (December 1777), 370r-v (November 1778), 402r-403, 439r-440v (August 1779).

141 Zilgalvis, ‘Varakļāni - muiža un tas saimnieki gadsimtu gaitā’; Polanowska, ‘Michał Jan Borch and his Residence in Varakļāni’, 31/n87. See e.g. the illustration of this architectural feature by Napoleon Orda c. 1875 in a watercolour sketch now in Krakow, National Museum, inv. No. MNK III-r.a-4121.



FIG. 22. NAPOLEON ORDA, VIEW OF SOUTHERN-FACING REAR FAÇADE OF BORCH MANOR PALACE (WATERCOLOR AND GOUACHE ON PAPER, 1875). NATIONAL MUSEUM, KRAKOW (POLAND), OBJECT NUMBER MNK III-R.A-4121. PHOTO: NATIONAL MUSEUM, KRAKOW.

the nature of idyllic marital domesticity and the perfect integration of art, architecture, landscape, and education.

The temple depicted in the background is of the tholos temple type of Greek peripteral design entirely encircled by a Corinthian colonnade and topped by a circular dome. It was clearly modelled after Roman examples from the 2nd–1st cent. BCE was made famous in period etchings by Roman artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi. These were the so-called Temples of Vesta (or Temples of the Sybil) in Tivoli and Rome, including two in the *urbe*—one in the Roman Forum near the House of the Vestal Virgins and another in Piazza Bocca della Verità near the Forum Boarium on the banks of the Tiber river, the latter converted into a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary.¹⁴² (Fig. 23–24.) Notably, Izabela Fleming Czartoryska had built a similar colonnaded round domed Temple of the Sibyl (Polish: *Świątynia*

142 The temple near the Forum Boarium (in Piazza Bocca della Verità) was later identified as the Temple of Hercules Victor.



FIG. 23. GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIRANESI, *TEMPLE OF THE SYBIL AT TIVOLI* (ETCHING, C. 1775). RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM, OBJECT NUMBER RP-P-1941-683. PHOTO: RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.



FIG. 24. GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIRANESI, *TEMPLE OF THE SYBIL IN PIAZZA BOCCA DELLA VERITÀ, ROME* (ETCHING, C. 1775). RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM, OBJECT NUMBER RP-P-2009-636. PHOTO: RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.



FIG. 25. CHRYSZTIAN PIOTR AIGNER, TEMPLE OF THE SIBYL, ANTE 1801. POLAND, PUŁAWY. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Sybilli), also known as the Temple of Memory, in Puławy gardens circa 1801, designed by Polish architect Chrystian Piotr Aigner (1756–1841) as a precise restoration of the ruined ‘original’ in Tivoli.¹⁴³ (Fig. 25.) Contemporary discourse fashioned Izabela through texts and images as the Enlightenment ‘Pulavian Sybil’ presiding over the temple, which functioned as a giant reliquary, housing objects, bodily remains, and artworks memorializing Polish-Lithuanian history and culture, ‘reiterating the polytemporal cycle in which retrospection and prophecy become co-extensive’ such that gathered fragmented objects became ‘a synecdoche for the shattered identity of the Commonwealth’s citizens’ while also reifying hope of a future reconstructed state.¹⁴⁴

While allowing for the resonance of patriotic sentiments surrounding the role the elite *szlachta* played in preserving the *Rzeczpospolita* in Peszka’s group portrait given Puławy’s renown, the

143 Musiał, ‘Mentem mortalia tangent’, 362–371.

144 Ibid., 363, 360.

painting subsumes any expressions of patriotic identity formation within a particular set of references to the ancient Roman cult of Vesta, goddess of home and family in Roman religion. This cultivated an ideal vision of Borch’s Varaklāni estate as a sanctuary safeguarding national, familial and conjugal piety, preservation and renewal. Occupying a specific liminal status in Polish Livonia within period geopolitical and conceptual geography, Varaklāni was framed as surviving bulwarks preserving and protecting enlightened Polish-Lithuanian culture and noble values.

The ancient Roman temple of Vesta in the Roman Forum housed not only the *ignes aeternum* (sacred fire), but also the *Palladium* or cult image of Pallas Athena – later syncretized with the Roman goddess Minerva, goddess of wisdom and warfare, justice, law, victory, and the sponsor of arts. Both the *ignes aeternum* and the *Palladium* were crucial symbols of Rome’s safety and prosperity, tended by prophetic sybils and priestesses, and ritually observed on a summer holiday festival when the temple curtain was opened and mothers left offerings to the goddess in exchange for blessing them and their family.¹⁴⁵ Peszka, likely in consultation with Michał, reimagined the family’s Varaklāni palace as an Enlightenment vestal temple, its threshold marked by the *ignes aeternum* in the form of a burning brazier sculpture on the balustrade and drawn red curtain just behind Eleanore. Within the inner sanctum to the left behind Zofia at the piano sits the *Palladium*, a statue of Minerva enthroned, presiding over the family gathering and the intellectual and artistic activities that are the precondition and product of the image itself.¹⁴⁶

The portrait draws freely from and recombines ancient and contemporary iconographies with personal circumstances to produce a polysemous composition, such that Eleanore embodies a multifaceted figural conceit of the Virgin Mary, Roman matron, and ‘Varklanian Sybil’, or even the incarnation of Vesta herself. When this was painted Eleanore closely oversaw the upbringing and education of her seven children, much like Izabela Fleming Czartoryska at Puławy; we should thus not underestimate her potential contribution

145 Meghan J. DiLuzio, *A Place at the Altar: Priestesses in Republican Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 119–153.

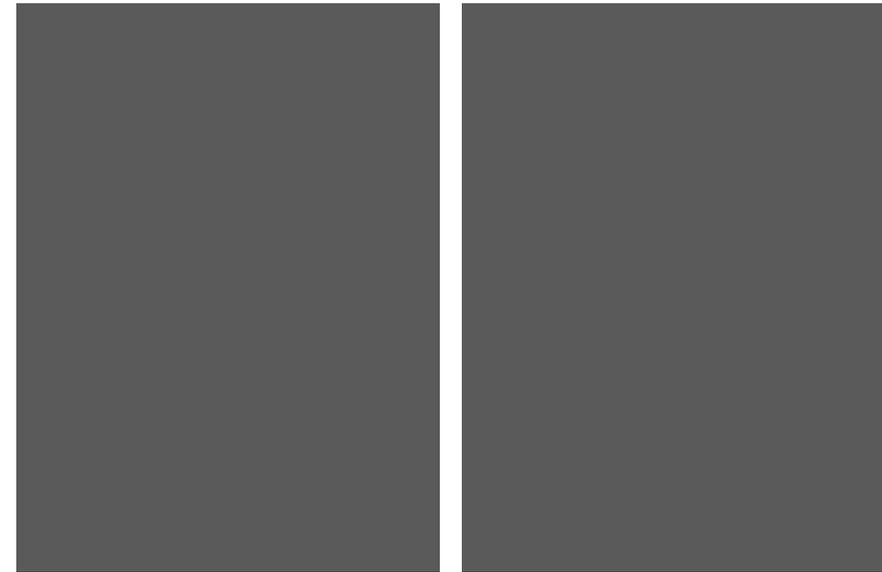
146 That the ensemble was loosely conceived of as a group of pious temple vestals would help explain the exclusion of grown son Karol and Michał from the composition.

to informing and inspiring the composition and its symbolism.¹⁴⁷ The difficult pregnancy and birth she had experienced with her last child, after which she was near death and remained incapacitated for several months, may have partly furnished an occasion for the execution of this portrait when she and the children departed Riga to join Michał and summer at Varakļāni.¹⁴⁸ Their seasonal family reunion underscores the reality that during the final years of his life Michał Borch lived separately from his wife and children: they resided in Riga for the benefit of the children's education. She considered the costs to maintain a cadre of private tutors at Varakļāni too high and the conditions at the Inflanty palace too cold and drafty. He remained almost constantly at Varakļāni, managing the estate and improving and expanding upon the gardens and grounds. He considered the countryside estate the best place to raise the children. Their difference of opinion on this issue was one of bitter disagreement that pushed Eleanore into a deep depression. Their reconciliation only after the birth of their last child perhaps provided another reason to have this portrait made in commemoration of restored marital harmony and domestic order.¹⁴⁹

147 Whelan, 'Izabela Czartoryska and Catholic devotion in the eighteenth-century Polish garden'.

148 See her letters to Michal Jan Borch in VSNALU, Fund 13, file 95, fol. 14r, 46r-73r (June-October 1807).

149 On 2 November 1807 Eleanore wrote in reply to complaints from Michal Jan (his letter does not survive): 'It hurt me to read in your last letter that you regard my staying here [in Riga] as useless, whereas it is a sacrifice that I am making for the upbringing of our children and in this moment and I owe my health to it because always suffering I can see clearly that it is quite necessary for me to be under the care of a doctor in whom I can trust. With my rheumatism that I suffer in the winter in our bedroom at [Varakļāni] which is so cold and where there is always a draft blowing through the windows which don't close. I can well believe that you must be bored by yourself, but why not come here when the roads were still passable. As for the order that I must give I sincerely pledge to you that I begin to lose heart since if after 20 years of my efforts one year of absence can ruin everything what pleasure and what satisfaction have already been uselessly lost. You may see by all that I tell you that I act not out of caprice, but my heart is truly broken with chagrin by a reproach that I hardly deserve, since God only knows how many times I took your interests to heart and how it has been my dearest wish to make your life agreeable and at the same time to bring you a good reputation, even when we still as yet had no children. Since having children I have redoubled my efforts, but I don't see success and this afflicts me greatly and certainly influences my health as well. I would like to know why you think the upbringing of our children would be better done in the country and by what means we will do so, because to have tutors they must not only be paid in pounds of gold but also be the slave to their whims and fantasies to keep the household peace. I swear to you that it angers me so much what I have just written that it is impossible for me to write further thus I will close with the assurance that despite your injustice I will always be with the most tender devotion your loyal friend Eleanore.' VSNALU, Fund 13, file 95, fol. 85r. Gustaw Manteuffel's late 19th-century account of Varakļāni palace and estate likewise described the site as 'a narrow and damp little palace.' Manteuffel, *Inflanty Polskie*, 127.



FIGS. 26–27. DETAILS FROM GROTTESCHI MURAL PAINTING OF FESTOONED TRIPOD (L) AND PRIESTESS (R) (C. 1783–1810). BORCH MANOR PALACE, VARAKĻĀNI, LATVIA. PHOTO: VARAKĻĀNI REGIONAL MUSEUM.

The strewn roses symbolize both the vestal offering and marital fidelity, likewise, signalled by the entwined trees behind Eleanore's left shoulder, the preening parrots perched on Amelia's arm, and the hound meekly submitting to Anna. The work's multiple references to conjugal love, in concert with the emphasis on the Arcadian landscape, recall Borch's rendering of the Temple of Marital Love in his poem *Sentimental Garden*, wherein a ritual tripod lit with a glowing heart was complemented by the motto 'Toujours tendre et fidèle' (forever tender and faithful), which was also the closing phrase that Eleanore wrote in private letters to her husband.¹⁵⁰ This theme was reiterated in the palace's interior decoration, in the form of a large mural in the manner of antique *grotteschi* portraying a fantastical architectural framework bedecked with floral festoons and framing repeated motifs of temple tripods flanked by robed vestal priestesses.¹⁵¹ (Fig. 18, 26–27.)

150 See e.g. VSNALU, Fund 13, file 95, fol. 2v.

151 Sincere thanks to the staff of Varakļāni Regional Museum for their kind assistance in accessing and photographing relevant materials.

CONCLUSION: BORCH'S PATRONAGE AND COLLECTING AT A CROSSROADS

As the last known surviving example of Michał Borch's artistic patronage, the Peszka family portrait offers a visual mediation on temporal, ideological, and geographical distance. This distance is framed not only between its patron-viewer (Michał) and its subjects, its actual location and imagined location, but also between the historical moments marked in conjunction with its pendant, Guttenbrunn's Grand Tour portrait. This distance in turn invites comparison between Borch as a young intellectual and would-be diplomat circa thirty years earlier after the first Partition, and as an aging *pater familias* withdrawn from public life after the third. His family's socio-political horizons and finances were severely impacted by the Partitions, which contemporaries decried had rendered Poland an 'antiquity', making the recourse to the antique an especially poignant mode of self-representation in this portrait, merging a nostalgic re-imagining of Italy with a romantic portrayal of family as an imaginary refuge. In this context, despite financial limitations, Borch's activities as collector and patron demonstrate a sophisticated self-fashioning through the artistic imbrication of Italian antiquity, Roman Catholic piety, and contemporary currents interconnecting the Partition-era Commonwealth, Inflanty, Italy, and Western Europe, enacted through the collecting, commissioning, and display of artefacts and artworks.¹⁵²

152 On comparable strategies in this period see Musiał, 'Mentem mortalia tangant', 363.

RUTH SARGENT NOYES: COUNT MICHAŁ JAN BORCH AS PATRON AND COLLECTOR: ART BETWEEN ITALY AND THE INFLANTY VOIVODESHIP IN THE AGE OF PARTITION

KEYWORDS: MICHAŁ JAN BORCH (MICHAEL JOHANN BORCH); ENLIGHTENMENT; POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH; PATRONAGE; ITALY; PORTRAITURE; GRAND TOUR

SUMMARY

This article reevaluates the lifelong artistic patronage and collecting practices of Polish-Lithuanian Count Michał Jan Borch (1753–1810/11) against the historical background of Enlightenment Europe more broadly and specifically the Age of Partition (c. 1750–1810). This article examines how despite persistent financial shortcomings and political difficulties, Borch staked for himself a strategic position as patron and collector, staging a renovation of the present by engaging with late baroque, rococo, and neoclassical Italianate forms that inflected Italy and the antique not as fixed entities but as a malleable or notional fragments that could be arbitrated, reassembled and transformed through the intermediating agency of persons and objects, and related to the past in form, style and language, thematizing the temporal passage between venerable and modern in a way that reanimated the grandeur of the past in honor of Borch's re-envisioning of his restored homeland. As a case study in period self-fashioning, the article is structured around four portraits of Borch and his family executed at crucial inflection points in his life and career.

CV

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