

Remarks on Architecture: The Vitruvian Tradition in Enlightenment Poland.

By Ignacy Potocki. Ed. and Trans. Carolyn C. Guile. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2015. xx, 156 pp. Notes. Illustrations. Map. \$74.95, hard bound.

“If we want to equip our fatherland with architecture let us not begrudge spending anything on those who bleed to work for it; let us respect all those who apply themselves for it”—wrote Ignacy Potocki, a prominent and a well-off Polish aristocrat from the late eighteenth century in his manuscript on architecture (90). Potocki, whose life spanned from 1750 to 1809, concerned himself primarily with his native Polish architecture in its European context. Well-travelled and well-educated, he offered a sketch of a history of European architecture including practical suggestions to his fellows Poles.

The manuscript lay unpublished, stored in the Central Archive of Early Records in Warsaw, for over two centuries. Carolyn C. Guile translated and edited the manuscript, wrote an introduction, and the book came out with the University of Pennsylvania Press in 2015. The book is divided into three parts: Guile’s introduction, an English translation of Potocki’s manuscript, and the Polish original. The introduction includes a summary of the major points of the text, as well as background information about both the author and Polish society during the eighteenth century. Hence, the subtitle refers to the Enlightenment, which defined the intellectual tradition in Poland as well as its architecture in the late eighteenth century. Potocki was not just a theoretician; he designed buildings himself, and the book includes sketches of several of them.

Potocki wrote his book during one of the most difficult times in Polish history, when the state was experiencing a major crisis. It disappeared from the map as a result of three consecutive partitions in 1772, 1793 and 1795 between the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian Empires. Potocki was conscious of the political crisis, and his book was one way to respond to it. “Beware,” he wrote, “the same fate to which other fields are subject befalls architecture. This is what prompted me to collect some remarks on architecture, that every reader may easily understand what architecture is all about,” he continued (57). The appeal of beauty, he explained, is universal. But the understanding of what is beautiful and what is not is a result of custom, and history. The architect, wrote Potocki, cannot operate outside of a specific historical context. Architecture also cannot be separated from nature, and it is a duty of an architect to work with, not against, nature. Polish architecture, he continued, developed primarily under Italian influence. This point is not insignificant. For Potocki, the European origins and European traditions of Polish architecture are essential. The text also includes a practical manual on architectural designs: arrangements, proportions, orientation of specific areas, and rooms. Proper use of space is essential in architecture, argued Potocki. Architecture is so important in society that architects deserve proper respect. Potocki concludes his text with suggestions for proper attitudes for architects: “Giving us a fresh example of it is the happy reigning German Kaiser Joseph II who not only visited the good painter Batoni frequently while I was in Rome but later, after granting him many awards, made him a nobleman, apparently doubting whether this nobility decorates the painter or the monarch more” (90). The Austrian Empire in this instance served for Potocki as a model of imitation for Poland. As an educated nobleman, he was concerned about the fate of his fatherland.

Carolyn C. Guile did an excellent job with translation. An informative introduction and extensive notes help the reader to navigate through the text. Penn State University Press has produced a nice volume with illustrations. The literature and the sources on that period in Polish history in English are sparse. This much needed

book will open a window to Polish society, history, and culture, specifically the eighteenth century, to non-Polish speakers. There are, however, some structural issues and overlaps. The three parts overlap, but the introduction, in particular, gives too much information from and on the actual text. A non-specialist reader might have benefited from more background information on Polish history and society during the eighteenth century, and not the extensive summary of the text that follows. Overall, this is a very valuable addition to the existing body of literature and primary sources on eastern Europe available in English.

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Le Silence et la parole au lendemain des guerres yougoslaves. Eds. Lauren Lydic and Bertrand Westphal. Limoges cedex, France: Presses Universitaires de Limoges, 2015. 264 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Illustrations. Plates. Paper. €23.00, paper.

It would be wonderful to have a synthetic academic work that could provide an analytical overview of cultural production in the former Yugoslavia since the end of the devastating wars of the 1990s. Such a book would identify the most significant and salient literary and artistic achievements and attempt to outline the main lines of thought animating them. Unfortunately, *Le Silence et la parole au lendemain des guerres yougoslaves* is not that book. Rather, it is a collection of essays by a variety of authors with no discernable thematic or analytic common thread.

The individual essays (most in French, though a few in English) as a rule cover a single work or creator. Each one is illuminating in its own way, though in most cases if the reader has not read the novel or seen the film or artwork being discussed he/she will not be able to make much out of a given contribution. As a result, the essays will likely be of interest only to those relatively few scholars who are already well versed in this material.

The first section contains four papers that analyze literary material and are devoted to authors from the former Yugoslavia living abroad including Ismet Prcic, Dubravka Ugrešić, David Albahari, and Aleksandar Hemon. For the most part, these writers are reasonably well known internationally—in the case of Hemon, quite well known—and their concerns (particularly regarding exile and a sense of home) are similar enough to provide some coherence to this section of the book. However, although the themes of the authors in question may overlap, the approaches taken by the various essay writers do not fit all that well together. One of the annoying things about the contributions to this collection, and it is a defect shared by many scholars who focus on less well-known regions and languages, is that each scholar writes his/her essay as follows: take X work by Y author; give the reader a short summary of its main thematic concerns; choose the scholar's favorite trendy (or, more usually, already formerly trendy) critical approach and grind the work in question through it. This can be Homi Bhabha or Edward Said, or Georges Bataille, or any other critic, but in any case the application of the theory to the work does not appear to be organic but rather an attempt to disguise the fact that what we are dealing with is a fairly straightforward analysis that would be a lot clearer and more convincing without the appended theorizing.

The second section of the book is even more eclectic than the first, comprising three essays dissecting the journalistic and fictional writing of the Spanish correspondent Juan Goytisolo, the encyclopedic, creative non-fiction of the Croatian scholar Predrag