

# Discovering antiquity in the second half of the 18th c. – from tradition to reception

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## When antiquity becomes a thing of the past

Antiquity, or rather the art of ancient Greece, from the Renaissance till the end of the 18th c. constituted an unchallenged aesthetic norm<sup>1</sup> for the European culture, regardless of artistic practices<sup>2</sup>. Władysław Tatarkiewicz calls it “The Great Theory of Beauty” which lasted from the 5th c. BC until the 17th c. AD<sup>3</sup>. Interestingly, however, this very standard, mostly due to the negligible number of original artefacts (especially in the case of painting), was validated with “second-hand” knowledge which came mainly from Hellenistic authors – Philostratus or Pliny the Elder. In fact, it was not even necessary to establish or reconstruct any of the specific principles making up this ancient model (later referred to as “classical”) because, starting with Alberti, both artists and theorists (usually in the same person) while considering themselves as heirs of this tradition would only confirm the prevailing opinions which rather proved their own erudition and educational background as opposed to promoting any original views. The possibility of creating art in different ways was not considered at all, and it was possible to only spoil it by turning away from ideal model. If we allow ourselves, while being aware of how burdensome such a generalisation is, to understand the classical tradition as broadly as



<sup>1</sup> I could use the term “pattern” here but as I am trying to describe it later in this work, the concept of pattern evokes the ideas of inaccessibility, distinctiveness and historicity (of the past) of what is exemplary. At this point, however, I would prefer to emphasize the enduring presence of the classical tradition. H.-G. Gadamer (*Truth and Method*, Transl. Rev. J. Weinsheimer, D. G Marshall, 2nd Rev. Ed., London – New York 2006, p. 288) reflects on the normative nature of classicism: “The ‘classical’ is something raised above the vicissitudes of changing times and changing tastes. It is immediately accessible, not through that shock of recognition, as it were, that sometimes characterizes a work of art for its contemporaries and in which the beholder experiences a fulfilled apprehension of meaning that surpasses all conscious expectations. Rather, when we call something classical, there is a consciousness of something enduring, of significance that cannot be lost and that is independent of all the circumstances of the time – a kind of timeless present that is contemporaneous with every other present”.

avant-garde artists did<sup>4</sup>, we will notice a significant change in the approach to antiquity which came about at the end of the 18th century. It is only then that antiquity will become the past and start embodying an unattainable pattern. Formerly, however, the tradition was not thought of in terms of the past and the present, with the latter shaped by the former, but it was rather considered as permanence, stability, unchangeability to which one belongs and within which one is immersed. It is worth quoting Ernst Gombrich's statement who, while reflecting on the "non-classical nature" of mannerism asks:

Yet who are we to say where exactly we should draw the line between classical norm and unclassical complexity? [...] Was mannerism a principle of exclusion that wanted to avoid order and harmony? Did anyone cry "Down with Raphael!" or paint moustaches on the Mona Lisa, as real anti-classical movements have done?<sup>5</sup>

Even if the 17th c. classics perceived their own time as the era of chaos and decay of values, when shaping their own attitudes they did not have to look for principles in an unfamiliar and distant antiquity, but rather save what still existed in the culture that surrounded them.

The first step towards the modern way of considering antiquity as a thing of the past was the loud *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* at the end of the 17th c. in France. The undermining of the authority of the ancient peoples in this debate must have primarily resulted from a disagreement with too strict rules and their enforcement within the Academy, and with the absolutization of the classical doctrine. What in the mid-17th c. was formulated, by Nicolas Pousin, as a summary in the form of recommendations for artists was solidified in academic regulations in the 1670s. The reaction was the publication of the treatise titled *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences* by Charles Perrault in 1688, in which the ancient originators are portrayed as imperfect creators with much less knowledge and weaker technical means their modern counterparts<sup>6</sup>. And while the rebellion of the "modernes" did not manage to challenge the authority of the ancient artists and theorists enough to prevent classicism from developing in the 18th c., the awareness of the classical tradition did undergo changes<sup>7</sup>. While in the poem titled *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand*<sup>8</sup> as well as in *Parallèle...* Perrault presents a vision of the present that surpasses the ancient past, 70 years later Johann Joachim Winckelmann will show his contemporaries how imperfect they are according to the classical ideal. In both cases, despite the extremely differing conclusions, the method of comparison, which reveals the separation of tradition from the present, in common to both authors. The distance between them, however, emerges alongside the development of historical reflection. As Hans-Georg Gadamer notes:



<sup>2</sup> Not forgetting, of course, the antiquity of the Middle Ages, the studying of Plato and later of Aristotle, and the familiarity with Vitruvius's treatise.

<sup>3</sup> Speaking of the classical norm, I mean not only the views on beauty itself, but also the understanding of art, the principles of creativity resulting from the recognition of beauty as the overarching goal. See **W. Tatarkiewicz**, *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay on Aesthetics*, Transl. Ch. Kasperek, The Hague 1980, pp. 125–128.

<sup>4</sup> Modern artists separate themselves from the entirety of traditional art and do not divide it into individual styles or epochs.

<sup>5</sup> **E. H. Gombrich**, *Gombrich on the Renaissance*, Vol. 1: *Norm and Form*, 4th Ed., London 1985, p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> It is the first of four volumes comparing, among others, art, science, poetry, astronomy, philosophy of ancient and modern medicine – with an advantage for the latter era. See **Ch. Perrault**, *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes, en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences* [...], Paris 1688.

<sup>7</sup> A book by **J. DeJean** (*Ancients against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle*, Chicago 1997, p. IX) is an interesting position, especially in the light of my deliberations over the "interpretation" of the past, in which the author presents the French debate as a "culture war". Already in the introduction admitting that "our view of the past, literally what we are able to see in each particular historical situation is inevitably shaped by the events and this issues at the heart of our own historical moment. In this particular case, this means that I would never have portrayed the late seventeenth century in France as I do, had I not been writing this book in the thick of what have now become known in this country as a Culture Wars". Therefore, the author consciously puts herself – the researcher – in the role of a war correspondent, yet while sitting in a modern trench, she describes a skirmish from 300 years before.

<sup>8</sup> **Ch. Perrault**, *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand. Poème*, Paris 1687.



<sup>9</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, pp. 288-289.

<sup>10</sup> See A. Gralińska-Toborek, *Greece – the irretrievably Lost Home of Art*, "Art Inquiry" Vol. 13 (2011).

<sup>11</sup> Ch. Roberts (*Living with the Ancient Romans: Past and Present in Eighteenth-Century Encounters with Herculaneum and Pompeii*, "Huntington Library Quarterly" 2015, No. 1, p. 62) claims, however, that these places have never been forgotten and that "the myth of sudden recovery was in part a convenient fiction promoted by the Bourbon court, the dominant influence behind the later, state-controlled excavation project".

<sup>12</sup> More prominent finds in this area were excavated from the beginning of the 18th c., and during the construction of the foundations of the palace, ancient ruins were discovered, as the palace had been built near Herculaneum.

<sup>13</sup> The first catalogue was published by J. Ch. Bellicard and Ch. N. Cochin : *Observations sur les antiquités de la ville d'Herculanum [...]*, Paris 1754. Maps and excavation plans prepared by subsequent archaeologists can be seen, among others on the project website: *Pompeii: A Different Perspective*, <https://www.pompeii-perspectives.org/index.php/excavation-history> (access date: 9.06.2022).

with the rise of historical reflection in Germany which took Winckelmann's classicism as its standard, a historical concept of a time or period detached itself from what was regarded as classical in Winckelmann's sense<sup>9</sup>.

Thinking of antiquity in terms of authority, pattern, and ideal has distanced and shifted the classical tradition into the past. Despite the seeming perpetuation and confirmation of the classical quality within classicism itself (neoclassicism or, as some would say, pseudo-classicism), even its precursors looked longingly at ancient Greece or Rome (as in Piranesi's case) and considered them to be an unattainable model. Also in the writings from the turn of the 18th and 19th c. of philosophers such as Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Schelling, and Georg Hegel, ancient Greece of the 5th c. BC appears as the perfect period when man lived in harmony with Nature, gods, society, and himself while creating art that was the highest expression of this very harmony. All three authors, however, evoked that moral and esthetic pattern of an integral man as a lost ideal<sup>10</sup>.

The universality and perfection of this pattern were challenged twice in the 19th c. – initially by the Romantics, and then by Friedrich Nietzsche. The latter, in his book from 1872 titled *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, pointed out that apart from the Apollonian element, which can be identified with superficial classical culture, in Hellas, there existed an opposite, previously anticipated yet aesthetically tamed, the powerful Dionysian element.

### Direct meetings with the past

This ideal and bygone image of ancient Greece was combined with a quite real and surprising, yet fragmentary, image of Roman cities from 79 AD, buried in ashes and pumice that were thrown out by the raging Vesuvius. Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae were largely forgotten until the beginning of the 18th c., when initially random, and then more and more organised excavations began (from 1738 in Herculaneum and 1745 in Pompeii)<sup>11</sup>. The early works were commissioned here by Charles of Bourbon, the king of Naples and Sicily, in order to acquire ancient relics to decorate his summer residence in Portici<sup>12</sup>. From 1750, excavation management was entrusted to a military engineer Karl Weber who had a more scientific, archaeological and systematizing approach as he meticulously documented and catalogued the artefacts<sup>13</sup>. However, this did not change the main goal, which was the extraction of treasures, which was why Charles did not care about publicity as he was creating his own collection. Yet, the news spread rapidly throughout Europe and attracted collectors, experts on ancient cultures, artists, and Grand Tourists who also had

Naples marked as one of the destinations on the maps of their educational journeys. Following these encounters with antiquity, the most eminent of them left notes, letters, sketches and, of course, collections.

Stating that excavations thoroughly changed the aesthetic attitude of the 18th c. elites and contributed to the flourishing of neo-classicism seems obvious. However, when we look closely at the main proponents of these changes, it turns out that their actions and goals are a mixture of different approaches resulting from differing levels of competencies, knowledge, preferences and sensitivity. Thus, it was not a renewal (or continuation) of the classical tradition, but rather a reception consisting in the “assimilation” of newly discovered monuments of the past and their interpretation. The attitudes of collectors, artists, erudites and sensation seekers would become mixed here, bringing varying visions of antiquity and the relationship between the past and the present.

It should not also be forgotten that the architectural monuments of ancient Rome were still present in the landscape of the eternal city, under a more or less disturbed form. Some of them Christianised, some neglected, they did not cause Grand Tourists to be emotionally aroused<sup>14</sup>, and the collection of ancient sculptures with Apollo Belvedere and the Laocoön Group at the Vatican, was a must-see place.

On the other hand, reaching Greece, which remained under Ottoman Turkish control was much more costly and risky. However, wealthy sponsors from the Society of Dilettanti initially, in 1748, sent to Athens James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, who published *The Antiquities of Athens* (1762) with illustrations of ancient ruins in the aftermath of their travels. Subsequently, Robert Pars and Richard Chandler set out on an expedition with Revett<sup>15</sup>. Their first volume of *Ionian Antiquities* was published in 1769<sup>16</sup>. Robert Wood travelled to Syria (Troy) and Baalbek (Herspolis), and subsequently published drawings inspired by his travels in 1753 and 1757.

Encounters with authentic testimonies of antiquity were only available to the wealthiest travelers – the great majority of those who were curious acquired their knowledge through classical literature and richly illustrated catalogues and descriptions of travels which were rarely documentary, and usually often constituted a kind of an interpretation and commentary, which indicated the reception of antiquity at that time.

### **Collectors and thieves – a fragmentary vision**

The attitude of a collector and a connoisseur of antiquities was the main reason for conducting (not always legally) excavations, and the main driving force behind the art market (as well as counterfeits<sup>17</sup>).



<sup>14</sup> One of the American Grand Tourists wrote about the Baths of Titus in his notes: “which are so ruined as not to afford great Instruction”. J. D. Prown (*A Course of Antiquities at Rome, 1764*, “Eighteenth-Century Studies” 1997, No. 1, p. 95) comments that “This was the Domus Aurea of Nero, now known as Baths of Trajan, but no mention was made of the subterranean grottoes, already well known in the Renaissance for their decorative ‘grottesche’ Perhaps these were too ‘rococoish’ for Byres’ [his cicerone] taste, or perhaps he felt that they were not worth the bother for this particular group”.

<sup>15</sup> See R. Eisner, *Travelers to an Antique Land: The History and Literature of Travel to Greece*, Ann Arbor 1991, pp. 71–75.

<sup>16</sup> About a complete set we can read in the description from the Bonhams auction (*Society Of Dilettanti, Ionian Antiquities, 5 vol.*, <http://bonhams.com/auctions/16779/lot/237> [access date: 9.06.2022]): “The first 2 volumes are devoted to the results of the first Ionian mission of Richard Chandler, Nicholas Revett and William Pars in 1764–1766. Volumes 3 and 5 contain materials gathered on the second mission undertaken by William Gell, John Gandy, and Francis Bedford in 1812–1813. Volume 4 incorporates additional research undertaken between 1861 and 1869 by R.P. Pullan on the sites of Priene, Teos, and Smintheum”

<sup>17</sup> The 18th c. is also the heyday of the production of counterfeits when all Grand Tourists wanted to bring back treasures from their journeys. Counterfeit antiques could be found on their own during staged discoveries organized for seekers. See Ch. H. Kniep, *A Sepulchre at Nola*, engraving from: W. Hamilton, *Collection of engravings from ancient vases. Naples, 1791*, Vol. 1, frontispiece. [http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/grand\\_tour/pu31.html](http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/grand_tour/pu31.html) (access date: 9.06.2022).



<sup>18</sup> The 18th c. was a time of extensive aesthetic reflection on taste, hence **G. Dickie** (*The Century of Taste: The Philosophical Odyssey of Taste in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford 1996) calls it “century of taste”.

<sup>19</sup> See **A.-M. Leander Touati, U. Cederlöf**, *Observations made on the museums in Portici and on the Vesuvian sites by two Swedish professionals in 1756 and 1768, respectively*, [in:] *Returns to Pompeii: Interior Space and Decoration Documented and Revived, 18th–20th Century*, Ed. **Sh. Hales, A.-M. Leander Touati**, Stockholm 2016, pp. 151–166.

<sup>20</sup> Greece was ruled by Turkey and the Ottoman dynasty from the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to 1821 when the Greeks declared independence.

<sup>21</sup> See **G. Blix**, *From Paris to Pompeii. French Romanticism and the Cultural Politics of Archaeology*, Philadelphia 2008.

<sup>22</sup> It is worth noting that in the first phase of excavations, many places were re-filled with earth after the excavation of valuable items took place.

<sup>23</sup> On the one hand, books such as the W. Hamilton collection catalogue (**P. d’Hancarville**, *Collection of Etruscan, Greek, and Roman Antiquities from the Cabinet of the Honble. Wm. Hamilton His Britannick Majesty’s Envoy Extraordinary at the Court of Naples*, Naples 1766–1767) were published, where next to drawings of the most beautiful vases, there were also diagrams with detailed calculations of proportions, which constituted proof of the universality of ancient beauty. On the other hand, among experts, there circulated unofficial copies of the quasi-scientific treatise on the cult of Priap by **R. P. Knight** (*An Account of the Remains of the Worship of Priapus [...]*, London 1786), illustrated with engravings of phallic antiquities.

Owning works of ancient art such as ceramics, bronzes or marble of high artistic quality was a sign of wealth, but also good taste<sup>18</sup>. Even if it was in conflict with the recognition of the aesthetic experience as disinterested, it did, on the other hand, open the possibility of expanding access to works of art by making collections public. In 1758, The Herculaneum Museum was opened, where the collection of Charles Bourbon’s antiquities was on display. Although one could access it only with the king’s consent, many visitors visited the museum and left descriptions of their visits behind<sup>19</sup>. The collection of Sir William Hamilton, the British Ambassador to the Kingdom of Naples from 1764 to 1800, was added to the British Museum’s collection as early as 1771. Significantly, another collection that came into the possession of the mentioned museum, was the famed treasure of Lord Elgin, a British ambassador to Constantinople (1799). Between 1801 and 1810 he organised the removal of the reliefs from the Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens, which was still under Ottoman rule<sup>20</sup>. In fact, Lord Elgin did it legally, with the consent of the Turks who used the Acropolis as a quarry and turned the Parthenon into a weapons warehouse. However, Elgin’s actions were hectic and disorganised, and, as a result, many works were destroyed.

Antiquities seekers, who usually considered themselves endowed with a classical taste, could, however, experience consternation when confronted with an authentic and materialised past. For not all discovered monuments confirmed the previous beliefs and convictions about the perfection of ancient creators, both on the formal as well as social and intellectual levels<sup>21</sup>.

It is not a surprise then, that the first discoverers brought to light only what satisfied their aesthetic expectations, and whatever aroused controversy, disgust or indifference, was hidden away in the cabinets of peculiarities<sup>22</sup>. What was happening at that moment was a materialisation of a peculiar split between what was classical (perfect) and near, and between what was historical and foreign, aesthetically disappointing or scandalous, and, at the same time, fascinating<sup>23</sup>.

The collector’s approach, which was supposed to be the outcome of expertise, simultaneously prevented the possibility of experiencing the ancient culture as a historical whole. By focusing on individual objects taken out of context, its image was created from separate fragments, and these were always the fragments that matched the earlier, idealised version. At the same time, their context and original meaning were destroyed, for example, by removing frescoes from the walls or by placing cult objects in museums. Thus, old objects were aestheticised, depaganised and rendered useless, which subsequently became treasures, works of art, and only later became to be seen as monuments or testimonies of the past.





<sup>24</sup> M. Owen, *The Neoclassicising of Pompeii*, [in:] *The False-Door: dissolution and becoming in Roman wall-painting*, <http://www.owen-artresearch.uk/custom/rw-painting/ch2/ch2.4.html> (access date: 9.06.2022).

### **Artists – a hybrid vision, eclecticism or pastiche?**

Artists travelling to Pompeii and Greece, and there were already over a dozen of them in the second half of the 18th century, first of all, tried to look for inspiration and role models that would confirm their classical taste and that could serve as an argument against the formal frivolity of Rococo. However, what they were dealing with did not make it possible to capture the entirety or integrity which would give a sense of a uniform style. Firstly, they lacked knowledge about the chronology of changes in the ancient culture from the Greek Archaic period and the Etruscan phase through Classical Greece to Roma in the 1st c. AD represented at Pompeii. The covering of eight centuries with a singular style is a task hard to imagine. Random objects of everyday use, frescoes of ruins of architectural monuments – they could be reproduced in a documentary, detailed way, as in d’Hancarville’s drawings in Hamilton’s catalogue. However, they could not constitute a representation of the world at that time.

Just as Emma Hamilton in her *Attitudes* staged individual poses from Greek vases, artists imitated individual monuments by incorporating them into the conventions of previously developed stylistics. Will they be portraits of Dilletanti by Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Lawrence or rather interiors designed by Joseph Bonomi, James “Athenian” Stuart or Robert Adam – they will be a compilation or, as Maurice Owen called hybrid designs:

James “Athenian” Stuart (1713–[17]88) who visited Pompeii in 1754 was one of the first to create interiors based upon “classical” sources. His hybrid designs were mainly derived from Etruscan, Pompeian and Greek artefacts, which he then liberally infused with motifs taken from Raphael’s Roman-style decorative wall paintings in the Vatican. The designs he produced for Spencer House in London in 1759 are generally regarded as the first of their kind in northern Europe<sup>24</sup>.

A hybrid, nevertheless, is a mixture of different genres, and the aim of followers of neoclassicism was rather to achieve beauty which, according to tradition, was to consist in a perfect alignment and the harmony of the parts making up the whole. They had goals that were closer to the followers of eclecticism, who, according to the principle of *eligere ex omnibus optima*, combined the best elements into an even more beautiful whole.

The problem, however, was even deeper, because the neoclassical artists did not start from scratch as they have the Renaissance and Baroque interpretations of antiquity, as well as Palladianism and Poussin behind them – that is, the continuity of the Classical tradition.

It is worth quoting Owen once again:



<sup>25</sup> *Idem*, *Back to the Present*, [in:] *The False-Door...*, <https://www.owen-artresearch.uk/custom/rwpainting/ch1/ch1.3.html> (access date: 9.06.2022).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> The Dilettanti, though they called themselves tastemakers, did not set the tone for the classic revival. Despite many methodological errors, Winckelmann remained the undisputed authority: "Yet his pioneer attempt to put artistic criticism on a systematic, chronologically relevant basis has earned him in the eyes of archaeologists a position in the annals of their discipline matching Adam Smith's in economics. Meanwhile, in his espousal of Graecomania, he did more than any other man to set in motion one of the greatest art crazes the Western world has ever seen" (D. E. Robinson, *The Styling and Transmission of Fashions Historically Considered: Winckelmann, Hamilton and Wedgwood in the "Greek Revival"*, "The Journal of Economic History" 1960, No. 4, p. 579).

<sup>28</sup> B. Redford, *Dilettanti: The Antic and the Antique in Eighteenth-Century England*, Los Angeles 2008, p. 12, <https://www.getty.edu/publications/resources/virtualibrary/9780892369249.pdf>

When ancient wall-paintings eventually emerged in significant numbers in the mid-eighteenth century, they came into a world that had already recreated its own pseudo versions of them. The aesthetic contamination was so significant that it became impossible to separate the original from the highly fashionable pastiché, which, somewhat ironically, became known as the Pompeian Style<sup>25</sup>.

Pastiche, on the other hand, can be dangerous as:

The discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum and their influence on contemporary design, accelerated the processes that divested the wall paintings of their original symbolic meaning and made them indecipherable from the images they helped to create, such as those found in the pattern books of Robert Adam or Percier and Fontaine<sup>26</sup>.

The antiquity of neoclassical artists is therefore only a declarative continuation or maintenance of the tradition. Yet, in practice, it constitutes forcing one's own taste and creating a new world for which monuments are only an alibi.

### Libertines – a Bacchin and erotic vision

Connoisseurs, academics, travelers, artists – the cultural elite that felt responsible for shaping and disseminating good taste willingly shared their views in publications, and were equally eager to associate exchanging experiences while having fun at the same time. The most characteristic Society of Dilettanti, founded in 1734 by English aristocrats who had done the Grand Tour aroused curiosity but also outrage, even amongst other admirers of antiquity. The classical taste which, until now, was supposed to retain both aesthetic and moral values in the name of *kalokagathia* that identified the beautiful with the good, was reduced to entertainment as sensual pleasure in the actions of dilettantes<sup>27</sup>.

The most subversive action was the cultivation of debauchery as an element essential to the ancient tradition:

desiring and acquiring, the erotic and the acquisitive, are profoundly interconnected. No eighteenth-century society understood and exploited these links more fully than the Dilettanti. Over the course of three generations, they reveled in promiscuity – sexual, aesthetic, and intellectual. Through rituals, images, and texts, they mingled, measured, mapped, and ordered. Informing all their activities was a passion for the Mediterranean world they had variously encountered and possessed on the Grand Tour...<sup>28</sup>

The discovery in Pompeii of testimonies of particular devotion to god Priap confirmed for the dilettantes the rightness of the exploration of sexual threads, both in erudite and practical ways<sup>29</sup>. The undeniable achievements that they had in organising and documenting expeditions, especially those to Greece and the Middle East, garnered roughly the same publicity as unofficial publications that investigated visual and descriptive testimonies of ancient phallic worship practices<sup>30</sup> and meetings that involved wine drinking to excess. In fact, the dilettanti searched in the ancient past for all that which was pagan while using their quasi-research to go beyond the norms founded by Christianity. Ironic use of religious language, secret gestures with sexual undertones, obscene illustrations imitating monuments found in Pompeii, all sprinkled with large doses of wine and fun – this was an expression of a new, libertine approach to antiquity.

Under the patronage of Priap and Bacchus, it appears to be phallic, erotic, joyful and coarse rather than heroic, virtuous and restrained, as the postulates for the revival of the classical taste might suggest. Despite clear references to the cult of the Greek Dionysus, the dilettantes were more interested in the Roman, aestheticized Bacchus – frivolous, coarse and drunk, straight from modern bacchanalia scenes (although their motto was: “Grecian taste and Roman spirit”). Nietzsche was to discover Dionysus as a tragic god only 100 years later.

The second half of the 18th c. is just the beginning of the exploration of Greek and Roman antiquity which will become an aesthetic inspiration for the next generations of academics and “romantics”. Reception, understood as receiving or acceptance, which constitutes an impulse to create a certain subjective image of the past, usually results from the desires, aspirations and questions posed by subsequent generations. In the 19th c., these questions will not be about what is universal, such as taste, ideas, and customs, but about what is individual and subjective, such as everyday life, emotions, identity and vanishing.

*Translated by Marta Toborek*

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#### **Słowa kluczowe**

neoklasycyzm, Pompeje, Towarzystwo Dyletantów, recepcja antyku

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#### **Keywords**

neo-classicism, Pompei, Society of Dilettanti, reception of antiquity

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<sup>29</sup> Shocking sexual themes (including homoerotic ones) were also followed by other lovers of antiquity, especially Winckelmann, but they were not made public. See **J. Harris**, *Pompeii Awakened: A Story of Rediscovery*, London 2007, pp. 114–115.

<sup>30</sup> See **B. Redford**, *Taste and Neapolitan Spirit: Grand Tour Portraits of the Society of Dilettanti*, „Studies in the History of Art” Vol. 79 (2013) (= *Rediscovering the Ancient World on the Bay of Naples, 1710–1890*, Ed. **C. C. Mattusch**, Washington DC 2013).



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**Summary**

**AGNIESZKA GRALINSKA-TOBOREK (University of Lodz) / Discovering antiquity in the second half of the 18th c. – from tradition to reception**

Classicism, beginning in the second half of the 18th c., is by no means an obvious revival of antiquity. Still up to the 18th c., its legacy was regarded as an undeniable tradition that did not actually need to be explained in detail. However, with an increasingly conscious reflection on antiquity, there was also a growing conviction that it was a model – but an unsurpassed one. This shifted this tradition into the past. At the same time, from the mid-18th c. onwards, the desire for direct contact with ancient monuments, no longer only in Rome, but also in Greece and in the newly discovered Pompeii, caused the vision of antiquity to become more complicated. Connoisseurs, collectors, artists have become the very ones who introduce anxiety and challenge the existing image of Greco-Roman antiquity. Instead of the certainty of immersion in a tradition that is still relevant, a process of reception of antiquity as distant, pagan, baffling has begun.