Art in everyday life in the Habsburg monarchy

Count Charles-Joseph de Clary-Aldringen (1777–1831)

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At the centre of many debates, the figure of the amateur assumes increasing importance during the 18th century, in connection with educational practices, the publication of treatises which made the range of the arts more and more accessible within the context of the Ancien Régime.¹ If the artists' career is better known, amateur practice remains central to research.² Along with collection catalogues, libraries, accounts and order registers, and post-death inventories, ego-documents are an exceptional source for retracing the history of these practices.³

The journals kept between 1795 and 1829 by the Comte de Clary-Aldringen, a French-speaking nobleman of the Habsburg monarchy and grandson of the Prince de Ligne, are exemplary in their richness, their precision and their literary quality. The eldest of a princely family with estates at Teplice in North Bohemia, the count, who succeeded to the title of prince in 1826, describes and draws in the course of hundreds of pages the „most piquant events“⁴ and „the most charming pictures“ that make up his daily life.⁵ The journals progressively constitute the work of a lifetime alongside his literary and pictorial compositions. The count is an amateur practitioner, a dancer at balls, an actor in amateur theatricals, and above all a talented designer and writer. Through the judgments he formulates and submits to various readers, from his family to posterity including the Viennese salons, he also approaches to the status of a connoisseur, without defining himself as such. The highlighting of the count's precise relationship to the arts brings us back to places and practices inseparable from the construction of aristocratic identity.

¹ Charlotte GUICHARD, *Les amateurs d'art à Paris au XVIII^e siècle*, Seyssel 2008, p. 13–23, 189–286. For Bohemia, see Ivo CERMÁN – Luboš VELEK (edd.), *Adlige Ausbildung. Die Herausforderung der Aufklärung und die Folgen*, Munich 2006, p. 1–15.

² The symposium *Art et Sociabilité au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 23–25 June 2011, offers a recent perspective on historiographical progress.

³ For the Habsburg monarchy, research undertaken on the subject of the Schwarzenberg family underlines the vitality of this topic, for example Jana FRANKOVÁ, *La musique et le théâtre baroque de Český Krumlov*, in: Olivier Chaline (ed.), *Les Schwarzenberg, une famille dans l'histoire de l'Europe (XVI^e–XXI^e siècles)*, Panazol 2012; Claire MADL, *Les engagements d'un aristocrate éclairé de Bohême: Franz Anton Hartig (1758–1797)*, Geneve 2013, provides information on the subject of libraries.

⁴ Státní oblastní archiv (hereafter SOA) Litoměřice – liason Děčín, family archives (hereafter FA) Clary-Aldringen, carton 159, 24 May 1810.

⁵ IBIDEM, carton 158, 12 June 1803.

The journals are imprinted with family correspondence which, along with the daily notes, provides their background. By giving his wife Louise Chotek (1777–1864)⁶ or his mother Marie-Christine de Ligne (1757–1830) information about social and cultural life, and by receiving information himself, he positions himself as an observer of the „*Grand-Monde*“.⁷ It is in the light of this double position, that of the active amateur and that of the observing amateur, that we propose to present these sources. From the circles which developed around the Ligne family and Casanova in Teplice, the count develops and tests what he calls his „*painter's eye*“.⁸ His travels in France in 1810 and 1822, and in Italy between 1816 and 1820, represent the trial of this from which he returns with a weight of objects and experiences which reinforce his position as an enlightened amateur.⁹

The study of his journals questions this notion of the amateur which gradually takes on a negative connotation in the debates of the second half of the 18th century. Whether simply curious, practitioner, connoisseur or critic, the amateur defines himself above all as a lover of the arts, which is clearly specified in the terms *Kunstfreund*¹⁰ and *Kunstliebender*.¹¹ The intellectual and aesthetic pleasure of the amateur is, however, inseparable from the game of social distinction that animates the elites: in the context of the upheavals of the first nineteenth century, they assert their social pre-eminence by using the more subtle register of sociability. The mastery of dance or music enters into the codes of a language which allows the definition of the contours of the *grand monde* in which the count participates, and which gives him a recognized identity.

The omnipresence of the arts in everyday life raises the question of the tension between aesthetic games and social issues, disinterested love and aristocratic distinction. By deliberately placing the focus on the individual – without being restricted to it, since the count also describes himself as an observer and critical spectator – it is possible to reflect on the complexity of this amateur figure at the point of intersection between several

6 IVO CERMÁN, *Les Chotek, histoire d'une noblesse de robe*, Prague 2008.

7 SOA Litoměřice – liason Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 158, 10 June 1803. See Matthieu MAGNE, *Mes lettres courent le monde, courez après. La correspondance dans les journaux de voyage de Charles-Joseph de Clary-Aldringen (1777–1831): objet littéraire et outil pratique*, in: François Cadillon – Michel Figeac – Caroline Le Mao (edd.), *La correspondance et la construction des identités en Europe centrale (1648–1848)*, Paris 2013, pp. 381–403.

8 SOA Litoměřice – liason Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 177, 11 July 1822.

9 In 1810, the count was appointed imperial courier for the marriage of Napoleon and Marie-Louise of Austria. The agreement brought him back to Paris in 1822. Matthieu MAGNE, *Identité en voyage et voyage de l'identité, Pratiques de l'écrit et trajectoires parisiennes d'un noble francophone de Bohême: le comte Charles-Joseph de Clary-Aldringen (1777–1831)*, Bordeaux 2011 (Master theses).

10 Johann W. von GOETHE, *Einleitung in die Propyläen 1798*, in: Erich Trunz (ed.), *Goethes Werke XII*, Munich 1981, p. 55; J. W. GOETHE, *Ecrits sur l'art*, Paris 1996, pp. 142–163.

11 Ernst BEHLER (ed.), *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe IV*, Paderborn 1959, pp. 120–121.

arts. From artistic practice to judgment of taste, including the organization of the family library, his love of art occupies most of the count's life. Dance, theatre and music are not approached as specific objects, but as part of an aristocratic lifestyle. Personal sensitivity combines with the dominant good taste without hesitating to confront it. The count thus forms a personal art at a glance, rendered by an amused and amusing style of his writing which opens up a reflection on the links between amateur practice, aristocratic identity and individual sensitivity in the era of Romanticism.

The Clary-Aldringens: creating a living environment conducive to artistic development

From their installation in Bohemia in 1634 until obtaining the princely title in 1767, the rise of the counts and then princes of Clary-Aldringen was linked to the development of the estates of Teplice. Count Charles-Joseph grew up in a cultural environment highly favourable to artistic practice. The first Prince de Clary was behind the Baroque redevelopment of the castle and the creation of a theatre for amateur performances.¹² This theatre welcomed travelling companies, and was also the setting for rehearsals and performances by family members and their prestigious guests. Coming mainly from Prague and Dresden, the troupes performed in summer in châteaux under the patronage of their lords.

These performances punctuated social life from July to September.¹³ Reckoning these together with private theatricals, not a day went by without a performance. This craze for the theatre, in which the great families became involved through patronage or amateur performances, is a common feature of the aristocracy in the Habsburg monarchy.¹⁴ As the family châteaux were also homes, they cannot be likened to simple replicas of the artistic and social life of Vienna: while fashionable plays from the Burgtheater in Vienna were acted and recreated there, these spaces were also places for the creation of and experimentation with plays subsequently performed in the imperial capital.

There was a genuine rivalry between the estates of the nobility: in Dux, the Waldstein troupe gave fine performances orchestrated by the owner, who integrated them into the cycle of festivals that illuminated the *belle saison* in North Bohemia.¹⁵ Moreover, it is with bitterness that the count notes the departure of „*Mr Koch and Md Bruniau, whom*

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¹² SOA Litoměřice – liason Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 102.

¹³ In 1798 the last performance took place on 4 September, before the departure of the Clarys for Vienna. *IBIDEM*, carton 157, 4 September 1798.

¹⁴ See also the *Mémoires, lettres, pensées* of the Prince de Ligne, F. Bourin, 1989, p. 614, or the writings of Pauline von Schwarzenberg – Milena LENDEROVÁ, *Pauline, princesse de Schwarzenberg*, in: O. Chaline (ed.), *Les Schwarzenberg*, pp. 213–214.

¹⁵ SOA Litoměřice – liason Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 157, 30 August 1795.

that nasty little baron has just kidnapped from us to send them to Carlsbad.”¹⁶ The theatre was not limited to the pleasures of entertainment but occupied a place within a complex system: this space was the privileged locus of aristocratic staging. The metaphor of *theatrum mundi* combines with the great nobles’ activities as patrons, in which they found a means of distinguishing themselves within the „mille-feuille“ of the nobility of the Habsburg Monarchy.¹⁷

Once the title of prince had been gained, it was imperative to maintain one’s standing. Through their function as performance and indispensable social entertainment, the arts occupied an essential place in the aristocratic way of life. They were also in demand for the organization of several key spaces: the theatre and salons, the library and the gardens. Prince Jean de Clary (1753–1826), director of court buildings, employed the services of the architect Jean-Auguste Giesel to furnish the façade of the château and the new theatre in the west wing. The Clary residence then assumed a monumental aspect in the neoclassical style. In this context, the Comte de Clary participated very early on in the effervescence of cultural life in Vienna and on the estates of the nobility. This milieu, ranging from amateur theatricals in salons to performances at the Teplice theatre, is already in evidence in his earliest letters.¹⁸

In accordance with the concept of „residence“ developed in German historiography, the whole estate was laid out in such a way as to stimulate the aesthetic pleasure of the family and its guests.¹⁹ We especially note the princes’ interest in gardens.²⁰ Thus Prince Jean de Clary created a superb English-style park, the focal point of walks on his estates. The Prince de Ligne, his father-in-law, an amateur very conscious of these matters and author of *Coup d’œil sur Beloeil*,²¹ describes this transformation of the landscape in his memoirs: *The extension and embellishment of the left part of the garden now makes it one of the most beautiful to be seen. If the Prince de Clary made use of whatever water he could get, he could have a superb waterfall from one pond to the other; and by enclosing the mountain of*

¹⁶ IBIDEM, 3 August 1798.

¹⁷ The expression is borrowed from Eric HASSLER, *La cour de Vienne (1680–1740)*, Strasbourg 2013, p. 43.

¹⁸ SOA Litoměřice – liason Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 188, letters to his grandmother, 1786–1801.

¹⁹ Thomas WINKELBAUER, *Fürst und Fürstendiener, Gundaker von Liechtenstein, ein österreichischer Aristokrat des konfessionellen Zeitalters*, Vienne–Munich, 1999, pp. 374–378.

²⁰ In accordance with the conceptions of the Baroque era, as summarized by Chancellor Wenzel Anton Kaunitz: „I am my own architect, my own gardener, and the creator of everything which presents itself to my eyes, and I am happy if I see people of taste praising my work.“ Quoted from Jiří KROUPA, *Alchymie štěstí: pozdní osvícenství a moravská společnost 1770–1810*, Brno 2006, p. 213; Olivier CHALINE, *Orlik, le siège de la secondogéniture*, in: idem (ed.), *Les Schwarzenberg*, pp. 353–364.

²¹ Charles-Joseph DE LIGNE, *Coup d’œil sur Beloeil et sur une grande partie des jardins de l’Europe*, Brussels 1781.

*Galgenbuch by means of these two forest borders [...], he would then have the most beautiful garden in the world, superior to those of England and Pulawy in Poland, Norlitz in Germany, Schönhof in Bohemia, Totès in Hungary, etc.*²²

It was in their capacity as enlightened amateurs that the Princes de Clary developed and managed their estates. The many walks or hunting routes whose charms the count depicts are all routes carefully thought out for aesthetic pleasure. Gardens, alleys, groves and even the borders of ponds are places for aristocratic staging. To these family estates we must add the importance of Vienna in the training of the *Kunstliebender*: the figure of the amateur develops between several spaces.

The Education of the Comte de Clary-Aldringen: Frameworks, Teachers and Practices

In accordance with the typical way of life in the Habsburg monarchy, the greatest families had to be present in the Danubian metropolis. In order to ensure family visibility and participation in the social, cultural and artistic effervescence, Franz Wenzel acquired in 1760 a palace on the Herrengasse²³ where the Clary-Ligne salon became one of the most famous in the capital.²⁴

The cultivation of the Comte de Clary's awareness of drawing, theatre or music was characterized by seasonality and the phenomenon of double residence: the family left Teplice in the autumn for the opening of the ball season in Vienna, before returning to the family estates the following summer. It took around 80 hours to travel from Teplice to Vienna via Prague, where the family also owned a palace.²⁵ Upon arrival in Vienna, their already vigorous social life accelerated even more. While in Bohemia more space was devoted to reading, walking and writing, Vienna represented the place for artistic education, where the count took lessons in riding, dancing and drawing. The drawing master Martin von Molitor (1759–1812) accompanied him from 12 January 1797.²⁶ A remark of 12 May in 1797 tells us that Molitor was also the teacher of Molly Ferrary.²⁷ The count's observations underline the importance of these tutors, often

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²² IDEM, *Mémoires du prince de Ligne*, Paris 2004, p. 564.

²³ SOA Litoměřice – lison Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 93: contract for the purchase of the Viennese palace. See ERIC HASSLER, *Dans l'ombre de la cour impériale: les palais aristocratiques viennois, 1683–1750*, Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles, 2011 (online: <https://journals.openedition.org/crcv/>, accessed 28 May 2021).

²⁴ Baronne DU MONTET, *Souvenirs de la Baronne du Montet 1785–1866*, Paris 1904, p. 106.

²⁵ A palace with a baroque façade erected by the Clarys in 1680, situated in the Malá Strana quarter, in close proximity to Hradčany and other palaces of the nobility.

²⁶ SOA Litoměřice – lison Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 157, 12 January 1797.

²⁷ IBIDEM. The painter Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1788–1853) replaced Molitor in 1812.

professional artists, in the *erste Gesellschaft* of Vienna.²⁸ On 15 March 1797, for example, he notes, „*At 7 am, Ventzi [Chotek] came here with his flute-master to rehearse with Maurice a Hoffmeister trio that they are to play at one of the [private] concerts.*“²⁹

Lessons from masters accompanied the reading of various treatises: historical works, Latin and contemporary poets.³⁰ These were copied and learned before finding a new place at evening parties, in the games of capping and recognizing quotations that entertained the *erste Gesellschaft*. The count's entourage was characteristic of his upbringing, which resulted in evenings of a high intellectual quality in Teplice as well as in Vienna. It was there, at the heart of salon life, that the figure of the amateur developed, amiable and at ease in the *beau monde*. His playful participation in conversations, with all the piquancy designed to charm his audience, revealed his mastery of the codes of sociability. This „*humanization*“³¹ began very early, with the practice of *Kinderbals* (children's balls), to which the count took his own daughters.³²

The whole complex structure of the Danubian edifice was based on the linking of several spaces. If Vienna was indeed the melting-pot of a composite monarchy where the elites shared a common way of life and practices, Teplice offered the original setting of a princely estate coupled with an internationally renowned spa town. A visit to the château of the Clarys was a must for members of the European aristocracy. We also note the presence of Goethe³³, Beethoven³⁴ or Chopin, asked to play „*Variations and Fantasies on charming themes*“ (25 August, 1829).³⁵

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²⁸ The designation given at the beginning of the 19th century to the closed group of nobles descended from the greatest families (counts and princes, the historical nobility), as opposed to the *zweite Gesellschaft*, more recently ennobled (notably after 1806). Václav BŮŽEK, *Les changements dans la noblesse du royaume de Bohême à l'époque moderne*, in: O. Chaline (ed.), *Les Schwarzenberg*, pp. 33–47.

²⁹ SOA Litoměřice – liason Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 157.

³⁰ IBIDEM, carton 183: the Comte de Clary's exercise books from 1790 to 1800. Milena LENDEROVÁ, *'La mère nouvelle' ou l'éducation de l'enfant noble dans les pays tchèques au début du XIXe siècle*, in: Olivier Chaline (ed.), *Familles nobles, châteaux et seigneuries en Bohême, XVI^e-XIX^e siècles*, Histoire, Economie et Société, Paris 2007, p. 145–152.

³¹ SOA Litoměřice – liason Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 160, 23 April 1814.

³² Milena LENDEROVÁ, *Une femme de deux espaces: Pauline de Schwarzenberg*, in: Catherine Horel – Bernard Michel (edd.), *Les noblesses dans l'empire des Habsbourg de la Montagne Blanche au Printemps des peuples 1620–1848*, Paris 2008 (= Numéro spécial de la Revue des études slaves 78/4), pp. 391–393.

³³ Notably at Teplice from July 1812 onwards: SOA Litoměřice – liason Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 159.

³⁴ IBIDEM, 20 January 1811.

³⁵ Journal of the count's daughter Eufémie (1808–1867). The composer improvised on a theme by Rossini chosen by the princesses: SOA Litoměřice – liason Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 223, 25 August 1829; Bronislas É. SYDOW (ed.), *Correspondance de Frédéric Chopin I*, Paris 1953–1960, p. 129.

In describing dinners at Teplice in these journals, the count describes many parlour games that form part of the practices of the amateur and characterize him as such. The most alluring scenes draw us into the exchanges between the Prince de Ligne and Casanova. Games of comparisons such as „*metamorphoses*“ were an opportunity to fit literary culture into a new place within society. Family and kinship represented a primary space in which to forge amateur practice.³⁶ Surrounded by a circle of connoisseurs and practitioners of the arts in Teplice as well as in Vienna, the count was immersed in these practices, and recognized as an enlightened amateur and therefore as an „*accomplished person*“.³⁷ By moving from Teplice to Vienna, he thus learnt to move in the *erste Gesellschaft*.

Prints and plates: an aristocratic way of life

The count's painstaking descriptions make it possible to work within spaces that are difficult to comprehend. Only the most prestigious concerts and performances were mentioned in almanacs and gazettes such as the *Wiener Zeitung*.³⁸ The study of the repertoire of pieces chosen for performances is supplemented by the contributions of ego-documents.³⁹ The newspapers contained excerpts from the plays performed: the aristocrats favoured short forms which allowed them to learn several roles and to perform quickly. The language of the repertoire was mainly French, the language of the élites and of social life: any enlightened amateur had to master it.

This was how a troupe of aristocrats decided on *Le Pasha de Surêne* for a performance at court in 1814. Rehearsals began at the home of Princess Metternich on 2 December.⁴⁰ The count was the prompter. He describes with humour and supporting sketches the course of a „very noisy“ rehearsal in which we find all the great names of the *erste Gesellschaft*.⁴¹ These

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³⁶ SOA Litoměřice – lison Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 157, 29 May 1797. This involved transforming a member of the party into an object or an animal and giving reasons for this.

³⁷ IBIDEM, carton 157, 18 July 1795, referring to Mlle de Knuht. This idea is to be found in *La Conversion de S.A. Madame la princesse Alexandrine de Dietrichstein née comtesse Schouvalloff racontée par elle-même*, Paris 1879, p. 6: „Of noble descent, with a splendid fortune, spoilt by the world, I wanted to be perfect. I wanted to combine virtues, science and talents.“ See Martina MUSILOVÁ, *Contes, romans et journaux inédits de la princesse Alexandra Dietrichstein*, in: Elena Gretchanaia et alii (edd.), *La francophonie européenne aux XVIII^e-XIX^e siècles*, Bruxelles–Bern 2012, pp. 159–171.

³⁸ Accessible on the website of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek: <http://www.onb.ac.at/> (2.6.2021)

³⁹ See notably Michelle GARNIEU-PANAFIER, *Un contemporain atypique de Mozart: le Chevalier de Saint-George*, Liancourt 2011.

⁴⁰ *Le Pacha de Surêne ou l'amitié des femmes, comédie un acte par Etienne et Gaugiran-Nanteuil*, Paris, Théâtre de Louvois 1802.

⁴¹ SOA Litoměřice – lison Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 160, 4 December 1814. The rehearsals took place from 2–5 December, involving more than forty actors and prompters.

rehearsals are described, in addition to private soirées and balls where the guest lists kept and commented on by the count offer a glimpse of the shifting contours of this aristocratic society where boredom was the enemy to be conquered.⁴²

After a final „noon rehearsal at the confused and tumultuous *Staatskanzley*,⁴³ the show goes on.“⁴⁴ The Zichys, Metternichs and Esterhazys were to be found there, and „some others of the most distinguished persons of the Court; this charming play, performed with the skill of consummate actors, was warmly applauded.“⁴⁵ This was not the only item performed: the posters, made by the amateurs themselves and pasted into the count's journals, record, in addition to the *Pasha*, presentations of *tableaux vivants*, one Le Brun and two Rembrandts.⁴⁶

A week of daily rehearsals was generally necessary for these plays, tableaux or dramatized proverbs before a performance in front of a select invited audience in one of the great Viennese houses. Therefore it was sometimes the Palffys and sometimes the Esterhazys or the Choteks who organized concerts and private performances where the hosts danced, acted, sang and accompanied each other. The harp and the harpsichord are the instruments which feature most frequently in the journals. These ubiquitous arts blended with the social practices of the aristocracy. The rehearsals were the occasion for soirées where the gatherings strengthened the Comte de Clary's network of relationships.

The assured lightness of amateur practitioners during their performances should not conceal the long hours of work to which the mornings were generally devoted. The count describes his brother's flute rehearsals in these terms.⁴⁷ He himself took advantage of the peace of Teplice at the end of the bathing season to develop his talent on the harpsichord.⁴⁸ In both cases, the family constituted the first audience before a performance in front of a wider circle. The Clary palace acted as an airlock: „*Ventzi came to us in the evening to try out his trio with Maurice*.“⁴⁹ Then came the concert at the Choteks' and other houses. Amateurs often appealed to the public for indulgence, a sign that performance was as much a social game as an aesthetic one. On 23 March 1814 *Caroline ou le tableau* was acted at the home

⁴² M. MAGNE, *Mes lettres*, pp. 391–394.

⁴³ The State Chancellery (Ballhausplatz 26) and the Metternichs' home were a single building, bearing witness to the proximity existing between the sphere of the Court, service of the State and aristocratic circles in Vienna.

⁴⁴ SOA Litoměřice – liason Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 160, 5 December 1814.

⁴⁵ Auguste de la GARDE-CHAMBONAS, *Fêtes et souvenirs du Congrès de Vienne (1814–1815)*, first edition 1820, Paris 1901, p. 217.

⁴⁶ *Tableaux vivants* consisted of live representations of famous paintings. Here these comprised *The Tent of Darius* by Le Brun, and a *Portrait of a Woman* by Rembrandt, embodied by Princess Kaunitz.

⁴⁷ SOA Litoměřice – liason Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 157, 15–30 March 1797.

⁴⁸ *IBIDEM*, carton 158, 9 October 1803.

⁴⁹ *IBIDEM*, carton 157, 28 March 1797.

of the Princess von Kaunitz. Rehearsals started on 16 March and were held in several great houses, but not everything went as planned: „*I found the play boring, and in the first scene [...], there was Madame de Kaunitz forgetting her lines, getting embarrassed, losing her head, asking the prompter «What?» and finally saying to the audience, «I beg your pardon, I don't know another word – allow us to lower the curtain and start again!» They applauded her, I zuredede [encouraged] her, picked it up again one sentence earlier, and finally got her back im Gleis [on track]. She acts badly, and always will.*“⁵⁰

Concerts and theatrical performances, then, are integrated into the daily life of the aristocracy in a broader sense, and combine a love of art with the purposes of achieving distinction. When the Count spends his mornings copying his roles, it is as much out of social duty as for the literary pleasure he finds in it. The two feelings are in harmony rather than opposition.

Amateur practice: a source of social distinction

The count is both observer and practitioner, and offers a complete overview of the palette of the arts, from theatre to drawing and the collages made by his mother Marie Christine de Ligne, which she presents to her guests. Every aristocrat had to know how to dance and act and possess a knowledge of the rudiments of singing, drawing and classical culture, even if only an approximate one. These arts were combined within a single evening, accentuating its brilliant character but also the logic of recognition and distinction that operated through these practices. The ball given by Franz Palffy on 17 March 1814 is an example of this: [...] *Not too many people, camera obscura, 6 or 7 pictures, the city of Milan, a so-called view of Vienna [...]. Excellent music which the audience did not listen to; Giulani, Mayleider, Hummel, Richter – [...] Italian comedy which amused me very much. Then dancing for 5 or 6 couples, then supper (splendidissimo) – two big round tables. There was a young Saurau there who, it is said, might marry Gabrielle Huniady.*⁵¹

Amateur practice brings the arts together at the risk of relegating them to the rank of simple social entertainment. Although all are familiar with music, dance and theatre, as well as collections of paintings, the guests invited do not all share the love of art experienced by the count, and do not indulge it with the same passion. The remark about the audience denotes a primary judgment of taste which tends to mark the author out as a music-lover among the crowd of socialites who see music merely as an accompaniment.

As evidenced by the count's last note about the Palffy party, dance was an essential aspect of social life, condensing the interplay of performance and scenography. During the Viennese balls, the count danced numerous *allemandes* and *écossaises* with the greatest ladies of the aristocracy. Among these, Louise Chotek was his partner at several balls

⁵⁰ IBIDEM.

⁵¹ IBIDEM, carton 160, 23 March 1814.

before becoming his wife in 1802. Dance was part of the language of sociability and of the mechanisms that presided over the construction of a space for familial relations within the European élites.

It was all about cultivating the talents that made it possible to shine in society, or at least to be recognized as belonging to the *grand monde*. Amateur practice of the arts was a condition for being acknowledged in the *erste Gesellschaft*, failing which the sanction was immediately enforced – one was excluded. Conversely, a person's quality was always emphasized: *We were at Princess Lubomirska's [...]. Prince Henri played the harp wonderfully, then he accompanied Mlle de Wallerskirchen, then his violin played the quartets in his way which I had already heard at Md Lansgronska's; at 10 o'clock the ball started [...]. Prince Henri danced the menuet de la reine, his hat on his head, with incredible grace and nobility; he was superb. I do not understand how he does not turn the heads of all women – a good fellow, intelligent, educated, polite, considerate, full of talent, with a charming face and with all this, entirely lacking in pretension; in short, I do not know of a more accomplished man.*⁵²

In addition to personal development, these qualities of men and women of the world make it possible for them to be introduced into different circles, and to know how to behave there, by mastering the subtle codes fundamental to noble identity. For the count, the talents encountered are so many examples and counterparts to his own practices. While he masters the palette of the arts, sings, and acts in amateur theatricals, his real passions remain drawing and writing. The archives of Děčín and Teplice contain several hundred drawings by him, as well as translations and his own personal compositions: verses, *bouts rimés*, theatrical dialogues and even a novel in letters.⁵³

This talent is of course reinvested in social life: he recites his verses and reads his works aloud.⁵⁴ Likewise, his sketches fit into an economy of gifts and presents which animates the nobility and strengthens the bonds between its members through gifts and loans. Collections of prints do not remain locked in libraries; they circulate among members of the aristocracy. The count thus brings his collections to the salons where they „win success“. ⁵⁵ His talent was recognized in the society of amateurs who introduced him to Baron de la Motte-Fouqué (1777–1843), for whom he became the illustrator of two of his famous works, *Undine* and *Der Zauberring*, published in 1811 and 1813.⁵⁶

Even if the amateur does not aim at the challenges of a professional career, talent is not a mere adjunct to his practice of the arts. Here again, we must not confuse the

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⁵² IBIDEM, carton 157, 2 February 1797.

⁵³ IBIDEM, cartons 184 and 185.

⁵⁴ This is the case with *Coralie*, to which he „gives birth“ in July 1803 before giving readings in society. IBIDEM, carton 158.

⁵⁵ IBIDEM, 26 April 1814.

⁵⁶ Sketches and original engravings are preserved in the Museum at Teplice.

lightness attested in the sources with the reality of the performances. Some individuals shine in society as true masters of their art. Despite criticism from Goethe and Schiller, the amateur does not always practise as a dilettante.⁵⁷ He is an amateur because he does not depend on the arts to meet his needs and cultivates them as an art of living inseparable from aristocratic identity, and often as a passion appropriate for developing his personal sensitivity.

This passion makes it possible for him to distinguish himself as a particularly brilliant member whose presence elevates the quality of an aristocratic circle. It is also in this sense that one can explain why it was that the count's work remained unpublished during his lifetime: only the beautiful engravings for *Undine* and *Der Zauberring* were published. The handwritten compositions are no less well known to the *grand monde*: intended for a select audience „worthy“ to receive and identify with them, they are carefully composed.

Despite the indulgence of the public, the game of distinction was not without its risks, and the figure of the amateur cannot be understood as a simple posture. The *beau monde* was quick to spot deficiencies and laugh at them, sometimes cruelly. The stakes were even higher when the Empress herself was involved: „*For a few days now we had been preparing a play, La Double méprise [...], the result of a conversation between the Empress and Goethe [in Teplice]. She had done, I think, little more than sketch the backdrop, and had arranged a few scenes for him, especially his role. It was all very commonplace – quite bad. Louise and I were the lovers [...], my father [Prince Jean de Clary] was acting (in despair about acting in German), Goethe, and the grand master, and Madame ODonel. Everyone was ready to die of curiosity. I was in despair because I felt it made her look ridiculous. [...] The day before Goethe said he was ill and gave up his role to Edouard Lichnovsky [...]. Genuinely persuaded that I was doing the Empress an important service [...] I told her about the rumours about this play and how she risked it being reported in the newspapers [...]. At 6 o'clock the Empress withdrew the play [...]*“.⁵⁸

Several passages thus make it possible to measure the involvement of amateurs and the weight of the aristocratic public when the quality of someone's reputation was at stake in the course of society entertainments.

The description of everyday life highlights the expression of the bonds that unite and distinguish a social group. These links are also political: practices such as amateur theatricals go beyond society amusements to become part of the political turmoil of the beginning of the 19th century where questions of allegiance were all the stronger as the

⁵⁷ These same authors do not deny that they practised the arts as amateurs. In Goethe's case, this applies to painting and landscape gardening. Jean DELINIÈRE, *Les écrits de Goethe et de Schiller sur les pratiques d'amateurs*, in: Jean-Louis Jam (ed.), *Les divertissements utiles des amateurs au XVIII^e siècle*, Clermont-Ferrand 2000, p. 180–182.

⁵⁸ SOA Litoměřice – lison Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 182, 9 June 1826.

world of the élites was being completely transformed. The *tableaux vivants* „arranged“⁵⁹ in several houses and then performed during the Esterhazy dinner on April 23 1814 thus joined the cycle of illuminations, parades and Te Deum which accompanied „*the downfall of Napoleon*“.⁶⁰ Handsomely described in the newspapers; they culminate in „*the bouquet, conceived specially for this occasion, and the capo d'opera of the feast: Charles VII restored to the throne by Joan of Arc and receiving the tributes of the 3 orders of the nobility and the keys of Paris. Nikerl [Esterhazy] as Charles VII did not appear to great advantage, albeit with nobility and grace; he wore a lilac dalmatic without a belt [...]. He stretched out his hand towards the crown presented to him by the kneeling Duke of Burgundy (myself in Klingmann's costume, a red mantle bordered with ermine)*“.⁶¹

When we note that children are present and take part in these performances, we understand the powerful issues of socialization and integration represented by the chosen scenes, paintings and dramatized proverbs from a social, cultural and political point of view.

The amateur is entertained, it should not be forgotten, but he also expresses his membership of the *grand monde* by taking part in performances, by staging himself, and by knowing how to decipher all the social codes which reproduce the classic repertoires with a piquant touch of topicality. The message transmitted takes on an increased importance, and one with a wealth of significance.

Everyday attendance at artistic venues

Amateurs frequently visited Vienna's theatres, as well as galleries, cabinets of curiosities and painters' studios. These spaces provided two essential resources: judgments to make and objects to acquire. The line between the aristocratic world and that of professional artists may seem porous, though without ever actually blurring. The arts brought nobles and artists into contact, and brought them together for aesthetic purposes, but according to different approaches. Subtle links in fact united the two circles under the critical eye of a public acting as a legitimizing body. A remark by the count to his wife during his stay in Naples in 1816 allows us to understand the extent of this: „*Great day at the Opera. All the fashionable people were there. First performance of Gabrielle de Vergy & that of an amateur, one Caraffa; he is a great musician, [...] this is his first great opera. Relatives and friends are in the country; the ultra-Rossinis look on in pity. [...] Anmaßung [arrogant] by an amateur; Gallenberg is dying of jealousy that another amateur & gentleman has put on an opera here, while he only produces skimpy little airs for the ballet. What is more, this Caraffa is*

⁵⁹ IBIDEM, 20 April 1814. Rehearsals are in progress and costumes are being prepared. Here, the principal painting being staged is a Carlo Dolci preserved in Dresden.

⁶⁰ IBIDEM, carton 160, 13 April 1814.

⁶¹ IBIDEM, 23 April 1814.

*hardly an amateur any longer. A big spender, devoured by debts, he threw himself into music in order to live; he spends his life with the theatre folk [...].*⁶²

Thanks to this eloquent passage, we sense the difference that exists between the two milieus. The practice of the arts acquires very different meanings depending on whether or not it is attached to the dimension of subsistence. The aristocratic concept places beauty above material contingencies and makes the arts a social ideal. In an era of reforms and revolutions which questioned the political and social frameworks of an orderly society, the relationships between individuals and the capacity to „make society“ and to produce a brilliant environment thus became important resources in the development of a language which united and distinguished the members of the *erste Gesellschaft*.

Parterres, boxes and artists' studios constituted so many spaces of sociability in which people knew that they could meet acquaintances and have an enjoyable time while building up an area in which to develop relationships⁶³. From one such space to another, aesthetic pleasures met with the dynamics of the relational field. In this respect, the count's travels were constructive: his connections gave him privileged access to boxes at the theatre, private collections and studios. In this way he took advantage of his family connections and his position as imperial courier in 1810 to meet the painters Gérard and Robert Lefèvre: in the first case, it was the Bellegardes who introduced him. In the second, Count Golowkin, his „*cicerone*,“ was responsible for the introductions.⁶⁴

While studios provided the opportunity for new encounters, they also offered a basis for conversation and brought together members of the aristocracy on a European scale. For the count, this was an opportunity to test his „painter's eye“ and his judgment: *„All the Parisian artists have studios furnished with extreme elegance, a prodigious luxury of tripods, [...] so that we believe ourselves to be in Apelles's studio, at least in terms of furniture if not of talent. Lefèvre has some very beautiful portraits, with a striking likeness. His brushwork is considered hard. For my part, I dare not say that I prefer his portraits to those of Gérard [...]. He has a charming portrait of Mme de Barral, leaning against a rock and wearing a dress of red challis, the folds of which fall well with the weight of cashmere [...].*⁶⁵

Essential to the affirmation of the dynastic memory of great families, the art of the portrait subtly participates in the forming of the area of relationships, and mingles with the pen portraits drawn by the count in his journals.

This logic extends to all fields of art: during the same month of May 1810 when the count visited the painters' studio, he went to a „*dinner at Mme de Boufflers' house with plenty of academics*“ and his friend Tchernitchef took him „*to his box at the Théâtre*

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⁶² IBIDEM, cartons 161, 3 July 1816, letter N° 57 to Louise.

⁶³ M. MAGNE, *Mes lettres*, p. 391–394.

⁶⁴ IBIDEM, carton 159, 3 May 1810, letters N° 24–25 to Louise.

⁶⁵ IBIDEM.

Feydeau". The count was therefore in a privileged position:⁶⁶ „*It was Martin's return to the stage [...] but the choice of pieces was unfortunate. Cimarosa is detestable [...]. Martin has a very nice voice, but loads it with so many gurglings and falsetto notes that it no longer gives any pleasure.*"⁶⁷

This judgment of taste, which does not spare the professional artist, was also applied to amateurs, without the latter needing to be ashamed of their status: „*Evening at Madame de Souza's [...]. Madame Alexandre Potocka asked M. de Flahaut to sing [...]. He sings charming romances with extraordinary taste. I would have liked to ask him for one for our Haus-Nachtigal [tame nightingale] – ‘Remerciez-moi Titine’; I find the expression delightful.*"⁶⁸ The interpenetration between sociability and love of art reaches its climax in his Italian travels, from which the count returns fortified by his success as an amateur and a man of the world.⁶⁹

The count's personal taste echoes that of the European elites: Florence, Rome and Naples are indispensable stops.⁷⁰ Charles-Joseph de Clary thus joins the European community of travellers which largely overlaps with that of the *grand monde* of the aristocracy while also extending to the European élites. The challenge of amateur practice of the arts also lies in being able to move within the European élites by means of recommendations and relationships. Through his judgments, the Comte de Clary ultimately revealed himself as a connoisseur, capable of making remarks which denote a good taste which became more and more important in determining in the construction of the identity of the nobility at the beginning of the 19th century.

The painter's eye in the journals of the Comte de Clary

The diarist describes his proximity to the arts, and adds his remarks on the art world, from the market to actors' performances, with precision and topicality. Enriched by an incisive epistolary style, these journals were read in salons, and formed part of a conversation where readers appreciated an elegant formulation, literary portraits of famous characters and the delicacy of line with which they were depicted.⁷¹

In his lists of people present at balls or dinners, the count comments on their talents. The journals thus form a sort of social repertoire seen through the prism of the count, and constantly updated. It serves as an indicator of the author's movements as much as it

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⁶⁶ IBIDEM.

⁶⁷ IBIDEM.

⁶⁸ IBIDEM.

⁶⁹ IBIDEM, cartons 161–166 (year 1816) and 167–176 (years 1818–1820).

⁷⁰ Gilles BERTRAND, *Le Grand Tour revisité. Pour une archéologie du tourisme: le voyage des Français en Italie, milieu XVIIIe-début XIXe siècle*, Rome 2008.

⁷¹ They were conceived in an original way as an epistolary diary. M. MAGNE, *Mes lettres*, pp. 394–397.

sheds light on the brilliant life of the houses he frequented. The same logic applies to the world of the theatre: the actors and their acting are judged, and nothing escapes description: style, physique, declamation, personal history.

Since these considerations fuel conversations, a mastery of information is the key to enhancing one's status within aristocratic circles. The nobleman must therefore be aware of artistic news, placed on the same footing as world news. From the aesthetic of a Van Eyck to the threat of Russian looting of the Dresden gallery, the art lover is also the one who knows about these things and knows how to talk about them.⁷² The man of the world thus manages to meet the expectations of his audience. The notebooks become a scrapbook of „the most charming glances“, spicy anecdotes and jokes slotted into daily life.⁷³

Through his choice of description, the amateur manifests a „way of seeing“ where personal sensitivity meets the taste of the social circles he frequents.⁷⁴ This is what the Count calls his painter's eye: that ability to detect – from the imperial court to the highways of Europe – beauty wherever it is to be found. The count's travels brought the logic of journals to its peak: creating journeys through images, the strokes of his pen, and sketches. They are also an opportunity to confront the new Napoleonic élites for whom the figure of the amateur is also a way towards the affirmation of social rank.⁷⁵

Personal judgments reveal an enlightened amateur's approach: the market value of the arts gives place to aesthetic remarks. The count speaks as a connoisseur rather than a critic. He sits on the side of conversation more than of peremptory judgment, without hesitating to take issue with the „so-called Gut-Denkende“. ⁷⁶ The journals reflect these choices: they are the laboratory where the count refines his painter's eye and outlines the Clary definition of the amateur.

Before inheriting the title of prince in 1826, his means did not allow him to acquire the paintings he admired in Rome or in Paris. Nevertheless, he becomes a virtual collector by organizing his own gallery in his journals, a gallery of which he does the honours for his readers. His judgments are based on commented references from travel guides, especially by well-known authors such as Goethe. The logic is that of memory, of the reminiscence of aesthetic pleasure which reinforces the affirmation of good taste. The count thus gives a particular inflection to this play of references which characterized the development of travelogues in the 18th century. While visiting the Boissénée Gallery

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⁷² SOA Litoměřice – lison Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 160, 27 October 1814.

⁷³ IBIDEM, carton 158, 12 June 1803.

⁷⁴ IBIDEM, carton 177, 11 July 1822.

⁷⁵ Natalie PETITEAU, *Elites et mobilités: la noblesse d'Empire au XIXe siècle (1808–1914)*, Paris 1997, p. 126.

⁷⁶ SOA Litoměřice – lison Děčín, FA Clary-Aldringen, carton 160, 16 July 1814.

in Stuttgart, his personal comments are supplemented by an example from Goethe: „II. *The Adoration of the Magi by Van Eyck. The incredible clarity which rests on that pretty town in the distance, that detail, those beautiful heads, those fabrics [...], what beauty! [...]. I cannot help inserting here some remarks by Goethe [the German version follows here]. What a language Goethe's is! What clarity, what precision.*”⁷⁷

Once he became a prince, the contacts which he made allowed him to devote himself to the work of a collector in the more traditional sense of the word. He therefore organized the thousands of works in the Vienna and Teplice libraries, which he supplemented with a marked preference for views and lithographs. His pleasure as an amateur is thus part of the continuity of the work, in terms of both aesthetics and of lineage, of one of the greatest families of the Habsburg monarchy.

Conclusion

In trying to define the practices of an amateur belonging to one of the greatest families of the Habsburg Monarchy, it is on the very essence of the aristocratic way of life that we focus. The line between these two notions is of genuine heuristic interest, but it is obvious that it does not exist for the diarist. The count uses the writing of journals to paint literary pictures of the *grand monde* at court, at the theatre, in the salon or on princely estates.

His membership of the aristocracy allowed his aesthetic sensibility to flourish. In turn, his talent allowed him to be recognized and to shine, from balls in Teplice to the salons of Paris and Rome. Good taste was becoming a common point among the European élites, and was current in several languages. As a true grandee of the monarchy, the count was a polyglot; he copies Goethe in German, appreciates nothing so much as French plays, and acquires the key concepts in English and Italian which allow him to compare the different schools of painting during his travels.⁷⁸

Observing and listening, acting by practising – often simultaneously – singing, dancing, acting, drawing or poetry and finally transmitting through writing, speaking or building collections are skills developed by the members of the *erste Gesellschaft*. As the cadres of the Ancien Régime totter, the love of art becomes a dominant element of aristocratic language. From performance to discourse on performance, the individual contrives to find his place, and participates in redefining the dominant good taste and in the development of aesthetic trends. This is evidenced by the enthusiasm for lithographs and the romantic touches which colour the stories of the traveller on the roads of Europe.

If the professional lives by his art, amateurs like the Comte de Clary live by the arts. The requirements are different, as is the relationship to art as manifested in the sources.

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⁷⁷ IBIDEM, carton 177, 16 April 1822.

⁷⁸ IBIDEM, carton 177, 11 June 1822.

It is about constructing and staging an identity where the nobleman becomes the artist of his own life by combining the imperative of social distinction with aesthetic pleasure.

From Teplice to Pompeii, art within everyday life becomes the art of everyday life: the glances cast at artistic and social life become representative of a way of seeing specific to an aristocracy grappling with the upheavals of the early nineteenth century. By retracing the frameworks and practices of Charles-Joseph, who became Prince of Clary-Aldringen in 1826, we can see the significance of the homage to the lover of the arts rendered by the Baroness du Montet in her *Mémoires*: *'Prince Clary has died, regretted by all who knew him. [...] We spent charming evenings in the heart of his delightful family, in the midst of his books, his paintings and the works of art with which he was surrounded as a discerning and enlightened amateur.'*⁷⁹

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⁷⁹ B. DU MONTET, *Souvenirs*, p. 257.

Matthieu Magne

**Art in everyday life in the Habsburg monarchy
Count Charles-Joseph de Clary-Aldringen (1777–1831)**

Abstract

The article explores the relation between aristocratic status and art in daily life of Charles-Joseph de Clary-Aldringen, the landlord of Teplice in Bohemia. The aristocrat acquired great skills in all arts, but was not a professional. He was an amateur who used art to express his membership of the *grand monde* by taking part in performances, by staging himself, and by knowing how to decipher all the social codes. We discuss his role as a diarist, as artist drawing pictures, as theatre actor and as collector of art. We show how the competition between aristocratic families motivated him to develop the spa of Teplice. We explore the role of drawing and letter-writing in his self-expression. If the professional lives by his art, amateurs like the Comte de Clary live by the arts. The requirements are different. The aristocrat seeks to construct and stage an identity where the nobleman becomes the artist of his own life by combining the imperative of social distinction with aesthetic pleasure.

KEY WORDS:

Clary-Aldringen; Teplice; aristocracy; diaries; collections; social distinction.