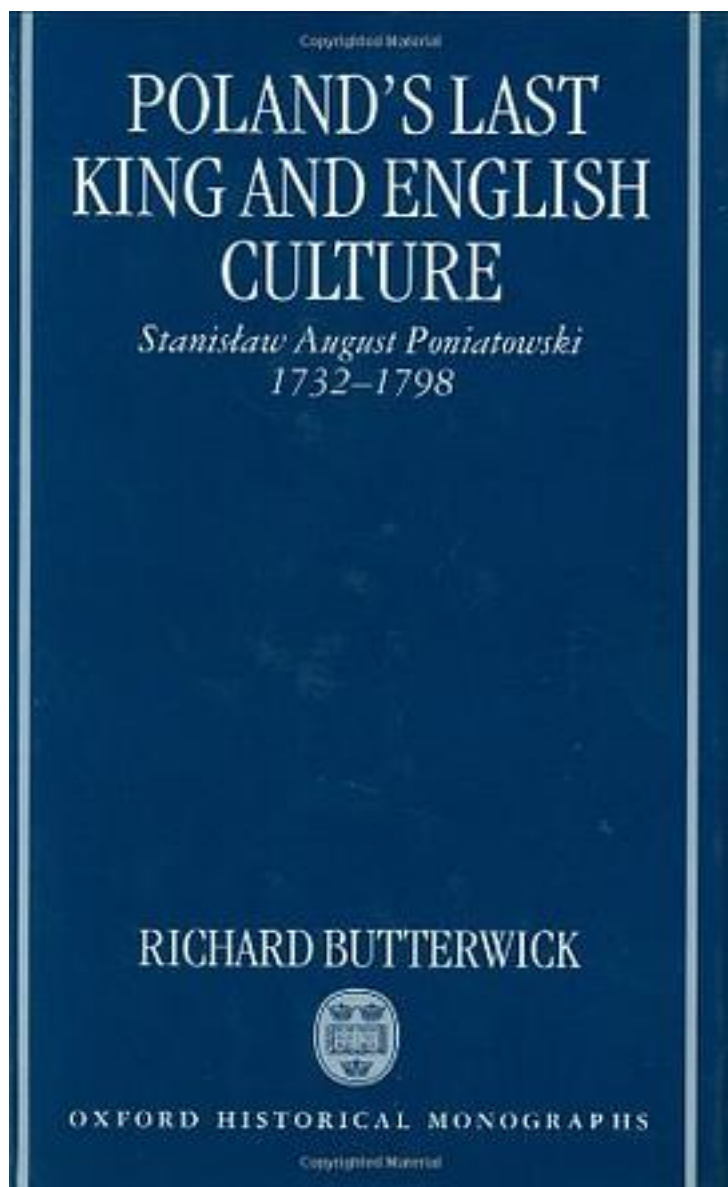


Poland's Last King and English Culture



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The attempt by Stanislaw August Poniatowski (1764-95) 'to create anew the Polish world' was one of the most audacious enterprises of reform undertaken by any enlightened monarch in the eighteenth century. None started in less promising circumstances. Politically the King was trapped between a Russian protectorate and a nobility wedded to its anarchic liberty. The beginnings of the Polish Enlightenment had yet to make more than ripples on the stagnant waters of Polish culture. Yet by 1791, Poland-Lithuania had made a huge cultural advance, and had given herself a constitution admired across Europe. Tragically for Poland, her neighbours then destroyed much of these achievements and partitioned the country out of existence. Stanislaw August died in exile, cursed by most of his compatriots to this day. In *Poland's Last King*, Richard Butterwick reassesses the achievement of Poland's last and most controversial king. He shows how Stanislaw's radical plans for reform of Poland's constitution and culture were profoundly influenced by his love of England, and examines the successes and limitations of the Polish Enlightenment.

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