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# Recreational Tourism, Make-Believe Antiquity, and the Trivial Origins of the Renaissance in Niccolo da Martoni's Travels through Latin-Occupied Greece

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VLADIMIR AGRIGORAEI

RECREATIONAL TOURISM, MAKE-BELIEVE ANTIQUITY,  
AND THE TRIVIAL ORIGINS OF THE RENAISSANCE  
IN NICCOLÒ DA MARTONI'S TRAVELS  
THROUGH LATIN-OCCUPIED GREECE\*

Renaissance is often regarded as a product of great minds. This cultural phenomenon would owe its origins to the first Humanists who passionately collected texts and described ancient monuments. Yet the first Humanists did not break with the medieval mind-set. Furthermore, although cardinal Bessarion's arrival in the West is representative of the Byzantine scholar migration at the close of the Middle Ages, the discovery of Greek letters has much older origins. Some scholars find them in Latin-occupied Greece, others in cultural exchanges dating back to the time of the first crusades, or in Rome in Carolingian or Ottonian times. Although it is not this paper's scope to deliver an assessment of what the Renaissance was, it is evident that predominant research in academia accentuates the higher cultural aspects of the phenomenon. The petty culture of the average man is often dealt with in a messy manner, for reasons having to do with a feeling of contempt of these individuals' education and cultural tastes.

\* In writing this study, I am indebted to many colleagues for their help. I owe special thanks to Demetrios Athanasoulis, Maria Teresa Rachetta, Aurélien Robert, Ileana Sasu, Iulia Cosma, and most of all to Tasos Tanoulas.

That is exactly the case that I am trying to make, even though the examples studied here by no means allow one to draw conclusions as to exactly how important they were in the larger context of their time. The corpus is too patchy and open to too many interpretations, but I will ask large questions in small places. This paper deals with the continuum linking the culture of the elite to the popular one. It speaks of recreational tourists drinking from the fountain of Aristotle in order to become as clever as the philosopher, of medieval distortions of ancient Greek mythology, of the intrusion of chivalric themes in this tour of antiquities, of the reception of the *Primo Umanesimo* by lower social strata, of misread inscriptions, and of the invention of ready-made stories, customized halfway between the visitor's knowledge of the ancient world and what the ruin really looked like.

#### *A Troy Story from Athens*

One such tourist was Niccolò da Martoni, an Italian notary who went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. His voyage was a little bit unusual, therefore he saw more than other pilgrims have seen. After visiting Egypt and Palestine and waiting too long for his return ship, Niccolò made other arrangements and sailed from Beirut to Cyprus (Famagusta), where he stayed for two months. He then proceeded to Rhodes, where he reunited with another fellow pilgrim, and together they tried to sail to Messina, but the pirates of the Cyclades made them jump ship. This altered course of events took them to Athens. Because the road to Corinth was blocked by military confrontations, they went to Euboea instead, and waited forty days. As they found no available ship there, the pilgrims returned to Athens briefly, went to Megara and Corinth, assuming great risks, and from there managed to get to Patras. Finally, from Patras they sailed to Corfu, reached Apulia, and got back home. This return voyage through the Greek lands fills almost half of Niccolò's travel memoirs.

Niccolò da Martoni is often regarded as a simpleton from Carinola (province of Caserta) who visited Athens in February 1395. One could have sold him any obnoxious lie, as long as it were miraculous, since he was on his way back from the Holy Land, where he heard of many mir-

acles. Researchers looked upon his testimony with the eyes of modern man. Roberto Weiss, for instance, thought that in Athens «some residents acted as his guides and told him a lot of nonsense about some of the ancient remains, which he accepted quite uncritically»<sup>1</sup>. However, Niccolò's case is complicated, and he was not a simpleton. He had a lower level of education than the cultural figures of his time, but not necessarily lower than many aristocrats. He was a notary, kept notes about days, places, or buildings, and measured a lot of things during his travels. From this particular point of view, Niccolò was an unusual man. Most 14<sup>th</sup> century voyagers did not document their voyages in this way.

His stay in Athens was quite short. Niccolò landed in Attica on February 23, 1395, late in the evening, but his ship could not stop in Piraeus because of a strong wind, so it stopped in another harbour. He travelled to Athens during the night and entered the city on February 24, early in the morning. As he left Athens on February 25, Niccolò had no more than a day to walk around and visit the city. Taking into account the time he needed to stop and take notes, it is extraordinary that he was able to visit so much. He returned briefly for a second time, but apart from attending mass on Palm Sunday in a small Dominican church before leaving for the Isthmus, he does not seem to have visited anything<sup>2</sup>. This second time, he was more interested in talking to the local ecclesiastic elite, in order to adjust his journey back home.

I am particularly interested in his visit to the Acropolis. He wrote a short description of the Propylaea, already analysed by Tasos Tanoulas<sup>3</sup>,

1. R. Weiss, *The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity*, Oxford 1969<sup>2</sup>, pp. 133-4.

2. *Die dominico palmarum iiii° die aprilis, audita missa in ecclesia Sancti Dominici pauperula et parva, ubi sunt duo fratres tantum, et receptis ibi sanctis palmis, discessimus ab Athenis cum quibusdam someriis quos conduximus usque ad castrum Metre...*; *Io Notaio Nicola de Martoni. Il Pellegrinaggio ai luoghi santi da Carinola a Gerusalemme, 1394-1395* [Paris - Bibliothèque Nationale n. 625 du fonds latin], ed. M. Piccirillo, Gorle 2003, p. 148; cfr. L. Le Grand, *Relation du pèlerinage à Jérusalem de Nicolas de Martoni, notaire italien (1394-1395)*, in «Revue de l'Orient latin», 3 (1895), pp. 566-669: 656.

3. *Deinde accessimus ad castrum ipsius civitatis, quod est supra quoddam saxo marmoreo hedicatum, in quo castro est quedam sala magna in qua sunt columpne magne xiii. Supra quas columpnas sunt trabes longi pedibus triginta, et supra ipsas trabes sunt tabule marmoree; magnum et mirabile opus videtur*; *Io Notaio* cit., p. 138; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 650. Among the many studies published by Tasos Tanoulas, I cite the most important one, T. Τανούλας, Τα Προ-

but the Parthenon was the thing which impressed him most, not necessarily the ancient building as much as the Byzantine and Latin changes made to it. He was mesmerised by the size of the columns and by the materials used in their manufacture<sup>4</sup>. Niccolò was of course interested in the local relics. He counted everything that the Parthenon caretakers showed him: the head of Saint Macarius, the arm of Saint Dionysius (probably the Areopagite, presented as the Parisian saint), more arms of Saint Cyprian and Saint Justin, as well as the bones of the Maccabees<sup>5</sup>.

And there were other attractions too. There was a column signed with a sign of the cross by the same Saint Dionysius, a copy of the Gospels in gold letters written by Saint Helena, and an icon of the Virgin painted by Saint Luke<sup>6</sup>. As for the light that never died, a fire in a crack of the wall, Niccolò venerated it as hagiophanic<sup>7</sup>. And in the ancient part of the

πόλεια της Αθηναϊκής Ακρόπολης κατά τον Μεσαίωνα, Athens 1997, vol. II: Πίνακες εικόνων και σχεδίων with an English Summary of the text.

4. *Est acchorum ipsius ecclesie pulcrum, et in circuytu altaris sunt quatuor columpne de iaspide, ipsarum quelibet grossa quantum possunt actingere duo homines cum brachiis et alta duas cannas; Io Notaio cit., p. 140; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 651.*

5. *In dicta ecclesia predicto die vidimus subscriptas sanctas reliquias, ostensas nobis per procuratores ipsius ecclesie, que sunt hec, videlicet: De capite sancti Maccharii. | De osse brachii sancti Dionysii de Francia. | De brachio sancti Ciprianoni. | De brachio sancti Iustini. | De osse anche sancti Macchabei. Io Notaio cit., p. 140; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 652.* It is hard to know what the bones of the Maccabees really were. Their relics were in Constantinople until 1200, when a pilgrimage account mentions them. Nothing is known afterwards, so Niccolò's story justifies a translation of relics to Athens. Cfr. A. Berger, *The Cult of the Maccabees in the Eastern Orthodox Church*, in *Dying for the Faith, Killing for the Faith: Old-Testament Faith-Warriors (1 and 2 Maccabees) in Historical Perspective*, ed. G. Signori, Leiden 2012, pp. 105-23; 121. Two Russian pilgrims saw only relics of Salomone (the mother) in 1349 and 1391, but nothing is said about the sons. Berger, *The Cult* cit., p. 122. The crusader interest in such relics was evident. In Byzantium, the Maccabees as were regarded as martyrs, but the Latins venerated them as well (as holy warriors). Ivi, pp. 119-21.

6. For the signature of the saint: *Intus quas columpnas est una columpna signata, in qua sanctus Dionysius, tempore passionis Domini nostri Ihesu Christi, stabat adhesus; Io Notaio cit., p. 138; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 651.* For the Gospels, see: *Liber omnium Evangeliorum scriptus per manus sancte Elene in cartis membranis deauratis ad linguam grecam qui liber ibi pro magno thesauro reputatur; Io Notaio cit., p. 140; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 652.* The icon is mentioned before the Gospels: *Prope ipsum altare, in quadam parva cappella a latere dextro altaris, est quedam cona cum figura Domine nostre Virginis Marie, picta per manus beati Luce, evangeliste, que cona ornata est perulis, gemmis et aliis multis lapidibus pretiosis, que cum clavi diligenter custoditur; Io Notaio cit., p. 140; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 652.*

7. *In quadam sissura muri ipsius ecclesie apparet lumen ignis accensi quod nunquam extinguitur:*

monument, he counted the columns of the Parthenon and measured them in a planned form of amazement:

Postea accessimus ad maiorem ecclesiam sitam intra dictum castrum, vocabuli Sancte Marie, que ecclesia est fabricata lapidibus marmoreis et magnis, omnibus implummatis, et est ipsa ecclesia magna sicut ecclesia Capuana. In circuytu ipsius ecclesie extra ecclesiam sunt columpne magne LX. Quelibet ipsarum alta plus de scalis de vendemiando, et grossa quantum possent actingere quinque homines, brachiis expansis. Et supra ipsas columpnas sunt trabes de marmore longe et grosse. Supra quas est atrium ipsius ecclesie. Impossibile videtur menti hominis quomodo ipsa tam magna hedificia construi potuerunt<sup>8</sup>.

But the highest attraction were the Gates of Troy:

Introytus ipsius ecclesie est largus, ut extimo, cannas quatuor, et altus cannas quinque. In dicto introytu sunt porte de illis portellis qui steterunt in portis civitatis Troye, quando civitas Troye fuit destructa. Portelli portarum ipsius civitatis fuerunt portati ad Acthenas et facte fuerunt porte in dicta ecclesia Sancte Marie<sup>9</sup>.

We have no idea what he saw, but we have his measurements (8m X 10m). These Gates do not appear in the copies of drawings of the Parthenon by Cyriacus of Ancona, made several decades after Niccolò's visit. Niccolò was shown something impressive but fairly recent, at least from Byzantine times, but he enjoyed seeing it without wondering whether it was true or not, just as contemporary tourists visiting the site of Troy are less interested in the ancient ruins and more in the wooden horse replica.

The Gates were probably part of an identity construct of the Latin occupants. Inspired by the account of Virgil, many medieval historians created Trojan genealogies for their nations before the Fourth Crusade. The entire Western Europe became one giant legendary Trojan diaspora<sup>10</sup>.

*extimatur quod aliquod corpus sanctum ibi sit inclusum; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 140; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 652.

8. *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 138; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 651.

9. *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 140; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 651.

10. From the many studies concerning this topic, see Th. Shawcross, *Re-Inventing the*

This is why the Franks presented themselves as Trojans during the Fourth Crusade<sup>11</sup>. Theresa Shawcross defines this cultural phenomenon as a «reinvention of the homeland», since the newly installed Latins truly believed that they had a right to be in Greece. Earlier Greek commentaries of the *Iliad* equally manifested a nationalistic point of view regarding the Trojans<sup>12</sup>. This means that the Troy Gates of the Parthenon were fashioned after an already established cultural paradigm.

The Latin occupants made good use of this idea all over the place. In the town of Patras, for instance, the Latin archbishop's palace had the Troy legend painted on the walls of an entire room. Niccolò saw these murals when he stopped there and he greatly enjoyed the visit, as he could see the legendary confrontations once more:

Eodem die in crepusculo intravimus civitatem Patrax, et non invenimus locum aliquem nec hostulanium ad morandum, nec in ecclesia Sancti Nicolai in qua est locum Minorum. Sed archiepiscopus Patrax, qui erat notus et amicus domini Antonatii, recepit omnes nos in hospitio suo, quod est pulcrum hospitium. Habet unam salam longam paxus XXV, in cuius sale parietibus est picta in circuytu tota ystoria destructionis civitatis Troye. Dictus archiepiscopus, qui est de ordine Minorum, dominatur dicte civitati et pluribus aliis terris sibi subditis in temporalibus et spiritualibus<sup>13</sup>.

There was also «Ὁ Πόλεμος τῆς Τρωάδος» («The War of Troy») a poem in fifteen-syllable Demotic Greek verse written in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Its source is related to the 12<sup>th</sup> century French *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte-Maure (an adaptation of it, not a faithful translation). The language

*Homeland in the Historiography of Frankish Greece: the Fourth Crusade and the legend of the Trojan War*, in «Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies», 27 (2003), pp. 120–52. For the French narratives, see C. Beaune, *Naissance de la nation France*, Paris 1985, pp. 45–8.

11. When meeting the Vlachs and Cumans of Kaloyan, Pierre de Bracheux was asked the real purpose hid behind his warlike actions. His answer was clear in the chronicle of Robert de Clari. The noble from Beauvais said that his ancestors were Trojans and that the knights of the Fourth Crusade were there to take possession of what had been rightly theirs. For a discussion of this reference from the point of view of the Vlachs, see F. Curta, *Constantinople and the Echo Chamber: The Vlachs in the French Crusade Chronicles*, in «Medieval Encounters», 22 (2016), pp. 427–62.

12. See for this the commentary bT to the *Iliad* in M. Van der Valk, *Researches on the Text and Scholia of the Iliad*, Leyde 1963, vol. I, pp. 474–5.

13. *Io Notatio* cit., p. 156; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 661.

of the Greek poem equally points toward Latin-occupied Peloponnese, as it was often compared to the Demotic Greek version of the *Chronicle of the Morea*. And it is safe to assume that the Greek translator did not know Homer, as testified by his use of the proper names in Westernized forms, but it may also be argued that neither was he familiar with local realia<sup>14</sup>. This means that the translator belonged to a mixed cultural elite whose standpoint was Frankish, even though the text was written in Greek.

Getting further astray from our main subject, it is also worth noting that the «Ὁ Πόλεμος τῆς Τρωάδος» lacks the Cornelius Nepos introduction characterizing the various versions of the French Trojan poems. This introduction was essential to the evolution of the legend, because it spoke of the Latin author as translator. Cornelius Nepos was supposed to have discovered the Greek text of Dares the Phrygian in a cabinet and dedicated his Latin version to another famous writer, Sallust. This led to all sorts of medieval inventions based on the *topos* of the 'found book'. One of them is the Corinthian origin of the *Prose 1* French version of the *Roman de Troie*, presumably assembled in the Latin-occupied mainland of Greece at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The colophon of this version states:

Si vos ai ore menee a fin la vraie estoire de Troie selonc ce qu'elle fu trovee en l'almaire de Saint Pol de Corrinte en grijois languaje et dou grizois fu mise en latin et je la translatai en françois et non pas par rime ne par vers ou il covient par fine force avoir maintes menchoignes com font ces menestriez qui de lor lengues font maintefois rois et amis solacier de quoi il font sovent lor profit et autrui domage, mais par droit conte selonc ce que je la trovai sans riens covrir de verité ou de mencoinge demoustrer en tel maniere que nus n'i poroit riens ajoindre ne amermer que por vraie deust estre tenue. Explicit. Amen. Que Dieuz tous nos gart<sup>15</sup>.

14. For instance, Athens is an important place in this story, the Greek lords assemble there many times before and after the Trojan War, but there are no descriptions of this city and on one occasion we learn that Athens is a port town, like in many French romances. For the port town reference, see Ὁ Πόλεμος τῆς Τρωάδος / *The War of Troy*, κριτική έκδοση με εισαγωγή και πίνακες, eds. Μ. Παπαθωμοπούλου - E. M. Jeffreys, Athens 1996, p. 116, v. 2265.

15. The transcription of this *explicit* found in the French 1612 manuscript of the BnF in Paris was published by Anne Rochebouet in the online description of the *Prose 1* version at the *Archives de Littérature du Moyen Âge* site ([https://www.arlima.net/qt/troie\\_en\\_prose\\_1.html](https://www.arlima.net/qt/troie_en_prose_1.html)). F. Tanniou, *De l'Orient rêvé à l'Orient révélé: les mutations de l'exotisme du*



Even though it was implied that the Corinthian origin of this version may be true, it is hard to believe such a tall tale. One recognizes the *topos* of the ‘found book’, imitated after the romance of *Cligès*<sup>16</sup>. There’s no need to imagine that these books were real. Everybody found them in secret cabinets. The *Prose 1* rewriter knew that there was a city called Corinth in Greece, and that the Westerners occupied it, but that was all. Since there was no such church in medieval Corinth<sup>17</sup>, the mention of Saint Paul is a reference to the two Epistles to the Corinthians, with whom the public of the *Prose 1* version was familiar, much in the way in which Niccolò da Martoni refers to the Colossus and to the Epistle to the Colossians when he visits Rhodes. Saint Paul’s name and his church was an artifice that the rewriter used in order to render his story credible<sup>18</sup>. This does not automatically imply that the autograph of *Prose 1* didn’t have a connection of some sorts with the Morea. It simply goes to show that references like these were generally fabricated. The Gates of Troy shown to Niccolò in the Parthenon belong to the same category. It was a fashion of the time. The creation of the Troy Gates of the Parthenon could therefore be a consequence of this Westerner ‘obsession’ with the tale of Troy.

‘*Roman de Troie*’ de Benoît de Sainte-Maure au ‘*Roman de Troie en prose*’ (*Prose 1*), in «Bien dire et bien apprendre», 26 (2008), pp. 211-26: 218. Cfr. A. Robertson Brown, *Medieval Pilgrimage to Corinth and Southern Greece*, in «Herom. Journal on Hellenistic and Roman Material Culture», 1 (2012), pp. 197-223: 212, who deals with the pilgrimages to Corinth, and accepts the hypothesis of Th. Shawcross.

16. Chrétien de Troyes pretended to have found this other book in another cabinet, this time in the town of Beauvais. The mention of vague geographical references in the *Prose 1* French version (Negroponte, Achaia, and Corinth) was taken as proof that the text was written in the Frankish Morea, but this is not a believable argument, little does it matter if an exaggeration about the political union of Italy (as Magna Graecia) and Morea was thrown into the mix. Cfr. L. Barbieri, *Les versions en prose du ‘Roman de Troie’. état des recherches et perspectives*, in *Pour un nouveau répertoire des mises en prose. Roman, chanson de geste, autres genres*, eds. M. Colombo Timelli, B. Ferrari, A. Schoysman, Paris 2014, pp. 33-67: 48. The *topos* was further distorted by another rewriter, one who wrote another tall tale in the prologue of an adaptation of *Prose 1*. He said he found the book in a cabinet of Saint-Denis in France.

17. I thank Demetrios Athanasoulis for kindly taking the time to verify these matters.

18. Furthermore, it is probable that this invention came from an error in the manuscript source, since manuscript H of the *Roman de Troie* has *Corincus* instead of *Cornelius* at verse 83. For this idea, see Barbieri, *Les versions cit.*, p. 47, note 2.

*Paris and Helen in Kythira*

Fixations like these are persistent ideas and images which fill the minds of entire communities. It is only natural that they reappear in different contexts. For instance, when Niccolò wrote about the island of Paros, he mentioned once more the narrative of Troy, this time in connection with the early life of Paris:

Predicto die, invenimus insulam que dicitur Paris, habitata multa gente, et dicitur dicta insula Paris quia proiectus in ea fuit Paris, filius regis Priami domini Troye, eo quod, cum natus fuit dictus Paris, fuit pronosticatum quod pro eo destrui debebat civitas Troye, qui ibi nutritus ibit cum lacte a pastoribus<sup>19</sup>.

The whole Troy thing seemed important to him. He was fascinated by it. It is reasonable to assume that Niccolò and the people whom he met during his journey shared this common fixation. But the most important passage is about another island. Before Patras and Paros, before even getting to Athens, when he was on his way to the Holy Land, the notary stopped in the Venetian-held island of Kythira and saw a temple connected with the Troy narrative:

In qua quidem insule Citrini Paris, filius regis Priami Troyane civitatis regis, dum vellet ire pro ultione Exionis, sororis sue capte et portate per illos de Grecia, ultra voluntatem Hectoris et fratrum aliorum suorum qui pronosticaverunt destructionem civitatis Troye, accessit cum pluribus navibus versus Greciam et applicuit ad dictam insulam Citrini, in qua erat et nunc est quodam templum; ad quod templum illo tunc accessit Helena, uxor regis Menalay qui dominabatur in illis partibus Romanie, que tunc Grecia erat, et videntibus se ad invicem dicto Paride et dicta Helena regina, que erat in pulcritudine gemma omnium mulierum, filocapti fuerunt ad invicem ferventi amore, et sic ipsam Helenam capuit in dicto templo insule Citrini et eam portavit Troyam. Ista ystoria relinquatur scientibus et legentibus Troyanum. In dicta insula, est maxima fertilitas carniarum et dantur crastati septem pro uno ducato<sup>20</sup>.

Niccolò does not tell us precisely if he visited a temple, but it is clear that such a temple must have been the local attraction, since it was shown

19. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 130; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., pp. 645–6.

20. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 18, 20; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 580.

to Cyriacus of Ancona. It is also worth noting that our traveller mentions the story of Hesione, the Trojan princess whose abduction by Hercules provided a moral reason for the abduction of Helen by Paris in the texts derived from the Dares the Phrygian's tradition, including the French *Roman de Troie* and its adaptations<sup>21</sup>.

The same legend about Kythira, must have been described to Cyriacus of Ancona who explored the island in 1437 and drew the ruins of what he imagined to be the temple whence Paris stole Helen. However, Cyriacus did not really draw a temple, he drew the ruins of two towers, one rectangular and the other horseshoe-shaped, located near Kastri, and some other ruins, difficult to identify, probably in Skandeia<sup>22</sup>.

Similar ruins were shown to Ruy González de Clavijo in 1403. He mentioned the turrets of a castle on a promontory, and close nearby the remains of a wall and other ruins. He was told that those ruins used to be the temple destroyed by Paris when he took Helen:

...y a hora de medio día fueron a raíz de una isla poblada que es llamada Cetul, y pasaron por entre esta isla y una roca alta que es llamada el Lobo, y en esta isla de Cetul apareció un castillo pequeño de torres altas, hecho en una alta peña hacia el mar, y ayuso junto con el mar estaba una torre en guarda de la subida del castillo, y un poco adelante a la vuelta de la dicha isla en un llano de hacia el mar apareció un gran pedazo de muro y torres derrocadas, y dijeron que allí fuera el templo que Paris derrocara cuando robara a Elena, y quebrantara el Ídolo al tiempo que el Rey Príamo su padre lo enviara hacer guerra en la Grecia, y en cabo de esta isla pasaron entre tres rocas, que son llamadas Tres, Dos y As<sup>23</sup>.

21. See e.g. Ph. Logié, *L'oubli d'Hésione ou le fatal aveuglement*, in «Le Moyen Âge», 108/2 (2002), pp. 235-52.

22. The first drawing is identified as MOENIA in the copy of Cyriacus' drawings by Giuliano da Sangallo; the latter as a sort of ΑΦΡΩΔΗΤΕΡΩΝ, probably a corruption of a bad rendering of Ἀφροδίτης ἱερὸν by Cyriacus himself. For the identification of the towers with the Byzantine fortifications at Kastri and for the other ruins of the 'temple' at Skandeia, see G. L. Huxley, *The History and Topography of Ancient Kythera*, in *Kythera. Excavations and Studies conducted by the University of Pennsylvania Museum and the British School at Athens*, eds. J. N. Coldstream - G. L. Huxley, Park Ridge NJ 1972, pp. 33-40: 35-6. Cfr. M. Chatzidakis, *Moenia nobilissima: Antiquarische Gelehrsamkeit und tagespolitische Zielsetzungen in Ciriacos d'Ancona Rezeption antiken griechischen Mauerwerks*, in «Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft», 41 (2014), pp. 34-5, and pp. 23-52: 49 note 65.

23. Since I was not able to use the editions of Leoncio Cabrero (2002) or Rafael López Guzmán (2009), I am quoting the online version available at [www.cervantesvirtual.com](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com)

In 1419, the lord of Caumont saw a temple whence Paris took Helen, but he did not give further details<sup>24</sup>. Cristoforo Buondelmonti told same the story, spoke about a statue of Aphrodite, but said nothing about a temple<sup>25</sup>. Pero Tafur wrote about Paris and Helen in connection with his stop in Kythira (1435-1439), but he did not mention a temple or castle, only a rock that was shown to him<sup>26</sup>. The bishop Louis de Rochechouart did not really stop there in 1461, but from the boat he was told the story of a temple of Apollo whence Paris carried off Helen<sup>27</sup>. And last but not least, Richard Guylforde transcribed the same story in his *Pilgrimage to the Holy Land* (1506)<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, the Kythira ruins were a favourite place to stop on the Venetians' route to and from the Holy Land, or at least a nice story to tell to their passengers. The tradition was old. It dated several centuries back, at least to the times of the Fourth Crusade, since the local Venetian marquis from the Venieri family traced their ancestry to the goddess Venus, making Kythira their birth right<sup>29</sup>. The story could

(Edición digital a partir de *Historia del Gran Tamorlán e itinerario y narración del viaje de la Embajada que Ruy González de Clavijo...*, Madrid 1984, pp. 23-259).

24. Cfr. *Voyage d'Oultremer en Jhérusalem par le seigneur de Caumont: L'an MCCCXVIII*, ed. Marquis de La Grange, Paris 1858, p. 40: ...ytle de Setwill: X. milles, lequel antiquemant fut nonpmée Sitarée, dans lequel ylle est le temple de la déesse Vénus, ont la dessus dite Helleyne estoit venue fère oraison ou sacrifice, quant ledit Paris la prist et lass'enmena, comme dessus est dit.

25. *Description des Îles de l'Archipel par Christophe Buondelmonti. Version grecque par un anonyme*, ed. transl. É. Legrand, Paris 1897, pp. 172-4.

26. *Andancas e viajes de Pero Tafur por diversas partes del mundo avidos (1435-1439)*, ed. M. Jimenez de la Espada, Madrid 1874, p. 46. On the other hand, Tafur mentions various legends about the Greek islands, including one about Agamemnon reigning in the island of Crete.

27. C. Couderc, *Journal de voyage à Jérusalem de Louis de Rochechouart, évêque de Saintes (1461)*, in «Revue de l'Orient latin», 2 (1894), pp. 168-274: 233: Quinta décima [iunii], navigavimus Iovium mare. Ad manum sinistram, reliquimus insulam Delphos, quam Itali Cirigo vocant, in dominio Venetorum. Ibi est prope insula et templum sive templi vestigia in quo colebatur Apollo, quando rapta fuit Helena a Paride. Grece vocatur hec insula Κυθήρεια, quam vocant Itali Citherea. Citherea prope vidimus alium scopulum cui nomen Ovum, quia in modum ovi erectum est.

28. *The pylgrimage of Sir Richard Guylforde to the Holy Land, A.D. 1506, from a copy believed to be unique, from the press of Richard Pynson*, ed. Sir H. Ellis, London 1851, pp. 12-3: Upon Tewysdaye ayenst nyght we passed by the yle called Cyrigo, whiche yle was somtyme called Citheria, where Helena the Grekysshe Quene was borne, but she was rauysshed by Paris in ye next yle by, called Cicerigo, doynge sacryfyce in the Temple, for the whiche rape folowed the distrucion of Troye, as ye famouse storye therof sheweth, knowen in euery tonge.

29. F. Thiriet, *À propos de la seigneurie des Venier sur Cerigo*, in «Studi veneziani», 12 (1970), pp. 199-210: 201.

have originated in the Benoît de Sainte-Maure tradition, or from earlier texts adapted from the Dares narrative.

This tourist attraction must have been shown to travellers on a regular basis, with more or less the same accompanying story, improved with the passage of time. In the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century there is also talk of the castle of Menelaus. First it was the residence of Menelaus, in a 1512 voyage of Jean Thénau<sup>30</sup>. Jérôme Maurand (1544) did not mention it, since he noted only the ruins of a beautiful temple of Diana and Apollo<sup>31</sup>, but the residence turned into a castle in the journal of Nicolas de Nicolay Daulphinois, a geographer, a soldier, and chamberlain of the French court. Nicolas de Nicolay saw the Aphrodite temple on a high mountain of Kythira in 1551. Below the temple, an islander showed him the supposed ruins of a 'Castle of Menelaus' and told him all sorts of odd stories:

Pendant le temps de notre séjour en cette île de Cythère, pour rassasier mon esprit et éviter oisiveté, je mis peine de rechercher les reliques des antiquités tant de la ville Cythérée que du château de Ménélaus, et ancien temple de Vénus. Enfin, me furent montrées par un isolan sur le sommet d'une haute montagne, quelques ruines qu'il disait être du temple. Et vraiment s'y voient deux hautes colonnes ioniques, sans chapiteaux, ensemble cinq autres carrées, entre lesquelles apparaissait la forme d'un grand portail. Et tout après, une statue de femme vêtue à la grecque, de grandeur démesurée. Mais à ce que me dit ma guide, quelques années auparavant, la tête en avait été ôtée par un provéditeur de l'île, qui la fit porter à Venise, et affirment les isolans que c'était l'effigie d'Hélène. Ce que Jehan le Maire de Belges approuve en ses 'Illustrations de Gaule', disant que ce fut là où Pâris, après l'avoir ravie, prit avec elle le premier fruit de ses amours. Un peu plus bas que ce temple, sur la même montagne était le château de Ménélaus, mari d'Hélène, qui était roi de Sparthe, et seigneur de cette île. Les vestiges duquel château y sont encore fort apparents par les reliques des murailles

30. *Le Voyage d'Outremer (Égypte, Mont Sinay, Palestine) de Jean Thénau, gardien du couvent des Cordeliers d'Angoulême, suivi de La Relation de l'Ambassade de Domenico Trevisan auprès du Soudan d'Égypte - 1512*, ed. Ch. Schefer, Paris 1884, p. 163: *Nous passâmes non loin de Cérigo, place forte et île du domaine de Saint-Marc, qui a soixante milles de tour. Elle tut jadis la résidence de Ménélaus, roi des Grecs. C'est là que sa femme Hélène fut enlevée par Paris, fils de Priam, roi de Troie. Ce rapt fut la cause de l'incendie de cette dernière ville. Il y a à Cérigo une très grande quantité de bétail.*

31. *Itinéraire de Jérôme Maurand, d'Antibes à Constantinople (1544)*, trad. L. Dorez, Paris 1901, p. 155.

qui s'y voient faites de pierre de taille, sans mortier ni ciment, de longueur et grosseur démesurée, et y avait une haute tour carrée, de laquelle en temps clair et serein se pouvait voir non seulement la cité de Sparthe, mais aussi la plupart du Péloponèse, aujourd'hui appelé la Morée. De ce château, on venait à descendre en la cité Cythérée, qui était située du côté d'orient à la pente de la montagne, en laquelle apparaissent encore quelques fragments des anciennes murailles. Et, pour meilleur témoignage de son antiquité, les habitants de l'île appellent pour le jour d'hui toutes ces vieilles ruines Paleopolys, qui est à dire vieille cité<sup>32</sup>.

With the passage of time, some of these ruins gained new meanings. The temple was forgotten, it became the Baths of Helen, and it was still a fashionable place to visit in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. George Wheler, one of these late travellers, saw the make-believe baths in 1675, but he was also shown the ruins of a so-called castle. It is hard to know if this was the same castle shown to Nicolas de Nicolay in the previous century or another one, in another place:

Among these Ruins are some Grotto's cut out of the Rock; which one of the Island pretending to be an Antiquary, assured us were anciently the Baths of Helena; affirming, that her Palace was not above three or four miles from thence on the Hills. We took this Antiquary for our guide, and went to see what we could find of it. But all we discover'd, were two Pillars standing upright, but without Chapitars; and the Bases so deep in the ground, that we could not judge of what order they were. They were neither Chanell'd, nor altogether plain; but their Fusts cut into Angles, about the breadth of an usual Channel; and that not the whole length of their Fusts, but some proportionable part only. I rather believe it to have been some ancient Temple, than a Palace. They now call the place Paleo-Castro, or Old Castle<sup>33</sup>.

32. Nicolas de Nicolay: *Dans l'empire de Soliman le Magnifique*, éd. M.-Ch. Gomez-Geraud - S. Yerasimos, [Paris] 1989 (no page numbers), beginning of the third chapter (*Antiquités observées par l'auteur en l'île de Cythère*).

33. *A Journey Into Greece, by George Wheler Esq; in Company of Dr Spon of Lyons. In Six Books. Containing I. A Voyage from Venice to Constantinople. II. An Account of Constantinople and the Adjacent Places. III. A Voyage Through the Lesser Asia. IV. A Voyage from Zant Through Several Parts of Greece to Athens. V. An Account of Athens. VI. Several Journeys from Athens, Into Attica, Corinth, Boeotia, &c. With Variety of Sculptures*, London 1682 (online edition at the Early English Books Online, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu>).

Élisabeth Malamut, from whom I borrowed some of the references, believed that these voyagers had a cultured mind, and that they were familiar with the works of the ancient authors, but this is probably far from the truth with reference to the earliest ones of the lot<sup>34</sup>. It is more reasonable to assume that the medieval tradition was assimilated and continued to provide the basis for a tourist attraction of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with changes reflecting the cultural tastes of the period (mythological scenes with gods and nymphs depicted bathing were favourite subjects of Renaissance and Baroque allegorical paintings, thus explaining the creation of Helen's Baths).

There is also a familiar pattern in this evolution. The introduction of the castle does not appear to be random at all. If the temple was present in all the stories (except for the last one, with the Baths, too distant from the medieval heritage), this happens because the Kythira temple was already present in all the stories derived from the Latin text of Dares the Phrygian. The castle, on the other hand, is not mentioned in the Dares text. Chapters 9 and 10 talk only of a town (*oppidum*), which could also be understood as a fortification in later Medieval Latin texts, but the essence of the action does not take place in its streets, except for a minor incident with the locals; the real action is concentrated at the shrine (*fanum*)<sup>35</sup>. Benoît de Sainte-Maure, on the other hand, spoke of *un temple*

34. É. Malamut, *En passant par Cythère, de l'antiquité à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in *Venezia e Cerigo. Atti del Simposio internazionale*, Venezia, 6-7 dicembre 2002, eds. M. Koumanoudi, Ch. Maltezou, Venice 2003, pp. 31-48: 34: *Tous ces esprits cultivés avaient lu les Anciens et, bien souvent, les voyageurs qui, avant eux, étaient passés par Cythère. La forteresse en ruines de Kastri, que l'on assimilait au château d'Hélène, frappait l'imagination des voyageurs beaucoup plus fascinés par la 'grande histoire' de la Grèce antique que par l'histoire locale de Cythère à l'époque paléochrétienne.* For a short list of the travellers' accounts about the temple of Aphrodite in Kythira at the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Renaissance, see Malamut, *En passant cit.*, pp. 33-4.

35. *Posthaec Alexander in Graeciam navigavit, adducto secum duce eo qui cum Antenore iam navigaverat. Non multos ante dies, quam Alexander in Graeciam navigavit, et antequam in insulam Cytheream accederet, Menelaus rex ad Nestorem Pylum proficiscens, Alexandro in itinere occurrit, et mirabatur regiam classem quo tenderet. Utrique occurrentes aspexerunt se invicem, inscii quo quisque iret. Castor et Pollux ad Clytaemnestram ierant, secum Hermionam neptem suam Helenae filiam abduxerant. Argis Iunonis dies festus erat his diebus, quibus Alexander in insulam Cytheream venit, ubi ad fanum Veneris Dianae sacrificavit. Hi qui in insula erant mirabantur regiam classem, et interrogabant ab illis qui cum Alexandro, qui essent, quid venissent. Responderunt illi a Priamo*

*riche e merveillous, | mout ancièn, mout precious, | aveit en cel isle, en l'enor | Venus, la deuesse d'amor* (vv. 4261-4) where sacrifices were made<sup>36</sup>. Paris sacrificed there in honour of goddess Diana, like in the Dares text. Helen came to the temple, the Trojans invaded it, but at the end there is also a castle: *sur le port ot un chastel, | Elee ot non, mout par sist bel* (vv. 4523-4)<sup>37</sup>. From this castle sprang out the locals who put up a fight. This means that the castle first appeared in Benoît's text, but it had not yet become the castle of Menelaus. We find it under this designation in the *Istorietta troiana*, a late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century Italian *volgarizzamento* summarizing the Benoît de Saint-Maure adaptation. It is interesting to note that the *Istorietta* setting of the scene where Paris meets Helen for the first time agrees with the tourist tradition of Kythira. In order to avoid discussing a lot of the story's elements, some of the Kythira passages are worth reading in full:

Tanto navicò Paris essua compangnia, che elli arrivò in Grecia presso d'uno nobile castello, il quale era del re Menelao. Di sopra dal castello avea assai presso uno boschetto, nel quale era uno tempio di Venere di grande nominanza e ricchezza pieno, e molto il teneano uomini effemine della contrada in grande reverenza, e dicienzo che più largamente dava la dea Venus in quel tempo quello che con reverenza era chesto che innullo altro, e perciò erano costumati di venire a questa festa la maggiore parte di Grecia e recavano ricche offerende e gran-

*rege legatum missum ad Castorem et Pollucem, ut eos conveniret. At vero Helena, Menelai uxor, cum Alexander in insula Cytherea esset, placuit ei eo ire. Qua de causa ad littus processit, ubi Dianae et Apollinis fanum est: ibi rem divinam Helena facere disposuerat. Quod ubi nuntiatum est Alexandro, Helenam ad mare venisse, conscius formae suae, in conspectu eius ambulare coepit, cupiens eam videre. Helenae nuntiatum est, Alexandrum Priami regis filium ad oppidum, ubi Helena erat, venisse. Quem etiam ipsa videre cupiebat. Et cum se utrique respexissent, ambo, forma sua incensi, tempus dederunt ut gratias referrent. Alexander imperat, omnes ut in navibus sint parati: nocte classem solvant, de fano Helenam eripiant, secum eam auferant. Signo dato fanum invaserunt, Helenam inviolatam eripiunt, in navem deferunt, et cum ea mulieres aliquas depraedantur. Quod oppidani cum vidissent, diu pugnaverunt cum Alexandro, ne Helenam eripere posset. Quos Alexander fretus multitudine sociorum superavit, fanum exspoliavit, homines secum quamplurimos captivos duxit, in navim imposuit, classem solvit, domum reverti disposuit, in portum Tenedon pervenit, ubi Helenam moestam alloquio mitigavit, patri rei gestae nuntium misit; Daretis Phrygii De excidio Troiae historia, ed. F. Meister, Leipzig 1873, pp. 11-3.*

36. Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le roman de Troie. Extraits du manuscrit Milan, Bibliothèque ambrosienne*, D 55, ed., transl. E. Baumgartner - F. Vielliard, Paris 1998, p. 152.

37. Ivi, p. 164.



de oblationi. E Paris arrivò al porto la villa della detta festa, alla quale era gente senza numero, ella chiesa era ornata di nobili adornamenti e ricchi tesori. Paris uscì della nave conto e nobile eccon ricca compagnia. Tutti quelli del castello gli si fecero incontro per sapere chi fosse [...]. Paris essua compagnia passarono oltre per lo castello e passando molto andò provvedendo. E poi che elli fuoron giunti al tempio della dea Venus e viddero le belle offerende elli belli doni, li quali li Greci facieano ad onore della dea. A quella festa era venuta la bella Elena moglie derre Menelao, che era de' più alti re di tutta Grecia, la quale molto avea irriverenza laddea Venus. Quello re che Paris avea incontrato in mare era il marito della reina Elena, la quale molto v'era venuta contamente con nobile compagnia [...]. Poi tornò alle navi molto isnello con la sua compagnia e presero consiglio di rubare il tempio e di rapire Elena. Il qual consiglio preso, s'armaro vistamente, e anzi chella luna si levasse furono tutti armati e ordinati e quietamente vennero al tempio anzi che nullo se ne prendesse guardia, ellà ordinaro cento cavalieri alla guardia, acciò che nullo ne potesse uscire e nel tempio n'entraro quattrocento, i quali rubaro quanto chennel tempio era prezioso. Paris andò alla reina Elena e quelli che difendere la voleano morti furo [...]. E Paris di ciò le rende grazie e presela per mano eccon sua compagnia la condusse infino alle navi e poi tutta la preda del tempio e delle gienti che dentro erano. Cierti greci cheffuggiro infino ad uno vicino castello, che ivi presso era, contarono ciò che avvenuto era. Dire non si potrebbe come isnellamente e tosto quelli del castello furono armati e trovarono una parte de' Troiani carichi di prede e lassì; sì percossero alloro e molti n'uccisero. Ma quelli delle navi udirono il grido; siccorsero isnellamente al soccorso e ricolsero loro gente con grande danno de' nemici, e trassersi alle navi. Poi levaro le vele al vento e non finarono di navigare infino attanto ch' elli furono ad una giornata presso a Troia, ellà soggiornarono una settimana<sup>38</sup>.

If the whole setting is fashioned in perfect accord with the ruins and with the geography of the place, this implies that not only was this story narrated to the travellers when they visited the island of Kythira, but also that the setting of the *Istorietta* could have been correctly adjusted to the topography of the place. Other texts, such as Guido delle Colonne's Latin version, are clearly invented and have no knowledge whatsoever of the site<sup>39</sup>. Contrary to this invented version, *le château de Ménélaus* was located

38. Cfr. *Testi inediti di storia trojana preceduti da uno studio sulla leggenda trojana in Italia*, ed. E. Gorra, Torino 1887, pp. 385-8. I was unable to find the recent edition by Alfonso D'Agostino (2018).

39. *Quare Troiani naves, secundis ventis afflantibus, salubri cursu divertunt et veniunt in quamdam insulam nomine Cythaream de districtu Grecorum, que insula Citrius hodie a navigantibus ap-*

*un peu plus bas que ce temple, sur la même montagne* in the story told to Nicolas de Nicolay. The Italian text places the *tempio di Venere* in exactly the same place, *di sopra dal nobile castello del re Menelao*. Therefore it is highly probable that the *Istorietta* was fashioned at a time when Kythira had been in the hands of the Venetians for almost a century, and that its plot became the story told to the tourists<sup>40</sup>. But was our notary familiar with the

*pellatur [...] Erat autem in hec insula Cytharea quoddam templum in honorem Veneris ex antiquo constructum, mire pulchritudinis et diviciis multum plenum [...]. Celebrabatur itaque diebus illis in templo ipso tunc festum ipsius Veneris principale [...]. Quod postquam innotuit Paridi, in comitiva multorum decenter ornatus accessit ad templum, et more Dardanico in templo ipso simplici vultu in presentia populi tunc astantis ibidem devotis orationibus oblationes suas in multa auri et argenti copia immensa prodigialitate profudit. [...] Sed loquax fama, que multas vires acquirit eundo, vicinas iam dispersa per partes ad aures Helene de pulchritudine Paridis ad templum Veneris accedentis multa relatione pervenit [...]. Ad consummationem sui desiderii iam concepti Helena, quibusdam suis familiaribus convocatis, iubet eis parare necessaria, equos, et comites, cum apud Cithaream ad templum Veneris appetat se conferre [...]. Non enim a Menelay regno extiterat Cytharea remota [...]. Ipsa demum causa sui solvendi voti Veneris templum adivit ibique suas oblationes dee Veneri in multis et preciosis muneribus presentavit [...]. Quo facto, Paris, ab Helena humili obtenta licencia, in comitiva suorum templum exivit, quem exeuntem Helena, dum potuit eundem uidere, dulcibus est aspectibus insequit. [...] Armata manu in templum irruant et exponant prede que poterunt universa [...], subito templum intrant [...], templum spoliant [...]. Reginam Helenam et omnes eius comites Paris propria manu cepit, in qua nullius resistencie contradicionem invenit [...]. Ex multo igitur tumultu clamoris impelluntur incolarum aures, qui in quodam castro in eminentiori loco supra templum ipsum firmato degebant [...], arma capiunt, et armati rapido cursu descendentes a castro irruunt in Troyanos. Erat enim in castro ipso multorum quedam bellicosa iuventus, qui armorum magisterio velut docti acriter insultant in Troyanos et dura resistencia ipsos impellunt, putantes eos neci tradere et captas posse recuperare personas. [...] Sed Troyani demum, qui eos multo potius quam in quadruplo excedebant pre multorum armatorum copia, facto in ipsos impetu, ipsos vertunt in fugam et eos usque ad radices montis castri predicti in ore gladii persequuntur. Fit igitur finis bello et Troyani, obtenta victoria, gaudentes revertuntur ad naves, nichil preciosum relinquentes in templo, ex cuius preda multas et innumerabiles divicias quesierunt; Guido de Columnis, *Historia destructionis Troiae*, ed. N. E. Griffin, Cambridge Mass. 1936, pp. 69–71, 74–6.*

40. This features do not appear in Ὁ Πόλεμος τῆς Τρωάδος ('The War of Troy'), which follows Benoît de Sainte-Maure and speaks of a fortress named Ἀγλαΐα (cf. *Helee* in the Benoît version), whose inhabitants attempt to rescue their fellow Greeks, but are rejected by the Trojans. Ὁ Πόλεμος cit., p. 95, vv. 1847–50: Ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸ πόντον ἄνωπεν ἔστεκε σιμὰ κάστρον | Ἀγλαΐα ὀνομάζετον, καλὰ ἦτον γαρνισμένον. | Οἱ καστρινιοὶ ὡς ἤκουσαν τὴν ταραχὴν τὴν τόσην, | Γοργὸν ἐξεπηδήσασι μετὰ φανῶν, λαμπάδων. The rest of the plot is more or less the same as in Benoît de Sainte-Maure's version: Paris (and Deiphobus) reach the temple of Apollo Alsaïos on the island of Kythouria, where a festival was in progress. Eleni learns about their arrival and decides to come, they meet and fall in love. Paris plans to raid the place, taking Eleni as booty. Preparations are made for a night-attack. The Trojans attack the temple. The inhabitants of Aglaia, a nearby fortress, attempt to rescue their fellowmen, but are repulsed. The Trojans sail away to Tenedos.

*Istorietta* or *Roman de Troie*? The absence of the castle in Niccolò's account might be explained by the brevity of his account.

*Istorietta troiana* played an important role in shaping the artistic depictions of the scene. The island of Kythira was depicted several times, and these representations created a genuine fashion. An early 15<sup>th</sup> century *casone* reflects the description from the *Istorietta troiana*<sup>41</sup>, thus proving that the knowledge of the site could have been real. This means that art could have reflected cultural trends already present in various social strata. The abduction of Helen was a popular theme for Italian furnishings or objects in general. A marriage chest dating back to the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, preserved in National Gallery in London, has a representation of the story, as well as a tempera on wood from the same period, nowadays in the collections of the Royal Wavel Castle of Krakow, and another *casone* painted by Liberale da Verona in c. 1470, currently in the Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon. Further analogies can be identified in two birth salvers (*deschi da parto*) of the National Gallery, London<sup>42</sup>. Sometimes there is a statue of Apollo in the depiction of the Kythira temple; other times there is a statue of Venus. It has been implied that these minor variations may be determined by different textual traditions<sup>43</sup>, but they may also repre-

41. J. Miziołek, *The awakening of Paris and the beauty of the Goddesses. Two Cassoni from the Lanckoroński collection*, in «Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz», 51/3-4 (2007), pp. 299-336: 318-9.

42. Miziołek, *The awakening* cit.

43. Sometimes, various details have been taken for proof of their originating from two divergent and combined literary traditions. Such is the case of the nakedness of the goddesses during the *Judgement of Paris* – from Guido delle Colonne – in combination with the presence of a fountain – originating from Benoît de Sainte-Maure's text. This means that the painters (and / or their public) knew these different versions of the story and were able to reimagine them in new and inventive varieties. Cfr. Miziołek, *The awakening* cit., p. 322, who discusses a representation of the *Rape of Helen* by a Florentine painter (tempera on wood, 43,4 x 50,3 cm, ca. 1450, in the Krakow Royal Wavel Castle): «In the upper left hand corner of the painting there is a monopteros supported by Doric columns and a statue on a high plinth in the centre. These elements clearly indicate that the event takes place at Cytherea, as described by Dares. According to him, Helen's abduction occurred in the temple of Apollo and Diana, while Guido delle Colonne and the author of the 'Istorietta troiana' maintain that it happened in the temple of Venus». Analogies have been made with the two *deschi da parto* from the National Gallery in London, but the interesting thing is that these two pieces depend on different versions of the story, with the statue of Apollo or with the statue of Venus inside the temple.

sent an evolution of the theme from one representation to the next, with or without direct connection to the initial text. They could be connected with the presence of a statue in the Kythira temple though, as mentioned by Nicolas de Nicolay in 1551. The most important thing is that all of these depictions show a round temple with columns and their sources are identified with the Italian *volgarizzamenti*.

Let us stray away for a second time and observe that this Italian tradition of depicting Paris eloping with Helen from Kythira had humble origins, but other favourite subjects painted on *cassoni* and *deschi da parto* were inspired by texts written for a different public. Even though the recipients of these other objects seem to be the same, or to belong to the same social milieu as the previous ones, the *Primo Umanesimo* played its part in shaping the new cultural trends. There are scenes taken from the *Odyssey*, apparently inspired by the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century Latin translation made by Leonzio Pilato for Boccaccio, also read by Petrarch<sup>44</sup>. There are depictions of Theseus and Hippolyta as newly-weds<sup>45</sup>, probably in relation with Boccaccio's *Theseid*. And there is also the Queen of Sheba and Solomon<sup>46</sup>. It is true that most examples date back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but they belonged to a cultural trend whose origins were medieval. One may identify them in the Tristan and Isolde depictions of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century objects<sup>47</sup>. This heterogeneous assortment of subjects needs to be addressed in connection with Niccolò da Martoni's cultural tastes.

44. Cfr. J. Miziołek, *The 'Odyssey' Cassone Panels from the Lanckoroński Collection: On the Origins of Depicting Homer's Epic in the Art of the Italian Renaissance*, in «Artibus et Historiae», 27/53 (2006), pp. 57-88.

45. Cfr. P. Humfrey, *Two Fragments from a Theseus Cassone by Cima*, in «The Burlington Magazine», 123/941 (1981), pp. 470, 477-8.

46. Cfr. J. Miziołek, *The Queen of Sheba and Solomon on some Early Renaissance 'Cassone' Panels 'a pastiglia dorata'*, in «Antichità viva», 36/4 (1997), pp. 6-23.

47. See e.g. the synthesis of F. Galli Tatsch, *Objetos e suas narrativas visuais: algumas considerações sobre o mito de Píramo e Tíse nos cofres de amor do tardo-medieval*, in «Modos», 2/2 (2018), pp. 193-211.

*Arthurian Stories in the Aegean*

Since I mentioned Tristan, the Queen of Sheba, the *Odyssey*, and the *Theseid* in the same paragraph, it is worth revealing that the mixture of Bible stories, Troy stories and chivalric ones is typical of the French cultural trends of that time. Niccolò did not probably speak French, but the French influences had permeated the Italian culture of the previous centuries so well that he didn't need to speak it in order to belong to this culture's sphere of influence. This also implies that Niccolò did not necessarily join the ranks of the most learned public who took an interest in the legend of Troy. Our traveller maintained a low cultural profile and should be understood as such. This is why an odd reference in his journal about a fortification in Euboea (Negroponte) should be placed alongside his references about Troy.

The first editor of Niccolò's text considered it to be *la mention la plus inattendue*<sup>48</sup> and identified it with an antique fortification built on a small island of the Euripus Strait, between continental Greece and the island of Euboea. Niccolò's journal actually says:

In dicto brachio maris quod dividit dictam insulam a terra firma est quodam antiquum et magnum hedificium insulatum dicto brachio maris quod dicitur fuisse castrum Fate Morgane, domine Laci, matris Pozelle Gage; in quo castro dicitur fuisse captivum dominum Calvanum<sup>49</sup>.

It seems that our traveller was told a particularly significant story, because he linked the beauty of the fairy with that of the local women (or his guide did that for him):

Credo quod ex successione illarum fatarum, que fuerunt in dicto Castro antiquo, mulieres ipse sunt generaliter mira pulcritudine decorate, et pulcris indumentis, more Ytalie, indute<sup>50</sup>.

48. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 575.

49. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 144; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 654.

50. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 146; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 655.

*Fata Morgana* and *Pozella Gaga* probably come from the Italian *cantare* of *Ponzella Gaia*, traditionally dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century but whose origins should probably be found in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>51</sup>. Since Gawain is not a prisoner in this particular poem – only the Ponzella Gaia is a prisoner, locked in a tower in the fictitious town of Pela-Horso by her mother, Morgane la Fée, and Gawain is trying to free her – Niccolò's tale probably belongs to an oral tradition or derives from a lost version of the narrative. This is particularly interesting, as the early versions of the *Ponzella Gaia* were perhaps based on a slightly different plot, before their transcription in Venetian verse or in Tuscan prose in the 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>52</sup>. In this case, it is particularly significant that Gawain (the Arthurian hero in general) borrows a lot from Lancelot in terms of character composition, including the love or jealousy of Guinevere<sup>53</sup>. Therefore it is no surprise that in the third section of the *Cycle of Lancelot-Grail*, Lancelot is imprisoned by Morgane in a castle similar to the one Niccolò speaks of<sup>54</sup>. The story told to Niccolò da Martoni should be linked with this episode, or maybe Niccolò himself was mixing them up by mistake, as he did with historical events too<sup>55</sup>.

It should also be noted that the Italian poem starts with a bet between Gawain and an otherwise unknown knight named Troiano. This ac-

51. The mention was discussed by S. Poli di Spilimbergo, *Un ricordo della Pulzella Gaia in Eubea*, in «Lettere Italiane», 25/3 (1973), pp. 356–60; and G. Varanini, *A proposito della Pulzella Gaia in Eubea*, in «Lettere Italiane», 26/2 (1974), pp. 231–3.

52. The only manuscript preserving the entire *cantare* is located in Venice (Marciana, It. IX 621 (= 10697), with a *terminus post quem* in 1467). There is also a prose Tuscan version of the story. A fragment of this prose version survived in a manuscript in Florence (National Library, Magl. II IV 136), but the girl's name is *Gaia Donzella*. Another *Gaia Pulcella*, daughter of Morgane la Fée, appears in an earlier Italian vernacular romance, the *Tavola Ritonda*, as a secondary character.

53. M.-J. Heijkant, *The Transformation of the Figure of Gawain in Italy*, in *Gawain: A Casebook*, eds. K. Busby – R. H. Thompson, New York 2006, pp. 239–53.

54. For the episode, see *Lancelot. Roman en prose du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. A. Micha, Geneva 1978–1982, vol. V, pp. 47–63.

55. Cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 575: *Nicolas est généralement mal servi par ses réminiscences historiques. Il prétend que Godefroi de Bouillon vint mettre le siège devant le Caire, voulant sans doute parler du roi Amauri; d'après lui, les Sarazins se seraient emparés de saint Louis à Damiette en submergeant son camp sous les eaux du Nil, et le paiement de la rançon du roi aurait tellement appauvri la France que pendant longtemps l'or et l'argent auraient presque disparu de notre pays; ce qu'il raconte de l'histoire de Pâris et d'Hélène n'est pas enveloppé de moins de légendes.*

counts for the manner in which the Trojan legend and the chivalric romances were mingled in Italy, indistinguishable from the mixture in the French-speaking lands. Bible stories were added to this mixture too, and these Francophile Italians (from Venice, Pisa, Florence, Naples, etc.) formed a large part of the Western residents settled in the towns of Frankish Morea<sup>56</sup>. On the other hand, the appearance of an Arthurian site in the Aegean may result from the fact that many stories (Arthurian, romances of Antiquity, *chansons de geste*, hagiographic, etc.) were set in the East, in the Greek lands, or in Asia. It was only natural that the Italians and French who visited, went on a pilgrimage, or settled in those lands felt a need to place their imaginary characters in a real setting. Subsequently, the chivalric tradition grew local roots, both Latin and Greek.

This is the case of «Ὁ Πρέσβυς Ἰππότης» ('The Old Knight'), a 15<sup>th</sup> century Arthurian tale in vernacular Greek. It translates a small part of the French chivalric compilation of Rustichello da Pisa. The original *Compilation* was made up of stories of Tristan's father, named Meliadus, and Guiron le Courtois, both of them taken from different texts. The first, for instance, was an interpolation from the prose chivalric romance of *Palamedes*, with a plot set in pre-Arthurian times. The Old Knight is a character from this romance and his story occupies the first 39 chapters of the *Palamedes* section. Nevertheless, «Ὁ Πρέσβυς Ἰππότης», its Greek translation, is fragmentary and corresponds to two chapters of Rustichello's *Compilation*, even though it is always assumed that the entire Greek text could not have been much larger, because it probably fitted the contents of a single manuscript quire<sup>57</sup>.

Francesca Rizzo Nervo, considers that the anonymous translator of «Ὁ Πρέσβυς Ἰππότης» was a sort of *portavoce della aristocrazia greca, conservatrice anche se aperta agli influssi franchi*, because of the minor changes operated in the storyline, especially those accentuating the power of the king to the detriment of other characters' actions and personae. She places the Old Knight's tale in the same category as Niccolò da Martoni's mention of *Ponzella Gaia*, and goes on to mention the various Arthurian testi-

56. A. Tzavara, *Clarentza: une ville de la Morée latine. XIII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Venice 2008, pp. 139-200.

57. See e.g. *Il vecchio cavaliere*, ed. F. Rizzo Nervo, Soveria Mannelli 2000.

monies in Crusader history, with a special interest for what happened in Cyprus, probably because of the palaeographical traits of the Greek manuscript copy, which also point towards Cyprus, even though they may concern only this particular copy and not the original translation<sup>58</sup>.

I, for one, believe that this translation should not be linked with pure bred Greeks only. It could as well be linked with the local Latin aristocracy. It hasn't been yet noted that the Genoese Gattilusi (one of the famous Aegean families of the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries) had a certain Palamedes among their ranks. Palamede Gattiluso was lord of the island of Ainos from 1409 until his death in 1455. Born in c. 1389, he bore an unusual name, a credible testimony of his family's literary tastes. Nobody knows if the one responsible for this odd onomastic choice was his father, Francesco II Gattiluso lord of Lesbos (1384-1404), his mysterious mother (niece of the Byzantine emperor), or other members of the Gattilusi family who descended, married, or were related to the Palaeologues of Constantinople. What is known is that the Gattilusi belonged to this mixed-breed aristocracy, half Latin, half Greek<sup>59</sup>. Even their tombs, similar to those of other Latins in Greek lands, show unmistakable signs of Byzantine influences<sup>60</sup>. This does not mean that «Ὁ Πρέσβυς Ἰππότης» was written by or for the Gattilusi. It just serves to show that there were many other lords in the Aegean, of mixed Latin and Greek lineage, who were much interested in Arthurian tales. The story heard by Niccolò was not odd and out of place. There must have been many more chivalric tales circulating the same area. For instance, the Vienna version of the French romance of Apollonius sets its protagonist in an odd fight with a demonic knight and a dragon somewhere in the Greek islands in the time of King

58. *Il vecchio cavaliere* cit., pp. 5-33, and p. 23 for the quotation.

59. For the Gattilusi as Byzantine border lords and promoters of a mixed cultural identity, see F. Kondyli, *Lords at the end of the Empire: Negotiating Power in the Late Byzantine frontiers (fourteenth-fifteenth centuries)*, in «Annual of the British School at Athens», 112 (2017), pp. 327-31: 309-39. Cfr. Ch. Wright, *Byzantine Authority and Latin Rule in the Gattiluso Lordships*, in *Byzantines, Latins, and Turks in the Eastern Mediterranean World after 1150*, eds. J. Harris - C. Holmes - E. Russell, Oxford 2012, pp. 247-63.

60. The Palaeologan monogram on the Gattilusi tombs is the most obvious piece of evidence. E. A. Ivison, *Funerary monuments of the Gattilusi at Mytilene*, in «Annual of the British School at Athens», 87 (1992), pp. 423-37.



Alexander<sup>61</sup>. There are many other bizarre encounters of this type in Western chivalric romances. If such stories were heard in the Aegean, the local Latins or Gasmouloi could wish to identify them with certain places in their vicinity. Other stories could have been local, originating there, from their own ranks. When it comes to tall tales and make-believe legends, the sky is the limit.

Niccolò and his guides took an interest in Gawain and Troy because they reflected the cultural preoccupations of their age: more Troy and chivalric stories. But Niccolò was also a pilgrim, interested in the Bible, and it should be pointed out that Dante described the French literature of his time as a mixture of Bible, Troy, and King Arthur stories, so there is absolutely no contradiction in the fact that Niccolò, a pilgrim to the Holy Land, was obsessed with Troy and King Arthur too. What shocks in the pilgrimage journal of Niccolò da Martoni is the absence of direct Bible quotations. He was a religious tourist, yet he did not quote the Bible<sup>62</sup>. This implies that Niccolò's education was not very thorough. He probably knew what the average man of his time knew, including Troy and Arthur, because he was an average man himself. Niccolò fits perfectly the cultural profile of *Ponzella Gaia's* readers: *una scrittura destinata a lettori o uditori di mediocrissimo livello culturale*<sup>63</sup>. One might even compare it to the educational level of the mass organized tourist of our time.

### *The World Through Niccolò da Martoni's Eyes*

Up to this point, I ran through three tourist attractions on Niccolò's pilgrimage account, all of them dictated by Western cultural trends: the Troy Gates of the Parthenon, the temple of Kythira, and the Euboean castle where Gawain was kept prisoner. Before discussing the other three

61. *Le roman d'Apollonius de Tyr, version française du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle de l'Histoire d'Apollonius de Tyr...*, ed. M. Zink, Paris 2006, pp. 70, 72, 74.

62. He quoted the story of Saint Catherine because he was obsessed with it, as she was the patron of his own chapel; he referred to Bible stories in general – in short summaries of the stories that he had in mind – but he never quoted words of the sacred text.

63. G. Varanini, *Il manoscritto quattrocentesco della 'Ponzella Gaia'*, in «Scriptorium», 13/1 (1959), pp. 70-9: 73.

attractions of the list, probably borrowed from the Byzantines (the Aristotle monuments of Athens, Hadrian's Gate, and the Cretan Labyrinth), we need to understand their value from the standpoint of the average medieval man. We need to assess who Niccolò really was, that is, Niccolò the individual who saw these monuments and heard these stories. Niccolò's standpoint will help us understand how certain stories migrated all the way through the cultural continuum between the high culture of the elite and the low culture of the masses.

Niccolò had a binary perception of aesthetics. He was unable of observing shades and nuances. He split everything into *pulcher* and *turpis*. For him, beauty was related to the presence of the saints or holy figures. He was impressed and his feelings were naturally moved. He was predisposed to seeing things as beautiful, therefore he saw them as such<sup>64</sup>. He must

64. For example, when in Cairo, the church of *Sancta Maria de Cava, que est pulcra ecclesia cum picturis [...] in qua ecclesia invenimus, in quodam loco interiori, dictam in qua beata Virgo Maria cum suo filio dilecto ascondit se ex timore Herodis; or Sancta Barbara, que est pulcra ecclesia cum conis et picturis sanctorum, et est ibi corpus sancte Barbare; or again ecclesia Sancti Martini, que est pulcra cum conis et picturis sanctorum; et est ibi quodam corpus sanctum quod vocatur sanctus Barbasus; Io Notaio cit., p. 48; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., pp. 597-8. In Bethlehem, struck by the same holy presence, he finds beauty in the church of the Virgin, but continues to compare it with the churches back home: *Ecclesia Sancte Marie de Bethleem alias fuit multum magna et pulcra, antequam destruerent Sarraceni, et habebat castrum magnum et multa alia pulcra et magna hedificia ante dictam ecclesiam, sed omnia ipsa hedificia sunt dirructa. Dicta ecclesia est magna et simulatur ecclesie Capuane, verum non est tantum larga et habet naves a quolibet latere. In quibus navibus sunt columpne xliiii<sup>or</sup>, et muri circuitus ipsius ecclesie sunt picti cum ystoriis factis labore musayco et cum auro fino in tribuna altaris majoris; in qua tribuna sunt tres figure, una beate Virginia cum suo Filio dilecto stante in medio, altera David et alia Abrahe, a lateribus ipsius Domine, et est laborata pulcherime auro purissimo, quemadmodum est tribuna ecclesie Sancti Bernardi de Caleno; Io Notaio cit., p. 72; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 611. Same thing in Jerusalem: *Templum Salamonis, quod videtur longe et est opus mirabile et satis pulcrum; templum quod est prope dictum templum Salamonis, ubi Dominus noster fuit presentatus in ulnis sancti Symeonis; Io Notaio cit., p. 78; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 614. The beauty of the church of the Dormition of the Virgin is equally obvious: *descenditur ad ipsam ecclesiam per gradus xxxviii et in medio ipsius ecclesie est quedam pulcra tumma, ubi est sepulcrum eius cum duabus parvis intratis; Io Notaio cit., p. 78; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 614. In Mons Oliveti, there is *quedam pulcra ecclesia (Io Notaio cit., p. 80; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 615), because Christ was there. The same on Mount Syon, where *predicta ecclesia facta cum una pulcra et magna lamia, in qua Fratres Minores celebrant divina, because intus quam ecclesiam, in altari maiori, est locus ubi Dominus noster Yhesus Christus suos discipulos communicavit; Io Notaio cit., p. 82; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 616. In the *locus ubi sanctus Thomas apostolus palpavit manus et latus Christi, there was of course quedam pulcra cappella; Io Notaio cit., p. 82; cfr.*******

have heard lots of stories about the sacred places before leaving on his trip, from previous travellers, from priests, or even from con artists who pretended to return from the Holy Land in order to cheat credulous people<sup>65</sup>. It is only natural that when Niccolò was in the Holy Land, he wanted the Holy Land to be beautiful. And since he imagined the beauty of Troy, he probably also wanted the Trojan attractions to be in the same way.

He also liked the things and places where (and when) he was happy or protected. After seeing Jerusalem, he arrived in Jericho, where all the gardens and fountains were suddenly beautiful<sup>66</sup>. Nonetheless, everything was *turpe* in Corinth, because he was tired after waiting too long in Negroponte, irritated because he had to sleep in a small church outside Megara<sup>67</sup>, and every place he visited was closed on account of military

Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 617. In the place where *angelus dixit beate Marie 'Resurrexit Dominus', cappella ipsa est pulchra et magna et cum pulcherrimis conis; Io Notaio* cit., p. 84; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 618. The entrance to the church of the Holy Sepulchre *est pulcherrime fabricatus cum pulchris et diversis laboribus, et a latere sinistro ipsius ecclesie est quoddam campanile altum et pulcherrime laboratum; Io Notaio* cit., p. 88; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 620. The same for the *sepulchrum pulchrum de lapidibus marmoreis in quo sepultus fuit sanctus Lazarus quem Dominus resuscitavit; Io Notaio* cit., p. 90; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 622. Or the *quedam alie pulchre domus magni hedificii nunc dirructi, que fuerunt dicti Zachari, patris beati Iohannis; Io Notaio* cit., p. 90; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 622. In fact, *civitas Ierusalem est magna civitas et pulchra (Io Notaio* cit., p. 92; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 623), because he expected it to be beautiful (it was sacred). Or in Rhodes, in the church of Saint-Catherine, whom he venerates the most: *est in dicta ecclesia Sancte Catherine quedam cona multum devota et pulchra, in qua sunt xxx reliquie incluse cum litteris in circuytu quas non potui omnes legere; Io Notaio* cit., p. 126; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 642. In Patras, he thinks that a certain *ecclesia* was *pulchra* because it was there that *sanctus Andreas apostolus, stans in illis partibus ad predicandum fuit captus et carceratus; Io Notaio* cit., p. 156; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 661.

65. See for this the case of the *duo gyrovagi de Flandria* who told made-up stories about the Holy Land to brother Felix Fabri in Ulm at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, trying to impress the local German audience: *quod capella Dominici sepulchri esset auro fulvo vestita, et lampades eius penderent in candelabris aureis [...], quod tota Ierusalem de pretiosis lapidibus etiam constructa et protulit unum lapillum impolitum quem dixit se in platea Ierusalem invenisse, et pro 20 ducatis non vellet eum vendere; Fratris Felicis Fabri Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti Peregrinationem*, ed. C. D. Hassler, Stuttgart 1843, vol. I, pp. 262-3.

66. *Ierycho, ubi sunt habitationes Sarracenorum et sunt pulchra jardena et fontes aquarum, et in hora nona ascendimus montem in quo Dominus noster Ihesus Christus ieunavit quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus; Io Notaio* cit., p. 90; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 621

67. Niccolò da Martoni could not enter Megara (*Metre*) because the city was closed in fear of the Despot of Morea approaching, so he slept in *quadam ecclesiola que est extra castrum iuxta fessos castris. Io Notaio* cit., p. 148; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., pp. 656-7.

confrontations in the Isthmus, so the situation was uncomfortable for him at the time<sup>68</sup>. In psycho-evolutionary theory, the combination of surprise and joy enforces delight as a secondary emotion<sup>69</sup>. Current research on tourism and pilgrimage also emphasizes subjectivity, the mood changes of the individual tourist<sup>70</sup>. This is why Niccolò's evaluations do not have a definitive character. He suffered a lot during his voyages: he was cheated, lost, forgotten, menaced in many ways, therefore his state of mind changed a lot from one place to another<sup>71</sup>. The best case is his description of the ugliness of Beirut, where he nearly drowned, turning his hair and beard white, but where he liked the gardens outside of the city gates, where he met with Venetians and Genoese<sup>72</sup>.

Niccolò certainly liked the buildings where he was well received, in an opulent manner, much in the manner in which the average tourist of our days appreciates luxury places and all-inclusive hotels. In Egypt, Niccolò appreciated the gardens where he ate very big fruit<sup>73</sup>. This becomes evident in Sinai, where he ate lots of fruit close to the monastery of Saint-

68. *Nunc vero ipsa civitas est posita super quemdam montem excelsum et mons ipse est fabricatus in circuytu turpibus meniis, et, ut extimavimus, dominus Antonatius et ego, qui ipsam civitatem ambulavimus in circuytu, girant menia ipsa milearia duo vel circa. Intus sunt turpes domus et in multis locis civitas est vacua. Credo quod in toto vacuo ipsius civitatis non seminarentur ultra tres thuminos grani, et sunt in ea focularia forte quingenta. In quodam tartarecto intus civitatem est quodam turpe castrum, licet sit difficile; Io Notaio cit., p. 152; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 659.*

69. Cfr. R. Plutchik, *Emotion. A psychoevolutionary synthesis*, New York 1980.

70. Y. Poria - A. Biran - A. Reichel, *Tourist perceptions, personal vs. non personal*, in «*Journal of Heritage Tourism*», 1/2 (2006), pp. 121-32, argue that an individual's impressions of a certain place, as a tourist, should be examined according to the changes in his or her particular mental state, leading to a variable intensity and duration of his or her experience.

71. For a brief synthesis of Niccolò's many adventures and misfortunes, compared to the *Odyssey*, see N. Chareyron, *Pilgrims to Jerusalem in the Middle Ages*, transl. W. D. Wilson, New York 2005, pp. 205-6.

72. *...est parva et turpis terra Barutum. Multa jardena sunt intus civitatem. Extra civitatem sunt etiam jardena pulcra et oliveta pulcra et sunt multi mercatores Venitiales et Ianuenses; Io Notaio cit., p. 100; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 626. For the drowning episode, see *Io Notaio* cit., p. 102; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 627: *propter hoc et multa alia occurrentia pericula michi ante et post cani intempestivi in mea barba et vertice funderunt.**

73. *...in dicta terra Fuge sunt jardena pulciora mundi, de arangeis, lombincellis, grisonnulis et aliis fructibus et sunt magna, et ita fructus sunt spissi quod sol modicum vel quasi nihil potest transire, per que homo non posset equester pergere, ita sunt pedes fructuum spissi; Io Notaio cit., p. 40; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 593.*

Catherine<sup>74</sup>. Or upon his return to Rhodes, when beauty equalled his personal comfort<sup>75</sup>. The same happened in Negroponte, where he admired a room in which he slept well<sup>76</sup>. Or in Patras, where he saw the Troy depictions in the palace of the archbishop, where he slept.

Closely related to this, he found beauty in connection with richness. In Negroponte, he admired that the city *habet ipsa civitas nobiles homines et divites ac pulcras mulieres*<sup>77</sup>. Similarly, he loved the bulls whose price he was able to calculate<sup>78</sup>. He enjoyed things that he could measure, like the windmills of Rhodes<sup>79</sup>. But everything became *satis pulcrum* in Famagusta, for no apparent reason<sup>80</sup>. In fact, *satis pulcer* becomes a recurrent epithet in his Cyprus visit, where he oscillated between various types of beauty, in opposition with *multum pulcrum*, depending on a logic which may be emotional, because he spent two whole months in the island of Cyprus.

At a certain point in his narrative, *pulcer* becomes the thing that impresses him, with or without beauty. The castle ditches in Famagusta are beautiful, probably because they were big, or because he admired the wealth of the community<sup>81</sup>. He said the same about the fortifications of

74. *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 68; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, pp. 607–8: *in quadam valle sistente intra dictos duos montes est quidam pulcer jardenus plantatus multis fructibus ficuum, amendularura, arangiorum, olivarura, grisonniolorum, malorum, granatorum et multarum pergularum uvarum diversi generis, optimarum ad comedendum.*

75. *...quodam pulcro hospitali in quo sunt plures pulcre camere cum lectis pluribus et bonis, in quo hospitali hospitantur omnes peregrine; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 124; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 642.

76. *...quadam pulcra camera cum duobus pulcris lectis pro domino Antonacio, domino Symone et me, et aliis lectis pro familiaribus; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 144; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 654.

77. *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 146; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 655.

78. *Boves ipsi sunt magni et pulcerrimi et non sunt mallati ut fortiores sint, extimo quod valeret unus in patria nostra triginta ducatos, aliquis plus et aliquis minus, sed in partibus illis Egicti pulcior non valet nisi ducatos octo et minus; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 42; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 593.

79. *Portus dicte civitatis est satis pulcer et cum pulcro molo, in quo sunt navilia undecumque venientia; in quo molo sunt molendina quindecim que macinant et volvunt a vento, sic constructi quod hic non posset calamo declarari, nisi stilo vel digito designetur, et distat unum molendinum ab alio forte per tres candas, et quodlibet ipsorum venditur in extaleum pro uncis sex annuatim; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 24; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 583.

80. *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 104; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 628.

81. *...circumdata fossis multum pulcris; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 108; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 631. I thank Hugo Thomas for pointing to me that the maintenance works of a city's fortifications were the responsibility of that city's inhabitants, thus explaining Niccolò's admiration.

Negroponte, which he admired on his way back<sup>82</sup>. In fact, Niccolò was a great admirer of military architecture. Even back in Italy, he admired the fortress of Lecce, because it was *circumdata pulcerimis menis, cum turribus ultra centum, cum fossis fabricatis in circuytu, et habet pulcrum et magnum castrum cum multis et pulcris jardenis*<sup>83</sup>. But in the Cyclades, a town was big, *sed habet turpes domos*<sup>84</sup>. And another town in Corfu was big, just like the town of one of his companions, *sed habet turpes domos generaliter*<sup>85</sup>.

Gardens for fruit and walls for protection. Safety and repletion equate with beauty. And there is also the question of familiarity with the places that he saw or the foods that he ate. This may be compared to the nowadays situation in which many tourists think they will want to eat the local food, but most of them eat only what they receive within the safety of a hotel. Their main concern is linked with issues of health and hygiene. In exotic destinations, these tourists will not eat unless they are sure that the local food is based on acceptable ingredients and prepared in an acceptable way<sup>86</sup>. But there is also the question of biological and cultural stimuli<sup>87</sup>. And there is the delicate balance of what came to be called the 'tourist's paradox', the oscillation between desire to seek novelty and familiarity in the food encountered during voyages<sup>88</sup>. When dealing with cognitive-normative typologies in travel motivations, Stanley Plog proposed a personality continuum for tourists, ranging from psychocentric to allocentric (allocentric, near-allocentric, mid-centric, near-psychocentric, and psychocentric). Among these five categories, the allocentrics are the ones looking for novelty, they are risk-takers who prefer exotic destina-

82. ...*civitas ipsa est circumdata mari forte pro tribus partibus et habet pulkra menia et multas turres in circuytu*; Io Notaio cit., p. 146; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 655.

83. Io Notaio cit., p. 166; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 666.

84. Io Notaio cit., p. 128; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 644.

85. Io Notaio cit., p. 162; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 666.

86. E. Cohen - N. Avieli, *Food in tourism: attraction and impediment*, in «Annals of Tourism Research», 31 (2004), pp. 755-78. For a similar interpretation, see P. Rozin, *Food is fundamental, fun, frightening, and far-reaching*, in «Social Research», 66 (1999), pp. 9-30.

87. Cfr. C. Fischler, *Food, self and identity*, in «Social Science Information», 27 (1988), pp. 275-92, who also distinguishes the tourists' reaction according to their belonging to a 'neophobic' or 'neophilic' type.

88. R. C. Y. Chang - J. Kivela - A. H. N. Mak, *Food Preferences of Chinese Tourists*, in «Annals of Tourism Research», 37/4 (2010), pp. 989-1011.

tions. At the other end of the continuum, psychocentrics always choose familiar destinations with a lack of risks during their travels<sup>89</sup>. Niccolò may have been near-psychocentric, or a psychocentric thrown in a situation where the risks were high, even though he wanted to avoid them.

Leaving aside the food and safety issues, it is worth noting that our traveller lacked an aesthetic feeling. When he evaluated a work of art, he did it from a mercantile point of view. He calculated its financial value or the amount of work. *Pulchritudo* appears several times in connection with *laboribus* in his text. A good example was in the Holy Land, where he admired the tomb of Absalom son of David (*pulcerrime laboratum diversis pulcris laboribus*)<sup>90</sup>. The church of Mary Magdalene in Jerusalem was also beautiful because he saw a lot of effort put in the decoration<sup>91</sup>. And a seat in Nicosia was *sedile pulcerimum cum columpnellis multis pulcris, et diversis laboribus ornatum*<sup>92</sup>. This last formula bears a particular interest, as the notary evaluated the Athenian studio of Aristotle in exactly the same way: *laboratum diversis laboribus cum auro fino et aliis pulcris coloribus*<sup>93</sup>. The fine gold and beautiful colours spoke more to him than the company of Aristotle.

In Athens, he was insensitive to the beauty of the old city, but he admired the plain, from an agricultural point of view (*pulcram planam durantem per milearia XII*) and the olive trees (*in qua plana plura et pulcra sunt oliveta*). He admired the same thing about Megara: *habet pulcram planam*<sup>94</sup>. He had a practical mind, and his profession made him evaluate things. When he saw strange animals, such as elephants, he thought of animal husbandry and felt compelled to liken them to the ones he evaluated at home, with precise zootechnical measurements<sup>95</sup>.

89. S. Plog, *Why destination areas rise and fall in popularity*, in «The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly», 14/4 (1974), pp. 55-8.

90. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 80; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 615.

91. *Introytus ipsius ecclesie est pulcerrime fabricatus cum pulcris et diversis laboribus, et a latere sinistro ipsius ecclesie est quoddam campanile altum et pulcerrime laboratum*; *Io Notaio* cit., p. 88; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 620.

92. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 114; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 634.

93. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 138; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 651.

94. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 94, 148; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., pp. 649-50, 657, for the three quotations.

95. ...*invenimus quatuor alefantes quorum unus erat mirabiliter magnus, extimo in rei veritate sicut essent quatuor magni bufali, pili nigerimi, grossis cathenis ligatus. Alter erat sicut unus bufalus duorum annorum, et alii duo sicut genci unius anni, omnes ligati cathenis, et alter ab altero secrega-*

Last but not least, Niccolò liked when things were similar to those he was familiar with. In fact, he probably liked what he wished to have at home<sup>96</sup>, or the things that looked like the ones back home. This is obvious in Famagusta, on his way back, a city which *habet pulcras plateas et domos* because they are *quasi similes illis de Capua*<sup>97</sup>. In Negroponte, *mulieres ipse sunt generaliter mira pulcritudine decorate, et pulcris indumentis indute*, because they are *more Ytalie*<sup>98</sup>. The *hospitium* of the Patras archbishop was *pulcrum* because its hall was painted with the entire story of the destruction of Troy (*tota ystoria destructionis civitatis Troje*), a story well known to him, therefore beautiful<sup>99</sup>. In Cairo, he was mesmerized by the loggias, so much that he started seeing everything as wonderful in a continuous utterance of the adjective *pulcher*<sup>100</sup>. But in Alexandria, he did not like the city, maybe because everything was crowded and unfamiliar<sup>101</sup>.

*tus; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 54; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 601. The giraffes needed to be compared to something outside of the household: *invenimus sex animalia que dicuntur jaraffe, mirabilia ad videndum: forma ipsorum est ita quod capud habent sicut cervus cum cornis longis medio palmo, collus est exilis et longus fere una canna, pedes et tibie sunt ad modum bovis, sed multo longiores, pilus ipsorum est scacbiatum coloris rossacii et albatii, divisi ad modum mosye, altitudo persone ipsarum est palmorum decem; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 56; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 602.

96. Among the *pulcris hospitiiis* of Nicosia, in Cyprus again, there is the *satis pulcrum* one, belonging to the king of Cyprus, because it has a *cortileum magnum sicut castrum novum de Neapoli et multa pulcra membra in circuitu, inter que membra est una sala magna*; but there are better things inside, because in that hall there is *quodam sedile pulcherimum cum columpnellis multis pulcris, et diversis laboribus ornatum*. Niccolò admits for once that he believes *quod modica seu nullum reperiat pulcrus illo sedili; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 114; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 634. He probably wished to have it back home.

97. *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 104; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 628.

98. *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 146; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 655.

99. *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 156; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 661.

100. *Die martis in occasu solis applicuimus per dictum flumen ad burgum Cayri quod longum est iuxta litus fluminis; in quo burgo sunt domus mirifice pulcras cum gaysis [loggias] a fenestris vitatis, monachectis et aliis pulcris laboribus, et sunt jardena pulcra post ipsa hospitia. Dicte domus sunt tantum pulcre plus quam erant domus marine Neapolis, licet non sint tantum magne, et durat dictum burgum cum ipsis domibus ita pulcris cum burgo fluminis Babillonie per milearia triginta vel circa; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 46; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, pp. 595-6. He repeats *cum predictis domibus ita pulcris et jardenis* and *ita pulcris domibus et jardenis*, he gets *ad quodam pulcrum hospitium consuli, in quo permansimus donec fuimus in dicto Cayro; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 46; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 596.

101. *Civitas ipsa est maior civitate Neapoli, ut generaliter tenetur, verum non habet pulcra hospitia generaliter, et habet tantam quantitatem gentium quod non posset calamo scribi, et omni hora diei platee sunt ita plene gentium quod homo non potest uno pede ambulare quod non tangat et tangatur; Io Notaio cit.*, p. 32; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 588.



The only thing he really liked there were the walls and towers, because they provided safety<sup>102</sup>. This reaction may be linked with a phenomenon that sociologists consider to be derived from the environmental stimuli, an emotional oscillation that takes place until a balance is achieved. If the environment does not provide the traveller with satisfactory stimuli, he will engage or reduce his exploratory behaviour until the said balance will be achieved<sup>103</sup>.

Last but not least, Niccolò had a limited universe<sup>104</sup>. He compared the average towns that he visited with his hometown of Carinola (*Calenum*)<sup>105</sup>. The tombs around the church of Saint-Anthony in Rhodes were *sicut sunt ille de Sancto Matheo de Caleno*<sup>106</sup>. When in Egypt's Alexandria, he observed that *sunt in dicta civitate montes duo artificialiter constructi de fimo et immunditia platearum et domorum, [...] in quorum uno, qui est altior monticello Sancti Archangeli de Calino [...]*<sup>107</sup>. This applied also to buildings, such as churches or towers, and to architectural objects, such as church tribunes<sup>108</sup>. Antonaccio de Aspello et Cobello de Dyano, his travelling companions<sup>109</sup>, must have done the same type of comparisons, since Nic-

102. *menia dicte civitatis sunt pulera et turres spisse in circuytu et barbacanis, et in pluribus turribus sunt briccule*; *Io Notaio* cit., p. 34; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 589.

103. T.-H. Lee - J. L. Crompton, *Measuring Novelty Seeking in Tourism*, in «Annals of Tourism Research», 19 (1992), pp. 732-7.

104. Cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., pp. 566-7: *Nicolas de Martoni exerçait la paisible profession de notaire, dans la petite cité de Carinola, dont son frère était archidiacre, et il ne devait guère connaître d'autres horizons que ceux de la terre de Labour, de la Campanie et de la campagne romaine, car, lorsqu'il décrit quelque édifice, il le compare presque toujours à ceux de Capoue ou de Naples, quelquefois à ceux de Rome.*

105. In the Cyclades, *castrum est totum intra mare et quemdam lacum ibi sistentem, magnum forte pro tertia parte lacu Caleni*; and *terra ipsa est secus mare et est magna, extimo, sicut civitas Caleni vel circa; sed habet turpes domos*; *Io Notaio* cit., p. 128; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 644. When he arrives in Vostitsa (Aigio) on his way to Patras, he says it is *magnum sicut civitas Caleni*; *Io Notaio* cit., p. 154; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 660.

106. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 26; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 585.

107. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 34; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 589.

108. The church of the True Cross *est quasi sicut ecclesia Caleni larga et longa*; *Io Notaio* cit., p. 92; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 623. When he arrives in Porto-Fanari: *quod castrum est supra quemdam montem et deinde supra unum tartarectum, sicut esset tribus vicibus turris magna castru Caleni*; p. 665. The tribune in the Church of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem is *auro purissimo, quemadmodum est tribuna ecclesie Sancti Barnardi de Caleno*; *Io Notaio* cit., p. 72; cfr. p. 611.

109. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 16; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., pp. 577-8: *ego notarius Nicolaus de*

colò refers to their hometowns several times. To give but an example, when describing one of the Nile's lobes in Alexandria, he compared it to a river back home and to the rivers in the hometowns of his two companions. These comparisons could have been inspired by actual discussions between the three pilgrims<sup>110</sup>.

Niccolò knew only the mountain visible from his hometown (*Marsicus*). The mountains he saw in his trip were regularly compared to this one<sup>111</sup>. The river Jordan seemed to him *quod est sicut flumen castris Vayrani, sed non est tantum largum*, that is, the Volturno, the biggest river of his region, the one that he often crossed into Capua<sup>112</sup>. Many things and places are compared to Capua. In fact, Capua plays the role of a medium towards big settlement in his mind, probably because it was located 24 km away from his hometown. Rhodes, for example, is *civitas magna sicut quasi Capua vel circa*<sup>113</sup>. In Cyprus, *civitas Famagusta est magna, extimo, sicut civitas Capue, et habet pulcras plateas et domos quasi similes illis de Capua*<sup>114</sup>. And the Capuan term of comparison applies also to the buildings that he saw, to the architectural objects, or to the dates that he ate during his voyage<sup>115</sup>.

*Marthono de civitate Calinensi volens et cupiens sepulcrum Domini nostri Jhesu Christi et alia loca ultramarina visitare una cum nobilibus viris Antonatio de Aspello, de civitate Suessa, et Cobello de Dyano, de civitate Theani, et multis aliis peregrinis.*

110. *Fluit per ipsa canalia ad civitatem Alesandrie et omnes cisterne Alesandrie implentur de dicta aqua, et quando est plena una cisterna vadit ad aliam subtus terram, quemadmodum implentur putei civitatis Theani. Et cum sunt omnes cisterne plene, elevatur dicta aqua, et sufficit in Alesandria per totum annum, et est optima aqua ad bibendum. In veritate, ego notarius Nicolaus et mei socii tanta bibimus, dum fuimus xvii diebus in Alesandria, omni hora diei, quod credo, si fuisset de aqua Calinole vel Theani, occidisset nos propter intensum calorem; Io Notaio cit., p. 16; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 590. In Sinai, Ecclesia Sancte Catherine est multum devota et est magna, ut michi visum fuit, sicut ecclesia Suessana; Io Notaio cit., p. 64; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 607. When he arrives in Corfu: est civitas magna, extimo, sicut civitas Theani; Io Notaio cit., p. 162; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 666.*

111. Still in Italy, close to Trapani, Niccolò says that *applicuimus prope insulam Maritimi que est prope civitatem Trapani, quam ego notarius Nicolaus bene vidi quia videbatur mons magnus, sicut mons Marsicus de civitate Calinensi; Io Notaio cit., p. 16; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 578. Close to the Turkish coast, when he arrives in Cos or Stankio, he says that versus quam insulam est Torchia, que est terra firma, et sunt montes alti, sicut mons Marsicus; que distat a dicta insula miliaria xv; Io Notaio cit., p. 22; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 582.*

112. *Io Notaio cit., p. 88; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 621.*

113. *Io Notaio cit., p. 24; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 583.*

114. *Io Notaio cit., p. 104; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 628.*

115. When he speaks about the dates, *et erat tanta quantitas daptilorum quod videbatur sicut*

This is how his comparison of Athens and Capua should be interpreted. Since he did not possess an aesthetic sense, or since this sense was completely inconsequential to him, the only thing that he could compare was the size of towns, buildings, or objects. When he saw the *porta introytus que fuit dicti castris, qui introytus est de lapidibus marmoreis*, he appreciated that it was *pulcris laboribus fabricatus*. Therefore, he evaluated the amount of effort put into the work. He compared it instantly to the gates of Capua in terms of height and greatness (*sic pulcher sicut est introytus turrium civitatis Capuae*), but he immediately corrected himself, because he thought that the Athens one was not high enough (*set non ita magnus introytus ut michi videtur*)<sup>116</sup>. And the same type of comparison was applied to the Parthenon (*est ipsa ecclesia magna sicut ecclesia Capuana*), probably because of the height and length of the building<sup>117</sup>.

From time to time, he dared make other comparisons, but they were rare. For instance, there was Aversa, 40 km away from his hometown, probably bigger than Carinola, but smaller than Capua<sup>118</sup>. There was

*nemus Sancti Laurent quando itur Capuam; Io Notaio cit., p. 38; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 591. The Church of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem est magna et simulatur ecclesie Capuane; Io Notaio cit., p. 72; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 611. Still there, he compares a local 'cortille' with another one in Capua: satis pulcrum hospitium cum antecortilio magno, multis hedificiis et jardeno pulcro, est quodam cortileum maius illo de Capua, in quo venduntur panes, magna quantitas olerum et aliorum fructuum, sicut fit in cortilio Capuae, et venduntur ibi omni die panni et alie multe res ad incantum et est cortileum ipsum, credo, in medio civitatis; Io Notaio cit., p. 106; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., pp. 629-30.*

<sup>116</sup>. *Io Notaio cit., p. 138; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 650. Cfr. Weiss, The Renaissance cit., p. 134, thought that Niccolò was impressed by the beauty of the Athenian buildings: «The beauty of the Propylaea built by Mnesicles quite definitely moved him, to the point of making him admit that they were as handsome as Frederick II's bridgehead of his own city of Capua. Similarly the church of the Panaghia or St. Mary of Athens as it was called by the Latins, i.e. the Parthenon, struck him as being of the same size as the church, that is to say the cathedral of Capua». However, Niccolò does not perceive beauty on purely aesthetic grounds. He quantifies it in financial terms.*

<sup>117</sup>. *Io Notaio cit., p. 138; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 651.*

<sup>118</sup>. *In Nicosia, civitas ipse Nicosie est maior, ut extimo, civitas Aversa; Io Notaio cit., p. 114; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 634. However, immediately after comparing Nicosia to Aversa, he repeats the comparison used for Famagusta (with Naples): est hospitium in quo manet rex Cipri satis pulcrum; habet cortileum magnum sicut castrum novum de Neapoli et multa pulcra membra in circuitu; Io Notaio cit., p. 114; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 634. In Italy, when he arrives in Apulia, he says that Licium est magna civitas sicut civitas Aversie ut nobis visum fuit; Io Notaio cit., p. 166; cfr. Le Grand, Relation cit., p. 666.*

Naples, the epitome of urban greatness in his eyes<sup>119</sup>. And there was Rome, a city mentioned only twice. One of these two mentions takes place in Jerusalem, easily compared in terms of greatness with the Eternal City<sup>120</sup>, but the other one happens in Egypt, where Niccolò accepted other people's opinions. In Cairo, *ambulantes per plateas Babillonie, videbantur nobis sicut sunt platee et domus Rome*, but only because he was accompanied by a person who had better terms of comparison, his guide, *nomine Antonio Zocto de Florentia*<sup>121</sup>.

The image that one draws from his comparisons is that Niccolò described everything in terms of size, but he missed the identity of the places he saw. When in the Parthenon, he was not impressed by the beauty of the ancient architecture, but by the medieval part, much similar to the one back home, for the only things he found beautiful were the *achorum ipsius ecclesie pulcrum*, because it had *quatuor columpne de iaspide*, and a *quodam pulcrum trullum*, above those columns, *supra altare magnum*. He also liked the *quedam pulcra et magna cisterna* in the altar<sup>122</sup>. It is therefore worth noting that he did not use the word *pulcher* in connection with Aristotle himself (an Einstein of sorts), probably because Aristotle was not a saint. Niccolò used this epithet in reference to the colours of the philosopher's *studium*, since its upper part was 'decorated with beautiful works'<sup>123</sup>. And the other thing he appreciated was the philosophers' spring or fountain, whence he drank, just as our contemporaries visit Einstein's house in Bern and question themselves «What did Einstein eat?».

119. When describing Alexandria, in Egypt, he says that *civitas ipsa est maior civitate Neapoli*; *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 32; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 588. The houses he sees in Cairo: *dicte domus sunt tantum pulcre plus quam erant domus marine Neapolis*; *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 46; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 596. And for once, when discussing the urban planning of Famagusta, he risks a comparison with Naples: *Tota ipsa civitas est, seu eius menia sunt fundata super saxis marmoreis et duris, ita quod nullo modo posset cavari, et est in ipsa civitate a latere maris tarzenale magnum et pulcrum, sicut est illud de Neapoli*; *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 114; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 631.

120. In Jerusalem, *supra dictum Sepulcrum est quedam lamia rotunda magna et alta cum foramine magno, quemadmodum est ecclesia Sancte Marie de Roma, sed non est ita larga, nec ita alta*; *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 48; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 618.

121. *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 48; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 597.

122. *...laboratum diversis laboribus cum auro fino et aliis pulcris coloribus*; *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 138, 140; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 651.

123. *Io Notaio cit.*, p. 138; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation cit.*, p. 651.

praising his vegetarianism on the same scale as his knowledge of physics. Niccolò was not able to appreciate Aristotle's ideas. He drank the water to become smart and he appreciated the time, work, and money put into the decoration. In the same way, he did not look upon the entrance gate of the Acropolis as a beautiful building in itself, but as a sum of financially evaluated 'beautiful works' (*pulcris laboribus fabricatus*)<sup>124</sup>.

*Niccolò da Martoni as a Case Study of Medieval Recreational Tourism*

The individual profile drawn above assimilates Niccolò to the average present-day tourist. But is it possible to speak of tourism in medieval times? Lutz Kaelber's opinion concerning the tourism-pilgrimage connection is particularly useful for this study<sup>125</sup>. He follows Nicolas Vincent<sup>126</sup>, showing that religious travel for pious purposes and recreational journeys cannot be distinguished, and argues that tourism and pilgrimage were already merged in the trips of medieval European royalty. Next, he argues that these traits characterise various social strata, including religious pilgrims; and he notes that medieval and early modern 'tourism' share many other features of current-day tourism, from the «pre-modern version of the package tour» (such as in the case of our Niccolò and other pilgrims who boarded Venetian ships)<sup>127</sup> to the «theme parks» (the *sacri*

124. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 138; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 650.

125. L. Kaelber, *Paradigms of travel. From medieval pilgrimage to the postmodern virtual tour*, in *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*, eds. D. J. Timothy - D. H. Olsen, London 2006, pp. 49-63. Cfr. L. Kaelber, *The sociology of medieval pilgrimage: contested views and shifting boundaries*, in *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism: The Social and Cultural Economics of Piety*, eds. W. H. Swatos Jr - L. Tomasi, Westport CT 2002, pp. 51-74.

126. See N. Vincent, *The Pilgrimages of the Angevin Kings of England, 1154-1272*, in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, eds. Colin Morris - P. Roberts, Cambridge 2002, pp. 12-45, who studied only the Plantagenets, but the same conclusions may be reached when analysing the itineraries of Sigismund of Luxembourg (14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries), the Hohenstaufens (12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries), Italian noblemen (in pre-Renaissance times), etc.

127. The most frequently mentioned example of this type is that of Felix Fabri, a Dominican who made many voyages to the Holy Land at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and who gave precise details about his travels. Once they settled with the sea-captain, the travellers conceived a contract: *in super XX concepimus articulos, quibus modum conventionis*

*monti* of Italy). Kaelber duly observes that the problem with separating travellers into tourists and pilgrims lies in the misconceptions of present-day research<sup>128</sup>. As for the religious nature of medieval travels, opposed to the secular character of modern and contemporary ones, Kaelber takes into account another unnoticed factor: travelling became increasingly secular after the spreading of the educational type of travel in early modern times. Thus the evolution of travelling was gradual and it slowly became secularized.

This makes the medieval pilgrim akin to the current-day tourist, in that they share many common traits. Dolcibene's pooping in the Valley of Josaphat (as it is narrated by Franco Sacchetti in his *Trecentonovelle*) accounts for many similar situations wherein bad jokes and genuine piety or admiration coexist, shaping the experience of the average tourist. Even though a large part of academia still considers tourism and pilgrimage to be separate issues, the two activities cannot be dissociated from an economic standpoint. Tourism and pilgrimage are two activities situated at different end points on a continuum of travel, but there are many stages accounting for the mixture of the two.

This is precisely the case with Niccolò da Martoni. Religious tourism may be a form of 'knowledge-based tourism'<sup>129</sup>. The large spectrum of the travel continuum was not so large in the Middle Ages, therefore the two aspects coexisted naturally in the voyages of those times. Separating the pilgrim from the tourist may be wrong and manicheistic, because the secular and the sacred coexist naturally in the human mind. These two poles seem artificial and measure only a punctual state of the same mind.

*nostrae limitavimus, et ad quae nobis patronus obligaretur expressimus.* For the text of the twenty articles, see *Fratrīs Felicis Fabri Evagatorium* cit., vol. I, pp. 89-91. Felix Fabri's text contains many other juicy bits about the pilgrimages to the Holy Land, including a harsh critique of his fellow pilgrims, too attached to the worldly matters.

128. Cfr. Kaelber, *Paradigms* cit., p. 51: «...much of the literature composed by non-medievalists has failed to recognize the variation in the motives and experiences of medieval pilgrims, substituting (often unknowingly) a depiction of what should have been for a depiction of what was». Webb 2002 noted that Venetian shipmasters offered «inclusive packages» for the medieval pilgrims, similar to those proposed by the nowadays tourist offices, and based on many comparable medieval-contemporary variables such as the financial means of the pilgrim, the number of places he wished to see, etc.

129. See for this A. Jackowski - V. A. Smith, *Polish pilgrim-tourists*, in «Annals of Tourism Research», 19/1 (1992), pp. 92-106.

The same person could be judged differently from one day to the next if he or she were impressed by something else. The false separation occurs only when modern man tends to separate religion from culture, even though there is ample proof that both of them share the same sphere of cognition. More than often, religious ideas shape the cultural patterns of a society. And in medieval times, these two cannot be dissociated. I therefore embrace Clifford Geertz's approach to religion as a dimension of culture<sup>130</sup>. In this case, the categories of tourist profiles should be applied to Niccolò's story, in order to see if there is more than meets the eye in the make-believe Antiquity stories and sites that he was presented with.

Erik Cohen proposed a typology of tourist profiles based on their desire for novel or familiar experiences: the organized mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the explorer, and the drifter<sup>131</sup>. In another study, he proposed five different types of tourist profiles, forming a continuum of 'modes' and ranging from the seeking of mere pleasure to the quest for meaning: recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, and existential<sup>132</sup>. These two typologies became the standard reference in sociological tourist studies, and when we take a look at the description of the recreational mode, we instantly recognize elements of Niccolò's travelling experiences: «a recreational experience is a form of entertainment akin in nature to other forms of entertainment such as the cinema, theatre, or television. The tourist 'enjoys' his trip, because it restores his physical and mental powers and endows him with a general sense of well-being»<sup>133</sup>. It is true that Cohen distinguishes between the tourist and the pilgrim, because for «the recreational tourist trip, the intent and meaning of the religious voyage is secularized: it loses its deeper, spiritual content»<sup>134</sup>. However, we may easily relate this to the different interests of

130. C. Geertz, *Religion as a Cultural System*, in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. M. P. Banton, London 1966, pp. 1-46.

131. E. Cohen, *Toward a sociology of international tourism*, in «Social Research», 39/1 (1972), pp. 164-89.

132. Id., *A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences*, in «Sociology», 13/2 (1979), pp. 179-201.

133. Cohen, *A Phenomenology* cit., p. 183.

134. Ivi, p. 184.

Niccolò's voyage and to the absence of the sacred in most Greek sites of his trip. Cohen explains the «apparent gullibility» quite simply: this type of tourist «seeks recreation, he is quite eager to accept the make-believe and not to question its authenticity; after all one does not need to be convinced of the authenticity of a TV play or a motion picture in order to enjoy it as a recreative, entertaining or relaxing experience»<sup>135</sup>.

Focused on pleasure, this variety of tourism thrives on pseudo-events. Since the tourist becomes a part of the performance, he participates in a game, giving the false impression that he is gullible and credulous, even though he is not. For instance, Niccolò da Martoni narrates all sorts of silly stories. Chief among them is one implying that the beauty of ancient art should be ascribable to a divine power and not to human nature. This story was told to him in Port Raphty, 24 miles north of Athens, and it involved a woman and a man turned to stone (that is, into statues) by God, because the man was chasing the woman for carnal pleasures:

Prope quem portum non multum longe in quodam monte, sunt due ymagines de marmore, viri et mulieris, de quibus hoc recitatur quod dictus vir existens homo sequebatur dictam mulierem, que erat virgo, causa ipsam carnaliter cognoscendi. Ipsa fugiebat per dictos montes nolens se consentire voluntati sue. Tandem videns mulier quod non poterat evadere de manibus dicti viri suas preces fundit Deo ut converterentur ambo in ymagines marmoreas et exaudite fuerunt preces sue, et sic manent usque in hodiernum diem<sup>136</sup>.

Was Niccolò credulous? Did he really believe it? Did he also believe that a niche in the Thrasyllus monument of Athens sheltered the statue of an idol – the Gorgon – by whose magic power any hostile ship approaching Athens was sunk on the spot?<sup>137</sup>

135. Ibid.

136. *Io Notario* cit., p. 134; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 648. Cfr. Weiss, *The Renaissance* cit., p. 135, for the identification with Port Raphty.

137. Ivi, pp. 134–5. See also J. P. A. van der Vin, *Travellers to Greece and Constantinople: Ancient Monuments and Old Traditions in Medieval Travellers' Tales*, Leiden 1980, p. 46, notes 155 and 156, who identifies the idol and the two columns with the Gorgon made of gilded bronze placed on the wall of the Athenian stronghold. He thinks that this could be located in the theatre of Dionysus, where a Gorgon representation was dedicated by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. However, van der Vin, *Travellers* cit., p. 46, is aware that the two pillars have been identified with the monument of Thrasyllus, lost in 1827, during the siege of the Acropolis.



Extra menia castris sunt due columpne magne supra quas dicitur alias fuisse quoddam septrum mirifice factum in quo sepro dicitur quod erat quidam ydolum intra inclusus cum tali potestate constructus quod si qua navilia illis temporibus venissent contra civitatem Acthenarum, quantum longe videbantur in mari, per dictum ydolum statim suffocabantur, quando vero veniebant ad Acthenas pro bono esse, nullum nocumentum ipsis naviliis per dictum ydolum inferebatur<sup>138</sup>.

Niccolò's naivety is not uniform. He is naïve in numerous ways. In front of the Red Sea, for instance, he notes that its *aqua est sicut aqua aliorum marium*<sup>139</sup>. This disappointment helps us explain why he disliked the urban aspects of certain sites. Perhaps he had preconceived ideas about how the sacred places were supposed to look, a mental picture that did not correspond to reality<sup>140</sup>. On the other hand, his knowledge of the Greek world was extremely limited and he accepted every story that he was presented with, probably because the recreational tourist is «eager to accept the make-believe and not to question its authenticity»<sup>141</sup>.

Niccolò was not a simpleton. He was half-seriously deluding himself for the pleasure of it, because the experience was not part of his real world. He found himself in a «finite province of meaning, separate from reality», «aware of the fact [he was] playing a role in order to upkeep an inauthentic, indeed artificial, but nevertheless enjoyable, construction of (touristic) reality», and he accepted it because «admission would spoil the game»<sup>142</sup>.

138. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 142; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 652.

139. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 62; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 606.

140. Cfr. N. Collins-Kreiner – N. Kliot, *Pilgrimage tourism in the Holy Land: The behavioural characteristics of Christian pilgrims*, in «GeoJournal», 50 (2000), pp. 55-67: 61, who note that most contemporary pilgrims to the Holy Land have such an initial image, but very few consider that their mental images correspond to reality. Most of them note a large discrepancy between their imaginary view of the sites and the real ones. They analysed the discrepancy between the pilgrim's image and reality and the various emotional range of this reaction (disappointment, joy, or astonishment), implying that this depends on the pilgrim's location on the axis of sacred-secular. «The discrepancy grows as the distance between the pilgrim's world perception and reality grows. The discrepancy's positive or negative nature depends on its direction: the more it contrasts with the pilgrim's world perception, the more negative it is, whereas, if it fits the pilgrims' world perception, it will be more positive».

141. Cohen, *A Phenomenology* cit., p. 184.

142. Ivi, pp. 184-5.

Yet there are other modes of tourism in Cohen's typology. The diversionary tourist wishes to «escape from the boredom and meaninglessness of routine». His actions are similar to those of the recreational tourist, except that «it is the meaningless pleasure of a centre-less person»<sup>143</sup>. The next profile is that of the experiential tourist, a «disenchanted or alienated individual [who] becomes growingly aware of his/her state of alienation» and «observes the authentic life of others», all the more remaining «aware of their 'otherness'»<sup>144</sup>. Niccolò shares certain traits of this type of tourist when he is trying to drive a cart of oxen in Cyprus, accepting that he is not good at doing it<sup>145</sup>. Next comes the experimental mode, «characteristic of people who do not adhere any more to the spiritual centre of their own society, but engage in a quest for an alternative in many different directions»<sup>146</sup>. And the last type is the existential tourist, «committed to an 'elective' spiritual centre, i.e. external to the mainstream of his native society and culture». For Cohen, «the acceptance of such a centre comes phenomenologically closest to a religious conversion»<sup>147</sup>.

Cohen explains these categories through their interaction with a centre. This is why he compares the last tourist mode, the 'existential one' with the pilgrim. In his opinion, «the traditional religious pilgrimage is a sacred journey to a centre which, though geographically 'ex-centric' is still the centre of the pilgrim's religion»<sup>148</sup>, but he accepts that there are other centres of pilgrimage of a less religious nature (cultural, artistic, or national ones). He counts among these cultural pilgrimages the «visits to the great artistic centres of the past, the heritage of one's own culture, [...] or any visit by people of 'Western' culture to the sites of classical antiq-

143. Ivi, pp. 185-6.

144. Ivi, pp. 186-8.

145. *Alloghavi unam carrectam pro certo pretio ut me portaret Nicosiam. Patronus carrecte, qui erat Grecus, fecit me conducere carrectam cum bobus, me iuncto, et multotiens conturbabat se mecum quia non bene ducebam, et quia nimis percutiebam boves carrecte. Ego nesciebam quid facere, quia nunquam talem artem exercivi; cum ipsa contemptione accessi tota die ad quemdam casale in quo illa nocte dormivi in terra super unam stolara; Io Notaio cit., p. 112; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 634.*

146. Cohen, *A Phenomenology* cit., p. 189.

147. Ivi, pp. 189-90.

148. Ivi, p. 190.

uity»<sup>149</sup>. And in a later study, Cohen even accepts that pilgrimage and tourism form a common cultural continuum, but he constantly argues that pilgrimage and tourism have different approaches to the direction of the journey. According to his evaluation, the pilgrim or the pilgrim tourist and the traveller or travelling tourist move toward or away from their own socio-cultural centre<sup>150</sup>.

The problem with these sociologic typologies is that they are manicheistic no matter what they chose to enforce as common denominator of the 'modes'. The typologies do not conceive cases like Niccolò's, in the same time a pilgrim and a recreational tourist, because they need to isolate an individual in one category, or in between two categories, without paying attention to the possibility that the same person could belong to two or more categories depending on several factors (state of mind, emotional disposition, nature of the visited place, etc.). Because of exactly the same problem, it is difficult to decide if Cyriacus of Ancona is an experiential or experimental tourist, since he clearly could not belong to those who look for a different spiritual centre. This happens because the typology cannot conceive the existence of multiple cultural centres at the same time, such as Rome and Athens for Cyriacus. However, it does not matter if these typologies work in the case of our rare and odd examples. They simply allow us to understand, through continuous comparisons with modern and contemporary cases, what was different in the voyages of Niccolò and Cyriacus.

The latter did not practice recreational activities. He had doubts concerning some stories, and was in search of ancient inscriptions, even though his knowledge of Greek was limited. The only difference between the doubts of Cyriacus and those of George Wheler (1675) comes from the better knowledge and education of the latter. In order to prove this, one should note that Nicolas de Nicolay (1551), a man of the Renaissance, was as credulous as Niccolò da Martoni, simply because he was enjoying his visit of Kythira. I therefore believe that Cyriacus, Niccolò, and the others were told similar stories simply because the tourist pseu-

149. Ivi, p. 191.

150. Id., *Pilgrimage centers: Concentric and excentric*, in «Annals of Tourism Research», 19/1 (1992), pp. 33-50.

do-events were fashioned after the high and popular culture milieus of the time. They were tailored to suit any traveller, with a better or worse level of education. The guide would only provide them with entertaining stories. And it is highly probable that the stories told by locals came from the milieu of high culture, more precisely from the interactions with the Byzantines, as proven by the last three examples of the current study.

### *The Fountain(s) and Studium of Aristotle*

I mentioned the *studium* and fountain of Aristotle several times. It is high time we read the notary's account of this particular visit. Niccolò drank from the fountain, in hope of getting smarter, and contemplated the studio of Aristotle:

... accessimus ad illos duos fontes aquarum de quibus oportebat quemlibet scolare bibere pro acquirenda scientia, et in hoc auctores figunt, quia aqua fontium quam oportebat eos bibere erat studium magnorum philosophorum, videlicet Aristotelis et aliorum qui erant in dicta civitate Athenarum, qui fontes erant duo pulcherrime laborati et fabricati cum lapidibus marmoreis. Deinde accessimus ad studium Aristotelis, quod studium est de lapidibus marmoreis fabricatum, longum pedibus XX et largum XVI. Erat copertum supra de trabibus marmoreis et tabulis marmoreis supra eos et totum studium in circuitu et supra erat laboratum diversis laboribus cum auro fino et aliis pulchris coloribus, itaque adhuc videntur vestigia dictorum laborum ab utroque capite ipsius studii; extra portas sunt atria cum columpnis coperta trabibus et tabulis marmoreis, per que atria ita laborata et picta auro Aristotelis, quando erat fastiditus studendi, ibat ambulando pro sui delectatione<sup>151</sup>.

Joined to the *studium* building was an atrium where Aristotle walked to amuse himself when he was tired. In dealing with this passage, van der Vin believes that «Aristotle's way of teaching was no longer properly understood in the Middle Ages»<sup>152</sup>. This could be a sort of Chinese whispers for the Peripatetic teaching. Yet Peripateticism was known in the Middle

151. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 136, 138; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 650.

152. van der Vin, *Travellers* cit., p. 43.

Ages. Most of its Medieval Latin references draw on the explanation provided by Isidore<sup>153</sup>. This leaves us with two probable explanations. On the one hand, Niccolò could have been told a correct story by his guides, on condition that the latter belonged to the local cultural elite (clergymen, Latin monks, etc.), but he misunderstood it. Another possibility is that these guides were not members of the said elite, but they had heard stories originating in upper cultural strata and misunderstood them themselves. Whichever of the two possibilities is nearer to the truth does not matter here, for both of them verify that there was a certain degree of permeability between cultural strata, and that even the lowest of the low were able to learn stories fashioned for the clever ones.

Getting back to Niccolò's text, it is difficult to say what monument was the *studium*. Even though it was identified with the Thrasyllus choragic monument or with the skene of the Dionysian theatre<sup>154</sup>, on account of two different places where it is placed by other sources, I believe that none of the two are what Niccolò saw. It should be pointed out that there is a certain progression in Niccolò's Athenian visit. He followed a precise path. First he went to the fountain(s), then to the *studium*, next to Hadrian's *hospitium*, entered the Acropolis through the Propylaea, visited the Parthenon, and ended his notes with the two columns where he was told the story about the Gorgon statue. The route seems to move from East / South-East to West / North-West<sup>155</sup>, and he must have recorded it thoroughly. Given that the *studium Aristotelis* has also been identified

153. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, VIII 6, 13: *Peripatetici a deambulatione dicti, eo quod Aristoteles auctor eorum deambulans disputare solitus esset; Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiae sive originum libri XX*, ed. W. M. Lindsay, Oxford 1911, vol. I, p. 304.

154. van der Vin, *Travellers* cit., p. 43, thinks that Niccolò saw the Thrasyllus monument. Cfr. W. Judeich, *Athen im Jahre 1395 nach der Beschreibung des Niccolo da Martoni*, in «Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung», 22 (1897), pp. 423-38: 435, who suggested that this may be identified with the skene of the Dionysian theatre and the nearby stoa. Van der Vin follows here J. Morton Paton, *Chapters on Mediaeval and Renaissance Visitors to Greek Lands*, Princeton 1951, who pointed out that in many of the travellers' descriptions the *studium Aristotelis* was located either near the aqueduct of Hadrian on the Lykabettus, or else near the monument of Thrasyllus on the southern slope of the Acropolis.

155. For a similar opinion (Niccolò had visited only a part of the city located to the South-east of the Acropolis), see van der Vin, *Travellers* cit., p. 47.

with the aqueduct of Hadrian on the Lykabettus<sup>156</sup>, on account of similar information provided by Cyriacus of Ancona<sup>157</sup>, it is highly peculiar that Niccolò described the *hospitium Hadriani* immediately after, and using the word *deinde*, which implies a progression. It is more likely that the two could have been part of the same complex, or located in the same area of the ruined city:

Deinde accessimus ubi fuit magnum hospitium dicti inperatoris Adriani, quod est dirructum: nunc sunt columpne XX, alte circa palmos octuaginta, et grosse quantum possent accingere quatuor homines extensis brachiis. Supra quas columpnas sunt trabes de marmore longi et grossi supra quos magnum erat hedificium<sup>158</sup>.

Since the *hospitium Hadriani* could be the temple of Olympian Zeus, as identified by van der Vin and others before him – an interpretation that seems in accordance with the details provided by Niccolò<sup>159</sup> –, the *studium* should be located in its vicinity. I believe that it could be a part of the Roman Baths complex of Athens, located to the north of the Olympian Zeus temple, nowadays to the West of the Zappeion building in the National Garden of Athens, or some small building close nearby, probably disappeared today. From what Niccolò tells us, the *studium* was decorated with marble, gold, and beautiful colours, but it was not big. Niccolò was not impressed by its size (twenty feet by sixteen, that is, roughly 6m × 4,5m). The place was small, but it was intact, therefore it was imagined as a room where a human being could have lived. What impressed Nic-

156. Cfr. J. Morton Paton, *Chapters on Mediaeval and Renaissance Visitors* cit., pp. 32-3, note 13. Cfr. Weiss, *The Renaissance* cit., p. 134: «He also tells us that he saw the ruins of the school of Aristotle, all this being probably what was left of the aqueduct built by Hadrian and completed by Antoninus Pius».

157. C. Wachsmuth, *Die Stadt Athen im Alterthum*, Leipzig 1874-1890, vol. I, p. 727, believed that Cyriacus' words (*ad fauces aquaeductus extra Civitatem ad unum mill., quae studia Aristotelis, vulgus Atheniensium hodie vocat*) refer to the aqueduct of Hadrian at the foot of the Lykabettus.

158. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 138; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 650.

159. For the identification of the *hospitium Hadriani* with the temple of Olympian Zeus, see van der Vin, *Travellers* cit., p. 43. It was already identified as such in the study of Judeich, *Athen* cit., p. 436. Cfr. Wachsmuth, *Die Stadt* cit., vol. I, p. 727, who worked on Cyriacus' notes and also believed that this was the Temple of Olympian Zeus.

colò was the decoration, but from his description one might infer that such richness could hardly characterise the early Roman period or the times of Hadrian. It fits better with the decoration of the late Roman or early Byzantine era. This is why I am thinking of the recently uncovered Roman Baths. The *caldarium*, *tepidarium*, and *frigidarium* were located north of the Gate of Hadrian, along Amalias Avenue. They were built in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century and the complex was enlarged at an even later date (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>160</sup>. Some of these rooms were decorated with polychrome marble tiles in *opus sectile*, characteristic for the late period, and this type of decoration may be compared to the one that stirred Niccolò's enthusiasm. Of course one may never know what the precise building was and where exactly it was located. Many Hellenistic and Byzantine monuments of this particular area of Athens were destroyed in order to enhance the pure Greek and Roman heritage when the Zappeion was built. A large part of the Roman Baths was also permanently buried<sup>161</sup>. And we should also think of the ruins of the Roman villa located on the southern side of the National Garden, also close to Hadrian's Gate and to the temple of Olympian Zeus. Nobody knows how they looked in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but they date back to the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>162</sup>. Niccolò could have seen them too.

This is a preliminary hypothesis. A final conclusion cannot be reached in the absence of an in-depth research on this topic. Moreover, the working hypothesis does not fit the assertion that the *studia Aristotelis* – equally mentioned by Cyriacus of Ancona – were located by the aqueduct of Hadrian. In order to explain the differences between the two sources of information, it should be noted that Cyriacus explored a much larger area. It is best to quote the entire passage from his notes in a later printed edition:

160. R. Pitt, *Archaeological exhibits from recent excavations in Athens*, in «Archaeology Reports», 58 (2012), pp. 28-9: 29.

161. Θ. Καλπαξής, Καταστρέφοντας αρχαιότητες 'χάριν συμφερόντων των ζώντων', in «Αρχαιολογία και Τέχνες», 87 (2003), pp. 50-4.

162. M. Spiro, *Critical Corpus of Mosaic Pavements on the Greek Mainland. Fourth-Sixth Centuries, with Architectural Surveys*, New York 1978, pp. 14-26.

[78] Ad marmoream, & nobilissimum arcum Divi Hadriani Principis prope Palatia sua in prima facie.

ΗΛΕΙΣ. ΑΘΗΝΑΙ. ΘΗΣΕΩΣ. Η. ΠΙΠΙΝ. ΠΟΛΙΣ

[79] Item in alia facie.

ΗΛΕΙΣ. ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟΥ. ΚΑΙ. ΟΥΧΙ. ΘΗΣΕΩΣ. ΠΟΛΙΣ

[80] Ad fauces aquaeductus extra Civitatem ad unum mill., quae studia Aristotelis, vulgus Atheniensium hodie vocat.

[Deest icon.]

[81] Ad domos Hadriani Principis marmoreis, & immanibus columnis, sed magna ex parte collapsis. Extant utique adhuc integris, & directis suis cum Epistiliis c.xxi<sup>163</sup>.

The last passage is followed by the transcriptions of several inscriptions from the temple of Olympian Zeus. There is no drawing accompanying Cyriacus' note on the *studia Aristotelis* in the 1747 edition, but there is a drawing made by Giuliano da Sangallo after a manuscript of Cyriacus which agrees with it. On the lower end of f. 30v of the Barberini Latin 4424 codex, Giuliano copied the drawing of a ruined aqueduct with two parts of an inscription (badly copied, certainly), whose better version is to be found in the anonymous copy of Cyriacus preserved in the Berlin, Hamilton 254 manuscript, on f. 85v. Here it is below:

IMP. CAESAR. T. AELIVS.	HADRIANVS. ANTONINVS.
AVG. PIVS. III. TRIB. POT. II. PP.	ATHENIS. COEPTVM A DIVO
AQVAEDUCTVM. IN .NOVIS.	HADRIANO PATRE. SVO
CONSVMMAVIT	DEDICAVITQVE

The inscription is known as CIL 03.549 or ILS 0337 in the Latin inscription corpora<sup>164</sup>. Further proof that the Aristotle attraction was located at the feet of the Lykabettus may be found in the memoirs of an Italian

163. *Inscriptiones seu epigrammata graeca et latina reperta per Illyricum a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Liburniam, designatis locis ubi quaeque inventa sunt cum descriptione itineris*, Rome 1747, p. xi.

164. M. C. J. Miller, *Inscriptiones Atticae. Supplementum inscriptionum Atticarum*, Chicago 1992, vol. VI, pp. 7-9: *Imp(erator) Caesar T(itus) Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus / Aug(ustus) Pius co(n)s(ul) III trib(unicia) pot(estate) II(!) p(ater) p(atriciae) aquaeductum / in novis Athenis coeptum a divo Hadriano patre suo / consummavit dedicavitque*.



anonymous writer, preserved in a Milano manuscript. The latter saw Athens in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and mentioned a similar story about Aristotle, with a similar inscription nearby. However, he was not shown the same room as the one visited by Niccolò. He was shown only the aqueduct:

Ancora & da quella parte verso griego lontana de la terra circa un buon m(igli)no a piè d'un monte un arco triumphale assai bello, ma più de la mità per terra, e tutto di belli marmori, nel quale sono queste lettere IMP. CAES. T. AI suo loco vedeti, il qual arco fu fatto in memoria de Adriano imperatore, et qual fece far un condotto d'aqua, per condur(la) in Athene, del qual ancora par le vestigie al piè del detto monte, e in questo loco dicono li homini grossi esser stato il studio di Aristotele, ma non è alcune vestigie del aedificio antiquo. Ma credo più presso fuse quello aedificio, dove sono le 120 colonne grande, reaedificato in memoria del studio antiquo di Aristotele et altri antiqui phil(osophi), perchè è in f(orm)a de portico aperto da ogni banda, ma parre, come è detto, che fusse coperto di marmora et non è alcuna scraja del muro<sup>165</sup>.

This means that the inscription copied by Cyriacus must have been located around the *studium* of Aristotle. We do not know what happened to the *studium* itself, since the anonymous Italian of the 16<sup>th</sup> century did not see the same thing as Niccolò, but he probably saw what was shown to Cyriacus. One explanation would be that the said room was destroyed in the time passed between these visits. Another one would be that Niccolò was wrong, but it is also possible that Niccolò was shown something different.

The Aristotle-at-Lykabettus tradition continued. The Königsberg pharmacist Reinhold Lubenau also described the 'Palace' of Aristotle as the aqueduct of Hadrian at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>166</sup>. Later on, at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, François Arnaud locates the school of Aristotle once again at the aqueduct<sup>167</sup>. But there were new things in this

165. Morton Paton, *Chapters cit.*, p. 167, note 35, who quotes the Milano manuscript.

166. Ivi, p. 48: *In der Stadt hatt ehr mir ein Ohrt gezeiget, da noch 25 Marmorseulen stehen, etwa drei Man hoch und zimlich dicke, da ohne Zweifel ein grosser Pallast gestanden, und daneben lagen viel zerbrochner Quaderstück. Nicht weidt davon wahren zwei andere weisse Seulen, da sol Aristotiles, wie sie sagen, sein Palatium gehabt haben.*

167. Ivi, pp. 52-3: *Plus, hors la ville, se voit une porte sur deux colonnes, oh est escript ce que s'ensuit: IMP. CAESAR. T. AELIUS AUG. COS. III TRIB. POT. II. P. R. AQUE-DUCTUM IN NOVIS //// consumavit //// Les habitans disent que là estoit l'escolle d'Aris-*

late journal as well. There was, for instance, the seat of Aristotle<sup>168</sup>, and *un grand fanal de marbre, qu'on dict estoit d'Aristote*, most probably the Lysicrates choragic monument, which means that the traveller moved a bit through Athens and did not present the ruins grouped<sup>169</sup>. However, when speaking of the so-called school, it is worth noting that Arnaud saw the same inscription on the aqueduct as Cyriacus of Ancona and the Italian anonymous. This Aristotle attraction must have been part of the regular Athenian tour, but this also means that Aristotle stories grew in order to include more ruins, and they ended up as the core of a local folktale.

With this in mind, one should retain that Niccolò's visit was the very first among these Westerners' travels to Athens and that the early tradition could have evolved over a period of time. I believe that Niccolò was shown something else, either because of the level of education of his guides, because the local tradition had not yet settled down, or because the information was adapted from Greek sources and said different things. A second guess would be that the story of the philosophers' fountain could have started in the high culture milieu.

The *Mirabilia Urbis Athenarum*, a Byzantine text dating back to the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, lists more or less the same attractions, but does not group them in clear geographic clusters. After mentioning the Gate of Hadrian, this anonymous Greek guide mentions a royal building, identified with the temple of the Olympian Zeus. To the south of this building, the *Mirabilia* describe another royal building, as well as fountains, sanctuaries, and aqueducts:

εἰς ἣν οἶκος βασιλικός· ὑπῆρχε πλείστοις δὲ κίοσιν, ὑποκάτωθεν στηριζόμενος, ὅστις ἐλεπτουργήθη πρὸς τῶν δύο καὶ δέκα βασιλέων τῶν τὴν ἄκραν οἰκοδομησάντων. Πρὸς δὲ νότον τούτων ἐστὶν οἶκος βασιλικὸς πλὴν ὠραῖος, εἰς ὃν κατερχόμενος ὁ δούξ κατὰ καιρὸν εἰς εὐωχίαν ἐκινεῖτο· ἐκεῖ ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ Νεάκρουνος πηγή ἢ Καλλιρρόη, εἰς ἣν λουόμενος ἀνήρχετο εἰς τέμενος τὸ τῆς Ἥρας λεγόμενον καὶ προσηύχετο· νῦν δὲ μετεποιήθη εἰς ναὸν τῆς ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου ὑπὸ τῶν εὐσεβῶν<sup>170</sup>.

*tote, de plus voit on le lieu où se faisoient les joustes, avec de grandes places taillées au roc vif, et se voit dans du roc où posoient des idoles.*

168. Ivi, pp. 167–8: *Au pied de ladite montagne de St. George est une petite chapelle du même nom dans laquelle on voit une espèce de fauteuil de marbre enclavé dans la muraille que les sçavans du pays, qui sont en vérité de grands ignorans, nous ont dit être la chaise d'Aristote.*

169. Cfr. ivi, p. 52, note 12.

170. A. Corso, *The Topography of Ancient Athens in the 'Mirabilia Urbis Athenarum'*, in «Hyperboreus», 16/17 (2010–2011), pp. 69–80: 72.

The royal building is said to have hosted the δούξ – probably a military commander in the tetrarchic administration – who went there during festivities. It was located in the vicinity of the fountain Kallirrhoe or Enneakrounos, a strong suggestion that this should be the school of Aristotle presented to Niccolò, and that the fountain(s) that he saw could have been this / these particular fountain(s)<sup>171</sup>. Niccolò probably saw the ruins of one or two fountain houses, at the Kallirrhoe spring itself, in the bed of the Ilissos river and south-east of the temple of Olympian Zeus, the other being at Enneakrounos, nearby on the same bank<sup>172</sup>. Since the royal building was located to the south of the temple, this fits well with the tour of Niccolò da Martoni, but it is hard to identify what it was exactly<sup>173</sup>. Then the Greek text makes a lengthy description of Herodes Atticus's Odeon, located on the southwest slope of the Acropolis of Athens, and mentions two aqueducts (ἀγωγούς ὕδατος δύο)<sup>174</sup>.

There is nothing about philosophers drinking from fountains, a vital piece of information in Niccolò's visit, but the *Mirabilia* draw on other ancient sources and speak of the διδασκαλεῖον of Aristotle a little bit earlier, without placing it where it should have been, at the Lyceum.

Κατὰ ἀνατολὰς δὲ τούτου ὑπῆρχον τὰ παλάτια Κλεινίδους καὶ Μιλτιάδου· καὶ πλησίον τούτων ἄκμῃ ἴσταται διδασκαλεῖον λεγόμενον τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους<sup>175</sup>.

There are no direct references in the Greek text as to where this

171. For this opinion, see D. P. Crouch, *Water Management in Ancient Greek Cities*, New York-Oxford 1993, p. 294. For the two fountains, see also the point of view of E. J. Owens, *The Enneakrounos Fountain-House*, in «The Journal of Hellenic Studies», 102 (1982), pp. 222-5, and R. Tölle-Kastenbein, *Kallirrhoe und Enneakrounos*, in «Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts», 101 (1986), pp. 55-73, who argue that the name Enneakrounos was transferred from a derelict fountain to another one in the Agora.

172. For a different opinion, see van der Vin, who thought that these fountains could have been the remains of some waterworks on the south side of the Acropolis. To prove this, he quoted Judeich, *Athen* cit., pp. 434 (and note 2), 435 (and note 1).

173. Since all of this complex is said to have included the sanctuary of Hera, where the δούξ offered prayers, Corso believes that the whole architectural ensemble that was one believed to be the Panhellenion. Corso, *The Topography* cit., p. 79.

174. For these aqueducts, see Sh. Leigh, *The Aqueduct of Hadrian with the Water Supply of Roman Athens*, PhD of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 1998.

175. Corso, *The Topography* cit., p. 71.

διδασκαλεῖον should be located, but the following phrase mentions a site located above it:

Ἵπερθε δὲ τούτῳ ἴστανται δύο κίονες· καὶ εἰς μὲν τὸν ἀνατολικὸν ὑπῆρχε τὸ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἄγαλμα, εἰς δὲ τὸν δυσικὸν τὸ τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος· μέσον δὲ τούτου λέγουσιν εἶναι ποτε Γοργόνης κεφαλὴν ἔνδον κουβουκλείου σιδηροῦ· ἔστι δὲ καὶ ὥρολόγιον τῆς ἡμέρας μαρμαριτικόν<sup>176</sup>.

The columns above the school of Aristotle and the head of the Gorgon «which is said to have once stood nearby» have close terms of comparison in Niccolò's memoirs. Our traveller does not mention the marble sundial, but he mentions everything else. However, the Greek text places the school of Aristotle on the southern slopes of the Acropolis and not to the east, in Hadrian's city, like Niccolò, or to the north-east, at the foothill of Lykabettus, like all the other Western travellers. This means that there was a local tradition about the διδασκαλεῖον, but that it changed at the arrival of the Latins and it was probably still evolving by the time of Niccolò's visit, in search of a better and more attractive place. Therefore this tourist attraction had evident Byzantine roots – and even truthful ones, for the Byzantines knew well the architecture of the city<sup>177</sup> – but it evolved during the Latinocracy, when certain ruins were favoured to the detriment of the real sites. The best proof is that the Byzantine *Mirabilia* had deeper roots in ancient literature. Corso argued that the mention of Poseidon and Athena's statues on the two columns in the vicinity of the Gorgon may be the misinterpretation of a passage by Pausanias who described a similar statuary group on the terrace of the Acropolis. He also argued that the mention of the school of Aristotle refers to the commentators of Aristotle (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*) whose philosophical schools were located on the southern side of the Acropolis in Late Antiquity<sup>178</sup>. Corso also went as far as to identify the διδασκαλεῖον with the

176. Ibid.

177. Cf. *ivi*, p. 76: «The reference to the 'so called school of Aristotle' refers probably to the philosophical schools which had been constituted in late antiquity on the south of the Acropolis and where philosophers who became famous for their *commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* taught. The fact that the guide [the *Mirabilia*] defines this attribution (said to be) implies that the writer was aware of its convention».

178. Ibid.

House of Proclus, or *House Chi*, a building erected at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> or at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, but whose description does not fit Niccolò's description of the *studium*<sup>179</sup>.

If the Aristotle house or school are not one and the same in Byzantine and Latin sources, this may be due to the fact that the attraction changed locations. The more richly decorated site could have been chosen because it was more beautiful, providing better stories. Wherever these places were actually located, it is clear that Niccolò's tour of Athens counted sites already included in the Byzantine tours. This meant that there was a cultural recuperation, which is obvious when one deals with the Niccolò's story about the Gorgon idol.

The Byzantine text also mentions the story of Gorgon's head. It did not exist anymore at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century; the anonymous author borrowed it from a tradition started by Pausanias<sup>180</sup>. But so did Niccolò, who said that the two columns were there (present time: *extra menia castris sunt due columpne magne*), while the Gorgon head has been, therefore it was not (imperfect tense: *erat quidam ydulus intra inclusus*). Strangely enough, Niccolò mentioned a *septrum* instead of the statues of Poseidon and Athena, and imagined that the Gorgon head was displayed in this *septrum*<sup>181</sup>. This implies that his guides knew the Byzantine tradition to the letter, and maybe even the Byzantine text of the *Mirabilia* itself, because Niccolò's presentation seems to be a corruption of the Greek text, in which two separate places have been mingled simply because they were presented one after the other. This in turn means that the Latin tradition was fashioned after the Byzantine one, with several changes and alterations. It is a pity that Cyriacus, who was also shown the Gorgon attraction, provided only basic information and no story<sup>182</sup>.

179. For the House of Proclus, see A. Karivieri, *The 'House of Proclus' on the Southern Slope of the Acropolis: A Contribution*, in *Post-Herulian Athens, Aspects of Life and Culture in Athens A.D. 267-529*, ed. P. Castrén, Helsinki 1994, pp. 115-39; cfr. A. Afonasiu - E. Afonasiu, *The Houses of Philosophical Schools in Athens*, in «Σχολή», 8, 1 (2014), pp. 9-23.

180. Corso, *The Topography* cit., p. 76, note 39.

181. For all the quotations, see *Io Notario* cit., p. 142; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 652.

182. See for this *Inscriptiones* 1747, p. 1X: *ad statuam Gorgonis sub arce ad marmoream, & ornatissimam scenam prope incisam rupem, & mira ope fabri factum specus*. Cfr. Wachsmuth, *Die Stadt* cit., vol. I, p. 727, who believed that the place should be located above the Theatre.

With all this in mind, let us should return to the question of the fountain(s) and *studium* at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The fact that these attractions occupy a different place in Niccolò's narrative may be an effect of the Latin alterations to the Byzantine tradition. The choice of Kallirrhoe or Enneakrounos as the fountain(s) of (any of the) philosophers (*quislibet scholaris*) could have been dictated by the adding of more attractions to the already established Byzantine tour. Such a fountain may be indeed related to the ancient texts which speak of springs or fountains located in the eastern part of the city.

The Lyceum, for instance, the heart of the Peripatetic school of philosophy founded by Aristotle, was located near the fountain of Panops. This fountain was located between the Academy and the Lyceum. It is mentioned in Plato's *Lysis*, a dialogue starting with the Socrates describing his route from the Academy to the Lyceum, coming to the postern gate of the city, located by the fountain of Panops (ἡ Πάνοπος κρήνη)<sup>183</sup>. Nevertheless, a Medieval Latin scholar could not have borrowed this particular reference from Plato's work, for the Latin translations of Plato were rare and did not include this particular dialogue. However, the fountain and the Plato reference are mentioned by Cicero in the first book of *De oratore*, where Scaevola says:

cur non imitatur, Crasse, Socratem illum, qui est in Phaedro Platonis? Nam me haec tua platanus admonuit, quae non minus ad opacandum hunc locum patulis est diffusa ramis, quam illa, cuius umbram secutus est Socrates, quae mihi videtur non tam ipsa acula, quae describitur, quam Platonis oratione crevisse, et quod ille durissimis pedibus fecit, ut se abiceret in herba atque ita [illa], quae philosophi divinitus ferunt esse dicta, loqueretur, id meis pedibus certe concedi est aequius<sup>184</sup>.

Since *acula* means here a small stream or a small amount of water, a medieval reader of Cicero could have been compelled to identify such a

183. Ἐπορευόμεν μὲν ἐξ Ἀκαδημείας εὐθὺς Λυκείου τὴν ἔξω τείχους ὕπ' αὐτὸ τὸ τεῖχος: ἐπειδὴ δ' ἐγενόμην κατὰ τὴν πολίδα ἢ ἡ Πάνοπος κρήνη, ἐνταῦθα συνέτυχον Ἰπποθάλει τε τῷ Ἱερωνόμῳ καὶ Κτησίπῳ τῷ Παιανιῇ καὶ ἄλλοις μετὰ τούτων νεανίσκοις ἀθρόοις συνεστώσι; *Plato: Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias*, with an English Translation by W. R. M. Lamb, Cambridge Mass. 1925, p. 6.

184. *Cicero: De oratore*, eds. E. W. Sutton - H. Rackham, Cambridge, Mass. 1959-1960, vol. I, p. 20.

fountain close to the Lyceum as a fountain of the philosophers of Athens. The reference to the fountain of Panops and its exact location were not known at the time<sup>185</sup>, but a Latin scholar could have easily looked for fountains in the proximity of a place connected with Aristotle.

It is not hard to imagine such a scenario, in which the Latin monks or clerks, knowing the Ciceronian reference, looked for such a place in Athens. The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century were times of great learning, when the first real Latin translations of Aristotle were made, and the most famous Aristotelian scholar of those times, William of Moerbeke, spend many years in the vicinity of Athens. This friend of Thomas Aquinas and participant at the Second Council of Lyon (1274) became archbishop of Corinth in 1277 and stayed there until his return to Italy in 1283. It was argued that the church of Merbaka, in the vicinity of Argos, owes its name to him, and that the use of ancient *spolia* in the decoration of this particular building could be an interpretation of 13<sup>th</sup> century theological questions, also related to William's presence<sup>186</sup>. William's knowledge of Greek was prodigious. He spent time in Nicaea and Thebes in 1260, and was one of the most prolific translators from Greek into Latin. He revised older Latin translations of Aristotle, he translated previously untranslated Aristotelian texts as well as commentaries to the work of this philosopher, the *Elements of Theology* by Proclus, and mathematical treatises. It is only natural to imagine that he was involved in cultural exchanges during his stay in the Peloponnesus and in Attica. And there must have been others like him, more or less educated, who could have facilitated the assimilation of Greek texts, even less academic ones, such as the *Mirabilia Urbis Athenarum*.

I therefore believe that the tradition about Aristotle's school and fountain(s) started from Byzantine bases and evolved into a tourist story, regularly told afterwards. It continued to be told in the same way as the one about Kythira (told until late modern times). And it is of no surprise that

185. The fountain of Panops was probably located been near the Eridanos river, north of the Lyceum. Cfr. J. Travlos, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Athens*, New York 1971, p. 345.

186. G. D. R. Sanders, *William of Moerbeke's Church at Merbaka: The Use of Ancient Spolia to Make Personal and Political Statements*, in «Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens», 84/3 (2015), pp. 583-626.

the Athenian stories involved the presence of philosophers, because the ancient philosophers must have been a favourite subject of the French and Italian upper class. The philosophers were summoned in another places too, in connection with other sites. For example, the Florentine pilgrim Leonardo Frescobaldi did not really visit Greece, but he stopped in Methoni (Modon) on his way back from the Holy Land, in 1385, and he noted a story about a hill which involved once again the presence of ancient philosophers<sup>187</sup>. It looks like these Antiquity references were a favourite make-believe for the tourists stopping in Greece.

*The Trojan Destruction of Athens, Hadrian's Gate, and Boccaccio's Theseid*

Of a modest education, Niccolò must have known only what the average travelling man of his time knew. This explains his recurring Trojan references, which were told to travellers on a regular basis. There were probably several highlights of the Greek lands that formed the must-see proofs of the legendary past. Such could have been the case of the Kythira temple, where the Trojan War started. The same may be said about the ruins of the aforementioned Athenian attractions. They explain the strange story of the destruction of Athens by the Trojans, coming immediately after the mention of Emperor Hadrian in Niccolò da Martoni's text<sup>188</sup>:

Civitas Aethenarum, ut hostendit per antiqua hedificia, et prout doctores et auctores loquitur quod alias fuit magna civitas et magna hedificia in ea fuerunt, prout vidimus multas columpnas et multos lapides marmoreos qui nunc iacent ubi ipsa civitas fuit hedificata. Ipsa civitas alias erat constructa usque ad mare et girabat in circuytu milearia XXIII<sup>or</sup>, tempore imperatoris Adriani, qui ipsi civitati fuit dominatus. Deinde postquam ipsa civitas fuit destructa a Troyanis reducta est prope castrum civitatis<sup>189</sup>.

187. *Dirimpetto al porto di Modona si è un grandissimo poggio, il quale si chiama il Poggio della Sapienza; nel qual poggio anticamente solevano andare i filosofi e i poeti a fare loro arti; Pellegrini scrittori: Viaggiatori toscani del Trecento in Terrasanta*, ed. A. Lanza - M. Troncarelli, Florence 1990, p. 174.

188. Cfr. van der Vin, *Travellers* cit., p. 42, who believes that the destruction of Athens by the Trojans refers to the invasion of the Heruli in 267 AD. It is hard to imagine how Niccolò could have learnt of such an invasion.

189. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 136; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 649.



Morton Paton compared this passage to a story by Ludolf von Südheim (*Ludolphi de itinere Terrae Sanctae liber*). This German priest wrote it half a century earlier, and it concerns two destructions (of Athens and of Troy)<sup>190</sup>:

Haec civitas [that is, Athens] quondam fuit nobilissima, sed nunc quasi deserta. Nam in civitate Ianuensi non est aliqua columna marmorea vel aliquod opus bonum lapideum sectum, nisi sit de Athenis ibid. deportatum, et totaliter ex Athenis civitas est constructa, sicut Venetia ex lapidibus Troiae est aedificata<sup>191</sup>.

Ludolf von Südheim had some mixed up ideas about what happened in ancient times. His knowledge of Antiquity was limited, probably below Niccolò's, thus explaining the otherwise inexplicable tale of the Genoese taking spoils from Athens and the Venetians taking spoils from Troy. In a previous passage, Ludolf explained what Troy was for him. He was shown such a place, with under-water foundations, and he repeated the same information, i.e. the Venetians building their city with columns and marble pieces from Troy:

Cum autem sic cum galeyda de loco ad locum, de portu ad portum navigatur usque ad Constantinopolim, de qua prius dixi, pervenitur, et ipsa civitate dimissa supra littus Asiae minoris pervenitur ad locum, ubi quondam illa nobilissima civitas Troia fuit sita, cuius aliquod vestigium non apparet, nisi aliqua fundamenta in mari sub aqua et in aliquibus locis aliqui lapides et aliquae columnae marmoreae subterratae, quae tamen dum inveniuntur, ad alia loca deportantur. De quibus est sciendum, quod in civitate Venetiae non est aliqua columna lapidea vel aliquod bonum opus lapideum sectum, nisi de Troia ibidem sit deportatum<sup>192</sup>.

This was probably the στόμα τῆς Προποντίδος at Abydos, also known as *bocca d'Abido* or *buccha Avis* in other accounts. Robert de Clari equally describes it as the site of Troy<sup>193</sup>. But we shouldn't try to make ends meet

190. Morton Paton, *Chapters cit.*, p. 32, note 10, mentioning F. Gregorovius's *Geschichte der Stadt Athen im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 1889, vol. II, p. 342.

191. Ludolphi rectoris ecclesiae parochialis in Suchem *De itinere Terrae Sanctae liber*, ed. F. Deycks, Stuttgart 1851, p. 23.

192. Ludolphi rectoris cit., p. 16.

193. *Tant alerent qu'il vinrent a un port que on apele Bouke d'Ave, qui estoit bien chent liwes*

between the inconsistent materials provided by the two travel journals. The German priest learned that Athens was destroyed by the Genoese and that Troy was destroyed by the Venetians, while Niccolò thought that Athens was destroyed by the Trojans. These stories seem contradictory and yet they are much alike if not the same. It is obvious that the German and the Italian traveller were told weird narratives by their guides, that they did not understand those stories well, or maybe that the guides themselves misunderstood those stories too. And it really does not matter what the exact stories were. What matters is that they were made up by less educated people in order to impress their customers, the majority of whom had roughly the same level of education.

The only other thing of significance here is that Ludolf wrote his journal around 1350. It is therefore evident that the habit of telling tall tales about ancient times to travellers was part of an earlier tradition. This could have been the case in Athens, where Niccolò's escorts, some local Latins, showed him sites that they did not well understand. In order to fill the tour with stories, these guides were compelled to add some meaning to the ruins. And since Niccolò and the other travellers adored the story of Troy, the guides pulled Troy out of the hat as many times as they felt necessary. The fact that this ruse could lead to confusions and contradictions (Troy wrecked by Athenians at the Parthenon gates, followed by Athens destroyed by Trojans at other sites) was inconsequential. Niccolò travelled in a «finite province of meaning, separate from reality». He had his fun, did not care for authenticity, and the guides had a story to tell. This is why I believe that the odd story could have evolved out of the misreading of various Latin or Greek inscriptions, or even out of the misunderstanding of other (local) stories.

There is some proof that there were such misinterpretations. Some of these tall tales invented by local Latins or Greeks could have taken huge literary proportions. Roderick Beaton dealt with a curious story among the books of a 16<sup>th</sup> century private library in Constantinople: «The story of the most valiant Theseus, king of Athens, and how he went to the Amazons and fought against them and took them over and how he re-

turned again to Athens and ruled jointly with his brother Hadrian»<sup>194</sup>. The book is nowadays lost, but it appears in a catalogue of books belonging to one John Soutsos of Constantinople in 1570<sup>195</sup>. It is mentioned at the end of the list, along with three other romances (numbers 20–23 out of a total of 24 books in the entire library). The four books are:

κ'. ἱστορία τοῦ Φραντζέσκου μετὰ τῆς Μπέλας, καὶ ὅπως ἐπῆρε ὁ Φραντζέσκος ἀπὸ τὸ σιδερόκαστρον τὴν Μπέλα καὶ ἔφυγε, καὶ τὸ χαρτὶ ἔνε βιββάκινο φυγουράδο.

κα'. ἱστορία τοῦ Ἱμπερίου υἱοῦ ῥηγὸς τῆς Προβέντζας, καὶ ὅπως ἐπῆρε τὴν Μαργαῶνα, θυγατέρα οὐσα τοῦ ῥηγὸς Ανάπολις ντεριάμε, καὶ τὸ χαρτὶ ἔνε βιββάκινο φυγουράδο.

κβ'. ἱστορία καὶ βίος τοῦ γενναιοτάτου καὶ ἀνδρικοτάτου μεγάλου Βελισαρίου στρατηγοῦ τῶν Ῥωμαίων, καὶ ἔνε τὸ χαρτὶ βιββάκινο φυγουράδο.

κγ'. ἱστορία τοῦ γενναιοτάτου Θησαίου βασιλέως Ἀθηνῶν, καὶ ὅπως ἐπῆγε εἰς τὰς Ἀμαζόναις καὶ ἐπολέμησε καὶ ἐπαράλαβε αὐτὰς καὶ ὅπως πάλιν ἐπανῆλθεν εἰς τὰς Ἀθήνας καὶ συνεβασίλευσε μετὰ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἄδριανοῦ καὶ τὸ χαρτὶ ἔνε βιββάκινο φυγουράδο<sup>196</sup>.

The story of Belisarius is a well-known Demotic Greek text narrating the deeds of the famous general bearing the same name. The earliest version could be dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but there are three more versions, one of which is a *Rimadha*<sup>197</sup>. Next, *Imperios and Margarona* is another documented text, an adaptation of the French story of *Pierre de Provence et la Belle Maguelonne*, made at a later date (after 1453?), but there are suspicions that it may actually predate the French version<sup>198</sup>. The story of «how Francesco took Bela from the Iron-Castle and ran» is completely unknown. Even in the case of *Bella* being the adaptation into Greek of an epithet instead of the feminine character's name, there is no Italian

194. R. Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, London 1996<sup>2</sup>, p. 108 (for the Greek quotation, see p. 107).

195. The first editor of the said catalogue (Förster) implied that another list of John Soutsos' library was received by Antoine de Verdier, who published it at the end of his *Supplementum epitomes Bibliothecae Gesuerianae*, Lugduni 1585, at pp. 57–9. The information is incorrect and I could not identify such a list anywhere in de Verdier's book.

196. Richard Förster, (*Ricardi Foersteri*) *de antiquitatibus et libris manuscriptis Constantinopolitanis commentatio*, Rostochii 1877, p. 19. The catalogue itself bears the title ταῦτά εἰσι τὰ βιβλία τοῦ ἐνδοξοτάτου ἄρχοντος κυροῦ Ἰωάννου τοῦ Σοῦτζου.

197. *Ἱστορία τοῦ Βελισαρίου*, eds. W. F. Bakker – A. F. van Gemert, Athens 1988.

198. Beaton, *The Medieval* cit., pp. 138–40.

story of the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century that has Francesco for protagonist<sup>199</sup>. This leaves us with the story of Theseus, the Amazons, and his brother Hadrian. Beaton insists that the lost romance's plot could not be derived from the *Theseid*, even though it presents a very similar introductory part<sup>200</sup>. The main difference is the presence of Hadrian, brother of Theseus, in the Athenian sequence of the Byzantine story and that of Arcita and Palemone in Boccaccio's narrative.

Moreover, it is hard to imagine that a Greek translator of the *Theseid* would have made such changes, especially when there was a Greek translation of the *Theseid* already available in the late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century. This translation was presumably made in Venetian Crete or in the mainland of the Acciaiuoli, at a time when these Florentines became dukes of Athens. It is an abridged version of Boccaccio's story, but it does not change the plot and it is quite faithful in formal aspects. It even imitates the *ottava rima* of the original, even though the eleven-syllable verse of the Italian original was changed into the fifteen-syllable political verse that characterised Greek vernacular poems<sup>201</sup>. As for the differences, the Greek translation has seven stanzas more (six of these compose a catalogue of heroes), a fuzzy treatment of mythological details (due to the translator's own education, probably), and maybe the translator also used the commentaries of the *Theseid*<sup>202</sup>. I would add that the Greek version

199. There is only a late medieval Florentine *cantare* about a certain Ginevra degli Almieri, married to a Francesco Agolanti, but the two do not love each other, this Francesco is not a protagonist, Ginevra ends up with another character, and the text is known only from sixteenth century printed books, even though there were probably earlier versions in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. S. Corelli, *La 'Historia di Ginevra degli Almieri': proposte di studio per un cantare a stampa cinquecentesco*, in *La letteratura italiana e le arti*, Atti del xx Congresso dell'ADI – Associazione degli Italianisti (Napoli, 7–10 settembre 2016), eds. L. Battistini – V. Caputo – M. De Blasi – G. A. Liberti – P. Palomba – V. Panarella – A. Stabile, Rome 2018, pp. 1–7: 3–4.

200. Beaton, *The Medieval* cit., p. 108. He follows the opinion of Σ. Π. Λάμπρος, *Εικονογραφημένοι λογοτεχνικοί κώδικες*, in «Νέος Ελληνομνημύων», 11 (1914), pp. 433–40: 434–6.

201. Beaton, *The Medieval* cit., pp. 142–3.

202. E. Follieri, *Gli elementi originali nella versione neogreca del Teseida del Boccaccio*, in «Ελληνικά», 9 (1958), pp. 292–8; B. Olsen, *The Model and Translation Method of the Greek Theseid*, in *Origini della letteratura neogreca*. Atti del secondo Congresso Internazionale 'Neograeca Medii Aevi' (Venezia, 7–10 novembre 1991), ed. N. M. Panayotakis, Venice 1993, pp. 313–8. Cfr. B. Olsen, *The Theseid in Modern Greek - original or traditional?*, in «Renaissanceforum», 12 (2017), pp. 61–70.

of the *Theseid* is available in two manuscript and one print. Given the scarcity of Greek vernacular literary texts, subject to the vicissitudes of history that followed the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, one would expect that the 16<sup>th</sup> century reference must be one of the versions of the Greek *Theseid*. This is why Beaton did not know what to do with the *ἱστορία τοῦ γενειοτάτου Θησαίου* from the Constantinopolitan list of books. The presence of Hadrian in this story was simply absurd.

To the best of my knowledge, the only convincing explanation that accounts for such a variation in the storyline is an Athenian inscription mentioning both Theseus and Hadrian on the same monument. It was inscribed on both sides of Hadrian's Gate, the ruin located to the south-east of the Acropolis, and it read αἶδ' εἶς' Ἀθῆναι Θησέως ἢ πρὶν πόλις («this is Athens the former city of Theseus», on the eastern side), and αἶδ' εἶς' Ἀδριανοῦ καὶ οὐχὶ Θησέως πόλις («this is Hadrian's city and not that of Theseus», on the western side)<sup>203</sup>. I already mentioned Cyriacus' transcriptions of these inscriptions and we already know that the ruin was one of the local Athenian attractions.

There were also sculptures with stories of Dionysus, Ariadne, and Theseus installed in the Theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus, at the feet of the Acropolis, as a sort of homage to Hadrian (compared to Dionysus), but the ancient symbolism could not be known to the Byzantines or to the Latin occupants<sup>204</sup>. The Greek inscriptions on the Gate of Hadrian, on the other hand, were well known. The *Mirabilia Urbis Athenarum* speak about them and describe the edifice:

Ἴσταται δὲ κατὰ ανατολὰς τούτου καμάρα μεγίστη καὶ ὠραία· εἰσὶ δὲ τὰ ὀνόματα Ἀδριανοῦ καὶ Θησέως· εὕρισκεται ἔνδον τῆς αὐλῆς [...] μεγίστη ἐτύγχανεν<sup>205</sup>.

It was implied that Niccolò da Martoni read these inscriptions<sup>206</sup>, and

203. IG II<sup>2</sup> 5185. Cfr. e.g. M Zahmt, *Die Hadriansstadt von Athen. Zu FGrHist 257 F 19*, in «Chiron», 9 (1979), pp. 393-8.

204. For the gate's inscriptions and the connection with the sculptures in the theatre, see A. Karivieri, *Just one of the boys. Hadrian in the Company of Zeus, Dionysus and Theseus*, in *Greek Romans and Roman Greeks. Studies in Cultural Interaction*, ed. E. N. Ostenfeld, Aarhus 2002, pp. 40-54.

205. Corso, *The Topography* cit., p. 72.

206. According to van der Vin, *Travellers* cit., p. 43, Niccolò could have been able to

that Hadrian's Gate was the entrance of the *castrum* in his travel memoirs<sup>207</sup>, but this extrapolation is clearly wrong. What is more interesting for us is to observe that these inscriptions explain Niccolò's mumble-jumble story about Hadrian. Furthermore, the use of these inscriptions in the Byzantine guide-book and in Cyriacus' drawings raises odd questions about the creation of the Italian *Theseid*. Could it be a Greek story (or a local Latin story) that Boccaccio might have learned from his friend Acciaiuoli and decided to adapt, ditching the character of Hadrian, who did not make sense to a well-educated expert in Roman history?

Far-fetched as it may be, this new hypothesis should not be rejected as null and void. Researchers have struggled to explain Boccaccio's echoes of Greek novels for quite some time. Daria Porciatti defined the presence of Greek themes in Boccaccio's works as an *araba fenice metastasiana, sempre menzionata da tutti ma di cui è difficile provare l'esistenza*<sup>208</sup>. Often mentioned are the influences of late ancient Greek romances of Hellenistic inspiration, but there is also the question of the *favole greche ornate di molte bugie* mentioned the opening of Boccaccio's *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*. The passage is obscure and it led to two or more interpretations. The rejection of these fables can signify Boccaccio's discovery of Homer and his

read Greek and understand the name of Hadrian in the inscription of the gate simply because he was from Southern Italy, a place where the knowledge of Greek was advanced in comparison with the rest of Europe. van der Vin, *Travellers* cit., p. 41, extrapolates here from two studies by Weiss (R. Weiss, *The Dawn of Humanism in Italy*, London, [publisher not identified], 1947, pp. 4-5; and R. Weiss, *The Greek Culture of South Italy in the Later Middle Ages*, in «Proceedings of the British Academy», 37 [1951], pp. 23-50: 31), claiming that Weiss had shown «that in the eleventh to fourteenth centuries it was precisely people from the class of notaries in southern Italy who were intensely interested in the study of the Greek language, and that these Hellenists even practised the writing of Greek poetry». Weiss, on the other hand, simply speaks about Boccaccio and Petrarch's contacts with translators of Greek.

207. van der Vin, *Travellers* cit., p. 44, believes that the *introitus dicti castris* should be identified with the Gate of Hadrian or with the remains of a complex of buildings bearing a lost inscription. In my opinion, the entrance gate described by Niccolò could be the very gate of the fortification erected by the Franks. Van der Vin ignores that Niccolò is speaking next about the Propylaia and thinks that he must have considered the palace of Hadrian to be the *castrum civitatis*.

208. D. Porciatti, *Boccaccio e il romanzo greco. La fortuna delle 'favole greche ornate di molte bugie'*, in *Intorno a Boccaccio / Boccaccio e dintorni*. Atti del Seminario internazionale di studi (Certaldo Alta, Casa di Giovanni Boccaccio, 25 giugno 2014), eds. G. Frosini - S. Zamponi, Florence 2015, pp. 127-38: 127.

subsequent rejection of the Dares and Dictys' tradition<sup>209</sup>. But it may equally concern the works that Boccaccio himself had written until then; the passage can be taken as a sort of self-critique<sup>210</sup>. Boccaccio's knowledge of the Greek language and Homer was limited to say the least<sup>211</sup>, and it was secondary: he knew only what he learned from the Greek scholars that he surrounded himself with<sup>212</sup>, especially during his stay in Angevin Naples<sup>213</sup>.

Boccaccio could have had Greek connections feeding him Greek stories, but this type of proof is nevertheless irrelevant for the present question. There are other things to take into account. For instance, one of the stories in the *Decameron* which have been compared to the late ancient Greek novels, that of Alatiel<sup>214</sup>, is set in the Latin occupied Morea. Why not expect an influence of the Byzantine novel of the Palaeologan times, since it also had its roots in the exact same ancient sources?<sup>215</sup> These Greek novels were written in the same timeframe as Boccaccio's works. Finally, there is also the possibility that Boccaccio's Arcita, one of the main characters of the *Theseid*, is Digenis Akritas in disguise. The idea comes from a veteran article by Renée and Henry Kahane which attracted a 'cult following'<sup>216</sup>. Many other studies frequently cite it and accept the general hypothesis that Boccaccio may have heard this Greek story, but they also point out that most of the compared passages are commonplaces found in many literary texts<sup>217</sup>. The only thing that still stands from

209. L. Battaglia Ricci, *L'Omero di Boccaccio*, in *Boccaccio: gli antichi e i moderni*, eds. A. M. Cabrini - A. D'Agostino, Milano 2018, pp. 7-45: 14-5.

210. Porciatti, *Boccaccio cit.*, p. 136.

211. Ivi, p. 134: *conoscenza superficiale quando non addirittura assente del greco da parte di Boccaccio*.

212. C. C. Coulter, *Boccaccio's Acquaintance with Homer*, in «Philological Quarterly», 5 (1956), pp. 44-53.

213. R. Weiss, *The Translators from the Greek at the Angevin Court of Naples*, in «Rinascimento», 1 (1950), pp. 195-226.

214. Porciatti, *Boccaccio cit.*, p. 130, who makes a synthesis of a series of hypotheses presented by Cesare Segre and Michelangelo Picone.

215. Beaton, *The Medieval cit.*, p. 52 et sgg.

216. H. Kahane - R. Kahane, *Akritas and Arcita: A Byzantine Source of Boccaccio's Teseida*, in «Speculum», 20 (1945), pp. 415-25.

217. A. Pertusi, *La poesia epica bizantina e la sua formazione: problemi sul fondo storico e la struttura letteraria del 'Digenis Akritas'*, in *Atti del convegno internazionale sul tema: La poesia*

of the Kahane demonstration is the onomastic coincidence, the Amazon fight, the fight at the fountain, the story of the physician, and the similar deaths of the two heroes. We therefore deal with broad terms of comparison and the textual references quoted by the two Kahanes do not really prove anything<sup>218</sup>. Consequently the coincidences between the *Theseid* and the Greek epic may be either fortuitous or of an oral nature. Boccaccio might have heard an abridged version of the Digenis story, but frankly there is no way of telling which of the two interpretations is to be preferred<sup>219</sup>.

For the sake of the present demonstration, let us embrace the second option and imagine Boccaccio hearing the story of Digenis told by a Greek in Naples, or even by his dear friend Niccolò Acciaiuoli who had extensively travelled in the Peloponnesus and Attica in 1348-1341, the exact moment when Boccaccio wrote the *Theseid*. Recent research argued that Boccaccio made precise descriptions of the places visited by his friend Acciaiuoli – the castle in the story of Alatiel being Chlemoutsi, the old residence of the Villehardouin princes –, but he also fell into stereotypical descriptions of the Greeks taken from the commonplaces of the literature of his time<sup>220</sup>. If this was so, then the original story would not

*epica e la sua formazione (Roma, 28 marzo - 3 aprile 1969)*, Rome 1970, insisted on the links between the *Theseid* and *Digenis Akritas*, he but could not bring any conclusive evidence. For an assessment of the same hypothesis, see C. Carpinato, *Altre osservazioni sulla traduzione greca del 'Teseida'*, in *Medioevo romanzo e orientale. Oralità, scrittura, modelli narrativi*. Il Colloquio Internazionale (Napoli, 17-19 febbraio 1994), eds. A. Pioletti - F. Rizzo Nervo, Soveria Mannelli 1995, pp. 173-89: 178-9. In works of a general nature, where this hypothesis is not important, the similitudes between the Digenis legend and the *Theseid* are always mentioned, always criticized as being insufficient, but also tolerated as possible, because such a prospect would be interesting from a cultural point of view.

218. Moreover, Boccaccio's recreated Athens is based on Roman monuments and Latin literary descriptions. Cfr. J. H. McGregor, *Boccaccio's Athenian Theater: Form and Function of an Ancient Monument in Teseida*, in «Modern Language Notes», 99/1 (1984), pp. 1-42. This means that Boccaccio did not imagine Athens or Greece from what Greeks could have told him in Naples, nor from the stories of travellers that he may have encountered there or elsewhere.

219. If we imagine that the cultural transfer was of an oral nature, it is equally reasonable to imagine that Boccaccio modified the original story the way he liked it. He may have kept the fight at the fountain, the physician, and many other details from the original plot, but he fashioned the rest according to his own needs.

220. N. Budini Gattai, *La percezione del mondo greco del XIV secolo tra incomprensioni cul-*



be first hand, it could have mutated due to its oral nature, but Boccaccio still could have heard something about Amazons, therefore he could instantly think of Theseus. It is not difficult to imagine that Theseus could have thus been only the pretext of the poem. The place that Theseus actually occupies in the Italian poem (its very beginning) may prove that Boccaccio needed him in order to speak of Amazons. If this source (or another one, for there were many Greeks coming to Naples) told him another Morean story about Theseus, the Amazons, and Hadrian, such as the one recorded in the Constantinopolitan catalogue, Boccaccio could have made a single story out of two, ditching the character of Hadrian for obvious reasons.

Imagining the oral nature of this literary transfer is the only way to make it work. There are other solutions that speak of Boccaccio in connection with the Grottaferrata manuscript of the Digenis legend<sup>221</sup>, but frankly they don't make sense. Further proof that the story of the fight between Digenis and Maximou the Amazon must have been essential for the development of the Akritan legend in the 14<sup>th</sup> century is the painting of this scene under a representation of the Mother of God on the lower register of an immured diaconicon entrance in Chrysapha, close to Mystras, the capital of the Byzantine Despotate. This is the earliest definite representation of Digenis where the hero is clearly identified by his name. Maximou the Amazon, his opponent, is also identified by an inscription<sup>222</sup>.

I have lingered too long over these details. It is time to draw a preliminary conclusion and to move on. I therefore believe that there is a 25% chance that Boccaccio's *Theseid* could be influenced by one or two Greek stories. There is also a slim chance that the *Theseid* reworked the narrative

*turali e topoi letterari*, in *Boccaccio geografo. Un viaggio nel Mediterraneo, tra le città, i giardini e... il 'mondo' di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. R. Morosini, coll. A. Cantile, Florence 2010, pp. 103-31.

221. R. Beaton, *Boccaccio and the Greek World of his Time: A Missing Link in the "True Story of the Novel"?*, in *Renaissance Encounters. Greek East and Latin West*, eds. M. S. Brownlee - D. H. Gondicas, Leiden 2013, pp. 207-17: 213, who does not really believe in this other hypothesis, but proposes it as an alternative.

222. L. N. Horan, *The Unique Late Byzantine Image from the Epic of Digenis Akritas: A Study of the Dado Zone in the Church of the Panagia Chrysaphitissa*, MA paper of the University of California Los Angeles, Los Angeles 2018.

of Theseus and Hadrian, provided that this lost story predated Boccaccio's work, a thing which is impossible to prove or to disprove<sup>223</sup>. Nevertheless, the Gasmouloi (descendants of mixed Byzantine and Latin unions) were interested not only in translations of Western texts, such as the *War of Troy* (adapted from the Benoît de Sainte-Maure tradition), *Apollonius of Tyre*, the *Old Knight*, *Imperios and Margarona*, and many others, but also in local literary productions. *Francesco and Bella* may be one of these local productions intended for the Latinized Greeks or Hellenised Latins. The story of Theseus and his brother Hadrian could be another one. It could have originated in the Latin-occupied Athens, where the misreading of ancient inscriptions and the invention of tall tales about Troy, Aristotle, Hadrian, and other ancient attractions were a local fashion.

The only firm conclusion is that such make-believe stories about ancient characters and places were the norm of that century. Similar stories were told to Niccolò da Martoni or to Ludolf von Südheim, whose degree of education was not equal to Boccaccio's and who could not consequently correct or adapt them to make sense. The lack of sense in the accounts of Niccolò and Ludolf may also substantiate that the early beginnings of the Renaissance lie not only in the contacts between great Eastern and Western scholars, writers, and artists, but also in the silly ideas and stories heard by the average man. In my opinion, Niccolò was as much a man of the early Renaissance as was Boccaccio. They both shared an interest for tales of jousts and bravery, for ancient glories, since they were both medieval and modern at the same time. The only difference between the two was Niccolò's pettiness of mind.

### *The Labyrinth of Crete*

Another interesting thing about the last two examples is that they have Byzantine origins, but they were not the only ones whose origin was Byzantine. Niccolò alludes to stories about sites that he was not able to

223. The late date of the Constantinopolitan list of books does not constitute a valid argument for the disproof of this theory, because most Greek novels of the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century are preserved in very late copies (15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century).

see. He had barely left Kythira, pursuing his voyage to the Holy Land, when the Venetians made another stop in an island of the Archipelago. Niccolò gives us various details about the death of the Archipelago duke, about his mother, or about the Greeks who inhabit those islands, when suddenly he provides two unexpected pieces of information about Crete:

Que insula Candie armat galeas XVI quandocumque vult; et est in dicta insula Candie Liberintum in quo alias fuit Minotaurus<sup>224</sup>.

The Venetians must have told him something about the Labyrinth. This was the Cave of Ambelouzos, one of the largest man-made caves located in Crete. It was regularly visited because it was thought to be the site of the fight between Theseus and the Minotaur. There were many Western visitors in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, but there are not many sources describing these visits<sup>225</sup>. One of the earliest Latin texts alluding

224. *Io Notaio* cit., p. 22; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 581.

225. A. M. Woodward, *The Gortyn 'Labyrinth' and its Visitors in the Fifteenth Century*, in «The Annual of the British School at Athens», 44 (1949), pp. 324–5, in a short note concerning the Ambelouzos 'Labyrinth' of Crete, close to the city of Gortyn, compared Joseph Pitton de Tournefort's description of the cave graffiti (1770), among which the earliest was dated in 1444, with a passage from the *De orthographia* treaty of Gasparino de Barziza, in order to draw attention to the possibility that the Venetian governors of Crete paid regular visits to the labyrinth at earlier times. Cfr. M. Guarducci, *Οι αρχαιότεροι επισκέπται του Λαβύρινθου της Γόρτυνος*, in «Κρητικά Χρονικά», 4 (1950), pp. 527–8. He immediately corrected these conclusions, demonstrating that the identification of the Ambelouzos cave labyrinth with the one of the Minotaur and Theseus is of a much earlier date, for it appears in the text of Cedrenus (11<sup>th</sup> century). She also noted that another modern author, Claude-Étienne Savary (1788), mentioned the existence of 14<sup>th</sup> century inscriptions in the same cave, in parts unexplored by Tournefort. Cfr. Guarducci, *Οι αρχαιότεροι* cit., who refers to a mention of the labyrinth in the text of yet another medieval explorer, Cristoforo Buondelmonti, spoke of this in his *Descriptio Insulae Cretae* (1417). Cfr. van der Vin, *Travellers* cit., p. 232, who considers that the first inscriptions date probably from the period following the Cretan rebellion of 1363, but this may be a socio-political conjecture and it has little bearing upon our discussion. His hypothesis fits other details pointed by A. L. D'Agata, *The many lives of a ruin: history and metalhistory of the Palace of Minos at Knossos*, in *Cretan Offerings: Studies in honour of Peter Warren*, ed. O. Krzyszkowska, London 2010, pp. 57–68: 62. The latter mentions the chronicle of John Malalas and Catullus who spoke of *iniusti regis* (i.e. Minos) *Gortynia templa*, so the tradition may have antique origins. Cfr. K. Παραγκαμιάν - Α. Βασιλάκη, *Η Λαβύρινθος της Μεσαράς*, Herakleion 2002. For the best synthesis of the subject, which adds further proof from Nicephoros Gregoras (14<sup>th</sup> century), see A. Kotsonas, *A Cultural History of the Cretan Labyrinth: Monument and Memory from Prehistory to the Present*, in «American Journal of Archaeology», 122/3 (2018), pp. 367–96.

to them may be a short annotation in the treatise of Gasparino da Barziza (1421-1422). It mentions a *laberinthus in Creta naturalis, non manu factus sub monte quodam incredibili ambage viarum implicitus*. The Venetian authorities visited it guided by local Jews<sup>226</sup>. About the same time, when writing his *Descriptio Insulae Cretae* (1417-1422) for the humanist Niccolò Niccoli, a Florentine Franciscan friar named Cristoforo Buondelmonti was unconvinced by the identification of the cave with the labyrinth of Greek and Roman mythology, but he provided an accurate description of his visit there:

A latere septentrionali prope nobilissimam olim predictam Gortinam per duo miliaria in altum, ut fertur, est laberinthus. Est enim os suum arduum deinde in amplitudinem devenit. Via una versus orientem ducentorum passuum est; altera vero, versus septentrionem, nullam ut dicitur habet finem; per quam multe vie circumflexe videntur et in istam revertuntur principalem. Ab ostio per mille et quingentos passus fons cernitur iuxta quem paludem parvulam arundinibus cohopertam comperimus una cum huiusmodi de lapide pila a sinistra. Ultra hanc aquam longa manifestatur via, quam nullus aut pauci ingredi curant vel transitum agere per eandem. Arma vero intrantium atque nomina designata per omnia erant et vespertilionum multitudo ubique videtur. Valde per eum ambulare periculosum est, quia aliquando immensurati lapides ab alto per venas pendentes cadunt et totum sepe obturant transitum. Tu qui cuncta noscis, mi Nicolae, non esse hunc quem homines tenent laberinthum bene existimare posses. Quia lapis ab isto monte extractus lapidi atque civitatis simulatur. Et sic per diversas parte huius insule antra huiusmodique lapidum vene subterraneae reperiuntur infinita. Per totam hanc insulam artificiosum atque nominatum laberinthum ob amorem tui, mi Nicolae, quem nunquam alibi potui reperire. De ostio tandem dicti laberinthi recedimus et Castrum Novum, parva valle peracta, videmus [...] <sup>227</sup>.

226. Woodward, *The Gortyn* cit., p. 324: *Laberinthus per -th- carcer ut a poetis fingitur discrimine viarum implicitus. Reperitur etiam laberinthus in Creta naturalis. non manu factus sub monte quodam incredibili ambage viarum implicitus. quem novi magistratus a Senatu Veneto in eam insulam missi hebreis ducibus accensis funalibus usque quo iter est pervium Inni sunt semper cum primum insulam attigerunt.*

227. Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Descriptio insule Crete et Liber insularum*, Cap. XI: *Creta*, ed. M.-A. van Spitael, Heraklion 1981, pp. 176-8. I use this edition because it is the only one available. For a discussion concerning the manuscripts and the previous bibliography, as well as for many corrections to this edition, see the harsh criticism provided by D. Tsougarakis, *Some Remarks on the 'Cretica' of Cristoforo Buondelmonti*, in «*Ariadne*», 3 (1985), pp. 88-108. He deals with the two autograph versions, written in 1417-1422, but he also mentions that «the differences in the two versions of the DIC are not very serious,

Buondelmonti also drew a map of the cave, copied in later manuscripts<sup>228</sup>. But his most important piece of information concerns the coats of arms scratched at the entrance of the site (*arma intransium*), accompanied by names (*nomina*), which could be written in both Greek and Latin letters, since the Italian monk does not provide specific details. This means that there were several Westerners who visited this cave.

The mention of the same cave labyrinth occurs in a vernacular poem (*Isolario*) dealing with the geography and the navigation of the islands, written by a Venetian sailor in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Bartolommeo 'dalli Sonetti' speaks therein of *il minotauro* and *el monte dove e laberinto*. In one of the manuscripts of this poem there is a representation of the labyrinth as a hill with a dark entrance of a cave<sup>229</sup>. These three sources provide more than ample proof that the site and its legends were well known to the Venetians. It is therefore evident that Niccolò alludes to a tourist attraction that he was not able to see.

Weiss did not credit these visits to the cave 'Labyrinth' with an antiquarian scope<sup>230</sup>, but he was wrong in doing so. It is true that the general Western view of the mythical labyrinth was vague. In the *Ovide moralisé* in verse (14<sup>th</sup> century), the Labyrinth was a prison or a cage; in the later *Ovide moralisé* in prose (15<sup>th</sup> century), the Minotaur lived in a fortified mansion or house<sup>231</sup>. This happened because Ovid, the source of the two

as far as the essentials are concerned» (p. 93). The main problem of the edition is the absence of Buondelmonti's drawings.

228. For this illustration, see the Fig. 12.6 in J. D. Heinrichs, *The Topography of Antiquity in Descriptions of Venetian Crete*, in *Art, Architecture and Identity in Venice and Its Territories, 1450-1750. Essays in Honour of Deborah Howard*, eds. N. Avciö lu - E. Jones, Ashgate 2013, p. 212 (ms. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 29.42, f. 23r, dating back to 1429).

229. Heinrichs, *The Topography* cit., p. 211 (and p. 217, notes 40 and 41). The quotation is from the poem bearing the title 'Sesto soneto per Crete'. J. D. Heinrichs considers that «the representation of the Labyrinth corresponds to the site as the Venetian magistrates would have seen it» (p. 211).

230. Weiss, *The Renaissance* cit., p. 135: «the Venetians who were exploring the 'Labyrinth' of Gortyn in Crete already in the very early fifteenth century, were merely moved by curiosity and nothing else».

231. In the *Ovide moralisé en vers*, dating back to the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the place where the Minotaur dwells is described as a *prison* (VIII, v. 1319) or *vilz cage* (VIII, v. 1326). Cfr. *Ovide moralisé, poème du commencement du quatorzième siècle publié d'après tous*

poems, used a generic word (*domus*) when describing the context of the scene. Boccaccio spoke of the labyrinth in similar terms (*prigione*) in his commentary to Dante<sup>232</sup>. However, several Westerners had a correct understanding of what the mythical labyrinth was supposed to be. Guido da Pisa described it in his commentary of Dante's *Inferno* (c.1321–1337), quoting Isidore of Seville<sup>233</sup>. These Westerners knew well their sources, and Buondelmonti's scepticism came precisely from this shared knowledge. But not all Westerners were scholars. The less educated ones, or the ones belonging to the category of recreational or diversionary tourists, fell most certainly prey to the local fashions.

*les manuscrits connus*, eds. C. De Boer – M. G. De Boer – J. Th. M. Van't Sant, Amsterdam 1931, tome III (Livres VII–IX), p. 140. The Minotaur itself is a plain monster, *le toriau qui gastaît Crete* (VIII, vv. 1149–50), or *li dyables, li anemis* (VIII, v. 1159). Cfr. *Ovide moralisé, poème cit.*, p. 136. In the *Ovide moralisé en prose*, dating from the next century and written for René d'Anjou, the author–translator describes the Minotaur as *ung monstre qui fut demy home et demy thoreau. Ovide moralisé en prose (texte du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle), édition critique avec une introduction*, ed. C. De Boer, Amsterdam 1954, p. 220. The labyrinth is *une forte maison* made by *ung charpentier moult renommé d'estre bon ouvrier de charpenterie, appellé Dedalus; Ovide moralisé en prose cit.*, p. 226. In the next passages, he mentions *la dicte maison* two times (*ibid.*) or *la maison forte* (*ivi*, p. 227).

232. *Esposizioni sopra la Commedia* (1373–1374). Cfr. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante. Note, varianti e indici*, ed. G. Padoan, 2 voll., Milano 1994, vol. I, p. 562: *Minòs il fece rinchiudere in una prigione chiamata 'laberinto', e in quella mandava a lui tutti coloro li quali voleva far crudelmente morire; e questo Minotauro gli uccideva e divorava. [...] Adriana [...] gli insegnò [to Theseus] come dovesse fare quando giugnesse a questo Minotauro e come dietro ad uno spago se ne tornasse fuori della prigione.* In his *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, Boccaccio doesn't even mention it when he tells the story of Theseus (he mentions only the Minotaur). And in the *Theseid*, Boccaccio omits Theseus' various slayings of monsters altogether.

233. Cfr. *Le Expositiones et glose super Comediam Dantis di Guido da Pisa. Edizione critica*, ed. M. Rinaldi, PhD dissertation at the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Naples 2011, pp. 386–7: *Sed, quia mentio facta est de laberinto, videamus quid sit, et quot fuerint laberinti. Laberintus enim ubi fuit Minotaurus inclusus fuit quidam carcer horridus et obscurus, sicut ait beatus Ysidorus XI<sup>o</sup> libro Ethymologiarum in hec verba: 'laberintus est perplexis parietibus edificium, qualis est apud Cretam a Dedalo factus, ubi fuit Minotaurus inclusus, in quo, siquis introierit sine glomere lini, exitum invenire non potest. Cuius edificii talis est situs ut aperientibus fores tonitruum intus terribile audiat; descenditur autem centenis ultra gradibus. Intus simulacra et monstrifera effigies in partes diversas, transitus innumeri per tenebras, et cetera ad errorem ingredientium facta, ita ut de tenebris eius ad lucem venire impossibile videatur. Quatuor autem sunt laberinti; primus in Egypto, secundus in Creta, tertius in Lemno, quartus in Ytalya; omnes ita constructi ut dissolvere eos nec secula quidem possint'.*

In Crete, the Venetians recuperated a much earlier tradition concerning the Ambelouzos cave. One of its best variants surfaces half a century before Buondelmonti's *Descriptio*. It is the Greek *History* of Nicephoros Gregoras, covering the years 1204-1359. This Byzantine scholar tells us that he was visited by a former disciple who had travelled a lot and told him many stories. When this disciple recollects the memories of a Cretan trip, he mentions the Labyrinth as an artificial cave (σπήλαιον πολυχωρητότατον τεχνητόν) located in the vicinity of Knossos, but Knossos is here located on the inland area of the island (Κνωσσοῦ μεσογειῦ πόλεως ἔγγιστα ὄντα). Furthermore, the disciple describes the process by which a certain craftsman or artist (ὁ τεχνίτης) opened a door in the soft rock, then proceeded with a tunnel, expanding both to the right and to the left, but also creating columns in order to support the vaults. What is interesting is that Gregoras' disciple visited the cave guided by local people (δέδεικται μοι πρὸς τῶν ἐγχωρίων) with many torches in their hands (λαμπάδας φωτὸς ἐν χεροῖν ἔχόντων πολλάς)<sup>234</sup>. This implies that the locals showed the cave as a local pride, on a regular basis.

Whether this 14<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine visit was real or not is not the matter here<sup>235</sup>. What matters most is that Greeks visited the place before

234. Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhōmāische Geschichte / Historia Rhōmaïke, Fünfter Teil (Kapitel XXIV,3 - XXIX)*, ed. J.-L. van Dieten, Stuttgart 2003, pp. 61-2: "Ἐχὼν δ' ἐκ πολλοῦ διὰ μακρᾶς τῆς ἐφέσεως ἔγωγε τὸν ἐν Κρήτῃ λαβύρινθον θεάσασθαι, ἐπειδὴ πολὺ τοῦ λιμένος οὗ καθωρμίσθημεν ἀφροσθήκοι, ἔδοξέ μοι καιρὸν ἔχοντι νῦν ἀποβάντι θεάσασθαι καὶ αὐτόν, Κνωσσοῦ μεσογειῦ πόλεως ἔγγιστα ὄντα. Ἔστι δ' ὁ λαβύρινθος σπήλαιον πολυχωρητότατον τεχνητόν. Ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἔτυχε λίθος οὐ πάνυ σκληρὸς τὴν οὐσίαν ὑπάρχων ὁ τόπος, ἔδωκε πολλὴν τὴν ραστώνην λαξεύειν ἐφ' ὅποσον ἂν τις ἐθέλοι. Διὸ καὶ θύραν μίαν ὁ τεχνίτης ἀνοίξας, ἔπειτα λαξεύων, προῆει μέχρι πολλοῦ κατὰ τὸ ἴσον εὐρύων ἅμα τὰ τ' ἐνώνυμα καὶ δεξιὰ πλευρά, ἠφίει δ' ἐν μέσῳ κατὰ συχνὰ διαστήματα στύλους ξεστούς, ἀνέχοντας τὴν ἐπὶ τὸν ὄροφον γῆν, μερίζων δ' ἐποίει διαφόρους οἰκίας καὶ προαύλια καὶ κρήνας. Δέδεικται δέ μοι πρὸς τῶν ἐγχωρίων, λαμπάδας φωτὸς ἐν χεροῖν ἔχόντων πολλάς.

235. Kotsonas, *A Cultural History* cit. disagrees with A. Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity: Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature. Empire and After*, Philadelphia 2013, pp. 148-53, on the analysis of this particular source, because the latter considers that parts of the story may be fictitious. However, it is equally possible that A. Kaldellis is right (the character in Gregoras' story, Agathangelos, is certainly fictitious) but this doesn't change the fact that the labyrinth in question was the cave of Ambelouzos. A. Kotsonas' noted that «numerous visitors refer to a spring (or dripping water) in the Ampelouzos cave, which must correspond to the fountain noted by Gregoras».

the Latins, thus explaining how the Venetian tourist tradition started. Furthermore, Gregoras' text stems from Byzantine sources which point, all of them, toward the first version of the Cretan cave story reported by John Malalas in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Malalas' late antique recount of the adventures of Theseus is equally interesting, because at the arrival of Theseus in Gortyn, the Minotaur runs toward the 'area of the Labyrinth' (ἔφυγε εἰς τὴν Λαβύρινθον χώραν), climbs a mountain (ἀνελθὼν ἐν ὄρει), and hides in a cave (εἰς σπήλαιον κρυπτόμενος). Theseus asks for directions, finds the cave, takes the Minotaur out, and slays it (καταδιώξας αὐτὸν ὁ Θησεὺς ἔμαθεν ὑπὸ τινοσ, ποῦ κέκρυπται ὄντινα ἐκβαλὼν ἐφόνευσεν εὐθέως). Finally, the victorious hero returns to the city of Gortyn (εἰσελθὼν ἐν τῇ πόλει Γορτύνῃ ἐθριάμβευσε τὴν κατὰ τοῦ Μινωταύρου νίκην)<sup>236</sup>.

It is thus probable that the Venetian governors and other Western visitors who left their names and coats of arms inscribed in the cave's bedrock followed an earlier Byzantine tradition. This becomes even more obvious when one thinks of the Venetian recuperation of Byzantine religious traditions in Crete<sup>237</sup>: the cave story could be a collateral consequence of a much larger cultural transfer. And in a second time, the situation is similar to the Athenian philosophers' fountain. All of them could be the result of a cross-contamination between Latin and Greek sources, between different types of 'tourism'.

\* \* \*

There is not much to say in conclusion so far as Niccolò's voyage is concerned. The real stakes here concern the trivial origins of the Renaissance. In truth, the present article is nothing but a preliminary work which must lead to a greater study. More pieces of evidence need to be

236. For all the quotations, see Ioannis Malalae *Chronographia*, ed. I. Thurn, Berlin 2000, p. 63: καὶ ἦλθε κατ' αὐτοῦ ὁ Θησεὺς εἰς τὴν Κρήτην ἐξαίφνης, καὶ πάντες ἕασαντες τὸν Μινώταυρον οἱ συγκλητικοὶ καὶ ὁ στρατὸς ἔδοξαν φεύγειν τὴν πόλιν Γόρτυναν. καὶ γνοὺς ὁ Μινώταυρος τὴν προδοσίαν ἔφυγε καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς τὴν Λαβύρινθον χώραν καὶ ἀνελθὼν ἐν ὄρει εἰσῆλθεν εἰς σπήλαιον κρυπτόμενος. Καὶ καταδιώξας αὐτὸν ὁ Θησεὺς ἔμαθεν ὑπὸ τινοσ, ποῦ κέκρυπται ὄντινα ἐκβαλὼν ἐφόνευσεν εὐθέως. Καὶ εἰσελθὼν ἐν τῇ πόλει Γορτύνῃ ἐθριάμβευσε τὴν κατὰ τοῦ Μινωταύρου νίκην.

237. M. Georgopoulou, *Late Medieval Crete and Venice: An Appropriation of Byzantine Heritage*, in «The Art Bulletin», 77/3 (1995), pp. 479-96.



gathered from travellers' journals, literary texts, historiographical texts, artistic representations, etc. The local tradition also needs to be explored. I am therefore compelled to boil down my conclusions to a minimum.

First of all, I do not agree with the mainstream view that the interest in Greek antiquity started only with the arrival of Emanuel Chrysoloras in Florence in 1397-1400. Roberto Weiss believed that Chrysoloras' arrival and his contacts with the humanist circle of Niccolò Niccoli were...

... instrumental in inducing Cristoforo Buondelmonti, a Florentine priest, to move to Rhodes in 1414 in order to explore the islands of Greece. This meant a long odyssey which lasted for some sixteen years at least, during which Buondelmonti found ample time to learn Greek and write a Latin description of Crete addressed to Niccoli (1417), as well as an itinerary of the islands in the same language (1420), accompanying both these works with maps<sup>238</sup>.

This interpretation does not take into account the possibility that the interest for Greek subjects and monuments was already present in Florence and Italy in general because of all the previous voyagers and all the make-believe tales of the Latinocracy. Buondelmonti made his explorations in the same timeframe as those who were informants for Gasparino da Barziza. One cannot claim any credit in the name of these informants, as they were anonymous. But one can claim credit for Niccolò da Martoni, since his account is personal and contains treasurable details. Moreover, our notary from Carinola was not alone. There were many other travellers whose accounts were lost or never written. Many of them spoke of Kythira and very few about Athens and other places, but that happened because Kythira was a regular stop, a hub for the voyages to the Holy Land, while Athens, Crete, or Euboea were rarely stops on the same route. Neither was Abydos, but we know that the Venetians who passed it presented those ruins to their passengers as the ruins of Troy. It is therefore hard to believe that...

... despite Crusades and trade, Latin rule and missionary effort, the archaeological study of the Greek world during the Renaissance practically began and ended with Ciriaco d'Ancona, and by 1455 Ciriaco was dead. After him the

238. Weiss, *The Renaissance* cit., p. 135.

Turkish conquest of Byzantine lands put an end to antiquarian travel in Greek territories for about a century; and when Pierre Gilles went to Constantinople in 1546 as antiquary to the French ambassador, the Renaissance was nearly over<sup>239</sup>.

Cyriacus was not a scholar. He barely knew the rudiments of Greek, and his contribution was greatly exaggerated. Even though he tried to break with the medieval mind-set, Cyriacus of Ancona was shown the same monuments as the others travellers, probably by more or less the same type of guides who led Niccolò in Athens. It was because of these particular guides that Cyriacus was able to draw and write down Greek inscriptions. Had he known the Greek alphabet and a little bit of history, had he enjoyed more than a day of visiting Athens, Niccolò da Martoni would have provided us with similar pieces of information, since the current-day research always corrects his account according to the information provided by Cyriacus<sup>240</sup>.

There were many degrees of exploration in the tourist rambles of late Middle Ages and there must have been intermediary degrees as well. One such traveller could be Niccolò Acciaiuoli, Boccaccio's friend, a man educated enough to understand most of what he saw, but not that much to become passionate and explore in the way that Cyriacus did it. Most of them were men of their own age, but then so was our notary from Carinola. If Niccolò enjoyed a mixture of Antiquity and chivalric stories under the much larger umbrella of biblical stories, so did Boccaccio. The only difference between the two – I already said it – is Niccolò's pettiness of mind. What would Boccaccio have to say about the Athenian antiquities? I believe that he said it quite well in the chivalric mythologies of the *Theseid*.

The same intermediary level probably characterised many Westerners who lived in the Greek lands. The make-believe Trojan stories represent-

239. Ivi, p. 131.

240. There is also a chance that Niccolò's measurements were sometimes incorrect. According to van der Vin, *Travellers* cit., p. 43, Niccolò miscounted the number of columns in the temple of Olympian Zeus (20), because Cyriacus counts 21 at a later date. Niccolò also counts 60 columns around the Parthenon. Later on, Cyriacus counts only 58, which is the right number. See for this ivi, p. 45.

ed an identity construct of those Latin occupants. They were shared by several social strata of the Latinocracy, from the highest lords to the lowest of the feudatories, and by the merchants too. We do not know which one provided our traveller with tall tales about Antiquity, but he was a local inhabitant of Athens and Niccolò believed him because of this<sup>241</sup>.

The migration of scholar stories about Peripateticism or the fountain of the philosophers happened across many social strata. These stories probably started in the high culture of the clerks and monks, some of whom were translators of Greek texts, but they characterized the mixed identity of all the occupants, halfway between the Latin and Greek traditions, as many of these stories were of a Byzantine origin. It is therefore hard to accept Weiss' image of Athens during the Middle Ages:

The Frankish, Catalan, and Florentine rulers of Athens took no greater interest in the ancient monuments of their capital, than the Venetians, the Genoese, and the Knights of Rhodes took in those to be found in their own Greek domains, which means just about nil<sup>242</sup>.

Giving Buondelmonti and Cyriacus the upper hand just because of their cultural prestige is a distortion of reality. Niccolò da Martoni visited the Acropolis at a time when Acciaiuoli were lords of Athens, long after their ancestor's first visit to Greece. In those times, the Propylaea were transformed into a palace which impressed its visitors to the point that its accretion of Byzantine, Frankish, and Florentine architectural features on the basis of ancient Greek ruins provided the source of inspiration for the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano<sup>243</sup>. None of this would have been possible without the shared rediscovery of Antiquity by Ludolf von Südheim, Niccolò da Martoni, Niccolò Acciaiuoli, Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Boccaccio, and Cyriacus of Ancona. They were all sharing stories originating in a mixed Latin and Byzantine continuum linking the high ends of elite culture and the lower strata of common people.

241. ...rogavi quosdam de dicta civitate ut me conducerent ad videndum ipsa hedificia et res antiquas; *Io Notario* cit., p. 136; cfr. Le Grand, *Relation* cit., p. 650.

242. Weiss, *The Renaissance* cit., pp. 132-3.

243. T. Tanoulas, *Through the broken looking glass: the Acciaiuoli palace in the Propylaea reflected in the villa of Lorenzo il Magnifico at Poggio a Caiano*, in «*Bollettino d'arte*», 100 (1997), pp. 1-32.

## ABSTRACT

*Recreational Tourism, Make-Believe Antiquity, and the Trivial Origins of the Renaissance in Niccolò da Martoni's Travels Through Latin-Occupied Greece*

The study of the pilgrimage account of a late 14th century notary from Carinola leads to the study of the continuum linking the culture of the elite to the popular one. Niccolò da Martoni acted as a recreational tourist, drinking from the Athenian fountain of Aristotle in order to become as clever as the philosopher, enjoyed the medieval distortions of ancient Greek mythology as much as he enjoyed intrusive chivalric themes punctuating the cultural life of the Latin-held Greece, and his interests, from misread inscriptions to the invention of ready-made stories, customized halfway between the his knowledge of the ancient world and what the ruin really looked like, testify to the reception of the *Primo Umanesimo* by lower social strata.

KEYWORDS: Pilgrimages; Western medieval romances; Ancient Greek ruins; Demotic Greek literature; Medieval tourism.

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