Twinning Project: Greek Heritage in European Culture and Identity (GrECI) Research Meeting II: 'The Material Heritage of Ancient Greece in Early Modern Europe: New Approaches and Perspectives' – Athens 2024

1-2 February 2024

The Norwegian Institute, Athens, Greece

The second research meeting of the GrECI consortium took place in Athens, at the Norwegian Institute, on the 1st and the 2nd of February 2024. The meeting was centered around new approaches and perspectives on the 'Material Heritage of Ancient Greece in Early Modern Europe' and brought together scholars employing historical and philological methods as well as digital humanities approaches. The aims of the workshop were to shed new light on the ways in which the Greek heritage was used in the material culture of early modern Europe. While aspects of this domain have largely been explored in isolation (e.g. in the study of antiquarianism and book history), the workshop aimed to undertake a more comprehensive and inclusive approach.

Over the two days, participants from several academic institutions in Europe, USA, and Saudi Arabia, representing different disciplines and diverse methodologies, discussed case-studies from their ongoing research. The meeting was opened by Delia Tzortzaki (Adviser and the Legal Representative of the Norwegian Institute in Athens) who welcomed the attendees and presented the institute's history, mission, and activities. After that, the main co-organizers of the conference presented the meeting's structure, aims, and ambitions (Maria Cristina Manzetti), as well as its institutional context and academic background, including the concept of material Hellenism (Han Lamers). The notion of material Hellenism, broadly conceived, encompasses the engagement with the ancient Greek heritage through both the reception of physical objects from Greek antiquity (such as monuments, medals, and artifacts) and the incorporation of Greek art, literature, and language into the material culture of early modern Europe.

Organized into four sessions, thirteen papers presented case studies of, and digital approaches to, the early modern reception of the material heritage of ancient Greece. The first session focused on the representation of the Greek language and literature in the visual culture of early modern Europe. Clarisse Evrard (University of Lille, France), presented a

diverse range of representations of ancient Greek mythology on maiolica services – ceramic vessels which served both practical and artistic purposes. These vessels, Evrard argued, were conveyors of a shared European culture and identity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Raf Van Rooy and Manou Vermeire (Catholic University of Leuven, Flanders, Belgium), offered a different approach to material Hellenism by focusing on the use of the Greek language on titlepages of Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* and in other aspects of the material culture associated with Erasmus. They emphasised Erasmus' use of Greek phrases as eye-catching ornaments (*emblemata*) that were not always meant to be fully understood.

The next session centered around the relationship between Greek antiquarianism and Greek and European identities. Antonio Crisà (Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University, Saudi Arabia) examined the interests and approaches of sixteenth-century antiquarians of Sicily. Focusing on numismatics, Crisà highlighted the significance of autopsy and inspection in the study of the island's Greek heritage, aligning with the prevailing trends in antiquarian research during that period. Following Crisà's paper, Nathanael Aschenbrenner and Jake Ransohoff (Bard College and Harvard University, United States of America), discussed the interest in material evidence of Byzantium at the Habsburg Court (1450-1550), through the lens of numismatics and coin collections. They explored the work of three understudied key figures (Johannes Fuchshmagen, Jacobo Strada, and Johannes Cuspinianus), arguing that these antiquarians variously inscribed Byzantium into histories of the Western and/or Eastern Roman Empire, often to legitimize Habsburg 'imperial' power. The speakers contrasted this approach to approaches of philologists such as Hieronymus Wolf (1516-1580) who focused on textual rather than material sources from Byzantium and emphasized discontinuities and decline. The final paper of the session, given by Deborah Leem (King's College, London, United Kingdom), offered an innovative approach to early modern collections as 'hubs' of material Hellenism in early modern Europe. Focusing on the collection of Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), the speaker presented a method for data extraction to create digital catalogues of early modern collections and explained its process, benefits, and possible challenges.

Leem's paper served as a bridge to the third session, specifically dedicated to digital approaches and methodologies. The papers collected in this session highlighted how digital approaches can provide solutions to longstanding inquiries and/or generate new research questions. The session was opened with a paper by Richard Gartner (Warburg Institute, London, United Kingdom), presenting the Pellicier Library Project, directed by Raphaële Mouren and Rosa Maria Piccione. This project aims to chart the dynamics of the creation and

circulation of Greek manuscripts in the library of Guillaume Pellicier (c. 1490 – 1568), using a digital method based on a system of formal representations that organize concepts and relationships to facilitate data integration and analysis (ontologies). The results of the project will be made available through the British Museum's ResearchSpace, a free open-source semantic web platform. Following Gartner's presentation, William M. Barton and Lev Shadrin (Innsbruck University, Austria) presented the LAGOOS project. The project aspires to produce a machine-readable open-source version of the private diaries of the French Hellenist Karl Benedikt Hase (1780-1864), composed in ancient Greek. For this purpose, the team is using Transkribus, a digital tool for the automatic transcription of Greek text. In addition to making the diaries available in a widely usable digital format, their work will also serve to significantly improve the accuracy of Greek transcription with Transkribus, a platform using artificial intelligence to recognize and transcribe text from historical documents, enabling users to easily search and access their content. Afterwards, Brady Kiesling presented some preliminary results of the Digital Periegesis Project, hosted by Humlab at Umeå University. This project aims to explore and map Pausanias's spatial representation of Greece through his *Hellados Periegesis* (Description of Greece). The project aspires to create a digital annotation of Pausanias' text by means of the Recogito Platform, a web-based tool that facilitates the collaborative annotation of texts and maps. Concluding the first day of the workshop, Stavros Oikonomidis (Gennadeios Library, Athens, Greece) explored some of the research behind TravelTrails. Based on the collections of the Gennadius Library and the Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, this database gathers and organizes data from personal diaries, itineraries, and travel journals, compiled by travelers to the Eastern Mediterranean from the early sixteenth century up to 1830. In particular, Oikonomidis focused his discussion on the use of spolia in the buildings of Athens, mentioned in the travelogues of the European travelers visiting the city in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The fourth session opened the second day of the workshop. It was organized around the subject of Greek spaces, mobility, and travel. Catherine Gaullier-Bourgassas (University of Caen-Normandie, France), Principal Investigator of the AGRELITA project, opened the session with a discussion of the ways in which Greek spaces were represented in fifteenth-century French geographical texts. In particular, she looked at three French illustrated manuscripts contextualizing and comparing the authors' perception of ancient Greece, as constructed both in the text and in the illustrations. In turn, Elodie Turquois (Johannes Guthenberg University at Mainz, Germany) discussed the writings of French travellers who

visited the city of Constantinople during the mid-sixteenth century. Turquois focused on the descriptions of the city's material heritage found in the Aramontine corpus (1546-1555) and used digital methods, specifically network analysis, to study the relations between people and material heritage. Benedetta Bessi (Ca' Foscari University, Venice, Italy) subsequently outlined her MapAeg project ('Mapping the Aegean: Cristoforo Buondelmonti's *Liber insularum* and the Origins of Classical Archaeology'). Through the creation of a digital edition of the text and maps of Buondelmonti's *Liber*, Bessi explored its impact on the humanist movement in Europe, particularly in terms of exploration and rediscovery of Greece. The last speaker of the meeting, Cristina Manzetti (University of Cyprus), introduced the digital method of deep mapping through GIS (Geographic Information System), as a digital method to visualize the impressions and emotional experiences of European travelers who visited Greece during the Grand Tour in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The second day culminated in a round-table discussion. Discussants emphasized that the intersection of historical and philological scholarship with digital humanities provided new insights and expressed a desire to pursue synergies in future research. The discussion also emphasized the diverse and complex nature of the reception of Greek heritage in early modern material culture, encompassing a range of responses influenced by various factors such as cultural background and personal preference. The unexpected range of responses to Greek heritage sparked discussions on how modern neo-classical assumptions about the Greek heritage may have influenced contemporary perceptions of engagement with it in early modern Europe. Material Hellenism emerged as a significant factor in shaping identities across Europe, particularly at the local and regional levels, as evidenced in examples like the island of Sicily and the Habsburg court. On the other hand, further investigation is needed to explore the extent to which the Greek heritage during this period was perceived as a unifying factor in shaping a cohesive European identity across different regions.