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CHAPTER 9

Tales of the Trojan War: Achilles and Paris in Medieval Greek Literature

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In Greek fictional literature in the vernacular, the long and illustrious Homeric tradition is mainly represented by two works. The first and long-time neglected text, the so-called *Byzantine Iliad*, was first published in 1975 from a 16th-century manuscript.¹ As we will see in more detail below, the author modelled the Trojan material according to the patterns of the Palaiologan vernacular romances, of which it seems to be a belated epigone. Thus, the reader will be surprised to find such a major deformation of the heroic myth of Troy precisely in the milieu of that Greek world in which it had come into being. In this respect, the Homeric characteristics of the main protagonist, Paris, can hardly be recognized.

Even more distant from the ancient model is Achilles, the protagonist of the second text I will deal with, namely the *Achilleid*, which actually presents all the features of a typical romance of love, and only harks back to the Trojan War and its heroes in the title. However, it makes sense to read these two works within the Byzantine Homeric tradition, in order to better evaluate on the one hand the kind of distortion the Homeric material was given and, on the other, to identify the pathway it followed in its dissemination through the medieval world, both East and West.

Homer's Ancient and Early Byzantine Readings

Already in the ancient period, there were, alongside the *Iliad*, cyclical poems that endeavoured to explain the events leading up to the Trojan War and its aftermath. Later on, the Homeric material was elaborated by the tragedians and taken up in the Hellenistic age by mythographers. Subsequently, in the first centuries of our era, it was reorganized in romance form thanks to two works that have come down to us in later Latin versions, the *Ephemerides of the*

Trojan War by Dictys Cretensis and the *History of the Destruction of Troy* by Dares Phrygius.² Dictys' text was based on a Greek original, some papyri fragments of which have been found,³ Dares' work is also likely to be based on an existing Greek text; neither, however, is extant. Both works are presented as being eyewitness accounts of the events: Dictys, a Cretan soldier who had participated in the Trojan War, allegedly wrote a diary in six volumes in Phoenician characters, which was translated into Latin at the time of Nero (54–68 AD), allegedly by a certain Lucius Septimius. Dares in turn, according to what the introductory letter – falsely attributed to Cornelius Nepos – maintains, was a Trojan, who also directly participated in the events. The two works make a common claim to provide a more truthful and complete narration of the vicissitudes of the Trojan War than the Homeric account, which is steeped in myth and legend. Both Dares' and Dictys' compilations actually go back to the time of the Second Sophistic (1st–early 3rd century AD). They reflect the need for the rationalization of myth already felt in ancient times, and are to be set in the historiographic debate that was ongoing in the age of Lucian, since they both show the tendency today defined as “pseudo-documentarism”. That is to say, they belong to a category of texts which base their authoritativeness on fictitious sources, but which claim to be true.⁴

Dictys' and Dares' works were incorporated into narrations of universal history offered by medieval chronicles; they were deemed useful for the narrative and detailed reconstruction of events for which the Homeric text alone, with

2 Ed. W. Eisenhut, *Dictys Cretensis Ephemeridos belli troiani libri a Lucio Septimio in latinum sermonem translati. Accedunt papyri Dictys Graeci in Aegypto inventa*, Leipzig 1973 and ed. F. Meister, *Daretis Phrygii de excidio Troiae Historia*, Lipsiae 1873 respectively. Both texts have recently been republished with an Italian translation and ample introduction by E. Lelli, *Ditti di Creta, l'altra Iliade. Il diario di guerra di un soldato greco. Con la Storia della distruzione di Troia di Darete Frigio e i testi bizantini sulla guerra troiana. Testi greci e latini a fronte*, Milan 2015. A new edition of Dares' text is provided by G. Garbuglino, *La storia della distruzione di Troia*, Alessandria 2011. An English translation of both works is in R.M. Frazer Jr, *The Trojan War. The Chronicle of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian translated*, Bloomington, Indiana 1966. – A useful study, especially on the fortune of the Trojan legends in Italy, is Prosperi, *Omero sconfitto*. D'Agostino's work *Le gocce d'acqua*, in addition to a study on the fortune of Dictys and Dares in the romance sphere, also provides a large anthology of Latin, French, Ibero-Romance and Italian texts.

3 Tebtunis Papyri II, 268, ante 250 AD; P.Oxy.XXXI 1966, pp. 45–48 (late 2nd–early 3rd century AD); P.Oxy LXXII, 4943–4944.

4 Hansen, *Strategies of Authentication* p. 302. On the issue of fictionality vs historiographic truth in Byzantium, see Lassithiotakis, “Παύσασθε γράφειν Ὀμηρον”; Agapitos /Mortensen, *Medieval Narratives between History and Fiction*, particularly the long article by Agapitos, “In Rhomaian, Persian and Frankish Lands” pp. 227–267.

1 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. suppl. gr. 926, ed. Nørgaard/Smith, *A Byzantine Iliad*.

its legendary characteristics, did not provide sufficient and reliable elements.⁵ Thus, the two texts on one side constitute the point of confluence of a long tradition starting from Homer, and on the other they are to be seen as the point of departure of an awfully successful genre, in both East and West, which was only to be surpassed by that of the *Alexander Romance*.⁶

As regards the Byzantine East, already in the 6th century John Malalas, a Greek of Syrian origin, incorporated the Trojan legends into his *Chronicle*, taking them directly from the Greek Dictys.⁷ Malalas writes in a Greek rich in vernacular expressions and addresses a vast and not very educated readership; with him the story of the Trojan vicissitudes already takes on a novelistic colour. A clear example of this can be found in the passage where Paris falls in love with Helen, seeing her walking in a garden:⁸

While Menelaos was staying in Creta ... it happened that Helen came down into her palace garden to take a walk with Aithra, Menelaos' relative ... Paris looked out into the garden and noticed Helen's beauty and youth. Falling in love with her, he seduced her with the aid of Aithra ... He took her and fled in the ships he had with him from Troy.⁹

Homer's Students and Scholars in 12th-century Byzantium

In 12th-century Byzantium, Homeric studies flourished. While the bishop of Thessalonica Eustathios wrote a monumental commentary on the *Iliad*,¹⁰ the

5 For a useful overview of the Homeric tradition in Byzantine Literature see Browning, *Homer in Byzantium*; Jeffreys, "The Judgement of Paris"; Lavagnini, "Storie troiane"; Nilsson, "From Homer to Hermoniakos".

6 Cf. Lavagnini, *Storie troiane* p. 49. On the multifarious avatars of the *Alexander Romance* in Byzantine literature, see the chapter by U. Moennig in this volume.

7 On the relations between these texts see Patzig, "The Hypothesis", pp. 423–30; Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*, pp. 29–30.

8 John Malalas, *Chronicle*, ed. Thurn, p. 69, lines 72–80: 'Ἐν τῷ δὲ διάγειν τὸν Μενέλαον ἐπὶ τὴν Κρήτην θυσιάζοντα Διὶ Ἀστερίῳ καὶ τῇ Εὐρώπῃ ἐν τῇ Γορτύνη πόλει συνέβη τὴν Ἑλένην κατελθεῖν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ παλατίου αὐτῆς εἰς τὸ εὐρισθῆναι μετὰ τῆς Αἰθρας τῆς συγγενίδος τοῦ Μενελάου [...] ὁ δὲ Πάρις παρακύψας εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ προσεσχηκῶς τῷ κάλλει τῆς Ἑλένης καὶ τὴν νεότητα, βληθεὶς ἔρωτι εἰς αὐτὴν [...] ἔλαβεν αὐτὴν καὶ ἔφυγεν διὰ τῶν εἶχεν μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ πλοίων ἐκ τῆς Τροίας [...].

9 See Jeffreys/ Jeffreys/ Scott, *The chronicle of John Malalas*, pp. 46–47.

10 Eustathios of Thessalonica, *Commentarii*, ed. M. Van der Valk, *Eustathii Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes*, 7 vols. Leiden 1971–1987.

scholar and erudite John Tzetzes devoted much of his work as a grammarian to Homer, including the *Carmina Iliaca* in hexameters.¹¹ His Homeric *Allegoriae*, written between 1146 and 1160 in the verse of Greek vernacular literature, the political verse, by contrast, were not addressed to scholars, but were concerned with the cultural formation of the German princess Berta of Sulzbach, who in 1146 had married the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos.¹² The princess herself, Tzetzes writes, had asked him "to make Homer, who encircles the whole inhabited world like the deep ocean, suitable for everyone to ford and cross."¹³ In order to fulfil this goal, Tzetzes adopted the ancient method of allegorising the supernatural elements that still enjoyed great success in Byzantium. A characteristic example of this attitude is his severe criticism of the judgement of the three goddesses, an episode of Paris' biography that also enjoyed great popularity in western literature. This may well be the reason, as E. Jeffreys suggests, why this episode disappears from later versions of the Trojan story, such as the *Byzantine Iliad*.¹⁴ In the *Allegoriae* Tzetzes inserts facts not narrated in the *Iliad*, which instead belong to the tradition of *antehomerica*, such as, for instance, the stories related to Paris' birth and youth, which later were to successfully endure, as we shall see below.

Even more evident is the popularizing intent of Tzetzes' contemporary Constantine Manasses (1130–87); his universal *Chronicle* in political verses was commissioned by the *sevastocratorissa* Irene, the sister-in-law of Berta and wife of Andronikos Komnenos.¹⁵ Manasses too narrated the Trojan story, mainly dwelling on the events leading up to the war and its aftermath. His work, preserved in more than 80 manuscripts, was very popular and generally played an important role in providing narrative material for Greek vernacular literature.¹⁶

11 John Tzetzes, *Carmina Iliaca*, ed. P.A.M. Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae Carmina Iliaca*, Catania 1995.

12 On the relationship between Tzetzes and Manasses on one hand and the imperial patroness on the other see Jeffreys, "The Comnenian Background".

13 Tzetzes, *Allegoriae*, vv. 28–30, ed. J.-F. Boissonade, *Ioannis Tzetzae Allegoriae Iliadis, accedunt Pselli Allegoriae*, Lutetiae 1851, p. 4: ...τὸν μέγαν τὸν βαθὺν ὠκεανὸν Ὀμήρου / τὸν πάσαν περισφιγγοντα κύκλω τὴν οἰκουμένην / βατὸν κελύεις ἅπασι καὶ πορευτὸν ποιῆσαι. On the Homer/sea metaphor cf. Cesaretti, *Allegoristi*, pp. 180–8, 198–99.

14 See Jeffreys, "The Judgement of Paris", and for a more general overview Hunger, "Allegorische Mythendeutung"; Cesaretti, *Allegoristi*.

15 Jeffreys, "The Sebastocratorissa Irene as Patron"; Jeffreys/Jeffreys, "Who was Eirene the Sevastokratorissa?".

16 The Trojan section in Manasses is at lines 1118–471. Praechter, "Zur Byzantinischen Achilleis" n. 48f. defined Manasses' work as "Vermittlerin schrift- und volkärmythischer

Like Tzetzes and Manasses, Isaac Porphyrogenitus, author of a prose piece with the title *On what Homer left out*, took on the task of completing Homer and making him accessible to less educated people, as he himself writes.¹⁷ His work narrates numerous episodes from the Trojan-cycle lacking in Homer, such as the dream of the pregnant Hecuba; the birth of Paris and his exposure on Mount Ida; his rescue by a shepherd; the return to Troy; the abduction of Helen; the Trojan War; Achilles' love for Polyxene and his death in a trap; the stratagem of the wooden horse; Troy's conquest and destruction; the sacrifice of Polyxene on Achilles' grave and many more. In short, as H. Hunger rightly remarked, this work mirrors the themes and the mental attitude underlying the medieval romances on Troy.¹⁸ The author has been identified with Isaac Sebastocrator (1093-after 1152), the third-born son of Manuel Komnenos and hence the brother-in-law of Berta-Irene and also of the *sevastocratorissa* Irene.

Thus, it seems that there was a major interest in the Trojan subject matter at the court of Manuel Komnenos, from around mid-12th century onwards, precisely at a time when the same topic had begun to gain currency at the Norman court of Henry Plantagenet.¹⁹ The huge *Roman de Troie* penned by Benoît de St-Maure, with its more than 30,000 verses is probably to be dated around the 1160s. It soon became a fundamental text for the development of French literature, and played a major role in establishing the Trojan material as a topic of narrative fiction. Its spread is attested by the great number of manuscripts, as well as by French prose translations and the Latin rendition, also in prose, by Guido delle Colonne, which was the origine of further adaptations in many vernacular languages.²⁰

Literatur". On Manasses in prose see Praechter, "Eine vulgargriechische Paraphrase" and, more recently, Genova, "Vorläufige Bemerkungen".

17 Isaac Porphyrogenitus, *De rebus ab Homero pretermisissis*, ed. H. Hinck, *Polemonis declamationes*, Leipzig 1873, pp. 61–62.

18 Hunger, *Profane Literatur*, vol. 2, p. 58.

19 Bratianü, "Le roman de Troie", gives the symbolic dialogue between a Frankish knight and a Walach of Bulgaria (1205), reported by the chronicle of Robert de Clari, which shows that both knew the Trojan legends. See Lavagnini, *Storie troiane*, p. 56, note 29; Shawcross, "Re-inventing the Homeland in the Historiography of Frankish Greece" esp. pp. 125–32.

20 Complete edition of the Roman: Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le roman de Troie*, ed. L. Constans, 6 vols., Paris 1904–12; see the fundamental study by Jung, *La légende de Troie* and Gorra, *Testi inediti*. Benoît's novel was also rewritten in prose; the oldest of these versions, so-called Troy 1, appears to have been written in Morea in the middle of the 13th century (cf. Jung, *la légende de Troie*, pp. 440–562 on the versions in prose); however, the Greek version is not based on it. See Jeffreys, *Byzantine Romance*, p. 227, n. 52.

Interestingly enough, the *Roman de Troie* was also translated into Greek vernacular. The transposition in around 15,000 political verses has come down to us in seven more or less complete manuscripts; it is fairly close to the original, though it tends, where possible, to summarize and abridge.²¹ As a recent study suggests,²² the translation was done in Frankish Morea, before 1281, when Leonardo da Veroli, – the chancellor of William of Villehardouin on behalf of Charles of Anjou, who was Lord of Morea since 1267 – passed away. According to the hypothesis of E. Jeffreys, Leonardo is likely to be the promoter of the Greek version of the *Roman de Troie*, which had just been 'reedited' shortly before and given illustrations stressing the political overtones already present in the text. Like the original a century earlier, the latter was also intended to consolidate the idea of the Frankish monarchy's Trojan ancestry. The Greek version was to strengthen the legitimacy of the new sovereign in the eyes of his Angevins' Greek subjects by implicitly underlining his Trojan descent.²³ On the other hand, the adaptor was surely aware of the Byzantine Trojan tradition represented by the *Chronicle* of Manasses – which he even quoted verbatim at some points²⁴ –, thereby fruitfully linking together the two different traditions.

Be that as it may, the Greek translation of Benoît's romance surely played a role of its own in the composition of the two vernacular Trojan tales mentioned at the beginning, the *Achilleid* and the *Byzantine Iliad*. An evident trace of this is the fact that in both texts the name of Achilles' beloved comrade, Patroclus, appears in the corrupt form *Pàndruklos*, which is not to be found elsewhere besides the *War of Troy*. This not only shows that these texts do belong to the same tradition, but it is also a clear indicator that they were written in a cultural sphere where no need was felt to link the stories narrated either to the Homeric tradition itself nor to the Byzantine one.

The last of these, however, was anything but forgotten. On the contrary, the learned Byzantine tradition is the only one on which two further works, also dealing with Trojan material, rely. The *Ilias* of Constantine Hermoniakos is a long composition of over 9,000 octosyllabic verses, largely based on Tzetzes

21 Ed. M. Papatomopoulos/E. Jeffreys, *Ἡ Πόλεμος τῆς Τρωάδος (The War of Troy)*, Athens 1996; on the manuscripts, *ibid.*, p. liv. On the way the translator approached the original text, see Conca, "Gli amori di Briseida".

22 Jeffreys, *Byzantine Romances*.

23 For another opinion see the chapter by K. Yiavis in this volume, pp. 133–34.

24 *War of Troy*, pp. lxiv–lxv; he also follows it in avoiding the episode of the judgement of Paris.

and Manasses, though other sources cannot be ruled out.²⁵ It tells the vicissitudes of the Trojan War, the events leading up to it, as well as those following the fall of the city. The author dedicated the work to his patron, John Komnenos Angelos Doukas, Lord of Epirus, about 1320. Although its literary value is limited, Hermoniakos' *Iliad* was to become much later, in the early 15th century, the basis for the only narrative text in Greek vernacular on this subject to be printed, the *Iliad* of Nikolaos Lukanis, which is credited with being the first *Iliad*'s translation into a modern vernacular.²⁶

The Vernacular 'Homer'

This retrospective examination was necessary in order to better understand the *Achilleid* and the so-called *Byzantine Iliad*, to which I will now turn. Very different from one another in content and the organization of the narrative material as well as in many other respects, the texts share a similar focus on single heroes, Achilles and Paris respectively, rather than on the Trojan War as a whole. In this regard they reflect the late medieval tendency to fragment the Troy story into individual stories of the single protagonists, a tendency already present in Byzantine chroniclers, and which also was widespread in the West.²⁷

A The *Achilleid*

The *Tale of Achilles* has come down to us in three different versions, handed down by a Neapolitan manuscript²⁸ (N), a London manuscript²⁹ (L), and an Oxford manuscript³⁰ (O) respectively. While in the London version, (1363 verses), the beginning is missing and the Oxford one (763 verses) is only a highly abridged version of the story, the longer Neapolitan version, (1820

25 See Jeffreys, "Constantine Hermoniakos and Byzantine Education"; Lavagnini, "Storie troiane" pp. 57–66.

26 Νικολάου Λουκάνη 'Ομήρου 'Ιλιάς, Venice 1526, see also Follieri, "Su alcuni libri greci stampati a Venezia".

27 Cf. Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*, pp. 29–30.

28 Napoli, Neap. III B 27, sheets 13r–59r. This is a miscellaneous codex written by four different scribes, dated, for the part that contains the *Achilleid*, to the years 1460–75 (van Gemert, *Μαρίνου Φαλιέρου*, p. 50, n. 6), or according to others (Smith, *Achilleid* p. 4) to the last quarter of the 15th or early 16th century.

29 London, British Library, Additional 8241, sheets 7r–78v.

30 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. T.5.24.

verses)³¹ is not only more complete, but also more consistent from the narrative point of view, insofar as it displays both a prologue and a conclusion, where the hero's end is recounted. The problem of the priority given to one or other version which used to provoke lively debate, has lost much of its interest today, since it is commonly accepted that each version should be considered as a separate piece of literature in and of itself, without a direct link to an original text.³² The N edition, however, must be considered in all respects the best and most interesting, as the following summary will show.

vv. 1–19 Prologue: the author addresses his audience declaring his intention to describe the power of Love and inviting them to listen.³³

vv. 20–176 Beginning of the story: there is a king of the Greeks, in the land of the Myrmidons, who has a brave army and a very beautiful wife. The couple have no children, and the king, therefore, wants to be separated from his wife. After a while, however, the queen becomes pregnant, and a son is born amid great joy, and is called Achilles. The child stands out for his beauty. At the age of four he is educated in Greek letters (*γράμματα ἑλληνικά*), and at eight he is instructed in horse racing and in the military arts. Achilles first proves his valor in a tournament; the king is very much impressed, and wants to give up his own crown. Achilles refuses the crown, and asks to have instead a corps of chosen warriors in order to fight on behalf of the king.

vv. 177–365 Messengers bring the news that a foreign king is ransacking the lands of Achilles' father. Achilles asks to set out to defend the kingdom, and chooses the bravest warriors, which he recognizes at the first glance; he also selects 12 particularly formidable warriors to be his companions as well as his crack troops. Before setting out, they are all invited to a banquet with the king and queen. Achilles plays the cithar and sings a song in praise of valorous young people, criticizing those who yield to the allurements of love. Achilles' cousin, Pandruklos, the best and handsomest of his companions, warns him about the power of love nobody is able to escape.

31 In the edition by O.L. Smith, who also inserts in the numeration the rubrics in prose and in red ink, the text amounts to 1926 lines. However, the rubrics cannot be considered an organic part of the composition, but constitute a specific aspect of the copyist's work. Hence, I follow the numbering of Cupane's edition. For a different opinion on the issue of the rubrics see Agapitos/Smith, "Scribes and Manuscripts of Byzantine Vernacular Romances", esp. pp. 68–71.

32 This is a problem common to all medieval texts in Greek vernacular; for this reason I will not be dealing with the issue here. See Smith, *The Byzantine Achilleid*, pp. 178–179 (on the *Achilleid* especially).

33 On the interplay between hearing and reading in the *Achilleid*, and more general in vernacular romances, see the chapter on audience by C. Cupane in this volume.

vv. 366–751 At dawn the army sets off, and reaches the kingdom's boundaries ten days later. Messengers from a frontier fortress belonging to Achilles' father come, and relate to him about the overwhelming strength of the enemies. The enemy's forces, however, are engaged in the siege of the castle and are therefore not able to deploy their troops. Since Achilles immediately moves towards the castle to bring reinforcements, the enemy king together with his five sons gets ready to fight.

A relentless battle between the two armies arises; it is described at length and with great attention to technical details showing a more than superficial knowledge of strategy and warfare. As to be expected, Achilles' skills prove to be superior. The enemy army cannot withstand the pressure and run away, and Achilles pursues the survivors well into their own lands, camping outside the king's castle. From the wall, women are watching the besieging army, among these is the king's daughter; at the mere sight of her Achilles the invincible is wounded by love. However, he has first to accomplish his duty as a commander. Thus, he writes a letter to his father announcing the victory, and asks him to move there, for it would be suitable to control the enemy's movements. His father complies with this request, and he moves to reach his son with the queen and his retinue, leaving a governor in his place.

vv. 752–830 We now move to the narration of Achilles' love for the enemy king's daughter. The setting shifts from the battle-field to a blooming garden, where the girl, according to a time honored romance tradition, dwells. Both garden and girl are described in great detail, the first being the symbolic counterpart of the second.³⁴ The *ekphrasis* (description) of the heroine is an obligatory *topos* in the romances. Here a noteworthy accumulation of adjectives is mobilised to describe the beauty of face and body, her supple gait, and the sweetness of her speech. Her attire and ornaments are described in detail as well, which interestingly both refer back to Frankish fashion. But the girl is haughty, she does not know love and refuses to yield to its allurements, just like Achilles himself earlier.

vv. 834–1096 Achilles meanwhile pines with love; he sends a message to the young girl, declaring his love. She responds immediately, albeit initially dismissively, and between the two a correspondence develops³⁵ which in the end – along with the active support of Eros himself appearing to her in a dream

34 On the intimate relationship between erotic heroine and the garden see Barber, "Reading the garden".

35 On this correspondence and, more generally, on the issue of literacy and orality in the *Tale of Achilles*, see Agapitos, "Writing, Reading and Reciting", pp. 158–62. The exchange of letters in the *Achilleid* is certainly reminiscent of the analogous scene in the romance

– lead's to the girl's capitulation. In her last letter she eventually asks her suitor to come as soon as possible. Accompanied by the 12 peers Achilles arrives at the castle, and with the aid of his lance, he jumps over the walls and right into the golden plane-tree. At this unexpected sight the girl faints. The two embrace each other and exchange kisses, but do not yet fully satisfy their desire; as dawn interrupts them, Achilles returns to his abode together with his men.

vv. 1097–1364 The preparations for the second visit, one day later, are described: Achilles and his men are richly dressed as for a feast, and also rich and refined is the harness of the hero's white horse.³⁶ The two lovers converse at a distance; Achilles agrees with his beloved a rendezvous for midnight. When the full moonlit night comes, he sets out again, this time on his black war horse. Under the walls he intones a love song, and then, while the faithful Pandruklos keeps watch, he jumps into the garden and is welcomed by the young girl, who is awaiting him impatiently. Now the two can at last consummate their love. Finally, the moment comes for them to leave: Achilles jumps down from the wall on to his horse's back, while his men putting their lances together form a kind of ladder on which the girl climbs down. She is entrusted to Pandruklos and five other knights who take her to Achilles' parents while Achilles stays to cover their escape and to face any enemies. Meanwhile, he sings a triumphant song in which he boasts of having abducted a bird from its cage, thereby provoking the girl's brothers. Thereupon they come out of the castle with the army, but Achilles defeats them all, albeit sparing the brothers of his beloved. Full of admiration for Achilles' prowess they surrender to him and offer to come with their parents and to celebrate the marriage.

vv. 1365–1548 The wedding celebrations are described at great length, the peak being a joust in the course of which Achilles unseats all the enemy knights with a single lance blow. Soon after, the girl's parents and brothers take their leave, and Achilles accompanies them a bit of the way, during which he displays his bravery by killing a lion. After this he takes his leave and returns home, where he is welcomed and feasted by his family. The girl sings a song in which she describes her love: her beloved is like a tree that has taken root in

Livistros and Rodamne (on which see the chapter on the original romances" by C. Cupane in this volume).

36 As the author will specify later on, the white horse is suitable for love encounters, the black one for war: v. 1219, ed. Cupane, p. 406: ἄσπρον εἶχεν εἰς ἔρωτας καὶ μούντον εἰς πολέμους.

her heart, while the branches spread out in her limbs. He is the master of her soul and her body.³⁷

vv. 1549–1758 The young couple's happiness lasts six years. But the joys of this world do not endure; the young wife falls sick and lies on her deathbed. She asks Achilles and his men to wrest her from death, but men can do nothing against the invisible enemy, Charon. The double dialogic lament of the two lovers who are about to be separated for ever by death, appears to be the reverse image of the cheerful epistolary dialogue of verses 836–1065, which celebrated the sudden outburst of their love. On the death of his bride Achilles tries to take his own life, but he is kept back by his friends and relatives. The funeral is held and a sepulchre is built, but Achilles fails to get over his grief and dies after only one year.

vv. 1759–1820 Although the story has found its end with the death of both the hero and the heroine, the redactor of the N version gives it a new start by having Achilles 'resurrected' from death and taking part, as the Homeric hero did, in the Trojan War. Paris, the lord of Troy, proposes marriage between his sister Polyxene and Achilles, so as to make peace with the Greeks. However, this offer is nothing but trickery: when Achilles goes to the temple for the wedding, Paris and Deiphobos kill him with a dagger. Achilles is only able to say: "Deiphobos has killed me, with Paris, treacherously."³⁸ The war then lasts more years, and ends with the destruction of Troy.

The story, as the redactor claims, was taken from books by poets, rhetors and philosophers such as Homer, Aristotle, Plato and Palamedes. These were authors – he claims – everyone read to educate themselves, and were now turned into more comprehensible language, so that uneducated people could also hear of Achilles and could learn how everything in this world is vain and ephemeral.

After having read this synopsis it should be clear to anyone that very little of the Homeric hero is left in the story, apart from the names of Achilles, Myrmidons, and Patroclus (in the corrupted form Pandruklos). The prologue in the Neapolitan text extolling the power of Eros and placing the whole story under the seal of this god is missing in the other two versions, and has been

37 *Achilleid* N 1540–46, ed. Cupane, p. 424. This song is certainly reminiscent of one of the love letters in *Livistros and Rhodamne*, see on that Cupane, "Jenseits des Schattens der Alten?", pp. 97–99.

38 *Achilleid* N, 1792–93, ed. Cupane, p. 440: ἄλλο μὴδὲν φθεγγάμενος εἰ μὴ τὸν λόγον τοῦτον / Ἄνεϊλεν με Δηίφοβος καὶ Πάρις μετὰ δόλου. Both verses are to be found, although not together, in the *Chronicle* of Constantine Manasses, lines 1326 and 1408, ed. Lampsides, pp. 74 and 77: on the relationship between both texts see below. pp. 252–53 and n. 50.

considered an addition.³⁹ Nevertheless, it fits in well with the rest of the tale, in which, at the salient moments, Eros is always evoked as a god, and under whom it is unavoidable to submit oneself.⁴⁰ The central nucleus of the story – common to all three versions in different forms, – is its bipartite structure, with a first section in which the hero's miraculous birth and his deeds are described, and a second one dominated by the love story. Such a bipartition is reminiscent of *Digenis Akritis*, which also presents a very similar biographical unfolding, and ends in the same way, with the death of the protagonist.⁴¹ The similarity, however, ends here, since the *Achilleid* lacks the epic spirit still perceivable in all the versions of the *Digenis*, as well as its narrative richness, its density of references to *realia* and, most of all, its deep rootedness in concrete historical and geographical reality.⁴² One may assume that the author of the tale of Achilles had in mind *Digenis*, and adapted it for a new audience in a simplified form, thereby replacing the new Byzantine frontier hero Digenis, by the hero par excellence of ancient Greece, Achilles. Little more than his name, however, remains of the ancient hero, since this new Achilles is a romantic figure.⁴³ His vicissitudes, narrated in a simple and linear way and without excessive concern for plot, are not without grace, especially in the part describing the love story of the two protagonists, where the use of metaphorical language are close to the oldest examples of modern Greek folk poetry.⁴⁴ Obviously, the anonymous author and his readers felt able to treat the figure of Achilles that freely because their scanty knowledge of the real Homeric characters did not create any obstacle in this regard. Such an unbiased stance towards the classical literary heritage, on the other hand, contrasts sharply

39 Smith, "Versions and Manuscripts", p. 317 observes that there was no space for an analogous prologue in the missing sheets of the London manuscript.

40 Eros the sovereign, present both in the romances of the Komnenian age and in those of subsequent epochs, corresponds to the ancient god of love in the new depiction given by courtly western poetry, as C. Cupane has shown in her studies "Ἔρως βασιλεύς", "Metamorphosen des Eros"; for another opinion, see Magdalino, "Eros the King".

41 On the biographical structure as a generic device in several vernacular narratives see Moennig "Biographical Arrangement", esp. pp. 123–24.

42 On *Digenis Akritis* see the chapter by C. Jouanno in this volume. According to Lassithiotakis, "Παύσασθε γράφειν Ὀμηρον", p. 71, the presence of akritic material surviving within a love plot in the *Tale of Achilles* witnesses the gradual shifting from epic to romance in Byzantine literature. See also id., "Achille et Digénis".

43 Cupane, *Romanzi*, pp. 310–11 observes that the large scope given to the tragic love story of Achilles and Polyxene in the *Roman de Troie* (and in its Greek adaptation, *Polemos tis Troados*) could have suggested this new dimension for the Homeric hero.

44 The same Neapolitan codex III B 27 contains at sheets 118v–121r 124v anonymous poems in Greek vernacular.

with the competence the text shows concerning the techniques of war (knowledge of military manuals is evident), and other *realia* of the Byzantine court,⁴⁵ although the latter are impossible to place in a precise chronological framework. The only certain data are those provided by the codex itself.⁴⁶ That is to say, the *Achilleid* N is a text copied after the fall of Constantinople, and probably written not long before it.

The final part of *Achilleid* N (vv. 1759–1820) which earlier scholars regarded as an interpolation, does, however, deserve separate consideration. In fact, the story of Achilles ends in version N, as in the other two versions, with the subsequent natural death of the protagonist some years later.⁴⁷ The addition of an alternative ending, this time taken from the post-Homeric tradition, can be understood when considering it as the work of a copyist-*diaskevast* that awkwardly wanted to ‘re-Homerize’ the story. The end attained is unintentionally very modern in that it offers up an ‘open’ ending, with the possibility for the reader to choose the conclusion that he or she prefers.

B The Byzantine Iliad (*Diegesis*)

This romance in political verses on a Trojan subject was long neglected by scholars. Judged “an untidy abridged edition” by Krumbacher, it has only been mentioned by a few more recent scholars,⁴⁸ and was first edited in 1975.⁴⁹ The plot can be summarised as follows:

45 On this subject see Lavagnini, *Note*; Cupane, in the notes to her version of the *Achilleid*, *passim*.

46 See note 27 *supra*.

47 *Achilleid*, line 1758, ed. Cupane, p. 438: *Καὶ τότε ἀπέθανεν μετὰ κανέναν χρόνον καὶ αὐτὸς* (to be corrected *καὶ αὐτὸς μετὰ κανέναν χρόνον*). The verse is usually seen as an interpolation or a substitute for a rubric, although it does appear in a very similar form elsewhere: see Smith, *The Byzantine Achilleid*, p. 148 and n. 129; Cupane, *Romanzi*, p. 463.

48 See Krumbacher, *Geschichte* p. 848, Beck, *Geschichte*, p. 139, Mitsakis, “Χρονολόγησι”, p. 71, Michailidis, “Palamedes”, pp. 261–80.

49 *A Byzantine Iliad*, ed. Nørgaard/Smith, to be supplemented with the textual remarks by Kambylis, “Beiläufiges zur Byzantinischen Ilias”. By contrast, the valuable doctoral dissertation presented in London in 1971 by D. Dedes is unpublished. An Italian translation of the work, based on a new reading of the manuscript, with extensive comment, is Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*. The narrative structure is analysed by U. Moennig, “Ἔρως, Ἰστορία, Θάνατος”, who rightly underscores the fundamental role of fate (*Μοίρα*) in Paris’ vicissitudes. Less convincing is his interpretation of Paris as a negative hero, depicted according to the rhetorical rules of the *ψόγος* (blame) (see Moennig, “Ἔρως”, p. 83, “Biographical Arrangement”, p. 241). However, the portrayal is, in my opinion, far more nuanced and sympathetic, Paris actually appearing both as a victim of fate, worth to be commiserated with, and an adventurous young man and passionate lover.

vv. 1–176 King Priam has many children and a beautiful wife. While she is again pregnant, the king sees three times in a dream that his wife gives birth to a torch that sets the city of Troy on fire. After consulting the noblemen and the diviners, he is advised to put the child to death as soon as he is born. Hence, when Paris is born, the parents are forced to put him in a box sealed with pitch, and to throw it into the sea. The wind brings the box onto a beach, off the island of Mytilene, where he is picked up by the rich landowner Selinios, who has recently lost a child and is therefore happy to raise the baby. Like Achilles, the child is first educated in Greek letters (*Ἑλληνικὴν παιδείαν*), and from the age of ten in the military arts.

vv. 177–432 Paris guards sheep together with his Selinios’ shepherds, and becomes their leader; to punish one of the shepherds for a minor transgression, he cuts his ear off. The shepherd’s parents protest to Priam. Paris and Selinios are called to Troy to justify themselves, and the King recognizes his son. New prodigies announce bad luck because of the return of Paris. Put under pressure by the nobility, Priam confines his son with 12 peers of the same-age to a tower without doors or windows. Here he dwells until one day he throws one of his fellows prisoners down from the tower, once again to punish him for some transgression. There are protests among the Trojan archons as well as the common people, who want to set the tower on fire. But Paris forestalls this plan and the night before it is due to be carried out, escapes by sea in a small galleon; in a storm he loses his balance and is shipwrecked on an island. Here he is welcomed and fed by the monks of a convent.

vv. 433–700 The beautiful Helen is now introduced. She has many suitors vying for her, until the decision is taken to choose the bridegroom by lots. The lucky one is the minor king Menelaos; the other suitors swear to help him if anyone should disturb the marriage. So Helen and Menelaos now live happily on the island. Paris decides to enter into the service of the island’s king. He immediately shows his skill, and is admired for his cleverness and beauty. He is very dear to Menelaos and Helen, who install him as the head of the palace. Helen and Paris fall in love, thanks also to the music of the lyre, which both play masterly. Helen is the first to declare her love, which Paris passionately reciprocates. Once Menelaos sets out to visit one of his castles, the two lovers eventually succeed in being alone together; their happiness reaches its peak.

vv. 701–856 Helen is pregnant; the two decide in despair to take refuge in Troy. Dressed as a man, Helen embarks with Paris taking Menelaos’ riches. In Troy the couple are welcomed by new prodigies; now fate is about to be fulfilled. The Greek kings gather to avenge Helen’s abduction; among them is Achilles, about whom, we are told, Homer wrote a lot. Achilles loved Chryseis (Briseida) and lived with her in his tent. But a plague spreads through the army:

the oracles enjoin Achilles to return Chryseis to her father. Achilles, grieved, dresses as a woman and withdraws from the battle. One of the wise men succeeds in uncovering him with a stratagem. Pretending to be a merchant he goes around selling swords: Achilles, attracted, grabs one of them, and this gesture betrays him. His companions convince him to return to the battle.*

vv. 857–969 The war lasts nine years; to end it, Trojans and Greeks entrust its outcome to a duel between Paris and Menelaos. Helen climbs on the wall to watch the struggle: everyone admires her. The duel proceeds with chequered fortunes. Menelaos comes out on top, but the goddess breaks the strap with which he has grabbed Paris. The duel having been ineffective, Priam and Paris offer to Achilles Polyxene's hand in marriage as a peace token; the latter accepts, and enters Troy for the wedding accompanied by Pandruklos and his 12 peers. But Paris and Deiphobos kill him treacherously with a dagger.

vv. 970–1145 After one more year of war, the Greeks decide to draw on a subterfuge: they construct a huge golden and silver horse, and have 300 armed men hidden inside; then they pretend to sail away. The rejoicing Trojans pull the horse into the city as a victory trophy, after knocking down the gate. At night, 300 come out, and make signals to the Greek fleet from above the wall. Achilles' son, Pyrrhus, slaughters Priam and his whole family on the father's grave. With Troy having been destroyed, the Greeks are held up on their way home by a south wind. The ghost of Achilles appears asking that Priam, Paris and all their family should be sacrificed on his sepulchre. The already mentioned slaughtering scene is now presented again in more detail, thereby offering the author the opportunity to produce an extensive lament on Achilles' death and on the frailty of human life.

As this summary immediately makes evident, the most noticeable feature of the text is its bipartite structure: in fact two separate stories are juxtaposed, one about Paris and one about Achilles' deeds in Troy. Beyond that, the overall tone in the *Byzantine Iliad* is not dissimilar to that of the *Achilleid*, for here too the heroes of the Trojan War themselves have become "romance" heroes. But the anonymous author not only gave the Trojan story a 'romantic' hue, but also incorporated various motifs from differing narrative traditions. In fact, we are faced with a mixture of narrative ingredients which often give scope, alongside the traditional elements of the Trojan legends, to very fanciful developments. Nørgaard and Smith have pointed out the analogy between the episode of Paris' abandonment and the biblical story of Moses' exposure as well as to the mythos of Danae and Perseus as told by the ancient poet Simonides of Ceos. Although both these stories cannot be ignored, the more convincing parallel is to be found in the episode of the abandonment at sea of the presumed dead

body of Archistratigusa in the romance of *Apollonius of Tyre*, with whom our *Diegesis* also shares many other motifs.⁵⁰

Another work, whose affinities with our Trojan story deserve to be mentioned, is the romance of *Belisarius*. This is not so much because of precise narrative similarities, or even specific textual echoes, though they exist,⁵¹ but rather because of an analogy of 'climate', particularly in the representation of the power relationships between king, nobility and common people. If in *Belisarius* the emperor is shown alternatively yielding to the pressures of ones or the other, in our story the Trojan king is continually sanctioned by both nobility and common people, who judge him and affect his actions.⁵² Thematic affinities to other vernacular romances, such as *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, *Florios and Platziaflora*, *Livistros and Rhodamne*, the *Achilleid* and *Imberios and Margarona*, can also be detected. The childhood and upbringing of Paris are similar to those of Imberios, Florios and Achilles; Priam's palace vaguely recalls the *Erotokastron* in *Velthandros*; Paris after the shipwreck is fed by monks just like Imberios who is given shelter in a convent; he shows his valor in a joust, just as Imberios and Achilles also do.⁵³ Here, too, the thematic analogies are buttressed by textual correspondences. One single verse (973), in which Pandruklos and Achilles' 12 peers are mentioned, has led some scholars to infer direct knowledge of the *Achilleid*.⁵⁴

Naturally, greater curiosity exists concerning the origin of the Trojan material found in the story. Given the number not only of anachronisms, but also of fanciful elements – like the shipwreck of Paris, Helen's pregnancy, her disguising herself as a man – accuracy in mirroring any presumable sources on the

50 On the analogies with the romance of Apollonius (vv. 390–405, 135–160, 118–200 and 216–233, ed. Kechagioglou: *Απολλώνιος της Τύρου*, vol. 1, pp. 353–56) see Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*, pp. 31–32.

51 Textual correspondences are not in themselves proof of dependence of one text on the other, as G. Spadaro maintained (in "Problemi" 111, 262–66 as regards *Byzantine Iliad*), but are to be considered in the perspective of the particular style of the first literature in Greek vernacular. To the pioneer studies by Jeffreys/Jeffreys, "The Style of Byzantine Popular Poetry", much literature has been added more recently, showing that the particular circumstances of the composition and the transmission of these texts in Greek vernacular, mostly anonymously, led to the formation of a formulaic and repetitive style.

52 *Belisarius* (ed. Bakker-van Gemert), *passim*; cf. Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*, pp. 33 and 51.

53 More precise comparisons can be found in the dissertation by D. Dedes, in E. Jeffreys, "The Judgement of Paris", p. 116, and Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*, in the notes to the translation.

54 As Spadaro, "Problemi" 111, p. 257, first showed; for an alternative assessment see Moennig, "Schiffskatalog" n. 28c.

part of our author is not to be expected. Nevertheless, the link with the Byzantine tradition, and particularly with the *Chronicle* of Manasses, is evident: indeed, elements of the old sagas of Paris and Achilles handed down by the ancient mythographers, which are to be found in the *Diegesis*, are largely the same already included in Manasses' story.

In Constantine Manasses' Trojan section,⁵⁵ the following episodes are described: Hecuba's dream; the soothsayers' suggestion of exposing the baby to wild beasts or throwing him into a fire (1126–29); the birth of the lovely baby, so winning as to arouse pity in his parents, who do expose it but in such a way that it is found and raised by shepherds (1130–41), until the baby reaches adulthood and Priam takes him back. Paris then kills a relative and leaves for Sparta (1142–49) where Menelaos welcomes him; but Eros the tyrant causes Paris to see Helen (whose beauty is amply described and praised) after Menelaos' departure, and makes him to fall in love with her. With Helen's consent Paris abducts her and sets out for Troy (1157–1170). Paris' youth is very briefly mentioned in Manasses, but the corresponding, much ampler narration of the *Diegesis* certainly echoes yet another passage by Manasses (vv. 749–777), where the author versifies Herodotus' account (Herodotus 1, 108–25) of the birth, infancy and youth of Cyrus, who behaves in almost the same way Paris does, and is also described as having been exposed and risen up by a shepherd. It is clear that this story, especially in two details – the exposed child who replaces a child that has recently died, and the precocious aptitude for command, which allows for their later recognition – offered the author of the *Diegesis* a welcome opportunity to widen and enrich the story of Paris' childhood and youth.⁵⁶

The *Diegesis* again coincides with the story told by Manasses in its second part. This can be seen in the episodes of the meeting of the Greeks in Troy (Manasses vv. 1222–1397), Achilles' death in the well-known trap (vv. 1377–97), the construction of the horse, the way it is carried inside the walls of Troy, and finally the capture of the city with the consequent slaughter of adults and children (vv. 1415–52).

But Manasses' story also contains parts such as the arrival of the fugitive Paris and Helen to Egypt, where Helen is held back by Proteus (vv. 1171–1208), and the episode of the Greek hero Palamedes, who becomes the victim of Ulysses' envy, which are both absent in the *Diegesis*. By contrast, the latter

55 Constantine Manasses, *Chronicle*, lines 1119–70, ed. Lampsides, pp. 64–66.

56 Moennig, "Ερωσ, Ιστορία, Θάνατος" pp. 82–83, as well as id., "Biographical Arrangement" p. 126, suggests that the apocryphal *Life of Judas* – a text today only extant in Latin and other vernacular adaptations, but purportedly also extant in a Greek version – may have been another possible source.

narrates facts missing in Manasses, like Paris' upbringing and military training,⁵⁷ the Homeric episodes of Achilles' anger and the duel between Paris and Menelaos, along with the teichoscopy (τειχοσκοπία), present instead in Tzetzes and in Hermoniakos. Lastly, the episode of Achilles among Lycomedes' daughters is treated very fancifully in our text, where it is connected to that of the hero's anger. The *Diegesis* closes with the prodigious apparition of Achilles' ghost who stops the Greek ships on their way home; this episode is lacking in the ancient tradition, and is only to be found in a few Byzantine adaptations of the Troy matter, such as those by Isaac Porphyrogenitus and Hermoniakos.

It should be clear from what has been said that Manasses' *Chronicle* could not have furnished by itself all the narrative material the *Byzantine Iliad* displays. However, in seeking other derivations it will be useful to more closely consider the way the identifiable traditional material is dealt with in the *Diegesis*. By considering, for example, the episode of Hecuba's dream and the subsequent prophecy, as they are told by Tzetzes in the *Prolegomena* to the *Allegories of the Iliad*,⁵⁸ the poet's characteristic approach can be ascertained. Whenever he retains traditional elements, he always uses them as a starting point for developments and amplifications; he not only paraphrases by inserting rhetorical embellishments, as we see it by Manasses and, above all, Hermoniakos, rather he also refines the narration introducing novelistic elements of disparate origin, which often point to a different literary taste.

A comparison with only a few verses of the poem already allow us to observe that the strictly Trojan material, even when present, at some points is almost entirely left in the background. We frequently notice that, alongside passages where the source is reproduced almost verbatim, in many other cases the plot has been freely embroidered, sometimes through the adoption of narrative schemes closer to the structure of a popular text. There is, for instance, the triplication of actions, or the occasional use of characteristic devices of the romance genre, such as *ekphraseis* (descriptions) – beauty and magnificence of sovereigns and heroes, Priam's palace, Paris' tower –, or the introduction of elements drawn from the reach stock of different, though well-established narrative traditions (the abandonment of the infant at sea, the youth of Paris/Cyrus).

57 For Paris' education see Malalas, *Chronicle* IV 2, ed. Thurn, p. 68, lines 24–34; Tzetzes, *Prolegomena*, vv. 236–255, ed. Boissonade, pp. 13–14 (as well as a prose text, 'Υπόθεσις Ἰλιάδος, attributed to him, on which, cf. Mertens, "Songe d'Hécube", p. 22); Hermoniakos II 66–68, ed. Legrand, p. 28.

58 Lines 176–81, ed. Boissonade, p. 12 (= Manasses, *Chronicle*, vv. 1121–29, ed. Lampsidis, p. 64; Hermoniakos II vv. 10–22 ed. Legrand pp. 25–26).

We also have to bear in mind the manifold pathways along which the Trojan material was handed down. One thinks of the Homeric commentaries, of the several ὑποθέσεις or explanations ἐξηγήσεις Ἰλιάδος (summaries or interpretations of the Iliad) accompanying Byzantine Homer editions, or the Homeric paraphrases, and of prose retellings like the one already mentioned by Isaac Porphyrogenitus, although his popularizing intent is quite different from that underlying the *Diegesis*. This kind of literature, which probably also included texts not known to us, must have provided the background for our text, which uses exclusively Greek material. Such a conclusion seems compelling since there is nothing in the *Diegesis* that does not find its counterpart in Byzantine tradition, and, also, the text does not show any direct trace of western models, apart from the generic chivalric climate, common to works written after the Fourth Crusade. However, it is difficult to specify the precise relationship between the authors known to us and the *Diegesis*, for the text does not display any textual repetition, except in the case of Manasses, where the author, however, consistently corrupts the wording of his source.

Be that as it may, the relationship with Manasses is an important one, not least because, as already hinted at, it ties together the *Diegesis* and the *Achilleid's* ending in the Neapolitan codex.⁵⁹ Since both the so-called interpolation of *Achilleid N* and our romance are likely to depend for their corresponding parts on a common original, I believe that the existence of a text can be hypothesized, in which the different traditional elements present in the *Diegesis* were gathered. This must have been written by an author whose cultural background enabled him to draw directly at least on the most recent representatives of the Homeric tradition, which he further enriched with elements coming from the vast and partly 'submerged' literature which arose on the margin of the

59 U. Moennig, "Schiffskatalog", after a meticulous comparison of both passages concludes that the *Byzantine Iliad* has the best readings (qua more close to the alleged source, Manasses), and should therefore be seen as the giving, the *Achilleid* being the receiver (besides, p. 284 n.12, he makes me take the opposite view, but see Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia* p. 84). Hence, the original version of the *Byzantine Iliad* precedes the *Achilleid N*, and must date back to first half of the 15th century. However, one has to take into account that copyists of vernacular texts did not aim at reproducing accurately their model, rather they dealt with it freely and unbiased. Therefore, it is not possible to demonstrate the dependence of one text from another on the basis of textual parallels. On the contrary, as I already showed elsewhere (Lavagnini, *I fatti di Troia*, pp. 60–61, 84–85) the *Achilleid*, whose older manuscript (N) goes surely back to the second half of the 15th century, appears much closer to the Byzantine atmosphere of the Palaiologan romances than the *Diegesis* with its modern-looking narrative style.

Homeric text. It does not appear plausible to attribute this operation to the writer of the *Byzantine Iliad* himself, as he seems to have had a greater familiarity with the vernacular literature of his time, on which he draws liberally. In contrast, his relationship with antiquity is very vague and hazy, going as far as to a loss of linguistic identity: verses 162 [169] and 284 [302] Πάρις γὰρ λέγεται βρετὸς εἰς τὴν Ἑλλήνων γλώσσῃσιν ("Paris means foundling in the language of the ancient Greeks.") in this respect are striking. The process of the modernization of the hero, however, is still only half complete. If Paris is a knight of fortune, as he himself declares: "I am a poor fellow and travel around the world; I left my place and homeland seeking my fortune and my destiny",⁶⁰ his Homeric derivation, nevertheless, cannot be doubted. However, the same does not hold true for the figure of Achilles in the romance devoted to him, it is therefore no accident that the author of the *Achilleid's* ending in the Neapolitan codex tries somehow to compensate for this loss of Homeric characteristics.

It is difficult to delineate the personality of an author within a literary production which is by definition anonymous. It should however be noted that the narrator of the *Byzantine Iliad* is a very intrusive presence in the narrative. His first-person interventions are frequent, both at the beginning of the composition, to expound the subject, and later on, when he is concerned with asserting his narratorial inadequacy, or affirming his intention to restrain from lengthy description in order to avoid boredom. Furthermore, he often takes the reader by the hand, helping him to follow the changes of scene, marking narrative sequences and above all underlying again and again his inferiority in comparison to the wise men of old, first of all Homer. However, his consciousness in belonging to an ancient, glorious tradition cannot be denied. It comes to the fore, for example, in his claim of having drawn on ancient books written by highly learned scholars, which he rewrote in a plain way in order to make accessible to the youngest and simplest people the story's moral meaning, by demonstrating the vanity of all worldly things. To be sure, such a purported simplicity is not original, if anything it is formulated in a topical way. This, of course, does not mean that it has no function in our romance, which employs such stereotypical expressions with remarkable frequency. Rather, although such topicality seems to underline in a more or less conscious way the author's

60 *Byzantine Iliad*, vv. 610–12 [630–32], ed. Nørgaard/Smith, p. 44: ἄνθρωπος εἶμαι ἐκ τοῦς πτωχοῦς, τὸν κόσμον περιγυρίζω / ἐξήλθα ἐκ τοῦ τόπου μου καὶ ἐκ τὰ γονικά μου / τὸ ριζικὸν τῆς τύχης μου θέλω νὰ δοκιμάσω. On the issue of the western derivation of the adventure motif see Cupane, "Topica romanzesca"; more specifically on the "errance" as a typical feature of chivalric existence in Byzantine vernacular understanding see Lassithiotakis, "Le personnage du chevalier errant" pp. 100–200.

uneasiness in approaching an elevated subject like the Homeric one, it also reflects the precise authorial intention of praising the importance of the work undertaken to his intended audience.

If this vernacular re-enacting of the celebrated Trojan story is deeply indebted to the romance tradition, which enjoyed greater diffusion and success at that time, it must also be recognized that it has its own originality and literary physiognomy. There is particular attention paid to the expression of feelings and states of mind. One thinks of Priam's worry after seeing the dream, Priam's and Hecuba's grief in separating from their child, the compassionate words of the shepherd and his wife when finding the abandoned baby, Selinios' desperation faced with the king, the parents' joy during the *anagnorisis* (recognition), or the joyful words Paris utters to express his love for Helen.

Furthermore, one has to note a tendency towards digressions accompanied by an often highly effective descriptive minuteness, as in the scene of the recovery of the box the baby Paris lies in by the shepherd, where a calm bucolic and marine landscape is abruptly disturbed by the sudden coming into sight of the box, followed by the lively scene of the recovery. The marine and indeed insular setting is the favourite one. The beach is the place of the abandonment and finding of Paris, as well as that of his later adventures. This familiarity with the sea seems to be a realistic element of the tale, which is consistently set in the landscape of Troas, between Troy, Axos, 'the island of Menelaos', Troy again and then Achilles's grave.

But a marine and island reality is relevant for the most of Greece, as much today as it was in antiquity, and still more so in late Byzantine times, when the island areas touched by Venetian and Frankish influence were already showing lively signs of a new modern Greek culture. Hence, there are no elements that can tell us about a precise geographical origin for this text, just as it is almost impossible to delimit its chronological framework. If the copy that has come down to us stems, broadly speaking, from the 16th century,⁶¹ the text is certainly much older. Certain linguistic characteristics, like the way of forming the future tense, some elements of its lexicon, and the absence of rhyme move it back about one century. Be that as it may, the *Byzantine Iliad*, as it has come down to us, must be later than the romances of *Apollonius* and *Belisarius*, as well as the *Achilleid*, and also, therefore, of the other romances with which it shows similarities. The last of these is *Imberios and Margarona*, a text, which displays striking analogies with our Trojan story, not only in language but also in tone and style. The characteristics that account for the popularity of *Imberios*

61 According to the chronology proposed by Astruc-Concasty *Le Supplément Grec* III, p. 27.

and *Margarona*, the only vernacular romance to have been printed,⁶² such as its tone somewhere between the naive and the adventurous, are also present in our text. This lends it its particular physiognomy as a work of naive craftsmanship, but still bearing the signs of a millennium-old tradition, albeit now reduced to a simple story.

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