PART 1

The Mediterranean

Claiming and Contesting Trojan Ancestry on Both Sides of the Bosphorus – Epic Answers to an Ethnographic Dispute in Quattrocento Humanist Poetry

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1 Introduction: Humanists and Troy

Humanist, or humanist-inspired, philology and antiquarianism are one of the chief suspects for tearing down the idea that all European peoples originated in Troy – and the cultural and political prestige that idea conveyed – to make way for new national identities. Local and regional antiquarian endeavours had provided the critical tools that would later foment the rise of historical and archaeological sciences. Still, in other areas of humanist writing, those ideas and concepts could prove to be quite persistent and were aspiring to new heights of creativity and inventiveness. The notions humanism brought forth of antiquity as an actually foregone era inspired new needs for and strategies of imitating and rivalling the classical literature and synchronizing what it had in store with the authors' own age. This pattern of simultaneous continuity and dissociation, as well as the attempt to manage it, becomes particularly palpable in epic poetry, especially when it chooses as its subject contemporary history, never willing or able to shake off the ancient epic's inclination to make poetic sense of history, not only on the conceptual level, but also by the adaptation of contents that link antiquity and pre-history to, say, the fifteenth century. In contrast to antiquarianism or ancient history, which denote their subjects as something to recover, humanist epics habitually and blatantly, by devices such as the divine machinery or other structural elements, make their world the same as the one in which classical heroic epics had taken place.

That tracing one's own origins back to Troy played a potentially crucial role in medieval attempts to harness history in order to legitimize one's reign goes as uncontested as the fact that classical texts speaking of the Trojan War and its aftermath gained additional momentum thanks to the humanists' devotion

to antiquity.¹ Speaking of Troy and Trojans in the Middle Ages was in most cases a matter of ‘intentional history’,² which turned into ‘virulent collective memory’ in issues of political import.³

To be sure, exploiting a claim to a Trojan origin,⁴ i.e. sharing ancestry with Rome, is a phenomenon even older than the canonical text for the phenomenon of exploiting Trojan origins politically, the *Aeneid*.⁵ However, the *Aeneid*, Dares the Phrygian, and Dictys of Crete – the last two being pseudepigraphic eyewitness accounts actually stemming from late antiquity, which were considered more reliable sources for the Trojan War in the Middle Ages than the texts of the Augustan poets⁶ – do not offer any starting point for construing, for example, the Frankish or British legends tracing their civilization back to Troy. It is established no sooner than in the *Chronicon* of Ps.-Fredegar and

- 1 Cf. on this Garber J., “Trojaner – Römer – Franken – Deutsche. ‘Nationale’ Abstammungstheorien im Vorfeld der Nationalstaatsbildung”, in Garber K. (ed.), *Nation und Literatur im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit*, Frühe Neuzeit 1 (Tübingen: 1989) 108–163, here 116, who offers a very concise summary of the idea: ‘Die antike Geschichte wird auf die Gegenwart ausgerichtet, indem der Einbruch zwischen Antike und mittelalterlicher Herrschafts- und Volksgeschichte durch Abstammungsgenealogien mit fiktivem Kern geschlossen wird. Die Abstammungsgenealogie ist das zentrale Legitimationstheorem der mittelalterlichen Geschichtsschreibung. Die extreme zeitliche Zurückdatierung des gentilen Ursprungsstatus erfolgt mit der Zielsetzung, erfahrbare Geschichte durch Heroengeschichte zu ersetzen’. The connection Garber draws between Trojan ancestry and the idea of the Golden Age, on the other hand, is less plausible (“Trojaner” 121).
- 2 Gehrke H.-J., “Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man intentionale Geschichte? Marathon und Troja als fundierende Mythen”, in Melville G. – Rehberg K.-S. (eds.), *Gründungsmythen – Genealogien – Memorialzeichen. Beiträge zur institutionellen Konstruktion von Kontinuität* (Cologne – Weimar – Vienna: 2004) 21–36, here 25.
- 3 Gehrke, “Was heißt” 36.
- 4 The most extensive recent treatment of this subject is Kellner B., *Ursprung und Kontinuität. Studien zum genealogischen Wissen im Mittelalter* (Munich: 2004) 131–296. Particularly elucidating are her thoughts on Troy as the earliest testified event in non-biblical history. For secular nobility, the self-inscription into the aftermath of the Trojan War was thus particularly attractive, because it meant that one’s own kind had been there all the time, since the dawn of history, cf. *ibidem* 131–133.
- 5 There are hints that already in Caesar’s Gallic War the Haeduans received special diplomatic treatment due to their supposed status as relatives of the Romans. Fraudulent use of a fictional Trojan origin can be traced at least to a passage in Lucanus, echoed later by Sidonius Apollinaris, in which the Arvernian people successfully try to associate themselves with the Haeduans’ hitherto exclusive standing, cf. Hommel H., “Die trojanische Herkunft der Franken”, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 99 (1956) 323–341, here 335–337. In a striking conclusion, Hommel relates this phenomenon to the Roman custom of adoption, in which a mere social and juridical act is then expanded to biological and genealogical heritage.
- 6 See Kellner, *Ursprung* 155–156.

the *Liber historia Francorum* afterwards.⁷ The search for, or invention of, an

7 The construct drew its plausibility mainly from the amalgamation of the two versions of pseudo-Fredegar and the *Liber Historiae Francorum*. Concurring claims led to the drive for a more or less 'gapless' Trojan ancestry. Thereof the *Speculum regis* by Geoffrey of Viterbo bears witness, in which a version is found that unites both strands of the Trojan *origo*, the Roman one via Aeneas, and the Frankish one via Priam in Charlemagne; cf. Garber, "Trojaner" 134f. An erroneous ascription is made by Stohlmann J., "Trojadicthung. II. Mittellateinische Literatur", *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 8 (1997) 1035–1036, here 1035, who states that a poetic reference to the Trojan origin of the Franks is made by the anonymous author of a panegyric poem to Charles the Bald. The poem makes no such allusion, and the name of the Franks is explained by an etymology that goes back to Isidorus, cf. the anonymous *Carmen de Exordio Gentis Francorum*, ed. E. Dümmler, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Poetae* 2 (Berlin: 1884) 141–145, here 142, v. 34. Despite this, there is actually ample evidence of Trojan genealogies for Carolingian monarchs, cf. Görich K., "Troia im Mittelalter – der Mythos als politische Legitimation", in Zimmermann M. (ed.), *Der Traum von Troia. Geschichte und Mythos einer ewigen Stadt* (Munich: 2006) 120–134, here 129. A few more stations of the development of Trojan origin as a widespread idea in Western Europe should be mentioned in short: Albert of Stade, *Troilus*, ed. T. Gärtner, *Spolia Berolinensia* 27 (Hildesheim: 2007) mentions, in a sort of poetic balance sheet at the end of the sixth book, the casualties on both sides of the Trojan War (6, 705–716) and traces the paths of the Trojan and Greek heroes further, until their respective deaths (6, 717–880). He makes no mention, however, of any descendant of King Priam, who later might have become the founder of a European dynasty. The numbers he tells are from Dares' feigned *eyewitness* report of Troy's fall. A meticulous study of all classical references in the *Troilus* is to be found in Gärtner T., *Klassische Vorbilder Mittelalterlicher Trojaepen*, *Beiträge zur Altertumskunde* 133 (Stuttgart – Leipzig: 1999) 409–556. On the author's life, cf. *ibidem* 409–416. Joseph Iscanus, a poet from twelfth-century Britain, refers to the Trojan origin of the British (by Priam's son Brutus) in his fragmentary *Antiocheis*, about the third crusade, cf. Joseph Iscanus, *Antiocheis* 1–3. Cf. Gompf's introduction to Iscanus Joseph, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. L. Gompf, *Mittellateinische Studien und Texte* 4 (Leiden – Cologne: 1970) 64. In exhaustive detail, Gärtner, *Klassische Vorbilder* 9–408, traces the classical models of Joseph's *Ylias*. On the author's life, cf. *ibidem* 9–13. He is thereby mainly relying on Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*; see Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, ed. A. Griscom (London – New York – Toronto: 1929). Although mainly in prose, this text gives an account of the Trojans' role in the primordial history of Britain that is modelled on Virgilian epic: Brutus, grandson of Aeneas, is exiled from Italy and, on his journey through the Mediterranean, he finds an oracle of Diana, where he is told to seek an island beyond Gaul and to settle there (Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia* 1, 14–15) Brutus encounters the goddess clad in cultic garments and with sacrificial instruments in her hands. Both his request and Diana's answer are metric. Later on, then, he and his fellows find the promised island of Albion and take possession of it (Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia* 1, 22). This bears proof of the fact that in the medieval imagination as well, the further paths of the Trojan refugees were a mission guided by fate rather than a mere escape resulting in the founding of European reigns by accident. On the other hand, it was not an obligation for poetic accounts of the Trojan War to imply any mythic-historical perspective beyond the one Virgil had offered. Simon de Capra Aurea's poem on the destruction of Troy and the voyage of the Aeneads to Italy, e.g., relies on Virgil almost exclusively. The most complete version of the poem is found in Boutemy A., "La Version parisienne du

eponymous hero from Troy had a special significance in these matters.⁸ For this, the catalogue of Trojan refugees in Western Europe, as presented by Guido delle Colonne, was a valuable resource.⁹ In Hartmann Schedel's *World Chronicle*, a 'Franco' is still a son of Hector and forefather of the Franks. Yet, belief in the Trojan origins of European dynasties and peoples was waning among Western humanists, culminating in assessments like that of the humanist Stephanus Pighius, who denounced the whole endeavour to find Trojan

poème de Simon Chèvre d'Or sur la guerre de Troie (Ms. lat. 8430)", *Scriptorium* 1 (1946–1947) 267–288. An important source for the major strands of genealogic attribution is the version of the destruction of Troy that Guido delle Colonne tells. In the beginning of his *Historia*, the author collects a variety of legends, among others those of Francus (France), Brutus (Britain), Antenor (Venice), and Sicanus (Sicily). Guido drew his inspiration largely from Benoît de Saint-Maure's *Roman de Troie*, which already found connections between Troy and its Norman audience, but Guido's Latin version had paramount influence in multiplying these constructs all over Europe, along with matching contemporary taste through a chivalric re-contextualization of the heroic deeds from classical epics. On this cf. Tanner M., *The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Hapsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor* (New Haven: 1993) 52–66. The other main reason for the success of Trojan legends with the elites of the Middle Ages was that they offered a device for creating political legitimization and identity; cf. Görich, "Troia" 124; for a summary account, see Contamine P., "Trojanerabstammung der Franken", *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 8 (1997) 1041. There are countless additional examples of genealogies in various parts of medieval Europe that show how widespread the idea of being descended from Trojan refugees was at that time and in that part of the world. An overview is offered by Görich, "Troia" 128–131; see also Karsenti T., "From Historical Invention to Literary Myth: Ambivalences and Contradictions in the Early Modern Reception of the Franco-Trojan Genealogy", in Montoya A. – van Romburgh S. – van Anrooij W. (eds.), *Early Modern Medievalisms: The Interplay between Scholarly Reflection and Artistic Production*, Intersections 15 (Leiden – Boston: 2010) 93–110, here 95.

- 8 Görich, "Troia" 124. Cf. e.g. Warnefridus Paulus, *Liber De Episcopis Mettensibus*, ed. G.H. Pertz, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores* 2 (Hanover: 1829) 260–268, here 264, 36–40: '[...] Nam gens Francorum, sicut a veteribus est traditum, a Troiana prosapia trahit exordium'. This was further transmitted e.g. in the *Genealogiae Karolorum*, ed. G. Waitz, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores* 13 (Hanover: 1881) 241–248, here 11, 40–41.
- 9 The value of such concepts was manifold: primacy in rank and prestige, legitimizing one's own type of rule, refutation of foreign claims to dominance, strengthening of one's own identity as opposed to the others', and bridging the gap between biblical ethnic genealogy and the ethnic present; cf. Görich, "Troia" 125. On the last point, cf. Tanner, who in an intriguing, although at times slightly unsystematic, study assembling the different strands of a Trojan-Frankish tradition, suggests that not only was the Trojan bloodline supposed to be harnessed to political and dynastic legitimacy, but it could also function as a means to establish a sacred dimension of rule by hinting at the imperial cult invented by the Julio-Claudian dynasty, which could additionally be expanded by a Christian edge through connections to a Mosaic or Davidian legacy; cf. Tanner, *Last Descendant* 23–44 and 67–90. The second part of her study traces primarily this latter strand, thus rendering the book's title slightly misleading.

ancestry as a *Troicum delirium*, and even French writers had started to have growing doubts about the *Francus* issue, too.¹⁰

Whereas epic poets could not ignore the success humanist philology and antiquarianism had in making their monuments crumble, the idea of Trojan origins and a fateful mission rising from the ashes of Troy still could have a remarkable persistence in the genre whence it had come in the first place – and this shall be the topic of this paper. Therefore, it appears appropriate to take a glance at both an epic that conveys the traditional notion of European dynasties going back to Troy and one in which their putative nemesis in the 15th century, the conqueror of Constantinople, justifies his military and territorial aggression with the very same claim. On a very basic level, this dispute appears to be the ideal research sample for identifying a specifically epic quest for an appropriate past: Laying claims to, e.g., a founder is not as delicate as laying claims to an ancestor. Up to a certain number of cities or states, it is not implausible that, say, Antenor founded them all on his way. Emphasizing or forging a certain lineage, on the other hand, may lead to a circle of relatives the ruler of a fifteenth-century state or head of a noble family would rather not care to be associated with. And it was exactly that issue which became the matter of discussion concerning the Trojans.

2 Refugees Welcome – Trojans and Other Stray Heroes in Tito Strozzi's (1425–1505) *Borsias*

Tito Strozzi's *Borsias* is a panegyric epic rich in not only the fruits of humanist imitation and emulation of classical poetry, but also reflections of what a humanist court-poet – who was at the same time a magistrate of Ferrara, the state of his patrons, the Este *marchesi* and dukes from Leonello to Ercole I – dealt with in everyday politics, ideological concepts, and diplomatic manoeuvres.¹¹ The writing of the poem accompanied the last fifty years of Tito Strozzi's long life, and thus it echoes matters of the Este court in regional and international politics all through the second half of the quattrocento. We will concentrate on a passage that was presumably written in the 1480s.

10 Gehrke, "Was heißt" 36. On the later fate of the Trojan *Francus* legend in France, see Karsenti, "From Historical Invention" 96–109.

11 See Walther Ludwig's introduction to the edition of Strozzi Tito, *Borsias*, ed. Walther Ludwig, Humanistische Bibliothek, Reihe 11: Texte 5 (Munich: 1977) 11–58, and Peters C., *Mythologie und Politik. Die panegyrische Funktionalisierung der paganen Götter im lateinischen Epos des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Wissenschaftliche Schriften der WWU Münster 24 ,10 (Münster: 2016) 265–269.

By presenting an account of the Trojan origins in the sixth book of his *Borsias*, Strozzi is heeding his own announcement from the epic's first proem, where the poet states, after appealing to the addressee Borso himself as the source of inspiration, rather than the Muses, that he 'will tell of both brave leaders (or dukes) and the noble beginnings of the Ateste kin, stemming from Trojan origin' ('Magnanimosque duces atque alta exordia dicam / gentis Atestinae Troiana ab origine ductae').¹² Strozzi makes good on this promise, but he lets an intradiegetic narration do the job for him. As an avatar, he introduces a contemporary figure, the respected court physician of the Este, Girolamo Castelli, to tell Giovanni Pontano (a diplomatic envoy to Ferrara) about Duke Borso's youth, and the origins of the Este.¹³

Seen within the larger narrative framework of the *Borsias*, the colloquial situation of Strozzi's Trojan *origo gentis* legend for the Este is striking insofar as it provides the tale with a double authorization. The first is by virtue of having an esteemed local humanist tell it, whose narration occupies virtually half the epic, spreading from the beginning of book 6 to the sudden end of the unfinished poem in book 10. His narration comprises various topics, such as the military achievements of young Borso; the marriage of Niccolò to Ricciarda di Saluzzo, resulting in the birth of Borso's successor, Ercole I; the Este family's rise to power in Ferrara; and the history of their rule. The account of the Este family's Trojan origins forms part of the latter.

Second, Castelli's entire speech is directed to Giovanni Pontano, doubtlessly one of the most respected humanists of the time. Pontano becomes part of the *Borsias* plot when his – historically not proven – visit to Ferrara is the climax of a series of three visits to the city in the fifth book of the poem. First, Pius II comes to town, maybe in preparation for a narration of Borso's appointment as duke of Ferrara in the final books of the *Borsias*, which have never been written. Then, emperor-to-be Frederick III passes through the city on his way to Rome, where he is supposed to be crowned by the pope, and invests Borso as duke of Modena and Reggio. The three visitors were probably grouped by Strozzi to pay respect to all three fundamentals of Este power: the pope as their liege in Ferrara, the emperor as their liege in Modena and Reggio, and Pontano, who visits Ferrara in diplomatic service for the king of Naples, representing the city's importance as a diplomatic player mediating between the larger powers

12 Strozzi, *Borsias* I, 9–10. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own.

13 Strozzi, *Borsias* VI, 1–7, 565.

in Italy.¹⁴ The emphasis on Pontano, in that nearly half of the extant epic is an intradiegetic narration directed to him, may be understood, then, as stressing the primacy of humanist cultural ambitions over petty politics – to be sure, the *Borsias*' Pontano uses his stay to visit the hinterland of the Po delta, where he immediately encounters two nymphs, who tell him about a metamorphosis being the aetiology of a bird common to the area.¹⁵

The actual shape into which Strozzi casts his account of the Este origins resonates with the instability and uncertainty to which humanists had exposed the traditional narratives of Trojan origins. As Walther Ludwig shows, in the commentary alongside his excellent edition of the *Borsias*, the actual version of the Trojan origin of the Este family is a more or less conventional one, as will be made clear. The impression that the genealogical account in the form of an interior narration might work just as well as a standalone epyllion-like work is supported by the fact that it is this very portion of about three hundred verses that Strozzi presented to Ercole d'Este as a sample of his poetry. Nonetheless, what must interest us about it is its very careful imitation of the *Aeneid*, which is all the more striking, the more its embedding makes it an epyllion-like interior narration resembling the Virgilian *Iliupersis* in the second and third books of the *Aeneid*. Strozzi makes the exposition of his account of the Trojans' journey to France a veritable sound-alike of the *Aeneid*'s proem without ever citing more than two words in a row:

Argolicis cum iam cecidissent Pergama flammis
Et profugi incerto diversa per aequora cursu
Classibus errarent Teucri, satus Hectore Francus
Iactatur vento Scythiae glacialis ad oras
Atque illic parvam, ut perhibent, sibi condidit urbem.

When Troy had already fallen to the fires of the Greeks, and the Trojans were roaming various seas as fugitives with an uncertain route with their fleets, Francus, son of Hector, driven by the wind, washed up on the Scythian shore, and there he founded a small town, as they say.¹⁶

14 Strozzi, *Borsias* v, 52–315 (Pius II); v, 316–361 (Frederick III); v, 468–551 (Pontano's arrival).

15 On this cf. Ludwig's in-depth analysis in his commentary accompanying the edition of the *Borsias*, 300–307, and Peters C., "Founding Sisters. Nymphs and Aetiological Fiction in Quattrocento Latin Poetry", in Enenkel K. – Traninger A. (eds.), *The Figure of the Nymph in Early Modern Culture*, Intersections. Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture 54 (Leiden-Boston: 2018) 421–444.

16 Strozzi, *Borsias* vi, 246–250.

as opposed to

Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
 Italiam fato profugus Lavinaque venit
 Litora – multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
 Vi superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram,
 Multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem
 Inferretque deos Latio; genus unde Latinum
 Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae.¹⁷

Arms and the man I sing, who first from the coasts of Troy, exiled by fate, came to Italy and Lavine shores; much buffeted on sea and land by violence from above, through cruel Juno's unforgiving wrath, and much enduring in war also, till he should build a city and bring his gods to Latium; whence came the Latin race, the lords of Alba, and the lofty walls of Rome (trans. Fairclough).

The reader will notice a shift of focus regarding the purpose of the Trojans' odyssey: While there clearly is a purpose in what Aeneas and his fellow refugees have to face, Francus' journey seems to be intentionally blurred: Virgil has his hero be *fato profugus*, and all the other *Teucri* (note the plural) are travelling *incerto cursu*. The multitude of Trojan refugees may stand for the multitude of conflicting or just neighbouring claims to Trojan ancestry – what Strozzi can do is put the tale back where it belongs, that is: the epic tradition. A potential lack of reliability in the medieval and supposed ancient sources, like Dares, Dictys, and Fredegar, makes way for the primal literary dignity of the epic – the genre from which not only the idea of a Trojan origin, but also its attractiveness as a source of political prestige originated.

The account Strozzi has Castelli tell broadens the perspective of lineage.¹⁸ It is conventional for the most part and provides the Este with a maximum amount of noble kinship. Great historic and prehistoric personalities from all three parts of the known world are inserted into their ancestry. The son of Trojan Francus, Belfortes, settles in Gaul; a relative of his, prince Rugerus, has a posthumous son of the same name, whom his mother, a Libyan princess stemming from Alexander the Great, gives to Atlas, descendant of the mythical bearer of the sky axis, to have him educated. Atlas teaches him thoroughly, but then at first refuses to let him go, knowing it's the Rugerus that later will

17 Virgil, *Aeneid* 1, 1–7.

18 Strozzi, *Borsias* VI, 246–550.

fight the Libyan peoples,¹⁹ that is, the Muslim Caliphate – as Strozzi's readers knew well from chivalric romance and the beginnings of Italian vernacular epic, of which Ferrara was a foremost centre at the time. In this cornucopia of genealogical attributions, Strozzi nonetheless never neglects to echo Virgilian *fatum*; Atlas, for example, cannot hold Rugerus in Africa, just like Dido cannot stop Aeneas,²⁰ and with a 'Heldenschau' in the moment of parting, confronts Rugerus with his descendants.²¹

Finally, the poem refers to the Este coat of arms with the white eagle as core element, a symbol honouring the abducted Ganymede, thereby coming full circle with the reason why Francus had to leave Troy in the first place.²² Although he mentions it, Strozzi falls conspicuously short of giving a similar aetiology for the *fleur-de-lis* granted to the family by the French king in 1431.

When implementing the genealogy into the *Borsias*, the decision to make it a part of Castelli's narration to Pontano seems a natural one. Thus, Strozzi could have a local humanist present a local version of the Trojan origins of the

19 Strozzi, *Borsias* VI, 322–326: 'Talem igitur pacis Rugerum finxerat Atlas / Artibus et, quoniam fatorum haud nescius illum / Noverat exitio Lybicus fore gentibus et, quas / Prisca superstitio posuit mortalibus, aras / Eversurum olim, summis in rupibus arcem / Struxit, ubi exigeret segura per ocia vitam, / Quo saltem miseris aliquam, si forte liceret, / Adderet ipse moram tali conamine rebus' ('Into such a man Atlas had shaped Rugerus with the arts of peace, and, since he, who could foresee the course of fate, knew that one day Rugerus would be the African peoples' doom and would overthrow the altars that the old superstition had built for mortal men, built a fortress high up in the mountains, where his pupil would lead a life of calm, so he could at least delay, if at all, the sad events a little with such an undertaking').

20 Strozzi, *Borsias* VI, 334–339: 'Verum, ubi consilio fatorum infringere legem / Non datur et magicæ nequicquam innititur arti / Nec retinere valet precibus discedere certum / Et maiora sequi pulchra pro laude parantem, / Tristior atque pio pueri commotus amore, / Quo virtus et fata vocant, permittit abire' ('But, since deliberation is not allowed to break the rule of fate, and he is neither willing to use magical powers nor able to stop him by pleading, who is determined to leave and ready to pursue greater and more beautiful things for glory, he all too sadly permits the boy, to whom he attached in pious love, to go where virtue and fate call him').

21 Strozzi, *Borsias* VI, 378–446.

22 Strozzi, *Borsias* VI, 539–545: 'Forsitan et quaeras, magni Iovis unde ministram / Gens ea portet avem, quæ rostro armatur et uncis / Unguibus atque alas ingentes candida pandit. / Hanc Phryges illato superis Ganymede ferebant; / Haec quoque magnanimis gestanda nepotibus ipsi / Signa reliquerunt Troes, quibus aurea miscent / Lilia, cognatae monumentum nobile gentis' ('You might also wonder where the Este kin got the bird of Jupiter in their coat of arms from, armed with beak and hooked claws and, white in colour, spreading its enormous wings. The Phrygians wore it, after Ganymede had been carried away to the gods; and this coat of arms was also bequeathed by the Trojans themselves to their great descendants, to which they added golden lilies, as a noble monument of their kinship').

medieval Franks and then have it recognized by another humanist from outside of Ferrara of high esteem and rank.²³ Considering the specific qualities of the epic discourse in a panegyric situation – namely to tie local or momentary fragments of history to a universal backdrop of epic ‘Geschichtshermeneutik’ – it does not seem beyond the realm of belief that Strozzi resorted to that very discourse in order to stabilize an ethnographic and genealogical tradition which otherwise might not prevail over critical scrutiny by humanist antiquarianism. As we will see, humanists around Pius II, an important character in book v of the *Borsias*, had put great scholarly effort into discrediting one genealogical construction – namely the Trojan origin of the Turks – in the same medieval source that provided the first and most important fundament for any connection drawn between the Trojans’ escape from their blazing home and the recent European peoples and kingdoms. If one could prove the medieval sources wrong concerning one issue, why shouldn’t this be the case with other genealogical constructs?

While Strozzi more or less openly discards the idea that divinely sanctioned fate is behind the Trojans’ westward journey, he still seems willing to underline the possible facticity of a Trojan origin for his patron’s kin. To be sure, there were Ferrarese traditions that tried to establish a direct link from Troy to the Este, instead of the complicated one via the Franks.²⁴ In the late thirteenth century, a Milanese local chronicler by the name of Galvano Fiamma etymologizes, in a somewhat clumsy aetiological hyperurbanism, a Trojan noble named Marthus as being the eponymous founder of the so-called Marchesana region.²⁵

Overall, it seems convincing that Strozzi wanted to assist his patron Ercole in stressing a closer relation to the French, who were increasingly becoming a power to be reckoned with in Northern Italy in the second half of the Quattrocento. In addition, another reason might have been the dwindling plausibility of the manifold local apocryphal Trojan forebears in the wake of humanist philology. In that case, the amalgamation of a well-established

23 The role of the humanist dialogue in verifying the Este origins should not be overemphasized; the topic forms only a tiny part of Castelli’s narration that extends over the last five, out of ten, books of the *Borsias*.

24 See Ludwig’s introduction to the *Borsias*, 67–68.

25 The source is available in Muratori L.A. (ed.), *Antichità Estensi ed Italiane*, 2 vols. (Modena, Stamperia Ducale: 1717–1740), vol. 1 (1717) 67: ‘Sextus Princeps Trojanus [...] qui obsedit Mediolanum, dictus est Marthus, qui in quodam monticulo civitatem construxit, quam ex suo nomine Marthum appellavit, quae toti Contratae nomen dedit, quae dicitur Marthesana in praesentem diem’ (‘The sixth Trojan prince of Milan was called Marthus, who, on some hill, founded a namesake city, which gave the name for the entire area, which up to this day is called Marthesana’).

literary tradition for content (French Francus legends) with one for form (epic poetry) might have appeared more attractive for a tasteful and politically far-sighted and informed court poet like Strozzi was. Therefore, Strozzi's compositional choice to make Castelli tell the story about the origins of the Este not only authorizes the obsolescing Trojan legend, but also objectifies and externalizes it as an item of humanist antiquarian discourse. Strozzi posits that a conventional account of the Este's Trojan roots is something humanists would agree upon in learned yet casual environments. His reluctance to make good on the proemial promise that he himself will tell of the *exordia gentis* may thus result not merely from his obedience to the rule of epic poetry – never to tell things in the *ordo naturalis* – but also from a wish to delegate some of the scholarly responsibility implied in his narrative to a wider circle of experts.

3 Trojan Turks in the Humanist Latin Epic

It was the same humanist enthusiasm and diligence in rediscovering actual or supposed antiquities that led to the demise of most of the claims to Trojan ancestry. Probably not the starting point, but a major catalyst for this development was the effort made by Pius II to denounce the idea of the *Turci* being descendants of the phonetically similar *Teucrici*, for which purpose he, when still a cardinal, had the Greek Nicolaus Sagundinus find proof for a Scythian origin of the Turks.²⁶ Humanism, with its historical concept of demise and rebirth of the ideal classical culture, had to create friction with those former notions not only in that they based themselves on the presupposition of continuity – *translatio*²⁷ – but also on the grounds of a newfound individual dignity of nations and cultures other than Rome.²⁸ It should be stressed, though, that for

26 The letter with Sagundinus' report is edited as an appendix to Pius' *Carmina*, ed. A. van Heck, *Studi e Testi* 364 (Vatican City: 1994) 217–225. See Görich, "Troia" 133–134, and Helmrath J., "Pius II. und die Türken", in Guthmüller B. – Kühlmann W. (eds.), *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance* (Tübingen: 2000) 79–138, here 87, who stress that disregarding the impact or non-impact of Pius' writings about the Turks in the political and military fields, their value as a source for the intellectual climate of the encounter between East and West is paramount. Cf. also Meserve M., "From Samarkand to Scythia: Reinventions of Asia in Renaissance Geography and Political Thought", in Martels Z.R.W.M. – Vanderjagt A.J. (eds.), *Pius II – 'El Più Expeditivo Pontifice': Selected Studies on Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405–1464)*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 117 (Leiden: 2003) 13–39, here 17–35.

27 Garber, "Trojaner" 145–154.

28 Garber, "Trojaner" 154–163.

most of the early modern period, the scholarly effort to gain actual knowledge about origins and history of the Turks was far from all-encompassing.²⁹

4 How the West was Won – Fate, Vengeance, and Dynasty in Gian Mario Filefo's (1426–1480) 'Amyris'

To contrast Strozzi's relative nonchalance towards the Trojan forebears of the d'Este, I want to turn to an epic poet who very much embraces the idea of an authoritative genealogical line and purpose behind the Trojans' and their descendants' way through history, and exploits it to create a cultural middle ground, at least in the form of a consistent poetic fiction. Gian Mario Filefo's (1426–1480) *Amyris*,³⁰ a work from the first half of the 1470s, deals with the Turkish menace, which is a sort of cosmic microwave background in most quattrocento Latin epics,³¹ in a very special kind of way, in its hero Sultan Mehmed II, conqueror of Constantinople, because the poem was, at least in its original version, a contracted work for a businessman from Ancona, Lillo Othman Ferducci, for whom reaffirming his ties with the Ottoman court was of vital entrepreneurial import and who therefore in the early 1470s ordered a Latin epic to dedicate to the sultan.³² Subject matters and panegyric context

29 Even when contacts and acquaintances grew and information about the host society of tradesmen in the Levant became economically virulent, there were cases of 'cultivated ignorance' and 'proactive [...] ignoring', as Zwierlein C., "Coexistence and Ignorance: What Europeans in the Levant did not read (ca. 1620–1750)", in Zwierlein C. (ed.), *The Dark Side of Knowledge: Histories of Ignorance, 1400 to 1800*, Intersections. Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture 46 (Leiden – Boston: 2016) 225–265, here 256–257, shows.

30 Recent readings of the *Amyris* featuring biographical details on the author are Bihrer A., "Der Feind als Held. Türkische Heroen in der italienischen Renaissance: Gian Mario Filefos *Amyris* im Kontext turkophiler Schriften des 15. Jahrhunderts", in Aurnhammer A. – Pfister M. (eds.), *Heroen und Heroisierungen in der Renaissance*, Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissanceforschung 28 (Wiesbaden: 2013) 165–180, and Peters, *Mythologie* 392–433. Filefo, whose biography is summarized by Haye T., "Die *Cosmias* des Giovanni Mario Filefo", in Baker P. – Kaiser R. – Priesterjahn M. – Helmuth J. (eds.), *Portraying the Prince in the Renaissance: The Humanist Depiction of Rulers in Historiographical and Biographical Texts*, Transformationen der Antike 44 (Berlin – Boston: 2016) 271–286, here 271–274, with further literature, suffered heavy insults from twentieth-century philology for praising the sultan; cf. Belloni A., *Il poema epico e mitologico*, Storia dei Generi Letterari Italiani 8 (Milan: 1912) 107.

31 Conspicuous examples are Basinio da Parma's *Hesperis* and Tito Strozzi's *Borsias* (see below, Conclusion), cf. Peters, *Mythologie* 38–392.

32 Filefo's father already had, in a Greek letter from 1454, offered – next to what ransom he could afford – especially his rhetorical skills for the praise of the sultan in exchange for the freedom of his mother-in-law, Manfredina Chrysolorina, and two of her daughters, who had been sold as slaves after the sack of Constantinople, cf. Filefo, *Epistolarum Libri*

apparently situate the poem in the flagrant discourse among humanists on where to locate the origin of the Turks.³³ What is more, the early 1470s had seen a new rise of publicist interest (for the first time coinciding with the spread of printing technology) in the events in the Greek east with the sack of Venetian Euboea (Negroponte) in July 1470, which provoked a widespread response of politically endorsed, printed *lamenti* and other poetry, Latin and vernacular, on the horrific events that marked a new milestone of what was perceived as the Turks' unstoppable march on the Latin West.³⁴

xii, 4, 7–9. See also Hankins J., "Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995) 111–207, here 130.

- 33 See the most comprehensive bibliography on the topic in Helmrath, "Pius II.", n. 25. Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders" 135–144, gives a concise survey of the competing and conflicting theories on the *origo Turcarum*; Meserve M., *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought*, Harvard Historical Studies 158 (Cambridge, MA – London: 2008) 22–64, treats the issue in more detail. In a recent study Döring K.D., *Türkenkrieg und Medienwandel im 15. Jahrhundert. Mit einem Katalog der europäischen Türkendrucke bis 1500*, Historische Studien 503 (Husum: 2013) 173–176, while discussing the deep interconnection between political agitation and ethnographic expertise in the treatise by Sagundinus and its intellectual context, shows that Sagundinus actually was a far-sighted and profound expert on Turkish matters, the political usage of his knowledge notwithstanding. Höfert A., *Den Feind beschreiben. 'Türkengefahr' und europäisches Wissen über das Osmanische Reich 1450–1600*, Campus Historische Studien 35 (Frankfurt/Main: 2003) 170, 185–186, and 197, touches upon the origins of the Turkish-Trojan legend only superficially, without underpinning the political motives behind its disintegration or connecting it to the work of Sagundinus. On the stance Greek intellectuals took towards the Turkish issue in exile, cf. Schwoebel R., *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453–1517)* (Nieuwkoop: 1967) 153–166. The political dimension of courtly art having 'Turkish' Trojans as a subject matter is analysed convincingly with regard to the visual arts by Harper, who traces the flourishing and the decline of Trojans looking Turkish in frescoes, tapestry, etc. during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; cf. Harper J., "Turks as Trojans, Trojans as Turks: Visual Imagery of the Trojan War and the Politics of Cultural Identity in Fifteenth-Century Europe", in Kabir A.J. – Williams D. (eds.), *Postcolonial Approaches to the Middle Ages: Translating Cultures* (Cambridge: 2005) 151–179, here 155–170. Most striking is his example of the 'Hall of Troy' in Mantua, in which the iconographic programme undergoes a shift to an unfavourable depiction of 'Turkish' Trojans in the moment of the Gonzaga duke's marriage to a Byzantine princess in exile. Schwoebel, *The Shadow* 188–189, shows, by the example of the German pilgrim Felix Fabri, that a detailed and affirmative account of the Ottomans' Trojan origins would, from a Christian standpoint, still not lead to the acknowledgement of their claim to Greece as a legitimate one.
- 34 See Meserve M., "News from Negroponte: Politics, Popular Opinion and Information Exchange in the First Decade of the Italian Press", *Renaissance Quarterly* 59, 2 (2006) 440–480, especially 445, where Meserve emphasizes the humanist dominance in the discourse on the events that is illustrated by the dominance of literary renderings of the events instead of mere news bulletins. Meserve speaks in favour of the vernacular writings, when she states that 'the ballads embody a sort of organically grown urban discourse while the highly artificial humanist Latin confections represent little more than the personal ambitions of the men who composed them.'; cf. *ibidem* 461. A valuable observation is the

The *Amyris* takes its starting point from one particularly controversial aspect of this discourse that is exemplified vibrantly by the Turks' most ardent adversary in the West, Pius II.³⁵ Analyses of his speeches and writings have shown the massive employment of classical political rhetoric by the pope in his advertisement of a new crusade.³⁶ The aspects by which Pius tried to reprove the Turks – most of which, as we shall see, Filelfo is eager to falsify – are following various strategies of agitation. Next to denouncing the wrathful, voluptuous, and unreliable character of the Turkish people as a whole and of Mehmed II as an individual,³⁷ he employs primarily an argument based on ethnographical concepts – either using an innovation, by declaring the Turks descendants of the Scythians,³⁸ or by falsifying contemporary figurations of the Turks as the rightful heirs to Troy. How virulent this latter idea was can be observed in an account of the Byzantine historian Kritoboulos of Imbros, who dedicated his work to the conqueror of Constantinople. In a chapter of the fourth book, he shows the sultan's acts honouring the Trojan heroes in what he believed to be the ruins of Troy, thereby imitating Alexander the Great in his envy of both

fact that the new technology was endorsed for the spread of poetically processed news by ambitious humanists, who tried to appeal to future patrons, but hardly ever by leading intellectuals of the day to further actual political agitation; cf. *ibidem* 467–469.

35 In that the aspects in which Pius tries to denounce the sultan betray what the pope's contemporaries might have considered acceptable or approvable concerning the Turkish monarch and his military ambitions, cf. Helmuth, "Pius II." 114–115.

36 Helmuth, "Pius II." 92–98; Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders" 115–135; Schmugge L., *Die Kreuzzüge aus der Sicht humanistischer Geschichtsschreiber*, Vorträge der Aeneas-Silvius-Stiftung an der Universität Basel 21 (Basel: 1987), and Schmugge L., "Deus lo vult? Zu den Wandlungen der Kreuzzugs-idee im Mittelalter", in Schreiner K. – Müller-Lückner E. (eds.), *Heilige Kriege. Religiöse Begründung militärischer Gewaltanwendung: Judentum, Christentum und Islam im Vergleich*, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs 78 (Munich: 2008) 93–108, here 104–106. As for the epic fashioning of the ideal Western leader for a campaign or crusade, see Schaffenrath F., "Riccardo Bartolini's *Austrias* (1516) oder: Wie ein Herrscher zum Feldherrn gegen die Türken wird", in Baker P. – Kaiser R. – Priesterjahn M. – Helmuth J. (eds.), *Portraying the Prince in the Renaissance: The Humanist Depiction of Rulers in Historiographical and Biographical Texts*, Transformationen der Antike 44 (Berlin – Boston: 2016) 193–213, who analyses how Riccardo Bartolini's *Austrias* shapes an image of Emperor Maximilian I as the obvious leader of the Turkish war.

37 Helmuth, "Pius II." 104–106 and 111–114.

38 An idea that, of course, permeated into poetry as well; cf. e.g. Marsi Paolo, *De crudeli Eurapontinae urbis excidio sacrosanctae religionis christianae lamentatio* ([Rome, Silius Italicus: ca. 1471]), an early printed work appearing shortly after the sack of Negroponte and offering an epicized eyewitness account of the events; it speaks of a 'Caucasian army', 'swarming in from the frozen plains' ('Caucaseum gelidis agmenque irrupit ab arvis', fol. 1 v), and later on explicitly calls the Turks a *Scythica gens* (fol. 7 v). On the *Lamentatio*, see Meserve, "News" 459–460.

the ancient heroes' deeds and their luck to have had a poet to celebrate them, to then declare the sultan's conquests of Byzantine territories as acts of vengeance for the Trojan War:

Καὶ ἀφικόμενος ἐς τὸ Ἴλιον κατεθεᾶτο τὰ τε ἐρείπια τούτου καὶ τὰ ἔχνη τῆς παλαιᾶς πόλεως Τροίας καὶ τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τὴν θέσιν καὶ τὴν ἄλλην τῆς χώρας ἐπιτηδειότητα καὶ ὥς ἔκειτο γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης ἐν ἐπικαίρῳ, προσέτι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἡρώων τοὺς τάφους ἰστόρει, Ἀχιλλέως τέ φημι καὶ Αἴαντος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων, καὶ ἐπήνεσε καὶ ἐμακάρισε τούτους τῆς τε μνήμης καὶ τῶν ἔργων καὶ ὅτι ἔτυχον ἐπαινέτου Ὀμήρου τοῦ ποιητοῦ· ὅτε λέγεται καὶ μικρὸν συγκινήσας τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰπεῖν· “ἐμὲ τῆς πόλεως ταύτης καὶ τῶν αὐτῆς οἰκητόρων ἐν τοσοῦτοις περιόδοις ἐτῶν ἐκδικητὴν ἐταμιεύετο ὁ θεός· ἐχειρῳσάμην γὰρ τοὺς τούτων ἐχθροὺς καὶ τὰς πόλεις αὐτῶν ἐπόρθησα καὶ Μυσῶν λείαν τὰ τούτων πεποίημαι. Ἕλληνες γὰρ ἦσαν καὶ Μακεδόνες καὶ Θετταλοὶ καὶ Πελοποννήσιοι οἱ ταύτην πάλαι πορθήσαντες, ὧν οἱ ἀπόγονοι τοσοῦτοις ἐς ὕστερον περιόδοις ἐνιαυτῶν νῦν ἐμοὶ τὴν δίκην ἀπέτισαν διὰ τε τὴν τότε ἐς τοὺς Ἀσιανοὺς ἡμᾶς καὶ πολλάκις γενομένην ἐς ὕστερον ὕβριν αὐτῶν”.

And when he came to Ilion, he beheld its ruins and the traces of the old city of Troy for a long time, its size and its position, the general amenity of the landscape and the advantages of the site towards both the land and the sea. What is more, he went to the graves of the heroes, that is: the ones of Achilles and Ajax and the others, and praised them, calling them blessed both thanks to their fame and because they had found the singer of their praise in Homer. Gently moving his head, he is said to have uttered: ‘God spared me for all those years, so I could become the avenger of this city and its inhabitants. I have subdued its enemies, destroyed their cities and turned their possessions into a “Mysians’ prey”. For it was the Greeks, Macedonians, Thessalians and Peloponnesians, who once razed this city to the ground, whose descendants now, after so many years, have paid to me for their hybris against us Asians back then and on many later occasions’.³⁹

Thus, the Sultan’s expedition to what he considered the ruins of Troy was an anecdote from recent history, the circulation of which Mehmed approved of. What his historian Kritoboulos has him declare on-site provides him with double authorization as a ruler and a commander-in-chief. Visiting the memorial site of the Trojan and Greek heroes places Mehmed in a long tradition

39 Kritoboulos of Imbros, *Historiae*, ed. D.R. Reinsch, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 22 (Berlin – New York: 1983) IV, 11, 5.

that includes Caesar, and even Alexander. However, Mehmed surpasses both of these ancient rulers by understanding an age-old call to arms emanating from the Trojan graves that is addressed to him in particular. More than merely imitating and emulating heroic virtues of old, he accepts the historic mission to take revenge for the injustice done to his ancestors. In the Latin West this specific idea, which mostly hinged upon the etymology of *Turci* from *Teucris*, was considered explosive enough that Pius II commissioned a rebuttal of this theory by the Byzantine exile scholar Nicolaus Sagundinus. The epic echoes of this controversy will be addressed again later.

Back to the *Amyris*: Tracing the Sultan's conquests in the narrative of Filelfo's epic one by one would be tedious and exceed the scope of this paper – rather, let us hear how the Sultan himself, in an apostrophe to the Greeks, summarizes the gist of his mission:

Namque Phryges nisi vos, Graeci, tot funera passos
Oppressissetis, regnumque a culmine totum
Corporaque ampla virum vinclis et carcere duro
Vestra manus traheret, nisi tanta incendia belli
Ex Helenes moechae vitio commissa fuissent,
Rex Mahomettus ea nunc vos non mente tulisset
In praeceps, nec vellet eis committere bellum
Cum quibus ulla foret non causa, nec ullus habendi
Adiectus stimulus.⁴⁰

Anything the Greeks are presently suffering is justified because of their forefathers' unjust war against the Trojans. Shadow is also cast on the morals of Western *moecha* Helena, who out of petty desire draws her entire world into war – especially if this passage is read against what the epic Mehmed announces earlier, in book one, where he promises to avenge the violence against the bravest of the Trojan virgins:

Namque litabo tuo cineri quandoque Pelasgos,
Ut nostra Aeacidæ tam pulchra Polyxena quondam
Fertur amatori iniusta ratione litata.

40 Filelfo Gian Mario, *Amyris*, ed. A Manetti (Bologna: 1978) 3, 566–574.: 'For had you, Greeks, not overwhelmed the Phrygians, who suffered the deaths of so many, and had your hand not drawn the valiant bodies of heroes from the height of rule in chains and captivity, had there not been so many fires of war risen from the fault of the adulterous Helena, king Mehmed wouldn't have brought about your downfall now with this in mind, and wouldn't want to wage war against those with whom he wouldn't have any quarrel otherwise, and no desire to conquer whatsoever'.

I will appease your ashes by sacrificing the Greeks one day, like they say our fair Polyxena once was offered in a nefarious manner to make atonement for Achilles who had loved her.⁴¹

Gian Mario Filelfo's poetical wit resorted to de- and re-contextualizing these acts of political symbolism into the genre whence it originally came. I want to illustrate this with two more examples. First, he uses his domain as an epic poet as an instrument to create new mythic-historical fiction: He inserts a new element into the family tree from which all pretensions to a Trojan ancestry by European rulers had sprung, that of King Priam. But instead of inventing just another hitherto unknown son or grandson of Priam or Hector, he speaks of a certain Othman as *quartus proavus* of Erichthonius, who would, depending on how one reckons, at least be a grandfather of the eponymous Teucer, whose namesake people and their family ties with the *Turci* were so heavily contested:

[...] Othman nam maximus ille
 Quartus Erichthonio proavus fuit; ille relatus
 Chaldaeo quandoque solo, bellisque fugatus
 Persarum strepitu, Phrygiam superaverat oram,
 Et Lyciam, Mysasque truces.

For that great Othman was the fourth great-grandfather of Erichthonius; one day, carried to Chaldean soil, and chased away by the Persians' sabre-rattling, he conquered the Phrygian shore, Lycia and the savage Mysians.⁴²

With this fiction, a very peculiar variety of what Karl Enenkel calls a 'Stammbaumimplantat' in the case of the sixth *Panegyricus Latinus*,⁴³ Filelfo not only constructs a foundation for depicting Mehmed's conquests as a rightful act of retribution, but might also be alluding to the self-fashioning of the Christian adversary, Pius II, as an *alter Aeneas*, who by calling together Europe's powers for a new crusade, would found Rome and Western civilization once again. Filelfo develops a similar link between prehistoric past and present: Osman I, depending on the semantics of *proavus* possibly also highlighted by Filelfo as the *quartus proavus* of Mehmed II, is shown as the one who reclaims

41 Filelfo, *Amyris* I, 994–995. For the role of violence as a legitimate means to contain (sacrilegious) violence in founding myths, see Kellner, *Ursprung* 146–147.

42 Filelfo, *Amyris* I, 476–480.

43 Enenkel K., "Panegyrische Geschichtsmythologisierung und Propaganda. Zur Interpretation des *Panegyricus Latinus* VI", *Hermes* 128 (2000) 91–128, here 103.

what has rightfully been his since the times of the prehistoric Othman. As the founder of the Ottoman dynasty and conqueror of large parts of Asia Minor, Osman lived up to his prehistoric ancestor and typological role model far better than the Western *Pius Aeneas*. How so? Mehmed, in an elaborate and lengthy *Hercules in bivio* – like scene, is tempted by Venus, who tries to talk him out of waging war against the Christians, but he does heed the virtuous option proposed by Bellona.⁴⁴ Thus, at the same time, the Romans are flawed by their unwarlike goddess, whom the greatest of their generals had even claimed as his ancestor.⁴⁵

Filelfo does not stop at justifying the Turks' supposed campaign of vengeance using genealogical fiction: He also transfers the divine *telos* of the Augustan model *Aeneid* to the conquests of his hero Mehmed. Right after the beginning of the *Amyris*, the birth and infancy of the future ruler are treated, and with them, the portents and prodigies that accompanied them.

Namque ubi liquisset nondum cunabula, visa
 Flama fuit cinxisse caput; miratur alumna,
 Ancillaeque instant flagrantem extinguere. Sed res,
 Fatiferi ostensura viri memorabile signum,
 Prosequitur commissa sibi, celsasque per aedis
 Labitur, et Pursae complectitur amphitheatrum.
 Concurrunt proceres, quaeruntque quid inclyta flamis
 Regia tam diris urbsque undique tota cremetur.
 Denique conspiciunt purum super aethera ferri
 Hunc ignem, nec obesse urbi, nec gentibus ullis,
 Nec domui regis. Portenta ea sola fuisse,
 Ex quibus infantis Mahometti gloria cerni
 Posset et egregium decus et virtutis imago;
 Haud decernentes quae multa incendia dicat

44 Bihrer, "Der Feind" 174–180, shows how Filelfo concentrates his angle of view on the military excellence of the sultan to signpost which of his qualities not even Westerners could question.

45 Filelfo, *Amyris* 1, 232–235: 'At Caesar, cui tantus honos, quem progenitorem / Erexere tui, nonne est quandoque remissus / Et Veneri ascriptus, quando est ea sola voluptas / Quae generat teris quidquid laudatur in amplis?' ('But Caesar, upon whom so much honour was bestowed, and whom your people made their forebear, didn't he ease off from time to time, and don't they ascribe him to Venus, since she is the only joy that creates anything that receives praise in the wide world'). In addition, an allusion to the Judgement of Paris may be intended in order to further augment Mehmed's moral superiority. This can be corroborated by intertextual reference to the account of the myth in Ovid's *Heroides*; cf. Peters, *Mythologie* 407.

Ignis is illorum patriae, quos castra sequentur
 Discordes animis, quamquam ampla laude beatos.
 Certus Amorattim tunc nuncius ante parentem
 Admonet, inde omnis populosque ducesque, quid instet
 Sperandum Othmannis praeclaro sanguine cretis
 Troados eximiae stirpis, quam Iupiter, alto
 Prospiciens solio, tanto decoraret honore.⁴⁶

The reader sees baby Mehmed in his cradle, when suddenly a ring of fire engulfs the future sultan's head. The nurse and the maids at court are stricken with awe and terror and try to extinguish the flames. They do not succeed, but the flames turn out to be harmless and are then seen to spread out to the city of Bursa, where the scene is set, embracing its ancient amphitheatre. The court is rushing together, trying to interpret the signs that eventually rise up to the sky. Mehmed's father, the ruling sultan Murad II, feels reaffirmed about the great expectations his son aroused within the Ottoman dynasty.

Now, what to make of this? At first glance, Filelfo is merely imitating the fire prodigy seen on Ascanius' head in the second book of the *Aeneid*, forming part of the *Iliupersis* and marking the decision to leave Troy in search of a new home in the West⁴⁷ – as Claudian had already done in his panegyric on

46 Filelfo, *Amyris* I, 15–37: 'For even before he had left his cradle, a flame was seen to encircle his head; his nurse is astonished, the maids are rushing to extinguish the burning child. Then an event granted to him takes place, revealing a memorable sign of how fateful this man would be, and [the flame] soars through the high palace and hovers around the amphitheatre of Bursa. The nobles run together and wonder if the famous palace and with it the entire town were about to be burnt down altogether. Finally, they see that fire ascend into the clear sky, not harming the city or any of its inhabitants, or the royal house. That this was only a foreboding sign, from which the future fame of young Mehmed was to be seen, his outstanding honour and exemplary virtue; they do not understand, however, how much destruction this fire predicted for their homelands, whom, valiant, yet estranged in their hearts, war would reach in the end. Then, a reliable messenger informs first Murad, the father, then all the peoples and their leaders, what to hope for from the Ottomans, born from the noble blood of great Trojan ancestry, onto whom Jupiter, looking down from his high throne, bestows such honour'.

47 Virgil, *Aeneid* II, 679–691: 'Talia vociferans gemitu tectum omne replebat, / Cum subitum dictoque oritur mirabile monstrum. / Namque manus inter maestorumque ora parentum / Ecce levis summo de vertice visus Iuli / Fundere lumen apex, tactuque innoxia mollis / Lambere flamma comas et circum tempora pasci. / Nos pavidi trepidare metu crinemque flagrantem / Excutare et sanctos restinguere fontibus ignis' ('So crying, she filled all the house with moaning; when a sudden portent appears, wondrous to tell. For between the hands and faces of his sad parents, from above the head of Iulus a light tongue of flame was seen to shed a gleam and, harmless in its touch, lick his soft locks and

the fourth consulship of Honorius.⁴⁸ However, unlike the Virgilian model, the city of Bursa is not burning and will not burn anytime soon. Instead, the poet insinuates that another city will burn, i.e. Constantinople, and great misery will come to that city's inhabitants. Thus, Filelfo constructs a direct analogy between Aeneas heeding the *telos* of fate in history towards the foundation of the Roman Empire and Mehmed II heeding the *telos* towards completing the foundation of the Ottoman Empire by conquering Constantinople. To corroborate this, we must turn to a small but crucial detail through which Filelfo is deliberately manipulating the historical facts. When in his text he speaks of Bursa as the site of Mehmed's birth and childhood, he seemingly errs, as the capital and residence of the Ottomans had been Adrianople (Edirne) for a few years after its conquest by Mehmed's great-grandfather Murad I in 1362. Filelfo, who was born in 1426 in Constantinople, had studied in the Byzantine capital from 1439 to 1441 and was connected to the Byzantine nobility via family ties, and he would have been sufficiently informed to know in which direction, seen from the Eastern Roman capital, its mortal enemy had been lurking for decades. Now, what Filelfo achieves by messing with information about contemporary politics is the ability to model Mehmed's conquests even closer to the *Aeneid*. This way, Mehmed's campaign to fulfil heavenly sanctioned *telos* leads him West, from Asia to Europe, like Aeneas. Had he started his career in the *Amyris* from Adrianople, west of Constantinople and on European soil, this literary device would have been far less effective. We do not need to stretch as far as modern readings of the *Aeneid*, which trace the lure of Virgilian *fatum* urging westwards expansion as far as the Old West frontier, Vietnam, or the moon,⁴⁹ to see that myth-laden topography held promise for a humanist poet: Perhaps the most elaborate and ingenious panegyric epic poem of the Quattrocento, Basinio Basini da Parma's *Hesperis*, was concerned enough about seeing its

pasture round his temples. Trembling with alarm, we quickly shake out the blazing hair and quench with water the holy fires' – trans. Fairclough).

48 Claudian, ed. and trans. M. Platnauer, Loeb Classical Library 135–136, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA – London: 1922), *Panegyric on the Fourth Consulship of Emperor Honorius* 182–202. Cf. very recently Ware C., *Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition* (Cambridge: 2012) 90–97.

49 Waswo R., *The Founding Legend of Western Civilization: From Virgil to Vietnam* (Hanover, NH: 1997). For criticism of the East/West-dualism in the *Aeneid*, see Reed J.D., *Virgil's Gaze: Nation and Poetry in the 'Aeneid'* (Princeton – Oxford: 2007) 3–7. There is a recent assessment of the ideological implications of spatial absorption via escape and foundation (in the *Aeneid*) or imperial conquest (in Petrarch's *Africa*) in Huss B. – König G. – Winkler A., *Chronotopik und Ideologie im Epos*, GRM-Beiheft 76 (Heidelberg: 2016) 64–95 and 123–166. For medieval notions on this transition from East to West, see Kellner, *Ursprung* 134.

hero, Sigismondo Malatesta, move west, despite actually facing an enemy *from* the west, i.e. Aragonese Spain, that it made him embark on a fictitious journey to the Isle of the Blessed.⁵⁰

Even while tampering with political geography on purpose, Filelfo still uses his profound knowledge of humanist philology and antiquarianism: The fire prodigy is not only recognized by the court and people of Bursa and the Ottoman Empire as a sign of future victory for their 'Trojan kin' (*Troados stirps*), but also Jupiter is verified as its author. He can cast his benevolent gaze upon the city quite comfortably from his 'high throne' (*alto prospiciens solio*), since Bursa is situated beneath the slopes of the Uludag, a mountain range, known to antiquity as the *Olympus* of Bithynia, as Filelfo could know from Strabon or Pliny, both Major and Minor.⁵¹

Thus, Filelfo has the Turks and Mehmed II equipped with a full-blown Virgilian *telos*, and all the birthrights deriving from it, to face the European adversaries as equals, while sweeping the Greeks away; plus, he provides an additional notion of primacy by not having in their ancestry the bloodline of Venus, whom the poem denounces as an obstacle to virtue and glory. Therefore, within the epic coordinates of the *Amyris*, Mehmed is fully justified when he announces exactly what humanist discourse suspected his motivation to be. Gian Mario Filelfo's reworking of the Turkish aggression as an act of retribution for the former crimes of the Greeks is probably the most elaborate and in many respects the most subtle version of a very common motif employed by humanist poets and writers. Earlier poetic treatments of the sack of Constantinople feature depictions of the sexualized violence inflicted upon the women in the conquered city, most prominently in Ubertino Pusculo's eyewitness epic account *Constantinopolis*:

Femineis resonant ululatibus omnia tecta,
Diripiuntque domos Teucrici, sacrataque templa,
Thesaurus rapiunt veteres; puerique puellae
Et matres, pulchraeque nurus in castra trahuntur,
Captivique viri.

Every home resounds with the cries of women, and the Trojans loot the houses and the sacred temples, they rob them of their ancient treasures;

⁵⁰ Cf. Peters, *Mythologie* 202–213.

⁵¹ Strobel K., "Prusa, Prusa ad Olympon", in *Der Neue Pauly*, 15 vols. (Stuttgart, Metzler: 1996–2002), vol. x (2001) 490–491.

boys and girls alike, mothers and fair maidens are drawn to the encampment, as well as the men in captivity.⁵²

Elsewhere, Puscuro takes the Janissary corps, an Ottoman elite troop made up of Christians who had been abducted as children and forced to convert, as evidence that the Sultan's sexual transgressions do not refrain from boys. Filippo da Rimini, the Venetian chancellor of the isle of Corfu, tells how the Sultan himself ceremonially raped a daughter from the imperial family in the Hagia Sophia as an act of retribution for the rape of Cassandra in the Trojan War.⁵³ Filelfo counters this strategy of Western humanists to discredit the Ottomans on the grounds of their supposed moral, and particularly sexual, depravity by underlining that it had been the Greeks who threw the first rock ages ago.

5 How the East was Lost – Trojan Retribution from a Christian Point of View

Beyond these generic insults against a conqueror deemed barbaric, however, Filelfo is by far not the only one to make an epic figure out of Mehmed II in the model of a vengeful Trojan heir. Either aspect – a supposed Trojan ancestry of the Turks or their conquests as retribution for the sack of Troy – plays a role in other contemporary epic poetry as well, so Filelfo may be understood as a challenge to their assumptions regarding Greek guilt and Trojan vengeance. The Turks' vengeance for the suffering of their Trojan ancestors also is palpable, albeit more subtly, in Ubertino Puscuro's epic, when it tells of Mehmed's westward campaign:

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- 52 Puscuro Ubertino, *Constantionopoleos libri IV*, ed. A. Ellissen, in A. Ellissen (ed.), *Analekten der mittel- und neugriechischen Literatur*, 5 vols. (Leipzig: 1855–1862), vol. III, 1 (1857), appendix, 4, 1056–1060. Depictions of sexual violence against Greek women persist in anti-Turk poetry, e.g. on the sack of Negroponte in 1470, cf. Paolo Marsi's *Lamentatio Christianae Religionis* fol. 7 r: 'Virgineus nudatur honos, omnemque per urbem / Traxerunt nudas barbara mo[n]stra nurus' ('Stripped of all cover is the virgins' chastity, and the barbarian monsters drag the naked girls all through the city').
- 53 Meserve, *Empires* 37. Francesco Filelfo, in a long letter from 1464 offering – probably unsolicited – strategic advice to the Venetian doge Cristoforo Moro on the Republic's steps against the Turks, at times turns into a veritable rant against Mehmed's character, and depicts in detail the sumptuous infrastructure the sultan purportedly maintained for the fulfilment of his rapacious sexual desires, with *satellites* scouting for and administering the boys and girls for the sultan to rape; cf. Filelfo Francesco, *Epistolarum libri*, ed. J. de Keyser, 4 vols. (Alessandria: 2015) XXI, 1, 184–203.

[...] Mycenae,
 Regis Troianum qui regnum evertit Atridae
 Sedem olim primam, tunc Phryx obsederat, altis
 Montibus, et fortem, generosamque aere, Corinthum.⁵⁴

Florentinus Liquenaius, a jurispudent from Tours who did not leave any other mark on fifteenth-century Latin literary history, composed a short work by the name of *De Constantinopolitana destructione sive De Troianorum in Grecos ultione*, which already in its title lays bare Liquenaius' adoption of the idea of a Turkish vengeance for the sack of Troy. The work was written in the late 1450s and is preserved in two early prints.⁵⁵ It treats the last stand of the Byzantine in the battle for Constantinople and the Turks' ultimate victory with a special emphasis on the cruelty and the war crimes committed by the Ottoman conquerors, to end in a passionate appeal to the Greeks to reclaim their lost territories with Western aid. For our topic, we shall focus on the divine consultations at the beginning of the narrative. They imitate the prophecy Jupiter reassures Venus with in the first book of the *Aeneid* and tie the latter's sorrowful plea to the political realities of the 1450s. Venus, whose miserable appearance adopts elements of the depiction of the personified *Roma* in Claudian's *Bellum Gildonicum*,⁵⁶ addresses Jupiter, urges him to take a stand and offer help. She recalls the destruction of Troy, the dispersion of the survivors and, most of all, the revenge Jupiter had promised her as the patron of the Trojans.

Summe Pater, qui fata regis, qui tela gigantum
 Fulmine delesti, tua vana potentia visque?
 Oblitusne mei es? Memoras Danaumne ruinis
 Immeritis quae passa fui? [...]
 [...]
 Tu quoque Troiugenum fatorum archana repandens
 Ossibus ex nostris ultorem sepe futurum
 Pollicitus; steteratque mihi solamen id unum.
 Que tua mens? Nunquam Troianos ultus acerbe
 Martia cum Grecis furibundus bella parabis,

54 Puscuro, *Constantinopolis* 11, 81–84: 'The Phrygian first conquered Mycenae, once residence of the king from the house of Atreus, who overthrew the Trojan realm, then Corinth, strong with mountains high and ennobled by its richness in bronze'; for Puscuro's anti-Greek bias, cf. Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders" 143.

55 Liquenaius Florentinus, *De Destructione Constantinopolitana* (Paris, Antoine Denidel: ca. 1500). What little is known about the author and the early prints in which the work appeared is collected in *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, vol. VIII (1978) nos. 10045 and 10046.

56 Claudian, *Bellum Gildonicum* 17–127.

Et, tua bellorum cui summa potentia, Mars, est?
 Hectoris indomiti velox ulciscere funus.
 Aspera gens bello viget, et validissimus oris
 Morbezanus in his dominatur corde feroci.
 Eya age, bella ciant sine Iuppiter optime divum!

Highest father, have you, who rules fate, who smote the giants' weapons with a thunderbolt, forgotten about me? Has your power and your might come to naught? Don't you remember what I suffered by the destruction wrought upon the Greeks undeservingly? [...] You, as well, promised, when revealing the secrets of the Trojans' fate to me, that there would be many an avenger from our bones, and only that gave me comfort. Now what do you have in mind? Will you never furiously wage war against the Greeks, avenging the Trojans, or you, Mars, to whom is given the supreme command over warfare? Make haste and avenge the death of untameable Hector! A violent tribe is strong in war, and Morbezanus, the strongest of all, rules over their lands with a wild heart. Now then, Jupiter, greatest of the gods, permit them to unleash war!⁵⁷

One may note the allusion to Dido's words shortly before her suicide in the fourth book of the *Aeneid*, linking her thirst for revenge as a patron of Troy with the trail of destruction among other civilizations Aeneas' sense of duty towards the *fata* left behind, leading to the escalation of divine sentiments in the *Aeneid*.⁵⁸ While the Punic Wars avenge Dido's bleeding, the conquest of Constantinople requites the injustice committed by the Achaeans of old. However, the diachronic tension between the event that justified retribution and the retribution itself is stronger here than in the Virgilian model, as the distance between the two is much greater: The sack of Troy happened at least quite some time before Dido's suicide, while the Punic Wars are substantially earlier than the recent events in the Byzantine Empire – one teleology encapsulates the other. Unlike the *Aeneid*, Liquenaius' poem lets Mars intervene with a speech. He taunts Jupiter by implying that he may have lost his control

57 Liquenaius, *De destructione*, fol. 2v. 'Morbezanus' is a pseudonym for Mehmed II, by whose name several spurious letters to the pope circulated in the aftermath of the sack of Constantinople. Meserve, *Empires* 34–44, traces the *Morbezanus* literature. She also deals briefly with the poem by Liquenaius, cf. *ibidem* 40–41.

58 Virgil, *Aeneid* IV, 625–627: 'Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor / Qui face Dardanios ferroque sequare colonos, / Nunc, olim, quocumque dabunt se tempore vires' ('Arise from my ashes, unknown avenger, to harass the Trojan settlers with fire and sword – today, hereafter, whenever strength be ours!' – trans. Fairclough).

over fate, and then insists that the sack of Constantinople shall quench the Turkish-Trojan thirst for vengeance.

Conditor eterne rerum, nunquam patietur
Troia suos bellis ulcisci filia natos?
Num tua fata regis? Et Grecos nonne potestur
Armisonis Troie Teucro subvolvere telis?
En manus armipotens et Morbezanus Achivos
Odit. Diruere vice versa desine Grecos.
Constantina ruat Troie pensando ruinam.
Edicas igitur bellum, ne semper inulta
Troia suum fleat occasum.

Eternal founder of all, will our daughter Troy tolerate never avenging her sons in war? Do you even rule fate? Won't Teucer be able to subdue the Greeks under the clashing arms of Troy? Look, a powerful army and Morbezanus himself hate the Achaeans. Stop scattering the Greeks in their turn. The city of Constantine shall fall and atone for the ruin of Troy. Therefore, declare war, so that Troy will not bewail its downfall ever forth.⁵⁹

This redundant involvement of the god of war makes, if nothing else, the ensuing order by Jupiter more affirmative of the Trojans' claim. Jupiter's mind is already made up, and he grants his children their wishes and thereby ensures the fulfilment of fate in history. Full atonement will be achieved only by the total submission of Greece under Turkish rule. Liquenaius' *ultio Turcorum* suggests a continuous thread of Fate overarching the gap between the heroic age and contemporary history, a thread that sees fulfilment no sooner than the author's own time or even later. Hence the vengeful Turks strike Greece *robore memori*; and in Liquenaius' work as well as in the *Aeneid*'s proem, Juno's *ira memor* is the reason for the Trojan refugees' suffering, *memor* occupying the same slot in both lines, respectively.

Desine gnate meas vires incendere probris.
Novi Troianos consumere posse Pelasgos
Ulcisci Partumque suum Troiam potuisse
Hectora sed fati series immobilis arctat
Eventus rerum. Sunt expectanda diebus

59 Liquenaius, *De destructione*, fols. 2v–3r.

Tempora, quis victis Turcus dominabit Argis
 Omnibus, et sacri populabitur atria ligni.
 Fraudis Ulixee Troiam ulciscetur Achivos
 Robore contundens memori, sparsosque per arva
 Destruet Argolicos furiato Marte quirites.
 Hoc ego iandudum conceptum mente revolvi:
 Clara deum proles, tua te manet ultio digna.
 Quid mea, nate, tuis sic verbis fata lacesis?

Son, stop fanning the flames of my power with your insults. I know that the Trojans are able to consume the Greeks and the Troy could have avenged its son Hector, but the unalterable course of fate narrows down the outcome of things. We will have to expect a time in which the Turk rules over all the Greeks, and will devastate the palaces of the True Cross. He will avenge Troy for the cunning of Ulysses, smiting the Achaeans with unforgiving strength, and annihilate the Argolians, scattered through their lands, with furious war. I have been going over this plan for a long time now: Illustrious offspring of the gods, you will have your rightful vengeance. So why do you, son, taunt with your speech the fate I control?⁶⁰

The *Amyris*, when read against the backdrop of these poems, offers a positive interpretation of Mehmed's intentions, or at least it does not make them appear severely delusional. He is neither a wrathful savage nor in league with Satan. Rather, he makes a perfectly reasonable decision in front of a mythic-historical backdrop that had already benignly seen his Western opponents (or: relatives?) rise to glory. In the *Amyris*' logic, the descendants of Troy cannot deny one of their own the right to walk in their footsteps. There is, however, another reason this mythic-historical approach is more attractive. It dispends the author from the duty of depicting the Turkish march on Europe as a 'clash of religions'.⁶¹ While earlier epic or epicizing appeals to the Europeans,⁶² not least those made by Pius II,⁶³ urged them to unite against Mehmed in the role

60 Liquenaius, *De destructione*, fol. 3r–3v.

61 Note the valuable and cautious assessment in Gehrke, "Was heißt" 25, that the 'clash of civilizations', as formulated by Samuel Huntington, has only a limited validity for matters of the Turkish issue in the early modern period.

62 An early but already very elaborate poetic intervention is the verse epistle Leonardo Dati sent to Pope Nicholas V, *In Thurcum Mahomet*, which is edited in Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders" 169–176, and analysed in Peters, *Mythologie* 433–438.

63 There is also a poetic branch of Pius' tireless efforts of advertising a new crusade, namely two longer pieces in his *Carmina*. The first one strictly rejects the idea of a Trojan ancestry

of Satan's accomplice or disciple, the continuous defeats of the Europeans would ask of the epic poet to show Christianity losing to Satan over and over again. The urgency of a concerted European response to the Turkish threat notwithstanding, this type of didactic-protreptic tough love would have struck a fifteenth-century reader not only as unpleasant, but as downright un-epic. This is not the case when showing Sultan Mehmed calling in debts from the times before Christian revelation was even an issue. To be sure, Filelfo explicitly states that the whole conflict is not about religion:

Nam locus hic fidei non est reserare volumen,
Scindere nec lites sectarum.

For this is not the right place to open the book on belief, nor to tackle the quarrels of religious factions.⁶⁴

of the Turks. Instead, it endorses the notion of a Scythian origin of the Ottomans, cf. the poem in Piccolomini Enea Silvio, *Carmina*, ed. A. van Heck, Studi e Testi 364 (Vatican: 1994) 101, 11–12: 'Non hoc Dardanidum genus est nec sanguine Teucro / Ducit avos: Scythica est tetraque barbaries' ('They are not a Dardanian people, nor have they forefathers of Trojan blood: They are a ghastly barbarian tribe from Scythia'). When he makes the strong opposition against upgrading the Turks to Trojans a prominent point of his poem and states – seemingly uncalled for – who they do not descend from, Pius illustrates how common this ethnographic attribution was at the time and how dangerous it was considered to be by its chief antagonist. Cf. the short note on Pius' anti-Turk poems in Helmrath, "Pius II." 98. Mark also that, despite his fierce opposition to the etymology in question, earlier on in his career Pius had used the name *Teucro* for the Turks without any further reflection or hesitancy, as his epitaph for Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, who had perished in the battle of Varna in 1444, lays bare; cf. Pius II, *Carmina* 128, 5–6.

- 64 Filelfo, *Amyris* 1, 46–47. Some years earlier, his father Francesco Filelfo, with whom he seems not to have corresponded about their respective epic projects, had urged Venetian doge Cristoforo Moro to eradicate the *Mahumetanorum secta* altogether. Tellingly, in the few instances when Christianity prevailed against a Turkish campaign, the Christian colouring of poetry kicks back in – like in the case of the *Triumphus Hydruntinus*, a short epic from 1482 celebrating the liberation of Otranto one year before; cf. Probo da Sulmona Marco, *Triumphus Hydruntinus*, ed. M. Pisani Massarmomile (Naples: 1979). In this text, the pagan gods and heroes in Greece literally pack their bags and flee westwards to those better equipped to protect them, while the bastions of real Christendom, like Rhodes, withstand the Turkish storm, probably also because not only did they do away with paganism, but they also did not give in to the schismatic aberrations of the Eastern church; cf. Peters, *Mythologie* 438–448. The sieges of Rhodes and Otranto were met with publicist interest in the early printing business as well; cf. Meserve, "News" 444–445. Both for success and setbacks in the Turkish war, very similar aspects and strategies could be poetically employed. Schindler C., "Barbarico tingi sanguine vidit aquas. Die Schlacht von Lepanto in der neulateinischen Dichtung", in Föcking M. – Schindler C. (eds.), *Der Krieg hat kein Loch. Friedenssehnsucht und Kriegsapologie in der Frühen Neuzeit*, GRM-Beiheft

Despite Filelfo's resourcefulness, this eccentric nuance of humanist approach to the Turkish issue also excludes the Turks from Europe, in that it renders them driven by the belated strive to avenge primordial injustice, thus making them incompatible with present. Whether the *Amyris* failed due to its philo-Turk stance or not,⁶⁵ it is an obvious failure when measured against its foremost intention, which was to be a stepping stone for the career of one of the most prolific humanist poets of the fifteenth century – a career which refused to kick into gear for most of his life. It is, however, a fascinating document of a humanist poet turning humanist philology and antiquarianism against themselves to shape a past that his addressee could endorse and that his addressee's enemies would not be able to debunk.

6 Conclusion

By epic means, Filelfo stresses primacy for the most unlikely contestant in a competition that put its candidates – think of Strozzi's *profugi* and their *incertus cursus* – at risk of becoming the stray dogs of history.⁶⁶ The Turkish-Trojan link may, then, also be vital in understanding Tito Strozzi's peculiar treatment of the Este genealogy, if we observe it once again under the issue of what's in a name: Strozzi conspicuously avoids calling the Turks anything other than *Getae* when in the first book the very *raison d'être* of the eponymous Borso d'Este is discussed by the Olympian gods, who then decide to cause his birth, in order to show mankind a perfect human being, so they will put down their arms and gather for the liberation of the Greek East, so it won't go down in flames again like Troy once had.⁶⁷ So, there is fate at work in the events of

65 (Heidelberg: 2014) 114–140, shows how Latin epic poems on the Battle of Lepanto 1571 aimed to both praise the moral and military qualities of the victorious leaders and to exhort Christendom – newly split into confessional groups – to unite against a common enemy that could well be understood as a divine scourge for either heresy or the corruption of the church.

65 Bihrer, "Der Feind" 167–169; Helmrath, "Pius II." 111; Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders" 130.

66 Slightly odd is the fact that there are no lasting attempts, among the many conceits of Trojan origin claiming to predate one another, to make something out of the Penates' mandate to Aeneas to bring them back to their and the Trojan ancestors' actual former home in Italy (Virgil, *Aeneid* 111, 153–168). On this cf. Tanner, *Last Descendant* 12f.

67 Strozzi, *Borsias* 1, 197–200: 'Imperium Europae manus invasura Getarum / Argolica iam nunc speret de gente triumphos. / Invisas testor Lethaei gurgitis undas, / Me Troiae excidium graviter Priamique tulisse' ('By now, the hordes of the Gets, about to invade the realm of Europe, may very well already hope for victory over the Greek people. By the odious waves of the Lethean stream, I swear that I did not take lightly the fall of Troy and king

the *Borsias*; it even partially accounts for the very existence of its namesake hero, but Strozzi cannot (and does not need to) rely on it as an authorizing link across the ages between his hero and epic antiquity, while it is vital for Filelfo's work to establish fate as a category apart from politics or ethnographic scholarship, in order to make its protagonist a plausible hero.

Poets had access to a variety of both pasts and patterns of adopting and endorsing one of them. Tito Strozzi conservatively maintains a poetically plausible and intellectually acceptable version of the European nobility's common past and heritage, with just the right mixture of distancing and authorization. Filelfo, on the other hand, makes up for in resourcefulness what he may have lacked in sense of style and decency: He actually stages the mortal enemy of Western Christendom as a ruler on the quest for an appropriate past. For the sake of this, he appropriates the means of attaching oneself to whatever past appears the most suitable and prestigious he might have observed with his opponents in the Latin West, thereby subverting the humanist monopoly on scholarly appropriation of any given past by means of poetic fiction.

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Priam'). Similar avoidance can be observed in Francesco Filelfo's *Ode* 3, 1, where the muse Euterpe asks the poet to exhort the French King Charles VII to wage war against the Turks, edited in Filelfo, Francesco, *Odes*, ed. D. Robin, I Tatti Renaissance Library 41 (Cambridge, MA – London: 2009). The muse invokes the Trojan ancestors of the Franks as typological role models for the monarch, an argument that is, of course, incompatible with a Trojan origin for the Turks. Hence Mehmed II is depicted rather with conventional stereotypes of the voluptuous and intemperate barbarian. Paolo Marsi's *Lamentatio*, fol. 3r, next to *Scythica gens*, also calls the Turks *Getici*. The exclusion of the *Getae* from the common Greco-Roman cultural heritage hearkens back to Claudian; cf. Schinder C., "Pagane Mythen – christliche Herrscher. Mythos und Mythologie in den politischen Dichtungen Claudians", in Leppin H. (ed.), *Antike Mythologie in christlichen Kontexten der Spätantike*, Millennium Studies 54 (Berlin – Munich – Boston: 2015) 19–42, here 24.

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