

The Reception of the Hippodrome in the Writings of French Travellers to Constantinople During the Embassy of Gabriel d'Aramon (1546-1553)

The Aramontine Corpus¹: Genre, Autopsy and Mimesis

The period of the embassy of Gabriel d'Aramon², a pivotal stage of the French policy of diplomatic alliance with the Ottoman Empire, saw a profusion of texts written by the visitors who stayed in its capital³. The authors in question are Jacques Gassot, Pierre Belon, André Thevet, Guillaume Postel, Pierre Gilles, Nicolas de Nicolay and Jean Chesneau (in chronological order of printing date, not composition, as several of them were dead by the time their work was published). They were messengers and secretaries⁴, geographers⁵, and scholars with interests ranging from antiquarianism to natural sciences and comparative religion⁶.

Although this corpus may be unified by its historical context, and there are many points of contact between the texts (making it evident that they read each other), the differences in the authors' background and training, as well as interests, nuance their reception of Constantinople. Their attitudes towards the Ottomans also range from the open turkophobia of Nicolas de Nicolay to a more neutral or at times positive presentation by Guillaume Postel, suiting his purpose of advocating for religious tolerance. As their interests in antiquities and monuments vary, the amount of text they dedicate to Constantinople's architecture also ranges from just a few words in Postel to most of the book in the case of Gilles.

In terms of genre, while all the texts may be said to fall under the broader umbrella of travel-writing, they present and select their material differently. Gassot's *Le discours du Voyage de Venise à Constantinople*, originally a letter written from Aleppo on 5 December 1548 most strictly belongs to the category of travel-writing, focusing largely on the travelling itself and its itinerary. He modelled his account largely on an earlier Italian text written by the Venetian Ramberti⁷, lifting whole sections of his text and translating it into French. Chesneau then used Gassot's account to build his *Voyage de Paris en Constantinople*, expanding and correcting it as he saw necessary⁸. Belon composed his *Observations de plusieurs singularitez et choses memorables trouvées en Grèce, Asie, Judée, Egypte, Arabie et autres pays estranges* as a collection of curiosities, whether antiquities or from the natural world. As a cosmographer, Thevet's geographical focus means that he organised his account of Constantinople in his *Cosmographie de Levant* according to its seven hills, the only one in the corpus to do so. Gilles, inspired by two Italian antiquarians⁹ and their works on Rome, organised his presentation of the city in his *De Topographia Constantinopoleos et de illius antiquitatibus libri quatuor* according to the eleven regions of the Late Antique *Notitia Dignitatum*. Nicolay's *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et pérégrinations orientales*, although a travel account with a greater focus on ethnography, probably features the most references to

1 The expression comes from Tinguely, *Écriture* and refers to the texts produced by travellers who were in the East during the period of Aramon's embassy (see following note) – this does not mean Aramon had a personal influence on the content of their writings. Rather, the name denotes the cultural context of their authors' stay in the East. Tinguely also notes the influence of the corpus on later descriptions of Constantinople (idem 128), giving examples from the end of the 16th century, but arguably this influence can be felt in even later works, such as in the 19th century Van Millingen, *Constantinople*, and in the 20th century Janin, *Constantinople*. Gilles' influence can even be detected in Haury's edition of the *Buildings*, cf. Haury, *Procopius 364*, where he translates the Greek κίβωτος from 1.11.19 in his *index graecitatis* with the Latin *saxa, quibus forma arcarum erat* most likely under the influence of the large square stones observed in Gilles, *Bosporo* 250, when the term actually refers to wooden caissons.

2 Gabriel de Luetz, baron of Aramon (1508?-1553) was ambassador to the Sublime Porte from 1546 to his death. On his embassy, see Paviot, *Ambassade*.

3 Belon, *Observations* 69 explains that French travellers were hosted by the embassy in Pera and extols the generosity of the ambassador towards his guests, providing them not only with hospitality and whatever they may need such as clothing, mounts and money to return to France, no matter their extraction.

4 Jacques Gassot (1525-1585) was a messenger for Francis I and Jean Chesneau (1520-?) was the secretary of the ambassador.

5 André Thevet (1516-1592) was cosmographer for Francis I and Nicolas de Nicolay (1517-1583) was geographer – and likely also a spy – for Henry II. On Thevet, see Lestringant, *Atelier*, and Van Den Abbeele, *Duplicity*. On de Nicolay, see Ilg, *Reisebericht*.

6 Pierre Belon (1517-1564) was a botanist whose travels were funded by the cardinal De Tournon and Pierre Gilles (1489-1555) was a natural scientist with a strong background in Hellenism, sent by Francis I to the east to look for manuscripts for the Royal library of Fontainebleau. On Belon, see Barsi, *Énigme*. On Gilles, see Miachon, *Oeuvre*, and Jacob, *Voyage* (more specifically on the De Bosporo). Guillaume Postel (1510-1581) was a philosopher and linguist, the only author without royal connections during the embassy. On Postel and his thought, see Bouwsma, *Concordia*, and Kuntz, *Postel*.

7 Ramberti, *Cose*.

8 Chesneau wrote during the reign of Selim II (1566-1574). The 19th-c. edition of his text is based on BnF Arsenal, Ms. 4767 (Tinguely, *Écriture* 275) but the most extant manuscript version is BnF, Ms. fr. 23045, fols 269-309^v.

9 Marliani, *Topographia*, and Fulvio, *Urbis*.

ancient texts after Gilles. As for Postel, *De la République des Turcs* focuses on Turkish mores and society rather than travelling, and his references to monuments fit within this discussion rather than being descriptive.

Most of the authors write within the conventions of their genre, which offers challenges for the modern historian. Despite being able to claim autopsy for the things they describe, their descriptions are shaped by mimesis, just as much from contemporary texts as from ancient testimonies, borrowing from such genres as patria or city-praise. Gilles in particular relies extensively on classical texts, to the point of being reduced to this aspect by modern critics as if the way he composed his text with profuse quotations from ancient sources eclipsed his direct personal experience¹⁰. On the contrary, by interweaving numerous quotations in his text, he subtly articulates together past and present to convey the experience of Constantinople in a multi-layered way. Thus, this paper will aim to analyse how mimesis is deployed to achieve the writers' purposes in depicting Constantinople, in particular in shaping the reader's view of the city through building impactful images and using emotional language.

Textual Economy and the Hippodrome as Pole and Axis in the Mental Map of Sixteenth-century Constantinople

Most of the authors in the corpus had a limited amount of textual space to deploy their depiction of Constantinople, which usually forms only a small part of a much larger geographical space covered (with the exception of Gilles whose two books cover Constantinople and the Bosphorus only). Hence the concept of »textual economy«, as defined by Basseler for use in analysing short stories as the way a text manages its material, i.e., its narrative resources, may be applied to the travellers' accounts¹¹. How do the authors negotiate the necessity of presenting Constantinople as vividly as possible with the smallest use of resources? They do this through their selection of material, that is, not covering all monuments but choosing the ones with the greatest evocative power, they use condensation or shorthand, and they aim for the most evocative power and the sparest use of resources through deploying cultural references and frameworks known to the reader¹².

There are two monuments which appear in all texts, even Postel's which is more concerned with ethnography than ar-

chitecture, and they are, as one might expect, Hagia Sophia and the Hippodrome. In Gilles' text, the two monuments occur the most, and not only does he devote large sections of the narrative to them, but he uses them as reference points throughout. When he represents the hypothetical view the Sultan has over the city from his palace on the first hill, he highlights the two buildings: »[...] respicit [...] et prope nobilem Urbis partem, ædem Sophiæ et Hippodromum«¹³. The adjective qualifying the area defined by the two monuments, *nobilis*, conveys their importance and fame. But the sentence is also placed at the heart of the panorama Gilles describes, surrounded by the other charms the city has to offer, bucolic landscapes, sea breezes and little sailing boats bobbing along the Bosphorus. In fact, the Hippodrome and Hagia Sophia are the main architectural elements in this ekphrasis, framed by this *locus amoenus*. Even in his other text on the Bosphorus, Gilles mentioned the Hippodrome, not as a pole, but as an axis, when he suggests imagining a straight line going from the promontory of Chalcedon cutting through the Hippodrome then through the complex of Sultan Bayezid on the third hill, then the complex of Sultan Mehmed on the fourth, before reaching the Land Walls. It is no coincidence that he associates these places as locations of displays of past power¹⁴.

Unsurprisingly, the authors of the corpus who offer condensed descriptions of the city all allot some space to the Hippodrome. These short accounts allow us to see the mimesis at play within the corpus, as they frequently echo each other. The earliest description is that of Gassot:

L'on voit en Constantinople l'Hippodrome où anciennement faisaient courir les chevaux, avec la forme du Théâtre et arènes au milieu dudit Hippodrome y a une grande aiguille, qui est une Colonne faite en façon d'aiguille fort belle, et bien élaborée, et sans chaux, faite des pierres vives mises ensembles: de sorte qu'elle est élevée plus de cinquante brasses¹⁵, en amenuisant toujours en forme d'aiguille, ou de Pyramide, et est appuyée sur quatre balles de marbres. Davantage l'on voit une colonne de bronze en forme de serpent avec trois têtes. Il y avait n'a pas longtemps un Hercule de bronze, qui avait été porté de Hongrie, mais ils l'ont ôté de ce lieu. Puis au milieu y a une grande machine comme un colosse de divers marbres et beaux, en laquelle est entaillée et engravée l'histoire des susdites choses, et autres qui jadis se déroulaient habituellement au théâtre, et hippodrome (all French extracts modernised by me)¹⁶.

10 Tinguely, *Écriture* 97. »La parole du voyageur risque ici de s'effacer presque complètement devant celle de l'autorité citée, traduite ou commentée. La glose savante menace à chaque instant d'éclipser toute trace de témoignage vécu, toute impression ressentie sur les pistes des contrées lointaines«.

11 Basseler, *Economy*.

12 E.g., Postel, *République* 44 compares Hagia Sophia to Notre Dame and Sainte-Croix in Orléans, both cathedrals likely to be familiar to his audience.

13 Gilles, *Topographia* 31. »Closer, he sees the eminent part of the city, the church of Hagia Sophia and the Hippodrome.« All translations from the *Topographia* were adapted from Byrd, Gilles.

14 Gilles, *Bosporo* 251-252.

15 A brasse was about 1.62 m, so 50 would be about 81 m.

16 Gassot, *Discours* 11. One can see in Constantinople the Hippodrome where in ancient times they would have horses race, in the shape of a theatre or arena. In the middle of the aforementioned Hippodrome there is a great needle, which is a column made in the shape of a needle, very beautiful and elaborate and without lime, made from exposed stones assembled together so that it is taller than fifty brasses [fathoms], getting thinner in the shape of a needle, or pyramid, and leaning on four balls of marble. Additionally, one can see a bronze column in the shape of a snake with three heads. Not long ago there was a

This section translates fairly closely the corresponding passage in his Venetian model¹⁷. The description of the Hippodrome only gives a vague impression of its overall appearance (a theatre or arena) before moving on to its decorative elements: the Obelisk of Theodosius, the Serpent Column, and the Colossus of Constantine (also known as the Masonry Obelisk), and a bronze Hercules which he mentions had been recently removed. When it comes to the details of the Obelisk and Colossus, Gassot reproduced mistakes from his model, inverting their attributes: it is the Obelisk of Theodosius that features iconography (on its base, not the Obelisk itself which features hieroglyphs), and the Colossus which is made of masonry¹⁸. It is surprising that Gassot followed his model faithfully without correcting the text based on his first-hand experience. Chesneau then copied Gassot's text but attempted some corrections. First, he removed the reference to the bronze Hercules. Then, he attempted to redistribute the characteristics of the first obelisk, but in doing so, he created a third, imaginary hybrid one¹⁹.

The next condensed description, the shortest of all, is that of Belon:

Il y a aussi un Hippodrome, qui était une chose somptueuse et magnifique: dans lequel on voit deux obélisques, dont l'une était revêtue de lames d'airain, puis dorées: aussi n'est il fait que de pierres de marbre liées avec fer et plomb. L'autre obélisque y a été apportée d'Égypte, qui n'est pas tout entière. Encore y a là, un serpent d'airain fondu d'excessive grosseur, élevé droit en manière de colonne²⁰.

Belon does not concern himself with the overall aspect of the Hippodrome, beyond its beauty, and only gives details of the two obelisks and the Serpent Column, concentrating principally on the materials used. However, he does provide the information that the Colossus used to be covered in brass cladding, without naming a source for this²¹. Thevet's account is almost as short as the previous one:

En outre, il y a de beaux et plaisants spectacles nommés Hippodromes, c'est-à-dire, lieux spacieux, où anciennement les Empereurs faisaient courir les chevaux par récréation et manière d'exercice. Au milieu de cette grande place il y a plusieurs belles colonnes fort antiques et magnifiquement ouvragées et gravées, toutes de marbre, sauf une qui est de cuivre en forme d'un serpent ayant

trois têtes. Là aussi y a un Hercule de cuivre, qui fut apporté de Hongrie, chose singulière et plaisante à regarder²².

Although later than Belon's text, it is possible that Thevet did not know it. While he mentions the obelisks and the Serpent Column, Thevet seems to deliberately avoid the difficulties faced by Gassot and Chesneau by choosing to eschew differentiating the obelisks entirely and grouping them instead into an indefinite group of so-called columns. In fact, the illustration which accompanies the passage on the Hippodrome in both editions (**fig. 1**) appears to represent one obelisk (likely the masonry one, at the very least it does not feature hieroglyphs) as well as a historiated column. There was no such column in Thevet's time, but the illustration clearly aims to represent the antique Hippodrome as evidenced by the horse riders and charioteers in Roman garb. Perhaps the confusion stemmed from the fact that the masonry obelisk was believed to have been historiated in the time of its bronze panels. Thevet also writes about the bronze Hercules as if it was still



Fig. 1 Thevet, *Cosmographie* (1556) p. 64. – (Photo BnF Gallica).

bronze Hercules which had been brought from Hungary, but they removed it from this place. Then in the middle there is a big construction like a colossus of various beautiful marbles on which are cut and engraved the history of such things or others that used to happen customarily in the theatre, or hippodrome. All translations my own unless otherwise stated.

17 Ramberti, *Cose* 12-13.

18 Tinguely, *Écriture* 131.

19 Tinguely, *Écriture* 133-134.

20 Belon, *Observations* 73-74. There is also a Hippodrome, which is a sumptuous and magnificent thing: in which one sees two obelisks, one of which was cov-

ered in brazen sheets which were then gilded: besides it is only made of marble stones assembled with iron and lead. The other obelisk was brought from Egypt and is not whole. There is also a snake of melted brass whose size is excessive, raised upright in the manner of a column.

21 At the very least, the information that it used to be bronze is included in the Greek epigram on its base: »The four-sided marvel of the uplifted, wasted by time, now Constantine the Emperor, whose son is Romanus, the glory of the kingship, restores better than the ancient spectacle. For the Colossus was a wonder once in Rhodes, and this is now a brazen wonder here«. Trans. Bardill, *Monuments* 151. For the inscription, see Rhoby, *Epigramme* 610-612 (TR53).

there, even if it was gone by the time our visitors arrived in Constantinople²³.

The latest text to be published, written by Nicolay, combines elements of many of the previous:

Le reste des notables antiquités, qui pour le jour d'hui se trouvent à Constantinople sont l'Hippodrome, que les Turcs appellent Atmayden. Qui est la place où les Empe-reurs faisaient anciennement courir les chevaux, pour le plaisir et divertissement du peuple, qui les regardait d'un cirque ou théâtre du tout pour le présent ruiné. Au milieu de cette grand place se voient élevée sur quatre boules de fin marbre, une belle Obélisque de pierre mixte, toute d'une pierre, et de la hauteur de cinquante coudées, remplie et enrichie de lettres hiéroglyphiques: et tout auprès un grand colosse: auquel sont entaillées, par histoires les choses mémorables qui ont été faites en l'Hippodrome. Une autre grande colonne de marbre près de là, et une de bronze faite par un singulier artifice, en forme de trois serpents entortillés [...]²⁴.

We can see elements of several of the condensed descriptions, like the general shape and purpose of the Hippodrome (the mention of its ruined state also echoes Gilles' text, cf. below). Nicolay does reproduce one of the mistakes of his predecessors in presenting the colossus as a historiated obelisk. One thing he is the only one to offer is the name of the Hippodrome in Turkish: Atmayden (i. e. Atmeydani).

These condensed descriptions show an efficient way to convey a visual impression of the Hippodrome relying on the powerful visuals of its decorative elements. We can also see a trend of associating certain buildings or elements with the Hippodrome which are not technically part of it, as sort of satellites, like the church of John Dihippion converted into a menagerie (more on the association with the menagerie and the procession of the Sultan below). Gilles also puts the Hippodrome in a position of choice and as a major urban pole when he depicts the topography of the city as shaped like an eagle:

Nec admodum dissimilis est aquilae pandenti alias, oblique intuenti sinistrorsum: in cuius rostro positus est collis primus, ubi Regis Palatium, in oculo templum Sophiae, in capitis vertice posteriori fere est Hippodromus, in collo sunt duo colles, secundus et tertius. Reliqua Urbis pars ala, et caeterum corpus occupant²⁵.

The only monuments mentioned are, as expected, the Sultan's Palace, Hagia Sophia and the Hippodrome, forming the eagle's head. Of course, the image was chosen to tie the city to its Roman and mythical past, as it evokes not only the Roman insignia and the eagles which appear in a foundation myth according to which Constantine had meant to set his new capital in Chalcedon, but eagles stole the mason's lines and dropped them in Byzantium instead²⁶. But the fact that Gilles mentions the two sultans' complexes in his description of the axis that cuts the Hippodrome (see above) and the current sultan's seraglio in this topographical description, shows how historical locations of imperial displays of power are constantly connected with those of Ottoman power.

Layering the Greek and Roman Past with Ottoman Constantinople

This layering or merging of the past with the Ottoman present is one of the main features of the Hippodrome's presentation, in both textual and visual representations. It is presented with its current meaning, not only as remains of the city's Greek and Roman identity, but as a symbol of Ottoman power. This is particularly evident in the way the Sultan's menagerie becomes associated with the Hippodrome, and his procession is depicted as passing in front of the Hippodrome, which is not technically accurate. This procession had become a topos in the imagination of the period, forming a bridge between the topoi of the Seraglio and Hagia Sophia²⁷. In our texts, this effectively makes the space of the Hippodrome much denser by linking it with these two catalogues: the menagerie on one hand, and the procession on the other. For example, Thevet goes straight from the Hippodrome to the menagerie of Saint John of Dihippion²⁸, listing the animals

22 Thevet, *Cosmographie* 63-64. Additionally there are beautiful and pleasant spectacles called Hippodromes, that is to say, spacious locations, where in ancient times the Emperors would make horses race for entertainment and in manner of exercise. In the middle of this big square there are many beautiful columns, very antique and beautifully ornamented and engraved, all of marble, except one which is copper in the shape of a three-headed snake. There is also a copper Hercules there, which was brought from Hungary, a singular thing and pleasant to behold.

23 For the textual and iconographic evidence on the bronze Hercules, see below.

24 Nicolay, *Navigations* 65. The rest of the noteworthy antiquities which are still in Constantinople today include the Hippodrome, which the Turks call Atmayden. It is the square where the Emperors would make horses race in ancient times for the pleasure and entertainment of the people, who would watch them from a circus or theatre which is now in ruins. In the middle of this large square rises on top of four balls of fine marble a beautiful Obelisk of mixed type(?) stone, all in one block, and of a height of fifty coudées [cubits], filled and enriched with hieroglyphic letters, and right near another large colossus where are engraved as

manner of stories the memorable things which happened at the Hippodrome. Another large marble column nearby, and a bronze one made by a peculiar device in the shape of three snakes twisted together [...].

25 Gilles, *Topographia* 24. It is not very different in shape from an eagle stretching its wings and looking at an angle to the left: in its beak is situated the first hill, where the Royal Palace [i. e. Topkapı] is, in its eye, the church of Hagia Sophia, near the nape of its neck is the Hippodrome, on its neck are two hills, the second and the third. The remaining parts of the city occupy its wings and the rest of its body.

26 Tinguely, *Écriture* 102. The anecdote is related by Nicolay, *Navigations* 89 and comes from Zonaras, *Annals* 13.3. The first French translation of Zonaras had recently been published in 1560, which is likely what Nicolay used (Millet, *Zonare*).

27 Tinguely, *Écriture* 137.

28 On the church and its use as a menagerie, see Mango, *Diippion*, *Asutay-Effenberger/Effenberger*, *Kirche*, *Grémois*, *Note*, and *Westbrook*, *Freshfield*.

in the sultan's menagerie as if following the way the gaze travels, when there is a considerable distance between the great cats of the Dihippion and the elephants kept in the Palace of Constantine²⁹. This increases the density of the Hippodrome, as well as »repopulating« it (cf. below). This association had already become part of the iconography of Constantinople in the period. Thevet inserts a print into the second edition of his book on page 60 depicting the Sultan on his way to the mosque (fig. 2) in his description of the procession, which precedes the descriptions of Hagia Sophia and the Hippodrome. There had already been an illustration (identical to fig. 1) for the Hippodrome in the first edition, page 63, showing the sphendone, the masonry obelisk, the serpent column and a historiated column (matching the text rather than reality). That image clearly represented the Hippodrome in the past, with riders wearing classical gear. In the new illustration, showing a more contemporary image, the sphendone is in ruins, and only one obelisk can be seen (presumably, the Masonry Obelisk, although it is hard to tell), elongating the vertical axis of the horse's raised leg. The position of the horse itself is reminiscent of imperial equestrian bronzes, for example the famous one of Justinian which used to sit at the top of a column in the nearby Augusteion. The foreground in the image is crowded with the Sultan's retinue, the antique ruins a background used to ground the Sultan at its heart. The image is the perfect representation of the way the Ottoman power builds on the iconography of New Rome³⁰. Thevet may have been inspired by the work of the Flemish Pieter Coecke van Aelst³¹ who represented the Sultan's procession through the city in a woodcut whose last panel (VII) shows the Hippodrome, particularly the spina's monuments, in the background (fig. 3). Van Aelst had visited



Fig. 2 Thevet, *Cosmographie* (1556) p. 60. – (Photo BnF Gallica).

Constantinople in 1533, hence the Hercules and its two sister statues can be seen (fig. 4), although the work was printed later in Antwerp in 1553. The caption under the image reads:

La Ville de Constantinople, avec toutes ses mosquées ou temples, obélisques ou aiguilles, et colonnes avec le serpent de cuivre, à voir par le dedans. Idem, comment et de quelle manière le grand Turc ayant devant lui allant



Fig. 3 Pieter Coecke Van Aelst, *Ces Moeurs et fachons de faire de Turcz*, print from a woodcut, 1553. – (Photo The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Object Number: 28.85.1-.7a, b).

29 Tinguely, *Écriture* 136.

30 Tinguely, *Écriture* 136.

31 On the artist and the original purpose for the design – likely intended to be produced as a tapestry sold to Süleyman – see Born, *Moeurs*, and Born, *Coecke*.



Fig. 4 Detail of fig. 3.

douze acquebutiers ou archers: et après lui suivent deux de ses plus nobles chambellans. Et faisant ainsi le tour de la ville, il fait sa démonstration³².

This engraving and the accompanying legend show well the juxtaposition of the Sultan's procession, a display of Ottoman power, with the decorative elements of the Hippodrome, the two obelisks and the Serpent Column, themselves symbols from earlier historical powers (Egypt, Greece, Rome, Byzantium).

First, the obelisks stand out in their ubiquitousness in the French reception of the Hippodrome (they appear in all our authors aside from Postel). As noted earlier, there are some issues and confusion in the accounts, mostly due to the way mistakes get repeated across the texts. The history of the two

obelisks and their origin is something few of the authors attempt to discuss, aside from Gilles, but their function of representing Constantinople as a new Rome by reproducing the iconographic programme of the old Rome with two obelisks on the spina of its Circus Maximus was something at least some of our authors would have been aware of³³. Of course, the appeal of obelisks, like pyramids, relied partially on exotism and the suggestion of domination over distant nations. However, the symbolism of obelisks as objects of power was something with contemporary relevance. Thevet's protector, the cardinal of Lorraine, had an ivy-clad obelisk topped with a crescent as his emblem (although he called it a pyramid)³⁴. It is entirely possible that Thevet's choice to add the image of the Sultan with the obelisk in the background in the second edition of his book was meant to please his powerful patron. The other two monuments which function by evoking the past are the bronze Hercules and the Serpent Column. The past they recall goes further back in time than the obelisks which evoke emperors of Rome and New Rome, as their appeal is to the Greece of a mythical, legendary past. For the serpent column, its connections to the Delphic oracle are the main source of its appeal as it ties back to the *patria* (i. e. foundation myths) of the city. Most of the authors discuss Constantinople's origins in more or less detail, but references to Delphi only appear in Thevet, Gilles and Nicolay. Thevet and Nicolay do not make the connection between the serpent and the Delphic oracle but provide the legend of the Delphic oracle regarding the best location for the original city of Byzantium (deemed superior to Chalcedon), which Nicolay says was given to a duke (rather, a general if translating the Latin *dux*) called Pausanias, saying the story came to him from many ancient authors³⁵. While Pausanias is said to have captured Byzantium and possessed it, he is not usually said to have founded it, and the oracle provided by Nicolay about building opposite the blind (i. e., Chalcedon) is usually given to the Megarian Byzas in the tradition³⁶. Perhaps the tie between Pausanias and the Delphic serpent can be made from the mention of his dedication of the golden tripod at Delphi which we associate with the Serpent Column³⁷. Gilles ties the Serpent Column to its original Delphic origin much more explicitly, patchworking extracts from ancient sources with his own remarks as he usually does³⁸. He starts with Zosimus relating that Constantine set up the Delphic tripod in the Hippodrome, then adding that Sozomen mentioned another tripod which was dedicated to Apollo after the victory of Pausanias over the Persians, then Eusebius on the

32 The City of Constantinople, with all its mosques or temples, obelisks or needles, and columns with the copper snake, as can be seen. Idem, how and in which manner the great Turk, having ahead of him twelve arquebusier or archers and after him follow two of his most noble chamberlains, touring the city thus, makes his procession.

33 See Bardill, Monuments for a discussion of the obelisks' late antique origins and contexts. See also Akýürek, Hippodrome 22-30. 32-40.

34 On this emblem and the perception of its symbolism in the period, see Anderson, Horace.

35 The oracle is at Thevet, *Cosmographie* 58-59 and Nicolay, *Navigations* 61. Later in the same passage, Nicolay mentions Pliny, Diodorus, Polybius and Zonaras, but none of them attribute the foundation to Pausanias or connect the famous oracle to him.

36 Herodotus, *Histories* 4.144.2, Strabo, *Geography* 7.6.2 and Tacitus, *Annals* 12.63.

37 This is notably related in Cornelius Nepos, *Pausanias* 1.2. Nepos does use *dux* to refer to Pausanias so this may be a clue that Nicolay read him.

38 Gilles, *Topographia* 90-91.

serpent column supporting the tripod³⁹. He then quotes older sources to evoke the original history of the tripod; Herodotus first, then the imperial writer Pausanias to counter the idea that the Ottomans had removed the gold from the monument, when it had already been stripped in his time⁴⁰. The way Gilles braids these testimonies together after giving his description of the Serpent Column has the effect of tying it to a multi-layered past; that of Constantine and the glory of the city in its late antique heyday, but also that of ancient Greece and its history, particularly the Persian wars. The mentions of Apollo, Delphi and the Pythian oracle bring a dimension of magic and myth, which gives further evocative strength to a monument full of apotropaic power⁴¹.

This brings us to the final decorative element which occurs in most of our texts (apart from Chesneau and Belon) even though this sculpture was no longer in situ during their visits. The power of the bronze Hercules was that it conveyed the impression of Greek mythical antiquity despite the fact it was not ancient. Thevet and Gassot (see above) mention the bronze without providing its origin. Perhaps they did not know it, but it is also possible they chose not to include it to preserve the idea that it may have been ancient. Gilles, on the other hand, presents it in context, first with its location, a specific marble column for which he gives dimensions, before explaining that it was brought back from Hungary by the vizier Ibrahim Pasha⁴². He then relates the story of its destruction:

Sed illo extincto Hercules, qui non modo vivus in domandis monstris orbem peragraverat, sed etiam mortuus huc illuc gestatus fuerat, tot clades evaserat. Tandem eversus et distractus est a Turcis, acerrimis hostibus statuarum et totius artis Vitruvianæ, Hercule præstantioribus. Qui tertio decimo proposito certamine Herculem vicerunt fortius quam qui primi vicerunt longis ante temporibus [...]⁴³.

With this dramatic statement, Gilles conflates two time periods, or rather real historical time and mythical time, by making the destruction of the statue by the Turks the thirteenth labour of Hercules. This is designed to aggrandise the depiction of Ottoman power as surpassing even the heroes

of ancient myths. There is also a reference to Muslims' beliefs against statues, which then turns into a reference to Vitruvius. While the art of Vitruvius might suggest architecture at first sight, within the context of this passage, it must reference a section of the *De Architectura* which had garnered a lot of interest in the Renaissance and within Gilles' own circle: the one explaining how to depict the proportions of the human body⁴⁴. This modern destruction of Hercules then transitions into a classical parallel. This is typical of the way Gilles writes in his book; populating his text with quotations from ancient sources, and patchworking together the past and present:

[...] ex eo quod Herculem ligneum summa arte factum combussissent, ut Diagoras [...] impius. In publicum deversorium [...] profectus. Cum lignis [...] egeret ad lentem coquendam, invenisset qui Herculem ligneum pulcherrime et summa arte laboratum, eum in frusta dissectum in ignem congestit, addens hæc verba: »O Hercule, qui duodecim certamina subiisti, age [...] et tertiumdecimum [...] certamen subeas, et lentem nunc coquas!«⁴⁵.

With this, Gilles establishes a parallel between the famous atheist Diagoras and the Ottomans in their lack of respect towards statuary. This anecdote also emphasises the humorous tone which was already showing through in the claim that the destruction of the statue by the Turks was Hercules' thirteenth labour. When Gilles brings up the bronze Hercules in a later passage discussing another statue of Hercules featuring in ancient sources, it is worth keeping in mind this humour and not taking his claim that they are one and the same too seriously:

ubi etiam Suidas tradit fuisse Herculis statuam, quæ colabatur, eique multa sacrificia fiebant, eamque postea in Hippodromum traductam, Iuliano consulare, ab antiqua Roma [...] Byzantium una cum decem statuīs deportatam partim vehiculo, partim navi. Qui si ille est, quem ex Ungaria Abramus Bassa Byzantium vexerat et collocaverat in Hippodromo, non minus mortuus, quam vivus orbem peragravit⁴⁶.

39 Zosimus, History 2.31; Sozomen, History 2.5; Eusebius, Life 3.54.

40 Herodotus, Histories 9.81.1; Pausanias, Description 10.13.9.

41 See Stichel, Schangensäule, as well as Stephenson, Serpent for a diachronic study of the monument and its reception.

42 See Dernschwam, Tagebuch 100 for a contemporary account of the statue by a German traveller who saw it *in situ* and provides details of its origin.

43 Gilles, Topographia 89-90. But after his death [i. e., Ibrahim Pasha], Hercules, who had not only wandered the world, vanquishing monsters while alive, but even dead had been carried here and there, had escaped so many calamities. Finally, he was overturned and dismembered by the Turks, the most hostile enemies of statuary and of the whole art of Vitruvius. These men, with a thirteenth labour, vanquished him, rather than those who first vanquished him a long time ago [...].

44 Vitruvius, Architectura 3.1, which Gilles' friend Guillaume Philandrier commented on in Philandrier, Annotations 132-134 (81-82 in the primary text), bringing in the opinion of contemporary authors such as Pomponius Gauricus, Luca di Borgo and Mario Equicola.

45 Gilles, Topographia 90. [...] in so much as they had burned a Hercules exquisitely crafted of wood, as the impious Diagoras did. Entering an inn and wanting wood with which to cook his lentils, he [Diagoras] found a most beautiful and exquisitely crafted wooden Hercules, cut it up and built a fire, saying these words: »O Hercules! You who undertook twelve labours, go on, suffer a thirteenth labour! Now you will cook lentils!«. This anecdote comes from Scholia in Aristophanem 118 (ad Nubes 830) but can also be found in the 4th c. Epiphanius, Ancoratus 103.8 with slightly different phrasing, and an earlier variant occurs in Athenagoras, Legatio 4.1 with turnips rather than lentils.

46 Gilles, Topographia 115 quoting Souda s. v. βασιλική: Also in this location there was the statue of Hercules, as Suidas tells, which was worshipped. Many sacrifices were made to it, and later, it was transported to the Hippodrome, having been brought from the Old Rome under the authority of the Consul Julian [...] to Byzantium among ten statues partly by chariot and partly by ship. If this is the same one that Ibrahim Pasha took from Hungary to Byzantium and put in the Hippodrome, he wandered the world no less when he was dead than when he was alive.

This other statue of Hercules was destroyed by the Latin crusaders in 1204, according to Niketas Choniates⁴⁷, an author who Gilles quoted multiple times in his works⁴⁸. While we cannot determine whether Gilles had read this particular passage of Choniates⁴⁹, even if he did, he could well have preferred to leave this fact unsaid in order for the image to work and be able to offer his humorous take on the extensive travels of Hercules in life and in death. Continuity is his priority, and by subsuming both statues into one, Gilles is able to connect together different periods and iterations of the Hippodrome and its use for displays of power and their symbolism.

In particular, one symbolic meaning connecting the Roman and Ottoman uses of the Hippodrome which the travelers take notice of is that of triumph. When Postel discusses the episode of the grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha setting up the three bronze statues on a marble column at the Hippodrome, as can be seen in **figure 4**, which included the Hercules, he specifically interpreted this gesture as emulating Roman triumphs. The depictions of the Sultan's procession shown in **figures 2** and **3** deliberately evoke Roman triumphal aesthetics. Many elements of the Hippodrome descriptions also summon the idea of *translatio imperii*, tying together empires of the past, whether Egyptian, Greek, or Roman, with the current Ottoman empire. The spoliation of the Sultan to create his own monuments⁵⁰ is expressed in terms that echo that of Constantine building his capital⁵¹. The parallel between the Sultan and Constantine uses cultural frameworks familiar to the reader to imbue modern Constantinople with a sense of its past. The illustration added to Thevet's book in 1556 (**fig. 2**) represents the Sultan in an equestrian pose known to the reader from famous imperial statues, such as that of Justinian which had recently been destroyed⁵². The continuity can act as a reassuring link to the familiar past, and glorifying the Ottoman rule as a continuation from its Roman predecessors reflects positively on the French's current policy of alliance with Süleyman. Yet, there is still room for tension in the text between the past and current state of

the Hippodrome. A certain melancholy for its past glory can be felt, particularly in Gilles:

Nunc vero circus Constantinopolitanus friget omnibus ornamentis spoliatus, nuperque exaedificari coeptus est, quod me spectantem dolore adfecit. Quem augebat Belisarii primum de rege Vandalorum in Hippodromo triumphantis, deinde ob virtutem summam maxime periclitantis recordatio, quam mihi dabat numisma, quod tum forte habebam in manibus. In cuius uno latere scalptus erat Iustinianus Belisarium excipiens triumphantem, in altero Belisarii imago cum hoc elogio: GLORIA ROMANORVM BELISARIVS⁵³.

This passage pivots right after Gilles' discussion of circus factions in the Hippodrome and juxtaposes on one hand the current Hippodrome, empty and in the process of being demolished, with that of its heyday in the sixth century. He uses a material object, a medal commemorating Belisarius' triumph, as a sort of talisman summoning a picture of the past. Whether the medal even existed, as it is currently unattested, matters little for its literary function⁵⁴. With the figure of Belisarius, Gilles is able to evoke two opposite sides of the past Hippodrome; the glory of an imperial triumph combined with the violence of the Nika riots which he subtly evoked with the »great peril« Belisarius encountered⁵⁵. After this intensely emotional passage, Gilles quickly switches to soberly quoting Procopius discussing the various entrances to the Hippodrome⁵⁶. The passages quoted all come from the section of the *Wars* discussing the Nika riots, so without ever mentioning them openly, it is clear what Gilles intends to bring to the reader's mind. With this medal and the Procopius quotations, Gilles did not only contrast the current desolate state of the Hippodrome with its triumphal past, but he also put in parallel its contemporary destruction by the Ottomans (*nuperque exaedificari coeptus est*) with that caused by the circus factions.

47 Choniates, *Historia* 649-650. See Cutler, *Signis* 116-117 and Cutler, *Herakles*.

48 Gilles, *Bosporo* 71-72; *Topographia* 122. 124. 154. 164. 177. 204.

49 We do not know which Vatican manuscript he read Choniates in, but at least Vat.gr.163 featured this part of the text, also known in scholarship as *De Signis*.

50 Gassot, *Discours* 9; Chesneau, *Voyage* 26.

51 Belon, *Observations* 73; Nicolay, *Navigations* 62.

52 Gilles, *Topographia* 105 says the statue was taken down thirty years prior to his visit; he is able to take measurements of some fragments, a leg and the nose from the emperor, and the hoof from his horse. For an overview of the monument's history and its reception across periods and cultures, see Boeck, *Horseman*.

53 Gilles, *Topographia* 94-95. But now the circus of Constantinople is lifeless, stripped of all ornamentation. They recently started demolishing it, a spectacle which struck me with grief. This was aggravated by the memory of Belisarius, who first celebrated his triumph over the Vandal king at the Hippodrome, then suffered the greatest peril because of his extreme virtue, something I was re-

mindful of by a medal I happened by chance to have in hand. On one side of the medal Justinian had been stamped as he welcomed the triumphant Belisarius, and on the other side was a portrait of Belisarius with the caption: *Gloria Romanorum Belisarius*.

54 The Latin word *numisma* can be interpreted as either coin or medal, I preferred the idea of a commemorative medal here, finding it less plausible that an actual coin used for tender would centre Belisarius to this degree, but considering the object is quite likely fictional, the difference between coin and medal matters little.

55 The Nika riots of 532 started as violence between the Blue and Green circus factions before turning into a sedition, contesting the rule of Justinian. Many buildings were destroyed during the riots, including Hagia Sophia, which led to a rebuilding programme by Justinian afterwards. Belisarius fought to defend the imperial palace from rioters, which is likely what Gilles is alluding to. On the topography of the riots, see Westbrook, *Palace*.

56 Gilles, *Topographia* 95; Procopius, *Wars* 1.24.43, 52 and 49.

Populating the Description of the Hippodrome in Gilles' Topographia

The way Gilles used the medal of Belisarius to close his account of the Hippodrome is part of his greater strategy of combining ancient sources and modern anecdotes with his topographical and architectural descriptions to enliven his text. One could also interpret the association of the menagerie and procession mentioned earlier in other textual and visual depictions as part of a similar effort to bring the Hippodrome back to its ancient glory by populating it, in its textual form, with people and animals. This infuses its description with vitality and highlights its function as a place of spectacle and entertainment. This strategy also combines real and artistic depictions of people and animals. In Pierre Gilles, outside of the menagerie, the only live animals featured are the dolphins, leaping out of the waves, as seen from the viewpoint of the Hippodrome⁵⁷. In terms of artistic depictions, there is of course the Serpent Column, but also multiple mentions calling to mind horses: the four bronze horses which were taken to Venice⁵⁸, as well as equestrian statues: of Justinian⁵⁹, but also Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius, all in the imperial gallery⁶⁰, and of chariot-eers⁶¹. Artistic depictions of animals at the Hippodrome were something that was already part of the French *imaginaire* of the Hippodrome's statuary in crusader literature, as in Robert de Clari's list of its bronze animal statues depicting lion, bear, horse, camel and bull⁶². The way the animals of the menagerie were brought closer to the Hippodrome, as mentioned earlier, can also be interpreted in light of that, as a way to bring back the lost animals to the modern Hippodrome.

More often than not, the way Gilles incorporates his quotations from ancient texts that depict the people of the Hippodrome forms parallels with his modern anecdotes. This is the case in his account of the Obelisk of Theodosius, where, after describing the bas-relief on the base of the obelisk which depicts its transport and erection, he quotes Ammianus⁶³ on the method of transporting an obelisk, then ties it to his witnessing of a similar method with the »columna virginea« in his own time:

Hunc Obeliscum posse etiam Byzantios machinatores in alium locum transferre incolumem, adverti ex columna sita in dorso quinti collis Constantinopolitani, quæ parum cedebat Obelisco. Hanc a suis sedibus deiici in terram vidi in hunc fere modum⁶⁴.

Gilles thus combines his description of the work of art, a quotation of an ancient text elaborating on the same theme, and autopsy in a way that creates continuity from past to present and represents the same thing across three different modes of writing, which adds a variegated texture to his own text. With this, he also claims that ancient technical knowledge has not been lost and brings life to his account of the Hippodrome while dealing with a complex technical topic. The other obelisk, the masonry Colossus, also features a striking modern anecdote, following a shorter account of the monument than the other obelisk, consisting of its technical description, the context of its erection, and the epigram written on its base. With the contemporary anecdote, Gilles reinforces the height of the colossus, already highlighted in his description and the epigram which compares it to the colossus of Rhodes:

His Colossus excelsior est Obelisco. In cuius cacumen, {cum} festo quodam die qui celebrabatur ob circumcisionem Principis Boldaniæ⁶⁵, ascendere vidi circulatorum quemdam bene peritum, et descendere incolumem. Quem subsecutus alter imperitior ascendit quidem similiter in cacumen. Sed excelsitas ita præstrinxit eius oculos ut, desperans descensum se quantum contendere potuit, longe a Colosso proiecerit, ne decideret in Colossi crepidines. Itaque rectus cadens, pedibus alte defixis in terram, statim mortuus spectatus est⁶⁶.

The anecdote is both vivid and grotesque, with the acrobat's erect position in death, lodged into the Hippodrome's ground, turning him into a human column. This striking image also ends the account of the obelisk abruptly before moving onto the Hippodrome's column and statues. With this episode, Gilles reminds the reader of the Hippodrome's original use as a circus, a place of spectacle. The Latin word chosen to refer to the acrobat, *circulator*, brings it to mind etymologically, but also through implying that the person's occupation is a public performance, attracting a crowd in a circle around him. This spectacular and somewhat violent side of the Hippodrome is also illustrated by an anecdote later in the text, in the discussion of the Chrysotriklinos, a hall in the Great Palace:

Chrysotriclinii porta occidentalis illa fuit, cuius meminit Leo sextus, cum prædixit Andronico tyrannidem meditantem, per

57 Gilles, Topographia 33.

58 Gilles, Topographia 93.

59 Gilles, Topographia 93; cf. Planudian Anthology 62.

60 Gilles, Topographia 115. cf. Souda s.v. Γρατιανός.

61 Gilles, Topographia 93-94.

62 de Clari, Conquête 91. On Robert de Clari, see Macrides, Constantinople.

63 de Clari, Conquête 85-86; Ammianus, History 17.4.15.

64 de Clari, Conquête 86. There are still Byzantine engineers who could move this obelisk safely to another site, which I concluded from the column situated on the side of the fifth hill of Constantinople, which is only a little smaller than the Obelisk. This, I saw removed from its base and placed on the ground in this way.

65 The prince of Moldavia, Ilyaş Vodă Rareş. The festivity occurred on the 31st of May 1551, cf. Grégoire, Itinéraires 333.

66 Gilles, Topographia 89. This Colossus is taller than the Obelisk. On a holiday celebrating the circumcision of Prince Boldania [sic], I watched as a very experienced entertainer climbed to the top and came back down safely. Following him, a less experienced man similarly climbed to the summit, but the altitude so blinded him that, having no hope of descending no matter how much he exerted himself, he jumped as far away from the Colossus as he could so that he would not land on its base. Thus he was watched as he fell, in a straight line with his feet fixed deep in the ground, dying instantly.

portam Chrysotriclinii occidentalem Andronici caput in Hippodromo abscindendum ad se allatum iri⁶⁷.

The quotation does not tell much to the reader about the Chrysotriklinos, but it brings the promise of spectacular violence and associates the Hippodrome with political intrigue and public execution.

The main use of the Hippodrome as a place of sporting events is brought up through Gilles' discussion of the statues which used to populate it. Some of those are of emperors (e. g. the equestrian statues mentioned above), or eunuchs (specifically a certain Plato who Gilles mentions was burnt alive⁶⁸). But he also evokes the ones depicting its athletes, emphasising their multitude:

Iam vero quid commemorem infinitas statuas pugilum, luctatorum, aurigarum in Hippodromo sitas? Quæ etsi dudum perierunt, tamen recens eorum memoria non perit, retenta plusquam trecentis versibus etiamnum exstantibus, quibus nonnulli aurigæ decantantur. Sed permultorum memoria exstincta est [...]⁶⁹

This hyperbolic statement efficiently repopulates the Hippodrome with a plethora of people who would have usually provided the entertainment. It also allows Gilles to bring up the way time erases the past, in this case the many chariot-eers who found glory in the past. This allows him to transition from this impersonal account of the many into one specific case of a charioteer whose name he preserves:

[...] ut Thomæ aurigæ præstantissimi. Quæ ne funditus pereat me admonet lapidis fragmentum, quod vidi Byzantii cum hac inscriptione, Θωμᾶ ἡνιόχου⁷⁰.

Gilles then includes a large quotation from Cassiodorus about Thomas in a letter from the Ostrogoth king Theodoric to the prefect Faustus⁷¹. Just as with the medal of Belisarius, Gilles uses material remains to ground his account in the physical landscape of contemporary Constantinople. The inscription's fragmentary state fits within his discourse of the Hippodrome in the process of being demolished, allowing Gilles to present himself as the preserver of memory, in line with classical views of historiography. His use of the Cassiodorus' quotation works to complement the scant physical remains, as it tells a

fuller story of Thomas than the small remnant of an inscription only preserving his name and occupation. Whether the stone and inscriptions exist, like with the medal, may not be determined. But its use in Gilles' text, to summon an emblematic figure of the Hippodrome and bring him back to life, can still be appreciated, whether fact or fiction. Of course, the Hippodrome of the time was not as lifeless as Gilles purports it to be, as it hosted various pageants and sporting events, something Gilles himself was aware of with his anecdote of the acrobats⁷².

All in all, the authors of the corpus, and most acutely Gilles, deploy literary strategies intended to make their subject come to life, whether by alluding to contemporary human activity they can associate with the Hippodrome, or by bringing its past glory through quotations and allusions. This purpose of antiquarianism, to bring the dead back to life, was already evident in the works of antiquarians, numismatists and epigraphers of the earlier Renaissance, such as Ciriaco of Ancona⁷³.

Panoramic Views and the Aesthetics of Ruin

One last element of the presentation of the Hippodrome by sixteenth-century French travellers is the hardest one to quantify: empty space. This empty space in the Hippodrome functions on multiple levels, in its literary and artistic representation. First, the empty space can be that of what is missing and thus associated with the state of ruin. This is particularly evident with Gilles both times he discusses the Hippodrome as a ruin⁷⁴. What is missing from the Hippodrome plays as much a part in its presentation as what still remains there. The stripping of the Hippodrome also functions over a long period of time, as elements that are currently missing are mentioned for both the distant, ancient past (missing statues and decorations spoliated at various points of the city's history) and very recent past (the statue of Hercules, but also parts of the structure being demolished right in front of Gilles' eyes).

Yet the empty space may also be a source of appeal. Without it, the Hippodrome would not have the same quality as a vista, as it creates a sense of expansion and open space. This panoramic aspect can also be experienced at various levels, as the Hippodrome can be appreciated as a striking vista from above (from the Sultan's point of view from

67 Gilles, *Topographia* 132, quoting Zonaras 16.14.16-17. Leo V mentions the western door of the Chrysotriclinium when he predicted to Andronicus, who was fomenting a coup, that his head, after being severed in the Hippodrome, was going to be brought to him via the western door of the Chrysotriclinium.

68 Gilles, *Topographia* 93, quoting Souda s. v. Προκόπιος (475/476).

69 Gilles, *Topographia* 93, referring to *Palatine Anthology* 15.41-50; *Planudian Anthology* 335-387. But why should we recall now the countless statues of the boxers, wrestlers and charioteers that once stood in the Hippodrome? Although they have long since perished, their memory has endured up to now, preserved in over 300 verses still extant, which praise some of the charioteers. But the memory of most has been extinguished [...].

70 Gilles, *Topographia* 93, [...] like that most excellent charioteer, Thomas. Lest he disappear completely, I am reminded of his existence by a stone fragment, which I saw in Byzantium with the following inscription: Θωμᾶ ἡνιόχου [Thomas Charioteer].

71 Cassiodorus, *Variae* 3.51. This identification is deemed plausible by Cameron, *Porphyrius* 10.

72 For the Hippodrome as a nexus of urban activity in the early modern period, see Kafescioğlu, *Picturing*.

73 Belozerskaya, *Wake*, although aimed at a general audience, is a good overview of Ciriaco's part in the birth of modern archaeology.

74 Gilles, *Topographia* 94, cited above and 239 where he refers to it in his conclusion as »Hippodromum spoliatum«, the stripped Hippodrome.

the height of his palace) but also offers wide seaside views from its grounds. The appreciation for panoramas was already something present in Byzantine literature, with spiritual connotations⁷⁵, although in the case of our texts, no such spiritual elements may be detected, but rather the traditional dynamics of power as the viewer from above extends control through his gaze onto the landscape viewed.

The space allows the artistic elements of the Hippodrome (the two obelisks, the serpent column, other columns present at the site) to be appreciated with some breathing space, as in an open-air museum. The linearity of these elements arranged along the centreline of the Hippodrome also has an aesthetically pleasing quality, and, as we have seen earlier, it has a processional quality which the texts exploit by linking it to the procession of the Sultan and the listing of the animals present in his menagerie. In fact, the list as a rhetorical and artistic device has a long history⁷⁶ and is something the authors deploy in their descriptions of Constantinople as part of their use of textual economy, whether it is a list of the main features of the Hippodrome, or a list of the antiquities of Constantinople⁷⁷. These lists give a more impressionistic idea of the city, the vagueness a source of evocative power as the necessary scantness of description for each item leaves room for the imagination. From the controlled display of power, the discourse changes to an appreciation of the scattered and fragmented. The pathos present in Gilles' evocation of the Hippodrome, devoid of life, and in the process of being demolished, tinges its appreciation with melancholia. This prefigures romantic ideals

and tropes that much of future travel literature in Greece and the East would adopt in later centuries. In the same city cohabit two ways of reading the remains of the antique built environment, on one hand, structures appropriated, used and renewed by contemporary power, and on the other, those left to merge with and become part of the natural landscape, disintegrating into it.

In sum, these texts offer both a unified and diverse view of sixteenth-century Constantinople and its monuments. They play complex games of mimesis, with each other, with contemporary travellers' accounts, and with ancient sources. All together they offer a national effort to claim Constantinople for France, something which would soon solidify in the next century with Louis XIV claiming descentance from Byzantine emperors, and in such cultural efforts as the so-called *Byzantine du Louvre*, an imprint offering editions of Byzantine historians⁷⁸. The period represented by these texts, Aramon's embassy and its diplomatic effort to court the rising Ottoman power, had its own stakes in representing the glory of the Ottoman capital as a new, New Rome, reflecting in turn positively on the French and their effort to ally with it. In a way, the authors are claiming the lustre of Ottoman Constantinople for themselves, another reason why the embassy produced so many texts in a short period, with each author trying to claim his own stake. Yet, under the brilliant displays of power, there is an awareness of the fragility of human creations and the necessity to preserve the past before it crumbles away.

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Summary / Zusammenfassung / Résumé

The Reception of the Hippodrome in the Writings of French Travellers to Constantinople During the Embassy of Gabriel d'Aramon (1546-1553)

This paper looks at the reception of the Hippodrome in the writings of French travellers to Constantinople during the embassy of Gabriel d'Aramon from 1546 to 1553; Pierre Gilles, Pierre Belon, Jean Chesneau, Guillaume Postel, Jacques Gassot, Nicolas de Nicolay and André Thevet, as well as relevant iconography from the period. The way the Hippodrome was perceived and represented by the French travellers is examined first in their focus on a handful of powerful artistic elements meant to economically convey the monument, then in the trans-historical picture they created by adding the many layers of Constantinople's history, Greek, Roman and Byzantine to its modern presence. A case study for this purpose is the strategy of Pierre Gilles of featuring animals and people from both past and present to bring his account to life. Finally, while all the authors represent the Ottoman power and contemporary Constantinople as the new, New Rome, fitting within the context of the French alliance and this embassy's purpose, their texts also have a melancholic tinge prefiguring the Romantic appreciation of ruins.

Die Rezeption des Hippodroms in den Schriften französischer Reisender nach Konstantinopel während der Gesandtschaft von Gabriel d'Aramon (1546-1553)

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Rezeption des Hippodroms in den Schriften französischer Reisender in Konstantinopel während der Botschaft von Gabriel d'Aramon von 1546 bis 1553, nämlich Pierre Gilles, Pierre Belon, Jean Chesneau, Guillaume Postel, Jacques Gassot, Nicolas de Nicolay und André Thevet, sowie in einigen zeitgenössischen Bildern. Die französischen Reisenden stellten das Hippodrom durch eine Handvoll kraftvoller künstlerischer Elemente dar, die dazu bestimmt waren, mit kleinen Strichen ein impressionistisches Bild des Denkmals zu malen. Sie fügten dem eine transhistorische Dimension hinzu, indem sie die vielen Schichten der griechischen, römischen und byzantinischen Geschichte Konstantinopels seiner modernen Präsenz hinzufügten. Die Strategie von Pierre Gilles, Tiere und Menschen von gestern und heute in Szene zu setzen, um seine Erzählung zum Leben zu erwecken, ist ein exemplarischer Fall. Schließlich stellen alle Autoren die osmanische Macht und das heutige Konstantinopel als das neue »Neue Rom« dar, was im Kontext des französischen Bündnisses und des Ziels dieser Botschaft steht, aber ihre Texte haben auch einen melancholischen Unterton, der die Vorliebe der Romantiker für Ruinen vorwegnimmt.

La réception de l'Hippodrome dans les écrits des voyageurs français à Constantinople au temps de l'ambassade de Gabriel d'Aramon (1546-1553)

Cet article examine la réception de l'Hippodrome dans les écrits des voyageurs français à Constantinople pendant l'ambassade de Gabriel d'Aramon de 1546 à 1553, à savoir Pierre Gilles, Pierre Belon, Jean Chesneau, Guillaume Postel, Jacques Gassot, Nicolas de Nicolay et André Thevet, ainsi que dans certaines images contemporaines. Les voyageurs français ont représenté l'hippodrome à travers une poignée d'éléments artistiques puissants destinés à peindre à petites touches une image impressionniste du monument. Ils ont ajouté à cela une dimension transhistorique en surimposant les nombreuses strates de la Constantinople grecque, romaine et byzantine, à sa présence moderne. La stratégie de Pierre Gilles, qui consiste à mettre en scène des animaux et des personnes d'hier et d'aujourd'hui pour donner vie à son récit, en constitue un cas exemplaire. Enfin, si tous les auteurs représentent la puissance ottomane et la Constantinople contemporaine comme la nouvelle »Nouvelle Rome«, ce qui s'inscrit dans le contexte de l'alliance française et de l'objectif de cette ambassade, leurs textes ont également une teinte mélancolique qui préfigure le goût romantique pour les ruines.