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Les aventures de Télémaque: a fictional “Mirror of princes” in the entourage of the first Mavrokordatos family

François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque* (1699) is one of the last ones in a long and blooming tradition of texts – of which, Thomas Aquinas's *De Regimine Principum* (1265), Erasmus's *Institutio Principis Christiani* (1516), Guillaume Budé's *Institution d'un Prince Chrétien* (1547) are the most well-known examples. They were written in order to educate a prince and refer to his duties as a ruler. Through the potential of the art of printing they became accessible to a wider audience. The original recipients of Fénelon's work were Louis XIV's grandsons, whose education he had undertaken in 1689; having developed a particular relationship with the Duke of Burgundy, the little dauphin, -his contemporaries thought of him as “a small monster”-, who was destined to be the future heir to the French throne. After having been released in the form of a manuscript in the royal court of Versailles, the text reached a printing office in 1699 due to a copyist, without the writer's consent. At least, this is what Fénelon claimed, up to his death in 1715, perhaps in an effort to make light of the existing dissatisfaction within the royal court, this piece work met with great editorial and translation success, immediately among commoners as well as young princes and future rulers (of Prussia, of Sweden and of the Netherlands), which was largely due to the multifaceted renewal of the “Mirror of princes” literary genre.

The French theologian, educator and writer chose to present his regulatory proposal to the future ruler in the form of a modern literary genre, the novel, which brought him to the centre of the dispute between the Ancient and the Modern ones, with the latter ones defending him, saying that he had not written a novel but a poem in the form of a prose. Through Mythology and Archaeology, the Mentor –that is goddess Athena, as is revealed in the end of the narration- incarnation of Divine Providence, gives lessons of ethics (morality), politics, philanthropy, social justice, and virtuous Christian behavior. The monarchy, as the divine right of a king, in the court of “*le roi Soleil*” can, under no circumstances, be doubted. However, there is room for criticism against the ruler's vanity or selfishness. It is the moral priority of the people and the defense of His Majesty's subjects rights that are projected in order to stress that the ruler's only objective is to provide His services to His people. The King's power should be based on a law that submits to the human will, a law that is divine and unchanged, one that dictates the monarch's actions and renders His people happy.

“Mirrors of princes” are educative and consequential texts that adopted the abstract nature of political or philosophical essays. *Les aventures de Télémaque* renewed the genre not only by being written in the form of a fictional mythological narrative, but also, by putting the pedagogical relation between a Mentor-teacher and a prince Telemachus-student in the center, as an element that ensures the potential of teaching and pedagogics. The Pedagogics of persuasion, of freedom, of moderation, which relies on the ethics of simplicity and learning against any form of authoritarianism. The pair Mentor-Telemachus indicates that learning takes place

through direct experience and personal maturity. In reality, Telemachus and his Mentor's circumnavigation of the Mediterranean constitutes a tour of a series of state regimes, which rely on different forms of economy (trade, agriculture, animal farming). This brings the young hero in direct contact with the way of thinking and the actions of different rulers. The utopian society of Salento, where there are no economic inequalities and all economic terms are regulated by the state, is quite interesting. In Salento, the Mentor founds a new social and political regime. He realizes a census of the population and the land, of the goods, the trade and the navy. He puts the responsibility to decide about any economic matter on the state. The inhabitants have the right to freely trade with foreigners, under the strict supervision of certain officials. Nothing is exempt from the regulations and the control of the state. The Mentor determines all the details of everyday life, he forbids whatever promotes luxury and indolence, he bans golden and silver decorations, he forbids sophisticated nutrition. The arts and all professions are regulated by the state. However, there are inequalities among the different social classes: There are seven social classes, which are distinguished by the color of the clothing they wear and not by the quality of the clothing.

The novel is woven on a rich intertextual canvas. Besides *Odyssey* of which the nomenclature directly makes us think, there are more references to Virgil's *Aeneid*, while the educational trip bears similarities to Xenophon's *Cyrus Paedea*. The platonic utopia is –twice- tractable behind Salento and isolated Vetica. The sophological tradition of the books of the Old Testament, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, Proverbs, Solomon, Psalms, the Stoics and Seneca have an undeniable contribution to the synthesis of this piece of work.

Les aventures de Télémaque has been documented to have been read in the entourage of Nikolaos Mavrokordatos, ruler of Moldavia and Wallachia. Besides the letter reference of Skarlatos's son (around 1720) concerning the presence of this piece of work in the renowned library and the positive comment that accompanies it, we know that Nikolaos's doctor and secretary, who was also tutor of his other son the future ruler Konstantinos, Nikolaos Prokopiou Pamperis translated all this long novel, which is still preserved today in the form of a 19th century manuscript.

The attention paid to a text of French literature which had been written *ad usum delphini*, in order to initiate the heir of the French throne into his future duties, can be interpreted in multiple ways, as concerns the entourage of the first Phanariot family that became rulers of Wallachia and Moldavia. First of all it could easily be included in the distinct «French turn», to which the scholars of the Republic of Letters, with whom there was systematic letter communication. In the library one could find more or less tested texts of French literature: Montaigne's *Essais*, texts belonging to the libertins and to French classicism (Guy Patin, and also La Fontaine), modern literary genres, theater as well as novels (Furetière's *Roman Bourgeois*, Marivaux, Molière, Boileau). The famous curiosity which emerged in the entourage of the first Mavrokordatos family, to which we have been used to attributing the coming of everything new or modern together with studiousness and language learning, was stimulated by a particular group of texts which appeared in the middle of the 17th century that came from the French literature of the aristocracy: They are poems and letters that combine the pleasures and joy of life with didacticism in a lighthearted way; the resounding presence of texts referring to private aspects of the

French court of the roi Soleil is obvious (e.g. the sensationalist chronicle *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules* (1659) by Bussy de Rabutin that narrates the adventures of the ladies of the court during the youth of Louis XIV, and many more). The glamour of the French court at the time could explain the curiosity about the form and the content of the prince's education, so much so, that the political education of the monarchy was identified with one person only, that of the monarch. For relevant reasons, obviously, the owners of the library had ensured the possession of a title such as Bossuet's *Histoire Universelle* (1710), written ad usum delphini (1681) for Fénelon's students' father. It began with the following phrase: "History may be useless to the other people, we should, however, read it to the prince". We should also add that there was interest in the newest pedagogical theories, as we can understand from the presence of John Locke's French translation of *Éducation d'enfants* (1721).

Moreover, *Les aventures de Télémaque* is an educational piece of work which belongs to the literary genre of the novel: the Greeks were the first to use the word «ρομάντσο» [romanzo] thanks to Skarlatos's entourage. Although it is the narrative-novel parameter that dominates it, an important part of the text consists of axiomatic aphoristic phrases, that give the reader the possibility to read it in a "parathematic" way. In this way, it is in accordance with the admonishing and ethological tradition of the short forms that are characteristic of the aphorism and the axiom that characterizes Nikolaos's regulatory texts *Περί των Καθηκόντων, Νουθεσίαι του αιιδίμου αυθέντου Νικολάου βοεβόδα προς τον υιόν αυτού Κωνσταντίνον βοεβόδα αυθέντην, Εγχειρίδιον εν ω γνώμαι και φροντίσματα περί ήθη και πολιτείαν* and less *Φιλοθέου πάρεργα*, and even more prestigious pieces of works such as La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* and Gracián's *El oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*. Thanks to the generalizing character of the moral lessons, which is achieved through the vagueness of the apophthegmatic words –"whoever", "man"- based on an educational action achieved through fictional persons and on the mythological world of the Greek antiquity, the education of the French prince was an instance of education not only for the future prince but also for every human being.

The translation of *Tychai Telemachou* took place under the orders of His Highness, the Wisest, Lord and Prince of Hungro-wallachia and Moldo-wallachia Mr Ioannis Nikolaos Alexandros Voevodas Mavrokordatos, as one can see in the title page of the manuscript. It shows the unconditional approval of the prince and furthermore, his will to allow it to penetrate in the narrow or wider entourage of his subjects. The valid signature of the secretary and mediator in his communication with the Republic of Letters, who was also the educator of the heir to the throne, is a guarantee for the "consistent" transfusion of the text in the target language both ideologically and as a literary genre, and it allows its inclusion in the phanariot norm. Considering that the "christian policies" that Skarlatos Mavrokordatos traced in this piece of work in his short comment on it, include the virtues of piety, repentance and humility, which together with bravery, prudence and justice constitute the fundamental obligations of the rational being in political society according to the code of conduct presented in *Περί Καθηκόντων* and we should integrate it in the phanariot domain as part of the normative knowledge. To be more precise, as a western version of the fictional "mirror of princes" as opposed to *Στεφανίτης και Ιχνηλάτης*, which is of the same literary genre though stemming from oriental tradition. It too was translated from Ancient to Modern Greek by Nikolaos Prokopiou Pamperis and survives as a manuscript to this day, without ever having being published.

Selected bibliography

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