Split, 27 August 2021: Welcome

Dear and indefatigable organizers,

Dear participants, friends and colleagues,

Dobrodošli i ugodan dan !

Chers collègues des régions francophones,

N’oubliez jamais que notre Euroclassica est une association bilingue! Pour raisons pratiques, je parlerai sûrtout en anglais (comme feront tous les conférenciers), mais, s.v.p. n’hésitez pas d’utiliser le français dans les discussions, ou pendant l’Assemblée Générale. Entre amis, on se comprend toujours!

In the Catholic tradition of our host country Croatia, I’d like to start this meeting with a small reflection on the triptych Faith, Hope, and Love.

**Faith**: Of course, we all believe in ‘classics’. But as often (when has it not since the Industrial Revolution?) this faith has been tested, particularly in the last years, with some scholars as it were cutting off the branch on which they are sitting themselves. *Nolite timere*! In fact, such discussions time and again point to the relevance of the ancient world. Classical reception studies point to how we should not only study the **values** that we ascribe to ancient cultures, but also the **infrastructure** that makes such ascriptions possible – a permanent dialogue and interaction that is between the present and the ancient past (cf. Marcus Aurelius). Other scholars of reception studies elaborated on the concept of *cura* (“care”): rather than merely conservating objects and texts from the past, we should think of ourselves as curators of this past, dealing with an audience as diverse as the Black Lives Matters movement or a group of retired alumni of a gymnasium practising classics in their ‘free time’.

**Hope**: This conference comes at a time when teachers are subtlely encouraged or blattantly intimidated not to organise the following student trip (“one should still be careful”) and conferences for the first term are again (!) being cancelled and reshaped into clean and sterile virtual meetings. As humanists, we trust in mankind, and we firmly resist such cancel culture.

**Love**: Let this be a conference full of love and passion, not only for our shared object of studies, but also because of warm collegiallity and so much needed real human exchange!

Warm thanks again to our organizers, and let’s start for three days, full of faith, hope and love, indeed!

Mostar, 28 August 2021

Dear Bosnian hosts,

It is a true honour for us to be welcomed in Mostar, and to have Bosnia-Herzegovina not only as a hosting country, but also as a future new member state of our Euroclassica.

Speaking about Bosnia and the classics tradition brings me to somewhat unknown ground, and I am glad that the distinguished speakers from today have explained the matter to you. As a classicist and ancient historian with a keen interest for later periods and the Balkans (I have taught a course on Byzantine history too), Mostar is in my mind as a beautiful and welcoming place during a visit back in 2014. From that same year, I cherish the memories of my reading of *Na Drini* *ćuprija* by Ivo Andrić, one of the most beautiful novels I have ever read. And for sure, I have memories of watching the frightful news in the nineties of the last century, with events that shocked everyone with a heart for Europe, or rather everyone with empathy for fellow human beings and essential human rights.

Let me just complete these words of thanks saying with what I hope to be a hopeful and stimulating thought. Of all countries in Europe, Bosnia-Herzegovina is the only one to experience a unique mix of Catholic, Orthodox and Islamic traditions and religions. Between these cultures and traditions, an intense cross-fertilisation has always taken place. And all have their origin in and further elaborate on ancient Graeco-Roman civilisation. Many islamic cities from the Middle Ages have these little craftsmen buildings with one opening towards the streets, as you find it in ancient cities. Bathhouses were as ancient *thermae*, Koranic schools and guest houses often still have a division which ressembles the Roman atrium and impluvium. It would take an entire conference and many books to elaborate on the influence of, say, ancient philosophy and poetry on Islamic, Catholic (Latin West) and Orthodox (Greek East) thoughts and writings in their wide diversity. In other words: people whom we not seldom think of as ‘strangers’ or even ‘opponents’ in fact share a common past with us. I firmly believe that such rich and common culture heritage has the potential to unite and bring together people, rather than to divide them.

In other words: the melting pot that constituted the ancient world and the classical civilization is in a way reflected in present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina. May this be a message of hope for a future in which we, as classicists, should firmly trust – with faith, hope and love, indeed!

[For inspiring thoughts on the topics expressed here, see M. De Pourcq, “De wereld staat in brand – wat met de oudheid?” in *Kleio* 50, 3-4 (2021) 125-132 and D. Rijser, “Naar een nieuw, verruimd gymnasium”, in *Kleio* 50, 3-4 (2021) 174-178].