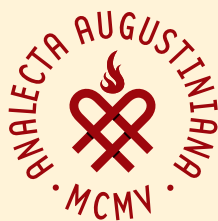


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La rivista, nata nel 1905 come organo ufficiale di informazione e cultura della curia generalizia dell'Ordine dei Frati Eremitani di Sant'Agostino, a partire dalla nascita degli *Acta Ordinis Eremitarum Sancti Augustini* nel 1956 – denominati in seguito *Acta Ordinis Eremitarum Sancti Augustini. Commentarium Officiale* (vol. V,1) e dal 1963 *Acta Ordinis Sancti Augustini. Commentarium Officiale* (vol. VIII, n. 1) – è rimasta una rivista di carattere esclusivamente culturale, dedicata in particolare alla pubblicazioni di fonti e studi sulla storia dell'ordine agostiniano, sulla vita e le opere dei suoi membri più illustri e sul pensiero dei suoi dottori.

The journal began in 1905 as the official means for information and culture about the Order of Hermit Brothers of Saint Augustine. As from the year 1956, when the *Acta Ordinis Eremitarum Sancti Augustini* was founded – later re-named *Acta Ordinis Eremitarum Sancti Augustini. Commentarium Officiale* (vol. V,1) and from 1963 *Acta Ordinis Sancti Augustini. Commentarium Officiale* (vol. VIII, n.1) – it is considered as an exclusively cultural journal, dedicated in particular way to the history of the Augustinian Order, and to the study of the life and works of its illustrious members and the thought of its doctors.

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Typical and Unique: John Capgrave's *The Solace of Pilgrimes* Reconsidered

DANIELA GIOSUÈ

Analecta Augustiniana
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ABSTRACT

Since his re-emergence in the nineteenth century, and although the general underestimation of fifteenth-century literature may now be viewed as a thing of the past, the Augustinian friar John Capgrave (1393-1464) remained, until recently, a disregarded, mischaracterised and, in some cases, harshly criticised author. Attention on him has so far been limited to the efforts of a handful of scholars, and dedicated studies of his surviving works and the manuscripts that contain them remain relatively few. Recent scholarship has effectively shown that many of the criticisms traditionally aimed at him are grounded in approaches to his writings that fail to recognise the context that produced them. As a result, his rehabilitation is now well underway.

*Capgrave's guide to the antiquities and churches of Rome, with the suggestive title of *The Solace of Pilgrimes*, represents an exception within the author's extensive production of biblical commentaries, theological treatises, and historical and hagiographical works. Although it has been increasingly quoted in articles and books in the last few decades, apart from a few studies, it did not yet receive the degree of scholarly attention it would deserve. This essay aims to shed new light on the significance and historical value of the *Solace*, whilst also offering some insights into the current state of scholarship on this fascinating work and its author.*

Introduction*

Theologian, historian, chronicler, hagiographer and biographer, the Augustinian friar John Capgrave (1393–1464) held prominent positions in the Augustinian Order. He was prior of the friary of Bishop’s Lynn (now King’s Lynn) from about 1446 until his death, and was twice elected Prior Provincial of the Order in England, remaining in office from 1453 to 1457¹.

Since his re-emergence in the nineteenth century, and although the general underestimation of fifteenth-century literature may now be viewed as a thing of the past, Capgrave has remained until recently a disregarded, mischaracterised and, in some cases, harshly criticised

* The occasion and momentum for the writing of this article was given to me by my participation in the 2016–2018 «Pilgrim Libraries» international research network project supported by the Leverhulme Trust’s International Network grant scheme. For details about the network, see *Pilgrim Libraries: Books and Reading on the Medieval Routes to Rome and Jerusalem*, at www.bbk.ac.uk/pilgrimlibraries/. I wish to express my thanks to Anthony Bale, Kathryne Beebe, Matthew Coneys, Peter J. Lucas, Antonella Mazzon, Massimo Miglio, Anna Modigliani, and Sebastian Sobiecki. I am deeply grateful to all of them for many and different reasons, which would be too long to declare. My grateful thanks also to the Editors and the anonymous readers for *Analecta Augustiniana*.

¹ Many aspects and periods of Capgrave’s life remain a matter of speculation, and his biography has been only fragmentarily reconstructed on the basis of limited information contained in his extant works and a few documents from the Augustinian archives. Only the essential and more recent bibliography will be cited here. For biographical discussion of Capgrave see, among others, J.C. FREDEMAN, «The Life of John Capgrave, O.E.S.A (1393–1464)», *Augustiniana*, 29 (1979), 197–237; M.C. SEYMOUR, *John Capgrave*, in *Authors of the Middle Ages*, III/7–11, M.C. SEYMOUR *et alii*, ed., Aldershot 1996 (English Writers of the Late Middle Ages), 195–256; P.J. LUCAS, *From Author to Audience: John Capgrave and Medieval Publication*, Dublin 1997, 7–12; K.A. WINSTEAD, *John Capgrave’s Fifteenth Century*, Philadelphia 2007, 1–17. For exhaustive bibliographies see both LUCAS, *Author to Audience*, and WINSTEAD, *Fifteenth Century*. A great part of Lucas’ many essays on Capgrave and his works, originally published between the late 1960s and the 1990s, are included in *Author to Audience*; unless otherwise stated, further citations are from here.

author. Attention on him has so far been limited to the efforts of a handful of scholars, and dedicated studies of his surviving works and the manuscripts that contain them remain relatively few in number². Further discussion below will demonstrate that his rehabilitation is anyhow well underway. Recent scholarship has indeed shown that many of the criticisms traditionally aimed at him are grounded in approaches to his writings that fail fully to recognise the context in which they were produced. An effective contribution both in the study of Capgrave generally, as well as in redressing his reputation, has been made especially by Peter J. Lucas and Karen Winstead. Winstead rightly observes that the reason Capgrave's works appear so «pious, didactic, and dull»³ lies mainly, if not exclusively, in the fact that they are perfectly in keeping with the tradition of their time⁴. In his illuminating essay *Dullness and the Fifteenth Century*, David Lawton proposes a valuable reflection on the use of terms such as «dull», «conventional» and «traditional» with reference to fifteenth-century English writing, persuasively arguing that «the dullness of the fifteenth century is a willed, self-conscious and ostensible dullness»⁵. Resonating with Winstead's and Lawton's ideas, more recent studies by Joni Henry and Rory G. Critten have given conclusive proofs that most of the criticisms of Capgrave are unsubstantiated⁶.

Although in the last few decades it has been increasingly quoted in articles and books, and apart from a few exceptions, similarly to what has happened with the author, Capgrave's guide to the antiquities and churches of Rome, suggestively entitled *The Solace of Pilgrimes*, did not

² Only twelve of the forty-three works attributed to Capgrave have come down to us. A list of the works with details of their manuscripts and editions can be found, among others, in LUCAS, *Author to Audience*, 307, 309–314.

³ WINSTEAD, *Fifteenth Century*, 162.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xi–xii, 161–162. See also further discussion below.

⁵ D. LAWTON, «Dullness and the Fifteenth Century», *English Literary History*, 54/4 (1987), 761–799: 791. Lawton effectively explains that in an era of profound social, political and religious uncertainty, the choice of conventional, traditional writing allowed authors to fulfil their social duty as guides and advisers to the powerful, while also placing them in a better position to give voice to uncomfortable opinions and truths in defence of peace, religion and the common good. Moreover, their use of vernacular and of a plain style ensured that they could be understood also by literate people of lower social standing, with whom they identified by hiding themselves behind a semblance of commonplace and dullness. On Capgrave's use of vernacular and of a simple style see further discussion below.

⁶ J. HENRY, «Capgrave's Dedications: Reassessing an English Flunkey», *Studies in Philology*, 110/4 (2013), 731–761; R.G. CRITTEN, «The King's Historiographer: John Capgrave, Austin Identity, and the Pursuit of Royal Patronage», *Viator*, 47 (2015), 277–300.

yet receive the degree of scholarly attention it would actually deserve⁷. The aim of this essay is to shed new light on the significance and historical value of the *Solace*, whilst also offering some insights into the current state of scholarship on this work and its author⁸.

Written after Capgrave's visit to the city about 1450, the *Solace* provides no details regarding his itinerary to and from Rome, the motivations, timing and duration of his visit, or where he lodged⁹. Whilst two references within the text indicate with a degree of certainty that he visited Rome and wrote the *Solace* after April 1447 and before July 1452¹⁰, his presence there can be more precisely dated on the basis of a reference in the dedicatory letter to William Grey (or Gray) (c. 1414–1478), bishop of Ely, of his *Commentarius in Actus Apostolorum* (c.

⁷ JOHN CAPGRAVE, *Ye Solace of Pilgrimes: A Description of Rome, circa A.D. 1450*, C.A. MILLS and H.M. BANNISTER, ed., London 1911. All citations and references are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the text; Middle English spellings þ, 3, and «u» for «v» have been normalized throughout, everything else remains unchanged. For an Italian translation, see JOHN CAPGRAVE, *Ye Solace of Pilgrimes. Una guida di Roma per i pellegrini del Quattrocento*, translated by D. GIOSUÈ, Roma 1995. For further details on the *Solace* see *Codice topografico della città di Roma*, R. VALENTINI and G. ZUCCHETTI, ed., IV, Roma 1953, 325–349; J. GROSSI JR., «John Capgrave's "Smal Pypying": Marveling at Rome in *Ye Solace of Pilgrimes*», *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 30 (2004), 55–83; LUCAS, *An Englishman in Rome: Capgrave's 1450-Jubilee Guide*, *The Solace of Pilgrimes*, in *Studies in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Texts in Honour of John Scattergood*, A.M. D'ARCY and A.J. FLETCHER, ed., Dublin 2005, 201–217; D. GIOSUÈ, «L'immagine di Roma tra mito e realtà. Il *Solace of Pilgrimes* di John Capgrave», *Studi Romani*, 40 (1992), 12–22; EAD., *John Capgrave e Margery Kempe a Roma. Immagini della città a confronto, in Libri di viaggio, libri in viaggio. Studi in onore di Vincenzo De Caprio*, S. PIFFERI and C. CAPITONI, ed., Viterbo 2012, 195–210; C. NARDELLA, «La Roma dei visitatori colti: dalla mentalità umanistica di maestro Gregorio (XII–XIII sec.) a quella medioevale di John Capgrave (XV sec.)», *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria*, 119 (1996), 49–64.

⁸ This article had already been accepted for publication, when I received from Prof. Peter J. Lucas the very welcome news of the forthcoming publication of his new edition of the *Solace*. I am honoured and pleased to be able to provide the details of Prof. Lucas' work here: JOHN CAPGRAVE, *Rome 1450. Capgrave's Jubilee Guide: The Solace of Pilgrimes*, edited and translated by P.J. LUCAS, Turnhout 2021 (*Textes Vernaculaires du Moyen Âge* 28).

⁹ For a detailed analysis and valuable hypotheses see LUCAS, *Englishman*.

¹⁰ The first reference concerns the recent death of Henry Beaufort (1377–1447), Bishop of Winchester and Cardinal of Sant'Eusebio, on 11th April 1447 (133); the second concerns John Kempe (c. 1380–1454), who on 21st July 1452 became Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Bishop of Santa Rufina. In the chapter in which he describes the church of Santa Balbina, Capgrave refers to Kempe as still Archbishop of York and Cardinal of this church (107). On Henry Beaufort and John Kempe see R. FOLKESTONE WILLIAMS, *Lives of the English Cardinals*, II, London 1868, 70–109, 110–123. The dating is further confirmed by references to Cardinal Prospero Colonna (c. 1410–1463) (40) and, most crucially, to Pope Nicholas V (1447–1454) (123).

1458)¹¹. Grey was a well-known humanist and book collector whom Henry VI had appointed as his proctor at the Roman *curia* in 1449. In his dedication Capgrave expresses his gratitude to Grey for having visited him while he was lying ill in Rome. Based on this information, the date of his presence in Rome in or after 1449 can confidently be taken into serious consideration¹². Moreover, contact with Grey supports Jane Cowan Fredeman's hypothesis that Capgrave might have been in Rome in an official capacity as English delegate for the General Chapter of the Augustinian Order held there in 1449¹³.

Preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 423, the *Solace* is the last of five works bound together by order of Sir Thomas Bodley (1545-1613), who himself identified the first page of the guide with the generic title *Stations of Rome*¹⁴. It contains the legends of the origins of Rome, a description of its ancient monuments and a series of fanciful narratives on them, and a list of its rulers. This is followed by accurate descriptions of the churches, accompanied by extremely detailed lists of the relics they preserved and the indulgences that could be earned by their visitors, and by the stories of their dedicatee saints and martyrs and of the miracles that took place there.

Though not preceded by a formal dedication, the prologue contains words of thanks for Capgrave's «special mayster» Sir Thomas Tuddenham (1399-1461), Lord of the Manor of Oxburgh, near Lynn, «undyр whos proteccioun [his] pylgrimage was specially sped» (1). Neither an aristocrat nor a high ecclesiastical dignitary like Capgrave's other dedicatees, Tuddenham was nevertheless a powerful figure in Norfolk. Though he held important offices, he is mostly remembered for having

¹¹ The text of the dedicatory letter to bishop Grey is available in JOHN CAPGRAVE, *Liber de Illustribus Henricis*, F.C. HINGESTON, ed., London 1858, 221. See also LUCAS, *Englishman*, 203-204.

¹² FREDEMAN, *Life*, 232-233; LUCAS, *Author to Audience*, 11, 15-16, 18, 22-23; ID., *Englishman*, 202-204; WINSTEAD, *Fifteenth Century*, 11-12; HENRY, *Capgrave's Dedications*, 749-751. See further discussion below.

¹³ FREDEMAN, *Life*, 232.

¹⁴ The manuscript, which is unfortunately incomplete, is a very accurate copy on parchment of high quality, bearing coloured initials and marginal flourishes. Based on meticulous examinations of all the known extant manuscripts containing Capgrave's works, Lucas offers compelling evidence that the author either produced the majority of the manuscripts of his works himself, or closely supervised their production, probably in the scriptorium at Lynn friary. More importantly, he argues that the manuscript of the *Solace* was written and also corrected by Capgrave. Although scholars remain in disagreement, it would be pointless to attempt to summarise in detail every single study dealing with this matter. For full discussion see LUCAS, *Author to Audience*, 8, 11, 15, 19, 35, 37-38, 45-48, 80, 81, 94-97, 203, 282.

been a blackmailer and an extortionist – the Pastons were among his victims – who was eventually executed for high treason in 1461. Tuddenham was buried in the Augustinian convent in London, indicating that his merits as benefactor of the Order were far greater than simply having funded the author's visit to Rome¹⁵. This dedication provides convincing evidence that, contrary to what has too often been asserted, Capgrave was deeply engaged both socially and politically. Indeed, he knew very well how to consistently fulfil his duties as the head of a religious house and his mission as a clergyman, whilst relating to powerful people to safeguard his Order's interests¹⁶. If his lengthy tenure as prior of the Lynn friary and his double election to the role of Prior Provincial of the Order in England, as well as the dedications of his other extant works, were not sufficient to show that he was anything but a pious and isolated scholar, his open contact with such a man certainly does.

The description of Rome: an ancient textual tradition

In terms of literary genre, *The Solace of Pilgrimes* represents an exception within Capgrave's extensive production of biblical commentaries, theological treatises, and historical and hagiographical works. Drawing on the deeply rooted authorial strategy of compilation, he carefully assembled, edited and improved a range of earlier texts that were part of a large family of writings containing descriptions of Rome. As discussed further on, he also included quotations from a variety of other texts. The result of this meticulous reorganisation and reworking of the huge amount of source material that flowed into the *Solace* is a guide that encompasses the textual tradition of an entire millennium.

In order to better focus on the text's relationship with established literary traditions concerning Rome, before going into more detail with the analysis of the content and of the main aspects of the work, it is appropriate to spend a few words on the origins of the genre. Its earliest examples are the seventh-century *Itineraries*, handed down by

¹⁵ On Tuddenham see CAPGRAVE, *Solace*, 1, n. 2; FREDEMAN, *Life*, 220, 231–232; LUCAS, *Author to Audience*, 10, 16, 74, 239, 271–272; ID., *Englishman*, 201–202; WINSTEAD, *Fifteenth Century*, 14–15; HENRY, *Capgrave's Dedications*, 755; CRITTEN, *The King's Historiographer*, 290–291.

¹⁶ In line with Henry's views concerning Capgrave's dedicatory practices, Critten keenly argues that a considerable part of Capgrave's public activity and literary output were devoted to promoting and enhancing the power and the prestige of the Augustinian Order. See HENRY, *Capgrave's Dedications*; CRITTEN, *The King's Historiographer*, 295.

later manuscripts and based on the fourth-century *Regionaries*, lists of places without any description that survive in the texts of the *Notitia urbis Romae regionum XIII* and the *Curiosum urbis Romae regionum XII-II*¹⁷. The first known itinerary, containing a list of suburban churches and catacombs that could be found on the roads departing from the city, is the *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae*¹⁸. Another example is the *De locis sanctis martyrum quae sunt foris civitatis Romae*, which is accompanied by an appendix entitled *Istae vero ecclesiae intus Romae habentur*¹⁹. Later texts, such as the eighth-century *Einsiedeln Itinerary*, the tenth-century itinerary of Archbishop Sigeric, and the twelfth-century diary of Nikulas of Munkathvera, became progressively richer in detail²⁰. All this and much other material from later texts was interlaced over time with collections of inscriptions, oral traditions, fanciful tales spread by pilgrims, and legends on the city and its pagan monuments, forming the basis for the extremely rich and varied textual tradition of the *Mirabilia urbis Romae*, on which the first part of the *Solace* mainly depends²¹. The *Itineraries* are a clear reflection of the first period of Rome's conversion from a pagan to a Christian city, between the fourth and eighth centu-

¹⁷ *Codice topografico*, I, Roma 1940, 63–192.

¹⁸ *Codice topografico*, II, Roma 1942, 67–99.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 101–131.

²⁰ On the *Einsiedeln Itinerary* see *ibid.*, 155–207; see also V. ORTENBERG, «Archbishop Sigeric's Journey to Rome in 990», *Anglo-Saxon England*, 19 (1990), 197–246; F. PEABODY MAGOUN, «The Rome of Two Northern Pilgrims: Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury and Abbot Nikolas of Munkathverá», *Harvard Theological Review*, 33/4 (1940), 267–289; *Id.*, «The Pilgrim-Diary of Nikulas of Munkathvera: The Road to Rome», *Medieval Studies*, 6 (1944), 314–354; F.D. RASCHELLÀ, «Itinerari italiani in una miscellanea geografica islandese del XII secolo», *Filologia germanica*, 28–29 (1985–1986), 541–584; *Id.*, *Devozione cristiana e leggenda germanica nell'itinerarium dell'abate Nicola di Munkathverá*, in *L'immaginario nelle letterature germaniche del medioevo*, A. CIPOLLA, ed., Milano 1995, 257–273.

²¹ The earliest known redaction of the *Mirabilia* survives in a manuscript miscellany, the *Liber politicus* of Benedetto Canonico, containing a number of administrative and judicial acts of the papal curia as well as texts of a liturgical and topographical nature. The manuscript is dedicated to Cardinal Guido of Città di Castello (d. 1144), who was elected Pope Celestine II in 1143; it can therefore be dated to before that year. One of the texts included in the *Liber politicus* is the *Ordo romanus*, composed by Benedetto with the aim of reforming the old liturgical celebrations contained in the *Ordo romanus antiquus*, produced in the mid-tenth century. In this text Benedetto describes with archaeological expertise and profound erudition all the monuments to be found along the processional itineraries. The strong similarities between the *Ordo romanus* and the *Mirabilia*, including many coincidences in the identification of monuments, have led scholars to hypothesise that Benedetto himself was the author of the latter text. See *Mirabilia Urbis Romae, The Marvels of Rome, or, a Picture of the Golden City*, edited and translated by F.M. NICHOLS, London 1889; *Codice topografico*, III, Roma 1946, 3–65.

ries. As these early texts prove, until the beginning of the seventh century the places of worship visited by pilgrims were mainly suburban, and the focus was mainly on the catacombs; churches within the city are indeed listed separately from those outside the walls. This conversion was achieved through a complex and gradual dialectical process of ideological rejection of pagan values and appropriation and redefinition of the material legacy of the pagan world, justified by the logic of Christian ideology. While pagan temples and monuments within the walls were gradually converted into places of Christian worship, the relics of the martyrs were moved from the catacombs to the city and those of Christ's passion were transferred from Jerusalem to Rome. As the Arab expansion made the Holy Land inaccessible, Rome effectively became the new Jerusalem and the centre of Christianity. This process, clearly outlined in the *Mirabilia* and evocatively described in many pages of the *Solace*, has been carefully analysed by Jennifer Summit, among others²². The situation that followed contributed to the extraordinary fortune – which grew further with the institution of the Holy Years – of a family of related texts known by the generic title of *Indulgentiae ecclesiarum urbis Romae*. These guides to the churches, the indulgences that could be earned by visiting them, and the relics they preserved, of which *The Stations of Rome* is a significant yet peculiar example²³, over time became associated with vernacular translations of the *Mirabilia*. As the structure and subject matter of the *Solace* shows, the material collected in them forms the basis for the second and the third parts of the guide²⁴.

Capgrave's «small pypping» more in-depth

Turning now to a more detailed analysis, it must be observed that the first part of the *Solace* draws mainly on the two opening sections of a text which has not yet been mentioned, the *Graphia aureae urbis*

²² See J. SUMMIT, «Topography as Historiography: Petrarch, Chaucer, and the Making of Medieval Rome», *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 30/2 (2000), 211–246. See further discussion below.

²³ The latest edition of *The Stations of Rome* is available in *Medieval English Travel: A Critical Anthology*, A. BALE and S. SOBECKI, ed., Oxford 2018, 232–261.

²⁴ For a more detailed discussion and bibliography on medieval guides to Rome see M. CONEYS, «Pilgrimage, Print, and Performance: Giuliano Dati's Roman Cantari», *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 51/1 (2021), 79–104.

*Romae*²⁵. As in the *Graphia*, an overview of the origins of Rome, from the arrival of Noah in Italy to the foundation of the city, is followed by the *Mirabilia*, with the description of the ancient monuments and the legends related to them. A list of rulers of Rome from Romulus to Frederick II substitutes the content of the third part of the *Graphia*. The second and the third parts of the *Solace* mainly depend, as anticipated earlier, on books of indulgences and relics, which the author brilliantly enriched and harmonised with details from martyrologies and hagiographies and, as discussed further on, with clear echoes of the medieval stage. The resulting text offers an exhaustive guide to the seven principal churches and the Lenten stations, as well as other churches not included in the Lenten itinerary. In addition to this wealth of material and to the Scriptures, Capgrave makes substantial use of around thirty different sources and authors²⁶. Appearing from the start very careful in expressing his views, he cautiously appeals to the authority of the Scriptures and of famous works. Often quoting from them, he engages in long digressions, painstakingly supporting his opinions through his erudition, his theological expertise, and a large use of the methods of biblical exegesis, in which he was highly adept. He also shows to be well aware that his readers' attention is put to a hard test by a stream of information, quotations, and continuous digressions for observations, explanations, reasonings and reflections. Therefore, skilfully amalgamating all this with the fixed patterns of his sources, with a keen eye on his readers' interests and concerns, and in an effort to entertain them and capture and retain their attention, he constantly engages in a relaxed dialogue with them making frequent use of internal cross-references. The defence of his authorial authority begins in the prologue, where he describes to «all men of [his] nacoun that schal rede [his] book» how he will proceed. Having named famous individuals such as «pictagoras, [...] plato, [...] titus livius, [...] seynt jerom, [...] marcus paulus, [...] jon maundevely», who, «aftyr her pilgrimage have left memoriales of swech thingis as thei have herd and seyn» (1), Capgrave declares:

²⁵ The text of the *Graphia* dates from the twelfth century and survives in the thirteenth-century manuscript miscellany Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana MS Pl. 89 inf. 41 (*olim* Gaddi 267). It unites three independent texts: the history of the origins of Rome, a later version of the *Mirabilia*, and the *Libellus de cerimoniis aulæ imperatoris*. See *Codice topografico*, III, 67–110.

²⁶ For a list of the authors cited by Capgrave see *Codice topografico*, IV, 327–328. On Capgrave's sources see further discussion below.

Aftr all these grete cryeris of many wonderfull thingis I wyl folow with a smal pypping of swech straunge sitis as I have seyn and swech straunge thingis as I have herd. No man blame me thow he be leve not that I schal write for I schal not write but that I fynde in auctores & that is for a principall, or ellis that I sey with eye and that is for a secundari, or ellis that I suppose is soth lete that be of best auctorite (1).

Capgrave's strong commitment in always trying to provide information which is as objective as possible, based on written authority, direct experience, or both, can be detected in many passages of his guide²⁷. As shown by the following examples, comparisons between the actual topography of the city and the details on sites and distances in the text clearly demonstrate that topographical information is on the whole very accurate, and can plausibly be considered also as evidence of first-hand experiences:

Now go we oute of the cyte be a gate thei clepe porta lavicana and betwixt heggis and vynes walk a grete myle or we come at the cherch of seynt laurens. For it stant in a feld in her langage and in oure legendis thei sei in agro verano (79-80).

Munday in the fourt weke is the stacion at a church of iiii coronatoris on a hill on the rith hand as we goo to seyn ion lateranensis (126).

A nothir cherch of our lady called sca maria iuxta scolam grecorum is rith in the weye as we go to seynt paules or we come at the mount adventyn the cherch stant on the lift hand and scola grecorum on the rith hand (167).

The *Solace* also proves particularly valuable as memory of the past. It contains precious information about churches which have disappeared, as well as others that still exist but, having been rebuilt, retain few or none of the features they had at the time²⁸. The same also applies to the numerous epigraphs the author claims to have copied and often translates into English, many of which went lost over time. In his preface to the *Solace* Mills states that the texts of the epigraphs, when compared with those still in existence, are very precise. Though Capgrave might have used an anthology, Mills argues on this basis that those which are no longer extant can confidently be considered as correct (viii). Another, even more eloquent, example is given by the description of the

²⁷ See further discussion below.

²⁸ See LUCAS, *Englishman*, 214.

Septisolum. Its presence on the Southeastern end of the Palatine Hill is reported until 1588–1589, and Capgrave's description corresponds exactly to the drawings made before its loss²⁹:

Septisolum alsoo was a famous place it stant fast be seynt gregories monasterie a marvelous place of bildyng for in the west side it is mad of grete aschler stones and thoo ar all to schake as though thei schuld falle. The othir iii sides ar open with peleres of marbil so disposed that there be distincte vii setis be twix these pileres and so soundith the name of the place, for sep-tem is sevene and solum a sete that is for to say sevene setis. A bove these sevene setis are othir sevene & eke above tho sevene ar othir sevene that it is merveil who tho hevy pileres of marbil myth be caried up so hy. Of this place be thre opynyones wherof that it served. The romanes sey that thei dwelt ther the vii wise men which thei clepe the vii sages. We rede that there wer vii wise men in grece whos names be redy in chronicles. The first hith pitacus, the second solon, the third eylon, the fourt piriandus, the fift cleobulus, the sexte bias, and the vii bienus. But these men leved not all at ones at o tyme and though thei had be at o tyme I wene that thei come nevyr at rome. To this sey the romanes that this place was mad for othir sevene but thei have not her names rydyly. Wherfor I geve not grete credens to this tale for this cause namely for all the grete clerkis of rome for the most party had places of her owne as seneca tullius caton boys³⁰ and eke salustius. An othir opinion red I in dominicus book de arecio that it was clepid septisolum for whann octavian cam hom fro all his conquestis and was in pees with al the world the romanes ordeyned ther that he was receyved with vii sundry worchippis peraventur of every sciens of the vii liberal was mad sum special pagent in comendacioun of the man. I red eke a nothir tale at seynt gregories monasteri be the schewyng of an englich monk. It was and is writyn there that seynt gregory occupied this place with grete maisteris of all sevene sciens at his cost that what man wold com lerne any of the sevene he schuld frely lerne in that place (44–45).

It is also important to stress that Capgrave is always remarkably honest about locations he was unable to identify, find, or visit in person, and he regularly highlights this so that his readers are aware of any possible shortcomings. This is the case with the «archus prici tarquinii» – probably the Circus Maximus, whose construction began under Tarquinius Priscus – which he failed to both find and identify:

²⁹ See R. KRAUTHEIMER, *Rome, Profile of a City, 312–1308*, Princeton 1980, 323, fig. 258.

³⁰ «Boys» stands for Boethius; see CAPGRAVE, *Solace*, 45, n. 1.

Archus prici tarquinii is an othir place and in very suyrte I wot not where it standith. The descripcioun of the place schal I write as I fynde levyng the soile for to be soute of hem that wil walk and take heed mor bisily than I ded. Martyn seith in his cronicle that it stood be twixt the mount aventyn and the grete paleys and [...] clepith this place circus prici & the cronicle clepith it archus prici. Archus is a arche rered for a victour circus is a place mad for rennyng of hors. This place was of ful grete beute and so marvelously mad that though there stood nevyr so many men therin schuld nevyr man lette othir to see thoo games which wer exercised ther. Al a bove wer arches mad with gold and precious stones [...]. But all this is down and as I seide be for I am in doute whethir it was this place or nowt for there be othir biggingis which to my dom wer mor likly than this that swech werkis schuld be there (45–46).

Moreover, due to the fact that all the ancient buildings whose original function was then no longer known were generically referred to as palaces, it is sometimes difficult to determine which monuments Capgrave actually saw and correctly identified³¹. In the following example there might be a confusion between the Forum of Trajan, which was completed by Hadrian, and the Baths of Trajan:

The paleys of traiane I wot not verily wher it standith. Adrianes paleys thei sey is the castell aungell summe sey it is a nothir place be which stant a columpne in altitude xx passe (17).

Things are certainly not better with the large number of etymologies of the names of places and monuments Capgrave makes a point of quoting. Probably – and correctly – sensing that his sources are wrong and that the information he got is unreliable, there are several instances in which, as in the following case, he leaves the decision to his readers:

Now next afir this gate [Laterane or asinari] stant a ful solempne gate which thei calle the grettest and eke thei name him therto porta lavicana be this gate passe the pilgrimes whan thei goo to seint laurens extra muros. And wheythir it is clepid lavi with a v or lani with a n it is dowt to summe men for lanicana with a n soundith the gate of wollis and lavicana with a v soundith the gate of wasching. I leve all this in the disposicioun of the rederes (10)³².

³¹ On the use of the word palace see *Codice topografico*, III, 21, n. 1.

³² Both etymologies are indeed wrong, as the name Labicana comes from «Labicum» or «Labici», one of the cities of ancient Latium.

Entangled in a maze of centuries-old information from many different sources, in the first part Capgrave often struggles to extract an objective truth from the «grete errouris that poetis feyne» (4). This is the case, for example, with the names of the «sevene famouse hillis», that «have be so ofte chaunged that it is ful hard for to write the treuth of hem» (13), and with the names of the other, less famous hills, «whose names for errour of writeres [he could] not discerne» (16). More generally, this is regularly the case with the stories, the myths and the legends about the origins of the city. Notwithstanding his interventions, and despite his considerable ability at recasting patterns using digressions and explanations, Capgrave could indeed do little to significantly rework the captivating blend of history, myth, fantasy and magic embodied in the *Graphia* and the *Mirabilia*. The legends concerning the monuments of classical Rome, which, although largely reduced to ruins, offered a material reflection of a mysteriously glorious past, therefore preserve their original charm and strength. Originated primarily from a loss of historical memory regarding the reasons for the city's former power and the function of the monuments, the legends evolved in many versions in Rome and Europe's northern and eastern courts. Facilitating the obliteration of historical truth, they were in time supplanted or integrated with stories of saints and miracles spread by the Church in order to counter the attraction of these mysteries to pilgrims, and thus to establish and maintain control over the minds of the faithful. At the same purpose, the Church deliberately destroyed pagan idols, converting pagan buildings into churches and statues of gods into simulacra of saints. All of this was an important part of the long process of Rome's conversion from a pagan city into a Christian one which has already been briefly outlined in the section devoted to the textual tradition. Repeatedly described and hinted at especially in many passages of the first part, this process is powerfully exemplified in the chapter devoted to the Colosseum. As a result of the loss of historical memory, of the legends which were constantly re-elaborated by popular imagination, and of the cogent and trenchant exorcising action of the Church, the Flavian amphitheatre ended up being considered as a sort of planetarium. Here is what follows to the detailed description of the architectural structure of the monument and the various hypotheses on the etymology of its name:

The collise [...] was a temple of grete heith and brede nominat and consecrate on to the sunne and the mone in which wer many wondirful werkis. For the rof a bove was cured with plates of metall so gilt and depeynted that it was lich the sterred hevене a bove in which be sotill craft thei

feyned thundris and levenes reynes and othir wederes swech as come fro the firmament. Ther wer also apperyng there the signes super celestial expressid ful weel in which tymes of the yer the sunne passith be hem. As in januari be the signe thei clepe aquari, in february be the fischis, in march be the ram, in april be the bul, in may be the too twynnes castor & pollux, in iune be the crabbe, in iule be the leoun, in august be the virgin, in september be the balaunce, in october be the scorioun, in novembir be the scheter, in december be the gote. All these wer schewid ther ful marvelously in her mevingis and many othir thingis. In the myddis of this place stood the grete god phebus so is the sunne cleped and eke apollo is his name. He was so mad that with his feet he touched the erde and with his rith hand the hevene for in his left hand held he a bal as though he had al this world in governaunce. [...] Now whi al this fayre werk was destroyed wil I telle you. Seint silvester aftir that tyme he had baptized the grete constantine was mad lord and emperour of all this side of the world for the for said constantin went on to constantinople and dwelt ther that he ne non of his schuld interrupt the grete power and the grete possessioun which he gave to the cherk. Thus standyng the cherk at his liberte mech cristen puple come to rome in pilgrimage and whann thei seyn this gay bilydyng and this mevyng of these planetis as I have declared thei left mech of her devocioun and stood and gased on these vanities rith for novelte of the site. Tho mad seint silvester this maunmentrie to be broke and spent in to betir use. Al this have I red, that which folowith in this mater have I herd. Men sey that silvester cam thidir on processioun which tyme this werk schuld be destroyed and this grete ymage that stood al a bove be power which the devele had therin spak to silvester and seide thus. Colis eum that is to sey in englich worchipis thou him. The devele spak thoo wordes at that tyme to sterve the puple which was redy to distroye that maunmentrie that for very fer of thoo wordis thei schuld lette hir werk. And thann seynt silvester with a grete boldnesse turned the xposicioun on to anothir and seyde to the maundment. Colis deum that is to sey thou worchipist god. So cried thei oft sithis as it is told the on colis eum the othir colis deum and of this dialoge in returnyng of a terme roos the name of this place as sum sey that it was called collise. Whethir this be the treuth or nout I make no meyntenaunce. But this have I red in this mater that silvester ded distroye it and in tokne that ther was swech a thing sumtyme the grete heed and the left hand in which he held the ball he sette at laterane and yet stant it ther (34–36).

The traditional, stereotyped and multilayered image of a contrast between the pagan and the Christian, which in the *Solace* and other similar texts is constantly evoked and is also reflected in medieval maps, strongly affected both the material and the ideal domain, and was at the time extremely difficult to rework. Even if we entertain the possibility that Capgrave considered the option, the task of providing a personal

and realistic description of the city that surmounted this image and all the ideas and values connected to it would have been too demanding. As a result, information on medieval buildings other than, as previously noted, churches that no longer exist or have been completely remodelled, finds no place in the *Solace*. Similarly, there is no reference to the many towers and palaces that Capgrave's countryman and predecessor Master Gregorius could not help but notice from the top of *Mons Gaudii*, and so effectively and succinctly described in his famous *Narracio de mirabilibus urbis Romae*³³.

The outstanding pioneering humanistic sentiment and the independence from tradition that characterise the *Narracio* put it surprisingly ahead of its time. Comparisons between the *Narracio* and the *Solace*, though unavoidable, might therefore turn out to be partial and, if not properly argued, even misleading³⁴. This is especially the case with debates on Capgrave's attitude towards humanistic ideas, of which his works are devoid, and his apparent lack of genuine interest in the Roman ruins. Concerning humanistic ideas, keen considerations have been made in this respect by Joseph Grossi in the conclusion to his detailed and valuable analysis of the main aspects of the *Solace*. Grossi notices that Capgrave's indifference «toward the pagan foundations upon which Italian humanism by the mid-fifteenth century was in part building» appears in line with other «fifteenth-century writings that reflect sternly moralizing, rather than classicizing, English attitudes toward the Eternal City»³⁵.

It is anyway essential to stress here that it is insufficient to simply accept the textual evidence, and that Capgrave's attitude towards humanism remains a somewhat open question. This is perfectly clear from Henry's keen and thorough study of Capgrave's dedications, in which she argues that the dedication of the *Commentarius in Exodum* to Humphrey Duke of Gloucester (1390-1447) surprisingly adopts both humanistic style and ideas: a stark contrast with the *Commentarius in Genesim*, which is addressed to the same patron. In seeking to explain

³³ On this work, dated between the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, see MAGISTER GREGORIUS, *Narracio de mirabilibus urbis Romae*, R.B.C. HUYGENS, ed., Leiden 1970; MASTER GREGORIUS, *The Marvels of Rome*, edited and translated by J. OSBORNE, Toronto 1987; C. NARDELLA, *Il fascino di Roma nel Medioevo. Le «Meraviglie di Roma» di maestro Gregorio*, Roma 2007. On the image of Rome during the Middle Ages see Krautheimer's seminal study *Rome, Profile*.

³⁴ On Gregorius and humanism, and in particular for valuable comparisons of the *Narracio* and the *Solace*, see NARDELLA, *La Roma dei visitatori colti*.

³⁵ GROSSI, *John Capgrave's «Smal Ppyying»*, 76.

this oddity, Henry interestingly suggests – thus recalling Lawton's ideas discussed earlier in the introduction – that Capgrave was aware of the new learning but may well have chosen not to follow it, or to use a humanistic style of writing³⁶.

Regarding the theme of ruins, it is important to observe that, despite his dealings with humanists such as William Grey and Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, Capgrave never laments the fact that pagan monuments have been and continue to be destroyed to obtain lime and material for new buildings. Though this may represent a serious shortcoming from a modern perspective, and the comparison with Master Gregorius is striking, the absence of evidence of humanistic sensibility in a text that encompasses centuries of medieval tradition should instead be considered as quite normal. Indeed, it should be seen as a clear indication of the typicality of the work. With reference to this, Lucas convincingly argues that to «criticize Capgrave, even implicitly, for failing to have a concern for classical heritage is to miss the mark»³⁷.

All hypotheses and discussions aside, the explanation to Capgrave's attitude can easily be found between the lines of the text. Like Master Gregorius and any other pilgrim, Capgrave was certainly deeply impressed by the grandeur and awesome beauty of the Roman ruins. However, even in the first part of the *Solace* it is evident that his prevailing concern is the earnest fulfilment of his didactic duty as a churchman and theologian. More than once, anticipating his discussion in the second and third parts of the work, he implicitly draws his readers' attention to matters that in his view are of genuine importance for Christian pilgrims: not the pagan monuments and their related legends, but Rome's Christian marvels and treasures, and an awareness of how right and good it was that the «templis of fals goddis» (25) had been «chaunged [...] in to bettir use» (48) and «turnyd to servyse of seyntis» (25). In this perspective, good Christians simply have no reasons to lament the passing of pagan Rome, and the unavoidable sense of wonder inspired by the ruins is, if necessary, skilfully justified by explaining that whatever might appear inconsistent finds its logic in God's plan. One of the most significant examples of this view can be found in the chapter relating the story of the Pantheon:

³⁶ HENRY, *Capgrave's Dedications*, 736–744. On Capgrave's connection with Duke Humphrey see also FREDEMAN, *Life*, 224–227; CRITTEN, *The King's Historiographer*, 285–290. See also further discussion below on Capgrave's use of vernacular and of a simple style.

³⁷ LUCAS, *Englishman*, 212.

Men myth ask her whi our lord suffered these wikked spiritis thus to apper and thus undir simulat religioun to make men spend so grete good in the develes servyse. As for the sufferauns of god that mater is inperscrutabil save that seynt paule seith that for the grete defautes which wer in her lyvyng thei wer worthi for to be disseyved. Thus seith he in the epistill ad romanos. To the othir party whi he suffered swech riches to be spent in the develes servyse summe men answer because it was wrongfully gote it had the lesse grace for to be weel spent. Summe men sey bettir ther to that god mad a purvyaunce at that tyme that thoo grete houses which were rered up for errour or for vanyte schuld aftirward serve in betir use to worchip of god and seyntis as david took the crowne af an hethen kyng and wered it him selve this rede we in the second book of kyngis (38).

In a later chapter of the third part Capgrave completes his description with the narrative of the conversion of the Pantheon from pagan temple into the basilica of Santa Maria Rotonda or Santa Maria ad Martyres:

There was in rome a pope clepid boneface the fourt a blessid man of lyf and grete in reputacion. This man was pope in tyme of focas the emperour sone aftir seint gregory for aftir gregory was sabinus a yere and viii monthis and thanne bonefacius tercius not fully a yere so that be my counting this bonefacius iiiius was in the yer of our lord vi hundred and v. This boneface prayed the emperour focas that he schuld geve him this temple which was cleped be for pantheon that is to sei a temple of all goddis for pan is as mech to sey as al and theos god or goddis. The principal cause which meved the pope was this for the wikkid spiritis that had receyved grete offerings there of the puple whil thei were in errour sey the same puple had forsake hem and wer turned on to crist of gret malice which thei have, hurt the puple in morownyngis and evenes with mervelous maledies. And be cause this cherch stant in the best of rome wher most puple dwellith therfor this pope of grete pite was the more bisi to seke remedy a geyn this myschef. So aftir the emperoures graunt he mad all the maumentis with in the hous to be broke clensid the hous of all offices that were with in longing to swech cerymonies as the hethen puple used. Aftir this doo he called all the cristen puple of rome and in here presens halowid the place saide there a messe and hosild the most part of the puple. Tho mad he a constitucion of the cherch that this day fro this tyme schuld be as holy as cristemasse day and all the puple schuld come and do reverens to god and too all seyntis that all the negligenses which falle in the long yere schuld be amendid with solempnite of this fest. Summe croniculeris write that boneface set this feest the xv day of may and on of the gregories aftirward changed it and set it the first day of novembir for this cause. For grete multitude of the cuntre cam to rome at this feest and vitale that tyme of the yer was passing scarce wherfor he sette it at this tyme whan corn and wyn is in moost plente (157-158).

In line with the textual tradition, the pages describing the buildings of ancient Rome and the associated legends are almost exclusively populated by historical and mythical figures³⁸. In the second and third parts of the guide – besides the ever present «puple of Rome» and several anonymous inhabitants involved in the stories of famous miracles that Capgrave relates – the scene is instead dominated by popes, saints and martyrs. Therefore, it is only on rare occasions that Capgrave describes people he met or otherwise came into contact with while visiting the city.

As highlighted earlier, written evidence of contacts with bishop Grey, who visited Capgrave while he was ill in Rome, helps date his presence there in or after 1449. Due to his illness, the author might have stayed in the city for quite a long time, and might perhaps have been there during the Jubilee of 1450. Although in his descriptions of the Lenten stations he incidentally declares on two occasions to have observed large crowds (102, 165), this cannot be taken as conclusive evidence of his presence during the Jubilee. As a matter of fact, considerable numbers of pilgrims commonly attended the station churches during Lent.

In the chapter devoted to the church of Santa Susanna Capgrave refers in passing of his encounter with «an englich frere» who told him that he «was on of hem that bare [...] the body of seynt susanne fro seynt peteres kirk on to this same» (123). In the chapter devoted to the station at Santa Prassede he hints at the abbot of the church who guided him and his fellow pilgrims on their visit. It is worth noting that this is the only case in which he signals the presence of other people with him:

Ther sei we in the sacristie a fayr vernycle which seynt petir ded make as the abbot seid to us and kept it al his lyf but whan he deyed he gave it to this mayde [Prassede] and many othir thingis (148).

Finally, when Rome's more prosaic inhabitants make their appearance, the resulting portraits are anything but complimentary. A brief remark on the irritability of Romans asked by visitors for directions is particularly telling, and needs no further comment: «the dwelleres ar wroth

³⁸ On the absence of contemporary inhabitants in medieval descriptions of Rome see SUMMIT, *Topography as Historiography*, 239; C.D. BENSON, *The Dead and the Living: Some Medieval Descriptions of the Ruins and Relics of Rome Known to the English*, in *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, A. CLASSEN, ed., Berlin 2009, 147–182: 148; this essay also contains extensive discussion about the themes and texts examined here. Further valuable developments of Benson's study of Rome in the medieval imaginary are now included in ID., *Imagined Romes: the Ancient City and Its Stories in Middle English Poetry*, University Park 2019. See also GIOSUÈ, *John Capgrave e Margery Kempe*, 195–205.

a non if men ask ony questiones» (161). An extremely unflattering portrait of contemporary Romans can also be found in the chapter devoted to Mount Testaccio entitled «Of that place cleped omnis terra» (50). It contains a vivid account of one of the key celebrations of the Roman Carnival, and Capgrave seems again to speak from direct experience:

Up on this hill is gret ordinaunce on fastinging sunday for ther be grete cartis with bugles therin for to drawe hem and the cartis ful of swyn, alle this ordinaunce is sette a bove the hill and there come the romanes with armour and swerdis in her best aray for he that may cacch a mussel of flesch that day he is a man for evyr. Thus sodeynly the cartes go down and the men be redy with speris for to gor the bestis so what for the grete descence and sodeyn fro the hill and hurt of the bestis and cry of the men the ger brekith and the bestis are loos a ful onlikly game me thoutht it was wher that flesch is hewe with rusty heren and summe men hurt and summe dede but this is her elde game which thei can not leve (50-51)³⁹.

As Grossi has argued, in the two instances that have just been examined, and in other cases, Capgrave never misses the opportunity to fulfil his mission as a clergyman and, just as importantly, an English churchman. More or less between the lines, he always finds a way to stress the moral difference between the well-read, pious and orthodox English pilgrims to whom his guide is addressed, and the cantankerous, unreliable, deceptive Roman natives, still semi-barbarian and, even more deplorably, semi-pagan⁴⁰.

The difficulties faced by Capgrave in the reorganisation of the material on which the second and third parts of the *Solace* are based, though remarkable, were arguably far lesser than those examined in the analysis of the first part. He certainly appears more at ease in manipulating the equally ancient and strongly codified texts at his disposal, and his work gains in accuracy, objectiveness, reliability and effectiveness in entertaining his readers. Alongside detailed descriptions of the churches, accurate enumerations of indulgences and relics, and tales of the extraordinary

³⁹ On the Roman Carnival and the games of Testaccio, and on the strong secular and religious symbolic value of these events, see R. GUARINO, «Carnevale e festa civica nei ludi di Testaccio», *Roma moderna e contemporanea*, 20/2 (2012), 475-497; A. MODIGLIANI, *Le cacce dei Romani fra tradizione municipale e ingerenze pontificie*, in *La caccia nella Roma dei papi nei secoli XV-XVI*. Atti della giornata di studi, Roma, Fondazione Marco Besso, 26 maggio 2015, F. PIGNATTI, ed., Roma 2016 (RR inedita 66, saggi), 43-54; also see *ibid.* G. CRIMI, *La festa dei cacciatori a Roma nel XV e XVI secolo (e alcune testimonianze letterarie sulla festa di Testaccio)*, 55-76. See also the notes in CAPGRAVE, *Solace*, 50-52.

⁴⁰ For a more detailed discussion see GROSSI, *John Capgrave's «Smal Ppyying»*, 71-74.

lives and hideous deaths of Christian saints and martyrs, he compellingly describes miraculous events and exorcisms, and tells exemplary stories that extol the actions of the Church. Compared to the first part, the narrative is increasingly interspersed with long digressions in which Capgrave shows off his erudition, whilst his expertise as a theologian and exegete, and his concern to always respect the tenets of the Church and the authority of the Scriptures and of famous works become even more evident. At the same time, his constant dialogue with his readers becomes more intense. All this is well exemplified in the following passage, as well as in many others, too numerous to mention here:

Anothir stacioun is there on the thursday afir the first sunday of lenton at a cherch thei clepe seint laurens panisperne. [...] This [...] was a place in which mech bred was mad & many ovenes used for in on of thoo ovenes as thei sey there which ovne lesteth there at this tyme was seynt laurens rosted. A gret merveylye to me growith in this mater. Summe sey he was rosted on the white ston that stant at seynt laurens and that suppose I best for a man may yet se the places wher the gres and the flesch of him fried and this ston is not smal to put esily in a ovne for it is as mech as a comoun graveston. Summe sey that he was rosted on a gridel of yrun of which many parties lesten yet in rome and are kissid with ful grete reverens for touching of holy body. Summe sey that he was leyd in a ovne. I may weel be leve that his tormentis wer chaunged now to o peyne now to a nothir and thus at dyvers chaunges had he dyvers tormentis and all in fyr. In confirmacioun of myn opynion is that first I rede in his lyf that thei took grete brennyng plates of yrun and leyd hem to his sides. I rede also that decius seid on to him that al that nyth schuld be spent in tormetrie of his body which soundith on to my eres that there was chaunge of tormentrye. In his lif eke is red who decius comaunded a bed of yrun to be brout forth in which laurens schuld rest. This bed of yrun is clepid the gridil. And I suppose verlyly that if I had now at hand the grete book of martires which is cleped passionarium I schuld fynde mo testimonies for myn oppinioun. Suffiseth as now that oure devocioun be inclined on to the treuthis which the cherch of rome prechid both of the ston which is hald in grete reverens and stant in the principal part of the cherch of him evne on the rith hand of the popes sete. And eke of the ovne which is anexid to a cherch of his name and ful wel hillid a bove (101-102).

As already observed for topographical information and other particulars, and as the passage just quoted also demonstrates, notwithstanding its necessary dependence on textual tradition the text offers much evidence that on the whole it actually reflects Capgrave's first-hand experiences. Further and more convincing proof of this is given by the cases in which he declares that he has not been able to see or take note of the relics:

In this same cherch [Santa Sabina] be many relikes which I wrote not (87).

Many othir relikes ar schewid in this cherch [San Lorenzo in Panisperna] of which I have now no fresch remembrauns for I wrote hem nowt for the prees that was there (102).

The same applies to many lively remarks that leave no space to doubts as to the fact that Capgrave is relating his lived experiences; as when he notes the poor state of preservation of the stational church of San Vitale, described as a «ful desolate place [...] and al in ruine as there be many moo» (112), and of San Ciriaco, «a lital chapel [...] and ful desolate nevyr open in the yer but that day as I suppose» (138). Alongside hints at the presence of stalls with «certeyn thingis which thei selle there at staciones» (89) outside the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, and of «a taverne to the counfort of pilgrimes» annexed to the «praty lital cherch» (162) of Santa Maria in Palmis, peculiarly evocative passages of the practice and atmosphere of Lenten stations are also not missing. The one that follows is also spiced up by another unflattering judgement on the inhabitants and their craftiness:

Now wil we speke of all thoo cerches where the staciones be olden in lenton [...]. Seynt Gregory as we redyn ordeyned these staciones and was at hem him selve and prechid there as we may notabilly parceyve in many of his omelies. It is cleped a stacioun a stando for stacioun is as mech to sey as to stand aftir walkyng. For pilgrimes walkyn the sercle with grete labour and summe rest nevyr tyl al her labour be don. Wherfor this holy doctor gregory ordeyned that every day schuld be a masse in a certeyn place and there schuld men rest and her that masse. Eke for to encrese her devocyon mor on to this dede he graunted on to that cherch wher the stacyon is as mech pardon as is in al rome as for that day. And this is the cause as I suppose that fewe romanes walk the sercle but the stacioun as a man may pleylnly se (85).

A distinctive feature of Capgrave's writings is an ability for dramatisation in which Fredeman detects a resemblance with the techniques of medieval stage⁴¹. As previously observed, the *Solace* contains clear echoes of the author's familiarity with these techniques. A brief hint at the tradition of mystery plays in Rome gives proof of his interest in liturgical drama:

⁴¹ FREDEMAN, «John Capgrave's First English Composition, *The Life of St. Norbert*», *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 57 (1975), 280-309: 300, 309; EAD., *Life*, 202.

Be for the gate of seynt cruces stand iii crosses on which the passioun of our lord is ensaumpled on good fryday with mech othir circumstauns (79).

The lively exchange between Pope Silvester and the statue of the Colosseum, which has been mentioned earlier, is only one of the examples of Capgrave's ability to use the dramatic form that can be found in the first part. His skills become even more evident from the stories collected in the second and the third parts of the work, notably those describing events from the lives of saints and martyrs, miracles and exorcisms. In these stories he adeptly alternates narrations and descriptions with scenes full of life that, more than being described, are conjured up through well-constructed dialogues and the use of strongly evocative images, such as the martyrs' blood, their tormented flesh, and the fire by which many of them were tortured and killed. One example from among the many available will suffice to give evidence of this:

Tewisday in palme weke is the stacion at a chorch dedicate to seint prisca virgin and martyr. [...] This mayde was bore in rome doutir to a consul fayr of body fayrer in soule. In claudius tyme the emperour died sche for confession of the feith. Whan sche was brout first be for the emperour he had merveye of hir beute and swech wordis he seid on to hir. O god appollo grete is thi myth that can make so fayre a creatur to the plesauns of man. Thoo he enqwirid of hir religion. Sche saide on to him that every day sche mad offering on to hir god with outen spillyng of blood. He undirstood not hir wordis but mad hir to be led in to the temple of appollo there to make hir offering. Sche cam to that place where appollo was honowred swech a orison sche mad there as it is reported. Ioye be to the fader of hevene on the I calle and the I pray this place that is used with mech onclennesse ageyn thi worchip and thi comaundment thou with thi myty hand distroye that the emperour may know and all the puple that we schuld not worchep but only the. Sone afir these wordis wer saide a non the erde schoke many houses of the cite broke but specialy this appollo fell down smal as sond the third part eke of his temple fel down with him. Tho comaunded Claudius that thei schuld bete hir. In her betyng sche thankid god. Blessed be thou lord sche saide that hast ordeyned evyrlastyng mede to hem that trost in the. A vois was herd fro hevene in that same tyme wech saide. Counfort the doutir in god for afir schort payne folowith long reward. Many tormentryes suffered this mayden betyn nakid with scorgis rased hir body with hokys and evyr the next day was sche found hool put a mongis wilde bestis and not hurt in the myddis of a grete fir and not brent. Alle these tormentries suffered sche with gret paciens. Last of alle sche lost hir heed for cristis love and wan hevene ioying there with crist hir love (149–150).

Winstead keenly highlights Capgrave's special attention to the stories of female saints and martyrs in comparison to their male counterparts, and his reworking of them to shift emphasis from the importance of virginity to the role of women in their families and communities, a pattern that can also be observed in his saints' lives⁴². One of the most significant passages of the *Solace* in this respect is the one devoted to the «holy virgine cleped potenciane» (117):

Sche was doutir on to an holy man disciple of seint petir whos name was pudens. [...] This noble woman potenciane was lerned of hir fader in the lawe of crist and educate in perfith lif on the best maner. Aftir the deith of hir fader be the councel of pius the pope & of anothir holy man ny of hir kin cleped pastor sche mad hir hous a cherch and all hir servauntis that wold be cristen sche mad hem fre and relesed her bondage be the consent of praxede which was hir sistir. Aftir many good dedis do god gaf hir reward of hir good werkys for sche deyed the xiiii kalend of june and is byried in the cymyterie cleped priscille (117).

Winstead also emphasises that several of Capgrave's works are characterised by a focus on topics that might have been of interest in the context of the lively female devotional culture of East Anglia⁴³. With their imagery and atmospheres, many passages of the second and third parts of the *Solace* are indeed strongly reminiscent of the *Book of Margery Kempe*⁴⁴. Both works share not only the same cultural and religious climate, masterly represented in the work of Capgrave's contemporary and fellow countrywoman, but also the use of vernacular, which is another important aspect of that culture.

Lucas identifies the *Solace* as emblematic of the central period of Capgrave's vernacular production⁴⁵. He emphasises his strong commitment to make his texts readable for «as wide an audience»⁴⁶ in «as wide

⁴² WINSTEAD, *Fifteenth Century*, xi, 90, 97-99, 106, 112-115; EAD., «John Capgrave and the Chaucer Tradition», *The Chaucer Review*, 30/4 (1996), 389-400.

⁴³ WINSTEAD, *Fifteenth Century*, x, 13, 97-99.

⁴⁴ For an exhaustive introduction, bibliography and new modern English translation see MARGERY KEMPE, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, translated by A. BALE, Oxford 2015. In addition to GIOSUÈ, *John Capgrave e Margery Kempe*, on Kempe's own pilgrimage to Rome and, more importantly, for the results of recent archival research in this regard, see A. BALE and D. GIOSUÈ, *A women's network in fifteenth-century Rome: Margery Kempe encounters 'Margaret Florentyne'*, in *Encountering The Book of Margery Kempe*, L. KALAS and L. VARNAM, ed., Manchester 2021, 185-204.

⁴⁵ LUCAS, *Author to Audience*, 239. See also FREDEMAN, *Life*, 237.

⁴⁶ LUCAS, *Author to Audience*, 248.

an area of the country as possible»⁴⁷, which can be clearly discerned in his endeavour to employ a spelling system «remarkably consistent»⁴⁸ for his time. The use of vernacular does not simply denote the author's compliance with a more recent yet, by that time, already well-established tradition within the genre; it also indicates the importance and dignity the vernacular had definitively gained, and an awareness of a widening audience as a result of increasing literacy. In line with Lawton's views, this second suggestion supports the hypothesis that Capgrave's use of a simple style, which is typical of his works, was a deliberate choice. Tellingly enough, in the prologue to the *Solace* he excuses himself for his «sympilnesse» to the wide audience he hopes to reach, drawing attention instead to his «good entent»:

On to all men of my nacioun that schal rede this present book and namely on to my special mayster sir thomas tudenham undyr whos proteccioun my pylgrimage was specially sped I recomende my sympilnesse praying hem of paciens in the redyng that thei take no hed at no crafty langage wher non is but at the good entent of the maker (1-2).

Capgrave's move towards the use of vernacular has also been analysed by Winstead. She considers his linguistic choice to represent conclusive evidence that he was a man who lived in the world, indicating, again in accordance with Lawton's ideas, Capgrave's social and educational commitment and efforts to reach a wider lay audience⁴⁹.

It has been previously noted that Winstead sees Capgrave's works as perfectly in keeping with the tradition of their time. She also keenly observes that he reorganises and adapts the texts he uses in a way that reveals him to be a «literary innovator [...] within traditional genres»⁵⁰. Added to his consideration for the female devotional culture of East Anglia, this further demonstrates that, contrary to what has too often been asserted, Capgrave was a remarkably progressive author.

Another open conclusion

In the conclusion to *An Englishman in Rome*, while announcing his new edition of the *Solace*, Lucas writes that

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 204, 228.

⁴⁹ WINSTEAD, *Fifteenth Century*, x, 13, 97.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

further work is now needed to distinguish the author's voice from those of his sources, and to compare his testimony with that of others, so that his contribution can be evaluated more fully⁵¹.

More informed and close readings will certainly be necessary both to evaluate Capgrave's achievement in the reorganisation of his sources and reevaluate the work in all its complexity. A systematic study aimed at determining to what extent Capgrave merely copied, and to what extent he summarised, combined and improved with personal additions the source material used for the composition of his guide would need a thorough and complex analysis. The first goal pointed at by Lucas lies therefore too far beyond the scope of this essay⁵².

Although for obvious reasons of space the same applies to detailed comparisons with other texts, some evidence for the second objective indicated by Lucas has already been given by briefly juxtaposing the *Solace* with Master Gregorius' *Narracio* and *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Further significant and useful insight can easily be gained by comparing the *Solace* with other similar contemporary texts. By way of example, and without detracting from their undoubted value, the descriptions of Rome by Giovanni Rucellai⁵³ and Nikolaus Muffel⁵⁴, who visited Rome respectively in 1450 and 1452, and the later one (which is part of a much broader and richer text) by Arnold Von Harff⁵⁵, who visited it in 1497, immediately appear strikingly different with regard to the quantity of information. All three texts are mainly focussed on Christian Rome, and the material from the *Mirabilia* is included only occasionally. The main point is, however, that the comparison with these texts immediately and glaringly reveals conspicuous differences, confirming that the *Solace* is actually much more than a simple, unoriginal or impersonal collation of earlier texts. Capgrave's reorganisation and reworking of

⁵¹ LUCAS, *Englishman*, 214.

⁵² Lucas' new edition of the *Solace* (see footnote 8 for full details) is a much needed work that makes a decisive contribution in this and many other respects.

⁵³ GIOVANNI RUCELLAI, *Che vuole dire Giubileo e della bellezza e anticaglia di Roma*, in *Giovanni Rucellai e il suo Zibaldone*, I. *Il Zibaldone Quaresimale*, A. PEROSA, ed., London 1960, 67-78.

⁵⁴ NIKOLAUS MUFFEL, *Beschreibung der Stadt Rom*, W. VOGT, ed., Tübingen 1876; for an Italian translation, see ID., *Descrizione della città di Roma nel 1452*, translated by G. WIEDMANN, Bologna 1999.

⁵⁵ ARNOLD VON HARFF, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold Von Harff Knight From Cologne, Through Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, Ethiopia, Nubia, Palestine, Turkey, France and Spain, Which He Accomplished in the Years 1496 to 1499*, edited and translated by M. LETTS, London 1946, 15-46.

the fixed patterns and content of his sources results in a richness and completeness either unattempted or unachieved by any other author. Whilst its paradigmatic and fascinating blend of tradition encompassing an entire millennium makes the *Solace* especially typical, its high degree of elaboration and its elements of innovation mark it out as distinctly different from analogous works. Ultimately, all of this contributes to make the *Solace* a unique example of what might nowadays be termed a miniature library for pilgrims to Rome.

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