



# A Narrative in Search of an Author: The *Hypnerotomachia* and its Authorial Criticism

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## Abstract

*The Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, published anonymously in 1499, has long posed puzzles for historians and scholars as to the full depth of its meaning, such as, the name of the illustrator, why it was published through the Aldine Press in Venice, but perhaps most notably in twentieth century research, why it was published anonymously and who the author actually was. There are by now numerous suggestions for authorship, ranging from Cosimo d'Medici to Leon Battista Alberti, the Francesco Colonna of Venice to the Colonna of Rome. This paper, however, does not posit a new suggestion but rather critiques the suggestions made over the last century and the present one and suggests a narratological method of biographical research for authorship profiling for future authorial research.<sup>1</sup>*

**Keywords:** Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, Narratological, Acrostic, Letters

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## Introduction

The title of this paper could just as well read 'Poliphilo Studies: a discourse in search of an author' for authorship has certainly preoccupied much of the twentieth century scholarship on the text. This paper does not, perhaps disappointingly, draw a conclusion as to the author of the *Hypnerotomachia*. It rather reviews the evidence for names already posited whilst contributing to the already lively debate of authorship through the analysis of evidence in support, or against the authorial candidates in question, before suggesting future research incorporate narratological methodology. The importance of a narratological methodology in authorial argument is that through the analysis of literary styles in the text we may determine certain key factors that are required to be observed in the proposed author.

This paper shall be divided into three sections: firstly, concerning a brief review of the landscape of authorial research on the *Hypnerotomachia* (but by no means an exhaustive overview). Secondly, examinations of both satellite and serious candidates are presented. This will be in relation to key themes in the narrative to support or counter authorial claims. Thirdly, through a narratological methodology, this paper will engage with narratological examinations concerning iconography, material, symbol, or structure and their placement in respective narrative stages and what it reveals about the author, his education, and the process of composing the text as a method of biographical research.<sup>2</sup>

## Landscape of Authorial Research

The earliest evidence of a Francesco Colonna as author of the *Hypnerotomachia* is found in the original publication.<sup>3</sup> An original copy contains a printed couplet that refers to a famous "Francisco alta columna;" this acrostic is formed from the initials from the first 36 chapters and has prompted a standard in Poliphilo studies to conclude the author to be Francesco Colonna (See fig. 1). First evidence for the acrostic comes from a copy of the *Hypnerotomachia* in the Dominican library of the Zattere, Venice, seen by opera librettist Apostolo Zeno in 1773. There, was written: "1512, June 20<sup>th</sup>. The name of the author is Franciscus Columna of Venice, who was a member of the Order of Preachers and, being ardently in love with one Hippolyta of Treviso, changed her name to Polia and dedicated the chapters of the book to her, as we see. The chapters of the book show this through the first letter of

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<sup>1</sup> By biographical research I refer here to research concerning the life of the proposed author.

<sup>2</sup> For many of the texts reviewed here, see (Barcaioli, 2015) See also (Brown, 1996, p. 287)

<sup>3</sup> Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek: Inc. 4508

each chapter; thus together they say: ‘FRATER FRANCISVS COLVMNA POLIAM PERARMAVIT’ (Father Francisco Colonna greatly loved Polia.) He now lives at SS. Giovanni e Paolo” (F. Colonna, 1968, p. 63).



**Fig. 1** The acrostic formed from the first letter of each of the thirty-eight chapter titles.

Secondly, a poem preceding the narrative by Matteo Visconti of Brescia, originally contained the lines: “Mirando poi Francisco alta columna/Per cui phama imortal de voi rissona” (admiring Francisco the high column through whom your immortal fame resounds) where the Italian ‘Colonna’ is replaced by the Latin ‘columna’ creating an architectural pun on the surname. This line was later withdrawn in printing, yet a few copies still contain the lines (F. Colonna, 1968, pp. 94–95). Thirdly, the preceding poem by Andrea Marone, after asking who really is Poliphilo, replies “Nolumus agnosci” (we do not wish to tell) which is observed by Marco Ariani to be an anagram of “Columna Gnosius”, Gnosius meaning Knossus, the ancient capital of Crete, and possible first cult of Aphrodite/Venus, thus an apt reference to the author of the *Hypnerotomachia* (Ariani & Gabriele, 1998, pp. 495–496). Lastly, Godwin observes that the three lines in the epigraph to Polia, starting “F C I” most likely spells “Franciscus Columna Invenit” (Francesco Colonna invented [this]) suggesting strong evidence for a Francesco Colonna as author of the *Hypnerotomachia*. The main question, then, is which Colonna? (Godwin, 2005, p. 76).

#### **Alternative Candidates:**

Regarding early antiquarian authorial analysis, Khomentovskaia proposed the Veronese Felice Feliciano as the author (1936) based on similarities of antiquarian rhetoric between the novel and his letters and the Hellenized nouns found in the narrative of the *Hypnerotomachia*, relatable to Feliciano’s epistolary style (Khomentovskaia, 1936, pp. 161–170). Although she ignores the content of the narrative, she does present evidence for the northern geographic position of the composition of the text. Somewhat similarly, based on antiquarian passion and correlations between the writings of Ciriaco and the antique ekphrasis of the *Hypnerotomachia*, Charles Mitchell has proposed Ciriaco d’Ancona as the author (1960) stating that the author ‘with his head full of antiquarian writing, Horapollo’s hieroglyphs and pagan religion, meant to transport us into an antique world.’<sup>4</sup>

Roswitha Stewering (1996) has proposed the Trevisan-Paduan *letterato* Niccolò Lelio Cosmico (1428–1500) as the author, based largely on his esteemed education and presumed acquaintance with Teodoro Lelli, Bishop of Treviso (d. 1466) (Stewering, 1996). This is on account of the similarity of their last names, Lelio and Lelli and the mention by Polia in the *Hypnerotomachia*, that the bishop is her relative (HP, 379).<sup>5</sup>

Eliseo da Treviso is the authorial candidate for Alessandro Parronchi (1963) based on a book of annals of the Servite Order by A. Giani in 1618–22 which erroneously refers to him as a Poliphio, on which claim later English libraries attributed authorship (Parronchi, 1963, pp. 889–904). Pierro Scapecchi similarly argues for Colonna to be only the dedicatee, and the true author as Fra Eliseo from Treviso (Scapecchi, 1983, pp. 286–298, 1985, pp. 68–73). Alternatively, for Lamberto Donati it is an entirely unknown person, who wished to remain unknown using Colonna as a fictitious attribution. Donati (1963) also does not agree with the Venetian elements of the writing, though he does not give further linguistic analysis as to the geographic position of a vernacular style to qualify this statement (Donati, 1962b, pp. 247–270).

<sup>4</sup> (Mitchell, 1960, p. 467) See also, (Mitchell, 1961, pp. 197–221)

<sup>5</sup> (Stewering, 1996, pp. 162–245) See also (Billanovich, 1976, pp. 419–429)

### **The Venetian Dominican Colonna:**

The attribution of the Venetian Dominican Colonna (c. 1433-1527) is initially observed by two early philological examples. The Venetian monk is the candidate of authorship in both Charles Nodier's 1844 study and Clément Janin's prelection to the early twentieth century work by Nodier (wherein we read, neither for the first time or last, the importance of being a bibliophile and bibliographer in comprehending the Venetian Colonna's broad degree of interests) (Janin, 1927; Nodier, 1844). This is the assumption of Gnoli's 1899 biography, who also observes other "*machia*" titles emerging from the Aldine press, such as the pseudo-Homeric *Batracomyomachia* (Battle of the Frogs and Mice), or the *Galeomyomachia* (Battle of the Rats and Cats) demonstrating something of a cultural practice of such texts written in the north of Italy and published by Aldus Manutius.<sup>6</sup>

The attribution of Francesco Colonna from the Dominican monastery of SS. Giovanni e Paolo is also Pompeo Molmente's conclusion, who takes his cue from Gnoli, and presents further archival evidence of the life of this Francesco Colonna, the Dominican friar (Molmenti, 1906). Roberto Weiss presented an updated biography of Francesco Colonna (1961) observing the established parallel with Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione* though disregarding the narrative as 'a serious runner up as the most boring work in Italian literature' without any further analysis on the narrative (Weiss, 1961, p. 78).

Rino Avesani (1962) reviewed the work by Casella and Pozzi confirming the attribution to the Francesco Colonna of SS. Giovanni e Paolo (Avesani, 1962, pp. 435–440). The later work by Eduardo Fumagalli (1992) argues against the Roman Colonna attribution, continuing to adhere to the Colonna venezia de SS. Giovanni e Paolo. He also comments on the lack of evidence to suggest a historical figure for the character of Polia, arguing for a conceptual figuration of her embodiment of virtue.<sup>7</sup>

Scholarship on the life of the Venetian Colonna was greatly augmented by Maria Teresa Casella's exhaustive archival research (1959), correlating dates and events of the Venetian friar with proposed dates in the narrative of Polia and Poliphilo.<sup>8</sup> Casella and Pozzi observe that Colonna was born in 1433, Venice, and became a Dominican priest in the convent of Saints John and Paul (Casella & Pozzi, 1959, p. 17). In 1465 he is in Treviso, possibly since 1462, and in 1465 teaches at Treviso. In 1473 he began his bachelor's degree in theology in Padua and this is awarded in 1481 *per ballum* (not by examination). He reappears in Venice in 1481 entitled as 'Magister' most likely obtained in Padua (Casella & Pozzi, 1959, p. 29). He latterly spent his later years in the convent of San Zanipolo before living outlawed by October 19<sup>th</sup> 1500 (most likely on account of moral misconduct) before emerging by 1512 in the convent. From 1515 he is again in Treviso and in 1516 defends himself in Venice against the case of "sverginata putta" (Casella & Pozzi, 1959, p. 69). In 1518 he has a job teaching grammar, and in 1523 he is documented as supervising restoration work in San Zanipolo. (Casella & Pozzi, 1959, p. 78). He dies on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1527.

This biography is added to by Emilio Menegazzo (2001) commenting also on the character of Colonna and corroborating the information provided previously by Daniela Fattori (1996) (Fattori, 1996, pp. 281–287; Menegazzo, 2001b, pp. 3–47, 2001a, pp. 48–64). This attribution is the focus of the commentary of Ciapponi and Pozzi's enormous 1964 publication on the textual sources and language of the *Hypnerotomachia* (Casella & Pozzi, 1959, 1984, pp. 159–180). The most ground-breaking commentary and note on the authorship by the Venetian Colonna of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, however, is by Ariani and Gabriele's analysis of the philosophical material (1999) with a further evidence for a Venetian Francesco Colonna as the author (Ariani & Gabriele, 1998). Finally, this Colonna has since become of standard acceptance in most recent Poliphilo scholarship of the last two decades and remains the norm.

### **Alberti as Author:**

The attribution of Alberti as the author first appears in Emanuela Kretzulesco-Quaranta's publication, this is after an initial attribution to the Colonna, lord of Palestrina, and her prior attribution of the text to a committee consisting of Leon Battista Alberti, Lorenzo de' Medici, Francesco Colonna romano, Pico Mirandola, Domizio Calderini and Gaspare da Verona (Charageat, 1979; Kretzulesco-Quaranta, 1970, 1986). This latter attribution by 'committee' is refuted by Gabriele, on account of the work, and serious examination in the original language, as being penned by only one hand and cannot be argued to have been written by group stratifications, whose variations in form and content would not be possible to hide (Ariani & Gabriele, 1998, p. lxxxiv).

In spite of this, however, Giovanni Pasetti (2010) argues for a Florentine connection with authorship through an inspiration for the journey from Pico Mirandola (Pasetti, 2010). Seemingly unacquainted with Kretzulesco-Quaranta's Albertian attribution, Lefavre argues for the same attribution based on the proliferation of Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* (Lefavre, 1997). This is refuted by Gabriele for not accounting for the Venetian

<sup>6</sup> (Gnoli, 1899, p. 190) "Certo è che frate Francesco Colonna nacque nel 1433 circa, e morì, non nel luglio, ma il 2 ottobre del".

<sup>7</sup> (Fumagalli, 1992, p. 421) See also (Fumagalli, 1986, pp. 207–231)

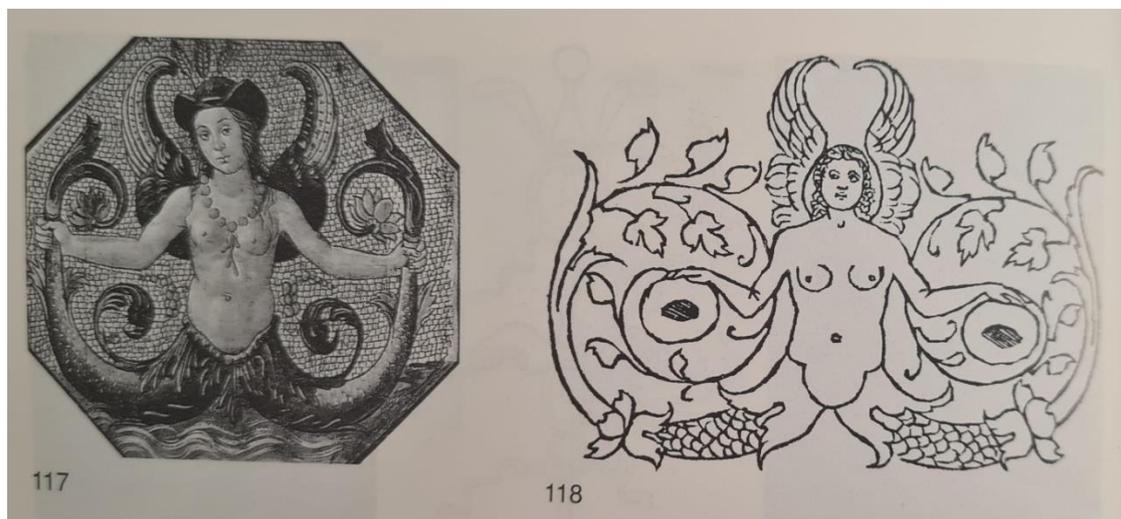
<sup>8</sup> (G. Pozzi & Ciapponi, 1962, pp. 320–325) See also (G. P. Pozzi, 1962)

language, or for the death of Alberti in 1472 despite the text of the *Hypnerotomachia* borrowing ideas from texts up until its publication in 1499, such as certain words from Nicolo Perotti's *Cornucopia* printed after his death in 1489, or the borrowing from Germanicus' *Aratea*, published by the Adline Press in 1499 (Ariani & Gabriele, 1998, p. lxxxv). Finally, and most recently, Lionel March (2015) argues, on the basis of numerical symbolism, for an Albertian attribution of authorship (March, 2015).

### The Roman Colonna:

Donati refutes a Venetian Francesco Colonna (1962) and concludes a Colonna romano, lord of Preneste, through the relationship to the temple of Fortuna Primigenia, and the mausoleum of S. Constanza. He goes on to argue the relationship between text and image with the temple of *Domina Venere* (1975).<sup>9</sup> This argument is also taken up by Gerhardt Goebel (Goebel, 1983). The most prominent Roman Colonna advocate is, however, Maurizio Calvesi whose seventy-five point thesis on this attribution may be, very roughly, summarised as thus:<sup>10</sup>

Calvesi references Jean Martin's 1546 edition of le Song de Polifile in which he writes the author was of an illustrious house, and Jacques Gohorry's edition of 1554 where he states that he thinks the author was of an illustrious Roman family (Calvesi, 1996, p. 33). He observes how Leonardo Crassi's brother was married to the daughter of Francesco's sister, demonstrating a familial connection (Calvesi, 1996, p. 34). Beside observing Matteo Visconti's line "Mirando poi Francisco alta columna/ Per cui phama immortal de voi rissona" (admiring Francesco, the high column, through whom your fame resounds) that was used by Petrarch in a poem to the noble Roman Colonna family, Calvesi also looks at the similarity of a heraldic imagery of a siren on the Colonna coat of arms (though without a crown in the *Hypnerotomachia*) (Calvesi, 1996, pp. 35–48).



**Fig. 2 A siren on the Colonna of Palestrina coat of arms, and a depiction of a mermaid from the *Hypnerotomachia*, Maurizio Calvesi, *La "pugna d'amore in sogno" di Francesco Colonna Romano* (Roma: Lithos Editrice, 1996), 192.**

Calvesi observes Colonna's interest in verse (though none survive) and his families antiquarian interests, beside the ownership of the Temple of Fortune, which Colonna restored, and which for Calvesi was the basis of the Magna Porta (Calvesi, 1996, pp. 75–82). He relates the banquet of Eleuterylida with the banquet held in 1473 for Eleonora of Aragon and observes the similarities with the illustrations and Roman frescoes arguing that the artist must have known the Borgia frescoes (Calvesi, 1996, pp. 106–120; 158–171). Regarding the connection with Treviso and the Veneto, Calvesi argues for Polia to be a symbolic character and not based on a real woman, and that the language is not particularly Venetian at all (Calvesi, 1996, pp. 198–213).

The life of the Colonna romano, from Calvesi's research looks thus: born to Stefano Colonna and Eugenia Farnese, 1453, and mentioned in an epigram by Paolo Porcari in 1468 and by 1471 becomes a master of Latin prose and verse (Calvesi, 1996, p. 259). Becomes Magister of Saint Peter's in 1473 and in 1482 the Pope appoints him 'commander' of the monastery of Santo Pastore in Riete and frees him from any future excommunication (Calvesi,

<sup>9</sup> (Calvesi, 1980b, pp. 302–304; Donati, 1962a, 1975, pp. 51–55)

<sup>10</sup> (Calvesi, 1997, pp. 34–36; Calvesi, 1980a, pp. 217–224, 1984, pp. 137–145, 1989, pp. 70–101) See also, Maurizio Calvesi, "Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, Nuovi Riscontri e Nuove Evidenze Documentarie per Francesco Colonna Signore Di Preneste," *Sto-Ria Dell'arte* 60 (1987): 85–136; Maurizio Calvesi, "Fratello Polifilo: L'enigma Di Francesco Colonna," *Art e Dossier* 60 (1987): 85–136; Maurizio Calvesi, *La "Pugna d'amore in Sogno" Di Francesco Colonna Romano* (Rome: Lithos, 1996); Maurizio Calvesi, "Parenti e Discendenti Di Francesco Colonna," *Miscellanea Marciana* 16 (2005): 17–30; Maurizio Calvesi, "Ancora per Francesco Colonna," *Storia dell'arte* 124 (2009): 25–30.

1996, p. 260). In this year he succeeds his father in becoming lord of Palestrina (Calvesi, 1996, pp. 260–261). By 1485 he becomes governor of Tivoli, and marries Orsini Orsina in c.1490 and in 1493 finishes restoration of the Palastrina temple as a palace (as dated on the temple) (Calvesi, 1996, pp. 261–264). He observes in 1503 the Pope sends soldiers to Palestrina to occupy Francesco's properties, which are restored that year on the Popes death, then finally in 1517 the distribution of wealth and property of Francesco's suggests his death (Calvesi, 1996, pp. 267–270).

In a comparative study between Colonna's description of the magna Porta and tempio di Venere, and Filarete's conceptions for the bronze door for S. Pietro, Rome (1445) Angela Cianfarini concludes a similarity of mythological and historical iconography suggesting a direct inspiration (Cianfarini, 1996, pp. 561–576). Corroborating this notion Debora Vagnoni concludes that the hieroglyphic illustrations in the *Hypnerotomachia* are a source for Valeriano's own Hieroglyphica, on account of both dissimulating compositions, written within the humanist atmosphere of 15<sup>th</sup> century Rome. (Debora Vagnoni, "Le Immagini Della Dissimulazione: I Hieroglyphica Di Pierio Valeriano e l'Hypnerotomachia" (Roma nella svolta tra Quattro e Cinquecento: atti del Convegno internazionale di studi; Roma; De Luca, roma, 2004), 601–5).

More recently, Stefano Del Lungo argues that the narrative reflects a medieval pilgrimage of Rome, allegorically progressing between S. Peters and S. Giovanni in Laterano, and argues that the 14bi-frontal dancers, represent the 14 gates of Rome (Del Lungo, 2004, pp. 505–510). Stefano Colonna, the most recent bearer of the Calvesian 'Colonna romano' theory (and perhaps the most emotionally involved on account of the attempt to prove a relation between himself and his supposed author of the Poliphilo) adds further to the discourse, documenting evidence of the Roman Colonna's journeys to Venice as historical evidence. However, both examples offer limited exploration of specific details, and do not explicitly relate to Poliphilian architectural examples.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, Stefano Colonna draws on a list of previous studies in support of his claim, including, Danesi's 1987 study constructing a cultural profile of a Palestrinian Colonna (Danesi, 1988, pp. 86–97; S. Davidson, 1989, pp. 137–154); Borsi's 1995 analysis of the Roman architectural components; Adorasio's 2004 study of Roman antiquarianism; Bober's 2004 study of a relationship between Pomposio Leto and Francesco Colonna Romano (Adorasio, 1976, p. 34, 2004, pp. 465–480); Briganti's 2004 study of the link between the Roman families Counts, Orsinis, Aguillaras, and Colonna di Palestrina (Bober, 2004, pp. 455–464; Bober et al., 2010); Cianfarni's 2004 relationship between the Roman Colonna and the door of San Pietro by Filarete (Cianforni, 2004, pp. 561–576); Davidson's 2004 study exploring the relationship between narrative and the literary figures of Cardinal Bessarione, Pomponio Leto and his followers Sylvie G. Davidson, "In Search of Francesco Colonna's Rhetorical and Political Ploys" (Roma nella svolta tra Quattro e Cinquecento: atti del Convegno internazionale di studi; Roma; De Luca, roma, 2004), 553–60; Davidson, "L'Hypnerotomachia Polphili Ovvero l'abolizione Del Tempo."; and Del Lungo's 2004 study exploring the relationship between the Tor de 'Specchi in Rome and the tower in the *Hypnerotomachia* (S. Colonna, 2009, pp. 19–66; Del Lungo, 2004, pp. 505–510). This long list of Roman studies do not, however, sufficiently engage in the issues of the Venetian language and the absence of less well-known Roman elements in the text, making the endeavour seem, at times, superfluous to an authorial argument..

### Authorial Evidencing

In examining the authorial evidence, the first point to cover is some of the satellite-theories of authorship. Firstly, Feliciano as the author, presented by Komentovskia in 1936 is put forward, during a time of enormous interest in antiquarian matters in the Poliphilo and in a contemporary academic climate which assumed the true meaning of the text was to explore classical ruins and antiquarian objects, which Polia allegorises.<sup>12</sup> This theory, however, suffers, as other candidates do, from the issue that the *Hypnerotomachia* can be shown to have been written as late as 1499, and the evidence of referencing Germanicus' *Aratea*, published in 1499, proves too great an issue, as Felice Feliciano died in 1480.

The second candidate, Ciriaco d'Ancona, presented by Charles Mitchell in 1960, suffers the same issue, as Ciriaco died in 1452. We can see, however, from the travel-diary like descriptions at certain parts of the narrative that describe the experience of walking from one ruin to another, and their formal characteristics and measurements, that there is certainly a resemblance between these types of narrative modulation into travel diary description and ekphrasis, especially with Ciriaco's writings.<sup>13</sup> Yet, despite this, the issue lies in the date of composition and its literary sources, for the *Hypnerotomachia* takes numerous words from Perotti's *Cornucopia* printed after his death in 1489, some thirty years after Ciriaco's death, warranting a ghost to have finished the text after Ciriaco.

<sup>11</sup> (S. Colonna, 2002, pp. 23–29, 2004b, pp. 93–98, 2012, 2014, pp. 2–4) See also (S. Colonna, 1989, pp. 127–142, 2004a, pp. 577–600, 2004b)

<sup>12</sup> On this matter see (Brunetti, 1999, pp. 157–164)

<sup>13</sup> For instance, see HP, 57 and (Ciriaco d'Ancona et al., 2003, p. 15)

Thirdly, should Niccolò Lelio Cosmico be the author, as Roswitha Stewering presents in 1996, though the dates would suffice in that he lived until 1500, the text would have been something of an anomaly, due to its use of Venetian language. Indeed, there is not much else to this theory, (for example with regard to linguistic analysis, geographic evidencing on architectural examples, or Tuscan iconography), other than the mention by Polia, in the *Hypnerotomachia*, of the bishop being her relative (HP, 379).

Fourthly, Alessandro Parronchi (1963) argues that fra Eliseo da Treviso is the author, (after previously proposing Giannantonio Campano) similarly argued by P. Scapecchi in 1983, based on a book of annals of the Servite Order by A. Giani, published in c.1618 which listed fra Eliseo da Treviso as 'a Poliphio'. Gabriele surmises that Eliseo, due to his scholarliness and erudition, was known by his brothers as a venerable 'Poliphilo' and over a century later this whimsical attribution became confused with fact (Ariani & Gabriele, 1998, p. lxxxiii-iv). Given the lack of documentary evidence for claiming Eelasio da Treviso as author, we must presume that the evidence may rest on that assumption.

Fifthly, Kretzulesco-Quaranta (1976) argues the *Hypnerotomachia* was written by a committee consisting of Leon Battista Alberti, Lorenzo de' Medici, Francesco Colonna romano, and Pico Mirandola, aided by Domizio Calderini and Gaspare da Verona, who provided the Venetian patina. This does seem too great a northern-linguistic feat considering the number of Florentines in this committee-theory, however. Secondly, despite the collection of great humanists on so great a project there is no documentary evidence in any of their existing notes and writings of such a joint-venture. (Ariani & Gabriele, 1998, p. lxxxiv). Thirdly, a thorough reading of the original reveals not a stitching together of styles, but a consistent hand, demonstrating not a collective effort but rather a single one (Ariani & Gabriele, 1998, p. lxxxiv).

Sixthly, should the author wish to remain anonymous, as suggested by Lamberto Donati (1962) it would be rather more easily achieved without the acrostic commenting on a 'Franciscus Columna' as a fake author, or dedicatee. Necessity to remain anonymous due to the pagan content and the "double accusation" of inferring immortality is plausible but the acrostic, as a symbol of anonymity, is not (Donati, 1963, p. 254). It is more revealing than concealing to have the novel nominally attributed. Furthermore, given the evidence of a Francesco Colonna being repeatedly referenced, as already noted, nearly all scholars now assume a Francesco Colonna as author.

Regarding the Roman Colonna who was born to a Stefano Colonna and Eugenia Farnese, in 1453, he became a magister of Saint Peter's, governor of Tivoli, had apparent participation in the Roman Academy of Leto and lived a life of learning, privilege and wealth, with knowledge of Latin prose and poetry. The argument that this historic figure must be the author rests on ideological evidence that relies on prejudicial thinking, for believing only wealth and privileged education can account for extraordinary works of art and literature (a current trend in Shakespearean biographical studies where Francis Bacon and Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, are now common authorial substitutes). A genuine relationship between the text and a socio-cultural geographic reflection of Rome and Lazio to support the Colonna romano theory is objectively thin on the ground, and apart from well-known iconographical similarities (such as the basis of the amphitheatre of Venus on the colosseum) there is almost nothing to go on..

What, however, are these other Roman elements? Apart from the reference to the Colosseum, there is of course the obelisk in the Vatican, the baths of Hadrian, the monolithic columns of Agrippa's Pantheon and possibly the Constantinian sepulchral monument outside Rome, later converted into the church of Santa Constanza, but these are all well-known and do not express an intimate relationship with the architectural landscape of Rome. One may assume, if the author was Roman, perhaps there would be further similarities given the extent of ruins available. Indeed, there is also the similarities with the Arco dei Gavi of Verona, the reference to the glass from the island of Murano, and intimate references to Treviso. There are, however, still greater issues with the Colonna romano theory, for there is no Lazio element of the language at all, which would make the Colonna romano's efforts to create a Veneto-Latin hybrid language particularly bizarre. The academy of Pomponio Leto, that Colonna romano was said to frequent, disbanded in 1467 when the nobleman was 14 years of age, and despite supervising and paying for the refurbishment of the Temple of Fortune there are no further architectural references to him.

Indeed, the Colonna romano is, on all accounts, an unlikely author, simply due to his lack of literary compositions, with almost no literary remains except an epigram addressed to him. A matter that is further emphasised when we consider that there is no familial mention of the *Hypnerotomachia* by the family over the last five hundred years, despite many of the family members in proceeding centuries being scholars and bibliophiles. Lastly, as Ariani states: "it is incomprehensible that the Roman Francesco Colonna would have been thus alienated from his own linguistic and cultural heritage, sacrificing it in favour of a language and ambience like those of Venice and Padua, which biographically and culturally were completely foreign to him" (Ariani & Gabriele, 1998, p. lxxxii).

Thirdly, the attribution of Alberti (1404-72) as author, initially put forward by Princess Eamanela Kretzulesco-Quaranta, is based on the breadth of ideas and knowledge of classical antiquity in the text. This, she argues, would have been written in Latin before 1464, and transcribed into a venetian vernacular by the Venetian humanists Domizio Calderini and Gaspare da Verona after Alberti's death (Kretzulesco-Quaranta, 1986, p. 139). In

1997 Liane Lefaivre independently came to the same authorial candidate, with analysis from Alberti's texts. She argues that no other humanist had the span of talents required to create the work, making him the only likely candidate. She observes the learning of classical architectural terms from Vitruvius's *De architectura*, such as *abacus*, *epistylus*, *scotia*, and *troclea* (from the Greek) and Alberti's *De re aedificatoria*, such as *venter*, *latastrum*, *obiculus* and *rudens*, as well as the source material of similar buildings, creating an identification of the author as both learned humanist and antiquarian connoisseur (Lefaivre, 2005, p. 34). Lefaivre observes the link between nature and edifice and the manner in which architecture and nature become synonymous (this is certainly the case in the grounds of Eleuterylida and the garden island of Cytherea). Indeed, we may add that there is an abundance of natural forms throughout Alberti's architectural designs wherein nature and edifice bare a conceptual relationship.<sup>14</sup>

With regard to Alberti's literary writings, Lefaivre cites his love of literature and his broad span of literary interests, re-stating the borrowings from Dante and Boccaccio, Jean de Meun, yet she does not engage sufficiently with the concept of lovesickness, other than to describe an unbridled eroticism rife throughout the *Hypnerotomachia*, which in her description of its concentrated phenomenological effect of literary style, appears uncharacteristic of Alberti's works (Lefaivre, 1997, pp. 62–77). Here, we may augment, for, particularly in Book II, there is a subtle literary model of lovesickness which could easily have been incorporated into one of Alberti's amorous writings, such as *Deifira* and *Ecatonfilea*. In Alberti's *Deifira*, love is a multifaceted process which, for Filarco, characterises a psychological interaction with the beloved, creating emotional responses that result in obsession, suffering, and even anger; while the elegiac character of Pallimacro characterises a longing for the beloved, resulting in melancholic suffering.<sup>15</sup> The elegiac portrayal of love's detrimental result on Poliphilo finds a courtly similarity in Alberti's *Ecatonfilea* where an ideal lover cultivates himself to be worthy of receiving love.<sup>16</sup> The physical effects of lovesickness are clear in Polia's narration of Poliphilo's physical decline through unrequited love, regarding notions of love's visual commencement, developing obsession, and mental agitation leading to physical decline.<sup>17</sup> We are reminded here of Landino's remark of 'Alberti the chameleon' and of the highly varied types of work he engaged in, documented by Stefano Cracolici.<sup>18</sup>

March argues that the year the *Hypnerotomachia* was complete, 1467, proceeded by one year Alberti's writings on coded messages, and that the narrative contains ciphers which illuminate its author as Alberti. He attributes numerical values to letters to determine that words Polia, Poliphilo, and *Hypnerotomachia* are multiplications of each other creating a square root of a larger figure demonstrating a very mathematical way of composing the text, which he relates to Alberti's architecture, particularly Santa Maria Novella (March, 2015, pp. 702–710). Unfortunately, despite many illuminating insights to the mathematical underpinnings of both the *Hypnerotomachia* and Alberti's own projects, March fails to address the Venetian language or borrowings from the *Aratea* and *Cornucopia* that object to the 1467 date of completing the text.

On this note, there are indeed numerous examples of arithmosophical examples of symbolic numbers used in the *Hypnerotomachia* that we observe when examining the architectural proportions and ratios, such as the use of six in proportioning the Magna Porta, the use seven and four in the palace of Eleuterylida, and eight and ten in the temple and amphitheatre of Venus. These numbers, although finding instances in the geometry of Alberti reflect more greatly the humanist interest in numerical symbolism, which itself derives from Medieval scholasticism, presenting a notion that this knowledge could also have been learnt from a monastery.

These analyses of the relationship between the *Hypnerotomachia* and Alberti's texts as evidence for the attribution of authorship, (of which there are too numerous to mention), are not without great issues to contend with. Although one can argue against the idea that the rationality of Alberti's prose which presents balanced concepts behind each character in his amorous writings is largely at odds with the narrative emphasis on phenomenological experience in the *Hypnerotomachia*, particularly with regards the handling of eroticism (on the grounds of there being more eroticism in Alberti's fictional characters and more objective, un-erotic thinking on behalf of Poliphilo than often credited) there are larger issues. Firstly, with regards the Venetian language, which Lefaivre fails to address, Thomas Reiser has commented on the use of Venetian spellings of words, such as *aggiunti*, *leggerai*, and *legge* throughout the text, creating a clear relationship to the Veneto and the metamorphosis genesis myths of Treviso, where the narrative unfolds (Reiser, 2014, p. viii). This is beside the well-known comments by Alberti on Tuscan vernacular which are at odds with Poliphilo's plurilingual experimentalism (Ariani & Gabriele, 1998, p. LXXXV). Secondly, the composition of the text continues until 1499 which requires an author to have completed Alberti's *Hypnerotomachia* after Alberti's death in 1472, beside Venetianizing the language.

Finally, that the Venetian Colonna should be the author does echo in the use of the *Rocconella herbal*, possible acquaintance with the Paduan botanical gardens, the narrative partly set in Treviso, and the Latinization of verbs usual in the art-languages of the North, beside the 3,000 Greek words, suggesting a northern location,

<sup>14</sup> (Lefaivre, 1997, p. 52) Consider on this point the use of natural geometries in Alberti's Santa Maria Novella.

<sup>15</sup> Alberti, *Deifira*, in C. Grayson, ed., *Opere Volgari*, vol. 3 (Laterza: Bari, 1973), 245.

<sup>16</sup> Consider, for instance, *Novella di Ippolito e Lionora*; Leonardo Bruni, *Stratonice*; Alberti, *Deifira*, and *Ecatonfilea*.

<sup>17</sup> Consider here, *Hypnerotomachia*, 12; 152; 390; 425, for instance.

<sup>18</sup> Cristoforo Landino, "Proemio al Commento dantesco," in *Scritti critici e teorici*, ed. R. Car-dini, vol. 1 (Roma: Bulzoni, 1974) 100-64; (Cracolici, 2006)

culturally influenced from ties with Constantinople (F. Colonna, 1968). In the geographic question, the narrative symbolism pertains outside the epistemological and literary remit of an Ovidian tradition (per Pozzi's argument) on account of Neoplatonic nuances, Pythagorean symbolism and initiatory sequences echoing spiritual senses of the mystic middle ages; which would, perhaps, suit a friar over a Patrician. There is also the relaxed atmosphere in the Venetian Dominican communities on account of the plague that decimated them, upon which the Venetian Colonna stretched these lax rules to breaking point due to licentious behaviour, not unbefitting the author of the *Hypnerotomachia* (Lowry, 1979, pp. 121–122). Then there are the Venetian uses of language, which suggests an obvious Veneto geographic location, indeed given the evidence it is impossible to say the author could not have been from elsewhere.

But is Francesco Colonna, the friar of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, born 1433, the author? There are issues with this attribution which require consideration. Firstly, Colonna venezia, who was not ordained until the age of 30, did not receive his bachelors degree until 40 at the university of Padua, perhaps displaying a slow acquisition of grammar, arithmetic, logic, rhetoric, music, and astronomy, in the Dominican curriculum. This creates a portrayal at odds with the total mastery of humanist learning present in the *Hypnerotomachia*. The author requires a mastery of classical languages, architectural theory; types of engineering, antiquarianism, a connoisseurship of the arts, and interior design; contemporary and classical knowledge of literature and compositional techniques of genres; knowledge of the tradition of lovesickness; and interests steeped in Medieval and classical authors sympathetic to Neoplatonic and mystical concepts. This is notwithstanding the contemporary mediocre educational system present at SS. Giovanni e Paolo, imparted by each convent in each province of theological studies and natural philosophy complimented by the *studium Bibliae et sententiarum*, a more thorough analysis of holy scripture, which appears to have given Colonna apparent difficulties in gaining, casting doubt over his ability to compose such a text as the *Hypnerotomachia*.

### Narratological method in Biographical Research:

What are the means by which narratological research may help with the attribution of authorship? Firstly, we should observe the different concepts that are at play in Book I and II, beside obvious stylistic differences, such as the great interest in lovesickness and medical traditions, narrative use of mythology in theme and setting in Book II, the great fascination with antiquity and display of a connoisseur of the arts in relation to complex philosophical concepts in Book I and the absence of those highly complex philosophical structures in Book II. It is already common knowledge that such stylistic dissimilarities suggest an earlier date of composition, allowing us to begin a biographical portrait with medical and elegiac traditions of love-sickness as the first stage to form the text suggestive of the first literary learning in the life of the author.

Firstly, through Polia's narration in Book II we have descriptions of Poliphilo displaying traditional elegiac qualities of lovesickness, where she narrates "but he did not know what to do, except stare and stare again with obsessive gaze."<sup>19</sup> Love, having been described as first entering the gaze here, then through obsession, becomes physically detrimental via the power of sight, described as causing 'perpetual sorrow and anxiety' and later exclaiming 'as a last resort, it seems to me better to die now, rather than to live burdened with the absence of your love' indicating a pronounced interest in the elegiac tradition of lovesickness.<sup>20</sup>

Given the description of love entering the eyes we may draw a connection to Galen, whilst love as an illness of the soul may refer to Constantine's *Viaticum* and a comparable portrayal in the *Liber Pantegni* demonstrating, certainly, a literary interest upon the medical tradition of lovesickness.<sup>21</sup> To this literary tradition we can add, too, the elegiac similarities with Catullus' ode to Lesbia who exclaims "an eternal night" and "a thousand kisses" with his beloved; or Propertius' who describes laziness for the absence of his beloved, declaring "my soul is starved for her kisses" leaving him resting for lack of energy upon the couch; or Echoes' forlorn echoes of Narcissus whilst feeling "The more she followed him/ the hotter did she burn, as when the flame/ flares upward from the sulphur on the torch./ Oh, how she longed to make her passion known!" which reflect the painful anguish characterised in Poliphilo, besides thematic similarities on the theme of love with Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*, Alberti's *Deifira*, Bruni's *Stratonice*.<sup>22</sup>

The second theme (I limit myself to only discussing two here) of dissimilarity of content between the books concerns thematic and contextual mythology. That is to say there are not only Ovidian borrowings, for instance the combination of Ovidian interacting Latin Gods, here with the borrowing from Boccaccio's *Nastagio*

<sup>19</sup> *Hypnerotomachia*, 389.

<sup>20</sup> *Hypnerotomachia*, 389; 390.

<sup>21</sup> *Breviarium Constantini dictum viaticum*, Lugd., 1510 (John Crerar Library), Liber primus, cap. X in (Lowes, 1914, p. 515) See also, (Wack, 1990, p. 7)

<sup>22</sup> Sextus Propertius, *Propertius in Love: The Elegies* (University of California Press, 2002), 26., for an historiography of Narcissus see (Spaas & Selous, 2000), on Propertius see (Trent, 1898, p. 263) For further details see (O'Neill, 2020, pp. 129–155)

degli Onesti, but also a setting concerning local mythology.<sup>23</sup> Here, Polia describes the mythological origins of Treviso by Lelius Silirius, beside the origin myth of the nearby town of Murganio, the characters of Lelio Syliro and his daughters Astorchia and Melmia who were turned into streams that flow through Treviso (Syliro become the Sile), making the author's local mythologising of Treviso as the setting for the literary mythology of the narrative suggestive of native dwelling near Treviso.<sup>24</sup> We may then place medical learning and literary learning of mythology and the elegiac tradition as the first steps of personal education on behalf of the author. Presuming there is some historic truth to the date the second book was finished, in 1467, we thus assume this learning occurs sufficiently up until this point.

Secondly, we observe that the content of antiquarian connoisseurship is a concept reserved for Book I, displaying a later form of education, possibly post 1467, and more importantly demanding on-site experience. For instance, although the author has through literary reading a knowledge of building characteristics and their ancient similarities, such as inside the Magna Porta where Poliphilo reads the iconography of a cornice, observing Clymene, Cyparissus, and Daphne, saying 'Such faultless bas-relief was never made by the stone-carver Polycleitus, nor by Phidias, nor Lysippus.'<sup>25</sup> The *Magna Porta* bears formal similarity to the triumphal *Arco dei Gavi*, Verona, while the sculptural reliefs echo the design of the *Arco di Traiano*, Benevento and here Poliphilo compares the style of flanking monumental monolithic columns to Agrippa's *Pantheon*, suggesting a relatively broad area of archeological exploration.

There are also descriptions in the rhetorical modulation of the narrative into travel-diary note-taking, that is highly expressive of extensive ruin-exploring. For instance:

As I hurried up to this deserted place I was seized with an unexpected joy ... I discovered there a colonnade of the noblest form imaginable ... There were the epistyles and capitals, excellently designed and roughly carved; cornices, zophori or friezes and arched beams ... each face of the square base ... was six stadia in length. Multiplied by four, this gave the ambitus of the pyramid's equilateral footing as twenty-four stadia.<sup>26</sup>

What is displayed is an intimate knowledge of antiquarianism through literary knowledge and exploration of ruins, as well as a markedly educated connoisseurship, displaying not only passive reading and accumulation of names, but intimate understanding of their formal and historic characteristics. His experience of going from ruin to ruin in real time, reflects extensive experience.

Charles Mitchel has observed a similarity between Poliphilo's description of the polyandron and its ruins, with those that were sketched onsite, documented in a notebook of Ciriaco d'Ancona, and owned by Felice Feliciano, suggesting a possible viewing of the notebooks or acquaintance with Feliciano (Mitchell, 1960, pp. 455–483). Furthermore, Mitchell argues that the Medusa head upon the Magna Porta may have been influenced from Ciriaco's description at the temple of Hadrian at Cizicus; and the golden grapevines described upon the temple of Venus, may reference those described by Ciriaco at Cizicus, suggestive of interactions with northern antiquarians of the time (Mitchell, 1960, pp. 455–483). On account of Feliciano dying in 1479, if the author of the *Hypnerotomachia* and Feliciano did meet, it would at least suggest the antiquarian interests took place between 1469 and 1479 and after.

On account of the link between antiquarianism and architectural theory at this time, we may posit a possible period of learning into engineering and architecture around 1479 and afterward.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, this learning is decidedly steeped, to the extent that I argue the author was able to construct the buildings that he imagined.<sup>28</sup> I suggest that he worked from the architectural plans of the buildings that he created and then included them into the narrative of the *Hypnerotomachia*.

At this time and throughout the period between 1467 and 1499 when the final research for the *Hypnerotomachia* was complete, we have his interest in garden design and botanical interest from the northern herbaries and most likely the Paduan botanical gardens. There is stark comparison between the medieval styled *hortus conclusus* in the garden of Adonis and the Eleutherilidian gardens, with their straight garden paths flanking the palazzo possibly demonstrating Albertian influence, whilst the balance of geometry and design could reflect the concept of *concinitas*, representing a unique form of the developing Renaissance-styled garden. The final development by the author in garden design, is in the island garden of Cytherea, characterised by a circular *locus amoenus* similar with that described by Theodore Hyrtakenos of the theoretical garden of Saint Anna in the Byzantine *Ecphrasis in Paradisum S. Annae*, demonstrating a uniquely literary advancement on contemporary

<sup>23</sup> *Hypnerotomachia*, 401-23.

<sup>24</sup> *Hypnerotomachia*, 383-86. On this point see (Reiser, 2014, p. 8)

<sup>25</sup> *Hypnerotomachia*, 54.

<sup>26</sup> *Hypnerotomachia*, 22-3.

<sup>27</sup> Consider here the relationship between Alberti and the level of engineering present in the *Hypnerotomachia*, in (Lefavre, 1997, pp. 115–126)

<sup>28</sup> On this matter see (O'Neill, 2020, pp. 50–81)

garden aesthetics (Kural, 2018, pp. 66–67; O'Neill, 2020, p. 148).

Thirdly, there is the emergence of highly Neoplatonic elements regarding the use of, not only objects of art and architecture, but also the topography, and last of all, a Neoplatonic visualisation of narrative culminating in Book I.<sup>29</sup> For example, on the holy centre of Cytherea, there is a description observed in real time allowing the reader to visualise a metaphysical transformation of *materia* into the metaphysical, as nature becomes crystalline and reflective, bridging the earth and sun, in Neoplatonic initiatic splendour. On this issue let us repeat Gabriele's reflection upon the luminous and reflective characteristics of the island of Cytherea:

The prodigy of this "razor-sharp matter" is precisely that of constituting an incredibly veracious land in which Nature rejoices ("Ornatissima insula poscia of gratissimo et novello et perhenne operation of verneo virore, for all the most highly regarded plan"): marvellous Venus of an alma lux that transforms the crystal into "perhenne virore", into herbs and flowers made of celestial light and solar water, everything on the island is "translucent": the mirror-boxes that reflect everywhere the colours of the flowers in HP, p. 307; the amber, the columns, the vases in HP, pp. 306-309 in a musical-luminous concretion [HP, p. 309 "emusically"; see HP, p. 160, note 1]; the river-mirror in HP, p. 312; the boxwood of "vitiina illustratione" in HP, p. 316; the mosaic esplanade of "specula illustratione" in HP, p. 325; the trophies in HP, p. 330; the amphitheatre of "alabastryte sua nitella superba luculenta reserved" in HP, p. 350, not to mention the gem-crystalline source of Venus in HP, p. 360, in which the "translucent flesh" of the goddess herself is immersed, the supreme epiphany of numinous light (Ariani & Gabriele, 1998, p. 978).

This excerpt implies the great interest in Neoplatonic and mystagogic matters by 1499 presenting a further step in the author's education.

Fourthly, and finally, we know from the publication of Germanicus's *Aratea* that the completion of the formation of language had to have taken place by 1499, marking the end of the lengthy period of composition where ideas of linguistic style and visualisation of narrative become formed.<sup>30</sup> This may have begun before the date of 1467, and developed latterly through Perotti's *Cornucopia*, and may mark both an earliest, latest, and longest interest on behalf of the author.

### Conclusion

The narrative stylistic and thematic modulations suggest stages of narrative composition which have been stitched together, most likely overlapping, and written from separate stages of interest and education, reflecting a sum of the author's considerable knowledge. A narratological method of biographical research would consequently suggest the following:

- a) Early medical and elegiac interests in the traditions of lovesickness; local and literary mythologies (by 1467)
- b) Antiquarian interests of architecture, sculpture, engineering, garden design and botany, extensive exploration of ruins and learning of antique architecture and sculpture- likely begun between 1467 and 1479, possibly continued afterward.
- c) Developing philosophical interests in Neoplatonic and mystagogic literature forming into the concept of self-transformation that characterises Book 1; this is developed into the visualisation of nature and *materia* into the metaphysical at the end of Book 1 completing his philosophical interests, in Cytherea (either coinciding with or after the antiquarian education, likely part of the last elements of the author's learning and writing over the 1480s-90s.)
- d) Through the lengthy process of composing the text over several decades an interest in language developed up until 1499, this may mark the earliest and latest form of education for the author but is impossible to determine except for its completion by the publication of Germanicus' *Aratea*.

Through this means we have a biographical profile that connects with the educational interests of the author, evidenced through the developing literary style and interests in the narrative. The discussion put forth in this paper argues that by engaging with the text, and specifically the narrative, its flow and its varied styles and concepts, an understanding of the process of composition presents itself and consequently aspects of the author's education and biography are revealed.

<sup>29</sup> On this matter consider (O'Neill, 2020, pp. 23–49)

<sup>30</sup> On the visualisation of language see (Lucia A. Ciapponi., 1964, p. 13)

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