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The *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* by Gaius Julius Solinus: A Roman Geography for a Changing World

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ABSTRACT

The *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* is a collection of wondrous facts from various areas of natural science presented within the geographical framework of a description of the known world. Little is known of its author Gaius Julius Solinus, possibly a *grammaticus* who lived between the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century AD. Despite being today largely neglected within the field of Latin literature, the text played a significant role in the transmission of classical geographical and scientific knowledge to Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Since the publication of Theodor Mommsen's critical edition of the text in the late 19th century, studies on Solinus' work have largely focused on philological issues concerning the author's sources and the authenticity of the second redaction of the text. Such approach stemmed from the general view that the text was a mere epitome of its main source, Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*, and has not offered a comprehensive assessment as to why and for whom the *Collectanea* was written. This thesis aims to fill this gap in the research and to answer the question of what the ultimate purpose of this text was. Specifically, the following aspects of the issue are investigated: the cultural, social, and historical reasons that prompted Solinus' reorganisation of Pliny's knowledge; the world view that emerges from the prominent space reserved to Rome within the text; and the role of *mirabilia*, and in particular animal paradoxography, in providing the author with the epistemological support to the world order that his text upholds. The methodology here adopted follows a text-based approach, by analysing those passages of the *Collectanea* in which Solinus' tone, choice of words, and deviation from source material can be read as indicative of his authorial autonomy, and thus the reflection of a clear political project. This thesis concludes that a date of composition at the reign of Constantine I (or at least between the end of the third and the first few decades of the fourth century) is consistent with the author's need to reaffirm the cultural primacy of the city of Rome, at a time in which it was losing its political relevance. It also suggests that the view of Nature that emerges from Solinus' use of animal paradoxography (and *mirabilia* in general) is indicative of a 'deterministic' Weltanschauung, and is used as the moral justification of a providentially arranged world order with Rome at its centre.

This thesis ultimately argues that Solinus' *Collectanea* should be read independently from its sources, and that its importance lies in its being one of the most significant reflections of the cultural eclecticism of its time.

DECLARATION

This thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Due acknowledgement has been made to all other material used. The total word count of this thesis is 66,313 words as approved by the Higher Degrees by Research Committee.

Giovanni Piccolo

12 September 2022

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My interest in the work of Gaius Julius Solinus began in 2005 when, as an undergraduate student, I was first made aware of the existence of the *Collectanea* by my then lecturer of classical philology at the University of Rome, Professor Piergiorgio Parroni. My fascination with this text, and my desire to know more about its author have remained with me ever since, and this thesis is the culmination of the work begun all those years ago. To Professor Parroni, with whom I share a passion for ancient geography, I extend my most sincere gratitude for introducing me to a topic that has taken me on a journey around the wonders of the classical world, and has opened my eyes to the many fascinating aspects of one of the most exciting periods in Roman history.

Contents

INTRODUCTION

The description of our world seems hardly a task that one would undertake without the knowledge or, at least, the conviction of ultimately serving a purpose of some importance. It is, for example, the current concern over climate change and its effects on nature and all living creatures that has, in recent years, prompted the action of the likes of naturalist Sir David Attenborough, whose relentless efforts in ensuring that the general public be given access to all facts and information regarding our planet and the wonders within it are dictated by the belief that "few people will protect the natural world if they first don't love and understand it."[1] In a somewhat similar manner, in an unidentified time between the third and fourth century AD, the now practically unknown *grammaticus* Gaius Julius Solinus decided to embark on the thankless task of describing the territories of the Roman Empire and its bordering regions, by reordering the geographical, scientific, and anthropological information taken from Pliny's *Naturalis Historia,* Mela's *Chorographia* and other "selected works",[2] in order to provide his readers with a description of the known world and its wonders in the form of a compendium, first published under the title of *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium,* and later known as *Polyhistor.* While the comparison between modern-day scientific divulgation and an obscure late antique geographical digest might not seem immediately fitting, it prompts the question whether Solinus' work was in fact the manifestation of the author's need to respond to the social and political changes of the late empire, similarly to the way in which modern popular science plays a role in our society's response to the environmental challenges of our time.

[1] Sir David Attenborough speaking at the premier of Netflix's documentary series *Our Planet,* on 4 April 2019.

[2] Sol. *Praef.*, 3, "exquisitis enim aliquot uoluminibus studuisse me inpendio fateor…"

I. *The Work*

Often described in modern Latin literature handbooks as an epitome of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* written "in an exaggerated and confusing and insipid style",[3] Solinus' *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* is a collection of scientific and historical facts and curiosities presented within a geographical framework, aimed at providing an account of the geography, anthropology, flora and fauna of the known world. The structure of the work sees Solinus' description originate from a centre and follow an anticlockwise spiral movement that proceeds by regions, rather than in the form of a *periplus*. The centre from which Solinus' itinerary starts is none other than the city of Rome, to whose description Solinus devotes the first half of Chapter 1. After an account of the geography, topography, and history of the city, Solinus devotes the majority of the one hundred and twenty-seven paragraphs that make up Chapter 1 (the longest of the entire work) to a collection of interesting facts and *mirabilia* on various aspects of human nature, namely its biology, anatomy, physiognomy, and moral traits.

From Rome, Solinus moves on to describe Italy, Sicily, Sardinia and the Aeolian islands (2-6); he then proceeds to the "third gulf of Europe" (*tertius Europae sinus*, 7.1) with an account of Greece, Thessaly, Macedonia, Thrace and the Greek islands (7-11); his journey continues north-east into the Pontic region and Scythia (12-19); he then moves back west to Germany, Gaul, Britain, and Spain (20-23) before diving down into the North-African provinces of Libya, Mauretania, Numidia, and Africa (24-29); then crossing the external borders of the empire into Aethiopia (30-31), and finally returning to Egypt (32). He subsequently continues moving east by describing Arabia, Judaea, Syria, and Mesopotamia (33-37), and concludes the spiral trajectory of his journey by turning slightly west to the various regions of Asia Minor (38-45). From there, Solinus alters the course of his path, by first moving east towards Assyria (46), the Caspian Gates and Bactria (47-49), the land of the *Seres* people (Chinese), India and Taprobane (50-53); then going back west into the Persian and

[3] Mommsen (1895) p. VIII, 'nam sane perparvum interest scire quibus artibus saeculi tertii scholasticus Plinium quasi scriptorem iusto simpliciorem loqui docuerit tumide et perplexe et insipide'.

Arab gulfs, Parthia and Chaldaea, and finishing with the Atlantic coast of Aethiopia (West Africa) and the Canary islands (54-56).

In spite of what this carefully crafted itinerary might lead us to believe, the description of these lands does not account for the majority of the content of the entire work but rather seems little more than a pretext to introduce the "memorable facts" that the author wants to tell. The geographical information of each region is, in fact, relegated to the beginning of each chapter, with the remaining paragraphs discussing anything deemed memorable, wondrous, and awe-inspiring: be it exotic animals, opals of miraculous properties, or the terrifying customs of barbarian tribes. As stated by Solinus himself in his first dedicatory letter, the *Collectanea* is nothing more than a collection of data acquired from a wide selection of writers, with the author's contribution solely consisting in redacting them to a summary and rearranging "each element in its right order" (*suo quaeque ordine*, *Praef.* 3), that is within the description of the region to which each element belongs. Solinus' writing technique can therefore be described as a compilation of excerpts from a variety of geographical and historical sources, of which only Pliny's and Mela's works can be clearly identified; excerpts that are at times copied almost verbatim, at times condensed or expanded.

By his own admission, Solinus does not provide any information that is not previously known through other sources, "for what could be deemed as our own, which might remain unaltered up to this era, the diligence of old having neglected nothing?"[4] Seemingly, his own contribution only appears evident in the form of short sentences introducing the description of a new region, reminding his readers of the importance of mentioning a specific feature of a certain area, or reflecting on the relevance of a particularly significant piece of information. And yet, the *Collectanea* is on many occasions the sole surviving testimony to a number of otherwise lost archaeological and mythological traditions, amongst which many concern the regal period of Rome. Mommsen rejected the idea that any data not directly ascribable to Pliny or Mela could have been produced by Solinus without the

[4] Solin. *Praef.* 5, "quid enim proprium nostrum esse possit, cum nihil omiserit antiquitatis diligentia, quod intactum ad hoc usque aevi permaneret*?"*

need to consult a written source; however, it does not seem too far-fetched to presume that a *grammaticus* (the equivalent of a secondary school teacher, according to Robert Bedon)[5] would have had access to a mental repertoire of previously acquired notions that he could simply put down in writing at his convenience.[6] In line with "the style […] typical of a compiler",[7] Solinus never makes any direct mention of his primary sources, Pliny and Mela, quoting instead the names of several Roman and Greek authors (with Varro, Cornelius Bocchus and the Greek philosopher Democritus of Abdera having the largest number of mentions) whose works he would have not read, but found cited in the *Naturalis Historia* and *Chorographia.*[8] As noted by Arwen Apps, such explicit citations should be read as the author's way to strengthen the authority of the information reported, as well as to show his readers the validity of his commitment to make use of a selection of works. On the contrary, his immediate sources are used as "vehicles of transmission", whose names are not needed for the purpose of conferring authority on his work.[9]

The patchwork nature of Solinus' method of compilation is reflected in the unevenness and inconsistency of his writing style. Far from strictly adhering to the author's declaration of conciseness, the language of the *Collectanea* varies from the rhetorical affectation of the prefatory letter - composed with the topical traits of *captatio benevolentiae*[10] - to the lengthy and convoluted excursuses on animals and opals, and to the abrupt interruption of the description of certain regions (be it due to a lack of interest or a lack of knowledge on Solinus' part) under the pretext of a renewed call for *concinnitas*. The *hapax legomena* are many, as are the archaisms and late antique forms,[11] as well as some linguistic errors that it is difficult to determine whether they are due to Solinus' own confusion or to a corruption in the tradition.[12]

[5] Bedon (2004a) p. 72. The 'title' of *grammaticus* appears in the subscription of the manuscripts of the second and third class. See Mommsen (1895) p. V.
[6] A similar observation was made by Macé (1899) p. 196 and Nieto (2001) p. 51. For the debate around Solinus' sources see below pp. 9-13.
[7] Nieto (2001) p. 54.
[8] A complete list is given by Mommsen (1895) p. XIII.
[9] Apps (2014) pp. 32-42.
[10] Santini (1998) pp. 35-49.
[11] Nieto (2001) p. 53.
[12] See, for example, Solin. 12. 4 where, in the context of his description of the dolphins that inhabit the Hellespont, the transmitted text has *catulos edunt*, "they eat their cubs" rather than the obvious *catulos edant* "they give birth to their cubs". There is no trace of *edant* in Mommsen's apparatus, so the error could either have been made very early in the tradition or be considered Solinus' own misspelling of the word.

Numerous also are the geographical inaccuracies resulting from Solinus' adaptation of Pliny's and Mela's passages, mostly consisting in the confusion and misplacement of homonymous sites or the mention of non- existing places.

II. *Aims and Scope of this Thesis*

Since Mommsen's first edition in 1864 (re-edited in 1895), not a great deal has been written on Solinus' work, and the vast majority of the scarce scholarly literature available on this topic has focused on the search for Solinus' sources, striving to identify the real authors of the works behind the many pieces of information that are (still today) transmitted exclusively by the *Collectanea*. The state of oblivion in which the text has been lying since the 17th century is all the more remarkable if one looks at the enormous popularity enjoyed by Solinus in late antique and medieval times. Solinus' reputation started to decline around the year 1500, when the Italian philologist Filippo Beroaldo published an edition of his text. In his preface and dedicatory letter to his friend Michael Cheserius (the Hungarian humanist and philologist Mihály Kesserü), Beroaldo referred to the author of the *Collectanea* as "simia Plinii" (Pliny's ape). It was the 'kiss of death' that marked the beginning of the end of Solinus' fortune, and it was also the first of a long list of disparaging comments on the author and his work that would stick to Solinus until the end of the 19th century. The derogatory epithet was soon reprised by the Swiss scholar Joachim Vadian in 1530, by the English translator of the text Arthur Golding in 1587, and by Gerardus Vossius (the Dutch scholar and theologian Gerrit Janszoon Vos) in 1627. Still at the end of the 16th century Jospeh Scaliger characterised Solinus as "the most futile author", and in 1629 the French classicist Claude Saumaise described him as "a remarkable joker, a mere fool, an ape that confuses and combines all things" (*mirum nugatorem; merum miscellionem; omnia turbantem et confundentem simium*). Towards the end of the 19th Century, the German philologist Theodor Mommsen published the edition of Solinus' *Collectanea* that is, to this day, point of reference for anyone who might want to study the *Collectanea*. Mommsen, however, added his voice to the choir of Solinus' critics, describing him in his preface as a "simple schoolteacher" (*magistellus*) who wrote "in

an exaggerated and confusing and insipid style" (*tumide et perplexe et insipide*).[13] While Mommsen's monumental study had the merit of resuscitating the scholarly world's interest in Solinus, its harsh judgement on the style and the value of his work condemned the *Collectanea* to perpetual irrelevance, and it is only in recent times that the attention of a small number of academics has been drawn to the very content of the volume, and that its author's significance and contributions have begun to be investigated.[14] With its origins untraceable, the biography of its author shrouded in mystery, its manuscript tradition enormous and complex, the *Collectanea* has until recently been looked at as a puzzle to solve and has only awoken the interest of those scholars driven by the desire to take on the challenges posed by these unsolved issues.

The aim of this research is to move away from the traditional debate concerning Solinus' sources and method of compilation, and to focus instead on the author's presence behind the text, in order to give a new reading of the *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium*: specifically, one that informs us as to the very purpose of this unassuming compendium, its author's Weltanschauung, and its significance in relation to the historical context in which it was written. This thesis aims to offer an alternative to the traditional assessment of Solinus' work as an epitome, it endeavours to demonstrate the independent nature of Solinus' project, argue that the importance of the *Collectanea* lies not only in the preservation of otherwise unattested traditions but also in its being an expression of the cultural and political changes faced by Rome and the empire in Late Antiquity. Nevertheless, it will be beneficial to provide a review of the debate around the two main philological issues of the identity of Solinus' sources and the authenticity of the second redaction of the *Collectanea* (known by the alternative title of *Polyhistor*), on which past scholars have focused their attention since the publication of Mommsen's edition.[15] This discussion will be followed by an overview of those late antique and medieval authors who used Solinus' text as a source for their works. This will not only show the contrast between the text's past fortune and the oblivion into which it has fallen, but also highlight the need to make sense of this contradiction through a new, text-based approach.

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[13] Mommsen (1895) p. VIII.
[14] Brodersen (2011) pp. 63-88.
[15] A separate chapter will be devoted to the debate surrounding the identity of the author. See below Chapter 1.

II. *The Status Quaestionis in the Studies on Solinus*

1. The Sources

The investigation into the sources of the *Collectanea* has its origins in Mommsen's *Quellenapparat*, which contains the details of the alleged original passages upon which each paragraph is based, be they from Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, Mela's *Chorographia* or other unknown works. Such passages of unknown origin present historical information which is absent in Pliny's and Mela's originals, and is traceable instead in the works of a range of classical and early imperial authors. Mommsen rejected the idea that Solinus could have read any of those authors, suggesting instead the existence of a now lost chronicle, probably written in the early first century AD under the reign of Claudius, as Mommsen infers from the mention of the consulship of Gallus and Veranius (AD 49) in Solin. 1. 29.[16] The German scholar went so far as proposing Cornelius Bocchus as the author of the lost volume, cited by Solinus three times throughout the whole work, and who also served as one of Pliny's sources.[17] As for the geographical information not found in either Pliny or Mela, based on Solinus' mentions of Varro and the second-century historiographer Granius Licinianus, Mommsen theorised the existence of a lost chorographic work, likely written by Licinianus himself.[18] According to Mommsen, Solinus would not have made direct use of any of these four sources (Pliny, Mela, Bocchus' chronicle and Licinianus' chorography), reading instead a fifth work that included elements of all four, most likely an epitome of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, integrated with information from Mela and the two alleged lost compendia: Mommsen's so-called *Chorographia Pliniana,*[19] of which the *Collectanea* would have been an epitome.[20]

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[16] Mommsen (1895) p. XIV.
[17] Mommsen, *ibid.* In Pliny's Book 1 Bocchus is cited as one of his sources for Books 16, 33, 34, 37.
[18] Mommsen (1895) p. XXIII.
[19] Mommsen (1895) p. XVII ff.
[20] The comparison between Solinus' paragraphs on Indian parrots (52. 43-45) and Apuleius' analogous description in *Florida* 2.12 led Mommsen to theorise a common dependence of the two authors on the lost *Chorographia Pliniana*. See Mommsen (1895). pp. XVII-XIX. The same would have been the case for Ammianus' *Res Gestae*, based on the absence in Ammianus' work of any mutually exclusive data from Pliny or Solinus: "[h]ätte Ammian beide neben einander gebraucht und in Anschluss an Plinius die Worte des Solinus geändert, so würden wir ertwarten dürfen wenigstens in den geographischen Abschnitten irgend einem von den Memorabilien unabhängigen plinianischen Excerpt zu begegnen. Dies aber ist schlechterdings nicht der Fall". See Mommsen (1881) p. 628 sg. and Mommsen (1895) pp. XIX-XXIII.

Another 19th century scholar, the Italian Gaetano Mario Columba, rejected Mommsen's theory and proposed the somewhat revolutionary idea that both Solinus and his main models, Pliny and Mela, might have depended on a common source.[21] Specifically, the presence in the *Collectanea* of data absent from Pliny and Mela - testimonies of traditions that have their origins in a plethora of Greek and Roman authors - along with the absence in Solinus' adaptation of certain errors made by Pliny,[22] as well as the contamination of passages of Plinian origin with data from Mela and vice versa, led Columba to theorise the existence of a lost chorographic work, mostly Varronian in its content and with Sallustian elements: a *Chorographia Varro-Sallustiana*.[23] Once again, Solinus would not have consulted this work first hand, but an epitome, or even the abridged version of an epitome.

In agreement with Columba regarding Solinus' dependence on a pre-Plinian work, in 1906 Maximilian Rabenhorst identified Verrius Flaccus' *Rerum Memoria Dignarum Libri* as the source for the *Naturalis Historia*, the *Collectanea* and, in general, all those authors that Columba thought to be dependent on the lost *Chorographia Varro-Sallustiana*.[24]

It was the 1909 dissertation by German scholar Friedrich Rabenald that first moved away from the quest for Solinus' 'single source'.[25] Rabenald, who pointed out the arbitrary nature of Mommsen's theory, could not see any reason why a direct

[21] Columba (1920).
[22] In Solinus' description of Indian parrots, Columba identified details common not only with Apuleius' *Florida* but also with Claudius Aelianus' *On the Nature of Animals*. Such details, absent from Pliny's paragraphs on the same bird, should demonstrate the existence of an original source containing more details than the *Naturalis Historia*, that both Pliny and Solinus - as well as Apuleius and Aelianus - would have used. According to Columba, this common source would also explain Pliny's confusion between parrots and magpies, which is not reflected in Solinus' and Apuleius' adaptations. Pliny would have simply made an error that neither of the later authors made. See Columba (1920) pp. 32-34.
[23] Columba based his assumption upon the presence of Varronian fragments, in the form of direct citations, within Solinus' text, and on his use of expressions that contain elements of Sallustian phraseology. See Columba (1896) pp. 114-115 and Columba (1920) pp. 20-24.
[24] Rabenhorst (1906) pp. 567-603.
[25] Rabenald (1909).

use of Pliny and Mela as sources for the *Collectanea* should be excluded.[26] As for the geographical information not ascribable to them, Rabenald suggested that Solinus' similarities with Greek and Roman works pointed out by Columba should be considered mere coincidences or just Solinus' wish to show off his encyclopaedic knowledge and proficiency in the Greek language.[27] Finally, Rabenald addressed Solinus' correspondences with Varronian traditions, most of which are found in his account of the history of the Roman calendar. Through a comparison with analogous passages in Macrobius' *Saturnalia* and Censorinus' *De Die Natali*,[28] Rabenald identified differences and similarities between the three late works and Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, concluding that Pliny and Censorinus on the one side, and Solinus and Macrobius on the other, would have actually used two different sources: the former Varro, the latter Suetonius' lost work *Prata*, which might very well be considered the source of most of the data that Mommsen labelled as of unknown origin.[29]

With the search for an *Einzelquelle* finally put aside, 20th-century scholars did not stop pondering the origin of those traditions for which Solinus is the sole testimony in the entire Latin literature. In 1963, Herman Walter undertook a thorough comparison of a number of Solinus' passages with their equivalents in

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[26] Contrary to Mommsen, Rabenald saw the similarities between the *Collectanea* and Ammianus' *Res Gestae* as the sign of a common dependence on Pliny, as well as of Ammianus' use of Solinus' text. See Rabenald, *op. cit.*, p. 23, "For I cannot see what forbids us from deciding that, together with Pliny, Marcellinus made use of his imitator too" (*Neque enim video quid obstet quominus statuamus Marcellinum una cum Plinio eius pedissequum adhibuisse)*. Rabenald considered the geographical content of the *Res Gestae* as the product of material found in different sources, amongst them Pliny and Solinus and other unidentified authors, or even deriving from Ammianus' own knowledge, so that nothing should prevent us from applying the same criterion to the *Collectanea*. See Rabenald (1909) pp. 17-55.

[27] See for example Columba's comparison of Solinus' description of the Aeolian island of Strongyle (Stromboli) in 6. 3 with its Plinian equivalent (3.94). Solinus' description of the island's shape as 'the least angular' (*angulosa*) has no correspondence in Pliny but presents a similarity with what stated by Strabo in 6. 2. 276, "Strongyle is named after its shape" (ἡ δὲ Στρογγύλη καλεῖται ἀπὸ τοῦ σχήματος). Whereas Columba saw this coincidence as evidence that Solinus followed a tradition common, amongst many others, even to Strabo (i.e. the *Chorographia Varro-Sallustiana*), Rabenald simply pointed out that Solinus "knew that the word στρογγύλος means *round* in Latin and that the island of Strongyle was named after its round shape" (*certe scivit vocabulum* στρογγύλος *Latine significare rotundus atque insulam Strongyle a forma rotunda appellatam esse*). See Rabenald (1909) p. 61.

[28] Mommsen had already pointed out the analogies amongst the three authors with Varro, whose content they would have accessed through the *Chorographia Pliniana* "for this will always return to Varro, as the author of all authors. However, I would not believe that Censorinus, Solinus and Macrobius had read Varro's works that were too learned for their time." (*nam ad Varronem quidem semper ea res redibit tamquam auctorum auctorem: nec tamen crediderim Censorinum Solinum Macrobium ipsos legisse Varronis volumina supra suae aetatis modum docta*). See Mommsen (1895) p. XXIV.

[29] Rabenald (1909) pp. 102-113.

Pliny and Mela, suggesting the possibility of an external intervention: namely corruptions, glosses and interpolations in Pliny's and Mela's manuscripts used by Solinus.[30] In 1972, Carmelo Salemme saw a dependence of Solinus' paragraphs describing African snakes on Lucan's *Pharsalia*,[31] rejecting Rabenald's theory that saw Suetonius' *Prata* as their source.[32] At the beginning of this century, Fernández Nieto published a Spanish translation and commentary of the *Collectanea*, and suggested that, while it is undeniable that Solinus' main sources were Pliny and Mela, whose passages he often copied almost verbatim, there is no reason to deny that he could have possessed direct knowledge of a number of other works, some of which he read directly,[33] some others - too old to allow us to believe that Solinus would have had them in his library - known through either Pompeius Trogus' monumental *Historiae Philippicae*[34] or a now lost compendium of paradoxography, of which Herodotus would have been the main source. Nieto concluded with the suggestion that this unknown paradoxographical work would have served as the source not only for Solinus but also a number of authors before him, including Mela.[35] In recent years, Tom Hillard has returned to the matter and cast new doubt on the extent of Solinus' use of Pliny's (and Mela's) work. Although he does not exclude that Solinus had access to the *Naturalis Historia*, Hillard has rejected the idea that he was 'dependent' on it, either directly or through an intermediary source, and has suggested instead the use of an earlier source common to both authors.[36]

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[30] Walter (1963) pp. 98-147.

[31] Salemme (1972) pp. 338-343. Salemme based his assumption on certain ophiological errors common to Solinus and Lucan; errors which Solinus would have hardly found in a scientific or geographical source, but that could easily be explained by Lucan's attention to rhetoric and *poeticus color* rather than scientific accuracy.

[32] Rabenald rejected the idea that Solinus, who on no occasion copied Lucan, would have used the *Pharsalia* for the one description of African snakes, and nowhere else. Based on similarities between Solinus's ophiological paragraphs,and analogous passages in the *Commenta Bernensia* and Isidore's *Etymologiae*, Rabenald concluded that much of the information common to Solinus, Lucan's anonymous commentator and Isidore would have been transmitted to them through Suetonius' *Prata*. See Rabenald (1909) pp. 126-127.

[33] Namely Varro, Lucretius, Cicero, Nepos, Valerius Maximus, Tacitus and Velleius Paterculus. See Nieto (2001) pp. 33-52.

[34] See Nieto (2001) p. 51, '[S]i en un pasaje descubrimos huellas de Teágenes y de Valerio Acíate, no es porque nuestro autor manejase sus obras, sino más bien porque actuaron como modelos de Trogo, a quien copió Solino'. Trogus, however, is cited by Solinus in 1. 51. If it is true that Solinus dissimulated his immediate sources, a direct use of Trogus' work should be excluded.

[35] Nieto (2001) n. 83.

[36] Hillard (2014) pp. 43-74.

Establishing all the sources of a digest of facts and curiosities from a variety of fields of human knowledge seems not only impossible, but probably not even necessary. While it is today accepted that Solinus had at least some direct knowledge of Pliny's and Mela's texts, it is also not unlikely that he might have used the works of a number of "carefully researched books" (not necessarily in the form of an epitome) or that he was able to provide previously acquired information from memory. Virgil's presence in the paragraphs on the history and the origins of Rome is hard to ignore;[37] so is the influence of Strabo in the account of the foundation of Italian cities and Pausanias in the description of Sardinia; a Livian tone emerges in the author's prefatory declaration that no new information will be given, and that what is already known is presented in a new (and possibly better) way; and Verrius Flaccus' taste for etymology - albeit through Festus' epitome - seems to have informed Solinus' explanation of the origin and meaning of many a toponym. Whether he had access to all these works individually or in the form of a miscellanea; whether he read them in their entirety or just a number of excerpts; whether he had them on his desk as he was putting together his own text or he simply remembered what he found in them long before, it hardly matters. If we decide to believe Solinus' very words that he "preferred to choose the universal opinions rather than innovate", we must accept the *Collectanea* for its incontrovertible value as sole witness to a number of otherwise lost classical traditions that, according to our author, were still well alive and popular in his time.

2. The Second Edition

Somewhere between the completion of the *Collectanea* and its publication, to Solinus' grief and indignation, "certain people, more impatiently than zealously, hurried to intercept the booklet at which [he] was working and gave it to the public, albeit still unpolished, before [he] might give [his] final touch to the commenced

[37] In addition to the more obvious references to the eighth book of the *Aeneid* in Chapter 1, Fabrizio Feraco has also identified a strong presence throughout the text of elements from the second book of the *Georgics*. See Feraco (2006) pp. 460-488.

work."[38] To remedy the damage seemingly caused to him by such early and unauthorised distribution of his work, Solinus presented in a second letter a revised and improved version of the *Collectanea*, under the new title of *Polyhistor*. This document, that is seemingly also addressed to Adventus, only appears in a group of manuscripts that present numerous other additions compared with the rest of the tradition.[39] Whether said additions - including the letter - should be attributed to Solinus' hand, and whether a revised edition of his work was indeed circulating under a new title, has been much debated.

Mommsen's relentless work to establish Solinus' text and identify the archetype of the tradition was the result of his collection of 153 manuscripts, which he grouped into three classes.[40] Class I consists of codices testifying the first edition of the text, published under the name of *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium*, divided into a northern family - *Havniensis* 444 (*N*, 9th century) and *Heidlbergensis Palatinus lat.* 1568 (*H*, 10th century) - and a southern one - represented by *Vaticanus lat.* 3542 (*R*, 10th century) and *Casinas* 391 (*C*, 11th century). These codices present gaps in the 56th and final chapter, likely due to a missing folium in the archetype, which Mommsen theorised to have been written before the 6th century. Its *terminus ante quem*, however, stands for certain at the year 825, when Dicuil's *De mensura orbis terrae* was published: gaps and errors present in Dicuil's adaptation of some of Solinus' excerpts and common to the manuscripts of Class I, demonstrate that the Irish monk used a codex of this class. Peculiar to this class is the subscription "with the devotion and care of our master the most invincible prince Theodosius" (*studio et diligentia d. n. invictissimi principis*

[38] See Mommsen (1895) p. 217, "quidam inpatientius potius quam studiosius opusculum quod moliebar intercipere properarunt idque etiamtum inpolitum prius in medium dederunt, quam inchoatae rei summa manus inponeretur".
[39] Mommsen (1895) pp. 217-220.
[40] Mommsen used 153 out of a total 174 manuscripts to which he had access at the time, according to Mary Ella Milham. The total tradition, however, is likely to amount to at least 350 manuscripts, 'very few of which have been investigated for the evidence they could add to medieval and Renaissance geographical learning from dates, hands, proveniences, scribes, and owners.' See Milham (1960) p. 74. Milham' list has since been revised and expanded by Brodersen, whose updated catalogue comprises 276 items between manuscripts and excerpts. See Brodersen (2014) pp. 201-208.

Theodosii) that appears after the prefatory letter in *H* and in 26 manuscripts descending from it.[41]

Class II is made up of older codices, that share some errors with I and some interpolations with III: *Leidensis Vossianus* 87 (*L*, 9th century), *Parisinus lat.* 7230 (*M*, 10th century), *Gudianus lat.* 163 (*G*, 10th century) and *Parisinus lat.* 7230 A (*Q*, 10th century).

Class III is represented by three contaminated codices from the first two classes: *Sangallensis 187 (S,* 10th century*)* and *Angelomontanus I, 4, 15 (A, sec. x)* from Class I, and *Parisinus lat. 6810 (P,* 10th century) from Class II. Although these three codices share a number of errors and interpolations with those of the first two classes, Mommsen identified a series of *lectiones* that are peculiar to *A* and *P* and would suggest the independence of these two manuscripts from the archetypes of Class I and II.[42] The first two classes would have ultimately shared a common archetype, while the third would descend from a separate one.

The problematic nature of Class III is due to a series of interpolations, some of which are in common with Class II, a list of rubrics for each chapter, and the second dedicatory letter. Mommsen refused to accept the authenticity of those extra paragraphs (and especially those in chapter 22, on the British isles and Thyle, to which he referred as *additamenta Britannica*) as they seemed at odds with the rest of the chapter,[43] as well as that of the second letter, mostly based on a striking contradiction in its final sentence. The letter, which starts with the salutation formula *Solinus Advento*, concludes with the words, "[s]o, having compared this letter with the one that marks the beginning of my composition, you will understand that you occupy the same position as he to whom I dedicated the totality of my work".[44]

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[41] Mommsen reports Otto Jahn's observation that the mention of "the most invincible prince" in the subscription should refer to Theodosius II, a "known *kalligraphon*", and goes as far as suggesting that Theodosius' copy might be none other than the archetype common to the entire tradition. See Mommsen (1895) pp. LXVV, XCIV, XCVIII.

[42] Mommsen (1895) p. LXXXVI.

[43] Mommsen (1895) p. XCI.

[44] Mommsen (1895) p. 217.21-23: "conlata igitur hac epistula cum ea, quae auspicium scriptionis facit, intellegis eodem te loco habitum quo eum, cui laboris nostri summam dedicavimus".

Considering that the first prefatory letter already contained a dedication to Adventus, and this second missive is also addressed to him, the meaning of its final sentence seems unclear, and one could hardly think that they are both meant for the same man; hence the authors of some codices even replaced the name of Adventus with *Constantius* or *Herennius*, in order to compensate for this inconsistency.[45] Based on the content of the interpolations, Mommsen theorised the intervention of a 6th-century Scottish monk, who redacted a new edition of Solinus' text by adding extra information about northern Europe, including his homeland.

Finally, Mommsen refused to acknowledge the existence of a second edition of the *Collectanea*, circulating under the new name of *Polyhistor,* given that - apart from the interpolations and the second letter - the codices of Class III do not carry differences and changes significant enough to justify a revision, and the improvements promised by the author of the second letter are described by Mommsen as nothing more than 'replacing words with other words'.[46] Ultimately, Mommsen saw both the archetype common to the first two classes and the one of Class III as coming from a single hyper-archetype, possibly the 5th-century edition redacted by Theodosius II.[47]

Mommsen's theory was soon contested by G. Kirner in 1896, who believed in the existence of a revised edition of the *Collectanea.*[48] Kirner argued that the so-called *additamenta Britannica* fit well within the text of the manuscripts of Class III, while their presence in some manuscripts of Class II would be due to a scribe's error, who simply "transcribed the text that he had in front of him and mechanically interposed what he found in another manuscript".[49] A scribe would also be to blame for the insertion of Adventus' name in the salutation of the second letter.

[45] The name "Constantius" is indeed found in five later codices ranging from the 12th to the 15th century. However, it appears in the salutation of the first letter, while there is no trace of the second, as none of these manuscripts belongs to Class III.
[46] Mommsen (1895) p. LXXXVIII.
[47] Mommsen (1895) p. XCIV.
[48] Kirner (1896) pp. 75-96.
[49] Kirner (1896) p. 84.

In 1969, Hermann Walter first made the observation that nothing in the second letter hints at a new dedication:[50] the missive should in fact be read as a private letter to an unknown friend and would have been attached to a revised copy of the work carrying the new name of *Polyhistor*. This private copy would have then been published through unofficial channels, including both letters, and should be considered as the archetype for *SAP*. As for the unauthorised publication of the first version, Walter's theory saw Solinus handing a draft of his work to a copyist, who would have then proceeded to copy it into more than one 'fair' exemplars that, intercepted by Solinus' friends, were subsequently given to the public without the author's permission.

In more recent times, Peter Lebrecht Schmidt offered an alternative reconstruction of events to that given by Walter.[51] Schmidt rejected the idea that Solinus would have commissioned a copyist with an incomplete work: he considered the first version as complete and authorised by Solinus, with the first letter there to prove it. Based on the aforementioned testimony of some 12th-century manuscripts, Schmidt identified the letter's addressee with Emperor Constantius II (337-371), to whom the work would have been dedicated, on the occasion of his visit to Rome in 357. Following the emperor's departure and Solinus' subsequent decision to revise his text, the author would have needed to find a second patron to assist him in the publication of the revised edition, possibly Adventus, to whom the second letter was addressed. Although Schmidt accepted the private nature of this document, he saw it nonetheless as an official request for help in publishing the revised text, which should be held as the final version of Solinus' work and the official text for any future edition.[52]

Given the scarcity of information available on Solinus and the people involved in the publication of his work, and considering the contradictory nature of the second letter, any decision as to the identity of the addressees of both missives will necessarily be seen as arbitrary. It is clear that Adventus cannot have been the person to

[50] Walter (1969).
[51] Schmidt (1995) pp. 23-35.
[52] See Schmidt's interpretation of the sentence *erit igitur operi isti titulus Polyhistor* in Schmidt (1995) p. 30: "Das *erit* von Walter (14. 28. 69) als echtes Futur, d. h. als Hinweis auf die noch bevorstehende Publikation der Bearbeitung gedeutet, dürfte vielmehr im Sinne von *sit* zu verstehen sein, d. h. als Bitte, das Werk unter dem neuen Titel 'Polyhistor' zu publizieren."

whom both letters were addressed and it must be noted that his name in the salutation formula of the second letter only appears in A; just one out of the three major manuscripts that make up Class III.[53] Consequently, it is unlikely that Adventus could be the recipient of the second letter. Furthermore, Solinus' words in the closure of this document, with the reassurance that the addressee will "occupy the same position" as the original dedicatee, seem to imply a perceived inferior social status of the second recipient, compared to the first. However, the recurrence in the manuscript tradition of Adventus' name in the salutation of the first letter is far too vast to justify the replacement of this name with Constantius, found in five codices only, so that Schmidt's theory does not have a higher degree of probability than any other. Unless new information is made available through an examination of the manuscripts of which Mommsen had no knowledge, or that he simply did not use, we might never know the real identity of the recipient of the second letter. Nonetheless, nothing in the content and style of the additional paragraphs and of the letter itself can genuinely allow us to reject Solinus as their author. In conclusion, the only certainties that seem to emerge from the reading of the two letters and the support of the manuscript traditions are that 1) the first letter was addressed to a certain Adventus, to whom the first edition of the work was dedicated; and 2) a slightly enlarged version was then sent to an unknown friend, probably of inferior rank to first dedicatee, to be circulated under the new title of Polyhistor.

3. Reception and Legacy of the *Collectanea*

If one chooses to believe Solinus' words in the debated second letter, his humble miscellanea was already enjoying enormous success right from before its publication. In a time when encyclopaedic trends were becoming increasingly popular across different literary styles, Solinus' work became a major vehicle for the

[53] The *praefatio spuria*, with or without Adventus' name, does appear in several other minor codices, ranging from the 10th to the 15th century, only partially used by Mommsen due to the high number of corruptions and contaminations. This is the case, for example, for the presence of Adventus' name in *L* and *Q*, two codices of Class II, which should be ascribed to the contamination from a manuscript of the third. See von Büren (1993) pp. 22-87.

transmission of the monumental knowledge of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, and came to be seen as "a foundational late antique authority in geographical matters."[54]

Solinus' popularity began as early as the fifth century with the publication of Theodosius II's edition, when the *Collectanea* started appearing amongst the Latin texts used at Constantinople's *Pandidakterion* and spreading across both the eastern and western side of the Roman Empire.[55] Soon it became the main means of transmission of classical geographical knowledge to the Middle Ages, both as a school textbook and as a source for a remarkable number of late antique and medieval authors. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei,*[56] Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii,*[57] and Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* are today considered to be the oldest texts bearing witness to Solinus' legacy, with all three authors using excerpts from the *Collectanea* and Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* at the same time. As Solinus' popularity increased so did his authority, and mentions of his name started accompanying the excerpts and quotations from his work; with the very first occurrence of *Solinus* coming from the 455 edition of the *Liber Genealogus*, a Christian chronicle written by anonymous African Donatist scholars.[58] By that time, Solinus' name alone carried enough weight to give authority in matters of geographical knowledge; so much so that a grammarian of the calibre of Marcus Servius Honoratus did not disdain to resort to the humble compendium for his commentary on Virgil. Whereas Mommsen's list of compilers and his 'catalogue of

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[54] Fitzgerald Johnson (2006) p. 13.

[55] Columba (1920) p. 8.

[56] Addressed to both Christians and Pagans, Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* contains, in book XXI, a collection of paradoxographical items, heavily influenced by Solinus' *Collectanea* and most likely aimed at providing Augustine's non-believing readers with examples of 'miracles' in pagan culture. See Paniagua (2014) pp. 119-140. Not only does Augustine's work provide the only certain *terminus ante quem* at 426 A.D. but, by referring to his sources as 'those [natural] historians against whom we are arguing' (21.7), it should put an end to the *vexata quaestio* whether Solinus was a Christian or a Pagan writer.

[57] Martianus' biography has been object of debate, and it is not possible to say who, between him and Augustine, was the first late antique author to make use of Solinus' text. Danuta Shanzer's rejection of the traditional timeframe for the composition of his work at the beginning of the fifth century and her subsequent suggestion that the *terminus post quem* be pushed back to the reign of Emperor Anthemius (462-472) would perfectly agree with the only piece of information we have regarding the chronology of Solinus' text*:* the circulation and popularity of the oldest known edition of the *Collectanea* during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II in the second half of the fifth century. See Shanzer (1986) pp. 11-12.

[58] *L. Gen.* 75, *hoc Solinus adseruit,* and 132, *hoc Solinus adseruit, qui totum describit ambitum mundi.* The work is transmitted by a groups of seven codices representing four editions, published over a period of approximately 50 years. The edition of 455 A.D., transmitted by the *Lucensis* manuscript, is the only one that cites Solinus by name, along with geographical information on India, Babylonia and Parthia, which is absent from the three previous redactions. See Paniagua (2007) pp. 135-144.

passages used by and excerpted from Solinus'[59] only includes three references to Servius[60] - with two of them coming from the same paragraph in the *Collectanea* - a number of similarities between the two authors in the transmission of traditions not known prior to Solinus, would lead one to believe in a far greater presence of Solinus' data in the work of the Virgilian commentator.[61] It is certain, however, that Solinus' zoological paragraphs contributed quite extensively to the ophiological notes of another late antique commentary: the *Commenta Bernensia* on Lucan.

At the beginning of the sixth century, Solinus' style and language - scorned and ridiculed by modern commentators - were deemed worthy by the African grammarian Priscianus of providing his readers with examples of the use of some verb forms and noun cases. Eight times is Solinus' name quoted in Priscianus' *Institutiones grammaticae*, in reference to three passages of the *Collectanea*,[62] while the name of Solinus' work itself appears in different forms throughout all ten of Priscianus' books.[63] The African grammarian also made use of Solinus' geographical information to adapt his Latin translation of Dionysius of Alexandria's *Periegesis* to a more Roman taste: 'Priscian turned to Solinus to flesh out on those regions neglected by the Greek author but now central to Roman culture, such as Sardinia (vv. 467-69, cf. Solin. 4.6) and Sicily (vv. 489-504, cf. Solin. 5.10-11, 16, 18, 20, 25).'[64]

By the seventh century, Solinus fame had reached Visigothic Spain, where Isidore of Seville reprised his explanation on tides in a section of his *De Natura Rerum*

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[59] Mommsen, *op. cit.* (1895) pp. 238-249.

[60] Servius *ad Aen.* 1.269 and 3. 284 and Sol. 33.13; Servius *ad Aen.* 12. 753 and Solin. 2.11. It is not Servius, however, but his later editor Pierre Daniel (the so-called Servius Danielis or Servius Auctus) who was credited by Mommsen as the author of the three comments (*op. cit.*, p. XXVI); a view that in most recent times has been rejected by David Paniagua, at least for the comments to the first and third book of the *Aeneid*. See Paniagua (2008b).

[61] In a paragraph describing Hercules' dedication of the *Ara Maxima*, Solinus mentions Evander's mother *Carmenta* by the alternative name of *Nicostrate*, the first appearance of this form in the entire surviving Latin literature. The similar form *Nicostrata* appears instead in Servius *ad Aen.* 8.51, with *Nicostrate* in the comment to *Aen.* 8. 336 being the result of the intervention of the so-called Servius Danielis. It is, of course, possible that Servius read this name in its (likely) original source, Plutarch's *Moralia* 278, B, 10; however, a second coincidence occurs between Solinus 2.10 and Servius *ad Aen.* 6.136, where the Virgilian commentator is the only author other than Solinus to mention Orestes' dedication of a temple of Diana near Ariccia.

[62] Namely Solin. 1.21 for the use of the perfect *exivit*; 22.2 for the neuter plural *pecua*; and 33.8 for the use of *aceris* as the genitive singular of *acer.* See F. Racine (2014) p. 164.

[63] Racine, *ibid.*

[64] Racine (2014) p. 165.

dedicated to the ocean, citing Solinus by name and referring to a passage of the *Collectanea* on the very same topic.[65] Once again, it is important to observe that the mention of Solinus' name alone seemed to be sufficient information for the readers of these late antique writers, without any need for further clarification. Although never mentioned by name, Solinus also figures as an undisputed source for Isidore's *Etymologiae,*[66] especially for the ophiological information coming from Solinus' chapters on Africa,[67] where the assimilation of the excerpts from the *Collectanea* into Isidore's text is often *verbatim,* so that according to Mommsen it would be clear that he had Solinus' very words before his eyes.[68]

Between the seventh and ninth century, Solinus' name started appearing in texts from the Anglo-Saxon world, such as the *Epistula ad Aricium* by the abbot and poet Aldhelm of Malmesbury.[69] The English monk Bede made use of Solinus' description of Britain for his *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, while Solinus' data on the fertility of Ireland made their way into Dicuil's *De Mensura Orbis Terrae* and the *De Situ Orbis* by the Anonymous of Leiden,[70] while his description of Italy became a source for the Benedictine monk Adevrald of Fleury's *Miracula Sancti Benedicti.*[71]

Amongst the texts written before the year 1000, Solinus' name appears twice in the preface to the *Vita Sancti Galli* by Walafrid Strabo, who even copied an entire paragraph from his description of the *ager Raeticus.* However, Mommsen did not include Walafrid Strabo's citation of this chapter in his list of Solinus' compilers, as it would stem from a manuscript of Class III that he considered interpolated. Nonetheless, whether the extra paragraphs in the manuscript of this class were interpolations or not, it can still be argued that Walafrid did indeed read Solinus' work, albeit in a modified version.[72] Written in an unspecified time between the ninth and tenth century, the

[65] See. Isid. *De Natura Rerum* 40, *sic Solinus refert*. Isidore refers to Solin. 23. 20.
[66] Neither Mommsen (1895, p. XXVII) nor Isidore's editor Heinrich Dressel had any doubts regarding Isidore's dependence on Solinus. Dressel, however, proposed slight modifications to Mommsen's list of *loci similes* between the two authors. See Dressel (1874), pp. 247-250.
[67] See Gasti (1988) pp. 121-129.
[68] Mommsen (1895) *loc. cit.*
[69] Mommsen (1895) pp. XXVII-XXVIII.
[70] Parroni (1984) pp. 352-358.
[71] Manitius (1889) p 563.
[72] See Solin. 21. 2, Mommsen (1895) p. 218 and Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 114, *praef.* 3.

anonymous epic poem *Waltharius* seems to have relied on Solinus' paragraphs on African snakes,[73] while at the conclusion of the tenth century traces of excerpts from the *Collectanea* can be found in Leo of Naples' *Historia de Preliis*, in which the medieval author reprised Solinus' account on the life of Alexander the Great.[74] Finally, similarities with Solinus' description of the Psylli, an African tribe immune to snake venom, appear in Ratherius of Verona's *Praeloquia,*[75] while a citation of Solinus' excursus on the Egyptian god Apis can be found in the 79th chapter of the *First Vatican Mythographer.*[76]

The popularity of Solinus' handy compendium reached its peak between the 11th and 12th century, when the citations of the author's name, along with the reprise of entire sections of the *Collectanea*, started appearing with increased frequency in works from all over Europe. This period also saw a considerable increase in the number of manuscripts produced,[77] mostly coming from Germany and France, where it must be presumed that Solinus' work would have been widely read and copied. Amongst the most important authors of that time, Adam of Bremen' *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* features Solinus' name in its fourth book (*Descriptio insularum aquilonis*) while the 19th chapter of the anonymous *Gesta Treverorum* presents, according to Max Manitius,[78] strong hints of a thorough compilation of the *Collectanea* by its author. Solinus was also used by Petrus Damianus,[79] and by Theodoric of St Trond both for the *De Mirabilibus* Mundi, the first verse epitome of the *Collectanea*, and as a source for his *Vita Rumoldi Mechliniensis.*[80] Finally, a second poem known as *De Mirabilibus Mundi* contains numerous excerpts from both Solinus' and Isidore's works.[81]

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[73] See Solin. 27. 28-33 and *Waltharius,* 11.992-994.
[74] Pfister (1972) pp. 73-77.
[75] Manitius (1911) p. 50.
[76] See Mommsen's apparatus to Solin. 32.5-17: *referunt tam mythographus Vaticanus primus c. 79 quam scholia novicia ad Lucan. 8. 479.* The theories that have been advanced on the identity of the author and date of composition see the *First Vatican Mythographer* as possibly the work of eighth or ninth-century Irish writer. According to Ronald E. Pepin, however, his identity is destined to remained unknown. See Pepin (2008) p. 5.
[77] Milham (1960) p. 74.
[78] Manitius (1889) p. 563.
[79] Manitius (1931) p. 70.
[80] Manitius (1931) pp. 709-712.
[81] Manitius (1931) p. 735.

The 12th-century French priest and crusader Fulcher of Chartres made abundant use of the ophiological paragraphs of the *Collectanea* as a source for his *Historia Hierosolymitana,* while traces of Solinus' description of Anatolia and Syria appear in the *Historia Rerum Gestarum in Partibus Transmarinis* by William of Tyre, another chronicler of the Crusades.[82] One sign of the peak reached by Solinus' popularity in the 12th century is given by the repeated mentions of his name in two works by Godfrey of Viterbo, *Liber Memorialis* and *Pantheon*, who flaunted his knowledge of the *Collectanea* without actually citing any particular passage.[83] Solinus' anthropological paragraphs provided material for Honorius Augustodunensis' *De Philosophia Mundi* and Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium*,[84] while another mention of his name is made in Leo of Ostia's *Chronicon Monasterii Casinensis*. He was used by the English philosopher John of Salisbury and the historian Henry of Huntingdon,[85] by the Italian geographer Guido of Pisa, the Welsh topographer Gerald of Wales, and the English chronicler Ralph de Diceto.[86] Finally, the testimony of the French chronicler Lambert of Ardres informs us of the very first translation of the *Collectanea* into a Romance language by Simon of Ghisnes for Baldwin IX Count of Flanders.[87]

Indicative of the great extent to which Solinus came to replace Pliny for the medieval readers, is his use as a source for the 13th-century encyclopaedic text *Li Livres dou Tresor*, written in Langue d'oïl by the Italian scholar Brunetto Latini. Brunetto's use of the *Collectanea* (whose title or author are never mentioned) is limited to the geographical and zoological sections of Book I of the *Tresor* and is all the more remarkable if we look at the style of adaptation of Solinus' original passages:

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[82] Manitius (9131) p. 433-434. Solinus is also mentioned by name in William's account of the foundation of Alexandria (19. 24) '*Condita autem est* [scil. *Alexandria*] *ut ait Iulius Solinus duodecima* [...] *Canopicon appellant*'.

[83] Manitius (1889) p. 564.

[84] Manitius (1892) p. 191.

[85] Manitius (1889) pp. 563-565.

[86] Manitius (1931) pp. 618-619; 625; 637-638 and Parroni (1984) p. 353.

[87] Manitius (1931) p. 731. Into which language Solinus' work was actually translated Lambert does not say but he informs us that it was a Romanic language very well known to the translator, to whom he refers by the name of Symon de Bolonia. See Mon. Ger. Hist. 24. 598. 30, "*Solinum autem de naturis rerum non minus phisice quam philosophice proloquentem, quis nesciat, a venerabili patre Ghisnensi magistro Symone de Bolonia studiosissima laboris diligentia de Latino in sibi notissimam Romanitatis linguam fida interpretatione translatum et* […] *ei presentatum et publice recitatum*?"

"Brunetto's methods of compilation are curious. In some places he borrows a sentence of Solinus, and translates it word for word; in others he paraphrases and expands the original; and in others again he compresses the substance of three or four pages into a couple of lines, which, as often as not, in consequence consist merely of a string of names, which happen to have caught his eye. This haphazard way of going to work leads him at times into strange mistakes."[88]

Brunetto adapted Solinus' text in a way so similar to that in which the latter adapted Pliny's, that the above description of his style could be applied word for word to Solinus. Interestingly, however, Brunetto undertook a reordering of the geographical and zoological knowledge transmitted by the *Collectanea* that is reversed to the one carried out by Solinus: whereas the latter collected Pliny's data on animals from books 8-11 of the *Naturalis Historia* and reorganised them by geographical regions in his own work, Brunetto detached Solinus' paragraphs on natural history from the strictly geographical ones and separated them into two different sections of Book I, namely Part IV on 'la Mappemonde' and Part V on 'la nature des Animaus'.[89] The fact that Brunetto chose to go through the trouble of separating what Solinus had assembled, rather than finding the information he needed in Pliny's text, where it was already arranged by thematic sections, says a great deal on the extent of Solinus' popularity in the late Middle Ages, when the *Collectanea* had become a necessary resource for geographical knowledge.[90] Citation without mention was also made by the English scientist and theologian Alexander Neckam, who copied several lines from Solinus' paragraphs on the Arabian phoenix without acknowledging his source,[91] while on several occasions the philosopher Roger Bacon paid tribute to Solinus, whose zoological and anthropological knowledge he used for his *Opus Tertium* and the *Epistula de Secretis Operibus*.[92]

Solinus' popularity did not, however, exempt him from criticism: that is the case of a reference to Solinus' and a certain Jorach's descriptions of a species of birds in

[88] Toynbee (1894) p. 64.
[89] Toynbee (1894) p. 62.
[90] Toynbee (1894) p. 73, 'Brunetto refers to the latter [Pliny] by name as his authority on one occasion (*Tresor*, p. 182, §1) but it is evident that he derived a great part of his material, not from Pliny direct, but from Solinus, since he repeatedly makes mention of details which appear in the same connexion in the *Collectanea*, but are not to be found in the *Historia Naturalis*'.
[91] Nigg (2016) p. 148.
[92] Manitius (1889) p. 564.

the Greek isle of Karistos, capable of flying through fire without being burnt, made by the doctor of the Catholic Church Albert the Great, who after expressing his doubts as to the truthfulness of such phenomenon and the trustworthiness of the two authors goes so far as to call them liars: *sed illi philosophi multa mentiuntur et puto quod hoc sit unum de mendaciis eorum*.[93] If this passing remark can be read as one of the first cracks appearing in Solinus' popularity, a notable takeaway from it is Albert's reference to Solinus as a philosopher rather than a geographer or grammarian. A follower of Aristotle's empirical method, Albert used the term "philosopher" with a clearly negative connotation, describing Solinus as somebody who valued *sapientia* over *experientia*.

Perhaps the most remarkable and interesting example of Solinus' legacy is given by the Pisan poet Fazio degli Uberti's *Dittamondo*, a 14th-century geographical treatise written in the style and metre of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Of clear Dantean influence and inspiration, *Dittamondo* describes an imaginary trip around the world, undertaken by Fazio to atone for his sins. Not only is its geographical content heavily influenced by the *Collectanea*, but Solinus himself also appears as a character who, just as Virgil guided Dante through hell and purgatory, accompanies Fazio around the known world, having been sent by God upon the poet's prayer and request for a guide. The encounter between the two characters, Fazio and Solinus, provides some important insight into the high regard in which the latter was held amongst authors of medieval didactic literature, as the poet addresses his newly-found guide as 'the very one who parted the beginning, the end, the middle of the world, its inhabited parts and what is in them'.[94] Further information on the reception and the possible uses of the *Collectanea* in Fazio's times is given by the following exchange:

"Allor, come il figliuol che alla sua mamma
Con riverenza parla, dissi: o sole,
In cui non manca di mia voglia dramma;
Quel che da te prima l'animo vuole,
Si è d'aver ripartito per rubrica

[93] *De Animalibus* 23. 1. 22. See also 25.1. 5 *et sicut in multis mentitur Solinus ita et in hoc falsum dicit.* See Thorndyke (1914) p. 286.
[94] Fazio, *Ditt.* 1.58-60 "Solin, diss'io, se' tu quel proprio desso / che divisi il principio, il fine, il mezzo / del mondo, l'abitato e ciò ch'è in esso?"

il mondo; e queste fur le mie parole.
Ed egli a me: Nella mia età antica
Tutto il notai, bench'ora mal s'incappa
L'uom, perché non intende quel ch'io dica.
E però teco formerò una mappa,
Tal che l'intenderanno, non che tue,
Color che sanno appena ancor dir pappa."[95]

The reverence felt by the poet for Solinus is made evident by his comparison of the ancient geographer to an awe-inspiring mother first and to the sun immediately after, and once again Solinus is credited with undertaking a first partition of the world "by rubrics", meaning by geographical areas. Fazio's admiration for Solinus is therefore a clear sign not only of a taste for encyclopaedism typical of his era, but also of the fundamental role played by the *Collectanea* in the transmission of classical geographical knowledge to the Middle Ages. Solinus' character's final remarks, with his intention of creating a map to make his description of the world accessible to those who did not understand Latin and to the young, is also indicative of the success of his geographical innovations, exceeding the immediate popularity of his text. Written over twenty years, between 1346 and 1367, and unfinished, the *Dittamondo* is today considered, in studies of Italian literature, one of the most important and popular works of the second half of the 14th century.[96]

With the advent of the Renaissance in Italy and in the rest of Europe, came a renewed interest in the classics and a rediscovery of those very works by Pliny and Mela whose authority the *Collectanea* had replaced from around the 9th century. In the 15th century, mentions of Solinus and his work become more and more rare, whereas his critics appear to be more numerous and vocal, so that no widespread use of his geographical knowledge is to be reported, apart from very few exceptions. According to Zweder von Martels, "the most spectacular use" of Solinus' text came by none other than Christopher Columbus, who would have been particularly interested in Solinus' description of the Blessed Islands.[97] Also from Italy, came two notable examples: one in the commentary to Ovid's *Fasti* by the

[95] Fazio, 1.7.76-87.
[96] The Italian scholar Giulio Ferroni describes Fazio's poem as the most characteristic work of its time. See Ferroni, (2002) p. 354.
[97] von Martels (2014) p. 13.

Italian scholar Poliziano, who used an edited manuscript of the *Collectanea* to comment on Ovid's description of Mount Circeo,[98] and the other in the *Tractatus* by the humanist Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, whose description of the stones and gems that cover the throne of Lady Fortuna is heavily influenced by Solinus' mineralogical paragraphs.[99]

While Solinus kept enjoying a relative popularity in Spain - where his work heavily influenced the geographical content of Antonio de Torquemada's *Jardín de flores curiosas*[100] - and in the studies of cosmography of some European universities,[101] the 16th century saw the decline and downfall of his authority in the field of geographical knowledge, with his fate sealed by the Italian classicist Filippo Beroaldo who, in the preface to his 1500 edition of the *Collectanea*, first used the infamous epithet of 'simia Pliniana' (Pliny's monkey) that will taint Solinus' reputation and remain with him until the 20th century.

Although previous studies have provided very detailed catalogues of Solinus' compilers,[102] the popularity of his text throughout the over one thousand years from its publication to the start of the Renaissance was so widespread, that a comprehensive overview of its fortunes would require a thesis of its own. Nonetheless, as quoting Solinus or compiling excerpts from his work had become, in the Middle Ages, akin to consulting an encyclopaedia for modern scholars, the identification of every single author that used the *Collectanea* as a source seems hardly achievable. While the importance of Solinus' reception lies primarily in the amount of geographical information transmitted by him to posterity - for much of which, it has been said, Solinus is the oldest testimony - and in the aid given by his work to the field of textual criticism with the solution of several textual problems in the works of his compilers, it is the very quality of his medieval readers that demonstrates what is perhaps the most important aspect of his legacy: used by historiographers, chroniclers, philosophers and grammarians, the *Collectanea* played a crucial role in creating a descriptive,

[98] Marandini (1990) pp. 117-128.
[99] von Martels (2014) pp. 12-18.
[100] Nieto (2001) p. 69 ff.
[101] Nieto (2001) *ibid.*
[102] Nieto (2001) pp. 68-75. The list of authors mentioned in this chapter mostly matches Nieto's review, with a few omissions and some additions.

historical and even political geography, placing the discipline amongst the humanities and shaping the perception of it that we have today, of a social rather than a natural science.

IV. *Methodology*

As stated above, this thesis intends to follow a text-based approach, focusing on those elements of Solinus' language and style in which allusions can be found to his perception of the world that he describes, as well as to the intents and motivations behind his work. The content of selected passages will be analysed and discussed against existing scholarly literature. Furthermore, an original translation will be provided, along with the Latin text for those passages in which the examination of Solinus' lexical choices is essential to the understanding of the rationale behind inclusions and omissions in adapting source material, as well as to the identification of differences and similarities in tone and intentions between Solinus and his sources (especially Pliny).

This thesis will present two arguments in response to the key research question as to what the ultimate purpose of the *Collectanea* was. The first part will deal with the debate over the details of Solinus' life, the identity of his mysterious dedicatee Adventus, and the author's treatment of Rome, aiming to examine the issue from a historical perspective. Within Part I, the first chapter will be devoted to the debate concerning the author's biography. A review will be given of previous scholars' theories aimed at identifying Solinus' provenance, followed by observations based on the reading of a specific section in the account of the topography of Rome in its regal era. Specifically, the argument will be presented that the author's lack of geographical accuracy in the description of Rome and Italy is not necessarily a reflection of a non-Italian background.

Similarly, after an overview of the different theories concerning the century in which Solinus lived and worked, the second half of the first chapter will endeavour to provide a more specific *terminus post quem* for the composition of the *Collectanea,* in the

second half of the third century. This will be achieved through the analysis of Solinus' description of geographical areas along the eastern *limes*, which will aim to determine if and how the author's linguistic and stylistic choices can be seen as indicative of the geopolitical changes affecting those regions between the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century. As will be discussed in the course of the first chapter, the need to determine the period in which Solinus' work was written stems from the conviction that his portrayal of Rome and the rest of the world - as well as the very reason behind his undertaking of their description - is dictated by the author's desire to respond to the cultural and political changes of his time.

The identity of Adventus will also be discussed, and a new theory will be advanced that might help explain the inconsistencies caused by the presence of this name in both letters, as well as the difficulties created by the absence of the dedicatee's *tria nomina*, title, or any other personal detail. Similarly to what has been said in regard to Solinus' identity, the determination of the real meaning behind the author's salutation to Adventus might offer some clarification as to the person or occasion for which the text was written and intended, and what its ultimate purpose was.

The relationship between Solinus' historical context and his text will be further explored in the second chapter, which will deal with the representation of Rome both in Chapter 1 of the *Collectanea* and throughout the rest of the text. The examination of Chapter 1 will be limited to its first half, in which the author adheres to his commitment to investigate the origins of the city. Through the reading of selected passages on Rome's foundation and history - and specifically through the analysis of Solinus' tone, choice of words, and differences with his sources - the possibility will be discussed that Solinus' appeal to the collective memory of his readers might be indicative of his attempt to reclaim the cultural and historical primacy of Rome, at a time in which it was losing its political relevance. A similar approach will be used in the reading of Solinus' allusions to Rome and the Romans in the description of other geographical areas throughout the text, focusing on his use of language and how it might betray the author's imperialistic attitude towards the provinces and the world as a whole.

The second part of this thesis will investigate the role of *mirabilia* and the possible presence of both Stoic and Christian influences within the text and provide the philosophical side of the argument. In its third chapter, this thesis will first endeavour to explain the rationale behind the significant presence of wondrous facts throughout the *Collectanea*, as well as Solinus' apparent predilection for paradoxography over geography itself. Within the paradoxographical content, animal *mirabilia* will be used as a case study, in order to illustrate what the author's view of Nature is, and how such a view is consistent with that of a providentially arranged world order with Rome at its centre. The description of rare, exotic, and fantastic beasts - or even just the account of remarkable features of more familiar ones - is in fact where the author's amazement at the power of Nature is the most evident. Once again through the analysis of Solinus' language and tone, the examination of every paragraph containing wondrous animal facts will, therefore, illustrate not only his authorial autonomy in the adaptation of source material, but also the very epistemological project that lays the foundations of his political one.

The fourth and final chapter will discuss how Solinus' depiction of Nature might have been the influenced by Stoic physics. His direct mentions of Stoic philosophers, along with the recurrent comparison between the cosmos and a living being, will be assessed as possible hints of Stoic influences on his work and world view. Similarly, drawing from the work of previous scholars,[103] Solinus' tone in the account of the barbaric customs of some Gallic tribes will be scrutinised in search for traces of Christian morals, and a new reading will be given of those zoological passages in which the author displays a clear hatred for snakes and reptiles. The author's blatant ophidiophobia will be in fact discussed as a possible sign of a new sensitivity influenced by the negative connotation of the animal that was found in the Scriptures. This discussion will provide further contextualisation for the author and his text and contribute to the overall assessment of the social and cultural reasons that fostered Solinus' reordering of the geographical knowledge of the past.

[103] von Martels (2003).

PART I

CHAPTER ONE
THE AUTHOR

The scarcity of the information concerning the identity of Gaius Julius Solinus has long been a cause of frustration for those engaged in the study of his text. Since Mommsen's edition, different (and often contradictory) theories have been formulated on both the author's geographical provenance and the chronology of his life, with very little agreement reached amongst scholars, other than a general identification of the time of composition of the *Collectanea* being between the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century. While determining where and when Solinus lived might seem unnecessary - if one looks at his text as the mere rearrangement of Pliny's knowledge in a somewhat more manageable form - clarifying some of the key questions and doubts as to his biographical details is essential to the ascertainment of the real purpose of his work, since the world view upheld by his text (if any) cannot be but a reflection of the historical and geographical context in which he wrote. Although much has already been said on this matter (as a review of the theories advanced by previous scholars from Mommsen to our time will show), further contribution will be given to the debate, through the analysis of those textual elements in which the author's words might offer traces of the historic development of a particular region, and where the geographical items that he discusses are just as important as the ones that he ignores.

I. *Solinus' Name and Homeland*

Within the manuscript tradition, the name of the author appears in its complete form of *G. Iulius Solinus* only in the manuscripts of the second class (specifically, in the inscription of *M* and in the subscription of the remaining books) and - in the form of *C. Iulius Solinus* - in both the prescription and subscription of the entire third class (*SAP*). *Iulius Solinus*, the name by which he was known in Medieval times,[1] is instead the form present in the subscription of the manuscripts of the first family. Finally, the prefatory letter of all manuscripts except for *H* contains *Solinus* alone, a *cognomen* rare amongst

[1] Nieto (2001) p. 11.

people of higher and lower classes alike.[2] Although only one epigraphic testimony of Solinus' complete name is transmitted to us by an Asturian inscription (*CIL* II. 2650), *Solinus* alone appears in both a British inscription (*CIL* VII. 31) and in various pottery vessels from Britain and Gaul.[3] A. Mócsy identified ten other occurrences of the *cognomen* in the different cases of *Solinus* and *Solini*, as well as in the feminine *Solina* and the slightly different form *Solinius*, in Gallic and Germanic inscriptions, and one from Split, the authenticity of which is in doubt.[4] While acknowledging the possibility that the name could have been present in other areas, such as Italy and Africa, Mócsy noted that the large number of documents from the areas of Aquitania, Gallia Lugdunensis, and the Rhineland made it very likely that the author of the *Collectanea* came from the Gallo-Germanic area.[5] Mommsen, on the other hand, had already rejected any idea that Solinus could be anything other than Roman, or at least Italian, on the basis of an alleged lack of partiality in the description of any of the provinces of the empire.[6] Walter, however, pointed out a series of geographical and topographical inaccuracies in the description of both Rome and Italy, which would contradict Mommsen's view:[7] namely Solinus' lack of confidence in describing the Temple of Saturn, which according to Walter would have hardly suited a resident of Rome;[8] his failure to include any reference to the *Horti Sallustiani* and the *Scalae Gemoniae* in two close adaptations of original Plinian passages featuring said landmarks;[9] the anachronism caused by the reference to a shrine of *Pietas* as still standing, while by Solinus' time it had long been replaced by the Theatre of Marcellus;[10] and the many

[2] Mommsen (1895) p. V. As for *Iulius*, it was the most common *nomen* in the western provinces of the empire. See Mócsy (1982-1984) p. 385, n. 24.
[3] *CIL* VII. 1331, 104. 1336, 1081. 1082. XII. 5686, 847. See Holder (1896) s.v. *Solinus.*
[4] Mócsy (1982-1984) p. 384, n. 22.
[5] Mócsy (1982-1984) p. 385.
[6] Mommsen (1895) p. VI.
[7] Walter (1963) pp. 149-154.
[8] See Sol. 1.12. Specifically, Walter took issue with Solinus' use of the verb *fertur* to report the presence of an *aerarium* inside the temple. The presence of an *aerarium* was in fact allegedly reported until at least the fifth century AD, so that Solinus would have been able to verify this in person, had he been living and working in the capital. See Walter (1963) p. 150.
[9] Cf. Sol. 1.88 with Plin. 7.75, on the extraordinary height of Pusio and Secundilla, buried in Sallust's Gardens, and Sol. 15.10 with Plin. 8.145, on the faithfulness of a dog towards his master, whose body had been thrown onto the *Scalae Gemoniae*. For both landmarks, Walter noted that anyone with a knowledge of the city of Rome would not have omitted their mention.
[10] Cf. Sol. 1.124-125 and Plin. 7.121. Having described the act of *pietas* performed by a young woman towards her incarcerated father, Solinus notes that "the place dedicated to its *numen* is a shrine of *Pietas*" (*locus dicatus suo numinis Pietatis sacellum est*), thus indicating, according to Walter, that Solinus thought the shrine to be still in its place. Pliny, on the other hand, reports that the place was consecrated "after a temple of *Pietas* was built on the location of that gaol, where there is now the Theatre of Marcellus" (*templo Pietatis exstructo in illius carceris sede, ubi nunc Marcelli theatrum est*). See Walter (1963) p. 152.

geographical errors in his description of southern Italy, caused by the misreading of Mela's account of the same area.[11] Finally, in more recent times, Nieto identified the hint of Solinus' possible provincial origin in two passages in which the author refers to the Italians in the third person, thus making it unlikely that he might have been an Italian himself.[12]

Notwithstanding the validity of Walter's observations in regard to Solinus' lack of geographical and topographical accuracy (or even competence), it must be noted that nearly all of those instances contain what can easily be explained as adaptation or citation errors, possibly due to Solinus adapting parts of Pliny's text from memory. Although Walter argued that a resident of Rome (or anyone with a good knowledge of the city) should have been able to avoid making such mistakes - or at least to question the accuracy of the information reported - such a view, nonetheless, fails to take into account Solinus' professed intention not to innovate or stray away (deliberately, at least) from the material of his sources, as "[he] preferred to select all opinions rather than alter them" (*opiniones universas eligere maluimus potius quam innovare*, *Praef.* 5). While this does not mean that Solinus never shows authorial autonomy throughout the text, it does imply that his commitment to the faithful reporting of "all opinions" trumps the need for geographical accuracy, so that inaccurate information could have easily made its way into Solinus' text - due either to the misremembering of his sources, or to corruptions in the manuscripts in his possession - without him feeling the need to rectify it. Furthermore, it would do Solinus great injustice to underestimate the importance of his topographical account of regal Rome (1.21-26), which includes the location of the dwelling of each of Romulus' successors form Tatius to Superbus, and which is regarded by Roman archaeologists as the most complete testimony of this kind.[13]

Possibly an adaptation of Varronian material, the segment contains explicit allusions to contemporary Rome, through Solinus' reference to the Temple of Juno Moneta, the *Regia*, and the Shrine of the Lares, as still standing in his time. Of course, one could

[11] Cf. Sol. 2.21-22 and Mela 2. 67-71.
[12] In Sol. 6.1. After mentioning the Aeolian islands, Solinus observes that "the Italians call them Vulcanian" (*Itali Vulcanias vocant*), while in Sol. 23.13 the author describes the Etruscan Sea "which the Greeks call Ionian or Tyrrhenian, the Italians call Southern" (*quem Graeci Ionium vel Tyrrhenum, Itali Inferum vocitant*). See Nieto (2001) 12, n. 7.
[13] See below pp. 75-79.

make the same objection that was made by Walter in regard to Solinus' anachronistic mention of the Shrine of Pietas: that the author is here erroneously describing as still existing monuments that by his time had long been replaced or destroyed. It could also be suggested that Solinus is here displaying that faithfulness to his sources that responds to the commitment made in the preface, and that, if the account was indeed correct, it was only due to his slavish compilation of Varro's data. The difference, however, lies in the way in which those buildings are referred to by Solinus. They are in fact topographical landmarks that might be of use for the identification of specific places of historical significance to a Roman readership, the mention of which has a political rather than geographical purpose, such as the kings' dwellings on the hills surrounding the Forum: "Tatius on the citadel, where now is the Temple of Juno Moneta" (*Tatius in arce, ubi nunc aedes est Iunonis Monetae*, 1.21), "Numa […] in the *regia* that is still called so" (*Numa ... in regia quae adhuc ita appellatur*), "Ancus Marcius at the top end of the *via sacra*, where is the Shrine of the Lares" (*Ancus Marcius in summa sacra via, ubi aedes Larum est*, 1.23),[14] as opposed to the mere reminder that the gaol where an extraordinary act of devotion by a young woman towards her father took place "is a shrine of *pietas*" (*Pietatis sacellum est*, 1.125).[15] The *commemoratio locorum* in which the geographical framework of the text consists is, after all, almost a pretext, only secondary to the account of the memorable things that the world has to offer and of the role that Rome plays in it, and for which geographical remarks often serve as an entry-point.[16] Consequently, the perception is that the author's occasional inaccuracy (geographical, historical, or otherwise) can be easily excused or forgiven.

Even the "steadfastness of truth" (*constantia veritatis*, *Praef.* 6), with which the author vows in the preface to investigate the origins of Rome, does not so much imply

[14] The same can said about Solinus' mention of the house of Cacus "where is now the Porta Trigemina" (*ubi Trigemina nunc porta*, 1.8) and of the dwelling of the nymph Carmenta at the foot of the Capitol "where is now a sanctuary of Carmenta" (*ubi Carmentis nunc fanum est*, 1.13).

[15] In regard to Solinus' adaptation of this passage, it is noteworthy that his version differs from the original Plinian model in reporting the gender of the young woman's parent: the mother in Pliny, the father in Solinus. Such difference is all the more remarkable if we look at the similarities between his and Pliny's account, which in some parts Solinus seemingly adapted verbatim. The legend was in fact transmitted by two distinct traditions: one followed by Valerius Maximus and Pliny, and the other by Festus (228 L) and Solinus. As noted by Tim Parkin, the original story was probably the one involving the father, as attested by both artistic and literary sources. Whenever the change back to the original version occurred, in the time between Pliny's and Solinus' versions, it is likely that it was already present in whatever source Solinus was using, possibly in the form of a gloss in his manuscript of the *Naturalis Historia*. See Nieto (2001) p. 186, n. 205 and Parkin (2003) pp. 194-198.

[16] See below pp. 101-105.

that everything reported is true, as that it has been truthfully reported. And little does it matter that Solinus could have verified the veracity of some of the information provided - such as the exact position of a temple, or the location of a southern Italian town - since his intention was never to write a *periegesis*, but a compendium of the wonders of the Earth and a reminder of the role played by Rome in relation to such wonders. As for Nieto's observations regarding Solinus referring to the Italians in the third person, it must be noted that a clear and consistent pattern of 'identitarian' language is hard to identify, and in fact the only linguistic hint to Solinus' origins is his use of the first person plural to describe elements of Roman history and culture, amongst which two references can be found to Latin as his own language (Sol. 11.7 and 11.34), and two allusions to his own and his readers' Roman heritage (19.1 and 21.3).[17] Solinus might very well have been a Gaul with a mostly bookish knowledge of Rome and Italy, but his identity was clearly Roman, and in light of his commitment to the promotion of Rome as the eternal *caput orbis*, shown in both the preface and the first chapter,[18] it seems rather unlikely that he would not have spent at least some time in the capital.

II. *Solinus' Life*

1. Finding a *Terminus Post Quem*

More important than identifying Solinus' homeland is establishing the chronology of his life, or at least the century in which he composed his work. Mommsen suggested that a date earlier than the third century can be excluded on the ground of linguistic and stylistic reasons,[19] and that the earliest *terminus post quem* can be set at the Principate of Elagabalus (218-222), based on Solinus' observation that with the introduction of silk "a passion for luxury has persuaded women first, and now men too, to exhibit rather than cover their bodies";[20] for the Severan emperor was allegedly the first man to have

[17] See below pp. 87-91.
[18] See below Chapter 2.
[19] Mommsen (1895) p. VI. His view has been shared by all those who have investigated the matter after him. See Walter (1963) pp. 155-156, Nieto (2001) p. 14.
[20] Sol. 50.3: "ostendere potius corpora quam vestire primo feminis, nunc etiam viris, luxuriae persuasit libido."

publicly worn silk clothing.[21] As for a *terminus ante quem*, Mommsen observed that the author must have lived "quite some time before Theodosius II"[22] (401-450) - who, according to a subscription present in 26 manuscripts of the first class, curated the publication of an edition of the *Collectanea*[23] - or at least before 426, the year of the publication of Augustine's *De Civitate* Dei, the oldest text in which Solinus' influence is clearly visible.[24] Given the considerable popularity that the text would have had to enjoy in the first half of the fifth century in order to attract the attention of the emperor himself, it is safe to assume that it achieved wide circulation already in the second half of the fourth century.[25] Nevertheless, Mommsen categorically excluded that Solinus lived and worked during the fourth century, based on the use in his text of the name of Byzantium instead of Constantinople, along with the absence of any references to Diocletian's division of the provinces of the empire, as well as any direct mention of Christianity: all clear indications, according to the German philologist, that the date of the composition of the *Collectanea* should be set in the middle of the third century.[26] Furthermore, a perceived tone of pessimism in Solinus' rhetorical question when he wonders "who in this age is not born shorter than his own parents?" (*quis enim iam aevo isto non minor parentibus suis nascitur*, 22.1-2) should be interpreted as a sign of economic crisis and widespread malnourishment, which would fit the period of military anarchy, and specifically the principate of Valerianus and Gallienus (253-260), as opposed to the prosperous time of the Antonine dynasty in the second century.[27] Walter, on the other hand, pointed out the inconsistency of such a view, which disregards the fact that similar observations on the absence of Christian references and the use of Constantinople's old name of Byzantium can also be applied to the fifth-century author

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[21] Nieto noted that as we know from Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.33) and Cassius Dio (57.15.1), silk clothing actually used to be worn by men in Rome until its use was forbidden, on account of its depraved nature, by the Senate (according to Tacitus) or by Tiberius himself (according to Cassius Dio) in AD 16. See Nieto (2001) p. 21.

[22] Mommsen (1895) p. VI.

[23] See above p. 14.

[24] Mommsen denied Solinus' role as a source for Ammianus' *Res Gestae*, published towards the end of the fourth century. See above pp. 9-11.

[25] This is also confirmed if we accept that Solinus was used as a source by Ammianus, a theory accepted by Rabenald and all those who have investigated Solinus' sources and legacy after Mommsen. See above Chapter 1.

[26] Mommsen (1895) pp. VI-VII.

[27] Mommsen cited this passage along with other references in the text that, in his view, would indicate that Solinus wrote in the third century: namely the allusion to camel trade (49.11, the relevance of which is, however, not explained) and the custom, popular in the third century, of having performances by flutists during the equestrian spectacles held in the Circus Maximus (45.11-12). See Mommsen (1895) *l.c.* and Nieto (2001) p. 21.

Marcianus Capella. Instead, Walter noted how Priscian's mention of Solinus as a testimony of the Latin language, along with Ulpian and Vegetius, would allow for a later date in the fourth century.[28] If anything, he suggested that the *terminus post quem* be moved back by thirty years, based on a comment by Solinus on the Libyan tribe of the *Blemyes* found in the manuscripts of the third class. In his comment - expunged by Mommsen on the ground of his rejection of the authenticity of the second edition - Solinus noted that "people believe that the Blemyes, but not those who inhabit the regions near the Red Sea, are born mutilated in that part of their body where the head is, but they have their mouth and eyes on their chest."[29] Mommsen had argued that the allusion to the Aethiopian Blemyes was a gloss by someone eager to show his knowledge of the skirmishes between this tribe and the Romans, which occurred from the time of Diocletian to the reign of Justinian.[30] Walter - who accepted the authenticity of the readings present in *SAP*[31] - noted that contacts between the two populations had in fact been documented since the reign of Decius (249-251), so that nothing would prevent us from not only ascribing the entire passage to Solinus, but also setting a *terminus post quem* at around 250.[32] In more recent times, Schmidt observed that the absence of a division into books could mean that the text was published as a *codex*, which would suit the fourth century better than the third. Similarly, its very nature of compendium would place it, alongside the epitomes of Livy's and Valerius Maximus' works, in the fourth century; as would some features of his style and language.[33] As for the absence of Christian references in the text, Schmidt objected to Mommsen's assessment, and identified a possible Christian undertone in the way in which Solinus showed his contempt for the barbaric customs of some Gallic and Scythian tribes.[34]

Nieto identified further elements in the text that might help narrow down the options for both a *terminus post* and *ante quem.* The confusion between Nemesis and Diana,

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[28] Mommsen had dismissed the inclusion of Ulpian and Vegetius in Priscian's mention saying that later authors were sometimes included in lists of older ones. See Mommsen (1895) p. VII.
[29] Sol. 31.5: "Blemyas, [sed non eos qui vicina Rubro mari incolunt,] credunt truncos nasci parte qua caput est, os tamen et oculos habere in pectore." The rejected part is only present in the manuscripts of the third class (*SAP*).
[30] See Mommsen (1895) p. XCII. Mommsen believed that the readings present in *SAP* were not the work of a single author. He saw, therefore, in this particular allusion the hand of a rather late scribe, whom the century-long conflict would have compelled to add this interpolation.
[31] See above p. 17.
[32] Walter (1969) pp. 73-74.
[33] Schmidt (1995) pp. 30-32.
[34] A theory subsequently reprised by von Martels. See below pp. 143-144.

shown by Solinus' adaptation of Mela's mention of a Temple of Amphiaraos in Rhamnous,[35] would in fact have been caused by a syncretism of the two goddesses, which became popular in the Danubian provinces between the second and third century, and whose presence in Rome in the middle of the third century is attested by an inscription from the reign of Gordian III (238-244).[36] Solinus' description of the Palestinian city of Engada, as "a town [that] was south of the territory of the Esseni, but has been destroyed" (*oppidum infra Essenos fuit, sed excisum est*, 35.12) would instead help establish the *terminus ante quem*; for the town, which was indeed destroyed in AD 73, was then rebuilt around the year 300, or at least towards the beginning of the fourth century. This would not necessarily establish the *terminus* at the year 300 but would definitely mean that the passage could not have been written later than the first few decades of the fourth century; either before the reconstruction of Engada or at least before its news had time to reach Solinus.[37] Finally, Nieto observed some similarities between the language of Solinus' passage on the marital customs of some African tribes, and that of some laws pertaining to marriage in Diocletian and Maximinus' constitution of 295. Lexical coincidences, as well as the similar tone with which the polygamous unions of these tribes are condemned, could in fact signify Solinus' adherence to morals and values that were contemporary to those expressed in the constitution.[38] Based on his own and his predecessors' observations, Nieto acknowledged the impossibility of determining anything more certain regarding Solinus' biography, other than the years 290 and 350 as the likely chronological limits for the composition of the *Collectanea*[39]

When it comes to establishing clear dates for the chronology of Solinus' life (or at least of the period in which he worked at the *Collectanea*) one cannot help but agree with Nieto's final remark on the unattainable nature of such a task. For even new hints that might emerge from reading the text inevitably come to clash with the reality of the uncertain origin of Solinus' data, and the absence of a consistent pattern in his selection of source material. It is therefore with all necessary caution that further observations can

[35] See Mel. 2.40: "Rhamnus parva, inlustris tamen, quod in ea fanum est Amphiarai et Phidiaca Nemesis" and Sol. 7.26: "Ramne quoque, in qua Amphiarai fanum et Phidiacae signum Dianae".
[36] *CIL* 6.130. See Nieto p.25 and n.32.
[37] Nieto (2001) pp. 25-26.
[38] Nieto (2001) p. 26: "[C]omo si ambos redactores compartiesen un mismo estado de opinión."
[39] Nieto (2001) p. 27: "[S]ospecho que Solino pudo escribir entre el final del siglo III y la primera mitad del siglo IV (290-350), sin que esté a nuestro alcance precisar más."

be made on possible indirect chronological references to be inferred from Solinus' own words. Such is the case of the description of the southern Levant, in which the geopolitical changes that characterised the area in Late Antiquity are never explicitly accounted for, but (possibly) unwittingly implied.

Solinus' account of Arabia (Chapter 33) begins from the easternmost branch of the Nile Delta by the Egyptian port of Pelusium, beyond which the author describes "Arabia (…) stretching to the Red Sea" (*Arabia … ad Rubrum pertinens mare*, 33.1), the province of Arabia Petraea, which occupied the territory of the Sinai Peninsula. After an aetiological explanation of the etymology of the name of the Red Sea[40] and a passing mention of the coastal city of Arsinoe (modern Suez, 33.2), Solinus moves on to the description of that part of Arabia that he probably found the most interesting on account of the *memorabilia* that it contained: the so-called Arabia Felix, to which the rest of the chapter is devoted (33.2-33.23). He then proceeds with a paradoxographical excursus containing data drawn from five different Plinian books (according to Mommsen's apparatus), at the conclusion of which he states that "this is enough about Arabia: let us repatriate to Pelusium" (*hoc Arabiae sat est: ad Pelusium repatriemus*, 33.23). The questions that arise from reading Solinus' expression (which is nowhere to be found in any of the adapted Plinian passages) do not so much pertain to its origin, as to its very meaning and significance. While the area described in almost the entire chapter did not belong to Rome, the territory immediately east of the *Pelusiacum ostium* had in fact been part of the empire since its annexation by Trajan in AD 106, so that Pelusium did not mark an external border, and Solinus' itinerary, as it was again proceeding in its direction from Arabia Felix, could hardly be considered a 'repatriation', given that the whole of the Sinai Peninsula (and therefore the Roman Arabia Petraea) lay in between. It is true that the initial mention of the Egyptian city and the (albeit indirect) reference to Arabia Petraea are merely a pretext that allows Solinus

[40] Solinus actually provides two different versions, the first taken from Pliny (6.107), the second of unknown origin, according to Mommsen's apparatus, but allegedly from one of Varro's lost works (possibly *De ora maritima*), if Solinus' words are to be trusted: "Rubrum […] mare, quod Erythraeum ab Erythra rege, Persei et Andromedae filio, non solum a colore appellatum Varro dicit. qui affirmat in litore maris istius fontem esse, quem si oves biberint, mutent vellerum qualitatem et antea candidae amittant quod fuerint usque ad haustum ac furvo postmodum nigrescant colore" (Sol. 33.1).

to delve into the wonders of Arabia Felix,[41] and that geographical accuracy often takes second place to paradoxography.

Nonetheless, his words could very well be indicative of his overall perception of the area in relation to Rome and its borders. Solinus does not in fact differentiate between the Roman province of Arabia Petraea, the uninhabited territory of *Arabia deserta*, and the part of the Arabian peninsula known as Arabia Felix. Having mentioned the city of Arsinoe, he describes how "this part of Arabia extends to that fragrant and rich land that is occupied by the Arabian tribes of the Catabani and Scaenitae, famous for Mount Casius", a land "which the Greeks called *Eudaemon*, while our people called it *Beata*".[42] The area occupied by Mount Casius (El-Kas) was in fact just east of Pelusium, on the Mediterranean coast of the Sinai Peninsula and still in Egyptian territory; far away from what was known as Arabia Felix.[43] Solinus' confusion as to the different geographical areas that went by the name of Arabia is all the more remarkable, because he seems to consider foreign an area that had belonged to Rome for over 200 years. As noted by Walter D. Ward, between the late third and fifth century Arabia and Palestine were often used as vague geographical terms with little regard for accuracy when it came to defining their boundaries.[44] The area had indeed been subject to continuous administrative changes during and after the Tetrarchy, with entire regions being transferred from Arabia to Palestine and back, and possibly a second Arabian province being created by Licinius,[45] so that it is possible that Solinus' confusion as to the exact boundaries of the regions of the southern Levant might reflect the uncertainty caused by the constant reorganisations of the area between the late third and early fourth century. Finally, if anything can be observed with a higher degree of certainty in regard to Solinus' words, is that the verb *repatriare* is not attested in texts earlier than the

[41] Its fantastic animal creatures (the Phoenix and the *cinnamolgus*, 33.11-15), its tribes of peculiar culinary customs (the *Scaenitae* who abstain from pork, and the *Arabes* who feed on snakes, 33.3 and 33.17), its precious fragrances (frankincense and myrrh, 33.5-10), and its gems of miraculous properties (33.18-23).

[42] Sol. 33.2: "haec Arabia procedit ad usque illam odoriferam et divitem terram, quam Catabani et Scaenitae tenent Arabes", Sol. 33.4: "hanc Arabiam Graeci Eudamonem, nostri Beatam nominaverunt."

[43] Pliny located its north-easter border by the town of Charax on the Persian Gulf (around the location of modern Al-Qurna, Iraq): "Charax oppidum Persici sinum intimum, a quo Arabia Eudaemon cognominata excurrit" (Plin. 6.138).

[44] Ward (2012) p. 297.

[45] Ward (2012) p. 298. According to Bowerstock, the political and administrative status of Arabia became constantly harder to define after Diocletian. See Bowerstock (1971) p. 242.

Collectanea, and that its earliest use by anyone other than Solinus is found in the fourth-century *Res Gestae Alexandri Macedonis* by Julius Valerius.[46]

A final consideration can be added on Solinus' description of Mesopotamia, and specifically of the basin of the Euphrates (37.1-4), which is modelled on Pliny's account of the same area (5.83-85). Similarly to Pliny's, Solinus' description begins from the spring of the Euphrates in Greater Armenia, to which other observations on the hydrography of the area are added, and it then follows the river's course as it proceeds south-east. The two accounts then diverge from where the river stops marking the border between the northern Syrian region of Commagene and the Arabian territory of the Orrhoei, before bending east. From there, while Pliny embarks on an excursus on Syria, Solinus' narration continues along the course of the Euphrates down to Babylonia and Mesopotamia, before moving on to the description of the Tigris. It might have been that Pliny's excursus, which also includes the northern part of Mesopotamia, refers to the area as *Arabia*, thus adding to Solinus' confusion as to the exact location of a region by this name. What is noteworthy, however, is Solinus' choice to gloss over Pliny's list of Mesopotamian cities, except for a brief mention of Babylonia (37.2), and to eliminate Syria completely, including the city of Palmyra, on which Pliny's account does instead focus with a degree of interest that surpasses that shown for any other place in Syria or Mesopotamia.[47] As inconsistent as Solinus' methodology can be at times, it is possible that Pliny's data on Palmyra were not deemed of interest by him, due to an indifference towards, or even ignorance of the existence of the city, which had in fact been destroyed by Aurelian in 272, following Zenobia and Vaballathus' rebellion and their attempt at seceding from Rome. Whether Solinus was committed to the *damnatio memoriae* of the rebellious city, or the memory of its existence had by then been erased from his own and his readers' mind, it seems likely that he worked at the *Collectanea* at least a few decades after the events, between the end of the third and the start of the fourth century.

There are two more hints pointing towards Aurelian's reign (270-275) as a possible *terminus post quem*. The first is the absence of any reference to Dacia, which Aurelian

[46] Hyskell (1925) p. 13.

[47] Plin. 5.88: "Palmyra urbs nobilis situ, divitiis soli et aquis amoenis, vasto undique ambitu harenis includit agros, ac velut terris exempta a rerum natura, privata sorte inter duo imperia summa Romanorum Parthorumque, et prima in discordia semper utrimque cura."

had abandoned in 271; and while a description of the region is indeed also absent from Mela's and Pliny's texts, Pliny does, nonetheless, make mention of the Dacians in a list of Transdanubian Scyhian tribes, which is (according to Mommsen's apparatus) partially used by Solinus as a source for the data concerning the borders of the Germans.[48] The second and possibly more relevant hint is given by the very structure of Solinus' work. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Solinus' decision to commence his itinerary from Rome can arguably be regarded as indicative of the role played by the capital within his worldview, as well as of a change in the city's cultural and political status in his time. If one considers the way in which Solinus' work has often been described as an epitome of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, the different layout of the *Collectanea* - with Rome at the beginning of the author's *commemoratio locorum*, in contrast to Pliny's traditional periplus, which started its route from the Pillars of Hercules - reflects in fact Solinus' need to provide his readers with a different take to Pliny's on the current world order, or rather on the world order that his text is trying to reflect or even uphold. A renewed interest in the city of Rome arose, in the second half of the third century, during Aurelian's reign, not only with the construction of new walls and the extension of the *pomerium*, but also (and especially) with the promotion of old Roman traditions, such as his advice to the senators to consult the Sibylline books.[49] Ultimately, the primacy of Rome and its centrality in the world, as seemingly upheld by Solinus' text, would suit a society still influenced by the legacy of the Emperor "through whom the whole world was returned to Rome's name" (*per quem totus Romano nomini orbis est restitutus*, *HA Aur.* 1.5).[50]

The suggestion of Aurelian's reign as a *terminus post quem* is not meant to question the validity of Nieto's observations and, especially, of his decision to push back the

[48] See Sol. 19.2: "[Germania] extenditur inter Hercynium saltum et rupes Sarmatarum. ubi incipit Danuvio, ubi desinit Rheno perfunditur" and Plin. 4.80: "inter Danuvium et Hercynium saltum usque ad Pannonica hiberna Carnuti Germanorumque confinium". The two passages are only similar in their mention of the Hercynian Forest as seemingly marking the western end of the territory of the Germans. And although Solinus like Pliny does mention the Danube, his description seems to confuse which end of the territory is the western, and which the eastern (unless, of course, he is deliberately using an almost chiastic structure, by proceeding from west to east, and then from east to west again). Overall, a dependence on Pliny for this particular passage does not seem to be guaranteed, nor necessary. It should be added that such lack of clarity as to the borders of Germania seems as badly suited to the theory of Solinus' Gallo-Germanic provenance, as his topographical and geographical inaccuracies are to the possibility of a Roman or Italian origin.

[49] Dmitriev (2004) pp. 568-578.

[50] Aurelian had received the title of *restitutor orbis* after the destruction of Palmyra, and of *pacator orbis* after his victory over the Gauls. See Dmitriev (2004) p. 574, n. 49.

chronological limits of Solinus' life to the period between the very end of the third century and the start of the fourth. Following the example of previous scholars, the present research has attempted to infer possible hints and chronological references from the author's very words, and has proposed the reign of Aurelian as the earliest possible date, before which it seems unlikely that Solinus would have been active in the composition of the *Collectanea*. The spirit of the work itself, however, does seem to speak to a later readership, and the answer to the question as to how late (albeit one that can hardly be supported by incontrovertible textual evidence) could very well lie in the lack of explicit allusions by the author to his contemporary time. A sense of universality and timelessness is in fact the result of Solinus' efforts to deprive his own text of any significant references that might circumscribe it to a specific decade or even century, aiming at making it relevant to his contemporary and future readers alike. This, moreover, could respond to a clear political and ideological intent, of which the prime position reserved to Rome within the text is the most obvious manifestation. Solinus' timeless description of a boundless world that is still ruled over by Rome at its centre could in fact suit a reunified post-Tetrarchy empire; a world whose renewed unity the author is celebrating, but in which, through his text, he firmly opposes the displacement of the old capital from its legitimate position of power.

2. Solinus and Adventus

The debate around Solinus' biography is connected to that on the identity of the mysterious dedicatee Adventus. Mommsen reported that the *cognomen* was given to members of senatorial families between the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, and that it was found amongst at least two men of the Antistii and Oclatinii: Quintus Antistius Adventus Postumius Aquilinus, consul under Marcus Aurelius, and Oclatinius Adventus, consul in 218. Mommsen, however, rejected the suggestion, first posited by the 18th-century Irish scholar Henry Dodwell, that Oclatinius Adventus be identified as the dedicatee of the *Collectanea*, on account of the absence of any reference to Adventus' office, as well as of the title *clarissimus*.[51] A

[51] Mommsen (1895) p. VI.

suggestion reprised, as reported by Nieto, by the German philologist Hermann Usener after the publication of Mommsen's first edition, who made the (rather bold) conjecture that the name *Octivianus* in the gloss *Iulius Solinus sub Octiviano fuit*, present in the *Monacensis Lat.* 14429, should be read as a corruption of *Oclatinius.* Usener's conjecture was subsequently rejected by Gundermann, who suggested that the reference to Octavian*,* in the corrupted form of *Octivianus*, could have been the result of the glossator's confusion between *C. Iulius Solinus* and *C. Iulius Hyginus*, who indeed lived during Augustus' reign.[52] Nieto also pointed out that the character of Oclatinius Adventus, whom Cassius Dio describes as "unable to see due to old age, and to read due to lack of education, and to do anything due to inexperience" (μήθ'ὁρᾶν ὑπὸ γήρως μήτ'ἀναγιγνώσκειν ὑπ'ἀπαιδευσίας μήτε πράττειν τι ὑπ'ἀπειρίας δυνάμενον, 79.14.1), would hardly suit the portrait of a man who "excelled over the others by virtue of the leniency of [his] ears and [his] dedication to the most excellent arts" (*et aurium clementia et oprimarum artium studiis praestare te ceteris*, *Praef.* 1), as per Solinus' opening statement in his prefatory letter. The Spanish scholar did not exclude, however, that a descendant of Oclatinius Adventus could have been the unknown dedicatee.

The most interesting theory perhaps came from Schmidt, who on account of the presence of the dative *Constantio* instead of *Advento* in the prefatory letter of some 12th-century manuscripts identified the dedicatee of Solinus' work with none other that the emperor Constantius II, whose visit to Rome in 357 would have been the reason behind the dedication, and would have relegated the unidentified Adventus to the role of a second patron, who helped Solinus revise the second edition of his work and publish it under the new title of *Polyhistor*.[53] Schmidt's theory, however, did not care to explain the presence of the name of an orator called Herennius, in lieu of that of Adventus, in the opening of the second letter of three manuscripts of the third class,[54] and failed to take into account the alternative that the Constantius mentioned in the five codices of the first class could have very well been Constantius I. Whatever one's assessment of Schmidt's supposition might be, it is a fact that an overwhelming majority of the vast manuscript tradition reports *Adventus* for both letters, which makes it hard to accept a

[52] Nieto (2001) pp. 14-15.
[53] Schmidt (1995) p. 29. See above p. 17.
[54] *Ambrosianus* C 246 (13th century), *Ambrosianus* I 118 (15th century), and *Parisinus* 11206 (15th century).

conjecture based on five manuscripts alone.[55] Nonetheless, Schmidt did make a valid point in connecting the publication of the *Collectanea* with an imperial visit to the capital, for Solinus' choice to commence his description of the world from Rome (which he identified as the world's 'head') and the extensive portion of the first chapter devoted to the mythology, history, archaeology, and topography of the city, do highlight Rome's connection with (or embodiment of) political power within Solinus' world view.

Few conclusions can be drawn with any confidence in regard to Adventus' role in the publication of Solinus' work: first, that he could not have been the addressee of both letters, as made evident by the closing statement of the second one; then, that the person to whom the second letter was addressed was of lower rank than the receiver of the first; and finally, that the second letter does not read as a dedication at all, but rather as a request for help from Solinus to a friend who might assist him in publishing the revised edition. Therefore, the Adventus whose name appears in the salutation of the first letter (*Solinus Advento salutem*) is the one and only dedicatee of both the *Collectanea* and the revised *Polyhistor*; he is a patron of the arts, of a social status superior to Solinus', and holder of political office.[56] Now, if one partially accepts Schmidt's theory, it is perhaps more likely that the name Adventus was in fact the personification of the arrival, that is the *adventus*, to Rome of somebody whose visit was symbolic enough to legitimise and justify the Rome-centric framework of Solinus' text. The *adventus* ceremony, in which a ruler was met and greeted by the populace on his arrival, was an essential element of imperial propaganda; one that, for as long as the divine nature of the emperor remained unquestioned, was in fact a religious event aimed at promoting the universality and ubiquitousness of the ruler, as has been noted by Sabine MacCormack.[57] The *adventus* followed a clearly defined outline that it is possible to reconstruct from the testimony of Greek sources: a procession of citizens would meet the emperor outside the city walls, then escort him into the city and to a meeting with the local senate, and finally to circus games followed by a distribution of largesse.[58] Between the third and fourth century, the

[55] Schmidt did claim, however, that *Constantius* was *lectio difficilior*.
[56] Santini (2003) pp. 37-38. The concept of "leniency" or "mercy" that appears in the expression *aurium clementia* was interpreted by Santini as an allusion to the dedicatee's connection with political (or even imperial) power: "La *clementia* introduce alla sfera del politico; il termine appartiene infatti di rigore alla titolatura degli imperatori […] e dei grandi personaggi e potrebbe essere una spia della posizione illustre del dedicatario."
[57] MacCormack (1972) p. 722.
[58] MacCormack (1972) p. 723.

rise of Christianity deprived the *adventus* of its religious aspect,[59] but at the same time the increasingly prolonged absence of the emperors from Rome made their return to the capital an exceptional event for the people and the elite alike.[60] Within the spectacle of this ostentation of power, which the ceremony became in Late Antiquity, the city of Rome assumed the role of scenery and stage, on which the emperor (in other words, the protagonist of the show) made his appearance before the audience of his subjects.[61]

Alessandro Maranesi's reading of some 4th-century *Panegyrici Latini* drew emphasis on to another aspect of the city's relationship with the *adventus*, namely its transformation into an ideological instrument of political consensus. Particularly from Constantine's reign onwards, Rome became, through the appeal to the collective memory of the population, a space of legitimisation of imperial power, despite the loss of its status as physical centre of the political and administrative life of the empire.[62] In light of these considerations, Solinus' use of cultural and historical traditions from both republican and early-imperial Rome seems to respond to the same needs expressed by the historical and mythological allusions of the pro-Constantine rhetoric of Nazarius and other 4th-century panegyricists: to remind their listeners or readers of the special and unique relationship between Rome and the Emperor, as well as of the city's eternal role as the empire's ideal and symbolic centre of power.[63] That the *Collectanea* might have been written (or at least published) on the occasion of an imperial visit (as first suggested by Schmidt) seems in line with the ideological outline of Solinus' description of Rome (to be discussed in the next chapter). That the author might have chosen to strengthen the political message of his work by dedicating it to a personified *Adventus*, it is perhaps no more unlikely than any of the other theories advanced since Mommsen's edition.[64] If Solinus' *Adventus* is indeed a personification, it is a deliberately anonymous one, which reflects the author's striving for universality and timelessness. While the occasion for Solinus' dedication might have been created by one specific *adventus*, it is the very ideal of the connection between the city of Rome and imperial power that the

[59] MacCormack (1972) pp. 726-727.
[60] Maranesi (2014) p. 97.
[61] Maranesi (2014) p. 98.
[62] Maranesi (2014) p. 100.
[63] See below Chapter 2.
[64] A personification could also explain the 2nd-declension dative *Advento* in the salutation of both letters, in lieu of the 4th-declension *adventui*. As for the presence of Adventus' name in the second letter, Kirner's theory that saw it as the result of a glossator's confusion seems the most acceptable. See above p. 16.

author is saluting, and not only the man who is the temporary embodiment of such power. As for the question of whose *adventus*, one can only speculate, and Schmidt's theory on Constantius II's visit to Rome in 357 has at least some philological support behind it. Nevertheless, the textual elements that have been discussed in this chapter do point towards an earlier date around the beginning, rather than in the middle, of the fourth century; and to those elements, considerations on the ideological intent of Solinus' writing have been added, which suggest that the text might have been written at a time of political and cultural transition. Within this context, Constantine's triumphal entry in Rome, and his controversial *adventus* ceremony in 312 that marked his victory over Maxentius,[65] might have not only been the event to which Solinus' personified *Adventus* alludes, but also the very reason behind the author's need to remind his readers of Rome's rightful place in the world. Constantine's 'liberation' of Rome and Italy might have, in fact, inspired Solinus to reaffirm the city's ideological and symbolic importance, at a time when its strategic value was decreasing, and emperors from Diocletian onwards had already started looking east for a suitable replacement.[66]

The argument that has been made in this chapter for a date of composition at (approximately) the beginning of the fourth century, along with the new theory that has been advanced on the identity of Adventus, have hopefully offered a new perspective on a mystery that might never be solved. Once again, one might wonder what need there is to establish the chronological limits of Solinus' life; and what difference it makes whether he wrote in the first or the second half of the third century, or even in the fourth. If Solinus' text is to be read purely as a practical reorganisation of Pliny's encyclopaedic knowledge, intended for the late antique reader who might have been discouraged by the 37 books of the *Naturalis Historia*, it surely makes no difference. If instead one wishes to find an answer to the question as to what the purpose was of such reorganisation, and of which Weltanschauung it is the representation - which is what this thesis endeavours to do - the differences in the political landscape of Rome before and after Diocletian, and before and after Constantine, make the identification of the period

[65] On account of his conversion to Christianity, Constantine famously refused to conclude his *adventus* with the time-honoured tradition of a visit to the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus; a refusal which greatly angered the citizens of Rome. See MacCormack (1972) p. 726 and Maranesi (2014) pp. 98-99.
[66] Diehl (1924) pp. 1-5.

of composition the key to understanding the very nature of the *Collectanea*. As will be discussed later in this thesis,[67] other elements within the text contribute to the portrait of Solinus as an author who was the product of the cultural and political eclecticism of his time. It was a time when Roman traditions, Greek philosophy, paganism, and Christianity co-existed; and in which the changes in the very structure of the empire, and in the manifestations of imperial power, justified Solinus' monumental effort in reordering the geographical knowledge of the Greek and Roman traditions into a new form. One that reflected the empire's restored unity and celebrated the eternity of Rome, while Constantine's reign marked the advent of a new era.

[67] See below Chapter 4.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PRIMACY OF ROME IN SOLINUS' WORLD ORDER

I. *Roma Caput Orbis*

It is inevitable that the beginning of a work concerned with the description of the Earth should pose the question as to which region should be the most deserving of marking its starting point. Whether dictated by a patriotic sentiment, a personal preference, or simply by convenience, such choice naturally results in reflecting the author's world-view, as well as the perception of the role (if any) played by such a region within the author's world order. Solinus' intention, stated at the conclusion of his prefatory letter, to begin his journey with an account of the origins, history, and geography of Rome is indicative of the prominent position reserved for this city within the *Collectanea*, both in terms of the length of the chapter devoted to it and the number of references throughout the text, and of the quality of the information presented. In stark contrast with the itinerary proposed by his sources, Solinus' placement of Rome at the start (and at the same time at the centre) of his description of the Earth is therefore not only one that breaks with the tradition, but also one that is indicative of a view of the empire and, by extension, the world, which greatly differs from that of his predecessors. The comparison between Solinus and his two main models, Mela and Pliny, has already been the object of much of the scholarly literature regarding the genesis of the *Collectanea*, from the end of the 19th to the middle of the 20th century. Although the investigation of Solinus' sources is not part of the present study, it will be helpful, nonetheless, to examine the three authors' declarations of intent - in the form of the prefaces to their respective works - by looking at the rationale behind the choice of starting point for their itineraries, and of the trajectory that they should follow, in order to determine what the structure that Solinus proposes for his text can tell us about his Weltanschauung, and about Rome's role and relevance during his times.

Following a brief preamble in which the author states his intention to "describe the structure of the world" (*orbis situm dicere*, Mel. 1.1), Mela first presents his readers

with an account of scientific geography (1.3-8), followed by a general physical description of each of the three continents into which the *oikoumene* is divided: Asia (1.9-14), Europe (1.15-19), and Africa (1.20-24). Having dealt with the "summary of our world" (*summa nostri orbis*, 1.24), Mela reveals the order in which his itinerary will proceed, stating that for a more accurate description of the coasts and sites of the various regions, "it is most convenient to begin from where our sea enters the lands, and especially from the ones that are on the right of the sea flowing in" (*est commodissimum incipere unde terras Nostrum pelagus ingreditur, et ab his potissimum quae influenti dextra sunt*). Following the North African coastline in an eastward direction, he then embarks, in the first two books of his *Chorographia*, first on an anticlockwise circular route of the Mediterranean sea that takes his readers back to the starting point at the Straits of Gades, and then, in the third book, on a description of the Atlantic coastline of Europe and Africa, concluding once again at the Pillars of Hercules. No other reason is given by Mela for his choice to begin his itinerary from where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Mediterranean Sea, other than that it is convenient for those wishing to provide an accurate geographical description of both coastlines. Mela chooses indeed a starting point and a route that allow him to transition seamlessly from the internal to the external part of his *periplus*, and to resume his journey, at the conclusion of his Mediterranean itinerary, from "those shores that are on the right side for those coming out" (*ea quae exeuntibus dextra sunt*, 3.3), meaning the Southern coasts of Hispania Baetica. Convenience does play a role in establishing the pattern followed by Mela; however, his choice is also one that, along with his scientific excursus, places his work within the tradition of Greek geography, which had long considered Spain the first region of Europe and the Straits of Gades the figurative point of entry into the Mediterranean world, as noted by Silberman.[68]

Similarly, having devoted his first book to a summary of the content of the entire work, and his second to elements of scientific geography (namely astronomy and meteorology), Pliny begins his account of regional geography in Book 3, also selecting the Straits of Gades as the starting point of his journey, and subsequently proceeding along the Mediterranean coastline. Pliny's itinerary, however, moves in the opposite

[68] Silbermann (2003) p. 118, n. 1.

direction to Mela's, describing the northern shores of the Mediterranean Basin first, and not returning to its starting point via a circular route, but breaking instead the continuity of the *periplus*. Upon completion of the description of the fourth gulf of Europe (Plin. *NH* 4.75-93, including its inner lands and its islands) Pliny moves, in fact, onto the account of the "external part of Europe" (*extera Europae*, 4.94), crossing over to Northern Germany and following the Atlantic coastline from the Ripaean Mountains "until we arrive at Cadiz" (*donec perveniatur Gadis*). From there, he finally proceeds with the description of North Africa, moving east until he reaches India and Taprobane, before returning to the islands off the Atlantic coasts of Africa through the same route that will inspire Solinus' description of these regions, and concluding the geographical section of his encyclopaedic work with an account of the Blessed Islands (6.202-205). Pliny's choice of itinerary, with his decision to begin with the description of the European rather than the African coastline, is dictated by his regard for Europe as the "nourisher of the people conqueror of all nations and by far the most beautiful amongst the lands" (*altrice victoris omnium gentium populi longeque terrarum pulcherrima*, 3.5). This not-so-subtle praise of the Roman people, mentioned before the beautiful physical features of the European landscape, represents the author's main justification for his choice to devote the beginning of his geographical section to Europe and, consequently, to start his account from Southern Spain, being the first region of the first continent. Pliny combines, therefore, the Greek tradition of making the Strait of Gades the starting point of any geographical *circumvectio,* and of commencing it with a description of Europe on account of a perceived superiority of the continent over any other land,[69] with a Rome-centric approach that is absent in Mela's introduction.

Solinus' prefatory statement is a carefully crafted exercise in rhetoric that contains all the *topoi* of literary dedication.[70] Carlo Santini identified five sections into which the letter is structured: profile of the dedicatee, nature of the work, content, Solinus' views on originality and authenticity, and finally his intention to commence with an account of the origins of Rome.[71] Having praised the dedicatee's generosity and kindness;

[69] The motif of Europe's superior beauty was also present amongst Greek geographers. See for example Strab. 2.5.26: ἀρκτέον δ᾽ἀπὸ τῆς Εὐρώπης, ὅτι πολυσχήμων τε καὶ πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἀνδρῶν εὐφυεστάτη καὶ πολιτειῶν, καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις πλεῖστον μεταδεδωκυῖα τῶν οἰκείων ἀγαθῶν.
[70] See Santini (1998) and Pavlock (2014).
[71] Santini (1998) p. 37.

emphasised the brevity and succinctness of the book; named the "description of places" (*commemoratio locorum*, *Praef.* 3) as its main topic; stated his intention to follow the "traces of the old money" (*vestigia monetae veteris*, *Praef.* 5) and to "select all opinions … rather than innovate [them]" (*opiniones universas eligere ... potius quam innovare*), Solinus appeals to the "steadfastness of truth" (*constantia veritatis*, *Praef.* 6) of those who have preceded him and outlines the rationale behind his selection of Rome as the starting point of both his work and his itinerary:

sicut ergo qui corporum formas aemulantur, postpositis quae reliqua sunt, ante omnia effigiant modum capitis, nec prius lineas destinant in membra alia, quam ab ipsa ut ita dixerim figurarum arce auspicium faciant inchoandi, nos quoque a capite orbis, id est ab urbe Roma principium capessemus, quamvis nihil super ea doctissimi auctores reliquerint, quod in novum praeconium possit suscitari, ac supervacuum paene sit relegere tramitem decursum tot annalibus. ne tamen prorsus dissimulata sit, originem eius quanta valemus persequemur fide. (*Praef.* 7-8).

"Therefore, just like those who copy the shapes of bodies, having put the rest aside, outline first of all the head, and do not devote any lines to the other parts of the body before they might make an auspicious beginning from that very fortress of figures, so to say; we will also undertake our beginning from the head of the world, that is from the city of Rome, although the most learned authors have neglected nothing about it, which might be set up into a new celebration, and it is almost redundant to retrace a path taken by so many annals. However, we will pursue its origin with as much faith as we can, lest it be completely ignored."

Through a simile that compares his endeavours as a geographer to those of the painters engaged in portraying a human body, Solinus reminds his readers of the artists' custom of drawing the head before one can move on to the other parts of the body, which depend upon it, and then proceeds to identify the head with Rome and the rest of the body with the regions of the world that surround it. This section of the preface concludes with a further justification for the special place granted to Rome within Solinus' work, with the author emphasising his intention not simply to embark on a new praise of the eternal city, but to pursue the truth around its origins with as much honesty as possible. As noted by Santini, the "biological metaphor" was not new to doxographical writing, and examples of the comparison of a state to a living organism could already be found in Florus' preface to his epitome of Livy, as well as in the works

of Aristotle and Polybius.[72] Santini rather emphasised the importance of the equivalence between what is first and what is greatest, whereby Rome's greatness is reflected by its position as first in the author's *commemoratio locorum.*[73] Furthermore, the parallelism between Rome as the head of the world, and a human head as the *figurarum arx* would be, along with Solinus' wish for an "auspicious beginning", a clear reference to the augural tradition of taking auspices from the Capitoline Hill, the citadel of Rome.[74] Similarly, Barbara Pavlock stressed the importance of this analogy in illustrating the role that the city plays within the *Collectanea*: the greatest and therefore the first, and the one region capable of providing Solinus with an "auspicious beginning" for his work.[75] Finally, while the closing sentence - with its allusion to the work of those "very learned authors" who dealt with Rome's history before Solinus - reveals the daunting nature of the task faced by the author in fitting such a large and overdone topic as Rome in his compendium, the importance of starting his description of the world with an account of Rome lies, nonetheless, in the city's very wondrousness and in its providing the readers with a taste of the marvels yet to come.[76]

The notion of Rome as the "head" of the world is indeed not original to Solinus. The expression is already present in Pliny at 3.38 (*Roma terrarum caput*) and, albeit not explicitly, at 3.40 where, in his introduction of Italy, he deems Rome as "a face worthy of so glorious a neck" (*digna iam tam festa cervice facies*). Pliny's casual reference to Rome as the "head of the world" - which he makes in the context of his mention of Latium within a list of Italian regions[77] - is almost antithetical to Solinus' elaborate simile. Whether or not Solinus read such expression in Pliny's text, it is not the determination of its origin that is important, but rather the higher level of attention that is drawn upon it in Solinus' than in Pliny's passage. While the centrality of Rome's role

[72] Santini (1998) p. 44.
[73] Santini (1998) p. 45: "[L]'idea stessa di Roma come *caput orbis* sta ad indicare come parametro l'intenzione che i *prima* abbiano a risultare anche i *maxima*".
[74] Santini (1998) *loc. cit.* In regard to the Capitol as centre of the religious life of the city, Scheid observes that "it was the central sanctuary of the empire and so possessed great political and diplomatic importance". See Scheid (2016) pp. 90-91.
[75] Pavlock (2014) p. 29.
[76] See Pavlock (2014) p. 31: "It is now the reader's task to make his own journey, first through the remote beginnings of Rome to get grounded for the rest of his travels through a work filled with strange and marvellous encounters. The *Praefatio* itself has already prepared the reader to expect paradox in many forms and to appreciate the thought it provokes."
[77] Plin. 3.38: "Italia dehinc primique eius Ligures, mox Etruria, Umbria, Latium, ubi Tiberina ostia et Roma terrarum caput".

seems to be an established fact for Pliny's readers - so much so that no further explanation of the meaning of the expression is required - not only does Solinus' simile help his readers make sense of the idea of Rome as a "head", but it also justifies the very structure of his entire work. And that the superiority of Rome might not be a concept that is immediately clear to his intended readership is hinted at by the second part of the simile, in which Solinus states that just like painters start with the head, he will also begin his work "from the head of the world, that is from the city of Rome". The *id est* with which Solinus introduces the name of Rome not only serves the purpose of drawing emphasis on the identity of the city - almost by presenting it as a moment of revelation after the anticipation created by the simile - but is also indicative of the author's need to provide a justification for the special attention that he is about to give the capital in the first chapter of his work. Whereas Pliny's brief matter-of-fact remark is indicative of Rome's superior status being 'common knowledge' for his readers, Solinus' elaborate simile seems to be aimed at a readership for which the primacy of Rome (and Italy) might have indeed been not a truth universally acknowledged but a new concept in need of contextualisation, or rather a new one in need of revival.[78]

Finally, looking at how the simile fits into the context of the letter, and into the author's overall declaration of intent, one cannot help but notice its connection with Solinus' remarks on truth and honesty as contributing factors in his selection of a starting point. Through the use of the connector *ergo*, Solinus links the beginning of the simile to the *constantia veritatis* of his predecessors, which is mentioned immediately before, and which he has vowed to uphold. His decision to start with Rome appears therefore to be related to his stated intention to abide by the truthfulness of his sources; a connection that is reiterated in the final sentence of the letter, in which Solinus promises to give a most honest account of Rome's origins. Notwithstanding his professed intention not to innovate and not to undertake an encomium of Rome,

[78] A celebration of Rome's supremacy as "the subjugator of the entire world" (*totius domitor orbis*, Plin. 36.18) does feature towards the end of Pliny's work, in the context of his elaborate description of the city's buildings at 36.101-120. It is in fact the large number of its architectonic beauties that can "show [how we have] conquered the world" (*terrarum orbem victum ostendere*, 36.101) and that makes it comparable to "some other world concentrated in one single place" (*mundus alius quidam in uno loco*). Still, Pliny's explicit assertion of the primacy of Rome and its people in relation to the rest of the world reads rather differently to Solinus' almost apologetic way of introducing his readers to the topic of Rome's greatness through his carefully constructed simile. Once again, Pliny's words seem to speak to a readership that is capable of acknowledging the artistic (and natural) manifestations of Rome's power, whereas Solinus' readers need to be reminded of it.

Solinus' insistence on the importance of the truth in his investigation of the origins of the city reads like a response to those "very learned authors" who had relegated this topic to the sphere of poetry or even mythology rather than historiography, such as Livy's dismissal of the accounts of the foundation of Rome as something pertaining "to the stories of poets rather than the untainted records of history" (*poeticis magis ... fabulis quam incorruptis rerum gestarum monumentis*, 1.6).

Solinus' letter shares indeed more than one dedication *topos* with Livy's preface; namely the acknowledgment of the hackneyed nature of their topic, the superiority of their predecessors, and the professed unassumingness of their work. While it is impossible to establish with certainty whether or not Solinus intended his preface to be a response to Livy's, it is nonetheless hard not to read his closing statement - and especially his metaphor of the history of Rome as "a path taken by so many annals" - as an allusion to Livy's monumental work.[79] Pre-Roman Latium is not neglected by Livy, and the events from Aeneas' arrival down to Rome's foundation by Romulus do feature heavily in Book 1; however, although Livy justifies the use of foundation accounts with Rome's legitimate attempt at "making its own origins sacred" (*consecrare origines suas*, 1.7), he also expresses his disinterest in such legends, stating that "[he] will indeed not assign great distinction to them" (*haud in magno equidem ponam discrimine*, 1.8). Within such context, Solinus' final apophasis - with his protestations that he will not go down a path too many times taken, immediately contradicted by his commitment to a truthful account of the genesis of Rome "with as much honesty as possible" - not only highlights the importance that the origins of Rome have in Solinus' eyes, but can also be interpreted as a response, if not directly to Livy, at least to the condescending approach of the historiographic tradition to the topic of Rome's foundation. Rome's origins matter insofar as they are also the origins of the world as Solinus' readers know it; and since *veritas* and *fides* are the foundations upon which he vows to build his work, it is only by establishing the truth about the birth of the most important city in the empire first, that he can subsequently deliver a truthful description of the rest of the world.

[79] Livy himself refers to his work as "my annals" (*meos annales*, 43.13.2).

Having broken with the tradition of the *periplus*, and having deprived the Pillars of Hercules of their prime role as the gateway to the Mediterranean world, Solinus presents multiple arguments in support of his innovative choice of starting point for the journey that he is about to undertake. Rome is the figurative 'head' (as in the most important city) of the empire and the world in which he and his readers live; it is the metaphorical citadel from which he can best make an "auspicious beginning" of his work; it is the place of origin of the political power that forms the system of government of which Solinus and his contemporaries are part; it is at the geographical centre of the Mediterranean world and of the spiral trajectory along which Solinus' description proceeds; and it is the physical 'head', the governing organ of a world that, following the tradition of Stoic physics, is likened to a human body, and therefore perceived as a living and breathing organism.[80] In his prefatory letter Solinus outlines the structure of his work and, at the same time, lays the foundation of a new perception of the *oikoumene;* one that opposes Mela's mere catalogue of peoples and places "in a sufficiently confused order" (*perplexo satis ordine*, 1.1), and that reverses Pliny's compartmentalisation of geographical and non-geographical elements "into their own sections" (*in suas partes*, 3.2); a new vision of a rationally and hierarchically arranged world, through which Solinus provides his readers with the data that they need to know, "each in their right order" (*suo quaeque ordine*), and that bestows on Rome that rightfully prime and central position that the city deserves.

II. *From Aeneas to Augustus: Greek traditions and Roman identity in Solinus 1.*

Solinus' first chapter - the longest and perhaps the least geographical of the entire text - can be roughly divided into four sections: an account of the history and the topography of the city of Rome (1.1-33); a review of the ways in which the length of the year was originally calculated in Italy, Greece, and Egypt, followed by the description of Caesar's and Augustus' reforms of the calendar (1.34-47); a brief account of the life of Augustus, inclusive of some miraculous events that took place under his principate (1.48-52); and finally a long anthropological excursus, mostly focused on wondrous

[80] See below Chapter 4.

elements of human physiognomy (1.53-127). The four sections are connected to one another through transitions that, albeit not always seamlessly, create a sense of continuity throughout the chapter, which allows for the four components to be read as parts of the same argument. For, as the examination of its content will show, the peculiarity of Chapter 1 lies not only in its length, but also in the multifaceted way in which it supports the notion of the primacy of Rome expressed in the preface.

Adhering to the commitment expressed in the final sentence of the preface, the chapter's first section consists of a review of the different traditions concerning the origins of Rome: namely the various versions of the etymology of its name (1.1-6); the mythological accounts of pre-Roman Latium (1.7-13); the legends surrounding Romulus and the city's primitive settlement (1.14-20); a topography of regal Rome with a catalogue of the kings' dwellings (1.21-25); an attempt at calculating the exact date of its foundation (1.26-30); and finally a brief list of some of the most important events in Roman history (1.31-33). According to Mommsen's apparatus, the information reported by Solinus in this segment of his text is entirely of unknown origin, and cannot be related to either of his clearly identified sources, Mela and Pliny. Consequently, the great value of this section of the *Collectanea* is given precisely by the number of otherwise unattested traditions around the archaic period of Rome of which Solinus is the sole testimony. And while the presence of such traditions represents a treasure trove for Roman archaeologists and those interested in the topography of early Rome, it is also indicative of the particular status that Rome has within Solinus' work and world order overall. For this compendium of the history and topography of monarchical Rome has indeed little in common with the description of the orography, hydrography, and human geography of the other lands mentioned in the *Collectanea*, which are (almost) all presented through the same descriptive pattern that sees the initial mention of their geographical features function as an entry-point for the account of the wondrous qualities of some non-geographical item. The account of the origins of Rome occupies only about a third of Chapter 1, but it is where Solinus, more than anywhere else in the *Collectanea,* distances himself from his two main sources in both form and substance.

Rome does indeed not feature as an independent geographical item in the works of his predecessors, but is instead only mentioned in the context of their descriptions of

Italy. Within a short list of inland Italian cities, Mela mentions "Rome once founded by shepherds, now, if one were to speak in accordance to this topic, a second work would be necessary" (*Roma quondam a pastoribus condita, nunc si pro materia dicatur alterum opus*, 2.60); the antithesis created by the adverbs *quondam* and *nunc* not only emphasises the contrast between the city's humble origins and its present greatness, but also highlights Mela's own disinterest in exploring a topic whose enormous size would far exceed the limits of his work. In fact, Italy itself (very much like Greece) plays a very secondary role in Mela's work and, as noted by Roger Batty, "it makes no pretence at being anything other than a bland catalogue",[81] so that neither the land nor the city takes precedence over the provinces, thus leaving Mela's world without a clear centre.[82] Similarly, Pliny introduces Rome in the context of a list of Italian cities (3.38), and also hints at the need for a work entirely devoted to it, before moving on to the description of the coastline of Campania.[83] He subsequently provides a catalogue of the inland colonies of the region, at the conclusion of which Rome is introduced again, and of which he gives, in the two following paragraphs (3.66-67), a topographical description, listing the number of its gates, hills, and regions; the length of its walls; and the measurements of its area. Rome does feature again throughout the whole of the *Naturalis Historia*, mostly in the form of the mentions of the first introduction into the city of animals and other non-geographical items; however, Pliny's Rome lacks the centrality of Solinus'. Notwithstanding his acknowledgement of Rome's primacy as "head of the world", Pliny's brief account of the topography of the city pales if compared with Solinus' far more detailed chronicle of its mythological, historical, and topographical traditions. Rome is indeed a "head", but one whose purpose is to adorn and exalt its neck: Rome is the "worthy face" of that "glorious neck" that is Italy, "the land child and mother of all lands, chosen by the will of the gods to make heaven itself

[81] Batty (2000) p. 78.

[82] Mela justifies the lack of special treatment for Italy by stating that "everything is known" (*nota sunt omnia*, 2.58) about it, so that his attitude towards Italy and Rome seems rather ambiguous: on one hand, Rome is too large a topic to fit within the three books of which the *Chorographia* consists, but would instead be deserving of one specifically devoted to it; on the other, Italy is so well known that no detailed description of it is required. As Batty suggested, Mela's dismissal of Rome, along with his disinterest for both Italy and Greece, are all indicative of his refusal to identify a centre for the world that he describes, be it one inherited from Greek geography or a new western one intended for a Latin-speaking readership. See Batty (2000) pp. 77-78.

[83] Plin. 3.40: "quo tandem narrari debet operi!"

more glorious".[84] Rome is worthy of Italy, and not vice versa, so that it is Italy, and not Rome alone, that occupies the centre of Pliny's world.

In both earlier authors Rome is presented as a task that is at the same time too big to undertake and unnecessary to the purpose of their works. If Rome needs not be described to the Roman reader in the same way as remote and exotic lands do, Solinus' extensive account is, once again, expression of the different perception that his readers might have had of the city, in comparison with Mela's and Pliny's contemporaries. And the information selected by Solinus in the chapter devoted to it not only shows the author's taste for antiquarianism, but also assumes a function that differs greatly from that of the data contained in the rest of the text. Much has been speculated on the possible provenance of the unknown data and, especially, on which texts Solinus might have consulted during the composition of his work. Although the investigation into the identity of the authors read by Solinus - on which many scholars have obsessed since the publication of Mommsen's edition - is not the object of the present research, it will be helpful nonetheless to present an overview of the traditions that can be identified, as they are indicative of which image of Rome, its origins, and its contemporary role Solinus is trying to convey.

1. A Rome before Rome

a) *What's in a name?*

The investigation into the true etymology of the name of Rome is the first evidence of Solinus' commitment to give a faithful account of the city's origins, as well as of his promise to give preference to lesser known traditions over the better known ones.[85] Of the three versions of the legend of the foundation of Rome reported by Solinus, two want the city founded by the Greeks, rather than the Trojans, starting with this tradition that saw the original site on the Palatine first established by Evander and the Arcadians:

[84] Plin. 3.39: "terra omnium terrarum alumna eadem et parens, numine deum electa quae caelum ipsum clarius faceret".
[85] Sol. *Praef*. 3: "ut et a notioribus referrem pedem et remotis largius inmorarer."

Sunt qui videri velint Romae vocabulum ab Evandro primum datum, cum oppidum ibi offendisset, quod extructum antea Valentiam dixerat iuventus Latina, servataque significatione inpositi prius nominis Romam Graece Valentiam nominatam. quam Arcades quoniam habitassent in excelsa parte montis, derivatum deinceps ut tutissima urbium arces vocarentur (1.1)

"There are those who would like it to appear that Evander was the first to give Rome its name, when he had established there a city that, once erected, the Latin youth had formerly called Valentia, and after the meaning of the name previously imposed had been preserved, Valentia was called by the Greek name of Rome. And because the Arcadians had inhabited it on the highest part of the hill, it subsequently happened that the most secure parts of any city were called *arces*."

As noted by Nieto, this tradition should be traced back to unspecified Greek authors who liked to fabricate false etymologies for Italian cities after the names of heroes and other characters of their mythology.[86] Its introduction into Latin literature was possibly due to the works of Gaius Ateius Capito, Roman jurist of Augustan era and himself a source for many ensuing Roman and Greek authors,[87] as we know thanks to Servius' commentary to *Aen.* 1.273: "Ateius claims that before Evander's arrival Rome was for a long time called *Valentia*, but afterwards it was called with the Greek name of *Rome*" (*Ateius adserit Romam ante adventum Evandri diu Valentiam vocitatam, sed post graeco nomine Romen vocitatam*). No other testimony is found for the false etymology of *arx* from the name of the Arcadians, instead of its commonly accepted origin from the Greek ἀρκέω, meaning "to ward off" or "defend". A correlation between the two, however, could possibly be inferred by the use of *tutissima*, which might signify Solinus' attempt at merging the etymology of the grammarians with one that was more common amongst the people or even of his own creation.[88] As for the identification of the *arx* "on the loftiest part of the hill" that was Rome's original settlement (therefore on the Palatine, according to the tradition followed in the *Collectanea*), Solinus' confusion seems to originate from his interpretation of Virgil's mention of "Evander [as] the

[86] Nieto (2001) p. 118, n. 5.
[87] Verrius Flaccus, Pliny, Suetonius, Frontinus, Gellius, and Macrobius amongst his Roman compilers, and Plutarch and John the Lydian amongst his Greek ones.
[88] Nieto (2001) p. 119, n. 7.

founder of the Roman citadel" (*Evandrus Romanae conditor arcis*, *Aen.* 8.313), thus incorrectly locating the *arx* on the Palatine rather than on the Capitoline Hill.[89]

The second tradition reported by Solinus is also of Greek origin, and sees the name of Rome deriving from that of a woman called *Romē*:

Heraclidi placet Troia capta quosdam ex Achivis in ea loca ubi nunc Roma est devenisse per Tiberim, deinde suadente Rome nobilissima captivarum quae his comes erat, incensis navibus posuisse sedes, struxisse moenia et oppidum ab ea Romen vocavisse. Agathocles scribit Romen non captivam fuisse, ut supra dictum est, sed Ascanio natam Aeneae neptem appellationis istius causam fuisse (1.2-3).

"Heraclides believes that, after Troy had been seized, some of the Achaeans came down along the Tiber into those places where Rome is now, then persuaded by Romē, the most noble woman amongst their prisoners, who was their companion, after they set fire to their ships they settled down, erected walls and named the town Rome after her. Agathocles writes that Romē was not a prisoner, as we said earlier, but that she was Ascanius' daughter and Aeneas' granddaughter and had been the cause of that name."

Whatever the text in which Solinus found this version of the myth (be it Ateius', Flaccus' analogous passage, or its epitome by Festus),[90] this tradition, which is to be traced back to the Greek historians Heraclides and Agathocles, saw once again a predominantly Greek component in the foundation of Rome, at least in the case of Heraclides. In both authors, however, the ethnicity of *Romē* herself is Trojan.

b) *From Hercules to Romulus*

The account of the origins of Rome continues with an excursus on the pre-Roman mythology and archaeology of the area of the lowlands between the Tiber and the surrounding hills of the Aventine, Capitoline, and Palatine. Solinus begins with the legends concerning the area of the Forum Boarium, which also saw a significant presence of Greek and eastern populations,[91] noting that "the fact that some forms of

[89] The *arx* was the northern peak of the Capitoline Hill, with the *Capitolium* being the southern, and its site is today occupied by the basilica of Santa Maria in Aracoeli. See Coarelli (2014) p. 38. It is possible that Solinus read Virgil's synecdoche too literally.
[90] See Fest. 16-23 L and 6-15 L in Lindsay (1913) pp. 328-329.
[91] The presence of Greek and eastern peoples can indeed be traced as far back as the eighth century BC, with archaeological findings of geometric Greek pottery corroborating those traditions that see an involvement of the Greeks in Rome from its very beginning. See Coarelli (2014) pp. 307-308.

cult were maintained there long before Romulus caused inquiries into some ambiguous matters".[92] Starting with the mention of Hercules' dedication of an altar to Jupiter Inventor,[93] Solinus recounts the legend of Hercules' slaying of Cacus, "who lived in a place named *Salinae*, where is now the *Porta Trigemina*" (*qui Cacus habitavit locum, cui Salinae nomen est: ubi Trigemina nunc porta*, 1.8),[94] following a tradition that saw Cacus' dwelling located at the base of the Aventine Hill, which can also be found in Suetonius and Virgil, as opposed to the one reported by Livy, who placed it by the Palatine.[95] Solinus then contradicts himself by describing Cacus not as a local shepherd (or even a monster, as per Virgil's account) but as an emissary of the Phrygian king Marsyas, captured by the Etruscan king Tarcho during an embassy (along with his companion Megale), who, after freeing himself, established an Etruscan kingdom in Campania and subsequently attacked the Arcadians settlers in Latium, before being stopped and slain by Hercules. This version, which Solinus reports as a quotation from the lost work of the historian Gnaeus Gellius, is not attested elsewhere and, as noted by Nieto, is most likely of Etruscan origin.[96] Unfazed by the inconsistency caused by first locating Cacus' dwelling in the Forum Boarium and then stating that "he had come as an ambassador sent by king Marsyas" (*legatus venerat missu Marsyae regis*), Solinus merges the two traditions, possibly in an attempt to convey the ambiguity that surrounds the history and mythology of pre-Roman Latium, as remarked in his statement at the beginning of this section.

Also testimony to a not otherwise attested tradition is the account of Hercules' dedication of the *Ara Maxima*, "an altar, which is considered the greatest amongst the pontiffs, after he [Hercules] had discovered that he was immortal from Nicostrate, Evander's mother, who was named Carmenta after her prophecies".[97] Following a Greek tradition attested in Plutarch's *Moralia,* Solinus' text records the first ever Latin

[92] Sol. 1.7: "Ambiguitatum quaestiones excitavit, quod quaedam ibi multo ante Romulum culta sint."
[93] Probably near the temple of Hercules Invictus in the area of the *Ara Maxima*. See Nieto (2001) p. 123 n. 13 and Coarelli (2014) p. 319.
[94] The *salinae* contained warehouses that stored salt brought from Ostia to Rome through the Tiber. Their proximity to the *Porta Trigemina* (today the area around the basilica of Santa Maria in Cosmedin) was already mentioned by Frontinus in his *De Aquaeductu Urbis Romae* (1.5).
[95] A fragment of Suetonius' lost work *Prata* saw both Cacus' dwelling and the place where he was killed in the Forum Boarium, while Livy set the same events at the base of the Palatine Hill. Cf. Suet. fr. 178.5 R, Verg. *Aen.* 8.231 and Liv. 1.7.3.
[96] Nieto (2001) p. 124, n. 16.
[97] Sol. 1.10: "aram, quam maxima apud pontifices habetur, cum se ex Nicostrate, Evandri matre, quae a vaticinio Carmentis dicta est, inmortlaem conperisset."

occurrence of Carmenta's original Greek name as Nicostrate, along with the etymology of her Latin name from the practice of singing *carmina.*[98] Solinus then concludes his description of the Forum Boarium with the mention of an unspecified shrine of Hercules, which he dedicated with sacrifices of part of his cattle, and "in which evidence of the banquet and of his own greatness remain" (*in quo argumenta et convivii et maiestatis ipsius remanent*, 1. 11).

From the base of the Aventine Hill Solinus then moves on to the area of the Roman Forum adjacent to the Capitoline, where he mentions the temple "which is reported to be the Treasury of Saturn" (*quae Saturni aerarium fertur*, 1.12), and finally the *Porta Saturnia* or *Pandana* in that area at the foot of the hill "where is now the sanctuary of Carmenta, after which the Gate of Carmenta was named" (*ubi Carmentis nunc fanum est, a qua Carmentali portae nomen datum*, 1.13). While we know that the *Porta Carmentalis* stood in a section of the Servian Walls that extended from the Capitoline to the Tiber (near the Sant'Omobono area at the foot of the Capitoline Hill), the identity of the *Porta Pandana* remains a mystery. Solinus is here following a Varronian tradition that saw in the gate evidence of the ancient presence of a city named Saturnia;[99] a gate which was most likely still standing in Varro's time but no longer visible to Solinus' contemporaries.[100]

Finally, Solinus' account of the legends concerning the Palatine Hill contains a mention of the Italic population of the Aborigines that, albeit short, presents questions of both philological and interpretative nature.

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[98] Plut. *Mor.* 278 C: Τὴν δὲ Καρμένταν οἱ μὲν Εὐάνδρου μητέρα λέγουσιν οὖσαν ἐλθεῖν εἰς Ἰταλίαν ὀνομαζομένην Θέμιν, ὡς δ᾽ἔνιοι, Νικοστράτην· ἐμμέτρους δὲ χρησμοὺς ᾄδουσαν ὑπὸ τῶν Λατίνων Καρμένταν ὀνομάζεσθαι· τὰ γὰρ ἔπη ‘κάρμινα᾽ καλοῦσιν.

[99] The Saturnian gate was, according to Varro, one of three relics of the ancient city, along with the temple of Saturn and the inscription "Saturnian walls" in some private buildings of the area. See Varr. *De Lingua Latina* 5.42: "hunc antea montem Saturnium appellatum prodiderunt et ab eo Lati<um> Saturniam terram, ut etiam Ennius appellat. antiquum oppidum in hac fuisse Saturnia<m> scribitur. eius vestigia etiam nunc manent tria, quod Saturni fanum in faucibus, quod Saturnia porta quam Iunius scribit ibi, quam nunc vocant Pandanam, quod post aedem Saturni in aedificiorum legibus privatis parietes postici 'muri <Saturnii>' sunt scripti." The third piece of evidence is only clear if Bernhard ten Brink's insertion of *Saturnii* is accepted. Varro is suggesting that the building-walls (*parietes*) of some houses by the Capitoline Hill might have actually been the city-walls (*muri*) of the ancient city of Saturnia. See Kent (1951) p. 43.

[100] Varro's use of *nunc* seems to indicate the existence of the gate at the time when he writes, as opposed to Solinus' use of *postmodum* to simply record a change of name subsequent to its foundation. For the etymology of *Pandana* see Festus 220.17 M: "quod semper pateret".

Palatium nemo dubitaverit quin Arcades habeat auctores, a quibus primum Pallanteum oppidum conditum: quod aliquamdiu Aborigines habitarunt, propter incommodum vicinae paludis, quam praeterfluens Tiberis fecerat, profecti Reate postmodum reliquerunt (1.14).

"No one could doubt that the Arcadians are the settlers of the Palatine, by whom first the town of Pallanteum was founded; and the Aborigines lived there for some time, but on account of the inconvenience of the nearby swamp that the Tiber had created by flowing past, they later abandoned it, having set out for Rieti."

Having reaffirmed the Arcadians' presence on the Palatine and their role in giving it its name and founding a city - as he had already done at the beginning of the chapter - Solinus then emerges as the sole testimony of a tradition that sees the Aborigines first inhabit the Palatine along with the Greeks, and then migrate to Rieti; as opposed to the one transmitted by Varro, which has them move in the opposite direction, from Rieti to the Palatine.[101] Nieto suggested that Solinus might be following a Catonian tradition, according to which the Aborigines were a nomadic Greek tribe that occupied different areas of Latium first and the *ager Reatinus* afterwards.[102] Cato's claim on the Greek origins of the Aborigines is actually transmitted via indirect tradition by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who reports that both Cato and Gaius Sempronius Tuditanus posited an Achaean provenance of the tribe.[103] However, that Cato saw the Aborigines migrate *to*, and not *from*, Rieti is never stated by Dionysius, and the only suggestion to that end is given by a fragment of his lost work *Origines* that is transmitted by Priscian, and that could potentially imply that the Aborigines did not originally occupy the Sabine field but only moved there in a second time after the Volsci.[104] As noted by Dominique Briquel, nothing in Cato's fragments refers to the migratory movements of the Aborigines between Sabina and Latium (in either direction), so that one can only speculate as to the historian's theories regarding a presence of this tribe either in Latium first and in Sabina after, or even in both areas at the same time.[105] Since Solinus'

[101] Varro, *Ling.* 5.53: "Quartae regionis Palatium, quod Pallantes cum Euandro venerunt, qui et Palatini; <alii quod Palatini> aborigines ex agro Reatino, qui appellatur Palatium, ibi conse<de>runt; sed hoc alii a Palanto uxore Latini putarunt. Eundem hunc locum a pecore dictum putant quidam; itaque Naevius Balatium appellat."
[102] Nieto (2001) p. 129, n. 29:"[L]a tradición representada por Catón hacía de ellos una etnia de origen griego que, después de haber vagado por distintas partes del Mediterráneo, fijó su residencia en distinto punto del territorio sabino, alrededor de Cutilias. Solinio es el único escritor que mantiene esta versión".
[103] Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.10.11.
[104] Cato, *Orig.* Cornell F24: "agrum quem Volsci habuerunt, campestris plerus, Aboriginum fuit."
[105] Briquel (1993) p. 25.

passage does not contain any references to a Greek origin of the Aborigines, but clearly identifies Arcadians and Aborigines as two different peoples,[106] it is hard to see a dependence (direct or not) on Cato's tradition. No other author makes mention of the same migration pattern, but such coincidence is hardly enough evidence to support Nieto's view of Solinus' adherence to Cato's (alleged) theory. In whichever source Solinus found this piece of information, or whether he even modified the data proceeding from Varro's tradition himself, the intention that transpires from the passage is to confirm the commonly accepted tradition that sees the tribe as indigenous to Latium. For Solinus states that while "no one could doubt" that the hill was named after and urbanised first by the Arcadians, the Aborigines had also been living in the area "for some time"; his use of the subjunctive *dubitaverit* seemingly casts doubt upon the factuality of a presence of the Arcadians in the area before the Aborigines or any other tribe. Similarly, a trace of scepticism is detectable in the way in which Solinus introduces the etymologies of the name of the Palatine; "there are those who would like" (*sunt qui velint*, 1.15) it to derive "from the bleating of sheep" (*a balatibus ovium*), or from the name of either the goddess Pales or a woman named Palanthus, daughter of a Hyperborean man and mother of Latinus, born of her rape by Hercules. Although Solinus' versions differ from the ones present in Varro's analogous account, one can presume that he would have been familiar with the passage from the *De Lingua Latina*, or at least with the tradition stemming from it.[107]

Those traditions that not only saw an active involvement of the Greeks (Arcadians or Achaeans) in establishing the site of the future Rome, but also, in some cases, had them as founders of the city itself - thus setting the date of its foundation soon after the fall of Troy - are never explicitly doubted by Solinus, but are nonetheless reported in a way that challenges the readers to question their validity. For the presence of the Arcadians is said to be reported by "those who would like it to seem" that Rome was named after Evander, with the subjunctive *velint* clearly ascribing a level of subjectivity to a

[106] Dionysius (1.10.11) did suggest an Arcadian origin for the Aborigines, which - according to Briquel - was purely his own theory. See Briquel (1993) pp. 19, 27-28.

[107] Both passages deal with the presence of the Aborigines on the Palatine and the etymology of the name of the hill in the same order. The tradition that wants the hill named after Pales, however, is not only absent from Varro's passage, but is also not attested anywhere else other than in the *Collectanea*. As for the etymology from Palanthus, notable is the different relationship with Latinus ascribed to her by the two authors: his wife according to Varro, his mother (albeit not mentioned explicitly) for Solinus. See Nieto (2001) p. 130, n. 32.

tradition that Solinus reports, but does not necessarily endorse. Likewise, the use of the expressions "Heraclides believes" and "Agathocles writes" to introduce the legend of *Romē* allows Solinus to distance himself from the Greek traditions that he nonetheless includes. Finally, his recounting of the legends connected with the area between the Aventine, Capitoline, and Palatine - with the mythological traditions on Hercules and Cacus, the presence of Evander and the Arcadians, and the migration of the Aborigines - is also one that raises questions as to their ambiguous nature. Frank E. Romer regarded Solinus' decision to begin his work by "presenting - but not resolving - conflicting ideas about the origins of Rome", as his way of engaging his readers, of leaving his mark in such a crowded field through the aid of that "passion for knowledge" (*fermentum cognitionis*) that in his prefatory letter he promises to favour over the "golden leaves of eloquence" (*bratteas eloquentiae*).[108] The Greek component that is common to the traditions concerning pre-Roman Latium is not presented by Solinus in a perfectly unbiased way; however, its inclusion in the investigation into the origins of Rome plays a fundamental role in the fulfilment of the author's quest for a faithful account of events. These legends, in fact, do serve the specific purpose of leading the readers to the truth, which is presented in the form of the one and true tradition that is universally acknowledged and accepted, and that wants Rome founded by Romulus and named after him:

Sed quamquam ista sic congruant, palam est prospero illi augurio deberi gloriam Romani nominis, maxime cum annorum ratio faciat cardinem veritati: nam, ut adfirmat Varro auctor diligentissimus, Romam condidit Romulus, Marte genitus et Rea Silva, vel ut nonnulli Marte et Ilia (1.16-17).

"But although these facts are consistent in this way, it is evident that the glory of the name of Rome is owed to that fortunate omen, since the calculation of the years firmly determines the truth: for, as the most accurate author Varro affirms, Romulus founded Rome, born of Mars and Rea Silva or, as some say, or Mars and Ilia."

That the accounts reported thus far should be, if not entirely dismissed, at least regarded with the benefit of the doubt, is hinted at by Solinus' reluctant acceptance of the general agreement of such conflicting traditions. The adversative *sed* at the very

[108] Romer (2014) pp. 77-78.

start of the new paragraph, along with the concessive *quamquam*, add to the author's overall scepticism, so that the contrast with what follows could not be clearer. For Solinus' account of the traditional Roman version is one that does not leave room for doubt, with the impersonal "it is evident" bestowing on it a degree of impartial truthfulness that is in antithesis to the authorial discretion of the Greek traditions. Furthermore, past authority is used here to reinforce the validity of the tradition, through the appeal to none other than "the most accurate author" Varro, who "affirms", as opposed to the Greek Heraclides, who "believes", and Agathocles, who simply "writes". The story of Romulus and how he came to found Rome is so well known to Solinus' readers, that no explanation as to what "that fortunate omen" should be (likely Romulus and Remus' contest of augury to determine who between them should be leader of the new settlement) is required, thus presenting it almost as a historical fact rather than a mythological tradition. Romer observed that the legends concerning the origins of the settlements in pre-Roman Latium and the etymology of the name of Rome hardly matter, in Solinus' eyes, in comparison with "the glory" of that very name;[109] that although there might have been a "Rome before there was a Rome" (and a Greek one, at that), it is Romulus' act of foundation the one from which said glory descends, one that does not raise *ambiguitatum quaestiones*, and one that is so entrenched in his readers' mind that it need not even be recounted.

It can be argued, however, that the inclusion of those Greek traditions, which both the author and his readers would have considered of doubtful accuracy, is not (only) dictated by Solinus' wish to indulge his own, and his readers', *fermentum cognitionis*, but works instead as a sort of narrative device: Solinus presents a series of false etymologies as a build up to the 'authentic' one that wants Romulus as eponym of the city, and that provides a justification for "the glory of the name of Rome"; a city that was founded not by a group of Arcadian exiles, or named after a Trojan slave, or Ascanius' daughter, but by a local king rightfully appointed by the gods.[110] Similarly to Livy's notion of a combination of fate, divine intervention, and human virtue that are accountable for Rome's greatness, the importance for Solinus to establish (or rather

[109] Romer (2014) p. 81.
[110] The predominantly Italian nature of Romulus is also given by Solinus' obvious preference for the Varronian tradition that wants his mother named Silvia, rather than Ilia. See Nieto (2001) p. 131, n. 33.

review) what the true etymology was for the name of Rome lies in the connection between the miraculous nature of its foundation and the 'glory' that he associates with its name. The etymological section is there to remind Solinus' readers that Rome's name is still glorious, because glorious was the way in which the city was founded, in spite of what some false eastern traditions may say. On the other hand, the presence of the Arcadians on the Palatine is only reluctantly acknowledged by Solinus, and their overall involvement in settling pre-Roman Latium is presented under a purely mythological lens: it is a tale of heroes, monsters, and nymphs; and no historical reference (or rather no reference to anything other than legends reported by either Greek authors or unknown sources who "would like it" to be so) is given as to the presence of Greek tribes in the lowlands on the eastern bank of the Tiber.

2. Rome's Foundation: Official Traditions and Revisionist Interpretations

Regarding the act of foundation by Romulus and the form of Rome in its early days, Solinus' text offers one of the most interesting occurrences of the expression *Roma quadrata*, the exact meaning of which has long been regarded as a philological and archaeological mystery:

dictaque primum est Roma quadrata, quod ad aequilibrium foret posita. ea incipit a silva quae est in area Apollinis, et ad supercilium scalarum Caci habet terminum, ubi tugurium fuit Faustuli. ibi Romulus mansitavit, qui auspicato murorum fundamenta iecit duodeviginti natus annos (1.17-18).

"Rome was first called 'squared' because it had been established on levelled ground. It begins from the forest which is the area of Apollo, and ends by the summit of the Stairs of Cacus, where Faustulus' hut was. There stayed Romulus, who, after taking the auspices, laid the foundations of the walls at the age of eighteen."

Following the same Varronian tradition that he began reporting at the start of 1.17,[111] Solinus is the only author to give an approximate description of the area to which the definition of *Roma quadrata* should apply, and that extends from the temple of Apollo

[111] "[N]am ut affirmat Varro auctor diligentissimus." See above pp. 68-69.

to the summit of the Stairs of Cacus.[112] Whether such description should be considered part of Solinus' citation of Varro, or if it is instead Solinus' own addition, has been a matter of debate;[113] along with the still unresolved question as to the very shape and size of *Roma quadrata* that emerges from the often vague descriptions of Latin and Greek authors: a limited space on the Palatine or the entire city of Rome in its most primeval form.[114] Whichever size the real *Roma quadrata* might have had, and whatever the origins of the description that is given by the *Collectanea*, what is important in the context of Solinus' account is the author's motivation behind the mention of *Roma*

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[112] Amongst the authors who explicitly name *Roma quadrata*, Solinus is the only one who provides its demarcations, while its description in Festus (310 L), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1.88), and Plutarch (*Romulus* 9.4) is limited to the mention of an area on the Palatine. The only other mentions of Faustulus' hut as the location of *Roma quadrata* occur in Byzantine times in John Tzetzes' scholia to Lycophron's *Alexandra* (1232) and in John Zonaras' *Epitome historiarum* (7.3.9). See Alexandre Grandazzi (1993) pp. 542-545. Nieto observed that Tacitus' description of Romulus' *pomerium* (*Ann.* 12.24.1) fits within a quadrangle that included the whole Palatine within its area, with its corners marked by the *Ara Maxima*, Consus' altar, the *Curiae veteres*, and the Shrine of the Lares. However, the expression *Roma quadrata* does not appear in Tacitus' passage. See Nieto (2001) p. 131, n. 34.

[113] The expression *Roma quadrata* does not appear anywhere in Varro's fragments, and Solinus' passage is the only evidence of indirect tradition ascribing to Varro the origins of these data. Of course, Solinus' citation of an author does not necessarily imply an actual consultation of his works; nonetheless, that Solinus is following here a tradition from Varro is argued by Grandazzi who pointed out that, while the mention of Apollo's temple within the context of a Varronian citation might seem anachronistic - since the temple was inaugurated in 28 BC and Varro died only the following year - Solinus is actually referring to an *area*, not a temple. The dedication of a temple to Apollo was in fact promised by Octavian in an area on the Palatine that he consecrated upon his return from Sicily in 36 BC, as we know from Vell. Pat. 2.81.3. Cassius Dio (59.15.3) also informs us that Octavian had bought the area from the public with the intention of building his residence there, and that he consecrated it to Apollo after a thunderbolt had struck it. Solinus could therefore have easily found the mention of an *area Apollinis* in the context of Varro's account of *Roma quadrata*. See Grandazzi (1993) pp. 503-505.

[114] Solinus' description of such a limited area is in apparent contradiction with the first half of the sentence, which seems to refer to Rome in its entirety. A similar inconsistency can be found, according to Grandazzi, in Festus' epitome of Verrius Flaccus' *De significatu verborum* (310 L) which is testimony to a tradition that goes as far back as Ennius: "Quadrata Roma in Palatio ante templum Apollinis dicitur, ubi reposita sunt, quae solent boni ominis gratia in urbe condenda adhiberi, quae saxo munitus (*minitus* cod.) est initio in speciem quadratam. Eius loci Ennius meminit cum ait: et †quis est erat† Romae regnare quadratae". Grandazzi argued that Festus' (or rather Verrius') description corresponded to a "foundation deposit", a restricted squared area on the Palatine used by Romulus in his act of foundation of the city, similar to the one described by Plutarch (*Rom*. 11.2), while Ennius' fragment - which he suggested belongs to the first book of the *Annales* - would refer to the city of Rome or, at least, the whole Palatine Hill. Grandazzi also saw in Ennius' line the archetype of a tradition followed by Livy, Ovid, and Solinus himself, whose definition of *Roma quadrata* would therefore also apply to the whole of Rome, and whose mention of an *area Apollinis* would actually refer to the whole *temenos*, a space therefore much larger than just the area in front of the temple. His (rather elaborate) theory was partly rejected by Attilio Mastrocinque, who thought it unlikely that Verrius would have included a quote that contradicted his own definition of *Roma quadrata*, and interpreted both Verrius' and Solinus' passages (as well as Ennius' line) as the description of a sacred space on the Palatine. Cf. Grandazzi (1993) pp. 498-507 and Mastrocinque (1998) pp. 681-683. It is indeed difficult to reconcile Solinus' mention of the boundaries of *Roma quadrata* with the identification of it with the entire city, or even just the entire hill. Grandazzi explained such inconsistency with a lack of topographical skills on Solinus' part, "parce que nous avons là affaire à un texte plutôt mythographique […] que topographique" (p. 506); however, the second part of Solinus' passage - which says that Romulus laid the foundations of the city walls by Faustulus' hut (subsequently known as *casa Romuli*), after he took the auspices in that very spot - also seems to describe a restricted area on the Palatine, delimited by Romulus in a precise location that he considered sacred. If Solinus' claim that "Rome was at first called squared" (*dictaque primum est Roma quadrata*) sounds like it should apply to the whole city, it might simply be because, at least in Solinus' interpretation, that small squared area marked by Romulus in the very moment of its foundation was, in fact, the whole city.

quadrata itself. The area between the Temple of Apollo and the Stairs of Cacus was occupied in fact by the House of Augustus, so that Solinus' decision to report what appears to be an Augustan tradition - likely aimed at strengthening the public perception of Octavian as Romulus' direct descendant - could be read as a way to remind his readers of the history and relevance of the imperial presence in the area. Mastrocinque identified in this same location the *area Palatina*,[115] which according to Gellius was a gathering spot for the people wishing to greet the emperor,[116] and which in imperial Rome came to be known as *forum Palatinum*, as we read in a fourth-century inscription that records the restitution of the area to the public by Valentinian, Valens and Gratianus in 374.[117] If in the late fourth century the area was still perceived as a meaningful place for the people of Rome - one where they could see the emperor in person, and that therefore signified the special bond between the capital, its citizens, and the imperial power - one can only assume that it had a similar value for Solinus' contemporaries, who would have been familiar with the imperial connection to (and ownership of) a space that - regardless of the emperor's actual place of residence at the time when he wrote - provided them with a physical link not only to the first emperor, but also to the first king and to the very beginnings of the city.

The importance of establishing the truth in regard to the origins of Rome - or rather of establishing a version of the truth that conforms to the official tradition - is further highlighted by Solinus' detailed account of the exact day and time on which the foundations of the walls of the new city were laid by Romulus:

XI k. Mai., hora post secundam ante tertiam, sicut L. Tarruntius prodidit mathematicorum nobilissimus, Iove in piscibus, Saturno Venere Marte Mercurio in scorpione, Sole in tauro, Luna in libra constitutis (1.18).

"On the eleventh day before the Kalends of May, between the second and the third hour, like has been reported by Lucius Tarruntius, the most prominent mathematician; with Jupiter positioned in Pisces; Saturn, Venus, Mars, and Mercury in Scorpio; the Sun in Taurus; the Moon in libra."

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[115] Mastrocinque (1998) p. 683.
[116] Gell. *NA* 20.1.2: "in area Palatina, cum salutationem Caesaris opperiremur."
[117] *CIL* VI.1177.

Other than in this passage, the name of the astronomer Lucius Tarruntius occurs in Latin only two more times, in the slightly different form of *Tarutius*: one in Cicero's *De Divinatione*,[118] and the other in Book 1 of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, as one of his sources for the astronomical content of Book 18.[119] Of the calculations reported by Solinus, only the presence of the moon in Libra is also mentioned by Cicero who, however, gives us some more information as to the identity of Tarruntius/Tarutius: a friend of his from the Italian town of Fermo, learned in Chaldean science. Amongst the astronomer's acquaintances Cicero was not the only illustrious name, since, according to Plutarch (*Rom.* 24.1-6) - our only Greek-language source, who also mentions him by the name of Tarutius - he was close friends with Varro, who gave him the task to determine the day and time of Romulus' birth. Having acknowledged the Romans' tradition of celebrating the foundation of Rome on 21 April (the eleventh day before the Kalends of May, which is the same date given by Solinus), and having provided the alternative date (caused by the discrepancies between the Roman and Greek months) of the thirtieth day of the month in the third year of the sixth Olympiad, on the day of a solar eclipse,[120] Plutarch gives account of the astronomer's calculations of the dates of Romulus' conception and birth, and of the foundation of Rome, according to the Egyptian calendar. Interestingly, Tarutius' date for Rome's *dies natalis* does not match the one reported by Solinus, but is set instead at the ninth day of the Egyptian month of Pharmouti, which corresponds to 4 October. Assuming that Solinus is here still quoting Varro, there is an evident contradiction between his and Plutarch's account, especially given that Plutarch is (supposedly) reporting a version that is also of Varronian origin. A closer look at the horoscope of Rome as reported by Solinus provides the solution to such inconsistency, since the data recorded in his passage cannot possibly determine a date in late April 753 BC, as demonstrated by Grafton and Swerdlow.[121] The position of Saturn and Venus in Scorpio, Jupiter in Pisces, and the moon in libra can, in fact, only fit a date between 2-4 October 754 BC, while Mars and Mercury are off by respectively

[118] Cic. *Div.* 2.98: "L. quidem Tarutius Firmanus, familiaris noster, in primis Chaldaicibus rationibus eruditus, urbis etiam nostrae natalem diem repetebat ab iis Parilibus, quibus eam a Romulo conditam accepimus, Romamque in iugo cum esset luna, natam esse dicebat nec eius fata canere dubitabat."
[119] Plin. *NH* 1: "L. Tarutio qui Graece de astris scripsit."
[120] While the third year of the sixth Olympiad corresponds to 754 BC, the date mentioned by Plutarch should presumably be 21 April 753 BC since the olympic year starts in the summer, as noted by Grafton and Swerdlow (1986) p. 148. No record is found, however, of a solar eclipse visible in the Mediterranean around that year. See Grafton and Swerdlow, *ibid.* and Grafton and Swerdlow (1985) p. 456.
[121] See Grafton and Swerdlow (1985) pp. 454-465 and Grafton and Swerdlow (1986) pp. 148-153.

half a sign and two signs (but would have reached Scorpio by the third week of October) and the position of the sun in Taurus is completely wrong.[122] Tarutius' calculations appear therefore to match Plutarch's account, rather than Solinus', so that one can infer that the contradiction originated from the manipulation of the astronomer's horoscope to make it fit within the traditional dating in April 753 BC.

It is of course impossible to establish with certainty what Varro did with the information provided to him by his friend Tarutius, but it is also clear that such distortion of the astrology of Rome - caused by the misplacement of the sun, which Grafton and Swerdlow labelled as "very ignorant"[123] - must have occurred long before Solinus, given that the same mistake is found in Cicero's passage, which also associates the date of the foundation of Rome with that of the Parilia in April.[124] The moving of the sun from Libra to Taurus is therefore a deliberate attempt at making Tarutius' horoscope match the traditional dating of 21 April,[125] and it should not come as a surprise that Solinus should (consciously or not) uphold the manipulation of past authority to legitimise the official tradition concerning the origins of Rome. Similarly, it makes perfect sense, within this context, that Solinus should embrace the "revisionist reinterpretation"[126] of the festival of the Parilia and the false etymology of its name; whereby "it was consequently observed that no victim should be sacrificed on the day of the Parilia, so that that day might be free from blood, the meaning of which they want to infer from Ilia's birthing" (*et observatum deinceps, ne qua hostia Parilibus caederetur, ut dies iste a sanguine purus esset, cuius significationem de partu Iliae tractam volunt*, 1.19). Romer observed that the original meaning of the Parilia as a shepherds' festival was already lost in Augustan times, and by Solinus' day probably forgotten. Nonetheless, amongst the several inconsistencies present in this short passage (namely the omission of the real etymology from the name of the goddess Pales, mentioned earlier in the context of that of the Palatine; and, of course, the absence of

[122] Grafton and Swerdlow (1985) pp. 458-459.
[123] Grafton and Swerdlow (1986) p. 151.
[124] It must be noted, however, that Cicero does not seem to think highly of Tarutius' calculations, or of astronomy in general. See Cic. *Div.* 2.99: "O vim maxumam erroris! Etiamne urbis natalis dies ad vim stellarum et lunae pertinebat?" Plutarch himself expresses a similar level of scepticism as to the relevance of Tarutius' findings. See Plut. *Rom.* 12.24.6: ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἴσως καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα τῷ ξένῳ καὶ περιττῷ προσάξεται μᾶλλον ἢ διὰ τὸ μυθῶδες ἐνοχλήσει τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας αὐτοῖς.
[125] That the sun was in Libra at the time of Rome's foundation is also confirmed by Manilius 4.773-777, as noted by Grafton and Swerdlow (1985) p. 459.
[126] Romer (2014) p. 81.

any reference to Remus) what stands out is Solinus' acceptance of Ilia over Rhea Silvia as the twins's mother, thus abandoning the Varronian tradition that he seemed to prefer only a few lines above.[127] According to Romer, Solinus deliberately avoids explaining such inconsistency, thus allowing the readers to offer their own interpretation. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the use of the indicative *volunt* seems to carry a degree of factuality that is lacking in other questionable etymologies introduced by the subjunctive *velint.* If Solinus was unaware of the true and original meaning of the Parilia, this false etymology, which he seems to accept somewhat reluctantly, could be interpreted as his way of making sense of a tradition that he has no intention of questioning, and that fits well within the tone of the second part of his account of the origins of Rome: one whose aim is to uphold the value of Roman traditions, after surreptitiously doubting the validity of the Greek ones presented in the first half.

3. Of Kings and Hills in Regal Rome

The section devoted to Romulus concludes with a series of data that either confirm or only slightly modify the historiographical tradition: namely the length of his reign set at 37 years (instead of the 38 given by a Suetonian fragment)[128]; the triple triumph over the neighbouring Italic populations of the *Caeninenses*, *Antemnati* (instead of the *Crustumini* mentioned by Livy at 1.10), and *Veientes*; his death in July (as opposed to a less popular tradition followed by Ovid in *Fast.* 3.481-512, which sets his death in February); and finally his disappearance in the *Capra Palus*, also reported by the three earlier authors.[129]

The importance of the *Collectanea* as preserver and transmitter of otherwise lost traditions is nowhere else as evident as in the topographical account of regal Rome. Of likely Varronian origin, this segment of Chapter 1 provides details on the location of the houses of Romulus' successors in and around the area of the Forum, beginning with

[127] Romer (2014) pp. 79-83.
[128] Suet. fr. 178.25 R: "Romulus Martis et Iliae filius regnavit annos XXXVIII. urbem Romam condidit XI Kal. Mai. qui dies appellatur Parilia".
[129] See Suet. *loc. cit.* "Hic cum natat ad paludem capra, subito nusquam conparuit"; Ovid, *loc. cit.;* and Livy 1.6.

Titus Tatius, the Sabine king associated to Romulus' reign once peace had been made between the two populations.[130]

Ceteri reges quibus locis habitaverunt, dicemus. Tatius in arce, ubi nunc aedes est Iunonis Monetae; qui anno quinto quam ingressus urbem fuerat a Laurentibus interemptus est. septima et vicesima olympiade hominem exiuit. Numa in colle primum Quirinali, deinde propter aedem Vestae in regia quae adhuc ita appellatur; qui regnavit annis tribus et quadraginta; [sepultus sub Ianiculo]. Tullus Hostilius in Velia, ubi postea deum Penatium aedes facta est; qui regnavit annos duos et triginta, obiit olympiade quinta et tricesima. Ancus Marcius in summa sacra via, ubi aedes Larum est; qui regnauit annos quattuor et uiginti, obiit olympiade prima et quadragesima. Tarquinius Priscus ad Mugoniam portam supra summam nouam viam; qui regnait annos septem et triginta. Seruius Tullius Esquilinus supra cliuum Vrbium; qui regnavit annos duos et quadraginta. Tarquinius Superbus et ipse Esquilinus supra clivum Pullium ad Fagutalem lacum; qui regnavit annos quinque et viginti. (1.21-26)

"We shall say in which places the remaining kings lived. Tatius on the citadel, where now is the Temple of Juno Moneta; he was killed by the Laurentes four years after he had arrived in the city. He passed away during the twenty-seventh Olympiad. Numa first on the Quirinal, then near the Temple of Vesta in the *regia* that is still called so; he reigned forty-three years; [he was buried at the foot of the Janiculum]. Tullus Hostilius on the Velia, where afterwards the Shrine of the Penates was built; he reigned thirty-two, and died during the thirty-fifth Olympiad. Ancus Marcius at the top end of the *via sacra*, where the Shrine of the Lares is; he reigned twenty-four years, and died during the forty-first Olympiad. Tarquinius Priscus by the *Porta Mugonia* above the top end of the *via nova*; he reigned thirty-seven years. Servius Tullius above the *clivus Urbius*; and he reigned forty-two years. Tarquinius Superbus also on the Esquiline above the *clivus Pullius* by the Fagutal; he reigned twenty-five years."

Solinus' passage is the only Latin testimony to a tradition that saw Tatius' house on the *arx* (and therefore on the Capitoline Hill) which is first found in Plutarch (*Rom.* 20.5). An apparently late and little known tradition, as stated by Jacques Poucet, which might have stemmed from Dionysius of Halicarnassus' account of Rome under Romulus and Tatius' co-regency, according to which the Sabines would have occupied the Capitoline and the Quirinal, while the territory of the Latins extended over the

[130] See Coarelli (1982) p. 734, who refers to Solinus' passage as "le plus complet de ces textes qui dérive certainement des antiquaires, vraisamblablement de Varron."

Palatine and the Caelius.[131] As for Numa's residence both in the *regia* and on the Quirinal alternatively, Poucet noted that Solinus (like Plutarch and Cassius Dio before him)[132] is here trying to reconcile two different traditions: a more widespread one that wanted him as the founder of the *regia*, and a later one that saw the Quirinal as a Sabine hill.[133] Likewise, the identification of Tullus Hostilius' residence on the Velia seems to follow a Varronian fragment that makes also mention of Ancus' dwelling by the *Porta Mugonia*: "Tullus Hostilius [lived] in the Velia, where is now the shrine of the Penates; Ancus in the Palatine by the *Porta Mugonia*, along the *via sacra* on the left".[134] The fragment, cited by Nonius Marcellus as an example of the prepositional use of *secundum*, shows Solinus follow a different tradition to that of his (probable) source for the house of Ancus Marcius: while Varro located it by the *Porta Mugonia*, Solinus places it "at the top end of the *via sacra*, where the Shrine of the Lares is" (1.23), identifying instead the *Porta Mugonia* as the location of the residence of Tarquinius Priscus.

Many in the field of Roman archaeology have stated the importance of this passage, not only for the amount of information provided, but also for its attempt at making

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[131] Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.,* 2.50.1: Ῥωμύλος μὲν τὸ Παλάτιον κατέχων καὶ τὸ Καίλιον ὄρος (ἔστι δὲ τῷ Παλατίῳ προσεχές), Τάτιος δὲ τὸν Καπιτωλῖνον, ὅνπερ ἐξ ἀρχῆς κατέσχε, καὶ τὸν Κυρίνιον ὄχθον. Dionysius emphasises the Sabine nature of the Capitoline Hill, which Tatius apparently had held "from the beginning" of his reign (ἐξ ἀρχῆς); however, as noted by Poucet, no mention of a house belonging to Tatius on the Capitoline and one to Romulus on the Palatine appears in Dionysius' account (or in Livy's, for that matter), so that such tradition would have been an ancient but minor one, not made popular until Plutarch's biography of Romulus. See Poucet (1967) pp. 297-300.

[132] See Plut. *Num*. 14.1-2: ἐδείματο πλησίον τοῦ τῆς Ἑστίας ἱεροῦ τὴν καλουμένην Ῥηγίαν, οἷόν τι βασίλειον οἴκημα· καὶ τὸ πλεῖστον αὐτόθι τοῦ χρόνου διέτριβεν (…) οἰκίαν δ᾽εἶχεν ἑτέραν περὶ τὸν Κυρίνου λόφον, ἧς ἔτι νῦν τὸν τόπον ἐπιδεικνύουσιν, and Dio, fr. 6.2: Ὅτι ὁ Νουμᾶς ᾤκει ἐν κολωνῷ τῷ Κυριναλίῳ ὠνομασμένῳ ἅτε καὶ Σαβῖνος ὤν, τὰ δὲ δὴ ἀρχεῖα ἐν τῇ ἱερᾷ ὁδῷ εἶχε, καὶ τάς τε διατριβὰς πλησίον τοῦ Ἑστιαίου ἐποιεῖτο καὶ ἔστιν ὅτε καὶ κατὰ χώραν ἔμενεν.

[133] Poucet (1967) pp. 17-21. Poucet's comparison of Solinus' passage with those of the earlier authors shows that while Plutarch mentions the *regia* first and the Quirinal second, the order is reversed in both Dio and Solinus, thus leading the Belgian scholar to hypothesise an increasing importance of the question around Numa's residence (see p. 19, n. 26). Interestingly, however, Solinus' passage is the only one to see Numa living on the Quirinal *first* and *then* in the *regia* once he became king; while the other two see him divide his time between his private residence and his official one. As for the detail regarding his grave by the Janiculum, the phrase "sepultus sub Ianiculo", accepted by Mommsen in his 1895 edition, is only present in the second class of manuscripts (*LMBAP*) and missing entirely from the first (*RCNHS*). Such piece of information is not in line with the pattern of the passage, which provides the place of residence and length of reign of each king, with no mention of their resting place, other than for Numa alone. Furthermore, according to Livy (1.33) the Janiculum was only annexed to Rome by Ancus Marcius, so that it seems rather out of place that Solinus would have mentioned his burial in what was still foreign territory. While one might feel compelled to adhere to the principle of *lectio difficilior potior*, the oddity of the phrase within the passage, along with its absence from half of the tradition, would certainly allow for its rejection in a (hypothetical) new edition of the *Collectanea*.

[134] Varro *apud Non.* 12.51: "Tullum Hostilium in Veliis, ubi nunc est aedis deum Penatium: Ancum in Palatio, ad portam Mugionis, secundum viam, sub sinistra."

sense of contrasting and contradicting traditions. As noted by Frank E. Brown,[135] the literary tradition of both Greek and Roman historians placed the private residences of the kings in different areas of Rome, with the *regia* solely associated with Numa.[136] According to Brown, it might be inferred that all kings after Numa did keep the *regia* in the Forum as the religious centre of their power, while having their private residence elsewhere, but still in its proximity. To this end, Annie Dubourdieu observed that Solinus provides his readers with a "double tradition": on one hand identifying the location of the dwellings of the kings on the hills surrounding the Forum, and on the other naming the *regia* as the official royal residence.[137] For, although Solinus mentions the *regia* exclusively as Numa's residence, he is indeed referring to the so-called 'historic *regia*', the one in the Forum "that is still called so", possibly implying that the house of each king was, as such, a *regia*, but that only the one founded by Numa is, at the time he writes, still known by that name. However, nothing in his words seems to suggest an alternate use by the kings of the historic *regia* with their own *regiae*, their private residences; so that, leaving archaeological truth aside, the role of the historic *regia* after Numa's reign does not seem to be the main focus of this section of Solinus' work.

As noted by Coarelli,[138] Solinus - whose account he defines as the most accurate within the antiquarian tradition - merges two different traditions in this passage. One had a geographical association of some kings with a place culturally or historically linked to their origins (such as Tatius and Numa on the Capitoline and the Quirinal respectively, two hills traditionally linked to the Sabines; and Servius Tullius on the Esquiline, which was annexed to Rome under his reign). The other established a religious connection of the monarchs with sanctuaries still standing in and around the Forum: Numa with the Temple of Vesta, Tullus Hostilius with that of the Penates, Ancus with the Lares, Tarquinius Priscus with Jupiter Stator, and Servius Tullius with Diana and Fortuna. A religious connection for the location of the houses of the first two

[135] Brown (1974-75) pp. 36-37.
[136] In addition to the already quoted passages from Plutarch and Dio (see n. 66), see Livy 1.30; 1.41; 1.44; 1.56; Dion. Hal. 3.1.5; 4.13.2.
[137] Dubourdieu (1989) pp. 514-515: "Il existe, à propos du lieu de la résidence des rois, une double tradition, rapportée par Solin: selon l'une, leur résidence était la Regia, selon l'autre, ils demeuraient sur les collines dominant le Forum."
[138] See Coarelli (1982) p. 734 and Coarelli (1983) pp. 56-57.

Etruscan kings is, however, not present in Solinus' text. While we know from literary sources that the Porta Mugonia was indeed located by the Temple of Jupiter Stator, therefore in proximity of the location of where Solinus' text places Tarquinius Priscus' house, no mention of said temple is made by Solinus and, in fact, no religious or cultural reference to any Roman deity is given for the three Etruscan kings. Dubourdieu noted a contrast, in Solinus' passage, between legendary and historic kings, whereby the lack of a religious connection for the Etruscan dynasty is explained with their belonging to a "historical reality".[139] In this regard, Solinus' choice to follow a version of the tradition for the location of Ancus Marcius' house alternative to that of his Varronian source is all the more relevant: by moving Ancus' dwelling from the *Porta Mugonia* to the Shrine of the Lares, Solinus is upholding the existence of a cultural connection between Numa, Tullus Hostilius, and Ancus Marcius and the cults of Vesta, the Penates, and the Lares; the three cults of the public hearth, originally private and strictly linked to a domestic environment, and only made public at a later stage.[140]

The explicit association of the Sabine and Latin kings with some of the most ancient Roman deities, and at the same time the exclusion of Servius and the Tarquins from any such link to Rome's primitive religious cults, is yet another indication of Solinus' reverential attitude to the sacrality of the origins of Rome. A sacrality of which the foreign Etruscan kings cannot partake. In addition to this, notable is the reference to the Temple of Juno Moneta in the place where Tatius' house was once standing. The mention of this temple, dedicated in 344 BC, cannot carry the same connotation as the association of Romulus and Tatius' first three successors with the deities of the hearth, and it seems to serve more as a practical topographical reference than a reminder of the city's ancient cults. The whole passage provides, in fact, as close a description as we get of the area of the Forum in Solinus' time; in which the author - making mention of physical landmarks that his readers would have most likely known - traces a west-to-east route, from the Capitoline to the Esquiline Hill, that could almost be read as a guide to a tour around the ancient city.

[139] Dubourdieu (1989) pp. 524-525.
[140] Coarelli (1982) p. 734.

4. Making Sense of Rome's Chronology

Having discussed the etymology of its name and the identity of its founder, Solinus concludes his investigation into the origins of Rome with an attempt at establishing the exact date of its foundation, starting with the accounts of those historians who preceded him.

Cincio Romam duodecima olympiade placet conditam: Pictori octava: Nepoti et Lutatio opiniones Eratosthenis et Apollodori comprobantibus olympiadis septimae anno secundo: Pomponio Attico et M. Tullio olympiadis sextae anno tertio. conlatis igitur nostris et Graecorum temporibus invenimus incipiente olympiade septima Romam conditam, anno post Ilium captum quadringentesimo tricesimo tertio. (1.27)

"Cincius believes that Rome was founded during the twelfth Olympiad; Pictor during the eigth; Nepos and Lutatius in the second year of the seventh Olympiad, confirming the opinions of Eratosthenes and Apollodorus; Pomponius Atticus and Marcus Tullius in the third year of the sixth Olympiad. Therefore, once we have compared our dates with those of the Greeks, we discover that Rome was founded at the beginning of the seventh Olympiad, in the year 433 after Troy was taken."

Apart from Solinus' misquotation of Cicero - who actually observes that, according to the Greek annalistic tradition, Rome was founded in the second year of the seventh Olympiad, and not in the sixth as incorrectly reported in the passage above[141] - notable is the somewhat sceptical tone with which Solinus reports previous traditions that he seems to deem nothing more than beliefs or opinions, which both Greek and Roman authors "believe" (*placet*), as opposed to the factual nature of the date that has been established through his (or possibly his sources') findings (*invenimus*). What follows (1.28-30) is in fact a series of detailed, and rather complex, calculations based on two events used as chronological points of reference: the reorganisation of the Olympic games by Iphitus of Elis 408 years after the fall of Troy, and the consulship of Gallus and Veranius 801 years after the foundation of Rome, that is during the two hundred and seventh Olympiad, according to the *acta publica*. By aligning the Varronian date *ab Urbe condita* with the Olympic one - as well as through the reference to the destruction of Troy as the ultimate chronological benchmark for both dating systems - Solinus aims

[141] Cic. *Rep.* 2.18.

at giving as much legitimisation as possible (once again, *quanta valemus fide*) to the date provided at the beginning of this paragraph, which he likely read in Cornelius Bocchus' chronicle;[142] hence "it is right to believe that Rome was founded in the first year of the seventh Olympiad".[143]

A brief paragraph on the history of post-regal Rome is the last of the section of Chapter 1 strictly devoted to the city. In it, the author lists, in chronological order, a series of significant events that occurred throughout the republican era, concluding with the mention of Augustus' rise to power, in what can be read as the first part of an encomium of the emperor.

In qua regnatum est annis ducentis quadraginta uno. Decemuiri creati anno trecentesimo secundo. Primum Punicum bellum anno quadringentesimo octogesimo nono, secundum quingentesimo tricesimo quinto, tertium sescentesimo quarto, sociale sescentesimo sexagesimo secundo. Ad <A.> Hirtium et C. Pansam consules anni septingenti decem; quorum consulatu Caesar Augustus est consul creatus, octauum decimum annum agens, qui principatum ita ingressus est, ut uigilantia illius non modo securum, uerum etiam tutum imperium esset. Quod tempus ferme solum repertum est, quo plurimum et arma cessaverint et ingenia floruerint, scilicet ne inerti iustitio langueret uirtutis opera, bellis quiescentibus. (1.31 - 33).

"And the monarchy lasted for two hundred and forty-one years. The Decemvirs were elected in the year 302. The First Punic War took place in the year 489, the Second in 535, the Third in 604, the Social War in 662. Seven hundred and ten years passed until the consulship of Aulus Hirtius and Gaius Pansa, and during their consulship Caesar Augustus was appointed consul, at the age of seventeen, who began his principate in such a way that on his watch the empire was not only untroubled, but also safe. And almost this period alone has been found, in which above all conflicts ceased and talents flourished, evidently so that, in the absence of war, the work of virtue might not be dull with idle inactivity."

That Solinus' coverage of republican Rome is so much more concise than his account of the regal period (albeit a topographical, rather than historical one), should not come as a surprise: after all, it is the origins of Rome (its name, its founder, and the date of its

[142] Nieto (2001) p. 140, n. 69.
[143] Sol. 1.30: "par est Romam septimae olympiadis anno primo credi conditam."

settling) that he has vowed to investigate. What is in fact remarkable - within this seemingly haphazard selection of events of which the brief chronicle of republican history consists - is rather the lack of any direct reference to the very system of government that defined that era: the Republic itself. Having once again reminded his readers of a time in which Rome was ruled by kings (*regnatum est*), Solinus makes no mention of the monarch being replaced by two consuls, so much so that the only constitutional change explicitly acknowledged is the Decemvirate of 451-450. He then glosses over the almost five hundred years of the republican era, only to mention finally the very consulship that effectively marked the beginning of the end of consular supremacy. The Republic is therefore defined exclusively by the end of the regal period and the beginning of the imperial one; and while several consulships are mentioned throughout the text, it is always done purely as part of a dating system that Solinus occasionally uses alongside (or in alternative to) the Olympic chronology.[144] Of course, one might argue that the introduction of such an institution at the end of the Monarchy would have been common knowledge for an educated reader, making therefore any explicit mention of it unnecessary. However, the same could be said about the Punic Wars and the Social War, which Solinus, nonetheless, feels deserve to feature in his historiographical paragraph; so that the omission of any formal acknowledgement of the republican system of government seems rather deliberate, especially given the attention devoted to both monarchical institutions of the Kingship and the Principate. Within such a context, this excursus on Rome's republican history - which in a way reduces the experience of the Republic to a transition from one monarchy to another - appears to be nothing more than Solinus' way of facilitating the introduction of his next topic: the life and accomplishments of Augustus.

5. Augustus and the Calendar

There has been much speculation as to the identity of the literary source for the historiographical information provided throughout Chapter 1, with much of the 19th-century debate centred on Mommsen's view that Solinus drew all historical data from

[144] See Sol. 1.96; 1.102; 11.31; 26.10; 36.42.

Cornelius Bocchus' lost chronicle.[145] As fruitless as the conjectures on Solinus' sources usually are (if a source must be identified at all, given that most of the data reported would have been easily accessible to an educated scholar),[146] it seems indeed legitimate to wonder whether the partiality shown for Octavian's ascension to power and for the consequent change of political regime should be regarded as Solinus' own, or rather as the slavish imitation of some first-century historian. The allusion to the restoration of peace and to the flourishing of artistic talent brought about by Augustus (1.33) has indeed the Virgilian tone of a praise for a returned golden age, which would better suit an author of the early imperial period. Nevertheless, it would be hard to accept that a late-antique grammarian would have uncritically included a centuries-old political endorsement, if he did not share its sentiment, or at least acknowledge its validity.

The introduction to the life and deeds of Augustus at 1.33 gives Solinus the opportunity to embark on an excursus on the history of the Roman calendar (1.33-47), "for before Augustus Caesar, the year was calculated in a confused way" (*nam ante Augustum Caesarem incerto modo annum conputabant*, 1.34). The lengthy, and at times inaccurate, account of the different methods adopted by Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans to establish the exact duration of the year was used by Rabenald (amongst other passages) to argue in favour of a presence of Suetonius' lost work *Prata* throughout Solinus' text.[147] Once again, theories on the origin of Solinus' material for this 'history of the year' matter insofar as they can raise questions as to the rationale behind the very presence of this section within what appears to be a panegyric of Augustus. The excursus does fit rather oddly into the structure of Chapter 1, and the best justification that one could provide for its presence is given by Solinus' observations on Caesar's calendar reform of 45 BC and Augustus' subsequent adjustment of 8 BC. For, having given a summary of the various methods that the Romans used (from Numa onwards) to intercalate the six hours necessary to align the calendar to the exact duration of the solar

[145] Rabenald (1909) pp. 99-100.
[146] In this regard, it is interesting to note Solinus' error in reporting Octavian's age (17 instead of 19); his anachronistic use of "Augustus"; and his observation on the principate beginning with Octavian's consulship of 43 BC, rather than with the conferment of the *imperium* by the Senate in 27 BC. These inaccuracies seem more justifiable if we accept that Solinus drew the data from memory, rather than that he consulted an early imperial chronicle (with or without Suetonius as an intermediary) such as Bocchus'.
[147] Through a comparison with analogous passages in Macrobius' *Saturnalia* (1.12.2-1.14.14) and Censorinus' *Liber De Die Natali* (19.4-22.13), Rabenald identified traditions common to the three authors, which he claimed originated from Suetonius' lost work. See Rabenald (1909) pp. 104-116.

year (1.38-1.44), Solinus first praises Caesar's intervention, which "fixed this whole inconsistency, by removing the confusion of the intervals" (*hanc universam inconstantiam, incisa temporum turbatione, conposuit*, 1.45), and subsequently uses Augustus' correction (made necessary by the pontiffs' misapplication of the intercalation rules), following which "the calculation of all years was thereafter established" (*omnium postea temporum fundata ratio est*, 1.47).

The final remark on the permanent legacy of Augustus' intervention on the calendar allows Solinus to transition into the second part of his short biography of the first emperor:

Verum cum et hoc et multa alia Augusti temporibus debeantur, qui paene sine exemplo rerum potitus est, tanta et tot in vita eius inveniuntur adversa, ut non sit facile discernere, calamitosior an beatior fuerit. (1.48)

"But truly, although we owe both this and many other achievements to the age of Augustus, who ruled in an almost unprecedented way, such great and many adversities are found in his life, that it not easy to discern whether he was more unfortunate or blessed."

It is hard to read this brief introduction - which is followed by a list of significant episodes of Octavian's life, from his failed bid for the office of *magister equitum* in 46 BC up to his death in AD 14 (1.49) - without detecting an element of bias towards Augustus. His vague remark on the "many other achievements" for which posterity is in debt to the prince, along with the (perhaps deliberately) cryptic mention of the "unprecedented way" in which he came to power, betrays a somewhat sympathetic tone that is further highlighted by the juxtaposition with the "adversities" mentioned immediately after. On the other hand, the beginning of the Plinian passage on which Solinus' is based (7.147-150), mentions only in passing the "great turns of human fortune" (*magna sortis humanae ... volumina*, 7.147) that characterised Octavian's life. Although it is part of a section of Pliny's anthropological book that deals with the success of some notable men interrupted by a reverse of luck, it still lacks the idea of an antithesis between fortune and misfortune playing an equal role in Octavian's life, and does not contain that mixture of admiration and compassion that Solinus' words convey.

Finally, in what is yet another example of Solinus' manipulation of source material, the allusion to Augustus' death assumes the role of entry-point for the long anthropological excursus that occupies the second half of the chapter:

Huius tamen suprema quasi lugeret saeculum, penuria insecuta est frugum omnium: ac ne fortuitum quod acciderat videretur, inminentia mala non dubiis signis apparuerunt: nam Fausta quaedam ex plebe partu uno edidit quattuor geminos, mares duos, feminas totidem, monstruosa fecunditate portendens futurae calamitatis indicium. (1.50-51).

"As if his century were mourning his death, however, scarcity of all crops came immediately after: and so that what was happening may not seem coincidental, the clear signs of impending adversities appeared: for a certain plebeian woman named Fausta gave birth to quadruplets, two boys, and just as many girls, showing with her extraordinary fertility the mark of the calamity about to come."

The story of Fausta's quadruplets is the real element of transition into the anthropological section, and is (according to Mommsen) most likely taken from a different passage of Pliny's book 7, which deals with exceptional births. Octavian is in fact not the object of Pliny's interest, and he only features as a chronological reference for the miraculous delivery of Fausta's children "on the day of the death of the divine Augustus" (7.33). No mention of "mourning", "adversities", and "calamities", as well as no reference to Fausta's multiple childbirth as a bad omen directly related to Augustus' passing are made by Pliny, so that there is no reason to doubt that such dramatic portrayal should be Solinus' own.

Solinus' conclusion of his 'history of Rome' with the death of Augustus was seen by Mommsen as evidence of the author's reliance on an early imperial source, of which the *Collectanea* would have been nothing more than an epitome. It is indeed an abrupt ending, with which Solinus moves on from the historiographical section of Chapter 1, but one that, nonetheless, is faithful to his promise to investigate the origins of Rome. Starting from the etymology of its name and the legends connected to Troy and the Epic Cycle; proceeding with pre-Roman Latium and the various foundation mythologies; having given a portrayal of the city of the Kings, and touched on the age of the consuls, Solinus concludes where his account of the beginnings of Rome should conclude: with the beginning of the Principate and the system of government that is contemporary to

him. Having (briefly) recounted all that it has taken Rome to reach its current status, Solinus' historical narration has no need to continue, as the non-republican regime created by Augustus is, for all intents and purposes, the one under which he and his readers still live; especially if one accepts that he wrote in a reunified (and once again monarchical) post-Tetrarchy empire. In this regard, it is consistent with his carefully crafted justification of his contemporary world order, that he should praise the man by whom such world order was first created; and it is only fitting that such praise should be associated with the story of the calculation of the year and the mention of Augustus' intervention on the Roman calendar. As Leandro Polverini observed, Augustus' correction of Caesar's reform was seen, and indeed used, as an instrument of political propaganda;[148] not only through the change of the name of the month *Sextilis* into *Augustus* (as we are reminded by Suetonius, *Aug.* 31.2), but also with the introduction of the calendar into the eastern provinces.[149] Having exerted his control over the space of Rome, with his organisation of the natural borders surrounding the Mediterranean, Augustus' systematisation of the calculation of the year affirmed his control over its time too.[150] Likewise - having illustrated the centrality of Rome within the *oikoumene*, along with the primacy of its history, of its space, and of its time - Solinus can now move away from the centre and begin with the exploration of all that rotates around it.

III. *Rome beyond Rome*

Reaching beyond the paragraphs devoted to it in the first chapter, Rome asserts its presence throughout the entirety of the *Collectanea,* through geographical and historical references that keep bringing the reader's attention back to the centre of the world that Solinus is describing. Be it by explicitly mentioning the name of Rome; by referring to notable episodes or personages of Roman history; or by the occasional use of 'identitarian' language, Solinus constantly seems to infer a subordinate status to Rome of the areas that are the object of his description.

[148] Polverini (2016) p. 103-104.
[149] Polverini (2016) p. 105.
[150] Polverini (2016) p. 114.

The first type of references in which a somewhat imperialistic tone is most evident comes in the form of the author's allusion to the Roman conquest of specific areas or provinces. The importance of such references is given by their very absence in the original passages consulted by Solinus, and by the author's conscious adoption of a Rome-centric point of view in his adaptation of source material that, in most cases, does not contain (at least in equal measure) elements of imperialistic propaganda.

Having concluded his long anthropological excursus, Solinus opens Chapter 2 by declaring that it is now time to revert to the "description of places" (*commemoratio locorum*, 2.1), and that his writing should now be devoted "especially to Italy, whose splendour we have already discussed in the description of Rome" (*principaliter in Italiam, cuius decus iam in urbe contingimus*). The entire section bears more than one resemblance with Pliny's description of Italy; and to Pliny Solinus subtly alludes with his acknowledgement of the "most outstanding writers" (*scriptores praestantissimi*, 2.2) who have previously sung the praises of the peninsula.[151] Nevertheless, the notion of Rome being Italy's "splendour" or "glory" (*decus*) seems to reverse Pliny's view of the city as "a face worthy of so glorious a neck" (*digna iam tam festa cervice facies*, 3.40), which is indicative of an overall greater focus on Rome in Solinus' text that in Pliny's.[152] Notable is also Solinus' mention of the Romans within a list of all the peoples who established cities or colonies in Italy, "which were first founded by the Aborigines, the Aurunci, the Pelasgi, the Arcadians, the Siculi, later by foreigners from the whole of Greece, and in short by Roman conquerors".[153] Any allusion to the Roman conquest of territories previously occupied and settled by other nations (indigenous or not) is absent from Pliny's analogous list, which is only limited to pre-Roman Italic populations.[154] On the other hand, by referring to the Romans as "conquerors" (*victores*) Solinus seems to make a point of reminding his readers of Rome's military prowess and superiority over pre-existing populations, and of its presence in and outside of Latium established through victory in battle. It is also interesting to observe how Solinus' other addition to

[151] What follows is in fact a paraphrasis of Pliny's catalogue of the most praiseworthy geographical features of Italy. See Sol. 2.2 and Plin. 3.41
[152] See above pp. 55-56.
[153] Sol. 2.3: "quae primum Aborigines Aurunci Pelasgi Arcades Siculi, totius postremi Greciae advenae et in summa victores Romani condiderunt".
[154] Plin. 3.56: "colonis saepe mutatis tenuere alii aliis temporibus, Aborigines, Pelasgi, Arcades, Siculi, Aurunci, Rutuli, et ultra Cerceios Volsci, Osci, Ausones".

Pliny's list (his mention of settlers from Greece) further enforces that dichotomy between a foreign East and a Roman Italy that was already present throughout Chapter 1 with his (albeit subtle) refutation of the Greek traditions on the foundation of Rome.

Other references to Rome's territorial expansion through military conquest come in the form of historical allusions to the Punic Wars. After his description of Sardinia, Solinus opens Chapter 5, which is devoted to Sicily, with an observation on the historical connection between the two regions (the first two Roman provinces), which were created after the First Punic War: "because after both islands had been brought under Rome's control, they were made provinces at the same time, when in the same year Marcus Valerius was assigned the administration of Sardinia, Gaius Flaminius of Sicily."[155] Similarly, Solinus' description of Spain in Chapter 23, which is largely modelled on Mela's encomium of his native land, contains a passing remark on the date of its subjugation by Rome, "after it became ours during the Second Punic War" (*secundo Punico bello nostra facta*, 23.3), which is (understandably) absent from Mela's description. Interestingly, no explicit mention is made of the Third Punic War within the description of the territory around Carthage, which is part of the chapter devoted to the province of Africa, except that after its destruction the city "was given to Italian settlers by Gaius Gracchus and named Junonia by him" (*a C. Graccho colonis Italicis data et Iunonia ab eo dicta*, 27.11). Nevertheless, Solinus promptly shifts the focus of the segment back onto Rome, with his remark on Junonia being "the second splendour of the world after the city of Rome" (*alterum post urbem Romam terrarum decus*, 27.11).

Finally, one of the most notable examples of an imperialistic tone being added by Solinus to his source material can be found in his description of Judaea and, in particular, in his observations on this region's production of balsam:

In hac terra balsamum nascitur, quae silva intra terminos viginti iugerum ad victoriam nostram fuit: at cum Iudaea potiti sumus, ita luci illi propagati sunt, ut iam nobis latissimi colles sudent balsama. (35.5)

[155] Sol. 5.1: "quod utraque insula in Romanum arbitratum redacta isdem temporibus facta provincia est, cum eodem anno Sardiniam M. Valerius, alteram C. Flaminius sortiti sint."

"Balsam is produced in this land, which was a forest of twenty iugera up to our victory: but since we have come into possession of Judaea, those groves have been enlarged so much that now very spacious hills sweat balsam for us."

The historical allusion to the Roman conquest of Judaea is also present in Pliny's account of the properties of the balm of Gilead, on which Solinus' passage is modelled, and where direct mention is made to Pompey's invasion and to the subsequent presence of the produce in all triumphs celebrated in Rome.[156] The subjugation of the region and its consequent servitude to Rome are also not omitted by Pliny, who observes that "this [region] is now subject to Rome and pays tribute together with its people" (*servit nunc haec ac tributa pendit cum sua gente*, 12.112); nevertheless, Pliny's words do not seem to carry the same level of imperialistic rhetoric that is conveyed by Solinus' use of the first-person plural. For the annexation of Judaea is still referred to as "our victory" centuries after it occurred,[157] and the increase in the growth of balsam trees on the Judaean hills is not only seen as a direct consequence of the Roman presence in the area, but also as a commodity that is still there to be exploited by "us", that is the Roman victors in Solinus' time. Likewise, although Pliny does mention the limited space of twenty *iugera* in which the plant once used to grow, no correlation is established in his passage between Rome's conquest of Judaea and an increase in the production of balsam, which is instead clearly stated by Solinus. Overall, Solinus' passage makes a point not only of highlighting the perceived benefits of the Romanisation of Judaea, but also of affirming the Roman identity of the readers. If in Pliny's time this type of 'identitarian' language was not needed to justify the western domination of an eastern province and exploitation of an eastern commodity, Solinus' repeated attempt at portraying the conquest of Judaea as an experience also shared by him and his readers could arguably be seen as a way of asserting the legitimacy of Rome's presence in the East.

[156] Plin. 12.11: "ostendere arborum hanc urbi imperatores Vespasiani, clarumque dictu, a Pompeio Magno in triumpho arbores quoque duximus."
[157] It is not clear whether Solinus is referring to Pompey's invasion of 66-63 BC, its incorporation as a province by Claudius in 44 AD, or its reorganisation as an imperial province by Vespasian in 73. It is possibly the latter, given that the plantations of balsam would have then fallen under direct imperial control. See Nieto (2001) p. 467, n. 1084.

The practice of referring to past military achievements or elements of Roman history and culture as "ours", and to the Romans in general as "us", is in fact widespread throughout the text; and what is once again worth noticing, in regard to the (at least) 15 occurrences of the different forms of the first-person plural pronoun, is their originality within Solinus' adaptation of source material. Symbols of Roman mythology and religion are claimed by Solinus as "ours": such as the Sibylline Books, consulted by "our pontiffs" (*pontifices nostri*, 2.16) in the temple of the Sibylla at Cumae; the city of Pallanteum, remembered for giving its name "to our Palatine hill" (*Palatio nostro*, 7.11), with an etymology also mentioned by Pliny (4.20), albeit without the use of the possessive adjective; and "our annals" (*nostri annales*, 24.15), which Solinus cites as his source for all information regarding the North African mountain range of the Atlas, along with Hanno's *Libri Punici*.[158] Likewise, Latin is quite explicitly referred to as the language of the author and his readers on two occasions, both in the chapter devoted to the Greek islands: one in Solinus' description of Crete, where he observes that the Cretan version of the name of Diana, Britomartis, "sounds like 'sweet virgin' in our language " (*sermone nostro sonat virginem dulcem*, 11.7); and the other in a short section devoted to Mount Athos, in which, commenting on the longer-than-average life expectancy of the inhabitants of the city of Acroton on the top of the mountain, he informs us that "the Greeks called the people from there *macrobii*, [while] we called them *longaevi*" (*inde homines macrobios Graeci, nostri appellavere longaevi*, 11.34). Finally, in addition to Solinus' almost patriotic enthusiasm in describing the benefits of the conquest of Judaea, the presence of Rome in the East is reaffirmed through an allusion to two episodes, which further seeks to establish a connection between the readers and the military endeavours of the past: the first being the subjugation of the Greek cities of the Thracian coast of the Black Sea, not explicitly mentioned by Solinus but implied in his reference to the island of the Apollonitae, "from which Marcus Lucullus brought to us the statue of Apollo of the Capitol" (*ex qua M. Lucullus Apollinem Capitolinum nobis extulit*, 19.1); and the second being the Roman occupation of the two Moesiae, "which our ancestors deservedly named Ceres' Barn" (*quae maiores nostri iure Cereris horreum nominabant*, 21.3).

[158] While Hanno is also mentioned by Pliny as a source consulted "by Greek authors and ours" (*a Graecis nostrisque*, 5.8), notable is the contrast between Pliny's generic *nostri* and Solinus' 'appropriation' of a component of traditional Roman historiography such as the annals.

While Solinus' linguistic choices might seem self-explanatory - he wrote in Latin for a Latin-speaking readership, after all - and perhaps not warranting so much attention, it is once again their originality that helps us make sense of the author's view of the world, as well as of his own and his readers' relationship with the changes of their time. For regardless of all unanswered (and perhaps unanswerable) questions on Solinus' biography, it is not so much the details of his geographical provenance (which such linguistic choices may or may not reveal) that are important, as the sense of identity that these choices seem to project. What the absence of a personal or possessive pronouns in the (mostly) Plinian passages that Solinus adapts can tell us goes beyond the usual questions of philological nature, as the author's changes to the wording of his sources are indicative of an increased need to signal his sense of belonging to Rome, to its past, and to its present. The glorification of past military conquests, the appeal to some of the most sacred symbols of Roman culture, the affirmation of Latin as the language common to the author and his readers (as well as the language of the victors), and the overall use of ancestry as a means to connect the present to the past manifest the author's need to reaffirm his own (as well as his readers') Roman identity. Solinus' appeal to the collective memory of his readers, and the relentless reminding of their shared Roman roots read as the author's attempt at holding on to the past, and at shielding his contemporaries from the political changes of the present.

IV. *The Centre and the Wild Frontier*

The amount of information presented in the chapters devoted to Rome and Italy is only matched by that of the description of the most peripheral regions of the empire on either side of the border. Solinus' accounts of Africa, India, and Egypt are in fact the longest of the entire text, with the first two even surpassing in length the description of Rome. The nature of the information provided is, however, what differentiates these (and, more generally, all other) chapters from the first; as they provide the readers not with an account of the mythology, archaeology, and history of each region, but with a brief overview of the geographical features of the area, followed by excursuses of various nature. Following a pattern that is consistent throughout the entirety of the

Collectanea, Solinus introduces each region through the aid of a geographical reference that works as an entry-point for the much larger and more detailed account of one or more non-geographical items, often in the form of paradoxographical data on the zoology, anthropology, botany, and mineralogy of the region.[159] Notably, as Solinus' itinerary proceeds along its anticlockwise spiral trajectory, the increase in the presence of paradoxographical content seems to be directly proportional to an area's distance from Rome. The two provinces of Africa (Chapter 27) and Egypt (Chapter 32), as well as the external land of India (Chapter 52), contain in fact the largest amount of paradoxographical data on monstrous tribes, miraculous stones, and (especially) wondrous animals; and while accounts of mythological beings, or plants and gems with magical properties can also be found in the areas immediately surrounding Italy, the overall description of a chaotic world of wonders is reserved for the territories at the edge of the empire.

Zoological and anthropological content accounts for the majority of those *memorabilia* that the readers encounter along Solinus' itinerary around the world, and such content is (for the most part) concentrated along the frontier; the regions whose descriptions are largely occupied by paradoxographical excursuses are located along the North African provinces (on either side of the *limes Africanus*), in the areas of the Arabian and Palestinian *limes,* and on the northern shores of the Black Sea. The North African provinces of Tingitana (Chapter 25), Africa (Chapter 27), along with the external land of Aethiopia (Chapter 30), provide in fact a considerable amount of zoological content, in the form of descriptions of both existing and fantastic beasts;[160] while the Scythian territories around the Black and Caspian seas are a fertile ground for Solinus' lengthy anthropological excursuses on the monstrous tribes that inhabit the banks of the Borysthenes (now the river Dniepr, Chapters 15 and 16) and the Riphaean Mountains (Chapter 17).

The barbaric nature of the *limes* is made explicit in at least three out of the nine instances in which Solinus uses this term to refer to a peripheral region. Towards the

[159] See below Chapter 3.
[160] See below pp. 114-120.

conclusion of the chapter devoted to Italy, Solinus moves on to the border areas on either side of the peninsula.

Italicus excursus per Liburnos, quae gens Asiatica est, procedit in Dalmatiae pedem, Dalmatia in limitem Illyricum, in quo sinu Dardani sedes habent, homines ex Troiana prosapia in mores barbaros efferati. (2.51)

"An Italian extension proceeds through the territory of the Liburnians, who are an Asian population, into the foot of Dalmatia, Dalmatia proceeds into the Illyrian frontier. In this gulf the Dardanians have their home, people of Trojan lineage who have been made savage and turned into barbarian customs"

The Asian origins of the Liburnians and the corrupt nature of the Dardanians seem to be deliberately stressed by Solinus; for in spite of its proximity to Italy, the *limes Illyricus* is still presented as an area of transition between the West and the barbarian East. Similarly, the border between Numidia and Africa Vetus, the *limes Zeugitanus*, "produces wild beasts" (*feras educat*, 26.2); and the territory in which "the Persian frontier is connected to the Scythians" (*limes Persicus Scythis iungitur*, 49.6) is densely populated by the highly disciplined tribes of the Massagetae, Essedones, Satarchae, and Apalaei, "beyond whom we observe that hardly a coherent description has been given of the customs of other populations, since some very savage barbarians are located in between."[161] Interestingly, Solinus deviates from his source Pliny in describing the tribes that live beyond the *limes Illyricus* and the *limes Persicus* as "barbarians". As noted by Brodersen, Solinus' use of the term *barbarus* has evolved from Pliny's traditional cultural notion of barbarians.[162] While Pliny's definition of *barbari* was defined by the savage nature of their customs, and he therefore located barbarian peoples also within the provinces of the Empire, "for Solinus there are no barbarians within the Roman Empire, but plenty of them beyond its edges."[163]

In these and in the remaining occurrences of the term, the concept of *limes* appears to have evolved (at least in the way Solinus uses it) from its meaning of military road,

[161] Sol. 49.8: "post quos, immanissimis barbaris interiacentibus, de ritu aliarum nationum paene inconstanter definitum advertimus."
[162] Brodersen (2015) pp. 32-41.
[163] Brodersen (2015) p. 40.

which we find in first and second century authors, as well as from its later use to denote a natural land-boundary.[164] Solinus' *limes* describes an area of transition, rather than a means of military conquest or a simple 'borderland', and it reflects the evolution of the very concept of frontier that responded to the political changes of the third century.[165] It is an area populated by wondrous human beings and animals, a buffer against the unknown world that lies beyond the Roman one. In a similar way, the description of other peripheral regions that are not located on the *limes* seems to reflect Solinus' view of what is beyond Rome's borders as another world; such as "the coast of the Gallic shore [which] would be the end of the world, if the island of Britain did not almost deserve the name of 'a second world' by virtue of its somewhat great size",[166] or the province of Hispania Baetica "where the most remote boundary of the known world is" (*ubi extremus est noti orbis terminus*, 23.12). In this regard, Solinus' choice to extend his itinerary as far as India is indicative of his perception of what is beyond Rome (and especially what lies to its East) as a world of wonders; for Solinus' predilection for paradoxography is nowhere more evident than in the description of this land.[167] India, as well as Aethiopia and Scythia, is a treasure trove of *mirabilia*, which not only sparks the readers' curiosity for and fascination with the unknown reality that lies across the frontier, but also reminds them of the boundless nature of the empire. For the borders of Rome are the borders of the world itself, and what lies beyond them is a different universe altogether; one that belongs to monstrous creatures and savage people, and that consists of lands unconquered and unconquerable, which a providential Nature has placed around (but far away from) the Roman world.

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[164] Isaac (1988) pp. 126-132.

[165] See Olshausen (2006): "It was succeeded in the 3rd cent. AD by various concepts in response to changed political and military conditions. The material traces, however, left behind in the landscape by the Roman Empire's frontier system draw the observing eye to the military aspects of the *limes"*. Notably, however, no such traces are present in any of Solinus' nine mentions of the *limes*, and its use of the term seems to be devoid of any military connotation. As noted by Isaac, one of these concepts was that of 'border district', a vast area along the border under military administration, which best seems to fit Solinus' use of the term (although he is of course not interested in the administrative aspect of it). See Isaac (1988) pp. 132-136.

[166] Sol. 22.1: "Finis erat orbis ora Gallici litus, nisi Britannia insula non qualibet amplitudine nomen paene orbis alterius mererentur".

[167] See below pp. 125-128.

V. *Rome as an Ideal*

From the biological metaphor used in the prefatory letter to the historical and cultural allusions disseminated throughout the entire text, Rome is used by Solinus as an ideological tool more than a geographical item. The comparison between the city and a human head is in fact not only the first indicator of the central role played by Rome within Solinus' world order, but also a way of reminding the readers of such a (perhaps) forgotten role; of reviving their interest in the mythology, topography, and history of the ancient capital; of preparing them for the description of a world with Rome still at its centre, in spite of the political and cultural shifts that are dominating their current time. Rome needs to be described first because the rest of the world is in fact the result of Rome's expansion, including the (unnamed) city that has now replaced it (or that is about to do so). And in this optic it makes perfect sense that the second half of the chapter devoted to Rome be occupied by a long excursus on human physiognomy: for Solinus must deal with Rome before he can move on to the other regions, just like he must deal with the human being before he can describe any other living thing.[168]

The use of Greek traditions on the history and mythology of the foundation of Rome throughout the first half of Chapter 1 also corresponds to the author's desire to restore the centrality of the city. The refutation of any attempt of Hellenisation of the origins of Rome (its name, its founder, and the date of its foundation) is followed by the assertion and celebration of the traditional Roman versions, presented as both legitimate and unquestionable. And while those Greek traditions are never openly and explicitly doubted, Solinus' stylistic choices make it clear that they cannot aspire to become part of the official foundation mythology, and that Greek culture cannot claim a role in the building of Roman identity.

Similarly, the brief historical excursus that culminates with the encomium of Augustus reads as yet another element of Solinus' identity-building exercise. For the praise of Augustus is a praise of the political system created by him; a praise amplified

[168] See Sol. 1.53: "cum de animalibus quae digna dictu videbuntur, prout patria cuiusque admonebit, simus notaturi, iure ab eo [homine] potissmum ordiemur, quod rerum natura sensus iudicio et rationis capacitate praeposuit omnibus."

not only by the deliberate absence of any mention of the republic, but also by the parallelism with his reorganisation of time and space. The Principate, which brought order to a chaotic world, is presented by Solinus as intrinsically linked to the city of Rome, so that Roman is the lived reality of Solinus' contemporaries, wherever they may be. Consequently, in spite of the changes and evolutions undergone by the empire from Augustus to Solinus' time, the author is keen to remind his readers of what the ideal centre of power was and will always be, no matter where the actual centre of power currently is.

If power is exerted (amongst other things) through identity, and identity is built through memory, Solinus' appeal to the collective memory of his readers responds, therefore, to his desire to restore (albeit symbolically) Rome's primacy in the world. The reaffirmation of well-known traditions, as well as the references to a shared linguistic and cultural background, contribute to the awakening in the readers of a sense of belonging to that classical world that was built by Rome's force and shaped by Rome's culture; a world whose boundaries mark the limits of the world itself, beyond which another world exists, in the form of those wondrous lands populated by monstrous beings, which are kept at bay at the edge of the empire. At a time in which the city of Rome is losing its primacy in the world, Solinus' text reflects the need to hold on to the past by means of reinforcing the cultural identity of its readers; it perpetuates the idea of Rome as the eternal capital of the empire, and political and cultural *Arche* of civilisation; and it stands, equally nostalgic as defiant, as a stronghold of *Romanitas* in an increasingly deromanised world.

PART II

CHAPTER THREE

MEMORY, NATURE, AND POWER: THE ROLE OF *MEMORABILIA*

As a work of geographical writing, the *Collectanea* perhaps fails to provide its readers with a thorough description of the world; and not simply on account of the author's lack of accuracy, but mainly because of the relatively little space that is reserved to the commentary of the physical features of most of the regions touched by Solinus' itinerary. And yet, nowhere in the title or in the preface does Solinus refer to his own text as a geographical treatise (a *descriptio* or *divisio orbis*). The object of his compilatory efforts is presented instead to his readers as a "recollection of places" (*commemoratio locorum*), within which "[he has] portrayed the qualities of humans and other living beings, [and] a few things have been added on exotic trees, on the appearances of remote peoples, on the different customs of hidden tribes, [and] also several facts that is worth remembering":[1] that is those *mirabilia*, or rather *memorabilia*, the description of which occupies the majority of Solinus' text, and whose presence far exceeds that of geographical content.

The use of wondrous facts is, of course, not exclusive to Solinus, and their presence in his work could in fact be explained by looking at Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, from which most of them are taken. In regard to Pliny's paradoxographical content, scholars have interrogated themselves as to the role and importance of *mirabilia* within his encyclopaedia, and have identified a close relationship between Pliny's use of natural marvels as an inventory of what the world has to offer for the benefit of Rome, and the imperialistic ideology manifested by human control over Nature itself. Pliny's *mirabilia* are in fact not only a manifestation of Nature's power, but also a demonstration of Rome's central authority over the remote, and are the author's way of praising the unifying control of imperial power.[2]

[1] Sol. *Praef.* 4: "hominum et aliorum animalium naturas expressimus. addita pauca de arboribus exoticis, de extimarum gentium formis, de ritu dissono abditarum nationum, nonnulla etiam digna memoratu".
[2] See Conte (1994), Beagon (2007), Naas (2011).

Similarly, one cannot read the *Collectanea* without wondering as to the reason behind the preponderant presence of paradoxographical data throughout the text, and specifically how their use fits within the world view that Solinus aims to uphold. While it is true that their presence could be dismissed as yet another example of the author's faithfulness to his sources, Solinus' *mirabilia* do express a view of Nature and the world that, albeit heavily influenced by Pliny's, responds to the very different challenges posed by the cultural and political landscape of Solinus' time. What has been said in the previous chapter, in regard to the relationship between the orderly centre and the chaotic world of wonders kept by Nature at the edge of the empire, is but one aspect of the role that *mirabilia* play within the text, for as knowledge turns those *mirabilia* into *memorabilia*, memory becomes (once again) Solinus' privileged epistemological instrument of political legitimisation and justification. Between the title and the preface, Solinus in fact reinforces his text's main objective to function as a mnemonic support for the readers: for memory represents the premise upon which the ideological outline of the text is based. The collective memory of what is already known, that is the glorious past of the origins of Rome, is therefore complementary to the discovery of what is not known yet, of what is "memorable" and "worth remembering", such as the wonders that populate both near and (especially) far regions of the empire.

Beginning with the wondrous facts of human biology to which the second half of Chapter 1 is devoted (1.53-127), Solinus' *memorabilia* are presented in the form of excursuses within the description of each region, often occupying a considerable section, or even the majority, of each chapter. As he states in the preface, Solinus covers all aspects of natural science, spanning from observable phenomena of human anatomy to unbelievable accounts from the remotest regions of the world. Whether through tales of monstrous creatures or by striving to find the miraculous in the mundane, all of Solinus' *memorabilia* are presented in a way that is aimed at creating a sense of amazement in the reader. And although the human being occupies a prime position not only amongst the other *memorabilia* but also within the text itself - "since Nature has put him above everything else for the judgement of his thinking and the ability of his reasoning" (*quod rerum natura sensus iudicio et rationis capacitate praeposuit omnibus*, 1.53) - it is the description of animal wonders that most of all arouses Solinus' interest, and through which he best elucidates Nature's role within his world view.

While their content is mostly modelled on passages from Pliny, it is the tone of Solinus' language, his choice of words, the information included and omitted that betray the author's attitude towards the animal creatures that he describes, and his view as to how their presence in the world is a reflection of Nature's design. As the examination of all zoological paragraphs will show, Solinus' interest in and approach to the description of the animal kingdom are indicative of his perception of the wonders of the Earth, and they are essential to the understanding of not only the purpose of *memorabilia* in the *Collectanea*, but also the relationship between Nature and man, and the role of Nature itself according to the author's Weltanschauung.

Animal paradoxography: a case study

I. *Solinus' methodology*

Solinus' geographical journey into the North African province of Mauritania Tingitana opens with a brief description of its shape, stretched towards the Mediterranean Sea and culminating in a range of seven mountain peaks called the Brothers.[3] This one-sentence commentary on the orography of the region is all we have regarding the physical geography of the Moroccan landscape, with the remainder of Chapter 25 almost entirely dedicated to the account of the sizes, shapes and customs of elephants. What makes this particular chapter exemplary of Solinus' method of compilation is the manipulation and rearrangement of the data drawn from his sources, as shown by a comparison of Solinus' first two paragraphs with their Plinian models:

[3] The seven peaks of Jebel Musa, a mountain of the Rif range in Northern Morocco.

Plin. 5.18

ipsa provincia ab oriente montuosa fert elephantos, in Abyla quoque monte et quos Septem Fratres a simili altitudine appellant; freto imminent ii iuncti Abylae…

Sol. 25.1

E provinciis Mauretaniis Tingitana, quae solstitiali plagae obvia est quaeque porrigitur ad internum mare, exurgit montibus septem, qui a similitudine fratres appellati freto imminent. hi montes elephantum frequentissimi sunt.

Plin. 8.1

Maximum est elephans proximumque humanis sensibus, quippe intellectus illis sermonis patrii et imperiorum obedientia, officiorum quae didicere memoria, amoris et gloriae voluptas, immo vero quae etiam in homine rara, probitas, prudentia, aequitas, religio quoque siderum solisque ac lunae veneratio.

Sol. 25.2

monent a principio hoc animantium genus dicere. igitur elephanti iuxta sensum humanum intellectus habent, memoria pollent, siderum servant disciplinam.

Whereas Pliny's description of Tingitana in Book 5 proceeds with the listing of the main rivers and towns of the region, before moving on to the neighbouring province of Mauretania Caesariensis, Solinus' brief reference to the Moroccan mountains appears as a mere pretext to introduce a lengthy excursus on elephants, his true object of interest. Pliny's account of this animal, which opens the zoological section of the *Naturalis Historia* (Books 8 to 11), contains at 8.2 a reference to the moon-worshipping customs of the Mauretanian elephants which, along with a fleeting remark on the presence of elephants on the Seven Brothers in Book 5, provides Solinus with the opportunity to link the description of the geographical area to that of a non-geographical item.[4] Solinus' intent, however, is not simply to describe the elephants that inhabit that particular region, but to give a comprehensive treatise on the animal "from the

[4] Plin. 8.2: "auctores sunt in Mauretaniae saltibus ad quendam amnem cui nomen est Amilo nitescente luna nova greges eorum descendere ibique se purificantes sollemniter aqua circumspergi atque ita salutato sidere in silvas reverti vitulorum fatigatos prae se ferentes."

beginning*"* (*a principio*).[5] Although the two passages are very similar in content - since Pliny's 32 paragraphs on elephant facts at the start of Book 8 are also not limited to the African genus, but mix data and anecdotes on this and the Indian subspecies[6] - Solinus' description establishes a relation between geographical and non-geographical items that is inverted to that shown in the Plinian model. When Pliny follows an object-to-area direction, and his description of a non-geographical item contains an accessory or incidental remark on a particular region, Solinus uses the latter as a framework for his zoological, botanical, mineralogical or anthropological excursuses.

The names of the provinces touched upon by Solinus in his worldwide journey often assume the role of 'cells' or 'host-entries'[7] aimed at facilitating the reader's transition across the various *memorabilia* through area-object associations that are at times accurate, or at least correspond to source material, at times arbitrary.[8] It is, for example, the case of Solinus' Chapter 12, in which the opening two paragraphs, recounting the importance of the Hellespont as a link between Europe and Asia, conclude with a very short description of the Propontis, followed by a long cetological excursus on dolphins - animal that, according to the author, inhabits those waters in large numbers.[9] While the geographical component of Chapter 12 is a faithful (and almost verbatim) adaptation of Plin. 4.75-76, the facts and stories on dolphins reported in the *Collectanea* are taken instead from 9.20-33, with the two sections of the chapter joined together through an association of ideas that is not immediately comprehensible. As noted by Kuznetov, "[n]one of those items are [sic] located in the Propontis by Pliny, who in his section on dolphins does not mention the Propontis or Hellespont at all."[10] Although it is true that Pliny's dolphins are not located in, or immediately connected to, the Propontis, the earlier author does make mention of the animal at 9.50, as the only piscivorous sea

[5] Solinus' adaptation of the aforementioned Plinian passage modifies the source-text by removing the reference to the Amilo river: Sol. 25.2: "luna nitescente gregatim amnes petunt, mox perspersi liquore solis exortum motibus quibus possunt salutant, deinde in saltus revertuntur*."* Since Solinus has made clear his intention to provide a general account of this animal, any geographical localisation that pertains to the specificity of the Mauretanian elephant is consequently removed. Pliny's mention of Mauretania has already served its purpose in providing Solinus with the area-object connection that he needed.

[6] Where possible, animal classification is given according to Linnaean Taxonomy.

[7] Kuznetov (2020) pp. 113-145.

[8] Kuznetov (2020) p. 120: "It is important to notice that connections established by Solinus between low level non-geographical units and their geographical host-entries are often arbitrary: hosts are not necessarily associated with subordinated items either in the natural order, or in the *Natural History*."

[9] Sol. 12.3: "Haec profunda delphinos plurimos habent, in quibus causae miraculi multiformes."

[10] Kuznetov, *loc. cit.*

creature to inhabit the Black Sea besides the seal, before moving on to an excursus on tuna.[11] Interestingly, this information is not present in Solinus' chapter which concludes, however, with a brief description of the swimming patterns of the Pontic tunny. Taking into account the geographical proximity of the Propontis and the Pontus, Solinus' association seems hardly arbitrary, considering that to this day dolphins do swim in the Marmara Sea and migrate to the Black Sea through the Bosphorus in the warmer months of the Northern Hemisphere summer.[12] Once again, Solinus has rearranged an accessory piece of geographical information from his source-text and made it his entry-point for the introduction of a non-geographical item.

While his mineralogical excursuses are almost as extensive,[13] nowhere else does Solinus' fascination with nature's wonders transpire as in his account of exotic beasts, for animal facts occupy approximately 20% of the entire content of the *Collectanea.*[14] Between real and fantastic beasts, Solinus names 48 different animals, and while most are only discussed once, some feature more than others: two genera of dolphins and two subspecies of grey wolves, plus two arachnids, five primates, 14 snakes and 17 birds of difficult classification (given the presence of real genera and species along with fictional ones), together with all those creatures for which only one mention is made amount to a total of 85 animal beings. The description of each creature is as detailed as great is its potential to amaze, with much attention given to physical and behavioural features and mating habits, along with historical and mythological anecdotes of human-animal interactions, in a pattern that the author seems to follow throughout his parade of animals, albeit inconsistently. Personal knowledge and abundance of source material are a contributing factor in determining the extent of Solinus' excursus on each animal. However, what Solinus chooses to include or omit, the way in which he reorders and rearranges data, and especially his very own stylistic choices in the rewriting and rewording of Pliny's zoological descriptions are all indicative of each animal's

[11] Plin. 9.50: *"*Sed in Pontum nulla intrat bestia piscibus malefica praeter vitulos et parvos delphinos. thynni dextera ripa intrant, exeunt laeva.*"*

[12] Turkish Marine Research Foundation, "Street Boys of the Bosphorus - Dolphins in Istanbul Strait", *Turkish Marine Research Foundation* [website], [no date] <https://tudav.org/en/our-%20fields/marine-biodiversity/marine-mammals-studies/street-boys-of-the-%20bosphorus-dolphins-in-istanbul-strait/>, accessed 20 July 2020.

[13] Between rocks, gemstones and crystals, Solinus mentions 61 different minerals throughout the whole text.

[14] Out of the 966 paragraphs into which the *Collectanea*'s 56 chapters are divided, as per Mommsen's 1895 edition, 198 are dedicated, entirely or in part, to the description of animals.

perceived degree of worthiness to be included in his collection of memorable facts and in his account of what "must be pursued" and "must not be neglected".[15]

II. *Solinus' parade of animals*

Solinus' zoological collection opens with the water snakes (*chersydri*) and boas that inhabit Calabria, in Southern Italy (2.33-34). With vivid, almost dramatic language, the author gives a horrific account of how the Italian boa hunts cattle and fastens itself to the udder of whichever cow produces the most milk, and suckles until it gains enough strength and size to devour the whole herd and bring the region "to ruin" (*ad vastitatem*, 2.34).[16] Of the Italian wolves (2.35-36), Solinus describes the ability to make a man lose his voice if they see him before he sees them, the aphrodisiac power of their tail, and their mating and eating habits. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Solinus' passage on wolves is the author's intention to leave out a great deal of information, except for what is "most worthy of being observed" (*spectatissimum*, 2.36), in spite of his professed knowledge of the topic.[17] Also in Italy, Solinus records the eating habits of the *cervarius*, or deer-wolf (2.37), a most likely imaginary animal thought to be a type of lynx,[18] who is said to forget its meal if distracted by something else while eating. The actual lynx, on the other hand, is mentioned immediately after (2.38-39) for the properties of its urine, which hardens into a precious stone called Lyncurium to be used

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[15] Said respectively of the Anatolian horses at 45.4 and Diomedes' birds at 2.45.

[16] The *chersydros*, a poisonous amphibious snake, was known in the Greek world to Nicander (*Th.* 359-371) and Philoumenos (24.1-2). Of its presence in Calabria, there is no other testimony than Solinus', but it is likely to be identified with Virgil's unnamed Calabrian water snake from *Geor.* 3.425, "*est etiam ille malus Calabris in saltibus anguis*", see Fairclough and Goold (1999) p. 207, n. 30. As for the presence of boas in the southern Italian region, Kitchell observed that the giant snakes that feature in many tales of the Graeco-Roman world "are sometimes identified as a genus of boa (…) but this is far less likely than a python", while the only actual boas, as well as the largest species, close to the Mediterranean could have been found in the Horn of Africa. See Kitchell (2014) p. 156. Nieto suggested that this Italian boa be identified with the *Malpolon monspessulanus*, a venomous Mediterranean colubrid commonly known as the Montpellier snake, and that the origin of its name, as reported by Solinus, be ascribed to an etymology derived from the story that sees this snake suckling cow's milk; a popular belief, Nieto noted, already widespread in the Greek and Roman world. See Nieto (2001) pp. 209-210, n. 259.

[17] Sol. 2.36: "sciens de lupis praetereo multa: spectatissimum illud est." The statement, which is in accordance with Solinus' intention to not discuss subjects that are too popular, seems particularly fitting if one takes into account that the grey wolf populated Italy and Greece in large numbers and that while "[t]he average urban Greek and Roman probably had little first-hand experience of the wolf […] it seems safe to say that farmers and shepherds in the country, especially near mountains and forests, had fairly frequent encounters", Kitchell (2014) 209-210.

[18] See Nieto (2001) p. 211, n. 298 and Kitchell (2014) p. 115.

as a remedy against kidney pain and jaundice.[19] Solinus concludes his excursus on Italian animals with two mythological allusions. The first in his description of the Calabrian cicadas of Rhegion (2.40), known for their silence caused by Hercules himself, who ordered them to be quiet after they had disturbed his rest.[20] And the second in relation to the so-called birds of Diomedes (2.45-50), which fly off the coast of Apulia and are named in honour of the Greek hero's companions.[21] Their anatomy, flight, egg-laying behaviour, and attitude towards humans are described more extensively and in a more amazed tone than in the original Plinian passage (Plin. 10. 126-127).[22]

Solinus' description of Sardinian fauna begins with a remark on the island's lack of snakes,[23] and while it is curious that the author should stress what cannot be found in the region that he is describing, rather than what it has to offer, Sardinia's lack of reptiles provides him with the opportunity to introduce an equally dangerous pest: the solifuga (4.3). A spider-like creature, whose venom is just as lethal to man as that of snakes, the solifuga is said to flee daylight (hence the name), to inhabit silver mines,

[19] Solinus, and Pliny before him (37.53), refers to this disease as the "royal sickness" (*morbus regius*). Such name was apparently due to the large amount of money necessary to afford treatment for it. See Nieto (2014) p. 212, n. 301.

[20] Stories about the mute cicadas of Rhegium (modern Reggio Calabria) and their noisy Locrian neighbours are documented in both Greek and Roman authors, but the aetiological myth that sees Hercules as the cause of their silence, which, according to Solinus, was transmitted by Granius Licinianus, is not otherwise attested in Latin. A similar version, however, can be found in Diodorus 4.22.5 and sees Hercules praying to the gods for the insects to be silenced, rather than ordering them himself. Whoever the original source for this legend may be, the addition of this story shows Solinus' great interest in the legends of Hercules, who features prominently in the early paragraphs of Chapter 1.

[21] The name of these birds came from their presence on the largest of the Tremiti Islands, known in antiquity as Diomedes' Islands, which, according to both Pliny and Solinus, featured a temple dedicated to the Greek hero. Both authors also make brief mention of the legend that saw Diomedes' companions being turned into birds and consequently settling on the island and its temple (cf. Sol. 2.50 and Plin. 10.127). As for the species of the bird, it has at times been identified with the gannet, the seagull or a type of duck. Cf. H. Rackham (1940) p. 372, n. *e*, and Nieto (2001) p. 218, n. 313.

[22] Solinus' 'language of wonder' is all the more remarkable when absent in his sources. His use of the term "wonderful" (*mirabile*), in regards to the small Italian island being the only place in the world inhabited by these birds, along with the observation that the description of this animal "must not be disregarded" (*non omittenda*) contrasts with Pliny's more objective and scientific approach, and is only one of the many manifestations of Solinus' amazement at natural phenomena.

[23] Sol. 4.2-3: "Sardinia est quidem absque serpentibus." This is, in fact, incorrect: Sardinia is home to five species of colubrid, all non-venomous and harmles to humans. However, it is the only Italian region free of the *Vipera aspis*, a venomous species native to Italy and southern France.

and to kill with its bite the unfortunate men who happen to sit upon it unaware.[24] Although snakes are not present in the area and do not pose a threat to the Sardinian population, Solinus notably uses them as a benchmark for animal dangerousness, warning his readers that "what the snake is in other places, the solifuga is in the fields of Sardinia" (*sed quod aliis locis serpens, hoc solifuga Sardis agris*). To such comparison between the two pests, add Solinus' use of the verb *reptare*, employed to describe both the solifuga's crawling at 4.3 and the scytale's slithering at 27.30, in the context of his listing of African snakes.[25]

Amongst the animals of Greece birds feature the most prominently, and the peculiar white blackbirds of Arcadia (7.12) are the first type of a relatively ample ornithological section spread across three of the five chapters dedicated to the different regions of the "third gulf of Europe"; namely Chapter 7 on central Greece and the Peloponnesos,

[24] This unidentified creature is mentioned by different names and by several authors before and after Solinus: it is *solipuga* and *salpuga* in Pliny (8.104; 22.81; 29.92 citing an otherwise unknown reference by Cicero); also *salpuga* in Lucan (9.837); *solipugna* in Festus (389.4L). Solinus is the only author (apart from Isidore, who used Solinus' text as his source) to use the term *solifuga* and to place the animal in Sardinia. Although all descriptions have elements in common (namely the small size and lethality of the animal) it is possible that they might be referring to different creatures. See Kitchell (2014) p. 174. According to Otto Taschenberg's extensive study of the occurrences of all mentions of this animal in both the Old Testament and in Greek and Roman literature, elements from Pliny's and Lucan's descriptions of the *solipuga/solpuga* - namely the strength of its venom, its Iberian origin and its absence from Italy - would allow for an identification of the creature with the modern solifuga, or "sun spider" (*Walzenspinnen*), also known as camel spider, wind spider or wind scorpion; an arachnid present in Europe, India and North America, that is neither a spider nor a scorpion and that is not poisonous or dangerous to humans. See Taschenberg (1907) pp. 213-268 and Allaby (2020) s.v. *Solifuga*. As for Solinus' *solifuga*, its identification with the homonymous arachnid was categorically excluded by Taschenberg: "[n]un ist es sicher, daß wie das Festland Italien, so auch Sardinien keine Solifuge beherbergt; demnach wäre also entweder die Bemerkung des Solinus überhaupt als unrichtigt zu bezeichnen oder die Deutung der Solipuga anders zu fassen, worauf schon der Ausdruck animal perexiguum hinweist". See Taschenberg (1907) pp. 252-253. Giving Solinus the benefit of the doubt, that it might not be a simple error on his part, Taschenberg suggested that the identity of the mysterious Sardinian arachnid might be that of *Latrodectus tredecimguttatus*, commonly known as malmignatte or European black widow, which is still native to Sardinia and some coastal areas of Italy. It is worth mentioning, however, that Solinus' description never refers to the solifuga as a spider, but as "a very small animal shaped like a spider" (*animal perexiguum aranei forma*). Sardinia being home to three species of 'mouse spider' (*mus araneus*) - namely the White-toothed shrew (*Crocidura russula*), the Lesser white-toothed shrew (*Crocidura suaveolens*) and the Etruscan shrew (*Suncus etruscus*) - it is not impossible that Solinus might actually be describing a variety of shrew. The *Suncus etruscus*, in particular, is said to be the second smallest mammal in the world (after the Kitti's hog-nosed bat of Thailand) and a shy nocturnal animal that inhabits dry stones and hunts for food under rocks; a description that seems to match quite well Solinus' account of the solifuga. See Puddu and Viarengo (1993) pp. 65. As noted by Kitchell (2014) p. 171, "the shrew was feared in antiquity for its bite and, indeed, some shrews have poisonous salivary glands that cause painful bites", and although none of the Sardinian varieties presents the same dangerous traits as the continental ones, it is likely that Solinus was unaware of any distinction amongst the different species of this animal.

[25] Cf. Sol. 4.3: "[solifuga] occultim reptat et per inprudentiam supersedentibus pestem facit" and Sol. 27.30, "scytale tanta praefulget tergi varietate, ut notarum gratia videntes retardet et quoniam reptando pigrior est, quos adsequi non quit, miraculo sui capiat stupentes." The verb is also used in its participial form at 37.22, as Solinus compares the shape of the *myrmecites* to that of a crawling ant, "myrmecites reptantis formicae effigie notatur."

Chapter 10 on Thrace, and Chapter 11 on the Greek islands. After a brief account (of allegedly Varronian origin) of the wondrous properties of the waters of two unnamed Boeotian rivers,[26] Solinus devotes most of the section on Boeotia to the description of partridges. His wordier adaptation of a one-sentence Plinian passage on the flying pattern of the Boeotian partridges - which are prevented from crossing the border into Attica and are generally confined to the skies of Boeotia[27] - is all that Solinus needs in order to introduce an excursus on the mating habits and the high libido of this bird genus, not limited to the Boeotian kind.[28] Similarly, Solinus' adaptation of Pliny's list of Thracian cities (from Plin. 4.44) makes mention of a legendary war between cranes and Pygmies in the city of Gerania that provides the opportunity for a detailed account of the flying patterns and night watches of these birds (10.12-16).[29] Within a mostly Plinian content, Solinus reports facts of unknown provenance, such as his remarks on cranes migrating north during winter; on sailors enduring a rain of pebbles dropped by the cranes flying above the Tauric Chersonese; and on exhausted cranes being helped and physically supported mid-flight by the rest of the flock. Again at 10.18, within the context of the description of the Ceniensian region,[30] Solinus combines data drawn from two Plinian passages (4.47 and 10.70-73) to allow for an, albeit short, account of the peculiar flight patterns of the swallows that refuse to fly above the town of Byze (modern Vize, in north-western Turkey).

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[26] The waters of the two rivers were said to be capable of changing the colour of a sheep's wool, and a nearby well to bring death to those who drink from it. See Sol. 7.27, "Varro opinatur duo in Boeotia esse flumina, natura licet separi, miraculo tamen non discrepante: quorum alterum si ovillum pecus debibat, pullum fieri coloris quod induerit, alterius haustu quaecumque vellerum fusca sint in candidum verti. addit videri ibi puteum pestilentem, cuius liquor mors est*."* Pliny, who mentions the two rivers by the names of Melas and Cephisus (2.230) and refers to the deadly spring as Styx (2.231), does not, however, cite Varro as his source.

[27] See Sol. 7.28: "perdices sane cum ubique liberae sint ut aves universae, in Boeotia non sunt nec cum volant sui iuris, sed in ipso aëre quas transire non audeant metas habent: inde ultra notatos iam terminos numquam exeunt nec in Atticum solum transmeant*",* a more detailed account than its Plinian counterpart at 10.78: "perdices non transvolant Boeotiae fines in Atticam*"*.

[28] Sol. 7.29: "hoc Boeotis proprium: nam quae communis sunt omnibus, generatim persequemur."

[29] Sol. 10.11-12: "celebrant quondam urbem Geraniam (Cathizon vocant barbari), unde a gruibus Pygmaeos ferunt pulsos. manifestum sane est in septemntrionem plagam gieme grues frequentissimas convolare. nec piguerit meminisse quatenus expeditiones suas dirigant*."* The legendary fight between cranes and Pygmies featured widely in the art and literature of the Mediterranean and other parts of the known world, such as India. See Nieto (2001) pp. 260-261, n. 464 and J. M. C. Toynbee (1973) p. 244. As for Solinus' claim that cranes migrate north during winter, this is incorrect, since they fly south to spend their winter in Africa. See Nieto (2001) p. 270, n. 465.

[30] The *Ceniensis regio* (or *regio Caenica* in Plin. 4.47) was home to the tribe of the *Ceni* and one of the *strategiae* of the Roman province of Thrace. See Nieto (2001) p. 273, n. 472.

The subsequent observation on these birds' gift of foreknowledge of disaster - which allows them to avoid nesting on roofs about to collapse - is Solinus' addition and, probably, his own interpretation of Pliny's remark on the instability of Thebes' walls (10.70), from which swallows were also said to keep away; the final datum on their being sacred is not otherwise attested.[31] As for the fauna that inhabits the Greek islands, after reassuring his readers that Crete (albeit abundant in goats) is free from deer, wolves, foxes and other noxious quadrupeds, Solinus once again includes the island's lack of snakes amongst its qualities,[32] only to compensate for the absence of the latter with the mention, immediately after, of the only harmful creature to be found on Cretan soil: the phalangium spider (11.13), whose small size contrasts with the lethality of its venom.[33] Similarly to what he did for his description of the Sardinian *solifuga*, Solinus draws a parallelism between snakes and spiders that is not at all surprising, if one takes into account that both animals represented two of the three main groups of harmful creatures, along with scorpions, that fascinated the authors of scientific works in the Graeco-Roman world.[34] Moving on to Euboea, Solinus mentions the fantastic Carystian birds, named after the town of Carystos on the southern coast of the island, capable of flying through fire unharmed. Finally, after reporting Pliny's mention of 'Ortygia' as one of the alternative names of Delos, Solinus uses the description of this island as an entry-point for a detailed account of the migrating habits of quail (11.20-23), with the etymology of 'Ortygia' as 'quail island' (from the Greek ὄρτυξ) providing the necessary link. The otherwise unknown pieces of information that these birds were first seen in Delos, and that they were thought to be Latona's guards, is not difficult to explain if one

[31] According to Solinus, the sacred status of swallows granted them immunity from being attacked by rapacious birds. Once again, this might be the author's own interpretation of Pliny's text, who at 10.73 describes how they avoid falling prey to other birds thanks to the swiftness of their flight. As noted by Nieto, however, Swallows were indeed regarded as sacred to Aphrodites/Venus and the Penates. See Nieto (2001) pp. 273-274., n. 474.

[32] Sol. 11.12: "serpens nulla, larga vitis, mira soli indulgentia, arborarii proventus abundantes". Again, Solinus' statement is only valid if applied to venomous snakes. The island of Crete is, in fact, home to five species of colubrid, only one of which (the *Telescopus fallax*, commonly known as European cat snake) possesses a mild dose of venom that is, however, not dangerous to humans.

[33] The term *phalangium* was inconsistently used to describe both any venomous spider - as opposed to *aranea*, which denotes a spider without venom - and a specific genus of spider, most likely to be identified with the European black widow, as suggested by I. Beavis (1988) pp. 44-56. If Solinus' *phalangium*, and therefore Pliny's, is a black widow, the mystery remains as to what creature by the name of *solifuga* is the object of his description at 4.3. That Solinus might be referring to the same spider by two different names, it is entirely possible. However, the identification of the Cretan *phalangium* with a black widow would be compatible with the aforementioned hypothesis that the Sardinian *solifuga* might indeed be an Etruscan shrew.

[34] Beavis (1988) p. 44.

gives Solinus' knowledge of mythology and of the Greek language more credit than it has received in the past.[35]

To the aforementioned description of the dolphins of the Marmara Sea (Sol. 12.3-12) is devoted one of the longest zoological passages on a single animal in the whole work. The excursus occupies almost the entirety of Chapter 12, with the exception of the geographical introduction of the Propontis in the first two paragraphs and a brief description of the Pontic tunny's migration patterns at the end. While the biological data on the dolphins' structure, the account of their swimming and breeding habits, as well as the stories of human-dolphin interactions are mostly derived from Pliny, the importance of this chapter - apart from Solinus' already examined data-manipulation technique - lies in the author's own remarks on the miraculousness of these creatures. The observation, at the start of the cetological excursus, that dolphins present "different causes of wonder" (*causae miraculi multiformes*, 12.3) is followed by a list of some of the animal's natural traits and activities varying from the rapidity of its swimming to the height of its leap, from the position of its mouth to the sound of its voice. Moving on to discussing dolphins' behaviour and to giving examples of their fondness for humans, Solinus recounts the tale of a Campanian boy who, having befriended a dolphin, would ride it across the Bay of Naples on his way to school from Baiae to Pozzuoli, with the event repeating itself over many years, "until due to the regular spectacle, what was happening ceased to be a miracle" (*donec assiduo spectaculo desineret miraculum esse quod gerebatur*, 12.8).[36] In both its occurrences of the word *miraculum,* and especially with this last remark, Solinus provides a definition of what a 'miracle' is: the effect of amazement on the readers or spectators of a previously unheard or unobserved phenomenon. The Campanian boy's singular ride on dolphin's back stops being a 'miracle' due to its recurrent nature, so that, rather than the action itself, it is its perception that confers miraculousness on it.

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[35] Solinus would have been familiar with the myth of Asteria, Leto's sister (Latona for the Romans) who, after turning herself into a quail to escape Zeus, fell into the sea and became an island called at first Ortygia, then Delos, 'the clear' (from the Greek δῆλος), because Apollo first saw daylight on its soil. A different version of the myth has Ortygia and Asteria as Leto's two sisters. On the island, Leto hid from Hera to give birth to Apollo and Artemis. See P. Grimal (1951) s.v. *Asteria.*

[36] This remark is Solinus' own and absent from Pliny's passage, to which Solinus' adaptation is overall very faithful. Interestingly, however, Solinus copies almost verbatim Pliny's own observation on the ridiculousness of the story, that he would be ashamed to report if it had not also been reported by Maecenas and other writers before him. Cf. Plin. 9.25 and Sol. 12.8.

Solinus' account of the Pontic area continues with the description of its tributaries: after the *Hister* (modern Danube) and the *Hypanis* (the Southern Bug), Chapter 15 is devoted to the *Borysthenes* (the Dnieper) and the animals and human tribes that inhabit the area. After a brief mention of a species of boneless fish "of excellent flavour" (*egregii saporis*, 15.1) that swim in the river's waters, Solinus lists the populations that occupy its banks, concluding his catalogue with a mention of the Albani, a Scythian tribe on the west coast of the Caspian Sea, which gives him the opportunity to introduce the story of the two dogs gifted to Alexander the Great by the Alban king. The Albanian dogs, however, feature in the first half of the excursus only (15.6-7), with the remaining paragraphs dedicated to an account of wondrous examples of dogs' loyalty and devotion to their masters; of the interspecific breeding habits of Indian dogs (made to mate with tigers by the locals); and of the Egyptian dogs' cunning in escaping from crocodiles when drinking from the waters of the Nile (15.8-12). If the paragraphs on the ferociousness and strength of the Albanian dogs - of enormous size and capable of mauling bulls, lions and elephants, and, therefore, "deserving to be remembered in the annalistic records" (*meruerunt etiam annalibus tradi*, 15.6)[37] - are openly paradoxographical, the second part of the excursus - devoted, in Solinus' words, to "what is common to all dogs" (*reliqua communia universis*, 15.8) - is hardly one of general cynology. Not for all animals does Solinus provide an account of *mirabilia*, often giving scientific along with fantastic data; however - while it is probable that reporting common facts on dogs would have gone against the author's very promise to keep away from what is already well known - it is noteworthy that the description of an animal as supposedly ordinary as the dog[38] not only consists entirely of memorable tales, but is also introduced by a sort of justification: it is exclusively by virtue of their extraordinary traits that dogs are worthy of being included in Solinus' account.

The description of the large felines that inhabit the forests of Hyrcania occupies almost the entirety of Chapter 17 and offers an interesting example of Solinus' attitude

[37] Nieto noted that a different version of the legend of Alexander's dogs sees the animals as being a gift of the Indian king Porus; as for their breed, he suggested that they might be Central Asian Shepherd dogs, noting that "[e]n qualquier caso, sabemos que los albanos utilizaron como perros venatorios a los dogos asiáticos, conoscidos como perros indios o perros séricos (de China); se trataba de animales de gran ferocidad, magnificamente dotados para la caza mayor". See Nieto (2001) p. 303, n. 573.

[38] Dogs in the Graeco-Roman world were widely used as hunting companions, house-guards, pets and even in performances. See Toynbee (1973) pp. 102-124.

towards different predatory animals. Of the Hyrcanian tigers (17.4-7), Solinus describes the physical features with words verging on the laudatory: the marks on their coat are "outstanding" (*insignes*, 17.5), the tawny colour of their fur makes them "shine" (*nitent*), the variety created by their black stripes "is very becoming" (*adprime decet*) and, along with their speed, it all contributes to make their species "remarkable" (*memorabile*).[39] Moreover, the way in which Solinus reports how female tigers protect and rescue their cubs from hunters, showing their utmost power through their maternal feelings, injects an element of pathos that adds to an overall positive portrait of the animal - in striking contrast not only with the succinct language of its Plinian model, but also with Solinus' own disposition around other creatures capable of harming humans.[40] A more neutral tone is used (at 17.8-10) to describe the characteristics of the Hyrcanian panthers' coat, the magical properties of their body odour, and their intelligence in avoiding being killed by hunters with poison. Finally, the leopards that populate the same forests are quickly dismissed in the space of one paragraph (17.11), as "they are sufficiently well known and should not be pursued more extensively" (*noti satis nec latius exequendi*),[41] with Solinus limiting himself to the only mention of the interspecific breeding habits of leopards and lionesses, resulting in an inferior breed of lions.

The ample section - spanning over five chapters (14-19) - dedicated to the various Scythian tribes that inhabit the lands between the Black and the Caspian Sea, concludes with a lengthy excursus on deer (19.9-18). Once again, Solinus seems to feel the need to

[39] Sol. 17.5.

[40] Cf. Sol. 17.6: "ac maxime potentia earum [scil. tigrium] probatur, cum maternis curis incitantur, cum catulorum insistunt raptoribus*"* and Plin. 8.66: "animal [scil. tigris] velocitatis tremendae, et maxime cognitae dum capitur totus eius fetus, qui semper numerosus est." Solinus' mention of the tigers' "maternal feelings" (*maternis curis*), along with his choice to replace the dry Plinian "litter" (*foetus*) with the more endearing "cubs" (*catulorum*) cannot be interpreted as a mere attempt at differentiating his own text from that of his source, given that verbatim adaptations of Plinian passages are not infrequent. Solinus' deliberate softening of Pliny's language could, instead, be read as a clear sign of a fascination with large predatory felines, which is all the more remarkable if one takes into account his insistence on the dangerousness of much smaller creatures, such as snakes and spiders. In Solinus' own perception, venomousness appears to be a far more dangerous (and despicable) animal trait than the ability to tear a prey apart; an attitude that fits with the Graeco-Roman world's fear of venomous animals "which were regarded with a terror which can scarcely be said to be proportionate to the risks actually involved". See Beavis (1988) p. 44.

[41] Probably Solinus' own interpretation of Pliny's remark on this animal being present in large numbers in Africa and Syria. See Plin. 8.63: "nunc varias, et pardos qui mares sunt, appellant in eo omni genere, creberrimo in Africa Syriaque." It is not to be excluded, however, that the leopard might have been one of the few exotic animals of which Solinus had a first-hand knowledge, since "we can be assured that the leopard (*Panthera pardus*) was a commonly seen animal, especially in the Roman arenas". See Kitchell (2014) p. 107.

justify his choice of topic, warning his readers that "it is a sacrilege to neglect which types of wild animals are peculiar to Scythia" (*religio est praeterire, quaenam peculiares sint ferae Scythiae*, 19.9) and that, due to their large number in this region, deer will be the subject of his description. What follows is an account of these animals' mating habits; their ways of caring for their offspring and for the weak members of their herd; and (some) of their physical features, namely their ears, teeth and antlers. Of these, Solinus mentions the medical properties and - in a rare instance of the author using the second person singular - he advises his readers as to their usefulness in warding off snakes.[42] Finally, the last paragraph of Chapter 19 consists of a brief mention of the *tragephali*, or "goat-stags", a fantastic creature said to populate the banks of the river Phasis.[43]

Moving back towards western Europe, Solinus devotes the majority of Chapter 20 on Germany to its animals (20.3-8) and gems (20.9-15). The Hercynian Forest,[44] home to most of the fauna mentioned by Solinus, is described as being populated by a fantastic species of birds, whose wings shine in the dark and that the local men use to guide them through the darkness in their nocturnal excursions;[45] the strong maned bison (*visontes*), similar to oxen, swifter than bulls, and impossible to tame;[46] the wild oxen (*uri*) commonly (and incorrectly) referred to as 'buffalo', distinguished by the huge size and large capacity of their horns, which make them suitable to be used as wine cups in royal banquets, once severed;[47] and, finally, the elks (*alces*), who are forced by their overly pronounced upper lip to graze while walking backwards. The German island of Gangavia[48] is also said to be home to a species of elks that, due to the absence of joints in their knees, are forced to sleep standing, while leaning on trees.[49]

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[42] Sol. 19.13: "si fugare angues gestias, utrum velis ures".
[43] The Rion River, flowing through western Georgia into the Black Sea.
[44] "[T]his great forest comprised the whole northern Danubian region from the sources of the Rhine and Danube in the west to Transylvania and the Carpathians in the east". See Hyde (1918) p. 231.
[45] The information regarding this peculiar use of the Hercynian birds by the locals seems to be Solinus' own. Nieto suggested a possible dependance on Livy, namely, the now lost Book 142 which described Drusus' military campaign in Germany. See Nieto (2001) p. 327, n. 647.
[46] The *bisontes* in Plin. 8.38, likely the European bison (*bos bonasus*).
[47] Possibly the now extinct *bos urus* or *bos primigenius*, that inhabited the forests of Gaul, Belgium and Germany at the time of the Roman invasion. See Hyde (1918) pp. 242-245.
[48] Most likely the Scandinavian peninsula. See Nieto (2001) p. 328, n. 649.
[49] Both features - the overly large upper lips and the absence of joints in the hind legs - go back at least to Caesar's description of the Hercynian Forest in the sixth book of the *Bellum Gallicum*. Notwithstanding the fictitious nature of the data regarding their jointless legs, the *alces* described (amongst other Greek and Roman authors) by Caesar, Pliny and Solinus are to be identified with the modern common elk. See Hyde (1918) pp. 239-242.

The aforementioned description of African elephants (25.2-15), which is almost entirely adapted from Pliny and mixes data relating to both the African and Indian variety, focuses, in its first two thirds, on their social and sexual behaviour, as well as their intelligence and their ability to show compassion - traits that differentiate them from most animals and that, in Solinus' words, liken them to humans. The last five paragraphs - a considerable part of the 15-paragraph excursus - are dedicated to the graphic and gruesome description of the elephants' eternal war with pythons,[50] that are said to jump on them from overhanging tree branches while the herd is walking through the forest, and aim at their eyes and ears, from which the serpents may drain them of their cold blood, to help them quench their thirst and cool down from the burning heat.[51]

Moving east, Solinus' itinerary in North Africa continues with the description of the province of Numidia. Of its fauna, the author only mentions the Numidian bears, superior to all other species in fierceness and in the thickness of their fur. Once again using the geographical area as an entry-point for a general zoological excursus, Solinus embarks on a digression on the animal (26.3-10) - not limited to the Numidian species - mostly focused on its sexual behaviour and mating habits.[52]

The province of Africa's abundance in wild beasts provides Solinus with the opportunity to display his penchant for animal paradoxography, through a parade of

[50] Or possibly boas, the *iaculi* mentioned in Solinus' excursus on African snakes. See below pp. 104-106.

[51] Solinus' version of the story of the enmity between the two animals - which was known in the Graeco-Roman world since Diodorus - is the only one, other than that of his source Pliny (8.33-34) in which both the elephant and the snake end up dead: the former from blood loss, the latter crushed by the elephant's weight as it falls to the ground; while the versions of all Greek authors (Diodorus, Strabo and Aelian) saw the serpent as victorious. Unlike Pliny - who sets the war in India, relocating it from its orginal African setting, as per his source Juba II - Solinus does not offer a geographical localisation. See Hofmann (1970) pp. 625-630.

[52] The connection between the geographical and non-geographical item, provided by Pliny's mention of a show of a hundred Numidian bears put on by the curule aedile Domitius Ahenobarbus in 61 BC, is all the more indicative of Solinus' habit of rearranging his sources' information to fit the geographical framework of his text, given Pliny's own observation that "[he was] surprised at the description of the bears as Numidian, since it is known that the bear does not occur in Africa" (*miror adiectum Numidicos fuisse, cum in Africa ursum non gigni constet*, Plin. 8.131). Not only does Solinus' adaptation omit Pliny's final remark, but the author uses the data to link his excursus on bears to a geographical area that, in his Plinian source, did not have bears at all. As a matter of fact, the now extinct Atlas bear (*ursus arctos crowtheri*) did once inhabit North Africa, from Mauretania to Libya, and was known to both Greek and Roman authors (such as Strabo, Virgil, Martial, Juvenal, and Dio) except for Pliny, "whose confident assertions about the absence of bears in Africa were simply wrong". See Toynbee (1973) p. 94. Solinus' correction of Pliny's error corroborates the author's own prefatory statement that he consulted "a number of selected works" (*exquisitis aliquot voluminibus*) and not only does it make it possible to give Solinus' literary knowledge some well-deserved credit, but it also shows that his seemingly far-fetched associations were not (always) the result of geographical ignorance.

exotic creatures that occupies almost the entire Chapter 27. In a long excursus (27.13-20) that once again shows the author's interest in large felines, lions are given the most attention within the chapter. Amongst data regarding their eating and hunting habits, as well as their sexual and reproductive behaviour, Solinus mentions their mildness and mercy towards the weak (women and children) and those who beg to be spared.[53] The list of African beasts continues with the fictional *leontophonus* (27.21-22), a small creature whose flesh is lethal to lions and which, therefore, the latter are said to destroy without biting it;[54] the hyaena (27.23-25), on which "many wonderful things" (*multa mira*, 27.23) can be said, such as the cunning ways in which it attracts human and animal prey, and the magical power of its pupils; the *corocotta* (27.26), another fictional creature born from the union between a male hyaena and a lioness, said to feign human voice in order to lure its prey;[55] the wild ass (27.27), whose extreme libido and fear of lustful rivals make the males of this species bite off the testicles of new-born colts.[56]

Solinus' negative perception of dangerous reptiles is nowhere else as evident as in his account of African snakes (27.28-35), which he introduces as an evil that plagues the province to an extent unseen in any other land.[57] Between real and fictional varieties, Solinus lists fourteen different genera of snake: *cerasta*, *amphisbaena*, *iaculus*, *scytale*, *dipsas, hypnale, haemorrhois*, *prester*, *seps*, *ammodytes*, *cenchris*, *elephantia*,

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[53] The account of lions' clement disposition towards women, children and captives is adapted from Pliny's Book 8. Interestingly, however, Solinus neglects to insert Pliny's subsequent mention (albeit treated with scepticism) that - amongst other beasts prone to be placated by human appeals - snakes are reportedly tamed through songs, in a clear reference to the practice of snake charming. See Plin. 8.48: "Varia circa hoc opinio ex ingenio cuiusque vel casu, mulceri alloquiis feras, quippe ubi etiam serpentes extrahi cantu cogique in poenam verum falsumne sit non vita decreverit."

[54] The identification of this fictional creature with a mosquito has been rejected by Nieto on account of its edible nature. See Nieto (2001) p. 380, n. 810.

[55] The accounts and descriptions of the *corocotta* are varied across the Graeco-Roman world. Kitchell suggested that it should be identified with a spotted (*Crocuta crocuta*) or striped hyaena (*Hyaena hyaena*). See Kitchell (2014) p. 34.

[56] Solinus introduces the animal with a reference to its herbivore nature, "Inter ea quae dicunt herbatica eadem Africa onagros habet". The adjective *herbaticus* is not attested elsewhere before Solinus, and in Ira Hyskell's linguistic study of the *Collectanea* it is classified as a "new word". See Hyskell (1925) p. 9. According to Nieto, it had a practical rather than biological purpose, as it was used as one of the classifications for wild beasts to be employed in circus games. See Nieto (2001) p. 383, n. 817. The term does appear again in the context of a circus spectacle, namely in the *Historia* Augusta's description of the show offered by Probus to celebrate his triumphs over the Germans and the Blemmyae: *HA Prob.* 19.4: "…iam damae, ibices, oves ferae et caetera herbatica animalia quanta vel alii potuerunt inveniri". Whether or not the "grass-eating beasts" mentioned in the *Historia Augusta* were indeed donkeys or any other herbivore creatures, African wild asses were used in shows, at least in Martial's time. See Toynbee (1973) pp. 192-193. and Nieto (2001), *loc. cit.*

[57] Sol. 27.28: "Africa serpentibus adeo fecunda est, ut mali huius merito illi potissimum palma detur."

chersydros, *chamaedracon*. Unlike his descriptions of most other animal creatures - which mainly focus on eating, hunting and mating habits - Solinus' paragraphs on African serpents concentrate exclusively on the dangers of their bite, the lethality of their venom, and the monstrous nature of their physiognomy. And in spite of the ungenerous criticism of many 19th and 20th-century scholars, Solinus' ophiological excursus is one of the best example of his ability to use descriptive language.[58] The *cerastae* are said to "destroy" (*perimunt*, 27.28) the birds they prey on; the *iaculi* "pierce" (*penetrant*, 27.30) their victims; the *scytale* hypnotises other animals with the beauty of its skin, so that "it may seize those who remain astonished at its marvel" (*miraculo sui capiat stupentes*, 27.30); of the various species of asp, Solinus makes a point of mentioning only the ones endowed with deadly venom (namely the *dipsas*, which kills by thirst, and the *hypnale,* with sleep), while the treatable venom of the others "deserves less fame" (*minus famae meretur*, 27.31); the bite of a *haemorrhois* will destroy one's veins and "extract through a stream of blood whatever is left of life" (*quicquid animae est evocat per cruorem*, 27.32); that of a *prester* will cause inflammation until one "dies swollen with enormous obesity" (*enormique corpulentia necatur extuberatus*); while the bite of a *seps* will be followed by "putrefaction" (*putredo*). Finally, Solinus concludes his list with the ominous warning that "so great is the number of names as that of deaths" (*quantus nominum tantus mortium numerus*,

[58] The previously mentioned debate over the true origin of this excursus (see above) is a *vexata quaestio* in the studies concerning Solinus' sources. Whoever is right and whether Solinus did draw inspiration from Lucan's description of the horrific serpents encountered by Cato's army while crossing Libya (*Phars.* 9.700-827) - as per Salemme's opinion, endorsed by Nieto in most recent times - or if instead he consulted Suetonius' now lost encyclopaedic work *Prata* - which Rabenald saw as the source for all ophiological material in the *Collectanea* - when it comes to describing snakes Solinus does share with Lucan a taste for the macabre that seems to serve a similar purpose: to evoke a sense of horror and fear in his readers. See Aumont (1968) p. 104: "Si leurs noms évoquaient pour les contemporains de Lucain quelque chose de précis, on se rend compte de l'effroi que ceux-ci pouvaient ressentir à la lecture de cet épisode."

27.33).[59] The undeniably negative tone of this passage, coupled with the word choice of his ophiological descriptions of previous chapters, is emblematic of Solinus' ophidiophobia, and so great is his hostility towards snakes, that he removes any resemblance of a positive trait found in his sources. It is the case, for example, of the ability of scorpions, skinks and lizards to "have feelings" (*habent adfectus*, 27.34) for one another, to the extent that they always wander in pairs and "if one has been captured or killed the one that has survived rages" (*capto altero vel occiso uter superfuerit efferatur*); a quality that Pliny, in the original passage compiled by Solinus, had instead ascribed to asps.[60] Through a distorted adaptation of his Plinian source-material, Solinus transferred the positive observation on the monogamous nature of the asp to a group of reptiles that (as he cares to clarify) are not snakes,[61] and while it is entirely possible that this might simply be the result of a misreading (or misremembering) of Pliny's text, Solinus' neglect in including any non-negative ophiological features found in his sources suggests otherwise. No species of snake, however, and no creature whatsoever is as despised by Solinus as the Pyrenean basilisk (27.50-53), a mythological half-foot-

[59] Solinus's African snakes, whose list matches Lucan's in all but three names, are for the most part identifiable with known species of viper, cobra, boa, and colubrid. The *cerasta* is the Saharan horned viper (*cerastes cerastes*), native to a range of Mediterranean countries and endowed with a toxic but not lethal venom. See Kitchell (2014) p. 26. The *amphisbaena*, described by Solinus as a two-headed snake, is possibly a genus of sand boa "which snake charmers often tried to pass off as having two heads" or a lizard with head and tail so resembling each other that "quand l'animal est inquiété, il les dresse toutes deux". Cf. Kitchell (2014) p. 2 and Aumont (1968) p. 115, n. 2. The *iaculus,* that according to Solinus plunges onto its prey from a tree and kills them by piercing through their body, is most likely the javelin sand boa (*Eryx jaculus*), a non-venomous snake native of North Africa, endowed with great physical strength and that kills its preys by strangulation. See Aumont (1968) p. 116, n. 24 and Nieto (2001) p. 385, n. 821. The *scytale*, whose name suggests a cylindric shape, is more difficult to identify, with its skin, according to Solinus' and Lucan's descriptions, bearing some resemblance to that of an *Echis*, commonly known as saw-scaled viper. See Aumont (1968) p. 115, n. 17. For the identity of the *dipsas*, whose bite causes unquenchable thirst that eventually leads to death, both Nieto and Kitchell suggested the Sahara sand viper (*cerastes vipera*); however, as Kitchell noted, "thirst is a common side effect of snake bite and is not confined to a single species". See Nieto (2001) p. 386, n. 822 and Kitchell (2014) p. 47. The *hypnale* is none other than the Egyptian cobra (*Naja haja*) or, to use Nieto's words "el aspid propriamente dicho" whose bite, as its name suggests, causes drowsiness first, then stiffness, and eventually death (see Nieto, *op. cit.*, p. 386, n. 824). The *haemorrhois*, a 'blood-letter' snake whose bite causes bleeding from every orifice, should be identified with the Lataste's viper, also known as snub-nosed viper (*Vipera Lastastei*), found in Spain and northwest Africa. See Nieto (2001) p. 387, n. 826 and Kitchell (2014) p. 81. The *prester* and the *seps* have also been hard to identify, with overall consensus that they might be two subspecies of the common viper. See Aumont (1968) p. 115, n. 16; Nieto (2001) p. 387, n. 827; Kitchell (2014) pp. 155 and 167. Of the last five species of his list, Solinus mentions nothing but their names, two of which - *elephantia* and *chamaedracon* - are not otherwise attested. As for the remaining three, possible identifications (based mostly on Lucan's description) are the Levantine viper or even the barracuda for the *ammodytes*; a species of viper or the rainbow boa (*Epicrates cenchria*) for the *cenchris*; and a type of venomous amphibious colubrid for the *chersydros* (already mentioned by Solinus in Chapter 2, within the context of his description of Italy. See above). Cf. Aumont (1968) p. 114, n. 12 and Nieto (2001) p. 387, n. 829.

[60] Plin. 8.86: "[aspides] coniugia ferme vagantur, nec nisi cum pari vita est. itaque alterutra interempta incredibilis ultionis alteri cura".

[61] Sol. 27.33: "nam scorpiones scinci lacertaeque verminibus, non serpentibus adscribuntur".

long serpent, distinguished by a white crown-shaped mark on its head (hence the name of βασιλίσκος, or "little king"), deadly to humans, animals, and vegetation alike.[62] Through a description solely focused on its lethality, Solinus paints a horrific portrait of this "evil with no equals on earth" (*malum in terris singulare*, 27.51), with a vehemence in his language that, once again, betrays his own fear and contempt for venomous reptiles.[63] Finally, the segment on Cyrenaica concludes with a brief description of the Syrtis Major, from which Solinus ventures further south into the wilderness and the wonders of sub-Saharan Africa, with an excursus on the monkeys that inhabit the territory between Egypt, Aethiopia and Libya (27.55-60). After apologising to his readers for any offence that the topic might cause,[64] Solinus describes, with heightened interest, the ability of these animals to mimic human gestures, the effects of lunar phases on their mood, and the unlimited affection that they show towards their offspring; while of the five species of monkey subsequently mentioned - *cercopitheci*, *cynocephali*, *sphinges*, *satyri*, and *callitriches* - Solinus reports data concerning their behaviour and physiognomy.[65] Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this section is the justification with which the author introduces the excursus - and that immediately follows his allusion to the offensive nature of the word *simia* - that "it is worth not

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[62] An identification of this mythological creature with the Egyptian cobra (*Naja haja)* has been suggested by Kitchell (2014) p. 10.

[63] Solinus' amplifies the horrific nature of Pliny's original description (Plin. 8.78) by ascribing to this creature two traits absent in the Plinian model: namely the venomous strength of the basilik's smell, which will kill the birds that fly above it (Sol. 27.51: "ipsas etiam corrumpit auras, ita ut in aere nulla alitum inpune transvolet infectum spititu pestilenti") and the inedibility of any creature that dies as a consequence of its bite (Sol. 27.53 "quicquid morsu eius occiderit non depascitur fera, non attrectat ales"). Solinus is also the only author to report that the lethality of the basilisk outlives the basilisk itself and that a dead specimen of the reptile is, therefore, kept in a temple at Pergamum as a deterrent against spiders and birds (27. 53: "vis tamen ne defuncto quidem deest. denique basilisci reliquias amplo sestertio Pergameni comparaverunt, ut aedem Apellis manu insignem nec araneae intexerent nec alites involarent"). Finally, Solinus' reference to the basilisk as an 'evil' is absent in Pliny, who instead reported that "its power is a source of evil to other creatures" (*aliis vis malo est*). While it is common for Solinus to reword his source-material, the transferring of the evilness from the basilisk's lethality to the basilisk itself is yet another sign of the author's aversion to snakes.

[64] Sol. 27. 55: "… nec quisquam offensus nomine cognitionem gravetur". The term *simia* was used throughout Greek and Roman antiquity as an insult, due to the imitative nature of the animal. See Kitchell (2014) p. 120. Ironically, it was Solinus' alleged imitation of Pliny's work that earned him the infamous epithet of *simia Pliniana*.

[65] Solinus does not differentiate between monkeys and apes (which are both described in Latin by the noun *simia*) and the only observation that is closest to a taxonomic classification is that the *cercopithecus* possesses a tail, unlike the *simiae* previously mentioned (Sol. 27.58: "cercopitheci caudas habent: haec sola discretio est inter prius dictas"). As for the identity of the species listed by Solinus, the *cercopithecus* was, according to Toynbee (1973) p. 56, "[t]he breed of monkey best known in Italy", commonly known as the tailed Barbary ape, and the aggressive *cynocephali* that inhabit the forests of Aethiopia should be identified with the baboon. According to Nieto (2001) p. 402, n. 875, both the *sphynx* and the *satyrus* seem to fit the description of a chimpanzee; while Kitchell identified the bearded *callitrix* as most likely a species of Mantled guereza (*Colobus abyssinicus* or *Colobus guereza*), "a stinking monkey whose face is framed with a white fringe that does resemble a beard". See Kitchell (2014) p. 21.

neglecting anything in which the providence of nature might be observed" (*operae pretium est nihil omittere in quo naturae spectanda sit providentia*, 27.55). Although Solinus does not expand on the meaning and significance of this observation, it is a clear reference to the similarities between humans and monkeys and the ability of the latter to imitate human behaviour, which makes them easier to capture.[66]

Venturing across the borders of the empire, Solinus' itinerary continues with the description of Aethiopia, a region abundant in wild animals and wondrous tribes, which once again provides him with the opportunity to display his paradoxographical skills by presenting his readers with a collection of (mostly fantastic) exotic beasts: the *dracones* (30.15), which inhabit the fiery peaks of an unnamed mountain range and will kill with a stroke of their tail, rather than their bite;[67] the giraffe (30.19), which Solinus describes as "having the neck of a horse, the feet of an ox, the head of a camel" (*collo equi similem, pedibus bubulis, capite camelino*) and whose Latin name *camelopardalis* suggests a half-camel, half-feline creature; the *cephus* (30.20), an unidentified animal with humanoid limbs;[68] the rhinoceros (30.21), which use their horn as a weapon in their ongoing fight with the elephants; the *catoblepas* (30.22), a seemingly "helpless beast" (*iners bestia*) provided with a lethal glance;[69] a species of huge ants shaped like dogs and equipped with leonine paws (30.23), capable of chasing and killing whoever might steal the gold nuggets that they dig up from the earth;[70] the *lycaon* (30.24), a type of maned wolf;[71] the *parandrus* (30.25-26), a cloven-hoofed horned creature the size of

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[66] Sol. 27.56: "plebes simiarum in his est quas passim videmus non sine ingenio aemulandi, quo facilius in manus veniunt". Monkeys and apes were used as pets, companion animals, or even performers throughout the Antiquity, mostly sourced from Egypt and Aethiopia. See Toynbee (1973) pp. 55-60.

[67] This animal had already been mentioned in relation to the ongoing war between elephants and snakes in Africa at 25.10-15 (see above). The term *draco* was generically used by some Greek and Roman authors for 'snake' or even 'large snake' and the tradition followed by Solinus, for at least the aforementioned passage, seemed to identify this creature with the python. See Hofmann (1970) and Kitchell (2014) p. 61. While there is no reason to suggest that he might here be referring to a different creature by the same name, Solinus' is interestingly the first attested Latin mention of this type of snake by the name of *draco* in relation to fire.

[68] Possibly the gorilla, according to both Pliny's and Solinus' descriptions, although the original Greek term κῆπος was used to describe the baboon. See Nieto (2001) p. 417, n. 924.

[69] From the Greek κατῶβλεψ (down-looker), "[a] wild animal in Aethiopia, perhaps a species of buffalo, or the GNU, a species of antelope". See Kitchell (2014) p. 100.

[70] Along with the *draco*, these huge dog-ants are the only animals whose description is not derived from Pliny for this passage. Nieto suggested an unknown paradoxographical source for this data of Herodotean origin. See Nieto (2001) p. 419, n. 930.

[71] The African wild dog (*Lycaon pictus* or *canis pictus*). Perhaps thanks to his knowledge of Mela's text, Solinus seems to have here rectified Pliny's error, who located this animal in India.

an ox, capable of changing the colour of its fur when threatened;[72] the Aethiopian wolves (30.27), able to jump as high as birds can fly, and which refrain from attacking humans;[73] the *hystrix* (30.28), known for the pointy spines that cover its back, which it can remove and use to defend itself from the attack of dogs "with constant rainstorms of spikes" (*assiduis aculeorum nimbis*); and finally the *pegasus* - a bird with horse ears[74] - and the *tragopan* (30.29), a bird larger than an eagle and provided with ram horns.[75]

Crossing the border back into the territory of the empire, Solinus finds in the province of Egypt yet another wonderland of exotic animals, and devotes an ample section of Egypt's zoological paragraphs to the description of the crocodiles that inhabit the river Nile, along with the animals that are, in one way or another, associated with them. In an almost verbatim adaptation of Pliny's account, Solinus describes the size, shape and breeding habits of the crocodile (32.22-24), ascribing its practice of laying its eggs in a location that is just outside the reach of the waters of the flooding Nile to a "natural foresight" (*naturali providentia*, 32.22).[76] Companion to the Egyptian crocodile is the *strophilos* (32.25), a small bird that helps it clean its mouth by picking the leftover food stuck in its teeth and throat;[77] a practice that gives the *ichneumon* the opportunity to penetrate the crocodile's mouth and devour its entrails.[78] Harmful to the crocodile is also a species of dolphins that swim in the Nile - provided with a saw-like crest on their back, which they use to eviscerate the crocodiles that swim above them - as well as a brave tribe of short men capable of fending off the crocodiles' attacks and eventually

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[72] The reindeer, also known as *tarandrus*, which Solinus erroneously locates in Aethiopia rather than in Scythia or northern Europe. See Kitchell (2014) pp. 160-161.

[73] Also known as *thoes*. Possibly the jackal, known throughout the ancient world for their agility. See Nieto (2001) p. 421, n. 934.

[74] The *pegasus* bird described here by Solinus, and that owes its name to the mythological winged horse, is mentioned by both Mela (3.88) and Piny (10.136) before him. However, Solinus is the only one to make an indirect reference to the mythological creature, stating that "this bird has nothing equine except its ears" (*haec ales equinum nihil preter aures habet*).

[75] Probably the horned pheasant (*tragopan*), distinguished by two small horn-shaped lumps on its temples. See Nieto (2001) p. 422, n. 937.

[76] Solinus' second mention of Nature's providence is an adaptation of the Plinian term *praedivinatio* (8.89), which is not attested elsewhere before Pliny. In a segment that is almost a word for word replica of its source, it is noteworthy that this is one of the few elements at odds with the original. Although the verb *praedivino* does not necessarily denote the foresight of a divine being (see *TLL* s.v. *praedivino*: "spectat ad quamlibet rationem praenoscendi"), it is possible that Solinus might have wanted to avoid any religious connotation that the root of the word might carry, ascribing instead to Nature, as a living and active force, the ability to gift its creatures with means of self-preservation.

[77] The spur-winged plover (*Hoplopterus spinosus*), according to Nieto (2001) p. 440, n. 998. The name *strophilos* is another variation from Pliny's original *trochilos* (8.89) and is not attested elsewhere other than in Solinus.

[78] The Egyptian mongoose (*Herpestes ichneumon*), according to Kitchell (2014) pp. 95-96.

taming them (32.26-27).[79] The overall tone of the passage, with its reference to crocodiles as a "four-legged evil" (*malum quadrupes*, 32.22) and "monsters [that] chase those who flee" (*haec monstra fugientes insequuntur,* 32.27), the mention of the "horrible grasp of [their] bite" (*morsus eius horribili tenacitate*, 32.22) and the "huge size of their claws" (*unguium immanitate*, 32.23), along with the final praise of the tribe of courageous crocodile fighters, is yet another testimony to Solinus' obsession with the dangerousness of reptiles. Of the skinks, a species of lizard that inhabits the banks of the Nile (32.29), Solinus mentions the anti-venom properties of their bodies but, interestingly, neglects to report Pliny's remark of their usefulness as an aphrodisiac.[80] The list of the amphibious creatures of the Nile concludes with a detailed physical and behavioural description of the hippopotamus (32.30-31), inclusive of his foraging technique and the peculiar way in which it drains its own blood to relieve itself after excessive eating. Much praise is, finally, given by Solinus to the ibis (32.32-33), a bird that lives by the Nile and feeds on snake eggs, preventing the reproduction of this reptile's "harmful offspring" (*fetuum noxiorum*, 32.32). In yet another display of the illustrative power of his language, Solinus describes the heroic efforts of these birds in attacking a species of Arabian flying snakes, whose venom is so lethal that "death comes before the pain of their bite" (*morsum ante mors quam dolor insequatur*), thus defending the "borders of our land" (*terminos patrios*) from the invasion of a "foreign evil" (*externum malum*).[81]

Solinus' account of Arabia in Chapter 33 is not as rich in zoological paragraphs as the one of its neighbouring regions. However, this land gives him the opportunity to describe a creature that is perhaps the epitome of animal paradoxography: the Arabian phoenix (33.11-14). The physical and behavioural description of this mythological bird - which is the size of an eagle, with plumes the shape of a cone on its head, crested

[79] Apparently the inhabitants of Tentyris (now Denderah) - en Egyptian town on the west bank of the Nile, that both Pliny and Solinus misidentify with an island - known in Antiquity for being excellent crocodile hunters. See Nieto (2001) p. 442, n. 1001.

[80] The reptile described by Solinus, and by Pliny before him, is not to be identified with the small south-European lizard commonly known as skink, but with a much larger species of lizard; probably the Nile monitor (*Varanus niloticus*). See Rackham (1940) p. 66, n. a, and Nieto (2001) p. 443, n. 1004.

[81] The ibis' practice of feeding on snake eggs is not attested elsewhere. As for the bird's ongoing battle with the Arabian flying snakes, the content is an adaptation of Mela 3.9.82. Both authors make use of military terminology, referring to the flock as an "army" (*agmen*); however, Solinus' dramatic tone (with his definition of the reptile invaders as a "foreign evil") as well as his patriotic praise of the ibis for defending Rome's borders, are absent from his source.

cheeks, golden neck, purple body, a pink and blue tail, and builds its own funeral pyre using cinnamon sprigs - is another close adaptation of a Plinian original (10.3-5), with the sole exception of a brief digression on the duration of the 'Great Year', likened by both authors to the life span of a phoenix (540 years), but for which Solinus also gives the alternative length of 12,954 years.[82] The presence of the phoenix in Rome is also discussed by both authors, who report a record in the *acta urbis* that sees a phoenix being brought to Rome and exhibited in the *comitium* in 47 A.D. on Claudius' order. Solinus, however, neglects to insert Pliny's final observation that "nobody would doubt that it was a fake" (*falsum esse nemo dubitaret*, Plin. 10.5), stating instead that "this event, contrary to the opinion that persists, is also registered in the city's records" (*quod gestum, praeter censuram quae manet, actis etiam urbis continetur,* Sol. 33.14), thus choosing to not embrace his source's open scepticism as to the existence of this creature.[83] One paragraph is, finally, devoted to the description of the *cinnamolgus*, a fictional bird that uses cinnamon sprigs to build its nest, which is, therefore, highly sought after by the locals who wish to sell the spice at a high price.[84]

Roaming the forests of Mount Tmolus (now known as Boz Dag), is the *bonacus* (40.10-11), the first animal to feature in the chapter devoted to the Roman province of Asia; a creature with the body of an ox, the mane of a horse, backward-curved horns on its head, and whose ability to discharge dung for a length of three acres while fleeing

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[82] Sol. 33.13: "licet plurimi eorum [auctorum] magnum annum non quingentis quadraginta, sed duodecim milibus nungentis quinquaginta quattuor annis constare dicant." The *annus magnus* is supposedly the revolution of the whole universe, resulting in the alignment of all planets and celestial bodies. Solinus is one of only three authors to cite the number of 12,954, which was first attested in a passage of Cicero's lost work *Hortensius.* Other than in Solinus' work, the passage is in fact embedded in Tacitus' treatise on oratory (*Dial.* 16.7) and in two Servian comment (*ad Aen.* 1.269 and *ad Aen.* 3.284). Solinus' claim of this datum being reported by "many authors", could possibly suggest a knowledge of both Cicero's and Tacitus' texts on Solinus' part. Nevertheless, whichever his source might have been for this particular piece of information that Pliny either missed or ignored, Solinus is clearly eager to exhibit his knowledge of astronomy, which he had already partially displayed in his extensive account of the Roman calendar (1.34-47). As for the number of 12,954 itself, according to Laila Zimmermann's calculations, it is the result of the product of the prime numbers 2, 3, 5, 17, 73, 127; which are themselves the prime factors of the orbiting time (in days) of the seven "old planets": Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Earth, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. See Zimmermann (1973) pp. 179-183.

[83] Most interesting in Solinus' adaptation of Pliny's passage is his use of the noun *censura*, which is also present in his source but with a different acceptation, as Pliny describes the alleged exhibition of a phoenix in Rome as having happened *Claudii prinicipis censura* (10.5). Since no hint is given by textual criticism (with no alternative readings present in Mommsen's apparatus), the reason behind Solinus' choice to replace "Claudius' censorship" with "Claudius' order" (*iussu Claudii prinicipis*) and still adopt the noun *censura* but as a synonym of "iudicium, aestimatio, examinatio, inspectio, sententia" (see *TLL*, s.v. *censura*), is anybody's guess.

[84] Just like its habit of building a nest out of cinnamon, this fictional creature was probably derived from the phoenix. See Nieto (2001) p. 466, n. 1055.

from its pursuers earns it, in Solinus' view, the epithet of "portent" (*monstrum*, 40.11).[85] Proceeding north, the Troad is described as a meeting point for Memnon's birds (40.19), a fictional type of birds said to gather every five years at the tomb of the mythical Aethiopian king, which is found in the region around Troy.[86] Of the chameleon (40.21-24), Solinus describes the physical traits, the ability to mutate colour and the poisonous nature of its flesh, which is lethal to the ravens that prey on it and that can only escape death by eating a laurel leaf as soon as they are aware of the danger; an innate foresight, for which Solinus once again praises "nature stretching forth its hand for a cure" (*ad medellam natura manum porrigente*, 40.24). Solinus' chapter on Asia concludes with an account of the storks (40.25-27) that gather at *Pythonos Come*, an unspecified location in the middle of the Asian plains, during the early days of their migration north. After mentioning their habit of tearing to pieces that of their flock that arrives there last, Solinus launches into a praise of their "extraordinary devotion" (*eximia pietas*, 40.26, exemplified by the mutual care that parents and chicks show one another) which not only creates a stark contrast with the brutality and cruelty of the aforementioned practice, but also far exceeds (in both tone and length) Pliny's succinct reference to these birds' custom of nourishing their aged parents.[87] Finally, Solinus could hardly miss the opportunity to show his appreciation for the storks of neighbouring Thessaly, deemed sacred and untouchable as they prey on snakes and "remove much evil from the Thessalian regions" (*regionibus Thessalicis plurimum mali*

[85] Solinus' description is adapted from Pliny's account of the *bonasus* (known today as 'bison' or *bos bonasus*) that inhabits the forests of Paeonia (8.40), and it is faithful to its source in all but the name of the creature itself and its geographical location. Out of the three readings of this animal's name recorded in his apparatus - "bonacum" (*LMG*), "bonnacum" (*RCNSAP*) and "bonnacon" (*H*), - Mommsen chose the version of the second class of manuscripts: *bonacus* (which appears in Solinus' text in the accusative case "bonacum") is *lectio facilior* and can be easily explained as a corruption or misreading of *bonasus*. Harder to answer is the question related to the creature's geographical misplacement from Paeonia to Lydia, which might have been caused by another textual corruption or by Solinus' assumption that - due to the geographical proximity of the two regions - bison were equally found in Lydia, as well as in Paeonia. As a matter of fact, the recent discovery of a bison skull fragment dating to the Byzantine period (seventh to eigth century AD) in the Istanbul area seems to suggest a presence of the *bos bonasus* in Asia Minor. See Onar *et al.* (2017) pp. 103–109.

[86] According to legend, they were Memnon's companions who, having been turned into birds, would gather at his tomb to fight to the death, thus re-enacting the funeral games in his honour. Possibly to be identified with the black-bellied sandgrouse (*pterocles orientalis*), by virtue of their gregarious nature and the fierceness of the fights between the males of the species over the possession of a female. See Nieto (2001) p. 497, n. 1205.

[87] Plin. 10.63: "ciconiae nidos eosdem repetunt. genetricum senectam invicem educant."

detrahunt, 40.27), through an exaggeration of his source's data that, once again, betrays his own ophidiophobia.[88]

The ample section on the different regions of the Anatolian peninsula (chapters 38-45) concludes with a description of Cappadocia that contains only an ever so short account of its physical and urban geography (45.1-4), while the remainder of the chapter is devoted to the horses that populate the province in large numbers (45.5-18). The connection between the geographical area and the non-geographical item is provided by Solinus' own definition of Cappadocia as "nourisher of horses", and the extensive length of the excursus - which is not in fact restricted to the Cappadocian breed[89] - is justified by his assertion of the necessity of treating the topic of equine natural traits.[90] What follows is one of the longest passages devoted to the description of a single animal, carefully arranged in three distinct sections: Solinus' praise of equine loyalty to humans (45.6-7); notable historical examples of bond between man and horses, along with a reference to the use of this animal in circus games (45.8-15); horses' libido, mating habits, and physical and behavioural differences between males and females.

Solinus' itinerary continues east with the description of Bactria (Chapter 49), whose camels are the object of the author's interest for approximately one third of the chapter (49.9-11). Amidst a number of curiosities about these creatures - such as the roughness of their mating practices, their hatred of horses, and their inability to endure a change in climate if carried across to foreign countries - Solinus praises their strength, speed, and usefulness as pack animals; he admires their longevity and their ability to endure thirst for as long as four days; and is amazed at the strength of the libido of the females of the

[88] Cf. Plin. 10.62: "honos iis serpentium exitio tantus ut in Thessalia capital fuerit occidisse eademque legibus poena quae in homicidam" and Sol. 40.27: "noceri eis omnibus quidem locis nefas ducunt, sed in Thessalia vel maxime, ubi serpentium immanis copia est: quos dum escandi gratia insectantur, regionibus Thessalicis plurimum mali detrahunt". Not only is the identification of the snake as an "evil" absent in Pliny's description, but Solinus also seems to exaggerate the extent of the danger posed by the "enormous number" of snakes in Thessaly.

[89] The majority of the data reported by Solinus is adapted from Pliny's description (8.154-166), which does not mention this animal in connection with Cappadocia. The horses of this region, however, were highly regarded and deemed to be one of the best breeds in antiquity, so that it is entirely possible that Solinus consolidated Pliny's information with his personal equine knowledge. See Nieto (2001) p. 506, n. 1236.

[90] Sol. 45.5: "Terra illa ante alias altrix equorum et proventui equino accommodissima est: quorum hoc in loco ingenium reor persequendum."

species, as well as at the Bactrians' preference for female over male camels as war animals.[91]

If one land should be named that arouses Solinus' curiosity above all others, that land would be India. Covering two chapters (52 and 54), the content of its description spans almost all aspects of geographical knowledge (physical and urban geography, history, anthropology, mineralogy, botany, and, of course, zoology), drawing from the data of eight different Plinian books[92] - along with Mela and other unidentified sources - in a compiling effort unmatched within Solinus' work. The zoological section (52.33-45), which is limited to the first of the two chapters, features an opening statement on the author's intention to examine only a small part of the regions' many wonderful beasts. Curiously, but in a way that is consistent with Solinus' previously demonstrated hostility towards reptiles, the description of the enormous snakes that are capable of swallowing deer and other animals of similar size, and of swimming long distances to reach and plunder the isles of the Indian Ocean (53.33) precedes the aforementioned statement, thus excluding such creatures from the number of the wonderful beasts of India.[93] What follows is a list of mostly fictional animals that - along with the monstrosities of its tribes, the fabulous features of its vegetation, and the prodigious properties of its minerals - contributes to Solinus' overall portrait of India as a mythical land of wonders:[94] the *leucocrota* (52.34), fast beyond compare, the size of an ass with the back of a deer, the chest and limbs of a lion, the head of a badger, cloven hooves, a bone in place of its teeth, and capable of mimicking the human voice;[95] the *eale* (52.35), similar to a horse, with the tail of an elephant, the jaws of a boar, and a pair of mobile horns on

[91] The passage, almost entirely adapted from Pliny, presents yet another hint as to Solinus' method of work. In comparing Bactrian and Arabian camels, Solinus mistakenly reports that the number of humps on a camel's back is one for the former and two for the latter, when it is, in fact, the opposite, as correctly stated by Pliny. Cf. Plin. 67: "Camelos inter armenta pascit oriens, quarum duo genera, Bactriae et Arabiae, differunt, quod illae bina habent tubera in dorso, hae singula…" and Sol. 49.9: "Bactri camelos fortissimos mittunt, licet et Arabia plurimos gignat: verum hoc differunt, quod Arabici bina tubera in dorso habent, singula Bactriani." While it is undoudebtly possible that Solinus' confusion was caused by a corruption in his copy of the *Naturalis Historia*, the very nature of such error would seem to suggest a misremembering on Solinus' part, corroborating the possibility that (at least occasionally) he referred to parts of Pliny's text mnemonically.

[92] Books 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, 37, and Mela's Book 3, according to Mommsens.

[93] Sol. 52.33: "Enormitas in serpentibus tanta est, ut cervos et animantium alia ad parem molem tota hauriant, quin etiam oceanum Indicum quantus est penetrent insulasque magno spatio a continenti separatas pabulandi petant gratia. idque ipsum palam est non qualibet magnitudine evenire, ut per tantam sali latitudinem ad loca permeent destinata. [34] Sunt illic multae et mirabiles bestiae, quarum e multitudine et copia vel particulam persequemur."

[94] Di Serio (2018) pp. 19-31.

[95] A type of hyaena, according to Kitchell (2014) p. 108.

its head, which it can extend or fold back when fighting;[96] the Indian bulls (52.36), tawny in colour, swift as a bird, with backward hair, a mouth as big as their head, impenetrable skin, and an untameable nature that causes them to kill themselves rather than fall prey to human hunters;[97] the *mantichora* (52.37-38), a frightening hybrid of a lion and a scorpion, with three ranks of teeth, the face of a man, its coat the colour of blood, and a taste for human flesh;[98] a species of horned oxen (52.38), provided with one or three horns on their forehead and non-cloven hooves;[99] the *monoceros* (52.39-40), "the cruellest of all" (*atrocissimus*), "a monster with a horrible roar" (*monstrum mugitu horribili*), with the body of a horse, the limbs of an elephant, the tail of a swine, and the head of a deer, provided on its forehead with a horn "of wonderful brilliance" (*splendore mirifico*), a creature impossible to attack and that will rather be killed than captured.[100] Of the "no lesser wonders" (*miracula non minora*) that can be found in the region's bodies of water, Solinus recounts the huge eels of the river Ganges along with the enormous worms capable of dragging an elephant into its waters - thanks to their two arms long six cubits each (52.41)[101] - and the whales that swim in the Indian

[96] Likened to a hippopotamus by both Solinus and Pliny (8.74), who places it in Aethiopia. Speculations abound over its possible identification with a real animal; the only certainty seems to be its long-lasting popularity in mediaeval heraldry. Cf. Kitchell (2014) p. 63 and Nieto (2001) p. 535, n. 1343.

[97] Possibly a type of rhinoceros, as suggested by Nieto (2001) p. 535, n. 1346.

[98] Its name literally translates to "killer of men". Possibly an exaggerated version of the tiger. See Kitchell (2014) p. 116 and Nieto (2001) p. 536, n. 1348.

[99] The animals described so far were originally listed by Pliny amongst the creatures that "Aethiopia produces" (*Aethiopia generat,* 8.72). Their transposition to India in Solinus' adaptation might have been caused - if not by a textual error, as suggested by Kitchell (2014) p. 108 - by the ambiguity of Pliny's passage itself. First, Pliny mentions the "Indian oxen" (*Indicos boves*, 8.73), whose name seems at odds with their suggested geographical location; then, following his account of the "wild bulls" (*tauros silvestres*, 8.74) he states that "Ctesias writes that in the same area is born the animal that he calls *mantichora*" (*apud eosdem nasci Ctesias scribit quam mantichoran appellat*, 8.75) citing Ctesias of Cnidus' *Indica,* which places the *mantichora* (or *martichora*, as per Ctesias' text, frag. 45.15) in India. While a textual error is certainly a possibility, Mayhoff's proposal to amend Pliny's text by replacing "apud eos" with "apud Indicos dein" would only explain his misplacement of the *mantichora*, and not that of the other creatures that Ctesias locates in India, such as the *leucocrota* (frag. 76). Whatever the reason behind Pliny's deceiving description, "[t]here was much confusion between Aethiopia and India for ancient commentators who often either saw no difference between the two or transposed features from one to the other", Nichols (2008) p. 219. Whether Solinus was simply misremembering Pliny's passage or had actually read Ctesias' fragments first-hand and was trying to reorder his source's data with a perceived geographical coherence, it appears that (unlike Pliny) Solinus thought of Aethiopia and India as two distinct and separate areas.

[100] While the name of this creature literally translates to "unicorn", its description has little to do with the fabulous animal that in the contemporary collective imaginary goes by the same name. Its origin is to be found once again in Ctesias' *Indica* (frag. 45.45), whose data were subsequently adapted and amplified by later authors, amongst whom Pliny and Solinus, so that "[t]he monoceros was merely a blend of several animals that actually existed, the onager, the rhinoceros, scorpion, etc., to which the fancy of artist or poet added." Hyde (1918) p. 236.

[101] 2.6 metres. Another misquote of Pliny's text, which described the worms as provided with a pair of gills measuring 120 cubits each (53 metres).

Ocean (52.42),[102] which are larger than four acres and "discharge from their pipes the previously swallowed waters so violently, that they often sink the mariners' ships with a rainy flood".[103] The Indian creature that seems to excite Solinus' interest the most is the parrot (52.43-45);[104] a bird that "only India breeds" (*sola India mittit* 52.43), and whose physical and behavioural features he illustrates with a language of wonder that once again betrays a level of fascination that is absent in his source (Plin. 10.117.119). Green and crimson in colour, the parrot has a beak of "extraordinary firmness" (*extraordinariae firmitatis*) and "a head so strong" (*caput vero tam valens*, 52.44) that is capable of withstanding the blows of an iron rod; on its ability to memorise information, Solinus observes that "it learns more quickly and it retains more firmly" (*citius discit et retinet tenacius*) what humans teach it in its second year of age, with a carefully placed chiasmus that highlights the author's amazement at the intellectual faculties of this bird; of its toes, Solinus relates that their number (five or three) marks the distinction between the better and the worse of its species; and finally of its tongue, that it is "broad and much broader than that of other birds" (*lata multoque latior quam ceteris avibus*, 52.45), which gives the parrot its ability to speak, "a talent that Roman voluptuaries have admired so much, that the barbarians have made a trade in parrots."[105]

Between the chapters devoted to India (52) and the one that describes the Indian route to the Persian Gulf (54), Solinus provides an account of Taprobane (modern Sri Lanka); the island that the Graeco-Roman West for a long time considered "another

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[102] Sol. 52.42: "Indica maria balenas habent ultra spatia quattuor iugerum, sed et quos physeteras nuncupant…". The ambiguous wording of Solinus' passage poses a problem of textual criticism, since it is unclear whether the author is here referring to one or two separate species of whale. Pliny's text, upon which Solinus' passage depends, speaks of "whales of four *iugera* each" (*ballenae quaternum iugerum*) amongst the huge animals that inhabit the Indian Ocean at 9.4 and then again at 9.8, where he also describes the "sperm whale" (*physeter*) of the Bay of Biscay. That Solinus merged the data from the two separate passages - thus ignoring or forgetting that Pliny placed the *physeter* far away from India - is in keeping with his method of compilation; but it is the words "sed et", with which he introduces his account of the sperm whale, that make the translation problematic. The tradition of this reading is almost unanimous, with the only two exceptions of "sunt et" in *S*, which would better fit the description of two separate species, and simply "sunt" in *H*, which would work if one assumes that Solinus meant *physeter* to be the name by which the whales of the Indian Ocean are known.

[103] Sol. 52.42: "…haustosque fistulis fluctus ita eructant, ut nimbosa adluvie plerumque deprimant alveos navigantium."

[104] The green parrot (possibly the Indian Ring-Necked Parakeet) was the only bird of its species to be known to the Graeco-Roman world, while no trace can be found in any Greek or Latin text of the West-African grey parrot (see Toynbee, *op.* cit., p. 247). The resemblance between Solinus' text and Apuleius' description of the the same animal (Florida, 2.12) - with both passages containing similar errors, only some of which are common to Pliny's description, (10.117;119), such as the misattribution to the parrot of some features pertaining to the woodpecker or the magpie - was a key element of both Mommsen's and Columba's theories on the sources of the *Collectanea.* See above p. 9, n. 19.

[105] Sol. 52.45: "quod ingenium ita Romanae deliciae miratae sunt, ut barbari psittacos mercem fecerint."

world" (*orbem alterum*, 53.1), and the description of which is as awe-inspiring as that of its subcontinental neighbour. Its zoological section opens with a mention of the multitudes of tigers and elephants that inhabit the island's land (53.19), and of the fish and sea turtles that swim in its waters (53.20), with the latter being so huge, "that their surface can make a home and comfortably host a numerous family".[106] Finally, Solinus' obsession with animal sexuality is nowhere else as evident as in his extensive account of Taprobane's oysters and their way of producing pearls (53.23-27), a non-sexual act that yet he likens, with abundance of imagery, to a mating ritual. Solinus describes how the molluscs, during their mating season, are seized by a "rioting craving for conception" (*luxuriante conceptu*, 53.23), due to which they "thirst for dew as if for a mate" (*sitiunt rorem velut maritum*), which they swallow as they "gape wide for the desire of it" (*cuius desiderio hiant*), an imagery that Solinus reiterates as he writes that they "drink the desired liquid" (*hauriunt umorem cupitum*), and "become pregnant" (*gravidae fiunt*).[107]

India and Taprobane are as far east as Solinus goes. There the author inverts the direction of his literary journey, turning westwards and providing an itinerary that leads the reader from India straight to the Atlantic Ocean and that, more than any other section of the *Collectanea*, reads like the description of a commercial route. The Fortunate Isles (Spain's Canaries) conclude Solinus' geographical account, as well as his parade of animals, with an albeit brief description of the few creatures that inhabit the archipelago, which makes use of a language of wonder aimed at reflecting not only its lush flora and fauna, but also the ironic contrast between its name and some aspects of its nature. The "enormous lizards" (*enormibus lacertis*, 56.16) of Capraria are the only feature of this island worthy of mention.[108] Of the neighbouring Canaria (modern Gran Canaria), Solinus reports a breed of dogs of most distinguished form (*canibus*

[106] Sol. 53.20: "ut superficies earum domum faciat et numerosam familiam non arte receptet."
[107] The metaphor that likens the production of an oyster's pearl to the procreation of offspring is also present in Pliny's description of the same mollusc at 9.109, from which Solinus' account is drawn. Pliny's passage, however - which does indeed refer to a pearl as the *fetus* and *partus* of an oyster - is free from the double entendres and innuendos that characterise Solinus' graphic account. It is interesting that Solinus' most explicitly sexual depiction should indeed describe a practice that is not sexual at all, but whatever the author's motivations might have been, this is yet another example of his long underestimated skills as a descriptive writer.
[108] Possibly the Giant Lizard (*Gallotia simonyi*), which today inhabits the El Hierro, the Canaries' most remote and second smallest island, but is believed to have once populated the entire archipelago, including the islands of Alegranza and Fuerteventura, with which Nieto identified Capraria. See Nieto (2001) p. 568, n. 1464.

forma eminentissimis, 56.17); "the great number of birds" (*avium magna copia*, 56.18) that inhabit its forests; its rivers "abundant in silurid fish" (*siluris piscibus abundantes*, 56.19); and the foul scenery of its shores, where "the wavy sea spits out wild creatures" (*expui in eam undoso mari belvas*) whose decomposing carcasses give the air a putrid smell that is not congruous with the islands' name.

III. *Animal wonders and the Providence of Nature*

Reading Solinus' *Collectanea* as a work of geographical writing, one will be surprised by the large number of animal facts that it contains; and while not for each land that he describes does Solinus provide a zoological excursus, the animal content is so preponderant that one cannot help but wonder what purpose it serves within Solinus' carefully crafted description of the known world. Whether it was used as a filler - to supply the author's lack of knowledge or source material on a particular region on which he would otherwise not know what to write - or whether it was a conscious choice dictated, amongst other things, by Solinus' clearly stated intention to not report what was already well known (and what could be less known than creatures that most of his readers might have never seen or heard of?), it appears evident that animal paradoxography (or zoology in general) aroused his interest like nothing else did. It is true that the description of rare, wondrous, and even fictional creatures alternates with that of animals that would have been considered ordinary by Solinus' readers, or even part of their everyday life; nevertheless, the very traits that the author chooses to highlight in these accounts are indeed susceptible of finding the 'miraculous' even there where one would normally not expect it. Furthermore, as the introduction of each animal (as well as any other non-geographical item) is always facilitated by the description of a well identified geographical area, those that are perceived as universal - or for which no *miracula* could be reported - are automatically excluded: notable is the absence of cats, mice, and chickens. That animal content was to play a major role in the composition of Solinus' text, is already stated in the prefatory letter, where the description of the "natures of men and other animals" (*hominum et aliorum animalium naturas, Praef.* 3) comes immediately after the "recollection of places" (*commemoratio locorum, Praef.* 4), Solinus' professed primary objective; not only establishing the area-

object connection right from the outset, but also conferring on zoology, along with anthropology, a position superior to all other non-geographical components of the *Collectanea*; first in his list of *memorabilia.*

A utilitarian reading of Solinus' use of "memorable things" (animal and non) was given by Robert Bedon,[109] who proposed that the non-geographical content of Solinus' work be read as an inventory of what remarkable produce (natural or man-made) each region of the empire had to offer for Rome's enjoyment and exploitation: "un catalogue au sens commercial du terme, car la présentation des productions, ou le contexte de celle-ci fait très souvent référence à leur envoy à Rome".[110] Bedon identified in Solinus' language certain remarks that, in his view, either directly indicate the capture and possible shipment to Rome of some animals, or at least imply their involvement in spectacles or their use as companion animals for the ruling classes: it is the case of the Indian parrots and their aforementioned use as pets by the Roman elites (52.45); the Cappadocian horses, for whose employment in circus games Solinus provides a rather detailed description;[111] the Numidian bears, whose fight with a hundred Aethiopian hunters in the circus games thrown by Ahenobarbus was allegedly reported in the Annals and "recorded amongst the memorable headings" (*inter memorabiles titulos adnotatur*, 26.10);[112] the African lions, "of which Scaevola, son of Publius, first made an exhibition in Rome while he was curule aedile" (*spectaculum ex his primus Romae edidit Scaevola Publii filius in curuli aedilitate*, 27.22); the Aethiopian giraffe, a creature "first shown in Rome at the circus games thrown for Caesar's dictatorship" (*Romae circensibus dictatoris Caesaris primum publicatum*, 30.19); the rhinoceros of the same region, which "the Roman spectacles did not know before Pompey's games" (*ante ludos Cn. Pompeii rhinocerontem Romana spectacula nesciebant*, 30.21); the hippopotami and crocodiles of Egypt, which "Marcus Scaurus first imported to Rome" (*primus Romae M. Scaurus invexit*, 32.31).

[109] Bedon (2004b) pp. 59-73.
[110] Bedon (2004b) p. 63.
[111] Sol. 45.12: "quidam enim equorum cantibus tibiarum, quidam saltationibus, quidam colorum varietate, nonnulli etiam accensis facibus ad cursus provocantur." This datum, however, refers to horses in general, and is not limited to the Cappadocian kind.
[112] See above pp. 114-115.

Alongside these, Bedon listed animals for which Solinus does indicate exportation from their homeland, albeit not (necessarily) to Rome:[113] the African monkeys, who have a talent for mimicry "thanks to which they come more easily into human hands" (*quo facilius in manus veniunt*, 27.56);[114] the Hyrcanian tigers, whose cubs are preyed upon by hunters (27.6); the African hyaenas, of which "it is easier to capture a male" (*pronius est marem capere*, 27.24); the dogs of Canaria, of which "two were even presented to King Juba" (*etiam duo exhibiti sunt Iubae regi*, 56.17); the two Alban dogs "sent to Alexander by the king of Albania" (*Alexandro a rege Albaniae missos*, 15.7) and set to fight with other animals for Alexander's entertainment; the Mauretanian elephants, who "when they are about cross the seas, do not climb into the ships before an oath is sworn to them about their return".[115] Even such creatures, which Solinus does not directly associate with Rome, were regarded by Bedon as part of the author's inventory of circus beasts, as he considered Solinus' mention of famous historical figures (Roman or not) as a way to keep alive their value and the interest in their importation to Rome. In Bedon's interpretation, these and other creatures - which he admittedly did not mention for lack of space - formed, along with non-animal *memorabilia*, a catalogue that could be extracted from Solinus' text of all the commercial goods to be sent to the global marketplace that was Rome; while those for which no mention of capture or trade is made should be regarded as mere accessories to Solinus' *commemoratio locorum*. Furthermore, Bedon considered Solinus' use of the verb *mittit* and its double meaning of "produces" and "sends" as an indication of what produce each region sends, and therefore "exports", to Rome:

"C'est ainsi que l'Afrique *mittit* la hyène (27.23-26), que l'Inde en fait autant avec le perroquet (52.34), et les perles, parallèlement avec la *Britannia* pour ces dernières (53.28). Et cette exportation répond bien à une demande romain".[116]

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[113] Bedon's list includes animals for whose capture or trade no textual reference could be found, such as the Hyrcanian panthers and the Indian elephants. See Bedon (2004b) p. 67.
[114] See above p. 118.
[115] Sol. 25.8: "maria transmeaturi in naves non prius subeunt quam de reditu illis sacramentum luatur." Solinus does make mention of their first appearance in Italy at the time of the Pyrrhic War; however, he does not directly hint at their presence in Rome's circus games.
[116] Bedon (2004b) p. 68. The exportation of pearls from India and Britannia, however, is not introduced by *mittit* but by *dat*. See Sol. 53.28: "Dat et India margaritas, dat et litus Brittannicum".

The verb *mittit* occurs 12 times throughout the text (two in its plural form *mittunt*), nine of which in relation to animals: in addition to the aforementioned hyaenas and parrots, it introduces the elk (*Gangavia insula e regione Germaniae mitti animal quale alce*, 20.7), the *lycaon* (*eadem Aethiopia mittit lycaonem*, 30.24), the *parandrus* (*mittit et Parandrum*, 30.25), the black ibis (*nigras solum Pelusium mittit*, 32.33), the Arabian winged snakes (*Arabicae paludes pennatorum anguium mittunt examina*, 32.33), and the Bactrian camels (*Bactri camelos fortissimos mittunt*, 49.9). However, it alternates with other verbs that Solinus uses to establish the area-animal connection, such as *gignit,* introducing the Italian snakes (2.33), the Hercynian birds (20.3), and (in its plural form) the Indian eels and water worms; and *nascitur*, for the *corocotta* (27.26), the *catoblepas* (30.22), the hippopotamus (32.20), the phoenix (33.11), the *bonacus* (40.20), and the *mantichora* (52.37). While it might be argued that most of these animals are fictional and, therefore, unlikely to be part of a list of creatures that would have appeared in circus games, notable is the presence amongst them of the hippopotamus and the *corocotta* (the spotted hyaena), which would have been known to the Roman public. It is not a coincidence, though, that the majority of the aforementioned animals introduced by *mittit* or *mittunt* are part of extensive lists from chapters that contain, more than others, a substantial animal presence; namely 27, 30, 32, and 52.

In Chapter 27 on Africa, one of the richest in animal content, the area-item connection is established in a variety of ways: the land "is held by lions" (*leones tenent*, 27.13); "sends" striped hyaenas; the spotted one "is born" there; "has wild asses" (*onagros habet*, 27.27); "is rich in snakes" (*serpentibus adeo fecunda est*, 27.28); "produces the basilisk" (*basiliscum creat*, 27.51); and "is filled with various types of monkey" (*varium implevit simiarum genus*, 27.55). In Chapter 30 on Aethiopia, "there is a great abundance of pythons" (*draconum magna copia*, 30.15); its regions "are full of wild beasts" (*feris plena sunt*, 30.19, introducing giraffes, *cephi*, and rhinoceros); the *catoblepas* "is born" there; and the land "sends" the *parandrus;* while its canine ants, wolves, the *pegasus* and the *tragopan* are not introduced by any verb denoting them as the produce of the area. In Chapter 32 on Egypt, the crocodile "thrives equally both on the land and in the river" (*et in terra et in flumine pariter valet*, 32.22); "there is a kind of dolphins in the Nile" (*Est et delphinum genus in Nilo*, 32.26); "skinks are also very

frequent around the Nile" (*Scinci quoque circa frequentissimi*, 32.29); the hippopotamus "is born" there; "there is the ibis bird" (*ales est ibis*, 32.32); its skies are infested with winged snakes that "the Arabian swamps send forth"; and the land "sends" the black ibis. Again, for some creatures, such as the *strophilos* bird and the *ichneumon*, no verb is used. In Chapter 52 on India, the *leucocrota*, the *eale*, the Indian bulls and oxen, and the *monoceros* are simply introduced by the appropriate forms of *sum*; the *mantichora* "is born" there; the Indian waters "produce" eels and worms; its seas "have whales" (*Indica maria balenas tenent*, 52.42); and the land "sends" the green parrot.

The use of a verb such as *mittit* is undoubtedly suggestive of trade between Rome and the land object of the description; and it is true that at least for the green parrot, which is 'sent' from India, Solinus directly mentions its importation to Rome as a pet for the wealthy. It could be argued, however, that its sporadic appearance amongst other verbs that indicate what each land produces responds to a choice of stylistic variation, rather than to a concrete need to catalogue circus or companion animals. In regards to Solinus' other indications of the capture of exotic beasts, their presence in Rome, as well as their association with famous historical figures, most of this content is adapted from Pliny. While - as advocated by Bedon - a new approach to the studies of Solinus' work is needed that emancipates both the author and the text form Pliny's obtrusive presence,[117] the Plinian origin and nature of the vast majority of Solinus' paradoxographical data cannot be ignored, so that it is difficult to separate the content from the context. If Solinus indeed used Pliny's text as an encyclopaedic source - which he probably often quoted by heart - the presence in both authors of remarks concerning the capture and transportation of animals is unlikely to be indicative of anything other than Solinus' intent to give a comprehensive account of each creature, using all information available to him.

The concept of *utilitas* is not entirely foreign to Solinus; it does not seem, however, to be his main intent, as shown by his description of Indian diamonds. After listing the

[117] See Bedon (2004b) p. 62, n. 19: "[I]l faut maintenant dépasser ce è quoi en revenaient presque infailliblement les études antérieurs qui lui étaient consacrées: mettre en rapport la moindre de ses phrases avec Méla, Pline, ou tel autre. Il n'est que temps désormais, si l'on veut progresser dans son étude, de le considérer désormais comme un auter qui, s'il a construit son livre à partir d'*excerpta* […] présente un minimum d'autonomie."

qualities that make these excel above all other stones of the same kind - their ability to drive madness away, to resist venom, and to free one's mind from fear - Solinus states that "it was necessary to first praise the things about them that [he] considered pertain to their usefulness: now [he] will refer what appearance and what colour each diamond has."[118] What follows is a description of the shapes and colours of various stones, gems, and metals - such as the "extraordinary" (*eximius*) colour of crystal, with its "most pure brilliance" (*splendore liquidissimo*), or the paler one of the "most excellent type of gold" (*in excellentissimo auro*) - and of the indestructibility of diamonds, which can "neither be conquered by iron nor tamed by fire" (*nec ferro vincuntur nec igni domantur*) but which can be finally split into fragments "if they are soaked in goat's blood for a long time" (*si diu in sanguine hircino vincuntur*). Having absolved himself of the necessity to relate what is 'useful', Solinus is now free to delve into what arouses his interest the most: the wondrous aspects of his object of description. A "passion for knowledge" (*fermentum cognitionis, Praef*. 2) is what ultimately guides Solinus' writing and, in the case of animal paradoxography, it is his genuine interest in Nature's creations - which come to life for the reader in accounts that alternate scientific rigour to descriptive language - that justifies their preponderant (and at times overbearing) presence throughout the text. None of them, not even the most fantastic one, appears within a mythological context but they are all real and existing in the world, to the best of the author's knowledge, so much so that he awards them a prominent position in his prefatorial programmatic statement. Solinus' way of reshaping the source material needed for his zoological accounts is perhaps the best evidence of his authorial autonomy, as it shows his perception of the objects he describes, exposing both positive and negative feelings towards them, in a way that his sources' writing does not. The content may be Plinian, but the stupor at the miraculousness of dolphins, the admiration for tigers, the praise for ibises and storks, and most of all the hatred for snakes are Solinus' own.

The importance of animal paradoxography lies in the author's reaction to it; specifically, in the way in which his very amazement at the unnaturalness of Nature is a manifestation of his belief in its intelligent power. Nature is mentioned four times in

[118] Sol. 52.54(57): "haec primum de his praedicari oportuit, quae respicere ad utilitatem videbamus: nunc reddemus quae adamantium sint species et quis colos cuique."

relation to animal phenomena, in a way that implies an active role not only as a creator but also as a force that ensures that all living creatures play their part in the greater scheme of things.

I. 27.18: *dedit enim has notas generosissimo cuique natura.*

The "marks" to which Solinus refers are the ear movements with which lions and horses manifest their feelings, an instrument given to them by Nature, by virtue of their nobility.

II. 27.56: *operae pretium est nihil omittere in quo naturae spectanda sit providentia.*

As previously mentioned, it is unclear what aspect of the African monkey should be considered as evidence of Nature's foresight. Nevertheless, it is the very observance of it that justifies the inclusion of the (apparently) offensive mention of monkeys.[119]

III. 32.23: [*crocodilus*] *metatur locum nido naturali providentia*.

Nature's foresight has gifted the crocodile with the innate knowledge needed to protect its offspring, by nesting in a safe location away from the Nile's flood waters.[120]

IV. 40.24: *corax habet praesidium ad medellam natura manum porrigente.*

The image of "Nature stretching forth its hand" to provide ravens with a cure to the poisonous chameleon flesh is also telling of an intelligent protective force.[121]

The other occurrences of the word *natura*, although not in relation to animal wonders, also contribute to the imagery of Nature as an active power. Discussing twins in his anthropological excursus of Chapter 1, Solinus marvels at "Nature's cunning" (*naturae ingenium*, 1.78) in producing identical individuals. Of the phenomenon of male corpses floating face upwards and female ones face downwards, he praises the "method of modesty" that "Nature has discerned" (*pudoris disciplina…natura discrevit*, 1.95). Describing the *catochitis*, a small rock found in Corsica that sticks to those who touch it, thanks to a type of glue within it, Solinus recounts how Democritus of Abdera used it as an example of "Nature's secret power" (*occultam naturae potentiam*, 3.5) to disprove claims of the existence of magic. The coexistence of snow and fire on Mount Etna is explained by "Nature's stubbornness" (*naturae pervicacia*, 5.10). Similarly, of

[119] See above p. 118.
[120] See above p. 121.
[121] See above p. 123.

the miraculous spring of Debris in the territory of the African tribe of the Garamantes, which is cold during the day and hot at night, Solinus marvels at how "Nature has created such dissonant variety" (*natura tam dissonam faciat varietatem*, 29.2). Finally, of a type of lemon tree that grows in Media, Solinus observes that "Nature's resistance" (*natura resistente*, 46.6) has prevented other nations from borrowing the fruit given by Nature to Media as a privilege.

Nature's cunning, Nature's power, Nature's stubbornness, and Nature's foresight are perhaps the best examples of Solinus' perception of Nature as a living and active force, whose power manifests itself in the wonders of the animal kingdom above all other aspects of Earth's creations. Solinus' *memorabilia* may be read as a catalogue of all the incredible products that every corner of the empire, along with its peripheral regions, has to offer. However, animal paradoxography is also what best illustrates Solinus' almost religious respect for Nature's omnipotence and omniscience. A Nature that has created a world in which every living and non living thing has a place and a purpose; a world whose limits coincide with those of the Roman Empire, and of which Solinus' carefully crafted description with "each element in its right order" (*suo quaeque ordine*, *Praef.* 3) provides a justification.

CHAPTER FOUR
STOIC PHYSICS AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

I. *Homo Minor Mundus: Solinus and the Stoic Physical Theory*

Solinus' depiction of Nature is far from being unique in ancient geographical writing. The belief in the existence of a rational order for all natural elements, the idea of harmony amongst all components of the universe, and the faith in a providential force that rules in the general interest and wellbeing of the living beings that inhabit the Earth are in fact all aspects of Strabo's cosmology, which bears a striking resemblance to Solinus' world order. The occurrence of natural disasters and the seemingly unfavourable disposition of particular regions, for instance, are often explained - and justified - by the Greek geographer through the intervention of an inscrutable providential design.[122] Such is the action of the tides that occur near the Egyptian city of Pelusium (the modern plain of El Tineh), resulting in the flooding of parts of the area around the isthmus of Suez, and that might one day lead - observes Strabo - to the connection of the Mediterranean and Red Sea; a phenomenon that, in Strabo's words, should "strengthen our trust in both the works of nature and the changes that happen in other ways."[123] Or the location of the city of Toulouse, half-way between the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of south-western Gaul, whose mention allows Strabo the opportunity to praise the uniform nature of the hydrography of the region. A work of Providence that has provided the inhabitants of that land with ways of communicating and trading with each other.[124]

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[122] See Aujac & Lasserre (1969) p. xxi, "…une Providence dont les desseins ne nous sont pas toujours pénétrables et dont les réalisations particulières nous déconcertent souvent, faute de connaître l'ordonnance de l'ensemble" and Laurent (2008) p. 119: "L'existence d'une Providence aux desseins impénétrables […] est clairement soutenue. Strabon fait ainsi état d'explications causales simplement probables qui tiennent compte de ce que l'on peut appeler un meilleur conditionnel et font intervenir une Providence optimiste."

[123] Strab. 1.3.17: τὴν πίστιν ἰσχυρὰν κατασκευάζειν τῶν τε τῆς φύσεως ἔργων καὶ τῶν ἄλλως γινομένων μεταβολῶν.

[124] Strab. 4.1.14: ὥστε ἐπί τῶν τοιούτων κἂν τὸ τῆς προνοίας ἔργον ἐπιμαρτυρεῖσθαί τις ἄν δόξειεν, οὔχ ὅπως ἔτυχεν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἄν μετὰ λογισμοῦ τινος διακειμένων τῶν τόπων.

Providence is, according to Strabo, "the creator of endless works" (μυρίων ἔργων δημιουργός, 17.1.36) an almighty force that, conjointly with Nature, has shaped the Earth around the necessities of humans, animals, and plants. Unsurprisingly, a similar role is played by Nature in Pliny, upon whose views Solinus most likely based his. In his description of the Alps Pliny mentions the various measurements of their breadth taken at different points along the mountain range, and praises Nature's Providence for creating a wider distance separating Italy from Germany than anywhere else on the Italian northernmost border.[125] Nature's intervention is lauded again by Pliny in regards to the anatomy of the dolphin, insofar as the inconvenient position of its mouth, right below its snout, makes it harder for this animal to hunt for fish, none of which could otherwise escape the cetacean's speed.[126] This depiction of Nature as an active, intervening, even controlling force - common to the three authors - finds many corresponding features in philosophical writing, particularly in Cicero's illustration of Cleanthes' cosmology in *De Natura Deorum* - one of our main sources for Stoic physics in general and for Cleanthes' elemental theory in particular[127] - so that it is impossible not to establish a connection between Solinus' representation of Nature's agency and Stoic physics. Cicero ascribes to Nature traits similar to those that constitute Solinus' deterministic world structure: namely that "everything is subject to Nature" (*omnia subiecta esse naturae*, 2.82), that "the universe itself is ruled by nature" (*mundum ipsum natura administrari*, 2.86) and, most importantly, that a Providence of Nature exists, which has consciously created and arranged all parts of the universe according to a rational design.[128]

Traces of Stoicism are, in fact, widespread throughout Solinus' text, both in the form of source citation and in that of references to elements of Stoic physical theory. At the conclusion of his prefatory letter, Solinus justifies his decision to begin his literary journey from Rome (the "head of the world") by likening his geographical effort to the

[125] Plin. 3.132: "namque et centum milia excedunt aliquando, ubi Germaniam ab Italia submovent, nec LXX inplent reliqua sui parte graciles, veluti naturae providentia."
[126] Plin. 9.20: "sed adfert moram providentia naturae, quia nisi resupini atque conversi non corripiunt."
[127] Salles (2009) p. 121.
[128] Cicero's Providence, like Strabo's one, has a divine quality that Solinus' Nature lacks, as will be explained below. See Cic. *ND* 2.87, 2.98, 2.140.

artistic representation of a human body, which usually starts from the head.[129] A comparison which is subsequently reprised in the anthropological section of Chapter 1 where, in regards to the anatomy of the human body, Solinus reminds his readers that "the natural philosophers have judged the human to be a smaller world" (*physici hominem minorem mundum iudicaverunt*, 1.93), in what is a clear reference to Cleanthes' assertion that the cosmos is a living being.[130] This same element of Stoic physics is again referenced in Chapter 23 within the context of the description of the tides that occur around the shores of India, which leads Solinus to interrogate himself as to the causes of this phenomenon, and provides him with the opportunity to embark on an excursus about natural philosophy. In a passage mostly adapted from Mela (3.2), Solinus reports "the most esteemed opinions" (*opiniones probatissimas*, 23.19) of those who have investigated the matter, namely the "natural philosophers [who] say that the world is a living being" (*physici aiunt mundum animal esse*, 23.20)[131] and who explain the occurrence of tides with the presence of underwater caves through which the Ocean breathes in and out its waters, while "those who follow the teaching of the stars" (*ii qui siderum sequuntur disciplinam*, 23.22) linked the rising and retreating of ocean waters to the phases of the moon.

Most interesting in Solinus' adaptation is the greater degree of reverence for the Stoics that his words seem to offer compared to those of his source, through his reference - absent from Mela's passage - to the philosophers' opinions as *probatissimae.*[132] On at least four more occasions Solinus' words betray a greater interest in Stoicism than in the philosophers from other schools, as well as a more

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[129] Sol. *Praef.* 7: "sicut ergo qui corporum formas aemulantur, postpositis quae reliquae sunt, ante omnia effigiant modum capitis, nec prius lineas destinant in membra alia, quam ab ipsa ut ita dixerim figurarum arce auspicium faciant incohandi, nos quoque a capite orbis, id est ab urbe Rome principium capessemus".

[130] Cic. *ND* 2.32: "animantem esse mundum". See Salles (2009) p. 119.

[131] It is important to note that Solinus does not use the term *physici* exclusively in relation to Stoic physicists, but rather applies it generically to all philosophers whose studies focus on the explanation of natural phenomena, such as the Presocratic Democritus of Abdera (see Sol. 1.54 and 10.10).

[132] Bedon (2004b) p. 81. Mela gives three theories for the explanation of the origin of the tides: the Aristotelian view that they were caused by the Earth's breathing; the Platonic theory of underwater caves into which the ocean's waters would retreat, and from which they would come out again; and Posidonius' correct astronomical explanation. Solinus merges the Aristotelian and Platonic theories and replaces Mela's *doctiores* with *physici*, possibly due to the similarity with his previous statement at 1.93, which might have created some confusion as to which of the theories was indeed Stoic. One theory, however, did not necessarily have to exclude the others, given the moon's perceived connection with breathing. See Reinhardt (1926) p. 59: "Die Erklärung auf den Wirkungen des Mondes schloß nicht den Vergleich der Atmung (ἔοικεν nach Athenodor) zumal der Mond für das pneumatische Gestirn galt und die Schwellungen nicht weniger als ein pneumatisches Phänomen." See also Silberman (2003) p. 247, n. 5.

enthusiastic tone than that of his sources. Recounting Pompey the Great's visit to Posidonius of Apamea's house, Solinus refers to the Greek philosopher as "the most famous teacher of wisdom at the time" (*clarissimi tunc sapientiae professoris*, 1.121) changing the original *clari* in his Plinian model (7.112) with a superlative that reveals Solinus' intention to display a higher admiration than that of his source. In his description of Cilicia the author mentions the ancient city of Heliopolis, "the native place of Chrysippus, the mightiest Stoic philosopher" (*patria Chrysippi stoicae sapientiae potentissimi*). Finally, he praises the talent of the poets, historians, and philosophers of Asia Solinus includes amongst the Seven Sages Cleanthes, "the most eminent of the Stoics" (*Stoicae eminentissimus*), and Heraclitus, "entertained in the secrets of a more subtle discipline" (*Heraclitus etiam subtilioris doctrinae immoratus*), with the adjective *subtilioris* used to compare Heraclitus' Stoicism with Anaxagora's physical theory, which is mentioned immediately before.

An examination of the most evident traces of Stoicism in the *Collectanea* was conducted by Bedon, who went as far as suggesting that Solinus be considered a follower of the doctrine of the Porch and that the allusions to the philosophy present in his work be read as Stoic propaganda intended for his readers.[133] The laudatory tone reserved exclusively to Stoic philosophers or to those associated with Stoicism;[134] the direct references to Stoic cosmology; the depiction of a generous, intelligent, and providential Nature; the pessimistic considerations upon the physical decline of the human race[135] - all these are evidence, according to Bedon, of Solinus' intent to use his own text as a public declaration of affiliation to Stoicism.[136]

Philosophical activity was indeed still strong in late antiquity, and the debate amongst the three major schools - Stoics, Platonists, and Aristotelians - "intensified and

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[133] Bedon (2004b) p. 80.
[134] Bedon (2004b) p. 79: "Socrate, tenu par les stoïciens comme le maître dans la pensée duquel leur doctrine trouvait son origine, bénéficie pour sa part d'un traitement plus favorable, et nettement orienté vers la louange". See Solin. 1.73: "inter alia Socratis magna praeclarum illud est, quod in eodem vultus tenore etiam adversis interpellantibus perstitit."
[135] See Solin. 1.87: "Nunc si de ipsis hominum formis requiramus, liquido manifestabitur nihil de se antiquitatem mendaciter praedicasse, sed corruptam degeneri successione subolem nostri temporis per nascentum detrimenta decus veteris pulchritudinis perdidisse" and 1.90: "quis enim iam aevo isto non minor parentibus suis nascitur?"
[136] Bedon (2004b) p. 80.

became one of [its] driving forces."[137] Although no useful information about the school is available from the third century AD, and Diogenes Laertius' *Vitae Philosophorum* (one of our major sources for ancient philosophy) does not discuss any philosopher later than the second century, the widespread nature of Stoicism - in the form of writers and teachers - in many parts of the empire through the second and until at least the first half of the third century meant that its influence on both philosophical and non-philosophical works persisted throughout late antiquity. Neoplatonism and Christianity (increasingly popular in the late empire) eventually replaced Stoicism, but they also absorbed Stoic ideas from the areas of ethics and physics, particularly through the reading of the works of Epictetus who, at least since the times of Marcus Aurelius, came to embody a generic conception of 'philosopher' or 'philosophy teacher' not bound to the doctrine of any one school. At a time of coexistence between the three major schools and the growing Christian community, Greek philosophy in general - and Stoicism and Platonism in particular - "[developed] as an ideological competitor to new religious ideals".[138] In spite of the absence of testimonies as to the existence of chairs, teachers, and students after the second half of the third century - elements of the Stoic doctrine continued to influence the philosophical and cultural activities of the Graeco-Roman world.

Terrestrial geography was a standard topic of Stoic physics,[139] so that both the content of the *Collectanea* and the time in which it was written mean that Solinus would have been at least exposed to Stoic ideals. Portraying him as a Stoic himself, however, could easily raise the same objections encountered by those who wish to label Strabo as a follower of the Porch, namely the absence of clearly defined theories of Stoic physics, such as the conflagration of the universe and the corporeal nature of the soul, as well as elements of Stoic ethics and logic.[140] Solinus' Cleanthian representation of Nature and his explicit admiration for certain Stoic natural philosophers are not accompanied by a cosmological explanation: he does not provide a well-defined epistemology, but rather adopts (consciously or not) elements of Stoic physics that help him make sense of Nature's wondrous creations, be they human, animal, vegetal, or mineral. If for the

[137] Inwood (2004b) p. 127.
[138] See Inwood (2000) pp. 131-136 and Gill (2003) p. 36.
[139] Gill (2003) p. 39.
[140] Laurent (2008) pp. 126-127.

Stoics knowledge of the natural world allows us to live "in conformity with Nature",[141] the Stoic lens through which Solinus describes the *oikoumene* highlights the necessity for the educated men in charge of the administration of the empire - for whom, according to Bedon, Solinus' work was intended - to know the world and its marvels, in order to be better rulers.[142] While it is undeniable that Solinus' world order is heavily influenced by elements of Stoic physics, Stoicism appears to be a means, rather than an end, that provides him with the epistemological support necessary for the promotion of his Weltanschauung.

II. *Snakes, Cannibalism, and Christian Morals*

Philosophical eclecticism was not the only form in which the range of old and new ideas that made late antique Rome a cultural melting pot manifested itself. By the middle of the third century new Christian ideas were spreading rapidly amongst all strata of society, including men willing to take an active part in the administration of the empire.[143] In spite of Decius' (250), Valerian's (257-258), and Diocletian's persecutions (302) the number of Christians continued to grow, and it is estimated that by the beginning of the fourth century approximately two-fifths of the population of the empire were adherents of the new religion.[144] In this climate of religious fervour and coexistence between Roman paganism and Christianity it is likely that Solinus would have been brought into contact with elements of the new faith, especially given the increasing number of members of the ruling elites who were also part of the Christian community. The presence of a Christian influence in the *Collectanea* was, however, categorically excluded by Mommsen, who also saw the absence of any direct reference to Christianity in Solinus' text as evidence of an early date of composition, most likely in the first few decades of the third century.[145]

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[141] White (2003) pp. 124; 128.
[142] Bedon (2004a) pp. 83-88.
[143] Boak (1921) pp. 372-327.
[144] Boak (1921) p. 382.
[145] See above p. 34.

It was not until a century later that the possibility that Solinus' language might contain traces of a Christian undertone - far more subtle than the explicit allusions to Stoic philosophers, and showing itself in the form of passing remarks and observations, rather than through the reference to past authority - was first raised by Schmidt. The German scholar considered Mommsen's assessment about the lack of any allusion to Christian beliefs as based solely on his disregard of the additions of the manuscripts of the third class (*SA*), such as the deliberate exclusion from his edition of Solinus' negative remark on the practice of human sacrifice by some Gallic tribes, which he condemns as an "abominable religious rite" (*detestabilis sacrorum ritus*).[146] Solinus' text as established by Mommsen and as transmitted by the first two classes of manuscripts, however, still contains - in this and other passages - an outraged and horrified tone in the description of both religious rituals involving the killing of human beings and cannibalism, so that Mommsen's judgement appears to be a conscious editorial choice dictated by his insistence on an early date and his rejection of any evidence to the contrary, rather than by his refusal of any material deemed unauthentic.

While it can be argued that one needs not be a Christian in order to disapprove of human sacrifices and cannibalism, the importance of Solinus' remarks lies in their very absence from the original texts that he adapts, as noted by Zweder von Martels in more recent times. Solinus describes the Gauls as "dishonoured" (*infamantur*, 21.1) by such rites, the practice of which constitutes an "insult to religion" (*iniuria religionis*), in a far more disapproving tone than his source Pliny, whose reference to human offerings as "monstrous rites" (*monstra*, 30.13) does not carry an equal level of disgust and disdain. Solinus labels the Anthropophagi a "wicked nation" *(impia gens*, 16.4) that feeds on human flesh, a "condemnable nourishment" (*exsecrandi cibi*) and a "nefarious ritual" (*nefarius ritus*), in striking contrast with Mela's account "without any moral condemnation" of the practices of the Scythian tribe.[147] In another adaptation of Mela Solinus describes the custom of some Indian people who kill and eat their elderly parents before they die of old age: whereas Mela simply refers to the practice as "very greatly pious" (*maxime pium*, Mela 3.7), Solinus adds that such tradition is regarded "in that country not a crime but an act of piety" (*ibi non sceleris sed pietatis loco*, 52.23):

[146] Schmidt (1995) pp. 31-32.
[147] von Martels (2003) pp. 74-78.

Solinus' addition - along with the omission of Mela's positive remark on those elderly Indians who, instead, choose to throw themselves onto fire, thus dying "happy and with glory" (*laeti et cum gloria*) - seems to indicate a shift in sensibility in regards to practices such as euthanasia and suicide, showing "a different perception of the value of human life", von Martels noted.[148] Similarly, Solinus' censure of the incestuous habits of the Aethiopians and praise of the chastity of the Essenes, along with his mention of the city of Gomorrah - unattested to pagan authors before his time - may be evidence of an influence of Christian morality onto Solinus' own values and writing, or at least of his familiarity with the Scriptures.[149]

Even more indicative of Solinus' likely knowledge of Christian texts is, according to von Martels, the similarity between some of his expressions and those of certain late antique Christian authors. One of these expressions is the "majesty of Providence" (*maiestatis providentia*, 35.9), which Solinus praises for gifting the Essenes of Judaea with their chaste way of life, and that reminds one of both Firmicus Maternus' *providentia divinae maiestatis* (*De errore*, 27.5) and Lactantius' *providentissima maiestas* (*De Opificio Dei*, 3.2). Another one is the "steadfastness of truth" (*constantia veritatis*, *Praef.* 12), to which Solinus professes to adhere in his reporting of the data drawn from past sources, and that can also be found in the writings of Tertullian and Augustine.[150] Also in the prefatory letter, von Martels identified the connection of the three concepts of *antiquitas*, *universitas*, and *consensio*, which Solinus was the first to combine with the intention of determining an ancient universal truth as the ultimate authority that could confer prestige upon his work, and which would be later reprised, in much the same way, by the abbot Vincentius Lirinensis in his treatise on the universality of the Catholic faith.[151] Whichever the original sources of such expressions, and whichever relationship of direct dependence (if any) between Solinus and these authors - who lived immediately before, during, or after his time - von Martels concluded by suggesting that such correspondences and similarities should be sufficient evidence as to the author's acquaintance with Christian circles, in which those expressions were popular.

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[148] von Martels (2003) pp. 75-76.
[149] von Martels (2003) p. 77.
[150] von Martels (2003) p. 78.
[151] von Martels (2003) pp. 64-74.

Traces of Christian values and biblical language are, however, not limited to the praise or condemnation of human moral traits or to the author's declaration of intents, but also appear within Solinus' description of animal creatures. Most peculiar is, in the zoological paragraphs of the *Collectanea,* the representation of snakes, which are portrayed in a far more negative light than any other beast, be it harmful to humans or not.[152] Venomous creatures in general are often the subject of Solinus' cautionary tales on the deadly effects of their encounters with humans; snakes, however, seem to be particularly deserving of his hatred, as well as of the highest number of mentions throughout the text. For, in addition to the description of 14 different species and genera (both real and fictional), snakes are also mentioned in the context of the account of their unfriendly interactions with other animals, as well as in the author's assessment of the dangerousness of certain regions (for which the absence or presence of snakes seems to constitute a determining factor) for a total of 41 occurrences of the Latin word for 'snake', in the forms of *serpens* (24 occurrences), *anguis* (12) and *draco* (5).[153] The representation of venomous snakes in Latin literature, and specifically in Latin poetry had, indeed, always been one susceptible of inducing terror in its readers. André Sauvage[154] identified recurring themes in ophiological descriptions present in both Greek and Latin literature - such as a sense of mystery associated with exotic snakes, gigantism, chthonic nature, the symbolism of the different snakeskin colours, a connection with fire and, of course, venom - noting, however, a heightened emphasis on the dangerousness of snake venom and on the most macabre elements of snake anatomy in Latin poetry, compared with the more measured tone of the Greeks.[155]

Such negative literary representation of this animal is in contrast with the overall good repute that snakes (albeit of the non-venomous varieties) enjoyed in the Graeco-

[152] See above pp. 116-118 on Solinus' description of African reptiles.
[153] The two terms of *serpens* and *anguis* seem to be used interchangeably by Solinus, as well as by Pliny before him, since, with the exclusion of Livy, *serpens* was in general the preferred term by authors of prose. As for *draco*, which Solinus uses to identify the python, the term, originally used for fictional monstrous creatures, became in later authors a synonym for snakes of large size. See *TLL* s.vv. *anguis*, *draco* and Sauvage (1975) p. 242.
[154] Sauvage (1975) pp. 241-254.
[155] Sauvage (1975) p. 245, saw an increased taste for horrific details in Latin poetry, "une tendance générale de la poésie latine a donner à l'expression de la terreur et de l'horreur, grâce à la notation de détails extérieurs, une tonalité plus théâtrale que la poésie grecque". See also p. 254: "[L]es Latins ont, dans presque tous les genres poétiques, fourni une représentation de l'animal où les éléments corporels susceptibles d'inspirer la terreur ou le dégoût se trouvent majeurs."

Roman world: they were exhibited in shows and kept as pets,[156] they represented the spirit of the dead, and were associated with the gods of healing and fertility.[157] Within this context, Solinus' portrayal of snakes distinguishes itself not so much for its hostility, as for its application of a poetic optic and language to a prosaic and seemingly scientific description. The use of horror-inducing descriptive language (partly adapted from Lucan) is, however, not the only trait that sets the ophiological paragraphs apart from the rest of Solinus' parade of animals. Solinus' snakes, in fact, not only do not show any of the positive moral traits that he ascribes to some other equally dangerous creatures, but are also deprived of the one feature that represents a Leitmotif in his zoological section: namely the account of their mating and reproductive habits. There is no trace of the admiring, or even endearing tone, with which Solinus describes the care given by several other creatures - predators (tigers and crocodiles) or not (deer, storks, and monkeys) - to their young ones; and the only mention of snake offspring occurs within the praise of the Egyptian Ibis' practice of feeding on snake eggs, thus eradicating that *fetuum noxium*.[158] Nothing in the description of any of the numerous species and genera of snakes of which Solinus gives account is therefore prone to suscitate a sense of relatability in the readers, or to appeal to their eagerness to get to know the role these creatures play in Nature's providential design. Solinus' snakes are not simply dangerous: they are an evil that infests this world and that must be eliminated. The term *malum* occurs, in fact, in its substantive form four times in relation to this creature: the snakes of Africa (27.28), the basilisk (27.50), the flying snakes of Arabia (32.32), and the snakes of Thessalia (40.27) are all referred to by Solinus as a *malum*, and - apart from the crocodile (32.22) - no other beast seems to be deserving of such a damning epithet.

The evil nature of snakes was indeed a trait of the Jewish-Christian tradition, which not only associated the animal with danger, death, and deception, but also saw in it the incarnation of Satan.[159] The first and best known appearance of a snake in the Scriptures is, of course, in *Genesis* where the serpent persuades Eve to defy God's orders by eating

[156] Toynbee (1973) p. 223.
[157] As noted by Toynbee, Latin prose and poetry offer several accounts of the peaceful interactions between humans and harmless snakes and in Rome. See Toynbee (1973) pp. 223-224.
[158] Sol. 32.32.
[159] See Toynbee (1973) p. 223 and Vigouroux (1912) t. V col. 1672.

the forbidden fruit. The snake, "more crafty than any other beast of the field"[160] is consequently condemned by God to be "cursed above all livestock and above all beasts of the field"[161] and to move on its belly and eat dust in eternity. Biblical exegesis, such as that of the French theologian Fulcran Vigouroux, saw the animal's craftiness as the symbol of the control exerted over it by a superior power capable of leading humans into temptation; and it explained God's sentencing of the snake to slither on the ground as the cause of the unfavourable imagery attached to it.[162] All other mentions of this creature throughout both the Old and New Testament, in the form of warnings against the lethality of its venom and its deceiving nature,[163] bear traces of that negative perception given to it by its defiance of God. Finally, John's *Book of Revelation* portrays the serpent as the very incarnation of 'evil', making an explicit association between the animal and the devil himself: "the great dragon, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan" (ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὁ καλούμενος διάβολος καὶ ὁ σατανᾶς*, Rev.* 12.9).[164] The wide circulation of the books of the New Testament, whose attestations in Greek manuscripts had been constant from the second until the sixteenth century,[165] might not necessarily mean that Solinus (or the intellectual circles that he might have frequented as a *grammaticus*) had a direct knowledge of the traditions that they carried, but it certainly implies that their diffusion amongst the general population had caused a shift in values, to which the author would have also been exposed. Solinus' treatment of snakes and their association with the concept of 'evil' likely reflected such change in the perception of the animal in the Graeco-Roman world, so that this and other traces in his text of values and ideas that stemmed from the Jewish-Christian tradition - such as the ones identified by von Martels - can legitimately be read as a sign of his non-indifference to the new religion.

One should not make the mistake to read this as evidence of a hidden Christian agenda, and we must avoid the temptation to depict the author as a member of the Christian community, for the traditional pagan gods are indeed present in the *Collectanea*, not only as eponyms or patrons of cities and regions, but also in the

[160] *Gen.* 3.1. *English Standard Version* translation is used here for all quotations of Biblical passages.
[161] *Gen.* 3.14.
[162] Vigoureux (1912) *ibid.*
[163] Vigouroux (1912) t. V coll. 1673-1674.
[164] See also *Rev*. 20.2: "ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὅς ἐστιν διάβολος καὶ ὁ σατανᾶς."
[165] Jongkind and Williams (2017) p. vi.

context of mythological tales involving the Olympians as active characters, whose agency and existence are hardly ever doubted by Solinus.[166] Yet no reference to paganism is used to enforce a traditional system of belief, and divine power is never, in any form, at the centre of Solinus' world. Unlike Cicero's, and even Pliny's,[167] Solinus' Providence is, in fact, not the result of the intervention of anyone or anything, other than Nature itself; and while Solinus' "eternal Book of Nature" was read in the Middle Ages "as an illustration of the richness of God's creation",[168] it is only Nature's power that is responsible for the wellbeing of all living and non-living things, and that emerges as a lay deity in the author's world order. At a time of increasing Christian presence in a still pagan world, Solinus' work, firmly anchored to its Roman pagan values, acknowledged however the changing religious sentiment, and with its surreptitious nods to the new faith secured an audience of pagans and Christians alike. Solinus' *Collectanea* became the scientific text of reference for the mediaeval readers, whose preference for Solinus over Pliny might have also been dictated by the later author's closer sensitivity to their own. An admirer of Stoic physics but not a Stoic, a promoter of Christian morals but not a Christian, Solinus embodied the intellectual eclecticism of his time and, by embracing elements of both doctrines, provided a philosophical counterpart to the political component of his message of belonging to a universal empire with Rome at its centre.

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[166] In only two instances it is possible to detect a hint of scepticism: the first in the allusion to Minerva's wrath as the cause of the Argive fleet's troubled crossing of the Hellespont on their way back from Troy, and the second in the explanation of the etymology of the island of Naxos after Liber. See Sol. 11.25: "[Hellespontum] ubi post Ilii excidium Argivam classem vel Minervae ira vel, quod certior prodit memoria, sidus Arcturi gravibus adfecit casibus" and 11.28: "Naxos Dionysias quam Naxos prius dicta, vel quod hospita Libero patri vel quod fertilitate vitium vincat ceteras."

[167] While Cicero explicitly talks of a "divine providence" (*divina providentia*, *ND* 2.87; 98), Pliny does not directly associate the concept of Nature's Providence to god's intervention, and he even famously denies the existence of the traditional pagan gods that impersonate human vices and virtues (see Plin. 2.14). However, Pliny does make reference to the Pythagorean and Stoic creed that believed the world "to be a divine being…eternal, immeasurable, a being that never began to exist and never will perish (*numen esse credi par est, aeternum, inmensum, neque genitum neque interiturum umquam*, 2.1), in contrast with Solinus' repeated comparison of the world to a "living being" (*animal*).

[168] von Martels (2003) p. 79.

CONCLUSIONS

At the conclusion of this study, which hopes to have contributed to the rehabilitation of Solinus' reputation, it must be said that the *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* may perhaps never feature in an end-of-year Latin school examination, and that the space devoted to it in Latin literature textbooks is unlikely ever to exceed the few lines (or one paragraph at most), which the author's profile occupies today. Still, despite its many inaccuracies, the unoriginality of much of its material, and the unevenness of its style - which are things that could all be said about Pliny himself, after all - Solinus' work has contributed to modern geography far more than it is given credit for. It is owed to Kai Brodersen's contribution to have first pointed out Solinus' geographical innovations, amongst which his transition from a 'linear' description of the world to one by areas, his use of cardinal points as directions, as well as that of "Mediterranean" and "Orient".[169] Brodersen and Nieto - whose annotated Spanish translation provides to this day the most comprehensive commentary of the *Collectanea* - have also the merit (amongst other scholars)[170] to have shifted the debate from Solinus' sources on to Solinus himself, which is the approach that this thesis has endeavoured to follow.

The reading that has been provided draws from the work of those scholars who already saw a political project behind Solinus' text, such as Bedon[171] and Paniagua,[172] who identified a political and cultural agenda behind Solinus' use of *memorabilia*, or Schmidt who first theorised a connection between Solinus' work and an imperial visit to Rome.[173] This thesis, however, has endeavoured to move further and offer a comprehensive assessment of how different elements of the text, which are seemingly at odds with each other, can actually be read as different parts of one organic project. Specifically, the research object of this thesis has been prompted by the conviction that Solinus' work has been misread and mislabelled as an 'epitome', and that the author's

[169] Brodersen (2011) pp. 84-85.
[170] Robert Bedon, David Paniagua, Fabrizio Feraco, and Fabio Gasti have also written extensively on different aspects of Solinus' text.
[171] See above pp. 130-132.
[172] Paniagua already discussed the "ecumenical and universal value" of Solinus' *memorabilia*, and described his compilatory effort as the attempt at preserving the memory of classical antiquity for the future generations. See Paniagua (2008a) pp. 104-113.
[173] See above pp. 17; 46-47.

project was far bigger and more significant than the mere summary of Pliny's 37 books. And if such conviction alone were not enough to justify this thesis, one should consider the fact that the *Collectanea* was meant as (and ended up being) a vehicle of preservation and transmission of classical knowledge to late antique and medieval readers. What is in fact important, in this regard, is not so much the fortune that the text went on to enjoy, as the very selection of those elements that were deemed worth remembering by Solinus and his readers, and the insight into the cultural sensitivity of late antique Roman society that this selection may provide.

What this insight reveals are the importance to preserve the memory of the past for a society that was at risk of losing it and the need for Solinus' contemporaries to be reminded of Rome's glory and role in the world. Within this context - and to answer the key research question of what the purpose of Solinus' work was - the *Collectanea* reads as a very different project from that of its sources; one that Pliny did not need (and Mela did not want) to undertake: a Roman geography for a changing world, a reminder of the historical and cultural primacy of Rome, a reaction against its loss of political relevance and a rejection of the hellenisation of its history, and a justification of its superior status within a carefully and providentially arranged world order.

The attempt to determine the exact period of such age of transition has been hindered, like many others before, by the scarcity of information on the author, and by the (likely deliberate) absence of explicit chronological references in the text. Building upon the observations of past scholars, this thesis has endeavoured to infer such references from Solinus' words, and particularly from his description of the southern Levant and the eastern borders of the Empire, which would seem to point towards a *terminus post quem* at the reign of Aurelian. Nevertheless, the portrait that emerges of a boundless world reads better as a reflection of a pacified and reunified post-Diocletian society, than a divided empire under the Tetrarchy, or even one marked by political and social instability under the principate of Valerianus and Gallienus, in spite of what Solinus' observation on the short stature of his contemporaries might lead us to believe.

Stylistic innovation is often the reflection of political and social disruption, and if one accepts that Solinus' choice of discontinuity with the tradition of geographical

writing must have been dictated by a change in Rome's status, it is difficult to look at such change as anything other than the threat of cultural and political displacement. It is in this context, therefore, that Solinus' account of the origins of the city should be read, not as the author's display of antiquarianism, but as the literary representation of his reaction to the loss of the traditional political order. A reaction whose most obvious manifestations are Solinus' appeal to the collective memory of his contemporaries and the conflict that ensues between the reception of Greek traditions and the reaffirmation of Roman identity, with the (albeit subtle) refutation of all legends concerning Rome's name and foundation other than the traditional one. Augustus' encomium and the veiled anti-republican stance of the rest of Chapter 1 - along with the use of the first-person plural throughout the text to convey the idea of a common Roman identity of the author and his readers - contribute to an overall imperialistic tone, whose presence can only be fully understood if one first determines which kind of world Solinus was describing, and for which kind of readers his description was intended. As has been argued in the first chapter of this thesis, the investigation into the chronological limits of Solinus' life and the identity of Adventus is, therefore, more than a philological exercise. It is essential to the comprehension of the prominent role reserved to Rome within the text, and it provides the necessary historical contextualisation to the author's use of memory as an instrument of ideological propaganda.

Such use of memory is of course complementary to the role it plays in the readers' understanding of the world order that Solinus aims to justify. Through the catalogue of the natural wonders deemed "worth remembering", the author reveals in fact how the orderly centre that is Rome and the chaotic *limes* coexist within a providentially arranged universe. Within this catalogue, as the second part of this thesis has shown, animal *memorabilia* are what most of all entice a reaction from Solinus, and what lead him to reflect on the scale of Nature's power and agency. It is right through the author's passing remarks on the role designed by Nature for some of its most fantastic creatures that the very structure of a carefully organised world emerges; a world in which the wondrous is present in the human being as much as in all other living things, chaos is kept at bay along a distant frontier, and even the existence of "evil" (in the form of snakes, for example) is contemplated and countered by Nature's providential intervention.

The commentary on animal paradoxography in the fourth chapter of this thesis has, therefore, aimed to explain the philosophical grounds on which Solinus bases his defence of Rome's cultural primacy. This has been further illustrated by the examination of the author's references to the Stoics' physical theory, and the extent to which elements of Stoic physics and Christian morals help him present to his readers a world in which everything has a place and a purpose. At the same time, by adding to the perception of a culturally eclectic age, in which old beliefs coexist with (and are being challenged by) new ones, those elements reveal more on the social and cultural environment that has compelled the author to give a new purpose to the geographical knowledge of the past.

Within this assessment, the reign of Constantine I has emerged as the strongest candidate; the one that best meets all historical and textual requirements, and during which the pagan nostalgia for the glorious past of Rome, faced with the advent of a new Christian and Greek identity hailing from the East, would have been most likely to produce a work such as the *Collectanea*. Its publication on the occasion of Constantine's *adventus* in Rome - or at least of the visit of an important person from the East - would not only suit the assumption that the text was enjoying a wide circulation as early as the middle of the fourth century, but also explain the fact that its popularity soon spread east to Constantinople and made its way into the court of Theodosius II. To make sense, in fact, of the enormous fortune that the *Collectanea* subsequently enjoyed, which somewhat baffles the modern reader, one must consider how elements in its text, along with the suggested circumstances of its publication and divulgation, would have made it palatable to pagan and Christian readers alike.

It is necessary to conclude by acknowledging the limitations of this thesis, insofar as it is largely reliant on personal interpretation, and (in some instances) it has not been able to find the philological support necessary to give factual status to its findings. In the case of Adventus, the suggestion that has been made regarding his identity has aimed to provide a viable alternative to the inconclusive theories of previous scholars, rather than disprove them or pretend to establish an incontrovertible truth. And if this theory should also fail to settle the issue, it will have at least offered a new perspective, which future studies might hopefully deem worth exploring further. It will not be until a

properly thorough examination of all manuscripts of the third class is undertaken, that some new evidence might emerge, which might provide some clarification as to the nature of the second letter and the presence of Adventus' name in it. Long overdue is, after all, a comprehensive review of the manuscript tradition, not only in the hope to find further clues on the identity of Adventus and Solinus himself, but also (and especially) to produce a new critical edition of the *Collectanea*; one that will finally abandon the obsessive quest for its sources, that will put the text and its content at the forefront, and that might even do justice to the "simple schoolteacher" who saw the world around him change and committed himself to the preservation of its memory.

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