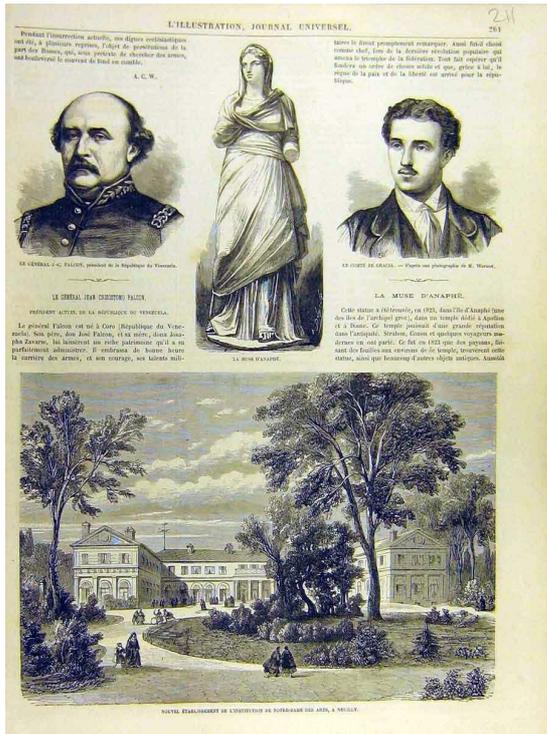


BULLETIN γ

An array of heterogeneous notes that provide points of interaction with the project’s concept.

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LA MUSE D’ANAPHE (PART II)



La Muse d’Anaphé in *L’illustration universelle*, Vol XLII, 1863, Paris, page 262.

...why did the French navy boat return to Toulon empty? Why did the *Muse d’Anaphé* not make her way to France as originally hoped following the heartfelt report from archaeologist Raoul-Roquette? I found clues about the statue’s fate hiding in various sources in the *Archives Nationales de France* in Saint Denis, just outside Paris.

Perhaps, as suggested by history professor Louis Lacroix, the statue could not be acquired by France because of the strict Greek laws on antiquity export<sup>1</sup>. However, none of the official ministerial manuscripts I consulted in Saint Denis indicates Greek law as an impediment to the acquisition of the Muse.

Incidentally and interestingly, Lacroix describes the Muse as having “*the right to be beautiful without*

*necessarily having to be as beautiful as the Vénus de Milo*”.

In his fiery article in the *Annales de la société de agriculture*<sup>2</sup>, author Jules Roussy seems to believe that Greek law is not the root cause of the failed acquisition. Roussy suggests that Greek jurisdiction would not apply in this case as the statue was found in 1823 when Anafi was not part of the Greek Kingdom and when Alby was not a Greek citizen. Why should the newly formed Greek state – states Roussy - be entitled to assert its jurisdiction over this statue bought by a foreigner before Anafi was even a Greek territory? Roussy then insists that the French government simply did not do enough to obtain this very precious statue. Is Roussy right in claiming the only responsible party for the missed acquisition is the French imperial administration? He vehemently regrets that, twenty years after the Raoul-Roquette’s flattering report, the statue is still not in France. He insists that consul Alby was ready to sell the statue to France on condition that the Muse would be granted the same honours and display *grandeur* as the *Vénus de Milo*. He reveals that Alby even refused a 28,000 pound sterling offer from a secretive Englishman, so strong was his desire for the Muse to be displayed at the Louvre.

The short period between 1861 and 1862 is very dense with confusing and contradictory correspondence within the French administration. In particular, a letter of 11 February 1863, from the French Consulate in Santorini to the Fine Arts Ministry in Paris announced the death of consul Alby in October 1862. It also mentioned that it was Alby who did not want to separate himself from the statue until after his death. Alby’s brother was intended to sell it to the Louvre because of his dire financial situation and he regretted he was unfortunately not in a position to donate the artwork. No price was mentioned but the local consulate urged Paris to seriously consider the offer. Is it therefore Alby’s wish the reason for the missed acquisition by the French administration? Did he really want to hold on to the statue until after his death?

But it was most likely one of the Louvre curators that ended the Alby family’s hope to see the Muse ever enter the Louvre collection. A handwritten note of 11 April 1863 to the Director General of the Imperial Museums sheds more light on this. In this bitter note, the curator states that Raoul-Rochette was never sent on an official mission to Santorini in

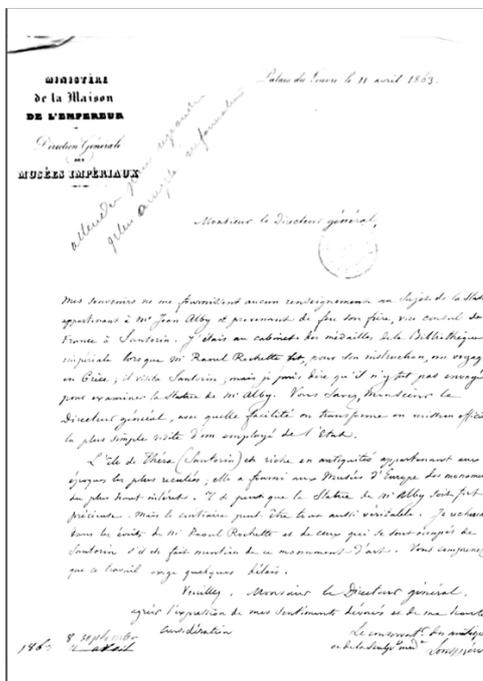
<sup>1</sup> Iles de la Grèce, Louis Lacroix, Firmin Didot Frères, Paris, 1853, p. 489.

<sup>2</sup> Annales de la société d’agriculture, sciences et arts de la Dordogne, XXIII, 1861, p. 183.

the 1830ies and that he acted entirely on a personal basis. In his own snotty words, “*you know, dear Director General, how easily one transforms a private visit of a state employee into an official mission*”. The curator added that there is no reliable official information about the statue and therefore the Louvre should not rush to purchase it. “*The statue could be very valuable, but the opposite might also be true*”. A hand-written response from the Director General on the side of the original note states “*wait to respond, more information needed*”. This was probably the *de facto* end of the French bid to purchase our Muse and a serious blow to the integrity of Raoul-Rochette and his 1838 report.



Picture of Antonio Watrison from the 19-century.



handwritten note of 11 April 1863 to the Director General of the Imperial Museums. Photograph by P Pepe from the Archives Nationales in Saint Denis

The plot thickens significantly in July 1863, when the *Muse d’Anaphé* statue suddenly turns up in Paris. She is hosted in the Sorbonne borough, between the Luxembourg gardens and the Pantheon, at 12 rue Royer-Collard. I discovered this fact thanks to a handwritten letter sent to the French Fine Arts Ministry by a gentleman called Antonio Watrison, a resident of 12 rue Royer-Collard. According to the letter, it is just by absolute chance that Watrison heard of an ancient Greek statue being displayed at the same hotel where he lived. It was brought to Paris by a young Greek man, the nephew of the late consul Alby. The letter also confirmed that consul Alby did not want to separate from this beautiful statue until after his death.

Watrison even quotes the Raoul-Rochette report to substantiate how beautiful the statue was. He also mentions the references of a few journals that had published the Raoul-Rochette report. Watrison concludes by saying he has little to no information about the statue as Alby’s nephew does not speak French, but he does know that he is wishing to sell the Muse and that it would be an absolute shame if such masterpiece were not acquired by a French museum.

Who is Antonio Watrison? How can he have heard about the statue accidentally but at the same time be ready to quote published archaeological reports about it? How did he manage to obtain such references from Alby’s nephew who only spoke Greek? I searched for more information on Watrison and found that he was an esteemed publishing author and commentator? Is this all just a coincidence? Did Watrison really happen to be in the same hotel as the statue or did the statue end up at that address because of him? What is the mystery of 12 rue Royer-Collard? I recently visited this address, after one of my courses, and could not find any hint of anything remarkable.

Back to our story. Watrison’s letter must be the reason why a few days later, still at 12 rue Royer-Collard, the Muse was shown to Mr. Nieuwerkerke, a high-ranking bureaucrat from the French cultural administration. *L’illustration universelle* suggests that Mr. Nieuwerkerke refused to purchase the

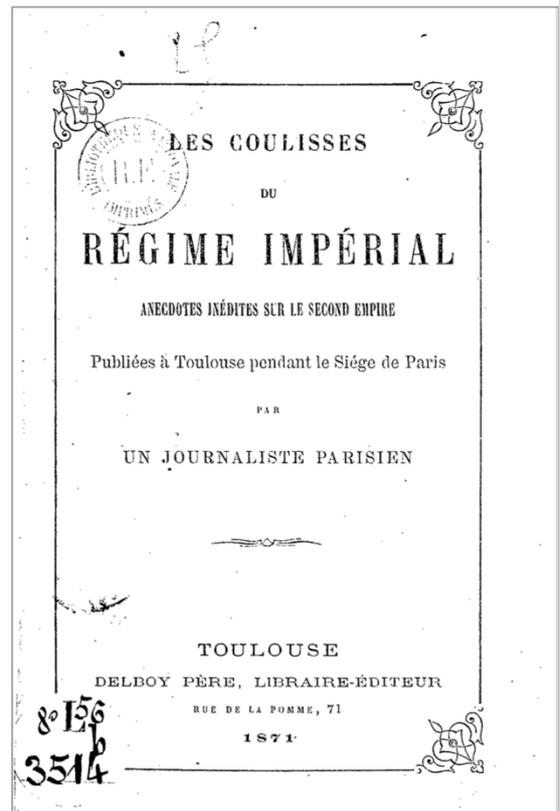
statue, due to the low budget of the Louvre at the time<sup>3</sup>.

However, the real key to this riddle lies in an article published in 1871 by an anonymous journalist, “*un journaliste parisien*”<sup>4</sup>. In this article, aimed at ridiculing the populism of the second French empire, the anonymous journalist vehemently attacks the incompetence of bureaucrat Mr. Nieuwerkerke and mentions his inability to recognize the intrinsic archaeological value of the Muse as a clear indicator of such incompetence. The merciless journalist also reveals that Alby’s nephew, a fierce Greek man, took the statue to Paris, with great sacrifice of money and time. The consul had apparently expressly instructed his heirs to transport the statue to Paris after his death.

The article also states that it was the anonymous journalist himself that gave the name “Muse d’Anaphi” to the statue, as a close friend of the Alby family. He fiercely accuses Mr. de Nieuwerkerke of misdating the statue, denying its value and of putting forward a ludicrous offer of 2,000 francs, while it already cost 3,000 francs to transfer it from Santorini to Paris.

It was this inappropriate offer that triggered the rage of Alby’s nephew, a Greek “*de race et d’esprit*”. Upon receiving the low offer, the Alby’s heir apparently said: “*tomorrow, I will have my stature transported to Boulevard des Italiens, and in the presence of your elegant Parisians, I will destroy it with a hammer, so they can see the contempt our ancient masters would have felt for them if only they could see them*”. The journalist goes on to say that with the help of a few friends he stopped the execution of this dramatic plan, but he could not stop the poor Greek man from dying of a heart attack, eight days later, due to anger, despair and the deception he felt towards France.

The journalist also reveals that, having made noises in the Parisian and international press, he was not at all surprised that, the day after the death of Alby’s nephew, Tsar Alexander of Russia sent a telegraph to Paris and offered 15,000 francs to the Parisian-based surviving heirs of Alby. Within hours, the offer was accepted and Russian ambassador Kiselef had the Muse shipped to the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, of course from 12 rue Royer-Collard.



Les Coulisses du Régime Impérial, Delboy Père, Toulouse, 1871.

For our bitter journalist, it was exclusively the fault of the French Empire and of its incompetent officials if such a masterpiece did not end up in the Louvre and was snatched by the Russians instead.

Who is this anonymous journalist? Is it Jules Roussy? Is it Antonio Watrison? Or is he just another one in this list of mysterious Frenchmen all determined to have the muse move to Paris?

I have not found any other document so far on the French side, but I did find a text from the official Hermitage documentation mentioning our Muse for the last time. It laconically states: “purchased in Paris in 1863”<sup>5</sup>.

I feel there is so much more to be discovered about our Muse. I will return to the dusty folders of Saint Denis.

Piergiorgio Pepe, research notes, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> L’illustration universelle, Vol XLII, 1863, Paris, page 262.

<sup>4</sup> Les Coulisses du Régime Impérial, Delboy Père, Toulouse, 1871, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Ermitage Imperial, Musée de sculpture antique, 1865, p. 93.