

The Soldier, The King, The Gardner, The Tourist: How The Caste, Fortifications and Walls of Nizza/Nice Became a Touristic Site (1821-1888)

Original

The Soldier, The King, The Gardner, The Tourist: How The Caste, Fortifications and Walls of Nizza/Nice Became a Touristic Site (1821-1888) / Pace, Sergio. - In: REVISTA DE HISTÓRIA DA ARTE. - ISSN 1646-1762. - ELETTRONICO. - 13:(2018), pp. 221-243.

Availability:

This version is available at: 11583/2728799 since: 2019-03-20T06:55:03Z

Publisher:

Lisboa: Colibri

Published

DOI:

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Resumo

O mais importante porto do ducado de Sabóia (1388-1720) e do reino da Sardenha (1720-1860) no Mediterrâneo, *Nizza Marittima* – a *Nice* francesa, depois de 1860 – era um assentamento defendido de maneira sofisticada: a partir de uma colina proeminente o castelo dominava a baía, enquanto uma linha de imponentes muralhas cercava a cidade triangular fortificada. Em 1706, o castelo foi destruído em definitivo: gradualmente, todo o sistema de fortificações começou a ser considerado uma relíquia antiquada do passado. Enquanto isso, um número crescente de turistas estrangeiros começou a desfrutar da suavidade do clima na costa, durante o Inverno. Um século depois, o castelo não passava de um amontoado inútil de ruínas, enquanto as muralhas não eram mais do que um obstáculo ao crescimento da nova *Nizza*. Assim, desde a década de 1820, a área do morro foi transformada num jardim luxuoso, permitindo desfrutar o maravilhoso *panorama* de 360°. Inesperadamente, em 1860, o turista já tinha substituído vitoriosamente o soldado. ●

Abstract

The most important harbour on the Mediterranean of the Duchy of Savoy (1388-1720) and Kingdom of Sardinia (1720-1860), *Nizza Marittima* – the French *Nice*, after 1860 – was a sophisticatedly defended settlement: from a prominent hill the fortified castle dominated the bay, while a line of mighty walls surrounded the fortified triangular town. In 1706, the castle was positively destroyed: gradually, the whole system of fortifications came to be regarded as an old-fashioned relic of the past. In the meanwhile, an increasing number of foreign tourists started to enjoy the mildness of the weather on the coast, during the winter season. One century later, the castle was nothing but a useless heap of ruins, while the walls were just an obstacle to the growth of the new *Nizza*. Thus, from the 1820s onwards, the area on the hill was transformed into a luxurious garden, allowing for the enjoyment of the marvellous 360° *panorama*. Quite unexpectedly, by 1860 the tourist had already victoriously replaced the soldier. ●

Arbitragem Científica Peer Review

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palavras-chave

NIZZA/NICE

FORTIFICAÇÕES

JARDIM

TURISMO

keywords

NIZZA/NICE

FORTIFICATIONS

GARDENS

TOURISM

Data de Submissão

Date of Submission

Out. 2017

Data de Aceitação

Date of Approval

Jan. 2018

THE SOLDIER, THE KING, THE GARDENER AND THE TOURIST: HOW THE CASTLE, FORTIFICATIONS AND WALLS OF NIZZA/NICE BECAME A TOURISTIC SITE (1821-1888)

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Today's Nice is not yesterday's Nice. She has long since abandoned the steep rock, which was her cradle, to the burial of her dead. Both cities and individuals change, morally and physically. She has left the male and warlike virtues of her ancestors, with the remains of their houses, on the height from which she descends. Instead of a barren rock, today's Nice needs a gentle plane, where she can tread the grass with her delicate feet; she needs pleasures instead of combats, love songs instead of war-shouts¹.

¹ "Nice d'aujourd'hui n'est plus Nice d'autrefois. Elle a abandonné depuis longtemps à la sépulture de ses morts le rocher escarpé qui fut son berceau. Les cités comme les individus changent au moral et au physique. Elle a laissé sur la hauteur dont elle est descendue avec les débris de ses maisons les vertus mâles et guerrières de ses ancêtres. Il faut à la Nice d'aujourd'hui, au lieu d'un roc stérile, une plaine riante dont elle puisse fouler le gazon de ses pieds délicats; des plaisirs au lieu de combats; des chants d'amour au lieu de cris de guerre." [Tourtoulon] 1852, 30 (author's translation).

Before evolving into the sumptuous capital of the French Riviera, Nice was officially known as *Nizza Marittima*. With little interruption, for a very long time, the city was an integral part of the Duchy of Savoy (1388-1720), then of the Kingdom of Sardinia (1720-1860), and the most important harbour on the Mediterranean coast at least until 1815 (Ortolani 2012). Due to its strategic location, for centuries Nizza had been a sophisticatedly defended settlement: on a prominent hill, looking over the sea, the fortified castle dominated the bay; down the hill to the seashore, the fortified triangular town was surrounded by mighty walls looking west, along the river *Paglione* or *Paillon*.

In 1706, the castle was taken by the French army, and destroyed: it would never be rebuilt. Moreover, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the city also



started to expand eastward, thanks to the new *Porto di Limpia*. As a result, after the Napoleonic years, the whole system of fortifications was regarded as an old-fashioned relic of the past: the newly-restored Nizza seemed to be destined to become something completely different.

An increasing number of foreign visitors – in French known as *hivernants*, as they usually spent their winter in town – arrived on the coast (Aillagon 2017, 138-170). Mainly from the United Kingdom, they enjoyed the mildness of the weather, spending weeks and months in this sunny corner of Europe. Inevitably, the old town

Fig. 1 – Plan parcellaire de la ville de Nice chef-lieu du département des Alpes-Maritimes, 1812. Nice, Archives Municipales, G.27.



Fig. 2 – Clément Roassal, *Vue des Ponchettes*, 1820 ca. Private collection.

² “Toute recherche pour donner une idée de l’ancienne Ville sur le château serait superflue. Les fortifications qui l’ont remplacée, et les bouleversements que les mines y ont opérés ont changé la face des lieux et fait oublier les anciennes dénominations.”

started to look inadequate (Boyer 2005, 163-180). The narrow streets and few squares turned out to be not exactly what English tourists would expect as the setting for their vacations (Hale 2009, 59-67). Such a wealthy and demanding international *élite* started to look elsewhere for more enchanting locations in which to live and spend its abundant leisure time (Bottaro 2014).

Until the second decade of the nineteenth century, the place where the glorious castle had been was little more than a promontory between the town and the port. After all those years and troubles, almost nothing had been preserved of the original fortified town of *Nikaia*, first founded on the top of this cliff presumably in the fourth century B.C. (*Guide des étrangers* 1827, 8)². On the top of the hill,

the remains were regarded as nothing but a useless heap of ruins while, down the hill, the remains of the walls along the river and shore were just an obstacle to the growth of the new Nizza³. The “once invincible” fortress was regarded as nothing more than a melancholic relic (Sulzer 1780, 176), while the new port (to the east) and the old town (to the west) were divided by “the cliff”, whose only charm was to be appreciated when the sea waves crashed on it furiously (Millin 1816, 87)⁴.

Un pubblico passeggio, or how the old Castle of Nizza was thoroughly redesigned

Nevertheless, in the early nineteenth century, a new age arrived. Charles Felix – *alias* Carlo Felice Giuseppe Maria, duke of Savoy – was crowned king of Sardinia on 25 April 1821. Until his death in 1831, many things began to change in his small but strategic kingdom: among them, the political, economic, and cultural destiny of the remote county of Nizza, more and more evidently bound to be transformed into a privileged location for foreign, wealthy *hivernants* (Pace 2017). In particular, two major processes were planned and financed by the Municipality and the Crown in the 1820-1830s.

On the one hand, on 30 July 1823 the king decreed that the old bastions along the river *Paglione* were gradually to be transformed into a riverfront, connecting the old town to the new borough of the *Croce di Marmo*, whose expansion was being determined by the newly-born *Cammino degli Inglesi*, namely the future world-famous *Promenade des Anglais*. On the other, and even more interestingly, the king donated the area upon the cliff to the municipality, which almost immediately started to transform it into a luxurious garden.

Evidently, the pivotal event which triggered the whole process had been the loss of centrality that the ports of Nizza and Villafranca [Villefranche] had suffered, due to the inclusion of Genoa within the borders of the newly restored kingdom. Becoming part of Liguria, that is the “immense amphitheatre” spanning from Tuscany to France (Bertolotti 1834, 2: 67), Nizza could do nothing but look for a brand-new role in local economies and politics. The chronological coincidence of the construction of the *Cammino degli Inglesi* along the seashore, the transformation of the castle into a park and, finally, the complete demolition of the city wall along the river was not fortuitous at all. The aims were concurrently economic and political: local *élites* regarded tourism – whatever this might have meant at the beginning of the nineteenth century – as crucial to the development of the city after 1814-1815. In fact, the term *tourism* may not be adequate to properly describe such a multifaceted context (Boyer 2005, 6). Foreign *hivernants*, spending their winter on the Riviera, were not exactly tourists, first because they generally inhabited these places for a long while, though without becoming locals⁵. They would rent apart-

³ On the long and complicated vicissitudes of the site, and namely of its archaeological remains, see Ghiraldi (2006) and especially Bouiron (2007-2008), who recorded an impressive amount of visual and written documents, as well as rough but essential data; the editor’s studies have also been condensed in Bouiron (2013). A well-illustrated summary on the whole case study has been recently published by Bodinier (2015).

⁴ Millin’s description of the route connecting the terrace of the *Poncette* and the *Porto di Lìmpia* – now the windy *Quai de Rauba Capeu*, meaning the *hat-stealing quay* in Nissart – is noticeably romantic: “En descendant vers le levant de cette belle et majestueuse terrasse, on arrive à un chemin qui a été fait autour du rocher, dont on suit les sinuosités comme sur un balcon; lorsque la mer est élevée, les vagues viennent s’y briser avec effort: la violence du choc fait jaillir l’eau à une hauteur considérable; et, en retombant en cascades sur ces aspérités, elle produit un effet difficile à rendre”.

⁵ The most recent and detailed history of tourism in the *Contea di Nizza*, or Département des Alpes-Maritimes since 1860, is Bottaro et al. 2013, in particular, for its early years, see the chapter “La recherche du confort climatique”, pages 9-97.



Fig. 3 – Clément Roassal, *Vue de la colline du Château*, 1828-1832. Nice, Bibliothèque du Chevalier de Cessole.

ments or, less frequently, sumptuous villas in the countryside for the whole season and spend their abundant leisure time enjoying the extraordinary charm of the natural surroundings or the minor pleasures of a rather modest social life. Other foreigners would pass through Nizza more quickly, spending only a few weeks or days in town, on their way from north-western Europe, and especially the British Isles, to Italy. Although Marseille and Genoa were much safer and better equipped harbours, Nizza could be a comfortable stop-over in their *grand tour* towards Florence, Rome, Pompei and other Italian *mirabilia*.

In such circumstances, the *Cammino* should not be regarded as a public intervention on the outskirts of the town, since it came out of the reconfiguration of a number of private properties between the seashore and the *Strada di Francia*. Nevertheless, local authorities encouraged it explicitly, regarding it as an essential tool for growth: “the aim of this work was to make poor people work and provide the foreign and sick inhabitants of the *faubourg* with a healthful and pleasant walk” (*Guide des étrangers* 1827, 115)⁶. Actually, the strategy turned out to be quite successful: the transformation of the *bord de mer* into the *Cammino* finally launched Nizza as a world-famous *station balnéaire* (Barelli 2015)⁷.

As a private investment, the completion of the *Cammino degli Inglesi* turned out to be rather fast, which was definitely not the case for the other interventions. Nevertheless, and quite paradoxically, the new park on the hill – whose renovation took over sixty years – gained fame and attracted visitors well before its completion. The process began under the impulse of Alessandro Crotti di Costigliole (1774-1830),

⁶ “Le but de cet ouvrage fut de faire travailler les pauvres, et de procurer aux étrangers, et surtout aux malades habitans au faubourg, une promenade saine et agréable” (author’s translation).

⁷ On the development of winter and/or summer sea-bathing, in Nizza and other locations, see Urbain 1994 and Toulhier 2016.

who was appointed *intendente generale* of the *divisione di Nizza* in 1819⁸, while the first phase of the new life of the castle began on 6 December 1821, when the municipality made a plea to the king to donate the area: the aim was to create “a public walk, which would be just as pleasant as its position is unique, and unique for the beautiful views that, from all its parts, any eye can discover”⁹. The state of the place seemed to demand some kind of urgent intervention, as it looked – in some of the many engravings, mostly destined for foreign visitors¹⁰ – completely separated from the city and somewhat wild, if compared to the dense urban fabric below and the new uses of the terrace of the *Poncette*, more and more dedicated to leisurely walks and the romantic contemplation of the seascape.

After a few months, the king responded to the plea and signed his *lettere patenti* in Genoa on 3 May 1822. Surprisingly, the goal was explicit: in the king’s words, his resolution was only determined by the presence of the wealthy *hivernants* in Nice, who provided money (*il lucro*) to the city and, therefore, needed a beautiful and salubrious environment in which to live¹¹. The Ministry of War and Navy only succeeded in saving the bastion and a few other military devices, still in place but at this point effectively useless.

In spite of the rapid royal decision, it was not clear yet how the municipality could rearrange the area, to say nothing about some of the complicated issues arising from the private properties still located there: consequently, the debate went on for years. Such difficulties must not be underestimated, considering that the reform of the hill would probably have been impossible if it was not to be included in the general reform of the city, down the hill and beyond the river *Paglione*, where the old military bastions rapidly started to change into a charming *promenade*¹². The late 1820s have been identified as crucial and the new *piano regolatore della città di Nizza Marittima* – designed by the municipal architect, Gio. Antonio Escoffier, helped by the geometer Louis Trabaud, in 1824–1825, approved by the municipality on 4–5 June 1829 and by King Charles Albert three years later – would set the rules for the next decades, even after the annexation to France in 1860 (Graff 2000, 52–57)¹³. In particular, the *lettere patenti*, signed on 26 May 1832, both created the municipal *Consiglio d’Ornato*, the institutional engine for the urban change in the following years, and included a *regolamento*, whose clause n. 22 explicitly mentioned the castle and the city walls, confirming the intentions decreed by King Charles Felix ten years before¹⁴. Anticipating the final royal approval of the plan, in 1831 the municipality gave the usufruct of the property of the castle to the *Regia Camera di Agricoltura e di Commercio*, which was thus entrusted with the new plantation¹⁵.

Gradually, the few inhabitants of the hill were relocated elsewhere in the old town, while all military uses became forbidden. Thanks to its relatively isolated position, the area had been a haven for many illegal activities: in the late 1830s the police still made frequent attempts to throw criminals and prostitutes out, in order to regain complete possession of what evidently seemed a waste land; in the meantime, the *Regia Camera* decided to fence the whole hill, leaving just two gated entrances from the port and the old town, to be opened at sunrise and closed at sunset. The

Fig. 4 – *Pianta generale del Promontorio su cui giace il distrutto Castello della Città di Nizza*, 1832. Nice, Archives Municipales, 1.Fi.2–24.

⁸ *Regie patenti*, 12 August 1819: cf. *Raccolta di Regj Editti* [1820], 142. The *divisione di Nizza* was an administrative division of the Kingdom of Sardinia, established in 1818 and replaced in 1859 by the *provincia di Nizza*: see Bracq et al. 2010, 173–185.

⁹ “Riuscirebbe molto vantaggiosa la concessione del Castello mentre formandosi in esso delle vie ed aditi con piantagioni d’alberi se ne formerebbe un pubblico passeggio, che sarebbe altrettanto ameno quanto la di lui posizione trovasi singolare ed unica per i bellissimi punti di vista che da tutte le sue parti scopre l’occhio”: see Archives Municipales de Nice (AMN), s. O, n. 3/17, *Pièces relatives à la concession des terrains du château à la ville (1821–1839)*.

¹⁰ For instance, see Hippolyte Caïs de Pierlas (drawer) and Comte de Lasteyrie (engraver), *Vue de la Terrasse et du Château de Nice*, 1821.

¹¹ “Nella mira di abbellire i contorni di quella città con pubblici passeggi e piantagioni per rendere viepiù salubre e gradevole il soggiorno, che varie ricche famiglie forestiere si fanno durante la stagione d’inverno”: see the manuscript copy of the decree in AMN, s. O, n. 3/17, *Pièces relatives à la concession des terrains du château à la ville (1821–1839)*.

¹² A manuscript copy of a deeply detailed *Ragionamento in sostegno del Piano di abbellimento e di via pubblica sui nuovi Baluardi della Città di Nizza Marittima*, signed on 31 March 1826, is in AMN, s. O, n. 4/1, cart. 2.

¹³ *Piano Regolatore della Città di Nizza Marittima redatto sulle basi del voto emesso dal Congresso permanente d’acque e strade*, in AMN, s. O, n. 4/1 (1820–1864. *Plan régulateur. Documents généraux, pièces officielles*). As regards the history of the urban landscape of Nizza until 1860, see also Castela 2012, 57–149.

many reports, signed by Agostino Millo as “caretaker and waterer of the plants and herbs rooted on the old Castle”, made reference to an enchanting garden that was difficult to protect, due to its position¹⁶.

Between the lines of the abundant documentation concerning the security of the castle and exchanged between the *Regia Camera*, the police and the municipality, it became evident that the brand-new garden must not only be pleasant but also safe for any visitor. Foreign tourists were implicitly but inevitably regarded as the first and most important referees: by means of such a deep environmental and social cleansing, they were to be saved from any kind of moral and/or criminal inconvenience. In the meanwhile, the trees and plants grew more and more abundant. A number of the most illustrious administrators of the *Regia Camera* shared all the responsibilities: in particular, the famous scientist Giuseppe Antonio [or Joseph-Antoine] Risso (1777-1845) was appointed as the main botanist for the park’s new plantation in the early 1830s, when he took charge of the afforestation of the site with innumerable exotic species. After his death, other members of the *Regia Camera*, such as Baron Luigi Millonis, carried on his work until 1858, when the institution had to give the now restored area back to the municipality¹⁷.

Over the years, the transformation of the military ruins into a garden became a long and expensive task, though its ultimate objective was never called into question. In particular, the *Pianta generale del promontorio*, signed by the municipal architect Giuseppe [or Joseph] Vernier on 20 November 1845, quite meticulously described what the new *piano regolatore* had planned for the top of the glorious hill and, moreover, what had already been realized in the meanwhile¹⁸. Most of the avenues had been created and trees had been planted, in particular in the northern part of the site, towards the cemeteries and the *Porto de Limpia*; few military relics still remained on site – a *magazzino d’artiglieria*, a *batteria*, some fragments of the walls with their *rastelli* [gates], the *torre Sant’Elmo*, renamed *Bellanda* – but all the rest had disappeared, reshaped into a luxuriant green *plateau*. However, the ascent to the top was still to be completed: according to the drawing, a new flight of easily accessible steps would allow the visitor to reach the *torre* directly from the seaside, where the *strada delle Poncette* ended; once at the top, he or she would find a large boulevard, planted with a double row of trees, leading either north, towards the cemeteries, or east, towards the terrace overlooking the *Porto de Limpia*; from there, via a polygonal spiral path, the boulevard would go up to the highest point of the hill, where an elliptical open space would be dominated by a commemorative obelisk, in memory of either the Savoy family or the city of Nizza.

The feeble monumentalization of the place came as no surprise. Evidently, nobody seemed to care about who or what the municipality had to celebrate, while every single detail, carefully determined, was intended to create a pleasant walk in the newly planted tree-lined avenues, looking for the most beautiful *belvedere*, as if a full-scale enchanting *panorama* had been newly generated.

In all those years, though aiming for the radical transformation of a military zone into a green area, apparently nobody dealt with one crucial issue: its water

¹⁴ “Rimarranno tuttavia ferme in ogni loro parte le condizioni imposte nella Sovrana concessione fatta da S. M. il Re Carlo Felice alla Città di Nizza, del promontorio su cui giaceva l’antico castello, come pure quelle concernenti alla batteria da ricostruirsi in vicinanza del luogo ove il torrente Paglione sbocca nel mare, ed all’attiguo muro di cinta verso mezzogiorno”: see *Regie Lettere Patenti, in data del 26 di maggio 1832, per le quali S. M. approva il piano regolatore delle opere d’abbellimento, e d’ingrandimento della città di Nizza marittima, insieme coll’annesso regolamento, che dovrà essere di norma all’esecuzione del piano*, Torino: Stamperia Reale [1832], in AMN, s. O, n. 4/1, cart. 1.

¹⁵ Archives Départementales des Alpes-Maritimes, Nice (ADN), s. 033J, *Archives de la Chambre de Commerce et d’Industrie de Nice Côte d’Azur*; n. 0023, *Château de Nice. Aménagement des terrains du château en parc public, travaux de plantations, surveillance du parc: instructions, rapports, états des travaux, schémas concernant les fontaines, actes de locations, correspondance (1828-57)*; more useful documents are in the same archives, s. 01FS (*Intendance générale de Nice*), n. 0590 (*Colline du château de Nice*).

¹⁶ Millo was the “custode e irrigatore delle piante ed erbe radicate nel vecchio castello”, according to one of his many *Rapports du garde du Vieux-Château à la chambre d’agriculture et de commerce de Nice*, in AMN, s. F, n. 3/03.

¹⁷ In 1855 the municipality placed a commemorative plaque of such works in one of the avenues in the park, where it still stands.

¹⁸ *Pianta generale del Promontorio su cui giaceva il distrutto Castello della Città di Nizza Marittima indicante lo stato in cui trovasi al giorno d’oggi le proprietà particolari limitrofe, le ultime concessioni di terreno fattevi per parte del Regio Demanio e la superficie di cui la Città di Nizza chiede la Concessione a conferma delle Regie patenti del 26 maggio 1832*, in AMN, s. 1F12, n. 24.

Fig. 5 – Pietro Righini, *Festa della pesca a Nizza con Carlo Felice e Maria Cristina di Savoia*, 1839-1842. Polo Museale del Piemonte, Castello ducale di Agliè.



¹⁹ ADN, s. 033J (*Archives de la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Nice Côte d'Azur*), n. 0023 (*Château de Nice*).

²⁰ The author dedicated the *sixième promenade* of his book to the castle (Negrin 1867, 43-56). In the following years, the sixteenth century well – the so-called *devil's well* – would be occupied by the elevator leading from the *Ponchettes* to the upper level.

²¹ On the works for the source of Sainte-Thècle see Lacroix and Bracq 2007, 77-79.

²² *Projet de diversion de la cascade du château, plan des diversions, conduites des eaux aux égouts de la vieille ville, plan général du château, vieille ville*, in AMN, s. O, ss. 1.0 (*Réseaux de distribution et d'assainissement, 1862-1976*), cart. 8 (1881-1895. *Canal de la Vésubie, rigoles secondaires et tertiaires. bouches, filtres*), n. 5-7.

supply. A sixteenth century pit had been filled in 1706, then cleared during the revolutionary years and, finally, vaulted in 1830: it could still give access to a water source, indispensable to all flowers and plants. For this purpose, in 1837-1838 the *Regia Camera* decided to build a circular water tank, with a capacity of up to 240 m³; another smaller semi-circular tank was realized in August 1840¹⁹. Thus, plants and trees could be bedded out, also thanks to some generous benefactor. At the end of the 1860s, the administration still considered scheduling more works, to be executed by either the municipality or some private contractor (Negrin 1867, 45)²⁰.

In fact, during the summer seasons, Nice often suffered from extreme drought, while the network for its water supply was not proportionate to the needs of an aspiring year-round vacation city (Lacroix 2003). The solution to all these problems was found in the secondary outcome of the construction of the *Canal de la Vésubie*, a colossal infrastructure already conceived in the 1840s and finally realized in 1869-1885 (Lacroix 2003, 188-199). Derived at Saint-Jean-la-Rivière, the waters of this river were to be brought down to Nice, after a journey of over 30 km. After its opening in 1884, it was to provide 275,000 m³ per day to the whole town.

By means of such new equipment, the irrigation of the park rapidly became efficient, allowing for a rich and diversified horticultural activity²¹. Thanks to the new source, in 1885 some neglected ruins of the old *donjon* could be transformed into a small decorative cascade; in 1887 the project was expanded and the municipal engineer Berne imagined a monumental cascade, made of three different levels and articulated in different grottos, destined to become both an overflow to the basins of the first modern water supply in Nice and, moreover, the superb backdrop of the whole *baie des Anges*²². In 1888, the large amount of money, left by the benefactor Jean-Charles Lesage (1789-1883) as a gift to the city, allowed for

the construction of the homonymous *escalier*, finally giving direct access from the *Ponchettes* to the *tour Bellanda*.

Thus, the system was completed. All narratives – paintings and photographs, diaries and novels, posters and postcards, movies and selfies – finally found their landscape icon²³.

L’artillerie des ondes, or how the old Castle of Nizza was thoroughly revisited

It took time to turn into reality what the *piano regolatore* had conceived for the hill. When Montolivo and Dyonnet published their *Plan de la ville de Nice* in 1856, a good deal of work was evidently still to be done²⁴. Nevertheless, according to other visual and literary sources, the new life of the site had already begun, many years before, as if it had been long-awaited.

The narratives around one of the most eminent constructions of the former castle, the *torre Bellanda*, epitomised the early birth of the myth. In August 1823, the member of the *Regia Camera di Commercio* and consul of Naples in Nizza, Onorato Clerici (or Clerissi according to the French spelling), acquired the ruins of the *torre Sant’Elmo*, once the colossal fortified bastion on the castle hill where the State Treasury and even the Holy Shroud had been enshrined in the sixteenth century. Quite soon, he started to transform the military structure into something completely different: not a house, not a public building, but just a *belvedere*,

²³ The ADN have an impressive iconographic collection of the park and the cascade, to be explored and thoroughly analysed: in this perspective, many methodological suggestions on “iconography and landscape”, first made by Daniels and Cosgrove 1988, could still be extremely useful.

²⁴ *Plan de la ville de Nice, dressé par Ch. Montolivo; gravé par Ch. Dyonnet*, lithography, Nice: B. Visconti, 1856.

Fig. 6 – Claude Perrin, *Vue panoramique de la colline du Château*, 1840 ca. Nice, Archives Départementales des Alpes-Maritimes, 05Fi.330.

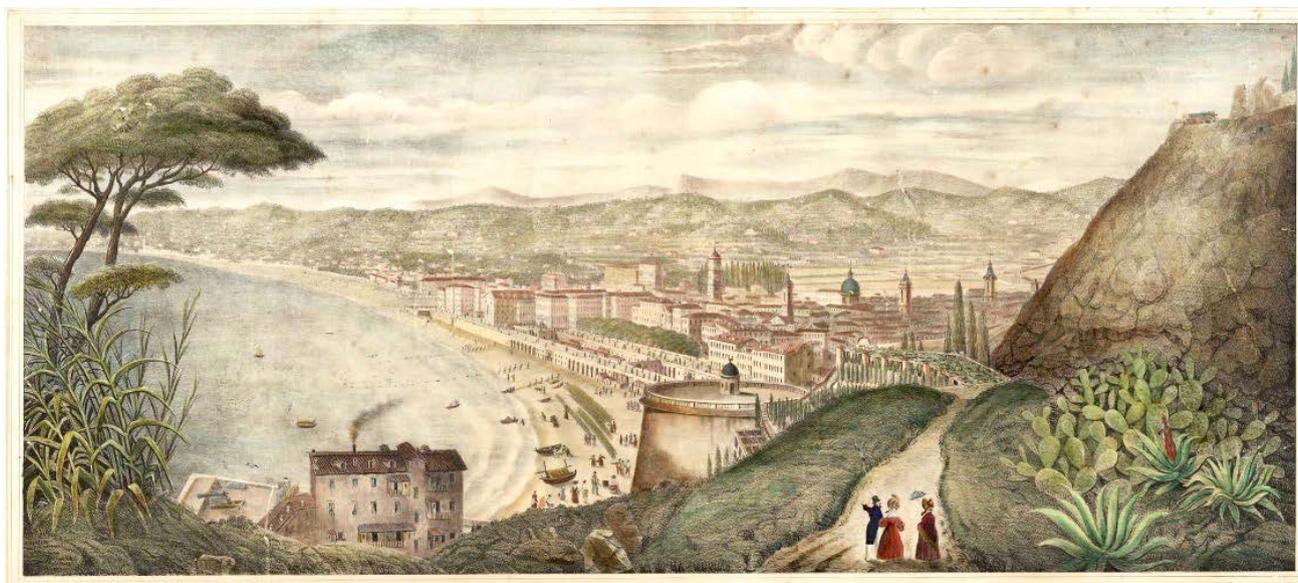


Fig. 7 – Nice en 1848. Archives Départementales des Alpes-Maritimes, 05Fi.47.

²⁵ Paolo-Emilio [or Paul-Emile] Barberi (drawer) and François Le Vilain (engraver), *Vue de la tour de Clerissi, à Nice*, in *Album ou Souvenir de la Ville de Nice (Maritime) et de ses environs, Dessiné et Lithographié par le Ch.r Barberi (P. E.) Professeur d'Architecture et de Peinture des Ecoles de la Ville de Nice, et ancien Professeur de dessin du Lycée et du Collège*, Nice: Société typographique, [1834], ill. 9.

²⁶ A later record of the event was Pietro Righini's *Festa della pesca a Nizza con Carlo Felice e Maria Cristina di Savoia* [The fishing party in Nice with Charles Felix and Mary Christine of Savoy], where the tower can be appreciated as dominating the hill in the background (fig. 5).

²⁷ On guidebooks for travellers a heated debate has been carried on, at least since the 1980s, when a clear distinction between travel and tourism was finally made. As Paul Fussell put it, "tourism simulates travel, sometimes quite closely [...]. But it is different in crucial ways. It is not self-directed but externally directed. You go not where you want to go but where the industry has decreed you shall go. Tourism soothes you by comfort and familiarity and shields you from the shocks of novelty and oddity. It confirms your prior view of the world instead of shaking it up. Tourism requires that you see conventional things, and that you see them in a conventional way" (Fussell 1987, 651). Generally, such a distinction is considered to work for later years, but some specific places in Europe – such as the seaside resorts, Brighton and the English coast first, but also the coast around Nizza – might have developed this dichotomy even before the invention of mass tourism: see Urry (1990) 2012, 16–37.

²⁸ "Ce lieu qui a été si long-tems un objet de terreur et le centre de tous les fléaux de la guerre deviendra un site enchanteur, où de bosquets à l'anglaise, des bois touffus, des allées délicieuses remplaceront les batteries, les casemates et les mines" (author's translation).



made both to enjoy the stunning view of the bay and spot the hill from the bay²⁵. Clerici had his first opportunity to show off the grandness of his work during the official visit of King Charles Felix, in late 1826. In his honour, the city organized a sumptuous party on 30 November, held in an ephemeral ballroom built on a terrace next to Palazzo Radicati. There, in front of more than 600 guests, a purposely composed *opera* – *Ercole al passaggio delle Alpi* – was staged: at the end of the third act, the passage of the Alps was represented quite dramatically, thanks to the lighting of the whole terrace and the newly restored *torre Clerici*, decorated as a part of the stage set, in the background (*Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie* 1826, 1158–1159)²⁶.

A half-artificial and half-natural theatre, a number of bewitched spectators, the cliff as the protagonist of a unique sound-and-light show ... everything suggested that something was worth watching. In fact, many authors reported this and other events, quite carefully: as it happened in other European countries, between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the multifarious travel literature is a precious companion in order to discover what early tourists ought to have visited and, moreover, how they were supposed to visit it. The many guides for foreign travellers, also increasingly popular on the *Riviera* in Italian, French or English by the end of the 1820s²⁷, explicitly testified that the old castle – having been "an object of terror" for a long time – was rapidly becoming "an enchanting site, where groves à l'anglaise, thick woods, delicate alleys [would] replace the batteries, casemates and mines" (*Guide des étrangers* 1827, 85)²⁸. The place, once a defensive structure and military observation deck, was being thoroughly reshaped and reconsidered as a touristic area, where both residents and *hivernants* could enjoy the breathtaking view of the whole bay. Together with other signs, this was perhaps the first real sparkle for the new life of Nizza. The old peripheral military outpost started to become the new holiday town, in particular when its inaccessible fortifications,



made for watching without being spotted, were transformed into the platform for a magnificent 360° experience.

Coupled with paintings and engravings, the many tourists' writings – diaries, letters, novels... – are an inexhaustible mine for exploring the newly reborn town, too (Jones 2004, 105-128)²⁹. In 1831 an illustrious visitor, Hector Berlioz, was hosted at Clerici's residence, where he rented "a lovely room [...] on a small fortified mountain". Immediately, he was captivated by the beauty of the scenery: as he wrote to his family on 21 April, "I have a delightful room with windows overlooking the sea.

Fig. 8 – Charles Montolivo, Charles Dyonnet. *Plan de la ville de Nice*, Nice: B. Visconti, 1856.

²⁹ More generally, an essential introduction to travel literature of all genres is provided by Speake 2003, *passim*.



Fig. 9 – *Plan de la ville de Nice et de ses faubourgs avec le tracé des alignements approuvés*, 1860. Nice, Archives Municipales, 1.Fi.1/18.

³⁰ “J’ai un appartement délicieux dont les fenêtres donnent sur la mer. Je suis tout accoutumé au continuel râlement des vagues; le matin, quand j’ouvre ma fenêtre, c’est superbe de voir les crêtes accourir comme la crinière ondoyante d’une troupe de chevaux blancs. Je m’endors au bruit de l’artillerie des ondes, battant en brèche le rocher sur lequel est bâtie ma maison” (author’s translation).

I have got used to the continuous moan of the waves. When I open my window in the morning, it is wonderful to watch the crests approaching like the undulating mane of a squadron of white horses. I go to sleep to the sound of the artillery of the waves, which crash against the rock on which my house is built” (Berlioz 1972, 219)³⁰. The *artillerie des ondes*... no metaphor could be more appropriate for such a place. All authors apparently repeated the same rhetorical scheme. At first, there was an unbeatable bastion, recently transformed into a wonderful terrace with a view: from this perspective, the former *torre sant’Elmo*, then *Clerici* or *Clerissi* and what was finally renamed *Bellanda* in 1844, played a crucial role in brilliantly inventing such a late-romantic landscape³¹. Albeit far from being completed³², by the end of the 1830s the park on the top of the hill was already considered a must-see location, soon regarded as the visual pivot of the whole coast and



Fig. 10 – *Vue prise de la hauteur de l'ancien château*, 1864. Nice, Archives Départementales des Alpes-Maritimes, 02NUM.03549/03.

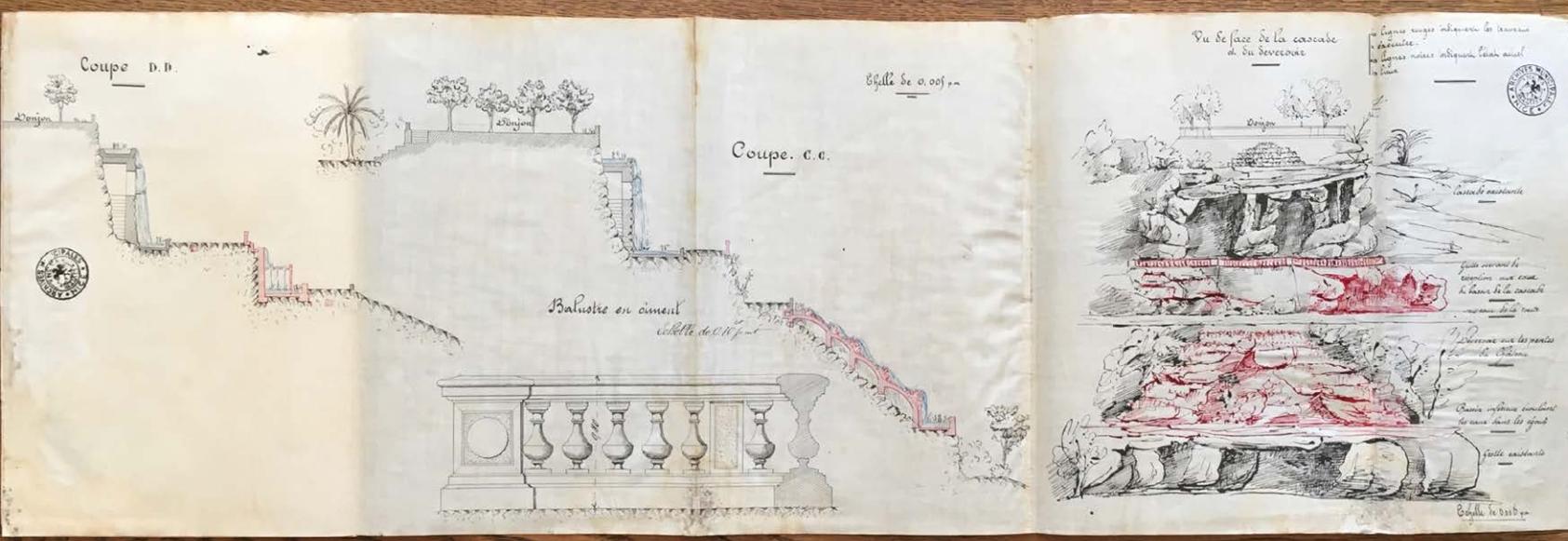


Fig. 11 – François Bensa, *Vue de la colline du Château*, 1880. Nice, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Palais Massena.

acknowledged as a singularity much before its official renaming as *Côte d'Azur* by Stéphen Liégeard (1887, 30). According to many authors' words, the park on the hill – still under construction – became the first source of health and wellness for any visitor, who could finally breathe salubrious air while also enjoying a soothing *vista*. Gradually, and thanks to the many re-writings of a repetitive literary palimpsest, the landscape of Nizza was becoming “a cultural practice”, or

³¹ Among others, see Durante (1847, 64-65), whose words could be paired with the *plan de la propriété Clérissi et des terrains adjacents*, August 7, 1847, in AMN, s. O, n. 3/19.

³² Both a lithography, drawn by Ferdinand Perrot and published in *Promenade de Nice à Gênes* (Chapuy and Cuviller 1838), and a watercolour by Joseph Frigerio, possibly dating from the late 1840s and now in a private collection (cf. Benvenuto 2009, 34), vividly show the promontory as a half-wild spot, overlooking the Mediterranean.



“a social hieroglyph”, realized “by naturalizing its conventions and conventionalizing its nature” (Mitchell 1994, 1 and 5).

As the British epidemiologist William Farr magnificently described it, “the old town is built in the form of an amphitheatre, on the western declivity of a rock, on the summit of which are yet to be seen the ruins of an ancient castle; from this point you have a fine view of the whole bay of Nice to the south, and at sunrise and sunset the island of Corsica may be often clearly distinguished, though it be some 70 or 80 miles distant; to the west you have a panoramic view of the town, and its beautiful environs, embellished, as they are, by numerous country houses, and their well-cultivated gardens extending to the summit of the nearest range of hills; further on, in the same direction, you see the mouth of the river Var, and the town of Antibes, and finally its light-house, which terminates the half circle of the bay; the horizon is bounded in that direction by the Estrelles range of mountains, distant about 30 miles; to the east you have the port or harbour, the light-house of Villa Franca, and the hills which separate this little town from Nice; to the north the view extends over the two first ranges of mountains, and the horizon is terminated by the elevated points of the Maritime Alps and Col de Tende, covered with snow. The road by which the summit of this rock is attained, is of easy ascent, spacious, and well protected; it is the frequent morning walk of the aged invalid, and is a very convenient one to test the quantity of newly gained vigour which the climate has imparted to him. It is common for the valetudinarian generally, but especially for those who have spent a great part of their lives in a warm climate, to accomplish this task with ease within a month after his arrival.” (Farr 1841, 106-107). For the following decades, this would be the narrative standard for anyone reaching the top of the hill between the port and the old town: the new identity of Nizza, then Nice, was also being built simultaneously through the redesign of the castle and the new travel literature on it³³.

Fig. 14 – Déversoir de la cascade du Château, 1887. Nice, Archives Municipales, 1.O.8/6.

³³ Among others, Solms (1854, 265-271) also wrote a sensuous description of the site, regarded as a major highlight in the history and geography of Nice; also, see Boyer 2002, 214-215. As regards the possible connection between local or national identities and touristic development, see Kosbar 1998.

³⁴ “Colle già intraprese opere il suolo del Castello prende ogni giorno un sempre più leggiadro aspetto, e costituisce uno dei più grandiosi punti di vista sul Mediterraneo, talmente che quella località fa l’ammirazione di tutti gli illustri forestieri ed anche da Sovrani e Principi i quali, invernando in Nizza, o trovandosi soltanto di passaggio, vanno tutti a visitare con sempre maggior diletto quel promontorio il quale coperto ancora in parte di alcune vestigia delle antiche fortificazioni, ricorda gloriosissimi fatti d’arma, e presenta al dì d’oggi una prospettiva pittoresca ed unica sotto ogni rapporto.”: cf. *Examen par le Conseil Restreint de la demande formulée par soeur Mathilde, religieuse carmélite, pour la concession d’un terrain tout en haut du château afin d’y créer un monastère*, 1846, in AMN, s. O, n. 3/20 (author’s translation).

³⁵ “La promenade du château est devenue charmante et tous les jours elle s’embellit encore” (author’s translation).

³⁶ “Aujourd’hui l’espace occupé jadis par l’ancien Château est couvert en grande partie par des allées ombrées, par des pelouses vertes, par des palmiers, des myrtes, des chênes-verts, des cactus, des aloès, des pins parasols, des lauriers-roses [sic].” (author’s translation).

The site had gradually been changing for more than forty years, growing more and more pleasant as “one of the grandest points of view on the Mediterranean”, described and beloved by all kinds of visitors, enchanted by both the military relics and “the picturesque perspective”³⁴. According to Auguste Burnel, who wrote in 1857, “the walk of the castle has become charming and every day it grows more beautiful” (Burnel 1857, 34)³⁵; trees, flowers and rather exotic plants were blossoming like never before, as the area “[was] covered to a great extent by shady alleys, green lawns, palm trees, myrtles, green oaks, cacti, aloes, umbrella pines, roses” (Burnel 1857, 52)³⁶, while only a few relics evoked its military past. Not only the history, but even the nature of the place had been forcedly adjusted to its new purposes: the highest point of the cliff, as an obstacle to the newly conceived *belvedere*, had been abruptly undermined and razed to the ground; heretofore, not all conflicting activities had been sufficiently reconceived and redesigned – for instance, quite incredibly, an *atelier d’equarrissage* [a slaughterhouse] was still on active duty in the area – but the road map had been successfully traced (Burnel 1857, 53-54).

Quite unexpectedly, when Nizza Marittima became the French city of Nice in 1860, the tourist had already replaced the soldier, victoriously. The countess of Drohojowska, the first foreign visitor recording the *annexion* of the County of Nice to the French Empire, could enjoy few more details in the new garden, albeit emphasising the amazing view of the city and the sea (Drohojowska 1860, 24-25). Three months later, a sumptuous visit of the Emperor Napoleon III and his wife Eugenia de Montijo, during the “memorable days of September 12th-13th”, finally celebrated the power shift in Nice (Saint-Germain 1860, [3]). The schedule was pretty intense but, not surprisingly, the “ancient castle” was the first destination of the imperial cou-



Fig. 15 – Alexis Mossa. *Le bassin au Château*, 1898. Nice, Musée d’Art et d’Histoire du Palais Massena.

ple, soon after their arrival. The ceremony was designed as a genuine takeover: the local authorities led their guests “to the upper terrace, on the platform covering the tower; from there the Emperor, considering both the city masterplan and the city itself, [was] able to indicate the improvements to be introduced” (Saint-Germain 1860, 45)³⁷. The press dwelled on the visit as much as possible, stressing the pivotal position of the castle hill, indispensable to redesigning the new Imperial capital of the Riviera: actually, very little was said about the site itself, as it was probably far from being completely rearranged. As the journalist Auguste Vitu put it, “a macadamized terrace, planted with trees and furnished with benches, was arranged at the top of the ruins; it serve[d] as a promenade for those foreigners, courageous enough to brave the heat of the sun and the escarpment of the dusty slopes by which they [were] accessed, and which [were] lined with large cacti” (Saint-Germain 1860, 79-80)³⁸. For many years the celebrated terrace remained “nothing as magical as the spectacle displayed from there, under our feet” (Banville 1861, 19)³⁹.

As a conclusion, or the *pays des enchantements*

In 1892 the second part of the fourth volume of the *Guides artistique Simons aux eaux, à la mer, au soleil* was dedicated to the *pays des enchantements* [country of enchantments] between Antibes and Sanremo: obviously, Nice *la belle* occupied a prominent position (Simons 1892, 61-109). Such a definition sounds quite intriguing: if something happens to be enchanting, there must be someone destined to be

³⁷ “Au Château, l’on mène de front la charpente de la terrasse supérieure et le parquet qui recouvre la plateforme de la tour d’où l’Empereur, considérant à la fois le plan régulateur de la cité de Nice et la ville elle-même, sera à même d’indiquer les améliorations à y introduire” (author’s translation). For the whole visit to the castle see Saint-Germain 1860, 78-88.

³⁸ “Une terrasse macadamisée, plantée d’arbres et garnie de bancs, a été ménagée au sommet des ruines; elle sert de promenade aux étrangers assez courageux pour braver l’ardeur du soleil et l’escarpement des pentes poudreuses par lesquelles on y accède, et qui sont bordées de grands cactus” (author’s translation).

³⁹ “Rien de magique comme le spectacle qui se déroulait de là sous nos pieds” (author’s translation).

Fig. 16 – *Cascade du chateau*, 1900 ca. Nice, Archives Départementales des Alpes-Maritimes, 02Fi.01262.

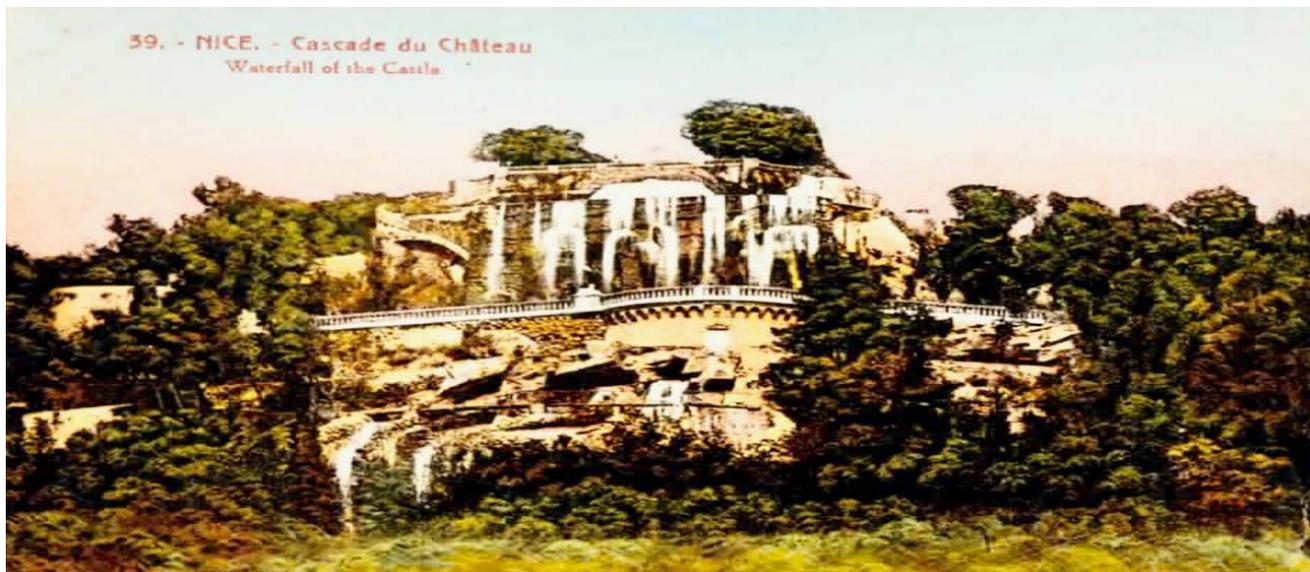


Fig. 17 – Charles Legresle, *Nice. Plan d'orientation. Plateforme du château*, Nice: s.n., 1903.



enchanted. There is no landscape without a subject, there is no landscape without Nature and, moreover, there is no landscape “without contact, link, meeting between the subject and the Nature” (Jakob 2008, 34). Thus, over the course of the nineteenth century, the gradual invention of the *Côte d’Azur* implied the invention of its brand-new inhabitant, the *hivernant* or *vacancier*, who reinvented the landscape day by day. In fact, the tourist’s routine was unequivocally designed as the sequence of a “performed art”, aimed at “the discovery of new territory, the search for a ‘homeland of the soul’, the desire to fortify the mind with an anodyne of beautiful memories, the study of the ‘book’ of the world, and the exploration of terrestrial paradise” (Adler 1989, 1375-1376). Thus, once in Nizza, anyone’s first stop had to be at the *Ponchettes*, between the seaside and the old town; thence, he/she could start a challenging but rewarding ascent to the top of the hill, where *Nikaia* had been founded and the *belvedere* of the new Nice was now astonishingly resplendent. The relics of the Greek and Roman colony, first covered by the medieval town and then reshaped by the citadel of the Savoy, had been transformed into a sort of an extra, on the spectacular stage of the terrace where anyone could enjoy “a panoramic view of indescribable beauty” (Simons 1892, 71)⁴⁰. Quite obviously, the most popular observation deck was no longer the terrace on the *tour Bellanda*, but the terrace in front of the new waterfall.

⁴⁰ “C’est vous qui découvrirez de ce point élevé une vue panoramique d’une indescriptible beauté” (author’s translation).

Thus, another *panorama* of the nineteenth century was born (Sternberger 1938), a breathtakingly real one, to be perceived with all five senses, though still led by the power of sight: “it is the gaze that orders and regulates the relationships between the various sensuous experiences while away, identifying what is visually out-of-ordinary, what are relevant differences and what is ‘other’” (Urry and Larsen 2011, 14)⁴¹. After all, in 1843 the chemist Luigi Roubaudi’s words had already been scientifically unequivocal: “From this elevation, one can still enjoy a magnificent spectacle by contemplating the immense surface of the sea and observing, on the waves, the effects of the sun at different times of the day. When the sea is calm, struck by the sun’s rays, like a vast mirror, it reflects the brightest and most beautiful light” (Roubaudi 1843, 51-52). The relaxed and relaxing contemplation of the sea from the mainland was becoming a cultural *topos* for the modern tourist, finally shifting from *hivernant* to *vacancier* and, therefore, just caring for his or her personal wellness, independently from any disease or season⁴². For them, “the sea, having no limits apart from the distant horizon, is beautiful to look at”, while surrounded by perfumes and colours, bathed by the Mediterranean light, bewildered by such a “burst of life” (Bazancourt 1853, 7-10)⁴³. The communion between Man and Nature could start from the top of that old, glorious cliff, redesigned as a timeless and unmissable *locus amoenus* (Maderuelo 2005, 173-176). Providing a 360° view, the new *belvedere* finally gave everybody the magic opportunity of perceiving the irrepresible lure of the sea (Corbin 1988). ●

⁴¹ More generally, the new revised edition of Urry’s main work (2002) offers essential guidelines to further investigation on tourism as “fun, pleasure and entertainment”, always determined by visual experiences (in particular see pages 1-30).

⁴² In the 1850s, the appreciation of Nice’s weather, either in winter or in summer, started to appear in different guides and accounts, such as Burnel (1857, 127-135, namely 127): “Nice winters are popular all over the world; but very few people know the summer of this delightful region [Les hivers de Nice sont populaires dans le monde entier; mais bien peu de gens connaissent l’été de cette contrée délicieuse]”.

⁴³ “La mer, n’ayant ainsi de limite que l’horizon lointain, est belle à regarder [...] mais toujours à travers ce parfum, à travers cette verdure, à travers tout cet éclat de la vie présente” (author’s translation). It is worth pointing out that Bazancourt concluded his history of Nice where he had started it, going back to the vestiges of the castle, regarded as an almost eternal witness of greatness and continuity (Bazancourt 1853, 337).

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