

Modernity's Classics

Sarah C. Humphreys
Rudolf G. Wagner
Editors



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Preface

We are most grateful to the Central European University, Budapest, and its Rector Yehuda Elkana, for funding our first workshop, and to the Heidelberg University Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows” for funding the second and third. We also wish to thank those who took part in one or more workshops but for various reasons were unable to contribute to this volume: Aziz al-Azmeh, Gabor Betegh, Rajeev Bhargava, Yaakov Dweck, Nancy Florida, Garth Fowden, Ann Hanson, Joachim Kurtz, and Glenn Most.

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Inscribed Early Chinese Bronzes from Sotheby's and Christie's (2007, with Liu Yu), *A Complete Collection of Chinese Wooden and Bamboo Documents*, vol. 20 (2005, ed. with Hu Pingsheng), *Exploring China's Past: New Discoveries and Studies in Chinese Art and Archaeology* (1999, trans. and ed. with Roderick Whitfield), *Origins of the Wuxing Theory and Modes of Thought in Early China* (1998, ed. with Sarah Allan, and Fan Yuzhou), *Exploration into China* (1995), and *Dunhuang Manuscripts in British Collections (Non-Buddhist Scriptures)* (1990–1997, ed. with others). He has organized a number of conferences and workshops and is academic adviser and contributor to four television documentaries on Chinese history and archaeology.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Sarah C. Humphreys and Rudolf G. Wagner

The Theme

Modernity's Classics deals with tensions in modern thought between travelling into the future and keeping the best from the past; with the frictions between political-social realities and the sociocultural imaginaire; with the global circulation of ambitious dreams and the local realities of practice. Opening up an international debate about the role of 'classics' and 'cultural heritage' in modern constructions of knowledge and of education, this volume has grown out of an extended conversation among scholars from many different fields over 3 years and three conferences. Their varied national and disciplinary backgrounds have shaped their questions and concerns. The reconfiguration of 'classics' in the modern period was a global phenomenon, with the restructuring of disciplines in modern educational systems exerting a major influence. However, there has as yet been no sustained effort to study this interlinked process across the whole range of civilizations and disciplines. A single volume could not possibly provide a comprehensive analysis; what we aim to do, instead, is to present a collection of provocative case-studies that raises new questions and suggests directions for further research.

The term used for a 'classic' in imperial China, for example, was "jing." Translated by Europeans as 'classics' or 'canon', the word is a live metaphor taken from silk weaving,¹ which commentators explain as being the woof of the cloth on which the warp forms the specific pattern. The "jing" is thus the eternal all-pervasive element shot through with all the specificities of place and time—most importantly for the Chinese imperial context, all meaningful thought on state,

¹ Cf. Ganeri 2011, 108–110 on commentary as re-weaving in India (and, of course, "text" itself).

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governance, and public order. The metaphor is appropriate for this collection, where we are dealing with the survival and reconfigurations of the 'classical'.

'Classics', as the term is used here, refers to texts, historical periods, artworks, etc.² of the remote past to which normative authority was attributed in premodern times (it thus also covers texts more commonly termed 'scriptures' or 'sacred books').

Every civilization with ancient texts, monuments, or artefacts had given some of them a privileged status in an 'imaginaire' of a widely shared set of assumptions about how things should be. These assumptions formed at a very early stage of a culture and, in various guises, survived even abrupt and radical historical changes.

The key element that made the 'classics' into an important and highly legitimate resource for both critical and supportive reflections on the actual condition of state, society, and man was their location in this imaginary realm of an idealized time before time—whether seen as the timelessness of God, the time of prophets and sages, or the time of a glorious past civilization swept away by historical change. While various players in historical time tried to harness "the classics" for their purposes—and would always present their current recommendations as being in accordance with the "classics"—even the most rigid system of discursive control and imposed orthodoxy never managed fully to silence the specific voices of these "classics." They retained their potential as a challenge to any given present and could recurrently be drawn upon to articulate such a challenge in terms of the need to 'return' to the hallowed ideals of the imaginaire through a thorough cleansing of the 'classical' texts of the interpretive debris that had accumulated through social practice in historical time—if these foundational texts had not been forgotten altogether.

The idea of the 'classical' was not new in the modern period, and neither were the routines of bringing the message of the classics to bear on the present. Each civilization had its own category of specialists with their own strategies for negotiating the balance between contemporary relevance and timeless authority. These strategies consolidated into shared practices of 'scholarship', mastery of which conferred status on men of letters. In this common pattern, however, there was considerable variation in such matters as the relationship of scholars to political authorities, procedures for certifying their expertise, the linguistic, school or denominational homogeneity or heterogeneity of textual authority, the genres and institutional contexts in which rereadings were formulated, the relations between oral performance and writing, the ways in which scholars constructed and signalled autonomy of judgment, and the degree to which scholarly discourse became esoteric, whether as a strategy for escaping political censure or because approval from peers became an end in itself.

Modernity constructed itself as a trajectory into the future that necessitated a rupture with key aspects of the past: as progress in scientific knowledge, and

²There is interesting recent work on the reconfiguration of 'classical,' music in India: Bakhle 2005, Weidmann 2006.

evolution towards rational, secular government and society. The necessity of such a rupture was most radically proclaimed with regard to the recent past but this modern dispensation also followed the routine of earlier reform efforts by anchoring itself in a social imaginaire located in the deep past, yet surviving in a selection of texts, objects, institutions, values, and practices deemed 'classical'. Even where this 'classical' was seen as encrusted with much later accretions, once its 'original' purity had been rediscovered and reconstituted through scholarly efforts, and once it had been disseminated through the educational system, it could not only function as object of contemplation, as food for the spirit, as national or universal heritage, or as an anchor of identity and stability, but could also lend authority and dignity to radical innovations and controversial calls for reform.

Modernity came with a huge destabilization of the superstructure. This was a traumatic as well as exhilarating experience already in Europe, and it was still more disruptive in Asia. There, it was perceived as involving not only a reconfiguration of the local environment, but also a reconfiguration of the role other nations and their systems of governance and education played in the local scene. There were many forms of dealing and coping with this tumultuous change and the visible asymmetries in cultural exchanges and power relations this involved. They ranged from the Taiping, Sepoy, or Mahdi upheavals to cutting telegraph lines; from utopian dreams to dreams about returning to the times when people still kept to their station in life; and from a total rejection of local traditions to the claim that the values and institutions of the present Western canonical dispensation had their ultimate origins in the Eastern golden age of antiquity. Such lines of reasoning offered a way to find common ground while accepting the inevitability of radical change.

As modernity, from the late eighteenth century, became a global issue, so did its relationship to the 'classical'. This new relationship differed from earlier rereadings because it was forming in a world that was becoming closely and consciously connected in information, trade, economic cycles, projections of power, and fashions—but also in utopian dreams of a 'civilized' and modern world. The reconfiguration of the classics as a resource supporting 'modernity' thus became inserted into an increasingly connected process that was also perceived as such by all participants involved. This globalized perception in turn introduced a new factor into the process: the awareness that the classical heritage was a crucial resource that had been used by more successful players in their modernization drive. The modern recasting of the classics by the different players in Europe and Asia is therefore no innocent set of parallel developments, but is linked together in a single process with a complex dynamics of the interaction of the different players.

This recasting of the classics as props of modernity is not a homogeneous process but one with its own tensions and dynamics. Modernity was not generated by the classicists out of the classics. Modernity occurred in a process that happened elsewhere and was little understood, much less planned. But it was disruptive and required great effort in adjustment and institutional change, down to details of government-mandated changes in shaved chins and school curricula. The non-

simultaneity of political and economic developments in Europe, with England and France surging ahead and the German states lagging behind, had already fostered a sort of asymmetrical warfare in which Prussia, especially, tried to overcome its disadvantages by investing in two areas where it felt it had the means to score: education—including scholarship and science - and the military. Many of the key figures in the recasting of the European ‘classical’ heritage came from this backwater and their massive contributions were one way of handling this asymmetry with the neighbours. German thinkers also promulgated the claim that each cultural unit had its own specific characteristics, and that the ‘national’ spirit had developed organically through a slow process of accumulation of tradition and experience and extended beyond the boundaries of the many German states. It could not be heedlessly swept aside by radical schemes for rational reorganization as carried out next door.³

Information about the ‘modernization package’ was initially carried by middlemen such as colonists, traders, and businessmen, Western missionaries in Asia, and Asian students in the West (and eventually Japan). In East Asia, initially, local elites saw military technology as its core ingredient and only gradually turned their attention to the argument that scientific knowledge and political structures might be the key. Only then did they ask how such deep structural changes could be made without uprooting society altogether. The task of grounding modernity in Asian classics—or defending these classics against such an abuse—presupposed men of letters with strong exposure to the new trends of the world. In the process their roles as political activists and scholars gradually, never fully, separated, with a professionalized classical scholarship assigned its own responsibilities in the modernization process.

Modernity, as well as prompting thinkers, educators, poets, and artists around the world to ‘reread’ their classics, came with new models of reading. Western philology was presented as ‘science’ and thus gave new authority to critical judgments on dating and attribution, distinctions between genuine works and forgeries, technical treatment of manuscripts (both conservation and emendation), and the transfer of approaches from one genre or culture to another. The value of existing scholarly practices was reassessed in the light of this new dispensation.

Recasting the classics involved new practices of studying, archiving, and administering the past. In East Asian societies the insertion of such scholarly efforts into the agenda of national modernization was a conscious choice for most scholars, but it was also increasingly guided by reformist state authorities who claimed the high ground in setting a master narrative valid for the given moment that claimed the allegiance of the men of letters and left little subjective and objective space for the internal dynamics of scholarly research. Thus, study of the development of classical scholarship and its public role in East Asia requires a much stronger attention to institutional interactions with the state than is warranted for the most

³ Specifically, in opposition to the adoption of the Napoleonic code, Savigny; more generally, Herder.

fruitful periods of humanities scholarship in Europe and the United States. The situation in colonial India (and North Africa), in the Ottoman Empire and in diaspora Jewish communities was similar in the basic constraints of institutional guidance and subjective allegiance, but different with regard to the nature of the institutions and the motives for allegiance.

Modernity was tied to historicism with its claim that the knowledge of the ‘ancients’ had a time line and no longer provided eternally valid and comprehensively useful grounding. With revolutionary upheavals threatening to uproot societies altogether, the German anxieties found wider credence. The classical had to be recast so as to become an integral and stabilizing part of the ‘modernization package’, and there was agreement, at least for the Asian continent and the Islamic world, that only the recast local classics had the potential effectively to play the crucial role of grounding modernity.

The disjunction in time in the modernization process in Europe (including Russia) was easier to overcome because the elites in the German states and in Russia read and spoke French and increasingly also English. With new developments in scholarship, science, and education in German, German also became a widely shared scholarly language. Thus the absorption of information could proceed quickly and on a broad basis. This was already much more difficult in the Ottoman Empire, and more so in Asian states further east. The most successful process—in Japan—was due to an extraordinary effort by the Meiji government to send large numbers of students to Europe for training and invite foreign scholars to teach in Japan, and thus to gain the wherewithal to engage in the huge translation and appropriation projects of the 1870s through 1920s. One integral part of this Japanese modernization drive was the reaffirmation of the continuing validity of basic “Confucian” values in the hugely influential Imperial Rescript on Education of 1893. This was a direct response to the perceived contribution of Christianity and classical values in the West to social stability in these times of transition. In China, the Raj, and the Islamic world similar efforts were made by people of many ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds with a strong exposure to this global trend. Drawing on the resources of Asian traditions to deal with the modernization challenge and to legitimize the strategies followed or proposed gave these strategies the soothing authenticity of not being foreign-imposed, and even the option to claim parallel simultaneous developments (as in the postmodern concept of ‘multiple modernities’). The scholars doing this work were neither bookworms aloof from the great social, cultural, and political issues of the day, nor simply scholarly hacks providing the footnotes for the master narrative of the day as determined by state, religious, business, or party authorities of their home country. They are part of a wider discussion that involves the classics as well as social, cultural, and institutional change.

The interaction of these efforts at recasting the classical tradition with the modern Western dispensations also meant that Western routines associated with this process were to a degree appropriated by local scholars, and that foreign amateurs of Asian cultures became active participants in this globalizing process both locally and through translations into Western languages (the *Sacred Books of*

the East, the Chinese Classics, etc.). These efforts developed on the basis of an increasingly accepted understanding that peoples of the Asian continent (including Europe) basically shared a set of values, ideas, and ideals that could provide the basis for the utopia of a 'civilized' world. Their 'classics', whatever the source of their insights, pointed to timeless truths that combined universal validity with expression of the essence of national identity. Once cleared of historical debris, the sagely dispensations of different cultures could thus be put side-by-side to explain and supplement each other. The results of the successful retooling of the classical heritage as props of modernity in the West might then reasonably be interpreted as a stimulus for the rereading of the local classics, and the prevalence of certain desired social values in Asian societies could in turn enrich the common platform for 'civilization' down to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

To address such a global process with its many historical predecessors and roots is a challenge to the delineations marking the existing academic disciplines worldwide. Defined as they are in the nation-state framework of their birth in the nineteenth century and delineating their sources by physical properties (text, image, building, excavation, sound) rather than subject matter, they are ill equipped for this analysis. 'Globalization', 'interdisciplinarity', and the 'postmodern' are increasingly prevalent catchwords, but what does it mean to look at 'modernity' in historical perspective, and to write the 'global' history of recasting the classics in close communication across disciplinary boundaries? We do not claim to have the answers, but we can make some suggestions.

'Global' history has little to offer as a new form of Hegelian narrative with 'civilizations' as the agents. At the same time the overwhelming evidence of globalization in our everyday lives has led to a rereading of the past and the discovery that transcultural interaction has been a key constituent in the process of culture since time immemorial. Constructive historiographic reactions to globalization, therefore, focus on processes of reciprocal interaction and flows of ideas, 'entangled histories' in which colonial institutions change those of metropoleis, China and India contribute to the reconfiguration of Western 'classics' and 'literature', new models of public space are elaborated in Africa, India, or Australia, and the category 'religion' takes on new contours as practices, beliefs, and communities are redefined in new patterns of interaction.

The global historian also has to deal with time in a new way, to account for the time- and information-lags in these processes of interaction. Modern ideas and institutions travelled at varying speeds and by varying routes, while continuing to produce change at the points of origin; what was presented and perceived as modern in India in 1800 did not have the same salient features as the modernity seen by the Chinese a century later.⁴ Prussians, 'backward' in comparison with England or France, saw modernization largely through their experience of Napoleon in terms of military threat, rationalization of administration and education, and radical

⁴ Gershenkron's model of the "historic advantages of backwardness" (1962) is relevant here.

recodification of law; while accepting the need to modernize in warfare, education, and bureaucracy, they resisted the Napoleonic code as incompatible with the organic development and spirit of German institutions,⁵ placed the emphasis in classical education on Greece rather than Rome, and developed a Romantic, aestheticizing conception of the role of philosophy in education that diverged from the French Enlightenment model, which was more specifically anticlerical. Chinese men of letters, in a state that already had a bureaucracy staffed by them, and had a huge rural peasant population hardly touched by modernization (at a time when traditional German peasants almost seemed to be a dying breed: see Algazi below), supported their conviction that the ‘stupid people’ at large were incapable of collective rationality and needed strong guidance with references to their recast classics as well as most recent Western doctrines of the state (Bluntschli) and the ‘masses’ (Le Bon), while simultaneously asserting with other references that the legitimacy of a government hinged on acceptance by this very people, and by inserting the new notion that only a literate population unified by a national consensus that was bolstered by unimpeded flow of communication between high and low would be able to overcome the manifest asymmetries in power with the West.

Modern conceptions of time contained costly contradictions. The model of all human societies moving at varying speeds along the same track from primitive origins towards a unified modern future became dominant as part of the asymmetrical spread of the narrative of modernity. In turn, this prompted the rearticulation of the many intellectual, social, cultural, military, etc. histories—each with their own, usually border-crossing connections—into a ‘national’ history characterized by a ‘culture’ and moving through ‘stages’ each defined by its particular *Zeitgeist*. The energy wasted on explaining away the myriad anomalies and non-sequiturs of this story must be reckoned among the transaction costs of modernity. The push for a unified approach and even ‘axial’ timeline to the hugely varied body of materials dubbed ‘classical’ in the new global conceptual lingo is part of this global homogenization.

We consider it essential to look at the modern reconfigurations of classics from the point of view of several disciplines, as well as culture areas, for a number of reasons. First, because the tendency to reify ‘cultures’ is one of the legacies of modernity that now seems increasingly problematic both politically (as in Huntington 1996) and because it has encouraged disciplinary narrowness, for which the growth of ‘comparative literature’ and ‘comparative religion’ only marginally compensates. With regard to written ‘classics’ in Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and other Indian languages, and Chinese it is important to emphasize that they are not confined to ‘religion’ and ‘literature’ but include works on mathematics, medicine, philosophy, law, and statecraft, which have

⁵ The code remained in force in southwestern Germany, however, until it was eventually replaced by a new German civil code in 1900.

been marginalized until very recently in modern university disciplines. As much as ‘classical’ works in architecture, painting, sculpture, or music, they are all part of processes of transcultural interaction.⁶ Historicist models of ‘stages’ of historical development were framed as universally applicable, and this ambition may well have encouraged the transfer to Asia of the earlier European narrative in which “classical” achievements had been followed by “medieval” decline (and then “Renaissance”). This model did not impede the growth of research on medieval history in modern Europe, especially where the national culture was traced to medieval roots (see Algazi, below), but elsewhere⁷ medieval decline was used to explain lack of progress and weaknesses attributed to modern populations.

Historicism did lead to an interest in the pre-classical, the ‘origins’ of classical civilizations, which favoured archaeological research, interest in Chinese oracle bones, ‘archaic’ art, ‘presocratic’ philosophy, etc.;⁸ but there was no comparable move towards studying the post-classical genres and styles of rewriting that extended, reframed, or transformed the ‘classics’ in the interim period between ages designated ‘classical’ and modern times.

One of the main obstacles here was the modern idea that scholars should concentrate on ‘original’ texts and that ‘mere commentary’ was a secondary, derivative, ‘unoriginal’ genre (except insofar as it was directed towards improving ‘original’ texts by removing ‘corruptions’). It is now increasingly recognized that commentary in the premodern period was in many traditions a favoured genre for the expression of new ideas and recommendations for change.⁹

The asymmetry between the Western narrative marked by milestones along the road to progress and modernity and the other story leading through decline to decadence (or eventually to a belated modernity produced by Western influence) was duplicated at disciplinary level. Western philosophy, science, and historiography had progressed, while elsewhere early innovation (attributed where possible to Western influence) had been followed by stagnation. The Islamic world had ‘translated’ and ‘preserved’ Greek texts that would otherwise have been lost, but there was (again, until recently) no Western interest in the development of Islamic philosophy and science—still less in interactions between the Islamic world and India.¹⁰ The post-classical texts of non-Western civilizations were seen only as ‘sacred texts’ or as ‘literature’. Research on the education and scholarly activities of ‘classically’ trained premodern elites has thus been—with the partial exception of China—selective and biased. Some historical background is therefore needed here, both on common features and on significant variations.

⁶ See Sen 2005, Chap. 8, on intellectual relations between China and India in the first millennium C.E.

⁷ Also in Greece, where nationhood was linked to the classical past: Herzfeld 1962, Kitromilides 2010.

⁸ Cf. Fotiadis, Thouard and Wang, and Laks, below.

⁹ See, e.g. Netz 2004; Ganeri 2011; Wagner, below.

¹⁰ See n. 6 above, and the account of David Pingree’s work in Calder and Heilen 2007.

Premodern Classical Traditions: Common Features

Premodern conceptions of the ‘classic’ had been anchored both in cosmology and in the education of literate elites. Order in the cosmos corresponded to order in the state, to the order portrayed in classical texts, and to order in the physical world. ‘Classics’ were models of proper behaviour, literary style, valid reasoning, and the relations between sovereigns and subjects. Because the classics were located in the past, disorder in the present state of affairs could be attributed to failure to follow the prescriptions of the classics or to misinterpretation and/or corruption of their texts.

A cosmology is a conception of the interrelations between the divine/supernatural, the universe, human life and society, and the physical world.¹¹ The modern cosmology was unusual in its emphasis on human understanding and manipulation of ‘nature’ and in its reconfiguration of the divine (God as divine watchmaker at the beginning of creation, religion as guidance for individual ethical behaviour). The degree to which cosmologies were institutionalized and systematized was very variable,¹² and cosmology did not determine responses to modernity—but it might well determine the way in which the asymmetries between the modern West and other societies were problematized.

The papers in our first section are all in a sense ‘cosmological’. Modern public spaces make statements about sovereignty, community, and their anchorage in classical or national pasts; Islamic political theory grapples with the relation between divine and human sovereignty; the Renaissance garden was a cosmological statement (a ‘paradise’) linking classical culture and power in this world to scripture and divine supremacy; the Chinese classics portrayed an ideal state located in the past, and prescribed proper relations between rulers, officials, and subjects.

Members of premodern literate elites thus thought in categories linked to the cosmologies of classic texts; they also wrote and thought in their words. The languages of the classics were deeply internalized; classic texts had been memorized, quotations and allusions formed a shared network of references. Like any language, that of the classics could be used to express critical opinions and new ideas; classical texts could be read in new ways and did not form a seamless unity. But to eliminate the classics from the cultural *imaginaire* or marginalize them into irrelevance would require new conceptions of literacy and new educational practices.

¹¹ Conceptions of time (calendars, astronomy) and space (where was the centre of the world? Sen 2005, 171) were important.

¹² Western observers have been prone to oversystematize non-Western cultures, e.g. Granet 1934 on China, Dumont 1966 on India.

Multiple Traditions

A systematic study on a global scale of the ‘classics’ of the world’s literate civilizations and of the positions of the specialists who studied and interpreted them cannot be attempted here.

It would have to take into account variations in the control exercised over classical canons. These were defined by the state in China,¹³ in 363 C.E. by Church Council in Christianity, in the ninth and tenth centuries C.E. in the case of the *hadīth* and the *Qur’ān*; India had an internally controlled Brahman tradition of oral transmission of the Vedas, whereas there was more recomposition in other performance texts (*Mahābhārata*, *Ramayana*, *Puranas*) and genres of learned writing (treatises and commentaries). In the practices by which canons were maintained or modified, Indian and Muslim teachers, like those of Renaissance and early modern Europe, made their own choice of texts to teach at the more advanced levels; Muslim students were licenced by their teachers to teach texts that they had satisfactorily studied, while European universities (functioning rather like guilds) had collective procedures of assessment through agonistic debate; competitive debate and performance at courts served to establish the reputations of Indian scholars and gain them the resources needed to fund students.

It would also be of interest to know more about the degree and types of specialization in different branches of knowledge and forms of literary production. It was probably in most cases the ambition of the exceptional scholar to master all branches of learning (although studying philosophy and *Kabbalah* were disapproved of by some Jewish communities); equally, however, there were distinctions everywhere between studying medical texts and exercising practical skills, between poetry full of classical allusions and popular song, between mathematical theory and keeping business accounts, between advanced theological speculation and using sermons to control the behaviour of congregations. The less learned or even illiterate end of the scale was especially common in rural areas, and this is also where we find women (singers, midwives, root-gatherers). But careers might also lead from notarial activity into higher branches of law, or from successful practice to treatise-writing and teaching. It is also useful to consider the careers of the less successful students, who would end up in lower-rank positions or in marginal rural areas, or find alternative careers as singer/poets¹⁴ or perhaps—as in the case of Luo Zhengyu (Thouard and Wang, below)—in some obscure branch of antiquarian research. Practice was also linked to scholarship and teaching in Islamic and Christian areas by the charitable foundation of hospitals with professorships attached.

¹³ The state also tried to exercise control over textual traditions outside the examination system, e.g. the Buddhist and Taoist canons.

¹⁴ China, which had the most rigorously controlled system of classical education, also had a strong tradition of *refusenik* and *dropout literati*.

Specialization was also promoted by the reputation of some cities—not necessarily politically significant—as centres of learning, to which students would be attracted. In Europe these centres promoted themselves as ‘universities’ covering all branches of knowledge, but also developed a division into ‘faculties’ in which students tended to specialize. In India a city might become famous for a particular school of learning and teaching (e.g. Vārānāsī/Benares: Ganeri 2011).

Teaching classical texts, commenting on them, and putting forward new views in treatises were closely connected activities, and famous scholars did not necessarily confine themselves to one branch of learning. There was however a general distinction between those classic texts that students learned by heart in the early stages of their education and more specialized works that would be studied later through reading.

Reconfigurations

Westerners who brought modern ideas to Asia both undermined and reinforced the authority of Asian classics. On the one hand they stressed the value of Western science, technology, and institutions, and the imperative need to modernize. On the other hand, they went to local literati for instruction in language, law, and religion; they admitted that at least the Chinese had once outstripped the West in ‘scientific’ discoveries; the European historical schema recognized ‘classical’ progress and excellence even if followed by ‘medieval’ darkness and stagnation; they were interested in Asian ‘classics’ as evidence of the pre-medieval development of human ideas, of ‘mythical thought’, of the ‘primitive’ poetry admired by the Romantics, and of early history. Their attitudes to ‘other religions’ were also contradictory; missionaries in China were inclined to stress similarities between Christianity and Confucianism, following an older deist model in which Confucius (with Plato, Moses, and Mohammed) was seen as one of the sages who had preserved through secret teaching a true religious revelation corrupted in the course of history by priests. In India the British colonial officials (coming from a stratum to which lower-class evangelism seemed vulgarly ‘enthusiastic’ and even dangerously revolutionary) were opposed to attempts at conversion; this led to a policy of respect for ‘religious law’ in areas where it did not conflict with colonial policies or British sensibilities (‘family law’ was ‘religious’ but could not include property relations or *sati*), and it also encouraged a reification of ‘religion’ as Hindu, Muslim, or ‘tribal’. Missionaries in India followed the deist model in its hostility to priests and ritual, and promoted a model of Christianity as monotheist and emotional which appealed to Indian sects and encouraged the development from the European side of theosophy, and from the Indian side of the Brahma Samaj and Ramakrishna movements.

Westerners also increasingly brought a model of knowledge and texts as divided into disciplinary compartments: theology, philosophy, history, archaeology, geography and geology, mathematics, the ‘natural sciences’, literature. Asian

‘classic’ texts were valued as ‘literature’ or as sources of information on religious law and sensibilities, or on local history.¹⁵ Asian philosophy was often reduced to ethical teaching or subsumed under ‘religion’ (whereas ancient Greek thought about the divine was reclassified as ‘philosophy’).¹⁶ Interconnections between philosophical writings in Sanskrit and in Persian were ignored.¹⁷

The major factor of disruption of premodern education systems in the modern period was Western insistence that only Western knowledge was modern, other forms of knowledge being classified as ‘religious’, as only of historical interest, or—more recently—as exotic ‘alternatives’. Jews and Muslims—whose classics were indeed ‘scriptures’—developed parallel systems of education in which the Bible and Talmud, Qur’ān and hadīth, were studied in schools of traditional form while the same students might also attend schools and universities with ‘modern’ curricula (in which Jewish Studies or Islamic Studies might feature as an option). In China—where the thorough state control of education perhaps encouraged extreme defence or rejection of classical schooling—the examination system was abolished in 1905 and replaced by schools and universities modelled mainly on those of Meiji Japan. The British in India debated whether Indians should be educated by study of ‘their own’ Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic classics, or by learning Greek and Latin, but decided instead to make English the language of government (replacing Persian) and to follow the pleas of Bengali intellectuals by teaching the ‘classics’ of English literature in the schools (Viswanathan 1989). The teaching and study of ‘classics’ in the West was also disrupted, on the one side by claims that it should be replaced by ‘modern’ scientific knowledge, and on the other side by the preference for early texts and the imposition of modern disciplinary definitions; so Herodotus and Thucydides were considered superior to Livy or Plutarch, Plato’s *Timaeus* instead of being considered the supreme statement of his thought became an embarrassment, and ‘Hippocrates’ seemed more interesting than Galen.

In the process of modernization ‘classically’ trained elites and the ‘classics’ in the manner in which they interpreted them were marginalized at varying speeds and in different ways. European Jews were offered more opportunities for assimilation (and experienced more pressure to convert to Christianity), which raised new choices between strict orthodoxy and reform; Indian pandits and mullahs, though consulted by colonial officials in the early stages of British rule, were progressively sidelined even as experts in Sanskrit or Arabic—though a new specialization in deciphering inscriptions developed (Guha-Thakurta 2004). Classical education continued for longer in China but was interrupted by sudden reforms: abolition of

¹⁵ Cf. Thouard and Wang, below, on the use made of Chinese local chronicles by Chavannes and Segalen.

¹⁶ Philosophy also became a substitute for religion, in different ways, in the curricula of the modern French Lycée and German Gymnasium.

¹⁷ Recently both Tavakoli-Targhi 2001 and Ganeri 2011 have called attention to the translation of Sanskrit philosophical texts into Persian, but they do not ask whether there were also translations of Persian works into Indian languages, or what the translators had been reading as they learned Persian. (The question is raised by Raychaudhuri 1999, 100).

the examination system in 1905 and a savage attack on the lingering impact of ‘old’ ideas among the educated elite in the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Whereas Jewish communities and Islamic states, as we have seen, tended to develop parallel educational systems, one traditional/religious and the other modern, in the West the competition for time between arts/humanities and science/‘modern studies’ took place within schools and universities (with more pressure on boys to modernize).

Marginalization generated new ways of dealing with ‘classical’ pasts, which were increasingly removed from contexts of everyday use to be repositioned as texts of high stature in ‘dead’ languages in need of translation and comment, or as ruins, ‘art’ (to be kept in museums) or archaeological sites and artefacts to be explored, excavated, catalogued, preserved, labelled, and (again) museumized (Shaw 2003; Guha-Thakurta 2004).

This process of museumization involved contradictory notions of time: museumized ‘classics’ were now timeless not so much because they were seen as belonging to a Paradisal, eternally relevant past, but because they were detached from all contemporary reuse. On the other hand they had to have a date: museums were organized by chronology and ‘cultures’.¹⁸ Dating raised questions of precedence; had China enjoyed democratic government already under the Duke of Zhou? Could Aristotle have learned logic from Alexander’s reports of Indian philosophy?¹⁹ The nation-state and the idea of national culture favoured a search for ‘origins’ in the deep past; classical ages could be used to rebalance the asymmetries of the modern present by highlighting past achievements, to explain these asymmetries as due to ‘medieval’ periods of corruption and decline, and to offer models of a new national character for the future—or at least models of the persistence of national ‘spirit’ in contexts dominated by modern Western materialism (Raychaudhuri 1999).

The reconfiguration of ‘classics’ in the modern period is only one aspect of these contradictory movements. It is significant, however, for several reasons. First, ‘classical’ education had been a major force in creating unified elite cultures in literate societies; this predisposed these elites both to defend their culture and their privileged positions as interpreters, and to think of wider national models of education in terms of cultural unification, even though this might involve a shift to vernacular ‘national classics’ or—in colonial India—to English literature (Viswanathan 1989). Secondly, the selection and construction of periods and aspects of ‘national’ pasts that would be presented as significant was influenced (even where the past selected was ‘medieval’) by the model of an ideal, timeless age (heritage) of origin remote from modernity (cf. Algazi below). Thirdly, the question of the authority of texts was closely linked to ‘religion’ (particularly in the nineteenth century, there was a tendency to scripturalize ‘secular’ classical texts while simultaneously undermining the authority of scriptures through historicization). The question whether, or how far, prescriptions in religious texts can be adapted to modern conditions through rereading is still highly controversial (cf. Pasha, below).

¹⁸ For Japan see Tanaka 1994.

¹⁹ This was suggested by Görres in the early nineteenth century.

Modernizing Iranians who promote the study of Achaemenid Persia, non-orthodox Jewish historians interested in Hellenistic Judaism, and left-wing historians of India concentrating on the once neglected Mughal ‘middle ages’, are still manoeuvring within frameworks set in the modern period.²⁰

Frameworks and categories—including disciplinary categories—are not immutable, but are anchored to institutions and change only slowly. There are time-lags here too. Historians and philosophers of science have discarded many modern assumptions about the irrelevance of the humanities, while governments still cling to them. Universities claim to promote interdisciplinarity but still direct funding to discipline-based departments. Global, post-modern histories can make readers more aware of the specificity and peculiarities of modern categories.

Taking some distance from modernity and its cultural frameworks might also lead to reflection on distance itself and its place in the poetics of knowledge. Distance both enhanced the authority of classic texts and left a space in which critical reading could modify them in relation to changing circumstances. While critical reading often declines into irrelevant pedantry (or eccentricities such as Bentley’s attempt to rewrite Milton), it is not an element in education that can be discarded as elitist. The continuing value of ‘classics’ should be that there is no single prescribed way of reading them, yet not every reading is possible; there is space for argument. The tacit and stubborn insistence of ‘classical’ works on their own meaning and their refusal to bend to randomly imposed interpretations forces the scholar and the student into a willingness to both recognize and bridge this distance. The environment of the ‘classical’ works in the distance of time as a foreign country, just as a different tradition works in the distance of space. The challenge of the transcultural interaction of the present with the past and of one cultural environment with another is the same in both fields, as is the methodology required to deal with this challenge.

The Case Studies

Our case studies cluster around three connected themes: the re-rooting of modernity in classical pasts and cosmologies through new experiences of space and new interpretations of texts; the rearrangement and rereading of classical texts to fit new conceptions of disciplinary knowledge, national culture, and linear history; and the impact of modern ideas on the eye, as viewers learn to see ruins, feel the presence of the past, criticize historicist conceptions of proof through images, see objects as ‘information’, or see their contemporaries as living relics.

²⁰ Far too often, non-Western rejections of Western views and positive assertions of ‘otherness’ have operated within and with constant reference to Western categories, asserting that ancient China already had the institutions characteristic of modernity (Wagner, below), or that India had its own ‘science’ (Prakash 1999), had transmitted the zero and calculus to Europe (Raju 2007, with no discussion of Islamic connections), and had its own tradition of ‘philosophy’ defined by reference to western standards (Raghuramaraju 2006, criticizing this obsession with Western philosophy; Ganeri 2011).

Part I: Anchoring Modernity

This part deals with the use of ‘classics’ in the public sphere. Monica Juneja, *The making of New Delhi*, begins with a classic moment in the discipline of art history and the modern reconfiguration of the Greek and Roman classics: Winckelmann’s argument that the greatness of ‘classical’ Greek art was the product of Athenian democracy. Classical architecture came to be associated especially with public space and with democratic or at least republican government. On the other hand, public space in the modern period was increasingly seen as national, and this prompted alternative suggestions that Gothic architecture was more appropriate for northern Europe; this debate between the rival claims of national and classical styles was transferred to India and China.

Ronald Inden, *Classics in the Garden*, deals with an earlier period but is equally concerned with the reorganization of spatial experience to enhance power and authority, and with the harmonization of alternative systems of reference to the past, in this case ‘classical’ and scriptural symbolism in the garden of the Villa d’Este.

Rudolf Wagner, *The Classic, the State, and Modernity. The Ritual of Zhou 1860–1950*, shows in a detailed analysis how the *Zhouli*, for China the “classic” text on the organization of the state, was reread in the modern period as prefiguring the modernizing reforms being recommended in China in a distinctly critical perspective on the structure of governance and political communication in late Imperial China.

This might indeed be called the ‘classic’ strategy of reconfiguration, in which a classic text is adapted to new circumstances—in this case, the impact of Western modernity—by commentary. Scholars who had deeply internalized a model of harmonious correspondence between good governance, human morality, and the society portrayed in classic texts, were impelled by this model, and by the need to deal with the asymmetry between its authority and the claims made for the ‘advancement’ of Western government and science, into repositioning the *Zhouli*, the ‘classic’ account of statecraft, as a model for reform. As the Chinese state derived its authority from the “classics” and the viability of the state-imposed educational system with its state-mandated readings of the classics was increasingly questioned, a commentary that was recasting the classics was the preferred genre of political debate.

‘Recasting the classics’ has also been an essential part of Islamic debates over modernization. Too often, however, these debates are seen only in terms of a choice between modernity and ‘fundamentalism’. This simplistic dichotomy is questioned by three of our contributors (Pasha, Pormann, and Manoukian), all showing that it does not fit the way influential but controversial Muslim thinkers have tried to rethink the relations between Islam, knowledge, and modernity. In the first case Sayyid Qutb, studied here by Mustapha Pasha (*Sayyid Qutb’s theocentric reconstruction of sovereignty*), formulates a new theory of sovereignty which implies a correspondence between the structure of the Islamic state and the character of the believing citizen (there are interesting parallels with the recommendations of Sun Yirang, analysed here by Wagner).

Part II: Repositioning Texts

While Wagner and Pasha both deal with thinkers whose use of texts is oriented towards reconceptualizing the state and formulating recommendations for reform, our next two papers deal more specifically with recasting the past as a marker of identity down to its becoming the prehistory of the modern nation. Peter Pormann, *Classical Scholarship and Arab Modernity*, shows how Egyptian ideas of ‘national history’ incorporated the periods of Ptolemaic and Roman rule that had been appropriated by Western classicists as part of a “Western” history, and how modern conceptions of philology as a universally applicable text-processing discipline produced controversial reinterpretations of early Arabic ‘classic’ poetry and of the Qur’ān.

Judaism has its own division between ‘reform’ and ‘orthodoxy’; it has been influenced not only by the general problem of deciding how far scriptural rules should be taken as valid for all time or can be seen as produced by and for specific historical circumstances (cf. Pormann’s paper), but more specifically by the impact of modern philology and historicism on Bible interpretation, and by the influence of modern concepts of the “nation” on Jewish history. Nicholas de Lange’s case-study of the reception of the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible (Septuagint or LXX), *The Septuagint as a Jewish classic*, shows how an open attitude to translation as a necessary adaptation of God’s word to the understanding of congregations was gradually replaced by an insistence on the preeminence of Hebrew. Interest in the LXX revived in the modern period first among historians interested in the origins of Christianity; Jewish scholars began to take a serious interest only in the late twentieth century, when Jewish culture came to be seen in terms of proto-national or at least ethnic resistances to Hellenistic and then Roman influences and domination.

André Laks, *Phenomenon and reference: revisiting Parmenides, Empedocles, and the problem of rationalization*, deals with disciplinary identity. This essay traces a history of reception which had its tensions already in antiquity, as fourth-century B.C.E. and later scholars faced decisions about the boundaries of ‘philosophy’ and of its history. These issues were sharpened in the modern period by interest in the “origins of Greek thought,” and construction of early Greek thought as the birth of a new form of rationality. Parmenides and Empedocles, already problematic figures in antiquity because of their use of verse and the associations of Parmenides with revelation and Empedocles with magic, attracted more attention from the late nineteenth century onward as figures standing between an imagined ‘traditional’ Greece and its progress towards full rationality. In turn, ‘premodern’, ‘archaic’ Greece could be seen, in a backlash against classicism and rationalism, as a source of ‘anthropological’ insights into the human condition. Historians irritated by philosophers’ reluctance to allow their discipline to be reduced to “history of ideas” may be attracted by this marriage of historicism with modern irrationalism. Laks, however, takes a line much more in tune with the theme of this volume, arguing that Parmenides and Empedocles were not unconsciously recycling earlier

images and ideas but were using them reflectively, taking a distance from them, reconfiguring them, but keeping them in view through ‘reference’, in a process perhaps comparable to the ‘reference’ to the Qur’ān, or to Chinese classics, by modern thinkers.

Our section on ways of reading the ‘classical’ ends with Humphreys’ examination of reading itself, *Towards an Anthropology of Reading*: the relations between reading, writing, and performance, and conceptions of the ‘anthropology’ of the reader. What sort of person is a reader and what does reading do to personhood? Answers have perhaps been surprisingly various. But the modern period made two highly influential and rather contradictory contributions to conceptions of reading ‘classics’. On the one hand classics were supposed to ground ‘national’ cultures and therefore ‘national’ identities, to be inculcated into the young and defended by adults; on the other hand they were historicized; each had its own place in time and its own historical context without knowledge of which it might be misread and misunderstood. The ‘classic’—like a work of ‘art’ in a museum or a piece of music in a concert hall—had a frame, a label, programme notes, a surrounding busy with information telling the recipient how to read, what to see, how to hear. The nature writer Richard Mabey pinpoints a comparable syndrome:

... the paraphernalia of the countryside interpretation business, the hides with gates, the trails waymarked in five colours, the boards that tell you what to look for and what to feel about it... the precautionary fences and smoothed-out paths of the new safety culture with its ominous common message: “You are not encouraged to have First-hand Experiences. They may hurt. Life is Dangerous. Keep Out.”

Part III: Reconstructing Pastness

This section deals with the possibilities of experiencing the past as present, and the tensions between immediacy and interpretation. In Setrag Manoukian’s account, *The Ruins of the Others: History and Modernity in Iran*, Fursat al-Shīrāzī manages these tensions light-handedly, wandering in text between visits to the (Achaemenid) ‘ruins of the others’, encounters with other travellers, remembered associations of ideas, and reflections on the networks of knowledge, acquaintance, and identity that emerge from them. While Fursat is modern in his interest in ancient remains, his eagerness to learn to read cuneiform, and his interest in new scientific discoveries, he has an as-yet-undisciplined curiosity expressed in a genre of writing that moves easily among images, poetry, and prose.

Although Luo Zhenyu and Victor Segalen, the subjects of a jointly authored study by Denis Thouard and Wang Tao, *Making New Classics: the Archaeology of Luo Zhenyu and Victor Segalen*, were more or less contemporary with Fursat, the modern discipline of archaeology had a much more distinctive impact on them. Luo learned about early twentieth century archaeological interests and methods in Japan and produced a programme for modern archaeological research in China that stressed the importance of all aspects of material culture and the interest of even

the most humble domestic utensils, contrasting his vision with earlier research that concentrated only on inscribed surfaces. Segalen was very different: he attached special importance to inscribed stones, giving the title *Stèles* to a poetic expression of his experiences in China, but he also refused to reduce experience to the disciplinary conventions of description. The Han sculptures that he and his companions discovered in inland China—tracking them through references in local histories—were personalities in their own right, imposing their identities on the researcher in an unforgettable, unique experience of encountering imposing otherness: to be left thereafter to sink back into the mud, leading their own lives, rather than being reburied in museums.

Samuel Butler, studied by James Porter, *Homer, Skepticism, and the History of Philology*, shared Segalen's ambivalence towards disciplinary viewing. A rebel throughout his life against conventions and disciplines, he attacked conventional classical philology in his mischievous and self-mocking argument that the *Odyssey* was written by a Sicilian girl, and satirized Heinrich Schliemann's publications of his excavations at Troy by using poorly-reproduced photographs of unlocatable caves and walls to 'prove' that he could trace Odysseus' travels. As Porter says, the photographs indicate presence, they say "I was here," but they do not tell the viewer where "here" was.

Michael Fotiadis, *Naked presence and disciplinary wording*, deals with a similar tension between experience or 'presence' and disciplinary protocols, asking why archaeology students pay more attention to words than to images, and tracing the changing roles of varying techniques of illustration in archaeological publication. Like Humphreys, he is concerned that in modern education students are being trained to look for 'information' before confronting any kind of data, while he is also aware that a 'datum' is already culturally (disciplinarily) constructed as such.

Reactions against classicism included not only attacks like that of Butler, but also the promotion of alternative pasts, studied here by Gadi Algazi, *Middling Ages and Living Relics as Objects to Think with: Two Figures of the Historical Imagination*, in the case of the German Middle Ages. The position of 'middling' ages between ancient, 'classical' pasts and modern present already laid them open to alternating evaluations, as distant yet close, as inferior to classics or as preserving qualities lost or threatened in modern times. This ambiguity was enhanced in a further figuration in which 'living relics' are constructed as embodiments of the Middle Ages in the present.

While (as Algazi shows) the double move of distancing the past yet simultaneously bringing it back into the present can be found also in premodern times, it became much more pervasive in the modern era. And it is also surely the case that the 're-presentified' past is too often labelled, glass-cased, fenced, 'protected' in reservations or tourist sites, surrounded by 'information'.

Nevertheless the student in Fotiadis' photograph is not writing but, like Segalen, drawing: following an ancient gesture with her hand. Education in the Humanities needs to pay more attention to forms of engagement, and to critical reflection on its own procedures. Cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary analysis of the many ways in which modernity constructed and reconfigured its 'classics' may be a step in this direction.

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Part I
Anchoring Modernity

Chapter 2

The Making of New Delhi

Classical Aesthetics, “Oriental” Tradition and Architectural Practice: A Transcultural View

Monica Juneja

Summary The paper discusses how British architects tried to create for New Delhi a public architecture that would maintain the well-established association between classical buildings and the public sphere. It argues that such projects were a global phenomenon at the turn of the century when classical ideals were drawn upon and translated into symbolic statements in a number of world capitals, shaped at each site by local conditions. The imperial capital of New Delhi was envisioned as modern in geometrical layout but built in a recognizable ‘Indian’ style, secularized by omission of any explicitly ‘religious’ imagery.¹

In an address to the Virgil Society of London in October 1944, T.S. Eliot termed the literary achievements of the Greek and Roman poets “universal as no other literature can be.” “It is sufficient,” he continued, “that this standard [the classic] should have been established once and for all: the task does not have to be done again. But the maintenance of the standard is the price of our freedom, the defence of freedom against chaos.”² Conveying the troubled mood of the times, Eliot’s words point to the virtues of order and authority which modern Western civilization ascribed to classical antiquity, making it a powerful source of anchorage. These virtues, and the aesthetic ideals in which they were embodied, the poet goes on to remind his audience, were not a resource always available at hand, but had to be again and again recovered, recreated, and defended. The openness of Eliot’s formulation can

¹ I am grateful to those who have contributed in many ways to this article: to Rudolf Wagner for inspiring conversations, helpful references, and insightful suggestions; to Sally Humphreys for useful comments on an earlier draft of the paper and her skilful editing of this one; to Franziska Koch for assistance with formatting; to Madeleine Rettig and Brigitte Berger-Göken for their efforts in processing visuals and procuring copyrights.

² Cit. Zerner, *Rebuilding*: 261.

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be read as a sign of the elastic uses of the notion of the classical across time and in changing contexts. The classical has functioned as a marker of aesthetic value, cultural prestige, space, power and ethics in writings across disciplines. It indeed turns out to be an elusive category that exists in relation to its opposite—anticlassical—in association with other binaries such as symmetry/asymmetry, timeless/contemporary, stable/dynamic, pure/hybrid, universal/local. In art history the term was an invention of early modern times, projected backwards by art critics onto the Greeks and Romans. The modern art historical idea of a ‘classical’ style originated during the age of absolute monarchies in Europe, in order to distinguish an elite aesthetic.³

Eliot’s conviction about the constantly mediated, reinvented nature of the classic did not however take into account the journeys of an ideal considered to be a carrier of universal values across the globe and its implantation in highly diverse cultural contexts, a process that had already been under way since the turn of the century. The reconfigured classical, which the essays in this collection examine as one face of modernity, calls for being investigated as a transcultural phenomenon. As modernizing processes across the world came to be increasingly braided, the recourse to an ancient past became one more site of transcultural engagement, to which the different agents involved brought their own desires and distinct visions of that past. Reconfiguring those visions in new settings, however, meant entering the space of practice inhabited by another, more grounded set of concerns and contestations. The monumental architecture of modern capital cities, which is the subject of this paper, creates a distinct space which can be experienced by collectivities in a direct physical and intellectual encounter. While it is generally accepted that modern nation-states have been built on the mass circulation of the written word, the public monument addresses a deep-seated need for attachment that can be fulfilled only on a physical site that harnesses visual and spatial feelings and associations through which the existence of the political communities of empire and nation (and the transition from one to the other) can be reaffirmed in a simple but powerful way. These sites belong to the secular realm of the modern empire/nation, which seeks to distance itself from the rhetoric of religious sacrality but at the same time manufacture an aura that can mobilize the emotive economies of a pre-secular past. Classical idioms appear suited to fulfil this promise of creating a sense of the compelling and the eternal, akin to but not collapsible into the sacred. They could be deployed to articulate an unchanging schema, to serve as an anchor that would hold in the face of, but could even be adapted to, the unpredictable turns of history.

In the context of modern South Asia the notion of the classical has been deployed at two levels. The category was created by intellectual and cultural practice during the late nineteenth century with the aim of recovering a universal ideal from the multiple, historically diverse and heterogeneous literary and cultural traditions that had proliferated over centuries in the subcontinent; these traditions themselves were constituted through transcultural flows and relationships among the regions of Eurasia. Reinventing a universal vision of ‘Indianness’ could at the given historical

³ Ackermann, *Origins*: 236.

conjuncture become a resource for educated elites engaged in modern nation-building. Reference to classical antiquity had been used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to revitalize different fields of cultural production through processes of rationalization, secularization, and historicization that reshaped actors and practices in conformity with the political and ethical values of Enlightenment modernity.⁴ The contexts of these references have an entangled history that played itself out at different sites across the globe, undergoing transculturation in both senses of the term: as transformations that unfold through mobility across cultures and negotiations of the temporal distance between a past ideal and its rejuvenation in the present.⁵ An investigation of these processes hinges on a number of key questions: identifying the shifts from imitation to historicization inherent in the act of reconfiguring ancient artistic models, negotiating the gap between textual/visual sources and local practice, identifying the multiple drives that determined what was selected and seen in traditions canonized as classical, and examining the modes of reconciling conflicting voices and agendas.

This paper takes a look at the architectural history of the central government complex of New Delhi during the years of its creation (1911–1931) as the new imperial capital of the British Raj. It is a case study of a set of concerns, interpretations and agendas that intervene to reconfigure the notion of the classical in architecture and graft its authority and claims to totality onto new sites. The creation of a new capital city called for a disciplining of plurality through a clear statement of authority. In this sense the modern ideal of the classical, reconfigured over time, beginning with the artistic experiments of the Renaissance, and subsequently shaped by the reception of Winckelmannian texts and the historicist modes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to become the basis around which the arts and artistic practice were reorganized in post-Enlightenment Europe, appeared most suited to transport the ‘liberal’ programme embodied in colonial power to the distant colonies. Such an ideal was seen as an effective medium through which a distant European past could be made compatible with modern metropolitan liberal polities, while a culturally alien local past in the colony could be domesticated and contained within its overarching frame. Inevitably, the intention of creating a new capital in the classical mould was, in the Indian context, mediated by several factors, which can be plotted through looking at a vast amount of textual material such as letters, minutes of meetings, public lectures, newspaper articles, and art historical writings on the one hand, and architectural practice on the other. While there was a broad theoretical consensus about the export of Western classicism, the need, extent and ways in which ‘Indian tradition’—discredited, admired and re-invented by the colonial elite—should be integrated to create a ‘truly imperial style’, remained contested, as did categories such as modernity and civilization.

The architectural history of imperial New Delhi from 1910 to 1931 shows the kinds of translations and transculturations that European classicism underwent once it

⁴Thapar, *Early India*; Inden, *Text and Practice*; Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments*; Juneja (ed.), *Architecture*.

⁵On the latter: Wagner, “Transculturality,” points 8, 9.

entered the unruly sites of local practice. My interpretation here departs from the view that the architecture of New Delhi was directly adapted from the locally available idioms of Mughal buildings, as a way of appropriating for the British Raj a sense of continuity as well as something of the charismatic legitimacy enjoyed by the Mughal emperors. Just as the staging of colourful *darbars* was seen to re-enact some of these past glories, the use of red sandstone as building material, together with individual architectural features such as lattice screens, projecting eaves, turrets, and porticoes, and above all the choice of a site for the new imperial capital adjacent to the older Mughal capital of Shahjahanabad—all have been proffered as evidence of a desire to recast the new imperial capital in a Mughal mould.⁶ Instead, I argue that the task of distilling from centuries of building history in the subcontinent and from its multiplicity of religious traditions and local practices a notion of ‘Indian tradition’ was a challenge to which building practices in colonial India responded through diverse experiments that went beyond a simple Mughal revival. The classical aesthetic reshaped by Winckelmann and his eclectic interpreters in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was now to be anchored within a form of ‘oriental classicism’, imagined as the style with the appropriate potential to elevate the colonized as well as restore to them a sense of their lost past.⁷ My paper attempts to flesh out some of these processes, drawing attention to local agency, while also pointing to multiple translations of the classical in a global perspective that cuts across both national and colonial narratives. Setting the capital cities of Europe, which were redone following grandiose schemes, together with others like Washington DC, Nanjing, Canberra, Pretoria, and New Delhi within a common frame, and viewing their architectural and urban histories through the lens of cultural translation, can serve as a useful corrective to the diffusionist paradigms in which culture is seen to ‘flow’ from ‘high’ metropolitan centres to culturally absorptive peripheries, producing inferior versions of an ‘original’ classical ideal. It is also a more productive analytical perspective than that offered by recent postcolonial scholarship which reads such processes overwhelmingly in terms of bipolar asymmetries of power between colonizer and colonized, often flattening the role of local agencies, suppressing the conflicting voices and attitudes in metropolis and colony, and ignoring the multi-polar dimensions of these histories.

Classic Pasts, Modern Styles: Imitation, Emulation, Historicization

Classical aesthetics viewed as an order of things was mediated continuously and given a fresh lease of life in successive ages and contexts. The engagement of artists and historians with a past canonized as a ‘golden age’ remained inextricably rooted in the present, in those cultures through which encounters with the past came to be

⁶ Mukherjee, “Old Seat.”

⁷ Metcalf, *An imperial vision*.

negotiated. Research on the Renaissance in early modern Europe has thrown up diverse views about the quality of responses to classical antiquity, which have challenged some of the traditional temporal and spatial boundaries of the period labelled “Renaissance.” Recent scholarship has also pointed to the ways in which the predilections and hierarchies that characterized the Renaissance appropriation of the classical continued to mark subsequent receptions of classical antiquity—one example was the over-privileging of Italy and correlative neglect of the constitutive role of other Mediterranean cultures such as North Africa, West Asia, and Spain in the development of Western culture.⁸ The Renaissance encounter with classical antiquity often meant wrestling with fragments—vanishing traces of frescoes, broken statues, fragments of texts, or caved-in roofs—where the task of ‘completing’ or reassembling an image or a text was by its logic an exercise in interpretation. This was especially pronounced in the domain of architecture, where scattered entablatures, brackets, capitals, or crumbled walls could not indicate much of the building’s architectural sequence of forms. The task of retrieving the logic underlying the assemblage of discrete parts was equally dependent on texts. Architectural treatises such as those of Vitruvius and writers of succeeding generations⁹ helped shape intellectual tools and strategies to reorder heterogeneous archaeological data into a coherent whole. This inevitably meant isolating aesthetics from construction principles. Not only was architectural revival a collaborative exercise between architects and philologists,¹⁰ the temporal disjunction meant that actual (re-) construction remained necessarily rooted in the technical, economic, and social conditions of the specific age, which itself had undergone radical changes since Antiquity.

Pre-Enlightenment configurations of the classical were informed by the concept of *imitatio*, a notion and practice shared by all disciplines, for it became a channel through which history and the temporal gap between the past and the present could be grappled with. Indeed the idea of imitation as emulating the models of preceding writers, artists, or philosophers, was one that connected humanist writers with the Romans, since both were engaged in a renaissance of a kind—the Romans following the exempla of their Greek predecessors in more or less the same ways as the humanists responded to the Romans.¹¹ A protracted discussion of various facets and understandings of imitation was a major enterprise among humanists during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the details of which are beyond the scope of this paper.¹² In these discussions the model to be imitated was generally agreed to be exemplary, while the extent to which it could be surpassed or translated into a different idiom was open to debate. In the field of architecture imitation involved a choice of appropriate models from the bulk of preserved texts as well as from

⁸ Payne et al., *Antiquity*, 2. A discussion of these issues is however beyond the scope of this paper.

⁹ Betts, “‘*Si come dice*’”: 244–253.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* Thoenes, “Patterns”: 191–196.

¹¹ Ackerman, *Origins*: 127.

¹² Discussed at length *ibid.*: 127 ff.

building remains of varying quality. Here it became “an act of analysis,” as ancient models had to be separated into elements that could be imitated and those that could not.¹³ All in all, to imitate meant keeping art or a building technique alive and moving. Indeed the incessant preoccupation with the subject may have been rooted in the anxiety that the failure to imitate might result in decline. In addition to furnishing a structure through which an appropriation and sense of community with the classical past could be defined, humanist debates about imitation prefigured a later definition of the classic which focused on formal style and above all on the establishment of those principles considered permanent.¹⁴

The ‘classic’ which the Renaissance cast as a widespread ideal and entity¹⁵ came to its acme in the eighteenth century, where its prestige was on the one hand heightened, while its coherence, on the other, gradually broke up as its historical roots were articulated. A key text that triggered this process and became paradigmatic of a renewed classicism was Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, published in Dresden in 1764. This period saw the emergence of classicism as an imaginative complex that could serve as a new anchor within the rapidly changing geographies and cultural topographies of the modern world. At the same time Winckelmann’s work and its reception made a hitherto ‘timeless’ model of classical excellence—the art of Greek antiquity—into a historical phenomenon, thereby prefiguring historicist modes of the next century. The far-reaching engagement with Winckelmann—the reinterpretations of his conceptual agenda and their implications for artistic practice—through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is of crucial significance to an assessment of the modes of recasting a classical aesthetic within modern frames.

Winckelmann’s *Geschichte* offered a synthesis of almost all existing knowledge about the visual artefacts of the ancient world, whose history he sought to trace in a way that departed from earlier scholarship. His analysis encompassed the civilizations not only of ancient Greece and Rome, but also of Etruria, Egypt, and the Near East, though he wrote at a time before the archaeological discoveries of the cultures of ancient Mesopotamia. The greater part of his work, however, is taken up by his analysis of the art of ancient Greece and Rome—this account forms the basis of his conceptual model. The remarkable impact Winckelmann’s *Geschichte* made on a contemporary cosmopolitan European community of scholars, artists, and thinkers was partly due to his sheer scholarly achievement in compiling and ordering copious amounts of textual and visual material relating to the art of antiquity. More importantly it functioned, well into the next century, as a model to conceptualize the entirety of classical artistic tradition. It is in the latter sense that this work has been seen as foundational to a new kind of art history that spread across Europe—and in the twentieth century to the non-European world—and which took the discipline beyond the confines of antiquarian scholarship.¹⁶

¹³ Thoenes, “Patterns”: 191.

¹⁴ Henri Peyre, *Qu’est-ce que c’est que le classicisme?*

¹⁵ Panofsky, *Sinn*: 51 ff.

¹⁶ Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte*: 90 ff.

The *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* is informed by two key notions: a theory of artistic style embedded in a specific historical context and the idea of a historical process which construed a larger history of the antique ideal as part of a pattern of rise and decline. The key moment in this history was a classic period—the so-called golden age of Greek culture—extending from the end of the Persian wars in the early fifth century B.C.E. to the time of the Macedonian conquest of Greece in the late fourth century B.C.E., a phase of graceful form characterized as *der schöne Stil*. This phase of culmination was preceded by a steady progress from archaic origins, *der ältere Stil* marked by simplicity, to an early classical austere phase, *der hohe Stil*, and then to mastery of perfect form. From here followed a gradual decline, *der Stil der Nachahmer*, marked by imitation, excess, and degeneration. By way of this schema, ancient monuments that had previously been classified almost exclusively according to their subject matter now began to be categorized stylistically. Historical context was supplied through a copiously detailed account of the materials and techniques used in the production of ancient art, aspects of political life that would shed light on the conditions of artistic production, the practices, and the beliefs which may have had a bearing on the patronage of art, and the effects of climate and the physical environment.¹⁷ This scholarly analysis is marked by striking shifts in register, between elaborate accounts of a historical nature and intense, lyrical passages evoking the beauty of individual sculptures.¹⁸

The reverberations of Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* were felt not only during the immediate aftermath of its publication, but throughout the following century and a half. His ideas reached a non-German reading public through a series of translations—French, Italian, English—beginning with extracts published in journals. A French translation entitled *Histoire de l'art chez les anciens* became available within 2 years of the German first edition, followed by Italian translations.¹⁹ The latter in turn came after the publication of a second, considerably enlarged posthumous German edition in 1776. It was 80 years after Winckelmann's death in 1768 that the *Geschichte* became available in complete form to readers in English.²⁰

The response to Winckelmann's passionate advocacy of a classical ideal hinged on the tangled question of the relation of contemporary art to classic models of the past. Built into his aesthetic paradigm was a tension between classicism as a timeless ideal and as a historical phenomenon. Historicizing the antique ideal implied a clear divide between the classical and the modern. In other words, if classical art was entirely contained within its own history, was it also available to the present as a universally valid model? A further issue concerned the place of the art of the present in a larger history of art since the Renaissance. According to the

¹⁷ Winckelmann, *Geschichte*: Part 1, Chap. 4, section 1.

¹⁸ Discussed in Potts, "Winckelmann's": 377–407.

¹⁹ Winckelmann, *History* (2006): 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 30–31.

parallel Winckelmann had drawn between the rise and decline of ancient art and the evolution of modern art, contemporary art would be approaching the end point of the decline that had set in since the High Renaissance.

Such questions were of topical significance for cultural theorists and artists during the periods subsequent to the publication of *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*. The French Revolution was one crucial moment of engagement with the cultural politics of Winckelmann's history. The ideal of political freedom, which Winckelmann saw as one of the pre-conditions for the flourishing of art in Greek antiquity, became an impassioned issue in revolutionary France. The Jacobin dream of constituting a free republic drew its inspiration from ancient Greece as a model of utopian freedom and virtue. The revolutionaries gave a call to retrieve art from the excesses of a degenerate *ancien régime* through a return to the pure and simple forms of the antique. Such visions of political and artistic rebirth, while inspired by the conflation of formal simplicity and ethical value invoked by Winckelmann's much quoted dictum "*eine edle Einfalt und eine stille Größe*" ("a noble simplicity and a calm grandeur"), modify his unique privileging of classical Greece by advocating a mythical unity of Greece and Rome as a new, reinvigorated classical ideal—as was put into practice by David, Canova, or Ledoux.²¹

Winckelmann's conceptualization of an artistic tradition in terms of its historical development prefigured an understanding that became a norm in the nineteenth century—when historicist thinking pushed this argument to a critical edge. The imperatives of historical analysis now called for an examination of different kinds of art produced by the peoples of the ancient world. Even while not questioning the primacy of the Greek ideal, later thinkers from Herder to Goethe and Hegel saw these ideals as historically unique and hence as being inherently at odds with the norms of modern European society. Historicism of the nineteenth century involved bringing alive that art of the past which seemed particularly compelling to the modern imagination—be it that of classical Greece, Gothic, or the Italian Renaissance—by setting out its history and engaging self-consciously with its distinctive conventions.

This also marked the moment where the ideal of *imitatio* gave way to a modernist notion of re-invention, of emulating authority through individualized expression.²² While the curricula of academies of art through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries continued to be based on drawing from ancient and modern 'classical' models, this training was now seen as the necessary preparation for emulation, the step forward into creative self-realization. Writing in 1755, Winckelmann declared: "Der einzige Weg für uns, groß, ja, wenn es möglich ist, unnachahmlich zu werden, ist die Nachahmung der Alten. . ." (The only way for us to become great or, if possible, inimitable is imitation of the Ancients).²³ Yet this and the following generations witnessed the erosion of *imitatio*, to be supplanted by

²¹ Pommier, *L'Art*; Pommier, *Winckelmann*; Rosenblum, *Transformations*; Crow, *Emulation*.

²² Crow, *Emulation*.

²³ Winckelmann, *Gedanken*: 3.

a concept of great art and that of genius. Artists and theoreticians—for example Winckelmann’s close associate Anton Raphael Mengs, or Sir Joshua Reynolds whom Mengs had met in Rome—entered into an impassioned discussion opposing imitation as plain copying, a practice decried as antiquarian ‘aping’ and adulation of the past, to “inventive borrowing” in which, according to Reynolds, the sagacious imitator penetrates into the principles of a work: “What is learned in this manner from the works of others becomes really our own, sinks deep and is never forgotten.”²⁴ While Wittkower rightly argues that none of these ideas arose “like a phoenix from the ashes” and that the concept of genius itself could be traced back to Plato,²⁵ the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did erode earlier modes of engaging with classical models by valorizing the freedom to “transform” the spirit of antiquity through “novelty” and “variety.”²⁶ While the term “eclectic” met with ridicule through the eighteenth century,²⁷ in practice the idea of “informed” or “selective” imitation, inventiveness, and variety fused with historicist approaches to shape the ways in which the values of universality associated with the classical were realized in artistic practice.

The emergent disciplinary formations of archaeology and art history during the nineteenth century also raised questions about ways of conceptualizing architecture—a field where the competence of engineers and art historians intersected. In the wake of prolific historicist experiments in building practices, debates about what distinguished architecture as a representative field from building in general hinged on the concept of style, considered to be the source of aesthetic meaning. The architect of the nineteenth century, trained in art history, saw style as providing architecture with a ‘language’ which, like all language, was endowed with symbolic potential. According to Ruskin the “poetry of architecture” lay in its expressive power to speak for the time and place in which it was created.²⁸ Applied to the proliferation of architectural idioms across the burgeoning cityscapes of mid-Victorian England, this meant defining the specific attributes of individual styles. Ellen Morris identifies two specific categories that had crystallized to classify building styles by the second half of the nineteenth century: the classicizing, termed “Greek,” “Roman,” or “Renaissance” (“Italianate”), and the medievalist—“Gothic,” “Medieval,” or perhaps “Elizabethan.” Each of these categories was perceived as being grounded in a set of specific ethical and historical imperatives, and they therefore emerged as ideological polarities. These surfaced during an ambitious architectural competition (1856–1857) for a new Foreign Office Building in which ideological lines were clearly drawn. Claims and counterclaims made on behalf of the different entries in the competition revolved around ascriptions associated with individual modes, while the central role played by associational

²⁴ Wittkower, “Imitation”: 153; also for an account of the debate on *imitatio sapiens* and *imitatio insipiens*.

²⁵ *Ibid.*: 157.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 161.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 154–155.

²⁸ Cit. Morris, “Symbols”: 8.

propriety in relation to the idea of style was summarized in an article in *The Building News*: “The destination of an edifice should appear as much as possible on its face...”.²⁹ Historicist associations were drawn in to sanctify Classicist styles as generators of imperial symbolism, whereas the “medievalizing” styles were considered unsuited to secular buildings, especially those with public, official functions. “Boldness,” “impressiveness,” “simple dignity,” “largeness of manner” are epithets linked to classical styles that recur in public pronouncements on these issues. In the architectural pluralism of the high-Victorian period, styles now brought under the label of the classical came to be privileged for certain kinds of public buildings—political institutions, the British Museum—endowed as they were with the power to transmit liberal values and therefore embody national identity. That the classic style easily permitted the beholder “to recall to mind the monuments of Roman greatness, and even suggesting a comparison between that people and the English nation,” as one observer noted, ascribed to it an international legibility seen as befitting the imperial status of Britain as a nation.

World Capitals

Among those who enthusiastically spoke for a rebirth of classicism as befitting monumental buildings of an era of intense patriotism, and anticipated its flow to the colonies, was Edwin Lutyens, the architect of the new imperial capital of New Delhi. In 1903 Lutyens wrote to Baker, who was to be his future colleague in New Delhi: “In architecture Palladio is the game!! [. . .] To the average man it is dry bones, but under the hand of a Wren it glows and the stiff materials become plastic clay.”³⁰ Lutyens indeed traced a genealogical line of descent from the Greeks to the Romans, to Italy, France and to Christopher Wren, valorizing in this way the attempt of each age to enter into a relationship with a past ideal wherein cultural distance was negotiated in specific ways which reaffirmed the authority of that ideal. Lutyens was also reacting here to the prevailing mood during the Edwardian era of the early twentieth century motivated by the ambition to make London a truly imperial capital that would vie with Paris, Rome, and Berlin. Most striking among the building projects of the Edwardian years was the construction of a ceremonial Mall designed by Aston Webb (1849–1930) that led from Buckingham Palace to Trafalgar Square in the heart of London. Completed in 1913 after having undergone many changes of plan, the Mall gave London a symbolic axis, a broad tree-lined avenue anchored at the palace end by the Victoria Memorial and at Trafalgar Square by the Admiralty Arch, which evoked a vision of the Roman triumphal arch. The scheme was completed by the re-fronting of Buckingham Palace itself

²⁹ 1859: 774.

³⁰ Hayward Gallery, *Lutyens*: 33.

with a classical façade in the style of the *École des Beaux-Arts*.³¹ An even more ambitious scheme for an “imperial” capital was outlined in a leading article entitled “Imperial London,” which appeared in the January 1912 issue of *The Builder*.³² The proposed scheme envisioned a new Parliament House, a complete transformation of Buckingham Palace, and the creation of an “Imperial Processional Way.” The entire north bank of the Thames including St. Paul’s Cathedral down to Blackfriars Bridge was encompassed within this plan at the centre of which an “Imperial Palace” was envisioned. This grandiose scheme of creating “a grand new Parisian London” came to nothing, not least owing to the outbreak of war in 1914.

Yet the idea of “imperial capitals” in the classicizing mould lived on to travel and take shape in the colonies—and not only there. This proved to be a global phenomenon that transcended the frame of the British Empire. It referred to an architectural revival that encompassed the United States and most of Europe from the 1890s onwards, where local versions of Classicism of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries were reinvented. One important source of this global flow was the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, an institution that was heir to the *Académie Royale d’Architecture* created by Louis XIV in 1681. Study at the *École* was meant to be a training in classical taste; teaching was buttressed by regular competitions, the most prestigious being the annual *Grand Prix de Rome*. The *Beaux-Arts* style was famed for a particular method of architectural organization based on a system of symmetrical monumental axes, intersecting at one or more star-like points of emphasis at which the principal buildings are sited. This was most clearly manifested in the elaborate designs for single buildings produced by students at the *École*, but could easily be extended to urban complexes.³³ The *Beaux-Arts* principles, as they were known, had informed the dramatic rebuilding of Paris during the Second Empire under Baron Haussmann and in 1901 became the model for the re-planning of Washington DC.³⁴

The first plan for the central core of the federal precinct in Washington was laid down in 1791 by the French architect Pierre Charles L’Enfant. L’Enfant’s vision continues to be invoked as the ‘essence’ of Washington, even though his plan underwent several revisions in the hands of subsequent planners and architects.³⁵ Drawing upon the model of Versailles, L’Enfant’s scheme combined its particular version of the classical with the picturesque sensibilities of the late eighteenth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century a new academic classicism with the *Beaux-Arts* imprint (a number of architects involved in the re-planning of Washington had studied in Paris³⁶) gained the upper hand over emerging modernist styles under the aegis of the Senate Park Commission. In L’Enfant’s

³¹ Discussed below; Metcalf, *An imperial vision*: 179.

³² *The Builder*, 5 January 1912: 11–12.

³³ Egbert, *The Beaux-Arts tradition*; Draper, “Paris”: 110–111; Cody et al. eds., *Chinese*.

³⁴ Sutcliffe, *Towards the planned city*.

³⁵ Bednar, *L’Enfant’s Legacy*; Hines, “The Imperial Mall”; Scott, “This Vast”; Reys, *Monumental Washington*.

³⁶ Hines, “The Imperial Mall”: 83.

plan the central focus was on the Capitol, housing the legislature, which was located on the highest point, Jenkins Hill. The executive mansion was placed at a distance and to one side of the principal axis, though the two important buildings were linked formally through a series of gardens and functionally along a diagonal avenue. They were also geometrically linked by two primary axes at right angles to each other. L'Enfant's plan, which remained a first draft, became the subject of extensive discussion and was never submitted in a revised version. Its spirit was invoked in the early twentieth century as the federal precinct with the Mall took shape, almost creating an illusion of continuity with L'Enfant's envisioned schemes. The Mall creates a broad linear space—simple, bold, and expansive, with little to detract the eye and disrupt the coherence of the whole. Viewed from a distance and diagonally, most buildings appear as little more than an unobtrusive backdrop, though many of them are architectural creations in their own right. Yet their pivotal placing and qualities become apparent only at close range. The linear movement of space is punctuated by the Washington monument: here space opens up around the base and at the same time the gaze is carried upwards by the soaring thrust of the obelisk. The axis continues westward, punctuated once more by the reflecting pool and the Lincoln Memorial beyond. The geometric order of the landscape and the architecture of Egyptian, Greek, and Roman building types within it were intended to reinforce the authority of Antiquity and its subsequent appropriations (e.g. in revolutionary and Napoleonic France) as a buttress for modern democracies. The monumental centre of the capital city belongs not only to the city but to the nation, and its plan highlights this relationship. Within a single composition the legislative, judicial, and executive centres of authority are impressively displayed, flanked by important cultural institutions and commemorative monuments to national heroes, which all have a shrine-like quality to which visitors are drawn. This bare sketch does not take account of the complex history of successive additions, the diversity of tendencies and architectural-cum-urban movements that shaped the growth of this complex. The suggestion of effortless creation is equally part of the vision: no historic markers or plaques remind the visitors of what once existed before this remarkable space took shape. This idea of a compositional vista would reappear in world capitals planned around the same time or shortly after—Canberra, Pretoria and New Delhi, and Nanjing.

The designing of capital cities in the colonies rested on the assumption that classical idioms embodying an ideal of order reflected fundamental and eternal principles. Considered by planners and political figures to be the architecture of universality, such an order was perceived as not tied to any geographical or temporal setting; its rules were considered applicable by anyone anywhere. What had been formed in Washington or Pretoria and perfected in Canberra or New Delhi, so it was felt, could be potentially replanted at any other site. In 1925 Herbert Baker, planner of the imperial capitals of Pretoria and New Delhi, carried the same style to Kenya where he designed the Government House in Nairobi as one more variant of the Classical.³⁷ And yet in practice, models to be copied or

³⁷ Metcalf, "Architecture": 399–400.

emulated were never simple transplants. While the idea per se of classical forms as carriers of political meaning was a transculturally mobile one, the process by which two-dimensional plans morphed into concrete structures unfolded through continuous redefinitions and adjustments to local considerations—economic, professional, political, and symbolic.

Around the time that the Washington federal precinct acquired its present form and the planning of New Delhi had just begun, a similar axial concept could be seen in Canberra, envisioned by the Chicago architect Walter Burley Griffin, also inspired by Beaux-Arts classicism.³⁸ Griffin's plan was designed to incorporate the topography of the site: a "land-axis" led from the Capitol Hill to a distant mountain, Mount Ainslie. It was crossed by a "water-axis" in the form of an artificial lake. The Parliament House buildings were placed on the hill spreading horizontally up the major axis toward the river. Despite the grand scale of the overall composition, its visual effectiveness was diminished for many years by the absence of monumental architecture. In Griffin's plan the Houses of Parliament occupied low buildings; all major axes of the city emanated from its open sides, giving the capital a less ceremonial and more open character. However, by the time the architectural structures of the Australian capital were in place, the Beaux-Arts Classicism which had inspired its plan had been superseded by modernism, which informed the buildings along the government axis.

Capital cities were not simply planned patterns but elaborate symbolic statements shaped and modified by the different political natures and contingencies of specific contexts—such as those in Australia, India, China, or South Africa. Nanjing and Pretoria offer distinct examples of a conscious elaboration of a shared conception with divergent results. In China revolutionary changes that came with the creation of a Republic in 1911 included the transfer and translation of the Beaux-Arts style into architectural practice at different locations across the country. During the early years of the twentieth century, a number of Chinese students of architecture had made their way to Europe and the United States to attend schools of architecture. They were trained in the architectural pedagogy of the *École des Beaux-Arts* as it had come to be transcultured through American practices. Prominent among these was Lü Yanzhi, a young graduate from Cornell and an associate of Henry Murphy, an architect from New York working in China where he coined the notion of "adaptive architecture" to signify a symbiosis between traditional Chinese and Western idioms.³⁹ Murphy was appointed in 1928 to plan the new capital of the Chinese Republic, Nanjing, which he proceeded to draw up along an axis provided by the mausoleum of Sun Yat-sen, already in the process of being built under the aegis of Lü Yanzhi, who had won the design contest in 1925.⁴⁰ The symbolic referent in this plan was once more the Washington Mall, aligned along the complex of buildings in which institutional power was concentrated:

³⁸ Van Zanten, *Selected Designs*; *id.*, "Walter Burley Griffin's Design"; Johnson, *The Architecture*.

³⁹ Cody, *Building*; Cody *et al.*, *Chinese*.

⁴⁰ Wagner, "Ritual."

Congress, the White House, the Washington Memorial, and the Lincoln Memorial. The layout of the Sun Yat-sen mausoleum with its long pathway and flight of stairs leading up to the Memorial Hall evoked the similar spatial experience that characterized the approach to the Lincoln Memorial. Moreover, Lü had planned a columned façade for the mausoleum which was to be crowned by a roof in Chinese idiom.⁴¹ As a parallel gesture to the political tenor of the Lincoln Memorial, where two of the President's canonical texts—the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address—are engraved on the inner walls, Lü proposed doing the same with Sun's writings. Such an appropriation had the potential to create a particular 'imagined community' of readers: engraving on the wall takes the text beyond the domain of mechanical reproduction and transforms it into a national treasure, a work of art created with lavish materials and in a sequestered space. Reading these text panels is no longer a purely individual act, but creates its own practice by which readers have to follow a certain decorum, which includes standing at a distance to be able to view and read the panels in their entirety. The ensemble of the urban plan of Nanjing's monumental core with the Sun Yat-sen mausoleum rests on the conviction that axial spatial arrangements, symmetrical patterns, and selected symbolic devices have the potential to transmit messages of power and legitimacy, that they obey the logic of closure whereby inscriptions and statues are fixed and frozen for all time. Yet this was a difficult illusion to sustain; perception of the built structures themselves was filtered through a sequence of conflicting political factors that destabilized any possibility of simply imitating a complex that symbolized a historically different set of political arrangements.

The plan of the new South African capital Pretoria was informed by the vision of a British Empire inclusive of the Dutch Boer Republics, which were eventually appropriated by the British after the war of 1899–1902. Its architect Herbert Baker was trained at the London Royal Academy before he moved to Cape Town in 1892. In 1900 he was sent off by his South African patron, Cecil Rhodes, on a tour of the classical sites of the Mediterranean, and then commissioned to design the Union government buildings in Pretoria. Baker's plan of this complex was envisaged as a building set upon an acropolis like that of Athens. For this he chose a site halfway up a barren hillside with planted terraces reaching down the valley, after rejecting propositions made by the government to locate the buildings on a flat plain within the city.⁴² The main building had two blocks joined by a long, open semi-circular colonnade, with tall domed towers at each end, a style that genuflected in the direction of Christopher Wren.⁴³ The shape was proclaimed to symbolize the union of the English and Boer colonists and to provide an amphitheatre in Greek fashion for public ceremonies. With the intent of exploiting to the fullest the

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: Fig. 12.3. This essay contains an extensive and nuanced discussion of a range of symbols and the processes of their adaptation, including the bell which, while it cites the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, carries the meaning of the traditional wooden bell meant to "wake up the world."

⁴² Van Zanten, "Walter Burley Griffin's Design."

⁴³ Stamp, "New Delhi": 34.

monumental side of Classicism, Baker had proposed a “Hall of Fame” in the form of a classical temple that would rise from beyond the colonnade, a plan which remained unrealized. Many of these features re-emerged in the plan of New Delhi.

“A Scape of Towers. . . Grand as Rome”

The analogy of Rome, a favourite theme of planners and architects of capitals across the world, was evoked once more, in 1931, by the architectural critic Robert Byron, in his eloquent description of the new British imperial capital of New Delhi, seen through the eyes of a traveller on his first visit:

A flat country—brown, scrubby and broken, over which the cold winds of the central Indian winter sweep their arctic rigours—lies on either side. This country has been compared with the Roman Campagna; at every hand tombs and mosques from Mogul times and earlier, weathered to the colour of the earth, bear witness to former empires. The road describes a curve [. . .]. Suddenly on the right a scape of towers is lifted from the horizon, sunlit and pink ream against the blue sky, grand as Rome [. . .]. The traveller heaves a breath. Before his eyes sloping gently upward runs a gravel way of such infinite perspective as to suggest the intervention of a diminishing glass; at whose end, reared above the green tree-tops, glitters the seat of government, the seventh Delhi, four-square upon an eminence [. . .]. With a shiver of impatience he shakes off contemporary standards, and makes ready to evoke those of Greece, the Renaissance, and the Moguls. (Byron, *New Delhi*)

In the efforts of Edwin Lutyens, appointed in 1912–1913 to design the central buildings of the new capital of the British Raj, monumental aspects predominated, with relatively little attention given to planning the city as a whole. For Lutyens Edwardian experiments in the classical were confused, eclectic, and undisciplined. “You cannot play originality with the orders. They have to be so well-digested that there is nothing but essence left,” he wrote while evolving the design of the viceregal lodge in New Delhi.⁴⁴ Lutyens’ vision of “essence” involved abstracting a geometrical and formal logic from an ideal and developing it into a new grammar—monumental yet disciplined. His vision of an ordered humanist architecture differed from that of his collaborator in New Delhi, Herbert Baker, whose architecture, as illustrated by the buildings of Pretoria, was more literally dependent on tradition.

On the face of things, there appeared to be a consensus among different agencies in the metropolis and colony—architects, Viceroy and Public Works Department—about creating a new capital in an aesthetic mould which would embody an ideal of order produced out of chaos. Yet both the siting of the city and the question of its architectural style proved to be highly contentious issues, mediated by several factors, which can be plotted through looking at a vast amount of textual material such as letters, minutes of meetings, public lectures and art historical writings on the one hand, and architectural practice on the other. Individual personalities, local agencies, aesthetic arguments, and historical practices all shaped the extent and

⁴⁴ Cit. Hayward Gallery, *Lutyens*: 34.

ways in which a universal classicism could be adapted locally to create a “truly imperial style.”

The debate on these issues went back to 1873, to a discussion that took place in the London Society of Arts between the architects T. Roger Smith and William Emerson. Roger Smith, recently returned from Bombay, expressed the view that: “. . . as our administration exhibits European justice, order, law, energy, and honour—and that in no hesitating or feeble way—so our buildings ought to hold up a high standard of European art. They ought to be European both as a rallying point for ourselves, and as raising a distinctive symbol of our presence to be beheld with respect and even with admiration by the natives of the country.”⁴⁵ William Emerson, on the other hand argued for a style more in tune with local tradition and contingencies, insisting that it was “impossible for the architecture of the west to be suitable to the natives of the east.”⁴⁶ The different positions in the debate on what kind of architectural style was most appropriate for the colony rested on a common premise, acceptance of a nexus between art forms and the political conditions in which they are produced and circulate. In doing so, both those who advocated an imperial enterprise following in the footsteps of the ancient Romans who “unquestionably not only cut their roads and pitched their camps in Roman fashion, but put up Roman buildings wherever they had occasion to build. . .,”⁴⁷ and those who argued on the basis of cultural difference grounded in theories of climate and race, shared a concern for the political effect of their choices of style and idiom.

The debate on the question of style for New Delhi was polarized from the start. Building practices in India since the 1860s had experimented with a number of “native” styles for public buildings, creating architecture that, following the architectural historian James Fergusson, was termed Indo-Saracenic. The author of the first systematic history of Indian architecture in the modern sense, James Fergusson had devised a taxonomic classification of pre-colonial Indian monuments by tagging them with religious labels—Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim. Two modern media were central to the project of colonial archaeology and architectural history—photography and the use of plaster casts. Both were seen as mechanisms that drew out the substantive truth of an object through their ability to present it as a visual fact (cf. Fotiadis, this volume). Systematically catalogued and classified facts and objects then became an important medium through which, in the words of Fergusson, a land possessing no written histories could be deciphered. Fergusson’s *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (1876) drew upon the Winckelmann canon and historicist methods to classify the history of Indian architecture into stylistic units seen as the basis of a modern, rational discipline, yet one which continued to draw on religious categories. Taste was the measure of perfection against which style was defined: Buddhist-Gandharan architecture, characterized by a certain “classical” simplicity and purity of form, was seen to represent the

⁴⁵ Smith, “Architectural”: 286.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 286–87.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 281.

highest stage of aesthetic excellence attained by Indian art. “Hindu” architecture, on the other hand, with its “false” principles of design and what was regarded as its excessively ornate surface decoration, stood in Fergusson’s scheme as the polar opposite of the “Buddhist.” The history of Indian architecture could then be conceptualized in terms of the evolution from the first type to the other, following Winckelmann’s teleology of progressive decline.⁴⁸ The advent of Islam in the twelfth century interrupted this narrative of continuous decline: Islam was seen as a positive cultural force for several reasons, above all through its assimilation of extant Roman buildings and arcuate techniques during the formative phase of ‘Islamic’ architecture. The fusion that followed produced what came to be labelled as Indian Saracenic architecture which flowered in 13 different styles listed by Fergusson, achieving its height under the Mughal emperors and declining once more in the wake of the dispersal of imperial power and authority during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Fergusson’s taxonomies and explanatory models had a decisive influence on the architectural practices of the British Raj during the subsequent decades, marked by a panoply of experiments visible in numerous Indian cities.⁴⁹ While pre-colonial models of buildings pre-dating the advent of Islam and labelled “Hindu” were considered debased in taste and technically incapable of being adapted to modern buildings, later regional variations drawn from a host of medieval cities in Northern India, and collectively classified as Hindu-Saracenic, became the basis of a recognized colonial building style. Mughal buildings of Delhi, Agra, and other provincial centres of the Mughal empire were visited regularly and mapped in detail, the results compiled in a comprehensive series of drawings in the 12 volume *Jeyapore Portfolio of Architectural Details*.⁵⁰ This was to provide a rich source of stylistic elements, from copings and plinths to pillars and brackets. All in all, Fergusson’s classifications canonized the Buddhist monuments and the high noon of Mughal architecture as “classical” Indian styles, which the architects of New Delhi selectively drew upon.

The Classical Made “Sane for India”

When the decision was made in 1912 to build a new capital at Delhi, many visions bore upon each other. The siting of the new Delhi adjacent to the old Mughal capital carried with it the imprint of an older vision in which the British sought to capture for their empire the majesty of their predecessors. Both the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, and the Public Works Department of the Government of India advocated an “Indian” or “Oriental” style of architecture at New Delhi, as being appropriate politically, also arguing that it was the preference of the rulers of the

⁴⁸ Juneja, *Architecture*: 13–24.

⁴⁹ Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*.

⁵⁰ Ed. Col. S.S. Jacob, London 1890. Scriver and Prakash, *Colonial Modernities*: 115–126.

Indian princely states. Imbuing the “Classical with the spirit of the East” in Hardinge’s pronouncements found different expressions: “Plain Classic” with a “touch of Orientalism,” or “buildings of a bold and plain character with an Oriental adaptation,” or alternatively “a good broad classic style with an Indian motif.”⁵¹ Other voices opposed the imposition of a “Western” style of architecture; these included that of E. B. Havell, Principal of the Calcutta School of Art, who advocated the exploitation of local building traditions and the employment of Indian craftsmen as the only way of reviving the ancient arts of India.⁵² The pages of *The Times* were filled with correspondence on the subject, especially after Herbert Baker wrote an article in October 1912 arguing that the Classical was the only style that would “embody the idea of law and order.”⁵³ In 1913 several members of the Arts and Crafts movement signed a petition to the Secretary of State for India pleading for New Delhi to be built in “the Indian manner”.⁵⁴ Provoked by the polarized character of the debate, Lutyens took an extreme position in which he made no bones about his contempt for the colonial experiments of the past 50 years and for Mughal architecture, and claimed to be repelled by the apparent chaos and obscurantism of Hindu temples. “Personally I do not believe that there is *any* real Indian architecture or any great tradition. . . wonderful made picturesqueness but with no intellect,” he wrote dismissively.⁵⁵

Yet New Delhi never turned into a model of the pure, rational, and humanist Classicism of Lutyens’ rhetoric. Nor can it be described as being cast in a ‘Mughal mould’. While the earliest designs and plan were pronouncedly Renaissance in manner, the shaping of the city, as in all attempts to invoke a classical model across distance of time and place, involved intensive negotiations among different claimants and interpreters of the ‘classical’. Processes of translating and articulating an architectural language considered authoritative ended up creating a model of ‘oriental’ Classicism based on a careful selection and domestication of non-Western idioms while assimilating them within a totalizing conception—a process that Lutyens himself referred to as making the Classical “sane for India.” In the plan of the city, one principal axis ran from the dome of the Viceroy’s house on the Raisina Hill to Shah Jahan’s Friday Mosque in the old walled Mughal city of Delhi. At 60° to this stretched east the principal ceremonial axis of New Delhi: King’s Way, the equivalent of the Mall in Washington. Either side of this, below the Viceroy’s house, the Secretariat buildings were to be symmetrically disposed (Fig. 2.1).

Water became an integral feature of this plan with fountains, basins, and long reflecting pools running the length of the central axis. The water axis continues and re-emerges in the channels that run through the Mughal-style garden at the back of the Viceregal residence culminating in its central pool (Fig. 2.2). The patterns of water, colour, and symmetrical units were modelled on the Mughal *chahar bagh*

⁵¹ Hardinge Papers (Nehru Museum, New Delhi), v. 110, cit. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*: 229.

⁵² Juneja, *Architecture*.

⁵³ Baker, “The New Delhi. Eastern and Western.”

⁵⁴ Hayward Gallery, *Lutyens*: 37.

⁵⁵ Hussey, *The Life*: 277, 279.



Fig. 2.1 King's Way with Viceroy's residence flanked by the secretariat buildings (Photograph: dpa picture alliance)



Fig. 2.2 Viceroy's House, Mughal-style garden (Photograph: dpa picture alliance)

and shared a similar concern to offer a soothing contrast to the aridity and drab wilderness of the surrounding landscape. This too has been interpreted as a telling affirmation of the “British resolve to bring order to India.”⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Irving, *Indian*: 126.

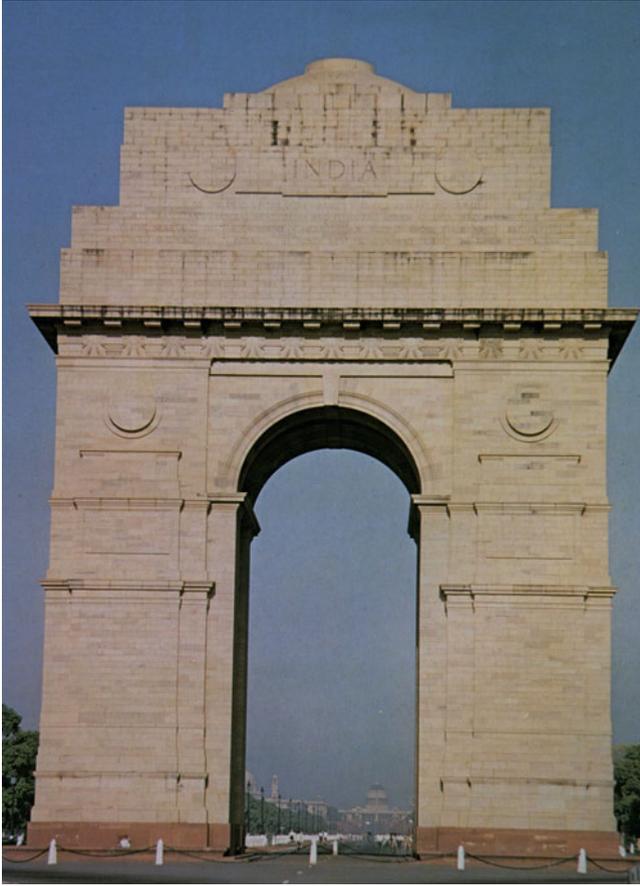


Fig. 2.3 All-India War Memorial Arch in memory of Indian and British soldiers who fell in World War I (Photograph: F. Huneke)

Down the processional axis two more monuments, completed in 1931, were intended to accentuate its formal symmetry and provide a focus for political ceremonial. These were the All-India War Memorial Arch and the Memorial for George V. The former, a colossal structure commemorating the dead of the First World War, partakes of the elegiac qualities of war memorials across the globe (Fig. 2.3).

The massive, austere façade is punctuated by sculpted panels of stonework relief and a dentilled cornice separating the huge central arch from the heavy masonry of the attic above. Crowning the attic is a shallow dome whose profile quietly echoes that of the Viceroy's house at the other end of the axial plan.

The Memorial to King George V, completed 5 years later, was an elevated baldachin in pink and cream sandstone set in a rectangular pool and adorned with allegorical symbols of kingship (Fig. 2.4).

Lutyens' plan was somewhat altered when Baker, responsible for the execution of the Secretariat buildings, argued in favour of raising all the central buildings on



Fig. 2.4 Memorial to King George V. *Left*: Historical photograph, c. 1930. *Right*: baldachin today without statue which was removed in 1948 (Photograph: *Left*: PIB, New Delhi; *Right*: Wikimedia Commons)

the Raisina Hill, so as to symbolize the equality of the elements of government and thus create a more impressive “acropolis.” To achieve this, the Secretariat blocks were elevated and the Viceroy’s house pushed further back west. This meant however that the vista of the latter from the roadway was interrupted. Lutyens had intended the viceregal mansion as the axial point of his scheme to be visible along the entire length of the ceremonial King’s Way. Placed far back on the hill behind the Secretariat buildings, the Viceroy’s house was for a time lost from view as the road climbed steeply up the hill. The matter became a controversial issue that caused great bitterness between the two colleagues. While this conflict has been highly personalized in historical accounts, the differing attitudes of the two architects are symptomatic of the paradoxes and tensions built into the attempts to reinterpret classical models across chasms of time and place—a paradox inherent to the legacy that goes back to the eighteenth century and which was articulated in both positions. The conflict also brought to the fore the different political attitudes of the two protagonists to the role of the empire. Baker’s faith in the British imperial mission was unwavering. In a paper entitled “Architecture of Empire” he wrote: “Our rule confers order, progress and freedom within the law to develop national civilizations on the lines of their own tradition and sentiment: so in architecture there is infinite scope within the limits of order, true science and progress for the widest self-expression in every field of art. . .”.⁵⁷ For Baker the classical always served an ethical-cum-political purpose—his commitment to its aesthetic principles viewed the one as inseparable from the other. In his view the two secretariat buildings were built at a height to spell out the exalted position from which the imperial bureaucracy ruled India, while at the same time drawing upon traditional

⁵⁷ Singh and Mukherjee, *New Delhi*: 53.



Fig. 2.5 *Left:* Taj Mahal, façade of mausoleum constructed by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, completed in 1648; *Right:* portal of the northern Secretariat designed by Baker, 1927 (Photograph: *Left:* M. Juneja; *Right:* F. Huneke)

forms and elements from princely building practices. Lutyens on the other hand prioritized an aesthetic vision that embodied universal truths above all other considerations—ordered symmetry and perfect visibility were uncompromising attributes of this vision. Architecture to him represented “the intellectual progress of those that are in authority. . .”⁵⁸

In his ode to New Delhi Robert Byron eulogized Lutyens for having achieved a “true fusion of East and West” whereas in the design of Baker, “the elements have remained separate and allusive: body embryonic, ornament a writing in symbols.”⁵⁹ The different approaches to “reclassicizing” and domesticating an alien culture are inscribed within the architectural fabric of the capital city. Baker’s Secretariats were Edwardian Baroque buildings with Indian details. The domes are Wren, orientalized through the use of carved lattice screens (Mughal *jalis*) and the placement of domed kiosks (*chhatris*) in the manner of the Mughal mausolea of Humayun and Shah Jahan (Fig. 2.5).

From the porticoes of the Secretariat, so Baker wrote, the ministers could look out across “the far ruinous sites” of India’s historic capitals and then look down to “the new capital beneath them that unites for the first time through the centuries all races and religions of India.” At the same time Baker described the two blocks as “the guardians of the Processional Way up to the Acropolis, [which] may suggest the attributes of majesty which distinguished the rock platforms and stairway at Persepolis.” His was a Classicism transcultured through a selective incorporation of the “great elemental qualities” of many traditions. He laboured to point out that “the

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 57.

⁵⁹ Byron, “New Delhi.”



Fig. 2.6 Early designs of the dome of the Viceroy's House, drawing by Lutyens, 1914 (Photograph. RIBA, London)

colonnade and arcade . . . the open court of audience, are common features in southern classical architecture. The deep portal arch of Persia and India has its prototype in the classic exedra common in the Roman bath and well known in the Vatican. The pride of Indian architecture, the dome, has its highest manifestation in St. Paul's. And the magnificent ground-planning of the Taj Mahal is but an Eastern example of the 'grand manner' of the West."⁶⁰

Lutyens, on the other hand, describing the Taj Mahal, had declared: ". . . it is wonderful, but not architecture, and its beauty begins where architecture ceases to be."⁶¹ Lutyens's "fusion of East and West", as Byron termed his interpretation of the Classical, involved a more carefully selective, less eclectic distillation of the historic traditions of the Indian subcontinent: it meant often going back to a distant past, and subordinating what he took from it to the grammar of the Classical. His selection was shaped by what he considered the potential of individual idioms to be domesticated by the unflinching rigour of an abstract ideal. Hence the recourse to Buddhist art, motivated by the Winckelmann canon as recast in Fergusson's authoritative work as the Indian "classical." The process of domesticating an 'orientalizing' idiom becomes evident once the transition from the early designs of the dome (Fig. 2.6) to its final form is charted.

The semi-circular profile of the stupa of Sanchi has now been transformed into the extraordinary dark dome of the viceregal mansion, which appears to float in the heights above its long horizontal roofline (Figs. 2.7 and 2.8). The thick

⁶⁰ Baker, "The New Delhi. Eastern and Western": 38.

⁶¹ Hussey, *The Life*: 277.



Fig. 2.7 Buddhist stupa of Sanchi, Central India, third century B.C.E (Photograph: M. Juneja)



Fig. 2.8 Main façade of the Viceroy's House (Photograph: F. Huneke)

railings—again clearly evoking the sites of Sanchi and Bharhut—are equally successfully incorporated into the austere classical grammar of the looming dome.

Another 'Oriental' motif exploited by Lutyens was the Mughal *chajja*, the thin projecting cornice of stone. This was taken all the way around the mansion and thereby treated as an organic element within the dominant order. Its function was to cast a band of deep shadow, to break the glare of harsh sunlight. Unlike Baker's use of the *chhatris* on the Secretariat Buildings, Lutyens' are not drawn from an existing Mughal model, but like the other elements reinterpreted or 're-classicized'. Viceroy Hardinge had tried to persuade the architects to use the pointed Mughal



Fig. 2.9 Rows of lions bordering Viceroy’s Court (Photograph: F. Huneke)

arch, which he described as “a symbol, and has a meaning which all Indians understand, while a round arc means nothing at all.”⁶² Yet both Lutyens and Baker privileged the round arch as epitomizing the simplicities of classical design.

Neoclassical allegories, often mediated through drawings and prints of the eighteenth century, were consciously chosen as appropriate symbolic forms for the buildings designed by Lutyens, within and beyond the imperial complex. The symmetrical rows of lions, an allegory of strength and wisdom, guarding the entrance to the Viceroy’s Court on the northern and southern sides (Fig. 2.9) were clearly inspired by a print by Giovanni Piranesi depicting the entrance of an ancient lycée.⁶³

At the same time, individual Indic elements appear as playful accents in the entire scheme, Lutyens’ castigation of Hindu symbolic forms and imagery as obscurantist notwithstanding: the cobra fountain dispensing water (Fig. 2.10), the lotus on the top of the Jaipur column from which a star seems to grow, the red-sandstone-caparisoned elephant sentinels (Fig. 2.11),⁶⁴ and the bracketed columns of the basement beneath the South Court.

On the other hand, the capitals designed by Lutyens for the viceregal palace bypassed the neo-classical orders—the Doric, Corinthian, and Ionic—and instead created a new “Delhi Order,” most probably in emulation of Latrobe’s “American

⁶² Hardinge Papers (Nehru Museum, New Delhi), v. 112, cit. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*: 225.

⁶³ Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Ingresso d’un antico ginnasio*, repr. Volwahsen, *Imperial Delhi*, 174.

⁶⁴ Elephants figured in several of Lutyens’ travel stories, anecdotes, and humorous sketches.



Fig. 2.10 Cobra fountain, south court of Viceroy's House (Photograph: F. Huneke)

Order” for Washington DC which had incorporated the corn cob and tobacco plant as motifs representing the Southern states.⁶⁵ In Lutyens' words: “The capital . . . is a wholly new invention arrived at after weeks of labour. It is again a kind of synthesis—and one of the usual acanthus leaf type, but strained and re-strained to a much greater abstraction while it is, at the same time, touched with an Indian note in its angle bells.”⁶⁶ (Figs. 2.12 and 2.13) The choice of the bells has remained uncommented, except in Lutyens' own observation that they were found on columns of a Jain temple and “took on a symbolic meaning,”⁶⁷ one which he however does not further elaborate.

This is not surprising in view of the architect's general reticence in his otherwise prolific correspondence about the considerations and reflections motivating his conscious iconographic choices. Yet the use of the bells as an iconic motif was

⁶⁵ Volwahren, *Imperial*, 187.

⁶⁶ Butler, *The Architecture*, 35. Bells made an appearance also in the lower basement colonnade of the Viceroy's house, reproduced in Hussey, *The Life*, plate 96.

⁶⁷ Butler, *The Architecture*, 35.



Fig. 2.11 Sandstone elephants, southern entrance to Viceroy's Court (Photograph: F. Huneke)

hardly a passing fancy, since it reappeared in his design for the British Embassy in Washington DC a few years later.⁶⁸ Bells have a long historical association with ideals of just rulership in a Eurasian context—or perhaps even beyond—one whose transcultural trajectories are only just beginning to be explored. In South Asia the clearest textual and visual references are from the Mughal empire.⁶⁹ A chain of bells, accompanied by the scales of justice, the globe, and the peaceful cohabitation

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: 46.

⁶⁹ The memoirs of the emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) contain the following statement: “After my accession, the first order that I gave was for the fastening up of the Chain of Justice, so that if those engaged in the administration of justice should delay or practice hypocrisy in the matter of those seeking justice, the oppressed might come to this chain and shake it so that its noise might attract attention. Its fashion was this: I ordered them to make a chain of pure gold, 30 *gaz* in length and containing 60 bells. Its weight was 4 Indian maunds . . . *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*:7.



Fig. 2.12 Pillars in front portico of Viceroy's House (Photograph: F. Huneke)

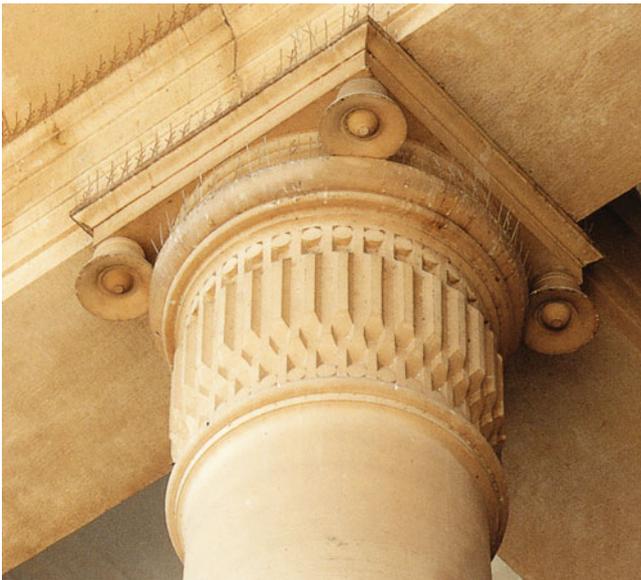


Fig. 2.13 Capital, portico pillars (Photograph: F. Huneke)

of animals whom nature had deemed to be inimical, was a leitmotif in a large number of visual representations of the Mughal rulers portraying a just and enlightened polity. A chain of bells suspended from the royal palace meant an access to the ruler and therefore to justice available to any wronged subject of the kingdom.⁷⁰ The use of this motif in the new imperial capital and its travels to another site of British authority is but one more link in a long and fascinating transcultural web of connections whose history awaits unravelling.⁷¹

All in all the vigorous yet bare surfaces of Viceroy's House, broken only by carefully positioned windows and by the spaces articulated through the columns, go beyond a mere employment of classical orders to recreate classical grammar and syntax in a way that almost anticipates the visual economy of modernism.⁷² The formal symmetry of the axial plan was interrupted, however, as history intervened through the agency of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, which required a building to house the new legislative assembly. The Council House, designed by Baker, closes the vista down Parliament Street at a 60° axis from the central buildings. Baker had originally proposed a domed triangular building on a site northeast of the North Block of the Secretariat, but as the demand for space grew, he adopted Lutyens' suggestion of a circular plan with no decided orientation.

The search for classicism as a carrier of universal ethical-cum-political ideals, not tied locally or temporally, and yet capable of being adapted to and implanted in any context across the globe, is caught in a paradox. On the one hand the efforts simply to transplant a model cast as 'universal' or 'eternal' proved to be an impossible agenda. On the other hand, in terms of overall forms, axial organization and symmetry proved to be flexible enough to represent any political system—monarchy, empire, or republic. In India the planned complex viewed as an expression of colonial power could be easily adapted to the symbolic requirements of an independent republic, though not without a certain irony. The Viceroy's residence became the headquarters of the figurehead president of India, while the powerful legislature was housed in the visually subordinate Council House (today Parliament House). The ceremonial avenue King's Way, now Raj Path, continues to serve its purpose as the site of official celebrations of the postcolonial nation state. This paper has attempted to chart the translation of classical models into practice, marked as the process was at every stage by negotiations and tensions. Placing the construction of the imperial capital of New Delhi on a global matrix that is more complex than the binary opposition between colony and colonizer involves viewing it as part of a longer process by which a revived classical ideal came to function in modern societies as one that was capable of living through infinite translations. The non-European world opened up a new field, laboratories where such translations could proliferate.

⁷⁰ For a discussion, Juneja, "On the margins": 224–226.

⁷¹ I am grateful to my colleagues Antje Flüchter and Rudolf Wagner for a range of references which testify to the global travels of this concept; on China see Wagner, "Die Verantwortlichkeit."

⁷² Stamp: "... it can be related to many of the industrial and commercial monuments of the period in both Europe and America," "New Delhi": 40.

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Chapter 3

Classics in the Garden: Suppers in an Earthly Paradise

Ronald Inden

Summary Historically, the studies of classics have focussed on their use in education, the formation of youth, and have concerned themselves only indirectly or incidentally with the adult use of the classics for self formation. What I propose to do here is to look at the practices in which adults used the classics. What were these practices? They were performative practices—song and classical poetry recitals, storytelling, the reading of classics aloud to one another and discussion of them. These practices were concerned with texts, but there were others that involved other media—music both vocal and instrumental, food and drink, costuming, the viewing of sculptures and paintings, and the use of architecture—most if not all with classical connections. The use of these media in conjunction with one another had the effect of turning these practices into entertainments or spectacles, performances which the performers considered theatrical and didactic. The main institutional venue for these practices was some sort of daily or occasional meeting that involved food and drink and other performances. This is an institution that has a number of variants and a long and complicated history that interconnects the ruling classes of empires and kingdoms from China and India to Iberia, including, of course, the symposium of European antiquity. The locus for these meetings was, from early times, a garden-palace, a palace or pavilion with an audience and banqueting hall complemented by a garden of delights. Almost invariably the masters of these garden-palaces themselves considered these settings to be paradises on earth—exclusive places where those who were qualified by birth and divine connection could have some sort of experience of transcendence of the everyday world by engaging in a liberating practice of some kind—and encouraged others to think so. I refer to the garden-palaces as courtly paradises.

The main example I look at here is the Villa d’Este, a courtly paradise of the so-called Renaissance near Rome and the suppers that took place there. I focus on

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three issues: the constitutive importance of homologizing and allegorizing; the interconnectedness of different media and the importance of performance; and the role of machinery and modernity.

Classics and Transcending Experiences

The idea of a paradise on earth was, in the words of W. B. Gallie, an “essentially contested” concept (Gallie 1964). Rivals of a person claiming to have built one would deny that he had succeeded. People also disagreed over the liberating practices that were appropriate to an earthly paradise, some asserting they should be social and sensuous (many royal courts), others that they should be lone and contemplative (Buddhism), still others that they should be social and ascetical (Benedictine monasteries) or lone and sensuous (Krishnaism). Theologians have also disagreed about whether such an institution could even exist in their present, except perhaps metaphorically. Such disagreements only heightened the importance of efforts to build terrestrial paradises. Indeed, it is my argument that these attempts have been crucial to the success of dominant polities, whether empires or republics, not only in the eyes of their own ruling classes but in the eyes of would-be rivals as well. Courtly paradises were, as I see them, extensions of the institution historians of religion have referred to as divine or sacred kingship. The utopias (and arcadias) of modernity, each equipped with its own ‘political theology’, are themselves the descendants of these earlier paradises on earth, as I show elsewhere.¹

I shall focus on moments in the past when, in my view, classics were crucial to the formation of ruling classes. The ‘early modern’ European idea and institution of a classical education arose in ‘Renaissance’ Italy, in what I prefer to call more narrowly the Habsburg imperial formation or more widely the Iberian-Ottoman. The Habsburg Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor (r. 1519–1558) and Valois heir of Burgundy (1506), was the central figure of this world. It presupposed that its subjects were going to live in a world substantially homologous with that of the classical texts at issue. It is my argument that a similar situation obtained elsewhere, whether we are talking about the earlier Romans and the Greek classics, the Arabs and the Hellenistic classics, the Turks, Iranians, and Indians of the Persianate world and the Sasanian classics, or the Renaissance Europeans and the Latin (and Greek) classics. Once this condition ceased to obtain, I maintain, the classics concerned ceased to occupy the apex of what we might call a scale of texts in the educational practices of their respective societies.

The main example I look at here, the Villa d’Este, was built by the wealthiest cardinal of the time, Ippolito, in the town of Tivoli near Hadrian’s Villa in the sixteenth century (1560–1572). Ippolito d’Este (1509–1572) the younger son of Lucrezia Borgia and Alfonso I (1476–1534), duke of Ferrara, became archbishop of Milan in 1519 when his uncle, Ippolito I, cardinal of Ferrara (1493–1520),

¹ I give one Indian example in an earlier essay (Inden 2006: 241–311).

resigned. His elder brother, Ercole II, succeeded to the duchy in 1534, while Ippolito followed his uncle and became cardinal of Ferrara in 1538, as was the Italian practice (Maniates 1996: xii). Tivoli, called Tibur in antiquity, stood near the Aniene (Anio or Teverone), main tributary of the Tiber (Tevere) river, in the province of Lazio (Latium). The man who envisioned the garden and supervised much of its construction was Pirro Ligorio, a painter interested in Rome's ruins, who was named the cardinal's "antiquarian" (ancestor of archeologist and philologist) from 1549 until 1555. When Ippolito returned to Tivoli in 1560, he began construction of the garden and continued it until his death with Ligorio supervising the work from 1567 to 1568 onward (Coffin 1960: 92–97). The venture was extremely costly and involved a great deal of destruction—the demolition of a convent and the displacement of many houses and the use of spolia from the nearby villa of Hadrian. The garden-palace was located on the top, slopes, and bottom of a reordered terrain and not, as was usually the case in earlier gardens, on a level terrain.

At the top of this was the summer palace of the cardinal, built along two sides of a courtyard. To the side of the villa was a secret garden (*giardino segreto*). The villa itself consisted of a suite of reception halls, the cardinal's apartments, and a chapel. The main hall or salon (*salotto*) in the palace was in the center of the first floor and its grand entrance provided access to the gardens below through a double staircase. This led to a wide terrace from which two additional double staircases led to the garden below. The halls of the villa had fountains in them and displayed an elaborate decorative scheme of frescos and grottos.

The garden had a central axis having the central entrance to the villa at the top and a series of fountains, the last of which was at the bottom of the garden inside the entrance to the garden-palace used by guests. It was called the Porta Romana because guests from Rome would enter the garden-palace there. The Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II (1564–1576) was so astonished to hear about the villa and its gardens that he had Étienne Dupérac (1520–1607), artist and garden designer, do an engraving of it. The garden in the engraving appears as it was planned and not as actually completed.²

The garden itself was a large and complex "hydraulic machine" comprising 51 fountains and nymphaeums (with 398 spouts, 364 jets, 64 cascades, 220 basins connected by 875 m of tubes and channels) (Barisi 2004: 16). Unusually, it featured not only a central axis, but also two transverse axes. These and the rest of the garden were divided into compartments and arranged over five terraces accessed by staircases leading from the lower parts of the garden to the villa itself.

The cardinal and those who assisted him thought they were constructing a paradise on earth at the Villa d'Este. Using Greco-Roman and Old Testament mythology, they were 'modern' men rebuilding a world along 'ancient' lines. It was a celebration of the Christian God's favor shown to its builders and residents in

² Étienne Dupérac, engraving, 1573, with legend of Antonio Lafreri. Another contemporary description is the so-called Manuscrit parisien of 1571 (Desnoyers 2002: 289–296).

the present and above all a setting for experiences that brought about moments of transcendence *of* the world *in* the world.

The experiences that people had here most certainly involved the use of classical texts, but they did so selectively. They articulated what they took from the classics with architectural features and statuary, including many spolia, painted scenes and portraits, an altered landscape, and a complex system of hydraulics, to bring what they wanted from the past into the present. All of these combined theatrically to induce awe on the part of visitors as they journeyed through the garden. The feature of the garden most involved in inducing awe was the Fountain of the Organ, considered a “marvel” at the time. The supper, the main practice in which the cardinal and his guests engaged after they journeyed through the garden, itself involved conversation and drink, poetry, and music, all of which were supposed to induce ecstasy on the part of the participants. The setting for these experiences involving classics was not just that of a villa and garden, but of a villa and garden as a paradise on earth.

Villa and Garden as a Paradise on Earth

People of the ruling society to which the cardinal belonged referred to villas and gardens such as these as paradises on earth (Bentmann and Müller 1992: 69–84). The Franco-Germans (including Italians) had associated their gardens of delight both with the heroes and heroines of “courtly love” and with the biblical figures of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Italian humanists of the so-called Renaissance associated their gardens with Greco-Roman (‘mythological’) gods and heroes. They represented their villas and gardens as paradises on earth associated with groves or gardens in antiquity.

One of the classical gardens to which Italians sometimes turned was the garden of the Hesperides. This “garden,” actually a grove (*alsos*) in antiquity, belonged to Hera and was located “in the west.” The Hesperides were the nymphs of the evening who guarded its tree (or trees), a “tree of life,” the apples of which bestowed immortality on those who ate them. The nymphs were unreliable, so Hera assigned a serpent with a hundred heads called Ladon (later represented as a dragon) to guard it. Hercules (Herakles), the hero of antiquity who carried out 12 labors, was charged, as his eleventh labor, with the task of bringing back apples from the garden. To accomplish this, he slew the serpent. (Another version has Atlas steal the apples while Hercules holds up the world) (Bull 2005: 115–117).

Another model for an earthly paradise taken from Greco-Roman mythology was even more important (MacDougall 1994: 121). This was Mount Parnassus or Mount Helicon, in central Greece, above Delphi. A fountain named Castalia was located on Parnassus. Pegasus, the winged horse, caused a spring or fountain called Hippocrene (“horse spring”) to come forth on Helicon. These springs or fountains made the sites into groves or, more precisely, nymphaeums, grottoes where water

nymphs resided. Many Greeks considered both of these sites to be the home of the water nymphs called the Muses. People in Renaissance Europe often conflated the two mountain sites (Bull 2005: 314–323).³ The term muse derives from the Greek *mousa* as do the terms museum (*mouseion*, “temple of the Muses”) and music (*mousikos*, “pertaining to the Muses”). Apollo rather than Hercules was the main figure on Parnassus. The patron of the Muses, he appeared as a young man wearing a laurel crown and playing a lyre. Mount Parnassus was not only a home of the Muses and Apollo, it was also the location of the Delphic Oracle, the center (*omphalos*, “navel”) of the Greek World.

Villa D’Este as Hesperides and Parnassus

The cardinal and his garden designer, Ligorio, used their imagination of Hesperides and Parnassus in constructing the garden and its fountains. There are several excellent and detailed studies of the villa and garden upon which I rely. The study of David Coffin (1960) uncovers most of the more obvious mythological, geographical, and historical connections of villa and garden. A later study (Dernie 1996) argues that a Christian interpretation can be read into the mythological iconography. An even more recent study (Desnoyers 2002) points to the importance of Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), translator, with commentaries, of Plato’s works into Latin, and argues that a Neoplatonist interpretation can be superadded to these.

The first ensemble of fountains and gardening that a guest encountered, just inside the entrance to the garden-palace consisted of four compartments along the axis of the garden at its northern edge. Called an herb garden (*giardino delle semplici*), it consisted of pergolas of grapevines, jasmine, and heather fashioned into a cruciform arcade. At the center of this was an octagonal pavilion (1570) topped with a cupola. Inside the pavilion were four fountains in the shape of flowers. The cupola had eight silver Este eagles at its corners and a gilded lily at its crown. Each of the four compartments had a small pavilion at its center which was aligned with four gates and paths that divided the compartment into four parterres. These were planted with medicinal herbs, flowers, and fruit trees.⁴ What was the point of this virtually self-contained herb garden? I would argue that it closely resembles the aristocratic or royal garden described by Crescenzi and others for the medieval or Gothic garden. This was, in effect, a “historic” garden, as Coffin also argues (1960: 16–17). So what the visitor first saw upon entering was an out-of-date medieval garden in which his view was restricted by the leaves and

³ There was a temple dedicated to the Muses at Helicon, from which Constantine the Great took the statues and installed them in Constantinople.

⁴ Today this suite of compartments has at its center the Rotunda of the Cypresses and off-center, in each of the four parterres around it, a Fountain of the Este Eagle.

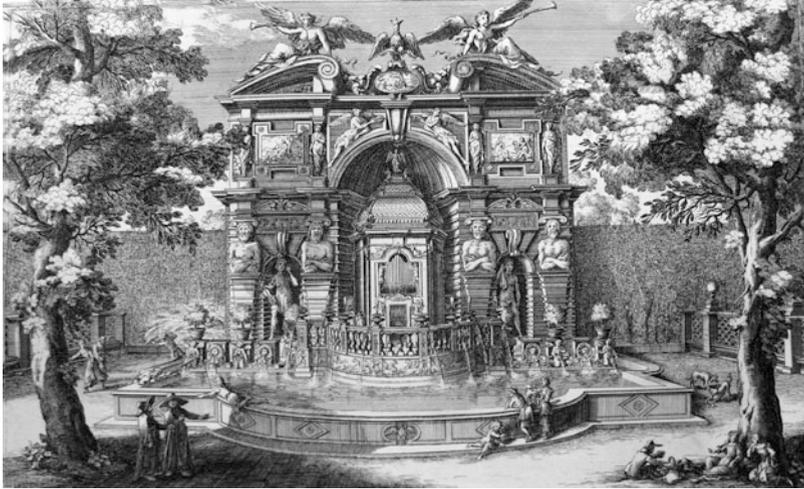


Fig. 3.1 Fountain of the Organ, Luc Leclerc, Claude Venard, 1566–71. Engraving, G. F. Venturini, ‘Le fontane del giardino Estense in Tivoli’ (Falda 1691 pt. 4: pl. 13). Permission to use this and the other Venturini engravings below, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

vines of the arcade. When he emerged from this, he was meant to be struck with awe at the modern garden that rose up the hill in front of him.

Just beyond this medieval garden was the lower of the two transverse axes, an ensemble of seven compartments. The Fountain of the Organ (Fig. 3.1) in the shape of a triumphal arch with the Este eagle at its crest, sits at its eastern and higher end.⁵ It became famous because of its hydraulic works, inspired by Greek and Roman classics in engineering and architecture.

The frontispiece of the organ displays four herms.⁶ A Goddess of Nature or Fortune was installed in 1569 in the central recess of the organ, removed in 1611 and replaced by a kiosk.⁷ The smaller recesses between the herms were to contain statues of Apollo and Orpheus. Above are two reliefs, one of the musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas, the other of Orpheus enchanting wild animals with his music. They are flanked by caryatids in the form of sirens. Winged victories hover over the central recess.⁸ The operation of the hydraulic organ and its automated trumpets was itself a marvel, as such automata had been in the Caliphate, New Rome, Rome, and Alexandria:

⁵ Fountain of the Organ, Luc Leclerc, Claude Venard, 1566–71.

⁶ Four herms, Pirrino del Gagliardo, 1568.

⁷ Goddess of Nature or Fortune, Gillis van den Vliete, 1568, after a second-century statue of Diana (or Artemis) of Ephesus, Farnese Diana, National Museum, Naples. The fountain now stands at the bottom of the axial walk featuring the Stairs of the Bubbling Fountains.

⁸ These were all added in 1611.

The show began with the sound of two trumpets held up by Fame above the cornice. After this, the organ sounded—probably a madrigal of four or five voices and, after the music, there occurred the most theatrical effect of the show: the ‘flood’. Suddenly a great spray of water tumbled down from above—pouring from a myriad of taps placed along the cornice of the first order and in other places in view. At the same time, other tall jets spurted up from below. The...water would...produce a rainbow... (Barisi 2004: 66)

Originally, a cascade emanated from below the Fountain of the Organ and continued to ground level.

The Fish Ponds continued this transverse axis. Originally, a semicircular basin was to project out from the fish ponds opposite the Water Organ. This was to have been called the Fountain of the Sea and to have contained a statue of Neptune driving his chariot drawn by four sea horses. This was never constructed. The idea was that the waters of the Tiber splashed down from the mountains and hills to Diana in the organ, thence into the fish ponds of the plains and eventually emptied in the sea. Here, in this transverse axis, the Tiburtine waters presented themselves to the visitor as the font of Nature (Coffin 1979: 327–28), not as it was but as it should be. Above the fish ponds, the steep incline of the garden began.

One other fountain should be mentioned because of its automata. This is the Fountain of the Owl (*Fontana di civetta*) in an enclosed outdoor room at the western end of the garden.⁹

This fountain has strong connections with Bacchus and initiation into his cult (Desnoyers 2002: 238–239). Eight satyrs in niches held vases that poured water. Inside the central niche were three youths of stucco holding a large wineskin from which water poured into a vase and then into the basin below.

On the artificial mount which supported the vase were little tree branches with bronze birds which sang with the play of the water until suddenly an owl appeared whose cry, also created by the water, silenced them. This game between the birds and owl with all the sounds created by the flow of water was naturally one of the great attractions of the gardens. (Coffin 1960: 22–23)

The main classic works at issue here were those of Hero (Heron) of Alexandria (first century C.E.). The devices he describes that are relevant at the Villa d’Este appear in his *Pneumatica*. Since the automata at Villa d’Este were built before these Latin and Italian editions were published, they cannot have been based on these editions, but on engineers’ and workers’ understandings of what these devices were. These understandings probably have more to do with the works of the Arab engineers who made more sophisticated versions of the machines in the earlier New Roman (Byzantine) versions of the older Hellenic/Roman work.

Historically, guests first experienced the central axis of the garden from the entrance at the bottom of the garden. From the moment they emerged from the south gate of the cruciform arcade in the first suite of parterres, they could see the inclined suite of compartments that led up toward the villa. This suite of compartments had at its center the central fountain of the entire garden, the Fountain of the Dragons. Three broad

⁹ Fountain of the Owl, Giovanni Del Duca, 1565–69.

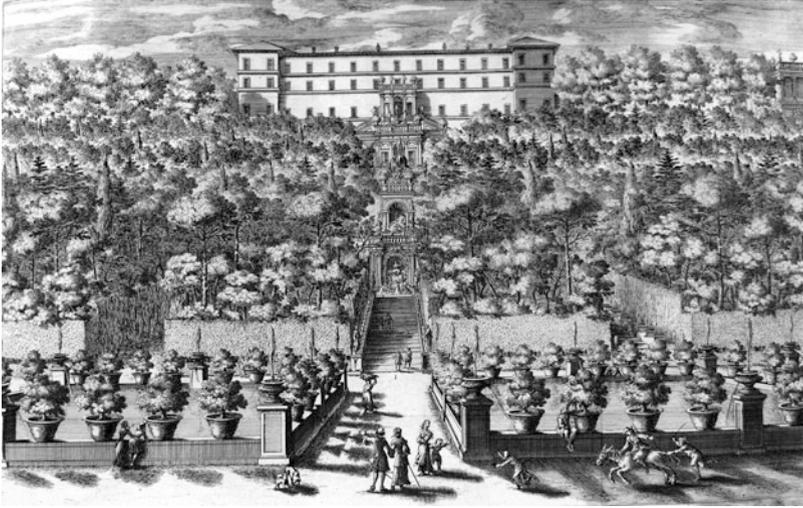


Fig. 3.2 View along the axial stairs, G. F. Venturini, 1691 (Falda 1691: pt. 4, pl. 4)

staircases called the Stairs of the Bubbling Fountains (*Scale dei bollori*) lead up the incline to the upper part of the garden and the villa.¹⁰

When visitors proceeded up the axial stairs (Fig. 3.2) that led up to the terrace of the villa their gaze was directed up to the loggias with statues in them or on their roofs and fountains in front of them, which were situated along the central axis itself.

The Fountain of the Dragons (*Fontana dei Draghi*) is at the center of the ensemble of the gardens, displacing the axial stairs into the two ramped curved staircases that circumnavigate it. These form a partial enclosure for the fountain. A closer view shows the water channel that runs along the staircases. Behind the fountain is a central grotto with an arched entry and columns alongside it. Inside, a statue of the colossal Hercules was installed.

Each of the four dragons spouts water from its mouth while a central, very powerful jet shoots water upwards. When it was constructed, bursts of water produced explosive sounds supposed to resemble artillery fire, one of the marvels of the garden. Originally, one dragon with a hundred heads was to be represented here, Ladon, the dragon Hercules defeated in order to steal the apples from the Garden of the Hesperides.¹¹

Hercules also appeared twice more in this ensemble. Above the fountain of the dragon and along the central axis of the garden stands a grotto with another statue of

¹⁰ Stairs of the Bubbling Fountains, 1567. The northeast stair was not finished.

¹¹ The cardinal had the four winged dragons placed here for the visit of pope Gregory XII (1572), who had this dragon ensemble as his emblem (Barisi 2004: 71–72).

Hercules inside it, that of Hercules reclining after the completion of his labors. Taken from Tivoli, it was installed here in a fountain.¹² On the roof terrace of this grotto was a statue, also spolia, of Hercules and his child Telephus.¹³ One of the reception rooms in the villa was decorated with frescoes depicting the labors of Hercules.

Homology, what M. Foucault (1970: 17–45) refers to as resemblance or similitude in his discussion of Renaissance modes of knowledge, was crucial to the ‘episteme’ through which the cardinal and his visitors understood Hercules and other classical images in the villa and garden. Some of these homologies had to do with spatial conjunction, others with the active emulation of a distant figure, all of them with sympathies among the entities involved. Resemblances were often hidden, requiring special knowledge to uncover them.

Hercules had been worshiped as a protector deity in a temple at Tivoli. Ercole (Hercules) was also the name of the first duke of Ferrara and Ippolito’s father. Hercules appears at numerous points in the iconography of the Villa d’Este as a multivalent allegorical figure. He is the hero, the god, the founder of a dukedom, and the cardinal himself, who labored mightily to build the villa and garden. Three statues of the hero were to have been installed along the main axis of the garden: a colossal Hercules with a club was to go in a niche behind the central fountain of the garden, the Fountain of the Dragon; above that in another niche a figure of Hercules reclining was to be placed; and on the roof of that, an image of the hero standing with his son Telephus. The dragon itself, of course, was the 100-headed serpent that guarded the golden apples of the Garden of the Hesperides (which Hercules was ordered to steal in his eleventh labor).

Hippolytus, the Greek figure after whom the cardinal was named also appears in the garden-palace. Ligorio designed a series of tapestries drawing parallels between the life of Hippolytus, the Greek hero, and that of the cardinal. They were probably intended for the decoration of rooms in the villa. The drawings for these relied on Seneca’s *Hippolytus* but also on Ovid (Coffin 1960: 69–77).

The placement of these and other figures in the garden, their articulation with one another, were intended to be didactic as well as entertaining. The three apples Hercules stole were the three virtues of chastity, temperance, and prudence, all of which the cardinal (whose seal displays an eagle holding a branch of apples from the Hesperides) supposedly embodied. The dragon was the softness of voluptuous desire that Hercules conquered. Coffin discusses these and other instances showing that Hercules was positioned not just as a glorious hero, but also as a moral figure (Coffin: 79–84).

What of the nymphs, the Hesperides themselves? They appear not here but in a fountain in the courtyard of the villa. Even here their appearance is not straightforward, for they appear in the form of a Roman statue installed in a Fountain of

¹² Reclining Hercules, Courtyard of the Pinecone, Vatican Museum.

¹³ Hercules and his child Telephus, marble, Roman copy, first to second century C.E. of Greek original, fourth century B.C.E., found at Tivoli, moved to Villa d’Este in Tivoli, then Borghese Collection, then Louvre, Paris (purchased, 1807).

Venus/Hesperides.¹⁴ The heraldic eagles of the d'Este family (instead of a serpent) guard the sleeping nymph here. So, the sleeping Venus is also the nymph who guards the Villa d'Este as the Hesperides did their garden. This sculpture establishes a connection between the d'Este garden and the Garden of the Hesperides.

The scene above the Venus/nymph is evocative of the countryside of Tivoli. Branches of a quince tree, on which sit doves, birds dear to Venus, rise along both sides of the arch and meet at the top. The quinces are the fruits of gold, the fruits of immortality that the tree of life in the garden of the gods bears. The white eagle of the Estes sits at the top of these branches (Desnoyers 2002: 19).

Because the fountain of the dragon and the statues and fountains of Hercules occupy the center of the garden, and a fountain of the Hesperides dominates the courtyard, one might think that this was a garden taking the garden of the Hesperides as its model; a dedication confirms this. Marc Antoine Muret (1526–1585), Muretus in Latin, was a humanist Latin poet in Paris, forced to leave France because of charges of sodomy. He went to Italy and in 1558, Cardinal Ippolito settled him in Rome. He frequented the villa at Tivoli and wrote this epigram:

The golden apples which Hercules stole from the sleeping dragon
 Now Ippolito possesses
 Grateful for the gift, he wishes on its author
 That the gardens he has planted—to him be dedicated.¹⁵

The garden-palace of the Villa d'Este was also a Parnassus, as an examination of the second and higher transverse axis will show. This transverse axis consists of a suite of three fountain displays and dominates the gardens above the fountain of the dragon. The Oval Fountain (*Fontana dell'Ovato*), the oldest fountain in the garden (also called the Fountain of Tivoli), sits at the eastern end (Fig. 3.3).¹⁶ Three statues, themselves fountains, stand in three grottoes in the Tiburtine Mountain, made of tatar; behind it, the Tiburtine Sibyl, Sybilla Albunea, with her son, Melicertes in the central grotto and, in the grottoes at her side, personifications of the two rivers that provide the water for the gardens, the Anio, main tributary of the Tiber, and another, the Ercolaneo.¹⁷ The Tiburtine Sibyl was the maternal protector of the Tiber river, which provides water not only to Tivoli but to the city of Rome itself.

The water from the fountains spills into a canal alongside the promenade atop the balustraded semicircular arcade and the oval basin below. A gardener could activate trick jets in the pavement of the courtyard, spraying the unsuspecting. The centerpiece of this basin is the krater-like fountain from which water spills into the oval basin below. Visitors in the arcade could walk underneath and behind the

¹⁴ Fountain of Venus/Hesperides, Raffaello Sangallo, 1568–69; statue of Venus, second to third century, Roman.

¹⁵ Barisi 2004: 23.

¹⁶ Oval Fountain, Pirro Ligorio; three grottoes sculpted, Giovanni Battista della Porta, 1567.

¹⁷ Sybil statue, Gillis van der Vliete, 1568. Anio and Ercolaneo statues, Giovanni Malanca, 1566.

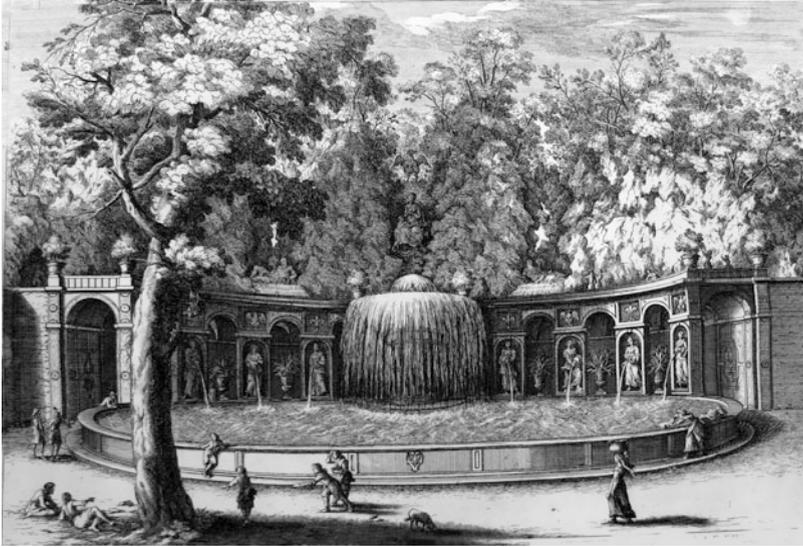


Fig. 3.3 Oval Fountain, Pirro Ligorio; three grottoes sculpted, Giovanni Battista della Porta, 1567. Engraving, G. F. Venturini, 1691 (Falda 1691: pt. 4, pl. 7)

semicircular wall of water it produced. Ten nymphs in the pilasters between the archways of the arcade (now overgrown with vines) pour water from vases into the basin.

A huge white marble statue of a winged horse (sixteenth century) dominates the Fountain of Pegasus on a small hill at the eastern end of the garden behind and above the Oval Fountain.¹⁸

This is, of course, a representation of Pegasus, the mythical horse who, with the blow of his hoof, caused the Hippocrene (“horse spring”), a spring or fountain, to appear on Mount Helicon. In the Renaissance, Mount Helicon became conflated with Mount Parnassus because both were the homes of the Muses, the spring nymphs who inspired men to make and perform poems, dances and dramas, and music. Here, according to the label, Pegasus, his head pointing in the direction of the villa, is pounding his hoof on the mountain of Tivoli and causing the rivers there to spring forth from the fountain below. The Pegasus here, in the eyes of the cardinal and his associates, not only made the hill and the Oval Fountain below into a replica of the original Parnassus; it also demonstrated allegorically that Parnassus as the home of the arts had actually appeared at Tivoli.

The design of the Oval fountain and its courtyard was significant. The semicircular arcade behind the basin made it resemble a theater and, indeed, it was considered a “water theater.” The cardinal and his guests in the courtyard watched

¹⁸ Fountain of Pegasus, B. Pediconi, N. Marziali, G. Bianchi. Another study attributes the hill and statue to Curzio Maccarone, 1566 (Schröder 1993: 94).

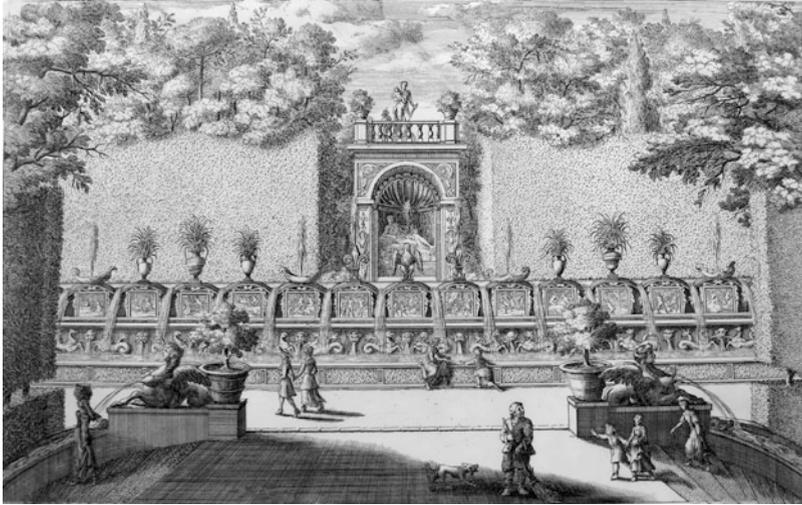


Fig. 3.4 Avenue of the Hundred Fountains, engraving, G. F. Venturini (Falda 1691: pt. 4, pl. 13)

the waters perform and experienced the awe and sense of cool well-being that came from interacting with them.

Visitors could have seen the nymphs in the arcade as the nine Muses—the nymphs of Parnassus or Helicon presiding over the literary, artistic, and scientific topics of the symposium. On the wall opposite, beside the entrance to the fountain room, are fountains of Bacchus, the god of wine who presided over a symposium in antiquity. The cardinal had ten plane trees planted here. This was done not just to provide shade but also to evoke the Academy of Plato, located in a grove. Here, in the cardinal's realization of that institution, on built-in benches and at tables, the guests invited to a supper were welcomed. These events took place in the salon, the main hall of the villa, where the cardinal received guests who had come through the garden and made their way up to the terrace of the villa.

The court of the Oval Fountain is connected to another major fountain display across the garden by the Avenue of the Hundred Fountains (Fig. 3.4) beside which water flows in three channels. These channels were supposed to represent the aqueducts that provided water to Rome from the surrounding Tiburtine countryside. The upper channel contained 22 boats, each separated by 3 vases, from which water spurted. Below the boats and above the middle channel were reliefs, along with fountain spouts, of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

The reliefs depicting scenes from the *Metamorphoses* were closely related to contemporary practices for publishing classics and especially this one. Published not only in Latin, but also in French, Italian, German, English, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese translations, it was probably the single most important source for mythology (Kinney and Styron 2010). Most if not all of these publications had interpretive commentaries.



Fig. 3.5 Fountain of Roma with ruins, Pirro Ligorio, Curzio Maccarone, 1567–70. Engraving, G. F. Venturini, 1691 (Falda 1691: pt. 4, pl. 15)

One of the most important illustrators was Virgil Solis (1514–1562), starting in 1563 with a Latin version and a commentary by Johann Spreng (1524–1601). Solis himself appropriates designs from the earlier Bernard Solomon (c. 1508–c. 1561) who illustrated simplified editions of the *Metamorphoses* in French and Dutch, *Métamorphose Figurée* (Lyon 1557) with 178 woodcuts. So far I have not found any attempt to connect the reliefs with any specific book illustrations (perhaps due to the poor condition of the reliefs), but it is obvious that there was an overall connection, since the reliefs derived from the same milieu. We can see each of the reliefs in fact as the projection of a book illustration, the viewing of which could no doubt have prompted recitation of the text illustrated, and explanation of the truth hidden in it, by a learned guest.

Beyond the Avenue is the Fountain of Roma (“*Rometta*”), a simulation of the eternal city in miniature (Fig. 3.5).¹⁹

On a higher podium to the right was a theatrical set representing the Seven Hills of Rome and their more important buildings, including the Colosseum, the Pantheon, and the Temple of Victory on the Palatine. Also to be seen was the Tiber island (*Isola Tiburina*) in the form of a ship in the Tiber carrying an obelisk. On the plain above stands the statue of Rome Victrix. She held a small statue of Victory in her right hand. To her right was the she-wolf nursing Romulus and Remus.²⁰ To her left was the depiction of a lion attacking a horse, a representation of Rome dominating Tivoli. Here, in the transverse axis the divinely endowed Tiburtine waters present themselves in counterpoint to those of the fountain of the organ below as the origin of Art, the foremost creation of which was Rome itself (Coffin 1979: 327–28).

¹⁹ Fountain of Roma with ruins, Pirro Ligorio, Curzio Maccarone, 1567–70.

²⁰ The Fleming Pierre de la Motte carved both, 1568.

Suppers and Banquets

After experiencing awe and ecstasy in the gardens, regular visitors to the villa joined the cardinal in a supper. Special visitors invited on special occasions were honored with a banquet, a grandiose version of the supper. The main hall or salon of the villa (Hall of the Fountain) was itself decorated to appear as a monumental loggia set in the middle of a garden. On the walls were landscape scenes separated by painted columns twisted in the manner of the columns supposed to have been taken from the Temple of Solomon or the pillared portico near his palace and used in the Basilica of St. Peter's in Rome.²¹ One of these frescoes shows the villa and garden themselves.

The imaginary loggia of the salon was synonymous with a monumental loggia built at the western end of the terrace (and near the kitchen). It was entered through a triumphal arch that also doubled as a belvedere (Barisi 2004: 49). Suppers also took place outdoors in this loggia.

The practice that the cardinal and his companions took as their model for their suppers was, of course, the dialogue of Plato called *Symposium*, recounting a symposium that supposedly took place in 416 B.C.E. It was first translated into Latin by Marsilio Ficino, with an important commentary, in 1474/1475 (Florence 1484; Ficino 1944: 13). They may also have had recourse to the *Symposium* of Xenophon, another pupil of Socrates, written about the same time and first translated into Latin by Janus Cornarius (Basel 1548; Brown *et al.* 1992: 7, 189). The symposium was a drinks party held in the men's room (andron) of a high-ranking Athenian. It took place after a meal and had rules to be followed by participants—which, as drinking progressed, they sometimes ignored.

The suppers the cardinal held for himself and his guests were contemporary or modern appropriations of the ancient symposium and not literal, historic reconstructions of it. To note just one difference, the supper or banquet took place at a trestle table and the participants, among whom women could be included, sat on chairs. They did not recline on couches, in pairs, arranged around a hall exclusively reserved for men.

The institution of an elaborate meal or drinking party set in a garden of delights or in a hall decorated as a garden can ultimately be traced back to the Achaemenid Persians. What we are seeing in the Villa d'Este is a modification of the earlier courtly feast in Franco-German Europe, especially Burgundy, which itself had taken the institution from the Normans of Sicily, who had in turn appropriated it from the Fatimids. Scenes from their Arab-style courtly paradise appear on the ceiling of their royal chapel in Palermo.²² The two musicians in the picture to the left, both haloed, play lutes. One of the musicians (both of whom are also haloed) in the picture to the right plays a flute, the other a tambour.

²¹ Main hall, Girolamo Muziano, decorative fresco scheme, 1565–70, Dernie 1996: 30.

²² Musicians on either side of a tree, paint on wood, Cappella Palatina ceiling, *Palazzo reale*, Palermo, c. 1150 (Grube 2005: A7.3, 7.2, pl. 12).

From the evidence it is clear that a circle or coterie of humanists regularly visited the villa when the cardinal resided there. Contemporaries referred to such a circle as a cenacle (*cenacolo*, from *cena*, supper). A permanent coterie of philosophers (*cenaculum philosophorum*) was formed in 1571 (Barisi *et al.* 2003: 133). Francesco Bandini Piccolomini, archbishop of Siena, friend and guest of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, called it an academy, after Plato's academy, the *Accademia degli Agevoli*.

Presupposed in the Italian Renaissance idea of the classics was the preeminent position of poetry (Kristeller 1964: 308–309). The Muses are not the mistresses of separate and equal domains. They are mistresses of arts which are all integrated by and in poetry. So it is not surprising that the poet Marc Antoine Muret, already mentioned, was a mainstay of the coterie. He reportedly selected books from Ippolito's library in Rome and took them to Tivoli. There he and the cardinal read some passages from one of these while strolling the length of the shaded avenues of the garden or sitting in the garden being delighted by the cool of the fountains. The readings furnished the starting point for animated discussions in which those in the cardinal's circle participated, on theological and philosophical arguments and themes of interest to the cardinal later in the evening, when the suppers took place. In the hotter afternoons, while waiting for the cooler evening, they preferred to linger over more delightful arguments, reading and commenting on classic poets, in particular on Horace, who had exalted the salubrity and beauty of the Tiburtine region (Barisi *et al.* 2003: 133).

Music, closely linked to poetry, was integral to the coterie's daily practices. Ferrara was an important musical center. Josquin Desprez, one of several Franco-Flemish musicians whom Ercole I, grandfather of Ippolito, invited to the city in 1503, dedicated a mass to him (*Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae* 1505). It is based on a theme drawn from the syllables of the Duke's name (Lockwood 2005: 254–255). The cardinal was musically educated and is reported to have been accompanied by a band of singers and instrumentalists when he traveled and when he took up his post at Tivoli. From 1551 on, a musical choir (cappella) composed of 30 members was in his service and great masters like Nicola Vicentino (1511–1575/1576), a musical theorist and composer, who was in the service of the cardinal until 1563, directed it. Relying largely on Boethius (c. 480–524/25, *De institutione musica libri quinque*), he claimed he was able to recapture the legendary powers of ancient music in his *Ancient Music Adapted to Modern Practice* (*L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* 1555; Maniates 1996) printed at the cardinal's own expense (Maniates 1996: xxv). Music was a part of the daily routine of the coterie. Vicentino reports that after dinner the cardinal was delighted to listen to madrigals composed by him and other composers of the time (Barisi *et al.* 2003: 135). Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525/1526–1594) began organizing summer musical events at the villa in 1564 and entered Ippolito's service (1567–71).

Ferrara was the city in Italy where "secular" or mythological theater was "revived" (under Ercole I) in the form of the comedies of Plautus and Terence, translated into Italian. These and other later theatrical performances took place just before Lent, during the carnival period. Modern vernacular comedy, set in Ferrara and dealing with people in the present, began here. These plays also drew on

religious dramas (*sacre rappresentazioni*). Indoor performances were held in the great hall of the palace and the duke had a special hall built for theater (*Sala dalle Comedie*), never completed. The performance of these comedies involved the use of a “mechanical representation of heaven” (*Paradiso*), a device used in the religious dramas in Florence (Tuohy 1996: 257–261).

Frequent theatrical performances were staged in the palace or garden of the Villa d’Este during the night, for which stage scenery painted on wood was prepared. Tragedies, including those of Muret, comedies, and pantomimes accompanied by fireworks were performed, but the details of these events are not known. According to Estean custom, they included the “forces of Hercules,” i. e., acrobatic shows in addition to feats performed by the Moorish slaves of the cardinal, the buffoonery of jesters, donkey races, and parodies of chivalry/tricks with horses (Barisi *et al.* 2003: 136–137). These Moorish slaves are the only traces of the Arab world of Spain and the Fatimids that the Habsburg empire now saw themselves as dominating. Their use for celebratory purposes goes back to the triumphal progress of Charles V throughout Italy after defeating Barbarossa, admiral of the Ottoman fleet in North Africa (Strong 1973: 93–94).

The grand version of the daily supper was the banquet (*banchetto*, a term originally used to refer to a long bench or table). Banquets could be held at noon or in the evening (Albala 2007: xi). The most important banquets were those held to celebrate victories and for the reception of foreign princes or ambassadors (Albala 2007: xii).

Cristoforo Messisbugo, innovative steward (*scalco*) at the court of the Este family, orchestrated many banquets there and describes them and their novelties in great detail. The first chapter describes a banquet that Ippolito d’Este, then only archbishop of Milan, offered to his brother Ercole, duke of Chartres and Ferrara, and his wife Renea, Francesco d’Este and other gentlemen and gentlewomen, amounting to 54 in all at the first table, on Saturday, 20 May, 1529, St. Bernard’s day.

The event began at the end of the day at 21 hours after men on horseback charged at a target with lances. The guests then entered the palace where a farce and “divine music” were performed by diverse voices and instruments.

Meanwhile, a table with three tablecloths, one on top of the other, was set in the garden with napkins having different folds, “divinely made.” The table was “marvellously decorated” with different flowers and weapons, with salt dishes and knives; above it was “a most beautiful canopy (*frascata*)” with festooned greenery and flowers and different coats of arms “artfully fashioned.” Five figures of Venus, Bacchus, and Cupid, of sugar, partly gilded and artfully painted, were put on display. To the right of the table, under a finely decorated canopy, the credenzas and bottle racks were readied. To the left of the garden was a most beautiful and grand canopied stand, decorated like that over the table for the musicians and other performers.

They left the salon at 22 h., the farce being finished; and while they came to the table, four musicians dressed in livery went among them, one playing a cetra, another a lute, the third a harp, and the fourth a flute; yet all played together, and four boys and girls danced galliards, accompanying them to the table. There they were immediately offered perfumed water for their hands. They ate salads while the boys and girls continued to dance.

Courses of cold dishes consisting of salads, cold meats, and other antipasti alternated at a banquet with those of hot dishes, especially roasts which were carved by carvers (*trinciante*) for the guests. Cold dishes were served from the credenza, hot ones from the kitchen. This banquet was, however, of fish, that is, without meat.

What was innovative here was the entertainment. As soon as the first course was placed on the table, a band of three trumpets and three cornets played until the course was finished. Different combinations of instruments, singers, dancers, and even clowns provided interludes to divert the guests while dishes were cleared off and the next course served up. Among these were a Moorish woman who played the pipes to torchlight while some peasants (*contadini*) pretended to mow the grass in the garden for as long as it took to bring in the fifteenth course, and a man with a lyre who “sang divinely in the manner of Orfeo” before the sixteenth.

After the ninth course of oysters and pears had been served, the first tablecloth was removed and the table reset. Fifteen figures, eight naked Moorish men and seven naked women, their heads adorned with pastries of sesame and honey (*pasta di sosameli*) and garlands of laurel and their private parts hidden by real vegetables and various flowers, were displayed on the tables for the amusement of the guests during this interlude.

After the meal, the “most reverend signora” had carried to the table a small silver ship laden with necklaces, jewels, ear ornaments, rings, perfumed gloves, and other “most genteel articles,” all of which were presented to the diners. Twenty-four men dressed in livery clothes held lit torches and musicians played on pipes while this went on, until five o’clock, at which point “a most beautiful Moresca,” led each one home ([Messisbugo 1992: 31–42](#); [Strong 2002: 129–131](#)).

The ceiling of the salon at the villa d’Este has a painting entitled Synod of the Gods. In it the Olympian gods prepare for a festive entertainment. Jupiter sits at the center; Bacchus, to the left, pours wine; Apollo, to the right, plays his lyre. Hercules looks out at the viewer. We are witnessing his apotheosis (he was not originally a god). The Hall of Hercules explicitly depicts this event in its ceiling fresco. The dining and entertainment that took place at the table below the painting was a homologous refraction of the one above. The Hercules below, Ippolito, acknowledges the gaze of the Hercules above.

Prominent among the items displayed or used at these banquets were dishes of majolica, painted lustreware called Hispano-Moresque ware because their making and design originated partly in the Islamic world and Spain. Italians retained the floral and geometric designs on much of their lustreware but also turned to depicting scenes of human or divine acts.

Christianity and Neoplatonism

At this point, we could make a sharp contrast between this earthly paradise and the one from which the Renaissance villa and garden was differentiating itself, the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Benedictine, Cluniac, or Cistercian monastery. If the monastery with its cloister was an earthly paradise where men engaged in

liturgical practices that would lead to permanent transcendence of the world *after* life, the villa with its gardens was an earthly paradise where men engaged in diverting practices that induced moments of transcendence *during* life. We are witnessing here a move from religious to secular (humanist) discourse. Classical imagery is being used to symbolize secular entities, the power, wealth, and fame of the garden's owner (as if power, wealth, and fame were not themselves historically constituted). This dichotomy of 'religious' and 'secular' which echoes those of 'traditional' or 'medieval' and 'modern', is, however, too neat if not downright false.

It is difficult to talk about a movement from the religious to the secular here because the people of the ruling society of Italy in the sixteenth century also attributed religious significance to the ensembles of fountains and statues in the gardens and the paintings in the villa. These were Christian and Neoplatonic.

There are virtually no direct Christian representations in the cardinal's Villa and its garden, chapel apart (Coffin 1960: 88). There is imagery from the Old Testament (Halls of Stories of Solomon, Noah, and Moses), but these figures are treated like the Greco-Roman ones as mythological. The absence of Christian imagery seems strange, but is itself part of the enjoyment the visitor was to have of the villa and garden.²³ For if the visitor puzzled over their imagery, he could find that Christ did in fact figure prominently—in the form of Hercules himself. Christians had long been willing to see Hercules, along with other Greco-Roman gods and heroes, as a prototype of Christ. This was especially so during the early history of Christianity as the official religion of a New Rome (Byzantium).²⁴ Italian cognoscenti revived this way of homologizing ancient gods and heroes with Christian ones as they came to use the mythology of the ancients for their own purposes. So I think, following Dernie (1996: 117), we can see the polysemic Hercules not only as displacing Christ in the ontology and anthropology of the Villa but as an epiphany of Christ there.

The Sibyls were prophesying priestesses of Apollo. Medieval Christians took 12 of them as parallels to the Old Testament prophets from different places. One of these was the Tiburtine Sibyl. She is said to have prophesied the coming of Christ to the emperor Augustus on the occasion of the Senate's decision to decree his apotheosis. The most important frescoes in the cardinal's chapel depict the Sibyls and the Prophets. The other frescoes in the chapel depict the Virgin and Christ.

The hidden allusions to Christian symbolism in the paintings of the villa are almost endless. According to Dernie (1996: 31), the holm oak tree in the fresco of the villa and garden stands for Jupiter and, hence, God, the nine birds in the sky are

²³ One should not think that this situation is characteristic of all public or courtly spaces. As Malcolm Bull points out, mythological scenes overall remain marginal to Christian ones in the Renaissance (Bull 2005: 380–384).

²⁴ "In Byzantine Egypt the ascetic image of the life of Herakles was particularly valued. The hero's labours, his search for a moral path, his agonising end—all of this transformed him into a saviour and redeemer of mankind. The 12 labours thus represent a metaphor for the earthly path travelled by Herakles, as a result of which the hero attains immortality and reaches Olympus" (Heritage Rooms 2006: 151).

the nine generations of the world prophesied by the Tiburtine Sybil, and the peacock in the foreground is the symbol of eternal life and hence of the resurrection of Christ.

Finally, the knowing visitor was prompted to read into the visual images of the villa and garden a Neoplatonist quest for a direct experience of God through contemplation and ecstatic love. Recall, for example, the statue of Venus (doubling as the nymph guarding the Villa d'Este) asleep in the courtyard of the villa. She could be seen as a sign of erotic love, but she could also be seen in the Neoplatonist writings of Marsilio Ficino, popular among those with a classical education, as divine love in the form of beauty (Desnoyers 2002: 22–24). I might add that she appears herself to be experiencing ecstasy. This ecstasy in a dream could also be seen as an anticipation of the unity the soul attains with the Absolute at death (Desnoyers 2002: 24–26).

Pirro Ligorio, the designer and builder of the Villa d'Este, himself provided the ontological reason, Christian and Neoplatonic alike, for the importance of Apollo, the Muses, Minerva and Hercules. They

signify the labours and happy days of those who are dedicated to higher things, and who lead man to the everlasting pleasures of the greatest knowledge, to high and profound meditation on seeing with the eyes of the mind how wonderful is the Prime Mover who made the heavens and earth so varied in its inspirations. Thus the force and the essence of the Divine Light can be recognized in plants and animals. (Pirro Ligorio, unidentified ms., cited in MacDougall 1994: 121)

The “plants and animals” are of course a reference to gardens.

The paradise on earth at Villa d'Este was not, thus, in the eyes of its builder, a secular competitor of the Paradise called Heaven. I prefer to think of it rather as a supplement to the earlier Christian paradises and an attempt to go beyond them, to bring them into the present-day world. This Platonism or Neoplatonism was itself part of an Italian appropriation of Plato's works and their extensions both a humanist move and a reaction to the demise of New Rome. Cosimo de Medici sponsored a council at Florence in 1439 meant to reconcile the Eastern and Western churches and launch a crusade against the Turks. Pletho, a prominent New Roman humanist and Neoplatonist, attended. According to one scholar, “Cosimo hosted lavish banquets during the council at which the luminaries on both sides mingled, and these congenial gatherings provided a venue in which Pletho held forth on his favorite subject” (Wells 2006: 100). Cosimo also gave Ficino the use of a villa at Careggi, near Florence, a metaphoric “academy” because Ficino and his circle could meet there (Field 2002).

Conclusions

There is little doubt that the people at the Villa d'Este valued the books of the classics they had studied while being educated as young men (and women). They did not, however, as adults, confine the classics to books. They used the classics in many media in the villa and its garden to bring about liberating experiences that were both cognitive *and* emotive. The suppers and banquets that took place in the

villa and garden were intended to appeal to all of the senses, so they involved not only delicious foods and wines, but also playful and even erotic poetry, music, and dramatic performances, often translating Latin into Italian. The builders of the garden-palace used statues, reliefs, fresco paintings, fountains, and other architectural features, all of them supposedly classical in origin, to turn their surroundings into what they called a theater where not only people, but rivers, fountains, and machines performed, inducing awe and ecstasy in the spectators (who were often also performers themselves).

The cardinal and his coterie made their readings of the classics, texts of a remote past, the foremost of which was probably Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, come alive in their own present through the use of homology, the idea that forms of the present and past are not arbitrarily similar. They resemble each other because they have the same origin and purpose and are hence in sympathy with one another. As Foucault puts it, language consisted not of a binary system of signifier and signified, but of a ternary system of signifier, signified, and conjuncture, the link, often hidden, that connected the other two. The classics not only provided a language for and knowledge of the past but for the present. Allegory was perhaps the most commonly used vehicle for making these connections, not only in words but in sculpture, painting and architecture. Sophisticates used some classics, notably those of Plato and his followers, the so-called Neoplatonists, to explain how and why past and present were connected.

Scholars and rulers reinvented the classics of European antiquity as we commonly talk about them during the Iberian-Ottoman imperial formation. What I am calling here a reinvention is often referred to as the Renaissance. I have tried to show here how the people of the ruling society used the classics as adults. Their use of the classics was, I have argued, integral to the fashioning of themselves as men and women resident in a courtly paradise and to the fashioning of that paradise itself, whether as a garden of the Hesperides with Hercules as the main figure or as a Parnassus with Apollo as the main figure. Classics were imbricated in the architecture, the fountains, and the statuary of the garden and in the decoration of the villa. People who had access to the villa saw the classics performed in daily life there and especially on the occasion of suppers and, to the greatest extent, banquets, and often themselves performed. These performances were multimedia, involving not only readings from classic texts but also poetry and especially sung poetry with instrumental accompaniment, all considered theatrical and didactic. The aim, especially of the fountains, was to induce awe, while the aim of the other performances was to bring about ecstasy, a love that they thought was both Platonic and Christian and could liberate people from their mundane lives.

What made all this possible ontologically was a newly divinized world outside the Church and its institutions, a world seen as an organism and not as a machine. Its political dimension was the quest for the reestablishment of a Roman empire centered on Franco-German Europe. As its episteme of similitude gave way to that of representation in a world seen as a machine, the classics as multifarious performative practice crucial to personal liberation lost its hold.²⁵

²⁵ Somewhat confusingly for my purposes, Foucault calls this the "classical" period.

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Chapter 4

A Classic Paving the Way to Modernity: The *Ritual of Zhou* in the Chinese Reform Debate Since the Taiping Civil War

Rudolf G. Wagner

Summary The Chinese classics were read as explorations of the true way of good governance left behind by Sages of Chinese antiquity. The complexity of their subject forced these Sages to use a coding of such complexity that the later born had to bridge the gap between what for them seemed like empty signifiers and the assumed definite meaning of the Sages' bequests. The Imperial Chinese state, its educational system, and the class of scholar-officials it produced were all tied to this body of classics. The state institutions and the commentary to the classics are both advertized as translations of the classics into specific forms. A competitive challenge to the state always came with or in the form of a challenge to the reading of the classics it patronized. The perceived superiority of Western state institutions transformed the Chinese state and the reading of the classics in the educational systems and commentaries into not just deficient modes, but formidable obstacles to a modern reform. Rereading the classical Chinese heritage in the light of the Western state institutions against the inherited "translations" helped reformers to produce an alternative for both the state and the understanding of the classics that had the cultural advantage of representing modernization along Western lines as a return to the true and forgotten dispensations of the Sages of Chinese antiquity. This argumentation eased anxieties about asymmetries in cultural exchanges, while keeping the way open for an emulation of foreign features that were considered beneficial.

The Classics, the State, and Modernity

The Chinese classics are at any given time a definite number sanctioned by the Imperial State, not a loose body of references as they are in Europe. They have little to say about the creation of the world, gods, or feats of war. While they mostly

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consist of collections of independent documents, poems, or pronouncements, most of them visibly share a common focus: what is the best way to run a state. Those that do not visibly do this, such as the *Book of Songs*, have been read as doing so indirectly. The Chinese state, especially since its transformation into a bureaucratic and meritocratic system from the Song dynasty (960–1279) onwards, claims legitimation from the classics for its structure and style of administration. It is in this logic that the Imperial examination system tests the candidates' familiarity with the classics and their capacity to apply them to current problems.

The challenge of modernity for China came primarily in the form of the Chinese perception since the middle of the nineteenth century that Western states, which were minute in landmass and population compared to the Qing empire, were generating a commercial, political, military, and cultural energy that was able to fuel a global projection.¹ This global projection was not only beyond comparison with that of the Qing, it had already reached the Chinese sphere of influence in East Asia and Qing China itself. This perception, however, noted a quality change. China, like any other place, had been part of a transcultural flow of concepts, institutions, practices, goods, and men, and much of its cultural innovation and change had resulted from this. The mid-nineteenth century challenge, however, went beyond sweet potato, vernacular stories, gunpowder, or the institution of the monk and the monastery. While these earlier flows inserted the Chinese lands into a low-temperature globality of exchanges, they presented no challenge to the state's mode of operation and its legitimacy. The breadth and width of the new Western projection signalled that it might be supported by a new kind of state system that was able to mobilize, combine, and guide a vast array of diverse energies at home with the result that the whole was infinitely more than the sum of the paltry parts. This was a high-temperature challenge. To buy a few Krupp cannon to blast off the foreign ships would not do. On the basis of this perception, Chinese men-of-letters started to inquire what might be the underlying cause of these achievements of Western states—and of the inability of the Qing state system to match them. From the outset, this was a comparative inquiry. It was driven by an anxiety about the role and fate not just of this institution or that group of people, but of a deeply-layered system that connected the state, the classics, the education of the elite, and the social structure through a unified and mutually enhancing legitimation.

This anxiety is one about asymmetry. It drives the efforts rapidly to grasp the features that made the challenger superior, quickly implement them so as to be better able to match the challenge, and develop narrative strategies of coping with this asymmetry as long as it is perceived. In other words, the perception of this asymmetry releases a broad spectrum of historical energy that is driving political reform, relations with the world, and scholarly work.

¹ During the eighteenth century, the European perception of prosperity, order, and rational governance in the Qing state had offered a challenge in the inverse direction, although without Chinese agency in this projection.

A probe of the role of the Chinese classics and ‘classical’ learning in this modernity challenge will have to reflect this connection and the resulting perceived temperature, or order of magnitude, of the challenge. These are not trivial for the analysis, because these systemic and vast connections might in fact be prompting historical actors to pursue certain paths of inquiry, or not to pursue them, in view of their potential consequences and fallout.

This paper will study the way in which Chinese men-of-letters from the 1860s on dealt with the systemic challenge of ‘modernity’. The test case will be the question of communication between state and society, seen as crucial by many of them. The “classic” at the centre of this study will be the text most frequently adduced in their discussions, the *Rituals of Zhou*, Zhouli.²

Reading the Classics and Coping with Asymmetry in Cultural Exchanges: The Historical Record

The literati class evolving with the fragmentation of the Zhou into largely independent kingdoms since the middle of the eighth century B.C.E. eventually settled for a canon of works as the bequest of truths handed down from “Sages,” *shengren*, to later generations. While this canon began gradually to come together in pre-imperial times, it was only during the Former Han Dynasty that it was sanctioned as a body of a fixed number of “classics,” which was to form the basis of education for official careers. The literati class claimed that their education and moral standing authorized them to understand and interpret this heritage. The notion that the critical assessment of individual performance by political leaders (“remonstrance”), as well as any change or reform of political institutions, had to be based on the truths encoded in these “classics,” became the shared political capital of this class, compensating in part for its weak institutional standing. Their doctrine was referred to as the “School of the Ru (scholar-officials),” translated by Westerners “Confucianists.”

It was assumed that the underlying truth made accessible by the different Sages through the classics was internally consistent, although their alleged authors had lived at different times and under different circumstances, two of them were not ethnically Chinese, and they had used different media of communication. The story that Confucius had edited these texts was a story about the unity of their meaning.³ This unity established a body of legitimate cross-references on which to draw for a non-random “scholarly” proof of the reliability of the reading of a passage.

The range of political options offered by this canon was large, going from antiquarian insistence on following every detail of the concepts, institutions, and

² The work has only been translated into French: Biot 1851.

³ Cf. the story of the ‘miraculous’ production of the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible: de Lange, this volume.

practices described in the classics to radical innovations that were said to follow the spirit underlying the classics, only adjusted to the times, following the practice of the Sages of antiquity. The textual genres used in updating the relevancy of the classics were the commentary to one of the classics, the political essay with ample reference to the classics, and the memorandum, which again was cross-referenced. The ideal addressee of all three down to the middle of the nineteenth century was the emperor. This signals an intimate connection between the state and the commentary. Both are readings of the classics, the latter in the form of textual notes, the former in the form of institutions and practices.

To enhance its legitimacy, the state claimed to operate on the basis of the classics, and prevailed upon the scholarly community to supply the evidence through appropriate readings. This is why education in the classics was the key qualification for public service. Technically speaking, the state and the commentaries are thus both efforts to translate the classics into specific recommendations for action. Both the state and the commentaries, however, remain structurally separated from the truth towards which the classics point. This gap opens a legitimate space for critical discussion, which might—and did—take the form of new and different commentaries,⁴ or of a government reform proposal. In most cases both were linked.

Recasting and rereading the “classics” to make them foundation stones for ‘modern’ reforms and changes is a standard pattern in Chinese history. In moments of high temperature—such as efforts at dynastic change or fundamental political change—these attempted recastings and rereadings become more radical and decisive. If these attempts fail, they are denounced as cheap efforts to harness the prestige of the classics for some ill-begotten usurper; if they succeed they become the new orthodoxy.

The stability of the canon in terms of its constituent elements and its meaning could be contested at any moment. The texts included even in the “Confucian” canon shifted constantly; the relative importance to be given to the individual classics shifted; philological inquiry from early on pursued the question whether all parts of the canon were genuine; and philosophical inquiry probed the structural arrangement of classic texts (including possible mis-arrangements by early editors) as well as details of meaning.

The imperial state tried from early on to secure for itself the agency to establish the form and content of the canon and to settle its meaning. These state-sponsored canonical collections were proactive in sponsoring certain texts and desired readings (through commentaries that were included) and in the same process they excluded other texts and readings. While the imperial Chinese state was active in promoting its ideological agenda of the moment, it never developed a system of pervasive censorship to prevent publication of non-canonical texts and opinions. In the selection of texts, their standing, and their reading, the state was constantly challenged by currents in society which developed their own traditions and networks.

⁴“Commentary” is here used as a generic term. It includes both formal commentaries attached to specific classic texts, and interpretations of the classics in other formats and genres.

Through the strong emphasis on literacy and familiarity with the canon and commentaries, an emphasis eventually given state sanction through the examination system as the main path of an official career, the scholar-officials shared a canon of references wherever they were in the lands of the respective dynasty and whatever language they spoke at home. This provided a ‘national’ platform and a short-hand for discussing matters of ‘national’ import. Book printing greatly facilitated and accelerated relevant communication.

The relationship of any “present” with the golden age of the “Three (pre-imperial) Dynasties” was one of a deeply asymmetrical access to truth. The present could get this access only through the reading of the bequests of the Sages offered by the scholar-officials, the Ru.

Why were such Ru specialists necessary? The trivial explanation is that the Chinese classics transmit texts written or compiled for audiences many centuries before these texts acquired the status of classics. Later audiences lacked the context as well as the familiarity with the rhetoric, lexicon, and grammar of that time and needed both “translation” into their vernacular and explanations supplying context, such as the counter-text against which passages were written. The standard strategy to deal with these problems is the commentary. It can provide translation as well as explanation, a practice that continues to this day. The classics, however, were not a user’s manual from the deep past for dishwasher repair that was using terms and forms of instruction that were not understood anymore. They had become classics because they were considered to have been products of “Sages,” a group of altogether 13 human beings dispersed over a long stretch of time and endowed with the unique gift of having understood the workings of the universe and of human society and having been able to translate this knowledge into the true form of state government. As language is a singularly clumsy tool to deal with the complexity of the universe and human society, but is still the best instrument available, the Sages had to devise complex strategies of articulation. Their use of the whole range of communication tools—from the song to the harangue, from the pointedly silent action or refusal to answer a question to minute shifts in the protocol language used in annals—produced texts that combined the high stature of “classical” pointers to truth with an often overwhelmingly trivial textual surface. They were in a very real sense “empty signifiers,” namely statements with underdetermined meaning that came with the claim of containing the highest truth.⁵ A commentator would do his best to bridge the gap between this emptiness and this high standing by specifying the signifier. This might involve opting for a

⁵ The original term is Ernesto Laclau’s. It is, however, too good and suggestive a coinage to leave to his narrow definition and polemics with structuralism. The term is used here for a pointer to some truth that is beyond language’s narrow powers of definition and therefore is intrinsically empty beyond this function. The truth it is pointing to can only be linguistically approached by reducing it to specific aspects that might seem valid at a given time. This reduction, its replacement by another reduction, and the rediscovery of the original emptiness is the purpose of the commentaries. The classics thus get their specific ‘meaning’ through the eternal efforts of the commentators to overcome their linguistically unavoidable ‘emptiness’.

grammatical construction as well as lexical meaning that differed from previous readings. The text of a Chinese classic therefore must be seen as a pure potentiality. It is made into an actual text with definite meaning only through the commentator, but loses its claim to be a full representation of the truth contained in the classic with the very act of specification. The commentator does his work in the awareness of an unbridgeable distance between his insight and that of the Sages. The openness or emptiness of the texts also meant that while he did his best to offer a reading that challenged, undid, or improved that of earlier commentators, each was aware that others would come who would do the same to him.

As a prelude to discussing the rereadings of the *Zhouli* produced after 1860 in the effort to deal with the perceived asymmetry in power between China and the West, we may note that asymmetry had also posed a challenge earlier, when Buddhist missionaries arrived from India with new “classic” texts and a new geography map in which India, not China, occupied the central position. Chinese Buddhists responded with new commentaries on the Chinese classics showing that they already contained these teachings, which had been lost in thickets of later commentary. Their Daoist opponents claimed that Laozi—the supposed author of the Daoist classic *Daode jing*—had travelled west and had transformed into the Buddha to “convert the barbarians” with a teaching appropriate to their uncouth nature (cf. Wagner 1999; Zürcher 1959). Both strategies reappear in the nineteenth century.⁶

Discovering the Modern Potential of a Classic: The *Zhouli* and Communication Between State and Society: Hypothesis

All participants in the public discussion unfolding from the 1860s in China—foreigners and Chinese alike—operated up to the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 on the shared assumption that coping with the double internal and external challenge could only be done through a return to the pre-imperial “Three Dynasties” when Sages had been in charge of government. The dispensations of these Sages were indeed contained in the “classics,” but their truths lay now (again) buried under mountains of ‘learned’ rubbish if they had not been spiked with subtle fakery for political reasons. The Ru steeped in this fake learning—and that means the officials running the Qing state—were an objective obstacle to a Chinese renaissance. Worse, the Chinese state itself, as a translation of a reading of the classics into another code, shared the same fatal flaw of a fundamental disjuncture

⁶This is not imitation, but a deep-seated pattern of reaction. Though it is not part of the theme of our volume, comparison of premodern strategies for rereading indigenous classic texts in response to internal or external challenges would be worthwhile. Some work has been done on the more philological techniques (textual emendation, accusations of intrusive editing or forgery, etc.), but this is not the whole story. Josephus’ retelling of the Jewish ‘history’ of the Bible (*Antiquities*) is a clear example.

from the ancient teaching. By supporting and guiding this flawed reading by the Ru, patronizing their institutions of learning, and claiming legitimacy from the classics, this state was indeed the ultimate, and formidably proactive, obstacle blocking access to truth and altogether endangering the standing of the classics.

For those daring to take up the challenge of modernity, learning about the West was the easy part. Politically and socially prevailing against the Court, against the ideology carried in the educational system, and against the class of their own peers, was much more formidable and risky. Providing ‘scholarly’ proof for the validity of a different vision through a commentary was essential if the scholar-officials were to be reached, but also offered a relatively innocuous platform for indirect debate. Among the classics the *Rituals of Zhou* (*Zhouli*) was seen as having the greatest potential.

The *Zhouli*⁷ is a unique text among the Chinese classics and indeed in world literature. It contains the minutely specified complete architecture of a ‘feudal’ government down to the detailed duties of each office, the number of officials and their subordinates, and their lines of communication. It does not spell out any underlying philosophical principles. Even the macrostructure of this text is purely symbolical, with six categories (Heaven, Earth, and the four seasons) to group the ministries and offices. The text is unique among the Chinese classics in having a very homogeneous overall structure and organization.⁸

By the early 1860s, some of the freshest Chinese minds had been recruited privately as secretaries by the rising stars of the Han-Chinese elite to help them defend the Manchu dynasty against the Taipings and address the Western challenge. They began to probe not just the visible instruments of Western might, but the causes underlying their development.

The *Zhouli* appeared to provide suitable tools for this comparative analysis of institutions, because it could be read as a detailed account of the golden age Chinese state. Even the Taipings turned to it (see Wagner 2010), although their main theme was the return to the monotheism attributed to the golden age.⁹ I will now test the hypothesis that Western institutions were seen as a successful reading of the true

⁷ Often quoted with another, more accurate title, *Zhou guan* 周官, the *Officials of the Zhou*. The earliest known text, in “old [i.e. pre-Qin] script” was found among other manuscripts in the second century B.C.E. (modern scholars accept that it contains material of this date), and transcribed into “new” clerical script at the end of the first century. Ascription to the Duke of Zhou (the last Sage before Confucius) had become established by c. 200 C.E., and this gave it classic (*jing*) status; it became part of the official canon from the Tang period on. However, it only became prominent in periods of agitation and contestation; this made its status rather questionable.

⁸ The *Book of Songs*, the *Book of Documents*, the *Ritual Records* and texts later elevated to the rank of classics such as the *Analects* and the *Mengzi* are all collections of stand-alone units. The core of the *Book of Changes* has an overall cohesiveness, although the sequence of the hexagrams varies in different manuscripts and editions. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* is an annalistic record of events with no visible structure other than time sequence.

⁹ Missionaries used a well-known Neoplatonist schema (which can be traced back through the Renaissance to Late Antiquity: Walker 1972) in which an original revelation given to all mankind at the Creation had been, except in Christianity, perverted in the course of time by priests who wrapped it in myth to convey it to simpler folk and/or for their own profit.

‘classical’ way of running a state; that they were offering a powerful challenge to both the Chinese state and the Chinese commentarial tradition; and that they were prompting a critical reexamination of both together with a rereading of the pre-imperial ‘classical’ Chinese heritage to discover principles compatible with those underlying the Western institutions and thus pave the way for Chinese reforms along the lines of these Western institutions. The main focus will be on the work of Sun Yirang.

The main features singled out by the young reformers of the late nineteenth century concerned two-way communication between the state and the people, and the new style of education needed both for the officials involved in transmission and the people themselves. The Western institutions that were anticipated in the *Zhouli* dealt with information-collection (maps, censuses), dissemination of news and ideas and expressions of public opinion (newspapers, parliament), new forms of provincial organization and municipal government,¹⁰ nationwide school systems, militia-type national armies, and scientific education. *Zhouli* equivalents were special officials for collecting information, including local texts and popular songs (expressions of opinion); mass assemblies in times of crisis to discuss alternative measures and collect ideas (parliament), a return to the clan system¹¹ with local appointment of officials who would serve in their own area (both related to municipal government), and the inclusion of mathematics in the classical training of officials.

The preferred form for these rereadings of the *Zhouli* was the traditional ‘reform proposal’ essay,¹² but the same ideas appear in the editorials of newspapers set up to provide alternatives to the official, gazette-type state publications (Wagner 2001, 2005), and in the observations on Western institutions sent home by Chinese ambassadors from London and Paris. However, a full-scale commentary was also produced, starting in 1872,¹³ by Sun Yirang 孫詒讓(1848–1908); it was published in 1899. Sun, who came from a family of scholars with a tradition of working on ritual texts,¹⁴ explained that the other classics already had Qing commentaries, so he felt that “the *Zhouli* alone should not be left out.”¹⁵

¹⁰ This topic was much discussed in the West; Lewis Henry Morgan (1877) held up the Iroquois to Americans as a model of municipal self-government; Marxian socialism, anarchism, guild socialism are also relevant. The Manchu Tsai-Tse, travelling in 1906 on a “Mission to Investigate the Practice of Constitutional Government in Foreign Countries,” singled out municipal government as the real strength of the British system. Tsai-Tse 1908, entry March 30, 1906, quoted in Min Tu-ki 1989: 145. The Meiji reorganization of municipal units in 1889 may also have stimulated discussions in China.

¹¹ The Taipings also wanted to redistribute land, which other reformers considered impracticable.

¹² E.g. Feng Guifen’s ‘Counterproposals’, *kangyi*, written in the 1860s.

¹³ Wang Gengsheng 1972, vol. 1: 22.

¹⁴ Sun Xidan (1736–1784) 孫希旦 from his clan in Ruian between Shanghai and Hangzhou had written a standard commentary to the *Liji*, *Liji jijie* 禮記集解, which was edited by Sun Yirang and his father Sun Yiyan 孫衣言 in the late 1860s in a collection printed by the Sun family (Sun Xidan 1868). His father was a *jinshi* of 1850, a class to which also Yu Yue (1821–1906) 俞越 belonged, an important scholarly contact in later years.

¹⁵ Sun Yirang (1905) 2000, vol. 1: 4.

His aims became more political, however, in reaction to the Taiping rebellion, the Sino-French war of 1884, and the Sino-Japanese war of 1895. He read works by other Chinese reformers, such as Feng Guifen's (1809–1874) *Jiaobin lu kangyi* (Counterproposals from the Jiaobin Studio) and translations of Western books such as *The Nineteenth Century* by Robert Mackenzie (1823–1881).¹⁶ He promoted popular education by setting up schools; organized regional and local commercial interests in a chamber of commerce; opened up a Xing Ru hui 興儒會, a Society for the Revival of Confucianism, modelled on Kang Youwei's Guangxue hui (Association to Spread Learning)¹⁷ but organized like a share-holding company; and eventually got involved in the development of the regional parliaments that were instrumental in ending the Qing dynasty. All the while he was doing ample work in scholarship, working on things as diverse as the *Mozi*¹⁸ and the newly discovered oracle bones. His life is a model case for the “elite activism” described by Mary Rankin, and he rightly has a place in her study.¹⁹

Though he disagreed with Kang Youwei's wholesale rejection of the classics “in old script,”²⁰ his own work had utopian notes. He accepted the usual view that Confucius was the last of the sages, but hoped that a millennial saviour might yet be born and that study of his own commentary would prepare scholar-administrators to serve under such a figure.²¹

The *Zhouli* would have evolved gradually before the Duke of Zhou put it into its final form: this view opened space for further adjustments to changing circumstances. For Sun, the *Zhouli* state rests on two pillars, political institutions, *zheng* 政, that secure the flow of communication between the regions and the centre as well as the court and society; and education, *jiao* 教, as the instrument with which to form a people, combining practical skills to generate prosperity with moral values to secure social order. The real world counter-text is a late Qing political structure that is characterized by a rigid separation between court and society, resulting in ignorance and lack of common resolve: and an educational system that is accessible only to a small minority of boys, has no focus on generating prosperity, and misses out on the meaning of the classics. Flow of information is essential: the preface singles out the boldest of the *Zhouli* institutions, namely the mass meetings outside the palace where king, officials, and people would deliberate their response to a crisis. Sun's model is, however, comparatively conservative, focussing on the moral qualities needed in an emperor rather than institutional specifics. Similarly, despite his own involvement in the school system, he has little

¹⁶ Feng Guifen 1998, Mackenzie 1880. Chinese translation in Richard 1898.

¹⁷ See Wagner 2002.

¹⁸ The parallel between Sun's work on the *Zhouli* and the *Mozi* is nicely put in Zhang Jian's epitaph, Zhang Jian 1920.

¹⁹ The extensive biography by Wang Gengsheng previously quoted in note 13 offers much information. It has been the main source for Rankin 1985.

²⁰ Sun actually wrote a polemic against Kang Youwei's *Xinxue weishu kao*, the *Xinxue weishu kao boyi* 新學偽書考駁誼, which has not been published but seems to be extant. It is quoted in Hong Cheng 1963.

²¹ Sun Yirang (1905) 2000, Preface: 5.

to say on the content of education. In any case, while the success of Western institutions showed that they conformed to the *Zhouli*'s prescriptions, there seemed (to many Chinese) to be a gap between what they read and heard about the West and the culture of those Westerners who came to China—the missionaries.²² Reestablishment of the correct reading of the Chinese classics in both state and scholarship would thus enable China to take its true place as the source of global enlightenment.

Within months of the publication of Sun's voluminous commentary (in 86 juan grouped into 20 or more volumes) the Boxer rebellion broke out. Sun did his share to organize a local militia against the Boxers as his father had done against the Taipings. Times looked bad for the *Zhouli*, and no latter-day sage was in sight. Pressed by the Powers and an increasingly restive Jiangnan elite with a public voice in the Shanghai media, the Empress Dowager Cixi accepted, in 1901, an urgent proposal by Sun's "examination patron" Zhang Zhidong and others to rekindle the reform process that had been aborted in 1898. A public appeal went out to submit bold proposals for reform, and within weeks reform proposals, translations of Japanese and Western works, and encyclopedic works with 'modern knowledge' that had been published between 1895 and 1898 were reprinted, and new ones poured forth.

An urgent appeal from the court, the most important scholarly opponents (Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao) being in exile, and a national crisis with foreign troops in the capital—if there ever was a moment to bring the *Zhouli* to the fore, this was it. Sun Yirang followed the suggestion of friends and produced in 10 days a stunning new work in two small volumes, the *Essential Political Institutions of the Zhouli*, *Zhouli zhengyao* 周禮政要.²³ In itemized format, it contained 40 sections, the topics ranging from court ritual to mining. For each reform topic, Sun would put together the relevant passages from the *Zhouli* with some material from the Han-commentaries; he would give a systematic summary of the evidence; and then offer a terse and informed description of the corresponding Western institutions, indicating some of their diversity.

²² Sun was not shy about his opinions concerning the intellectual quality of the Christian faith. In an 1896 letter to a friend, he went on lustily: "What gives me sorrow for my remaining years is. . . the current political situation. I say the spread of Nestorianism [=Christianity] went on like a wildfire without stop. Beginning with the trumped-up birth of Jesus Christ [from a virgin] the vulgar stuff from the Old and New Testaments was shallow enough, but the villagers believe it all in a great rage! There is no honesty in gladly accepting [Christian teaching], the [Westerners] in fact rely on the help of their wealth and power, sacrifice some money and silk and lubricate that with riches, gather military forces together to extend their protection [of Christians], and with a strategy of tethering the oxen and horses [honest people] they fulfil their plan to provide ample fodder for the snakes and pigs [greedy evil people]. And in all this the Chinese literati wear their official sash and hold forth about the Book of Poetry and the Book of Documents and in grand style talk about politely giving precedence. Already thinking about it can make one's heart hurt. That is why with my ignorance and inability I always hold forth in great detail so as broadly to locate the best talents in the entire country, and muster the collective strength of the people. . . so as to excite their aspirations, spread this distant model, clarify the teachings of the Six Arts in the *Zhouli* to spread this far and wide among the barbarians, and store up the plans of the nine arts of Zhong and Li so as greatly to wash away the shame [inflicted] by the enemy."

²³ Sun Yirang 1902.

Originally called *Bianfa tiaoyi* 變法條議 (Reform Proposals),²⁴ it was published first in Ruian in 1902 and used in the schools there. Reprints from “tens of Shanghai booksellers” quickly appeared, and in some places officials ordered schools to use it.²⁵ The introduction of a 1902 reprint gives us a glimpse of the career of this work as well as the uses to which it was put.

After its “return from a journey” [sic] to Peking in 1901, the Court made up its mind to go for reform and handed down a decree to change the examination system and do examinations on *celun* 策論, questions and themes, the questions of which would encompass Chinese and foreign, old and new matters. . .

If the books to be used [in the preparation] for the *celun* were only the sections of the classics and histories of our own land together with the reference works. . . from our Dynasty, this material would already be vast like the sea. To this have to be added the newly translated Western and Japanese books and papers, which from the time of 1896 up to today already have grown from three hundred to four or five thousand. . .

Han Yu once said “In recording government matters, go for the essence; in excerpting speeches, go for the fundamentals”. If scholars want to go for the essence and go for the fundamentals, they first have to find a book that does so, to use it as reference material for their study. Only then will they, on the basis of what has already been said, further strive for what has not now been said and in this way they will be able to get substantial results [in the examination] with little effort.

Talking about books published by contemporary scholars, the *Zhouli zhengyao* by Sun Yirang from Ruian is truly at the very top of offering the essence and the fundamentals of the different books of use for the *celun*. The title of this book is *Zhouli zhengyao*, but in fact it gets to the bottom of things Chinese and foreign, old and new, and traces them back to the *Zhouli* to the point that it could be renamed *Zhongwai zhengyao* 中外政要, the *Political Essentials of Things Chinese and Foreign*. . . Furthermore, if its explanations exaggerate a little on the side of worshipping antiquity, while one might consider it naive to identify the general principles of modern progress with the old ways [of the *Zhouli*] and [Sun] will not avoid censure for it, to appreciate one’s own country and not go to the extremes of despising China and praising the West is also a feature in the education of citizens that should not be omitted.

Just like the Way of the Samurai (Bushido) in Japan, the interpretation of the classics in China has its basis in the national soul, *guohun*. If one were to look in the old customs of China for a national essence, *guozui*, to preserve, the interpretation of the classics, *jingyi* 經義 [as practiced in the imperial examinations] would have the highest status and be most important. One has to take it like the *bushido* in Japan, it is something that may be reformed, may be expanded, but it is not something about which one might impose a change on the people.

This book by Mr. Sun offers the refined essence, divides it up into separate entries and with regard to the old classic of the *Zhouli*, it definitely offers a reform and an expansion. The origins and developments, the advantages and disadvantages it proposes span across the three old dynasties [of China] and the five continents. The book has only two volumes, but is able to encompass the politics and law and the principles of scholarship of everything.

Talking very fundamentally, it may be taken for the history of politics of our dynasty, and may be used for general lectures in the middle and higher schools. Talking just shallowly, it is handy as material for the *celun* about the core points and the fundamentals in the examinations.

²⁴ Shen Jingru 1963: 76.

²⁵ Sun Yirang 1903, note on the back cover. Shen Jingru 1963: 81.

Its writing is elegant, its language rich; it does not use too many of the new terms such as *ziyou*, freedom, and *pingdeng*, equality, and does not in a one-sided manner privilege new theories about constitutional government and people's rights. When it talks about new ideas and new laws, these are not now familiar in the Chinese world of writing, and in the hands of other people it is sometimes hard to make out [what they mean], but as articulated by Mr. Sun's brush, they seem not different from familiar stories and are easily understandable for the eyes and brains of people half in the old times and half in the new.

Guangxu February 1903, commentary and punctuation by the QiuXin tushuguan 求新圖書館

The *Zhouli zhengyao* was more than a reform proposal. It hit the market as a tightly organized set of proposals for reform together with explanations of both the classical references and the Western institutions. Among potential candidates for the new-style examinations, there was some panic at the time. The schools to which they had gone had not prepared them for the new examinations, and even the new schools mushrooming all over Jiangnan lacked teachers able to teach the new topics. In this situation, short and longer encyclopedic works, especially for Western learning, offered the only way to prepare. Sun's book offered a systematic rereading of the *Zhouli* as a modern text that could stand side by side with Western works. The book market was quick to spot the book and disseminate it through reprints at a time when the notion of copyright was just being introduced.

The new style of urbanity comes through in the easy and sophisticated manner in which this introduction deals with the implied readers, who are "half in the old times, and half in the new," with the antiquarianism inherent in Sun's approach, the light touch with which the interpretation of the classics is made into the core of the Chinese national soul in the same breath that defines the Bushido as the Japanese soul, and the unabashed advertisement of the book as offering in two slim volumes the totality of all that is essential in East and West, olden and new times.

Sun Yirang's own preface follows in the tracks of the preface for his *Zhouli zhengyi*. His appraisal of the *Zhouli* remains as high as ever, but he seems now to have read much more about Western political philosophy, and come to the conclusion that these Western authors have also grasped the "universal principles" encoded in the *Zhouli* and valid in the East, the West, in olden and modern times.

Generally speaking, [however], the most ultimate essence of government must needs correspond to the commonweal of the myriad ordering principles and be applicable in all the changes of the myriad government actions. Not to talk about this [essence] at all, but only to use "Chinese" and "Western", "old" and "new" models to map out borders so as to distinguish oneself I classify as stupidity devoid of any knowledge.

China began its civilization four thousand years ago, but in terms of culture's flourishing, nothing surpassed the Zhou. That is why that single classic, the *Zhouli*, is the most sophisticated and complete in political and legal institutions 故周禮一經，政法之精詳。It accords like two parts of a tally with the means by which different states in the Far East [=Japan] and the Far West nowadays pursue wealth and power. Accordingly, what people of the calibre of a Washington, Napoleon, Rousseau, or Adam Smith used to do and say and what people of our day point at as the latest in Western politics has already been developed in its key features by our old political institutions two thousand years ago.²⁶

²⁶ Sun Yirang 1902, Preface: 2a.

The idea that eventually the *Zhouli* alone would be able to provide a theoretical superstructure for the modern states of the world is not repeated. The *Zhouli* comes in as an original Chinese contribution to political philosophy. At the same time, the *Zhouli zhengyao* is informed and specific on both the *Zhouli* and the Western ends. The Western institutions are needed to highlight and show the actuality of the *Zhouli*'s implied principles, because these have been not only disregarded in China, but are unknown even to the educated. "That the structures of our polity, *zheng* 政, and our education, *jiao* 教, have not been cultivated and have lost their old tracks so that [even] highly praised gentry gentlemen all are in the dark to the extent that no one knows their source—this is a shame for those who transmit learning."

While the general focus again is on the two key features of political structure and education, the chapter division is based on a division between the institutional framework of the state and state measures to manage society. The first part contains subjects such as government ministries, personnel, parliament, the press or the military; the second household registers, taxes, measurement standards, popular education, and law.

Following our emphasis on "communication between high and low," the treatment of the press is selected here. In the section "Spreading the News," *guang bao* 廣報, Sun first quotes in detail the *Zhouli* text and Zheng Xuan's commentary on the duties of the members of the Royal staff who are in charge of keeping the ruler informed in Court as well as on inspection tour. The Royal Scout, *tuxun* 土訓, will run beside the ruler's carriage and inform him about the physical features of the land ahead, including suitability for agricultural use, and military obstacles. The Travel Guide, *songxun* 誦訓, keeps the ruler informed about the historical background, local taboos, and landmarks of the region ahead. In the Court, the Junior Scribes, *xiaoshi* 小史, keep the historical records of the kingdoms and principalities of the realm; the External Secretaries, *waishi* 外史, are in charge of the official annals of the states; the Mentors of all Regions, *xunfangshi* 訓方氏, teach the ruler about the political affairs in all regions and read to him the reports from the regions so that he knows about the feelings of local people there. The Junior Messenger, *xiao xingren* 小行人, gathers for the ruler information in the regions and produces written reports about events, government affairs, local customs, disasters, and the degree of harmony.²⁷

After this very elaborate account, Sun summarizes with indented "Comments," *jin'an* 謹案:

These different Zhou officials. . . are together in charge to make known the virtue of the ruler above [among those below], and to communicate the situation below [in society to the ruler above]. This corresponds to [the] deliberation [in the statement of Shun] in the Books from Yu (Yao tian, Shun tian etc.) [with the chief of the four mountains to throw open the doors (of communication between the court and the empire and)] to see with the eyes of the [four directions] and understand with the intelligence [of the four directions].²⁸ This idea is

²⁷ Sun Yirang 1903: 52–53.

²⁸ Legge 1865: 41. This reference had already become topical for newspaper discourses. It had already been used in a *Shenbao* editorial.

very sophisticated and when his imperial highness orders to investigate broadly and gather information in an encompassing manner, the Junior Messengers were in fact taking care of this. This is what the *Zhouli* calls “he carefully details for each one of the states and reports them back to the emperor [so that he might be completely informed about the empire].” The subcommentary by Jia Gongyan thinks that “for each individual item a separate letter was made out to report about it to the emperor.”²⁹ [This would prompt a translation of the several “makes a book. . .” as “makes one series of reports,” R.W.] If the *Shihuo zhi* 食貨志 of the *Hanshu* says: “The Messengers of the Zhou went through the lanes to collect the songs” [to give them to the music master, who would adjust their notes and let the emperor hear them, therefore it is] said “The king without watching out of the front door is informed about all that goes on under heaven,”³⁰ this is in full accord with the actual features of the *Zhouli*. He Xiu’s 何休 commentary to the *Gongyang zhuan* says: “ ‘Searching for songs’ [from the people] means that the village transmits it to the district, the district to the commandery, the commandery to the fief, and the fief brings it to the knowledge of the Son of Heaven,” but as Yang Xiong also says in his *Fangyan*: “In former times all [missives] coming from the Envoys with the Light Carriages as well as the memoranda and documents were archived in the offices of the Zhou and the Qin.” Thus we know that presenting songs [to the emperor] to [enable him to] observe the customs [of the people] is about the same as presenting writings to inform [the emperor] about the state of the polity, and these are also just the buds of the official and private newspapers in the Western nations today.

This summary supplements and contextualizes the *Zhouli* quotations given in the beginning. It enriches the *Zhouli* text substantially by using reports from other sources about the Zhou collection of popular songs as a way to keep the ruler informed about the people’s mood and morals. In the *Zhouli* itself, the officials named here are all in different ministries and do not form anything like a team. Although they are described first, before the Western newspapers, it is quite clear that the link between these officials is established through a function associated with the Western newspaper. After the transition in the last phrase, Sun now turns in the third part, which is not formally separated, to the West.

Generally speaking, the power of the state 國勢 and the aspirations of the people 民志 are linked. When [the people’s aspirations] are beneficial and they are guided in those [activities by the government], there will be order, but if they deviate and then are subjected to control measures, there will be chaos. If fettered and blocked, the people will become more stupid, and the state will definitely become weaker. In the Western nations since the Southern Song Dynasty [Chinese time] there is a contract between the English King John and the people, called Magna Charta,³¹ which means “great document.” It broadly established private papers 民報 and the rule that frank words should not be taboo.³² For this reason the aspirations of the people greatly expanded and the knowledge of the people was also greatly opened up.

²⁹ Sun Yirang (1905) 2000: 3008.

³⁰ This phrase also occurs in *Laozi* 47. It has already become a standard quotation in newspaper editorials. With newspapers, one can be informed about the entire world without even looking out of the window.

³¹ The name is given in phonetic transcription, *magenta zhada* 馬格那吒達.

³² In the Magna Charta I see no such rule, but a rule that frank words in parliament should not be punishable was made in 1523, and famously used by Thomas More in his defence.

Nowadays the Western official gazettes, *guanbao* 官報, contain everything in completeness, from debates in parliament, the handling of the state's finances, military policies on land and water down to new principles in the natural sciences and new products in engineering. The private journals of scholarly associations 民間學會報章 are even more numerous. There are geographic, agricultural, commercial associations, medical, and engineering journals and even astronomy, mathematics, acoustics, optics, chemistry and electricity all have their specialized professional journals down to journals even for women and children. They come out quarterly, monthly, weekly or daily. In the morning a paper comes out, by the evening [the news] has spread over the five continents.

This is why the state [government] has no troubles due to lack of communication and to ignorance, and those who peruse the[se papers] have the benefit of seeing the good and broadening their knowledge. As to those supervising the writing [=the editors, 司紀述者], in their great majority they are Ru- scholars of broad insight, accomplished men of letters who are fully acquainted with the science of government. Their standing may be gleaned from the fact that some of them step in as editor-in-chief of a newspaper company after retiring from their position as prime minister!³³ It is the function of these newspapers to report on the state administration above, and sample public discussions below. Because every word is distributed among networks of readers around the globe, time and again newspaper outlets within a single state count by the ten thousands, and the runs put out by a single newspaper company number in the several tens of thousands. As servants and maids, women and children all read papers, the knowledge and skills 智巧 of the Western nations open up more by the day. In the very end this is what getting wealthy and powerful hinges on.

China has taboos that are too deeply engrained, and its rigidity is overdeveloped. Time and again when there is a great political event in the Chinese land, the Western papers have already spread it in all four directions while the officials, clerks, gentry and people in the inland of China are utterly ignorant of it. What greater absurdity can be imagined!³⁴ As to the *Jingbao* [Peking Gazette] and the *Dichao* [regional official papers], these are leftovers from the Tang and Song [Dynasty] Courts. Formerly they existed only in the capital. They contain nothing but imperial edicts and memoranda [from officials]. This is not all. The governors of each province also each have a *Yuanmenbao*, but they are even more fragmentary and hardly worth mentioning.

Since trade has opened with the Western nations, dailies have begun to be set up in Fujian, Guangdong and Shanghai. They are all managed by Westerners. In recent years [Chinese] commoners in different provinces have begun to open companies for the publication of papers, but their numbers are still small and furthermore, because they are afraid of interference and bans, some of them have put themselves under the name of a foreign firm. In a district with several tens of thousands of households the number of newspaper readers does not reach one in a hundred, it truly is sad that the rustics definitely have no way of getting enlightenment.

I dare to say that right at the beginning of this reform one has to broadly open official gazette bureaus in the capital, and then broadly open newspaper offices in each province, commandery, circuit and district. For private papers by the people one has to relax the restrictions as far as possible. Each month the ministry officials and the provincial governors [have to] send a collection of the articles from the official gazettes and the private papers to the Grand Council for perusal during [the Emperor's study time] during the second watch, and the different offices and educational facilities should exchange the

³³ Another trope of newspaper self-depiction. Liang Qichao already used it in a programmatic article on the benefits of newspapers in the first issue of the *Shiwubao* in 1896; see Vittinghoff 2002: 29.

³⁴ Cf. Egyptian embarrassment and annoyance that new classical texts found in Egypt are studied in Europe but unknown locally: Pormann, this volume.

papers appearing in their circumscription, should broadly spread them and protect them and make sure they gain wide circulation. The famous foreign papers such as the *Times* from England and the American *The Sun*, Di sen 滴森 should also be bought, translated and brought to the emperor's attention. Their key contents, furthermore, should be inserted into the official gazettes and thus distributed in the different provinces so as to supplement the emperor's learning above and open up the people's knowledge below. [All] this would be of no negligible benefit for their understanding of the contemporary [world] situation and their grasp of the multifarious events.

It is quite evident that Sun Yirang takes the *Zhouli* as a handbook for state management. The addressee of the channels of information, which the *Zhouli* developed and which the modern press has made so much faster and more efficient, is the emperor. He has to be informed about all that goes on in the empire. The same is true for opinion, whether articulated by officials or commoners. They are to give him advice. Sun describes what the state could and should do. He lived in an age where state machineries were becoming ever more invasive and took on ever more responsibilities, from preventive inoculation to nationalist indoctrination. Nearby Japan showed the benefits of such a decisive top-down approach characterized "not by many words but by vigorous action". Society's contribution is marginalized, and not conceptualized at all. The *Zhouli* obliges by focusing exclusively on the state's agency, and designing a highly invasive "modern" state that penetrates the furthest reaches of society.

In the area of the press, Sun goes for a development of the official gazettes, the *guanbao*, relegating papers by private citizens to those dealing with scholarship or addressed to women and children. The official gazettes were even to select and publish suitable articles from the *London Times* or the *New York Sun* in translation. Even the Western papers are put into a semi-official context with prime ministers becoming editors and Bismarck sending items to the press for publishing. Sun's note on the foreign-run papers (and the Chinese-run papers with fake foreign management) does not include a strong statement about the need for an independent press.

While this particular feature seems out of step with international trends at the time, Sun probably represents the mainstream of newspaper thinking among the Chinese elite of his and later generations. Liang Qichao was perfectly willing to have his *Shiwubao* transformed into the official gazette, and the political organizations a generation later, such as the KMT and the CPC, certainly pushed for a monopoly of the Party/state papers, which the CPC eventually managed to establish in 1949. In Chinese press history the official gazette, rather than the privately-owned paper, has been the main organ. As an advocacy paper, first of a party and then of the state, it was considered the optimal tool for the effective education of society.

It remains amazing that a man who spent much of his life developing social institutions that were independent of the state—although not directed against the state—should remain so state-focused that he was unable and unwilling to accept the option, offered by many Western translations and Chinese reformers, of conceptualizing society as a player in the nation. While this trend of his *Zhouli*

zhengyao, also to be found in the other sections, puts him in the same category as those Qing officials who tried to run the Xinzheng as an enhancement of the state's regulatory and managing powers with official gazettes in the lead, with parliament reduced to an advisory body and a constitution bereft of any bite, his actions in real life seem far ahead of his thinking, and not well represented by it.

Sun Yirang's case shows that the *Zhouli* offered a variety of options for modern rereading. Within a broad common framework, Sun was pushing for a state that would reform itself so as to develop its full potential to bring about wealth, power, and peace. The foreign newspaper comes in as a successful embodiment of a universal principle, which prompts both a critical look at the way in which the Qing Court and its officials were cut off from any detailed knowledge about their own society and a rereading of the *Zhouli*, against the established view, as containing, *in nuce*, the buds of what has come to full bloom in the West, but has failed to be remembered, transmitted, and developed in China.

Chinese reactions to Western superiority, even when tied to rereadings of classic texts, were not unified. A range of 'Wests' could be seen, and it was a philosophical principle that even the most successful were only striving to approximate to the ideal already realised in China in the past.

Liu Shipai 劉師培 (1884–1919) shared Sun Yirang's anger about a facile and fashionable adoption of all that was Western. He also shared his fascination with early Chinese texts, which eventually made him into the founding father of modern linguistics in China. Like Sun, he made great and successful efforts to familiarize himself with a wide array of Western works. But their political beliefs differed, with Liu espousing anarchism.

Inspired by a Chinese translation (from Japanese) of Rousseau,³⁵ Liu's book on "the Chinese contrat social" (1904)³⁶ traced it back to the *Zhouyi* (Book of Changes), which he took to be a part of the *Zhouli*.

Within the same basic narrative, methodology, and even with the same textual references, Liu Shipai arrives at conclusions radically different from those of Sun Yirang, stressing the people's rights in public articulation and decision-making instead of the ultimate authority of a well-informed ruler.

Further rereadings followed this socialist line, produced especially in the years before and just after 1949 by non-communist intellectuals,³⁷ especially Xiong Shili (1885–1968).³⁸

In the PRC, however, there was no rearticulation of the CP's new policies in the terms of the *Zhouli*. The text was too tightly bound up with the very tradition denounced by May Fourth activists as being part of the "cannibal" old society. Only

³⁵ This translation was serialized in late 1900 and early 1901, and printed as a book by the Shanghai wenming shuju in 1902 under the title *Lusuo minyue lun* 盧梭民約論. See Li Fan 2003:69.

³⁶ Liu Shipai 1904, vol. 1: 560 ff. An excerpt is in Li Miaogeng 1996: 9–62.

³⁷ An entire literature sprang up to record these insights. See, for example, Fei Xiaotong 1950.

³⁸ Xiong Shili 熊十力 1945: 1108–1109.

in the 1980s did a small trickle of articles start to appear that spoke in positive terms of the *Zhouli*'s elaborate system of disaster relief, and its commitment to improve the material life of the people.

Conclusions

The evidence demonstrates the close link between the classics commentary and the state structure. Both claim legitimacy from agreement with the classics. The Western challenge to the Chinese state in terms of comparative effectiveness in reaching shared goals was thus a direct challenge to the Chinese educational system and its tradition of reading the classics. The claim of the state and of commentaries to 'classical' legitimacy was always fragile, since it was agreed that the Sages of antiquity were forced by the clumsy nature of language to communicate complexities beyond the grasp of language through "subtle words." Non-understanding of the classics and a misguided translation into state institutions are not trivial failures. Given the powers of the state, the homogenizing influence of the educational system, and the weight of the class of scholar-officials, a mistaken reading of the classics may become the most formidable obstacle to modernity.

The words of the classics are both indefinite in their meaning and pointers to the true way of good government. I have thus defined them as 'empty signifiers'. The gap between the classics and the institutional or commentarial specification of their meaning was one of principle, and kept the door open for challenges on both counts. The Western challenge to Chinese state institutions thus could and did prompt a guarded rereading of the classics to see whether, *in nuce*, they contained the principles upon which these Western institutions were based. In this rereading the elements of the classics were reassembled in a new pattern that emulated the respective foreign institutions. In this reassembled form, the Chinese classics with their focus on the true way of good government could become the foundation on which a radically recast state structure and educational system could be built.

The argumentative spectrum of the efforts to rediscover the classics as foundations for modernity and deal with the resulting asymmetrical exchange is wide.

- First, they might show up in the form of a denial of any asymmetry with the West through the claim—articulated since the late Ming—that all Western scientific and institutional inventions and innovations had their base in early Chinese developments still traceable in classical writings. These had in some way or the other become known in the West. This is known as the "theory of the Chinese origin of Western learning."³⁹ In practical terms this argument was not just defensive in denying the awkwardness of asymmetry, but opened the way for a creative appropriation of these foreign developments, because they ultimately were not foreign at all.

³⁹ Quan Hansheng 1935.

- Second, they might be articulated in a derivative of neoplatonist philosophy that had been brought to China by early Protestant missionaries with a nonconformist background (cf. n. 8). In the most pronounced form this was Taiping theology, but it shared its core assumptions with most early Protestant missionaries coming to China, who were in close contact with the Taiping rebels.⁴⁰ James Legge’s “Chinese Classics” translations and commentaries largely followed this line of reasoning by restoring, through his translation—at least for English-language audiences—what he saw as the true monotheism and morality of Chinese antiquity.
- Third, they came through a story line that saw the dominating features of non-Chinese as being material greed and a propensity for violence. Greed had pushed the Westerners to develop international trade and the wherewithal (ships, railroads, etc.) to facilitate it, and the propensity for violence had prompted them to develop murderous weapons as well as forms of military organization, discipline and financial management allowing the most effective deployment of power. Western science and technology as well as state organization were thus the result of a lack of culture and morality. They could be selectively appropriated by China as it saw fit for its own needs, much as it had earlier appropriated technical innovations from militant barbarians such as the stirrup, the saddle, and the harness. The visible superiority of the West in these practical matters, however, came with an equally evident inferiority in terms of core notions of morality and government. This line of reasoning is referred to as the theory of “Chinese [teaching on morality and government] for substance, Western [practical devices] for application.” When this formula was coined around 1898, it already represented a defensive stand against clamours for reforms of the “political system” that would not leave the “Chinese substance” untouched.⁴¹ In practical terms it proposed a double instead of a simple asymmetry, and supported proposals for a reform of the educational system that would continue to put heavy emphasis on a largely unchanged reading of the classics as the “substance” while allowing for a modicum of “new” Western-derived “practical” knowledge.
- Fourth, they came in the form of a radical and critical rethinking of the substance of the “Confucian” classical heritage itself. This heritage, it was argued most prominently by Kang Youwei (1858–1927) in his writings during the 1890s, had been fundamentally distorted early in the imperial period by Liu Xiang (77 B.C.E.- 6 C.E.) and Liu Xin (c. 46 B.C.E.- 23 C.E.), father and son, who had used their position as heads of the imperial library at the end of the former Han dynasty to “edit” the Confucian heritage for the purpose of helping the ambitions of Wang Mang, an usurper. This had passed unnoticed until now. The entire educational system of the present, the state examinations as well as the state

⁴⁰ See Wagner 1984.

⁴¹ This doctrine is mostly associated with Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909), who proposed it in his 1898 work *Quanxue pian* 勸學篇 (Exhortation to Study), Zhang 1898.

structure, were thus based on classical texts that had been suffused with truly “un-Confucian” inserts. These in turn had become the very core of the canon, most of all the way in which Confucius described his own labours: I am “only transmitting without creating anything of my own 述而不作.” This had been held up as a standard of behaviour for educated men for 2,000 years and had led to the stagnation of the Chinese polity. In 1897, Kang came out with a book carrying the provocative title “On Confucius as a Reformer.”⁴² It claimed that Confucius had made huge reforms, above all setting up a school that was open to everyone willing to pay the modest fee, an example that was quickly followed by many others. Kang’s argument came with a large-scale scholarly effort to weed out these “faked” elements from the classical heritage by means of rigid philology. The revised classics showed a clear path for a forward development, instead of an endless and stagnant dynastic cycle. Kang Youwei (1858–1927) and his students were in close and very frequent contact with one of the most active foreign proponents of China’s need for reform, Timothy Richard (1845–1919).⁴³ The features associated with Confucius in this new dispensation show their descent from the Christian social gospel⁴⁴ as well as a lay Buddhism recast under its influence.⁴⁵ Confucius was to step into the place of Jesus as the anchor for the Chinese calendar, and the Buddhist bodhisattva’s commitment to “save all sentient beings” was translated into a commitment to social and political reform. Contemporaries accused Kang Youwei of insinuating with his historical trajectory that he cast Confucius in the role of Moses to reserve for himself that of Jesus, while others claimed he was setting himself up as Luther (Wagner 2002). In practical terms, this line of argument called for a radical revision of the Chinese canon’s essence with scholarly methods so as to bring out its truly modern and revolutionary character. The strength of the West was not in its gunboats but in its political institutions. If China wanted to stand on its own feet it would have to rediscover that reform was the very essence of its Confucian heritage. It had in its own pre-imperial canon the wherewithal for modernity, and in fact the true teachings of Confucius qualified for becoming the foundation of a new global world order characterized as *datong*, the Great Commonweal. Kang Youwei had started from the early 1880s on to sketch this new world order based on a “correct” reading of the classics and on a summary of Edward Bellamy’s social science fiction novel *Looking Backward* (1888).⁴⁶

⁴² Kang Youwei 1897.

⁴³ Richard had made his own reform proposal with his *Xin zheng ce* 新政策, Richard 1897.

⁴⁴ For an overview, see Heasman 1962.

⁴⁵ Goldfuss 2001.

⁴⁶ This work circulated in manuscript and was printed in its entirety as the *Datong shu* only in 1935. Bellamy’s novel had a huge impact in the US and abroad. A summary was published in Chinese in 1892 in a journal subscribed to by Kang Youwei.

- Fifth, they came in the form of a reranking of the classics together with a rereading. While historically the position of ‘lead classic’ as well as of ‘lead commentary’ had changed several times, there was one among the classics that tended to move to the forefront once temperatures rose to the point of some grand turnabout, and this was the *Zhouli*, the Ritual of Zhou. As the political temperature rose during the second half of the nineteenth century, the *Zhouli* again moved to the fore.⁴⁷
- Sixth, in the form of a radical rejection of the entirety of the Chinese canon as primitive and incompatible with modernity, together with a call for a total Westernization that included abandonment of the Chinese script, and for some a move towards Esperanto as a global lingo. Emblematic of this attitude, which is associated with the May Fourth Movement 1919 (against the Versailles Treaty), is an 800-page “Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the New Culture” (1923) that ran through over forty editions over the next decades.⁴⁸ The “new culture” here is marked by being completely Western (the headings are all Western words and names with Western letters arranged alphabetically, the explanations are in Chinese), and by not containing a single reference to Chinese tradition.

These approaches were not sequential, but were often pursued simultaneously and in different constellations by different groups and individuals. Their common denominator is the need to reassess and revitalize the classics to handle the internal and external challenges of the present. Their common purpose is to cope with the existing asymmetry in a manner that kept the option of Chinese agency alive.

The challenge of modernity created new opportunities for some, and new anxieties for others. But whether the reaction was a radical rejection or an avid espousal of the new dispensation, both had to deal with the fact of an asymmetrical exchange and its perception. Much of the intellectual and political energy that went into acquiring—or denouncing—the new knowledge was generated and guided by the efforts to deal and cope with this asymmetry. The Chinese classics were a key resource in this process, because they offered a familiar and accessible Chinese platform for all elite members to articulate different options of modernity and read the crisis of the present as one of correct reading of the classics rather than of gunboats steaming up the Huangpu.

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⁴⁷ For the discussions about this text earlier in the nineteenth century, see Wagner 2010. The volume with this study is dedicated in its entirety to the history of the *Zhouli*.

⁴⁸ Tang Jinggao 1923.

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Chapter 5

Modernity's Islamicist: Sayyid Qutb's Theocentric Reconstruction of Sovereignty

Mustapha Kamal Pasha

Summary Too often, treatment of contemporary Islamic thinkers starts by categorizing them as either 'traditionalist' (and 'religious') or modern and secularist. This dichotomy does not fit Sayyid Qutb, who restructures it so that modernity is subsumed under God's sovereignty (Hakimiyyah), but in a way that preserves the individual believer's freedom to interpret God's word, and responsibility for striving with other believers to bring about a truly Islamic society.¹

Humanity is standing today at the brink of an abyss, not because of the threat of annihilation hanging over its head—for this is just a symptom of the disease and the disease itself—but because humanity is bankrupt in the realm of "values," those values, which foster true human progress and development. This is abundantly clear to the Western world, for the West can no longer provide the values necessary for [the flourishing] of humanity. (Qutb 1990: 6)

This paper explores the relation between modernity and sacralization in the political thinking of the prominent Islamic thinker, Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966). Recognized as one of the pioneers of modern Islamic fundamentalism in the Islamic Cultural Zones (ICZs), Qutb provides both intellectual and ideological resources for several contemporary Islamic political movements (Haddad 1983; Musallam 2005; Tripp 1994; Kepel 1994; Abu Rabi 1991, Abu Rabi 1996; Zimmerman 2004). Received interrogations characterize Qutb as a proponent of a theocratic Ideal State drawn from his diagnostic Quranic meditations on the moral and political crisis in the Islamic World. These interrogations are indeed premised on the established view of inseparability between the political and the religious domains in Islam (Sivan 1985). On the usual reading, modern fundamentalism merely reinforces the original

¹ I am indebted to Sally Humphreys, Rudolf Wagner, and Joachim Kurtz for invaluable comments on an earlier version of this paper. The errors are strictly mine.

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Islamic Ideal. Qutb's deliberate conflation of diagnostic and prescriptive analysis of the evils of modernity contributes to his image as an advocate of an anti-Western global crusade (Berman 2003). Qutb's principal target in his critique, however, is the Muslim political class seduced by the lure of secular power.

As an integral aspect of modernity, sacralization² endows modernity with a mystical source (Trainor 2006), one that only religion can offer.³ In Qutb's case, however, sacralization reconfigures modernity to serve ends that escape its grasp. Qutb's project, to be sure, is fraught with anomalies and tensions—contradictions that his corpus never seeks to resolve. Self-assured in his theocentric conviction, Qutb deploys modernity to serve God's assumed purpose.⁴

In this paper, I propose a re-reading of Sayyid Qutb on three registers: First, as an Islamist proponent of the sacralization of politics; second, as a theorist of *modern* sovereignty, albeit conditioned within an Islamic discursive milieu; and third, as an exponent of a particular variant of Islamic Reformation. This counter-reading challenges the popular understanding of contemporary Islamicist political currents as atavistic expressions of resistance to modernity. Rather, these political currents instantiate the temper of political modernity (Voegelin 1965) and presuppose the displacement of traditional (religious) sources of legitimate authority (Gentile 2006) in the ICZs. Qutb sacralizes politics principally by severing theocentrism from history. His reconfiguration of the Quranic commentary (*Tafsir*) rejects an essentially desacralized historical experience characterized by a *de facto* divide between polity and faith. Qutb's immanent reading of Islamic political thought constructs a *modern* account of sovereignty to produce a vision of an Islamic social order. Above all, Qutb reconfigures the relation between God and humans by conceding the centrality of establishing an Islamic state, yet rewriting (almost negating) the role of the Islamic clergy (*ulema*).

Sayyid Qutb's political discourse is a part of a wider transnational flow of ideas across the Islamic civilizational landscape. However, the traffic in fundamentalist ideology reflects not only considerable borrowing from Islamic sources, but also active translation and mistranslation of Western modernity. During the twentieth century,

²“The sacralisation of politics is a process which belongs to modern society, and through which the political dimension, after having gained its autonomy from the traditional metaphysical religions, takes on its own religious character, becoming the mother for new systems of beliefs, myths and rites, thus taking on the characteristics and functions typical to religion, such as interpreting the meaning and finality of existence” (Gentile 2005: 29). Also see Gentile (2006) for a broader exploration of this theme.

³On the received view, modernity assumes, among other things, ‘disenchantment’, a rupture in temporality, growing confidence in scientific knowledge, the triumph of Reason, secular government, and the ascendancy of an anthropomorphic field of vision.

⁴It is beyond the scope of this paper to engage with the full scope of Qutb's investigations into a very large family of disparate themes embracing the “discursive tradition” (Haj 2009) of his times. The purpose here is more modest: to outline Qutb's radical departure from the Islamic Reformist tradition centered on the question of the relation between modernity and sacralization, particularly as it relates to the question of sovereignty and its relation to the Qur'ān—arguably a ‘living’ classic in the Islamic tradition. For Islamic views on Greco-Roman ‘classics’ see Pormann (2009).

especially, the expansion of a modern literary regime through print capitalism and the ascendancy of the pamphlet as the preferred vehicle for dissemination of lay ideas also created the lineaments of an Islamic public sphere (Salvatore 2007). Qutb makes an integral contribution to the shaping of this sphere. Despite recurrent use of familiar tropes and symbols emanating from the Islamic Classics, a modern sensibility marks Qutb's writings. His reliance on scripture allows him to reconstruct an Islamic alternative to secularism. In this enterprise, temporality is drastically negated in favor of a realist conception of the Islamic City (March 2010).

Qutb's active involvement in politics, which ultimately resulted in his torture and death at the hands of an authoritarian and fiercely secularist regime, adds another layer to his complex position in contemporary Islamic political thought.⁵ Between 1951 and 1964 Qutb wrote five major books in prison. In part, his radicalization can be attributed to ill-treatment at the hands of an ungodly secular state. However, Qutb's own self-discovery as an autogenous Muslim thinker can also not be minimized. The latter is especially noticeable in his magnum opus, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'ān* (1951–1965). In totality, Qutb's treatment of the inescapable restructuring of the social world by modernity has deep tensions and ambivalences.

This paper, therefore, is located within the broader framework of the political remaking of the ICZs under late-modern conditions of global connectivity with specific reference to processes of rescaling and deterritorialization of sovereignty. A main aspect of the inquiry is to delineate the main lines of continuity and rupture between traditional (religious) notions of legitimate political authority and sovereignty, on the one hand, and of emergent (secular) forms of supreme temporal authority, on the other.

The easy circulation of representational tropes of Islamic distemper, stressing either the immutability of religiously coded social action in the ICZs or their temporal relocation in stories of modernization and progress, largely rests on an assumed tension between modernity and Islam. On a standard reading, Islam's resistance to the modern temperament serves as the explanatory axis pinpointing the various political ailments of the ICZs. Resistance flows from the inseparability of faith and politics. The fusion of religious and temporal authority produces illiberal politics and publics, substituting ethics for politics and privileging community over the individual. Islamic political practice, on this view, can only remain mired in traditional notions of authority. Alternatively, modernizing impulses in the ICZs are fragile. However, the aspiration of political transformation cannot be entirely abandoned; the answer to the Islamic predicament lies in modernization and its distinctively secularizing processes.

Hence Sayyid Qutb presents few enigmas for the political imagination trained in the Westphalian science of sovereignty. Eschewing the secular enterprise of evacuating faith from the sphere of legitimate authority and of relations between sovereigns, he merely presents a retrograde response to modernity. Repudiation of temporal sources of authority alone, for Qutb, could salvage Islamic civilization from

⁵ For details on Qutb's biography see Haddad 1983; Musallam 2005.

moral corruption and decay. Rejection, therefore, can only be totalizing. To renounce temporal solutions to the human predicament, encompassing disenchantment, alienation, and nihilism, is to renounce modernity in its entirety. Qutb's fundamentalism offers no concealment of its purported aspirations. His embrace of Islam as the self-sustaining receptacle of Truth and Reason, serving to counter the fatal and self-defeating enticements of Western modernity, authenticate his status as the progenitor of Islamic fundamentalism. This widespread view is remarkably uncomplicated and uncontroversial.

This paper suggests an alternate account of Sayyid Qutb, both to decenter his intellectual location and to reframe his fundamentalist intervention as *modernist*. Specifically, Qutb's reworking of traditional Islamic conceptions of legitimate authority within the modern state and an acceptance of *raison d'état*, his celebration of modern science, and his recognition of the necessity of political power in the service of God to materialize the Ideal Islamic State, complicate established accounts. Qutb's reconstruction of traditional notions of sovereignty underscores the difficulty of sustaining the image of Islamic fundamentalism as an anti-modern project.

Many notable scholars have recognized that the decentralized character of Islamic religious authority generates proliferating claims on politics and on the relations between faith and political obligation. Under modern conditions, however, proliferation readily succumbs to centralizing currents that give texture and definition to identity. The foremost inclination of the modern is not only to differentiate and classify but to homogenize. This paper also seeks to address these concerns, albeit in a very compressed manner.

Qutb's Vision

Qutb presents an integralist vision in which the modern can be subsumed within an Islamic system of God's sovereignty (*Hakimiyyah*). Relations between the cosmos and the world, the individual and society, and society and state can be harmonized with an unconditional acceptance of Allah's transcendence. Rejecting all forms of Orientalism which regard Islam as a barrier to modernity, Qutb inverts the nexus between Islam and modernity by *subordinating* modernity to Islamic ideals. While he is representative of a whole generation of twentieth-century Islamic reformers 'coping with modernity' under conditions of material and cultural asymmetry vis-à-vis the West, Qutb's radical strategy avoids the standard problematic of accommodation, adjustment, and reform adopted by his predecessors. Clearly, Qutb is well placed within the broader modern tradition of Islamic Reformism marked by "the recurring impulse to renew the faith, to return to pristine origins, to shed the accretions of time and clime, and to recapture the vigor and simplicity of prophetic times" (Binder 1988: 170). His worldview does not, however, draw inspiration from defensive identification of modernist impulses within Islam, potential for reform within tradition, or recognition of compatibility between modernity and tradition.

Rather, his conception of Islam as a 'total' system *marginalizes* modernity. This objective is pursued through an appeal to the example of the first generation in Islam (*Salafi*), represented notably by the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs (except the third caliph Uthman, whom Qutb does not hold in high regard due to his assumed infirmity as a leader). More significantly, however, Qutb seeks to marginalize modernity by inventing a new language to express the Islamic alternative. By reworking older terms and giving them new meanings, Qutb is able to set aside virtually all pre-modern relics of accumulated *Tafsir* wisdom. Central in this exercise is a spatio-temporal ordering of concepts, lifting them out of specific historical or textual contexts to produce a new theoretical architecture. Both *Jahiliyyah* (human sovereignty) and *Hakimiyyah*, as key instances, experience a novel metamorphosis. *Jahiliyyah* no longer provides a representative picture of pre-Islamic Arabia, but of humanity divorced from divine sovereignty, and hence in Qutb's time an image of contemporary society. Similarly, *Hakimiyyah*, a term absent from the Qur'ān, acquires through rhetorical finesse the character of an authentic Islamic term.

Hence Qutb's mobilization of the Islamic Classics, notably the Qur'ān, allows him to offer authoritative judgment on "the actual state, society, and man in their placement into an imaginary realm of an idealized time before time" (Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'ān; Introduction* above: 4). Return to the Qur'ān through cleansing of "the interpretive debris that had accumulated" over time (p. 4) gives Qutb a "clearing" in which to engage the problems of his time. "One reason for Qutb's influence," notes Nettler, "was the profound, masterful integration of the Qur'ān in his thought" (1994: 102). It is Qutb's knowledge of the Qur'ān that authorizes him to offer diagnosis and prescription of Islam's fate under conditions not of its own choosing. Qutb's ultimate objective is to produce an Islamic template for imagining a modern Islamic society. In *Social Justice in Islam* (2000a), for example, as well as other writings, Qutb's principal focus remains the challenge of modernity, but he considers the Islamic alternative to be intrinsically superior. Unlike his predecessors, whose engagement with the Qur'ān was often "indirect," Qutb uses it verse by verse "to build a theory of, and a practical programme for, modern Islam" (Nettler: 104). Throughout his commentary, Qutb counterposes his conception of *aqida* (Islam's creed) to current secular notions of political and cultural identity ensconced in the nation or state.

It is not only the substance of Qutb's intervention that is salient, but also the form in which it is delivered. Qutb's insistence on writing in lay speech to bypass the constraints of formalistic Islamic scholarship, or what he regards as self-imposed limits of a secularizing discourse, makes space for the kernel of a political and social order based *entirely* on an autonomous Islam. The 'Classics' for Qutb, in this case the Qur'ān, need not rely on intertextually developed *Tafsir* (Quranic interpretation). Qutb's own massive commentary on the Qur'ān tends to deviate from received practice. His undeterred focus on establishing *Hakimiyyah* allows him to sidestep the perilous avenues inherent in interpretation, Quranic exegesis, or tacit acceptance of a *zahir* (exoteric)/*batin* (esoteric) divide within Quranic hermeneutics.

Although Qutb's message is designed principally to address the Muslim Question—that of cultural, political, military or economic subordination in a hostile environment of secular modernity and its materialist civilization—he uses the language of humanism. His presumed audience is the whole of mankind besieged in modern *Jahiliyyah*. Yet Qutb's relation to humanism is not so straightforward. He concedes scientific and technological advance propelled by European civilization, albeit deeply indebted to Islamic civilization. Qutb stresses the importance of material achievement, and of technique in the narrower sense of achieving 'how to' tasks, and the usefulness of instrumental rationality. However, Qutb comprehensively rejects ends that fall outside *Hakimiyyah*. Human life projects must always remain subservient to the Will of God, the obligations God has conferred upon humanity. Humans by nature need the divine. Qutb's capacious notion of an Islamic system (*nizam*) allows him to reject any idea of an unbridgeable gap between human and divine purpose. However, harmony can only be achieved by fulfilling the primary condition of acceptance of divine sovereignty. Qutb also dismisses one-dimensional rejections of *Jahiliyyah*, including Sufism. It is unnatural in God's design to repudiate the materiality of existence. An authentic Muslim community combines *din* (faith) and *dunya* (worldliness). In *Milestones* (1990), Qutb adopts a more militant tone to advance his goal of establishing an order that is both divinely inspired and just.⁶ Piety alone cannot generate a social and political order consistent with *Hakimiyyah*.

Ambivalence towards modernity lies not in rejecting the rueful language of earlier Islamic reformism, but in Qutb's interpretation of the Qur'ān in a strictly *modern* register.⁷ In the first instance, Qutb makes politics a condition, not an effect, of establishing an Islamic society. For Qutb, Islam cannot fulfill its role except by taking a concrete form in a society, or more precisely, in a nation (*Milestones* 7). This suggestion recognizes the inescapable presence of the nation and the state as

⁶ As Binder (1988) notes: "The Ma'alim [*Milestones*] is a response to a new nonscripturalist literature of reform and reassessment of the Islamic tradition. But it is not a wholly negative response to that literature. One of the most important elements in Qutb's altered perspective is his all but admitted adoption of the pragmatic perspective which he attacked in the '*adala* (188)." Qutb's starting premise, as in philosophy, is not doubt, but "an unequivocal acceptance of revelation" (*ibid.* 195).

Missing in standard interpretations of Qutb is his reliance on a deeply antisemitic language in parts of *Milestones* embedded in his deep-seated hatred and suspicion of the Jews. Notably, Qutb's deployment of the theme of a Zionist global conspiracy allegedly found in *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a case in point. This deployment is not merely rhetorical but captures widespread antisemitic prejudice in large sections of the population.

⁷ Akhavi (1997) mentions an assumed "dialectic" between the purposes of scripturalists and their utilization of modern concepts to promote traditionalist objectives; similarly, modernists, influenced by ideas of foreign provenance, feel compelled to try to reach their goals by reference to early *kalam* (377). Akhavi attributes this distinction to Şerif Mardin, a renowned international thinker from Turkey.

political containers of Islamic identity. On the other hand, Qutb selects an idiom that resonates with the contemporary Muslim condition of self-annihilation under secularity, instantiated most poignantly by the (Egyptian) state. Another source of ambivalence lies in Qutb's attempt to divorce Islamic foundations from their historical, worldly contexts. As Nettler (1996: 185) notes, Qutb "seeks trans-historical, essential, principles of Islam in his scriptural and historical interpretations." The ambivalence is also compounded by Qutb's sensitivity to the notion of human nature (*fitra*), which corresponds to the salience of the project of Islamic renewal, especially in his early writings. Furthermore, Qutb melds humanism and theocentrism. In *Social Justice* (2000a) he attributes to Islam the parentage of the idea of humanity as escaping the constrictions of blood, territory, and tribe. Fidelity to God places human beings in a vertical attachment to other human beings, all recognizing their finitude and limits. Similarly, Islamic renewal depends on an individual's faith:

The believer holds on to his *din* [faith] like the holder of a precious stone in a society devoid of religion, of character, of high values, of noble manners, and of whatever is clean, pure, and beautiful. The others mock his tenacity, ridicule his ideas, and laugh at his values, but this does not make the believer weak of heart. He looks from his height at those who mock, ridicule and laugh, and he says, as did Noah, one of the great souls, who preceded him on the long and bright path of faith: "You ridicule us! Yes indeed we shall ridicule you as you ridicule." [*Qur'ān* 3:196–197] (*Milestones* 125)

In placing the onus of renewal on the individual, Qutb is reiterating his faith in individual conscience. Qutb recognizes the human capacity for knowledge, reflexivity, and above all ability to act in the world. Neither fatalism nor asceticism provide pathways towards renewal; only action (*harakah*) does, informed by an unconditional faith in divine sovereignty. Change is possible, indeed desirable, and the individual *is* the locus of initiating it. However, Qutb draws a basic distinction between the material and the spiritual world. Only God can comprehend matters of spirit; humans have the capacity to unravel the secrets of the material world. Qutb cautions against the *Jahiliyyah* sensibility of making the human the primary locus of knowledge and understanding. Recognition of limits does not mean a suspension of reason. The quest for knowledge is divinely ordained. Despite his choice of humanistic metaphors, Qutb repudiates anthropomorphism, which would make humans arrogant in the face of *Hakimiyyah*. Qutb's theory of knowledge stands in stark opposition to the principal objective in Islamic philosophy of fostering reconciliation between Revelation and Reason. Ironically, though, Qutb's understanding of knowledge generates a dualistic universe in which instrumental reason is severed from metaphysical concerns. This could potentially transform an epistemological hierarchy into the dualistic world in which the modern Muslim is perpetually trapped.

Qutb's model of sacralization⁸ is unconventional since he is not inventing either civil or political religion⁹ to provide legitimacy to modern forms of authority, but is redefining Islamic politics itself as sacralized practice. Qutb's attempt is not without earlier precedents in Islamic history. However, the context of his intervention is quite different—the modern nation-state. The modern condition introduces an entirely new set of constraints: as Moro notes, “The modern sacralisation of politics, which acts in an immanentist landscape, is obviously a very different thing. In the age of secularisation, phenomena surrounding the politicisation of religion continue. In this last phase, however, secularisation deeply changes their profiles” (2005: 82). Qutb tries to bypass modernity by reconfiguring the concept of the nation:

A Muslim's fatherland is where the Islamic faith, the Islamic way of life, and the *Shari'ah* of Allah are dominant. Only this meaning of 'fatherland' is worthy of human beings. Similarly, 'nationality' means belief and a way of life, and only this concept is worthy of man's dignity. (*Milestones* 109)

Qutb's view of sacralization follows an alternate trajectory of meaning. According to the accepted view, as Emilio Gentile notes:

The sacralisation of politics occurs all the time by virtue of the fact that a political entity, for instance, the nation, the state, race, class, the party, assume the characteristics of a sacred entity, that is, of a supreme power, indisputable and untouchable, which becomes the object of faith, of reverence, of cult, of fidelity, of devotion from the side of the citizens, up to and including the sacrifice of life; and as such it lies in the centre of the constellation of beliefs, of myths, of values, of commandments, of rites and of symbols (2005: 29).

Implicit in Qutb's reconstruction of the Classics is the rediscovery of the *political*, at the level both of the individual and of society. His appeal, especially in *Milestones*, rests on this rediscovery and builds on his early concern with social

⁸ According to Gentile (2005: 29): “In the modern age, politics, after conquering its institutional autonomy toward traditional religion. . .has acquired the aura of sacredness up to the point of asserting, in an exclusive and complete way. . .the prerogative to define the ultimate meaning and the fundamental goal of human existence on earth.”

⁹ Gentile draws a distinction between civil religion and political religion. The former “is a form of sacralisation of a collective political entity that is not identified with the ideology of a particular political movement, affirms separation of Church and state, and, though postulating the existence of a deistically conceived supernatural being, coexists with traditional religious institutions without identifying itself with any one particular religious confession, presenting itself as a *common civic creed* above parties and confessions. It recognizes broad autonomy for the individual with regard to the sanctified collectivity, and generally appeals to spontaneous consensus for observing the commandments of public ethics and the collective liturgy.” By contrast: “*Political religion* is a form of the sacralisation of politics of an exclusive and integralist character. It rejects coexistence with other political ideologies and movements, denies the autonomy of the individual with respect to the collective, prescribes the obligatory observance of its commandments and participation in its political cult, and sanctifies violence as a legitimate arm of the struggle against enemies, and as an instrument of regeneration. It adopts a hostile attitude toward traditional institutionalised religions, seeking to eliminate them, or seeking to establish with them a relationship of symbiotic coexistence, in the sense that the political religion seeks to incorporate traditional religion within its own system of beliefs and myths, assigning it a subordinate and auxiliary role” (*ibid.* 30).

justice. Moral renewal, for Qutb, is insufficient. Rejecting pietistic solutions to the Muslim predicament—a condition marked by the triumph of secularity—Qutb sees the Islamic solution as one of reorganizing state-society relations. Through struggle (*jihad*) and call (*da'wah*) the political order is attainable. Qutb's shift from social reform to the primacy of the political marks his radicalization as well as his separation from his nineteenth-century reformist forerunners.

For Qutb, the political “was a transcendent category as well as a mundane one. The Godly Islamic community was necessary on earth for cosmic as well as for earthly reasons” (Nettler 1994: 108). March (2010) characterizes this project as a “realistic utopia,” comparable to Rousseau's.¹⁰ Central to its realization, though, is leadership inspired by the Qur'ān and its imaginaire of human society. Leadership (*qiyada*) for Qutb “was a combination of revealed truth and the political and social application of that truth—*Shari'a* or *aqida* or *al-manhaj al-Islami*” (Nettler 1994: 108). Unlike the impulse either of his contemporaries or of modern followers seeking to institute ‘political’ Islam, Qutb's project was “a *metaphysical imperative* within a general cosmological conception.” In the words of Nettler (1994), “Qutb's ‘political Islam’ has a very different look and rationale. It pertains not only to the allegedly deracinated modern Muslim society and its problems in the period of decolonization, but to a larger order of God's organization of the cosmos” (114).

The choice between *Jahiliyyah* and *Hakimiyyah*—concepts designed both to characterize the modern condition (deviation from divine sovereignty) and to overcome its dangers—operates within a political scheme. The central problem Qutb addresses concerns the *authorization of authority*, which exclusively belongs to God. Man-made systems usurp God's sovereignty. The task is to undo this arrangement. *Hakimiyyah* ensures man's proper destination, both in the cosmos and the world. Without divine sovereignty, he insists, humanity is adrift, rudderless and estranged from God and the world. Paradoxically, the emphasis on the creation of an Islamic political order shifts the task away from the divine to the community, and indeed to each individual.

Qutb's conception of *Jahiliyyah* is not merely a characterization of a social condition, but is decidedly conditioned by a metaphysics of *shirk* (worship of something or someone other than Allah). On this reading, all attempts to reconcile Revelation and Reason contain elements of *Jahiliyyah*. As Binder observes:

¹⁰“Qutb is horrified by the divided and alienated self that the inequalities of modernity have produced and rejects the capacity of reason alone to provide meaning and purposes for mankind. His solution also involves a similar effort to construct an integrated and emancipated modern self out of both presocial, innate human materials (*fitra*) and the habits, emotions, and relationships of society. Qutb's modern emancipated self cannot be achieved through a turn inward away from commercial society or upward through losing oneself in God. It cannot be achieved privately because the development of a certain moral personality has to occur within comprehensive social relationships that eradicate domination and competition for esteem and advantage. Qutb's response to modernity thus involves a similar gambit to Rousseau's: not a reactionary turn to historical tradition and the hierarchies and mystification so useful for domesticating the passions of the many, but an effort to harmonize modernity's expectations of social justice, formal equality, and publicity with a political morality both austere and responsive to human psychology” (March 2010: 193).

Qutb insists that speculative idealism, and deductive intellectualist systems not derived from immediate religious experience, are characteristic forms of contemporary *jahiliyya*. Theoretical systems which are derived from worldly praxis and material existence alone are equally *jahili*. In this way Qutb rejects not only Marxism, but also Western philosophy, the medieval philosophies of Islam, and much Islamic legal reasoning, claiming that they represent the most insidious and reprehensible forms of the *jahili* attack on Islam. (1988:179)

Divine Sovereignty

Qutb refrains from producing a bifurcated theological universe. The source of his effectiveness, both as a pioneer of a new language of modern Islam and as an exemplar of innovative political currents in the ICZs, is his quest for a return to the Quranic concept of *Tawhid* (unity), but in different guise. He avoids the tendency to ‘modernize’ Islam, which inevitably separates religious and secular worlds. Qutb, instead, chooses to Islamize modernity (see below). This may not be apparent on a literalist reading of his corpus. Qutb relies on conventional exegetical codes within the Islamic intellectual tradition. However, his reading of modernity is a *political* reading. Both the triumph of Western modernity and the decline of Islam are linked to the accumulation or diminution of power. The rise of a material civilization in the West corresponds to spiritual corruption in the ICZs. A reversal is possible and Islam can be restored to its former glory. Yet the pathway to creating an authentic Islamic society is to annul all roads to *Jahiliyyah*, not to create a dual carriageway. Recognition of God’s sovereignty is that pathway. Qutb revisits Islam’s fundamentals, beginning with the concept of *Tawhid*. His interpretation of *Tawhid*, however, is remarkably unoriginal in its tenor:

Islam begins by establishing the principle of the Oneness of Allah (*Tawhid*), as it is from Him that Life issues and unto Him that it turns. “Say: God is One. . .” (*Qur’ān*, 112-1-4). Accordingly, there is no controversy or doubt about the origin of this universe. . . Out of the Will of this One God, the whole existence has been created in the same unified manner. . . There is no intermediary between Creative Will and the created beings, nor are there multiple ways of creation, but it is the Will referred to in the Quran by the word ‘Be’ that prevails. . . The One God reigns sovereign over all beings, to Him they turn for refuge in this life, and in the Hereafter. . . The universe, with its diverse ramifications has one origin from which it is issued. . . By one Supreme rule, this universe has been thoroughly administered in a manner that precludes any collision among its parts. . . (Qutb, *Islam and Universal Peace* 1951)

Qutb’s emphasis on *Tawhid* as the organizing principle of the Islamic system would remain largely abstract without its materialization in *Hakimiyyah* (God’s sovereignty). *Hakimiyyah*, therefore, is not an Ideal, but a form of government.¹¹ It is not merely a Utopia, but a particular realist settlement binding God and human beings:

¹¹ Qutb’s *Hakimiyyah* is a distant cry from “Alfarabi’s neo-Platonic characterization of a virtuous city, where every individual maximizes his or her virtue by playing a specialized role, under the direction of a virtuous ruler, who combines religious knowledge and rational insight to achieve harmony in the state” (Rahman 2009: 40). See also Alfarabi 2001.

The basic principle upon which the Islam system is based differs from the basic principles upon which all human systems are based. It is based upon the principle that sovereignty (*hakimiyyah*) belongs to God alone, and He alone legislates. The other systems are based on the principle that sovereignty belongs to man, and it is he who legislates for himself. These two basic principles do not coincide, and therefore the Islamic system cannot really coincide with any other system, and cannot be called anything but "Islam." (*Social Justice in Islam*, in Shepard 1992: 220)

Qutb does not pursue an abstract theory of *Hakimiyyah*. His main purpose throughout the various phases of his discussion of it is to present a concrete model of government, but this is not spelled out in any great detail. Yet Qutb is not a philosopher, but a political thinker deeply immersed in the political quotidian:

Islam cannot fulfil its role except by taking a concrete form in a society, or more precisely, in a nation. Men do not listen, especially in this age, to an abstract theory which is not materialized in a living society. From this point of view, we can say that the Muslim community has been extinct for a few centuries, for this Muslim community does not denote the name of a land in which Islam resides, nor is it a people whose forefathers lived under the Islamic system at some earlier time. It is the name of a group of people whose manners, ideas and concepts, rules and regulations, values and criteria, are all derived from the Islamic source, so that that the Muslims' way of life is an example to all Mankind, just as the Messenger is an example to them: "And thus We made of you a community justly balanced that you may be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger as witness over yourselves." [*Qur'an* 2:143] (*Milestones* 7)

The elevation of sovereignty as the First Principle in a refurbished Islamic theological design impregnates Faith with power. This important intervention serves two purposes: First, it challenges any possibility for the quietist accommodation to modernity sought by the vast majority of the Muslim political class; second, it forecloses the option of privatizing faith, a *de facto* ontological condition of modernity. In sacralizing politics, Qutb abolishes the modern distinction between social spheres. Analytically, these spheres do exist, but for Qutb only an integrated order based on divine sovereignty can produce an Islamic order.

Despite the endless rhetoric offering Islam as Ideal and as ethical code, the political class in the ICZs has long recognized the difficulty (if not impossibility) of overcoming modernity or building an Islamic order *on Islamic principles*. The 'modern' intrudes and renders all projects feeble. Qutb excoriates the nominally 'Muslim' political class not only for its insincere attempts to adhere to Islamic principles, but for its basic orientation toward State and society. This orientation is characterized principally by an acquiescent schizophrenia engineered to accommodate God and humanity simultaneously. Taking the form of secularism, the modern political settlement evacuates Divinity from human affairs. For Qutb, therefore, there are no Islamic states, only Muslims. The accusation of 'un-Islamic' political and social existence leaves no room for compromise. *Hakimiyyah* is a goal to be pursued, but in Qutb's hands the concept also serves a delegitimizing function. Muslim elites are unable and unwilling to realize the Islamic Ideal. Across the Islamic spectrum, society is a *jahili* society since it rejects Allah's sovereignty; it is characterized by compromise with the sovereignty of man.

A corollary of accommodation is the privatization of faith. Visible, mostly ritualistic expressions of religiosity disguise the withdrawal of Faith from the public realm. Qutb's Arendtian (Arendt 1958) notion of Islam, one that connects identity to the public sphere, cancels out any possibility of creating a dualistic world of private religiosity and public ritual. The 'system' of Islam embraces no separate private/public spaces. For Qutb, the publicness of Islam bears an organic relation to an individual's Faith. Hence, the secular alternative of cultivating separate spheres for piety and for lay purposes, or of tolerating multiple pathways to Divinity, empties out *Hakimiyyah*. An Islamic society is a singular universe with no compartments and no parallel universe.

By sacralizing politics, Qutb strives to overcome the dualistic character of modernity. "Every productive concept in the modern theory of the State" for Qutb is not merely "a secularized theological concept" (Schmitt 1922), but a basic departure from Faith. On Qutb's alternative reading, sacralization of politics returns politics to its highest status. Implicit in this formulation is a distinction between a classical view of politics as the quest for the Good Life, and politics as competition or compromise. For Qutb, all politics is of the second variety in both the West and the ICZs. Furthermore, modern politics poses a threat to human existence itself. Neither social harmony nor individual liberty can be secured under its sign.

An implicit facet of Qutb's theocentrism is his repudiation of the Islamic intellectual tradition, particularly jurisprudence. Despite the rich diversity of this tradition, jurisprudence took on an exaggerated salience in Muslim thought in relation to political theory, philosophy, theology or mysticism. As Muqtedar Khan provocatively suggests:

One consequence of the emphasis on jurisprudence is that this has reduced Islamic thought to a medieval legal tradition. The extraordinary influence of the idea of Islam as Shariah has made law the precursor of the state and political life. Instead of thinking of law as serving the changing needs of the political community, the polity is said to be legitimate only if it properly implements Shariah. (Khan 2004: 63–64)

In that tradition, a *de facto* classification of human actions produces separate religious and secular worlds. During the medieval period, especially, Islamic scholarship produces a mature theory of secular authority. An Islamic variant of *raison d'état* becomes a recognizable feature of the political architecture of the Caliphate (Euben 1999:50).¹² Yet for Qutb any division between religious and secular authority, except for merely technical reasons, is a deviation from the spirit of Islam. Reworking the history of Islamic philosophical sciences, Qutb offers an alternative template marked by the presence or absence of the Divine:

The division of human actions into "*ibadat*" (worship) and "*muamalat*" (transactions, social relations, dealings between peoples), which we find in the books of fiqh (jurisprudence), was introduced in the beginning merely for technical reasons in order to present different topics in a systematic manner. Unfortunately, with the passage of time, this produced the erroneous impression in people's minds that the term "*ibadah*" (worship) applies only to those actions that are included under the title "*fiqh al-ibadat*" (jurisprudence of worship). This application of the term "*ibadah*" was a grave distortion of the Islamic concept.

¹² For background see Gibb 1962.

Qutb's expansive conception of *Hakimiyyah* covers all human activity. Submission to God's sovereignty permeates conscious human existence. Yet belief in the sovereignty of God contradicts the historical experience of Islam. On Qutb's rendition, throughout its long career, Islamic history has approached the Quranic Ideal with little success. Barring the first generation of Islam, the impulse to accommodate materiality has reigned. There are obvious subsequent exceptions for Qutb in this account, notably Omar II (682–720 C.E.), who approached the temperament of excellence established by the Prophet and his companions. Others have allowed worldly concerns to impinge upon the journey towards *Hakimiyyah* (divine sovereignty). For Qutb, modern secular power is the farthest Islamic history has travelled from its origins. Modern society is a new, more deadly expression of *Jahiliyyah* since it dethrones God entirely from the social and political order.

At the heart of Qutb's critique of modernity is modernity's assumed negation of divine leadership, producing social orders characterized by *Jahiliyyah*.¹³ To the degree that all *modern* systems diminish God's authority, they are an embodiment of *Jahiliyyah*. Social (and political) life without divine guidance can never be in harmony with nature. Key to Qutb's political vision is his inventive interpretation of Surah 7 of the Holy Qur'an:

When this state of affairs has reached (Jahiliyya), God sends a messenger to human beings explaining to them the very same truth they had had before sinking into Jahiliyya. Some of them write their own destruction, while others are able to spare themselves by returning to the truth of the faith. These are the ones. . . who listen to their messenger as he says to them: "My people, worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him." (*Qur'an* 7:59, 65, 73, 85)

Qutb's reading of the Qur'an generates a philosophy of history infused by a battle between Islam and *Jahiliyyah*. This is not the story of the march of freedom, but of Truth. Prophecy has a unifying theme expressed in this Surah. There are only two possible historical paths: the path of God or the path dictated by humans themselves. The latter can only engender *Jahiliyyah*. (Western) modernity in Qutb's view has abandoned God in favor of human Reason. Obedience to human law is to accept the sovereignty of humans, not God. Qutb's notion of freedom is inextricably tied to *Hakimiyyah*. Only when God's sovereignty is accepted in its entirety can humans be free. Human perfection rests on an alignment between divinity and human nature (*fitra*). On this view, constitutional government or any of its forms, including the democratic dispensation, curtails freedom.

Eschewing a model of separate spheres, Qutb insists that God's sovereignty permeates the totality of human existence. The Western notion of separating state and church is fatally flawed. Proposed separation produces a "hideous schizophrenia" (*Islam: The Religion of the Future* (1984: 33). Qutb's sustained repudiation of the Protestant Reformation (*Social Justice in Islam*: 42) underscores the centrality

¹³ Qutb releases this concept from its original locale in pre-Islam to characterize all societies devoid of *Hakimiyyah*. Hence, "Jahiliyya for Qutb becomes a transcendent historical designation of universal existence and application to any trend of human moral and intellectual culture not revelation-based" (Nettler 1996: 185).

of his concern with innovation within Islam's hermeneutic circles (Salvatore 1999). The only concession available to Qutb is recognition that social practice is legitimate only if it seeks inspiration from divine guidance; it cannot be crafted in detail.

Amongst modern hermeneutic circles, no figure is more paramount for fleshing out this account of *Hakimiyyah* than Syed Abul A'ala Mawdudi (1903–1979), who provides the original conceptual template for Qutb. Key to Mawdudi's design is the modern state. His notion of Islamic government also substitutes theo-democracy for theocracy, providing an allowance for consultation and elections (Nasr 1994). Without a religiously infused leadership, *Hakimiyyah* cannot come to fruition:

The whole question of human well-being depends entirely on who exercises control over human affairs. A train runs only to the destination determined by its driver. All passengers can travel only to the same destination, whether they like it or not. In the same way, the train of human civilization travels where those who exercise power dictate. (*In the Shade of the Quran* [Qutb 2002-9], vol. 6:149–150)

Like Mawdudi, Qutb views harmony as a result of adherence to Quranic principles, but he also emphasizes the inseparability of worship and ethics, political order and civic duty. Human actions are always subordinated to divine action. Islamic government takes singular divinity and God's sovereignty as its foundation. But Qutb's objective is not limited to Mawdudi's preoccupation with the establishment of an Islamic State. Qutb's self-conscious embrace of national spaces for the establishment of Islamic government only partly corresponds with his vision of a post-national Islamic constellation.¹⁴

Accepting the conventional distinction between *dar-al-Islam* and *dar-al-Harb*, Qutb recognizes the necessity of an Islamic state:

Only one place on earth can be called the home of Islam (dar-al-Islam), and that is the place where the Islamic state is established and the Shariah is enforced and Allah's limits are observed, and where all the Muslims administer the affairs of the community with mutual consultation. The rest of the world is the home of hostility (dar-al-harb). A Muslim can have only two possible relations with dar-al-harb: peace with a contractual agreement, or war. A country with which Muslims have a treaty is not regarded as the home of Islam. (Qutb, *Milestones*: 102)

¹⁴ As Binder notes: "Despite Qutb's embracing Mawdudi's theory of *Hakimiyya*, he turns it into a declaration of man's radical freedom. Man's absolute subjection to God's will is a matter of individual conversion and personal conviction, as his rejection of worldly government—for no Islamic state actually exists. Man may be the measure of all things religious in the sense that Islam is an expression of the divine conception of man, but that conception is not articulated in a doctrinal formula. It is rather grasped intuitively and experienced by a living consciousness existing through time. The Islamic experience of man's Being is founded upon faith and revelation rather than upon material existence alone, but its dynamism, its capacity to change, the fact that the Islamic conception—*al-Tasawwur al-islami* [Islamic Conception]—is also a *tasawwur haraki* [Concept of action] means that Islamic religion is conceived of as a human phenomenon and not something coterminous with God, as in the Qur'an. It is, nevertheless, important to insist that the origin of this religious experience, or enlightenment, is not historical or this-worldly experience. As a consequence, religious duties are not governed by political prudence, or natural necessity, or the laws of social process" (1988: 200).

Muslim identity, however, escapes the container of the nation-state. Again, Qutb's humanism intervenes. It is not enough for a Muslim to be chained to the national imaginary:

The homeland of the Muslim, in which he lives and which he defends, is not a piece of land. The nationality of the Muslim, by which he is identified, is not the nationality determined by the government. The family of the Muslim, in which he finds solace and which he defends, is not blood relationships. The flag of the Muslim, which he honors and under which he is martyred, is not the flag of the country. And the victory of the Muslim, which he celebrates and for which he is thankful to Allah, is not a military victory. It is what Allah has described: "When Allah's help and victory comes, and you see people entering into the religion of Allah in multitudes, then celebrate the praises of your Lord and ask His forgiveness. Indeed, He is the Acceptor of Repentance." [*Qur'ān* 110:1–3] (Qutb, *Milestones*: 108)

Islamizing Modernity

Qutb's theory of sovereignty can be seen as a part of an integral and larger project to Islamize modernity.¹⁵ At a minimum, this project involves a "work of purification" seeking a fundamental break between the past and the present. Qutb's absolute reliance on the Qur'ān to advance the case for *Hakimiyyah* presents a mistaken image of historical introversion. In fact, key elements in Qutb's strategy suggest the opposite. His theological reconstruction involves a complete rewriting of Islamic intellectual history characterized by two key theoretical shifts: First, a departure from the traditional emphasis on jurisprudence and law; second, a new emphasis on the centrality of political power to the establishment of the City of God. In the first instance, Qutb produces an account of the history of monotheism featured by an uninterrupted clash between *Jahiliyyah* and *Hakimiyyah*. From its pure origins to the time of Christianity, God's message weakens until the advent of Islam. With the departure of the Rightly Guided Caliphs from the historical scene, the pendulum once again shifts in favor of *Jahiliyyah*. Qutb's principal target in this historical reconstruction is the Christian doctrine of Salvation. He explicitly and repeatedly rejects any notion of personal salvation. Christian theology, for Qutb, remains Islam's dialogical Other. The notion of a personal God builds a theoretical purgatory with no exit. Only *Hakimiyyah*—total commitment to the Divine with no traces of human innovation—can offer true spiritual and social harmony. Attempts by Muslim jurists to recognize the dynamic quality of social existence and the necessity of cultivating different zones of conduct are brushed aside. Qutb's iconoclastic rejection of *Fiqh* leaves the Qur'ān and the Sunnah as the only sources of true knowledge that can to anchor human action.

¹⁵ Notable scholars of Islam rehearse the view of Qutb's outright rejection of modernity. See, for instance, Sivan 1985.

A major step towards Islamizing modernity for Qutb is to read the totalizing discourse of modern sovereignty back into *Hakimiyyah*. Secularized statolatry is rejected but the state retains remarkably similar elements. The social contract becomes a Divine Compact. As mentioned, Qutb intertextually borrows key elements of Mawdudi's concept of *Hakimiyyah* (sometimes presented as "Theodemocracy") to build his own theocentric model. The monopolistic nature of modern forms of political power provides a mirror image of *Hakimiyyah*. But Qutb also collapses early modern (Hobbesian) and modern (Weberian) understandings of power and authority, respectively, in providing an Islamic Ideal and its realizable blueprint. For Qutb, theocentrism yields not a fragmented, but a unified sphere of authority dependent upon total submission to God's Will.

A major implication of Qutb's theocentric reconstruction of sovereignty is the subsumption of modernity into *Hakimiyyah*. Qutb gives no concession to Western modernity, except infrequent commendation for its scientific and technological achievement. Very swiftly, however, that achievement comes under scrutiny for its depraved, material character. Against the narrative of modernity, Qutb's conception of what he means by Islam becomes more transparent:

Islam, which is mandated to organize the totality of human life, does not attend to the diverse aspects of that life blindly or randomly, nor does it treat them as fragments or parts. This is because it has a universal, integrated concept of the physical universe, life, and humanity, from which all the divisions and detailed expositions begin and return, and to which are linked all its theories, legislation, prohibitions, rituals of worship, its social relations. All these things are founded on this universal integrated concept. Islam does not improvise an opinion for every given occasion, or treat every given problem as separate from the rest of the problems. (*Social Justice in Islam*: 28)

Qutb's meta-historical account liberates *Hakimiyyah* from temporal constraints. The relation between Islam and modernity is no longer central. Qutb offers a sustained and uncompromising critique of all modern forms of the state, from liberal democracies to Communist dictatorships. Human history, to reiterate, is ultimately a battle between *Jahiliyyah* and *Hakimiyyah*. Modernity, *sans* divine purpose, produces a universe of *Jahiliyyah*. In rejecting the primacy of the Divine in structuring social and political institutions, modernity cannot escape *Jahiliyyah*. The frailty of human reason merely becomes more pronounced in modernity. To the degree that all modern states are various shades of *secular* settlements, they are embodiments of *Jahiliyyah*. Political power cannot be produced outside relation with Divinity.

Modernity, for Qutb, is the product of a compromise between material and spiritual human drives. By contrast, Islam offers a unified view of human nature:

For the life drives cannot be suppressed in every instance, and the material necessities of life cannot be eternally conquered. Of necessity, humanity yields to the pressures of these drives most of the time. Indeed, the perpetual suppression of life's drives is not good, because Allah has created life, and he has not done so in vain, nor has he created life for humans to neglect or hinder its development. Undoubtedly, it is good for humanity to exceed its physical necessities and transcend its desire, but not to disregard life in the process. The soundest and safest way is to unleash the constitutive potentiality of human nature so that humanity can supersede the humiliating submission to its physical necessities. This is the aim of Islam when it unites the physical necessities and the passions of the spirit into a system, securing absolute individual liberty with inherent feeling and practical possibility, neglecting neither. (*Social Justice in Islam*: 35)

Qutb's rejection of 'godless' modernity also seeks to undo the philosophical premises of Western liberalism and its dualistic response to the human condition. The modern nation-state congeals this response by producing a compromise between security and liberty. Allegedly, a brutish state of nature is overcome by submission to an almighty impersonal entity which allows individual liberty to be secured. For Qutb this is a false utopia, since the modern secular state creates neither security nor individual liberty. In the first instance, statolatry removes divinity from social and political existence. The insatiable quest for material fulfillment ends up enslaving humanity. Positive and negative freedoms for Qutb are secured by submission to God alone. Once humans have accepted Divinity as the sole authority in the universe, fear no longer permeates the social body. Social harmony is the outcome. Submission to God, in turn, gives human beings true freedom, overcoming the possibility of subservience to desires of the flesh. Qutb's critique of the Western liberal settlement is also a denunciation of the notion of self-seeking.

It is misleading to read a Protestant message into Islamic reformist thought. Apart from the peril of reading a priori Christian parallels into the world of Islam, there is also the danger of distancing the temporal worlds of modernity and Islam. In the latter instance, temporal co-evalness (Fabian 1983) succumbs to a tradition/modernity dualism: the Islamic present merely replicates (albeit in its own particularity) the Christian past. Furthermore, the assumption of growing (and inevitable) disenchantment as the condition of modernity cannot be taken at face value. Modernity offers neither total rupture nor continuity. Despite these qualifications, Qutb's intervention presents familiar Protestant themes, notably the recognition of any Muslim's rational capacity to interpret the Holy Scripture and the necessity to reorganize faith in the face of the crisis of modernity.¹⁶ The confidence in individual reason, however, presupposes in Qutb's case not reconciliation between Reason and Revelation, but a Reason afforded by Revelation. The more significant aspect of Qutb's view, his acceptance of the modern condition without hermeneutic mediation, bypasses centuries of serious juridical scholarship. Without the burden and demands of institutional knowledge, a *laissez faire* approach to interpretation and exegesis endows personal faith with supreme status. Qutb's rejection of personal salvation does not necessarily imply rejection of an individual's spiritual right to interpretation.¹⁷

Spiritual egalitarianism in the case of Islam is clearly contextual. With the decline of traditional religious authority, particularly during the phase of European colonial expansion into the Muslim heartlands, but also preceded by persistent

¹⁶ According to Binder (1988: 200), Qutb's "arguments remind one of some elements of contemporary Protestant theology, especially those that are unconcerned with the question of the literal truth of revelation and more concerned with the moral phenomenology of the scriptural message."

¹⁷ March (2010: 191) reads Qutb within a broader reformist tradition: "His work represents some of the most elaborate and sophisticated expressions of Salafi Reformist themes. These include Islamic renewal and authenticity, the purification of religion of arbitrary practices (certain Sufisms, excessive legal formalism, customary habits), a direct encounter with the texts and practices of the revelatory period, the rationalization of Islamic legal and political thought for application within the political-institutional conditions of modernity, the relevance of Islam for action and material life, and, perhaps most important, the natural religion doctrine."

assaults on the *ulema* by political rulers in pursuit of greater power, a vast frontier for equal opportunity in interpretation opened up. Facilitated by print capitalism and the advent of modern communication, religious knowledge production entered the realm of market exchange, dethroning traditional intellectuals. The supposed democratization of the Islamic public sphere, however, has also produced deterritorialized forms of knowledge and communication. Qutb's heavy reliance on Mawdudi becomes more explicable in this context. The crisis of modernity from the vantage point of modern "translators" plays out in the twin registers of Muslim internal decadence and Western arrogance. Deviation from the straight path under new conditions of stress and strain could only result in Muslim paralysis.

Conclusion

The focus on political power for Qutb is not one of several key aspects of building an Islamic order; it is *the* main goal. Paradoxically, it is not Faith that propels Qutb's theory, but a deeply politicized Faith. Without a modernist reading of sovereignty, one in which political power assumes a central role, Qutb's political theory is not possible. Over the course of Qutb's career, one marked by an extended period in prison under Nasser's authoritarian regime, *Hakimiyyah* acquires greater salience. His early interest in social justice metamorphoses into a theory of sovereignty. Only *Hakimiyyah*, for Qutb, can create social justice. Qutb's modernist reworking of sovereignty into *Hakimiyyah*, however, presents important contrasts. Modern sovereignty is typically based on an isomorphic relation between territory and identity crystallized in the nation-state. For Qutb, *Hakimiyyah* knows no borders. Deterritorialized, Qutb's settlement gives unlimited scope.

Qutb's autonomous Islamic system presents several challenges to established understandings of Islam's relation to modernity. Unlike the apologetic rationales of key Islamic reformers seeking accommodation to Western modernity, Qutb offers an alternative mapping. In the first instance, he produces a different 'standard of civilization' to give Muslims not merely resources for cultural defence against foreign encroachment, but a moral compass. The West (notably America) is "abysmally primitive in the world of senses, feelings and behavior" (*The America I Have Seen* 2000b: 11). Qutb appears more charitable in his diagnoses of Muslim society. Lacking in spirituality and moral capacity, the Western civilizational project rests precariously upon material foundations—"fruits of the creative genius of Europe" (*Milestones*, 6). With the establishment of *Hakimiyyah*, "Islam is the only system that possesses" the values to harmonize nature and humanity (*ibid.*). In this vein, he rejects the false dichotomy between the material world and Spirit.

The main objective for Qutb is the creation of *Hakimiyyah*, both to restore a fractured Muslim identity and to establish Islamic government. Qutb remains uninterested in producing hybrid variants of an Islamic system (*nizam*). Modernity has the potential to produce hybridity. Qutb's theory of sovereignty relies on purification. Yet, his attempts to purify Islamic social and intellectual history can only succeed by modernizing the concept of sovereignty. Striking parallels exist

between Qutb's design and erstwhile Protestant impulses within Christianity. However, Qutb deprivatizes Faith, insisting on submission only to Allah. There are no separate domains or separate principles to structure them. Rather, human existence is a unified geometrical arrangement permeated by Divinity. Qutb's solution to the materialization of a transcendent order ends up producing an Immanentist framework. The latter is essentially a modernist alternative.

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Part II

Repositioning Texts

Chapter 6

Classical Scholarship and Arab Modernity

Peter E. Pormann

Summary Any treatment of Islamic ‘classics’ and their modernization must start by rejecting the stereotyped dichotomy of ‘traditionalists’ (or ‘fundamentalists’) and ‘modernizers’. Twentieth-century conceptions of the Qur’ān and its authority were influenced by globalized modern ideas of ‘scripture’; and Egyptian scholars who had studied (Western) ‘classics’ in Western universities did not see them as alien, but wanted to re-root the study of Greco-Roman Egypt in their own country and globalize ‘classical philology’ by applying it to Arabic texts.

The Arabo-Islamic civilization had strong ties to the Graeco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian ones from its inception. The many links in the areas of philosophy, theology, medicine, science, mathematics, and even poetry have been well documented.¹ Likewise, the classical heritage exerted a profound influence on Arab authors in modern times.² A hitherto unexplored subject is the impact that classical scholarship had on Arab modernity. It is this particular topic that I propose to address in the present contribution. Before doing so, it is necessary to discuss the two terms ‘classical scholarship’ and ‘Arab modernity’ in this introductory section, beginning with the latter.

“Modernity” (*ḥadāṭa*) is a very fraught term in Arabic. For many, it represents the Western civilisation that fundamentalists argue is contrary to the values of Islam.³ Just as Europe, the Arabic and Islamic world witnessed many debates about the “old” (*qadīm*) versus the “new” (*ḡadīd*). One might think that traditionalists would favour the old over the new. Yet a closer study of fundamentalist movements reveals

¹ The authoritative treatment of this subject is Gutas 1997; recent literature includes Tamer 2008; van Gelder and Hammond eds. 2008, especially pp. ix-xv; and Pormann ed., 2012.

² See, for instance, Pormann 2007 and 2013.

³ See, for instance, the recent Atif Ahmad 2009.

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quite a different picture. For instance, ‘Salafism’ aims at emulating the ancestors (*as-salaf*) of the time of the prophet; it is closely linked to Wahhabism, dominant in Saudi Arabia, whence it gained popularity in many parts of the Gulf and beyond. Despite the appeal of Salafism, a short stop in the countries of the Gulf will indubitably show that Western modernity penetrates even the most outwardly traditional Arab societies. The streets of Dubai or Jeddah teem with the latest cars, and the most modern goods fill the shopping centres’ shelves. Even a little bit of surfing through the numerous satellite channels produced in the Arab world (such as Rotana⁴) will reveal performers who are so scantily clad that they can easily rival their American colleagues in the amount of flesh on display.

The accommodation of Salafism with modernity is therefore readily visible. The Islamic fundamentalist movements of the twentieth centuries, however, not only manage to negotiate an uneasy relationship with modern inventions, but owe their very existence more to modernity than to a traditional past.⁵ Mustapha Pasha shows in this volume that Sayyid Qutb, the leading figure in the Muslim brotherhood during the 1950s and 1960s, developed a theory of sovereignty that draws heavily on modern political concepts.⁶ Towards the end of this article, we shall come back to the (indirect) debt that Salafism owes to nineteenth-century classical scholarship; this therefore confirms the modern character of this fundamentalist ideology. Leaving the topic of modernity aside for a moment, it is important to distinguish between the Arabo-Islamic and the Graeco-Roman classics. To be sure, for the Salafis, the “pious ancestors” represent in one sense classical models: they are authoritative figures whose example they want to follow. Yet for the present purposes, the term classical refers to the Graeco-Roman past; this choice is practical rather than ideological, and should not be construed as an attempt to deny the value or influence of the ancient Arabic sources. We are mainly concerned here with the question how classical scholarship—in the sense of studies of Graeco-Roman history, literature, and thought—time and again influenced debates about Arab and Muslim identity. It would be interesting to investigate how the constant reference to the Graeco-Roman ‘classics’ in Europe compares with that to the Salaf in an Arabo-Islamic context; however, this question lies outside the scope of the present investigation. Moreover, we will mention some Arab intellectuals who called on their compatriots to embrace, and engage with, the Graeco-Roman heritage. And yet, the reader should bear in mind that these examples are only tangential to the main argument about the impact of classical studies on Arab modernity.

The developments described here occurred against the background of a struggle against the colonial overlords.⁷ Intellectuals could find themselves at opposing ends

⁴ <http://www.rotana.net/>. Accessed on Jan. 20, 2012.

⁵ Abou El Fadl 2001; Kepel 2006, with further literature.

⁶ Mustapha Pasha, “Modernity’s Islamicist: Sayyid Qutb’s Theocentric Reconstruction of Sovereignty,” above.

⁷ Gelvin 2005; more specifically, Mitchell 1991.

of a debate about the influence of Greek culture or the importance of classical studies. They were united, however, in their aim to throw off the yoke of oppression. In these debates about how to achieve independence, classical studies occupied a prominent place. In a first part, we shall discuss the role of papyrology in the context of early twentieth-century Egypt; this classical sub-discipline became the battleground between colonists and colonized. We shall then turn to three controversies about the interpretations of ‘classical’ texts from the 1920s, 1960s, and 1990s. Again, at these crucial times, classical scholarship occupied a prominent place in arguments about the Arabic and Islamic heritage and its relation to modernity. Finally, the example of the ambiguity of a canonical religious text, the Koran, will illustrate that the methods of nineteenth-century philology not only influenced the advocates of classical studies in the Arab world, but also the Salafists. Despite their considerable ideological differences, they inhabited a shared epistemic space that conditioned their thought.

The Hegemony of Knowledge

Already in the Renaissance, certain humanists developed a rhetoric of saving the Greeks and Romans from the Arab and Muslim barbarians (Pormann 2004). According to physicians such as Symphorien Champier (1472–1538 or 1539) and Leonard Fuchs (1501–1566), Arabs and Muslims had corrupted and distorted the Greek sources; and they added insult to injury by favouring what Guillaume Postel (1510–1581) called “Muḥammad’s trumpery” (*nugae Mahometis*) and “this plague” (*haec pestis*), namely the religion of Islam (Postel 1538, sig. D_{II}r.). The rejection of “Arabism” and “Mahometism” went hand in hand. Renaissance scholars thus arrogated to themselves the right to edit and interpret Greek and Latin learning to the exclusion of the proverbial Other, the Arabs and Muslims. Ironically, this happened at a time when Gemistus Pletho (1360–1452), the Greek Renaissance scholar, was translated into Arabic at the Ottoman court (Akasoy 2003a, b). Pletho played a central role in the promotion of Greek in Italy, notably helping to set up the new Platonic Academy together with Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499). This movement to study Greek and edit Greek texts led to the sidelining of the Arabic heritage, although Pletho’s *Laws* (*Nómoi*) were translated into Arabic and read in Arabic at that time.

This tendency to make the Greeks ‘our Greeks’—to lay claim to them for Europe—continued during the Enlightenment and beyond. Voltaire, for instance, saw in the victory of the Greeks over the Persians the defining moment in European history: only because Greek thought survived the centuries did Europe take on its superior shape and character.⁸ In the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, this discourse continued in various European countries. This is particularly illustrated by the example of papyrology. Egypt’s sand contained and probably still

⁸ Voltaire 1778: 445, n. 1; see Strohmaier 1998: 198.

contains important collections of discarded papyri preserving otherwise lost Greek literary and philosophical works (Parsons 2007). Particularly spectacular finds include Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution* (1879 and 1889), *Bacchylides* (1896), Sophocles' *Trackers* (*Ichneutai* 1907), and Menander's *Misanthrope* (*Dýskolos* 1957). The papyri containing these Greek texts are now all in Western libraries. In the rhetoric of the time, they had to be saved from the "natives" culpable of "intolerant ignorance" and "restored to us."⁹ In this sense, the literature of the Greeks allegedly belonged much more to the English than to the modern Egyptians whose ancestors had copied it some fifteen centuries earlier.

Yet, the European researchers did not always protect the antiquarian treasures that they claimed to cherish. David Fearn, for example, has shown that in the case of the famous Bacchylides papyrus, the mutilations are largely due to "Western" and not "Oriental" influence.¹⁰ Fearn explains that Sir Ernest A. W. Budge (1857–1934), the English Orientalist in the service of the British Museum, had been offered an important papyrus containing a Greek lyrical poet during one of his numerous treasure hunts in the Middle East.¹¹ This happened in November 1896, and Budge cunningly (as he himself describes it) negotiated a price with the local dealer. But the story does not end there; at the time it was illegal to take such antiquarian items out of the country. He therefore cut it up, hid it between some photographs, and smuggled it past the border by cleverly deceiving the native custom inspectors. For all intents and purposes, Budge purloined the papyrus. But Budge and his compatriots easily justified such an act on the grounds that the Greek work really belonged to them, not to the Egyptians, the ignorant natives who had neglected it for too long.

British imperialist ambitions were partly justified by a sense of cultural superiority, a superiority which itself derives from a close contact with the Greek and Roman classics. As Voltaire had said, European superiority originated (if symbolically) in the Greek victory over the Persians at Salamis. Two basic positions of resistance to such discourses of the colonizer are open to the colonized: to lay claim to the same Greek heritage in order to construct an identity equal to that of the Europeans; or to reject the premise that Greek culture is necessary for great achievement whilst at the same time valorizing one's own intellectual legacy. Both these theoretical positions were also realized in practice, but not always, to be sure, in such a clear-cut and stereotypical manner.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889–1973), the most influential Egyptian intellectual of the twentieth century, illustrates the first position particularly well.¹² After a very traditional Islamic education, Ḥusayn studied both at the newly founded secular University of Cairo and at the Nouvelle Sorbonne in Paris, obtaining doctorates

⁹ Quotations from *The Times* and a letter by Frederic George Kenyon (1863–1952); see Fearn 2010.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ These journeys are detailed in Budge 1920.

¹² On Ṭāhā Ḥusayn in general, see his autobiography Hussein 1997; on his education, Mahmoudi 1998.

from both institutions. He began his university career by teaching ancient history at Cairo University in 1919; shortly afterwards (1921), he published his Arabic rendering of Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution* (᾿Αθηναίων πολιτεία), one of the texts mentioned above that were found on papyrus in Egypt. In the preface, Ḥusayn expresses his embarrassment:

I learnt about this book, which I present today to the readers of Arabic, by accident in Paris: one of our professors at the Sorbonne assigned it to us. When I returned [to Egypt], I found out that it had been discovered in Egypt in the year 1891.¹³ Then it was transferred [*nuqila*] to the British Museum in London. Then a facsimile of it was published. Then it was printed in London, Paris, Berlin, and other modern European cities. Then it was translated into English, French, German, Italian, and other modern languages. Then it was the object of criticism and commentary in all these languages. Then it was studied in the universities of Europe. Then European historians benefitted from it. Then they corrected the errors in the history of Athens and filled in the gaps. Then thirty years passed without the Egyptians knowing anything about it.

When I was teaching Greek history at the University [of Cairo], I had taken it upon myself to explain to the students from time to time certain primary sources in ancient history, so that they could get used to reading historical works critically, and benefit from them. In this year, I decided on this book. Yet I could not begin with this course without being overcome by shame [*al-ḥaḡal*]: I would explain a book found in Egypt, but read its French or English translation, since reading the Greek source is neither easy nor beneficial, as none of the students had taken the trouble [to learn] this language. So why should I not explain it in Arabic translation, given that the misfortune has befallen us not to care for the ancient languages, and not to pay close attention to their study. After all, I owe Egypt this translation, since I did not study just to benefit myself by what I had learnt. For it is the right of each Egyptian to deploy the power he possesses to reform [*li-ʿiṣlāḥ*] the corruption [*al-fasād*] that has attained Egypt. (Ḥusayn 1921: 281–2)

Therefore we see that for Ḥusayn, the fact that this papyrus, although written and found in Egypt was first read, edited, and translated in England had a bitter aftertaste. The papyrus was lost in two ways, physically and culturally: the physical object had been taken to the British Museum, and the ideas about democracy that it contained had also been lost on the Egyptians, something which he wanted to change by translating this text.

But Ṭāḥā Ḥusayn did not only aim at making the ideas of Aristotle known to his compatriots. Rather, he believed that they could only achieve true intellectual independence and cultural manumission through the mastery of the classical languages. For, as he argued in his influential work *The Future of Culture in Egypt*, only when Egyptians have a full command over Greek and Latin will they be able to write their own history.¹⁴ After all, many sources from Egypt's past were written in these two languages. In this way, Ṭāḥā Ḥusayn became a keen supporter of the classical languages. Yet he encountered opposition to his idea to teach Latin

¹³ F. G. Kenyon stated that he found the most important papyrus fragment in January 1890 when he went through the papyrus rolls recently brought back from Egypt, so technically the papyrus must have been found in 1889; see Kenyon 1920, iii: "Anno enim p. C. mdccxc et mense Ianuario mihi contigit inter rotulos papyraceos nuper in Museum Britannicum ex Aegypto allatos textum operis Aristotelici fere totum agnoscere."

¹⁴ Ṭāḥā Ḥusayn, 1938 (Ḥusayn 1954). The relevant chapters are 34 and 35.

and Greek in school and university not only from his countrymen, who deemed these languages unimportant, but also from the foreign professors employed at Cairo University. Some of them (of a left-wing persuasion) associated these languages with the forces of reaction, whereas others (in a more imperialist mindset) believed the Egyptians not to be ready for their study.

The battle over the fate of Classics which raged during the 1920s and 1930s was ultimately won by Ḥusayn, as the subject is now firmly established in Egyptian academia (‘Etmān 1995). One of its most prominent exponents, ‘Aḥmad ‘Etmān, also dealt with Ḥusayn’s struggle to establish the discipline in a play entitled *The Goats of Oxyrhynchus* (*Ma‘īz al-Bahnasā*); see Almohanna 2010. It is a clever engagement with both Sophocles’ satyr play *The Trackers* (*Ichneutai*) and Tony Harrison’s play *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus* (1990). Bernard P. Grenfell (1869–1926; Bell 2004a) and Arthur S. Hunt (1871–1934; Bell 2004b), the two Oxford classicists who are rightly regarded as the founders of modern papyrology, discovered important fragments of the *Ichneutai* in the sands of Egypt. Harrison uses this historical event to construct his play, thus drawing both on Sophocles’ satyr play and on the historical circumstances surrounding its discovery. ‘Etmān in turn links Ṭāhā Ḥusayn’s struggle to establish a department of Greek and Latin at Cairo university with Grenfell and Hunt’s discovery of the Sophocles papyri. ‘Etmān’s play opens with a scene in which Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and his European colleagues Enno Littmann (1875–1958) and Alfonso Nallino (1872–1938) discuss the usefulness, desirability, and feasibility of teaching Latin and Greek at Cairo University. Both Nallino and Littmann make the point that Cairo University is not ready for Latin and Greek, as the Egyptians hardly know anything about their classical past (‘Etmān 2000, 13; see Almohanna 2010). In the next scene, the same three professors discuss excavations in Oxyrhynchus, to which the action now shifts. From now on, Grenfell and Hunt’s search for papyri occurs parallel to the search for some stolen goats. It is in these parts that Tony Harrison’s influence is most strongly felt, although ‘Etmān obviously approaches the subject quite differently from his English predecessor.¹⁵ Suffice it to say that the Egyptian ‘Etmān portrays the English papyrologists somewhat more sympathetically than did the English Harrison. In both Harrison’s and ‘Etmān’s plays, however, Grenfell and Hunt take an interest in the ‘natives’ mostly as a source for ancient ritual. For the Egyptian classicist hailing from upper Egypt (‘Etmān), the last point acquires additional meaning: towards the end of the play, it emerges that the ritual of the poor peasants still continues, in refracted form, the ancient Greek one.

Be that as it may, this short discussion of papyrology in Egypt illustrates an important aspect of the role that classics played in the struggle between colonizer and colonized. The Budes and Kenyons of the British Empire justified the pillage of papyri and other antiquities by their superior knowledge of the classics. Although much more remote in spatial terms from the lands of the Greeks, European imperialists saw themselves time and again as their heirs apparent. Conversely, as

¹⁵ See Almohanna 2010 for a detailed discussion.

the short passage from Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's preface cited above shows, he accepted the fundamental premise that Europeans had superior knowledge of Greek and Latin. For him, the way to independence led through the acquisition of these languages; put differently, he wanted to catch up with the Europeans. Moreover, Egyptians and Europeans shared in the same classical tradition. Just as the Europeans had turned back to effect a rebirth of their own culture during the Renaissance, so the Arabs ought to return to the Greeks and Romans to bring about their own *Nahḍa* or "awakening" (Pormann 2006). It is perhaps because Ḥusayn succeeded in establishing Classics as an academic subject in Egypt that ʿEtmān portrayed Grenfell and Hunt in a somewhat more favourable light than Harrison. But ʿEtmān also shows that the Egyptians have a double claim to the Greek heritage: insofar as their native soil preserved the texts, but also as their native custom perpetuates the traditions described in these texts.

In two ways, therefore, things have profoundly changed. First, compared with the imperial heyday of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Classics has lost much of its former centrality and prominence in the West: for instance, the majority of the civil servants in London and Lucknow have no longer read 'Greats'. It is partly for this reason that Classics departments close in England, whereas they open in Egypt. And this is the second point: whilst Egyptians largely depended on 'foreigners' (that is to say, European scholars) to interpret their own classical history at the turn of the twentieth century, they now produce highly influential academic works in this area.¹⁶ The Egyptian classicists, therefore, successfully pursued a strategy of catching up with the Europeans in Greek and Latin studies. They also argued for a pan-Mediterranean culture that encompassed the shores of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Many of Ḥusayn's contemporaries, however, did not share in his enthusiasm for either the classics or European scholarship. Like Ḥusayn, they loathed the colonial control over Egypt; yet they strove to struggle against it by reasserting the traditional values of their own Arabic and Islamic culture. However, this struggle over the place of classics within Egyptian culture and academia was by no means uncontroversial. At two points during the twentieth century the clash over the classics took on a particularly virulent form, and it is to this debate that we now turn.

Ancient Greeks and Modern Arabs: A Shared Heritage

Three 'affairs' illustrate the central role that classics in particular, and modern literary criticism in general occupied in the shaping of Arab modernity. The first took place in the mid-1920s around the nature of pre-Islamic poetry; the second in

¹⁶ A case in point is El-Abbadi 1990, in which he draws on Latin, Greek and Arabic sources to reconstruct the history of the famous Alexandrian Library. Moreover, Muḥammad Salīm Sālim, a classicist from Alexandria University, edited a number of medieval Arabic translations that Ḥunayn ibn ʿIshāq and his circle produced for fundamental works by Galen; see Sālim ed., 1977, 1985, 1986, 1988.

the mid-1960s around the nature of a revered classical Arab author of prose and poetry; and finally the third in the early 1990s about the question whether the Koran is a text in a historical context.

We have already encountered Ṭāhā Ḥusayn as an eager student in Paris who is introduced to Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution* for the first time there. He also learnt the methods of classical scholarship, and notably historical criticism. In the academic year of 1925–1926, he applied what he had learnt in Paris to some of the most celebrated works of Arabic literature, the so-called Pre-Islamic or *ghāhili* poetry.¹⁷ Put succinctly, he argued that the Pre-Islamic poetry was actually a forgery of later, Islamic times (that is, after 622 C.E.). As Pre-Islamic poetry was and still is highly esteemed in most Arab countries, this constituted an affront to many lovers of Arab literature. But it also had a significant implication for the interpretation of the Koran, since eighth-century commentators such as aṭ-Ṭabarī frequently quoted Pre-Islamic poetry to support their interpretation of a certain passage, or word (McAuliffe 1988). Without these witnesses [*šawāhid*], many explanations which later acquired widespread acceptance would be called into question. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn formulated his ideas very much in terms of old [*qadīm*] and new [*ḡadīd*]. According to him, modern scholarly methods need to be applied to the ancient Arabic sources just as modern European scholars applied new methods to the Greek and Latin classics; Ḥusayn mentioned the examples of Homer and Livy.¹⁸ To modernize is to apply radical doubt to time-honoured truths, so to speak.

At the end of the academic year 1925–1926, Ḥusayn published his lectures and thus caused a massive wave of criticism from both nationalists (who saw the Arab heritages vilified) and Muslim clerics (who rejected the religious implications of Ḥusayn's conclusions). One of Ḥusayn's fiercest critics objected to his work on both religious and nationalist grounds, namely Muṣṭafā Šādiq ar-Rāfi'ī, a conservative literary scholar (1880–1937).¹⁹ Ar-Rāfi'ī did not accept Ḥusayn's dichotomy between “old” and “new,” as he explained in his seminal work *Under the Banner of the Qur'ān: the Struggle between the Old and the New*, first published in the same year as Ḥusayn's *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* (1926). There he stated:

If they mean by “the new school [*al-madḥab al-ḡadīd*]” scholarship [*al-'ilm*], verification, clarification of opinion, and invention in meaning [*al-'ibdā' fī l-ma'nā*], provided that the language remains based on its foundations [*alā 'uṣūlihā*] . . . then we do not reject any of this, nor do we contest it, but it is rather our opinion [*ra'yunā*], it is the opinion of life, it is the law of nature [*qānūn aṭ-ṭabī'a*]. Yet we add to this that the foundation [*al-'aṣl*] in all this is that the language remains intact [*salāmat al-luḡa*], and nationalism remains intact [*salāmat al-qawmīya*]. We only consider the opinions of [other] nations on the basis that we are orientals [*šarqīyūn*], we only translate from the languages of the Europeans [*min luḡāt al-'Ifranḡ*] on the basis that we are the people of a language that has its specificities [. . .]. (ar-Rāfi'ī 1926: xx).

¹⁷ Ḥusayn 1926. Ḥusayn himself revised the book and published it the following year under a slightly different title (Ḥusayn 1927). A summary of Ḥusayn's arguments can be found in Arberry 1957: 228–5.

¹⁸ Ḥusayn 1926: 45–6 (1996: 83–4).

¹⁹ For a very sympathetic account of ar-Rāfi'ī's life, see Sa'īd al-'Iryān 1955.

In this way, ar-Rāfi‘ī embraces a certain modernity, one built on tradition and preserving cultural specificities. The word translated here as “foundation” is *ʿaṣl* in Arabic, plural *ʿuṣūl*, from which the term “fundamentalist [*ʿuṣūlī*]” is derived. And yet, ar-Rāfi‘ī’s modernity remains extremely conservative: the two pillars of his worldview are the Koran and the pure Arabic tongue [*al-ʿArabīya al-Fuṣṣḩā*].

Ḥusayn claims to apply radical doubt [*ṣakk mutḩlaq*] to historical sources. He sees himself as following René Descartes in this approach, but also refers to European classical scholarship. He attempts to achieve modernity by applying the latest scholarly techniques to a traditional set of sources. Traditionalists such as ar-Rāfi‘ī take great offence at the implications of Ḥusayn’s conclusions. We shall return to Ḥusayn’s own bias in his work *On Ancient Poetry* in the third part of the present contribution, and show that Ḥusayn and his critics both distort the historical evidence to create a very similar theory about the text of the Koran. For now, let us turn to the second affair in which classical scholarship played a major role.

A pupil of Ḥusayn, one of Egypt’s most influential literary critics, Louis ʿAwaḩ, stirred up a controversy similar to that provoked by his teacher.²⁰ He used the methods of comparative literature to explain and interpret a famous work of Arabic literature, the *Epistle of Forgiveness* (*Risālat al-Ġufrān*) by ʿAbū ʿAlā al-Maʿarrī (973–1058). Like Ḥusayn, ʿAwaḩ had studied first at Cairo University; then he moved to Cambridge, and later Princeton, where he obtained a doctorate in comparative literature with a thesis on the Prometheus myth (1953). In a series of articles that first appeared in 1965 and were published as a book in 1966, ʿAwaḩ argued that a number of themes and subjects in the *Epistle of Forgiveness* actually go back to Greek sources such as the *Odyssey* and Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, since in all these works, there is a *katābasis*, a descent into the underworld. He wondered how al-Maʿarrī, who lived in Syria, could have had access to these texts, and one of the possibilities he mooted was the many Christian monasteries that existed there.

Maḩmūd Muḩammad Ṣākīr (1909–1997), a prominent Egyptian intellectual, became the most vocal critic of Louis ʿAwaḩ. In a number of articles, later published in form of a book entitled *Idle Chatter and Nightly Prattle* (*ʿAbāṩil wa-ʿAsmār* 1972), he inveighed against ʿAwaḩ. He attacked ʿAwaḩ for not quoting his sources correctly and not having a good grasp of Greek—and both these criticisms have some merit. But he also reveals his true colours when he takes objection to ʿAwaḩ’s alleged scorn for the Arabic language and Muslim religion. In his writings, ʿAwaḩ was given to using similes based on Greek mythology. Ṣākīr was shocked by the polytheistic implications that these involve. Moreover, he did not want to admit adulteration to the pure Arabic language through Greek influence.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn applied the methods of modern philology and historical criticism to Arabic sources, whereas Louis ʿAwaḩ approached an Arabic text with the tools of comparative literature that he had acquired in Princeton. Each of them used scholarly techniques that enjoyed great prominence and popularity in Western

²⁰ A brief sketch of ʿAwaḩ’s life and literary output can be found in Donohue and Tramontini eds. 2004, i. 153–9.

universities of the time. And although their methodologies differ, they both compare Greek literature to Arabic literature. Ḥusayn drew parallels between Homeric and Pre-Islamic poetry, notably as regards orality and transmission; in this, he was undoubtedly inspired by Sulaymān al-Bustānī, the Arab translator of the *Iliad*. ‘Awaḍ saw common themes, subjects, and myths in Greek and Arabic works. The two critics of Ḥusayn and ‘Awaḍ did not reject modernity as such. Ar-Rāfi‘ī even talks about linguistic “innovation” (*‘ibdā’*), a word with clearly negative overtones in a religious context, as *bid‘a* came to mean “heresy.” Yet ar-Rāfi‘ī and Šākīr reject the idea that Greek heritage played a decisive role in the development of the Arabo-Islamic civilization; consequently they see a fascination with all things Greek as it existed in the case of Ḥusayn and ‘Awaḍ simply as “Westernization,” (*tağrīb*), as an attempt to pander to Europe and blindly imitate it.

The third affair, the case of Naṣr Ḥāmid ‘Abū Zayd (1943–2010), is slightly different as it does not focus mainly on Greek influence or classical scholarship.²¹ ‘Abū Zayd was a professor of Arabic at Cairo University. In the early 90s he applied for promotion, which he was denied because of controversy around his ideas about the Koran. As in the case of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, which was often cited as a parallel, ‘Abū Zayd was dragged before the court; but unlike the former, he was convicted of apostasy and forcibly divorced from his wife. He fled to Leiden University, and lived in the Netherlands until his untimely death in July 2010. ‘Abū Zayd’s main contention is that the Koran is a text revealed in a historical context whose message is conditioned by this context. ‘Abū Zayd notably applied certain methods of modern hermeneutics to the Koran. For anybody familiar with traditional Koranic exegesis, ‘Abū Zayd’s basic points appears trivial at first glance, as there is a whole branch of traditional Koranic studies dealing with *‘asbāb an-nuzūl*, the circumstances in which the Koran was revealed. Even the Koran itself distinguishes between Meccan and Medinian sūrahs, that is, those revealed in Mecca or Medina.

For instance, in his book *The Concept ‘Text’: A Study in Koranic Studies (Maḥūm an-naṣṣ: Dirāsa fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, 1990; see also Sukidi 2009), ‘Abū Zayd explains his idea that the Koran is a text revealed in a context. He defends it by drawing on the traditional Koranic exegesis just mentioned (such as *‘asbāb an-nuzūl*). He distinguishes between two different approaches. The first is that of the Salafists who consider the Koran to be an absolute text to be applied to an absolute reality [*taṭbīq “naṣṣ” muṭlaq ‘alā “wāqī” muṭlaq*] (*ibid.*, p. 15). But by claiming that the Koran is absolute, they deny, ‘Abū Zayd argues, the revelation of the Koran [*waḥy al-Qur’ān*]. In other words: why would the Koran itself contain sūrahs revealed in Mecca and Medina, if the circumstances of revelation did not, and do not, matter? Nor is the reality as it existed during the days of the Prophet Muḥammad ahistorical. For instance, the power politics of the time had a direct influence on the Prophet’s life. Therefore one should not neglect to study them. For ‘Abū Zayd, the second group consists of those blindly championing modernization [*tağdīd*]: they simply deny that the message of the Koran, a text more than

²¹ His main works available in English are Abū Zaid 2004 and 2006.

13 centuries old, still applies. But they, too, like the Salafists, make a crucial mistake by seeing the Koran implicitly as an absolute text. Whilst the former claim that the same ahistorical and immutable truth still applies today, the latter argue that it only, if ever, applied to the historic period in which it originated, but no longer possesses any relevance today. 'Abū Zayd endeavours to avoid this dichotomy between Salafists and modernists by seeing the Koran as a text in a context. He can thus reinterpret it, and thereby, the Koran gains a new meaning and new relevance. Moreover, each generation is thus able to reengage with the divine text; this process of engagement and interpretation began immediately after the original revelation and ought to continue today.

This brings us to our final point, the concept of ambiguity in the Koranic text, which made both progressive intellectuals and Salafists uneasy. Their search for univocality, again rooted in classical scholarship, unites them, as we shall now see.

The Koran in Traditional and Modern Perspectives

Following on from Cartesian philosophy, and the scientism of the Enlightenment, positivism came to dominate much of nineteenth-century academic discourse.²² Scholars became increasingly confident that they would be able to define the world around them by describing it in great detail. Classical and biblical scholars in particular developed the tools of textual criticism to reconstruct the pure archetypes of past texts.²³ The general idea was the following: the author produced an unambiguous text which could be reconstructed through recourse to the methods of philology and textual criticism. In this way, the new tools would lead to a new text that is (ideally) identical with that in front of the author more than two millennia ago.

But the search for the original text also led scholars to discern redactional layers in their ancient sources. In the biblical book of Genesis, for instance, German theologians such as Heinrich Ewald (1803–1875) could distinguish the “Elohist” from the “Jahwist,” because of the use of the Hebrew word for god (*ʿelōhīm* אֱלֹהִים) instead of God’s name (Yahweh יהוה).²⁴ In a similar vein, Friedrich A. Wolf (1759–1824) distinguished different layers in the Homeric works under the

²² In the following, I draw on Thomas Bauer’s work on “ambiguity;” see Bauer 2006, and Chap. 3, entitled “Spricht Gott mit Varianten?” of Bauer 2011. I would like to thank Professor Bauer for kindly emailing me an advance copy of this chapter.

²³ This method of finding an archetype through textual criticism is famously associated with the German philologist Karl K. F. W. Lachmann (1793–1851); see Timpanaro 1963.

²⁴ See, for instance, Ewald’s influential review of Stähelin 1830 (Ewald 1831). He begins with the programmatic statement: “Die Untersuchung über den Ursprung und die Quelle der Genesis ist, ähnlich der Untersuchung über die Entstehung und Quellen der Evangelien, eine der schwersten und höchsten, welche die biblische Kritik in ihr Gebiet ziehen muss.” (The investigation of the origin and source of Genesis is, like the investigation of the formation and sources of the gospels, one of the most difficult and most important that biblical criticism ought to consider within its purview.)

influence of theological studies.²⁵ But even in the case of these complicated textual traditions, the nineteenth-century scholars searched for the original source, the Urquelle, which their sophisticated methodology promised to reveal.²⁶

It is strange, at least at first glance, that both twentieth-century Arab modernists such as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, and traditionalists such as Ibn ‘Uṭaymīn (1929–2001) adopted many of the underlying assumptions of nineteenth-century classical scholarship. For as we shall see, both have the ideal of an unambiguous Koran and abhor the notion that it could be ambiguous either in its text or its meaning. In this they differ considerably from the general medieval Muslim view about the text of the Koran.²⁷ One of the most famous and most prominent authorities on this subject, Ibn al-Ġazarī (1350–1429), for instance, held that the Koran was transmitted in an ambiguous textual state containing many variant readings; and that this was a positive feature to be celebrated rather than criticized. In other words, the medieval notion of the Koranic text is much closer to post-modern literary criticism than the ideas of either Ḥusayn or Ibn ‘Uṭaymīn.

Let us first look at medieval Koranic exegesis, both as a counterpoint to twentieth-century interpretation and a necessary background to understanding the latter (see Gilliot 2002). Because of his fame and influence, Ibn al-Ġazarī’s (A.H. 1345) *An-Naṣr fī l-qirā’āt al-‘aṣr* (*Publication about the Ten Readings*) can serve as our guide to medieval ideas about the state of the Koranic text. The Koran was successively revealed over the last 20 years or so of the prophet’s life. Importantly, this revelation was an oral one: the archangel Gabriel recited different sūrahs at different times. Whilst the Prophet was still among them, some of his companions learnt these sūrahs by heart, and thus preserved them for posterity. Even during Muḥammad’s lifetime, different readers [*qurrā’*] recited the full Koran more than once. They transmitted their versions largely orally to their pupils, so that chains of transmission from Muḥammad’s to Ibn al-Ġazarī’s day exist.²⁸ The Koran was also written down, first under the auspices of the first rightly guided caliph ‘Abū Bakr (reg. 632–4), and then under the third one ‘Uṭmān (reg. 644–55). These early texts only contained the *rasm*, that is, the ‘skeleton’ text without the diacritical marks distinguishing between *bā’*, *tā’*, *ṭā’*, and *nūn*; *ġīm*, *ḥā’*, and *ḥā’*; *dāl* and *ḍāl*; *sīn* and *šīn*; *ṣād* and *ḍād*; and *ṭā’* and *zā’*; furthermore, this text lacked the vowel signs for a, ā, i, u, and so on. This illustrates that the oral text still had priority over the written one. Moreover, this ‘skeleton’ text was a deliberate choice on the part of the scribes; diacritical marks had long been invented, as we know from inscriptions. Its very ambiguity was a blessing as it accommodated many different

²⁵ Wolf 1795. Obviously Wolf’s view is more complicated than this short summary would suggest.

²⁶ Obviously, the history of classical as well as biblical scholarship in the nineteenth century is much more complicated. In the latter, to give just one example, Protestant and Catholic exegetes constructed quite different traditions. See further Thouard, Vollhardt, and Zini eds. 2010.

²⁷ For a more general survey, see Ali al-Imam 1998.

²⁸ His major work, Ibn al-Ġazarī n.d., is a collection of biographies of famous readers, and includes detailed information about such chains of transmission.

readings of the same text. Then, over the centuries, a new discipline in Koranic studies developed, the “science of variant readings” [*‘ilm al-qirā’āt*]. Some experts in this science wanted to limit the number of ‘canonical’ variants to seven (linking it uncannily to a *ḥadīth* that says that the Koran was revealed “in seven ‘*aḥruf*”).²⁹ But for Ibn al-Ġazarī, such a limitation is without foundation, and he wants to take at least ten readings into consideration for public recitation, as can be seen from the title of his fundamental work *An-Naṣr fī l-qirā’āt al-‘aṣr* (*Publication about the Ten Readings*). But for scholarly purposes Ibn al-Ġazarī argues that one has to consider all available readings, even if some are highly unlikely. Take the fourth verse of the first sūrah (*al-Fātiḥa*), as an example. The transmitted consonant text runs *mlk ywm l-dyn*, which is generally vocalized as *māliki yawmi d-dīni* (the possessor of judgement day), but other readings such as *maliki yawmi d-dīni* (the king of judgement day), *malaki yawmi d-dīni* (the angel of judgement day), etc. are also possible. Instead of making a definitive choice of one reading to the exclusion of all others, Ibn al-Ġazarī deemed certain readings more, and others less likely. Apart from these variants in vocalization, the text of the Koran obviously also contains variants in the consonant text, but this need not concern us here.³⁰

The important point for the present argument is that medieval Koran exegesis embraced the ambiguous state of the holy text as something positive that deserves careful study. It contributes to the richness of the revealed message, and should be celebrated. Yet when we turn to the twentieth century, and notably the moderniser Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and the Salafist Ibn ‘Uṭaymīn, we find a completely different picture. Neither of them wanted to admit the possibility that the Koran has more than one text, nor did they like the idea that it is ambiguous and thus open to different equally valid interpretations.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn discussed the textual character of the Koran and its variant readings in his famous work *On Pre-Islamic Poetry*, already mentioned above. He has the following to say:³¹

The Koran was recited in one language and one dialect, namely the language and dialect of the Qurayš. No sooner had the readers [*al-qurrā*] from different tribes received it [the Koran], than did the [different] readings [*al-qirā’āt*] multiply, and the dialects diversify [that were used] for it; they [the readings and dialects] fluctuated greatly. The later readers and scholars [*al-‘ulamā*] made an effort to edit it precisely [*ḍabṭihī wa-taḥqīqihī*], and established a science, or specific sciences, to this end.

For Ḥusayn, God’s message is univocal just as God is one. The variances in the Koranic texts are due to human failure and frailty, not divine economy, as Ibn al-Ġazarī still thought. We have seen above that Ḥusayn wanted to apply the method

²⁹ The interpretation of ‘*aḥruf*, plural of *ḥarf*, is disputed, but one meaning often accepted for this context is “reading.”

³⁰ Under the supervision of Angelika Neuwirth, a major project, first conceived by Gotthelf Bergsträsser and entitled *Corpus Coranicum*, is currently under way to produce a critical text of the Muslim holy writ; see <http://www.bbaw.de/bbaw/Forschung/Forschungsprojekte/Coran/de/Startseite>. Accessed on Jan. 2, 2012.

³¹ Ḥusayn 1926: 33, emphasis added.

of René Descartes, namely radical doubt. Descartes himself was a firm believer in univocality, and Ḥusayn follows him also in this regard.

Ibn ‘Uṭaymīn was an extremely prominent and influential Wahhabī (and, by implication, Salafī) cleric. In his work *On the Foundations of Exegesis (Fī ‘Uṣūl at-tafsīr)* (A.H. 1423), he devotes a chapter to “The writing and compilation of the Koran” (*Fī kitābat al-Qur’ān wa-ġam’ihī*).³² Ibn ‘Uṭaymīn distinguishes three stages in the composition of the Koran: first, during the prophet’s lifetime, the Koran was memorized and written on palm leaves and other materials; second, the caliph ‘Abū Bakr produced a first edition of the Koran; and third, the caliph ‘Uṭmān produced an authorized text in the language of the Qurayṣ, since it was originally revealed in this dialect. Then he explains the rationale behind these two different “editions:”

The difference between his [i.e. ‘Uṭmān’s] and ‘Abū Bakr’s compilation [*ġam’*] is the following. The compilation in the age of ‘Abū Bakr aimed at writing down the whole Koran as a collection in an exemplar [*taqyīd al-Qur’āni kullihī maġmū’an fī muṣḥafīn*], so that nothing of it would be lost, but without bringing the people to agree on one exemplar. For no trace of difference in their readings had become evident that would have called for bringing them to agree on one exemplar. The compilation in the age of ‘Uṭmān, however, aimed at writing down the whole Koran as a collection in one exemplar [*taqyīd al-Qur’āni kullihī maġmū’an fī muṣḥafīn wāḥīdin*], that brings the people to agree on it, because the frightful trace of difference in readings had appeared [*li-zuhūri l-‘atari l-muḥjfi bi-ḥiṭlāfi l-qirā’āti*]. (ibid. p. 26)

In a feat of historical distortion that cannot be fully analysed here, Ibn ‘Uṭaymīn describes the process of producing the written version as an exercise in preserving the one authoritative version that was revealed to Muḥammad. Like Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, he wants to have one univocal text of the Koran, on which all have to agree.

Modernity abhors ambiguity. The Cartesian drive for clarity continues in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Bruno Latour (1991) argued that so-called modernity was characterised by the wish to distinguish between knowledge of people and knowledge of things as illustrated in the works of Thomas Hobbes (d. 1679) and Robert Boyle (d. 1691); and that this distinction, and therefore the notion of modernity itself, is profoundly flawed. Two diametrically opposed figures, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Ibn ‘Uṭaymīn, illustrate the problematic nature of modernity’s quest for clarity: they both desired the same univocality in the text and interpretation of the Koran, even if they harboured radically different opinions about the content of its clear message. In this, they both followed models of European erudition, and especially Franco-German scholarship.³³ In the conclusions, I shall briefly reflect on how Graeco-Roman antiquity and its scholarly study contributed to the development of an Arabo-Islamic modernity.

³² The relevant chapter is on pp. 23–8 of the online edition.

³³ Apart from Descartes, Ḥusayn had a great fondness for Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903); see, for example, Ḥusayn’s description of how he read the whole of Mommsen’s *Römisches Staatsrecht* and *Römisches Strafrecht* in French translation in Hussein 1997: 379.

Conclusions

From the nineteenth century onwards, Egypt and other parts of the Arab and Muslim world were exposed to European imperialism and colonialism. In part, at least, the colonial powers justified their aggression with claims of cultural and intellectual superiority. This superiority was not only based on technological advantages or military might, but also on a constructed line of descent from the Greek and Roman past. Incidentally, this tendency also continues in the new global hegemon, the United States, whose political institutions are modelled on those of the Roman Republic (think of the Senate and the Capitol). The example of papyrology illustrated this colonial attitude in a nutshell: the Greeks belonged to Budge and Kenyon, not Aḥmad or Muṣṭafā. Furthermore, the illegal pillage of papyri was justified by an intellectual bond with the culture of the Greeks, even if these papyri were produced on Egyptian soil and, as modern Egyptian nationalists might argue, by Egyptians for Egyptians.³⁴

This colonial onslaught had two general effects. On the one hand, Arab intellectuals such as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Louis ‘Awaḍ, who studied in Europe, developed a great love for Greek and Latin works that were then still at the pinnacle of the European canon. They studied and translated them, and rightly saw their own culture as heir to the Greeks and Romans as much as that of the Europeans. The great Egyptian playwright Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm even advocated a marriage of Greek and Arabic literature similar to that which had taken place in the European Renaissance between the various vernacular languages and classical literature. These modernizers of Arab culture claimed the Greeks as theirs, and wished to reengage with them to bring about a rebirth of Arabic and Islamic culture.

At the same time, other more traditionalist elements in society argued strongly against this trend of Westernization, or alienation [*taḡrīb*].³⁵ They did not reject modernity. On the contrary, they too desired a renewal, but on the basis of different fundamentals (*‘uṣūl*). Although they bitterly rejected the recourse to a Greek and Roman past following the model of European literature, they embraced many of the implicit values of the colonial overlords, as did Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and his companions.

In his book *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* (1926), Ṭāhā Ḥusayn came to the conclusion that the odes of the Arabs before the advent of Islam, recorded in various collections from the eighth century onwards, were a forgery. He came to this view in part because he attributed much greater authority to written than to oral works. Although there could hardly be an Arab thinker more different from Ṭāhā Ḥusayn than Ibn ‘Uṭaymīn, the latter adhered to a similar bias against oral literature when retelling the history of the Koranic text. Here European modernity indirectly asserted itself.

³⁴ For a further exploration of this topic, see McCoskey 2002.

³⁵ The work *taḡrīb* is ambiguous, as it can denote making something “*ḡarīb* (strange)” or “*ḡarībī* (Western)”.

Likewise, both Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Ibn ʿUṭaymīn reject the idea of ambiguity in the source text of the Koran: God is one and the text of the Koran is univocal. In doing so, both go against centuries of Muslim exegesis. In the case of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, it is easy to demonstrate that he followed models of classical scholarship, and notably nineteenth-century source criticism. Such direct influence can, of course, be excluded for Ibn ʿUṭaymīn, but the indirect influence of a modernist desire for univocality and clarity of meaning cannot be discarded, especially when one compares Ibn ʿUṭaymīn’s approach with that of the previous tradition.³⁶ Both Ḥusayn and Ibn ʿUṭaymīn inhabit the same modernity, which derived in part from nineteenth-century academic discourses.

We find many reflections and refractions of the role of classical studies in contemporary Arab and Muslim societies. Aḥmad ʿEtmān’s play *The Goats of Oxyrhynchus*, for instance, engages on at least three levels with the classical past: firstly, it draws on a Greek source; secondly, it considers Egypt’s relation to her Hellenistic heritage; and thirdly, it comments critically on the place of this heritage in modern Egypt. The struggle for modernity continues in many countries of the Middle East. The interpretation of texts takes centre stage in this process. Here classical studies have contributed significantly to debates about cultural and religious authority and identity, as we have seen throughout this article. Again and again, intellectuals who were trained in the methods of classical scholarship have provoked controversy by offering interesting perspectives on the history of Arabic and Islamic thought. These debates, to be sure, continue today with even greater vigour, as Greek and Latin studies are thriving in Egypt.

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³⁶ Abou El Fadl demonstrated for the disciplines of Islamic jurisprudence and case law that modern Saudi-Arabian clerics often show a complete disregard for traditional exegesis. His studies therefore confirm Thomas Bauer’s analysis of Ibn ʿUṭaymīn’s attitude to the text of the Koran; see Abou El Fadl 2001.

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Chapter 7

The Septuagint as a Jewish Classic

Nicholas de Lange

Summary The Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Jewish Bible—was in antiquity a Jewish ‘classic’, in the sense of a store of deeply internalized language and stories. It then more or less disappeared from view in western Europe until rediscovered by modern historicism, first as a source of information about the matrix from which Christianity emerged and then, more recently, as a key product of Hellenistic and Roman Jewish culture.

1

The guiding thread of this essay is the way that the Septuagint is imagined and described, and specifically in relation to the Jewish matrix from which it emerges into the light (at least for us), around the time that Christianity, too, is considered to have originated. My specific focus will be on the twentieth century. In keeping with the project on “Modernity’s Classics” of which the essay is a part, I shall attempt to show how the Septuagint, during this period, came to be widely considered by scholars in a number of disciplines (biblical studies, Christian theology, ancient history, Jewish history) as a *classic text*, by which I mean not particularly that it carried authority within a religious system, but that it was the focus of the education and coloured the culture of (in this case) Greek-speaking Jewish communities, and that it was imitated, quoted, and alluded to in subsequent literature, and served as a factor in shaping a common identity for such communities.

2

By “Septuagint” I mean the Greek translation of the Torah, the sacred text of the Jews, also known as the Pentateuch because it consists of five books, or the Law (*nomos*) because much, though by no means all, of it consists of legislation. I do not refer to a particular Greek text of this work. Although ancient Jews considered that

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there was a single, authentic text, it is now clear that considerable variation existed among the ancient manuscripts and among citations by ancient authors, and we know of various attempts to revise or rewrite the translation. This is a large and complex process which has not yet been fully described. Suffice it to say that the text was constantly being revised from the late first century B.C.E., if not earlier, and that some revision was so radical that we can reasonably consider it a new translation. The extreme example is that of Akylas (or Aquila), which is thought to have originated in the early second century C.E. and which seems to have become more popular than the earlier translations among Jews who knew some Hebrew, partly at least because it corresponds closely to the ‘proto-Masoretic’ Hebrew text that came to be more widely used than the somewhat different Hebrew text from which the Septuagint was translated.¹ Other revisions too were aimed at bringing the Greek closer to this Hebrew text. In the period which is best documented, to the end of the first century C.E., the question of variant texts or revisions is never mentioned directly in the sources.² Even Philo, who discusses innumerable passages in detail, never mentions the existence of variant readings (as Origen does two centuries later). In what follows, while recognising the existence of variants and revisions, we shall speak of the Septuagint as a single text, as the ancients did.

We do not and probably cannot know for certain whether the entire Torah was translated as a single project, or whether various partial translations were made over a period of time. According to the so-called *Letter of Aristeas* (henceforth Ps.-Aristeas), the translation was commissioned in the early third century B.C.E. for the Library of Alexandria, and a copy was subsequently presented to the Jewish community of the city. Ps.-Aristeas is now recognised to be a Jewish forgery or pseudepigraphon, produced some 150 years after the events it purports to describe, and intended in part as propaganda in favour of the Septuagint; it is therefore probably of little or no value for the reconstruction of the origin of the translation (although it continues to be used for this purpose, presumably because of the lack of other information). What is really interesting about Ps.-Aristeas is the image it presents of the Septuagint as a text held in respect by Jews and non-Jews alike, full of wonderful teachings. Other Jewish texts in Greek testify to the honoured place of the Septuagint within Greek-speaking Judaism. To name only a few examples, among extant works *Joseph and Aseneth* (first century B.C.E. or later) builds a story alluded to very briefly in Genesis 41:45 into a Greek romance, and *Wisdom* (mid-first century B.C.E. or later) makes frequent allusion to the narratives in Genesis and Exodus, while among fragmentary works the epic poet Philo (third–second century B.C.E.) versifies stories about Abraham, and the tragic poet Ezechiel (second century B.C.E.?) casts the exodus from Egypt in the form of a Greek drama. It is the theologian Philo of Alexandria (early first century C.E.) who is the clearest and

¹ See de Lange *et al.* 2009.

² Kahle 1959, 212–14 argues that the existence of variant texts is implied in Ps.-Aristeas (on which see below).

fullest witness to this. Much of Philo's voluminous extant *œuvre* consists of commentaries and treatises based on the Septuagint, and he takes it as given that this text is the foundation of Jewish teaching. All the Greek Jewish writings share a common attitude to the Pentateuch: it is the only authoritative source of history, laws, and religious teachings, and virtually the only source of references and allusions. References to other books are very rare, even in the many extant volumes of Philo. Only Josephus draws on other 'biblical' books in writing his history of the Jews, and he was a much later, Palestinian author with direct access to the Hebrew Bible. In a very real sense, therefore, the Septuagint can be described as the foundation-stone of ancient Greek-speaking Judaism.³

It is perhaps worth emphasising here that, while the Septuagint is a translated text (of a lost Hebrew or Aramaic original), and that fact was well known to Jews who stopped to think about it, the authors mentioned above, and indeed all the Greek Jewish authors, did not treat it as a translation but simply as a text: they do not refer to it as a 'translation', nor do they criticize supposed errors of translation or compare it with the original, as modern authors might. In fact when Ps.-Aristeas and Philo refer to the moment of translation, they make it clear that, as far as they are concerned, the translation is a totally reliable rendering of the original, so that any comparison would be redundant. Philo goes so far as to write this: "If Chaldeans have learned Greek, or Greeks Chaldean, and read both versions, the Chaldean and the translation, they regard them with awe and reverence as sisters, or rather *one and the same*, both in matter and words, and speak of the authors not as translators but as prophets and priests of the mysteries. . ."⁴ This attitude contrasts sharply with that of modern authors, from Azariah de' Rossi on.

3

The text of the Septuagint has come down to us, with the exception of a few early fragments, entirely in Christian manuscripts. The same is true of all that we possess of the ancient Greek Jewish literature. This is largely an outcome of the incorporation of the Greek Pentateuch into the "Old Testament" of the early Greek-speaking church, together with other books translated from Hebrew and some composed in Greek. The attitude of the early Christian authors to the "Law" is ambiguous, and not uncontroversial. In the first century Paul, who, as a Jew, was brought up on it and knew it intimately, assumes a knowledge of it in his readers, and refers to it often, but adopts a negative attitude to the "Law" as law. At the end of the century Clement of Rome, in his Epistle to the Corinthians ("I Clement"), also assumes a knowledge not only of the stories in Genesis but of Numbers and Deuteronomy as well. In the second century

³ I prefer to avoid the term "Hellenistic Judaism," which seems to me inappropriate, except perhaps in a purely chronological sense. It is a term loaded down with baggage from various modern theories about ancient culture.

⁴ Philo, *Moses* 2.40. The emphasis is mine.

Marcion rejected the Law along with the whole Old Testament in favour of the 'Gospel of Love' revealed by Jesus and preached by Paul. Marcion, whose influence was considerable, was excommunicated in 144, and thenceforth the Christian church accepted the Law as having been revealed by the one God, while generally opposing the observance of most of the laws, either by invoking a new revelation replacing the older one, or by using the literary device of allegorical interpretation (inherited from Jewish interpreters such as Ps.-Aristeas and Philo). It is clear, however, from the harshly critical preaching of churchmen such as Origen in the third century or John Chrysostom in the fourth that some Christians continued to take the Pentateuchal laws seriously and to observe such ceremonies as the New Moon festival or the eating of unleavened bread at Passover. The attitude to the Pentateuch of what emerged as Christian orthodoxy was thus complex and ambivalent: the attachment to the ancient Jewish scripture was a token of the antiquity of the Christian message, but stronger emphasis was placed on the new Christian revelation, to which the Old Testament as a whole always took second place. So the Pentateuchal stories and laws were interpreted in the light of the New Testament writings and were read as prefiguring the coming of Jesus and the teachings of the church. Some Christian authors maintained that the Jews had deliberately corrupted the text of their scriptures so as to conceal or distort the Christian teachings they contained.

In this way the Greek Pentateuch, in its Christian guise, has remained at the heart of the worship and life of Greek-speaking Christianity to this day, together with the other Old Testament writings. Other Christian churches, both Eastern and Western, used translations of the scriptures into other languages, generally based on the Greek, which thus exercised an influence far beyond the confines of the Hellenophone world. The attitude towards the Law of Moses was uniform throughout Christendom: it embodied the oldest revelation, and its promises and teachings, when properly interpreted, remained valid for Christians. Thus the church, while fully acknowledging the Jewish origin of the Law, regarded it as a Christian book, the bedrock of the Christian Bible.

In Western Christianity, until the Reformation, it was the Latin Vulgate translation that enjoyed this authority. Little attention was paid to the Greek throughout the Middle Ages. In the fifteenth century, contacts between Greek and Latin scholars (at a time of moves for union between the two churches encouraged by the Ottoman conquests in the east) led to the arrival of Greek manuscripts in the West, and a growth of interest in Greek language and culture. The Greek Septuagint was first printed in the Complutensian polyglot Old Testament of 1514–1517, issued in 1522, and in the Aldine Bible of 1518. A far better text was contained in the Sixtine or Roman edition (1587–1588), which was based on the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus. Such publications, while they made the text more accessible, do not indicate a radical change in the status or authority of the Septuagint. A few scholars, like John Fisher (1469–1535), maintained that it was divinely inspired; most sixteenth-century scholars regarded it as a corrupt version of the Hebrew, and of secondary interest for biblical studies. The Reformation focus on the Hebrew text, which in the long term had a decisive effect on the course of Christian biblical study, did little in the short term to enhance the standing of the Greek.

4

In the modern period, then, the prevailing attitude towards the Septuagint, particularly among Christian theologians and biblical scholars, but also among ancient historians, has been heavily influenced by the “supersessionist” or “replacement” theology that has characterized Christian attitudes towards anything Jewish until very recent times. The very widespread belief that ancient Judaism, together with its religion and sacred books, was merely a preparation for Christianity, and had no permanent merit, had consequences ranging from the promotion of negative stereotypes and unfavourable comparisons for propaganda purposes through a total lack of interest in the pre-history of Christianity to, at best, an interest in ancient Judaism as providing background information useful for the study of the gospels.

“Replacement” theology has influenced attitudes to the Septuagint in various ways. Its impact is mostly felt in exegesis, but it can also affect the writing of history, as when Christian authors claim that soon after the arrival of Christianity the Septuagint was “transferred from the hands of the Jews to the Christian Church.”⁵ How this providential transfer was achieved is not clear, and no firm evidence has ever been adduced on the matter. Many authors imply, or assert, that the Jews gave up using it because it was used by Christians,⁶ a notion unparalleled in the case of the sacred scriptures of any religion and so implausible that one would have imagined it would have required proof. No proof of such an effect on the Jews of the use of the Septuagint by Christians has ever been put forward, however, and, indeed, leading Christian specialists who give prominence to such a notion often adduce another explanation of the abandonment of the Septuagint by Jews (which is indeed a fact), drawn from internal developments within Judaism and having nothing to do with Christianity.⁷

Given this prevailing ideology it is hardly to be expected that we should find ancient Judaism studied by Christians for its own sake. Yet, paradoxically perhaps, we do occasionally encounter an interest in the Septuagint, arising precisely from theological considerations. A striking case in point is Edward William Grinfield

⁵“Aus den Händen der Juden ist sie dann in die der christlichen Gemeinde übergegangen,” Schürer 1886: §33.1.1.

⁶E.g. “Adoption by the Christians led eventually to abandonment by the Jews” (Jellicoe 1968: 353).

⁷E.g. Swete 1902: 30: “When the LXX passed into the hands of the Church and was used in controversy with Jewish antagonists, the Jews not unnaturally began to doubt the accuracy of the Alexandrian version. . . But the dissatisfaction with which the LXX was regarded by the Jewish leaders of the second century was perhaps not altogether due to polemical causes. ‘The LXX did not suit the newer school of [Jewish] interpretation, it did not correspond with the received text.’” (quoting W. Robertson Smith). Similarly, Hengel 2002: 43–4: “The consistent appropriation of the Greek Bible—one could also speak of its ‘Christianization’—did not take place, to be sure, without resistance. . . The suppression will have taken the form of a gradual development, probably paralleling the growing influence of rabbinical scholars from Palestine on the worship of the Diaspora synagogues.”

(1785–1864), the founder of a lecture series on the subject at Oxford that still continues. Grinfield was one of the most positive Christian exponents of the value of the Septuagint, and in 1850 he published *An Apology for the Septuagint*, in which he challenged the primacy of the Hebrew Old Testament in the Church of England, and advocated recourse to the Greek instead.⁸ Grinfield is perfectly firm in the orthodox Christian view that the Jews have been abandoned by the Holy Spirit, which has passed to the Christian church, but he does also appeal to the Jewish origin of the Septuagint (which term he uses in the broadest sense, referring to the whole Old Testament) as an important point in its favour. It was the first translation of the Hebrew scriptures into any other language, he points out, and he maintains that it was made at a time when Hebrew had ceased to be spoken among Jews, even in Palestine. He stresses “That it was universally received by the Hellenists, or Jews of the Dispersion, as authoritative and canonical, being publicly used in their Synagogues, both before and after the Christian era” (p. x). Consequently Jesus was brought up on it, and both he and his disciples quote from it, even sometimes when it differs from the Hebrew.

Grinfield’s *Apology* remains something of an oddity. The best-known and most influential exponent of this positive view among Christian theological writers of the nineteenth century is Emil Schürer (1844–1910), whose *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* went through several German editions between 1874 and 1909, and achieved great success in English translation. Schürer, as we have seen, is committed to the supersessionist view, and his interest in Jewish history, as the title of his work suggests, centres on the light it sheds on the background to the birth of Christianity. When it comes to the Septuagint, he asserts firmly that it is “the foundation of all Judaeo-Hellenistic culture,” and he adds that “Hellenistic Judaism is as inconceivable without it as the evangelical Church of Germany without Luther’s translation of the Bible.”⁹

5

In Jewish circles these theological considerations do not apply. Nevertheless, after the time of Josephus, at the end of the first Christian century, we almost lose sight of the Greek Pentateuch. This is no doubt due to the loss of most Greek Jewish writing after that time. There are traces, however, of the public reading of the Greek as late as the mid-sixth century, when a Novel of Justinian records a bitter division between devotees of the Greek and the Hebrew reading.¹⁰ Ultimately the Hebraist

⁸ Grinfield 1850. Arguments in favour of the authority of the Septuagint in the church are still heard today, the most prominent polemist in favour of the view being Müller 1996. See also Barthélemy 1965.

⁹ “Ohne sie ist das hellenistische Judenthum ebenso wenig denkbar, wie die evangelische Kirche Deutschlands ohne Luthers deutsche Bibelübersetzung” (1886 §33.1.1).

¹⁰ Novel 146, dated 553: *Corpus Juris Civilis* 3 714–18. For a full discussion of the question of Greek readings see Colorni 1964.

faction won, and imposed the reading of the Torah in Hebrew not only in Greek-speaking communities but throughout the Jewish world.

The use of Hebrew accords with a more or less strongly-held position in favour of Hebrew expressed in rabbinic writings from the third century on (de Lange 1996). The earliest rabbinic writings, however, while they promote the use of Hebrew, do not forbid readings of the Torah in Greek, in fact they explicitly permit them.¹¹ A rabbinic statement preserved in the Palestinian Talmud says that Greek is the only language into which Scripture can be adequately translated.¹² Another text mentions a new Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures made by a proselyte called Akylas in the early second century, and recalls the lavish praise bestowed on it by various famous early rabbis.¹³ Such rabbinic texts, and others which quote Greek renderings of biblical words attributed to Akylas,¹⁴ support the view that his translation (now lost except for some fragments and quotations) was not only accepted by the Rabbis but was studied and taught by them. In this way, for some centuries, a Greek Pentateuch was part of the culture of Greek-speaking Jewish communities in the rabbinic orbit, while those outside it probably continued to use the older Septuagint translation.¹⁵ (Both Akylas and the Septuagint are mentioned in the Novel of Justinian.) Although the Novel records an internal Jewish dispute about the public reading of the Greek, there is no rejection of Greek translations in rabbinic texts until a much later date. The Babylonian Talmud (*Megillah* 9a–b) endorses the older permission to use the Septuagint; it adds a brief account, based ultimately on Ps.-Aristeas, of the supposed origin of the translation, and lists some changes that were introduced by the translators.¹⁶ It is only after the Talmudic period that we begin to find sources that forbid the use of Greek translations, on the grounds that (contrary to the earlier rabbinic teaching) the Hebrew could not be adequately translated into Greek.¹⁷

The Greek traditions about the origin of the Septuagint going back to Ps.-Aristeas are also incorporated in *Sefer Yosippon*, a Hebrew historical work probably written in Byzantine south Italy in the ninth–tenth centuries, and largely based on the Latin translations of Josephus and on the Greek biblical books (Dönitz 2009). The author curiously conflates the story of the Septuagint with elements derived from the Greek Books of Maccabees, with the result that he seems to place the translation in the mid-second century B.C.E., although no weight should

¹¹ Smelik 1999, 2001, 2007.

¹² J. Meg.i.9(8) (10b).

¹³ J. Meg.i.11 (71c); J.Qid.i.1 (59a).

¹⁴ See the traditions about Akylas preserved in Midrash Tanhuma (ed. Buber), *Mishpatim* 3, discussed by Silverstone 1931: 25–6 and by Veltri 2006: 170–2, who also collect other rabbinic traditions about Akylas.

¹⁵ So Wasserstein 2006: 63. Study of biblical quotations in Greek on Jewish tombstones suggest that there was no universally accepted text: Cappelletti 2009.

¹⁶ Such a list is found in several rabbinic texts: see Wasserstein 2006: 51–94. The Babylonian Talmud is generally dated in the sixth century.

¹⁷ *Soferim* 1.7, *Sefer Torah* 1.6: see Wasserstein 2006: 69–73.

probably be attached to this. While it is hard to show explicitly that he used the Greek Pentateuch, it is clear that he was familiar with other books of the Greek Bible, and he certainly does not express a negative attitude to the Greek Pentateuch, indeed he invests it with a miraculous character. The *Sefer Yosippon* is evidence for a continuing positive assessment of the Septuagint, and the Greek Jewish heritage more generally, among Byzantine Jews. The work achieved enormous and widespread popularity throughout the Jewish world. It is hard to judge its influence specifically on the question of the Septuagint, but we can detect it occasionally, for example in the *Book of Genealogies* of Abraham Zacut (1452–1515), who repeats the link to Maccabees that was established in *Sefer Yosippon*.¹⁸ Thus the story of the origin of the Septuagint was known to Jews throughout the Middle Ages, but it was something of a curiosity, and the translation was not considered to have had any impact on Judaism: if anything it was thought of as a Jewish gift to the Ptolemies. It was certainly not regarded as a useful resource for the study of ancient Judaism.

The sixteenth-century Italian scholar Azariah de' Rossi is rightly identified as a key figure in Jewish study of the Greek Jewish sources, since he read and discussed Philo, and translated Ps.-Aristeas into Hebrew; however, he read these sources in Latin, and his Greek was inadequate to the task of studying the Septuagint in the original.¹⁹ He devotes close attention to the story of the translation of the Torah, comparing the accounts of Ps.-Aristeas and the rabbis.²⁰ He does not, however, evince much interest in the place of the Septuagint in the life of ancient Judaism.

It was not until the nineteenth century, under the twin influences of the Enlightenment movement and the pressure for the civil emancipation of the Jews, that Jews in central and northern Europe gradually gained access to the universities and to a classical education. A pioneering figure was Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875), who after receiving a traditional rabbinical education graduated from the University of Budapest in 1831. Frankel's *Historisch-kritische Studien zu der Septuaginta nebst Beiträgen zu den Targumim: Vorstudien zu der Septuaginta* (Leipzig 1841) marks a watershed in that it takes the Septuagint seriously as a source of ancient Jewish exegesis and religious ideas. Frankel describes the Septuagint as the starting point for the development of Jewish religious life in Egypt, and the medium through which new understandings of old teachings and new views on the law spread (p. 1). However, as he explains, his motive in studying the Septuagint was an attempt to trace ideas found in the Talmud back into an earlier age, and he evinces no interest whatever in the role it played within Greek-speaking Judaism, beyond a historical study of its use in the synagogue. As founding principal of the first modern rabbinical seminary, at Breslau, from 1854, and as the first editor of the leading journal of Jewish scholarship, the *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* (1851–1868), Frankel was in a unique position to promote the

¹⁸ Wasserstein 2006: 227.

¹⁹ Baron 1964; Weinberg 1985.

²⁰ Weinberg 2001, esp. pp. 182–96; Wasserstein 2006: 247–9.

study of the Septuagint and of Greek-speaking Judaism in general. Yet the record shows that he did very little in this respect. At the Seminary he taught mainly Talmud and halacha, while Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891) taught Bible exegesis, Hebrew grammar and history, and Jacob Bernays (1824–1881) religious philosophy, Greek classics, Latin, ancient history, and German literature.²¹ Greek Jewish texts and culture do not seem to have figured on the syllabus. In the pages of the *Monatsschrift*, Frankel published a study of Ps.-Aristeas (1858), an article on Philo's ethics (1867), and a translation and discussion of the Story of Susannah (1868). Given Frankel's interest in the Septuagint (Treitel 1901) this meagre harvest seems surprising, the more so when we note that he did not publish contributions by others on the Greek Jewish literature. Nor did the situation improve much after Frankel's time. Very few studies of the Septuagint were published in the *Monatsschrift*.²² The general trend in *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* circles was to treat the Septuagint purely from the point of view of biblical study. Yet Heinrich Graetz in his famous history of the Jewish people offers a very positive assessment of the Septuagint and its reception in Diaspora Judaism (although not in Palestine), and gives a balanced judgment of its impact. It led to the translation of other books, and also to the birth of the sermon: "Pulpit oratory is the child of the Alexandrian-Judaeian community." It also gave birth to other Jewish writings in Greek.²³

The debate around "Jewish Hellenism" in nineteenth-century Jewish circles (and indeed more recently) is too complex to be summarized here (Shavit 1992). "Hellenism" was a label that was hurled by nationalists at Reform and Orthodox Jews, by religious traditionalists at secular nationalists, and so forth. Both German-speaking religious modernists and Yiddish-speaking *maskilim* (adherents of the Hebrew Enlightenment), for different reasons, became interested in ancient Greek-speaking Judaism, its history, ideas, and literature, but the ideological basis of this interest produced a somewhat superficial, partial, and sometimes polemical approach.

6

As we enter the twentieth century, scholarship focused on the Septuagint is largely concerned with the text itself: critical editions, history of the text, and linguistic study occupied the main energies of researchers, together with speculation about the origins of the translation and the exploitation of the Septuagint as a tool for the textual criticism of the Hebrew Pentateuch.²⁴ Such approaches do not concern us here. The authors involved in these valuable enterprises rarely evince any interest

²¹ Frankel 1861.

²² Frankl 1872; Treitel 1897. These are the only examples until 1928, when two articles on the Septuagint were published, by A. Kaminka and M. Holzmann. The situation in Britain and France was no better: for France see de Lange 2006.

²³ Graetz 1863ff., vol. 3 Leipzig: 34–43; Eng. tr. 514–15.

²⁴ See the summary by Katz 1956.

for the reception of the Septuagint within Judaism (or within Christianity for that matter).²⁵

At the very threshold of the century we encounter one of the monumental works of Septuagint scholarship, Henry Barclay Swete's *An introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (1900), an admirable work of precise scholarship and the foundation of much Septuagint research that followed. Swete (1835–1917) was Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, had previously edited the entire Greek Old Testament, and had an unrivalled knowledge of his subject. His book is a mine of information on a wide range of topics. He anchors the Septuagint firmly within Alexandrian Judaism and the Greek-speaking diaspora, and he devotes an entire chapter to what he calls “Literary use of the Septuagint by non-Christian Hellenists,” tracing the use of the Septuagint in Greek Jewish authors down to Josephus. However, as the title of the chapter suggests, his interest throughout is in the Christian history of the text.²⁶

Within its limitations, Swete's account is a fair one, even if his focus is on what Greek Jewish authors can contribute to our understanding of the Septuagint, rather than vice versa. Most twentieth-century biblical scholars either ignore the pre-Christian Septuagint, or show only a minimal interest in the Jewish reception. An extreme, though not unique, example is the first volume of the *Cambridge History of the Bible*, a work published as recently as 1970, and aimed at a broad educated readership: the Septuagint is simply omitted from the story (Ackroyd and Evans 1970). The majority of Old Testament specialists who do refer to the Septuagint see it as a tool for the textual study of the Hebrew.

Even Jewish Bible scholars writing about the Septuagint, in a Jewish context, tend to ignore the Jewish reception. For example, Harry M. Orlinsky, in a chapter on the Septuagint written for the *Cambridge History of Judaism* in the 1970s, omits any mention of the place of the Septuagint in Judaism; he focuses on the origin and philosophy of the translation, and the Hebrew *Vorlage*.²⁷ Again, Suzanne Daniel (1972), writing on the importance of the Septuagint in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, makes only four points: critics have seen it as “precious evidence of a Hebrew text far older than the oldest extant manuscripts;” it is “one of the most extensive collections of texts in Hellenistic *Koiné*;” it is worthy of study as a translation; it is an early witness to Jewish exegesis as found in the rabbinic sources, potentially casting light on the spiritual links between the diaspora and Palestine. With the benefit of hindsight, the absence of any mention of the place of the Septuagint in Greek-speaking Jewish life and culture seems remarkable.

Even more surprising, given the change in attitudes (as we shall see below) in the intervening period, is the approach adopted by two American Protestant biblical scholars in a recent introduction to the Septuagint aimed at theologians (Jobes and

²⁵ Even later works of the stature of Jellicoe 1968 and Brock, Fritsch and Jellicoe 1973 ignore these dimensions of the subject.

²⁶ See further my remarks in de Lange 1993.

²⁷ Orlinsky 1989.

Silva 2000). In an introduction to the book entitled “Why study the Septuagint?” they write: “Any knowledge of the ancient world would be incomplete without understanding the significance of the Septuagint and the history that brought it into existence” (p. 19). Yet the authors show no interest in this history. The introduction has two sections: “The Septuagint and the Hebrew Bible” and “The Septuagint in the Christian Church.” The intervening Jewish phase is absent, apart from these words: “The Greek versions have virtually no place in modern Jewish worship, although they had occupied a very prominent place in the lives of Jews of the Hellenistic period. In effect, by the end of the second century the Septuagint had passed into the care and keeping of the Christian church” (p. 83). The second sentence, with its unsubstantiated claim and its supersessionist language, is surprising, but no less so than the first, which alludes to the “prominent place,” which is the subject of the present essay but tantalizingly refrains from elaborating on it.

If one seeks a key date for the emergence of a different attitude to the ‘Jewish history’ of the Septuagint, it is convenient to refer to 1980, when the first steps were taken in Paris towards the creation of the project now known as “La Bible d’Alexandrie.”

Marguerite Harl, the initiator of this ambitious project, has written about it in her autobiographical book *La Bible en Sorbonne*. Looking back on her decision to move from the study of the Greek Fathers and Philo to that of the Septuagint without the intermediary stage of the New Testament, she remarks that it was a providential step: “nous avons pu découvrir la Septante dans son autonomie d’œuvre juive. . . Une fois la lecture de la Septante bien située dans sa propre histoire, avant la naissance du christianisme, nous pourrions redescendre dans sa postérité et voir comment elle avait eu une survie dans le Nouveau Testament et chez ses lecteurs chrétiens” (2004: 193–4). True, the perspective presented here has as its end the Christian rather than the Jewish reception. True, too, the attention to Jewish readings is very uneven in the five volumes of annotated translations of the Pentateuch published between 1986 and 1994. Nevertheless, it was present in the minds of the participants from the outset, and as the project has progressed to embrace other biblical books the references to Philo and Josephus, at least, in the commentaries has become more marked. The one-volume Pentateuch (Dogniez and Harl 2001) contains a series of valuable introductory essays, including two on the use of the Septuagint by Greek Jewish writers.²⁸

Jennifer Dines, in her introduction to the Septuagint,²⁹ is clear not only about the place of the Septuagint in Greek Jewish culture, but about the importance of this for biblical research:

²⁸ Hadas-Lebel 2001; Alexandre 2001.

²⁹ Dines 2004. Dines speaks admiringly of “a brief resumé of great clarity”, by Harl (1988). “Our improved knowledge [of the history of Judaism in the Hellenistic and Roman periods],” Harl writes, “enables us to locate the Septuagint within a continuing process: it is both an original creation and a link in Jewish religious history.” The Septuagint “belongs simultaneously to the worlds of Greek and Jewish culture. It is the product of a Jewish religious community which wanted to have a faithful and intelligible text of the Bible. It had a real existence within this Jewish community for several centuries, being continually reread and revised.”

The rediscovery of the Septuagint as the medium in which many Hellenistic (and later) Jews, both in Palestine and elsewhere, heard, read and knew the Law and the Prophets and the other books of their ancestors. . . is proving fruitful for research. The Septuagint takes us back before the Christian era to the Jewish culture which gave it birth. The study of the Septuagint as a witness to the religious outlook of Greek-speaking Judaism . . . is one which encourages the reconstruction of the historical circumstances (including date and place) of the translations themselves. (p. 154)

This view takes further the insights expressed by Harl; it represents, so far as I am aware, the first clear articulation within biblical studies of the Septuagint as the foundation text of Greek-speaking Judaism.

7

Twentieth-century scholars writing about Greek Judaism from a Christian theological perspective adopt a mosaic of different approaches to the Septuagint. Some embrace the unhesitatingly positive perception of the Septuagint as the foundation of Greek Jewish literature, so clearly expressed by Emil Schürer in the previous century.³⁰ Others are more complicated in their assessment. Robert Hanhart, who was director of the Septuagintaunternehmen in Göttingen from 1961 to 1993, endorses an old German theological view that associates the Hellenistic period with the death of prophetic inspiration in Judaism. The translation points to the fact that revelation has become a dead letter, a written word: the Septuagint does indeed underlie Greek Jewish culture, but this is a theologically sterile edifice that is simply waiting for the salvific advent of Christianity.³¹ Another prominent German scholar, Martin Hengel, who made his name as an authority on Jewish Hellenism, encouraged students to move beyond atomizing the Septuagint as a source of references in the study of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, and to read it as a text in its own right, yet himself saw it primarily as a document of early Christianity. At best it is “the first complete and pre-Christian ‘commentary’ to the Old Testament.”³² Such an approach effectively extracts the Septuagint from its Jewish context.

Another approach, while recognizing the place of the Septuagint within Greek-speaking Judaism, contrives to separate it from the rest of the Greek Jewish literature and attach it to the Hebrew Bible. John J. Collins, who has written extensively about Greek Judaism and its literature, does this nimbly when he writes: “While Hellenistic sensibilities in theology and style inevitably left some imprints, the Septuagint of the Pentateuch is remarkably faithful to its prototypes, and is far removed from the free rendering of the tradition we find in some Hellenistic Jewish

³⁰ Such an approach is characteristic of the numerous writings of William Horbury. Niklaus Walter’s judgment that it “is the source which nourished the greater part of the literary production of the Hellenistic Jews” (1989: 385) contrasts sharply with the approach, already mentioned, of Orlinsky in the same volume (1989).

³¹ See particularly Hanhart 1999.

³² Hengel 2002: xi. A similar approach can be found in other authors, e.g. Trebelle Barrera 1993: 315.

authors, or from the paraphrastic nature of the Targums... In short, Diaspora Judaism had the same canonical foundation as its Palestinian counterpart.”³³

A different emphasis is that of John M. G. Barclay (1996), who, in a book about the Jewish diaspora in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, surveying “current study of the Diaspora” (pp. 4–9), includes a section on “editions and translations of Diaspora literature” without referring to the Septuagint at all. While describing his aim as “to provide a *comprehensive* and *multi-faceted* survey of Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from 323 B.C.E. to 117 C.E.,” and complaining of a lack of “a comprehensive survey of the field and in particular one which combines *study of the history of Jewish communities in the Diaspora* with *analysis of the main Diaspora literature*” (p. 9, emphasis in original), he sees the Septuagint as one work among others, and certainly does not categorize it as fundamental, even though in practice he cites it often simply because his chosen authors do. Barclay’s low opinion of the Septuagint is expressed in his description of it as “a clumsy and over literal translation, often obscure in its style as well as its subject matter,” and in his comment on Philo: “As we watch him in tractate after tractate spinning intricate intratextual webs, we feel the devotion of a man who has devoted the best years of his life to making sense of this enigmatic text” (p. 166).

While it is hard to discern a trend among Christian historians, it seems that there is a growing number of authors who are willing to ascribe a positive value to the literature of Greek Judaism, and to recognise the translation of the Torah as being the foundation of this literature.³⁴

8

As we have already remarked, ideology plays a part in the approach of Jewish historians to the Septuagint, and Jewish Hellenism generally, no less than in that of Christian theologians. ‘Hellenism’ had become a loaded term in Jewish usage by the end of the nineteenth century, and prejudices continued well into the twentieth.

The best-known book on Jewish Hellenism is Victor Tcherikover’s *Hellenistic civilization and the Jews* (1959). This book contains the often-quoted sentence: “The cornerstone on which the entire edifice of Jewish Alexandrian literature rested was the Greek translation of the Scriptures, known as the Septuagint or ‘Translation of the Seventy’” (p. 348). This seems on the face of it like a clear recognition of the foundational status of the Septuagint; however on closer inspection it seems curiously and significantly isolated. The only reference in the index to “Septuagint” is to this passage, and the rest of the paragraph in which it occurs is devoted not to

³³ Collins 1983: 12. Gabriele Boccaccini 1991 goes even further in seeing the Septuagint as merely a translation with no existence on its own separate from the Hebrew Pentateuch. He does not appear to consider it as a document of “Middle Judaism.” Hans Wilhelm Haussig follows a similar line of reasoning when he criticizes the Byzantine tradition of biblical exegesis on the grounds that it is based on the Septuagint: “Byzantine theologians never succeeded in getting behind the Greek translation of the Old Testament which they had inherited from antiquity. The Hebrew original was unknown.” Haussig 1971: 217.

³⁴ The translation “was one of the most significant events for Judaism as a religion”: Grabbe 2008, vol. 2: 305.

Greek Jewish civilization in general, but to the adoption by Jews of the Greek language. Tcherikover's attitude to the Septuagint, and to Jewish Hellenism in general, is spelled out in his "Prolegomena" to the corpus of Jewish papyri from Egypt which he edited with Alexander Fuks (1957). Here Tcherikover fully accepts that the Septuagint was the basis of 'Hellenistic' Jewish culture and literature, but tends to see it as a betrayal, one that affected the very basis of national life:

We may question whether it was truly the doctrine of Moses which was preserved in the Greek version of the Torah. . . The Greek Bible became Greek in concept as well as in language, since the numerous religious and legal terms used by the translators were no longer the traditional ones of ancient Israel, but modern Greek terms, evoking numerous associations with Greek classical literature and with Hellenistic legal practice. . . so the Torah of Moses was altered and modified, a fact of fundamental importance for the entire cultural development of Egyptian Jewry. (p. 31)

In keeping with this dismissive attitude, Tcherikover discusses the education of the Alexandrian Jews in terms of Greek education (the gymnasium) only, not in terms of the Bible and Judaism, and when he does write about the "Greek Torah" his tone expresses the disdain conventionally reserved by Zionists for 'assimilated' diaspora Jews:

Aristeas is a great admirer of the Torah, but it is very important to emphasize that it is the Greek Torah which he admires. . . We have seen above that the Torah underwent a change when translated into Greek. It was not only the Bible in Greek, it was a Greek Bible in its thought and expression. This Greek Bible could be read by everyone, and everyone could convince himself of the truth and depth of the religious and moral ideas of the Jewish lawgiver Moses, and of the importance of the people to whom such precepts had been given. The 'inferiority complex', deeply rooted in the soul of every 'emancipated' Jew in the diaspora who is in touch with peoples of high cultures, was largely removed by the fact that the Bible ceased to be a 'barbarian' book sealed with seven seals, but became open to the entire civilized world. . . (pp. 42–3)

This judgment, which fully recognizes the foundational role of the Septuagint in Greek Jewish culture yet dismisses that whole culture as a false simulacrum of the true Judaism, still has echoes in Jewish scholarship, particularly in Israel, today. A good example is the following:

The Septuagint is at once the greatest achievement of hellenistic Jewry and its most important legacy to western mankind. Its creation was the response to an existing Jewish need; its effect was the preparation of the soil for the spread of the Christian gospel. With the disappearance from history of hellenistic Jewry much of what it had created disappeared from the historical memory of the people of Israel. The legacy of Greek-speaking Jewry survived almost exclusively in the Christian church. . . What we are concerned with is the living and life-giving survival of texts read and used in a living community, affecting the thought of that community, its beliefs and customs, and, on another level, the transmission of its Holy Scriptures as well as their form and format. In these respects, there is no trace of the Septuagint in the Judaism that we know from history.³⁵

³⁵ Wasserstein 2006: 16–17. I have chosen this representative example of a widespread attitude because it is so clearly and unambiguously expressed, and I do not intend any disrespect to either the late Addi Wasserstein or to his son David who continued the work after his father's death.

This view is sharply opposed to that of Frankel who, as we have seen, turned to the Septuagint precisely to shed light on the early history of the rabbinic exegesis embodied in the Talmud and Midrash. It also appears to adopt an unduly narrow approach to historical study: in relying exclusively on continuous tradition and ruling out archaeological discoveries and other sources of knowledge of the past it is at odds with the modern conception of history, and seems to hark back to a pre-modern era.

Even in Israel, though, a different approach is making itself felt. There is a good deal of research currently on Greek-speaking Judaism, and some sign of a more positive valuation of the Septuagint. For example, a leading classical scholar, the late Menahem Stern (1976), declared, implicitly contradicting Tcherikover, that “The Septuagint was the foundation of Hellenistic Jewish Literature, which was a truly Jewish literature in Greek.” Moshe Zipor has even translated the Septuagint Book of Genesis into Hebrew with a commentary, for the benefit of Israeli readers. In the preface he writes: “Before my eyes stood the Hellenistic Jewish reader, for whom the Septuagint was his Bible. My book tries to present in Hebrew dress what that reader might have understood from the Greek text in front of him.”³⁶ The implication is that, far from considering the Greek translation a betrayal of the national spirit, the author believes that even Hebrew speakers can derive benefit from its study.

Outside Israel, we can detect a total change in presuppositions about the study of Greek-speaking Judaism and of the place of the Septuagint within it. This change can be clearly seen in a recent book by Tessa Rajak, who has devoted her scholarly career to the study of this branch of Judaism.³⁷ *Translation and Survival*, subtitled “The Greek Bible of the ancient Jewish diaspora,” is, I think, the first book devoted to the Septuagint that is also a book about ancient Judaism. Chapter 6, “The uses of scripture in Hellenistic Judaism,” examines the role of the biblical writings in the lives of Greek-speaking Jews. These writings are what gives unity and a sense of a common tradition to people spread over a vast geographical area across a long time-span. Rajak emphasizes that the Greek Torah did not function only as a sacred text. She lists 13 different aspects of what she calls “scripture in action;” since, taken together, they amount to a comprehensive analysis of what I mean in speaking of the Septuagint or Greek Torah as a classical text I think it right to enumerate them, with a key phrase or brief summary:

1. “The written Torah was itself an iconic object.”
2. “Moses the lawgiver, as the author or transmitter of the Torah. . . served as the ideal figure, the culture hero par excellence of the Hellenistic-Jewish imagination.”
3. “The Greek Bible was the source of the Greek-Jewish sense of history, a building-block of identity.”
4. “The mental furniture of literate Jews was biblical when they expressed themselves in Greek at moments of crisis or drama.”

³⁶ Zipor 2005, here p. 5 (my translation).

³⁷ Rajak 2009. The origin of the book is in Rajak’s Grinfield Lectures at Oxford in 1995–6.

5. "Public expression as recorded in inscriptions. . . drew on the rich resources of the Greek Bible formulae."
6. "Scripture was prior to Temple, since there were laid down the prescriptions for its construction, for its maintenance. . . , and for the Temple cult in all its aspects."
7. "The Greek Torah was the chief (and perhaps sometimes sole) determinant for Greek-speaking Jews of Jewish practice and observance."
8. "The Greek Bible was the source of Jewish practical ethics in the diaspora."
9. "The Greek Torah. . . may at times have served as a source of law, referred to in the jurisdiction of Jewish courts."
10. ". . . the authority of the text conferred status on its interpreters—be they scribes, or teachers, or even translators."
11. "Torah reading was the focal point of the synagogue."
12. The Greek Torah influences the language and content of prayer.
13. "Devotion to the Torah is spelled out as the driving force of Judaism."
(pp. 227–37)

Some of these functions, such as the veneration of the book itself, or its use in public worship and private devotion, clearly relate to its sacred status. The majority of items, however, relate to a broader cultural function. The 'classical' status is seen most clearly when the text is used as a source of ethical teachings, and when authors quote from or allude to it, as they very often do. "Exact citation and close allusion to biblical material is found in nearly all the literary texts in my survey" (p. 226).

The same essential position underlies Erich S. Gruen's *Heritage and Hellenism* (1998). While it does not directly address the Septuagint, it illustrates as clearly as possible the way it functioned as the foundation of the Greek Jewish literature. One chapter, entitled "The use and abuse of the Exodus story," examines how this key narrative of the Septuagint was distorted by anti-Jewish polemicists and by Jewish apologists. Another, "The Hellenistic images of Joseph," studies the various interpretations by Greek Jewish writers of this Septuagintal personage who rose to be viceroy of Egypt. The thread running throughout the book is the way that Greek Jewish writers exploited the Septuagint for a range of purposes:

Jewish-Hellenistic writings in Greek came in assorted forms, genres, and styles. The retelling of biblical stories for those who dwelled in Greek-speaking communities proved to be an especially lively enterprise. But it was more than mere self-indulgence or entertainment. The writers treated here addressed themselves to devout Jews who knew their Scriptures, at least in Greek translation. None evoked any distrust in the authority of the text. Their renditions, however, with judicious selectivity, omission, or augmentation, could enhance the significance of the tradition for Jews conversant with Hellenic culture. (p. 135)

This is effectively what we mean when we describe the Septuagint as a classical text of Greek Jewish culture.

9

To conclude, it is my contention that a new consensus is slowly emerging about the ancient Greek-speaking Jewish culture as an object of study, and about the place of the Septuagint within that culture.

I have chosen to trace the emergence and elaboration of this consensus in three distinct, though inter-related, strands of scholarship: biblical study, Christian theology (including an interest in Jewish history derived from Christian theological concerns) and Jewish historiography (conducted by Jews). My reason for creating this tripartite structure is that with differing motivations came different views of the Septuagint: traditionally, biblical scholars have tended to focus primarily on an authoritative text of the sacred scripture (the Hebrew for Protestants and Jews; the Latin for Roman Catholics) and relegated the Septuagint to an ancillary role;³⁸ Jewish historians have tended to consider Greek-speaking Judaism as a transitory aberration; only Christian theologians have taken the study of Greek-speaking Judaism seriously and have recognised the central place of the Septuagint within it. However, the interest of the theologians has been driven ultimately by an interest in the origins of Christianity, and this interest has coloured and sometimes limited their historical vision.

A thorough investigation of the reasons for the changes I have sketched would be a work of much larger scope than was possible for me in the present context. It would have involved a detailed study of the impact of the Enlightenment on European scholarship, embracing territories such as the separation of scholarship from religion and the development of classical studies and ancient history, and eventually Jewish studies, within the universities, the political emancipation of the Jews and responses to it, including antisemitism and Zionism, and most recently postcolonialism. I have not been able here to do more than scratch the surface of these great themes, in indicating some of the attitudes that have shaped approaches to the Septuagint. Much of the impetus for change has been the result of interaction between two or more of these trends: for example, the impact of the discipline of ancient history on Christian and Jewish scholars.

I have been mainly concerned with the past century or so, since the time of Swete, Schürer and Graetz, to name three iconic figures, from the three disciplines in question, who can be seen with hindsight to have anticipated, within limitations, the trend I have been tracking. Great archaeological discoveries made during this period have stimulated new trends in research: primarily the papyri from Egypt and the Dead Sea scrolls, and to a lesser extent perhaps Jewish inscriptions and ancient synagogues. All these discoveries have challenged accepted ideas about Judaism in the Graeco-Roman period. The papyri have shed new light on the history of Greek-speaking Jews; the papyri and the Dead Sea scrolls together have given us our earliest Greek biblical manuscripts and led to a reassessment of the early history of the text. The impact of the discoveries has been enormous, but they do not of themselves explain the changes I have been tracing, which are due in part to other factors as well.

While sketching out what I see as a general trend towards taking the history of Greek-speaking Judaism in antiquity seriously and towards recognizing the

³⁸ Greek Orthodox Christians have always ascribed authority to the Septuagint; they have been left out of this study because in modern times there has been a lack of comparable critical Orthodox biblical or historical scholarship.

Septuagint as the conceptual and literary foundation of Greek Jewish culture, I have also tried to illustrate alternative approaches that, deliberately or not, opposed or ignored this trend, even in recent scholarship. Most surprising is the attitude of biblical scholars: unlike specialists in the Hebrew Bible, who generally recognize the importance of studying the historical matrix out of which the text arose, Septuagint scholars often seem content to leave the historical background of their text unexplored. It is hard to account for this phenomenon, except perhaps in terms of a conscious or unconscious theological motivation (affecting Christian and Jewish scholars differently). Today, however, such attitudes are coming to seem old-fashioned.³⁹

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³⁹ This article is exclusively concerned with published scholarship. Popular views lag behind. On the survival of older attitudes to the LXX on Jewish websites see Greenspoon 2008.

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Chapter 8

Phenomenon and Reference: Revisiting Parmenides, Empedocles, and the Problem of Rationalization

André Laks

Translated by Sarah C. Humphreys

Summary This paper deals with the state of affairs arising when philosophy, which already had many of the characteristics of a modern discipline, became subject in the modern period to historicism (raising questions about its ‘origins’) and to new conceptions of rationality and the irrational. The term ‘rationalization’, used for describing some kind of process leading from an ‘irrational’ to a ‘rational’ state of affairs, takes two opposed values, depending on whether this process is considered as objective or subjective, legitimate or not. The development of a new form of rationality in Archaic Greece (philosophy) and its later historiography often display interesting tensions between the two options. Have we to deal with the ‘original’ phenomenon, which should not be explained away, or with transpositions, which ‘refer’ to traditional claims or patterns of thought? The article confronts in this respect Parmenides’ fantastic description of his journey to the Goddess, in the proem of his poem, and Empedocles’ self-portrait as a sorcerer and magician, in some of his fragments, and suggests that both of them are liable to the second approach.¹

¹ Revised version (responding to observations and requests for clarification from S. Humphreys) of Laks 2003; bibliography updated. Many thanks to her for the translation and for the further suggestions she made while doing it. R. Wagner, whom I also thank for his reading, tells me that there are Sinological parallels to the role of shamanism in the interpretations of Greek philosophy analysed here, for example in comments on the voyage of Qu Yuan in the *Chu ci* (see Hawkes 1985), or in the “mystical” conception of Chinese thought current in the *Tel Quel* group (cf. Saussy 2002, Chap. 8).

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Rationalistische Exegese
Nicht von Raben, nein mit Raben
Wurde Elias ernähret—
Also ohne Wunder haben
Wir die Stelle uns erkläret
 Heinrich Heine (Nachlass)

We may start with a quotation from Aby Warburg²

The epoch in which logic and magic—as Jean-Paul said of trope and metaphor—flourished as if grafted onto one single tree is really timeless. By showing up this polarity, the history of civilization may yet contribute undiscovered evidence to further a profounder constructive criticism of our historiography, which is still operating with a doctrine of evolution exclusively wedded to the concept of time.

It illustrates (by ‘antiphrase’, one might say) the problem that confronts any theory of ‘rationalization’ in history. The concept of rationalization, burdened though it is by all the attacks on rationality of the twentieth—and now twenty-first—century, remains indispensable for the understanding of certain historical processes, certainly when it comes to the history of philosophy. I am not here trying, however, to defend the type of historiography (Kantian, more specifically Hegelian) to which Warburg was objecting; the question, rather, is what can replace its abstract model of conceptual development.³ Moves towards a less abstract conception of such processes, whether they draw on Burckhardt’s and Nietzsche’s model of confrontation and conflict⁴ or—in an ostensibly radical culturalist historicism still tainted by modern irrationalism—oppose primitive ‘experience’ to philosophical distortions,⁵ miss the way in which (authorial) reflection often operates, that is by recontextualizing and thereby rationalizing utterances or inherited data. This is where the distinction between ‘phenomenon’ and ‘reference’ comes in, ‘phenomenon’ designating an attested, ‘original’ cultural fact (or ‘experience’), to which a reflective thinker may ‘refer’.⁶

From this point of view the question of the origins of Greek philosophy is doubly interesting. First, because it remains (and will remain for the foreseeable future) an

² Warburg 1920; translation from Gombrich 1970: 208. On Warburg’s personality, the background to his intellectual work, and his interest in the irrational (strongly influenced by his fear of the anti-Semitism in his environment) see Schoell-Glass 1998.

³ We must for example ask how Cassirer—who had little sympathy for Hegel—constructs his history of philosophy and the sciences (cf. Cassirer 1925).

⁴ See Bohrer 2010.

⁵ In the field considered here (the Presocratics) see Gemelli Marciano 2007: 373 ff., for an example of this type of historicism, based on a pragmatic approach to human behaviour. On ‘experience’ see *eadem* 2008.

⁶ My approach is indebted, for its general perspective, to the work of Jean Bollack (see for example Bollack 2000); it does not necessarily endorse specific interpretations of particular passages or authors.

obligatory point of reference for narratives dealing with the history of reason, not only from a Western point of view;⁷ second, in a more technical perspective, because the structure of our sources and the processes by which they have been transmitted raise at every step the question whether the informant—on whom the historian is dependent, but whom he must always distrust—“rationalizes” (in a sense of the term to be clarified below) the information he provides, or not—or to what extent.

From many possibilities I have selected two examples, both clearly belonging to the ‘origin’ stage, chosen both for their intrinsic interest and for their notable differences. Parmenides the logician: *also* the mystic? Empedocles the natural philosopher: *also* the magician? This is a Warburgian formulation: it has advantages over the simplifying move of those who in their anxiety to avoid constructions imposed by later philosophical sources insist that Parmenides was *essentially* a mystic and Empedocles *essentially* a sorcerer.⁸ But in fact, juxtaposition is not the best available model for thinking about the relation between the terms of the opposition. Rationalization (in a certain sense of the term), in conjunction with referentiality, must also be taken into account. Parmenides and Empedocles illustrate here two ways, the one fairly straightforward, the other more problematic, in which this model operates.

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We can now see—despite the mythical constructions of some conspicuously rationalist histories of reason—that it is absurd to claim Greece as the birthplace of reason, or even of science or philosophy. But this does not imply, of course, that the Greeks did not produce a new form (or forms) of reason. This was fully recognized by J.-P. Vernant, for example, when in his early works (strongly influenced by Marxism), he calls Greek rationality the daughter of the (also distinctively Greek) city-state—a city which according to him is itself pervaded by a new rationality.⁹ But the attempt to demythologize rationality, which is part of Vernant’s programme (there is no such thing as the ‘Greek miracle’), has also been influenced since the late nineteenth century by a critique of the Enlightenment still alive in many forms, especially—in the case of Greek studies—in an insistence on the ‘other’ of Greek rationality, which has been marginalized or simply suppressed by the blind spots of naive rationalism.¹⁰

⁷ This is one thing I learned from S. Humphreys’ work in general and from the *Modernity’s Classics* project in particular. See also Lloyd and Sivin 2002.

⁸ I refer to the work—often, it should be said, highly instructive—of P. Kingsley and L. Gemelli, to which I shall return below.

⁹ Vernant 1962; cf. Humphreys 2009.

¹⁰ Dodds 1951 remains basic; a history of the elimination of the irrational would be worth writing.

As we have seen, Warburg represents the relation between the rational and the irrational as simple coexistence—better, as an atemporal polarity. I see it, instead, as part of a (doubly) dynamic process.¹¹ ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ are not treated here as substantive invariants but as the intrinsically unstable terms of a functional relationship (which does not exclude recurrences, analogical developments, or—despite the temporal implications of the term ‘rationalization’—regressions¹²). Moreover, the term ‘rationalization’ itself is entangled in contradictory evaluations, depending on whether the process is considered positive or negative, legitimate or illicit. Where it is judged illegitimate and subjective, there is emphasis on elimination of the irrational, a specific example of “fear of the irrational.”¹³ In this case rationalizations must be uncovered and where appropriate denounced. Psychoanalysis, while recognizing the need for such secondary elaborations in normal life, works with this negative evaluation. But there is also a place for a positive conception of rationalization, which would trace the introduction by critical perspectives, in the course of history, of new contents into inherited forms of thought, which in their earlier form may subsequently be classed as “irrational.” It is clearly essential to distinguish these two senses of ‘rationalization’. Indeed, one of the historian’s problems, as I have already pointed out, is to decide how to classify a specific datum: as representing a ‘positive’ rationalization of existing practices or as concealing an irrational element by ‘negative’ rationalization. The treatment in the history of the emergence of Greek rationality, and in particular of philosophical discourse, of phenomena belonging to the domain of “shamanism” or “magic”¹⁴ is a case in point. It is no wonder that Gernet discussed them in an article that may be considered the starting-point of Vernant’s *Origines*.¹⁵ While the new rationality may have been “daughter of the *polis*,” it was reacting *against* something—a ‘something’ that might be simply rejected but was also often (perhaps most often) integrated, by a process that reconfigured it and so changed its meaning. It is this process that interests me here.¹⁶

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¹¹ For an instructive analysis of a ‘dynamic’ process of rationalization in the sixth to fifth centuries B.C.E. see Humphreys 1986. In preference to her term “dialogue,” which emphasizes the mutually constraining forces at work in the process of constructing the dichotomy rational/irrational, I use “reference,” which *i.a.* leaves space for a more active conception of authorship.

¹² See especially Cassirer 1949. The point is missed by those who object to the formulation “from myth to reason:” see (typically) the introduction to Buxton 1999.

¹³ On one form of this fear see Yates 1979.

¹⁴ I do not attempt here to define these terms precisely or consider their relevance to the Greek case. For serious doubts see Macris 2003, at 268ff., with bibliography in nn. 116–18. For “shamanism” see e.g. Zhmud 1997: 107ff.; for “magic,” Bremmer 1999a. Cf. also Bremmer 1999b.

¹⁵ Gernet 1945; on Gernet see Humphreys 1971.

¹⁶ Failure to distinguish between the two senses of the term “rationalization” weakens the otherwise interestingly balanced account of Morgan 2000 (which I regret to have missed in Laks 2006). For her use of the term “rationalization,” coupled with “allegory” (also taken in a restricted sense), see esp. p. 65f.

As is well known, Max Weber in his *Protestant Ethic* mentions Greek rationalism, along with Jewish, as one of the two direct sources of Calvinist rationalism: “that great historic process in the development of religions, the ‘demagification’¹⁷ of the world, which had begun with the old Jewish prophets and, in conjunction with Greek scientific thought, had repudiated all *magical* means to salvation as superstitious and impious, came here [sc. in Calvinism] to its logical conclusion.”¹⁸

In Weber’s usage, “magic” does not only refer to magical practices, but more generally characterizes the polar complement to the “demagified” world, and thus includes, in particular, all functions of “charismatic” type. However, the concept of “demagification” does refer also to “magic” as a specific type of activity: thus we expect—in the instances discussed here—shamanism to be “deshamanized,” and magic “demagified.” Each of my two cases—the introduction or “proem” of Parmenides’ poem, and two fragments of Empedocles—in its own way illustrates a form of rationalization. One of the interests in combining them lies in the difference between the two examples.

Parmenides’ Initiatic Journey

The main body of Parmenides’ poem has two parts: a first section about truth (*Aletheia*), which formulates the properties of Being, and a second characterized as representing erroneous mortal opinion (*Doxa*), which embarks on a narrative account of the formation of the world and its constituent parts for which the ontological principles of the preceding section provide no sufficient basis.¹⁹ The whole poem presents itself as an account (often called “revelation”) delivered by a nameless goddess to an exceptional mortal, a ‘me’ who may be identified as Parmenides himself. The “proem” explains the circumstances of this extraordinary meeting. The narrator, represented as a youth (*kouros*) who is both purposeful and adept (*eidôs*),²⁰ arrives after a strange cosmic voyage at the home of a goddess who teaches him about “everything:”

¹⁷ *Entzauberung* is usually translated “disenchantment” (Parsons, see n. 18 below, has “elimination of magic”); *Zauber* does mean “spell,” “enchantment,” but *Zauberer* is a sorcerer. “Magic” here is *magisch* in the original (both terms underlined by Weber).

¹⁸ Weber 1905; translation here from Weber 1930, slightly modified.

¹⁹ There have been a number of attempts to deny this rupture and construct continuity between the two sections. The view presupposed here is that there is a radical rupture within a relative continuity (see Laks 2004:7f.).

²⁰ Purposeful like the mares that draw his chariot, (ll.1f.); *eidôs* l.3; *kouros* l. 24. Burkert (1969, at n. 32) notes the use of “kouros” for an initiate; cf. also Cosgrove 1974.

Parmenides, B1 D.-K.²¹

The mares that carry me as far as desire might go
 Were bringing me onwards, after they had conducted and set me down on the much-
 famed path
 Of the divinity, the path that carries through all the towns²² the man who knows.
 It was on this path that I was being carried: for on it the much-knowing horses were
 carrying me,
 Straining at the chariot, and maidens were leading the way.
 The axle in the naves emitted the whistle of a pipe
 As it flamed (for it was pressed hard by two whirling
 Wheels, one on each side) when the maidens of the Sun
 Hastened to bring me, after they had left behind the palace of Night
 Towards the light²³ and had pushed back the veils from their heads with their hands.
 That is where the gates of the roads of Night and Day are,
 And a lintel and a stone threshold hold them apart.
 The ethereal gates are blocked by great doors,
 And much-punishing Justice holds the alternating keys.
 The maidens, cajoling her with gentle words,
 Wisely persuaded her to thrust quickly back for them
 The bolted bar from the gates. And when these flew open
 They made a yawning gap where the doors had been, rotating in turn
 In their sockets the bronze pivots fastened with pegs and rivets. There, through them,
 The maidens guided the chariot and horses straight along the thoroughfare.
 And the goddess welcomed me kindly, took my right hand
 In her hand, spoke these words and addressed me:
 “Young man, you who, accompanied by deathless charioteers,
 Have come to our residence with the mares that carry you,
 I greet you: for it is no evil fate that has sent you to travel
 This path (for indeed it is remote from the steps of men),
 But Right and Justice. It is necessary that you learn everything,
 Both the unshakeable heart of persuasive²⁴ truth
 And the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true trust.”

We owe our knowledge of this prologue to the Sceptic philosopher Sextus Empiricus,²⁵ who would not have cited it in his long history of truth-criteria if an earlier tradition of interpretation, which he follows, had not already allegorically transformed, that is rationalized, the fantastic voyage (implicitly taken as mythical) into a philosophical statement. Clearly Parmenides’ proem must have generated some embarrassment in the philosophical tradition—analogueous, *mutatis mutandis*, to that aroused by Homer’s religious lapses. The lesson that Sextus draws from the

²¹ The following translation has been revised by Glenn W. Most. I have introduced line-breaks to mark semantic units.

²² The text is uncertain; for the reading adopted here see Leshner 1994.

²³ On the construction adopted here, see below, pp. 172–3.

²⁴ Or “well rounded,” according to another reading.

²⁵ *Against the Grammarians* VII. 111.

proem is that “Parmenides takes scientific reason to be the criterion of truth of existing things, rejecting sensation” (§114). This idea could have been found elsewhere, in particular in the passage classed by modern scholars as ll. 2–7 of Fr. 7 (“and let not habit, imbued by experience, force you on this road to depend on an unfocussed eye or a buzzing ear and language; instead, settle by argument (*logos*) the richly controversial test I have set you”²⁶). However, to use the proem rather than this subsequent explicit statement has the advantage, from Sextus’ point of view (or that of his source), of giving Parmenides’ epistemology pride of place in the structure of the poem and so producing a scholastically satisfying sequence (the instruments of learning preceding the matter to which they are applied). The mares (l. 1) thus represent for Sextus “the impulses and irrational desires of the soul;” the road to the goddess (l. 2) is “the doctrine that conforms to philosophical reason;” the daughters of l. 5 are the senses, while the Daughters of the Sun in l. 9 are the eyes. The chariot wheels (l. 7) represent the ears; Justice, who clasps the bolts, is “the thought that grasps matters firmly,” while “the unshaking heart of persuasive truth” (l. 29) is the “changeless seat of truth,” and “mortals’ opinions” (l. 30) are “everything that depends on opinion, because it is unstable.” These identifications strike us as arbitrary and in a sense irrational (this is the paradox of allegorizing rationalization). But their overall Platonizing inspiration is clear: it comes in a direct line from the central myth of the *Phaedrus*, in which a chariot becomes the “image” of the soul.²⁷

Modern interpreters have been no less intrigued by the ‘mythical’ framework enclosing a discourse that explicitly aligns itself with the rigours of argument.²⁸ They too have often enough engaged in allegorical readings, even if these—while sometimes taking directions or even using elements of interpretation already present in Sextus—are considerably more plausible.

²⁶ These lines are quoted by Sextus in direct continuation of the proem. That this is not an error in textual transmission (as suggested by Deichgräber 1958: 646) is confirmed by Sextus’ remark in § 114: “besides, at the end, he clearly states that we do not need to use sensation, but reason” (see Reinhardt 1916: 34).

²⁷ The existence of a (neo)Platonic reading of Parmenides’ proem is clear from Hermias’ commentary on *Phaedrus* 246a, which notes that Homer, Hesiod, and Parmenides (“the divinely inspired poets”) had before Plato used the image of chariot and horses to represent the soul (Couvreur 1901, p. 122.19). The interpretation reported by Sextus has often been associated with the Platonizing Stoic Posidonius, especially because it gives the senses (represented by “ears” and “sight”) a role in the acquisition of knowledge. This view, if correct, clashes with Sextus’ use of the passage (according to which Parmenides relies on reason only), but this does not mean that it is false: Sextus or his source might simply have misused it.

²⁸ The goddess herself requires her protégé to “judge by reason” (B 7 5f., cited above). This passage from the outset relativizes her “revelation” (cf. Bodnar 1989; Granger 2008, at p. 16). Kingsley 2003: 140 and 566–8, gets round this intrusion of reason by emending the instrumental dative *logôî* into a genitive, *logou*, which can then be translated “account.” I shall return on another occasion to this very interesting manoeuvre.

We may distinguish two main types of interpretation, in principle independent of each other even if sometimes combined.²⁹

The first, ‘subject-based’ approach takes up the idea that Parmenides’ voyage represents an epistemological process. Rather than dealing with the chariot and its parts, it concentrates on the journey. Thus H. Diels (followed by H. Fränkel among others) sees the equipage as leaving the dark kingdom of mortal error to ascend to the luminous realm of truth, guided by the Daughters of the Sun, who both draw Parmenides’ chariot and persuade Justice to let it in through the gates of the goddess’s home (ll. 5, 9f., 15f.).³⁰ This interpretation makes sense of some elements of the voyage not mentioned by Sextus (though he could easily have accommodated them): for example, the gates can be taken as a kind of epistemological threshold that must be crossed by anyone possessing authentic knowledge.³¹ Above all, it may seem less arbitrary than Sextus’ reading, due to the apparently (though not really) natural association of darkness with ignorance and light with knowledge.³² Deichgräber adds in a Platonical vein that the journey, in addition to representing progress towards knowledge, also depicts the fulfilment of a soul seeking enlightenment under the impetus of philosophical *eros*.³³

The second approach concentrates entirely on the cosmological—hence ‘objective’—elements of the proem, which play hardly any part in Sextus’ reading. There are indeed clear links between the proem and the rest of the poem, especially its second section.³⁴ A passage in Aetius’ doxographic compendium³⁵ tells us that Parmenides’ world had a solid casing round it “like a wall” (*teikhous diken*: the image certainly goes back to Parmenides). Some have connected this wall with the gates through which Parmenides’ chariot passes in the proem, even going so far as to suppose that the gates were set in it.³⁶ Another opportunity for a cosmological reading is provided by the description of Parmenides’ destination as the pivotal point for the alternation of day and night.³⁷ This insistence on a basic metabolism of the universe (of special importance to mankind) is evidently related to Parmenides’ cosmological doctrine that luminous flame and dark night are the two primary constituents of the world.³⁸ The recurrent alternation of day and night recalls the

²⁹ As in Deichgräber 1958.

³⁰ Diels 1897: 7, speaks of “Die grandiose Himmelfahrt, mit der unserer Dichter sich und uns in den Aether der reinen Vernunft erhebt.” Showing that the poem was an allegory, and a threadbare (*dürftige*) one at that (p. 9), was an essential part of Diels’ case against the view (represented by H. Stein 1867, cf. p. 3f.) that Parmenides’ work displays high poetic quality. Cf. also Diels 1922.

³¹ Cf. Fränkel 1930 (1960: 161; 1975: 5).

³² See Bowra 1937.

³³ Deichgräber 1958: 703 (but without reference to the *Phaedrus*).

³⁴ For traces of a cosmological reading of the poem already in antiquity, see Laks 2003: 16f.

³⁵ Aetius, *Placita* II.7.1 = 28 A 37 DK. On the meaning of this important and controversial passage see Bollack 1990: 17ff.

³⁶ Mansfeld 1964: 245. This hypothesis is characteristic of Mansfeld’s quasi-literal reading of the proem (see below, nn. 53–4).

³⁷ B 1.11 DK.

³⁸ B 8.55-9, B 9 DK.

fundamental equality of these two cosmological elements, and thus presents the two forces as unified, despite their contrasting properties. Thus the succession of day and night serves as an emblematic image of the mechanism of the universe that the goddess will reveal.³⁹

All these linkages do not, of course, imply that Parmenides' voyage may be allegorically deciphered as taking place *in* his cosmos, thus making it possible to read it 'literally'. It is, for example, far from clear that the walls of the universe would have gates: onto what would they open? Whether the "gap" (*khasma akhanes*, l. 19) is taken to correspond to Hesiod's "chaos" beyond the gates,⁴⁰ or to their wide opening onto a road beyond them on which the chariot embarks,⁴¹ there is no place for a vacuum or anything else beyond the limits of Parmenides' universe. Moreover, it is hard to see how the solid—hence dark—wall of the universe could have gates that the proem describes as *made of* ether; cosmologically, the wall should instead be homogeneous and compact to hold in the expansive force of ether—yet in the proem the ethereal gates (complemented by a stone threshold) are set at the point of junction of day and night, where the goddess dwells. It is also absurd to think that Parmenides' journey followed the path of the sun round the earth.⁴² Parmenides' presence at the crossroads of day and night does not imply that he is projecting himself into the centre of his celestial mechanism.

But while a cosmologically 'literal' reading of the proem is doomed to failure, it remains true that proem and cosmology are linked in a particular combination of unmistakable allusions with referential suppleness. The force of the linkage comes from the presence in the two texts of identical or matching elements; its suppleness from the fact that their relationship—their syntax, one might say—varies from one context to the other. Once this distinction between the terms of the relationship and their syntax has been recognized, however close the fit between the proem and the rest of the poem may seem to be, they can never be superimposed.

These linkages—which produce both homologies and differences—tend indeed to proliferate, especially if the analysis moves on from a literal conception of cosmological elements to a series of more formal, quasi-ontological features. We have already seen that the succession of day and night, in a way, points to the unity of opposites. But the chariot and gates can be given an analogous interpretation. Scholars have often been struck by the precision with which they are described.⁴³

³⁹ Primavesi 2005 (at pp. 81f.) centres his analysis on the homology between the apparent duality of day and night—both issuing from (the home of) night—and the duality of flame and darkness, both likewise "coming from" unity. This notion of "unified duality" already occurs in Deichgräber 1958 (see below, n. 45).

⁴⁰ Cf. Morrison 1955, at p. 60; Burkert 1969: 12, who paraphrases, "Das Offene, Halt- und Bodenlose, Leere"; Mourelatos 1970: 15; Kingsley 1999: 15.

⁴¹ On this point see Granger 2008: 13.

⁴² As in Kranz 1916, at 1159f.; Bowra 1937: 104; Guthrie 1965: 7.

⁴³ Significantly, the analysis first presented as an appendix in Diels 1897 ("Über altgriechische Thüren und Schlösser," 117–51) later became a chapter in Diels 1914.

This is not merely a stylistic issue;⁴⁴ both chariot and gates have features that recall the general structure of the cosmos, especially what Deichgräber calls its “unified duality.”⁴⁵ The chariot wheels—circular like rings, or like Being (B 8, 43)—are twofold. Each is set at an end of the axle that holds them together; the adverb *amphoterôthen* might look redundant if taken as merely descriptive.⁴⁶ The door has two main components, frame and leaves: two leaves and two pivots, each pair forming a unity. The chariot-axle has the same function as the door-bolt.⁴⁷ Deichgräber, who has compiled a suggestive list of these complementary elements, notes: “The essential point is that we never find a simple juxtaposition; the two elements are always seen or thought of as standing in an antithetical relation which is, as it were, subordinate to unity.”⁴⁸

Some sort of allegory—there is no reason not to call such a reading ‘allegorical’—is thus arguably relevant for deciphering a text that is deliberately using certain codes. But one may wonder whether this ‘rationalizing’ mode of analysis is appropriate for understanding Parmenides’ proem. W. Burkert, in particular, has developed a counter-interpretation that might be called ‘anthropological’ since it connects Parmenides’ journey to archaic religious and social practices.⁴⁹ This reading not only rejects any kind of allegorical interpretation, it also substantially modifies in an important point the philological interpretation on which it was based, questioning the view that light and darkness in the proem stand for truth and error, and that Parmenides is travelling upwards into the light of truth.

This latter idea, which one might be tempted to derive from Plato (exit from the Cave), rests on a specific reading of ll. 9f., and on the assumption that the chariot comes to an “ethereal” region.⁵⁰ The latter point is certainly debatable: even if the gate (notwithstanding its stone threshold) should be taken as representing the luminosity of ether, it serves as an entrance, and nothing suggests that it opens onto a realm of light. The problem of lines 9ff. is more intricate. The traditional reading of these lines is based on the punctuation (a comma, printed or understood, after *nuktos*) by virtue of which the prepositional group *eis phaos* (“towards the light”) depends on the infinitive *pempein* (“escort”).⁵¹ By this reading the

⁴⁴ Pace Fränkel 1930 (1975: 5, “The use of such concrete details is merely an archaic method of emphasis, used to attract attention”). In any case, there is no incompatibility between allegory and detailed realism (cf. Kurz 1982: 54f.).

⁴⁵ Deichgräber 1958: 666ff.

⁴⁶ B 1.6-8 DK.

⁴⁷ As Deichgräber, *ibid.* p. 669, notes, *okheus* (bolt) comes from *echô* (hold), which plays an important role in the poem: Necessity, in particular, “holds” what is within its limits (B 8, 30ff. DK).

⁴⁸ Deichgräber 1958: 666f. For a specific aspect of the relation between duality and unity see now Primavesi 2005.

⁴⁹ Burkert 1969.

⁵⁰ B 1.13 DK. Cf. Burkert *ibid.* 11.

⁵¹ The comma was supplied by Diels 1897: 28.

Daughters of the Sun lead the youth “towards the light;” but objections are possible. Are we to suppose that the youth, before his departure, *and* the Heliadae were in darkness?⁵² Moreover, and more importantly, the lexical evidence prompts one to take *eis phaos* with the participle *prolipousai* (*proleipein eis* is a regular construction).⁵³ In this reading ll. 9f. concern only the Daughters of the Sun: they have left their home (the dwelling of Night), and by so doing are moving *ipso facto* towards the light; they have fetched the youth and are now taking him to the home of the goddess—who would be, according to the evidence of Hesiod and Stesichorus, Night.⁵⁴

This reconstruction (whose validity I shall not discuss here⁵⁵) confirmed for Burkert the view—first propounded by Diels—that Parmenides’ voyage belonged to a tradition of religious initiation to be connected with shamanism and Orphism:⁵⁶ a reading that in a way normalizes Parmenides’ proem. Furley sums up the change of perspective well: “the journey is not a new style of allegory but a *katabasis* belonging to a familiar genre.”⁵⁷ This ‘anthropological’ reading, by restoring a context that the philosophical tradition had removed, would also be in a way a ‘literal’ reading, of a different kind from that which localizes the proem in Parmenides’ cosmology, but even more literal, since it would reflect Parmenides’ actual mystical experience.⁵⁸

This recontextualization, however, hardly resolves by itself the problems that have intrigued both ancient and modern readers of the proem and have motivated

⁵² Gigon 1945: 246; *contra*, Burkert 1969: 8.

⁵³ This construction was first defended by Mansfeld 1964: 238f., and is accepted by Burkert 1969: 7f. Most recently, Gemelli 2008: 33f., n. 35.

⁵⁴ We have evidence for the view that the sun spends time in the home of Night, beyond Ocean, at the edge of the world in Stesichorus F 185 *PMG* and Hesiod *Theogony* 748ff. On this mythical topography see Ballabriga 1986. Cf. Morrison 1955: 59; Mansfeld, *op. cit.* 237; Burkert p. 9; Furley 1973 (Furley 1989, at p. 28). Thus Parmenides’ voyage could be envisaged as heading for darkness rather than light. Kingsley 1999: 93ff., goes further, identifying the nameless goddess as Persephone; good critique in Granger, “Proem,” emphasizing that the goddess’s anonymity is only one aspect of a depersonalization intrinsic to the whole poem, to be seen in terms of something like the universality of reason. On depersonalization as a process see further Laks 2004.

⁵⁵ Burkert’s reading of ll. 9f (now generally accepted) is certainly possible, but not mandatory: cf. Granger 2008: 12, “The stubborn fact remains... that the text may bear the readings of both interpretations of the youth’s direction.” Bollack 2006a does not even mention it.

⁵⁶ Diels 1897: 9–22, especially 16, 21. Diels however defends the allegorical reading of the proem and obviously does not rely on his construction of ll. 9f., since his comma confirms the view of the journey as an ascent. Kingsley (e.g. 1999: 101ff.) proposes a radical version of the shamanist thesis, seeing Parmenides as a “healer seer” (*iatromantis*) practising incubation according to the tradition of the family Ouliadae, to which—as we now know from an inscription discovered in 1962 (*Supplementum epigraphicum graecum* 38.1020.4/53.1114.2)—he belonged. This view is having a successful career: see Schibli 1999; Gemelli 2008.

⁵⁷ Furley 1973 (Furley 1989: 28). A *katabasis* is a descent into the world of the dead.

⁵⁸ This position is perfectly expressed by Gemelli, *op. cit.*

the various allegorical readings—even if it might lead one to reformulate them. In the first place it has nothing to say about the (objectively present) links between the proem and the rest of the poem.⁵⁹ Admittedly, since I wrote this in 2003, the supporters of the ‘mystical’ reading have brushed this objection aside by simply insisting that the main body of the poem (especially the second part) is itself an expression of lived mystical experience,⁶⁰ conveyed in an ecstatic song devoid of any logical argumentation.⁶¹ This is hardly the place to discuss in detail what seems to me a regression back to modern irrationalism not only in relation to Warburg, who was interested in the coexistence of opposing dimensions, but also in relation to the works of Burkert himself, which still leave some room for ambivalence.⁶² Here I will only insist on the fact—essential in a discussion of processes of rationalization—that Parmenides’ proem is patently a *referential* text. One might even say, given the large number of identifiable allusions not only to Homer and Hesiod but also to traditions that can be found in Pindar and Stesichorus⁶³ (these would probably be more numerous if we had access to lost works), that Parmenides uses reference as a formal structural principle. Moreover, the way in which he uses his references clearly indicates that he does not accept the tradition to which he refers. This is not specially original; on the contrary, the function of reference is usually to signal distance or difference from the referent.⁶⁴ If Parmenides is original, from a formal point of view, it is only in the density of his network of allusions. Thus: he alludes to the mares of Achilles—but they are not the hero’s; to Hesiod’s Tartarus, home of the sun, and crossroads of day and night—but not according to Hesiod’s conception; to the scene of the poet enthroned by the Muses—but he is an adept, not a shepherd; to the tradition of the poet’s chariot—but it is not the same vehicle;⁶⁵ to the complex relation between truth and fiction as illustrated in Homer and Hesiod—but a different complexity; and so forth. The important point is that in this perspective, there is no reason to deny referential

⁵⁹ This is recognized by Burkert 1969: 16. It is not a new situation: Deichgräber 1958, summarizing the history of modern studies up to Fränkel 1930, could already write (p. 638): “Die Philologen, so sehr sie bemüht waren, Parmenides Auffahrt zur Göttin historisch, z.B. von orphischen Vorstellungen her zu verstehen, haben kaum den Versuch gemacht, eine Sinnlichkeit von Prooimion und Philosophie des Eleaten aufzuzeigen.”

⁶⁰ Gemelli 2008: 26, referring to Kingsley 2003.

⁶¹ E.g. Gemelli *op. cit.* 32.

⁶² For a salutary reaction to the views of Kingsley and Gemelli on the non-argumentative nature of Parmenides’ thinking, see most recently Granger 2010.

⁶³ These references have often been traced and listed: see now Granger 2008.

⁶⁴ In this sense Parmenides is an “author” like any other, as defined by Bollack 2006b.

⁶⁵ Gemelli 2008: 27f., argues against the view that Parmenides’ chariot belongs to a poetic tradition (though the tradition is well attested); the analogy would be “superficial.” She fails to see that a reference does not imply acceptance of the image in question; and it is really absurd to oppose a “religious” tradition (chariot of Apollo, mares of the *Hymn to Demeter*) to a “literary” one. These references may also come into play but, by definition, no reference determines the sense of the passage in which it is used.

status to initiation or mystical experience itself. Even if one came to accept that Parmenides had actually had, and recounted, a mystical experience (Descartes himself, after all, had a dream one night in November 1619), this bit of biographical information would tell us nothing about how logic and ontology, for the first time in the history of Western thought, got “grafted onto the trunk” of initiation practices. As things stand, Parmenides may best be seen as inaugurating the long philosophical tradition which, after him, constructs philosophical teaching on the model of initiation to the mysteries:⁶⁶ a very striking example of formal rationalization.

Empedocles and Magic

In terms of the problematics of rationalization Parmenides is a relatively simple case. That of Empedocles is both structurally different and trickier—so, perhaps, more interesting. Unlike Parmenides’ “I,” who—in the guise of an indeterminate “youth”—can easily be seen as an intellectual construct, Empedocles, whose characteristics are explicit and expressly claimed, seems directly attached to an identifiable social role.

Empedocles has always figured under the rubric of a pair of fundamental alternatives which can roughly be characterized as ‘philosophy’ (or ‘science’) and ‘religion’. The modern opposition builds on an old division. Ancient scholars, using the language of scholastic affiliation, disputed whether Empedocles was the disciple of Parmenides or Pythagoras,⁶⁷ i.e. whether he was primarily concerned with ontology and cosmology or with eschatology and the fate of the soul. Modern scholars ask how the poem traditionally titled *On Nature* is related to the *Purifications* (*Katharmoi*), which draw on Orphic theories of reincarnation.⁶⁸ But this opposition between the natural philosopher and the religious thinker is doubled by a second, more specific one. Not only is Empedocles placed somewhere between philosophical science and religion; he also has characteristics of a “magician.”⁶⁹ At least two fragments, plus a series of testimonies, clearly identify him as a “wonderworker.” And while the problem of reconciling ‘philosophy’ or ‘science’ with ‘religion’ may by now have lost some of its urgency—whatever the terms in

⁶⁶ Cf. Riedweg 1987.

⁶⁷ Diogenes Laertius VIII. 54–5.

⁶⁸ See for example Reinhardt 1950. The data, and the debate, have been reinvigorated—but not in principle altered—by the publication of the Strasburg papyrus (Martin and Primavesi 1998). Some interpreters had already argued for a unified reading of Empedocles’ work: a single poem, a single doctrine (Osborne 1997). This position, however, still runs into several difficulties. I have dealt with the relation between the two poems several times, most recently in a critical discussion of Bollack 2003 (Laks 2010).

⁶⁹ Magic, religion, philosophy: three terms of a classic anthropological schema (going back at least to Comte): see Keck 2002.

which, in Empedocles' case, the solution is couched⁷⁰—this is not the case for the relation between philosophy/science and magic/miracle working. Admittedly, if historians of ancient philosophy had noticed the by now familiar stress in the history of science on the coexistence of enlightenment and the occult, quantification and alchemy, astronomy and astrology—in short, the rational and the irrational—in thinkers such as Giordano Bruno and Kepler,⁷¹ there would perhaps be less embarrassment about the whole matter. Empedocles, described by E. Renan as “a mixture of Newton and Cagliostro,” could even be seen as a forebear of the Janus-headed ancestors of modern rationality—especially since, in his case like theirs, the evidence for ‘irrationality’ was for a long time minimized or eliminated. One may also ask, however—before accepting Warburg’s “polarity” (as in the examples just mentioned)—whether Empedocles’ magic, like Parmenides’ initiation, should not also be seen as “referential” in the sense adumbrated above.⁷²

The main evidence on Empedocles’ miracles comes from book VIII of Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives and Opinions of the Famous Philosophers*, especially §§58b-62, whose leading theme is precisely Empedocles as “magician.”⁷³

Satyros says in his *Lives* that he was also a physician and an excellent orator; and that in any case Gorgias of Leontini, a man preeminent in oratory who published an *Art* of it, was his pupil Satyros reports that this man [i.e. Gorgias] said that he himself was present when Empedocles performed magic. Indeed, he says that in his poems Empedocles promises this and much else when he says:

As many remedies as there are for ills, and protection against old age—
 You will learn them, since for you alone I myself will accomplish all this.
 You will stop the force of tireless winds that onto the earth
 Rush down and destroy the fields with their blasts;
 And in turn, if you wish, you will bring back breezes in requital.
 You will make a seasonable dryness out of a black rain-cloud
 For men, and you will also make out of a summer dryness
 Tree-nourishing streams that dwell in the ether.
 And you will bring out of Hades the strength of a man who has died.
 (31 B 111 DK)

⁷⁰ The question now is not so much about the ‘compatibility’ of the two orientations as about the type of unity presupposed, both in systemic and in material terms (two titles, one poem?).

⁷¹ See Yates 1964; Simon 1979. As for Ficino, he belongs to the main neoplatonist tradition, in which the legitimacy of Iamblichus’ theurgy was already a controversial issue.

⁷² I deliberately leave aside Kingsley’s reductive position, according to which magic is Empedocles’ *essential* determination, to which the all the information we have about him should be subordinated (Kingsley 1995; see also the second part of Kingsley 2003). Kingsley’s aim is thus to detach Empedocles from the tradition of history of philosophy (which goes back to Plato and Aristotle) and reinsert him into the history of “magic” not only —so to speak—upstream, “magic” here being a term for archaic shamanism, but also downstream, in the later history of ancient and medieval alchemy. Kingsley stresses that Empedocles is claimed as a forerunner by the tradition of esoteric alchemy—which is hardly conclusive, since he is only one of nine Presocratics so characterized. However, the fact that he is the only Presocratic miracle-worker may (regardless of doctrinal affinities) explain what made him attractive to the alchemists.

⁷³ The following translation has been revised by Glenn W. Most. Paragraphs 67b-75, dealing with Empedocles’ death, also contain a series of data relevant to this context, but I cannot deal with them here.

Timaeus too in the 18th book [*scil.* of his *Histories*] reports that this man [i.e. Empedocles] caused astonishment in many ways. For instance, once when the Etesian winds blew violently so that they damaged the crops, he ordered that asses be flayed and bags be made of their skin, then he stretched these out around the hills and headlands to catch the wind; because it abated, he was called the “wind-stopper.” Heraclides in his book *On Diseases* says that he also taught Pausanias about the breathless woman [. . .]. In any case Heraclides reports that it [*scil.* the case of the breathless woman] was like this: for thirty days he preserved her body without breath and without pulsation; and for this reason Heraclides called him both a physician and a diviner, deriving this from the following lines as well:

Friends, you who dwell in the great city beside the yellow Acragas
 On the lofty citadel and who care for good deeds,
 I greet you. I, who for you am an immortal god, no longer mortal,
 I go amongst you, honored, as is appropriate,
 Crowned with ribbons and with blooming garlands;
 < > whenever I arrive with these in the flourishing cities,
 By men and by women I am venerated. They follow me,
 Thousands of them, asking where is the road to profit,
 Some of them desiring prophecies, others for illnesses
 Of all kinds ask to hear a healing utterance.
 (31 B 112 DK, 1-2, 4-12)

This section of Diogenes Laertius, semantically unified under the triple rubric rhetoric/magic/medicine, is a good example of the way in which ancient biographers deduce information from an author’s works.⁷⁴ Two fragments come into question here, the second explicitly attributed by Diogenes to the *Purifications* (B 112 DK), whereas the first (B 111 DK = 12 Bollack) has been attributed by all modern editors since Diels to *On Nature*.

The texts deal with different situations. In B 111 the speaker (Empedocles) addresses a disciple (“you”), identifiable from a passage cited soon afterwards by Diogenes as Pausanias, and lists the powers that his teaching will confer.⁷⁵ The second fragment (B 112), addressed to the community of Empedocles’ friends in Agrigentum, gives a self-portrait of the same speaker, who as a “divine man” travels through the public spaces of various cities and is hailed there as a saviour. The main point of contact between the texts is that the various healing powers from which the crowds expect blessings have their counterpoint in the powers that the master’s teaching will transmit: the disciple too will be able to heal (*kaka*, ills, in B 111 corresponding to *nousoi*, illnesses, in B 112). But there are also clear differences, which can be related to the differences in context—pedagogical and initiatory in one case, public and social in the other. The crowd expects Empedocles not only to heal but also to deliver oracles, a function of the healer-seer (*iatromantis*) attested elsewhere in Greece and more widely in the ancient Near

⁷⁴ Cf. Chitwood 1986.

⁷⁵ This fragment (attributed by some earlier editors to the *Purifications*) was placed by Diels at the end of *On Nature*, a rather naive way of minimizing its importance (Van Groningen 1956 even denied its authenticity, another way of eliminating it). But Bollack (2003: 22) is right to recognize it as a programmatic announcement that should derive from a poem.

East.⁷⁶ However, the search for a prophylactic against old age—explicitly distinguished here from other ills—was hardly part of ordinary expectations. Moreover, Pausanias is told that he will learn how to “recall from Hades the vitality of a man who has died.” This extraordinary and outrageous declaration is separated from the more normal therapeutic claims made in the fragment, to conclude and crown—like the top circle of a spiral—an equally unexpected reference to powers over sky and weather.⁷⁷ Salvation is still the topic, but on a very different scale from that which is considered in the fragment from the *Purifications*: a scale, it seems, of total mastery.

The two passages in combination provide a coherent image of Empedocles as “sorcerer” or “magician.” Indeed, the corresponding Greek term *goēs*⁷⁸ plays a strategic role in the context of the quotations, since Diogenes cites B 111 to confirm the anecdote, reported by the Peripatetic biographer Satyros, that Gorgias had personally seen Empedocles practising magic (*autos pareie toi Empedoclei goeteuonti*, §59).

Actually, we should not give too much weight to this last indication, because Gorgias’ original claim may well be that he heard Empedocles bewitching his auditors *through his words*: an interpretation which would fit well with the fact that Empedocles was considered as the founder of rhetoric and Gorgias as his pupil.⁷⁹ On this reading, which provides a beautiful early example of the “demagification of the magician,” Empedocles is a “magician” in the sense that Gorgias is one.⁸⁰ This is the rationalization that Diogenes (or his source) both highlights and calls into question by choosing to treat Gorgias’ report of Empedocles as non-metaphorical; Diogenes cites B 111 precisely to show that Empedocles had (at least in regard to Pausanias) the ambitions of a genuine “magician”—not just an expert orator.

As a matter of fact, B 111, used by Diogenes to illustrate Empedocles’ actual sorcery, had together with the complementary B 112 from the *Purifications*, been subject already in antiquity to secondary, ‘rationalizing’ interpretations, trying to prove—as far as possible—that all the apparent references to magical practices could be explained away. These rationalizations, which Diogenes has collected,

⁷⁶ See Grottanelli 1982; Burkert 1983; Vegetti 1996; also Mauduit 1998; for the mystical version Kingsley 1999: 101ff. Further bibliography in Macris 2003.

⁷⁷ On the structures of this fragment see Bollack 2003: 20.

⁷⁸ For the history of the term see Burkert 1962.

⁷⁹ Empedocles the inventor of rhetoric: Diogenes Laertius §57 = Aristotle, fr. 65 and 70 Rose. Gorgias pupil of Empedocles: Diogenes Laertius §58.

⁸⁰ Burkert 1962 already speaks of the “disenchantment of the enchanter,” but here refers to the process by which the institutionalized role of sorcerer was transformed, in the new context of the city, into the figure of the “quack” (pp. 51f.). However, one can also see the sophists as representing a positive rationalization of rhetorical “magic.”

as if that had been his aim, concern “weather-mongering” and the revival of the dead.⁸¹

The historian Timaeus of Taormina (fourth to third centuries B.C.E.) evidently in his history of Sicily supplied a systematic rationalization of most of the claims made in B 111. Control over the weather is represented in Timaeus’ account (or what Diogenes preserves of it) by capturing the winds, a feat that had earned Empedocles the title *kolusanemas*, “wind-barrer.”⁸² To preserve the harvest from storm damage, Timaeus reports, Empedocles had made people fix donkey-skin bags along the crest of neighbouring hills, to create a barrier. This account deprives Empedocles’ corresponding promise of all magical content,⁸³ while at the same time explaining why his practical ingenuity gave him a reputation as “magician”—the term here becoming mere hyperbole. The historian says soberly, “He aroused admiration for many reasons”(Diogenes Laertius VIII 60).

We find an analogous schema in ancient explanations of Empedocles’ promise to resuscitate the dead. As he had blocked the winds he would indeed have revived a woman who had been in a coma for a week (in another version, 30 days)—not real death, but quasi-death. The ancient sources, which seem to come from a medical tradition, are more interested in the patient (designated by the technical term *apneic*, “the non-breather”) than in the healer and the cure, but what matters here is that miracle has been transformed into diagnosis and treatment, i.e. medical expertise.

Pliny, in a list of famous resuscitations (*Natural History* 7. 52.175), characteristically associates this case with those of Hermetimus, Aristeas, and Empedocles himself, all known for the out-of-body experiences of their souls (and hence often classed as “shamans” by modern interpreters). It was particularly easy to explain ecstasy or trance in the case of women: Pliny (or Heraclides Ponticus, whom he cites) uses the term “hysteria.”⁸⁴ One might prefer the (less sexist) version of Galen, who attributes the same woman’s coma to hypothermia;⁸⁵ in any case Galen, like Pliny, draws on a *medicalized* version of Empedocles’ claim.

Whether we are dealing with stopping the winds or raising the dead, the limits of rationalization are as evident as the fact of its presence. It is no accident that we get no explanation of the ability to arouse winds, or to bring or stop rain, although

⁸¹ One could also show that the accounts of Empedocles’ death are related equally closely to the characterization of him as “divine man” in B 112.

⁸² On “weather-mongering” in antiquity see Fiedler 1931, especially 21f. (on the philosophers). On the feats attributed to Pythagoras see Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 29 = Iamblichus MVP 135.

⁸³ This is certainly true for Timaeus (*FGH* 566 F 30), even if magical use of donkey-skins is attested elsewhere (Mauduit 1998: 243f.).

⁸⁴ “Women are particularly subject to this state, due to the displacement of the uterus. Heraclides’ famous book about a woman who comes back to life after being dead for seven days is a good example.” (Pliny, *loc.cit.*). See Lonie 1965 (Heraclides would have drawn on Plato’s gynaecology in *Timaeus* 90).

⁸⁵ *Peri dyspnoias* 1.5ff., VII.765ff. K., with reference to *Peri sphygmon* 766, 768.

B 111 explicitly makes these claims along with its reference to stopping winds. We may perhaps assume that ancient interpreters, being unable to think up suitable mechanisms for these cases, fell back on extracting kernels of fact from rhetorical exaggeration.

But if total rationalization is impossible, is it not safer to go for a 'literal' interpretation of Empedocles' promises? Does he not simply endorse the claim of being a sorcerer, and so able to teach magic? ('Literal', as in Parmenides' case, would primarily here mean reinserting the data into their 'primitive' socio-cultural context). All depends, in fact, on how we understand the action of 'claiming'. And this, in turn, depends on the view one takes concerning the relationship between this particular fragment and the rest of the work. Should we consider the explanation of natural processes, as it was deployed in Empedocles' poem, as a background for magical practice and expertise, or, on the contrary, read his claim in accordance with our conception of the purpose and the orientation of his work? The question, in other terms, is: how do you choose or construe the relevant context, social, and literary?⁸⁶

Certainly this is not a simple question, and it cannot be dealt with here, not even in the specific case at hand, because this would require an overall reconstruction of Empedocles' enterprise, and that is not the point of the present contribution (which focusses on methodology). But there are at least two possibilities for interpreting Empedocles' promise in a referential way. Jean Bollack has suggested that Empedocles' "magical" promises can be read as a set of impious statements whose transgressive boldness would be explicitly mitigated, in what immediately follows (B 3 DK = 14 Bollack), by a kind of recantation. One could wonder whether Empedocles is not, rather, displacing the extraordinary claims represented by the traditional figure of the sorcerer or *iatromantis*, saying perhaps: *if* such wonders are possible, as we are told, *then* you—and only you—will be able to perform them. This would amount to a proto-Cartesian programme, to be provocative, of "mastery and ownership over nature," which would also imply treating magic as "primitive science"—an ur-form of demagification, so to speak. The hermeneutically interesting point in this case, however, is that the referential move is so close to the phenomenon from which it distances itself that it risks passing unnoticed.

What I have tried to suggest by analysing the material presented above is threefold. First, that in the specific case of philosophy, the modern attempt to 'rationalize', in the sense of 'explain away' texts or utterances coming from authors implicitly endowed with the status of a 'classic', such as Parmenides and Empedocles, is deeply rooted indeed in ancient disciplinary practice; which is no great news. More important, I think, is to recognize that there is a sense in which 'rationalization' is not an *a posteriori* strategy, whether ancient or modern, for

⁸⁶ It is of course significant that ancient editors assigned B 111 to the *Purifications*. They could also have put it in the "medical treatise" sometimes attributed to Empedocles (perhaps as a way of preserving the scientific purity of *On Nature*).

sidelining the embarrassing features of a classical text, but a possible and—by certain standards at least—expected characteristic inherent in these texts themselves, in so far as they consciously engage in a process of remodelling tradition or a variety of traditions, instead of simply breaking with them. The third idea, which is also the most interesting (and also the most in need of further elaboration), is that one should not allow processes of positive rationalization to be ignored or suppressed because of the undeniable fact that negative rationalizations have often been and still are at work in history. In other terms, fear of the rational should not replace fear of the irrational, even if—or rather just because—we have by now become aware that rationality is a complex and sometimes even dangerous phenomenon.

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FGH=*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Edited by Felix Jacoby, *et. al.*, 1923–. Berlin: Weidmann/Leiden: Brill.

MVP (Iamblichus)=*De vita pythagorica liber*. 1937. Edited by Ludwig Deubner and Ulrich Klein. Leipzig: Teubner. 2nd edition 1975.

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Chapter 9

Towards an Anthropology of Reading

Sarah C. Humphreys

Summary “Anthropology of reading” in this paper means conceptions of the reader as a person and how reading shapes personhood. I attempt to deal with these questions both cross-culturally and diachronically, with the aim of asking what is peculiar about modern conceptions of reading, how they have affected the reading of ‘classics’, and how ‘classics’ might contribute to a new conception of reading.

An earlier book about a significant moment in the reception of ‘classic’ texts, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (Grafton and Jardine 1986), was an explicit response to a sense of crisis in humanities education. Since that time the situation has worsened; teachers in the humanities have signally failed to explain to governments, students, or the general public what is valuable in their work and how it equips students with skills needed in contemporary society. Like George Steiner,¹ I see reading as a central issue. We assume that a reader must be able to ‘interpret’ what s/he reads: but what kind of supplementation or interaction is implied here? Is ‘interpretation’ something acquired from outside the text, or something put into it—as a musician interprets a score, or an actor interprets a script?

Two groundbreaking books by Wolfgang Iser (1972, 1976) presented reading as a dialogue between readers and texts that already tried to shape their responses. Since that time there has been an increasing amount of research on the history of reading and of the book, though much of it has concentrated on the Western world.²

¹ While I agree with Steiner (1989) on the harmfulness of modern ‘interpretation’ (see also Fotiadis, this volume), I focus on action rather than transcendence.

² See e.g. Chartier 1995; Cavallo and Chartier 1995. Jacob and Giard 2001, 2003 is a comparative study of ancient civilizations; there is as yet no equivalent for the modern period. See also Chatterjee 1995 for Bengal; Yu 2003 for China; Messick 1993 for some aspects of Islamic textuality; and further bibliography cited below.

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Dehaene 2007 and Iser 1981 deal with reading from the point of view of cognitive anthropology: the relation of reading to brain structures and to the capacity to handle fiction. What I want to do here, however, is neither a study of universal human characteristics nor a survey of the sociology of reading (who can read, what they read, etc.), but instead what should perhaps more precisely be called an ethno-anthropology of reading: a study of varying conceptions of the reader as a person and what reading does to/for readers. My aim in drawing material from a wide range of societies and periods is to distance you—my reader—from your own experience of reading and your unquestioned assumptions about it; and thus bring you to the question whether something has been lost along the way in the journey to modern reading. ‘Classic’ texts will play a central part in this study because they were central to the reading of premodern readers.

Writing is a technique for storing speech so that it can be reactivated after a journey across space and/or time. It does not exactly reproduce all features of speech, and for comparative purposes it is useful to think of a written text as a performance score, used for ‘safe keeping’ and for materializing speech, and to facilitate or check reproduction.³ For much early writing the imagined reader was a god, a dead person, or a chance passer-by.

Knowledge can be transmitted without writing and indeed it is a very modern idea (misconception) that it can be acquired from texts alone, without any tacit supplementation.⁴ But writing has been used to make knowledge visible and solid: in lists (cf. Goody and Watt 1963), maps of various kinds (see Yates 1966 on “memory theatres”), books, and libraries. So, too, it could be lost, destroyed, recovered: the history of both Chinese and modern ‘classics’ includes stories of destruction and retrieval.⁵

Objectification of knowledge in material (written) form also opened up a space between it and the knower/reader, a space that could expand as the language of speech diverged from that of texts, and texts acquired an aura of pastness. Specialized activities and skills developed in these spaces: copying, interpreting/translating, re-performing. Modern research, governed by the interests of

³ The storage function is stressed by Assmann 1983; speech is “deposited” in writing to maintain its existence between performances. Assmann also emphasizes the materiality of writing (it has often been noted that in archaic Greece the stone on which a law has been inscribed ‘is’ the law). The “performance score” image is used by Assyriologists in discussing the origins of writing, and by al-Azmeh 1998 in relation to the lack of vowel notations in Arabic.

⁴ See Fotiadis’ paper here on the need to train students to “read” images. The “do-it-yourself” handbook is a very modern genre; studies of the history of ‘technical’ literature (an interesting topic which I cannot here explore at any length) often recognize that it had to be used in association with practical training (apprenticeship) or in directing the work of employees whose skills had been acquired through practice.

⁵ On the exaggeration of the ‘destruction’ of the library of Alexandria see Canfora 1987.

philologists, has paid more attention to the textual residues of these activities than to the actors and their performances, but a strictly philological perspective flattens out some significant variations.⁶

Premodern training in literacy was often (though not always) oriented towards the production of writers rather than readers, ‘scribes’ to copy texts, who incidentally learned to read while learning to write texts that they had already memorized. It seems to have been generally the norm for memorization to precede writing and reading;⁷ early instruction in reading would thus have been on the “whole word” system.⁸ Texts were internalized (“written on the tablets of the heart,” Carr 2005), and their internalization formed the character/person—with some cultural variation in whether this ‘forming’ was envisaged primarily in general ethical terms or as producing specialized skills.⁹ Recent studies (Carr 2005; Van der Toorn 2007), concerned with the relation of the Biblical corpus to Near Eastern scribal culture (see also Charpin 2008), have stressed that what the ‘scribe’ internalized was not only a body of specific textual material, but also a language register in which additions would be composed. A scribe was not ‘merely’ a copyist or commentator, but active in manipulating, enriching, and transforming the textual patrimony.¹⁰

The history of writing and reading in India has so far been rather little researched (see Inden *et al.* 2000 for writing), but it seems clear that memorization and oral transmission was especially important for brahmans, whose ritual performance had to be phonetically exact, and that the ability to write was not per se associated with high status. Writers—*kayasthas* and similar specialists—seem to have become

⁶ On the relations between ‘classics’ and performance, and especially the relative neglect in modern research of liturgical performance, see Humphreys *in preparation*.

⁷ For China see e.g. Gardner 1989; Yu 2003; for Islam e.g. Mottahedeh 1985, Messick 1997; Duverdiere 1971 for Tahitians being taught to ‘read’ who memorized instead. Note also Furet and Ozouf 1977 on early modern readers, especially women, able to read the Bible but unable to write; K. Thomas 1986 and Daly 1967 on the slow development of alphabetization, in societies where education did not necessarily begin with (or even include) learning letters in a fixed order. We do however have early abcedaria from Greece: Langdon 2005.

⁸ See Dehaene 2007 for modern educational debates. While progression in reading skills would eventually require the ability to decipher unfamiliar words, and teaching by the alternative “letter-sound correspondence” method is explicitly attested for ancient Greece (Manacorda 1983; Svenbro 1995; Cribrione 1996), training in whole-word recognition, plus the fact that Greek and Latin are more highly inflected than modern Western languages, may well have a bearing on the absence of word-division and punctuation in many ancient texts on stone or more perishable materials (the use of punctuation *decreases* over time, although by the Hellenistic period there is a move towards avoiding word- or at least syllable-division at the end of lines in inscribed texts). See also Gavrilov 1997.

⁹ See Gardner 1989 for debates in China. ‘Wisdom’ literature seems to play a larger role in the formation of literate persons in Egypt than in the ancient Near East, perhaps corresponding to a clearer division of ‘scribal’ functions between temple personnel and other officials. There may also have been a clearer idea in both China and Egypt of correspondences between cosmic order, ‘classic’ texts, and the fully developed ethical personality (Gardner, *op. cit.*; Wagner, this volume).

¹⁰ See Wagner, this volume, on Chinese “commentary” (also Wagner 2000); Netz 2004 on commentary in Late Antique and Arabic mathematics; Ganeri 2011 for India.

more important in the Mughal and subsequently British periods, when they learned the rulers' languages and acted as interpreters; at this stage their caste status (*kshatriya* or *sudra*) was disputed. "Learned brahmans" were associated with palaces, where they might advise on legal issues (as they did later in British courts), or take part in philosophical debates (Hulin 2007; Ganeri 2011); their reputation was based on textualized knowledge, on performance in debates, and on teaching, rather than on authorship.¹¹ Writing (composition of 'new' texts) was 'encyclopedic' in the sense that it was oriented towards remodelling a 'scale of texts' so that a new pattern emerged, while the operation by which it had been produced was occluded; and performance was more important than the production of written scores. Accurate oral transmission of Vedic rituals was a fixed point in a moving landscape of re-performances and re-compositions.¹²

Ancient Greece, too, lacked high-status 'scribes'; much writing was done by slaves. In the Bronze Age syllabic scripts, developed mainly (it appears) under Egyptian influence, seem to have been used only for administrative records.¹³ After the early twelfth century B.C.E. the syllabic script was lost, and only vague memories of writing remained (*Iliad* 6.168–9). Writing was encountered again through the visits of Greek traders to eastern Mediterranean ports and of Phoenicians to Greek settlements; a new alphabetic script was introduced between c. 800 and c. 750, but again it came without any attached patrimony of texts.¹⁴ Greeks took to writing enthusiastically, producing casually-written texts in a wide range of places and on a wide range of materials, at a time when there was apparently nothing for them to read;¹⁵ and their writing was (and remained) distinctively *authored*. Objects speak: "I am Tharios' cup," "I am the memorial (*mnêma*) of Glaucon;" rocks preserve the memory of personal encounters, "Here a man fucked a lovely boy;" and a record of Greek mercenaries in Egyptian service,

¹¹ See Inden 2000a on the absence of "authorism" in premodern Indian culture; Lambert 1957 for ancient Mesopotamia; Wyrick 2004.

¹² Inden, Walters and Ali 2000; Inden 2000b on puranas, which were performed by bards (cf. Goswami 2004 on the colonial period); Pollock 1993b and Richman 2001 on Ramayanas; Lothspeich 2009 on Mahabharatas; Rocher 1993 on recomposition of treatises.

¹³ Writing was a skill, and most probably a rare one, in Minoan and Mycenaean palaces, but there were no scribal book-collections. Cyprus in the Late Bronze Age had at least one 'scribe' capable of dealing with foreign correspondence in Akkadian, the diplomatic *lingua franca* (Moran 1992).

¹⁴ One Cretan community c. 500 appointed a *poinikastas*—"Phoenicianizer" or "writer in red paint"—who was a public servant, was to pass his position to descendants, and had to record community decisions in writing (probably on stone or bronze), but one scribe does not make a scribal culture; other Cretan cities had "memorizers" (*mnâmones*). *Supplementum epigraphicum graecum* 27.631; Bile 1988 no. 28.

¹⁵ There have been many suggestions about Greek reasons for adopting writing, e.g. to record oral poetry (Powell 2002); to call gods' attention to dedications (Willi 2005). It is possible that intensive research in Greece has led to the discovery and publication of more pieces of casual writing than we have for other areas (but do we have scraps of *playful* demotic writing from Egypt?). See also Langdon 2005 on casual writing on rocks by shepherds. Larsen 1987 suggests that too little research has been done on casual writing in the ancient Near East.

at the First Cataract, ends: “Archon son of Amoibichos and Axe son of Nobody wrote us [the letters].”¹⁶ The orally composed epics of ‘Homer’ acquired an author at an early date, and from Hesiod onwards poets spoke in their own persons, and provided ‘biographical’ details in their poems, while works of doubtful attribution tended to be attracted to named poets.¹⁷ The lists of ‘classic’ texts produced in the Library of Alexandria (following the model of the three great tragedians already in a sense ‘canonized’ by Aristophanes’ *Frogs* in 405 and the erection of their statues in the Athenian theatre, with a law that actors must follow the authorized texts, in the 330s-320s), were lists of ‘great authors’ in various genres. Alexandrian scholars also devoted much attention to distinguishing genuine works by these authors from those spuriously attributed to them (see e.g. Dover 1968). The “author-function” in the modern sense defined by Foucault (1969) as an identity constructed to give meaning to a set of “works,” was given a new twist.¹⁸

The figure of the historical author was extended to an interest in drawing up lists of inventors, “first-discoverers” (Kleingünther 1933; gods and heroes were also credited with inventions), and contributed to an idea that society was changing and that only teachers with a mastery of new knowledge (“sophists”) could train the young to deal with unprecedented circumstances. Reactions to these claims were mixed: the new experts might be regarded as “magicians” of a new kind (see Laks, this volume), or—in the case of doctors or cooks—as charlatans trying to impress the gullible by displays of book-learning although they lacked basic practical skills (Dean-Jones 2003; Willi 2003). Especially in Athens in the traumatic circumstances of the late fifth century—defeat in war, two short stretches of repressive *junta* rule—those in exile or silenced at home by suspicion of their political associations produced a kind of *samizdat* flow of ‘pamphlets’, speeches that could not be delivered, memories of Socrates, constructed as a martyr to democratic process turned sour, and historical reflections.¹⁹ Xenophon went on to produce a series of written handbooks on traditional upper-class fields of knowledge (hunting, estate management, cavalry command, state economic policy).

Athens, however, was still a city where performance was dominant; the move to a more ‘bookish’ culture may have happened earlier elsewhere, in ‘provincial’ or ‘colonial’ communities eager for news from the cultural ‘capital’. This development came to full flower in Alexandria with the foundation of an institution—the

¹⁶ Lang 1976 no. F 3; Chankowski 2002; Meiggs and Lewis 1969 nos. 3 (Glaukon) and 4 (Archon); 3 and 7 in the 1988 edition.

¹⁷ See Most 2006 for Hesiod; Slings 1990 for first-person statements in lyric poetry; Bowie 1986 on poems attributed to “Theognis”; Lefkowitz 1981 on deduction of biographical information from poems (cf. Laks, this volume, for philosophers). Competitions at both public festivals and private symposia (Bowie 1986) helped to construct this authorial persona.

¹⁸ See also Calame and Chartier 2004, Wyrick 2004.

¹⁹ Thucydides was condemned for failing as a general, and went into exile, before the oligarchic coups of 411 and 404, but was writing his history through the following decades. Xenophon and Plato were suspect because of their associations with Socrates and with the oligarchy. See also Yunis 2003b.

Mouseion—devoted to the collection and cataloguing of texts. Poets' allusions to earlier texts became more self-conscious and recondite (Bing 1998); scholars demonstrated their learning by not only citing texts but calling for books to verify their references (Johnson 2009).

In the new colonialism of the Hellenistic world—a colonialism of settler-rulers rather than settler-communities—knowledge of Greek became a mark of social status, and written documents played an increasing role in administration. In Egyptian towns on the edge of the desert, where writing on papyrus was preserved (cf. Pormann, this volume), we see that some favourite school texts (Homer, Euripides, Menander) were kept at home, and that some Egyptians adopted Greek names. Equally well preserved evidence of another kind from the walls of Pompeii, however, suggests that schooling often left adults with a few remembered lines and tags rather than a reading habit.²⁰

It could be argued that an ideal of universal adult literacy was not imagined as a concomitant of democracy, but as part of the reaction of the Jews in the Hellenistic period to the spread of “Hellenization.” This seems to be the date of foundation of the synagogue as a meeting-place for the reading and exegesis of Biblical texts; it was organized as a space for a listening, learning, and responding public rather than for processions and sacrifice.²¹ Greek translations (de Lange, this volume) and Aramaic versions were used to ensure that the congregation understood. How many Jews, where, and in what periods could and did read Biblical texts for themselves is far from clear, but a scale measuring male, adult ethnic-religious identity by the study of Biblical texts seems well established. The Jews were a “textual community,” as were splinter groups such as the Qumran sect.²²

This ideal, and the school-like practices of the synagogue, were perpetuated in early Christian “assemblies” (*ecclesiae*), though they also had their form of sacrifice (the eucharist), and their processions (Duchesne 1889). Since the sermons of prominent bishops and theologians were recorded and circulated in written form, we can see that the sermon combined explanation of a text that was part of the “readings” for the day with comment on current issues and on the congregation's daily behaviour.²³ Bishops told congregations that they should read the scriptures

²⁰ See Houston 2009 for book collections in Egypt; Milnor 2009 for Pompeii. The Athenian institution of ostracism presupposed that a quorum of 6,000 citizens could write (or find a friend to write for them), and many did, but some in the early fifth century had a very shaky grasp of spelling; Lang 1990, Brenne 1994 (on the “quorum” see Rhodes 1981). See also R. Thomas 2009 on “democratic literacy.”

²¹ See especially Snyder 2000; also Perrot 1988, Goldenberg 2007.

²² See Stock 1983 for “textual communities;” Goodman 1994 on literacy and on the authority of “scribes;” Vermes 1962 on Qumran; de Lange 2005 on the role of books in Jewish life.

²³ Commentary on behaviour came earlier in letters from Paul and other leading figures, read out to congregations. Written versions of sermons, for circulation, were presumably selected and edited, perhaps removing more local and ‘occasional’ references; thus our evidence for Islamic sermons, which comes from writers concerned with maintaining orthodoxy (Berkey 2001) or with politics (Mottahedeh 1985), may give us an exaggerated idea of difference.

also at home (Todde 1973), but a sustained effort to create schooling systems that aimed to produce a whole population of Christian readers may have been mounted only in the modern period.²⁴

Be that as it may, the monotheistic religions produced the idea of a whole society of believers linked to God not only through ritual but through texts. The ‘wisdom literature’ tradition in which texts formed the scribe as a special kind of person had been expanded into a universalized conception of a text-nourished inner self.²⁵

Texts that told readers how to read were produced. Monks, who in the Western early Middle Ages became largely responsible for keeping and copying texts and for schooling, were taught a new style of meditative reading in which the text became a jumping-off point for an intellectual-imaginative journey leading the reader onward and upward into a clearer realization of Christian truths (Carruthers 1998). Even a pagan text, or an image, allegorically interpreted, could be used in this way. Reading became part of a process of thought and, though Christian readers were warned to be on their guard against straying down mundane paths, the text did not tell the reader where to go. It was by having texts in the memory that a reader could navigate from one to another. But whereas the ancient art of memory described in the *Rhetoricum ad Herennium* was a technique for short-term organization of thoughts (Yates 1966), recommended to orators to allow them to improvise fluently without losing the thread of their argument, the medieval art of memory was intended for more permanent storage. It resembled the ancient technique in that the ‘places’ to which memory-data were linked were still tied to experience—a building, a text, an image—rather than being abstract structures designed for the purpose of classification like early modern ‘memory theatres’, and also in that there was no master-plan: each individual would create a system meaningful for him. But it was ‘a machine for thinking’, a heuristic tool rather than just an ancient form of PowerPoint.

Reading was thus, for the committed readers of the early medieval world, an active process of engagement not only with texts but with a Cosmos created and directed by God. It was a process that took the reader into his own stored resources and then upward. It involved efforts of concentration and affective responses as well as the recognition of relations between ideas: will, heart, and intellect, soul and spirit, with less interest than Plato had in separating their functions.²⁶

This idea of reading as an active process both fed on and contributed to some limits on the authority of texts. Pagan texts had authority as examples of style, but had to be read allegorically to convert them to Christian use; sacred texts had given rise to theological disputes and to heresies, and there were questions about the

²⁴ See Gawthrop and Strauss 1984 and Gilmont 1995 on the limits of Lutheran literacy; Furet and Ozouf 1977 on counter-reformation schooling in France; K. Thomas 1986.

²⁵ It should be noted that the connection between textual formation and character was expanded in imperial China through the efforts of large numbers—a high proportion of whom failed, especially at the higher levels—to pass the examinations and attain an official position: Yu 2003.

²⁶ Taylor 1989 suggests that Augustine wanted to represent the parts of the soul as corresponding to the persons of the Trinity—but Augustine’s terminology was not very consistent.

applicability of the law of the Jewish Bible to Christians. Law, which had disputes as its field of operation, was divided between ecclesiastical and secular spheres, while the latter was further divided according to the rulers by whom laws had been issued.

Struggling with texts in thought to arrive at a higher level of understanding was not easy, and might also lead into heresy. Brian Stock (1983) discussed heresy as one of the potential implications of literacy; he was particularly interested in the formation through heretical interpretation and discussion of new textual communities based on a particular set of readings. The authority of sacred texts made them suitable as armoury for groups critical of, or at odds with, the church authorities, and efforts at repression might well push those accused of heresy deeper into dangerous theological reasoning.

Three case studies: the village of Montailou may not have had more than four readers in a population of about 200,²⁷ but had a lively oral culture of theological and ethical speculation which brought it into conflict with the local bishop. The villagers then learned that they were heretics, and some obstinately stuck to their guns. A sixteenth-century Italian miller, Menocchio, had collected a small library and borrowed books from friends; he had worked out an idiosyncratic cosmology and liked to discuss his ideas with others; here too we have an inquisition record which shows him floundering as he tries to answer questions on which he had not worked out his view (Ginzburg 1976). Finally, at the top of the politico-ecclesiastical pyramid, Henry VIII of England, having on the basis of Jewish law acquired a papal dispensation to allow him to make a leviratical marriage with his dead brother's wife, had to call in experts in Hebrew to produce counter-texts and counter-arguments when he wanted to divorce her (Rosenblatt 2006).

A text with authority stood outside the reader, was called on for help rather than internalized. Whereas the monastic reader's memory-places were internal, secular readers were encouraged to keep "commonplace books" with headings under which they could file quotations, arguments, and anecdotes for easy retrieval.²⁸ This was another type of active reading, a more obvious form of bricolage in which textual passages—like spolia from ancient monuments—were recombined.

The authority of texts, both sacred and secular (the latter preserving information from the classical past and also serving as stylistic models), also created a need for

²⁷ Le Roy Ladurie 1975 has no section on books and reading (and no index!), but Graff 1987 counted four passages implying ability to read. L. presents the villagers in an ethnographic 'dream-time', and has no interest either in the sources of their ideas or in the effects of the inquisition process. Cf. K. Thomas 1986 on heterodox illiterates; on heretical reading see also Grafton 1991: 204, 211–12.

²⁸ Moss 1996; Sharpe 2000; there were also texts with instructions on how to read (for similar practices going back to antiquity see Easterling 2002). When being trained to write Greek and Latin prose, and to study classical texts, c. 1950, I was still told to keep a commonplace book. Sherman 1995 (a valuable account) calls early modern reading "adversarial" (from the use of the title *Adversaria* for collections of textual notes), but not all marginalia related to textual or interpretive problems. Readers also marked elegant phrases, useful arguments, etc., and indexed texts to facilitate future use. Cf. Grafton 1997, and Céard 2003 on Budé's notebooks.

reference-books of various types: collections of legal or theological opinions, moral maxims and *exempla*, medical prescriptions, examples of figures of speech, stories, and anecdotes. While some of these were still organized systematically on quasi-disciplinary lines (grammar, law), there was an increasing trend towards the more mechanical alphabetical arrangements.²⁹ Later, as Frances Yates (1966) showed, there was a new development into classificatory systems designed as an “art of memory:” the image of memory here is no longer the “heart” on which texts are written, or by which they are learned, but of an information retrieval system.

Texts themselves also served as classificatory devices, in the sense that commentary accumulated in their margins. If one knew the text—and ‘classical’ texts were still memorized—the book in which it was written became a locus not merely for emendations but for references to parallels or other connected information (responsa which themselves had legal authority; addenda to medical prescriptions or herbaria).³⁰

As in antiquity, books claiming to guide practical activities always presupposed practical supplementation; the handbook written for complete novices is an invention of the second half of the twentieth century. Medieval and early modern handbooks, however, were written for readers who had acquired their practical knowledge by apprenticeship as well as for gentlemen who relied on the practical support of others. They might also be written to preserve and (within limits) transmit trade secrets rather than to reorganize practical knowledge in more systematic form.³¹

It is perhaps one of the characteristics of reading and writing as skills that can be fairly easily acquired at a basic level (and then practised and improved, or forgotten) that although the premodern public was divided into hierarchically ranked categories—clerics and laymen, those who knew Latin or those who knew only vernaculars, men and women, townsmen and rustics, proto-professionals and amateurs—reading practices and texts could cross these boundaries. Translation and printing both greatly increased the rapidity of this transmission. In both cases imagining new reading publics played a part. Vernacular translations of the Bible, while partly directed against monopolization of the Latin text by church authorities, also imagined, and helped to create, a new type of Christian (a dream spread more energetically later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by nonconformists, the SPCK, and missionaries). In large cities, printing could be used to address street readers imagined as eager for news and sensational stories (and, later, advertising). With the spread of vernacular education in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries and of new ideas about the ‘nation’ as the organic product of history, publishers enthusiastically produced series of “national classics” (Bonnell 2008).

²⁹ See Wormald 1999 on the need for, and production of, systematically organized collections of laws in the early Middle Ages; K. Thomas 1986 on alphabetization.

³⁰ Cf. Zipser 2003, treating a medical text as example of an anthology or florilegium.

³¹ Chrisman 1982, Maccagni 1983; cf. Davis 1975 for print and reading among peasants and urban workers in early modern France.

This notion of “national classics” accelerated rethinking of the concept of ‘literature’ and its functions. The main focus was on poetry (though prose works could also qualify as ‘literature’), and on a perceived tension between the ornamental character of poetic language and serious purpose. According to Timothy Reiss (1992), efforts to give literature a serious function began with claims that through an exact use of language it was able to represent reality faithfully, yet in a way that brought out universal truths. The argument moved on, however, to seeing literature as a form of introspection, a way for the mind (or soul) to contemplate its own potential. The concept of literature was linked to questions of critical judgment already in Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets*, which originated as introductions for a set of poetic ‘classics’ (Bonnell 2008).

De Jean 1997 develops this argument, tracing the rise of a new concept of the “public,” as made up of responsive readers, to mid-seventeenth-century France (see also Davis 1975; Forster 2001 for England), and associating it with the rise of the novel, the birth of the modern newspaper (or journal for the common reader), and the defence of modern literature as more worth reading than ancient. She emphasizes the development of a new terminology for emotion, affect/affection, sentiment, sensibility, etc., and a new association of emotional life with the heart rather than the soul, encouraged by the discovery of the circulation of the blood. Arguments for and against novel-reading were tied up with opposing views of women, as more perceptive than men or as more corruptible.

This story of changes in the anthropology of the inner self and of reading (cf. Darnton 1984 on Rousseau; Taylor 1989) is a complex one with local variations. By the time the love-novel reached England there had been new developments in letter-writing as a medium for exploring selves and relationships (see Darnton 1984: 233 for France); and in Protestant countries the same period saw new forms of religiosity (Pietism, Methodism) that gave Bible-reading a new role in relation to feelings.

Court life in the seventeenth century, and the possibility for the upper class of imitating court fashions, had given people a sense that they could influence their aesthetic surroundings—including their reading—by choice, and this generated philosophical discussion on the bases of such choice, on “taste” (Kivy 1976), and new forms of literary and artistic criticism (Agamben 1970; Halliwell 2002). This implied a sharper separation between author or artist and reader or viewer. The function of the reader was not to carve up the work for his own use, but to react with taste and with appropriate emotions. The successful writer contributed to forming taste, developed the potential of the language, and called forth a response based on a common human capacity to perceive beauty, which was innate but could be cultivated by education.

Johns (1996) has analysed a more scientific eighteenth-century theory of reading that accompanied new conceptions of optics, the brain, and thought. Texts, like other visual stimuli, were processed by the eyes and acted on the “animal spirits” in the optic nerves, being transmitted thence to the *sensus communis* and then to the mind (or directly into action). However, imagined ideas could also act on the *sensus communis*. The thinker had to learn to privilege understanding over imagination,

and to control responses to reading. This physiological theory was linked to attempts to develop a new psychology which would give taste and beauty an objective standing (Kivy 1976). Concern had moved from the reader's capacity to remember and use texts to his/her ability to respond with the right balance of sensitivity and judgment.

The new style of reading was carried out in different places; "pocket editions" of national classics were literally designed for pockets and could be taken to beautiful outdoor spots to be enjoyed in appropriate surroundings (they were also taken on journeys). The reader did not move from book to notebook in a book-lined room, but savoured each work on its own.

A split was developing between 'literary' reading and reading as a way of connecting with a world of experience outside books.³² Curiosity became a positive quality (Blumenberg 1966), and was fed by texts offering 'news', travels, and scientific discoveries.

Printing produced another phenomenon: readers who did not find their interests sufficiently represented in the available texts, and began to write for readers like themselves. This happened with both female and working-class readers, though further developments were different in the two cases. The idea of texts that catered for what were perceived as women's interests—centred mostly on the risky business of marriage—fitted prevailing stereotypes of gender and of the 'light' reading suitable for women, even if the new works presented their male villains in a critical light. Men soon took to writing (and reading) novels too; while the success of the novel was linked to the increasing exclusion of women from entrepreneurship and production, it also came to correspond to a heightened contrast between domestic private life and the public world of work and politics.

The association of reading with leisure and 'nature' corresponded to a new theory of how it should be taught; instruction in school based on memorizing and then learning to decipher religious texts was to be replaced by maternal teaching at home in which letters were linked to voiced sounds (Kittler 1985). Though not explicitly secularist, this theory 'naturalized' both literacy and moral teaching by linking them to the loving relationship between mother and child.

Working-class children were less likely to learn to read at home, and were probably unaffected by these new ideas. But in various ways in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was becoming more possible for a bright and ambitious working-class child (at least a boy) to build on the minimum of schooling at least one member of a sibling group might have had, practise on the increasing amount of reading matter available in the streets, find access to books, and become an avid autodidact reader.³³

³² Experience is not a self-evident concept (Daston 1988, Chap. 5; Latour 1991). For the metaphor of "reading the world" in early Mesopotamia see Michalowski 1990.

³³ See Vincent 1981; Collini 2008, Chap. 19, notes that much of the evidence on working-class reading comes from uncommon autodidacts. Rose 1993 (cf. McElduff 2006) stresses that working-class readers made their own sense out of 'classic' texts.

Rancière (1980) has pointed out that class boundaries at the beginning of the modern period were far from stable. Many of the writers and readers who took the lead in producing and circulating texts focussing on working-class interests, experience, and political visions had drifted into a precarious proletarian existence as a result of illness, bad luck, or bad management, having started in more solid positions, and often in trades linked to literacy (printing, painting, etc.; cf. Davis 1975).

Working-class readers developed their own public institutions: reading rooms, discussion clubs, and at least in England (in association with nonconformism) schools—the Dissenting Academies—where the focus was on science rather than the classics (Uglow 2002).³⁴ Working-class reading thus had a strong collective aspect, while writing by and for women, even though there was plenty of sociable domestic reading, on the whole stressed the internal transformation of the reader.

One might ask how the Greek and Latin classics survived and were relegitimized in this outburst of new styles of reading, new writing, and construction of rival vernacular canons (plus interest in the ‘classics’ of other civilizations, to which we shall shortly turn). One answer might be that the classics gained in historical interest what they lost in authority (this was also true, though more controversially, for the Bible, and for other religious texts). While the Greeks and Romans were gradually losing authority in science and stylistics, they were of new interest as models of republicanism and of the sad effects of decline into monarchy.³⁵ Secondly, they offered an alternative to Christianity, not in the form of paganism (constructed as civic ritual rather than belief³⁶) but as providing through philosophy a rational foundation for morals. Thirdly, education in Greek and Latin—including the increasing rigour of philological criticism—provided a mental discipline which could replace or supplement in the public sphere the Christian piety which was now being left to home training. This educational discipline would also eliminate those whose mental power or financial backing was inadequate, and thus provide upper-class males with a common culture—a culture that required knowledge of texts as its recognition signals.³⁷

Classical philology was a model discipline, with clear (though not immutable or uncontroversial) notions about its procedures, standards, and aims, at a time when newer disciplines were still struggling to formulate their identity (linguistics, modern philologies, the natural sciences), while law, medicine, and theology were increasingly developing their own professional career structures.

³⁴ See Howard 2006: 84–5 on eighteenth century Academies as representing modern, scientific thinking, in opposition to universities.

³⁵ As an 8-year-old in a PNEU school in the 1940s I was taught “civics,” which was entirely about ancient history (cf. McElduff 2006).

³⁶ The idea of inventing a new civic religion was briefly popular in France in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (see e.g. Reardon 1985 on Comte; Ariès 1975 on revolutionary funerals; Palmer 1985).

³⁷ Stray 1998, McElduff 2006. Ogilvie 1964, though in some ways it now looks dated, has valuable material on how classics were read. See also Espagne 2010 on the construction of the persona of the modern philologist.

Classic texts, then, were Ancient and not Modern, but the past to which they belonged was a prestigious one, and the question of the onward march of time could be bracketed either—in history—by a combination of cyclical models (growth, maturity, decline) with the idea that each epoch had its own characteristics, or (in literature and philosophy and art) by asserting that sublime works had supratemporal value. It was also claimed that Western civilization had a special relation to the ‘legacy’ of the classical world, a legacy selectively identified by emphasis on those periods and texts that could be constructed as forerunners (though the ‘legacy’ model, in European countries, was rivalled by seeking the origins of national culture and spirit in medieval vernacular texts; see Bloch and Nichols 1996; Algazi’s paper here).

Classical studies in the nineteenth century were thus underpinned by a set of disparate factors: a shift from being seen as models of style and knowledge to being seen as models of secular government³⁸ and civic engagement; the academic prestige of an arduous and well-entrenched discipline; classical education in school as a marker of gender and class;³⁹ a philosophical psychology that related morals to aesthetics.⁴⁰ Global ambitions in cultural policy also came into play; the leading nation-states wanted their universities, libraries, museums, and research policies to stretch beyond merely national interests.⁴¹

In the twentieth century these factors came under pressure from various directions. The natural sciences increasingly claimed superior status both as models of disciplined research and as producers of new knowledge; elite forms of education in both schools and universities became open to women and (at a much more limited level⁴²) to members of the lower middle and working classes; government became more complex and ancient examples less relevant to it; the philosophical infrastructure collapsed. Classical studies in education became one Humanities option among others, now rather disadvantaged by its prestigious past and museum associations.

Perhaps it does not matter how many people learn ‘dead’ languages and read their classic texts in them. But for critical thinking about contemporary, postmodern attitudes to ‘classics’ and to reading it does seem to me important to analyse the transformation that the reception of classics and the anthropology of reading went through during the modern period. This period saw the introduction of several

³⁸ Including colonial government; the French, especially, liked to see themselves as the new Romans.

³⁹ And race; the British in India debated whether Greek and Latin or Sanskrit and Persian should be taught in schools for Indians, but in the end decided on English (Viswanathan 1989; cf. Minault 2000; Pernau 2006).

⁴⁰ The weight of these factors, and the chronology of changes in weighting, varied from country to country: see Bollack 1984 on the defence of classical studies in late nineteenth/early twentieth century France and Germany.

⁴¹ McClellan 1994, Jonah H. Siegel 2008. For non-Western reactions see Shaw 2003; Pormann, this volume.

⁴² At least in Britain. For “poor students” in Germany see La Vopa 1988.

major new ideas: that reading could be a ‘leisure’ occupation; that society and knowledge were changing and that reading could bring information on news and discoveries; that texts had researchable historical contexts—and, related to this, that they could be associated with national cultures; but also, in a competing model of culture, that to read widely was to be ‘cultured’, was ‘self-cultivation’. Along with the latter notion went a critical discourse stigmatizing some forms of reading matter as trivial, degenerate, and destructive to character; but also—much more related to changing ideas of the child and of education (Steedman 1990) than to eighteenth-century psychology—a defence of reading as stimulating the imagination. I am not clear how the two latter trends eventually coalesced—with help from the eighteenth-century associations of reading with leisure and pleasure—into a feeling that reading as distraction and relaxation is a legitimate and justifiable use of time, a way of ‘switching off’, of ‘escape’.⁴³

Classic texts did not acquire their status by helping readers not to think, or even just by offering beautiful language. They are many-sided, facing the reader with questions to which the answers are not obvious. Or, if a question does seem obvious—if we are sure that Antigone was right, that elected governments are better than philosopher-kings, that ‘Homer’ was a better poet than Callimachus—then we need to ask how our certainties have been historically shaped, and how it was possible for other readers in the past to think differently.

‘Reception studies’ have suddenly become popular with Western publishers—though only timidly introduced by university departments.⁴⁴ Departments do not see reception analysis as an integral part of their teaching, but only as an optional extra or as a way of making interdisciplinary connections and facilitating combinations of disciplines in undergraduate degrees (e.g. Classics and English). There are presumably some areas of Biblical Studies where a reception narrative has become well established—stories of the critical evaluation of the text and of authorship, of research on historical reliability, of the discovery of Biblical poetry, and of course of the reevaluation of Genesis’ account of creation. But—as de Lange’s paper here shows—the history of the reception of Greek versions of Biblical texts is still little studied. What about the rest of the world?

In India there is a lot of critical work on the history of historiography, including reexamination of the concept of an Indian ‘medieval’ period (Inden 2000a), and much new research on the Mughal period, neglected until recently (e.g. Juneja here; K. Chatterjee 2009). In terms of ‘classic’ texts, more energy has gone into recording

⁴³ ‘Escape’, ‘fantasy’, and ‘realism’ may be problematic categories in cross-cultural analysis. Joshi 1998 notes Indian readers’ preferences in the colonial period for melodramatic rather than ‘realistic’ English novels, English life being in any case not ‘real’ to them (and melodrama more like Indian stories?). See also perhaps Messick 1997 on Yemeni reception of the American “southern novel;” James T. Siegel 1997 on reading in modern Indonesia; Mrazek 2002 on modern technology and fantasy.

⁴⁴ E.g. Martindale and Thomas 2006; Hardwick and Stray 2008 (both with earlier bibliography). The treatment of reception (and historicism, and ‘theory’ generally) in Harrison 2001 is remarkably edgy; contrast the firm view on the necessity for reception-analysis already in Bollack 1977.

and comparing local variants (see n. 12 above) than into reception history, perhaps partly because variants are hard to date before the modern period, but also because the whole idea of a classical ‘original’ seems anachronistic and colonial. There is also history of education (e.g. Pernau 2006; Viswanathan 1989) and of modern disciplines (e.g. archaeology/art history). But there still seems to be a gap between Indian Sanskrit specialists and the question of the precolonial reception history of Sanskrit texts, for which academics’ hostility to militant Hinduism is hardly entirely responsible.⁴⁵

Comparison of two recent papers (2001) on versions of the Ramayana, by Rao and Shulman, may indicate what has been missing. Rao provides a brilliant historical analysis of Telugu versions from Andhra Pradesh, but largely reduces them to politico-social reactions. Shulman is far more interesting on the history of poetics. A history of the poetics of time and of attitudes to the past in India is also what Ranajit Guha—founder of the ‘Subaltern school’ in Indian history—is now calling for in a recent work (2002).⁴⁶

Study of the poetics of forms of writing, both disciplinary and non-disciplinary, and of the interrelations of genres, might be a way of opening up reading both to premodern ideas and to reactions to modernity, without allowing the analysis to be forced into the dilemma of classifying texts as either ‘national’ or ‘modernizing’. Texts and modes of reasoning related to the fields of the modern disciplines⁴⁷ had their own poetics and circulation flows; how far, when, and how, any changes in poetics and conventions of reading and writing became ‘national’ would be an open question.

In various ways the (post) modern reader has become alienated from texts, walled off by the separation of author from reader, and the increasing gap between aesthetic response and ‘information’ (cf. Agamben 1970). Does reading have to be either soporific or alienating? We need to re-imagine reading as a productive activity, a means of getting texts to talk to each other in new ways (we may do this, but we have not theorized or taught it), a reading style in which what the reader should/might do with a text, what she needs to know in order to understand it, is not predetermined. To some extent we can imagine it as like medieval meditative reading, except that there the aim of reading was set even though the process of moving from text to ‘uplift’ was not.

What would the aim of such reading be? It would at least include asking questions about the presuppositions of both text and reader (e.g. about what is ‘real’ and what fictional in any text?). It would be more dialogic, more reception-oriented. Disciplines are fictional (they construct their own coherence). It would be post-disciplinary not in the sense that readers would be unaware of disciplinary rules of the game for writing and reading—what counts as a valid move, etc.—but

⁴⁵ Rocher 1993 remains an important study for the colonial period; see Goswami 2004; Ganeri 2011 for philosophy.

⁴⁶ Cf. Rancière 1992, and note the attention to genre and poetics in Florida 1995; Papailias 2005.

⁴⁷ Lloyd 2009 notes that the model discipline for India was linguistics; but his analysis too often assumes that modern disciplinary categories are unproblematic.

because they would be consciously aware of the rules and of the limits they impose. It would also be post-disciplinary in that the paths of exploration (research) opened up by a text or a problem would not be limited by disciplines. Universities and governments are already recognizing that most of what the (post) modern world sees as ‘problems’ do not fit into disciplinary categories but require ‘interdisciplinary’ research. However, the thinking about how to achieve this mostly so far goes in one of two directions: either the creation of new disciplines, or the creation of ‘Institutes’ (“clusters”) that recruit specialists trained in a variety of disciplines and somehow expect them to interbreed intellectually. Because we are (hopefully) in a transitional period, the majority of academics involved in interdisciplinary research began their careers in a single discipline, were socialized into its reading practices, and are reluctant to move into unfamiliar terrain. Moreover, there is at present very little research into or discussion of the history of reading in the modern period, beyond questions of the spread of literacy and book distribution. There is discussion of the best way of teaching small children to read and of treating dyslexia (less on numeracy), but much less on school and university training in summarizing, note-taking, analysis and synthesis of arguments.⁴⁸ Disciplines are often still resistant to the idea that they are selective, fictitious constructions of knowledge, problems, and research procedures; if one wanted to include in every university student’s curriculum a good critical study of the disciplinary process it would be hard to put together a reading list (it would mainly come from history of science). Disciplinary reading, except in ‘literary’ studies, is not on the whole thought of as being made up of texts and therefore subject to the types of analysis developed for use on texts.⁴⁹

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⁴⁸ See Fotiadis, this volume. Apparently English schoolchildren all now learn to use PowerPoint.

⁴⁹ Disciplinary resistance to such work as White 1983 on historiography or Clifford and Marcus 1986 on ethnography—or Bollack (see 1977) on philology—has resembled the resistance of theologians to historical analysis of the Bible.

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Part III
Reconstructing Pastness

Chapter 10

The Ruins of the Others: History and Modernity in Iran

Setrag Manoukian

Summary This paper discusses changing attitudes to the ancient Iranian past at the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth centuries, through a study of the work of Fursat Shîrâzî, arguing for a more sensitive appreciation of the tentative, experimental character of his writing; and for a reevaluation of his construction of conceptions of knowledge and the self that draw on both Islamic models and modern ideas.¹

Today, historians consider the period between 1850 and 1920 formative of what is often termed “Iranian modernity” (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001; Najmabadi 2005; Cole 2000). As the title of Tavakoli-Targhi’s influential book, *Refashioning Iran* (2001), underlines, the period was one of conceptual and material retooling. Tavakoli-Targhi and other scholars see the relationship with the West with its colonial and orientalist entailments as constitutive of this process. Transformations in the political and technological landscape reoriented several social domains with effects lasting through the twentieth century and up to today. The emergence of the ‘nation’ as a discursive formation is at the centre of this refashioning that also involves, as Tavakoli-Targhi argues, transformations in the conceptualization of history and geography. These transformations are read through the prism of modernity, which operates as an explanatory trope.

This essay aims to rethink this conceptualization of modernity in Iran and the idea of a radical break with the past that it entails. While not denying the rupture, I argue that this came about as the combination of a disparate set of circumstances rather than through any overall jolt of conscience. I take up the question of the emergence of a new image and conception of the past of Iran and

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look at its construction through a discussion of the works of a provincial intellectual from this period, Fursat Shirazi (1854–1920). A painter, poet, historian, and passionate dilettante, Fursat is a minor and eclectic figure who embodies the conjuncture of his times and opens up conceptual questions for the history of thought in Iran. His writings are located at the intersection between several Muslim discursive traditions and nineteenth century European concepts. Guided by a sort of practical opportunism, Fursat ventures into disparate topics, combining ‘science’ and ‘religion’—as well as Iran and Europe—in a move towards a research ethic that celebrates knowledge as the quality of being human. He therefore offers a vantage point from which to consider the question of how a different view of the past of Iran constituted itself at the end of the nineteenth century and what subject of knowledge it presupposed. How did the archaic past of Iran become an icon of the modern? How did modernity construct its past?

Fursat Shirazi’s figure invites us to rethink the idea of an “Iranian modernity” and the concomitant emergence of a new image of the country’s past which does not construct it simplistically either as a complete break or as simple continuity. Fursat’s writings and his approach to knowledge point to an assemblage of a disparate set of materials and ideas, a ground for experimentation, out of which the idea of an individual reasoning subject will emerge in later decades, and will then retrospectively be used to make sense of this period and of the history of Iran more generally.

Self-Formation and Intellectual Autonomy

Mîrzâ Muhammad Nâsir al-Hussaynî, better known as Fursat Shîrâzî (1854–1920) was a painter, poet, calligrapher, essayist, and local historian who lived at the cusp of the social and technological transformations of his epoch and made sense of them through a multiform production of paintings, poems, and other writings. He lived mostly in Shiraz but travelled extensively and spent a few years in Tehran during the constitutional revolution of 1906. He later returned to Shiraz to head the office of the Ministry of Education in the city and for a brief period was also in charge of the office of the Ministry of Justice. He was trained in a *madrassa*, frequented mentors in mysticism and philosophy, and was well read in poetry and theological books. Above all, Fursat was a self-taught portraitist and painter who made a living by painting portraits of the local and national aristocracy to whom he was linked by relations of patronage. The Qajar shahs commissioned several works from him and honoured him with a gold medal in recognition of his services. He knew English and had extensive conversations with Europeans who were living in Shiraz.²

In addition to an extensive body of poetry, Fursat composed essays on topics as diverse as astronomy, music, and photography. The breadth of these writings is an

² See Fursat’s account of his life in his collection of poems (Fursat 1915), and the introduction by Rastigâr in Fursat (1998), which lists all his known publications.

index of his pragmatic approach to knowledge. Searching for information wherever he could find it, Fursat moved from topic to topic, capturing along the way what was new and relatively unknown, using commissions and requests as triggers for research and inquiry, often dictated by the need to support himself financially.

In the nineteenth century Shiraz was one of the regional capitals of the Qajar kingdom. The city and the surrounding region of Fars were ruled by a governor, often a close relative of the Shah, nominated to the post from the capital, in collaboration and competition with local notables. Landowning families, tribal confederations, merchants, religious hierarchies all colluded and competed for allocations and influence. Foreigners, especially British, intersected these networks and channelled their dynamics. At certain junctures, people revolted against some or all these constituencies. All this resulted in an unstable equilibrium of alliances within Shiraz and between the city and the capital.³

Fursat's life exemplifies how patronage by notables, princes, and state administrators was one of the main axes for the production of knowledge. Patrons commissioned and paid for works in artistic and scientific domains. This production took place at the intersection between scholars in the city and a wider national network with its centre in Tehran. Shirazi figures aspired to receive the recognition of the Qajar court in the capital, through the mediation of governors or other officials posted in the city. The court, in turn, by acknowledging these figures, bestowed its power on them and articulated a vision of the country as made of different but intersecting locales. At the same time, scholars and men of letters were increasingly oriented towards a more generalized readership. The consolidation of the press and the publishing trade, as well as the diffusion of politics as a domain of general concern, were reorienting this production of knowledge towards the 'citizens' of the emergent nation of Iran. These changes eventually resulted in the transformation of the system of court and provincial patronage into a state administration of knowledge, with the nation as its central concern and a public as its audience.

Fursat's life is shaped by these transformations. His paintings and poetry are connected to the world of patronage, while his wide range of publications reveal a concern for popularizing knowledge and diffusing it to a general public. His works reveal the tensions of a provincial man who is eager to participate in the construction of a national vision and is aware of international debates, while at the same time being eminently concerned with his city. His writings are often self-reflexive and oriented towards establishing the autonomy of reason as a prerequisite for effective understanding. In his youth he painted the portraits of several governors of Shiraz; by the end of his life he had become a state functionary.⁴

³ See Royce 1981 and Martin 2005.

⁴ There are some instructive parallels to be explored between Fursat Shirazi and Victor Segalen as presented by Thouard and Wang in their essay. Roughly contemporary, they were both interested in archaeology and engaged in diverse intellectual productions. While entirely different, Segalen's 'exoticist' approach does speak to Fursat's engagement with ancient ruins, which combines a practice of conceptual difference combined with an existential interrogation. They are both figures that defy easy categorization.

The ‘Ruins of the Others’

Fursat’s *Âsâr-i ‘Ajam* (1896), is often described as a “local history” or a “local geography” of Fars and Shiraz.⁵ Through an historical cartography in the form of a travelogue, the book outlines numerous domains of knowledge and grounds them in a concrete territory. *Âsâr-i ‘Ajam* is divided into two independent parts, written in sequence by Fursat. The first part, the *Âsâr-i ‘Ajam* proper, is a detailed description and illustration of Achaemenid and Sassanid ruins that Fursat visited throughout the region of Fars and beyond, drawing pictures and taking notes on what he saw. The second part, titled *Shîrâznâma*, is a description of the city of Shiraz and some of its past and contemporary notable figures. While separate, the two parts are interwoven: many Shirazi figures are discussed in the first part of the book, while the second part refers to episodes recounted in the first.

Âsâr-i ‘Ajam is first of all a lithographic text. In the nineteenth century, lithography was the print medium of choice in Iran, India, and the Middle East. Like most other books by Fursat, *Âsâr-i ‘Ajam* was printed in Bombay, a location that makes evident both the strong ties that connected Shiraz and Iran more generally to the Indian subcontinent, as well as an indication of the wide network of knowledge in which Fursat participated. Lithography provided a relatively cheap and convenient format that retained some of the conventions of manuscript culture such as the calligraphy, the organization of the page and its decorations, while offering reproduction on a relatively large scale for the epoch (Messick 1997b; Scarce 2006).

Nile Green (2010) has emphasized the global scale of the lithographic network that since the 1830s had connected England, France, the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and India with Iran. Stones, machines, and skills circulated across continents and favoured the development of this kind of printing. Green makes the point that lithography, a European invention, was appropriated and adapted to different uses in Asia where it effected a printing revolution that exploited the technical possibilities of this kind of press far beyond what Europeans were doing with it. Green attributes the success of lithography foremost to economic reasons, but also points out that lithography allowed for the continued relevance of scribes and calligraphers, rendering the transition from manuscript to press smoother. He also notes the relevance of illustrations to this growing market. As Marzolph (2001) notes, illustrations of Persian epic poems were particularly popular in both India and Iran (see also Pinney 2002).

A history of the ‘lithographic’ axis between Bombay and Iran (and more specifically Shiraz) still needs to be written. Given the number of lithographic editions of books written by Shirazi authors or published by Shirazi publishing houses/bookstores that were printed in Bombay up until the first decades of the twentieth century, it is however possible to speculate on the relevance of this connection, and

⁵ See the descriptions in Grigor (2007: 566) Kashani-Sabeet (1999: 44) Kasheff (1999), Scarce (2006: 243) Tavakoli-Targhi (2001: 106). The book is part of the century-old genre of local histories of Iran. This genre became even more popular in the nineteenth century, in conjunction with the Qajar dynasty’s interest in Iran’s territory (see Kashani-Sabet 1999 and Khazeni 2009).

Fig. 10.1 Page sample of the layout of *Āsâr-i 'Ajam* by Fursat (Fursat 1896: 489)



perhaps argue that the relationship between Bombay and Shiraz was a crucial one for the publication industry in Iran. A study of this relationship will not only confirm the need to go beyond a national(ist) view of the development of printing in Iran and elsewhere, as Green and others have done, but could also potentially reconfigure the way one writes the history of knowledge production in nineteenth and early twentieth century Iran, highlighting the relevance of Indian Ocean networks.

Āsâr-i 'Ajam is a complex artefact whose material layout parallels the conceptual terrain it delineates. The architecture of the pages of *Āsâr-i 'Ajam* consists of the main text in calligraphy enclosed by a rectangular frame, and copious glosses on the margins of most pages written in a calligraphy that recalls the twists and turns of handwriting (Fig. 10.1).

These glosses are numbered footnotes that appear in the main text, explaining, correcting, or supplementing the information found there. The rectangular frame is itself divided into horizontal and vertical columns when poetry is inserted. This layered structure orients and amends the narrative flow, divided by chapters each beginning on a new page with the customary invocation that marks a beginning, but more poignantly and visibly marked by words in bold which signal a place, a person’s name, or a topic, and which highlight ‘reading entry points’ without breaking up the stream of the narrative.

The specificity of the lithographic format lies primarily in the 50 illustrations that constitute the core of the book around which the narrative is organized.⁶ These images are numbered and signed with a seal that repeats itself on every image. They also contain numbers and letters that are explained in the text. Sketches and charts appear on many pages in the main text or in the glosses, contributing to the composition of a powerful and multilayered ensemble.

Âsâr-i 'Ajam is an assemblage of images and words collected on the road (*dar tûl-i râh*) during several journeys. Fursat writes that he did not edit the notes he took while travelling since he was more concerned with the drawings.⁷ The narrative of *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* unfolds through diversions and detours. It retains the characteristics of travel: it pursues a line of argument but diverges to describe encounters on the road, dialogues with hosts and people Fursat meets while drawing the ruins. Discussions of doctrine alternate with biographies, poems, and many other textual interventions. Nevertheless, at a later stage Fursat interspersed the travelogues with chapters written once he returned from his journeys, in order to expand and clarify certain discoveries.

For example, at the end of Chap. 2 Fursat writes that one of his hosts on the road asked him to narrate the biography of the mystic and scholar Shaykh Muḥfid who was Fursat's mentor. This biography occupies the final pages of the chapter, followed by a *qasîda* Fursat had written for the Shaykh while travelling (Fursat 1896: 25). The following chapter begins with the biographies of all the characters mentioned in this *qasîda*, a long list of Arab, Persian, and Greek 'sages': Luqmân, Jâmâsb Hakîm, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Galen, Fârâbî, Ibn Sînâ, Labîd, and more. This sequel is itself interrupted at Abû al-Hasan Ash'ar, after whom there is a long section on the differences between the Ash'arî and Mu'tazilî school, and a long poem written by Fursat himself. The presentation of sages resumes and ends with Qudsî, a poet contemporary with Fursat. In the following chapter the travel narrative continues from where it was interrupted at the end of Chap. 2.⁸

Âsâr-i 'Ajam works by addition and diversion.⁹ Characteristic of many of Fursat's writings, this style reveals a pragmatic approach to knowledge, which confronts the topics discussed as encounters dictated by circumstances and

⁶The first edition of the book (1896) also had a chromo-lithographed map of Fars.

⁷"I wrote most of these pages in the desert or in villages and God witness I draw with a pencil on my horse, in a place where there wasn't a Persian or Arabic vocabulary, not a literature or history book" (Fursat 1896: 5).

⁸For an example of an encounter, after describing the *âtashkada* in Firuzabad Fursat writes: "I was sitting drawing and writing these pages when all of a sudden some people on horses passed by, one of them was Mîrzâ Tabîb whose pen name is Surûr who was travelling to meet an important person from the Khamsa [tribal confederation]. We have known each other for a long time so when he saw me he got off his horse and the pen of my thoughts was distracted by his sight, and this is his biography" (Fursat 1896: 115).

⁹This does not mean that the book is 'disorganized'. A detailed index appears at the beginning of the volume. In addition the narrative is full of cross-references, meta-commentaries on the book and its organization, instructions on how to read, and other signals.

curiosity, rather than by a drive towards codification. The bulk of the information in the *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* comes from Fursat's observations, supplemented by the books he had at his disposal and by chance encounters on his travels. Throughout the book, Fursat describes how *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* took shape because of various requests from patrons, scholars, and friends. He underlines both the occasions that initiated the project and the "necessity" that prompted its composition (see for example Fursat 1896: 547). Fursat deals with topics as practical problems and seeks to discuss them with the conceptual tools and information available to him, aware of the limits and shortcomings of his knowledge, while putting as much effort as possible into completing the task he set for himself.

Delineating a Territory

The title of the work establishes a spatio-temporal relationship. *Âsâr* is the plural of *athar*, an Arabic noun that refers to signs, traces, remains, relics, works (Fr. *oeuvres*), and monuments. It does not necessarily convey a temporal dimension but often indicates things of the past. In Fursat's book, the term *Âsâr* describes physical traces and remains of the past as a time separate from the present: inscriptions, bas-reliefs, columns, statues, buildings that point towards a different, distant epoch. The remains are located in a separate time and presented as foreign and relatively unknown: they are signs to decipher, objects of curiosity and research. *'Ajam*, the second word of the title, specifies this relationship further. This Arabic word describes someone who does not speak properly, who mumbles or is mute, someone who does not speak Arabic. The term was used in many different ways to describe 'non-Arabs' and Iranians in particular. Sometimes this took on a derogatory connotation. More often it referred to a generic geographical location, describing Iranians as non-Arabic speakers, or a more specific one, when the term was used to name *Irâq-i 'Ajam*, the western portion of the Iranian plateau (Bosworth 1998). In Fursat's book, the term is used both as a spatio-temporal distinction and a cultural one: *'ajam* delimits the specificity of a geographical area that during Fursat's epoch was divided between Iran and the Ottoman Empire. It also defines a time, clearly demarcated from the present and the more recent past. It is the time when the *'ajam* inhabited these lands.

The book delimits a land and a time as separated from the present. At the same time, however, these spatio-temporal and cultural differences are made part of the present of Fursat: the narrative of the book, organized as a travelogue and interspersing the description of the remains with encounters, diversions, and observations, projects the ancient ruins into the everyday life of the late nineteenth century. Ruins are part of the landscape of the present while also objects of study and curiosity.

In Iran interest in the ancient past of the country grew steadily during the nineteenth century. The Qajar monarchs fostered it by appropriating certain Achaemenid or Sassanian elements in their visual culture and by commissioning or carrying

out excavations.¹⁰ This engagement intersected with European interests. Philologists put Iran—or rather, Persian—near the root of the Indo-European language tree, developing a web of racial and linguistic theories particularly concerned with the question of ‘origins’. Historians of religions developed a steady investment in ‘Zoroaster’. More and more travellers described ruins and monuments, made drawings that were published as prints, and took photographs. Archaeologists began expeditions and, later, digs.

According to Tavakoli-Targhi (2001) these trajectories intersected with an even more important movement of translation and diffusion of texts from India to Iran. Parsi scholars and British orientalists produced or edited a number of neo-Mazdean texts, which found their way to Iran. These books presented a different conceptualization of the history of Iran and opened a discursive space for thinking about Iran and Islam as separable and, eventually, opposite terms. This configuration became the base for the future articulation of a refashioned Iranian nation in racialized terms, reclaiming an Aryan race and a Persian language purified of Arabic elements.

Talinn Grigor (2007) argued that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century these reconfigurations became particularly relevant in the architectural and visual domains. Iranian architects and intellectuals revived Iran’s pre-Islamic heritage in conjunction with European debates on the origins and location of the Western architectural canon. Grigor quotes *Âsâr-i ‘Ajam*, in passing, as one of a growing number of books that cultivated this increasing interest in ancient ruins, developing at the Qajar court as well as among the reading public. These publications, and the architecture they inspired, selectively appropriated European arguments about the Aryan origins of architecture to construct a secularist, modernist, and racially based aesthetic that proclaimed the cultural superiority of the Iranian nation.¹¹ Grigor reveals how this generation of reformists produced a hybrid style that was at once an assertion of a self-fashioned universalism and a response to colonial encroachments. Her argument pushes for a reorientation of questions of ‘influence’ towards a consideration of the “multiple tactics of resistance to and transformations of the appropriated original. They also show that culture itself operates on the interplay of sameness and difference, which necessitates formal exchange” (Grigor 2007: 586).

A close look at the *Âsâr-i ‘Ajam* helps to push Tavakoli-Targhi and Grigor’s arguments further. A little older than the ‘architects’ of the Aryan view of Iran, more provincial, but also less interested in power and therefore more cosmopolitan, Fursat highlights a different territorialization of Iran. His way of approaching the ancient past, his mystical interests and his aesthetic curiosity show him to be a playful and self-styling reasoning individual, curious about the world and a little too self-confident, rather than the precursor of the celebratory destiny of the Iranian nation.

¹⁰ Abdi 2001, Baygdilu 2001, Grigor 2007, Scarce 2006.

¹¹ Grigor discusses several buildings of the Qavam family in Shiraz and Tehran as indicative of this hybrid style. As noted above, the Qavams were Fursat’s patrons. Cf. Juneja’s paper here.

A view from the *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* further dispels the idea that the approach to ancient Iran of the late nineteenth century was necessarily a search for origins, a quest for authenticity leading necessarily to the later rigid and exclusionary bipolarism between Iran and Islam, the nation and religion. *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* invites us instead to consider how the growing bifurcations between the East and the West, Islam and the nation were terrains of experimentation for new sensibilities that grew out of aesthetic as well as historical concerns.

From the point of view of *Âsâr-i 'Ajam*, the relationship with Europe loses some of the transparency implied in a dialectic of mirroring. Rather than a relationship of identity and difference, self and other, *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* proposes a modality of knowledge as a path of affective experimentation that assembles disparate matters of concern from East and West to reconfigure them into an original territory of self-expression. Curiosity and exploration are in every page of the book. Fursat's descriptions and analysis of the remains are experiments in coming to terms with a domain that he does not completely master. This does not mean that in so doing the book does not draw its own boundaries, tracing sharp lines of distinction, judging people and things.

Drawing Ruins

In the introduction to *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* Fursat writes that “one of the sahibs of the British state asked me to draw some of the old monuments of Fars and take measurements, through the intermediary of a Parsi living in Tehran called Manekji” (Fursat 1896: 2–3).¹² Manekji Limji Hataria (1813–1890) was an Indian Parsi and British subject sent to Iran by a Parsi organization in Bombay to ameliorate the living conditions of Zoroastrians in the country. He lobbied for them at the Qajar court, channelled to them money collected in India, contributed to reorganizing the community in Yazd, and favoured the migration of Zoroastrians to India. As is evident from his travelogue, Manekji had seen many of the monuments on his way to Tehran, deploring their sorry state.¹³

Fursat writes that he travelled around the region to draw the ruins and sent the drawings along with a booklet in which he had written some notes. He subsequently learned that Manekji had died and was worried that his efforts would be lost. But Nizâm al-Sultâna who was governor of Shiraz at that time, having met Fursat, talked to him about the monuments, saw his drawings and ordered him to draw more remains in Fars. Fursat accomplished the task, combined the drawings with the notes he had taken while in situ, and dedicated the work to Nizâm al-Sultâna.

¹² In his biography he will write that it was “Manekji Sahib” who wrote to him to travel and do the drawings, omitting reference to a British official. I do not have supplementary information; Manekji was a British subject so Fursat might have been referring to him anyhow. Or he called upon a “British authority” to give relevance to the assignment. Or there is a British connection that would need to be explored further.

¹³ See Boyce 1969, and Vahman 2008 on his relations with Babis.

Interest in the ruins of Persepolis and other ancient remains was certainly not new. For centuries, starting with the Sassanids, subsequent dynasties instituted a relationship with Persepolis' columns and bas-reliefs by engraving inscriptions (or bas-reliefs) to mark their visits to the place and express their homage to the greatness of the remains. Historians, poets and travellers of different epochs described the ruins and made sense of them (see Mustafavi 1964). While the history of European visits to Achaemenid ruins is relatively well known (see Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Drijvers 1991) less work has been done on descriptions and illustrations of Persepolis in Persian and Arabic scholarly and literary traditions, especially before the nineteenth century. Mousavi (2002) discusses the role of Iranians in excavations and scholarship on Persepolis in the twentieth century. Abdi discusses the development of Iranian archaeology in relation to the nationalist project (2001). Both these essays establish a division between a time before European interest in Persepolis, when Iranians had a more "symbolic" and "mythological" (Mousavi 2002) relationship with the ruins, and a time after Europeans began visiting the ancient site, when Iranians became increasingly "scientific" in their relationship towards the ancient past. This understanding is predicated on a series of a priori juxtapositions (such as mythological/scientific) which would need to be reevaluated by considering changing cultures of scholarship, changing conceptions of the past and, last but not least, changes in the very notion of the real.¹⁴ This article is a modest step in this direction. Through considering that such transformations did not take place only in relation to encounters with Europe, and discussing works such as *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* that do not fit neatly into the premodern/modern division, a different perspective emerges.

These considerations are relevant to discussion of the plates of *Âsâr-i 'Ajam*, which in Fursat's view take precedence over the text, in his view serving as commentary on the images. The 50 images depict landscapes with ruins or are closer views of bas-reliefs, statues, and buildings. Some sites, such as Persepolis and Naqsh-i Rostam, take up many illustrations. Visually the images are connected both to what is referred to as the "popular" genre of lithographed narratives, and to prints by Europeans that Fursat knew and studied.¹⁵ They exhibit a zeal for meticulous detail and a concern for realistic presentation: Fursat at times explains why he decided to draw certain remains from a particular angle, and in the case of Persepolis he writes that he chose to depict the ensemble of the imposing remains using the technique of the 'bird's eye view', naming it in English, to ensure a proportionate vision of the whole, by establishing the perspective of the drawing from a point suspended above the ground (Fursat 1896: 136) (Fig. 10.2).

This was a widespread technique in the nineteenth century that allowed for a comprehensive view of cities and other landscapes as if seen by a bird in the sky above them. The technique involved measuring the ground to be depicted in order to

¹⁴ In turn, these dynamics would need to be discussed in relation to the Qajar's interest in the territory of Iran, its history, and its resources.

¹⁵ See for example the prints of Persepolis by Grelot and Tavernier (Tavernier 1930). On illustrations of Persian epic poems in lithography see Marzolph 2001.

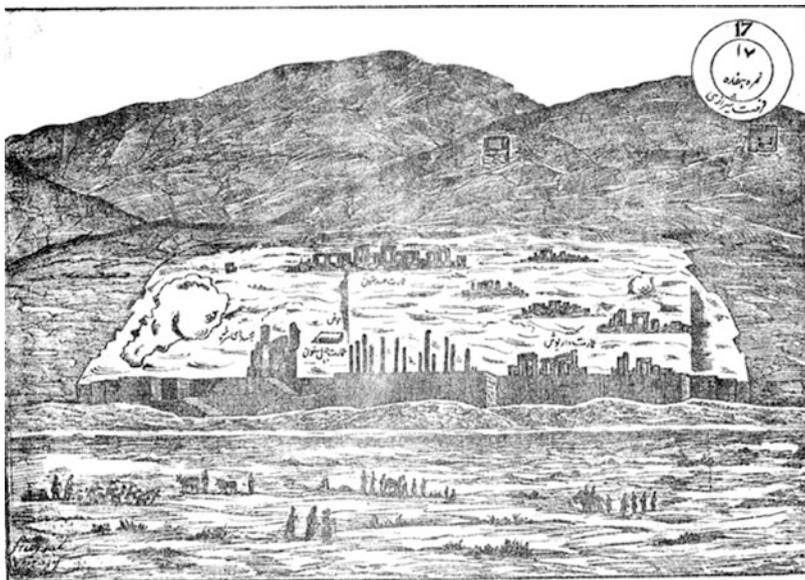


Fig. 10.2 Fursat: ‘Bird’s eye view’ of the ruins of Persepolis (Fursat 1896: 136)

give adequate proportions, but was often used for ‘artistic’ panoramas that were less concerned with the proportions and more with the image of the city as a whole (Vitta 2005).

The images often have numbers or letters that are explained in the text or the glosses; sometimes they carry captions such as such as “city of Shiraz” or “here was a castle.” In addition to the sketches on the pages and in the glosses, images often illustrate a design, or the exact location of a bas-relief on a mountain, as if words alone would not be able to convey the description Fursat aims to give. Following the custom in European prints, the figures that appear in images, often people on donkeys and horses, peasants, or passers-by, have the function of indicating the scale of the ruins, while also creating a landscape and giving the ruins a social and exotic setting (Fig. 10.3).

The images—like *Āsâr-i ‘Ajam* as a whole—are approximate, they retain the exploratory and provisional character of the work. They combine a documentary approach with a more expressive attitude. While the effort at precision and documentation is constantly underlined, there is a peculiar way of adjusting inconsistencies of perspective or a lack of detail with a dramatization of certain elements of the landscape. Skies and mountains are often drawn in broad strokes as masses in an expressive landscape rather than realistic efforts.¹⁶

¹⁶ See Fotiadis’ discussion of “images” as the dominant form of archeological knowledge in his article for this volume, and Thouard and Wang on the tension between documentation and expressiveness in Segalen. Though produced for this kind of consumption, Fursat’s plates are also ‘images to think with’, visionary statements about the past that do involve a cognitive perspective: they participate in constructing the conditions of possibility for thinking about the ancient past of the country.

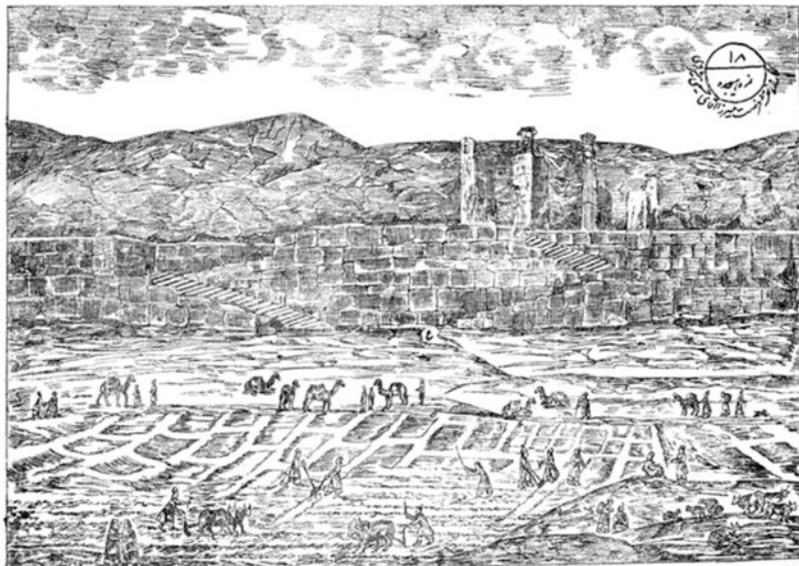


Fig. 10.3 Fursat: The wall of the city of Persepolis (Fursat 1896: 300)

Though there might be questions about its actual circulation, *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* is in many ways the presentation of the ruins of the *'Ajam* to a growing readership made possible by technologies such as lithography, offering the possibility of mechanical reproduction of images. The volume with its plates presents an ancient world of ruins to the court and beyond, appropriating the world of European prints, and working towards new ways of territorializing Iran.¹⁷ This process is as much experimentation with new techniques as it is reconfiguration of older ones, including the miniature tradition.

Territorializing Language

Fursat's engagement with the territory of *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* is intertwined with his studies of ancient Iranian languages and his experiments with language. Fursat's progressive acquaintance with the ancient world and its scripts is an integral part of *Âsâr-i 'Ajam*. The book recounts his advances in reading cuneiform writing. Fursat describes how he first learned to decipher the cuneiform script from an Italian representative stationed in Shiraz. The short passage in which Fursat records visiting the Italian's library, and realizing that he had books on cuneiform script, testifies to his "passion" for learning, his curiosity, and his pragmatic approach:

¹⁷ Lithography at least in this case was not a precursor of photography. Lithography and photography should be here thought of as two parallel technologies with different organizations, possibilities, and limits of circulation etc. Mousavi 2002; see also Stein 1989.

Once I was in his library and I was looking at books in English, French and other languages. I found a book on the inscriptions of Takht-i Jamshīd [Persepolis] that had been translated into Italian and that the Italian could read himself. The force of my passion (*shawq*) made me jump from the chair, grab his vest and ask him if he could teach me how to read that script. He accepted and for twenty days I spent three hours a day at his house and learned the script and translated some inscriptions. (Fursat 1896: 138)¹⁸

The *Âsâr-i 'Ajam*, like Fursat's poetry, exhibits the neologisms derived from Neo-Mazdean texts that were popular at the time. The language fits the topic. As Tavakoli-Targhi (2001) argues, this literary fashion was a linguistic experiment, a mark of distinction.¹⁹ Later modernist literary critics and philologists searching for 'pure Persian', criticized these experiments as unsuccessful and artificial.²⁰ They do not therefore so much represent a 'return to', as an exploration of, a different lexical ground. Marginal notes indicate the vocalization of these words and explain their meaning.²¹ At the same time, Fursat insists that he wrote the book in easy, readable prose, without ornaments and rhymes (*sajj*) (Fursat 1896: 8).

However, his prose is often interspersed with verses; and poetry, by Fursat or others, occupies a special place in the textual economy of the book. Poets conclude the biographical sections on Shiraz and the book itself. In several instances, Fursat recounts the occasion for composing a particular poem and then quotes it in its entirety. Often these poems are *qasīdas* dedicated to his hosts or to a figure he admires. The alternation of prose and verse is widespread in Persian books and has its ultimate model in Sa'dī's *Gulistān*, one of the most revered texts of the Persian literary tradition. In Fursat's work this versatility is a habitual decorative gesture. At the same time, the interweaving of verses and narration turns the *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* into a poetic journey. Accompanied by references to ancient and contemporary poets, this alternation of prose and verse territorializes poetry as one of the components of the material and conceptual landscape that Fursat is delineating.

The Cartography of Ruins

Fursat traces the cartography of *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* through a series of conceptual and geographical delimitations that identify the object of the book, extracting it from larger regions and topics. The book opens with mention of Iran as "a vast country

¹⁸ After composing *Âsâr-i 'Ajam*, Fursat continued to study cuneiform writing and devoted an essay to this topic in which he wrote that what he included and translated in *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* was incomplete and in part incorrect as he did not have enough experience at the time, and that he later learned more cuneiform from a German called Dr. Mann (quoted in Fursat 1998, Vol I: 24).

¹⁹ In the introduction Fursat narrates how an envious secretary challenged him to write a *qasīda* without using any Arabic, arguing that it was easy to use only Persian words in prose, but it was almost impossible to do so in a poem, especially a *qasīda*. Fursat describes how he defeated the arrogant secretary and quotes the *qasīda* he composed (Fursat 1896: 5–7).

²⁰ This is also the opinion of Rastigâr, the editor of the typescript edition (Fursat 1998, Vol. I: 104).

²¹ See below for these notes. Rastigâr believes that they are from the calligraphers, but they could also be from Fursat.

whose places had many names that changed over time and comprised Iraq, Khurasan, Tabarestan, Fars, Azerbaijan and Kerman and so on, places we are not concerned with” (Fursat 1896:10). It outlines the region of Fars, naming its borders, its dimensions, its two climatic zones and its major cities: “Fars comprises (*ibârat ast az*) Shîrâz, Kâzîrûn, Fîrûzabâd, Dârbjird, Fâsâ, Nîrîz, Sarvistân, Kavar, Jahrum, Marvdasht, Shabankara and so on, and I do not plan to mention all of them” (Fursat 1896:10). The cartography of *Âsâr-i ‘Ajam* in fact follows the journeys and conceptual detours of Fursat rather than the administrative boundaries of Fars, and the last portion of the travelogue is devoted to Western Iran, outside the territory of Fars as initially defined.

In articulating this geographical and conceptual selection, Fursat moves back and forth between two different temporalities: the present in which he writes and a distant, indefinite past (*dar qadîm al-ayyâm*), a place of origins. Fursat discusses this past by combining genealogy and etymology: lands acquire names from their rulers, and in turn their descendants inherit portions of these lands, which are named after them. Iran is named after Hûshang; his son Pars inherited its lands and so the whole of Iran was called Pars for a time. Pars had several children (Jam, Shîrâz, Istakhr, Fâsâ) after whom cities were named. While he reports these theories, Fursat does not endorse them (“some also say”) and quickly moves back to the present. This mythical past forms the foil against which *Âsâr-i ‘Ajam* constructs the ruins as an object of knowledge in the present. Often mentioned, sometimes discarded—as in the case of the name Takht-i Jamshîd for Persepolis—this past of origins and hearsay is juxtaposed to the evidence of drawings and descriptions that make up the book.

The articulation between the pre-Islamic past of Iran and Islam follows a peculiar route in the book. Less concerned with establishing a general frame of interpretation and evaluation, Fursat is more interested in finding ways of coming to terms with a novel object of inquiry. This approach results in detailed discussions of concrete ruins that appear genuinely foreign and unknown rather than already mapped within a general scheme. As a counterpoint to this open inquiry, several passages of the book make clear that the *Âsâr-i ‘Ajam*, the ruins of the non-Arabic speaking territory, are distant from the present day of Iran as a Muslim territory. This separation is invoked, for example, at the beginning of the book, where the customary invocation to God is followed by one to Muhammad as the one who “extinguished the fires of the Âtashkada’s of the Parsis and destroyed the religion of the Zoroastrians” (Fursat 1896: 2). This invocation, written mostly with ‘Parsi’ words, institutes a clear break, one that seems even too strong, since a few lines below the ‘Parsi’ Manekji is evoked. The ‘ancients’ are located in a conceptual and linguistic space of their own, which can therefore be discussed in so far as it remains squarely foreign to the present.

The ancient past is approachable not as an alternative to the present order of things but as a different past whose traces dot the mountains and plains of the country. *Âsâr-i ‘Ajam* presents ancient times as a separate and demarcated territory which elicits curiosity and which should be studied scientifically. Moreover, the book in several of its detours touches on many Muslim figures and debates, weaving them without fissures into the narrative of Achaemenid and Sassanid ruins. In a few

instances Fursat uses the interpretative tools of Islamic philosophy to read Achaemenid bas-reliefs and statues, opening up the possibility for a metaphysical reading of the ruins.

Shiraznama

The second part of the book is devoted to a description of the city of Shiraz, Fursat's home. Shiraz is the big city counterposed to the small towns where Fursat stays on his voyages. It is a centre of knowledge for the entire region and beyond, inhabited by friends and scholars whom Fursat presents as his community. Shiraz is the capital of Fars and the noblest (*mu'azzamtarîn*) of the cities of the region.

The pages on Shiraz are less exploratory than the first part of the book, even if they often digress or wander in several directions, especially in the glosses. They move within a familiar terrain, relying on a vast textual tradition of writings on the city. Here too, however, Fursat delineates his own itinerary, selecting certain buildings and people, and writes that he leaves others aside because he already mentioned them in the first part of the volume, or other scholars have written about them, or simply because they are too many. At the end of the first part of the volume, he writes that several people urged him to write a *Shîrâznâme* to add to the account of his travels. He comments that the available *Shîrâznâmas* did not help him because they describe buildings that have disappeared without trace (*âsâr*) and concludes with a poetic expression drawn from Sa'dî: "the old *Shîrâznâmas* belong to the calendar of yesterday's years (*taqvîm-i pâriîna*)" (Fursat 1896: 422).

The section on Shiraz in *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* is therefore devoted to the existing city. The narrative opens with a physical description of the setting and the city's main water channels. After praising the air and the climate, Fursat establishes a connection between the city and its inhabitants:

Its people (*mardumân-ish*) are jovial and pleasurable (*sâhib-i zawq*), most of them are discerning and thoughtful, masterful, industrious and artistic, desiring to study the sciences—it is for this reason they called this place the Abode of Knowledge. They are short of finance, but are rich in temperament (*tab'*), they all have dervish manners and pure faith and for this reason they named the place the House of Companions. (Fursat 1896: 427)

This sketch rehearses a set of characteristics of the people of Shiraz found in older narratives and establishes a relationship between the people and their city by recalling two of the epithets most commonly used to name the town: Shiraz, the Abode of Knowledge; Shiraz, the House of Companions. This territorialization is articulated in two interrelated domains, knowledge and devotion, themselves intersecting three characteristics: Shirazis are pleasurable, they are clever and they believe.

The narrative proceeds to list the names of neighbourhoods, followed by sections that present buildings and other places in Shiraz typologically: mosques, gardens and tombs, *takkiyas*, *madrasas*, *husaynîyas*, bazaars, and so on. Fursat describes the physical features of these places, lists people who are connected to them, and

sometimes comments on their state, especially in the case of notable buildings such as the Friday Mosque. Sections on notable individuals follow, divided by category: ‘*ulamâ*’ and ‘*fuqâhâ*’, sermon givers, physicians, administrators and military men, foreigners living in Shiraz, secretaries, calligraphers, painters, merchants, artisans, and finally poets. As is common in *Âsâr-i ‘Ajam*, this order is often transgressed in the actual narrative: many biographies are recounted in the section on a particular building in which the person works, prays, or is buried.

Ahl-i ‘ilm

The style of the biographies is not dissimilar from other books in the Persian literary tradition that collect short notices on individuals. They recount the studies of a man (no women are mentioned), his current activities, his writings or accomplishments. As is customary, Fursat often describes the relationship he has with each of the people he lists, inserting himself in the narrative. Taken all together, the biographies constitute the *ahl-i ‘ilm*, the people of knowledge, the learned of the city, Fursat’s network.

The delineation of this assemblage is a significant element of Fursat’s articulation of knowledge. Adopting the standard format for the description of notable individuals, he reproduces an age-old model that structures the relationship between knowledge and place as one of embodiment: the qualities of a place are found in the people who represent it. Even though the individuals listed partake of this configuration to different degrees, as a whole they circumscribe a ‘society’ of people eager to learn. This association gives relevance to knowledge, one of the characteristics of Shirazis taken as a whole. Historians often describe this embodiment as a ‘person-oriented’ configuration of knowledge as opposed to a more abstract one in which books and other technologies take precedence over people. Often the fault line between ‘traditional’ and a more ‘modern’ or contemporary approach is depicted as the passage from knowledge embodied in individuals to one embodied in texts.²²

In my view this approach to knowledge is more specific. The term *ahl* is the first element of syntagms that establish a relation between a group, or single individual, and a place, a trade, an interest, or a particular moral quality or vice. *Ahl* does not refer to an already formed and self-contained autonomous ‘identity’, but indicates a disposition towards something, an affiliation, structuring a composite made of individuals and other things rather than the internalization of knowledge as a body. The various compounds it produces, particularly varied in Fursat’s book, are themselves a cartographic indication of a geo-poetic relation, rather than a social definition in terms of who is a person of knowledge and who is not.

²² See Messick 1997a for a review of these approaches and a partial critique of them that shows the interconnections between the two ways of conceptualizing and transmitting knowledge.

While a product of an age-old tradition, Fursat's conceptualization of the *ahl-i 'ilm* points to the reconfiguration of knowledge taking place in the late nineteenth century. Fursat writes for everyone. *Āsâr-i 'Ajam* and his other writings are directed at a general readership that he terms *khâss va 'âmm*. This common expression separates and unites two distinct categories of people: "the distinguished ones" and "the commoners." Fursat's writings are in many ways introductory, general books rather than specialized ones.

This approach is related to a specific disposition towards knowledge that combines certain ethical trajectories in Islam with ideas coming from elsewhere. It is an approach that crystallized for Fursat in his encounter with Jamal al-Dîn Asadâbâdî, also known as al-Afghânî, which took place in the city of Busher in 1885 while Fursat was going on pilgrimage to Karbalâ'.

As Fursat recounts in the autobiography that prefaces his collection of poetry, this encounter with the Sayyid, as he calls him, was a sort of 'Copernican revolution' for the 32 year-old Shirazî painter. Al-Afghânî taught Fursat the 'new' heliocentric astronomy and impressed upon him a conception of knowledge (*'ilm*) as the source and light of humanity. Fursat writes that for Al-Afghânî knowledge is a process of learning that grants autonomy to individuals through the exercise of reasoning. The Sayyid disdains those who ignorantly and blindly follow orders and received ideas without seeking causes and information for themselves (Fursat 1915: 30–106). Humans have the power as well as the duty to know in order to fulfil their essence. This view of knowledge establishes the autonomous rational individual as a subject.

The partition between the learned and the ignorant, or, more precisely, between those who have an orientation to learning and those who do not, traverses Fursat's entire oeuvre.²³ This is for him a constant matter of concern. He refers to it as a social commentary on the state of Iran but also uses it to chastise or mock a whole variety of people. Fursat is particularly concerned with people who, while "ignorant," pretend to know and act in an arrogant manner toward others. In *Āsâr-i 'Ajam* he recounts several episodes during his travels when he was confronted with such characters. A judge who treated Fursat disparagingly because of his simple dress turned out to be totally "ignorant" himself. Fursat's revenge came the following day when the ignorant judge could not decipher the ornate calligraphy of an inscription. The attack on pretension is an old ethical theme that can be found in the works of Sa'dî, for example, among many classical authors. In Fursat it acquires specificity as a social denunciation, an evil that impedes the social progress of the country, and becomes a critique of a whole set of practices and beliefs that are dismissed as "superstitions."

These positions resonate with debates and exchanges that in those years called for an "awakening" and a series of political and social reforms as part of concerns about the destiny of the nation. At the same time Fursat, particularly in the *Āsâr-i 'Ajam*, rarely brings up political questions. He also does not discuss the politics of the figures that he mentions, such as the activist Shaykh al-Ra'îs, or Babi, who spent

²³ See in particular his collection of essays, Fursat 1904b.

a few years in Shiraz before being expelled from the city for supporting a revolt against what were considered unjust allocations of bread (Cole 1999). This partly follows the style of biographical dictionaries, which are often parsimonious with sensitive information. The dedication of the book to the governor as well as his sponsorship could also explain Fursat's reluctance to be more explicit. Fursat will condemn "despotism" (*istibdâd*) and the arrogance of the powerful much more explicitly in later years, after the constitutional revolution in which he played a marginal part and about which he wrote a book.²⁴ Even in those writings, Fursat's accent is on morality rather than political ideals, and he often denounces violence on opposite sides.

Fursat's reflections on the universal value of knowledge and his emphasis on its social role can be related to the more general articulation of knowledge as a process of emancipation and awareness that was circulating in different configurations in those years in Iran. In Fursat this approach is rooted in theology and ethics, which he often refers to and relies on, and is not constructed as an alternative to the forms and practices of knowledge that had been common in Iran for centuries. This is one of the elements that sets him apart from the 'national' intellectuals of his time, those who argued for the annihilation of the past as well as those who argued for a bifurcation of nation and Islam.²⁵ For Fursat, Islam and science are both domains of knowledge through which superstition and ignorance can be denounced and overcome.

In *Âsâr-i 'Ajam*, and Fursat's other writings, this position is inflected with a strong pedagogical trajectory underlining the relevance of knowledge and the need to educate oneself, so as to escape from ignorance and acquire the tools for the advancement and well-being of the self and the nation. This prescriptive dimension defines knowledge as a goal for the realization of human potential, while at the same time posing autonomy as its precondition. In these instances, Fursat's mobile path of exploration takes a more definite shape and becomes an evaluative system, a prescriptive indication of the need for work on the self, the formation of a subject of knowledge with certain qualities.

Âsâr-i 'Ajam experiments with combining older traditions and forms of knowledge with new objects of study, delineating a material and conceptual territory composed of ruins, a desire for knowledge, and poetry. This is an unstable territory. *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* and other writings by Fursat alternate between a more exploratory journey and the territorialization of a system of evaluation. This instability is itself an indication of Fursat's position of approximation and recombination, which at times territorializes the main concerns of his day, while at others it diverts their systems of judgment towards a less directed, and therefore less precise articulation of curiosity.

²⁴ See *passim* Fursat 1904b and 1915.

²⁵ This is much more evident in his collection of essays (1914). See for example Mirza Agha Khan Kirmani or Mirza Fath 'Ali Akhundzada (Sanjabi 1995). Fursat at times criticizes ignorance in singular judges and "*ulamâ*," but the religious hierarchies as an institution are not his target.

The same instability is also detectable in Fursat's construction of Europe. In line with his overall exploratory and approximate approach to knowledge, Fursat engages with European people, books, and images as singular tokens of a configuration he is delineating for his own ends. In these moments, encounters with European books, drawings, and individuals are instances of a mobile configuration rather than sources of emulation or terms of comparison. At other times, instead, Fursat refers to European scientists, painters, as well as newspapers and particular technologies, as models (cf. Wagner's paper here). He compares them with the situation in Iran, which he describes as backward, and quotes them as ultimate authorities.

A few years after Fursat's death the precarious and exploratory territory outlined in *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* would take different forms and become a solid platform for evaluations of the past and present of Iran. Retrospectively, the book itself will be promoted as a significant step towards a new kind of knowledge and new approach to the past; it will be reprinted in 1934 in Bombay at the height of the Reza Shah epoch, and subsequently republished several times in offset. In 1998 a professor from the university of Shiraz published the first typescript edition of the book, in conjunction with an ever-increasing general interest in the cultural past of the city and in Fursat in particular. Fursat has become today one of the major 'local' figures of Shiraz, to such an extent that there are plans to build a statue of him.

Considered from the perspective of Fursat Shirazi, 'Iranian modernity' is a contingent product. It is the combination of particular encounters of people and things, which only retrospectively became a stark divide between what Iran had been for centuries and what it was going to become. Even the relationship with Europe, while casting its shadow, does not play an exclusive role, and Asian trajectories (albeit with colonial inflections) seem to have had at least equal if not more substantive relevance. While in the decades that follow ancient Iran became the basis for imagining a prescriptive view of modern Iran, in the pages of *Âsâr-i 'Ajam* one finds a different account of the "ruins of the others": an open-ended interrogation which is at once existential and philological. Self-formation by means of texts and images has been in many times and places a recurrent claim for the value of 'classics': can it still be made?

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Chapter 11

Making New Classics: The Archaeology of Luo Zhenyu and Victor Segalen

Denis Thouard and Tao Wang

Summary Luo Zhenyu and Victor Segalen might both be considered figures moving to the ‘classics’ through modernity: Luo pathfinder of the modern discipline of archaeology in China; Segalen a peculiarly modern kind of poet. They might be seen as moving in opposite directions, though each is critical of the tradition from which he comes. Luo draws on Western archaeology to call for a more inclusive study of all past artefacts, whether inscribed or not, whereas Segalen rejects the conventional frame of Western study of ‘China’, from its beginnings to the Ming period, and insists that the ‘real’ China can only be found in the early times of the Han. Luo finds a kind of poetry even in cooking-pots and the recreation of ordinary life, while for Segalen the past becomes present again only in a moment of discovery; Han lions and tigers would be made dead once again by being moved to a museum.

The question of the “classics” (*jing* 經) proposed an acute dilemma to China at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the one hand, the position of the canonized classics (namely the 13 classical texts¹) was challenged by the ever

¹ The 13 classics include the *Zhouyi* 周易 (The Book of Changes), *Shangshu* 尚書 (The Book of Documents), *Shijing* 詩經 (The Book of Songs), *Zhouli* 周禮 (The Rites of Zhou), *Yili* 儀禮 (The Book of Rituals), *Liji* 禮記 (The Records of Rituals), *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 春秋左傳 (The Spring and Autumn Chronicles with Zou’s Commentary), *Chunqiu Gongyangzhuàn* 春秋公羊傳 The Spring and Autumn Chronicles with Gongyang’s Commentary, *Chunqiu Guliangzhuàn* 春秋谷梁傳 The

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popular Western learning; but on the other hand many Western intellectuals were making a great effort to seek the ‘classical’ China—not only in old texts, but also in remote mountains, riverbanks, and deserts. This created a significant traffic from two opposite directions; and it was indeed against such a background that the discipline of modern archaeology was born.

The birth of modern archaeology in China has been attributed to foreign influence, in particular to the Swedish geologist Johan Gunnar Andersson (1874–1960), who not only made some important archaeological discoveries but also established the basic principles of excavation.² It is perhaps unfair, however, to suggest that China had no archaeology before the twentieth century. The Chinese had a long and very sophisticated tradition of studying antiquities. But this was a very different kind of archaeology, mainly based on studies of ancient inscriptions found on various materials such as bronze and stone, known as the *jinshixue* 金石學. It is therefore an important question how much, if at all, the traditional scholarship of *jinshixue* influenced the development of modern archaeology in China.

This paper, however, will not provide a direct answer to that question. Instead, our purpose is to reflect on the cross-over movement between China and the West in the beginnings of modern Chinese archaeology, initially inspired by Western scientific norms and practitioners. Among many candidates, we have chosen the French poet and archaeologist Victor Segalen (1878–1919) and the Chinese scholar and politician Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1866–1940). Both played crucial roles in the early stage of the development of modern archaeology in China; furthermore, they both had complex relationships with the ‘classical’ traditions of China and of Europe.

Luo Zhenyu was a reformer, but also a loyalist to the Qing Imperial Court and dissident in the Republic of China. He had a long and complicated life.³ In China, Luo has been often criticized for his political associations with the Manchu and the Japanese. Nevertheless everyone recognizes his distinguished academic career, and significant contributions to the mainstream scholarship of twentieth century China, including the study of Shang oracle bone inscriptions, Han wooden documents and Tang manuscripts from Duanhuang, Qing Imperial archives, and various ancient artefacts.⁴ Many of these studies benefited, or directly derived from, his communications with Western scholars such as Emmanuel-Édouard Chavannes

Spring and Autumn Chronicles with Guliang’s Commentary, *Lunyu* 論語 (The Analects of Confucius), *Xiaojing* 孝經 (The Book of Filial Piety), *Erya* 爾雅 (The Erya Thesaurus), and *Mengzi* 孟子 (The Sayings of Mencius). The formation of the canon went through a long process: in the beginning, only five *jing* classics were recognized by the Han government; in the Tang period, they became nine, and then twelve; the thirteen classics were fixed only by the Southern Song dynasty. For an introduction to the textual history of these classics, see the relevant entries in Loewe 1993.

² For a study of Andersson (known by his Chinese name An Tesheng 安特生) and his influence on Chinese archaeology, see Chen Xingcan 1997.

³ Reconstruction of Luo’s life depends on his autobiography *Jiliao bian* 集蓼編, LXTHJ vol. 26, and two other biographical records *Yongfeng xiangren xingnianlu* 永豐鄉人行年錄 (LXTHJ vols. 178–179), *Tingwen yil üe—huiyi zufu Luo Zhenyu de yisheng* 庭聞憶略—回憶祖父羅振玉的一生 (Luo Jizu 1987), all edited by his grandson Luo Jizu 羅繼祖 (1913–2002).

⁴ For a summary of Luo’s scholarship, see Wang Qingxiang 2002–2005.

(1865–1918), Paul Pelliot (1878–1945), and Mark Aurel Stein (1862–1943). But at the same time Luo was a self-appointed protector of the “classics.” He argued that China must “return to the classics and trust the ancient.”⁵ His role in the transition from traditional *jinshixue* to modern archaeology deserves a special treatment from the contemporary perspective.

On the other hand, the original aesthetical approach of Victor Segalen was an attempt to escape from European ‘classics’. In his archaeological investigation of old Chinese monuments, Segalen established the first systematic description of China’s great “statuary:” monumental, funeral, imperial, and historical. He was writing for a Western audience, but at the same time he drawing strength from the Chinese traditional method of making “descriptive records of places” (*fanzhi* 方志). The interesting point about Segalen is that his search for “classics” or for the old “genuine” (as he believed) China was not mainly directed towards a scientific appropriation based on new archaeological museums—even though he worked for scientific missions and reported regularly to the Institute in Paris—but towards the fugitive aesthetic moment of discovery and contemplation. The “look across the hill” to which he dedicates fine pages in *Equipée* and *Stèles*⁶ may give us the key to his thoroughly unconventional archaeological approach. The “first sight” he was seeking could only be such insofar as central China remained “unexplored” by “archaeological expertise” (1995 vol. 2: 745). Segalen offers no naive look at an “eternal China,” but he decidedly opposes the numerous clichés already attached to its past: he wants to bypass the filter of all the chinoiseries and Ming reproductions erroneously taken to be the genuine old art of China and not merely some of its relatively recent cheap products. Thus knowledge and aesthetic sense were for him complementary: the quest for the experience of old genuine forms was supported and mediated by reflection and science. Together with the scientific reports of the three missions he led with Gilbert de Voisins (1877–1939) and later also with Jean Lartigue, *China. The Great Statuary* is, in its fascinating ambiguity, the major testimony of his archaeological and aesthetic attempt to understand Chinese art and archaeology.⁷

⁵ For a recent discussion, see Pai Shih-Ming [forthcoming](#).

⁶ See “La passe” among the “Stèles along the road,” in *Stèles* (1995 vol. 2: 101), “Le regard pardessus le col,” *Equipée* (*ibid.*: 274–275). We quote from Segalen 1995. The second volume is entirely dedicated to China and presents the main archaeological materials. The archaeological writings are presented by Vadime Elisseff, who in 1948 was already working at the Musée Cernuschi in Paris and gave the first presentation of Segalen’s archaeological activities in the *Cahiers du Sud*, updated in 1972 and 1995 (1995 vol. 2: 736–743). The first contains his sketches *Briques et tuiles* and *Feuilles de route* (vol. 1: 839–1249). We have about 1,400 pages related to China and nearly 300 concerning archaeological topics (vol. 2: 733–1007).

⁷ In a certain sense, the text has only recently been published (Segalen 2011). Until 1972 only the scientific reports, articles, and the account edited by Jean Lartigue after Segalen’s death were available. Then Segalen’s daughter, Annie Joly-Segalen, provided a readable transcription of Segalen’s manuscript under the title: *Chine. La grande statuaire*, which was soon translated into English (Segalen 1978). A closer look reveals that this version is a recomposition that omitted many references (Chinese as well as European) and details, and cut down the whole project, which would have included a second section, which we know as *Les origines de la statuaire de Chine* (published

Luo Zhenyu: Politician and Scholar

Luo Zhenyu was born into a low ranking official family on 8 August 1886 in Huai'an (Jiangsu). His ancestors came originally from Shangyi Yongfengxiang in Zhejiang and Luo always called himself a "Man from Yongfengxiang" (Yongfengxiang ren 永豐鄉人). He began his traditional private education (*sishu 私塾*) at the age of 5; in this he would have to memorize the works of the Tang and Song poets, as well as the *jing* texts such as the *Book of Poetry*, *Book of Documents*, *Book of Changes*, *Record of Rites*, and *Spring and Autumn Chronicles*. Following older members of his family, he was very interested in ancient inscriptions, and wrote a book on stelae when he was 19.

However, Luo was unlucky with the imperial examination system. Not without trying, he only managed to pass the initial stage in the civil service recruitment examination. For several years, he had to work locally as a private tutor for several rich families. The turning point of Luo's life came in 1896. A year earlier, in 1895, the Canton-born scholar Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) wrote the famous long reform petition to the emperor Guangxu, and in the following year, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), a follower of Kang Youwei, started the newspaper *Current Affairs* (Shiwubao 時務報) in Shanghai to promote the ideas of reform. In the same year the first group of Chinese students was sent to Japan to learn new knowledge and skills. China embarked on the journey to modernization. Luo Zhenyu was 31; he left his home town for Shanghai and established with a friend, Jiang Bofu 蔣伯斧 (1866–1897), the Society for Agricultural Science (*Xuenongshe* 農學社) and the Agricultural Science Newspaper (*Nongxuebao* 農學報). It should be noted that these establishments were not concerned merely with traditional learning but also with Western agricultural science, and aimed to publish foreign books in translation. Luo's activities soon attracted the attention of a number of senior politicians who wanted to reform the old education system, including Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837–1909), Sheng Xuanhuai 盛宣懷 (1844–1916), Qin Chunxuan 秦春煊 (?), and Duan Fang 端方 (1861–1911). Luo was finally called to Peking to serve as a *xingzou* 行走 on the Board of Education and Examinations (*xuebu* 學部) of the Qing dynasty; he later moved up to the position of "adviser" (*canshi* 參事) and inspector of schools. Luo had proposed some grand plans for educational reform; one of these was to establish an Academy of National Learning (*Guoxueguan* 國學館) in each province, with, under the Academy, a library, a museum, and a research institute. This may have sounded idealistic, but Luo made it all sound reasonable.

1976 by A. Joly-Segalen), plus the little text *Orchestique des tombeaux chinois* (edited by Philippe Postel in Segalen, 1998). Philippe Postel has now published a new "critical" edition (Segalen 2011). It was not possible to use it for this paper; a review will soon give an account of its relevance to our topic. In his preparatory study (Postel 2001), he gives many suggestive and useful indications, e.g. in the first section, "A l'école d'une sinologie naissante," where he sketches Segalen's relation to Chavannes (27–43) and his own conception of the work of an archaeologist (45–88). We need not follow Postel's attempt to see in *The Great Statuary of China* the invention of an "écriture critique" beyond fiction and science in order to derive profit from his groundbreaking work.

Why? Because any study must depend on the resources of reading material available; for the study of archaeology, one has to see as many ancient objects as possible; the institute should employ learned scholars to act as tutors, teaching students who have a good knowledge of scholarship, disregarding their background, and the length of time their studies might take. It was a very attractive proposal which several national universities (for example the Qinghua University) later adopted.

Like many other scholar-officials, Luo Zhenyu indulged himself in collecting fine books and antiques. But this was more than just a hobby for Luo. At that time, Shang dynasty oracle bone inscriptions had just been discovered and were sought by many collectors. Luo immediately realised the academic value of these inscribed “dragon bones,” and in 1909, he published his *Yin Shang zhenbu wenzi kao* 殷商貞卜文字考 (An Investigation of the Divinatory Writings of the Yin-Shang dynasty). To him, the mere fact that these old animal bones were dug up from the ground was enough to warrant them as historical records, and their importance would equal that of transmitted *jing* texts such as the *Shangshu* and *Chunqiu*. Luo put the same emphasis and effort into the publication of Dunhuang manuscripts and wooden slips. It has to be said that in the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century the dominant position of the *jing* had been seriously threatened by the new trend towards Western learning, even before the fall of the Qing dynasty. This situation made Luo increasingly couch his defence of the classics in the context of new archaeological discoveries. In his own words:

Ancient treasures were once revealed in China during the late reign of Guangxu Emperor: first, the writings from Yinxu; second, the wooden documents from the western regions. I have obtained nine out of ten [oracle bone inscriptions] that were found in the bank of the Huan River, and have now made rubbings, sorted out by their categories, and studied their inscriptions. Although the world has not fully realized their importance, I enjoy this activity and am very satisfied—it seems that heaven especially presented them to me... Alas, heaven did not present those spiritual objects during the prosperous reigns of Qianlong and Jianqing, but revealed them in the days when our national power had declined. Now, the country is breaking down, the ritual system has gone, and ancient music has disappeared. We may have to wait another hundred years before the world returns to enlightenment. But just for this reason I am very anxious, in a great hurry to recover these documents, as if they are escaping. Considering the current trend, no one is as foolish as me. However, I walk alone in my dark path, and my determination cannot be defeated.⁸

In a very sentimental way, Luo clearly asserted himself as the ‘guardian’ of the classical tradition. He was acutely aware of events happening around him—the crumbling dynasty and the collapse of the old order. He was loyal to both the political institution and the ideology of the imperial dynasty. In 1911, after the downfall of the Qing, Luo first considered committing suicide to show his loyalty to the court. Instead, on the invitation of his Japanese friends, he left China

⁸ Luo Zhenyu 1968b.

for Japan together with his brother, his son-in-law, his close friends Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) and Dong Kang 董康 (1867–1947), and their families. To Luo and his associates the Meiji Restoration in Japan was the model for China's modernization. As early as 1898, 2 years after he arrived at Shanghai, Luo had already set up the Society for Learning Japanese (Dongwen xueshe 東文學社); here he met Wang Guowei and became his patron and friend. In 1899, Luo published Naka Michiyo's 那珂通世 *Shina tsūshi* 支那通史 which, for the first time, introduced the idea of “new history” to China.⁹ Luo had a good knowledge of Japanese society, and during several of his official journeys there he acquired many influential Japanese friends, which made it easier for him to settle down in Japan. He lived in Kyoto for 8 years, until 1919, and produced his finest works of scholarship during this period. He published no less than 60 books, the majority of them belonging to the *jinshixue* category. One may think that there were financial motives for his extraordinary productivity; he had to make a living by producing and selling these books. But, as Wang Guowei pointed out:

The master (Luo) especially treats scholarship as his own life, and the ancient objects and books are the embodiment of the life itself. . . . After the Xin Hai (the year when the Qing fell), he exiled himself overseas, and supported himself and others by selling antiques. However, he managed at different times to publish oracle bone inscriptions from YinXu and ancient slips and manuscripts from Dunhuang. Things that could not even be done by the state and by collective power were accomplished by the master with a single man's forces. All the books published by him are of a very fine quality. Living in exile for eight years, the master spent many thousands to print these books, leaving himself barely a month's worth of savings. The master was, however, contented with his actions. He did everything by himself: compiling the books, reading proofs, selecting the printer, and supervising the work, even in minor matters such as the designing and binding of the volumes, the ink and paper used—all the tedious and troublesome things that no scholars, past or present, care to take trouble over. The master did them all.¹⁰

Luo built himself a private library “Dayun shuku 大雲書庫” in Kyoto, which had over 300,000 volumes and several thousand rubbings and antiques. The significance of the library goes beyond a personal collection of books and antiques, as Wang Guowei pointed out: “. . .when mountains and rivers once again return to their beauty and heaven and earth become clear, then the collection of this library will be given back to the heavenly country. It is truly a deposit made for the stone chamber and golden casket, which will survive for thousands of generations, and be handed down endlessly.”¹¹ The reference of “stone chamber and golden casket” (*shiwu jin kui* 石屋金匱) refers to the safe keeping of the imperial archive of the Qin/Han dynasties. Here, the metaphor reminds us of the scholarly learning and the Dark Ages in European history.

⁹ This is a very significant publication. China did not have the social Darwinist style ‘evolutionary history’ before. See Wagner 2001.

¹⁰ Wang Guowei (1930–1935) 2003.

¹¹ Wang Guowei *ibid.*

In 1918, 7 years after his self-exile to Japan, Luo Zhenyu paid a visit to the old capital Peking. On 29 April he had an unusual visitor at the Yantai Hotel where he was staying. It was Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940), then the President of Peking University. The purpose of Cai’s visit was to invite Luo to accept an appointment as the Chair of Archaeology of the University. Luo initially refused the offer, saying that he was not good at giving lectures. But Cai was persuasive, insisting that Luo did not have to teach, and that the University was willing to establish an institute of archaeology where Luo need do only research and his duties as director of the institute. Luo was touched by Cai’s open-mindedness and agreed to draft a plan for the proposed institute, as well as national legislation for the preservation of ancient artefacts. The appointment did not happen, as Luo finally turned it down with the excuse of old age.¹² The real reason for Luo’s refusal might, however, be different: as a diehard loyalist to the Qing Court, Luo could not see himself teaching at a republican nationalist university. Later, when his friend Wang Guowei accepted the invitation to become a “research tutor” at the national Peking University, Luo advised him to turn down any “salary” from the university.¹³ Nonetheless, Luo did draft his plan for archaeology, in the form of a private letter addressed to Cai: “A letter to my friend about the study of ancient objects 與友人論古器物學書.”¹⁴

This letter was obviously not meant only for private reading. It is very long and verbose. However, it deserves a close examination, as it represents Luo’s theory and ideas of ‘archaeology’—not archaeology in the modern sense, but more precisely the transition from the *jinshixue* to modern archaeology in a particular historical context. First Luo tried to propose a new definition for “*guqiwuxue* 古器物學” and to distinguish it from the traditional *jinshixue*; he wrote:

It is very kind of you to ask me about the methodology and outlines of *guqiwuxue*, or the study of ancient artefacts. That you have taken it to heart to revive this subject is admirable. I will discuss it briefly here and express my ideas. The Song dynasty scholars wrote the *Bogu tu* 博古圖 (Illustrated Antiquities) which included many ritual objects of the three dynasties [Xia, Shang and Zhou], and their coverage was very broad indeed. Later, however, this learning focussed mainly on inscriptions on vessels, in particular on bronzes. Thus, the study of antiquities has been especially directed to palaeography. In terms of knowledge modern scholars are much better positioned than previous generations, but the coverage of the subject has become much narrower. The term “*kaogu* 考古” (archaeology), was coined by the Song scholar Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠 (b. 1081) who wrote the *Jinshi lu* 金石錄 (Records on Bronzes and Stones). The book arranged the inscriptions in two branches: those recorded on bronzes and those on stone stelae. The Jin dynasty scholar Cai Gui 蔡珪 (d.1174) wrote the *Guqiwupu* 古器物譜 (Catalogue of Ancient Objects) and followed Zhao’s terminology. From the Jiaqing 嘉庆 and Daoguang 道光 reigns (1797–1820, 1821–1851) other types of ancient objects began to appear in books, in addition to ritual implements. Some scholars such as Liu Yanting and Zhang Shuwei collected a great number of objects, but conducted their study as a supplement to *jinshixue* (the study of bronzes and stones), and did not appropriate the term “*kaogu*” or

¹² *Beijing daxue rikan* (Peking University Daily), June 4, 1918.

¹³ See Shen Weiwei 2003.

¹⁴ This letter was first named “*Guqiwuxue yanjiu yi* 古器物學研究議” and was included in his *Yunchuang mangao* 雲窗幔稿 (Luo Zhenyu 2005c).

“archaeology” for their approach. I have taken that necessary step and have named the subject “*guqiwuxue*,” or the study of ancient artefacts, precisely because it is the study of ancient artefacts and includes *jinshixue*, whereas *jinshixue* is a specific term and cannot cover the fuller range of archaeology. Nowadays, precious things are no longer retained as treasures in the earth, and ancient objects appear daily. This makes the present a perfect time for the development of *guqiwuxue*.

Here Luo injected a new meaning into the term *guqiwuxue*, which can be literally translated as “the study of ancient objects.” In a recent paper, Cheng-hua Wang points out that Luo’s term “*qiwu*” refers to three-dimensional objects, which represents an epistemological difference from two-dimensional art (such as *shuhua* 書畫, calligraphy and painting).¹⁵ In the other words, the materiality of the objects is stressed; thus it is probably better to understand the term *guqiwuxue* as “archaeology.” Today we may take it for granted that archaeology has less to do with the study of artefacts, but mainly refers to scientific excavations. But if we put “archaeology” back into the eighteenth or nineteenth century, it mainly denoted the pursuits of the antiquarian. In the early twentieth century field archaeology was still in its infancy.¹⁶

Based on his own definition of *guqiwuxue* or archaeology, Luo then made a new classification of ancient objects: (a) ritual vessels, (b) musical instruments, (c) chariot and horse ornaments, (d) weapons, (e) weights and measures, (f) coins, (g) seals and tallies, (h) objects relating to daily life and clothing, (i) funeral objects (*mingqi*), (j) archaic jades, (k) early ceramics, (l) bricks and roof tiles, (m) moulds used for casting ancient objects, (n) pictorial carved stones, (o) Buddhist images. The new categorization is significant. In addition to the ritual bronzes and stelae (which were the main subjects for traditional *jinshixue*), Luo added many new categories, including objects relating to daily life and clothing, funeral objects, early ceramics, bricks and roof tiles, and moulds used for casting ancient objects, previously neglected by Chinese scholars. For instance, he wrote:

Funerary objects have been found in recent years, dating as early as the Three Dynasties, and as late as the Song and Yuan dynasties. These include *zun* and *ding* vessels, models of fields and houses, wells and granaries, domesticated animals, servants, labourers, entertainers, even spirits and deities. Everything is represented. Moreover, there are new discoveries every day. Recently I saw a Han dynasty animal pen in which a man was standing on a bow—this is evidence for the use of the ancient foot bow. In the central provinces, some bottles were found in Guanzhong with red and black dipinti by people of the Han dynasty. Such items had never been seen before. There are also many pieces from tombs, such as wood and stone from the *huangchang* 黃腸 (yellow intestines, referring to the material used for tomb construction) structure, metal cicadas, and jade pigs; we could read about these in old books, but the majority of them had been taken overseas. We should start to collect such objects at the earliest opportunity, and should not feel as though we are missing out. As for early ceramics, the discovery of ceramics of the Three Dynasties has come very recently, and most pieces are containers that have been unearthed in the territories of the Yan 燕 and Qi 齊 states. There are also some examples from the Western

¹⁵ Wang Cheng-hua [forthcoming](#). Wang however did not cite Luo’s letter.

¹⁶ The term “archaeology” (Greek *archaiologia*) came from *archaios*, “primal, ancient, old” and *logos*, “reasoning,” account, study. For an interesting discussion of the early archaeology in Europe, see Schnapp 1993, especially Chap. 6.

and Eastern Han dynasties. Pieces that have survived intact can be used for the study of ancient measurements. There are some incomplete writings on ceramics that differ from the archaic script (*guwen* 古文). In the past I have argued that inscriptions on ancient coins, ceramics, and seals are one of the branches of the study of archaic script. The scholar of traditional “lesser learning” (*xiaoxue* 小學) should be able to utilize this material effectively.

He also paid much attention to clay moulds used for casting ancient objects:

Previous scholars saw many moulds used for casting coins. Recently, I have also seen coin moulds, in particular some moulds for casting spade-coins, as well as moulds for mirrors, tiles, bows and arrows. I have also seen moulds for seals, axes, arrowheads, ritual vessels and moulds for casting inscriptions. The discovery of Han dynasty moulds for making mechanical parts such as cogwheels proves the existence of such machinery in the Han dynasty. This is highly significant for archaeologists.

Luo also promoted the idea of studying the history of art:

Pictorial carved stones. Han dynasty pictorial carvings on stones mostly relate to ancient stories, and what is depicted can be used for studying the customs of the capital cities. For example, a scene of hunting hares matches the pictorial graph, and shows that some things of the Three Dynasties survived into the Han period. Westerners are very keen on this area of study. However, this cannot be regarded as an easy and error-free task for the Westerner who desires to study the ancient things of our country.

Buddhist images. Since the Yongping 永平 reign (57–75 C.E.), religious imagery had come to China from the West. By the time of the Six Dynasties and the Tang dynasty countless images were cast in metal and carved in stone. The techniques of casting and carving can be used as art-historical evidence for investigating different traditions and schools. This scholarship is very popular in Europe, America, and Japan. In China, art historians still focus on inscriptions about art. We should employ various methods to study the history of art.

These words clearly show that Luo was well aware of the new developments in Europe. He again wrote:

In addition to these, there are ancient bones, horns, shells, and ivory unearthed from Yinxi, which can also be used for the study of ancient biology. While this may be different from the study of ancient man-made objects, it is beneficial to pursue these enquiries at the same time, in order to broaden academic learning.

The new approach was probably due to Luo’s direct contact with Western scholars. Luo met the French sinologist Paul Pelliot for the first time in 1909 in Peking, when he was shown the manuscripts from Dunhuang. Through Pelliot, he started to correspond with other leading European sinologists and archaeologists such as Chavannes and Stein. Luo translated their works into Chinese (with the help of Wang Guowei) and made the Chinese academic circle aware of Western scholarship. Chavannes tried to invite Luo and Wang Guowei to visit Europe, but the plan was prevented by the outbreak of the First World War.

One very interesting aspect of Luo’s theorization of archaeology is his emphasis on the “dissemination” of archaeological data. In “dissemination,” he included

authentication, reproduction, and the writing and publication of archaeological material. He even commented on the use of rubbings in the circulation of archaeological information. He wrote:

Inscriptions on ancient objects should be made available as rubbings, to enable every scholar in the world to view them. I often feel sorry for the European and American countries insofar as they do not know about the method of making ink rubbings. Yet they do collect things that are obsolete and scarce. The rubbing method can reproduce the form of the objects and show the image of the real thing; thus, by looking at the ink-rubbed copies, we may feel as though we are in contact with the original object. The use of ink-rubbing will enhance the progress of archaeology. From the time of the monk Liu Zhou (of the Qianlong-Jiaqing periods) and Fu Yan, who first invented the ink-rubbing method of reproducing the form of objects, this technique has been of great benefit to the transmission of ancient tradition. We should employ people to learn and practise this, and to make this method widespread.

Luo fully realised that the publication of archaeological material played a crucial role:

This is the most urgent task in archaeology. Ancient objects cannot survive forever. We can build museums and display artefacts, but not every scholar in the world can come and visit. We should select learned scholars to write books with illustrations and commit themselves to publication. Thus we can preserve the life of the ancient objects. In this way, even citizens of foreign lands could have a copy to hand and see the illustrations and images of ancient objects. We should compile a book with illustrated investigations of things, in which different things are arranged in different categories. It would be based on real ancient objects, combined with classical texts and the commentaries of previous scholars, together with illustrations and surveys of various explanations. Such a book would be rather complex, with contents that would cover several hundred volumes. But we could manage it by inviting a group of senior scholars first to decide on principles and then to edit the volumes in different categories. As soon as one category is completed, we would print it for circulation. Eventually, after a number of years, the day will come when the entire book is successfully completed. Earlier illustrated books, such as the *Sancai Tuhui* 三才圖會 [1607], all copied from one another, and errors were transmitted. If our proposed book can be realised, it will reach the truth and dismiss the fakes. I have seen how early scholars studied ancient measurements by using ancient jade *gui* and *bi*, and explained weights and measures based on ancient *ding*-vessels and *zhong*-bells. Their intentions may have been good, but they failed through incompleteness. When I wrote my “Illustrated Study of Ancient Arrow Heads,” I used real ancient arrows to test the theory of the early scholars; to ask, for instance, how we can judge whether the *lian* were in threes or fours, and the difference between *mingdi* and *pingti*. Seeking answers in old theory is a murky business, but the answers appear naturally as soon as we look at the ancient artefacts. If we do not make the illustrations now, the ancient artefacts will disappear and be gone within ten or twenty years. Writing and publication are particularly valuable in transmitting our knowledge of antiquity, but at the same time they are complicated processes. However, we must not let thoughts of difficulty and tedium distract us from this important task.

Luo’s final words in the letter were also worth noting:

These are the basics for archaeology, or the learning about ancient artefacts. If we want to put them into practice, then there are thousands of avenues to pursue. A few thousand words cannot exhaust the topic, and this letter serves merely as an introduction. I would feel fortunate indeed if you would offer your views on what I have written.

By redefining the concept of *qiwu* and providing the new system of categorization of ancient artefacts, Luo had opened the door for a new academic discipline. In her paper, Cheng-hua Wang argues: “the rise of *qiwu* largely resulted from the increasing magnitude of archaeological discoveries in the early twentieth century and, more importantly, the urgency of heritage preservation that had gained its greatest momentum from the year 1905 to the first decade of the Republican period. Its related scholarship, *qiwuxue*, can be viewed as transitional learning because it represents a process of scholarly development from palaeography to archaeology” (Wang Cheng-hua [forthcoming](#)). At that time it was still flexible and experimental, combining both Chinese and Western elements. However, this flexibility soon disappeared, as the trend of Westernization came to occupy centre stage. There is a clear break between Luo and the later archaeologists who worked for the Academia Sinica 中央研究院, the national research institution set up by the Republican government in 1928. In his preface to the *Yinxu wenzi leibian* 殷墟文字類編, compiled by Luo and his student Shang Chengzuo 商承祚 (1902–1991), Wang Guowei made this very explicit: “The studies of epigraphy and ancient objects and the studies of the classics and history are two sides of the same thing. Only when someone reaches full understanding of the entire coverage of these two fields—not to bend the old to suit the new, and not to subdue the new to follow the old—then we could say that he has arrived at the truth of the ancients and that his words can be trusted by future generations” (Wang Guowei (1923) 1976: 5). To Luo and his followers, the ultimate goal was still the texts of the classics; archaeology was just beginning to move out from being a ‘handmaiden’ to become an equal partner. The combination of texts and archaeology is termed “method of double proof,” *erchong zhengju fa* 二重證據法, which is still today regarded as the valid historical research method in China. This may be only a small step forward from the traditional “study of inscriptions on metal and stone,” *jinshixue*, but it is a very arduous and significant step.¹⁷

The completion of the transition was marked by the establishment of the Institute of History and Philology (IHP) under the Academia Sinica. In 1928, Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (Fu Ssu-Nien 1896–1950), Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980), and Yang Zhensheng 楊振聲 (1890–1956) together drew up the blueprint for the IHP, which included three divisions: history, linguistics, and archaeology (anthropology was later added). The first director was Fu Sinian,¹⁸ who himself had studied in Germany for many years and aimed to build the IHP on the model of European oriental studies. Fu wrote in his manifesto for the IHP (Fu Sinian 1928), that modern history “has become a combination of various scientific methods: geology, geography, archeology, biology, meteorology, astronomy, and

¹⁷ For a recent discussion on the transition from the *jinshixue* to archaeology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Liu 1998, in which he argues that there is a direct link between the two. This paper listed Luo Zhenyu among the scholars who were active in the movement, but did not even mention Luo’s letter to Cai Yuanpei.

¹⁸ For an in depth study of Fu Sinian, see Wang Fan-Shen 1993.

other sciences, all supply the tools for historians . . . Also, if we are going to excavate a site, for someone who has no scientific support, one shovel down, there are countless ancient objects that will be damaged. He would even not know if the digging itself hits the target. This cannot be compared to those who have the necessary prior scientific training, and can excavate layer by layer. In this way, we obtain not only treasures, but also information about the lives of ancient people. This is often more important than getting objects.” His famous motto for IHP was “To come to the point, we are not the people who read books. We are here to reach the blue sky above and dig down to the yellow spring, using our hands and moving our feet, in order to find things! (*shangqiong biluo xia huangquan, dongshou dongjiao zhao dongxi* 上窮碧落下黃泉,動手動腳找東西).”¹⁹ This clearly showed that the new scholarship would have to open up new directions and avenues. The old classical studies had to give way to archaeology. Fu appointed the young newly returned Harvard graduate Li Ji 李濟 (1896–1979) as head of the Archaeology division, instead of Ma Heng 馬衡 (1881–1955) who was a follower and friend of Luo Zhenyu, and himself a renowned senior scholar in *jinshixue*.²⁰ Li Ji and his team began in 1928 their excavations of the Yinxu (last capital of the Shang dynasty), which not only formally declared the birth of modern archaeology in China, but also ended the European dominance of archaeological discourse.

By then, Luo had fallen out of favour with the Republicans and his influence was waning. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Manzhouguo (滿洲國, Manchu state 1932–1945). After the invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the Japanese created a puppet state that was firmly under their control. The last Emperor of the Qing dynasty, Pu-Yi was invited to become the head of the state. Many loyalists followed him to Manchuria. Luo played a facilitating role as intermediary between his old master Pu-Yi and the Japanese. He took a number of senior political appointments, including that of the President of the Supervisory Committee. But at the same time, he was also trying to fulfil his scholarly dreams. He set up the Guoxueguan 國學館 in Manzhouguo, which he had first proposed to the Qing court more than two decades earlier, and installed a museum there to hold his own collections. Luo died in 1940 aged 84.

¹⁹ Fu Sinian 1928. For an analysis of this document, see Sang Bing 2001. For a brief introduction to IHP, see Tian Tong and Hu Zhangmiao 2006.

²⁰ See Du Zhengsheng 1998. For a discussion of Ma Heng’s *jinshixue* and his role in modern archaeology, see Shen Songjin 2000.

Victor Segalen: Poet and Archaeologist

Born in Brest, and a doctor in the French Navy, Victor Segalen (1878–1919) was a great traveller.²¹ His interest in the arts directed him very early towards the invention of a completely unprecedented kind of poetry, in which sculpture, music, language, design, and dance are harmoniously combined. His determination came from Mallarmé and his high concept of poetry, and from Rimbaud, whose desire to leave Europe he shared (indeed, after Rimbaud's death, Segalen followed in his footsteps to the Yemen). In this, he clearly moved from the symbolist heritage²² to the quest for other horizons, leaving, like Rimbaud, “l'Europe aux anciens parapets.” He was also fond of Gauguin, saving some of his paintings after his death, and proposed a collaboration with Debussy. Against the superficial vogue for exotic subjects exemplified by authors like Pierre Loti, he invented a radically different concept of “exoticism,” which he understood in a sensual way as the “aesthetics of diversity” (Forsdick 2000).

Following his interests in the East, Segalen set about discovering India, Ceylon, and Japan, but his real goal was China. In 1908 he began to study Chinese and visited the School of Oriental Languages (Langues O') in Paris. He was introduced to Chinese archaeology at the Collège de France by Édouard Chavannes (1865–1918). He was sent to China as an interpreter in 1909, and could then begin the exploration that would bring him through central China in search of the centre of the “Real” material he had begun to purchase. His first expedition from August 1909 till January 1910, which he made together with Gilbert de Voisins (who could afford its costs), lasted 6 months and took them to the centre of the country, from Peking to Gansu, Lanzhou and Chengdu, “la grande ville au bout du monde” (the great town at the end of the world). He remained in China between 1909 and 1913, albeit with some interruptions, either making expeditions, or staying in Peking or Tianjin. It was in 1914 that Segalen, together with Gilbert de Voisins and Jean Lartigue, undertook his greatest archaeological journey into the China of the past. Segalen's archaeological report soon attracted much attention from the Chinese themselves, and was translated by Feng Chengjun 馮承鈞 (1887–1946) into Chinese.²³ The First World War forced him to return to France,

²¹ Bouillier 1961. This remains the most comprehensive study of the whole of Segalen's work.

²² In April 1902, Segalen published a medical and aesthetical essay in the *Mercur de France*, “Les synesthésies et l'École symboliste” to contest the decadence verdict of Max Nordau and suggest the fecundity of the “Correspondance” programme. His reflection is rooted in the intellectual landscape of the late nineteenth century, including Max Muller and Spencer: “C'est enfin l'allure même du mouvement philosophique actuel: passer du ‘même à l'autre’ (Hegel), relier par une dialectique rationnelle les diversités du monde sensible, s'approcher ainsi du terme dernier de la connaissance qui doit être une *Hétérogénéité cohérente* (Spencer).” This is the real attraction of the current movement in philosophy: to pass ‘from the same to the other’ (Hegel), to connect the diversities of the physical world through a rational dialectic, and thus to draw nearer to the ultimate end of knowledge, which has to be a *coherent heterogeneity* (Spencer). (1995, vol. 1: 78).

²³ Segalen 1914b. Segalen's name was translated as Se Jialan 色伽蘭 which later changed into Xie Gelan 謝閣蘭.

but in 1917 he had a final opportunity to head for China in order to recruit Chinese workers in Nanjing, where he made a third expedition.²⁴ He returned to France in 1919, where he died, at the age of 41 in the Breton forest of Huelgoat.

During the last 10 years of his life he produced an original poetical opus that is still to be evaluated as a whole. His Chinese lyrical work *Stèles* (1914a), his prose-poems on imagined Chinese paintings, *Peintures* (1916), his famous novel *René Leys* (1912), the poetical sketches taken from his Chinese expedition *Equipée* (1929), and his *Voyage au pays du réel* (1915), are all quite well known. But his ‘scientific’ work should not be neglected. In addition to the reports of his three expeditions (1909, and especially 1914b and 1917a), he wrote a critical work on Chinese statuary, to which we now have access through the following publications: *Chine. La grande statuaire* (1972), *Les origines de la statuaire en Chine* (a continuation of *La grande statuaire*), both widely reviewed, and his different travelogues: *Briques et tuiles* (1909–1910), *Feuilles de route* (1914c), *Voyage au pays du réel* (1915), and *Lettres de Chine*, addressed to his wife (1909–1910).²⁵

The Scientific Project

The purpose of identifying and cataloguing ancient Chinese sculpture came from Édouard Chavannes (1865–1918), who had studied Chinese at the École des Langues Orientales with Maurice Jametel (1856–1889) and at the Collège de France with Marquis d’Hervey de Saint-Denys (1822–1892), but began serious research with his journey to China at the beginning of 1889. Édouard Chavannes dedicated himself to the *Shiji*, an important historical text by Se-ma Ts’ien (Sima Qian), parts of which he translated with commentary (*Les Mémoires historiques*, Paris, 1895–1898²⁶). At the same time he interested himself in the neglected topic of Chinese sculpture, as a result of a journey from Peking to Shanghai in January 1891. Since people were selling by the roadside some rubbings of bas-reliefs they had made in the neighbourhood of Tsi-ning tseou (Shandong), he wanted to see the originals. He was then able to see the bas-reliefs of Xiaotang shan and the graves of the Wu family from the second century C.E., and presented this material in his book *La sculpture sur pierre en Chine au temps des deux dynasties Han* (Chavannes 1893). He announces

²⁴ The photographs of the archaeological missions of Chavannes, Segalen, Maspero, Segalen-Lartigues-Voisins are available on the site of the Guimet Museum: <http://www.guimet.fr/fr/collections/archives-photographiques>

²⁵ Most of the works are to be found in the *Oeuvres complètes* (Segalen 1995); the *Correspondance* was published separately in two volumes in 2004.

²⁶ Chavannes had translated the whole “hereditary clans” or “Benji,” the chronological tables or “Nianbiao,” and the eight “Shu” treatises, but only a part of the principal annals or “Shijia,” and none of the biographies (monographs) “Liezhuan,” when he died. Segalen was possibly inspired by this work as he planned his novel *Les Annales Kouang-Siu ou Le Fils du Ciel*, which he left uncompleted (1995 vol. 2: 329–452).

his book as a contribution to a better knowledge of pre-Buddhist Chinese sculpture, and suggests that this “archaic” period was actually learned and sophisticated.²⁷ In the same year (he was 28 years old) he became Professor at the Collège de France. In spring 1907 he returned to Shandong to complete his earlier work and discovered the very first sculptures of the second century B.C.E. He also discovered sculptures of the Song period in Hunan and of the Tang period in Shanxi.

While Chavannes certainly had other fields of interest, the two already mentioned—history and sculpture—suggest how he was led to his method: a good knowledge of the chronicles was the basis for locating the archaeological material indirectly evoked or cited there. He thus succeeded in pushing back the chronological limits of Chinese art far earlier than his contemporaries usually allowed.²⁸ The mixture of thorough familiarity with the relevant texts and curiosity for neglected forms of ancient art led him to his discoveries; a method that Segalen had only to follow and to interpret in his own manner.

The obituary of Chavannes by Henri Cordier in the *Recherches Asiatiques* (1918: 197–248) emphasized how his Chinese studies helped to expand world history beyond “quelques territoires de l’Europe et de l’Asie dont les habitants avaient confisqué à leur profit tout le passé de l’humanité” (some European and Asiatic territories whose inhabitants had commandeered for their own benefit the whole past of humanity). Here Segalen can be regarded as the disciple and continuator of Chavannes, as he always admitted. Where Chavannes saw more scientific interest in the oldest sculpture but no artistic greatness,²⁹ Segalen proposed an aesthetic reappraisal of this ancient art; where the former’s interest was directed to bas-reliefs, Segalen preferred sculpture in the round. Their appreciation of the evolution of Chinese art also differed basically. Chavannes noticed through the ages a kind of “servility” towards “tradition” and considered Indian influence very welcome:

Why should we wonder if this faint whisper disappeared completely behind the mighty inspiration from India? Yet it has still been worthwhile to try to retrace the history of this art that was—maybe an exception in history—from the very beginning independent of any religion, but did not discount the importance of Buddhism for later traditions of Chinese art; see Chavannes and Petrucci 1914 and Postel 2001: 37–39.

In this point at least Segalen differed from his master, because he could not help despising all Buddhist influences as producing a mixed style. He sought a “pure

²⁷ In this rehabilitation of genuine Chinese art, Chavannes was surely a precursor of Segalen. However he remained far more nuanced than Segalen, who tended *categorically* to deny any aesthetic value to Buddhist influence. He praised ancient Chinese art as independent from any religion, but did not discount the importance of Buddhism for later traditions of Chinese art; see Chavannes and Petrucci 1914 and Postel 2001: 37–39.

²⁸ His interest in Chinese books before the invention of paper, especially texts written on bamboo, obviously leads in the same direction and testifies to his fine sense of research: see among other publications Chavannes 1905.

²⁹ “After reaching this conclusion that sculpture had been developing in China for three or four centuries before the arrival of Buddhism, one is forced to admit that the artists of this early period were singularly uninventive” (Chavannes 1893: xxxii).

style” that could only be rooted in ancient, “untouched” China, not in a globalized one. In this point he remained deeply marked by the Nietzschean critique of Christendom and Western civilization. Where Nietzsche turned himself towards the archaic Greece of Heraclitus or, better, towards Zarathustra, Segalen dreamed of an intact and genuine ‘China’.³⁰ ‘Modernity’s classics’ for him were to be found in the archaic past, not in the Ming works considered in modern times to be the height of ‘Chinese art’.³¹ He still suspected in Buddhism forms of priesthood he decidedly rejected (cf. Forsdick 2000 on missionaries in Tahiti).

Thus Segalen and his two companions Gilbert de Voisins and Jean Lartigue based their work explicitly on Chavannes’ researches and method, but introduced a new point of view that took the excavated works seriously in terms of aesthetic value.

Segalen was indeed inspired by Chavannes’ use of written sources.³² Looking for stone sculptures, he knew from his master that the right way to find those stones was first to read all the ancient local chronicles—making the best use of the good fortune of doing archaeology in an old and well organized state!

The method so authoritatively introduced by the Master consisted in systematically going through the voluminous collections of “Chronicles” recorded over the centuries by every region, prefecture, and sub-prefecture. Verbose, thick, charming but also wearisome, they contain the elements of a vast historical and geographical description of the whole Empire. Even the smallest runs to a large number of volumes, but one can leaf through quickly and prune rapidly. Having discarded all the chapters on ancient fortifications, sites of lost towns, lists of officials and of famous men, lakes, pond, mountains, rivers, women of exceptional virtue, prodigies. . . one is left with three chapters of major archaeological interest, usually titled “Ancient remains,” “Stones and Metals,” and “Tombs and Tomb-monuments.” Here—lost in the mass of text as they are isolated in the landscape—one finds notices of statues that may still exist: recorded because they were themselves considered “ancient remains” (this is rare); or because, being sited close to a contemporary inscription, they partook of the renown of the stele, the inscribed “stone” that made them memorable for

³⁰ Segalen dedicated his poem *Thibet* to “Frédéric Nietzsche, dompteur éternel des cimes de l’esprit!” (to Frédéric Nietzsche, eternal tamer of spiritual heights!) (1995 vol. 2: 609). He received his inspiration partly through Jules de Gaultier and his “Bovarism” (Bouillier 1961: 110–116).

³¹ Parallels to this search for another conception of ‘classics’—at the same time more ancient and more modern—can be seen in the defence of Dorian culture by Karl Otfried Müller and in Nietzsche’s Dionysian reappraisal of “classical Greece.” Segalen praised the art of the Former and Later Han, and considered the later periods rather weak: “This is an art unknown in earlier periods, unparalleled in the West (either classical or barbarian); an art which—until evidence to the contrary appears—one may and should call purely Chinese, a pure expression of the genius of ancient China” (1995 vol. 2: 798).

³² If Chavannes introduced a kind of revolution in Sinology with this systematic exploration of the written chronicles, it is not at all obvious, (*pace* Postel) that Segalen could anticipate this method in his *Immémoriaux*, a rather different project (for the good reason that Chinese culture was a learned, written one, so its own writings had to be exploited and interpreted, whereas all written materials for the *Immémoriaux* were of foreign provenance), nor that this method had anything to do with Claude Bernard’s “experimental method” (Postel 2001: 35–36).

Chinese antiquarians, above all attracted by calligraphy; or finally (and most often) because they stood on the tomb of a man whose name and date were historically preserved. Here the hunt begins—with all its risks.³³

As we have seen, Segalen followed Chavannes' combination of written and plastic sources, considering the indirect method of discovery of his master fully adapted to his purpose of hunting for unknown pieces of art; but he turned it in his own direction. The successful results of the methodological inquiry led to the personal implication of the scientist and complemented the necessarily objective attempt to make archaeological discoveries with the aesthetic subjectivity of the inquirer.

A Sensual Archaeology

Our purpose is to examine how Segalen's practice of 'archaeology' as continuous with art criticism and poetry enabled him to extend and deepen his research—even if some of his aesthetic prejudices forbade him to go further and work durably for the establishment of an archaeological model that would be both methodological and individual. That he used his sinological knowledge to arrive at an eccentric point of view and invent a poetics of his own goes without saying. For example: in the preface to his popular book *Stèles* he insists on the standing stones that inspired him: "Épigraphe et pierre taillée, voilà la stèle, corps et âme, être au complet." (Inscription and sculpted stone: this is the stele, body and soul, a whole being). And he recalls that they often sat on a tortoise-like base, mentioning the habits and longevity of this animal, adding:

And let us not forget the prophetic powers of its shell, curved in the image of the celestial vault and reproducing all its variations; rubbed with ink and dried in the fire, it reveals as clearly as the signs of the sky itself the calm or stormy contours of future weather. (1995, vol. 2: 35)

This divinatory power had been explained in an article by Édouard Chavannes (1911) at the very time when Segalen was writing his *Stèles*.³⁴ Therefore we know what the book took from contemporary archaeology. Given that Segalen engaged himself in an archaeological mission without abandoning his aesthetic priorities,

³³ Segalen 1995, vol. 2: 748–9. It is worth noting that this metaphor of the hunt (exploited more recently in the study of papyrology, as Peter Pormann's paper in this volume shows, in a play on the name of the well-known scholar Arthur Surridge Hunt) may well be characteristic of the period.

³⁴ Chavannes 1911. The invention of the 'stèles' as a poetic form clearly shows how Segalen transformed his knowledge and his artistic expectations into new forms of literary experience. In his report on "Sépultures des dynasties chinoises du sud" (Segalen 1995 vol. 2: 983–1001), he refers to the "stele-bearing tortoises" and illustrates them, noting also the rubbing made by Chavannes during his mission (*ibid.* 986).

even if his research remained limited, it is interesting to ask whether his eccentric version of academic discipline can contribute useful insights or not.

It is important to look at the situation of China in the early part of the twentieth century. Inspired (or threatened) by its neighbour Japan's success in modernization, the Qing dynasty had to react to challenges coming both from inside the country and from outside. Many Chinese intellectuals began to embrace Western notions of government, education, and science. The old value system, including the position of the "classics," was called into question. When Segalen first arrived in China, the Manchu court was still in power; but he would soon witness the total collapse of the imperial order and the birth of the new 'Republic' of China. In 1919, the year of Segalen's untimely death, the May Fourth Movement broke out, and China embarked on an irreversible train of 'modernization'. On this train there was little space for the traditional "classics."

Segalen's idea of the "classics" played an important role because "his" China was the "pure" China—the old, imperial, central, traditional one. He despised all foreign influences, which included the entire coast of China, all Buddhism, and the modernization of the country in all its ideological, technical, and political aspects. He was looking for unmodernized classics, maybe for unmodernizable classics.

His approach was at the same time sensual rather than academic, even though he studied and knew a lot. Knowledge had to be submitted to his poetical goals: experience of what he called the "Diverse," quest for the other, anticipation of a new vision.

To Segalen the Chinese written script occupied the preeminent position. It is no surprise that he chose the title *Stèles* for his most important poetic work on the old Chinese civilization:

Their script cannot but be beautiful. So close to the original forms (a man beneath the roof of heaven—an arrow launched against the sky—a horse, mane in the wind, tensed on its hooves—the three peaks of a mountain; the heart with its three auricles & the aorta). Characters accept neither ignorance nor awkwardness. Nevertheless, as visions of beings crossing the human eye, flowing through the muscles, the fingers, and all such nervous instruments of ours, they receive thereby a distortion through which art penetrates into their knowing. – Today correct, but nothing more, they were once full of refinement during the Yongzheng era; elongated during the Ming like elegant cloves of garlic; classic during the Tang, thick & robust in the Han; how far they go back, back to bare symbols bent to the curve of things. But the ancestry of the Stele itself goes no farther than the Han. (Segalen 2007: 62–63)

Here the stelae that carried Chinese script were permanent monuments which resisted any corruption of time and change. Like many other Europeans of his time, Segalen perceived the Chinese written characters as ideogrammatic representations of the real world.³⁵ But unlike the great German philosopher Hegel, who saw the Chinese written language as "a great obstacle to the development of learning,"

³⁵ In this respect, Segalen's view could be compared with Pound's *Cantos* (begun about 1915). Pound was much impressed by Ernest Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, which Fenollosa drafted c. 1906 and to which Pound added notes in 1914–1916.

Segalen took it as a more direct channel to sense and feeling (cf. Saussy 2008). In fact, when producing the book *Stèles*, he tried to make it more ‘Chinese-like’, by using Chinese characters, oriental paper, and traditional binding. In other words, he rediscovered the “materiality” of Chinese language. He wanted to create his writing as a physical artefact. For him, archaeology was essentially poetic, and poetry became, in a way, archaeology.

Segalen’s purpose was to write a text “affranchi de toute l’archéologie—ou mieux—de toute la sinologie qui l’aura préparé” (freed from every archaeology—or better, from every Sinology—that might have prepared the ground for it; note dated 7 April 1917, Nanking). He still intended to write an archaeological report, as he was obliged to do. But he deeply distrusted the kind of archaeology that he found represented in the works of the painter Gustave Moreau: heritage as a naïve science that might quickly be dismantled by new discoveries or interpretations, whereas a work of art always remains true in its own way and does not need to be legitimated by science (Segalen 1908). Art had won its autonomy and appeared more resistant to time and fashion than any science. This pre-eminence of art gave Segalen’s archaeological enterprise very specific features.

The Great Statuary

China. The Great Statuary presents archaic Chinese sculpture in separation from other forms of art and from architecture, but still in relation to a framework and ‘orchestral’ composition as the context within which old Chinese sculpture had its artistic value and should still be understood. (Segalen was a sharp critic of museums and of the museumization of the world). Sculpture is monumental, funeral, imperial, and historical, thus inscribed in a topographical, geographical, and symbolic context.

The subject-matter of this book is Chinese stone in its sculpted forms: this is the original expression of China in solid volume. (Segalen 1995 vol. 2: 745)

Segalen saw in the expedition a chance to encounter a part of China that had not been unveiled by Western inquiries (unlike the south coast, which he for this reason rejected), both in the deep past and in the most remote parts of the inner country. His idea of the genuine China was certainly part of his own mythology, but this may have been the price he had to pay in order to focus on his goal. Some of his photographs show this landscape “du réel” (Fig. 11.1).

Comparing text-references with the places, the topography, and the villages, estimating distances, and taking account of developments in agriculture, clearly made identifications anything but easy. The expedition still remained an “adventure,” a confrontation with the contingency of places and people, which are

Publishing it first in 1918, Pound always recommended it to beginners. See the critical edition of Haun Saussy *et al.*, Fenollosa and Pound 2008, with Saussy 2008.



Fig. 11.1 Landscape Central China. Shaanxi, Lintongxian, tumulus of Qin Shihuangdi, panorama (Photograph by Victor Segalen, February 1914. Copyright bpk/RMN/Paris, Musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet. AP29_3)

recorded in Segalen's diary *Feuilles de route*, but still have some presence in the *Great Statuary*. This dimension of hunting for aesthetic discoveries remains perceptible within the precision of tomb descriptions. So the first sight of statues as they were being excavated from a field becomes an event, the real object of the 'scientific' inquiry.

But the discovery, the laying bare, surround themselves with an emotion so fresh that no descriptive text can disguise or silence it. . . It is above all of this type of statue, this kind of adventure that I speak here. The statues are only just "excavated," "unearthed," "uncovered". . . They are alive. They still lie where we found them. They have not yet "figured" in a museum. They have not yet died a second death. (Segalen 1995 vol. 2: 750)

Instantaneous contemplation and poetic description here take the place of scientific registration and museumized conservation (indeed, burial). This practice of archaeology deliberately turns its back on the nineteenth-century custom of removing Greek and Egyptian works to the great European cities. It is no longer legitimate to take away whatever is discovered; instead, the ego is nourished by enjoying it in its original context. Segalen and his companions left the statues where they were, enriched by no more than their first sight of the finds.

Archaeological Excavation: Or a Second of Eternity

If the everyday task of situating the discovered works in the long span of Chinese history is never forgotten, the team of the Segalen mission still focusses its interest on the presence of the stones. And it is mainly during the process of discovery that



Fig. 11.2 Shaanxi. Qianzhou, tomb of Tang Gaozong. Marble unicorn excavated in March 1914 (Copyright bpk/RMN/Paris, Musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet. AP 71-2)

the sculpture is fully experienced (Fig. 11.2). In order to grasp the mixture of scientific objectification and aesthetic sensitivity, it may be enlightening to follow the description of the Eastern Han Winged Tiger. Segalen presents the tiger with a first attempt at dating:

Ranked according to their current state of preservation, the fourth Later Han statue known today is the seated Winged Tiger which I provisionally attribute to the tomb of Fong Houan at K'iu-hien, giving it a date of 121 by our era.

He then describes the physical aspect of the stone:

More damaged than the Tigers of Kao Yi and Fan Min, this creature has lost its head and both forelegs. What remains is the chest, intact; the back; and the complete hindquarters, seated—as a cat sits—on a well-preserved base.

And then comes the illuminating moment of discovery, the first glimpse, suddenly interrupting the description:

It was found by Gilbert de Voisins who, while studying the pillar of Fong Houan and exploring the area round the tomb, noticed by the roadside, in the flooded rice-field, a rounded sandstone block. Barely visible traces of relief carving on a projection seemed to be of good quality, so he had it freed from the mud, set upright, brushed, and dried: and then shone forth the beautiful fragment in finest Han style shown in figs. 13 and 14, giving us for the first time a new version of the Han Big Cat, in seated position.

After this exceptional moment of excavation, Segalen turns back to his tranquil description of the Tiger:

The ornamental details—mystical? monstrous?—resemble those of the tigers already described: undivided wing, scaly spine. The wing—stylized rather than feathered—begins

closer on the breast, and continues in an oblique upward, rearward line to end in a single elegant volute, from which a long plume runs down on both sides, ending in three parts at the base of the shoulders.

The neck is slim. No sign of a thick mane, only a few sparse falling hairs more like those of a horse than those of the Big Cats seen earlier. Here the clear absence of mane permits identification: this is a tiger.

The sculptural effect is frozen and majestic. Despite the loss of the head (hard to imagine how it fitted onto such a frail neck), despite the loss of the forelegs, it is unexpectedly well-balanced, resting on the rounded stomach, on the solid support of its crouched thighs, and above all on its hindlegs, which grip the remains of the base with four huge toes, tensed like an enormous fist.

Remarkably, while describing as precisely as possible the shape, aspect, and effect of the stone, he seems to give up any attempt to complete the description by a reconstruction. The reason is his view of sculpture as based in a gesture perpetuated in the stone. Such a gesture cannot be imitated:

This incomplete beast has an unjustified appearance of stability. And I admit that any reconstruction would be delusive. If one wanted to draw a foreleg—even though the curve of the breast seems to be preserved—how would it run? at what angle? One cannot nowadays *invent* a Han posture. And the head? It should either be tiny, to fit on such a small neck, or monstrously large. . . . One cannot recreate a Han face-mask—even for an animal.

A fleeting gesture cannot be recreated, nor can the privileged instant of discovery be repeated. On the contrary it fades out if immobilized for examination. It makes no sense to Segalen's eyes—though it may seem scandalous to art history (less, perhaps, to genuine archaeological understanding³⁶)—to bring the Winged Tiger into some Zoo-Museum:

Even in this state it was a fine discovery. We left it in the paddy-field, in its old place but now upright, near the pillar of Fong Houan which no doubt explains its presence, and provides its highly probable date of 121 C.E. This tiger of the early second century thus comes between the Western Han Horse and the "passant" Tigers of the early third century. A powerful presence, its chisel-cuts well preserved—by now, no doubt, it has sunk back into its mud. Soon, no one will ever be able to relocate it. (Segalen 1995 vol. 2: 779–780)

In a narrative frame, Segalen records how the Tiger was discovered, how it looked first and then later, when restored to its 'normal' upright position. It is then analysed and described in the precise terms of archaeology and art history, and compared with other similar pieces. The identification of the subject is thus established and its aesthetic impact sketched. In our case, we just have a fragment of a winged tiger. Characteristically, Segalen refused to go beyond what was provided by the discovery. In his drawing he intentionally left the head incomplete (*ibid.*: 779) and did not attempt any reconstruction. Archaeology does not lead to conjecture of any kind. The otherness of its objects would forbid it: we have nothing in common with the genuine beauty of Chinese sculpture. This is not a historicist assertion of the radical incommensurability of all historical periods, but the

³⁶ Similarly, many Etruscan tumuli are intentionally left under the earth to preserve them from weather and human injury.



Fig. 11.3 Inverted lion from the Siao Hong [Xiao Hong] tomb passage, environments of Nankin [Nanjing], Ki-lin men [sic]. From the 1917 Segalen mission (Photograph taken in April 1917. Copyright bpk/RMN/Paris, Musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet. AP630-3)

aesthetic insight that it would make no sense to try to *remake* the past. It could only be grotesque and ugly. For the same reason, it would make no sense to remove the stone to a city museum: it had to be abandoned to the oblivion of time. The crumbling stone of this fragmentary winged tiger becomes haloed in all the ambiguity of the alternative archaeology of the mission. The descriptions of the Siao Hong lion (Fig. 11.3) and the Siao King lion — the latter the “first” and “unforgettable” monument Segalen met—fit this intuitive ‘method’ perfectly and are also worth reading (*ibid.*: 811).³⁷

³⁷ “I reproduce here, upside down, the Lion of Siao Hong, which I found thus placed (Fig. 33) in a ravine, 50 m. north of the stelae and columns of this prince’s tomb. A stream, enlarging a drainage channel, had undermined its base and overturned it, burying the head. It seemed still to have all the marks of its species: curvature, tongue, wing. One might have regretted that it had tumbled down from its original position. Yet, on a closer look, the head appeared too massive, the neck too long, the wing—though fairly well modelled—very heavy, the tongue uninteresting, the legs absurdly short, the shoulders graceless. . . in short, the Siao Hong lion, least elegant of them all, had chosen wisely to present itself upside down and should indeed be published in that position—even if by now the reader will automatically have righted it.

The Lion of Siao King, with which I will end this disquisition, was also the first I saw. I will never forget the imperious, decisive, formidable wholeness in which it appeared in my path—after an hour’s walk, in rain, at dusk, as I emerged from the great twenty-league bank of earth that surrounds Nanking. The wet marble was black; the earth brown-red, about to sprout. He had been making his way through the waters there—rearing, rebellious, furious—for 1,500 years, struggling not to drown; with a proud expression of insubmission, a heroic ‘Leang stance,’ so pronounced that ever since I have recognized it even at a distance, before getting any clear view.



Fig. 11.4 [Jiangsu]. Around Nankin [Nanjing], Yao-houa men [Yaohuamen], [Ganjiaxian]. Winged Lion from the tomb of Siao Houei (Xiao Hui) (Photograph by Victor Segalen taken on the 20/3/1917 or 24/3/1917. Copyright bpk/RMN/Paris, Musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet. AP655_3)

This lion has not yet become the “damned Chinese lion,” the “official, silly lions” that later invaded the country to populate the tourist shops of Peking (*ibid.*, 836)!

Segalen characterises his style by the “vision,” the “direct contact” he wanted to give to his reader (*ibid.*: 799). Nevertheless, even if magnetized by this physical and aesthetic experience, (Fig. 11.4) the mission remained framed within a scientific

This stance was enough in itself: I had no desire to excavate him. A break visible between shoulders and wing, and a backward slope of the stone, indicated that the figure was doubtless intact under the soil. We can see the ornamental spirals falling onto the breast, and the deep central cleft that enlarges and projects the two forequarters. This above all is what generates the balance between the hollowed back and the solid, rounded-out body. The straight-lined image in profile brings out an equally felicitous touch.

Viewed face on, especially when the huge head is seen close up (Fig. 35) the mask and its physiognomy appear in full sculptural realization.

Note first the tongue, pleasing to my touch in its full, fleshy, voluptuous curve. It is muscular, divided by a furrow into two masses, like the back and the chest.

Inside the mouth one can see a pleasingly carved hollow in which the grain of the marble is still after 1,500 years visible. The tongue, unlike those of other lions, does not loll out of the mouth but is subtly projected, swollen and solid, muscular like the beast’s whole stance. The mouth opening (less square than that of the Siao Sieou lion) is framed by a curiously stylized mask: two flat volutes round the nostrils, protuberant eyes. Finely placed touches—the circle of gums round the powerful, broken canine teeth—show how finished the whole monumental group was in its sculptural detail.

This lion mask remains one of the most powerful animal countenances I know.” (1995 vol. 2: 811).

project; the three travellers had to send reports to the Institut in Paris, and summarize their results in academic journals.

Segalen's *Rapport sur les résultats archéologiques de la mission Voisins, Lartigue et Segalen* was presented on 25th June 1914 (Segalen 1914b, 909–913), and he published several papers in the *Journal Asiatique* of the following year (1995 vol. 2: 915–981).³⁸ Jean Lartigue, after Segalen's death, published a report based on Segalen's last notes, *L'Art funéraire à l'époque des Han* (Segalen, Lartigue, and de Voisins 1935).

From Texts to Sensations: Drawing Visuality into Ancient Archaeology

In a chapter of *Equipée* (written between 1914 and 1915), the fictional summing-up of his Chinese experience,³⁹ Segalen reflected, not without humour, on the significance of the completed mission. What is it like to progress from texts towards stones? You trust texts and imagine you are about to discover “a nice archaic stone statue from this mighty and humane period of the Han” (1995 vol. 2: 310), and you find yourself “nose to nose” with an unrecognizable remnant—or better, scrap—of sandstone! Sandstone is a very weak stone that over time loses its shape and becomes bleached. This disappointment, however, leads Segalen to a physical response to the situation. By drawing this “shapeless remnant” he makes visible what had been eroded. This is the exact contrary of his refusal to make a scientific conjectural reconstruction of the winged tiger, seen above.

Even so, I draw—almost in superstitious piety, from habit. I draw this shapeless scrap. And slowly but surely the pencil and the instinctive movement of my fingers bring back to life what my eyes could not see. Without doubt: this is the sturdy, sexual Han tiger. (Segalen 1995, vol. 2: 310)

There is a kind of devotion in the process of drawing, and the fingers bring something to light. Where an objective attempt to reconstruct was doomed to fail, the merely physical movement of the drawing hand brings the statue back to life. Segalen goes so far as to suggest a kind of “muscular divination:”

I draw. It happens. The shapes come into being, as I follow them in the stone, not by mere eye-contact but by muscular divination of the chisel-track in the stone; they take shape, firm up—no longer in the crumbling sandstone, but in the fictional space of imaginative delight. (*ibid.*)

The hand took over from the eye and revealed the imaginary scene where the “real” appears, in a pure artistic process known to painters and sculptors. The form

³⁸ Segalen 1915–1916. Some results also appeared in Segalen 1917a and 1922; see also 1917b.

³⁹ “Imaginer, sur la foi des textes” (To imagine, trusting in texts). *Equipée*, Chap. 23; 1995 vol. 2: 310–311.

emerges out of the block through the evocative power of drawing, just as (one might say) Rodin's forms try to escape from their marble block. Segalen speaks of a "magical and logical evocation" (Segalen 1995 vol. 2: 311). The gestural "reconfiguration" resurrects the crumbling form. One of the supplementary *Stèles* he wrote in 1911, on "composition," criticizes "description, which kills the gesture" (la description tue le geste: Segalen 1999, vol. 2:125). Similarly, in *Peintures* (1916), he invited the reader to understand his contemplation as "a participation in the drawing gesture of the painter" (participer au geste dessinant du peintre), as "a *movement* within the painted space" (se *mouvoir* dans l'espace dépeint: Segalen 1995, vol. 2: 157). This physical dimension of understanding goes beyond the practice of "objective" archaeological work, which respects the "alterity" of its datum. Where the archaeologist gave up the attempt to bring the Winged Tiger back to life even in a conjectural drawing, the author of *Equipée* sees in drawing the continuation of the initial gesture of the work and therefore the possibility of some kind of recovery of it. The physical gesture of drawing the shape of the ancient statue creates a substantial continuity with it that outweighs the objectification inherent in scientific appropriation. Here the contradictions in Segalen's enterprise are patent.

Concluding Remarks

In their historical encounters in the twentieth century, the West played the upper hand, and as a result, its value system replaced that of the East. The waves of Western dominance brought about the sudden death not only of oriental society, but also of its emphasis on the traditional learning of the classics. However, as many historians and archaeologists now realise, this does not mean that in these encounters the East has always played a passive role, or the role of victim. As we have seen in Luo Zhenyu and Segalen, the encounter between different cultures changed relationships not only among peoples, but also between people and objects. Colonialism produced a huge amount of energy and experiment, "creating new ways of doing things in a material and social sense" (Gosden 2004: 25). Luo put forward a new concept of *qiwuxue* that opened the door for modern archaeology. In the case of Segalen and his archaeological investigation in China, he aimed to discover and to save the "classics" of China. He opened up a new approach to research and a new way of seeing. Curiously, his writing enriched his own European civilization in numerous ways but was largely ignored by the indigenous population in China.

In his attempt to reveal the genuine character of Chinese sculpture, obliterated over time by erosion, forgetfulness, and reinterpretation, Segalen belongs to a very specific mode of dealing with tradition. The claim to get back to the origins, *ad fontes*, periodically accompanies the progress of knowledge and the evolution of society in the West. It can have its own radicalism, when the claim becomes vehement opposition to current norms. European humanism turned back to Greek

and Latin literature and wisdom, and elevated schoolbooks into “classics.” This was surely a selective view of ancient literature and myths, privileging a rather rationalized view of antiquity. This ideal was rejected during the nineteenth century by people like Friedrich Schlegel or Friedrich Nietzsche, who were looking for a different antiquity. The quest for another kind of ‘classics’, taken from the so-called ‘presocratic’ philosophers, from tragedy, from India, etc. began to create a second meaning of ‘Modernity’s classics’ during the twentieth century. Seeking for the genuine China, Segalen belongs entirely to this second tradition. But the way he managed to integrate his alternative view into the Western canons of scientific enterprise makes him unusual—an intermediary between Europe and China, with a critical insight.

Today, as the world has entered the post-colonial period, we are forced to reconsider and reevaluate the power relationship between East and West. For China, the question is not simply to retrieve its lost ‘classics’, but to reconfigure them. The old China has survived in objects, in texts, and in some remarkable works such as Luo’s oracle bone inscriptions and—in translation—in Segalen’s poetry and his archaeological writing. The “real” things or *realia* offer modern China an opportunity to invest its classics with a renewed materiality. We believe that revisiting Luo Zhenyu and Segalen has thrown new light on changing ideas of the historic heritage (“classics”) in a particular historical context, and on the complexity of the impact of modern disciplines, as well as on China’s transformation into a ‘modern’ state in the early twentieth century. Our modest effort here is to unlock some of the doors that could lead us back to the Chinese classics.

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Chapter 12

Homer, Skepticism, and the History of Philology

James I. Porter

Summary Both archaeological ‘documentation’ and Homeric scholarship were satirized in Samuel Butler’s *Authoress of the Odyssey*, the work of a writer who devoted his life to subverting the revered institutions and mocking the sacred cows of late Victorian Britain. Butler suggests his own recipe for enlivening modernization—surely a mischievous young female author is preferable to an aged bard?—but quickly turns to making ‘presence’ ridiculous in his photographs of “Cyclopean” walls, and a “Cave of Polyphemus” that looks like any other cave.¹

This essay rests on two propositions, which will also underlie a longer study in progress (*Homer: The Very Idea*): first, that the history of classical philology is coextensive with the reception of the two Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; and secondly, that philology is founded as much on doubt and skepticism as it is on the authentication and acceptance of the transmitted and received past. The first of these propositions is rather easy to document. Homer was the single, most undisputedly canonical text from the earliest traces of Greek grammatical scholarship onward (Theagenes of Rhegium, the late sixth-century Homerist and first known prose author on Homer, was honored in antiquity as the first *grammatikos* or “philologist”). And the arc of philology more or less follows the fate of Homeric philology, from the earliest glosses on Homer in the fifth century, to the Alexandrian librarians, to F. A. Wolf’s *Prolegomena ad Homerum* in 1795, to Wilamowitz

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in the late nineteenth century, to Milman Parry's revisions of oral theory in the early twentieth century, into the present. Indeed, one might venture to say that classical philology is as much conditioned by the reception of Homer as it is a part of that reception history.

The second proposition is perhaps less obvious but it is no less easy to demonstrate. Theagenes' allegorical defenses of Homer were probably mounted in response to critiques like those by the Presocratic philosophers Heraclitus and Xenophanes, though these latter were doubtless moved in the first instance by ethical and epistemological, not literary, considerations. Nevertheless, skepticism towards Homer instigates philology, and the trend continues over the next centuries. Protagoras, and later Zoilus (the renowned "Scourge of Homer," as he was known to Aristotle and others) are only the two best known sophistic critics of Homer who challenged his authority and prestige in the fifth century B.C.E. Alcidas of Elea, a pupil of Gorgias, brought out doubts that had swirled around the traditions of Homer's life and works in his own literary historical work, the *Museum*, which staged a contest between Homer and Hesiod (in which Homer lost). Plato questioned Homer's capacity to know anything, while in the process formulating some of the finest literary tools of the day. And it is perhaps no accident that Alexandrian scholarship, the culmination of Homeric criticism in antiquity, arose to allege the authenticity or the spuriousness of the transmitted Homeric text at the very moment that ancient skepticism began to flourish as a philosophical school around Pyrrho, from the third to first centuries B.C.E.

The philology of Wolf and his progeny in the late eighteenth century marks the ascendancy of what is sometimes called academic "Pyrrhonianism." It too was founded on a fundamental skepticism towards classical attestations about the past and, in the case of Wolf, about Homer's authorship of the Homeric corpus. Wolf's point would later be put into a compressed form by another Wolfian, Friedrich Nietzsche, who announced in his inaugural lecture at Basel (1869, emphasis in original) that "We believe in the one great poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—just not in Homer as this poet." After all, one of the primary aims of philology and one of its final touchstones, authentication (*krisis*), has as its flip side the activity of doubting (separating the wheat from the chaff). But because philology likes (and needs) to think of itself as a positive activity, it tends to repudiate skepticism, even as it internalizes this critical activity within itself. Consequently, early modern classical philology was perhaps more destructive of received myths about antiquity than it was constructive in a positive way (think of Bentley's exposure of the forged *Epistles of Phalaris*), which is not to say that it didn't erect its own set of myths about the classical past (one need only recall the creative symbiosis between forgers and critics: Grafton 1990). Of equal significance is the fact that, once skepticism severs the links with positive truth about Homer's poems, another element or tone of discourse becomes available, as a literal reflex of philology: parody and satire. And these latter run alongside the more serious genres of Homeric commentary pretty much from its first beginnings down to the present.

What I would like to do with the present essay is to explore how this contradictory posture of philology has generated mimetic, parodic critiques from within and

without. If I had space I would take up five or so case studies: that is, five readings of five savagely counter-philological or satirizing texts: Alcidas' *Contest Between Homer and Hesiod* (from around 400 B.C.E.); Dio of Prusa's Trojan Oration (late first to early second century C.E.); Philostratus' *Heroicus* (early third century C.E.);² Samuel Butler's *The Authoress of the Odyssey* (1897); and, for good measure, Adorno's remnant from *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, "On Epic Naiveté" (1943). These parodic or counter-philological works, each of which presents a strong revision of Homer and of conventional readings of Homer, distinguish themselves in part by blurring the line between parodic critique and positive philology. To give one example from the so-called Second Sophistic movement from the Roman imperial era, Dio of Prusa (Dio 1893–96, Oration 11), while drawing upon enormous scholarly erudition, calls Homer a compulsive liar, and he goes on to rewrite the Trojan war as it really happened (he claims): Hector slew Achilles; Troy never fell; the tales told by Odysseus never occurred; and so on. Philostratus follows suit, attacking Homer the confabulator through the mendacious Odysseus, inverting large swathes of both epics in the bargain, but above all turning his critique into a catalogue of academic lore, some of it reaching back to Plato or earlier (Philostratus 1870): the Achaeans knew that Helen really went to Egypt, but nevertheless they fought for her as if she were present, being in reality eager to capture Trojan riches (§ 12); Homer was Odysseus' toyboy (*paignion*), and thus included details that aggrandized the hero to please him (§ 14); Homer basely criticizes the gods in places, hence he is to be "blamed" (§ 10) and so on. In turning Homer on his head, these critics help to lay bare the very constitutive essence of philology (and both draw heavily on Alexandrian debates). What they lay bare is in good part the fiction that there ever was such a thing as a 'conventional' reading of Homer to begin with. On the contrary, Homer was from the first a palimpsestic text of accumulated, creative, deviant misreadings over the centuries and eventually over the millennia, only one of which, the residual misreading, forgot that it was deviant and came to be known as canonical. But, given the constraints of space, I will focus on a modern example, Butler's *Authoress of the Odyssey* (1897), whose latter-day revision of Homer deserves to make Butler a member of an as yet to be named literary coterie—namely, the Third Sophistic movement.

Before we begin, a quick run-up to modernity will be needed. That Homer had a plastic identity in antiquity was pretty much an open secret at the time, as we have just seen, and the tendency only intensifies (if this is even possible) in modernity. Giambattista Vico, for instance, held the influential view that Homer was not a person but an idea (*un'idea*) created by the Greeks (though believed in by them), in his *Scienza Nuova Seconda* (1730). Less extreme but no less devastating was the example of F. A. Wolf. Wolf set the tone of modern inquiry into the classics with his *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795), in which he argued that the Homeric texts were largely not the work of Homer but rather of a long rhapsodic tradition that

² Philostratus 1977, and Dio 1893–96.

eventually came to be associated with the name ‘Homer’.³ The *Prolegomena* enjoyed a *succès de scandale* that lasted well into the next century, not least because of the indecision it embodied, only some of which was rhetorically staged. If the perplexities of Wolf’s stance tended to be repeated rather than confronted by later generations, it was nonetheless his historicist approach that swept the field. Henceforth, the Homeric texts themselves began to appear as something like an archaeological site, with layers of history built into them in a palpable stratigraphy: the disparate effects of multiple compositional layers (some, including Richard Claverhouse Jebb, the eventual editor of Sophocles, would actually call them “strata”) and the intrusive hands of editors could all be felt in the poems.⁴ The temptation was to separate out these layers of accretion—indeed, just to detect them was already to prise them apart—with the result that Homer and his texts slowly unraveled, even if there was still something sublime about this heap of threads. By the end of the century the ‘analysed’ Homer was such a commonplace that it had percolated into popular consciousness. And this is where Samuel Butler enters the picture.

Samuel Butler and the Mimesis of Philology

People find what they bring. Is it possible that eminent Homeric scholars have found so much seriousness in the more humorous parts of the ‘Odyssey’ because they brought it there? To the serious all things are serious. (Butler 1897, 258)

In 1897 the novelist and essayist Samuel Butler (1835–1902) published his curious, half-satirical and half-whimsically-serious study aimed at the late-Victorian public, with its mouthful of a title, *The Authoress of the Odyssey where and when she wrote, who she was, the use she made of the Iliad, and how the poem grew under her hands*, in which he argued that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman who, “young, self-willed, and unmarried,” had never left her modest home in Sicily and strongly disagreed with Homer’s portrayal of the second sex. Butler had read classics at Cambridge as an undergraduate (from 1854 to 1858) before breaking with Victorian mores, first by sheep farming in New Zealand (instead of entering the Church as his parents had hoped) and then, upon returning to England in 1864, by embarking on a career as a painter, novelist, satirist, art historian, and cultural pundit. Though critical of “the Wolfian heresy,”⁵ Butler claimed with considerable confidence to

³ See Introduction to Wolf 1985, and Grafton 1981.

⁴ The conceit took. Cf. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling 1804: 40, comparing the earth to a philological problem: “in geology we still await the genius who will analyse the earth and show its composition as Wolf analysed Homer.”

⁵ Butler 1922: 252. Henceforth, references to this edition of Butler’s *Authoress* will be given by page number only in the body of the text. The phrase “Wolfian heresy” (*ibid.*: 2) is borrowed from Mure 1851.

be able to detect, *inter alia*, traces of “two distinct poems [in the *Odyssey*], with widely different aims,” which had been “cobbled” together and “united into a single work, not unskillfully, but still not so skillfully as to conceal a change of scheme.”⁶ The remark could have easily come from a work like Wilamowitz’s *Homerische Untersuchungen* (1884).⁷ But how different, in fact, was the rest of Butler’s reasoning from that of the philologists? Butler’s self-styled “subversive” intervention in the debates of the big boys at Oxbridge (3),⁸ with his privileging of the tumbledown *Odyssey* over the manly *Iliad* and his cavalier manipulation of the evidence (while strictly playing by the rules that sanctioned this very manipulation), deserves to be recognized as a watershed of sorts in the history of classical scholarship, despite the stony silence his book received and continues to receive from professing classicists, with few exceptions.⁹ The work is in fact an attack on the professionalization of classics, especially at Cambridge and Oxford but also on the continent, outraging as it does, albeit tongue-in-cheek, the conventions of scholarship, often hilariously, in the spirit of Swift’s irreverent *Battle of the Books* (1704) and Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* (1872). But in the larger scheme of things *The Authoress of the Odyssey* has to be viewed as an extreme symptom of the age in which it was written.

No longer a matter of the historicity of Homer and his world alone, as in the case of Wolf and his succession, it was the historicity and the frail contingency of an entire set of disciplines that was being brought into the public glare through philological inquiry and its various spin-offs. As Homer, the new disciplinary object, was being put to the test (and not least of all to the test of gender-bending),

⁶ Butler 1893 (here 1923: 276–77), itself dependent on an outlandish narrative about how the authoress’ plans for the *Odyssey* evolved from a sketch into a full-blown epic.

⁷ Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1884: 228–229: “The ‘redactor’ [of the *Odyssey*] used three epics for his compilation, which were themselves already the product of contamination. The most recent of these, which for its part presupposes the other two, was produced not long before the redaction, and likewise on the mainland. . . [while] the remaining two poems are formally of a higher caliber, are older (even if there is no reason to date them to earlier than the eighth century), and were produced in Ionia.” The remark is typical of much nineteenth-century mantic philology.

⁸ “How can I expect Homeric scholars to tolerate theories so subversive of all that most of them have been insisting on for so many years? . . . If I am right they have invested their reputation for sagacity in a worthless stock” (3). As Butler recognizes (*ibid.*), his subversion pertains as much to the *Iliad* as to the *Odyssey*.

⁹ An unsurprising exception is Farrington 1929, a vigorous and straightforward defense of Butler’s claims by another ‘subversive’; another is Butler’s continuator L. G. Pocock (1955, 1957, 1965). For correctives, see Shaffer 1988, 167–203, who sets the right tone, and who also pays close heed to Butler’s use of visual imagery, photographic and other; similarly, Shaffer 2004: “The very title of his book. . . was calculated to offend the entire establishment nurtured on Gladstone’s notion that a classical education, a grounding in the political and military tactics of Homer’s *Iliad* and the navigational prowess of the *Odyssey*, was the best preparation for young men whose task was to rule the empire.” Also Whitmarsh 2002; Beard 2007. Butler’s “subversiveness” in a way merely consisted in literalizing the bias about Homer (known also in antiquity, [Longinus] *Subl.* 9.11–15) to which Richard Bentley gave lapidary form in 1713: “the *Ilias* he made for the Men, and the *Odysseis* for the other Sex.” Cf. Mure 1854: I. 225; Kingsley 1880: 114–115; Butler 1893: 286.

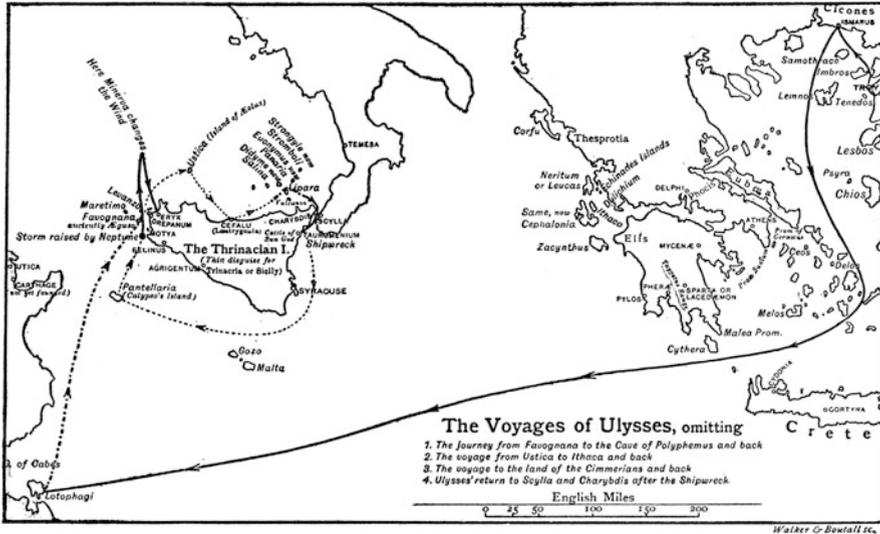


Fig. 12.1 Map of the voyages of Ulysses (From Butler 1922: 180b)

so too were the disciplines that sought to encompass him. A certain debasement of Homer was perhaps inevitable. Butler's study is a case in point.

Not satisfied with his outrageous speculations about a literalizing reading of Homer, for instance in his attempt to pinpoint with GPS accuracy the geographical location of Odysseus' wanderings (Fig. 12.1; he plumps for Sicily, as we shall see), Butler seems to have been happy to press the metaphor of textual archaeology to the limit as well.

Butler disputes the unitarian hypothesis put forward by Jebb: he detects a rupture in the *Odyssey*. The break falls between the visit to the Phaeacians and the story of Penelope and the suitors along with the first four books. Butler can even pinpoint the verses where the break appears, and can offer explanations as to why the authoress changed her mind about later additions unforeseen earlier in the composition of the text (252; 253–4). His critical posture is thus that of a unitarian (he believes in single authorship), but of a qualified sort: his author is a fickle one, and her poem reflects a change of heart, indelibly—quite literally so, as she seems to have composed her verses “with a sharply pointed style [sic] of hardened bronze, or even steel, on plates of lead, [hence] alteration would not be so easy as it is with us. Besides, we all cobble rather than cancel if we can” (256). Butler is thus blending in an incongruous form the unitarian and analytical methods of approaching Homer's text, under the camouflage of a psychological hypothesis that is both fanciful and hard to swallow.¹⁰

¹⁰Note, too, how the embedded inconsistencies (layerings) of the oral tradition hypothesis have been replaced by a (rather strained!) explanation based on the technology of writing.



Fig. 12.2 Photograph “Ausgrabung auf der Baustelle des Tempels” (Excavation on the site of the temple) (From Schliemann 1874a, Tafel p. 112)

The Appeal to the Real: Imaging and Imagining Homer

Butler’s account is true to this last apothegm. It is truly cobbled together, and also self-interrupting, especially in its use of photographs. One of the more interesting aspects of his work is its photographic account of Mycenaean ruins, of Italy, and of Troy. Thanks to this, his work deserves to be considered for its manipulation of the conventions of the travelogue and its offshoot, the modern archaeological report, for which Schliemann’s studies are among the great innovators—not least for having deployed, if not introduced, the idea of a detailed graphic and photographic record of find spots (Fig. 12.2).¹¹

And so, while one could examine Butler’s infamous *Authoress* as a continuator and critique of classical philology at the level of the text, I want instead to focus on the self-interrupting nature of the visual evidence provided, in its appeal to images, and to the first-personal element in the text’s narrative of discovery of the truth of Homer. The camera introduces a medley of elements and accents: realism, historicism, empiricism, but also subjectivism, contingency, and journalism; it can bring an intrusive lower-class touch into an elitist genre. (Figs. 12.3 and 12.4)

¹¹ See Claire L. Lyons et al. 2005; Downing 2006: 87–89. Dörpfeld is sometimes said to have supplied Schliemann with the idea of photographing his excavations, but C. Runnels points to “the extensive use of photography by Schliemann in 1874 to document his Trojan finds [and] the numerous photographs he had taken at Mycenae in 1876, all before he met Dörpfeld. Schliemann regularly used engravings in his publications because he was dissatisfied with the quality of the photographs he could obtain” (Runnels 1997: 128). See Schliemann 1874b and the accompanying volume of illustrations, 1874a; also Schliemann 1878. On images in archaeological reports see also Fotiadis and Wang and Thouard, this volume.



Fig. 12.3 Boy Sleeping, Trapani (Photograph by Butler. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge)



Fig. 12.4 Mycenae, Tomb of Atreus with Ladies (Photograph by Butler. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge)

Butler was well acquainted with this kind of approach. His earlier nonfictional works were daring forays into the mixed genre of image and text, notably in the field of art history: for instance his two studies, *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and the Canton Ticino* (1881) and *Ex Voto: An Account of the Sacro Monte* (1888). In these two works he sought to reclaim the heritage of minor, Cisalpine Renaissance artists who were working in a humbler (grotesque, verist, primitive) and decidedly non-academic style, in contrast to the canonical old masters of the handbooks (Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Titian, each of whom he blames for the “decline” of Italian art). His own authorial style is perfectly tailored to his subject matter: it is cheeky, rakish, bluff, and scandalous.¹² The books incorporate drawings and photographs, as well as the local, personalized vignettes of a traveler cultivating his “ignorant eye.”¹³ With these studies, Butler was doing more than facing off squarely with the unvarnished truth of what was to be found in the modest, untouched corners of a forgotten production site of the Northern Renaissance. He was aiming as much at scandalizing his contemporaries and their institutions as at retrieving the past. As Elinor Shaffer observes, “[Butler’s] choice of site, theme and artist is itself a running ironic commentary on the art criticism of his day and the solemnities of culture.”¹⁴ These two works are in more ways than one pilot-studies for *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, where Butler could now bring his inimitable talents to bear on the hoariest of all traditions in Europe, that of classical Greece.

In foregrounding the exposed image of antiquity in the *Authoress*, Butler was forging a radical break with the conventions of classical philology, purportedly with the aim of fortifying his philological arguments, but ultimately casting them into a strange sort of limbo. The appeal to the empirical and the positive evidence of the Real oddly has the opposite effect of upending the seriousness of the philological enterprise, or at the very least of sending a shudder of uneasy tension through his work. In the final analysis, Butler is raising the question of what the proper—the fitting—voice of the modern-day philologist ought to be. As Butler realized, the question of propriety is one of near-indiscernible tonality, something as nuanced as the difference between *humor* and *Homer* (Butler 1892). And shuttling back and forth between images and text does much to contribute to the effect. The maneuver makes palpable the discordances between philology and archaeology, between theory and reality, between myth and history, between the imaginary and the empirical, and between past and present, as a tour of Butler’s illustrations in his study on Homer will demonstrate.

¹² See Butler 1888a: 123–25 for one delicious example. The earlier work, Butler 1881, is bizarrely dotted with musical accompaniments, in the form of scores, apparently drawn from Handel’s organ concertos (Shaffer 1988: 79), designed to describe what Butler claims he heard at various points on his journeys, e.g., “By and by, the galloping, cantering movement became a trotting one, thus:—”, upon which a page of musical notation follows (Butler 1881: 84).

¹³ See E. S. Shaffer 1988 for a superb account (whence the phrase “ignorant eye”).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 99.



NAUSICAA

Fig. 12.5 Nausicaa. Frontispiece of Butler 1922

The first of the plates is the book's frontispiece, which is a portrait purporting to be of Nausicaa (Fig. 12.5), whom Butler later discloses to be the best candidate for the *Odyssey's* author. Does it count as one of the book's illustrations or not? On the one hand, the answer has to be yes. Butler returns to the image later in his study to dwell upon it and her character at some length. Indeed, the book depends as much upon the truth of this image as upon any other. And yet, mysterious and enigmatic, the fetching image refuses to allow us to accept Butler's claims at face value.

One breast bared, a braid dangling over her right shoulder, the alleged authoress of the *Odyssey* is gazing downwards, attentively, like us, but she is also looking away from us, avoiding our gaze. It appears to be a photograph of a framed painting. Is it real or not? The ambiguity is purposeful, as is the reluctance and mutual avoidance of the two gazes (hers and ours). It is also characteristic of the entirety of Butler's project, as well as of his voice, which parades its outrageous claims behind the screen of scholarly seriousness. Later on, three-quarters of the way

through his book, when Butler gets round to showing his cards and finally proposes Nausicaa, and emphatically not Homer, as the author of the *Odyssey* (she was an inhabitant of Trapani in Sicily, where she, or else her mythical avatar, would have met Odysseus *en route* home), he dwells at considerable length on “my frontispiece.” The image, he feels, speaks for itself, and why not? What image could fail to do so?

Let the reader look at my frontispiece and say whether he would find the smallest difficulty in crediting the original of the portrait with being able to write the ‘*Odyssey*’. Would he refuse so to credit her merely because all he happened to know about her for certain was that she once went out washing clothes with her attendants? Nausicaa enjoyed a jaunt on a fine spring morning and helped her maids at the washing cisterns; therefore it is absurd to suppose that she could have written the ‘*Odyssey*’. I venture to think that this argument will carry little weight outside the rank and file of our Homerists—greatly as I dislike connecting this word however remotely with the ‘*Odyssey*’. (Butler [1897] 1922: 207–208)

Butler’s premise is disingenuous, even captious, but irrefutable on its own terms and, one has to add, on any others too—as Butler well knows. But of greatest interest is the disarming appeal to the self-evidence of the portrait itself, and then the savage line with which the quotation ends, which reveals some of the real stakes of Butler’s gambit: merely to embark on his project is to wrest one epic away from scholarship—the *Odyssey*—and to divest Homeric professors of their title. As we shall see when we reach the end of this essay (and as Butler indicated early on), he has designs on Homer and the *Iliad* as well.

But that is not all. The portrait of his frontispiece may (or may not) be self-evident, but what is its real value? Butler immediately goes on to suggest that the authoress of the *Odyssey* purposefully gave a false description of herself in the parts of the epic that concerned her, and that she did so not out of vanity but out of a certain mockery of truth and pleasure in fiction:

At the same time I think it highly probable that the writer of the “*Odyssey*” was both short and plain, and was laughing at herself, and intending to make her audience laugh also, by describing herself as tall and beautiful. She may have been either plain or beautiful without its affecting the argument. (Butler [1897] 1922: 208)

This is a remarkable concession by Butler. Not only is his poetess a character in her own fiction; she is also a liar, and a humorist at that. She resembles, in other words, no one else so much as the author of the *Authoress*. No further motives are given for her self-beautification, but one can only suspect that foremost among these are the pressures of the epic genre itself, which tends towards the ideal, and which Homer’s work embodies in ways that the *Odyssey* does not, so far as Butler is concerned. Given the authoress’ opposition towards Homer in all other matters, it would only stand to reason that she should oppose him here too—in Homer’s sobriety, in his subscription to the high seriousness of the ideal of beauty, in his illusionism of another (epic) kind, all of which she cheerfully undermines, much like (or rather on behalf of) Butler himself, all the while winking at her knowing

audience.¹⁵ Butler's final indifference ("she may have been either plain or beautiful without its affecting the argument") is itself an exasperating reminder that so much, possibly all, of what he has to say could go one way or another without affecting his own arguments.

And yet, why then does he present his authoress as Nausicaa—tall, dark, and beautiful, which is to say, in the form of the illusion of her ideal, and not in the form of its reality? Needless to say, the inclusion of herself in her own fiction creates endless complications about her relation to the narrative content outside of the central tales told by Odysseus in books 9–12, and not least her relation to Penelope, which cannot detain us here. Did Nausicaa invent her contact with Odysseus, as she surely must have done if he was part of the epic material that she inherited? If so, what else did she invent? Suffice it to say that Butler has answers for all of this, and that he finds the Authoress' inventions to be nothing less than scandalous and bare-faced lies, albeit told from a feminine perspective—"Let us see what the 'Odyssey' asks us to believe, or rather, swallow" (Butler [1897] 1922: 125)—an extraordinary device that enables Butler, in turn, to dismantle the fictionality of this Homeric poem.

Topographies

Forty-two pages into the *Authoress*, the first of the photos proper announces itself as "The Cave of Polyphemus" (Fig. 12.6), though it serves merely as an illustration to Butler's loose abridgment of his own prose translation of the *Odyssey*, which would not appear for another 3 years (Butler 1900). The abridged version in *Authoress* takes up another 60 pages, all told, a little less than the initial third of the book. The image, like all the images reproduced in the second edition, is of poor quality, but the original prints were not of any finer quality either. Butler shot them himself.¹⁶ He was perfectly capable of high grade photography when he so wished (see Figs. 12.3 and 12.4),¹⁷ so we cannot lay the blame on amateurism (though the *pose* of amateurism is a better possibility).

Butler took no pains to help the viewer make out his antiquities, and if anything he seems to have done all he could to obstruct the view of the past with these badly exposed, poorly contrasted, and ill-framed images. The eye must strain to make out the details, as if squinting into the hoary past or at a partially uncovered ruin. The so-called "Cave of Polyphemus" shows a rock-strewn escarpment with two

¹⁵ Cf. Butler 1893: 276, where we read that the kernel of the *Odyssey* and its inspiration were a *jeu d'esprit* and the desire "to make fun of the Epic Cycle [which for Butler includes the *Iliad* (*ibid.*, 303)], much as the mock-heroic Battle of the Frogs and Mice made fun of it centuries later." Further, Butler 261: "I believe Nausicaa is quietly laughing at her hero [*sc.*, Odysseus], "a bald elderly gentleman, whose little remaining hair is red, [and who is] being eaten out of house and home during his absence," (270) and sees through him; cf. *ibid.* 269: "how obviously the writer is quietly laughing at [Alcinous] in her sleeve." Further, *ibid.*: 280.

¹⁶ See his remarks on p. 217 n. "†".

¹⁷ See Shaffer 1988, *passim*, and Chap. 5, esp. 242–94, with its photographic sampling of his work.



Fig. 12.6 The Cave of Polyphemus (From Butler 1922: 42a. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge)

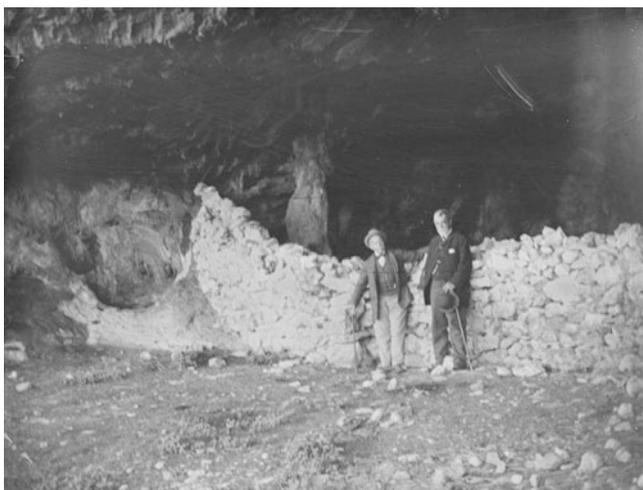


Fig. 12.7 Sig. Sugameli and the author, in the cave of Polyphemus (From Butler 1922: 42b. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge)

shadows that might be mouths opening into the darkness of a cave. The foreground is bare and flat, suggesting a sandy stretch by the sea, but there is no sign of the sea itself. A half-cropped wagon with one wheel exposed in the lower left corner acts as a sign of travel and human presence (cf. Manoukian, this volume), as does the photograph's bare indexical quality: both say "I was here," wherever here is—no geographical indication is given, though we later learn that the place is Trapani.

The verso (Fig. 12.7) is a close-up showing the author standing "in the cave of Polyphemus" in the company of a learned local from Trapani, Signor Sugameli,

backed up against a rock wall that is strangely shaped like an ossified Greek sailing vessel (the rocks, we might note, are diminutive, not megalithic—a point that will matter below) and further attesting to Butler’s presence and his convictions.

No comment is given about the images, which as stated do no more than stand in juxtaposition to the abridged translation, all 90 pages of it, which itself is meant, oddly enough, to act as a kind of caption to Butler’s own translation, if not to the original *Odyssey* itself, for which his own frontispiece acts as a metonym: “The abridgment [of the *Odyssey*] that I here give is not to be regarded otherwise than as the key-sketch which we so often see under an engraving of a picture that contains many portraits. It is intended not as a work of art, but as an elucidatory diagram” (Butler [1897] 1922: 14).

Forged Identities

The language and imagery of Butler’s last quoted remark are convoluted, and together they evoke a kind of allegory: the epic original is lost; all that remains for us is its engraving, reproduced in some artist’s imagination. Within that picture reside many portraits—possibly many figures (characters), possibly many variations of the original, one being Butler’s compressed rendering, another being the portrait displayed on the frontispiece, which on closer inspection proves to be a copy, in black and white, of an anonymous painting known as *La Musa Polimnia* (The Muse Polyhymnia). The original, we now know, was a forgery dating from the early 1740s. It was inspired by a fragment of a wall painting from Herculaneum (Ercolano) that was discovered in 1739, featuring a young music-playing couple.¹⁸ The work, painted in oils but presented as an ancient work in encaustic, was allegedly found buried among other lost antiquities in the region. The citharist was elevated to a Muse, and the Tuscan town of Cortona was able to boast its very own antiquity, rivaling those from Pompeii and Herculaneum. Eventually, the “Muse” was moved to the city’s museum, though access was restricted; locked away in a cupboard, it was available for inspection only upon request and with special permission. Butler too would have found it where it continues to be displayed today, in the Museo dell’Accademia Etrusca in Cortona.¹⁹ (Fig. 12.8) Being alert as he was to the hazards of art attribution, he cannot have failed to be on his guard with respect to this particular painting.²⁰

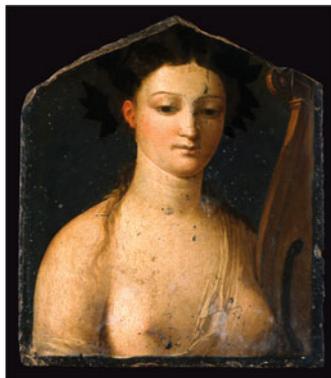
¹⁸ For this identification, see de Vos 1985: 71–72. The painter was formerly thought to be G. Guerra (a well known forger), but was more probably either the Roman painter and copyist Camillo Paderni or another pupil of Francesco Fernandi (see Burlot 2010). On Guerra and Paderni, see further, D’Alconzo 2007: 205 at n. 21. Guerra’s forgeries were exposed by the court of Naples, and one of his products was hung in the museum as an object lesson in thwarted duplicity (see Pelzl 1972: 310 n. 70).

¹⁹ The work is now hung, not secreted away, and it is accompanied by a gallery label that identifies it as a “post-classical” encaustic work—a recent concession.

²⁰ On these hazards generally, see Campbell 2010.

Fig. 12.8 *La Musa Polimnia.*

Cortona, Museo
dell'Accademia Etrusca
e della Città di Cortona
(By permission)



Forgeries of Roman wall paintings were rife in the eighteenth century, and they were a treacherous affair. Some of these momentarily took in connoisseurs, including the likes of Winckelmann, but they were rapidly and notoriously unmasked at the time. (Indeed, Winckelmann helped to spread the word once he realized that his colleagues, such as Caylus, had been duped.²¹) But while many of the Italian forgeries were unmasked, not all of them were, at least not definitively. The appeal of the antique past proved too much of a temptation, despite the obvious risks involved. The Muse of Cortona was a case in point. It survived exposure chiefly through neglect; art historians refused to discuss it. The painting was especially suspect given its rather pristine condition and its unclassical touches, and doubts swirled around it from the moment of its discovery well into the next century. While it was never thought to be a contemporary (eighteenth-century) forgery, it was suspected to be modern, typically of the Renaissance, perhaps the work of a master like Raphael or of Giulio Romano, Raphael's favorite pupil.²² I believe we get a

²¹ Winckelmann 1762: 31–32. But Winckelmann's better knowledge did not save him from falling prey to the same temptation at the same time. See de Vos 1990: 184–6; Pelzl 1972: n. 16 about the exposure of Guerra.

²² See the contemporary Italian documents assembled in Procacci 1984; Curzio dei Marchesi Venuti 1791: 233; also the correspondence between Barthélemy and Caylus from 1755 quoted and discussed in Burlot 2006. In the next century, see Lenormant 1877. Lenormant revived the controversy of the previous century (though it never went away), and exacerbated it, and he paved the way for the most recent findings today. He reproduced a high-quality photograph of *La Musa* for the first time as a scientific tool for study (pl. 7); he expressed an unresolved "skepticism" (42), but finally plumped for the ancient date; he recognized that the Muse was in fact a "simple citharodist" of the sort found in Pompeian wall paintings (43–44); and he suspected oils but then plumped for encaustic. In response came Heydemann 1879: 110–111: "sicher modern, nicht antik" (with a host of arguments). Heydemann also suspected the work to be painted in oils, not in encaustic, as do de Vos and Burlot today (*per litt.*). Cf. Sartain 1885: 8 who mentions, only to dismiss, the skepticism thrown on *La Musa*. He notes that some of the skeptics placed the work "in the epoch of the great artists of the Renaissance." Similarly, Cros and Henry 1884: 19–21. I am grateful to Delphine Burlot for these references.

strong hint of this again in Butler's account of Nausicaa's features, where he protests that there is nothing modern to be found in her likeness: "There is not a trace of the *barocco* in my frontispiece" (Butler [1897] 1922: 208).²³ We are plainly allowed to overhear a recent conversation here. Similarly, a page earlier, Butler challenges his audience to probe his frontispiece closely: "Let the reader look at my frontispiece and say whether he would find the smallest difficulty in crediting the original of the portrait with being able to write the 'Odyssey' " (207). The only other indication Butler gives as to the provenance of his image is in his Preface to the first edition, in which he states that the frontispiece, which Butler simply captions with "Nausicaa," is "taken" from an Alinari photograph "of a work in the museum at Cortona called 'La Musa Polinnia.'" It "is believed to be Greek, presumably of about the Christian era, but no more precise date can be assigned to it." "I was assured," Butler adds, "that it was found by a man who was ploughing his field, and who happened to be a baker," and who used it "for some time as a door to his oven" (x). The story, straining all credulity, is Butler's own whimsical invention. It does nothing to fortify his case for identifying "La Musa" with Nausicaa, or either one with the authoress of the *Odyssey*. Posting this controversial image at the front of his book, a copy of a copy with quite possibly no (genuine) original lying behind it, only serves as an advertisement of the book's own qualities and a stern warning: *Caveat lector*. Failing to caption the frontispiece with anything other than the mythological name "Nausicaa" perpetuates—or does it advertise?—the possibility of a hoax for the unsuspecting reader.²⁴

As it happens, hoax is a sensitive word in this context. The notice of Butler's translation of the *Odyssey* which appeared in *The New York Times* on September 15, 1900 made mention of his earlier book, the *Authoress*, in somewhat unvarnished terms: "Mr. Butler, who craved to be taken seriously, was however, notwithstanding his enthusiasm, generally laughed at, not because of lack of scholarship, but because most Greek scholars thought he had given them a delightful and scholarly hoax". The only problem with this assessment is its principle assumption that Butler "craved to be taken seriously". That too was a pose struck by Butler in his work, as when he writes:

I wish I could find some one who would give me any serious reason why Nausicaa should not have written the 'Odyssey.' For the last five years I have pestered every scholar with whom I have been able to scrape acquaintance, by asking him to explain why the 'Odyssey' should not have been written by a young woman [and so on]. (Butler [1897] 1922: 208)

This is the voice of a prankster who is making a rather bad imitation of a fanatical and craven, if self-abasing, zealot. Butler's first readers got him right, even if the *Times* notice conveys, unwittingly, the contradiction of Butler's book: its *faux* seriousness and the delightful hoax at its center. We might recall Butler's

²³ This is a *verbatim* echo from Butler 1888: 165: "There is no figure here which suggests Tabachetti, but still there are some very good ones. The best have no taint of *barocco*."

²⁴ Thus, for instance, Shaffer 1988: 166 reproduces the image and innocently assigns it the date: "1st century AD".

sequel to his pithy reminder: “People find what they bring. . . To the serious all things are serious.”

A reader of Butler’s book has reason to be on guard: it is strewn with such caveats. That anyone might believe Butler could have so easily imagined the cave shown in his book to be identical to the one described in *Odyssey* 9 is troubling, all the more so in the light of what we might call a “Pausanian” footnote which he appends to his own paraphrase of the Cave episode from *Odyssey* 9, and which appears on the page facing the second photo. The placement of the note is odd, as it clashes directly with his own captioning of the photo, which in turn could not be more apt given the context of the paraphrase, namely the episode of the Cyclopes, and specifically the line, “When morning came we hunted the wild goats, of which we killed over a hundred....”:

I have been all over [the island of Acitrezza] and do not believe that it contains more than two acres of land on which any goat could ever have fed. The idea that the writer of the ‘Odyssey’ would make Ulysses and his large body of men spend half a day in killing over a hundred goats on such a site need not be discussed seriously. . . . That it should be so confidently believed to be the island off the land of the Cyclopes serves as a warning to myself, *inasmuch as it shows how easily people can bring themselves to accept any site for any scene if they make up their minds to do so.* (Butler [1897] 1922: 43 n.; emphasis added)

The final *envoi* contains an astonishing admission, and a cautious reminder not only to Butler himself but to anyone who would read his work—as if any further warning were needed. And while this note is a unique intrusion of the traveler-scholar’s empiricism into his abridged rendition of the *Odyssey*, it is nonetheless typical of Butler to expose his own vulnerabilities in this work and to accept them chin up, ever the circumspect scholar willing to raise the ante in the high-stakes game of philological proof and counter-proof—a game that was pretty much forfeited from the start, with its fanciful appeal to the likeness of the Authoress of the *Odyssey*, not to say with its premise of a female author writing not just in place of, but consciously against, Homer.

Considerably later in the text come two topographical photographs, both panoramas, the purpose of which is to help bolster the case for Trapani, located on the west end of Sicily, as the physical site of Ithaca (Figs. 12.9 and 12.10).

These photographs are meant to display what Butler takes to be the harbor known in the *Odyssey* as Rheithron, but identified by him as the salt works of San Cusumano in modern-day Trapani, “now silted up” and therefore no longer identifiable even as a harbor. Running through local geographical details, Butler concludes that all the available information taken together makes it seem “as though the ‘Odyssey’ had been written yesterday” (171). There is no hint of skeptical self-doubt here, even though all the visual evidence speaks against him. Not content with the photographs of the plain, let alone with his own powers of description (to be discussed momentarily), Butler supplies his own hand drawing of the place (Fig. 12.11), a view from Mount Eryx (its modern name is Monte San Giuliano), which overlooks Trapani.



Fig 12.9 The Harbour Rheithron, now salt works of S. Cusumano (From Butler 1922: 166a. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge)

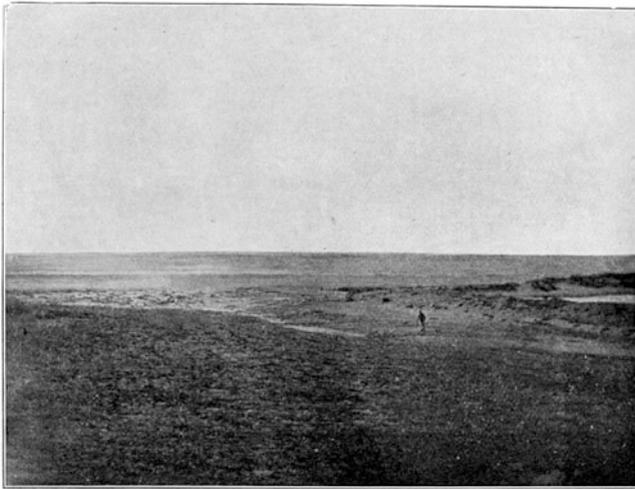


Fig. 12.10 The Mouth of the Harbour Rheithron, Now Silted Up (From Butler 1922: 166b. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge)

The drawing is meant to illustrate a verse from the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 9.25):²⁵

I live in Ithaca, where there is a high mountain called Neritum. . . It is a rugged island, but it breeds brave men, and my eyes know none that they better love to look upon. (trans. Butler 1900)

²⁵ Or any other number of like references in the poem to Neritum: Butler adduces several (see pp. 167–75).



Fig. 12.11 Trapani from Mt. Eryx, showing Marettimo (Ithaca) ‘all highest up in the sea’ (From Butler 1922: 178. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John’s College, Cambridge)

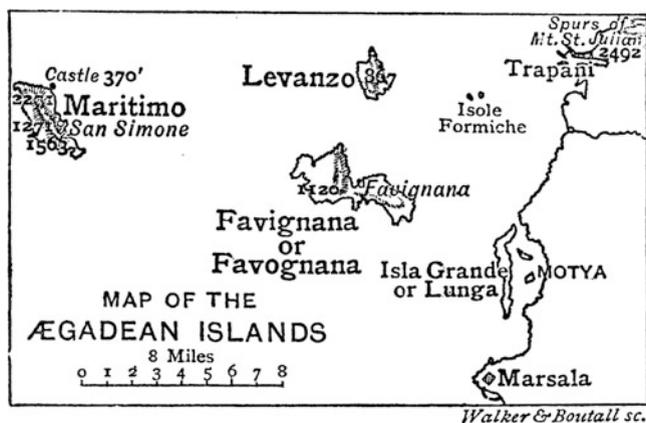


Fig. 12.12 Map of the Ægean Islands (From Butler 1922: 177)

The illustration is prefaced by some remarks about the local island geography, and about which actual islands or landmasses were made by the poetess to correlate with mythical place-names (“The lofty and rugged island of Marettimo did duty in the writer’s mind for Ithaca, though, as I have said, when details are wanted they are taken from Trapani and Mt. Eryx,” 177). An inset map is supplied for further accuracy (Fig. 12.12).

Butler confidently states what the poetess’ visual perspectives were, very much in keeping with the tradition of Robert Wood (1769), who was just as assured as Butler seems to be about what Homer saw from where and from which height: “I do not doubt that the poetess was describing it as she knew it from the top of Mount Eryx, and as the reader may still see it” (177).²⁶ So much for Butler’s warnings against self-delusions

²⁶ Cf. K. O. Müller’s suggestion that the cave where Hermes hid the cattle of Apollo, described in the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*, Hesiod, Ovid, and Pausanias, could be confirmed in its details

(“how easily people can bring themselves to accept any site for any scene if they make up their minds to do so”). Butler thinks he knows for a fact that the actual island where Odysseus slew his goats was not Acitrezza but Favognana, and that Mount Eryx is “the true site” of the cave of Polyphemus (182). Then comes a remark explaining the drawing to follow: “The rough sketch on the following page will explain *πανυπερτάτη εἰν ἀλί* [“all highest up in the sea”] better than words can do; the two small islands shown just over Trapani are the Formiche, which I take to be the second rock thrown by Polyphemus” (177; see Fig. 12.11).

Feigning exasperation or success, Butler concludes this segment of his proof with the words, “If what I have said above is not enough to satisfy the reader that the writer of the ‘Odyssey’ was drawing the Ionian islands from the Ægean, nothing that I can add is likely to convince him” (179). Butler is merely repeating the descriptive gesture of the poetess, who was “drawing” what she described in verse: evidently words are images of their own. The homologies between perceptions and actions across antiquity and modernity guarantees their truth—again a lesson learned from Robert Wood and the tradition of antiquarian travelers from the modern era culminating with Wood in the eighteenth century.

The locale of the neighboring Laestrygonians, or “Workers in Stone” (in Butler’s adventurous etymology, p. 184 n.), can be verified in Cyclopean remains such as those found at Cefalù near Palermo. A photograph of a wall rising from the sea, and another of megalithic remains (the latter “generally held to be of the Mycenaean age”) from near the same spot, serve as illustrations (Figs. 12.13 and 12.14).

Thucydides (6.2) doubted the existence of the race of Cyclopes, deferring instead to the poets, but Butler is prepared to reason beyond Thucydides (“clearly he does not believe in [this race of giants] except as poetical fictions”), for he, Butler, has no doubts on this score (184). The link with Mycenae will prove fertile in later pages. Once again, the images are meant to remind us of Schliemann. But beyond this, they lay the groundwork for Butler’s future assault on Homer, who will be shown to be ignorant of this pre-history—antiquity’s truest antiquity, as it were.

The next photograph (Fig. 12.15) shows Butler’s traveling companion, Henry Festing Jones, Esq., standing at “6 ft. 2 in.” beside a fragment from a fluted column at Selinunte, his body taking up the width of a single flute.

Festing Jones’s relaxed pose, with his knee bent and his head bared, gives the photograph more the look of a tourist postcard that says “wish you were here” than a professional archaeological specimen. Indeed, all it really establishes is that its photographer and subject were once there. The verso shows megalithic walls on Mount Eryx. Mount Eryx turns out to be critical to Butler’s recreated geography, and it proves hard to abandon, textually or visually. Pages later, photographic images of fortified walls at Hisarlık and the wall of Ilium are presented (Figs. 12.16 and 12.17), in part to create an impression of similarity with the earlier images of large stone

in Pylos “vor Augen” today (Müller 1833). Müller’s claim was based on the explorations reported in Blouet *et al.* 1831 (with illustrative plates), but also went well beyond their claims of having merely located the grotto of Nestor.



Fig. 12.13 “Wall at Cefalù, rising from the sea” (From Butler 1922: 184a)



Fig. 12.14 Megalithic remains on the mountain behind Cefalù (From Butler 1922: 184b. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John’s College, Cambridge)

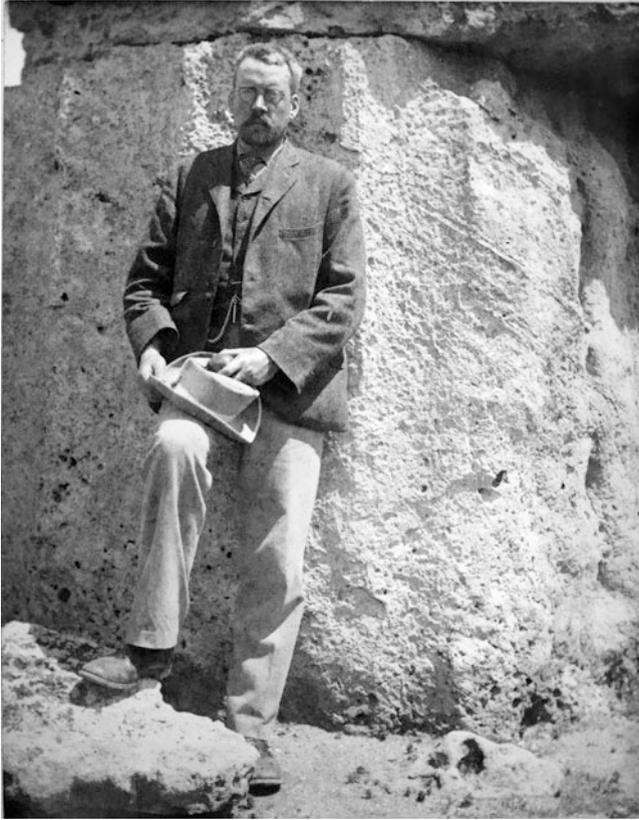


Fig. 12.15 H. Festing Jones, Esq. (height 6 ft. 2 in.) in flute of column at Selinunte (From Butler 1922: 192a. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge)

structures, in part to point to a relic that lay beyond the historical ken of the author of the *Iliad* (see below), and in part for its reality effect.

Butler's allegiance to the truth value of his image, here as elsewhere, is paper thin. As he writes:

The dark line across my illustration is only due to an accident that happened to my negative. I believe (but am not quite sure, for my note about it was not written on the spot) that the bit of wall given in my other illustration has nothing to do with the Iliadic wall, and is of greatly later date. I give it to show how much imagination is necessary in judging of any wall that has been much weathered. (Butler [1897] 1922: 217n.)

We might call this the Sebald-effect of Butler's text (after W. G. Sebald, whose faux documentary photography Butler anticipates) (Figs. 12.18 and 12.19).



Fig. 12.16 Wall at Hissarlık, showing contrast between weathered and protected courses (From Butler 1922: 216a. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge)

Revisiting and Revising Homer's Troy

Another of Butler's strategies in the *Authoress* comes into play in his linking of Eryx and Troy, namely his plan to counterpoint Homer's two epics and then argue for the preeminence of the *Odyssey* in virtually every respect. Just as the authoress wrote the *Odyssey* in order "to rival, if not to supersede," Homer (251), the same can be said of Butler's own work, which does its best to upend the primacy and the sanctity of Homer and Homericism, and all that these entail, from the myth of Homer in antiquity to the very idea of Homer in contemporary classical scholarship in both philology and archaeology.

The primacy of the *Iliad*, chronological and axiological, was guaranteed since antiquity: it was a commonplace among the ancients, and summed up nicely in Longinus' judgment that



Fig. 12.17 The Iliadic Wall (From Butler 1922: 216b. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge)



Fig. 12.18 Shore scene (From W. G. Sebald 1999: 69 (© Vito von Eichborn GmbH & Co Verlag KG, Frankfurt am Main, 1995))

[Homer] made the whole body of the *Iliad*, which was written at the height of his powers, dramatic and exciting, whereas most of the *Odyssey* consists of narrative, which is a characteristic of old age. Homer in the *Odyssey* may be compared to the setting sun: the size remains without the force. He no longer sustains the tension as it was in the tale of Troy, nor that consistent level of elevation which never admitted any falling off... In



Fig. 12.19 Possible ruin (From W. G. Sebald 1999: 230 (© Vito von Eichborn GmbH & Co Verlag KG, Frankfurt am Main, 1995))

saying this, I have not forgotten the storms in the *Odyssey*, the story of Cyclops, and a few other episodes; I am speaking of old age—but it is the old age of a Homer. . . The mythical element in [these latter tales] predominates over the realistic.²⁷

In reversing the age-old prejudice of the preeminence of Homer's *Iliad*, Butler is setting his face against a sacred tradition. Worse still, every aspect of his arguments goes against the grain of conventional modern scholarship. Never mind his promotion of the *Odyssey* at the expense of Homer's *Iliad*. His Sicilianism alone is heresy, as is his feminism: both radically displace the central expectations of conventional wisdom, the former by moving the focus away from mainland Greece to the Greek Italic west (and placing both Phaeacia and Ithaca in Trapani, and the Cyclopes' cave hard by—an uncomfortable conflation of myth and the real), the latter by polarizing gender roles as never before. Simply attempting to locate the geography of Odysseus' wanderings goes against all historicist reasoning. Eratosthenes was only one of the first to point out the futility of the wish to pinpoint Homer's fictions, and that was back in the third century B.C.E.

And yet, Butler's logic seems to run, what *is* historically verifiable? What makes the fall of Troy invulnerable to skepticism but not the core narrative of Odysseus' wanderings as told in *Odyssey* 9–12, let alone the suggestion of a new locale for Ithaca? In pressing the question of the relative dates of the two epics, Butler accepts what Jebb and others had already conceded, namely that the two epics are separated by a good century or more, and that the *Iliad*, the earlier of the two, postdates the fall of Troy by a generation, possibly more. At first, Butler shows himself willing to accept as a hypothesis the more or less modern consensus dates: "1184 B.C. as the

²⁷ Longinus, *On the Sublime* 9.13–14; trans. Donald A. Russell.

date of the fall of Troy;” “1150 B.C. [as] the latest date to which we should assign the ‘Iliad;’ ” “1050 B.C. will be about as late as it is safe to place the date of the ‘Odyssey’” (214–15). But in reality, Butler is unhappy with the idea that Homer lived a brief generation after the Trojan war, “for the impression left upon me by the ‘Iliad’ is that Homer was writing of a time that was to him much what the middle ages are to ourselves,” while the construction of the Trojan Wall must be redated to somewhere between 1500 and 1300 B.C.E. (in the wake of Dörpfeld’s findings, post-Schliemann). What is worse, Butler claims, Homer seems quite ignorant of the fall of Troy. Indeed, he knows “no more than the bare fact” of its fall, and is otherwise silent about the details

—which would point to a very considerable lapse of time—or else to suggest a fact which, though I have often thought it possible, I hardly dare to write—I mean *that Troy never fell at all*, or at any rate that it did not fall with the close of the Trojan War, *and that Homer knew this perfectly well*. (Butler [1897] 1922: 216; emphasis added)

This is one of the bombshells of Butler’s book, itself a book of bombshells—and the core revisionist suspicion it contains, second only to his view about the *Odyssey*’s authorship. Nor is this the end of the story. Butler’s Homer turns out not to have been a Greek, but was instead an Asiatic of some kind (Butler, who is remarkably unconcerned with Homer in this study, doesn’t seem to feel the need to identify Homer as anything beyond non-Greek), who “despised” the Greeks to whom he was catering. At the chapter’s close Butler confidently discloses a fact, presented with no evidence, that sheds an oblique light on the question: “That the Trojan language was Greek will not be disputed” (224). Probably Homer is meant to have been Trojan. As an Asiatic, his writing was correspondingly more subtle (if more “unfathomable”) than that of the authoress of the *Odyssey*, whose writing was correspondingly simple (whether in the classical sense or a feminine sense is not said, though why women cannot be subtle and not simple is never said either). And in narrating as if Troy had fallen Homer was, quite alarmingly, pulling the wool over the eyes of his intended Greek audience. Here is the passage in which this amazing assemblage of facts, all as unprovable as their opposite, is purveyed:

The infinite subtlety of the ‘Iliad’ is almost as unfathomable as the simplicity of the ‘Odyssey’ has so far proved itself to be, and its author, writing for a Greek audience whom he obviously despised, and whom he was fooling to the top of their bent though always sailing far enough off the wind to avoid disaster, would take very good care to tell them that—if I may be allowed the anachronism—Napoleon won the battle of Waterloo, though he very well knew that it was won by Wellington. It is certain that no even tolerably plausible account of the fall of Troy existed among the Greeks themselves; all plausibility ends with their burning of their tents and sailing away baffled (‘Od.’ viii. 500, 501)—see also the epitome of the ‘Little Iliad’, given in the fragment of Proclus. The wild story of the wooden horse only emphasises the fact that nothing more reasonable was known. (Butler [1897] 1922: 216–217)

If Homer might conceivably have gone so far as to tell his readers that Napoleon won at Waterloo, what *can* we believe when we read his great poem?

In this light, the purpose of Butler’s photographs is clear: the hard crystalline truth of the archaeological remains, presented in indisputable black and white contrasts,

points to a palpable truth that Homer sought to conceal: remains that he can never have known all that much about, since they predated him by a good three centuries. The more truthful the images, the more falsified Homer is made to appear, given Butler's unsparing analysis. And yet, for all their show of pseudo-science, there is something haphazard about all these images shot through Butler's lens. Butler is undoubtedly lampooning the archaeologist who sought to prove the very opposite of Butler, namely Schliemann, with his (Butler's, and his friend Henry Festing Jones's) poses among the ruins, which turn the ruins into poses of themselves. Schliemann may have been among the first to exploit photography in the name of archaeological record-keeping, and the first to do so in the area of Homeric archaeology, eager as he was to establish the historical site of Homer's Troy. Butler was in turn surely the first to exploit documentary photography to establish that Homer was ignorant of the fall of Troy and that the author of the *Odyssey* was not Homer but his rival, a woman—though not, interestingly enough, the hypothesis about female authorship. That honor goes to Ptolemy Chennos (“Quail”), the Greek grammarian and prankster from around the end of the first century C.E. who claimed that Homer pinched the stories of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* from two different women and on two different occasions: one a certain Helen of Athens, daughter of the legendary Musaeus, and the other a certain Phantasia (“Imagination”) hailing from Memphis in Egypt (Photius 2003: 190.149b22-5; 151a37-b5 Henry), each playing the part of Homer's original female Muse. As Butler says in his concluding chapter, on a page aptly labeled with the header “A Faulty Subject,” “can there be any more scathing satire on the value of scholastic criticism?” (266).

Appendices on Nausicaa

A. *Why Nausicaa?*

It is worth asking how Butler decided to fix on Nausicaa as his candidate for the hitherto undisclosed author(ess) of the *Odyssey*. We can abide by the very few speculations he gives which are internal to his own hypothesis—his narrative reconstruction about how a certain young woman invented 100 lines of epic-sounding verse intended to mock the Epic Cycle (including the *Iliad*), which then became the germ, first of *Odyssey* book 6, and then of the whole of that work.²⁸ But if we look beyond the *Authoress* another explanation suggests itself. Nausicaa had a certain reputation in Victorian culture, as a glance at the pictorial record would quickly establish, for instance, the prim painting titled “Nausicaa” by Frederic Leighton (1878) or another chaste recreation of *Odyssey* book 6 titled “Nausicaa and her Maidens Playing at Ball” by Sir Edward John Poynter (1879). It seems likely that Butler was seizing on this pre-established legacy and bending it to his

²⁸ Butler 1893, 276.

own ends. *La Musa Polimnia* cut a far more provocative figure than either of these two Nausicaa portraits.²⁹ But consider just one further example.

Charles Kingsley, the Christian Victorian social reformer (1819–1875), saw in Homer a rare opportunity to draw improving lessons about the rudiments of life, namely physical and moral hygiene. His essay “Nausicaa in London” (1873) is a vigorous rant against contemporary social rot, while the Greeks, gleaming in natural simplicity, grandeur, and nudity, form a shining foil against which true civilized health is to be measured. Nausicaa is for Kingsley a case in point. She is an ideal of cleanliness and of “noble maidenhood:” *washing* her clothes and performing light gymnastics “to the sound of song, as a duty almost, as well as an amusement.”³⁰ “True, [she] could neither read nor write,” Kingsley sighs (114)—such is the telltale dilemma of claiming Homer as a pattern of culture, despite his illiteracy and his “half-barbarous” ways. But today’s females go about prettied up with powder and puffery, suffering from various chemical deficiencies (of “phosphatic food” and “hydrocarbon”), spending their days huddled over “some novel from the ‘Library,’” swimming in salt water “laden with decaying organisms. . . polluted further by a dozen sewers,” lacking in “superfluous life and power,” and unable to “dance and sing.” Imagine such women insisting upon the right to learn Latin or “even Greek!” (120–2). High-minded Victorians were ill-equipped to conceive of Nausicaa in any other way than as a perfect literary daughter, and (as Leighton and Poynter’s portraits reaffirm) Nausicaa was no Circe. Whence the scandal caused by Samuel Butler’s screed a decade and a half on in which he actually nominated Nausicaa *as* the authoress of the *Odyssey*. For all her cleanliness, Butler’s Nausicaa is not at all like Kingsley’s. She is rather like Butler himself, as we saw—devious, mocking, and scandalous. Butler was plainly engaged in a different kind of hygiene from earlier Victorians: he was attempting to cleanse Victorian England of its own mores. James Joyce’s controversial Nausicaa episode from *Ulysses*, influenced by both Butler and to a lesser degree Kingsley, would be a later reminder of the various changes that could be rung on this singular character from Greek epic.³¹

B. From Citharist to Muse

Earlier, we saw how in Butler’s hands Nausicaa came to appear as more beautified in her self-depiction in the *Odyssey* than she was in “reality.” One explanation for this transformation was given above: Nausicaa is an emblem for the idealizing processes of the epic genre—or more broadly, of classicism—itsself, which Butler is gleefully laying bare, here by displaying the humbler, less flattering origins of a wished-for ideal. A related explanation is that she represents the deceptions of

²⁹ See n. 32 below.

³⁰ Kingsley 1873, 112.

³¹ For further background on the cultural resonances of Butler’s use of Nausicaa and of the place of women in the Western imagination of Greece, see Hall 2008, Chap. 10.

Butler's own ruses. A third explanation is more complicated, and deserves a brief discussion.

As mentioned, the original behind the forged *La Musa Polimnia* was a fragment of a Herculanean wall painting depicting two musicians, one holding a cithara. The citharist, cithara in hand (prominently displayed on the viewer's right; see Fig. 12.5), was isolated in the course of the forgery, while her partner was silently dropped from view: the citharist thus became a Muse, or *La Musa*. This transformation strictly parallels the classicizing move marked out for criticism by Butler in any event, as we see from a glimpse of an account of *La Musa* by one of the members of the Venuti family, Curzio dei Marchesi Venuti, whose ancestor Marcello was responsible for commissioning the forgery. His *saggio* from 1791 is a veritable hymn to the divinity and perfection of *La Musa* ("Ma la limitazione del nostro spirito non ci permette di far cosa alcuna di bello se non che per imitazione, e ci costringe perciò a prevalerci del bello naturale anche nell'esecuzione di quello ideale," etc.).³² Butler need not have known the specific details behind the forgery in order to spot the typology of the painting, which was the very sort that would have been found in Herculanean and Pompeian depictions of citharists (not Muses), as Lenormant had amply attested in 1877.³³

In his *Authoress*, Butler was visibly playing with the uncertain identity of Nausicaa's image, who was neither a citharist (she wrote pen in hand) nor a Muse, nor even Nausicaa, but someone else whose true name we never learn. In doing so, he was reenacting a gesture that he had perfected in his earlier art-historical writings at least on two occasions. The first involved the identities of Adam and Eve in a statuary group on Sacro Monte (*Ex voto*: 120–22), and the second involved the identity of a statue formerly known as St. Joachim in the sanctuary of Montrigone until Butler came along and redesignated it as the Virgin's grandmother (this in an essay from 1888). Strikingly, in both cases, Butler was intruding himself into local politics and involving all the parties concerned in the trials of undecidable gender trouble while pretending to perform serious art-historical inquiry. At the Sacro Monte chapel, Butler and Festing Jones investigate the statues in great detail, removing their drapery and determining to their satisfaction that the erstwhile Eve figure, though larger, beardless, and long-haired, must be Adam, while the smaller, mustached figure must originally have been Eve, before someone came along and transformed the two figures into sexually ambiguous Roman soldiers (both lacked any trace of breasts). In the second case, Butler insists that he will "demolish this mischievous confusion between St. Joachim and his mother-in-law once and for all," and comes up with a hilarious Jesuitical narrative

³² Venuti 1791, esp. 238–67 (here, 240).

³³ See n. 20 above on Lenormant 1877: 44. *La Musa's* exposed breast and skin "ne conviennent pas aux chastes filles de Mnémosyne. C'est, au contraire, le costume que les peintures antiques donnent à ces musiciennes que l'on faisait venir pour égayer les banquets et que les ornemanistes des maisons d'Herculaneum et de Pompéi ont souvent reproduites comme figures décoratives. Il faut surtout comparer à notre tableau de Cortone deux peintures, l'une d'Herculaneum, l'autre de Pompéi, représentant des Citharistes debout."

to justify his arguments. Butler's revelations come as a "pain and shock" to the local sacristan, who "had never heard anyone [in "this 60 years"] but myself question his ascription" of the statue to St. Joachim. What could he do? Butler advised him that "he should consult his parish priest and do as he was told."³⁴ The moral: "I would bear more in mind that I have perhaps always hitherto done, how hard it is for those how have been taught to see [their Virgin's grandmothers] as Joachims to think of them as something different." But also, the reverse is true too. For "if the reader differs from me, let me ask him to remember how hard it is for one who has got a figure well into his head as the Virgin's grandmother to see it as Joachim."³⁵ A perfect stalemate and undecidability, in this essay penned a decade before the *Authoress*, and in very much the same spirit of the later cranky upstart.³⁶

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³⁴ Butler 1888b: 168.

³⁵ Butler 1888b: 169. See further Shaffer 1988: 133–36 for a good account, but with no attempt to connect these episodes to the later study of Homer.

³⁶ As Shaffer notes (*ibid.*: 135), "the 'attribution' and even identification are finally irrelevant," but so too in the Nausicaa episode: "She may have been either plain or beautiful without its affecting the argument." Butler's ultimate target is his own audience, in both cases (and in all cases).

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Chapter 13

Naked Presence and Disciplinary Wording

Michael Fotiadis

Summary This paper approaches the question of whether, and how, the remote past can be made ‘present’ by analysing the roles of words and images in archaeological publication and teaching, asking whether modern culture has become so dominated by the idea of ‘information’ that even images are tailored to it. It seems especially paradoxical that archaeology students, who are at least partly attracted to the subject by the image of a ‘hands-on’, ‘real’ experience of pastness—“nose to nose,” in Segalen’s phrase—are nevertheless culturally conditioned to expect knowledge to be packaged in words. This tension between a longing for ‘presence’ and the distancing produced by disciplinary framing is central to the problems of current education in the Humanities.

I will start with language, but in fact I want to talk about images (slides in the university classroom, illustrations in the scholarly book) and eventually about things, that is, material objects—‘relics’ and archaeology’s artefacts.

Charms are a textual genre whose form is adapted to the presentification of entire situations from the past and of the events that emerge from them. Charms often project a juxtaposition between the narrative of a past situation in which a problem was solved and the description of a similar situation in the present where the corresponding problem is not yet solved. (Gumbrecht 2006: 324)

Could this be relevant to understanding why my students are fascinated by archaeological terminology? Could it be, that is, *that archaeology’s technical terms work for the students like charms*? That they hold the key to a problem at hand, namely, *distance* from the past (what historicization has accomplished)? I hasten to clarify that, for me, the teacher, terminology is “black-boxing” (as Latour would have it, e.g. 1987): I am ambivalent about its worth and weary

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of its mindless application. In accordance with such misgivings, I do not require command of technical terms from the students when they take their examinations. Could it be, however, that, for the students, terms cater to a desire for presentification of the past, “making the past present through language” (Gumbrecht again)? That terms are (surrogates for) the ancient things themselves or, at least, that they have an immediacy that my explications about their referents and the illustrations I show of them can never attain? That what is “black-boxing” for me functions for the students in an almost indexical capacity, invoking the referent as if it was ‘there’ in front of them? That technical terms, in all their opaqueness and abstruseness—or, rather, because of that abstruseness—work like incantations that manage to conjure up what is absent?

I can, of course, think of other reasons for which students might relish technical terms, e.g., that knowing the *name* of the thing gives them a sense of knowing (something essential about) *the* thing, and allows them to demonstrate a measure of erudition. But let us say that my hunches above are not entirely off the mark, that the appeal of technical terms is due in some measure to their capacity to make present their ancient, absent referents. During class, slides of those referents, mostly photographs, are projected on the classroom screen, often in more than one view. Yet for the students the slides seem to be something of an annoyance, a distraction from the task of keeping notes: they will hardly raise their eyes to look at the screen unless I repeatedly prompt them to do so—and then I often detect in their faces signs of bewilderment. Their contempt for images is in stark contrast with their feverishness for technical terms. Images, it would appear, are too unstable by comparison with the terms to serve as charms.

“In the course of a lecture slides on a screen flash by,” you will observe, “and audiences are hardly given time to memorize what they are shown, even less to make a shorthand record of it for later reference; while taking notes on a lecture is a relatively simple task, as easy as making a shopping list. And that may well explain why images are ‘unstable’ by comparison with terms.” Keep in mind, however, that students have access to the images after class. They can (literally) take them home and view them at their own pace, that being one of the effects of digital technology.¹

But, far more crucial: neither “taking notes on a lecture” nor “making a shopping list” is human nature. To state the obvious, they are rather, culturally, historically shaped dispositions. In the particular case of Greek humanities students, it is the effect of education practices that capitalize on language as *the* medium in which knowledge is coded (see also below), and on memorization. Learning begins, and all too often ends, with ‘scanning into’ memory the textbook and the notes from the lecture.² Accordingly, note-keeping during lectures becomes for students an essential survival skill.

¹ For the history of the illustrated lecture see Nelson 2000.

² This is a rather optimistic view: in fact, learning ends with *forgetting* what the student has memorized.

You would expect images, and especially photographs, to fare better in making present the material culture of the past. “A picture is worth a thousand words,” the saying goes. “Narratives can make us understand. Photographs do something else: they haunt us,” Susan Sontag observed in her last book (quoted in Gonzalez-Ruibal 2008: 251).³ “Language is, by nature, fictional,” Barthes noted in his last book, and we must take a great deal of measures to render it “unfictional,” while photographs need no mediation to prove their veracity: “the Photograph . . . is authentication itself . . . Every photograph is a certificate of presence” (Barthes 1980: 87). And W. J. T. Mitchell (2005: 9): “when students scoff at the idea of a magical relation between a picture and what it represents, ask them to take a photograph of their mother and cut out the eyes.” Photographs, in short, appear to be capable of engaging the beholder in a visceral way, by making present the thing, person, etc., they depict (and that may well be why children’s books in the West today are illustrated with watercolours and the like, but never with photographs). Yet students seem impervious to the presentifying power of photographs and of all images. They are quite attentive instead to the presentifying power of words—at least, of technical terms and their definitions (which, in their brevity and density, are not entirely unlike slogans and catchphrases). The students are followers of Lessing, as it were, rather than of Leonardo.⁴

It seems to me that the students’ propensity to neglect the presentifying power of images for that of words is a particular case of a far more broadly shared disposition, one that I will call “trust in language.” By this collocation I mean the premise, and the attendant practice, according to which knowledge in the human sciences is, or can be made, coextensive with the meanings of words and sentences; that such knowledge, in other words, can be expressed in its totality and in its essential detail in orderly, propositional language. Whereby images are rendered *logically* redundant; *in practice*, however, they are rendered a liability for learning, as I will explain.

I indicated already that images (slides) distract students during lectures. But students are not exceptional here. Scholars, and readers in general, are susceptible to comparable kinds of distraction: when images are included in a book, they interrupt the flow of reading. Besides, they provoke the reader’s scruples: are they indeed essential for following the text, relevant to the author’s arguments? The inclusion of images in a book is justified if—as is the case with many of the art historian’s and the archaeologist’s publications—they are reproductions of the *objects* of the analysis: if they ‘insert reality’, the object under study, into the book. A reproduction of, say, Gerard ter Borch’s painting *Ratification of the Treaty of Münster* in a historian’s treatise on the Peace of Westphalia is acceptable if it serves as *evidence* for one or another of the historian’s points. If not, it will be

³ A century and a half before Sontag, in 1856, Auguste Salzmann made a somewhat comparable point: “Photographs are more than tales [*récits*], they are facts endowed with a convincing brute force [*une brutalité concluante*]” (quoted in Bohrer 2005: 181).

⁴ See the wonderful essay of W. J. T. Mitchell on *Laocoon*, in Mitchell 1986, esp. pp. 105–113.

identified as a diversion of ‘aesthetic’ or ‘antiquarian’ interest (the wrong relish, as it were, served with a fine dish).

In brief, images are capable of upsetting the process of reading, of disturbing a text. To view images, the reader must switch to a different, subordinate kind of sensibility—specifically, s/he must suspend *understanding* and mobilize the faculty of *seeing*. Let me take up again the example of the historian’s work on the Peace of Westphalia. Suppose, first, that the reproduction of ter Borch’s painting turns out to be a diversion of ‘aesthetic interest’, for it is rather obscurely related to the historian’s thesis. The reader in that case will have discovered something beyond the historian’s mischievousness: s/he will have discovered, at some discomfort, that the self has a taste for either pure reading or pure seeing (but not going to and fro), whereas the book in hand, in its oscillations between text and images, has the feel of a *hybrid* (‘the wrong relish’ presented alongside ‘the right dish’). Suppose now that the opposite is the case, that ter Borch’s painting *is* crucial for what the historian has to say. The author makes this clear by *converting the image into text*, that is, by “discussing” (“analysing,” etc.) the image, at least some elements of it—whereby the reproduction itself is rendered mere ‘furniture’ the reader hardly needs to attend to it except in the most cursory way, since all that is essential for the argument has already been stated in the text. In short, the seeable has been made readable.⁵ In fact, the historian may have further helped the image to become text-like by adding notation directly onto it (letters, numerals, arrows, etc.), in order, for instance, to identify one or another of the luminaries present at the scene. Thus ‘tamed’, the image ceases to be a discomfort for the text.⁶

It seems to me indeed that for an image to be accommodated within a text without disturbing it, it must cease to function as an image (mobilizing, that is, the reader’s faculty of seeing) and be transformed into coded messages and, ultimately, into words and sentences: become a matter of *meaning to be understood*. I will give more detailed attention to this issue in the next section, with reference to archaeological illustration. Here I will only add that, in my view, none of this arises solely from the *nature* of things, e.g., from the nature of the human brain and its species- (or, perhaps genus-) wide lateralization. I think of it instead as the prerogative of a thoroughly literate, text-centered culture, namely Ours, the culture of the practitioners of the modern human sciences: a historically specific form of the ambivalence towards

⁵ I echo here Don Preziosi’s “making the visible legible,” (e.g., 1998, 1989: 30), but the argument to which I apply it is far more limited in scope than his.

⁶ Clearly, I am not the first to have noticed the tension in the text-image relationship. For readers acquainted with the scholarship that brought about the “pictorial turn,” or “iconic turn,” in disciplines ranging from art history to philosophy (see Moxey 2008 for a review), my remarks in the paragraph above will in fact be a reaffirmation of the familiar. The scholarship in question frequently returns to the language-image tension and its history, even more frequently to a homologous tension between two different modes of confronting the image: image as “hieroglyph” (that is, coded message to be deciphered) and image as “naked senseless presence” or “wild sign” (Ranci re 2007, 15; Mitchell 2006) that confounds semiotic analysis; all of which harks back, as the authors cited acknowledge, to Barthes and his *studium/punctum* distinction. See also Fliethmann 2007, who, noting that “The image seems to threaten the realm of words” (p. 46), traces attempts to “police” that threat back to the Early Modern period. See also below.

images characteristic of many literate cultures since antiquity (cf. Mitchell 2005: 6–8, 19–21).

What indeed of the natural sciences? Here the relationship of image to text appears to have long been different. “By the early eighteenth century, it was a settled matter that works of natural history, anatomy, and other observational sciences required illustrations, despite sixteenth- and seventeenth-century controversies on this score” (Daston and Galison 2007: 87). True, as Daston and Galison make clear, the work and status of the illustrator were subordinate to the work and status of the naturalist (though this might occasionally be negotiable). From the viewpoint of their intended utility, however, illustrations counted as much as or more than the text. Witness the extreme care that went into their preparation. Witness also the debates that have been unfolding since the eighteenth century, and the periodically shifting ‘philosophies’ about what an illustration ought to depict (e.g., the ‘ideal’ versus the particular case in all its idiosyncratic detail; what the camera sees versus the pattern the disciplined mind’s eye can discern). True again, the story is complex and anything but linear: efforts to redefine science by repudiating the pertinence of images to it (indeed, the pertinence of all sensory experience), are by no means unknown in the history of scientific practices. Such efforts, however, have been the preserve of minds with a strong mathematical and philosophical bent, theoreticians who did not conquer the main ground of scientific practices.⁷

In short, images have been, and continue to be, a privileged medium for coding and communicating knowledge among natural scientists.⁸ Not so among the practitioners of the human sciences, not even in archaeology. Here, images are not taken “seriously enough,” “are not generally considered... to be authoritative interpretations or explanations of the past,” may be viewed as “an adventitious phenomenon, divorced from the work of ‘real’ archaeology” and thus do not deserve critical attention or historicization (Moser and Smiles 2005: 6);⁹ here, too, a discourse

⁷ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many mathematicians, theoretical physicists, logicians, and philosophers thought that sensory experience was hopelessly subjective, hence unfit to serve science. The invariant structures of the cosmos they regarded as the proper domain of objective science were not, they argued, matters of sight and images, however produced. Nor, moreover, could such “invariant structures,” for some of those iconoclasts (e.g., Frege, Carnap), be captured by natural language. They sought, therefore, to purify science from both image and natural language, and to put in their place rigid formal languages, as abstract as the invariant structures those theorists postulated. See Daston and Galison 2007: Chap. 5. As the authors acknowledge (pp. 304–305), such views have retained substantial philosophical appeal to this day.

⁸ Historians of science, on the other hand, have been rather slow in capitalizing on the importance and historicity of scientific imagery: see Mosley 2007: 290–92. For current trends in the area of scientific imagery, beside Daston and Galison 2007: 363–415, see the articles in *Nature* 459 (2009): 629–39.

⁹ Moser and Smiles (2005: 6) do not, however, think of such attitudes as the soft underbelly of our trust in language. Images, they rather suggest, are a popular—as opposed to strictly disciplinary—medium, hence the reluctance of archaeologists to take them “seriously enough.” I fully concur, but I also think that what I defined above as “trust in language” is operative also in the rise and maintenance of the disciplinary/popular divide.

about the proper kind of illustration, about what images ought to depict and how, appears to have never acquired great intensity.

Taming Artefacts in Archaeology

I contended above that, if images are to be accommodated in a modern text without disturbing it, they must be “tamed,” i.e. converted into coded messages (and thus cease to function as images). The historian’s way of “taming” the image is, as we saw, to render it immaterial to the reader’s needs by substituting text for it. (Of course, the reader can always activate the faculty of seeing, see the image, and even make original observations on it; my point is that the reader *does not have* to do so in order to continue reading.) Somewhat different is the case of images in the archaeologist’s publications. In fact, the quotation from Moser and Smiles, that images are thought to be “divorced from the work of ‘real’ archaeology,” must be counterpoised by another quotation from them: “To this day the importance of a full visual record of archaeological discovery is not in doubt” (Moser and Smiles 2005:5; see also Smiles 2007). Images *do* routinely encode and communicate knowledge among archaeologists, and this is knowledge that cannot be readily conveyed by words and sentences. The archaeologist must indeed pay attention to the image, even memorize it. But, s/he must also do more than this, for the images are of a special kind, as I will explain.

When artefacts found in the course of a field project are illustrated in the project’s publications, the illustrations must be “informative,” that is, they must convey *information about* the artefacts. Or such is the standard by which the worth of archaeology’s images is judged in the present. Now, because information is not information unless it is coded in some way, the images of the artefacts must accordingly be coded. By virtue of being coded, however, such images become something akin to the text of the published book: they no longer function as images to be *seen*, but require instead to be semiologically approached, as arrangements of meaningful signs to be *read* (interpreted, given meaning).

In today’s practice, coding is achieved primarily by resorting to line drawings of a distinctive minimalist aesthetic. Why use such drawings and not, say, photographs (which are by no means absent from our publications) or paintings, such as watercolours (which have at times been resorted to in the past)? The quick answer is, because line drawings are constructed almost entirely with the aid of conventions and, therefore, lend themselves to the task of coding far more readily than photographs or paintings of any kind.¹⁰ But more needs to, and will, be said about this later. To stay with the ‘quick’ answer for now, line drawings can effectively abstract information from ‘noise’ by coding it in the form of stark, black and white

¹⁰ Cf. Barthes: “The photograph, ... by virtue of its absolutely analogical nature, seems to constitute a message without a code” and “must thus be opposed to the drawing which, even when denoted, is a coded message” (quoted and commented upon by Mitchell 1986: 60).

patterns. Let us also bracket here the issue of what counts as information and what is ‘noise’, and the objection that today’s (or one archaeologist’s) ‘noise’ will be tomorrow’s (or another archaeologist’s) information. Let us retain instead the points that (a) today’s artefact drawings are convention-based images, (b) these conventions must be *read*, i.e. meaning has to be assigned to the patterns one sees, and that (c) thereby such images become, in a crucial way, *like* written, orderly language.

If, for example, you are unfamiliar with the conventions, your attitude toward the drawings will, I think, be like your attitude toward a language that is neither wholly foreign to you nor really understandable. “Not wholly foreign,” because, for all their abstractness, the drawings still are reflections (“icons,” in Peircean terms) of the things they stand for; and “not really understandable,” because differences such as, for example, that between finely graded stippling and rough stippling are devoid of significance for you, and perhaps they do not even register as differences in your (mind’s) eye. Novices—my students again—routinely find themselves in this situation. Despite sustained explanations and exercises, reading the conventions is a challenge for them. They are inclined, therefore, to go quickly past the drawings, and that is what I meant above by “attitude.” Mature lay readers, I think, would adopt the same attitude; if not, why would exhibition catalogues almost never include such coded, convention-based drawings in their pages?

In the hands of a talented draftsman, the artefacts may still ‘come alive’ in his/her original drawings. However, by the time those drawings reach the printed page, whatever presentifying power they might originally have is greatly reduced as a result of the reproduction process. What is preserved is *information about* the artefacts, destined for the trained eye to *read*.

The trivial conclusion to be drawn from the last couple of sentences is that the contemporary archaeologist’s line drawings are perfectly suited to their purpose. They are not meant after all to presentify the artefacts they depict, only to convey information about them, and this they *do*. Yet, clearly, those drawings do more than this, for they also perform a pedagogical or disciplining function: they teach you *how to position the self vis-à-vis artefacts*, how to approach or *see* them—from certain angles and distances, in certain conditions of light (that will reveal what is important about the artefacts while occluding all incidental detail; Fig. 13.1), but also, and most importantly, from a certain mental perspective, namely, *as storehouses of information*. The drawings teach you, in other words, both the *corporeal* and the *cognitive* stances you will want to assume vis-à-vis artefacts, with the corporeal being subordinate to (i.e. guided, not wholly determined, by) the cognitive stance “artefacts as storehouses of information.” However, seeing artefacts *as* storehouses of information is not the same as *seeing* them. The former requires that artefacts, like their illustrations in the medium of line drawing, be semiologically approached—read, much in the way one reads a text—rather than being experienced in the way one experiences the not-yet-intelligible when it appears before the eyes.

I am claiming, then, that the archaeologist’s images of artefacts impart something of their principle of constitution to the artefacts they depict: if the drawings consist of coded messages, of meaningful signs to be interpreted, so too will be the



Fig. 13.1 Archaeology student practicing artefact drawing, University of Ioannina, 2009 (Photograph by Michael Fotiadis)

artefacts. Imaging technology hereby becomes a technique of seeing: the images direct your sight—both your retinal vision and your mind’s eye—when, in the course of fieldwork, lab routines, etc., you encounter artefacts. And if it is your discipline’s commitment, its ‘cognitive wager’ as it were, to see artefacts *as* storehouses of information, you may have a good deal of difficulty *seeing* them, or indeed experiencing them in any other way. You will certainly see no compelling reason to try. I will save further consideration of this issue for later.

A World Filled with Reading Matter

Let us return to the main issue, the ‘trust in language’ and the fact that images—not to say material things!—constitute a problem for language. Interdictions against images are, of course, as old as literacy. They have in all cases been inflected by local, context-specific understandings and concerns, and they have often had long-term effects beyond the intended ones. Take for example the Reformation. Hans Belting has argued that the variety of iconoclasm advocated by the Reformers and their insistence on the primacy of the word helped consolidate a new way of experiencing images: no longer as presences of the holy but as works of art, objects vested with an aura that was bestowed on them by connoisseurial discourses (Belting 1994: 458–490). Thus secularized, images now catered to sense perception and the cultivation of taste (see also Agamben 1999: 13–27). At the same time, “the word was the refuge of the thinking subject, who no longer trusted the surface appearance of the visual world but wanted to grasp truth only in abstract concepts.”

For Belting, this stance was epitomized in Dürer's engraving of Erasmus (1526), where the panel with the inscription (part Latin, part Greek) that is an important component of the scene "transcends the 'bodily likeness from life,' using the 'better [image] in the writings'" (Belting 1994: 465 and Fig. 282).

It seems to me indeed that interdictions against images are in an important way like a classical topos: a place (or condensed wisdom) outside history, to which people return in order to enlist its authority in diverse, mutually unrelated projects. And so it may make little sense to seek in the Reformers' practices the 'origin' of our trust in language, or even the origin of the Enlightenment conviction that the visual arts are inferior to literature.¹¹ True, it was this last conviction that was incorporated in the emerging *Altertumswissenschaft* (see Marchand 1996: 21–22, 40–43) and was even adopted by scholars working on areas well outside the Mediterranean classical world.¹² But the course between practices then and now has been anything but direct; it has been intersected instead by, and interlaced with, other currents, to some of which I turn immediately.

Beginning about the time of the Reformation, collections of antiquities were published in books, and it is in those books that antiquities were for the first time illustrated as things in their own right. In earlier centuries ancient things had always appeared in the context of a larger scene (e.g., the Holy Lance in a depiction of the Crucifixion). Now they were shown on the book page in stark isolation, severed from their former associations with events and persons; moreover, the depictions laid claim to observational accuracy. At first the things depicted were almost exclusively coins and medals, but soon images of Roman and medieval antiquities of all kinds found their way into the books (Haskell 1993: 13–25; Woolf 2005: 54–60; Burke 2003). By about 1700 the range came to include almost everything, from mummies to stone knives (cf. Thouard and Wang on Luo Zhenyu, this volume). Yet the early antiquaries were hardly of one mind about the value of illustrations. One endeavored to collect images of all the remains of classical antiquity into a "paper museum;" others wrote long treatises without a single image; and almost all were happier seeking interpretations in the ancient texts than in comparisons among the objects at their disposal (Burke *op. cit.*, esp. 277–79).

Illustrations became more important to antiquaries in the eighteenth century (though not so much, it seems, to Winckelmann). Remember, Montfaucon understood "antiquity" to mean "only what comes in the purview of the eyes, and which

¹¹ Suffice it to remember Lessing's iconophobia, in contrast to his endorsement of poetry; the matter has been frequently commented upon. Gombrich once thought that *Laocoon* might be "a book not so much about as against the visual arts" (quoted in Marchand 1996: 13). See Mitchell's essay on *Laocoon*, cited earlier (n. 4); also Jay 1999: 25–26.

¹² The *Guide to Northern Archaeology*, first published in Copenhagen in 1836, began with a chapter on the importance of ancient northern literature, before C. J. Thomsen's section on materials from "the heathen period," introducing his influential Stone, Bronze, and Iron Age sequence. See Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries of Copenhagen 1848.

can be represented in images.”¹³ Similarly, the Society of Antiquaries of London insisted on the importance of pictorial records from its first days, and from the 1780s on it employed its own delineators for the task. Visual accuracy was the paramount virtue, and the images were expected to provide “information and instruction;” “picturesque appearances produced by the skill of the Artist” were disapproved of (see Smiles 2007). Watercolour originals (some of them at least, e.g., the Ribchester helmet, the Hoxne hand-axe) had a striking capacity to presentify the things they depicted; a capacity that cannot be appreciated from their engraved (or aquatint) versions in publications. But this may be my illusion, for I have access only to digitized forms of both the originals and the published versions. Still, the demand for visual accuracy seems to me to have led to strikingly detailed, naturalistic depictions, at the opposite end of the spectrum from today’s minimalist line drawings.

Winckelmann is celebrated for having shown that classical artworks could be arranged in a historical sequence (there had been little interest in the matter before, artworks and all ancient objects being classified thematically). Thanks largely to his labours, the idea also gained ascendancy in the late eighteenth century that antiquities could afford insights into the political, economic, and moral conditions of the nation that produced them (Potts 1982; Haskell 1993: 181–82, 216–35). In the next century, historicist precepts of this sort transformed the field of antiquarian practices into a scientific discipline. Historicism entailed bracketing the modern subject and his/her experiences (visual, tactile, kinesthetic, visceral, or whatever) upon encounter with ancient artefacts, and attending to those artefacts instead as sources of knowledge about times past. The material residues of antiquity were thereby metamorphosed into signs, i.e., things that stood for something beyond, and more important than, themselves. Artefacts gained in meaning but lost in presence (the presence Segalen wanted to recapture). The latter now seemed too volatile a matter to warrant dispassionate scientific treatment. The adoption of the logic of stratigraphy around 1850 brought prehistoric antiquities within the scope of historicist science as well.

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century human disciplines rehabilitated the time-honored wisdom that the work of language stands above the work of the hands. Literature, not the visual arts (much less the work of crafts) was “the highest exposition of the spiritual side of Man.”¹⁴ Philology became a most serious, prestigious scientific discipline, at the same time as literacy spread and illiteracy became a handicap: the world was suddenly filled (‘literally’!) with inscriptions—signs you had to read in order to function, from how-to books to advertisements to street names to the classics (see Humphreys, this volume); and signs, too, to which the new hermeneutics and semiotics gave great theoretical depth and, thereby, academic respectability. What of archaeology? Its worth rested, first of all, with its capacity to supply ancient art to museums. It also rested,

¹³ “C’est ce que je tâche de faire ici; je reduis dans un corps d’ouvrage toute l’antiquité; par ce terme d’antiquité j’entens seulement ce qui peut tomber sous les yeux, & ce qui se peut représenter dans les images” (Montfaucon 1722: vi).

¹⁴ The quotation is from William Ridgeway 1909: 24, and echoes widely shared sentiments.

however, with its ability to supplement the ancient texts—probe their veracity, for example, or provide concrete details where there had been only a vague mention (e.g., no more than a tribe's name). In the age of flag-waving, some of archaeology's artefacts acquired emblematic status: professional archaeologists and lay folks alike *saw* in them their (or another) nation or race—nobility and virtue or barbarity and vice. Such artefacts and their images (which after 1920 circulated widely as postcards, posters, etc.) had, therefore, an aura, a presentifying power comparable to that of holy icons. But these were exceptions; for disciplined archaeology, artefact images became first of all *technical aids*, useful in a myriad tasks (aides-memoires and *Arbeitsobjekte* for the professional, devices for training the novice's eye, for comparing and classifying materials, communicating one's discoveries to other archaeologists, etc.). If you were schooled in archaeology, you were taught to *un-see* their presentifying potential. Only a few scholars—who also happened to be artists—ever took a different stance. “I write because I have drawn,” affirmed John Izard Middleton (1785–1849, “the first American classical archaeologist,” according to Norton 1885: 3) in the introduction to his *Grecian Remains of Italy*. He explained that in a work like his “the artist is perhaps of more real use than the scholar. I for this reason adopted the plan of making a collection of very accurate drawings. The views, therefore, which are now offered to the public are not meant merely to accompany the text; they are the principal object of this publication” (quoted in Norton, *op. cit.*). In the nineteenth century a scholar could still think, it seems, that the archaeologist's texts are too cerebral to do justice to antiquities, and that images have a radical potential (see also the case of Fursat, Manoukian, this volume, and even the different, but still relevant, case of Samuel Butler, Porter, this volume). Victor Segalen may have been the last scholar to privilege the encounter with antiquities in their “raw yet noble state,” as it were, before archaeological study would render them legible (Thouard and Wang, this volume); to privilege, that is, what was seeable but not yet “tamed”—historicized, classified, written down as scientific wisdom and, perhaps, “black-boxed.” As the twentieth century progressed, practices and attitudes such as those of Middleton, Fursat, or Segalen would seem increasingly eccentric, old-fashioned, permissible to archaeology's lay public but clearly at odds with the scientificity of modern archaeology.

Information came to the fore as the key dimension of material objects in the Cold War era, at a time when advances in computer technology and the ubiquity of television gave rise to an “information economy.” In these new circumstances information became “a substance as ‘real’ and as subject to exchange in financial markets as any solid commodity” (Joselit 2003: 129). Commodification of information augmented its prestige; by the 1960s material objects seemed to many static, ‘dead’ things, in contrast to the dynamic networks of information flow in which they featured. For archaeology the implications were of immediate interest: ancient artefacts would most productively be treated as “congealed information,” “represent [ing] coded information of great variety” (Clarke 1968: 85–88, 120, 660–62). The nature and purpose of archaeological drawings were also discussed at this time. Drawings were said to constitute a “pictorial language” to be deployed “side by side” with the author's text, and their use for selecting and transmitting information according to a code of conventions was justified (Piggott 1965, esp. 165–66, with

theoretical support drawn from Gombrich; see also Hope-Taylor 1966: 107–108).¹⁵ And, while line drawings comparable in their minimalism to those of today had appeared in publications in the interwar period, beginning in the 1960s they would become noticeably more common. In short, practice in the second half of the twentieth century focused on artefacts as ‘coded information’ much more systematically and resolutely than ever before, and it is the intensity of that focus that the expression “artefacts as storehouses of information” that I used earlier is intended to convey.

Paradoxes of Photographs

Let me return to the question “why drawings and not photographs or paintings” (but I shall leave the latter out¹⁶). Our field reports today do contain photographs of artefacts, yet they are comparatively few, several times fewer than artefact drawings. Even more telling, artefact drawings, along with all other line art, are dispersed through the text—a confirmation that they are not radically different from written language, and are to be read *like* text; photographs, in contrast, are as a rule printed on superior quality, glossy paper and are placed apart from the text as “plates” at the end of the book. Techno-economic reasons, wholly independent of how one thinks text and image relate to each other, may suffice to explain such a placement. Still, the effect is unmistakable: plates with photographs are rather *unlike* book pages with text and line drawings.

Is photography *by its nature* less well suited than drawing for coding information, as my “quick answer” earlier indicated? Yes, but not because that nature is “absolutely analogical” and renders the photograph a “message without a code” (see n. 10).¹⁷ Photography *does* depend on codes for its communicative efficacy (think especially of black and white prints), and whether it does so less than or as much as drawings is beside the point. Photography’s codes, however, are controlled in the first place by photo-chemical processes. They are not—as is the case with drawings—established by the scholar/delineator.¹⁸ It is by virtue of that dependence on light and chemistry that photography is by its nature less flexible than

¹⁵ Piggott (1965: 165–66) made several assertions to the effect that drawings are text-like (he compared, e.g., an uninformative drawing to a string of letters not yet separated into words), and he even thought of archaeology’s drawings as “cryptograms,” a notion he borrowed, tellingly, from Winston Churchill. Hope-Taylor (1966: 107–108) made it clear that drawings had to be selective in what they showed (“a record of certain facts and observations . . . bound to eliminate others”), hence the delineator had to have a firm “mental attitude” toward the matter.

¹⁶ See the perceptive remarks of Sam Smiles on the avoidance of oil paintings (2005: esp. 139–40).

¹⁷ I often think that, rather than photography being “absolutely analogical” (n. 10) and, thus, providing us with simulacra of the visible, the inverse may be the case: that photography has taught us to see the visible photographically, as it appears in photographs.

¹⁸ That is why Peirce thought of photographs as composites of iconic and indexical signs rather than solely as icons: see Mitchell 1986: 59–60.

drawing in complying with our desire to pull apart information from ‘noise’. The camera does the work of a human while disobeying human will.

But that is not the sole paradox. Look into project publications from about 100 years ago: artefact photographs there by far outnumber artefact drawings. Photographs gave way to drawings as the latter acquired their minimalist aesthetic and artefacts came to be seen as “coded information.” The effect of the trend is evident in publications from the 1960s and later. The substitution, then, appears to register the change in cognitive stance I summarized in the end of the previous section; and, if so, it may also seem fully rationally justified; it is a ‘methodological move’, you say, in accordance with archaeology’s new understanding of its artefacts. This, however, seems to me a blithely instrumentalist view of rationality. I think there is more to probe, and I will; but I need to begin my story in the nineteenth century.

Archaeologists had photographed antiquities since the 1840s, but few of those early photographs made it into published research reports, usually reproduced as lithographs.¹⁹ This changed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when photographs of artefacts—especially, artefacts that qualified as “art”—became progressively more common in archaeological publications. They were now reproduced by a bewildering variety of techniques, some old,²⁰ others patented since the 1850s;²¹ moreover, photographs reproduced by the new methods had a distinctive look by comparison with the products of the older technologies of engraving and lithography. It was at this time, I submit, that photographs and drawings became distinct in the archaeological mind’s eye as well,²² as the increased frequency of comparisons of their respective merits suggests. Such comparisons did not always privilege photography; photographs were often thought to be valuable only in so far as they helped the delineator prepare more accurate drawings.²³ And when, early in the next century, Flinders Petrie wrote his *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, “Drawing,” he observed, “is still the main resource for illustration, although photographic processes occupy so important a place” (1904: 68). Petrie devoted ten pages to photography, but he did not present it as the archaeologist’s panacea. Photographs, he wrote, are good for specific kinds of

¹⁹ Photographs circulated among scholars and were exhibited in meetings of learned societies. See, e.g., Taylor 1869: 171; Desor *et al.* 1874; Oliver 1875: 91; Feyler 1987 gives further examples.

²⁰ E.g., Holmes 1883: 113 and Fig. 10 (cut from a photograph); Richter 1885: Taf. I (lithographed photograph); Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 79 and Figs. 29 and 30 (drawn from photographs).

²¹ Lichtdrucken (collotypes), in Curtius *et al.* 1879: Taf. XXIV; Schumacher 1890: Taf. XXII; heliogravures, in Furtwängler 1890: Taf. II and III; photogravures in Kekule 1894: 21; half-tone process, in Norton 1896: Figs. 1 and 2. Petrie (1904: 117–19) gave an overview of processes available to archaeologists at the time and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each, including prices. The *American Journal of Archaeology* published photographs from its first issue (1885; process unspecified). The *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* did so earlier yet, in its second issue (1878; heliogravures).

²² Gabrielle Feyler (1987: 1046) has thought of Alexander Conze’s Samothrake publications (1875/1880) as the watershed in this respect, but one need not be so precise in the face of a convoluted matter.

²³ E.g., Ramsay 1882: 1 and 39; Norton 1885: 9; and see Klamm 2007: 210–11.

artefacts —“all objects of artistic interest,” “rounded forms for which elaborate shading would otherwise be needed,” and “views of excavations and buildings.” Lastly: “it is desirable to publish photographs as well as drawings of very important carvings, *in order to guarantee the accuracy of the drawing*” (*ibid.* 73, emphasis mine; he also recommended photography for plaster casts of coins and gems: p. 77).

Standing ruins, art, and inscriptions or squeezes from them: nineteenth-century archaeological publications rarely contained photographs of other artefacts such as things of plain quotidian significance. In the new century this changed radically. For one, excavation and other field reports published in the 1900s contained many more photographs of objects than reports from the previous decades. The range of artefacts shown in photographs also expanded and came to include many kinds of objects beyond those in Petrie’s prescription—in effect, everything from Palaeolithic stone tools (or putative tools) to coarse, undecorated pots and potsherds, to perforated beach pebbles and spindle whorls, to badly corroded and bent-out-of-shape iron weapons and implements.²⁴ Some archaeologists illustrated almost all their finds (thousands of objects!) in photographs.²⁵ Photographs were not relegated exclusively to plates but mingled freely with the text (a possibility opened by a printing technology new at the time), and authors and their printers took care to place them below, between, or to one side of the text describing the objects depicted.²⁶ In short, although artefact drawings did not disappear from the archaeologist’s reports, photography had won the day.

That change owed much to the spread of improved, more affordable printing technologies. It was epistemic virtues, however, that favored photography over drawing, even though those virtues were not new. “Engravings of earlier times bore the impress of the period or the engraver, and this character increased with their elaboration,” wrote Adolph Michaelis (1835–1910) in the early years of the twentieth century. “Compared with these methods,” he continued, “photography, in spite of certain inherent defects. . . shows an infinitely greater fidelity and precision in the reproduction of all the nuances of style, technical peculiarities, and artistic effects of the original. Thus with the help of photography we have learnt to see anew.”²⁷ Such remarks pertained specifically to classical archaeology and the arts of Greece and Rome. Still, it seems to me that their gist would have been endorsed at the time by archaeologists in general. Michaelis’s observation that engravings bore the style of their period or the individual engraver, whereas photographs were faithful to the object, echoes an aspect of arguments that had been frequently

²⁴ See, e.g., Tsountas 1901, Plate 5; Dragendorff 1903: Figs. 429, 491, 517 and 518; Wiegand 1904: 389, Figs. 500, 506 and 507; Kjellmark 1905: plates I, V and VI; Furtwängler 1906: Pl. 118: 2–7; Layard 1906: Plates XXX and XXXI; Wace, Droop and Thompson 1908: Figs. 9 and 16.

²⁵ E.g., Dragendorff 1903; Waldstein 1905.

²⁶ A good example is Tsountas 1906, where photographs, watercolours (by E. Gilliéron) and their descriptions, all printed on the same page, are the rule. Photographs are kept apart from drawings in the book’s 47 plates.

²⁷ Michaelis 1908b: 302; 1906: 258–59. For earlier comments to a comparable effect see Feyler 1987: 1046–47.

rehearsed in earlier decades among the practitioners of the natural sciences. Drawings, those arguments ran, did not reproduce simple retinal perceptions but incorporated instead the scientist's subjective understanding of the objects illustrated. Photographs, on the other hand, were the product of purely photo-mechanical processes (they were "impressed by Nature's hand" in Talbot's oft-quoted phrase) and were, therefore, unmediated by human subjectivity.²⁸ I think that, by the 1880s or 1890s, when the virtues of 'mechanical' objectivity which photography epitomized had conquered scientists from bacteriology to astronomy, archaeologists too had become attentive to the epistemic advantages of photographs.²⁹ And so, when techno-economic factors around 1900 made it practicable, archaeology's books and journals were filled with photographs.

It would appear from the above that photography won over archaeologists solely on account of its perceived 'greater fidelity' to the object. Yet Michaelis also suggested that photographs made it possible for the scholar to judge "the stylistic character of originals without seeing them" (*ohne die Originale selbst vor Augen zu haben*) and even to recognize "their relation to other known works" (1908: 302–303; 1906: 259). Is not this an acknowledgment of the presentifying power of photographs? As it emerges from Michaelis's account, photography is a neutral medium, an "eye without the mind," as it were: unlike drawings, photographs have no style of their own to superimpose on the style of the art they depict. And so, perusal of photographs of ancient artworks enables the scholar to study those artworks *as if s/he was standing in front of them*. Does not this attest to a "magical relation" (cf. above, p. 293), rather than a mere photo-mechanical one, between the photograph and the object it depicts? Are not photographs—like those sacred *acheiropoietai* icons—pure, unmediated presence?³⁰

That "magical relation," the ability of the photograph to become "the actual thing,"³¹ could also have contributed to the appeal photographs held for archaeology around 1900. But such a "magical relation" would turn into a liability when, later in the twentieth century, especially after World War II, archaeology aspired to ever higher levels of professionalization and standards of discipline and scientific rigour. And here might lie a deeper reason, beside the instrumental one I identified earlier, for which artefact photographs fell from favour and were largely replaced by line drawings. Photographs, it was now said, at their best "can convey the texture and 'feel' of sites and objects and may give a little scope for independent thought" (Hope-Taylor 1966: 108). Photographs, that is, could seduce you, make you see things you were not supposed to notice (texture, feel of objects, and the like, belonged

²⁸ Daston and Galison 2007: Chap. 3. The arguments of the nineteenth-century scientists were much more nuanced and had a broader scope than my two sentences on the issue above will suggest.

²⁹ Classical archaeologists in Germany (beside Michaelis) had certainly become attentive to those advantages; see Klamm 2007: 218–23 and 2010: 390–91.

³⁰ For the attractiveness of the *acheiropoietai*, "made by no human hand," in religion as well as in science, see Latour 2002, 18.

³¹ See Daston and Galison 2007: 319–20; also Bredekamp 2010: 51, 52–53.

to art appreciation, not science) and could thus disrupt your professional composure. Moreover, in the era of the Instamatic (first marketed in 1963) photography became associated with the amateur and leisure, so much so that it now seemed inappropriate for serious professional work. Artefact photographs were good for preliminary reports (they still are) and for the glossy magazine, but too many such photographs in a project's definitive publication meant the material had not been thoroughly analysed.³²

Presence

I claimed earlier that, if it is your discipline's standard to see artefacts as storehouses of information, you may have a good deal of difficulty seeing, or indeed experiencing, them in any other way. What 'other ways' of experiencing artefacts might there be, ways that are occluded by archaeology's 'cognitive wager' in the present? One's mind usually goes to aesthetic approaches. I will consider a different possibility, but I must first backtrack a little. I indicated above that, in addition to encoding and conveying information about the objects they depict, our drawings perform a pedagogical, or disciplining function. If so, we might be tempted to say, with reference to this latter function, that the drawings also encode and convey information about one of today's norms of archaeological practice, namely, how we should approach, or see, artefacts. Yet this has a strange sound to it: we might say it only on the provision that we *see* the norms of our practice *as* (again!) information, and that is not how we experience those norms. We do not experience them as information but as *authorities* instead, watching from behind our shoulder as we encounter artefacts (in the field, lab, etc.) and set about making pictorial, information-rich records of them.³³ However ethereal (or, better, *because* they are ethereal), those authorities are present at every step of the depiction process. By analogy, then, one can imagine a world where, and a disciplined practice for the devotees of which, the ancient artefacts themselves—the very material objects we now see/approach as storehouses of information—would be experienced as authorities: artefacts, I mean, vested with an aura that obliges the devotee to behave in certain ways in their presence.

³² In theoretically oriented publications of the period, even *drawings* of artefacts tended to disappear and be replaced by tables, graphs, and diagrams showing relations among abstract entities, e.g., structures and flows. Visualization here was replacing vision. The most ambitious such diagrams can be seen in Clarke 1968. For the theories framing such efforts, see Wylie 2002, esp. 1–15 and 57–77; see also Fotiadis 2001: 341–48.

³³ Try, however: “the drawings encode one of the period's norms of archaeological practice, namely, how the mid-nineteenth century approached, or saw, artefacts:” there is no strange sound to this locution—why? Artefact drawings from ‘another era’ (e.g., the mid-nineteenth century) are *themselves* artefacts of that ‘other era’ and can in the present be historicized: whatever authority they might have in that past is now safely kept at bay, and their salient function is to inform the present about the past.

Such a world and discipline are by no means pure figments of the imagination. Refractions of them have materialized in the past, materialize today, and will, no doubt, continue to materialize tomorrow. Consider, for instance, the case of an (unnamed) Ecuadorean healer, active in the twentieth century, who carried in his pouch, among other objects, a few ancient stone axes that he had enlisted to assist him in his job. The pouch and its contents have now their own cabinet in the Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin (Fig. 2). In the healer's mind's eye, the axes were ancestral Inca relics, and that is how they acquired their curative properties. His seems to me a good example of a *disciplined* practice (lest it escapes us, the healer had undergone initiation, his conduct adhered to rules, he was subject to peer criticism, etc.) that incorporates ancient artefacts in its core, and the artefacts are approached as potent agencies in the present. Let me add that the case is by no means unique: nineteenth-century scholars never tired of repeating that polished stone axes had long been vested with comparable kinds of potency in many places,



Fig. 13.2 Cabinet (exhibit) devoted to an Ecuadorean healer, Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin, 2009. Partial view (Photograph by Michael Fotiadis)

“from western Europe to Eastern Hindostan [sic]” and “in Western Africa, among a totally different race of men” (Lubbock 1872: xcv).

You would think perhaps that ancient artefacts endowed with potent agency in the present could exist today only among modernity's Others: folk like the healer, located in modernity's interstices. Surely modernity is “demagified,” you say (cf. Laks, this volume). In fact, such artefacts are common throughout the contemporary world. In many a culture, things touched by the famous (or the infamous) carry some of the authority and aura of those who touched them long after the latter have turned to dust. So, too, for centuries, have religious icons and paraphernalia.

Add “authentic replicas” of such objects (from shops near the source), add also antiquities-turned-monuments of/for the nation since about 1800, and today’s world becomes replete with ancient artefacts you and I may experience as authorities (cf. Mitchell 2005: 128). But the practices in which such objects are implicated are anything but disciplined (here the healer’s was different), and I will not dwell upon them. In any case, the thought that such practices have been forgotten, at least marginalized, in the wake of enlightenment, modernity, historicism, and archaeology *does not stand up to fact*.

But whether or not worlds and disciplined practices where ancient artefacts were approached as authorities once existed, or exist today, makes no difference for archaeology and its devotees in the present. Here, the possibility of experiencing ancient artefacts as authorities, as things causing us to do things (or making us do things in one way rather than another; or, better yet, things we should enlist as our allies, ensure their propitiousness, before we proceed with this or that task) is foreclosed by the success of the artefacts-as-information perspective. Information is modernity’s universal currency.

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Chapter 14

Middling Ages and Living Relics as Objects to Think with: Two Figures of the Historical Imagination

Gadi Algazi

Summary Classical pasts were not the only pasts to be repositioned in the modern period through the double framing of historicism and nationalism: medieval pasts were subject to the same treatment, especially in Protestant northern Europe which had been marginal in antiquity. The paper studies two ‘figurations’ in which the tensions of remoteness and re-presentification are particularly clear: the construction of ‘middling ages’ as *between* antiquity and modernity, and the attempt to emphasize their links to modernity by the identification of ‘living relics’, labelled “backward” or “traditionalistic” by forward-looking modernizers but ambiguously valued also as preserving virtues threatened by development.

In the following, I intend to depart somewhat from sound historical practice, and instead of presenting you with a detailed analysis of a historical case from which some conclusions might be drawn, I shall opt for a deductive mode of presentation. I shall put forth a simple hypothesis and use a limited range of historical materials to illustrate it. I shall not deal with specific images of the Middle Ages; we have several useful studies at our disposal.¹ Rather, I shall focus on procedures for producing such images and on reasons for constructing ‘middling’ ages, *mittlere Alter*. I would argue that our own “Middle Ages” sometimes, but not always, function as one variant among several such middling ages.

That ‘the past’ is used to construct, imagine, and legitimate perceived presents is a commonplace discovered ever anew by historians. That ‘the past’ might be regarded

¹ Lehmann 1914; Gordon 1925; Günther 1984; Neddermeyer 1995. There is a spate of recent interest in medievalism and its various national shapes, partly documented in Boydell and Brewer’s book series *Studies in Medievalism*. In the following, however, it is not the changing images of the Middle Ages I’m interested in. It is the function, the operation—not the label—that is at stake here.

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with awe, hence that one may assign authority to specific institutions and practices by presenting them as old, is common knowledge. This is supposed to be the case especially in so-called ‘traditional’ societies, allegedly imbued with reverence to ‘The Past’. We should admit, however, that this is much too crude, and perhaps too banal to lead us much further. ‘Traditional societies’ display a whole range of attitudes to the past. ‘The past’ is never fully shared;² it is always liable to be contested. More importantly, this dictum gives no clues as to which segment of the past is actually used and likely to be venerated. To put it more bluntly: ‘The past’ is an analytical category alien to everyday use; what people use and sometimes revere are specific ‘moments’, particular *tempora*, each often equipped with a particular name and distinctive connotations which do not necessarily pertain to ‘The Past’ as a whole. In varying social contexts, actors may invoke and defend their piece of the past and question other invoked pasts.³ Hence to ascribe to a whole society an attitude to an undifferentiated and unvaryingly binding past seems *a priori* doubtful. Nor are people committed to adopting the same mode of dealing with the past consistently across social contexts.⁴ In some situations, a general vague reference to the way things ‘have always been’ can be considered acceptable and effective; in others, this would not prove sufficient, and more precise conformity with pre-existing, more codified images of the past is required to fit an existing practice or attitude into a given matrix.

Some pasts are simply *passés*, that is, the models they seem to embody, though occasionally venerated, may be considered irrelevant. In order for historical periods to be actually used as effective models in structuring the social world, it is not enough for them to be held in awe; they might be venerated from a safe distance and politely discarded. A successful piece of the past has to be both authoritative *and* relevant. To be considered authoritative and binding, it needs to be distant—untarnished by current debates, safe, and hallowed by virtue of old age. At the very same time, in order to be regarded as accessible and applicable, it needs to be perceived as lying within reach, not a fading figure on the horizon, but a potential presence. Thus, a successful piece of the past has to be furnished with contradictory attributes, distant and proximate, conveniently old and reasonably recent at one and the same time. Temporal distance is here often a paraphrase of perceived social distance: ‘recent’ may be a way of saying this past is ‘ours’, or at least can be claimed and effectively appropriated, be considered part of ‘us’; ‘old’ might mean positively othered, distant enough to command recognition or at least some respect beyond the group claiming it.

To remain on the same abstract level, one could imagine two complementary ways for achieving this. They are often combined, but for the sake of clarity I shall handle them as two separate procedures and give each a proper name. One could

² Leach 1954: 265–266, 277–278; Goody 1977.

³ For an attempt to lay out a set of formal constraints for invoking the past, see Appadurai 1981, esp. p. 203.

⁴ See Pocock 1962, esp. pp. 213–214.

either break the past into segments in order to produce a historical period endowed with contradictory attributes, or split the social world in order to construct a segment of society perceived as both past and present. The outcome of the first historiographical operation is the repeated invention of middle ages; of the second—the proliferation of living relics. These figures, I submit, in their diverse guises, form an essential part of our historical imagination.

1

‘Middling ages’, *Mittlere Alter* of all sorts are not simply hallowed pasts, but specific segments of the past considered both ancient and recent, venerable and redeemable. That which has been codified in the modern period as ‘the Middle Ages’ is but one variant. The fascination with the Middle Ages, I contend, is not to be reduced to the authority of things ancient; it is closely related to their specific position, at once hallowed *and* recoverable to different degrees. Different middle ages can be constructed in varying contexts. Sometimes their pastness is stressed, their alterity; on other occasions their perceived proximity to the present or the envisioned, realisable future. But they owe their appeal to their middling position and its potential contradictions.⁵

The fascination exercised by ‘the Middle Ages’ should be explained not by referring to their changing chronological boundaries, but by their relative position, as both old and recent. From this perspective, the often noted contradictory image of medieval times—sophisticated and primitive, modern and archaic, repudiated and yearned for (Oexle 1990, 1992)—does not only reflect the actual heterogeneity of medieval culture, forged out of components of diverse civilizations and modes of social organizations; it is also due to the conflicting demands a middling age has to meet, distant and near at once. Indeed, I would suggest with some caution that the illustrious career of the Middle Ages as an object of study may be partly due to the encounter between a heterogeneous piece of the past and a scholarly gaze intent on perceiving it—although this perception has emerged out of bitter debates between historical schools which have tended to emphasize opposing aspects of the period. In a sense, every historical ‘period’, any culture, can be said to be heterogeneous; but the Middle Ages were fortunate enough to be often constructed as such. The role they were accorded in the historical imagination of the nineteenth century allowed their heterogeneity and contradictoriness to be perceived through the interplay of competing interpretations and political parties.

Pre-modern elites have created and cultivated various ‘classical’ pasts; the fascination they exercise is related to their perceived distance, more precisely, to their exclusivist presence. While modernity’s classics were discarded only to be almost immediately resurrected in the nineteenth century, the comparison with pre-modern ‘classical periods’ of different sorts brings the uses of middling ages into sharp relief. Where Middle Ages could enable the incorporation of ‘folk cultures’

⁵ A similar observation has been made by Cohen 2000: 5 (“interminable, difficult middle”).

within national projects, ‘classical’ pasts were often made present within purified, increasingly museumized ‘high culture’. As a rule, such epochs are constructed as the exclusive domain of an educated elite disposed to perceive itself as capable of embodying—through imitation and reenactment—‘the classics’; humanists have sought to reduce methodically the historical distance separating them from the classical past through elaborate exercises of assimilating ancient texts and enacting purified, revered forms (Grafton and Jardine 1986; Kaster 1986; Bushnell 1996). Yet the social use of such a past is predicated upon its perceived differential distance, its relative social inaccessibility. ‘Classical’ pasts can indeed be used to classify, to draw social distinctions, to serve as a crucial basis for the cultural authority of elites precisely because they are deemed inaccessible to common men and women. They might live among ruins of an ancient landscape shaped in a bygone age, but to gain access to it they should succumb to elaborate rites of passage and gain access to cultural codes defended by expert practitioners. A middling age, in contrast, is potentially present,⁶ it is not—or not yet completely—*passé*. It also has to do with a different sort of cultural politics, one of unequal incorporation within a national culture. Not the presence of mere ruins counts, but the potential comeback of institutions and practices—dreaded or longed for.⁷ The scholarly Middle Ages could certainly be as distant as the codified ‘classics’, but in that case, they would hardly function as a middling age, with its specific fascination and potential political uses.

Middle Ages of different sorts, with varying temporal coordinates, are in this sense present pasts. As such,⁸ they could be invoked by intellectuals both to discard present practices or institutions (“What a shame—this is truly worthy of the Middle Ages!”), or in the context of attempts to revive them. This goes some way toward explaining the political virulence of debates on the Middle Ages in Western Europe during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century—but also why ‘our’ Middle Ages, professional historians’ Middle Ages, have lost much of their political relevance in Western Europe since 1945. Yet other middling ages can be produced in their stead.

2

The other related procedure has generated not hybrid historical periods but bounded segments of the social world. Whereas the former figure has often been commented

⁶ Note Émile Littré’s conception of the Middle Ages as a “philological ring” (*anneau philologique*) linking the classical period to modern times, thereby positioning French “as simultaneously the most ancient and the most modern of the major Romance tongues.” Nichols 1996, 25–56, and esp. 34–40.

⁷ After the reformation, it was not the mere presence of the remains of dissolved monasteries that counted but the extent to which monasticism was perceived as a relevant option, which made it so central an element in the perception of “the Middle Ages;” see Thomas 1983.

⁸ Different Middle Ages have been constructed; India’s Middle Ages are a case in point. In Jewish history, an influential nationalist perspective decreed similarly that “traditional” Jewish society in Eastern Europe existed until the end of the “Middle Ages”—that is, until the crisis brought about by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. On the Japanese case, see Keirstead 2004; on India, see Inden 1990.

upon, its affinity with the production of living relics seems to have been overlooked. Living relics are segments of the past existing in the present; however, they seem to exist on a different temporal dimension, preserving ancient models. They embody the past in the present, and might be used to prove the relevance and applicability of the past models that they seem to embody—or to point out the danger of their unwelcome return. Living relics are depicted as immensely distant, immune from historical change, but lo and behold, they remain fully accessible for immediate observation and, more crucially, for wider implementation. They are conjured not by dividing historical time, but by splitting present society.⁹

Scholars could differ on the exact identity of such historical relics, but they have often shared the procedure, its underlying assumptions, and, more importantly, the contradictory requirements which brought it about. In the nineteenth century, “the peasant” was a good candidate for playing the role of a living relic, but whole peoples could also offer themselves for service. The operation underlying the construction of historical relics within European societies is almost indistinguishable from that which enabled Europeans to deny the coevalness of colonial societies, relegating them to a different temporal order.¹⁰ For Henry Maine (1822–1888), India—in Ronald Inden’s apt phrase—was “a living museum;” “the British rulers of India,” he famously remarked, “are like men bound to make the watches keep true time in two longitudes at once.”¹¹ Hence the need for intervention, for bringing about a major transformation from ‘outside’. This also applies to Zionist perceptions of Palestine.¹² At the same time, to substantiate claims for the relevance of middling ages, living relics in the present were often invoked. The link is particularly apparent in the case of conceiving peasant communities as immutable (Dewey 1972).¹³

3

Not only social groups but also language itself could be depicted as a living relic to be revived. In his ambitious *Handbuch der allgemeinen Staatenkunde*, published in Winterthur in 1808, the Swiss Carl Ludwig von Haller (1768–1854), an avowed opponent of the French Revolution and modernity, sought to present his own alternative system. It was conceived as a non-theoretical political theory, based on what he termed divine and natural principles, that is, on principles abstracted from past history. Yet like other conservative thinkers, Haller found it difficult to argue from history, since the recent past—the French Revolution and its aftermath—seemed to prove that historical change had indeed become irreversible. In that sense, one had to

⁹ In that respect, they go beyond Tylor’s “doctrine of survivals;” see Hodgen 1936.

¹⁰ Fabian 1983; Wolf 1982. See also McNiven and Russell 2005.

¹¹ Inden 1990: 138; Maine 1875: 237; see also Ganim 2000: 123–134.

¹² For a recent useful critique, see Gerber 2003.

¹³ See Wolfe 1991, 1997, 1999, on “repressive authenticity” and the colonial representation of indigenous Australians’ land rights as belonging to “dreamtime” (with 1999: 55 on the double irony of the colonial setting of Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon*, 1872: utopist colonists displacing local inhabitants). Cf. also Mabey 2007 on the effort required to produce “natural” trees.

come to terms with a new notion of modernity—in some ways irreversible and radically discontinuous with the time preceding it—rather different from its previous uses.¹⁴ How could one bridge the chasm separating the now distant past Haller invoked from the present? Haller could not circumvent history by resorting to some general, abstract principles: relying on deduction or abstract principles in order to deny the authority of history was in his case risky and could easily be turned against him by *idéologues* devising “abstract systems.” Haller’s solution is remarkable: he resorts to the old chancellery style (*der ältere Canzley-Stil*), partly still in use, he claims. He sings the praise of the old style in what can be read as one of the earliest projects of a *Begriffsgeschichte*:

The Old Chancellery style is generally both extremely noteworthy and significant. It flew without effort (*kunstlos*) from the nature of things and reflected them faithfully in their purity.

Recent attempts to discredit the old style and to replace it with a “colourless, metaphysical language-use,” he writes, are intended

to efface all the traces of former relations, so that no one could remember them any more, and to make even princes forget who they really are. But no-one has been able to corrupt it completely, and it remains a fertile source of truth.

Haller urges his readers to engage in a historical semantics for pedagogical reasons: by learning and assimilating (Haller insists on conflating the two) past language-use, they would immerse themselves in the past and learn anew to think in concepts still embedded in the traditional legal idiom. His *éloge* of notarial language, his attempts to invest legal formulae with ever-present meaning, could well remind one of certain emphatic appeals by twentieth-century historians in favour of imbuing historiographical discourse with the so-called “language of the sources” (*Quellensprache*). In fact, on various points Haller seems to anticipate Otto Brunner (1898–1982) in surprising ways; for example, in his conception of lordship as a uniform structure based invariably on reciprocity between unequals, his diatribes against the notion of “civil society,” and the way he seeks to dissolve social structure into a series of particular and immediate relationships (Algazi 1997). This is not the place to dwell at length upon this point; the one aspect I wish to underscore is Haller’s use of language as a remnant-turned-relic capable of transforming the present.

My second illustration requires more detailed discussion. Writing some 50 years later his monumental *Natural History of the Folk*, Wilhelm Riehl (1823–1897) identified two forces of change—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and two forces of persistence and continuity—the aristocracy and the peasantry.¹⁵ For Riehl, each hypostatized group was a living embodiment of some fundamental social principle.

¹⁴ Jauss 2005, esp. 360–363.

¹⁵ I do not intend here to assess Riehl’s work as a whole—a fascinating mixture of astute observations and flawed interpretations interspersed with uncommon insights—but to reconstruct the logic of one of his main arguments. From the wealth of existing scholarly literature on Riehl, see Stein 2001.

Thus, the aristocracy was said to embody the principle of social restraint and historical ancestry. The aristocracy, Riehl claimed, is liable to argue from history in order to defend its position; therefore, it is prone to uphold the importance of historical consciousness, of descent and birth, for all of society. But since the aristocracy's bond with the past is a conscious one and depends on genealogical tables and a continuous effort of cultivation to sustain it, its effectiveness remains limited.¹⁶ The past, however, is not irrevocably lost because it is embodied more immediately and effectively in "the Peasant." According to Riehl, one only has to leave the city behind in order to enter a different social universe existing in a different temporal order. Social reality is thus split to allow for peasants to serve as living archives of the past.¹⁷ This is no mean feat. The village had to be constituted as a separate reality while remaining fully accessible, a true wonder:

Only in the peasant estate does the history of the old German *Volk* stretch out in person into the modern world.

All other social groups, writes Riehl, have abandoned their original milieus and traded their ancient peculiarities for the levelling forces of civilization, but not the peasants:

Studying the peasant conditions means studying history; the peasant's custom is a living archive, a historical sourcebook of immense value.¹⁸

Peasants embody persistence and tenacity (*Zähigkeit*). Even their reputed passivity or lethargy (*Trägheit*) is transformed into virtue—a spontaneous articulation of true conservatism: for "the peasant has not learned history, he himself is historical;"¹⁹ "obscure tradition" preserved by peasants allows us to reach the most remote recesses of the past.²⁰ Riehl's peasants are not knowing subjects but reliable vessels of past history. A passage in the ninth-century *Annals of Fulda* can thus be interpreted by pointing to mid-nineteenth-century villages of the Westerwald; one can also study the facial expressions of the thirteenth-century sculpted figures in the

¹⁶ For contemporaneous attempts to take up Riehl's challenge and cultivate memory among noble families, see Crane 1996.

¹⁷ Wilhelm Riehl, *Naturgeschichte des Volks als Grundlage einer deutschen Social-Politik* (1851–1869, with several successive editions); the second volume, *Land und Leute*, appeared in 1854. All subsequent references, unless otherwise stated, are to the first edition: *Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1851), bk 1, pt. 1, pp. 33–115.

¹⁸ "In dem Bauernstande allein noch ragt die Geschichte alten deutschen Volkstums leibhaftig in die moderne Welt herüber. Der Bauer hat keine Geschichte gelernt, aber er ist historisch. Alle anderen Stände sind aus ihren ursprünglichen Kreisen herausgetreten, haben ihre uralten Besonderheiten gegen die Auebungen einer allgemeinen Zivilisation dahingegeben, die Bauernschaft allein existirt noch als unberührbarer, organisch selbstständiger Stand. Die bäuerlichen Zustände studiren, heißt Geschichte studiren, die Sitte des Bauern ist ein lebendiges Archiv, eine historisches Quellensammlung von unschätzbarem Wert." Riehl, p. 35.

¹⁹ Riehl, pp. 33, 35.

²⁰ "In Zeitläufe, zu welchen keine Geschichtsschreibung mehr hinausreicht nur noch die dunkle Tradition, welche uns die Bauern bewahrt haben." (Riehl, p. 39); in the later editions, the term "dunkle Tradition" was replaced by "dunkle Kunde," obscure knowledge.

Elisabethkirche in Marburg by comparing them with the faces of peasants in contemporary Hesse.²¹ But Riehl's intention is not merely scholarly: the Middle Ages are still present, not only retrievable but also redeemable, because peasants are still infused with the noble pride of a true corporative spirit.²²

These assumptions gave Riehl occasion to comment at length on peasants' lives, yielding a mixture of perceptive observations (for example, concerning naming practices or rural justice) and patent nonsense. But for all its apparent concreteness, Riehl's present-past tended to resemble a constantly receding apparition, for he was avowedly not primarily concerned with real peasants but with "the spirit of an estate" turned flesh. A constant process of *substitution* is at work in Riehl's text: the *Volk* is said to preserve old, sound traditions, but peasants were more *Volk* than most folks were. Again, when approaching peasants, one had to take precautions, for some of them failed to behave as living archives should. Some peasants have already been contaminated by modernity. Thus a further figure emerges: *Hofbauern*, living in relative isolation in their hamlets, are said to have preserved their ancestors' *mores* more faithfully. They are the personification of "the most authentic historical peasant."

This does not yet necessarily yield reliable living relics, free from the temptations and changes of the present. Peasants can be contaminated by proletarians, schoolteachers, and city-dwellers in general. Riehl hence constructs a further, deeper, and more reliable layer, onto which former ways could more securely be projected and rediscovered:

Women and mothers drive out of men's minds all that has established itself there through foreign influence.²³

At home by the hearth, the woman can more easily preserve the inherited Volk-identity (*Volkstum*), whereas the man, engaged in communication with the outer world, surrenders his rough make-up. Living relics are indeed evasive entities, a cherished social projection occasionally sustained by disciplinary violence (or indeed by violence *tout court*). Riehl's focus on women is not accidental, for his depiction of the peasantry has much in common with images of women as cherished, protected repositories of treasured values,²⁴ in need of protection from themselves. Occasionally, the analogy becomes explicit: An enlightened peasant, says Riehl, is like a woman engaging in philosophy, a bluestocking in a smock.²⁵

²¹ Riehl, pp. 35–36, 42.

²² Riehl, p. 51. In the later editions, *Corporationsgeist* was replaced by *Standesgeist*, estate-spirit.

²³ "allein, wie wir es bei Völkern, deren Stamm und Wesen bedrängt ist, häufig finden: die *Frauen und Mütter* bringen den Männern wieder aus dem Sinn, was von fremden Einfluß sich festgesetzt hat. Daheim am Herde mag die Frau leicht das ererbte Volkstum bewahren, während der Mann gezwungen ist, im Verkehr und Wandel die schroffe Eigenthümlichkeit abzustreifen." (Riehl, p. 38).

²⁴ On constructions of women's sphere in response to social change, see Welter 1966; Cott 1977.

²⁵ "Ein Bauer, der im Sinne des rationalistischen Polizeistaates aufgeklärt geworden, ist gleich einem philosophierenden Frauenzimmer, ein Blaustrumpf im Kittel." (Riehl, p. 72).

Such similarities have not escaped historians; I am more interested in the underlying operations. The constant process of substitution evidenced in attempts to portray living relics is symptomatic of the contradictory requirements underlying their construction.²⁶ If evoking ‘middling ages’ involves a constant oscillation between representing them as remote and hallowed and insisting on their proximity and potential presence, analogous contradictions are involved in constructing living relics. Depicting them as museum pieces would impair their presumed relevance and applicability; too lively, they might become mutable, modern, and fail to embody past models authentically enough. Are living relics really reliable? How much life can we safely infuse into historical remnants? This is the point where a romantic, idealized view of living relics can turn into its destructive opposite.

The peasants, says Riehl, lack the historical consciousness that aristocrats possess; peasants are themselves an element of past history. Peasants know nothing about the history of the medieval empire or political history in general, but echoes of medieval serfdom live on in innumerable customs and figures of speech: “The Peasant has not studied history and is no amateur antiquarian; his custom is his history, and he himself and that which surrounds him is the only antiquity that he cherishes.”²⁷ Peasants are not in possession of the past; they are possessed by it. But if so, when and how were the models Riehl wishes to propagate inculcated in them? If peasants—inactive and immobile—are not subjects but objects, a living archive, who built this archive? Peasants cannot have constructed it on their own, nor can they be trusted to manage it themselves. On the other hand, if this role is assigned to some external agent, they re-enter society and historical time—not a timeless essence but the product of social relations.

On the whole, Riehl seems to eschew the question and to consider peasants’ tenaciousness simply self-evident, part of their nature. But when at one point he approaches it, he is forced to depart from his cherished principle according to which each historically formed group is supposed to embody a set of principles independently of all others, and to reintroduce an interplay between apparently isolated peasants and the rest of society. Peasants are *zäh*, stubborn and tenacious, he writes, because living under lords’ rule in the past has made them so. After some conventional condemnations of lords’ violence and abuses, Riehl asserts:

For the German peasant estate, the pressure of the Middle Ages has been a disciplinary school of life [*Zuchtschule des Lebens*], to which he owes one of his most precious virtues—his endless tenacity.²⁸

²⁶ Cf. the analysis of the contradictions involved in the Swadeshi movement’s construction of the peasant as the true Hindu in Sartori 2008.

²⁷ “Denn er hat ja keine Geschichte studirt, er ist überhaupt kein Geschichts- oder Alterthumsfreund, seine Sitte nur ist seine Geschichte, und er selber und was an ihm hängt, das einzige Alterthum, welches er ästimirt.” Riehl, p. 44.

²⁸ “. . .der Druck des Mittelalters ist für den deutschen Bauernstand eine Zuchtschule des Lebens geworden, und eine seiner kostbarsten Tugenden, seine unendliche Zähigkeit, hat er dieser zu danken.” Riehl, p. 45.

Here Riehl comes remarkably close to the insight that tenacity and conservatism are not essential properties of neatly isolated groups, but the product of specific historical configurations, of patterned interactions. But he recoils immediately from the implications of his argument—and not only for theoretical considerations. For if the peasants' habitus is the embodiment of past oppression, and some peasants apparently nowadays abandon their traditional ways, it seems to follow that the remedy for their current degeneration must likewise be brutal and coercive.

Riehl puts much effort into eschewing this conclusion; precisely at this point in his argument he introduces a conventionalized praise of peasants' ancient freedom in order to claim that the most conservative peasants are those who had enjoyed remarkable privileges and relative freedom in medieval times; they are, as it were, *Urbilder* of the German Peasant.²⁹ Still, he betrays here an uncanny awareness of the contradictions inherent in the figure of the living relic. This becomes apparent in the following chapter, as he turns from describing "*The Peasant*" to depicting actual peasants, degenerate creatures (*entartet*), integrated in a cash economy, mobile and contentious. The real peasant, he claims, would never have sought to change his social position; but observable peasants, he admits, are constantly trying to become what they are not. Riehl's remedy includes not only populist reforms, some aid to impoverished peasants who tenaciously retain their traditions, but also some harsh treatment. He prescribes a systematic social purge, an "amputation" of degenerate members, who should be driven to emigrate:

First, the peasant estate must be cleansed. We have two sorts of degenerate peasants. One consists of those degenerates sufficiently described above, in whom moral ruin is combined with economic one. Society can be freed from them only by chirurgical means, that is, by the most comprehensive amputation. Here there is no choice but rapidly and energetically to induce the emigration of whole degenerate communities as well as of such individuals.³⁰

What is presented here as a harsh cure to be imposed,—getting rid of degenerate peasants—recurs in Riehl's argument elsewhere as a chosen vocation. The German Peasant, says Riehl, is the born colonist. His tenacity and perseverance pre-ordained him for his world-historical vocation—to spread German spirit and German morality to all corners of the world. But colonization is mainly discussed as a remedy for regenerating men of higher standing threatened by *déclassement*; colonization offers the prospect of self-transformation. In Germany, a respected person would be ashamed to adopt the rural life, "but beyond the ocean he would not feel ashamed of himself." The colonist's life—that is, peasant life—is a true cure, he says, a thorough cleansing for the whole sick organism.

²⁹ Riehl, p. 46.

³⁰ "Es gilt vorab, den Bauernstand zu *reinigen*. Wir haben zwei Hauptarten von verdorbenen Bauern. Die eine bilden jene von uns hinreichend gezeichneten Entarteten, bei welchen sich der sittliche Ruin zu dem ökonomischen gesellt. Von ihnen kann die Gesellschaft nur auf chirurgischem Wege befreit werden, nämlich durch eine möglichst umfassende Amputation. Hier kann es sich nur darum handeln, wie die Auswanderung von ganzen derartigen verkommenen Gemeinden wie von Einzelnen möglichst rasch und kräftig befördert werde." Riehl, p. 104. Cf. Rebel 1996 (with Rebel 2005) on the role of 'amputation' in the production of Austrian peasants.

At this point, the imagined movement in social landscape is transformed into a movement back in time, exposing the link between the production of middling ages and the cult of living relics. The lesson for statesmen, says Riehl, is that “it is in peasant life and peasant morale”—here standing for colonialism—“that the stale parts of society can refresh themselves.”³¹ Colonialism, in this context, is the means by which a miraculous transformation of the present into the imagined past can be achieved; it allows one to get rid of degenerate peasants, unreliable living relics, but also to rejuvenate, to bring back to life, the threatened middle classes. “Survivalism,” as Michael Fotiadis notes, can function as a “powerful, extremely versatile time-machine” (Fotiadis 1995: 99). Colonial reality is imagined here as a modern equivalent of that “severe disciplinary school” of the Middle Ages which inculcated such laudable characteristics in true peasants.³² Thus, while historians increasingly turn their attention to the colonial dimensions of medieval social processes,³³ we can also rethink the role of colonialism and modernism in the construction of historians’ Middle Ages.³⁴

Peasants, or better, a hypostatized *Bauernschaft* or *das Bauerntum*, like Haller’s chancelleries and legal acts, were living archives, an embodied history (*leibhaftige Geschichte*), living proof that the past was not irretrievably lost. They were such *malgré eux*: a prolonged effort of inculcation had been, or would be, needed to make them so. But once this operation had succeeded, it seemed they could be used as specifically modern repositories of the premodern world. They were living embodiments of past and future, distant in time yet still within reach.³⁵ On a closer

³¹ “Der zurückgekommen, zerfahrene, mit seinem Loose, seiner Heimath zerfallene Mann aus höheren Gesellschaftsschichten findet zuletzt Rettung und Genesung nur noch darin,—daß er Bauer wird. Er besitzt vielleicht noch Mittel genug, um sich in Deutschland ein Ackergut zu erwerben, aber so recht eigentlich Bauer werden könnte er in Deutschland nicht, die Verhältnisse, in denen er aufgewachsen und welchen er entfliehen will, würden ihn hier auch hinter dem Pfluge verfolgen, er würde sich hier des neuen Berufes schämen. Aber jenseits des Oceans schämt er sich dessen nicht. So gestaltet sich hier das Colonistenleben—d. h. das Bauernleben—zu einer rechten Luft- und Wassercur, die den ganzen kranken Organismus gründlich ausfeigt. Wer nirgends mehr seinen Frieden mehr finden konnte, der findet ihn im Urwald – als Bauer, und zwar nicht als faulzer Oeconom, sondern als ein Bauer im Wortsinne, der Schwielen in den Händen hat und im Schweiß seines Angesichts sein saures Brod ißt. Es liegt für den Staatsmann ein deutungsschwerer Fingerzeig in dieser Thatsache, daß die abgestandenen Theile der Gesellschaft zuletzt in Bauernleben und Bauernsitten sich wieder erfrischen.” Riehl, p. 56.

³² See Zantop 1997; Dagenais and Greer 2000.

³³ For colonial perspectives on medieval societies, see Bartlett and MacKay 1989; Bartlett 1994; Bourgne *et al.* 2008; Fernandez-Armesto and Muldoon 2008.

³⁴ For an exemplary case study, see Ellenblum 2007, part II.

³⁵ It should be noted in passing that in order to perform this *Kunststück*, Riehl had to revise the notion of history and to elaborate the image of the “living Archive,” anticipating some modern notions of “collective memory:” In premodern communities, memory and tradition were often ascribed to interacting groups, to whole communities whose conflict-ridden discourse was the process of tradition. Riehl, for his part, represents the peasantry not as an interacting group, but as a hypostatized social category, a repository of ascribed “memory.” Riehl’s *ererbtes Volkstum* (supra, n. 23) a hovering and onerous entity existing everywhere and nowhere, comes closest to some modern hypostatizations of national memory.

look, they turn out to be both evasive and unreliable. Archives require constant maintenance. The ideological effect consists in invoking their persistence and tenacity while concealing from view labour involved in keeping them immune from change.

4

It is very tempting to consider the figures of the middling age and the living relic as hallmarks of modernity; and in many respects this is surely justified. From this point of view, the construction of middle ages involves not only a perceived break with the past, as Pocock and others have suggested, but a more complex, double operation, which opposes modernity at one and the same time to both an ancient, classical past *and* to a middle ground, a *medium aevum*. Yet I'm more interested in the historical figuration which brings about these figures of thought—the relationship to the social world which it embodies. A third example, to be sketched in very broad strokes, might help perhaps to make this clearer.

Both procedures—inventing a middling age and a constituting a hybrid social universe—are already at evidence in the work of Nicolaus of Cusa, one of the most prominent churchmen and philosophers of the fifteenth century, but also a lawyer of rural origin.³⁶ Cusanus used both procedures in his writings. He invented a 'middling age', which he tended to locate in the time of the Ottonian emperors. Unlike classical antiquity, this was in his view an age both hallowed by distance and yet proximate enough to be recoverable through a sustained *reformatio*, a *reductio reformativa*. It is there that he located accessible sources for political reforms in his own time. On the other hand, Cusanus also constructed the countryside as immune to historical change and preserving ancient institutions, in order to substantiate his claim that these institutions—notably, legal assemblies—can be convened and used to bring about the reformation of the Empire. Already in 1429/30 Nicolaus claimed that while reading the early medieval Barbarian Law-Codes (*Leges Barbarorum*), he was actually able to see the institutions portrayed in them in the countryside of his home province.³⁷

A living relic should be seen as *both* immune to historical change and the permutations of the social whole *and* fully accessible for observation and emulation. The defining hallmark of the construction of living relics is not the mere

³⁶ A fuller discussion in Algazi 1998; for a useful discussion, see Ricklin 2004.

³⁷ *Has [leges] ego vidi seriatim omnes collectas et expertus sum multas de illis, et maxime potiores, in vulgari usu ex antiqua introductione cum suis formis maxime in iudiciis ruralibus potius quam in oppidis et civitatibus propter forte supervenientia statuta municipalia haberi.* Cusanus, *de Concordantia catholica libri tres* lib. III, cap. 25, par. 474 (p. 423). Schaeffer 1976: 2 notes that one should not have expected humanists "to see the Middle Ages in their entirety as an historic period, perhaps because the humanists of the sixteenth century as well as a number of generations still to come were too deeply immersed in surviving medieval forms of institutions, social structures and literary conventions, customs of life and habits of thought, to see the Middle Ages in our understanding of the word as definitively and irrevocably past." This goes some way toward explaining why Cusanus's middling period could not have been our "Middle Ages."

recognition of different paces and directions of change in different social domains, but a double gesture: insisting they are unrelated and remote, but still within reach. The construction of both living relics and middling ages is not only an intellectual operation, but a social strategy by which elites in general, and intellectuals in particular, can position themselves in relation to conditions prevailing in their own society—those they wish to repudiate, to distance themselves from, to reform or to revive. The question how the past, or whole historical epochs, become relevant, can be displaced, at least for a while; instead of ‘the past’, we might better look into specific ‘segments’—and not only classical ones; and in trying to account for their social uses, we might look harder into the particular relationships between specific social groups—projecting segments of the past on each other, or seeking to shed the burden of such imputed images, or even seeking to reject one imposed present-past by invoking another, ancient, but no less imposed and alien one (Sider 1993). Colonial contexts and perceptions of the rural social landscape both illustrate how groups seek to make each others’ past and future—often while denying the other’s historicity and the social relationship through which this past is being reconfigured.

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- Fig. 12.17 The Iliadic Wall (From Butler 1922: 216b. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John’s College, Cambridge)
- Fig. 12.18 Shore scene (From W. G. Sebald 1999: 69 (© Vito von Eichborn GmbH & Co Verlag KG, Frankfurt am Main, 1995))
- Fig. 12.19 Possible ruin (From W. G. Sebald 1999: 230 (© Vito von Eichborn GmbH & Co Verlag KG, Frankfurt am Main, 1995))

Fotiadis: Naked Presence

Fig. 13.1 Archaeology student practicing artefact drawing, University of Ioannina, 2009 (Photograph by Michael Fotiadis)

Fig. 13.2 Cabinet (exhibit) devoted to an Ecuadorian healer, Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin, 2009. Partial view (Photograph by Michael Fotiadis)

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