

What is Old is Dream-Worthy

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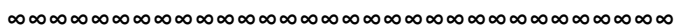
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Bibliography



[**Where Dreams May Come: Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World, 2 volumes by Gil H. Renberg \[Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, Brill Academic Publishing, 9789004299764\]**](#)

In this book, Gil H. Renberg examines the ancient religious phenomenon of "incubation", the ritual of sleeping at a divinity's sanctuary to obtain a prophetic or therapeutic

dream. Most prominently associated with the Panhellenic healing god Asklepios, incubation was also practiced at the cult sites of numerous other divinities throughout the Greek world, but it is first known from ancient Near Eastern sources and was established in Pharaonic Egypt by the time of the Macedonian conquest; later, Christian worship came to include similar practices. Renberg's exhaustive study represents the first attempt to collect and analyze the evidence for incubation from Sumerian to Byzantine and Merovingian times, thus making an important contribution to religious history.

Gil H. Renberg, Ph.D. (2003), who has taught at Harvard, Johns Hopkins and Washington University in St. Louis, is an American ancient historian and classicist whose work primarily focuses on the religious beliefs and practices of the Greeks and Romans, especially those revealed by material culture.

The discovery of inscriptions at Epidaurus containing dream narratives and healing miracles and their publication in 1883 drew the attention of historians of religion to the ancient practice of incubation and exercised significant influence on early psychoanalysis. Although the importance of incubation has often been studied regarding the cult of Asklepios, no comprehensive study of this phenomenon in the Greek and Roman world had ever been attempted. Gil H. Renberg's book not only fills this gap but also presents a comparison with other early cultures in the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East, as well as the early Christians. The systematic collection of the textual and archaeological sources and their thorough analysis make this book an indispensable reading for scholars working on ancient religious experience, religious healing, dreams, and divination. ---Angelos Chaniotis, Professor, School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study

Excerpt: I did not originally plan to write this book. Within a year of finishing my dissertation "Commanded by the Gods". An Epigraphical Study of Dreams and Visions in Greek and Roman Religious Life I had begun the process of revising it as two separate but related books: one an epigraphical catalog devoted to the 1300 dedicatory texts recording dreams or divine communications received through other media, and the other a broad study of the role of dreams in ancient religion. For a reason I can no longer recall I decided to begin the latter by jumping to the sixth chapter, on incubation. Perhaps that seemed the simplest way to start, as incubation was a well-worn topic that could be dealt with relatively quickly, enabling me to turn to more challenging subjects. That soon proved not to be the case, however, as I kept coming up with questions about the material that turned out not to have been addressed adequately (if at all), so that what was intended to be a twenty-page chapter had grown to twice that length and was continuing to expand. At this point, I decided to split off my discussion of incubation in the Latin West, where I had found the evidence for the phenomenon

to be negligible and much of the scholarship unreliable, and to publish that as a separate article which appeared in 2006. Even with this large portion of the chapter removed and my focus now limited to the Greek East, the rapid growth of the chapter continued until I finally decided to produce an entirely separate book devoted solely to incubation in the ancient world. Early in this project I decided that one could not discuss incubation among the Greeks without looking at Greco-Roman Egypt (particularly the Demotic sources), and this required looking further back to Pharaonic Egypt as well; similarly, hunting for the possible origins of Greek incubation required examining the phenomenon among the Sumerians, Babylonians, Hittites, and other peoples of the ancient Near East, and I also found myself exploring the related subject of "Christian incubation," using the eighth century as my approximate cut-off point. This book, therefore, is an accidental byproduct of ongoing work on a more general book on dreams in antiquity, maintaining as its focus the act of receiving dreams at holy sites while paying relatively little attention to god-sent dreams received in other contexts.

An accidental book, but not an unnecessary one. Over the decades, incubation beyond the cult of Asklepios had received little attention, with the only book-length treatments of its practice in multiple cults dating to 1900 and 1906 and little else of substance having been written over the ensuing century, other than a very good but too often overlooked 1997 encyclopedia entry. Moreover, it was clear, especially from studying the claims regarding incubation in the Latin West, that too many scholars were too often treating sources unskeptically and thus reaching questionable conclusions, or unquestioningly relying on the authority of others whose work displayed this flaw—with the end result that numerous sanctuaries were linked to incubation with little or no justification. It also has not been uncommon for scholars to rely on old and outdated works, undermining the validity of their conclusions: in particular, this has been a problem for scholars in other disciplines who when writing of dreams in the ancient Near East or Pharaonic Egypt and looking for parallels in the classical world have depended too much on obsolete treatments of Greek incubation; conversely, of course, scholars of Greco-Roman antiquity have not always taken advantage of the important studies of dreams among these more ancient civilizations that have appeared in recent decades. The ultimate purpose of this book is to rectify such problems, so that scholars of all disciplines touching on the ancient world will have a single, up-to-date work on which to rely. To that end, my goal has not been simply to write a book about incubation and how it functioned, but to engage in an analysis of every single source that has been cited as evidence for incubation to determine both how reliable it is and what it can tell us about the practice. The value of such an undertaking seems quite clear: scholars cannot properly discuss incubation without having a full appreciation of the quality of the sources, and for the first time there will be a

work serving as a common denominator that can be consulted by scholars of Greek religion, Pharaonic and post-Pharaonic Egypt, the ancient Near East, early Judaism and early Christianity, and members of other disciplines, permitting them all to have equally current information regarding the evidence for incubation in each culture. (Writing a book aimed at several different audiences does come with a cost: I have found it necessary to explain numerous rather basic aspects of life in the Hellenic world that are common knowledge among classicists but might not be known to most scholars in other fields, and to translate Greek and Latin words that normally would be left untranslated in a study aimed only at scholars of Greece and Rome. Likewise, many concepts considered basic knowledge among other disciplines are explained or translated for the benefit of classicists and other outsiders.)

For all of these reasons, therefore, I have not written a short work that avoids or minimizes technical discussion out of fear that the reader may lose the thread of argument, but rather a comprehensive work that I consider both "Herodotean" and "Mephistophelean": Herodotean, in that it is wide-ranging and full of investigative digressions, and Mephistophelean in that my scholarly approach of trying to find every possible flaw in the interpretation of a source before accepting its validity can be summarized by the famous words of Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*, "Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint!" (Of course, there is already a term for taking a scientific and suitably skeptical approach to one's sources, and it is "positivism," but shifting intellectual values in recent decades have made this something of a dirty word, so it is arguably wiser in academic circles to align oneself with the Devil.) It is thus by design that this book is composed in a manner that goes text by text, structure by structure, relief by relief, and seeks to determine any questions or problems associated with it—i.e., what that text, structure or object does not tell us for certain—in addition to exploring what it does reveal about incubation at a particular site or in general, and whether it presents novel information or reinforces what is known from other sources. Characteristic of this approach, for example, is that the discussions of Aelius Aristides's *Sacred Tales* and the collection of testimonies of miraculous cures inscribed at Epidaurus (the so-called "Iamata"), each rich and colorful enough to be the focus of a chapter if not a whole book, are limited to just a few paragraphs: since these represent indisputable evidence for incubation having been practiced at the Asklepieia of Pergamon and Epidaurus, respectively, there is no need to question their relevance or significance, and thus they can be mined freely for specific details regarding the practice, as is to be seen in the dozens of references to them scattered throughout this work.

The organization of this book is essentially straightforward: Part 1 is introductory in nature (Chapters 1-2), Part 2 covers Greek cults (Chapters 3-5), Part 3 explores incubation in Greco-Roman Egypt (Chapters 6-9), and a series of thematic studies as well as a catalog (Appendices I—XVII)

supplement the preceding chapters by addressing a range of issues pertaining to the study of incubation among the various civilizations discussed earlier in the book. Chapter 1 addresses a range of basic issues, including the terminology associated with incubation and incubation structures, the religious context of this practice, certain elements of broad importance for understanding this religious phenomenon, the history of scholarship on the subject, and the goals of this work. The following chapter assesses the earliest evidence for incubation among the peoples of the ancient Near East, Egypt, Greece, and other lands, exploring the problems of the ritual's origins and possible spread from one ancient civilization to another. Chapter 3 is wholly devoted to the cult of Asklepios, first looking at the full range of evidence for incubation having been practiced at numerous Asklepieia—literary sources, inscriptions, reliefs, and architectural remains—and then detailing what is known about the process of engaging in incubation at these sites and the nature of the experiences of those who did so.

Chapters 4 and 5, separately discussing therapeutic and divinatory incubation in other Greek cults, each begin with studies of the cult of Amphiaraos, the foremost example of a Greek divinity called upon for both healing and oracular dreams, and then turn to the less prominent cult sites linked to incubation in Greece, the Greek Islands, Asia Minor, and Italy. The remaining chapters shift focus to Egyptian and Greco-Egyptian cults in Ptolemaic and Roman times: in the case of Sarapis and Isis, who both came to be worshiped throughout the Mediterranean world, the evidence from both Egypt and beyond is examined, while in the case of the other cults native to Egypt the pertinent sources primarily or entirely come from one or a small number of cult sites. Thus Chapter 6 evaluates the sources for incubation at Sarapieia and Isieia both in Egypt and overseas, while Chapter 7 focuses on the various cults of Saqqâra's temple complexes (primarily Osorapis, Isis, Imhotep, and Thoth), Chapter 8 is devoted to the rock-cut sanctuary of Amenhotep and Imhotep at Deir el-Bahari in western Thebes, and Chapter 9 surveys eight other cults for which the evidence of incubation is more limited (and in some cases more ambiguous).

The guiding principle behind the inclusion of the various appendices, for which there are only a few exceptions, is that they generally address issues applying to multiple cults or cult sites, such as what is known regarding the nature of pre-incubatory prayer or the evidence for "fertility incubation," and thus are relevant to more than one chapter. Those appendices that are devoted to a single cult—Amphiaraos in the case of Appendix x, Asklepios in the case of Appendices xi and xii—do not primarily pertain to the practice of incubation in that cult and thus complement discussions of these gods in earlier chapters. Eight of the appendices are of particular note: Appendix i, the "ghosts" appendix, is the first study that collects problematic claims and suggestions regarding incubation having been practiced at certain sites and shows why these should no

longer be considered incubation sanctuaries (or, in some cases, should instead be recognized as possible incubation sanctuaries); Appendix ii studies the limited evidence for other divinatory practices in Greek religion, most notably at the Lebadeia Trophonion, that involved some form of direct contact with the god, before delving into the first detailed challenge to the often repeated belief that at certain temples in Egypt oracles would be deceptively issued by priests simulating divine voices (a perceived phenomenon sometimes associated with incubation in the scholarly literature, but one for which there turns out to be no reliable evidence); Appendix viii provides the fullest catalog of incubation reliefs from the cults of both Asklepios and Amphiaraos available, and draws on important recent work by the late Georgios Despinis that is not widely available; Appendix x presents the most detailed treatment to date of the origin and spread of the cult of Amphiaraos, an issue central to the development of incubation in that cult; Appendix XII gives Libanius long overdue recognition as an important source for the worship of (and reliance on) Asklepios, second only to Aelius Aristides among ancient authors; Appendices xiv and xv feature the first studies of the links between incubation and Egyptian dream interpreters and festivals, respectively; and, Appendix XVI, building in part on recent scholarship that raises questions regarding the widespread belief that "Christian incubation" evolved directly from earlier practices among the Greeks and Romans, challenges in detail how the sources for it have commonly been interpreted.

Fundamental to the understanding of ancient divinatory practices, both in antiquity and modern times, was the distinction between what Cicero termed "natural" and "artificial" divination, and the Stoics "nontechnical and untaught" and "technical." While the latter pertained to phenomena externally observed and typically in need of analysis for the meaning to be determined, the former was applied to divine messages that entered the mind of the recipient through inspiration or a dream. Such a dichotomy is indeed useful, but it is not the only one that can be made: one might also differentiate between divine messages that came unbidden and those that were only obtained following ritual acts, or at least specific queries. Among the Romans, for example, augury was always considered an "artificial" form of divination because of the need for observation and evaluation, but avian signs (*signa* or *auspicia*) could be either requested (*impetrativa*) or observed spontaneously (*oblativa*), as was also true of lightning. Similarly, unexpectedly dreaming of a god or divine sign in one's bedroom, requesting a dream-oracle through some form of private ritual, or engaging in an action intended to encourage dreaming while staying overnight at a temple all would have counted as "natural" divination, but there is an obvious distinction to be made between a solicited and unsolicited communiqué. The full range of media of communication believed to be employed by the gods was remarkably broad, but only one medium

was available to everyone, from kings and emperors to the lowliest and poorest of slaves: dreams. The majority of our sources for god-sent dreams in antiquity pertain to those that were unrequested, and show that significance was nonetheless attributed to them. As Artemidorus, author of the only complete book on dream interpretation to survive from the classical world, *Oneirocritica* ("Dream-Interpreting"), stated, "We call dreams that suddenly appear 'god-sent; just as we call all things that are unexpected 'god-sent'," which shows that unsolicited dreams were no less significant than those deliberately sought. There is also much information preserved regarding various methods of attempting to seek dreams from the gods in a private setting. This consists mostly of rituals and spells in the magical papyri, which are an excellent source for rituals in Greco-Roman Egypt but not necessarily for traditional Greek practices, but also includes a magic gemstone of unknown provenience inscribed with a prayer seeking a nocturnal oracle, presumably in a dream: "[Voces magicae], Counsel me this very night truthfully and with power of memory." A particularly striking example of privately seeking a dream is to be found in the Greek novel *Daphnis and Chloe*, since it shows the same individual both receiving an unsolicited dream at a sanctuary and soliciting one in a domestic setting: when Daphnis is overcome by sleep in the Nymphs' cave after Chloe's seizure by a raiding party, he dreams of these goddesses telling him that they and Pan will protect Chloe and ensure her safe return, and later that night, after having spent the day in prayer at the nymphæum, he returns home and prays that he will again see the Nymphs in a dream. As Artemidorus's statement and the gemstone as well as Daphnis's prayer show, the dreams one might receive at home or in another private setting, like the flights of birds, could be either *oblative* or *impetrative*. But dreams also frequently came to individuals who sought them within a sanctuary precinct by means of rituals, prayers, and even submission of written inquiries—a multifaceted form of divination referred to as "incubation." This rather artificial approach to "natural" divination, which at times was truly "artificial" in the ancient sense because of the need for expert interpretation, is the focus of this book.

Ancient worshipers who wished to consult a god at an oracular sanctuary usually did so indirectly, with the help of one or more official intermediaries attached to the site. But not all gods communicated with their visitors indirectly, as Apollo did at Delphi by inspiring a prophetess or Zeus did at Dodona by making oak leaves rustle in a way that could only be understood by a priest: at dozens of sites great and small throughout the Mediterranean world worshipers could consult a god directly, by engaging in ritual practices that gave them the expectation of being contacted by the god in a dream. The foremost method of divination that involved direct communication between god and worshiper within the confines of a cult site, incubation was not only a geographically widespread religious phenomenon, but also one involving a diverse group of divinities. And, as

epigraphical, papyrological, archaeological and literary sources can reveal, it may have been more widespread and involved more cults than is often recognized. These same sources reveal that the phenomenon collectively referred to as "incubation" was quite multifaceted, with significant differences at certain sites in terms of who would contact the gods, in what manner and type of structure they would do so, with what purpose, and what assistance they may have received from sanctuary personnel. The question of who could engage in incubation is an especially significant one, since while most sites were open to anyone, at least one Greek oracle may have been limited to political leaders and another in Asia Minor employed priests as proxy dreamers, whereas in Egypt at certain sites it is possible that only those serving in a cult were authorized to engage in incubation. Incubation can be detected in sources from the ancient Near East (and possibly Egypt) long before the Greeks began engaging in the practice, but it was the Greeks—not only those of mainland Greece and the surrounding islands but also those living in the lands that had become culturally Greek—who are known to have made the greatest use of this divinatory method, sometimes engaging in it en masse. In contrast, Roman religion appears not to have embraced this practice, though later on some form of incubation became popular in Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Islam.^{1°} It is the purpose of this study both to explore in depth the complex issues raised by the sources for incubation in all its forms and to establish what is known about the practice at each sanctuary where it can be detected, evaluating the reliability of all of the sources in question (and, in turn, the conclusions based on these sources).

Therapeutic vs. Divinatory Incubation: An Overlooked Methodological Issue

Neither broad studies of religion that include discussions of incubation nor those that are specifically devoted to the practice typically emphasize, as the present work does, that there were two distinct types of incubation: "therapeutic incubation," through which the sick and injured could receive medical attention, and "divinatory incubation," which involved seeking dreams about matters other than health concerns, either public or private. Therapeutic physician Galen indicates, there was also a matter of greater faith being placed in Asklepios than human practitioners of medicine, since some patients would obey prescriptions from the god that they might ignore if issued by a doctor:

And so, indeed, we see among us at Pergamon those being treated by the god obeying him when he instructs that for fifteen days (as it often is) they entirely avoid drinking, who would obey none of the physicians giving instructions. For it carries great influence with the one suffering to be firmly persuaded that doing everything instructed will bring about a remarkable benefit for himself.

Presumably, a similar level of trust was earned by Sarapis and other gods who issued prescriptions, and it even

appears to be the case that medical dreams not attributed to a specific god may have been heeded, showing the importance that some would place on dreams.

It is not unexpected that people suffering from an ailment beyond the abilities of the medical profession would have sought divine aid, but it is not necessarily to be expected that dreams would have been the vehicle for a prescription or miraculous cure. Although the belief in dreams was widespread, they were, after all, generally considered a relatively unreliable medium for divine communication: not only do the poets write of dreams issuing forth through either a gate of true dreams or one of false dreams, and not only does the extensive literature on dream interpretation reveal how difficult it could be to interpret some dreams correctly, but more historical literary sources and inscriptions often indicate that the veracity of dream-messages (or their interpretation) had needed to be confirmed through some other form of divination, a step which was not thought necessary for any other divinatory medium. However, dreams received within the boundaries of a cult site evidently were different in that they were treated as wholly reliable, since gods would not have sent misleading or outright false dreams to worshipers sleeping in an area consecrated to them. Moreover, as forcefully argued by Artemidorus in a discussion that begins with a reference to prescriptions received at the Pergamon Asklepieion and Alexandrian Sarapieion, due to the love of the gods for humanity they did not issue therapeutic dreams of a cryptic nature—as some of Artemidorus's contemporaries believed—but instead, as he advised, "You will discover that the prescriptions of the gods, truly, are simple and have nothing enigmatic about them", also noting that the cures to be found in such dreams fully matched those recognized and employed by medical science. Therefore, instead of merely offering up prayers to a healing god at his sanctuary as was most commonly done, visitors could consult him regarding a chronic medical problem and receive instructions for the needed treatment, or perhaps even envision him performing a cure. For the same reason, those seeking an oracle on a matter unrelated to health had the option of visiting an oracular sanctuary that functioned through inspired prophets or prophetesses, natural omens such as the rustling of leaves, or other forms of divination, but they also might visit a sanctuary at which they could themselves receive an oracle directly from the god as they dreamed, and the reliability of this dream oracle—though not necessarily its proper interpretation—would be beyond question. Thus incubation provided a welcome alternative to other forms of divination because the worshiper, if successful, would come into contact with a divinity, and the fact that such contact was solicited in a sanctuary not only would have increased the chance of success, but also ensured that the message received was to be fully trusted, and more often than not could be easily interpreted.

Overall, while scholarship on incubation in Greek and Greco-Egyptian religion has generally assumed a single practice simply called "incubation," the present work has as a fundamental principle that it is more useful to distinguish between "therapeutic incubation" and "divinatory incubation," and is partly devoted to demonstrating the importance of viewing incubation as a multifaceted phenomenon found in both prominent and obscure locales throughout the Mediterranean world. Such an approach, which requires identifying cults and cult sites with one type of incubation or the other, or sometimes both, can help to better establish the role or roles that the associated gods played in the lives of worshipers. For certain divinities and sanctuaries (e.g., Amphiaraos at Oropos, Amenhotep at Deir el-Bahari) there is clear evidence for some visitors seeking therapies through dreaming and others seeking oracles in the same manner, but it turns out that in most cases the evidence indicates that gods were exclusively (or almost exclusively) consulted regarding either health concerns or specific matters from private or public life. In the case of the shrine of Pasiphae near Sparta, for example, the sources only refer to that polis's leaders seeking dream-oracles from her, and there is no reason to conclude that ordinary individuals with bodily ailments would have visited the site in the hope of bedding down for the night and awakening either with a prescription to follow or a tale of miraculous recovery to tell. In contrast as noted above, there is a small amount of evidence suggesting that worshipers did sometimes ask Asklepios, the preeminent god of healing and prescriptive dreams, about matters unrelated to health—but, based on the relatively vast amount of information we have about his cult it is inconceivable that his sanctuaries at Epidaurus or Pergamon were commonly used as alternatives to Delphi or Claros. We do, after all, know a good deal about what sorts of issues would be brought before oracular gods by both states and private individuals, thanks to hundreds of literary sources and such documentary materials as the oracular tablets of Dodona and oracle questions preserved on Egyptian papyri, and we also know that there is only an inconsequential amount of evidence for Asklepios weighing in on such issues. Maintaining a distinction between sources for therapeutic incubation and for divinatory incubation therefor helps to establish a better understanding of why particular divinities might be consulted, and thus the nature of their role in local religious life.

This study, however, is not concerned with exploring the chthonic nature of incubation, the deeper meaning or significance of the rituals associated with the practice, the contents of dreams received in this manner and subsequently recorded, or similar issues. Instead, its chief purpose is to explore in detail the evidence that establishes where incubation is known or likely to have been practiced, with a secondary goal of illuminating the variations from cult to cult or site to site in terms of the ritual procedures and the sources that record these. Basic overviews of

incubation often do not do justice to the multifaceted nature of this religious phenomenon, in part due to the tendency of scholars not to distinguish between therapeutic and divinatory incubation, or to do so in a cursory manner. Only by evaluating the full range of sources found at or written about each sanctuary associated with one or both types of incubation can we begin to have a proper appreciation for where and precisely how such consultations of the gods were undertaken and with what purpose—and just how common this may have been. The approach used throughout this study, therefore, is to establish what we know about incubation at each site where it can be detected, which in turn can lead to a more nuanced understanding of this form of divination. Establishing what we know about the practice requires not only surveying the written and archaeological sources, but evaluating them for reliability as well—and, in numerous cases, it proves necessary to reevaluate past claims. A number of previous studies of incubation or individual cults or cult sites have included claims and assumptions that, when all of the available sources are reexamined, turn out to be questionable or demonstrably incorrect. Many of these claims are specific to a particular site or cult and thus have had limited impact, but certain assumptions have applied to multiple cult sites or been more widely manifested: in particular, there has been too great a willingness to identify stoas as incubation dormitories at sites not otherwise associated with incubation, and it has been repeatedly assumed that certain dedications recording dreams had been given by someone who had successfully engaged in the practice. Before we can establish what we do know about incubation, it is therefore necessary both to expunge unreliable sources and assumptions, and to evaluate the relative value of each valid source. Such a fresh examination of all the sources associated with incubation can enable us to form an accurate picture of the role that incubation played in ancient religion as well as the nature of the ritual activities required to solicit oracular and therapeutic dreams from the gods. Ultimately, this study is not intended to be the last word on incubation, but rather an attempt at providing scholars more solid footing on which to base their own studies of the practice.

A History of the Mind and Mental Health in Classical Greek Medical Thought by Chiara Thumiger [Cambridge University Press, 9781107176010]

The first substantial history of psychological thought in Classical Greek medicine. Demonstrating the richness and sophistication of the accounts in the Hippocratic texts and other medical sources, this book explores their connections with contemporary metaphysical discussions in tragedy and Plato as well as their relevance for modern debates in psychiatry and psychology.

The Hippocratic texts and other contemporary medical sources have often been overlooked in discussions of ancient psychology. They have been more mechanical and less

detailed than poetic and philosophical representations, as well as later medical texts such as those of Galen. This book does justice to these early medical accounts by demonstrating their richness and sophistication, their many connections with other contemporary cultural products and the indebtedness of later medicine to their observations. In addition, it reads these sources not only as archaeological documents but also in the light of methodological discussions that are fundamental to the histories of psychiatry and psychology. Because of this approach, the book will be important for scholars of these disciplines as well as those of Greek literature and philosophy, strongly advocating the relevance of ancient ideas to modern debates.

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The goal of this research project is to give a comprehensive account of discussions and representations of an ancient disease concept, phrenitis, [acute inflammation of mind and body, not in a theoretical but in a descriptive sense] which is one of the most important and earliest medical syndromes associated with mental disorder from ancient medicine onwards. This research project will examine discussions of the disease in ancient medical texts, as well as representations of it in non-medical Greek and Latin sources, seeking to highlight the important place of phrenitis in the development of medical ideas of mental illness in the Western tradition. This importance resulted in the persistence of phrenitis as a disease concept until as late as the nineteenth century.

- Ancient medicine (especially Hippocrates, Galen, Caelius Aurelianus)
- Ancient views of mind, mental health and mental disorder
- History of psychiatry; history of psychology; psychiatric nosology and taxonomy
- Ancient disabilities
- Patient cases and their history
- Ancient Emotions
- Greek Tragedy
- Ancient animals
- Theories of cognitive embodiment and their application to the hermeneutics of ancient texts

- Narratology; literary theory

This is a book about ideas, theories and observations regarding mental life in a specific time, the classical period (fifth and fourth centuries BCE) in Greece. Thumiger focuses attention on the medical sources (especially but not exclusively the so-called Hippocratic texts), placing them in dialogue with the testimony offered by literary texts from the same period, whether poetry or prose. Her approach is thus interdisciplinary, as far as the more strictly delimited boundaries of ancient science are concerned. It is also anthropological, in the sense that she looks at ideas about mental life as cultural—historical information that enriches our knowledge of ancient Greek life and thought as human phenomena; philological, in that it looks closely at the ancient texts, their wording, images and generic conventions; and theoretically engaged, insofar as it assesses ancient doctrines against the set of questions and problems that have become fundamental in the history of Western psychology, in order to highlight their impact on the origins of this history and the perspective they continue to contribute as a part of it.

Although Thumiger's territory is mostly ancient medicine, several disciplines and areas of research are relevant to this project, and it will therefore be useful to briefly list some of them here. In this field more than others, the scholarly background and the reception of ancient ideas it embodies are themselves a central part of the story being told.

It is usually the case that any interpretation of ancient answers to key human problems necessarily reflects the precise cultural, intellectual and scientific standpoint from which we look at the past. In the case of mental life, the interpretation becomes itself a segment of this history: if a completely neutral reading remains a utopian goal, its impossibility in the field of historical psychology is declared and self-evident. An eighteenth-century medical dissertation, any of Freud's psychoanalytical readings of the past, various forms of literary critique and anthropological analysis: these produce different versions of antiquity, different 'ancient psychologies', within which terms of discourse this research too was forced to take its initial steps.

Thumiger begins by surveying the scholarly research produced on the topic of the mind and mental health in ancient culture in the last two hundred, and especially the last fifty, years. This charting can only be a brief sketch of the subjects, their ramifications and contacts with other areas of research, paying especial attention to items relevant to the present inquiry.

Thumiger began this study by proposing to offer an account of mental health and mental disorder in the medical texts, mostly Hippocratic, of the classical era, including a survey of scientific thought in Platonic and Aristotelian passages regarding medical topics, and offering a comparison with

non-medical sources of the same period, especially tragedy and Herodotus, but also Homer and lyric poetry as constitutive of their traditional background. The results are summarized as follows:

The texts accessed emphasize mental life and disorder as visible and perceptible from the outside; they are primarily seen from outside. This aspect of objectification is traditional to ancient Greek culture and can be charted from Homer to the tragedies.

Next, most of the representations of mental suffering in these texts are embodied: the signs of mental illness are visible in the suffering body of the patient, in his or her disrupted physiology and altered vital functions. This aspect is similarly traditional and finds many parallels in parallel poetic sources. The level of exploration in the physiological accounts offered by medical texts has not been as thoroughly recognized before, and so is new and unique to this study.

Within embodied mental life, sensory changes play a central role and deserve separate and special mention. The medical authors devote enormous attention to sensory sphere of experience, with a level and refinement of detail that are often noteworthy. The search for subjectivity in these texts inescapably leads here, rather than where modern humanism leads us to expect, to the emotions and rational—logical thought.

These authors do not ignore features of personality and character and emotional or cognitive aspects as part of mental health. But these features are naturalized as much as possible and remain of relatively minor importance in the medical discussion of the period. This constitutes a striking departure from the representation in non-medical sources. Tragedy (despite its largely exogenous representation of mental disturbance), but also Herodotus and philosophical authors, Thumiger emphasizes the internalized — ethically and spiritually — dimension of mental health; largely rely on the individual's verbal utterance to convey it; and appear to take for granted a widespread understanding of mental life and psychological suffering framed in strong metaphysics (ideological, ethical or religious).

Comparison with the literary and cultural tradition in which the Hippocratics operated, on the one hand, and consideration of conceptions of mental life, mental disturbance and health care in post-Hellenistic medical texts, on the other, thus makes the following points emerge as typical of these texts and the medical activity to which they bear witness:

- The avoidance of personal detail. Patient cases allude to personal issues afflicting patients that might play a role in mental malaise only rarely, if at all, and never indulge in idiosyncratic details. We never hear about the content of individual patients' dreams or hallucinations; specific worries and anxieties are almost never mentioned.

- The absence of any aspect of ethical evaluation. Apart from a few exceptional references to 'badness' or 'lack of propriety' for individual patients' behavior, the health of the mind in these texts is categorically neutral from an ethical point of view. A comparison with Galen, but also with any other post-Hellenistic medical discussion of mental health, exposes this gap clearly.
- A total continuity between body and mind, expressed not only in the juxtaposition of notes about stools, diet, sleep, mental facts, fever and chills and so forth, but also in the absence of a concept 'disease', with reference to mental life, in our texts, despite the expression — or the metaphor — being a notable topos in tragedy, comedy, Herodotus and philosophical texts of the same period. Subsequent medical nosology easily transfers Hippocratic symptomatology into discrete categories of mental disease. Our authors, however, avoid explicitly offering a classification in this sense.
- The absence of motifs, themes and experiences that seem to dominate the representation of mental life and disturbance in the period. Among these stand out the motif of conflict and violence qualifying the cause and course of madness; punishment or responsibility as explanatory models; danger to oneself and others, and especially suicide as a pathological outcome of mental disturbance; the erotic emotion as a paradigm of mental affliction; and familial patterns of mental pathology.
- Most cogently, the avoidance of traditional psychological vocabulary that constitute the backbone of traditional representations of mental activity, are largely absent, mostly employed anatomically or strictly confined to theoretical discussion and specific texts, which is hardly psychological in our sense of the word in our texts, and is only very selectively associated with illness). Indeed, the clinical cases eschew this vocabulary altogether, signaling a discontinuity between 'theory of mind' and 'symptomatology of mental life'.

The history Thumiger has tried to reconstruct thus turns out to be composed of two different stories: one that concerns ancient psychology and mental health within the wider cultural discourses of classical Greece, and another that concerns medical thought in the fifth and early fourth centuries as a fundamental phase within the development of ancient medicine and scientific thought.

Within the first story, the contribution of these texts might appear poorer, less perceptive and certainly more mechanical than the narratives preserved for us by mythology and in poetic texts. Within the second, these authors stand out for the strength of their program and for their determination to carve out a place for scientific approaches to mental well-being that clearly separate from contemporary metaphysical representations, and this against a background in which traditional models of mental life were already conspicuous and strong.

As Thumiger tried to highlight without committing her analysis to pointless retrospective validation, the rejection of metaphysics in these texts results in a scrupulous attentiveness to embodied mental life that current developments in distributed cognition (enactivism and affective cognition) help us appreciate as a valid and truthful account of human life.

Later medical thinkers, who operated within clearer professional demarcations and received and could elaborate the influence of a long philosophical tradition about the 'care of the self', return to ethical, personal and evaluative themes in their discussions of mental life, integrating them within their understanding of human physiology. At the same time, they reorganize the material available to them from the Hippocratic writings in elaborate forms of psychiatric nosology and pathology proper — a move most clearly observable in the thrust of Galen's comments on these texts. The Hippocratic picture thus testifies to a unique phase in the history of Western thought, still influenced by traditional models and devoid of taxonomic agendas and anatomical explanatory grids, on the one hand, but urged on by an intransigent determination to define an exact intellectual and professional territory, on the other. <>

The Wizard and the Prophet: Two Remarkable Scientists and Their Dueling Visions to Shape Tomorrow's World by Charles C. Mann [Knopf, 9780307961693]

From the best-selling, award-winning author of *1491* and *1493*--an incisive portrait of the two little-known twentieth-century scientists, Norman Borlaug and William Vogt, whose diametrically opposed views shaped our ideas about the environment, laying the groundwork for how people in the twenty-first century will choose to live in tomorrow's world.

In forty years, Earth's population will reach ten billion. Can our world support that? What kind of world will it be? Those answering these questions generally fall into two deeply divided groups--Wizards and Prophets, as Charles Mann calls them in this balanced, authoritative, nonpolemical new book. The Prophets, he explains, follow William Vogt, a founding environmentalist who believed that in using more than our planet has to give, our prosperity will lead us to ruin. *Cut back!* was his mantra. *Otherwise everyone will lose!*

The Wizards are the heirs of Norman Borlaug, whose research, in effect, wrangled the world in service to our species to produce modern high-yield crops that then saved millions from starvation. *Innovate!* was Borlaug's cry. *Only in that way can everyone win!* Mann delves into these diverging viewpoints to assess the four great challenges humanity faces--food, water, energy, climate change--grounding each in historical context and weighing the options for the future. With our civilization on the line, the author's insightful analysis is an essential addition to the urgent conversation about how our children will fare on an increasingly crowded Earth.

Excerpt: All parents must remember the moment when they first held their children—the tiny crumpled face emerging, an entire new person, from the hospital blanket. I extended my hands and took my daughter in my arms. I was so overwhelmed that I could hardly think.

After the birth, I wandered outside for a while so that mother and child could rest. It was three in the morning, late February in New England. There was ice on the sidewalk and a cold drizzle in the air. As I stepped from the curb, a thought popped into my head: when my daughter is my age, almost 10 billion people will be walking the earth.

I stopped in midstride. I thought: How is that going to work?

Like other parents, I want my children to be comfortable in their adult lives. But in the hospital parking lot this suddenly seemed unlikely. Ten billion mouths, I thought. How can they possibly be fed? Twenty billion feet—how will they be shod? Ten billion bodies—how will they be accommodated? Is the world big enough, rich enough, for all these people to flourish? Or have I brought my children into a time of general collapse?

When I began as a journalist, I envisioned myself, romantically, as an eyewitness to history. I wanted to chronicle the important events of my time. Only after I began work did the obvious question occur: What are those important events? My first article, essentially the caption for a photograph of a bad automobile accident, certainly didn't document one. But what was the standard? Hundreds of years from now, what will historians view as today's most significant developments?

For a long time, I believed that the answer was "discoveries in science and technology." I wanted to learn about the curing of diseases, the rise of computer power, the unraveling of the mysteries of matter and energy. Later, though, it seemed to me that what was important was less the new knowledge than what it had enabled. In the 1970s, when I was in high school, about one out of every four people in the world was hungry—"undernourished," to use the term preferred by the United Nations. Today, the U.N. says, the figure is one out of ten. [In absolute terms, the decrease seems less impressive. Several hundred million still live in destitution. In recent years, moreover, the number of hungry has risen a bit. Researchers disagree on whether this

reversal is a long-term problem or a temporary blip due to violence (Southwest Asia, parts of Africa) and falling commodity prices, which have lowered national incomes in some places. Nonetheless, a child born in the twenty-first century has less chance of emerging into a life of absolute want than at any other century in known history.] In those four decades, the global average life span has risen by more than eleven years, with most of the increase occurring in poor places. Hundreds of millions of people in Asia, Latin America, and Africa have lifted themselves from destitution into something like the middle class. In the annals of humankind, nothing like this surge of well-being has occurred before. It is the signal accomplishment of this generation, and its predecessor.

This enrichment has not occurred evenly or equitably; millions upon millions are not prosperous, and millions more are falling behind. Nonetheless, on a global level—the level of 10 billion—the increase in affluence is undeniable. The factory worker in Pennsylvania and the farmer in Pakistan may both be struggling and angry, but they are also, by the standards of the past, wealthy people.

Today the world has about 7.3 billion inhabitants. Most demographers believe that around 2050 the world's population will reach 10 billion or a bit less. About this time, human numbers will probably begin to level off—as a species, we will be around "replacement level," each couple having, on average, just enough children to replace themselves. All the while, economists say, the world's development should continue, however unevenly, however slowly. The implication is that when my daughter is my age a sizable percentage of the world's 10 billion souls will be middle class. Jobs, homes, cars, fancy electronics, a few occasional treats—these are what the affluent multitudes will want. (Why shouldn't they?) And though the lesson of history is that the great majority of these men and women will make their way, it is hard not to be awed by the magnitude of the task facing our children. A couple of billion jobs. A couple of billion homes. A couple of billion cars. Billions and billions of occasional treats.

Can we provide these things? That is only part of the question. The full question is: Can we provide these things without wrecking much else?

As my children were growing up, I took advantage of journalistic assignments to speak, from time to time, with experts in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Over the years, as the conversations accumulated, it seemed to me that the responses to my questions fell into two broad categories, each associated (at least in my mind) with one of two people, Americans who lived in the twentieth century. Neither is well known to the public, yet one man has often been called the most important person born in that century and the other is the principal founder of the most significant cultural and intellectual movement of that time. Both recognized and tried to solve the fundamental question that

Spotlight

will face my children's generation: how to survive the next century without a wrenching global catastrophe.

The two people were barely acquainted—they met only once, so far as I know—and had little regard for each other's work. But in their different ways, they were largely responsible for the creation of the basic intellectual blueprints that institutions around the world use today for understanding our environmental dilemmas. Unfortunately, their blueprints are mutually contradictory, for they had radically different answers to the question of survival.

The two people were William Vogt and Norman Borlaug.

Vogt, born in 1902, laid out the basic ideas for the modern environmental movement. In particular, he founded what the Hampshire College demographer Betsy Hartmann has called "apocalyptic environmentalism"—the belief that unless humankind drastically reduces consumption its growing numbers and appetite will overwhelm the planet's ecosystems. In best-selling books and powerful speeches, Vogt argued that affluence is not our greatest achievement but our biggest problem. Our prosperity is temporary, he said, because it is based on taking more from Earth than it can give. If we continue, the unavoidable result will be devastation on a global scale, perhaps including our extinction. Cut back! Cut back! was his mantra. Otherwise everyone will lose!

Borlaug, born twelve years later, has become the emblem of what has been termed "techno-optimism" or "cornucopianism"—the view that science and technology, properly applied, can help us produce our way out of our predicament. Exemplifying this idea, Borlaug was the primary figure in the research that in the 1960s created the "Green Revolution," the combination of high-yielding crop varieties and agronomic techniques that raised grain harvests around the world, helping to avert tens of millions of deaths from hunger. To Borlaug, affluence was not the problem but the solution. Only by getting richer, smarter, and more knowledgeable can humankind create the science that will resolve our environmental dilemmas. Innovate! Innovate! was Borlaug's cry. Only in that way can everyone win!

Both Borlaug and Vogt thought of themselves as environmentalists facing a planetary crisis. Both worked with others whose contributions, though vital, were overshadowed by theirs. But that is where the similarity ends. To Borlaug, human ingenuity was the solution to our problems. One example: by using the advanced methods of the Green Revolution to increase per-acre yields, he argued, farmers would not have to plant as many acres. (Researchers call this the Borlaug hypothesis.) Vogt's views were the opposite: the solution, he said, is to get smaller. Rather than grow more grain to produce more meat, humankind should, as his followers say, "Eat lower on the food chain." If people ate less beef and pork, valuable farmland would not have to be devoted to cattle and pig feed. The burden on Earth's ecosystems would be lighter.

I think of the adherents of these two perspectives as Wizards and Prophets—Wizards unveiling technological fixes, Prophets decrying the consequences of our heedlessness. Borlaug has become a model for the Wizards. Vogt was in many ways the founder of the Prophets.

Borlaug and Vogt traveled in the same orbit for decades, but rarely acknowledged each other. Their first meeting, in the mid-1940s, ended in disagreement. So far as I know, they never spoke afterward. Not one letter passed between them. They each referred to the other's ideas in public addresses, but never attached a name.

Instead, Vogt rebuked the anonymous "deluded" scientists who were actually aggravating our problems. Meanwhile, Borlaug derided his opponents as "Luddites."

Both men are dead now, but their disciples have continued the hostilities. Indeed, the dispute between Wizards and Prophets has, if anything, become more vehement. Wizards view the Prophets' emphasis on cutting back as intellectually dishonest, indifferent to the poor, even racist (because most of the world's hungry are non-Caucasian). Following Vogt, they say, is a path toward regression, narrowness, and global poverty. Prophets sneer that the Wizards' faith in human resourcefulness is unthinking, scientifically ignorant, even driven by greed (because remaining within ecological limits will cut into corporate profits). Following Borlaug, they say, at best postpones an inevitable day of reckoning—it is a recipe for what activists have come to describe as "ecocide." As the name-calling has escalated, conversations about the environment have increasingly become dialogues of the deaf. Which might be all right, if we weren't discussing the fate of our children.

Wizards and Prophets are less two ideal categories than two ends of a continuum. In theory, they could meet in the middle. One could cut back here à la Vogt and expand over there, Borlaug-style. Some people believe in doing just that. But the test of a categorization like this one is less whether it is perfect—it is not—than whether it is useful. As a practical matter, the solutions (or putative solutions) to environmental problems have been dominated by one of these approaches or the other. If a government persuades its citizenry to spend huge sums revamping offices, stores, and homes with the high-tech insulation and low-water-use plumbing urged by Prophets, the same citizenry will resist ponying up for Wizards' new-design nuclear plants and monster desalination facilities. People who back Borlaug and embrace genetically modified, hyper-productive wheat and rice won't follow Vogt and dump their steaks and chops for low-impact veggie burgers.

Moreover, the ship is too large to turn quickly. If the Wizardly route is chosen, genetically modified crops cannot be bred and tested overnight. Similarly, carbon-sequestration techniques and nuclear plants cannot be deployed instantly. Prophet-style methods—planting huge numbers of trees to suck carbon dioxide from the air, for instance, or decoupling the world's food supply from

industrial agriculture—would take equally long to pay off. Because backtracking is not easy, the decision to go one way or the other is hard to change.

Most of all, the clash between Vogtians and Borlaugians is heated because it is less about facts than about values. Although the two men rarely acknowledged it, their arguments were founded on implicit moral and spiritual visions: concepts of the world and humankind's place in it. Entwined with the discussion of economics and biology, that is, were whispers of "ought" and "should." As a rule, these views were articulated more explicitly by those who followed Vogt and Borlaug than by the two men themselves. But they were there from the beginning.

Prophets look at the world as finite, and people as constrained by their environment. Wizards see possibilities as inexhaustible, and humans as wily managers of the planet. One views growth and development as the lot and blessing of our species; others regard stability and preservation as our future and our goal. Wizards regard Earth as a toolbox, its contents freely available for use; Prophets think of the natural world as embodying an overarching order that should not casually be disturbed.

The conflict between these visions is not between good and evil, but between different ideas of the good life, between ethical orders that give priority to personal liberty and those that give priority to what might be called connection. To Borlaug, the landscape of late-twentieth-century capitalism, with its teeming global markets dominated by big corporations, was morally acceptable, though ever in need of repair. Its emphasis on personal autonomy, social and physical mobility, and the rights of the individual were resonant. Vogt thought differently. By the time he died, in 1968, he had come to believe that there was something fundamentally wrong with Western-style consumer societies. People needed to live in smaller, more stable communities, closer to the earth, controlling the exploitative frenzy of the global market. The freedom and flexibility touted by advocates of consumer society were an illusion; individuals' rights mean little if they live in atomized isolation, cut off from Nature and each other.

These arguments have their roots in long-ago fights. Voltaire and Rousseau disputing whether natural law truly is a guide for humankind. Jefferson and Hamilton jousting over the ideal character of citizens. Robert Malthus scoffing at the claims of the radical philosophers William Godwin and Nicolas de Condorcet that science could overcome limits set by the physical world. T. H. Huxley, the famed defender of Darwin, and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce of Oxford, contending whether biological laws truly apply to creatures with souls. John Muir, champion of pristine wilderness, squaring off against Gifford Pinchot, evangelist for managing forests with teams of experts. The ecologist Paul Ehrlich and the economist Julian Simon betting whether ingenuity can outwit scarcity. To the philosopher-critic Lewis Mumford, all of these battles were part of a centuries-long

struggle between two types of technology, "one authoritarian, the other democratic, the first system-centered, immensely powerful, but inherently unstable, the other man-centered, relatively weak, but resourceful and durable." And all of them were about, at least in part, the relationship of our species to Nature—which is to say they were debates about the nature of our species.

Borlaug and Vogt, too, took sides in the dispute. Both believed that *Homo sapiens*, alone among Earth's creatures, can understand the world through science, and that this empirical knowledge can guide societies into the future. From this point, though, the two men diverged. One of them believed that ecological research has revealed our planet's inescapable limits, and how to live within them. The other believed that science could show us how to surpass what would be barriers for other species.

Who is right, Vogt or Borlaug? Better to have your feet on the ground or live, however chancily, in the air? Cut back or produce more?

Wizard or Prophet? No question is more important to our crowded world. Willy-nilly, our children will have to answer it.

What this book is not: a detailed survey of our environmental dilemmas. Many parts of the world I skip over completely; many issues I do not discuss. The subjects are too big and complicated to fit in a single book—at least, not a book that I can imagine anyone reading. Instead I am describing two ways of thinking, two views of possible futures.

Another thing this book is not: a blueprint for tomorrow. The Wizard and the Prophet presents no plan, argues for no specific course of action. Part of this aversion reflects the opinion of the author: in our Internet era, there are entirely too many pundits shouting out advice. I believe I stand on firmer ground when I try to describe what I see around me than when I try to tell people what to do.

In the first chapter I step back to consider what biology suggests about the trajectory of any species—that is, why one would imagine that *Homo sapiens* actually has a future. Biologists tell us that all species, if given the chance, overreach, overreproduce, overconsume. Inevitably, they encounter a wall, always to catastrophic effect, and usually sooner rather than later. From this vantage, Vogt and Borlaug were equally deluded. Here I ask here whether there is reason to believe the scientists are wrong.

Next, I turn to Vogt and Borlaug themselves. I follow Vogt from his birth in pre-suburban Long Island to his near death from polio to his ecological conversion experience off the coast of Peru. I close the first part of his story with the publication of his tract *The Road to Survival* (1948), the first modern we're-all-going-to-hell book. *Road* was meant as a warning bell, based on objective science, but it was also an implicit vision of how we should live: a moral testament. Vogt was the first to put together, in modern form, the

principal tenets of environmentalism, the twentieth century's only successful, long-lasting ideology.

Borlaug's tale begins with his birth into a poor Iowa farming community. Borlaug was released from what he saw as endless toil by the great good fortune of having Henry Ford invent a tractor that could be built and sold cheaply enough to replace his labor on the farm. Allowed to attend college, he labored through the Depression until a concatenation of accidents put him into the research program that led to the Green Revolution. In 2007, when Borlaug was ninety-three, *The Wall Street Journal* editorialized that he had "arguably saved more lives than anyone in history. Maybe one billion."

In the middle section of this book, I invite the reader to put on, as it were, Vogtian and Borlaugian spectacles and look at four great, oncoming challenges: food, water, energy, and climate change. Sometimes I think of them as Plato's four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Earth represents agriculture, how we will feed the world. Water is drinking water, as vital as food. Fire is our energy supply. Air is climate change, a by-product, potentially catastrophic, of our hunger for energy.

Earth: If present trends continue, most agronomists believe, harvests will have to rise 50 percent or more by 2050. Different models with different assumptions make different projections, but all view the rise in demand as due both to the increase in human numbers and the increase in human affluence. With few exceptions, people who became wealthier have wanted to consume more meat. To grow more meat, farmers will need to grow more grain—much more. Wizards and Prophets have radically different ways of approaching these demands.

Water: Although most of Earth is covered by water, less than 1 percent of it is accessible freshwater. And the demand for that water is constantly increasing. The increase is a corollary of the rising demand for food—almost three-quarters of global water use goes to agriculture. Many water researchers believe that as many as 4.5 billion people could be short of water by as early as 2025. As with food, the disciples of Borlaug tend to react in one way to this worry; those of Vogt, in another.

Fire: Predicting how much energy tomorrow's world will need depends on assumptions about, for instance, how many of the roughly 1.2 billion people who do not have electricity will actually get it, and how that electricity will be provided (solar power, nuclear power, natural gas, wind, coal). Still, the main thrust of every attempt to estimate future requirements that I am aware of is that the human enterprise will require more energy—probably quite a lot more. What to do about it depends on whether you ask Borlaugians or Vogtians.

Air: In this list, climate change is odd man out. The other three elements (food, freshwater, energy supply) reflect human needs, whereas climate change is an unwanted consequence of satisfying those needs. The first three are

about providing benefits to humankind: food on the table, water from the tap, heat and air-conditioning in the home. With climate change, the benefit is invisible: avoiding problems in the future. Societies put their members through wrenching changes and then, with a bit of luck, nothing especially noteworthy occurs. Temperatures don't rise much; sea levels stay roughly where they are. Little wonder that Wizards and Prophets disagree about what to do!

Climate change is different from the others in a second way, too. It is rare to encounter people who don't accept that the world's increasingly prosperous population will ratchet up demand for food, water, and energy. But a significant minority believe that climate change is not real, or is not attributable to human activity, or is so minimal as to be not worth bothering about. The disagreement is so passionate that it's easy for one side to say, "Well, if he gives any credence to this claim, then he belongs on the other team, and forget about anything else he reports!" Hoping to avoid this fate, I split the discussion of climate change in two. In the first section, I ask the skeptics to accept—just for the moment—that climate change is a real future problem, so I can look at how Borlaugians and Vogtians would address it. In an appendix, I address in what ways some of the skeptics could be correct.

The question this book asks is not "How will we resolve these four challenges?" but "How would a Vogt or Borlaug approach them?" I close with the last years of both men, melancholy in both cases. Tying up a loose philosophical end, an epilogue returns to the discussion of why one might believe that our species could succeed, and even thrive.

The Wizard and the Prophet is a book about the way knowledgeable people might think about the choices to come, rather than what will happen in this or that scenario. It is a book about the future that makes no predictions.

In college I read two Vogtian classics: *The Population Bomb* (1968), by the ecologist Paul Ehrlich, and *The Limits to Growth* (1972), by a team of computer modelers. Famously, *The Population Bomb* begins with a thunderous claim: "The battle to feed all of humanity is over." Matters go downhill from there. "Sometime in the next fifteen years, the end will come," Ehrlich told CBS News in 1970. "And by 'the end' I mean an utter breakdown of the capacity of the planet to support humanity." *The Limits to Growth* was a bit more hopeful. If humankind changed its habits completely, it said, civilizational collapse could be avoided. Otherwise, the researchers argued, "the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years"

The two books scared the pants off me. I became a Vogtian, convinced that the human enterprise would fall apart if our species didn't abruptly reverse course. Long afterward, it occurred to me that many of the Prophets' dire forecasts had not come true. Famines had occurred in the 1970s, as *The Population Bomb* had predicted. India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, West and East Africa—in that decade all were wracked, horribly, by hunger. But the

death tally was nowhere near the "hundreds of millions" predicted by Ehrlich. According to a widely accepted count by the British development economist Stephen Devereux, starvation claimed about 5 million lives during that period—with most of the deaths due to warfare, rather than environmental exhaustion. Compared to the past, in fact, famine has not been increasing but has become rarer. Nor did anything like Ehrlich's planetary breakdown occur by 1985, though there have been awful losses that will not be easy to set right. Similarly, pesticides did not lead to lethal epidemics of heart disease, cirrhosis, and cancer, a prospect Ehrlich warned of in 1969. Farmers continued to spray their fields, but U.S. life expectancy did not fall to "42 years by 1980:'

In the mid-1980s I began work as a science journalist. I met many Wizard technologists and grew to admire them. I became a Borlaugian, scoffing at the catastrophic scenarios I had previously embraced. Cleverness will get us through, I thought, as it had in the past. To think anything else, given recent history, seemed foolishly pessimistic.

Nowadays, though, worrying about my children, I am waffling. My daughter, in college as I write, is headed into a future that seems ever more jostling and contentious, ever closer to overstepping social, physical, and ecological margins.

Ten billion affluent people! The number is unprecedented, the difficulties like nothing before. Maybe my optimism is as ill-founded as my previous pessimism. Maybe Vogt was right after all.

Thus, I oscillate between the two stances. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, I think Vogt was correct. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, I go for Borlaug. And on Sunday, I don't know.

I wrote this book to satisfy my own curiosity, and to see if I could learn something about the roads my children could take. <>

Crafting Characters: Heroes and Heroines in the Ancient Greek Novel by Koen De Temmerman [Oxford University Press, 9780199686148]

This intricately researched and well-written study, derived from author's doctoral dissertation after thorough revision, explores the nature of character in what remains of ancient Greek novels. De Temmerman's attempts to create collation and systemization of the rhetoric, narrative, and ideas underlying the presentation of character in these stories. The study offers some innovative evidence and inference about the nature and limits of ancient presentation of character.

The oldest European novels were written in ancient Greek during the first few centuries of the Common Era. Despite the gold rush towards these novels in the last two decades and the resurgence of interest in representations of character in literary studies, and Classical studies , no volume has yet been devoted to exploring character and

characterization in the ancient Greek novels.

This study analyzes the characterization of the protagonists in the five extant, so-called "ideal" Greek novels (those of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius, Longus, and Heliodorus). De Temmerman offers close readings of techniques of characterization used in each novel and combines modern--mainly, but not exclusively, structuralist--narratology and ancient rhetoric. He argues that three conceptual dyads central to ancient theory of character: typification vs. individuation, idealistic vs. realistic characterization, and static vs. dynamic character. This construct of character in these narratives offers a more ambiguous, more elusive, and in a more complex way than has so far been discussed in the literature. Throughout the different chapters, it also becomes clear how this personal way of presentation of character become entangled with self-representation and enactment of the self.

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Reading Robin Hood: Content, form and reception in the outlaw myth by Stephen Knight [Manchester Medieval Literature and Culture, Manchester University Press, 9781526123770]

[Reading Robin Hood](#) explores and explains stories about the mythic outlaw - a figure who always represents the values of natural law and stands up for true justice - from the middle ages to the present.

While a few books have described the outlaw myth, usually in its earlier forms, and occasional academic essays have commented on elements of the Robin Hood story, this is the first in-depth analysis of the whole sequence and the varying elements of the adventures of Robin Hood. First, it explores the medieval tradition from early poems into the long-surviving sung ballads - and also two major early developments, the Scottish version of the outlaw hero, here called Rabbie Hood, and then around 1600 the gentrified Robin, the exiled Earl of Huntington, created by socially aspirational writers and partnered by Lady Marian.

Medievalism passed into memory, and early nineteenth-century Romantic authors, followed by novelists, re-imagined Robin, as strongly involved with nature, deeply in love with Marian, definitely English, not Norman or French, and representing in the time of reform the rights of the ordinary man. That fitted Robin for the modern world, but he did not stop developing.

In film, he has stood up for international Western values - even those of a crusader - and the modern Marian plays a much more substantial role: here for the first time she has a chapter to herself. The multiple Robin Hood myth flourishes,

continuously producing new forms for the hero's story, and new understandings of his meaning.

Excerpt: The literary and cultural tradition of Robin Hood differs substantially from other collections of material that might appear comparable. A myth which may have some basis in legend, like that of King Arthur or Tristan and Isolde, it is clearly much more popular than them in both its genres and its politics. The materials do not have the grand status or splendid illustrations of those medieval classics, they do not run on into modern high-status genres like epic poem or opera, and through the myth there is no clear structure of descent or authoritative transmission of the narrative. Modern Robin Hood stories, whether in print or in film, do not, like King Arthur versions, have evident sources which are carefully updated for a new context – rather, as is argued in Chapter 8 of this book, they tend to draw without apparent cultural hierarchy on a scattered range of unranked sources and so are remarkably open to new materials and ideas.

That rhizomatic tendency is itself recurrently regenerated through the way in which the myth itself is of uncertain, even anarchic, nature. Every Robin Hood scholar is familiar with the journalist who only wants to know whether Robin really existed, and some may have spoken on the myth in parts of England where members of the public will confidently identify where Robin Hood was born and brought up – usually close to their own personal locations. Historians and archivists, both professional and overtly amateur, have enthusiastically joined in this reduction of a heroic figure to a mere issue of personal identity – though very oddly (and again anarchistically) the earliest R. Hood of all to appear in the records, who was intriguingly accused of murdering a servant of the Abbot of Cirencester just before 1216, has proved of no interest at all to the 'real Robin Hood' people.

If the myth can be personally empiricised in this randomized mode, it has also avoided serious status through the varied, small-scale, incoherent ways in which it has been recorded for posterity. It was at first apparently oral, in reports, songs and place-names, then was recorded in a couple of unostentatious manuscript anthologies, then became a reasonably popular early print, then withdrew into ephemeral printed broadsides, to emerge in the nineteenth century in a few little-valued poems and a range of unpretentious novels, often with garish illustrations, and in the twentieth century located itself primarily in children's fiction and the new popular disposability of film. This was not the treasured material of great libraries, nor was it enshrined in the genres which would attract moral or nationalistic excitement when, around 1900, literary criticism began to study fiction in languages other than Latin and Greek.

The two main scholarly functions which have proved central to both literary prestige and cultural capital, textual editing and critical commentary, were for long notably absent from the Robin Hood tradition – and when they partly appeared

they were redirected in other, primarily historical directions. The sheer popularity of the Robin Hood ballads, including those in small anthologies called garlands, merged in the late eighteenth century with nascent medievalism, first in 1777 by the forgotten Welsh bookman Thomas Evans and then very influentially in 1795 by Joseph Ritson, who basically copied Evans's edition but preceded it with a long introduction which did look like classic-forming respectful scholarship. It referred in its notes to many of the earlier texts, literary as well as popular, but the emphasis lay on the eleven-page 'Life of Robin Hood' (with sixty pages of quasi-empirical 'Notes and Illustrations'), including a genealogical chart tracing his lineage back to the Norman Conquest (when the name was allegedly Fitz Ooth).

In the new mood of biography (the major accounts of Johnson by Hawkins and Boswell came out in 1787 and 1791), this was a life and a legend, but such history itself involved hierarchy. Ritson fully accepted the sixteenth-century gentrification of Robin, turning him from an order-threatening yeoman into an earl true to all hierarchy but opposed to bad King John. Ritson was also for his time a startlingly radical figure – he addressed people as 'Citizen' and, probably even more alarmingly, was a vegetarian – but like many in England at the time, especially looking at events in France, could accept political and social reform only if it were led by a lord. By the 1840s that view had changed, and J. M. Gutch's new anthology, which positioned itself independently by being personally hostile to Ritson, probably because of his radicalism, also, and contradictorily, was more radical than him by conducting a long argument about Robin's having been not a lord but a yeoman, a figure of the people – almost a modern member of parliament, so maintaining Ritson's discursive position on identity and politics but updating it after fifty years.

In much of the nineteenth-century narrative that developed in the novel, historicity still ruled. Robin Hood remains a figure whose exciting deeds are retold only for a political, and so would-be historical purpose – for Scott he is Englishness embodied, and as is outlined in Chapter 6 for others he can be the spirit of Magna Carta rather weirdly combined with the modern English parliament; or among other desirabilities from high liberal politics to low pleasures, he could represent the spirit of English resistance to the French, the natural medieval forest against the alienating modern city, standing up to bullying lords and nasty legal officials, and while fond enough of his wife always keen to kiss a pretty girl. This under-focused para-historical figure oscillating between a trickster spirit and banal nationalism is also behind the finest piece of early outlaw scholarship, the collection and collation by Francis James Child in the early modern period of the early ballads, especially the printed riches, at one penny each. Volume 3 of the five-volume *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, which, as part V, originally appeared in 1888, gathers together thirty-eight Robin Hood texts, thirty-one of them broadside or garland ballads (see pp. 83–4),

but they are not identified as a theme-focused section. In fact Child links them to the Scottish outlaw of the border ballads by printing 'Johnie Cock' at the start of the volume, then obfuscates the date and coherence of the outlaw texts by offering next the unrelated 'Robin and Gandelyn' and then 'Adam Bell', at best a Robin Hood parallel and recorded later than the early Robin Hood texts which follow.

Child saw the early Robin Hood materials as part of early English national folk culture, and missed their special characteristics, as discussed in Chapter 4. This blurring of boundaries and contents between outlaw texts and folk ballads meshed with his mission – one that was accomplished with remarkable energy and learning, and relied on what would still be impressive world-wide consultation – which was to make widely available in full scholarly mode the early, primarily oral, folk materials of English culture, which were in many instances also part of American culture, and he was implicitly arguing for the richness of these materials that the usual high-culture emphasis on literature and its European antiquities was overlooking. But as well as showing a laudable popularism and an understandable interest in the American cultural past, Child also blurred a crucial generic boundary. The almost comparable scholarship of Bertrand Bronson when he gathered *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads* showed that musically the Robin Hood materials are, as in so many other areas, very different from the norm: their tunes are not ancient and folkloric, they are not medieval, and they are primarily urban and commercial and mostly borrowed – they are new early modern phenomena, and are not of antique folkloric value, neither in the content that Child privileged nor in the form on which Bronson focused.

But no-one at the time in the scholarly or critical professions would notice these malformations of the context of the Robin Hood materials, as almost nobody took any notice of them. The burgeoning number of folklore and folk-ballad people soon realized that the outlaw texts were different, and passed them by for the border ballads and the many early songs of love and loss (the largest category of the Child ballads). The literary people focused on authors who could be felt to rank with the Latin and Greek classics of their earlier education, and in the first half of the twentieth century literary criticism (much to the surprise of people when it is pointed out) was just about Shakespeare and the major poets. The important part of Leavis's intervention was not the shaky moralistic basis and the thematic redirection of authors, but his decision to concentrate on the novel as the major literary art form – *The Great Tradition* is a deliberately challenging title: poetry is superseded. But the outlaw novels were never contenders, being quite without the alienated wit of Austen, the moralizing intensity of Eliot or the sensual narcissism of Lawrence.

There were rare instances of scholarly engagement with the outlaw tradition – in 1909 a young American scholar, W. H.

Clawson, produced a careful formal study of the major early Robin Hood text, *The Gest of Robin Hood*, and the diligent Oxfordian E. K. Chambers described the early ballads in several studies as part of his literary-historical approach – but no-one followed them up. The first quivers of coherent Robin Hood scholarship appeared after the Second World War in Britain as a debate developed in the journal *Past and Present* about the social and political meaning of the figure and some at least of the texts. Rodney Hilton linked Robin to the so-called 'Peasants' Revolt' of 1381 and others agreed, but then James Holt argued that Robin represented the dissent of small landowners, who were both free yeomen and also minor gentry. Though his interest was clearly political, the conservative Holt could read texts well, and was in fact the first to see ambiguity, even a multiple audience, at the core of the myth,⁶ but there were also other nuances. Tom Hahn has shown how this debate was also about how to re-read the English tradition in the light of the postwar leftward move of British politics.

Similar variations in the structures and attitudes of university education led to the actual development of something like Robin Hood studies in the late twentieth century. The move away from core courses, themselves re-creators of a stable hierarchical canon replete with cultural capital, permitted restless-minded people to set up optional courses to study never-discussed issues – like the concerns of women, workers, the colonized and, in this instance, the popular audience. I and others, notably in North America, came across the figure of Robin Hood in courses on ballads, as well as on popular culture and film, and it was immediately obvious that there was no informative secondary material on the tradition, beyond the 'real Robin Hood' obsessives and the recent extension of that concern into social and political history. One move towards the texts from the historians was the anthology by Dobson and Taylor, but its major value was a lengthy introduction which was the first survey of the textual tradition beyond a few pages in the earlier histories. An indication that a more literary approach would be productive appeared in an essay by Douglas Gray, a classic literary medievalist with wide-ranging and often radical interests, who here thought about the themes and structures of the earliest texts.

It was clear to us Robin Hood ballad teachers that there was more to do to make this tradition, so varied in time and genre, available for coherent analysis. I set out to provide a basically descriptive account, which appeared in 1994 – the subtitle 'A Complete Study' was meant to suggest the old-fashioned descriptivist nature of the project: I was tempted to spell it 'Compleat'. Others were thinking along similar lines: Jeffrey Singman published in 1998 a survey with emphasis on the drama, building on David Wiles's earlier useful though slender book. Kevin Carpenter at Oldenburg University in Germany arranged in 1995 a conference and an essay collection to complement his own fine collection of Robin Hood materials, including visual

realizations. Tom Hahn at the University of Rochester joined in with several perceptive analyses as well as organizationally as mastermind of the International Association for Robin Hood Studies, which first met in 1997 and has kept doing so in alternate years, miming the forest spirit by having no subscriptions and no bureaucracy, just a flexible and ad hoc organizing group.

Texts for classroom use were another issue and having separately approached the TEAMS (Teaching of the Middle Ages) series on this matter, Tom Ohlgren of Purdue University and I teamed up and in 1998 produced our *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, which has been widely used. A different textual move transpired when, having heard about the discovery in 1993 of the seventeenth-century 'Forresters' manuscript of Robin Hood ballads, I learnt at the British Library, to my surprise, that there were no plans to publish it. I turned to this task – there were no new ballads as such in the manuscript, but a few better versions of broadsides and some new editorially corrected texts. The volume was produced by that fine scholar-turned-publisher Derek Brewer, who proved friendly to Robin Hood – his very wide interests already reached into folklore. Through all this process I realized how hard it was to track down such scholarly and critical materials as had been randomly appearing: Gray's essay, in a Tokyo journal, was one of the easiest to find. Again, with the help of Brewer, I produced a plump book of reprinted pieces that have helped many a student write interesting essays on the disparate, challenging but highly rewarding primary material.

Once we had as it were introduced Robin Hood to the groves of academic teaching, it was natural, from genuine interest, as well as meeting (and even ironizing) the requirements of the modern university's managerial sheriffs, to develop research output on the English outlaw. The International Association for Robin Hood Studies has produced four essay collections from its meetings; there are other independent ones in process, and several scholars have produced essays and books. Much of this work has been a sophisticated form of extending our knowledge of Robin Hood across the genres: Scott Nollen has charted the Robin Hood films, while Kevin Harty has recurrently written on little-known outlaw films, including ones outside the Anglophone world; Linda Troost has analyzed eighteenth-century musical theatre, and Lorraine Stock has explored the later work of de Koven; Lois Potter has matched that with a study of the English Georgian Alfred Noyes, as well as reporting on the Sherwood-area poets of the early nineteenth century; Tom Hahn's work on the 'Lives of Robin Hood' will be an important addition to this Robin Hood fieldwork; a major contribution has been Tom Ohlgren's research into the early texts and his re-editing of them, with the sadly late Lister Matheson, in a classic comparative edition.

Another form of critical scholarship has produced striking results as the contexts of Robin Hood materials have been looked at both more closely and more widely. Rob Gossedge has shown that Peacock's Maid Marian is not a mere witty frolic, as most have thought, but responds to the royal family's attempt to enclose major parts of Windsor Forest in 1814; Helen Phillips has not only seen a Robin Hood theme deep in the most political Brontë novel *Shirley*, but has also set out in compelling detail the varied and determined ways in which early modern religious controversialists, from St Thomas More on, used the Robin Hood tradition as an instrument in their arguments; John Marshall has examined the events and implications in several of the better recorded early play-games; and I have argued for a fuller understanding of the way in which the play-games link to the French pastourelle tradition of 'Robin et Marion'. Laura Blunk, Allen W. Wright and John Chandler have all looked further into the outlaw tradition continuing in modern popular culture.

If moves of those kinds took Robin Hood deeper into the academic libraries, there has also been some sign of transition towards a concept-based treatment of the materials of the myth. This was the Raymond Williams-linked idea behind my book [Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography](#), tracing how a changing myth operates politically in terms of its multiple receptive – and in terms of this tradition at least, productive – contexts. Other theory-oriented approaches have appeared: the essay collection that I edited for Brepols in 2011, devoted to serious academic treatments of the outlaw myth, included Valerie Johnson's account of it in terms of Giorgio Agamben's theories, and Alex Kaufman's development of Nietzsche's theories of the horde in terms of greenwood society. There will surely be more of what have been in a tricksterish spirit called 'Robin Hood with brains' ventures, exploring through scholarship and theory how the outlaw materials are not merely a domain of irritating complications, as they were long seen by tidy-minded and effectively conservative scholars, but are in fact a rich field of social, political and intellectual complexity.

The present book is seen as work towards this goal – its premise is to treat the Robin Hood material with the scholarship and the measured, even plodding, tread of analysis that has long been natural to more prestigious literature. These chapters each develop from an area where I have long felt exist elements of unclarity and uncertainty, but have not been able to spend enough time or space to report on them adequately. Most of the chapters have derived from delivered papers which have been too unwieldy or preliminary to publish, though 'Rabbi Hood' did appear in a conference-based essay collection: 28 one of the reasons to continue to miss the late Julian Wasserman is that we never received his promised, or threatened, matching paper entitled 'Rabbi Hood'. This paper, and all the rest, have been worked on and worked up in response

to the generous invitation of Anke Bernau and David Matthews to appear in this series which they edit.

The first three chapters focus on enigmas of uncertainty arising in the early materials that have never been properly explored. The first concerns itself with the medium of the early ballads – are they originally oral, as was long felt, primarily by Child, or are they, as Fowler argued, fully literary? Or do we need to rethink that separation, as the chapter maintains? The second chapter focuses on the curiously frequent and never explained Scottish connections of the early Robin Hood material, which are explored and analyzed, in terms, among others, of their capacity to impact on the English materials – the return to the center of the colonial resistance to repression, as post-colonial theorists would describe it. The third chapter reconsiders the so far unsatisfactorily explained nature and the likely sources and avatars of *The Gest of Robin Hood*, which I have long felt to be both a partial gentrification of the tradition and also needing to be read in the context of other late medieval multisocial-level texts like *Gamelyn* and the ‘King and Subject’ ballads.

The fourth chapter and its successors deal with existing unclarity in terms of the structure and interrelationship of a sizeable range of texts. The broadside ballads have long been sourced from and largely left for comment to Child – but editing and collating them, both for a text reader and for the Forrester edition, led me to feel that Child’s order and sometimes his texts were not always defensible, and that what was needed, but never yet attempted, was a sound analysis of them into dates, types and socio-political meanings. The chapter sorts the broadsides in these ways, and takes this treatment on to the later and much amplified garlands, which lead almost directly to the late eighteenth-century editions of Evans and Ritson. These are then seen as the first stages of what the next chapter surveys and analyses as the Romantic reception and re-formation of Robin Hood, in poetry and prose. This material too has never been sorted properly as a whole, and after some uncertainty I augmented the material by including Peacock’s *Maid Marian* in this chapter, rather than in the next one, which offers a similarly unprecedented analytic survey of the nineteenth-century Robin Hood novels. This decision seemed justified when I found surprisingly little, and that largely trivial, influence from Peacock on the novels in the tradition. Whereas I have before commented on some of the more notable novelists, such as Egan and Stocqueler, I sought here as with the broadsides to give a full account of a Robin Hood sub-genre that is in fact remarkably varied and with multiple sources, textual and socio-political.

The last two chapters work across all the materials, from their different thematic viewpoints, one of content and one of form, and both involving reception. This greater range does involve revisiting topics dealt with in the more narrowly focused previous chapters, and as a result there is some reference back to fuller earlier discussions, though in a few

instances issues in Chapters 1–6 which are of some importance in the last two chapters have been deferred for fuller discussion until then.

Chapter 7 explores multiplicity across the tradition in both tone and socio-political meaning, considering and analyzing the varied ways in which Marian plays a part – and sometimes, in its own way significantly, does not. Placing her realizations last of the chapters that survey material is a temporal climax, because millennial modernity has made her role much more important. But it is still substantially varied, from Jennifer Roberson’s Jane-Austenish managerial Marian to the star of televisual feminist farce (as interpreted by *Miss Piggy*) and on into various forms of female agency, including what can look like post-feminism. Marian’s variety over time and within periods is itself archetypal of the multiplicity and anti-hierarchical character of the whole tradition, and this is the topic, from a theorized viewpoint, of the last chapter. It sees, with Deleuze and Guattari, the concept of rhizomatic structure as the way of understanding this tradition whose ever-changing popularity, facility of access, multiplicity of traditions and malleability by contextual forces has long been opposed to, even ostracized by, the canonical tradition which is linear, uniform or, in their terms, arboreal. With Robin Hood you have the forest, not the mere trees.

There might seem to be a misfit in the increasingly common tendency for scholars to impose professional academic methods on this most determinedly rhizomatic of traditions. Is this a fated and innately destructive attempt to fabricate an arboreal structure?

Will we lose sight of the rhizomatic wood? That is not in fact the situation, because criticism itself, especially when it is in the cultural studies and cultural criticism tradition, is not itself linear and arboreal as is so well suited to the hierarchical myths like Arthur or Tristan and Isolde. Brains can operate in rhizomatic mode. The reason why Robin Hood studies have moved quickly and effectively in recent years is that they are themselves of their time, and function through their own un-hierarchical non-linear form. Like seventeenth-century balladeers showing in a time of many constraints how Robin speaks for values beyond the city and its sheriff, even beyond the king, like nineteenth-century novel-writers sensing among all the moralizing that Robin can be a liberationist symbol of anti-aristocratic reform (as well as some fine fighting and inspirational trickery), the modern Robin Hood scholars are asserting that this various, porous, richly labile tradition is highly appropriate to the modern multi-mobility, generic and personal as well as national and international, that necessarily responds to the alarms, threats, potential oppressions – and indeed the farcical composites – of the modern world.

Robin Hood combines clarity of situation – many ballads begin with the isolative absolutism of ‘Robin Hood in greenwood stood’ – with both great popularity and mysterious power: the much-quoted proverb is ‘Many men

speak of Robin Hood that never drew his bow.' The cultural scholarship and criticism that is the natural discourse of the humanities in the modern universities, where in the painful present the sheriffs eagerly gather to profit and prevent, is the appropriate way to understand what comprehensions have been implied in the past and present and what aspirations may in the future be invoked by the formations and re-formations of this potent myth of popular freedom.

Tales in Context: Sefer ha-ma'asim in Medieval Northern France by Rella Kushelevsky, historical epilogue by Elisheva Baumgarten [Raphael Patai Series in Jewish Folklore and Anthropology, Wayne State University Press, 9780814342718]

In the thirteenth century, an anonymous scribe compiled sixty-nine tales that became *Sefer ha-ma'asim*, the earliest compilation of Hebrew tales known to us in Western Europe. The author writes that the stories encompass "descriptions of herbs that cure leprosy, a fairy princess with golden tresses using magic charms to heal her lover's wounds and restore him to life; a fire-breathing dragon . . . a two-headed creature and a giant's daughter for whom the rind of a watermelon containing twelve spies is no more than a speck of dust." In [Tales in Context: Sefer ha-ma'asim in Medieval Northern France](#), Rella Kushelevsky enlightens the stories' meanings and reflects the circumstances and environment for Jewish lives in medieval France. Although a selection of tales was previously published, this is the first publication of a Hebrew-English annotated edition in its entirety, revealing fresh insight.

The first part of Kushelevsky's work, "Cultural, Literary and Comparative Perspectives," presents the thesis that *Sefer ha-ma'asim* is a product of its time and place, and should therefore be studied within its literary and cultural surroundings, Jewish and vernacular, in northern France. An investigation of the scribe's techniques in reworking his Jewish and non-Jewish sources into a medieval discourse supports this claim. The second part of the manuscript consists of the tales themselves, in Hebrew and English translation, including brief comparative comments or citations. The third part, "An Analytical and Comparative Overview," offers an analysis of each tale as an individual unit, contextualized within its medieval framework and against the background of its parallels. Elisheva Baumgarten's epilogue adds social and historical background to *Sefer ha-ma'asim* and discusses new ways in which it and other story compilations may be used by historians for an inquiry into the everyday life of medieval Jews.

The tales in *Sefer ha-ma'asim* will be of special value to scholars of folklore and medieval European history and literature, as well as those looking to enrich their studies and shelves.

Excerpt: [Sefer ha-ma'asim: A Compilation of Medieval Hebrew Tales in Northern France](#)

Once it was decreed that Aliharaf and Ahiya, two of Solomon's scribes, would die at the gates of Lod. And the Angel of Death regretted that he was unable to vanquish them. And anyone who was within the city of Lod, the Angel of Death had no control over. And because Solomon was fond of them, he made Asmodeus swear that he would take them there.

This anecdote, which later ends with the deaths of Solomon's scribes, despite the king's efforts to deceive the Angel of Death, appears in a compilation of tales known in the scholarship as *Sefer ha-ma'asim*, one of the most impressive of its kind from the Middle Ages. The tale has its sources in the Babylonian Talmud (Succa 53a). In this version, however, the scribe omitted certain parts of the talmudic narrative, emphasizing instead Solomon's special affection for his scribes, the reason he helped them escape far from his palace to "Lod" (i.e., Luz), the city over which the Angel of Death has no control) The motif of Solomon's special affection for his scribes, the changes made in the text compared to the original, and the very choice of this anecdote about Solomon's scribes—all these are significant when contextualized within the tale's new environment in *Sefer ha-ma'asim*. In the cultural consciousness represented in *Sefer ha-ma'asim*, the scribe, as a medieval topos, joins his patron in preserving collective treasures, and the story he included and adapted in the compilation can be seen as an *ars poetica* declaration about the nature of copying as a form of creative writing. The fondness of Solomon for his scribes, a motif that is first introduced in *Sefer ha-ma'asim*, is what seems to be important in this specific version of the tale. Scribes in the Middle Ages, both Jews and non-Jews, greatly interfered with the text, even with those attributed to a specific author. They adapted and changed the texts, added comments in the margins, and forcefully expressed their opinions of the text by means of their interpolations? They presented their readers—and us, hundreds of years later—with stories that are familiar in some respects and new and surprising in others, with fascinating intertextual affinities.

The two definitions of the Hebrew word *sofer* are fused in the persona of the medieval scribe, in the range between preservation and innovation: a scrivener, skilled in the writing of documents, contracts and letters, bills and memoirs, according to the medieval meaning of the word; and in a certain sense also a creative writer according to the modern meaning of the word. Although the division of these tasks is not unequivocal, and a number of scribes, narrators, and redactors were probably involved in fashioning the stories during their oral and written transmission up to the compilation's final consolidation, *Sefer ha-ma'asim* will be discussed in this book as a literary product of its time and place, in the thirteenth century in northern France, against the background of the culture of

the society in which it was created, which is represented by the figure of the anonymous scribe.

The discovery—which I found surprising—that the thirteenth-century *Sefer ha-ma'asim* shares some quite extensive intertextual affinities with contemporary French literature first took shape during my work on the text. I had my first inkling when I noted a particular oddity in the compilation, combined with a certain sense of familiarity or even intimacy. In my efforts to make sense of these incongruent features, I attributed them to a number of factors: the fairly arbitrary sequence of the tales in the compilation, which for the most part do not correspond to a specific editorial organizing principle; their episodic structure and the often schematic plot lines that run counter to modern expectations of narrative redundancy; idiosyncratic motifs borrowed from medieval French romances that are not typical of traditional Jewish contexts—all these gave me the impression of a certain distance, of a buffer between past and present. This process involved, to a certain extent, my adapting to a different horizon of expectations—that of a medieval audience. This made the compilation especially challenging, and the curiosity and interest that it piqued in me because of these distinctive features captured and retained my attention.

Throughout the reading, a balanced, tolerable level of tension is maintained between distance and intimacy. This is primarily so because everyone, whether during the Middle Ages or today, enjoys stories. What are love, family, community, courage? Contending with each of these spheres differs among different cultures in accordance with social and personal contexts, but human experiences are fundamentally universal and do not belong exclusively to one period or another.

Each story is impressively introduced with the phrase "Ma aseh be—"—"A tale of" or "Once upon a time"—graphically designed in meticulous detail, offering a joyous promise to satisfy the expectations of everything stories can offer. Values such as prayer, Torah study, charity, as well as marital and family life come up frequently in the compilation. Religious and social values represent faith in the possibility of a better world, and this basic faith is also what leads us to view these tales in a favorable light, even if in the Western reality of today, cynicism seems to dominate almost every aspect of our lives. The experience of an encounter with a world that is familiar despite being so dissimilar is what generates the fluctuating impressions throughout the compilation; the intimate experience of reading that varies in response to a certain remoteness, sometimes both in the same story. The fusion of an aesthetic sensibility—which today we can identify as medieval—with modern notions that we tend to apply through our own reading processes is what makes these texts so stimulating for us today.

The literary-historic perspective in this book is manifested in an awareness of cultural symbols that serve as interpretive

keys to an artistic product imbued with significance. Based on my comparative study, I suggest that the very fact of the intertextuality between narratives of two different cultures—Jews probably became acquainted with French narratives by way of oral performances and written texts—implies their participation in the great upsurge in literature and culture that occurred in France and Western Europe as a whole during the Middle Ages. Jews however, responded to it in terms of their own Jewish values and identities. Furthermore, intertextual links to Jewish sources imply a relative level of erudition on the part of the book's editor, possibly the scribe himself, and a readership that was quite conversant with the sources of the stories. Thus *Sefer ha-ma'asim* refutes the dichotomy, accepted in the past, that was seen as a result of the romantic orientation between belletristic literature geared to the elite, on the one hand, and folklore aimed at the broader and lower levels of society, on the other. The intertextuality in *Sefer ha-ma'asim* makes it impossible to draw simplistic conclusions regarding how this compilation of tales was conceived and received.

The brief description of the structure of the book provided here may help guide the reader in making sense of the stories, their overview, and the individual analyses that follow. The first part of the book consists of three chapters, in which I present my thesis that *Sefer ha-ma'asim* is a product of its time and place, and should therefore be studied within its medieval, Jewish, and European settings, particularly that of northern France. An investigation of the scribe's techniques in reworking his sources, Jewish and non-Jewish, into a medieval discourse supports this claim.

The second part of the book consists of a diplomatic edition of *Sefer ha-ma'asim*, and includes both the original Hebrew and the English translation of the tales. This is the first publication of a Hebrew-English diplomatic edition, accompanied with brief comparative comments, citations, and explanations. The publication of this edition will serve scholars from a wide range of disciplines, as well as a broader readership.

The third part of the book, "An Analytical and Comparative Overview: *Sefer ha-ma'asim*, Its Tales, and Its Parallels" (hereafter "Tales and Parallels"), offers an analysis of each tale as an individual unit, contextualized within its medieval framework and against the background of its parallels. While they are neither brief comments nor full-length articles, the studies in this section serve as the backbone for the introductory section and support generalizations put forward there. These short essays on each story offer potential directions for further elaboration in future forums. Some of the tales have indeed already been the subjects of full-scale articles—"A Slave for Seven Years," "The Poor Bachelor and His Maiden Cousin," and "One of Ten."

The four appendices in the book include facsimile images of the tale collection; a list of the tales, which follows their order in *Sefer ha-ma'asim*; a list of texts in Ms. Bodl. Or. 135; and indexes of tale types and motifs (Tubach, ATU,

Thompson, and IFA). The facsimile images reproduced in the volume are from the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. While the entire Ms. Bodl. Or. 135 was recently digitized and retrieved into the Bodleian Library website, it is my hope that including the facsimile here will serve the convenience of the reader. Elisheva Baumgarten's epilogue adds social and historical background to Sefer ha-ma'asim, and discusses new ways in which Sefer ha-ma'asim and other story compilations may be used by historians to inquire into the everyday lives of medieval Jews. The bibliographical list includes manuscripts, primary sources, and studies. An alphabetical index of the tales precedes the general index. Transcriptions in this book follow the Encyclopedia Judaica rules and those of the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

Between Pleasure and Didactics

The compilation was probably intended to serve the purposes of both pleasure and didactics, in the same way other literature in the Middle Ages combined the two. The purpose of entertainment is evident from the fact that the stories are consecutively arranged without any connecting words of exegesis and edifying homilies; from the diversity and scope of the compilation in a thirty-nine-page format; and from the very legitimacy given to the copying of such a large compilation of stories which is neither law nor exegesis. In comparison to story compilations in the East the didactic purpose of which was particularly emphasized, and certainly in comparison to midrashic literature the purpose of which was homiletic and exegetical, episodic narratives capable of gratifying curiosity and a desire for adventure in the Middle Ages. The scope of the stories ranges from two or three to a page to those that take up several pages. The longest and most convoluted, "Johanah and the Scorpion" (no. 28), extends over about nine pages in the manuscript (313b-317b), and is full of the adventures experienced by Johanah, a sort of Jewish knight who strives to gain an unattainable princess for his king and to fulfill the tasks she allots him.

Sefer ha-ma'asim is a unique compilation. The Midrash *aseret hadibrot*, for example, contains stories and linking homilies about the Ten Commandments, the scope and length of which vary. In the eleventh-century work *Hibbur yafeh mehayeshu'a* by R. Nissim of Kairouan, the stories are embedded in a framework of homilies that were intended to hearten their audiences in times of distress. That is not the case with Sefer ha-ma'asim, which is first and foremost a compilation of tales, replete with stories that lack any linking homilies. The aesthetic impact is created by a combination of a magnificent design, a plenitude of stories, a rich diversity in theme and genre, and sharp, rapid transitions between short, didactic tales and extended.

At the same time the tales, many of them exempla told as true stories, were intended to instill the values of the Jewish ethos, such as those of the Sabbath, Torah study, prayer, and charity. The moral is engraved in the tale and stems

from the structure of the plot, which advances from a sin to its punishment, and from the fulfillment of a commandment to its reward; it is also explicit in the epilogue that accompanies the story. The exemplum is a prominent genre in Sefer ha-ma'asim, in fact a dominant one, which takes up about a third of the compilation. In these exempla unequivocal messages are clearly preferred to twisting plots.

At times the desire to give pleasure and appeal to the aesthetic taste of the period is not entirely compatible with the didactic aim. In "The Poor Bachelor and His Maiden Cousin" (no. 55), the scene mentioned earlier that alludes to Bérout's Romance of Tristan is scarcely within the boundary lines of Jewish law, yet it is tame in keeping with the scribe's polemical purposes against the latter's courtly norms while didactically addressing his Jewish audience. Tension is created between the two poles: the aesthetic for the purpose of giving pleasure and the didactic for the purposes of instructing and imbuing meaning. In any case, the very dialogue with the romance, a very popular genre at the time, and the use of a story as a sort of Jewish substitute for its non-Jewish parallel in France, are means for providing pleasure and interest within the narrating community.

Textuality and Orality

The stories in Sefer ha-ma'asim were apparently transmitted both orally and in writing, a frequent occurrence in the Middle Ages prior to the invention of printing. In writing their existence is first of all on the linear continuum of the manuscript, which renders it a "text." The large scope of the compilation and its beautiful design—as well as para-textual aspects such as well-maintained, balanced margins; headings such as "Ma'aseh be- in bold at the top of every story, endowing the opening with a high hierarchical status; and opening and ending formulae that separate Sefer ha-ma'asim from the works that precede and follow it—all reflect the purpose of a written compilation of tales that is competing with vernacular literary works that flourished in France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and which were copied into beautifully embellished manuscripts.

Other signs, such as the epilogues attached to several of the stories of Sefer ha-ma'asim, indicate that they were performed—that is, read orally before an audience, not necessarily dramatized. While the story itself is fashioned more or less based on its sources, the epilogue enabled the scribe to address his audience directly and to relate the story to events of his own time. The verbal gesture "come and see" as an appeal to a collective audience appears in several excerpts of epilogues in Sefer ha-ma'asim. Another example of a performance situation is the narrator's warning against religious conversion as a result of the persecution of the Jews by the Christians: "You may not exchange me for idols.... Bow not to the dead [=Jesus] but to He who puts to death and revives the dead." The

narrator's moral of "cleanliness" in intimate relations, as mentioned in some of the tales' epilogues, might express an awareness of a possible influence of the courtly romances and their ethos of love on the minds of his Jewish audience.

One can also assume the existence of recitation and performance events from the numerous rhetorical questions in the stories, particularly from the consistent tendency in *Sefer ha-ma'asim* to leave out words that are clear from the context, and often those whose purpose was to clarify the pragmatic function of the expression ("request," "question," "declaration," etc.), as well as details that create an effect of redundancy. The plot is preserved, the events of the story are told, but in a more condensed manner. The reason may have been financial—due to the great expense of writing in the preprint period. It does not seem, however, that the scribe tried to save on space. In Eli Yassif's words, there is an air of "leisure and broad spirit" in the work, as the resources apparently allotted to the writing of the compilation by a professional scribe would suggest? It is more reasonable to assume that it was the seemingly banal schematic scaffolding of the story that enabled the narrator to add details of color and volume on the occasion of a recitation, in a context common to him and his listeners. By providing a scheme rather than a redundant plot, "chapter headings" rather than rich and full descriptions, the narrator was left with a broad space for acting and maneuvering during the performance. Nonetheless, although the scribe may have condensed the text for pragmatic considerations of context and performance, as well as to conform to a specific aesthetic taste, his language is no less rich or anchored in Jewish sources.

In a certain sense, this rhetoric of foregoing narrative redundancy can be likened to *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine. The compilation was composed in the 1260s and was an enormous success. It was circulated in the Middle Ages in about a thousand manuscripts and was translated from Latin into all the West European languages. A contemporary reader seeking the reason for its success in the texts themselves, in the written narratives, would be disappointed. The legends are written in the most banal fashion, eschewing any opportunity to include any psychological or historical depth. It seems that is actually the reason for its success, as Kleinberg suggests. The shallow description left the local priest ample opportunity to augment the story and bring it closer to his listeners. In the Jewish context of *Sefer ha-ma'asim*, the stories that were familiar from the rabbinic literature were probably supplemented and reworked when they were performed before an audience in the Middle Ages, to draw them closer to the reality of their own lives. In their "multiple existence" as tales that were told and retold time and again in various versions—taken out of their context in the compilation and treated as distinctive units to be performed and copied on different occasions and in different places—their brevity and sparse style left enough room for individual improvisation.

Where and in what circumstances were the tales read aloud, and what was the place of Hebrew in these performances in comparison to French, the spoken language? The transitions between the written and oral media are not unique to the Middle Ages—those stories were widespread in oral form throughout all the generations since the rabbinical period of the Mishnah and the Talmud, in parallel with their written form." Many of them can also be classified as international tale types, despite their Jewish character. The feature that renders them special in the Middle Ages is the discourse the stories represent; the aggregate of contexts that accompany them, which the researcher has to reconstruct from the written text; and the connotations they probably evoked among their audiences in performance situations. The tales may have been recited within the family and circles of friends as a kind of leisure entertainment. The owner of the manuscript commissioned it in the thirteenth century from a very professional scribe, so we can assume he was wealthy. One can see that—taking into account his financial status, literacy skills, and grasp of cultural and religious resources, which become apparent in a study of this compilation—it is likely *Sefer ha-ma'asim* was commissioned so the stories could be recited at family, social, and cultural events.

We can also assume that stories from *Sefer ha-ma'asim*, particularly the short, didactic exempla, were recited or orally transmitted in the framework of sermons in the synagogue or at other public occasions, as rabbinic legends were previously done. Stories from the Talmud and the Midrash occupy a prominent section in the compilation, and owing to their adaptation and the nuances that enabled their reception as texts relevant to their medieval audience, they were particularly suited to being integrated into various sermons on religious occasions, especially in the synagogue. Those tales, brought into the compilation from the non-Jewish society in France, were also adapted to *Sefer ha-ma'asim* according to familiar patterns from rabbinic literature, as a Jewish response to foreign ideas, and as a no-less-attractive and enjoyable substitute.

The tales were recited in Hebrew in a bilingual Jewish society, even though they may also have been told in the vernacular. Hebrew was used even when it was not a daily spoken language. Lists of homonymic words in the manuscript are translated into lament. This is not actually because manuscripts were lost but because the Jews preferred Hebrew as a language for writing, parallel in status to Latin in the society at large. French was the spoken language, but Hebrew was the language of writing and of the study of both sacred and secular works, the language of communicating among Jews from afar as they came together for social or business activities. No distinction was made between exegetical and halakhic writings and poetry and prose. The recitation of tales from a Hebrew manuscript was part of this activity.

French (in Hebrew letters). Two books of grammar and lexical clarifications by Abraham Habavli and Solomon ben Abraham ibn Pirchon attest to the relevance of the Hebrew language to the Jewish society in northern France. It would have been reasonable to expect the use of Hebraico-French in writing and reciting the stories, since French was the daily spoken language, but, like the development of poetry and liturgy in France, which is largely in Hebrew and not in Hebraico-French, the prose in *Sefer ha-ma'asim* is in Hebrew. Very few literary texts in Hebraico-French—namely Old French in Hebrew script (Judeo-French did not develop during that period)—are extant. There are several wedding songs and one French and Hebrew existed side by side among Jews, and mutual influences between the two are evident in the manuscript. Two interesting examples from the stories are the word *taba*, meaning a ring, in the story "Johanan and the Scorpion", and the word *nekhd* in "The Poor Bachelor and His Maiden Cousin", which Yassif commented on, to denote the family relationship of a nephew. The word for "ring" in Old French as well as in modern French is masculine: *anneua* or *annel*. The grammatical pattern of the masculine voice was copied into Hebrew and also translated into Hebrew. In the manuscript the Hebrew word *taba'at* became *taba*. Along with the word *taba* in "Johanan and the Scorpion", there are errors in the masculine and the feminine in the third person singular, since the distinction between the two was not yet clear-cut in Old French. One example is "samah hamalka simha gedola." "Johanan and the Scorpion" is not known from the Jewish sources and was apparently created within the narrating community represented in *Sefer ha-ma'asim* based on contemporary non-Jewish models. For this very reason it contains irregular expressions that reveal its source in French. <>

Essay: Hemerology in Medieval Europe by László Sándor Chardonnens

Hemerology, a method of divination that is common to civilizations worldwide, links the outcome of events to the occult nature of the times at which these events occur. Specific units of time, such as seasons, months, days, or hours, were thought to have hidden, intrinsically auspicious or inauspicious qualities that influenced the outcome of actions undertaken and events taking place during these periods. The actions and events could vary from mundane things like making clothes or putting animals out to pasture to potentially life-threatening activities like going on a journey or undergoing a medical treatment such as bloodletting. Whatever the gravity of the action or event, its success or failure would depend on the intrinsic quality of the time at which it happened.

In medieval Europe, hemerology was firmly integrated into daily life, since its aims and methods intersected with prevalent medical practices and the study of time for religious observance. A standard medical procedure such as bloodletting, for instance, was not only performed on the

basis of medical theories related to the four complexions and humors (the temperaments and bodily fluids) that were thought to determine personality, physique, and character but was also regulated by several hemerological practices that relied on the lunar and solar cycles, the same cycles that were used to keep track of the passage of time in Christian religious observance. It is not unexpected, therefore, that a form of divination like hemerology was so successful in medieval Europe, because it fitted into established systems of knowledge. Going back to Latin *dies mali* "evil days," via Old French *dis mal*, English "dismal" testifies to the belief that some days are more dangerous than others. In present-day English, the adjective "dismal" expresses misfortune, gloom, or bad luck and is no longer a hemerological term, but medieval English sources still retained the etymological meaning "evil days." The *Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy*, a fourteenth-century astrological treatise, for instance, explains: "There are evil days (*evyl daies*), and there are many of them. In the calendar it is noted, furthermore, that there are many *dismales*, that is to say, bad and unlucky days." It is unclear whether the author of *The Wise Book* consciously distinguished between two distinct forms of hemerology (*evyl daies* and *dismales*), but the fact that he was able to talk about the place of evil days in the calendar and their inauspicious quality demonstrates that hemerology was an integral part of his worldview and that of his audience. The more than thirty text witnesses of *The Wise Book* from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century show that knowledge about evil days must have been widespread, the more so in view of the many hundreds of other texts that deal with the same type of avoidance days described here. Add to this the other hemerological practices distinguished back then, and an image presents itself of a medieval Europe that was acutely aware of the intrinsic qualities of time, an awareness not now commonly attested except for folk beliefs such as the inauspicious quality of Friday the thirteenth.

In this chapter, hemerological practices known in medieval Europe are introduced as a counterpoint to the practices transmitted in the daybooks (*rishu*) and related hemerological texts of early China. Fifth- to fifteenth-century Europe is extensive ground to cover, spanning a millennium of hemerological practices and of religious and secular responses to hemerology that were continually changing. Several thousand surviving texts are scattered across almost as many manuscripts (and printed books from the late fifteenth century onward) and were transmitted in Greek, Latin, and most European vernacular languages and their regional variants. In view of the many languages, the wide range of sources, and the considerable time span, there is no comprehensive study of medieval European divination comparable to the outstanding study of Chinese mantic techniques in Dunhuang 敦煌 manuscripts dating mainly from the ninth and tenth centuries CE. This chapter is not a comprehensive analysis but should be read as an

introduction to medieval European hemerology, and a selective introduction at that. The aim has been not to analyze how hemerological practices in medieval Europe correspond to and differ from practices in the ancient Chinese daybooks but to contextualize the ideological background that enabled the introduction and transmission of hemerology in medieval Europe and to introduce specific medieval European hemerological practices.

The chapter consists of four sections. The first section introduces the terminology used in this chapter. The second section discusses the study of time that underlies both Christian religious observance and hemerology. Calendrical science was pursued as a useful discipline that aided religious observance, and its intensive study in learned monastic settings is likely to have facilitated the introduction and spread of hemerology in early medieval Europe. In its earliest stages, the transmission of hemerological practices relied on the spread of literacy and learning that resulted from Mediterranean efforts to convert western Europe to Christianity. This is not to say that hemerology was not potentially at odds with religious views about proper religious observance, and the third section of this chapter sheds light on the tense interplay between authentication and denunciation by casting it as an exchange between superstition, commemoration, and natural philosophy. The fourth section presents a select survey of hemerological practices known in medieval Europe that allows comparison with the practices in the daybook manuscripts discussed in this volume.

Hemerology and Daybooks

In current studies of medieval Europe, the mantic techniques for identifying good times and avoidance times for actions and events, so that people can arrange their activities to optimal effect, are unlikely to be referred to as “hemerology.” English studies, for instance, speak of “perilous days” or “lucky and unlucky days”; French studies of *jours périlleux* (dangerous days), *jours heureux et malheureux* (lucky and unlucky days), or *jours fastes et néfastes* (auspicious and inauspicious days); German studies of *verworfene Tage* (corrupted days), *gefährliche Tage* (dangerous days), or *Glücks- und Unglückstage* (lucky and unlucky days); and Dutch studies of *goede en kwade dagen* (good and evil days). Although these modern expressions suggest parity in regard to knowledge of both auspicious and inauspicious days, in medieval Europe the main concern was to know when to avoid actions and events. Indeed, most texts identify inauspicious days only. Auspicious days are almost invariably embedded in a larger system that combines inauspicious and auspicious days. Western scholars of medieval Europe may also focus on individual text categories, such as Egyptian Days, lunaries, mansions of the moon, or perilous days without ever mentioning the word “hemerology.”

The reason is not that the knowledge and texts from medieval Europe are unrelated to hemerology in the forms

occurring in ancient Egypt, the Near East, or China. Rather, in the formation of modern Western disciplines, the English word “hemerology” (with corresponding words in other European languages) was used first by nineteenth-century Assyriologists in identifying cuneiform calendar-based texts from the second to first millennium BCE with content devoted to the inauspicious and auspicious aspects of days. They adopted the modernized spelling of medieval Greek hemerologion and Latin hemerologium, which by the nineteenth century was a little-used word for a record of days (hemero-), or calendar; that is, the word did not denote texts such as the cuneiform treatises to which Assyriologists applied the name “hemerology.” Given the disciplinary divisions in Western scholarship, it is not surprising the medievalists did not use the Assyriologists’ name for a type of cuneiform text. Yet the cuneiform hemerologies had a function in ancient Babylonian and Assyrian civilizations comparable to that of texts on lucky and unlucky days and lunaries in medieval Europe.

At the present time, we all recognize the importance of comparative cultural studies to our respective disciplines and the need for a shared terminology that facilitates communication. The discovery in 1975 of a pair of third-century BCE daybooks (*rishu*) from Shuihudi tomb 11, Hubei, which Marc Kalinowski described in 1986 as sources of Chinese hemerology, makes an even more compelling case for extending hemerology to include medieval European hemerology. On the one hand, the study of medieval European hemerology may benefit from comparison with the equally rich textual sources in daybooks and other hemerological texts in recently excavated ancient Chinese manuscripts and in medieval Dunhuang manuscripts. On the other hand, the study of Chinese hemerology is still young, and comparison with medieval Europe may provide useful guidance to scholars of early and medieval China.

In this chapter, the term “hemerology” is applied to the knowledge and the texts containing that knowledge in medieval Europe, keeping in mind that it was not part of the contemporaneous vocabulary of hemerological ideas and practices. The characteristics of hemerology in medieval Europe can be situated in two basic frames of reference: first, the viewpoint of Christian religion and, second, the organization of knowledge into *artes*, or arts and sciences.

Christian religion viewed hemerology as superstitious and associated it with two out of three types of superstitions: prognostication, which reveals the future through the observation of omens and significant signs; and divination, which reveals the future through the analysis of data obtained from observation or from the manipulation of selected materials. For hemerology, the distinction is a matter of input: prognostication involves astronomical observation, whereas divination is related to the calendrical science derived from astronomical observation. In common with Chinese daybooks, medieval European hemerology was based predominantly on calendrical science, not on

astronomical observation, and hence was a form of divination. Further distinctions can be made between the electionary, “a guide for choosing (i.e., ‘electing’) activities according to the most favorable astrological conditions”; the lunar, “a set of prognostications based upon the position of the moon at specific times”; the destinary, “a horoscope; a group of prognostications based upon time of birth, determining destiny (Latin *destinaria*, ‘fate’ or ‘fortune’)”; and the questionary, which “is only concerned with specific questions ... and the means by which they may be answered.” Prognostication and divination usually are conflated in modern scholarship because their methods are similar and are used to “resolve doubts” (*jueyi*), the standard understanding of divination in ancient Chinese texts, but they are distinct from the third type of superstition, which is magic, the manipulation of the future through rituals involving supernatural means.⁹ This is not to say that medieval European manuscripts might not contain hemerology alongside magic or magical medicine, which is also true of the Chinese daybooks under discussion.

The medieval organization of knowledge into *artes*, which encompassed hemerology, may be compared to the place of hemerology in the “*Shushu*” (Calculations and arts) division in the Book of Han (Han *shu*) bibliographic treatise of around 100 E.10 The *artes* are a classification of arts and sciences, not in the modern sense of the words “art” and “science,” but in the sense of practices and skills. There are three *artes*: the liberal arts (the trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric plus the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy/natural astrology), the mechanical arts (e.g., cloth making, architecture, agriculture, animal husbandry, warfare, hunting, trade, cookery, metallurgy, alchemy, medicine, geography, navigation), and the magical arts (e.g., natural, demonic, and theurgic magic; incantations; judicial astrology; prognostication; and mantic arts such as hemerology, geomancy, chiromancy, and dream divination). Hemerology is classed with the magical arts, with close ties to the mechanical arts in the form of medicine and calendrical science. Scholars conducting research on Chinese hemerology or daybooks who wish to orient themselves in medieval European hemerological practices are advised not to look for “hemerology” in the titles of modern studies because, as explained, the term has not been used by medievalists. In the current research literature, the subject categories to search include *artes*, prognostic(s), prognostication, divination, mantic arts, astrology, and magic, as well as specific text categories, such as Egyptian Days or lunaries. This chapter contains references to the most relevant studies as an aid to daybook scholars.

The differences and similarities between the ancient Chinese daybooks and medieval European hemerological literature make up another issue that requires clarification. The problem arises mainly from the use of the term “almanac” to translate *rishu* “daybook” in some Western studies of Chinese daybooks. As is shown in this volume, the daybook manuscripts are not arranged in the format of months and

days found in contemporaneous examples of excavated calendars; hence it is misleading to call them “almanacs.” A few excavated calendars from ancient China sometimes include a hemerological notation next to a particular day, but hemerology was not combined with the annual calendar until much later, in China’s medieval period. There is a similar distinction between hemerologies and almanacs in medieval Europe. Bernard Capp describes a late medieval almanac as “a table of the astronomical and astrological events of the coming year: the movements and conjunctions of the planets and stars in the zodiac, and details of eclipses.... Following the invention of printing, almanacs (supplying astrological data) and prognostications (predictions derived thence) were among the earliest works to be published, at first separately.” Louise Hill Curth includes Capp’s description in her fuller statement on almanacs: “Almanacs were cheap, annual publications that contained ‘tables of the astronomical and astrological events of the coming year: the movements and conjunctions of the planets and stars in the zodiac, and details of eclipses.’” However, most early modern editions also disseminated a range of other astrological and non-astrological, useful, interesting, and even entertaining, material.” Thus, the earliest European almanacs were primarily annual astronomical tables, and the annual prognostications that made use of these tables were transmitted separately. It would take some time before the first combined almanacs and prognostications were published, but even then, the titles of these books would clarify the difference between almanacs and prognostications, as in Richard Allestree’s *A New Almanacke and Prognostication, for this yeare of our Lord God, 1617*. Early handwritten almanacs, such as the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century folded almanacs, would sometimes include hemerologies (see plate 10), as would later, printed almanacs from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but these hemerologies were distinct in nature from both the almanac and the prognostication. Almanacs and prognostications were annual, after all, whereas the medieval European hemerologies under discussion would remain valid across the years given that they make use of recurring cycles of time. Hemerology, then, was not a standard ingredient of medieval European almanacs but belonged to the range of auxiliary materials sometimes included in almanacs. In sum, in ancient China and medieval Europe, the annual calendar and hemerology were not combined as one text, and reference to the *rishu* “daybook” as an “almanac” is misleading.

Hemerology and the Study of Time

Hemerology relied heavily on calendrical science for religious observance in early medieval Europe, so this section sketches the intellectual setting that initially provided such a hospitable environment for hemerology. Time, or, more precisely, the study of time, played a key role in religious life in medieval Europe. Books such as *De temporum ratione* (The reckoning of time) by the English

patristic monk and scholar Bede (ca. 673–735) and *De temporibus anni* (The times of the year) by the English abbot and writer Ælfric of Eynsham (ca. 955–ca. 1010) were written in the knowledge that the passage of time in its various manifestations was instrumental for a proper understanding of what is known as salvation history: of the past as it was related in the Bible and post-biblical historiography, of the present, and of the eternal future promised through the suffering and sacrifice of Christ. Making sense of time, then, was elementary to *doctrina christiana* “Christian doctrine,” a scholarly method of inquiry for religious purposes envisaged by the Church Father Augustine of Hippo (354–430), as explained by Faith Wallis:

Doctrina christiana sees Christian erudition as a means to an end: the training of exegetes and preachers—men who could understand the Word of God and convey its message accurately and persuasively. Augustine began with a radical division of knowledge into two categories: useful and useless. Christians did not need to know anything that was not useful to salvation. On the other hand, the Bible was such a rich, complex and mysterious text that its study demanded formidable erudition of a philological, historical and scientific nature. Augustine invited the Christian intellectual to pillage the “useful” knowledge accumulated by the ancients, and rearrange it in forms more pertinent to the Christian project. For instance, he thought it would be very useful if someone could compile a kind of dictionary of biblical science and mathematics, in which every number, creature, and geographical location in the Bible would be defined, explained, and arranged for handy reference. In short, *doctrina christiana* involved dismantling and rearranging ancient erudition so that it would solve specific problems of biblical interpretation or exposition.

The rigorous dichotomy between useful and useless forms of knowledge expounded by Augustine in Late Antiquity (the transitional period between Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages) encouraged medieval scholars to evaluate the usefulness of all kinds of disciplines from a religious perspective. One such discipline was the study of time, which was essential in understanding biblical history, the temporal life, and the eternal future. A black-and-white distinction between usefulness and uselessness might seem to invite the outright exclusion of some categories of knowledge because they were deemed useless a priori, but instead it facilitated discussion rather than rejection of many kinds of auxiliary knowledge, including hemerology. In fact, the study of time had a supporting role in establishing correct religious observance, which helped originally pagan hemerological practices flourish in medieval Europe.

The main function of the study of time for religious purposes was to establish exactly when important historical events

had taken place so as to commemorate these events at the correct times throughout the liturgical year. The liturgical calendar provided Christians with a cyclical framework in which to carry out their religious duties and observances, which were linked to key events celebrated at specific times, such as the feasts of saints and the life and passion of Christ. Christ’s birth, for instance, was celebrated at Christmas, while his resurrection three days after his crucifixion was celebrated at Easter. But whereas Christ’s birth is customarily set at December 25, there is no fixed point in the calendar at which Easter is celebrated. Instead, the celebration of Easter is set annually at a point between two extreme dates in the calendar known as the Easter limits. On the one hand, Christmas and its related feasts, such as the circumcision of Christ eight days after his birth on January 1, are said to be fixed feasts. On the other hand, Easter and its related feasts, such as Pentecost fifty days after Easter, are said to be movable feasts because they occur at different times each year. The difference between the two types of feasts is occasioned by the fact that fixed feasts take place at set times in the solar cycle, whereas movable feasts are based on set moments in the lunar cycle. When Easter observance was established in the early Christian Church, it was linked to the Hebrew feast of Passover, which was situated in the temporal framework of the Hebrew lunar calendar and required annual alignment with the solar calendar used by Christians. A year based on lunar cycles, however, is different in length from one based on the solar cycle, and since the Christian liturgical year was mapped onto the solar, Julian (i.e., pre-Gregorian) calendar of 365.25 days, liturgical events in the lunar cycle and their corresponding places in the solar cycle needed to be correlated by means of a superimposed lunisolar cycle.

One reason the correlation of lunar and solar cycles in a single lunisolar cycle was so important was that the proper timing of a religious observance determined its efficacy. Some liturgical events that depend on the correct timing of Easter actually precede Easter, such as the forty-day fast in commemoration of Christ’s fasting in the desert, but it was impossible to postpone all pre-Easter events until the correct lunisolar configuration for celebrating Easter presented itself astronomically. Rather, the correct moment for Easter had to be established by calculation well in advance of Easter itself so as to enable the celebration of pre-Easter events. The systematic study of time was imperative to making correct calculations in medieval Christian communities, not time as an astronomical phenomenon but time as a calculable set of parameters. Thus, when Bede in the 720s reiterated the decision reached by the bishops at the First Council of Nicaea (325) that “the Sunday following the full moon which falls on or after the equinox will give the lawful Easter,” he did not suggest that people observe this moment astronomically. The lunar cycle and the vernal equinox referred to here were not astronomical realities but calendrical conventions established and manipulated by means of calculation. The vernal equinox, for instance, was

originally set at March 25 when the Julian calendar was established in 46 BCE, but since the Julian year was minutely longer than the astronomical, solar year it described (hence the Gregorian calendar reform in 1582), the astronomical vernal equinox had drifted to March 21 by the fourth century. As a consequence of time as a construct versus time as an astronomical phenomenon, the observance of movable liturgical feasts like Easter became dependent on the models used to correlate the lunar and solar cycles. Being theoretical constructs, lunisolar models were liable to vary across time and place, a case in point being the Easter controversy at the Synod of Whitby (664) recorded in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (Ecclesiastical history of the English people). With northern English Christians using an older lunisolar cycle of eighty-four years and an equinox set at March 25, and southern English Christians using the newer lunisolar cycle of nineteen years and an equinox set at March 21, it is only logical that Easter would be celebrated at different times in some years, depending on the method of calculation. Legend has it that matters came to a head at the Synod of Whitby under the leadership of the northern king Oswiu (ca. 612–670), who switched from northern to southern English usage so that he would not be celebrating Easter while his southern wife Eanflæd (626–685) was still fasting in preparation for Easter.²⁰ If it is assumed that only one of the two Easter dates is correct, either the king or the queen would have erred by observing Easter at the wrong time. The separation between observing time astronomically and studying time calendrically, and reliance on the latter at the cost of the former, necessitated advanced theoretical models for describing beforehand what could also have been verified by observation on the spot.

There were various models for correlating lunar and solar cycles, various ways of tweaking the small but irreconcilable differences between them, and various approaches to describing calendrical time and astronomical time. The scientific method that concerns itself with such temporal models, tweaks, and approaches is called “computus,” which, as Wallis remarks, “is not an observational science, or a physics of time, but a technique of patterning time into repeating cycles according to certain conventions.” From an Augustinian perspective, computus developed into a highly useful branch of Christian doctrine, precisely because it helped structure religious observance into the annual cycle of the liturgical calendar. Indeed, works such as Bede's *De temporum ratione* and Ælfric's *De temporibus anni* were specifically designed to help Christian communities understand the need for the study of time, even if the models that were developed and propagated were not uniform. Presenting a variable but coherent picture of how time was structured, computus elucidated what kinds of lunar and solar cycles could be distinguished, and how they related to each other. For instance, solar years, on the one hand, were usually defined as the 365 days and six hours it took for the sun to return to the same position against the

fixed stars as seen from earth (so with the sun orbiting the earth, as it was thought in medieval Europe). Lunar cycles, on the other hand, were measured as the 29 days and twelve hours from new moon to new moon (the synodic month), or as the 27 days and seven hours it took for the moon to return to the same position against the fixed stars (the sidereal month). The lunisolar cycle used to correlate lunar and solar cycles was the interval it took for a lunar month “to begin on the same date as in some previous year.” The lunisolar cycles known in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages were 8, 11, 19, 84, or 112 years in length, and of these, the 19- and 84-year cycles were most prominently used in medieval Europe, as the example of the Synod of Whitby illustrates. Computus also concerned itself with other cycles of time that were equally relevant to religious observance, such as the minutes of the hour, the hours of the day, the days of the week, the months of the year, and the cycles of seasons, equinoxes, and solstices, all of which were theoretical models, not astronomical observations.

The operative word in the preceding discussion of computus is “cycles,” and connected with cycles is the idea of recurrence that identifies temporal patterns from which to extrapolate. One of the aims of patterning time for religious observance is to project familiar, past events into the future on the basis of calculation through recurring, cyclical patterns. To put it another way, the recognition that time runs in cycles enabled computists to establish by calculation how liturgical events in the lunar cycle could be integrated into the solar liturgical calendar before they happen. Yet the skills developed to describe such cycles for religious observance may also be used to divine recurring non-liturgical events that employ the same cyclical structures. For instance, the synodic lunar cycle from new moon to new moon, familiar from religious observance, was also used to assign avoidance days and good days for events such as giving birth, bloodletting, dreaming, and falling ill in a type of hemerology called a “lunary.” Thus, by means of exactly the same lunar cycle used for calculating Easter, lunaries revealed that letting blood on the first day of the moon was good but was to be avoided on the second day of the moon, because of the intrinsically auspicious and inauspicious qualities of the days of the moon.²⁵ Future Easter celebrations and the consequences of bloodletting, then, were event patterns built on the same recurring lunar time cycle. In short, the recognition that time could be arranged in recurring cycles facilitated its use as a template for modeling the future, which was a useful type of knowledge not just for correct religious observance but also for hemerology.

Computus as an auxiliary science for religious observance played a definitive role in processes leading to the firm establishment of hemerology in medieval European conceptualizations of time. By the end of the medieval period, hemerology was a well-documented and widely practiced form of divination, so much so that one can almost

consult fifteenth-century prayer books or scientific or medical manuscripts at random and discover hemerological texts on at least some of the leaves. The ubiquity of hemerology in the late Middle Ages would seem to stem from the importance of the study of time in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, when Christianity first took hold in Europe.

Christian missionary activity from the fourth century onward brought with it a text-based religion whose proper observance depended on written sources and calendrical science, interpreted and studied by a literate elite. Communities throughout the British Isles and continental western Europe were converted from their native religions to Christianity, and churches and religious foundations, such as monasteries and nunneries, were established in the wake of the missionaries. These religious foundations formed the intellectual backbone of Christianity by training clergy and scholars and encouraging the pursuit of useful knowledge as an important activity, which resulted in sizable monastic libraries. The first hemerological texts were copied in these learned environments in the eighth century, but they came from older, pagan Mediterranean sources that may have traveled with the rolls and books brought by missionaries. Among the earliest forms of hemerology preserved in monastic libraries are lunaries, which relied on the lunar cycle, and Egyptian Days, which relied on the solar cycle. The ninth-century medical compendium St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 751, for instance, contains a number of hemerologies, including bloodletting and birth lunaries.

Lunaries are attested in older Byzantine Greek sources, and their appearance in a ninth-century manuscript from one of the main monastic centers of continental western Europe is testimony to the almost instantaneous assimilation of non-Christian hemerology into Christian learned culture. The so-called Egyptian Days—avoidance days for bloodletting, medication, and miscellaneous actions—were integrated as quickly into Christian learning, as witness the ninth-century manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 63, which combines computus materials with texts on the Egyptian Days. Hemerological practices, though based on natural phenomena such as the lunar and solar cycles, were emphatically not meant to be employed on the basis of astronomical observation, but, like religious observance, they made use of the theoretical discipline of computus. In other words, both religious observance and hemerology relied on calendrical science, which is substantiated by the transmission of hemerological texts alongside computistical texts and liturgical calendars in early medieval manuscripts.

The Bible, computus, the liturgical calendar, and hemerology were all text-based forms of learning, which placed their initial study and dissemination in the hands of a religious, literate elite. This elite at first restricted itself to Latin, irrespective of the local language, and controlled the material transmission of text-based knowledge by

controlling literacy. The first translations of computistical and hemerological texts into the vernacular appeared in England in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, perhaps to cater to monastic audiences who were not yet educated well enough to understand Latin but would have needed to familiarize themselves with computus and other useful skills all the same. The eleventh-century English manuscript London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A. xv, for instance, is a computistical miscellany with a number of hemerological texts, including some in English translation, such as a text on the Egyptian Days. The increased dependence on writing outside a religious setting from the twelfth century onward encouraged the spread of practical literacy and gave nonclerical professionals, such as diviners, astrologers, and physicians, access to all kinds of text-based knowledge. In the late Middle Ages, hemerological texts were transmitted in staggeringly large numbers across all of Europe, in prayer books and in scientific, medical, and astrological manuscripts that were no longer copied solely in religious foundations but also produced at universities, commercially in copy shops, and at home for private use. The nonclerical transmission of natural philosophy and the artes (including hemerology) and the use of the vernacular became well established throughout late medieval Europe. Hemerological texts have been identified in Celtic (e.g., Irish, Welsh), Germanic (e.g., Dutch, English, German, Icelandic), and Romance languages (e.g., French, Italian) in manuscripts that formerly belonged to monastic and secular clergy, university scholars, nonclerical professionals, and laymen.

A special form of hemerology from the end of the medieval period involves the use of non-textual modes to communicate hemerological information. Non-textual materials were sometimes included in folded almanacs, “a class of small manuscripts that contains calendrical, astrological, and medical elements.” The fourteenth-century folded almanac Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson D. 939, for instance, preserves what is described in the catalog of manuscripts as “a long series of enigmatical numerals and signs” but which is in truth a picture lunary in which the actions to be undertaken or avoided on the thirty days of the moon are represented graphically. The images and the fact that the numbers are not in the roman or arabic number systems prevalent at the time but in a sort of intuitive cipher indicate that this lunary could be decoded by people who did not have the levels of literacy and numeracy associated with the medieval liberal arts. This does not mean that pictorial resources like folded almanacs were addressed to the illiterate by definition. Hilary Carey argues that “the audience for calendar manuscripts of all types covered a wide social spectrum from professional users, such as university-trained physicians, at the one end, to common people struggling with literacy and numeracy at the other.” The visual representation of the dangers of letting blood on the Egyptian Days.

non-textual hemerology, and is even rarer than the picture hemerologies found in the handful of surviving folded almanacs. The twenty-four Egyptian Days were usually recorded in calendars in the form of written text, but the calendar in the twelfth-century manuscript *The Hague*, National Library of the Netherlands, MS 76 F 13, displays the Egyptian Days as images of people letting blood, which is to be avoided at all costs on these days.

Non-textual hemerology is not the norm in late medieval Europe, but it is indicative of the successful adoption of hemerology, from the first occurrences of hemerological texts in eighth-century encyclopedic, medical, and computistical manuscripts to the picture hemerologies in late medieval calendars and folded almanacs. In terms of quantity, while we do not have many hemerological texts dating to the early medieval period, for the fifteenth century they survive by the hundreds. If computus and book learning had not been so essential to Christian doctrine in the early stages of the conversion, hemerology would not have fallen on such fertile ground despite its non-Christian origins. Hemerological texts were being copied in the early monasteries, and thanks to the intellectual drive to preserve useful knowledge, hemerology emerged outside the walls of monasteries in the twelfth century and fixed itself in the mind-set of medieval Europeans at large.

Divination, Commemoration, and Natural Philosophy

The commonalities between religious observance and hemerology notwithstanding, these two ways of conceptualizing time were different in kind. Computus, which underlies both the liturgical calendar and hemerology, is essentially a value-neutral discipline that inquires into repetitive cycles of time, but a distinction would sometimes be made between permitted religious versus denounced superstitious uses of time. We may no longer be able to fully understand how hemerology might differ from religious observance because both activities would seem to rely on specific moments in time with intrinsic qualities, but even though Christians would preserve hemerology, the practice of hemerology was out of bounds to these same Christians, mainly on the basis of biblical precept. When the apostle Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians (the Galatians were an early Christian community in the Near East) around 50 CE, he criticized them for turning away from his teachings after they had been converted by him. He wrote that “now, after that you have known God, or rather are known by God: how turn you again to the weak and needy elements, which you desire to serve again? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest perhaps I have laboured in vain among you” (Galatians 4:9–11). It is not known what made the Galatians resort to hemerology in his absence, but there is no doubt that Paul berated them for their return to non-Christian practices. Clearly, then, religious observance and hemerology were already at odds in the earliest stages of Christianity.

Hemerology as Divination

Paul’s criticism became a locus classicus in the writings of Christian authorities in Late Antiquity. The Church Father Ambrose (ca. 340–397), for instance, observes in one of his letters: “But you will agree that it is one thing to observe in a pagan fashion what things should be started at which day of the moon; that the fifth day, for instance, should be avoided and nothing started on that day, and also that various lunar cycles recommend or advise against certain days for doing business, just as many are accustomed to shunning the unlucky or Egyptian Days. It is another thing to direct oneself with a devout mind to observance of this day, of which it is written: ‘This is the day which the Lord hath made’ (Psalms 117:24).” These comments are situated in a discussion about the observance of Easter, and Ambrose contrasts the necessity of knowing the date of a future Easter with the hemerological practices denounced in the Epistle to the Galatians. Calendrical science, Ambrose maintained, was useful because it facilitated correct religious observance, but when applied to hemerology, it became a useless art that led people astray. Lunaries and Egyptian Days, the types of hemerology that Ambrose advanced, specify the lunar and solar hemerologies hinted at in Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, which Ambrose had quoted just before these observations. That Ambrose was able to make a distinction between lunar and solar hemerology at all is evidence that both methods were known in Mediterranean Christian communities at the time. The presence of Egyptian Days in a Christian Roman calendar for the year 354, for instance, shows that he was not referring to practices that had no place in late antique southern Europe.

Writing at around the same time, Augustine was equally dismissive of hemerology: “For who would believe it to be such a great sin to observe days and months and times—as those do who on certain days, in certain months, or in certain years will or will not begin something, because they consider the time favorable or unfavorable in accordance with vain human doctrine—if we could not weigh the magnitude of this evil from the fear of the apostle, who says: ‘I am afraid of you, lest perhaps I have labored in vain among you?’” Augustine cites the apostle Paul and refers to hemerology as a great evil springing from “vain (i.e., useless) human doctrine.” He seems to imply, as Ambrose did, that there is a difference between useful religious observance and the useless human attribution of auspicious and inauspicious qualities to time. Thus, when Christians celebrate Christmas or Easter, or refrain from work on one day of the week in acknowledgment of God’s rest on the seventh day of creation, they honor God, but when they act on the intrinsic qualities of time, they err.

The difference between religious observance and hemerology was not just a concern in the Mediterranean region in Late Antiquity. When northwestern Europeans were converted, they were introduced to the Bible and the

writings of the Church Fathers. These early medieval Christians inherited a distrust of pagan divination, yet they also preserved hemerological texts in large numbers in their monasteries, apparently not bothered by the fact that church authorities tried to suppress hemerology. In any case, the views of patristic writers like Ambrose and Augustine influenced those of medieval churchmen, but this did not mean that hemerology was suppressed.

The writings of the English abbot Ælfric provide evidence of how hemerology was perceived at the time. In one of his homilies, Ælfric responds to the customs that people observe when they celebrate the first of January as the start of the year: “Now foolish men practice many divinations on this day, with great error, after heathen custom, against their Christianity, as if they could prolong their life or their health, with which they provoke the almighty creator. Many are also possessed with such great error that they regulate their journeying by the moon and their acts according to days, and will not bleed themselves on Monday, because of the beginning of the week; though Monday is not the first day in the week, but the second. Sunday is the first in creation, in order, and in dignity.”

Ælfric is outspokenly negative about divination in this homily. He claims that those who practice hemerology transgress against God by committing a grave error. Moreover, these people are foolish, which Ælfric demonstrates by pointing out a logical flaw in their avoidance of bloodletting on Mondays under the mistaken belief that Monday is the start of the week. The three Egyptian Days corroborate the existence of such hemerological practices. Here and throughout the homily, the writer emphasizes the foolishness of people who practice hemerology, one of their mistakes being that they ascribe intrinsic qualities to days of the week and another that they attach value to January 1 as a special day. There were several starts of the year in medieval Europe, depending on the origins of the various traditions of measuring time, and January 1 had been taken over from the Roman calendar. For Christians like Ælfric, however, the vernal equinox was the proper start of the year because it was the moment when the sun and the moon were created by God (and hence were in perfect opposition). Ælfric meant to say not that it was wrong *per se* to celebrate January 1 as the start of the year but that it was wrong to ascribe an intrinsically auspicious value to the start of the year, or an inauspicious value to Mondays, for that matter.

The preceding examples demonstrate that Christian authorities contrasted religious observance and hemerology, but matters were not always this clear-cut. Paul, Ambrose, Augustine, and Ælfric argued that religious observance honored God, whereas hemerology was vain human doctrine. Ælfric called this vanity “foolishness,” and reproached practitioners of hemerology for their faulty logic. If the division between religious observance and hemerology is clear, then what about natural philosophy,

which records events that at first sight seem to be conspicuously similar to hemerology? A case in point is a miracle narrated in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*, in which Saint John of Beverley (d. 721) was called upon to heal a nun who fell ill after having been bled: “Then he asked when the girl had been bled and, on hearing that it was on the fourth day of the moon, he exclaimed, ‘You have acted foolishly and ignorantly to bleed her on the fourth day of the moon; I remember how archbishop Theodore of blessed memory used to say that it was very dangerous to bleed a patient when the moon is waxing and the ocean tide flowing. And what can I do for the girl if she is at the point of death?’”

John’s intercession brought the dying nun back to life, but the question of interest is whether the mention of letting blood at the wrong time is a reference to hemerology, which would make Saint John of Beverley a believer in auspicious and inauspicious values for the days of the moon. He might, for instance, have been referring to bloodletting lunaries, which stipulate that bloodletting is to be avoided after early morning on the fourth day of the moon. In view of the allusion to the famous scholar and archbishop Theodore of Tarsus (602–690), it is more likely, however, that John’s observation derived from another field of knowledge, that is, natural philosophy. Early medieval scientific and medical sources substantiate the existence of the theory that the moon had an effect on all kinds of natural processes involving fluids, including blood. A waxing moon would increase the flow of fluids, which could have negative consequences for bloodletting, while a waning moon would reduce the flow of fluids. Such a theory from natural philosophy was perceived to be different from ascribing intrinsic qualities to specific times, as hemerology did. In other words, the waxing moon had no intrinsically inauspicious quality, but it exerted a physical influence on the flow of fluids through natural processes. Wallis observed that “medieval thinkers ... were careful to distinguish this natural or ‘environmental’ influence from astrological determinism.” Donald Harper argued the same for the Warring States period in China, in which there were “important distinctions between magico-religious conceptions of nature and a more rationalized account of nature’s operation.” The difference between these two sets of distinctions, however, is that medieval European hemerology was distinct from natural philosophy on doctrinal grounds, not on rational grounds: natural philosophy was concomitant with God’s creation of the universe, whereas hemerology was vain human doctrine

That this distinction was common knowledge in medieval times is demonstrated by Ælfric, who in his homily contrasts Paul’s denunciation of hemerology in his Epistle to the Galatians to observations derived from natural philosophy:

The Christianity of a man who lives with devilish divination is void. He appears Christian, but is a wretched heathen, just as that same apostle (i.e.,

Paul) says about such a man: “I believe that I labored in vain when I turned you to God. Now you observe days and months with vain divinations.” However, every bodily creature in creation, which the earth brings forth, is, according to nature, fuller and stronger in full moon than when the moon is waning. Therefore, trees also, if they are felled during full moon, are harder and more lasting for building, and especially if they are made sapless. This is no divination, but it is a natural thing through creation.

Ælfric drew a clear line between divination and natural philosophy by contrasting the putative intrinsic qualities of time and the properties of wood in terms of the correlation between each one and the lunar cycle. Laws of nature, he maintained, resulted directly from God’s creation. Hemerology, however, was diabolical and vain, which is particularly evident in his rendering of Galatians 4:10 (“You observe days, and months, and times, and years”) as “Now you observe days and months with vain divinations,” in which “vain divinations” is a negative judgment of the usefulness of hemerology that is not in the Epistle to the Galatians.

Hemerology as Commemoration

The contrast between natural philosophy and hemerology, so strongly argued by Ælfric, is further confirmed by normative, doctrinal, and legal attitudes toward divination, though efforts were made to authenticate hemerology from a philosophical perspective. Whereas late antique and early medieval writers did not hesitate to denounce hemerology outright, without giving reasons for considering it vain human doctrine in the first place, influential late medieval scholars tried to steer the criticism away from the vanity of human doctrine by drawing hemerology into the realm of religious observation. This authenticating strategy is best demonstrated by contrasting the opinions of the Church Fathers and writers of canon law to the views of scholars at the universities, which were first founded in Europe in the twelfth century. Rather than denounce hemerology, these scholars tried to integrate it into their worldview through dialectic reasoning, even inventing biblical precepts for hemerological practices like the Egyptian Days.

The doctrinal perspective on hemerology is witnessed in Ambrose’s denunciation of the Egyptian Days (referred to above), which is echoed in Augustine’s commentary on Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians:

Therefore, let the reader choose which of the two meanings he wishes, as long as he understands that the superstitious observation of times leads to such grave danger to the soul that the apostle remarked on this topic: “I am afraid of you, lest perhaps I have labored in vain among you.” Although these words are read with such renown and authority in church-es all over the world, our congregations are

still filled with people who accept from astrologers the times for when to do things. So much so that often even those who, as the saying goes, do not know where they are walking do not hesitate to warn us not to initiate any building or work of this kind on days that they call “Egyptian.”

In the early Middle Ages, these anti-hemerological sentiments were incorporated in biblical commentaries, endorsed at Church synods, and preached to Christian communities. Divination in general and hemerological practices such as the Egyptian Days in particular had to be suppressed because they were looked upon as superstitious, though hemerologies were copied in manuscripts by monks, and higher clergy like abbots and bishops were sometimes known to have owned manuscripts containing large collections of hemerological texts. Throughout the Middle Ages, hemerology was legislated against, for instance, in the Decretum Gratiani (Decree of Gratian), a mid-twelfth-century treatise on canon law (the religious counterpart to secular law). In a section titled “Dies Egipciaci, et Ianuarii kalendae non sunt observandae” (Egyptian Days and January the first are not to be observed), the Decretum reads: “Do not observe the days that are called ‘Egyptian,’ or January the first.... Indeed, those who place belief in them, by going to diviners’ houses or allowing them into their own houses to ask them questions, let them know that they have violated the Christian faith and the baptism. Pagan and apostate, that is, against God’s wish and hostile to Him, they have gravely incurred the wrath of God in eternity, unless they will be reconciled to God, corrected by ecclesiastical penitence.”

Along with a host of mantic techniques, hemerology was prohibited by canon law, as the Decretum Gratiani illustrates. It stands to reason that religious legislation strongly rejected hemerology because it had been considered an error since the earliest Christian times. Many church calendars, however, included references to the Egyptian Days and the Dog Days, and this potential problem was not covered by the Decretum but dealt with in the commentaries that developed around the major canon law collections.⁵⁰ In the late twelfth century, Simon of Bisignano (fl. 1177–79), for instance, addressed the matter in full in his commentary on the Decretum Gratiani:

From the words “Do not observe” to “Egyptian Days.” The following argument may be brought against this clause: If it is illegal to observe those days, as Augustine seems to suggest, then why does the church respect the Egyptian Days and why does it have them written in the martyrologies (i.e., liturgical calendars)? The solution: The church has them not so that it may observe them but so that it may disapprove of them.... We find, or rather it shows, at which times and hours the Egyptians were punished by God. They are called “Egyptian Days,” either because they come from Egypt, where this idolatry was invented.... Or it comes

from the Egyptians because they were punished in those times. Or from darkness, for *Egiptus* may be interpreted as “dark,” because he who on those days lets blood in agreement with their erroneous opinion moves toward darkness and failure.

Simon of Bisignano realized that the problem of hemerology did not lie primarily with diviners and their clients but with the presence of Egyptian Days in the liturgical calendars used by the clergy. He was of course unwilling to claim that churchmen practiced hemerology because it was more strategic ideologically to place diviners outside clerical circles. So instead of denouncing the clergy, his solution was to rationalize the existence of Egyptian Days in the calendar in a manner that is strongly reminiscent of how scholastic writers approached the subject, that is, by using logic and etymology to explain how the Egyptian Days got their name.

Simon of Bisignano maintained the opposition between religious observance and hemerology from a legal perspective, but scholastic writers from the learned milieus at European universities tried a more integrative approach from a philosophical angle. The learned setting of the universities established in twelfth-century Europe was conducive to the emergence of scholasticism, a type of advanced study that used dialectic reasoning to resolve contradictions between theology and philosophy.

The scholastic author Peter Comestor (d. ca. 1178), for instance, tried to unite religious observance and hemerology in his analysis of the Egyptian Days: “It should be noted that there were more plagues in Egypt than the ten which Exodus enumerates, but they happen not to have been so devastating, and that is why no mention is made of them. Hence, some days are called ‘Egyptian’ because on those days Egypt suffered. We keep only two of them in every month in remembrance, although perhaps there were more. It should not be believed that the Egyptians, experienced though they were in astrology, considered these days as unlucky for starting a task or a journey or bloodletting.” In the context of his *Historia scholastica* (Scholastic history), Peter Comestor wrote commentaries on the historical books of the Bible. This excerpt is situated in his exegesis of the Old Testament narrative of Exodus, in which God punishes the Egyptian pharaoh with a series of plagues for refusing to release the Israelites from captivity. By connecting the Egyptian Days to Exodus, Peter Comestor, like Simon of Bisignano, gave them a biblical origin. In his eyes, these days were not vain doctrine or a pagan form of hemerology, as late antique and early medieval Christian authors opined. The term “Egyptian Days” referred instead to the devastating plagues visited upon the Egyptians. Since the Bible lists only ten plagues against twenty-four Egyptian Days (two per month), these ten plagues were allegedly the most severe.

Peter Comestor did not intend to denounce a widespread contemporaneous hemerological practice, but then his

purpose was not to set doctrinal boundaries and formulate normative rules, as Paul, the Church Fathers, and legislators did. By integrating theology and philosophy, he tried to understand God’s creation from a logical perspective. What Peter Comestor did, in fact, is much subtler than plain denunciation. Rather than say that hemerology is vain human doctrine, he disarmed the hemerological nature of the Egyptian Days by claiming that they were recorded “in remembrance.” The consequence of his analysis is that the Egyptian Days commemorate historical events, and this is precisely what religious observance does, too. To celebrate saints’ days or the birth of Christ or his resurrection, after all, is not an act of divination but of commemoration. Religious observance, in other words, seeks to commemorate key events that occurred in the past, whereas hemerology looks forward to what is still to happen. The past was known to Christians, but they were not allowed to try to discover what might happen in the future, which is why divination was out of bounds. Peter Comestor redefined the Egyptian Days as a commemorative act, thereby drawing a form of hemerology out of the realm of divination and into the domain of religious observance.

Contemporary scholastic writers used a similar approach. In the encyclopedic treatise *De proprietatibus rerum* (The properties of things), Bartholomaeus Anglicus (ca. 1203–1272), for instance, reflects on the Egyptian Days as follows: “Of those days one is Egyptian, the other is not. That day is Egyptian on which God sent some kind of plague over Egypt. Hence, as there are twenty-four Egyptian Days, it is clear that God sent more plagues over the Egyptians than the ten that are more famous than the others. They are placed in the liturgical calendar, not because something should be left undone on those days more than on others, but so that we may keep the miracles of God in remembrance.”⁵³ In the context of a discussion of weekdays and days, Bartholomaeus’s argument is similar to Peter’s in that the Egyptian Days are linked to the plagues, of which there are more than the ten recorded in the Bible. Bartholomaeus, however, is even more explicit about the commemorative nature of the Egyptian Days, which were “placed in the liturgical calendar ... so that we may keep the miracles of God in remembrance.” The existence of Egyptian Days in the calendar legitimated rather than undermined their observance, from a liturgical perspective, because they were not to be used hemerologically.

A final example of the scholastic method is from the *Speculum maius* (The great mirror) of Vincent of Beauvais (ca. 1190–1264). One of the most influential encyclopedias of late medieval Europe, the *Speculum maius* has a wealth of information on the Egyptian Days:

They are called “Egyptian Days,” as some suppose, because on those days God punished Egypt. Although one reads about only ten plagues, many lesser ones are reported. According to others, they are called “Egyptian” because the Egyptians, as

experienced astrologers, discovered days that were ill-starred and on which they say it was dangerous to let blood or drink medicine. Others, however, say that this is because it was discovered that they had a good constellation, and therefore they noted that such works should be performed on those days rather than on others. Then there are those who say that the Egyptians shed their blood for demons. Lest the church follow them in their errors, let it refrain from all such things. The church has those days marked in its calendar, not because it believes that something is best started or ended on those days rather than on others, but in order to commemorate them.

In a chapter devoted to the Egyptian Days and the Dog Days, Vincent's analysis corresponds to observations made by other scholastics. Some interpretations of the invention of the Egyptian Days and their name have been given above, but there are others that were no less familiar in the late Middle Ages. The unusual, auspicious reading ("they had a good constellation, and therefore they noted that such works should be performed on those days rather than on others"), for instance, is matched by a comment in the liturgical study *Rationale divinatorum officiorum* (Explanation of the divine offices) by William Durand (ca. 1230–1296):

"alternatively, maybe they (i.e., the Egyptians) found that those days had good constellations and they therefore wrote them in their calendar so that on those days, rather than on others, certain activities may be undertaken." The reference to an alleged Egyptian custom of blood sacrifice is also attested in the computistical treatise *De anni ratione* (The reckoning of the year) by Johannes de Sacrobosco (ca. 1195–ca. 1256), who observed that some Egyptians "even sacrificed human blood to Pluto (the Greek god of the underworld) on these days." In short, Vincent of Beauvais drew on a variety of interpretations developed by scholastics in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and he did not prefer one interpretation over the other, nor did he denounce the Egyptian Days. Scholastics deliberately avoided the confrontation sought by makers of doctrine and law, such as Ambrose, Augustine, and Gratian. Using philosophy, Vincent and his scholastic contemporaries reconciled hemerology and religious observance by recasting the former as an act of commemoration.

Hemerology as Natural Philosophy

The main viewpoints so far are that hemerology was either denounced as a superstition or redefined as a commemorative form of religious observance, but there is a third perspective, that of practitioners and authors who had a vested interest in legitimating hemerology. Late medieval physicians as well as practitioners of divination and astrology, who relied on hemerology for some of their procedures, were anxious to justify the role of hemerology. For instance, having explained that bloodletting was to be avoided at all costs at specific hours on the Egyptian Days, an eleventh-century author observed that "a certain doctor

investigated this; he bled his horse at such an hour (on an Egyptian Day), and it lay dead immediately." This observation is not present in the Latin source text, but there apparently was a need to validate hemerology by putative medical experiment, thereby proving (for lack of a better word) that it was on a par with scientific disciplines such as natural philosophy, medicine, and computus.

Authors of medical, scientific, astrological, and mantic treatises would incorporate a range of ideas drawn from the Bible, normative writings, natural philosophy, and scholastic philosophy in their efforts to demonstrate that hemerology was as much part of God's creation as, to cite the example of Ælfric's homily, the durability of wood felled during a full moon. The author of *The Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy*, for instance, advanced a worldview that justified hemerology as a valid natural phenomenon. In a dialogue about free will and predestination, the latter a determinist notion of God's complete foreknowledge, the author of *The Wise Book* used hemerology to advance the idea that both good and evil are intrinsic values in God's creation and that human beings are influenced by both. Astrology and divination pointed out the most likely course a person's life may take on the basis of intrinsically auspicious or inauspicious qualities, but free will enabled human beings to override any predetermined cause of events, making them responsible for their own actions, even if God, who is said to exist outside of time, might know from the beginning the entire course of every human being's life. From a hemerological perspective of good and evil, it was only a small step to justify astrology, which in turn justified all kinds of philosophical, natural, and medical notions, such as the complexions and the humors, wholesale.

The Wise Book accomplished these aims by recording a fictitious dialogue between two astrologers (or philosophers, as the word *philosophre* has both meanings in medieval English),⁵⁹ who debated whether humans have free will or are subject to predestination. The first astrologer tried to prove the existence of predestination by "these words that Paul spoke in the Bible: that there are evil days, and there are many of them. In the calendar it is noted, furthermore, that there are many dismales, that is to say, bad and unlucky days. And this is true and may easily be proved by Old Testament astrologers, because when people went to battle at that time, and if they were victorious, then they loved it and thanked God, and worshipped that day. And if they lost the battle, then they made that day dismal in their calendars." The astrologer is advancing a significantly skewed rendering of the views Paul expressed on hemerology in his Epistle to the Galatians. Paul's words now confirm rather than deny the existence of hemerology, which is further corroborated by the supposedly ancient biblical custom of recording inauspicious days in the calendar. The idea of commemoration, advanced by scholastics, is still present in this excerpt, but it is abused for the purpose of advocating a belief in hemerology that is meant to prove

the existence of predestination, whereas the Church was at pains to stress the existence of free will, so that people could freely choose good or evil. The other astrologer objects to this line of reasoning and claims that the whole of creation is intrinsically good and flawless, including “the planets, the constellations, the elements, the months and the days, man and beast, and everything else.”⁶¹ This astrologer proceeds to explain that when God created the universe and the ten orders of angels, the tenth order rebelled against God under the leadership of the archangel Lucifer. God cast these angels from heaven, and they corrupted many things in their fall. Some angels fell all the way into hell, while others clung to the stars, the constellations, the planets, and earth, and these became the stellar, planetary, and elemental spirits that corrupt whatever they govern.

Though it would be acceptable to distinguish between divine goodness and demonic evil, religious writings strongly countered the notion that good and evil could become intrinsic qualities of time and matter, but not *The Wise Book*. Diviners and astrologers, after all, were concerned with legitimating their activities, and one way of doing so was to turn hemerology from a mantic art into natural philosophy. By creating systematic and coherent ways of describing the origins of intrinsic qualities, their manner of functioning in the natural world, and the nature of their connection to human lives, these qualities could be fitted into schemes and systems like those of natural philosophy. In this light, it makes sense that the astrologer in *The Wise Book* boldly concludes, “that man’s predestination is true is explained by way of astrology, for every living person is made of three things in general, that is to say, of the seven planets, the twelve signs, and the four elements, which give him his fortune and his misfortune, his manners, and his complexion,” thereby arguing in favor of predestination and against free will. It is not to be wondered at, then, that the appearance of a planet or a star on the horizon at a specific time had a demonstrable effect on life on earth, because God and the devil instilled good and evil in the whole of creation. Since good and evil are qualities that reside in the heavenly bodies and in the very substances that make up the complexions and the humors, hemerology is subject to the same scientific treatment as computus and medicine.

Late antique and medieval Church Fathers, legislators, and scholars alike would have cringed at the occasionally deplorable logic in *The Wise Book*, but it is more relevant here to realize that these fictitious astrologers added a third perspective on hemerology. Normative sources such as Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, the writings of the Church Fathers, and canon law denounced hemerology as a vain human doctrine. The philosophical writings of the scholastics redefined hemerology as a commemorative act and drew it into the realm of religious observance. In scientific, medical, and astrological sources, such as *The Wise Book*, hemerology was turned into a discipline within natural philosophy that substantiated the intrinsically auspicious and

inauspicious qualities of the created universe. It is important to observe here that these three perspectives on hemerology were not mutually exclusive but existed side by side, catering to the needs of different audiences. These perspectives, moreover, were advanced by different groups who all stood to gain from seeing their views win acceptance. The orthodox, Christian view of hemerology as a pagan or vain doctrine is in evidence from the first century CE onward. It never went out of fashion with religious policy makers, who tried to marginalize and suppress hemerology. The twelfth century saw the rise of a more integrative, philosophical approach. Scholars at that time were bent not on denouncing or defending hemerology but on trying to understand the reasons for its existence. One of those reasons, they argued, was that hemerology commemorated historical events in the manner of religious observance. The third voice, finally, is that of late medieval practitioners. In an attempt to secure their own interests, diviners, astrologers, physicians, and other practitioners wrote a master narrative in which hemerology was authenticated by a primordial struggle between good and evil that affected every facet of creation, including the fabric of life itself.

Hemerological Practices

The range of hemerological practices from medieval Europe is extensive. Written forms of hemerology were not native to Europe but originated in various Mediterranean cultures. To varying degrees, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Classical, Hellenistic, and Byzantine Greece, Rome, and Arabic cultures are all thought to have contributed hemerological practices that were disseminated throughout medieval Europe. Evidence from the late antique period bears witness to the existence of hemerology in southern Europe, such as the Egyptian Days in the Roman calendar of 354. Aside from this calendar, however, no hemerological texts are attested in Europe before the introduction of Christianity. In light of the monastic producers of manuscripts containing hemerological texts, and the close connection between computus, religious observance, and hemerology, Christianity was probably the route via which hemerology entered Europe. Many methods had been introduced in the early medieval period, with a smaller number of methods arriving in the late Middle Ages. The first hemerological texts date from the eighth century and were copied in monasteries in what is now England, France, Germany, northern Italy, and Switzerland.

The hemerological practices that proved most popular throughout the Middle Ages and well into the modern period were already known before the eleventh century. These practices comprise lunar hemerology in the form of lunaries, solar hemerology in the form of the Egyptian Days, and stellar hemerology in the form of the Dog Days. From the eleventh century onward, some new methods of hemerology were introduced, such as zodiacal lunaries, which went back to Arabic and Byzantine Greek sources,

and a new form of the Egyptian Days, which may have been invented in England. These late, newly introduced medieval hemerological practices survive in significantly smaller numbers. The late medieval period saw many advances in medicine and divination, particularly in the field of astrology, but these advances rarely resulted in new forms of hemerology. Instead, new developments in astrology and astrological medicine often took on board older, hemerological practices, such as the use of the Egyptian Days in the astrological context of *The Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy*.

This section presents a select overview of hemerological practices from medieval Europe, arranged alphabetically, omitting forms of divination that make use of temporal structures but are primarily non-hemerological. There are many kinds of mantic techniques, for instance, that predict what will happen in the future based on the time when certain natural phenomena occur, such as sunshine, thunder, or wind. These techniques are non-hemerological in the sense that there is nothing to be avoided or initiated at particular times. Rather, the correlation between a natural phenomenon and a point in time will irrevocably lead to a specific result. If it thunders on a Sunday, for instance, kings and bishops will die. This outcome is fixed and cannot be avoided, in contrast to that of certain life-threatening activities on an Egyptian Day, which can be avoided so as to preserve life.

Probably the most widely distributed non-hemerological but temporal form of divination is the *Revelatio Esdrae* (*Revelation of Esdras*). Attributed to the biblical prophet Esdras, this mantic technique is best described as a year prognosis that predicts what will happen when the first day of the year falls on a certain weekday. If the first day of the year falls on a Sunday, for instance, “winter will be good, spring stormy, summer dry; a good harvest of grapes, sheep multiply, honey will be abundant, and there will be peace.” Again, there is nothing to be avoided or initiated on the first day of the year that could possibly alter human affairs, the weather, or the harvest in that year. What makes the *Revelatio Esdrae* worth mentioning is that it proved hugely popular in both the medieval and the early modern period, which is not the case for all forms of hemerology, as some were discredited in the early modern period due to cultural and religious reforms. Another reason for singling out the *Revelatio Esdrae* is that it was transmitted in the very same early medieval computistical and liturgical manuscripts that featured hemerological practices, such as lunaries and Egyptians Days. The fact that the earliest copies of the *Revelatio Esdrae* were produced in the monastic learned setting that also initiated the dissemination of computus and hemerological practices may indicate that the *Revelatio Esdrae* was yet another way of conceptualizing the passage of time along with computus, religious observance, and hemerology. Yet despite the many links between the wide range of temporal mantic techniques known in medieval Europe and hemerology, this

section discusses only those practices that are manifestly hemerological.

Auspicious Hours for Bloodletting

Bloodletting was a standard medical procedure in Classical Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Early Modernity, but so many dangers were associated with the practice that most hemerologies list avoidance days for bloodletting rather than good days. The text on the auspicious hours for bloodletting in the manuscript London, British Library, Sloane 475 (ca. 1100), is exceptional for identifying certain hours in each day of the week as the good hours for bloodletting. The text merits inclusion here precisely because of its unusually positive approach and its focus on hours of the day as the unit of time rather than the day, both of which are hemerological specificities not often found in other texts. According to the text, bloodletting is permitted on all seven days of the week so long as it is practiced at the correct hours. The assignment of hours is Sunday, the second, sixth, and ninth hours; Monday, the first, fourth, and eleventh hours; Tuesday, the third, seventh, and tenth hours; Wednesday, the fourth, seventh, and tenth hours; Thursday, the third, eighth, and tenth hours; Friday, the fifth and eighth hours; and Saturday, the second and eighth hours. The text does not explain why these particular hours are good but simply introduces them by saying that “these are the hours on which you should let blood.”⁶⁸ The auspicious hours for bloodletting may presumably grant some kind of immunity to harmful side effects. Texts on the twenty-four Egyptian Days, in contrast, would sometimes list specific hours to be avoided because of their lethality.

Dog Days

The Dog Days (in Latin, *dies caniculares*) are avoidance days for medication and bloodletting based on the visibility of the Dog Star.⁶⁹ The Dog Star is the star Sirius in the constellation *Canis Major* or, less commonly, the star Procyon in the constellation *Canis Minor*. The Dog Days are a period that begins with the appearance of the Dog Star on the horizon and ends with its subsequent disappearance. The dates on which the Dog Star appears and disappears vary from place to place depending on the latitude of the observer and across time due to inaccuracies in the calendar, calendar reforms, and the precession of the equinoxes. The length of the period was set according to local custom, ranging from a month to fifty-four days, which seems to suggest that observance of the Dog Days was tied not to astronomical observation but to calendrical science, even though its origins were ultimately based on observation of the heavens. Indeed, knowledge of the Dog Days was most commonly transmitted through liturgical calendars in religious and miscellaneous manuscripts, which would mark the beginning of the Dog Days (*dies caniculares incipiunt*) and the end (*dies caniculares finiunt*). The appearance of the Dog Star was sometimes marked separately as the rising of the Dog Star (*ortus caniculæ*), after the start of the Dog Days. In medieval northwestern

Europe, the beginning of the Dog Days usually fell between July 14 and 18, the rising of the Dog Star between July 17 and 19, and the end of the Dog Days on September 4 or 5.

The Dog Star was an inauspicious sign. Its appearance in the Mediterranean region coincided with the height of summer, and the dangerous influences of the hot climate on illness and hygiene were attributed to the Dog Star. Being the brightest star in the sky, the Dog Star's inauspicious nature was thought to be intensified by the power of the sun. Bloodletting and medication were to be avoided on the Dog Days, which made sense during a period of intense heat in cultures with limited access to hygiene. Incisions from bloodletting, for instance, could more easily become infected and medication was considered hazardous when the severity of an illness was intensified under the influence of the Dog Days.

There are many hundreds of medieval manuscripts containing information on the Dog Days. The Dog Days were duly marked in liturgical calendars, which in early medieval manuscripts had both a religious and a medical function, in the sense that bloodletting was regulated by the same time cycles that structured religious life. Early medieval liturgical manuscripts with calendars often include other hemerological bloodletting regulations alongside computistical notes and medical texts. In view of the medical risks on the Dog Days, medical manuscripts are also sources of knowledge of the Dog Days and either integrate these days into longer medical treatises and hygienic and dietary calendars or discuss them separately in recipe collections. Texts on the Dog Days sometimes include a moonbook and may be found together with texts on the Egyptian Days.

Egyptian Days and Egyptian Hours

More famous than any other type of inauspicious day, Egyptian Days are avoidance days for medication, bloodletting of humans and animals, consumption of goose meat, and miscellaneous actions based on the assignment of three, twelve, or twenty-four days per year. The twenty-four Egyptian Days are first attested in Rome in the fourth century, the three Egyptian Days in northwestern Europe in the ninth century, and the twelve Egyptian Days in England in the twelfth century. All three types are explicitly identified as Egyptian Days, but the name was not explained until the twelfth century, when scholastics speculated on the origins of the Egyptian Days. Texts dealing with the Egyptian Days from this period sometimes similarly give some background information, for instance, "if darkness is called, with a Greek term, *egyptus*, then we rightly call the days of death dark" or "because these days are cursed by God." Egyptian Days differ considerably from native Egyptian hemerologies, which assign auspicious and inauspicious qualities to each of the three parts of the day in a thirty-day cycle.

The three Egyptian Days are three Mondays per year. Minor variations aside, the first Egyptian Day is the Monday after March 25, the second the first Monday of August, and the third the last Monday of December. There is no reason why these three days in particular are inauspicious, except that they might somehow have been connected to the three seasons in the Egyptian agricultural calendar. Bloodletting of humans or animals was thought to be fatal within three to seven (or fifteen) days, medication within fifteen days, and the consumption of goose meat within forty days. *Auca*, the Latin word for "goose," was sometimes misspelled *aqua* (water) in medieval manuscripts, leading to the mistaken assumption that drinking water on the three Egyptian Days was dangerous. Some texts additionally warn that whoever is born on any of these Mondays "will die an evil death," in contrast to texts on the miraculous birthdays, which often accompanied texts of the three Egyptian Days. The three Egyptian Days are attested in different types of manuscripts from the ninth century onward, at first mostly in computistical, liturgical, and medical manuscripts, but later in a wide variety of contexts. Less well known than the twenty-four Egyptian Days, a few hundred texts of the three Egyptian Days survive.

The twelve Egyptian Days are divided evenly across the twelve months of the year. There are only two text witnesses of this type of hemerology, both in scientific manuscripts of the early twelfth century. The manuscripts are closely related, and it is therefore likely that these texts on the twelve Egyptian Days have a common ancestor, possibly produced by the English monk and scholar Byrthferth (ca. 970–ca. 1020). It is unclear exactly what should be initiated or avoided on these days, since the texts provide little more than a list of dates preceded by the comment "these days must be observed every month, on which the people of the Egyptians were cursed together with Pharaoh." The reference to days "on which the people of the Egyptians were cursed" would suggest that these are a type of Egyptian Day on which bloodletting was to be avoided.

The twenty-four Egyptian Days are composed of two days from each calendar month. In view of the many hundreds of text witnesses, there is considerable variation in the dates of the Egyptian Days, but a fairly standard set is attested in many manuscripts. Despite early modern and modern attempts to formulate rules that explain why these particular days were selected, no rationale has as yet been discovered, and it is likely that the twenty-four Egyptian Days were assigned arbitrarily. A wide range of activities is discouraged on these days. Most texts stress the dangers of medication and bloodletting, and some also discourage initiating anything, planting vineyards, buying or selling grapevines, killing and taming animals, and harvesting crops. The twenty-four Egyptian Days are the most ubiquitous form of hemerology in medieval Europe and appear in all kinds of manuscripts. They are marked in liturgical calendars and in computistical, scientific, medical,

matic, and astrological contexts, but they may also feature in hygienic and dietary calendars. In keeping with the widespread notoriety of the twenty-four Egyptian Days and the large number of texts, there is considerable variation in how the twenty-four Egyptian Days were transmitted. Entries in liturgical calendars read *dies egyptiaci* (Egyptian Days), *dies eger* (troublesome days), *dies mali* (evil days), *d e, d m*, or simply *d* against the relevant date, without an explanation of what these words or abbreviations mean. Another way of listing them is to enumerate the dates in calendar notation in texts dealing with the danger of the Egyptian Days, which seems a logical thing to do but is actually quite rare. It is more usual for the twenty-four Egyptian Days to be listed in a cryptic, formulaic fashion either in prose or in verse, with the first date given from the beginning of the month and the second date from the end of the month. The three methods are combined in the following example:

lani prima dies, et septima fine timetur. Periculosum est flebotomari in principio mensis ianuarii die primo, hoc est kl. ianuarii, et ante eius exitum die .vii.a., hoc est .viii.a. kl. februarii.

The first line presents the dates for January in a formulaic manner in metrical verse: *lani prima dies, et sep-tima fine timetur* (in January the first day, and the seventh before its end is feared). In the next lines, the dates are repeated in prose, with the formula spelled out: *in principio mensis ianuarii die primo ... et ante eius exitum die.vii.a.* (in the beginning of the month of January the first day ... and before its end the seventh). In addition, they are reiterated in Roman calendar notation: *hoc est kl. ianuarii* (this is the kalends of January) and *hoc est .viii.a. kl. februarii* (this is the eighth kalends of February). These are three ways of saying exactly the same thing: January 1 and 25 are Egyptian Days. The calendar notation is rarely attested, in contrast to the formula in prose and verse. The prose formula is usually presented as a list, while the verse formula appears as a complete poem of twelve or twenty-four lines (one or two lines per month), or individual verse lines could appear at the top of each month in liturgical calendars. The calendar shown in figure 10.4, for instance, has pictorial representations of people letting blood, the letter *d* for *dies egyptiaci* to the left of the images, and the relevant verse line, *Dat duodena choors septem inde decemque decembris*, at the top of the calendar page. The line is ambiguous, meaning either “the twelfth (duodena) cohort hence gives seventeen (septem ... decemque) to December (December 12 and 15)” or “the twelfth cohort hence gives seven (septem) and ten (decemque) to December (December 7 and 22).”

An even more cryptic method for listing the dates of the twenty-four Egyptian Days is coding them into brief, mnemonic poems. This deliberately hermetic method was first developed by scholars in the twelfth century, and the poems appeared only infrequently in non-scholastic contexts. One type has twelve pairs of words, and the

position of the word pairs corresponds to the position of the months in the year, so the first word pair stands for January, the second for February, and so on. The first letter of the first word in the word pair signifies the first Egyptian Day, and the first letter of the second word the second Egyptian Day. Johannes de Sacrobosco published the following poem (the relevant letters are in bold italics):

*Arm**i**s Gun**f**e, dei Kalatos, adamare dabatur, Lixa memor, conflans gelidos, lin**f**ancia quosdam.
Omne limen, Aaron bagis, concordia laudat, Chiicæ linkat, ei coequata, gearcha lifardus.*

The meaning of the poem is obscure, but the way in which the Egyptian Days are listed is clear. The first letters of the first word pair, “*Arm**i**s Gun**f**e*,” for instance, are “*a*” and “*g*,” and these two letters stand for the first and second Egyptian Days of the month of January. “*A*” is the first letter of the Latin alphabet and signifies January 1; “*g*” is the seventh letter of the alphabet and signifies the seventh day from the end of the month, that is, January 25.

Another type of mnemonic poem consists of twelve words, with the position of the words in the poem corresponding to the position of the months in the year so that the first word stands for January, the second for February, and so on. The first letter of the first syllable of each word signifies the first Egyptian Day, and the first letter of the second syllable the second Egyptian Day. William Durand cited the following poem:

*Augurior decies, audito lumine clangor,
Linq**u**it olens abies, coluit colus, excute gallum.*

Again, the meaning of the poem is obscure, but the way in which the Egyptian Days are listed is clear. The first letters of the first and second syllables of the word “*augurior*,” for instance, are “*a*” and “*g*,” and these two letters stand for the first and second Egyptian Days of the month of January. “*A*” is the first letter of the Latin alphabet, and signifies January 1; “*g*” is the seventh letter of the alphabet and signifies the seventh day from the end of the month, that is, January 25. Like the metrical verses above, these mnemonic poems present the Egyptian Days formulaically: the first day is the result of a process of addition from the beginning of the month; the second day is the result of subtraction from the end of the month. The reason for conceptualizing the twenty-four Egyptian Days in a formulaic manner is not known, but the variety of methods that use the formula is so extensive that it must have been a productive mnemonic strategy, indicating that the twenty-four Egyptian Days were observed intensively in medieval Europe.

The activities to be avoided on the twenty-four Egyptian Days were particularly dangerous during the Egyptian Hours. Calendars identified only the Egyptian Days, but metrical verses would sometimes include references to specific hours that were extremely lethal: “twenty-four days are recorded annually, on which one hour is usually feared by mortals.” These verses would pair an hour with every Egyptian Day. The entry for January in the poem titled

“Histis mortiferam cognoscite versibus horam” (Know the deadly hours by these verses) reads:

die horam fine dieshoram

Dat prima undenam ianus, pede septima sextam.

The second line is a metrical verse that reads “January gives the eleventh on the first, the seventh from the foot the sixth.”

The first line serves as a gloss that separates the Egyptian Day (dies) from the Egyptian Hour (hora). Upon combining the two lines, the verse for January can be decoded as “January gives the eleventh (hour) on the first (day), the seventh (day) from the foot (i.e., the end) the sixth (hour).”⁸⁴ Johannes de Sacrobosco’s mnemonic poem also includes the Egyptian Hours. In each word pair, the first letter of the first syllable of each word signifies the Egyptian Day, and the first letter of the second syllable the Egyptian Hour. The word pair for January, “Armis Gunfe,” for instance, can be decoded as the eleventh hour (“m” equals eleven, not counting “h” and “j”) on January 1 (“a”) and the sixth hour (“f”) on January 25 (“g,” i.e., the seventh day before the end). Egyptian Hours are limited to the twenty-four Egyptian Days and are not associated with the three and the twelve Egyptian Days.

Journey Hemerology

Travel plays a large role in European hemerology—for instance, in the mansions of the moon and zodiacal lunaries—and the topic figures prominently in the astrological and magical literature of medieval Europe. To my knowledge, however, journey hemerology on its own is uncommon, except for topical zodiacal travel lunaries. The following rare text touches upon a matter of interest in medieval natural philosophy, the so-called quaternities, a concept that is comparable to the Chinese five agents (wuxing). In contrast to the system of five agents, Western natural philosophy used interlocking groups of four properties, such as the four seasons, the four cardinal directions, the four elements (fire, earth, air, water), the four stages of life, the four qualities (hot, dry, moist, cold), the four humors (blood, phlegm, choler or yellow bile, melancholy or black bile), and the four complexions (sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, and melancholic). Some of the quaternities are famously given shape in the diagram thought to have been composed by Byrhtferth, the possible inventor of the twelve Egyptian Days. That these quaternities were relevant not only in natural philosophy and medicine but also in hemerology is demonstrated by the journey hemerology (called simply *iornye* in the manuscript source):

If you would like to go to the parts of the east, go when the moon is in an airy sign, that is, in the west.

If you would like to go to the west, go when the moon is in a fiery sign, that is to say, in the east.

If you would like to go to the north, go when the moon is in a dry, south sign.

If you would like to go to the south, go when the moon is in a watery, north sign.

The quaternities are here included as the four directions of travel, the four elements associated with the signs of the zodiac, and the four positions for the moon. The text advises the practitioner to initiate a journey when the moon is in a zodiacal sign with properties that oppose those of the direction of travel, presumably to ward off any inauspicious qualities of the cardinal directions. For travel to the east, one would have to wait for the moon to be in an airy, west sign that countered the fiery east. The airy west was countered by a fiery, east sign, the watery north by a dry, south sign, and the dry south by a watery, north sign. The system of four triplicities (four groups of three zodiacal signs) elucidates the properties of the signs: Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius are hot and dry (fire), east, and masculine; Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn are cold and dry (earth), south, and feminine; Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius are hot and moist (air), west, and masculine; and Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces are cold and moist (water), north, and feminine. Exploiting the properties of these four groups of three signs and observing the opposition between the signs and the direction of travel would enable one to travel safely.

Had the writer of the text known of apotropaic methods for safe travel, he might have advised the use of a ritual similar to that based on the “five conquests” (wusheng) in the second Zhoujia tai tomb 30 daybook-related manuscript for “when (you) are in a hurry to travel and are not able to wait for a good day”. Based on the direction of travel, the method entails “overcoming” (yue) the agent associated with the direction by using the agent that conquers it in the five-agents conquest cycle: when traveling east, conquer east-Wood with Metal (which conquers Wood); when traveling south, conquer south-Fire with Water (which conquers Fire); and so forth. The related method in the Kongjiapo tomb 8 daybook instructs the traveler to carry materials that instantiate the conquering agent, such as a piece of iron when traveling east (Metal conquers Wood) and a vessel of water when traveling south (Water conquers Fire). The subject of medieval magic (and its intimate relation to Christianity) is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it should be noted that there is little evidence from medieval Europe of apotropaic rituals for warding off the inauspicious consequences of violating hemerological proscriptions. That said, the putative existence of free will ensured that predetermined inauspicious outcomes could be negated somehow, and medieval Christianity also allowed for divine intervention and the miraculous as escape routes.

Lunaries

Lunaries list avoidance days and good days for miscellaneous actions based on the lunar cycle. They make use of the synodic lunar cycle of twenty-nine days and twelve hours from new moon to new moon and should not be confused with related lunar hemerological practices such as the mansions of the moon and zodiacal lunaries. Lunaries are first attested in western European manuscripts in the

eighth century and are thought to have been introduced through Byzantine Greek exemplars.

There are two types of lunaries: topical lunaries and general lunaries. Topical lunaries list auspicious and inauspicious outcomes of specific actions and events. One kind of topical lunary, known in German as a Tagwählunar (day-selection lunary, or agenda lunary), discusses the outcome of miscellaneous activities such as trade, education of children, travel, marriage, agriculture, animal husbandry, and moving house. Other topical lunaries are restricted to a single type of event, such as the birth of a child, bloodletting, dreaming, and illness. General lunaries include the kinds of topical lunaries described above, plus information on lost items and fugitives.

There are many hundreds of lunary texts in existence, but some kinds are more popular than others. Topical lunaries for dreams and illness and general lunaries have been transmitted in larger numbers than topical lunaries for birth and bloodletting. Agenda lunaries are rarest, perhaps because they lack the focus of the other topical lunaries and the comprehensiveness of general lunaries. More common than general lunaries in the early medieval period, topical lunaries tended to be distributed according to their subject matter, with illness and bloodletting lunaries present in the liturgical and computistical manuscripts that also include texts on the Egyptian Days; bloodletting lunaries close to liturgical calendars, which were likely to refer to the Dog Days and Egyptian Days; and agenda, birth, and dream lunaries in nontechnical manuscripts. No such thematic distribution took place in late medieval manuscripts, and any kind of lunary could appear in any type of manuscript, with a marked preference for general lunaries over topical lunaries.

Topical lunaries are concise texts that provide little more than lists of predictions linked to the thirty days of the moon. The thirty days of the moon are listed as Luna .i to Luna .xxx. (moon 1–30), or Luna 1 to Luna 30 in some late medieval manuscripts, after arabic numerals had been introduced alongside the more usual roman numerals. A typical bloodletting lunary, for instance, would just present a list of days of the moon together with the outcomes for bloodletting. The bloodletting lunary prefixed to a liturgical calendar in the eleventh-century manuscript London, British Library, Arundel 60, arranges the days and outcomes in a table with ruled columns (fig. 10.7). The entries for the first three and last three days read: “Moon 1: All day is good. Moon 2: It is not good. Moon 3: It is good from the third hour.... Moon 28: It is bad. Moon 29: It is good. Moon 30: It is not good.” All other types of topical lunaries, except for agenda lunaries, are similarly concise.

Agenda lunaries give predictions of miscellaneous activities and take up more room, as in the following example: “On the first day of the moon, go to the king and ask him what you want; he will give it to you. Go to him on the third hour of the day, or when you know that the sea will be full.”⁹⁰

Birth lunaries, which give short predictions of the life and character of a newborn child, are as brief as bloodletting lunaries: “Moon 1: Whoever is born will be healthy. Moon 2: He will be average. Moon 3: He will be unhealthy.” Dream lunaries, which predict whether dreams come true, are equally concise: “Moon 1: Whatever you see will turn to joy. Moons 2 and 3: They will have an effect.”⁹² Illness lunaries predict someone’s chances of recovery upon falling ill: “Moon 1: He who falls ill will recover with difficulty. Moon 2: He will rise immediately. Moon 3: He will not recover.”⁹³ The contents of topical lunaries are structured as brief sequential statements rather than running prose and could be presented as lists. Early medieval bloodletting lunaries, in particular, were sometimes laid out as tables, complete with frames, in keeping with their prominent position on the first page of carefully designed liturgical manuscripts, immediately preceding the calendar. Topical lunaries laid out in tables would permit quick and accurate retrieval of information, in contrast to texts presented as running prose. Topical lunaries could be arranged effectively side by side, allowing consultation either on one topic (in columns) or on one specific day of the moon (in rows), a design that sometimes occurred in manuscripts from the ninth to the twelfth century.

General lunaries are more comprehensive than topical lunaries. The first day of the moon might read, for instance, “Moon 1 is useful for doing all things. A newborn boy will be illustrious, shrewd, wise, learned, endangered by water. If he escapes, he will live long. A newborn girl will be unblemished, chaste, kind, radiant, pleasing to men, justly discriminating. In later life she will be bedridden for a long time. She will have a birth mark by her mouth or eyebrow. Whoever falls ill will languish for a long time. Whatever one dreams will be turned to joy; it means nothing bad, but rarely good. It is good all day to let blood.” This entry for the first day of the moon demonstrates that general lunaries incorporate the categories of topical lunaries, that is, the miscellaneous actions and events of the agenda lunary together with information on birth, illness, dreaming, and bloodletting. General lunaries are thought to have resulted from the process of compiling and expanding topical lunaries with the addition of new kinds of information. Whereas topical birth lunaries are concise and do not distinguish gender, for instance, the birth section of general lunaries differentiates according to gender and is more extensive, addressing life and character, major events and dangers, and the location of birthmarks. Another feature of general lunaries is the inclusion of information on lost items and fugitives. The general lunary quoted above, for instance, advises that items lost on the fifth day of the moon “will be found with difficulty” and people who run away on the fourth day of the moon “will be found immediately.” That said, the comprehensiveness of general lunaries is in evidence mainly at the beginning of the texts, with the length of the entries for the days of the moon dwindling progressively toward the thirtieth day of the moon, as the

text in a fourteenth-century German manuscript demonstrates.

Both topical and general lunaries employed authenticating strategies designed to counter religious denunciation. One such strategy is to attribute them to Daniel, a Jewish biblical prophet who is reported in the Old Testament to have been carried off to Babylon around 600 BCE to be educated as a court adviser. Daniel was known for interpreting signs, such as the dreams of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, and his putative authorship of lunaries must have deflected religious disapproval. Another authenticating strategy is the addition of verses from the Old Testament book of Psalms. For instance, one dream lunary matches the sequence of the Psalms to the days, beginning from “Moon 1: Whatever you see will be turned to joy. ‘Beatus vir qui non abiit’ (Blessed is the man who hath not walked).” Verse 1 of Psalm 1 begins “Blessed is the man who hath not walked.” The second day of the moon in this dream lunary quotes the opening of verse 2 of Psalm 2, and so on through the subsequent days of the moon. A third strategy is to associate each day of the moon with a biblical figure, starting with the first people in creation—Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel—for days one through four. These three methods are likely to have been developed in response to normative attempts to denounce lunar hemerology.

Mansions of the Moon

The mansions of the moon are avoidance days and good days for miscellaneous actions based on the lunar cycle. This hemerological practice makes use of the sidereal lunar cycle of twenty-seven days and seven hours in which the moon returns to the same position against the fixed stars. The mansions, or houses, are the celestial markers—similar to the Chinese twenty-eight stellar lodges — that divide heaven into twenty-eight unequal parts, each mansion having a fixed star as a reference point. In hybrid forms of lunar hemerology, the mansions of the moon are converted to positions in the synodic lunar cycle used for lunaries, which leads to texts with twenty-nine or thirty predictions. The mansions of the moon are not measured against the twelve signs of the zodiac, as in zodiacal lunaries, but it was nonetheless convenient to express the position of the moon as being in a specific zodiacal sign. The celestial circle of 360 degrees was used for fixed stars and signs of the zodiac alike and was divided into twelve equal parts of 30 degrees each for the signs of the zodiac, providing a convenient system of reference. Thus, the first mansion of the moon might be said to last “from the beginning to the thirteenth degree of Aries,” the second “from the thirteenth degree to the twenty-eighth degree of Aries,” the third “from the twenty-eighth degree of Aries to the ninth degree of Taurus,” and so on.

Like zodiacal lunaries, the prognostic genre of the mansions of the moon relied on medical, scientific, philosophical, and astrological notions that were not yet in evidence in lunaries based on the synodic lunar cycle, which had been

introduced into Europe in the eighth century. In describing the relationship between the mansions of the moon and their effects, Laurel Means observes as follows:

Each lunar mansion is endowed with particular prime and principal qualities. These qualities mutate the air, which mutation in turn produces changes in other elements. For instance, when the moon passes through a mansion characterized by the quality moist (*humidus*), its own essential moist quality is augmented, producing rain or high tides. The precise nature of the movement of the moon also determines a judgment: it may be progressive (moving with the signs against the movement of the firmament), rising (in its auge or elevation, and hence in its most influential movement), or falling (*occusus* and in its most harmful movement).

The *modus operandi* of the mansions of the moon, then, is far more complex than that of lunaries. Lunaries assign intrinsic values to individual days of the moon, whereas the mansions of the moon assign intrinsic values to the combination of the moon and the associated stars, just as zodiacal lunaries evaluate the combination of the moon and the signs of the zodiac.

The mansions of the moon are similar to general lunaries and general zodiacal lunaries in that they designate avoidance days and good days for miscellaneous actions. To my knowledge, there are no topical mansions of the moon. The mansions of the moon advise on the usual actions, such as medication, agriculture, animal husbandry, travel, marriage, lost items and fugitives, imprisonment, and apparel and personal hygiene. The following passage concerns the moon in the first mansion:

When the moon is in this mansion, it is good to take medication, put animals out to pasture, initiate a journey, except in the second hour of the day. Do not marry as long as the moon is in this mansion, or in the sign of Aries. Do not take a servant, because he will be a rogue, disobedient, or a fugitive. Buy domestic animals. Ride or make your journey by water if you will, because you will have a good voyage. Do not acquaint yourself with new people, because it will not last. He that is captured will be sorely imprisoned. Make weapons. Plant trees. Cut your hair and your nails. Make clothes and wear them. But whatever you do, make sure that the moon is free from unfortunate aspects with evil planets.

These activities are much more varied than those addressed in general lunaries, but the range is similar to that of zodiacal lunaries. This makes sense because many of these activities are based on the astrological notions that underlie both the mansions of the moon and zodiacal lunaries but were not applied to lunaries, such as the properties and interactions of the stars and the planets. The mansions of the moon were introduced into western Europe in the late

medieval period along with other forms of luni-stellar hemerology, such as zodiacal lunaries. References to the mansions of the moon in late medieval literature show that this type of hemerology was widely known in late medieval Europe, though the number of extant text witnesses is smaller than that of lunaries and zodiacal lunaries.

Miraculous Birthdays

Miraculous birthdays are good days for being born based on the assignment of three days per year. There are several types of birth prognostics, but not all are hemerological; however, the miraculous birthdays are manifestly hemerological because the three days in question have intrinsically auspicious qualities. Other birth prognostics predict the gender of an unborn child, or the life and character of a child based on the time of birth. Texts on the miraculous birthdays are extremely concise and to the point: “It is declared that there are three days and nights in every year on which no women are born, and the body of a man who is born on these days will never decay, but it will be preserved until Judgment Day. They are the last day of December and the first two days of January.”

Men born on the three miraculous birthdays will lead the same lives as other people, but the quality of the three days is such that their bodies are immune to decay after death. For Christians, the advantages would be obvious. Since everyone was thought to be corporeally resurrected on Judgment Day, having an intact body would be beneficial. Aside from a rare variant that identifies March 27, August 13, and January 30 as miraculous birthdays, the three days are in sequence and are liminal moments in time, bridging the transition from one year to the next. This may be the reason why these days specifically are miraculous: *est mirabile misterium* (it is a miraculous mystery), in the words of one of the texts. Around a hundred texts on the miraculous days might survive, but due to their brevity—they take up no more than a few lines in manuscripts that may have hundreds of leaves—they often go unnoticed. Because the three miraculous birthdays correspond numerically to the three Egyptian Days, they may often be found clustered with the three Egyptian Days.

Moonbooks

Moonbooks list avoidance days and good days for medication and bloodletting based on the lunar cycle. They should not be confused with lunaries or other lunar hemerological practices. Moonbooks are transmitted along with texts on the Dog Days and the twenty-four Egyptian Days and are unattested on their own. The number of surviving moonbooks is small. Like Dog Days and Egyptian Days, moonbooks regulate medical procedures, but in contrast to these solar hemerologies, moonbooks also assign auspicious days, and they make use of the synodic lunar cycle: “At which time a vein is to be opened. The fourth moon is good, and the fourteenth, and the twenty-fourth. On the fifth moon, the tenth, the fifteenth, the twentieth, the twenty-fifth, or the thirtieth, it is very dangerous to accept a

potion or to let blood according to the sayings of doctors of old.” The text demonstrates that medication and bloodletting are good on any day of the moon with a four in it but are to be avoided on any day of the moon with a five or multiples of five in it.

Being lunar and assigning auspicious days, moonbooks are complementary to Dog Days and Egyptian Days, which make use of the stellar and solar cycles, but clashes must have been unavoidable, for instance, when a good lunar day for bloodletting fell within the Dog Days or on an Egyptian Day. The same applies to the use of bloodletting lunaries alongside texts on the Dog Days and Egyptian Days. There is no record of how such clashes were resolved, and it is not known whether lunar hemerology was preferred over solar hemerology or auspicious qualities over inauspicious qualities. Bloodletting was regulated by lunar cycles through both hemerology and natural philosophy, but the solar-based twenty-four Egyptian Days were the most popular method of regulating bloodletting.

Perilous Days

Perilous days are avoidance days for miscellaneous actions based on the solar cycle. This type of solar hemerology attributes inauspicious outcomes to a varying number of days per year, ranging from as few as thirty to as many as forty-four, distributed across the months arbitrarily (from one to seven days per month). Some studies distinguish between the forty-four days and the approximately thirty days as two separate perilous-days traditions, the latter of which are sometimes called *Pariser Tage* (Parisian Days) in German research. Ironically, French studies call these same days *Jours égyptiens allemands* (German Egyptian Days). Despite the somewhat unstable number of days and the possibility of more than one text tradition, the perilous days all serve to warn against inauspicious outcomes related to a long list of occurrences, including falling ill, being wounded, getting married, giving birth, traveling, trading, planting, and initiating something new. Uniquely, the texts explicitly state that none of these situations or actions will end well: those who fall ill will not recover, those who travel will not come back, and marriage will lead to the departure of the spouse or to unhappiness, and so forth. The range of actions to be avoided is more extensive than that of the Egyptian Days, and there is a manifestly nonmedical side to the perilous days. Another distinction between these two types of solar hemerologies is that texts on the Egyptian Days merely tell the practitioner to avoid certain activities, whereas texts on the perilous days explain precisely what will happen if the advice is not heeded. Both perilous days and Egyptian Days were sometimes integrated into hygienic and dietary calendars. The perilous days are first attested in the thirteenth century and survive in large numbers, mostly in European vernacular languages.

Unlucky Days

Unlucky days are avoidance days for initiating something new based on the lunar cycle. There are two unlucky days

per month, and “whatever is begun on these days will never be finished.” There are as many unlucky days as Egyptian Days, and it has been argued that the unlucky days were modeled on the twenty-four Egyptian Days. The unlucky days are, however, distributed in a synodic lunar cycle, so they fall on different calendar dates annually. The days are as follows: the third and fourth day of the moon in January, the fifth and seventh in February, the sixth and seventh in March, the fifth and eighth in April, the eighth and ninth in May, the fifth and twenty-seventh in June, the third and thirteenth in July, the eighth and thirteenth in August, the fifth and ninth in September, the fifth and fifteenth in October, the seventh and ninth in November, and the third and thirteenth in December. In contrast to the twenty-four Egyptian Days, the unlucky days are distributed much more unevenly across the month, with a preference for the first half of the lunar cycle, and with the two days of the moon per month closer together than the two Egyptian Days per month. Texts on the unlucky days are first attested in the eleventh century and survive in small numbers, mostly in European vernacular languages.

Zodiacal Lunaries

Zodiacal lunaries list avoidance days and good days for miscellaneous actions based on the lunar cycle. They make use of the sidereal lunar cycle of twenty-seven days and seven hours in which the moon returns to the same position against the fixed stars. For convenience, the moon is thought to spend about two and a half days in each of the twelve signs of the zodiac that divide the celestial circle of 360 degrees into twelve equal parts of 30 degrees: Aries (the first sign, visible at the vernal equinox), Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces. Zodiacal lunaries, therefore, are divided into twelve sections, one for each zodiacal sign the moon passes through. Like the rationale behind the mansions of the moon, the theory behind zodiacal lunaries is far more complex than that of lunaries. Lunaries assign intrinsic values to individual days of the moon, whereas zodiacal lunaries assign intrinsic values to the combination of the moon and signs of the zodiac. Irma Taavitsainen describes the distinctive characteristics of zodiacal lunaries as follows:

The signs had standard descriptions in medieval astrology. They were divided into movable, common, and stable; feminine and masculine; cold and hot. The four elements were attributed to them, and by correspondences the system encompassed everything. These qualities were enforced when the moon entered the sign in question. Movable signs were good for things that one could accomplish soon, i.e., that could be completed when the moon was in the same sign, or for things that were classified as “movable.” Thus the time was appropriate for trading, setting on a journey, sowing seeds, courting women, and so on, but one was advised not to undertake anything that should

remain stable and last long, such as matrimony, building, or planting trees. They belonged to stableness and should be done when the moon was in a stable sign. Some conclusions were even more straightforward: the signs of earth were appropriate for farm work, and the influence of the watery signs was augmented by the moon, so that the time was then appropriate for building watermills and digging wells. Although the moon increased the moist effect, it was not opposed to contrary signs. The signs of fire were good for all work that had something to do with this element, such as melting metals, making bells and guns, and building furnaces. Several predictions in zodiacal lunaries derive directly from the above descriptions, but for a more profound knowledge one had to master the implications of the planets, some of which were derived from classical mythology. The planets attributed to Aries were Mars and the sun; thus the time was favorable for the beginning of war and for approaching people of high rank. The medical sections also have an explicit scientific basis. The body was divided into twelve parts, each of which was ruled by a zodiacal sign. The basic assumption was that the moon had a negative influence on the part of the body in whose sign it was. Thus, people were advised to abstain from phlebotomy, medical treatment, or operating on that particular part. The order was from head to foot, as in medieval treatises of medicine in general.

Zodiacal lunaries, then, were much more comprehensive than lunaries, because they brought together a range of concepts that intersected in intricate ways: astrological theory about the properties of signs of the zodiac and the planets, medical theory about the complexions and the humors, and ideas from natural philosophy. Along with a system of correspondences between the universe (macrocosm) and the human body and mind (microcosm), these theories and ideas were linked to the moon’s passage through the zodiac, constructing a more sophisticated hemerological method than that of lunaries.

Zodiacal lunaries vary in complexity. Texts that focus on single actions are comparable to topical lunaries. Medical applications, particularly with regard to bloodletting, feature in both topical lunaries and topical zodiacal lunaries. From a zodiacal perspective, bloodletting was to be avoided in that part of the body governed by the zodiacal sign that the moon was in. Such medical zodiacal lunaries were sometimes accompanied by a so-called zodiac man, an image of the distribution of the signs of the zodiac across the human body, from Aries in the head to Pisces in the feet, as in the fifteenth-century folded almanac London, British Library, Sloane 2250. The action of travel is not singled out in topical lunaries but is in evidence in topical zodiacal lunaries toward the end of the medieval

period: “And if you find the moon in Aries, you will fulfil your journey soon and in good order. If it is in Taurus, you will suffer harm.” Another action not included in topical lunaries is the outcome of an imprisonment: “Whoever is imprisoned when the moon is in Aries will easily get out. The moon being in Taurus, it will be long before he is released.” The reason information on travel and imprisonment was not included in topical lunaries is unclear, but the heavy involvement of zodiacal lunaries with judicial astrology, in which such issues did play a large role, may explain why topical zodiacal lunaries differ from topical lunaries. The number of topical zodiacal lunaries is, however, negligible in comparison to general zodiacal lunaries, which address miscellaneous actions.

Some general zodiacal lunaries were so brief and simple that practitioners would not have to be familiar with the underlying theories in order to make sense of them, but others are so extensive that they rely on knowledge from various hemerological and mantic traditions. An extensive zodiacal lunary from late medieval England devotes a whole page to each zodiacal sign. With the moon in Leo, a “fferme and stabyll” (firm and stable) sign, the time is suitable for long-term undertakings, for instance. The text starts to list the actions to be avoided at this time, indicated by the word “bad” in the margin. Internal medicine and treatment of the heart and stomach are dangerous, green clothing is dangerous to make and wear, long journeys are dangerous, plotting against one’s enemies is to be avoided, and anything that needs to end soon should not be initiated at this point. The text then proceeds to list a range of auspicious activities, indicated by the word “good” in the margin. It is good to engage in actions that are suitable to the stable (i.e., long-term) nature of Leo, such as marriage, making foundations for castles, accepting a great office, or undertaking anything that is unlikely to change soon. It is a good time to speak with kings and princes, to cast metal for bells and guns, to do things that are related to fire (in keeping with the fiery element of Leo, which is a hot and dry sign), and to buy green clothing. After this part, the text seems to fall back on traditional lunary topics: the lives and characters of male and female children, the recovery of lost items and fugitives, and the auspicious outcome of an illness. The text concludes with a kind of weather prognostic: if it thunders in Leo, there will be strife between the king and his subjects, a good but small harvest, many people will experience illness of the eyes, and a great prince will die, “as astrologers provythe” (as astrologers declare). This general zodiacal lunary, in short, brings together ideas from at least three different hemerological and mantic practices. The beginning is like most zodiacal lunaries, but the middle part resembles a general lunary, while the ending seems a combination of a thunder prognostic and a Revelatio Esdrae. The newer tradition of general zodiacal lunaries is, therefore, more synthetic than the older tradition of general lunaries. Zodiacal lunaries not only incorporated knowledge from medical science, natural philosophy, and astrology but

also adapted information from various other mantic techniques, some non-hemerological.

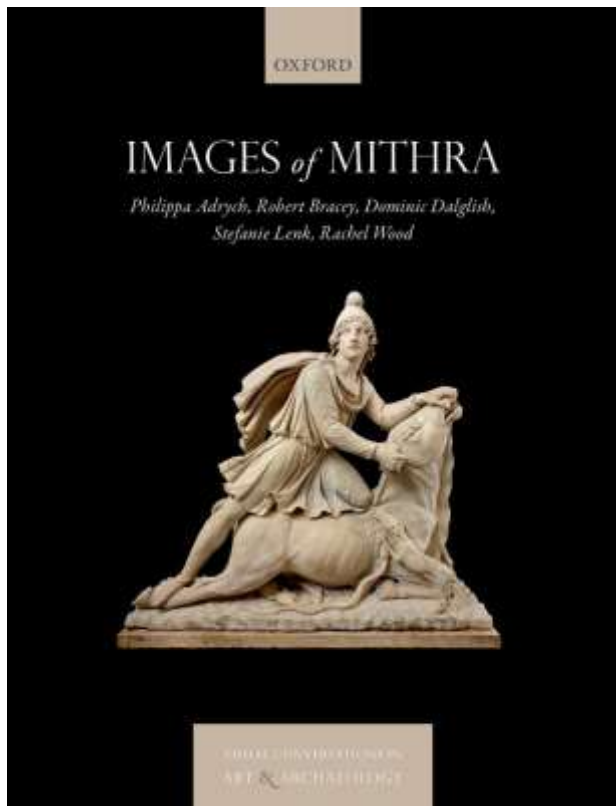
Zodiacal lunaries, both topical and general, were introduced in the twelfth century. They survive in smaller numbers than lunaries, perhaps because lunaries had been in circulation in western Europe for about three centuries by then. The late introduction of zodiacal lunaries meant that this form of hemerology could not derive optimum benefit from the hospitable reception lunaries had enjoyed in the learned monastic milieus of early medieval Europe. That said, zodiacal lunaries were in great demand by all kinds of professionals, such as diviners, astrologers, and physicians, and were popular until well into the seventeenth century.

Inferences

Surviving in great variety in several thousand manuscripts, hemerology figured prominently among the many forms of divination known in medieval Europe. The study and use of hemerology fitted in with other practices that were essential to daily life, such as medicine and religious observance, but in contrast to these practices, hemerology offered a measure of certainty. The attribution of intrinsically auspicious or inauspicious qualities to units of time enabled medieval people to exert control over their lives by arranging their actions in such a way as to minimize risk in the immediate future, a segment of time that mattered immensely but was not part of the eternal future promised by Christianity. The introduction of hemerology in early medieval Europe coincided with efforts to consolidate skills that were greatly valued by Christians, such as calendrical science. The importance of calendrical science for correct religious observance, and the consequent value placed on the study of time, facilitated the transmission of hemerology in the scientific manuscripts that were being produced in monasteries all over western Europe.

Even so, hemerology and the dominant belief system in much of Europe did not coexist in harmony. On grounds less clear to us than to medieval people, a distinction was made between the study of time for commemorative purposes and for superstitious motives. The latter employed the intrinsic qualities of time, not to remind people of important past events, but to attempt to foresee the future. Hemerology, therefore, did not sit well with the religious leaders who outlined church doctrine because it was not commemorative, nor was it part of medieval natural philosophy. This does not mean, however, that hemerology was widely condemned, as seen in the responses to hemerological practices by scholastic writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Unlike Church Fathers and legislators, these scholars were not out to discredit hemerology. Rather, they tried to grasp why it existed in the first place, and in doing so, they inadvertently drew specific forms of hemerology such as the Egyptian Days into the realm of Christian commemorative observance. Yet another approach to hemerology was that of the physicians, diviners, and

astrologers who stood to gain from acceptance of



hemerology as a valid part of natural philosophy.

The author of *The Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy*, for instance, explained that intrinsically auspicious or inauspicious values are natural to all parts of creation. If the heavenly bodies that mark the passage of time have an intrinsic value, then time itself may reasonably be expected to be auspicious or inauspicious as well. Hemerology, in short, was regarded alternatively as a form of superstition, an act of commemoration, or a kind of natural philosophy. Whatever the agendas of the various groups in medieval society who denounced, studied, or practiced hemerology, however, the large number of surviving text witnesses and the great variety of hemerological practices suggest that hemerology fulfilled an urgent need in the lives of medieval Europeans. <>

Mithra Re-Envisioned

Images of Mithra by Philippa Adrych, Robert Bracey, Dominic Dalglish, Stefanie Lenk, Rachel Wood, and series edited by Jas Elsner [Visual Conversations in Art and Archaeology, Oxford University Press, 9780198792536]

With a history of use extending back to Vedic texts of the second millennium BC, derivations of the name Mithra appear in the Roman Empire, across Sasanian Persia, and in the Kushan Empire of southern Afghanistan and northern India during the

first millennium AD. Even today, this name has a place in Yazidi and Zoroastrian religion. But what connection have Mihr in Persia, Miuro in Kushan Bactria, and Mithras in the Roman Empire to one another?

Over the course of the volume, specialists in the material culture of these diverse regions explore appearances of the name Mithra from six distinct locations in antiquity. In a subversion of the usual historical process, the authors begin not from an assessment of texts, but by placing images of Mithra at the heart of their analysis. Careful consideration of each example's own context, situating it in the broader scheme of religious traditions and on-going cultural interactions, is key to this discussion. Such an approach opens a host of potential comparisons and interpretations that are often side-lined in historical accounts.

What *Images of Mithra* offers is a fresh approach to the ways in which gods were labelled and depicted in the ancient world. Through an emphasis on material culture, a more nuanced understanding of the processes of religious formation is proposed in what is but the first part of the *Visual Conversations* series.

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Images of Mithra (Visual Conversations in Art and Archaeology) by Philippa Adrych, Robert Bracey, Dominic Dalglish, Stefanie Lenk, Rachel Wood, and series edited by Jas Elsner [Oxford University Press, 9780198792536]

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Visual Conversations by Jas Elsner

Images of Mithra is the first volume of a new and experimental series of multi-authored books published by the Oxford University Press. The series, *Visual Conversations*, brings together groups of scholars with different areas of expertise to work collectively on a single project. The idea is to produce not a conventional edited book where there is one editor and various authors who write more or less related papers, nor the normal scholarly fare of the single-authored monograph. Rather, it is about people working together and bringing together skills and ranges of knowledge greater than any individual can command, but doing so with the coordinated and integrated thrust that is much more characteristic of a single-authored book than a collection.

In the current era, the ancient material cultural disciplines—within art history, archaeology, and ancient history—have a collective identity in engaging with objects via ways that push beyond and at the same time reflect with a different perspective upon the evidence of texts, documents, and literary survivals. One of the real desiderata is a comparative conversation based on shared methodological concerns, that include the archaeological basis of so many of the materials from pre-modern periods and geographical contexts, the complex relations of understanding our objects about the evidence of surviving texts in ancient languages, and the problematic partiality of the surviving evidence—the fact that such a small percentage of what made up the ancient world is known to us. That conversation, in an era of globalization and cross-cultural interest, has a public resonance beyond academia. Even within relatively specific subject fields (e.g. Classical art or pre-Columbian archaeology) a real interest has developed over the last generation in looking at comparative material from other worlds and contexts—Persia, India, Egypt, Ethiopia, China, Mesopotamia, the Americas.... The antiquities that survive from these cultural contexts may not belong in the same place within the same absolute dating system (especially in cultures that had no knowledge of one another—like Mesoamerica and Eurasia, until the Spanish conquest of the former). But their archaeological means of survival, and the fact that they come from a context known to us through the

artefacts themselves and some relatively sparse selections of surviving texts, offers us many potential comparisons and conversations based on similar methodological explorations.

The writers of *Images of Mithra* have been working together for several years in the 'Empires of Faith' project funded by the Leverhulme Trust and based between the British Museum and Wolfson College, Oxford. Their areas of expertise range from ancient India and pre-Islamic Iran to the Roman Empire and the early Christian west, all of them working on material and visual culture in archaeologically embedded contexts, as well as museum collections (notably that of the British Museum). The book arose from a series of conversations and arguments between them and within the group about the nature of ancient religion and the place of visual culture in writing its narratives. This book's energy is thus the energy of a vibrant and still continuing series of discussions, of which this volume is a first stage in a long conversation. As the principal investigator of 'Empires of Faith', it has been a wonderful experience for me to observe the process and the pyrotechnics along the path, not to speak of the way in which the volume has grown from a short collective seminar paper, via a half-day colloquium, and an international conference with external respondents, to a book.

Images of Mithra does two things—first, as a collection of papers that span Asia and Europe within antiquity (in this case a period covering the first century BC to the fourth century AD), the volume challenges what has become the normative scholarly approach to the (now no longer practiced) religions associated with Mithra. That normative approach has, in the last half century, been to regard the cults, myths, texts, and images associated with the name 'Mithra' in Asia outside the Roman Empire as an entirely different phenomenon from the cults, myths, texts, and images associated with the name 'Mithras' in the Mediterranean world ruled by the Romans. Given that some of the finest and most thoughtful scholarship in all the history of ancient religion has been devoted to what has been called 'Mithraism', this normative approach has the backing of an extremely powerful and impressive academic constituency. But its starting position, dividing Europe and Asia and assuming the cult should be treated entirely differently in these contexts because it was entirely different in each, at the very least needs some reconsideration. The appeal of a god bearing the name 'Mithra' in both western and Asian religious and visual culture begs the question of whether there are any connections beyond a name; and the increasing impetus in scholarship in the last decade to look comparatively at phenomena on a more global or at least trans-cultural level demands that we be at least open to the possibility for more interconnections than the standard approach to Mithraism has allowed.

One of the problems of studying the religions connected with Mithra is that our textual sources—the normative evidential and empirical base for exploring religion—are much more exiguous, fragmentary, and frankly inconclusive than the extremely rich material-cultural, archaeological, and art-historical remains. The use of texts also involves applying literary evidence from one cultural context (for instance, ancient Iran) to archaeology from a different context (for

instance, the Roman Empire). This is not only methodologically problematic, but it also represents a theoretical and theological presupposition—not one that is provable—to the effect that Mithra in these different contexts is in fact, the same entity. One of the great challenges facing this book has been to put the material culture first, to find ways to make it speak (sometimes in the absence of texts), to take it across the borders between the Roman world and the empires of Iran and India, and to attempt to make some comparative conclusions based on the visual evidence. In this, the volume attempts to pioneer a new, more material-culturally embedded approach to the study of ancient religion.

But more broadly still, and moving beyond simply the question of Mithra, and indeed beyond issues of ancient deity-worship in the Roman, Parthian, Sasanian, and Kushan Empires, the book broaches the fundamental problem of what a name may imply about a god. This is a question in which visual culture confronts epigraphy, in defining iconographic form through naming, and in which material culture confronts literary evidence, raising issues that—at any rate in the history of religions—have ramifications well beyond the ancient world and indeed Eurasia. The volume includes, in the response by Claudia Brittenham, the thoughts of an historian of Aztec art and religion, working with entirely different material in an entirely different cultural context, on this fundamental intellectual issue in the study of religion—which is equally valid and equally problematic in thinking about Mesoamerican deities. The Aztec material, in the context of an entirely different god, Quetzalcoatl, raises precisely analogous problems of the use of texts from different contexts (in this case, some colonial and some from non-Aztec pre-Columbian cultures) to throw light on the material culture, and of visual and archaeological evidence of different kinds and from different places, linked only by the naming of the deity.

As the series editor of *Visual Conversations*, it is my hope that *Images of Mithra* will be a beacon and an inspiration to other groups of scholars who want to try to move beyond the lone expert into a world of collaborative discussion and pooling of intellectual resources to tackle big and complex questions that may be beyond the single researcher. Clearly, such collaborations need not be restricted to material culture, although it is in the arena of comparative art history and archaeology that this project began, and clearly, they need not be restricted to the ancient or the late antique worlds. This Foreword is thus not only an introduction to a series and to its inaugural volume, but it is also an invitation to readers to approach the series editor with proposals of their own.

Names and Images

This book is about names and images. Specifically, it is about one name that is widely associated in the early centuries AD with depictions of a divine male figure. In Middle Persian, the name is *Mihr*, in Bactrian *Miuro* or *Muro*, and in the Latin- or Greek-speaking worlds, *Mithra* or *Mithras*. Although all of these names have a single etymological root, students have long queried to what extent the things that they label are connected.' This problem of the relationship between labels and things goes far beyond the scope of Mithraic studies.

In the sixth chapter of *Through the Looking Glass*, Lewis Carroll's Alice enlists the wall-bound ovoid Humpty Dumpty to unravel the meaning of the poem *Jabberwocky*. The conversation turns several times on the question of what a word means, on the relationship between a name and the thing it labels.

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.'

'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you CAN make words mean so many different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master—that's all.'

In this part of the exchange, Humpty upholds what we know words are: they are labels that we use; there is no reason that the same label could not be used for two quite different things. Alice, on the other hand, represents how words behave. We often assume that a single word means one thing. We try to avoid using it to mean several different things, and we assume it means the same thing when others use it. Yet we know that is not the sole possibility. It is easy to think of words that mean more than one thing, of words that mean different things to different people, or words that once meant something very different in the past.

Of course, reality lies somewhere between. Words and names clearly are labels, but there must be some consistency if communication is to be possible, and some basic agreement between different users. So if we find the same name labelling a youth slaying a bull as a Roman sculptural group in the British Museum, a divine being greeting a king on a stele in Turkey, and a design on a coin made in Afghanistan, should we assume they depict the same person and relate to the same beliefs?

The name here may function as a basis for comparison. Some comparisons are simpler than others, with much depending on proximity. For evidence close in location, time, function, and form, often what is missing in one instance can be assumed from what is present in another. Similarly, we may witness changes in thought, technological ability, economic well-being, and so on through the comparison of 'close' evidence from the past. This is a fundamental aspect of the historical process: the comparison and interrelation of evidence that we consider relating directly to the same topic of investigation. With increasing distance, it becomes more difficult to relate evidence directly, and comparisons thus become more complex. Often, we justify comparison on the basis of commonalities, such as political union—the Roman Empire for example—or geographical concepts. But just how far does political union align to a shared culture? And do geographical distinctions (such as might be born from, for example, topographical peculiarities, established local social norms, or the proximity to an urban or sacred 'center') have any bearing on religious observances? It is precisely the complexity of comparison that prompts us to ask these questions and reflect on the justifications for it in the first place.

The appearance of 'Mithra' in a variety of places was not coincidental—different peoples did not simply happen upon the same word. The name was a thousand years old or more

before it labelled the images that we focus on in this volume; it appears in the very oldest of Indo-European texts, the Rig Veda. Functioning as a noun as well as a name, the word could mean variously 'contract', 'promise', 'oath', 'alliance', 'friend', or more abstractly, a moral obligation. It has continued to appear, more or less frequently, in a variety of places, languages, and media ever since. Yet does continuity in the use of the name Mithra from the second millennium BCE through to the present day give us any assurance that the subject it labels remained equally unchanged? Looking at this name alone, a multitude of problems present themselves.

One complication is that of language itself: linguistic translation is rarely simple. Even within Iranian lands, where veneration of Mithra is attested for perhaps over two millennia, the accompanying cultural and political changes during this vast time-period dislodge the comforting illusion of stasis and continuity. In Old Persian, the language of the Achaemenid kings (c.550-331 BCE), we see the Avestan 'Mithra' as 'Mitra', written in cuneiform script. In Iran under the rule of the Parthians (c.141 BCE-CE 224) from the northeast, however, the name is rendered as 'Mihr' in the Aramaic script of the Parthian language, and the same English transliteration is used from the Sasanian Empire's (CE 224-651) language, Middle Persian (Pahlavi). The word lingers in Farsi (modern Persian), bearing similar connotations to the earliest uses: 'mehr' can mean 'seal', 'love', or 'kindness', as well as acting as a synonym for the sun. There is an intrinsic implication of change in such endurance, whereby the name must adapt to the circumstances and demands of the contemporary situation. Names can gather all sorts of associations depending on who ends up using them. Why these people use specific names (in terms of who they wish to communicate with, what they wish to communicate, and how they use them), has the power to change a name through its very use. In Commagene, the name Mithras appears in combination with others to denote what appears to be one figure as 'Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes'. Did the name's association here with the names of three other divine figures modify its meaning?

Putting aside the issue of changes to a name in its iteration across different languages, the spelling—or rather misspelling—of the word within a single language exposes the problem of relying too heavily on any one form of a name in the first place. Coins of Kushan Bactria bear inscriptions with the name MIIRO and MIORO. We might like to imagine that these two words were closely if not wholly aligned, but as we shall see, the situation was not always so simple. Equally, we might ask how much the names meant at all if people did not require them to be consistent or could not read them. Within the Roman Empire there was no overall uniformity in the name given to Mithras; the god could be described by many epithets, of which by far the most common was *invictus*, 'invincible'. These epithets ranged from the specific, such as 'Mithras Oromasdes' and 'Zeus Mithras Helios Cosmocrator', to generic titles applied to many deities, such as the aforementioned *invictus* and the even more ubiquitous *deus*. It is usual to see a string of names and epithets attached to Mithras in inscriptions. The order of these could be changed, or certain elements included or ignored. Further potential for confusion

comes with the conflation of Mithras with *Sol Invictus*, since one of the most popular sequences of names is 'deus Sol Invictus Mithras', the variants of which include 'deus Invictus Sol Mithras', 'Sol Invictus Mithras', and 'deus Invictus Mithras'. There were two important state cults of *Sol Invictus* in the Roman Empire: that of *Sol Invictus Elagabalus*, and the *Sol Invictus* cult promoted by the emperor Aurelian in CE 274. This second cult has often been associated with Mithras worship, although there is little evidence to support such a connection, and indeed it seems mainly to be founded upon the shared use of the epithets *invictus* and the name (or, in some cases, perhaps an epithet) *Sol*. The confusion and conflation of two apparently separate understandings of a solar god is a salutary lesson; a shared name is not sufficient to create a shared theology.

For this book, we use the most relevant formulation of the name according to the particular context in order not to obscure the local variations unnecessarily or to imply a false homogeneity. In other words, we refer to 'Mithras' when talking of sites in the Roman Empire or of scholarship on worship within the *imperium Romanum*, while in the Kushan Empire we refer to 'Miuro' since that is the most common rendering of the name in that region. Geopolitical boundaries, however, are not the only qualifying factor. When referring to the Avestan *yazata* we use the term 'Mithra', yet when talking specifically of the Sasanian context we use the transliteration of the Middle Persian name for the divine being, 'Mihr'. When addressing our topic more broadly, we use the name 'Mithra' not because it is more correct to do so, but because it came out of the hat first.

Such difficulties of comparison do not negate the value of looking at references to Mithra in concert, rather they suggest that certain ways of doing so may be more profitable than others. Invaluable work has been undertaken on the study of Mithra for well over a century, but it is worth remarking on some of the most common pitfalls to which scholarship on Mithra is susceptible, since they have shaped the appearance of our subject.

One would be hard pushed not to be intrigued by the appearance of this name in quite so many places over such a long period, and equally by some of the similarities in how the deity was represented and what his role might have been. This did not escape the attention of historians at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a time when origins were very much on the minds of scholars working in diverse fields, many of which were born out of this period. The origins of language were sought by philologists, of society by anthropologists, of the world itself by geologists, and of species by biologists. The burgeoning fields of psychology and sociology similarly sought these traits in all of us and in each community. The search for deep origins was inherently linked to the idea that there could be an initial guiding principle, which, however morphed and shaped by a host of other factors over time, could in some way provide the key to understanding subsequent manifestations of that base phenomenon.

The Belgian scholar Franz Cumont (1868-1947) was the first to study Mithra systematically with the objective of reconstructing a genealogy, a deep history across cultures and time.' Between 1894 and 1899 he published *Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux mystères de Mithra*, which drew together the texts

mentioning Mithra from the Iranian (Avestan), Indian (Vedic) and Greco-Roman worlds, alongside which he placed the first attempt at collecting the vast array of material evidence, predominantly from the Roman Empire. It was a monumental achievement and one that not only founded a discipline (that of Mithraic studies), but that duly placed him at its head for decades to come.

To characterize his work as simply a search for origins would be unjust; Cumont was deeply involved with questions surrounding Mithra's role and place, especially at Rome. But at the core of his scheme runs the thread of a genealogy. It is a method that makes his approach to history somewhat linear; Cumont did not consider his material so distinct as to prevent the sort of comparison that typifies the historical process. He encapsulated his objectives, methodology, and the degree to which he had been influenced by the movements of the time when he declared:

An analysis of the constituent elements of Mithraism, like a cross-section of a geological formation, shows the stratifications of this composite mass in their regular order of deposition. The basal layer of this religion, its lower and primordial stratum, is the faith of ancient Iran, from which it took its origin.

His argument ran that, over time, the key tenets of the doctrine of 'Mithraism' had developed through the accretion of elements drawn from India, Persia, Babylonia, Armenia, Anatolia, the Hellenistic kingdoms, and finally Rome, which all, ultimately, could be unraveled. So strong did he believe these connections to be that he employed a geological metaphor that not only suggests but necessitates the linear, regular, transmission of Mithra. The argument that resulted from this was that the great spread of the name Mithra represented the movement of a god and with him a recognizable religion with distinct doctrines: Mithraism.

.....

Bearing some caveats and warnings in mind [about the Cumont synthesis and its various critiques], we present a series of occurrences of the image of Mithras, Mithra, Mihr, or Miuro, to explore the question, 'what's in a name?' These are disparate in time and provenance, spanning the first century BC to the fourth century AD, from Western Europe through to Central Asia, though given the long history of the name this is a relatively concentrated period. Each example is allowed the significance of its own contextual background, and the questions that each raises finds resonance with the others. In doing so, we hope to illuminate the range of ideas and the potential for their flexibility and movement in a non-linear sense.

We begin in the Reconstructions: Mithras in Rome with two marble tauroctony statue groups in the British Museum's collection. Both are thought to be originally from Rome and date roughly between the end of the first and the second century AD. These carefully constructed compositions, painstakingly restored in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries following damage in the intervening millennium and a half, simultaneously present us with the characteristic representation of Mithras in the Roman Empire, yet also show

the difficulties in reconstructing ancient religion from a fragmented material record.

Our second case study is of two gypsum reliefs from Dura-Europos, a city on the Euphrates in modern Syria. Not only is this a rare example of two carved tauroctony reliefs on more or less equal display in the same mithraeum, but each relief respectively shows a unique feature of sacrifice. This is particularly visible on the second relief, where the patron who dedicated it in CE 170/1 chose to have a representation of himself included on the Mithraic scene. This invites the viewer to ask questions about the relationship between Mithraic patrons, worshippers, and the god Mithras himself.

The chapter, Settings: Bourg-Saint-Andéol, examines rock-carved tauroctonies in mithraea and the monumental tauroctony in Bourg-Saint-Andéol, southeast France. It is noticeable that the carvings are set in different ways within each mithraeum, which may suggest differences in the worship of and belief in Mithras between individual communities. The chapter seeks to broaden our ideas of what the tauroctony meant to worshippers by examining the possible impact of the interior setting and exterior surroundings on ancient perceptions of and interactions with the reliefs.

From rock reliefs in the Roman world we move to a late fourth-century rock relief in the Sasanian Persian Empire. At a site in western Iran called Tā q-e Bostā n, an unlabeled radiate figure is most frequently identified as the Avestan divine being Mithra. He accompanies two Sasanian kings in a scene commemorating the transition of power from Šapur II to his successor Ardašir II. This depiction of Mithra—unique among Sasanian rock reliefs—prompts us to explore not only the problem of identification, but also the role of Mithra in the religion that became what we now know as Zoroastrianism and how, if at all, we reconcile images with our far more abundant yet scattered textual sources.

An instance where we do have a labelled image of Mithra, however, prompts further questions concerning the precise character of who is represented and what was understood by such labels and images. This image is the subject of "Interpretations: Miuro in Kusan Bactria" and appears on coins minted in Bactria, part of the Kushan Empire that spanned parts of modern-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, and northern India from the early first century CE to the early third century CE. How does the name 'Miuro' on these coins relate to the religious beliefs of the Bactrian population?

Finally, on the mountain of Nemrut Dağ ı in the kingdom of Commagene, we have a first-century BCE stele with a depiction of a king, Antiochus I, grasping the hand of a figure named 'Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes'. This image and others from across the kingdom depicting a god named in this way call upon a variety of iconographic and, through the name, linguistic traditions that raise questions about the way conceptions of the divine could be selected, rationalized, and propagated. This act of comparing and combining religious traditions, often referred to as 'syncretism', allows us to think about what the use of the name Mithras suggests to us beyond the relatively simple transmission of a god.

Despite this being a comparative and joint venture, the core of the book consists of individually authored chapters. This structural separation assuages several methodological concerns. We do not want to give the impression that any of the cases presented is of immediate relevance for the understanding of any of the others. Where we think it is appropriate, we have made direct references to the other chapters. In this way, each case study is allowed the space to speak in its own terms, rather than as a reflection or proxy for any of the others.

This book could not have been written by any of us individually. In fact, none of us would have considered writing this book the way it is now without exposure to the often divergent and changing flow of ideas from discussions with each other. We have attempted to be truly collaborative: while each chapter is structurally separated from the others, the texts of each individual author underwent the same process of shaping according to our shared vision of this project as did the Introduction and Conclusion. Each chapter, therefore, is the author's own, but could not have been written without the contributions, criticisms, and challenges brought by all the others.

The epilogue to this book is an indication of how this project has evolved since we began casually discussing appearances of Mithra in our respective fields over lunch. At that stage we could never have imagined that our suggestions might warrant a response from a Mesoamerican art historian, and that our approach might resonate beyond our own particular areas of interest. Claudia Brittenham's short essay, 'Quetzalcoatl and Mithra', is an independent response to this book that reflects on our conclusions in relation to a wholly removed instance of divine representation. This vignette speaks for itself as a fascinating demonstration of the types of comparison that may fruitfully be made, and we believe that the example of Quetzalcoatl inspires more reflection on the topics discussed here.

Our aim has been to illuminate from different angles a range of ideas we want to bring forward about how Mithra was conceptualized—presented and seen—in the ancient world. Since we started with the ambition to argue with one voice, it was necessary to take the time to engage in debate with each other until we could produce this voice. Here lies one of the core ambitions of our collaboration, to address the question of how to approach interdisciplinary research for the most edifying results. It is a problem that has and will continue to attract a great deal of attention. We wish to make a positive contribution to this debate. Overcoming the boundaries of academic disciplines and specialist expertise, we would argue, needs to be done as a collective, and, if the members decide to speak in one voice, only true exchange and conversation will make cross-fertilization of ideas possible.

It is clear there are many questions and many problems that this book will not answer. Some are intractable and there are others that would require the careful grind of scholarship on a larger scale than we can offer. So instead we present three questions which are a little larger than the many details. They are questions that have driven our research into the problem. First, how might our understanding of each of these objects be

furthered by learning about the others that share the same name? The second question is that which attracted us to Mithra in the first place: what does the appearance of a name in such varied contexts mean for our understanding of ancient religion? And the third is, to what extent can material culture tell us anything about religious practice? <>

The Mysteries of Mithras: A Different Account (Orientalische Religionen in Der Antike) by Attilio Mastrocinque [Mohr Siebeck, 9783161551123]

In this work, Attilio Mastrocinque cautions against an approach to Mithraism based on the belief that this mystic cult resembles Christianity. While both Christian and pagan authors testified that Mithraic elements were indeed borrowed, according to Attilio Mastrocinque this was only done by some gnostic Christians. He counters that Roman Empire ideology and religion provide better clues on how to approach the matter, contending too that Virgil proves to be more important than the Avesta in understanding Mithraic iconography. The meaning of the central scene - the Tauroctony - thus becomes clear when the Roman triumph's central act of bull sacrifice is thought of as just that, with Mithras playing the role of victor as author of this success. The episodes depicted on many reliefs relate to a prophecy known to Firmicus Maternus and other Christian polemicists, and which foretold the coming of a savior, i.e. the first emperor, when Saturn returns and Apollo-Mithras will rule.

Entangled Worlds: Religious Confluences Between East and West in the Roman Empire: The Cults of Isis, Mithras, and Jupiter Dolichenus (Orientalische Religionen in Der Antike, Book 22) edited by Svenja Nagel, Joachim Friedrich Quack, and Christian Witschel [Mohr Siebeck, 9783161547300]

This collective volume, originating from an interdisciplinary conference at Heidelberg University, deals with the expansion of the so-called oriental cults in the Roman Empire. The concept of oriental cults' itself has come under discussion in recent years because it has been questioned whether the cults in question really formed a coherent group and to what degree they might be called oriental' at all. This discussion is reflected throughout the papers of the volume which focus on the three cults of Isis (and Osiris), Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus. Of special interest are the (alleged) origins of these cults in Egypt, Persia and Northern Syria, their expansion and adaptation within the Roman Empire (through some sort of religious flows'), their linguistic and visual expressions as well as the architecture and decoration of sanctuaries and the rituals connected with them.

Contributors: Jaime Alvar, Michael Bloemer, Mihaly Lorand Deszpa, Dariusz Frackowiak, Richard Gordon, Andreas Hensen, Kathrin Kleibl, Ralf Krumeich, Ian Moyer, Svenja Nagel, Joachim Friedrich Quack, Florence Saragoza, Martin Andreas Stadler, Julietta Steinhauer, Miguel John Versluys, Engelbert Winter, Christian Witschel.

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Joachim Friedrich Quack/Christian Witschel: Introduction: Religious Confluences in the Roman Empire; or: Why 'Oriental Cults' Again? —

Why to produce yet another volume on the religious history of the Roman Empire and especially on the so-called 'oriental cults'? After all, the last decades have seen the publication of several good surveys and introductory essays on various aspects of religious life in the Imperium Romanum, including the peculiar appearance of cults that originally were and sometimes remained — at least from a certain perspective and in certain circumstances — 'foreign' or 'non-institutionalized' ones. More specifically, the latter phenomenon has been treated extensively in a whole series of studies that was initiated in the 1960s: starting under the title *Études préliminaires aux cultes orientales dans l'Empire romain* (EPRO) and later renamed as *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* (RGW), the series has by now reached more than 180 volumes. In addition, regarding the three cults envisaged in this volume (i.e. those of Isis, Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus), we have experienced a lively series of conferences on the cult of Isis in the Roman Empire as well as regular meetings on Mithraic studies and a few general studies on this cult, recently joined by intensive research on the origins and diffusion of the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus. So, to repeat the initial question: why did we initiate yet another project on this subject?

On the one hand, the intensive research carried out during the last years on the so-called 'oriental cults' has reached an important phase. There are by now some very useful corpora of data especially for the cult of Isis thanks to the work of Laurent Bricault and his group, which make the production of an overall synthesis much easier. At the same time, new and exciting discoveries have occurred all around the Roman world which might help to advance our understanding of these religious phenomena significantly. For the cult of Isis, the demotic Egyptian sources provide a rich new input, and much is still to be gained from papyri which remain unpublished now. Regarding the cult of Mithras, recent archaeological fieldwork has led to the detection of new temples and interesting objects" — both on a large scale like inscriptions and wall-paintings, but also about 'small finds' like pottery and animal bones which help us to analyze the ritual context of specific sanctuaries by using up-to-date archaeological techniques. In the case of Jupiter Dolichenus the excavations of a large sanctuary on the Dülük Baba Tepesi near Doliche in Commagene, the (supposed) 'homeland' of this god, have shed new light on the question of the origins of the cult as it was known in the Roman Empire, whereas recently discovered sanctuaries of the god in places as far apart as Vindolanda (near Hadrian's Wall in Britannia) and Balaklava (on the Crimean peninsula) have provided us with fresh insights into the diffusion of the cult and its local organization.

On the other hand, some fresh theoretical and methodological approaches are now at hand which could be relevant for the study of the cults in question. Our project was part of a 'Cluster of Excellence' (Exzellenzcluster), which has been established at the University of Heidelberg in 2007 and was at that time called Asia and Europe in a Global Context. Shifting

Asymmetries in Cultural Flows. Such a background provides a specific outlook as well as analytic parameters which can inform the research on some of the most popular cults within the Roman Empire. It might direct us towards a better understanding of processes of adaptation and transformation of originally 'foreign' cults as one of many historic examples in which a desire to fill a real or perceived void in the 'mental map' of contemporary societies, or for acquiring a package of (fascinating) new knowledge, leads to the appropriation of what once had been regarded as the 'Other'. On a broader level one can remark that in some instances such cultural or religious 'flows' move in accordance with the political or economic dominance of one specific power over other entities, either imposed by a colonial authority or sought after by the subjects themselves as part of a program of 'modernization'. In other cases, however, like in the Roman Empire, such flows can — at least partially — also run counter to the general trend of (military) expansion. Here, some members of the dominant power (i.e. the 'Romans' — an instable and shifting group) were attracted by religious phenomena which were perceived (or even constructed) as belonging to an 'alien' culture that was older than their own and thus worthy of some veneration but now subject to their political superiority. At this point it might be fruitful to bring in comparative material from more recent periods: Modern (western) fascination with Buddhism, for example, can provide us with interesting models for interpreting the material we know from the ancient world.

At the same time, we can expect not only to benefit from the insights of our colleagues from Modern and Contemporary (Global) History, but also to add a substantial input of our own to confer more depth to the current debates on 'religious confluences' and to the broader theme of 'cultural hybridity'. Since we treat a period of Antiquity with political, socio-economic and cultural conditions quite different from those in modern times, we hope to make clear what part of the observed phenomena might be classified as 'universal' and which other parts are more specific to certain periods or epochs because they are conditioned by a peculiar political and cultural environment. Furthermore, we try to study religious developments over a long period of time (from the Hellenistic period to Late Antiquity) and are thus able to come up with a broad historical perspective which is sometimes lacking in the analysis of contemporary religious phenomena.

More specifically, one of our central aims is to use a global approach when looking at the different 'foreign' cults within the Roman Empire studied here (regardless whether we treat them as a coherent group of 'oriental cults' or not) by not focusing on one of them in isolation, but by studying them together and in comparison, with each other. It is obviously impossible nowadays for a single scholar to master the whole range of literary, papyrological and epigraphic sources as well as the numerous archaeological finds from the Roman Empire; and the testimonies (many of them dating to much older periods) from the real or supposed 'homelands' of the cults in question which were situated in different parts of the 'East' (Asia minor, Syria, Persia, Egypt etc.). The requirements of linguistic competence and detailed knowledge of very different cultures are beyond the reach of any one person.

Thus, the natural solution is to establish cooperation between the various scientific disciplines that are concerned with these phenomena. By combining contributions from Ancient Historians, Classical Philologists and Roman Archaeologists as well as Egyptologists in this volume we hope to gain mutual benefits and to sharpen our eyes for similarities as well as differences between the phenomena that are brought into focus.

One last — and very important — problem comes into play here. At least since the time of Franz Cumont it has been common to speak of 'oriental cults' as an overarching category, and despite growing criticism in recent scholarship this is still a model favored by many scholars who deal with the religious landscape of the Roman Empire. Such an approach often implies the — rather problematic — claim of a general structural similarity between religious phenomena that were characterized by quite heterogeneous origins (both in time and in place) and later evolutions. It also takes the risk of introducing a kind of 'orientalist' discourse by which an undifferentiated picture of an exotic 'Orient' with a vibrant religious life — allegedly superior to the 'coldness' of traditional Roman religion — is constructed. Other elements which were supposedly shared by all or most of these cults have also come into discussion in recent years. It has been questioned, for example, what part (if at all) ritual complexes which might be characterized as 'mysteries' (such as rites of initiation) have played within the cults belonging to this supposed group; and whether it is appropriate to classify them as 'mystery cults' or even as 'mystery religions' in toto. It is equally disputed if and to what extent these cults offered some promise of salvation to their followers (and might thus be called 'religions of salvation' or 'Erlöser-Religionen') — either in this world or regarding a life after death. Following recent trends in religious studies dealing with the Roman Empire, we are not convinced that such a (perceived or real) unity of 'oriental cults' ever existed. We rather intend to check the validity of these concepts by paying careful attention to the many discrepancies encountered in case studies; and to be open-minded about the possible variety of the final results.

The first case study presented in this volume (containing three papers) focuses on the origins and diffusion of the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus in the Roman Empire, for which different models are presented here. The expansion of the cult(s) of Isis and Osiris is the subject of the next part of the book which also deals with forms of textual transfer from Egyptian languages (especially Demotic) to Greek and Latin. Then the different forms in which the gods were conceptualized through images are discussed in some detail in the following three papers. The so-called 'oriental cults' are characterized by a rich repertoire of visual expressions which show a wide array of iconographic variations. Although some forms of standardization are detectable, there are no signs of a mechanical reproduction of a small number of central (cult) images. We are instead confronted with continuing processes of rearranging given motives as well as creating new designs; and — especially in the representation of Jupiter Dolichenus — also with constant alterations between an 'Orientalizing' and a 'westernizing' or 'Romanizing' mode of depiction. The last section of the book concentrates on the variability in the setting, architectural

design and décor of the sanctuaries of Isis and Mithras, and on the rituals that were staged within these temples.

It emerges quite clearly from the case studies presented in this volume (and elsewhere) that the cults in question had no fixed doctrinal core or 'theology' which was then spread unaltered over long distances in time and space. Instead, their basic structures, rituals and outward appearance were constantly adapted to the needs and expectations of their followers in different parts of the Roman Empire. In this context, it is important to keep in mind that these cults were 'optional' or 'elective'. People were not obliged to take part in them (as, for example, in the imperial cult), but could consciously decide to join in by selecting their preferred cult out of a broad range of religious choices. In addition, the adherents of these cults (especially those of Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus) were normally organized in rather small groups around a sanctuary with reduced dimensions, thus creating an 'intimate' atmosphere for the worshippers. Such 'small group cults' ('Gruppenreligionen') seem to have been especially open (and attractive) for religious innovation and appropriation which were initiated by creative individuals within these groups. On the other hand, the religious phenomena we are dealing with — which might be labelled as 'universal cults' as they were present in many different regions of the Mediterranean — were also characterized by a certain degree of uniformity, which made them recognizable throughout the Roman Empire and created a sense of belonging (and membership) for their followers. When looking at these cults from a broad perspective, we are therefore confronted both with a remarkable standardization of some important organizational, ritual, architectural and iconographical elements (like the 'icon' of the tauroctony in the cult of Mithras), and at the same time with a large range of variations, some of them presenting highly individual creations. There was thus a constant tension between the poles of the 'universal' and the 'particular' (on the local level) within these cults.

On the other hand, we should recognize that besides using a global approach the specificity of each cult and its historical development should also get more attention. To give just one example: Looking at the veneration of Isis it has become apparent during the last years that there is a strong link between the Graeco-Roman form(s) of the cult and genuine Late Period Egyptian roots. Especially the demotic sources have proved to be of crucial importance in this respect. They have allowed us to connect the concept of Isis as a supreme deity much better to the situation in Egypt itself during the Late Period. Besides that, it has become increasingly clear that there were elaborate Egyptian mythological tales about the wars of the gods taking place mainly in Asia, and that the Greek accounts such as those written by Diodorus and Plutarch ultimately rely on them. By contrast, in Mithraic studies there is a lively debate about the question whether the cult of Mithras was a more or less direct inheritance from the ancient Iran (as it was envisaged by Roman authors who tended to locate the origins of the cult somewhere in 'Persia' and even attributed the establishment of the cult to Zoroaster), perhaps transmitted or transformed by a group of magi in late Hellenistic Asia minor; or whether it was in most parts a western 'construction'

or 'invention' that had only occurred in the late 1st century CE in Italy. This question is not solvable in the current state of our knowledge, but it should at least be remarked that we have no firm evidence that might link the Roman cult of Mithras as we know it from the Flavian period onwards in a direct way to its supposed ancient Persian roots — at this point we seem to be confronted with a situation quite different from the one which recent studies have delineated regarding the cult of Isis. In the case of Jupiter Dolichenus, the majority of scholars still believe in a more or less direct connection between the veneration of the god as we encounter it in many parts of the Roman Empire from the early 2nd century CE onwards and its (supposed) 'homeland' in Commagene, i.e. in the small town of Doliche to which the name of the god seems to refer and where a large sanctuary of the local deity has been excavated in recent years. However, even in this case it is not certain whether we should really assume a straight and rapid 'export' of a local North Syrian weather god to the West or a rather more complex process of (re)creating a new religious phenomenon in different parts of the Empire.

We can thus observe some rather fundamental divergences between the cults treated in this volume. But there were also significant differences within the single cults, as their appearance and structure varied from region to region and sometimes even from place to place, as has already been remarked above. For this reason, we also intend to trace these internal variations down to the local or even individual level, because we have to reckon with the possibility that a 'universal' cult like that of Isis and Serapis, although diffused throughout most parts of the Roman Empire, meant rather different things to people in different areas. For example, in a few regions of Greece the local temple of Serapis played a major role in the manumission of slaves, whereas this aspect was quite unknown in most other areas. This is more likely to be linked to the specific socio-economic situation in certain places than to an overarching and specific connection between Serapis and a concept of 'liberty'. Regarding Mithras, certain sources seem to indicate that the cult was enriched with divergent concepts, including some rather 'intellectual' ones. On the other hand, there is by now quite a lot of epigraphic and archaeological evidence especially from the north-western provinces of the Imperium Romanum demonstrating that the cult of Mithras was often embedded in local religious and ritual practices. The latter observation raises the question of how much 'exoticism' or 'foreignness' the adherents of these cults really wanted — or at least many of them, as we have seen that individuals or small groups were always capable of creating their own (textual or visual) conception of a specific god that could be highly original. But about a large part of our source material, especially the epigraphic attestations of these cults, it has to be stated that there is often hardly anything beyond the name of the deity itself that is substantially different from the 'mainstream' of Graeco-Roman votive offerings. How were the followers of 'oriental cults', then, affected by the fact that the god they venerated was supposed to have been imported from a distant region somewhere in the 'East'? And what did this mean in regions like Pannonia or Germania where the Greek and Roman gods were themselves 'foreigners', or at least foreign names imposed on or given to local deities?

I. The Concept of 'Oriental Cults' in Recent Debates

Jaime Alvar: The 'Romanisation' of 'Oriental Cults' —

For Alvar, the 'oriental cults' were situated in an enduring tension between the establishment of new religious forms, including new offers of salvation, and the temptations of assimilation. If they remained confined to marginal social groups, the messages of salvation remained primary. In the case of the two cults with the earliest diffusion in the Roman Empire, the Phrygian and the Egyptian, however, the interest of the Roman authorities, after an initial period of intermittent repression, lay in reducing their alterity and assimilating them to the pattern of civic religion. As they gradually acquired civic status, and the socio-economic status of their members rose, these cults appealed less to the marginal groups and more to those who were better integrated. This in turn provoked a dissonance between the search for new forms of religious expression and the desire to conform to received notions of this-worldly salvation. The solution was found in transmuting the desire for radical salvation into the symbolic world of the purely exotic. 'Legitimate' exoticism thus became a means of channeling and domesticating the socio-religious discontent of marginal groups.

*Julietta Steinhauer: Osiris *mystes* und Isis *orgia* — Gab es 'Mysterien' der ägyptischen Gottheiten? —*

The problems described at the outset, which relate to the conceptual nature of the 'Mysterien', could unfortunately not be solved with this contribution. Also, a more useful topologizing of the terms used than those designed by Ugo Bianchi could not be formulated. But it should have been clear from the example of the Isis cult that the actual findings are very different from what Franz Cumont had defined as "mysterien" in general. On closer inspection, it becomes quickly apparent that Cumont had succumbed to his own idea and made a perfectly adapted reading of the literary and epigraphic sources. The following can be summed up after a renewed analysis of the relevant testimonies: with the inaugural rituals described in modern research as "Isis Mysterien", it seems to be to formulate with Walter Burkert, if only around "a color patch of the much richer range of the Egyptian cults", a small special area in the total spectrum of the cult, which, in my opinion, was locally different in character and was not part of a superior religious system. It is even conceivable that the initiation procedures described by Apuleius did not involve the initiation of a simple layman into the 'mysterien' (as was the case, for example, in Eleusis), but possibly the formation and introduction of a human being into the position of a cult official or a specialist. The latter may not have been considered a full-fledged priest, but may possibly serve as a mediator between cultures in his function as a cultist, who was both initiated into the Egyptian tradition and was familiar with Roman cult practice. Thus, in the Rome of the second century AD, May not have been socially relevant to become a member of the group of *pastophores* [priests from ancient Egypt, responsible for carrying holy shrines in official ceremonies and processions]. It is probable that Apuleius has received certain information, including those from Egyptian

priests, and used it in *Metamorphoses* in Book 11 to give his portrayal a religious and authentic atmosphere.

Under these circumstances, it does not seem justified to speak of "Isis Mysteries" as a fixed and general category. Rather, the Isis cult should be understood as an open cult with many options for its followers, in which some ritual complexes were carried out, some of which were based on the Eleusinian Mysteries or the Egyptian royal and priestly ordinations, but not necessarily, and above all not the rule. In any case, one should not conceive the Isis cult as a 'mystery religion' *stricto sensu* - at least if it is a fixed institution characterized by a clearly determinable, relatively constant ritual canon and a uniform, theology 'according to which Cult followers through different stages of initiation, so to speak, could reach the 'eternal bliss' and the 'salvation of the soul' as long as only the right cult practices were carried out.

Ultimately, Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses* is most likely to be understood as a literary portrayal of the ideal type of a ritual, each of which was carried out in different cults, and which, in order to emphasize its peculiarity, was called the Mysteries. If we follow Stephen Harrison and his interpretation of Book 11 as a parodic creation of the author to disclose a rival of ridicule, one can assume that Apuleius used all the knowledge at his disposal to make a highly overrepresented representation of a religious action which has never actually existed in this way. One of the goals of the author was to present his own reading, to arouse associations of various kinds at the same time. To decide whether the information contained corresponds to the reality remains ultimately left to the reader: *igitur audi, sed crede, quae vera sunt*. [So listen, but I believe that is true.]

II. Origins and Diffusion of 'Oriental Cults' within the Imperium Romanum: The Case of Iuppiter Dolichenus

Engelbert Winter: The Cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus and its Origins. The Sanctuary at Dülük Baba Tepesi near Doliche –

The ongoing excavations at Dülük Baba Tepesi have succeeded in locating the central sanctuary of Jupiter Dolichenus and thus the origins of his cult, which spread throughout the entire Mediterranean area. The excavations have also provided important information for the various phases of development of the site. We are now able to better understand the evolution and transformation of this important religious center, beginning from the middle Iron Age and continuing through to the Medieval period; from a sanctuary for the local storm-god to a Christian cult place, and finally to a Muslim *ziyaret*.

Important single finds date back to the earlier 1st millennium BC. The analysis of thousands of animal bones from layers dating to the Persian period demonstrates that sacrifices were performed on a large scale at this early stage. Precious votive finds (in particular a huge number of stamp and cylindrical seals) point to a certain affluence of the sanctuary during this period. The remains of imposing wall structures from this phase also confirm that an important place of worship existed at Dülük Baba Tepesi. The growth of this sanctuary in the Persian

era fits well into the general picture of the evolution of religious centers in Northern Syria. With the annexation of the Syro-Hittite principalities by the Assyrian empire, profound cultural changes occurred. The former political and religious centers were abandoned and soon lost their importance, whereas new rural sanctuaries emerged. These cult centers seem to have been supported by the Persian authorities to create regional infrastructures. The new data from Dülük Baba Tepesi offers a clearer picture of the archaeology and religious history of Northern Syria in the Persian period. The continuity of cult activities, which can be archaeologically ascertained from this time until the Roman period, makes Dülük Baba Tepesi a significant site for understanding historical-religious processes associated not only with Jupiter Dolichenus, but also with other Syrian deities. A transmission of religious ideas from the pre-Hellenistic past has often been assumed for most local Syrian deities, but there is still very little archaeological evidence for such a connection. In addition to new insights on the genesis and character of the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus during the Roman period, the present investigation of Dülük Baba Tepesi provides an opportunity to fully understand how a local deity evolved into an 'oriental' god worshipped throughout the entire Roman Empire.

Michael Bloemer: The Cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus in the East – Turning to the question of why and how the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus spread to the West during the late 1st or early 2nd century CE, this observation is of some importance and may help to challenge traditional views. The transmission of the cult to the West has frequently been associated with native Syrians, who had either been recruited into the Roman army or had arrived in the West as traders, slaves or freedmen. But this scenario becomes highly improbable if we consider the fact that, as we have seen in the previous section, the local inhabitants of Syria did not in general worship Jupiter Dolichenus beyond the territory of Doliche. It is indeed difficult to fathom why citizens of towns that already had their own age-old local cults, including those neighboring Doliche, such as Cyrrhus, Hierapolis or Beroia, should have endorsed the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, who was in origin no more than the city-god of a nearby town of minor importance.⁶³ This applies even more to the rural population, which was committed to their ancestral gods whose worship was rooted in the same Iron Age traditions as the god of Doliche. Equally, there is no evidence that the numerous *auxilia* from Commagene were particularly involved in the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus. In fact, there is no evidence at all to suggest a commitment of oriental military units to this cult at an early stage.

At the same time, it is easy to imagine that travelers from Syria arriving in a western town where the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus had already been established might have felt especially attracted to the town by its oriental guise. A Syrian trader would have easily identified the god as 'Syrian', reminding him of his native religious world. Thus, it may be assumed that the western sanctuaries became focal points for an oriental clientele, even though the latter did not originally have any affiliation with the god of Doliche.

Of wider implications is the analysis of archaeological evidence for the veneration of Jupiter Dolichenus in the rest of

Syria. It can be concluded that the popularity of this god with Roman soldiers was not simply one of the reasons for the extensive diffusion of the cult in the East, but that it was the only reason for this phenomenon.

There is no evidence that the native population in Syria beyond the town of Doliche participated in the worship of the god of Doliche. This means that the prevailing idea of a catalytic impact of faithful 'Syrians' in the proliferation of the cult should be dismissed.

Roman soldiers thus brought the cult to the West — and eventually back to the East again. Why they chose the god of Doliche and not, for example, the god of Beroia is another question which cannot be answered yet. However, while the cult was disseminated to the western parts of the Empire where it underwent a profound transformation and evolved into a 'Reichsreligion', the indigenous population of Doliche still venerated the god of their city in the traditional way. The local religion of the Syrian cities and territories also remained attached to their ancestral gods. Therefore, the veneration of the god of Doliche as a local god must be separated from the worship of Jupiter Dolichenus in the context of 'Reichsreligion'. Only in the city of Doliche itself did the two layers of perception merge.

Mihály Loránd Dézspa: Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus and the Re-Imagination of the Empire: Religious Dynamics, Social Integration, and Imperial Narratives —

This article focuses primarily on religion and Empire. Two remarkable features of the Roman Empire are: its long duration and its high level of integration of the various imperial subjects. Hence, a fundamental question regarding the Imperium Romanum is how such a large Empire could last for such a long time? How was the transformation of people with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds into loyal imperial subjects possible? The question becomes even more interesting when we consider that despite the instability of the monarchical system in Rome the imperial order stayed stable. There are many possible approaches and answers to this question. Dézspa's approach is from the vantage point of the dialectical relationship between religious dynamics and social integration, using as a case study the god Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus. This article is not about a real or presumed 'orientality' of this god' or an attempt to lend a voice to the subjugated inhabitants of the Empire. On the contrary, the focus is on those imperial subjects who were willing to integrate into, and implicitly to shape, imperial society. Hence Dézspa's aim is a more modest one. He describes the role played by the god Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus for the social integration in an imperial context through his function in shaping social identities of subjects with diverse ethnic backgrounds. Related to this inquiry Dézspa attempts to sketch an account of how the god underpinned the imperial imagery, and in this way, beginning in the second century CE, helped to shape the imperial subjects' re-imagination of the Empire and of their place within it.

To explore this contribution of the god Dézspa analyzes the meaning of 'Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus', since in Dézspa's opinion social integration was assured not only by

cult practices, but above all by how the meaning of the god's name was embedded in social practice. A description of this meaning of the god in his relation to the formation of social (or imperial) order is therefore pivotal for this inquiry. The starting hypothesis is that there is a co-determinacy between the god's meaning and the social networks in which the meaning occurs. In the analysis of the god's meaning Dézspa describes the cluster of properties by which the users of the words 'IOMD' referred to the Dolichenian god. Likewise, Dézspa examines the social representations and the discourses that structured these properties.

Beginning in the city of Rome, Dézspa offers a comparative analysis of the gods that evoked Syria or parts of it as their home. However, in contrast to previous approaches, Dézspa's focus is on the differences rather than on the similarities between these gods. In a first step, Dézspa outlines the social networks in which the meaning and properties of the gods occurred. This is done by looking at the various ways individuals used identity-building resources in order to shape social positions in the context of an imperial society. After doing this for Rome Dézspa compares these insights with data from Pannonia and Dacia, two provinces in which the god Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus was quite popular. By this comparison Dézspa hopes to gain some new insights into the discourses that regulated the social networks of which the god was a part.

III. Expanding from Egypt into Globality: The Case of Isis and Osiris

Ian Moyer: The Hymns of Isidorus at Medinet Madi: Global Currents in a Local Context —

From the place articulated by Isidorus in his fourth hymn, and from the physical space in which the written text was inscribed, it is possible to look back and reconsider the three preceding hymns to the goddess Hermouthis-Isis. From this vantage point, one can see that Isidorus arranged for different literary and religious traditions to meet each other, coming and going at the gates of the temple. But it was not only differing traditions that met, it was also differing orientations to cultural mixture, syncretism, hybridity — whatever we wish to call these various phenomena of globalization. In his first hymn, Isidorus addressed Hermouthis-Isis from a relatively unspecified position. In its metrical form and discursive pattern, the poem adopts the genre of the Homeric hymns, but it also incorporates aspects of the Greek Isis aretologies. The discursive characteristics, content, and form that Isidorus chose for this hymn appear to assume a 'global' or at least transregional reader rather than a local one. Were the inscribed text of the first hymn taken away from the temple gates, a reader, ancient or modern, would be hard pressed to return it to Narmouthis, or even to the Fayyum. The first hymn, in short, could not be further from the fourth. Considering their spatial arrangement, these two texts embody a meeting between a well-established and well-travelled syncretism that returns to Egypt only to be confronted by a newly discovered nativism,

albeit in a translated and hybrid literary form. The second and third hymns, appropriately enough, form a middle ground. Both, in different ways, domesticate the global Isis, and in both hymns the indexical ground of Isidorus' discourse is crucial to integrating the great goddess into the local world of Narmouthis.

But where does Isidorus himself stand? Do any of these shifting grounds represent Isidorus' 'true' position? At first blush, the more emphatic self-reference in Isidorus' fourth hymn, his explicit marshalling of Egyptian authorities within his own discourse, and the physical position of the hymn closer to the privileged space of the temple all suggest that Isidorus, whatever his ethnical or cultural background may have been, sided with the local and the native. On the other hand, this was not an oppositional 'anti-global' stance. In each of the hymns to Hermouthis-Isis, Isidorus adopts a coherent rhetorical and discursive practice to persuade the goddess to bestow benefits on him. Rather than an opposition between global and local, or between syncretic and nativist positions, what stands out most is the complexity of Isidorus' practice in mediating between these different religious currents, and between the various discursive and literary genres through which he articulates those positions. Isidorus' poetry, humble though it may be in comparison with the greats of Alexandrian literature, exhibits sophisticated local innovations that drew from both a Hellenistic literary habitus and also the Egyptian literary modes to which he had access. From a religious perspective, Isidorus' work is grounded in his specific situation at Narmouthis, but it also engages with diasporic and syncretic representations of Isis that have traveled around the shores of the Mediterranean. His poetry provides us with a rare ancient insight into the fact that "the individual actor is the last locus of [a] perspectival set of landscapes" that constitute any form of globalism, ancient or modern. Isidorus' effort to articulate his position — in both literary and religious terms — emerges as an ongoing and active process that not only re-inscribes and perpetuates received traditions and cultural flows but is also capable of generating novel discursive practices and religious ideas.

Svenja Nagel: One for All and All for One? Isis as una quae es(t) omnia in the Egyptian Temples of the Graeco-Roman Period —

In sum Nagel points out some lines of ancient tradition that converged in religious Egyptian texts of the Graeco-Roman period proclaiming Isis' sovereignty over the whole land by presenting her as the one goddess behind the others. The same traditions seem to have at least partly influenced comparable Greek and Latin compositions proclaiming her sovereignty over the whole known world. Although Isis is not the only deity in Egypt, nor the only goddess to whom this predominance has been ascribed, evidence from all over the land shows that it is truly she, together with the Osirian family and her alter ego Hathor, who had cults throughout the nomes of Egypt, which is less true of other, mainly locally important gods. And she is the figure that carried an abstract of Egyptian tradition and religion across the borders and into the west.

Martin Andreas Stadler: New Light on the Universality of Isis (pVienna D. 6297+6329+10101) —

Now, Stadler hesitate to label the Vienna Papyrus as the direct predecessor of the Oxyrhynchus text, based on the Athena/Latina-problem; it is an isolated indicator for such a relationship, yet a rather important one. Furthermore, the Oxyrhynchus list is by far more elaborate and goes into much more detail by specifying Isis' identity with goddesses with particular towns, whereas the Demotic version remains on the broader level of peoples. Aware of this issue, Stadler previously proposed an indirect relationship between the Demotic and the Greek versions, which may be strengthened by further research. If the reconstruction of the text's ancestors, its sources and its forms of influencing other hymns is correct, the versions have indirectly raised questions of who influenced whom in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. These questions must be confronted with an answer that does not claim general validity, but which is also limited to the area of Isiac hymns. At first this might sound disappointing, but considering the overwhelming importance of Isis, this contributes a valuable nuance to our picture of the goddess' cult. The papyrus, which Stadler presents here in more detail for the first time, is further proof of the great potential of Demotic sources, which have not been comprehensively explored yet. Any judgement of Hellenistic Isis would be on the wrong track if it did not consider the relevant Egyptian texts, as well as the specific nature of Isis within the environment of Hellenistic and Roman Egypt.

Joachim Friedrich Quack: Resting in Pieces and Integrating the Oikoumene. On the Mental Expansion of the Religious Landscape by Means of the Body Parts of Osiris —

One of the major problems of research on the cult of Egyptian deities in the Roman Empire has been the question of diachronic development and how to trace the latter in the sources. Those scholars coming from the discipline of Classics normally tend to see the attestations as a rather straightforward path — we have well-dated specific authors, and for the epigraphic record, we have a sequence of inscriptions dated by paleography or in lucky cases even by directly preserved historic attribution, such as an indication of era or the year of a ruler.

Even under such conditions, however, things work best if we are primarily concerned with the sociological background of the veneratorators where inscriptions are a source amenable to direct chronological conclusions. It becomes quite a bit murkier once we move beyond that into the field of more complex theological compositions. Taking, for example, the great aretology of Isis preserved in five different preserved inscriptions (plus a variant version of the beginning in Diodorus I 27, 4),³ we have not only the technical problem that the dates of some of the crucial testimonia are disputed by various specialists, but we can also note how different attestations of basically the same text are scattered over times. Would we still have drawn correct conclusions if for the great aretology of Isis we had to rely only on the copy on los from the 2nd to 3rd century CE (the latest known)? And can we give any reasonable value for how large a time lapse we should postulate between the actual composition of such a text and its

first preserved attestation? Don't we risk falling into the trap of positivistic naivety if we just follow the trail of actual attestations? E.g., the Greek aretology of Maroneia is the oldest extant version, but given its much more obvious hellenisation in style and content, it is hardly the composition most closely to the original.

Disconcerting though such considerations are, they are more so once we turn to the Egyptian side of affairs. Here, we immediately should say goodbye to any conception of an author in the sense we are used to such as for Plutarch or Apuleius. For Egyptian texts, to be anonymous is almost a second nature.¹ Worse still, much of the hieroglyphic record is to be used with caution, once it comes to chronological questions. At first glance, we have a substantial number of hieroglyphic inscriptions giving statements about Isis, and most of them can be dated quite closely to a reign, normally by ruler cartouches directly present in the scene, sometimes more broadly through considerations of the building and decoration history of the temple in question. The only problem is that working from those hieroglyphic attestations alone, it has always seemed quite difficult, indeed almost impossible, to bridge the gap between the Egyptian and the Graeco-Roman Isis, so much so that earlier scholars often saw little connection, and many of them doubted closer connections or even rejected them out of hand, claiming that little except the name of the goddess really had its roots in the land of the Nile. Obviously, something is wrong here.

By now, it should be obvious what the missing link really is and why its neglect has caused so many problems. The mistake of relying too much on the hieroglyphic inscriptions was that, as with so many other monumental temple scenes, they are normally built out of segments taken from traditional liturgical compositions, most of them substantially older than the date of the engraving on the stone," and thus not the most secure indicators of the current state of mind in religious matters. If we want to overcome such impasses, we should go for another sort of source material, one that is not hard to find, even.

Besides the hieroglyphic and hieratic texts, we also have the Egyptian sources in Demotic language and script. While even here we cannot evade finer problems of dating, at least we can be a lot more certain that what we get from them is really from the Late Period. As a matter of fact, several recent studies drawing heavily on the Demotic Egyptian material have almost revolutionized our understanding of the Isis religion, culminating in the monograph of Holger Kockelmann on Demotic Isis-hymns. Especially this material allows us finally to perceive more of a bridge between the different sides, and thus to see Isiac religious theory and practice much more as a continuum from Egypt to the wider Roman Empire. Some of the Demotic Isis hymns, especially one text known in at least two, perhaps even three different copies, sound quite like the logical fore-runner of a Greek-language text like pOxyrhynchus 138016 which might even be its direct translation (with only the final part of the geographical section preserved).

In this sense, I would like to take up a specific question concerning the theology of Isis. It takes its starting point not with herself but with the figure who originally has much more

prominence in the cult, namely her brother Osiris. My intention is to discuss a phenomenon of which the extreme parts — be it in hieroglyphic or in Greek and Latin sources — are relatively well known. My contribution would try to fit in some little known or even completely unpublished elements mainly from the Demotic Egyptian sources to see if here also they can provide the links for arriving at a better global picture of the cult and its development...

Here it seems time to sum up the attestations for a dead Osiris or his parts outside of Egypt. There is evidence for connections with places in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially Byblos, but also the Aegean, as well as Nubia to the south of Egypt. Both regions did not gain such an honor by chance. Rather, they had deep and long-standing contacts with Egypt. Especially Nubia had even been for many centuries under Egyptian political dominance. Also the Levantine area, especially Byblos, had long-standing relations to Egypt going back at least to the third millennium. I would propose to see the conceptual expansion of Osiris and his parts to such areas as being not a result of chance. Rather, it is intimately linked to the global cultural relations between those outside areas and Egypt itself. The closer the connections to Egypt were, the more logical it becomes that the area in question is included in an overall pattern where participation in the body of Osiris defines an in-group. Thus, he really serves to integrate together a self-understood Oikumene. Regions are acknowledged to form part of the larger unity of the keepers of parts of Osiris, a fact which means certainly a bit more than simply being a worshipper of Osiris. Probably it was so attractive that e.g. at Thessaloniki, the local people put up such a claim on a somewhat slender basis.

Another, more specific point should not be completely overlooked. When we hear about a quest for the divine members in Syria, specifically in the region of Niniveh, this recalls the motive of reclaiming the divine statues from Asia as it appears frequently, especially in early Ptolemaic inscriptions.

Egyptian texts speaking of Egyptians being successful in campaigns which aim at bringing back the divine members are obviously on a par with the prediction contained within the "Prophecy of the Lamb" that the Egyptians will successfully campaign in Syria, bring back the chapels of the gods, and get revenge on Niniveh. On the one hand, this parallel should teach us a bit about the ontological status and cultural relevance of the divine members of Osiris. They are as sacrosanct as the statues which, in Egyptian conception, were gods.

On the other hand, the fact of the presence of divine members (or statues) in Asia can also be constructed as a legitimizing reason for Egyptian military campaigns in Asia, and this means that they are not simply just integrating factors in an unequivocally beneficent way. They can also in a more asymmetrical relation be used with a one-sided domination claim where the bodily presence of an Egyptian god justifies imperialist expansion. This should not be seen without a connection to the ambitions of Egyptian expansion in Syria held by the Saïtic dynasty and later the Ptolemies.

In this connection, another potentially relevant episode should be mentioned, namely the supposed origin of the Serapis statue in Sinope at the Black Sea as reported by Plutarch, *De Iside* chapt. 28 and Tacitus, *Historiae* IV 83, the latter one also providing alternative stories according to which the statue should have come from Seleucia or from Memphis. While a real origin of the statue in the Pontus region or Syria does not seem very plausible and there is some possibility that a local Egyptian place of similar pronunciation in the Memphite area was meant, the global concept that statues must be brought home to Egypt would have provided a model for fitting in a supposed foreign origin of the major cult image of Serapis.

Finally, from the dead Osiris back to the living one. What I have sketched for the geographical expansion of the resting places of his body parts is only half the picture.

The other half is the stories about the conquest of foreign countries by the living and ruling Osiris. These also should be a continuously developing conception according to changing horizons. Some Demotic Egyptian papyri, often still unpublished but available in preliminary reports, attest to a conception of heroic deeds of a living Osiris at the head of an Egyptian army. He is confronting again the great one of the East Apopis, the very same figure prominent in the *Inaros* epic. As a matter of fact, at the beginning of the *Inaros* epic, the gods and some previous kings seem to be mentioned as role models for campaigns in Asia.

Among the Greek authors, Diodorus of Sicily, while not attesting anything about the discovery of body parts of Osiris outside of Egypt, has probably the most highly developed story about the campaigns of the living Osiris in many foreign countries, conquering Ethiopia, Arabia, and going to India and the ends of the *Oikoumene* before also turning to Europe where e.g. Thrace and Macedonia became subject to vassal-kings installed by him. But Plutarch certainly knows about the motive even if he is little inclined to tell it in full.

Of course, we can easily point out that such conceptions are likely to be late creations, modelled on the victorious campaigns of Dionysus who conquered all lands up to India as attested e.g. in the epic of Nonnos of Panopolis. More to the point would it be to ask what reason there was to present Osiris in a similar light. The fact of an equation of the Greek Dionysus and the Egyptian Osiris was certainly of relevance for this, and I see the story of his successful campaign against most regions of Asia and Europe as not only a purely intellectual exercise but also, at the time of its conception, as a template for cultural and political unification by the contemporary political players, even if in later religious and literary history, it obviously developed a trajectory of its own.

IV. The Visual Conceptualization of 'Oriental Gods'

Miguel John Versluys: Egypt as Part of the Roman Koine. a Study in Mnemohistory —

In the Roman world, material culture that we call 'Egyptian' is often not a culture-style, has often nothing to do with Egyptians in a Roman context, and does not, for that matter, show a

desire to become Egyptian. 'Egypt' is a cultural scenario that is used and played out in different Roman contexts and periods for different reasons. Every context got the 'Egypt' it deserved.

When we are analyzing cultural interactions in the Roman Empire, it is important to bear this in mind, as it underlines how much the conceptual categories we use to study these processes ('East', 'West', 'Oriental', etc., but also 'Greek', 'Roman', 'Egyptian') are — and were already in Antiquity — a kind of socio-symbolical constructions, the interpretation of which could differ very much in terms of time and context. If the Roman Mediterranean really functioned as a highly interconnected zone of 'inherent pluralism', this would even imply that all styles of material culture we see being used are a form of reception history, or even mnemohistory.

In this paper, I have tried to outline an approach towards Egyptian influences in the Roman world that goes beyond the dichotomy that has been created between understanding and misunderstanding. The traditional paradigm saw Egyptian influences for the largest part as being firmly connected to the cults of Isis in a framework of religious dissemination. As a reaction, alternative perspectives like 'exoticism' were highlighted by other scholars. However, both approaches are too monolithic to convince, and are, in fact, only describing and not explaining. It has been argued above that the 'religious dissemination' of the Egyptian cults under the Flavii can only be properly understood as a very specific and distinctly Flavian reception and appropriation. In the same vein, the 'exoticism' of things Egyptian during the Flavian period is a form of imperialistic display, as well as — simultaneously — a celebration of the older and superior culture that Rome was now succeeding. We can only arrive at such nuanced understandings when we study Egypt as part of the Roman *koiné*, and thus better grasp the different stages of its mnemohistory; and when we think about 'Egypt' not only as the 'real Other' but also as the 'constructed Other'. Let me underline once more that both approaches are necessary. In some ways, Egypt in the Roman world is a distinct territory with its own specific culture-style; and the dissemination of Egyptian or Egyptian-looking material culture is related to religious, political and economic developments and to Egyptians flowing around the Mediterranean. At the same time, however, we deal with a cultural system that is not to be explained out of these cultural containers alone, and where much more is going on at other levels simultaneously, when it concerns styles of material culture. This is especially true when it concerns things Egyptian, as also in the Roman world the case of Egypt is a special one.

Darius Frackowiak: Mithräische Bilderwelten. Eine Untersuchung zu ausgewählten ikonographischen Elementen im römischen Mithraskult —

Im Laufe dieser Untersuchung konnten zwei Aspekte herausgearbeitet werden: Zum einen weisen die Erzeugnisse der mithräischen Bildkunst starke regionale oder sogar lokale Ausprägungen bzw. Variationen auf. Die Darstellungsschemata und Attribute sowie die damit verbundenen Wesenszüge der Gottheit waren augenscheinlich nicht statisch und doktrinär festgelegt, sondern konnten durchaus in erheblichem Maß

variieren. Diese Variationsbreite bei der Ausgestaltung der Kultbilder sowie aller anderen Szenen und Figuren scheinen gegen die Existenz einer dogmatischen Lehre mit einer Art ‚Mithras-Bibel‘ oder einem Zentralheiligtum in Rom, in dem das Urbild der Stiertötung aufgestellt gewesen sein soll, zu sprechen. Vielmehr hatten die einzelnen Mithrasgemeinden offenbar die Möglichkeit, auf die jeweiligen spezifischen Bedürfnisse der Anhänger vor Ort einzugehen und neue Elemente in die Kultliturgie und Ikonographie einzubauen, sodass man eher geneigt ist, von einem Polyzentrismus der Mithraskulte (im Plural) auszugehen. Dies ist ein Hinweis darauf, dass die Strukturen im römischen Mithraskult offenbar relativ flexibel waren und dadurch die spezifischen religiösen Bedürfnisse und Vorlieben der lokalen Kultgemeinden einfacher realisiert werden konnten als in konventionellen Kulturen, die von einem starken Konservatismus geprägt waren.

Zum anderen konnte aufgezeigt werden, dass eine ausschließliche Herleitung der Ikonographie im römischen Mithraskult aus der Bildersprache des griechisch-römischen Kulturkreises oder aber eine einseitige Rückführung auf iranische Konzepte der Komplexität der mithräischen Bilderwelt nicht gerecht würde. In diesem Zusammenhang soll allerdings die Frage nach dem Ursprung des Mithras-Kultes bewusst beiseitegelassen werden, da sie bei dem derzeitigen Forschungsstand nicht eindeutig beantwortet werden kann. Ein Nebeneinander von graeco-römischen und vermeintlich orientalischen Motiven ist nämlich stets in beide Richtungen deutbar: Entweder handelte es sich beim Mithraskult um ein westliches Konstrukt, bei dem vertraute Bildchiffren mit fremd wirkenden Versatzstücken vermischt wurden; oder aber die Anhänger eines ursprünglich aus dem Osten stammenden Kultes griffen bewusst auf eine vertraute Bildersprache zurück, die im gesamten Imperium Romanum verstanden wurde, um damit ein möglichst breites Publikum anzusprechen.

Anhand der vorgestellten Beispiele konnten mehrere Kategorien von ikonographischen Elementen in den Heiligtümern des Mithras festgestellt werden: Neben solchen Elementen, die den meisten Kultanhängern aus ihrem Kulturkreis her vertraut gewesen sein dürften, findet man auch Elemente, die zwar ebenfalls dem klassischen Formenspektrum entstammen, die jedoch von den Kultanhängern mit neuen Inhalten gefüllt wurden. Darüber hinaus scheint es auch vereinzelt Elemente gegeben zu haben, die vermutlich für den römischen Mithraskult neu konzipiert wurden. Dank seiner Flexibilität und Aufnahmebereitschaft bot dieser Kult seinen Anhängern also neben einer (gelegentlich) exotisch wirkenden Fremdheit auch viel Vertrautes an, mit dem sich jeder identifizieren konnte. Dies mag einer der Gründe für seine enorme Attraktivität gewesen sein.

[Darius Frackowiak: Mithraean picture worlds. An investigation into selected iconographic elements in the Roman Mithraeum - During this study two aspects could be elaborated: On the one hand, the products of the Mithras sculpture show strong regional or even local variations. The representational schemata and attributes, as well as the related features of the divinity, were obviously not static and doctrinal, but could vary considerably. This range of variations in the development of

cultic images, as well as in all other scenes and figures, seem to speak against the existence of a dogmatic doctrine with a kind of Mithras Bible or a central sanctuary in Rome, in which the prototype of the extermination was supposed to have been established. Rather, the individual Mithras communities had the opportunity to respond to the specific needs of the followers on the ground and to incorporate new elements into cultic linguistics and iconography so that one would tend to assume a polycentrism of the Mithras (plural). This is an indication that the structures in the Roman Mithras were apparently relatively flexible and that the specific religious needs and preferences of local religious communities could be realized more easily than in conventional cults characterized by a strong conservatism.

On the other hand, it could be shown that an exclusive derivation of iconography in the Roman Mithraeum from the language of the Greek-Roman cultural circle or a unilateral return to Iranian concepts of the complexity of the Mithraean pictorial world would not do justice to it. In this context, however, the question of the origin of the Mithras cult is deliberately left as it cannot be clearly answered in the current research. A co-existence of graeco-Roman and allegedly oriental motifs is always clear in both directions: either the Mithraeum was a Western construct, in which familiar image chords were mixed with extraneous-looking pieces; Or the followers of a cult originating originally from the East, consciously relied on a familiar picture language, which was understood throughout the empire Romanum, to speak as broadly as possible to an audience.

Because of the examples presented, several categories of iconographic elements could be found in the shrines of Mithras. In addition to elements which may have been familiar to most cultists from their cultural circle, there are also elements which are also derived from the classical form spectrum. Were filled with new contents by the cultists. In addition, it appears to have given some isolated elements, which were presumably conceived for the Roman Mithras. Thanks to its flexibility and receptiveness, this cult offered its followers, in addition to a (sometimes) exotic, foreign, much familiar, with which everyone could identify.]

Ralf Krumeich: Zwischen Orient und Okzident. Bilder des Jupiter Dolichenus und der Juno Regina aus dem Osten und Westen des Römischen Reiches –

Zum Pantheon ‚orientalischer‘ Gottheiten im Römischen Reich gehörte seit dem frühen 2. Jh. n. Chr. auch der aus dem nordsyrischen Doliche stammende Jupiter Dolichenus, dessen Heimatort und ‚zentrales‘ Heiligtum sich in der Region des hellenistischen Königreichs von Kommagene befanden.¹ Nach der Integration Kommagenes in die römische Provinz Syria im Jahr 72 n. Chr. wurde der Dolichenus-Kult durch Soldaten, Händler und Reisende über das gesamte Imperium Romanum und insbesondere in Italien, den Rhein- und Donauprovinzen und Britannien verbreitet; die spätesten Dokumente für die Verehrung dieses Gottes gehören in die diokletianische Zeit.

Wie bei vielen Gottheiten war auch die Ikonographie des Jupiter Dolichenus durchaus flexibel und vielgestaltig. Die meisten Wiedergaben des Gottes zeigen ihn in der Nachfolge

anatolisch-nordsyrischer Sturmgötter als eine mächtige, auf einem Stier stehende Gestalt, die als Attribute des Wettergottes ähnlich wie zum Beispiel der hethitische Teshub eine Doppelaxt und ein Blitzbündel trägt. Vor allem in Rom und im Westen des Römischen Reiches erscheint der Gott in Anlehnung an die Ikonographie des römischen Kaisers oft im militärischen Kostüm Sowohl in Doliche und seiner Umgebung als auch in Rom und den Provinzen des Römischen Reiches lassen sich jedoch zahlreiche Varianten des Dolichenus-Bildes beobachten, die sich in einer differenzierten Ikonographie und unterschiedlichen Begleitfiguren manifestieren und die jeweilige kulturelle Prägung seiner Verehrer dokumentieren. Die ikonographische ‚Anpassungsfähigkeit‘ der Dolichenus-Denkmalen ist in der Forschung bereits früh bemerkt und in den Standardwerken zu dieser Gottheit knapp skizziert worden; dies gilt etwa für die Arbeiten von Pierre Merlat, die einzelnen Einträge im *Corpus Cultus Iovis Dolicheni* (CCID) von Monika Hörig und Elmar Schwertheim sowie für die Beiträge von Silvia De Bellis und Stefania Sorrenti in dem 1997 erschienenen Sammelband zu einigen der ‚orientalischen‘ Kulte in Rom (*Orientalia sacra urbis Romae*). Jedoch fehlt eine systematische Analyse und Interpretation des Materials in Hinsicht auf die variantenreiche Ikonographie des Jupiter Dolichenus bis heute.

Im folgenden werde ich mich anhand ausgewählter Denkmäler aus Doliche und seiner Umgebung sowie aus Rom und aus den Rhein- und Donauprovinzen auf einige charakteristische Aspekte der Dolichenus-Ikonographie konzentrieren, die als Dokumente für den kulturellen Hintergrund der jeweiligen Stifter bzw. für Kontakte zwischen unterschiedlichen Kulturen im Römischen Reich interpretiert werden können.

[Ralf Krumeich: *Between Orient and Occident. Pictures of Jupiter Dolichenus and Juno Regina from the east and west of the Roman Empire* -

To the Pantheon, oriental gods in the Roman Empire belonged since the early 2nd century AD also the Jupiter Dolichenus from the north-dynasty Doliche, whose hometown and, central 'sanctuary, were in the region of the Hellenistic kingdom of Kommagene. After the integration of Commagene into the Roman province of Syria in 72 AD, the Dolichenus cult was spread by soldiers, traders and travelers across the entire Roman empire and especially in Italy, the Rhine and Donauprovinzen and Britain; The latest documents for the worship of this God belong to the Diocletian period.

As with many deities, the iconography of Jupiter Dolmens was also quite flexible and varied. Most of the god's representations show him in the succession of Anatolian-Norse-Syrian storm gods as a powerful figure standing on a bull, carrying a double ax and a lightning bundle as attributes of the weather god, like the Hittite Teshub. Above all in Rome and in the west of the Roman Empire, the god appears, in accordance with the iconography of the Roman emperor, in military costume. However, in Doliche and its surroundings as well as in Rome and the provinces of the Roman Empire there are numerous variants of the Dolichenus image, which manifest themselves in a differentiated iconography and different accompanying figures and document the respective cultural characteristics of their worshippers. The iconographic

adaptability of the Dolichenus monuments has already been noticed early in the research and has been briefly sketched in the standard works on this deity; For example, the work of Pierre Merlat, the individual entries in the *Corpus Cultus Iovis Dolicheni* (CCID) by Monika Hörig and Elmar Schwertheim as well as contributions by Silvia De Bellis and Stefania Sorrenti in the 1997 anthology of some of the oriental cults In Rome (*Orientalia sacra urbis Romae*). However, a systematic analysis and interpretation of the material with regard to the varied iconography of Jupiter Dolichenus is still missing today.

In the following, I will focus on some characteristic aspects of Dolichenus iconography by means of selected monuments from Doliche and its surroundings, as well as from Rome and from the Rhine and Donauprovinzen, as documents for the cultural background of the respective founders and for contacts between different cultures In the Roman Empire.]

V. Changing Forms of Sacred Space, Sanctuaries and Rituals

Kathrin Kleibl: An Audience in Search of a Theatre – The Staging of the Divine in Sanctuaries of Graeco-Egyptian Gods –

While Roman society in the first and second centuries AD was essentially rather static, enjoying the transformation of social hierarchies only in comedies, the Graeco-Egyptian cults offered spiritual transformations from one hierarchic level to another. Whereas the traditional forms of beliefs lost their central place within society, various ideologies, from secular philosophies to mystery cults, gained ground. They provided individuals with a meaning for their lives. The Graeco-Egyptian cults catered to these needs, reinventing themselves from old Egyptian roots and adapting to Roman social structures without losing their religious vitality.

This influenced the architectural layout of the sanctuaries. While the temenos wall closed off the cultic structures from the exterior world and its 'unbelievers', the courtyard in the sanctuaries of the Graeco-Egyptian cults was increasingly opened to the initiated. The threshold of the cella also receded further and further back to leave space for the growing community. The audience thus came closer to the stage, viewing it from all sides, each mystes longing to become an actor in his own personal mystery play.

Florence Saragoza: Exploring Walls: On Sacred Space in the Pompeian Iseum –

Due to its burial during the eruption of Vesuvius, the Pompeian Iseum is exceptionally well preserved. Within a few years of its discovery, the temple had become so famous that it attracted travelers from the whole of Europe and inspired scientists and artists alike. Among the discoveries made by Don Joachim de Alcubierre's teams between 1764 and 1766, it was the paintings that won the admiration of the excavators. This admiration led them to take the paintings off the walls to protect them from deterioration, and to bring them to the Museum in the Royal Palace at Portici. Most of these paintings are now on display in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale of Naples, in a scenography devised by Enrico Guglielmo and Stefano De Caro in 1992. No other Isiac sanctuary offers such

rich iconographical material, and the uniqueness of these paintings cannot be stressed enough.

The Pompeian sanctuary, built in the southern part of the city, consists of a podium temple surrounded by a portico, with several rooms opening onto its western and southern sides. One of these rooms in the west, known as the *eklesiasterion*, was an open space with pilasters. The other rooms were provided with doors, as we can deduce from the remaining thresholds. Behind these doors were cultic rooms on the western side and rooms for the accommodation of the cult personnel on the southern side (including the temple kitchen, a bathroom, and a *cubiculum*). The court comprised several altars and a small monument, which has been called *purgatorium* from the early nineteenth century onwards. The portico served as a temple precinct and was originally built in the Augustan period, as a recent study has shown. This paper will deal with the decoration of two elements of the Pompeian Iseum: the portico and the so-called *purgatorium*.

The paintings in the portico are traditional Pompeian mural paintings, which are divided into three areas. One of the areas is the *dado*, where fantastical animals are depicted on oblong panels which have yellow backgrounds and are separated by narrow red panels with vegetal motifs. The main area consists of alternately oblong and narrow panels on a red background. The narrow panels are painted with architectural views, and the oblong ones with either idyllic landscapes or *Isiac* priests. Above these panels runs a foliated scroll on a black background, topped by *aediculae*. This decorative scheme is typical of the Pompeian 'fourth style', which means that these paintings are restorations that were carried out after the earthquake of AD 62. Based on comparisons with the paintings in the *Casa dei Vettii* and the *Casa della Pareti Rosse*, they are usually dated to the earlier 70s AD.

Less common, however, is the representation of priests; the traditional iconographical corpus was, in this case, adapted to the sacral environment. The depiction of priests confirms the function of the portico as the precinct of the Iseum. Although the theme recalls the representations of the cult ritual in Pharaonic temples, these paintings owe their form and iconographic scheme to classical Roman paintings. Pharaonic offering scenes typically show an opposition of two protagonists, with the king facing one or more deities. In the Pompeian paintings, however, there is neither god nor king, only priests and other cult personnel. The opposition here seems to be an architectural one, between the portico-precinct, where priests are shown, and the temple proper (including the niches that housed the cultic statues). However, contrary to the first impression, there is no uniformity in the sequence of priests, as the eastern wall shows a different composition from that of the other walls of the portico. Here, the priests are grouped symmetrically on the wall on both sides of a shrine dedicated to *Harpocrates*, painted on a large panel opposite the entrance of the temple. Thus, the arrangement is following the principle of opposition.

On the western wall of the precinct, only one priest, wearing an *Anubis* mask, is shown. The members of the cult personnel painted on the southern and northern walls show some correspondence with those that are described by Apuleius in the 'Golden Ass'. Some of the figures are shown carrying

sacred insignia, such as a lamp, palm branches, a *caduceus* (uncertain), some vessels, a garland and a *sistrum*, while another one is depicted with his back to the entrance of the sanctuary, reciting prayers from a sacred book) This sequence is quite different from the procession of the *navigium Isidis* as described by Apuleius. Indeed, it is hard to recognize a ceremony here. Some priests are shown looking in one direction, and some in the other.

Andreas Hensen: Spelaea et templa Mithrae. Unity and Diversity in Topography, Architecture and Design of Sanctuaries in the Cult of Mithras —

Mithraic temples are the only type of Roman sacral buildings that the archaeologist can often with confidence identify as such, even where no cult image, inscriptions or ritual paraphernalia survive. There are two reasons for such confidence. In the first place, the ground-plan, proportions and internal divisions follow a clear model, which remains recognizable even though details vary. Second, about their chances of survival, Mithraic temples enjoy a decided advantage over other types of sacral buildings: since they were usually constructed somewhat below the surface, or in the shelter of a natural cave, and after their abandonment filled with fallen debris, eroded top-soil, or used as rubbish-tips, the buildings themselves, like the temple fixtures, remained over the centuries relatively well-protected. In some fortunate cases altars, ritual equipment, crockery and other requisites have been found *in situ*. For these reasons, the discovery of new Mithraic temples is reported practically each year, recently indeed from areas of the Empire where the cult was previously unattested, for example at *Angers/luliomagus* in western Gallia *Lugdunensis*,¹ at *Lugo/Lucus Augusti* in north-western Spain, or at *Inveresk* (near *Musselburgh*) on the Firth of Forth in Scotland, near a Roman fort at the eastern end of the Antonine Wall.

Over recent decades, research on the Roman cult of Mithras has also benefitted from the recognition that relevant information is provided not merely by the numerous and striking cult-reliefs but also by votive inscriptions, architectural details, pits for burying bones and rubbish, and the wide range of 'small finds', including taphonomic remains, viz. animal bones, plants, pollen etc. In recent years interdisciplinary teams using modern archaeological methods have evaluated the results of numerous well-documented excavations; and, beyond that, some of the documentation and finds from older excavations have been made accessible in modern form. A good deal of research has thus been devoted to the temples of the Roman cult of Mithras. Yet Roger Beck's remark of thirty years ago is still largely true: "There is no monograph or article devoted to the *mithraeum* in general". In this paper, I provide an initial impetus to such a larger undertaking. My first focus will be on the Mithraic temple as a specific type of sacral architecture, and its characteristic architectural features. As soon as we try to draw up ideal-type specifications, however, we also should take the variations into account. The practical archaeologist is often confronted with cases where the identification of a building as a *mithraeum* is uncertain. This raises the question of whether there are indeed reliable criteria for identifying *mithraea*. There follows a

discussion of the locations of these temples, particularly in relation to the surrounding settlement. All this provides the basis for a list of major questions for future research in this field.

Finally, I make some suggestions regarding the practical requirements for a broad-based study not just of mithraea but also of other aspects of the cult.

Richard Gordon: From East to West: Staging Religious Experience in the Mithraic Temple –

Virtually all interesting questions relating to the history and doctrines of the Roman cult of Mithras are controversial. One such issue is the question of origins. External evidence indicates the god Mithras and his cult were Persian in origin: the earliest literary reference, in Statius' *Thebais*, dating from before AD 92, explicitly locates the god's bull-killing in a Persian cave,¹ and in the third quarter of the second century Lucian of Samosata picks out the god's outlandish Median dress, his jacket (*kandys*) and tiara, and mocks that he could not even speak Greek. For Greek-speaking neo-Platonists and neo-Pythagoreans, such as Numenius, Kronios, and Celsus, at much the same period, the cult's Persian origins were likewise a fact. They of course had their own reasons for insisting on the cult's origins among a nation deemed 'wise', since in that case elements from it, duly interpreted, could be used as evidence for the pristine religiosity of humankind. In the altered politico-military situation of the mid-fourth century, we find Firmicus Maternus drawing on the same conviction to denounce the cult as of the enemy — namely the revived Sasanian power that had, since Sapūr I's invasion of AD 253/54, continually threatened the stability of the Empire.

The impression given by internal evidence, however, is more nuanced. The god's elaborately-painted 'Persian' clothes in the cult-frescoes in the Barberini Mithraeum in Rome, at S. Maria Capua Vetere, at Marino in the Alban Hills and at Dura Europos, as well as the acclamation *nama* — an authentic Old Persian word — do imply an internal interest in stressing the claim about Persia, at least from the late Antonine/Severan period, if not earlier.² We may also note the grade-name *Perses*, for which however there is scarcely any documentary evidence: outside the Severan mithraeum beneath S. Prisca on the Aventine in Rome, it is attested epigraphically in the western Empire prior to fourth century exactly once, in Gallia Narbonensis. The only explicit evidence that evokes the East is the acclamation to the Fathers at S. Prisca: *nama [Patribus] / ab oriente / [ad occiden]tem* ("Hail to the Fathers from East to West"), which, though Persia itself is not mentioned, seems at any rate to imply a conscious claim that the cult originated in the East. On the other hand, there is not a single explicit epigraphic reference internal to the cult in the western Empire to Persia, to Zoroaster or to the magi. One might perhaps argue that this silence is due to the nature of our epigraphic evidence, which is almost exclusively votive and therefore constrained by relatively tight generic rules, but, even given such constraints, one would have expected it to appear more often if the theme were of central importance to worshippers in the West. Moreover, the casual allusion in another lacunated verse from S. Prisca to the ancient Italic goddess, *Pales*,³ indicates that 'Persia' and 'Italy' were not experienced as contradictions or antitheses. Such differences, between internal

and external evidence, and between East and West, clearly imply the constructed, negotiated, quality of the notions 'Persia' and 'Persian'.

The classic theory of the Franco-Belgian scholar Franz Cumont, set out in his *Textes et monuments relatifs aux mystères de Mithra*, drew proximately upon Georges Lafaye's model of the cult of Isis, and more distantly upon the nineteenth-century *communis opinio*, arguing that the Roman cult of Mithras was authentically Iranian, filtered through Babylonia, and transmitted to the Roman Empire by the supposed *magousaioi*, the Greek-speaking Zoroastrian priests of Anatolia. The deities of the western cult, such as the Lion-headed God, Jupiter, Oceanus, Caelum/Caelus, the Winds and so on, are in this view merely the Graeco-Roman guises of 'Mazdean' deities; the snake and scorpion of the bull-killing scene *khrafstra*, repulsive and harmful — all this legitimating the claim that Avestan and Pahlavi texts can be used to illuminate Mithraic iconography.

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The Roman Mithras Cult: A Cognitive Approach (Scientific Studies of Religion: Inquiry and Explanation) by Olympia Panagiotidou, Roger Beck, series editors: Donald Wiebe, Luther H. Martin, and William W. McCorkle [Bloomsbury Academic, 9781472567413]

[The Roman Mithras Cult: A Cognitive Approach](#) is the first full cognitive history of an ancient religion. In this ground-breaking book on one of the most intriguing and mysterious ancient religions, Olympia Panagiotidou, with contributions from Roger Beck, shows how cognitive historiography can supplement our historical knowledge and deepen our understanding of past cultural phenomenon.

The cult of the sun god Mithras, which spread widely across the Graeco-Roman world at the same time as other 'mystery cults', and Christianity offered its devotees certain images and assumptions about reality. Initiation into the mysteries of Mithras and participation in the life of the cult significantly affected and transformed the ways in which the initiated perceived themselves, the world, and their position within it. The cult's major ideas were conveyed mainly through its symbolic complexes. The ancient written testimonies and other records are not adequate to establish a definitive reconstruction of Mithraic theologies and the meaning of its complex symbolic structures.

[The Roman Mithras Cult](#) identifies the cognitive and psychological processes which would have taken place in the minds and bodies of the Mithraists during their initiation and participation in the mysteries, enabling the perception, apprehension, and integration of the essential images and assumptions of the cult in its worldview system. <>

The Mind of Mithraists: Historical and Cognitive Studies in the Roman Cult of Mithras (Scientific Studies of Religion: Inquiry and Explanation) by Luther H. Martin [Bloomsbury Academic, 978-1472584199]

The Roman cult of Mithras was the most widely-dispersed and densely-distributed cult throughout the expanse of the Roman Empire from the end of the first until the fourth century AD, rivaling the early growth and development of Christianity during the same period. As its membership was largely drawn from the ranks of the military, its spread, but not its popularity is attributable largely to military deployments and re-

deployments. Although mithraists left behind no written archival evidence, there is an abundance of iconographic finds. The only characteristic common to all Mithraic temples were the fundamental architecture of their design, and the cult image of Mithras slaying a bull. How were these two features so faithfully transmitted through the Empire by a non-centralized, non-hierarchical religious movement? [The Minds of Mithraists: Historical and Cognitive Studies in the Roman Cult](#) of Mithras addresses these questions as well as the relationship of Mithraism to Christianity, explanations of the significance of the tauroctony and of the rituals enacted in the mithraea, and explanations for the spread of Mithraism (and for its resistance in a few places).

The unifying theme throughout is an investigation of the 'mind' of those engaged in the cult practices of this widespread ancient religion. These investigations represent traditional historical methods as well as more recent studies employing the insights of the cognitive sciences, demonstrating that cognitive historiography is a valuable methodological tool. <>

Mythology as politics, genealogy as myth

Ritual Embodiment in Modern Western Magic: Becoming The Magician by Damon Zacharias Lycourinos [Gnostica, Routledge, 9781138574175]

In the Western world, magic has often functioned as an umbrella term for various religious beliefs and ritual practices that seek to influence events by harnessing supernatural power. The definition of these myriad occult and esoteric traditions have, however, usually come from those that are opposed to its practice; notably authorities in religious, legal and intellectual spheres. This book seeks to provide a new perspective, directly from the practitioners of modern Western magic, by exploring how a distinctive mode of embodiment and consciousness can produce a transition from an 'ordinary' to a 'magical' worldview.

Starting with an introduction to the study of magic in the Western academy, the book then presents the author's own participant observation of five ethnographic case studies of modern Western magic. The focus of these ethnographic case studies is directed towards ideas and methods the informants employ to self-legitimize and self-represent as 'magicians'. It concludes by discussing the phenomenological implications and issues around embodiment that are inherent to the contemporary practice of magic.

This is a unique insight into the lived experience of practitioners of modern magic. As such, it will be of keen interest to scholars of the Occult and New Religious Movements, as well as Religious Studies academics examining issues around the embodiment and the anthropology of religion.

Damon Zacharias Lycourinos completed his PhD at the University of Edinburgh, UK, where he also acted as an instructor in Religious Studies. His main areas of interest are the study of ritual from the perspective of embodied cognition,

subjectivity, and self-narrative; the concept of 'spirituality in the flesh'; and a phenomenological consideration of the subtle dimensions of religious experience.

Excerpt:

Interpreting the modern practice of Western magic

In their introduction to *The Metamorphosis of Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Periods*, Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra define 'magic' as a field of inquiry 'commonly used to designate a whole range of religious beliefs and ritual practices, whereby man seeks to gain control over his fate and fortune by supernatural means'.¹ However, as Michael Bailey indicates, magic has typically been defined by authorities of various sorts (religious, legal, intellectual) who are either opposed to or at least condescending toward the practices and beliefs they see it entailing'. Furthermore,

[i]n many contexts people have self-designated as magicians, and continue to do so (again, regardless of the actual terminology). Some readily confess to magical crimes when questioned by authorities. Others promote their image as a practitioner of powerful rites or a possessor of occult knowledge as a social identity.'

Despite these issues in representation, Bailey contends that evidence demonstrates that most cultures draw on certain distinctions separating 'manipulations of spiritual or occult natural forces and entities that are deemed appropriate and approved from those considered sinister and illicit'. Whether defined in terms of foreign rites of 'otherness' or private rituals as opposed to public and communal ceremonies, magical beliefs and practices comprise 'a shadowy and tenuous, but still often carefully constructed, realm that helps shape a society's basic conceptions about both spiritual and natural forces that imbue the world with meaning'. According to Bailey the reason for this persistence of reference is that

[i]n its rites, rituals, taboos, and attendant beliefs, magic might be said to comprise, or at least describe, a system for comprehending the entire world. It provides a means for navigating among the varied forces that comprise and shape material creation and promises its practitioners methods of controlling or at least affecting those forces. In certain circumstances, magicians claim that their rites can elevate them to a higher state of consciousness, allowing them to perceive occult aspects of nature or enter into communion with preternatural or supernatural entities.

The portrayal of magic as a meaningful and effective worldview for practitioners requires careful examination of the words, concepts, and conditions designating magic as a categorical field of inquiry. The same also applies for how designations of magic may relate to other expansive systems of inquiry, such as religion and science. Furthermore, investigations into specific magical beliefs practices may also need to introduce the development of other areas of study, such as ways in which material objects and even human bodies become inscribed with meaning and power as critical interfaces for the academic study of magic.

To approach magic as a worldview, along with how it might inscribe with meaning and power the material and physical dimensions of practice, in this book I propose that rather than simply studying magic in terms of how it is understood and reacted to, analytical focus should shift to *how it is enacted* to become a meaningful 'lived phenomenon' for practitioners. This approach demands that the practitioners themselves become the focus of inquiry, as it is their inclination to espouse certain narratives objectified by acting in certain ways to produce the conditions for participating in a magical worldview. This entails that the enactive modes of embodiment, as both a symbolic and an experiential medium, should become a critical focus for the study of magic.

The primary research question that I aim to address, therefore, is how practitioners by means of a distinctive mode of embodiment and consciousness produce, represent, and experience magic as a participatory process, transitioning from an 'ordinary' to a 'magical' worldview of meaning and effect. As a process of self-transformation, whether temporary or permanent, I examine how practice produces the subjectivity of the 'magician' as comprising a 'ritual body' of a lived nexus of symbols, gestures, and narratives constructed in reference to magical narrative and enactment in order to participate in a magical worldview. This approach also calls for an investigation into how the magician's ritualised body serves as the locus of interaction with forces and entities presenting in both primary and secondary sources of magical literature, thus expanding scholarly knowledge regarding the use of the body in magical ritual.

To investigate ritual and the body as a critical interdisciplinary interface for the study of magic, I present my own participant observation of five ethnographic case studies of modern Western magic. My selection of rituals is illustrative, rather than representative, of the spectrum of modern Western magic but which nevertheless incorporate some central types of Western magical ideas and practices. The focus of these ethnographic case studies

is directed towards ideas and methods my informants employ to self-legitimise and self-represent as 'magicians' seeking to obtain communication with forces and entities of a participatory magical worldview.

The historico-cultural backgrounds and cosmological structures that define the nature and objectives of each ritual are discussed in depth, followed by extensive portrayals of their enactments by selected ethnographic informants. These portrayals also incorporate my informants' own explanations for the selection and approach to their genre of Western ritual magic, along with their own personal testimonies regarding the experiential outcomes of their magical rituals.

In the following chapters I address the ethnographic data to understand how my informants claim participation in a magical worldview through the construction of a symbolic and physiological ritual body of meaning and effect in light of an anthropological phenomenology of ritual and the body. The analytical focus of these chapters identifies and determines *how* the magician becomes the paradigm of a ritual body by assessing *where* and *when* the physiological and psychic, corporeal and incorporeal, merge in the ritual act as the experience of a multidimensional body in communication with forces and entities of a magical worldview. Finally, I draw these threads together in my theory of Western ritual magic as a process of ritual narrative and performance for becoming the magician through the embodied logic of ritual that seeks to construct a ritual body through which to experience a participatory worldview.

A methodological approach to the study of modern Western magic

Reflecting on the tendency of contemporary magical practitioners to legitimise their ideas and practices as continuities of historic paradigms of Western magic, Egil Asprem writes,

Despite what some contemporary practitioners might say, there is no evidence of an unbroken tradition of ritual magic from ancient times until today. That, however, does not mean that there is no continuity whatsoever: certain sources and ritual liturgies have indeed inspired similar practice throughout the past two millennia. But we must be clear about what we are dealing with: namely, a number of different sets of ritual practices, codified in ritual texts and liturgies authored in different centuries and cultural contexts, that have been subject to loss, rediscovery, reinterpretation, innovations, and abridgements, and which have furthermore inspired and spawned new literature as centuries have passed.

Examining how modern Western magic has evolved in response to certain sociocultural and political developments, Asprem further observes that

[although it is tricky to periodize the contemporary, it makes sense to start in the early 1990s: the Soviet Union has collapsed, the cold war ended, Western capitalism and consumerism reign supreme, and the great ideologies of the twentieth century die as postmodernism goes mainstream. Meanwhile, a communications and media revolution is underway that rapidly changes the rules of the game: the emergence of the Internet and the development of the World Wide Web have had a remarkable effect on the production and dissemination of ritual magical texts, but also on the actual *practice* of magical ritual.

Asprem distinguishes the emergence of 'scholar-magicians' who began visiting the archives of the British Library and the Bodleian to discover and publish old magical manuscripts. These texts were disseminated online from 1994 onwards providing a plethora of resources on esoteric ideas and practices. Access to this information challenged the old initiatory structure of late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century magical orders, as the novice magician was not required to have direct involvement with the social space and dogmatic commitments of such institutions. This gave birth to a whole new generation of solitary practitioners with the freedom to choose resources and recreate accordingly, where 'one could easily be an unaffiliated magician, aiming to reconstruct Elizabethan ritual magic, goetic demon conjurations, or rituals from the Greek magical papyri'. Furthermore, Asprem also makes reference to the emergence of a strand of 'magical purism' advocated by some contemporary practitioners who claim authority from their engagement with specific textual resources deriving from periods prior to modernity. Despite their apparent differences, both of these approaches can be understood as processes of 'disembedding' certain esoteric ideas and practices from one historico-cultural context, and 'reembedded' in new ones.

This process of disembedding and reembedding is characteristic of Western magical narrative referenced in both etic historiography and emic applications, exhibiting a pragmatic merging of a diversity of cosmological motifs, esoteric discourses, and ritual performances into an operational system. An example of this, which acts as the foundation for one of my ethnographic case studies, is a collection of manuscripts known as [*The Treatise of Angel Magic*](#) that demonstrates some of the definitive disembedding and reembedding temperaments of

Renaissance and early modern magicians. *The Treatise of Angel Magic* is effectively an attempt to correlate more or less coherent magical theologies and technologies described as a synthesis of Kabbalistic designations, Renaissance renditions of Hermeticism and Neoplatonism, ceremonialism from medieval grimoires, Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia*, and the Enochian elements received through John Dee's and Edward Kelly's angelic conversations.

To present modern Western magic as an amalgamation of diachronic sources, symbols, and practices set within a worldview determined by events of synchronic reception is to acknowledge these sources, symbols, and practices also as synthetic and dynamic prior to their reconstitution. Such a methodological approach, though, must also take into account emic attitudes that may not necessarily view this process as the creation of a 'new' system but, rather, as a natural process of continuity and development of ideas and practices already present and familiar. Therefore, it is essential to recognise both the diachronic and synchronic dimensions of modern Western magic in emic perceptions of the legitimacy of self-designations as 'magicians' and what this might imply for current reconstructions of Western ritual magic.

To address the synchronic dimensions I identify how variants of modern Western magic become distributed through discursive networks that practitioners renegotiate. The diachronic is addressed in terms of how historical elements of Western magic are received and adapted in synchronic settings to meet the objectives of ethnographic inquiry. With this contextual approach I have allowed full potential for expression and remained as faithful as possible to representations of emic narrative and performance to develop a sensitive but critical ethnographic and phenomenological study of *why* and *how* subjects evoke and partake in a magical worldview.

Regardless of the latest developments in the academic study of modern Western magic, ethnographic investigations using participant observation remain infrequent. Tanya Luhrmann and Susan Greenwood's ethnographic studies of contemporary magical practitioners, which I will discuss in the following chapter, are rare exceptions. However, their selection of informants limits their documentation of modern Western magic to a certain ideological and performative orientation. Luhrmann dismisses magical practices other than which her subjects are engaged with, explicitly fearing sinister overtones in practices referred to as Left-Hand Path and often characterising aspects of Aleister Crowley's esoteric and ritual propositions as violent and destructive." Greenwood's ethnographic

data are entirely drawn from magical groups nearly identical in ideology and performance with those of Luhrmann's study, with an emphasis on Western Mystery schools and Wicca.

A more recent study of modern magical practitioners utilising ethnographic tools and is Kennet Granholm's research published as *Dark Enlightenment: The Historical, Sociological and Discursive Contexts of Contemporary Esoteric Magic*. Granholm limits his empirical scope on a single magical order — the Stockholm-based Dragon Rouge — of which Granholm is an initiate. He adopts as his central method a discursive approach to comprehend ways in which historical and contemporary reflections on esoteric knowledge and identity within the Dragon Rouge. Rather than argue that modern Western esotericism is a response to 'disenchantment' Granholm contends that the hallmark of modern Western esotericism is 'eclecticism' in the relationship of the individual to religious institutions.

This form of 'multi-sited ethnography' acted as a method for acquiring relevant hard-to-find data, since the nature of research could not just focus on a single site of investigation. My collection of data took place at various sites determined by the location and availability of my research participants. Attention also focused on how these were informed and reproduced on macrolevels, accessing information through literature and cyberspace, along with interaction with like-minded practitioners.

To direct and develop methods and outcomes of ethnographic research my informants would spend time explaining their self-identification as 'magicians', whilst also sharing previous experiences and certain expectations as magical practitioners. Regarding my presence during the rituals, my informants confessed that it did not act as a disturbance or affect the outcome. One reason for this was my personal interest outside of my academic career in *The Greek Magical Papyri*. This was convincing enough for my informants to feel comfortable and trust I would not pursue what they perceived as a reductionist agenda reflecting 'social taboos that still exist regarding magic and occultism'. Also, my informants did not consider me a passive observer unaffected and detached from their magical rituals, as they believed that I too was being exposed to the effects of the forces and entities summoned, and hence participating in their magical worldview.

Although I developed a strategy of research that acknowledges macrotheoretical concepts, another factor that emerged after the purposive sampling was the solitary nature of the magical rituals. My informants confessed to having worked in magical rituals with other practitioners. However, they admitted that they primarily practiced on a solitary basis. This was due to their opinion that working as a solitary practitioner was far more constructive for their

personal development as magicians. My informants articulated that the reason for this was that collective magical ritual diminishes the control and experience of the complete 'embodiment' of the magicians

Despite the predominance of male ritualists in this book, my research objectives do not aspire to a study of masculinity and gender or universalisation of the male body. Neither do I argue that men and their bodies, as represented in this study, speak for modern Western magic as a whole. For my PhD research I had secured access to the ethnographic study of a magical ritual performed in partnership by a male and female magician, which was also included in the final draft of my submitted PhD thesis. However, because of personal reasons they requested that I do not include my ethnographic study of them in this book.

The gender structure of this study is merely the result of pragmatic circumstances of ethnographic selection. From my previous interactions with both male and female practitioners I can safely argue that the majority of my willing informants as male does not reflect the true gender ratio of contemporary magical practitioners. The reason for the reluctance of more women to participate in this study may be due to the fact that I am male, or possibly, as Mayer speculates that 'female magicians avoid verbalizing and verifying magical practice to a larger extent than male practitioners'.

Two responses to feminist critiques of the implicit power inequalities found between male researchers and female informants can be summarised as follows:

The first relates to the now dated complaint that men find it difficult to get access to women's world of social experience. The second, more modern response is that it is politically 'inappropriate' for men to do such work.

Regardless of the validity of this statement, I must admit that on the whole, I found it easier to locate male informants who were willing to grant me access to their private space. The space reserved for most of the ethnographic documentations was their private living quarters. Allowing access to one's private space comes with a certain level of trust. Although I had gained the trust of both potential and current informants regarding my professional ethics, one could argue that forming a relationship between members of the same sex, which at times may extend into more private affairs of practice and personal narrative, involves fewer complications and insinuations. Les Back presents a valid example of this in response to some of the complexities of his status as a male anthropologist conducting fieldwork in south London:

During the course of participant observation within

the youth-club setting my masculinity affected the contexts where I could speak openly to young women. While I could usually speak openly and freely with groups of young women, if the conversation centred on one or two individuals I would be open to accusations from the young men of making sexual advances.... It became clear that such contact placed the young women themselves in a vulnerable position."

Both male and female researchers have noted the binary and often incomplete results that arise due to male/female identifications. From the female perspective, Lila Abu-Lughod's *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* stresses that male researchers would have difficulty obtaining the access she gained with the women of the Bedouin community in Egypt purely by virtue of gender. Likewise, there are cases of husband-and-wife fieldwork teams specifically designed to enhance research results that would otherwise be clouded with problematic gender representations if only one of them attempted to research both male and female participants. As a sole male researcher studying and residing in the very intimate and domestic spaces of these ritual practitioners, it makes sense that I chose to study male practitioners.

On a final, but methodologically important note, my theoretical approach can be described as what Shaun Gallagher refers to as 'enactive phenomenology'. From this perspective, phenomenology seeks to understand consciousness in terms of 'the subject actively perceiving or apprehending an object', and thus directing subjective intentions towards an objective description of the phenomena of the world.

Within the context of the perceiver and the act of perception, phenomenological inquiry posits that there are some natural events forming the ground of experience from which the concept of 'sensation', or as Husserl refers to as 'hyletic data', may be abstracted. Shaun Gallagher contends that hyletic data indicate two general types of data:

Data that are the result of externally oriented sensing, and data that are associated with bodily processes and experiences, e.g., touch, pressure, warmth, cold, and pain sensations.

From this description Gallagher argues that hyletic data are not perceptual objects but, rather, the necessary operational conditions that constitute the properties of the perception of an object that enters into the intentional structure of consciousness. Gallagher also argues that the same theoretical approach can be applied to the notion of 'qualia', that is, the qualitative

or phenomenal feel of consciousness. Both hyletic data and qualia are understood to be a matter of pre-reflective phenomenal experience involving sensory reactions. However, Gallagher also argues that to think about hyletic data and qualia in terms of phenomenal consciousness is an 'abstraction mistaking objective/intentional qualities for internal or phenomenal', and undermines the role of the body with respect to 'what is it like' to experience. To ignore the body is to ignore a multitude of synaesthetic experiences of the lived body bearing on perception and cognition:

Here there is an important distinction between ... the body-as-object — characteristics that I perceive as happening in or to my body, *versus* taking them as aspects of the *body-as-subject* — bodily experiences that have an effect on the way that I experience the world.

This implies that somaesthetic experience is the manner in which one perceives things qualified not only by the physical state of the body but, more important, the experience of also being in a particular state of embodiment. Hence, to speak in terms of embodied consciousness in a holistic brain/body context is to evaluate how the phenomena that one engages with in the world affects and shapes one's perceptual and cognitive life.

My phenomenological approach can also be described as seeking to capture the phenomena as they appear and as the subject attains an understanding of them. This approach is referred as *epoché*, and as a research tool in my study reflects Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi's argument:

Not to doubt, neglect, abandon, or exclude reality from consideration; rather the aim is to suspend or neutralize a certain dogmatic attitude towards reality, thereby allowing us to focus more narrowly and directly on reality just as it is given — how it makes its appearance to us in experience. In short, the *epoché* entails a change of attitude towards reality, and not an exclusion of reality.

Furthermore, I apply 'phenomenological reduction' as a hermeneutic configuration of the data acquired in order 'to analyse the correlational interdependence between specific structures of subjectivity and specific modes of appearance or givenness'.

With this ethnographic and phenomenological approach I have endeavoured to inaugurate a critical evaluation of the enactive process that defines *why* and *how* my informants as 'magicians' evoke and partake in a magical worldview expressed in terms of experiencing distinct modes of consciousness and embodiment. Hence, this study

is a theoretical and methodological conceptualisation of the ideas and methods modern Western magical practitioners may employ to self-legitimise and self-represent as magicians in terms of somaesthetic strategies of negotiation of subjectivity through ritual enactment. The technologies of ritual praxis are examined to determine their relationship with emic accounts regarding the existential qualities of reimagining and recasting subjectivity, in order to consider how the magician becomes the paradigm of a ritual body. In turn, I determine whether the hermeneutics of the anthropology of ritual give an adequate account of modern Western magic as a ritual narrative generating a participatory worldview. My anthropological assessments of the lived body as the locus of ritual interactions are designed to advance understanding of the dynamics of ritual, in general, and the infrastructure and aspirations of modern Western magic, in particular.

Interpreting the modern practice of Western magic: A theoretical reflection on the study of modern Western magic

In their introduction to [The Metamorphosis of Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Periods](#), Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra define 'magic' as a field of inquiry 'commonly used to designate a whole range of religious beliefs and ritual practices, whereby man seeks to gain control over his fate and fortune by supernatural means'.¹ However, as Michael Bailey indicates, magic has typically been defined by authorities of various sorts (religious, legal, intellectual) who are either opposed to or at least condescending toward the practices and beliefs they see it entailing'. Furthermore,

[i]n many contexts people have self-designated as magicians, and continue to do so (again, regardless of the actual terminology). Some readily confess to magical crimes when questioned by authorities. Others promote their image as a practitioner of powerful rites or a possessor of occult knowledge as a social identity.

Despite these issues in representation, Bailey contends that evidence demonstrates that most cultures draw on certain distinctions separating 'manipulations of spiritual or occult natural forces and entities that are deemed appropriate and approved from those considered sinister and illicit'. Whether defined in terms of foreign rites of 'otherness' or private rituals as opposed to public and communal ceremonies, magical beliefs and practices comprise 'a shadowy and tenuous, but still often carefully constructed, realm that helps shape a society's basic conceptions about both spiritual and natural forces that imbue the world with meaning'. According to Bailey the reason for this persistence of reference is that [i]n its rites, rituals, taboos, and attendant beliefs, magic might be said to comprise, or at least describe, a system for comprehending the entire world. It provides a means for navigating among the varied forces that comprise and shape material creation, and promises its practitioners

methods of controlling or at least affecting those forces. In certain circumstances, magicians claim that their rites can elevate them to a higher state of consciousness, allowing them to perceive occult aspects of nature or enter into communion with preternatural or supernatural entities.

The portrayal of magic as a meaningful and effective worldview for practitioners requires careful examination of the words, concepts, and conditions designating magic as a categorical field of inquiry. The same also applies for how designations of magic may relate to other expansive systems of inquiry, such as religion and science. Furthermore, investigations into specific magical beliefs practices may also need to introduce the development of other areas of study, such as ways in which material objects and even human bodies become inscribed with meaning and power as critical interfaces for the academic study of magic.

To approach magic as a worldview, along with how it might inscribe with meaning and power the material and physical dimensions of practice, in this book I propose that rather than simply studying magic in terms of how it is understood and reacted to, analytical focus should shift to how it is enacted to become a meaningful 'lived phenomenon' for practitioners. This approach demands that the practitioners themselves become the focus of inquiry, as it is their inclination to espouse certain narratives objectified by acting in certain ways to produce the conditions for participating in a magical worldview. This entails that the enactive modes of embodiment, as both a symbolic and an experiential medium, should become a critical focus for the study of magic.

The primary research question that I aim to address, therefore, is how practitioners by means of a distinctive mode of embodiment and consciousness produce, represent, and experience magic as a participatory process, transitioning from an 'ordinary' to a 'magical' worldview of meaning and effect. As a process of self-transformation, whether temporary or permanent, I examine how practice produces the subjectivity of the 'magician' as comprising a 'ritual body' of a lived nexus of symbols, gestures, and narratives constructed in reference to magical narrative and enactment in order to participate in a magical worldview. This approach also calls for an investigation into how the magician's ritualised body serves as the locus of interaction with forces and entities presenting in both primary and secondary sources of magical literature, thus expanding scholarly knowledge regarding the use of the body in magical ritual.

To investigate ritual and the body as a critical interdisciplinary interface for the study of magic, I present my own participant observation of five ethnographic case studies of modern Western magic. My selection of rituals is illustrative, rather than representative, of the spectrum of modern Western magic but which nevertheless incorporate some central types of Western magical ideas and practices. The focus of these ethnographic case studies is directed towards ideas and methods my informants employ to self-legitimise and self-represent as 'magicians' seeking to obtain communication with forces and entities of a participatory magical worldview.

The historico-cultural backgrounds and cosmological structures that define the nature and objectives of each ritual are discussed in depth, followed by extensive portrayals of their enactments by selected ethnographic informants. These portrayals also incorporate my informants' own explanations for the selection and approach to their genre of Western ritual magic, along with their own personal testimonies regarding the experiential outcomes of their magical rituals.

In the following chapters I address the ethnographic data to understand how my informants claim participation in a magical worldview through the construction of a symbolic and physiological ritual body of meaning and effect in light of an anthropological phenomenology of ritual and the body. The analytical focus of these chapters identifies and determines how the magician becomes the paradigm of a ritual body by assessing where and when the physiological and psychic, corporeal and incorporeal, merge in the ritual act as the experience of a multidimensional body in communication with forces and entities of a magical worldview. Finally, I draw these threads together in my theory of Western ritual magic as a process of ritual narrative and performance for becoming the magician through the embodied logic of ritual that seeks to construct a ritual body through which to experience a participatory worldview.

A methodological approach to the study of modern

Western magic

Reflecting on the tendency of contemporary magical practitioners to legitimise their ideas and practices as continuities of historic paradigms of Western magic, Egil Asprem writes,

Despite what some contemporary practitioners might say, there is no evidence of an unbroken tradition of ritual magic from ancient times until today. That, however, does not mean that there is no continuity whatsoever: certain sources and ritual liturgies have indeed inspired similar practice throughout the past two millennia. But we must be clear about what we are dealing with: namely, a number of different sets of ritual practices, codified in ritual texts and liturgies authored in different centuries and cultural contexts, that have been subject to loss, rediscovery, reinterpretation, innovations, and abridgements, and which have furthermore inspired and spawned new literature as centuries have passed.

Examining how modern Western magic has evolved in response to certain sociocultural and political developments, Asprem further observes that [although it is tricky to periodize the contemporary, it makes sense to start in the early 1990s: the Soviet Union has collapsed, the cold war ended, Western capitalism and consumerism reign supreme, and the great ideologies of the twentieth century die as postmodernism goes mainstream. Meanwhile, a communications and media revolution is underway that rapidly changes the rules of the game: the emergence of the Internet and the development of the World Wide Web have had a remarkable effect on the

production and dissemination of ritual magical texts, but also on the actual practice of magical ritual.

Asprem distinguishes the emergence of 'scholar-magicians' who began visiting the archives of the British Library and the Bodleian to discover and publish old magical manuscripts. These texts were disseminated online from 1994 onwards providing a plethora of resources on esoteric ideas and practices. Access to this information challenged the old initiatory structure of late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century magical orders, as the novice magician was not required to have direct involvement with the social space and dogmatic commitments of such institutions. This gave birth to a whole new generation of solitary practitioners with the freedom to choose resources and recreate accordingly, where 'one could easily be an unaffiliated magician, aiming to reconstruct Elizabethan ritual magic, goetic demon conjurations, or rituals from the Greek magical papyri'. Furthermore, Asprem also makes reference to the emergence of a strand of 'magical purism' advocated by some contemporary practitioners who claim authority from their engagement with specific textual resources deriving from periods prior to modernity. Despite their apparent differences, both of these approaches can be understood as processes of 'disembedding' certain esoteric ideas and practices from one historico-cultural context, and 'reembedded' in new ones.

This process of disembedding and reembedding is characteristic of Western magical narrative referenced in both etic historiography and emic applications, exhibiting a pragmatic merging of a diversity of cosmological motifs, esoteric discourses, and ritual performances into an operational system. An example of this, which acts as the foundation for one of my ethnographic case studies, is a collection of manuscripts known as *The Treatise of Angel Magic* that demonstrates some of the definitive disembedding and reembedding temperaments of Renaissance and early modern magicians. *The Treatise of Angel Magic* is effectively an attempt to correlate more or less coherent magical theories and technologies described as a synthesis of Kabbalistic designations, Renaissance renditions of Hermeticism and Neoplatonism, ceremonialism from medieval grimoires, Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia*, and the Enochian elements received through John Dee's and Edward Kelly's angelic conversations.

To present modern Western magic as an amalgamation of diachronic sources, symbols, and practices set within a worldview determined by events of synchronic reception is to acknowledge these sources, symbols, and practices also as synthetic and dynamic prior to their reconstitution. Such a methodological approach, though, must also take into account emic attitudes that may not necessarily view this process as the creation of a 'new' system but, rather, as a natural process of continuity and development of ideas and practices already present and familiar. Therefore, it is essential to recognise both the diachronic and synchronic dimensions of modern Western magic in emic perceptions of the legitimacy of self-designations as 'magicians' and what this might imply for current reconstructions of Western ritual magic.

To address the synchronic dimensions I identify how variants of modern Western magic become distributed through discursive networks that practitioners renegotiate. The diachronic is addressed in terms of how historical elements of Western magic are received and adapted in synchronic settings to meet the objectives of ethnographic inquiry. With this contextual approach I have allowed full potential for expression and remained as faithful as possible to representations of emic narrative and performance to develop a sensitive but critical ethnographic and phenomenological study of why and how subjects evoke and partake in a magical worldview.

Regardless of the latest developments in the academic study of modern Western magic, ethnographic investigations using participant observation remain infrequent. Tanya Luhrmann and Susan Greenwood's ethnographic studies of contemporary magical practitioners, which I will discuss in the following chapter, are rare exceptions. However, their selection of informants limits their documentation of modern Western magic to a certain ideological and performative orientation. Luhrmann dismisses magical practices other than which her subjects are engaged with, explicitly fearing sinister overtones in practices referred to as Left-Hand Path and often characterising aspects of Aleister Crowley's esoteric and ritual propositions as violent and destructive." Greenwood's ethnographic data are entirely drawn from magical groups nearly identical in ideology and performance with those of Luhrmann's study, with an emphasis on Western Mystery schools and Wicca.

A more recent study of modern magical practitioners utilising ethnographic tools and is Kennet Granholm's research published as *Dark Enlightenment*:

The Historical, Sociological and Discursive Contexts of Contemporary

Esoteric Magic. Granholm limits his empirical scope on a single magical order — the Stockholm-based Dragon Rouge — of which Granholm is an initiate. He adopts as his central method a discursive approach to comprehend ways in which historical and contemporary reflections on esoteric knowledge and identity within the Dragon Rouge. Rather than argue that modern Western esotericism is a response to 'disenchantment' Granholm contends that the hallmark of modern Western esotericism is 'eclecticism' in the relationship of the individual to religious institutions.

This form of 'multi-sited ethnography' acted as a method for acquiring relevant hard-to-find data, since the nature of research could not just focus on a single site of investigation. My collection of data took place at various sites determined by the location and availability of my research participants. Attention also focused on how these were informed and reproduced on macrolevels, accessing information through literature and cyberspace, along with interaction with like-minded practitioners.

To direct and develop methods and outcomes of ethnographic research my informants would spend time explaining their self-identification as 'magicians', whilst also sharing previous experiences and certain expectations as magical practitioners.

Regarding my presence during the rituals, my informants confessed that it did not act as a disturbance or affect the outcome. One reason for this was my personal interest outside of my academic career in *The Greek Magical Papyri*. This was convincing enough for my informants to feel comfortable and trust I would not pursue what they perceived as a reductionist agenda reflecting 'social taboos that still exist regarding magic and occultism'. Also, my informants did not consider me a passive observer unaffected and detached from their magical rituals, as they believed that I too was being exposed to the effects of the forces and entities summoned, and hence participating in their magical worldview.

Although I developed a strategy of research that acknowledges macrotheoretical concepts, another factor that emerged after the purposive sampling was the solitary nature of the magical rituals. My informants confessed to having worked in magical rituals with other practitioners. However, they admitted that they primarily practiced on a solitary basis. This was due to their opinion that working as a solitary practitioner was far more constructive for their personal development as magicians. My informants articulated that the reason for this was that collective magical ritual diminishes the control and experience of the complete 'embodiment' of the magician."

Despite the predominance of male ritualists in this book, my research objectives do not aspire to a study of masculinity and gender or universalisation of the male body. Neither do I argue that men and their bodies, as represented in this study, speak for modern Western magic as a whole. For my PhD research I had secured access to the ethnographic study of a magical ritual performed in partnership by a male and female magician, which was also included in the final draft of my submitted PhD thesis. However, because of personal reasons they requested that I do not include my ethnographic study of them in this book.

The gender structure of this study is merely the result of pragmatic circumstances of ethnographic selection. From my previous interactions with both male and female practitioners I can safely argue that the majority of my willing informants as male does not reflect the true gender ratio of contemporary magical practitioners. The reason for the reluctance of more women to participate in this study may be due to the fact that I am male, or possibly, as Mayer speculates that 'female magicians avoid verbalizing and verifying magical practice to a larger extent than male practitioners'.

Two responses to feminist critiques of the implicit power inequalities found between male researchers and female informants can be summarised as follows:

The first relates to the now dated complaint that men find it difficult to get access to women's world of social experience. The second, more modern response is that it is politically 'inappropriate' for men to do such work.

Regardless of the validity of this statement, I must admit that on the whole, I found it easier to locate male informants who were willing to grant me access to their private space. The space reserved for most of the ethnographic documentations was

their private living quarters. Allowing access to one's private space comes with a certain level of trust. Although I had gained the trust of both potential and current informants regarding my professional ethics, one could argue that forming a relationship between members of the same sex, which at times may extend into more private affairs of practice and personal narrative, involves fewer complications and insinuations. Les Back presents a valid example of this in response to some of the complexities of his status as a male anthropologist conducting fieldwork in south London:

During the course of participant observation within the youth-club setting my masculinity affected the contexts where I could speak openly to young women. While I could usually speak openly and freely with groups of young women, if the conversation centred on one or two individuals I would be open to accusations from the young men of making sexual advances.... It became clear that such contact placed the young women themselves in a vulnerable position."

Both male and female researchers have noted the binary and often incomplete results that arise due to male/female identifications. From the female perspective, Lila Abu-Lughod's *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* stresses that male researchers would have difficulty obtaining the access she gained with the women of the Bedouin community in Egypt purely by virtue of gender. Likewise, there are cases of husband-and-wife fieldwork teams specifically designed to enhance research results that would otherwise be clouded with problematic gender representations if only one of them attempted to research both male and female participants. As a sole male researcher studying and residing in the very intimate and domestic spaces of these ritual practitioners, it makes sense that I chose to study male practitioners.

On a final, but methodologically important note, my theoretical approach can be described as what Shaun Gallagher refers to as 'enactive phenomenology'. From this perspective, phenomenology seeks to understand consciousness in terms of 'the subject actively perceiving or apprehending an object', and thus directing subjective intentions towards an objective description of the phenomena of the world.

Within the context of the perceiver and the act of perception, phenomenological inquiry posits that there are some natural events forming the ground of experience from which the concept of 'sensation', or as Husserl refers to as 'hyletic data', may be abstracted. Shaun Gallagher contends that hyletic data indicate two general types of data:

Data that are the result of externally oriented sensing, and data that are associated with bodily processes and experiences, e.g., touch, pressure, warmth, cold, and pain sensations.

From this description Gallagher argues that hyletic data are not perceptual objects but, rather, the necessary operational conditions that constitute the properties of the perception of an object that enters into the intentional structure of consciousness. Gallagher also argues that the same theoretical approach can be applied to the notion of 'qualia', that is, the qualitative or phenomenal feel of consciousness. Both hyletic data and qualia

are understood to be a matter of pre-reflective phenomenal experience involving sensory reactions. However, Gallagher also argues that to think about hyletic data and qualia in terms of phenomenal consciousness is an `abstraction mistaking objective/intentional qualities for internal or phenomenal and undermines the role of the body with respect to 'what is it like' to experience. To ignore the body is to ignore a multitude of synaesthetic experiences of the lived body bearing on perception and cognition:

Here there is an important distinction between ... the body-as-object — characteristics that I perceive as happening in or to my body, versus taking them as aspects of the body-as-subject — bodily experiences that have an effect on the way that I experience the world.

This implies that somaesthetic experience is the manner in which one perceives things qualified not only by the physical state of the body but, more important, the experience of also being in a particular state of embodiment. Hence, to speak in terms of embodied consciousness in a holistic brain/body context is to evaluate how the phenomena that one engages with in the world affects and shapes one's perceptual and cognitive life.

My phenomenological approach can also be described as seeking to capture the phenomena as they appear and as the subject attains an understanding of them. This approach is referred as epoché, and as a research tool in my study reflects Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi's argument:

Not to doubt, neglect, abandon, or exclude reality from consideration; rather the aim is to suspend or neutralize a certain dogmatic attitude towards reality, thereby allowing us to focus more narrowly and directly on reality just as it is given — how it makes its appearance to us in experience. In short, the epoché entails a change of attitude towards reality, and not an exclusion of reality.

Furthermore, I apply `phenomenological reduction 'as a hermeneutic configuration of the data acquired in order 'to analyse the correlational interdependence between specific structures of subjectivity and specific modes of appearance or givenness'.

With this ethnographic and phenomenological approach I have endeavoured to inaugurate a critical evaluation of the enactive process that defines why and how my informants as `magicians' evoke and partake in a magical worldview expressed in terms of experiencing distinct modes of consciousness and embodiment. Hence, this study is a theoretical and methodological conceptualisation of the ideas and methods modern Western magical practitioners may employ to self-legitimise and self-represent as magicians in terms of somaesthetic strategies of negotiation of subjectivity through ritual enactment. The technologies of ritual praxis are examined to determine their relationship with emic accounts regarding the existential qualities of reimagining and recasting subjectivity, in order to consider how the magician becomes the paradigm of a ritual body. In turn, I determine whether the hermeneutics of the anthropology of ritual give an adequate account of modern Western magic as a ritual narrative generating a participatory worldview. My anthropological

assessments of the lived body as the locus of ritual interactions are designed to advance understanding of the dynamics of ritual, in general, and the infrastructure and aspirations of modern Western magic, in particular. <>

Genealogy of the Pagan Gods, Volume 1: Books I-V by Giovanni Boccaccio, translated with notes and introductions by Jon Solomon [The I Tatti Renaissance Library, Harvard University Press, 9780674057104]

Genealogy of the Pagan Gods, Volume 2: Books V I-X by Giovanni Boccaccio, translated with notes and introductions by Jon Solomon [The I Tatti Renaissance Library, Harvard University Press, 9780674975590]

A third volume is due to complete the work in about a year Giovanni Boccaccio's *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods* is an ambitious work of humanistic scholarship whose goal is to plunder ancient and medieval literary sources so as to create a massive synthesis of Greek and Roman mythology. The work also contains a famous defense of the value of studying ancient pagan poetry in a Christian world.

The complete work in fifteen books contains a meticulously organized genealogical tree identifying approximately 950 Greco-Roman mythological figures. The scope is enormous: 723 chapters include over a thousand citations from two hundred Greek, Roman, medieval, and Trecento authors. Throughout the *Genealogy*, Boccaccio deploys an array of allegorical, historical, and philological critiques of the ancient myths and their iconography.

Much more than a mere compilation of pagan myths, the *Genealogy* incorporates hundreds of excerpts from and comments on ancient poetry, illustrative of the new spirit of philological and cultural inquiry emerging in the early Renaissance. It is at once the most ambitious work of literary scholarship of the early Renaissance and a demonstration to contemporaries of the moral and cultural value of studying ancient poetry. This is the first volume of a projected three-volume set of Boccaccio's complete *Genealogy*.

A truly stupendous effort in which Boccaccio references hundreds of ancient Greek and Roman sources in over a thousand citations--a stunningly masterful synthesis of all classical mythology, running to over 700 chapters. The whole thing is an utterly amazing performance, a towering masterpiece of Renaissance humanism, and here, as one of the latest entries in Harvard University Press' I Tatti Renaissance Library, it gets its very first unabridged translation into English. Jon Solomon does the honors, everywhere using a deftly light touch that works perfectly to bring out the relatively straightforward simplicity, sometimes called "arid" by those who go into the work expecting frolics in the Tuscan hills, of the Latin Boccaccio uses in this teeming work...This I Tatti volume is in itself a mighty achievement, and when it's joined by its companion volumes, all attractively produced and supplied with the extensive

critical apparatus most modern readers will need for a work that isn't entirely accessible, it will stand as a long-overdue monument to its beloved author. And it will give that author's many fans something new--and wonderful--by him to read. (Steve Donoghue *Open Letters Monthly* 2011-05-24)

Excerpt: Giovanni Boccaccio's *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods* (*Genealogia deorum gentilium*) is an ambitious synthesis of ancient mythological information, Greek and Latin poetry, medieval and humanistic scholarly research, and poetic manifesto. Boccaccio divided this large work into fifteen books. The first thirteen contain a mythological genealogy meticulously organized within a single, all-encompassing genealogical matrix. The scope is enormous: 723 chapters include well over 1000 citations from over 200 different Greek, Roman, medieval, and Trecento authors and scholars to identify and describe approximately 950 Greco-Roman mythological individuals and groups and account for dozens of additional names of spouses, mothers, and unnamed siblings as well as mythological beasts and even quasi-personified geophysical phenomena. Boccaccio incorporates into most of these entries an array of allegorical, historical, and scientific analyses of the fabulous and iconographic elements embedded in the ancient tales, and he expands many of these passages by comparing and evaluating previous interpretations selected from his medieval predecessors. In Books 14 and 15 Boccaccio writes a compelling defense of poetry in general and a more specific defense of his *Genealogy*. In doing so he offers a brief history of the origins of poetry as well as a dexterous and unabashed justification for the study of pagan literature within a Christian context.

Much more than a prose collection of pagan myths, the *Genealogy* incorporates hundreds of relevant poetic excerpts, applies scholarly analyses that represent the new scientific spirit of Italian humanism, and argues that this method of studying ancient mythological poetry ultimately affirms God's truths. As one of the first works of classical scholarship in the Renaissance, as a comprehensive treatment of classical mythology, and as a historical, theoretical, and practical endorsement of the value of poetry, the *Genealogy* would remain a treatise of enduring influence for several centuries.

History of the Work

We do not know exactly when Boccaccio began writing the *Genealogy*, although we can identify numerous stages of development and production that spanned four decades.

- Near the conclusion of the *Genealogy*, Boccaccio informs us that he had become interested in pagan mythology "while still a youth" (15.6: *Ego iuvenulus adhuc*). This would have been during the 1330s, when as a teenager Boccaccio studied with Paul of Perugia, head librarian at King Robert's Angevin

court at Naples, from whom he collected material which would eventually be cited in or incorporated into his *Genealogy*.

- In the Preface of the *Genealogy* Boccaccio explains to his patron, King Hugo IV of Cyprus, why he was reluctant to accept the enormous undertaking when first petitioned by the king's minister Donnino di Parma. It has been suggested that the meeting took place between 1347 and 1349, when Boccaccio was residing primarily in Ravenna and Forlì while working on the *Decameron* and, as it would turn out, escaping the initial impact of the plague in Florence in 1348.
- Near the end of the *Genealogy* (15.13) Boccaccio apologizes to the king for not seriously engaging in the project prior to further urging from Becchino Bellincioni, who after traveling from Cyprus met with Boccaccio in Ravenna, and Paul the Geometer, who showed him signed and sealed orders from the king. This Ravenna sojourn is thought to have taken place in 1350, the year before the Senate of Florence sent Boccaccio to Padua to offer Petrarch a chair at the Florentine Studium.¹ Indeed, it was in 1350 and 1351 that two inspiring personal encounters with Petrarch in Florence and Padua were dramatically transforming Boccaccio's literary focus from vernacular Italian romance and poetry to scholarly Latin prose treatises.
- One would like to think that the abdication of Hugo in November 1358 and his subsequent death in October 1359 provide obvious termini ante quem for the initial completion of the project: Boccaccio addresses the king throughout the work as if he were alive. But Boccaccio also frequently cites Leontius Pilatus, whom he employed as his Greek tutor during Leontius' tenure at the Florentine Studium from 136 to 1362, so the Greek passages in the *Genealogy* prove that work continued during these years.¹
- A decade later, in a letter written to fellow humanist Pietro Piccolo da Monteforte on April 5, 1372, Boccaccio describes his manuscript as "incomplete" (*non perfectum*). Giuseppe Billanovich, Vittorio Zaccaria, and others have identified the corrections Piccolo made in the margins of this extant autograph copy of the *Genealogy*, and these and subsequent corrections and additions made by Boccaccio were incorporated into a subsequent redaction.

The text of Boccaccio's autograph reveals the status of the *Genealogy* as a work undergoing periodic revision that

would continue in later copies, now lost. In its margins we find references to sources Boccaccio had previously neglected, e.g., Tacitus (3.23),⁶ Pliny (3.19, 25), Martial (3.2), and Columella (11.1). His neat, semi-Gothic script is altered on many leaves with erasures, corrections, and additions which often continue into the margins. The discussion of Atlas (4.31) alone contains two corrected genealogies and a parenthetical addition as well as an appended citation from the elder Pliny. Nearing the end of the project, Boccaccio compiled a lengthy table of rubrics listing in order all 723 entries in the *Genealogy*, subsequently adjusting it to include final additions, e.g., 2.76, on Scythes. A leaf representing Scythes was added as well to the colorful and naturalistic genealogical trees Boccaccio had painted earlier to introduce each of the first thirteen books. Even so, the lack of rubrication throughout the autograph reveals the autograph's incomplete state.

As the fifteenth century approached and commenced, interest in the *Genealogy* expanded, and several humanists made the work even more valuable as a veritable encyclopedia of mythological information. Coluccio Salutati, who was serving as Chancellor of Florence when Boccaccio died, commissioned Domenico Bandini, the Aretine teacher of rhetoric and grammar working in Florence, to compile an alphabetic glossary for the *Genealogy*. The result, containing 1966 entries — keyed to book and chapter numbers, and alphabetized to the second letter — was one of the most comprehensive indices applied to a work of European scholarly literature at that time and one of the first to be committed to print. Two additional indices were compiled in the final decades of the fourteenth century, one by Matteo d'Orgiano and the other anonymous, but it was Bandini's that would continue to appear in most of the subsequent printed editions. Domenico Silvestri, who like Boccaccio had studied Greek with Leontius and specialized in the writing of Latin verse epigrams, composed eighteen Latin hexameters featuring seriatim the name of the progenitor of each of the thirteen books of the *Genealogy*. Like Bandini's index, Silvestri's versified table of contents became attached to the subsequent tradition of the *Genealogy*.

Although less than a century separated Boccaccio's death and the first printed edition of the work, forty-seven extant codices contain the first thirteen books or complete versions of both strands of the manuscript tradition, and another forty-two contain several books, single books, extracts, or paraphrases; we know of over three dozen additional early fifteenth-century manuscripts which included all or portions of the *Genealogy* but are no longer extant. As just one marker of its influence, in the early fifteenth century Boccaccio's *Genealogy* was already providing source material for John Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* (e.g., 3.3537-42).

In 1472 Wendelin of Speyer issued the *editio princeps* of the *Genealogy* in gilt vellum; the text of this version was

corrected by the Istrian humanist Raffaele Zovenzoni. Although he chose not to print the illustrated trees, Wendelin did print a passage (3.22) with Greek type nearly two decades before Aldus Manutius began printing his influential Greek texts in Venice. In the next year Johann Veldener, the first printer in Louvain, issued an anonymously paraphrased Latin compendium of the first thirteen books. Thereafter, printed Latin editions of the *Genealogy* proliferated. Editions appeared in Reggio in 148, Vicenza in 1487, and Venice in 1494 and 1497, followed by Parisian and Venetian editions in 1511 and Jacob Mycillus' 1532 Basel edition with annotations and a new, even larger index. None included any Greek text, but most included Boccaccio's table of contents, Bandini's index, and Silvestri's epigram followed by a printed version of Boccaccio's *On Mountains*. Some, beginning with the 1494 Venetian edition, include woodcut renditions of the genealogical trees.

Vernacular translations made the treatise accessible to a wider audience. In 1498 a French translation of the first thirteen books (*De la généalogie des dieux*) was published by Antoine Vérard in Paris in a large-format, gilt-edged volume accompanied by a generous number of unattributed woodcut images; this was reset in 1531 in a smaller format with fewer of the woodcuts. The French translation has been attributed to the humanist Laurent de Premierfait, who is known to have translated Boccaccio's Latin works on illustrious men and women (*De casibus virorum illustrium*, 1400; *De mulieribus claris*, 1409) as well as the *Decameron* (1414-18).

The earliest Italian translation was rendered by an equally prominent man of letters, Giuseppe Betussi. A member of Padua's *Accademia degli Infiammati* and sponsored by Sperone Speroni, Betussi was at the avant-garde of those promoting the substitution of Italian for Latin as the language of scholarly literature. From 1544 to 1547 he was in the service of Count Collaltino di Collalto, to whom his version of Boccaccio's *Genealogy* is dedicated, as are his translations of two other major Latin scholarly works by Boccaccio. Betussi's *La genealogia de gli dei de' gentili* was published first in Venice by Comino da Trino di Monferrato in 1547, and this was followed by nearly a dozen subsequent editions into the seventeenth century. Most of these include Betussi's ten-page biography of Boccaccio, and their alphabetical indices are keyed to page numbers, not book and chapter. Indicative of the continuing interest specifically in the mythological content of Boccaccio's *Genealogy*, many of the Betussi editions were published along with contemporary publications of Lilio Gregorio Giraldi's *De deis gentium* (1548), Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini de i dei de gli antichi* (1556), and Natale Conti's *Mythologiae* (1567).

Although the works by Giraldi, Cartari, and Conti put an end to the dominance of Boccaccio's *Genealogy* as a mythological reference, near the end of the sixteenth century it still served as an important source for Edmund

Spenser's Christianized paganism. Thereafter the visibility of Boccaccio's *Genealogy* was mostly limited to lexica of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, but as a monumental artistic and intellectual model, it would continue to influence the Greco-Roman mythological tradition. Perhaps most noteworthy is Boccaccio's identification of Demogorgon as the ultimate progenitor of the entire race of pagan divinities. In the seventeenth century John Milton included Demogorgon among Satan's netherworld conspirators in *Paradise Lost* (2.965), and in the nineteenth century Acts II and III of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* featured Demogorgon as the sole power in the universe capable of deposing the dominant celestial divinity widely worshipped as the supreme being. It was only a few decades later that Attilio Horns, Henri Hauvette, Oskar Hecker, and others began to apply the methodologies of modern scholarship that prepared the way for modern editions and translations of Boccaccio's *Genealogy*.

Sources

The sources range chronologically from Homer to Boccaccio's mid-fourteenth-century Greek contemporary Leontius Pilatus, who, not coincidentally, was helping Boccaccio learn to read Homer in Greek. Indeed, incorporating the Homeric poems as mythological evidence and then citing, quoting, and translating into Latin dozens of ancient Greek passages which Western Europeans had not been able to access in centuries is the most revolutionary aspect of Boccaccio's scholarship in the *Genealogy*.

There are forty-five Greek passages quoted from Homer, ranging in length from one to six hexameters. Most of them contain minor diacritical and/or orthographic errors. All but one of the twenty-four books of the *Iliad* are cited; the entries involving Ulysses flesh out the many *Odyssey* passages cited in Book 13 of the *Genealogy*, although there are no citations from the last five books of the *Odyssey*. Boccaccio cites Homer directly or indirectly over 250 times, more than he cites any other author.

Boccaccio no doubt collaborated with Leontius, to whom he refers nearly one hundred times for most if not all the Homeric passages, but he gained access to additional ancient Greek sources through Paul of Perugia, who provided him source material from Barlaam of Calabria as well as Theodontius. We know little about Theodontius, whose work is lost, except that that he was knowledgeable in Greek as well as Latin, offered otherwise unknown variants and interpretations of pagan myths, and antedated Boccaccio by at least two centuries. But Boccaccio cites him almost two hundred times and through him gained limited access to Pronapides and still other Greek sources.

Another important Greek source, the *Chronicle* of Eusebius, which Boccaccio cites nearly one hundred times, had been translated into Latin and adapted long before by Jerome. Boccaccio employs the *Chronicle* to add chronological precision to his historical analyses, and in most instances he regards it as an unimpeachable source. Following in the

Scholastic tradition, Boccaccio cites as well eight different works by Aristotle (some already translated into Latin) and also makes reference to such ancient Greek poets as Theognis, Euripides, and Apollonius of Rhodes, such natural scientists as Thales, Anaxagoras, and Anaximander, and the historian Thucydides, cited or epitomized by such Latin intermediaries as Cicero, Valerius Maximus, Servius, Macrobius, Fulgentius, and Isidore. For European scholarship in the fourteenth century, the collection and use of such an extensive array of original Greek sources and intermediary ancient and medieval Latin sources was unparalleled.

The ancient Latin poets Boccaccio most frequently cites or quotes are Ovid, Vergil, and Statius, who supplied him with hundreds of well-known narratives and memorable descriptions of divinities and mythical mortals. The most frequently cited Roman prose author is Cicero, whose *On the Nature of the Gods* confirmed for Boccaccio that the chief Olympian gods featured by these poets were actually euhemerized homonymous pluralities, e.g., the three men who shared the name Jupiter. As with the multiple Greek authors, Boccaccio cites and quotes a variety of additional ancient Roman poets and prose authors, e.g., Seneca (tragedian and philosopher, cited as two different authors), Pliny, Pomponius Mela, Horace, Livy, and Lucan, not to mention such late ancient writers as Solinus and Claudian. To balance and contradict the ancient pagans, Boccaccio cites scripture over one hundred times.

Although he had access to a number of comprehensive mythological compilations, Boccaccio only sporadically cites the ancient collection of myths attributed to Hyginus, Papias' medieval *Lexicon*, or the late twelfth-century *Great Book of Etymologies* by Uguccione da Pisa. Writing in the fourteenth century, Boccaccio preferred to use the late antique and early medieval compilations and commentaries by Servius, Lactantius Placidus, Macrobius, Augustine, Fulgentius, Isidore, Albericus, and Rabanus, because such secondary works offered him not only variants and summaries of divine descriptions and mythological narratives but also allegorical and rationalizing interpretations which he found either convincing or worthy of discussion and refutation in his own treatise. Similarly, through his elder contemporaries Paul of Perugia and Barlaam he had direct and indirect access to additional interpretations developed in the rich twelfth- to fourteenth-century tradition of mythographic commentaries, all of which now are of relatively obscure or anonymous authorship and many of which survive in only fragmentary states. For analyses which required astronomical perspective, he made use of the ninth-century Arab astronomer Albumasar, whose *Introduction to Astronomy* John of Seville had translated into Latin in the twelfth century, and the poet Andalò di Negro of Genoa, whom Boccaccio identifies (1.5.5) as the man who taught him astronomy.

Throughout the first thirteen books of the *Genealogy* Boccaccio often submits these authorities to source criticism,

juxtaposes contrasting assertions, and applies a broad palette of investigative and exegetical methodologies. At 2.60 he prides himself on offering a very different, i.e., non-Vergilian, account of Dido, and in repeated demonstrations of his scholarly integrity, he admits when he cannot find a source or remember reading anything more about a character. Boccaccio makes clear his goal — to remove the "veil" (velum) from a story (fabula) to reveal its true meaning (sensus) — and he specifies in the final two books of the *Genealogy* that underneath the ancient veil one can discover sound philosophy and valuable ancient wisdom.

But in addition to collecting, reporting, and analyzing his multiple sources, Boccaccio accommodated the humanistic spirit by adding an additional and essential element: he clearly identified his sources so his readers could benefit more fully from his research. At a time when few books were carefully prepared with scholarly guides, Boccaccio had already experimented by appending informative glosses to his pseudo-ancient tale of Theseus (Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia). To provide additional guidance for his *Genealogy*, he not only included a table of contents at the outset of the treatise but also recorded the name of each of the authors cited within the paragraph in the outer margins of the autograph.

Boccaccio demonstrates a different approach to his sources in the final two books designed to explain, theorize, and justify the methodology he has applied to the mythological materials he has examined in Books 1-13. Here the author becomes an advocate of the proposition that the pagan poetry he has been discussing throughout the work has great value in revealing divinely inspired truths to the reader who has been properly guided through allegorical hermeneutics. When Boccaccio writes of ancient poets in Book 14, it is not to recount and interpret their fables but to cite the lives of the authors as moral and ethical exempla superior to the contemporary icons revered by his detractors (14.4.15-17) or to compare the value of their fables with those told by and about Christ (14.9.12). Throughout he calls upon the ancient tradition of literary criticism found in Latin authors from Cicero to Macrobius. By contrast, near the center of the final book (15.6) he concentrates exclusively on demonstrating the value of such modern sources as Andalò, Dante, Barlaam, Paul of Perugia, Leontius, and the revered Petrarch.

Aware of the different spiritualities underlying his chronologically broad spectrum of sources, Boccaccio accommodates his methodical organization of ancient source material and his allegorical, historical, and scientific exegeses of what he considers to be pagan irrationality within a traditional Christian context. His synthesis depends upon still another source tradition that had been nurtured by Scholastic theologians and continued in Trecento Italy by Albertino Mussato and Petrarch, a tradition which would regularize the acceptance of art and poetry as expressions

of the sensible world and thus as veiled expressions of divine truth. Perhaps no passage in the *Genealogy* is more indicative of Boccaccio's ability to reconcile his pagan and Christian sources than the chapter in Book 15 (15.9) in which he affirms eloquently and at length his commitment to Christ by citing stories about a fictitious pagan character in Terence and the historical pagan King Mithridates of Pontus. This synthesis allowed Boccaccio, who at first seems to have circulated Books 14 and 15 separately from the mythological genealogy, to incorporate the two parts into a comprehensive but integrated treatise.

Precedents and Achievement

More than a millennium after ancient Greek arguments about the value and uses of poetry originated with Archaic critiques of Hesiod and Homer, Christian apologists and moralists would argue over whether to embrace or condemn pagan literature itself. When a secondary set of arguments about the use and relative value of Latin and vernacular language resonated early in the fourteenth century, Boccaccio's humanist predecessors, particularly Mussato and Petrarch, summoned up the well-known arguments Plato presented in the second and third books of his *Republic* (known via

intermediate sources). Boccaccio addresses these arguments at 14.16-19, applying them to a wide-ranging justification for reading ancient poetry and fiction, adding exegetical analysis, and continuing the contemporary scholarly momentum. The commitment, learning, and passion Boccaccio poured into his defense of poetry and the study of pagan literature in Books 14 and 15 contributed to making the *Genealogy* a standard text for literary critics, scholars, and poets of the Renaissance, and it remained an intellectual highwater mark for Sidney, Wordsworth, and Goethe, who was reportedly reading the *Genealogy* during the final days before his death.

In antiquity, the corpus of Greco-Roman myths had continued to develop over the course of a millennium, as such exceptional poets as Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, Vergil, and Ovid produced mythological poetry and Hellenistic and Roman scholars identified their literary sources and origins in archaic ritual. But pagan antiquity failed to produce a comprehensive scholarly collection of Greco-Roman myths that also analyzed the mythological corpus as a whole. Many ancient prose authors, from Thucydides and Plato to the paradoxographer Heraclitus and Flavius Philostratus, analyzed, allegorized, and reformulated mythological material, but none produced a comprehensive collection, and Cicero's well-known *On the Nature of the Gods* was a philosophical study of pagan theology, not a scholarly collection of myths. The two most important extant compilations of the mythological corpus were those attributed to Hyginus and Apollodorus, but even though those authors both collected and arranged mythical narratives and summaries and the latter was even chronologically comprehensive, they lacked exegesis.

At the end of the fourth century the official Christianization of the Roman Empire not only hastened the elimination of the worship of the pagan gods but in doing so disengaged the mythical corpus: now these once sacred gods and their enormous progeny would be merely collected and studied. The euhemeristic demotion of the gods to human status and an increased tendency to allegorize enabled this process to thrive in the medieval period, which produced several widely promulgated works. The sixth-century *Mythologies* of Fulgentius nonetheless is not comprehensive and rarely cites sources. The learned *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville is relatively comprehensive and contains whole sections devoted to grammar, rhetoric, mathematics, medicine, law, and other well-established ancient rubrics, but it does not offer a systematic analysis of pagan mythology. Toward the end of the ninth century, the Carolingian Renaissance inspired the learned commentaries of Remigius of Auxerre, a forerunner of an additional number of commentaries and glosses on various works by Vergil, Ovid, Macrobius, Martianus Capella, and others written by William of Conches, Arnulf of Orleans, and the Third Vatican Mythographer, whom Boccaccio equated with Albericus. The early fourteenth-century mythological creatures and humans consigned to Dante's *Inferno* derive from a number of these earlier Latin sources, and Boccaccio's earlier contemporary Pierre Bersuire (Petrus Berchorius) completed his influential mythographical *Moralized Ovid* when Boccaccio was still studying with Paul of Perugia.

Boccaccio then incorporated many facets of this rich, variegated mythographic tradition into his *Genealogy*. Demonstrating extraordinary research skills for his era, he compiled a wealth of information and ideas from the notes he made during his Neapolitan studies with Paul of Perugia, which would have included most of the references to Barlaam and Theodontius; sorted through Albericus, Isidore, Fulgentius, Macrobius, and other strains of the medieval tradition; incorporated ideas from Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*; collected a fairly extensive series of quotations from ancient Latin poetry; worked for three years with Leontius to learn a sufficient amount of Homeric Greek; and received additional input from Pietro Piccolo da Monteforte. By modern standards he lacks precision as a copyist, his research is not exhaustive, and the value of his analyses varies. But it was by collecting and organizing this amount of material, comparing interpretations and then enthusiastically arguing for his own interpretations, identifying and incorporating ancient Greek quotations, and zealously defending the importance and benefit of doing so that Boccaccio helped to establish a new standard of classical scholarship. In addition, he promulgated the results of his studies not only by writing the *Genealogy* and lending a copy to fellow humanists in Naples, but by adding a number of features to make the work accessible to readers, including the table of contents, carefully painted genealogical trees, the prose descriptions which explain the arrangement of the root and leaves of the trees that

preface each of the first thirteen books, the marginal Latin translations of the Homeric passages, and the marginal lists of ancient and medieval sources cited.

Boccaccio's comprehensive collection and study of Greco-Roman myths soon became a principal source for one of the ancient world's most intellectually and artistically alluring cultural products. The Greco-Roman myths would for the next two centuries inspire countless works of poetry, prose, painting, sculpture, and drama. For humanists and literati of the period, Boccaccio's *Genealogy* helped to establish the scholarly parameters for the study of Greco-Roman myths; it also provided an authoritative essay promoting the beneficial artistic and philosophical qualities of ancient poetry.

Nonetheless, the *Genealogy* is still a product of the mid-fourteenth century and retains a number of quintessentially medieval features: allegorizing and euhemerizing exegeses, portmanteaus and false etymologies, incomplete and inaccurate source citations, limited and imprecise Greek quotations, and an underlying Christian presumption laced with a firm reliance on astrological determinism. Boccaccio accepted the erroneous traditions that there were two different younger Senecas and only one Lactantius. The mythologically rich Greek tragedies are almost entirely ignored, as are Hesiod and Pseudo-Apollodorus. Finally, the genealogical framework of the work is another traditional element. But Boccaccio's scholarly achievement was to combine these variegated elements into an expansive treatment of an important and alluring subject that was to yield a substantial legacy during one of the most innovative and productive artistic periods in the Western arts.

Prefaces

Boccaccio begins with a general Preface (Prohemium) dedicated to King Hugo IV of Jerusalem and Cyprus. That Hugo claimed title to two kingdoms over two thousand kilometers southeast of Florence is not without significance for the geographical and spiritual compass of the *Genealogy*. Hugo was the ninth monarch of the dynasty founded by the French crusader Guy de Lusignan in the aftermath of the failed Third Crusade. One century later the fall of Acre may have reduced the hereditary Lusignan title 'king of Jerusalem' to an idle claim, but the Kingdom of Cyprus, now the easternmost extension of Christendom, flourished as the trade and manufacturing center of the eastern Mediterranean. Hugo was a beneficiary of this continuing prosperity. A patron of the arts educated in both Latin and Greek, he commissioned this illuminating compilation of mythical divinities, which includes the Greco-Roman goddess of love said to have emerged from the sea on the shores of the very island he ruled. But as an antidote to the underlying pagan content of the *Genealogy*, Boccaccio repeatedly affirms the primacy of Christ, who was said to have been crucified at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Guy de Lusignan had first crowned himself king of Jerusalem in 1186. Conscious of this dual tradition,

Boccaccio differentiates his patron the Cypriot monarch from the pre-Christian Greeks (and Cypriots) who believed in the pagan "evil":

Paul of Perugia ... sometimes stated in my presence that he had learned from Barlaam, the Calabrian exceedingly learned in Greek letters, the name of no preeminent man, whether identified by his important position or other distinction, living anywhere in Greece, its islands, or along the aforementioned shores during that era in which this foolishness flourished, who did not claim that he originated from one god or another. So what can I say, or what can you say, as we look at such an ancient evil that spread so far and wide?

Toward the end of this first preface Boccaccio introduces the travel motif he will develop in the subsequent prefaces introducing each of the fifteen books:

... as a new sailor on a rather frail skiff I will descend into the vertiginous sea encircled by ubiquitous cliffs, uncertain as to whether the labor will be worth the effort of reading all the books. The shores and mountain woodlands, the channels and caves I will traverse by foot if need be. I will descend to the nether regions, and I will become another Daedalus and fly into the ether. To carry out your project, not otherwise than if I were collecting fragments along the vast shores of a huge shipwreck, I will collect the remnants of the pagan gods strewn everywhere in a nearly infinite number of volumes.

As he crosses Hellenic waters in his imaginary little skiff, he weathers monstrous storms, descends into the abyss, and rides the crest of a gigantic wave in vivid prose:

I was still navigating the waters surrounding your town of Paphos, splendid Prince, ... when, behold, as if Aeolus' prison had broken open, all the winds flew forth onto the sea and began to grow angry, and impelled by the greatest force the waves surged toward the sky, but, repelled from there, dove into the depths to Erebus ... I was carried down to where from the deep I spied approaching me, not otherwise than if the iron walls of Dis had been destroyed and their chains had been thrown off, the immense progeny of ancient Titan.

Boccaccio braves the elements of a pre-Christian nature and crosses the horizontal barriers of space to decrease the barriers of time. Most of the prose in the *Genealogy* is purposely restrained and emotionless, as befits its encyclopedic and scholarly intent. But as he visits ancient realms in the prefaces at the outset of each book, Boccaccio regales us with dramatic Dantesque passages that lend literary authority to his mythological project.

Structure of the *Genealogy*

Like many of its predecessors dating back to Hesiod's *Theogony* and the Book of Matthew, Boccaccio's *genealogy*

unfolds in a descending direction from progenitor to progeny.

He frequently expands his lineages internally, inserting secondary and tertiary lineages as they unfold, not hesitating to proceed into one or two later generations of one descendant before completing the descendant's contemporaries. But he does not always do so, particularly if one of the progeny is a major progenitor with a complicated legacy or is worthy of an expanded narrative. He traces the lineage of Ulysses, for instance, in Book 2, from Ether to the first Jupiter to Liber to the second Mercury to Autolycus to the first Sinon to Aesimus to Anticleia, who was Ulysses' mother, but Boccaccio saves his account of the Odyssean voyage for Book 13 in connection with his father, Laertes.

The mythological material begins in Book 1, Preface 2, in which Boccaccio asks the essential question, "Who was regarded as first among the pagan gods?" Identifying a father or mother for all the obvious candidates who had considerable and well-known progeny—Jupiter, Sky, Ocean, Earth, Sun, and Ether—Boccaccio declared the parentless Demogorgon as the ultimate progenitor.

Demogorgon, whom Boccaccio discusses briefly in Preface 3, differed significantly from the traditional Olympian and preOlympian divinities of the Greco-Roman religious system. He represented a type of divinity found mostly at the theological fringes of Greco-Roman spirituality. In his *Timaeus* (40c) Plato writes of a demiourgos, an "artificer," who more so than any genuine Greek divinity performs the mythographical role of the creator god of Genesis. This demiourgos was developed into a mysterious spiritual force in later Platonic and Gnostic thought. Like the "uncertain Judaeian god" described by Lucan (*Pharsalia* 2.592-93) and the aniconic Cypriot stone described by Tacitus (*Historiae* 2.2-3), the Demiurge was not anthropomorphic and lacked the usual mythological elements and votive epithets. He resurfaces in late antiquity and takes on a revised identity as Demogorgon through Lactantius Placidus' commentary on Statius' *Thebaid* (4.516-17). Ironically, his original nonmythological essence provided the parentless status that Boccaccio found to be unique. It is primarily through Theodontius and obscure, lost Greek sources that Boccaccio is able to attribute to him the progeny that will connect him to the remaining genealogical history of the pagan divinities.

From Demogorgon Boccaccio will ultimately derive Erebus, who produces the first Jupiter and Sky, who in turn produce the second and third Jupiters, Titan, Ocean, and Saturn. These produce all the remaining lesser "gods" other than the primordial Eternity and Chaos and the eight offspring of Demogorgon. The large branches consume more than one book, and individual books generally contain information about more than one sub-branch of the genealogical tree. Boccaccio describes each pagan figure in a single entry, and he distributes the 723 entries among the first 13 books,

ranging in number from the 19 entries in Book 8 to the 86 in Book 2. Each entry is prefaced by one of the rubrics Boccaccio extracted and listed in the autograph's table of contents and then usually commences by specifying the parents and the source of the information, often supported by a quotation from an ancient source. Thereafter Boccaccio usually expands the entry, either by quoting source materials or by listing any relevant fables, attributes, and epithets, and then analyzes the material he has laid out.

Summary by Book

Book 1 accounts for the two additional primordial contemporaries, Eternity and Chaos (1.1-2), and then initiates Boccaccio's rigorous genealogical concatenation with the interesting collection of nine offspring of Demogorgon, e.g., Strife (1.3), Pan (i.4), and the Fates (1.5), the eighth being Earth (1.8), who in turn produces five children, and the ninth being Erebus (1.14), who produces twenty-one, twenty of whom are described here (1.15-34).

Book 2 begins with Ether, the twenty-first child of Erebus, who in turn fathered the first Jupiter and Sky (2.1). The first Jupiter's thirteen progeny (2.2-86) include Liber (2.11), who fathers the second Mercury (2.12). The twelfth child of this Jupiter is Epaphus (2.19), whose son Belus fathered Danaus, Aegyptus, and Agenor (2.2). Boccaccio offers chapters on three of Danaus' fifty daughters (2.22-26) and one of the fifty sons of Aegyptus, who fathers Lynceus, father of Abas, Iasius, and Acrisius, the latter being the father of Danae, the mother of Perseus, the others producing Atalanta, Amphion, Parthenopeus, and several others (2.27-43). Agenor fathers seven predominantly Levantine children, including Cilix, who fathers Pygmalion, king of the Cypriots, and the rest of the Cypriot tradition through Adonis (2.44-53) — no doubt to the intended delight of King Hugo. Boccaccio proceeds to the eastern branch that produced Dido (2.55-61) and the Theban tradition that produced the line of Oedipus (2.62-86).

Book 3 begins the focus on Sky, who fathered twelve children, only eight of whom are treated in this book because several—e.g., Ceres (3.3), Mercury (3.20-21), the Cypriot Venus and the second Venus (3.22-24)—were important divinities who either produced many descendants or require lengthy exegeses to account for all their fables, attributes, and epithets. Ceres (3.4) was the mother of the infernal river Acheron, who also had a large progeny (3.5-17).

Book 4, the longest other than the nonmythological Book 14, continues with the children of Sky but is limited to the progeny of Titan. Titan alone fathered an additional thirteen as well as a brood of giants. First of the thirteen is Hyperion, who fathered Sun (4.2-15), and this generates a discussion about the element of time and Sun's better-known offspring, especially Pasiphae Medea (4.i2), Circe (4.13), and Moon (4.16-17). Coeus, the third child of Titan, fathered Latona, who in turn produced Apollo and Diana (4.19-20). The eighth child of Titan is Iapetus, who

engendered Atlas (4.31), the father of whole groups of star figures (Hyades, 4.32; Pleiades, 4.34-40), Epimetheus (4.42-43), and Prometheus (4.44). The discussion on Prometheus and humankind is one of the longest in the entire *Genealogy*. The Winds (4.54-61) and the Giants (4.68) warrant comprehensive entries toward the end of the book.

Boccaccio devotes Book 5 to fifteen of the progeny of the second Jupiter, the ninth son of Sky. These fifteen children include additional well-known Olympian deities: Diana (5.2); Apollo and his progeny (5.3-23), notably Orpheus (5.12), Aesculapius (5.19), and Psyche (5.22), Apuleius' account of whom is discussed at some length; Bacchus and his Theban progeny (5.25-33); and Minerva (5.48).

Book 6 focuses on the progeny of Dardanus, the sixteenth child of the second Jupiter by Electra, daughter of Atlas. This subbranch was of particular interest to Boccaccio because as the ancestor of the Trojan royal line, Dardanus and his progeny include many of the characters included in Homer's *Iliad*. Boccaccio inserts Greek texts into a dozen of the entries in Book 6. The first part of the book includes the two large groupings in this lineage, the progeny of Laomedon (6.6-13) and the prolific Priam (6.14-48). Thereafter Boccaccio changes his focus to the segment of the Trojan lineage that produced the mythological ancestors of Rome, beginning with the eponymous Tros, his son Assaracus (6.49), his great-grandson Aeneas, who warrants an extended discussion derived from Homer, Livy, Vergil, and others (6.53), and continuing all the way to Iliia, daughter of Numitor and the mother of Romulus and Remus (6.73).

Having completed the offspring of the second Jupiter, Boccaccio in Book 7 now picks up the succession from Book 5 by delineating the progeny of Sky's tenth child, Ocean (7.1), who in several earlier genealogies was identified as the ultimate progenitor of gods and men. According to Boccaccio's research, Ocean produced thirty-four offspring, and he seems to assign them to four general categories: well-known Oceanids, e.g., Phaethon's mother Clymene (7.6); anthropomorphized sea creatures like Triton (7.7) and Proteus (7.9-11); Nereus (7.13) and the many nymphs he fathered, including Thetis (7.16), Galatea (7.17), and Arethusa (7.18); and rivers. Boccaccio focuses on two important Greek rivers: Achelous, who fathered the Sirens (7.19-20), and Inachus, whose daughter Io is compared to Isis (7.21-22). Continuing this Egyptian line, Boccaccio then discusses the Nile, who fathered a number of Egyptian children who have been syncretized with Greco-Roman equivalents, including the fourth Mercury, Hermes Trismegistus (7.34). This Egyptian excursus also inspires Boccaccio's scientific analysis of Phaethon's solar catastrophe (7.41). The remaining rivers range geographically from the western Tiber (7.50) to the Asian Axius (7.52) and Meander (7.60).

Book 8 introduces a branch of the Sky tradition that descended from his eleventh child, Saturn. Saturn's ten children include Juno, Neptune, and the third Jupiter, who

are reserved for the ensuing five books. As a primordial figure who castrated his father and experienced a well-documented afterlife, Saturn himself undergoes a lengthy analysis (8.1), as does his daughter, an alternate Ceres, along with her daughter Proserpina (8.4), and Pluto (8.6). The second half of the book features the progeny of Picus (8.10), whose lineage through his son Faunus (8.11) leads to King Latinus (8.17) and Lavinia (8.18) and elicits a discussion about such Arcadian creatures as fauns, satyrs, Pans, and Silvani (8.13). This is the shortest book of the Genealogy.

Book 9 is limited to the complete lineage descended from the Saturnian Juno. After an extended discussion of Juno herself (9.1), Boccaccio continues with her parthenogenetic issuance of Hebe (9.2) and a discussion of Mars as a god of war (9.3). Mars in turn fathered fifteen children. First is Cupid, and Boccaccio neatly juxtaposes this extended discussion of desire with the previous discussion of war (9.4). Other offspring descended from Mars include Oenomaus and his daughter Hippodamia, wife of Pelops (9.6-7); Tereus, father of Itys (9.9-10); and the Calydonian King Oeneus, who fathered Deianira, Meleager, and Tydeus, father of Diomedes (9.16-23), among others. Somewhat like the entries involving woodland figures in the latter segments of Book 8, the final third of Book 9 introduces the offspring of Ixion (9.27), many of whom were centaurs (9.28-32). The final entries in this book involve the most famous and chronologically latest Roman offspring of Mars, Romulus and Remus (9.40-41).

Book 10 delineates the thirty-five children of Neptune (10.1). Many of these are lesser figures to whom Boccaccio devotes short paragraphs, but he expands the entries on Scylla (10.9) and Polyphemus (10.14), well known from the accounts by Homer and Vergil; Medusa (10.11); the Cyclopic trio of Brontes, Steropes, and Pyragmon (10.16); and Pegasus (10.27). Neleus, the twenty-second child listed (10.35), produced four children, including the Homeric Nestor, who in turn produced eight (10.36-41). Neptune also produced the giants Otus and Ephialtes (10.47), as well as Aegeus (10.48), father of Theseus (10.49), father of Hippolytus (10.50). Boccaccio leads to the conclusion of this portion of the genealogy with the lineage of Nauplius and Palamedes (10.59-60) and the Harpies (10.61).

Books 1, 12, and 13 are required to accommodate the thirty-nine children of the more familiar third Jupiter, that is, the son of Saturn and brother of Juno. In Book 1, after a full discussion of Jupiter himself (11.1), Boccaccio discusses twenty-nine offspring and their progeny, featuring extended entries on the nine Muses (11.2); Castor and Pollux (11.7); the Homeric Helen (11.8); Orion (11.19); Minos and his well-known progeny (11.26-32); and the Homeric Ulysses (11.40). The unextended passage on Clytemnestra (11.9) reflects the general lack of interest in the tradition of ancient Greek tragedy, even through Seneca tragicus served as an intermediary.

The first of the eight Jovian children covered in Book 12 include the six generations of Tantalids: Tantalus, Niobe/Pelops, Atreus/Thyestes, Agamemnon/Menelaus, Electra/Orestes, and their offspring (12.1-23). Thereafter Boccaccio features Perseus, the thirty-second child of Jupiter, and his genealogical legacy leading down through Amphitryon and Alcmene to but not including Hercules (12.25-40), who is reserved for the following book; the Aeacids, including Achilles (12.45-56); the lineage of Mercury, the thirty-sixth child, including the Lares (12.62-69); and the lineage of Vulcan, the thirty-seventh child, which leads to the quasihistorical Tullius Servilius (Servius Tullius) and his two daughters, for whom Livy is the major source (12.70-79).

Book 13 then completes the Jovian section of the Genealogy by delineating the progeny of Hercules, who fathered seventeen sons (13.1-19), and Aeolus, who fathered ten children (13.20-70). The initial entry on Hercules is one of the longest in the entire Genealogy, presenting thirty Herculean labors (13.1). None of the sons warrants an extended treatment, but Jason was great-grandson of Aeolus, and his quest for the golden fleece is described in some detail (13.26). Boccaccio then features two more of his descendants, Sisyphus (13.56) and Bellerophon (13.58). The last entry offers Boccaccio's explanation for why he does not include either Alexander the Great or Scipio Africanus as a son of Jupiter (13.71). Boccaccio ends the genealogy itself here.

Book 14 offers the author's general response to "the enemies of the name of poetry." After an address to the king (who may well have predeceased its writing) (14.1), Boccaccio denigrates many of his critics for their ignorance and lack of taste (14.2-3). He also attacks the wealthy in an extensive defense of poverty (14.4). The second half of the book offers a more positive approach, defining poetry and discussing its origin, function, and usefulness (14.6-10). He then justifies the obscurity of poetry, asserting that one's inability to understand poetry does not validate critical condemnation (14.11-15). Boccaccio then compares poetry and philosophy, concentrating on Plato's apparent condemnation of poetry in his Republic (14.16-19). Boccaccio finishes with an address to the enemies of poetry in the hope of reforming them (14.22).

In Book 15 Boccaccio anticipates the criticism that his Genealogy will engender and attempts to defend its worth. Fables, he argues, are natural forms of adornment, and because his book lifts the veil from these fables, it should have enduring value (15.1-2). Boccaccio allows that others might prefer a different genealogical arrangement or the insertion of fables he has omitted, but perfection is impossible (15.3-4), and he has selected only ancient stories, some of them long forgotten (15.5), and cited such knowledgeable modern authorities as Andalò, Dante, Barlaam, Paul of Perugia, Leontius, Paul the geometer, and Petrarch (15.6). He explains that he has quoted ancient

Greek poetry not to be ostentatious with his learning but in imitation of ancient writers like Cicero and Macrobius, and because he and his contemporaries have much to learn from the ancient Greeks (15.7). Then he affirms the value of studying ancient theology (15.8), and in the next passage he eloquently expresses his firm belief in the Christian god to challenge any threat his contemporaries feared from the examination of paganism (15.9). He also addresses his own natural inclination to pursue this project and reviews the process by which the king commissioned the work (15.10-13); he then concludes humbly and apologizes for any defects (15.14). <>

The Omnibus *Homo Sacer* by Giorgio Agamben [Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics, Stanford University Press, 9781503603059]

Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* is one of the seminal works of political philosophy in recent decades. A twenty-year undertaking, this project is a series of interconnected investigations of staggering ambition and scope investigating the deepest foundations of every major Western institution and discourse.

This single book brings together for the first time all nine volumes that make up this groundbreaking project. Each volume takes a seemingly obscure and outdated issue as its starting point—an enigmatic figure in Roman law, or medieval debates about God's management of creation, or theories about the origin of the oath—but is always guided by questions with urgent contemporary relevance.

The Omnibus Homo Sacer includes previous published volumes (dates are of publication of the English translation):

1. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998)

The work of Giorgio Agamben, one of Italy's most important and original philosophers, has been based on an uncommon erudition in classical traditions of philosophy and rhetoric, the grammarians of late antiquity, Christian theology, and modern philosophy. Recently, Agamben has begun to direct his thinking to the constitution of the social and to some concrete, ethico-political conclusions concerning the state of society today, and the place of the individual within it. In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben aims to connect the problem of pure possibility, potentiality, and power with the problem of political and social ethics in a context where the latter has lost its previous religious, metaphysical, and cultural grounding. Taking his cue from Foucault's fragmentary analysis of biopolitics, Agamben probes with great breadth, intensity, and acuteness the covert or implicit presence of an idea of biopolitics in the history of traditional political theory. He argues that from the earliest treatises of political theory, notably in Aristotle's notion of man as a political animal, and throughout the history of Western thinking about sovereignty (whether of the king or the state), a notion of sovereignty as power over "life" is implicit. The reason it remains merely implicit has to do, according to

Agamben, with the way the sacred, or the idea of sacrality, becomes indissociable from the idea of sovereignty. Drawing upon Carl Schmitt's idea of the sovereign's status as the exception to the rules he safeguards, and on anthropological research that reveals the close interlinking of the sacred and the taboo, Agamben defines the sacred person as one who can be killed and yet not sacrificed—a paradox he sees as operative in the status of the modern individual living in a system that exerts control over the collective "naked life" of all individuals.

2.1. *State of Exception* (2005)

Two months after the attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration, amid what it perceived to be a state of emergency, authorized the indefinite detention of noncitizens suspected of terrorist activities and their subsequent trials by a military commission. Here, distinguished Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben uses such circumstances to argue that this unusual extension of power, or "state of exception," has historically been an underexamined and powerful strategy that has the potential to transform democracies into totalitarian states.

The sequel to Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, *State of Exception* is the first book to theorize the state of exception in historical and philosophical context. In Agamben's view, many legal scholars and policymakers in Europe as well as the United States have wrongly rejected the necessity of such a theory, claiming instead that the state of exception is a pragmatic question. Agamben argues here that the state of exception, which was meant to be a provisional measure, became during the twentieth century a normal paradigm of government. Writing nothing less than the history of the state of exception in its various national contexts throughout Western Europe and the United States, Agamben uses the work of Carl Schmitt as a foil for his reflections as well as that of Derrida, Benjamin, and Arendt.

In this highly topical book, Agamben ultimately arrives at original ideas about the future of democracy and casts a new light on the hidden relationship that ties law to violence.

2.2. *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm* (2015)

We can no longer speak of a state of war in any traditional sense, yet there is currently no viable theory to account for the manifold internal conflicts, or civil wars, that increasingly afflict the world's populations. Meant as a first step toward such a theory, Giorgio Agamben's latest book looks at how civil war was conceived of at two crucial moments in the history of Western thought: in ancient Athens (from which the political concept of *stasis* emerges) and later, in the work of Thomas Hobbes. It identifies civil war as the fundamental threshold of politicization in the West, an apparatus that over the course of history has alternately allowed for the de-politicization of citizenship and the mobilization of the unpolitical. The arguments herein, first conceived of in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, have

become ever more relevant now that we have entered the age of planetary civil war.

2.3. The Sacrament of Language: An Archeology of the Oath (2010)

Having already traced the roots of the idea of sovereignty, sacredness, and economy, he now turns to a perhaps unlikely topic: the concept of the oath. Following the Italian scholar Paolo Prodi, Agamben sees the oath as foundational for Western politics and undertakes an exploration of the roots of the phenomenon of the oath in human experience. He rejects the common idea that the oath finds its origin in religion, arguing instead that the oath points toward a response to the experience of language, a response that gave birth to both religion and law as we now know them. This book is important not only for readers of Agamben or of continental philosophy more broadly, but for anyone interested in questions relating to the relationships among religion, law, and language.

2.4. The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Glory (2011)

Why has power in the West assumed the form of an "economy," that is, of a government of men and things? If power is essentially government, why does it need glory, that is, the ceremonial and liturgical apparatus that has always accompanied it? In the early centuries of the Church, to reconcile monotheism with God's threefold nature, the doctrine of Trinity was introduced in the guise of an economy of divine life. It was as if the Trinity amounted to nothing more than a problem of managing and governing the heavenly house and the world. Agamben shows that, when combined with the idea of providence, this theological-economic paradigm unexpectedly lies at the origin of many of the most important categories of modern politics, from the democratic theory of the division of powers to the strategic doctrine of collateral damage, from the invisible hand of Smith's liberalism to ideas of order and security. But the greatest novelty to emerge from *The Kingdom and the Glory* is that modern power is not only government but also glory, and that the ceremonial, liturgical, and acclamatory aspects that we have regarded as vestiges of the past constitute the basis of Western power. Through a fascinating analysis of liturgical acclamations and ceremonial symbols of power—the throne, the crown, purple cloth, the Fasces, and more—Agamben develops an original genealogy that illuminates the startling function of consent and of the media in modern democracies. With this book, the work begun with *Homo Sacer* reaches a decisive point, profoundly challenging and renewing our vision of politics.

2.5. Opus Dei: An Archeology of Duty (2013)

Agamben investigates the roots of our moral concept of duty in the theory and practice of Christian liturgy.

Beginning with the New Testament and working through to late scholasticism and modern papal encyclicals, Agamben traces the Church's attempts to repeat Christ's unrepeatable sacrifice. Crucial here is the paradoxical figure of the priest, who becomes more and more a pure instrument of God's power, so that his own motives and character are entirely indifferent if he carries out his priestly duties. In modernity, Agamben argues, the Christian priest has become the model ethical subject. We see this above all in Kantian ethics. Contrasting the Christian and modern ontology of duty with the classical ontology of being, Agamben contends that Western philosophy has unfolded in the tension between the two. This latest installment in the study of Western political structures begun in *Homo Sacer* is a contribution to the study of liturgy, an extension of Nietzsche's genealogy of morals, and a reworking of Heidegger's history of Being.

3. Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive (2002)

As a philosophical study of the testimony of the survivors of Auschwitz, Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben probes the philosophical and ethical questions raised by their testimony. "In its form, this book is a kind of perpetual commentary on testimony. It did not seem possible to proceed otherwise. At a certain point, it became clear that testimony contained at its core an essential lacuna; in other words, the survivors bore witness to something it is impossible to bear witness to. Consequently, commenting on survivors' testimony necessarily meant interrogating this lacuna or, more precisely, attempting to listen to it. Listening to something absent did not prove fruitless work for this author. Above all, it made it necessary to clear away almost all the doctrines that, since Auschwitz, have been advanced in the name of ethics."--Giorgio Agamben

4.1. The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life (2013)

What is a rule, if it appears to become confused with life? And what is a human life, if, in every one of its gestures, of its words, and of its silences, it cannot be distinguished from the rule? It is to these questions that Agamben's new book turns by means of an impassioned reading of the fascinating and massive phenomenon of Western monasticism from Pachomius to St. Francis. The book reconstructs in detail the life of the monks with their obsessive attention to temporal articulation and to the Rule, to ascetic techniques and to liturgy. But Agamben's thesis is that the true novelty of monasticism lies not in the confusion between life and norm, but in the discovery of a new dimension, in which "life" as such, perhaps for the first time, is affirmed in its autonomy, and in which the claim of the "highest poverty" and "use" challenges the law in ways that we must still grapple with today. How can we think a form-of-life, that is, a human life released from the grip of law,

and a use of bodies and of the world that never becomes an appropriation? How can we think life as something not subject to ownership but only for common use?

4.2. The Use of Bodies (2016)

The Use of Bodies represents the ninth and final volume in this twenty-year undertaking, breaking considerable new ground while clarifying the stakes and implications of the project as a whole. It comprises three major sections. The first uses Aristotle's discussion of slavery as a starting point for radically rethinking notions of selfhood; the second calls for a complete reworking of Western ontology; and the third explores the enigmatic concept of "form-of-life," which is in many ways the motivating force behind the entire *Homo Sacer* project. Interwoven between these major sections are shorter reflections on individual thinkers (Debord, Foucault, and Heidegger), while the epilogue pushes toward a new approach to political life that breaks with the destructive deadlocks of Western thought. *The Use of Bodies* represents a true masterpiece by one of our greatest living philosophers.

Excerpt as Alpha & Omega:

Alpha: The Greeks had no single term to express what we mean by the word "life." They used two terms that, although traceable to a common etymological root, are semantically and morphologically distinct: *zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group. When Plato mentions three kinds of life in the *Philebus*, and when Aristotle distinguishes the contemplative life of the philosopher (*bios theōrētikos*) from the life of pleasure (*bios apolaustikos*) and the political life (*bios politikos*) in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, neither philosopher would ever have used the term *zoē* (which in Greek, significantly enough, lacks a plural). This follows from the simple fact that what was at issue for both thinkers was not at all simple natural life but rather a qualified life, a particular way of life. Concerning God, Aristotle can certainly speak of a *zoē aristē kai aidios*, a more noble and eternal life (*Metaphysics*, 1072b, 28), but only insofar as he means to underline the significant truth that even God is a living being (similarly, Aristotle uses the term *zoē* in the same context—and in a way that is just as meaningful—to define the act of thinking). But to speak of a *zoē politikē* of the citizens of Athens would have made no sense. Not that the classical world had no familiarity with the idea that natural life, simple *zoē* as such, could be a good in itself. In a passage of the *Politics*, after noting that the end of the city is life according to the good, Aristotle expresses his awareness of that idea with the most perfect lucidity:

This [life according to the good] is the greatest end both in common for all men and for each man separately. But men also come together and maintain the political community in

view of simple living, because there is probably some kind of good in the mere fact of living itself [kata to zēn auto monon]. If there is no great difficulty as to the way of life [kata ton bion], clearly most men will tolerate much suffering and hold on to life [zoē] as if it were a kind of serenity [euēmeria, beautiful day] and a natural sweetness. (1278b, 23-31)

In the classical world, however, simple natural life is excluded from the polis in the strict sense, and remains confined—as merely reproductive life—to the sphere of the oikos, "home" (*Politics*, 1252a, 26-35). At the beginning of the *Politics*, Aristotle takes the greatest care to distinguish the oikonomos (the head of an estate) and the despotēs (the head of the family), both of whom are concerned with the reproduction and the subsistence of life, from the politician, and he scorns those who think the difference between the two is one of quantity and not of kind. And when Aristotle defined the end of the perfect community in a passage that was to become canonical for the political tradition of the West (1252b, 30), he did so precisely by opposing the simple fact of living (to zēn) to politically qualified life (to eu zēn): ginomenē men oun tou zēn heneken, ousa de tou eu zēn, "born with regard to life, but existing essentially with regard to the good life" (in the Latin translation of William of Moerbeke, which both Aquinas and Marsilius of Padua had before them: facta quidem igitur vivendi gratia, existens autem gratia bene vivendi).

It is true that in a famous passage of the same work, Aristotle defines man as a politikon zōon (*Politics*, 1253a, 4). But here (aside from the fact that in Attic Greek the verb bionai is practically never used in the present tense), "political" is not an attribute of the living being as such, but rather a specific difference that determines the genus zōon. (Only a little later, after all, human politics is distinguished from that of other living beings in that it is founded, through a supplement of politicity [policitAa] tied to language, on a community not simply of the pleasant and the painful but of the good and the evil and of the just and the unjust.)

Michel Foucault refers to this very definition when, at the end of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, he summarizes the process by which, at the threshold of the modern era, natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of State power, and politics turns into biopolitics. "For millennia," he writes, "man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question" (*La volonté*, p. 188).

According to Foucault, a society's "threshold of biological modernity" is situated at the point at which the species and the individual as a simple living body become what is at stake in a society's political strategies. After 1977, the courses at the Collège de France start to focus on the passage from the "territorial State" to the "State of

population" and on the resulting increase in importance of the nation's health and biological life as a problem of sovereign power, which is then gradually transformed into a "government of men" (Dits et écrits, 3: 719). "What follows is a kind of bestialization of man achieved through the most sophisticated political techniques. For the first time in history, the possibilities of the social sciences are made known, and at once it becomes possible both to protect life and to authorize a holocaust." The development and triumph of capitalism would not have been possible, from this perspective, without the disciplinary control achieved by the new bio-power, which, through a series of appropriate technologies, so to speak, created the "docile bodies" that it needed.

Almost twenty years before *The History of Sexuality*, Hannah Arendt had already analyzed the process that brings homo laborans—and, with it, biological life as such—gradually to occupy the very center of the political scene of modernity. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt attributes the transformation and decadence of the political realm in modern societies to this very primacy of natural life over political action. That Foucault was able to begin his study of biopolitics with no reference to Arendt's work (which remains, even today, practically without continuation) bears witness to the difficulties and resistances that thinking had to encounter in this area. And it is most likely these very difficulties that account for the curious fact that Arendt establishes no connection between her research in *The Human Condition* and the penetrating analyses she had previously devoted to totalitarian power (in which a biopolitical perspective is altogether lacking), and that Foucault, in just as striking a fashion, never dwelt on the exemplary places of modern biopolitics: the concentration camp and the structure of the great totalitarian states of the twentieth century.

Foucault's death kept him from showing how he would have developed the concept and study of biopolitics. In any case, however, the entry of zoè into the sphere of the polis—the politicization of bare life as such—constitutes the decisive event of modernity and signals a radical transformation of the political-philosophical categories of classical thought. It is even likely that if politics today seems to be passing through a lasting eclipse, this is because politics has failed to reckon with this foundational event of modernity. The "enigmas" (Furet, *L'Allemagne nazi*, p. 7) that our century has proposed to historical reason and that remain with us (Nazism is only the most disquieting among them) will be solved only on the terrain—biopolitics—on which they were formed. Only within a biopolitical horizon will it be possible to decide whether the categories whose opposition founded modern politics (right/left, private/public, absolutism/democracy, etc.)—and which have been steadily dissolving, to the point of entering today into a real zone of indistinction—will have to be abandoned or will, instead, eventually regain the meaning they lost in that very horizon. And only a reflection that, taking up Foucault's and

Benjamin's suggestion, thematically interrogates the link between bare life and politics, a link that secretly governs the modern ideologies seemingly most distant from one another, will be able to bring the political out of its concealment and, at the same time, return thought to its practical calling.

One of the most persistent features of Foucault's work is its decisive abandonment of the traditional approach to the problem of power, which is based on juridico-institutional models (the definition of sovereignty, the theory of the State), in favor of an unprejudiced analysis of the concrete ways in which power penetrates subjects' very bodies and forms of life. As shown by a seminar held in 1982 at the University of Vermont, in his final years Foucault seemed to orient this analysis according to two distinct directives for research: on the one hand, the study of the political techniques (such as the science of the police) with which the State assumes and integrates the care of the natural life of individuals into its very center; on the other hand, the examination of the technologies of the self by which processes of subjectivization bring the individual to bind himself to his own identity and consciousness and, at the same time, to an external power. Clearly these two lines (which carry on two tendencies present in Foucault's work from the very beginning) intersect in many points and refer back to a common center. In one of his last writings, Foucault argues that the modern Western state has integrated techniques of subjective individualization with procedures of objective totalization to an unprecedented degree, and he speaks of a real "political 'double bind,' constituted by individualization and the simultaneous totalization of structures of modern power" (Dits et écrits, 4: 229-32).

Yet the point at which these two faces of power converge remains strangely unclear in Foucault's work, so much so that it has even been claimed that Foucault would have consistently refused to elaborate a unitary theory of power. If Foucault contests the traditional approach to the problem of power, which is exclusively based on juridical models ("What legitimates power?") or on institutional models ("What is the State?"), and if he calls for a "liberation from the theoretical privilege of sovereignty" in order to construct an analytic of power that would not take law as its model and code, then where, in the body of power, is the zone of indistinction (or, at least, the point of intersection) at which techniques of individualization and totalizing procedures converge? And, more generally, is there a unitary center in which the political "double bind" finds its *raison d'être*? That there is a subjective aspect in the genesis of power was already implicit in the concept of *servitude volontaire* in Étienne de La Boétie. But what is the point at which the voluntary *servitude* of individuals encounters objective power? Can one be content, in such a delicate area, with psychological explanations such as the suggestive notion of a parallelism between external and internal neuroses? Confronted with phenomena such as the power of the society of the spectacle that is everywhere transforming the

political realm today, is it legitimate or even possible to hold subjective technologies and political techniques apart?

Although the existence of such a line of thinking seems to be logically implicit in Foucault's work, it remains a blind spot to the eye of the researcher, or rather something like a vanishing point that the different perspectival lines of Foucault's inquiry (and, more generally, of the entire Western reflection on power) converge toward without reaching.

The present inquiry concerns precisely this hidden point of intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power. What this work has had to record among its likely conclusions is precisely that the two analyses cannot be separated, and that the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original—if concealed—nucleus of sovereign power. It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power. In this sense, biopolitics is at least as old as the sovereign exception. Placing biological life at the center of its calculations, the modern State therefore does nothing other than bring to light the secret tie uniting power and bare life, thereby reaffirming the bond (derived from a tenacious correspondence between the modern and the archaic which one encounters in the most diverse spheres) between modern power and the most immemorial of the *arcana imperii*.

If this is true, it will be necessary to reconsider the sense of the Aristotelian definition of the polis as the opposition between life (*zēn*) and good life (*eu zēn*). The opposition is, in fact, at the same time an implication of the first in the second, of bare life in politically qualified life. What remains to be interrogated in the Aristotelian definition is not merely—as has been assumed until now—the sense, the modes, and the possible articulations of the "good life" as the *telos* of the political. We must instead ask why Western politics first constitutes itself through an exclusion (which is simultaneously an inclusion) of bare life. What is the relation between politics and life, if life presents itself as what is included by means of an exclusion?

The structure of the exception delineated in the first part of this book appears from this perspective to be consubstantial with Western politics. In Foucault's statement according to which man was, for Aristotle, a "living animal with the additional capacity for political existence," it is therefore precisely the meaning of this "additional capacity" that must be understood as problematic. The peculiar phrase "born with regard to life, but existing essentially with regard to the good life" can be read not only as an implication of being born (*ginomené*) in being (*ousa*), but also as an inclusive exclusion (an *exceptio*) of *zoē* in the polis, almost as if politics were the place in which life had to transform itself into good life and in which what had to be politicized were always already bare life. In Western politics, bare life has the peculiar privilege of being that whose exclusion founds the city of men.

It is not by chance, then, that a passage of the Politics situates the proper place of the polis in the transition from voice to language. The link between bare life and politics is the same link that the metaphysical definition of man as "the living being who has language" seeks in the relation between *phonē* and *logos*:

Among living beings, only man has language. The voice is the sign of pain and pleasure, and therefore, it belongs to other living beings (since their nature has developed to the point of having the sensations of pain and pleasure and of signifying the two). But language is for manifesting the fitting and the unfitting and the just and the unjust. To have the sensation of the good and the bad and of the just and the unjust is what is proper to men as opposed to other living beings, and the community of these things makes dwelling and the city. (1253a,10-18)

The question "In what way does the living being have language?" corresponds exactly to the question "In what way does bare life dwell in the polis?" The living being has *logos* by taking away and conserving its own voice in it, even as it dwells in the polis by letting its own bare life be excluded, as an exception, within it. Politics therefore appears as the truly fundamental structure of Western metaphysics insofar as it occupies the threshold on which the relation between the living being and the *logos* is realized. In the "politicization" of bare life—the metaphysical task par excellence—the humanity of living man is decided. In assuming this task, modernity does nothing other than declare its own faithfulness to the essential structure of the metaphysical tradition. The fundamental categorial pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, *zoē/bios*, exclusion/inclusion. There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion.

The protagonist of this book is bare life, that is, the life of *homo sacer* (sacred man), who may be killed and yet not sacrificed, and whose essential function in modern politics we intend to assert. An obscure figure of archaic Roman law, in which human life is included in the juridical order [*ordinamento*] ("Order" renders the Italian *ordinamento*, which carries the sense not only of order but of political and juridical rule, regulation, and system. The word *ordinamento* is also the Italian translation of Carl Schmitt's *Ordnung*. Where the author refers to *ordinamento* as *Ordnung*, the English word used is the one chosen by Schmitt's translators, "ordering."—Trans.) solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed), has thus offered the key by which not only the sacred texts of sovereignty but also the very codes of political power will unveil their mysteries. At the same time, however, this ancient meaning of the term *sacer* presents us with the enigma of a figure of the sacred

that, before or beyond the religious, constitutes the first paradigm of the political realm of the West. The Foucauldian thesis will then have to be corrected or, at least, completed, in the sense that what characterizes modern politics is not so much the inclusion of *zoé* in the polis—which is ancient—nor simply the fact that life as such becomes a principal object of the projections and calculations of State power. Instead the decisive fact is that, together with the process by which the exception everywhere becomes the rule, the realm of bare life—which is originally situated at the margins of the political order—gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoé*, right and fact, enter a zone of irreducible indistinction. At once excluding bare life from and capturing it within the political order, the state of exception constituted, in its very separateness, the hidden foundation on which the entire political system rested. When its borders begin to be blurred, the bare life that dwelt there frees itself in the city and becomes both subject and object of the conflicts of the political order, the one place for both the organization of State power and emancipation from it. Everything happens as if, along with the disciplinary process by which State power makes man as a living being into its own specific object, another process is set in motion that in large measure corresponds to the birth of modern democracy, in which man as a living being presents himself no longer as an object but as the subject of political power. These processes—which in many ways oppose and (at least apparently) bitterly conflict with each other—nevertheless converge insofar as both concern the bare life of the citizen, the new biopolitical body of humanity.

If anything characterizes modern democracy as opposed to classical democracy, then, it is that modern democracy presents itself from the beginning as a vindication and liberation of *zoé*, and that it is constantly trying to transform its own bare life into a way of life and to find, so to speak, the *bios* of *zoé*. Hence, too, modern democracy's specific *aporia*: it wants to put the freedom and happiness of men into play in the very place—"bare life"—that marked their subjection. Behind the long, strife-ridden process that leads to the recognition of rights and formal liberties stands once again the body of the sacred man with his double sovereign, his life that cannot be sacrificed yet may, nevertheless, be killed. To become conscious of this *aporia* is not to belittle the conquests and accomplishments of democracy. It is, rather, to try to understand once and for all why democracy, at the very moment in which it seemed to have finally triumphed over its adversaries and reached its greatest height, proved itself incapable of saving *zoé*, to whose happiness it had dedicated all its efforts, from unprecedented ruin. Modern democracy's decadence and gradual convergence with totalitarian states in post-democratic spectacular societies (which begins to become evident with Alexis de Tocqueville and finds its final sanction in the analyses of Guy Debord) may well be rooted in this

aporia, which marks the beginning of modern democracy and forces it into complicity with its most implacable enemy. Today politics knows no value (and, consequently, no nonvalue) other than life, and until the contradictions that this fact implies are dissolved, Nazism and fascism—which transformed the decision on bare life into the supreme political principle—will remain stubbornly with us. According to the testimony of Robert Antelme, in fact, what the camps taught those who lived there was precisely that "calling into question the quality of man provokes an almost biological assertion of belonging to the human race" (*L'espèce humaine*, p. ii).

The idea of an inner solidarity between democracy and totalitarianism (which here we must, with every caution, advance) is obviously not (like Leo Strauss's thesis concerning the secret convergence of the final goals of liberalism and communism) a historiographical claim, which would authorize the liquidation and leveling of the enormous differences that characterize their history and their rivalry. Yet this idea must nevertheless be strongly maintained on a historico-philosophical level, since it alone will allow us to orient ourselves in relation to the new realities and unforeseen convergences of the end of the millennium. This idea alone will make it possible to clear the way for the new politics, which remains largely to be invented.

In contrasting the "beautiful day" (*euēmeria*) of simple life with the "great difficulty" of political *bios* in the passage cited above, Aristotle may well have given the most beautiful formulation to the *aporia* that lies at the foundation of Western politics. The twenty-four centuries that have since gone by have brought only provisional and ineffective solutions. In carrying out the metaphysical task that has led it more and more to assume the form of a biopolitics, Western politics has not succeeded in constructing the link between *zoé* and *bios*, between voice and language, that would have healed the fracture. Bare life remains included in politics in the form of the exception, that is, as something that is included solely through an exclusion. How is it possible to "politicize" the "natural sweetness" of *zoé*? And first of all, does *zoé* really need to be politicized, or is politics not already contained in *zoé* as its most precious center? The biopolitics of both modern totalitarianism and the society of mass hedonism and consumerism certainly constitute answers to these questions. Nevertheless, until a completely new politics—that is, a politics no longer founded on the *exceptio* of bare life—is at hand, every theory and every praxis will remain imprisoned and immobile, and the "beautiful day" of life will be given citizenship only either through blood and death or in the perfect senselessness to which the society of the spectacle condemns it.

Carl Schmitt's definition of sovereignty ("Sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception") became a commonplace even before there was any understanding that what was at issue in it was nothing less than the limit concept of the

doctrine of law and the State, in which sovereignty borders (since every limit concept is always the limit between two concepts) on the sphere of life and becomes indistinguishable from it. As long as the form of the State constituted the fundamental horizon of all communal life and the political, religious, juridical, and economic doctrines that sustained this form were still strong, this "most extreme sphere" could not truly come to light. The problem of sovereignty was reduced to the question of who within the political order was invested with certain powers, and the very threshold of the political order itself was never called into question. Today, now that the great State structures have entered a process of dissolution and the emergency has, as Walter Benjamin foresaw, become the rule, the time is ripe to place the problem of the originary structure and limits of the form of the State in a new perspective. The weakness of anarchist and Marxian critiques of the State was precisely to have not caught sight of this structure and thus to have quickly left the *arcanum imperii* aside, as if it had no substance outside of the simulacra and the ideologies invoked to justify it. But one ends up identifying with an enemy whose structure one does not understand, and the theory of the State (and of the state of exception, which is to say, of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the transitional phase leading to the stateless society) is the reef on which the revolutions of our century have been shipwrecked.

This book, which was originally conceived as a response to the bloody mystification of a new planetary order, therefore had to reckon with problems—first that of the sacredness of life—which the author had not, in the beginning, foreseen. During the undertaking, however, it became clear that one cannot, in such an area, accept as a guarantee any of the notions that the social sciences (from jurisprudence to anthropology) thought they had defined or presupposed as evident, and that many of these notions demanded—in the urgency of catastrophe—to be revised without reserve.

Omega: Epilogue: Toward a Theory of Destituent Potential

The archeology of politics that was in question in the "Homo Sacer" project did not propose to critique or correct this or that concept, this or that institution of Western politics. The issue was rather to call into question the place and the very originary structure of politics, in order to try to bring to light the *arcanum imperii* that in some way constituted its foundation and that had remained at the same time fully exposed and tenaciously hidden in it.

The identification of bare life as the prime referent and ultimate stakes of politics was therefore the first act of the study. The originary structure of Western politics consists in an *ex-ceptio*, in an inclusive exclusion of human life in the form of bare life. Let us reflect on the peculiarity of this operation: life is not in itself political—for this reason it must be excluded from the city—and yet it is precisely the

ex-ceptio, the exclusion-inclusion of this *Impolitical*, that founds the space of politics.

It is important not to confuse bare life with natural life. Through its division and its capture in the apparatus of the exception, life assumes the form of bare life, which is to say, that of a life that has been cut off and separated from its form. It is in this sense that one must understand the thesis at the end of *Homo Sacer I* according to which "the fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life as originary political element" (Agamben 4, p. 202/181). And it is this bare life (or "sacred" life, if *sacer* first designates a life that can be killed without committing homicide) that functions in the juridico-political machine of the West as a threshold of articulation between *zoè* and *bios*, natural life and politically qualified life. And it will not be possible to think another dimension of politics and life if we have not first succeeded in deactivating the apparatus of the exception of bare life.

2. Yet during the study, the structure of the exception that had been defined with respect to bare life has been revealed more generally to constitute in every sphere the structure of the *archè*, in the juridico-political tradition as much as in ontology. In fact, one cannot understand the dialectic of the foundation that defines Western ontology, from Aristotle on, if one does not understand that it functions as an exception in the sense we have seen. The strategy is always the same: something is divided, excluded, and pushed to the bottom, and precisely through this exclusion, it is included as *archè* and foundation. This holds for life, which in Aristotle's words "is said in many ways"—vegetative life, sensitive life, intellectual life, the first of which is excluded in order to function as foundation for the others—but also for being, which is equally said in many ways, one of which is separated as foundation.

It is possible, however, that the mechanism of the exception is constitutively connected to the event of language that coincides with anthropogenesis. According to the structure of the presupposition that we have already reconstructed above, in happening, language excludes and separates from itself the non-linguistic, and in the same gesture, it includes and captures it as that with which it is always already in relation. That is to say, the *ex-ceptio*, the inclusive exclusion of the real from the *logos* and in the *logos* is the originary structure of the event of language.

3. In State of Exception, the juridico-political machine of the West was thus described as a double structure, formed from two heterogeneous and yet intimately coordinated elements: one normative and juridical in the strict sense (*potestas*) and one anomic and extrajudicial (*auctoritas*). The juridico-normative element, in which power in its effective form seems to reside, nevertheless has need of the anomic element for it to be able to apply itself to life. On the other hand, *auctoritas* can affirm itself and have sense only in relation to *potestas*. The state of exception is the apparatus that must ultimately articulate and hold together

the two aspects of the juridico-political machine by instituting a threshold of undecidability between anomie and nomos, between life and the juridical order, between auctoritas and potestas. As long as the two elements remain correlated but conceptually, temporally, and personally distinct—as in republican Rome, in the opposition between senate and people, or in medieval Europe, in that between spiritual power and temporal power—their dialectic can function in some way. But when they tend to coincide in one person alone, when the state of exception, in which they are indeterminated, becomes the rule, then the juridico-political system is transformed into a killing machine.

In *The Kingdom and the Glory*, an analogous structure was brought to light in the relation between rule and governance and between inoperativity and glory. Glory appeared there as an apparatus directed at capturing within the economic-governmental machine the inoperativity of human and divine life that our culture does not seem to be in a position to think and that nevertheless never ceases to be invoked as the ultimate mystery of divinity and power. This inoperativity is so essential for the machine that it must be captured and maintained at all costs at its center in the form of glory and acclamations that, through the media, never cease to carry out their doxological function even today.

In the same way some years earlier in *The Open*, the anthropological machine of the West was defined by the division and articulation within the human being of the human and the animal. And at the end of the book, the project of a deactivation of the machine that governs our conception of the human demanded not the study of new articulations between the animal and the human so much as rather the exposition of the central void, of the gap that separates—in the human being—the human and the animal. That which—once again in the form of the exception—was separated and then articulated together in the machine must be brought back to its division so that an inseparable life, neither animal nor human, can eventually appear.

4. In all these figures the same mechanism is at work: the archè is constituted by dividing the factual experience and pushing down to the origin—that is, excluding—one half of it in order then to rearticulate it to the other by including it as foundation. Thus, the city is founded on the division of life into bare life and politically qualified life, the human is defined by the exclusion-inclusion of the animal, the law by the exceptio of anomie, governance through the exclusion of inoperativity and its capture in the form of glory.

If the structure of the archè of our culture is such, then thought finds itself here confronted with an arduous task. Indeed, it is not a question of thinking, as it has for the most part done up to now, new and more effective articulations of the two elements, playing the two halves of the machine off against one another. Nor is it a matter of archeologically going back to a more originary beginning: philosophical archeology cannot reach a beginning other

than the one that may perhaps result from the deactivation of the machine (in this sense first philosophy is always final philosophy).

The fundamental ontological-political problem today is not work but inoperativity, not the frantic and unceasing study of a new operativity but the exhibition of the ceaseless void that the machine of Western culture guards at its center.

5. In modern thought, radical political changes have been thought by means of the concept of a "constituent power." Every constituted power presupposes at its origin a constituent power that, through a process that as a rule has the form of a revolution, brings it into being and guarantees it. If our hypothesis on the structure of the archè is correct, if the fundamental ontological problem today is not work but inoperativity, and if this latter can nevertheless be attested only with respect to a work, then access to a different figure of politics cannot take the form of a "constituent power" but rather that of something that we can provisionally call "destituent potential." And if to constituent power there correspond revolutions, revolts, and new constitutions, namely, a violence that puts in place and constitutes a new law, for destituent potential it is necessary to think entirely different strategies, whose definition is the task of the coming politics. A power that has only been knocked down with a constituent violence will resurge in another form, in the unceasing, unwinnable, desolate dialectic between constituent power and constituted power, between the violence that puts the juridical in place and violence that preserves it.

The paradox of constituent power is that as much as jurists decisively underline its heterogeneity, it remains inseparable from constituted power, with which it forms a system. Thus, on the one hand, one affirms that constituent power is situated beyond the State, exists without it, and continues to remain external to the State even after its constitution, while the constituted power that derives from it exists only in the State. But on the other hand, this originary and unlimited power—which can, as such, threaten the stability of the system—necessarily ends up being confiscated and captured in the constituted power to which it has given origin and survives in it only as the power of constitutional revision. Even Sieyès, perhaps the most intransigent theorist of the transcendence of constituent power, in the end must drastically limit its omnipotence, leaving it no other existence than the shadowy one of a Jury constitutionnaire, to which is entrusted the task of modifying the text of the constitution, according to definitively established procedures.

Here the paradoxes theologians had to grapple with concerning the problem of divine omnipotence seem to repeat themselves in secularized form. Divine omnipotence implied that God could do anything whatsoever, including destroying the world that he had created or annulling or subverting the providential laws with which he had willed to direct humanity toward salvation. To contain these

scandalous consequences of divine omnipotence, theologians distinguished between absolute power and ordained power: *de potentia absoluta*, God can do anything, but *de potentia ordinata*, which is to say, once he has willed something, his power is thereby limited.

Just as absolute power is in reality only the presupposition of ordained power, which the latter needs to guarantee its own unconditional validity, so also can one say that constituent power is what constituted power must presuppose to give itself a foundation and legitimate itself. According to the schema that we have described many times, constituent is that figure of power in which a destituent potential is captured and neutralized, in such a way as to assure that it cannot be turned back against power or the juridical order as such but only against one of its determinate historical figures.

6. For this reason, the third chapter of the first part of *Homo Sacer I* affirmed that the relationship between constituent power and constituted power is just as complex as that which Aristotle establishes between potential and act, and it sought to clarify the relation between the two terms as a relation of ban or abandonment. The problem of constituent power here shows its irreducible ontological implications. Potential and act are only two aspects of the process of the sovereign autoconstitution of Being, in which the act presupposes itself as potential and the latter is maintained in relation with the former through its own suspension, its own being able not to pass into act. And on the other hand, act is only a conservation and a "salvation" (*soteria*)—in other words, an *Aufhebung*—of potential.

For the sovereign ban, which applies to the exception in no longer applying, corresponds to the structure of potential, which maintains itself in relation to act precisely through its ability not to be. Potential (in its double appearance as potential to and potential-not-to) is that through which Being founds itself sovereignly, which is to say, without anything proceeding or determining it, other than its own ability not to be. And an act is sovereign when it realizes itself by simply taking away its own potential-not-to, letting itself be, giving itself to itself. (*Agamben 4*, p. 54/46)

Hence the difficulty of thinking a purely destituent potential, which is to say, one completely set free from the sovereign relation of the ban that links it to constituted power. The ban here appears as a limit-form of relation, in which being is founded by maintaining itself in relation with something unrelated, which is only a presupposition of itself. And if being is only the being "under the ban"—which is to say, abandoned to itself—of beings, then categories like "letting-be," by which Heidegger sought to escape from the ontological difference, also remain within the relation of the ban.

For this reason the chapter could conclude by proclaiming the project of an ontology and a politics set free from every figure of relation, even from the limit-form of the ban that is the sovereign ban:

Instead one must think the existence of potential without any relation to being in act—not even in the extreme form of the ban and the potential-not-to be—and of the act no longer as fulfillment and manifestation of potential—not even in the form of self-giving and letting be. This implies, however, nothing less than thinking ontology and politics beyond every figure of relation, beyond even the limit-relation that is the sovereign ban. (*Ibid.*, p. 55/47) Only in this context could it become possible to think a purely destituent potential, that is to say, one that never resolves itself into a constituted power.

It is the secret solidarity between the violence that founds the juridical order and that which conserves it that Benjamin thought in the essay "Critique of Violence," in seeking to define a form of violence that escapes this dialectic: "On the interruption of this cycle maintained by mythic forms of law, on the destitution [*Entsetzung*] of the juridical order together with all the powers on which it depends as they depend on it, finally therefore on the destitution of state violence, a new historical epoch is founded" (*Benjamin 4*, pp. 108-109/251-252). Only a power that has been rendered inoperative and deposed by means of a violence that does not aim to found a new law is fully neutralized. Benjamin identified this violence—or according to the double meaning of the German term *Gewalt*, "destituent power [*lt., potere destituente*]"—in the proletarian general strike, which Sorel opposed to the simply political strike. While the suspension of labor in the political strike is violent, "since it provokes [*veranlasst*, "occasions," "induces"] only an external modification of labor conditions, the second, as a pure means, is nonviolent" (*ibid.*, p. 101/246). Indeed, it does not imply the resumption of labor "following external concessions and this or that modification to working conditions" but the decision to take up a labor only if it has been entirely transformed and not imposed by the state, namely, a "subversion that this kind of strike not so much provokes [*veranlasst*] as realizes [*vollzieht*]" (*ibid.*). In the difference between *veranlassen*, "to induce, to provoke," and *vollziehen*, "to complete, to realize," is expressed the opposition between constituent power, which destroys and re-creates ever new forms of juridical order, without ever definitively deposing it, and destituent violence, which, insofar as it deposes the juridical order once and for all, immediately inaugurates a new reality. "For this reason, the first of these undertakings is lawmaking but the second anarchistic" (*ibid.*).

At the beginning of the essay, Benjamin defines pure violence through a critique of the taken-for-granted relation between means and ends. While juridical violence is always a means—legitimate or illegitimate—with respect to an end—just or unjust—the criteria of pure or divine violence is not to be sought in its relation to an end but in "the sphere of means, without regard for the ends they serve" (p. 87/236). The problem of violence is not the oft-pursued one of identifying just ends but that of "finding a different kind

of violence ... that was not related to them as means at all but in some different way" (pp. 102-103/247).

What is in question here is the very idea of instrumentality, which beginning with the Scholastic concept of "instrumental cause," we have seen to characterize the modern conception of use and of the sphere of technology. While these latter were defined by an instrument that appears as such only insofar as it is incorporated into the purpose of the principal agent, Benjamin here has in mind a "pure means," namely, a means that appears.

What is decisive, in any case, is that for Scotus relation implies an ontology, or a particular form of being, which he defines, with a formula that will have great success in medieval thought, as *ens debilissimum*: "among all beings relation is a very weak being, because it is only the mode of being of two beings with respect to one another" (*relatio inter omnia entia est ens debilissimum, cum sit sola habitudo duorum*; *Super praed.*, q. 25, n. 10; qtd. in Beckmann, p. 45). But this lowest form of being—which as such is difficult to know (*ita minime cognoscibile in se*; *ibid.*)—in reality takes on a constitutive function in Scotus's thought—and starting with him, in the history of philosophy up to Kant—because it coincides with the specific contribution of his philosophical genius, the definition of the formal distinction and of the status of the transcendental.

In the formal distinction, that is to say, Scotus has thought the being of language, which cannot be realiter different from the thing that it names; otherwise it could not manifest it and make it known but must have a certain consistency of its own; otherwise it would be confused with the thing. What is distinguished from the thing not realiter but formaliter is its having a name—the transcendental is language.

9. If a privileged ontological status belongs to relation, it is because the very presupposing structure of language comes to expression in it. What Augustine's theorem affirms is in fact: "all that is said enters a relation and therefore is also something else before and outside the relation (that is to say, it is an unrelated presupposition)." The fundamental relation—the ontological relation—runs between beings and language, between Being and its being said or named. Logos is this relation, in which beings and their being said are both identified and differentiated, distant and indistinguishable.

Thinking a purely destituent potential in this sense means interrogating and calling into question the very status of relation, remaining open to the possibility that the ontological relation is not, in fact, a relation. This means engaging in a decisive hand-to-hand confrontation [*It., corpo a corpo*] with the weakest of beings that is language. But precisely because its ontological status is weak, language is the most difficult to know and grasp, as Scotus had intuited. The almost invincible force of language is in its weakness, in its remaining unthought and unsaid in what says and in that of which it is said.

For this reason, philosophy is born in Plato precisely as an attempt to get to the bottom of logos, and as such, it has a political character immediately and from the very start. And for this reason, when with Kant the transcendental ceases to be what thought must get to the bottom of and instead becomes the stronghold in which it takes refuge, then philosophy loses its relation with Being and politics enters into a decisive crisis. A new dimension for politics will be opened only when human beings—the beings who have logos to the same extent that they are possessed by it—have gotten to the bottom of this weakest potential that determines them and tenaciously involves them in an errancy—history—that seems interminable. Only then—but this "then" is not future but always under way—will it be possible to think politics beyond every figure of relation.

10. Just as the tradition of metaphysics has always thought the human being in the form of an articulation between two elements (nature and logos, body and soul, animality and humanity), so also has Western political philosophy always thought politics in the figure of the relation between two figures that it is a question of linking together: bare life and power, the household and the city, violence and institutional order, anomie (anarchy) and law, multitude and people. From the perspective of our study, we must instead attempt to think humanity and politics as what results from the disconnection of these elements and investigate not the metaphysical mystery of conjunction but the practical and political one of their disjunction.

Let us define relation as what constitutes its elements by presupposing them, together, as unrelated. Thus, for example, in the couples living being/ language, constituent power /constituted power, bare life/law, it is evident that the two elements are always mutually defined and constituted through their oppositional relation, and as such, they cannot preexist it; and yet the relation that unites them presupposes them as unrelated. What we have defined during this study as the ban is the link, at once attractive and repulsive, that links the two poles of the sovereign exception.

We call a potential destituent that is capable of always depositing ontological/political relations to cause a contact (in Collé's sense; cf part III, §6.5 above) to appear between their elements. Contact is not a point of tangency nor a quid or a substance in which two elements communicate: it is defined only by an absence of representation, only by a caesura. Where a relation is rendered destitute and interrupted, its elements are in this sense in contact, because the absence of every relation is exhibited between them. Thus, at the point where a destituent potential exhibits the nullity of the bond that pretended to hold them together, bare life and sovereign power, anomie and nomos, constituent power and constituted power are shown to be in contact without any relation. But precisely for this reason, what has been divided from itself and captured in the

exception—life, anomie, anarchic potential—now appears in its free and intact form.

u. Here the proximity between destituent potential and what in the course of our research we have designated by the term "inoperativity" appears clearly. In both what is in question is the capacity to deactivate something and render it inoperative—a power, a function, a human operation—without simply destroying it but by liberating the potentials that have remained inactive in it in order to allow a different use of them.

An example of a destituent strategy that is neither destructive nor constituent is that of Paul in the face of the law. Paul expresses the relationship between the messiah and the law with the verb *katargein*, which means "render inoperative" (*argos*), "deactivate" (Estienne's Thesaurus renders it with *reddo aergon et inefficacem, facio cessare ab opere suo, tollo, aboleo*, "to render aergon and ineffective, to cause to cease from its work, to take away, to abolish"). Thus, Paul can write that the messiah "will render inoperative [katargese] every power, every authority, and every potential" (1 Corinthians 15:24) and at the same time that "the messiah is the telos [namely, end or fulfillment] of the law" (Romans 10:4): here inoperativity and fulfillment perfectly coincide. In another passage, he says of believers that they have been "rendered inoperative [katargethemem] with respect to the law" (Romans 7:6). The customary translations of this verb with "destroy, annul" are not correct (the Vulgate renders it more cautiously with *evacuari*), all the more so because Paul affirms in a famous passage that he wants to "hold firm the law" (*nomon istanomen*; Romans 3:31). Luther, with an intuition whose significance would not escape Hegel, translates *katargein* with *aufheben*, which is to say, with a verb that means both "abolish" and "preserve."

In any case, it is certain that for Paul it is not a matter of destroying the law, which is "holy and just," but of deactivating its action with respect to sin, because it is through the law that human beings come to know sin and desire: "I would not have known what it is to desire if the law had not said, 'You shall not desire.' But seizing an opportunity in the commandment, sin rendered operative [kateirgasato, "activated"] in me all kinds of desire" (Romans 7:7-8).

It is this operativity of the law that the messianic faith neutralizes and renders inoperative, without for that reason abolishing the law. The law that is "held firm" is a law rendered destitute of its power to command it is no longer a law of commands and works (*nomos ton entolon*, Ephesians 2:15; *ton ergon*, Romans 3:27) but of faith (*nomos pisteos*, Romans 3:27). And faith is essentially not a work but an experience of the word ("So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word"; Romans 10:17).

The messiah functions in Paul as a destituent potential of the *mitzwoth* that define Jewish identity, without for that reason

constituting another identity. The messianic (Paul does not know the term "Christian") does not represent a new and more universal identity but a caesura that passes through every identity—both that of the Jew and that of the Gentile. The "Jew according to the spirit" and "Gentile according to the flesh" do not define a subsequent identity but only the impossibility of every identity of coinciding with itself—namely, their destitution as identities: Jew as non-Jew, Gentile as non-Gentile. (It is probably according to a paradigm of this type that one could think a destitution of the apparatus of citizenship.)

In coherence with these premises, in a decisive passage of 1 Corinthians (7:29-31), Paul defines the form of life of the Christian through the formula *hos me*:

I mean, brothers and sisters, time has grown short; what remains is so that those who have wives may be as not having, and those who mourn as not mourning, and those who rejoice as not rejoicing, and those who buy as not possessing, and those who use the world as not abusing. For the figure of this world is passing away.

The "as not" is a deposition without abdication. Living in the form of the "as not" means rendering destitute all juridical and social ownership, without this deposition founding a new identity. A form-of-life is, in this sense, that which ceaselessly deposes the social conditions in which it finds itself to live, without negating them, but simply by using them. "If," writes Paul, "at the moment of your call you find yourself in the condition of a slave, do not concern yourself with it: but even if you can become free, make use [*chresai*] rather of your condition as a slave" (1 Corinthians 7:21). "Making use" here names the deponent power of the Christian's form of life, which renders destitute "the figure of this world" (to schema tou kosmou toutou).

12. It is this destituent power [It., *potere destituente*] that both the anarchist tradition and twentieth-century thought sought to define without truly succeeding in it. The destruction of tradition in Heidegger, the deconstruction of the archè and the fracture of hegemonies in Schürmann, what (in the footsteps of Foucault) I have called "philosophical archaeology," are all pertinent but insufficient attempts to go back to a historical a priori in order to depose it. But a good part of the practice of the artistic avant gardes and political movements of our time can also be seen as the attempt—so often miserably failed—to actualize a destitution of work, which has instead ended up re-creating in every place the museum apparatus and the powers that it pretended to depose, which now appear all the more oppressive insofar as they are deprived of all legitimacy.

Benjamin wrote once that there is nothing more anarchic than the bourgeois order. In the same sense, Passolini has one of the officials of Salò say that the true anarchy is that of power. If this is true, then one can understand why the thought that seeks to think anarchy—as negation of "origin"

and "command," principium and princeps—remains imprisoned in endless aporias and contradictions. Because power is constituted through the inclusive exclusion (*exceptio*) of anarchy, the only possibility of thinking a true anarchy coincides with the lucid exposition of the anarchy internal to power. Anarchy is what becomes thinkable only at the point where we grasp and render destitute the anarchy of power. The same holds for every attempt to think *anomie*: it becomes accessible only through the exposition and deposition of the *anomie* that the juridical order has captured within itself in the state of exception. This is also true for thought that seeks to think the unrepresentable—the *demos*—that has been captured in the representative apparatus of modern democracy: only the exposition of the *a-demia* within democracy allows us to bring to appearance the absent people that it pretends to represent.

In all these cases, destitution coincides without remainder with constitution; position has no other consistency than in deposition.

The term *archè* in Greek means both "origin" and "command." To this double meaning of the term there corresponds the fact that, in our philosophical and religious traditions alike, origin, what gives a beginning and brings into being, is not only a preamble, which disappears and ceases to act in that to which it has given life, but it is also what commands and governs its growth, development, circulation, and transmission—in a word, history.

In an important book, *The Principle of Anarchy* (1982), Reiner Schürmann sought to deconstruct this apparatus, beginning from an interpretation of Heidegger's thought. Thus, in the later Heidegger he distinguishes being as pure coming to presence and being as principle of historical-epochal economies. In contrast to Proudhon and Bakunin, who did nothing but "displace the origin" by substituting a rational principle for the principle of authority, Heidegger had thought an anarchic principle, in which origin as coming to presence is emancipated from the machine of epochal economies and no longer governs a historical becoming. The limit of Schürmann's interpretation clearly appears in the very (willfully paradoxical) syntagma that furnishes the book's title: the "principle of anarchy." It is not sufficient to separate origin and command, principium and princeps: as we have shown in *The Kingdom and the Glory*, a king who rules but does not govern is only one of the two poles of the governmental apparatus, and playing off one pole against the other is not sufficient to halt their functioning. Anarchy can never be in the position of a principle: it can only be liberated as a contact, where both *archè* as origin and *archè* as command are exposed in their non-relation and neutralized.

13. In the potential/act apparatus, Aristotle holds together two irreconcilable elements: the contingent—what can be or not be—and the necessary—what cannot not be. According to the mechanism of relation that we have defined, he thinks

potential as existing in itself, in the form of a potential-not-to or impotential (*adynamia*), and act as ontologically superior and prior to potential. The paradox—and at the same time, the strength—of the apparatus is that, if one takes it literally, potential can never pass over into the act and the act always already anticipates its own possibility. For this reason Aristotle must think potential as a *hexis*, a "habit," something that one "has," and the passage to the act as an act of will.

All the more complex is the deactivation of the apparatus. What deactivates operativity is certainly an experience of potential, but of a potential that, insofar as it holds its own impotential or potential-not-to firm, exposes itself in its non-relation to the act. A poet is not someone who possesses a potential to make and, at a certain point, decides to put it into action. Having a potential in reality means: being at the mercy of one's own impotential. In this poetic experience, potential and act are no longer in relation but immediately in contact. Dante expresses this special proximity of potential and act when in the *De monarchia* he writes that the whole potential of the multitude stands *sub actu*; "otherwise there would be a separate potential, which is impossible." *Sub actu* here means, according to one of the possible meanings of the preposition *sub*, immediate coincidence in time and space (as in *sub manu*, immediately held in the hand, or *sub die*, immediately, in the same day).

At the point where the apparatus is thus deactivated, potential becomes a form-of-life and a form-of-life is constitutively destituent.

Latin grammarians called those verbs *deponent* (*depositiva* or also *absolutiva* or *supina*) that, similarly to middle-voice verbs (which, in the footsteps of Benveniste, we have analyzed in order to seek in them the paradigm of a different ontology), cannot be said to be properly active or passive: *sedeo* (to sit), *sudo* (to sweat), *dormio* (to sleep), *iaceo* (to lie), *algeo* (to be cold), *sitio* (to be thirsty), *esurio* (to be hungry), *gaudeo* (to be glad). What do middle-voice or deponent verbs "depose"? They do not express an operation but depose it, neutralize it, and render it inoperative, and in this way, they expose it. The subject is not simply, in Benveniste's words, internal to the process, but in having deposed its action, he has exposed himself with it. In form-of-life, activity and passivity coincide. Thus, in the iconographic theme of the deposition—for example, in Titian's deposition at the Louvre—Christ has entirely deposed the glory and regality that, in some way, still belong to him on the cross, and yet precisely and solely in this way, when he is still beyond passion and action, the complete destitution of his regality inaugurates the new age of the redeemed humanity.

14. All living beings are in a form of life, but not all are (or not all are always) a form-of-life. At the point where form-of-life is constituted, it renders destitute and inoperative all singular forms of life. It is only in living a life that it

constitutes itself as a form-of-life, as the inoperativity immanent in every life.

The constitution of a form-of-life fully coincides with the destitution of the social and biological conditions into which it finds itself thrown. In this sense, form-of-life is the revocation of all factual vocations, which deposes them and brings them into an internal tension in the same gesture in which it maintains itself and dwells in them. It is not a question of thinking a better or more authentic form of life, a superior principle, or an elsewhere that suddenly arrives at forms of life and factual vocations to revoke them and render them inoperative. Inoperativity is not another work that suddenly arrives and works to deactivate and depose them: it coincides completely and constitutively with their destitution, with living a life.

One can therefore understand the essential function that the tradition of Western philosophy has assigned to the contemplative life and to inoperativity: form-of-life, the properly human life is the one that, by rendering inoperative the specific works and functions of the living being, causes them to idle [It., girare a vuoto], so to speak, and in this way opens them into possibility. Contemplation and inoperativity are in this sense the metaphysical operators of anthropogenesis, which, in liberating living human beings from every biological and social destiny and every predetermined task, render them available for that peculiar absence of work that we are accustomed to calling "politics" and "art." Politics and art are not tasks nor simply "works": rather, they name the dimension in which works—linguistic and bodily, material and immaterial, biological and social—are deactivated and contemplated as such in order to liberate the inoperativity that has remained imprisoned in them. And in this consists the greatest good that, according to the philosopher, the human being can hope for: "a joy born from this, that human beings contemplate themselves and their own potential for acting" (Spinoza 2, III, prop. 53).

At least up to modernity, the political tradition of the West has always sought to keep operating in every constituted system two heterogeneous powers, which in some way mutually limited each other. Examples of this are the duality of auctoritas and potestas in Rome, that of spiritual power and temporal power in the Middle Ages, and that of natural law and positive law up to the eighteenth century. These two powers could act as a reciprocal limit because they were entirely heterogeneous: the senate, to which auctoritas belonged in Rome, was lacking in the imperium to which the people and their supreme magistrates were entitled; the pope did not have the temporal sword, which remained the exclusive privilege of the sovereign; the unwritten natural law came from a different source than the written laws of the city. If already in Rome beginning with Augustus, who had caused the two powers to coincide in his person, and during the Middle Ages, with the struggles between pope and emperor, one of the powers had sought

to eliminate the others, the modern democracies and totalitarian states had introduced in various ways one sole principle of political power, which in this way became unlimited. Whether it is founded, in the last analysis, on popular sovereignty, on ethnic and racial principles, or on personal charisma, positive right no longer knows any limits. Democracies maintain constituent power in the form of the power of revision and the control of the constitutionality of laws on the part of a special court, but these are in fact internal to the system and, in the last analysis, of a procedural nature.

Let us now imagine—something that is not within the scope of this book—in some way translating into act the action of a destituent potential in a constituted political system. It would be necessary to think an element that, while remaining heterogeneous to the system, had the capacity to render decisions destitute, suspend them, and render them inoperative. Plato had in mind something of the kind when at the end of the *Laws* (968c), he mentions as "protector" (phylake) of the city a "Nocturnal Council" (nykterinos syllogos), which, however, is not an institution in a technical sense because, as Socrates specifies, "it is impossible to lay down the council's activities until it has been established [prin a kosmethe] ... through a long standing together [meth synousia pollen]." While the modern State pretends through the state of exception to include within itself the anarchic and anomic element it cannot do without, it is rather a question of displaying its radical heterogeneity to let it act as a purely destituent potential. <>

Nostradamus: A Healer of Souls in the Renaissance by Denis Couzet, translated by Mark Greengrass [Polity, 9781509507696] paperback

One of the most enigmatic figures in history, Nostradamus - apothecary, astrologer and soothsayer - is a continual source of fascination. Indeed, his predictions are so much the stock-in-trade of the wildest merchants of imminent Doom that one could be forgiven for forgetting that Michel de Nostredame, 1503-1566, was a figure firmly rooted in the society of the French Renaissance.

In this bold new account of the life and work of Nostradamus, Denis Couzet shows that any attempt to interpret his *Prophecies* at face value is misguided. Nostradamus was not trying to predict the future. He saw himself, rather, as 'prophesying', i.e. bringing the Word of God to humankind. Like Rabelais, for whom laughter was a therapy to help one cope with the misery of the times, Nostradamus thought of himself as a physician of the soul as much as of the body. His unveiling of the menacing and horrendous events which await us in the future was a way of frightening his readers into the realisation that inner hatred was truly the greatest peril of all, to which the sole remedy was to live in the love and peace of Christ.

This inspired interpretation penetrates the imaginative world of Nostradamus, a man whose life is as mysterious as his

writings. It shows him in a completely new dimension, securing for him a significant place among the major thinkers of the Renaissance.

"This study by the distinguished historian of Renaissance France, Denis Crouzet, is a milestone in studies of Nostradamus for two reasons: its attention to the sixteenth century context of the prophecies, and its 'anti-interpretation', arguing that the meaning of the texts 'is always left hanging in the air'." *Peter Burke, University of Cambridge*

"In this very subtle and thought-provoking book Denis Crouzet makes sense of Nostradamus precisely by accepting his deliberate obscurity. The extraordinary violence and disquieting imagery of his quatrains can be compared with the paintings of Bosch, portraying a world turned upside down where sin and cruelty presage divine punishment. Crouzet skillfully weaves this into a broader understanding of the spiritual and emotional imaginary of the Reformation era, when all old certainties seemed to be melting down, amidst terrifying human savagery." *Robin Briggs, All Souls College, University of Oxford*

Excerpt: I have long regretted, these last three or four years, my decision to embark on a study of 'Master Michel de Nostredame', Michel Nostradamus. It has been an arduous task, verging on absurdity, even aberration. On the one hand, the prophetic astrologer remains a mystery, because the documents and sources that deal with him are scarce; on the other, because his prophecies remain impenetrable, they are unclear, and make no sense. The history, therefore, to the extent that it is feasible, is bound to remain fragmentary.

The reader will find at the back of the book a chronology of what historians know about Nostradamus, linking the few biographical details that have survived to the broader events of his time.

It will be evident that the biographical details are piecemeal and that there is little enough to go on in order to write about the most celebrated astrologer in history. That, however, is not the only problem. More importantly for the historian, the fragmentation applies also to the work of Michel Nostradamus, and so to his imaginary. There is a disjunction that baffles us, and which lies at the heart of his main work, the Prophecies; perhaps even, to use a stronger term, a dilution of meaning. Every quatrain in each of the ten centuries comprising the Prophecies can be likened to a bottomless pit, where anything that might serve as a foothold on which to resolve the enigma posed by Nostradamus crumbles or disintegrates, each quatrain beginning to oscillate and vibrate, becoming unreadable or evanescent. The meaning is lost in contradiction and polysemy; it leaches away into a sort of unbridled linguistic extravagance.' Nostradamus, the prophet from Salon-de-Provence, creates just such a quicksand for the reader, luring him into it by the fascination of his writing. Once sucked in, he leaves the reader struggling, avoiding or

dodging his questions and possible answers, dragging him down into 'a whole range of variations and permutations', like a metaphor for the absurd.' That absurdity is doubled, moreover, by the way that charlatanism has always been inherent in prediction, i.e. in the presumption that there is a dynamic knowledge of what is to come, hidden in the disconcerting agency of Nostradamus' words. Anachronism haunts Nostradamus' Prophecies, takes hold of them, overworks their meaning, and endlessly refashions them in the light of present-day events and current hopes and fears. It leads the historian to doubt his own calling, which relies on quite the reverse premise, namely, to try humbly and to the degree that it is possible to do so, to penetrate the imaginaries of the past. The historian's task is to recreate the imaginary with all its fragility and potentiality in the most plausible way possible.

I should add in passing that this is a subject where dyed-in-the-wool fundamentalists and augury merchants from temples of divination of every hue are much in evidence, outdoing one another in their hallucinatory delusions. My starting-point has been to ignore them, and their eschatological lunacies serving only to second-guess catastrophic events, even when I have experienced my own dark nights of doubt. That is because one must remain both rational and agnostic when confronting Nostradamus and the misuses to which he has been put. There are those who will be irritated by this approach but that is not my problem. They have no understanding of history, its methods or its hermeneutics. As Erasmus, the humanist whose presence will be felt throughout this book, put it in his Praise of Folly, 'better to pass over them in silence without "stirring the mud of Camarina" or touching that noxious weed'. I shall be equally deaf to the recriminations of devotees of fact-ridden and realist history, those (Erasmus again) 'whose beard and cape inspire respect, and who proclaim themselves alone wise whilst all other mortals are mere fluttering shadows'. A little idealism, in the Marxist sense of the term, does not come amiss from time to time in the human sciences.

To summarize, whilst also emphasizing the limitations of my astrological erudition and my conclusions regarding the authenticity of the different editions of Nostradamus' Prophecies, I find myself compelled, so as to preserve the identity of the past and go in search of the astrophile from Salon-de-Crau, to follow the presuppositions of Alphonse Dupront, who wrote:

To live and not to take account of what one is living, is a commonplace of existence. The grace of history is precisely to permit us, with the benefit of hindsight, to understand those depths that are generally a closed book to contemporaries, assuming that the essential function of history is, as it were, to keep a register of the shifts from non-consciousness to consciousness. Yet we still know that we cannot pretend — or rather ought not to pretend — that we can penetrate to the heart of the mystery. The mystery

makes itself felt, is tangible, locates itself; it does not explain itself lest it should cease to be mysterious ... Ultimately, every explanation of a mystery appears a negation of the mystery.

I shall be applying the 'mystery' that Duprout saw as encompassing what is 'myth' to the imaginary of Nostradamus.

That is something to which I will return. I have thus spent endless difficult hours, day and night, because everything had to be repeatedly thought through again, where dwelling on a word, a couplet, or a quatrain, forever coming up against a brick wall, or rather feeling I was meandering in a maze, I was often sidetracked by the fabulous world of symbolic thought or by the pursuit of possible historical points of reference. I began to wonder, too, if I was truly engaged in a work of history or whether I too was being led astray into enigmas or puzzles, a fantasy world of epistemology, richly polysemous to the extent of disguising what was nothing other than a game. When there is such a multiplicity of signifiers, such a fragmentation of meaning, where is the history? How to coax Nostradamus into historicity if all that remains at the end of the day is an art of stylistic deconstruction' focused on an approaching time of anxiety — 'for God's forgiveness will n'er be spread forth, my son, but when my Prophecies are mostly come to pass and in the fullness of time accomplished'.⁶ My problem was that I persisted in my belief that Nostradamus had a meaningful objective, and that I struggled to grasp the meaning of the words as if each of them was a nut shell that could be cracked and opened. I struggled to believe it without suspecting that the text itself, like the time frame it constructed, was of a 'cyclical' nature, framed after the fashion of sybilline verse, whose symbolic principles revolve around enumeration and repetition. It is a poetry of incantation, which is evident when read as a continuum, but which is paradoxically concealed under the artificial labyrinth of a factual varietas, proceeding by a succession of myriad snatches of writing, isolated and separated one from another.'

And yet it became apparent to me after reading and re-reading Nostradamus that, in order to understand his enigmatic world, and grasp his intentions, we must (and this is often the case with the discursive logic of Renaissance thinkers) not allow ourselves to become obsessed by the need to interpret him. That would be to imagine that Nostradamus wanted to captivate his readers by furnishing them with the wherewithal to decrypt, unambiguously and with certitude, and reconstitute what he wanted to say. It is less a matter of reading Nostradamus and more one of deconstructing the principle of such a readability, and therefore of a hidden knowledge.' There is a genuine 'occult' philosophy buried in the prophet's writings, but it is a philosophy of non-knowledge, of an awareness of aporia. Nostradamus himself encourages this, by a number of

indicators or markers inserted here and there in his writings. So, the final lines of the 'Preface' to his son César, are written 'notwithstanding that their comprehension has been wrapped up under a thick cloud: sed quando submovenda erit ignorantia [but when the time comes for the removal of ignorance] the instance shall become clearer'. Nostradamus gives his reader to understand that he must allow himself to penetrate beyond the words. Quo de futuris non est determinata omnino veritas — i.e. 'As to the future, none can be determined with absolute truth'. The path probably taken by Nostradamus throughout his writings is the one sketched out by Erasmus, that of Folly. As described by Jean-Claude Margolin, it is that of an 'ironic awareness of the self', an inverted discourse whose 'momentum, from the closed and sclerotic world of dogma and appearances, summons up a world of infinite freedom and openness for man, for whom all truth, inward and outward, is a labour of research towards greater profundity'. I have eventually emerged, therefore, with what might seem to be a reductive hypothesis in the face of the infinite possibilities of Nostradamus' oracular thought. For intelligibility is never complete, even when a quatrain seems to be completely straightforward. Full understanding is never achieved, and the meaning is always left hanging in the air.

So, what Nostradamus calls his 'nocturnal and prophetic calculations, composed more out of a natural instinct, accompanied by a poetic fury, than according to the strict rules of poetry' must be a hermeneutics of semiotic excess. The only way in which the history of Nostradamus can make any sense is to accept that it has to be a history that is structured outside the linearity of language, beyond the words themselves, and therefore outside the received norms of historical analysis. I shall begin my analysis on that assumption.

THE ONTOLOGICAL TURN

I proposed at the beginning of this book that we consider Nostradamus as a physician. His eschatology, in the imaginary which he puts forth, is a physick for souls. It is administered to awaken them to God, shake them out of their lethargy, and assuage their anxieties. We now need to consider further how this medicine took effect.

In the 'Preface' to the Prophecies which he dedicated in 1555 to his son César, the astrophile recounts that he had, in fact, discovered that, before the universal conflagration, the world would fall victim to 'so many deluges and floods that there will be scarce any land which is not covered with water'.⁷ In a period which is close to the end of the world, he isolates a sequence of aquatic violence as something which could happen at any moment, and which will be followed by a rain of fire and incandescent rocks, 'and all this shall come to pass, in short, before the final conflagration'. In the reign of Saturn and with the accomplishment of the three prophetic punishments of God — war, plague and famine — the world would end. Thus will begin what he describes as the 'anagaronic' revolution, etymologically the revolution

which acts as a break with the past, one that proclaims perhaps (but only after the collapse and incineration of the world) a regeneration. It is possible that Nostradamus is following the teaching of Regiomontanus and alluding to the planetary conjunction between Saturn (entering Aries) and Jupiter in the sign of Pisces, predicted to take place in 1584. This is the long-awaited theophanic Time, when God will appear in Majesty, the time foretold by the prophets, and it carries with it a call to prophetic awareness through an appeal that he addresses to César: 'Now come listen, my son, as I divine by my calculus of revolutions ... how the sword of death now threatens to lay us low by plague, by a war more horrible than that seen in three generations, and famine, a sword that shall fall upon the earth and shall often return'. Then there will come to pass a new cycle of time, which will be a time of reconciliation, of purity, and of hope.

What is there to say about the year 3797, which (according to Nostradamus) would be the decisive year, and which specialists have latched on to to try and date the final cataclysm in the history of the world? We need here, above all to dedramatize the issue.' Even a moment's reflection allows us to note that a simple numerological analysis can help solve the question. The nine and seven are the novenary and septenary. The nine refers, no doubt, to heaven — as, for example, in Dante's Divine Comedy — but also to an end which is also a beginning, because it is the last of the ordinal numbers, and thus alpha and omega simultaneously; it is at the ninth hour that Christ expired on the Cross. The seven is an allusion to the seven planets and their motions, but also to the seven days of Creation, the seven angels around the throne of God, and the seventh day, which is the Lord's Day. It was on the seventh day that Christ was placed in the sepulchre. And the three might well symbolize the Trinity, and is, according to Cornelius Agrippa, the first composite number. The repetition of the seven probably was intended to emphasize that a cycle of time had been accomplished and that another begins. So the number sequence 3797 should be regarded as that very symbol of a Word that says that it cannot say. There is no year 3797, and that quite simply because it should be seen as an encoding of Eternity. It was a way of saying that, for the man in faith, the man who is purified of his sin by trusting in divine grace, and who is nourished by the comforting message of salvation, time is, as it were, extra-temporal. The 'anaragonic revolution', the profound break with the past, will happen within, and man will be its subject; and that because he will have become aware that the temporal world arouses passions, and passions subvert those who let themselves be led astray by their seductions. To become aware of the infinity of evil is to pray to the Saviour, in full confidence of his merciful forgiveness and in the recesses of the heart. 3797 is thus a date which plays on a non-sense, on a symbol for what is outside time, for the time which follows the moment of conversion when the believer, in himself, is bathed in a moment of eternity, in the

Word of God in which he is nourished, as transported to him by the Holy Spirit.

So, the numerical sequence is probably telling us that Nostradamus reckoned himself incapable of dating the end-time, and that the issue was of no interest to him, for it was something that was known only to the divine Majesty. It aimed to say that such a matter was not the objective of his kind of astrology, which let the stars themselves proclaim the Logos. Nostradamus' eschatology was non-determinate, beyond his cyclical conception of time, which was probably part and parcel of his Kabbalah-inspired imaginary, and his vision of a world that was declining into every more calamities. But it was an indeterminacy whose mimetic apocalypticism is mere illusion, since its sole purpose is to purify the believer in his consciousness of sin, and to sanction his encounter with the 'exiguous flame' of faith. 3797 is the believer's cogito. Nostradamus' Epistle to King Henri II of 1558, it is true, wastes no time in laying bare the forthcoming rise of Antichrist, of apostasies, popular uprisings, persecutions of the Church of Jesus Christ and of clerics. The allusion to the Apocalypse (Revelation 19:17-19) is evident in the text:

And the old and new Testaments thrown out and burned, and thereafter the Antichrist shall be the Prince of Hell, and then for the last time all the Kingdoms of Christendom and those of the infidels shall tremble for the space of twenty-five years, and there shall be yet more grievous wars and battles, and towns, cities, castles and all those buildings will be burned, sacked and destroyed, with great shedding of virgin blood, wives and widows raped, suckling children dashed and shattered against city walls, and so many evils committed under the influence of Satan, Infernal Prince, that almost the entire world will find itself destroyed and abandoned.

Yet is this not a way by which Nostradamus conditions the Christian to enter the sphere of the believer's cogito, to re-enter the extra-temporality of Christ living in him? Nostradamus is thus making a play with his own way of writing, painting the picture of worldly time in the blackest of hues to stimulate the conscience, and launch a process of return to the self. Nostradamus is God's messenger. God is there to be announced by him in the Power of his Truth, His blessing, and Eternity.'

In the mysterious Antidoté Fanfreluches (Fanfreluches antidotées) that make up chapter 2 of Rabelais' Gargantua, the author appeals to his reader by means of a complex enigma to shatter privileges and take part in the advent of a time of renewal, and 'baffle the whole storehouse of abuses'. That will come about in the year of the 'sign of a Turkish bow, / Five spindles yarn'd, and three pot-bottoms too', perhaps the year M.CCCC.XXX [or 1530] if one transliterates that into Roman numerals. Then shall come about the 'joy' (soulas), 'promised of old as doom / To the heaven's guests' (the elect, the heavenly host). Then, when:

Spotlight

Mars be fetter'd for an unknown crime;
Then shall one come, who others will surpass,
Delightful, pleasing, matchless, full of grace.

The 'one' in question, we should note, would offer a meal as a sign of his coming. It is not difficult to suppose that this is Christ, giving his body and blood in sacrifice. And Rabelais adds enigmatically that Christ would come to reign spiritually in our hearts, a reign whose beginning was inexorable and close at hand. Then men will lift up their hearts:

... for he's deceased,
Who would not for a world return again,
So highly shall time past be cried up then.

This is what Rabelais' contemporary, the poet and translator Charles Fontaine called in a poem dedicated to Marguerite of Navarre, the reign of the 'strong utterance' by which the 'monster which aborts its young' will be slaughtered.' The Quart Livre, which has already featured in our discussions, was entirely constructed to show that hope lives on, stronger perhaps than ever before. In the Prologue of the Author (Prologue de l'auteur, M. François Rabelais, pour le Quatrieme livre des faits et dictz heroicques de Pantagruel), addressed to 'benevolent readers' and other 'good people', Rabelais proclaims that the Gospel, which is synonymous with 'Pantagruelism' ('which you know is a certain jollity of mind, pickled in the scorn of fortune') is a basis for good health, one which allows faith to be sustained and breathed forth. Laughter enables one to put worldly matters into perspective, and it is the means by which man can be disposed to receive the 'sacrosanct message of good news' in which God himself speaks.' In the same way as the learned rhetoric of Michel de L'Hospital in his Latin poetry (the Carmina) and speeches, Rabelaisian writing was thus the handmaiden of the Gospel, instrumentalized to enable 'good people' to understand that, if they agree to live in accordance with the Gospel and to benefit from its health-giving properties, they are at the threshold of what is a new age on the verge of coming into being, both individually and collectively. What Rabelais wrote was aimed at having an impact on the world because he believed in the divine efficacy of the word. Rabelais, even before he comes onto the parable of the woodcutter, Couillatris, expresses his conviction in a future which brings together good people with 'the aid of the blessed Lord', a future which is possible, and (therefore) both near and far away at the same time:

I have this hope in the Lord, that he will hear our supplications, considering with what faith and zeal we pray, and that he will grant this our wish because it is moderate and mean. Mediocrity was held by the ancient sages to be golden, that is to say, precious, praised by all men, and pleasing in all places. Read the sacred Bible, you will find that the prayers of those who asked moderately were never

unanswered. For example, Little dapper Zacheus,⁸ whose body and relics the monks of St. Garlick, near Orleans,' boast of having, and nickname him St. Sylvanus; he only wished to see our blessed Saviour near Jerusalem. It was but a small request, and no more than anybody then might pretend to. But alas! he was but low-built; and one of so diminutive a size, among the crowd, could not so much as get a glimpse of him. Well then he struts, stands on tiptoes, bustles, and bestirs his stumps, shoves and makes way, and with much ado clambers up a sycamore. Upon this, the Lord, who knew his sincere affection, presented himself to his sight, and was not only seen by him, but heard also; nay, what is more, he came to his house and blessed his family.

Rabelais' 'Prologue' ends by denouncing those who meddle in discussions and disputes about the 'power and predestination' of God when what they should be doing was abasing themselves before God, recognizing their own feebleness and acknowledging their wickedness.

'Mediocrity' was 'held by the ancient sages to be golden, that is to say, precious, praised by all men, and pleasing in all places' says Rabelais, and it defines the Christian who does not allow himself to overstep the mark with God and who lives in the hope of a future willed by God, to whom nothing is impossible. When the rainbow appears, a future beyond time opens up, here and now and far away at one and the same time, so close you could touch it but also far in the distance, a future that is completely on the move, and yet accessible: 'Upon this, O ye that labour under the affliction of the gout, I ground my hopes; firmly believing, that if it so pleases the divine goodness, you shall obtain health; since you wish and ask for nothing else, at least for the present. Well, stay yet a little longer with half an ounce of patience'.

Thus, whether it is Rabelais and his 'highest sense', or Nostradamus, the same arcane philosophy makes possible a profound transformation in our lives, away from a troubled and troublesome world, towards a peaceable sense of order within which, beside the Christian soul, God indwells, infusing it with meaning. It is God who, at the same time, endows whoever lives in the plenitude of the free gift of faith with a mission which is also a duty: to collaborate in the work of salvation, to the degree possible with the means at his disposal, and taking into account the resistance and hostility that he will meet up with, by seeking to communicate the mystery of life's meaning. The believer becomes the actor in a cryptic pageant in which the plays on words are there to help the audience understand that God is All, and over all. The tortured human future that Nostradamus envisaged was not designed to leave people, destabilized by the events of the 1550s in a state of angst, or at least that was not what ultimately lay behind the prophetic tension which gave it its sacral energy. The intention was to create a conscious awareness, to bring about a conversion to the benefits and joys of Christian liberty, and to bring healing to the sinful soul. We have to conceive that Nostradamus was on the same track as

Rabelais when he wrote: 'The age approaches renovation' (1:16), and when he stressed that there was a great renewal of the ages in store, and proclaimed that 'the Holy Spirit shall make the soul joyous, Seeing the Word in its eternity' (2:13), even dreaming of a 'Cross, peace, under a divine word accomplished' (4:5). He does not in any true sense separate out a millennial time as the accomplishment of the terrifying sequence of vicissitudes which he recounts. The scourges which announce the approaching end of time are there in abundance; droughts and deluges, universal famine (1:17; 1:67); the rise to prominence of other religions, such as Islam,' and sects, such as those that 'will be born forth in Germany' (3:76); the appearance of Antichrist; the endless persecutions of the Church; and the blood, blood, and more blood. We have to conclude that, for the astrophile, the notion of a thousand years of bountifulness is to be construed as nothing other than the indwelling of the 'divine Word' in each of us: 'The divine Word shall give the substance' (3:2). God's realm can be the realm in each of us.

As I have tried to explain, the astrophile of Salon was far removed from being the mediator of a wisdom that was predictive of a period of time in the future. For him, to prophesy was to see what was there, and ought to be seen. That meant seeing what was in ourselves in order to know oneself as a way of knowing God. That meant, first of all, depicting and making clear the extreme perils for the soul in a fascination for human history, irreparably stained by the mark of ever-increasing human sinfulness. Then, it meant creating a cognitive movement that led to the indwelling of the living God, of the Logos, revealed as of that nature in the indwelling of the divine Language, and living with that permanence of Love in an extra-temporality which transcended worldly matters. Nostradamus was one of those Christians who looked to encounter a God whom they regarded as mysteriously living in his Word. It was a God who set His face against the confessional ruptures of the Reformation, the more terrible and seemingly endless because that was the doom awaiting those who presumed to depend upon themselves rather than the God of love. He was one of those Christians who yearned to see in the Word of God a reflection of the immensity of the salvific love of the 'divine Essence'.

In a quatrain from the first Century (1:56), Nostradamus evokes an approaching sequence of infinite violence. It will occur 'sooner or later', so it is imprecisely delineated, but 'you will see a great change'. There will be 'extreme horrors' and retributions such that, if the moon is 'led by its angel, the heavens will be otherwise inclined' (viz. in astrological terms, they will move closer to a position in the horoscope other than that of their birth). In the tenth Century (10:74), it will be in July in the last year of the 'great number seven', just before the 'great millennium'

begins, the eighth millennium, when what sounds like the day of the General Resurrection will take place ('When the buried shall rise from their tombs'). The last reign before the

end of the world will be that of the sun.' And Nostradamus 'sooner or later' refers to God's Justice, as in Proverbs 11:21: 'Though hand join in hand (i.e. sooner or later), the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered'.

In 3:94, 'for five hundred years' no one will 'take any notice of him, someone who was 'the ornament of his age'; then suddenly, a great light shall shine forth 'which will bring great contentment to that age'. This light, is it not what will be heralded by the return of Christ on earth? <>

The Riddle of Nostradamus: A Critical Dialogue by Georges Dumézil, translated by Betsy Wing [Parallax: Re-visions of Culture and Society, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 9780801861284]

Nostradamus (1503-66) is one of the most controversial writers of the Renaissance and one of the most widely read. Whatever his other accomplishments, he is best remembered as an enigmatic seer, the man who could foretell events, though he could not specify when in the future they would occur. Modern readers tend to view Nostradamus either as a relic from a superstitious age or as an inspired visionary. In this book Georges Dumézil, renowned scholar of myth and religion, takes Nostradamus very seriously indeed. Can one foresee the future, Dumézil asks, and fail to understand it?

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, commentators on Nostradamus found in the twentieth quatrain of Nostradamus's Century 9 a bundle of precise details that seemed to predict the arrest of Louis XVI as he fled the French Revolution. Other details in the quatrain remained unexplained. Why was the person described as "le moyne noir"? What did the second verse signify: "Deux parts, vaultorte, Herne, la pierre blanche"? What can scholarship contribute to the understanding of these puzzles?

Dumézil explores three possibilities: a philological and historical study of the text to clarify its enigmas by a deeper investigation of Louis XVI's unsuccessful flight to Varennes; a logical analysis, determining how Nostradamus would have interpreted a view of the eighteenth century from his vantage in the sixteenth; and, finally, a metaphysical inquiry into the status and process of prediction. Written in dialogue form, *The Riddle of Nostradamus* is one of Dumézil's most arresting works, challenging dogmas, even scholarly ones, and raising sharp questions about how much we want to know, and why. Shunning the usual forms of academic inquiry to probe the grey regions that stretch between knowledge and belief, the book not only studies, but exemplifies, the role of the riddle in discussing portentous events.

Excerpt: This book by Georges Dumézil is about Dumézil—about his scholarly methods and even about his life. It is a tour de force application of his methodology. As such, it amounts to a brilliant exercise in comparative method and

reconstruction. It is easy to speak here of his methods; to speak of his life will be more difficult.

In this project, Dumézil applies his theoretical models of "externalized thinking" (*pensée extériorisée*) to Nostradamus. Why Nostradamus? This obscure sixteenth-century mystic strikes us at first as the most unlikely subject for Dumézil, who spent his academic life developing empirical methods in linguistic approaches to comparative sociology.

Dumézil's empiricism involves comparing the institutions of societies linked to one another by way of cognate languages that can be traced back to a prototypical common language, known to linguists as "Indo-European."

The key to this book is the comparative method itself and how this method can reconstruct a frame of mind by externalizing the traditions that formed that frame. If different minds at different times internalize the same given tradition, then a comparatist can find a link between these different minds by examining that tradition in its externalized forms. That is what Dumézil does in linking a tradition he finds reflected in the work of the Roman historian Livy, whose life straddled the first centuries B.C. and A.D., with what went on in the minds of two historical figures who had independently internalized that tradition in the context of their own classical formation. These two figures are Nostradamus, in the sixteenth century A.D., and Louis XVI, in the late eighteenth.

If we look at the tradition as internalized by the minds of Nostradamus and Louis XVI, then it seems as if the opaque verses of Nostradamus, as quoted in the title of Dumézil's book, had prophesied what was actually going on inside the head of Louis XVI at the fatal moments that marked the cataclysmic end of royalty, and of a whole way of life, in revolutionary France. If, however, we look at the tradition as externalized by the comparatist, we can see the opportunities for analogous reactions by two different minds to two analogous historical contingencies—reactions motivated by an analogous mental processing of tradition.

So much for the main thesis of Dumézil's project. But we must address also the medium Dumézil has chosen—that is, a quasi-Platonic narrative, containing dialogues, set in the 1920s. There are historical reasons for Dumézil's choosing this opaque Platonic medium and this equally opaque dramatic setting.

To start with the setting: we cannot easily see through the obscurity of the historical references. Today it would be difficult to find anyone sufficiently knowledgeable to speak with firsthand authority about the relevant history. Further, any effort to discover translucence amid all the opacity could not easily be justified if this book were not what it also is, a brilliant exercise in comparative method and reconstruction.

The little that shows through is this: the book has as one of its subtexts an apologia for Georges Dumézil's rightist past,

which is carefully distinguished from the fascist past that came to characterize those of his associates who eventually were involved in Action française. In the end, Dumézil comes across not as a rightist but as a royalist. This self-characterization is relevant to the thoughts purportedly going on inside the head of Louis XVI, the doomed king of a vanishing world, in the forest of Varennes. There are other subtexts as well, involving the demimonde of homosexuality and freemasonry, academic French style, among the elites of the 1920s.

In short, the book has a hidden agenda, much of it expressed in the code of an elitist French upper-class classical education. Even the names are coded. It is as if Dumézil were trying to recover, through encoding, a glimpse of a world that has by now utterly vanished. His stance is not only nostalgic, however: he is clearly striving to highlight those aspects of that world that will allow him to set the record straight, as far as his scholarly and personal reputations are concerned.

The Anglo-American reading public is here faced with a serious intellectual challenge: how to understand the historical context. (And why even bother?) Two most helpful aids are Didier Eribon, *Faut-il brûler Dumézil?* (Flammarion, 1992), and Maurice Olender, *Les langues du paradis: Aryens et Sémites: Un couple providenciel* (Gallimard/Le Seuil, 1989). Both of these works explore the moral as well as the intellectual importance of coming to terms with the problems raised by Dumézil's apologia. They also confront the inherent difficulty of ascertaining the basic facts.

Let us begin with a most striking example, in the person of M. Espopondie, the elderly scholar who emerges as the centerpiece of Dumézil's reminiscences. We find old Espopondie in the act of systematically consigning to the fireplace, piece by piece, evening after evening, a lifetime of accumulated papers. Helping him stoke the fires is the young Dumézil, who portrays himself as the old man's adoring acolyte. With every evening visit, they burn a new stack of papers. Then, one fine evening, they come upon a disquisition Espopondie had once written concerning a set of prophetic verses by Nostradamus, which seem to find their fulfillment in the life of a historical figure from a later era, Louis XVI.

Dumézil is allowed to rescue this disquisition from the fire. He takes it home. He reads and rereads it. From then on, during successive evening visits, the rescued text is discussed and rediscussed, with further elaborations. The evening discussions expand, with other figures joining in. One of the new characters is M. Leslucas.

It so happens that "M. Espopondie," described by Dumézil as a distinguished Orientalist, is a code name for Claude-Eugene Maitre, adjunct conservator of the Musée Guimet, who was the first director of the *École française d'Extrême-Orient*. (This is the man who "discovered" the ruins of Angkor.) Dumézil's book is in turn dedicated to Henri Sauguet, who was Maitre's secretary when the dramatized

events took place (Eribon, 171-72). The special relationship Dumézil had with his maître, whose real name was Maître, is suggested by the code name he gave to his beloved patron: "Espopondie" plays on the perfect first-person singular of the Latin verb spondeo, spondi, which we may translate as "I solemnly vouch for, having poured a libation" (32).

As for "M. Leslucas," it is a code name for Pierre Gaxotte, to whom Dumézil had dedicated his 1924 book, *Le festin d'immortalité: Étude de mythologie comparée indo-européenne* (Annales du Musée Guimet, vol. 34, Paris); Gaxotte had once been the secretary of Charles Maurras, a key figure in Action française (Eribon, 32).

The Action française of 1924 can hardly be equated with what it later became in the 1930s (33, 83-84), and Dumézil's aloofness from any collaboration with fascist movements has been carefully documented by his defenders (including Eribon [33]). I have no way of knowing for sure, but I trust the judgment of the classicist and historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet, who once told me directly that he thinks Dumézil has been exonerated of all charges and suspicions of collaboration. (Vidal was the scholar who originally recommended to me Eribon's book; Eribon [341] acknowledges Vidal's help.)

The obscurity of a book named after the "black monk in gray" reenacts the obscurity of Dumézil's own hidden life. Amid the grayness, however, are rays of evocation that have shone through to some of his book's most sensitive original readers. In the words of one such reader (Eribon, 172 [my translation]), "It will come as no surprise that Michel Foucault, in a remark reported by Claude Mauriac [*Le temps accompli* (Grasset, 1991), 51], had spontaneously evoked, speaking of Dumézil and of his book on Nostradamus, 'the freemasonic homosexuality of his youth.'" I continue with

Eribon's gloss on Foucault's remark (again, my translation): "He [Foucault] means the kind of homosexuality that is a life lived out by belonging to an underground community—a life withdrawn from the gaze of others, in an era that wants that life to be just that way—an era when homosexuals had to advance themselves by wearing masks, simply because homosexuality was forbidden and repressed. It is no doubt in this form of sympathy, founded on a secret kind of complicity [une complicité secrète], that one finds the key to many of the stances of Dumézil that would otherwise seem quite incomprehensible."

The expression "une complicité secrète" has a direct bearing on the even more overtly Platonic appendix to this book, a "divertissement" that seems on the surface an imitation of Plato's *Phaedo*. The main body of the book is opaque enough, but now we confront *obscuriora*. Ironically, however, the more-obscure is more clear, because the model of the ultimate master, Socrates, is overt.

The symbolism of the whole book can now impose itself: Dumézil's memory highlight's a few things and shades over many others, just as his master, M. Maître, burns most of his papers and saves only a few choice passages. This book is choice Dumézil. by Gregory Nagy

"C'est-à-dire l'homosexualité vécue comme l'appartenance souterraine à une communauté, comme une

vie dérobée au regard des autres (c'est l'époque qui le veut, une époque où les homosexuels devaient s'avancer masqués, tout simplement parce que l'homosexualité était interdite et réprimée). Il y a sans doute dans cette forme de sympathie fondée sur une complicité secrète la clé de bien

The Oracles of Nostradamus

This translation makes reference to Charles A. Ward, *The Oracles of Nostradamus* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, Modern Library, 1940), as well as to Henry C. Roberts, *The Complete Prophecies of Nostradamus* (New York: Crown, 1994). The translations in general, however, follow Dumézil's interpretation rather than those given by either Ward (closer to Le Pelletier's) or Roberts.

Tabloid psychics come and go, but the name of the prophet Nostradamus stands like a pillar of granite, even after some 500 years. Henry C. Roberts's translations and interpretations of Nostradamus's *Centuries* are almost as enduring. First published in 1947 as an attempt to make a complete *Centuries* book available to the public, *The Complete Prophecies of Nostradamus* has reached its fourth edition with few revisions. This unabridged, definitive edition with verbatim translations printed side by side with the original Old French is one of the most accurate interpretations available in print.

A medieval prophet of astonishing accuracy, Nostradamus was born in St. Remy in 1503, and he had an excellent reputation as a physician long before he became famous for his prophecies, shook the civilized world and an enlarged edition was subsequently published in 1588, dedicated to Henry II, King of France. *The Oracles of Nostradamus* is a reprint of the edition edited by Chas. A. Ward, noted British scholar and historian. It contains a brief but comprehensive biography and an illuminating chapter on magic and astrology. <>

Spotlight

des comportements de Dumézil qui pourraient sembler incompréhensibles" (Eribon, *Faut-il brûler Dumézil?* 171).

Dear Friend,

Because you have kindly induced me to publish these meditations, would you please pass a few bits of useful information on to the reader?

The first part of the book could be called "System of the World, volume I." But, because neither I nor the generations to come will ever write the volumes that follow, I think a more humble label is better.

It is useless to look for keys. I have constantly mixed memory and fiction. Although my conversation with Gustave Charles Toussaint off Jan Mayen Island is rather meticulously noted, I fear that the characters playing a part in this farce must be somewhat blurred; specifically, the three Perfect Ones must reduce to the only one who is not: after sixty years how could my division of the voices be right? In any case, Espopondie's last winter, as well as our relations, to which he probably owes his name, were indeed as I describe them. Thus, the bundle of papers in chapter 2 may be considered authentic. But I must acknowledge that I had not thought of them for a long time—until the end of 1968, when on the third floor of the Princeton Library I took down from the shelves a copy of Nostradamus dating from the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was when I reread it, my fingers actually touching the quatrains about "Varenes" and about "Narbon and Saulce," that I thought about the problem again and decided to take it somewhere.

Readers will certainly want to have recourse to the text, and should refer to the two volumes of *Le Pelletier's* annotated edition, republished in 1976 by Jean de Bonnot, 7, faubourg Saint-Honoré. See insert

My study would have made little progress if my grandsons and my daughter-in-law had not taken responsibility for a good deal of philological, lexical, statistical, and historical research. The result is that responsibility for the arguments, organization, and conclusions is mine but in large part the worth of the project is due to them.

With sincere thanks,

Georges Dumézil

About sixty years ago, between 1922. and 1925, I had the good fortune to become close friends with M. Espopondie, one of the men who has influenced me most deeply and, I believe, most productively. I was enjoying being twenty-five and he was nearing fifty. The battles of 1918 had somewhat shaped and humanized me, pulling me from the microcosm of khâgnes and books—indeed exciting, but unreal—to plunge me abruptly into the mixture of hell and paradise that the episodes of everyday life in an army campaign were for a young second lieutenant in the artillery. The words on the pall of Captain Cartesius, "I reflected little; I lived," did not apply. On the contrary, the principal lines of my thought and my behavior were

permanently delineated during the years I knew Espopondie, especially the last year.

An itinerant scholar and administrator, like many of our great Orientalists at the beginning of this century, he had long haunted the most distant parts of Asia. This was the opening that brought me—just beginning my studies—into contact with him. My Orient was not the same as his, but we held part of India in condominium. At that time I was also beginning to sketch out my first ideas, with all their illusions, concerning the Indo-Europeans and comparative mythology, and that interested him. Very soon, however, this no longer formed the center of our relationship. He was equally fond of poetry, music, and the plastic arts, and he had read prodigiously and lived intensely. His education as a philosopher gave him a kindly mastery of this great quantity of knowledge and experience. I went to avant-garde concerts and wrestling matches with him, and we visited Belgian museums. Every time something that I had not yet imagined would become clear.

But it was especially after the autumn of 1924 and during the final winter of his life that I truly came to know him. I was aware that, since his return to France just before the war, his health had not been good. I then learned that he suffered from two ailments, and the differing treatments for the two could not be reconciled. One of these affected his heart. In October the attacks came one after the other, and sometimes Espopondie remained indoors for weeks. Soon he became certain that his end was near, and he wished to make his departure wisely. He found he had reached a point at which he could look back on his life with neither smugness nor regret. He had had the "weakness," as he called it, feigning humility, to save packets of letters, some of them extremely intimate (he had passed through a number of stormy periods), as well as bundles of notes, notebooks, and books begun and then abandoned (he had published very little). He wanted, before destroying them, to take one last trip among these ultimate expressions—whether ridiculous or remarkable—of his thoughts, his research, and, if not his passions, at least some sincere attachments and many mirages of sentiment. He had, no doubt, put me to the test and decided that I inspired confidence. Also I probably provided some slight compensation for the grief he felt, and had once confessed to me, that he would die without leaving a son. In any case, he suggested that I join him on this pilgrimage and in this holocaust.

Around six o'clock almost every evening, when his secretary left, I would go to his place. We chatted while his servant provided us with a light supper; then we would move over to the fire that he always kept burning in his little study. He sat down in his armchair, some times slightly out of breath (occasionally I would be worried), but often very comfortably. I would then go into one of the three rooms where, next to the books, there lay several large envelopes still containing the ghosts of his life. He would read the

letters or have me read them. Sometimes a photograph would emerge and he would look at it for a few seconds, and then give it back to me. All of this went into the fire, and it never occurred to me to hold any back. He was so detached as he glanced through whole folders of reading notes, reflections, or projects and consigned them to the void. Only rarely would he ask me to read them to him. He would see how this or that page of writing related to some preoccupation, later forgotten, and tell me simply, "Keep going."

One evening, however, when Espopondie seemed less tired than usual, I pulled fifteen or so pages out of a long envelope. They were collected in a notebook with a title that intrigued me: "Prolegomena to Some Possible Secondary Physics."

"I'm glad to have found this old commentary," Espopondie said, smiling. "It must go back to the first years of this century, when I was your age. Put it aside and go on."

The rest of the envelope was tossed with the usual simplicity; then Espopondie motioned to me to pick up the notebook again.

I knew where Espopondie stood on the subject of metaphysics. He was fascinated by research on the atom, then just in its infancy, and he seemed to foresee its rapid development. "They were a little hasty when they called the atom 'the atom'—that is, the indivisible," he remarked. "You'll see, they'll break it in pieces, and then every piece into pieces. Infinitely, maybe. The Eleatics will get hold of it." And what did he expect from philosophy? Some days a lot, perhaps. Sometimes little or nothing. Was he a materialist? He avoided any such big words or partisan positions. In any case, he stuck to experience, refusing to separate what is habitually called spirit from what is called matter. He often told me that he had never felt anything resembling the famous religious anxiety. Born into a family of disbelievers who were, I think, anticlerical, he had not been baptized and had not had to break away from the faith of his childhood. Rather, during his youth, and especially when he was a student on the rue d'Ulm, it had required all of his intelligence and intense love for freedom not to let himself be swept away in the floods of antireligious fervor incited by Émile Combes. Moreover, he admired and loved theologies as he did all of humanity's creations, but he saw the artifice in all of them. He would willingly have come to the defense of established religions as long as they served as the refuge of the weak and desperate, but, rightly or wrongly, he thought he more frequently saw in them intolerance and abdication.

Would I say he was agnostic? He was convinced that the advances of physics, whose rhythms he marked, and the advances of critical history, to which he had contributed, would put an end to many empty formulas. At the same time, however, he foresaw that, as with the atom, in replacing the illusions of the past this work would give rise to other views that would waste no time in proving to be

equally illusory or insufficient. A rationalist? Yes, certainly. He was even quite prepared to deify reason. But there were two attitudes, or rather two varieties of the same attitude, that struck him as blasphemy against this goddess. Under the pretext of shying away from the irrational, he said, some people refuse to record any observation that the state of our knowledge does not allow us to interpret, and others fail to understand the mystery of the evolution relentlessly transforming apparently the most stable organic equilibriums into other forms of equilibrium that are no less temporary. To the first he recalled the objection raised, despite the evidence of the sea's horizon, against those who said the earth is round: how could men in the antipodes walk upside down? He advised the second group to ponder the evolution that began first on some spot on the skin that was sensitive to light and went on to produce the structure of the mammalian eye, which then, over a period of several centuries, with the collaboration of the entire human brain, now extends into opticians' and photographers' equipment, itself in a process of ceaseless transformation.

All this, of course, can be—or will be able to be—put into equations and justified by natural selection, but how can one not also suspect that from the beginning, and for each one of the billions of attendant and convergent changes that took place, there was the equivalent of a project? In short, his rationalism did not lock him into the present for either the means or the matter of his study. He entrusted the future with the progressive explanation of the unexplained, without imagining that this should ever be completed. Many stubborn errors of assertion and denial, he went on, are the result of some good minds in each generation having claimed to do the work of twenty or a hundred and claiming, at the same time, that they have put their finger on the "heart of the matter."

This portrait of him would be incomplete if I did not mention that he had no fear of and no curiosity about death, the most comprehensible of phenomena. He did not think that anything of him would survive the decomposition of his brain. His fondness for beautiful things made him hope that his death would come peacefully and neatly, but he knew that the two illnesses fighting it out in his thorax made this unlikely.

I have made this necessary detour to explain the interest that this pragmatic mind in its youth had in a few lines of the Oracles of Michel de Nostradamus. He made the interest, apparently revived this evening, clear to me in a few words.

"All the experiences we call psychic, all the notable cases of thought transmission and premonition, especially when there is communication with the beyond or with supernatural beings, run up against the same obstacle: no matter how honest the observer, no matter how strict the controls, there always remains the suspicion that this is autosuggestion—collective delusion, and usually trickery. Prediction of the future, whether near or distant, uttered by a 'seer' seems to

avoid this fate, at least when it has been written down at a known date in a ne varietur form and consequently been shielded from the favors of oral transmission. One can suppose that history, whether in the short or the long run, will either verify or refute it—with, however, the following qualifications: that there is no limit to history and that, unless the predicted event is dated, there is always

the chance that each generation will consider the event to be reserved for the future. But there are not many such records, and those that exist do not lend themselves, or lend themselves too well, to this a posteriori test: whether too general, or incoherent, or ambiguous, or all three at once, they bring to mind several, even numerous events over the centuries, each of which can be adjusted to their formulation if one gives it a good try.

"Nostradamus's Centuries is not exempt from this condition. All one has to do is skim through the commentaries written on it for more than three hundred years. Actually, all one has to do is read it to throw in the towel—with the exception of a very few quatrains in which enigma plays a limited role and precise details about people or places are given; by this I mean the rare proper names, improbable in the mathematical sense, that have afterward emerged only once in history as actors or settings. The most famous case is the twentieth quatrain of century 9, where not only all the exegetes but even the most skeptical of readers cannot help experiencing the astonishing feeling that Nostradamus has outlined the dramatic events of Varennes with their tragic consequences—the ill-considered trip that, almost two and a half centuries later, was to lead the last divine-right king and his family down the blind alley of a small town in the Argonne. Look at the beginning of my paper; I must have cited the quatrain."

He had indeed transcribed it in the very first lines. I read:

De nuit viendra par la forest de Reines,
Deux pars vaultorte Herne la Pierre blanche.
Le moyne noir en gris dedans Varennes,
Esleu cap cause tempeste, feu sang tranche.

(By night shall come through the forest of Reines
Two parts, face about, the queen a white stone,
The black monk in gray within Varennes.
Chosen cap causes tempest, fire, blood, slice.)

I knew the quatrain. More than once I had been intrigued by Nostradamus, but I had always ended up putting down the book.

"It is getting a bit late for us to read the paper tonight," Espoondie said. "Take it with you."

I had qualms about reading alone these pages that clearly meant so much to him. I made excuses and said I would rather give it some thought first. Espoondie then offered to lend me the annotated edition provided by Anatole Le

Pelletier in 1867. But this was unnecessary. I had it at home, inherited from my grandfather, and it was the only one in which I had read Nostradamus. Following the composite copy in the Bibliothèque nationale, it carefully reproduces Pierre Rigaud's first edition (Centuries 1-7, Lyon, 1558?; 8—10, 1566), and in the notes it gives the variant versions from the second edition, by Benoist Rigaud (whose kinship to Pierre is unknown) (Lyon, 1568). Le Pelletier also provides an intelligible paraphrase for a great many of the quatrains, as well as notes in which he confidently and naively makes use of the commentary of his numerous predecessors, but especially of his own erudition and his own flashes of inspiration.

"Good. Isn't it tomorrow that our friends are coming?"

After having much savored the world, Espoondie had of necessity withdrawn from it, but he made a few exceptions to his solitude. Ever since he had become more gravely ill, twice a week he received—together we received—two young men, both very intelligent but entirely different, whom I had quickly taken to. Espoondie said that these evening gatherings made him think of the Phaedo.

"So together you can decipher my paper. You will read it to them. Knowing them, I am sure they will have something useful to say. Afterward, we'll decide on the fate of these pages. They will go into the fire, or if one of you finds them interesting, he will take them."

It was nearly midnight when I left Espoondie. He was peaceful and relieved, I thought, the way a king would be the evening of his abdication. I myself slept extremely well, and the next morning I found my Le Pelletier—not without difficulty, for it was not conspicuous. Reading through his commentary and notes, I wondered what our friend had been able to get from such a text. Yes, it did concern a character, apparently important, who "shall come at night within

Varennes." And yes, the final line predicts that because of a "chosen cap" (cap is not followed by a period in 1566, but it is in 1568), there will be instances of great violence, and even at the end a "slice," a blade that—after the fire and blood—makes one think of the wise Guillotin's humanitarian invention. But what relationship did all the rest have to the dramatic events of Varennes? As for Le Pelletier's glosses, although one translated the word slice well and another opportunely recalled that the king, for his clandestine journey, had put on a gray habit like the character in the quatrain, on the whole his comments were astounding, and his use of Greek and Latin made things worse, not better. This is what I copied:

(line a) at "forest de Reines": Latin fores `door' (it is a question, therefore, of a concealed door in the queen's apartments through which the royal couple secretly left the Tuileries).

(line b) at "deux pars": part, an old word for "spouse, husband or wife."

(line b) at "vaultorte": Romance; composite word from vaulx 'valley' and torte 'tortuous,' that is, a crooked road or indirect path (it is a question of the change of direction decided upon by the king as he left Sainte-Menehould: toward Varennes rather than, as originally planned, toward Verdun).

(line b) at "Herne": first, Greek ernos 'stem, offshoot'; Herne, anagram for reine [queen], by metaplasm changing the h into i.

(line b) at "pierre blanche": the queen, a precious stone [pierre] dressed in white [blanche].

(line c) at "moyne": Greek monos 'alone, abandoned.'

(line c) at "noir": anagram for roi [king], by apheresis, by cutting the n.

(line d) at "esleu": Romance élu [chosen].

(line d) at "cap": by apocope Cap. for Capet. Benoist Rigaud puts a period, marking an abbreviation, after Cap, which is not there in Pierre Rigaud's version.

(line d) at "esleu cap": Capet élu, that is, the transformation of the ancient absolute royalty of the Capetians into an elective or constitutional monarchy.

Once again, I felt the impatience that an earlier reading, a number of years before, had caused in me when I met up with this ill-advised Greek and Latin, this pretentious paraphernalia of metaplasm, apheresis, apocope, this refusal to accept the clearest words, forest, monk, black, in their ordinary sense. And the geography! The history! The road from Sainte-Menehould to Varennes is neither tortuous nor crooked nor indirect. Constitutional monarchy is not elective; never, not in 1791 nor at the moment of flight nor later, would there ever be any question of "electing" a king as was done in Poland or in the Holy Roman Empire at the death of a pope. The king, who had become suspect, restored to power without election, was simply requested as the dynasty's representative to commit himself to respect the constitution. And that "Capet" reduced to "cap," with or without a period! It did not take me long, leafing through the Centuries, to come up with a "Cap de Byzance," which could hardly be a Capetian.

So I was curious to see how Espopondie had treated these four lines when I returned late in the afternoon to his place.

I shall not go on at length now about the interlocutors I met with every week. It suffices to say that M. de Momordy was a brilliant young diplomat freshly graduated from the Grand Concours, who now awaited a post in the Near East, and that Charles Leslucas, at twenty-two only slightly younger than he, had been my classmate at the École Normale Supérieure and that he was beginning a career in archaeology. He too was interested in the Eastern Mediterranean, but in its past.

As soon as we were all together, Espopondie filled the others in about our discovery; then I began to read the paper he had written in 1902. It was easy: our friend had

always had the clear and elegant handwriting with which we were familiar. Here is what we heard. <>

The Mesoamerican Codex Re-entangled: Production, Use and Re-use of Pre-colonial Documents (Archaeological Studies Leiden University, 31) [Leiden University Press, 9789087282639]

This innovative work aims to piece together the cultural biography of Mesoamerica's precolonial codices. Today, fewer than twenty manuscripts are all that remain of the Mesoamerican book-making tradition. These pictographic and hieroglyphic texts have often been researched according to their content, but such studies have ignored their nature as material objects. By tracing the paths these books have followed over the past five hundred years, Ludo Snijders offers fascinating insights into their production, use and reuse, destruction, rediscovery, and reinvention.

This 31st volume of the ASLU series is concerned with the study of the less than twenty remaining precolonial Mesoamerican codices. By considering these rare and fragile pictographic and hieroglyphic books from the cultural biography perspective, many different aspects of these books can be studied. The biography of these books begins with their production and continues during their life as sacred objects within Mesoamerican cultures. From the perspective of the late medieval European conquerors, these books had a very different meaning, which caused the destruction or physical alteration of these sacred objects. The few codices still in existence were almost forgotten in the European institutes that kept them in their collections. Only after these documents had been multiplied through the production of facsimiles, could they be reinterpreted by researchers and regain some of their meaning. The biographies of these books continue to grow as they get increasingly entangled with modern technology. A clear example of this is seen in the study of the palimpsest of the codex Añute or codex Selden, which is included in this work.

Ludo Snijders was awarded the position of KNAW Academy Assistant in 2010, which allowed him to lay the foundation for the current project. He works at Leiden University on the interpretation of the recovered palimpsest and the applications of imaging techniques for cultural heritage.

Archaeological Studies Leiden University (ASLU) is a series of the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University since 1998.

The series' aim is to publish research from the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University. It covers the fields of European Prehistory, Mediterranean, Near Eastern and Egyptian Archaeology, Mesoamerican and Andean Cultures, Caribbean and Amazonian Archaeology, Bio-Archaeology, Material Culture Studies, Archaeological Heritage Management, Digital Archaeology and the Archaeology of the Roman Provinces, Middle Ages and Modern Period.

[The Mesoamerican Codex Re-entangled](#) is an attempt to piece together the cultural biography of the precolonial Mesoamerican codices. It will be shown that modern technology is capable of elucidating even the earliest episodes of this

biography. The less than twenty manuscripts that still exist today are all that remains of the Mesoamerican book-making tradition. Past studies of these pictographic and hieroglyphic manuscripts have focused mostly on their content. The lack of a focus on their physical characteristics has meant that not enough is known about the production, use and re-use of these books.

As with any object, the biography of the codices begins with the creation process. Much about this process is unclear, as its study is made difficult by several factors. The first of these factors is the understandably protective policy of the institutes that have these books in their care. Any investigation of the originals should be done in a fully non-invasive manner. The methods currently available for non-invasive investigation of materials all use spectral analysis at different wavelengths. These methods can identify inorganic materials such as mineral pigments, but have limited applicability to organic materials. Earlier studies have shown that these codices are made on strips of either leather or paper, which was folded like an accordion to make pages and then covered with a chalk or gypsum gesso. On this bright white surface, the scribes painted their figures using mostly organic dye-based paints. What the source of these dyes was is often impossible to ascertain using the non-invasive methods. Next to these modern investigations, there is however also a few early colonial Spanish documents that provide information on the materials that were used by precolonial Mesoamerican peoples to make colors. These two sources of information provide a list of possible ingredients for the making of a codex. Within the context of this study experiments have been performed with the ingredients on this list to better understand how to work with this material; what previously unidentified secondary materials may need to be included; and, what techniques, skills and tools are needed to successfully make a full-scale codex. During this reconstruction process, it becomes clear that these books are the result of intensive interaction between many people. First, some of the materials identified in these books come from sources with a wide geographical spread. The wide range of skills needed to extract the resources and make all the components for each codex furthermore suggests a complex interaction between different craft specialists.

When an object is finished, it enters a new phase of its biography: a period of actual use. There is very little securely known about the use of these books, though these books were sacred texts rather than everyday objects. Some texts contain information that can be considered more historical in nature, though these books were also not objects for simple everyday use. A basic distinction that can be made is private versus communal use of a text. This distinction is important when considering the location of use, as well as all the other objects and people involved in its use.

When the remaining codices are studied closely, it becomes clear that these books are fragile. Danger comes from fire, water, light and simple handling. Thus, throughout their use they are in constant danger of deterioration and will eventually need to be either repaired, or disposed of in a proper manner. From Spanish descriptions as well as some very rare archaeological finds one way of disposing of an old codex

was by putting it in a burial, either in a cave or in the ground. Both leave very little archaeological remains. This helps explain why so few codices exist today.

The second big reason for the disappearance of entire libraries is to be found in the encounter between the Mesoamerican and the European worldviews. In Europe centuries of war against internal and external "Others" had associated non-Christians with the realm of evil. In the European imagination, there was a whole realm of evil, subjected to the devil, where demons were worshipped. In European art devils and demons were depicted as hybrid creatures, exhibiting both human and animal characteristics. In the Mesoamerican writing traditions, humans are often depicted with animal features in their dress. This was originally meant to be related to the name of the character, but was reinterpreted by Europeans to show that these were evil books used for demon worship. As a result, the Europeans destroyed them. The codex Iya Nacuaa (Colombino-Becker) shows an indigenous reaction to the threat of destruction levelled at the Mesoamerican writing systems because of this imaginary demonology. This document is one of the most damaged documents, but the damage is intentional and can paradoxically be seen to be directed towards a goal of preserving the document.

Almost all books that have survived the colonial period did so within the walls of European institutions. For many of these books it is not well known how they got there, or where they came from. For some it was even forgotten that they came from the Americas. In these institutes, the books lost their meaning and the workings of the writings system were forgotten. It was only with their reproduction that they could be studied and started to regain some of their meaning. The strategies of reproduction can be considered as a new chapter in the cultural biography of these codices. The different ways of reproduction transformed the objects in fundamental ways. Inaccurate reproduction is one obvious transformation, but even photographic reproduction, with its two-dimensionality, changes the codex. A second aspect of transformation is the creation of access to these books through reproduction. Whom they are reproduced for is as important as how they are reproduced. Reproduction of these books has given more access to scholars, but has due to the costs of many of the reproductions had a limited impact on the public. As with any rare and thus valuable object, these codices have attracted the attention of forgers, which again transforms the meaning of these objects. Modern digital technology is on the rise as one of the ways of creating access to cultural heritage, though it has not yet been applied extensively on these manuscripts. The new possibilities that these techniques offer, as well as the pitfalls that need to be avoided, are important aspects to consider for the future of these books.

Modern technology has been the main tool for the investigation of the earliest phase of one of the Mesoamerican codices. During the 1950s it was discovered that one of the codices had lived a life before the use of the known text: The Codex Añute (Selden) is a palimpsest. Hidden underneath the gesso layer, and older layer of images can be found. When it was first discovered, technology had not advanced far enough to allow

the investigation of these images without removing the gesso. Within the project here presented researchers from Leiden University, Delft University of Technology, and the Bodleian Libraries of the University of Oxford, have recently teamed up to recover these images in a noninvasive manner. A whole range of techniques was applied to obtain as much information as possible on the images that were already exposed — due to natural wear and the invasive investigation of the 1950s - as well as previously invisible images on pages still completely covered with gesso. This opened a whole series of new questions which may now be asked of this object: why was it reused? Was this normal? What can the hidden text tell us about Mesoamerican history?

All these new questions indicate that the cultural biographies of these manuscripts are not yet finished. One possible future chapter may be to use these books to reconnect present-day Mexican indigenous peoples with their cultural heritage. One medium for this may be the internet. The final part of this work contains a brief discussion of the possibilities and the pitfalls that this would bring. <>

Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China: The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States, Qin, and Han edited by Donald Harper and Marc Kalinowski [Handbook of Oriental Studies: Section Four-China, Brill Academic, 9789004310193]

[Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China](#) is a comprehensive introduction to the daybook manuscripts found in Warring States, Qin, and Han tombs (453 BCE-220 CE) and intended for use in daily life.

Excerpt: Introduction by Donald Harper and Marc Kalinowski

In 2017, it will have been forty-two years since the first discovery of daybooks (rishu 𠄎) among the bamboo-slip manuscripts in Shuihudi tomb 11, Hubei, a Qin dynasty tomb dated to 217 CE. The 1975 Shuihudi find was the third in a run of ancient Chinese manuscript discoveries that began in 1972 with Yinqueshan tomb 1, Shandong, the second-century CE Han dynasty tomb, followed in 1973 by Mawangdui tomb 3, Hunan, a Han tomb dated to 168 CE. Manuscript discoveries have been continuous since the 1970s. Today we have grown used to news of another find and to the increasingly efficient collaboration of archaeologists, conservation experts, and paleographers in China who restore, transcribe, and publish the manuscripts (a situation marred only by instances of looted manuscripts without archaeological provenance and by forgeries).

This is to say that before 1975, a book on ancient Chinese daybooks could not have been written because there were none. For that matter, even at the end of the 1970s, it could not have been anticipated that daybook manuscripts from the last centuries of the first millennium CE would reappear in amounts that constitute a sizable manuscript corpus more than two thousand years after they were used by people in communities that existed where modern excavation sites are now located. This volume is the collective effort of eleven scholars from several disciplines who describe, assess, and

contextualize the daybook manuscripts in terms of what the manuscripts reveal of the lives and ideas of the people for whom they were produced, as well as consider daybooks in light of comparable evidence from other cultures and peoples.

The word “hemerology”—the simplest definition is “knowledge of good and bad days”—is used mainly by scholars of the ancient Near East for the calendar-based texts in which hemerological knowledge was transmitted. The same forms of knowledge in early China are the most prominent feature of daybooks, and hemerology is the dominant theme for daybook studies. We decided on the title “Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China” in order to focus our attention beyond the subject matter and consider how daybook manuscripts became part of people’s lives, not simply as information transferred onto written media, but as a constituent of daily life realized anew in each manuscript. To use a term that has gained currency in cultural studies, daybooks were realia, or everyday objects used by many, and the material manuscripts we now have are as significant for our understanding of Chinese culture in a distant past as for their hemerological content.

The term “book of fate” is borrowed from popular culture in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, where the idea of such a book promised everyman an oracle for life. Indeed, Herman Kirchenhoffer published *The Oracle or Book of Fate, Formerly in the Possession of the Emperor Napoleon, and Now First Rendered into English, from a German Translation, of an Ancient Egyptian Manuscript, Found in the Year 1801*, by M. Sonnini, in *One of the Royal Tombs, Near Mount Libycus, in Upper Egypt in London in 1822*. His preface details Napoleon’s attachment to this Egyptian book of fate recorded on a papyrus scroll in the hieroglyphic script, the content of which had been dictated by a learned Copt to Napoleon’s secretary, who wrote it down in German in order to preserve its secrecy. The elements of secrecy and notoriety—except for the preface, nothing more is known about *The Oracle or Book of Fate*—made Kirchenhoffer’s English translation an instant success. The comparison between daybook manuscripts and books of fate in nineteenth-century England highlights the serendipitous circumstance of modern archaeology providing us with manuscript realia to study ancient Chinese popular culture.

The subtitle “The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States, Qin, and Han” represents the core of this volume, which is a comprehensive presentation of the manuscripts. The first eight chapters cover archaeological perspectives on daybook discoveries, the characteristics of the manuscripts discovered to date, daybook hemerology, religion as it appears in daybooks, and the calendar. The three final chapters broaden our perspective on hemerology as a field of study that embraces ancient and modern and gives us an exceptional lens through which to examine ideas and life experiences, whether in ancient Babylon, medieval Europe, or late imperial China. This exploration of hemerology beyond the corpus of ancient Chinese excavated manuscripts informs our reading of the daybooks in their original cultural setting and, at the same time, defines a common ground of interest for cultural studies irrespective of time and place.

This introduction addresses overarching concerns and conventions common to all chapters, leaving the thick description of daybook manuscripts, hemerology, and cultural settings to the chapters and appendixes. Four topics that constitute a shared theoretical and methodological foundation for the chapters are hemerology, technical occult and scientific literature, the codicology of daybook manuscripts, and daybook studies as a subfield of research on Chinese hemerology.

Hemerology

The term “hemerology,” designating certain calendar-based texts that record lucky and unlucky times and places for specified activities, entered the modern scholarly idiom in the second half of the nineteenth century, when it was adopted for cuneiform text examples by the first generation of Assyriologists, who applied the term “menology” to related cuneiform texts organized by months. Before they were adopted by Assyriologists, the English words “hemerology” and “menology” were used as modernized forms of the medieval Greek and Latin *hemerologion* and *hemerologium* and *menologion* and *menologium*, referring to a record of days (*hemero-*) or months (*meno-*) (with corresponding words in other European languages). The term “menologium” was used more often and included the meaning of the Christian calendar of saints; one seventeenth-century gloss of *hemerologium* cited in the Oxford English Dictionary describes it as “a *Kalendar* or Register declaring what is done every day, a *Day-book*.” The similarity between “*Day-book*” and the Chinese *rishu* “*daybook*” is fortuitous, and works titled *Hemerologium* in the seventeenth century were not devoted to the lucky or unlucky aspects of days.

In 1869, at the site of Nineveh, George Smith discovered “a curious religious calendar of the Assyrians, in which every month is divided into four weeks, and the seventh days, or ‘Sabbaths,’ are marked out as days on which no work should be undertaken.” When published by the British Museum in 1875, the two plates, showing facsimile cuneiform text from the front and back of one clay tablet, were identified as “*Hemerology for the Month of the Intercalary Elul*,” and Smith assisted the main editor, Henry Rawlinson, with the reproduction of the text. The Reverend A. H. Sayce’s translation, titled “*A Babylonian Saints’ Calendar*,” followed in 1876. Sayce’s introduction notes that the cuneiform hemerology “not only proves the existence of a Chaldean ritual and rubric, but also shows that each day of the year had been assigned to its particular deity or patron-saint, in whose honour special ceremonies and services had to be performed.” For Sayce, however, the hemerology’s greatest significance lay in the probable Babylonian precedent for the Sabbath in Judeo-Christian tradition.

Today, the “*intercalary Elul*” hemerology is known as one part of the multi-tablet hemerology *Inbu bēl arhi* (*Fruit, Lord of the Month*), edited and translated by Alasdair Livingstone. The tablets are from the Aššurbanipal libraries in Nineveh, now in the British Museum. *Fruit, Lord of the Month* is organized by months of thirty days, and the hemerology identifies the associated spirits for each day, as well as the favorable or unfavorable indications for activities involving sacrifices, food,

clothing, travel, medical treatment, divination, and the like. While *Fruit, Lord of the Month* addresses the king and the life of the palace, its contents were taken from older hemerologies intended for everyone. The connection between this work and Chinese daybooks is clear, and the term “hemerology” is useful for texts in which calendrical science and religious custom coincide in providing guidance for daily life. In addition to its appearance in studies of the ancient Near East, the term is increasingly being adopted—and its meaning adapted to current research—for texts and knowledge best described as “hemerological” in other cultures and civilizations.

Looking back to nineteenth-century Assyriology in England and Europe, it must be recalled that archaeological explorations in the Near East and the discovery of cuneiform documents held special relevance for showing the influence of the Babylonian and Assyrian civilizations on Semitic civilization and their links to the Bible. In the case of the “*intercalary Elul*” hemerology, clues to the origins of later Semitic calendars had already been found in cuneiform calendars, and the religiously oriented calendar found by Smith points to more connections with Judeo-Christian traditions. There is no record of who decided on the word “hemerology” (Smith or perhaps Rawlinson?), but Sayce’s “*Babylonian saints’ calendar*” indicates that Assyriologists were thinking of parallels to the Christian calendar of saints and to the calendrical “*ritual and rubric*” of the church. The predilection for reading cuneiform texts against a Judeo-Christian background belongs to the early history of Assyriology, and claims such as the identification of the Babylonian “*sabbath*” have been abandoned. Yet it was precisely this background that gave us hemerology and menology.

It should also be kept in mind that the words “hemerology” and “menology” were rare by the nineteenth century. Given their disuse, there was no need for explanation when they were reassigned to cuneiform texts in Assyriology. Rather, hemerology and menology were revived in a contemporary scholarly application that seemed to resonate with the perceived legacy of ancient Near Eastern religion and provided precise names for texts that were not merely calendars. Tellingly, nineteenth-century Egyptology did not use the new terminology even though there were studies and translations of hieroglyphic examples of similar texts. The name “*calendar of good and bad days*” was frequently used and remains in use in present-day Egyptology along with “*day-selection calendar*,” “*prognostic calendar*,” and “*hemerology*.”

To speak of ancient Chinese hemerology presumes a modern field of study in which the Chinese evidence adds to the evidence from Assyriology and Egyptology, as well as from medieval European studies (in which there is extensive research on hemerological literature and ideas in popular culture). Most research has been undertaken by scholars using the accepted categories and terminology of their separate fields—“*calendar*” and “*almanac*” are two words they all share—without explicit recognition of the word “hemerology” as a unifying term. One goal of this volume is to advance the field of hemerology, which might be loosely understood to concern the ideas, practices, and texts in all cultures that relate time as expressed in the calendar to daily fortune in the collective

experience of a people. Elizabeth Hill Boone's recent study of the painted books from premodern Mexico, which she describes as both divinatory codices and almanacs, examines the manuscripts as "guides for living," and the content summaries of the manuscripts show them to be congruent with the Chinese daybooks whose content is summarized in appendix B in this volume. In Mexico, as in China and the broader Mediterranean world, knowledge of lucky times and places, or hemerology, was contiguous with divination for deciding a course of action in everyday life; however, hemerology was the knowledge of experience as defined by the calendar and custom, in contrast to the chance wisdom of divination.

One further point to note about China is the existence of ancient words that correspond to the modern scholarly use of "hemerology." For hemerology as text, the first attestation is the third-century *sCE* title *Rishu* "Daybook" written on one of the *Shuihudi* daybook manuscripts; for hemerology as form of knowledge, there is the second-century CE anti-hemerology and anti-divination ideal recorded in the *Master of Huainan* (*Huainanzi* 淮南子): "do not practice season-and-day selection" (*ze shiri* 擇時 *kí*) (hemerology) and "do not practice hexagram and turtle divination" (*zhan guazhao* 占卦兆).¹⁰ To be sure, during these two centuries, when most of the daybook manuscripts known today were produced, most people did not consider their daily habits in regard to calendar-based customs as constituting a formal body of knowledge called "hemerology," and the current examples of daybook manuscripts indicate that the manuscripts were locally produced miscellanies for everyday use, not classified collections of hemerology. However, for certain groups in elite society, hemerology (the "season-and-day selection" specified in the *Master of Huainan*) was a subject of intellectual interest alongside divination, and points of view differed. In this respect, a cultural history of hemerology in early China adds to our understanding of the history of thought, in particular the formation of correlative cosmology between the third and first centuries BCE.

Technical Occult and Scientific Literature

In Brill's *New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World*, the entry for the term "technical literature," a translation of the original entry on *Fachliteratur* in *Der Neue Pauly*, begins with a definitional statement that technical literature "includes general and specialized presentations of ancient science, arts, and techniques." Although the term has gained currency in English, the study of technical literature, or *Fachliteratur*, emerged in the 1950s as a specialized area of research for medieval literature composed in German. Wolfgang Wegner estimates that roughly 90 percent of medieval German-language literature is *Fachliteratur*, adding that between the eighth and sixteenth centuries, the texts were composed continuously and in localities where there was no notable production of poetic literature, which held a distinctive status in medieval ideas about literature. The range of subjects includes the three medieval *artes* (knowledge of skills and techniques)—liberal arts (rhetoric, arithmetic, music, and so forth), mechanical arts (agriculture, metallurgy, medicine, and so forth), and magical arts (divination, incantation, necromancy, and so forth)—but

can be extended to include other areas of technical knowledge, such as political, legal, and administrative matters.

The English-language term "technical literature" conveys the meaning of *Fachliteratur* as texts that are informational sources of applied knowledge (Bernhard Haage speaks of them as medieval nonfiction). In addition to the idea of being "technical," the German word *Fach* suggests the many varieties of knowledge practiced by people who developed the technical language for their skills and transmitted it in texts, which, because they were composed in vernacular language (not in Latin), might have been used by both specialists and nonspecialists. Hence technical literature in German or any other language has significance not only for the history of literature but also for cultural history interpreted on the basis of the texts. On the one hand, technical literature encompassed skills and the fields of knowledge attached to skills. The practitioners, whatever their differences, had in common their involvement with technical literature and shared the same conventions of text production. To consider briefly the case of hemerology in early China, astrologers, calendar makers, and diviners were producing technical literature, and the excavated daybook manuscripts are one textual output. Technical literature became the common ground for their respective skills. On the other hand, technical literature influenced ideas and practices in society at large as increased production led to greater accessibility and circulation of texts, and daybooks are examples of popularization in the production of technical literature.

In medieval Europe, lettered society differentiated among the liberal, mechanical, and magical arts. In practice, however, this classification of knowledge did not fix boundaries as do modern conceptions of astronomy in contrast to astrology or, at the most general level, of science and religion as opposed to magic. The textual porosity of technical literature, which enabled the reception and transmission of all manner of useful knowledge, reflects the absence of such modern dichotomies. The characteristics of medieval European technical literature have been invaluable to modern studies of medieval science and religion precisely because the representation of ideas and practices in the texts elucidates a medieval worldview. Whether in regard to European or other premodern cultures, modern scholars writing in English often use contrastive compound terms such as "magic and religion," "occult and scientific," and "occult science" in order to examine their worldviews from the modern perspective, to which we are culturally and intellectually bound, without intending a false dichotomy for the worldview under examination. "Technical occult and scientific literature" and similar terms are used in several chapters in this volume with the intention of viewing daybooks as part of the ancient Chinese technical literature treating of occult and scientific knowledge and as comparable to related technical literature in other premodern cultures.

The term "technical occult and scientific literature" is noticeably similar to the Chinese *shushu* 數術 "calculations and arts," which first appeared in the classification of literature for the first-century CE editorial project that produced copies of books for the Han imperial court. In the associated catalog, the division of works that could be considered "occult and scientific" is

titled “Shushu” (Calculation and arts). From bibliographic classification, the term shushu was extended to name the body of knowledge; that is, the knowledge was identified with the texts, and vice versa.¹⁹ Shu “art” refers to knowledge of skills similar to the medieval European artes. The basic meaning of shu “calculation” is arithmetic calculation and, by extension, skillful methods. As preserved in the first-century E bibliographic treatise of the Book of Han (Han shu 漢書), the “Calculations and Arts” division is organized into six subdivisions: the first two list titles of works on astrology, meteorology, astronomical cycles, and calendar making; the next three treat of divination (including hemerology), incantation, and magic; and the last subdivision is for topomancy and physiognomy. In the bibliographic treatise, medicine forms a separate division called “Fangji” 方技 (Recipes and techniques), which reflects the view of medicine as technical skill. Out of 110 book titles in the “Calculations and Arts” division and 36 titles in the “Recipes and Techniques” division, only one or two survive in a transmitted edition.

Three issues require our attention when considering the relationship between the lost books recorded in the “Calculations and Arts” division of the Book of Han bibliographic treatise and the excavated manuscripts that represent technical occult and scientific literature in our classification. The first two concern the nature of books. It is certain that in the first century CE, the Han court manuscripts were state-of-the-art examples of book production. Further, the “Calculations and Arts” division represented the first-ever classification of occult and scientific literature. The classification not only served the purpose of bibliographic organization but also reflected elite intellectual trends and fulfilled the needs of court-centered ideology. In both cases, correlative cosmology based on five-agents (wuxing) and yinyang 陰陽 ideas was an influence. The third subdivision, “Wuxing” (Five agents), provides the most obvious evidence and is where works on hemerology are found. Among the thirty-one book titles, roughly one-third include the terms wuxing or yinyang, or both, and another third refer to hemerological methods by name, several of which are attested in daybook manuscripts. Nothing in the bibliographic treatise book titles matches the manuscript examples of daybooks (the reasons are addressed in the “Codicology of Daybook Manuscripts” section in this introduction). However, there are examples of specialized occult and scientific works, including hemerological texts, among the excavated manuscripts. Some may be related to books in the bibliographic treatise, yet it should not be assumed that the manuscript texts were influenced by the intellectual and ideological perspective of the treatise.

This leads to the third issue, which focuses on the idea of the occult—divination, hemerology, magic—from the sociological perspective. How do we account for different social levels and degrees of involvement with ideas and practices that we deem to be occult as well as with the production and use of the technical literature? And what were the views of the original users of the manuscripts? None of the ancient Chinese manuscripts discovered to date can be firmly associated with a specialist-practitioner as its maker or user, yet we may presume that there were differences between esoteric texts

produced for a small group and popular texts produced for wider circulation, with daybooks at the popular end of the scale. Modern studies sometimes treat “occult” and “esoteric” as comparable terms. Both suggest secret knowledge and the sense that there are hidden processes and powers in the world that people can identify and tap in a variety of ways. We opt for the word “occult” in this volume, in part because the usage is common in combinations such as “occult and scientific” and “occult science” and in part because “esoteric” emphasizes the presumption of secrecy maintained by the small group of people who possess the knowledge.

We would be remiss not to acknowledge that the study of technical occult and scientific literature is not limited to the historical past. Occultism and esotericism in the modern world has emerged as a field of study that involves historians of science and religion along with anthropologists, sociologists, and others in related fields. Discussions of definition and research objectives and delineation of the processes of popularization in modern occultism and esotericism bring forth new forms of evidence from contemporary society that bear on our studies of premodern cultures.

Codicology of Daybook Manuscripts

Daybooks are “guides for living” (to apply Boone’s term for the Mexican divinatory codices), collections of hemerological information and some non-hemerological information in a form convenient for everyday use. An integrated approach to studying them must consider the kinds of knowledge they contain in comparison to contemporaneous hemerological literature; the transformation of the knowledge into texts, tables, or diagrams; the production of the material manuscripts from these components; and their actual use. Codicology constitutes such an approach based on the codex, the manuscript-book formed from leaves bound together to make a multipage work. Most ancient Chinese manuscripts take the form of scrolls made from a set of narrow bamboo or wooden slips bound with cords. Exceptions are silk-sheet manuscripts, which can be rolled into a scroll or folded like fabric for storage, and wider wooden or bamboo tablets, which can be used singly or in sets. Allowing for the different circumstances of bound-slip scrolls and silk-sheet manuscripts in contrast to the codex, the methods of codicology apply to Chinese manuscripts.

Since 1975, when the manuscript with the title Rishu “Daybook” written on the verso of the last slip was found in Shuihudi tomb 11, Chinese archaeological reports have used rishu as a broad term for excavated manuscripts with hemerological content, and the same usage appears in studies of hemerology based on the manuscripts. Publication often did not follow the initial reports of manuscript discoveries, which has made a precise analysis of their relationship to the already published manuscripts impossible. This volume adopts a threefold classification of hemerological texts in the manuscripts based on codicological analysis of the manuscripts published to date.

First, we give the name “daybook” to a group of six manuscripts that constitute a distinctive text type: both Shuihudi manuscripts; one manuscript from Jiudian tomb 56, Hubei; two from Fangmatan tomb 1, Gansu; and one from Kongjiapo

tomb 8, Hubei. All six manuscripts are bound-slip scrolls. Enumerating their characteristics provides a working definition of the daybook text type. Daybooks are miscellanies, which means that multiple texts were copied onto the manuscript; the texts vary in length, sometimes occupying as little as a single slip; non-hemerological texts (including rituals, incantations, and magic) occur along with hemerological texts; the manuscripts were produced locally in communities near the site of their modern rediscovery and, despite their strong textual similarities, are not identical copies of the same work; daybooks are always contained within the space of a single scroll, or one set of bound slips, and the number of slips delimits the diversity of texts included; and different people may have used and added to these multiple-text manuscripts over time. Daybook-related manuscripts are miscellanies, like daybooks, but lack the defining characteristics of the daybook text type. The third manuscript group contains hemerological texts that are more specialized in comparison to daybooks and daybook-related manuscripts.

While rishu “daybook” is written on one of the Shuihudi daybooks and was intended as a generic title for that manuscript, we use the term “daybook” to classify the text type that includes it and the other five manuscripts. Among the six daybook manuscripts, the evidence of shared patterns of organization and conventionalization is codicologically significant. People were not copying the same book over and over again; they were assembling pieces of written information according to conventions that had become customary for them and that are recognizable on examination as what we call the “daybook text type.” The recurrence of the same pieces of written information in daybook-related manuscripts and specialized hemerological texts—and occasionally in medical manuscripts—indicates the common sources of information available to all, which is also a significant codicological fact about the interconnectedness of technical literature.

Evidence of planning refines the definition of the daybook text type as a miscellany and brings us to an essential observation on what daybooks are and what they are not. Daybook hemerology relies on the existence of the calendar for a particular year to which the user applies the information contained in the daybook, but the daybook itself is not arranged in the format of months and days found in contemporaneous examples of excavated calendars. Some calendars were found in tombs with daybooks or other hemerological texts, and some make limited reference to day qualifiers used in hemerology. However, in view of the infrequent occurrence of hemerological information on calendars, we do not classify any of the ancient calendars excavated to date as hemerological literature.

The situation is different for the medieval period in China, when calendars became a significant source of hemerological information, similar to the printed almanacs that were popular in recent centuries. These Chinese almanacs may be compared to hemerological literature arranged in calendar format in ancient Egypt and the Near East, medieval Europe, and premodern Mexico.

The daybook is an organized hemerological miscellany, or multiple-text manuscript, not a type of hemerological calendar

or almanac. The hemerologies contained in daybooks and daybook-related manuscripts are of two sorts, referred to here as general and topical. A general hemerology is a single hemerological system in which the prescriptions and prohibitions arising from the system are applied to multiple activities in daily life; a topical hemerology provides prescriptions and prohibitions for one or more activities as specified by the hemerology. Jianchu 建除 (Establish-Remove) hemerology, in which the assignment of twelve-day qualifiers to months and days determines whether a person should or should not engage in the activities specified in the text, is a general hemerology. Topical hemerologies address activities related to, for example, agriculture, construction, birth, illness, marriage, travel, and clothing.²⁶ One characteristic of the daybook text type is the placement of Jianchu hemerology and other general hemerologies at the beginning of the manuscript, followed by a mix of general and topical hemerologies interspersed with non-hemerological information.

The classification into daybooks, daybook-related manuscripts, and specialized hemerological texts is provisional and open to revision as more manuscripts are discovered and published. Nevertheless, there is a clear distinction between miscellanies such as daybooks and daybook-related manuscripts, on the one hand, and the few examples of manuscripts with specialized hemerological texts, on the other. Equally obvious is the difference between the manuscript miscellanies and the hemerological books whose titles are recorded in the “Five Agents” subdivision of the Book of Han bibliographic treatise. The latter books were edited, copied, and classified in the “Calculations and Arts” division by court command and ranged in length from six to twenty-nine scrolls. Daybooks were “unclassified” literature—single scrolls of varying quality depending on who happened to be involved in their production—that circulated in communities in response to local demand. No one intended to keep the same daybook forever. Daybooks were ephemeral objects and were replaced when they were no longer usable.

They have reappeared today because manuscripts were among the burial goods placed in tombs, tomb construction and the environment in certain regions favored the preservation of fragile objects made of wood and bamboo, and modern archaeology has increased the number of tombs being opened, by both archaeological teams and looters, resulting in regular discoveries of manuscripts. As of 2016, a considerable amount of hemerological literature has been recovered from tombs, and daybooks and daybook-related manuscripts account for most of it (non-tomb sites have yielded mostly fragments). For the period of the third to first centuries CE, archaeological excavations of cemeteries show a geographic distribution of daybooks from north to south, typified by the published daybooks from Fangmatan tomb 1, Gansu, and Shuihudi tomb 11, Hubei, both late third century CE. The preliminary report on the hemerological manuscript found in 2014 in Zhoujiazhai 周家寨 tomb 8, Hubei, describes the manuscript as a close match for the published daybook from Kongjiapo tomb 8. The tombs are situated only several hundred meters apart, and both are from the mid-second century CE, separated by about a decade; that is, the tomb occupants lived in the same

community at roughly the same time. The evidence from tomb archaeology indicates patterns of daybook production and circulation in local communities before the manuscripts became burial goods.

Our knowledge of ancient Chinese hemerology and hemerological literature depends on the expeditious publication of discovered manuscripts and the discovery of more manuscripts. Codicology remains an essential element of their study. At present, we may say that the daybook's place in the larger body of hemerological literature and the place of hemerological literature within the body of technical occult and scientific literature are knowable, even if not yet fully known.

Daybook Studies and Ancient Chinese Hemerology

The six published daybooks from Jiudian tomb 56, Shuihudi tomb 11, Fangmatan tomb 1, and Kongjiapo tomb 8 represent the major sources for the study of ancient Chinese hemerology today, followed by the group of published daybook-related manuscripts. Appendix B provides summaries of their contents. Over the past four decades, the frequency of daybook and daybook-related manuscript discoveries relative to the total of ancient Chinese excavated manuscripts, their geographic and temporal distribution within the archaeological record, the codicological coherence of the manuscripts, and their significance as realia in the lives of many all speak to the need for the kind of dedicated study realized in this volume. The main subject is hemerology. However, our focus is on the manuscripts, and the chapters address the fields and subjects necessary to establishing the field of daybook studies that the manuscript discoveries have made possible.

The first eight chapters are the core, the “inner chapters” (neipian 篇), to use a traditional Chinese designation. In chapter 1, Alain Thote discusses ancient Chinese manuscripts from the perspective of archaeology and the evaluation of artifacts. Chapter 2, by Liu Lexian, contains a codicological classification of daybooks and summary of manuscript sources. Donald Harper expands on daybook manuscripts as realia in their cultural context in chapter 3. In chapter 4, Marc Kalinowski examines hemerology in daily life and the technical hemerological knowledge recorded in daybooks. Chapter 5, by Yan Changgui, details the spirit world as evidenced in the hemerological and non-hemerological sections of daybooks. In chapter 6, Li Ling gives an account of the manuscripts looted from the tomb at Zidanku 子彈庫 (ca. 300 CE), Hunan, in 1942 and their identity as hemerological literature. Chapter 7, by Christopher Cullen, draws on excavated calendars to describe the calendar and calendar-making in ancient China. In chapter 8, Marianne Bujard uses daybooks and second-century CE stela inscriptions to examine religion in local communities and private religious practices.

The final three chapters complement the core and are the volume's “outer chapters” (waipian 外篇). Chapter 9, by Richard Smith, covers practices of “day-selection” in popular Chinese almanacs of recent centuries. In chapter 10, László Sándor Chardonnens addresses hemerological literature in medieval Europe and its place in the daily lives of its users. Alasdair Livingstone provides an overview of Babylonian and Assyrian hemerologies and menologies in chapter 11.

These brief descriptions highlight each chapter's part in creating a complete introduction to daybooks that will guide future daybook studies and research on the wider range of ancient Chinese hemerological literature. In the current state of daybook studies, the similarity between the hemerology in daybooks and the hemerology in use in other times and places is easily observed. The information in daybooks applies to everyday life and, in principle, to everyone, as does the hemerology of the later Chinese almanacs. Daybooks also share the ephemeral quality of the later almanacs, which were produced annually in great numbers and were disposable by design. The examples of daybook manuscripts reveal a degree of conventionality that can be attributed to continual local production and the practical utility of daybooks for many people. Comparisons with late imperial China, medieval Europe, and ancient Babylon indicate similar patterns in the formation of popular hemerological literature, its role in formalizing the body of knowledge that we call “hemerology,” and its wider role in giving structure to shared ideas and practices in people's experience of everyday life.

Research comparing daybooks with other ancient Chinese hemerological literature is just beginning. Specialized hemerological texts among the Mawangdui tomb 3 manuscripts were published in 2014 in the first complete publication of Mawangdui manuscripts, and manuscripts acquired by Peking University in 2009 promise to be another source of specialized hemerological texts from approximately the same period. One Peking University text, which is closely related to a Mawangdui hemerological text, was published in 2015, and publication of others is expected without undue delay. Complete examination of all hemerological texts in excavated manuscripts awaits their publication. Detailed analysis of the specialized texts must take into account their relationship not only with daybooks but also with other technical occult and scientific literature and is expected to offer new insights on the involvement of specialists in the production of technical literature and its popularization in daybooks.

The availability of more hemerological literature makes it possible to identify interconnections across a range of texts and improves our ability to interpret the literature. Already in daybooks, the occurrence of hemerological and non-hemerological information in multiple versions is an invaluable aid to the interpretation of both. When one manuscript is damaged, the solution may be as simple as finding the same text in an undamaged manuscript. Or one manuscript may provide fuller information than the others. Another circumstance is variation among the manuscript copies of the text, which no doubt led their original users to read the text differently. When making judgments about the correct reading, modern scholars must recognize the characteristics of the manuscripts and the expectations of their original users.

Transmitted sources can help us understand the manuscript sources, whether in contemporaneous writings such as the Master of Huainan or in later almanacs and hemerological compendiums. For the excavated calendars, accounts of calendrical calculations in use during the Han dynasty, as described in the Master of Huainan, the Records of the Scribe (Shiji 史記), the Book of Han, and the Book of Later Han (Hou

Han shu 後漢書), have offered guidance. In general, however, evidence of hemerology in ancient transmitted sources is scanty and incomplete. This includes even the first-century CE *Assay of Arguments* (Lunheng 論衡) by Wang Chong 王充, who addresses hemerology in several essays that present his objections to hemerology as a body of knowledge and collection of customs and refer occasionally to contemporaneous hemerological literature. Before the manuscript discoveries, this work was the only evidence of the literature. Now that we have original manuscripts, Wang Chong's hemerological references appear more like a backdrop to his views on hemerology and are of limited use for explaining the content of daybooks and other manuscripts with hemerological texts.

The daybooks and daybook-related manuscripts are a remarkable legacy from the beginning centuries of the age of manuscripts in China, when the idea of committing knowledge or information to writing led to rapid and abundant manuscript production. Manuscripts with historical and intellectual texts that defined an elite world of ideas are one outcome of this process. Scholars who study the excavated manuscripts with such texts must examine this new evidence together with the transmitted historical and intellectual literature. Another outcome is the multifarious technical literature to which daybooks belong. We are in mostly uncharted territory with the ancient technical literature, and excavated manuscripts are often the first evidence. Moreover, the form and function of daybooks and daybook-related manuscripts reflect the distinctive social and cultural circumstances that motivated the production of the manuscripts in local communities and their use by people of different social levels. In this volume, we have endeavored to address the manuscripts, hemerology, and everyday experience broadly in order to give daybook studies a firm foundation. <>

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Art & Theory

Visuality and Virtuality: Images and Pictures from Prehistory to Perspective by Whitney Davis [Princeton University Press, 9780691171944]

This book builds on the groundbreaking theoretical framework established in Whitney Davis's acclaimed previous book, *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, in which he shows how certain culturally constituted aspects of artifacts and pictures are visible to informed viewers. Here, Davis uses revealing archaeological and historical case studies to further develop his theory, presenting an exacting new account of the interaction that occurs when a viewer looks at a picture.

Davis argues that pictoriality—the depiction intended by its maker to be seen—emerges at a particular standpoint in space and time. Reconstruction of this standpoint is the first step of the art historian's craft. Because standpoints are inherently mutable and mobile, pictoriality constantly shifts in form and possible meaning. To capture this complexity, Davis develops new concepts of radical pictorial ambiguity, including "bivisibility" (the fact that pictures can always be seen in ways other than intended), pictorial naturalism, and the behavior of pictures under changing angles of view. He then applies these concepts to four cases—Paleolithic cave painting; ancient Egyptian tomb decoration; classical Greek architectural sculpture, with a focus on the Parthenon frieze; and Renaissance perspective as invented by Brunelleschi.

A profound new theory of the work of both makers and viewers by one of the discipline's most esteemed and engaged thinkers, *Visuality and Virtuality* is essential reading for art historians, architects, archaeologists, and philosophers of art and visual theory.

A General Theory of Visual Culture by Whitney Davis [Princeton University Press, 9780691147659] Paperback

Winner of the 2012 Susanne K. Langer Award for Outstanding Scholarship in the Ecology of Symbolic Form, Media Ecology Association

"Along with David Summers's *Real Spaces*, Whitney Davis's [A](#)

Spotlight

[General Theory of Visual Culture](#) is one of the most ambitious and potentially foundational books on art history in recent decades. . . . As conceptual reorganization of art history's fundamental terms of engagement with objects, the book is exemplary, and it is difficult to imagine a reader who is engaged with the discipline for whom this book is optional reading."--Jim Elkins, *CAA Reviews*

"[Q]uirky and ambitious."--Choice

"Davis's project to develop a general theory of visual culture is a necessary and urgent one."--Derval Tubridy, *Visual Culture*

"[A] magnificent book. This is an ambitious and fascinating work, one that offers a novel perspective on the intertwined projects of art history and visual culture. The sheer scope of the book and the detailed, methodical argument are simply too broad and too detailed to adequately summarize here."--Brian Kane, *Art Bulletin*

"This is a tremendously ambitious book, whose purpose is to clarify art history's fundamental confusions about the visual, visibility, and culture. It is a theoretical treatise, so it avoids practical proposals for curing art history's or visual studies' traditional insouciance regarding their founding concepts. But the book is an exemplary reconceptualization, and will take its place as one of the clearest and most general meditations on the place of the visual in culture."--James Elkins, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

"In this book, Whitney Davis, a major contributor to both the 'old' and 'new' art history, reviews fundamental concepts such as form, style, and iconography with the clarity and generosity of mind his earlier writings have taught us to expect. Beginning from problems described by Wittgenstein, Arthur Danto, and Richard Wollheim, Davis discusses these fundamental concepts in terms that will be of broad interest, at the same time developing a humane and subtle project for cultural interpretation. Davis's 'succession' and 'recursion' should become standard terms in art history, and the book amply repays the patience its careful, constructive arguments demand."--David Summers, University of Virginia

"This brilliant study addresses what the author rightly terms the 'urgent' question of art history's expansion into visual culture.' As penetrating in its theoretical analysis as it is wide-ranging in its historical scope, this is without doubt the most thoughtful and comprehensive work on the subject."--Stephen Bann, University of Bristol

"Displaying the erudition of an extraordinarily well-read art historian and arguing with the lucidity of a classical analytic philosopher, Whitney Davis extends the grand intellectual tradition of Riegl, Wölfflin, and Panofsky, as commented on by Wittgenstein, Wollheim, and Danto. Davis's detailed and subtle analysis will provoke a lively and lasting debate."--David Carrier, Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland Institute of Art

"Brilliant and original in conception and execution, this book succeeds triumphantly in its ambition to provide a general theory of visual culture. One has to go back to Gombrich's *Art*

and *Illusion*, Panofsky's *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, or Wölfflin's *Classic Art* to find art historical writing of comparable ambition and success. Art history will never be the same again."--John Onians, author of *Neuroarthistory*

"This fascinating book makes a remarkable contribution to the philosophy of art history. It contains brilliant analyses of some of the discipline's most deeply naturalized assumptions and will interest anyone who cares about its past, present, or future."--Keith Moxey, Barnard College, Columbia University

What is cultural about vision--or visual about culture? In this ambitious book, Whitney Davis provides new answers to these difficult and important questions by presenting an original framework for understanding visual culture. Grounded in the theoretical traditions of art history, *A General Theory of Visual Culture* argues that, in a fully consolidated visual culture, artifacts and pictures have been made to be seen in a certain way; what Davis calls "visuality" is the visual perspective from which certain culturally constituted aspects of artifacts and pictures are visible to informed viewers. In this book, Davis provides a systematic analysis of visibility and describes how it comes into being as a historical form of vision.

Expansive in scope, [A General Theory of Visual Culture](#) draws on art history, aesthetics, the psychology of perception, the philosophy of reference, and vision science, as well as visual-cultural studies in history, sociology, and anthropology. It provides penetrating new definitions of form, style, and iconography, and draws important and sometimes surprising conclusions (for example, that vision does not always attain to visual culture, and that visual culture is not always wholly visible). The book uses examples from a variety of cultural traditions, from prehistory to the twentieth century, to support a theory designed to apply to all human traditions of making artifacts and pictures--that is, to visual culture as a worldwide phenomenon.

Excerpt: The American painter Barnett Newman once said that an artist gets from aesthetics what a bird gets from ornithology—nothing. The editor of *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Michael Kelly, has extended Newman's observation to include art historians, archaeologists, and other students of culture in its widest sense. Aesthetics must be as useless to all of these scholars as ornithology would be to a bird unless, Kelly went on to say, "their research involves art created in periods when aesthetics was still considered relevant." According to *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, the period when aesthetics was considered relevant began in the eighteenth century and as "a European development that has not been duplicated anywhere else."

Aesthetics in this sense emerged when ancient Greek theories of poetic aptness (to single out Aristotle's main concern) and Roman and Renaissance practices of rhetoric and decorum were absorbed into Alexander Baumgarten's specification, in his *Aesthetica* of 1750, that aesthetics should be "the science of the beautiful." Nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers inherited this synthesis of ancient and modern interests. For them the wide problems of aisthesis or "animal and human perception" (problems not limited to the interpretation of art in the modern Western sense) became a philosophical study of

the particular aisthesis of "art in its natural and cultural contexts;" to use Kelly's phrase. At the beginning of the twentieth century, as we will see in Chapter Three, a high formalist ideology of art attributed aesthetic aspects to a particular class of man-made things, albeit a wide swathe of them; the aesthetic ideology of high formalism did not limit itself to artifacts made in the period during which its terms for aesthetic aspects had been created. But in recent years philosophical aesthetics has tended to endorse Newman's point and Kelly's elaboration. Backing away from the universal application of aesthetics promulgated by high formalists, it takes aesthetics to be relevant to Euro-American artists in the later modern era (and perhaps only to those artists) because their work can be explained in aesthetic terms.

Such explanation is warranted, in turn, because aesthetic ideologies have constituted part of the specifically visual-cultural context within which later modern Euro-American arts have been made, and within which they could be understood to be beautiful, worthy, illuminating, or challenging. To be aware of aesthetics or to have a philosophy of art has been a substantial aspect of what it has meant to be a later modern artist. Outside this particular context, however, visual and other modes of culture arguably do not have a specifically aesthetic aspectivity. Except in the cultural tradition rooted in the eighteenth-century European development of aesthetic philosophy, aesthetics does not seem to have constituted an aspect of formality, stylisticality, or pictoriality in visual culture in the senses to be developed in the chapters of this book. In other words, it has not been a historical visuality. For most makers of paintings, sculptures, and other items of visual and material culture outside the European tradition, aesthetics has been, as Newman said, as ornithology to the birds: though the birds might well be studied ornithologically, they do not see themselves ornithologically. And it remains an open question what they do see when, for example, they interact with objects in their visual world—even objects that they themselves have made.

I will not try to defend this line of thinking—an arguable and much-argued one—in substantive terms. This is not a book about art and aesthetics. I begin instead by noting a foundational consideration, perhaps quite an obvious one, about the very fact that if *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* is correct in its history (and let us assume that it is) aesthetics provides the cultural context of art. Strictly speaking it is true that art must have culturally-recognized aesthetic aspects; culturally-constituted aesthetic aspects make art. For this very reason, however, we might feel we have learned little analytically about art or aesthetic aspectivity in identifying this cultural context. Certainly the cultural context of art is the art-context. But effectively this statement is vacuous.

Again, I will not try to decide substantively whether art should be defined in terms of culturally-constituted aesthetic aspects. Provisionally it might be said that aesthetic aspects must be necessary for art but are not sufficient for it insofar as things other than art can be aesthetic, even (indeed especially) within the ideology of the aesthetic developed in European philosophy since the eighteenth century. For the concept of a visual-cultural context—in this case, of an aesthetics that

defines art—seems to need further analysis as well. So far it might seem that we have not learned much (beyond the crushingly obvious) about how art looks or what it looks like, aside from being able to say that "this work looks to be art ... it looks like art; it has aesthetic aspects."

Still, in an important sense this last statement is not tautologous. It addresses a substantive self-evidence—something materially visible and recognizable—in the particular things in question. It does not amount merely to adding the obvious analytical label "aesthetic" to "art." Evidently there are things that art looks like in our context (even or especially if it is a "European development that has not been duplicated anywhere else") that we can readily recognize. More important, there are things in our context that we readily recognize to be art because they are sufficiently like it in relevant respects—even though they may not "look like art" in every respect.

What is this form of life in which this likeness can be seen? Setting aside the question of art, how do we move from situations in which certain aspects of things (here the aspect we call "aesthetic") have not dawned on us to the different situation in which they have dawned on us? Is it necessary to make a new kind of thing? Or simply to see the same old things anew? Because aspects of any kind are constituted in perceptual awareness, these must be aesthetic questions in the ancient etymological sense. They are questions of the animal and human sensory awareness of things in the world, and this even if the European aesthetics of art since the eighteenth century has dealt only with a particular swathe of objects in terms of a particular kind of aspect that they have come to possess. When applied to such objects as paintings, sculptures, and so on, they are questions, that is, of the history and cultivation of vision.

The notion that "vision itself has its history," to use the words of Heinrich Wölfflin has been one of the longest-lasting and deepest-seated principles of art history, even if it has sometimes been somewhat subterranean. As Wölfflin went on to say, "the revelation of these visual strata must be regarded as the primary task of art history." According to this proposal, styles of depiction—culturally located and historically particular ways of making pictorial representations—have materially affected human visual perception. They constitute what might literally be called ways of seeing.

If it is correct, this hypothesis implies that art history should occupy a central place in virtually any study of human forms of life. For any such study will be likely to address the role of human visual perception. Certainly, the principles of art history, as identified by Wölfflin in himself or by later art historians like Erwin Panofsky and Ernst Gombrich, would have immediate relevance for research in arenas as diverse as anthropology, psychiatry, and ophthalmology. (Here and throughout I do not conflate art history and aesthetic inquiry, even though art historians are often interested in the art in the artifacts they study and many of the questions addressed in this book are problems of aisthesis—that is, of perceptual awareness and judgment. By art history I simply mean historical investigation of the interrelations of configuration, style, and depiction in artifacts, regardless of their origin or status as art in a modern Western sense.)

Stated this way, however, the implausibility of the claim that vision has a history seems equally clear. Psychiatry and ophthalmology have little to do with art history, even though they have occasionally used art and pictorial representations in their investigations. For its part anthropology has often criticized art historians for their overreliance specifically on Western aesthetics. It seems reasonable to suppose that human visual perception affects pictorial representations made by human beings. After all, human observers must be able to see pictures in order to use and interpret them. But it is more difficult to demonstrate that these depictions, the historical modes and media of their configuration and their cultural forms and styles, organize the seeing itself.

We can eat foods prepared in many different ways according to the canons of taste and the styles of preparation developed in different cuisines. But has digestion been shaped historically by these styles? Does it work in different kinds of ways when we eat different kinds of cuisine? In treating disorders of digestion (ulcers, say) must we know what culinary styles have been ingested in each case? We might conceive a circuit that interconnects natural human digestive processes and particular cultural styles of preparing food in a recursion or feedback loop of some kind. Indeed, a recursion or feedback loop seems to operate when we use pictures, for in seeing a picture we must see it as having configurative, historical, representational, and cultural styles, what I will call "forms of likeness." But does this mean that the seeing itself has been pictorially stylized or becomes stylized in the activity of seeing the picture? What would it mean to suppose that seeing has styles—styles reflected in configurative practices (that is, in ways of making and arranging the elements of an artwork or a picture) if not actually derived from them?

Questions along these lines have been asked ever since art history achieved its theoretical definition in the early twentieth century, and they continue to occupy me in this book. They have been especially pointed when the conceptual models of art history have been associated (by writers including Wölfflin, Panofsky, and Gombrich) with discoveries in anthropology, psychology, and biology about the nature of vision.

Oddly enough, however, a recent shift of art history into the study of so-called visual culture (best regarded as an expansion of art history into the study of visual culture) seems to presume that the questions have been settled. According to visual-culture studies, it is true *prima facie* that vision has a cultural history. Therefore, the historical dimension of vision—and particular histories of vision—must become our object of inquiry whether we are art historians or ophthalmologists. In turn (at least according to some accounts of this matter) typical art-historical interests, that is, interests in the configuration of artworks, in the style of artifacts, and in the iconography of motifs, should apply to all of the domains of human life that involve vision, entirely regardless of the activities or artifacts in question. For all domains supposedly have a cultural history of vision or ways of seeing. Conversely, our art-historical understanding of the constitution of vision in culture (that is to say, our understanding of visual culture) must be applied to specifically art-historical objects such as artistic styles, even though some styles (as we will see in Chapter Four) are not

wholly cultural entities. In these respects the study of art history and the study of vision equally dissolve into the investigation of visual culture. Or so we might be led to think.

But despite the emergence of visual-culture studies as a categorical solution to a long-standing theoretical problem, the question of the relation of vision and culture (a definite relation seems to be assumed in the very term visual culture) has not been settled. With the expansion of art history into visual-culture studies, the question has simply become more urgent. It concerns a greater range of objects and their attributes than would have been addressed by an art historian like Wölfflin, though Wölfflin's famous dictum, quoted at the outset, must count as a founding proposition of visual-culture studies.

As I see it, the question of vision and culture requires art historians to adopt something like the general theory sketched in this book. Properly stated, and despite the anti-art-historical rhetoric of some proponents of visual-culture studies, the general theory of visual culture fulfills long-standing art-historical interests rather than just replaces them with entirely different concerns. To be sure, much of what passes for visual-culture studies is simply a sociology of multifarious technological practices and cultural productions in the domain of human activities and artifacts meant to be seen. Its general theory, if any, is simply a sociology of culture that happens to be visible. I am interested here, however, in a general theory of visual culture as such—in the intrinsic relation between vision and culture, if any there be, that is implied by the very term visual culture. That term must needs be vacuous unless it can be explicated in substantive terms.

Therefore, I address the concept of *visuality*, or what I will call the "culturality of vision." If it is not to be vacuous, the concept of *visuality*, the specific theoretical basis of a visual-culture studies that makes good on the claim implied in its own name, cannot simply assume the culturality of vision. It must give substance to that concept—biological, psychological, social, and historical substance. At the very least, it must address two questions that are complementary, though analytically quite distinct. First, what is cultural about vision (Part Two)? Some things are cultural about vision. But not everything. And second, what is visual about culture (Part Three)? Clearly some things are visual in culture, or visible as culture. But again, not everything—even when the "visual dimension" of an artifact and a way of seeing it seem to be involved.

As we will see, it is for these very reasons that the intersection of vision (and visibility) and culture (and visible culturality) must be treated as a historical phenomenon. Stated another way, vision is not inherently a *visuality*. Rather vision must succeed to *visuality* through a historical process. The recursions of this succession are not well understood analytically, let alone neurologically, as actual or functional operations of the visual cortex and of higher (cognitive) processing. But a general theory of visual culture should attempt to map them in a way that might guide further investigation into the salient material processes. This investigation must (and will) be conducted by neurologists, psychologists, and anthropologists rather than art historians. But if art historians cannot guide it, then the theory of visual culture is empty.

In this book I make several interrelated proposals about visual culture and the historical succession of vision to visibility. Given what I have said, and despite the foundational neurological and psychological explorations that must be waiting in the wings, it is not surprising that my proposals are partly art-historical propositions—that they rely on arthistorical concepts.

The most important proposal modifies Wölfflin's claim. Vision can sometimes succeed to culture in the full sense implied in the theoretical notion of visibility. But it need not always do so. The succession occurs in complex relays and recursions of recognition in the kind of circuitry or feedback loop that I have already mentioned. These relays are inherently historical. They vary in an agent's experience. They differ between agents. They take time. They require work. And they are not inevitable: they can fail. Sometimes, in fact, they can only fail. Strictly speaking, then, there is no such thing as visual culture, at least if that term designates an agent's fully achieved horizon of commonality with members of his or her social group. Nonetheless we must accept that the unpredictable work of partial succession to visibility (and parallel cultural successions in other sensory channels) is the main activity of social life as it interacts with human proprioception (see Chapter Ten). Indeed, the recursion of sociability in proprioception might be defined as culture. One succeeds to visual culture in the course of one's history: one is not endowed with it. But what is this history? How does it take hold in proprioception?

To summarize the overall argument laid out in the next nine chapters of this book, vision is surely the chief natural context in which we encounter and experience the fine arts of painting and sculpture, the so-called decorative arts, and so on—visual culture in a strictly tautologous sense. Virtually by definition, visibility, as we will see in the succeeding chapters, must meet and match the perceptual—the aspective—face of visual culture. And sometimes it also makes it. What is visible becomes cultured in visibility; as we will see, an appropriately educated Egyptian beholder, for example, saw apposite differences between hieroglyphs and portraits even though they often deployed the same outlines and shapes. And visibility has usually cultured what becomes visible; despite what could be their identical outlines and shapes in many cases, the hieroglyphs and portraits have been assigned—have succeeded to—recognizable respects of notation and depiction respectively. The history of the succession of vision to visibility—its relays, recursions, resistances, and reversions—is my main topic. But this topic requires me to investigate a set of analytically distinct successions that constitute the feedback loop of vision and visibility just mentioned; that is, the complex relay or recursion of vision into visibility and vice versa. In particular, the formal, the stylistic, and the pictorial aspects of sensuously configured things, as I will put it, are mutually "interdetermined." Within a form of life, people can use the formal aspects of configuration to see its emergent stylistic aspects. They can use these stylistic aspects to see emergent depictive aspects. And they can use these depictive aspects to see emergent formal and stylistic aspects—and so on, in recursion after endless recursion. For this very reason the succession of vision to visibility can be described, at least in part, as the history within which formality, style, and pictoriality

come to be recognized in artifacts—to be seen or visualized. I will consider the vicissitudes of these successions (including their disjunction, resistance, and failure) in the following chapters: formality (the apprehension of sensuous configuration in artifacts) in Chapter Three, style and what I will call "stylisticality" in Chapter Four, and pictoriality (the emergence of depiction in what I will call the "iconographic succession").

In the domain of artifacts meant to be seen, form, style, and depiction are visual phenomena; they are visible in those artifacts. But culture does not require visual or visible manifestations. In the end, then, the culturality of vision, or true visibility, is not—or at least not exclusively—a visual phenomenon. Certainly, it is not wholly visible. This result (explored in some detail in Chapters Nine and Ten) may seem paradoxical to some readers, art historians not least. The visualist prejudices of art history have been carried into visual-culture studies, and they encourage us to believe that its primary object of study must be visual artifacts and ways of seeing them in the past and present. But one of the most striking and consequential propositions of the general theory of visual culture is that forms of likeness in my sense are not entirely a matter of sensuously apprehended morphology, of the visual and visible "look" of things. Forms of likeness that go beyond the visual and the visible (indeed, that go beyond the sensuous in any sensory modality or medium) constitute the historical identity of form, style, and depiction, even as the visible vicissitudes of form, style, and depiction constitute the culturality of vision, or visibility. This succession is the most general recursion that I will explore in this book. It explains why vision has an art history, as Wölfflin in probably should have said.

Visibility and Virtuality: Images and Pictures from Prehistory to Perspective by Whitney Davis [Princeton University Press, 9780691171944]

Excerpt: Visibility and Virtuality, this book, is a companion volume to [A General Theory of Visual Culture](#), published in 2011, and to *Space, Time, and Depiction*, a series of historical studies that I hope to publish soon. It explores the ways in which human beings have made different kinds of visual space by making pictures in different kinds of ways. I will try to show that the terms used in my title enable new analysis of this matter, what I call a "historical phenomenology": how "visibility" and "virtuality" relate to "images" and "pictures," and above all how "imaging a picture" (as I will often put it) — that is, using it in visual space — creates virtual space, whether or not this activity counts as "visibility," a visual culture, in the sense developed in *A General Theory of Visual Culture*.

In *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, I examined the question of visual succession to visibility —to visual culture—as a strictly analytic problem. The present book highlights historical variation and transformation in the imaging of pictures — a historical phenomenology. It would be impossible to be comprehensive. But I try to be as broad as my competence allows. I give considerable attention to four very different ways in which pictures have been constructed to be imaged, to be used in visual space: Upper Paleolithic "cave art" and other prehistoric practices of mark making (see especially Chapters

Two and Three); ancient Egyptian pictorialism, often described as highly "conceptual" (see especially Chapters Six and Seven); Classical Greek naturalism in figurative sculpture (see especially Chapter Eight); and early modern European and subsequent experiments in simulating natural visual perspective, notably in linear-perspective projections and in *trompe l'oeils* (see especially Chapter Nine). To a lesser extent my approach throughout has been influenced by the rise of digital image-making in present-day new media as a practice that can be said to be both "conceptual" (insofar as it is generated numerically) and "naturalistic" and even "illusionistic" or *trompe-l'oeil* (insofar as it can produce vivid simulations of visible worlds, even corporeally immersive virtual worlds, whether or not these environments simulate the kinds of objects and spaces to be found in the real visual world). The geometrical and numerical construction of pictures will be a major theme throughout. But I will not deal with today's new media head-on; the third book in this trilogy, *Space, Time, and Depiction*, will address this matter.

Despite the historical range just described, in Chapters Four and Five I need to focus on one well-defined historical topic: the supposed contrast between the ancient Egyptian mode of constructing pictorial spaces and the Classical Greek mode, despite cultural interconnections between Egyptian and Greek techniques, styles, and motifs between the seventh and fourth centuries BCE. Given the vast diversity of image- and picture-making traditions around the world from prehistory to the present day, this must be a rather local affair (albeit partly a trans-Mediterranean history). Still, it has had disproportionate significance in Western art history in the wake of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity* (1764) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1805) and his *Lectures on Fine Art* (1820s; often called Hegel's *Aesthetics*, as recorded by several of his students), foundational writings in which the world-historical contrast was initially stated and even though both writers grasped the historical influence of Egyptian art on Greek art and Hegel conceived Egyptian art less as the absolute opposite of Greek art than as the "middle," the dialectical "transition," between ancient "Eastern" arts (Persian and Hindu) and "Western" European arts. More recent studies of image- and picture-making in psychology, anthropology, and philosophy (in such landmark books as Margaret Hagen's [Varieties of Realism](#) and John Willats's [Art and Representation](#)) have continued to explore the contrast between "Egyptian" and "Greek" variants of pictorial virtuality, or at any rate to echo the old art-historical contrast.

It will be obvious from my subtitle (and the title of this Introduction) that I distinguish between "image," that is, the generation of a visual space, and "picture," that is, an artifact in visual space that extends visual space into a virtual space of virtual objects. (Of course, there are images other than visual ones. In German, this distinction is not easy to make lexically: the word *Bild* can refer both to images tout court (including "seeing," visualization, visual recollection, and visible imagery) and to depiction, not to speak of such mental structures as schemata, and such neuropsychological events as dreams. Perhaps it is partly for this reason that so-called

Bildwissenschaft inquiry into the perceptual, mnemonic, cognitive, and cultural varieties of *Bilder*, and the relations among them—is far advanced in German-language scholarship today. (Both Immanuel Kant and Sigmund Freud, for example, put *Bild* to use in characterizing different kinds of images as having determinate interrelations). Still, and given the fact that I write in English, it is useful for my purposes that the English language permits an idiomatic distinction between image and picture.

According to one common English use of the terms, a "picture" is simply one kind of image: pictures comprise a well-defined subset of the vast set of images. For this very reason, however, it can be misleading to use "image" and "picture" as wholly interchangeable terms, though the conflation can often be found in disciplines, such as art history, that focus for the most part on the subset (that is, on pictures as "images") and far less on the full set (that is, on images tout court). As we will see there are reasons for this conflation; to some extent it enables art-historical and similar inquiries. But in this book I will make an effort to avoid it.

As I will try to show, a picture is a complex interaction of several kinds of imaging. It cannot be wrong to identify this interaction as a kind of image in itself to identify pictures as a kind of interaction of kinds of images. But the discrimination in question requires that we deal with images beyond the kind—with the relations between pictures, as a kind of image, and images that are not pictures and imaging that is not pictorial. By far the most important of these relations must be the interaction between "seeing," or what I will often call "natural visual perspective" (NVP), and pictorial artifacts that have been made to be visible in visual space—the domain of "images" (and imaging) and the domain of "pictures" (and picturing), respectively, as I will use the terms.

I am an art historian, and this book is art-historical. Of course, art historians have traditionally (and rightly) addressed many objects that are not pictorial, a matter briefly addressed in the final section of Chapter One. As already noted, however, my particular concern in this book is the nature of the historical relations between images tout court and the imaging of pictures. This entails that I do not limit myself to "pictorial art" in an aesthetical sense to pictures that have been nominated as "works of art" in modern aesthetic ideologies and their present-day globalized offshoots (after many a critical turn and dialectical vicissitude) in contemporary artworlds, even if the artifacts in question were produced in those visual cultures (that is, even if they were produced as works of art). In this book (as in [A General Theory of Visual Culture](#)) my interest in aesthetic questions will largely be limited to the etymological meaning of *aisthesis*, namely, to sensory perception and embodied awareness. Everything I want to say about images and pictures (including any artworks) can be handled in that frame.

Images in General and Imaging Pictures

Neither an image nor a picture needs be wholly visual, or even partly visual. A fully general account of embodied human imaging would need to investigate not only auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory spaces—images constituted in hearing, touch, smell, and taste. It would also need to consider

motor-muscular, locomotional-positional, and autonomic-nervous spaces— images constituted in flexions, movements, and fluxes of the body in relation to itself, to other objects, to ambient environments, and to physical conditions and forces (such as the strength of the gravitational field). Indeed, it would need to explore "mental images," whatever their nature, and image(s) and imagining as a mode of human consciousness— possibly the mode. It is likely that all these images interact with one another in complex sequences, hierarchies, circuits, and feedback loops— what I prefer (following [A General Theory of Visual Culture](#)) to call "successions" and "recursions." This has been well recognized in a range of phenomenological inquiries from the late nineteenth century to the present day. At the moment of my present writing, in fact, these inquiries are not limited to psychological and philosophical investigations in the phenomenological tradition and in direct response to it. They also include historiographical critiques and diverse anthropological and historical applications undertaken not only as psychology but also as art history, cultural studies, and media aesthetics.

Still, one sometimes looks in vain for models of interactions among images—models that are well-defined enough to enable a precise analysis of certain particular interactions, such as the one I address in this book, namely, the imaging of pictures in visual space, especially the matter of the imaging of pictures under the visual angle constituted at corporeal "standpoint" or what I will often call the "imaging point." For whatever else might be true of embodied human imaging in general—the overall matter of the most general phenomenology— it is certainly true, I will argue, that no visible picture (more exactly what I will call apparent "pictoriality") can indefinitely survive geometrical-optical translocation of the imaging point— survive the movement, that is, of the beholder's standpoint considered literally and materially as his angle of vision.

Once we accept this thesis, we are constrained analytically to approach the imaging of pictures— or at any rate the visual imaging of visible pictures—in a way that flows not so much from a general phenomenology of active embodied imaging as such, valid though it might be as an overarching philosophical framework, as from the particular conditions of the interaction of speck successions and recursions of certain kinds of images. This is a more narrowly analytical matter within general phenomenology. But it is this analysis that will— that does— connect the general phenomenology (a very mixed bag of diverse philosophies of images, imagery, and imagination) with various branches of empirical neuropsychology. Without it, these two modes of inquiry, broadly philosophical and anthropological on the one side and broadly scientific and psychological on the other, often seem to talk past one another. Each sometimes fails to generate hypotheses that can be coherently explored in the terms of the other, or even recognized at all.

Visual space in the sense that I will give to the term in Chapter One cannot be wholly assimilated to nonvisual sensory spaces, such as auditory and tactile spaces. Indeed, it cannot be identified with other optical spaces, such as the spaces constituted in certain endogenous events in the eyes and the

visual cortex. These include the so-called Purkinje Tree, that is, visual images of blood vessels in the retina, and so-called phosphenes, luminous images sometimes having a definite configuration, a "form"— generated without real light entering the eye. Largely autonomic, some of these "entoptics" can be induced by mechanical, chemical, and electrical means, sometimes partly framed by cultural expectations that allow for continuity— even identity—between endogenous optical events and visual space in the sense adopted here. That is, the entoptic phenomenon seems to be something "out there" in the world, as it were externalized, rather than somewhere inside the visual system behind the surfaces of the eyes. This possibility has been explored by anthropologists and historians working with shamanistic visual cultures, including prehistoric ones, and with picture-making traditions that might have been associated with them (see Chapter Three). Indeed, one of the pioneering studies of entoptics investigated the possibility that observations of "Unidentified Flying Objects" (UFOs) by German airplane pilots were, in fact, endogenous visual experiences linked to a cultural fantasy.

To be sure, elements of my analysis might be applied to certain nonvisual pictures to pictures, for example, that have been made to be apprehended by the hands in the dark. And it is obvious that some pictures perhaps many— interweave visual and nonvisual modes of apprehension in attaining the full pictoriality constructed by their makers. I will sometimes touch on these phenomena. But I will not explore them systematically in focusing on my explicit topic: the specifically visual space created by pictures that have been constructed to be used visually by embodied human agents of vision. (For the sake of economy, henceforth I will not append this qualification to my every use of the term "picture.") Still, and mindful of my own criticisms of what I have called "visualist" prejudices in art history ([A General Theory of Visual Culture](#): 278-80), I will not take the visibility of such pictures for granted. Indeed, the question of the visibility of such pictures in visual space that is, how they are imaged is the very historical question at hand.

Here a crucial fact of a particular recursion of images will need to be noticed: the very introduction of pictures into visual space the "presence of pictoriality," as I will sometimes put it integrates features into visual space that often would not otherwise be part of it. That is, features are introduced that would not be aspects of the visible world, and indeed are not aspects of it for any agents of vision who have not fully succeeded to the form of life in which the pictures as such were made to be used, whatever else might be visible to these people. For one succeeds to the "visuality" of a picture, and indeed to any item of visual culture, by way of the forms of likeness emergent networks of both the visual and the nonvisual analogies of visible things that make it salient in particular ways. (This was my argument, at any rate, in [A General Theory of Visual Culture](#).) In this sense depictions might be said to supervene in the visible world. In the recursion of pictoriality in visuality, they virtualize the visual world in partly invisible ways.

Social historians of pictorial style have sometimes proposed that the visual skills needed to interpret pictures to see them — might be coordinated in a "period eye," to use Michael

Baxandall's version of E. H. Gombrich's general ethological theory (based on evolutionary psychology) of "perceptual readiness" or "mental set." Such socially constructed visuality might be found, for example, in a fifteenth-century Florentine merchant's ability to judge the size, volume, weight, and mass of things in visual space (and therefore their value and cost), a visual skill cultivated in commerce and banking and used by him to make sense of simulations of volume-shape produced in painter's perspective at the time. As I will argue throughout this book, however, the inverse of the equation deserves just as much analytic and historical attention (see [A General Theory of Visual Culture](#) 14-15, 158-60): if the merchant's commercial skills enabled him to judge virtual pictorial spaces, pictorial configurations, and depicted objects, it was equally true that pictures helped coordinate the imaging he employed in commerce, generating a complex network of forms of likeness within which both banking and painting were reciprocally organized. <>

Varieties of Realism: Geometries of Representational Art by Margaret A. Hagen [Cambridge University Press, 9780521313292]

Varieties of Realism argues that it is not possible to represent the layout of objects and surfaces in space outside the dictates of formal visual geometry, the geometry of natural perspective. The book examines most of the world's coherent representational art styles, both in terms of the geometry of their creation and in terms of their perceptual effects on the viewer. A lucid exposition of modern geometrical principles and relations, accessible to the nonmathematical reader, is followed by an analysis of all known styles as variants of natural perspective, as true varieties of realism. Delineating the physical and mechanical constraints that determine the act of visual representation in painting and drawing, the author traces the intimate relations among seemingly distant styles and considers the kind of perceptual information about the world each can carry. Margaret Hagen is a perceptual psychologist with an ecological point of view. Her rigorous but readable presentation of visual theory and research offers provocative new insights into the connections among vision, geometry, and art. <>

Art and Representation: New Principles in the Analysis of Pictures by John Willats [Princeton University Press, 9780691087375]

In [Art and Representation](#), John Willats presents a radically new theory of pictures. To do this, he has developed a precise vocabulary for describing the representational systems in pictures: the ways in which artists, engineers, photographers, mapmakers, and children represent objects. His approach is derived from recent research in visual perception and artificial intelligence, and Willats begins by clarifying the key distinction between the marks in a picture and the features of the scene that these marks represent. The methods he uses are thus closer to those of a modern structural linguist or psycholinguist than to those of an art historian. Using over 150 illustrations, Willats analyzes the representational systems in pictures by artists

from a wide variety of periods and cultures. He then relates these systems to the mental processes of picture production, and, displaying an impressive grasp of more than one scholarly discipline, shows how the Greek vase painters, Chinese painters, Giotto, icon painters, Picasso, Paul Klee, and David Hockney have put these systems to work.

But this book is not only about what systems artists use but also about why artists from different periods and cultures have used such different systems, and why drawings by young children look so different from those by adults. Willats argues that the representational systems can serve many different functions beyond that of merely providing a convincing illusion. These include the use of anomalous pictorial devices such as inverted perspective, which may be used for expressive reasons or to distance the viewer from the depicted scene by drawing attention to the picture as a painted surface. Willats concludes that art historical changes, and the developmental changes in children's drawings, are not merely arbitrary, nor are they driven by evolutionary forces. Rather, they are determined by the different functions that the representational systems in pictures can serve.

Like readers of Ernst Gombrich's famous *Art and Illusion* (still available from Princeton University Press), on which *Art and Representation* makes important theoretical advances, or Rudolf Arnheim's *Art and Visual Perception*, Willats's readers will find that they will never again return to their old ways of looking at pictures. <>

Alexander Baumgarten *Aesthetica* of 1750

Theoretische Ästhetik (German Edition) (German) by Alexander G. Baumgarten, edited by Hans R. Schweizer [Felix Meiner Verlag, 9783787307852]

Mit der Veröffentlichung der *Aesthetica* löste Baumgarten ein, was er in seiner *Metaphysica* (PhB 351) im Ansatz formulierte: die Ästhetik als eigenständige Disziplin, das ist als Wissenschaft der sinnlichen Erkenntnis, systematisch zu begründen und zur Darstellung zu bringen. Der Impuls, der davon ausging, hatte wirkungsgeschichtlich zunächst nur als Entwurf einer besonderen Philosophie der Kunst breite Resonanz. Das eigentliche Ziel war jedoch sehr viel weiter gesteckt: Gegen Wolff, der die Formen der sinnlichen Erkenntnis noch dem unteren Erkenntnisvermögen zurechnete, erweist Baumgarten das Eigenrecht der sensitiven gegenüber der rationalen Erkenntnis. Unveränderter Print-on-Demand-Nachdruck der 2. durchges. Aufl. von 1988.

[With the publication of the *Aesthetica*, Baumgarten solved what he formulated in his *Metaphysica* (PhB 351): Aesthetics as an independent discipline, which is to be systematically substantiated and portrayed as a science of sensual cognition. The impulse, which presumed to be effective, initially only had a broad resonance as a design of a special philosophy of art. The actual goal was, however, much further set: Against Wolff, who reckoned the forms of sensual cognition still to the lower cognitive capacity, Baumgarten proves the inherent right of the sensitive to the rational knowledge. Unchanged print-on-demand reprint of the 2nd Durchges. Resolution. of 1988.]

Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten wird 1714 in Berlin geboren. Er studiert Theologie, Philosophie, Poetik und Rhetorik an der Universität Halle. Angeregt durch Studienaufenthalte in Jena liest er Leibniz sowie die (damals in Halle verbotenen) Schriften Wolffs. 1735 erhält er für seine Magisterarbeit Philosophische Betrachtungen über einige Bedingungen des Gedichts in Halle die *venia legendi* und unterrichtet dort ab 1737 u. a. Philosophische Enzyklopädie, Philosophiegeschichte, Logik, Metaphysik, Naturrecht, Ethik und natürliche Theologie, bis er 1740 als „Professor der Weltweisheit und der schönen Wissenschaften“ nach Frankfurt/Oder berufen wird. In Frankfurt unterrichtet er „alle Teile der Weltweisheit“, Naturlehre, „die Wissenschaft der Rechte und Pflichten des gesellschaftlichen Zustandes“, Philologie, hebräische Grammatik und dogmatische Theologie. Baumgartens erstes Hauptwerk, die *Metaphysica*, erscheint 1739 auf lateinisch, 1766 auf deutsch. Die *Metaphysica* stellt eine Systematisierung Leibnizscher Gedanken mit Wolffschen Mitteln dar, die jedoch zu eigenständigen Ergebnissen führt. Kant hat sich mit dieser Schrift intensiv auseinandersetzt und sie als Grundlage für seine Vorlesungen verwendet. Auch die 1740 veröffentlichte *Ethica philosophica* wird zu einem einflussreichen Lehrbuch. 1750 erscheint der erste Teil, 1758 der zweite Teil der insgesamt unvollendet bleibenden *Aesthetica*, die der Ästhetik als selbständiger philosophischer Disziplin ihren Namen und Baumgarten den Ruf ihres Begründers einbringt. Er stirbt 1762 in Frankfurt/Oder.

[Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten is born 1714 in Berlin. He studied theology, philosophy, poetics and Rhetoric at the University of Halle. Inspired by study visits in Jena, he reads Leibniz as well as the writings of Wolff (forbidden at the time in Halle). 1735 he receives for his master thesis philosophical reflections on some conditions of the poem in Halle the *Venia Legendi* and teaches there from 1737 among other things philosophical encyclopedia, Philosophy history, logic, metaphysics, Natural Law, ethics and natural Theology until he is called to Frankfurt/or in 1740 as "Professor of World Wisdom and the beautiful sciences". In Frankfurt he teaches "all parts of the world-view-ness", "the science of the rights and obligations of the social State", philology, Hebrew grammar and dogmatic theology. Baumgarten's first work, the *Metaphysica*, appears 1739 in Latin, 1766 in German. The *Metaphysica* represents a systematization of Leibniz's thoughts with Wolffian means, which, however, leads to independent sense of pleasure. Kant has intensively dealt with this type of discourse and used it as the basis for his understanding of innate ideas. Also in the 1740 Baumgarten published *Ethica Philosophica* which became an influential textbook. In 1750 completes the first part, 1758 the second part of the total still unfinished *Aesthetica*, which makes aesthetics as independent philosophical discipline to be pursued in its own right.] <>

The Emergence of Modern Aesthetic Theory: Religion and Morality in Enlightenment Germany and Scotland by Simon Grote [Ideas in Context, Cambridge University Press, 9781107110922]

Broad in its geographic scope and yet grounded in original archival research, this book situates the inception of modern aesthetic theory - the philosophical analysis of art and beauty - in theological contexts that are crucial to explaining why it arose. Simon Grote presents seminal aesthetic theories of the German and Scottish Enlightenments as outgrowths of a quintessentially Enlightenment project: the search for a natural 'foundation of morality' and a means of helping naturally self-interested human beings transcend their own self-interest. This conclusion represents an important alternative to the standard history of aesthetics as a series of preludes to the achievements of Immanuel Kant, as well as a reinterpretation of several canonical figures in the German and Scottish Enlightenments. It also offers a foundation for a transnational history of the Enlightenment without the French philosophes at its centre, while solidly endorsing historians' growing reluctance to call the Enlightenment a secularising movement.

This book ventures across three sorts of academic boundaries: it discusses narratives and pictures, combines close readings with theoretical reflection and, while focusing on ancient material, simultaneously engages with modern art. Such roaming may easily estrange readers and implies the danger of inaccuracies. This risk is, I hope, made worthwhile by the new perspectives opening up for the trespasser. Aesthetic Experiences and Classical Antiquity will surely call into action the police patrolling disciplinary boundaries; at the same time, it relies on the intellectual curiosity of Classicists and students of Aesthetics. Just as contemporary debates in Aesthetics allow Classicists to see their territory in new light, I argue, so too ancient texts and pictures have the capacity to illuminate the field of Aesthetics — as indeed to re-orientate some of its discussions. In that sense, it is the 'and' of my title that provides the unlikely keyword: ultimately, I aim to foster a new dialogue between those interested in 'aesthetic experiences' on the one hand, and those concerned with 'classical antiquity' on the other.

Excerpt: The 'As-If' of Aesthetic Experience: Philostratus: Plunging into Painted Narratives

Aesthetic Experiences and Classical Antiquity explores the 'as-if' of aesthetic experiences triggered by both narratives and pictures. A discussion of both forms of representation together is suggested by ancient aesthetics, which emphasizes the thrill exerted by pictures as well as the enticement of narrative. The comparison of the immersive appeal of visual and verbal representation is already encapsulated in the Iliad's description of the shield of Achilles. The 'wonder' that the shield elicits from its spectators simultaneously describes the reaction of the epic audience and implicitly bestows praise on Homer for his artful description of the artwork.' Writers of the imperial age in particular took up and developed further the juxtaposition and entanglement of verbal and pictorial mimesis. Lucian, for instance, writing in the second century CE, has the speaker in

one of his rhetorical flits compare the Gorgons with the Sirens as a symbol of the power of pictures to transfix spectators. The juxtaposition plays out in the tension between the speaker's explicit assertions and what he does in his speech. While he claims that the Gorgons' spell exceeds that of the Sirens, that, in other words, pictorial mimesis trumps verbal mimesis, the hall and its paintings only come to life through the captivating force of his words.

Here I would like to linger on one of the most sophisticated ancient engagements with the relation between words and images, the *Imagines* of Philostratus the Elder, a description of an imaginary gallery from the beginning of the third century CE. The 65 ekphraseis of this work, given by an old rhetor to a young boy and a crowd of adolescents, nicely illustrate the immersive power of pictures and set it in parallel with the absorption effected by words, more precisely the spell of the narratives as which the rhetor renders the pictured scenes.' The immersion of the speaker into the painted scenes prefigures the involvement that Philostratus wishes to elicit from the readers of his verbal representation. At the same time, Philostratus' ekphraseis carefully qualify the experiential quality of the responses to visual and verbal representation and shed light on the 'as-if' that defines aesthetic experiences and is the object of this inquiry. The *Imagines* thus lend themselves as a starting-point for this chapter which furnishes the framework for the investigations of the following chapters.

One of the paintings described shows a group of hunters.

Do not rush past us, hunters, and do not urge on your horses till we track you down (*exichneusōmen*), what you want and what you are hunting. For you say that you pursue a fierce wild boar, and I see the deeds of the animal; it has burrowed under the olive trees, cut down the vines, and has left neither fig tree nor apple tree or branch, but has torn them all out of the earth, partly by digging them up, partly by hurling itself upon them, partly by rubbing against them. I see the creature, its mane bristling, its eyes flashing fire, and it is gnashing its tusks at you, gentlemen; for such wild animals are capable of hearing the din from faraway.

The speaker, an erudite rhetor, appears to have plunged into the painted scene. He seems to stand right in the devastated orchard, not only seeing the boar, but even hearing the grinding of his tusks. So intense is his immersion that he addresses the hunters directly. Here as in other *Imagines*, Philostratus drives home that painting has the capacity to transport its recipients into the world it represents.

Continuing his exegesis, the rhetor speculates about the true object of the hunt: 'But I think that, as you were hunting the beauty of that boy, you have been hunted by him and are eager to run into danger for him. For why so near? Why do you touch him? Why have you turned towards him?

Why do you jostle each other with your horses?' A rift opens between what can be seen and what is actually taking place. Those who seem to hunt are, the speaker suspects, themselves prey. This fissure between appearance and reality has been prepared by the word 'track down'. Oscillating between the

literal sense - 'till we track you down' - and the metaphorical use - 'till we track down what you want and what you are hunting' - it prefigures the shift from a literal to a metaphorical, from an actual to an erotic hunt. That being said, the questions fired at the hunters reinforce the sense that the rhetor is himself part of the scene.

Then, however, the speaker's illusion breaks:

How I was deceived! I was deluded by the painting/ description (*graphes*), thinking that they were not painted/ described (*gegraphthai*), but were real beings and actually moved and loved - I tease them as though they hear me, and I think that I hear some response - and you did not utter a single word to avert me from my mistake, overcome as much as I was, unable to free yourself from the deception and the slumber induced by it. So let us look together at the things painted/ described (*gegrammena*); for it is a painting/ description (*graphe*) before which we stand.

Whereas the Sirens can cast an enduring spell on their audience, Philostratus' spectator is duped only for a moment. His immersion evaporates and makes place for reflection. The rhetor notes that what he is seeing is only a picture and starts to muse on his initial deception. In the Sirens' episode, the limits to absorption are not entirely absent, but vaguely adumbrated in the shackles which prevent Odysseus from succumbing to their spell and, in the words of Horkheimer and Adorno, 'degrade' (*entmächtigen*) nature to art. Now the response of Philostratus' speaker in the Hunters forcefully draws our attention to the precarious nature of immersion. The spectator's absorption is temporally limited and counterpoised with reflection. Philostratus here gestures to a central point of my investigation, the vicarious nature of aesthetic experience.'

The rhetor's comment on his delusion features a pun that is widely popular in imperial ekphrasis and that here, as in other cases, invites us to compare the mimesis of pictures and words. No less than four times does he use the word *graphein* and its cognates, which signify both painting and writing. Philostratus thereby blends together verbal with pictorial representation. He highlights the mimetic recession with which the *Imagines* delightfully toys: its descriptions represent what itself is a representation.

The ekphrasis repeats the mimesis of the picture. Aligning the verbal with the visual representation, the emphatic use of *graphein* makes the painting a mirror for its description. The response of the rhetor to the painting becomes a model for the spell that Philostratus hopes to cast on the readers of the ekphrasis. What is more, the lexical ambiguity collapses the boundary between the two levels of mimesis. Meaning both painting and description, *graphê* intimates that, although only a verbal rendering, the ekphrasis lets us readers actually see the picture. Philostratus' ekphrastic play highlights that narratives as well as pictures have the capacity to jolt their recipients into the worlds they represent.

The alignment of the two forms of representation also adds complexity to the relation between immersion and reflection. At first, as the speaker's immersion cedes to reflection, they seem

to be mutually exclusive, but, as it now turns out, they are actually closely entwined. The very words with which the rhetor distances himself from his absorption suggest that the reader has unmediated access to the painting; when he comments on his delusion, his reference to *graphe* erases the boundary between text and picture. Pointing out his deception, the speaker himself enacts another deception which is palpable in the second person plural form: 'you did not utter a single word to avert me from my mistake'. As commentators have noticed, the words directed to the internal audience, the boys in the gallery, also address the external audience, that is the readers, who, too, did not, in fact could not, intervene to stop his delusion.' The readers thereby slide into the world of the text. The meditation on the gap separating the spectators from the world of the picture simultaneously draws the readers into the world of the text. Reflection is thereby imbricated with immersion.

Another piece from the *Imagines*, *Narcissus*, further illustrates this qualification of the immersive nature of aesthetic experience." The motif of *Narcissus* raises the reflexivity inherent in *ekphrasis* which, as we have seen, exploits the nesting of two levels of representation, artwork and verbal description. *Narcissus* adds a third level, a depiction embedded in the artwork. The reflection of *Narcissus* in the water serves as a mirror for an artwork representing him and, at one further remove and across the divide of text and image, its verbal description. As Jas Elsner puts it with characteristic elegance, the readers encounter 'imagined viewings of an image whose key theme is the act of viewing and ... representations of a visual representation whose subject is in fact representation itself.

The opening of the *Narcissus* in Philostratus' *Imagines* makes explicit the recession of representational levels that is at work: 'The pool represents (*graphei*) *Narcissus*, and the painting (*graphê*) <represents> both the pool and the whole story of *Narcissus*'. As in the *ekphrasis* of the hunters, Philostratus capitalizes on the ambiguous *graphein* in order to blend together visual and verbal representation. Here, however, he lines up not two, but three levels of *mimesis*. While the picture seems to morph directly into its *ekphrasis*, it is internally mirrored by the reflection of *Narcissus* in the water." The close alignment of the levels of representation that build on each other is rhetorically reinforced: the second half of the sentence features the word *graphe* echoing *graphei* from the first half, but itself lacks a predicate that needs to be supplemented from the first half. The *figura etymologica* and *ellipsis* formally express the entwinement of pool, painting, and *ekphrasis*. The neat transition through the mimetic recessions gives the reader the feeling of facing *Narcissus* and his mirror-image immediately.

The tension between immersion and reflection is enacted across the multiple levels of representation: 'The painting has such regard for truthfulness that it even shows drops of dew dripping from the flowers and a bee settling on the flowers - whether a real bee has been deceived by the painted flowers or whether we are to be deceived into thinking that a painted bee is real, I do not know. But let that pass'. The speaker praises the *mimesis* of the painting, but in doing so, he takes a

detached stance. Speaking of the deception, he has not succumbed to it. At the same time, his inability to pinpoint where the deception lies reveals that he is somehow under its sway. The issue whether the bee or the beholder is deceived refracts the pun of a famous anecdote about *Zeuxis* and *Parrhasius* reported by *Pliny*: while *Zeuxis*' painting is so life-like that birds try to peck at the grapes represented, *Parrhasius* manages to trick *Zeuxis* who asks for the veil to be removed which, however, is only painted. *Philostratus* abandons the agonistic context and picks up the juxtaposition of human and animal responses as a means to showcase the allure of naturalistic painting. While reflecting on the artfulness of the painting, the spectator simultaneously seems to have become its victim who cannot distinguish art from life anymore.

The rhetor continues to muse on the deception represented in the painting:

'As for you, however, *Narcissus*, it is no painting that has deceived (*exêpatêsen*) you, nor are you engrossed in a thing of pigments and wax; but you do not realize that the water represents you exactly as you are when you gaze upon it, nor do you see through the artifice (*sophisma*) of the pool, though to do so you have only to nod your head or change your expression or slightly move your hand, instead of standing in the same attitude; but acting as though you had met a companion, you wait for some move on his part. Do you then expect the pool to enter into conversation with you? Nay, this youth does not hear anything we say, but he is immersed, eyes and ears alike, in the water and we must interpret the painting for ourselves'.

Narcissus' absorption throws into relief the reflexive stance of the rhetor and his audience, who are aware that he sees merely an image in the pool. At the same time, the speaker's comment on *Narcissus*' deception itself undercuts the distinction between different levels of representation. The word 'deception' aligns the viewers and *Narcissus* with the readers of *Philostratus*. Here referring to a visual representation, *apatê* has a long-standing history as a term for the spell words can cast on an audience." It thus bridges the gap between text and image while also revealing that the *ekphrasis* is predicated on the same deceptive lure as the image it describes. The blending together of narrative and pictorial representations also comes to the fore in the word *sophisma*. The very term for the ingenious rhetorical devices which abound in *Philostratus* is here applied to visual representation, more precisely to the reflection of the pool. The collapse of visual into verbal representation goes hand in hand with an effacement of the boundary between artistic and natural representation. The words in which the rhetor distances himself from *Narcissus*' deception themselves obliterate the mediation of a picture through words.

The speaker pinpoints *Narcissus*' naïveté when he comments on his expectation that he can have a conversation with what is after all only water. And yet this point also illustrates that the speaker's stance is not so different from *Narcissus*'. While mocking *Narcissus* for wanting to communicate with his reflection, the narrator himself speaks to what is only a picture

when he addresses Narcissus in the second person. The absorption of the rhetor is proven further by his suggestion that Narcissus move in order to realize that he is seeing his own reflection. Just as a reflection cannot talk, a figure in a painting is not capable of moving. The rhetor thus re-enacts the very confusion for which he blames Narcissus — Narcissus takes the reflection at face value, he the painting. While the ekphrasis of the hunters embeds the erasure of the line between reader and text in a reflection on the gap between spectator and picture, the Narcissus Imago brings immersion and reflection together at the same level, welding them together in a single response.

Philostratus' *Imagines* highlight the absorption of spectators and juxtaposes it with the immersion that words can provoke. Both media envelop their recipients in a similar fashion. At the same time, Philostratus carefully qualifies the thrall of both modes of representation. As alluring as visual and verbal mimesis may be, the absorption it brings about is regulated by reflection. While being transported to the represented world, the recipient remains aware of attending to a representation. Even in the temptation of the Sirens which exacerbates the immersive power of song, the idea of aesthetic distance lies dormant in the shackles that prevent Odysseus from falling under the Sirens' spell. It is this 'as-if' of aesthetic experience which my investigation will try to understand better with the help of ancient material. I shall argue that, while our response to both pictures and narratives is vicarious, there is a specific difference between the narrative 'as-if' and the pictorial 'as-if'. This specific nature of the 'as-if' will reveal that the form of narratives and pictures encapsulates important modes of coming to grips with our being in the world.

Two theoreticians will help me to set up the theoretical background for this argument. Kendall Walton's theory of 'make-believe' offers a compelling account of the 'as-if' on which a wide range of representational arts is predicated. That being said, Mimesis as Make-Believe falters when it comes to doing justice to the differences between pictorial and narrative representation. Here, I will suggest, Lessing's *Laocoön* can help. Its argument has been the object of fierce polemics and is indeed problematic on many counts; yet it foregrounds an aspect that permits us to distinguish the 'as-if' of narratives and pictures and paves the way for a better understanding of the function of form in both.

The 'As-If' of Aesthetic Experience: Kendall Walton's 'Make-Believe'

Mimesis as Make-Believe is a remarkable contribution to aesthetics. It straddles the rigour of analytical philosophy and the breadth of the continental tradition. Both the reception and ontology of art are subjected to piercing scrutiny. The representational arts that are the object of Walton's investigation cover a wide field including novels and stories as well as visual and performative arts. The clue to Walton's theory, basic but seminal, is that he understands artistic representation as analogous with children's games. When children play, they plunge themselves into fictional worlds, adopting the identities of cops and robbers, princes and princesses, etc. In such games, children often use objects as props: tree-stumps, for example, are taken as bears, branches

become guns, and lawns figure as lakes. The representational arts, Walton proposes, invite us to participate in similar plays of 'make-believe'. Texts and paintings alike serve as props, immersing the recipient in fictional worlds. On the basis of this thesis, Walton inquires into the nature of representation, explores the participation of recipients, and discusses semantic issues.

The analogy between children's games and representational arts admittedly has its limits. Props are often marginal in children's games, which can even do entirely without them. Artworks, on the other hand, are indispensable for the artistic generation of fictional worlds. The quality of representation that is crucial for the depth of an aesthetic experience plays a minor role for the significance of props when children play. Moreover, the choice of what props stand for in games has no equivalent in what representations depict. What makes the analogy so fertile in my eyes, though, is the tension between immersion and distance. Children may scream and run away, but they do not actually believe that they are facing a bear. Similarly, the beholder of a painting sees shoes, but knows that what is in front of her is not a pair of actual shoes. While imagining Madame Bovary and her lover and being engrossed in their dispute, the reader is aware of attending to a story. Even in cinema, endowed with great immersive potential through the combination of picture and narrative and marshalling a vast technical apparatus, the flat screen reminds the viewer of the mediation taking place.

The crucial point of Walton's theory for my argument is that it pinpoints the role of the 'as-if' in the reception of a wide range of artworks across cultures. Novels, dramas, films, sculptures, and painting are aligned by evoking worlds into which recipients delve without forgetting that what they are attending to is only a representation. The pervasiveness of the 'as-if' in representations of all ages helps us counter objections to the idea of premodern aesthetics. In a much-cited paper, Kristeller shows that the modern system of arts did not emerge until 1800 CE. We thus have to be wary of projecting our idea of art back into premodern as well as non-Western societies. This however does not mean that, as is often concluded, the notion of the aesthetic is confined to modernity. Jim Porter, for one, demonstrates that there is an elaborate aesthetic tradition in Greco-Roman antiquity. The recipient's stance between detachment and attachment, on which my investigation of aesthetic experience concentrates, is by no means tied to the modern notion of art. While taking different shapes in different cultures, the tension between absorption and reflection is, I daresay, a trans-historical feature of our encounter with representations. As I will argue later, what makes our concept of art distinct is that it provides a special frame which reinforces the general 'as-if' of representations.

At first sight, Philostratus' engagement with aesthetic experience may seem to be at odds with Walton's notion of 'make-believe'. When viewing the painting of the hunters, the speaker first forgets about the representational status of the scene before he discovers the delusion. And yet we may read this as a hyperbolic expression of the painting's immersive spell. In order to underline the strong effect pictures can have on viewers, Philostratus describes a full delusion towards which

aesthetic experience may move, without, however, ever reaching it fully. The Narcissus ekphrasis, on the other hand, indicates Philostratus' awareness of the close entanglement of immersion with reflection. Here, the spectator's response simultaneously features absorption and distance. Thus, Philostratus, with due qualification, describes and enacts the tension between engrossment and detachment that is conceptualized in the idea of 'make-believe'.

Walton's approach is not without problems though. His idea of reception has been the target of cogent criticism. Following a long tradition going back to Aristotle's *Poetics*, Walton identifies emotions as an important part of our response to artistic representations. The fact that the audience may be horrified by a monster, but does not leave the cinema, is explained by him through the construction of 'quasi-emotions': The viewers do not actually fear the monster, they fear it only fictionally. The emotions elicited in 'make-believe', Walton asserts, are only fictional. As Schaeffer notes, this idea is odd: 'The easily moved spectator ... who sheds tears over this and that scene of *Titanic* does not shed fictional tears, nor is the shedding fictional. He sheds real tears, the same that he would shed otherwise perhaps at a funeral, and he sheds them actually in the sense that he is actually sad: The response to monsters which instil horror in the audience, but do not prompt them to flee is accounted for much more elegantly by the tension of immersion and reflection: enthralled as the recipient may be, she does not lose track of the fact that she is attending only to a representation.

The issue that is most exigent for my purposes is that 'make-believe' seems to work differently in texts and pictures. In Walton's argument there is a bewildering asymmetry in that, while 'pictures are fiction by definition', texts can be either fiction or non-fiction: 'It is not the function of biographies, textbooks, and newspaper articles, as such, to serve as props in games of make-believe. They are used to claim truth for certain propositions rather than make propositions fictional. A confusion of different concepts of fiction seems to be at work here. Walton introduces fiction as synonymous with representations, thus understanding it as 'things with the function of being props in games of make-believe': In this sense, pictures, even abstract ones as Walton argues, constitute fiction. Now when he considers biographies as non-fiction and therefore rules them out as props, a different concept of fiction has crept in: fiction is here defined as referring to invented instead of real material." The category of representation, however, cuts across this dichotomy: factual as well as fictitious stories are represented. Games of 'make-believe' can immerse us in events that have actually taken place. Walton himself seems to be not entirely comfortable with his exclusion of non-fictional texts when he admits that some histories, 'written in such a vivid, novelistic style that they almost inevitably induce the reader to imagine what is said, regardless of whether or not he believes it', can be read as fiction and thus serve as props in games of 'make-believe' Walton's qualification, while still stuck in the confusion of different concepts of fiction, highlights that 'make-believe' is not confined to fictional (as opposed to factual) stories.

Even if we save Walton's theory from the confusion generated by the Protean concept of fiction, the 'make-believe' of texts does not map onto the 'make-believe' of pictures. This comes to the fore in Walton's discussion of deictic references to pictures. His example is Stephen pointing at a picture, namely *Shore at Scheveningen*, and saying 'That is a ship. Walton is mostly concerned with the semantics of this sentence, whether it refers to the picture or only to a specific part of it, to a fictitious entity or to the representation. Truly disconcerting, however, is the observation raised only in passing that nobody would refer to the description of *Pequod* in *Moby Dick* and say 'That is a ship' — although 'Moby Dick is a ship-representation too, to which one can refer by pointing'. 'The difference, Marie-Laure Ryan points out, 'resides in the fact that while paintings depict iconically, words signify conventionally'. More poignantly, the role of sense perception in textual and pictorial games of 'make-believe' varies: whereas the signs of texts that we see and read trigger our imagination, the pictorial 'make-believe' is inherent in our perception of the painting. This is the reason for which Wollheim rejects the notion of 'make-believe' as a concept for pictures and, despite striking similarities, insists on his idea of 'seeing-in'. We will have opportunity to revisit Wollheim's theory in due course; here, it suffices to note that Walton's notion of 'make-believe' fails to make the necessary differentiations between texts and pictures. Verbal and pictorial representation are predicated on different forms of 'as-if'." A famous treatise that has received rather bad press in recent scholarship can help elucidate the difference: Lessing's *Laocoön*.

Narrative and Picture: Lessing's *Laocoön*

Lessing's *Laocoön* has proven one of the most influential, if heavily criticized, investigations of the relation between images and words as distinct means of representation. I shall first outline its central argument and mention some of the weightiest points of criticism put forward by Lessing's readers. We will then see that Lessing's argument, despite its shortcomings, provides the key for a point that went unnoticed by Lessing but is pivotal to my argument, namely a fundamental difference between the narrative 'as-if' and the pictorial 'as-if': A critical reading of the *Laocoön* thus brings us closer to identifying what makes the form of narratives and pictures a powerful means of engaging with our experience in the everyday world.

As one of the *Laocoön*'s most astute readers, David Wellbery, notes, 'the opening paragraph of the "Preface" establishes the framework for the remainder of the work'. The first man comparing painting with poetry noticed that they had a similar effect on him: 'Both, he felt, represent absent things as being present and appearance as reality. Both create an illusion, and in both cases the illusion is pleasing'. A mimetic model is here entwined with a theory of response: both poetry and painting imitate reality and evoke an illusion. While sharing common ground, linguistic representation and pictorial representation use different signs. It was a hallmark of Enlightenment thought that, unlike pictures and their natural signification, language employs arbitrary signs. Lessing shares this conviction which is presupposed in the *Laocoön* and explicitly voiced in the *Paralipomena*, earlier sketches that give us a glimpse of the *Laocoön*'s genesis. Relying on natural signs, painting seems

prima facie better suited to imitate and evoke illusions: 'Figures and colours are natural signs, the words which we use to express figures and colours, however, are not natural signs. Therefore, the effects of a form of art that deploys the former has to be infinitely quicker and more intense than those of a form of art that has to make do with the latter'.

In Lessing's eyes, however, painting is inferior: it is hampered by the nature of its signs and their limited syntax. Poetry relies on an advanced stage of semiosis and is therefore closer to the imagination, which is more central to aesthetic appreciation than sensual perception. The poet can express many things that are beyond the reach of the painter. It is one of the most incisive points of the *Laocoön* that the medium determines the range of objects to be represented. Noting that painting deploys 'figures and colours in space' (*Figuren und Farben in dem Raume*) and poetry 'articulated sounds in time' (*artikulierte Töne in der Zeit*), Lessing concludes: 'Objects or parts of objects which exist in space are called bodies.

Accordingly, bodies with their visible properties are the true subjects of painting. Objects or parts of objects which follow one another are called actions. Accordingly, actions are the true subjects of poetry'. For Lessing, poetry is a temporal medium, painting a spatial medium. In order to be in a 'comfortable relation' (*bequemes Verhältnis*) with their medium, poems should represent temporal objects, namely action, and paintings be confined to spatial objects, that is bodies. If a painter wants to imitate action, he can only do so 'by suggestion through bodies' (*andeutungsweise durch Körper*). Poets, on the other hand, can refer to bodies 'by suggestion through actions' (*andeutungsweise durch Handlungen*).

The representation of action lets poetry even eclipse the disadvantage of language, which, unlike painting, uses arbitrary signs: '... poetry has not only also natural signs, but also the means to endow its arbitrary signs with the dignity and force of natural signs. Onomatopoeic words and sounds used to express emotion are natural signs, residues from the time when language emerged. More importantly, poetry yields a natural sign through its sequential character: 'While words are not natural signs, their sequence can have the force of a natural sign. This is the case when all words follow upon each other in the same way as the things themselves they express'.

The parallel sequence of words and action aligns the represented and its representation which thereby becomes a natural sign. As Wellbery points out, 'the restriction of poetry to successive contents insures the naturalness of poetic signification'.

There is no scarcity of critics of the *Laocoön*. Only 3 years after the *Laocoön* came out, Herder published his first *Kritisches Wäldchen*, a response that, running over more than 250 pages in the original edition, is as disparaging as it is detailed. More recent reception, it must be said, has not been much warmer. Critics have in particular unveiled the chauvinist agenda feeding Lessing's comparison of poetry with painting. There are strong nationalistic overtones, as Lessing, enlisting British authors such as Shakespeare and Milton as allies, rants against the decadent French who corrupt poetry through pictorialism. Further agendas that are equally unpopular in current criticism map onto the political frontier in the *Laocoön*. It has been

pointed out that the juxtaposition of painting and poetry is gendered: whereas the passive and beautiful bodies depicted by painting evoke the idea of femininity, the actions represented in poetry figure masculinity. The privileging of poetry over painting also bears out the Protestant esteem for the word and seems to reflect an anti-Catholic bias. 'There is', as one critic puts it, 'fear in the *Laocoön* that the visual might excite viewers into Catholicism.' This may put things a bit too starkly, but nevertheless Lessing's aesthetic investigation is shot through with a strong bias in the fields of politics, gender, and religion.

The *Laocoön*'s argument is also open to challenge from the perspective of aesthetics. The paradigm of mimesis on which it is predicated began to lose its plausibility during Lessing's lifetime. Seen less and less as imitation of the world, art was increasingly conceptualized as the expression of a creative subject. In the twentieth century the linguistic turn and other theoretical approaches further discredited the idea of mimesis. Concerning the *paragone*, Lessing presents an odd blend of descriptive and normative elements. Time and space, cemented as transcendental categories by Kant, seemingly naturalize the idea that the content of poetry be confined to action and that of painting to bodies. There is, however, as the samples criticized by Lessing illustrate, a vast corpus of poetry that primarily describes. Even in rendering action, poetry can be anachronistic and rearrange the order of events. Art history too offers ample evidence for paintings that depict more than a single scene. Poussin's *Gathering of Manna* is a case in point to which I will return later. The rhetoric of time and space notwithstanding, it is an unproven premise that poets should capitalize on the parallel unfolding of narrated and narrative time and that pictorial representation depends on the spatial mimesis of a single moment.

If we turn from the content of representation to its reception, further challenges to Lessing's argument arise.⁵⁶ We perceive words, sentences, and stories sequentially, but we make sense of them synchronically. In order to comprehend a sentence, we have to attend to its entire construction. When we interpret a tragedy, we envisage the plot in its entirety. Our processing of texts thus interweaves diachrony with synchrony. Inversely, neuro-cognitivists have confirmed that we do not process pictures in a single moment. The area grasped by our eye is tiny, so the eye constantly jumps from one point to another. How long it takes to view a painting varies and ultimately defies definition, but viewing is not a simultaneous activity. Reception thus tinges pictures with sequence and poetry with simultaneity.

This does not mean that the difference between painting and poetry is erased. We process pictures as well as poetry temporally, but the sequence is more defined for the latter. Postmodern experiments left aside, the signs of poems, whether read or recited, are received in a fixed order. There is far less guidance in painting: the eye may be invited to focus on striking elements and to follow marked compositional lines; ultimately, however, it is free to steer its own course. The differences concern not only reception, but also pertain to medium. Printed in a book, a poem has material form. When it is recited, however, it is not spatial any more. Paintings, on the

other hand, at least the ones that Lessing considers, are bound to a spatial form of presentation. Still, the critique exercised by readers of the *Laocoön* reveals that medium, content, and reception of both poetry and painting involve spatial and temporal elements.

I contend, though, that the assignment of poetry to time and of painting to space holds good for an aspect that, crucial as it is, is noticed neither by Lessing nor by his critics. First, however, we have to modify the *Laocoön's* framework. Beginning with its first readers, the *Laocoön's* terms of *Poesie* and *Malerei* faced criticism. Herder noted that sequence and representation of action are not features specific to poetry. Lessing does not explicitly define *Poesie*, but his choice of examples implies that he thinks of metrically bound texts. It is, however, narrative, whether in verse or prose, that is most closely tied to time. The doubling of time at the level of representation and the level of represented that is key to Lessing's argument has been conceptualized in the dichotomy of narrative and narrated time: on the one hand, the action narrated takes time; on the other, its narration unfolds in time. This is not the place to enter into the debate of whether this distinction provides a satisfying definition of narrative. For my purposes, it suffices that the doubling of time is without a doubt a salient aspect of narrative in a wide range of media such as oral speech, writing, and film.

Even more puzzling than the deployment of poetry is the reference to *Malerei* in a treatise that derives its name from a sculpture. Lessing deals not so much with painting as, more generally, with static visual artworks. In order to be more precise, I substitute 'picture' for the misleading term of painting. My argument will concentrate on two-dimensional pictures, but I will point out in passing that, *mutatis mutandis*, it could also be applied to statues. I would thus like to replace Lessing's dichotomy of poetry and painting with that of narrative and picture. While not true to the letter of the *Laocoön*, this shift redefines the objects under discussion to fit Lessing's argument.

Note that the narrative-picture pair maps only partly onto the word-image or image-text juxtaposition that has received so much scholarly attention in the last decades.⁶³ Whereas 'picture' is not markedly different from 'image' and only excludes the metaphorical uses that 'image' invites, 'narrative' is simultaneously narrower and broader than 'word' or 'text'. Not all texts are narrative, as recipes and instruction manuals illustrate. Significantly, verbal descriptions which loom large in works on text and image do not qualify as narrative if they are about static objects. Philostratus' *Imagines*, discussed above, is exceptional in this regard, as the descriptions are not only embedded in the narrative of the rhetor's visit to Naples, but, in recounting actions, are themselves narrative. At the same time, the realm of narrative reaches far beyond the boundary of text or even word. For this, we do not have to rely on a definition of narrative as a cognitive process and thereby make it a catch-all concept. If we understand narrative more modestly as the representation of a temporal sequence involving human or human-like characters in a sequential medium, then comic strips, films, and stagings of plays also count as narrative.

The area covered by narrative also differs from the texts described as fiction, which seems to have received more attention than narrative in scholarship on the function of stories. Fiction is often used synonymously with literature tout court, and yet its distinction from factual texts is not easily muted. Walton's *Mimesis as Make-Believe* illustrates the problems to which the terminological confusion can give rise. Often the claims made about fiction are not bound to fictional texts. Take, for example: 'Readers of fiction tend to become more expert at making models of others and themselves, and at navigating the social world...' These and other abilities ascribed to reading are by no means premised on the referential status of the text. Reading Tacitus and Ranke can engage us in the Theory of Mind equally well as reading Flaubert and Proust. Most functions that are related to activities of the imagination can also be served by factual texts. To avoid misunderstanding: I am far from saying that narrative is in general a better concept than fiction or that 'narrative-picture' ought to be preferred over 'word/text-image'; the reason why I choose 'narrative-picture' is its heuristic value for my inquiry. It establishes an angle from which we can see that our response to a significant number of representations permits us to reflect on crucial ways of relating to the world.

This conceptual re-assessment, the shift from *Poesie* vs. *Malerei* to narrative and picture, paves the way for demonstrating the significance that, in my view, the time-space dichotomy has for aesthetic experience. Lessing comments on the effect of art on its audience, but he does not note any differences between the 'illusions' created by poets and painters. However, the aesthetic illusion of narratives and pictures is not only different, it can be described with the time-space dichotomy that is at the heart of the *Laocoön*. I thus suggest transferring the time-space dichotomy from the signs and objects to which Lessing applies it to the 'as-if' of aesthetic experience. I will argue that the 'as-if' on which our reception of narrative is predicated is primarily temporal, and that the 'as-if' involved in our response to paintings is essentially spatial. Lessing thus helps us differentiate the notion of 'make-believe'; conversely, Walton permits us to identify a point in which the time-space dichotomy of the *Laocoön* is fruitful.

I will unpack this thesis in the chapters on narrative and pictures; here I confine myself to outlining its central claim. Pictures let us see something where it is not. Our perception is bracketed though; while seeing shoes, we are fully aware that what we are attending to is a canvas. The 'as-if' in pictorial seeing is thus spatial. It makes our response to pictures, I shall argue, a reflection on the act of seeing. This reflection is of course not a theoretical meditation, but a practical or performative reflection, which is far more profound: it takes the very form of the act on which it reflects, but at the same time distances it. Through pictures, we can simultaneously enact and distance vision. We engage in an important mode of relating to the world without pragmatic strains. The frame of 'as-if' renders pictorial seeing reflexive: permitting us to enact and bracket vision at the same time, it lets us come to grips with seeing in a performative way.

When we read or listen to a narrative, we direct our attention to the action, but this attention, too, is qualified by 'as-if'. Here,

the `as-if' has temporal character: we retain the events that have already taken place and harbour expectations about the further course of the action, but, even if enthralled, remain aware that we merely concentrate on a representation. Narrative hence grants its recipients a reflection on their being in time. As with pictures, this reflection goes deeper than a philosophical treatise on time inasmuch as it enacts what it reflects. Following narrative, we undergo the same temporal process as in the everyday world, albeit from within the safe frame of `as-if. Narrative exposes us to the force of time, but in a way that is indirect and mediated. Simultaneously experiencing and distancing time, we engage with it performatively.

This is not to say that pictures cannot trigger a temporal `as-if' and narratives a spatial `as-if'. Just as we may wonder about the before and after of a painted scene or even regard the depiction of a sequence, we will imagine the setting of a narrative. That being said, this `as-if' is grafted on another, a primary `as-if'. In a painting, for instance, we first have to see the scene where it is not before we can conjecture about the action of which it forms a part. When we read a novel, our imagination of space derives from our attention to the temporal sequence of signs that conveys the temporal sequence of the action. The nature of the `as-if' becomes even more complex in media which combine narrative and pictorial representation. Notably, film uses pictures to narrate stories. Here, it is difficult to give priority to the temporal or spatial `as-if'. This, however, does not affect the hierarchy of `as-if' in representations that are only narrative or pictorial.

My analysis of the distinct notions of `as-if on which narratives and pictures are predicated in no way comes into conflict with, but rather complements, recent cognitive studies in their emphasis on the embodied nature of our reception of art.⁶⁸ Our response to pictures, it has been shown, is not purely perceptual; our processing of narrative is not only intellectual. As cognitive acts both are embodied. Not only when we perceive an action, but also when we attend to a representation of it, are the neuronal areas associated with this action activated. When for instance we read that somebody runs, we feel a neuronal readiness to run. Embodiment approaches are a welcome reminder of the experiential character of our engagement with art. And yet it is as dangerous as it is easy to get carried away by the findings of neuro-scientific research and, in concentrating on the sensorimotor resonances of our responses, to downplay that attending to a representation is still different from actually witnessing or even performing an action oneself. To counter such assertions, it is helpful to highlight the `as-if on which aesthetic experiences are predicated. The wide resonance of all sorts of representations in our sensorimotor system should also not detract from the specific form of representations and the kind of 'as-if' that is triggered by them. The `as-if' qualifies the entire bodily response, and yet in the case of pictures it is predicated on an awareness of seeing something where it is not and in the case of narratives on knowingly attending to a sequence when it is not actually taking place.

My approach will shed new light both on the form and function of pictures and narratives. More precisely, I will explore the

function that resides in form. Neither in literary scholarship nor in Art History is form held in high regard. Formalism is frequently used as a derogatory term in both fields. Not without reason: the exclusive focus on matters of style makes many Art Historical studies dull, just as important aspects of literature get lost if the analysis of narrative structure becomes an end in itself. The parsing of narrators as internal or external, homodiegetic vs. heterodiegetic, etc., is as arid as the proverbial counting of locks. That being said, neither literary nor art historical analysis can afford to neglect form. Even if not admitted, form is constitutive to various scholarly approaches. As I will try to show, it is form that instills in narratives a reflection on time and in pictures a reflection on vision.

The kind of formalism advanced here elucidates a new facet of the function of stories and images. Unlike form, function is popular among literary critics and Art Historians. The sway of cultural studies has made function an eminent category in the humanities indeed. However, most of the functions discussed by scholars pertain to content. It has been shown, for example, how in charter myths narratives explain the origins of a community and thereby help secure its cohesion. Those with a more subversive mindset have taken to demonstrating that narratives may challenge collective identities. Likewise, much attention has been given to the semantics of pictures; how, for example, portraits manifest the legitimacy of a ruler or, conversely, destabilize his claims. These are all important aspects that have been treated magisterially in many studies. More difficult to capture, but by no means less important, is the function encapsulated in the form. In investigating the reflexivity just described, I will address a function of narratives and pictures that is largely independent of content. <>

The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics, 2nd edition edited by Michael Kelly [Oxford University Press, 9780199747108] 1st edition

The first reference of its kind surveys the full breadth of critical thought on art, culture, and society--from classical philosophy to contemporary critical theory. Featuring 600 original articles by distinguished scholars from many fields and countries, it is a comprehensive survey of major concepts, thinkers, and debates about the meaning, uses, and value of all the arts--from painting and sculpture to literature, music, theater, dance, television, film, and popular culture. Of special interest are in-depth surveys of Western aesthetics and broad coverage of non-Western traditions and theories of art. The work includes cross references, bibliographies, and an index.

The second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* is an unparalleled reference resource that surveys the full breadth of critical thought on art, culture, and nature, from classical philosophy to contemporary critical theory. The four-volume first edition, published in 1998, effected a revival of aesthetics that created a receptive context for the contemporary importance of the field. Spanning six volumes and 815 articles, the new edition of the *Encyclopedia* has been updated and expanded to reflect the rapidly evolving character of the discipline. Renowned contributors from diverse fields provide analyses of the major artists, movements, and theories that

continue to inform scholarly research on aesthetics.

The updated *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* contains 250 new entries that incorporate innovative fields of inquiry, such as animal aesthetics and diaspora criticism, as well as significant new developments in art, including digital media and street art. Additionally, the second edition offers enhanced coverage of non-Western cultural areas and related issues, such as post-colonialism, globalization, and primitivism. In so doing, it extends the scope of critical aesthetics, seeking to create a more open environment for aesthetics in academia, culture, and art. With bibliographic references and images, the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* is an essential work that is of use to artists, scholars, students, and all others interested in art—from painting and sculpture to literature, music, theater, film, and more. <>

Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing [The Johns Hopkins University Press, 9780801831393]

Most contemporary artists are not interested in representing beautiful things. Much recent art—not only visual art but other art as well—looks for its subject-matter to fields far from the beautiful and uses for its forms the most striking kinds of deformity, distortion, asymmetry, and discord. If anything, one is inclined to say, recent art seems to seek on principle to move as far away from beauty as it possibly can. It searches even for effects opposed to beauty.

When Kafka wrote "The Metamorphosis"—that story, so terribly pitiful, enervating, and hopeless, of a young man transformed into a great insect—he was surely least of all concerned to bring to the reader a beautiful vision, to provide him with a picture of something that tends to arouse delight, fondness, joy, or the resting and uplifting satisfaction commonly associated with the experience of beautiful things. Or think of Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, the *Three Dancers*, the *Girl Before a Mirror*, or the *Guernica*, all at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. The artist's problems in these paintings were far from that of representing beauty in any form. It appears he felt himself compelled to choose exactly the opposite of beautiful elements and combinations to make his constructions: intensely loud colors, harsh color contrasts, ugly distortions of the human form and features, loud and jangling linear outlines, ambiguities and confusions in the placement of shapes and volumes. In the music of Schönberg and his followers, all effects of tonality and tonal harmony were in principle eliminated. The whole of the music was constructed out of musical elements chosen in such a way that they cannot but make an impression of extreme disharmony, cacophony, and tonal ugliness. As Kafka chose the ugly to write about, and Picasso the ugly to organize into a visual order, so Schönberg chose the ugly to make into a musical composition. Modern art is essentially, in principle and on purpose, an art of the negative: the unformed, the ugly, the absurd, the accidental, the discordant. The negative is the element in which it lives, breathes, and configures itself.

Now the use of negative elements, though extensively developed in the art of the twentieth century, is not altogether

unknown to older aesthetics. Lessing compares the ancients and the moderns in the opening sections of his *Laocoön*. "The Greek artist," he says, "represented nothing that was not beautiful. Even the vulgarly beautiful, the beauty of inferior types, he copied only incidentally for practice or recreation. The perfection of the subject must charm in his work ... among the ancients beauty was the supreme law of the imitative arts." As a result, the Greek artist was led to suppress or soften anything in the representation that might be incompatible with beauty. In this way Lessing explained (what he thought, wrongly, to be a fact) the absence of anguish in the face of *Laocoön*. Truthful expression of such a passion would have produced a hideous distortion of the countenance and this would have disfigured the work. The artist was led to soften the expression, sacrificing it for the sake of beauty. Winckelmann had thought that the artist expressed no violent emotion in the face because he wanted to represent a noble soul suffering great pain with Stoic endurance. But the true reason is that the law of beauty forbade it.

"The master was striving to attain the greatest beauty under the given conditions of bodily pain. Pain, in its disfiguring extreme, was not compatible with beauty and must therefore be softened. Screams must be reduced to sighs, not because screams would betray weakness, but because they would deform the countenance to a repulsive degree. Imagine *Laocoön*'s mouth open, and judge. Let him scream, and see. It was, before, a figure to inspire compassion in its beauty and suffering. Now it is ugly, abhorrent, and we gladly avert our eyes from a painful spectacle, destitute of the beauty which alone could turn our pain into the sweet feeling of pity for the suffering object." [Laocoön]

Modern art, on the contrary, has, according to Lessing, a different law. It no longer sets the narrow bounds to itself with which Greek art was content. Its realm has been greatly enlarged. Its imitations can extend over all visible nature, of which beauty constitutes but a small part. Truth and expression are taken as its first law.

"As nature always sacrifices beauty to higher ends, so should the artist subordinate it to his general purpose, and not pursue it further than truth and expression allow. Enough that truth and expression convert what is unsightly in nature into a beauty of art." [Laocoön]

If modern art makes use of the unsightly and ugly, then, it is for the sake of truth and expression. But—and this is the significant point to observe—the artist thereby achieves a higher beauty, one that art attains through its expression and its truth.

Did Lessing go wrong here? Is the restriction to beauty, even if it be a higher beauty, a weakening and taming of the effect once more? Does it not represent still the search for harmony, repose, quiescence, the essentially unoffending? According to him, the artist, whether poet or painter, ought never to express the ugly simply for the sake of doing so. If he does, he disgusts and offends our taste for harmony and order, which excites our aversion to the representation. He may, however, make use of the ugly—certainly in poetry, where it undergoes a diminution of effect because of the successive enumeration of its elements, and where it can be combined with other elements to produce

mixed sensations of the ridiculous and the horrible. Less certainly, the ugly may also occur in painting, where it may be similarly employed in attaining the ridiculous and horrible. But since in painting the picture is there for us all at once, and the effect of ugliness is not weakened, the painter must never express it for itself.

So Lessing thought he could legitimize the ugly in art by observing that the aims of modern art—truth and expression—opened the possibility of its presence, leading to a new artistic beauty. When displeasing features occur in a work in the service of truth and expression, as in Homer's making Thersites ugly to make him ridiculous, the result is a beauty of poetry. The poet can use this ugliness because, through his description of it, it acquires a less repulsive effect; in a way, it stops being ugly. He uses ugliness not by itself but as an ingredient to produce mixed impressions, for instance the comical, which entertain us in the absence of beauty's more agreeable dépressions.

Lessing was still timid about the use of the ugly. There is a "beauty" still to be gotten, which reduces the ugliness of the ugly. This is an ambiguous position. Recent art moves beyond it, seeking to use the ugly precisely as ugly, without weakening it, and not merely for its shock effect but for something that takes the place of beauty. Truth and expression become even more predominant. But now a new problem arises. Of what nature is this truth and expression?

In justifying the use of disagreeable elements for the sake of truth and expression, and thereby ultimately for a beauty of art itself, Lessing sounded a familiar note, heard already in the time of Aristotle. The Greek philosopher had explained our pleasure in seeing imitations of disagreeable objects by stressing the enjoyment of the knowledge this gives us. Lessing rejected this theory. Such a pleasure of knowledge is only transitory, whereas the discomfort is permanent and essential; the pleasure can hardly overbalance the displeasure. The sensations of pain induced by ugliness are incapable of being converted by imitation into pleasurable sensations, and in consequence the ugly cannot be a fitting subject for painting as a fine art. If, then, ugliness is used in any of the arts, it must in some way be reduced to the position of an element contributing to an artistic effect in which the original discomfort is overcome; and in achieving this effect, the work of art will have arrived at a beauty of a new kind—a beauty of art itself.

Lessing however makes little of this notion of an artistic beauty that transcends the beauty or ugliness of its constituent factors. It appears that he had in mind hardly anything more than Addison had in speaking of "the beauties and imperfections of an author" that a man of fine taste in writing will have the capacity to discern. The artistic beauty produced by the use of the ugly or the loathsome is nothing other than the truthful expression of the ludicrous or the terrible, needed as it may be in the construction of the work. It is not beauty in any more essential sense, in a sense close to the concrete beauty of form that Lessing attributed to Greek art as its ideal.

The question arises whether there is anything more to the conception of a specifically artistic beauty than this. If modern

art is an art of truth, or of expression, or of any other comparable aim, what indeed has beauty to do with it? Is not the ideal of beauty one that is limited as an artistic effect and dated as an historical phenomenon? If one begins to speak of an artistic beauty over and above anything beautiful or ugly represented in a work of art, can the word "beauty" be used here in any other than the innocuous sense that makes it synonymous with "fine point," "goodness," "excellence"? Or is there indeed a beauty visible less to the eye than to the mind and soul, one that belongs to art as such?

"To a great many persons art is the special domain of aesthetic feeling. In the presence of works of art they feel a release from all that obstructs them from the enjoyment of beauty in looking at nature. They worship art as being for them a means of gaining pure beauty from nature. They glorify the artist who in his work is not only able to win from nature a pure content of beauty freed from all disturbing attributes, but also able to create out of himself a beauty that is not offered by nature. They immerse themselves in contemplation of beauty. Their feelings rise from admiration through veneration to enthusiasm. They enjoy works of art with tense susceptibility and indulge themselves in this enjoyment. Who has not yet owed such pleasures to art, and who does not count such hours among the most beautiful of his life? But are we entitled through such pleasures to believe that we have caught hold of the essential, the really artistic substance of works of art?" [Laocoön]. <>

Rethinking Lessing's Laocoön: Antiquity, Enlightenment, and the 'Limits' of Painting and Poetry edited by Avi Lifschitz, Michael Squire [Classical Presences, Oxford University Press, 9780198802228]

Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, translated by Edward Allen McCormick [The Johns Hopkins University Press, 9780801831393]

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing first published *Laokoön, oder über die Grenzen der Malerey und Poesie* (Laocoön, or on the Limits of Painting and Poetry) in 1766. Over the last 250 years, Lessing's essay has exerted an incalculable influence on western critical thinking. Not only has it directed the history of post-Enlightenment aesthetics, it has also shaped the very practices of 'poetry' and 'painting' in a myriad of different ways.

In this anthology of specially commissioned chapters - comprising the first ever edited book on the *Laocoön* in English - a range of leading critical voices has been brought together to reassess Lessing's essay on its 250th anniversary. Combining perspectives from multiple disciplines (including classics, intellectual history, philosophy, aesthetics, media studies, comparative literature, and art history), the book explores the *Laocoön* from a plethora of critical angles. Chapters discuss Lessing's interpretation of ancient art and poetry, the cultural backdrops of the eighteenth century, and the validity of the *Laocoön*'s observations in the fields of aesthetics, semiotics, and philosophy. The volume shows how the *Laocoön* exploits

Greek and Roman models to sketch the proper spatial and temporal 'limits' (*Grenzen*) of what Lessing called 'poetry' and 'painting'; at the same time it demonstrates how Lessing's essay is embedded within Enlightenment theories of art, perception, and historical interpretation, as well as within nascent eighteenth-century ideas about the 'scientific' study of Classical antiquity (*Altertumswissenschaft*). To engage critically with the *Laocoön*, and to make sense of its legacy over the last 250 years, consequently involves excavating various 'classical presences': by looking back to the Graeco-Roman past, the volume demonstrates, Lessing forged a whole new tradition of modern aesthetics.

Rethinking Lessing's *Laocoön* from across the Humanities

The first person to compare painting and poetry with one another was a man of fine feeling who observed that both arts produced a similar effect on him. Both, he felt, place before us absent things as present, and appearance as reality. Both create an illusion (*beide täuschen*), and in both cases the illusion is pleasing.

A second person attempted to get at the inner core of this pleasure, and discovered that in both cases it springs from the same source. Beauty, the concept of which we first derive from physical objects, has general rules that allow themselves to be applied to numerous things: to actions, to thoughts, as indeed to forms.

A third person—who reflected on the value and distribution of these general rules—observed that some of them reign more prominently over painting, others over poetry: that in the one case poetry can therefore help to elucidate and illustrate painting, and that in the other painting can do so for poetry.

The first was the amateur (*Liebhaber*), the second the philosopher (*Philosoph*), and the third the critic (*Kunstrichter*) [*Laocoön*]

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoön*, first published in 1766, has proved one of the most abiding texts of the European Enlightenment. As the original, full title of the essay makes clear, *Laocoön, oder: Über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und Poesie* (*Laocoön, or: On the Boundaries of Painting and Poetry*) takes on no less a subject than the 'limits'—*Grenzen*—of visual and verbal representation: it tackles the essential ways in which 'painting' and 'poetry' affect their readers and viewers. But while shaping modern critical debates about the arts, sensory perception, and aesthetic experience, Lessing's treatise is also rooted in the historical interpretation of ancient art and literature. For Lessing, thinking about the medial mechanics of 'painting' and 'poetry' went hand in hand with reflections on the paradigmatic models of Greece and Rome: if the *Laocoön* has played a key role in recalibrating modern aesthetics, it takes its lead from a particular engagement with—and indeed construction of—the classical past?

The present volume brings together a range of different disciplinary perspectives to re-examine the aesthetic arguments, intellectual debts, and manifold influences of Lessing's text. Our objective has not been to impose some particular 'party line', directing contributors towards a specific framework for interpreting (or indeed refashioning) its critical

core; given the interpretive richness and wide-ranging afterlife of Lessing's treatise, moreover, we have not tried to offer a single 'handbook' guide to this text and its reception. In devising our anthology—the first such edited book dedicated to *Laocoön* in English—we have instead taken our cue from the essay's 250th anniversary (1766–2016). Individually, all of the subsequent chapters tackle a particular aspect of Lessing's essay, its thinking or its historical context. As a collective, though, the volume exploits *Laocoön*'s anniversary to offer an array of different celebratory (as indeed critical) evaluations, and from multiple vantage-points from across the humanities.

That broad spectrum of responses is hugely important. In bringing together a motley crew of classicists, intellectual historians, philosophers, literary critics, and historians of art (among others), the book's foremost aim is to spark new sorts of dialogue between different disciplinary specialists. Lessing's very attempt to delineate the *Grenzen* of literary and artistic media, we might say, tenders a unique opportunity to move backwards and forwards across the disciplinary boundaries of modern-day academia.

The fact this book should appear within a series dedicated to 'classical presences' also has a programmatic significance. One recurrent interest in the essays that follow concerns *Laocoön* as a work of classical reception. As we shall see, Lessing played a key role in directing nascent eighteenth-century traditions of *Altertumswissenschaft*: discussing aspects of classical philosophy, critiquing ancient traditions of image-making, and contemplating both the proximity and distance between the Graeco-Roman world and Lessing's own, this treatise articulates a certain view of the Greek and Roman past. But the 'classical presences' run much deeper. As an anthology, our book is concerned not just with the reception of antiquity, but also with the legacy of that reception over the ensuing 250 years—stretching right up to the present day. While some contributors draw on *Laocoön*'s engagement with its Graeco-Roman heritage, others explore how Lessing's text, so heavily indebted to classical thinking, has itself determined the direction of more modern criticism about the 'arts'. *Laocoön*, we suggest, is a liminal text that has helped define 'modernity' against an 'ancient' alter ego: in grappling with Lessing's *Laocoön* over the last quarter-millennium, and thereby with Lessing's own thinking about the legacy of antiquity, modern aesthetic traditions too have grappled with 'classical presences'—albeit often without fully recognizing the fact.

Before outlining the specific contributions of individual chapters, we use this introduction to sketch just some of the different disciplinary horizons that our book brings together. In the opening paragraphs of his *Laocoön* preface—translated in our epigraph—Lessing situated his project against the background of a wide-ranging critical tradition. Right from the outset, *Laocoön* sketches a tripartite development in thinking about the arts, and from an array of intellectual perspectives: for Lessing, it is a history that progresses from the 'amateur' (*Liebhaber*) who first compared painting and poetry, through the 'philosopher' (*Philosoph*) who related both forms to the aesthetics of beauty, and then third to the 'critic'—literally 'art-judge' (*Kunstrichter*)—who distinguished between the aesthetic workings of each medium. The *Laocoön* essay will champion the

'critical' acumen of its author: Lessing emerges as the ultimate Kunstrichter, albeit one whose verdicts have judicious recourse to the verdicts of earlier 'judges'. Yet intrinsic to this opening paragraph is the concession that a project as ambitious and all-encompassing as Lessing's had to encompass different critical perspectives. Indeed, one of the reasons Laocoön has proved so stimulating and provocative a text over the last 250 years lies precisely in the way it brings together such diverse materials, argumentative modes, and critical insights.

Although Lessing's three strands cannot in any straightforward way be mapped onto the interdisciplinary perspectives brought together in this book, the remainder of our introductory overview likewise situates our anthology against a triad of different academic perspectives. First, we introduce some of the many ways in which *Laocoön* forged its conceptual archaeology from the literary and material traces of antiquity: as a piece of aesthetic criticism, the essay is founded upon the assumed aesthetic exemplarity of the classical past. Lessing's self-consciously 'modern' intervention in 'ancient' critical debates leads us, second, to Laocoön's own eighteenth-century contexts—that is, to the essay's place within the Enlightenment, its engagement with contemporary debates, and not least its relationship with Lessing's other works. Third, we briefly chart the importance of *Laocoön* within ongoing debates about semiotics, aesthetics, and Medienwissenschaft: over the last 250 years, we argue, Lessing's treatise has played a key role in mediating between the legacies of antiquity and modern aesthetic critical theory.

...From the late 1970s onwards, Laocoön has served as a recurrent arena for debating the ways in which visual and verbal media function in ways that are like or unlike the other. Numerous critics might be cited here, among them Mieke Bal, Norman Bryson, Michael Camille, James Elkins, and Wendy Steiner. But arguably the most influential has been W. J. T. Mitchell, who tackled Lessing's *Laocoön* head-on in an article first published in 1984. Analysing the inherent 'ideological' stakes of Lessing's distinction between painting and poetry, and self-consciously approaching *Laocoön* from the perspective of what he labelled the 'pictorial turn' of the late twentieth century, Mitchell's reading forms part and parcel of a larger argument about the shared mechanics of words and pictures. Both visual and verbal media are mixed media, Mitchell argued, comprising a combination of natural and arbitrary signs alike: 'there are no "purely" visual or verbal arts', it follows, 'though the impulse to purify media is one of the central utopian gestures of modernism' While approaching the question from a different theoretical perspective, Mieke Bal reaches a similar judgment about the modern 'dichotomistic fallacy' that underpins Lessing's essay. Arguing that such strict delineations between verbal and visual realms are an artificial invention of modern academia rather than an essential category of cultural life, Bal suggested that the formal differences between images and texts (the demonstrable fact that images can never simply 'visualize' a verbal story) do not belie their cultural inextricability. If we define images as 'visual' on the grounds of their material form, and not least because of our 'clichéd norms of word-and-image distinctions', any response to an image inevitably engages with, and

thereby reshapes, verbal discourse (and vice versa). 'Just as all language is an articulation of nonverbal as well as verbal practices', in the words of Paul Mattick, 'so nondiscursive form—visual, aural, and other—shares its world of meaning with that constructed in speech.'

Such (post-)postmodern responses will hardly constitute the last word on *Laocoön*'s aesthetic and medial arguments. Indeed, it can be no coincidence that recent crusades against Lessing's 'boundaries' come at precisely the time when twenty-first-century technologies are reconfiguring modes of visual and verbal communication—from the SMS-language' of Emoji to the visual-verbal workings of contemporary social media. Yet whether we read *Laocoön* with a view to articulating essential medial distinctions, or else in order to situate our own culturally loaded views against those of our forebears, the fundamental questions asked in Lessing's essay show no sign of abating. More than that, Lessing's special blend of antiquarian retrospection and aesthetic critique responds to a timeless problem, namely that of navigating between historical critique and essentializing philosophical evaluation: within a series dedicated to 'classical presences', Laocoön reminds us just how much modern aesthetics can learn from the perspectives of the past—and not least, from our simultaneous proximity to and remove from the precedents of antiquity.

Unordentliche Collectanea?

Much more could be said by way of introduction. The tripartite framework of the preceding overview nonetheless reflects the presiding concerns of our larger volume, simultaneously dedicated (as the subtitle puts it) to 'Antiquity, Enlightenment, and the "Limits" of Painting and Poetry'. In bringing together these different interests, our collection of essays responds to the very fabric of Lessing's essay. After all, one of the reasons Laocoön has proved so stimulating over the last quarter-millennium lies in its varied critical texture—its shifting argumentative modes, diverse materials, and oscillation between ancient and modern frames of reference. Throughout the treatise, Lessing refers to his essay as a sort of metaphorical 'journey': it is said to comprise a meandering 'stroll' across diverse fields of intellectual enquiry. More programmatically still, the preface presents Laocoön as a sort of 'rag-bag'—a 'disorderly collection', or unordentliche Collectanea, that flies in the face of German rationalist traditions:

[The following chapters] were written as chance dictated and more in keeping with my reading than through any systematic development of general principles. Hence they are to be regarded more as unordered notes for a book than as a book itself.

Yet I flatter myself that even in this form they will not be treated wholly with contempt. We Germans suffer from no lack of systematic books. We know better than any other nation in the world how to deduce anything we want in the most beautiful order from a few postulated definitions.

Lessing's self-deprecating rationale here—his supposed rejection of any 'systematic development of general principles'—to some extent foreshadows our own thinking in this book. Whether or not our anthology should be 'regarded

more as unordered notes for a book than as a book itself' we leave our readers to decide. Yet what motivates the collection is precisely the provocation of Lessing's essay, and across so wide a range of academic fields.

As a collection, the overriding remit of this book is to combine different modes of approaching the text, at once rethinking the medial 'limits' defined by the *Laocoön*, and situating the text within its Entstehungs- and Rezeptionsgeschichte. Rather than just engage in polarized debates about whether or not Lessing was right in his delineations of poetry and painting, the book engages scholars from divergent academic backgrounds, each reading the text with their own concerns, questions, and interests. Some contributors address Laocoon from a systematic theoretical and conceptual perspective, returning to timeless issues about the 'boundaries' between word and image (no less than hierarchies between poetry, drama, sculpture, and painting). Other chapters, by contrast, stress the historicizing stakes—whether exploiting aspects in the text's reception to shed light on its original theoretical framework, or championing the historical and ideological conditions that moulded the systematic conclusions of Lessing's essay (as indeed his particular view of the classical past). Our objective has been to rally behind—rather than reconcile—such divergent diachronic, conceptual, and historicizing approaches: the Ordnung of these unordentliche Collectanea lies in bringing different modes of criticism into closer contact with one another.

The point lies at the heart of the following chapter by David Wellbery, who begins by charting some of the ways in which Laocoön has been 'good to think with' among the various artistic and literary theoreticians of the twentieth century. In Lessingian circles, as we have said, Wellbery is best known for his work on Laocoön's relation to Semiotics and Aesthetics in the Age of Reason (Wellbery 1984). In his chapter here, though, Wellbery revises his earlier readings: rather than see 'media theory' as Lessing's primary contribution (a view bound up with the intellectual preoccupations of the 1980s), Wellbery suggests that this might in fact amount to something of 'secondary' importance. For contemporary readers, Lessing's contribution in the field of semiotics is arguably less valuable than the 'conceptual constellation' of his essay (as discussed here in terms of the nature of critical judgment, the primacy of human action, and the texture of human emotion). If *Laocoön* is a work of classical reception, reading this text in light of its own posthumous receptions can illuminate both what Lessing shares with his critical heirs and, no less importantly, where posthumous responses part company with Lessing's own intellectual assumptions.

In the following chapter, Michael Squire throws a spotlight on how Greek and Roman materials might illuminate Lessing's essay. The project of *Laocoön* can in part be understood as a historicist one, Squire demonstrates: as we have already noted, the opening and closing sections of the essay are structured around the interpretation of a single ancient statue-group (together with Winckelmann's interpretation of it), introducing all manner of ancient historical testimonia to illuminate the transhistorical differences between 'painting' and 'poetry'. Yet for all its debts to ancient thinking, the Laocoön's conclusions about the two media—not least, Lessing's implicit argument

concerning the superiority of 'ancient' words over images—are predicated on a particular set of 'modern' ideas, themselves conditioned by a certain theological outlook. While purporting to talk about antiquity, Lessing re-imagines that Graeco-Roman 'world full of gods' in distinctly 'Protestant' terms: it is Lessing's deeply Lutheran assumptions that ultimately instantiate his delineation of poetry from painting on the one hand, and his demonization of the visual arts on the other.

Luca Giuliani likewise approaches Laocoön from the perspective of contemporary classical scholarship. Just as Lessing grounded his analysis of medial limits in inductive arguments drawn from ancient Greek and Roman case studies, Giuliani evaluates *Laocoön* as an 'analytical tool' for the twenty-first-century classical archaeologist. In doing so, Giuliani returns to some of the same literary case studies that so engrossed Lessing 250 years ago—and none of them more so than Homer's *Iliad*. At the same time, Giuliani introduces into the mix (what we now know to be) our best source for Archaic and Classical Greek Malerei: namely Greek vase-painting. By probing Lessing's theories of the respective workings of art and text, and exploring them in the context of ancient depictions of the *Iliad* (especially seventh- and sixth-century BC vase-paintings), the chapter explores both the virtues and problems of Lessing's account. As Giuliani argues, this historical perspective can help us formulate (and indeed delimit) the analytical importance of Lessing's framework; at the same time, the perspective of ancient art can help us see how Lessing's text is as much a treatise against as about the visual arts.

While many of the chapters in this volume focus on Lessing's distinction between 'painting' and 'poetry', Katherine Harloe demonstrates *Laocoön*'s important contributions to the wider field of eighteenth-century aesthetics. The particular focus of her chapter lies in Lessing's thinking about 'sympathy' (Mitleid), above all in the context of drama. Anticipating numerous aspects of Lessing's later Hamburgische Dramaturgie, Laocoön shows Lessing—himself a major playwright—forging a theory of drama against the backdrop of both Aristotelian philosophy and ancient dramatic paradigms. Harloe homes in on a particular passage in the fourth chapter of *Laocoön*, where Lessing has recourse to Sophocles' Philoctetes in order to engage with Adam Smith's arguments about the moral force of sympathy. In doing so, she champions the wide range of contemporary critical themes brought together in the essay, as well as the international scope of Lessing's Enlightenment thinking.

Where Harloe focuses on *Laocoön*'s engagement with the work of Adam Smith, Frederick Beiser's chapter deals with the palpable impact of another central eighteenth-century author (and one of Lessing's closest personal friends): Moses Mendelssohn. As noted above, Mendelssohn composed his own treatise about the differences between the arts in 1757, paying particular attention to hybrid artistic forms that combined 'natural' and 'arbitrary' signs through their fusion of 'successive' and 'instantaneous' elements. In his comments on an early draft of *Laocoön*, Mendelssohn reminded Lessing that poetry—due to the arbitrariness of its signs—could also succeed in expressing objects that coexist with one another

rather than only consecutive actions in time. Of all Mendelssohn's comments on *Laocoön*, Beiser argues, this was the one that most troubled Lessing. Although Beiser does not find *Laocoön*'s response to Mendelssohn convincing, he uses the exchange between the two writers to clarify aspects of Lessing's own thinking, demonstrating how Lessing's arguments are bound up with a larger nexus of contemporary debates, ideologies, and assumptions.

Lessing's arguments about the 'arbitrariness' of poetic signs—together with his response to Mendelssohn's objections in *Laocoön*'s seventeenth chapter—likewise provide the backdrop for Avi Lifschitz's essay. As Beiser's chapter makes clear, Lessing dismisses Mendelssohn's counter-arguments by pointing out that while language in general is arbitrary, this should not be the specific attribute of poetry. According to Lessing, who bases his arguments on the analysis of ancient case studies, the particular purpose of poetry must be the creation of a vivid illusion that approximates the immediacy of pictorial representation. Lessing attempts to cast the poet as 'elevating' arbitrary linguistic signs to the status of the natural signs of painting. Lifschitz sets out to explore the seeming paradox of this position. He argues that Lessing drew upon a wide range of French and German thinkers who downplayed the arbitrariness of language while simultaneously emphasizing its natural features (among them, Rousseau's projection of a performative 'language of signs' onto classical antiquity, Condillac's 'language of action', and not least Diderot's musings on what he termed 'poetic hieroglyphs').

Lifschitz consequently shows how *Laocoön* takes its inspiration from multiple sources, extending far beyond the intellectual remit of Christian Wolff and his German followers: Lessing's call for the naturalization of arbitrary signs, and his discussion of ancient poetry in this light, can only be understood against the backdrop of a cross-European debate about linguistic signs.

Whereas Beiser and Lifschitz examine *Laocoön* as a key contribution to eighteenth-century semiotics, Daniel Fulda evaluates the text against the backdrop of contemporary historiography. For many scholars *Laocoön*'s edicts have been understood to pertain to 'poetry' and 'painting' plain and simple. But as Fulda explains, Lessing's underlying prescriptions about painterly 'space' and poetic 'time' are also shaped by debates on how to write history—debates that themselves stretch all the way back (as indeed waged in response) to Graeco-Roman precedent. Ultimately, Fulda argues, Lessing's prescriptions about the proper 'limits' of 'poetry' and 'painting' respond to what was seen as a weakness of German historiography in the eighteenth century: namely, the struggle to reconcile the spatial and temporal dimensions of historical writing.

With Élisabeth Décultot's chapter we shift attention to the actual medium of Lessing's text. If *Laocoön* constitutes an attempt to delineate the boundaries of poetry and painting, to what extent can these categories be applied to Lessing's essay? How aware of these poles is the author in writing his own text that unfolds in time? Indeed, might *Laocoön* itself be understood as an exercise in 'poetry'? To answer these questions, Décultot first turns to a 1755 text that Lessing had

earlier composed with Mendelssohn (Pope—ein Metaphysiker!), a treatise in which both thinkers had tried to delineate the different realms of poetry and philosophy. Décultot proceeds to argue that there is a close proximity between what Lessing calls 'poetry' and his own philosophical writing: criticism, at least as practised in *Laocoön*, narrates action in time through the representation of a sequence of readings and debates with Lessing's contemporaries. Along the way, the chapter argues that Lessing's respective methods of distinguishing between two domains—whether between metaphysics and poetry (in Pope—ein Metaphysiker!), and between poetry and painting (in *Laocoön*)—prepared the way for an expanded aesthetic understanding of poetry.

Moving forward to the immediate reception of Lessing's *Laocoön*—that is, to the reception of Lessing's own reception of classical art and literature—Ritchie Robertson situates Lessing's text within emerging debates over the proper depiction of suffering in art. More specifically, Robertson's chapter focuses on Goethe's writings on the ancient Laocoon group, as well as on other late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century treatises dealing with the representation of pain. The issue of suffering in art was of utmost significance to Goethe's understanding of the classical, Robertson explains; more than that, the themes introduced in Lessing's essay—above all, its concerns with how suffering can be depicted in words and images—proved pivotal for Goethe's prescriptions about the relationship between idealism and individuality (or 'the characteristic') in art. As part of a larger campaign against what he called 'naturalism' in art (a crusade that Goethe waged in alliance with Schiller), Goethe argued that the ancients did not share the false notion that art must imitate nature. For Goethe, responding to Lessing, the power of the Laocoon group lay instead in its depiction of bodily suffering as something not just beautiful but also *anmutig* ('sensuously pleasing').

The topic of beauty resurfaces in a different form in Jason Gaiger's chapter, which examines Lessing's approach to the medium of the artwork from an unabashedly art-theoretical perspective. One of the most challenging—and widely misunderstood—aspects of the essay, in Gaiger's view, is its argument about the interplay between an artwork and the imaginative response of the subject. What role does the actual medium of a representation play in *Laocoön*? Does Lessing champion a 'transparency theory of art' (whereby the medium of representation is ideally 'transparent' to what it represents)? Or does *Laocoön* assume a more dynamic mode of engagement between material form and subjective imagination? Gaiger explores how different critics have differently approached these questions (with particular reference to the work of Anthony Savile, Arthur Danto, and David Wellbery). In casting doubt on the idea that Lessing subscribed to a 'transparency theory of art', moreover, Gaiger joins Lifschitz in suggesting that *Laocoön* works within a more complex framework of semiotic theory than is often assumed.

Jonas Grethlein, like Gaiger, tackles *Laocoön* from the perspective of contemporary aesthetics, developing Gaiger's interest in issues of subjective imaginative response. Grethlein begins by surveying some of the different 'ideological' critiques of Lessing's thesis—its notional nationalist undertones,

its supposed anti-visual stance, and not least the gendered stakes of its dichotomy between painting and poetry.

Responding to such 'deconstructionist' readings, Grethlein argues that Lessing's insights are fundamental for articulating how aesthetic experience works, and in a series of transhistorical ways. Reformulating Lessing's categories of temporal 'poetry' and spatial 'painting', while also concentrating on aesthetic response rather than formal medial difference, Grethlein treats the essay as a guide for delineating what he labels 'narratives' and 'pictures': Lessing's arguments about 'poetry' and 'painting' can help to advance a phenomenological argument about the 'as if' (in Kendall Walton's terms) of aesthetic experience, in particular the different modes of spatial and temporal response involved in reacting to narratives and pictures.

Where Grethlein (like others in the book) focuses first and foremost on the medial distinctions at work in Lessing's essay, Paul Kottman sets out to rethink Lessing's fundamental contribution to the history of aesthetics. For Kottman, Lessing talks of the differences between visual and verbal media primarily only to demonstrate their shared aesthetic effects. At stake, Kottman claims, is the very question of how art contributes to criticism—as played out in Lessing's opening distinction between the perspectives of the 'amateur', 'philosopher', and 'critic'. Like Wellbery, Kottman subsequently argues that what drives Lessing's interest in different media is less their specific properties or constraints than their respective ways of soliciting the aesthetic imagination: through its careful examination of literary and visual products, Lessing's essay is an attempt to grapple with the special ways in which the practice of art makes the world intelligible.

If Gaiger, Grethlein, and Kottman all approach Lessing's treatise from the critical viewpoints of modern aesthetics, Jürgen Trabant introduces an anthropological-historical perspective. For Trabant, Lessing's distinction between poetry and painting can stand for a wider controversy about the respective status (and indeed relative developmental history) of words and images. The historical anthropology of language, Trabant argues, can help substantiate many of Lessing's theories, not least the idea that word and image share substantial common ground as embodiments of human thought. In particular, Trabant explores Lessing's *Grenzen* in relation to the concept of 'articulation'—not only of sounds, but also of cognitive distinctions. Returning to the themes discussed by (among others) Beiser and Lifschitz, Trabant concludes that the specific structure of phonetic articulation allows greater arbitrariness and combinatory possibilities than visual images. Ultimately, he suggests, it is phonetic articulation that enabled the rise of human culture: if Lessing prompts us to imagine 'word' and 'image' as occupying two floors within a shared house, we are justified in assuming a certain topography—one in which language occupies the first floor above the realm of visual imagery.

In his closing epilogue, returning full-circle to the themes explored in W. J. T. Mitchell's preface, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht ends the volume by examining what it means to read Lessing's text from a distance of 250 years. Throughout the book, several contributors make reference to Gumbrecht's arguments

concerning aesthetic 'presence', in particular his polemics about the legacy of Enlightenment semiotic modes. In tackling issues about hermeneutics, materiality, and the reception of the past head-on, however, Gumbrecht explores both the proximity and distance between our intellectual concerns in 2016 and those that motivated Lessing's essay in 1766. The mediation of so many 'classical presences' within Lessing's treatise, we might say, finds a parallel in our own mediations of Lessing's essay.

So much for the parts. But what of the volume as a whole? We end this introduction by reiterating that this book offers only a selective 'rethinking' of Lessing's *Laocoön*: just as Lessing's views of ancient art and literature were coloured by the concerns of his Enlightenment milieu in 1766, so too are our own responses to *Laocoön* no doubt shaped by our own specific disciplinary and cultural contexts on the occasion of the essay's 2016 anniversary. We do not claim to have addressed every aspect of *Laocoön*; indeed, our combined argument is that so wide-ranging an essay must resist any such closure. Yet it is the very breadth of responses, drawn from across the humanities, that our book sets out to champion. The sentiment seems a fitting tribute to the provocations of Lessing's original essay: as the essay embarks on its next quarter-millennium, we hope that future audiences will find in it as much to entice, bait, and goad as previous readers have done over the last 250 years.

Lessing's chief contribution to aesthetics is his treatise *Laocoön: Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766). This brilliant, if tendentious, treatise is of characteristically polemical inspiration. It takes its title from the famous Hellenistic sculpture, now in the Vatican, depicting the death throes of the Trojan priest Laocoön and his two sons in the coils of two enormous serpents, and its point of departure is a disagreement with the art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann over the interpretation of this statue. Lessing's disagreement with Winckelmann is, on the face of it, a minor one, for he accepts Winckelmann's neoclassical premise that the supreme law that governed the visual arts in antiquity was the law of beauty. What he objects to is the moral component in Winckelmann's theory of beauty. He does not deny that the Greeks were morally admirable; he denies merely that their visual art, as distinct from their literature and way of life, was determined by moral considerations. Thus, Laocoön's half-closed mouth is not a sign of his stoical fortitude, that is, of his moral excellence, for, Lessing points out, Laocoön does scream aloud in Virgil's version of the story in the *Aeneid*, and other Greek heroes did not consider it unmanly to do likewise in similar predicaments. The statue shows him now just before he screams, because to show him actually screaming, with his mouth gaping open, would offend the rule of beauty. It was therefore solely in the interests of beauty that the sculptors avoided showing him screaming, whereas in literature (for example, the *Aeneid*), the law of beauty does not apply as it does in the visual arts, so that the poet is perfectly free to describe Laocoön's screams. In other words, Lessing insists on a narrowly aesthetic definition of classical beauty. Winckelmann's supporting, ethical arguments, though not incompatible with the aesthetic thesis, have the effect of blurring a distinction that Lessing wishes above all to establish.

Lessing uses this apparently minor disagreement with Winckelmann to demonstrate something fundamental to aesthetics: that poetry and visual art are subject to quite different laws. His aesthetic principles, like those of his age, are normative: each art form has rules of its own, and the arts must not be assimilated to one another, as the Horatian dictum "ut pictura poesis" had suggested. The central arguments in Lessing's *Laocoön* are not by any means original: most of them can be found in the work of earlier theorists such as Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, James Harris, Moses Mendelssohn, and Denis Diderot. But they had never been stated so fully and so lucidly. The treatise *Laocoön* shows Lessing at his analytic best: he is a master of logical distinctions. Although he attempted, in the final version of his work, to give it as formal and relaxed appearance as possible (before Winckelmann and Lessing, German aesthetics, having grown out of academic philosophy, had been all too addicted to abstract systems, such as that of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten), the early drafts show that it began, in the manner of Wolffian rationalism, as a rigorous piece of deduction from the concepts of space and time, along the lines of chapter 16 in the final version. Like the aesthetic theories of most of his immediate predecessors, Lessing's is a mimetic, representational one: it is the business of art to render imaginary objects present, to create an illusion of reality. It follows from this that there must be a natural relationship between sign and signified. Poetry uses words, which follow each other in time; hence, it must deal with objects that follow each other in time, that is, actions. The visual arts use shapes and surfaces, which coexist in space; hence, they must depict objects that coexist in space, that is, bodies. It is one of the strengths of Lessing's treatise that it supplements, and indeed builds up to, these a priori arguments with empirical ones (chiefly derived from the practice of the Greeks): Homer, as a poet, depicted primarily actions, and the Greek sculptors depicted primarily Lessing's treatise extends to literature the service that Winckelmann had performed for the visual arts. Just as Winckelmann had drawn his conclusions directly from the art of antiquity, so Lessing formulates the laws of poetry by direct reference to Homer, Sophocles, and (in his essays on drama, the *Hamburg Dramaturgy* of 1767-1769) the poetics of Aristotle. French literary classicism is either ignored or (again in the *Hamburg Dramaturgy*) attacked as weakly derivative and inauthentic. Greece supersedes France as a model for German culture, and the foundations of that Hellenism that became almost an obsession for German writers from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to Friedrich Nietzsche were laid.

It is a great misfortune that the *Laocoön* is unfinished. Its continuation was to have dealt with, among other things, music, dance, and mime, and with drama as an art form that combines visual art and poetry. As a dramatist himself, Lessing would have been well qualified to tackle this issue. The *Hamburg Dramaturgy* is no real substitute, for it consists of unsystematic reflections, chiefly designed to undermine the authority of French tragedy as practiced by Pierre Corneille and François-Mane Arouet de Voltaire, and to supply a theoretical justification for psychological and domestic drama in a more realistic idiom such as Lessing himself, Diderot, and a few other contemporaries were then developing. The

continuation of the *Laocoön* would have approached drama more systematically, working from first principles. Lessing gave an indication of how he would have proceeded, however, in his letter of 26 May 1769 to Friedrich Nicolai.

The conceptual framework of the *Laocoön* is supplemented by Lessing's semiotic theory of "natural" and "arbitrary" signs (which is itself foreshadowed in the work of earlier Enlightenment thinkers). A "natural" sign resembles the object it signifies, as do the shapes and colors of figurative sculpture and painting. An "arbitrary" sign (and all language, with rare exceptions such as onomatopoeic words, consists of "arbitrary" signs) has no necessary connection with its object: the connection is a purely conventional one. Because the aim of all art, according to Lessing's mimetic theory, is to present the imitated object to the intuitive cognition of the recipient in as direct a manner as possible, it follows that poetry must endeavor by all possible means to transform its "arbitrary" (that is, conventional) linguistic signs into "natural" ones. In depicting only actions and eschewing description of bodies—for the visual arts are more suited to the latter task—poetry takes a major step in this direction. Its use of images and metaphors (rather than abstractions) also enhances its concreteness and immediacy. But the genre of poetry best equipped to convert symbolic or linguistic cognition into intuitive or perceptual cognition—that is, to convert "arbitrary" signs into "natural" signs—is drama, as Lessing explains in the letter to Nicolai. Drama is not an imitation of speech, as the third person narrative often is: the sign (the dramatic dialogue) coincides completely with the signified (the speech of the characters); and the linguistic signs are reinforced by the purely "natural" signs of the actors' gestures and expression.

At this point, Lessing has reached the limits of the mimetic theory of art, and of the conceptual framework of his original treatise. The letter to Nicolai points the way to a new, nonreferential theory of art and poetry. Lessing did not develop such a theory himself. But his insistence that art should be judged only by aesthetic (as distinct from ethical, religious, political, or any other) standards consolidated Baumgarten's defense of aesthetic autonomy, and prepared the way for the aesthetics of Immanuel Kant; and his close attention to the artistic medium laid the basis for Johann Gottfried von Herder's attempts to relate the different arts to different senses, including touch and bodies. Lessing thus arrives at identical conclusions by two distinct routes: by the analytic methods of Baumgarten, Mendelssohn, and other thinkers of the Leibniz-Wolffian school, and by the empirical methods favored by the art historian Winckelmann and by British theorists such as David Hume and Edmund Burke.

One other of Lessing's aesthetic achievements deserves mention. In his short treatise of 1769, *How the Ancients Portrayed Death*, he further reinforced German Hellenism and the neoclassical movement in the visual arts. Death, he argues, was never depicted in classical (as distinct from Christian) art as an ugly skeleton, but as a beautiful youth, the brother of sleep; even on tombstones and sarcophagi, the law of beauty prevailed. This elegant little essay furnishes a theoretical justification for the neoclassical funerary sculpture of Antonio

Canova, John Flaxman, and their followers, and is a landmark in the post-Christian iconography of death.

It cannot be denied, however, that Lessing's interest is above all in poetry, and that, in the Laocoön, the visual arts come off poorly by comparison. Winckelmann's conception of classical beauty had itself been narrow and restrictive. Lessing has the same limitations, in that he is just as indifferent as his predecessor toward landscape, genre painting, still life, and other nonclassical art forms. But he adds further restrictions on top of these. Although he endorses Winckelmann's contention that the visual arts should depict beautiful and idealized human figures, he goes on to maintain that this is their exclusive task. Not only does he outlaw the ethical content of Winckelmann's conception of beauty; he also condemns allegorical and historical painting—forms held in high esteem by Winckelmann—as unwarranted intrusions by the visual arts upon the province of poetry. His censures of descriptive poetry (descriptive in the sense of indulging in enumeration of physical detail) diminish the province of poetry far less drastically than his corresponding strictures on whole areas of sculpture and painting diminish that of the visual arts; and whereas he deals separately with the different genres of poetry—and would have distinguished between them further had he completed his treatise—he simply lumps together painting and sculpture as if they were a single art form. (It was left to Herder, in his essay *Plastic Art [Plastik]* of 1778, to supplement Lessing's work with a separate aesthetics of sculpture as a three-dimensional form, relating less to vision than to the sense of touch.) The effect of all this was to confine the visual arts to depicting only a restrained and, in the last resort, empty variety of human beauty. Poetry, meanwhile, remains undisputed sovereign of the realm that interested the dramatist Lessing most: the boundless sphere of human activity, which affects us far more immediately than the lofty, but ultimately frigid, beauty of Greek art. It is probable, as E. H. Gombrich (1987) has suggested, that Lessing's attack on Winckelmann's interpretation of Laocoön as a paragon of fortitude is part of his campaign against French classicism, against the idealized stoical heroes of Cornelian tragedy. By banishing heroic images to the visual arts, and at the same time emptying them of all but aesthetic content, Lessing hopes to clear the way for literature—especially the dramatic and narrative forms—to get on with more important things, and to enjoy a monopoly of realism.

The limitations of the Laocoön are thus conspicuous, particularly in its treatment of the visual arts. About poetry, its limitations are not so much those of Lessing himself as of the representational aesthetics and neoclassical principles of his time. The mimetic theory is less than adequate to the more subjective varieties of poetry, especially the lyric. The role of unconscious factors in expression, the role of mood and atmosphere, and of the associative qualities of languages, are almost completely neglected. And although Lessing tries valiantly, in his *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, to harmonize Aristotle's *Poetics* with modern forms of drama, his attempts are strained. Despite his frequent praise of William Shakespeare, he nowhere seriously attempts to reconcile Shakespeare's plays with his own neoclassical principles. Based as the latter were on

the art forms of antiquity, their inadequacy in relation to newer, post-Renaissance forms was becoming ever more obvious. What was now required was an aesthetics capable of doing justice to the psychological, social, and cultural origins of works of art—of art as expression rather than as imitation. Herder's expressive theory of poetry (further developed by the Romantics) and his historical relativism (further developed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel) were among the first attempts to meet this need. <>

Aesthetic Experiences and Classical Antiquity: The Significance of Form in Narratives and Pictures by Jonas Grethlein [Cambridge University Press, 9781107192652]

In this bold book, Jonas Grethlein proposes a new dialogue between the fields of Classics and aesthetics. Ancient material, he argues, has the capacity to challenge and re-orientate current debates. Comparisons with modern art and literature help to balance the historicism of classical scholarship with transcultural theoretical critique. Grethlein discusses ancient narratives and pictures in order to explore the nature of aesthetic experience. While our responses to both narratives and pictures are vicarious, the 'as-if' on which they are premised is specifically shaped by the form of the representation. Form emerges as a key to how narratives and pictures constitute an important means of engaging with experience. Combining theoretical reflections with close readings, this book will appeal to art historians as well as to textual scholars.

Excerpt: Most histories of aesthetic theory in the Western world begin in earnest with the first decades of the eighteenth century. Conventional wisdom takes this to be the moment when medieval speculative philosophizing about beauty finally began to give way in much of Europe to a recognizably modern enterprise: the systematic and empirically oriented analysis of the perception of beauty as a mental phenomenon.' The list of theorists whose work marks this transition is almost as conventional as the transition's date. Many historians of aesthetics mention Joseph Addison (1672-1719) in England; David Hume (1711-76), Alexander Gerard (1728-95), and Archibald Alison (1757-1839) in Scotland; Jean-Pierre de Crousaz (1663-1750) in Lausanne; and Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636-1711), Jean-Baptiste Du Bos (1670-1742), and Charles Batteux (1713-80) in France. Some add Johann Jakob Bodmer (1698-1783) and Johann Jakob Breitinger (1701-1776) in Zurich, or Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) in Naples. But almost all give pride of place to Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) in England, Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) in Ireland and Scotland, and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-62) in Brandenburg-Prussia. Each of them has been influentially credited with breaking important new ground. Shaftesbury has been called the "inventor" of aesthetics and the author of "the first ... comprehensive and independent philosophy of the beautiful." Hutcheson, a "father" of the Scottish Enlightenment and first major exponent of the "moral sense," has been described as the first philosopher "to write a clearly recognizable, extended, and self-contained work on what we would now call aesthetics or the philosophy of art." Baumgarten, professor of

philosophy in the cities of Halle and Frankfurt (Oder), coined the very term *aesthetica* in 1735 as the name of a new philosophy and, in Ernst Cassirer's words, allowed philosophical aesthetics to "constitute itself as a philosophical discipline in its own right."

What precisely was modern about early-eighteenth-century aesthetic theories?

Historians of aesthetics usually regard as modern those theories that offer coherent, self-contained, and empirically informed discussion of the constellation of topics comprehended within the philosophical subdiscipline we now call aesthetics. They include the metaphysics of beauty; the psychology of human beings' experience of beauty; the nature of art or the arts as such; and various other elements of art-making and criticism, such as taste, imagination, and genius. None of these topics, of course, emerged *ex nihilo* in the eighteenth century. Individual aspects of each of them can be found in treatises and practical manuals on rhetoric, architecture, and painting and the other visual arts, not to mention a plethora of academic textbooks, extending back from the seventeenth century into the Middle Ages and antiquity. But insofar as the eighteenth century saw self-contained analysis of all these topics coalesce into a single genre or philosophical discipline, it witnessed the emergence of aesthetic theories worthy of the designation modern in the loose sense of that term.

Historians of aesthetics also tend to measure the modernity of an aesthetic theory by a different, narrower criterion — the degree to which it approximates what many of them have considered the supreme or first important model of modern aesthetic theory: Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, first published in 1790. This narrower criterion is the chief principle by which a mere parade of stars — such as Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Baumgarten — has long been presented as a coherent narrative.

Some authors of such narratives present early-eighteenth-century aesthetic theories as valiant but inadequate attempts to pose and solve a problem ultimately and more convincingly addressed by Kant. The central problem is sometimes described as a conflict over whether human judgment of a thing's beauty — or, more generally, whether knowledge itself — is ultimately a matter of sensation or reason. Bernard Bosanquet calls the problem a conflict between "individual" and "universal" philosophical tendencies; Ernst Cassirer describes the problem as "the schematic conflict" between experience and reason; Howard Caygill describes the problem as the paradox, addressed in different ways by two competing traditions, one British and the other German, of how to judge the rules according to which we use our own judgment to achieve a "union of sensible and intelligible"; and Ted Kinnaman describes the problem as a paradox arising from the question, bequeathed to the modern world by René Descartes (1596-1650), whether beauty is a "subjective" or an "objective" quality. Kant — so the stories go — resolved these problems."

Other histories of early-eighteenth-century aesthetic theory present preKantian theories as having anticipated concepts that came to fruition with Kant and thereby set the stage for

later discussion. The most heavily cited of these is the concept of the "aesthetic attitude," a particular type of contemplative experience characterized by "disinterestedness" and "autonomy," in the sense that the judgment it involves is subject to its own rules and is not directed toward any goal outside itself. What precisely the aesthetic attitude entails, and whether it is distinguishable from other kinds of experience, has long been a subject of controversy, and the lack of consensus about it among twentieth-century aesthetic theorists is reflected in the variety of stories about how it emerged as an object of investigation among eighteenth-century predecessors of Kant. Benedetto Croce, for example, writing at the turn of the twentieth century, traced his own concept of aesthetic experience as a type of nonconceptual cognition, or intuition, back through Kant to Vico, and, in an imperfect form, to Baumgarten. Jerome Stolnitz, in a series of articles beginning in 1961, developed the influential argument that a concept of "disinterested aesthetic experience" — much like his own — first appeared in the work of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson before Kant gave it more elaborate exposition. Paul Guyer, in a more recent argument untarnished by the heavy criticism endured by Stolnitz, has looked to Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Du Bos, Addison, and, above all, Baumgarten for anticipations of Kant's concept of aesthetic experience as necessarily involving the free play of the imagination!

Kantian concepts are equally central to another category of histories of aesthetic theory: those oriented not toward unearthing the origins of Kant's ideas, the origins of problems Kant tried to solve, or the origins of later aesthetic theories, but rather toward answering questions addressed famously by Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, among others, about the connections between aesthetic theory and fascist or capitalist ideologies. Like their counterparts among historians of aesthetics who avoid all trace of Marxist vocabulary, authors of these histories tend to take the concept of "autonomous" aesthetic experience, articulated influentially by Kant, as the essential element of modern aesthetic theory and to discuss Kant's predecessors with a view to establishing the ways in which they anticipated later uses of the concept. Their histories, too, in other words, present Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Baumgarten as milestones on the road to Kant and beyond.

Nor does the road adorned by these milestones lead only to modern aesthetic theory. According to a significant body of recent scholarship, it also leads to recognizably modern artistic institutions and cultural norms. Eighteenth-century Europe, on one influential account, witnessed the emergence of concepts of the "fine arts" as distinct from crafts and of the artist as distinct from the craftsman — distinctions unknown in the Middle Ages and antiquity." By contrast with the craftsman, the artist was a person of genius: inspired, spontaneous, and original. These new artists, as imagined in the eighteenth century, produced their work not primarily for a commissioning patron but for the emerging art market, driven in large part by growing middle-class demand in societies reaping the economic benefits of commercial expansion and the growth of manufacturing. Their works were to be enjoyed not for crass utilitarian reasons but primarily for the refined pleasure that a person of good taste

could derive from contemplating them in a "disinterested" way. These new ideals were reflected in, and reinforced by, a slew of art-related institutions that developed simultaneously with them, including art museums, concert halls, and theaters. Why exactly the concept of disinterested aesthetic experience began to emerge amid these other cultural and institutional developments is a matter of debate, but its centrality to those developments is seldom disputed.'

Among all these histories of aesthetic theory that look to Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Baumgarten as Kant's forerunners, many contain a great deal of truth. But almost every one of them unites the protagonists of its story with an ahistorical bond: to a greater or lesser extent, they all produced approximations of a theory — or participated in the construction of a discipline — that none of them knew would emerge. The story is coherent, but from the perspective of a historian interested primarily in the early eighteenth century, its coherence must seem disappointingly teleological. Insofar as the theories resembled each other, the causes of that resemblance still demand explanation. The occasional suggestion that the theorists themselves had common aims usually bears no weight, signaling instead a momentary lapse in the conscientiousness with which historians need to distinguish what foreshadows a later innovation from what their history's protagonists intended to achieve. George Dickie illustrates the problem well in his own introduction to aesthetic theory, when he purports, in a historical prelude, to "trace the central, organizing strains of the field and thereby set the stage for discussion of present-day problems in aesthetics." Even putting aside the question of whether a single field of aesthetics has in fact persisted from the eighteenth century to the present, Dickie's silence about whether early aesthetic theorists perceived the "central, organizing strains" of the field as we now perceive them opens the door to the questionable inference that in addressing questions and problems occupying aesthetic theorists today, eighteenth-century theorists were intentionally organizing their concepts and theories exclusively around those questions and problems.

My purpose is to forestall this inference by offering an alternative to the conventional history of modern aesthetic theory before Kant, an alternative history whose coherence is not teleological. This history accepts the widespread designation of early-eighteenth-century theories as modern in the minimal sense that they contained coherent discussions of still-familiar aesthetic topics, and in that respect it accepts the classification of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Baumgarten as modern aesthetic theory's pioneers. At the same time, it leaves aside the question of how closely their theories resembled Kant's, and by extension, it excludes any assessment of the validity of their theories relative to his. Instead, it excavates another, broader intellectual context in which these authors were working, in order to bring to light a different set of questions and problems they consciously designed their own theories to address. The result is a causal explanation for the creation of those theories and, thereby, a substantial basis — more substantial than the mere fact of their modernity — for including them in the same historiographical narrative. This narrative turns out to be considerably different from the

histories of aesthetics in which early-eighteenth-century theories have hitherto featured so prominently.

According to this new narrative, aesthetic theories were part of a larger pattern of responses in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, in much of Europe, to what could be called aspects of the Augustinian legacy of early modern Christianity. For all its shortcomings, probably the most lucid portrait of this larger pattern remains Hugh Trevor-Roper's "Religious Origins of the Enlightenment," a forty-page comparative study, now more than fifty years old, of proto-Enlightenment repudiations of seventeenth-century Calvinism in Holland, England, Scotland, France, and Switzerland. Trevor-Roper portrays the birth of the Enlightenment in all these places as, in essence, a restaging of the famous 1524-25 pamphlet exchange between Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1467-1536) on the freedom of the human will. One of the chief points of conflict in that exchange had been the extent to which sinful human beings are naturally capable of improving their own prospects for salvation. Against Luther, who insisted that salvation be regarded as an utterly unmerited gift bestowed on sinful human beings by an inscrutable but merciful God, Erasmus protested that God is also supremely just, and as such he must have given human beings a capacity to perform the virtuous actions he explicitly commands. By the late seventeenth century, following the lead of such theologians as Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) in the Netherlands, resurgent partisans of Erasmus within Europe's established churches and among a variety of dissenting groups had placed the heirs of John Calvin (1509-64), Theodor Beza (1519-1605), George Buchanan (1506-82), and John Knox (1505-72) ("What a gallery of intolerant bigots, narrow-minded martinets, timid conservative defenders of repellant dogmas, instant assailants of every new or liberal idea, inquisitors and witch-burners!") on the defensive. What united these "Erasmian" and "Arminian" bearers of Enlightenment's torch was not only their endurance of a wide range of slurs — including Arminianism, Socinianism, deism, Pelagianism, and atheism — but also their general antipathy toward the hitherto mainstream Protestant teaching that as a consequence of original sin, human beings are by nature radically depraved, which is to say, naturally incapable of doing good in this life without the supernatural assistance of divine grace.

The dynamics of this controversy, sketched so vividly by Trevor-Roper and elucidated with greater precision by others after him, can be observed in the churches and universities of all the places in which historians and philosophers have recently observed aesthetic theory's emergence — and not only in the context of theological debate. They were also evident in the university-taught subjects of moral philosophy and natural jurisprudence, where the subject of the controversy had by the early eighteenth century acquired a common name: "the foundation of morality" or, in the German-speaking world, *Grundlage der Moral*. At issue, in schematic terms, was the extent to which human beings can become genuinely virtuous by exercising faculties they naturally possess. Crucial subquestions included (1) the identity of the natural faculties that needed to be exercised and (2) the extent to which the exercise of these faculties must involve discovering God's

existence and understanding divine law In the Scottish Presbyterian and German Lutheran versions of this debate, two of the versions now best reconstructed by modern scholarship — and, happily, best suited to illuminate the goals of Baumgarten, Hutcheson, and the closest disciples of Shaftesbury, if not Shaftesbury himself — two basic positions were represented.

One position held that human beings in their natural state are simply incapable of acting in accordance with moral principles, including divine law, with any motivation other than the crass self-interest represented by a fear of divine punishments and a desire for divine rewards. Genuine virtue, on this view, requires a fundamental change or "regeneration" of the human soul by God in the course of a person's life, such that the motivation to act in accordance with moral principles ceases to be a desire for reward and fear of punishment and becomes instead a disinterested love of God and neighbor. In early-eighteenth-century Scotland, this view was represented by so-called orthodox Presbyterians. Key aspects of it — above all the assumption that human beings are naturally motivated only by crass self-interest — were understood by its critics, albeit sometimes unfairly, to reside also in the works of other authors familiar to Scottish university students, including Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Samuel Pufendorf (1632-94), and Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733). In Halle, the Brandenburg-Prussian university city where Baumgarten began developing his aesthetic theory, a similar view was represented by a number of theologians and jurists who defy easy placement under a single heading but who included canonical representatives of German Pietism and putative adherents to a tradition of natural jurisprudence with roots in the works of Pufendorf.

Another position in the debate, represented by many of Trevor-Roper's "Erasmians," held that without paying attention to the rewards and punishments attached to divine law, human beings are indeed capable of reaching a substantial degree of virtue, simply by cultivating and exercising a naturally inborn, more or less instinctive human desire for virtue itself. Elements of this view have been traced by modern scholars not only to Erasmus but also to ancient and medieval accounts of *synderesis* as a spark of divinity within the human soul, such as that of Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-74); to the well-known argument by Grotius that natural law would remain obligatory even if it were conceded that God does not exist; and to the "federal theology" of Reformed theologian Johannes Cocceius (1603-63), which introduced late-seventeenth-century Calvinism and Lutheranism to the possibility of human beings' progressive moral improvement, thereby undermining long-standing notions of original sin. Between 1720 and 1750, the best-known and most committed Scottish representative of this view was Francis Hutcheson, who devoted his career as a moral theorist and university professor to demonstrating that human beings possessed an instinctive benevolence, that virtue could by definition only be motivated by this benevolence, and that his students and other fellow countrymen should cultivate benevolence in themselves. In the German lands, including Baumgarten's Brandenburg-Prussia, the most important representative of a similar view was another professor: Christian Wolff (1679-1754), who attributed virtue to the

exercise of the so-called rational appetite, a natural impulse that would invariably prompt human beings unencumbered by their passions to choose a course of action that their own rational faculties and experience had led them to conclude would contribute to the perfection of themselves and others.

Learned controversy among representatives of these two positions on the foundation of morality received thorough attention in the lecture halls of eighteenth-century Scottish and German universities as well as in the pages of philosophy textbooks, treatises, dissertations, sermons, and periodicals. This attention was by no means purely theoretical. At stake was the education of university students and, more broadly, the beliefs of those whose ranks many students were about to join: the lawyers, officials, physicians, clergymen, and others in a position to wield state, church, and other institutional powers and thereby to inculcate political preferences, moral conduct, and religious teachings in the population at large. What these people believed about the foundation of morality mattered a great deal, a fact nowhere more obvious than in the heatedness with which Scottish and German professors struggled among themselves to control how the issue would be taught in universities. In Scotland, Hutcheson supported a campaign in the mid-1740s to prevent the appointment of David Hume (1711-76) to the vacant professorship of moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, apparently fearing that Hume would undermine the moral-educational project to which Hutcheson himself had devoted his career.

Like many of his colleagues, Hutcheson regarded this project as essential to upholding the legitimacy of the Whig establishment and the new monarchy brought to power by the Glorious Revolution of 1688; essential to ensuring the successful reform of the Church of Scotland; and essential to producing a Scottish population capable of enjoying the economic boons of the 1707 union with England while escaping the accompanying dangers of moral corruption and political apathy. In Brandenburg-Prussia, the stakes were similarly high. Controversy over the foundation of morality in early 1720s Halle between Wolff and his Pietist colleagues on the Theology Faculty led to Wolff's dismissal from the university and forceable expulsion from the land. The conflict turned on how to legitimate the Calvinist Hohenzollern regime in a land with a Lutheran church and nobility; how to reform the established Lutheran church; and how to produce a pious and industrious population capable of sustaining the economic and military projects central to Hohenzollern state-building. Each of these notorious incidents in the history of academic politics registers how important the participants perceived correct education about the foundation of morality to be, and why they devoted so much energy to debating it.

These incidents also suggest why aesthetic questions began to receive similarly intense scrutiny. As Hutcheson's presence among the more Eras-mian participants in the foundation-of-morality debate indicates, aesthetic theories were first developed largely as a means of bolstering the Erasmian position. Most authors of such theories in both Germany and Scotland, drawing on long traditions of reflection upon the nature of beauty and moral obligation, proposed that contemplating beauty in works of art and in the natural world,

independent of any revealed knowledge of God or of divine law, could lead the contemplator to virtue. In doing so, they afforded themselves and their audiences — including their critics — ample occasion for psychologically well-informed, theoretical consideration of the questions involved: what beauty is, how we human beings perceive it, how it affects us, and how to produce its effects by artistic means. Theories of art and beauty, in other words, functioned as arenas for implicit or explicit debate about the foundation of morality, even as they were coalescing into a self-contained philosophical genre distinct from moral philosophy.

This is not to say that German and Scottish theorists understood themselves to be engaging in a single conversation with one another across the transnational republic of letters. English and French aesthetic writings certainly attracted attention in early-eighteenth-century Scotland; Addison and Shaftesbury were widely read, and Hutcheson himself, for example, claimed to have read Crousaz's 1715 *Treatise on Beauty* before writing his own.³⁵ But German aesthetic writings such as Baumgarten's appear to have gotten no public mention there, if they were read at all. Likewise, while Baumgarten and his early-eighteenth-century German contemporaries were familiar with texts by English-language authors such as Shaftesbury, Addison, and, to a lesser extent, Hutcheson — either directly or indirectly through translations, reviews, and references in other texts; before the 1740s and 1750s, they appear to have directed most of their attention to their fellow countrymen and toward the French and the Swiss.

But if Scots and Germans did not write primarily for each other, they nonetheless did share a vocabulary, drawing key terms such as perfection, beauty, and obligation not only from the ostensibly "aesthetic" French and English texts they were reading in common but also from a different and more expansive repertoire of ancient and modern texts on metaphysics; natural law; theology; moral philosophy; the history of philosophy; and the practice and criticism of art, architecture, and literature. These texts were available throughout much of Europe and routinely featured — again, directly or indirectly through descriptions and excerpts in other texts — in the curricula of German and Scottish universities. The terms employed in these texts provided their readers with the building blocks from which they could construct theories that we now regard as aesthetic but that, from their own early-eighteenth-century perspectives, bore directly upon the moral-philosophical and natural-jurisprudential questions central to the discourses in which many of the terms featured prominently.

This, in brief, is a general history of the emergence of modern aesthetic theory in the early eighteenth century. The credibility of the thesis embedded within this history, that the emergence of aesthetic theories in early-eighteenth-century Scotland and Germany can be explained as an outgrowth of simultaneous and similar debates about the foundation of morality, depends upon the soundness of an argument with essentially two steps: (1) there were similar debates about the foundation of morality in Scotland and in Germany in the first half of the eighteenth century and (2) traditionally important aesthetic theories in both places should be construed as similar contributions to those debates. These two steps cross ground

already traveled by other scholars. Although the foundation-of-morality controversy in eighteenth-century Scotland has received only a modicum of sustained, explicit scholarly attention as a phenomenon in its own right, it has long received attention — and is now well understood — as a subject of disagreement between Francis Hutcheson and David Hume. That Hutcheson developed his ethical theory as a contribution to the foundation-of-morality debate, and that he used his aesthetic theory to reinforce his ethical theory, is also well known. This last observation accords well with the more general view that Shaftesbury and many of his Scottish readers ascribed beauty to the souls of virtuous human beings, saw art as an important tool of moral education, and thereby took for granted the interrelations between ethics, aesthetics, and politics. On the German side, although the term *Grundlage der Moral* is seldom applied, a substantial outline of the controversy to which it refers is available in the case of Christian Wolff and some of his critics among professors of law at the University of Halle in the 1710s, 1720s, and 1730s. And as research on Baumgarten has progressed in the past several decades, conducted in many cases by scholars either uninterested in his resemblance to Kant or interested in illuminating the value of his achievements by contrast with Kant's, implications of his aesthetic theory not only for moral education but also more specifically for the foundation of morality and its theological implications have come into view.¹

Terra incognita nonetheless remains, and establishing the relevant similarities between Scottish and German aesthetic theories requires that several parts of it be mapped precisely. On the Scottish side, although the persistent importance of Shaftesbury's moral and aesthetic ideas in the eighteenth century is widely accepted, the details of its reception remain hazy. In particular, the deviation of Hutcheson from Shaftesbury and the relative marginality of Hutcheson's aesthetic theory by the middle of the century, by comparison with Shaftesbury's, warrants careful attention. Contrary to many histories of pre-Kantian aesthetics, from an historical perspective, the best Scottish point of comparison with German theorists such as Baumgarten is not Hutcheson but rather several contemporaries of his who, while more obscure today, better represent the mainstream in their wholehearted adoption of Shaftesbury's ideas of aesthetic and moral education. The little-known William Cleghorn (1718-54) is probably an ideal representative.

On the German side, substantially more needs uncovering. First, the extent of the importance of the foundation-of-morality debate in the early German Enlightenment needs clearer demonstration. Although information about Christian Wolff's disagreement with contemporary natural jurists about the issue can be found in recent scholarship, the connection between this disagreement and Wolff's better-known quarrel with the Pietist theologians in Halle, who engineered his 1723 expulsion from Brandenburg-Prussia, requires further illumination. Disagreement over the foundation of morality was in fact the axis on which both these controversies turned. Second, Alexander Baumgarten's intellectual debts to many of those Pietist theologians in Halle continue to require careful

scrutiny, as does the relationship between his aesthetic theory and those theologians' quarrel with Wolff.

The chapters that follow dispel the mists around these features of the two historical landscapes, German and Scottish, in which several canonical pre-Kantian aesthetic theories took form. As the mists disperse, the landscapes reveal themselves to be, for all their differences, astonishingly alike. In fact, far more than simply allowing anyone who cares about the history of aesthetics to make an imaginative leap from one historiographical framework to another — that is, from pre-Kantianism to a more variegated history of debate about natural law, theology, and morality — the newly apparent similarities of the two historical settings suggest how a new history of early-eighteenth-century aesthetic theory could be told. Aesthetic theories in Scotland and Germany did not resemble each other only by virtue of the simple fact that they developed in connection with debates over the foundation of morality; rather, they also shared crucial concepts and deployed those concepts in similar ways, to similar ends, and at similar times in a pair of debates that not only shared a name and a subject but also unfolded similarly in multiple stages parallel to one another. The history of early-eighteenth-century aesthetic theory can be told in terms of the unfolding of these debates. Admittedly, this history may end up looking surprisingly unlike its old self. There is little mention of autonomy and the aesthetic attitude in the following pages. Francis Hutcheson, a familiar protagonist of the pre-Kantian story, has had to make room for William Cleghorn. But by comparison with that pre-Kantian story, the result is at least as coherent, situated in a more elaborate historical context, less teleological, and more faithful both to the purposes of the theorists it examines and to the character of the theories themselves. <>

William Blake and the Age of Aquarius edited by Stephen F. Eisenman, Mark Crosby, Elizabeth Ferrell [Princeton University Press, 9780691175256]

A stunningly illustrated look at how Blake's radical vision influenced artists of the Beat generation and 1960s counterculture

In his own lifetime, William Blake (1757–1827) was a relatively unknown nonconventional artist with a strong political bent. [William Blake and the Age of Aquarius](#) is a beautifully illustrated look at how, some two hundred years after his birth, the antiestablishment values embodied in Blake's art and poetry became a model for artists of the American counterculture.

[William Blake and the Age of Aquarius](#) provides new insights into the politics and protests of Blake's own lifetime, and the generation of artists who revived and reimagined his work in the mid-1940s through 1970, or what might be called the "long sixties." Contributors explore Blake's outsider status in Georgian England and how his individualistic vision spoke to members of the Beat Generation, hippies, radical poets and writers, and other voices of the counterculture. Among the artists, musicians, and writers who looked to Blake were such diverse figures as Diane Arbus, Jay DeFeo, the Doors, Sam

Francis, Allen Ginsberg, Jess, Agnes Martin, Ad Reinhardt, Charles Seliger, Maurice Sendak, Robert Smithson, Clyfford Still, and many others. This book also explores visual cultures around such galvanizing moments of the 1960s as Woodstock and the Summer of Love.

[William Blake and the Age of Aquarius](#) shows how Blake's myths, visions, and radicalism found new life among American artists who valued individualism and creativity, explored expanded consciousness, and celebrated youth, peace, and the power of love in a turbulent age.

When I arrived at the Block in 2012, I met with Professor Eisenman, who was already working on a project devoted to Blake for the museum. During this initial conversation I asked him, "Why Blake? Why now?" Though familiar with the devotion to Blake of poet/ songwriter/artist Patti Smith, I learned from Stephen that artist Robert Smithson and Beat poet Allen Ginsberg shared an equal fascination with Blake, as did artists Clyfford Still and Jay DeFeo, and photographer Diane Arbus, who titled one of her portfolios after Blake's most well-known poem, "Auguries of Innocence." There was also the rock band The Doors, whose very name evokes Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern." Blake, who lived 150 years before Woodstock, had, by 1969, become a cult figure for artists, writers, intellectuals, and pop musicians.

But which Blake was each of these artists interested in and why? Blake the visionary artist? Blake the prophetic poet? Blake the reformer and passionate revolutionary? Blake the dark and tormented Urizen? Here was fertile territory for new research, rich with parallels between historical moments—the late eighteenth century in England and the period immediately following World War II and into the early 1970s in the United States. Blake's oscillation between utopianism and its dark underside had much in common with the political idealism and challenges to conformity of 1960s counterculture, with its own impulses and excesses.

The goal of the exhibition and this associated publication is to consider, through their absorption of the many facets of Blake, the artistic imaginations and ideals of some of the key cultural figures of the 1960s. It is also our hope that seeing Blake against the backdrop of the "Age of Aquarius" will enable us to reconnect to the radicalism of this iconic figure and to find in his multidimensional contributions meaning for our own tumultuous times. It is also a reminder of the relevance of Blake's words to the museum as a shaper of knowledge. Is not his entreaty to "see a World in a Grain of Sand" and to "Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour" the role of the museum—to hold up a moment in time to better apprehend its infinite complexity?

Exhibition schedule: Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, September 23, 2017–March 11, 2018

The team at the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University is extremely proud to be the organizer of *William Blake and the Age of Aquarius*, an exhibition

curated by Professor Stephen F. Eisenman, Department of Art History. Like the Block's recent exhibition *A Feast of Astonishments: Charlotte Moorman and the Avant-Garde, 1960s-1980s*, this exhibition focuses on a particular strength of Northwestern—significant interdisciplinary study of the culture and history of the 1960s—and features both landmark scholarship and an innovative approach to exhibition-making. The exhibition also underscores the Block's commitment to making connections between art and ideas, past and present.

Excerpt: In 1967, during the "Summer of Love," tens of thousands of young people in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and elsewhere celebrated the dawn, in William Blake's words, of a "New Age." This was the high point of the "innocent" 1960s, when the poet and Blake enthusiast Michael McClure witnessed in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco the birth of a new way of life based on peace, love, and mind-expanding drugs.² The symbol of this movement was the flower.³ Sometimes it was a rose, like the ones on Grateful Dead posters and album covers (fig. 1), and sometimes the sunflower, like the one on a card designed in 1966 by Lorraine Schneider. It carried the legend: "War is not healthy for children and other living things" (fig. 2). The poster version of Schneider's card quickly colonized antiwar protests, coffee houses, nurseries, and dorm rooms everywhere. To more literary-minded peaceniks and hippies like McClure, however, flowers and "flower power" recalled Blake's lines: "To create a little flower is the labour of ages," from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; "To see a world in a grain of sand / And a heaven in a wildflower," from *Auguries of Innocence*; and "Ah! Sunflower! / Who countest the steps of the Sun / Seeking after that sweet golden clime," from *Songs of Experience*.

A few months later, on October 21, 1967, nearly one hundred thousand people of all ages, including activists Jerry Rubin, David Dellinger, and Dr. Benjamin Spock, rallied at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington to protest the Vietnam War. They then marched to the Pentagon. This was a signal event in the "experienced" 1960s, an era of war, assassination, rising criminal violence, corruption, and state repression of legitimate speech and protest.

Among the crowd that descended on the seat of military power were the poets Allen Ginsberg and Robert Lowell, the novelist Norman Mailer, the musician and poet Ed Sanders, and Abbie Hoffman, the leader of the Youth International Party, or "Yippie" movement. They chanted and sang in an effort to levitate the Pentagon and exorcise the demons within. Some protestors inserted flowers into the gun barrels of tense National Guard troops. Others rushed past soldiers toward the building itself, which remained stubbornly earthbound. About 650 people were arrested and hauled off to makeshift jail cells in a U.S. post office in Alexandria, Virginia.

In the van carrying him away, Norman Mailer imagined the Pentagon as an ancient Egyptian temple, "slab-like, excremental, thick walls, secret caverns ... giant mud pie on the banks of America's Nile, our Potomac!" His crew were hippies and dreamers: poets, ministers, artists, architects, and musicians, including Tuli Kupferberg from *The Fugs*, a satiric rock group whose name derived from the sanitized epithet repeated throughout Mailer's novel *The Naked and the Dead* (1948).

Kupferberg and the band (cofounded by Sanders) had recently set to music Blake's "Ah! Sunflower," "How Sweet I Roam'd," and "The Sick Rose." As he sat on a bench in jail across from Mailer, he may have remembered some subversive proverbs from Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

Prisons are built with stones of law, brothels with
bricks of religion.
The fox condemns the trap not himself.
The weak in courage is strong in cunning.
Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse un-
acted desires.

The protesters had plenty of experience with prisons and brothels in the respectable form of schools, colleges, churches, and temples. They needed no prompting to condemn traps—"Hell no, we won't go," they chanted in defiance of the military draft. And they had no lack of cunning—the Pentagon exorcism, and all the publicity it generated, proved it. But that last line of Blake's was the kicker. How serious was he? The lyric could be used to justify both state terror and the violence of a revolution that goes out of control. In fact, it predicted the mayhem that concluded the 1960s: the assassinations of 1968; the murder of Sharon Tate, the eight-months-pregnant wife of movie director Roman Polanski, along with eight others, by Charles Manson and "the family" in August 1969; the Chicago police killings of Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark while they slept in their beds on December 4; and the death two days later of a stoned and violent concertgoer at the hands of a Hell's Angels biker at a Rolling Stones free rock concert at Altamont Speedway in Northern California.

The death by drug overdose of some of the most talented popular musicians of the generation—Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, and Janice Joplin—was also a blow to the solidarity of a youth "counterculture" hooked on the products of the music industry. Indeed, the recuperative power of advertising and mass culture (what the philosopher Herbert Marcuse called "affirmative culture") was already in evidence with the 1968 Broadway production of the musical *Hair*—its best-known song containing the refrain "this is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius." The musical appealed to a broad middle-class audience, and its many road company productions further dispersed the formerly subcultural hippie style. By the mid-1970s, the Age of Aquarius was little more than a fashion whose time had passed and its music and art were used for purposes far from their creators' original intent. Even Blake, whose work was revived in sync with the rise of the counterculture, was affected. The fate of his four-stanza, alternate rhymed poem titled "Jerusalem" ("And did those feet in ancient time ...") from the preface to *Milton* is an example. Made into a hymn by the composer Sir Hubert Parry in 1916, orchestrated by Sir Edward Elgar a few years later, its suppressed erotic content ("Bring me my arrows of desire, ... Bring me my Chariot of Fire") was boldly reaffirmed by Jimi Hendrix in "Voodoo Chile" (1968). But a dozen years later, it was used as a patriotic anthem in the British film *Chariots of Fire* (1981). Margaret Thatcher even marshaled it to boost enthusiasm for the Falklands War!

Blake's preceding paragraph from the Milton preface, however, resists recuperation:

Rouze up O Young Men of the New Age! set your foreheads against the ignorant Hirelings! For we have Hirelings in the Camp, the Court, & the University: who would if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War. Painters! on you I call! Sculptors! Architects! Suffer not the fashionable Fools to depress your powers by the prizes they pretend to give for contemptible works or the expensive advertising boasts they make of such works.

William Blake, an impoverished, ghost-seeing, politically contrary eighteenth-century poet and artist thus prefigured the rebellion of the 1960s. The conditions that gave rise to his career, as we shall see, parallel those that led to the establishment of the 1960s counterculture; and the products of both periods are potentially valuable resources for social movements still to come.

During the 1960s, innocence and experience changed from metaphor to myth. That is, it became a stereotype that structured everyday speech and even political action. It helped maintain stability in the face of roiling fears about the war in Vietnam and the danger of a larger nuclear conflagration. The United States was exceptional among nations, many believed, by virtue of its simultaneous youth and age, benevolence and strength, innocence and experience. Frank's photographs, for all their honest depictions of race and class, already contained the germ of this affirmative vision. Amid the wealth and poverty, the luxury and despair; among the cowboys, hustlers, shoe-shines, politicians, factory workers, holy rollers, gamblers, and socialites, there was a solid and defensible core that comprised America. Even Trolley—New Orleans, the cover photo for the first U.S. edition (1959) of *The Americans*, for all its frankness about segregation, conveys the myth. The white folks sit in the front of the carriage and the black people in the back. In the middle, the white children represent innocence and a chance for redemption.

John Kennedy's remarks in his inaugural address two years later highlighted the sustaining utility of innocence and experience: "The torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage." The myth permitted acknowledgment of America's original sin of slavery and racism while promoting faith in the "new generation." Passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Act (1965), part of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program, were widely taken to be expressions of the nation's perfectibility.

Even the counterculture indulged the myth of innocence and experience. It endorsed the notion that rejection of accepted behavior (the culture of "squares") constituted revolution, and that the mere performance of innocence—going "back to the garden"—produced the real thing. (As if the history of American alternative societies was not two centuries long.) There was the additional naive faith that style and individual behavior—long hair, use of drugs (especially LSD), the consumption of rock music, and attendance at Be-Ins, Love-Ins, and music festivals like Woodstock—were enough to transform

society and politics. The idea of levitating the Pentagon was brilliant in its innocence, but the Yippies lacked a plan to actually raise it. The protests at the 1968 Democratic convention attracted the attention of the whole world ("the whole world is watching," the Yippies chanted while getting clubbed) but in the end succeeded only in getting Nixon elected president. Confronted by the collective force of conservative public opinion, a hostile press, a determined FBI, violent police forces, and widespread fear of social and cultural revolution, the 1960s counterculture, already compromised, was defeated and a counterrevolution begun.

In 1968, Jim Morrison expressed to an interviewer his own doubts about what had been achieved:

Lizzie: In your early, first album stuff, there's a definite feeling of an apocalyptic vision—"break on through"—a transcendence. Do you see this as a still existing possibility?

Jim: It's different now. (Pause) It used to seem possible to generate a movement—people rising up and joining together in mass protest—refusing to be repressed any longer—like, they'd all put their strength together to break what Blake calls "the mind-forged manacles." ... The love-street times are dead. Sure, it's possible for there to be a transcendence—but not on a mass level, not a universal rebellion. Now it has to take place on an individual level—every man for himself, as they say. Save yourself. Violence isn't always evil. What's evil is the infatuation with violence."

Even before that, in 1967, after the exultation of the Summer of Love, the contradiction between the hippies' desire for community and their hedonism was apparent to many. The San Francisco Diggers in October handed out black-bordered mourning cards announcing a funeral for the "Hippie, in the Haight-Ashbury District of this city, devoted son of Mass Media." The artist Paul Thek in the same year created his now lost self-portrait sculpture *The Tomb—Death of a Hippie*. (The configuration recalled Blake's *Death's Door* from *The Grave*.)

After the election of 1968 (marked by the racism of Nixon's campaign for "law and order"), the bombing of Cambodia, and the National Guard killings at Kent State University in May 1970, "transcendence," in Morrison's word, became an ever more remote prospect. The extended period of economic stagnation that followed, and the concomitant rise of a seemingly omnipotent global financial and political elite, only accelerated the sense of collective futility. Whatever critical value the myth of innocence and experience possessed—its simultaneous acknowledgment of U.S. oppression and utopian vision of a return to the garden—was shattered in the 1970s and after by the revival of the ideology of exceptionalism that endorses a purely one-dimensional innocence. Ronald Reagan's purposeful misreading of the Puritan John Winthrop's proto-Blakean sermon "A Model of Christian Charity" in his 1980 "shining city on a hill" speech was cited by a generation of right-wing politicians to endorse policies in manifest opposition to love and charity: foreign military intervention, tax cuts for the wealthy, undermining of public education, deregulation of financial services, and turning campaign spending into a form of free speech that rich and poor alike might enjoy. Blake

would have countered the last by saying: "One law for the Ox & Lion is oppression."

What William Blake, as well as the best artists, writers, and musicians of the Age of Aquarius, meant by innocence was something much richer and more contradictory than its recent misuse. They meant by it the mental and physical pleasures that come from creative work and sexual love. They meant toppling the abstraction of law that denies people the full exercise of freedom. And they meant the creation of alternatives to an existing "one-dimensional" political, economic, and moral system fixated on law and private profit at the expense of the community and the Earth itself.

The art, poetry, and ideas of Blake have in the nearly two centuries since his death undergone a few revivals and reanimations. His first biographer, Alexander Gilchrist, called him, in the subtitle of his 1863 book, "pictor ignotus"—"unknown painter." Within a generation, he was known and celebrated by the Pre-Raphaelites and their followers, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, and A. C. Swinburne. Soon after that, Walt Whitman embraced the energy and insistent sexuality he found in Blake's poetry. Then there were the poets and novelists W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, and the Bloomsbury group in England. And finally, as this book and associated exhibition demonstrate, Blake was acclaimed by a generation of writers and artists in the United States—many associated with the Beats and the counterculture—between about 1945 and 1970. In each revival, certain elements of the work were highlighted at the expense of others in response to the needs of the time and place. And in each case too, the best lessons of Blake—his endorsement of imagination, love and sex, antipathy to war and its merchants, resistance to blind law, condemnation of slavery (mental as well as physical), and love of animal and plant life—were embraced and sometimes trumpeted in poetry, art, and music. And though the social and political changes promoted by these successive generations have been largely stifled, the underlying energy and desire of each was preserved and passed on to the next. That is how history moves, not in a straight line but in a spiral, with each turn constituting a gathering and consolidation of forces. Blake is one of the handful of essential figures who provided energy and inspiration for that succession of critical artistic countercultures, and is certain to do so again. <>

The Elements of Logo Design: Design Thinking | Branding | Making Marks by Alex W. White, with a foreword by Jerry Kuyper (Allworth Press)

Designers looking to learn the art of designing logos need look no further than [The Elements of Logo Design](#) by world-renowned designer Alex W. White. Unique in its approach to explaining how to design marks, [The Elements of Logo Design](#) explores design unity, typography and its expression as frozen sound, how a logo fits into a greater branding strategy, and how to build a logo.

White is chairman emeritus of the Type Directors Club and has taught graphic design and typography for thirty years at Parsons School of Design, Syracuse University, and the Hartford Art School. He is the chairman of the graduate

program in design management at the Shintaro Akatsu School of Design at the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut.

With more than four hundred examples culled from advertising, editorial, and web use, readers gain a comprehensive understanding of universally shared graphic design principles. These principles are then applied to logo design specifically, relating the discipline to all other graphic design. Chapters in [The Elements of Logo Design](#) include such topics as:

- Logic in design
- Relationships, hierarchy, and structure
- Differences and similarities in design
- Research and planning an identity
- How to build a logo using type, image, and space
- Letterforms, type, and fonts
- Type alteration
- Semiotics: icons and symbols
- Image-to-image relationships

[The Elements of Logo Design](#) is for designers, not business people.

But White advises business people: Creating cool design is much harder than merely giving clients what they ask for. It takes vision and creativity to turn an obvious set of criteria (what most clients provide) into a fresh, memorable, 'creative' expression of the real, underlying problem. The given problem, the assignment business people give their well-paid consultants, must be turned inside out. Not all designers are equipped to do it. But business people have to give designers a chance to excel, else they will surely end up with mediocrity.

Design is the marriage of need and useful expression. It takes vision from the client (that is, the business person) – and clear vision from designers – to achieve excellence like that. Most clients start out wanting fresh, innovative, and noticeable design, then dilute it during multiple group meetings, until the result is common, expected, and frustrating for everyone at the table.

Maybe I'm wrong, but the hardest thing to design is the perfectly succinct, indelible logo. Every now and then we get a glimpse of how logo design comes to life. Time will tell if the essence of logo design can be unlocked, but Alex offers us the closest thing to a key. Sequester yourself and practice practice practice. – Rick Valicenti, the recipient of the Smithsonian Cooper Hewitt National Design Award and the AIGA Medal

A logo is the most visible representation of a brand. Capturing the brand's promise in a single enduring and memorable mark is no easy feat. I love how Alex frames this book to use existing creative constraints as opportunities to create the most distinctive, strategic, and powerful designs. – Connie Birdsall, senior partner and global creative director at Lippincott

This book covers all aspects of the creation of a brand's visual identity. In an era where most web sites are viewed on a tiny screen, it is essential that a mark be simple, well-designed and

Spotlight

memorable. This book addresses those issues for both students and professionals. – Gerard Huerta, a designer of letterforms

There are books full of logo examples. This book stands out because it discusses graphic design principles and then shows how they apply to logo design. It has fresh insights and different thinking on the process of designing logos. I am delighted to welcome Alex's thoughtful book to my library. – Jerry Kuyper, with more than thirty years of experience directing and designing corporate and brand identity programs, has worked for Siegel & Gale, Lippincott, Landor, and Saul Bass & Associates

[The Elements of Logo Design](#) is a visually stunning guide to learning the art of logo design. With a foreword by Jerry Kuyper, who is widely recognized as one of the top twenty-five logo designers of all time, [The Elements of Logo Design](#) is a formidable resource for learning the art of branding and making marks. <>

Interviews on Art: By Robert Storr by Robert Storr, edited by Francesca Pietropaolo [HENI Publishing, 9780993010354]

Over the past three decades, Robert Storr has set the critical and curatorial standard for American art

As a museum curator, academic, editor and writer, Robert Storr has met the most important artists of our era. Over the years he has amassed a major body of interviews, collected here for the first time in a single volume. *Interviews on Art* includes over 60 fully illustrated discussions, conducted between 1981 and 2016, with some of the most renowned names in the art world.

Interviewees represented in this book include Gerhard Richter, Jeff Koons, Richard Serra, Gabriel Orozco, Elizabeth Murray, Harald Szeemann and Mike Kelley (among many others), and each text is accompanied by relevant works and previously unpublished photographs of the artists. A number of the interviews are unpublished or appear in full for the first time, including those with Louise Bourgeois, Robert Gober, Buckminster Fuller, Bruce Nauman, Yvonne Rainer and Kara Walker.

Refreshingly, Storr is as reflexive about his own work as a critic as he is about the artistic works up for discussion. The book is introduced with a conversation between Storr and curator and art historian Francesca Pietropaolo. The two carry on a wide-ranging discussion in which they dissect the interview as a medium: exploring the ethics involved, various techniques and approaches as well as the limitations and difficulties of the process.

Robert Storr (born 1949) is a renowned American art critic, curator and artist. Trained as a painter, he served as Curator and then Senior Curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art for more than a decade. Equally distinguished as an academic, Storr led the Yale University School of Art as Dean from 2006 to 2016.

Contents list of interviews conducted and collected is a veritable who's who of many artists:

Louise Bourgeois \ Buckminster Fuller \ Rudy Burckhardt \ Chris Burden \ Sophie Calle \ Vija Celmins \ Olga Chernysheva \ Francesco Clemente \ Chuck Close \ Stan Douglas \ Tom Friedman \ Robert Gober \ Felix Gonzalez-Torres \ Pierre

Huyghe \ Jörg Immendorff \ Neil Jenney \ Kim Jones \ Ilya Kabakov \ Alex Katz \ Mike Kelley \ Ellsworth Kelly \ Jeff Koons \ Guillermo Kuitca \ Jac Leirner \ Robert Mangold \ Brice Marden \ Paul McCarthy \ Annette Messager \ Andrei Monastyrski \ Malcolm Morley \ Elizabeth Murray \ Wangechi Mutu \ Bruce Nauman \ Gabriel Orozco \ Gary Panter \ Philip Pearlstein \ Raymond Pettibon \ Adrian Piper \ Yvonne Rainer \ Charles Ray \ Mary Reid Kelley \ Gerhard Richter \ Robert Ryman \ Peter Saul \ Richard Serra \ Harald Szeemann \ Tatiana Trouvé \ Kirk Varnedoe \ Kara Walker \ Lawrence Weiner \ Jack Whitten \

Excerpt: "A book is a garden, an orchard, a storehouse, a party, a company by the way, a counselor, a multitude of counselors." Charles Baudelaire

"I don't think there is any truth. There are only points of view." Allen Ginsberg

[Interviews on Art: By Robert Storr](#) was inspired by the desire to bring together, for the first time, the most important interviews conducted by Robert Storr. The idea for it came into being during a conversation with Storr in 2011 in Venice, where he had come to participate in a panel organized by the Venice Biennale Foundation. I had avidly read many of the compelling interviews with artists, curators and critics that he had published in magazines and exhibition catalogs and, while living in New York, I had the opportunity to attend numerous public conversations with artists he conducted for the 92nd Street Y. (I should add that by then I knew him well, having worked with him closely on several curatorial projects.) Hence, the prospect of thoroughly exploring what promised to be a reservoir of richly diverse materials and of making a selection of them readily available to readers filled me with sheer enthusiasm.

My research in Storr's archive at his house in Brooklyn, quite literally unearthing, with his generous help, original audio tapes of interviews – notably those with Louise Bourgeois – and immersing myself in the reading of his published interviews, after locating them one by one, was an experience akin to wandering into the vastness of a seemingly labyrinthine space governed by its very own order of an intrinsic, almost organic quality, so to speak. Every find was a rewarding experience. And that Storr's archive is partly housed in his writing studio, almost entirely filled with books – as are the stairs leading to it – and adjacent to a second space devoted to painting, only added to my feeling of being enveloped in an atmosphere of alert creativity, where art is thought about and also present in the flesh.

Chosen out of a larger pool, the sixty-one interviews appearing in the pages that follow span the years from 1981 to 2016. They comprise engaging and thought-provoking dialogs on art with a wide range of artists of different generations and of different formal and poetic inclinations. The ultimate selection includes discussions on a variety of media, ranging from painting, drawing, sculpture, and installation to graphic work, photography, video, film, and performance. These conversations afford fresh insights into the methods, thinking, and achievements of some of the most influential practitioners of our time, and, simultaneously, they shed light on

significant shifts in esthetic and cultural discourse over, roughly, the last four decades. The themes of the conversations encompass the intrinsic problems of art as well as social and political issues of the day. Together, these interviews offer an unusual cross section of the landscape of contemporary art, opening up a multitude of points of view.

Storr began interviewing artists in the early 1980s, that is to say almost a decade before entering the museum world as a curator at The Museum of Modern Art in New York in September 1990. The conversations in this volume took place in a period of time during which he has become recognized internationally as one of the most important critics and curators of his generation. The first interviews he conducted were videotaped by Lyn Blumenthal or Kate Horsfield for Video Data Bank (VDB) at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1980, for instance, he interviewed Rackstraw Downes, in 1982 the poet and critic Peter Schjeldahl, and in 1984 he engaged with Eric Fischl, Peter Saul, and Susan Rothenberg. Three VDB interviews have been chosen for this book: those with Rudy Burckhardt and Buckminster Fuller, both realized in 1981, and the one with Robert Ryman from 1993.

At the 92nd Street Y in New York, where he oversaw the Artists' Visions, Conversations Series Program from 1995 to 2011, Storr conducted sixty-four public dialogs with artists as well as with cultural figures, such as Arthur Danto and Irving Sandler. At the 92nd Street Y archive, I listened to the audio recordings. Those featured in this book represent a distillation of that vast output: conversations with Francesco Clemente, Robert Gober, Bruce Nauman, Paul McCarthy, Wangechi Mutu, Philip Pearlstein, Kara Walker, and Lawrence Weiner were edited so as to respect their colloquial immediacy; the conversation with Philip Pearlstein appears here in the form in which it was first published in 2002. One day it would be interesting to produce a book devoted to all the 92nd Street Y conversations conducted by Storr.

In some instances, I have included in this volume multiple interviews with an artist held over the years, illuminating the development of the interviewee's ideas and methodology over time. This is the case of Louise Bourgeois, Gerhard Richter, and Robert Ryman, among others. The conversations with Louise Bourgeois were particularly compelling to listen to and I am grateful to Storr for having given me access to them. Those selected here allow us to gain an intimate view of her thought processes as an artist.

Among the most recent interviews, those with Mary Reid Kelley and with Andrei Monastyrski were specially commissioned for this book. Monastyrski's words on the importance of John Cage for his practice and of Collective Actions are particularly enlightening. Cage's presence is evoked as well, but from different angles, in the conversations with Buckminster Fuller, Olga Chernysheva, Ellsworth Kelly, Bruce Nauman, Yvonne Rainer, and Gerhard Richter.

The interviews with two curators, Harald Szeemann and Kirk Varnedoe, were selected from a pool of conversations with figures such as Catherine David, Massimiliano Gioni, and Marcia Tucker. If Szeemann focuses on the challenges of organizing his first edition of the Venice Biennale in 1999,

Varnedoe, then at the beginning of his experience at the helm of the Painting and Sculpture Department at MoMA, addresses the challenges of collection-based museums and the role of The Museum of Modern Art particularly vis-à-vis the acquisition of contemporary art. The urgency of many of the issues he raises are still palpable today. Varnedoe's thoughts prompt further reflections on how dramatically the art world has changed since then. The roots of such changes were already acutely perceived by Varnedoe in the sharp view he offered.

Disarmingly intimate in their general tone, these texts remind us that an interview is a process of discovery: it opens up matters rather than attempting to solve them. The dialogs the reader is invited to listen in on raise the level of discussion about art rather than imposing a monolithic view of it. They also exemplify Storr's wariness of overarching abstract categories and pre-ordered programs. Furthermore they stand as a refreshing challenge to the spectacularization of the medium of the interview format today.

The interviewees are at the very center. The texts appear in the book not in chronological order but by interviewee, alphabetically. Selected images of the art-works discussed by the artist, along with others that specifically resonate with them, are reproduced in chronological order so as to offer a visual unfolding of the artist's trajectory.

In the interview, I conducted with Storr, which serves as an introduction to this book, he discusses the interview as a genre, its limitations, and its possibilities. In the process, he touches on a wide range of issues about art and culture.

This volume will be followed by a companion publication gathering his most important writings. Many of the artists interviewed here have been written about by Storr and thereby illuminating connections will tether the two books.

I like to think of these conversations as doors to uncharted territories, much like the doors that open up in the Venetian *corti scante* evoked by Corto Maltese, Hugo Pratt's signature character.¹ Passing through them, having unlocked conventional certitudes and preconceived assumptions, we gain access to a multitude of worlds, of esthetic visions, and practices. Reading is a journey of discovery.

I am deeply grateful to Robert Storr for the time and spirit he has devoted to the lively exchanges, of which this book is the result. Above all, his and my heartfelt thanks go to the artists who enthusiastically agreed to participate in this project and generously responded to my many enquiries in the process. Our warmest gratitude goes to them and their representatives.

Robert Storr: Interviewing is a Form for Finding Out: Conversation with Francesca Pietropaolo

Edited transcript of a longer interview with Robert Storr conducted by Francesca Pietropaolo on 24 September and 1 October 2006 at Storr's house, Brooklyn, New York.

Francesca Pietropaolo: How would you describe your approach to interviewing? What makes a fine interview?

Robert Storr: For me the key element when interviewing artists, or anybody, is that you want to know what they think and how

they think. A good interview with someone results from drawing them out, making them feel safe to say what is on their mind. Artists can be expected not to tell you where their ideas come from. Richard Serra famously told Chuck Close once that an artist is only as good as the obscurity of his sources. The point is that there are subjects that the artists don't want to talk about, that you're almost never going to get them to discuss, and you don't want to put them in a situation where you effectively say, "Got you!". I've prepared the way for Gerhard Richter and other artists to say things that I didn't expect they would say, but it wasn't me versus them in a sort of prosecutorial relationship. It was me and them as two people with a common interest – art, generally, their work, specifically – trying to account for the texture of it and the reasons for it. So my general approach is not to cross-examine artists, but to ask real questions to which I would like to have the answers.

Fp Interviewing is also about psychology in the sense of being able to establish a relationship.

RsS It's absolutely about that. And in many cases I have done two, three, four, or five interviews with an artist – in the case of Louise [Bourgeois] perhaps twenty. So it really is about forming a relationship. One which fluctuates between deeper layers and shallower layers, the way most real relationships do. I think people have great interest in thought processes of artists and therefore, when talking to them, you're doing something on behalf of your reader. Of course what an artist says about his/her work is not the first word, is not the last word. It is a word. A singularly well-informed word but one of many. It doesn't control interpretation, but it does give you useful information as you make your own interpretation of the work.

Fp A common thread among these dialogs with such a diverse array of artists – of different generations and of different formal and poetic inclinations – is that you ask questions without showing off. You're an attentive listener and that allows you to gain trust and thus give readers remarkable access to the artists' methods and thinking. Is this a deliberate strategy on your part?

Rs Yes. It's a combination of my temperament and my sense of what an interview is as a genre. The interview is a form for finding things out. An important component is resisting the temptation to show the artists how much you already know about their work, as well as the temptation to show off to the reader how smart you are. Academics are too often prone to ask questions that make the artists' answers more and less superfluous. I don't think it's a constructive way to work so what I do is try to learn as much as I can beforehand and make extensive notes about what is relevant and pertinent. I look for key transitional moments in a person's work or life. I plan it out and then I set it all aside. I only look at the notes when I get lost or when I need to check a fact. So thereafter it's just a conversation. It's a way of saying, "Now, tell me about yourself. Who are you? What do you do? Why?". As I said, I try to put the person I'm questioning at ease. Of course, I am not entirely innocent in the sense that the more you make people feel comfortable, the more they are likely to take risks in what they tell you. I do press for answers sometimes when necessary, and sometimes I press to go into areas that are uncomfortable for the person being interviewed. But in general

I avoid grilling the subject. What would be the purpose if you can be pretty certain that they'd clam up?

Fp These interviews are of a remarkable range. They span from the early 1980s to the present. Brought together in a book, for the first time, they will have a new dimension to them: sparking dialogs with or against each other. Do you imagine your readership, at all, for such a collection of primary sources?

Rs No writer knows who reads them and certainly none has control over who reads them. I am trying to produce sources that are useful to intelligent people who are not specialists but are acute enough to expect and make the most of the best information. I avoid professional jargon and gossip – insiders' talk and insiders' topics – and instead focus on the "art part". And I try to do it in a way that is inclusive of a variety of possible readers – from very sophisticated to very unsophisticated but intelligent. What you can control is whether you rise to the level of what the intelligent reader wants and deserves.

Fp Next to the in-depth conversations, where you tend to have the artists talk about their work since their beginnings to give a sense of its development, there are more focused, shorter interviews occasioned by artist's commissions – notably the Richard Serra interview about his Monumenta installation in Paris (2008) – or shows of new work – for instance the Tatiana Trouvé conversation about her exhibitions at the Migros Museum in Zurich (2009–10) and at Gagosian gallery in New York (2010). How do you see this more occasional kind of interview and its possibilities? **Rs** When art writing is good journalism it is both well-informed and critical. But being occasional writing, it is not in-depth scholarship and needs not be ponderous. It may be done by scholars, but it's not by its nature scholarly. So, I accept comfortably that in doing occasional writing and interviewing, the occasion should play a part in the way the text appears. And it's often the way life enters into the back-and-forth, because if you talk to artists and you don't use the occasion to the fullest extent, the results tend to hew to the standard kind of press responses artists are prone to giving, responses that are on record in another place already.

Fp That way, interview after interview, artists create – some more strongly than others – a narrative of their own.

Rs That's right. So if there is a special occasion, often that's the way to get away from the habitual narrative and move into something that is on their mind that you can unravel into a discussion about their background, their motivation, and so forth. I see the occasional nature of journalism as a good thing. Virgil Thomson – the American composer who worked with Gertrude Stein on two operas and for many years made a living writing musical reviews for the kind of daily newspaper straphangers read – said that a writer should never underestimate the intelligence of the reader and never overestimate how much they know. The difference between how much people know and how intelligent they are is a crucial thing because for many people culture is a small portion of what they spend their time with – they can't afford to have it be any larger because they are using their primary mental

activity to do whatever they do in life. Therefore, when you get their attention you have to meet them where they are. One shouldn't assume that they are already up to date or privy to critical debates. But if they are quick-witted, they will immediately detect condescendence, or an insider's exchange that ignores them. However, in interviews the opportunity exists to democratize the discourses of art for a reader who neither is, nor aspires to be, an expert, but who does have a broad, deep commitment to understanding – what Virginia Woolf called the “common reader”.

Fp You approach the craft of making exhibitions in much the same way in relation to the public. You wear many hats in that you are a critic, an art historian, a curator, and an artist yourself. Are these vantage points in permanent dialog with each other?

Rs As you know, I have many hats and some good ones too! [both laugh] But they are all on the same head [both laugh]. They argue with each other. I am often of three or four minds about many things. And I do my interviewing and my writing in an attempt to get to the heart of those disagreements.

Fp What's interesting about the interviewing that you do is also that it brings to the fore a plurality of approaches in interpreting art: you draw attention to the importance of the biographical element in relation to the artist's way of thinking and working; you address the artistic and cultural context as well as issues relating to the very process of art-making. Are these all elements that together inform your method?

Rs Absolutely. I simply do not believe that art is a by-product of superstructural factors as many academics currently profess – rather, art is created by real people in real time. Each artist is born in a certain era, concerned about certain issues, and he or she works on or around them in a place that conditions what they're likely to do. Artists don't just follow the dictates of the episteme or the zeitgeist. It may be that the interpreter of art can explain the work by using the episteme to frame it, but that's a convenience that academics have. They have a distance from the activity in general and a distance from the individual creative event. But art happens in the present. People make things this morning, made them yesterday and will make them tomorrow. I am an existentialist in the sense of being a person who believes philosophically that it's the decision-making of a unique individual, in unique circumstances, at a specific moment that accounts for how art comes into existence. Those are the conditions that Walter Benjamin set down for the creation of “aura”: the experience of art occurs in unique individuals, in unique circumstances, at a specific moment. Of course, that doesn't mean that that's where all the discourse ought to be. But it's where I want to be. And it's where I think most artists are.

Fp As an artist yourself, you initiate insightful discussions with the artists about the making of their work, providing the reader with important information in that domain.

Rs Honestly, if I were a well-known artist, I think that probably they wouldn't do it in the same way. However, because I have explored many of these things to some considerable extent on my own, and I know what the difficult aspects of the problems are, I can have this conversation without getting into a contest

with them over our respective responses to it – because my response is not known to them. I don't push it. They can hear in the way I talk that I am paying close attention to familiar problems.

Fp You're almost side-by-side with them, in some of these conversations. Again, it's to make others, the reader, understand.

Rs Yes. From the reader's point of view, I'm on the inside inviting them to come inside. Whereas from the artist's point of view, I'm enough on the inside that they will feel comfortable saying things that go beyond the bare basics granted to total outsiders.

Fp In previous interviews you have said something to the effect that artists are your universities, which I think is very beautiful. Would you expand on that?

Rs I am the son of a historian, and my sisters and my brother-in-law are historians. So I come from a family where the historical method is a topic, and the question of the value of first-hand witness in history was disputed in some ways, as well as confirmed in others. So in approaching art it seems natural to me to go and ask questions of creative people rather than going straight to secondary sources. That was part of the impulse behind my saying, “These people are obviously smart and articulate.” The idea of artists being inarticulate is an old-fashioned prejudice.

Fp You told me once about how Bruce Nauman inspired you in thinking about the relationship between the conceptual and the perceptual that you tackled in your Venice Biennale exhibition.¹ Are there some interviews with artists that have particularly fed your own thinking?

Rs All of the interviews have fed my thinking to some extent. Some of them I did because the person I interviewed was a person that I had long thought about but couldn't come to terms with.

Fp Oh, really?

Rs Peter Saul, for instance, was somebody I argued with when I was a student and have argued with ever since – which is to say, on and off for thirty-five years! – and sometimes I find the arguments frustrating because I think he avoids expressing his self-consciousness about his work by wearing the comic mask of a total, know-nothing, provincial. While that's half true, it's not the whole truth. Peter's father sent him to a very severe English boys' school where, as was customary, he was frequently beaten for misbehavior. So he has experienced a lot of abuse early in his life. If you know that, then the stuff that he puts in his pictures is not so hard to understand. You may never grasp the nitty-gritty of it, but if you are aware that his fascination with extreme violence is the synthesized effect of genuine trauma in his life then his over-the-top sight gags are no longer just vulgar comedy, the grotesque in his work is no longer merely self-indulgent caprice. The paintings of his that I like the most are those inspired by the execution of Caryl Chessman, a murderer who was gassed in California in 1960, though Peter recasts it as an electrocution [Man in Electric Chair, 1966 and others]. Chessman was the subject of work by many other artists including Bruce Conner [Child (1959–60)] and Edward

Kienholz [The Psycho Vendetta Case (1960)]. Chessman was one of the famous test cases for the death penalty in this country before the death penalty was broadly abolished. I remember his execution because I was forced to listen to the broadcast of its gruesome details in school in California. It was terrible. For Peter, Chessman's execution was a metaphor of the cruelty of authority and he turned it into an absurdly funny, sadistic image.

Fp You two met on the occasion of a critique he gave you of your paintings, right?

Rs Yes, I met him at the Skowhegan [School of Painting and Sculpture] summer art program [in Maine] in 1978. [Established in 1946, the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine, comprises an intensive summer residency program of nine weeks for emerging visual artists.] He looked at my work (which was abstract) and said, "It sure looks like modern art to me!" meaning "bad". I defended my painting and said, "Let me see your stuff!" or something to that effect. We went to his studio and the argument got more interesting and, over time, it produced lots of letters back and forth. That's the way it went with many artists. Al Held was also somebody I used to argue with a lot. And many people I have interviewed are ones with whom I disagree. And that's OK, that's good, you know. I am not there to clean up my thinking by only talking to people who think the same way, and I'm not there to clean up their thinking.

Fp Over the years you had many public conversations with artists for the 92nd Street Y in New York, one of them being with Al Held. A small but significant selection of them appears in this book. How different for you is the experience of interviewing in a quite intimate way – going to an artist's studio or having an artist come to your house – to having a conversation in public?

Rs It differs a lot. In a public situation, you are really mindful of the audience. As Thomson said, you can't overestimate their information. The interview subject may take off in a direction that you and that person know about but the audience doesn't, in which case you have to stop, fill in some of the blanks as an aside, until the audience catches up, and proceed from there. Or if the interview subject has stage fright you have to manage that, coax them to open up. Or if he/she begins to toy with the audience you may have to draw a line at certain points.

Fp So there are many factors to juggle with.

Rs Yes, and it means you're not thinking 100 percent about the subject. You're thinking about all these other contingencies.

Fp It's like a performance.

Rs Yes. Sometimes it produces interesting results. This was the case of a public interview with Bruce Nauman who does very few of them. In the course of the conversation his eyes began to moisten and you could tell he was talking about something very important to him. I don't think that that would have happened in a one-on-one interview. I think it was the fact that he was sort of trapped on stage, and wanted to go some place that was in fact very emotional for him. People could see that. It was a very interesting dynamic and my job under those circumstances was to keep him talking, keep him going where

he wanted to go or maybe didn't want to go but had inadvertently found himself. I wish I could remember what the topic was, but I distinctly remember the look of vulnerability on his face. And, since, once in a private conversation between us, late at night in New Mexico, I had teared up, it was like watching a friend reciprocating a confidence without knowing exactly what had triggered it at that moment. I took it as a sign of trust.

Fp A great show of new videos by him has just opened downtown at Sperone Westwater Gallery [New York].

Rs Yeah. Bruce's work has always been more grounded in traditional studio practices that most people championing him would acknowledge. They maintain that Bruce is a radical, therefore they don't talk about aspects of his art that are in fact deeply traditional, but only about those which are paradigm breaking. But you can't talk about one without the other in his case. He did a seminal neon piece in the 1960s [Neon Templates of the Left Half of My Body Taken at Ten Inch Intervals (1966)] referencing the seven sections of the body in classical sculpture. In the new works in the show he is thinking about and riffing on classical sculpture and its notion of contrapposto, employing brand new twentieth-century materials. In the videos that you see as you ascend the building, Bruce stacks video units and has them in different orientations so that it's as if the body were rotating on an axis. It happens to be that there are seven of those units. We come right back to the neon piece from the 1960s. The other dimension to this new work is that Bruce was sick the last couple of years, and he has been feeling his mortality and struggling with a body that doesn't want to do what he wants to do. He's always been a very physical man, a great horseman, loving the outdoors and he suddenly found himself with a body that won't obey. This prompted him to do something he hasn't done in years, which is to be the primary performer in a very physical piece. It is extraordinary.

Now, if writers conversant with critical theory want to talk about The Body in the abstract and immediately start quoting other sources – Judith Butler and so on – I have no objections to it but, before doing that, they should talk about what is actually there, what the particular artist – Bruce or Yvonne Rainer, for example – has self-consciously put there. Or what an artist may put out there without being totally self-conscious but will not deny once you point it out to him/her. And what an interviewer can do is step into that breach and say, "Yes, by all means let's give artists more credit than they generally receive for having decision-making power, for having not a predetermined program, so much as questions they want to explore and a methodology for doing it." Let's find out more about what they think before we start relating it to what other people think. Particularly if those other people are not in the visual arts, don't know much about what the artist is doing or didn't even know the artist existed. I think an awful lot of critical writing these days is a convenience or concession for people who are extremely specialized in certain spheres but not very keyed into the visual. And they try to apply the techniques of literary criticism – of the word – to the perceptual phenomena. Too many fail to learn what they need to know about the visual grammars before they do that. They

don't describe enough, they don't explain enough, they don't bring into the mind what's really there in the work. So doing that is the task of the empirical critic and the interviewer.

Fp What was the most challenging interview for you to do, perhaps one where the artist resisted more or where you were too close to the artist, which sometimes makes things difficult?

Rs That's hard to say. Some of the ones with Louise [Bourgeois] were very difficult because she would go on the defensive. Especially after I learned about her lover, whom I met in the early 1990s.

Fp You write about that in the book on her life and art that just came out. [Robert Storr, *Intimate Geometries: The Art and Life of Louise Bourgeois*. (The Monacelli Press, New York, 2016), pp.122–3, 698–9. At the time of this interview, copies of the book had just arrived at Storr's house in advance of its publication.] You learned about it accidentally, right?

Rs Yes. In my early time at MoMA I went to Chile and visited the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago that was directed by a man named Nemesio Antúnez who had known Louise in the late 1940s/early 50s. He was an artist too. [Nemesio Antúnez (1918–93) and Bourgeois met in New York at Stanley William Hayter's experimental print shop, Atelier 17 in Greenwich Village where she had begun making prints in 1946.] (At the outbreak of World War II, Atelier 17 had been transferred from Paris to New York.) Other artists Bourgeois met there include Joan Miró, Le Corbusier and Yves Tanguy.

And he had been an actor as well – he appeared in the Costa-Gavras film *State of Siege* (1972), next to Yves Montand. We went to dinner together one night and during the evening he suddenly started talking to me about Louise. He talked about their affair, which I had not been aware of, nor, I think, was anyone. He knew I knew her and, also, he was still in love with her. The details he told me about her I haven't discussed with anybody because it is nobody's business.

Fp She was married to Robert Goldwater at the time of the affair.

Rs Yes, unhappily married in some ways. To my knowledge this is the only major affair that she had during her marriage. But it went on for quite a while. And I think it may have resumed in Paris when she and her family went there. By which time he was married too, but it was a real love match. So, the day after that dinner I went to the museum to look at some more art and when I was departing Nemesio said to me, "When you get back to New York, embrace Louise de ma part sur la bouche" (kiss Louise for me on the mouth). I didn't take it literally, but when I went to see her I delivered the message verbally and she glowed and then she shut down.

Fp Was she angry with you for finding out?

Rs No. She was absolutely delighted to receive the message – plainly she still loved the man and I think it was probably her most sexually satisfying relationship.

Fp Were you surprised by the relationship?

Rs No. Hers was an odd, mismatched marriage in many ways, and I think a sexually frustrated one. We'll leave it there, but there have been suggestions by numbers of people – who

would like to turn Louise into something she was not – that she became like her father who was a dragueur (womanizer). Of course she may have had other affairs. It's entirely possible though I doubt it. But I am pretty certain she was not a compulsive philanderer. That's why the story with Nemesio was so important, her one big transgression and it was done with love, erotic excitement, and all of that. And it remained a major part of her life.

Fp You pointed out to me yesterday that you suggested Bourgeois, then in her seventies, to read Gaston Bachelard and gave her two volumes from his series of books on the elements (earth, air, fire, and water). In her 1986 interview she says that had she read Bachelard before, she would have been a different person. How did you discover him as a writer and could you talk a little bit about the importance of his writing for you?

Rs In the late 1970s lots of my friends were reading him, for instance, Lynn Blumenthal and Kate Horsfield of Video Data Bank for whom I did my first interviews. I think the first Bachelard I read was the English language Beacon Press edition of *The Poetics of Space*. Then, because I spoke French, I could find more that had not been translated. So when I went to Paris I gradually started buying books, and then, when I got serious about Louise, I realized that the topics of the books about the elements by Bachelard were right up my alley, so I read them on spec. Louise said she had not known his writings. I was astonished because she was a very well-read person. So it was like, "Wow!" Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) is the text most widely known, but he also wrote a four-part series of books on the elements. He approached the discourse of culture and art from a point of view of psychological tropes having to do with the phenomenological properties of the materials that people use. He discusses the way in which earth – meaning stone among other things – can be very hard, resistant, and how the resistance brings out aggression in the maker. Or else the way in which it can be formless and lack resistance – mud, clay, plaster – and can be either frustrating or satisfying to the maker for that reason. Bachelard explores the nature of materials in relation to the psychological impetus behind the desire to transform. Which I think is at least as interesting as Freudian psychoanalysis, and in many cases more so. I am very aware of Freudian discourse and have made selective use of it. And, for more or less legitimate reasons, there have been generations of critics that tried to use psychoanalytical ideas to explain art. But it is only one model. There's much about art that can't be explained in those terms. So Bachelard is interesting in his own right and also as a counterweight to Freudian theory – he is quite outspoken against psychological chauvinism. As it later turned out, Louise had read some of Bachelard on her own, which gets us back to Serra's crack about the obscurity of an artist's sources. [Louise Bourgeois began reading Bachelard as early as 1952. She read his *La terre et les rêveries du repos* (1948) starting from 10 August 1952 as indicated in her journals. We are indebted to Marie-Laure Bernadac for this information which she discusses in a chapter of her forthcoming book *Louise Bourgeois: Femme couteau* (Flammarion, Paris), scheduled to appear in 2018.] I once gave Louise the 1984 facsimile edition

of *Les démoniaques dans l'art*, suivi de "La foi qui guérit" (*Art and Those Possessed by Demons*, followed by "The Faith That Cures") by the late nineteenth-century French psychologists Jean-Martin Charcot and Paul Richer, with commentaries by Georges Didi-Huberman. It focuses on the photographic iconography of hysteria produced out of Charcot's Salpêtrière hospital in Paris in the nineteenth century. [Paul Richer, Jean-Martin Charcot, Georges Didi-Huberman and Pierre Fédida, *Les démoniaques dans l'art*, suivi de "La foi qui guérit" (Editions Macula, Paris, 1984). It is a facsimile edition of Charcot's works *Les démoniaques dans l'art* (1887) and *La foi qui guérit* (1892), with commentaries by Didi-Huberman and Fédida.] Louise didn't know about that at all. Didi-Huberman was very pleased to know that I had done so.

Fp Was there anything that Louise introduced you to in terms of readings?

Rs Not so much in terms of reading but visually. Her house was this amazing place, a lair – that's the word she used – stuffed – or might one say homophonically: layered with stuff. There were all these books in many different languages because of her husband, Robert Goldwater, who was an art historian. There were a lot of picture books, cabinets and flat files full of prints. So when I was allowed to, I would look at those and discover things I had never seen. One of the really great things that Louise did for me personally was to re-legitimize works from periods that had been brushed aside as being retrograde. Goldwater was very interested in Symbolism, he wrote a book about it. Louise was very interested in it too. She lived in it, so to speak. In the 1960s and 70s symbolism had a pretty low status in the art world and in culture in general, except among the hippies. But not at all among "serious people" [both laugh]. Nobody gave it much thought. I had been lucky to see a lot of Symbolist material in Philadelphia when I was in college and had access to the collection of Lessing Rosenwald, and I experienced a kind of guilty attraction to some of it. So when Louise said, "Yeah, come on in, the water is fine," in I went.

Fp You discussed Blaise Pascal with her. She talks about his writing in ways that illuminate her own perspective and work. I would like to ask you: how do you relate to Pascal? What interests you of his writing?

Rs I read Pascal a lot and early on – I was seventeen and living in France at the time. I am not religious and I'm not remotely Catholic, much less Jansenist, but I like the way his mind works. I immediately knew that when I started reading him. For years and years, he and [Ludwig] Wittgenstein, and a few philosophers who are precise about language, have been touchstones for me. Pascal is the kind of writer who addresses the metaphysical questions in a way that makes you think effectively about them all together, not just take a position on them as generally stated. Pascal is someone I've written about in relation to numerous artists. In that conversation with Louise, Pascal came up and it was like, "Oh, yeah, great, let's do that." Hers was a wholly French education and mine is partially French – I attended a boarding school connected to the Quakers in France in 1967–8, so we were both aware of his writing. If you talk about Pascal to most people in this country they know that he was a thinker of consequence and that he

was the inventor of the computer, but most people don't know a word of his writing. I think he's an immensely important philosopher. For me the most crucial thing that he says is that belief is separate from proof. And you should respect it in those terms. You shouldn't try to prove everything you believe and you should admit it when you are making a leap of faith. And for what it is worth, it's exactly what Sol LeWitt thought.

Fp That's interesting!

Rs The first sentence of Sol's *Sentences on Conceptual Art* (1967) is "Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach." It's almost what Pascal says, right? A great deal of criticism tries to take artists like LeWitt and Bob Ryman – people who have made amazing leaps of faith and have developed out of them enormously important bodies of work – and try to rationalize them, and explain that each decision was a conscious, rational decision. That's not only untrue, but it also violates the spirit of the work.

Fp Of the interviews you did with Bourgeois, you published selected statements by her that you edited, taking your questions out. When you published a full interview you did so using the pseudonym of Trevor Rots. Why did you choose to use a pseudonym? I think it's the only time you did it for an interview? And how did you come up with that name?

Rs One of my oldest friends, Mary Davies, an artist and a scholar, called me Trevor Rots as a joke many years ago. It's my name reverted and you substitute the "b" with a "v" as you do in Spanish sometimes. It's a silly game. I was doing an interview with Louise and at that time I had written already some texts on her work, for instance for *Art in America* and *Art Press*. I was a little self-conscious about becoming a spokesperson for her. I was a free agent – I wasn't working for any artist – and I didn't want to be identified as the one who simply speaks for, or speaks to, Louise. And I didn't think it was good for her to have a pet critic/interviewer. So the reason for doing it was simply to cover my tracks. I wanted to do the interview, I wanted the information but I didn't need it "for my resume".

You know, Louise asked me also to edit interviews with her conducted by other people. When she didn't like something she would hand it to me – interviews and sometimes essays – and basically say, "You fix this." In my editing I tried to be non-intrusive, respect her way of thinking and expressing herself without adding to what she had said. It was just a question of the use of language. There was a lot of controversy about the way in which some of the interviews with Eva Hesse, as well as with some other artists of the feminist movement were edited by Cindy Nemser in her 1975 book *Art Talk: Conversations with 12 Women Artists*. I was attentive to that debate and probably Nemser did go too far. On the other hand, I am not a believer that the raw text is more truthful. The famous Paris Review interviews with writers were all heavily edited. And also transcriptions are funny in that many are done by somebody other than the interviewer and very often the transcribers don't know much about the material. So you can get really weird versions of the actual conversation – and some hilarious mis-transliterations.

The miles of tapes with Louise that you've listened to were made at difficult times of my life and she herself was a very difficult person. So those are really heavily loaded tapes.

Fp Emotionally loaded.

Rs Yes. There are some of these that I don't want to relive. I'm glad you did it.

Fp In many interviews with different artists – such as Mike Kelley, Louise Bourgeois and Paul McCarthy – you raise the question about the relevance of feminism for them. What is the importance of the feminist movement to you?

Rs The personal importance and the intellectual importance are connected but they are not identical. Feminism was the single most progressive force in general culture during the late 1970s – the civil rights movement had been the previously important force and, prior to that, the Free Speech movement. When you look at what was imparting change, feminism was the essence of it in so many ways. I grew up in a household with two sisters, and, in addition to my actual mother, I was partly raised by two women – a couple. So I've always lived in a matriarchal situation. It made perfect sense to me that women have a different status in the society. Kate Horsfield and Lynn Blumenthal of Video Data Bank were active feminists and they built me a bridge to the art world in that respect, as did my great aunt who had been a friend of Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas in the 1930s. In the case of Mike Kelley, he was profoundly influenced by feminism. When he went to California from Detroit the feminist movement was in full force. It was split between the kind of first-wave feminism – organized around the essentialist idea of womanhood and goddesses, which in fact comes up in Louise's work a lot – and the theoretical feminists, who were beginning to explore the challenges to Freudianism by female psychoanalysis and then of course the linguistic challenges to patriarchy. All this was in the air and Mike Kelley found this stuff and just decided to go for it.

Fp One of the most recent interviews you have done is that with Mary Reid Kelley who was a student of yours at Yale. What are the main aspects of her work that caught your attention?

Rs Mary is an artist who is in the middle of the culture in one way, and at angles to it in others. I like art like that, that takes on central issues but doesn't simply ratify or critique in a straightforward way the existing attitudes. Her work rethinks those issues from a position that is very much her own, which is that of a sharply observant, ingeniously whimsical, middle-class, mid-Western white American woman. She is very well read and knowledgeable, but she's not trained or schooled in any circumscribed doctrine. Her studio, when she was a student, was filled with stacks and stacks of books – she read extensively for use in her work. Like Raymond Pettibon, she reads opportunistically and promiscuously in the best sense of both words.

Fp She writes poetry and recites it in her performance videos.

Rs She writes a version of nineteenth-century Romantic and Symbolist doggerel that is funny, fantastic and theoretically anarchistic. The first pieces she made at Yale were based on gravestones. You could see someone that was a little bit odd

and then blossomed, came into her own. It is great to see somebody suddenly arrive in that place.

Fp So you like odd, with an edge to it.

Rs I always liked odd.

Fp In that respect, would you talk a little bit about your exploration of the grotesque?

Many of the artists interviewed engage with the grotesque – notably Wangechi Mutu and Kara Walker.

Rs The grotesque is a category to which I'm naturally attracted. Once upon a time it was for me a guilty attraction: its very nature was taboo. It was decorative – which means minor –, it was obscene – which means not for general consumption. I began to think about it more and I said to myself, "Wait a second, first of all I am attracted to it so I am not going to deny it, secondly, I am attracted to it in all, its different dimensions. What is the common thread that puts those dimensions all together?" I did a lot of reading of my own, discovering the whole series of writers on the grotesque. Its dynamics essentially show that contradictions sometime are irresolvable and, as such, they produce an amazingly complex and wonderfully convoluted dialectical third term. The grotesque was abhorred by people in the neoclassical tradition and yet we learn that the grotesque originated in the classical tradition – think of the Domus Aurea rediscovered at the beginning of the Renaissance, about Raphael and Leonardo, great classical draftsmen who also made grotesques. So the grotesque is where all that stuff that has no place in the culture or even in our psyche goes. Surrealism is a Freud-inflected version of the grotesque, basically. Expressionism, in Germany and elsewhere, is a version of the grotesque. Many of the styles that we organize in sequence in history or by their nationality are in fact cultural manifestations of the same impulse that produces the grotesque everywhere and in every era. And it's amazingly transcultural too. The Japanese printmakers were experts in the grotesque. The grotesque is also more accurate psychologically because my desire to go to sleep listening to Bach and then reawaking in my dreams listening to the Night on Bald Mountain [by Mussorgsky] is the dynamic we are talking about! [both laugh]

Fp To shift gears a bit, you also interviewed curators such as Marcia Tucker, Catherine David, and Kirk Varnedoe. One of such interviews selected for the book is with Harald Szeemann. You showed me once two photographs with him: one taken on the Red Square in Moscow and the other during an installation with Bruce Nauman.

Rs One of those pictures was made when I did the Bruce Nauman show at the Modern [The Museum of Modern Art, New York] and Szeemann came to discuss possibly taking the show to Europe. We'd met before that in Europe, in a variety of contexts – in those days curators easily got acquainted out in the world. Now they tend to stick to their groups!

I had seen a relatively small number of Harry's exhibitions before he made his first Venice Biennale. I knew of him and I liked him. I realized that he was a performance piece himself and a grand old man of the counterculture. I didn't worship him and I wasn't trying to compete for the stage with him – that

would have been a losing proposition. We did the Sydney Biennale together in 2000 as part of a team comprised of Nick Serota, the Australian curator Nick Waterlow, and others. Then Szeemann, René Block, Germano Celant, Viktor Misiano, Joseph Backstein, a handful of other colleagues, and I, had meetings in Moscow about a proposed Moscow Biennial. In the end, none of us were involved in the production of that show, except for Joseph Backstein and collaborators he selected. That's when that photograph on the Red Square was taken. Moreover, he and I served on the Viennese Holocaust Memorial jury instigated by Simon Wiesenthal that, thanks largely to us, along with Amnon Barzel and Sylvia Liska, gave the commission to Rachel Whiteread. However, I have to say that I'm astonished by the cult of Szeemann that has developed. It doesn't do justice to him. He was a much more unpredictable, inventive guy than the curatorial "saint" he has become for followers basking in his reflection. Many of those now claiming him as their own are just cultural bureaucrats hoping that a little bit of his bohemianism will rub off on them, adding pizzazz to their often lackluster reputations. Make no mistake – Harry was a very, very talented and imaginative curator, as well as a fairly ruthless one. He's definitely someone one can learn from, someone to be respected, but not worshiped.

Fp Could you tell me about how you and Kirk Varnedoe met and how he invited you to work at MoMA?

Rs It was somewhere downtown in the 1980s at a Karole Armitage performance with costumes and decors by David Salle and Jeff Koons. I think Mike Brenson introduced us. Kirk had read things of mine and expressed a little bit of interest. Many years later when he contacted me and asked me if I'd be willing to work as a curator at the Modern I was dumbfounded. I don't know how this idea occurred to him and why. I was a writer and had no curatorial track record. Up until then I'd only organized a mid-career Susan Rothenberg show in Malmo, Sweden and one show of three painters – John Obuck, Rebecca Purdum and Glenn Goldberg – at the Studio School on 8th Street in New York where I was teaching. Meanwhile, I had been asked by Art Press to do an interview with him because he was the incoming director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture. I did the interview with him in his office at the Modern. Slightly before that, I had said to him that I couldn't take the job because I had been offered a tenure-track teaching job at Tyler in Philadelphia. He was surprised that I had said no. But he said OK to the interview. In the course of our recorded conversation or shortly before or after – I don't remember exactly – he asked me if I would write something on Clement Greenberg for the reader he was producing in conjunction with his first show at MoMA, *High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture*. I said, "Sure!" and wrote an essay that was a polemic against Greenberg and against the post-Greenberg formalist thought of which October was an example. Kirk liked it a great deal. When it came out, just before the opening of the exhibition, and a year after I had been teaching at Tyler, he said, "Would you reconsider?" This time I asked some friends and the friend who made the difference was Felix Gonzalez-Torres. I asked Felix, "What happens if I do this? Will I be completely cut off from my community? Will it mean that I joined the establishment and I

will become a pariah?" And he responded, "No, no, it will be really great to have one of us inside." So I said, "Fine!" [both laugh] When I moved from being a free-agent critic and curator to being a temporary museum man I saw it as a larger field of activity. A place for on-the-job, on-site "institutional critique".

Fp You were able to bring in artists whose work had not previously been shown at the museum.

Rs Yeah. For instance, I did a show with Art Spiegelman. That was the first time that MoMA had ever shown comic book art as art.

Fp The choices you made over the years about artists to interview and to write about show great curiosity and indicate how, for you, the objective is not to champion one kind of art but rather to keep an open mind.

Rs And if you support kinds of art that resemble each other formally you explore the differences between them or among them, rather than using one to reinforce the authority of the other. If you choose things that are diametrically opposed to the one that you've just done, you find out more about both ends.

Fp As one goes from one interview to the other, a dialogic artistic community of some sort begins to take form in one's mind.

Rs There is a very strange thing called the "art world" – which is basically all about business – and then there is the "art community", composed of makers, critics, curators and many others, including some dealers, with a hand in creating the focus of our collective attention. What one reads about, for the most part, in the papers and in magazines is the art world, not the art community. What I'm interested in now, as before, is the art community; I try to stay as far away from the art world as I possibly can, while at the same time functioning within it to the degree required. You know, when I started getting interested in art and its world I was a teenager and I didn't know anything or anybody. I just met people. Soon I recognized that there was a group of people talking to each other in ways that I liked; the topics and the tone. The first art party I ever went to was in 1967, just before I went to France, and it turned out that it was at the loft of Bill Rubin, although he was not there. Guests included Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Claes and Patty Oldenburg, Lee Krasner, George Segal and his wife, Jasper Johns, and so on. A star-filled crowd and I didn't know they were stars. I just thought they were interesting. My next experiences happened upon my return from France, when I was in college in Philadelphia and later at the Art Institute of Chicago, and I began to meet artists at parties. That was a time when there was still a social art world where business was not the main preoccupation. The cast of characters was roughly the same but the power relationships were utterly different. You could meet anybody of any generation and have a conversation. I think such fluidity still exists but you have to go looking for it and make an effort to tap into it.

Fp How did you get invited to those parties early on?

Rs I had a relative who was an art collector. She was rich and stylish, unlike the rest of us – she'd "married well". She was a

kind of legend in my family. When I went to New York to take the boat to France in 1967, I was introduced to her. Her name was Elizabeth “Bobsy” Goodspeed Chapman. She had run The Arts Club in Chicago in the 1930s and had organized a range of exhibitions with artists such as [Max] Beckmann, [Piet] Mondrian and [Pablo] Picasso. [Elizabeth “Bobsy” Goodspeed Chapman served as president of The Arts Club from 1932 to 1940.] We hit it off because we were both interested in art and she saw me as someone with the same appetites but with zero experience. She would invite me once or twice a year to come to New York and do the round of galleries and museums with her. Thanks to those trips I saw some amazing things. I discovered [Robert] Ryman’s work by seeing his show at the Guggenheim with her; and with her I saw Eva Hesse’s last show in New York before Hesse died. I was the skinny kid escort to this very elegant society lady. Thanks to Bobsy I met Alexander Calder, James Johnson Sweeney, Alfred Barr, Roland Penrose, Lincoln Kirstein, Andy Warhol, Anthony Caro, Bill Rubin, and so on. The beginning of my writing is also tied to her: I wrote her letters about the art we had seen together. In some respects my criticism is like letters to the reader about the things that I have seen and what I have thought in response to them. Look at the pictures and figure the story out without having to decipher these horribly complicated things called letters. Gradually, I got to be a better reader. And the books that I wanted to read were comics such as Tintin and Asterix or the *The 13 Clocks* by James Thurber (1950), illustrated by Marc Simont or Thurber books he illustrated himself. They were wonderful. So cartooning was an idiom very familiar to me. I am interested in how stories are told as pictures, as a problem.

Fp When you speak to Raymond Pettibon, Mike Kelley, Gary Panter, and other artists to whom comics are important, it transpires from the conversations that you share this territory with them. A common knowledge that makes the conversation click faster, so to speak.

Rs Absolutely. And also the culture that is behind it, in the sense that, they too, are fan of the grotesque. But in my case the irony is that, as an artist, what I respond to most is abstract art.

Fp But you did both, figurative and abstract paintings.

Rs Yes, I did both. At one point, when I worked for [David Alfaro] Siqueiros I thought I would go on making murals. The point is that abstract art is the one I really feel. Abstract painting speaks to me most directly – Boom! Because it’s about the real world. Abstract art is materialist, it exists in actual space. And I feel that I know where I am in the world – often I don’t feel that way socially but I do artistically – when I am in a room with objects of art around. If those objects are abstract, it is by far the greatest pleasure! So when I’m in a gallery installing, I shuffle the deck trying to find ways so the works talk to each other and also do something for, and with, the room they are in. That’s really the key for me.

Fp Is that the case of Philip Pearlstein?

Rs No. For me, the interest in his work comes out of the fact that I made a lot of figurative painting from the model. I got interested because what he was doing was so like what I was attempting in terms of its basic observational premise but so unlike mine in terms of the result. Also because Philip is a

serious thinker who has written wonderful criticism and forceful manifestos. He makes austere paintings of naked twentieth-century people but he has a secret passion for Symbolist art and for Baroque art, and most importantly he was a huge fan of Francis Picabia – he wrote his dissertation on him while at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University.

Fp Is it abstract art that has some edge to it as with Ellsworth [Kelly]’s work, for instance?

Rs Yes. Bob Ryman probably more than anybody, and Ellsworth or Bob Mangold. There are a lot of artists. Or it’s the abstract element to certain artists who paint figurative work where the figures almost disappear.

Fp As some of the interviews demonstrate, you have a keen interest in comics, where image and text intertwine. Could you talk about how that came about?

Rs I’ve read comics for years and years and years. In my family I was made to feel bad about it. My father didn’t like comics. He thought of them as minor, trashy stuff.

Fp So it was very judgmental.

Rs Oh, yes. For many people of my generation comics provided this great playground for the Id. [both laugh] Comics were taboo. They represented freedom and rebellion. I am dyslexic and had a difficulty learning how to read so comics were great because I could

Fp Could you talk a little bit about your friendship with Ellsworth? The closeness of it is apparent from his interview.

Rs I don’t remember exactly when we met. I had seen his work early on and I was stunned by it. I didn’t really have a way of saying why. There were many, many points of contact between us. He was a very graceful and generous man. And Jack [Shear], his partner, is a very funny, smart man, whose collecting habits are akin to my own – which is to say eccentric.

Fp Earlier we talked about the sense of avid curiosity that animates your interviews and writings. In a statement that you wrote for *The New York Times* in 2011 you recall a talk that Bruno Bettelheim gave to your senior class in high school in the 1960s. Significantly, what stayed most with you was his encouragement about becoming “students of everything that excited our mind”. I’m sure you found that impulse within yourself, but that must have struck a chord in you. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Rs It went straight to the nerve of what I was thinking about. Bruno Bettelheim was the father of a student at my school, so he was someone we saw around all the time, a familiar face. This very famous intellectual, much published, came to this little basement auditorium filled with the members of the senior class and he was supposed to give us advice about our future in the world. In particular I learned from him something, for which I will be eternally grateful. He told us about how, when in Vienna, he was interested in philosophy, and so studied to get a PhD in philosophy but declined to take the final exam; about how he was interested in art and art history and so studied everything he needed to study in art and art history, and didn’t sit for that final exam either. Finally, he decided to take a degree in psychology, which is where he ended up, though by

that time the Nazis were making it impossible for Jews to complete their education. So, he did the complete preparation for three disciplines before he chose. And he said, "It was very important to refuse to take that degree, because if you take that degree you will become that thing. And if you're not sure yet what you want to be, don't box yourself in formally." It was very good advice.

Fp And when he speaks of whatever excites your mind it's also about not establishing hierarchies – there is no minor or major.

Rs Yes. And at that time, in the 1960s, at the age of sixteen, we were already worried about what we would become. So to be able to have this permission from somebody remarkable was a huge advantage. You have to bet on yourself, you just have to.

Fp In his fascinating interview from 1981, Buckminster Fuller talks about the problem of over-specialization in the American educational system. What do you think about that negative aspect today?

Rs I think it's acute. That interview was an odd interview in some ways, but I found myself liking him a great deal. Unfortunately what is not preserved in that filmed interview is when we talked about Jasper Johns and the Dymaxion map. I remember he was in his office in this very fancy building. You had the feeling of a guy that had been imprisoned in his reputation and in his eccentricities, but who just loved to talk. And the ideas came in a steady flow. I found him fascinating. You know, I wish I could do a lot of these interviews over again, knowing what I learned. But it probably wouldn't happen that way because when I did most of them I was nobody. They were not talking to a person in the world, they were only talking to themselves with me as their enabler.

Fp Do you think that that allowed them a larger freedom to think out loud?

Rs Yeah. Not that I think of myself as a big deal now, but some people apparently do and it gets in the way. That's definitely changed.

Fp Was there a transitional moment in that sense? Was it when you went to work at MoMA?

Rs I'm sure that MoMA was the key thing, but beyond that I think just being around makes it different for people. They are more guarded or more argumentative. You're not an innocent questioner. You're an invested questioner. Of course no questioner is innocent, but at the start I looked more innocent. [both laugh]

Fp You interviewed Buckminster Fuller for Video Data Bank (VDB) in Chicago as part of its interviewing program. Could you talk about how that started out and your involvement in it?

Rs The Video Data Bank was a really interesting program founded by Lynn Blumenthal who died prematurely and Kate Horsfield. [They ran it together from 1974 to 1988]. They were a couple and they were operating at a time when there was not a lot of money for visiting artists programs in art schools. VDB served that function at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where we were all students. They would film interviews with artists and show them at school. Lynn and

Kate were particularly keen on conceptual, minimal, process art and on feminism. And to a degree on what would now be called queer studies.

Fp You interviewed many painters for VDB, chief among them Susan Rothenberg, Rackstraw Downes, and Robert Ryman.

Rs I was more interested in painters than they were, though they were huge fans of Agnes Martin, Joan Mitchell, Elizabeth Murray, and other women who they taped. But the overall program was focused more on other directions. Anyway, I used to go to their seminars at lunchtime and listen to their interviews. [Among them, the interview with Louise Bourgeois (conducted in 1974 and produced in 1975) had a particularly profound impact on Storr in developing his interest in the work of the artist, an example of which, *Cumul I* (1969), he saw for the first time in the early 1970s, as he recalls in his book, *Intimate Geometries: The Art and Life of Louise Bourgeois*, p.690. His first meeting with the artist in 1981 at her Chelsea studio marked the beginning of a long and intimate working relationship that lasted until her death in 2010.] They were videotaped by Kate, while Lynn conducted most of the conversations, though Kate did some. Then on a screen adjacent to the video monitor they would show images of work done by the subject of the tape – slides. I had some experience with research and Kate and Lynn at one point asked me to help them with that. Kate sent Nancy Bowen, a friend of mine, and I to New York to collect slides and other materials from artists. In New York we made the rounds of studios – we met Sol LeWitt, Alice Neel, Nancy Graves, Christo and Jeanne-Claude and all kinds of artists – then we came back to Chicago with the goods. Later they asked me to do some interviews.

Fp In your interviews and writings, often the subjectivity emerges in the sense that you tend to explain to the reader the personal connection that you may have with a body of work or an artist. A connection based on your history and the history of the artist. This is the case with Gerhard Richter and also with Jörg Immendorff in relation to your political engagement when you were younger.

Rs The reason for putting that stuff forward is to say that it exists, and that I happen to know first-hand these ways of understanding the world because I experienced some of them myself. But that's not to put me in the picture. It's just to say that I'm a useful guide because I am aware of the realities behind the works. In the case of Richter, my German, half-Jewish aunt, Gabriele, went through the war in Germany and was in Germany at the end during the Russian occupation. She and I were very close. Some of her descriptions gave me insights into things Gerhard said because I was hearing some of the same trauma. In the case of Immendorff – in the 1960s I was on the American Marxist left, and in 1967–8, when I was in France, I had friends who were Maoists. So when Immendorff talks about his Maoist experience, that phenomenon is something I remember.

Fp You tend to be associated with painting but you have shown an early interest in installation art. You did a show at MoMA devoted to it, *DISLOCATIONS* in 1991–2. [*DISLOCATIONS*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 20 October 1991 – 7

January 1992.] You interviewed figures such as Ilya Kabakov, Adrian Piper, Chris Burden, and, more recently, Tatiana Trouvé. Furthermore, you conducted conversations with artists working in media such as video, photography, film, performance, dance, and sculpture.

Rs Well, interviews are ways for me also to further my own understanding. I tried to use the interview's opportunity, as a way to advance my own thinking about topics I am not totally sure of. I have the same attitude about writing. You don't just write what you know or believe; you write about what you don't yet know, and by the end of the writing you have a better grasp of what's what and where you stand.

Fp So for you writing is akin to thinking out loud.

Rs I start thinking out loud about something that I care about. After doing some significant research, it's writing itself as a process – sorting materials, ideas, and evidence – that leads me to some working conclusions. But they are working conclusions. I think that that's why I am such a problem for the academic establishment, because I don't have a discourse. I don't believe in having a discourse. I do have positions, but not a position. I don't see artists as examples of a larger argument of my own or anybody else. I see them as extraordinarily alert people actively trying to work things out. My task as a critic, and in doing the interviews, is trying to figure them out while they figure those things out.

Fp You did a wonderful interview with Pettibon. Do you remember when you encountered his work for the first time?

Rs That was in the early 1990s at Feature gallery in New York. And I remember being blown away by it. The particular interview you're talking about was done in the studio he has now in New York and there was a lot of vodka [both laugh] Before that, I had invited Raymond at Yale to do a talk. He was amazing. He stood up in front of a screen so that his head was blocking part of the projection. He stared at the screen and just talked without facing the audience while getting in the way of the image. And he sort of free-associated. It was wonderful.

Fp In the interview, you two really hit it off talking about poetry. Could you describe the significance of poetry for you? In what ways is it relevant to your writing?

Rs I try not to write poetically per se because I am not a poet. But I've read a great deal of poetry – especially in my twenties and thirties, and less lately, though I still read it. Poetry cleaned up an inherited tendency towards explanatory, academic writing, and enhanced my ability to convey thoughts through the use of images instead of arguments. Also, poetry allowed me to address emotions without being corny or confessional.

Fp Is it one of the reasons why Baudelaire is important to you as a critic?

Rs It's partly that, but Baudelaire is just important period. He is historically the source of modern art criticism. His particular set of mind is similar to my own. His ability to be caustic and exalted all at the same time is something I admire.

Fp Did you first read him in school?

Rs Yes. The first time I was conscious of his work was when he was translated in English in a New Directions paperback that I sold in the bookshop where I worked. He gave me this weird feeling. At first I didn't like the obviously stylized decadent aspect to his work at all. I just liked images and the rhythms. Then when I got to France I realized that everybody read Baudelaire and he was one of the great poets that the establishment could not deny. My friends recited his poems and I did too. We had to recite poems by heart in class in France, and I loved it!

Fp A great book that you touch on in the conversation with Pettibon is *Homo Ludens* by J. L. Huizinga (1938). Would you talk about how that notion of play as generating culture is of interest to you?

Rs Well, he maintains that high culture is the product of play rather than the determination to say big things in a big way. He also argues that play is rule bound rather than something purely capricious. So the freedom of play is within the rules and not outside them. He regards art as a special case of such ludic activity.

Fp And art is not unserious. There isn't such an opposition because play can be serious.

Rs Absolutely. Also, art is not just a leisure time activity. It is not something you do when you have time left over from serious matters like work. Playing as an occupation. **Fp** So it's a reflection on art as being just as important a cultural activity as the others. Not played down as something that doesn't stand up to the intellectual activity.

Rs There was a time when I worried about those issues. People made me worry about them. I don't anymore. It just seems to be self-evident that art doesn't need any justification. But there were times growing up in a rather earnest academic setting, and later in ardently political ones, when I worried about that a lot.

Fp Is there an interview that you would have loved to do and for some reason it couldn't happen?

Rs I tried many times to interview Jasper Johns, and he won't do it. I met him in 1968 and became friendly with him around 1981. I saw a lot of him during a certain period of time. I see less of him now, but do so as often as I can. And I have always wanted to do an interview with him. I don't know exactly why he is wary of me so I just let it go. He does say quite revealing things in casual conversation – he's told me lots of stuff off the record. I think he is a man who desperately wants to be known in some respects, and in others he's a man who desperately doesn't want to be known. And he can't decide how to proceed at the intersection of those two impulses. There was a time when he was living in a mansion on 63rd Street, a few blocks from the Barbizon Hotel for Women on Lexington Avenue – that was where David McKee gallery was originally located and where it had opened the first show of Philip Guston's figurative painting. Jasper's mansion had a wonderful interior courtyard and a studio on the ground floor. I used to go and have dinner with him once in a while and we used to talk and drink. Often, I have found, artists who are under siege by collectors like to have somebody there with them to take the pressure off. So he took me with him on some of those

Spotlight

occasions and I was useful. And, again, this is a lesson learned very, very early on about how the social dynamics of the upper worlds operate and I dealt with it as if I was Balzac. To get through of some these situations I pretended I was doing research for my version of the Human Comedy but I am not going to write it. [both laugh]

Fp Is there someone from the past that you would have loved to interview – just as a dream?

Rs Mondrian.

Fp Oh, that's interesting! Why? Is it because of your penchant for abstract art as a painter?

Rs No, not for that.

Fp What is it about his work that interests you?

Rs I can't quite put my finger on it. Probably the combination of order, rigor and intuitive improvisation. It's order with a sense of flux, with room for maneuver. Nothing is locked in, even if it looks like it is. You know, I hate symmetry in art, I can't bear it. And his work is never symmetric.

Fp It's true. And it's very subtle, right? There is a subtle tension.

Rs Yes, it's subtle. Whatever I learned about installing art in exhibition spaces comes from Mondrian. It's how you work on grids with different orientations, so you find a position for something over here that creates a dialog with something over there but doesn't align with it directly. Also, Mondrian is all about painting. Every part of a Mondrian painting is painted: when you look at a black line you can see the brush marks. You can see how much he struggled to get it just right and how that could not be done with mechanical tools or in any way other than how he did it. So the anti-painting people who go on and on about how painting is obsolete don't pay attention, not just to Richter and a host of people who have given painting a lot of things to do in the twentieth century but to Mondrian. <>

Quilts

Amish Quilts: Crafting an American Icon (Young Center Books in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies) by Janneken Smucker [Johns Hopkins University Press, 9781421423999]

Quilts have become a cherished symbol of Amish craftsmanship and the beauty of the simple life. Country stores in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and other tourist regions display row after row of handcrafted quilts. In luxury homes, office buildings, and museums, the quilts have been preserved and displayed as priceless artifacts. They are even pictured on collectible stamps. *Amish Quilts* explores how these objects evolved from practical bed linens into contemporary art.

Characteristically, Amish quilts use only solid fabrics, are pieced from geometric shapes, do not contain appliqué, and construction is simple (corners are butted, rather than mitered, for instance) and done entirely by hand. Amish quilters also tend to use simple patterns: Lancaster County Amish are known for their Diamond-in-a-Square and Bars patterns, while other communities use patterns such as Brick, Streak of Lightning,

Chinese Coins, and Log Cabins, and midwestern communities are known for their repeating block patterns. Borders and color choice also vary by community. For example, Lancaster quilts feature wide borders with lavish quilting, while Midwestern quilts feature narrower borders to balance the fancier piecing.

In this in-depth study, illustrated with more than 100 stunning color photographs, Janneken Smucker discusses what makes an Amish quilt Amish. She examines the value of quilts to those who have made, bought, sold, exhibited, and preserved them and how that value changes as a quilt travels from Amish hands to marketplace to consumers. A fifth-generation Mennonite quiltmaker herself, Smucker traces the history of Amish quilts from their use in the late nineteenth century to their sale in the lucrative business practices of today. Through her own observations as well as oral histories, newspaper accounts, ephemera, and other archival sources, she seeks to understand how the term "Amish" became a style and what it means to both quiltmakers and consumers. She also looks at how quilts influence fashion and raises issues of authenticity of quilts in the marketplace.

Whether considered as art, craft, or commodity, Amish quilts reflect the intersections of consumerism and connoisseurship, religion and commerce, nostalgia and aesthetics. By thoroughly examining these aspects, *Amish Quilts* is an indispensable resource for anyone concerned in the history of these beautiful fabric crafts.

Excerpt:

How did museums value the expensive quilts they acquired? Private collectors like Holstein and Pottinger took pride in the collections they assembled and relished knowing that their vision has been preserved and validated by the institutions that now owned the quilts. The museums reciprocated, acknowledging the collectors by calling the quilts collectively "Jonathan Holstein Collection" at the International Quilt Study Center & Museum and "David Pottinger Collection of Amish Quilts" at the Indiana State Museum. Docents at the Lancaster Quilt & Textile Museum told visitors about Esprit and Doug Tompkins, just as they highlighted the features of Bars and Center Diamond quilts. The repositories that owned these collections valued the quilts collectively, considering their use in exhibition, research, and education as greater than could be achieved by individual quilts. When quilts were not on exhibit, these institutions kept them stored in acid-free boxes, wrapped in tissue paper.

Few Amish quilts that differed from the "old dark" or "classic" variety have made their way into museum collections. Private collectors assembling groups of Amish quilts preferred these quilts, and since museums usually acquire from private collectors, only such examples typically end up in institutional collections. Fortunately, there are a few exceptions. Indiana State Museum's David Pottinger Collection of Amish Quilts includes several tattered everyday quilts that received frequent use and laundering, some quilts made from lighter colored and printed fabrics, and examples of utilitarian knotted comforters, appliqué quilts, and other Amish-made quilts that do not fit the criteria celebrated by connoisseurs.

IQSC&M [The International Quilt Study Center & Museum] also owns a few Amish quilts that were made in the second half of the twentieth century, after the so-called "classic era." These include quilts made for the consumer market during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, crafted to look like old dark quilts. The International Quilt Study Center & Museum also owns quilts that dealer and collector records purported were made during the early twentieth century. Only through fiber microscopy and fieldwork in Amish settlements did IQSC&M learn that these quilts were in fact made during the 1960s through 1990s. But even with this realization, curators determined that the quilts were still valuable to its educational mission, in large part because they challenged widely held assumptions about the dates and styles of Amish quilts. Few, if any, Amish-made quilts in the commercially popular styles like Country Bride or Bargello are owned by museums. Institutions have yet to find value in commercially produced Amish quilts that do not look like old quilts. Without the inclusion of such quilts in museum collections, "Amish quilts" will remain defined by connoisseurs of old quilts rather than by the quiltmakers and consumers who have kept Amish quilt-making a living, thriving practice...

At the end of this story, are we any closer to articulating what makes an authentic Amish quilt? Returning to a question asked in this book's introduction, what makes an Amish quilt Amish? Is it the maker? Is it the style? Is it the age? Is it the brand? Is it the way the quilt is used? What, indeed, is Amish about an Amish quilt? To me, a quilt used and loved in a contemporary Amish home—perhaps embellished with fabric paint, fringe, or sequins—is just as authentically Amish as an old dark Center Diamond or as a light-colored Country Bride quilt sold by Hannah's Quilts. Neither the Amish nor the quilts they have made and used have ever been static and unchanging. Maybe Jonathan Holstein would not bother to hang a contemporary Amish creation on a gallery wall today, but that does not make the continued cultural production of Amish quilts any less significant.

The coincidence of old Amish quilts resembling mid-twentieth-century abstract art did not set the story of Amish quilts in motion. Nor did Robert Hughes's proclamation that quilts like the one Rebecca Fisher Stoltzfus made in 1904 are America's "first abstract art" conclude it. At least a few Amish women in the nineteenth century began making quilts for reasons we'll never quite know. Since then, many thousands more have taken up the practice of stitching quilts to make gifts for family members, to earn extra money, or to craft something beautiful and expressive. And this story is not complete. Although "experts" have called Amish quilt-making a dying art for decades now, it has remained a living, changing art.

By examining the role of Amish quilts within multiple contexts—including Amish communities, the art world, the marketplace, and globalization—we can see that these objects have not had static meanings or values. But this is also true of all objects of material culture. Amish quilts are distinct objects because they were made within a defined cultural system, and they have garnished attention due to how they look, the particular people who have made them, and what they symbolically represent. But in other ways, Amish quilts are not distinct. As with all objects, we use our worldview, our past experiences, our

familiarity with other objects, and our imagination to craft meaning and value. We do this by creating, discovering, buying, selling, using, displaying, preserving, discarding, and reusing. We find value in objects. And in turn objects give value to our lives.

Amish Abstractions: Quilts from the Collection of Faith and Stephen Brown by Joe Cunningham, Robert Shaw, Janneken Smucker [Pomegranate, 9780764951657] Includes Collector's Note by Faith and Stephen Brown. 128 pages with more than 90 color images. Size: 9 x 10.5 inches. Smyth-sewn casebound book, with dust jacket.

At first glance, Amish quilts may appear curiously like works by the great abstract artists of the twentieth century. With their vibrant colors and bold geometric forms, the handcrafted designs seem reminiscent of paintings by Joseph Albers, Mark Rothko, and Frank Stella, among others. This visual coincidence invites a deeper appreciation of the quilts and the communities in which they were created. Closer examination reveals that the principles of the Amish faith--simplicity, humility, discipline, and community--are masterfully stitched into each design. Colorful and dynamic, the remarkable quilts radiate the harmony and dignity of Amish life while providing a window onto the history of American art and textile traditions.

Published in conjunction with the exhibition organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, *Amish Abstractions: Quilts from the Collection of Faith and Stephen Brown* explores the origins, techniques, and context of these visual masterpieces. More than seventy-five quilts originating in communities throughout Pennsylvania and the Midwest from the 1880s to the 1940s are presented with contributions by three quilt experts: Joe Cunningham, a well-known quilt artist, author, and lecturer; Robert Shaw, an independent curator of numerous quilt exhibitions; and Janneken Smucker, a doctoral candidate at the University of Delaware specializing in quilts from the Amish and Mennonite traditions.

About Joe Cunningham: Joe Cunningham's early mentors were steeped in quilt history and traditional techniques, leading him to a life of studying, making, and writing about quilts. He travels widely to lecture and teach on the subject. Cunningham lives in San Francisco with his wife and two sons.

About Robert Shaw: Robert Shaw, former curator at the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, is the author of *American Quilts: The Democratic Art, 1780-2007* and numerous other books. He has curated quilt exhibitions in the United States, Europe, and Japan; written articles for *The Magazine Antiques* and other publications; and served as a consultant to private collectors, museums, and Sotheby's.

About Janneken Smucker: Janneken Smucker is a PhD candidate in American civilization at the University of Delaware. Research for her dissertation, 'From Rags to Riches: Amish Quilts and the Crafting of Value,' has been generously supported by fellowships from the Smithsonian Institution, Winterthur Museum and Library, the International Quilt Study Center and Museum at the University of Nebraska--Lincoln, and the American Quilt Study Group.

Spotlight

American Quilts: The Democratic Art, 1780–2007 by Robert Shaw [Sterling, 9781402747731]

Spanning more than four centuries, *American Quilts* is the first book to cover the entire historical panorama of quilt-making in the United States, from the quintessential patterns to their cultural significance. Illustrated in stunning color photographs--with a keen, insightful text by Robert Shaw--it's a fascinating chronicle of the growth and evolution of an art form with a rich heritage as well as a revealing portrait of what it has meant and what it means to be an American.

"Quilts have been made and used by Americans of every walk of life," writes Shaw in his Introduction. "Men and women, children and adults, rich and poor, educated and unschooled, New Englanders and Southerners, Anglo-Americans and African-Americans, Christians and Jews, craftspeople and artists, amateurs and professionals." His fascinating exploration of this truly democratic art covers the earliest American quilts which, contrary to myth and popular belief, were not homespun necessities pieced by hard-strapped settlers; the rising accessibility of quilting due to the industrial revolution that made cotton readily available and affordable; technological advancements like the home sewing machine that helped fuel the greatest era of quilt-making; the digital information age that has profoundly changed the way quiltmakers communicate and learn; and much more.

American Quilts is a visually lush journey through history that will delight art and quilt enthusiasts and collectors alike. <>

The Amish Quilt by Eve Granick [Good Books, 9780934672740] 100 color plates. Comprehensive in its treatment of the Amish quilt, this authoritative work's topics include the origin and beliefs of the Amish; the Amish and Pennsylvania Dutch culture; historical development of the Amish quilt; and more. <>

Amish Quilts—The Adventure Continues: Featuring 21 Projects from Traditional to Modern by Lynn Koolish [C&T Publishing, 9781607057918]

Thirty years after *An Amish Adventure* introduced quilters to the joys of Amish quilting, C&T Publishing is offers another chapter in the adventure: 21 Amish-inspired quilts designed by some of today's leading quilters. Some of these quilts use traditional 19th-century patterns. Others offer distinctly modern takes on Amish ideas. They all celebrate the simplicity, the bold geometry, and the rich dark fabrics that give Amish quilts their ageless appeal. Includes 21 Amish-inspired quilts with complete instructions, plus photo gallery with 17 more quilts. Easy-to-make patterns show off today's beautiful solid fabrics. <>

Striking Beauty: A Philosophical Look at the Asian Martial Arts by Barry Allen [Columbia University Press, 9780231172721]

The first book to focus on the intersection of Western philosophy and the Asian martial arts, *Striking Beauty* comparatively studies the historical and philosophical traditions

of martial arts practice and their ethical value in the modern world. Expanding Western philosophy's global outlook, the book forces a theoretical reckoning with the concerns of Chinese philosophy and the aesthetic and technical dimensions of martial arts practice.

Striking Beauty explains the relationship between Asian martial arts and the Chinese philosophical traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, in addition to Sunzi's *Art of War* [Filiquarian, 9781599869773] It connects martial arts practice to the Western concepts of mind-body dualism and materialism, sports aesthetics, and the ethics of violence. The work ameliorates Western philosophy's hostility toward the body, emphasizing the pleasure of watching and engaging in martial arts, along with their beauty and the ethical problem of their violence.

Recently, the martial arts have received greater attention from English speaking scholars, mostly in the humanities and some social sciences (Japanese and Chinese language scholarship, absent in this volume, have been around much longer.) There are sociological and anthropological studies of martial arts practice and practitioners, works that analyze martial arts in various media with martial arts literature, theater, and film studies leading this field, and the occasional historical monograph. There is even a newly established journal, *Martial Arts Studies*, with an affiliated annual conference.

Like other academic martial arts monographs, Allen brings his academic expertise, in this case philosophy, into conversation with his hobby. He uses his knowledge of philosophy to ask whether there can be beauty in an activity that, he argues, was originally intended to train people for violence. He wrestles with the aesthetic qualities of martial arts on the one hand and, on the other, the ethical problem posed by participating in what seems to be an art created for violence. Along the way he uses martial arts as a lens for describing Chinese philosophy because all martial arts in East Asia were influenced by the philosophical and religious traditions that originated or changed in China. He also asks what, if anything, Western philosophy can contribute towards understanding martial arts.

Allen begins his monograph with a description of Daoism, the philosophical tradition that has had the most impact on martial arts in East Asia. Much in this chapter will be familiar to anyone with even a passing knowledge of martial arts philosophy or Daoism, which should not be surprising because most of the sources used in this chapter, and throughout the book for that matter, are secondary sources in English.

The second chapter, the strongest, covers Western philosophy, Allen's own field of expertise. The classical philosophy of Plato, Socrates, and their intellectual descendants throughout premodern Europe were too dualistic and focused on the soul/mind, having little good to say about the body, thus rendering Western philosophy 'mute before anything as corporeal as the martial arts' (61). The few philosophers who celebrated the body lost the discursive battle and it would not be until the early modern and modern eras when men like Spinoza, Nietzsche, Darwin, and Deleuze highlighted materiality, and with it, the body.

Aesthetics of the martial arts is the topic for chapter three. Here, Allen tries to differentiate martial arts from sports and dance, a topic introduced in chapter two, explaining why activities such as boxing and Indian wrestling are not martial arts. Unlike sports, Allen claims, martial arts were not originally meant for competition but for combat. Thus, there are no conventions such as competition rules in boxing. Allen disqualifies Indian wrestling as a martial art because, he argues, it has no intended instrumental value in combat. Why choose Indian wrestling? It is one of the few martial arts that has undergone a monograph-length academic study in English. A final chapter eventually ties together the notions of violence and power to martial arts and ethics.

[Striking Beauty](#) is a provocative work that, in its strongest moments, is thought provoking and enlightening. Unfortunately, those moments are undercut by unsupported, ahistorical assertions and problems with argumentation that weaken Allen's project.

First there is the issue of what Allen means by 'martial arts.' At first glance it seems straight-forward, 'the originally Chinese, then East Asian, and now global traditions of usually unarmed personal combat. This is the martial arts of the kung fu movies, China's contribution to world cinema'. It is certainly true that a small portion of nineteenth century Chinese 'kung fu' in the south made its way to Okinawa where natives transformed it into karate and then became the basis for Korean tae kwon do. However, his definition of martial arts would not include other globally popular arts that did not trickle down from China, nor appear in 'kung fu' movies, such as judo, aikido, and kendo (he tries to connect judo to China but only one of the handful of styles that comprise modern judo have an origin story about a man from China teaching some movements to Japanese—that hardly makes judo 'from China'). Sometimes Allen wants to talk about them as well, but only to the extent that it supports his claim that everything ties back to China. So, there is discussion of Yagyū Shinkage ryū swordsmanship, a popular sword style from seventeenth century Japan with Zen influence due to the teacher's relationship to the monk Takuan who used swordsmanship as a way to discuss Zen principles. Scholars have long pointed out the flaws of overemphasizing the Zen influence on premodern Japanese arts. Moreover, Yagyū Shinkage ryū is just one of many early modern Japanese martial arts that exist today, disproving his other unsupported assertion that, 'no Japanese martial art acquired its current form until the twentieth century' (203). These globally popular martial arts that he ignores undercut his disingenuous claim that 'what the world knows about Asian martial arts began in China'. Chinese and Indian (Buddhist) philosophy certainly influenced martial arts throughout East Asia, but philosophical influence is not the same as martial arts' origin.

Second, as suggested above, the problem of definition is compounded by basic historical inaccuracies which are not minor pedantic complaints but represent holes that fundamentally hurt the philosophical argument. The most egregious are on two consecutive pages: 'Karate derives from Shaolin gongfu, which Buddhist missionaries brought to Okinawa along with Zen'. Buddhist missionaries did not bring

karate to Okinawa with Zen. Inhabitants of the Ryukyu Kingdom (now Okinawa) moved back and forth from Southern China, as did Chinese themselves, working, trading, et cetera, and it is from that interaction, largely undocumented, that formed the basis for karate. The philosophical point that Allen wanted to illustrate is that the process by which Buddhists deemphasized violence embodied in their gongfu practice by 'spiritualizing' them. They did this, he claims, by creating prearranged solo forms (drills better known as kata in Japanese) and thus this 'spiritualized' art became Japanese karate. The Koreans, we are told, did not receive these 'spiritualized' martial arts because 'Koreans were able to sample the Chinese martial arts before their modification under Zen and built their own traditions (of which hapkido is relatively modern evolution) on this older foundation'. Besides the 'modification under Zen' problem I noted above, how would Koreans go about selecting Chinese martial arts? Are readers to believe that in some distant past Koreans selected Chinese martial arts as though choosing from a menu, and then never had any additions of Chinese arts in between the ancient past the modern period? Another, larger issue is revealed in the parenthetical comment 'of which hapkido is relatively modern evolution'—hapkido is Allen's own art of choice (the book is dedicated to his teacher 'grand master Don Cha').

This ties into the third problem, not only in this book but in the genre of martial arts scholarship in general. Often authors are unaware of their own desire to celebrate the authenticity of their chosen martial art. Here, authenticity means either the putatively ancient origins of their art, or its combat efficacy, or both. It is ironic that Allen demonstrates mastery of Western philosophy, including Foucault, but he forgets Foucault's warning that history should teach us to question the 'solemnities' of the origin, not believe in them. Foucault attacked a search for origins, believed to be a time 'free from the restraints of positive knowledge,' where 'the truth of things corresponded to a truthful discourse,' and always preceding the Fall (see Foucault's 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History'). In this book, combative efficacy of the martial arts is Truth and 'spiritualization' is their Fall. The premise of Allen's argument about violence assumes that martial arts are 'designed and trained for competent violence' in which 'no movements are symbolic or merely graceful'. Looping back to the definition problem, 'My concept of martial arts makes no provision for movements that are merely artful or meditative'. That may be, but Allen has no convincing evidence for this concept, and, as scholars have demonstrated, several Japanese martial arts contained movements not meant for combat as such. Even Allen is vague on this point: 'something in Chinese martial arts history troubles my neat distinction between martial arts and dance. China has a long history of involvement between martial arts and theater'.

[Striking Beauty](#)'s problems are not simply minor pedantic issues; they are fundamental to some of the philosophical claims. Martial arts authors, peer reviewers, and academic presses need to be aware of the fantasy narratives that martial artists tell themselves, consciously or not, about their hobby. On this point, perhaps the most appropriate thinkers

for a 'philosophical look at the Asian martial arts' might be Lacan and Zizek. ---Michael Wert, Marquette University <>

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Spotlight

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