'Voyages aux pays du passé': classical receptions in nineteenth-century French travel narratives to the 'Orient'

SARAH BARBARA BUDASZ

ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on the reception of classical antiquity in nineteenth-century French travel writing to the 'Orient'. It demonstrates how these travel narratives sought to establish continuities and discontinuities between the ancient world and the contemporary 'Orient'. After defining how classical culture shaped travellers' expectations and perspectives, it investigates the impact of a material experience (travel) on the essentially (inter)textual relationship between French travel writers and classical antiquity.

In the first chapter, I explore travellers' confrontation with the layers of history between antiquity and the nineteenth century. This chapter shows how conceptions of modernity and decline are complicated by material experience of alterity in the 'Orient'. The next chapters then focus on two material aspects of the 'Orient' as experienced by travellers: archaeological artefacts and natural environments. I contend that these complementary physical *loci* of classical reception evidence the tension between perceptions of the ancient past as both present and absent in the 'Orient'. The fourth chapter looks at the racialisation process within classical reception practices. It demonstrates how writers, by endorsing (dis)continuity narratives in their orientalist discourses, constantly question the heredity of modern inhabitants of the 'Orient', and thus their claims to classical heritage. Finally, in the last chapter, I examine the way certain authors attempt to bypass the material aspects of antiquity in the Orient in favour of establishing intertextual relationships between the ancient world and modern travel narratives. As I highlight the inherently interpretative nature of classical reception, I draw study how its practice opens up space for literary invention within the presumed factual genre of travel writing.

As it demonstrates the central and complex role of classical culture, both familiar and alien, ever absent and present in nineteenth-century travel, this thesis thus offers new perspectives in the study of orientalist discourses and of French classical receptions.

‘VOYAGES AUX PAYS DU PASSÉ’: CLASSICAL RECEPTIONS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH TRAVEL NARRATIVES TO THE ‘ORIENT’

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DECLARATION AND STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

This work has been submitted to Durham University in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is my own work, and none of it has previously been submitted to Durham University or any other university for a degree.

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INTRODUCTION

On 14th April 2016, members of the far-right nationalist movement Identitäre Bewegung Österreich stormed into the University of Vienna to interrupt a performance of *Die Schutzbefohlenen*, Elfriede Jelinek's adaptation of Aeschylus' *Suppliants*. Jelinek's adaptation centres the hardship of modern refugees in parallel with Aeschylus' tales of the Danaids fleeing from Egypt to Greece to avoid forced marriages, with refugees performing central roles in this new adaptation of the play. According to reports, the protestors, whose logo reuses the Spartan Lambda symbol (an Λ, for Lacedaemon, which used to be painted on soldiers' shields), also shouted 'This is Sparta', the battle cry from Zach Snyder's *300*, a 2007 Hollywood retelling of the Thermopylae battle.[1]

On 25th March 2019, another production of Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, directed by Philippe Brunet, was cancelled, as members from different anti-racist associations (the Ligue de défense noire africaine (LDNA), the Brigade anti-négrophobie and the Conseil représentatif des associations noires (CRAN)) blocked the entrance to the Sorbonne university where the play was expected to be performed. The anti-racist protestors condemned the use of 'blackface' by actors playing the parts of Egyptian women (the black make-up was replaced by masks in latter performances) and accused the production of propagating colonialist and racist tropes in its *mise en scène*. Brunet defended himself by stating that his intentions were, on the contrary, to 'montrer l'importance de l'Afrique dans l'héritage Grec'.[2]

Whilst no possible equivalence can be drawn between anti-racist protestors and far-right activists, these anecdotes nonetheless reveal the depth of political tensions and contestations around modern engagements with classical material. What could be seen as only a couple of episodes in a greater struggle between reactionary and progressive forces in contemporary European culture shows the remarkable weight still given to Classics as a heritage to be claimed, but also as a purveyor of dangerously liberal ideas for some and harmfully retrograde ones for others.

In the *Suppliants*, the Egyptian-born Danaids seek refuge in Argos, Greece, arguing their right from their common origin with their host (the Danaids are said to be the descendants of Io, a priestess from Argos who was pursued by Zeus and escaped to Egypt). Classical culture appears irreducible to its place in the European canon as, despite the appropriations of identarian nationalist

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[1] Marteen Pourcq, 'The Costly Fabric of Conservatism: Classical References in Contemporary Public Culture' in *Classics in Extremis*, ed. by Edmund Richardson (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 171-183 (p. 177).

[2] Laurent Carpentier, 'A la Sorbonne, la guerre du 'blackface' gagne la tragédie grecque', *Le Monde*, 27 March 2019, <https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2019/03/27/a-la-sorbonne-la-guerre-du-blackface-gagne-la-tragedie-grecque_5441663_3246.html> [accessed 14 March 2021]

movements, in Vienna and beyond, claims to classical heritage are always shared with and contested by the non-European other and work to complicate easy narratives of self-identity.

Despite the undeniably contemporary fault lines of the above incidents, tensions around the self-identification of Europeans as the natural and legitimate inheritors of what 'they', and 'us' after them, call the 'Classics' were no less fraught in the nineteenth century. Whilst, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, neoclassicism continued to hold the Greco-Roman ancient world as a European aesthetic ideal, the material remains of antiquity were often to be found outside the geographical boundaries of the Western world, in the Eastern Mediterranean. As the nineteenth century saw an exponential development of travel from West to East, so followed an upsurge of travel narratives, amongst these an extensive number of 'Voyage en Orient' (an expression, though not an itinerary, coined by Alphonse de Lamartine in 1835).[3] For many nineteenth-century travellers, raised on the texts and culture of classical antiquity, the journey towards the 'Orient' was thus the occasion (whether anticipated or not) of a confrontation between the ideal and the materiality of antiquity. Of course, nineteenth century journeys to the 'Orient' owe a lot to the eighteenth-century 'Grand Tour', to which they can sometimes be assimilated or considered a successor. However, while the latter is a journey of aesthetic education mostly taken in Western Europe (France, Italy, Switzerland…), the former, by no means restricted to educative purposes, takes place in what is by definition a non-European space, the 'Orient' as opposed to the 'Occident'. In his work on curiosity in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century travel writing, subtitled, 'From an Antique Land', Nigel Leask argues that this geographical label depends primarily on the 'temporalizing tropes' adopted by travel writers, and as such can be applied beyond ancient Greece and Rome, to 'orientalised' cultures including ancient Mexican and Hindu civilisations.[4]

Whilst my analysis is more geographically bound than Leask's, I understand here the 'Orient' as a term central to the imaginary geography of Western authors and thus referring to a space with shifting spatial boundaries, used systematically to represent the visited countries and their populations as the radical 'other' of Europe. In the corpus analysed here, it is used by travellers with no real degree of precision, but generally includes the territories of Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey and, often, Greece. Unless in direct quotations, the term is used in quotation marks and is understood to designate a shifting imagined space constructed as unified by travellers.

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[3] Sarga Moussa, 'Introduction' in Alphonse de Lamartine, *Voyage en Orient*, ed. by Sarga Moussa (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000), p. 7.

[4] Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing 1770-1840: From an Antique Land* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), pp. 48-49.

This 'Orient', as demonstrated by Edward Said, is above all a discursive construction that presents a certain geographical space as the 'other' of the West, 'its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.'[5] According to him, this antagonism can be traced back to antiquity itself: 'Consider first the demarcation between Orient and West. It already seems bold by the time of the Iliad'.[6] That the lines of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Orientalist discourses had already been drawn by ancient Greek authors appears obvious to Said, as he develops his analysis of two of Aeschylus' plays, *The Persians* and *The Bacchae*. 'The two aspects of the Orient that set it off from the West in this pair of plays will remain essential motifs of European imaginative geography. […] Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant.'[7] However, having drawn convincing parallels between fifth-century BCE and nineteenth-century CE representations of the 'oriental' other, Said does not make explicit how these ancient 'motifs' were transmitted to shape the modern 'imaginative geography' of the 'Orient'. In this thesis, I argue that as much as 'Classics' helped frame nineteenth-century Orientalist discourses, material experiences of the 'Orient' by French and other European travellers also transform their understanding of the ancient world.

Can 'orientalism' (and other postcolonial frameworks) be usefully drawn back to the ancient world, in the way suggested by Said? Whilst Denise McCoskey, in her study of race and antiquity, demonstrates the many ways in which the relationships that the Ancient Greeks established with other civilisations in general, and with their Eastern neighbours, the Persians, in particular, differ from the relationships between modern Europe and the 'Orient', she also highlights the ways in which they have consistently been received as similar and parallel by Western imperialists.[8] In a postcolonial perspective inspired by Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity, Amar Acheraïou contends that the integration of ancient culture into modern colonialist ideologies is more complex than the result of a linear transmission of Western heritage. For him 'the incorporation of ancient ideas and thoughts [in colonialist discourses] is combined with hijacking the indigenous and canonical texts' and can be conceptualised as 'colonialism-as-grafting'.[9] Irad Malking suggests that the benefits of applying postcolonial frameworks to the study of the Ancient world thus go both ways: these analyses can illuminate power relationships in the Greco-Roman world, and, at the

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[5] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003 [1978]), p. 2.

[6] Ibid., p. 56.

[7] Ibid., p. 57.

[8] Denise Eileen McCoskey, *Race: antiquity and its legacy*, London, Bloomsbury, 2012

[9] Amar Acheraïou, *Rethinking Postcolonialism: Colonialist Discourse in Modern Literatures and the Legacy of Classical Writers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 5 & p. 32.

same time, a closer attention to forms of colonisation or to perceptions of race in antiquity can bring historical depth to modern postcolonial theories.[10]

As the example above shows, to this day, Classics occupy a privileged place in debates about heritage, race or nationalism. In reality, a constant tension between 'Classicality' (the idealised aesthetic and ethical quality attributed to 'Classics' as part of a European cultural heritage) and antiquity (which pertains to the history of Ancient Greece and Rome, including their deep and complex relationships with other areas of the ancient world, including the 'Orient') is central to the reception of Classics, and is particularly acute in the nineteenth century, at a time of increased material discoveries from antiquity.

Whilst studies in classical reception evidence the ways in which the materials encompassed under the umbrella of the 'Classics' are constantly reassessed and transformed by subsequent receptions, the stability of the label itself from the eighteenth century onwards highlights its legitimacy in European culture. The importance of classical culture is thus inseparable from Europe's epistemological privilege. 'Classics functions as the paradigmatic discipline for thinking through the relations between disciplinarization and the ideological and institutional structures of authority, privilege and education'[11] and that is why it represents, as underlined by Barbara Goff, a 'vehicle'[12] of choice to study the links between culture and imperialism.

For a long time, Classics has served as a common cultural foundation for Western intellectual and political elites and was deeply embedded within the building of both national and imperial projects. This privileged position of classical studies is one of the reasons that explains the long and wide-ranging controversy provoked by the publication of Martin Bernal's *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*.[13] The first volume of this three-volume work put forward Bernal's two theses. The first is that ancient Greek language and culture owed a lot more than previously assumed to the influence of Egyptian and Phoenician civilisations, which, he contends, established colonies in Greece during the second millennium BCE (the 'Ancient model'). The second is that these 'African roots' of Greek, and therefore classical, culture were widely recognised in antiquity but were erased by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European scholarship which favoured the

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[10] Irad Malkin, 'Postcolonial Concepts and Ancient Greek Colonization', *MLQ: Modern Language Quaterly*, 65, 3 (2004), 341-364.

[11] Simon Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: Art, Opera, Fiction, and the Proclamation of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 2.

[12] Barbara Goff, 'Introduction' in *Classics & Colonialism*, ed. by Barbara Goff (London: Duckworth, 2005), pp. 1-24 (p. 11).

[13] Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1987-2006).

hypothesis of Greek settlers of Indo-European origin (the 'Aryan model'). Whilst the second and third volumes were used to present Bernal's archaeological and linguistic evidence of the Egyptian and Phoenician influence on ancient Greece, the first one focussed on the 'fabrication' of the 'Aryan model' of classical Greece's origins from the eighteenth century and its perpetuation throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, and have sparked intense controversy in the field of classical studies and beyond. The main critiques levelled against *Black Athena* are of two kinds. The first is comprised of scholarly contestations of its archaeological and linguistic theories, as well as its interpretations of ancient Greek myths; the second ones attack what they perceive as the ideological bias of the work, which is seen as propping up 'Afrocentric' movements and fuelling political appropriations of the ancient world not based on historical facts.[14]

Whilst the ongoing debates around Bernal's comparative linguistics and archaeological interpretations are beyond the scope and expertise of this thesis, it is relevant to note, as McCoskey does, that if some African, and African-American intellectuals have indeed appropriated the heritage of antiquity for political aims, they were preceded by many others, including the Greeks and the Romans themselves, as well as nineteenth-century European classicists.[15]

Numerous further studies have explored the relationship between (mostly British) imperialism and Classics. Goff's introduction to the edited collection *Classics and Colonialism*, which defines postcolonialism as the study of the voices of the (previously) colonised but also of the impact of colonisation on metropolitan societies, argues that the Classics have been used for the purposes of both imperialists and resistance, an idea explored by Lorna Hardwick who sees classical reception as 'a field for the practice and study of contest about values and their relationship to knowledge and power.'[16] With claims to classical heritage as central to the cultural identity of European imperial elites, investigating the reception of Classics in colonial and postcolonial contexts appears to Goff to be long overdue. Subsequent work, such as Mark Bradley's edited volume *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*,[17] and especially Phiroze Vasunia's *The Classics and Colonial India*,[18] present case studies of the reciprocal impact of classical culture on the British imperial project and

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[14] Mary Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers (eds.), *Black Athena revisited* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[15] Denise Eileen McCoskey, 'Black Athena, White Power: Are We Paying the Price for Classics' Response to Bernal?', *Eidolon*, 15 November 2018 <https://eidolon.pub/black-athena-white-power-6bd1899a46f2> [accessed 14 March 2021]

[16] Lorna Hardwick, 'Reception Studies', *Greece and Rome: New Surveys in the Classics*, 33 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 11.

[17] Mark Bradley, *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[18] See Phiroze Vasunia, *The Classics and Colonial India* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013).

of colonial politics on classical studies. Vasunia's work in particular provides an in-depth study of how Classics were used both in the framing of British perceptions of India as well as in the fashioning of resistance narratives by Indian intellectual elites.[19]

The last two decades have thus seen the emergence of a rich scholarship drawing both from classical reception and postcolonial studies. Many of these works examine the uses of Greco-Roman antiquity in postcolonial contexts, such as West and South Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and within the African diasporas,[20] whilst other research focuses more closely on the intersection between Classics and race, often, though not exclusively, within an African-American context.[21] Finally, some works, though not postcolonial in approach or context, have analysed in depth the strong links that Western nationalisms and imperialisms draw between their projects and classical antiquity. Although many of these analyses focus on Germany, Italy or the United States,[22] Athena Leoussi's *Nationalism and Classicism* illuminates the way aspirations towards an idealised Greek body, received through ancient art and its reproductions, shaped nineteenth-century

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[19] Similar work has been undertaken on Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria, see Barbara Goff, *'Your Secret Language': Classics in the British Colonies of West Africa* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

[20] *Classics in Post-Colonial worlds*, ed. by Lorna Hardwick and Carol Gillepsie (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007); Justine McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); *Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone, and Dramas of the African Diaspora*, ed. by Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Emily Greenwood, *Afro-Greeks: Dialogues between Anglophone Caribbean Literature and Classics in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); *Classicisms in the Black Atlantic*, ed. by Ian Moyer, Adam Lecznar, and Heidi Morse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); *Greeks and Romans on the Latin American Stage*, ed. by Rosa Andújar and Konstantinos P. Nikoloutsos (London: Bloomsbury, 2020)

[21] Patrice Rankine, *Ulysses in Black: Ralph Ellison, Classicism, and African American Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006); Tracy Walters, *African American Literature and the Classicist Tradition: Black Women Writers from Wheatley to Morrison* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Philippe Jockey, *Le mythe de la Grèce blanche: Histoire d'un rêve occidental* (Paris: Belin, 2013); Margaret Malamud, *African Americans and the Classics: Antiquity, Abolition and Activism*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

[22] Johann Chapoutot, *Le National-socialisme et l'Antiquité*, (Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, 2008); *Brill's Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, ed. by Helen Roche, and Kyriakos N. Demetriou (Amsterdam: Brill, 2017); John Levi Barnard, *Empire of Ruin: Black Classicism and American Imperial Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). See also *Classics and National Cultures*, ed. by Susan A. Stephens and Phiroze Vasunia, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) and *Graeco-Roman Antiquity and the Idea of Nationalism in the 19th Century*, *Case Studies*, ed. by Thorsten Fögen and Richard Warren (Berlin: de Gruyter GmbH, 2016).

nationalist political ideology and racial theories in England and France.[23] However, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies on Classics within the French colonial empire.[24]

What most of these works demonstrate is that Classics can be and often is concurrently appropriated by colonial discourses and narratives of postcolonial resistance. Reception theory provides a series of approaches to analyse these constant redefinitions and reinventions of Classics. It also underlines that 'Classics' do not fit a single model. It is almost tautological to point out that 'Classics' is only what is perceived as 'classical' at any given point, but the 'Classics' are identified with a classical model in part because of how they have been received and reinterpreted in postclassical times. This thesis thus relies fundamentally on classical reception for its theoretical framework, as it offers a broader scope to its analysis than theories of intertextuality (to which it is also decidedly indebted). By understanding 'Classics' not exclusively as a set of texts and artefacts, or as a historical period, but as a cultural imaginary, this thesis thus uses a plurality of approaches to analyse the productive intersection of this imaginary with that of the nineteenth-century 'Orient'.

Classical reception studies emerged in the 1990s as a new way to look at classical material, informed by reception theories primarily developed by German literary theorist Hans Robert Jauss in the 1970s. Jauss, influenced in part by Hans-Georg Gadamer 'fusion of horizons', felt that previous paradigms of literary analysis (namely the turn taken, amongst others, by Russian Formalists and New Critics after the First World War, away from cultural-historical inquiries towards a concentration on the text itself, its formal and self-referential aspects above all else) were nearing exhaustion.[25] First laid out in a lecture at Constance University in 1967, his theory seeks to unite Marxist historical dialectics with Formalists' use of aesthetic perception as an analytic tool. This fusion is realised through the notion of a 'horizon of expectations' (*Erwartungshorizont*), that is the historically, aesthetically and socially constructed mindset of a reader towards a text.[26] Reception theory offered novel ways to rethink the canon and encompass traditionally neglected works and new media, two elements that made its relation to classical literature fruitful and pertinent.

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[23] Athena Leoussi, *Nationalism and Classicism: The Classical Body as National Symbol in Nineteenth-Century England and France* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).

[24] A notable exception here is Bonnie Effros' work on military archaeologists in 19th Century colonial Algeria which demonstrates how French officers linked their conquest of Algeria to the Roman model. See Bonnie Effros, *Incidental Archaeologists: French Officers and the Rediscovery of Roman North Africa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

[25] Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A critical introduction* (London: Methuen, 1984), pp. 3-4.

[26] Holub, pp. 58-63

In 1993, Latin poetry scholar Charles Martindale posited that 'interpretations of texts are inseparable from the history of their reception'[27] and made his case for an alternative to 'positivistic' (or teleological) modes of interpretation that would oppose the idea of a 'natural' meaning to be discovered by a reader without preconceptions. For him, this 'natural' meaning itself has a history rooted in specific cultural practices and there can exist no reading without preconceptions. His two main theses are that insights about ancient literature are 'locked up in imitation, translation, etc.', and that interpretations are constructed by the chain of reception through which their readability has been effected. As he puts it: 'Meaning is always realised at the point of reception'. [28] His version of reception theory is influenced both by Jauss's *Rezeptionsästhetik* and Jacques Derrida's concept of *différance*. Going further than Jauss's theory (which emphasises a historical understanding of the contexts of different interpretations), Martindale (aided by Derrida) postulates that history itself is a constructed discourse (or 'text'). He consequently proposes to treat each text (or rather, each reading of a text) as an event or performance, which is linked to other performances/readings of the same text but also 'involved in an unceasing movement of *différance*', its meaning always deferred.[29]

As the field of classical reception developed, a distinction grew between what could be simplistically identified as aesthetic and cultural practices of reception. The former, embodied by Martindale, objects to what he identifies as a worrying trend: a shift from a primarily literary approach of reception towards Cultural Studies. For Martindale, a broader cultural approach to Classics is at risk of abandoning 'a commitment to the value of the texts we choose', [30] in other words, of rendering the entire notion of a classical canon irrelevant. Emphasising the 'aesthetic' in Jauss' *Rezeptionsästhetik*, Martindale suggests turning back to Kant's foundational theory of aesthetics as a way to evaluate the value of ancient and modern works and inform their receptions.[31] Opposed to this approach is Simon Goldhill, who considers that these analyses would focus too much on

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[27] Charles Martindale, *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. xiii.

[28] Ibid., p. 3.

[29] Ibid., p. 19.

[30] Charles Martindale 'Introduction: Thinking Through Reception' in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, ed. by Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 1-13 (p. 11).

[31] Charles Martindale, 'Performance, Reception, Aesthetics: Or Why Reception Studies Need Kant' in *Theorizing Performance: Greek Drama, Cultural History, and Critical Practice*, ed. by Edith Hall and Stephen Harrop (London: Duckworth, 2010), pp. 71-84.

individual authors and 'downplay reception as an embedded, political, and historical process.'[32] In *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity*, Goldhill defends his historicist and 'cultural' approach: 'I am concerned to locate aesthetics as one historically specific element in a series of frames in which any particular public display of art, performance in a theatre, or publication of a novel, needs to be comprehended'.[33] His work rejects an understanding of Classics via an exclusive canon of writers, both ancient and modern, in favour of a broad overview of the cultural role played by texts in society as a whole. For him, 'Reception Studies is most productive and interesting when we move away from the great man communing in his study with the great work of the past, toward the cultural significance of the representation of the past for a here and now'.[34]

As the scope and the corpus of this thesis are both firmly literary, it cannot dispense with an engagement with aesthetics as one of the main driving forces of attraction of both the 'Orient' and the Classics. For authors such as Flaubert or Loti, the reception of antiquity during their journeys is indissociable from their literary projects. As Martindale points out, one of the pitfalls of cultural studies can indeed be, when it relies on over-generalisations, to run the risk of 'ideological self-positioning' and of telling 'us what [the critic] already knows, [for example] that the Victorians were patriarchal, or in some way fail to live up to our enlightened standards'.[35] However, this care for the aesthetic and literary aspects of travel writing does not neglect the historical aspects of how Classics are used in Orientalist discourses and in many ways this project aligns more closely with Goldhill's broader approach.[36] This thesis is a study of antiquity within discourses that, without neglecting their particular and often nuanced positioning, emanate from authors in symbolic and often material positions of privilege, which aims to highlight the role of Classics in discursive constructions of authority beyond the expression of individual aesthetic sensibilities by each traveller.

The debate between aesthetic and historicist approaches has recently receded in favour of new analyses which focus more specifically on the processes of transmission, reception and adaptation operating within classical reception. As political appropriations of antiquity and debates around the historical elitism of classical studies heighten, notable new works have turned their focus towards

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[32] Simon Goldhill, 'Cultural History and Aesthetics: Why Kant is No Place to Start Reception Studies' in *Theorizing Performance: Greek Drama, Cultural History, and Critical Practice*, ed. by Edith Hall and Stephen Harrop (London: Duckworth, 2010), pp. 56-70 (p. 65).

[33] Goldhill, 2011, p. 14.

[34] Ibid., p. 16.

[35] Martindale, 2010, p.82.

[36] Goldhill, 2011, p.2.

the situatedness of these processes and, by extension, of scholarly and political engagement with Classics.[37]

Recognising that 'how we talk about the classical past, display it, teach it, adapt it, remember it and forget it (and who gets to be one of 'us', doing this) has always been charged and political', Edmund Richardson, in the introduction to *Classics in Extremis*, suggests that claims to classical heritage and interpretative authority are constantly challenged by 'extreme' receptions of antiquity, taking places on the margins of scholarly debates. These 'marginal' receptions expose an interpretative instability at the heart of all receptions of antiquity and thus suggest that the dominant discourse of the scholarly 'centre' is constantly shaped and unsettled by numerous classical engagements on its margins:

> This 'decentered' classics acknowledges the limits of all attempts to claim authority over the past, including our own, and the time-bound nature of all accounts of the ancient world, including our own. It embraces diversity over discipline, in both the subject matter it addresses, and the voices it listens to: not simply as a political position, but as a statement about how classical discourse has always operated.[38]

Similarly, in a collective reflection on the field, the 'Postclassicisms Collective', formed of nine senior scholars, identifies 'Responsibility' and 'Situatedness' (alongside others such as 'Value' or 'Agency') as guiding concepts to re-examine the relationship between 'Classics' (as the study of the Ancient past) and the present:

> The rejection of classical antiquity as a unified, knowable whole works together with the rejection of classical values as intrinsic rather than contingently determined within situated communities of valuers. We therefore make the acknowledgment of our own situatedness part of what it means to engage antiquity responsibly.[39]

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[37] See for example Rachel Poser's profile of Dan-el Padilla Peralta, 'He Wants to Save Classics From Whiteness. Can the Field Survive?', *New York Times*, 2 February 2021 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/02/magazine/classics-greece-rome-whiteness.html>. In France, an op-ed was recently signed by forty-five university professors to defend what they perceive as unfair attacks against Antiquity and Classics as a discipline: 'Effacer l'Antiquité de notre culture, c'est renier l'humanisme', *FigaroVox*, 21 March 2021 < https://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/histoire/effacer-l-antiquite-de-notre-culture-c-est-renier-l-humanisme-20210321 >.

[38] Edmund Richardson, 'Introduction' in *Classics in Extremis: the Edges of Classical Reception*, ed. by Edmund Richardson (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 1-12 (p. 11).

[39] The Postclassicisms Collective, *Postclassicisms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), p. 43.

A member of the 'Postclassicisms Collective', Constanze Güthenke proposes 'exemplarity' as one tool of analysis for Reception studies that would consider situatedness without a necessary recourse to historicism:

> [T]here is no reason not to consider the appellative, critical structure of exempla for our own practices as scholars of antiquity and of its reception. In this way, we make room for the anachronic features of rhetorical and literary tropes that upset temporal stability, without having to postulate a naïve ahistoricism or an approach that is insensitive to historical distance, historical situation, or peculiarity, embracing the full spectrum of inaccessibility at the same time as mobilizing it for our own position vis-à-vis the past.[40]

By making the scholar's situatedness explicit, these approaches not only seek to define an ethical position and method for classical studies, they also attempt to renew classical reception's original challenge to 'positivistic modes of interpretation'.[41]

Whilst this thesis is mostly historicist in its approach, and thus does not fully avoid claiming interpretative authority over nineteenth-century texts, whilst questioning nineteenth-century authors' own claims of privileged access to and understanding of cllassical culture, issues of 'situatedness' have also informed one of the central trends of my thesis: the ways in which Classics occupy a privileged position in the nineteenth-century cultural imaginary. Despite the canonicity of classical culture and its role at the core of what is considered 'European' and 'French' heritage, the presence of classical references within a nineteenth-century French text are not solely reducible to a marker of 'cultural capital'[42] or European identity. Of course, Classics can be and often are used to denote privilege, education, and the social complicity of a shared cultural canon, but in many ways, what falls under the 'Classics' umbrella differs greatly from one author to the other: Gustave Flaubert's 'Classics' are not Charles Maurras' 'Classics', which are also very different from Pierre Loti's. This thesis thus makes use primarily of theories which evidence the complex and individual ways in which Classics are transmitted and received, as well as providing tools to analyse these processes from a literary perspective.

In his introduction to the edited volume *Deep Classics*, Shane Butler proposes that we rethink the way we consider the past and the depth of time. Taking his inspiration from John Hutton's

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[40] Constanze Güthenke, 'For Time is / nothing if not amenable' — exemplarity, time, reception', *Classical Receptions Journal*, 12. 1 (2020), 46–61(p. 59).

[41] Martindale, 1993, p. xiii.

[42] See Lorna Hardwick 'Thinking with Classical Reception: Critical Distance, Critical Licence, Critical Amnesia?' in *Classics in Extremis*, pp. 13-24 (p. 16) and Stephen Harrison, *Victorian Horace: Classics and Class* (London: Bloomsbury 2017) for discussions of Bourdieu, Classics and class.

geological model of Deep Time (the awe-inspiring empirical presence of an abysmally distant past within a visible earth structure[43]), he seeks to apprehend the presence of 'Classics' through time as an archaeological or geological excavation of layers. Butler thus maps out reception history as geological strata, each reading adding a layer of reinterpretation to the previous one but also shaping those layers that come after it. In this sense, the practice of reception would be like excavating a cross-section of rewritings and looking not only at the formation of individual strata, but also at the processes of transformation of the original layer over time.

Interestingly, the position of the scientific observer favoured by Butler (physically confronted by 'jarring juxtapositions of distant past and immediate presence'[44]) is, in the case of this thesis, not only that of the scholar of Classics but also that of the travellers to the 'Orient'. In his account of their excursion at Siccar Point in Scotland, John Playfair, Hutton's associate, describes his impressions thus: 'We felt ourselves necessarily carried back to the time when the schistus on which we stood was yet at the bottom of the sea […] Revolutions still more remote appeared in the distance of this extraordinary perspective. The mind seemed to grow giddy by looking so far into the abyss of time'.[45] In their journeys, nineteenth-century travellers express very similar feelings to the eighteenth-century geologists when facing ancient ruins, or even living populations they readily identify with their imagined ancestors.

In a period where geology, archaeology and the theory of evolution by means of natural selection upset scientific understandings of time and history, the classical reader's relationship with the past and heritage was also called into question. What is more, this analogy not only accounts for but centres the materiality of the Classics by evidencing the necessary layers of reception, in palimpsests of texts but also in the intertwined physical remains of classical and postclassical history. 'From all these perspectives - archaeological, philological and that of the so-called classical tradition - nineteenth-century Classics was directing its attention not just towards "the ancient past" as some static entity but, equally, towards the time between then and now, the time that made that past "ancient".'[46] Butler's approach allows me to account for the materiality of the Classics in travel

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[43] Hutton writes about his observations: 'The result, therefore, of our present enquiry is, that we find no vestige of a beginning, – no prospect of an end.' James Hutton, 'Theory of the Earth; or an Investigation of the Laws observable in the Composition, Dissolution, and Restoration of Land upon the Globe' in *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 1, 2 (Edinburgh: 1788), pp.209-304 (p. 304).

[44] Shane Butler, 'Introduction: On the Origin of Deep Classics' in *Deep Classics: Rethinking Classical Reception*, ed. by Shane Butler (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 1-20 (p. 4).

[45] Quoted in Butler, p. 3.

[46] Butler, p. 9

writing and to observe how the physical as well as textual 'layering' of receptions shapes each author's chain of reception, between the author and antiquity.

As well as through their persistent presence (even if under layers of more recent history) within the traveller's present, Classics are characterised by their visible absence, the traces of their disappearance. This ambivalence is not as paradoxical as it first appears; Butler's 'Deep classics' model emphasises the transformation of Classics through time ('what made that past 'ancient'"), which implies both continuity and discontinuity as, despite the survival of Classics something is always lost in the process. The dialectics of loss has become central to reflections around access and interpretations of the Ancient world to the point that the 'postclassicisms collective' affirms that 'classics has a constitutive relationship to loss […]. Material objects from the classical world thus enter into our own doubly marked: they incarnate both loss and survival.'[47] That those losses are often due to the natural consequences of time passing should not conceal the human agency at play in multiple occurrences of destructions and transformations. Individuals throughout history have wilfully engaged with the ancient past, but they certainly did not respond to the same imperatives, nor did they receive 'Classics' in the same way. As Richardson puts it, 'classical reception is structured by a battle between recovery and erasure, reinvention and preservation, plunder and guardianship'.[48]

This tension between absence and presence of the Classics is conceptualised by Joshua Billings as an 'erotics of reception':

> Classical receptions begin in a desire for what is absent. This is not merely because erotics is one of many possible modes of relation to the ancient world. Though this is obviously the case, one could go further, and argue that erotics is a condition of classical reception. […] The erotic dialectic helps to formulate the specificity of classical receptions, as conditioned by a play of distance and proximity, or in Platonic terms, of lack and resource. [49]

By making desire the primary drive of classical reception, Billings highlights the active nature of literary engagements with the past and I thus propose to use this concept to investigate the varied dynamics of travellers' quests for antiquity in the 'Orient'. This thesis demonstrates how the unfulfilled nature of this desire is particularly crucial in fostering creative responses to this absence in travel narratives, as frequent textual references to antiquity are to be contrasted with, and maybe

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[47] *Postclassicisms*, p. 129.

[48] Richardson, p.9

[49] Joshua Billings, 'Hyperion's symposium: an erotics of reception.', *Classical Receptions Journal*, 2,1 (2010), 4-24 (p. 22).

compensate for, its material absence in the 'Orient'. 'Yet it is only by recognizing the absence at the heart of classical reception that we can fully understand antiquity's presence.'[50]

The different travel narratives show that 'classical' absence is at its most salient where material traces of antiquity (such as ruins or customs) appear to have survived through to the traveller's present. In his article on the essential function of materiality in classical studies, James Porter affirms that 'materiality is a constitutive factor – both a source of fascination and a source of resistance – in the conflicted attitudes that continue to shape our study of the Greco-Roman past.'[51] An example of this conflict is the attempt by travellers to reconcile their reception of the Classics as a European heritage and the 'exotic' nature of the countries in which they expect to discover traces of antiquity, in other words between a supposedly familiar antiquity and a decidedly alien 'Orient'. I thus contend that travel narratives by nineteenth-century French authors in the 'Orient' represent attempts to write in the perceptible gap between an ideal classical past and a material exotic present.

Travel writing offers a particularly relevant corpus to study the role of the material in the perception of classical antiquity, as a genre that overwhelmingly purports to offer its readers a testimonial of things seen and experienced by its authors. As such, these narratives are primarily concerned with the material (physical, visual, etc.) aspects of the travelled lands and present themselves as attempts to describe the world as perceived by the travel writer. In addition, European travel writing and classical studies represent, as alleged by Said and Bernal respectively, a Western hegemonic instrument of knowledge making.[52] The rise of travel writing studies can thus be understood as a by-product of postcolonial theories and the variety and quantity of travel narratives have become a privileged object of postcolonial analysis.

One of the earliest and most influential works in the field is Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. In this analysis, Pratt expands on the fertile concept of the 'contact zone' (previously exposed in a 1991 lecture to the Modern Language Association, 'Arts of the Contact Zone'[53]). Having defined these zones as 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination - such as colonialism and slavery, or their aftermath as they are lived out across the globe today',[54] she uses them to demonstrate how travel writing has constructed a certain

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[50] Ibid., p. 23.

[51] James I. Porter, 'The Materiality of Classical Studies', *Parallax*, 9, 4 (2003), 64-74 (p. 73).

[52] Said, *Orientalism*; Bernal, *Black Athena*.

[53] Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', *Profession*, 1991, pp. 33–40.

[54] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008 [1992]), p. 7.

knowledge of the world for Europeans. She also demonstrates how, through transculturation (a term first used by ethnographers 'to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture'[55]), colonised subjects engaged with European representations. Travel writing studies therefore highlight the ways in which hegemonic discourses of the 'Orient' are often nuanced by more complex negotiations of meanings taking place within the 'contact zone'. These do not negate the power asymmetry between the 'traveller' and the 'travellee',[56] but they unsettle the stability of the dominant discourse.

In the nineteenth century, Greece is a characteristic example of a 'contact zone' whose shifting historical status is constantly reassessed and contested by 'travellers' and 'travellees' alike. I consider here in particular its ambiguous position in the orientalist dichotomy between East and West.

> The Greek is racially and geographically European, but he is not a Western. […] He is Oriental in a hundred ways, but his Orientalism is not Asiatic. He is the bridge between the East and West, and he may claim to have moulded the latter in times past. Now it moulds him in certain ways.[57]

This assessment by Duckett Ferriman, an English traveller in Greece in the early twentieth century, reflects the unstable framings of the country in relation to Western Europe since its Independence in 1821. Greek people are here characterised as both European and 'Oriental', and yet never fully assigned to one side of this binary, revealing the contradictory identity narratives that are projected onto Greece by foreign travellers. This duality is implicitly attributed to Greece's specific history as having 'moulded the [West] in times past', that is to its classical heritage. However, what Duckett Ferriman recognises here is that the modern valuation of Ancient Greece by the Western Europeans is imposed on modern Greece and Greeks as a reversal of influences ('now it moulds him'). The philhellene project of the early nineteenth century rests on Greece's assimilation to Europe's idealised vision of antiquity.

> On the one hand, the Greeks themselves were divided between seeking a return to their ancient past and fighting for inclusion in the European modernity and on the other hand, the Europeans' claims on Greece lay in their knowledge of its past. Ultimately it could even be said that Greece owes its independence to the fact that the Europeans identified

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[55] Ibid., p. 9.

[56] This term is used here in the sense coined by Pratt as 'persons travelled to (or on) by a traveller, receptors of travel.' (Ibid., p. 242).

[57] Z. Duckett Ferriman, *Greece and the Greeks* (London: Mills and Boon, 1910), p. 132-133.

> themselves with the ancient Greeks and lauded Greece as their spiritual ancestor […]. At the same time, however, it was seen as Europe's cultural backwater.[58]

This double movement of idealisation (of the past) and disdain (for the present) traverses nineteenth-century travel writing to Greece and travellers are prompt to express their disappointment when Greek people insufficiently perform their 'Hellenic' identity. The constant reassessment of Greece's distance from both Europe and the 'Orient' is characteristic of the evolving cultural politics of Hellenism in France throughout the nineteenth century, which often disregard the Greeks' own claims to their history or their modern identity.[59] As such, this thesis, following many of the travellers it examines, whilst recognising Greece's particular status with regard to Orientalist discourses, includes Greece within the geographical orbit of the 'Orient', as an embodiment of the tension between the ideal and the material that forms the core of its analysis. Some texts from my corpus even focus exclusively on Greece as an exemplary 'contact zone' between the East and the West.

The shifting status of Greece also demonstrates the limits of reading travel narratives as the products of a dominant discursive model and underlines the lability of the orientalist binary.

After *Orientalism*, many critics have indeed re-examined the claims to a totalising and hegemonic discourse on alterity that Said identified in his work. A historical critique of the homogeneity of the Saidian and other postcolonial modes of reading comes from Steve Clark who seeks to 'resist the reduction of cross-cultural encounter to simple relations of domination and subordination'.[60] Focussing on the British Empire, it seeks to nuance its temporal extent (when does High imperialism start and stop?), its ideological unity ('there is no single colonialism, rather differing practices by a variety of cultures'[61]) as well as the extent of its power on the ground ('The British Empire […] was far-flung, run on the cheap, kept ticking over'[62]), going as far as to rehabilitate a positive view of the imperial ideal as one of 'commitment to collective endeavour, asceticism,

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[58] Dimitris Tziovas, 'Introduction: Decolonizing Antiquity, Heritage Politics, and Performing the Past' in *Re-imagining the Past: Antiquity and Modern Greek Culture*, ed. by Dimitris Tziovas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 1-26, (p. 2).

[59] Sophie Basch, *Le mirage grec: la Grèce moderne devant l'opinion française depuis la création de l'Ecole d'Athènes jusqu'à la guerre civile grecque (1846-1946)* (Paris: Hatier-Kauffmann, 1995).

[60] Steve Clark, 'Introduction' in *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*, ed. by Steve Clark (London: Zed Books, 1999), pp. 1-28 (p. 3).

[61] Ibid., p. 8

[62] Ibid., p. 9.

resilience and practicality.'[63] Critically, he undermines the actual hegemony of imperial travel literature in terms of reception, questioning notably the class and gender of its reading audience.

Some works, though not necessarily as direct responses to Said, present a counterpoint to his analysis of dominant discourses as hegemonic. In *Room for Manoeuvre: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative*, Ross Chambers outlines his theory of the 'oppositional (in) narratives' – the idea that Power can enable a discourse of change that works, or ends up working, against itself. What Chambers is trying to find here is the titular 'room for manoeuvre' in narratives produced within a power structure, after having considered that resistance from outside this structure is often a failure or it 'repeats the methods of power [violence] in overcoming it'.[64] Similarly, Lisa Lowe underlines the profound heterogeneity of the orientalist discourse, as it invokes a plurality of referents and is engendered by the social and literary circumstances of particular moments. Her use of Foucault emphasises this heterogeneity when she notes that for him 'discourse is a changing set of conditions that regulates the range of possible articulations at any time; yet with each articulation, the set of conditions shifts and adapts.'[65] In his analysis of late nineteenth-century travel writing, Ali Behdad however argues that 'opposition and counterideologies' are only *present* through their conspicuous *absence* from hegemonic discourses.[66] However, he agrees with Lowe that heterogeneity is characteristic of orientalism and he argues that this phenomenon is amplified in late nineteenth-century orientalist writing in what he calls 'the age of colonial dissolution'. These 'belated' travellers experience a 'desire for the Orient' that it is too late to fulfil, and which result in a 'schizoid discourse that simultaneously affirms and exposes the ideological discrepancies and political predicaments of colonial hegemony',[67] demonstrating here again the discursive instability of orientalist representations. Alongside Richard Terdiman's *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France,*[68] these works introduce ways to search for spaces of heterogeneity, opposition or subversion in apparently hegemonic discourses. I contend that, despite the embedment of Classics (as a discipline and as a set of texts and artefacts) in Western cultural hegemony, Greco-Roman antiquity, and particularly its material manifestations in

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[63] Ibid., p. 10

[64] Ross Chambers, *Room for Manoeuvre: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), p. 15.

[65] Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 14.

[66] Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 1.

[67] Ibid., p. 14.

[68] Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

the Eastern Mediterranean, often resists this easy assimilation and thus opens up the possibility of being received as heterogenous counter-discourses.

Focussing on a selection of fictions of the exotic, Jennifer Yee's *Exotic subversions in Nineteenth-century French Fiction* exposes how seemingly exoticising texts contain potential for critiques and resistance to the imperialist project. Yee's nuancing of Said's position relies on close textual analysis and, as well as other critiques of Said, seeks to account for the heterogeneity of literature, even in colonial contexts. In *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing*, Dennis Porter, while recognising the impact of 'discourse theory' on literature, aims to show its 'structural limitations' and what he perceives as a risk of 'cultural solipsism' in a strict interpretation of Said and Foucault. He then uses Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity[69] to explore the space for 'ambivalence and potential for subversion' in colonial discourse.[70] His defence of the essential heterogeneity of language, however, is most strongly based on Roland Barthes and the Russian Formalists postulating, respectively, the ubiquity of language and the 'defamiliarizing' activity of the 'poetic' function.

Surveying the expanding field of travel writing studies, in his introduction to *Travel Writing, Form and Empire: the Poetics and Politics of Mobility*, Paul Smethurst tries to unravel the link between imperial form, ('characterised by the systems of binaries […] which organised (or ideologically constructed) well-fenced, absolute, and universal self-other and same-other oppositions'[71]) and literary form ('in the sense of representational practices').[72] A tension is here revealed between the imperial need for orderliness[73] and the disruptive effect of mobility on both text and power. To understand the 'meaning-making' power of travel writing, he therefore proposes to explore its receptions as well as its formal literary mechanisms. Christine Montalbetti proposes such a formal study in *Le Voyage, le Monde et la bibliothèque* where she deploys an in-depth analysis of intertextual mechanisms in travel writings. She suggests that the obstacle raised by the travel writer's literary baggage ('la bibliothèque') is twofold: the first is 'repetition' ('le risque de la redite'[74]), the second is

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[69] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

[70] Porter, Dennis, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 5.

[71] Paul Smethurst, 'Introduction' in *Travel Writing, Form and Empire: the Poetics and Politics of Mobility*, ed. by Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 5.

[72] Ibid., p. 6.

[73] As Foucault, Said and Pratt have pointed out, this echoes the power at play in organising and controlling the fields of knowledge.

[74] Christine Montalbetti, *Le voyage, le monde et la bibliothèque* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), pp. 54-60.

'modelisation' ('un filtre entre ma plume et le monde'[75]). The traveller's library is in great part filled with classical texts, as Montalbetti shows through the case of the Hellenist Victor Bérard who travelled to Greece to document using photography the geography of the *Odyssey*.[76]. What she calls 'le complexe Victor Bérard' (the confusion by travellers of the essentially different spaces of fiction and reality) demonstrates how the traveller's classical imaginary exposes the fragility of the relationship between world and text(s). On a formal, discursive or historical level, travel writing is a more unstable genre than the Saidian model predicts. This thesis thus follows research that, after Said, has focussed on the diversity and sometimes on the contradictions of dominant orientalist and colonialist discursive productions. It shows the mechanism of one point of instability: what happens when a predictive model ('antiquity is to be found in the Orient') is confronted with a complex material layering of histories. In doing so, it focuses on a period going from 1840 to the first decade of the twentieth century.

Travel writing undergoes exponential growth during the nineteenth century as travel across the Mediterranean develops with easier, faster and wider access to transport: 'en un demi-siècle, le voyage en Orient est devenu rapide, facile, programmable.'[77] As a consequence, the number of travel narratives increases as well, fulfilling an apparently sustained market demand: 'Le mystère a beau avoir été galvaudé, il ne conserve pas moins de prestige auprès du public des Salons ou de la clientèle des librairies. Malgré les inévitables redites que cela suppose, le marché paraît inépuisable.'[78] Any analysis of the genre, even focussed on a limited time period, can never hope to be exhaustive and maybe not even fully representative. However, out of this rich field, a couple of famous texts have reached an exemplary status or can, at least, be credited as having established the literary blueprint of the genre and set a paradigmatic itinerary for subsequent journeys around the Mediterranean: François-René de Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1811) and Alphonse de Lamartine's *Voyage en Orient* (1835).[79] Due to their relative pioneering status as well as the subsequent canonical status of their authors, the *Itinéraire* and the *Voyage* are often considered, already in the nineteenth century, as models of the genre, and explicit or implicit points of

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[75] Ibid., p. 54.

[76] Ibid., pp. 67-73.

[77] Jean Claude Berchet, *Le voyage en Orient: anthologie des voyageurs français dans le Levant au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1985), p.6.

[78] Ibid., p.10.

[79] François-René de Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* in *Œuvres romanesques*, ed. by Maurice Regard, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1969) II; Alphonse de Lamartine, *Voyage en Orient*, ed. by Sarga Moussa (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000).

references and intertexts for later travellers. Without neglecting the foundational role of Chateaubriand and Lamartine, this thesis deliberately focusses on what Behdad calls 'belated travellers', namely from the post-romantic period to the end of the *fin-de-siècle*, corresponding roughly to the second half of the nineteenth century.

I argue that this period is marked by a series of historical transformations that have a direct effect on the travellers' perception of belatedness and the 'anxiety of coming after what had come before' identified by Behdad.[80] Amongst those, we can identify the expansion of tourism, the development of professional archaeology in the 'Orient', and the growth of the Second French colonial empire after the conquest of Algeria in 1830. Crucially, the period sees philhellenism losing traction in France after the Greek War of Independence. The alignment between the idealisation of classical culture and political support for national self-determination that characterised the philhellene movement is succeeded by a more ambivalent image of Greece, one that exposes the discrepancy between the dream of antiquity and the modern country.[81] Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, 'Voyages en Orient' thus often appear marked by anxiety, both personal, as travel writers experience 'belatedness' and fear of repetition, and collective, as Western European claims to classical heritage are complicated by the material presence of antiquity in the 'Orient' and, especially towards the *fin-de-siècle*, narratives of civilisational decline become more prominent.

The authors of this corpus are classically educated and, though they often claim authority on their subject, their work, with a couple of exceptions, cannot be classed as classical scholarship. However, they all display a particular interest for antiquity, its literature and its history and, except maybe Pierre Loti, none of them would have considered himself a 'travel writer'. The most well-known of these texts are Gérard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient*, Pierre Loti's *La Mort de Philae* and Gustave Flaubert's notes and letters from his journey.[82] These represent three different treatments of travel writing as a genre by authors with very different literary sensitivities. Other texts, such as Édouard Schuré's *Sanctuaires d'Orient. Égypte; Grèce; Palestine* and Eugène Melchior de Vogüé's *Syrie, Palestine, Mont Athos: Voyage aux pays du passé*, are less widely studied but are, in many ways, more

[80] Behdad, p. 13.

[81] See Basch.

[82] Gérard de Nerval, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. by Jean Guillaume and Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), II, pp. 171-881; Pierre Loti, *La Mort de Philae* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1908); Gustave Flaubert, *Voyage en Orient* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006); Gustave Flaubert, *Correspondance*, ed. by Jean Bruneau, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), I.

representative of the genre.[83] Although their motivations, and indeed their perspectives, are widely different, both are written by classically educated authors who present their narratives as objective accounts of their journey, destined to provide accurate information about the 'Orient' to their readership back in France. A group of travellers that Berchet, in his anthology of nineteenth-century 'Voyages en Orient', also classifies as travel writers despite the varied nature of their output, are the early members of the French School in Athens (EFA). Founded in 1846, the research institute, the first of its kind in Greece, started hosting young French classical scholars for an average of two years from 1847. The first of these 'Athéniens', as they called themselves, were granted a great degree of time and freedom to travel across Greece in order to inspire their research. The output of these early members has not been studied in depth, despite the remarkable variety of texts that it encompasses (travel narratives, articles, letters, scholarly studies), the interesting combination of scholarly and dilettante work[84] and their arrival in post-independence Greece at a turning point for representations of the country in France. The perceptible differences in the reception of modern and Ancient Greece by this socially homogenous group of travellers provides many insights in tracing the tensions between the ideal and the experience of Greece in the mid-nineteenth century. Finally, the last two texts represent a departure from those that came before, as Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras travel to Greece at the turn of the century, at a time where its place within the geographical space of Western Europe is not contested any longer.[85] Yet, *Anthinéa* and *Le voyage de Sparte* also retain a sense of continuity with the orientalising depictions of Greece that came before them. These journeys, undertaken by early proponents of French nationalist movements, contrast two very different visions of French identity in relation to Ancient Greece and make evident the frequent ideological underpinnings of classical reception in heritage narratives.

Whilst all of these texts evidently encompass a variety of journeys, of genre and of approaches to both travel and classical culture, from little-known scholars to major authors such as Flaubert and Nerval, it can be argued that no fraction of such an enormous existing corpus of texts can be

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[83] Édouard Schuré, *Sanctuaires d'Orient. Égypte; Grèce; Palestine* (Paris: Perrin, 1898); Vicomte Eugène Melchior de Vogüé, *Syrie, Palestine, Mont Athos: Voyage aux pays du passé* (Paris: Eugène Plon, 1876). Some of Vogüé's travel writing can also be found in *Histoires orientales* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1880).

[84] We can contrast for example Edmond About's cynical survey of modern Greece (*La Grèce contemporaine* (Paris: Hachette, 1854)) with Charles-Ernest Beulé's erudite study of the Acropolis monuments (*L'Acropole d'Athènes*, 2 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1853-1854)).

[85] Charles Maurras, *Anthinéa: d'Athènes à Florence* (Paris: Honoré et Edouard Champion, 1912 [1901]); Maurice Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte* in *Romany et Voyages*, ed. by Vital Rambaud (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1994), pp. 379-508.

representative. Indeed, this selection favours authors that are often renowned for works outside of their travel writing. If it were not for his extraordinary literary legacy, it is safe to say that Flaubert's letters and travel notes would not have found their way to posthumous publications, let alone to this thesis (conversely, any reading of these private writings is inevitably done in the light of his subsequent literary production). I am concerned with writers at the more literary end of the spectrum, whose intertextual engagement with ancient literature as well as their awareness of the occasionally formulaic nature of the travel writing genre, produced some of the richest material of this corpus. However, in reality, the majority of travel writers remained not only unknown figures, but primarily wrote non-fiction texts that showcased their scientific, political, social, religious or other interests.

For this reason, what is classified here as 'travel writing' encompasses a wide variety of texts. Maurras' *Anthinéa* and most of the texts by EFA members are made up of articles, none presenting a full account of the journey undertaken. Two posthumous collections of letters are used (one from Eugène Gandar, an EFA scholar, and Flaubert's correspondence), as well as some works that straddle the line between scholarly studies and travel narratives.[86] If some 'Voyages en Orient' are thus never published as a singular narrative, Nerval adds together instalments from two different journeys as well as invented episodes (some previously published in periodicals) to form his *Voyage en Orient*. In short, though many of these works are not 'typical' travel narratives, they demonstrate the extensive boundaries of the genre in the nineteenth century.

Exclusively male, this selection is in many ways representative of the gender imbalance of nineteenth-century travellers. However, many women penned travel narratives to the 'Orient' as attested by the work done, amongst others, by Bénédicte Monicat and more studies are warranted on figures such as Olympe Audouard and Louise Colet.[87] Nevertheless, whilst undoubtedly a rich material for a study of the gender politics of Orientalism, possibly due to most women lacking access to classical education throughout the nineteenth century, travel narratives authored by women appear, in general, less concerned with the reception of antiquity. Conversely, the gender and race of male travellers often makes them feel that they have a personal claim on what the elitist discipline of Classics consists of. In general, despite efforts made to present a global picture of the phenomenon it purports to analyse, this thesis' corpus inevitably reflects its author's subjectivity

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[86] Eugène Gandar, *Lettres et souvenirs d'enseignement* (Paris: Didier, 1869); Ibid., *Homère et la Grèce contemporaine* (Paris: Auguste Durand, 1858).

[87] Bénédicte Monicat, 'Pour une bibliographie des récits de voyages au féminin (XIXe siècle)', *Romantisme*, 77 (1992), pp. 95-100; Bénédicte Monicat *Itinéraires de l'écriture au féminin. Voyageuses du 19e siècle* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996).

and represents more a snapshot than an exhaustive study of travel writing in the nineteenth-century 'Orient'.

This thesis focuses on the reception of classical antiquity in nineteenth-century travel writing in order to demonstrate how travel narratives seek to establish continuities and discontinuities between the ancient world and the contemporary 'Orient', their focus alternating between the material presence of antiquity and its absence throughout the lands they visited.

The first chapter focuses on the layers of history between antiquity and the nineteenth century and the complex temporalities at play. It draws from Butler's 'Deep Classics' to explore the tensions at the heart of the 'jarring juxtaposition of distant past and immediate presence' perceived by travellers in the 'Orient'. It shows how reflections on temporalit(ies) of progress and decline are complicated by material experience of alterity. Wrestling with the dichotomy of modernity and decadence implies dealing with the density of timespan between the present and antiquity; the reception of less explored histories (such as the Byzantine Empire, later antiquity or the Ottoman Empire) is telling of the selectiveness of classical reception and is also analysed here. In the construction of Classics as a French heritage by nationalist authors, a positivist effort was made to draw a linear chain of reception from antiquity to the early twentieth century, in opposition with decadent modernity whose reception of the Classics was often fragmentary and non-linear. This chapter thus analyses the role of Classics in imaginary national genealogies as well as in *fin-de-siècle* narratives of oriental and European decline.

The second chapter focusses on the ruins as a physical *locus* of reception in nineteenth-century travel writing. It shows how travel writers engage with the materiality of the classical domain, at a time when archaeology was undergoing crucial scientific developments. An interest in ruins by travellers does not correlate with an appreciation for archaeology; some writers choose to exalt the aesthetics of ruins 'hors de tout savoir érudit'[88] and criticise professional archaeologists for isolating them from their environment, thus artistically 'sterilising' the sites they work on. This chapter thus investigates resistances to archaeological work on classical ruins as well as the aesthetic reinvestment of the symbolic imagery of the ruins to express epochal anxiety around belatedness and decay.

The third chapter explores the natural pendant to the built remains of the ruins: the study of antiquity through the oriental landscape. It shows the exploration of nature as an alternative to the scientific study of ancient vestiges in order to receive antiquity through the 'Orient'. It shows how

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[88] Alexandre Farnoux, 'Ruines, vestiges et patrimoine' in *La Métamorphose des ruines. L'influence des découvertes archéologiques sur les arts et les lettres (1870-1914)*, ed. by Sophie Basch (Athènes: École Française d'Athènes, 2004), pp. 5- 22 (pp. 17-18).

the natural environment of Greece is constructed in travel writings as 'classical', thus justifying travel writing as an exemplary mode of classical reception. It investigates in particular the aesthetic apprehension of oriental nature by Flaubert as a 'retrouvaille' and his memorialisation of 'Oriental' (particularly Egyptian) landscapes.

The supposed 'continuity of nature' explored in chapter 3 raises questions concerning the racial continuity of Greek and of other oriental peoples and populations. The fourth chapter looks at the racialisation process within classical reception practices. It demonstrates the writers' different motivations in endorsing (dis)continuity narratives in their orientalist discourses. Within orientalist frameworks, oriental women represent specific physical manifestations of both the 'Orient' and the classical past. This chapter thus looks at the role of racialised and sexualised oriental women in Flaubert's and Nerval's classical imaginaries. It postulates that the reception of antiquity and ancient religions in the authors' travel narratives is realised through a specific engagement with oriental women.

The last chapter looks at receptions of antiquity within travel writing which attempt to overcome the materiality of the travel experience. It demonstrates how travel writers engaging in processes of classical reception can bypass the material experience of the 'Orient' altogether, privileging the *literary* 'Orient' over the travelled one or 'literarising' the experiences of the journey in a quest for aesthetic authenticity. As Foucault commented on Flaubert's *Tentation de St Antoine*, 'L'imaginaire se loge entre le livre et la lampe'[89] and many journeys, searching for antiquity in the Oriental land, find nothing more than other texts to build their imaginary chains of receptions upon.

Overall, these chapters add up to provide an account of the continuities and discontinuities between the material and ideal receptions of antiquity in nineteenth-century travel narratives explored in this thesis.

[89] Michel Foucault, *La Bibliothèque fantastique. À propos de* La Tentation de saint Antoine *de Gustave Flaubert* (Bruxelles: La Lettre Volée, 1995), p. 9.

CHAPTER 1 – LAYERING THE PAST

Introduction: why does Modernity care about Antiquity?

Most approaches to classical reception have in common their focus on the unquestionable presence of the past within the present (or within a less distant past, like the nineteenth century), but without always systematically unfolding the long transmission of antiquity[90] or 'directing [their] attention […] towards the time between then and now, the time that made the past "ancient".'[91]

In contrast, for Shane Butler, classical reception, as a practice, proceeds from a constant reckoning with the density of time spent between antiquity and its reception. As he, like Martindale before him, demonstrates, there are no processes of classical reception which allow us to gaze directly at the past; each reception of antiquity is mediated by layers of post-classical discourses.[92] For Joshua Billings, classical reception itself is conditioned by the unreachability of its object:

> [The sigh of Goethe's Iphigenia] is the sigh of an age as it confronts the simultaneous necessity and the impossibility of a relation to Greek antiquity, which finds itself displaced from its notional homeland of antiquity, but equally unable to remember or imagine what that home looked like.[93]

Even though Billings' analysis focuses on 'Weimar' philhellenes, the image conjured here of unreachability as a condition of reception, applies to French romantic and post-romantic authors too. Classics are thus consciously received as regretfully detached from antiquity, although every travel narrative can be read as a tentative attempt to physically (re)cross the gap between past and present.

The material aspects of history and heritage are precisely what is at stake in travellers' quest for their 'notional homeland of antiquity' and this chapter thus highlights how shifting conceptions of time and history determine receptions of antiquity by travellers in the 'Orient'. This chapter will thus explore the complex intersection of modernity and antiquity in nineteenth-century French travel writing, first demonstrating the ways in which authors like Vogüé, or members of the EFA, use geographical displacement in order to experience temporal displacement and highlighting the

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[90] It might be necessary to note here that before 'classical reception', the term often used for enquiries into the legacy of antiquity was 'classical tradition', a locution that emphasises the perceived timelessness of the transmitted classical heritage. See Goldhill, 2010, (p. 58) and Felix Budelmann and Johannes Haubold, 'Reception and Tradition' in *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, ed. by Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), pp. 13-25.

[91] Butler, p. 9.

[92] Butler, pp. 1-3; Martindale, 1993, pp. 2-7.

[93] Joshua Billings, 'The sigh of philhellenism' in *Deep Classics*, ed. by Shane Butler, pp. 49-66 (p. 51).

paradox and the shortfalls of wanting to rediscover classical antiquity in the 'Orient'. This process often results in disappointment as the travelled countries prove resistant to such easy assimilation, themselves undergoing the profound changes wrought by European commercial and colonial expansion. I will then show the consequences faced by these travellers who seek to frame their reception of the classical past in material terms as it implies wrestling with layered traces of post-classical history, notably Byzantine and Ottoman, complicating the established dichotomy of modernity and antiquity. Finally, this chapter explores how some constructions of travellers' relations with the past lead them to receive antiquity via ideologically inflected processes.

As theorised by Martindale, the link between writers and their specific engagement with antiquity can be conceived as a 'chain of reception': 'our current interpretations of ancient texts, whether or not we are aware of it, are, in complex ways, constructed by the chains of receptions through which their continued readability has been effected.'[94] That this 'readability' is historically contingent seems to be a given, but it can also often be partially elective. By placing themselves as privileged receptors of a certain image of antiquity, writers are able to construct ideological narratives of heritage that suit their own purposes. This is particularly remarkable in the case of early twentieth-century nationalist writers Barrès and Maurras who, through their travel in Greece, endeavour to present the modern French nation as the privileged inheritor of a selective Greek past.

A concise definition of what constitutes modernity would go beyond the boundaries of this chapter, or even of this thesis, but it remains undeniable that nineteenth-century European writers, for better or for worse, saw themselves and the societies they lived in engaged in deep transformations leading to irremediable ruptures with the past.

> With the French Revolution and its reverberations, a great modern public abruptly and dramatically comes to life. This public shares the feeling of living in a revolutionary age, an age that generates explosive upheavals in every dimension of personal, social and political life. At the same time, the nineteenth-century modern public can remember what it is like to live, materially and spiritually, in worlds that are not modern at all.[95]

Regardless of whether or not they embraced these changes, when they dated these ruptures or from which pre-modern past they felt alienated, one can argue, as Neville Morley does, that this perception is what indeed makes them modern.

> The defining, unifying feature of modernity […] is the conviction of its own existence and significance; the sense, of those who believe themselves to be modern and to live in

[94] Martindale, *Redeeming the text*, p. 7.

[95] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 17.

> modern times, that this explains the whole of their condition of existence, including their dissatisfaction with the world and with themselves.[96]

Whilst this definition can appear to overlook more specific characteristics of the nineteenth-century Western sense of its own place in history, it highlights the self-conviction inherent in European modernity, that *they* are modern as *others* are not. The central role of antiquity, particularly ancient Greece, the pre-modern Western past *par excellence*, in this historical self-situation is thus firstly to be received as the necessary opposite of modernity:

> Modernity *requires* the study of antiquity for its self-definition: only so can it misrecognize itself in its own image of the past, that of a so-called classical antiquity. Classics performs, we might say, the work of historical remembrance *for* the modern world, ahistoricity being the form in which the present *experiences* its historicity. As a supplement to this historical void, insofar as it bolsters presentism in the guise of furnishing a history, Classics is an active agent in the construction of modern ideologies, which is to say the constitutive illusions of modern cultural life.[97]

Antiquity is constructed by modernity as its own past in a way that allows modernity to both establish a direct link between the classical past and the present but also to draw a line of rupture between them. It is important to underline, however, that only a selective reception of antiquity, the particular aspects of ancient Greece and Rome that are deemed classical, encompasses what modernity decides to remember from the past to build its own self-image as modern.

In parallel to classical antiquity, colonialism is also constitutive of modernity, in as much as it provides Europe with images of non-modernity (or pre-modernity) against which it seeks to define its own historicity. As François Hartog remarks, the *others* of modernity are both geographical and temporal:

> [E]ntre les Anciens et les Modernes, surgit et s'impose un troisième terme: le Sauvage. […] Depuis les premiers récits de la Découverte, le seul face-à-face des Anciens et des Modernes n'est plus tenable. L'affaire se joue désormais à trois: les Anciens, les Modernes *et* les Sauvages.[98]

From this triangle (entirely conceptualised by the 'Modernes' themselves) proceeds in reality a double construction. First the 'Anciens' (here, the authors of classical antiquity) provide cultural frames of reference to define the 'Sauvages' (here, the geographical others of the Orient): 'les

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[96] Neville Morley, *Antiquity and Modernity* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 13.
[97] James I. Porter, pp. 64-65.
[98] François Hartog, *Anciens, Modernes, Sauvages* (Paris: Galaade, 2005), p. 34.

Anciens demeurent […] présents […] comme ceux qui ont, les premiers, décrit des Sauvages et pensé la sauvagerie.'[99] However, at the same time, the geographical others become assimilated to the chronological others as parallels are drawn between these two archetypes of 'non-modernity'. The construct of classical antiquity is thus at the core of the orientalist othering of non-European cultures in nineteenth-century travel narratives (and elsewhere), first as a heritage of 'Western' civilisations self-defining against ('barbarian', 'savage', which is non-Western) others; secondly as a well-documented and studied example of otherness itself. The equivalence drawn between the stability of the ancient past and the pre-modern state of non-Western civilisations is rendered possible by their perceived shared immobility, which contrasts with the rapid changes of modernity.

> The sense that modernity is characterized by an unprecedented degree of upheaval and constant transformation rests on an implicit image of past timelessness and stability; modernity is defined - both by its own internal changeability and by the change from an unchanging past.[100]

The timelessness of both antiquity and the 'Orient' can be contrasted with the movement inherent to the modern European conception of time. This set-up is found in every travel narrative to the 'Orient' where mobility is the prerogative of the Western traveller and immobility and unchangeability are assigned to both travelled countries and people. In his work on *fin-de-siècle* literature of the exotic, Chris Bongie defines the exoticist project in terms that renders explicit its use in resisting nineteenth-century modernity: 'a discursive practice intent on recovering "elsewhere" values "lost" with the modernization of European society'.[101] Indeed, this resistance to modernity and movement can be found within nineteenth-century travel writings themselves, as travellers often lament the rapid disappearance of the 'timeless' and 'exotic' nature of the 'Orient' through the development of modern travel to which they are contributing.

In parallel to Classics, Orientalism occupies a central place in this spatial and temporal matrix of decline. 'From the start, "Semites" [the invented object of European pseudo-knowledge that created a forced grouping together of Arabs, Jews, and other peoples whose languages shared morphological similarities] were conceived as being "decadent", that is, as possessing an essence that would somehow be both unchanging and characterized by a kind of inherent degenerative

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[99] Ibid.

[100] Morley, p. 15.

[101] Chris Bongie, *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siècle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 5.

force.'[102] The entire orientalist discourse rests on a conception of oriental civilisation in perpetual decay, whilst at the same time stuck in an a-historical past, cast away from European modernity.

One way in which nineteenth-century writers react to the experience of 'upheaval and constant transformation' in European society is through a growing embrace, towards the end of the century, of a general diagnostic of decadence. The fear of social and artistic decline and corruption is an old one, but it is given a new life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Antiquity, and ancient Rome in particular, provide the model of what a 'decadent' civilisation was imagined to be in the nineteenth century. The most prominent example was undoubtedly the late Roman Empire, as described by Edward Gibbon in his monumental *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1789). Decadence itself was born as a Roman idea; according to *fin-de-siècle* critic Rémy de Gourmont: 'Comme l'histoire politique des Romains nous a fourni l'idée de décadence historique, l'histoire de leur littérature nous a fourni celle de décadence littéraire.'[103] The idea of decadence was transposed to the late nineteenth-century French literary field first by Théophile Gautier in the 1868 preface of Charles Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, where he justifies his description of the author as 'decadent' by referring to the latter's taste for late Latin literature, such as Petronius or Tertullian.[104] Then, in his *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*, the author and critique Paul Bourget also uses the late Roman Empire and fourth-century BCE Athens as prime examples of societies disintegrating in an explicit comparison with nineteenth-century France: 'l'entente savante du plaisir, le scepticisme délicat, l'énervement des sensations, l'inconstance du dilettantisme, ont été les plaies sociales de l'empire romain, et seront en tout autre cas des plaies sociales destinées à miner le corps tout entier.'[105] Whilst for Bourget these social scourges do not correspond to an equivalent artistic decline, most subsequent definitions of the *fin-de-siècle* phenomenon underline the strong links between the political atmosphere and the literary responses of the time.[106] Decadence can thus be defined as the dark counterpoint of modernity, but one that also draws its model(s) from classical culture and Orientalism. As classical culture provides the framework for modern writers to define, critique and resist modernity, the temporalities of antiquity and its associated decadent imaginary thus occupy a precarious position in representations of the 'Orient' in nineteenth-century travel writings, as both a model and a foil.

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[102] David Fieni, *Decadent Orientalisms: the Decay of Colonial Modernity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020), p. 4.
[103] Rémy de Gourmont, *La culture des idées* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1900), p. 114.
[104] Théophile Gautier, 'Charles Baudelaire' in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868 [1857]), pp. 1-75 (pp. 17-18).
[105] Paul Bourget, *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1883), p. 413.
[106] Eugen Weber, *France, Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Jean de Palacio, *La Décadence: le mot et la chose* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2011), in particular 'Chapitre VII: Politique de la Décadence'.

1.1 Decadence, aporia and regeneration: navigating ancient and modern temporalities

The recurring tension between modernity and decadence in the 'Orient' in travel narratives often results from the avowed expectations of travellers themselves, for whom 'dépaysement' is to be experienced geographically and historically. However, as they witness what they interpret as the disappearance of an 'authentic' exotic other, their texts often present the decadence of the 'Orient' as a possible mirror for the perception of Western decline. Whilst the retreat of the exotic prompts rhetorical uses of *aporia* (etymologically, a lack of passage, an impasse) and fear of the end of travel (and of travel writing), *fin-de-siècle* authors also stage their search for possible regenerations, through political or religious renewal, or an aesthetic embrace of decadent fragmentation.

1.1.1 Voyage aux pays du passé – the past is another country

Published in 1876, Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé's *Syrie, Palestine, Mont Athos: Voyage aux pays du passé*, takes place before the beginning of what is frequently conceived, *stricto sensu*, as the *fin-de-siècle* (the last two decades of the nineteenth century). However, some common themes of the period, for example disenchantment, fragmentation and the end of the exotic, are found in abundance in his travel narrative. Whilst his *Voyage en Orient* represents a minor contribution to the genre, his work is emblematic of the 'belated' mode of oriental journey, and of the complex temporalities at play within efforts to retrieve the ancient past from the alterity of the modern 'Orient'. His later sojourns in Russia, as well as his work on and translations of Russian literature, especially Dostoyevsky, will however constitute a significant contribution to late nineteenth-century literary culture. A cousin of the French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, and a veteran of the Franco-Prussian war, Vogüé travelled as an embassy *attaché* to Constantinople, Syria and Palestine in 1872, to Mount Athos in Greece in 1875 and to Egypt in 1876.

In the title of his book, *Syrie, Palestine, Mont Athos: Voyage aux pays du passé* (first published as a series of articles in *La Revue des deux mondes*), we find a prime example of what Fabian has called the 'denial of coevalness' of anthropological practice:[107]

> The sharing of time […] demands that ethnographers recognize the people whom they study as their coevals. However – and this is where the contradiction arises – when those same ethnographers represent their knowledge in teaching and writing, they do in terms of a discourse that consistently places those who are talked about in a time other that of

[107] Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, 'Les Iles, le Liban, Damas', *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 3, 7 (January 1875), pp. 328-360; 'II. Galilée, Samarie, Judée', *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 3, 8 (February 1875), pp. 521-557; 'III. Jérusalem: Juifs, Musulmans et Chrétiens', *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 3, 10 (April 1875), pp. 519-552; 'Le Mont Athos: un voyage dans le passé', *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 3, 13 (January 1876), pp. 281-317.

> the one who speaks. I called the effect of such strategies a 'denial of coevalness' and qualified the resulting discourse as 'allochronic'.[108]

By titling his travel narrative 'Voyage aux pays du passé', Voguë, like Fabian's anthropologists, establishes an immediate difference of temporality between his auctorial modernity and the antiquity of the travelled countries – and their inhabitants. The prevalence of this distinction between the time of the traveller and the time of the travelled has been analysed by Edward Said as one of the marks of Orientalism and obviously participates in the discursive construction of the 'Orient' by the West as a place stuck in the past.[109]

The competing existences of a (temporarily) shared oriental space between the traveller and the inhabitants, as well as a temporal distance between them, is explicitly set out by Vogüé in his introduction:

> La grande surprise et le grand bienfait de chaque journée de voyage en Orient c'est de nous mettre en contact avec les choses et les hommes d'autrefois, qui se sont à peine modifiés. Il n'est que de parcourir cette terre pour la voir s'éclairer d'une lumière inespérée, pour replacer dans son vrai jour toute cette histoire que la distance, l'ignorance des pays, des races et des mœurs ont si souvent faussée pour nous. Le présent immobile nous fournit la clef du passé, les lieux nous aident à saisir la légende […] Et ce n'est pas sa seule histoire que ce pays éclaire ainsi: l'état de ses sociétés arrêtées reproduit parfois avec une singulière fidélité l'état de nos sociétés occidentales à certaines périodes de leur développement: les mobiles qui les mènent encore et dont nous surprenons le jeu peuvent être attribués sans témérité à nos ancêtres […] La pratique attentive de l'Orient contemporain a confirmé ma foi dans cette formule qui résumera ma pensée: pour l'ensemble de la famille humaine, les phases de l'histoire ne sont pas successives, mais bien plutôt synchroniques.[110]

The programme of discovery in this introduction quickly takes a tone of quasi-scientific enquiry, theorising the 'denial of coevalness' as a history lesson: not every society goes through historical evolution at the same rate and this allows the European visitor to read the 'Orient' through his own Western history, and conversely, to understand his own historical development in the light of a society 'arrêtée' in the past. As argued by Morley, we are modern because we think of ourselves as modern[111], and nineteenth-century 'moderns' conceive of themselves as separate from antiquity,

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[108] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014 [1983]), p. 173.
[109] Said, pp. 230-231.
[110] Vogüé, *Voyage*, pp. ix-x
[111] Morley, p. 13.

divorced from nature[112] (as explored in chapter 3), furthering values of rationality and scientific progress[113] and, importantly if often implicitly, European. Although Morley also documents the attempts to receive a select version of classical antiquity as modern before its time, the past is generally understood as 'the "other", which allowed modernity to define its own contours.'[114] It is for this reason that we can understand the reception of classical antiquity by Vogüé as central to his historicisation of the oriental 'other'. Furthermore, this double alterity (geographical as well as temporal) highlights the paradox in claiming antiquity as a singularly Western heritage. As the shift between 'les choses et les hommes d'autrefois' (understood as belonging to an indefinite pre-modern past) and 'l'état de nos sociétés occidentales à certaines périodes de leur développement' (referring specifically to the Western past) reveals, Vogüé sees oriental societies both as unchanged, eternally ancient, and at the same time, as almost perfect imitations of ancient Western societies. The final remark does not dispel this tension; the very existence of historical phases can only result from a chronological conception of history (whether 'progressive' or 'decadent') that appears at odds with the synchronicity endorsed by Vogüé, where every different type of historical development would cohabit on a global scale in the same moment.

Of course, it is also possible to conclude that rather than 'arrêtées' in the past, Vogüé simply sees these societies as developing at a much slower pace than Europe (and to attribute the use of words such as 'immobiles' or 'arrêtées' to hyperbole). However, I contend that the practice of travel writing itself necessitates a radical immobilisation and circumscription of the travelled territories within temporal and geographical boundaries, as to make both mobility and progress the prerogative of the traveller.

Vogüé thus contrasts his own mobility with the *im*mobility of 'les choses et les hommes' he encounters. The perception of the antiquity of the 'Orient' is reserved, not to those who live there but to those who pass through it. 'Il n'est que de parcourir cette terre pour la voir s'éclairer d'une lumière inespérée', writes Vogüé, associating the literal 'enlightenment' of the country with his passage. His practice of travel illuminates his knowledge of Western history and ancient civilisations (whether these overlap or not) but it also brings to the fore the material reality of the past that he perceives in both objects and people.

Whilst Vogüé asserts in his introduction the century-long permanence of the 'Orient', the rest of his narratives presents a series of destabilising encounters between European modernity and

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[112] See Raymond Williams, 'Ideas of Nature', in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 67-85; Constanze Güthenke, *Placing Modern Greece: The Dynamics of Romantic Hellenism, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 5.

[113] Morley, p. 3.

[114] Ibid., p. 15.

'Oriental' traditional ways of life. In Ephesus, in Asia Minor, sitting in a train, he observes through the window camels being used as a mean of transportation: 'homme et bêtes nous regardent de ce grand regard étonné et résigné commun aux races humaines et animales de l'Orient et semblent se dire avec tristesse: Ceci tuera cela.'[115]

The primary meaning of this scene is the inexorable advance of modernity, replacing traditional ways of living (the railways replacing the camels). But 'ceci tuera cela' is also an emblematic chapter from Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* referring to the advent of the printing press 'killing' architecture at the end of the Middle Ages. In Hugo's chapter we find this elaboration on the revolution represented by Gutenberg's invention:

> Pour détruire la parole écrite il suffit d'une torche et d'un turc. Pour démolir la parole construite, il faut une révolution sociale, une révolution terrestre. Les barbares ont passé sur le Colisée, le déluge peut-être sur les Pyramides.[116]

The fragility of manuscripts (before the reproducibility allowed by printing) is, significantly, threatened by a 'Turc'[117] but the 'barbarians' also destroyed the monuments of ancient Rome. In fact, while Vogüé witnesses what he interprets as the end of the old 'Orient', his thoughts are turned towards his own civilisation's decline (past and present) and the 'Orient' is playing the role of mirror for Western anxieties of decadence. The triangular relation between 'Anciens, Modernes and Sauvages' proposed by Hartog is inverted here as for Hugo it is precisely the destructive 'Modernes' which are equated with the barbarian 'Sauvages', which raises the question of which precise past is Vogüé mourning whilst he watches the train and the camels. Ancient civilisations fell under 'barbarian' invasions and Western presence threatens traditional oriental way of life; implicitly, the 'Orient' is once again paralleled with classical antiquity, but this time the status of Western modernity is ambiguously cast as both a barbarian other and a decadent destroyer of its own heritage.

The 'révolution sociale' prophesised by Hugo is here the epochal transition of the European Renaissance, but the radical change of paradigm described anticipates *fin-de-siècle* decadence. With this perspective in mind, the civilisational change hereby foreseen is not a decadent one but the birth of a new era; the historical narrative might indeed be cyclical rather than declining. The comparison also implies that Western supremacy in the 'Orient' and beyond might be only

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[115] Vogüé, *Voyage*, p. 8-9.

[116] Victor Hugo, *Notre Dame de Paris*, ed. by Yves Gohin and Jacques Seebacher (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 182.

[117] That might be a reference to the fire in the Great Library in Alexandria. In any case, the adjective is used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to denote barbarian cruelty. 'Turc' in *Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé* (Nancy: CNRS) <http://atilf.atilf.fr/frantext.htm>

temporary and relative, as Vogüé sees in his own civilisation only the 'arts dégénérés' of a group of 'sociétés énervées'[118] failing to live up to their higher principles: 'progrès et dégénérescence de l'humanité, vérité relative ou absolue de ses conceptions successives, problèmes dont chaque génération s'épuise désespérément à chercher le mot et qu'elle emporte en derniers recours au tombeau'.[119]

The phrase 'arts dégénérés' is here inserted in a typically decadent conception of the dynamics of progress and decay, repeating itself immutably since time immemorial.[120] The decadence of the *fin-de-siècle*, whether in Europe or in the 'Orient', is only one iteration of this cycle. Vogüé showcases here the recurring tension in his narrative between the appearance of antique immobility of the 'Orient' and the visible progression of modernity and also highlights the difficult conceptualisation of modernity and history by travellers in the alterity of the 'Orient'. The visible disappearance of the past they witness challenges their conception of the 'Orient' as ahistorical, but it also casts doubt on the possibility of recovering classical antiquity through their journey.

1.1.2 Topos of the disappearing Orient

The disappearance of the 'real' 'Orient' evoked here is caused by its perceived alignment with European, that is 'modern', ways of life. As seen previously, the threat of modernisation for the traveller is the loss of a link both to the alterity of the travelled land, the erasure of its exotic features, and to an antique past, preserved for centuries by the a-historicity of the 'Orient'. However, the second half of the nineteenth century displays in reality an anxious intensification of a very old *topos*: the disappearance of an authentic, unchanged, travelled 'other' space (whether the emphasis is on the alterity of landscape, people or the society) is leading to an *aporia* for travel writing. This idea is consubstantial with Bongie's (and other) definition of the exotic, whose character is to always appear out of reach, always located somewhere *else*.

By the time of Vogüé's journey, 'The initial optimism of the exoticist project gives way, in the last decades of the century, to a pessimistic vision in which the exotic becomes less a space of possibility than one of impossibility'.[121] Exoticism as a discursive practice and an aesthetic category was also presented in the *fin de siècle* as declining, the radical alterity of the 'exotic' other having been gradually reduced in an increasingly globalised world. 'By the end of the nineteenth century the exotic was

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[118] Vogüé, *Voyage*, p. 67.

[119] Vogüé, *Voyage*, p. 68.

[120] The Nazis famously reused this phrase to justify their destruction of modern art. They most likely took the concept from Max Nordau, a (Jewish) critique of decadence. Vogüé's text predates Nordau's *Entartung* (1892) but both are clearly prime examples of fin-de-siècle declinist thought.

[121] Bongie, p. 17.

seen as being in irreversible retreat, and, when it was not ironic, exoticism operated in the mode of loss or nostalgia'.[122] The natural prolongation of the *fin de siècle* for the traveller is thus the idea of a *fin des voyages*, the end of the age of exploration where blank spots have all but disappeared from the map.[123] Behdad thus emphasises the impression of belatedness in travel writing to the Mediterranean from this epoch: 'The orientalists of this period undertook an exoticist project marked by an anxiety of coming after what had come before'.[124] This feeling naturally ties in with the omnipresent *fin de siècle* anxiety about endings.[125] However, some of these performances of 'belatedness' take place within an older *topos* of travel writing in the nineteenth century, which almost systematically includes reflections on the theme of the advancement of modernity and a gap between travellers' expectations and experiences. As previously seen, the ancient past can be received as 'other' in the same way as the 'Orient', and as unreachable; or, as Gilles de Van puts it, the 'exotic' can be chronological as well as geographical.

> Exoticism is generally defined as the attraction for a civilisation – manners, climate, social behaviour, clothing – foreign to our own, far from us in time or space; geographic exoticism should not cause us to ignore the chronological variety.[126]

The remoteness of antiquity and the 'Orient' are what renders them both exotic and thus either unreachable or absent from the visited countries. The feared *aporia* of travel writing comes as a consequence of the breaching of the gap (cultural as much, if not more than, geographical) between the travellers and the travelled land since it threatens the literary construction of the exotic, which rests upon a balance of distance and material experience. For travel writers such as Vogüé, Schuré or Pierre Loti, the end of the nineteenth century thus forces a confrontation with the retreat of the uncharted travel territory due to both proto-mass tourism and colonialism and a growing canon of travel literature which threatens the genre with possible saturation.

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[122] Jennifer Yee, 'Exoticism and Colonialism.' in *The Cambridge Companion to French Literature*, ed. by John D. Lyons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 151-167 (p. 159).

[123] See the 'Introduction' of the volume on nineteenth-century travel edited by Tim Youngs in 2006, which although focussing on British travellers, picked an eloquent title: *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces* (London: Anthem Press).

[124] Behdad, p. 13.

[125] 'The sense of a struggle against declining diversity is perhaps accentuated by the range of terms with which *fin de siècle* is associated: *fin de race*, *fin du monde*, *fin de règne*, *fin de globe*, *fin des voyages*. The myth of a *fin des voyages*, which haunts literature of the nineteenth century […] is accordingly an integral element of the aesthetics of *fin-de-siècle* France.' Charles Forsdick, 'Exoticism in the *Fin de Siècle*: Symptoms of Decline, Signs of Recovery', *Romance Studies*, 18, 1 (2000), 31-44 (p. 38).

[126] Gilles de Van, 'Fin de Siècle Exoticism and the Meaning of the Far Away', *The Opera Quarterly*, 11, 3, 1995, pp. 77–94 (p. 77). Translation by William Ashbrook.

> Authors seeking to publish accounts of popular, easily accessible destinations now faced a very crowded marketplace. Regions like Italy – long revered for its classical and Renaissance associations, and in the eighteenth-century the main focus for the Grand Tour – had been exhaustively described by previous travellers, and were also the primary sites targeted by the new guidebooks. Much nineteenth-century travel writing is consequently haunted by a sense of belatedness, of travelling in the footsteps of earlier, more illustrious travellers.[127]

From that, travel writing should have naturally reached an *aporia* with the end of possible journeys of discovery and the disappearance of exotic sights, due to increased Western cultural influence all around the world and an accumulation of textual productions that rendered remote places too familiar.

Late-nineteenth-century travellers hence often end up recording what they perceive as the disappearance of the authentic 'Orient' and thus of its lineage with classical history. Édouard Schuré, a late-nineteenth century author and musicologist who became a follower of the Theosophical Society, had already written a book, *Les Grands Initiés* (1889), allegedly describin the esoteric knowledge common to all ancient religions and spiritual traditions. As he travelled to Egypt, Palestine and Greece in 1893, specifically seeking to uncover the ancient oriental sources of his syncretic spirituality, he appears disillusioned by the dancing he witnesses on his first night in Cairo.

> J'éprouvais une stupeur mêlée de pitié devant cette désagrégation de la personne humaine par un retour voulu à l'animalité. O Terspichore, pensais-je […] Les hommes ont-ils pu te travestir et te ravaler à ce point? Je ne parle pas de ce que tu fus dans certains sanctuaires égyptiens, hindous et grecs, où l'on sut t'amener à l'expression des sentiments les plus sublimes par un genre d'extase religieuse et un art aujourd'hui perdu […] Pauvres almées, qu'êtes-vous devenues? Ce n'est pas ainsi, j'en suis sûr, que vous dansiez devant les Ramsès ou les Saladin.[128]

The modern dancer is depicted by Schuré as betraying the noble and antique history of her discipline ('ce n'est pas ainsi que vous dansiez devant les Ramsès ou les Saladin'), its spiritual greatness ('tu fus l'expression des sentiments les plus sublimes par un genre d'extase religieuse'), and her humanity even ('désagrégation de la personne humaine par un retour voulu à l'animalité'). Beyond the degrading racialised language of this tirade, comparing the dancer to a dehumanised

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[127] Carl Thompson, 'Nineteenth-Century Travel Writing', in *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, ed. by Nandini Das and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 108-124 (pp. 120-121).
[128] Schuré, *Sanctuaires d'Orient*, p. 26.

animal, it is notable that Schuré addresses his lamentation to the Greek muse of dancing, deploring at the same time the historical and the spiritual decadence of the ancient art, 'aujourd'hui perdu'. The degradation felt by Schuré in this spectacle is echoed in an encounter with an old rabbi for whom the dancer's movements represent the physical decomposition of spirituality.

> Non – pas de liens – tous séparés – tous ennemis – les fils de Sem – pour toujours – tous étrangers, les fils d'Adam. […] Oui, c'est le châtiment! – Regarde-la bien, la ghawazzi. – Vois-tu remuer la tête, la poitrine et le corps, chacun pour soi, comme les tronçons d'un serpent coupé en trois? […] Et quand l'Âme humaine sera morte aussi, la servante de Satan deviendra serpent à son tour. – Voilà ce qu'est devenue Héva la divine entre vos mains. Vous en avez fait Lilith! – Et c'est l'image de votre vie: vous avez tué l'esprit avec la matière d'en bas.[129]

The disarticulated movements of the dancer mirror the atomisation at the core of decadent aesthetic but are looked on with horror by both Schuré and the spiritual authority of the rabbi as the image of the rupture between the faiths as the 'fils de Sem' and the 'fils d'Adam' are condemned to remain 'tous séparés – tous ennemis'.[130] The dancer is compared to Lilith (according to certain biblical traditions, the first woman created at the same time than Adam), here likened to a degraded Eve (Héva), the image of a 'fallen' woman, condemned for her sexuality. Whilst there exist lots of traditions around the figure of Lilith, one of their common trait is an emphasis on her incapacity (or refusal) of giving Adam's children, sometimes going as far as painting her as a child-killing demon. The imprecation of the rabbi against an Eve turned into a Lilith thus implies a threat of human sterility as a punishment for women's sexuality. The old man's malediction announces the failure not only of Schuré's syncretic project but also of any possibility of recovering the classical antiquity of Terpsichore in the Orient.

1.1.3 Apocalypse and redemption: overcoming the aporia

Travelling through Egypt in 1907, Pierre Loti appears to witness the same physical disintegration of the Ancient past as he writes after his visit to the Serapeum of Saqqara (a necropolis near Memphis, in Egypt).

> C'est peut-être cela, du reste, qui est la plus terrifiante de toutes nos notions positives: savoir qu'il y aura un dernier de tout ; non seulement un dernier temple, un dernier prêtre,

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[129] Ibid., p. 30.

[130] See Bourget: 'Un style de décadence est celui où l'unité du livre se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la page, où la page se décompose, pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la phrase, et la phrase pour laisser la place à l'indépendance du mot.', p. 25.

> mais aussi une dernière naissance d'enfant humain, un dernier lever de soleil, un dernier jour.[131]

Fin-de-siècle anxiety might be expressed in a more elegiac mode by Loti than by Schuré (whose writing conveys more horror than nostalgia), but the sentiment provoked by the spectacle of decay is the same: a general, though ambiguously targeted, fear of decadence. Loti's enumeration of elements that will be the last of their kind, from the crumbling temple of his narrative's title to the last day of the Earth makes explicit the pseudo-apocalyptical tone of many *fin-de-siècle* travel narratives.

Amongst the ruins of Ephesus, Vogüé's own reflection on the fall of human civilisations turns biblical.

> [M]agnifiques témoins d'une civilisation morte, moins attachants pour moi néanmoins que ces champs de pierres pulvérisées où il ne reste pas un bloc entier; voilà l'éloquent commentaire des menaces bibliques que nous retrouverons à chacune de nos étapes dans le vieux monde: 'Il ne restera pas pierre sur pierre'.[132]

In the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, Jesus uses this phrase ('There shall not be left here one stone upon another') to talk about the advent of the Apocalypse and the second coming. As in the excerpt from *Notre-Dame de Paris*, he does not actually predict the end of the world but rather the ultimate redemption of humanity. This promise of regeneration bestows more charm on entirely destroyed stones than on better preserved vestiges, that are only a 'pature d'archéologue'. The atomised fragments of ancient stones are symbolically more eloquent than more complete and identifiable traces of ancient lives. For Vogüé as for Loti, in the midst of the epochal anxiety and the constant motif of the ruins, there is a creative and regenerating possibility to their experience of belatedness and classical absence. The underlying resistance to the narratives of immobility and decadence set in their text bring about a creative return to historical causality, whether through the cyclical and biblical motive of Vogüé, or through an aspiration to political change in the 'Orient', as is the case with Loti.

Loti's political inclinations were motivated by his visit to Egypt, where he was invited in 1907 by Mustafa Kamil Pasha, an Egyptian nationalist journalist and activist, to whom he dedicates the book (Kamil died between Loti's journey and the publication of the text in a volume, although articles were published in *Le Figaro* and in *L'Étendard*, the francophone version of *Al Liwa*, Kamil's

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[131] Loti, p. 100.

[132] Vogüé, *Voyage*, p. 11.

Cairo-based newspaper). *La Mort de Philae*, Loti's narrative of his Egyptian journey, is thus dedicated to Kamil.

> A la mémoire de mon noble et cher ami
>
> Moustafa Kamel Pacha
>
> qui succomba le 10 février 1908 à l'admirable tâche de relever en Égypte la dignité de la Patrie et de l'Islam.[133]

'Relever en Égypte la dignité de la Patrie et de l'Islam' was Kamil's political programme, wholeheartedly endorsed here by Loti. Indeed, the Egyptian 'patrie' and Islam are inherently bound together, and in his visit to Al Anzhar mosque (and university) in Cairo with Kamil, Loti seizes the opportunity to expose in greater detail his version of the history of the country. In opposition to an established attitude of French travellers who depict Islam as a backward tradition (starting with Chateaubriand), Loti refuses to impute to it the decline of Egypt. According to him, early Islam actually 'évoluait et progressait avec les races'[134] and has accompanied and encouraged the progress of Middle Eastern civilisations. The stagnation (or immobility) of the preceding centuries is here understood as a period of peaceful and ageless wisdom. However, an 'awakening' has become inevitable and Islam, after having survived as a timeless repository of wisdom and history, has to modernise to become a force of resistance (against the other invasive form of modernity, that of the British and Europe). In that sense, the distinction between history and tradition on one side and modernity on the other is both exacerbated and blurred: exacerbated because the opposition is set up between a traditional Egyptian way of life and the brutal forces of British modernising colonialism, blurred as the resistance to this same colonialism by Egyptian activists such as Kamil bases its own ideology on modern ideas of nationhood, and professes to aim to modernise both Islam and Egyptian society.

This tension is embodied by the description of Kamil in the Al Anzhar mosque by Loti

> Oh! combien alors mon ami Moustafa, que j'ai vu si Français en France, nous apparaît tout à coup musulman jusqu'au fond de l'âme. Du reste, il en est ainsi de la plupart des Orientaux qui, rencontrés chez nous, semblent les plus parisianisés: leur modernisme n'est qu'à la surface; en eux-mêmes, tout au fond, l'Islam demeure intact.[135]

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[133] Loti, p. XIII.
[134] Ibid., p. 83
[135] Loti, p. 75.

Despite the opposition drawn here between Kamil's surface of progressivism and his deeply held religious faith, the reality, as demonstrated by Sarga Moussa in his article on Loti and Kamil, is that the Egyptian activist is not opposing all facets of modernity, or even the Western world, and that his claim for an 'autonomous Egypt' within the Ottoman empire draws a lot, at least rhetorically, from earlier European 'nationalist' movements.[136] Similar to most nationalist movements, a '(re)invention of tradition' is central to Kamil's autonomist claim.[137] Positioning Egypt against the Western narrative of decline, he draws from national religious and cultural customs to advocate reformist policies. The distinction between an inevitably European modernity, which would have a superficial hold on Kamils' character, and his innermost identity as a Muslim 'jusqu'au fond de l'âme', is built up by Loti himself, and draws more from his admiration for what he perceives as the immutable spiritual tradition of Islam.

The underlying resistance to the narratives of immobility and decadence set in the text bring about a creative return to historical causality, here through an aspiration to political change in the 'Orient'. These movements throw a complex light on the reciprocal perceptions of and aspirations towards modernity and decadence, by Europeans and Egyptians alike. As David Fieni puts it: 'the Arabic writers understand themselves as truly "decadent", and aim at Western-inspired progress, while the French decadents feel overwhelmed by progress, and aim at Oriental decadence.'[138]

Even if he discreetly recognises the political necessity of the reforms supported by Kamil, preferring the posture of a traveller in a disappearing land, Loti constantly deplores what he perceives as a loss of spirituality in the inevitable modernisation of Islam. He thus offers a vision of Islam on the verge of losing its timeless charm in a modernisation process, reactivating the announced aporia of travel, hastened by the retreat of the radical otherness which characterised the Islamic world in nineteenth-century orientalist writing.

This tension between the troubling attraction of a declining spiritual tradition and the potential political force of an active religious community is also perceived, albeit in very different circumstances, by Vogüé visiting the orthodox fraternities of Mount Athos in Greece. For most of the chapter, the traveller describes the monks as a community fixed in time, both immobile and decadent. 'Ces vieillards ont huit cents ans, le double peut-être' and their 'pensée' is "assoupie" in an 'immuable sommeil', their 'langue morte, faite de debris hellènes et byzantins.'[139] However,

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[136] Sarga Moussa, '"Relever en Egypte la dignité de la Patrie et de l'Islam". Pierre Loti et Moustapha Kamel, autour de *La Mort de Philae*.' in *Les Orientaux face aux orientalismes*, ed. by Ridha Boulaâbi (Paris: Geuthner, 2013), pp. 67-85.

[137] The Invention of Tradition, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1983]).

[138] Fieni, p. 13.

[139] Vogüé, *Voyage*, p. 274 & p. 285.

despite predicting a slow but inexorable decline for the 'sterile' ways of the Greek monks, Vogüé is struck by the vitality of the Slavic and Russian monasteries. The products of 'une race vierge et neuve', Russian monks display a zealous Christian faith.[140] Their religious mode is ancient too, but unlike their Greek counterparts, it is a productive one as even if their Christian practices are judged archaic by the French visitor, they have kept a vigorous evangelical strain and their communities are growing year after year. Vogüé sees in them the direct images of medieval apostles, energetically spreading the gospel across the world. They live 'en plein moyen âge, mais au moyen âge barbare et occidental'[141]; unlike the Greeks, implicitly condemned as 'oriental' hybrids, unfit for religious mysticism and sublimation, the 'Slavs' are Westerners, capable of historical progress and compared here to figures such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Arnaud of Brescia. Both Catholic thinkers were for Vogüé promoters of an 'apostolat politique', which is of religion as a force for social and governmental reform, not unlike the use of Islam by Moustafa Kamil. In Athos like in Cairo, religious fervour offers a visible counterpoint to 'end of history' narratives.

However, this political revitalisation of spiritual beliefs and practices contains both a Western inspiration (the 'Orient's political revival comes from imitating European nationalisms for Loti, and from emulating European medieval religious apostolate for Vogüé) and an element of loss and mourning (for Loti, Islam will lose its poetic beauty in its process of reform; Vogüé after praising the vitality of the Russian clergy, witnesses the burial of a Greek priest and shifts his tone to wonder if death is not theologically superior to any gain of temporal power).

Travellers appear torn between a modernising impulse and the aesthetic appeal of a delayed form of Romanticism, as visible in Vogüé last impressions of Athos.

> Sur cette nature si riche et si vigoureuse, mais frappée de stérilité, un voile de deuil s'étend insensiblement, l'œil voit noir, la nausée vient au cœur à respirer les fades aromes de l'embaumement […] tout nous sembler suinter la tristesse, jusqu'au laurier-rose amaigri, ennuyé, qui détachait ses fleurs souffreteuses sur le mur gris du couvent.[142]

This description highlights the aesthetic appeal of decay and decomposition, even as they signify spiritual and physical death, that are characteristics of dark romanticism.[143] Both Loti and Vogüé exemplifies the double nostalgia of *fin-de-siècle* delayed romanticism, mourning the loss of pre-modern societies, but also the ephemeral beauty of their decadence.

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[140] Ibid., p. 324.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid., p. 331.
[143] Mario Praz, *La Chair, la mort et le diable: Le romantisme noir*, trans. by Constance Thompson (Paris: Denoël, 1977).

For both Vogüé and Loti, the dialectics of immobility and movement underpin an idea of progress marked by irremediable losses. These losses are central to understanding the recurrent dynamics of the reception of history and the ancient past. History progresses by abandoning ancient truths, whose remains subsist morally and materially in the 'Orient', but always in an incomplete manner. Mobility and progress, the tenets of 'Europeanisation', lead to destruction; the orientalist ways of living, immobile and a-historicist, lead to sclerosis and decay. Seeking to delay the decadent *aporia* of travel writing, Loti and Vogüé paint contrasting pictures of the 'Orient's' possibilities for regeneration, at once glimpsed in nationalist or religious evangelism, but immediately mourned as inducing the inevitable loss of the ancient and exotic oriental dream.

1.2 Un-layering classical and post-classical history

Wrestling with the dichotomy of modernity and decadence in the 'Orient' involves repeated confrontation with the density of timespan between the present and antiquity, with the layers of history that stands between the observer and the remains of the ancient past. For nineteenth-century travel writers in search of the ideal past of antiquity, the material presence of a postclassical history in the 'Orient' – Byzantine, then Ottoman, – has to be reckoned with. As Butler points out, staring at the past (of what remains of it) is always to stare at the many layers of 'time between then and now, the time that made that past "ancient"'.[144] If it is evident that postclassical history is what shaped and continues to transform what is understood as 'classical antiquity', the conscious embrace or rejection of certain historical heritages within a selective 'chain of reception'[145] is guided by each writer's particular positioning, by their willingness to claim or disavow specific layers of reception as their own.

1.2.1 Islam and Ottoman Greece

Schuré, who goes to Egypt with the avowed aim of finding traces of pharaonic religions, does not delude himself on their actual survival: 'Depuis des siècles, les sanctuaires d'Orient sont les uns déserts, les autres muets'.[146] Nevertheless, when he arrives in Cairo, he is surprised to encounter a very active spiritual tradition, Islam (which he had neglected to cover in his previous esoteric treatise).[147] Despite its supposed 'infériorité intellectuelle et spirituelle', he decides to nonetheless

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[144] Butler, p. 9.
[145] Martindale, *Redeeming the text*, p. 7.
[146] Schuré, *Sanctuaires d'Orient*, p. 4
[147] Schuré, *Les Grands Initiés: esquisse de l'histoire secrète des religions* (Paris: Perrin, 1889).

devote his first chapter to it: 'Je me convainquis que l'Islam est un rameau d'Israël qu'on ne saurait supprimer dans la hiérarchie et dans la future synthèse ethnique.'[148]

His syncretic project compels him to incorporate each religious manifestation into the spiritual synthesis he is aspiring to. However, whilst admiring the mosques he visits in Cairo (and encouraging Europeans to better recognise the political and spiritual importance of Islam in modern 'Orient'), he faults their relation to the divine as abstract and brutal:

> Dans la mosquée de Sultan Hassan, l'art, parvenu à son apogée, exprime ce principe dans toute sa puissance. Cette cour figure une tente de pierre à quatre compartiments, ouverte au somment. Le grand jour y tombe à flots, en fortes ombres, en larges pans de lumière. Cette disposition révèle d'un seul coup la grandeur et la nudité de l'Islam en son monothéisme farouche et intransigeant.[149]

The architecture of the medieval edifice is evidently impressive, but Schuré also underlines how the luminous building is representative of a religion that he perceives as both powerful and rigid. This parallel reinforces the old trope of Islam as a 'fanatical' religion, as he characterises it as 'farouche et intransigeant', in particular contrasted with Christianity.[150]

> Ce qui frappe dans la nef chrétienne et gothique, c'est le demi-jour de ses arceaux, qui prépare l'âme à l'initiation d'un profond mystère. […] cette conception triple du Verbe divin, hiératiquement formulée par l'Égypte ancienne, humanisée, popularisée et comme attendrie par le christianisme, contient aussi, pour qui sait la comprendre et l'interpréter dans son sens universel, les principes supérieurs de la science, les rayons souverains de l'art et de la vie.
>
> Ici, rien de pareil. Dieu impénétrable et absolu comme la lumière blanche et crue, sans réfraction prismatique. Il manque donc au mahométisme la transition de l'infini au fini, la traduction du divin par l'humain.[151]

Islam is judged inferior to Christianity in its disconnection of the divine from the human shown in the contrast between the 'fortes ombres' and 'larges pans de lumières' of the mosque and the 'demi-jour' of the church nave. For Schuré the mystery of Christianity (to which an initiation is possible) is preferable to the perceived absolute detached truth of Islam (keeping God 'impénétrable') which,

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[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid., p. 54.

[150] Ann Thomson, 'L'Empire ottoman, symbole du despotisme oriental?' in *Rêver d'Orient, connaître l'Orient : Visions de l'Orient dans l'art et la littérature britanniques*, ed. by Isabelle Gadoin and Marie-Élise Palmier-Chatelain (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2008), pp. 177-196.

[151] Schuré, *Sanctuaires d'Orient*, p. 54-55.

by excluding the possibility of a revealed truth (what he terms 'la traduction du divin par l'humain'), runs contrary to Schuré's narrative of travel through the 'Orient' as an initiatory journey towards the syncretic revelation. More significantly, he proclaims a spiritual heredity between Ancient Egypt and the Christian faith that bypasses Islam, once again electing the Western world as the privileged recipient of antiquity.

The historical place of Islam in post-independence Greece differs considerably from its spiritual weight in late-nineteenth-century Egypt, but the impression that Ottoman and Arab influences represent a stumbling block for the travellers' access to each country's more authentic heritage (pharaonic Egypt or classical Greece) remains. This disappointment is palpable in the writings of the first members of the EFA, founded in 1846 as 'une École française de perfectionnement pour l'étude de la langue, de l'histoire et des antiquités grecques à Athènes'.[152] This wide-ranging but vague programme identifies three areas for study: language and history, but also the material remains of antiquity. Crucially, neither the royal decree, nor the first programmes of the school specify how these studies should be organised.

The 'perfectionnement' indicates that the school is open to scholars who have completed the early stages of their higher education. Accordingly, the first cohort was constituted of seven *agrégés* of Philosophy, History and Classical Literature, of whom none were trained in archaeology (a discipline which would only become the main focus of the School from the 1870s onwards as we will see in chapter 2).[153] The educational benefits expected from their journeys in Greece are closer to those of the eighteenth-century 'Grand Tour' than of modern scholars.[154] In reality, what is hoped is that the contact with the 'antiquités' will enrich research on the other subjects (Greek language and history). They are tasked with studying the country, its nature and its monuments, to bring back impressions that will enrich their work and their teaching back in France. Despite not undertaking preparatory study in archaeology or modern Greek, the confrontation of their classical training with the modern country is deemed sufficient to foster intellectual productivity.

After the philhellene enthusiasm of the 1820s, the cultural status of Greece in Western Europe becomes more ambiguous as the Independence War ends. Sophie Basch notes the disappointment of French authors discovering post-independence Greece:

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[152] Ordonnance de fondation, art. 1 (11 September 1846), quoted in Georges Radet, *L'histoire et l'œuvre de l'École Française d'Athènes* (Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1901), pp. 423-424.

[153] The 'agrégation des classes supérieures' is the former name of the 'agrégation de lettres', which in 1959 became the 'agrégation de lettres classiques' when the 'agrégation de lettres modernes' was introduced. (André Chervel, *Histoire de l'Agrégation, contribution à l'histoire de la culture scolaire* (Paris: I.N.R.P., Kimé, 1993).

[154] This intellectual dilettantism allows Gustave Flaubert to ironically exclaim, in his notes from Athens: 'Ces messieurs sont ici payés par le Gouvernement pour retremper les lettres aux pures sources de l'antique!' (*Voyage*, p. 435).

> 'le désappointement provoqué par la découverte d'un pays portant encore bien des marques de la domination ottomane là où on s'attendait à retrouver les sources de la culture occidentale […] il devient vite notoire que la Grèce n'a pas tenu ses promesses.'[155]

Journeys to Greece were expected to justify philhellenes' sentiments and to concur with their gratitude for the 'sources' of Western culture. When these sources appear to have dried up, travellers find themselves uncomfortable praising a country that remains too 'oriental' in their eyes. The ancient glory of the country is not sufficient any longer to form the basis of a national identity, as too much of Greece's history and territory appear so completely foreign to Western sensitivities. Eugène Gandar, one of the School's first students, writing to his brother, can thus declare Greece to be 'Un pays qui ne doit qu'au culte de l'Europe pour son antique gloire son existence et sa liberté'.[156] Western Europe supported Greece in its struggle for independence, hoping that out of the Ottoman Empire would emerge an imagined nation, both classical and Christian, namely fully Europeanised. There is a constant disappointment in finding Greece too orientalised, having kept too visible traces of Ottoman culture, but also traces of the Byzantine period. The only acceptable model of Greek society is the antique one, the Byzantine period often being overlooked by travellers. Modern Greece is thus a European creation which fails to perform the classically inspired version of its identity travellers expect.

This failure is systematically attributed to the historical layers standing between the present time and antiquity. In other words, the decadence of Greece is blamed on the Byzantine rule and above all, on the Ottoman occupation: 'L'état misérable où la plupart de ces îles sont aujourd'hui tombées est le résultat de deux mille ans de désastres, de ravages, de calamités sans nom, et surtout de la domination des Turcs'[157], writes Charles Benoit about the Cyclades island in his *mémoire* about Milos. His assessment of Attica is not dissimilar: '[…] le paysage de la plaine d'Athènes n'avait rien de frais et de riant […] nous ne pouvions pas croire que l'Attique eût toujours été poudreuse et désolée, comme la guerre et une longue barbarie l'ont faite aujourd'hui.'[158] The 'état miserable' is ambiguously that of both the inhabitants and the physical territory of the islands and is blamed on two thousand years of 'désastres', situating the beginning of decline already with the Roman domination. However, the Greek landscape bears primarily traces of the Ottoman rule (the 'longue

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[155] Basch, *Le Mirage grec*, p.31.

[156] Gandar, *Lettres et souvenirs*, p.358

[157] Charles Benoit, 'Une excursion scientifique dans l'île de Milo' in *Mémoires lus à la Sorbonne dans les séances extraordinaires du comité impérial des travaux historiques et des sociétés saventes tenues les 23, 24, 25 et 26 avril 1867: Histoire, philologie et sciences morales* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1868), pp. 43-56 (p.44-45).

[158] Charles Benoit, 'La Grèce ancienne étudiée dans la Grèce moderne', *Annales de l'Est*, 6 (1892), 505-538 (p.508).

barbarie' alluded to here), made visible by the lack of resemblance of Attica to the descriptions of the ancient plain.

The primary visible impact of Ottoman domination is on the degradation of monuments, denounced here by Charles Lévêque:

> [I]l est permis d'affirmer que la seule présence des musulmans a été un malheur pour l'architecture antique. Leur contact l'a gâtée, salie, déshonorée. […] De plus, le culte des mahométans leur a inspiré des additions et des arrangemens[159] qui sont autant d'insultes à Ictinus et à ses œuvres. […] qui croira que des êtres raisonnables aient eu la pensée de placer un minaret sur le toit du Parthénon? […] Les Turcs ne s'en sont pas tenus malheureusement à ces dégradations déjà si regrettables. Ces monumens grecs maltraités par leurs mains ignorantes, ils n'ont pas su les défendre pendant la guerre contre les boulets de l'ennemi, pendant la paix contre des convoitises audacieuses qui visaient, non à les posséder pour eux-mêmes, mais à en faire trafic et marchandise.[160]

The language of desecration ('salie, déshonorée') applied to ancient monuments goes further than physical damage and implies a degree of moral degradation, which is attributed directly to the Muslim faith and its practices (Levêque does not mention that the Parthenon was previously used as a Christian church for at least four centuries and that the Turkish minaret was initially built as a church tower). Not only did the Ottomans damage ancient monuments, according to Lévêque, they also reused them, modified them for their use, failed to protect them and sold them away. They were unworthy of this valuable heritage, despite the fact that the practice of *spolia* (the reuse of older architectural elements in new constructions), for example, was extremely widespread all across the post Roman world from the late antiquity to the Renaissance.[161]

The Ottoman impact on Greek landscape is not limited to the ancient ruins; it affects nature itself as Benoit's description of Athens' plain as 'poudreuse et désolée' shows. Almost twenty years after the end of the Independence War, Greece has kept, at first sight, physical traces of desolation and the disappearance of ancient landscapes, that are more often than not attributed to the Ottoman occupation, rather than to the natural passage of time. Indeed, Levêque's comments are in line with early-nineteenth-century philhellenes' ideology which supported Greece's independence struggle,

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[159] This archaic spelling was eliminated by the 1835 spelling reform but was retained by *La Revue de Deux-Mondes* until 1919 - See also "monumens". André Goosse and Jacques Chaurand 'Histoire de la langue et histoire de l'orthographe' in *L'Orthographe en question*, ed. by Renée Honvault-Ducrocq (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2006), pp. 25-47 (p. 39).

[160] Charles Lévêque, 'Les monumens d'Athènes et les études archéologiques en Grèce', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 11 (1851), 637-660 (pp. 641-643).

[161] Dale Kinney, 'The Concept of Spolia' in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. by Conrad Rudolph (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 233-252.

motivated in part by the defence of its ancient heritage against 'Oriental' others. For all the political underpinnings of this Western outrage at the consequences of Ottoman rule in Greece, I contend that the real issue, which is part of the philhellene political drive, is the interference with the physicality of the classical past by agents deemed 'alien' to its heritage.

1.2.2 Byzantine and medieval history

If the Ottoman reception of classical Greece is easily dismissed as 'oriental' and un-Greek, modern Greeks themselves are not automatically entrusted with spiritual custodianship of their past. The reception of what French travellers call the Byzantine empire is a very good example of the chasm that exists between Western reception of Greek history and the Greeks' sense of their own national identity as in this description of the Greek population by Benoit in 1849.

> [E]n dépit de tant de vicissitudes et d'invasions barbares qui ont altéré le sang de ce peuple, malgré la fatale influence de l'oppression turque achevant l'œuvre de la domination byzantine, nous pouvions admirer souvent dans la mine héroïque ou fine de certains hommes, dans la beauté si pure de quelques femmes, des types qui nous rappelaient la statuaire antique.[162]

The beauty or heroism of (some) Greek people is irrevocably attributed to their classical heritage as they are compared to ancient works of art and the underlying idea is that this quality has endured despite the racial 'barbarian' influence deplored here. However, the idea of a Byzantine domination over Greece would not be recognised by the inhabitants Vincent is describing here; not only because the term Byzantium was never used, whether in the Eastern Roman Empire or in the Ottoman Empire,[163] but more crucially because nineteenth-century Greeks strongly identified with the Christian medieval empire whose rulers were overwhelmingly Greek speaking.[164] In other words, they were not dominated by the Byzantines, they *were* the Byzantines. Of course, to Vincent, the political rule of medieval Greeks matters less than the perception that the Eastern Roman Empire represents a suppression, or at the very least an alteration of the 'pure' Greece of classical antiquity.

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[162] Benoit, 'La Grèce ancienne étudiée dans la Grèce moderne', p. 511

[163] The Greeks referred to their empire as Roman or 'Romania' and to themselves as Romans (or sometimes as Hellenes) and so did the Ottomans. See Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

[164] Constantine Tsoukalas, 'European modernity and Greek national identity', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 1, 1 (1999), pp. 7-14; Dimitris Livanios, 'The Quest for Hellenism: Religion, Nationalism, and Collective Identities in Greece, 1453-1913, in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, And Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. by Katerina Zacharia (London: Ashgate, 2008.

However, not all of antiquity is created equal; the social model proposed to modern Greeks to emulate is inevitably Athenian democracy. 'Si les Grecs veulent absolument rattacher leur nouvelle histoire à celle des anciens, ce n'est pas aux Constantins qu'ils devraient songer, c'est à Périclès', suggests Emile Burnouf (another early EFA scholar, and the director of the School from 1867 to 1875).[165] This valorisation of the fifth century BCE against later antiquity has an urgent signification in the mid-nineteenth century, where European powers are dissuading Greece from actively pursuing its 'Megali Idea' (Great Idea) ideal of a Greek state encompassing the historical region of Hellenic presence in a revival of the Byzantine Empire with Constantinople as a capital. By encouraging the Greeks to invest Athens as their historical capital and heritage, against the city founded by Constantine the Great, not only is Burnouf trying to limit Greece's political ambition, but he is also imposing a genealogy of ancient heritage that corresponds to Western European valorisation of selective aspects of classical cultures above others. As often, European reception of Greek heritage is partial, contingent to social and political contexts, and exhibits biases in favour of particular geographical and historical areas.

Maurice Barrès is thus unusual amongst nineteenth-century French travellers in Greece as he displays a genuine interest in medieval history. As a nationalist catholic however, it is not so much that he values Byzantine history, but that he reactivates the memory of the French barons who reigned in the Crusader states founded after the fourth Crusade and known as the Latin Empire.

As noted by Astrid Swenson, in the nineteenth century, 'There was an overarching trend to think of the crusades in national terms, and to efface older interpretations. In contrast to the Early Modern period, where the crusaders were seen as a pan European, Christian enterprise, distinct national claims were made from the 1830s onwards.'[166] As a result, in Greece, in addition to the classical heritage, Barrès therefore also looks for traces of medieval French presence (notably Mystras and the Frankish tower on the Acropolis, by that time destroyed). His connection to Greece is formed via these different vestiges that often bring back memories of his native Lorraine. He praises Jean Alexandre Buchon for 'avoir publié les textes qui racontent comment nos croisés de France vinrent fonder leurs baronnies dans les vallons où avaient régné les rois d'Homère'.[167]

The search of Frankish vestiges becomes the pretext for the establishment of an original chain of reception between Homer and France. The choice by 'his' crusaders to settle in the same territories

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[165] Emile Burnouf, 'La Grèce en 1869, son avenir par les alliances et les travaux de la paix', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 81 (1869), 458-482 (p. 476).

[166] Astrid Swenson, 'Crusader heritages and imperial preservation', *Past and Present*, 226, 10 (2015), 27-56 (p. 20).

[167] Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 478. Jean Alexandre Buchon (1791-1846) was a French historian specialised in the study of the French presence in medieval Greece. He travelled to Greece between 1840 and 1841 and, two years later, published *La Grèce continentale et la Morée: voyage, séjour et études historiques en 1840 et 1841* (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1843).

as the Iliad's mythical kings leads him to draw further parallels between ancient and medieval warriors:

> Ils venaient de bâtir Notre-Dame et se trouvaient en présence du Parthénon. Ils ressuscitaient ces Agamemnon, ces Ajax, ces Achille qui se croisèrent contre Troie. Et beaucoup d'entre eux étaient des troubadours assez pareils à ceux qui firent les poèmes d'Homère. […] Deux brillantes fantaisies se heurtent sur un sol, d'où perpétuellement émane une divine influence.[168]

Barrès' medieval imaginary recasts the Greeks as crusaders against an orientalised Troy to emphasise the descendance of Agamemnon or Achilles in French noblemen, with parallels between Notre-Dame and the Parthenon, as well as Homer and the troubadours, emphasising the artistic aspects of this heritage chain. He does not however undermine the discordant aspects of this imagined genealogy ('deux brillantes fantaisies se heurtent'), but on the contrary extols the soil of Greece itself as capable of embracing a diversity of histories. Barrès' reception of antiquity through the Crusades, in addition to the heroic presence of France in Greece, presents an original chain of reception for Homer in early twentieth-century French nationalism.

1.3 Early nationalism and the political receptions of Greece

Barrès travelled to Greece in 1900 but only published his travel account, *Le Voyage de Sparte*, in 1906. The account of his journey is part of a series of texts that came to define and affirm his political ideology, alongside *Scènes et doctrines du Nationalisme* (1902), *Les Amitiés Françaises* (1903), *Amori et Dolori Sacrum* (1903), and articles in a variety of newspapers.

Charles Maurras began working in journalism in 1886 and developed his interest in poetry, especially Provençal. He co-founded the 'École romane' with Jean Moréas, a Greek poet writing in French, in 1891 as a reaction against Symbolism, pushing for a return to Greek and Roman aesthetics. He was sent to Athens in 1896 by *La Gazette de France* to cover the first modern Olympics from which he came back having bolstered both his personal aesthetics and his political ideology, resulting in the publication of *Anthinéa: d'Athènes à Florence* in 1901. This journey was so formative that in 1901, to promote the book in *L'Action Française* he stated 'Les théories philosophiques et esthétiques d'*Anthinéa* forment le fondement même de [ma] politique'.[169] Both writers constructed a particular vision of the Hellenic nation which tallied with their aesthetic and nationalist ideals.

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[168] Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 256.

[169] Charles Maurras, *L'Action française*, 1 November 190, p. 752. He later tried to distance himself from this stance when the book was accused of anti-Catholicism.

However, without being in any way unique to the writers, these geographies, in both cases, are intensely personal.

If we look at the structure of the texts, *Anthinéa* appears less as the relation of Maurras' travels than a tour of his aesthetic world. Two letters from Athens and the Olympic games (that were published by *La Gazette de France*) form the preamble to the 1912 edition. The first part of the book is devoted to the antiquities in Athens (the Acropolis and the National Archaeological Museum). Maurras then left Greece for London, where he came to supplement his knowledge of the Parthenon by admiring the friezes that are kept in the British Museum. The second part is about a Greek colony in Corsica. The writer then related his journey on the rest of the island (Maurras was born in Provence and always felt strongly Mediterranean, pitching himself against the 'northern barbarians'). He subsequently left France again for Florence. The final part of the book is about a return to the native land, Provence (but tracing here too its 'Greek origins'), while the rest of the Athenian articles are to be found in the annexes.

As for Barrès, we have to understand the title of his book, *Le Voyage de Sparte*, not only as a physical journey towards Lacedaemon, but also as a quest for meaning. In a preamble to his Greek journey, he dedicated a full chapter to the memory of one of his friends, Louis Ménard (1822-1901), a passionate but unrecognised Hellenist scholar whom Barrès admired from his time as a schoolboy and whom he befriended as a young man in Paris. The following chapters relate his disappointing time in Athens, writing at length about his disenchantment. Before his departure for Mycenae and Sparta, however, he paused to narrate his encounter and subsequent friendship with Tigrane, a young nationalist Armenian. This tale takes us from Athens to Paris, taking a detour with Tigrane back to Constantinople and Cairo. This chapter of his is also an occasion for reflections on the nature and aims of nationalism (whether French or Armenian). It is, however, in the final chapters, entirely dedicated to Sparta, that Barrès found an ideal to emulate as well as a fertile ground to develop his nationalist ideas.

1.3.1 Maurras' école romane and Barrès' German readings

To understand which ideological vision of literary and artistic history Maurras relies on in *Anthinéa*, we have to go back to two texts that are at the core of his aesthetic. The first is the letter that Jean Moréas published in *Le Figaro* to announce the formation of 'L'école romane' in September 1891. In this short text, Moréas states that this new literary school will rely on the 'principe gréco-latin' that has been fundamental to French literature since medieval times; it will revive what Moréas terms the 'chaîne gallique' that Romantics and Symbolists have broken. Moréas, himself a former

proponent of 'Symbolism'[170], is here voluntarily distinguishing himself from the professed apolitical stance of Parnassians poets from the 1860s and 1870's, whose major figures such as Leconte de Lisle or José-Maria de Heredia, also drew inspiration from aesthetic models from Antiquity. For Moréas, the new poetry will be 'forthright, vigorous and fresh', bringing back the 'purity and the dignity of its ancestry.'[171] This echoes a longer article that Maurras had published in July of the same year, in *La Plume*, entitled 'Barbares et Romans'. If Moréas pits the new school against Romantic and Symbolist poets, the opposition, for Maurras, is as aesthetic as it is geographical, and the French Roman is here opposed to the German barbarian. By 'Roman', Maurras understands, in reality, a wide Mediterranean space: 'Ce mystérieux rythme, qui s'étend du midi en ondulations de lumière, on peut le consacrer de mille vocables. Latin, felibréen, italien, hellène, il est le même.'[172] Maurras sees no difference of nature between ancient Rome, Greece and modern France: the chain of reception, conceived as uninterrupted, makes all these poetic traditions resonate to the same rhythm. More than the late Romantics, Symbolists or Decadent writers, the real enemy of Maurras is Germany. He primarily objects to what he perceives as the growing germanification of French literature and the dead end of such influences:

> Il est bien vraisemblable que, demain ni après-demain, la littérature française ne renaîtra par le commerce de l'âme germanique. Les barbares peuvent bien infuser du sang neuf à une race; un rythme neuf aucunement. Il fallut que les Provençaux du Xe siècle retrouvassent le rythme antique pour que la littérature moderne fût. Il fallut que Ronsard lût Homère et Pindare pour que les vrais chants renaquissent du moyen âge en perdition.[173]

French literature was only able to flourish when it reverted to its supposed Greek and Latin roots. However, Maurras' imagined Mediterranean space is a selective one. As noted by Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Sparta was, at the time, 'claimed' by Germany, while it had served as a model of the 'egalitarian ideal' a hundred years previously, for the French Revolutionaries.[174] It is therefore towards and around classical Athens that Maurras travels and builds his imagined geography. France's competition with Germany for a claim in ancient Greek heritage is an important feature of classical scholarship and culture in the late nineteenth century. It is notably emblematised by a

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[170] Jean Moréas, 'Le Symbolisme', *Le Figaro. Supplément littéraire du dimanche*, 18 September 1886, p. 150.

[171] Moréas, *Le Figaro*, 14 September 1891, p. 1.

[172] Maurras, 'Barbares et Romans', *La Plume*, 1 July 189, p. 229.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *La Démocratie grecque vue d'ailleurs: Essais d'historiographie ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992). Maurras himself was, naturally, very hostile to the Revolution. See Maurice Weyembergh, *Charles Maurras et la Révolution française* (Paris: Vrin, 1992).

rivalry around access to archaeological sites. When Germany opened its archaeological institute in Athens in 1872, it worked to secure exclusive rights to excavate in Olympia, which prompted the French government to negotiate a similar agreement in regard to the site of Delphi, which was granted in 1891.[175]

Barrès's attitude towards Germany is more ambiguous, and thus his genealogy of French culture is notably different from that of Maurras. Whereas Maurras rejects both Romanticism and Germany as 'barbarians', Barrès embraces Greek figures via Goethe (most notably Iphigenia and Helen of Sparta): 'La destinée qui oppose mon pays à l'Allemagne n'a pourtant pas permis que je demeurasse insensible à l'horizon d'outre-Rhin: j'aime la Grecque germanisée.'[176]

Here, 'la Grecque germanisée' refers to Iphigenia. Agammemnon's daughter is twice exiled for Barrès, once to Tauris (now Crimea) by Euripides, and a second time to Germany by Goethe. Barrès pictures the antique heroine as a noblewoman from the Weimar court; his classical reception is realised via Goethe, via Romanticism and via Germany. Barrès' affection for Goethe grew notably more strained with time. In 1884, he considers him as a European 'intellectual father', recognising here the continent's shared cultural heritage, across nations. As a Lorrain, he feels keenly the loss of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany, but, on the condition that France can get the provinces back, wishes for reconciliation and does not deny 'the strength of feeling' which attracts him to Goethe. After the First World War, however, there can be no question of a 'European culture': 'Il n'y a pas d'esprits européens. Chacun est Français, Anglais, Italien, Allemand, et bien mal compréhensible à d'autres qu'à ses compatriotes.'[177] Goethe, however, is retrieved *in extremis* from exclusively nationalist categorisation and made to stand above these sharply drawn borders: 'Seulement, certains hommes sont si hauts – Goethe, Léonard de Vinci – qu'on les voit de toute l'Europe.'[178]

The reprobation of Germany and its intellectuals, however, reveals itself to be extensive. In three articles between October and November 1920 ('Quelles barrières faut-il élever contre la pensée germanique?'[179], 'Les précautions contre le germanisme intellectuel'[180] and 'La surveillance de la pensée allemande'[181]), he condemns in a single sweep 'The Goethes, the Kants, the Hegels, the

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[175] Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 80-91; Catherine Valenti*, L'École Française d'Athènes* (Paris: Belin, 2006), pp.59-83.

[176] Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 449.

[177] Barrès, *Mes Cahiers: tome XIV* (Paris: Plon, 1957 [1922]), p. 72.

[178] Ibid.

[179] Barrès, 'Quelles barriers faut-il élever contre la pensée germanique?', *L'Echo de Paris*, 18 October 1920, p. 1.

[180] Barrès, 'Les précautions contre le germanisme intellectuel', *L'Echo de Paris*, 25 October 1920, p. 1.

[181] Barrès, 'La surveillance de la pensée allemande', *L'Echo de Paris*, 1 November 1920, p. 1.

Wagners, the Bismarcks, the Nietzsches.'[182] By putting Bismarck in the same lineage as Goethe, Barrès heightens an overlap of the political and cultural fields in his ideology. After the military victory of the First World War, the spirit of revenge on Germany extends here to the literary, the musical and the philosophical. Barrès' journey to Greece, twenty years earlier, thus takes place at a crucial moment, where his personal relationship with German culture (and, by extension, his understanding of French cultural heritage) is still at a crossroads. In a telling metaphor, he 'sees' and admires Iphigenia beyond the Rhine but cannot bring himself to call her his 'sister'. The Greek figure has been remodelled by Germany, not France, and Barrès recognises here that his own reception of the Classics is not as nationally delineated as Maurras' 'chaîne gallique'.

1.3.2 Democracy and classicism

Barrès and Maurras set off to Greece to test their aesthetic and national ideals but reach very different conclusions. An important conviction that is strengthened by Maurras' Athenian stay is, surprisingly given his praise for fifth-century Athens, his monarchist persuasions. He admires the new Greek king and subsequently declares:

> Mon ami Maurice Barrès s'est publiquement étonné que j'eusse rapporté d'Attique une haine aussi vive de la démocratie. Si la France moderne ne m'avait persuadé de ce sentiment, je l'aurais reçu de l'Athènes antique. La brève destinée de ce qu'on appelle la démocratie dans l'Antiquité m'a fait sentir que le propre de ce régime n'est que de consommer ce que les périodes d'aristocratie ont produit.[183]

In nineteenth-century France as in fifth-century BCE Attica, democracy can only lead to decline. This is a recurring idea in Maurras' ideology. In 1909, he wrote the preface to Pierre Lasserre's *M. Alfred Croiset, historien de la démocratie athénienne*, a searing critique of Alfred Croiset's account of ancient Athenian democracy, that expands on the causes of Athens' decline that Maurras alludes to here.[184] For Lasserre and Maurras, the democratic system in place in Athens prevented the establishment of Greek unity and ultimately precipitated the conquest of the peninsula by Philipp II of Macedon. Maurras and *L'Action Française* (which promoted and published extracts of Lasserre's book) drew some of their critiques of the Athenian regime from Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, in whose work they also found justifications for their theory of a hereditary 'gallic chain'

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[182] Ibid.

[183] Maurras, *Anthinéa*, p. XII.

[184] Pierre Lasserre, *M. Alfred Croiset, historien de la démocratie athénienne* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1909). Alfred Croiset, professor of history at the Sorbonne university, had published the same year *Les Démocraties antiques* (Paris: Flammarion, 1909), an overall positive account of democracy in the Ancient world in general, and in Athens in particular.

within the French population, preserved from Germanic invasions, and use them to justify further their deeply held antisemitism. In the same way that they indict Athens for its tolerant policies regarding the inclusion of 'métèques', they condemn what they see as the French republic's 'anti-patriotic' philosemitism.[185]

The monarchist question had divided French conservatives since 1848 and it was central to debates in nationalist circles. Maurras himself shifted the nationalist movement and newspaper *L'Action Française* from republican nationalism to royalism almost as soon as he became involved with them. As demonstrated in their edited correspondence, this divergence remained a major political point of contention between Barrès and Maurras, despite the latter's best effort to convince his elder. [186] Indeed, Barrès was never converted to monarchism and the lessons he brings back from his journey are quite different. When he looks back on his time in Greece, he finds it difficult to draw the same sharp conclusions as his friend Maurras. For all his admiration of the ancient Greeks, he finds himself incapable of 'feeling' that he belongs there: 'Je conçois tant bien que mal l'équilibre et l'harmonie de cette civilisation grecque : je ne l'éprouve pas.'[187] His reception of classical Greece is entirely theoretical. This ancient civilisation appeals only to his reason, not his emotions. He admires the 'harmony' of it all, but, crucially, unlike Maurras, fails to conceive the 'Gallic chain', which is a direct continuity between ancient Greece and modern France.

On the contrary, from that feeling of 'foreignness' towards Greece, he reinforces his own sentiment of national belonging.

> N'étant pas de sang hellénique, je ne sécrète aucune pensée athénienne […] Ainsi, dans ce voyage d'étude, quand la Grèce ravalait mes richesses d'emprunt, j'ai acquis par cette impérieuse, une vue juste de mon rôle.[188]

The chain is broken; the ancient 'riches' are only 'borrowed' by the French writer, they are not a direct part of his heritage. Consequently, his true place as a writer is in his native Lorraine. The art he wishes to produce can only grow from its own soil and cannot imitate the aesthetics of ancient Athens, in the same way that Lorraine's architecture cannot wish to emulate the Parthenon.

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[185] There exists of course a long European tradition of anti-democratic critique of Athens, which are explored in detail by Jennifer Tolbert Roberts in *Athens on Trial: the Antidemocratic in Western Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). As she shows, in nineteenth-century France, these are intimately linked with the reception of the French Revolution. However virulent, Maurras's position is already in the minority at the time of his writing and becomes more and more marginal along the twentieth century. For further study on the reception of ancient democratic ideas see, in addition to Roberts (1994), Vidal-Naquet (1992) and Wielfried Nippel, *Ancient and Modern Democracy: Two Concepts of Liberty?* Trans. by Keith Tribe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[186] Barrès and Maurras, *La République ou le Roi : correspondance inédite 1888-1923* (Paris: Plon, 1970).

[187] Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 487.

[188] Ibid., p. 489.

It is thus significant that Barrès put Sparta instead of Athens in the title of his book (while Maurras' *Anthinéa* is derived from a proposed etymology of Athens as 'the city of flowers,' which allows him to link the Greek city to Florence).[189] In fact, the ancient opposition between Sparta and Athens revived here is one of many between Maurras and Barrès. Maurras is a monarchist, Barrès is a republican; Barrès is a convinced Catholic, Maurras lost his Christian faith when he was a teenager; Maurras is a Mediterranean man, from the Provence region, Barrès was raised in Lorraine, the eastern part of France which was almost entirely annexed by Germany in 1870. Crucially, these differences inform a radical schism between their approaches to both travel and nationalism. Barrès, from his first literary work, has kept a sentimental, almost romantic aesthetic; his nationalism is instinctual, informed by his fidelity to the church and the emotional weight of the loss of Alsace and Lorraine. Maurras, on the other hand, approaches politics in a positivist manner. He arrives at the formation of his nationalist and monarchist ideals because they are the ones that fit his ideological world views.[190] This is embodied by his ultra-classicist assessment of Greek art in Athens: 'le classique, l'attique est plus universel à proportion qu'il est plus sévèrement athénien, athénien d'une époque et d'un goût mieux purgés de toute influence étrangère.'[191] The apex of Greek art is Athenian from the classical age, when, according to him, it reached its purest form, freed from foreign influence.

His choice of fifth-century BCE Athens as the epitome of aesthetic perfection is, of course, far from uncommon but it is ideologically significant. As Amar Acheraïou and Benjamin Isaac note:

> The classical Greeks' belief in cultural and racial supremacy was […] first attested in 5th century BC Athens. During this period which corresponded to Greece's emergence as an imperial power, the Greeks' chauvinism and contempt for non-Greeks reached their height.[192]

For Maurras, this period represents the 'age of Graecity, of pure Hellenism'.[193] Before this golden age, two influences hindered the development of Classicism. First is Asia; for Maurras, the Mycenaeans were 'barbarians or savage Greeks, full of Asian and Egyptian reminiscence' and it is

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[189] Maurras first attributes this etymology to a certain Curtius (either Georg Curtius (1820-1885), a German philologist or, more probably, his brother, Ernst Curtius (1814-1896), an archaeologist and historian). However, in a note of the second edition of *Anthinéa*, Maurras reveals his satisfaction of having found a mention of this etymology in a French historian's text: Jean Alexandre Buchon's *La Grèce continentale et la Morée*.

[190] For an analysis of Auguste Comte and Positivism's influence on Maurras's nationalism and, subsequently, on L'Action Francaise, see Michael Sutton, *Nationalism, Positivism and Catholicism: the Politics of Charles Maurras and French Catholics 1890-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[191] Maurras, *Anthinéa*, p. 72).

[192] Acheraïou, p. 55.

[193] Maurras, *Anthinéa*, p. 59.

only when art 'frees itself from the rigid models of the Orient' that it reaches its classical perfection. The second wave of migration to Greece is that of the Dorians. However, unlike the Asians, these 'barbarians from the North' were able to acclimatise themselves to the southern climate and be integrated into Greece's essence. At its peak and its most classic, this essence, for Maurras, coagulates in a high concentration of humanity, reason, and thus, beauty. This imagined distillation of exemplary universality is that which, for Maurras, spawns the Gallic chain that gave birth to French culture.

However, like barbarism, decadence also comes from abroad. To explain what he perceives as the decline of Greek art, Maurras blames Alexander the Great's eastern conquests:

> [L]a Grèce éteint sa flamme quand l'Asie d'Alexandre communique à ses conquérants […] un état d'inquiétude, de fièvre, de mollesse qu'entretinrent les religions de l'Orient. Adonis et Mithra décomposèrent les premiers le monde ancien. Qu'on ne croit pas que les artistes grecs aient hellénisé ces conceptions ennemies; ils n'y réussirent jamais. Mais ils furent certainement barbarisés par elles.[194]

For Maurras the 'orientalisation' of Greece began centuries before the Ottoman invasion with Alexander's forays into Asia. Long before the Greeks fell under foreign domination, the Barbarians had already won over their minds and their bodies as the vocabulary of disease used here seeks to demonstrate ('état d'inquiétude, de fièvre, de mollesse'). In fact, the 'barbarisation' attributed to the Mesopotamian and Persian gods is rendered responsible for the classical world's decadence. The emphasis on a process of foreign 'infection' and material decomposition is typically decadent and recalls Gibbon's narrative of the fall of the Roman Empire, with the notable difference that in the Greeks' case it is the conqueror himself that falls victim to the barbarism he seeks to dominate. Maurras himself was opposed to the French Third Republic colonial projects as, like many extreme right activists, he thought they were a distraction from the necessary 'Revanche' against Germany, and the reconquest of Alsace and Lorraine.[195] The risk of being 'barbarisés' by the conquered land that Maurras sees in Alexander's Asian conquests, could thus also apply to France's colonies in Africa.

The traveller, as many before him, is guided to Greece by his love of ancient literature and ritually invokes Odysseus during his maritime crossing between France and Greece, quoting 'le vieil

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[194] Maurras, *Anthinéa*, pp. 59-60.

[195] Olivier Dard, 'Les droites radicales et l'empire colonial au vingtième siècle', in *À droite de la droite: Droites radicales en France et en Grande-Bretagne au xx^e siècle*, ed. by Philippe Vervaecke (Villeneuve d'Ascq : Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2012), pp. 169-193.

Homère, dont je ne me sépare jamais, et qui est mon prophète'.[196] For this reason, amid his classification of Greek art he is worried about rescuing the poet from the newly defined era of 'la barbarie mycénienne'[197], which is the Bronze Age civilisation (seventeenth to thirteenth centuries BCE) forming the historical setting of the Homeric epics (eighth century BCE). Hence, he opposes historians who would look at Mycenaean art to better understand the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[198] The idea of a 'Homère barbare'[199] is horrific to him and he cannot fathom the association of 'the unique beauty' of the poems with what he considers subpar artefacts. He thus wishes to completely dissociate the epics from the period they are supposed to depict: 'L'art d'Homère veut qu'on l'étudie pour lui-même. Il importe peu que les sujets de ses descriptions ressemblent aux objets déterrés ici ou là-bas.' This dismissal of archaeology in favour of the literary value of Homer is very common in the late-nineteenth century (as we will see in chapter 2) but appears here at odds with Maurras' insistent drawing of a reasoned narrative of artistic development in Greece (from barbarian Mycenaeans to decadent Hellenism), that is swiftly minimised when discussing Homer's poetry.

These aesthetic preferences are not shared by Barrès who, as we have seen, struggles to be moved by the Athenian perfections: 'Rien de plus beau que le Parthénon, mais il n'est pas l'hymne qui s'échappe naturellement de notre âme.'[200] His rejection of the Parthenon's beauty is partially justified by his Christian allegiance – 'Entre le Parthénon et nous, il y a dix-neuf siècles de christianisme. J'ai dans le sang un idéal différent et même ennemi.'[201] – and it would be a betrayal to succumb to its charms: 'La perfection de l'art grec m'apparaît comme un fait, mais en l'affirmant je me nie.'[202] Unsatisfied by Athens, Barrès thus turns towards its age-old rival, Sparta, and journeys there in search of a different 'chain' of reception between modern France and Ancient Greece.

1.3.3 The Un-layering of Sparta

We can identify a variety of reasons for which Sparta proves more satisfying to Barrès. In the same way that Maurras finds in Athenian classical art a nationalist virtue to emulate, Barrès exalts Spartan

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196 Maurras, *Anthinéa*, p. 24.

197 Ibid., p. 54

198 Here, Maurras mentions Wolfgang Helbig, a German archaeologist, author of *Das homerische Epos, aus den Denkmälern erläutert* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1884) of which a French translation was published in 1894 (*L'épopée homérique expliqué par les monuments*, trans. by Fl. Trawinski (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1894). However, he seems to target a more general practice of the time when he attacks 'les personnes entichées de l'esprit évolutionniste et d'une espèce de mystagogie que l'on n'a pas encore nommée' (Maurras, *Anthinéa*, p. 53).

199 Maurras, *Anthinéa*, p. 53

200 Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 488.

201 Ibid., p. 421.

202 Ibid., p. 412.

values, which he identifies with an instinct for race preservation. The harsh social selection (including the killing of new-born babies) appears to him as rational in what it reveals of the will to build a 'humanité supérieure. He compares their practices to those of the horse breeder who only wants to raise a perfect stud.

He also finds there a site that goes against what he learned about Hellenism in school; Sparta exhibits more vitality, appears more natural. Its heroes are intelligible *in situ*. There is a provocation in this exaltation, especially as the Spartan figures that he exalts are often legendary (Helena, Castor and Pollux) in comparison to the real Athenians of the fifth century. However, he seems to reach with Sparta a kinship that escaped him in Athens.

Barrès's geographical and mental approach to Sparta reads thus like a return to his intellectual roots, a homecoming of sorts. In contrast to Maurras, who seeks to establish a direct Mediterranean link between ancient Athens and modern France, expunging all foreign, barbaric or decadent influences from this filiation, Barrès incorporates the different historical layers he perceives in Greece in his journey.

In the fourteenth chapter of *Le Voyage de Sparte*, 'Les approches de Sparte', Barrès seems to physically delve into Laconia's historical layers, to penetrate ancient Sparta. He starts, unsuccessfully, by looking for Ottoman remains in Tripoli ('je cherchai vainement un vestige du récent passé turc.').[203] Then, on his way to Mantinea battlefield, he remembers his compatriot Chateaubriand and Lord Byron (who visited the region in 1806 and 1810, respectively) rather than the ancient warriors. The following day, he decides to set out for the village of Piali (today Alea), the site of the ancient city of Tegea. What interests him is to see the Frankish cathedral built after Tegea was destroyed and replaced by the Byzantine city of Nikli. However, he does not spend much time describing the church, and uses the next scene to weave together different historical layers in his quest for the beauties of the ancient past.

In Piali, the writer desires to admire a famed bas-relief representing a lion that is kept in a locked building. He has to wait for the guard with the key, sitting on 'the Turkish stones' that surround the village's well. These Ottoman vestiges recall older ones and he fleetingly reminisces on the rape of Auge by Heracles that, according to Pausanias, supposedly happened by a fountain, perhaps the same one, in Tegea.[204] The Greek villagers surround him, and he compares them to an ancient chorus, setting himself, like Heracles, as the hero of a play. In his interpretation of their speech, he pictures them as the proud descendants of the Tegeates, even as he recognises among them some

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[203] Ibid., p. 460.

[204] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, ed. by R.E Wycherley, trans. by W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod, 5 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918), III, p. 363 (8.4.9) and IV, (p. 135) (8.47.4).

Turks. However, the moment of revelation, of expected communion with the true relic from the past, the bas-relief, is never realised: when the door is opened for him, the crowd of villagers follows him into the dark building, blocking the door and the only source of light, preventing him from admiring the artefact. Despite stripping Tegea of all its historical layers, he fails to receive any revelation from the ancient past, in the same way that Athens was not for him the ideological homecoming that it was for Maurras. In a 'Butlerian' reception of the classical, Barrès is confronted by the material density of the timespan between him and antiquity; present and more immediate past layers prevent his gaining direct access to the ancient knowledge he came to find in Piali. He has to reckon with physical barriers to the bas-relief (the door, the key, the crowd) as well as constant reminders of the history between the imagined past and his present experience.
It is Sparta's plain (and especially Mount Taygetus) that will finally provide him with the epiphany he was expecting from his journey in Greece:

> Le Taygète, vigoureux, calme, sain, classique (bien qu'il porte dans ses forêts toutes les lyres du romantisme), nous propose les cimes d'où l'on juge la vie fuyante. Cette plaine éternelle exprime des états plus hauts que l'humanité.[205]

Unlike the civilisations and the cities, the mountain seems immutable; we can judge the 'fuyante' nature of life from its summit. It is therefore not necessary to subject it to the historical un-layering of other vestiges. Despite having hosted romantic fantasies in its midst, it can remain eternally classical. In fact, paradoxically, Sparta seems to fleetingly allow Barrès unmediated access to classical culture. He thus quotes two poets with links to the city: an idyll ('the Epithalamium of Helen') from Theocritus, the precursor of bucolic poetry, and an elegy to Spartan soldiers from the lyric poet Tyrtaeus. He comments: 'On croit mourir de délices si l'on réveille dans les saules de l'Eurotas ces cantiques d'une franchise adolescente, ces poésies toutes directes. Rien n'est interposé entre nous et de telles images.'[206] Finally, the past appears to him in all its unmediated truth. In a spontaneous outburst of Romanticism (although one which, unlike in Vogüé and Loti's case, celebrates recovery rather than loss) prepared by the multiple allusions to Chateaubriand, he reads poetry in the landscape itself. This natural poem, however, is not a romance or an elegy. The Lacedaemonian countryside sings national poetry, 'le poème d'un noble sang disparu.'[207]

Despite describing his access to Sparta as direct and unfiltered, Barrès's reception of classical culture remains in reality mediated by other writers and the journey seems to be also a quest to

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[205] Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 464.
[206] Ibid., p. 467.
[207] Ibid., p. 467.

break free from these influences, to operate a textual un-layering, parallel to the search for the ancient through the modern physical remains. Now a forgotten figure, Ménard was a classical scholar, who also turned his talents to chemistry, poetry, painting and politics, before spending the last decades of his life lecturing and writing about ancient religions and societies. His hybrid work, *Les rêveries d'un païen mystique*, which intertwines mystical poetry and philosophy, had a great effect on the young Barrès. However, despite the evident affection he displays for the old scholar, retracing a life of intelligent passion for his subject, he concludes that Ménard's voice did not resonate within him while he was in Greece. It is not altogether surprising that Ménard's mystical and philosophical Hellenism does not fit Barrès's political reception of the classics. Ideologically, the two men could not be more different: in 1906 Barrès is established as a central figure for French nationalism and conservatism, Ménard, who died in 1901, was a socialist who took part in the 1848 revolution and had to go in exile to London, where he met Karl Marx, after having published revolutionary literature. The aesthetic effect of *Rêveries d'un païen mystique* is still compelling to the younger writer, but it is at odds with his political ideas: he praises this 'haute poésie essentielle',[208] but regrets not having been taught instead a national poetry closer to home, written to suit the students of Alsace and Lorraine. Since he entitles this chapter on Ménard 'Le dernier apôtre de l'hellénisme', we perceive that Barrès intends to emancipate himself from this fatherly figure but also to definitely outdate his mentor's poetics and politics of antiquity.

Another tutor figure for Barrès had been the poet Leconte de Lisle (who introduced him to Ménard), one of the most important figures of the French literary scene when he arrived in Paris, as a young man in 1883. Twenty years later, however the Parnassian poetics were rejected by Maurras, and Barrès, despite his personal friendship with Leconte de Lisle, finds in his journey a motive to disavow his aesthetics: 'Depuis que je suis en Grèce, je sens ce qu'a de guindé l'hellénisme parnassien. […] Entre Mégare et Corinthe, aujourd'hui, je déclasse les *Poèmes antiques, Barbares* et *Tragiques*.'[209]

However, his knowledge of Spartan poetry comes straight from Leconte de Lisle himself. Indeed, as noted by Vital Rambaud, when he quotes Tyrtaeus' verse on Spartan warriors, it is Leconte de Lisle's own translation that he uses.[210] It is in the volume that the older poet translated that we also find Theocritus's tale of Castor and Pollux, quoted as exemplary by Barrès. At the moment when he presents his access to Sparta and ancient culture as the most unmediated, he is actually quoting

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[208] Ibid., p. 391.

[209] Ibid., p. 443.

[210] Vital Rambaud, 'Notes', in Maurice Barrès, *Romans et Voyages*, ed. by Vital Rambaud (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1994), p. 1068.

someone's else words, and, most disconcerting, someone whose understanding of Greek literature he chose to reject as stilted, thus effectively artificial. What he finds most objectionable in Leconte de Lisle is 'd'avoir cru dur comme fer à une Grèce qui n'a jamais existé que dans le cerveau de [Ménard].'[211] The reality, of course, is that, despite his physical journey to Sparta, Barrès' Greece is no less imagined than his mentors'.

Paradoxically, the most satisfying classical reception is the one he realises via Goethe. Despite the looming presence of the inevitable border between France and Germany, Goethe brings Greek literature into familiar territory for Barrès. It is only within this interplay that we can understand why the figure of Helen is so important in the French author's Spartan narrative. On the one hand, he celebrates in Helen one of his favourite Spartan figures; she is Menelaus's spouse, Castor and Pollux's sister and a heroic emblem for all young Spartan women. However, he also imagines that she was carried away by Goethe (who makes her a character of *Faust, Part Two*), who, wanting to bring her back to Sparta, actually relocates her to Mystras' castle, which Barrès substitutes for Faust's. This thirteenth-century fortress built by a French baron next to the ancient ruins of Sparta, therefore, establishes a complex French (and German) genealogy for the ancient figure. As he playfully follows Euphorion, the son of Helen and Faust in Goethe's drama, up the mountain where 'des débris de toutes les époques et des races les plus diverses y prennent une couleur d'ensemble',[212] Barrès appears to briefly combine the different layers that are constitutive of his reception of Greece. Even more importantly, Mystras, as an imagined residence for Helen, offers to him a synthesis between the gothic architecture of his native Alsace and the light of Ancient Greece. By his own admission, this successful combination is revelatory and transfiguring for his soul. In the epilogue of his book (written two years after his return), he thus affirms clearly his cultural heritage, and his bolstered sense of nationalist identity.

Classical Greece thus played an important and complex role in the building of French national narratives, as an imagined cultural heritage and an ideological point of reference. The malleability of classical material allows it to be used to serve a variety of nationalist interpretations. However, the confrontations of these imagined classical genealogies with the materiality of Greece and its history, through a physical journey, often muddles the theoretical receptions of Classics. By rendering visible the complex historical density of the Hellenic peninsula, it forces Maurras, and especially Barrès, to examine and un-layer their own reception of antiquity, and in the process, encounter unexpected sites of classical resistance.

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[211] Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 392.

[212] Ibid., p. 476.

Traces of postclassical history in the 'Orient' often intersect with the travellers' expectations of the 'Orient' as a place fixed in a pre-modern past and tensions are highlighted between conflicting conceptions of temporalities. Authors such as Vogüé are keen to uncover the ancient past preserved in the 'Orient', a desire that finds itself at odds with his perception of the 'Orient' as decadent. The diagnostic of decadence is shared with other 'belated' authors such as Schuré and Loti, and in a different way, Maurras, but often reflects less their vision of the 'Orient' than an anxious counterpoint to Western modernity, which they also see as destructive of the romanticised ideal of antiquity. To retrieve classical antiquity, travellers are thus forced to reckon with the layers of history standing between them and the past they seek to recover. Whilst the EFA scholars are seeking to dismiss non-classical Greek history, Barrès attempts to operate a synthesis of reception that would find a place for French history within Greek myths. What all these receptions have in common is that travel constitutes a confrontation with the material traces of history, amongst which, ruins and material artefacts are a prime example.

CHAPTER 2 – MATERIAL RECEPTIONS: CLASSICAL RUINS

Introduction: travelling between archaeological science and the poetics of ruins

The impact of the passage of time and the layers of history between antiquity and the travellers' present finds one of its most striking embodiments in classical ruins, as a metaphor for the decline and disappearance of ancient civilisations, but also, increasingly, as an object of study for classical scholarship. Ruins are an inescapable presence in nineteenth-century visual and literary culture as well as one of the most prominent embodiments of the materiality of classical heritage in the 'Orient'. From the Renaissance onwards, literary ruins, especially from antiquity, were often a pretext for meditations on the inevitable passage of time and the *hubris* of human ambitions.[213] From Joachim Du Bellay in Rome[214] to Volney in Palmyra,[215] ruins were presented as a warning and a symbol of the decadence of various civilisations. However, the development of archaeology from the late eighteenth century onwards radically transformed the mode of depiction of ruins in the popular imagination. As the nineteenth century sees the rapid growth of classical archaeology as a scientific discipline, new representations of ruins and their material realities in the classical space find a place in discourses on antiquity. Classical archaeology, as a scientific enterprise, treats material artefacts in terms of their contribution to historical knowledge (how they can be measured, their material composition, what these factors suggest about the historical context of the geographical location in which they were found or excavated), as opposed to an understanding of objects solely in terms of their aesthetic or moral appeal. I therefore argue that ruins and material artefacts in the nineteenth century come to embody for travellers both the material presence and the irrevocable absence of antiquity in the modern world, and the insoluble tension between the two.

For writers fascinated by the literature of classical antiquity, the material discoveries and scientific advances of archaeological science were received in different ways. Despite archaeology's fruitful impact on nineteenth-century literary imaginations (Prosper Mérimée's *La Vénus d'Ille*, Théophile Gautier's *Le Roman de la Momie, Arria Marcella* et al. are amongst many examples of literary uses of archaeological discoveries), many travellers to the 'Orient' exhibit resistance to what is often a reassessment of received knowledge on antiquity. As demonstrated by Alexandre Farnoux, in

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213 Roland Mortier, *La Poétique des ruines en France* (Geneva: Droz, 1974)

214 Joachim Du Bellay, *Les Antiquitez de Rome* in *Poètes du XVIe siècle* ed. by Schmidt, Albert-Marie (Paris : Gallimard (La pléiade), 1953).

215 Volney, *Les Ruines Ou Méditations Sur Les Révolutions Des Empires* (Paris: Dessenne, Volland & Plassan, 1791)

parallel with a genuine popular appetite for ancient art, some writers, at the end of the nineteenth century, prefer to exalt the aesthetics of ruins 'hors de tout savoir érudit' and criticise professional archaeologists for isolating them from their environment, thus artistically 'sterilising' the sites they work on. [216] For many writers, the materiality of the ruins and thus, their grounding in specific, geographically and historically analysable contexts, complicates the process of classical reception.[217] The undertaking of large-scale, sometimes state-sponsored, excavations, displays the growing scientific interest in a systematic documentation of antiquity's material presence. This contrasts with the previously existing poetics of ruins as symbolic and picturesque representations of the disappearance of the ancient world, and its sorrowful absence from the modern world. As nineteenth-century travel becomes more accessible, the travelogue genre thus experiences a widening divide between scientific enquiries and literary aspirations, an opposition between 'artefact' and 'text'.

Historians of the discipline see in the figure of the 'antiquarian' (or 'antiquary') the predecessor of modern archaeologists. 'Antiquarianism' itself covers a variety of practices that expanded from the Renaissance to the late eighteenth century. Travellers, collectors or members of learned societies across Europe can all be characterised by their interest in the material aspects of ancient history.

> In the eighteenth century, a distinction was drawn between historians, who focused on rhetoric and grand narratives, and antiquarians. Although both admired and made use of classical antiquity as one of their main sources, the antiquarians believed that antiquities could provide new information not contained in the texts written by the classical author.[218]

Antiquarians' willingness to learn about antiquity from the objects they collected across the Mediterranean world set them apart from traditional historians and their textual focus. This distinction was paradoxically upheld, in practice if not in name, by some nineteenth-century scholars such as the classicists of the first generations of members of the French School in Athens. The seeking and collecting of antiquities were major impetuses for journeys in the Mediterranean and beyond and form a central part of the history of European travel to the 'Orient' from the Renaissance onwards.

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[216] Alexandre Farnoux, 'Ruines vestiges et patrimoine' in *La Métamorphose des ruines: Influence des découvertes archéologiques sur les arts et les lettres, 1870-1914*, ed. by Sophie Basch (Athens: École Française d'Athènes, 2004), 5-22 (p.17-18).

[217] Debates around the historicity of ancient narratives are numerous in the nineteenth century, usefully fuelled by archaeological discoveries on occasions, in Classics (see debates around Homer's poems before and after the excavations in Troy) and beyond, as with Ernest Renan historicising of biblical narratives (*La Vie de Jésus*, 1863).

[218] Margarita Díaz-Andreu, *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology: Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 2.

> Then Venetian and Genoese merchants set off for the eastern Mediterranean in a quest for Greek antiquities. And before long, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia were added to the list of destinations to be explored by antiquaries hoping to enrich the collections of Europe's nobility and bourgeoisie.[219]

These lucrative expeditions paved the way for the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century 'Grands Tours' of young educated Europeans, who also brought back art and artefacts from Italy, Greece and beyond for their collections.[220] However, the decline of the elite Grand Tour at the beginning of the nineteenth century to the benefit of proto-mass tourism as well as the professionalisation of archaeology and the growing role of the state in art and antiquities collecting tend to marginalise the individualist practice of the antiquarian, and their research in the ancient past is increasingly disregarded as nothing more than an elite pastime.

> In the nineteenth century, however, 'antiquarian,' like 'dilettante,' became synonymous with 'amateur' and 'fumbler'; the early modern virtuosi who—supposedly—collected according to whim and organized information according to arbitrary criteria.[221]

Antiquarians are thus replaced by professional archaeologists, whose work is characterised by more systematic large-scale excavations, increased use of methods from natural science such as stratigraphy, and state funding.

As noted by Marchand, the dismissal of antiquarians as mere 'fumblers' is not fully justified as, through centuries of collecting, they 'garnered a wealth of information on ancient chronology, religion, economic relations, and art' on which latter scientists also relied.[222] It can therefore be argued that the perceived shift from 'antiquarianism' to 'archaeology' was conceptual before being practical; moving away from artistic conceptions about classical art inherited from the Renaissance, these changes were prompted by the work of Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Whilst Winckelmann himself never took part in any excavation work, his attempt to periodise and systematically classify Greek art represents a clear departure from former conceptions of ancient material culture, despite his focus remaining firmly on the aesthetics of the object above its historical contexts.[223]

Schnapp identifies Napoleon's expedition in Egypt from 1798 to 1801 as the turning point that puts in practice Enlightenment positivist and systematic scientific frameworks.

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[219] Alain Schnapp, 'The Birth of the Archaeological Vision: From Antiquaries to Archaeologists', trans. by Martina Dervis, *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture*, 21, 2 (2014), 216-229 (p. 217).

[220] Díaz-Andreu, p. 45.

[221] Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, p. 40.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Joann Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, (Dresden: 1764). See Marchand for the impact of Winckelmann's work on the development of archaeology and art history (pp. 7-16)

> the expedition to Egypt marked a change of scale and method. It set a new objective: not the journey, the reconnaissance of a territory, but the systematic description of a whole body of natural and historical data. […] It heralded a way of exploring land in all its different dimensions, which would soon mark the transformation of the old antiquarian discipline into a new science, archaeology.[224]

Both the scale and the method that underlie the scientific outcome of the expedition, the twenty-two volumes of the *Description de l'Egypte*, are unprecedented. Despite the eventual military defeat of the Egyptian campaign, and as a consequence, the transfer of most historical artefacts seized by the French to Britain, it is clear that the expedition was also intended to serve the state collecting policy of Napoleon – as was the earlier Italian campaign (1796-1797). Systematisation of both scientific method and artefact collecting as well as an increased state centralisation and funding of archaeologists would remain the mark of the progress of national archaeologies throughout the nineteenth century. As state investment in archaeology expands, the constitution of a material national heritage emerges as an eminently political matter and development of excavations on national soil are encouraged to foster the building of national narratives.[225] Napoléon III's support for excavations of Celtic towns in France is a case in point.

> It is suggested that Napoleon III supported these excavations because of his desire to use belief in a common ethnic heritage to craft a uniform national culture that would help to unite modern France.[226]

Whilst enterprises such as these helped expand the notion of a 'patrimoine national', claims to the heritage of Greco-Roman antiquity remain competing and numerous, both in Greece and in Western Europe. Nations such as France, Germany and Britain competed for political influence and access to ancient sites in Greece, Palestine and Egypt,[227] whilst also valuing their own shared history with the ancient world, especially Rome. Thus, in addition to the building of a national heritage, 'Napoleon III claimed to sponsor these [Celtic] excavations as part of a massive program of historical and archaeological research that he was carrying out for a biography of Julius Caesar he was writing.'[228] The emperor's project, using both Celtic and Roman heritage to foster a French national identity, whilst setting himself as the political heir of the conqueror of Gaul demonstrates

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[224] Alain Schnapp, 'The Birth of the Archaeological Vision', p. 227.
[225] Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought: Second Edition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 248-261; Díaz-Andreu, pp. 317-337.
[226] Trigger, p. 213. See also Michel Reddé for the construction of Vercingétorix and Alésia as French national myths under the Second Empire ('Introduction: Alésia et la mémoire nationale française', *Anabases*, 9 (2009), 13-24)
[227] Díaz-Andreu, p. 102-103.
[228] Trigger, p. 213.

the political and scientific legitimacy afforded to professional archaeology in the second half of the century.

On the whole, major classical archaeological discoveries, from Pompei in the mid-eighteenth century to Troy and Mycenae in the 1870s (to mention only the most iconic excavations of classical sites), reinvigorated a focus on the materiality of classical heritage.[229] Through the scientific study of ruins, these excavations had a tremendous impact on classical scholarship, and on popular as well as erudite receptions of antiquity. For travellers in 'antique lands' in the second half of the nineteenth century, the ruins are no longer simply the symbolic sites of literary meditations on vanity or decadence, as in Shelley's Percy 'Ozymandias' most famously. They are now scientific artefacts, enriching and thus complicating historical knowledge and perceptions of antiquity, away from the canonical ideal of the classical literary canon. For this reason, the second half of the nineteenth century represents a decisive moment, not only in the scholarship of Classics, but in the broader difficulties for writers, communities or nations of claiming a homogenous classical heritage. The tensions that remain between scientific and aesthetic approaches are progressively displaced outside of the scholarly field as professional archaeology develops but remain heightened in many popular discourses about antiquities. The discovery of pre-classical vestiges from what are termed Mycenaean and Minoan civilisations in the second half of the nineteenth century transform the classical aesthetics of antiquity, not without resistance from authors such as Maurras who disparages these discoveries as 'les sauvageries de Mycènes'[230] in his visit to the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

As James Porter contends, 'the classical ideal had to be anchored in an aesthetic image of the past but also in its historical reality. Classicism was literally torn between materialism and idealism – between a materialism of the historical relic and an idealism of the relic-fetishized – and so too, between the extremes of attraction and aversion.'[231] This chapter thus shows how nineteenth-century travel writers navigating between those two poles (the ideal and the historical) integrate criticisms of archaeology in building a new aesthetic for ruins, as well as upholding textual conceptions of Classicism against material evidence.

It focuses in the first place on the resistance to archaeological practices and discourses in travel narratives. Whether for ideological, practical or aesthetic reasons, the first members of the EFA in the late 1840s, Vogüé in the 1870s or Maurras and Barrès at the very end of the century, are openly dismissive in their travel in Greece and around the Mediterranean of the work of archaeologists.

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[229] Classical archaeology represents only a fraction of the discoveries of a century that excavated prehistorical remains and also saw the development of 'national' archaeologies in countries with no Greco-Roman past. See Díaz-Andreu.

[230] Maurras, *Anthinéa*, p. 51.

[231] James I. Porter, p. 68.

All of them keen readers of ancient texts, they complain more often than not that their discoveries tarnish rather than enhance their classical heritage. This section will thus consider the examples of resistance to archaeological appropriation of the ruins and the dismissal of material remains as a source of knowledge on the ancient world in favour of a purely canonical textual heritage.

The second part of the chapter examines how ruins have been appropriated to bolster *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics of the exotic. It focuses on Vogüé's journey around the Mediterranean and Loti's disillusioned voyage in Egypt and their *desiring* reception of antiquity. The dynamic of a never-satisfied desire to retrieve what is found to be irremediably absent from classical culture constitutes what Joshua Billings terms an 'erotics of reception', which is that classical reception is constituted by a dialectic of longing, for the conjoined physical and ideal aspects of antiquity.[232] This analysis shows how the material experience of ancient ruins highlights both the presence and the absence of the classical world in modernity. These are combined to form a perfect *fin-de-siècle* literary image of decadence, dismissing both scientific and didactic uses of the ruins in favour of an aesthetic reconfiguration of an old motif.

2.1 Resisting archaeology

When the French School in Athens opened in 1847, none of its founding members, selected amongst the latest *agrégés* from the Ecole Normale Supérieure, were trained in archaeology and the educational benefits expected from their journeys in Greece were closer to those of the eighteenth-century 'Grand Tour' than those of modern scholars.[233] They were tasked with studying the country, its nature and its monuments, to bring back impressions that will enrich their research and their teaching back in France (forming what might be sees as an erudite counterpart to the artist residences of the *Académie de France*, in Rome's Villa Médicis since Napoleon) . Despite their lack of proficiency in archaeology or modern Greek, the combination of their classical training with the modern country was deemed sufficient to foster intellectual research.

In reality, the development of classical archaeology throughout the century is also often driven by the reception of the surviving written culture of antiquity: 'In the second half of the nineteenth century, classical archaeologists began to search for ways to recover information that would corroborate and expand what was known from written records.'[234] The desire to retrieve the material component of a primarily textually constructed antiquity is shared by archaeologists and

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[232] Joshua Billings, 'Hyperion's symposium: an erotics of reception.', *Classical Receptions Journal*, 2, 1 (2010), 4-24

[233] Catherine Valenti, 'Les membres de l'École française d'Athènes : étude d'une élite universitaire (1846-1992)', *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, 120, 1 (1996), 157-172.

[234] Trigger, p. 62.

travellers, as in the exemplary case of Heinrich Schliemann's mass excavations of Troy (1870-1871) and Mycenae (1874). A businessman and an adventurer, Schliemann came to archaeology as an amateur animated by a childhood fascination with the Homeric epics. As his famed discoveries of Troy and its treasure were widely covered across Europe, the German excavator of the mythical city and of Mycenaean civilisation came to represent, in the popular imagination, the ubiquitous stereotype of the archaeologist, both savant and adventurer.[235] As noted by Eric Perrin-Saminadayar, the nineteenth century sees the rise of a 'tension entre l'appréhension scientifique de l'objet archéologique et son investissement imaginaire et/ou esthétique.'[236] For writers falling resolutely in the second category, the figure of Schliemann is thus used as an implicit stereotype of all the negative aspects of archaeology. This is paradoxical as Schliemann himself is an outlier in regard to his contemporary archaeologists, a self-taught outsider to the academic world whose own digging enterprises in Troy first, then in Mycenae, are nothing if not guided by a personal 'investissement imaginaire' in the Homeric legend.

In reality, many critiques of Schliemann in France seem driven not only by his celebrity that makes him the ideal embodiment of a profession they disdain, but also by more personal, and potentially political, prejudices. If Vogüé dismisses his research, without even mentioning his name, Barrès appears to consider classical archaeology as a betrayal of national history, and thus the German Schliemann ('l'heureux épicier d'Allemagne'[237]) as an opponent to French interests in Greece. The potentially nationalist nature of these critiques is also evident in Maurras' account of his detailed visit to the Archaeological Museum of Athens, which holds some of Schliemann's Mycenaean finds, dismissed by the author of *Anthinéa* as barbaric and which he uses to criticise not only archaeology but also any attempt to link these artefacts too closely with Homer's texts. It is interesting that in all three cases Schliemann himself is not named directly but that his status and that of his work, places him, even if by association only, at the centre of late nineteenth-century French critiques of classical archaeology.

2.1.1 The disappointed dilettantes of the Ecole Française d'Athènes

As an institution, the specialisation of the EFA as an archaeological research institute occurs comparatively late, in the 1870s, with the excavation on the island of Delos (1873) inaugurating the period known as 'les grandes fouilles'[238] (Delos, Delphi, Argos, et al.), that spells the end of the

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[235] David Turner, 'Heinrich Schliemann: The Man behind the Masks', *Archaeology*, 43, 6 (1990), 36-42.

[236] Eric Perrin-Saminadayar, 'Présentation' in *Rêver l'archéologie au 19e siècle: de la science à l'imaginaire*, ed. by Eric Perrin-Saminadayar (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2001), pp. 9-14 (p. 12).

[237] Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 164

[238] Valenti*, L'École Française d'Athènes*, p.73-82.

more literary outputs of the School to the profit of archaeological advances. This belated professionalisation is partly a reaction to the rapid development of German archaeology in Greece, as the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut opened in Athens in 1874 and was immediately granted a monopoly on excavating work in Olympia from the Greek government (the EFA had to wait until 1891 to sign a similar agreement regarding the site of Delphi). This shift is thus indicative of the investment in archaeological science as a field where diplomatic rivalries play out, and thus of the growing national prestige of excavation findings in the late nineteenth century.

However, I have chosen to focus exclusively on the writings of the very first generations of EFA members, on which very little research has been done, despite the abundance and the richness of the material.[239] This is due not only to the quantity of material produced but also because most of these writings represent excellent examples of a hybrid genre of learned travel, which was rendered possible due to the freedom given to these scholars in terms of both travel and writing. Mixing travel impressions with scholarly reflexions on ancient literature, culture and history, Jean-Claude Berchet calls them 'promenades archéologiques',[240] a designation that rightly evokes both historical interest and travellers' dilettantism. As its foundational decree did not precisely define the scholarly activities of its members, the first members of the EFA benefited from a large degree of freedom in the pursuit of their studies, in Athens and beyond, as an increase in their scholarship in 1848 was decreed in order to 'les mettre à même de faire dans le pays quelques excursions qui seront profitables à leur instruction.'[241] As remembered by Charles Levêque, one of the School's first members, these journeys were envisioned as educational, although no programme of work was established for the students.

> On comptait évidemment que les monumens encore subsistans, que les lieux historiques avec leurs montagnes, leurs fleuves, leurs golfes, leurs îles; que les ruines, les vestiges, que les noms des villes fameuses susciteraient, dans ces intelligences nourries de souvenirs helléniques, des questions intéressantes à rajeunir ou à traiter pour la première fois. On se gardait de dire lesquelles. On se bornait à lancer en avant ce groupe curieux en lui disant: 'Allez, cherchez, trouvez !' En d'autres termes, il s'agissait, avant tout, de

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[239] Catherine Valenti's work on the history of the EFA uses a comprehensive range of archives and published work but does not provide any literary analysis of the school members' production (Catherine Valenti, 'Le voyage en Grèce des membres de l'École Française d'Athènes', *Balkanologie*, 6, 1-2 (2002), 155-166.; ibid., *L'École Française d'Athènes* (Paris: Belin, 2006). Sophie Basch analyses in more depth the most famous of these works, Edmond About's *La Grèce contemporaine* (1854), as representative of a backlash against the perceived idealisation of Greece by early nineteenth-century philhellenism, but does not examine the more nuanced narratives of other EFA members (Sophie Basch, *Le mirage grec. La Grèce moderne devant l'opinion française (1846-1946)* (Paris: Hatier, 1995)).

[240] Berchet, *Le voyage en Orient*, p. 1079

[241] Lettre de Narcisse-Achille de Salvandy, Ministre secrétaire d'État au département de l'instruction publique à Amédée Daveluy, directeur de l'École Française d'Athènes, 15 octobre 1847, EFA/ 2 ADM 1/ 16

> reconnaître le pays, puis de regarder et d'étudier, comme on étudie un livre, ce qui se présenterait de digne d'être bien regardé.[242]

It is evident from this programme that the EFA's members were primarily literary scholars, tasked with studying Greece as if it were a text to be deciphered; the names alone of famous cities from antiquity was to be enough to generate fresh classical scholarship.

Retracing the history of the School, Levêque relates:

> Il y a deux sortes d'archéologie : celle qui rencontre et commente des monumens déjà trouvés, et celle qui fouille pour en découvrir et en expliquer de nouveaux. Dans les neuf rapports publics qui vont de 1850 à 1858, on recommande aux explorateurs de tenir compte des documens et monumens archéologiques restés visibles ou rendus à la lumière; on ne leur impose pas, même à demi-mot, l'obligation d'en découvrir.[243]

(The notable exception to this approach is Charles-Ernest Beulé, who stayed in Athens from 1849 to 1852, and excavated the Roman gate and the propylaea of the Acropolis.[244]) Levêque's categorisation of two types of archaeology is simplistic but it highlights the distinction that shapes the transition between the antiquarian conception of the past, one that sees archaeology as a 'collecting activity', in which the excavation process is ignored or disregarded, and modern archaeology, which is modelled on natural science and pays as much attention to artefacts as to the exact conditions in which they were found.[245]

The travel narratives of these early scholars thus reveal a focus on classical Greece that dispenses with archaeological science and only considers the ruins as part of the broader classical scenery that they expect to find. The inevitable gap between these expectations, set up by the construction of a ubiquitous Hellenist ideal in early nineteenth-century Western education, and the Greek landscapes that are described by the travellers, crudely exposes the type of confirmation bias operating within these narratives. The search for an idealised and intact classical Greek landscape takes precedence over the long view of history adopted by professional archaeologists. As we have seen in chapter 1, members of the EFA are often dismissive towards postclassical Greece, and here towards the physical as well as historical layers that obscures antiquity from their view.

Overall, encounters with ancient ruins are deemed disappointing, or at the very least not fully fruitful for classical studies. With the important exception of the Acropolis, there is little interest

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[242] Charles Levêque, 'La fondation et les débuts de l'École française d'Athènes – Histoire et souvenirs', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 146 (1898), 85-119 (p. 93).

[243] Ibid., p.106.

[244] Charles-Ernest Beulé, *L'Acropole d'Athènes*, 2 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1853-1854).

[245] Alain Schnapp, *La Conquête du passé: aux origines de l'archéologie* (Paris: Le Livre de poche, 1998 [1993]).

for the potential of excavation work, which Levêque was disparaging already in an 1851 article, published when he returned from Greece.

> Il est un sentiment très vif, connu de quiconque a vécu dans les pays classiques et surtout en Grèce, c'est une préoccupation constante, une sorte de trouble d'esprit qui montre partout au voyageur sous le sol qu'il foule des merveilles enfouis. […] Il faut se délier pourtant de cet entraînement, qui ne conduit guère qu'à des mécomptes. […] le zèle de la société archéologique a toujours été guidé par un sage discernement. C'est au culte des chefs-d'œuvre de l'antique, et non à restaurer de vulgaires débris, qu'elle a de préférence appliqué ses faibles ressources.[246]

The dismissal of archaeological finds as 'débris' illustrates for Levêque the inevitable disappointment that awaits anyone who would look for buried masterpieces in the Greek soil. It is better to honour the remains of antiquity that have survived through the centuries. The restoration he praises here is the work done on the Parthenon in the last years of the 1830s and we find here the distinction made by Schnapp between archaeology as a 'une activité de la cueillette', which only picks up what is already unearthed (or was never buried), and the 'travail de fouille', which looks to uncover new artefacts.[247] In any case, the School members remain textual scholars, privileging the uncovering of literary truth in ancient texts over material culture. Levêque's warnings against the illusory desire to unearth classical wonders from the Greek soil reveal first and foremost the philhellenes' fear that ancient remains might not live up to the ideal of ancient Greece. The textual and material fragments of antiquity that have been received through the centuries have been granted a canonical status, akin to the timeless veracity generally attributed to religious teachings, as indicated by Levêque's use of the locution 'culte des chefs-d'oeuvre de l'antique'. However, it is here implied that the preservation of this canonical version of classical Greece runs counter to the progress of scientific knowledge represented by modern archaeological practices.

Like the romantic philhellenes before them, in general early EFA scholars appreciate ruins as part of picturesque landscapes (we will explore the question of the picturesque in more detail in chapter 3), not as objects of enquiry in and by themselves. However, whereas an author like Lamartine, who frames ruins as part of the ideal romantic picturesque landscape, exalts the Parthenon as sublime, specifically because the tragedy of its destruction adds to the aesthetic of the scene ('C'est le plus sublime effet de ruines que les hommes ont jamais pu produire, parce que

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246 Charles Levêque, 'Les Monumens d'Athènes et les études archéologiques en Grèce', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 11 (1851), 637-660 (p. 646).

247 Alain Schnapp, 'Archéologie et tradition académique en Europe aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles', *Annales*, 37, 5-6 (1982), 760-777, (p. 770).

c'est la ruine de ce qu'ils firent jamais de plus beau!'[248]), scholars like Burnouf continue to value intact buildings over ruins.

> L'artiste qui parcourt la Grèce, l'Italie méridionale ou la Sicile, s'étonne de voir les temples antiques si supérieurs en beauté à ceux que les modernes construisent dans le même genre et sur le même modèle. Il est vrai que l'effet des ruines et de la couleur dont le soleil a peint ces monumens s'ajoute à celui de l'architecture; mais un beau temple est toujours plus beau que sa ruine, et celle-ci ne nous touche que par le souvenir qu'elle rappelle. On ne peut donc pas dire que, si les temples de la Grèce l'emportent sur les nôtres, c'est une illusion de notre esprit qui se plait à parcourir le passé et qui voit toutes choses plus belles à travers le temps.[249]

If Burnouf recognises here the aesthetic attractions of ruins, prized by Romantics like Lamartine, he also rejects these in his appraisal of Greek temples as mere 'effet'. For him, it is misguided to believe the historical memories evoked by the ruined temples, these are the products of an illusory mode of thinking that values antiquity only because it is long gone (as Lamartine admires in the Parthenon the fall of what was once great, rather than its greatness itself). This type of classical reception is, for Burnouf, a sentimental distortion of the real superiority of Greek architecture. According to him, the beauty of Greek temples lies not in their antiquity but in their architectural qualities; they are favoured by artists because they are more beautiful *as constructions*, not as ruins. The picturesque landscape of ruins, complete with Mediterranean light and colours, is sidelined whilst neoclassical reproductions of ancient architecture 'sur le même modèle' fail to vie with the originals. For Burnouf, ruins of classical constructions are sought after by travellers not for their contribution to romantic landscape, but for their indisputable architectural superiority over more modern buildings.

> On s'explique au reste pourquoi dans la Grèce on recherche principalement les ruines grecques : en vérité, ce sont celles où il y a le plus d'art ; une seule pierre hellénique a plus de valeur aux yeux d'un artiste amoureux de la forme que la tour franque ou turque la mieux conservée.[250]

At the time when these articles were published, Burnouf does not exhibit an interest in the scientific study of ancient stones. He is here reinforcing the pre-existing hierarchy of historical remains, with

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[248] Alphonse de Lamartine, *Voyage en Orient*, in *Œuvres Complètes de M. de Lamartine*, 13 vols (Paris: Charles Gosselin, Furne et Cie, 1842), VI, p. 141.
[249] Émile Burnouf, 'Monuments de la Grèce – Le Parthénon', *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 20 (1847), 835-853, (p. 839).
[250] Émile Burnouf, 'D'Athènes à Corinthe', *Nouvelles annales des voyages, de la géographie, de l'histoire et de l'archéologie*, 1 (1856), 291-339 (p. 306).

classical ruins sitting above medieval or ottoman constructions. Following eighteenth-century classicist criteria of beauty and harmony, Greek ruins inherently contain 'le plus d'art' and are particularly pleasing to 'amoureux de la forme', which are artists who have followed Winckelmann's lessons on Greek aesthetic.

Twenty years after his first residence in Athens, Burnouf became the second director of the EFA (1867-1875). Whilst he does not appear to have significantly developed scientific archaeological programmes during his time leading the School (those will mostly be put in place by his successor, Albert Dumont), he did collaborate with Schliemann, visiting the site of Troy and, as a Sanskrit scholar, providing the German archaeologist with an interpretation of the swastika motif he had found on multiple excavated artefacts.[251] By this time, Burnouf recognises in his own work the contributions of modern archaeology, whilst also criticising its limits in solving the scholarly debate he is working on, which is how different religions have historically proceeded from each other.[252] His minor role in Schliemann's work and its diffusion reveals, however, the way archaeology at the end of the nineteenth century remains tied to reception of ancient literature (whether from Greece and Rome, or in this case, from India and its Vedic tradition).[253]

2.1.2 Barrès and the layering of memories

One staunch critique of these archaeological methods of historical enquiry is Barrès, as he expresses in his *Voyage de Sparte*. For him, archaeologists not only prevent the aesthetic enjoyment of ancient ruins, they also fail to understand the value (historical, sentimental and ideological) of artefacts or monuments, destroying layers of history in their quest for classical vestiges. The epithets he reserves for Schliemann are therefore nothing short of hyperbolic: 'Schliemann, l'éventreur des tombeaux, ajoute un retentissant sacrilège à la série héroïque des crimes mycéniens.'[254] Schliemann's excavations were indeed infamously destructive as he used dynamite to reach the layers of what he imagined to be the Troy he could date to the Homeric epic. His 'crime' is thus here equated to the series of intra-familial murders that marred the mythological stories of Atreus and his descendants (Agamemnon, Menelaus, Orestes, *et al.*). The most famous sacrilegious murder is the killing of

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[251] His explanation (that the motif was a Vedic one and represented either Prometheus (as a Christ-like figure) tied on Mount Caucasus or the logs of the sacred fire, see Emile Burnouf, *La science des religions* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1876), p. 240) was discredited early in the twentieth century but its presupposed Aryan origin was used by the Nazis when they adopted the swastika as their symbol and later as their flag.

[252] Emile Burnouf, *La Science des religions*.

[253] His correspondence also reveals that he helped to hide some of the Trojan archaeological finds in the EFA, when they were smuggled out of the Ottoman empire by Schliemann. See Olivier Masson, 'Recherches récentes sur Heinrich Schliemann', *Revue des Études Grecques*, 108 (1995), 593-600 (p. 596).

[254] Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 446.

Clytemnestra by her son Orestes, to avenge his father Agamemnon; this matricide is considered so horrifying that Orestes is punished by being relentlessly pursued by the Furies. The destruction of layers of history and the emptying of tombs by archaeologists such as Schliemann is thus decried by Barrès on a symbolic level, as a blasphemous destruction of heritage and ancestry.

The nationalist author thus certainly has in mind very similar scholars when he imagines a dialogue between a traveller (a thinly disguised autobiographical figure) and a member of the EFA (a composite caricature of a classical archaeologist), in the sixth chapter of *Le Voyage de Sparte* entitled 'Le palais des ducs d'Athènes'. That is why, when visiting the Parthenon, he deplores the recent destruction of a medieval tower on the Acropolis - according to Barrès, a surviving part of the Athenian duchy palace, founded in 1205 by Othon de la Roche after his participation in the fourth Crusade.[255] 'Vous ne tenez aucun compte des souvenirs français en Grèce' is the traveller's objection to his interlocutor, an imaginary archaeologist and 'Pensionnaire de l'Ecole Française d'Athènes'.[256] For Barrès, the case for the tower has to be made, not comparing its beauty or its innate interest with the ancient temple ('comme vous, je préfère les Propylées au palais des ducs d'Athènes, mais tel n'est pas le débat.'[257]), but as the preservation of an important part of French heritage: 'Le "miracle grec" c'est beau, mais le miracle français, je veux dire notre expansion au XIII[e] siècle, ce n'est pas mal non plus.'[258] In this confrontation of memories, Barrès appears determined to glorify French history in Greece, putting emphasis on a period, the Crusades, seen as one of national conquest and expansion. Then, invoking not only the Dukes of Brienne (the noble household of Othon de la Roche), but also the general Fabvier who fought in the Greek Independence war, he draws a version of Greek history intimately embedded in French legacy. Where he successfully merged ancient Greek and medieval French heritages in Sparta and Mystras (see Chapter 1), Barrès fails to do so while standing on the Acropolis. For the archaeologist, his argument remains scientifically unfounded: 'Je ne vois pas ce que le 'sang français' vient faire là-dedans! Je suis un archéologue classique et je fais mon métier.'[259]

The archaeologist's trade is precisely what Barrès is attacking here. 'Les objectifs de l'archéologie vont à l'encontre de ceux de l'histoire: c'est sur l'Acropole que Barrès manifeste avec le plus de conviction et de clairvoyance l'idée que la fouille compromet l'histoire du vestige en détruisant les

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255 The datation is uncertain. It could have been built by the Florentine dukes who succeeded the Burgundy lineage. Jean Baelen, 'L'Acropole pendant la guerre d'Indépendance. II. Le drame de la Tour Franque', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé*, 2 (1959), 240-298.

256 Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 412.

257 Ibid., p. 413.

258 Ibid.

259 Ibid., p. 415.

états successifs d'un monument'.[260] Ostensibly imputing to an invented figure (a member of the EFA) the destruction of the Frankish tower, Barrès is tarring all archaeologists with the same brush ('Vous ou vos frères en archéologie grecque').[261] In reality, the destruction of the tower seems to have been the project of Schliemann himself, who financed the work in 1874.[262] At the end of the nineteenth century, the figure of Schliemann seems, even indirectly, to be central in the negative portrayal of archaeology and archaeologists drawn by certain French writers.

Despite his own claim to scientific enquiry, Vogüé, like Barrès, demonstrates repeatedly his scepticism towards systematic archaeological methods, dismissing ancient stones in Ephesus as 'patûre d'archéologues'.[263] Vogüé's tone is notably sceptical on the value of specific archaeological excavations, even on sites of major historical discoveries.

> La Troade, je l'avoue, m'a toujours laissé froid. Que, dix siècles avant notre ère, une tribu hellène ait chassé de ces plateaux une tribu pélasge, c'est affaire à elles: je n'irai jamais chercher des pierres douteuses dans ces landes désolées.[264]

However, his dismissive comments on the search for Troy's vestiges reveal other layers of prejudices than simply an aesthetic response to scientific practices. Considering the timing of his journey in November 1872, this is likely to be, here again, a denigrating allusion to Schliemann's excavations of Troy (which began in 1870), that might be explained by the heightened resentment towards Germany in France at the time, especially as Vogüé was a soldier in the Franco-Prussian war. These comments also dismiss the possible historicity of the Homerian epics as irrelevant, with a series of striking simplifications. The collected armies of the most important Greek cities become a simple 'tribu hellène', whilst Troy is reduced to 'une tribu pélasge'. These remarks, seemingly trivialising the Trojan War, contrast with the praise given, one page later, to Homer and Virgil as humanity's 'plus noble et plus doux patrimoine'.

The use of the denominative 'pelasgian' to characterise the Trojans is perplexing. Admittedly, in the Iliad, the Pelasgians are presented as military allies of the Trojans[265] but few historians, in antiquity or in the nineteenth century, have classified the Trojans as Pelasgians themselves. A notable exception, and perhaps the source of Vogüé's interpretation, is Jules Michelet: 'Avant les

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[260] Farnoux, p. 18.

[261] Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 412.

[262] See reference. Interestingly, the director of the EFA in 1874 was Emile Burnouf (who, as we have seen, was already disparaging Frankish towers in 1854), by then a personal friend of Schliemann.

[263] Vogüé, *Syrie, Palestine, Mont Athos*, p. 9.

[264] Vogüé, p. 5

[265] Homer, *Iliad*, trans. by Augustus Taber Murry, revised by William F. Wyatt, 2 vols (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), I, p. 123 (2, 840-843).

Hellènes, les Pélasges occupaient toute la Grèce jusqu'au Strymon. […] De là ils s'étendaient sur la côte de l'Asie, dans les pays appelés plus tard Carie, Eolide, Ionie, et jusqu'à l'Hellespont. Sur cette côte, en face de Samothrace, s'élevait Troie, la grande ville pélasgique'.[266] Against the material evidence (as contested as the archaeological findings and their interpretations were at the time) presented by Schliemann that Homer's Trojans were Mycenaeans, Vogüé prefers the textual interpretations of a canonical, if outdated, French historian.

Maurras, travelling twenty years after Vogüé, had direct access to Schliemann's Mycenaean discoveries in Athens' archaeological museum, and appeared dismayed at the discrepancy between his expectations of artistic perfection, based on his faithful reading of Homer, and the material reality of the excavated artefacts dating from centuries before Greece's classical age. He is thus keen to dissociate classical texts, which he praises, from the decidedly 'un-classical' materiality of the ancient artefacts. Like Vogüé, Maurras receives antiquity as a textual model, divorced from its material reality, not dissimilar from Said's definition of orientalism as a form of discourse with little relation to the reality of what it describes.

> Empirical data about the Orient or about any of its part count for very little; what matters and is decisive is what I have been calling the Orientalist vision […]. In other words, we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate.[267]

Classical antiquity and the 'Orient' both proceed from a hegemonic Western discourse, destined to reinforce simplified narratives of identity and heritage.

Furthermore, Maurras uses this division to explain the following paradox: how the most perfect of poets can have been born in an otherwise artistically archaic age, or how fifth-century BCE Athens can be the pinnacle of Hellenic artistic achievement, three centuries after its most accomplished literary oeuvres? In fact, for him not all art develops at the same rate, in ancient Greece as in the example he gives of Renaissance Florence (where Dante flourished when Giotto was only starting to free himself from medieval painting constraints). This perspective bolsters the classical hierarchy of the canon independently of the historical circumstances that presided, for example the redaction of the *Divine Comedy* or the sculpting of the *Charioteer of Delphi*. It reinforces the selectivity of the canon by judging works of art against a universal and ahistorical ideal, and, by divorcing artefacts

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[266] Jules Michelet, *Histoire Romaine. Première partie: République*, (Paris: Librairie Classique de L. Hachette, 1831), pp. 16-17.

[267] Said, pp. 69-71.

(material or literary) from their context it justifies the separate judgement accorded to different forms of artistic representation.

It is therefore pointless to try and reconcile the Homeric account of the Trojan war and its aftermath and Schliemann (*et al.*)'s archaeological finds. Maurras thus decrees a superiority of literary reception over archaeological finds; Homer's texts are self-sufficient, their relationship with the reality they might purport to describe is irrelevant. The Mycenaeans, even if they sometimes appear to foster the seeds of the future development of classical art, are foremost 'des grecs barbares ou sauvages, pleins de réminiscence asiatique et égyptienne'.[268] Like with Vogüé' and his disdain for Troy's 'pierres douteuses', insinuating that the material reality of the Trojan war, or of Mycenaean civilisation, is negligible in the reception of antiquity allows the authors to take their distance from what is perceived as the 'Oriental' and Barbarian otherness of ancient Greece, by focussing on those aspects of it which are more easily assimilable into nineteenth- and twentieth-century French culture and into classicist aesthetic ideals.

Of course, Maurras might be rejecting what he perceives as the 'esprit évolutionniste' of those who are trying to read Homer in the light of the Mycenaean archaeological finds, but his own reception of antiquity is no less deterministic. In reality, his rejection of archaeology is selective as he only disparages what he perceives as inferior to the textual heritage of antiquity, whilst, for example, praising the beauty of fifth-century BCE artefacts. In this way, he differs from Barrès who opposes the general hierarchisation of ancient material culture practised by archaeologists themselves.

Barrès' case in favour of the Frankish tower of the Acropolis appears, at first glance, to be firmly anti-scientific, opposing the methodical process of the professional archaeologist with a sentimental argument in favour of what the tower represents: a tangible, emotive link to a specifically French past. However, his nationalist justifications are underpinned by a well-developed theory of history and reception. Against a strict 'originalist' approach that aims to restitute the purest available version of fifth-century BCE monuments, Barrès pleads for a vision of the Acropolis that would embrace layers of history in its midst. For him, researching the authenticity of Athena's temple in 1900 is an anachronistic illusion that only destroys testimonies from non-classical history, without bringing any true meaning to the reception of the classical past.

> Le principe du développement des sociétés et des vérités, voilà ce que nous mettrait sous les yeux, avec un pittoresque inexprimable, le temple de Pallas, compliqué d'une chapelle byzantine, d'un donjon féodal, d'un mirab musulman et d'un musée archéologique. La vue nette de ces constructions successives, l'apparente incohérence de tant d'efforts qui

[268] Ibid., p. 56.

> eurent chacun leur idéal et qu'un grand cœur sentirait dans leur unité, voilà une magnifique leçon de relativisme.[269]

Once again, Barrès appears to embrace an understanding of classical reception that would coincide with Butler's theory of 'Deep Classics', as the only way to reach any kind of historical truth is to envisage a place like the Acropolis, and by extension Athens and the Greek peninsula, in its layered diachronic complexity. In this regard, classical archaeology is dismissed as artificially selective and thus sterile, and the semi-satirical dialogue ends with a provocative suggestion, by the boarder at the French School in Athens, to entirely dismantle the Parthenon in order to better study its foundations. Barrès' sentimental nationalism finds echoes, in his Greek journey, in a broader historiographical concern with the erasure of layers of post-classical history by a misplaced attempt at recovering the idealised landscape of fifth-century BCE Athens. The vanquished presence of a Frankish tower on the Acropolis, far from spoiling his view of the ancient temple, would provide the French writer with a nationally and historically relatable testimony of the constant human reinvestment of the place. Instead, he deplores the fact that the remaining ruins are now only disused stones, of value only for scientists whose 'soulless' interest for the past remains purely intellectual.

As shown in chapter 1, Barrès' reception of antiquity is cumulative (integrating ancient Greece in a layered history which includes medieval and even modern transformations), whilst Maurras' is selective (relying on a chain of reception that goes from classical Athens to nineteenth-century France whilst overlooking any period or location considered antithetic to classical ideals). In fact, in this imagined dialogue, Barrès highlights that the supposed 'scientific' approach of archaeology owes more than it pretends to a hierarchical textual reception of antiquity. Schliemann is of course the perfect example of an archaeologist guided by his reception of literature, but here as well, the superiority of the Parthenon over the Frankish tower can only be justified by a broader cultural hierarchy that reveres classical antiquity as more aesthetically valuable, and more authentically Greek, than any other era that succeeded it.

2.2 Fin-de-siècle ruins

As demonstrated, an interest in ruins, in the nineteenth century, does not always correlate with an appreciation for archaeology. Barrès' peculiar interest makes him see erasure of the French past in modern archaeology's focus on antiquity, but concerns about European decline projected onto ruins are very widespread at the end of the nineteenth century. Vogüé's *Voyages au pays du passé* and

[269] Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 414.

Loti's *La Mort de Philae* are representative examples of impressions of the 'Orient' transcribed by French travellers at the end of the nineteenth century, at a time when confrontations with the ruins of the ancient world resonate strongly with the perceived decline of European civilisation(s).[270] I show here that *fin-de-siècle* travellers' enjoyment of ruins is conditioned by their visual symbolisation of decadence which is aesthetically incompatible with the positivism of scientific enquiry.
As Loti writes about the ruins of Saqqara:

> C'est peut-être cela, du reste, qui est la plus terrifiante de toutes nos notions positives: savoir qu'il y aura un dernier de tout; non seulement un dernier temple, un dernier prêtre, mais aussi une dernière naissance d'enfant humain, un dernier lever de soleil, un dernier jour.[271]

The *fin-de-siècle* anxiety explored in chapter 1 is here presented through Loti's meditative visits to Egyptian ancient monuments, making use of the motif of the ruin as a symbol of decadence, to form the basis of a reflection on the past and the weight of time on historical constructions. These *fin-de-siècle* travel narratives reconceptualise here their relationships with ancient history and heritage, as civilisation is presented as condemned to decline and end. This section thus shows how Loti and Vogüé make use of the rhetorical device of the *aporia* to produce *fin-de-siècle* travel narratives that are disillusioned by the material impossibility of retrieving the ancient past and the exotic other, and both complicate the decadent narrative of history and embrace its aesthetics.

2.2.1 Fin de siècle and the decline of the exotic

Whilst *fin-de-siècle* culture covers a broader spectrum than the explicitly decadent movement, it remains a period that is generally defined, at least in part, by a perception of decline, a generalised anxiety about social change and progress and a desperate recourse to exoticism as illusory escapism, 'a possible refuge from an overbearing modernity.'[272]

> Dismay at the fast pace of social and technological innovation led many [authors] to reject faith in the new beginnings proclaimed by the voice of progress, and instead focus in an almost perverse way on the imagery of degeneration, artificiality and ruin.[273]

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[270] Cécile Meynard, 'Splendeur et vertige des ruines: *La Mort de Philae* de Pierre Loti', *Dix-Neuf*, 17, 2 (2013), 224-236.
[271] Loti, p. 100.
[272] Bongie, p. 11
[273] Christopher Nissen and Marja Härmänmaa, 'Introduction: The Empire at the End of Decadence' in *Decadence, Degeneration, and the End: Studies in European Fin de Siècle* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 1-14 (p.1).

This disillusion does not spare the 'exotic' elsewhere and the perceived disappearance of places truly untouched by modernity led to travel narratives haunted by the threat of their own imminent irrelevance.

> The initial optimism of the exoticist project gives way, in the last decades of the century, to a pessimistic vision in which the exotic becomes less a space of possibility than one of impossibility.[274]

Whilst the impact of the *fin-de-siècle* decadent spirit and the retreat of the exotic on travel writing have been studied before,[275] Loti's and Vogüé's texts interrogate the place of Classics in belated journeys to a possibly disappearing 'Orient'. The relationship with history and cultural heritage being played out by 'belated' travellers is a complex one. As everything is set to a foreseeable end, antiquity provides both examples of decadent, and then 'fallen', civilisations but also an exoticised and aestheticised escape from modern late-nineteenth-century decadence. Classical culture is often presented as simultaneously preserved in the alterity of 'exotic' lands and irretrievably lost. Once again, the oriental journey is initially conceived as the occasion of a material confrontation with the traces of the classical past, through visits to archaeological remains first, but also through the interpretation of cultural alterity as preserving antiquity through a state of historical stasis. However, *fin-de-siècle* travel narratives deliberately mediate these confrontations through the recourse to ancient literature, in order to aestheticise the crumbling material traces of antiquity and thus construct elaborate decadent literary *tableaux* of the 'Orient'. As Goran Blix puts it, 'The importance of the visual in the poetics of recovery has produced an often recurring phantasm: the allegorical dream of excavating actual paintings from the earth, as if the ambition to forge a historical simulacrum had created a material correlative in the soil.'[276]

In the tension between the anxiety and the aesthetic of the *fin-de-siècle*, the value of the ancient past lies in its absence as well as in its presence in the modern world. The dynamic of a never-satisfied desire to retrieve what is found to be irremediably absent from classical culture, a dynamic that we find at play within a variety of nineteenth-century engagements with antiquity, has been theorised by Billings as an 'erotics of reception'.

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[274] Bongie, p. 17.

[275] In addition to Bongie, and Behdad, we can cite Charles Forsdick, *Travel in Twentieth-Century French and Francophone Cultures: The Persistence of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Jean-Marc Moura and Guy Ducrey, *Crise fin-de-siècle et tentation de l'exotisme* (Lille: Université Charles-de-Gaulle, 2002).

[276] Goran Blix, *From Paris to Pompeii: French romanticism and the cultural politics of archaeology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 90.

> parallel to a hermeneutics, we need an erotics of reception. Such a perspective would be sensitive not only to the ways the classical world is present in modernity, but also to the ways it is experienced as absent. It would understand engagement with the untimeliness of antiquity — not its timelessness or universality — as the genuinely productive force in classical reception. […] One can figure the negative element of this erotics in many ways: misremembering and erasure, historical incompleteness, the impossibility of translation, traumatic loss and repression, or […] mourning.[277]

I propose to relate this dialectic of desire and absence for the Classics to Vattimo's concept of the *Andenken* (remembering) which Bongie reinterpreted in his analysis of the 'exotic' in the *fin de siècle*. The *Andenken*, for Bongie and Vattimo, is the pendant of the *Verwindung* ('weak' overcoming) of modernity. In the *Verwindung,* no postmodern critique can fully overcome modern concepts such as progress (or indeed, the exotic) despite their inadequacies, and must thus continue to make use of them, in the same movement with which they are discarding them. *Andenken* is the consequential movement of summoning up a past that is 'always-already lost and forgotten'.[278] If the *Verwindung* precludes the modernist possibility of a positive future, the *Andenken* reveals the unbridgeable chasm between us and our past. By defining the category of the exotic as 'a posthumous project',[279] that is one whose overcoming is woven into the advent of modernity itself, Bongie uses it as a prime example of the *Andenken* movement: 'The exoticist project […] attempts to re-present what has 'always-already' been lost and forgotten; only once this project has been exhausted does the possibility of truly remembering the exotic arise – of remembering it, that is, as what can never be truly remembered, as what is absent, vanished.'[280] In that sense, the *Andenken*, here applied to the category of the exotic, would equally be applicable to frame the reception of the Classics in *fin-de-siècle* travel writing. In the same way that Billings' erotics of reception brings into focus the dynamics of desire fixated on an object – antiquity – which is irretrievably absent from modernity, yet whose remaining traces trigger an active movement of reception, Bongie stresses the way the *Andenken* 'does not pursue a direct contact with the past, but, rather, establishes itself in the abyss that forever separates us from that which we are remembering.'[281] Indeed, both Classics and the exotic are, and have always been, 'absent', mere nostalgic constructions made into objects of desire by writers drawn to their never quite attainable ideals. Both antiquity and the exotic captivate Vogüé and Loti

[277] Billings, 'Hyperion's symposium', pp. 21-22.
[278] Bongie, p. 26.
[279] Ibid., p .17.
[280] Ibid., p. 26.
[281] Ibid., p. 25

through a repeated confrontation with visible traces of both their seemingly irremediable disappearances.

However, the 'aporia' of travel writing, characterised by the impasse of travel writing in the face of exotic dissolution, appears to be constantly delayed. The exotic is repeatedly presented as being on the verge of disappearance, only to be captured one last time by a traveller posing as the last one to witness the 'real' 'Orient'. This prompts an accumulation of textual productions from travellers ever willing to fix the last trace of the disappearing 'Orient'. In aporia, creativity appears to flourish. In reality, both Classics and the 'Orient' resist the announced aporia and appear as much a source of creative renaissance in the *fin-de-siècle* as they were in preceding centuries. Against Bongie's critique of Loti's works as 'occlud[ing] the historical disjunction between the exotic world they wish to portray and the colonial present in which [he] must write',[282] *La Mort de Philae* encompasses the colonial reality in a wider reflection on the ways in which ancient history and cultural alterity are received by the modern traveller.

2.2.2 Haunting beauty of crumbling temples

In his essay *La poétique des ruines en France* (which covers a period from the Renaissance to the early nineteenth century), Mortier identifies two literary usages of ruins: 'l'usage *moral*, didactique, qui tire de la ruine une leçon (quand ce n'est pas un sermon); l'usage *pittoresque*, simplement visuel, qui en fait un spectacle.'[283] In *fin-de-siècle* travel literature, both usages are combined. The moral lesson, which could be summarised as a civilisational *memento mori*, is reconfigured into an aesthetic one: the decadent artist takes pleasure in the aesthetic of fallen empires, precisely because he embraces the (a)moral idea of inevitable decay that they evoke.

In this regard, the last and eponymous chapter of *La Mort de Philae* is emblematic. The island and the temple of Philae are halfway underwater and can only be visited by boat. When Loti arrives, at dusk, he is both cynical about British industrialisation (the British built the Aswan dam which caused the flooding of the island in 1902) and strongly enchanted by the vision of the submerged ruins and its promises of imminent disappearance in the Nile: 'combien il est adorable ainsi, le kiosque de Philae, dans ce désarroi précurseur de son éboulement! […] tout à fait kiosque de rêve maintenant, et que l'on sent si prêt de disparaître à jamais sous ces eaux qui ne baissent plus…'[284] Billings' erotics of reception, characterised by a never satisfied desire to retrieve the irremediably absent (absence being a condition of desire) are clearly at play in Loti's visit, faced with an ancient

[282] Ibid., p. 23.
[283] Mortier, p. 12.
[284] Loti, p. 347

temple irreversibly disappearing. The attraction of the antique is heightened by its imminent absence and the traveller is animated both by a desire to preserve the goddess and to watch her fall. Melancholy and the passage of time are what give antiquity its value. It is because it is never fully there, always on the verge of disappearing, that Loti desires it. What is more, the physical process of ruination itself adds to the 'erotic' of the scene.

> La voilà bientôt tout entière sortie de l'ombre, la déesse… Mais il semble qu'elle s'étonne et s'inquiète de voir à ses pieds […] sa propre image, un reflet d'elle-même qui s'allonge, qui s'allonge, renversé dans de l'eau… […]
>
> Et soudain, au milieu de tout le calme nocturne de ce temple isolé dans un lac, encore la surprise d'une sorte de grondement funèbre, encore des choses qui s'éboulent, de précieuses pierres qui se désagrègent, qui tombent, - et alors, à la surface de l'eau, mille cernes concentriques se forment et se déforment […] ne finissent plus de troubler ce miroir […] où l'Isis se regardait tristement…[285]

The double gaze of Loti on the statue and of Isis on her vanishing reflection in the water renders the erotic pursuit of the past an almost narcissistic endeavour. As the goddess remains fascinated by her own image as she is slowly disappearing in it, so Loti writes the scene as reflecting his own predicament as a fin-de-siècle traveller which witnesses both the ancient past and the exotic nature of Egypt disappearing in front of his eyes.

The destiny of the statue seems to mimic the lifecycle of Egyptian civilisation, first coming out of the shadows of ancient history, expanding its empire from the sources of the Nile to the Mediterranean, and then slowly falling to pieces, its beauty dimming, in the same way as the falling stones make circles on the surface of the water below it. Philae, whose 'death' is signalled by the title of the book, first appears as a metonym for ancient Egyptian civilisation, disappearing rapidly, subjugated by ruthless modernising forces, symbolised here by the dam built by the British. Whilst Loti laments the combined effect of colonisation and industrialisation on ancient ruins, this antagonism once again wilfully overlooks the existence of forms of non-Western modernity in Egypt. The only indigenous presence in this last chapter is, tellingly, decaying as fast as the temple. Unlike the positive and dynamic figure of his friend Mustapha Kamil, the factory workers that Loti meets in a tavern by the lakeshore are ruined by alcoholism and their working conditions: 'jadis des êtres de santé et de plein air, mais qui ont déjà la figure flétrie sous un poudrage de charbon, les yeux hagards, avec une expression malheureuse et mauvaise'.[286] Like many others, his meditations

[285] Ibid., p. 355.
[286] Ibid., p. 352

on the dissolution of ancient Egypt are first and foremost an answer to European *fin-de-siècle* anxieties about its own decline; the descriptions of the workers, covered with coal, addicted to alcohol, their tavern decorated with pornographic images, would not stand out in a nineteenth-century novel about the perils of industrialisation in Paris or London. Whether feared or embraced, visions of oriental decadence are primarily presented as an implicit reminder of Europe's, and France's, own decay.

In a strikingly similar scene, Vogüé sits on the shore of Byblos, Lebanon, at night where ancient goddesses (here Phoenicians, rather than Egyptians) are conjured into life in front of him: 'C'est l'heure des mystères et de la prière due aux déesses nocturnes: la Vierge lunaire, dont la calme majesté s'irradie devant moi […] - Astarté, la sombre déesse des puissances hostiles et immaîtrisées, la Mort, les Ténèbres, la Mer - Aschera, la Vie communiquée, la Volupté souveraine qui cherche Tammouz pour l'arracher au tombeau et le ranimer d'un baiser […] ressuscite la ville ensevelie et appelle hors de ces hypogées dont est criblée la plaine les populations qui l'ont adorée.'[287]

His reverie focuses primarily on the latest figure, Asherah, to whom he ascribes the power to bring men, god and entire cities back to life ('Elle est celle à qui rien ne résiste, et les sépulcres lui rendront leur proie.'). Despite alluding to multiple deities, it becomes apparent that, for Vogüé, Asherah and Astarte are two different faces of the same figure, an ancient goddess of death (Astarte) and life (Asherah), married to Tammuz, whom she mourns.[288] As in his reading of the Trojans as Pelasgians, Vogüé's interpretation of ancient Near East mythology rests on partial and imprecise sources, but it is primarily a pretext for a historically syncretic recreation of pre-Judaic Canaanite civilisation in Byblos. In this reverie, temples 'construits de monolithes gigantesques' are raised again 'sur les pilastres trapus', as are palaces and bazaars, welcoming an aggregate of ancient people in their ports: Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Carthaginians, Chaldeans, etc. A whole imaginary cosmopolitan 'Orient' comes back to life on the shore of Byblos, propelled by the desire of the goddess for her dead husband. Once again, 'erotics' is the driving force that triggers a resurrection of the past as Asherah/Astarte seeks to relive her husband. However, Vogüé then concludes with what is almost a failure of evocation. The demise of Byblos, as with that of Ephesus, is attributed to biblical forces: 'mais voici qu'un Juif sordide passe, qui la maudit au nom de son Dieu jaloux et dit: "J'exterminerai

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[287] Vogüé, *Voyage aux pays du passé*, p. 42

[288] The story of Tammuz and Ishtar (Astarte) seems to come primarily from Mesopotamian mythology, whilst Asherah is a central figure of the Phoenician pantheon. Astarte is the Greek name of a syncretic figure, known to the Phoenicians as Ashtart, and has also been associated with the Egyptian goddess Isis with whom she sometimes shares the qualificative of 'Queen of Heaven'. According to the Phoenician author Sanchuniathon, she could be the sister of Asherah. *Transformation of a Goddess: Ishtar – Astarte – Aphrodite* , ed. by David T. Sugimoto (Fribourg/Göttingen: Academic Press/Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 2014).

jusqu'à sa poussière, *radam pulverem ejus de ea.*'"[289] The quote from the Book of Ezekiel announces the destruction of Tyr, another Phoenician city, as a punishment for rejoicing at Jerusalem's fall. In Vogüé's eyes, the prophecy has thus been accomplished.

> Je regarde autour de moi, et dans le silence et la solitude, sous les débris accumulés par d'autres races, je ne retrouve même pas, en vérité, un peu de la poussière de ces âges merveilleux. Seule la vague obstinée revient mourir à sa place ancienne; seule la lune poursuit sa route immuable, propice et compatissante aux souvenirs du passé. Où sont ces races bruyantes et disparues? […] En rentrant me coucher dans ma tente, j'entends longtemps encore […] la sourdine plaintive de la mer battant contre les rochers, comme un écho demeuré des gémissements d'Astarté pleurant son divin amant.[290]

Here as well, the pursuit of a mythical past is embodied by a divine woman. The Phoenician goddess Astarté, like Isis for Loti, is witnessing the death of her ancient world. Unlike in Ephesus, the biblical reference does not promise resurrection but a complete annihilation of intelligible traces. In the Old Testament, the divine threat predicts the rise of nations against Tyr: 'I will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up.'[291] The motive of the flood, even as a metaphor, is here again underlying the inevitable disappearance of antiquity. The heaps of ruins are eternally silent but the Mediterranean, like the Nile for Loti, resonates as an 'echo' of civilisations gone by, and this echo is one of desire and mourning.

The resurrection of Tarmmuz proves as impossible as a genuine access to the ancient past for Vogüé as the fantasy of ancient Byblos emerges as a mere illusion in the light of day:

> Le jour naissant n'a rien laissé debout de nos rêves. Il nous a montré […] un donjon carré, construction arabe entée sur de belles assises de grandes pierres à refends qu'on a longtemps appelées cyclopéennes ou phéniciennes, mais qui, d'après les derniers arrêts de l'archéologie contemporaine, paraissent devoir être restitués simplement aux Romains. Nulle inscription ne trahit leur secret […] Pour témoigner […] des splendeurs du passé, des tronçons de colonnes de marbre, de porphyre, de granit de Syène, se sont gauchement laissé prendre à tous les pans de murs, dans le torchis de boue et de rocaille, et y font la piteuse figure d'un os de géant dans le squelette rachitique d'un nain.[292]

Of ancient Byblos, only ruins remain, integrated into a modern Arab construction (in reality, a crusader's castle, that Vogüé, unlike Barrès in similar circumstances, seeks to dismiss and other),

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[289] One of many examples of Vogüé's virulent antisemitism.
[290] Vogüé, p. 44-45.
[291] Ezekiel, 26. 3
[292] Vogüé, p. 45

and even those ancient stones are neither mythical ('cyclopéennes'), nor even pre-biblical ('phéniciennes'), but simply Roman. Here again, modern archaeology is a disheartening authority which frustrates more imaginative classical receptions. Ancient stones have been co-opted by subsequent societies which incorporated them into modern buildings, a common practice from the Renaissance onwards, but a layering that travellers in search of an immediate access to the ancient past tend to disparage.[293] For Vogüé, these remains of great civilisations look as if they have been forcefully integrated into inferior, almost shrivelled societies, here described as scrawny, that is ailing and fragile; after the splendour of ancient Phoenicia, all modernity appears ill and decadent. What is worse, prisoners of mud and gravel, the ancient stones remain silent and undecipherable and thus resist the foremost textual receptions that Vogüé has been imposing on the ancient world, whilst their layered, reused conditions as active foundations of modern building defeat the night reveries that saw them as part of a revived antiquity. Without being inscribed upon, and despite archaeologists' work on them, the ancient stones are as deadly silent as the ancient world. Astarte, both the goddess of death and a widow herself, destroying and mourning in the same movement, recalls Loti's Isis witnessing her own disappearance in Philae. However, whereas Isis was watching her own disappearance, Astarte looks for her husband, a dead god whose failed resurrection symbolises the impediment at the heart of the erotics of reception: the vital and creative force of desire can only manifest itself for that which is irretrievable.

In reality, Loti and Vogüé's journeys are a pretext for an aesthetic usage of decadent motifs. *Fin-de-siècle* aestheticism leads here to a regeneration of the travel genre, even as the travelled land and its past are depicted as constantly disappearing, recurrently drowning like Philae in the Nile or crumbling like Byblos and Ephesus. The decadent literary effect derived from the depiction of falling ruins is explicitly underlined by Loti: 'combien il est adorable ainsi, le kiosque de Philae, dans ce désarroi précurseur de son éboulement!'[294] The personification of the pavilion's angst at his crumbling adds to the enchanting image the travel writer is conjuring here. As Bourget puts it: 'Un style de décadence est celui où l'unité du livre se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la page, où la page se décompose, pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la phrase, et la phrase pour laisser la place à l'indépendance du mot.'[295] Whilst the literary unity of Philae and Byblos are preserved, their physical decompositions hint at a very *fin-de-siècle* aesthetic of fragmentation.[296]

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[293] See also members of the EFA (chapter 1)

[294] Loti, p. 347

[295] Bourget, p. 25

[296] See Blix: 'The dialectic of fragment and totality not only appears in museums and novels but broadly patterns much of nineteenth-century culture, from collecting and interior decoration to antiquarianism and philology, pursuits which rely heavily on fictive recombinations of isolated items', p. 135.

Both the ancient Mediterranean past and the oriental exotic are subject to the same process of desire in the face of their material disappearance, and thus of the literary sublimation of this very same disappearance. Always on the verge of redundancy, yet ready to re-enact its collapse in front of his gaze, Philae maps out the whole experience of travel in a too well-travelled Egypt for Loti. In theory, antiquity is long gone and the exotic is retreating, but the process of disappearance itself defies the announced aporia of travel writing, offering the writers one last chance to pose as the *fin-de-siècle* poets of a dying world.

In conclusion, despite the important classical discoveries made in the nineteenth century, travel writers around the Mediterranean remain drawn to a textual antiquity that is hard to reconcile with the reassessment of classical knowledge effected by the work of professional archaeologists. The ancient ruins in the Levant, that used to add to the picturesque lure of the countries for travellers and writers, increasingly become the disputed sites of contested receptions. The rediscovered material reality of places like Troy appears to constantly threaten the Homerian texts, regardless of Schliemann's professed reliance on the Iliad in his search. Material traces (ruins, artefacts) are disappointing as imperfect proofs of the *presence* of the ancient past and can only be occasionally redeemed as fateful and aesthetic symbols of the *absence* of this mythical past in the present. This dichotomy of antiquity as simultaneously vanished and found again in the ruins of the 'Orient' is resolved in very different ways in the authors' reception of the natural environment they traverse.

CHAPTER 3 – MATERIAL RECEPTIONS: 'ORIENTAL' AND CLASSICAL LANDSCAPES

Introduction: (re)constructing 'classicality' in natural environments

Faced with the disappointing *absence* at the core of ancient ruins, travel writers can be seen to turn towards other aspects of the 'oriental' environment, whilst searching for a classical *presence*. In many ways, natural elements present themselves as more malleable, easier to frame as part of a rediscovered 'classical' landscape. In her study of romantic Hellenism, Constanze Güthenke, postulating alienation from nature as a condition of modernity, remarks in turn that 'our feeling towards nature stands in the same relation as our feeling towards the ancients, according both the place of a sought-after object.'[297] The divorce between early nineteenth-century modernity and an idealised natural life is keenly felt by the Romantics, and the longing for a 'return to nature' can be understood in similar terms to that of the desire for an irretrievable classical past. Many Romantic authors developed a special relationship with nature which they conceived as intimately linked to authentic artistic expression, in opposition to the industrialisation that was sweeping through Europe.

> The romantic insistence on the superiority of the organic serves to remind us that attitudes to nature were deeply implicated in this cultural revolution. Since creative artistic expression of truth was organic and society false and mechanical, the world of nature could and did take on a particular resonance, a significance which drew upon and yet transcended traditional enlightenment considerations of nature and their expression in the picturesque.[298]

Raymond Williams demonstrated that late eighteenth- to nineteenth-century definitions of nature differed from earlier ones in strictly excluding human life from it: 'Nature, in this new sense, was in another and different way all that was not man: all that was not touched by man, spoilt by man: nature as the lonely places, the wilderness.'[299] This conception positions nature writers as outside observers, detached from their object of contemplation. This is accentuated in the case of travel writing to exotic

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[297] Güthenke, *Placing Modern Greece: the dynamics of Romantic Hellenism*, Classical Presences (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p. 32.

[298] Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998 [1985]), p. 226.

[299] Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), p. 77.

places such as the 'Orient', where the entire posture of European travellers hinges on their outsider status, towering politically and epistemologically above the oriental alterity they wish to survey.
In his definition of the landscape, cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove also insists on the importance of elite European social classes in the historical development of the concept.

> Landscape is a way of seeing that has its own history, but a history that can be understood only as part of a wider history of economy and society […] The landscape idea emerged as a dimension of European elite consciousness at an identifiable period in the evolution of European societies: it was refined and elaborated over a long period during which it expressed and supported a range of political, social and moral assumptions and became accepted as a significant aspect of taste.[300]

Even in more familiar environments, the development of landscape as a series of artistic expressions (painting but also outdoor space design) implied a 'way of seeing' that centred an overlooking rather than immersive point of view, with Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818) as a key example.[301] Even in the midst of a natural environment, the standpoint is that of the outsider's gaze. The romantic return to nature is thus a utopian idea, and as distinctions are drawn sharply between humankind and its environment in the same way that the classical world is cut off from modern times, direct access to both classical and natural ways of life have been lost.
In reality of course, nature is not a separate entity from society, though such a division is sometimes central to its definition.

> [N]ature has never been simply 'natural' – whether it's 'wilderness,' resources, 'natural hazards,' or even the human body. Rather, it is intrinsically social, in different ways, at different levels, and with a multitude of serious implications.[302]

For example, concepts of nature are socially constructed in various discourses, including a wide range of nineteenth-century romantic and travel literature. Nature, and associated concepts such as 'wilderness', are never essentially delineated but are only used in relation to specific social contexts,

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[300] Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, p. 1.

[301] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008 [1972]).

[302] Noel Castree, 'Socializing Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics', in *Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics*, ed. by Noel Castree and Bruce Braun (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp. 1-22 (p. 5).

whether to appropriate them ('resources') or alienate them ('wilderness').[303] The natural environment is constantly conceptualised within a complex web of social relations, with profound aesthetic, economic and political effects.[304] The development of landscape as an aesthetic category is a case in point, as it can be understood as the artificial framing of a portion of nature to conform to specific standards of artistic representation. As Güthenke puts it, 'materiality infused with meaning becomes the lens through which Greek and oriental nature is seen by travel writers'.[305]

This chapter explores the mechanisms of this 'infusion' of meaning into oriental landscapes, by travellers in search of antique traces in nature. It argues that the perception of nature as the 'non-human' part of the environment allows European travellers to think of it as unchanged from ancient times and thus see in it an ideal site of classical reception. The divorce between human and non-human elements of the travelled lands, as well as the perceived immutability of the 'Orient' allows for the development of environmental determinism as a tool of historical analysis; since nature is unchanged since ancient times, and clearly separate from the human aspects of the 'Orient', the influence on both ancient and modern societies of their natural environment is considered determinant and unchangeable. For the members of the French School in Athens, disappointed with their encounters with Greek ruins, this raises the possibility of scholarship via natural observation.

> Activated through complex embodied processes of reconnaissance, landscape made the past present […]. Reconnaissance found its most emblematic enactment in historical topography, the identification and mapping of the ancient towns, geographical features and other topographical memory places described in Classical texts.[306]

Travel writing, as a hybrid genre, renders the distinction between 'scientific' and 'unscientific' writing difficult to parse. However, in both cases, this process of 'reconnaissance' (what Flaubert calls his 'retrouvailles' with nature) is at the heart of the way travel writers engage with the oriental natural environment. This chapter demonstrates how the classical scholarship of the EFA scholars draws on

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[303] William Cronon, 'The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature', in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. by William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), pp. 69-90.

[304] See *Uncommon Ground*, ed. by William Cronon; David Demeritt, 'What Is the "Social Construction of Nature"? A Typology and Sympathetic Critique', *Progress in Human Geography*, 26, 6 (2002), 767–790.

[305] Güthenke, *Placing Modern Greece*, p. 5.

[306] Veronica della Dora, 'Mountains and Memory: Embodied Visions of Ancient Peaks in the Nineteenth-Century Aegean', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33, 2 (2008), 217-232 (p. 222).

theories of environmental determinism to 'make the past present' in the Greek natural environment. Journeying through famous Greek landmarks, such as the Thermopylae, they offer renewed readings of the classics in light of the perceived immutable authenticity of the landscape. Seeing nature as an observable repository of ancient traces also leads Flaubert to memorialise historically unremarkable landscapes in his travel notes, turning them into 'memory places', at the junction between cultural *lieux de mémoire* and personal *souvenirs*. However, these different investments of meaning into travelled landscapes are shaped by an active contribution from the classical intertext. This chapter thus argues that despite their claims of scientific or aesthetic value in the observation of material reality, these writers' conception of nature shifts towards a dematerialisation of their subject, that is being systematically supplemented by literary (inter)texts.

3.1 EFA natural scholarship

Scientific approaches to ruins are dismissed by the early scholars of the French School in Athens (EFA) in the mid-nineteenth century in favour of an appreciation for landscapes, but the aim of their interpretative process remains to uncover truths on antiquity in the Greek environment resulting in works which amount to a form of 'archaeology of nature'. However, these hybrid travel narratives, halfway between scientific communications and journeys of discovery, project onto the Greek landscape living memories of the ancient past, beyond the simple recognition of places described in classical literature.

They are inspired by the 'picturesque' genre of travel writing but also by theories of environmental determinism, that influence not only classical scholarship but also racial theories, as we will see in chapter 4. Focussing on nineteenth-century mountaineers in Greece, della Dora posits that recognition of the ancient past in contemporary Greek nature 'involved written texts, like Homer and Pausanias, with which these 'foot-weary students of the terrain' usually travelled, but it also involved the 'immutable text of nature' against which words and numbers were confronted.'[307] Reading and interpreting classical texts in the light of the Greek natural environment is thus an act of material reconstruction which confronts the sign with its signified, where the text supplements what is either lacking or different from the landscape. However, nature acts not only as the subject of classical texts but as their intertext, that is as another layer of sources onto which the classical past is inscribed.

[307] della Dora, p. 222.

The early EFA scholars thus develop a scholarly method based on observation of the natural environment from which they draw analysis that reaches all areas of Hellenism: history, literature, geology. Whilst ruins failed to live up to their classically mediated expectations of Greece, they read in their examination of the modern landscapes multiple endorsements of their receptions of ancient texts. The truth of the ancient past is to be discovered in the immutable environment, justifying travel in Greece as scholarly practice and what della Dora calls 'mnemonic acts'.[308] The layering of Greek landscapes and classical texts is expected to produce scholarly truths about the ancient past, supported scientifically by a substrate of theories of environmental determinism.

3.1.1 Environmental determinism

A causal relationship between natural environments and human ways of life is the mark of geographical theories of environmental determinism. The idea that climates determine the physiologies, cultures and temperaments of the inhabitants of certain lands is a persistent one, of which different manifestations can be found in the history of Western thought. Hippocrates' 'humourism' remained influential throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; however, in the eighteenth century the attribution of human characteristics to the environment shifts from medical discourses to political ones. In *De l'Esprit des lois*, Montesquieu thus proclaims: 'L'empire du climat est le premier de tous les empires',[309] an affirmation which is nuanced by but in general upheld by other Enlightenment philosophers like Voltaire and Kant.[310] The racial and colonial amplifications of such theories in the nineteenth century will be explored in chapter 4 but they are crucial for the EFA scholars' writings on Greek nature. In 1828, Victor Cousin thus writes in the introduction of his *Cours de Philosophie*:

> donnez-moi la carte d'un pays, sa configuration, son climat, ses eaux, ses vents, et toute sa géographie physique: donnez-moi ses productions naturelles, sa flore, sa zoologie, etc., et je me charge de vous dire *à priori* quel sera l'homme de ce pays et quel rôle ce pays jouera dans l'histoire, non pas accidentellement mais nécessairement, non pas à telle époque, mais dans toutes, enfin l'idée qu'il est appelé à représenter.[311]

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[308] Ibid., p. 218.

[309] Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des lois*, 2 vols (London: Nourse, 1772 [1748]), I, p. 388.

[310] David N. Livingstone, 'Environmental Determinism', in *The SAGE Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, ed. by John A. Agnes and David N. Livingstone (London: Sage Publications, 2011), pp. 368-380 (pp. 370-372).

[311] Victor Cousin, *Cours de Philosophie: introduction à l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Pichon et Didier, 1828), pp. 17-18.

Such a quote by an important figure of the French education system in the 1840s (Cousin was Minister for Education from March to October 1840 and president of the Jury for the Agrégation de Philosophy from 1840 onwards in addition to his professorship at the Sorbonne) gives an idea of the mainstream ideas that would have been familiar to the EFA scholars. Cousin articulates here a discourse of environmental determinism which generalises Enlightenment theories of government, attributing to the environment both individual human characteristics and the historical destiny of nations. Its totalising character anticipates (without fully overlapping with them) the more heavily racialised development of such ideas in the second half of the nineteenth century.[312] For Cousin, the environment and its representations (either via maps, or via biological catalogues) is an interdisciplinary tool which can be used for analyses that are at the same time anthropological ('quel sera l'homme de ce pays'), historical ('quel rôle ce pays jouera dans l'histoire') and philosophical ('l'idée qu'il est appelé à représenter'). These wide-ranging claims hint, however, at a possible scientific approach, resting on the idea that presented with an extended and accurate set of environmental data, one should be able to produce an accurate study of the essence of any given country. It is interesting to note that Cousin does not propose to gather geographical data himself, only to undertake the collating and analysis of data presented to him by other field observers. This attitude differs markedly from the EFA members who see in the direct observation of Greece the added value of their scholarship. However, a point of convergence is the historical determinism that is inferred from Cousin's environmental determinism, where both people and nature remain unchanged 'dans toutes [les époques]'. This historical constancy, commonly applied to the 'Orient' (as seen, for example, in the analysis of temporality in Vogüé's travel narrative), forms the basis of the EFA scholars' reception of Ancient Greece in the modern country.

> There has been remarkable tenacity to single out Greece, ancient or modern, for the enduring character of its natural features; its particularity of place, at the same time, was and continues to be thought extraordinarily suitable to embody universal concepts.[313]

The 'enduring character of [Greece's] natural features' makes it an ideal terrain for scholarly observations. This is not only the case because the modern country's nature thus presents a means of access to the past, but also because, as pointed out here, this perceived constancy allows the material

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[312] See for example Friedrich Ratzel, *Anthropogeographie. Die geographische Verbreitung des Menschen*, 2 vols (Stuttgart: J. Engelhorn, 1882-1891) and later Ellen Churchill Semple*, Influences of Geographic Environment on the Basis of Ratzel's System of Anthropo-Geography* (New York: Henry Holt, 1911).

[313] Güthenke, *Placing Modern Greece*, p. 3.

grounding of certain Western cultural ideals. Indeed, the 'in-between' borderland position of Greece in the mid-nineteenth century is emancipated from the 'oriental' domination of the Ottoman Empire but retains enough 'exotic' characteristics to prevent its assimilation into a Western European geographical space. French travellers thus paradoxically often refer to the country as part of the 'Orient', immutable as such, even when they are claiming a direct heredity from its classical history.

> Le climat de l'Orient paraît avoir, à la différence du nôtre, cette vertu: qu'il exerce sur l'homme une influence plus directe et plus sensible. La vie tout entière, même celle de l'âme, en semble dépendre. Des besoins bornés, des conditions d'existence uniformes, la rendent plus simple et plus régulière. L'activité volontaire s'y développe dans un cercle plus étroit: aussi s'arrête-t-elle plus vite et plus loin du terme, dans la carrière du progrès. Les mœurs doivent, par conséquent, varier moins selon les races et selon les âges; et c'est pourquoi on peut retrouver bien des traits des mœurs homériques chez les Turcs comme chez les Grecs, chez les Grecs d'aujourd'hui comme chez les Grecs d'autrefois.[314]

A causal relationship between regional climate and human ways of life is the mark of geographical theories of environmental determinism but here Gandar exonerates Western Europe of this influence, as the 'Orient' alone is deemed susceptible to direct climatic influence on its population's mores. Due to this, a constancy of climate (presupposed over thousands of years) is directly responsible for modern oriental customs, which have remained essentially the same since Homeric times. This racialised conception of historical progress is inseparable from an explicit orientalising of Greece (its climate is that of the 'Orient' and its mores are similar to the Turks' for Gandar). The immutability of Greek society across the centuries is only possible to envision in an oriental space. This process of orientalisation is symptomatic of the ambiguous perception of Greece in nineteenth-century Western Europe. After, and despite, its independence from the Ottoman Empire, its 'europeanness' is constantly reassessed, shifting back and forth between Western claims to its heritage and dismay at its persisting alterity, an ambiguous position which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Perceiving the Greek environment as not only immutable, but also directly affecting the historical development of Greek society, Gandar therefore draws upon theories of environmental determinism to justify his analysis of both ancient and modern Greece. A member of the first cohort of EFA students, he will stay in Greece from 1847 to 1849 of the first and once back in France, publish *Homère et la Grèce contemporaine*, a study (from his doctoral thesis) of Homer through geographical exploration

[314] Gandar, *Homère*, p. 55.

of modern Greece, which could arguably be read as an early example of 'classical reception' study. Here, he thus explains his research method for his study of parallels between Homer's texts and the contemporary country he is travelling through: 'c'est en vain que l'on compterait sur le témoignage des ruines: les monuments ont disparu pierre par pierre. Mais le peuple survit à leurs débris; et, en Grèce, le peuple n'a guère plus changé que la nature.'[315] To the immutability of nature is added the permanence of race; those will form the basis of the majority of the School members' studies. This equivalence allows them to draw multiple parallels between the landscapes of 1840s Greece and those described by Homer, but also between, for example, modern popular customs and ancient social practices. The physical journey illuminates the understanding of the classical texts, far beyond landscape observations, as nature acts as a getaway to the true essence of Greece.

As we have seen, three specific elements, for Gandar, lend themselves to comparisons and analysis of Greece through time: the ruins, the people and nature. However, the ruins are often disappointing, mutilated, fragmentary and, with the notable exception of Athens (where 'le siècle de Périclès semble revivre encore'[316]), cannot fully evoke Greece's glorious past. Greek people, as we have noted, remain (for Gandar) unchanged since antiquity but it is for the country's nature that he reserves his greatest appreciation.

> La nature enfin est un grand maître auquel nous nous abandonnons sans défiance, car elle ne trompe jamais; c'est elle que nous avons le plus de charmes à interroger; c'est elle qui nous fait les réponses les plus sincères et les plus complètes. Et ce n'est pas seulement les conditions géographiques de son histoire que la Grèce nous enseigne, c'est le développement de ses mœurs, le progrès de ses idées, le caractère particulier de ses artistes, de ses poëtes, de ses philosophes, de ses orateurs.[317]

Nature holds the key not only to Greece's geographical history but to all of its culture past and present; its observation can fully illuminate the social, artistic, intellectual and literary development of Greece. It is on this positivist theory of classical reception that most of the French School's early travellers base their classical scholarship; observing Greece always amounts to shedding light on its classical heritage. For Gandar himself, the result of his study is largely a reinforcement of Homer's status as the most perfect author of ancient Greece, not only in regard to his literary qualities but also to his accuracy,

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[315] Ibid., p. 54.

[316] Ibid., *Lettres et souvenirs*, p. 284.

[317] Ibid., p. 285.

and he thus concludes that 'Homère m'avait préparé à comprendre la Grèce, et la Grèce m'expliquait Homère.'[318] In the same way that classical reception studies aim to illuminate both ancient and modern texts, Homer defines modern Greece as much as modern Greece illuminates the Homeric *oeuvre*. Gandar's method is thus to show how Homer's descriptions match what he observes in Greece:

> Dès qu'on s'accoutume à les comparer à la nature de la Grèce on doit conclure, de l'exactitude des images et des comparaisons qu'il a répandu dans ses poèmes, que, si Homère a connu Ilion, que, s'il a traversé Ithaque, il a surtout et sans cesse vécu au milieu de la nature qu'il nous a peinte. […] La mer surtout lui est familière: azurée sous un ciel sans nuage; blanche, lorsqu'elle écume; violette, lorsqu'elle s'agite; noire, comme la nuit, comme le vin, comme la poix, lorsque la tempête s'amasse; il en sait toutes les couleurs; il en a écouté toutes les voix.[319]

Noting the diversity of epithets Homer applies to his descriptions of the sea, Gandar justifies them all with his own observations. Famously, the ancient poet did not use the word 'blue' to describe the water and enigmatically referred to it as 'wine-dark' on repeated occasions, in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[320] For the EFA scholar, the diversity of these descriptions reflects the intimate experience that the Greek author must have had of its environment; he knows the Mediterranean in all its changing circumstances – sunny, windy, tempestuous, etc. ('il en sait toutes les couleurs; il en a écouté toutes les voix'). Furthermore, Gandar's demonstration of the authentic 'truth' of the ancient epics emphasises the strength of the relationship of their authors with Greek nature ('il a surtout et sans cesse vécu au milieu de la nature qu'il nous a peinte'). The knowledge of Greece acquired by the travellers through sustained observation of its natural environment is all-encompassing, allowing for a surer judgement on Homer's poetry in all its aspects.

> J'ai vu de mes yeux les lieux qu'habitent les dieux d'Homère, les choses qu'ils font, tous les déguisements qu'ils empruntent pour se rapprocher des hommes sans être reconnus; je les ai vus errer au sommet des montagnes qui leurs sont consacrées, glisser sur la mer, traverser le monde.[321]

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[318] Ibid., *Homère*, p. 5.

[319] Ibid., p. 27.

[320] Adeline Grand-Clément, 'La mer pourpre: façons grecques de voir en couleurs. Représentations littéraires du chromatisme marin à l'époque archaïque', *Pallas: revue d'études antiques*, 92 (2013), 143-161.

[321] Gandar, *Homère*, p. 42.

The traveller's journey through Greece allows him to recognise not only the landscape features described by Homer, but also the characters of its epics, including the divine ones. Gandar presents here a gradation in his visual testimony from contemplating places associated with ancient myths ('les lieux qu'habitent les dieux d'Homère'), to witnessing their existence in front of him ('je les ai vus errer'). Gandar's Homeric scholarship relies here on the testimonial mode of travel writing, where direct observations justifiy his claims to epistemological privilege. Through observing the gods' immanent actions ('les choses qu'ils font'), the traveller is able to uncover their disguises. The use of the present tense highlights the material reality of the divine in Greece and the second sentence identifies divine presence within nature itself, as gods appear on consecrated mountains (probably Olympus) or in the sea. The truth, even fantastical, of ancient art and literature is thus confirmed by the experience of travel writing, which is in turn praised by another EFA scholar (and future director of the school) as the only pathway to their proper appreciation.

> C'est en vain qu'un homme recueillera à grand'peine tous les passages des auteurs anciens où il est question des peintures des temples et des édifices publics: s'il n'a vécu parmi ces monumens eux-mêmes, s'il ne les a habités, si la nature qui a inspiré les architectes ne l'a pénétré et inspiré lui-même, il sera sans doute un érudit, mais il n'aura pas l'intelligence de ces œuvres, il ne les jugera pas en artiste. Que manquera-t-il? Deux choses: la vérité du sentiment et celle du point de vue.[322]

Physical immersion is what allows travellers to reach beyond erudition to aesthetic truth itself. As works of art, monuments, literature, can only be truly understood in their physical context, travel writing is not only a mode of reception of the classics: it is the only acceptable one. For Burnouf (and his colleagues), to see what the ancients saw ('la vérité du point de vue') makes them able to feel what they felt ('la vérité du sentiment'). Whether avowedly or not, environmental determinism allows analysis of people and nature as part of the same archetypes and it is what gives scientific justification to this embrace of a materially perceivable Greek essence. Reading can thus prepare scholars to appreciate Greece, but they need to take in Greek nature unmediated, to be inspired by it, to form a true judgement on its works, in a recognisably romantic manner.

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[322] Emile Burnouf, 'Monuments de la Grèce – le Parthénon', *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 20 (1847), 835-853 (p. 850).

3.1.2 Reading texts in situ

Despite their far-reaching interest in all things Greek, members of the French School are first and foremost literary scholars, whose true enjoyment of classical culture is intertextual and derives from (re)reading texts *in situ*. The physical journey illuminates the understanding of the classical texts, far beyond landscape observations with nature as a getaway to the true essence of Greece. As della Dora notes, 'nineteenth-century Philhellenism (and Romanticism in general) called for an overwhelming sensorial engagement with the past and nature'.[323] It is this 'sensorial engagement' with both 'past and nature' that the EFA travellers consider the added value of their scholarship. The result is that a perception of nature as the keeper of ancient truths to be physically experienced gives rise to a method of study of the ancient world and its literature which is presented most comprehensively in one of Gandar's letters to one of his professors. He first exposes the benefits of a journey to Greece for the study of antiquity. The sojourn in Greece does not only illuminate the past, it helps appraise the picture of Ancient Greece that has been mythicised in French culture and school teaching. For Gandar, the perfection of Greece has been exaggerated by the focus of study on the greatest examples of ancient literature by an uncritical scholarship. The travel experience, on the contrary, allows a truthful evaluation of the classical heritage.

> [N]ous entrons ici comme dans une terre de libre examen où tous les faits, toutes les idées, tous les noms propres sont remis en discussion; la religion est ébranlée ; et la raison juge, faisant sa part au mal comme au bien […] Nous devenons, non pas sceptiques, ni même sévères, mais justes.[324]

Away from the literary myth, in contact with the material land of Greece, Gandar's preconceptions about ancient culture are put to the test and reassessed; he presents his study as relocating ancient Greece to a fair and balanced place in erudite culture and reconfigurating the hierarchy of great writers. The superiority of Homer is confirmed, the genius of the fifth-century BCE sculptor Phidias becomes concrete in view of the Parthenon remains, and the prestige of comedy author Aristophanes is increased as his moral satires still appear surprisingly truthful in ninenteenth-century Greece. In reality, the reassessment that Gandar suggests remains superficial, as the analysis produced by the EFA scholars, more often than not, judge highly celebrated authors such as Homer or Aeschylus as most

[323] della Dora, p. 230.

[324] Gandar, *Lettres et souvenirs*, p.282.

authentic, thus reinforcing the established canon of ancient literature: 'et la raison juge […] distinguant parmi ces gloires imprudemment confondues Euripide de Sophocle et Plutarque de Thucydide.'[325] Preferring the tragedies of Sophocles to those of Euripides as well as ranking Thucydides as a more reliable historian than Plutarch, for instance, are the conventional opinions of nineteenth-century scholarship, which Gandar dutifully upholds rather than upsets in his journey to Greece. The analytical method of re-evaluating texts in light of their geographical context is announced as a way to shed new light on ancient literature, but in reality, the new scholarship only reinforces the established canonical hierarchy of classical texts.

Despite the conservatism of these analyses, the observation of nature, combined with the reading of texts in Greece, is perceived as fruitful for classical scholarship by its practitioners. Thus, Isidore Vincent can affirm on the site of the battle of Thermopylae: 'Je te dirai que tout le récit d'Hérodote, comparé aux lieux malgré leurs changements, semble d'une exactitude admirable: nous l'avons lu et relu avec délices'.[326] As the shoreline has moved, the ancient narrow coastal pass is now a plain of a couple of kilometres between the mountain and the sea. Nevertheless, for Vincent, the ancient historian's descriptions paradoxically remain accurate even if the places have changed: 'les lieux ont donc considérablement change, mais tu vois cependant qu'on a tort de dire que les Thermopyles sont bouleversées.'[327]

By extolling the pleasure of reading the *Histories* on the site of the events they depict, however changed those sites are, the traveller uses ancient literature not to assess historical evidence but to supplement the imperfect material reality, as the reading pleasure increases appreciation for the scenery: 'ces grands souvenirs enivrent, tu le sais, quand ils s'unissent à la beauté des lieux et au plaisir de voir enfin satisfait un désir ardent et ancien.'[328] Literary memories exert a physical effect on the traveller when confronted with a beautiful landscape, whose beauty was desired and constructed precisely by the reading of classical texts. The Thermopylae pass appears beautiful because it is the authentic site of a famous classical event; Herodotus' descriptions of the battle site are truthful, because the observed landscape, however different, is beautiful and thus satisfies the desiring reception (in Billings' sense) of the traveller.

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[325] Ibid.

[326] Isidore Vincent, 'D'Athènes à Larisse', *L'Union des arts: revue littéraire et artistique*, 2 (1852), 121-138 (p. 128).

[327] Ibid., p. 127.

[328] Ibid., p. 128.

This romantic correspondence between nature and literary emotions is not reserved to historical accounts, as Charles Benoit goes as far as finding in the landscape of Santorini the confirmation of the oldest mythological accounts.

> J'avais avec moi ma Théogonie d'Hésiode; et je pus relire à loisir le récit de ce combat suprême des puissances de la terre et du ciel au lieu même qui en étalait encore à mes yeux l'épouvantable cicatrice. Auparavant j'avais pu dans ce chant des anciens jours ne voir qu'une légende poétique, inventée par les prêtres de la Piérie pour interpréter la succession des diverses dynasties de dieux trouvés ou apportés par eux dans la Grèce […]. Mais ici, en présence de la réalité, toutes ces fantaisies de l'érudition se dissipent. Les lieux vous révèlent avec une éclatante évidence le sens et la portée de ces poétiques traditions. Oui, les hommes ont été jadis témoins de ces effroyables convulsions de la nature; et on en reconnaît tous les phénomènes à travers les descriptions qu'ils en ont faites dans leur ignorance et leur frayeur.[329]

Once again, the re-enactment of the reading act *in situ* opens up new ways of receiving classics. Benoit, following existing traditions, sees Santorini as the location of the Titanomachy, and identifies the Minoan volcanic eruption (circa 1600 BCE) with the mythological struggle between the Titans and the Olympian Gods in the early days of the world.[330] However, as he finds in the landscape physical traces of what Hesiod described, he first acknowledges the myth as a popular explanation for natural occurrences, discarding socio-theological interpretations as 'fantaisies de l'érudition', opposing those to the materiality of the Greek landscape, visually marked by the volcanic phenomenon. Historicising the legend, he carries out the same reception process as Gandar as he uses the landscape to interpret Hesiod, whilst also advising modern geologists to turn to the record of ancient myths in their investigation of physical phenomena. Furthering his reading of Hesiod in the volcano's crater, the traveller abandons even the popular explanation of the myth through a natural phenomenon, in order to embrace a quasi-literal interpretation of the myth.

> Je revoyais presque sous mes yeux en effet les phases du combat. […] C'est ainsi qu'en relisant dans une crevasse du volcan l'antique récit d'Hésiode, je pensais encore assister au combat des puissances du ciel et de la terre aux anciens jours du monde. Le champ de bataille

[329] Charles Benoit, 'La Grèce ancienne étudiée dans la Grèce moderne', *Annales de l'Est*, 6 (1892), 505-538 (p. 519).

[330] Mott T. Greene, *Natural Knowledge in Preclassical antiquity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

> aujourd'hui semblait à peine pacifié et l'on croyait entendre encore le Titan enseveli sous ces ruines qui gémissait et menaçait de se réveiller un jour.[331]

The value attributed to physical empiricism in classical studies leads to a mode of assessment of literary truth in the light of physical experiences in the travelled land, assuring the triumph of sensation over scholarship. The passage adopts a *quasi*-testimonial tone, with verbs of perception systematically moderated, falling short of fully affirming the coevality of the contemporary observer and the mythical battle ('revoyais'; 'assister'; 'semblait'; 'entendre' are respectively preceded or followed by 'presque'; 'pensais'; 'à peine'; 'croyait'). Here again, the classical text supplements the palpable experience of the place to form a fully sensorial experience of antiquity.

As ancient myths are reinterpreted and relived in light of the Greek landscape, the appraisal of classical literature shifts from the search for exactitude in natural descriptions, to the authenticity of sensations. Texts are valued for how closely they depict the true 'essence' of Greece as observed and experienced by nineteenth-century travellers, allowing for a reassessment of the perceived accuracy of a wide range of ancient sources. Following Romantic ideas of 'truth in nature', travelled landscapes are thus expected to have kept the 'spirit' of classical Greece visible, allowing for the reading of all ancient literature, not only descriptive or historical texts, through the prism of natural observation. Travellers can thus easily compare the descriptions of Pausanias with the plays of Aeschylus:

> Pausanias est le cicerone banal; il vous fait le compte des stades et des plèthres, vous indique les rues et les quartiers, vous fait prendre à droite et à gauche, vous assomme d'une érudition empruntée et puérile, de notes compilées, d'anecdotes hors de propos. Eschyle est le vrai guide. Il révèle le sens secret de l'histoire et des lieux. Il peint les choses du présent, il évoque celle du passé; il représente les intimes et mystérieux effets de la nature sur le caractère, les passions et le langage ; sa poésie tient à cette terre, comme certaines plantes au sol maternel.[332]

Despite having served as a guide to travellers to Greece throughout the centuries due to the abundance of specific geographical and archaeological information contained in his *Hellados Periegis* (*Description of Greece*)[333], the second-century travel writer Pausanias is here dismissed by Antoine Grenier in favour of the classical tragedian Aeschylus. The descriptions of landscape and monuments, which are numerous in Pausanias' text, matter less than their supposed effect on ancient society, with literary

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[331] Benoit, pp. 519-520

[332] Antoine Grenier, *La Grèce en 1863* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1863), p. 23

[333] See Maria Pretzler, *Pausanias: Travel Writing in Ancient Greece* (London: Duckworth, 2007).

'truth' argued to be more important than geographical exactitude. The scholars' journeys are less intended to find locations as described by an ancient travel guide such as Pausanias' than to uncover the essence of Greece through the primarily literary experience of authenticity provided by great authors. Once again, the classical canon is reinforced by this romanticising mode of classical reception that, with the exception of Homer, extols Athenian art and literature from fifth-century BCE above all other examples. Pausanias' descriptions are judged too verbose, full of geographical details but covering only the surface of the topic, revealing nothing new; on the other hand, Aeschylus' tragedies are uncovering, for whoever reads it *in situ*, the hidden truth of Greek civilisation, which Grenier identifies as the origin of all of humanity's passions. Furthermore, Grenier's analysis draws a direct link between Aeschylus' literary truth and his natural environment. The poet's works are valued precisely as they are thought to show the intimate bond between the Greek people and their civilisations, as well as the relationship between Greek people and their land, because as nature affects 'le caractère, les passions et le langage', the most authentic Greek literature is that which exposes its own attachment to its soil. As Güthenke contends, in the early nineteenth century:

> As a place full of material remnants of its cultural past, and occupying a territory that was (politically and historically) not yet fixed, Greece was ostensibly blessed with a natural environment that was thought essential to its historical character.[334]

Greece's identity, both past and present, was indeed perceived by the first generation of EFA scholars as intimately linked to both its natural environment and its celebrated ancient history and culture. This double immutable heritage is at the core of the justification of their scholarly journeys. Nature, construed as both a classical source and a literary intertext, reinforces pre-existing conceptions of antiquity and its value. Their writings demonstrate that despite being presented as a novel element in the reading of ancient texts, the reception of classical works is not significantly transformed in contact with Greek nature. On the contrary, their observations of the Greek environment are more often than not used to confirm existing aesthetic and cultural hierarchies, as was the case, for example in chapter 1, with Maurras privileging of fifth-century BCE art over Mycenaean artefacts. Nevertheless, the material experience of nature in Greece is perceived as conferring not only scholarly legitimacy, but as presenting a historically enduring and authentic access to the essence of antiquity.

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[334] Güthenke, *Placing Modern Greece*, p. 6.

As we will see, whilst widely differing in aesthetic aims and methods, the search for an antique truth in the natural environment, both within and beyond the borders of Greece, also animated Gustave Flaubert's journey throughout the Mediterranean.

3.2 Flaubert's natural retrouvailles

From the first moment of his arrival in Egypt, Flaubert distinguishes between the novel aspects (the 'trouvailles') and the familiar ones (the 'retrouvailles') of his travel discoveries:

> peu d'étonnement de la nature, comme paysage, comme ciel, comme désert (sauf le mirage); étonnement énorme des villes et des hommes [...] Cela tient sans doute à ce que j'avais plus rêvé, plus creusé et plus imaginé tout ce qui est horizons, verdure, sables, arbres, soleil, que ce qui est maison, rues, costume et visage. Ç'a été pour la nature une retrouvaille et pour le reste une trouvaille.[335]

The opposition drawn in this letter to Louis Bouilhet between nature and culture matches the distinction between the known and the unknown of the 'Orient'. The author's pre-conceptions of the 'Orient' all pertained to the natural realm and a series of landscape elements he confesses to having already pre-imagined (sands, trees, skies, etc.). Flaubert's expectations are confirmed and even exceeded, as he announces in a letter to his mother from Cairo.

> Tu me demandes si l'orient est à la hauteur de ce que j'imaginais. À la hauteur, oui, et de plus il dépasse en largeur la supposition que j'en faisais. J'ai trouvé dessiné nettement ce qui pour moi était brumeux. Le fait a fait place au pressentiment, si bien que c'est souvent comme si je retrouvais tout à coup de vieux rêves oubliés.[336]

In his reassessment of the 'Orient', and especially of oriental nature, during the first steps of his journey, Flaubert attributes his experiencing of 'homecoming'[337] to having pre-imagined the Mediterranean landscapes long before his journey, but the writer's imagination is here characterised by its oneiric character ('j'avais plus rêvé'; 'de vieux rêves oubliés'). This section thus interrogates the

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[335] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 559 (1 December 1849).

[336] Ibid., p. 562 (5 January 1850).

[337] 'Retrouvaille', the action of finding something lost, is rendered by 'rediscovery' in Francis Steegmuller's partial translation of Flaubert's correspondence (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), but also means a 'reunion' with friends or family and, when not applied to people, can be understood as 'homecoming'. All of these meanings are applicable here, but I decided that 'homecoming' was particularly apt to express the sense of place expressed by Flaubert.

mnemonic aspects of Flaubert's writing on oriental nature; it argues that these 'oriental memories', despite being presented as dreams suddenly turned concrete, actually find their origin in Flaubert's imagined antiquity and are profoundly steeped in literary processes of classical reception. It will focus on Flaubert's framing of specific sections of the travelled land, building landscape scenes in his notes (and sometimes in his letters), thus memorialising the encounter between his own 'pre-dreams' of the 'Orient' and the materiality of the travel experience. Flaubert's oriental *souvenirs* therefore claim a complex status, at the intersection of memory, dream and imagination, which we can see most clearly in the way he approaches travelled landscapes. I argue here that his landscape 'snapshots' (as they are often found in his short notes, rather than in long descriptions) display, and sometimes embrace, a perceptive awareness of his culturally and historically mediated 'way of seeing'. The oriental landscape, for Flaubert, is framed by his literary reception of classical antiquity.

> Avoir choisi Delphes pour y mettre la Pythie est un coup de génie. C'est un paysage à terreurs religieuses, vallée étroite entre deux montagnes presque à pic, le fond plein d'oliviers noirs, les montagnes rouges et vertes, le tout garni de précipices, avec la mer au fond et un horizon de montagnes couvertes de neige.[338]

This description of the Gulf of Delphi thus exclusively frames the places as the historical seat of Apollo's oracle, the Pythia. The traveller admires here the congruence between the landscape and its mythologised history, praising above all the aesthetic intuition of ancient Greeks.

This section demonstrates that, by invoking an essentialised, historically and classically mediated 'way of seeing', Flaubert's framing of oriental landscapes represents an attempt to memorialise them, to turn sections of nature into *lieux de mémoire*. It is true that the titular phrase, 'lieux de mémoire', is defined by Pierre Nora in his seminal work as the result of France's cultural memorialisation of elements of its own history and that commemorations through the *lieux de mémoire* are central to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century construction of French national identity that Nora is documenting. However, I contend that the theoretical rigour of his project is not fully sustained in the three parts (divided in seven collaborative volumes) of *Lieux de mémoire (La République; La Nation; Les France)* themselves. For example, the commemorative aspect of national memory is present in widely different degrees depending on the chosen *lieux*. It is easily understood in the case of physical memorials such

[338] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 751 (10 February 1851).

as the Pantheon, or in public events such as the Centenary of the French Revolution but appears rather less prominent in rituals and events such as 'La visite au grand écrivain' or the Tour de France.
Critiques have pointed out the limits of a purely national approach to collective memory, as Nora himself discussed whether the concept could be exported, as well as the social bias of the choices of 'lieux'. [339]

> Malgré la diversité annoncée, il semble toutefois que sont privilégiés par Pierre Nora – et surtout universalisés, ou tout au moins étendus dans leur fonction symbolique comme valant pour l'ensemble de la collectivité nationale – des lieux de mémoire qui cristallisent prioritairement la mémoire des élites académiques et sociales.[340]

Whilst it is a deliberate choice by Nora to focus on what he identifies as 'national' aspects of collective memory, rather than the memory of minorities and marginalised groups (women, the working classes, Jewish communities, etc.) or regional communities, this approach shows its limits as the 'universalised national' angle appears to greatly privilege intellectual and institutional memory. Though it is arguable that French national memory is mostly the result of institutional processes of memorialisation, it is not convincingly proven by Nora.
Despite his introduction setting up opposition and polarities as the guiding principle of French history, some critiques have also commented on Nora's avoidance of important but divisive 'lieux de mémoire'.

> L'événement traumatique de la seconde guerre mondiale, comme nombre de fractures contemporaines, sont totalement laissées de côté. […] en quoi la Coupole, le Collège de France ou la visite au grand écrivain sont-ils plus des lieux de mémoire que le Mont-Valérien, la commémoration du 8 mai ou la station de métro Charonne?[341]

The reference to the 'Charonne' metro station is indicative of Nora's wider blind spot regarding French colonial history (the only exception being the article by Charles-Robert Ageron on the 1931 Colonial Exhibition[342]) or its non-metropolitan territories. Despite the inclusion of a couple of chapters on

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[339] Nora, 'La notion de "lieu de mémoire" est-elle exportable?', in *Lieux de mémoire et identités nationales*, ed. by Pim den Boer and Willem Frijhoff (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1993), pp. 3-10.

[340] Anne-Marie Saint-Gille, 'Canonisation culturelle et identités nationales: l'élaboration des 'lieux de mémoire'', *Études Germaniques*, 247, 3 (2007), 573-586.

[341] Henri Rousso, 'Un jeu de l'oie de l'identité française', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 15 (1987), 151-154 (p. 153).

[342] Charles-Robert Ageron, 'L'Exposition coloniale de 1931' in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 1 'La République' (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

religious minorities ('Port royal'; 'Le musée du desert'; 'Grégoire, Dreyfus, Drancy et Copernic') or counter-memories ('La Vendée'; 'le mur des fédérés), the seven volumes of *Lieux de mémoire* generally postulate both the existence of a unifying French memory and the nation as the most comprehensive scale of reference for this memory.[343] For this reason, the project mostly elides examples, such as 'Charonne', which emphasise starker and more contemporary divisions within French national history and hint at the existence of different irreconciled collective memories within the nation-state.

Despite Nora's favoured frame of reference, I thus contend here that 'Lieux de mémoire' remains a framework that can illuminate processes of memorialisation and collective identification outside the boundaries of the nation-state. I argue that collective memory itself is experienced on an individual level, in conjunction with one's own social identity, of which nation can be one, though not the exclusive, component.

In his description of oriental landscapes, Flaubert individualises collective memories. His remembrances of the landscapes operate on both personal and social levels as his memory is predetermined by previous memorialisation of the 'Orient' by travellers from a similar cultural background. The process described by Nora ('moments […] plucked out of the flow of history, then returned to it – no longer quite alive but not yet entirely dead'[344]) is thus analogous to Flaubert's memorialising description of the oriental nature. Nora argues that '*Lieux de mémoire* are created by the interaction between memory and history, an interaction resulting in a mutual overdetermination.'[345] As Flaubert describes the scenery around Delphi as 'un paysage à terreurs religieuses', we see an example of the 'overdetermination' of the memorialisation process, as the landscape is invested with the supernatural effect of religious fears. The 'vieux rêves' and the 'suppositions' that the traveller had conceived about Delphi and its mythical history are fixed as facts through the material encounter with the landscape around the ruined city. In describing the correspondence between the dreamed antiquity (although I contend that Flaubert uses 'de vieux rêves oubliés' as an analogy for very old memories) and the visited lands, the experienced materialisation of memory sets off a memorialisation of the material reality.

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[343] Monica Juneja, 'Architectural Memory between Representation and Practice: Rethinking Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de mémoire*' in *Memory, History and Colonialism: Engaging with Pierre Nora in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts*, ed. by Indra Sengupta (London: German Historical Institute, 2009), pp. 11-36 (p. 14).

[344] Pierre Nora, 'General Introduction: Between Memory and History' in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. by Pierre Nora, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 1-21 (p. 7).

[345] Ibid., p. 14.

3.2.1 Reading the Classics, dreaming the Exotic

Flaubert's descriptions of travelled landscapes are often inspired by classical readings, as here on the road between Delphi and the Thermopylae. As he and Maxime Du Camp approach the village of Topolia, in Greece, on horseback, he describes the scene in his notes as, once again, a rediscovery.

> Nous apercevons bientôt le village de Topolia, à mi-côte; devant lui, un rocher vert, à petits carrés longitudinaux, comme de grandes marqueteries; un bois d'oliviers dominé par les hautes pentes des montagnes. Tout cela a quelque chose de déjà vu, on le retrouve.[346]

The characterisation of the landscape is succinct, drawing from a couple of visual cues only (a rock, a wood, the mountain slopes) to conjure a sense of familiarity. The sparseness of the description serves to highlight the evocative power of these essentialised natural elements, such as the olive trees, in the reconstitution of an ideal classical landscape. What follows is an investigation by the writer of the source of this sensation of *déjà vu*, and of the intersection between personal and cultural memory:

> il vous semble qu'on se rappelle de très vieux souvenirs. Sont-ce ceux de tableaux dont on a oublié les noms et que l'on aurait vu dans son enfance, ayant à peine les yeux ouverts? A-t-on vécu là autrefois?[347]

The shift from the first-person plural pronoun 'nous' to the impersonal 'on' marks the transition from personal visual experience to cultural memory. The epithet 'très vieux' sets the origin of the memories in an indefinite past time, flickering between childhood and antiquity.

The intertwining of cultural and personal memory goes further with the invocation of painting as a reception device. As defined by Jan Assman, 'Cultural memory preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity.'[348] The 'nous' invoked here by Flaubert is the identifier of an elite group that is able to inscribe the landscape in the same cultural context as paintings from the Western canon. Ancient landscapes, received and mediated by paintings of classical scenes (Flaubert refers to different classical and neoclassical painters such as Nicolas Poussin and Hippolyte Flandrin in his travel notes), are found alive once again in the travel experience and the memory of Ancient Greece thus triggered is both a recollection of antiquity and of its cultural

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[346] Flaubert, *Voyage*, p. 408.

[347] Ibid.

[348] Jan Assman, 'Collective memory and cultural identity', *New German Critique*, 65 (1995), 125-133 (p. 130).

representation. In an almost Baudelairean way, the temporal distinction between the dense, long historical time of classical reception and the short lifespan of the writer seems to have been abolished by the possibility of a former life ('A-t-on vécu là autrefois?') in an undefined but resolutely ancient 'autrefois'.[349] The border between what is dreamed or imagined and what is remembered thus appears porous in the face of the complex process of recollection of antiquity in the materiality of a Greek landscape.

However, this reception of the landscape as a classical memory is supplemented by human figures that complete the framing of the landscape as a visual representation of antiquity.

> Mais comme on se figure bien (et comme on s'attend à l'y voir) le prêtre en robe blanche, la jeune fille en bandelettes, qui passe là, derrière le mur de pierres sèches.[350]

The reality of these figures within the landscape, first simply imagined ('on se figure bien'), is then reinforced by the expression of shared and almost concrete expectations ('on s'attend à l'y voir'). The figures themselves are essentialised archetypes, as indicated by the use of definite articles ('le prêtre'; 'la jeune fille'), whilst the white robe of the priest is enough to conjure a classical vision. By appealing to a shared set of visions of Ancient Greece, these idealised images act as metonyms for the entire classical world. There is no direct intertextual, or even pictorial, reference provided for this vision; the priest and the young girl exist in a temporally undefined but enduring classical space. The supplementation of the observed landscape with imagined/remembered figures crystallises the scene as belonging to the common Western imaginary of Greece: 'Cultural memory works by reconstructing, that is, it always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation.'[351] The memorialisation of the contemporary landscape is contingent on its appropriation by the traveller's personal mnemonic process.

The whole description cultivates the atmosphere of a return to the native land. The term 'native' applies of course to the reminiscences of the author's childhood hinted at earlier, but in the 'Orient', it also appeals to an imagined point in the early days of civilisation. This is why, for example, in the Lebanese countryside, Flaubert referenced the painter Nicolas Poussin ('aspects de rochers comme dans les

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[349] For example, in 'La Vie Antérieure' ('J'ai longtemps habité sous de vastes portiques…'). Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005 [1857]).

[350] Flaubert, *Voyage*, p. 408.

[351] Assman, p. 130.

tableaux de Poussin'[352]), famous for his painting of pastoral and antique troubled innocence, *Et in Arcadia Ego*. Arcadia is of course the emblematic example of the mythologisation of ancient nature, as the name for the existing region has been synonymous with pastoral idyllic since antiquity, but particularly from the Renaissance onwards. Once again, the landscape is thus delineated by its correspondence to artistic representation, as Flaubert then adds: 'pays vraiment fait pour la peinture et qui semble même fait d'après elle.'[353] Life imitates art as Poussin's depictions of antiquity are held as a standard of authenticity, even as they explicitly depict an ideal space. This pastoral ideal is inevitably transient, as the title of the painting makes clear (*Et in Arcadia Ego* are words placed on a tomb, reminding the passers-by of the existence of death, even in an idyllic world), but its representations endure and the reception of ancient nature by travellers is mediated by these representations. Neither Lebanon, nor even Greece, are real-life Arcadia, but nature turned into landscape by the traveller's gaze, inscribed with cultural memories, is enough to stage and sustain the illusion, at least temporarily. In Topolia, Flaubert renders the illusory process visible as he slips from the conjured reality of the vision and its figures to the ephemerality of the dream ('C'est comme un lambeau de songe qui vous repasse dans l'esprit…'), before simulating his own awakening ('tiens… tiens, c'est vrai! Où étais-je donc? Comment se fait-il? … Après, brrr!').[354] The distinction between imagination and dream is further blurred as the writer stages his own recreation of an ancient landscape as a dream from which he is waking up, and the dream itself as a way to access a common repository of memories.

3.2.2 Nature as 'lieu de mémoire'

In his travel notes, Flaubert often describes succinctly the landscapes he encounters. Sparked by the desire to record the 'Orient' in 'scenes', these descriptions highlight the inherent theatricalisation of nature by Flaubert.

> Placés sur un monticule de poussières, ayant derrière nous une ligne de palmiers dans lesquels un soleil couchant se répandait, nous avions devant nous la chaîne arabique, le Nil; au deuxième plan la campagne blonde de blés coupés, avec des fellahs et des bœufs s'y agitant – sur les murs des maisons, des blés – la lune a paru toute ronde, entre deux palmiers. Rien ne

[352] Flaubert, *Voyage*, p. 309.

[353] Ibid.

[354] Ibid., p. 408.

> faisait mieux songer à l'Égypte ancienne, l'Égypte agricole et dorée. Peu à peu la nuit est venue.[355]

Describing a panoramic view from a sandy mound, Flaubert carefully frames a still scene as he would a painting, setting the foreground, then the background, highlighting the geometrical perspective ('une ligne de palmiers') and the light effects ('un soleil couchant se répandait'). The oriental landscape is thus transfixed, integrating even the moving farmers and their animals into its immutability. This staging of the Egyptian countryside as immobile and unchanging is of course reinforced by its correspondence to a preestablished typology of Egyptian images: 'l'Égypte ancienne, l'Égypte agricole et dorée.' The landscape that Flaubert seeks to describe belongs to the visual register of antiquity and is essentialised by the use of the definite article. As in Topolia, the scene triggers for Flaubert the memory of archetypal images grounded in ancient history. The epithets 'agricole et dorée' are of course used to characterise the chromatic effect of the sunset on the wheat fields, but they also allude to the legendary wealth of ancient Egypt. Indeed, from Homer onwards, Greek authors appear fascinated by the fertility of the Egyptian delta, and the ensuing splendour of the pharaonic dynasties. In Homer already, 'the wealth of Egypt is much to the fore, including the riches of Egyptian agriculture'.[356] In his letters, Flaubert displays his familiarity with nineteenth-century writings on Egypt as he recommends Edward Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1837) to his mother and references the inescapable *Description de l'Egypte* (1809); here, however, he reverts to the ancient reception of the country, one shaped primarily by the fantastic tales of Herodotus or the later propaganda deployed by the Ptolemaic dynasty in order to impress Rome.[357]

Flaubert often depicts landscapes (and people, as we will see in chapter 4) as belonging to a pre-existing typology, sometimes, especially in his notes, describing them with only a few elements drawn from existing archetypes.

> Ramleh au fond de la plaine, plate, au pied des montagnes – plaine unie; on aperçoit la ville en descendant d'une espèce de mouvement de terrain en dos d'âne. Quelques oliviers – rien n'est plus Palestine et Terre Sainte.[358]

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[355] Flaubert, *Voyage*, p. 224

[356] Alan B. Lloyd, 'The Reception of Pharaonic Egypt in Classical Antiquity', in *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, ed. by Alan B. Lloyd (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019), pp. 1067-1085 (p. 1069).

[357] Ibid.

[358] Flaubert, *Voyage*, p. 242.

Here, some olive trees in a plain near Ramla are enough to characterise the landscape as typically 'Palestine et Terre Sainte'. The typology comes partially from the writer's confidence in his experience (he has been travelling through the Holy Land for a week, and through the 'Orient' for more than eight months), but mostly from culturally formed expectations of the features of the biblical land. In a letter to his mother, he develops the correspondence between the Palestinian landscape and the biblical text, reiterating at the same time the distinction established in Egypt between culture and nature:

> Les lieux saints ne vous font rien. Le mensonge est partout et trop évident. [...] Mais le pays, en revanche, me semble superbe – contre sa réputation. On ne *dépense* pas à la Bible ; ciel, montagnes, tournure des chameaux (oh les chameaux !), vêtements des femmes, tout s'y retrouve. À chaque moment on en voit devant soi des pages vivantes.[359]

The 'lies' of the sacred places are opposed to the authenticity of the Bible that is to be found in a landscape that Flaubert deciphers like a book ('pages vivantes'), used as the literary intertext to Palestine's material reality, in the same way that classical texts were recalled in Egypt and in Greece. Every sight triggers biblical thoughts, to the extent that he recommends that his mother re-read the Bible to better imagine the nature her son is encountering: 'Ainsi, pauvre vieille, si tu veux avoir une bonne idée du monde où je vis, relis la Genèse, les Juges et les Rois.'[360] The traveller displaces the responsibility of accurately relating the environment of his journey in Palestine to a higher authority, and in doing so reinforces the claims to authenticity of his own account. This appeal to the authority of the Book to describe the natural aspects of the Holy Land serves to add credit not only to Flaubert's own descriptions, but also to his oriental typology; Palestinian nature fits his assumptions of what a 'Biblical landscape' should look like, confirming the solidity of his aesthetic conceptions.

The recognition of a collection of 'types' displays the intersection in Flaubert's description of oriental views, of personal and cultural memories. The landscapes, as culturally constructed 'ways of seeing', are thus overinvested with meaning and turned into 'lieux de mémoire'. Pierre Nora's original definition of the concept emphasises the link between memorialisation and national identity, but I postulate here that the 'commemorative consciousness'[361] invoked by Nora, can transcend the national boundaries of memory.

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[359] Ibid., *Correspondance*, I, p. 673 (25 August 1850).

[360] Ibid.

[361] Nora, *Realms of memory*, p. 6.

> the fundamental purpose of a *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to inhibit forgetting, to fix a state of things, to immortalise death, and to materialise the immaterial […] – all in order to capture the maximum possible meaning with the fewest possible signs.[362]

The exotic landscapes described by Flaubert in his notes perform this function exactly; in the few signs of the short descriptions, the traveller attempts to fix a necessarily transient oriental reality and to materialise an imagined 'essence' of the 'Orient' into the frame of a particular (re)constructed landscape. In reality, the 'meaning' of the landscape lies beyond its visual description, surpassing it, yet evoked by the most banal of its elements. This parallels the historical co-existence of *lieux de mémoire* and their investment with memorial symbolic significance beyond their material reality. In this regard, the usage of the concept of 'retrouvailles' by Flaubert in his description of oriental nature can thus be understood as the rediscovery of the long-lost signifier of an intimately familiar signified. The framing of a supposedly authentic landscape as an image that conforms with Flaubert's 'memory' of oriental nature thus permeates many descriptions.

> Jardin et roseaux (le seul endroit du Nil où j'en aie vu – il n'y en a presque pas sur les bords du Nil) – grand soleil sur l'eau – à Abou Mandour le Nil fait un coude à gauche (rive droite) et de ce côté il y a de hautes berges de sable; une cange en tartane passe dessus – voilà le vrai Orient; effet mélancolique et endormant; vous pressentez déjà quelque chose d'immense et d'impitoyable au milieu duquel vous êtes perdu.[363]

Once again, the authenticity of the landscape is reaffirmed ('le vrai Orient'). Despite spotting reeds only once in his descent of the Nile, the plants are immediately integrated into the characteristic picture of the 'real' 'Orient'. What is more, this authenticity lies as much in what is visible (the bend in the river, the sandy banks, the boat) as in what is implied, the effect that the scene has on its spectator. The familiar quality of the landscape is suggested by the intertwining of nostalgia and dream in the description of its effect on the viewer as 'mélancolique et endormant'.

As indicated earlier, the landscape as *lieu de mémoire* signifies more than its visual construction. There is more to the 'vrai Orient' than what is directly visible, there is a more threatening and more alien *unseen* 'Orient' ('impitoyable'), both hidden and hinted at by the peaceful scene. The use of the verb 'pressentir' with the pronoun 'vous' ascribes the shared sensation of disquiet to any spectator in the

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[362] Ibid., p. 15.

[363] Flaubert, *Voyage*, pp. 81-82.

position of Flaubert, an educated Western traveller whose feeling is given the same universal claim to a framing of the authentic 'Orient' as the physical description that precedes it. Ultimately, the quality of this 'quelque chose' perceived behind the natural landscape is not elaborated upon, only its effect is described as overwhelming, capable of fully disorienting a lost traveller in its midst. For Flaubert these landscapes are thus more than the materialisation of cultural memories, they are proof of the authenticity of sensation as an aesthetic tool. The truth of the 'Orient' is always in the world to be sensed beyond the frame, in the symbolic effect of the visible on the perception of the invisible.

In Denderah, Flaubert renders explicit the description of the landscape as a symbolic 'framing' of the view.

> Un soir, dans les environs de Denderah, nous avons fait une promenade sous les dooms (= palmier de Thèbes); les montagnes étaient lie de vin, le Nil bleu, le ciel outre-mer et les verdures d'un vert livide; tout était immobile ; ça avait l'air d'un paysage peint, d'un immense décor de théâtre fait exprès pour nous. Quelques bons Turcs fumaient au pied des arbres…

Once again, the description seeks to affix the landscape into historical immutability. This excerpt highlights the presentation of oriental nature as 'retrouvée' as a consequence of its long-seated omnipresence in Flaubert's literary and artistic imagination. The view is compared to a painting as the description meticulously records the colour of the mountains, the Nile, etc. The constructed effect of such a description, even in a few rapid notes for Flaubert's personal usage, is emphasised by its summation of the view as 'un paysage peint' or 'un immense décor de théâtre.' However, the comparison between the landscape and both a painting and a theatre set highlights the traveller's awareness of the artificiality of his gaze upon the 'Orient'. As noted by Cosgrove: 'Landscape is not merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world'.[364] By comparing the countryside around Denderah to a painting or to theatrical scenery, Flaubert reinforces first and foremost his own cultural imagery of Egypt, but also recognises its constructed-ness.

This excerpt can be paralleled with an even shorter quotation: 'Bouquets de palmiers entourés de petits murs circulaires au pied d'un desquels fumaient deux Turcs – c'était comme une vue de l'Orient dans un livre.'[365] Once again, Flaubert relates his visual observations to a cultural referent, here a literary

[364] Cosgrove, p. 13

[365] Flaubert, *Voyage*, p. 144.

one ('une vue de l'Orient dans un livre'). Mediating Egyptian nature through European cultural representations accentuates the deliberate artificiality of Flaubert's gaze. Looking at the landscape as a painting, an illustration or a stage set has the effect of alienating it from its material reality. The scenes are constructed as full-sized *décor* for the enjoyment of the spectator who both watches the play and acts in it as the stage set appears 'fait exprès pour nous'. The pronoun 'nous' here refers obviously to Flaubert and Du Camp but in reality encompasses an entire tradition of Western travellers whose gaze is the one that is authorised to delineate the landscapes of the 'Orient' for their own usage. The reiterated figures of the smoking Turks are part of the natural décor, as much as the palm trees, and the stage is not set 'exprès' for them, but for the European spectator. As underlined by Cosgrove and Daniels:

> landscape is painterly way of seeing the world that creates a picturesque view. Such a painterly way of seeing […] is an élite way of seeing, not only because it was the wealthy classes of Europe who commissioned paintings but also because there developed a dialectical relationship between the rural landscape and painting.[366]

We can trace a reciprocal influence between some development of painting from the seventeenth century (painting in and of nature, seeking beauty in rural settings) and the emergence of landscape (artificially created or simply framed by visual codes borrowed from painting). It is thus unsurprising that Flaubert frames certain sections of oriental nature as emblematic and painterly. The typology of landscapes he convenes in his descriptions is based on cultural memories mediated through the traveller's Western gaze. His attempts to 'fix' the landscapes in short scenes represent the materialisation of these cultural memories and their transformation into *lieux de mémoire*. Flaubert's notes thus constantly attempt to relate a material experience in the lexicon of what the author knows to be a culturally charged and socially constructed imaginary, whilst still indulging in it.

3.2.3 Literature as substitute to travel observation

Throughout his letters and his notes, Flaubert appears very conscious of the culturally mediated aspects of his memories. Already on the boat between Malta and Alexandria, he writes to Bouillhet:

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[366] Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), paraphrased in James Duncan, 'Landscape geography, 1993-94', *Progress in Human Geography*, 19 (1995), 414-422, (p. 414).

> Accoudé sur le bastingage je contemplais les flots au clair de lune, en m'efforçant de penser à tous les souvenirs historiques qui devaient m'arriver, et ne m'arrivaient pas, tandis que mon œil, stupide comme celui du bœuf, regardait l'eau, tout bonnement.[367]

Playfully defying his own expectations, the writer presents his reverie on the deck as a failure to conjure the historical aspects of the Mediterranean from only gazing at the sea. This lack of spontaneous evocation is first used for a humorous self-deprecation ('mon oeil, stupide comme celui du bœuf'), but it is also contained within a warning addressed to his recipient: travel letters are not the place to expect literary reminiscences. He thus writes, a couple of paragraphs before: 'Je crois bien, homme intelligent, que tu ne t'attends pas à recevoir de moi une *relation* de mon voyage.'[368] This refusal to 'play the game' of the traditional oriental travel writing establishes a lasting tension in Flaubert's notes, but especially in his letters, between the vivid descriptions of the 'Orient' as he experiences it, and the rejection of the clichés of travel narratives. The invocation of classical memories is thus doubly conditioned, first by the intertextual layers of previous travel narratives (in the first place Chateaubriand, whom he quotes, and Lamartine, whom he refutes), secondly by Flaubert's own post-romantic reception of antiquity. As underlined by Sarga Moussa, Flaubert is particularly cognisant of the horizon of expectations of the genre he is trying to avoid:

> Or, ce qu'explique Flaubert dans cette lettre, c'est tout à la fois qu'il connaît parfaitement les contraintes du voyage en Orient (se déplacer dans l'espace est souvent prétexte à remonter dans le temps), et qu'il est aussi capable de mettre à distance le caractère codifié de la mémoire du voyageur ('les souvenirs historiques qui devaient m'arriver')[369]

This 'caractère codifié' of the traveller's oriental and classical 'memories' establishes a tension that permeates Flaubert's entire journey. On the one hand, the 'retrouvailles' with oriental nature are no less celebrated for being expected; in his notes, the materialisation of a dreamed memory of the 'Orient', regardless of how classically mediated, is recorded in the essentialisation, and aesthetic reinvestment, of many landscapes, particularly in Greece and Egypt. On the other hand, Flaubert repeatedly undermines his own expectations of the resurgence of a mythical ancient world in the 'Orient', particularly in his letters:

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[367] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 539 (1 December 1849).

[368] Ibid., p. 538

[369] Sarga Moussa, 'Critique du voyage: l'exemple de la correspondance d'Orient de Flaubert', in *Itinéraires littéraires du voyage*, ed. by François Moureau, Travaux de Littérature, 26 (Genève: Droz, 2013), pp. 169-176 (p. 172).

> Je m'attendais à rêver Cléopâtre, César, Antoine, etc que sais-je? toutes les cachuchas les plus épicés du monde antique ; et qu'est-ce que je rêve ? et comment diable cela s'est-il fait? devinez quoi? Le fils Larsonneur![370]

The classically codified oriental dream is here playfully subverted. Instead of the reverie of an exoticised classical Mediterranean ('toutes les cachuchas les plus épicés du monde antique'), the traveller's dream, on a boat between Alexandria and Cairo, only recalls a Norman dignitary. Even if often displaying an amused awareness of the hackneyed nature of his oriental expectations, Flaubert's oriental writings do not always avoid the recourse to commonplace images and exotic essentialisation. However, this determination to sidestep the well-trodden road of the already semi-canonical genre of the 'voyage en Orient' leads to a resolutely aesthetic and literary approach to the journey, away from the growing mass of published *relations de voyage*.

If the journey is not to give rise to any publication, its importance for the creative development of the author should not be undervalued, as he comments on Bouilhet's literary projects:

> Je peux te dire une chose fortifiante et qui a le mérite d'être sincère, c'est que, comme Nature, tu peux marcher hardiment. Tout ce que je vois ici, je le retrouve. (Il n'y a que les villes, les hommes, usages, costumes, ustensiles, choses de l'humanité enfin, dont je n'avais pas le détail net.) Je ne m'étais pas trompé. Pauvres diables que ceux qui ont des désillusions. – Il y a des paysages où j'ai déjà passé, c'est certain. Retiens donc ceci pour ta gouverne, c'est le résultat d'une expérience faite exactement qui ne se dément point depuis 10 mois: c'est que nous sommes trop avancés en fait d'art pour nous tromper sur la Nature.[371]

This is the clearest declaration by Flaubert of the equality, if not of the superiority, of art in regard to nature: aesthetic education can easily supplant material experience, nature can be learned through literary means without being directly observed. In this context, the possibility of a former life evoked in Topolia becomes a certainty ('Il y a des paysages où j'ai déjà passé, c'est certain.') and the nature of this experience is explicitly literary; the *déjà vu* is first and foremost a *déjà lu*. This does not preclude the importance of the physical (and as we will see in chapter 4, of the sensual) experience of the journey for Flaubert's literary sublimation of the 'Orient'. (In some ways, the letter can also be read as a consolation from Flaubert to his friend who wishes to write about China but is stuck in Normandy).

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[370] Flaubert, 'Lettre à Olympe Bonenfant', 5 December 1849 <https://flaubert.univ-rouen.fr/jet/public/correspondance/trans.php?corpus=correspondance&id=9805&mot=&action=M>.

[371] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 680 (4 September 1850).

However, the authenticity of the material reality of the travelled land is systematically used to reinforce the literary process of (classical) reception. In his preface to *La Tentation de Saint Antoine,* Foucault outlines Flaubert's construction of his imaginary as characteristic of a nineteenth-century shift towards a textual imagination:

> On ne porte plus le fantastique dans son cœur; on ne l'attend pas non plus des incongruités de la nature ; on le puise à l'exactitude du savoir ; sa richesse est en attente dans le document. Pour rêver, il ne faut pas fermer les yeux, il faut lire. La vraie image est connaissance.[372]

The relationship between oriental nature and classical landscapes, for Flaubert, is an essentially intertextual one. The subsuming of the material to the textual justifies the *mise en scène* of the landscape as well as its layering with classical references.

Flaubert's notes on oriental nature exposes a process of circular authenticity: the landscapes present a 'true' image of an 'Orient' both exotic and classical because they correspond to the traveller's pre-imagining of them, and the writer's imaginary reflects the truth of the world around him as nature appears as it was imagined. By doing so, the travel writings embrace and reinforce the cultural conditioning of the reception process by approaching the whole enterprise as the reading of a literary intertext. However, Flaubert is also keenly aware of this process, and while he sometimes appears to fall for the 'oriental' clichés in his notes and letters, he is also prompt to distance himself from them and, crucially, to keep his travel writing unpublished.

In conclusion, the 'Orient's' natural environment provides a rich instrument for classical reception. This is not only because ancient nature has been a recurring topic of classical literature but also because, from antiquity onwards, causal links have been made between a country's geophysical features and its civilisation. For this reason, members of the EFA frame their scholarship around the correspondence between their observations of Greek nature and ancient texts, opening up ways of interpreting the classical past that contrast notably with the past's absence evoked by ancient ruins. Framing his aesthetic perception of nature as 'retrouvailles' with an environment perceived as unchanged since antiquity but also rendered familiar through ancient texts, Flaubert attempts to memorialise the essence

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[372] Michel Foucault, 'La Bibliothèque fantastique: à propos de *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* de Gustave Flaubert' (Bruxelles: La Lettre volée, 1997), p. 9.

of 'oriental' landscapes. His short descriptions of exotic natural scenes reveal deep intertextual concerns and a sensitive awareness of the literary constructiveness of his own memories.

The assumption of environmental determinism, whilst justifying a material mode of reception of antiquity (though one that is often supplemented by textual elements), also leads to inclusion of the countries' inhabitants as archetypes, in these essentialised, and often racialised, reassessments of classical culture. In the next chapter, I will thus explore how classical reception racialises the inhabitants of the 'Orient' as travellers seek to reassess their heredity in relation to their ancient past, or their aesthetic conformity (or lack thereof) with classical aesthetic canons.

CHAPTER 4 – CLASSICAL RECEPTION AND RACIALISATION(S)

Introduction: classical heritage and racial (dis)continuities

The supposed 'continuity of nature' explored in the previous chapter raises questions concerning the racial continuity of Greek and other orientalised peoples and communities. Whilst ancient ruins pointed at the disappearance, or even the absence of classical antiquity in the nineteenth century, nature appeared to present a fertile terrain for narratives of continuity between the ancient past and the travellers' present. Basing their analysis on theories of environmental determinism, some authors established clear links between the 'oriental' natural environment and what they perceived as racial traits of local inhabitants, seeking to establish their hereditary relationship with the ancient past. In turn, the presence of putative descendants of ancient civilisations is often treated as another material opportunity to study antiquity and its legacy. This chapter thus looks at the racialisation process within classical reception practice. A definition of 'racialisation' can be found in Miles' and Brown's *Racism*:

> We use the concept of racialisation to denote a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically.[373]

Racialisation is thus understood here as the essentialisation of biological difference for the purpose of socially categorising different groups of people. What Miles notes is that the groups thus created are believed to reproduce themselves, thus passing down their 'essential' biological features. This aspect of racialisation is crucial in the case of modern Greeks and Egyptians whose lineage, in particular their hereditary relation to the Greeks and Egyptians from antiquity, is constantly reassessed and questioned by nineteenth-century travellers. Miles also understands racialisation as a process, which implies that the categories of assignation are not fixed, but historically and socially constructed.

> The characteristics signified vary historically and, although they have usually been visible somatic features, other non-visible (imagined and real) biological features have also been signified. The concept therefore refers to a process of categorisation, a representational process of defining an Other, usually, but not exclusively, somatically.[374]

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[373] Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 2003 [1989]), p. 102.
[374] Ibid., p. 101.

It is of course necessary to note that the categorisation process of racialisation is reliant on the perception of biological differences, whether these exist or not, or indeed whether they can be meaningfully perceived at all. Miles thus stresses that racialisation stems from the *representation* of the Other as essentially different, rather than from the visibility of those differences. However, not all essentialised characteristics used to categorise the 'other' are biological and Miles draws the following distinction between ethnicisation and racialisation:

> we define ethnicisation as a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to socio-cultural signifiers of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically, culturally and economically. Where biological and/or somatic features (real or imagined) are signified, we speak of racialisation as a specific modality of ethnicisation.[375]

Racialisation would thus be a particular type of ethnicisation, concerned specifically with physical characteristics as markers of difference. I contend however that these processes of essentialisation, whilst sometimes expressed specifically, in reality often take place simultaneously and, in nineteenth-century orientalism, are often used to reinforce each other in the categorisation of the oriental other. French travel writers in Greece for example, as we will see in this chapter, are particularly inclined to categorise modern Greeks as racial *others* to the extent that they perceive them as culturally different, not only from themselves, but from the Greeks of antiquity. For this reason, following Suvi Keskinen and Rikke Andreassen, I choose to use the term racialisation to describe all processes of difference essentialisation 'based on alleged biological differences, skin colour or cultural differences, often combining elements of these.'[376]

I argue that racialisation is a central feature of classical reception in the nineteenth century and it is rendered particularly visible in travellers' encounter with forms of cultural alterity that cannot be easily subsumed into 'classicality', as I defined it in the introduction. Ideas of 'race' are also intimately tied to the history of classical scholarship, as argued in depth by Martin Bernal in the controversial but ground-breaking three volumes of *Black Athena* and in the claim of 'Classics' as a Western heritage that came to dominate nineteenth-century receptions of antiquity.[377] The main thesis of this three-volume work is that the African (i.e. Egyptian and Phoenician) and Semitic roots of Greek, and therefore classical, culture, while widely recognised in antiquity, have been

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[375] Ibid., p. 99.

[376] Suvi Keskinen and Rikke Andreassen, 'Developing Theoretical Perspectives on Racialisation and Migration', *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 7, 2 (2017), 64-69 (p. 65).

[377] Bernal, *Black Athena*.

erased by nineteenth-century western scholarship which favoured the hypothesis of Greek settlers of Indo-European origin (the so-called 'Aryan hypothesis').[378]

This chapter will demonstrate that 'racialised' classical receptions in French travel writing represent a twofold reaction to the alterity of the 'Orient'. They first serve to repair the visible dis-junctures in reception narratives to establish continuity between the ancient past and the present. Secondly, they exoticise alterity and displace it outside of 'classicality'. However, in doing so, racialisation reinforces classical antiquity as a frame of reference. On the one hand, the oriental 'others' are presented as pre-classical (i.e. primitive) or anti-classical (whether dark, ugly or grotesque, as opposed to the whiteness, beauty and harmony associated with classicism); on the other hand, categories of othering and racialisation such as 'barbarian' and 'autochthony' are taken directly from Greco-Roman antiquity itself.[379] If we follow Butler's model of reception which imagines the history of Classics through time as a geological cross-section (see chapter 1), racialisation is one of the means through which connexions are drawn between different receptions of classical Antiquity. The narratives of classical continuity which emphasise the tradition of Classics, presenting their object as an immutable cultural treasure handed down through the centuries, reflect deep concerns with historical lineage and the legitimacy of heritage. 'Whose classics are those?' is a question that finds itself unsettled by the experience of travel to the 'Orient'. Some like Vogüé try to answer it in a generously universal fashion: 'il ne faut pas toucher au peu d'idéal que l'humanité garde encore: n'est-ce pas à lui qu'elle doit Homère et Virgile, son plus noble et doux patrimoine!'[380] However, the extent of this universality (do Classics really belong to the entirety of 'l'humanité'?) is brought into question, as in reality ancient literature is used by Vogüé to unfavourably contrast classical heroes with modern Greeks: 'La pratique des Grecs modernes rend un peu méfiant dans la lecture des Grecs anciens.'[381] The 'humanité' Vogüé refers to is implicitly restricted to Western travellers and readers of ancient epics.

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[378] The linguistic, literary and archaeological claims of *Black Athena* have been widely discussed and contested, on both scholarly and political grounds. The 'Black Athena controversy' has been wide ranging and has continued more than twenty years after its publication. For some of the critiques waged at Bernal's thesis, see *Black Athena Revisited*, ed. by Mary R Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). For Bernal's response, Martin Bernal, *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to His Critics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2001). A thesis by Caroline Kastor provides a more recent survey of the controversy: 'African Athena: Discussions Surrounding Martin Bernal's Black Athena' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Kansas, 2016), whilst an edited volume, *African Athena: New Agendas*, ed. by Daniel Orrells, Gurminder K. Bhambra and Tessa Roynon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) offers new analysis of the historical cultural exchanges between Greece, Africa, Rome and the Middle East.

[379] Acheraïou, *Rethinking Postcolonialism*; Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[380] Vogüé, *Voyage aux pays du passé*, p. 6.

[381] Ibid., p. 5.

In this chapter I thus demonstrate how in these orientalist journeys, the material presence of the oriental 'other' becomes a vector of classical reception, as they are racialised as either conforming or challenging the prevalent narratives of classical heritage, constructed by travellers as both exotic and Western (see chapter 1). This analysis shows how the question of racial continuity is central to travellers' reception of antiquity, as they focus on retracing the origin of the people they encounter and the customs they witness to a mythicised ancient past. I then illustrate how the classical canon of beauty, theorised by Winckelmann as white and harmonious, is constantly reinforced in the racialised aesthetic judgement of (especially female) 'oriental' bodies. However, this classical ideal of beauty can also be subverted, in particular by Flaubert in his exaltation of a grotesque aesthetic, whilst the exotic is constructed as both the predecessor and the radical 'other' of Greco-Roman antiquity.

4.1 Racial continuities

The racialisations of populations encountered around the Mediterranean is a common feature of most if not all nineteenth-century Western European travel narratives; however, this process can take a variety of forms. The depictions of nineteenth-century Greeks and Egyptians in French travel writing are thus very different, but they both draw from modern receptions of ancient civilisations. Greek people are racialised through a shifting dichotomy of proximity and distance with the ancient past where Classics become a way to measure 'Greekness'. The only individuals considered truly Greek are those whose language, appearance, and customs appear close to the ideal of ancient Greek civilisation, one that aesthetically and ideologically values whiteness.

On the other hand, Egyptians are repeatedly depicted as the 'other' of classical antiquity. They are still racialised through reference to classical sources, but their ancestry is placed in either a mythical pre-classical past or in a decadent era. Their racial identification is constructed through classical ways of mediating the non-classical, as many ways frames of references used to characterise alterity in the nineteenth century come directly from (particularly Greek) antiquity. We can cite here the extensive ethnographic aspects of Herodotus' *Histories* which shaped many subsequent conceptions of Ancient Mediterranean civilisations, above all Egypt and Persia.[382] The Greek historian was arguably the first to '*produce* the Orient politically, socially and imaginatively',[383] but what is more,

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[382] See for example Andreas Schwab, 'The 'Rediscovery' of Egypt: Herodotus and His Account of Egypt in the Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute-Égypte (1802) by Vivant Denon' in *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Herodotus in Antiquity and Beyond*, ed. by Jessica Priestley and Vasiliki Zali (Leiden: Brill, 2016) and *Herodotus in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Thomas Harrison and Joseph Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[383] Catherine Gimelli Martin, 'Orientalism and the ethnographer: Said, Herodotus, and the Discourse of Alterity', *Criticism*, 32, 4 (1990), p. 516.

his writings 'helped initiate the entire western practice of ethnography, providing a lasting structure for organising perceptions of the "other".'[384] It is for example notable that the *Histories* are structured around systematising oppositions between two groups, the Greeks and the Barbarians.

4.1.1 Barbarians and the Greek language

The ancient Greek word βάρβαρος, meaning barbarian, non-Greek, was used in opposition to the ἑλληνικός, hellène, Greek. The word 'barbaros' itself supposedly mimics the (to Greek ears) incomprehensible sounds of foreign languages ('bar-bar'). The distinction established in antiquity between Greeks and non-Greeks is thus firstly based on language: the ancient barbarian is the one who does not speak Greek. It is therefore not surprising that, for nineteenth-century classical scholars, such as the members of the EFA, the Greek language takes on an emblematic place in the survival of Greece's ancient heritage. However, the reception of this modern idiom is mixed at best, exemplifying the recurring tension between idealism and disappointment which characterises most travel narratives in search of classical Greece.

The question of the Greek language and its role in the unification of Greek nationhood is of a primary political importance but the everyday language of Greek citizens appears to the French intellectuals far removed from the ancient idiom they learned in school. The Greek language itself underwent a series of reforms throughout the nineteenth century. A scholarly effort to substitute or form archaic expressions to replace 'borrowed' words (from Italian, or Turkish), whilst keeping a modern pronunciation, was initiated in the late eighteenth century by Greek intellectuals educated in Western Europe and is inseparable from the Greek Independence movement.[385] This philological effort is praised by the most philhellene of the school members, such as Charles Benoit.

> C'était la langue toujours vivante d'Homère, de Sophocle et de Platon, qui se parlait autour de nous. Déjà du reste à cette époque la nouvelle génération travaillait avec une ardente et patriotique émulation à rapprocher le grec moderne du grec ancien, à le purifier de ses scories, à lui rendre les formes grammaticales qu'il avait perdues. On dirait que la nation tout entière avait entendu l'appel de Coraï.[386] Car ce n'était pas seulement dans les journaux et dans les livres qu'on suivait cette œuvre d'épuration; mais toutes les classes

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[384] McCoskey, *Race: antiquity and its legacy*, p. 62.

[385] Peter Mackridge, 'A language in the image of the nation: modern Greek and some parallel cases' in *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, and the Uses of the Past (1797–1896)*, ed. by David Ricks and Roderick Beaton (London: Routledge, 2009).

[386] Admantios Koraïs, a Greek patriot and scholar, came to redefine the Greek language on the eve of the Independence War. His work (amongst others) led to the adoption of the *katharevousa* (a 'purified' version of modern Greek) as the nation's official language. See Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

> de la société s'y intéressaient à l'envi. On sait avec quel succès s'est poursuivie depuis ce temps cette œuvre vraiment patriotique, qui a renoué à travers les siècles la tradition de langue nationale, et l'a retrempé à ses sources antiques.[387]

Benoit adheres here fully to the Greek project of linguistic purification that will bring Modern Greek (and by extension, modern Greeks) back to the time of Homer, Sophocles and Plato and is willing to reinforce the narrative of continuity between the glory of antiquity and contemporary Greece. Seeing in the *katharevousa* (from the Greek 'Καθαρεύουσα', purified) a popular and patriotic effort, Benoit praises it as a national effort from the Greek people to emulate their famous ancestors. The desire to see revived a specific form of 'greekness', typically modelled on conceptions of the classical era (fourth-fifth centuries BCE), has placed expectations on the Greek population since the philhellene movement and the Independence War. Modern Greeks are thus once again expected to perform antiquity for the European gaze (and ear), by clearing their language of postclassical 'impurities', and it is through this performance of a classically imagined identity that their legitimacy as a modern nation is recognised by Western Europeans. Benoit's stance is all the more remarkable in that his article was published almost fifty years after his journey to Greece, at a moment when 'demotic' (the 'popular' form of the Greek language) was experiencing a sustained revival in Greek literature, which serves to show the real disconnect that subsisted between the French members of the School and contemporary Greek society.[388]

On the other side of the argument, the *katharevousa* is scorned by Emmanuel Roux, another founding member of the EFA, as a hybrid language, neither natural nor properly antique, which confuses rather than elucidates linguistic questions. Roux thus treats its study with barely hidden disdain:

> L'effet le plus certain du grec moderne, c'est de vous brouiller avec l'ancien. C'est un patois; ce n'est plus même un patois depuis que les puristes ont entrepris de le recrépir. C'est quelque chose de bâtard et d'équivoque, où les mots sont anciens et les formes modernes.[389]

The word 'patois', like barbarism, etymologically refers to a form of communication that is not a 'proper' language; it probably comes from the Old French *patoier* signifying 'agiter les mains, gesticuler'[390] in order to communicate. Even though patois does not refer exclusively to primitive and pre-lingual forms of communication any longer, the pejorative connotation remains as Roux

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[387] Benoit, 'La Grèce ancienne', p. 512.
[388] Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece*, pp. 204-240.
[389] *Correspondance d'Emmanuel Roux 1847-1849*, ed. by Georges Radet (Bordeaux: Feret & Fils, 1898), p.38.
[390] 'Patois in *Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé* (Nancy: CNRS) <http://atilf.atilf.fr/frantext.htm>

defines modern Greek as an inferior dialect of ancient Greek. What is more, for him, the *katharevousa* actually made the situation worse by plastering the crumbling wall of the modern dialect with the mortar of the ancient lexicon, resulting in a hybrid version of the Greek language. The question of the language's 'purity' remains central but the artificial effort of Koraïs and his followers is scorned and perceived as having had the opposite of the desired effect, as the new idiom is not 'purified' but 'bastardised' by the *katharevousa* intervention. Eugène Gandar shares his colleague's objection and even refuses to learn it:

> [P]ersonnellement il me convenait fort peu d'employer deux années à étudier le patois que parlent les Grecs d'aujourd'hui […] j'ai renoncé à l'étude du grec vulgaire, étude tout à fait stérile pour moi, pour m'occuper exclusivement des études qui me plaisent.[391]

The use of the terms 'patois' (again) and 'vulgaire' to disparage modern Greek highlights that the only study considered worthwhile is that of ancient Greek, a language that French travellers learned and from which modern Greek can only be a degenerate version as playfully explained by About:

> Je faisais des progrès rapides, car le grec moderne ne diffère de l'ancien que par un système de barbarismes dont on trouve aisément la clef. Le tout est d'écorcher convenablement les mots que nous avons appris au collège: il n'y a rien de changé au fond de la langue.[392]

The travellers proudly display their classical knowledge as a sign of cultural superiority. The distinction between 'proper' Greek and 'Barbarian' is here revived as the equivalences between the ancient and modern languages are only explained through barbarisms (improper usages and thus the etymological design of a language as unintelligible as if it were foreign).[393] Modern Greek is thus a 'barbarised' version of the ancient language, close enough that About can easily understand it but too different to attain the same elite status as ancient Greek.

About also alludes to the difference in pronunciation between both idioms, as he suggests that to speak modern Greek it is enough to mispronounce ('écorcher') the ancient language. Indeed, even for French scholars who look more favourably on the official 'purification' effort of the *katharevousa* like Antoine Grenier, the authenticity of the pronunciation remains a contentious point.

> [J]e ne puis me dispenser de toucher un mot de la prononciation. Que celle dont nous usons soit purement conventionnelle, c'est chose que personne n'ignore. Celle des Grecs, pour être plus naturelle […] est-elle celle des anciens? […] je me borne à remarquer que

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[391] Gandar, *Lettres et souvenirs*, p. 265.

[392] About, *La Grèce contemporaine*, p. 12.

[393] Definitions of 'barbarismos' in *Le Grand Bailly – Dictionnaire Grec Français* (Paris: Hachette Education, 2000), p. 347.

> les anciens avaient trop le sentiment de l'harmonie pour prononcer à la façon de leurs fils, si tant est que les Grecs d'autrefois soient les pères de ceux d'aujourd'hui.
>
> Ceux d'aujourd'hui ont tellement multiplié les i, que leur langage ressemble à un gazouillement. On croirait entendre le fameux chœur des Oiseaux.[394]

The language Grenier hears in the streets of Athens is so removed from the recitations of his classical education that he compares it to the bird chorus of Aristophanes' eponymous play. Like About, he discards it for sounding almost comically non-human, in the same way that the adjective 'barbarous' was used in ancient Greek to first imitate non-Greek, thus unintelligible, sounds. Grenier judges the modern Greek pronunciation disharmonious, calling into question not only its historical transmission, but as a consequence, the true heredity of the modern Greek population itself. The racial heredity of the Greek people is intimately tied to their language; if their usage differs too much from what is expected by classically learned Western Europeans, they come very close to being considered 'barbarians', not (properly) Greeks themselves. Even if Grenier does not go as far as defending the accuracy of the reconstructed Erasmian model he has been taught, he implicitly praises its harmony, therefore justifying its place as the heir of (lost, but necessarily harmonious) ancient pronunciation.

However, other scholars, like Eugène Gandar, seem to find some redeeming qualities in the supposed continuity, even 'barbarised', of the Greek language:

> Les langues étrangères ont laissé quelques mots dans la langue grecque, mais ils ne l'ont pas altérée, elle ne s'est pas laissée absorber plus que le peuple. […] La langue d'Homère et de Platon a dégénéré; je n'ai qu'une chose à constater, c'est qu'elle vit encore.[395]

Despite its perceived decadence, the survival of their language is taken as a proof of continuous presence of Greek people on their land. The effects of migrations and occupations on its integrity are seen as minimal. In sum, in a highly romanticised way, the essence of Greekness survives through its language, because it is that of Plato and Homer and its classical quality allows it to resist foreign 'alteration'.

In general, however, the language used to characterise modern Greek is strongly racialised. Despite its origin denoting primarily linguistic difference, already in antiquity the opposition between Greeks and Barbarians acquired a new political potency during the Persian Wars.

> the term was soon applied, and with greater animosity, to the Persians themselves. Later the 'barbarian' would also encompass the range of peoples the Persians had added to

[394] Grenier, pp. 67-68.
[395] Gandar, *Homère*, p. 58.

> their own empire (e.g., Egyptians, Phoenicians and Thracians) and ultimately it would connote all non-Greek peoples. This collapsing of all human variation into a single racial opposition – Greek vs. barbarian – is the closest parallel in antiquity to the modern racial binary of 'black' and 'white'.[396]

The recurrent use of the term by nineteenth-century travellers thus connotes a broader racialised framework in encountering language evolution and a strict casting aside of idiomatic variations. A focus on the imagined (im)purity of the idiom (starting from the Greeks themselves and the *katharevousa*) is displayed through the use of terms such as 'dégénéré', 'scories', and 'bâtard'. The impurity of modern Greek is implicitly seen as betraying not only Greece's classical heritage, but also the hypothesised lineage of Greek people themselves. The question of the authenticity (whether lost, found or reconstructed) of the language acts as a metonym for the broader underlying question of exactly how 'Greek' the Greeks are considered to be. By scrutinising the change in the Greek language after centuries of postclassical linguistic evolution, the EFA scholars are also evaluating the perceived hybridity of Greek people: are they still essentially Greeks or have they too been 'barbarised'? Has foreign influence proved fatal to their classical essence or is the philhellene dream alive?

4.1.2 Continuity of race: Greeks, descendance and autochthony

The continuity (or lack thereof) of language thus raises broader questions about the racial descent of modern Greeks. To what extent can they be considered the direct descendants of the ancients? The answer to this question is complicated by the fact that for centuries, few of the Greeks themselves were identifying as such, and the older denomination of 'romaios' continued to be used throughout the nineteenth century by certain segments of the Greek population.[397] 'Undoubtedly, ethnic Greeks spoke Greek dialects and belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church. But they usually referred to themselves simply as Romans or as faithful to the cross.'[398] Until the Enlightenment,

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[396] McCoskey, *Race: Antiquity and its Legacy*, p. 55.

[397] Tassos A Kaplanis, 'Antique Names and Self-Identification' in *Re-imagining the past: Antiquity and Modern Greek Culture*, ed. by Dimitris Tziovas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 81-97.

[398] Constantine Tsoukalas, 'European modernity and Greek national identity', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 1, 1 (1999), 7-14 (p. 9). See also Dimitris Livanios: 'Despite the impressive resuscitation of the 'Hellene' in the nineteenth century, the 'Roman' did not die an early death […] The cleavage between 'Hellenism' and *Romiosýne* soon acquired may layers. It also became a battle between two different views of the Greek past: between those who favoured the splendor of antiquity, and their opponents, who longed more for Byzantium and the revolutionary period.' 'The Quest for Hellenism: Religion, Nationalism, and Collective Identities in Greece, 1453-1913, in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, And Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. by Katerina Zacharia (London: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 237-270 (p.267).

the Greeks' relationship to their antiquity was far from evident, and rarely valued. Nevertheless, the EFA's members are happy to exalt what they perceive as the racial continuity of Greek people.

> [N]ous nous plaisions à chercher et à retrouver des ressemblances entre ces Hellènes d'aujourd'hui et leurs grands ancêtres d'autrefois. Oui vraiment, en dépit de tant de vicissitudes et d'invasions barbares qui ont altéré le sang de ce people, malgré la fatale influence de l'oppression turque achevant l'œuvre de la domination byzantine, nous pouvions admirer souvent dans la mine héroïque ou fine de certains hommes, dans la beauté si pure de quelques femmes, des types qui nous rappelaient la statuaire antique.[399]

As we have seen, the qualification of 'domination byzantine' would have been incomprehensible for most Greeks, even after the Independence War (at the very least since the Byzantine Empire's dominant language was Greek). The search for the ancients in the moderns is here primarily aesthetic, as the blood 'purity' might be illusory; what is remarked upon is that the Greeks still look like ancient statues. In the rare cases where Greek figures did not satisfy the 'Winckelmannian' expectations of travellers, this is attributed to an inevitable lack of 'Greekness'. Since Greece is both source and synonym of beauty, anyone not satisfying classical aesthetic criteria cannot be truly Greek.

> Les Athéniennes ne sont ni belles ni bien faites […] C'est qu'Athènes, il y a vingt-cinq ans, n'était qu'un village albanais. Les Albanais formaient et forment encore presque toute la population de l'Attique, et l'on trouve à trois lieues de la capitale des villages qui comprennent à peine le grec. Athènes s'est peuplée rapidement d'hommes de toute nation et de toute espèce ; et c'est ce qui explique la laideur du type athénien.[400]

The Athenian women are dismissed as Albanian, thus foreign, on the basis of their perceived lack of beauty. In a way that is characteristic of the modes of racialisation employed by nineteenth-century travellers, women are judged primarily on classical aesthetic criteria, their beauty proving or disproving their heredity or their essentially 'oriental' quality. We can also note here the link established directly between the Greek language and its usage with Greek identity. Despite their criticisms for the changes it has undergone since antiquity, the Greek language remains once again the sign of the continuity and the purity of the Greek 'race'. This is not only the reiteration of a nation-building discourse around language as a vector of unity, but it demonstrates the pre-eminence of the French and Western European reception of classical antiquity over the inhabitants of Greece. The Greek language has been a tool of this reception and non-Greek speakers in Greece

[399] Benoit, 'La Grèce ancienne', p. 511
[400] About, p. 39.

cannot lay claim, even symbolically, to a classical heritage for which Europeans drew the canonical aesthetic rules.

Nevertheless, in general, a strong link between the land and its inhabitants is underlined and Greeks are considered to have absorbed foreign influences without losing their own identity.

> Autrefois la race grecque se vantait d'être née sur le sol qu'elle habitait, et que personne n'avait habité avant elle. On est tenté d'applaudir à ses prétentions en l'y retrouvant encore, impérissable dans son éternelle patrie. […] sans doute, il y a peu de Grecs qui n'aient eu quelque Barbare au nombre de leurs ancêtres. Ils sont Grecs néanmoins car ces Barbares l'étaient devenus. […| Ainsi l'étranger devient grec, ὁ βάρβαρος ἑλληνέζει [the barbarian speaks Greek, my translation], et le Grec, comme le Juif, ne sait pas devenir autre chose. […] au fond du cœur, en tous temps, le Grec est Grec.[401]

The link between the people and their land, explored in chapter 3, is revived here with a reference to ancient theories of autochthony, which designate a series of creation myths that present humans as created directly from the earth. Ancient Athenians in particular seem indeed to have recurrently claimed to descend from the archaic king Erechtheus, a mythical figure supposedly born from the soil of Attica itself.[402]

> Thucydides makes Pericles remind his assembled compatriots that their ancestors, 'always inhabiting the land as the same people, through their courage passed it on from generation to generation as a free country.' Autochthony thus became closely associated with a complex of core values: the legitimacy of possession of the soil, mutual solidarity, the equality of all citizens, and resistance to foreign domination.[403]

This presumed autochthony is celebrated within the implicit opposition between Greeks and 'oriental' non-Greeks (whether the fifth-century BCE Persians or nineteenth-century Ottomans) and serves to exalt the superiority of the Greeks through the 'purity' of their lineage.[404] Ultimately, 'greekness' is an inherent quality, strong enough to assimilate 'barbarians' within its territory and once again, the assimilation to this identity is realised through language, the barbarian becomes Greek as he starts speaking Greek.

This is the same conclusion reached by Maurras at the end of a letter to the *Action Française* founder, Henri Vaugeois, that he published in the appendixes of *Anthinéa*:

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401 Gandar, *Homère*, p. 57.

402 Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 114.

403 Isaac, p. 115.

404 *Cultural Response to the Persian Wars: Antiquity to the Third Millennium*, ed. by Emma Bridge, Edith Hall, P.J. Rhodes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

> Tous les Grecs, dit-on, ont péri. Et l'on avoue en même temps qu'il en subsista des masses considérables au nord-ouest de l'Achaïe, où le type physique s'est maintenu. Tout l'ancien grec est périmé; cependant l'idiome de certaines îles et de certains rivages du Péloponnèse en conserve des caractères. […] S'il est resté des Grecs, s'il subsiste, nette ou obscure, une langue de type grec, la survivance est démontrée, la continuité établie. […]
>
> Moins les Grecs survivants auront été nombreux, mieux sera établie la plastique vertu de leur hellénisme en action, ce génie de l'esprit et du sang qui leur permit de transformer leurs voisins et leurs conquérants en Hellènes de foi, de mœurs, bientôt de langue. […] Une sorte de greffe ethnique appliquée aux barbares refit des Grecs et des Latins. Ces deux noyaux qui se développent en assimilant l'étranger, perpétuent sans conteste l'hellénisme et le romanisme. L'adoption par contact vaut la génération.[405]

The strength of 'Greekness' (or 'Hellenism' as Maurras calls it) as an identity lies in its capacity for assimilating alterity into its midst, ensuring its survival through the centuries. The two elements used by the nationalist author to establish this continuity are once again, the persistence of the language and the physical resemblance of modern Greeks with the imagined 'physical type' of the ancients. Greeks have survived by 'converting' the barbarians to a Greek way of living, thinking and speaking. This conception of Hellenism assimilating and dominating other contributions to Greek identities is similar to his theorisation of the French 'race' which minimises Celtic heritage for the benefit of a 'Gallo-Roman' compound (the Gauls being thought as indigenous, and the Romans as valuable conquerors).[406] Maurras valorises here a process whereby culture becomes a form of ethnicity. For him, ancient Mediterranean civilisations are the ones destined for greater posterity as compared to northern (Celtic, Germanic, Slavs) thanks to their superior assimilative properties.

This conviction in the permanence of a direct lineage between ancient and modern Greeks allows travellers first to support their analysis of modern society with examples from classical culture, but also to enrich their classical studies with contemporary observations. For example, on an article about banditry in Greece, Burnouf appears to justify the practice based on its supposed antiquity:

> de tout temps, et aussi haut que l'on peut remonter dans l'histoire hellénique, on trouve ces populations sauvages et barbares menant de front le métier de bergers errans et de voleurs. Ce n'est pas ici le lieu, mais ce serait un travail intéressant de recueillir dans les

[405] Maurras, *Anthinéa*, pp. 295-296.

[406] Carole Reynaud-Paligot, 'Maurras et la notion de race' in *Le maurrassisme et la culture: l'Action française. Culture, société, politique*, ed. by Olivier Dard, Michel Leymarie and Neil McWilliam (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2010), III, pp. 111-119.

> anciens auteurs les textes qui prouvent la continuité et la haute antiquité de leur existence dans ces montagnes. Pour écarter l'idée que ce soient les restes d'une invasion slave, je rappellerai seulement qu'ils formaient un corps de troupes, probablement irrégulières, dans l'armée d'Alexandre le Grand; le jour de la bataille d'Issus, ce roi, qui les connaissait bien, leur adressa quelques paroles citées par Quinte-Curce, et qui seraient parfaitement appropriées à un corps de brigands du Pinde, s'il en existait un aujourd'hui.[407]

The Aromanians responsible for the 1870 murders of one Italian and three English tourists in Dilessi might be brigands but they are ethnically Greek, as justified by their ancestry in mercenaries of Alexander the Great's army. The Battle of Issus opposed Alexander's forces to the Persian army, during the Hellenic conquest of Asia. The participation of bandits in the battle is indeed reported by Curtius in his *Historiae Alexandri Magni* with the king exhorting them to 'wrest' gold from the enemy soldiers. Burnouf's use of an anecdote from Alexander's war against Persia establishes an unspoken parallel with the Independence War (against the Ottomans as modern-day Persians) which was fought in great part by the klephts, insurgent tribes of the mountainous regions of Greece, that made a living off both stockbreeding and robbery. By linking the klephts' deeds to those of Alexander's soldiers, Burnouf appears to elevate the modern tribes at a time where their prestige from the Independence struggle has diminished. All of their notable heroes having died, their image was replaced in popular imagination by the violence of the Arvanitaki brothers, the outlaws responsible for the Dilessi murders or the depoliticised lawlessness of Hadji Stavros in Edmond About's novel, *Le Roi des Montagnes* (1857).

Contrasting with About's and Burnouf's romanticised vision of Greek outlaws, Vogüé appears more disillusioned about the famed antiquity of the klephts.

> La pratique des Grecs modernes rend un peu méfiant dans la lecture des Grecs anciens: les bulletins de la guerre de l'Indépendance donnent peut-être la mesure de la véracité qu'il faut attribuer à ceux de Thémistocle et d'Alcibiade. […] nos petits-neveux feraient à Botzaris et à Colocotroni, dans l'histoire moderne, la place que nous laissons à Léonidas et à Miltiade dans l'histoire ancienne : et l'on verrait sans doute Hadji Stavros et Arvanitaki se mêler dans la mémoire des hommes au prudent Ulysse et au bouillant Achille.[408]

The heroic deeds of the Greek War of Independence fighters (Botsaris and Kolokotronis) diminish the prestige of antique generals (Themistocles and Alcibiades), and legendary heroes (Ulysses and Achilles) are close to being reduced to vulgar highway bandits (Hadji Stavros and Takos

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[407] Emile Burnouf, 'Le Brigandage en Grèce. — Le drame de Marathon, les Vlaques, leurs origines et leurs mœurs', *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 87 (1870), 987-1008 (p. 998).

[408] Vogüé, Voyage aux pays du passé, p. 5.

Arvanitakis). The deeds of Takos Arvanitakis must have been very fresh in Voguë's mind as the Dilessi murders occurred less than a year before his journey, his tourist victims being on their way back from a visit of Marathon (the strategist responsible for the Greek victory in Marathon, in 490 BCE, was Miltiades, and we can here see the irony Vogüé demonstrates in his opposition between ancient and modern Greeks). Furthermore, boundaries are blurred between Greek outlaws and insurrectionists as celebrated figures such as Botsaris and Kolokotronis, as well as bandits such as Hadji Stavros, were members of insurgent tribes which fought against the Ottoman Empire during the Independence War but were also famous for attacking and robbing travellers and villages.[409] Thus, the experience of Greece demystifies for Vogüé the romantic construction of correspondences between the Greek Independence War and classical culture, whose famed heroism is absent from his visit to the modern country.

Still, not all modern Greeks are mountain outlaws and the prestige gained from the Independence War has not fully faded by the middle of the nineteenth century. Desiring to trace the ancestry of Modern Greeks to the most famous epic tale, Gandar has recourse to environmental determinism to establish a geographical typology of Greek people as descendants from different Homerian heroes.

> les deux personnages principaux des épopées homériques caractérisent encore les deux parties principales de la population grecque.
>
> Le Grec du continent, plus violent qu'adroit, reproche à l'insulaire […] plein de subtilité dans les transactions comme de ressources dans les dangers, de ressembler encore au héros de l'*Odyssée* […]
>
> Quant à Achille lui-même, avec ses armes invincibles, son ardeur que rien ne dompte, et ses jalouses colères, c'est le klephte des montagnes du Nord […] apportant dans les combats une bravoure indisciplinée, et dans les conseils son implacable orgueil. Mais on lui pardonna ses excès, parce qu'il sut, comme le héros de Larisse, payer de son sang la victoire. […]
>
> À côté d'Ulysse et d'Achille, il y a, dans l'*Iliade*, un homme qui est brave et sage, mais moins sage que l'un et moins brave que l'autre. Cependant il commande en maître à tous deux. […] Ce personnage a toujours existé. […] Agamemnon, roi de Mycènes, c'est déjà le Péloponnèse qui s'isole et aspire au souverain pouvoir. […] Ainsi le veut la Morée, qui se croit la tête et le cœur de la Grèce, sinon la Grèce entière.

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[409] John S. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece 1821-1912* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1987).

> […] je n'aurais garde, sans doute, d'énumérer les autres chefs de l'Iliade. Il en est un pourtant que je tiens à citer encore […] parce que je l'ai très souvent rencontré en Grèce. Souvent même j'ai interrogé ses souvenirs, et une partie de ce que je rapporte s'appuie sur son témoignage.
>
> Lorsqu'on rencontre Nestor, il est facile de le reconnaître […] on écoute avec recueillement les conseils qu'il aime à donner, et auxquels il n'oublie guère de mêler le récit de ses exploits, l'éloge des demi-dieux dont il a été le compagnon.[410]

This analogy aims to demonstrate that perpetuation of race is not only dependent on the Greeks themselves but also on their environment. To the three heroes (Ulysses, Achilles and Agamemnon) correspond three regions of Greece (the islands, the northern mountains and the Peloponnese), with the addition of the old king Nestor representing Greece's memory. As seen in chapter 3, the environmental determinism of this sort of typology was common in geographical theories of the mid-nineteenth century, and intrinsically depended on the racialisation of the geographical 'other'. However, the underlying argument made by Gandar here is twofold as he claims that Homer's texts represent a way to understand modern Greek politics but also, as he uses his own travel experience ('je l'ai très souvent rencontré en Grèce. […] ce que je rapporte s'appuie sur son témoignage') to establish the originality of his classical scholarship.

The introduction of Gandar's work positions its author in the lineage of previous scholarship (primarily Jean-Jacques Ampère, *La Poésie grecque en Grèce* (1844), but also Robert Wood, Friedrich August Wolf, Johann Heinrich Voss and Giambattista Vico) but proposes to use Greece's natural environment and contemporary population as evidence in the Homeric debates. The publication by Wolf of the *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795) raised the questions of the oral origins of Homer's work, the unity of the poems and the historicity of their author. Whilst the 'Homeric question' remains at the centre of the scholarly debate in the mid-nineteenth century, it is in reality sidestepped by Gandar who privileges an approach that is not far removed from reception studies. For him, the 'popular' survival of legends about the poet's birthplace or his tomb proves more adequate than linguistic or historic arguments on the value of Homer and the truthfulness of his work in relation to modern Greece. In this regard, his analysis of the Iliad is particularly interesting, not only in what it reveals of the mythologisation of the Greek Independence War by young Hellenists almost twenty years later, but also as he chooses to read the Iliad as an ethnographic study of Greece. Greek identity would thus be a mixture of cunningness (Odysseus) and courage (Achilles), led by ambition (Agamemnon) and followed by its historical memory (Nestor), which

[410] Gandar, *Homère*, pp. 82-85.

would account for the ethnic and landscape diversity of the country, and these differences would have been transmitted since Homeric times.

French travellers are interested in retracing the heredity of the Greek people they encounter as the perception of establishing a direct link to the ancient past further enriches their comprehension of antiquity (and helps them further their classical studies), but also bolsters their own heritage narratives. Despite (or indeed partly because of) the difficulty of establishing a clear heredity between ancient and modern Greeks, the reception of Greek heritage by French travellers (and elite western Europeans in general) is centred around their own claim to the classical legacy. Whether they classify modern Greeks as 'authentic' or 'barbarised' Greeks, western Europeans implicitly set themselves as the privileged inheritors of antiquity, thus as the ones who can produce a discourse of knowledge on antiquity and judge the inhabitants of Greece on their degree of conformity to the ancient ideal. The perceived continuity of the Greeks is instrumental in the politics of French classical heritage, a heritage they claim, based not on geography but on epistemological privilege.

4.1.3 Egyptians as the classical 'other'

The racialisation of Egyptians is also found in narratives of continuity with ancient civilisations but the continuity between ancient and modern Egyptians reinscribes them in a position of alterity *vis-à-vis* the classical world. This 'other' is represented at times as primitive (pre-classical, mythical), decadent (which is post-classical), or simply barbarian (a characterisation that emphases the grotesque and 'anti-classical' aesthetic of the oriental other).[411] In *La Mort de Philae*, Loti's meditation on history and periodisation leads him to represent Egypt and the Egyptians (especially the *fellahs*, labourers of the Nile valley) as decadent, having fallen from the glory of the pharaohs' era to present-day apathy. The perceived slow decay of Egyptian civilisation is akin to a centuries-long period of sleep from which it would theoretically be possible to awaken. Loti thus puts forward a theory of racial development to explain the contrast between the glory of the Ancient Egyptian civilisation and its perceived current state of decadence:

> Pauvre belle race de bronze! Sans doute elle fut trop précoce et donna trop jeune son étonnante fleur, en des temps où sur la terre, les autres humanités végétaient obscurément encore; sans doute sa résignation présente lui est venue comme une lassitude, après tant de siècles d'effort et d'expansive puissance. Elle détenait jadis la lumière du monde, et la

[411] Hartog, *Anciens, Modernes, Sauvages*; McCoskey, *Race: Antiquity and its Legacy*.

> voici tombée depuis plus de deux mille ans à cette sorte de sommeil fatigué, qui a rendu la tâche facile aux conquérants d'autrefois comme aux exploiteurs d'aujourd'hui…[412]

The 'race de bronze' denomination is an allusion to the 'myth of the ages', originally from Hesiod's *Works and Days* and later found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The Bronze race is the third race in this history; it is a violent society with a deep love of war and conquest. In the *Metamorphoses*, the race actually becomes extinct in a flood (caused by Zeus, who grew irritated by their hubris), a motive that is recurrent in *La Mort de Philae* as its title references the flooding of the Philae island and its temple to Isis by the British construction of a dam on the Nile. Indeed, for Loti, there is no doubt that the 'exploiteurs d'aujourd'hui' in Egypt are the British, occupying the country since 1882, a peril against which he hopes for a reawakening of the Egyptian people. However, this description of the Egyptians as members of a 'bronze race' also corresponds to nineteenth-century taxonomies of racial divisions, ones with ancient origins and clear social consequences, theorised for example by Arthur de Gobineau in his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1855).[413]

In the *Republic*, Plato reuses the 'myth of the ages' as an edifying tale for good governance. The philosopher supplants a chronological succession of races with a synchronic vision; the five ages are replaced with four types of people (gold, silver, iron and bronze) to which corresponds a civic function (rulers, warriors, laborers and artisans). As Benjamin Isaac notes, the strict separations between these classes which derived from hereditary characteristics, makes this ideal society a heavily racialised one.

> While it is true that Plato presents all this as part of an invented myth to be told the citizens, the conclusion is yet inescapable that the metal contents which determine the overall quality of a person are racial characteristics.[414]

The reference to the ancient myth and its different receptions and reinterpretations reinforces here both the racialisation of the Egyptians by Loti, and their perceived current state of decline. The myth of the ages, as told by Hesiod, is a creation myth which narrates the story of the four races that came before the human era (the final 'iron race'). As the third race, the bronze one precedes the 'heroic age', whose race is made up of the characters of heroic myths such as the Trojan war or the seven against Thebes. By inserting them in this chronology (after the godlike figures of the

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[412] Loti, p. 143.

[413] In this pseudo-scientific essay, Gobineau divises humanity in three races, of which the 'white race' has led human development and whose mixing with other races will engender the ultimate decadence. Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des Races humaines* (Paris: Didot, 1853-1855)

[414] Isaac, p. 125

Golden age but before Greek heroes and humans), Loti assigns the Egyptians to a 'pre-classical' temporality, an age that is both mythical and primitive.

In the eponymous chapter, he then details the characteristics of this 'bronze race', underlying especially the constancy of its 'type'.

> Ces hommes sont les fellahs, les paysans de la vallée du Nil, les purs Égyptiens dont le type n'a pas changé au cours des siècles: dans les plus antiques bas-reliefs de Thèbes ou de Memphis, on les retrouve tels, avec leur profil noble aux lèvres un peu épaisses, leurs yeux allongés aux paupières lourdes, leur taille mince et leurs épaules larges.[415]

A lack of racial and personal singularity is used to justify the theory of a historical stagnation of Egyptian civilisation and the constancy of the race is inseparable from the constancy of customs observed by Loti. He particularly notices and highlights the songs ('un chant monotone sur trois notes, qui doit dater des premiers pharaons'[416]), as well as the agricultural techniques and utensils ('le châdouf est un primitive agrès, resté immuable depuis des temps qui ne comptent plus'[417]) as supposedly unchanged since antiquity, an assertion which can also be found in the *Description de l'Egypte*'s volumes on agriculture and music and thus often appears unchallenged throughout the nineteenth century. This presentation of an unadulterated people (he tellingly calls the fellahs 'de purs Egyptiens'[418]) eternally going through the same limited range of motions, singing the same melodies, is a romanticisation of ancient Egypt which erases of course centuries of history from the picture, including, in antiquity already, the Greco-Roman era in Egypt (from Alexander the Great's conquest to the rise of Christianity and the Arab conquest in the seventh century). This erasure is paradoxical as most of the historical knowledge of Egypt in Europe, preceding the Napoleonic expedition, comes precisely from Greco-Roman sources, proof of an intricate history of cultural exchanges in the ancient Mediterranean that is at odds with a representation of Egypt as a land eternally, or even temporarily, cast outside of the course of history.[419] This presentation of Egypt as paradoxically both stagnant and decadent informs Loti's view of oriental history, his reception of antiquity and how these two elements intersect with or contradict each other.

Whilst Flaubert is also keen to uncover an antique heredity to modern Egyptians, his classical references appear very different to Loti's, showing here a desire to keep some of the

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[415] Loti, p. 140

[416] Ibid., p. 137

[417] Ibid., p. 137-138.

[418] Ibid., p. 139.

[419] With the important exception of Herodotus (fifth century BCE), the majority of surviving ancient historical work on Egypt is posterior to Alexander's conquest. The Egyptian priest Manetho wrote his *Aegyptiaca* in the third century BCE, the historian Diodorus and the geographer Strabo worked in the first century BCE, and Plutarch wrote of Egyptian religious rituals in the first century CE. All of these works were written in Greek.

romanticisation of Egypt by previous travellers, such as Lamartine, at bay. When describing Cairo in a letter to Louis Bouilhet, after distinguishing between the 'trouvailles' (of human elements) and the 'retrouvailles' (of nature, see chapter 3), Flaubert adds, describing street scenes in Cairo: 'Mais il y a un élément nouveau, que je ne m'attendais pas à voir et qui est immense ici, c'est le grotesque.'[420]

The category of the grotesque is linked by Mikhail Bakhtin to the carnivalesque setting, most famously analysed in relation to Rabelais and the late-medieval period, but that Bakhtin himself ties to Aristophanes and the Old Attic comedy: 'We find this same conjunction of laughter with cultic food and drink, with sexual indecencies and with death in the very structure of Aristophanes' comedies.'[421] Aristophanes is the prime, although not the only example of ancient comedy reliant on 'debasing and mocking humor […] e.g., images of the body, language, banquets, excrement, beatings, laughter',[422] and was praised as such by Flaubert in a letter to Louise Colet: 'les anciens ne connaissaient pas ce prétendu genre noble; il n'y avait pas pour eux de chose que l'on ne puisse dire. Dans Aristophane, on chie sur la scène',[423] having previously declared that 'ce qui manque à la société moderne, ce n'est pas un Christ, ni un Washington, ni un Socrate, ni un Voltaire même ; c'est un Aristophane.'[424]

This 'grotesque' element is thus one of the ways used by Flaubert to build an aesthetic bridge between antiquity and the 'Orient'. The oriental 'grotesque' he describes is directly related to ancient comedies:

> Tout le vieux comique de l'esclave rossé, du vendeur de femmes bourru, du marchand filou, est ici très jeune, très vrai, charmant. Dans les rues, dans les maisons, à propos de tout, de droite et de gauche on y distribue des coups de bâton avec une prodigalité réjouissante. Ce sont des intonations gutturales qui ressemblent à des cris de bêtes féroces, et des rires par là-dessus, avec de grands vêtements blancs qui pendent, des dents d'ivoire claquant sous des lèvres épaisses, nez camus de nègres, pieds poudreux, et des colliers, et des bracelets![425]

All the elements of the 'vieux comique' of Cairo's streets can be identified with characteristics of ancient theatre. The 'intonations gutturales' that mimic 'des cris de bêtes féroces' evoke

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[420] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 538 (1 December 1849).
[421] Quoted in Antony T. Edwards, 'Historicizing the Popular Grotesque: Bakhtin's *Rabelais* and Attic Old Comedy', in *Theater and Society in the Classical World*, ed. by Ruth Scodel (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 89-117 (p. 95).
[422] Edwards, p. 90.
[423] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, II, p. 284 (27 March 1853).
[424] Ibid., p. 209 (16 December 1852).
[425] Ibid., I, p. 538 (1 December 1849).

Aristophanes' linguistic inventions in his animal choruses, as in *The Frogs* (Brekekekéx-koáx-koáx) or in *The Birds* (kikkabau-kikkabau-torot-toro-toro-torolililix). The emphasis on the grotesque facial appearance of Egyptians ('lèvres épaisses'; 'nez camus') recall the exaggerated features of the masks traditionally worn by comic actors in ancient Greece and Rome. Flaubert also quickly identifies characters or 'types' such as the beaten slave, or the cunning merchant who were central mechanisms of the work of later comedy writers such as the Latin author Plautus (who himself copied lots of his plots from the Greek Menander). From his first impressions of Cairo, Flaubert is thus presenting Egyptians not as individuals but as the archetypal characters (not dissimilar from Loti's description of Egyptian women) of an ancient farce of which he is the delighted spectator. As Said notes:

> His travel notes and letters reveal a man scrupulously reporting events, persons, and settings, delighting in their bizarreries, never attempting to reduce the incongruities before him. […] His tastes run to the perverse, whose form is often a combination of extreme animality, even of grotesque nastiness, with extreme and sometimes intellectual refinement.[426]

Said rightly sees in this attitude a reinforcement of the overarching male Western traveller's gaze, as well as an essentialisation of the exotic other, but also underlines that Flaubert takes pleasure in the aspects of Antiqutiy that are the furthest from the neoclassical ideal of antiquity. The inclusion of the grotesque as an aesthetic category within a classical frame of reference allows for the possibility of a non-classical (in the 'Winckelmannian' sense seen in chapter 2) reception of antiquity.

Flaubert delights indeed in relating bawdy anecdotes in his letters to his friend Bouillhet:

> Post-scriptum
>
> Pour toi seul
>
> Le bouffon de Méhémet-Ali, pour réjouir la foule, saisit un jour une femme dans un bazar du Caire, la posa sur le bord de la boutique d'un marchand et là la coïta publiquement pendant que le marchand continuait à fumer tranquillement sa pipe.
>
> Sur la route du Caire à Choubra il y avait, il y a quelque temps, un jeune drôle qui se faisait enculer publiquement par un singe de la forte espèce, toujours pour donner bonne opinion de soi et faire rire.[427]

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[426] Said, p. 184.

[427] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 542 (1 December 1849).

It is uncertain whether Flaubert witnessed the scenes he narrates, or if, more probably, he is relating anecdotes he heard circulating in Cairo. In any case, the base humour based on public displays of sexual violence and bestiality is explicitly set as part of performances ('le bouffon […] pour réjouir la foule'; 'pour donner une bonne opinion de soi et faire rire') as the word 'publiquement' is repeated to underline the theatrical aspect of these scenes. The context of the complicity of Flaubert's letters to Bouilhet ('Pour toi seul') highlights the positionality of the implicit audience: two Western men who, even from France, exercise their supervisory gaze on oriental bodies and their sexuality. These anecdotes also emphasise the carnivalesque aspect of the 'Orient', as does the character of the King's jester, a favourite of Flaubert who notes in the same letter: 'Les bouffons sont parfaits et les plaisanteries d'iceux du meilleur gout.'[428] Despite their bawdiness, the repetitions of these anecdotes – many others of the same type are found both in Flaubert's private notes and in his letters to Bouilhet – showcase how the traveller apprehends the alterity of the Orient through the lens of the ancient farce.

Flaubert constructs here his 'antique' Orient through his fascination for the grotesque and an aesthetic of excess. For him, the grotesque of Aristophane's plays represents the real aesthetic of antiquity:

> Mais les gens de goût […] ceux qui font […] du sentiment coquet et de l'art aimable, changent, grattent, enlèvent, et ils se prétendent classiques, les malheureux! Ah! que je voudrais être savant ! et que je ferais un beau livre sous ce titre: De l'interprétation de l'antiquité ! Car je suis sûr d'être dans la tradition […] Mais encore une fois, les anciens ne connaissaient pas ce prétendu genre noble; il n'y avait pas pour eux de chose que l'on ne puisse dire. Dans Aristophane, on chie sur la scène. Dans l'Ajax de Sophocle, le sang des animaux égorgés ruisselle autour d'Ajax qui pleure.[429]

'Authentic' antiquity for Flaubert is not classical or at least does not correspond to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century receptions of the 'Classics'. For Flaubert, modern canons of classicisms have polished antiquity for modern taste, embodied here by 'les gens de goût', (recalling also the ironic characterisation of the Egyptian jesters' jokes as 'du meilleur gout'). The question of what is in 'good taste' in relation to both the 'Orient' and antiquity is set up as central as Flaubert rejects classicism as a way to understand antiquity, revelling in the violent, grotesque and, *in fine*, orientalised hybridity of high and low register he finds in (classical) writers such as Aristophanes and Sophocles. In her study of Flaubert and antiquity, Sylvie Laüt-Berr demonstrates how from his

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[428] Ibid., p. 540.

[429] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, II, p. 284 (27 March 1853).

first oeuvres to *Salammbô* and 'Herodias', Flaubert's literary usage of antiquity favours periods of decadence, which also responds with the author's predilections for late-antiquity literature.[430]

A major influence on Flaubert's construction of an oriental antiquity was the work of Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (1810) which Flaubert knew through the translation (in reality, more of an adaptation) of Jean-Daniel Guigniaut.[431] In the midst of German romanticism, Creuzer, in opposition to the neo-classicism of Winckelmann, 'a construit la représentation dionysiaque d'une Grèce qui est orientale par ses origines'.[432] As he read *Religions de l'antiquité* to prepare the first *Tentation de Saint Antoine*, this idea will remain determinant for him long after his journey to the 'Orient', until the redaction of Salammbô twenty years later. For Laüt-Berr, '[d]ans Creuzer, il a appris à regarder l'Orient à travers la Grèce.'[433] In his travel writing, as in his fictions, Flaubert is departing from the Winckelmanian classical vision to promote a hybrid aesthetics of antiquity which encompasses both the sublime and the grotesque he witnessed in his journeys and in ancient literature. In the journey through the 'Orient', this aesthetic is primarily realised through the racialisation of oriental bodies and the emphasis on their physical as well as social alterity.

4.2 Classical and oriental bodies

Beyond language and customs, the bodies of the 'oriental' other are the central *locus* onto which racialised conceptions of alterity are built. Whether those are rejected or embraced, the racialisation of oriental bodies takes place within a matrix of references to classical aesthetical canons. Often, journeys across the Mediterranean, especially in Greece and in Egypt, allow for direct comparison between the encountered people and the ancient art of their (presumed) ancestors. The identification, by French travellers such as Loti and Flaubert, of Greeks and Egyptians with ancient art serves different purposes. It is a way, on the one hand, for Western European travellers to justify, through an observable heredity, their conceptions of 'oriental' history, fixing entire civilisations into an a-historical state of immobility (see chapter 1). On the other hand, they also seek pleasure from the aesthetic recognition that can be derived from the easy assimilation of Greek or Egyptian people with their ancient representations. However, these two processes more often than not go hand in hand and as Clare Foster contends, 'The pleasure at being able to be moved

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[430] Sylvie Laüt-Berr, *Flaubert et l'Antiquité: Itinéraires d'une passion* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001).

[431] Frédéric Creuzer, *Religions de l'antiquité considérées principalement dans leurs formes symboliques et mythologiques*, trans. by Jean-Daniel Guigniaut, 10 vols (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1825-1851).

[432] Ildikó Lőrinszky, 'Le soleil devient un mythe: Dimension mythologique et substrat mythographique dans Salammbô', *Flaubert* (2009), <http://journals.openedition.org/flaubert/601>

[433] Laüt-Berr.

by an ancient work cannot easily be separated from the external meanings of this ability as an aspect of social identity.'[434]

The classical criteria of beauty are especially, though not exclusively, projected by the white male traveller onto female bodies of colour and writers such as Maurras in Greece and Nerval in Egypt thus categorise encountered women by their adherence to this ideal model. The equation of whiteness with beauty, whether implicit or explicit, underpins most of these classifications and represents another heritage of Winckelmann's reception of ancient art: harmony, balance and whiteness. 'So wird auch ein schöner Körper desto schöner sein, je weißer er ist. [a beautiful body will be all the more beautiful the whiter it is]',[435] wrote the art historian in 1764, referring certainly to marble statues but drawing a persistent equivalence between whiteness and beauty that has endured for centuries. 'La phrase de Winckelmann marque l'entrée des modernes dans l'idéologie de la Grèce blanche *stricto sensu*. […] On trouve là, en effet, pour la première fois dans l'histoire de l'art, l'affirmation de la suprématie du blanc grec.'[436] However, the attraction of the exotic, the anti-classical aesthetic *par excellence*, is enhanced by the constant contrasting of the physical ideal of harmony from antiquity and the perceived hybridity of modern oriental bodies.

4.2.1 Statues, archaeology and racialisation

As seen above, one of the delights of the early EFA members during their stay in Athens, expressed here by Benoit, is the possibility for him and his fellow scholars to 'admirer souvent dans la mine héroïque ou fine de certains hommes, dans la beauté si pure de quelques femmes, des types qui nous rappelaient la statuaire antique.'[437] The similarity perceived between modern bodies and ancient sculptures does not only justify the heredity of Greek people, or a conception of history and progress reliant on the immobile a-historicity of the non-European people. It also triggers an erudite pleasure of aesthetic recognition which, by essentialising the observed bodies as belonging to a classical type, turns them into objects of artistic (and colonial) gaze and study, similar to ancient vestiges or exotic nature.

The aesthetic constancy of 'type', especially of women, is for example sought after by Maurras in the Greek colony of Cargèse. Established in Corsica in the seventeenth century, the presence of

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[434] Clare L. E. Foster, 'Familiarity and Recognition: Towards a New Vocabulary for Classical Reception Studies' in *Framing Classical Reception Studies: Different Perspectives on a Developing Field*, ed. by Marteen De Pourcq, Nathalie de Haan and David Rijser (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 33-69 (p. 44).

[435] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums. Erster Theil.* (Dresden: Walther, 1764), p. 148.

[436] Philippe Jockey, *Le mythe de la Grèce blanche: histoire d'un rêve occidental* (Paris: Belin,2013), p. 159.

[437] Benoit, 'La Grèce ancienne', p. 511

this small community of Greek speakers on French soil delights the nationalist author by the clear link they represent between Provencal and Hellenist identities.

> De jeunes Cargésiennes étaient groupées […] Et d'autres s'en venaient de l'extrémité d'un sentier mollement infléchi, les pieds nus, la cruche d'argile en équilibre au dessus du front. Je venais de trouver en Corse plusieurs occasions d'admirer ce dernier mouvement, le plus beau qui soit, car il met en valeur les qualités d'un jeune corps, non seulement dans sa forme, mais dans sa grâce. La poitrine se gonfle et se modèle comme un vase […] La colonne vivante se déplace, glisse, se meut sans s'interrompre […] Quelles pentes prennent alors les vêtements les plus grossiers! Je suis persuadé que les plis divins de l'Antique n'auraient jamais été possible sans la coutume de poser l'amphore sur la tête et de cheminer les pieds nus. […] Je conserve dans ma mémoire, comme des images précieuses, quelques bustes d'une fierté digne du marbre, et des profils d'épaules et de hanches infiniment purs.[438]

The traveller admires above all the grace of the women, the way their movement is shaped by the utilitarian gesture of carrying water. The gesture appears so classical that the women are here compared to archaeological objects such as a vase or a column, both curved and straight, aesthetically perfectly harmonious, accentuating the ways in which women's bodies are received and judged, like artefacts, primarily as objects, for their aesthetic qualities. Their bodies are here presented in a fragmented way that recalls Greek ruins, whether as a single column, or, as Maurras focusses on specific body parts (shoulders, hips, torso), as pieces of a destroyed statue. In some ways, the women are disembodied by the descriptions, appearing not as full figures but as a sum of disjointed parts, united by the grace of their movement. For Maurras, the beauty of the women is contingent on their re-enactment of a perceived antiquity of customs and the perfection of antique art is itself explained by the perceived recreation of its origin by the women. Once again, a selective reception of antiquity is projected onto the living Greek bodies as a means of interpreting antiquity, and the male western gaze judges oriental women solely on their conformity to classical aesthetic ideals.

Visiting ancient Egyptian temples, both Loti and Vogüé use archaeological vestiges, especially statuary, as a quasi-anthropological justification for racial essentialisation, seeing the resemblance between ancient art and modern men as a proof of their historical immobility:

> Ces hommes sont les fellahs, les paysans de la vallée du Nil, les purs Égyptiens dont le type n'a pas changé au cours des siècles : dans les plus antiques bas-reliefs de Thèbes ou

[438] Maurras, pp. 106-107.

> de Memphis, on les retrouve tels, avec leur profil noble aux lèvres un peu épaisses, leurs yeux allongés aux paupières lourdes, leur taille mince et leurs épaules larges.[439]
>
> La constance de la race, celle de l'art, vivant quarante siècles dans les mêmes langes, celle du type ethnique dont l'immobilité étonnante permet de confondre le fellah qui vous guide à Boulaq avec les statues qu'il coudoie.[440]

Both writers underline the physical similarities between ancient bas-reliefs and modern Egyptian *fellahs*, attributed to the enduring survival of a racial type. Whilst for Maurras, the resemblance between the young women of Cargèse and Greek statues was reinforced by the grace of their movements, for Vogüé, the likeness between Egyptian fellah and ancient art is enhanced by the immobility of the man. Unlike the women in Corsica, descendants of Greeks who had to leave their land but managed, according to Maurras, to preserve their ethnic identity, the Egyptians have been living for forty centuries 'dans les mêmes langes'. The metaphor of the swaddling clothes thus relegates Egyptians to a perpetual stage of infancy from which even their art has not been able to emancipate itself.

Vogüé develops his analysis, bringing a combination of artistic and psycho-social judgements to explain this perceived constancy, which reinforces the process of orientalist essentialisation operating in these comparisons.

> On est d'ailleurs moins choqué par la monotonie des figures [here: statues] égyptiennes, pour peu qu'on réfléchisse aux lois de la plastique orientale. Un art primitif cherche à rendre les attitudes ordinaires de la vie plutôt que les mouvements spéciaux qu'étudie seul un art très raffiné. Or ces attitudes sont restreintes à un très petit nombre chez l'homme d'Orient, immobile, grave et lent, sobre de gestes, impassible de visage: il ne connait pas cette individualité de la stature, du port, de la physionomie, si recherchée chez nous.[441]

Egyptian art is repetitive both because it is primitive and because its object, the oriental man, is devoid of western individuality. This lack of racial and personal singularity is used to explain the perceived historical stagnation of Egyptian civilisation and the constancy of the race is inseparable from the constancy of customs observed by Loti and Vogüé. Whilst oriental women are judged by Maurras and Loti through their conformity to aesthetic ideals, it can be noted that oriental men are here treated as object of scientific enquiry, similar to archaeological artefacts. Whilst the comparison with ancient art is common to both genders, the 'use' of male and female bodies by the Western gaze is different.

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[439] Loti, p. 140.
[440] Vogüé, *Histoires Orientales* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1880), p. 50.
[441] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

Similarly, describing his arrival in Egypt, Gustave Flaubert writes to his friend Jules Cloquet: 'Ainsi, dès en débarquant à Alexandrie, j'ai vu venir devant moi toute vivante l'anatomie des sculptures égyptiennes: épaules élevées, torse long, jambes maigres, etc.'[442] From the first moments of the journey, the past is revived through its physical embodiment in modern Egyptian people. His description recalls Loti's as both writers' gaze lingers on the slimness of the figure and the broadness of their shoulders. From Flaubert's perspective, antiquity is literally walking towards him as he steps on the oriental soil, not as people but as an essentialised 'anatomie', corresponding to previously seen images of bas-relief and sculptures.

In an even subtler way, he then draws a rapprochement between an Egyptian statue and a Greek woman: 'dans sa cour, une statue égyptienne [...] assise et les bras croisés; c'est une femme. À la fenêtre nous voyons une Grecque, petite, blanche, yeux bleus, allaitant un enfant.'[443] The succession of both images associates both figures and abolishes the temporal distance between them, the Greek woman seemingly a living answer to the Egyptian statue, crossing her arms as well, only this time, not in an solemn pause, but to carry a nursing child. The short description blurs the difference of nature between the ancient statue and the contemporary woman by turning them both into images that fit an expected oriental and classical 'type'. Both women, the statue and the living mother, are gazed at as answers to preconceived aesthetic forms and thus Flaubert is able to 'rediscover' them through his journey (as announced in his letter to Bouilhet where he distinguishes between 'trouvailles' et 'retrouvailles').

The sense of seeing the past come to life runs through Flaubert's whole journey. In his notes, describing the courtesan Kuchiuk-Hanem's dance he writes that he has seen similar dances 'sur de vieux vases grecs'[444]. He even offers to Jules Cloquet an 'archaeological' analysis of this art: 'Les danses que nous avons fait danser devant nous ont un caractère trop hiératique pour ne pas venir des danses du vieil Orient'.[445] The perceived ritual nature of the dance act is interpreted as a sign of its authentic antiquity and of the preserved customs of the 'Orient'. This contrasts with Edouard Schuré's own assessment of Egyptian dance (cf chapter 1), which he sees as a degradation of its ancient form. If Schuré does also refer to antiquity in his description of the Cairo dancer, it is only to underline its vulgarity: 'On pense aux vers de Martial sur la danse des filles de Gadès: *Vibrabunt*

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442 Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 564 (15 January 1850).
443 Flaubert, *Notes*, p. 128.
444 Ibid., p. 133.
445 Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 564 (15 January 1850).

sine fine prurientes lascivos docili tremore lumbos.'[446] (translation: 'endlessly prurient [they] vibrate lascivious loins with practiced tremor.'[447])

This epigram by the first-century Latin poet is written from the perspective of a man inviting one of his friends, Turanius, to his house, flattering himself on his sobriety of mores and the simplicity of his dinner (the full verse thus reads 'if you come to my home, you will not find dancers from Cádiz, endlessly prurient…'). Through the Latin intertext, Schuré thus positions himself as a reluctant spectator, as he distances himself from the lurid description, first by quoting it in Latin (a mark of erudition that thus legitimises the use of sexual language[448]) then, by delegating it to a narrator that himself is positioned as virtuous within the original epigram. For both authors, oriental dances find their origin in antiquity, but whilst Flaubert enjoys finding in their oriental nature the proof of the alterity of classical antiquity, Schuré only perceives them as a degradation of his classical ideal.

4.2.2 Race and classical beauty

If classical intertexts can serve to maintain a prudent, if only rhetorical, distance between the Western traveller and the oriental body, references to antiquity, more often than not, serve to extol the aesthetic qualities of the observed objects or people, or, on the contrary to reproach them for failing to live up to the aesthetic canon of ancient beauty, as in About's assessment of Athenian women. As we have previously seen, the presumed lack of beauty of the Athenian inhabitants is attributed to the noxious and exogenous influence of the Albanians. Greek women are famed for their beauty, not on account of previous travellers' testimonies, but based on the artificial example of ancient sculptures such as the Venus de Milo. As the aesthetic canon was set by modern interpretation of an ancient art, Greek women were retroactively expected to resemble the statues that supposedly depicted them, as only one type of Greek beauty is recognised by Western travellers, and it can only be classical.

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[446] Schuré, p. 25

[447] Martial, *Epigrams*, trans. by David Roy Bailey Shackleton, 3 vols (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), I, pp. 389-391 (5, 78).

[448] I have found no less than eight occurrences of this quote (in full or truncated) in French 19th century travel narratives to Egypt. The reference to Martial seems to originate from Guillaume André Villoteau's chapter on music and dance in the *Description de l'Egypte* (1809). A musicologist and a member of Bonaparte's expedition, Villoteau does indeed give to modern Egyptian dances a Greco-Roman origin: 'Cette danse était connue des Grecs et en usage dans les fêtes bacchanales; elle devint publique par la suite. Du temps des Romains, les Gaditanes s'y étaient acquis une grande réputation. Les poëtes Latins l'ont décrite avec une vérité énergique, qui révolterait la délicatesse de nos mœurs, et que la décence ne toléreroit pas dans notre langue.' Guillaume André Villoteau, *De l'art musical en Egypte* (Paris: Panckoucke, 1826), p. 171.

It is for this reason that male travellers' comments on foreign women's beauty systematically refer to classical Greek models, for example Loti's description of Egyptian women:

> Leurs femmes, qui de temps à autre descendent au fleuve, près d'eux, pour puiser aussi, mais dans des vases d'argile qu'elles emportent […] les fellahines, marchent ou se posent avec une grâce inimitable, drapées de voiles noirs, que même les plus pauvres laissent trainer sur la poussière ou le sable, à la façon des robes de Cour. […] très machinales créatures, à qui l'on n'a d'ailleurs rien appris, elles possèdent par instinct, comme sans doute jadis les filles de l'Hellade, le sens de la noblesse dans l'attitude.[449]

Like Maurras, Loti remarks on the posture of women carrying water and is immediately reminded of ancient Greece. However, according to him, the 'fellahines' only repeat this gesture instinctively and he does not attribute to them any agency in their reception of antiquity. The connection between antiquity and the present can only be made by the Western observer who is in charge of the gaze and the knowledge of the 'Orient'; 'on n'a rien appris' to the women, whose lack of capacity for self-consciousness is underlined by their descriptions as 'très machinales creatures',[450] who act less as humans than as gracious animals. Their inscription in the lineage of classical antiquity paradoxically contributes to their othering from the modern Western traveller.
On the contrary Maurras, commenting on the Cargèsian (Greek) women, brings their Greekness within French identity by underlining both their physical and moral qualities:

> Les mêmes charmants caractères m'avaient étonné et séduit chez les dames d'Athènes. Quoique originaire de Morée et non de l'Attique, les filles de Cargèse se révélaient les Athéniennes de l'Occident, mais en cotte de bure […]
>
> L'entretien […] venait de s'arrêter au plus grec, mais au plus subtil et au plus enchevêtré de tous les mystères, celui de la double procession du Paraclet […] Avec la lampe de Psyché et le verbe de Diotime, la jeune Cargésienne fut mon guide à travers cette abstruse théologie.[451]

This comparison of the Greek inhabitants of Corsica with the women of Athens, first reveals a dichotomy between 'Orient' and 'Occident' where the line of separation falls westward of Greece, relegated to the alterity of the 'Orient'. By 'Athéniennes de l'Occident', it is of course necessary to understand that Maurras sees in the Cargesian women, Greek women in French attire; 'cotte de

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[449] Loti, p. 140-141.
[450] Trying to prevent Colet's jealousy, Flaubert similarly writes to her, about Kuchuk-Hanem, the Egyptian dancer and courtesan he slept with: 'la femme orientale est une machine, et rien de plus; elle ne fait aucune différence entre un homme et un autre homme'. *Correspondance*, II, p. 282 (27 March 1853).
[451] Maurras, pp. 108-109.

bure' probably describes a woollen skirt but the 'bure' is a textile primarily associated with monastic robes, whilst 'cotte' is reminiscent of knights' chain mail, both elements bridging the gap between ancient Greece and modern Corsica via a French medieval imagery. The two figures of Psyche and Diotima serve to add moral and spiritual qualities to the Greek beauty displayed by the women, but also have an erotic subtext. The legend found in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* tells the story of Psyche, a human woman abducted by Eros whom she marries without knowledge of his identity, or even his appearance, until one day she holds a lamp to his face while he sleeps. As a drop of hot lamp oil awakens him, he takes off and Aphrodite forces the young woman to go through a series of trials to regain her beloved. Diotima of Mantinea is a philosopher and a character in Plato's *Symposium* (the only ancient source in which she appears). In the dialogue, Socrates recalls to the banquet's guests how he was instructed about the nature of love by the philosopher and prophetess Diotima in his youth. Psyche and Diotima are thus two ancient figures deemed to have uncovered the truth about 'love', Psyche by literally holding its divine incarnation into the light, Diotima by teaching the wisest ancient philosopher (at least from the perspective of the *Symposium*) about it. It thus appears that if Maurras is enchanted by his conversation with the young Cargesian woman, he is less interested by the theological debates on the nature of the Holy Ghost than by the implied possibility that she might teach him about love, thus shifting the pleasure of reception from purely aesthetic to a full physical embodiment of the feminine ideal.

Canons of feminine beauty are repeatedly drawn from the white Greek ideal theorised by Winckelmann and other neoclassical German authors.

> Eighteenth-century classicism started off dismissing color as a factor in judging beauty, but this very dismissal of color became an argument in favor of whiteness, not only in terms of marble but also skin color. […] The whiteness of marble statues […] became very important once Classicist aesthetics was invoked in support of racist theory. […] White signified the absence of color; it was the color that banished all thought about color, allowing the observer to contemplate the beauty that lay within the form of the human body. Nevertheless, color was never eliminated from thinking about beauty, in large part because 'whiteness' was understood both as the absence of color and as the defining color of Europeans.[452]

By making whiteness an intrinsic component of classical statuary, late eighteenth-century classicists contribute to its invisibilisation and its neutralisation as a colour. White statues and white skins are thus held as a neutral standard of beauty (against the reality of painted statues in antiquity as well

[452] Daniel Purdy, 'The Whiteness of Beauty: Weimar Neo-Classicism and the Sculptural Transcendence of Color' in *Colors 1800/1900/2000: Signs of Ethnic Difference*, ed. by Birgit Tautz (Amsterdam: Brill, 2004), pp. 83-99 (p. 86).

as the usage of non-white sculpture material).[453] The whiteness of classical beauty is thus reinforced in every comparison of modern Greek women with ancient statues, even as it remains unspoken. It appears much more explicitly when describing non-white bodies, as when Nerval, visiting a slave market in Egypt, contrasts blackness with beauty.

> C'étaient des négresses du Sennaar, l'espèce la plus éloignée, certes, du type de beauté convenue parmi nous. […] ces Nubiennes ne sont point laides dans le sens absolu du mot, mais forment un contraste parfait à la beauté telle que nous la comprenons. Une femme blanche doit ressortir admirablement au milieu de ces filles de la nuit, que leurs formes élancées semblent destiner à tresser les cheveux, tendre les étoffes, porter les flacons et les vases, comme dans les fresques antiques.[454]

Whilst the gesture of carrying vases recalls Maurras' depiction of Cargesian women, unlike the white Greek descendants, Black women are presented as entirely removed from classical beauty as is made clear that the 'type de beauté convenue parmi nous' refers to European canons of beauty. For Nerval, blackness can only be used aesthetically as a foil, to better emphasise the beauty of whiteness, always in a subordinate role. This hierarchical aesthetic of contrasts once again uses imagery from antiquity as Nerval pictures Black enslaved women repeating servile gestures on an ancient fresco. Their body shapes might recall elegant ancient representations, but their colour condemns them to remain the foils of white beauty, as Nerval muses: 'sans doutes les belles dames du Caire doivent aimer à s'entourer de chambrières pareilles.'[455] White women remain at the centre of Nerval's reveries even when, as in Cairo, they are not visible. A couple of pages later, having visited different slave markets, he thus writes:

> 'il y avait deux jours que je rêvais les nuages de ma patrie et les beautés pales du Nord; je devais cette préoccupation au premier soufflé du *khamsin* et à l'abus des visages de négresse, lesquels décidément prêtent fort peu à l'idéal.'[456]

Black women do not conform to his (and more generally that of a nineteenth-century white male French writer) vision of the ideal, which, being classical and thus white, led him to imagine temporarily inaccessible European faces. The visibility of the women's faces (both real enslaved women's faces and imaginary Europeans) contrasts with the ubiquitous veil which is worn by most women in Egypt and which Nerval is eager to, metaphorically, lift at every turn of his journey.

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[453] See Jockey.
[454] Nerval, p. 323.
[455] Ibid.
[456] Ibid., p. 329.

Nerval is one of the rare authors in this corpus to directly engage with the subject of contemporary slavery, and whilst some of the narrative is certainly invented, it raises a number of ethical questions as he is the only one who actively seeks to buy an enslaved woman. The narrative conceit aside (the narrator needs a woman in his household to be allowed to rent a house in Cairo), the quest for a woman, first to marry, then to buy, allows him to describe multiple encounters with oriental women of all social classes, providing a common thread to the Egyptian sequence (aptly entitled 'Les Femmes du Caire'). In reality, Nerval treats both potential fiancées and enslaved women as commodities to allow him first to live in Cairo and second to gain intimate knowledge of oriental women. Whilst positioning himself as a discerning, even 'ethical' slaveowner, who affirms that the enslaved woman who end up with him should consider herself free to leave him, he also refuses to consider his responsibility towards her and declines to bring her back to France with him.
In his search, he systematically rejects every woman which he considers 'too dark', asking merchants if they do not have lighter-skinned women to offer.

> J'ai demandé à en voir d'autres chez lesquelles l'angle facial fût plus ouvert et la teinte noire moins prononcée.'[457]
>
> 'Ne trouvant là que des négresses pures, je demandai au drogman si l'on n'y voyait pas d'Abyssiniennes.
>
> […] elles sont beaucoup plus chères.[458]

The fact that the price of the enslaved women varies based on their skin colour demonstrates that the racial hierarchy in place in Egypt concords closely with European racial constructions. Lightness of skin is highly prized by Western travellers such as Nerval, as well as Egyptian slaveowners. Once again, women are racialised in primarily aesthetic terms, as commodities to be gazed upon by men travellers; enslaved women allow Nerval to access, gaze at and describe the female bodies and faces that are usually concealed to foreign travellers and only through the subordination of their specific condition can he metaphorically unveil the oriental woman.

4.2.3 Exotic as the otherness of classics

Eventually, Nerval settles on a Javanese enslaved woman whose unique status (she is the only enslaved woman he is presented with who is not from Africa) and original racial features seem to immediately charm him:

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[457] Ibid., p. 323.
[458] Ibid., p. 324.

> 'Je poussai un cri d'enthousiasme; je venais de reconnaître l'œil en amande, la paupière oblique des Javanaises, dont j'ai vu des peintures en Hollande; comme carnation, cette femme appartenait évidemment à la race jaune. Je ne sais quel gout de l'étrange et de l'imprévu, dont je ne pus me défendre, me décida en sa faveur. Elle était fort belle du reste'[459]

The assessment of the woman's beauty is immediately interpreted through Western art, not classical but Dutch paintings, which bring the 'other' beauty within Nerval's aesthetic canon. However, what triggers Nerval's decision to buy her is her apparent exoticism which contrasts with his previous implied quest for a more Greco-Roman classical type of beauty. The exotic offers a contrast to the classical aesthetic as its charm resides precisely in its unfamiliar otherness. Nerval justifies his choice by his 'gout de l'étrange' and we can see in this qualification a parent of Flaubert's enthusiasm for the grotesque. As underlined by Acheraïou:

> 'hybridity concentrates multiple, contradictory forces involved in shaping cultures and identities. It represents a site of incorporation and rejection in which cultural difference is at once inscribed as sameness and continually disavowed.'[460]

This oscillation between familiarity and otherness characterises Nerval's description of Zaynab (the Javanesese enslaved woman) and is more generally representative of travellers' racialising discourse of exotic bodies. Indeed, after displaying both curiosity and contempt in front of Black enslaved women, Nerval concludes:

> 'Eh bien! Je ne m'enflammerai pas pour ces jolis monstres; mais sans doutes les belles dames du Caire doivent aimer à s'entourer de chambrières pareilles. […] Si j'étais en état de mener largement la vie orientale, je ne me priverais pas de ces pittoresques créatures'[461]

The expression 'jolis monstres' illustrates perfectly the combination of attraction and repulsion that characterises the description of exotic bodies by Western travellers. Both 'jolis' and yet monstrous, their charm derives precisely from this hybridity that Nerval sees as typical ('pittoresque') of the Orient.

Undeniably, the oriental body, whether male or female, is repeatedly depicted as defective, not fully human. In addition, these oriental bodies move in ways that run contrary to classical aesthetics of balance, harmony and whiteness. When in Cairo, Flaubert for example can only see male dancers because women have been prohibited by Mohammad Ali to perform in the Egyptian capital city,

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[459] Ibid., p.341.
[460] Acheraïou, p. 2.
[461] Nerval, p. 323.

presumably for reasons of public decency. However, the male dancers, mimicking women, appear sexually ambiguous and this gender hybridity forms an even greater contrast to Western classicality.

> 'Comme danseurs, figure-toi deux drôles passablement laids, mais charmants de corruption, de dégradation intentionnelle dans le regard et de féminéité dans les mouvements, ayant les yeux peints avec de l'antimoine, et habillés en femmes. […]
>
> Quelquefois ils se renversent tout à fait sur le dos par terre, comme une femme qui se couche pour se faire baiser, et se relèvent avec un mouvement de reins pareil à celui d'un arbre qui se redresse une fois le vent passé. […]
>
> C'est trop beau pour que ça soit excitant. Je doute que les femmes vaillent les hommes. La laideur de ceux-ci ajoute beaucoup comme art.'[462]

The dancers are represented as fully feminised, not only in their clothing and makeup, but also in their movements, especially in their dancing where they lay on the ground in a sexually passive position. The contrast between the men's bodies and their feminine allure adds to their ambiguous attraction for Flaubert, who finds the spectacle 'trop beau pour que ça soit excitant', seemingly more taken by the hybrid aesthetic of the scene than by its sexual aspects. The paradoxical charm of the dancers is underlined by their antinomic descriptions as both 'laids' and 'charmants'. Their physical ugliness and their obvious sexual and moral transgressions ('corruption'; 'dégradation intentionnelle') is constitutive of their unique hybrid exotic aesthetic to the point that Flaubert concludes that it is precisely their 'laideur' that renders them superior to (presumably more conventionally attractive) women dancers.

The traveller encounters his first women dancers' performance whilst travelling up the Nile, and in particular, he visits Kuchiuk-Hanem, a famed *almée*, that is an educated dancer and courtesan, whom he spends the night with on two occasions. This episode occupies multiple pages of his letters to Bouilhet as well as his notes as he narrates in detail both her dancing and their sexual encounters. The accent these descriptions puts on the size of her various physical features serves to reinforce her status as 'une déesse primitive […] une création quasi-mythique, aux proportions imposantes dont se dégage à la fois l'idée de fécondité féminine et de puissance masculine',[463] an almost mythical figure in Flaubert's oriental imagery.

> 'Kuchiuk-Hanem est une grande et splendide créature – plus blanche qu'une Arabe – elle est de Damas – sa peau, surtout du corps, est un peu cafetée. Quand elle s'assoit de côté,

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462 Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, pp. 571-572 (15 Janvier 1850).

463 Sarga Moussa, 'Flaubert ou l'Orient à corps perdu', *Revue des Lettres et de Traduction*, 5 (1999), pp. 93-213 (p. 200).

> elle a des bourrelets de bronze sur les flancs. Ses yeux sont noirs et démesurés – ses sourcils noirs – ses narines fendues – larges épaules solides – seins abondants, pomme.'[464]
>
> 'C'est une impériale bougresse, tétonneuse, viandée, avec des narines fendues, des yeux démesurés, des genous magnifiques, et qui avait en dansant de cranes plis de chair sur son ventre.'[465]

The adjectives used to describe the woman's body emphasise the impression of *démesure* she projects onto the Western traveller ('grande'; 'splendide'; 'démesurés'; 'larges'; 'abondants'). This effect is even accentuated in the letter to Bouilhet where she is described as an 'impériale bougresse', an expression that ties to the supremacy of her beauty ribald sexual connotations. The adjectives 'viandée' and 'tétonneuse' highlight her size and that of her breasts whilst also accentuating the animality projected onto her body, alongside her characterisation as a 'creature'. Flaubert also remarks on the colour of her skin, 'plus blanche qu'une Arabe', next to her origin (Syria). The comparative lightness of her skin tone marks her positively and differentiates her from the Egyptian 'arabs', underlining her unique status in the series of exotic female bodies encountered by the writer. In brief, Kuchiuk-Hanem embodies the hybrid exotic body that charmed Flaubert since his arrival in Cairo; tall and beautiful, her racialised body however is suggestive of sexual excess. Similarly, her tone is lighter than other women in Egypt, which would bring her closer to classical beauty, but her skin is also described as bronze and coffee coloured, two exoticising adjectives setting her apart from European whiteness.

Flaubert declines to describe her dance to Bouilhet but he does so, succinctly, in his personal notes, judging it 'brutale comme coups de cul' but not as beautiful as the men's dance. He, however, expands at length on the night he spends with her:

> Je la regardais dormir. […] Je m'amusais à tuer sur le mur les punaises qui marchaient et ça faisait sur cette muraille blanchie de longues arabesques rouges-noires. Je sentais sur mes fesses son ventre[466]

This specific passage upset Louise Colet, who asked to read her lover's travel notes in 1853[467] and in defending himself, Flaubert justifies and explains his entire oriental aesthetic:

> Ce que j'aime au contraire dans l'Orient, c'est cette grandeur qui s'ignore, et cette harmonie de choses disparates. […] Voilà l'Orient vrai et partant, poétique : des gredins

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[464] Flaubert, *Notes*, p. 132-133

[465] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 606 (13 March 1850).

[466] Flaubert, *Notes*, p.136.

[467] 'Mais c'est toi qui a voulu cette lecture. Je m'y étais longtemps refusé, souviens-t'en.' Flaubert, *Correspondance*, II, p. 276 (24 March 1853).

> en haillons galonnés et tout couverts de vermine. Tu me dis que les punaises de Kuchiouk-Hânem te la dégradent; c'est là, moi, ce qui m'enchantait. Leur odeur nauséabonde se mêlait au parfum de sa peau ruisselante de santal.[468]

An 'harmonie de choses disparates' is precisely what characterises Flaubert's hybrid reception of the 'Orient' and of antiquity. The stinking bugs add to the enchanting smell of the naked woman as the high and low registers are weaved in the traveller's recollection. In the same letter, he proceeds seamlessly from this exposition of a specifically oriental aesthetic to a defence of antiquity as far removed from classicism ('les anciens ne connaissaient pas ce prétendu genre noble; il n'y avait pas pour eux de chose que l'on ne puisse dire'[469]). The figure of Kuchiuk-Hanem represents, more than any other, the complexity of Flaubert's 'Orient', a projection of his reception of antiquity which stands in the margin of the 'classical' world yet embodies its hybridity.

The racialised receptions of antiquity at play in these travel narratives reveal a complex relationship to the alterity of the classical world. Some travellers, such as the early members of the French School in Athens, aim to use their classical scholarship to bring back Greek people within a classical cultural and ethnic frame. Others delight in the alterity of the travelled country and contrast this with classical aesthetics, going as far, in Flaubert's case, in finding in the 'Orient's' hybridity the purest model of his reception of antiquity. In all cases, they reveal deep concerns with the establishment of the heredity of classical ideals, which travellers seek to perceive through encounters with the oriental other. This preoccupation with the continuity or discontinuity of antiquity in the present is inscribed here on racialised bodies, as it was previously on archaeological artefacts or exotic landscapes.

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468 Flaubert, *Correspondance*, II, p. 283 (27 March 1853).
469 Ibid.

CHAPTER 5 – BYPASSING THE MATERIAL

Introduction: Classics, signs and textual journeys

Through the material experience of historical consciousness, ruins and other remains, the natural environment and, finally, the racialised other inhabitants of the 'Orient', nineteenth-century French travellers across the Mediterranean have sought to retrieve traces of classical antiquity and to transcribe these attempts in their travel narratives. Classical reception has thus functioned as an interpretative frame for the materiality of the travelled lands in the text. This chapter explores the relationship between travel as a material experience and the textuality of travel writing, and ways in which the interpretative role of classical reception can operate outside the parameters of the materiality of the travelled world.

In her study, *Le voyage, le monde et la bibliothèque*, Montalbetti postulates the heterogeneity of the referential text (of which travel writing purports to be an example) and the world. The world as materially experienced and observed remains inexpressible in discourse; what is more, the perception of the world itself is mediated by the pre-existence of other texts ('la bibliothèque'). 'Ce que tout texte référentiel raconte, et le récit de voyage en particulier, c'est d'abord l'histoire, chaque fois rejouée, d'un réajustement patient du dire au monde.'[470] Travel writing acts out its own effort to describe a world which, by its very nature, escapes description – using phrases such as 'aucune description ne peut donner une idée'[471], 'Essayons de décrire […] si toutefois il existe un vocabulaire pour parler de ce qui n'a pas été prévu.'[472] – to express the irreducibility of the material world in general, and the exotic country in particular, to language. Indeed, although readers of travel writing accept the inherent limitations of language in depicting the world, even more so as the 'exotic' aspect of the travelled land defies the common referential framework of the author and its intended audience, conventions of the genre generally frame travel narratives as truthful transcriptions of authentic observations.

> Travel books profess to be a representation of a journey, and of events on that journey, *that really took place*. Thus they are, in short, a non-fictional rather than fictional form. […] Generally speaking, travel writers do not have the same licence as novelists simply to

[470] Montalbetti, p. 10.
[471] Ibid., p.12
[472] Ibid., p.41.

> make things up; to do so is to risk one's narrative being classed as fiction, or worse, as fraudulent.[473]

Authors of travel writing are expected to truthfully relate a journey they really undertook, which gives to their text the weight of testimony, corroborating or rebutting previously received information on the travelled lands. Thus, travellers like Vogüé justify their publications by the necessity to correct preconceptions held about the visited countries:

> de cet Orient soi-disant si épuisé on ne sait pas le premier mot chez nous; qu'un récit de voyage est œuvre d'utilité publique […] on se fait de l'autre côté de la frontière les idées les plus fausses, sinon les plus grotesques.[474]

The utility of such texts for their readers rests then on the reliability of the information they carry, as well as on the credibility of their authors. The auctorial construction of the traveller as a simple witness, transcribing observations and impressions for a small audience of readers, works to conceal the widely differing personal interpretations of the 'Orient' by each author. In his preface (dedicated to Henri de Pontmartin, editor of *La Revue des deux mondes*), Vogüé thus disparages his work as 'ce volume de notes, recueillies sans ordre et sans suite, au hasard de l'heure, sous la tente, sur une table d'auberge ou un pont de bateau […] ce pauvre compagnon, bien sali, bien illisible, bien avarié par les mois passés dans les fontes de la selle.'[475] Despite this unassuming presentation, Vogüé continues by exposing a well-defined main argument for his narrative: 'la préoccupation de reconstituer avec le présent la physionomie réelle du passé.'[476] This process manifests itself throughout *Voyage aux pays du passé* as the reception of material remains of antiquity in the 'Orient' and the evaluation of their perceived distance in regard to classical culture and literature and I argue that it hinges heavily on particular interpretations of specific travel observations and historical frameworks.

The self-positioning of travel writing as truthful testimonies of authentic journeys is in itself a codified literary construction, even more so in the middle of the nineteenth century, at a time where Western travellers in the area have multiplied, and so have their publications.

> Le récit de voyage, en effet, ne fait jamais que dire ce qui existe avant lui. Il redit la réalité, dont il est le compte rendu, il reprend des récits qui ont déjà décrit les pays visités, et il répète, à l'intérieur de ses propres pages, les mêmes paysages et les mêmes scènes, dès

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473 Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.15-16.
474 Vogüé, *Voyage aux pays du passé*, p. VII-VIII
475 Ibid., p. V-VI
476 Ibid, p. IX

> lors que le réel les rejoue aussi. […] Cette 'répétition' s'accuse au XIX[e] siècle alors que la plupart des contrées ont été recensées.[477]

This 'risque de la redite'[478] is negotiated through different auctorial and stylistic differentiation strategies, from Vogüé's avowed endeavour to correct misconceptions about the 'Orient', to Flaubert who not only refuses to publish any travel narratives after his journey but also mocks those who do.

> Énault doit être splendide, depuis qu'il est revenu d'Orient. Nous allons avoir encore un voyage d'Orient ! impressions de Jérusalem! Ah! mon Dieu ! descriptions de pipes et de turbans. On va nous apprendre encore ce que c'est qu'un bain, etc.[479]

However, as Flaubert points out, these strategies underline rather than conceal the irreconcilable gap between travel and travel writing. In the nineteenth century, the 'voyage en Orient' becomes fully recognisable as a literary construction with its codes, its 'passages obligés' (the clothes, the bath, Jerusalem, etc.) and, as implied here, a saturation of the market. Each travel experience is unique, but each travel narrative runs the risk of repeating clichés.

In reality of course, as the 'voyage en Orient' increasingly refers not to the journey but to a narrative genre, the 'Orient' as a textual construction drifts away from the 'Orient' as a materially experienced series of territories. I thus argue that classical reception, as a way of 'reading' and interpreting aspects of the travelled 'Orient', opens up spaces of literary creation within avowedly non-fiction narratives.

In previous chapters, I demonstrated how travel narratives sought to establish continuities and discontinuities between the ancient world and the contemporary 'Orient', their focus alternating between the material presence of antiquity and its absence throughout the lands they travelled. In this chapter, my focus turns towards two types of travel writing which eschew continuity in favour of equivalence beyond historical frameworks and throughout the Mediterranean space. Nerval and Schuré's narratives both engage with oriental religions from an esoteric perspective, as they each describe their attempts to discover in the union of multiple religious traditions a universal source of ancient wisdom. Furthermore, Nerval, and authors such as Flaubert, embrace the avowedly (re)constructed and inevitably literary aspects of their travels. Religious syncretism and literature have in common a privileged relationship with signs and symbolism; syncretic theories, such as the ones championed by Schuré, rely on reading the same meaning in different signs (for example,

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[477] Isabelle Daunais, *L'Art de la mesure ou l'invention de l'espace dans les récits d'Orient (XIX[e] siècle)* (Saint-Denis: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 1996), pp. 15-16.

[478] Montalbetti, pp. 54-59.

[479] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, II, p. 494 (28 December 1853).

attributing the figures of Orpheus, Hermes, Plato and Jesus to the same unique religious truth[480]), whilst literary invention creates its own internal system of signs and meaning, whose relationship to the material world can afford to be only tangential.

Both syncretic and literary usages of travel thus establish an equivalence between antiquity and the modern 'Orient', as they both postulate the stability of meaning of signs or symbols in the past and as they are deciphered by nineteenth-century travellers. Syncretic journeys, seeking the source of all subsequent religions in an ancient 'East', present the 'Orient' as a fluid space, where all distinct traditions are found interwoven, though linked to a common origin. Meanwhile, for authors such as Flaubert, the 'Orient' is conceived as a textual construction, acquiring its own literary existence outside of the confines of its geography. Both these postures, by insisting on the selectiveness, if not the predetermined nature, of travel writing, subvert the status of these narratives as testimonies. In my first chapter, I explored the issues that the material obstacles of postclassical history raised for classical reception; in this chapter I show how travel narratives, at certain points, can appear to marginalise these obstacles and thus highlight the fluidity of reception practices. Classical reception is at its core an interpretative act, which is the attribution of meaning to a sign; as Martindale puts it, 'meaning is always realised at the point of reception'.[481] This chapter demonstrates how attributing characteristics of antiquity to the 'Orient' can be achieved by bypassing the material travelled lands, as the discursive construction of the 'Orient' is used as a classical intertext.

5.1 Religious syncretism or reception as semiotics

Since antiquity, religion(s) have been a fundamental medium through which Europe has engaged with the 'Orient'. This persists long into the nineteenth century, as demonstrated by David Gange, whose work shows how interwoven the development of British Egyptology was with Christian concerns of history and biblical temporality. The centrality of Egypt in the Ancient Testament led nineteenth-century Egyptologists to search for biblical traces in early Egyptian archaeology.[482] Similar, but more esoteric, was the ambition of Schuré and Nerval, who were hoping to find, 'universal' singular spiritual truth in Egypt. Schuré's syncretic essays, by which I understand an attempt to reconcile different beliefs systems into a unified spiritual theory, can thus be read as one particular development of nineteenth century religion investment in modern science.

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480 Schuré, *Les Grands Initiés: esquisse de l'histoire secrète des religions* (Paris: Perrin, 1889).

481 Martindale, *Redeemings the text*, p. 3.

482 David Gange, *Dialogues with the dead: Egyptology in British culture and religion, 1822-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

In fact, the most ancient and sustained form of travel writing to the region is the account of religious pilgrimage, a strong tradition also kept alive throughout the nineteenth century.[483]
Gérard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* (1851) and Edouard Schuré's *Sanctuaires d'Orient: Egypte; Grèce; Palestine* (1898), two texts separated by more than fifty years (Nerval published the first excerpts of his journey as articles between 1840 and 1847), both frame their research in esoteric terms, seeking to be initiated to this unifying principle that would reconcile the variety of religious traditions they come into contact with. Their texts also showcase an evolution in the perception of religious syncretism which I characterise as a shift from intellectual history to psychological science.
For Schuré, the interest of the oriental religious tradition is less historical than it is 'scientific', in the sense that this knowledge would contribute to scientific progress, and more specifically, to a better analysis of the human soul and the development of the young discipline of experimental psychology as a means to understand the global functioning of the world. 'L'âme humaine est la clef de l'univers. C'est pourquoi la psychologie expérimentale sera la science centrale de l'avenir'.[484]
This burgeoning discipline of psychology was one that the Egyptians had already mastered centuries ago, according to Schuré. Nineteenth-century Europeans are only rediscovering the source of wisdom that their works contain, and this all-encompassing knowledge contains revelations pertaining to the mysteries of the universe itself. For Nerval as well, Cairo, unlike Constantinople or Damas, is described as 'la seule ville orientale où l'on puisse retrouver les couches bien distinctes de plusieurs âges historiques.'[485] Egypt is also identified as 'la terre antique et maternelle où notre Europe, à travers le monde grec et romain, sent remonter ses origines?'[486]
For this reason, I will focus on Egypt as representative of the orientalist perception of ancient religions in these travel journeys as ancient Egyptian religion acts here as a representative example the greater 'oriental' spiritual tradition. However, the space of syncretism is always a fluid one and the establishment of synchronic correspondences between different traditions leads here to a syncretism of the 'oriental' space. Mobility being inherent to the transmission of spiritual tradition, both Nerval and Schuré shape their narratives as initiatory journeys. Yet, despite those esoteric pilgrimages endeavouring to unearth the universal source of ancient wisdom permeating all subsequent spiritual traditions, travel often highlights the historicity and circumstantiality of religious practices.

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[483] Doron Bar and Kobi Cohen-Hattab, 'A New Kind of Pilgrimage: The Modern Tourist Pilgrim of Nineteenth-Century and Early Twentieth-Century Palestine', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 39, 2 (2003), 131–148.

[484] Schuré, *Sanctuaires d'Orient*, p. 138.
[485] Nerval, p. 343.
[486] Ibid., p. 346.

Nerval and Schuré also represent two responses to a perceived cult of rationality in nineteenth-century Europe. Nerval, as a romantic, sets himself up as both the product of and the reaction to his 'Voltairian' education; Schuré explicitly writes his treatises against the 'décomposition sociale'[487] of modernity in the late nineteenth century. For him, the social anxiety that flows through *fin-de-siècle* Europe can be attributed to the sterile battle between the Church (established religion) and the University (science); the atheist rationality guiding scientific and technological progress is no less nefarious than the 'desacralized' state of the official Catholic church which he accuses of caring more about politics than spiritual elevation. For both writers, against the forces of a demystifying and materialist European rationalism, stands the old orientalist trope of the East as a place of mysteries and revelations.

Despite the orientalist alterity of Egypt experienced by nineteenth-century travellers, we can often perceive a clear Greco-Roman intertext in their understanding, reinterpretations and overall reception of ancient Egyptian religion. In reality, the intersection of Egyptian, Greek and Roman religious practices is already common throughout antiquity. A central figure in both Egyptian tradition and Western esoteric cults, for example, is Isis, through a Roman reappropriation first, but much later, there remain persistent legends, for example, about the foundation of Paris, whose name would signify Para-Isis, next to Isis, implying the presence of an earlier isiac cult in France.[488] Her cult, which preoccupies so much of Nerval and Schuré's itinerary, is one of the prime examples of a complex, mobile, culturally mixed set of religious practices.

These journeys demonstrate the fluidity of the classical space, complicating the story of its reception as a European heritage as well as Said's genealogy of orientalism as originating in the division between Greece and Asia minor and Persia. Despite the cultural impact of Napoleon's expedition on Europe's scientific knowledge of the 'Orient' and its antiquity, as well as on its imaginary geography, Egypt is still primarily a Greco-Roman construction in the early nineteenth century. As noted by Said, '[for Orientalists] proper knowledge of the Orient proceeded from a thorough study of the classical texts' and both Nerval and Schuré refer implicitly to Greek and Roman sources (Herodotus, Plutarch and Apuleius amongst others) and scholarship in their writing on ancient Egyptian cults whilst in reality, in antiquity itself, the Greco-Roman sphere of influence was historically fluid and shaped by cultural exchanges on both sides of the Mediterranean.[489]

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[487] Schuré, *Sanctuaires d'Orient*, p. II

[488] Agnès Spiquel, 'Isis au XIXe siècle', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée*, 111, 2 (1999), 541-552. The theory of Isis as a precursor of Ste Geneviève as the patron of Paris is also evoked by Nerval in 'Cagliostro' in *Les Illuminés* (Paris: Victor Lecou, 1852).

[489] Said, p. 79. See also '[Egypt's] occupation gave birth to the entire modern experience of the Orient as interpreted from within the universe of discourse founded by Napoleon in Egypt.' (Said, p. 87).

Syncretic traditions are used to try and bypass materiality by looking less at physical traces of the past and more at the perceived correspondences of various spiritual practices across historical and geographical contexts. I will first explore the way a fluid oriental religious space is constructed and dehistoricised in both travel narratives. I will then show how the modelling of travel narratives on esoteric initiations reproduces the same dynamics of a 'desire for what is absent' (as in materially driven instances of classical reception). Finally, I will expose the historical grounding of syncretic traditions embraced by Nerval and Schuré, and how these circumstances limit the possibility of a non-material reception of ancient spiritual practices.

5.1.1 A fluid spiritual oriental space

After witnessing a dervish performance in the streets of Cairo, Nerval asks M. Jean, a 'vieux soldat de l'armée Républicaine' living in Egypt since his time in Napoleon's expedition, to translate the songs for him. M. Jean dismisses those as 'grivoises' (lightheaded love songs) but Nerval finds they bear a resemblance to the Song of Songs.[490] A distinction is here established between Nerval's romantic sensibilities and the old French Enlightenment tradition which seeks to demystify religious practices. Nerval rejects what he calls his 'éducation voltairienne' and deliberately embraces a spiritual and syncretic interpretation, linking 'oriental' songs to biblical texts. His rejection of the old soldier's explanation is also a distancing from Europe's 'new' knowledge about Egypt since *La Description de l'Egypte* in favour of pre-Enlightenment spiritual traditions, such as hermetism.[491]

The role of Egypt in esoteric traditions predates the nineteenth century. One of its most recent manifestations at the time of Nerval's journey was the integration of some elements of (perceived) ancient Egyptian cults into Freemason practices in the eighteenth century. Despite the adherence of Nerval to Freemasonry having been disproved[492], he repeatedly exhibits a high degree of familiarity with the Egyptian rites and history, as in his short story 'Cagliostro' (in *Les Illuminés*) which relates a séance organised by Mrs. Cagliostro, wife of Alessandro Cagliostro, an Italian occultist who founded one of the first Masonic Lodges of Egyptian rites in the 1780s. We can also trace the central role of Egypt in Western esoterism to antiquity itself and the *Corpus Hermeticum* (a Renaissance collection of Greek texts written in Alexandria, but from around the first to the third century CE, related to a tradition that goes back to the third century BCE). The ancient adherents

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490 Nerval, p. 320.

491 See for example, Keiko Tsujikawa's study on *Les Illuminés*, *Nerval et les limbes de l'histoire: lecture des Illuminés* (Geneva: Droz, 2008).

492 Vincent Mugnier, 'Chaos et création dans le Voyage en Orient de Gérard de Nerval' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de la Réunion, 2017), p. 175.

of 'hermetism' believe it to contain the revelation of the syncretic figure of Hermes Trismegiste, the Greek god being here assimilated to the Egyptian divinity Thot, although the origins and the author of the text are still the object of scholarly debates.[493] This complicated syncretic tradition has enjoyed a variable popularity throughout Europe since antiquity, and though it certainly exerted its greatest cultural influence during the Renaissance, it has remained influential on further occultist practices, including alchemy and Freemasonry, for centuries.[494]

However, Egypt, as perceived by nineteenth-century French authors, is primarily a Greco-Roman construction, which is to say that it is known and framed through the filter of ancient Greek and Roman sources. Thus, not unlike the authors of the *Description*,[495] Nerval is keen to locate the permanent cradle of European culture there:

> N'est-ce pas toujours, d'ailleurs, la terre antique et maternelle où notre Europe, à travers le monde grec et romain, sent remonter ses origines? Religion, morale, industrie, tout partait de ce centre à la fois mystérieux et accessible, où les génies des premiers temps ont puisé pour nous la sagesse.[496]

Yet, Nerval highlights here not only the historical connection between the ancient Greeks and Egypt, but the specific mediation exerted by Greco-Roman culture on the reception of Ancient Egypt in Europe. As noted by Jan Assman, the construction of Egypt in French culture proceeds from a double Western memory which remembers the Greeks remembering the Egyptians. This mediated transmission of cultural origins recalls Shane Butler's theorisation of classical reception as a layering process.

> Cette mémoire culturelle à étages résulte de ce que les Grecs comme les Israélites ont porté leurs regards vers l'Égypte et l'ont appréhendée comme une origine étrangère, comme un passé qui n'était pas leur passé propre mais un passé autre, en quelque sorte séparé d'eux par un voile, et pourtant profondément inscrit dans leur mémoire culturelle.[497]

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[493] Christian H. Bull, *The Tradition of Hermes Trismegistus: The Egyptian Priestly Figure as a Teacher of Hellenized Wisdom* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

[494] Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times,* Trans. by David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

[495] 'Ce pays, que visitèrent les plus illustres philosophes de l'antiquité, fut la source où les Grecs puisèrent les principes des lois, des arts et des sciences.' in *Description de l'Egypte: Tome Premier* (Paris: Panckoucke, 1821), second edition preface.

[496] Nerval, p. 346.

[497] Jan Assman, *L'Egypte Ancienne : entre mémoire et science* (Paris: Hazan, 2009), pp. 15-16.

Not only is Egypt a discursive Greek and Roman construction, but the classical Greco-Roman world itself must be understood in its culturally fluid and often oriental dimension.[498] The layering of reception is not only diachronic, as an accumulation of traditions, but synchronic. Egypt, Greece, Rome and the rest of the Mediterranean world are received by travellers such as Nerval and Schuré as a single simultaneous fluid oriental space.

Whilst it is true that the ancient Greco-Roman world had strong syncretic practices and was prompt to incorporate foreign traditions into its own, in reality the mediation of knowledge about Egypt through Greek and Roman sources accentuates exoticising depictions of Egyptian religions as mysterious and different from Greco-Roman ones.[499] By defining the 'Orient' as a primal source of wisdom, Nerval also alludes to both esoteric ('mystérieux') and exoteric ('accessible') aspects of ancient Egyptian cults. From their harmonious synthesis, a number of prophets were able first to be initiated (Nerval mentions Orpheus, Moses and the mythical Indian king Rama) and then to spread the wisdom they received across the world, giving religious foundations to multiple civilisations. Nerval is in the minority of nineteenth-century theorists of syncretism by locating the primary spiritual source in Egypt, before it spread to India. Schuré, like Edgar Quinet before him, gives pre-eminence to India, at least chronologically:[500]

> J'ai tenté, dans mes *Grands Initiés*, une première synthèse de l'histoire des religions, depuis l'Inde jusqu'au Christ, et par lui jusqu'aux temps actuels et futurs.[501]

As evidenced here, religious practices are a prime example of the fluidity of the oriental space, as received through a Greco-Roman prism. The multiple reoccurrences of the cult of Isis, explored at length by both Nerval and Schuré, comes to embody the mobility of oriental religious mysteries in both classical and post-classical Europe. I argue that the reception and reinvention of such figures in the nineteenth century, heavily mediated by classical literature, are exercises in classical reception. Focussing on Egypt as a source of spiritual wisdom (neither of them journeys as far east as India), both writers also devise an itinerary back to a fantasised 'source' of classical knowledge. However, despite this investment of *meaning* in Egyptian land and history, contrary to previous idealistic claims regarding the synchronicity of all religious traditions, the modern country of Egypt is seen as broadly decadent, only a shadow of its former greatness. According to both Nerval and Schuré, this is explained by the fact that Egypt has fulfilled its role of doctrinal transmission, before

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[498] The political implications of this idea and its erasure are of course central to Bernal's critique of nineteenth-century 'classicisation' of the Ancient world. See *Black Athena*.

[499] Herodotus' *Histories* can be read as an early example of this.

[500] He follows in that the history of the reception of Indian culture ever since Europe's first translation of Sanskrit manuscripts in the eighteenth century. See, for example, Raymond Schwab, *La Renaissance Orientale* (Paris: Payot, 1950).

[501] Schuré, p. v.

its civilisation became extinct. 'Il semble que la mission historique de l'Égypte ait été de léguer à la Judée la doctrine mâle d'Ammon-Râ et à la Grèce les mystères d'Isis qui en formaient le complément',[502] writes Schuré, whilst Nerval suggests a reversal of the traditional lineage of reception, from Europe back to Egypt.

> Aujourd'hui, ce peuple, opprimé si longtemps, ne vit que d'idées étrangères; il a besoin qu'on lui reporte les lumières éparses dont il fut longtemps le foyer; mais avec quelle reconnaissance, avec quelle application studieuse, il s'empreint de et se fortifie de tout ce qui vient d'Europe?[503]

From being a matrix of civilisations to avid recipient of European enlightenment, the dynamics of transmission have changed and ancient Egyptian culture is paradoxically used as a way to justify European discursive domination over the 'Orient'. In the same way that European philhellenes during the Independence War were expecting modern Greeks to aspire to relive their classical history under the intellectual guidance of classically trained Europeans,[504] Nerval foresees for modern Egypt a possibility for emancipation only through the (re)-reception of its own culture and heritage from Europe itself.

Nerval's and Schuré's interest in oriental syncretism leads to a call for the 'Orient' to embrace its own heritage. This disillusioned aspiration is, for romantic and *fin-de-siècle* authors, a reaction against Western rationalism and materialism, and what they perceive as a form of 'presentism', the valuation by modernity of present progress over ancient traditions. It is also a 'reactionary' resistance to 'new knowledge' about Egypt (as embodied, for example, by Napoleon's expedition, or by archaeology – cf. chapter 2) and the ways it demystifies previous exotic and idealised representations of ancient civilisations.

5.1.2 Travel writing as religious initiation

Travel narratives are often presented as initiatory experiences, whether it is the medieval pilgrimage stories, or the eighteenth-century Grand Tour. This ancient trope finds new relevance in the writing of Nerval and Schuré, who deliberately present their oriental journey as a quest for spiritual enlightenment, modelled on the esoteric initiation. However, in reality, the travel experience acts more as a confirmation of previously held beliefs than as a true revelation. Because both authors are explicitly seeking traces of religious syncretism throughout the Mediterranean, they are driven to emphasise the fluid and shifting nature of spiritual signs and symbols.

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[502] Ibid., p. 148.
[503] Nerval, p. 1489.
[504] Basch, *Le Mirage grec*; Paul Cartledge, 'The Greeks and Anthropology', *Classics Ireland*, 2 (1995),17-28.

The narrative arrangement of Schuré's travel through the 'Orient' is set up as an initiation to religious mysteries. The journey is divided into three stages: Egypt, Greece and the Holy Land, with Egypt being subdivided between a first part, 'Muslim Egypt', and a second part, 'Ancient Egypt'. These correspond to three different initiations, following the imagined transmission of universal truth from Egypt to Greece then the Holy Land, where the final revelation is predicted to take place. Within the three stages there is a geographical progression (that might not necessarily follow the chronological itinerary of the traveller) towards a specific 'sacred' place, one imbued with esoteric meaning: Philae in Egypt, Eleusis in Greece, and the valley of Josaphat, just outside Jerusalem. These three culmination points are places where ancient mysteries were said to be revealed or, in the case of Josaphat, where the Last Judgement is expected to take place.[505] The description of each of them is also accompanied by the retelling of a legend (Isis and Osiris in Philae, Dionysos and Persephone in Eleusis) or by a vision (of the apocalypse, but also of the New Jerusalem, in Josaphat). In both the introduction and the epilogue, Schuré attributes to each of these sacred places one principle of what he terms 'la trinité éternelle de la Vie intégrale': Egypt is Science, Greece is Art and Jerusalem is Religion. His journey in the 'Orient' is devised as a triple initiation in order to realise a synthesis of the wisdom of the East to ensure the spiritual future of the West.

In Egypt, both Nerval and Schuré focus on the cult of Isis as an emblematic syncretic figure, and their quests are steeped in a rhetoric of desire for the always elusive female figure. This is especially the case with Nerval, whose entire journey is mapped as a (failed) search for the companionship of a woman. In both writers however, the trope of the 'Orient' as a land of religious and spiritual mysteries is constantly reinforced. The 'erotics of reception' are played out here in the desire for a hidden, and ultimately absent, oriental goddess, whose veil is never to be lifted by the desiring initiate. Both oriental women and religious truth appear to be always out of reach, their 'reception' always frustrated. This recalls Billings' 'erotics of reception' and the dialectics of presence and absence at the core of classical reception practices explored in previous chapters.

Schuré frequently uses the name Isis as a metonym for the entirety of religious mystery ('chercher Isis' or 'faire parler Isis' for example, signify 'accessing the higher truth'). His journey through Egypt, from Cairo up the Nile, leads him from temple to temple, until he reaches the most sacred one, Philae, the temple of Isis and the accomplishment of the initiation.

> C'est là qu'ils recevaient l'initiation dernière, dans la forme et sous le voile poétique du drame sacré par lequel les fils d'Hermès consentaient à révéler le plus grand secret de leur

[505] Joel 3. 2.

> religion […] Osiris était le Cœur de la religion égyptienne; mais Isis, qui pleure la mort de l'époux divin et le ressuscite par la puissance de son amour, était le Cœur du Cœur, l'arcane de l'arcane.[506]

The core of religious mystery is found in the unveiling of the paramount female goddess of Egypt and the initiations reflect the eroticism of this process. Like Vogüé's Phoenician goddesses, Isis' love has the power to bring life back from the dead. Her cult is thus considered central by Schuré, as the most essential and the most mysterious of all Egyptian cults. The Egyptian goddess is here associated with the descendant of the Greek god Hermes, tying her myth to that of the esoteric figure of Hermes Trismegiste. The Greeks themselves had assimilated the Egyptian divinity Thot, who according to Egyptian mythology helps Isis to resurrect Osiris, to Hermes. Schuré thus reinforces this identification, which is central to the dual Egyptian and Greek origin of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.

Visiting the pyramids in Cairo, Nerval meets a German scholar who narrates to him the religious initiation process that he believes was taking place inside the structures and whose climax was the novice seeing a statue of Isis lifting its veil. However, for Nerval, even in the case of successful initiations, the actual unveiling is only too brief before the disappearance of the goddess.

> L'aspiration du néophyte vers la Divinité […] l'amenait à un tel degré d'enthousiasme, qu'il était digne enfin de voir tomber devant lui les voiles sacrés de la déesse. […] Au moment où il tendait les bras pour la saisir, elle s'évanouissait dans un nuage de parfum.[507]

This frustrated unveiling, the disappearance of the feminine figure at the precise moment where one hopes to finally fully see her and comprehend her, is similar to Nerval's unsuccessful quest for a woman to live with. His search for a female companion in Cairo gives him a narrative pretext to evolve and eventually gain knowledge of different religious and cultural circles, but the journey proves fruitless as it ends with the acquisition of Zeynab, a Javanese slave, whose religion he struggles to correctly identify (he imagines she might be Hindu while she is in reality Muslim) and with whom cohabitation turns out to be less than straightforward. He revives his marriage project in Beirut, with Salèma (to whom he intends to offer Zeynab, as a wedding 'gift'), the daughter of the Druze sheikh Eschérazy.[508] As he is convinced that 'les akkals druses sont les franc-maçons de

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[506] Schuré, p. 151.

[507] Nerval, pp. 392-393.

[508] The character of Salèma is almost certainly an invention, or at least an amplification. It is very unlikely that his entire journey through Lebanon, his meeting with the Druze sheik's daughter, his courtship and their engagement could have taken place in the couple of months (maybe no more than one) that Nerval spent in the country. In any case, there is no trace of her in the letters he sent to his father during his journey.

l'Orient'[509], Nerval uses a Freemason paper to argue to the sheikh that they share a spiritual tradition, and that he is thus eligible to marry his daughter. To justify this parallel between the Druzes and the Freemasons, Nerval argues that the Druzes are in reality descendants from templars and crusaders. Like Barrès after him, but for sentimental rather than political gain, Nerval is looking to uncover historical links between the 'Orient' and France, focussing specifically on the period of the Crusades in order to insert himself into an oriental tradition, with what he presents as a renewed legitimacy.

Once again, this project, the closest that Nerval ever comes to becoming a religious initiate, does not succeed as the traveller contracts a fever that forces him away from Syria, back to European shores and 'le climat de nos villes du Midi'.[510] In the end, Nerval fails to assimilate socially in oriental culture(s); he never truly 'lifts the veil of Isis' or gains full access to religious mysteries. Conversion is delayed or, as he puts it himself: 'l'idéal rayonne toujours au delà de notre horizon actuel.'[511] At the moment when he seems most ready to convert to an oriental life, his sudden departure from Lebanon raises serious questions as to the sincerity of his attempts. He concludes the Lebanese chapter of his narratives by describing, in the present tense, an image of settled domestic bliss:

> Le cheik m'a conduit à son humble maison, dont le toit plat est traversé et soutenu par un acacias (l'arbre d'Hiram). […]
>
> Tu comprends que je n'ai pas à te décrire les rares entrevues que j'ai avec ma fiancée. […] Seulement cette aimable personne m'a donné une tulipe rouge et a planté dans le jardin un petit acacia qui doit croître avec nos amours. C'est un usage du pays.
>
> Et maintenant j'étudie pour arriver à la dignité de *réfik* (compagnon), où j'espère atteindre dans peu. Le mariage est fixé pour cette époque.[512]

Fully included in an oriental family, planting the seeds of his new life, Nerval is working to be initiated into the tradition which he had found closest to his syncretic ideal, by what he imagines to be its correspondence with Freemasonry, as shown by the reference to Hiram. However, the epilogue of the volume rushes the narrator away from the Druze community, on a boat to Constantinople, invoking vague but imperious incompatibility between him and his elected new residence.

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[509] Ibid., p. 596.
[510] Ibid., p. 600.
[511] Ibid., p. 365
[512] Ibid., p. 599.

> 'Mon ami, l'homme s'agite et Dieu le mène. Il était sans doute établi de toute éternité que je ne pourrais me marier ni en Égypte, ni en Syrie […]. Au moment où je commençais à me rendre digne d'épouser la fille du cheik, je me suis trouvé pris tout à coup d'une de ces fièvres de Syrie qui, si elles ne vous enlèvent pas, durent des mois ou des années. Le seul remède est de quitter le pays.
>
> […] La santé qui revient donne plus de force à mes regrets… Mais que résoudre? Si je retourne en Syrie plus tard, je verrai renaître cette fièvre que j'ai eu le malheur d'y prendre […]. Quant à faire venir ici la femme que j'avais choisie, ne serait-ce pas l'exposer elle-même à ces terribles maladies qui emportent, dans les pays du Nord, les trois quarts des femmes d'Orient qu'on y transplante?'[513]

Nerval blames external, compelling, even divine, forces for preventing him from converting and marrying as his health, his body itself, has suddenly became incompatible with his environment. This fictional construction of a timely illness serves two narrative purposes; it frees the narrator from romantic attachments for the last part of his journey in Constantinople and it reinforces the theme of failed initiation, whether romantic or religious. Unlike the acacia planted by Salèma, the grafting of the traveller in the 'Orient' did not take and the initiation remains unaccomplished, apparently to his regret. Continuing the botanical metaphor, he foresees that Salèma herself would not be able to take hold in European soil.

It is to be noted that conversion is also a failure for Zeynab, whom Nerval had left in a Christian boarding school in Lebanon, as indicated by a note at the end of the first volume of the *Voyage*.

> L'auteur a appris, depuis, que l'esclave javanaise s'était enfuie de la maison où il l'avait placée. Le fanatisme religieux n'y a pas été étranger sans doute. Quant à son sort actuel, auquel s'est intéressé notre consul, il semble fixé heureusement […]: 'La *femme jaune* est à Damas, mariée à un Turc, elle a deux enfants.'[514]

If Nerval attributes to destiny itself the failure of his long-term relocation to the 'Orient', in the case of Zeynab, he blames her for a more prosaic supposed 'religious fanaticism'. Her reluctance to adopt new beliefs and practices contrasts with Nerval's broad appetite for religious esoterism and thus can only be interpreted as narrow 'fanaticism'.

Conversely, Schuré does not centre his personal experience of mystery and revelation in his narrative. His attitude is outwardly proselytic, the journey a mere confirmation of his ideological programme. Mysteries have to be shared, unveiled and the official church to be converted to the

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[513] Ibid., pp. 599-600.

[514] Nerval, *Voyage en Orient I* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1867), p.432 (this note was not reproduced in the Gallimard edition).

occultist theology. In some ways, this represents a democratisation of religious initiations, from the elitism of the Freemasons to the quasi-evangelical tone of the occult movement.

It is unclear which religious beliefs Nerval actually held; he famously declared 'Moi, pas de religion? J'en ai dix-sept… au moins' - a quote related by Théophile Gautier.[515] It is this hyperbolic embrace of multiple religious beliefs, ancient as well as foreign, that the journey to the 'Orient' is expected to fulfil. In Cairo for example, he finds himself moved by the dervishes' dance that he interprets as traces of antique beliefs and practices:

> Peut-être était-ce ainsi que les anciens prêtres de l'Égypte célébraient les mystères d'Osiris retrouvé ou perdu ; tels sans doute étaient les plaintes des corybantes ou des cabires, et ce chœur étrange de derviches hurlant et frappant la terre en cadence obéissait peut-être encore à cette vieille tradition de ravissements et d'extases qui jadis résonnait sur tout ce rivage oriental, depuis les oasis d'Ammon jusqu'à la froide Samothrace. À les entendre seulement, je sentais mes yeux pleins de larmes, et l'enthousiasme gagnait peu à peu tous les assistants.[516]

The Cabeiri were divinities, worshipped in multiple Greek islands (including Samothrace) whilst the Korybantes were the sacred dancers of the cult of Cybele. Both types of figures are part of Greek cults which originated in Asia Minor; both belong primarily to 'mystery religions' into which one has to be initiated. With Osiris, and the modern dervishes, they form part of a syncretic reception of what Nerval perceives as a single oriental tradition 'de ravissements et d'extases'. Unlike more chronologically layered receptions which use images such as filiations or genealogy to describe the transmission of ancient material or discourses, Nerval offers a synchronic perspective where traditions are not defined by the temporality of their reception but by the timelessness of their common origin.

The important trait of these traditions is the re-enacted search for god, always 'retrouvé ou perdu' like Osiris. This aspiration towards an object of worship that is both ever-present and ever-absent is what triggers emotions ('ravissements et extases'; 'mes yeux plein de larmes') that characterise the 'erotics of reception' and transcend the circumstantiality of the religious manifestations. It is notable that Nerval uses here a cautious tone when establishing parallels between priests of Osiris, Cabeiri, Korybantes and dervishes: 'Peut-être était-ce ainsi'; 'tels sans doutes étaient les plaintes'; 'obéissait peut-être encore'. Positioning himself as a profane, Nerval is rhetorically prudent when advancing his syncretic theory, which contrasts with the confidence he exhibits, for example, in presenting the Druzes as oriental freemasons. Here he does not rely on his erudite knowledge of

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[515] Théophile Gautier, *Portraits et souvenirs littéraires* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1875), p.57.

[516] Nerval, p. 319.

Freemasonry, or his readings about the Druzes, as he asks M. Jean for his translation of the dervishes' songs. Keen to be initiated into the mysteries of the performance that moved him, the knowledge delivered by his interpreter is however so trivial and disappointing that he has to supply it with his own theory that the songs are similar to the biblical Song of Songs. As the entire initiation narrative is presented as destined to failure from the first episodes of the journey, it appears clear that no one can unveil the religious mysteries of the 'Orient' for Nerval. Despite the emotional connections that the traveller establishes with certain living aspects of oriental cults and cultures, he remains outside of the drawn veil of Isis.

5.1.3 Syncretic failure, literary success

As mentioned, much of classical reception functions, more or less explicitly, in a mode of longing for lost antiquity. In the gap between the travellers' expectations and what can actually be retrieved from the past, religious traditions appear more alive and more fruitful than most other ancient elements. However, for Nerval, despite his attempt at a synthesis between oriental and occidental traditions, personal conversion ends in a failure which underlines the circumstantiality of religious practices. His 'grafting' in the oriental soil did not take root, emblematising the inability of an all-encompassing esoteric universalism to incorporate the diversity of religious traditions in its midst. In the same way, whilst Schuré calls for spiritual dialogue between the 'Orient' and the 'Occident', seen as complementary, in his epilogue ('Âmes d'Orient et d'Occident, qui reflétez les deux pôles de la Vérité, quand donc vous déciderez-vous à regarder l'une dans l'autre?'[517]), his attempt to foster actual dialogue whilst in the 'Orient' also fails. Coming back from Jericho to Jerusalem, accompanied by his guide (Morkos), a Belgian friar (Luke) and a Bedouin guardsman, Schuré encounters a rabbi whom he invites to join them.

> Mais il me lança un regard défiant, étendit le bras et agita la main d'un geste négatif, en désignant successivement le Bédouin, le Franciscain et moi. Ce geste signifiait: 'Musulman, chrétien, hérétique, vous ne vous entendrez jamais, et je n'ai rien de commun avec vous.'[518]

This rejection is a failure of Schuré's syncretic effort: religions, even living in close proximity with Jerusalem, refuse to talk to each other, let alone consider what they have 'en commun', which the traveller tried to uncover and emphasise throughout his entire journey. Even when they seem to share a common journey (Luke and a Bedouin are praying next to each other), faiths are paralleled

[517] Schuré, p. 429.
[518] Ibid., p. 414.

but remain separate. Instead of the centre of a universal tradition, the Holy Land is revealed to be only an ill-fated Babel. From this impossible conversation, Schuré has a vision of a forthcoming apocalyptic chaos of universal war, between science and religion, between European nations, between classes, between the 'Orient' and the 'Occident' and the ultimate destruction of Jerusalem. Paradoxically, however, this failure to foster syncretic dialogue serves to further his spiritual ideology, if not in the material reality of his journey in the 'Orient', in the esoteric visions that they inspire in him. For Schuré, as for Nerval, the difficulties of realising the hoped-for reception of universal ancient religious wisdom in the modern 'Orient' become the pretext for developing imaginative tales and visions of what successful syncretism would look like (or conversely, of the consequences of abandoning the ideal of universal religious understanding).

Religious syncretism, like all other forms of classical reception, is best realised in narrative forms. Whether visions, tales or stories, the imaginative is needed to supplement the missing material reality of the elusive transmission of ancient traditions. The accumulation of material traces of diverse customs in Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine or Greece does not amount to the hoped realisation of the syncretic ideal in the 'Orient'. Eventually, the syncretic dreams of Nerval and Schuré find their most ideal manifestations in the invention and reconfiguration of ancient religious stories in light of the practices witnessed on their journeys, namely as narrative experiments operating chiefly on a textual level.

5.2 Classical reception and literary invention

Despite the material experience of the travelled 'Orient', classical reception appears in many travel narratives to function as a literary device, with the assimilation of classical antiquity and the 'Orient' realised on a textual level. This is visible not only in the inevitable selectiveness of the comparisons, but in the language that surrounds them.

As seen previously, the 'Orient' appears as both the embodiment of revived classical antiquity (Flaubert's 'pages vivantes'[519]) and a material obstacle to a straightforward access to the past (see chapter 1). My analysis explores how this materiality is sidelined to propose a textual integration of the 'Orient' in the process of classical reception. The 'Orient' here is neither a conduit nor an obstacle to access antiquity; it functions as an intertext, that is a discursive construction, used to identify and integrate classical elements (material remains, but above all customs, stories and aesthetics) in travel narratives. Treating the travelled land as an (inter)text then opens up the possibility of interweaving literary inventions into travel writings. It is thus possible to reframe the

[519] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 673 (25 August 1850).

previously explored dialectic of presence and absence characterising the classical reception in the 'Orient'. As searches for antiquity are presented alternatively as successful or unattainable (sometimes in the same text), travel narratives use textual constructions of recognition and disappointment to account for their perception of classical culture in the travelled lands that they identify as 'oriental'.

5.2.1 Pleasure of classical recognition and narrative construction of disappointments

Classical reception, if understood here as the assignment of meanings to discourses from antiquity, relies necessarily on the recognition of a shared canon of texts, artefacts and ideas. In fact, it is this enduring canonicity of the ancient Greco-Roman world in Western intellectual history that gives its name itself to the so-called 'Classics'.[520]

As Forster notes,

> All acts of communication imply a capacity to understand on the part of some persons or other; but this is foregrounded in the case of works that have a consensually pre-existing familiarity (whether actually familiar or not). And works from ancient Greece and Rome particularly foreground the need for acquired knowledge in order to recognise them.[521]

The recognition of classical antiquity thus implicitly serves the auctorial self-fashioning of the traveller. It draws a direct contrast between his pre-knowledge of the 'Orient', through classical culture, and the perceived lack of engagement of *native* populations with their own ancient history; this contrast, as surveyed in previous chapters, heightens both the intellectual legitimacy of the author and his pleasure in finding the classical world 'untouched' in the 'Orient'. This pleasure of recognition is central to classical reception in the 'Orient' and is built up by the anticipation of what Flaubert terms the traveller's 'retrouvailles'[522] with the dreamed land of antiquity, here exposed by Vogüé.

> J'entre en possession du plus ancien de mes rêves. Je vais donc toucher du pied toutes ces terres, filles gâtées de la légende, de la poésie et de l'histoire, voir surgir dans leur

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[520] Jan M. Ziolkowski, 'Middle Ages', in *A Companion to the Classical Tradition*, ed. by Craig W. Kallendorf (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 17-29 (p. 17).

[521] Claire L.E. Foster, 'Familiarity and Recognition: Towards a New Vocabulary for Classical Reception Studies' in *Framing Classical Reception Studies*, ed. by Maarten de Pourcq, Nathalie de Haan and David Rijser (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 33-69 (p. 41).

[522] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 559 (1 December 1849). See chapter 3.

> réalité ces lignes prestigieuses que, tout enfant, je suivais amoureusement du doigt sur la carte.[523]

Before having set foot in the 'Orient' itself, Vogüé is already setting up the scene for classical reception, anticipating the materialisation of what were only names on a map. The rhetoric of desire ('je suivais amoureusement') enhances the anticipation of physical pleasure in the encounter with classical lands. The pleasure of drawing links between theoretical knowledge of antiquity and travel experience is extolled by numerous authors, as Nerval reflects when traveling on the Greek island of Syra:

> Je vis depuis ce matin dans un ravissement complet. Je voudrais m'arrêter tout à fait chez ce bon peuple hellène au milieu de ces îles aux noms sonores, et d'où s'exhale comme un parfum du *Jardin des racines grecques*. […]
>
> 'Καλιμέρα (bonjour), me dit le marchand d'un air affable, en me faisant l'honneur de ne pas me croire Parisien.
>
> Πόσα (combien?) dis-je, en choisissant quelque bagatelle.
>
> Δέκα δραχμαί (dix drachmes)', me répondit-il d'un ton classique.
>
> Heureux homme pourtant, qui sait le grec de naissance, et ne se doute pas qu'il parle en ce moment comme un personnage de Lucien.
>
> Cependant le batelier me poursuit encore sur le quai et me crie comme Caron à Ménippe:
>
> 'Απόδος, ὦ κατάρατε, τὰ πορθμεῖα (paye-moi, gredin, le prix du passage)!'
>
> […]
>
> Je lui réponds vaillamment avec quelques phrases des *Dialogues des morts*. Il se retire en grommelant des jurons d'Aristophane.[524]

The pleasure of recognising scenes from Ancient Greece in nineteenth-century Syra relies exclusively here on language and literature. Unlike the scholars from the EFA (see chapter 4), Nerval does not identify any particular change between modern Greek and the version of the language he learned at school (*Le Jardin des racines grecques* was a school textbook of Greek grammar). Thus, the merchant giving the price of his products is said to speak (though unbeknownst to him, *à la* Monsieur Jourdain) 'd'un ton classique'. As Nerval's knowledge of Greek seems to come entirely from his classical education, every mundane interaction with the local inhabitants takes the

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[523] Vogüé, *Voyage aux pays du passé*, p .4.
[524] Nerval, pp. 249-250.

allure of a playful recreation of ancient texts. This playfulness is accentuated by the references to comic (Aristophanes) or satirical texts (Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*) and the traveller's self-mockery, as his next encounter with a local islander leads him to accept the offer of a glass of bad wine by pretending it is similar to the beverage served at the wedding of the hero Peleus and the nymph Thetis. This delusion is brought about by Nerval's belief that the island of Syra (Syros in Greek) is the birthplace and childhood residence of Achilles, Peleus' and Thetis' son. A couple of pages later, however, the narrator confesses his mistake:

> J'ai confondu plus haut *Syros* avec *Scyros*. Faute d'un *c* cette île aimable perdra beaucoup dans mon estime; car c'est ailleurs décidément que le jeune Achille fut élevé parmi les filles de Lycomède.[525]

The newly discovered absence of any mythical connection in Syra changes its perception from a newly found 'Arcadia' to a much more mundane port of call. Whilst it provides an occasion for the traveller to mock his credulity, it also knowingly undermines the *Voyage en Orient*'s quest for the truth of ancient myths in oriental lands. In Syra, like in Cythera, the gods have long disappeared.

> N'a-t-on pas compris ce dernier cri jeté par un monde mourant, quand de pâles navigateurs s'en vinrent raconter qu'en passant, la nuit, près des côtes de Thessalie, ils avaient entendu une grande voix qui criait: 'Pan est mort!' […] il est mort, lui par qui tout avait coutume de vivre![526]

What will become a *fin-de-siècle topos* (the decadence of ancient lands) is already found here in Nerval's short retelling of a Plutarch story, where an Egyptian sailor is said to have heard his name called from the island of Paxos (in the Ionian Sea), and then a demand that he passes along the news that 'Pan is dead' as he continues his journey. Plutarch presents it as an almost contemporary story, having received it from one of his professors who was travelling on said ship, and inserts him in a dialogue, *On the Decline of the Oracles*, that treats more broadly of the decline of certain polytheist myths and practices.

Many later interpretations of this narrative (whose only source is Plutarch) establish a parallel between the decline of polytheism and the rise of Christianity, between the death of Pan and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.[527] This theological parallel is unlikely to have escaped Nerval's mind but the use of a stone from Pan's altar in the wall of one of Syra's churches is here presented not as a form of spiritual continuity but as proof of the pagan god dying at the same time as his cult.

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[525] Ibid., p. 253.

[526] Ibid.

[527] For a history of these interpretations, as well as other receptions, see Philippe Borgeaud, 'La mort du grand Pan. Problèmes d'interprétation' *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 200, 1 (1983), 3-39.

As silence follows this 'dernier cri' from the Greek coast, and the imagined Scyros is replaced by the real Syra, the traveller appears disillusioned by his attempt at recovering an antiquity that only lives in Greek names and citations and disappears when this language is no longer spoken.
The pleasure of uncovering antiquity preserved in the 'Orient' that is anticipated in the first steps of the travel narratives thus often gives way to disappointment at finding historical heritage vanished, ruined or degraded. Nevertheless, as travel writing records its failure at 'faire voir' the world as it is,[528] it also carefully stages the confrontation between the travellers' dreams and disappointing travelling experiences. Thus Loti, whose Egyptian travel narrative consists of a series of thematic chapters juxtaposed against one another, not necessarily following the chronological order of the journey, opens his narrative with a description of Cairo that runs counter to more common characterisations of the Egyptian capital as hot, dry and lively. On the contrary, he visits the city at night and laments its coldness, its humidity and its decay:

> Dans la demi-obscurité, qui masque les décrépitudes, c'est parfois de l'Orient resté adorable, quand, au-dessus des maisonnettes si agrémentées de moucharabiehs et d'arabesques, on voit tout à coup quelques uns des grands minarets aériens, qui s'élancent prodigieusement haut dans le ciel crépusculaire.
>
> Cependant, que de ruines, d'immondices, de décombres ! Comment on sent que tout cela se meurt ! […] Essayez de préserver […] tout ce qui fut la grâce et le mystère de votre ville, le luxe affiné de vos demeures. […] Vous étiez des *Orientaux* (je prononce avec respect ce mot qui implique tout un passé de précoce civilisation, de pure grandeur).[529]

The perceived decadence of the Egyptian capital is contrasted with the historical glory that Loti associates with 'Oriental' civilisations. Paradoxically, the darkness of the night, by hiding the crudeness of the deterioration, highlights the few remains of the ancient aesthetic harmony of the city. Loti's disappointment in Egypt is presented early in his narrative through contrasting descriptions of 'l'ancien Caire […] tout le dédale encore charmant'[530] and 'le nouveau Caire […] l'électricité aveuglante […] le long des rues, triomphe du toc'.[531] The first chapters of *La Mort de Philae*, first at the Sphinx and the Pyramids, then through Cairo, thus set a haunting nocturnal atmosphere that mirrors the visit to Philae's temple that closes the narrative. The social critique of Loti's text, as seen for example in his disparaging descriptions of tourists ('leur intrusion est ici

[528] See Montalbetti, pp. 6-7.
[529] Loti, pp. 26-29.
[530] Ibid., p. 25.
[531] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

comme une offense, mais hélas! de tels visiteurs se multiplient chaque année d'avantage'[532]; 'les touristes, alléchés par maintes réclames, affluent maintenant chaque hiver en dociles troupeaux.'[533]), serves as a political background to the literary project of aestheticising the perceived decadence of the 'Orient', whilst the traveller attempts to distance himself from the 'passages obligés' of nineteenth-century travels in Egypt emblematised by the groups of tourists he keeps encountering. By making British dominion over Egypt responsible for the country's state of decay, Loti is able to blend politics and aesthetics in his description of Cairo:

> les nouveaux envahisseurs de ce pays ont apporté sans doute l'humidité de leur île brumeuse, en changeant le régime des eaux du vieux Nil pour rendre la terre plus mouillée et plus productive. Et ce froid inusité, ce brouillard, si léger qu'il soit encore, paraissent un indice de la fin des temps, font plus révolu et plus lointain tout ce passé, qui dort ici, en dessous dans le dédale des souterrains hantés par mille momies.[534]

The humid weather in Cairo is attributed both materially and symbolically to the British presence. On a symbolic level, the occupiers brought their own native climate to the land they occupy, colonising even the atmosphere. On a material level, Loti attributes the humidity to the Aswan low dam built by the British between 1899 and 1902, which, according to him, by disturbing the ancestral river, brought about not only meteorological but civilisational changes. This parallel between weather and political conditions is representative of Loti's literary endeavour; Egypt's perceived decadence is used to make *La Mort de Philae* both politically cogent and aesthetically original, contrasting with earlier nineteenth-century depictions of Egypt. In this context, the 'fin des temps' is a way for Loti to characterise the perceived rupture between British and ancient Egypt, finally rendering antiquity inaccessible to modernity, but it is also a *fin-de-siècle topos* that bolsters the melancholic aesthetic of his text, whilst keeping at bay the *fin des voyages* whose fears underline the entire journey. From the first chapters (visiting the Sphinx and pyramids surrounded by tourists in the moonlight) to the last (visiting the temple of Philae, surrounded with tourists in the moonlight), many fragments of Loti's Egyptian journey are steeped in aesthetic of darkness and decay which serve to aestheticise the traveller's disappointment in his impossibility to retrieve the dreamed antiquity from the travelled 'Orient'.

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[532] Ibid., p. 8.
[533] Ibid., p. 344.
[534] Ibid., p. 6.

Of course, not all travellers play up their classical expectations in the same way. In fact, Barrès introduces his reception of Greece in what appears to be a reversal of the usual journey from anticipation to disappointment:

> La curiosité qui m'oriente vers Athènes m'est venue du dehors plutôt que de mon cœur profond. Si le salon de Leconte de Lisle […] n'avait pas eu tant de prestige sur mon imagination à vingt ans, irais-je de moi-même chercher dans l'Athènes de Périclès un complément de ma culture? […] C'est avec une sorte de maussaderie et pour remplir un devoir de lettré que je vais me soumettre à la discipline d'Athènes.[535]

Unlike Vogüé or Flaubert who present the journey to the 'Orient' as the realisation of a childhood dream, Barrès frames the project as either dictated by curiosity or duty. Both sentiments are attributed to the influence of Leconte de Lisle, a towering figure of the French literary establishment in the second half of the nineteenth century, but one from which the nationalist author is trying to emancipate himself, as seen in chapter 1. Unlike authors like Flaubert who seek and find in the 'Orient' the confirmation of their aesthetic principles, Barrès on the contrary appears to use his journey to emphasise his distance from the tastes for classical antiquity ('l'Athènes de Périclès') of the literary milieu of his youth (he is 37 when he arrives in Greece, 44 when he publishes *Le Voyage de Sparte*). However, remembering his itinerary, probably years after his journey,[536] he admits to both his disappointment at the absence of antiquity in Greece, and, more unusually, the involuntary persistence of a classical ideal against his own memories of the classical land.

> Si puissante est la force de ces grands noms de la poésie, qu'après quelques semaines, mon imagination, repoussant mon expérience, rétablit sur ces îlots des beautés enivrantes et vagues. Le mirage restaure son règne sur les pauvres écueils, d'où ma lorgnette l'avait chassé. Mais, en avril 1900, comme je suivais la mer d'Ionie et de Crète, déçu par l'horizon, j'étais réduit à me pencher sur le sillage des illustres pèlerins qui vinrent avant moi chercher la Raison dans sa patrie, et je subissais avec eux cette alternative d'ardeur et de déception où nous balancent des noms qui parlent si fort et des rivages si muets.[537]

As for Nerval before him, for Barrès, on Greek shores, antiquity seems to exist only in ancient names, which the physical reality of the islands and the coast do not live up to. However, classical literary culture is so imposing that it soon overpowers the traveller's original impressions and the 'imagined' land retakes precedence over the travelled one. This process also highlights the

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[535] Barrès, *Voyage de Sparte*, p. 402.
[536] Ibid., p. 382.
[537] Ibid., p. 403

constructed nature of travel writing as, when faced with the disappointment of a non-classical looking Greece, Barrès turns towards other authors who all testify to the high expectations and disillusions of seeking the ancient world in a modern journey. In the end, Greece appears to be less a real place than a 'mirage' entirely sustained by classical literature and its transmission, bypassing the traveller's material impressions altogether.

The idea that ancient Greece is a 'mirage' that obscures the Western European view of its modern reality is found throughout the nineteenth century as here in an article by Beulé (a former member of the EFA).

> D'ailleurs, entre la Grèce qui luttait et l'Europe qui la contemplait, l'antiquité interposait son mirage. Les Grecs ne nous ont point trompés; ils sont ce qu'ils étaient avant d'être libres, ils sont déjà meilleurs: ils n'ont trompé que nos espérances, dont ils n'étaient pas complices, et dont nous leur faisons expier la vanité.[538]

For Beulé, the persistent gap between the philhellenes' dream and the Greeks' own narrative of their collective identity can be attributed to the 'mirage' of antiquity. The insistence of European travellers on receiving Greece (and the 'Orient') through the privileged prism of classical culture leads not only to disappointment but also to the impossibility of truly relating to modern Greeks, unless they perform a version of their identity that conforms to Western Europe's 'espérances'.

> Greek nationalists may or may not have felt particularly powerfully about the ancient pagan past, but those who had traveled to Italy, France or England learned quickly how devoted Europeans had become to ancient Hellas, and they played this philhellenic card at every opportunity – or allowed others to play it for them.
>
> Playing up Greek antiquity, and antiquities, helped the Greeks win their war against the Turks – and despite the fact that it was ruled by a foreign king and populated by eastern orthodox peasants rather than secular Athenians, the new Greek state's legitimacy rested heavily on antiquity's foundations.[539]

The use of Western Europeans' 'devotion' to antiquity by Greek supporters of independence to further their own political aims turn Hellenism into a sustained performance to maintain the nation's international legitimacy. Beyond the Independence War and the geopolitics of nation-building, Greek people are expected to (re)-receive their own heritage for the benefit of foreign

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[538] Charles-Ernest Beulé, 'Athènes et les Grecs modernes', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 10 (1855), 1042-1057 (p. 1046).
[539] Suzanne Marchand, 'The Dialectics of the Antiquities Rush', in *Pour une histoire de l'archéologie XVIII^e siècle – 1945: Hommage de ses collèges et amis à Eve Grand-Aymerich*, ed. by Annick Fennet and Natacha Lubtchansky (Pessac: Ausonius Editions, 2019), pp. 191-206, (p.194).

observers. The appearance (or sign) of Hellenism (by 'playing up Greek antiquity') is what travellers hope to perceive when they arrive in Greece and disappointment often stems from the failure of this performance. However, once the presence of antiquity in the modern world appears not as innate but as performative, a space opens up for other creative reinvestments of the 'oriental' space with signs of the dreamed antiquity, and thus to the insertion of fully fictional elements in travel narratives, such as Nerval's *Voyage en Orient*.

5.2.2 Travel writing and literary invention

The different parts of Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* (1851) first appeared in articles for *L'Artiste* and *La Revue des Deux Mondes*.[540] In reality, the 1851 version (and all subsequent complete editions) of the *Voyage en Orient* joins together two distinct journeys, one from Paris to Vienna, undertaken between 1839 and 1840, and the other, to Egypt, Lebanon and Constantinople, from January 1843 to January 1844, with the addition of fully fictional branches of the itinerary, most notably Cythera and part of the Lebanese itinerary.[541] The publication of the journey in two volumes gives more coherence to the narrative, but also uses fiction to bring together its originally disjointed aspects. We can distinguish two types of fictional insertions in Nerval's *Voyage*: fully invented elements and narratives within the narratives ('Histoire du Calife Hakem' and 'Histoire de la Reine du Matin et de Soliman').

Some of the journey's episodes are clearly fictional as they describe places Nerval never went to (like Cythera) or in which he spent less time than implied by the narrative. In particular, a great importance is given to the Lebanese section of the journey where the traveller meets Salèma and her father, travels through the mountains, get instructed in the Druze religion and gets engaged before leaving, whilst in all likelihood Nerval spent less than three months there.[542] From this, it is also possible to surmise that some characters encountered by the traveller have been invented, or at least had their importance amplified by the narrative. This is the case for Zeynab, the slave he bought in Cairo, and Salèma, his Druze fiancé, both of whom he decides to leave behind on his way to Constantinople.[543] It is well documented that Nerval filled some of the gaps in his journey

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[540] In *L'Artiste*, 'Lettre sur Vienne' (1840), an early version of the chapter 'Les Amours de Vienne' (1844 and 1847), a series of articles on Cythera and other Greek islands. In *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, a series of articles on Egypt and Lebanon (1846 and 1847), which correspond to the different chapters of the final version of the narrative. The first complete edition of the *Voyage en Orient* was published in two volumes in 1851.
For a precise history of Nerval's publication of his *Voyage* see Nerval, *Oeuvres completes II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp. 1369-1374 & 1387-1395.

[541] Ibid., p. 1828-1831 for a comparison between the maps of the real and the fictional journeys

[542] Ibid., p. 1371.

[543] Ibid., p. 1381. The breakup of his engagement is presented in the narrative as part of a letter to a friend, but Nerval's real correspondence holds no trace of her.

with information taken from his numerous readings about the 'Orient' and its religious traditions, going as far as to add informative appendices to the edited version of his journey on daily life in Cairo, or the Druze religion, freely adapted from Edward William Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), Silvestre de Sacy's *Exposé de la religion des Druzes* (1838), and others.[544] These breaches of the implicit genre contract of travel writing (as a non-fictional account recording information gathered by the author himself) serve a literary purpose which is to bolster the narrative drive of the journey as an (unsuccessful) spiritual and sentimental quest.

The transition between Vienna and Cairo takes the *Voyage*'s narrator briefly through Trieste to embark on a boat for the island of Syra, in Greece, before reaching Alexandria (in reality, Nerval's journey started in Marseille, with a stop in Malta on the way to Syra). The romantic expectations projected on the imagined Morea coast are thus steeped with literary references, as a narrative pretext is provided to justify a halt in Cythera (the burial of an unexpectedly deceased English passenger).

> 'Au-delà de cette mer, disait Corinne en se tournant vers l'Adriatique, il y a la Grèce… Cette idée ne suffit-elle pas pour émouvoir?' – Et moi, plus heureux qu'elle, plus heureux que Winckelmann, qui la rêva toute sa vie, et que le moderne Anacréon, qui voudrait y mourir, - j'allais la voir enfin, lumineuse, sortir des eaux avec le soleil![545]

The first vision of Greece is introduced by the combined memory of three figures from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: the Italian heroine of Germaine de Staël's 1807 novel of the same name, the German founder of art history and classical archaeology, and the poet and chansonnier Béranger (compared here to the ancient poet Anacreon). Whilst the narrator seems to align his expectations with this neoclassical framework of idealised antiquity, in reality, this perception is soon eclipsed by Nerval's romantic perspective as he contrasts his supposed real journey to Corinne's, Winckelmann's and Béranger's dreamed Greece.

> Je l'ai vue ainsi, je l'ai vue: ma journée a commencé comme un chant d'Homère! C'était vraiment l'Aurore aux doigts de rose qui m'ouvrait les portes de l'Orient! […] devant nous, là-bas, à l'horizon, cette côte vermeille, ces collines empourprées qui semblent des nuages, c'est l'île même de Vénus aux rochers de porphyre: Κυτήρη πορφίρυσσα [Kythera with purple rock].[546]

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[544] This is especially the case in his explanations of the Druze religion. Ibid., pp. 1378-1379.
[545] Ibid., p. 233.
[546] Ibid., pp. 233-234.

Whilst insisting on the testimonial value of his impressions ('Je l'ai vue ainsi, je l'ai vue'), Nerval relies heavily on classical intertexts in his first impressions, even quoting expressions directly from ancient Greek. This 'Homeric' dawn indicates a new beginning in the journey, opening the road to the 'Orient' and relegating the journey from Paris to the Adriatic to a 'prologue' preceding the central quest of the narrative. 'L'Aurore aux doigts de rose', a famous Homerian epithet, is thus to be understood less as a description than as a symbol of the epic poetry the traveller hopes to reenact in his journey, whilst the use of the Greek language, as seen earlier, conjures antiquity in front of his eyes. Calling Cythera 'l'île de Vénus', the text also signals the renewal of the sentimental quest (after a series of disappointing encounters in Vienna) but the traveller's hopes are soon thwarted.

> Voilà mon rêve… et voici mon réveil! Le ciel et la mer sont toujours là; le ciel d'Orient, la mer d'Ionie se donnent chaque matin le saint baiser d'amour; mais la terre est morte, morte sous la main de l'homme, et les dieux se sont envolés. […] Ainsi les dieux s'éteignent eux-mêmes ou quittent la terre vers qui l'amour des hommes ne les appelle plus![547]

Before Nerval even sets foot in Greece, the twin deaths of antiquity and the divine are in reality foretold, undermining the whole narrative of a traveller in search of the embodied ideal of love and religious syncretism. Whilst nature is true to itself and re-enacts an archetypal and eternal amorous narrative (as seen in chapter 3), the land itself is devoid of spiritual meaning as the gods have left the Greek soil. Antiquity's true death occurs when it is not desired anymore.

The immanence of the divine is contingent on the desire of men for it and the absence of this desire is paradoxically announced by Nerval in the first stage of his journey, foretelling the future failure of his religious initiation. Symbolically, this reflection occurs whilst approaching Cythera, the island that witnessed the birth of Venus and that, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, incarnated the idyllic refuge of love *par excellence*. As we have previously shown, the quest for spiritual revelation is foremost the search for a woman, but Venus has deserted her land and the initiation is bound to fail before it even started. In Cythera, as in Syra/Scyros, the only classical sign remaining is an ancient name whose mythological associations have long disappeared. However, as Nerval never visited Cythera, casting doubt on his claim of having witnessed a land abandoned by the ancient Greek gods, his detour to the island of Venus thus appears entirely designed to demystify the eighteenth-century gallant utopia and to build his own self-image as a romantic pilgrim in search of lost gods.

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[547] Ibid., p. 234.

The second type of literary invention within Nerval's *Voyage* consists of two tales that the traveller presents as reported from oral sources, but which are in all likelihood his own creation. These narratives within the narrative are interesting intertexts as they are examples of Nerval receiving and rewriting mythological material. Even though the two tales are not directly inspired by classical mythology, they still present a relationship with ancient traditions that is not determined by the materiality of the 'Orient' in which they take place, but which construct a fundamentally trans-cultural relationship between different foundational narratives.

'L'histoire du calife Hakem' tells the story of the legendary founder of the Druze faith. It is set in Egypt but Nerval reports hearing it from the Druze sheikh he befriends in Lebanon; 'Histoire de la reine du matin et de Soliman prince des génies' retells the biblical tale of Salomon, the queen of Sheba, and Adoniram, the architect of the Temple. This story, which owes a lot to the Freemasonic reception of the architect Hiram (Adoniram) is centred around the building of the temple in Jerusalem, but Nerval reports having heard it told over multiple nights in a café in Constantinople. These displacements, as well as the rapprochement made by Nerval between the Druze religion and masonic practices combine to draw a common Oriental arc between Cairo, Jerusalem and Constantinople, blurring the geographical origin of the myths to emphasise the fluidity of narrative circulation. Despite both stories being presented as transcribed from oral telling (which is particularly unlikely in the case of 'La reine du matin', which would have required, had this story indeed been told by a Constantinople storyteller, an excellent proficiency in Turkish from the audience), they both have literary sources[548] and owe more, above all, to Nerval's own imagination. In the appendix, he playfully comments: 'Il ne faut pas s'étonner de la tendance philosophique et, pour ainsi dire, voltairienne de ce récit. Les contes arabes et persans sont, la plupart, composés dans cet esprit.'[549] It is of course to Nerval's own 'voltairienne'[550] education that 'La reine du matin' owes its construction as a philosophical tale and his sweeping judgement on Arab and Persian tales is likely the product of his reading of other French orientalists. After giving more explanations of Arab legends, he thus concludes: 'On peut consulter sur tous ces points la *Bibliothèque orientale* de d'Herbelot.'[551] If the dictionary of Barthélémy d'Herbelot, a seventeenth-century traveller and orientalist scholar does mention the legends of Salomon and the Queen of Sheba, their descriptions are very different from their depictions in Nerval's tale and the central character of Adoniram (whose name, originally Hiram, is taken from masonic tradition) is mentioned in neither of their

[548] Sylvestre de Sacy for 'Hakem', the Bible and masonic tales for 'La reine du matin'.
[549] Nerval, p. 837.
[550] Ibid., p. 431.
[551] Ibid., p. 838.

dictionary entries. Despite it being the only credible source mentioned by Nerval in relation to this tale, it only highlights its high degree of literary invention.

In this context, the way Nerval uses his sources in his rewriting of the story of Salomon's architect, Adoniram, is more playful than the serious tone that the legendary retelling seems to predict. As he introduces himself as a simple member of the audience in the Istanbul café where the tale is narrated over multiple nights, he makes this comment, after the telling of one episode (the descent into the underworld of Adoniram, where he meets his ancestors from the 'fire race', children of the Eloim, all descending from Cain and including Hermes).

> Cette séance avait vivement impressionné l'auditoire, qui s'accrut le lendemain. On avait parlé des mystères de la montagne de Kaf qui intéressent toujours vivement les Orientaux. Pour moi, cela m'avait paru aussi classique que la descente d'Enée aux enfers.[552]

This interjection by Nerval between two episodes of the narratives points the way towards a possible intertext for the 'reine du matin' tale. Is Nerval playfully quoting his sources here? Adoniram's descent in the underworld is, in all likelihood, of Nerval's own invention in the retelling of the legend, and it does indeed bear resemblances to the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Is Nerval subtly demystifying the para-biblical legend, or Europeanising it, culturally signalling to his reader the pre-eminence of 'classical literature'? Or does this represent a complex attempt at religio-cultural synthesis? The *Aeneid* was written by Virgil in the first century of the common era, shortly after the establishment of the Roman Empire. In the sixth book where Aeneas goes to the underworld, he meets with his dead father, but also with his descendants, amongst whom is Augustus, the first emperor of Rome. The Roman epic author rewrites the legend of Rome's foundation to politically and culturally justify Augustus' empire. In the same way, by adding a classically inspired episode to a biblically inspired esoteric tale, Nerval can justify a common origin to spiritual tales from all across the Mediterranean, while in a 'post-enlightenment' sceptic way, he simultaneously underlines their cultural and circumstantial origins.

In conclusion, the use of elements from classical antiquity in travellers' tales and descriptions of the 'Orient' fulfils not only a series of intertextual functions but often participates in the building of complex transcultural narratives. This is particularly visible in Nerval's *Voyage en Orient*, which, despite the unifying narrative implied by its name, simultaneously exemplifies and demystifies the romantic travel narrative form, by setting a fantastical aspiration to cultural and religious synthesis

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[552] Ibid., p. 731.

and its failure. Travellers' willingness to read classical signs in the materiality of the 'Orient' underlines the inherently intertextual nature of both classical reception and travel narratives. Nonetheless, the fluidity of the classical material, its capacity to signify both Western cultural aspirations to universality as well as to a particular and localised, thus vanished cultural ideal, lends itself not only to a variety of historical receptions, but also to many forms of literary (re)inventions.

CONCLUSION

In Austria, before he embarks for the rest of his journey towards the 'Orient', Nerval's narrator, charmed in part by her origins, attempts to seduce Catarina, the young Venetian servant of a French noblewoman living in Vienna.

> 'J'ai expliqué à cette beauté qu'elle me plaisait, surtout – parce qu'elle était pour ainsi dire *Austro-Vénitienne*, et qu'elle réalisait en elle seule le Saint-Empire romain, ce qui a paru peu la toucher.'[553]

The seduction scene ends in failure, foreshadowing the traveller's other aborted sentimental adventures (most notably Salèma). Nerval's eagerness to see in Catarina the embodiment of a certain historical period (here the Holy Roman Empire, and elsewhere classical antiquity or the ancient 'Orient') is met with relative indifference by the young woman. More generally, the projection of the traveller's own reception of the past onto the material reality of the travelled present rarely results in the aspired return to life of the classical ideal.

In this thesis, I demonstrated how travel narratives sought to establish continuities and discontinuities between the ancient world, the contemporary 'Orient', and Europe, their focus alternating between the material presence of antiquity and its absence throughout the lands they travelled.

In nineteenth-century travel narratives, previously held assumptions regarding Western Europe's relationship to its own history and to its cultural heritage find themselves challenged by conflicting temporalities and travellers such as Vogüé articulate their precarious positions between the temporal alterity of the Classics and the geographical 'other' of the 'Orient'. Fears of decadence and decline are both mirrored and challenged in receptions of antiquity in the 'Orient' as travellers grapple with the layers of time that separate their modernity from antiquity. Faced with the religious predominance of Islam and British colonial rule at the end of the century, Loti and Schuré deplore what they perceive as the decadence of Egypt. In Greece, the first EFA scholars in the 1840s and 1850s, are dismissive of Byzantine and Ottoman remains. In the early twentieth century, whilst Maurras sharply distinguishes between classical, barbarian and decadent antiquity, seeking France's heritage in a selective section of Mediterranean history, Barrès proposes a more complex chain of reception that would encompass Sparta and the medieval French presence in Greece.

Material traces of the past, whether natural or human-made, are objects of fascination and rejection for the travellers, as they emblematise both the survival and the disappearance of the classical world. Responses to them thus range from scientific endeavours (in order to better understand

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[553] Nerval, p. 203.

antiquity) to the aestheticisation of their alternatively enduring or ephemeral condition. The rejection of scientific archaeology is emblematised by Barrès, who deplores the focus of archaeologists on the classical period, counter to his own interest for the multiple layers of postclassical history, particularly as they allow him to valorise the intersections of French and Greek history. The EFA scholars, similarly disappointed by ancient ruins, develop scholarly interpretations of ancient texts based on their observations of natural sites and theories of environmental determinism. Whilst Loti and Vogüé reuse the aesthetic motif of the ruin to counter the predicted *aporia* of travel writing, positioning themselves as the last witnesses of a disappearing exotic other, Flaubert memorialises the oriental nature as true to his own aesthetic (pre)vision of the 'Orient' and of antiquity.

The reception of alterity through both (pseudo)-scientific and aesthetic approaches also results in the systematic racialisation of 'oriental' others. These are led by a widely shared fascination for inhabitants of the 'Orient' as they are studied as potential material vestiges of the ancient past. However, they are also often racialised as the antithesis of the aesthetic ideal of classicality, for example by the EFA scholars who are disappointed by the changes undergone by the modern Greek language or by Nerval who emphasises the darkness of the slaves he sees in Cairo against the whiteness of classical beauty. These depictions are often gendered; on the one hand 'oriental' men are often used as proof of the (dis)continuity of classical history, on the other the exotic alterity of women is highlighted as either a foil (by Nerval) or an exciting alternative (by Flaubert) to classical aesthetic canons.

Overall, the receptions of antiquity in travel writing are intensely textually mediated. As Montalbetti puts it, the library stands between the traveller and the world. As classical reception is foremost an interpretative practice, which is the assignment of meaning to signs, this phenomenon is particularly visible in the narratives of travellers that are interested by religious syncretism like Schuré, but also in authors on the more literary end of the spectrum like Nerval and Flaubert, though the relationship between travel and creation plays out in different ways for both of these writers.

A common thread between all of these texts is that they are traversed by the tension between the material and the ideal, between the absence and the presence of antiquity. As travel writers 'reajuste[nt] le *dire* au *monde*',[554] their narratives are constantly looking to address what appears irreconcilable between their expectations and their experience. A variation of this prevalent tension is visible in Flaubert's notes and letters from his journey, as his recollections alternate between his

[554] Montalbetti, p. 10.

physical, and at times sensuous, enjoyment of the 'Orient' and his aesthetic conviction that literature is 'truer' than material reality. The logical outcome of this ambivalence is that he promptly abandons the idea of writing up his journey and does not publish any travel narratives. The literary use of his journey is solely transformative as he thus reuses his travel notes to compose later works, most notably *Salammbô* (1862) and "Hérodias" (1877).

In his work on the figure of Salomé, Bertrand Marchal demonstrates the double determination of the Egyptian dancer on the fictional Salomé, and conversely, of the biblical figure on the perception of the real Kuchuk-Hanem.

> Si Salomé, ce rejeton littéraire du Voyage en Orient de Flaubert, semble procéder de Kuchuk-Hanem, c'est en réalité parce que Kuchuk-Hanem – non pas la personne réelle, mais le personnage littéraire que fait d'elle Flaubert dans ses notes du *Voyage en Egypte* – est déjà prédéterminée par un scenario ou un mythe flaubertiens de Salomé.[555]

As Flaubert explains to Bouilhet first, and later to Colet, the journey to the 'Orient' acted as a materialisation of the literary intuitions that were already held by the writer.[556] The material reception of antiquity appeared thus 'prédeterminée' by Flaubert's literary baggage.

However, in preparation for the redaction of *Salammbô*, Flaubert returns to the 'Orient' (this time Carthage, in Tunisia) in 1858.[557]

> Il faut que je fasse un voyage en Afrique. J'ai seulement besoin d'aller à Kheff et de me promener aux environs de Carthage dans un rayon d'une vingtaine de lieues, pour connaître à fond les paysages que je prétends décrire.[558]

This back-and-forth movement between the 'travelled Orient' and the 'textual Orient' reveals a relationship between travel experience and literary production that is more complicated than a simple confirmation of Flaubert's pre-existing aesthetic ideas as texts and material observations constantly feed off each other. More broadly, as this thesis highlights through the examples of Flaubert, Nerval and others, the transformative role of literature as a deliberate reconfiguration of travel experience allows for fluid, ambivalent and conflicting reinventions of antiquity and its material presence in nineteenth-century culture to be played out in both travel and fiction writing. At their core, all classical receptions are new inventions of antiquity. The genesis of *Salammbô*, as the fruit of two 'oriental' journeys demonstrates how, despite Flaubert's affirmation of the

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[555] Bertrand Marchal, *Salomé: entre vers et prose ; Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Flaubert et Huysman*s (Paris: José Corti, 2005), p. 128.

[556] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 680 (4 September 1850); Ibid., II, p. 284 (27 March 1853).

[557] Flaubert, *Voyage à Carthage* in *Voyages*, ed. by Dominique Barbéris (Paris: Arléa, 2007).

[558] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, II, p. 795 (23 January 1858).

superiority of 'textual' experience ('Nous en savons trop en matière d'art pour nous tromper sur la nature'[559]), his material experience of the 'Orient' remains crucial to his recreation of antiquity.

As this thesis demonstrated, the reception of classical antiquity through the travel experience in many cases complicates and challenges ideals of the classical past. It highlighted the embeddedness of classical culture within orientalist discourses and how these were deployed to situate France and Europe as natural heirs to the Classics, even when doing so challenged the dichotomy between the West and the East. Barrès' and Maurras' journeys to Greece are here emblematic of the resistance posed by the materiality of the Classics to attempts to assimilate them to simple narratives of Western cultural transmission. Whilst nationalist receptions of antiquity represent one distinct and selective way to appropriate classical heritage, it is based on the exclusion of the competing claims and the multiple sources that enrich modern reinventions of antiquity.

It is true that, in the nineteenth century as in the twenty-first century, Europe continues to be considered the 'notional homeland of antiquity'[560], nevertheless what constitutes 'Classics' – whether it is the Mycenaean art unearthed by Schliemann, or the Semitic and Phoenician origins of Greek language defended by Bernal – is often perceived as foreign, hard to grasp, both disorienting and 'oriental'. Narrow foci on European 'classical' heritage and chains of transmissions from Ancient Greece and Rome through to modern nations, obscure not only the losses but also the numerous alienations in the historical process of classical receptions.

Published in 1858, *Stella* is a French-language posthumous novel by Haitian author Emeric Bergeaud, which follows the story of two brothers, Romulus and Rémus, rivalling for the love of the same woman, Stella, throughout the Haitian revolution.[561] In his novel, Bergeaud hereby fictionalises the establishment of the first independent Black republic through a reappropriation of the foundational myth of Rome, offering a striking contrast to both metropolitan receptions of the ancient world and representations of Haiti. As early as in the nineteenth century, Bergeaud, and other 'subaltern' writers 'engage with classics on their own cultural terms, recognising that which is germane to their historical and cultural experience and domesticating Classics according to the needs of their art.'[562] Therefore, a refusal to reduce antiquity to the familiarity of nineteenth-century idealised classicality can open possibilities for Classics to represent a positive way to engage with

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[559] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, I, p. 680 (4 September 1850)

[560] Billings, 'The sigh of philhellenism', p. 51.

[561] Emeric Bergeaud, *Stella* (Geneva: editions Zoé, 2009).

[562] Emily Greenwood, 'Subaltern Classics in Anti- and Post-Colonial Literatures in English', *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English – Volume 5: After 1880*, ed. by Kenneth Haynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 576-607 (p. 579).

alterity. Doing so would entail looking at transnational narratives of classical receptions, not to flatly claim a 'shared heritage' or a 'common history' but to truly embrace the fluidity and diversity of modern affiliations with the ancient past.

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