The International Review of Ancient Art & Archaeology

MAY/JUNE 2019

MINERVA

The Triumph of Art

The stream of culture flowing along ancient silk roads and incense routes linked the Mediterranean, the Middle and Near East, and India
ATTIC BLACK-FIGURE AMPHORA BY THE DIOSPHOS PAINTER

This vase type is known as a doubleen amphora. Depicted on the A-side we have Leto, one of the Titanides (female Titans) standing across from her twin children Artemis and Apollo kitharoides, with a deer between them. On the B-side we find Athena in the center grasping the hand of Herakles, a hoplite stands beside her and a young bull behind the goddess. This scene probably depicts the end result of Herakles after his seventh Labor where he captures the Eurysthean bull.


The Metropolitan Museum of Art has two fine amphorae by the Diophos Painter.

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Cultural connections

People, ideas and artefacts flowed back and forth, from east to west and back again, between the Mediterranean and the Middle and Near East along ancient trade-routes. One of our features is entitled ‘belonging to nowhere...’ which is a quotation from Sardinia from a book by DH Lawrence. But surely even an island belongs to somewhere or someone? How do we know where we belong? We may be identified by our language, our customs, our diet, and the way we look. But what about our art? We know there are different styles, periods and schools and we like to classify, categorise and label images and objects.

From her style and general appearance, there is no doubt that the lady on the front cover, for example, is from Palmyra in Syria. She is one of many fine pieces on show in an exhibition entitled World Between Empires: Art and Identity in the Ancient Middle East at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. So what has art to do with identity, and how permeable are its borders? Turn to pages 14 to 21 to find out more.

Next, we look at one of many effects that the arrival of Alexander the Great, whose empire stretched as far east as north-west India, had on the culture of those he conquered. He brought with him the influence of east as north-west India, had on the culture of those he conquered. He brought with him the influence of style and techniques of ancient Greek art, which had an impact on local artists and craftsmen. How much of an impact, and how far-reaching it was, is still being debated; as you will see on pages 22 to 26.

But as well as the physical evidence of cultural exchange there is also cross-fertilisation in the world of ideas and imagination. We do not even know if the great ancient Greek poet Homer actually existed, or if he wrote the Iliad and the Odyssey, but that has not stopped artists, sculptors, writers and poets from drawing inspiration from the idea of this man and his Homeric heroes never seem to die but reincarnate as we look at an exhibition in Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia, featuring towerlike structures called nuraghi, as we look at an exhibition in Cagliari, the capital of Corsica. The island flourished in the Bronze Age with a local population that lived in fortified stone settlements featuring towerlike structures called nuraghi, and who wrought different kinds of bronze figures and animals. There is a haunting strangeness to these artefacts, which are shown on pages 38 to 42.

For a good read turn to our book reviews on pages 52 to 55, and, if you are planning a trip, have a look at the Calendar, on pages 56 to 61, which lists exhibitions around the world with endless cultural connections. As John Donne said: ‘No man is an island.’
In an early start to celebrate the centenary of the discovery of the famous boy-king’s tomb in 1922, a dazzling exhibition entitled Tutankhamun, Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh is on tour, stopping at venues in 10 cities worldwide. It opened last March at the California Science Center in Los Angeles, it is currently on show at the Grande Halle de la Villette in Paris and, in November, it will come to London.

Now, more than 50 years after Tutankhamen’s fabulous treasures attracted millions of visitors to the ‘exhibition of the century’ in Paris in 1967, and London in 1972, and also in 2007, this is a further opportunity to rediscover the legendary gold of the pharaohs, before these precious artefacts are permanently housed in the new Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo that is set to open in 2020.

The exhibition has the largest collection of Tutankhamen’s treasures ever to travel outside Egypt. More than 150 artefacts from his tomb include 60 that have never left the country before.

Among them are a number of the young king’s personal possessions that accompanied him both in life and death – gold jewellery, sculpture and ceremonial objects.

The pharaohs who succeeded him almost managed to erase his name from history but, in 1922, he became headline news around the world when his intact tomb was found by the British archaeologist and Egyptologist Howard Carter. Had he not made this discovery, which brought fame to two men who lived 3400 years apart, this 18th-dynasty king (c 1341–c 1323 BC) could have been completely forgotten.

For Ancient Egyptians, death was considered to be a new birth, but immortality was only possible if the body was preserved and underwent the correct rituals. To ensure this post-mortem rebirth and survival in the afterlife, they created a host of funerary rituals, objects and images.

Visitors to the Paris exhibition can follow Tutankhamun’s passage into everlasting life, discovering along the way the purpose of each funerary ritual object on this perilous journey, as well as the story of one of the key discoveries in modern archaeology.

Tutankhamun, Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh seeks to focus exclusively on the interpretation and the ritualistic significance of the artefacts. Some of the magnificent objects on show include a miniature gold canopic sarcophagus, a gilded wooden tomb guardian, a gilded bed and a gilded shrine decorated with scenes from the king’s life.

But as we gaze on the face of the boy-king, let us not forget Howard Carter, who made the most famous archaeological discovery in history yet received not a single honour from his country, and whose sole memorial is a blue plaque on the wall of the London house where he was born. Could this be the time to erect a statue in his memory?


Lindsay Fulcher

1. Small gilded wooden naos (shrine) decorated with domestic scenes from the king’s life with his wife Ankhsenamon.
2. Miniature gold canopic coffing that contained Tutankhamun’s mummified liver.
3. Lifesize gilded wooden ka statue of the king; one of a pair that guarded the tomb.
Etruscans on Corsica

INRAP (Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives) archaeologists, who have been working on the site of an Etruscan and Roman necropolis near the ancient city of Aléria-Lamajone on the island of Corsica for some time, have excavated a hypogeum (an underground burial chamber) which could shed more light on the Etruscan presence in Corsica.

The necropolis, which extends over one hectare is in an exceptionally good state of conservation, especially as soil acidity in Corsica destroys most bones. There is evidence of different funerary practices: burials in pits, in studied wooden and stone coffins, and on funeral pyres.

Grave goods found – jewellery, including a pair of gold earrings (1), ornaments and around 100 unbroken vases, from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century AD – all indicate their owners’ high social ranking.

The discovery of a hypogeum on French territory is unusual, the first of its kind in over 40 years. These burial chambers that were dug into the rock, were reserved for high-ranking individuals. A flight of steps (2) and a six-metre-long corridor lead down to a still intact rectangular chamber two metres underground. Its entrance, which was sealed with a mixture of clay, pottery sherds, charcoal and stones, had been opened and re-sealed several times, perhaps to add offerings and extra bodies.

One skull and several artefacts have been found: three black varnished bowls, the handle of what was probably an oenochoe (wine-jug) and two skyphoi (deep drinking goblets with large handles). Based on grave goods already unearthed and dated, these finds indicate that the tomb is from the 4th century BC.

On the trade route between Liguria and southern France, Corsica also attracted Greek and Carthaginian traders. The island’s eastern side came under Etruscan influence and, between 500 BC–AD 259, when the Romans conquered Corsica, there was a stable Etruscan population at Aléria. Excavation has already brought to light the exceptional site of Casabianca with its necropolis revealing one of the richest Etruscan funerary ensembles found outside Italy. Some of its finds are in the Aléria site museum. The Aléria-Lamajone necropolis will shed further light on Etruscan culture.

1. Gold Etruscan earrings found inside a coffin. 2. Steps down to a six-metre corridor lead to the hypogeum (underground burial chamber).

The generosity of Getty

The J Paul Getty Trust, the world’s largest cultural and philanthropic organisation devoted to the visual arts, has given an update on its conservation projects and new funding, and reported on the J Paul Getty Medal award to the historian Mary Beard and the artists Lorna Simpson and Ed Ruscha, identified as ‘Three leaders who have helped transform and deepen our understanding and appreciation of the visual arts and the humanities.’

But Getty’s most far-reaching innovation is Arches, an open-source cultural heritage data management platform, developed by the Getty Conservation Institute with the World Monuments Fund. Arches allows anyone to make an inventory and manage any heritage site in the world. Teaming up with the City of Lincoln, for example, Arches was used to develop ARCADE (Access Resource for Conservation and Archaeology in a Development Environment), a publicly accessible web-based system resulting in an inventory of the city’s 18,000 archaeological and technical records (2).

The Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA) project based at Oxford University is using Arches to record archaeological sites and landscapes across 20 regions.

Getty also announced that it had given a £5million endowment grant to the Courtauld Institute of Art’s Wall Painting postgraduate programme. This three-year MA course has been running since 1985, and it remains the only one in the world. At Nagaur Fort in Rajasthan, for example, conservator Sibylla Tringham (1) from the Courtauld has spent six weeks every year, since 2006, conserving its wall paintings and providing training for local people to become conservators. Works of art were also given a boost with Conserving Canvas, a Getty funding initiative to ensure skills are not lost by supporting workshops, seminars, training residencies and holding a symposium. One of the first recipients was the National Gallery in London for conservation work on Van Dyck’s Equestrian Portrait of Charles I.

Then, there is the Getty Foundation’s Keeping it Modern grants, which have benefited 52 20th-century buildings in need of conservation. This ties in with Bauhaus Beginnings, a new show opening on 11 June at the Getty Center in Los Angeles, to mark the 100th anniversary of the radical German art and design school. All in all this adds up to a cornucopia of Getty generosity to the arts worldwide.

1. Sibylla Tringham conserves wall paintings in the Sheesh Mahal at Nagaur Fort, India. 2. Screenshot of ARCADE that shows the ability to spatially query data by drawing an area on a map of Lincoln.
Vikings invade East Anglia

The fearsome Great Viking Army arrived in East Anglia in AD 865; now they have taken up residence again in Norwich Castle Museum in an exhibition entitled Viking: Rediscover the Legend, which includes some of the most significant Anglo-Saxon and Viking treasures discovered in Britain. Star objects from the British Museum and Yorkshire Museum include the Anglo-Saxon York Helmet, and the Vale of York, Cuerdale and Bedale Viking Hoards. These are displayed alongside highlights from Norwich Castle’s own extensive collections, including many items on display for the first time, which help to tell the distinctive regional story of the Viking presence in East Anglia.

A series of themed sections takes the visitor through the story of the Viking presence in England over 200 years, from the first contact with their raiding parties in the 8th century, through invasion and settlement to the arrival of a new power in the land in the figure of William the Conqueror in 1066. Throughout this period, the Vikings had a major impact on Britain, re-shaping every aspect of the political, economic, religious, social and artistic life here, while their own culture was itself transformed by 200 years of British contact. It is a story that is both more complex and fascinating than the popular image of the pillaging marauder.

Nearly 50 objects illustrate the East Anglian Viking context, pointing to the scale of discoveries in the region. Norfolk has some 16,000 archaeological finds unearthed each year, including around 10 percent of the annual total of official treasure finds in the UK. Finds on show for the first time include: the Hingham Hoard (1) buried in the 860s when the Vikings were invading; a Viking lead weight reusing chopped-up Anglo-Saxon silver sheet (2); a Viking lozenge-shaped gold brooch (3) from Attleborough, the first of its kind to be unearthed in the country; a Ringerike Style (Scandinavian animal) horse bridle cheek-piece (4).

While the Viking presence in the north of England had more of a Norwegian flavour, East Anglian Vikings seem to have been drawn principally from Denmark. The north was also distinct in forming a separate Viking kingdom, which centred on York. The picture in East Anglia was more fluid. The Great Viking Army invasion of 865 saw the defeat of King Edmund, and his martyrdom in 869, and the end of the independent Anglo-Saxon kingdom. But, less than a decade later, the Vikings themselves were defeated by the king of Wessex, King Alfred, in 878 at the Battle of Edington.

At this point, the Viking army split up, and although the region was ruled by a Viking king, Guthrum, he took the English name ‘Athelstan’ when he was baptised, an indication of some form of submission to Alfred following his defeat in battle. Evidence suggests a process of assimilation with the local population as the Vikings moved from being invaders – in 869 their army overwintered in Thetford – to being part of the settled population. Proof of this is that there is little evidence of pagan Viking burials in East Anglia, suggesting that they soon converted to Christianity.

In fact, the Danes came to venerate Edmund as a saint to such an extent that the Danish king Cnut turned his shrine into an abbey, which gave its name to the town of Bury St Edmund’s, and became one of the most powerful monastic houses in England. Not that the path to peaceful co-existence always ran smoothly; as late as 1010 during the Viking’s resurgence in England, the army of Thorkel the Tall burnt down the town of Thetford.

Today, Viking influence in East Anglia can still be traced in place-names. For example, village names ending in ‘-by’ and ‘-thorpe’. The greatest concentration of these in the region are the 13 ‘-by’ settlements – including Hemby, Scrathy and Ormsby. The fact that these names are recorded in the Domesday Book suggests that a Norse language was spoken not only by the local Viking population but by English people in the area as well.

Norwich, too, shows traces of its time as an Anglo-Scandinavian city: evidence for Danish influence comes from street names with ‘-gate’ endings (‘gate’ is from Old Norse gata, ‘street’) such as Colegate. • Viking: Rediscover the Legend is on show in Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery (www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk) until 8 September 2019.

Lindsay Fulcher
Herodotus was right!

It is the largest graveyard of ancient ships found in the world. Containing over 70 vessels, the sunken port city of Thonis-Heracleion, which lies off the northern coast of Egypt 30km east of Alexandria, has yielded extraordinary finds. The discovery of Thonis-Heracleion and its nearby sister city Canopus in 2000 and their exploration is the work of the European Institute for Underwater Archaeology (IEASM) directed by its founder, renowned marine archaeologist, Franck Goddio.

To date, the remains of a temple, statues, golden coins and the many ships of this busy, ancient city have been located. Yet the recent discovery of a Nile barge (baris) by Goddio’s team is especially exciting. This kind of vessel was described in his Histories by the Ancient Greek historian Herodotus, after he visited Egypt in 450 BC, but this is the only one that has been found and identified.

Named Ship 17, it was excavated over three seasons by the IEASM between 2009 and 2011. A little over 24 metres of the keel survives, so it would have been about 27m–28m long with a beam of around 8m. It was a large transport barge and would have spent its active life ferrying cargo up and down the Nile and around its Delta. ‘The cargo could have been products of Egypt, such as barley or stone, or imports into the port of Thonis-Heracleion. There’s also a papyrus that talks about this type of ship transporting soldiers,’ explains Dr Damian Robinson, Director of the Oxford Centre for Maritime Archaeology (OCMA), which works in partnership with Franck Goddio and the IEASM on research and on the publication of his work on the submerged Canopic cities.

According to Dr Robinson, the vessel was probably built in a shipyard in the Delta. After its active life, it was taken out of service and reused as a piece of harbour infrastructure; a floating pontoon to extend a jetty out into deeper water. The timbers of the ship have been radiocarbon dated, as have the ceramics that were in the hull, as Robinson reports: ‘Together, they suggest that the vessel was old when it was bulked and reused as a jetty some time in the 6th century BC. It finally sank during the first half of the 5th century BC.’

The discovery of the vessel prompted amazement among the archaeological team, as he recounts: ‘The site of Thonis-Heracleion and the other cities of the Canopic coast have produced some wonderful and spectacular finds, and Ship 17 is certainly one of them. ‘Its significance obviously grew as the team got to know more about it and more information came to light about just how exceptional it was. It’s not every day that you find something completely new in your discipline. The evidence available for the baris up to this point was overwhelmingly textual, although it has been suggested that a baris is depicted on the Nile mosaic from Palestina in Italy.’

So, Ship 17 is the first archaeologically excavated and fully published baris, and its significance is two-fold, as Robinson explains: ‘First, it details a style of ship construction that is unique to Thonis-Heracleion and has never been seen before archaeologically. Consequently, this study has documented this form of construction in detail, and so it is important from a nautical architectural perspective. ‘Second, this style of shipbuilding so closely matches the description of the construction of a baris that it helps us to think a little more about Herodotus. We can now say that it is highly likely that the description was based on an eye-witness account, so Herodotus probably did visit a shipyard and saw one being made. ‘Often the accuracy of Herodotus’ accounts are called into question – some of them certainly are far from the truth – but here the accuracy of the description makes it clear that this isn’t something that he made up or half understood from something that someone else told him.’

More work will soon be carried out in Thonis-Heracleion and Canopus, says Robinson: ‘The team are going back to Egypt this year. The wonderful thing about working on the submerged Canopic cities is that the more we know about the sites, the more complex further questions we can ask about them. Consequently, there are always new things to learn about the cities, their people and their relationships with the world around them. We are also extremely fortunate to be funded by the Hilti Foundation who have allowed Franck and his team to conduct a long-term and extremely detailed research programme.’

Although the team have discovered over 70 ancient ships during the survey work, detailed excavations have only taken place on two of them; one of which is Ship 17, and this is the first one that has been published in detail.

‘We now know that there are many other examples of baris in Thonis-Heracleion, and so one of the subsequent things that the team has been able to do is select and start to excavate another. This example is a little smaller but has elements within its nautical architecture that are better preserved than on Ship 17.’

‘What this is enabling us to do is to come to an even better understanding of how these vessels were constructed, as the new excavations are helping us to fill in the gaps in our knowledge...’

• https://news.artnet.com/art-world/ancient-shipwreck-herodotus-1497052
• Ship 17 a baris from Thonis-Heracleion by Alexander Belov, OCMA monograph series Oxford 2019, distributed by Oxbow Books, hardback, £45. (Belov is a Research Fellow of the Centre for Egyptological Studies in the Russian Academy of Sciences. He has been part of Franck Goddio’s excavation team since the first season of excavation in Thonis-Heracleion in 1999.)

Diana Bentley

Minerva May/June 2019
Antiquities, Antique Arms & Armour, Hunting Antiques and Works of Art

Two pseudo-Chalcydian helmets, northern Black Sea region, 4th century B.C., and a Chalcydian Roman bronze helmet of the Buggenum type.

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Ancient Greece

At home with Homer

Many legends about Homer have reached us from antiquity: from these, we can surmise that the Greeks considered him the greatest poet that ever lived – but that they knew nothing certain about his life. They depicted him as a blind wanderer who suffered many indignities in the course of his travels and yet managed to compose epics of true poetic vision. According to the earliest traditions, he hailed from Ionia – that is to say, the area that now comprises western Turkey and the nearby islands. More specifically, he was supposed to have been born on the island of Chios, or in the port of Smyrna, or in the Aeolian city of Cyme. Some accounts also mentioned Athens and Argos, in mainland Greece, and the islands of Rhodes and Salamis as his places of origin. These seven, traditional ‘birthplaces of Homer’ were not, though, the only possibilities; as the horizons of the Greeks expanded, so the number of Homer’s alleged birthplaces multiplied. In a game of one-upmanship, some ancient Greek writers even claimed that he was an Egyptian, or an early Roman, on the grounds that the heroic practices he described resembled those of foreign people.

The satirist and rhetorician Lucian, writing in the 2nd century AD, made fun of that whole game, claiming (in a fictional tale entitled A True Story) that he had visited Homer in the Elysian Fields (the Land of the Blessed Dead) and had established, once and for all, that the poet hailed from Babylon. In a grand flourish he added: ‘...as for whether he was blind – for that too is rumoured about him! – I knew straight away that he was not, for I could see it and did not need to ask.’ Just as there was no agreement about Homer’s life, so there were doubts about which poems, exactly, he had composed. The authenticity of the Iliad was never questioned, but that of the Odyssey sometimes was, and a host of other epic poems – now surviving only in fragments and plot summaries – were sometimes attributed to him, as were several Homeric Hymns to the gods which we still have.

Definitions of Homer’s oeuvre depended on specific and variable

Barbara Graziosi sorts out fact from fiction

An exhibition devoted to the most famous poet of antiquity is on show at the Louvre-Lens Museum – but what do we really know about him, and are we even sure that he composed the great epic poems for which he is famed?
judgements, which only eventually coalesced into a more broadly shared consensus. In the 6th and early 5th centuries BC, Greek authors often treated Homer as the author of whole epic sagas, rather than just two specific poems. For example, when the playwright Aeschylus (circa 525–456 BC) claimed that his tragedies were ‘slices from the banquet of Homer’ he must have had in mind a whole cycle of poems concerning the Trojan War, as well as another cycle dealing with Oedipus, his children, and the war they fought over Thebes.

The historian Herodotus (circa 484–425 BC) likewise still expressed doubt about the authenticity of some: for example, when he noticed a contradiction between a detail in the Iliad and in the Cypria (a cyclic poem about the initial stages of the Trojan War) he suggested that, of the two, only the Iliad was truly Homeric. Many biographical fictions attempted to explain the existence of poems that were, and simultaneously were not, Homeric.

According to one story, Homer was so poor that he gave away the Cypria as a dowry for his daughter and, subsequently, his son-in-law claimed to be its author. According to another ancient legend, a certain Creophylus of Samos offered Homer much needed hospitality in his own home and then proceeded to steal one of his poems, The Capture of Oechalia.

These stories attempted to suggest that certain poems were more Homeric than others: the Iliad belonged to Homer alone – it was never stolen or given away – whereas other epics were more distantly related to the great poet.

By the 4th century BC, Homer was generally considered to be the...
author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* alone: Plato, for example, drew exclusively from those two poems when quoting ‘Homer’. Aristotle, a generation later, differentiated between those two poems and the cyclic epics on aesthetic grounds: he pointed out that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were much more tightly composed than other early epic poems and that, ‘whether from technique or natural genius’, Homer made his poems centre around a single action, rather than present a variety of loosely connected episodes, as the cyclic epics did. In short, knowledge of what Homer composed was not simply an inherited fact, but a matter of judgement – even in antiquity. As views about poetry changed, so did definitions of ‘Homer’.

Even after Aristotle pronounced on Homer, questions remained about what exactly he had composed. In the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, scholars working in the Great Library of Alexandria applied ever more stringent criteria in order to establish what was truly Homeric. They analysed in detail the diction and grammar of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and placed a special sign – a long dash called the *obelos* – next to lines or passages whose authenticity they doubted. They also argued extensively about what Homer might or might not have composed, speculating about his ‘character’ (*ethos*) and ‘persona’ (*prosopon*).

Artists working in this period were also interested in character, and attempted to depict the face of Homer with naturalistic realism, on the basis of what was said about him. Their efforts did not reveal the actual author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, of course, but testified to a sustained interest in his existence and identity – an interest that is still very much alive today.

Given that the ancient Greeks knew nothing certain about Homer, it is tempting to dismiss their views altogether, and start afresh with an analysis of the poems attributed to this mythical poet, in order to establish how and when they were actually composed. In fact, however, it would be impossible to begin with a clean slate. We inherited from the Greeks not just the name of Homer – and several portraits and legends about him – but a habit of discussing the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in terms of their author.

Readers impressed by the tight composition and sheer excellence of the poems, their intricate structure and ambition, often postulate that they were created by one (or perhaps two) exceptionally gifted individuals – but, of course, this assumption may reveal more about those who make it than about the actual circumstances in which the poems were composed.

Other readers point to small inconsistencies as signs of more extended processes of composition and re-composition in the course of time: again, though, the demand for absolute consistency may reveal a
modern need rather than an ancient failing. Beyond these differences, there are some points on which all Homeric scholars agree.

First of all, it is now universally acknowledged that the Iliad and the Odyssey stem from a rich and ancient tradition of oral poetry. The techniques used in the composition of Homeric epic were honed over a long period of time for the purpose of composing and performing epic tales to a specific rhythm (what we now call the hexameter 'line') in front of live audiences.

The language in which the Homeric poems were composed also suggests a long tradition of oral poetry: some words seem very, very ancient, whereas other forms are much more modern. Generally speaking, when modernising did not involve upsetting the hexameter rhythm, the epic idiom evolved in line with the general development of the Greek language; otherwise, archaic forms were kept in order to preserve the overall rhythmic profile of the poems. What we have, in short, is a poetic language that sounds grand and archaic but includes updates, when those can be integrated within its rhythm.

On the basis of linguistic analysis, it is also possible to establish that hexameter epic must have developed precisely in the area from where the earliest legends about Homer also stem, namely the coast of western Turkey and the nearby islands.

Now, linguistic analysis gives a sense of where Homeric language developed and how it evolved over time, but cannot help us pinpoint the moment of composition or fixation in writing of the Iliad and the Odyssey in absolute terms. In order to date those moments, we need to turn to other considerations, and more specifically to archaeology. Both the Iliad and the Odyssey refer to material circumstances not found before the later 8th or early 7th century BC, such as temples and cult statues, narrative art, and knowledge of the world extending from Thrace to Phoenicia and Egypt. This gives a terminus post quem: the poems cannot have been composed much before 700 BC (and this is, perhaps not coincidentally, also the time when the Greek alphabet first developed).

It is also clear that, by the second half of the 6th century BC, the Iliad and the Odyssey were well-known throughout the Greek-speaking world, from Ionia all the way to Sicily and southern

4. The Quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, circa 1695, by Giovanni Battista Gaulli (1639–1709), oil on canvas. H. 172.2cm. W. 247.3cm. MUDO–Beauvais © RMN-Grand Palais/Thierry Olivier.
Italy. The material record preserves many late archaic images inspired by these poems; and the earliest explicit quotation from the *Iliad* also dates to this period.

We know that a man called Theagenes of Rhegium was writing about Homer in the late 6th century BC: if he produced written texts about him, presumably by then it was also possible to obtain written copies of his works. This gives us a *terminus ante quem*: written versions of the Homeric poems must have been in circulation by 530–520 BC.

One issue that continues to be disputed is whether there were many differences between early texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and, more specifically, whether the poems are to be considered the creation of a single, gifted individual – or rather the product of a more collaborative, long drawn-out process of composition and re-composition.

Those who champion an early date of composition believe that Homer himself wrote down or dictated a master copy of the *Iliad* (and the *Odyssey*, some would add) in the early 7th century BC, taking full advantage of the newly developed technology of writing. Those who argue for a 6th-century BC date often emphasise the importance of an Athenian ‘recension’. According to some sources, Pisistratus, a tyrant ruling over the city of Athens in the 6th century BC, decreed that ‘Homer only’ had to be recited, ‘in the correct order’, at the most important city festival: the Panathenaea, a grand celebration in honour of the city goddess Athena.

The debate over the date of composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* reflects, in part, a difference in emphasis: some scholars emphasise an original contribution by one early poet, others focus on the earliest known historical context in which Homeric poetry was performed.

Beyond these differences, all agree that a 6th-century ‘recension’ must have captured something older; it is also clear that, even if texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* existed in the 7th century, the Greeks did not care much about them: they appreciated the poems through listening, not reading.

The *Iliad* is more than 15,000 lines long; it must have taken approximately three full days (or nights) to perform from start to finish. The *Odyssey* is almost as
long. These monumental epics required commitment on the part of audiences as well as performers. The earliest texts will have been scripts or scores – that is, attempts to support and facilitate a tradition of performance that was always intended to please not just the present audience, but also 'generations yet to come' (as the Iliad puts it).

This is where the figure of the poet Homer, whether or not such a person ever existed, becomes important. Because the Greeks believed that this great poet did once exist and that he did once compose the best epic poems ever, they did all they could to preserve them and hand them down intact. Homer, then, may always have been 'an aesthetic judgement' (as the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche put it) but, even so, this figure helped ensure the survival of the Iliad and the Odyssey – and our continued enjoyment of these extraordinary epics today.

* Homère (Homer) is on show at the Louvre-Lens Museum (www.louvre-lens.fr) until 22 July 2019. The catalogue is published by Musée du Louvre-Lens/Lienart éditions (in French only) at €39.
Exhibition

Blair Fowlkes-Childs and Michael Seymour, co-curators of a new exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art that explores the ancient Middle East in the age of the Roman and Parthian Empires, take us on a fascinating journey visiting the cities of Jerusalem, Petra, Sidon, Baalbek, Palmyra, Hatra and Babylon en route.
Drawing together some 190 works of art from 20 museums in the Middle East, Europe and the US, as well as objects from the Metropolitan Museum's own collection, a new exhibition entitled *The World between Empires: Art and Identity in the Ancient Middle East*, covers a period when two great powers, the Roman Empire in the west and the Parthian Empire in the east, competed for control of the Middle East and its lucrative trade routes between circa 100 BC and AD 250. But the empires themselves form only the backdrop to the main story: the exhibition's real subject is the cultural, religious and even personal identities of people and communities in the region that formed the edge of the two empires as expressed through art.

Following ancient trade routes across the Middle East, the journey begins in south-western Arabia tracing caravan routes, famous for spices and incense, heading north through Judaea and the Phoenician cities of the eastern Mediterranean coast, then east, crossing through the Syrian Desert and ending in Mesopotamia. En route it passes through cities such as Petra, Jerusalem, Sidon, Baalbek, Palmyra, Hatra and Babylon. The regions and cities through which the show travels each had distinctive traditions but were also deeply interconnected, and their art often reveals the ways in which they influenced one another.

In recent years, there has been substantial damage to several of the iconic archaeological sites featured in the exhibition – these include Palmyra and Dura-Europos in Syria and Hatra in Iraq, as well as sites in Yemen – and also to some of the region's most important museums through looting, armed conflict and deliberate destruction. These events
and responses to them are discussed alongside the ancient material, aiming to provide visitors with a sense of how the Middle East’s ancient cultural heritage has been affected, and how these events have played a role in ongoing humanitarian crises.

Filmed interviews with three archaeologists are on view in one of the galleries. Michel Al-Maqdissi, formerly Director of Excavations and Archaeological Studies at the Department of Antiquities of Syria and currently a researcher at the Musée du Louvre in Paris, and Michał Gawlikowski, Professor Emeritus at the University of Warsaw and former director of the Polish Archaeological Mission in Palmyra, focus on sites in Syria, particularly Palmyra, while Zainab Bahrani, Edith Porada Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Art and Archaeology at Columbia University in New York, contextualises the current situation in Iraq after the events of the last three decades. All offer their thoughts on the significance of the destruction and on current responses, and discuss ideas for the future.

The kingdoms of ancient southwestern Arabia were separated by desert from the commercial centres of the Roman and Parthian Empires and never conquered by either power, yet connected with both as the source of several precious commodities – most importantly frankincense and myrrh – and as a conduit for many others by way of Indian Ocean trade (8).

Prosperity led to flourishing artistic traditions that encompassed abstract and schematic forms alongside elaborate Hellenistic-style figures. Funerary and religious sculptures were carved in a distinctive translucent calcite alabaster or cast in bronze, such as the remarkable figure of a child Dionysos or Eros riding a lion (3) on loan from the Arthur M Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution.

The journey continues along the caravan routes north to the kingdom of Nabataea and its capital, Petra, with spectacular sculptures (10), on loan from the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, that similarly reflect multiple artistic and religious traditions.

Graeco-Roman style busts of deities, such as Dionysos, were created alongside divine images that were highly schematic, such as
a stele of a goddess with simplified facial features (2).

One highlight is a fully reconstructed limestone arch (over eight feet high) that formed part of the Nabataean sanctuary at Khirbet et-Tannur in Jordan, with the cult statue of a god inside, on loan from the Cincinnati Art Museum and restored by conservators from both institutions in a collaborative project. The exhibition also takes the opportunity to reunite the Cincinnati sculptures with others from Khirbet et-Tannur on loan from the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

In the gallery devoted to Judaea, astonishing objects on loan from the Israel Antiquities Authority include the Magdala Stone (6), renowned for its imagery relating to the Temple of Jerusalem and dating to the 1st century, during a time when the Temple still stood, before its destruction under the Romans in AD 70. The stone was discovered in an ancient synagogue at Migdal (Magdala) excavated in 2009.

Other objects movingly evoke Jewish struggles against Roman rule. A bronze statue of the emperor Hadrian (r 117–38) discovered in a Roman military camp at Tel Shalem is a powerful visual reminder of his suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt, named after its leader Simon Bar Kokhba, which was one of the largest and most serious rebellions against Rome. Bronze and glass vessels, a mirror, a knife and a key on display next to Hadrian’s statue are personal effects that were hidden by people as they tried to escape from the Roman army during the Bar Kokhba revolt, seeking shelter in the Judaean Desert in a cave, named the ‘Cave of Letters’ after the documents found there. These extraordinary objects connect us poignantly to the fugitives.

The thriving Phoenician port cities of Tyre and Sidon and the colossal sanctuary at Heliopolis-Baalbek, located in present-day Lebanon, are the next stops on the journey. During the Roman period, Tyre and Sidon’s harbours were expanded with breakwaters built using concrete, and the cities grew wealthy as exporters of incense, cedar and wine across the Mediterranean, and as importers of goods such as linen, jewels and silk from Judaea, Syria, Central Asia, India and China. During this time glass-blowing was invented and luxury vessels were produced

Minerva May/June 2019
In both cities and traded widely all across the Mediterranean. A 1st-century AD Roman blue glass flask on display (7) is one of the finest examples of the work of the Ennion, the most renowned and perhaps the first major maker of mould-blown glass. Worshippers came to the sanctuary at Heliopolis-Baalbek, located in the Beqaa Valley, to venerate Jupiter Heliopolitanus, a powerful god of agricultural fertility and the cosmos. Architectural sculpture, photography, and reconstruction drawings illustrate how the sanctuary’s innovative design combines ancient Middle Eastern and Graeco-Roman features, giving a sense of its immense scale. Gilded bronze statuettes and stone sculptures on loan from the Beirut National Museum and the Musée du Louvre that depict Jupiter Heliopolitanus and his companion deities, Venus Heliopolitana and Mercury Heliopolitanus, reveal how Roman and ancient Middle Eastern religious practices were intertwined, and are probably based on the large-scale cult statues that originally stood in the temples. A bronze statuette of the goddess Aphrodite Anadyomene discovered in Baalbek from the collection of the Beirut National Museum is a particular highlight. The figure appears in the pose of a famous Hellenistic statue type (4), but the gold earrings and a gold and emerald necklace she wears reflect the typically ancient Middle Eastern practice of adorning divine images. This is also apparent in an alabaster statuette of a goddess wearing gold jewellery and with ruby inlays in her eyes and navel, discovered in Babylon (5). Despite its fame as a cosmopolitan city that played a key role in trade between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea, the art of Palmyra remains relatively little known beyond specialists. Immense wealth spurred the city’s development between the 1st century AD and the late 3rd century, when the Roman emperor Aurelian sacked the city, ending the reign of Queen Zenobia (AD 240–274). The World between Empires offers an exceptional look at how the funerary portraits that commemorated the city’s elite and sculptures of its remarkable gods act as powerful expressions of a distinctive ancient Palmyrene identity (1), and enhances our understanding of the
losses that occurred during attacks by ISIS in 2015 and 2017, including the destruction of the city’s main religious building, the Temple of Bel, with explosives.

These acts took place alongside executions of local residents, including the murder of Khaled al-Asa’ad, the retired Director of Antiquities at Palmyra, on 18 August 2015, due to his refusal to co-operate with ISIS as he tried to save objects in the Palmyra Museum from destruction. Tadmor, the modern town located next to the archaeological site of Palmyra, has been extensively damaged, and its inhabitants have been displaced.

The section of the exhibition that focuses on the town of Dura-Europos (9) in eastern Syria reveals how religious life functioned within a cosmopolitan community in the ancient Middle East, as Jews, Christians and polytheists lived and worshipped in close proximity. A house, repurposed in about AD 232 as a space for Christian worship with an assembly hall and baptistery, is considered to be the world’s oldest surviving church and contained wall-paintings with the earliest known images of Jesus, which are on loan to the exhibition from the Yale University Art Gallery.

The synagogue, also dated to the

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Minerva May/June 2019
The 3rd century, is famous for its wall paintings of biblical scenes that revolutionised scholars’ understanding of early Jewish art as including figural imagery. Both were located in the vicinity of multiple temples where various gods of different origins were worshipped. Moving to the present day, looting at Dura-Europos has been extensive in recent years during the ongoing civil war in Syria, and photographs on display illustrate how satellite imagery is used to document the damage at the site, which remains largely inaccessible to archaeologists and cultural heritage specialists.

Travelling on from Syria to ancient Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq), the Parthian kings made their main royal residence at the city of Ctesiphon on the Tigris River. Mesopotamia was very rich agriculturally, and also the meeting-point between overland trading routes running across Syria and those through Iran and Central Asia, and between them and maritime trade via the Persian Gulf.

Northern Mesopotamia played a major role in the Parthian Empire’s regional security and its control of long-distance trade routes. The city of Hatra not only acted as an important political and religious centre, but also effectively controlled trade along a major land route at the western end of the Silk Road. In southern Mesopotamia, ancient cities underwent fundamental changes during the Seleucid and Parthian periods. Temples that had functioned for thousands of years in cities such as Babylon, Nippur and Uruk entered their final phases as older urban landscapes were reconfigured, while new cities, above all Seleucia on the Tigris and Ctesiphon, took political primacy. Tablets on show in the exhibition show Babylonian texts being copied into Greek shortly before the cuneiform writing system became extinct.

For more than 250 years the balance of power between the Parthian and Roman empires defined the political map of the Middle East. By the middle of the century the Parthian Empire had ceased to exist and the Roman Empire had fractured, and a new power now controlled much of the Middle East: the Sasanian Empire, established by Ardashir I (r 224–41), a local ruler from Pars in southern Iran who had rebelled and ultimately overthrown the last Parthian kings, and almost drove Rome out of the Middle East.

The exhibition ends with a single object that is a visual expression of the political changes that occurred in the Middle East during the 3rd century: an extraordinary cameo featuring the Sasanian king, Shapur I (r 240–271), grasping the Roman emperor Valerian by the wrist, on loan from the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The World between Empires shares an in-depth exploration of the art, religions, history and
culture of a period illuminated by recent scholarship, bringing together the stories of different cities across the ancient Roman and Parthian Middle East and their inhabitants through the theme of identity. Contextualising the recent destruction of cultural heritage alongside the ancient material, the exhibition aims to show why the archaeology and ancient art of this region are so important. Above all, it illustrates the variety and richness of the art of the ancient Middle East, and the many ways in which it connects us with real lives two millennia ago.

• The World between Empires: Art and Identity in the Ancient Middle East is on show at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (www.metmuseum.org/press/exhibitions/2019/the-world-between-empires) until 23 June.
• The accompanying book by Blair Fowlkes-Childs and Michael Seymour is published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art (distributed by Yale University Press) in hardback at £45 ($65).
When the British rulers of India first encountered local sculpture during the early 19th century, many were convinced that Greek art was its main inspiration. The chronological coincidence of Alexander the Great’s arrival in north-west India (Bactria) seemed to explain the sudden emergence of the sculpture of the Mauryan Empire (322–185 BC), which leads some art historians to assert that this region was the origin of all Indian art, especially sculpture.

Inevitably, Gandharan Buddhist sculpture (2), with its pronounced Hellenistic style (such as posture, facial features, clothing and proportion) was the first to catch their eye, but the art of an earlier period was quick to follow. When the Architectural Courts of the South Kensington Museum opened in 1873, the European Court was balanced by an Indian Court containing a cast of the eastern gateway of the stupa (Buddhist shrine) at Sanchi, whose sculpture dates from the 3rd century BC to the 1st century AD.

In a catalogue to the exhibition, Henry Cole (1808–82), the driving force behind the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the subsequent South Kensington Museum, wrote ‘...the exceptional excellence of the Sanchi bas-reliefs suggest that Greek masons, or possibly designers, may have been called in to assist the great work’. Next to arrive in the South Kensington Museum were copies of some of the Buddhist wall-paintings from the Ajanta Caves, which date from the late 3rd century BC to circa AD 460.

When Sir Alexander Cunningham (1814–93), the first director of the Indian Archaeological Survey, published The Bhilsa Topes in 1854, describing the stupas of Sanchi, it was the first serious examination of Indian Buddhism, tracing its history through architectural remains. Cunningham believed that the architecture of Kashmir was influenced by Greece; he even called the colonnaded style of its temples ‘the Arian Order’. In this...
book he wrote: ‘The architectural remains of Kashmir are perhaps the most remarkable of the existing monuments of India, as they exhibit undoubted traces of the influence of Grecian art…They cannot indeed vie with the severe simplicity of the Parthenon, nor with the luxuriant gracefulness of the monument of Lysicrates; but they possess great beauty; different indeed, yet quite their own.’

The suppositions of the imperial period are easy to discern, but they were not without historical foundation, since the Greeks had ruled in north-west India for more than two centuries and had extended diplomatic contacts as far as the ancient city of Vidisha/Besnagar, only a few miles from Sanchi. Greek artists had produced the startlingly beautiful coins of the Bactrian kings, and were well placed to work in other media.

But does this assessment of the origin of Indian, or at least Buddhist, art stand up to modern critical analysis? First, we must distinguish style from content; techniques of carving, for example, are not the same as the choice of subject matter, while the question of decorative detail lies somewhere between.

In 1889, the Indologist and art historian Vincent Smith (1848–1920) argued that the art of Ajanta could not have happened without Greek influence. By contrast, in Between the Empires (2006), the American scholar Frederick Asher of the University of Minnesota, states that: ‘... one does not have to imagine foreign artists finally teaching the poor benighted Indians, ignorant of the potential of an image as an object of worship, how to create such forms’.

A more nuanced approach arises when we consider the appearance of life-sized sculptures of gods and mortals in India. As early as the 11th century AD the Persian scholar al Biruni observed the parallelism of the Greek and Indian use of ‘idols’ in worship. He wrote: ‘... the ancient Greeks, also, considered the idols as mediators between themselves and the First Cause, and worshipped them under the names of the stars and the highest substances’.

But would a Gupta craftsman really seek to understand the nature of his art through a contemplation of the power of Greek images of the gods? Even Nehru (1889–1964), the first prime minister of India, seemed to be prepared to accept this idea. He wrote: ‘It is an interesting thought that image worship came to India from Greece. The Vedic religion was opposed to all forms of idol and image worship. There were not even any temples for the gods... But Greek artistic influence in Afghanistan and round about the frontier was strong and gradually it had its way.’

Yet many scholars in the 20th century, both Indian and Western, have resisted, or dismissed, the idea of Greek influence on the distinctive Gandharan art of the 1st century AD onwards. In this, Classical proportions, regular facial features and drapery (1) and hairstyles show a clear adoption of Greek norms, whether by Greek or Indian artists. This is what William Dalrymple, an authoritative historian of the ‘intimate’ relationship between the British and India, describes as a ‘fusion’ of eastern and western styles, one that was not equalised until the building of the early 20th-century architecture of Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944) in Delhi.

More controversial is the Greek connection with the art of Mathura,
Sanchi and Ajanta. Mathura sculpture began in the 2nd century BC with its heyday in the early centuries AD, and examples are found all over India, indicating that the Mathura school of sculpture was highly regarded. Cunningham unhesitatingly saw that the earliest art of Mathura was influenced by Greece because it exhibits a sharp break from Maurya art in scale, materials and style. The artists show a marked concern for anatomical realism: faces, hands, postures, emotions and movement are all there; only the large bosoms remain from the earlier mother goddess images.

One of the most Classically inspired compositions of all shows a Dionysiac scene of a drunken woman (5) from 2nd-century BC Mathura, which still gives her a voluminous bosom – hardly the Greek ideal. But these sculptures do include many small details of presumably Greek origin: girdles are tied in a ‘Heracles knot’ and the god Lakulish carries a club like the Greek hero Heracles (4). Heracles himself also appears, wrestling a lion, on a Mathura relief now in the Kolkata museum. Bodies bend and bear their weight on one foot in a way that was first seen in Hellenistic Greek sculpture, such as the Cnidian Aphrodite. But here, nudity seems to have a different connotation from that of the earlier Indian fecund mother-goddess type.

The reliefs depicting narratives of the life of the Buddha, both in Mathura and in Gandhara, invite comparisons with Greek style whose influence might explain the popularity of Dionysiac scenes, even though the vine was not cultivated in Mathura.

In The Face of the Buddha by the English literary critic and poet William Empson (1906–84), published posthumously in 2016, he suggests that “the “mysticism of the East”, as shown by the slim body and the half-shut eyes, seems to have been put in by the Greek artisans not by the Indians” (2).

The Buddhist complex at Sanchi is one of the earliest and most extensive settlements of this kind in Central India. A mendicant order needed to settle near a city (in this case, Vidisha/Besnagar) in order to have sufficient resources for begging, but Sanchi quickly developed into an economic centre in its own right. The scale of the buildings at Sanchi dwarfs anything that preceded them.

The massive Stupa 1 (6) dates from the 3rd century BC, and further stupas, temples and other buildings were added to the complex over the years. Stupa 1 is surrounded by a circuit wall with four tall gateways that are covered with a profusion of sculptural decoration. Most of the relief panels depict scenes from the life of the Buddha and from the Jatakas (the Buddha’s previous births); others depict scenes of worship in rural settings as well as kings’ processional departures from cities. One well-known scene shows a king paying homage to a stupa; he seems to be overcome with emotion and is supported by two women, perhaps his wives (8). This figure is often taken to be a portrait of Ashoka, who probably provided
support for the foundation.

In 1868 the Scottish architectural historian James Fergusson wrote ‘the expression of the king’s face is certainly that of a man in liquor’; but perhaps he has been overcome by religious emotion. Another intriguing scene (7) depicts musicians. Described today by local guides as ‘Greek’, the instruments they play include a thoroughly Greek aulos, as well as the kind of drum that may be seen in any musical performance in present-day India; they wear kilted tunics and boots. Many of the decorative details resemble Western models. Both the free-standing lions and the four addorsed lions of the ‘Ashokan’ capital on the Sanchi gateways (especially details such as their claws) convinced Alexander Cunningham they were the work of Greek artists, and features such as their manes are strongly reminiscent of Classical carving. A visitor steeped in the traditions of Classical art is also likely to be reminded of Ionic volutes when looking at the elaborate whorls on the end of some of the Sanchi gate beams. The salabhanjikas (nymphs) swinging in the branches of trees, here and at Bharhut, strongly resemble Greek winged victories.

Yet, in his 2003 guide to Sanchi (published by Oxford University Press), Professor MK Dhavalikar of Pune University emphatically denies that there is any Hellenistic influence: ‘Although Marshall has inferred that these sculptures were the handiwork of artists from northwest India who were influenced by Hellenistic (Greek) art, it is apparent that they are closer in style to the Satavahana sculptures in Western Indian caves, and an inscription on the Southern Gateway even refers to the artist of a Satavahana king. The sculptures are clearly in the Satavahana style and there is no trace of any Hellenistic influence on them.

This, however, begs the question: should we see Hellenistic influence in the contemporary Satavahana art as well? Before these sculptures...
were made, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries BC, there is no large-scale stone sculpture in India. The flexibility with which the human form is depicted is utterly different from the terracotta (and, rarely, bronze) figurines of mother goddesses (3) and dancers that characterise the Mauryan period.

The one exception to this generalisation is the life-size fly-whisk bearer (10) from Didarganj in the Patna Museum, which is generally attributed to the Mauryan period, both on account of its find-spot in the Patna district, and because of the ‘Maurya polish’ given to the stone of which it is made. However, in 1989, Frederick Asher and Walter Spink produced forceful arguments that the statue is, in fact, of Kushan date: the polish need not be the sole prerogative of the Mauryan period, and the monumentality of the figure, as well as its posture, are more reminiscent of Kushan art. This remains an open question, but there is no doubt that, if it is Mauryan, it stands alone at a very great distance from all other Mauryan art.

The earliest surviving paintings in India, apart from the images of prehistoric stick-men and animals in the Bhimbetka caves near Bhopal, are the wall-paintings in the Ajanta Caves near Aurangabad (Maharashtra) dating from 3rd to 1st centuries BC. The valley was settled by Buddhist monks from the 3rd century BC, and the first caves were excavated and painted in this and the following century, during the rule of the Satavahana dynasty. The later ones were all excavated and decorated in a brief phase of activity from AD 462 to AD 480.

All the paintings, which depict scenes from the life (and previous lives) of the Buddha, seem to have appeared – with no previous art traditions. They are contemporary with the Hellenistic paintings that have been emerging in Macedonian tombs during the last few decades. Is there a connection?

No art historian since Vincent Smith (1848–1920) seems to have pondered on this mystery. He wrote: ‘... whoever seriously undertakes the critical study of the paintings of Ajanta... will find, I have no doubt, that the artists drew their inspiration from the West, and I think he will also find that their style was a local development of the cosmopolitan art of the contemporary Roman Empire’. In fact, neither of the two phases of Ajantian painting is contemporary with the Roman art of the 1st to 3rd centuries AD that Smith had in mind. In Hellenism in Ancient India, published in 1919, the Indian historian GN Banerjee protested at the extremism of this view, arguing that ‘Professor Smith... confuses the assimilation of foreign technique by Indian traditional craftsmanship with artistic inspiration.’

But technique is at the heart of the matter. Given the connections of Greek rulers, such as the Indo-Greek king Menander (d 130 BC), with the Buddhist movement, and their presence in a region of India not far north of Maharashatra, it is worth considering how the idea of adorning these caves with narrative wall-paintings came about and who were the artists that demonstrated the necessary techniques.

The best comparisons for the Ajanta paintings so far seem to be the very poorly preserved art in the tombs at Vergina. Both the hunt fresco and the Persephone fresco (9) depict scenes of vigorous action. The figures in the hunt fresco are drawn with distinct outlines, while those in the Persephone fresco make use only of light and shade to create volume: the head of Hades, for example, uses no outlining at all.

The Ajanta figures are all clearly outlined and there is shading but no true shadows. The foreshortening of figures recalls that of several of the hunters in the Vergina hunt fresco; the preference for three-quarter depiction of figures and faces is also common to both the Indian and the Macedonian works. Facial features and skin colour clearly differ, since both traditions strive for naturalism of representation. Many of the Ajanta figures are naked (as are the Vergina hunters), but the depiction of drapery seems to follow similar conventions to Greek painting. Gesture and movement are naturalistically evoked in both. The horses (not native to India) are Greek in style. To my eye, the paintings at Ajanta could have been made by a Greek (Macedonian) observing Indian life around him.

At present it seems impossible to do more than speculate, but the fact that wall-painting in India begins at a time when Greeks were dominant in north-western India, and among Buddhists with whom Greeks seem to have close relations, does suggest that the date of origin of this Indian art is more than coincidental.
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The cover of the catalogue for the Royal Academy’s major spring exhibition, *The Renaissance Nude*, is revealing in being rather less so. It shows Titian’s *Venus Anadyomene* (*Venus Rising from the Sea*) circa 1520, on loan to London from the National Galleries of Scotland. Or, rather, the cover does not quite show Titian’s Venus. In the painting itself, the Roman goddess’s naked body is cut off halfway down the thigh by the sea from which she mythically rises. On the front of the RA’s catalogue, she is cut off just below the navel. Thanks to this cropping, Titian’s impudent Venus is made a *Venus pudens*, her *pudenda* sacrificed to spare the puritanical blushes of the modern world.

It has long been thus. Perhaps the most famous Bowdlerisation of nudity in art took place just 40 years after Titian had painted his freshly-cropped goddess, when Daniele da Volterra was ordered by Pope Pius IV to cover the naked genitals of figures in Michelangelo’s *The Last Judgement*, 1535–41, on a wall of the Sistine chapel, in wisps of painted cloth. Earning himself the deathless nickname *Il Braghettone* (The Breeches-maker) in the process, Daniele duly obliged. His additions were only removed in a restoration of the Sistine frescoes in 1994 – and, even then, not all of them. Reasoning that four centuries of cardinals had sat in convocation below clad saints and sinners and only four decades beneath unclad ones, the decision was taken to leave some loincloths in situ. They are there still.

So, what had happened in the years between 1509 and 1511, the years of Charles Darwent’s exhibition, *The Nakedness of the Nude*. Charles Darwent sees through the gauzy prudishness covering the genitalia in the nude paintings of the Renaissance to the naked truth concerning the unclothed human figure.

‘In almost every detail the body is not the shape that art has led us to believe it should be. No nude, however abstract, should fail to arouse in the spectator some vestige of erotic feeling, even if it be only the faintest shadow — and if it does not do so it is bad art and false morals.’  
*The Nude: A Study in Ideal Art* by Sir Kenneth Clark
when Michelangelo painted the 20 brazenly nude male ignudi on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and 1565 when Il Braghettone wielded his censorious brush?

In part, the answer was a change of pontiff. Julius II, Michelangelo’s first Sistine patron, was a della Rovere and the nubby penises of the ceiling’s nudes echo the Rovere family emblem, the acorn. Pius IV, who commissioned Daniele, was a Medici. Since the emblem of that family was six palle, or balls, the same logic might have been expected to apply, only more so. That it did not is explained by the Council of Trent, 1545 to 1563, when the Catholic hierarchy, wrong-footed by the Reformation, gathered in Trento to fight back against Protestantism. Answering Luther’s ascetic fire with fire, the Council sought to purify the Church, visually as well as morally. A result of this purification would be a covering-up of the human figure in religious art.

If the Council of Trent marks the rough end of the Renaissance nude, what of its beginning? At least part of the point of the Royal Academy’s show – it comes to London from the Getty Museum in Los Angeles – is to challenge long-held assumptions on this question, many of them popularised by Sir Kenneth Clark in his influential book, The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art (based on his Mellon lectures, given in Washington in 1953, and published by John Murray in 1956).

Clark, a man of his day, saw history in terms of topoi – rhetorical tropes that pitted opposites against each other – and it remained true that Michelangelo’s intensely personal use of the nude greatly altered its character. He changed it from a means of embodying ideas to a means of expressing emotions; he transformed it from the world of living to the world of becoming. And he projected his world of the imagination with such unequaled artistic power that its shadow fell on every male nude in art for 350 years. Painters either imitated his heroic poses and proportions or they reacted against them self-consciously and sought a new repertoire of attitudes in the art of 5th-century Greece. In the 19th century the ghost of Michelangelo was still posing the models in art schools.

‘It remains true that Michelangelo’s intensely personal use of the nude greatly altered its character. He changed it from a means of embodying ideas to a means of expressing emotions; he transformed it from the world of living to the world of becoming. And he projected his world of the imagination with such unequaled artistic power that its shadow fell on every male nude in art for 350 years. Painters either imitated his heroic poses and proportions or they reacted against them self-consciously and sought a new repertoire of attitudes in the art of 5th-century Greece. In the 19th century the ghost of Michelangelo was still posing the models in art schools.’

The Nude: A Study in Ideal Art by Sir Kenneth Clark
Northern, her pose is Italian – in the sense at least that it is taken from a lost painting by Leonardo of Leda and the Swan, disseminated throughout the Continent by the prints of artists as diverse as Marcantonio Raimondi and Lucas van Leyden. As for Meit himself, he was eagerly transgressive: a German who worked in the Low Countries; a Late-Gothic master whose style crossed over into the Renaissance.

As with the unambiguous genitals of Michelangelo’s Sistine ignudi, what strikes the viewer about Meit’s Lucretia is her lack of erotic charge. One of the curious things about the modern reception of Renaissance nudes was, until recently, the purse-lipped denial of the e-word in writing about them. In the case of Lucretia, and Michelangelo’s oddly de-sexed musclemen, this is fair enough: their nakedness is there precisely to be anti-erotic. But even the most titilating of works might be analysed in terms of its iconography and antique provenance rather than of its raunchiness. So the signage to the National Gallery’s version of Cupid Complaining to Venus, circa 1525, by Lucas Cranach the Elder (one of the rudest paintings ever made) sees the stolen honeycomb in the bee-stung god’s right hand as a moral warning against theft rather than as an allusion to the goddess’s vagina.

Such prudishness, too, is addressed by the Royal Academy’s exhibition. Noting that Lucas Cranach’s Venus Standing in a Landscape, 1529, (on loan from the Louvre) holds a pointlessly transparent gauze scrim over her genitals, the catalogue of The Renaissance Nude has this to say: ’the veil and its placement [are] a spur to the imagination (and illicit desire) … with Venus herself staring directly back at the viewer as she discreetly points to her groin with her pinkie’.

This may not quite be calling a spade a spade, but it does at least beat the truncated Venus on the cover of the catalogue.

‘It is widely supposed that the naked human body is in itself an object upon which the eye dwells with pleasure and which we are glad to see depicted. But anyone who has frequented art schools and seen the shapeless, pitiful model that the students are industriously drawing will know this is an illusion. The body is not one of those objects which can be made into art by direct transcription – like a tiger or a snowy landscape. Often in looking at the natural and animal world we joyfully identify ourselves with what we see and from this happy union create a work of art. This is the process students of aesthetics call empathy, and it is at the opposite pole of creative activity to the state of mind that has produced the nude. A mass of naked figures does not move us to empathy, but to disillusion and dismay.’

Meet a new hero

Christian Cameron, the Canadian fiction writer and historical re-enactor of ‘experimental archaeology’ tells Roger Williams what inspired him to write books set in the ancient world after a career as an intelligence officer in the US Navy.

Christian Cameron, a Canadian writer, has published several books including the six-volume Tyrant series, set in the time of Alexander the Great and the conflict between Greeks and Scythians; the six-book Long War series about the Persian wars; and the Chivalry series set in late-medieval England and Italy. His latest title, The New Achilles, was published in May. The first of two books, it takes place during the 3rd-century BC conflict between the Achaean League and Sparta.

Cameron has an honours BA in Medieval History from the University of Rochester in the US and a BA in Classics from the University of Toronto, Canada. He started full-time historical fiction writing in 2002 after leaving the US navy, where he had served as an intelligence officer.

Since then he has written several books a year, some of them shorter eBooks, some under the names of Miles Cameron and Gordon Kent.

He is a passionate re-enactor of historical events, or what he terms ‘experimental archaeology’. He was involved in re-enacting the Battle of Marathon in 2011 and 2015, and has led tours of Greece that include instruction in martial arts. He lives in Toronto with his wife and daughter.

Q: You studied Medieval History at Rochester. What attracted you to that period of history?
I was always interested in history, and when I was 17 and due to go to Rochester to study marine biology, I read Barbara W Tuchman’s A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th century. Over that summer my idea of what I wanted to do with the rest of my life was forever changed, and as soon as I got to university I switched majors.

Q: You collaborated on some books with your father, the author and playwright Kenneth Cameron. Which books were these, and how did that collaboration work?
We wrote eight thrillers. I was an intelligence officer and so was my Dad, so we know how the John le Carré world works. We used to go fishing in Scotland and we spent the entire time working out the next book, then we would then go away and write it. I adore my Dad and it was one of the most fun things I have ever done.

Q: Do you choose the themes for your historical fiction because you already know about a subject – or because you want to know more about a subject?
Both of those things. The process requires enough passion to get you through, but you also need to know enough facts about a subject to...
get a book out of it. I don’t want to ever make anything up. I don’t want some of my readers to say: ‘Oh, I know that didn’t happen.’ Sometimes it’s difficult to know what we know happened and what we think happened. Most texts in the ancient world have thousands of loopholes in them, and archaeology can sometimes contradict historic texts. Even if you read Greek and Latin, the evidence can be confusing.

Q: What led you to write about the Achaean general Philopoemen (252–183 BC), who is the ‘new Achilles’ in your latest book?

I was confronted with a story about the birth of federalism; the idea that here, in the Peloponnese, was a collection of little states that couldn’t stand up to Macedonia, or Egypt or Rome. They were in danger of becoming [today’s] Syria, the cockpit of a war. Philopoemen, the great leader of the Achaean League, is one of the founding figures of federalism.

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Edmund Burke all knew of him, yet his story is largely lost today. In the world of Trump and Brexit and refugee crises, ideas of federalism are current. Philopoemen was a military hero, but he was also a great political leader.

This was the hardest book I have ever written; there is so much evidence, so many sources, and yet so much confusion. Plutarch wrote about Philopoemen in his Lives, and he occurs in the Histories of Polybius, who was probably a relation, and the son of one of his officers. So we know about some of his life, but there are huge holes, which is the ideal for an historical novel.

Q: The book has a great deal of information about daily life in the Classical world, with a four-page glossary of Greek words. Do you see yourself as an educator or an entertainer?

Both. Any responsible novelist who is interested in history is teaching. My mentor at university, with whom I am still in touch, said that novels bring more young people into history than most academic work. If I can entice 40 people a year to the study of history I feel I have achieved something.

I also write fantasy novels as Miles Cameron, and a surprising number have wandered over to my historical fiction. From the fan mail tours I met a Norwegian medical student, who is now a doctor with Médecins Sans Frontières. He is passionately interested in Ancient Greek medicine and every time I have a medical problem in the book I pass it by him to check that everything is as authentic as it can be.

Q: The main character, a former marine from Rhodes, becomes a priest at the Asklepios (hospital) in Epidavros. How do you source your medical details?

I have an amount of military training, and I have been in real conflict, so I have some first-hand experience. On one of my historical

2. Christian Cameron at the scene of the 2015 re-enactment of the Battle of Marathon in Greece. The helmet is based on one from the Walters Museum in Baltimore. It has hinged ear-plates and a leather liner topped by a woven straw pad, a copy of one found on Crete.

3. In the armour of a wealthy Greek, Cameron wears a breastplate and greaves made of bronze by Jeffrey Hildebrandt and Aurora Simmons. The breastplate is based on one shown on a bronze statuette of a hoplite, 540–530 BC, found in Dodona and now in the Altes Museum in Berlin. The greaves are copies of originals found in Olympia. ‘They are very light and fit perfectly, so I can run in them,’ says Cameron. The red chiton is made of cashmere edged with hand-woven tape and embroidered with the same falcons that can be seen on the round, double-gripped shield (aspis), which Christian made himself.
I get, I would say that 10 years ago my readership was mostly white males, mid-30s to mid-60s, but it is much broader now, and I am pleased to say there is also a number of women and young people reading them, as well as military officers and a lot of history professionals.

Q: Some slang and swear words in your new book can sound modern. How do you justify this? Soldiers swore a lot in the ancient world, we can see that in [ancient Greek] plays. A common oath referred to the goddess Athena’s vagina, and some Greek curses were really nasty sexual insults that would shock many people today. So I try for moderation, hitting a point of authenticity without the reader being bounced out of suspended belief.

I want people to understand that The New Achilles is in part a story that might seem quite modern, about prostitution and slavery, oligarchy and democracy.

Q: Are you conscious, in the age of the #metoo movement, of writing about a culture whose gods were frequently involved in unwelcome sexual acts? I am a pretty passionate modern feminist, and I do know how bad the past was for women. From my own days as an intelligence officer, when I dealt with actual sex-workers, I have some idea what it’s like for a 15-year-old Polish girl in Saudi Arabia. It’s too grim for fiction. But I want to capture some element of that experience, and still have room for other characters with agency, and not make the past uniformly horrible. At the same time, when you look at the ancient world, when at any time your city could be sacked and you could all be made slaves, it must have been horrendous. Can you imagine living with that daily threat?

Q: What are the similarities and differences between ancient and modern civilisations? The two delights of history are when you find that people in the past were just like you, and when you find people in the past were totally different. And you have to be sure you know exactly what happened in the past.

For example, 19th-century historians were dedicated to antiquated ideas of gender, and they believed that most upper-class men in Greece were homosexual and most women were kept in purdah, but archaeology has You can find references to an andron, a man’s room, in a Greek house where women weren’t allowed. But this is not an ancient name. It was coined relatively recently, and now we know that one of the most commonly found items in that room are loom weights, according to Joan Connelly in her Portrait of a Priestess [Princeton University Press, 2009]. So it must have been used by women too.

Understanding the culture of the past is a difficult sea to navigate. I am surrounded here at home in Toronto with around 400 books for reference on ancient Greece, so I am as accurate as I can be. Sometimes I read something that changes my mind. It happens to other authors. In one of his historical books, Patrick O’Brien [the author of Master and Commander] wrote that women were not allowed on board British naval ships, but then he read The Wooden World by NAM Rodgers, and in his next
book he says that there were often 15 to 20 women on board. So suddenly there were women; he had just found another reference. I have done the same. I think Patrick O’Brian is possibly the best writer of historical fiction in my genre; I’m glad he corrected himself, and I try to do the same.

Q: What sort of re-enactments do you take part in and organise?
I have done any number of medieval tournaments in Italy and England, and hundreds of 18th-century ones, mostly in America and Canada.

Q: Your ‘experimental archaeology’ has included the re-creation of the Battle of Marathon in Greece, on its 2500th anniversary. Are you still helping to organise similar events in Greece now?
Today is a big day for us. I am just waiting to hear news from two friends and colleagues in Athens who are finally giving a presentation of our re-enactments to the Greek Ministry, something we have been trying to put on for 10 years. These re-enactments are the kind of things that are regularly staged in the UK and America, where costume interpretations make the past look real.

Greece has a huge tourist commitment to their ancient sites, which are often little more than a pile of rocks, with signs all in Greek. They are sometimes very difficult to interpret or understand. We have been trying to convince Greek history professionals and academics that we are not yobs or fascists, and have a serious intent.

Q: What garments and weapons are in your personal armoury, and where do you have them made?
I have a helmet based on one in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, my mother’s home-town. The Walters family has one of the finest collections of Greek material. The helmet covers your face and your ears, so you can’t see well or hear, which is why it has hinged ear-plates. On coins and in statues, Athenians are depicted with her ear-plates raised so she can hear what her worshippers are saying.

Both my helmet and my sword were copied by Craig Sitch, at Manning Imperial in Australia. He came to the first re-enactment of the Battle of Marathon. He does amazing work. I have learnt tons from him. My sword is copied from one of the very few intact Greek swords in the world, found in a royal Macedonian tomb at Vergina [Vergina]. It is made of folded steel like a Damascus sword, with a hilt of ivory and gold. I am a method actor; I always learn something from these things. I can’t write without experiencing things first-hand, and that includes viewing pottery and drinking wine from a kylix.

Q: You travel a good deal in your research. Do you have a favourite destination?
My favourite place is Mistras, overlooking Sparta in the Peloponnese. I keep going back. But the place where I decided that I liked ancient Greece is a castle on the island of Lesbos. The base of the curtain wall is Bronze Age, titanic masonry, and if you go up the wall you can see Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Genoan and Ottoman stones. It tells the whole story of the Mediterranean until the 19th century.

Q: The New Achilles is the first of a two-book series set in ancient Greece, with The Last Greek expected next year. Where will the next series take us?
I am coming to the end of the second book and haven’t made it to the end of Philopoemen’s life. I could stop here, or I could do more. Maybe it’s fine, and I don’t have to cover it all. My idea for the next series is the birth of commercial opera in Venice. It ties in so much with the world of tournaments, which became a focal point in Europe around 1500. Historically, the elements of civic pageant took over from knights and ladies who were, in effect, ‘re-enactors’ of Arthurian legend, and the story of the birth of opera develops from a tournament in Padua in 1636, with an Italian set builder and his English companion, who was a military engineer.

These men invented theatrical devices still being used. But it’s not just about men; there’s the first opera diva, Anna Renzi, and the grandmother of feminism, Arcangela Terrabotti. I need there to be enough to make a real story, and to make it fun so that people want to read it. I think maybe I have it all there.

Minerva May/June 2019
An exhibition in Cagliari reveals the rich and mysterious prehistoric legacy of the Nuraghic civilisation on the island of Sardinia; Dalu Jones reports

Sardinia’, wrote the English poet, essayist and novelist DH Lawrence (1885–1930) is ‘...lost between Europe and Africa, and belonging to nowhere…’ (Sea and Sardinia, 1921). Now a remarkable exhibition, Civilisations and the Mediterranean, currently on show in Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia, presents an array of more than 550 intriguing artefacts providing evidence that, at the dawn of history, this island was one of the hubs of the early Neolithic civilisations that developed along the shores of the Mediterranean and further inland, stretching as far as the Caucasus and beyond.

The exhibition, which is staged in two locations, the Archaeological Museum and the Palazzo di Città, has important loans from a host of museums ranging from site museums in Sardinia, Cyprus and Greece, to the Museum of Prehistory and Early History in Berlin and the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg. The overall concept seeks to underline affinities and differences between the artistic output of distant geographic and cultural entities during the Neolithic and Bronze ages, from the 6th millennium BC onwards, and is the result of continuing cooperation between Sardinian institutions and the Hermitage, which was inaugurated in Cagliari in 2015 with an exhibition Eurasia: fino alle soglie della storia (Eurasia: Until the Beginning of History). This was followed by an international conference in Cagliari in 2017 on the same broad theme: Le civiltà e il Mediterraneo – grandi musei a confront (Civilisations and the Mediterranean: Great Museums Compared) but with an emphasis on discussing and comparing Neolithic artefacts from major European and Russian museums.

During the Bronze Age, trade

Exhibition

‘...belonging

1. Barumini, the most complete and best preserved of all the Nuraghic sites. The village was continuously inhabited from the Bronze Age (11th–10th century BC) until the 3rd century AD. The megalithic nuraghe, a truncated cone made of superimposed large and small stones, with interior rooms, towers over the village. It is 15 metres high with a border wall with lateral towers. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Cagliari.


3. Miniature ship, Iron Age, Late Nuraghic, 10th–8th century BC, bronze. 10.5cm x 20.9cm. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Cagliari.
increased along land and maritime routes, often linking mining sites with international emporia where copper ‘oxhide’ ingots, were melted into slabs with ‘horns’ on their four corners, making them easy to pick up and carry. These often served as a form of currency, circa 1600 BC. These peculiarly shaped ubiquitous ingots have been found on Cyprus, on the Greek islands, including Crete, on Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, in Egypt, Southern France, along the shores of the Black Sea, in Turkey, at Bogazköy (Hattusa, the Hittite capital), as well as in two shipwrecks found off the Turkish coast. These ingots

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probably originated in Cyprus where very pure copper was mined, but it is not entirely clear yet as to whether or not some of these ingots might have been produced in Sardinia where copper-mines also exist. It is possible that the Sardinians produced ingots for their own use and for export, mixing imported Cypriot copper with local metals. 

What is certain now is that Sardinian pottery and metal objects were certainly traded far and wide, and that the island acquired artefacts, such as amber beads, from countries as distant as Scandinavia.

At the same time that durable goods were exchanged during the Mediterranean Bronze Age, there must have been a considerable volume of perishable goods travelling along the same trade routes. So it is not surprising that there are stylistic and iconographic similarities between Iberian, Sardinian and Eastern Mediterranean objects used during religious rituals and burials, as well as in daily life. An indication of the importance of this early maritime trade that Sardinians had mastered is given by the votive bronze miniature boats with prows in the
shape of a bull’s heads (3) found during archaeological excavations on the island.

Around 120 objects in this exhibition were found on Sardinia. These document the evolution of terracotta and bronze objects from the Neolithic period to the first half of the first millennium BC. They are displayed alongside objects similar in shape and purpose, including terracotta figurines and vases, pendants, necklaces, belt hooks and bronze statuettes, from sites in Cyprus, Spain and even in the Caucasus, some 3000km away, where fortresses and funerary mounds (kurgans), built in the Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, are not unlike their Sardinian counterparts.

Among items from the Caucasus are small bronze animals, especially rams with twisted horns (4), produced by the cultures of Majkop (circa 3700–3000 BC) and Koban (circa 1100–300 BC), major Bronze and Iron Age cultures in the Western Caucasus region of Southern Russia (2) that have parallels with those made in Sardinia at the same time. There is also an elegant Caucasian fibula in the shape of a horse (8).

Perhaps the most striking artefacts in the exhibition are the bronze figurines of warriors, chief-tains, priests and a small four-eyed, four-armed demon (5), that were made by the people of the Nuragic culture in Sardinia when complex societies began to develop on the island around the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age (circa 1700–1365 BC) and the early Iron Age, between the 9th and the 6th century BC and possibly some centuries earlier.

These Nuragic societies are named after the megalithic truncated stone towers called nuraghi that formed the monumental central core of each settlement of the time. More than 500 Nuragic statuettes have been found on the island, mainly in ritual contexts, in places of worship such as sacred wells and shrines, and within megalithic villages and temples. Interestingly, they have also been found in archaeological excavations in Central Italy and inside 9th–8th century BC Etruscan tombs.

They were probably made using the lost wax technique, and can measure up to 39cm in height. Although mainly small in size, these finely crafted, detailed figurines are powerful and arresting, and they testify to a complex, many-layered society with shared religious beliefs.

In the absence of written documents, we can only surmise who these statuettes represent – perhaps chieftains or priest-kings, dressed in their regalia and holding ceremonial swords and bows (6, 7, 9, 10 and 12) who might have ruled over a federation of clans, possibly sharing common holy places where they congregated and held religious festivals at certain times of the year.

Unlike all the other Italian regions, Sardinia, the second largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily, contains relatively few historical monuments. It is under-populated and retains its unspoilt pastoral culture and rural communities. Its dramatic, wind-swept, rugged landscape is dotted with thousands of megalithic structures ranging from simple dolmens and menhirs to stone circles.

There are also large and deep-stepped stone stairwells, and mysterious underground carved caves called locally Domus de Janas (House of Fairies) as well as tombs of different kinds. Of these, the most intriguing are the so-called Tombi dei Giganti, or Giants’ Tombs, gallery graves with a stone cairn over the burial chamber, and flanked by vertical slabs erected side by side.

None of these, however, are as numerous and as memorable as the nuraghi (1 and 11). More than 7000 of these imposing structures were built. The large, superimposed, regular dry-stone walls make up a monumental complex with one
or more circular towers, marking the sites where Neolithic settlements grew and flourished over many centuries.

So far there is no consensus among scholars about the actual function of the nuraghi: they could have been rulers’ palaces or military strongholds, community storage halls, religious buildings or temples, or a combination of any of these. Some of the nuraghi are, however, obviously located in strategic places from which important routes could be easily controlled. What is certain, though, from measurements made by archaeologists is that the entrances to all the nuraghi are oriented in the direction of sunrise on the Winter Solstice and towards the moon at its southernmost rising position.

Since small-scale models of nuraghi have often been excavated at religious sites, they may have symbolised wealth or power, and are, perhaps, the representation of the main seat of an established clan. In addition to haetys, the sacred stones used to mark the Giants’ Tombs, many models of nuraghi were also found at temple sites, like the one at Monte Prama in south-western Sardinia, where an extraordinary discovery was made in 1974 during the excavation of a large necropolis – more than 40 huge anthropomorphic statues were unearthed. Carved in the local sandstone, they stand between 2m and 2.5m high and are dated between the 11th and the 8th century BC, making them the oldest of this type to be found in the Mediterranean outside Egypt.

The discovery was considered by archaeologists at the time one of the most extraordinary finds of the 20th century, and a landmark for the understanding of Nuraghic culture and beliefs. These large stone statues represent warriors and heroes whose finery resembles that of the small bronze Nuraghic figurines in style and iconography.

The timeless archaic character of Sardinia survives today in its popular religious festivals, often held in mountain shrines near sacred natural springs and caves, believed to be inhabited by supernatural beings, and in the magnificent traditional costumes and jewellery that bear decorative motifs found on Neolithic artefacts, which can be seen in this exhibition in Cagliari.

This rich folk culture is kept very much alive by the local people, who treasure the ancient customs and traditions of the island, echoing its long and abundant prehistoric past.

All this is beautifully evoked in the novels of the Sardinian-born writer Grazia Deledda (1871–1936), who was the second woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1926. Her books show the interplay of the deep primeval forces that still rule the lives of Sardinian men and women whose destinies are determined by the overwhelming spirit of the island.

[The Mediterranean is] ‘... a thousand things together. It is not one landscape, but numerous landscapes. It is not one sea, but a complex of seas. It is not one civilisation, but a number of civilisations, piled one above the other’ (from The Mediterranean in the Ancient World, Fernand Braudel, Penguin, 2002)
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Hearts of English history

1. King Charles II and Colonel William Carlos (Careless) in the Royal Oak, 1660s, by Isaac Fuller (1606–72). H. 212.7cm. W. 315.6cm.

2. Charles II with the Royal Oak, circa 1660, Peter Stent (active circa 1637–65), engraving. H. 29.4 cm. W. 21.8cm. The legend reads:

‘Dodona’s Fable, Truth, my Story made
My Glories well obscured in that Shade ...
All was a Miracle and Heav’n would Have
A Parallel the Tree again should SAVE
September the 6th 1651.’
Oak

Caroline Spearing traces the history of a tree rooted in English national identity, which saved the monarchy, and that the ancient Greeks held sacred to Zeus, the father of the gods, especially at his oracle in Dodona.

In parts of England, 29 May is still traditionally celebrated as Restoration or Oak-Apple Day, when King Charles II's Restoration to the throne (in May 1660) is commemorated by the wearing of sprigs of oak leaves, or oak apples – an allusion to the oak-tree in whose branches he successfully concealed himself from Cromwell’s soldiers. Charles II depicted sheltering in the branches of a mighty oak (1 and 2) is one of the enduring images of English history, all the more surely etched upon the national consciousness by its depiction on signs outside public houses across the country.

Remarkably, it would appear, in its outline at least, to be true: the story was in circulation soon after the event and it was written up and published in 1660 by one Thomas Blount. It was a favourite anecdote of the king, himself, who – happily for posterity – happened to tell it to Samuel Pepys who, in turn, dutifully recorded it in his famous diary.

Following Charles I's execution in 1649, his son signed a deal with Scottish Presbyterians, which led to his coronation at Scone on 1 January 1651. From there, he mounted an invasion of England, but suffered a calamitous defeat at Worcester on 3 September. With a bounty of £1000 on his head and cavalry detachments especially mandated to search for him, the king cut his hair short and adopted the dress of a countryman (including coarse stockings and rough shoes, which tore the royal feet to ribbons) as he embarked on his six-week odyssey to the coast and a Channel crossing.

Before heading south, though, he spent several days eluding capture on the Boscobel estate in Shropshire. On 6 September Charles and a Royalist officer, William Careless, hid themselves in the leafy branches of a great oak near Boscobel House (6) and watched the Parliamentary search parties fruitlessly criss-crossing the woodland.

It was the iconic moment of the young king's escape. The Royalist poet Abraham Cowley (1618–67), in his Latin verse account of the escape – freely translated here by his friend John Evelyn (1620–1706) – contrasts the loyalty of the noble tree with the perfidy of the king's human subjects:

The loyal Tree its willing boughs inclin’d,
associated with the monarchy through the creation of royal hunting preserves in the wake of the Norman Conquest. Charles I and James I both combined this association with the nationalistic connotations of the oak-tree to emphasise the Englishness of what was, after all, a Scottish dynasty.

Portraits of Charles I, such as the famous equestrian one by Van Dyck, usually show him beneath an oak-tree. A medal struck in 1638 to commemorate the investiture of Prince Charles (later Charles II) into the Order of the Garter depicts a majestic oak benevolently sheltering lesser trees and grazing sheep.

Writers of the period followed this lead by regularly deploying the oak-tree as a symbol of the English monarchy. Published in 1640, against a background of increasing friction between king and parliament, Dodona’s Grove, or, the vocall forest (4) by James Howell (circa 1594–1666) is an allegory of several centuries of British history in which different socio-economic groups are symbolised by different species of
tree. The king, naturally, is represented by the oak. The enigmatic Upon Appleton House by Andrew Marvell (1621–78) alludes to the Civil War and regicide through the image of a woodpecker destroying a decaying, worm-ridden oak-tree:

Who could have thought the tallest Oak Nor would it, had the Tree not fed A Tractor-worm, within it bred. (As first our Flesh corrupt within Tempts impostant and basful Sin. And yet that Worm triumphs not long. But serves to feed the Hewels young. While the Oake seems to fall content,

Viewing the Treason’s Punishment.

Howell and Marvell were, however, not only interested in the oak-tree’s English iconographical tradition. For the elite of the 16th and 17th centuries, steeped in Classical literature, educated in establishments where the failure to speak in Latin was a punishable offence, the Graeco-Roman heritage offered a further rich source of imagery and allusion. Moreover, it carried a weight of authority that contrasted with a vernacular English literature that was still, comparatively, in its infancy.

English and Classical representations of the oak-tree overlap in the shape of the Druids, via a bogus etymology that derives the name from a Greek druas (oak) and carries the further advantage of linking the ancient order of oak-worshipping priests with the Greek tree-nymphs, the Dryads. These shadowy Druidic figures, known primarily from the work of Caesar, Pliny, Tacitus and Diodorus Siculus, became for early modern writers the most important evidence for an indigenous British culture, evidence not weakened but validated by Classical sources.

Classical allusion to the oak could then be given a particularly English cast by means of the Druids, whose very name recalled the tree. Every oak-tree in Graeco-Roman literature becomes an English oak.

In the essay ‘An historical account of the sacredness and use of standing groves, &c.’ appended to the 1706 edition of Sylva, the Royalist John Evelyn (5) links Classical stories of sacrilegious tree-felling with recent deforestation by the Cromwellian regime, to portray the cutting down of an oak-tree as an act of treason.

Two paradigms stand out in

3. Cromwell Cuts Down the Royall Oake of Brittayne, anonymous illustration from Anarchia Anglicana, 1649, by Clement Walker. Published in the year of Charles I’s execution, this engraving shows Cromwell standing above the mouth of Hell while his lackeys chop down a tree on whose branches hang the Bible, the laws, and the Magna Carta, as well as the royal coat of arms.

4. Dendrologia Dodona’s Grove, or, the Vocal Forest, 1641, by James Howell (circa 1594–1666). Howell’s immensely popular historical allegory depicts the monarch as the oak, the nobility as elm trees, the bishops as yews, the commoners as poplars and the lowest classes as coppiced woodland or ‘underwood’.

5. John Evelyn, 1687, by Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723). Shown at the age of 67, Evelyn was a prolific diarist, letter-writer and man of letters, a polymath and founding member of the Royal Society, whose works covered such diverse subjects as air pollution, salad, and garden design.

Evelyn’s intricate web of Classical allusion. First is the Ovidian story of Erysichthon, king of Thessaly, who cuts down: ...an old huge oak; even of itself a wood.

Wreaths, ribbands, grateful tables deckt his boughs

And sacred stem; the dues of powerful vows.

Full oft the Dryades, with chaplets crown’d,

Danc’d in the shade...


Erysichthon is punished with an insatiable hunger, to the extent that after selling all his possessions and even his daughter, he resorts to the Mony Pythonesque expedient of eating himself.

The second is Lucan’s account of Caesar ordering his men to cut down an ancient, sinister but sacred grove of oak-trees near modern Marseilles (Bellum Civile 3):

Th’ amazement of his men when Caesar found,

In his bold hand himself an hatchet took,

And first of all assaults a lofty oak;

And having wounded the religious tree,

Let no man fear to fell this wood (quoth he)

The guilt of this offence let Caesar bear...’


‘And so he did soon after,’ continues Evelyn, with lugubrious satisfaction, ‘carrying (tis thought) the maledictions of the incensed Gauls to his funeral pile.’ To fell an English tree, however, is not only sacrilegious but treasonable. Evelyn is clear on the British origin of the Druids and their cult of the oak and of the mistletoe which grew upon it. It is hardly surprising, he writes, that the Britons ‘... should be so extreamly devoted to trees, and especially to the oak, the strength and defence of all our enjoyments, inviron’d as we are by the seas, and martial neighbours’ (Sylva 4.9).

Abraham Cowley, in a passage cited by Evelyn, goes even further, attributing Druidical oak-worship to a mystical foreknowledge of the naval empire of Charles II (Plantarum Libri Sex, 6.536–342).

And so when Evelyn writes of the tree-felling enacted by the Cromwellian government (3), his words carry not only the considerable force of his own rhetoric, but also the weight of a tradition of tree-worship stretching back to the time of Caesar.

‘The Royal walk of elms in St James’ Park... was once propos’d to the late Council of State (as they called it) to be cut down and sold, that with the rest of his Majesty’s houses already demolished, and...’
marked out for destruction, his trees might likewise undergo the same destiny, and no footsteps of monarchy remain unviolated.” (Sylva 4.16)

Behind the image of the trees felled by the Cromwellian axe lies the painful memory of Charles I himself, beheaded just over a decade before the first edition of Sylva, in January 1649. For Evelyn, trees and sovereign are a very close fit.

Abraham Cowley (7), Evelyn’s friend and fellow-Royalist, uses the identification of oak and monarch to present the restored Charles II as the true heir to the Graeco-Roman cultural tradition. For Cowley, the pivotal figure is the legendary British ancestor Brutus of Troy, a descendant of Rome’s founder Aeneas, best known from the works of 12th-century chronicler Geoffrey of Monmouth. Cowley has Brutus visit the ancient oracle of Dodona, where the rustling of oak leaves was interpreted as the voice of Zeus. The oracle tells him that he will settle in Britain, and gives him a handful of acorns which he is to plant on arrival: ‘Sow them: these seeds will grow into vast woods, and the British oak will be renowned all over the world. The daughter’s fame will surpass that of her Greek mother. Then, Brutus, you will set up a cult in my honour, and you will be the founder of the Druid fathers, whose name is the most sacred in the world.’ (Plantarum 6.613–8, translation by Caroline Spearing.)

The Boscobel oak, which provides sanctuary for the fugitive Charles II, is heavily freighted with symbolism. It represents a primeval Englishness, a national essence, which – in popular memory at least – predates successive waves of invasion. It stands for the monarchy, above all the Stuart monarchy of Charles I and his son Charles II. And it connects Britain to the Classical past, making a claim for the nation and, above all, its restored monarchy, as the true heir to the rich legacy of Greece and Rome. Whatever the truth of Charles II’s flight from Worcester, whatever the tree that concealed him, the national narrative insists that it be an oak.
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PEN & SWORD BOOKS LTD
I am King Arthur the most written-about historical character who never lived? Was he a mysterious shape-shifting figure of British mythology and French medieval romance, or the elusive leader of a British war-band in the anarchic period after the withdrawal of the Roman authorities? Most academics today put their money on the former idea.

Once upon a time, in my distant youth, King Arthur was in fashion. Leslie Alcock’s excavations at South Cadbury (Somerset), in the late 1960s, featured in the Sunday supplements and resulted in his book ‘By South Cadbury is that Camelot...’ Excavations at Cadbury Castle 1966–70, published in 1972. Geoffrey Ashe’s The Quest for Arthur’s Britain, 1968, was in the bestseller lists, and only John Morris, with The Age of Arthur, 1973 – which attempted to reconstruct the history of Britain and Ireland during the so-called ‘Dark Ages’ (AD 350–650) – was the controversialist.

A much bigger audience saw the Lerner and Loewe musical of Camelot on Broadway, which struck a chord with the Kennedy generation; and then the film version, starring Richard Harris as Arthur and Vanessa Redgrave as Guinevere. Although ‘Long, leaden and lugubrious’ was the judgement of The Washington Post’s film critic, Harris made some kind of impression when ‘singing’ ‘I wonder what the King is doing tonight?’

Popular culture has continued to pursue Arthur: from John Boorman’s grim film Excalibur, 1981, to Jerry Zucker’s First Knight, 1995, a shallow effort starring Sean Connery as a grizzled Arthur, and Richard Gere as a pretty-boy Lancelot, both in pursuit of the relatively youthful (35 years younger than Connery) Julia Ormond as Guinevere. Although ‘Long, leaden and lugubrious’ was the judgement of The Washington Post’s film critic, Harris made some kind of impression when ‘singing’ ‘I wonder what the King is doing tonight?’

Meanwhile, in archaeological circles King Arthur became somewhat persona non grata. I knew Leslie Alcock quite well and, in later life, Arthur’s name and the world ‘Camelot’ scarcely passed his lips: perhaps he regretted the romantic speculation, the criticism of medievalists, and felt that it was better to stick to the strict archaeological data. (Although his book Arthur’s Britain was reissued in 1989 by Penguin. Who can resist the blandishments of publishers?)

But what goes around comes around. Jacqueline Nowakowski’s recent excavations at Tintagel, the spectacular coastal eyrie on the Cornish coast, have revived interest in the ‘Arthurian’ period. It is now clear that the place was a major entrepôt in the 5th and 6th centuries, with a substantial population, importing Mediterranean goods.

Tintagel’s significance may explain why, according to legend, Arthur was conceived there. In addition, the late Geoff Wainwright and Tim Darvill of Bournemouth University, excavating at Stonehenge, have argued that Geoffrey of Monmouth – a major source of Arthurian stories – may not be such a fantasist as historians usually assume, and that a healing cult was significant at Stonehenge.

So now two books on Arthur come along at once, both by respected academics. Miles Russell is a member of the Bournemouth
The 2004 film King Arthur claimed to be ‘The True Story behind the Legend’ – based on new archaeological information. As the author of the original screenplay also wrote Gladiator it would be natural to take that claim with a pinch of salt. The film was largely set in a ‘muddy and bloody Ireland’ and involved building a one kilometre-long reconstruction of Hadrian’s Wall. The Wall was the star of the film – though the Saxons lay to the north; Hollywood has a distorted sense of British geography – remember Robin Hood (Kevin Costner) travelling northward and passing through Hadrian’s Wall on his way to Nottingham?

Arthurius Castus (Arthur) is played by Clive Owen as a plank, his stoical stiff upper-lip extending to his whole body, and with Kiera Knightley (aged about 18) as warrior-woman Guinevere, looking as if she has inadvertently strayed out of Knightsbridge (better parts and an OBE awaited her). All in all, the film is a mess – but it did promote the Sarmatian theory.

Does this matter? Nicholas Higham seems to think so – and his demolition job is delivered fluently and effectively. Personally, I found his later sections on the British Arthur more interesting, particularly Arthur as the quarry of academics, and the response of Celtic scholars such as David Dumville to ‘naïve’ archaeologists, like Leslie Alcock, who, he argued, do not properly understand medieval literary sources.

These are two rather quirky books for the shelves of Arthurian enthusiasts. For anyone looking for a balanced view of Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries and the origins of the Arthur legend I recommend Guy Halsall’s Worlds of Arthur: Facts and Fictions of the Dark Ages (Oxford University Press, 2014).

But perhaps, now, we could have a moratorium on popular works about ‘The Once and Future King’. He deserves to be left in peace to lie quietly in Avalon, while we take stock for another decade – but, never fear, I am sure he will arise again shortly.
BOOKREVIEWS

Olympia: The Story of the Ancient Olympic Games
Robin Waterfield
Hardback, £18.99

British Classical scholar, Robin Waterfield is a translator (23 volumes, from Aristotle to Xenophon), editor and writer of children’s fiction. In other words, he is a great communicator with a wealth of knowledge about the ancient world at his disposal – all of which is evident in his latest book, Olympia.

Despite our reverence for the ideals and achievements of the ancient Olympic Games, some of the practices they involved would alarm any modern athlete or audience. First of all, athletes were purified by water and pig’s blood, contestants mainly competed naked, a false start in a running race was a floggable offence, and half way through the Games 100 oxen were sacrificed.

So, attending the Olympics, by our standards, would not have been for the faint-hearted. But we would still have appreciated their ethos of the pursuit of excellence. As now, huge human and other resources were devoted to the organisation of such a popular and successful event. From their traditional starting date of 776 BC, the programme and allure of the Games expanded until they attracted visitors from all over the Greek world – no mean feat at the time.

For many, the various legends concerning the genesis of the Games and their structure are familiar by now, but Waterfield’s wonderfully entertaining and enlightening book is replete with colourful details that enable us to recognise what an extraordinary phenomenon they became and what a unique, awe-inspiring form Olympia assumed. Here, intense athletic competition, religious fervour and sublime architecture and art all collalesced and, with a new Olympiad beginning every fifth year, the festival also gave the Greeks their system of reckoning time.

Like Ancient Greek drama festivals, the Olympic Games were a religious festival. Glorious temples arose in the Altis, the sacred precinct, chief among them the great Temple of Zeus in whose honour the games were held and which, from the late 5th century BC, housed Pheidias’ immense statue of the father of the gods – one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Statues commemorative of victories in athletics and war were everywhere, and Waterfield notes that Olympia was largely responsible for bringing the European tradition of portraiture into being, with the sculpting of a likeness of a living man for the first time.

The throng of visitors would have slept under the stars, and scores of sacrificial animals would have been present. With Waterfield’s expert guidance we can well imagine the melee; the shouts of food-sellers, the roar of the spectators, the cries of sacrificial beasts, not to mention the various aromas that would have filled the air.

The Games were celebrations of aristocratic class solidarity and rivalry. Except for the horse riders and charioteers, who were slaves or hired hands, competing was generally the preserve of the elite, who could afford to participate. Waterfield introduces us to the many other classes involved – from those charged with organising the Games, from the nearby city of Elis, which hosted them, to the busy purple-robed judges, and to the trumpet-blowers and heralds who had their own competition on the first day.

Winning meant all, and not just for the athletes, as professional trainers also became celebrities. There were no team events, and while married women could not attend, unmarried females (probably girls aged up to 15) could watch the naked competitors. But from the end of the 2nd century AD the Games began to decline and, in AD 393, Emperor Theodosius put an end to them.

Waterfield debunks the traditional story of the origins of the Marathon, of the victory run by Pheidippides from the scene of the battle to Athens. But in 1896, when the Games were revived by the visionary Frenchman Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the Marathon was won by a Greek farmer who was greeted with a frenzy of joy by his compatriots. It makes for an uplifting ending to an intriguing book, which takes us deep into the world of the Ancient Greeks.

Diana Bentley

Plato’s Alarm Clock and other amazing ancient inventions
James M Russell
Michael O’Mara Books Limited
Hardback, £9.99

You may not have been able to have root canal work in the ancient world but you were not entirely without hope if you suffered from toothache. Evidence from 7000 BC in the Indus Valley suggests that hand-held drills were used to drain dental infections; and, in Slovenia, a jaw dating to 4500 BC indicates that beeswax was used as a filling. The Etruscans soldered human teeth or ox teeth into bridgework made of gold. Meanwhile, the renowned Babylonian law code of Hammurabi from circa 1800 BC, lists dental extractions as a form of punishment following its credo of ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’.

Freelance writer and university teacher, James M Russell, provides us with a host of fascinating facts in his highly entertaining account of inventions pioneered in the ancient world. These are neatly divided into six chapters on subjects that include everyday life, medical knowledge and scientific advances. Locks and keys, fire brigades, razors, the alphabet, hot-air balloons, cosmetic surgery, algebra, map-making and a plethora of other developments – not forgetting sex aids and lavatories – are scrutinised by Russell. If you wondered how much of our knowledge originated, this is the place to look.

While we revel in the resourcefulness of our peers, which has given us the internet and flights into space, our forebears deserve considerable credit for their ingenuity. As Russell points out, many of our modern devices had their origins in the ancient world, and many of them were invented earlier than we may think. Simple water-clocks were believed to have been used in India and China as early as 4000 BC, but Plato (427–347 BC) created a clock with an alarm that would whistle – presumably to get both the philosopher and his students out of bed.

Russell is good at explaining in simple terms the operation of many inventions. The exact workings of some intriguing technical advances have, however, been lost to us. Damascus steel was once the hardest metal in the world but we no longer know how to
make it. Some ancients enjoyed everyday conveniences which not everyone has today: the Minoans in the Palace of Knossos may have enjoyed flushing lavatories, although many people still live without them.

Being innovative, however, could prove fatal: to ensure that Roman glassmakers stayed in business, the emperor Tiberius is said to have had an inventor who developed unbreakable glass put to death.

But the work of some ancient creative minds lives on – the screw perfected by that amazing polymath, Archimedes, is still used for pumping liquids. He also created the first compound pulley system and many other devices and machines that are still in use.

This delightful book, which takes its title from Plato’s alarm clock, could inspire further reading on the subject. We should not forget that we stand on the shoulders of an endlessly creative throng of ancestors. Diana Bentley

The Silence of the Girls
Pat Barker
Hamish Hamilton
336pp
Hardback, £18.99, Penguin paperback, £8.99

Helen may have brought thousands of Greek soldiers to the gates of Troy, but it was another woman who was at the centre of a dramatic turn of events in the Trojan war. Agamemnon’s claim over the teenage Briseis, the ‘prize’ awarded to Achilles after the sacking of Lyrnessus, led to Achilles absenting himself from the military action, to the death of his close companion Patroclus, his fabled wrath and, ultimately, his own demise.

As a captive woman, Briseis, of course, had no say in her involvement in these affairs of mighty military men. Although her status had been greatly reduced, she is still a human being, not just a prize, as novelist Pat Barker (known for her Regeneration trilogy) points out compellingly.

The Silence of the Girls forces us to gaze head-on at the harrowing experiences of women during war.

Lucia Marchini

The Traveller’s Guide to Classical Philosophy
John Gaskin
Thames & Hudson
192pp, 20 black-and-white illustrations
Paperback, £8.99

From Abdera to Troy, many places in the Classical world that have had a lasting, philosophical impact on Western civilisation can still be visited today. This new edition of a book by John Gaskin, former professor of Naturalistic Philosophy at Trinity College Dublin, sets out to introduce these sites, as well as wider themes in Classical thought.

The Traveller’s Guide to Classical Philosophy starts off as a fairly traditional account of the Classical world and its customs, such as wine-drinking and theatre-going. It is an accessible and lively overview, useful to visitors with little knowledge of Greece and Rome, and with a chronological outline of the main events and figures from Homer and Hesiod in the Archaic period up to Theodosius in the late 4th century AD.

But the book is essentially a philosopher’s guide to understanding the Classical world, and Classical ruins. The brief overview of the polis and the different structures common to various Greek cities and their functions would help travellers on site contextualise their ruined surroundings. The city walls, agora, aqueducts, baths, and bouleuterion (the meeting-place of the city council) are among those key structures given this treatment, a few of them enhanced with clear drawings to help fill in the gaps in the extant remains of the edifices.

After this orientation, some of the main philosophical ideas of the Graeco-Roman world are explored. Appropriately for a traveller’s guide, the concepts and fields of inquiry are arranged according to the site or region with which they are associated. In Troy, for instance, we encounter Homeric ideals and Archaic attitudes towards warfare, marriage, charity, character, justice, and more. The inclusion of Homer here reminds us of both the legacy of his epics, and that there is more to Classical philosophy than Socratic dialogue.

Gaskin’s approach is friendly, and given the book’s suitability for a wide audience new to the subject, one of its assets is that it brings out figures who may not be so familiar to the general reader, not just Plato and Aristotle. At Miletus, which may not attract the same number of visitors as Athens, we learn about Thales, one of the seven sages of Antiquity, who fell into a well while studying the stars. This episode is also captured in one of the book’s cartoons. A
BOOKREVIEWS

Similarly light-hearted pictographic treatment is given to Pythagoras, who is depicted reborn as a cockerel and attempting to draw a right angle; and to the Roman philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius curled up in bed with a cat under his feet.

The final part of the book is a gazetteer with short snippets about the various sites that a reader may encounter, either on their travels, or in ancient philosophy. As well as giving a brief account of what can be seen today, Gaskin describes the important personalities or themes associated with a particular place. Chalcedon, for example, was the birthplace of the Sophist Thrasymachus, who features in Plato’s Republic, but if any physical remains of the ancient city exist, they now lie buried beneath the suburbs of Istanbul. Herculanenum, in contrast, offers many attractions to travellers, and one of its stunning houses is the Villa of the Papyri. It contained some of the carbonised books of the important Epicurean philosopher Philodemus who worked there around 75–50 BC.

Slim enough not to be a cumbersome addition to a traveller’s bag and enjoyable enough to dip into, Gaskin’s guide is worth carrying for those looking for an easy introduction, but it is also useful for armchair travellers wanting to get to grips with the basics of Classical thought.

Lucia Marchini

The Long Shadow of Antiquity: What have the Greeks and Romans Done for Us?

Gregory S Aldrete and Alicia Aldrete

Bloomsbury

412pp, 74 black-and-white illustrations

Paperback, £16.99

Subtitled What have the Greeks and Romans Done for Us?, this book looks at the ancient world takes as its starting-point the Delphic injunction: ‘Know thyself’. While there is interest in our immediate ancestry, the authors write, it is also important to know how much our behaviour, habits and environment were formed in the cultural crucibles of Greece and Rome.

Gregory S Aldrete is Professor of History and Humanistic Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, and, with Alicia Aldrete, an alumni of Princeton, wrote Reconstructing linen Body Armour, published five years ago. Their aim here is to make the ancient world seem relevant today, a task in which they have certainly succeeded, by looking at all aspects of daily life, from housing and law to fashion and holiday-making. In Rome, for example, the vast majority of the people lived in tenements, apartment blocks that could rise as high as six to 10 storeys. A ‘single dark and squalid’ room could fetch the same price as a manor in the country. Many were precarious and

encouragement to learning. Friendly and easy to read, it is a fulsome response to John Cleese in The Life of Brian, when he asked: ‘What have the Romans ever done for us?’ Roger Williams

Londinium: A Biography: Roman London from its Origin to the Fifth Century

Richard Hingley

Bloomsbury Academic

383 pages, 75 black-and-white illustrations

Paperback, £27

At the start of the millennium I lived on the top floor of a tower-block near the Palace of Westminster. From our balconies I could monitor the shifting fabric of London. The number of cranes – always a forest – was a guide to the pace of change. One of London’s most distinguished recorders, Peter Ackroyd, wrote in London: The Biography, published in 2000, ‘London seems to invite fire and destruction, from the attack of Boadicea to those of the IRA’.

The old music-hall song described ‘one of the ruins that Cromwell knocked about a bit’. Londoners have never needed Cromwell – they constantly knock the place down themselves. Last week I crossed Waterloo Bridge for the first time in a couple of years and would hardly have recognised the view if it had not been for the familiar dome of St Paul’s among the proliferation of glass towers: the Gherkin, the Walkie-talkie, the Cheese-grater – Londoners love to give pet-names to their new protuberances. Yet St Paul’s is, itself, a relatively recent arrival – replacing, in 1697, the ancient cathedral destroyed in the Great Fire: ‘These Flames Impartial were, and mou’d down all’ (from The Misfortunes of St Paul’s Cathedral, 1678). While working on the project, Sir Christopher Wren and his colleagues noted the archaeological deposits visible in their building site. It was a hesitant

Minerva May/June 2019
start to the archaeological exploration of the city, which has burgeoned in recent decades. Thanks to London’s fondness for renewing itself, archaeologists have had ample opportunity to investigate the deeply buried cities beneath their feet. It is sometimes said, with justification, that it is the most archaeologically explored city in the world.

The result is that the shelves of academic libraries are groaning with London’s archaeological excavation reports – but these can be difficult to penetrate. The reports themselves need to be mined and quarried to construct London’s past, for the devil – or the story – is in the detail.

Professor Richard Hingley, of Durham University, has bravely attempted to make sense of this plethora of data, in order to reconstruct Roman London – Britannia’s largest settlement. It is not easy. There has been a huge number (and still growing) of excavations, but each is a key-hole into a shifting, three-dimensional kaleidoscope.

Unlike Pompeii or Silchester, Londinium cannot easily be exposed. The virtue of Hingley’s book is that it brings together a vast quantity of information (the appendix of excavation names, notes, bibliography and index runs to 134 pages). This is valuable for enthusiasts but does not make for an easy read. Nor is the author helped by his publisher’s parsimonious attitude to illustrations and the absence of colour images – this is a book crying out for more vivid pictures which are available on the Museum of London’s superb photograph archive.

Hingley expresses concern that London’s specialist archaeologists will criticise his book as a premature attempt at synthesis. But he need not worry: his task is a vital aspect of archaeology, without which we remain mere parochial antiquarians or technicians. Hingley puts Londinium into a wider context – that of native Britain, as part of the archaeology of the Thames Valley and as the major city of Britannia within the Roman empire.

Now we can see how London emerged and developed: its streets, drains, shops, houses, religious and public buildings and cemeteries. And how the young city survived its most destructive visitor – Boadicea (Boudicca) Queen of the Iceni. Roman London is a city in transformation, surrounded by water, a cosmopolitan trading centre, a cross between Singapore and Venice, with ritual, ceremony, craft and commerce side by side: noisy, smelly, venal and exciting.

Richard Hingley is to be congratulated: not for writing the biography of Londinium, but for posing the right questions and, hopefully, for enabling other authors and excavators to stand on his shoulders, providing them with a clearer view from the data mountain.

David Miles

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### CLASSICAL CONUNDRUMS

Adam Jacot de Boinod poses a vocabulary quiz from Latin and Ancient Greek

Can you guess the correct definition from the following three options?

**1) noverca (Latin)**
- A) a stepmother
- B) a novelty
- C) one ninth

**2) dapro (Ancient Greek)**
- A) to dip into
- B) to strike
- C) to devour

**3) stiria (Latin)**
- A) an ice drop
- B) wool taken from a dead sheep
- C) the youngest of a litter of pigs

**4) larios (Ancient Greek)**
- A) a person who lives inland, not on the coast
- B) fatty food
- C) a person who lives near the sea

**5) sandapila (Latin)**
- A) a cheap coffin, a poor man’s bier
- B) a small, low cloud
- C) a mole

**6) tainiges (Homeric Greek)**
- A) the cheeks
- B) pebbles
- C) the knees

**7) patibulum (Latin)**
- A) a larder, an area for storing food
- B) a mid-morning meal
- C) a fork-shaped yoke

**8) ophruos (Homeric Greek)**
- A) dead
- B) the brow of a hill
- C) blind

**9) hirudo (Latin)**
- A) a leech, a bloodsucker
- B) a soothsayer
- C) a swallow

**10) enagidzo (Ancient Greek)**
- A) to devour
- B) to cheat
- C) to offer sacrifice to the dead

**11) pathicus (Latin)**
- A) submitting to lust
- B) tolerant
- C) aware; sensitive

**12) perone (Homeric Greek)**
- A) wrinkled
- B) a clasp, a brooch, a buckle
- C) with confidence

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**Answers:**

- 1A) a stepmother. 2C) to devour. 3A) an ice drop. 4B) fatted, fat. 5A) a cheap coffin, a poor man’s bier. 6B) pebbles. 7C) a fork-shaped yoke. 8B) the brow of a hill.

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UNITED KINGDOM

CAMBRIDGE

Oscar Murillo

London-based artist Oscar Murillo (born 1986) is showcasing a new body of work including paintings, installation, live performance and video – extending beyond the limits of the gallery walls – for his first solo show at a UK public institution since 2013. The range of media and the artist’s multifaceted approach enhances the exhibition’s exploration of the experience of displacement and other topical themes, such as the economic and human impact of globalisation.

Kettle’s Yard
+44 (0)1223 748100 (kettlesyard.co.uk)
Until 23 June 2019.

HOUGHTON HALL

Henry Moore at Houghton Hall: Nature and Inspiration

Perhaps the most distinctive works of the celebrated 20th-century artist Henry Moore are his vast sculptural groups, often in bronze, that use figurative and abstract elements and are best seen with ample space in the great outdoors. The grounds of Houghton House offer a suitable setting for these monumental works, but this exhibition also brings Henry Moore inside with a selection of smaller sculptures, models and etchings that show his important place in post-war Modernism. Outdoor highlights include the bronze ‘Three Piece Sculpture: Vertebrae’, 1968–69, the fibreglass ‘Large Redlining Figure’, 1984, and ‘The Arch’, 1963–69 (left).

Houghton Hall
+44 (0)1485 528569 (www.houghtonhall.com)
From 1 May to 29 September 2019.

LONDON

Young Wellington in India

The military exploits of Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (1769–1852), against Napoleon secured him lasting fame, but details of the early career of the young Arthur Wellesley are less well-known. This exhibition looks at his time as a 27-year-old colonel in India, where his older brother Richard served as Governor-General. Portraits painted both before he set sail for India – such as one, circa 1804, made by John Hoppner (below left) – and after he returned to England, are on show, alongside a selection of drawings of his military colleagues and friends, and some of the books Wellesley purchased to educate himself about India. On public view for the first time is the spectacular Deccan Dinner Service, which is formally laid out on a banqueting table in the Waterloo Gallery. Made in London, this silver gilt service was paid for with money raised by officers who fought with Wellesley in the Deccan region during the Second Anglo-Maratha Wars.

Apsley House
+44 (0)20 7499 5676 (www.wellingtoncollection.co.uk)
Until 3 November 2019.

Manga

The Japanese narrative art form manga has its origins in the 19th century, when an assortment of drawings of various subjects, including people, animals and nature, by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) were published as ‘Hokusai Manga’. Today the global cultural phenomenon associated with manga encompasses graphic novels, animation, gaming and more. As well as tracing the roots of manga back to Hokusai and Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831–89), whose 17-metre-long Shintomiza Kabuki Theatre Curtain is travelling outside Japan for the last time, this show examines the work of more recent, internationally celebrated manga artists, such as Toriyama Akira (Dragon Ball), Tezuka Osamu (Astro Boy and Princess Knight), and Higashimura Akiko (Princess Jellyfish). The many different artists behind manga and the differing styles they used mean that there are a range of approaches to a wide variety of subjects. For example, the Princess Jellyfish series, intended primarily for women, explores issues of gender and identity in a fictional female-only Tokyo apartment block. Another work features the host venue, which appears in Professor Munakata’s British Museum Adventure, 2011 by Hoshino Yukinobu (above).

British Museum
+44 (0)20 7323 8000 (britishmuseum.org)
From 23 May to 26 August 2019.

Shift

For the third contemporary installation in SPACE, the gallery above Roman London’s Mithraeum, the Berlin-based artist Claudia Wieser has assembled collaged wallpaper and sculptures that combine the ancient and modern. In Shift, material from fine art, architecture, design and film, are combined (right) to challenge viewers on the way they look at the present and the past. The composite wallpaper is made up of images of ancient statues, contemporary portraiture, and also stills from the BBC television adaptation of I Claudius, while the sculptures make use of hand-painted tiles, mirrors and woodwork, as well as careful placement in relation to authentic Roman artefacts that are displayed at the Mithraeum.

London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE
+44 (0)20 7330 7500 (www.londonmithraeum.com/bloomberg-space)
Until 13 July 2019.

Minerva

May/June 2019

CALENDAR compiled by Lucia Marchini
Sea Star: Sean Scully at the National Gallery

The traditions of European art history have had a strong influence on contemporary artist Sean Scully and his abstract works. This is particularly true of JMW Turner’s *The Evening Star* (circa 1830), which Scully has said is a source of inspiration for him. This painting will be displayed in an exhibition that unveils new works by Scully and celebrates the role of the National Gallery in continuing to inspire many leading artists. Recent monumental, multi-panel paintings and works on paper bear witness to Scully’s bold approach, which, since 2016, has seen him painting on aluminium and copper, and to a profound love of colour and composition that he shares with Turner. Also like Turner, Scully is fascinated by the meeting-point of land, sea and sky, exemplified in his bold *Londline* paintings and which can be seen in his oil on aluminium work, *Londline Star*, 2017 (above).

**National Gallery**
+44 (0)20 7747 2885

Mali Morris RA: On Paper

Three different aspects of the career of Royal Academician Mali Morris are explored in this exhibition in the RA’s Tennant Gallery. The show includes:
- 32 works on paper, selected by the artist herself, including plein air watercolours made in Cyprus and Canada in the 1980s, such as *Lemba*, 1989
- A 1990s series Edge of a Portrait, inspired by Italian Renaissance profile portraits; and her works in acrylic from 2000, showing her experimentation in different ways to structure colour and to explore light and space using colour.

**Royal Academy**
+44 (0)20 7300 8090
(royalacademy.org.uk) Until 4 August 2019.

Van Gogh and Britain

Van Gogh is most often associated with his native Netherlands, the artists’ hub in Paris, and the picturesque landscapes in the South of France, but the artist also had an important relationship with British culture. As a young man he spent the period between 1873 and 1876 in London, where he saw works by the likes of John Constable and John Everett Millais. He wrote to his brother Theo that he loved the city, and he also developed a love of British writers, such as Shakespeare, Christina Rossetti and Charles Dickens, one of whose books is pictured in *L’Arlésienne*, 1890 (above right), a portrait painted in the South of France near the end of the artist’s life. Prints and engravings, particularly from popular magazines like the Illustrated London News, had a lasting impact on Van Gogh, although his only painting of London (Prisoners Exercising) is drawn from a print of Newgate Prison by Gustave Doré. Van Gogh made a powerful impression on British artists, too. The exhibition also explores his legacy through the eyes of Jacob Epstein, David Bomberg, Vanessa Bell, Francis Bacon and others.

**Tate Britain**
+44 (0)20 7887 8888

NORWICH

Viking: Rediscover the Legend

Weapons, hoarded coins and jewellery, looted silverware and a range of other artefacts, including some new discoveries, chart the relationship between the Vikings and the British Isles. This touring partnership exhibition, organised by the British Museum and Yorkshire Museum, has outstanding objects from both institutions, as well as local finds from Norwich Castle Museum. With Anglo-Saxon material also on display, stunning brooches and other objects provide evidence of how the Vikings shaped various aspects of life in Britain. (See *In the News* on page 5.)

**Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery**
+44 (0)1603 493649

WADDESDON

Brought to Life: Eliot Hodgkin Rediscovered

As well as an accomplished painter of still lifes and landscapes, Eliot Hodgkin (1905–87) was also a 500th anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci, and it looks at how people have approached this challenge over the past five centuries. Drawings by Leonardo are on show, as well as the first printed illustration of a many-sided icosidodecahedron from the *Divina Proporzione*, 1509, the only book that he illustrated. The exhibition charts how new technologies, such as the printing press, photography, stereoscopy and 3-D modelling, have helped develop ideas in anatomy, architecture, astronomy and geometry. Other highlights include anatomical books with flaps and pop-up elements, Galileo’s illustrations on the moon based on his observations through a telescope in 1609, and the first geological map of Mars, made using data from NASA’s 1971–72 Mariner 9 mission.

**Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries**
+44 (0)1865 277094
(www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk) Until February 2020.

OXFORD

Thinking 3D: From Leonardo to the Present

The challenge of capturing the three-dimensional on the two-dimensional surface of a page is one that has faced both artists and scientists. This is one of many shows that are being held to commemorate the
Harry Hyams, who acquired the property developer and collector Lord Rothschild and the late among Hodgkin’s admirers are families of their original owners. Before; some are still held by the and have not been on public display works come from private collections made in 1950–51. Many of these compositions, called the Months a selection of nearly 100 of his portraitist, an avid collector and a novelist. He worked mainly in oils and tempera, capturing such natural objects, such as radishes, feathers, dead leaves and lemons (One Lemon Quartered, 1972 is pictured above), and also London scenes, with remarkable precision. This major retrospective takes a closer look at Hodgkin through a selection of nearly 100 of his paintings and drawings, including a series of a dozen fruit and flower compositions, called The Months made in 1950–51. Many of these works come from private collections and have not been on public display before; some are still held by the families of their original owners. Among Hodgkin’s admirers are Lord Rothschild and the late property developer and collector Harry Hyams, who acquired the artist’s work for his Wiltshire home, Ramsbury Manor, which is reported to be in the process of becoming a national art gallery. Objects used by Hodgkin, including feathers, baskets, snail shells, seedcases, ceramics and an oil-can, are also on show alongside his apron, brushes, and a list of his tempera paintings and who had commissioned them, all giving an insight into his work. Waddesdon Manor +44 (0)1296 820414 (wwwwaddesdon.org.uk) From 25 May to 20 October 2019. Madame de Pompadour in the Frame Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild purchased François Boucher’s 1756 portrait of Madame de Pompadour in 1887. Either before this, or very shortly afterwards, the portrait was reframed, with an 18th-century frame that had a later, 19th-century cartouche and decorative elements added to match the floral motifs on Madame de Pompadour’s dress. When Baron Rothschild died in 1899, he left the portrait to his brother Nathaniel. The canvas then made its way to Germany, to the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, but the frame did not go with it, it remained at Waddesdon. Now, collaborating with Factum Foundation, 3-D digital reproduction technology and traditional restoration techniques have been used to present the famous portrait as Baron Ferdinand intended it to be seen. A facsimile of the portrait will be placed inside the newly conserved frame. Another work exploring the connection between the Madame de Pompadour portrait and the Rothschilds is Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, La verité Surrmonte l’Autorité, 1757, a wicked caricature by Germain de Saint-Aubin that shows Boucher as the Devil painting his flattering portrait (below left). This was also bought by Ferdinand de Rothschild as part of a collection of rare 18th-century French books. Waddesdon Manor +44 (0)1296 820414 (wwwwaddesdon.org.uk) From 25 May to 27 October 2019. WAKEFIELD Yorkshire Sculpture International Artists from around the world take part in the Hepworth Wakefield’s exhibition as part of Yorkshire Sculpture International. New commissions will be on view, and diverse works by international sculptors presented in the UK for the first time. The overarching theme for the show is ‘truth to materials; and it explores the ways in which the artists exhibited approach this idea and the relationship between the chosen material and sculptural form. Highlights include: Jimmie Durham’s recent works in dialogue with early pieces by Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore and Ronald Moody; a new installation by Wolfgang Laib (above; he is installing Unlimited Ocean at School of the Art Institute of Chicago) who uses natural material such as rice and pollen; and a sculptural series by Berlin-based Nairy Baghramian, which chimes with the architecture of the gallery. The Hepworth Wakefield +44 (0)1924 247360 (wwwwwhepworthwakefield.org) From 22 June to 29 September 2019.
of her small-scale still lifes (Still life with parrot and fruit, 1951), that teems with colour in a voluptuous jumble of shapes.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
+1 617 267 9300
(www.mfa.org)
Until 16 June 2019.

LOS ANGELES, California
Oscar Rejlander: Artist Photographer
Known as the 'father of art photography', Oscar Rejlander was an innovative practitioner whose work and experiments with techniques in the early days of the new medium earned him the admiration of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and the respect of his contemporary photographers Julia Margaret Cameron and Lewis Carroll. Born in Stockholm in 1813 and moving to England in his 30s, he worked as a painter before embarking on his prolific career. He secured a living through portrait photography, capturing images of the higher ranks of London society, but he was also interested in picturing the ordinary activities of the middle and lower classes, and he often staged in his studio familial scenes that he had seen out on the street. Combination printing – printing a single image from parts of multiple negatives that had been exposed separately – was one of the ways in which the photographer distinguished himself. It allowed him to create deeply dramatic compositions, such as Head of St John the Baptist in a Charger, circa 1860 (below) and other complex, allegorical works. Another of the remarkable Rejlander’s innovations was his ‘tunnel studio’, which was built from iron, wood and glass. The sitter would look into the dark of the ‘tunnel’ from the light end, causing their pupils to expand and so enhance their expressive quality.

NEW YORK, New York
The Tale of Genji: A Japanese Classic Illuminated
The Tale of Genji is one of the most celebrated works of Japanese literature. Describing the lifestyles of courtiers, it was written by the noblewoman Murasaki Shikibu (circa 978–circa 1014). Although the original is lost, it has continued to influence Japanese art ever since. Looking at this remarkable 1000-year-long tradition, this exhibition brings together a wide range of art works (including important loans leaving Japan for the first time) that conjure up the world of the Heian (794–1185) imperial court, where the Tale of Genji was written, bearing witness to its powerful legacy. The Genji-related art includes: paintings, calligraphy, lacquerware, silk robes, ukiyo-e prints and even contemporary manga. Of particular interest is a 17th-century Edo scroll showing Murasaki Shikibu composing her classic literary work (left); the 12th-century Lotus Sutra with Each Character on a Lotus; and a pair of Edo-period (1603–1868) screens by Tawaraya Sotatsu, that depict meetings between the prince Genji and a former lover. The Lotus Sutra with Each Character on a Lotus and Tawaraya Sotatsu’s screens will be on view for only six weeks, rotating with other works.

Metropolitan Museum of Art
+1 212 535 7710
(www.metmuseum.org)
Until 16 June 2019.

The World between Empires: Art and Identity in the Ancient Middle East
Important cities in the ancient Middle East were centres of commerce as well as of cultural and religious exchange. Distinctive and diverse cities like Petra, Baalbek, Palmyra and Hatra played host to such interactions between 100 BC and AD 250, as this exhibition investigates through stone and bronze sculpture, wall paintings, jewellery, and other artefacts. They reflect the diverse communities and contacts brought about by trade at the meeting point of the Parthian and Roman empires. In Baalbek, statuettes of deities demonstrate how Roman and Middle Eastern religious practices were intertwined, while artefacts from Judea at a time of struggle against Roman rule give a clear and powerful impression of Jewish identity. Among the spectacular objects on show is a bronze statuette of Jupiter Heliospolitanus (above right). (See pages 14–21 for an article by the exhibition’s curators.)

Metropolitan Museum of Art
+1 212 535 7710
(www.metmuseum.org)
Until 23 June 2019.

WASHINGTON DC
Empresses of China’s Forbidden City, 1644–1912
The empresses of China’s Qing dynasty (1644–1912) were influential and high-status figures with some impressive accomplishments, yet they are largely absent in Qing court history. The Qing dynasty was founded by Manchu rulers from northeastern Asia, who selected the Forbidden City in Beijing as their main residence and seat of power. Manchu women had more rights than Han Chinese women and were encouraged to ride and hunt alongside men and empresses; one such was Empress Xiaozhuang (below). They were educated, appreciated art and played an important role in religion at the court, as the range of objects in this exhibition shows. Organised by the Smithsonian’s Freer|Sackler, Beijing’s Palace Museum, and the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, the show brings together exquisite imperial portraits (many of which have never left the Palace Museum), rich robes and
The American Pre-Raphaelites: Radical Realists
To mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of the influential Victorian critic and artist John Ruskin (1819–1900), National Gallery of Art in Washington is presenting an American perspective, through paintings, watercolours, drawings and photographs by artists in the USA. Though Ruskin never visited America, his publications made their mark there. The Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art was set up by a group of artists, scientists, critics and collectors in January 1863 to promote his ideas. Members of the Association strive for reform not only in art, but also in the spheres of social and political reform, particularly the abolition of slavery. The artists featured in this exhibition, such as Thomas Charles Farrer, a British expatriate who had actually studied art under Ruskin, were all influenced by the great Victorian critic, who championed ‘truth to nature’, and produced faithful representations of the natural world.
National Gallery of Art
+1 202 737 4215
(www.nga.gov)
Until 21 July 2019.

COLOMBIA
BUCARAMANGA
Galería de la Fundación Philanthropía

FRANCE
LENS
Homer
Homer’s huge impact on Western culture has not been confined to literature. It has also affected the visual arts. This show explores his legacy as the ‘prime of poets’, and responses to the Iliad and the Odyssey over the millennia. It examines the authorship of the two epics, looks at how interest in Homer motivated archaeological excavations, and introduces the beliefs that gave birth to these poems. It includes archaeological artefacts from Greece, such as the fine red figure plate showing Eos and Memnon, from 490–480 BC (above), tapestries and paintings by artists from Rubens, Watteau and Derain to Cy Twombly. (For more on Homer see pages 8-13.)
Louvre Lens
+33 3 21 18 62 62
(www.lourelens.fr)
Until 22 July 2019.

ITALY
VENICE
Baselitz – Academy
For the first time in the history of the Gallerie dell’Accademia in Venice, a living artist is showing his work. It is the highly acclaimed German artist Georg Baselitz (b 1938) who will receive this honour, with a major retrospective timed to coincide with the Venice Biennale. Featuring his curious characteristic inverted paintings, such as Ankunft (Arrival), 2018 (below), drawings, prints and sculptures, this show explores Baselitz’s 60-year career right up to his recent work. Some of his rarely exhibited works will also shed light on the artist’s relationship with Italy and the Accademia.
Gallerie dell’Accademia
+39 041 5200345
(www.gallerieaccademia.it)
From 8 May to 8 September 2019.

PARIS
Forgotten Kingdoms: From the Hittite Empire to the Arameans
Until circa 1200 BC, the Hittite Empire was a powerful force across the Levant, ruling over Anatolia and rivalling ancient Egypt. After its demise, Neo-Hittite and Aramean kingdoms arose in Turkey in Syria, carrying forward some of the political and cultural traditions of the fallen Hittite Empire. The stories of the Hittites, Neo-Hittites, and Arameans are explored in this exhibition through a wide range of archaeological evidence, including statuary and carved steles, such as the Hittite stele of a scribe called Tarhunpiyas (above). Major sites like Tell Halaf, near the Turkish border in Syria, are investigated closely. Tell Halaf was excavated by Max von Oppenheim in 1911–13, and large sculptures from the palace of the Aramean king Kapara were transported to Berlin where they went on display and where they suffered extensive damage during bombing in the Second World War. As well as shining a new light on forgotten kingdoms, the exhibition draws attention to the importance of conservation work, the risks that war poses to heritage sites, and the Louvre’s work in protecting many endangered sites, including the museum’s involvement in setting up the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas, in 2017.
Louvre
+33 1 40 20 50 50
(www.louvre.fr)
From 2 May to 12 August 2019.

SPAIN
MADRID
Pioneers: Women artists of the Russian avant-garde
In Russia, the eventful years of the early 20th century coincided with an equally revolutionary artistic explosion; many exciting exhibitions were staged and radical manifestos released. Aspects of traditional Russian culture and art melded with influences from foreign avant-garde
Minerva
May/June 2019

beautiful pieces of clothing, jewellery, and other exhibits that tell the story of five notable empresses. Empress Xiaozhuang (1613–88) helped to shape the religion of the dynasty by her promotion of Tibetan Buddhism, and Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908) ruled as co-regent and became China’s most powerful empress.
Ernst Sackler, Smithsonian
+1 202 633 1000
(www.freersackler.si.edu)
Until 23 June 2019.

The American Pre-Raphaelites: Radical Realists
To mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of the influential Victorian critic and artist John Ruskin (1819–1900), National Gallery of Art in Washington is presenting an American perspective, through paintings, watercolours, drawings and photographs by artists in the USA. Though Ruskin never visited America, his publications made their mark there. The Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art was set up by a group of artists, scientists, critics and collectors in January 1863 to promote his ideas. Members of the Association strive for reform not only in art, but also in the spheres of social and political reform, particularly the abolition of slavery. The artists featured in this exhibition, such as Thomas Charles Farrer, a British expatriate who had actually studied art under Ruskin, were all influenced by the great Victorian critic, who championed ‘truth to nature’, and produced faithful representations of the natural world.
National Gallery of Art
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Until 21 July 2019.

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Eugénie-Emilienne Brisson, who was from Nice. Dufy visited Martigues, Hyères, Venice, Marseille and other towns, portraying the landscape and coast and capturing the spirit of local life and festivities, and everyday life in his evocative and joyful watercolours, paintings and drawings.
Mougin Museum of Fine Arts
+33 4 93 75 18 22
(www.mouginmuseum.com)
Until 14 July 2019.

LJERKA NJERŠ
CALENDAR
this show she explores some of her works in a range of media. In
Ljerka Njerš
Until 21 July 2019.
(www.nga.gov)
events

London Art Week
The biannual London Art Week returns to celebrate the city’s place in the global art world this summer. Leading galleries, auction houses and dealers in and around Mayfair and St James’s will host talks, exhibitions and events, and show antiquities, Old Master drawings, post-Impressionist paintings and much more.
28 June–5 July
Multiple venues
(www.londonartweek.co.uk)

Tudor Festival: Sir Thomas Gresham and His World
Celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of Sir Thomas Gresham, the college he founded is presenting a series of special events that shed light on this accomplished Tudor merchant, financier and adventurer, and the age in which he lived:
Gresham’s Exchange
Stephen Alford
Wednesday 8 May, 6pm

Museum of London
Sir Thomas Gresham, 1519–2019
John Guy
Thursday 13 June, 6pm

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The gallery of 20 shops, which occupies an entire floor of Alfies Antique Market, offers an extraordinary array of rare and beautiful objects from the Middle East including ceramics, jewellery, textiles, antiquities, paintings and manuscripts. Some were made no more than 100 years ago, others came from ancient civilisations.

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