

IMPERIALIZED ANTIQUITIES: VICTORIAN ENCOUNTERS WITH THE  
ANCIENT NEAR EAST IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

by

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(Under the Direction of Tricia Lootens)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the relationship between Victorian Britain and the Ancient Near East as produced and mediated through the British Museum. I consider how this encyclopedic museum narrativized antiquity for consumption by British spectators in an imperial context. This project unveils the layers of narrative that inform and are informed by the discovery, acquisition, and reception of artifacts from Ancient Lycia and Assyria. These narratives ultimately reveal the relationship between British imperial archaeology and the museum space. In addition, I showcase how these institutional practices and spaces illuminated Victorian Britain's place within the Great Chain of Empires initiated by their Assyrian predecessors.

INDEX WORDS: Ancient Near East, Anatolia, Archaeology, Assyria, Austen Henry Layard, British Museum, Charles Fellows, Empire, Victorian, Xanthos.

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## CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: NARRATIVIZING ANTIQUITY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
IMPERIALISM IN THE MUSEUM SPACE

In the preface to *Origines; or Remarks on the Origin of Several Empires, States, and Cities* (1824), William Drummond encapsulates what he perceived as a nineteenth-century impetus towards antiquity, writing “we gladly return to the tales of other times; linger over the dark legends of antiquity and delight to wander with the historians of old in the paths of wonder.”<sup>1</sup> Then as now, scholars and history enthusiasts have looked back to antiquity as a means of forging a connection with the peoples, nations, and empires that came before us and that have so greatly influenced our own cultures and canons. Today, the nineteenth century serves as an important steppingstone in our tracing backwards of how modernity has come to know or realize antiquity in a material sense.

Much of the scholarship concerning perspectives on antiquity in nineteenth-century Britain has focused mainly on the reception and application of Greco-Roman mythology, classical literature, history, and aesthetics. It is fair to argue that discussions concerning Greco-Roman antiquities and their nineteenth-century legacies have been exhausted on many fronts; however, interdisciplinary approaches to engagements with the material remains of antiquity offer fresh perspectives for examining relationships with

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<sup>1</sup> William Drummond, *Origines; or, Remarks on the Origin of Several Empires, States and Cities*, vol. 1 (London, Printed by A.J. Valpy, 1824), ix.

the past. Perhaps the most famous interdisciplinary pursuit has been the vast array of studies on the acquisition and display of the Parthenon or Elgin Marbles in the British Museum during the earliest years of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> British writers' responses to the acquisition, such as those of Lord Byron, greatly influenced the language we continue to use in debates about cultural heritage and repatriation. The Elgin Marbles have become an exemplar for understanding the nineteenth-century museum's role in narrativizing-- through the processes of acquisition and exhibition-- the iconography and materiality of the past to educate and entertain the modern consumer. In addition, the Elgin Marbles' position in the museum has allowed these artifacts to become what Debbie Challis has called "emblems of British national identity."<sup>3</sup> The repatriation debates that persist to this day, despite the British Museum's continued refusal to allow the Marbles to return to the Athenian Acropolis, continue to fuel public and scholarly interest in matters of the museum's role in both defining and perpetuating notions of cultural heritage and cultural nationalism. What Victorian Studies as a discipline offers, then, is a means of more clearly understanding the origins of the imperial disputes and repatriation controversies that were born out of the period's increasing professionalization and commercialization of archaeology and the institutionalization of museums in ways that clarify how and why these artifacts continue to make headlines.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Mary Beard, *The Parthenon* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2010), William St. Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), and John Henry Merryman, *Thinking About the Elgin Marbles: Critical Essays on Cultural Property, Art and Law* (London: Kluwer Law International, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Debbie Challis, "The Parthenon Sculptures: Emblems of British National Identity," *British Art Journal* 7, no. 1 (2006): 33.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Peter Walker and Helena Smith, "Return of Parthenon marbles is up to British Museum, says No 10," *The Guardian*, November 16, 2021. Retrieved from

Though the Elgin Marbles is the most popular case study for examining these debates, their popularity is not to imply that other, even similar, aesthetic objects from diverse geographical regions of antiquity are exempt from this discourse. Greco-Roman antiquity, exemplified in the British Museum by the Elgin Marbles, is not the only kind of antiquity that influenced how the British understood themselves in relation to the past. And it is not just an idealization of the past, on a social or aesthetic front, through which the British were seduced by antiquity in the nineteenth century-- antiquities speak also to matters of international affairs and the relationship between the spectator, their native Britain, and the modern empires and nation-states that presently sit upon such historic lands.

“Imperialized Antiquities” thus explores the relationship between Britain and the Ancient Near East across the nineteenth century as produced and mediated by the encyclopedic museum. My project begins and ends with the British Museum-- how this institution defined, classified, and narrativized the Ancient Near East for British consumption during the nineteenth century. The exhibitions centralized here consist of objects from the ancient lands of Anatolia and Mesopotamia produced between the 9th and 4th centuries BCE, prior to the conquests of Alexander the Great across the Near East. More specifically, I juxtapose exhibitions of artifacts from Xanthos, the Lycian capital in Anatolia, and the Neo-Assyrian Empire. While Xanthos was an important cultural and commercial center of the Lycian civilization, a geopolitical region located near what is today Turkey’s southwestern coast, Assyria was the world’s first major

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<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/nov/16/return-of-parthenon-marbles-is-up-to-british-museum-says-no-10>.

empire, eventually stretching from Mesopotamia to the Levant, Egypt, and southeastern Anatolia in the 7th century BCE.



Fig. 1. Topographical Map of Xanthos and Assyria

Previous studies of the Ancient Near East in nineteenth-century museums have largely centralized Egypt and Mesopotamia. While Stephanie Moser, Frederick Bohrer, and Shawn Malley have studied the competitive acquisition, exhibition, and reception of a plethora of Egyptian and Assyrian artifacts in the nineteenth century, less attention has been paid to these antiquities' Xanthian counterparts. When Xanthos is, however rarely, discussed, its sculptures are most frequently placed within the context of Hellenism,

despite its clear fusion of Anatolian and Persian influences.<sup>5</sup> Scholars have yet to consider how this particular pairing of Anatolia and Assyria illuminates the similarities and differences of how diverse geographic regions of the Near East were narrativized within the museum space.<sup>6</sup>

But what is perhaps most important for this study are the ways in which this pairing can further our understanding of the relationship between British imperial archaeology and the museum space, as well as its consequences for public reception. During the nineteenth century, the Rosetta Stone became one of the most recognizable symbols of the power of imperial archaeology to reveal critical information about the Near Eastern cultures that were exhibited in the British Museum. Not unlike the Rosetta Stone, the Assyrian and Xanthian remains I discuss in this project are symbols of imperial ambition and competition for the material remains of the past. Through imperial archaeology, “ancient monuments and artifacts, often encountered through the guise of archaeological study, became the object of collecting and represented essential but highly mutable ingredients in identity building and the brand of mythmaking integral to successful nations, colonies, and empires.”<sup>7</sup> Victorian approaches to the sculptures

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Harry Brewster, *Classical Anatolia: The Glory of Hellenism* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 1993).

<sup>6</sup> For dedicated discussion of the Ancient Egyptian galleries at the British Museum, see Stephanie Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities: Ancient Egypt at the British Museum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). For the two most comprehensive studies of Ancient Assyria in the nineteenth century, see Frederick Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Shawn Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain: The Case of Assyria, 1845-1854* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Bonnie Effros and Guolong Lai, “The Global Reach of Imperial and Colonial Archaeology,” in *Unmasking Ideology in Imperial and Colonial Archaeology*, ed. Effros and Lai (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2018): xxvii.

recovered and collected by archaeologists often situated the artifacts within a Western-centric art historical canon or Great Chain of Art. Additionally, imperial archaeology afforded greater evidence of and a vehicle for exercising Britain's revelatory place within a Great Chain of Empires, spanning back to the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and later Ottoman Empires that directly created, (in)directly influenced, and buried or kept buried the material remains of the ancient past. The new geographical orientation or scope that I propose is transformative for our understanding of British imperial archaeology in the nineteenth century. By pairing the most ancient empire buried in the heart of the Fertile Crescent with the mythologized yet forgotten liminal space that was and is Xanthos, I uncover how the museum became a key actor in this imperial discourse and how the visitors themselves were inundated with these narratives.

What the Xanthos-Assyria pairing reveals are broader patterns in the process of reception involving the layers of reading and textual artifacts that inform spectators' engagement with the antiquities. Bridging the gap between literary historiography, art history, and museum studies, my project unveils the layers of narrative that frame these particular exhibitions and influence public reception of the material artifacts. At the heart of my argument is the idea that first encounters with Ancient Near Eastern artifacts occur twice: first, via the imagination fueled by literary accounts and later the texts and sketches disseminated via travel journals and the periodical press, for instance, that detail the discovery, excavation, and display of the artifacts once they have reached British soil. The second first encounter is one's initial physical encounter with the object in the museum space. The imaginative and mythologizing textual shroud created in those preliminary texts shape both visitor expectations and the popular visual imagination. The

rhetorical strategies of guidebooks and other museum-related publications are also responsible for conditioning the spectator in that they prime the visitor for what they can expect to see within an institutional context and how the museum dictates the order and means in which objects are encountered. This multi-layered textual casing in which the objects are placed, combined with the physical power of classification and organizational placement, directly influence visitor perception and reception and continually inform the reviews, opinions, and accounts that are transmitted between those who have seen and those who are told that they must see.

Foregrounded in my study of the museum space, then, are the text-image relations that emerge within the multiple layers of narrative that coexist within the galleries. This mapping of intertwining narratives reveals how knowledge about both the ancient past and how these artifacts come to represent contemporary national and imperial ambitions is constructed within the museum space. In this way, I build on work by Svetlana Alpers and Michael Baxandall that considers how the museum as an institutional space creates its own way of seeing. Alpers calls this “the museum effect” and imagines how the museum’s privileging of an object outside of its native context reveals the tension that exists between the object being simultaneously an art object and a political artifact.<sup>8</sup> Baxandall examines appropriation and the parties he believes are responsible for creating meaning: the viewer, the exhibition, and the art object.<sup>9</sup> Adapting this model, I argue that

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<sup>8</sup> Svetlana Alpers, “The Museum as a Way of Seeing,” in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Levine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991): 25-32.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Baxandall, “Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects” in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Levine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991): 33-41.

it is in the curated museum space that three actors come to be and collide: visitor (which in this case is a decisively British observer), nation, and empire. Within the museum's walls, the visitor confronts carefully constructed narratives of antiquity that emphasize the museum's program of cultural and archaeological imperialism.

I explore how this institution informs the public's historic consciousness and also positions the public-- by directing the eyes and literally mobilizing the British spectator throughout the museum halls-- to understand the relationship between Britain as a world empire in relation to the modern powers presently occupying those lands. In doing so, I uncover how this mobilization of the spectator is both enacted by and recollected through a network of narratives in which the British Museum functions as the central node. Ultimately, what I present are the simultaneous narratives-- of aesthetics, of ancient contexts, of personal and literary engagement, of imperial conquest, of national regard, of shared cultural heritage-- that are staged in the museum and hinge upon the display of specific objects from the Ancient Near East. Becoming nodes in the narrative network I have outlined, the artifacts themselves become palimpsestic, at once testaments to the past but increasingly also legal, national, and imperial documents.

In both the Xanthos and Assyria sections, I begin with a reading of the ancient classical and biblical sources relevant to the regions at hand that nineteenth-century readers were likely familiar with. These texts are the foundation upon which their reception of the material artifacts from these regions-- these histories-- lie. After establishing a sense of how British subjects would have encountered Xanthos and Assyria in literary sources, I move between the subsequent narratives of acquisition, display, and

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visitor response and criticism. Narratives of acquisition primarily include the travel journals recorded during excavations by Charles Fellows and Austen Henry Layard. Periodicals, however, also serve as documentation of the objects' purchase by the museum.

Following my reading of these initial excavation narratives, I shift my focus to think about narratives of space and exhibition and how text-image relations are deeply influenced, if not revised, by the physical spaces in which one encounters them. Narratives of display provide accounts of the objects' physical exhibition within the museum, in regard to their individual placement, as well as that of the rooms they occupy within the museum's broader floorplan. Guidebooks and illustrations are the best evidence for revealing how museum visitors physically encountered these objects; they allow us to reconstruct, to the best of our ability, the order and means through which the museum led its visitors to encounter these objects. I will consider the order and proximity of the rooms and the objects displayed in each, as well as how these arrangements shifted or evolved over time. Official museum guidebooks published by the Order of the Trustees are key for attempting to unveil the rationale behind why and how objects were displayed; unofficial or external guides-- the "Must Sees" of the British Museum prepared by other parties-- also speak to how the public prioritized certain rooms, and therefore artifacts, over others. Though these guides are useful for generally mapping out how a Victorian museum-goer likely encountered these objects for the first time, actual visitor accounts and responses are paramount for understanding how the public actually digested these objects and the narratives of excavation and empire that they become shrouded in once they reach British soil. Finally, narratives of visitor response by British

writers that account for their study, criticism, and discussion of the objects serve as the “eyes” of the British spectator in these spaces I wish to reconstruct.

### **Chapter Overviews**

In “Part I: Between East and West: Anatolian Artifacts in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities,” I examine exhibitions of the Xanthian or Lycian Marbles which speak to how the Victorians were conditioned to understand the relationship between East and West. The Xanthian Marbles belong to the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities rather than the departments of Oriental or Egyptian & Assyrian Antiquities; however, I argue that this means of classification obscures the cultural and aesthetic tensions and fusions between East and West that are captured in the ancient marbles. I consider the Harpy Tomb, the Horse Tomb or Tomb of Payava, and the Nereid Monument as objects of special importance for thinking about Ancient Anatolia’s liminality. In chapter two, I begin with a survey of the literature in which nineteenth-century British readers would have encountered Xanthos, including works by Homer and Herodotus. I then analyze the accounts of the excavations at the site as presented in Sir Charles Fellows’s travel journals; Fellows published four journals detailing his travels and excavations in Asia Minor during the 1840s and 1850s. Of most importance to my study are *An Account of Discoveries in Lycia, being a Journal kept during a Second Excursion in Asia Minor* (1841) and *The Xanthian Marbles: their acquisition and transmission to England* (1843).

After considering how and why the Lycian marbles were acquired by the British Museum using museum guidebooks published by the Trustees of the British Museum and external parties, in chapter three I trace how the objects were brought together and

divided across various rooms over time, including the Lycian Room, the Room of Archaic Sculptures, and the Nereid Room. The Lycian and Nereid Rooms were both solely dedicated to Lycian art and architecture, whereas the Room of Archaic Sculptures included Etruscan antiquities among the Harpy Tomb and other Xanthian reliefs. The guidebooks and visitor accounts allow me to recreate the evolution of the Lycian Room (which was being referred to as the “New Lycian Room” by at least 1879). From there, I trace the creation of the separate Nereid Room, where the monument became housed separately in the 1890s, rather than continuing to occupy the western half of the Lycian Room as it had since the museum’s initial exhibition.

To account for visitor responses, Anna Jameson’s 1844 essay “The Xanthian Marbles, and Memories Connected With Them” (from which the chapter title is taken) becomes key for understanding early encounters between the British public and the marbles. In this essay, Jameson speaks to Xanthos and its Greco-Lycian and Greco-Persian remains as enigmatic and half-understood at the present moment; the gathering, arrangement, and public access provided by the national museum will afford increased understanding. Other useful accounts include exhibition reviews published in *The Times* (“The Xanthian Marbles in the British Museum” published May 1, 1843) and *The Illustrated London News* (“British Museum.-- Exhibitions of Marbles from Asia Minor” published February 11, 1843), as well as extended essays by Samuel Birch (1844) and William Watkiss Lloyd (1845). I then take a decade-by-decade approach to the Xanthian marbles’ constant reshuffling before ending with Pater’s brief discussion of the marbles in his *Greek Studies* (1895).

“Part II: Encountering Ancient Assyria in the British Museum” studies the British Museum’s exhibitions of Assyrian antiquities following the archaeological discoveries of Austen Henry Layard from 1845 to 1851. Before commencing my reading of Layard’s popular *Nineveh and Its Remains* (1849) as a primary source for revealing the excavations’ political program of archaeological imperialism, I begin chapter four by contextualizing Assyria and surveying the empire’s status in ancient texts, including the biblical Old Testament and works by historians such as Herodotus, Ctesias, and Diodorus Siculus. I then consider how the mythologies of Assyria’s infamous rulers become the subject of early nineteenth-century (meaning pre-Layard) literature. During his expeditions, Layard and his team of associates uncovered a vast trove of Assyrian artifacts; an overview of most or even a substantial chunk of his findings is plenty of material for its own dedicated study. Instead, I have selected the lamassus, or the sculptures of protective deities represented as winged, human-headed bulls or lions, as a case study for thinking about how these colossal portal guardians were conscripted into British service.

Chapter five continues my study of what I call the rhetoric of the colossal and the ways in which *The Illustrated London News* both informed and revealed the reception of the lamassus once they arrived in London and were exhibited within the various rooms of the museum’s Assyrian gallery. I also consider how the lamassus inspired literary productions of both W.H. Stone (1851) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1856/1870) before shifting to the sculptures’ varied use in the art criticism of John Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) and, most importantly, Anna Jameson in *Sacred and Legendary Art* (1857). Finally, I turn to the museum guidebooks and their description of the lamassus

and the exhibition rooms in which they were placed as museum guardians and the ways in which these texts placed Assyria within the Great Chain of Art.

To conclude this project, I reflect on the process of examining the British Museum's Lycian and Assyrian artifacts through these textual layers in a time of worldwide crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic halted travel for research purposes, forcing me to engage with these artifacts in ways not dissimilar to the Victorians encountering them for the first time. In this way, the methodology of "Imperialized Antiquities" reflects how digital archives have made scholarship from a distance possible.

## CHAPTER TWO

## CHARLES FELLOWS &amp; THE (RE)DISCOVERY OF XANTHOS, 1838-1843

Located less than twenty meters inland from Turkey's southwestern Mediterranean coast in the modern-day village of Kınık, Xanthos was the capital city of ancient Lycia. Although composed of a vast number of townships, Lycia was "already conscious of a certain communal inter-relationship, in other words of belonging to one nation."<sup>10</sup> Lycia maintained its independence as what Ekrem Akurgal calls an indigenous Anatolian culture prior to the Persian conquest of the city under Cyrus the Great's general Harpagus in 545 BCE.<sup>11</sup> Yet after becoming increasingly Hellenized as the reign of Alexander the Great approached, Lycians "proved particularly receptive to Greek art and culture generally" which resulted in "a most interesting confluence of Lycian, Persian, and Greek streams of culture."<sup>12</sup> It is in the artifacts that were excavated by Charles Fellows that we see this blended aesthetic program brought to life. Yet despite the cultural fusion prevalent in the designs of these monuments, the British Museum acquired these artifacts as contributions to what would become by 1861 the Department of Greek & Roman Antiquities. This chapter thus interrogates the ways in which Fellows' readings of the artifacts, important precursors to their departmentalization, mask important

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<sup>10</sup> Harry Brewster, *Classical Anatolia: The Glory of Hellenism* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 1993), 58.

<sup>11</sup> Ekrem Akurgal, *Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey*, trans. John Whybrow and Mollie Emre (Istanbul: Haşet Kitabevi, 1978), 17.

<sup>12</sup> Brewster, *Classical Anatolia*, 59.

tensions and/or fusions between East and West that are evident in the artifacts' provenance and designs.

Though his approach would prove to be more material than mythological, Fellows' attempt at reading Xanthos was not the first for the British. In order to fully conceptualize the magnitude of the Fellows excavations and Anatolia's place in British definitions of the Ancient Near East, we must first interrogate the presence of Lycia, and more specifically Xanthos, in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth print culture. An imperative question driving this study is in what texts might one have encountered the peoples, culture, and geography of ancient Lycia by the early nineteenth century prior to the display of the Fellows acquisitions in the British Museum? While the Bible remained perhaps the largest and most popular source for knowledge about the Ancient Near East throughout this period, Lycia—and especially Xanthos—is largely neglected in both the Old and New Testaments. Lycia is only named once in the Bible, where its coastal city Myra (east of Xanthos) figures as a brief stopping place between the Apostle Paul's voyage from Caesarea to Rome.<sup>13</sup> Xanthos itself is never mentioned. The lack of attention to Lycia in a biblical context signals that we must examine classical sources to understand what the shape of British knowledge about Xanthos and Lycia was pre-Fellows.

It was Homer, the purported blind Ionian bard, whose legendary poetic prowess drew readers to Lycia's capital city. An increasing staple in the nineteenth-century English classroom, Homer continued to evolve as both a poetic and moral authority.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Acts 27:5 King James Version

<sup>14</sup> Pim den Boer, "Homer in Modern Europe," *European Review* 15, no. 2 (2007): 181. As an example, Pim den Boer cites William Gladstone's belief in Homer as "full of moral adjustment

While few, if any, readers approached *The Iliad* in search of Lycia, its presence, however abstracted, remains central to the characterization of some of the premier, mythological Trojan allies. It is from Lycia which “lies far distant on the banks / Of the deep-eddied Xanthus” that the godlike heroes Bellerophon, Sarpedon, and Glaucus hail.<sup>15</sup> Lycia is figured as a far-distant land that breeds heroes with skills eclipsing those of many native Greek soldiers. While the land itself does not become a physical battleground or cultural destination, Christos Tsagalis argues that “the geographical location of Lycia filters the identity and function of Lycians in the Iliadic plot to such an extent that it becomes the measure of their bravery.”<sup>16</sup> The vast geographical distance between Troy and Xanthos thus lends itself to the mythologization of these heroes and their strength. In sum, *The Iliad* presents the Lycians as the foremost, non-Greek Trojan allies and the land as a potential source of their power; however, it is Herodotus’s account three-hundred years later that provides us with an increasingly historical rather than purely mythological portrait of these peoples, their heroes, and their customs.<sup>17</sup>

Due to his wide readership and generic adaptability, Herodotus emerges as a central— if not *the* central, especially for our purposes— classical author of the long nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> *The Histories* were popularly read and translated throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At least thirty translations, adaptations, and

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and law of duty” due to *The Iliad*’s “highly national character and the Greek idea of state,” as well as *The Odyssey*’s “[focus] on family life.”

<sup>15</sup> Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. William Cowper (London, 1791), 5.566-567.

<sup>16</sup> Christos Tsagalis, *From Listeners to Viewers: Space in the Iliad*, Hellenic Studies Series 53 (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2012), chap. 4, <https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5749.chapter-4-the-troad-and-lycia>

<sup>17</sup> Brewster, *Classical Anatolia*, 57-58.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Harrison and Joseph Skinner, eds., introduction to *Herodotus in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020).

commentaries were published between Isaac Littlebury's *The History of Herodotus* in 1709 and the end of Reginald Walter Macan's *Hellenikon: A Sheath of Sonnets after Herodotus* in 1898. Herodotus's *The Histories*, written circa 430 BCE, is the key classical text for tracing Greco-Persian relations and its cultural influences on the region in the fifth century BCE. Herodotus shapes our earliest understanding of Lycia's cultural and political orientation in the age of the Persian conquest. While *The Histories* privileges Greco-Persian political tensions in its theatricalization of the Persian Wars, these writings also provide some of the earliest glimpses at Anatolian geography and culture.

Though Herodotus undoubtedly spends much more time discussing the nearby regions Caria and Lydia, the passages in which Lycia is directly presented reinforce the familiar sense of military might we take from Homer yet also provide information about the origins of the Lycians and their customs, particularly their matrilineal family structure. Other than a brief survey of the Lycians migration from "Crete in ancient times," descriptions of Xanthos, its river, and the surrounding land is largely absent from the discussion.<sup>19</sup> Yet, instead of allowing the land to be a distant influence on heroic bravery in the model of *The Iliad*, the Xanthian acropolis becomes the site of one of the earliest tragic battles in *The Histories*. Herodotus describes the limited Lycian forces stalling against Harpagus's army until the Lycians were pushed back into and trapped within the city's walls. In this moment, Herodotus's account of Xanthos is transformed from a forgettable report of Persian conquest into a powerful and even excerptible vignette:

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<sup>19</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, ed. Robert B. Strassler and trans. Andrea L. Purvis (New York: Anchor, 2009), 95.

Once trapped in their city, they gathered together their women, children, possessions, and servants on the acropolis and set fire to it, burning up everything. Then, having sworn powerful oaths, the men of Xanthos went forth again to do battle against Harpagos. They all died fighting. And so, the present-day Xanthians are mostly immigrants, with the exception of eighty families, whose ancestors at the time of the battle happened to be abroad and thus survived. That is how Harpagos took Xanthos.<sup>20</sup>

In this scene, the acropolis—the crown jewel of Xanthos—is destroyed in the ultimate performance of resistance. Distance from the land is no longer the marker of bravery for these warriors as in Homer; rather, the ability to destroy the land which helped to cultivate Lycian life is the ultimate testament of courage.

Herodotus's description of the Lycians becomes much more physical in Book Seven (the beginning of the account of Xerxes' failed Greek campaign), the location of the only other passage in which the Lycians are discussed beyond being itemized in a list of forces or conquests. Here, Herodotus illustrates the uniform of the Lycian forces within Xerxes's fleet: "The Lycians contributed fifty ships. They wore breastplates and greaves, and carried cornel-wood bows, cane arrows without flights, and javelins. They also had goatskin caps trimmed with feathers. They were armed with daggers and billhooks."<sup>21</sup> As we will soon see, these descriptions supplement the reliefs of the tombs discovered by Fellows.

Through these classical texts, Xanthos comes to signify a site of courage and military might, but detailed accounts of the land and its architecture never seems to materialize. Furthermore, readers of Herodotus will recognize how Xanthos and the Lycians are mobilized as players within this early, dual-sided, and often graphic account

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>21</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 436.

of both the valor and horrors of imperial expansion and warfare. In their becoming Persian subjects, the Lycians of *The Histories* are removed from their previous state of cultural and political independence—a transition that would anticipate the increasing process of Hellenization that would occur in the coming decades.

But it was not solely up to voices of antiquity to describe what Xanthos once was. Even though the city burned down, willing travelers, even in the nineteenth century, could still venture on site. Aside from biblical and classical sources, then, the other major source of knowledge about Asia Minor was presented in contemporary travel narratives. In fact, “travel writing played a pivotal role in positioning Turkey in relation to Europe” during the period in which the British Empire grew as the Ottoman Empire declined, shifting the “global power balance.”<sup>22</sup> One such traveler, William Martin Leake, was an antiquarian and topographer who published his *Journal of a Tour of Asia Minor; with Comparative Remarks on the Ancient and Modern Geography of that Country* in 1824. Immediately, Leake’s preface to the journal is indicative of an attitude of excavation and collection that would continue to prevail during the coming decades: “To the traveller who delights in tracing vestiges of Grecian art and civilization amidst modern barbarism and desolation, and who may thus at once illustrate history and collect valuable materials for the geographer and artist— there is no country that now affords so fertile a field of

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<sup>22</sup> Teresa Heffernan and Daniel O’Quinn, introduction to *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (Buffalo: Broadview Press, 2013), 25. As far as these accounts are concerned, however, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s *Turkish Embassy Letters*, perhaps the most famous or canonical of eighteenth-century Turkish travel narratives, is contained within the north-western limits of the Anatolian peninsula. Montagu’s travels were limited to Adrianople and Constantinople, capital cities of the Ottoman Empire too far north to even come close to crossing over the Xanthos river. While Montagu’s letters serve as important windows into eighteenth-century Turkish culture and customs, they are generally unhelpful as far as ancient Anatolian art and culture is concerned.

discovery as Asia Minor.”<sup>23</sup> Leake’s emphasis on tracing specifically Grecian artifacts and influence in Asia Minor erases and devalues both indigenous and Persian cultures and their antiquities found among contemporary Ottoman settlements. Fellow’s own journal recounting his first visit to Asia Minor will also echo this sentiment.

In his topographical quest, Leake traveled from the north-west reaches of Constantinople through the southeastern lands of the peninsula before heading to the region he deems the southern coast, including what was once Lycia.<sup>24</sup> Xanthos, alongside Myra, is listed as one of the major ancient Lycian cities, but this is not new information to Leake.<sup>25</sup> As J. M. Wagstaff notes, Leake’s methodology borrowed heavily from other classical sources: “he printed a translation of Strabo’s description of the coastal zone between the Gulf of Glaucus (Makri) in the west and that of Issues (Iskenderun) in the east and interpreted the text through a series of notes which exploited the ‘collateral information from other ancient authors’... as well as the accurate locations and distances produced by the hydrographic surveyors.”<sup>26</sup> Essentially what Leake creates is a kind of intertextual, geographic collage that presents Lycia as a broad coastal region while neglecting or at least refusing to elaborate on the importance of Xanthos, quoted in the journal by Strabo as “the city of the Xanthii, the greatest in Lycia.”<sup>27</sup> While the *Journal* does make an effort to outline the very Greek remains that Leake lauds in his preface, the

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<sup>23</sup> William Martin Leake, *Journal of a Tour of Asia Minor; with Comparative Remarks on the Ancient and Modern Geography of that Country* (London, 1824), iii.

<sup>24</sup> An excellent map of Leake’s route appears in J. M. Wagstaff, “Colonel Leake and the Classical Topography of Asia Minor.” *Anatolian Studies* 37 (1987): 23-35.

<sup>25</sup> Leake, *Journal*, 182.

<sup>26</sup> Wagstaff, “Colonel Leake,” 29.

<sup>27</sup> Leake, *Journal*, 173

texts fail to prioritize Xanthos as a culturally and aesthetically rich locale, both in its own right and in terms of the undeniable Greek influence present in its observable ruins.

It is telling that the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, the ancient world wonder destroyed for the final time by 401 CE, leads Leake's list of principal temples in Asia Minor, though its location and remains would not be rediscovered (and, therefore, made visible for Victorian viewers) by John Turtle Wood with the support of the British Museum until 1869. Xanthos, despite its stature as a premier Lycian city, is not directly named as a possibility for housing some of the most important Lycian, and more broadly Anatolian, monuments, while the mythic, unseen— but widely read of— temple at Ephesus reigns supreme. Ultimately, then, Leake's work can be understood as a preface to Fellows' own. It will be up to Fellows to hone in on Lycia, to unearth and bring its architecture to the forefront, and allow it to come into being via the act of published writing. While Leake's travel narrative works to translate Anatolian geography into the English language and is an important precursor to public knowledge of the peninsula in this regard, the account remains inferior to visual depictions and physical artifacts in terms of allowing the domestic British spectator to truly see Lycia for themselves— even if it will in the form of broken, decontextualized remains displayed in the British Museum.

Textually speaking, where does this leave us? While Lycia is, at best, loosely present in the popular imagination prior to 1838, the grounds and remains of its capital city are absent. As far as the Near East was concerned, the British Museum's holdings up to this point were dominated by Egyptian artifacts. This is why Fellow's excavations hold so much cultural power and intrigue. We can look to classical, biblical, and contemporary

sources to get a gist of how the Ancient Near East might have been imagined by early nineteenth-century readers, but it is not until Fellows' excavations that Xanthos becomes truly visible. The physical, cultural artifacts that emerge allowed nineteenth-century spectators to better understand how the familiar classical narrative of the Greco-Persian Wars and its complex web of political relationships influenced Xanthian visual culture.

### **Charles Fellows in Xanthos**

#### *The First Visit*

Sir Charles Fellows knew his exploration of Xanthos had the potential to be of immense cultural interest, and the journal he published shortly after his first visit to Asia Minor in 1838 testifies to his sense of self-importance. In this account, Fellows is quick to present himself as the first European to traverse these “remains of important ancient cities” and that, as such, he feels compelled to publish these records for the benefit of the public. Fellows, here, is simultaneously echoing and ignoring the work previously published by Leake, just as he would overlook the Turkish in favor of the Grecian ghosts that once haunted the space.<sup>28</sup> It is not a comprehensive knowledge of the Near East for which Fellows travels; he immediately asserts that “the most interesting period of history of this country was the time of its occupation by the Greeks, so the remains of their cities form now the chief attraction to the traveler.”<sup>29</sup> In Fellows' eyes, the ultimate value of the ancient remains located in Lycia lies in his ability to identify the Grecian influence of their designs. It becomes increasingly clear, especially in his later accounts, that Fellows'

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<sup>28</sup> Charles Fellows, *A Journal Written During an Excursion in Asia Minor* (London, 1838), iii. Fellows will later acknowledge Leake's work in his later 1843 account of the British Museum's acquisition of the Xanthian marbles.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, iii - iv.

Western cultural schema drives his interpretation and valuation of these objects. This attitude extends beyond material artifacts to even the people living in the region. Despite his early insistence that he eventually learned to “remove” his prejudices against the Turks, Fellows has difficulty acknowledging Turkish people, cultures, and customs as valuable in their own right.<sup>30</sup> Though he acknowledges the history of this land and that its artifacts originated pre-Roman Conquest and pre-Christianity, he is unable to understand the artifacts outside of a Grecian, and therefore Western, context.

As early as his first visit, the Trustees of the British Museum were keen to acknowledge their interest in Fellows’ Xanthian ruins. Fellows concludes his preface acknowledging the British government has accepted Fellows’ cultural valuation of the ruins: “I hear that on [the Trustee’s] recommendation the Government has given directions for having these monuments of ancient art brought to this country; we may hope therefore to see them among the *treasures of our National Institution*” (emphasis added).<sup>31</sup> The impact of Fellows’ journal is unmistakable--- it is published as the first British account of the region with the intent of literally cataloging artifacts-- and therefore history-- and conditioning a British readership for their national consumption.

Fellows first visited Lycia between April 13 and April 23 of 1838, recording his experience in a series of descriptions and sketches. During this initial visit, Fellows explicitly contextualizes the ruins, particularly the Lycian tombs, for both himself and his intended British audience by comparing them to familiar French and English architectural styles popularized a thousand-odd years after the Lycian tombs were originally

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., v -vi.

constructed. After stumbling upon tombs at the Lycian port city of Antiphellus, Fellows describes the sarcophagi lids as resembling “the pointed Gothic arch” and that the “tombs cut in the rock have some resemblance to the windows of the Elizabethan age, with their stone mullions.”<sup>32</sup> Once he arrived in Xanthus, Fellows was self-aware enough to admit that he lacked the comprehensive knowledge needed to completely examine the artifacts in their native contexts; however, he argues that this “afford[s] inducement to the man of taste to visit this country, even from distant England.”<sup>33</sup> This might seem in opposition with the sentiment presented in the preface regarding their acquisition and removal by the British Museum. After all, their transport to the British Museum strips the objects from the land, and thus their original contexts, making it more difficult to truly understand them. Instead of actually needing to make the trek to Asia Minor, armchair explorers can make their way to London’s Bloomsbury district.

Yet Fellows’ perspective of Xanthos and its remains is inherently and consciously Romantic-- much of the description that follows reads as a travelogue of the picturesque in language that the British public had been previously conditioned to understand by Uvedale Price and William Gilpin. Framing the ruins of temples and tombs, Fellows writes,

the site is extremely romantic, upon beautiful hills; some crowned with rocks, others rising perpendicularly from the river, which is seen winding its way down from the woody uplands, while beyond in the extreme distance are the snowy mountains in which it rises. On the west the view is bounded by the picturesquely formed but bare range of Mount Cragus, and on the east by the mountain chain extending to Patara. A rich plain, with its meandering river, carries the eye to the

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

horizon of the sea towards the south-west.<sup>34</sup>

In this way, the language of the picturesque with its emphasis on seeing the variety and roughness of eroded ruins as they appear within the landscape are at odds with the deliberate, if not sterilized, rationality of interior museum display.

Additionally, not unlike the preface, Fellows describes the ancient city as highly ornamented and lacking any “trace of the Roman or the Christian age.”<sup>35</sup> He still, however, attempts to conceptualize what he sees in these terms: “and yet there are points, such as the costume in the bas-relief, the attitude and appearance of groups of figures, that reminded me of the times of the Crusades and of the Romans.”<sup>36</sup> Fellows’ conscious rupture of geographical and temporal boundaries in order to relay what he is seeing is complex. On the one hand, these moments can be read as a desire to locate cultural or artistic continuity across time and space. On the other hand, Fellows distorts the monuments by attempting to Westernize what he sees in terms a Christian and/or British reader would understand. In both the descriptions of their environment and the objects themselves, Fellows introduces them in accordance with a clear British schema.

With this approach in mind, we can turn our attention now to the two major Xanthian tombs to which Fellows would continually return and that would become important fixtures in the British Museums’ display of Lycian art and architecture: the Horse Tomb and the Harpy Tomb. The “most beautiful” of Xanthian tombs and what would later be known as the Tomb of Payava, the Horse Tomb was constructed circa 360

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

BCE for the burial of Payava, a Lycian aristocrat.<sup>37</sup> The rich and varied decorative program of the tomb includes reliefs ranging in content from a big-game animal hunt, a seated figure most likely the Persian satrap Autophradates, the lauding of an athlete, and a battle between foot soldiers and cavalry. Forging a clear connection between text and image as a necessary step towards increased legibility of his account, Fellows pairs the sketch he makes of the tomb with written descriptions of each relief in order to make the visual “more intelligible,” as he is quick to assert the imperfection of his drawings.<sup>38</sup>

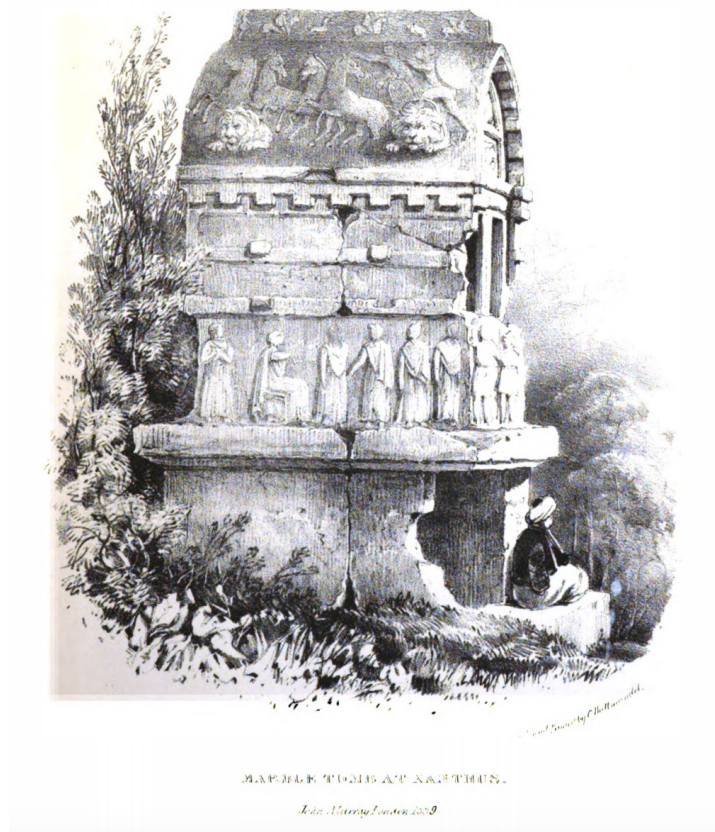


Fig. 2. Charles Fellows, “Marble Tomb at Xanthus.” Drawing, In *A Journal Written During an Excursion in Asia Minor*, Plate 16, London, 1838.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

Within his lengthy description of the sarcophagus, Fellows moves quickly from the whole to its individual parts, distinguishing between the warrior stepping into his chariot in on the roof's relief as rendered in "the early simple form," and those figures depicted in a "well formed and finished" fashion, such as the "beautifully formed horses" that draw the car.<sup>39</sup> Fellows' description of this particular relief is of interest because he fails to acknowledge or differentiate between the clearly Greek warrior's and Persian charioteer's dress. In the moments that follow, Fellows shifts his focus to the "perhaps Lycian" figures depicted on the lower chamber without attempting to describe what exactly makes them identifiable as Lycian.<sup>40</sup> He continues to gloss over what he sees—that is, until he reaches the reliefs positioned on either end of the tomb.

Fellows' deciphering of the tomb's end reliefs, once again, occurs in both British and Christian terms. In his eyes, the warriors of the southern relief resemble "the figures of the ancient Britons" in their clothing, consisting of only "girdles of armor round their loins, and petticoats reaching nearly down to their knees."<sup>41</sup> Fellows does not elaborate on how he has reached this conclusion or which particular image of the ancient Britons his comparison originates from. The only other energy he expends on this relief is fleeting; "mutilation" has left the inscription on the southern relief illegible, and therefore not worth his time attempting to copy.<sup>42</sup> The use of "mutilation" rather than "erosion" seems purposeful; rhetorically, it positions Fellows as one who is unable to make or contribute to any kind of scholarly progress or discovery concerning the inscriptions in

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

the moment due to intentional maiming by bad actors, whoever they may be. If we are to read this in light of his introduction and the way he has framed his quest, it does not seem a stretch for the reader to think contemporary Turks are responsible for the act of mutilation itself and/or the neglect that has allowed this damage to both persist.

Quickly shifting gears to the northern end of the tomb, Fellows acknowledges two figures: “one, clothed in a loose robe, stands in a commanding attitude fronting the spectator, with an arm raised over the head of a naked figure also standing.”<sup>43</sup> He continues: “were this marble found elsewhere, the group might be taken to represent the baptism of our savior, but the character of the figures does not support this idea, although the attitudes would be precisely correct for the ceremony.”<sup>44</sup> Rather than providing any concrete analysis of or evidence for the original context of these reliefs, Fellows knowingly makes an ahistorical comparison and attempts to put the reliefs in a language he understands, essentially only contributing to how we might understand how Fellows perceived these artifacts. Alas, much of the initial work that Fellows has recorded in his journal is a basic cataloging and overview of the subjects of the reliefs— however incorrect— as he interprets them. The moments in which he steps in to provide more than just a catalog of what he sees seem, at times, erratic.

Before shifting his focus to the Harpy Tomb, Fellows sums up his discovery of the Horse Tomb with a statement of purpose that frames, too, how we will read his engagement with the artifacts that follow. Expanding upon the language of mutilation to become increasingly invasive, Fellows believes that “it is not surprising that so beautiful

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 230.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

a tomb should have been broken open in all parts.”<sup>45</sup> This is the moment in which Fellows most directly assumes his role as savior, writing that “as each chamber is now exposed, I trust that it may not receive further injury.”<sup>46</sup> Fellows is only able to take on this protective role because, as he sees it, Others have done the invasive mutilation for him. Further, it is “as each chamber is now exposed” rather than “despite each chamber being exposed” that Fellows is inspired in his duty. Likewise, his lack of surprise makes clear that he, too, shares the desire to break part from whole to expose the ruins in whatever way he sees fit. After all, if the tomb was not fragmented and amply protected, would he have as strong of a case for their removal?

Fellows’ initial descriptions of the Harpy Tomb are less concentrated in their British and Christian comparisons or language of mutilation, instead favoring a cataloging of objects that appear in the reliefs in a so-called Greek style. Instead of immediately identifying the figures as the Harpies from Greek mythology, Fellows characterizes the reliefs that would become the tomb’s Westernized namesake as simply depicting women with large wings carrying off a child. It is not until 1843 with the publication of “The Xanthian Marbles” that he directly affirms that this tomb “we called the ‘Harpy Tomb’” and that “the object of the expedition was the bringing away the bas-reliefs representing the legend of the Daughters of King Pandarus.”<sup>47</sup> In the earliest travel journal, though, rather than discussing the content and context of the tomb’s decorative program as hailing from Greek mythology, he asserts the Greek-ness of the reliefs by

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Charles Fellows, *The Xanthian Marbles; their Acquisition, and Transmission to England* (London, 1843), 19.

simply identifying a “female with the Greek cap,” a figure seated in an “elegant Greek chair,” and a “dignified female, having a Greek tiara on her head.”<sup>48</sup> The latter female, however, is also described by Fellows as being dressed in “loose mameluke sleeves,” a popular Regency-era fashion deriving from the Mamluk class of soldier slaves across the Near East.<sup>49</sup> At this point, Fellows neither goes so far as to use his classification of objects to define this tomb as neither definitively Greek nor Persian nor Lycian in terms of its decorative program, regardless of the fact that the tomb’s symbolism seems much more cohesive and easily identifiable for Fellows than compared to the Horse Tomb. It would take a return visit to Xanthos for Fellows to complicate his initial reception of the tomb and expand his understanding of its larger cultural context.

#### *The Second Visit*

After publishing his first travel journal, Fellows reportedly “learned how completely unknown this country is to modern travelers,” despite its presence in canonical literature.<sup>50</sup> In the preface to the journal’s sequel, Fellows describes his second visit to Asia Minor in 1840, accompanied by artist George Scharf, as a responsible rescuing of ruins for the benefit of historians and lovers of art and an exploratory contribution towards filling in the blanks of Western maps. Yet, as Debbie Challis argues, a “traveller in the Ottoman Empire could not use the terminology of conquest and mapping, though they could claim ‘western’ symbols from the classical past as their

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<sup>48</sup> Fellows, 1838, 232.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Charles Fellows, *An Account of Discoveries in Lycia, Being a Journal Kept during a Second Excursion in Asia Minor* (London, 1841), iii.

own.”<sup>51</sup> In the case of Xanthos, Fellows ends up doing more of the latter. If the first travel journal influenced the readers-at-home’s perception of Xanthos and its remains as Greek culture to be rescued, *An Account of Discoveries in Lycia, Being a Journal Kept during a Second Excursion in Asia Minor* is where Fellows explicitly positions himself as its savior. It is through “the materials... which *I* have rescued from the ruins *I* visited” that Fellows feels “richly rewarded” in his pursuit (emphasis added).<sup>52</sup> The self-congratulatory tone of the preface speaks to Fellows’ confidence in his belief that his quest is a necessary contribution to English scholarship; it is his contribution to an ever-growing imperial desire to discover, name, classify, and acquire a diverse body cultural artifacts, especially those of an Other, under the guise of enlightenment, progress, and protection. Not only is Fellows aiding his government’s effort at representing Britain as a center of cultural and historical consciousness; he is supplying Britain in its “need to represent [itself] to others,” namely the Ottoman Empire, as professionally and financially equipped enough to become the protector and storehouse of other peoples’ cultures.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, the desire to excavate and remove the ruins his journals had publicized was exacerbated by the Anglo-French rivalry, as he believed the French might beat the English to the removal of these artifacts and botch the job.<sup>54</sup>

Yet what makes Fellows’ accounts of his findings at times so difficult to read is the way he creates tension between the artifacts themselves and their native contexts and

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<sup>51</sup> Debbie Challis, *From the Harpy Tomb to the Wonders of Ephesus: British Archaeologists in the Ottoman Empire 1840-1880* (London: Duckworth, 2008), 15.

<sup>52</sup> Fellows, 1841, iv.

<sup>53</sup> Christopher B. Steiner, “Museums and the Politics of Nationalism,” *Museum Anthropology* 19, no. 2 (1995): 4.

<sup>54</sup> Challis, *British Archaeologists*, 27.

how he assesses their content and value according to a Eurocentric rubric. In many cases, he is so set upon looking for Greece in Lycia that he is willing to ignore the moments in which he can push his inquiry about what makes these antiquities uniquely Lycian further. For example, in reference to his initial visit to Pergamum by the guide of local Turks in 1838, Debbie Challis asserts that Fellows' interpretation of the ruins as "truly Greek" goes beyond his estimation of their "high aesthetic value" in that it also stresses "that these antiquities and ruins did not 'belong' to the Turks as they were 'only conquerers' with no historical or cultural history in common with the ancient Greeks."<sup>55</sup> What this foreshadows, though, is Fellows' (and other archaeologists') ability to rationalize the excavation in the service of the British Museum in that the artifacts belong more to the children of the Hellenic West than those who presently occupied Lycia. Additionally, Fellows seems to ignore the fact that the land is not just occupied by those he classifies as trespassing Islamic Turks— indigenous peoples and those of other ethnicities are ignored entirely.

During this second expedition, Fellows continued to develop his understanding of ancient Lycian architecture in Eurocentric terms, naming both the Gothic and Elizabethan in his descriptions of the tomb styles he encountered.<sup>56</sup> For example, prior to his return to Xanthos, while visiting the small, northwestern Lycian town of Cadyanda, Fellows located the remains of a tomb weathered by an earthquake "resembling our Elizabethan domestic architecture."<sup>57</sup> Fellows quickly shifts, however, to emphasize the tombs' inherent Greekness: "I do not hesitate in placing this fragment in the finest age of

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Fellows, 1841, 104.

<sup>57</sup> Fellows, 1841, 116.

Greek work; it shows by the simplest effects the full expression of the history and ideas of the sculptured figures.”<sup>58</sup> Once again, Fellows identifies this tomb in both Elizabethan and Grecian terms, making no attempt to see this tomb as uniquely Lycian. As Debbie Challis argues, “such descriptive language created in a sense that the tombs already belonged to Britain and Europe.”<sup>59</sup> Seeing as the British Museum, and by proxy, the British Government had expressed interest in claiming the ruins, why wouldn’t Fellows play into this rhetoric?

Further, Fellows argues that if the tomb had not been partially destroyed by natural causes, “had they been all perfect,” he writes, “its value in a museum, either for the philologist, antiquarian, or artist, would be inestimable.”<sup>60</sup> In this way, Fellows’ conception of the sign-exchange value placed upon the objects by or through the museum is directly connected to both the wholeness and visible perfection of objects that he identifies as inherently Western. The ultimate paradox, though, is the fact that in cases such as the Harpy Tomb, Fellows and company were only permitted to remove the reliefs rather than the entire architectural structure to London. The fact of the matter is Fellows’ project is less a rescue-and-protect mission than it is divide-and-conquer plunder. Fellows fails to acknowledge— and perhaps we can only do so in retrospect— that part of the objects’ value will become so tightly intertwined with Fellows himself. Through the act of discovery and excavation, the artifacts become a product of the explorer’s self-proclaimed noble quest and will forever carry that association. This phenomenon is by no means unique to Fellows’ excavations in Lycia; however, I argue that this is particularly

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Challis, *British Archaeologists*, 30.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

problematic for regions such as Lycia that remain otherwise unknown or overlooked by the Western gaze.

Fellows' return visit to Xanthos, his favorite city, "the first in which I became acquainted with the remains of art of the ancient Lycians, and in which I hope to find still more, embodying their language, history, and poetic sculpture" is not unlike his recent experience in Cadyanda, despite his intent to periodize and historicize the ruins.<sup>61</sup> From the very onset of his visit on April 17, 1840, Fellows expresses his determination to come to know the ancient Lycians through their sculptural remains. Each of the Lycian inscriptions on the Horse Tomb, for instance, named here only as "the beautiful gothic-formed sarcophagus-tomb," are successfully copied (yet not deciphered here) by Fellows in hopes of "[doing] more justice to these fine works of the ancients."<sup>62</sup> Despite his enthusiasm for recording Lycian language inscriptions and a fleeting moment in which he briefly lets go of his total Westernification of the marbles, he falls into the same limiting trap of historicizing these artifacts as overwhelmingly Greek. Fellows' attempt at periodizing the ruins on the fourth day of his visit proves his inability or lack of desire to imagine their creation and use outside of what we might call the Western cultural timeline: the ruins "certainly [possess] some of the earliest Archaic sculpture in Asia Minor... [and] must be the work of the sixth or seventh centuries before the Christian era."<sup>63</sup> Fellows continuously prioritizes Greek influence in the region; rarely does he imagine a Lycia outside of this context. Yes, there is an undeniable Greek influence across Asia Minor thanks to the migration of and contact with Dorian and Ionian Greeks;

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<sup>61</sup> Fellows, 1841, 163.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 165-66.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-165.

however, the examination of this influence is not to negate nor override what makes Xanthos distinctly Lycian. Fellows' ends his brief consideration of art historical periods by summarizing the whole of the ruins as "Greek, fine, bold, and simple, bespeaking an early age of that people. No sign whatever is seen of the works of the Byzantines or Christians."<sup>64</sup> But what about non-Greek influences?

The furthest Fellows seems to go in extending his analysis of the ruins beyond Grecian limits occurs in his return to the Harpy Tomb. At first glance, his account of the Harpy Tomb seems promising in that he is willing to acknowledge a degree of Near Eastern influence: "On closer examination I find these to be far more interesting and ancient than I had before deemed them. They are in very low relief, resembling in that respect the Persepolitian or Egyptian bas-reliefs."<sup>65</sup> Here, Fellows seems to acknowledge this influence on a technical level (very low relief), rather than on a symbolic or narrative level. As Leo Raditsa argues, however, this tomb shows a "Greek-Lycian version of audiences depicted at Persepolis."<sup>66</sup> Ritual offerings were important to but differed in their significance across Greek, Lycian, and Persian cultures; however, Raditsa asserts that members of these respective cultures were aware of this difference when witnessing another's ritual gesture.<sup>67</sup> In this particular case, the offering depicted on southern relief meant, for a Greek audience, "the worship of a hero; for a Persian, an audience before the Persian governor of Xanthus, faintly reminiscent of the audiences before the Great King

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>66</sup> Leo Raditsa, "Iranians in Asia Minor," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, vol. 3, *The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), 104.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

in Persepolis.”<sup>68</sup> The nuanced reading of the Harpy Tomb that Raditsa provides concerns the relationship between narrative (the depiction of the ritual) and perspective (the various interpretations of the ritual) in ways that transcend Fellows’ ability— or perhaps desire— to see the tomb as a truly multifaceted cultural artifact. Additionally, Fellows’ lines are of further interest because he, first, seems to equate “more ancient” with “less Greek,” and second, is willing to name two Near Eastern cultures that broaden the area of influence far south and even farther east of Greece. Yet, unlike Raditsa, Fellows does not slow down long enough to qualify how and why he now sees these Near-Eastern influences at work.

Instead, Fellows shifts gears to examine the narrative symbolism of the reliefs in, again, a Greek context, supporting what we might call his appropriated Greek gaze by citing the analysis of sculptor Benjamin Gibson, an interpretation Fellows believes is the most convincing and “the best that I have yet heard.”<sup>69</sup> Fellows copies at length a letter from Gibson in which Gibson identifies the winged figures as the mythological Harpies abducting Pandareus’s daughters. Gibson’s analysis cites both Homer and Strabo as evidence, asserting that because “Strabo tells us that Pandarus was king of Lycia... this tomb becomes thus very interesting; which, if it be not the tomb of Pandarus, shows that the story was prevalent in Lycia, and that the great author of the *Iliad* derived it from that source.”<sup>70</sup> But rather than interrogating regional difference through the ways the tomb’s

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Fellows, 1841, 171.

<sup>70</sup> Fellows, 1841, 172. It is also important to acknowledge that Strabo himself questions the identity of this Pandarus— Pandarus is only affiliated with Lycia insofar that he is the same person as or conflated with Pandareus. See Strabo, *Geography*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones, Loeb Classical Library 223, 317.

narrative is distinctly Lycian, Gibson, and therefore Fellows, just revert to and rely upon Homer and Strabo (whose account was written hundreds of years after the construction of the tomb) to do the analytical heavy lifting. According to Homer, the daughters of Pandareus were snatched away by the Harpies and forced to serve the Furies after being brought up by Aphrodite, Hera, and Artemis following the death of their parents. It is of note, however, that in Homer's account the Harpies are personified as stormwinds rather than described as the half-woman half-bird composite figures Hesiod portrays in the *Theogony*.<sup>71</sup>



Fig. 3. Charles Fellows, “Sculptures on Tomb at Xanthus.” Drawing, In *A Journal Written During an Excursion in Asia Minor*, Plate 18, London, 1838.

<sup>71</sup> William Cowper's popular 1809 translation of *The Odyssey* upholds the image of the Harpies as storm-wind snatchers: “Storms suddenly the beauteous daughters snatch'd / Of Pandarus away... / the Harpies ravishing away / Those virgins, gave them to the Furies Three, / That they might serve them. (Book XX, lines 76-91). Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. William Cowper (London, 1809), 20.76-91. See also Paul Murgatroyd's summary of the Harpies varied portrayal in Ancient Greek and Roman literature in *Mythical Monsters in Classical Literature* (London: Duckworth, 2007): 63-69.

Inspired, Fellows soon begins to build momentum in his decisive analysis of the tomb, as he asserts that thanks to Gibson's reading of Homer and Strabo, it is impossible not to recognize the appearance of the goddesses in the reliefs.<sup>72</sup> For instance, he reads the seated figures depicted in the western relief as Juno and Venus and her attendants and supposes, then, that "upon another [relief] is probably represented Diana, recognized by the hound."<sup>73</sup> Yet, the dog that appears on the eastern side of the tomb is positioned aside and looks, as in obedience to, an unmistakably male figure. Fellows confidently concludes his examination of the Harpy Tomb by, first, acknowledging that "in the Harpies... we have the illustration of those beings as described by the classic writers."<sup>74</sup> In this case, sculpture can only be read in dialogue with the ancient texts that preceded it; it cannot exist as its own object of study. Fellows is outright about how these classical narratives are layered upon both the findings themselves and his interpretation of them, in that "every excursion we have made has added tales of fresh discoveries of pieces of sculpture."<sup>75</sup> Yet the "freshness" of these discoveries is limited by the fact that Fellows only seems to elaborate on that which fits into his reading of the artifacts as being of "a pure Greek date" or possessing "subjects [that] may be of interest to the mythologist."<sup>76</sup> Today, the British Museum refutes the interpretation of the tomb as depicting the Harpies and their abduction of Pandareus's daughters, going so far as to assert that the bird-like creatures are no longer to be interpreted as harpies but as sirens.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Fellows, 1841, 172.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> The curatorial notes for the Harpy Tomb refute the Gibson-Fellows interpretation on the grounds that the Harpy narrative does not explain the central groups such as the scene of ritual

Though interpretations of the Harpy Tomb's reliefs have evolved over time, this does not negate how revealing it is that both Fellows and Gibson are working so desperately to read the reliefs according to their knowledge of Greek mythology. Additionally, Gibson and Fellows' discussions of the Harpy Tomb foreshadow comparative exhibitions within the museum space and attest to the explorer's ability to layer the narratives connected to his own discovery process atop each artifact.

Before moving on to the subsequent excavation account that documents how the Xanthian remains were acquired by the British Museum, I want to briefly acknowledge that Fellows, immediately after closing his discussion of the Harpy Tomb, begins making comparisons between a generalized body of sculptures across the Xanthian acropolis and objects he has observed in the British Museum's Greek holdings. Even while on the ground in Xanthos, he actively hearkens back to the museum space as a way to orient or even regulate his knowledge-making. This is another instance, though this time relegated to a footnote, in which he concedes Persepolitian influence on the depiction of horses and a chariot driver; however, he makes no further comment on how or why this is possible or its broader significance.<sup>78</sup> If Fellows' first examination of the Harpy Tomb privileged his ability to catalog Greek elements of its reliefs, the second

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offering that Raditsa has centralized. The curatorial commentary surveys various theories that have been presented regarding the meaning of the tomb's reliefs, some of which attempt to interpret figures as Lycian deities or as representing the Lycian matriarchy. It is important to note, however, that the curator seems to favor reading into the tomb's Greek influence, writing that "given the purely Hellenic workmanship of the relief, an interpretation within the Greek cycle of ideas seems most probable." "Tomb." British Museum, accessed February 1, 2021, [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G\\_1848-1020-1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1848-1020-1). Cf. Leo Raditsa, "Iranians," 104, who believes that the tomb was erected by Greek craftsmen but for Persian patrons. We must consider the broader purpose and audience of the reliefs in order to complicate this notion that this Lycian tomb is simply an extension of the history of a purely Greek art.

<sup>78</sup> Fellows, 1841, 173.

examination gestures, albeit rather hesitantly, toward the possibility of acknowledging its non-Western influences. Yet as we will soon see, this acknowledgment is not sustainable. In the third published account of his travels and studies in 1843, the Harpy Tomb becomes increasingly Greek, despite the cultural fusion that was briefly revealed during the second visit, likely due to the belief that its recognizable Greek influence would make it most interesting for British Museum patrons. In this way, Fellows has begun to figure Lycia as an extension of Greece rather than a hybrid of east and west.

*The 1842-1843 Excavation*

The third account of the Lycian expedition is presented in Fellows' *The Xanthian Marbles: Their Acquisition and Transmission to England* (1843). This document is presented as a "register of incidents" connected to the acquisition, as well as a correction of so-called rumors and misrepresentations of the archeological integrity of the excavations.<sup>79</sup> The publication of his second expedition journal attracted considerable attention from the British Museum Trustees, who pressed Lord Palmerston, a staunch British nationalist, to acquire a firman from the British embassy in Constantinople through which Fellows and his team could begin excavating and shipping the marbles to London in the interest of what the Trustees called the "public spirit."<sup>80</sup> The acquisition of this legal document was not without its diplomatic difficulties; Fellows himself had to travel to Constantinople and concede to only excavate at Xanthus after learning the British government had overextended its welcome and proposed to also excavate an

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<sup>79</sup> For further discussion of Fellows' excavation techniques, see Enid Slatter, *Xanthus: Travels of Discovery in Turkey* (London: Rubicon Press, 1994), 221 and Challis, *British Archaeologists*, 34.

<sup>80</sup> Fellows, 1843, 5.

ancient fortress at Bodrum (or ancient Halicarnassus) during the journey.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, Fellows accompanied the expedition because he felt he best understood the principal objects and their locations at the excavation site; however, he did so on his own dime, even going so far as to pay for the supplies needed to remove the artifacts himself, though he believed he would be reimbursed by the Trustees without issue.

The journey was begun with the intention that the planned excavations of the Harpy Tomb and Tomb of Payava would likely “bring to light others, probably better preserved and more valuable.”<sup>82</sup> This proved to be the case, as the excavations at Xanthos would reveal what came to be known as the Nereid Monument, the largest of Lycian artifacts to soon appear in the British Museum. Diverging in tone and purpose, however, this particular document does not mirror the earlier journals’ attempts at art historical analysis. Rather, Fellows is explicit in that he “shall avoid giving any description of the sculptures, which ere long will be better judged of in the British Museum.”<sup>83</sup> What follows, then, is more so a narrative of the archaeological process rather than an attempt at antiquarian or scholarly analysis. Once Fellows and his team arrived in Xanthus and began working in early January 1842, they began plotting to retrieve the sculptures based on the positions, weight, and shape of the stones. Plans were proposed, deemed unfeasible, and revised, taking into account the tools and machinery that were actually available to the team. During this process, Fellows stressed the necessity of removing the

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<sup>81</sup> See Slatter, 216-217. As evidence of British-Ottoman imperial relations at this moment in time, Slatter calls the firman “an expression of sincere friendship between the two nations” (216). Further, “the expedition had, therefore, full authority to take whatever stones were considered the most valuable as works of art, in the spirit of a gift from the Sultan to the Queen, to be kept in the British Museum for the pleasure and erudition of the public and antiquarian scholars” (217).

<sup>82</sup> Fellows, 1843, 3-4.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 38.

artifacts and transporting them quickly and efficiently, for he believed that any delay might jeopardize placing the artifacts “safe in English custody” as “ignorance of the peasantry, the curiosity or wantonness of travellers, might do them injury, or political changes might check the expedition.”<sup>84</sup> This fear that the already weathered and fragmented remains could be further endangered even after the British had been given the power to exercise control over the site seemed to shock the process into motion.



Fig. 4. George Scharf. *View of the ruins of the Nereid Monument at Xanthos.*

Drawing, c. 1843, (British Museum),

[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G\\_2012-5034-5](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_2012-5034-5).

Shortly thereafter, the ruins of the Ionic temple, soon to be known as the Nereid Monument, were discovered. Their arrangement in the earth seemed to be the result of an earthquake, rather than man-made destruction. It would not be until 1848 that Fellows would publish a thorough examination of the Nereid Monument after it had already been

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 24.

exhibited in the British Museum since May 1845. In keeping with the linear chronology of the discoveries, publications, and reception of the Xanthian marbles, this document will be discussed in full in the next chapter. For now, it is important that we understand how Fellows initially framed this discovery in the 1843 excavation account. Fellows made no attempt to interpret the “220 feet of frieze and eleven statues” and other fragments they soon retrieved, other than to say that three of the statues “displayed the emblems of Venus beneath their feet.”<sup>85</sup>

The next project was to remove a series of sculptures embedded in the walls of the Xanthian Acropolis. In this account, Fellows goes as far to generalize that this architecture and its reliefs “are of early Eastern character, and distinct from the Greek, which is the only style of art found in the other parts of the ruins in which we had been working.”<sup>86</sup> This statement is far more divisive than his acknowledgment of any degree of hybridity he made in the previous journal. In fact, he is so taken aback by two of the sculptures embedded in the wall that he confidently asserts that “the whole of these sculptures are of a school hitherto unknown in European museums.”<sup>87</sup> But instead of describing how and why he has reached such a conclusion, Fellows abruptly moves on; at last, it came time for the Harpy and Horse Tombs to be deconstructed and packaged for their journey to London. The situation regarding the deconstruction of the Horse Tomb is perhaps the most revealing of Fellows’ care and concern regarding the artifacts and their potential destruction by British hands. He worked quickly and diligently to, at the very least, “mark with lines and numbers the various cracks and stones upon the middle story,

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 28, 27.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 31.

and to map them accurately, as I was sure it would fall in pieces as soon as the weight of the top was removed.”<sup>88</sup> Sure enough, Fellows’ fears were correct— the center of the tomb cracked into pieces; however, he lauds the overall success of the operation because, after all, the sculptures themselves ”did not receive more injury than they probably would have done from a more scientific operation.”<sup>89</sup> Ultimately, the care he took in mapping the ruins, however rudimentary his archaeological prowess was, did allow the monument to be reconstructed (as far as Fellows understood or imagined it) once its pieces arrived in the British Museum.

Fellows closes the account of the excavation by placing himself in the position of a kind of omniscient spectator. Standing at the Acropolis, Fellows imagines what the “Greek-built district” must have been.<sup>90</sup> It is in this moment that he imagines Herodotus in this space so many centuries before him recounting the very siege of the city that put this land on the map of the historical imagination. Much as Sigmund Freud would later imagine “Rome’s past ages visually superimposed upon one another,” Fellows evokes a palimpsestic image of Xanthos where text, ruins, memory, and imagination are woven together.<sup>91</sup> But neither Fellows nor the crated-up artifacts would remain permanent physical fixtures in this space. The various journals that Fellows published during this period recounting his travels would, however, allow British readers to see this space through the traveler’s eyes before being given the opportunity to see the transposed version of Xanthos that would soon appear in London. It is now possible to trace the

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>91</sup> Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 139.

narrative of the artifacts' arrival and display in the museum space and examine the ways in which spectators grappled with the composite layering of Fellow's textual framing of the artifacts, the museum's curated display of them, and the public's response with their own. What follows is a constant reconciliation of one's own way of seeing with those that surround and that came before them.

## CHAPTER THREE

“A FAR-OFF, ALIEN SHORE—A LAND OF POETIC DREAMS”: RESURRECTING  
XANTHOS ON BRITISH SOIL

Once the Xanthian Marbles began arriving in London in December 1842, they were quickly exhibited for the public in the British Museum. Immediately, the artifacts entertained and enlightened viewers, but their constantly evolving presence in the museum would make clear the conflict created when Near Eastern artifacts were forcibly assimilated into a Great Chain of Art that lauded Hellenism above all else. From the beginning, the new Lycian acquisitions were temporarily displayed in the Phigalien Room and Grand Central Saloon, located in the western wing of the ground floor, until the completion of the Lycian room in 1845.<sup>92</sup> It is worth noting that the Phigalien Room was an explicitly Greek exhibition space, housing the Bassae reliefs excavated from the site of the temple of Apollo Epikourios in southwestern Greece in 1811. This position was temporary yet influential on the artifacts’ reception. The museum was undergoing a vast expansion project during this period; it would not be until 1845 and beyond that the Lycian marbles would have their own designated gallery spaces. The promptness of their temporary display, however, could never imply that all viewers would arrive just as quickly at the same set of conclusions regarding the marbles and their cultural or political value. By the spring of 1843, a slew of Victorians other than Fellows took to the pen as a means of recording their personal responses to the artifacts and, consequently, shaping

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<sup>92</sup> David M. Wilson, *The British Museum: A History* (London: British Museum Press, 2002), 103.

public access to and reception of the marbles in this evolving institutional space. I want to consider, then, what was being published for the people to notify them of this acquisition beyond Fellows' own publications in a manner that was easily accessible.<sup>93</sup>

The periodical announcements published after the artifacts' arrival bridge the gap between Fellows, the Trustees, and the visitors (including famous authors and established critics) who would soon step foot in the galleries and write their own reviews of the Xanthian marbles. Both *The Illustrated London News* and the *Times* published announcements of the exhibition during the spring of 1843; however, these brief articles seem to blend announcement and advertisement with a kind of depersonalized and selective initial review. The *Illustrated London News* published the "British Museum.—Exhibition of Marbles from Asia Minor" on February 11, 1843, accompanied by three illustrations: two figures from the Nereid Monument and the reliefs of the Harpy Tomb rendered in both two and three dimensions. The *ILN* review begins by questioning the value of exhibitions of fine art, surveying key debates as to its purpose before asserting that they "have become necessary to the maintenance of social order at home, and tasteful supremacy of our manufactures abroad."<sup>94</sup> Additionally, the government's interest in procuring the artifacts for exhibitions is done so "with a liberal spirit" that "guides its resuscitated energies for the education of the people, the improvement of our industrial

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<sup>93</sup> An expanded version of this project will further flesh out the technical details of the acquisition and any behind-the-scenes doings. I will look into internal documents and Fellows' correspondence with the British Museum— documents that are confined to physical archives that are currently inaccessible or limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>94</sup> "British Museum.— Exhibition of Marbles from Asia Minor," *Illustrated London News*, 11 February 1843.

products, the monumental record of our acts and heroes, and the general aggrandizement of the state.”<sup>95</sup> But what are the objects that are brought before the public in this manner?

Published the same week the exhibition opened for the public, the *ILN*'s review of the Xanthian Marbles that follows this introductory interrogation of the museum is very much in dialogue with Fellows' journals. Not only does the author reiterate that the most interesting period of Lycian history is when it was occupied by the Greeks; they also continue to summarize some of the key objects in the exhibition by copying Fellows' Gothic and Elizabethan comparisons. Interestingly, though, the discussion of the Harpy Tomb goes beyond Fellows' casual mention of there being a vague degree of Egyptian and Persepolitian influence in the reliefs. Instead of regurgitating Fellows' and Gibson's interpretation of the reliefs as depicting the abduction of Pandareus's daughters, the author capitalizes instead on these other Near Eastern influences. The author suggests that “the character of these sculptures... bears strongly the marks both of Egyptian and Persepolitian art. The chairs, the harpies, and the lilies which many of the figures are smelling, are of the former; and the tie of the hair and folding of many of the draperies, the latter.”<sup>96</sup> It is unclear exactly how the author makes these determinations or which exact Egyptian and Persepolitian artifacts the tomb is being compared to; however, the British Museum was in no short supply of Ancient Egyptian artifacts depicting similarly seated figures, water lilies or Egyptian lotuses, and bird-like creatures.

The new Egyptian Gallery had opened in the museum in 1834, and the *ILN* describes the reconstructed Harpy Tomb as placed “in the saloon between the Egyptian

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

and Elgin Galleries.”<sup>97</sup> Equal to the size of the Elgin Marbles Gallery, in this ancient Egyptian sculpture gallery a visitor would encounter the colossal bust of Ramesses II and the head of Amenhotep III in the center of the room, with smaller “second rate” pieces set back in rows along the walls of the gallery.<sup>98</sup> Stephanie Moser argues that while the architect Robert Smirke’s “Grecian Revival-style designs” for this new wing of the museum were “intended to reinforce Britain’s connections with ancient Greece,” the plans “inadvertently bestowed an important status on the civilization of ancient Egypt as well.”<sup>99</sup> Moser goes on to assert that “although ancient Egypt was excluded from the intimate connection that existed between the museum and the classical world, the architectural style of the new building provided a more austere and sophisticated setting for the Egyptian collection.”<sup>100</sup> Such a statement neglects both artifacts located in the Greco-Roman collections and throughout the museum that are cultural and aesthetic hybrids, just as it ignores the viewer’s ability to make connections between these ancient cultures through their own engagements with the artifacts in and across these closely positioned galleries.

On top of looking for or through a lens of cross-cultural connections, the author of the *ILN* essay does also pause to consider the reliefs as simply depicting the buried subject himself: “May they not be conjectured to represent the character of the

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<sup>97</sup> If we look at a map, though, the author of the article ignores the Central Saloon which connects the Egyptian Gallery to the corridor containing the Phigalien and Elgin Galleries. See museum floorplan lithograph reproduced in Stephanie Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities: Ancient Egypt at the British Museum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006): 179.

<sup>98</sup> Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities*, 154.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

deceased?”<sup>101</sup> Still, what follows this interrogation is the discussion of the “strong” marks of Egyptian influence. What makes this initial exhibition announcement so interesting is its early willingness to think outside of the limitations Fellows’ interpretations seemed to place on the artifacts. This applies both to his reading the tomb as indicative of the Pandareus myth as well as his inability or lack of desire to articulate how exactly he sees Egyptian influence present in the tomb. What this essay ultimately does, then, is condition the reader to think about broader Ancient Near Eastern influences in Lycia and how comparisons could be made between the artifacts in the Egyptian saloon, for example, and the Xanthian tombs.

The *Times*’ take on the exhibition skews more Greek than Egyptian in its focus, though it does list the same points of resemblance to Egyptian sculptures outlined in the *ILN* essay. The *Times* essay entitled “The Xanthian Marbles in the British Museum” was published almost three months later on May 1. Unlike the *ILN* exhibition announcement, the *Times* essay is much more deliberate in pointing out the physical, but also cultural, juxtaposition between the Xanthian and Elgin Marbles in the museum space. The author quickly determines the value of the Lycian marbles based on their nearness to the Elgin Marbles. From the perspective of the author, it is almost as if the Xanthian marbles walked so that the Elgin Marbles could run: “as might be expected, these sculptures do not, as works of art, rank with the Elgin marbles, but they are highly interesting as illustrating the state of sculpture in a much earlier age. They are supposed to include some of the earliest efforts of Greek art which have come down to our times.”<sup>102</sup> That

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<sup>101</sup> “British Museum.-- Exhibition of Marbles from Asia Minor,” *Illustrated London News* (February 11, 1843), 98.

<sup>102</sup> “The Xanthian Marbles in the British Museum,” *The Times* (May 1, 1843), 8.

said, the author does allow the Xanthian marbles to “vie with the Elgin marbles” in terms of the “vigour of design” rather than the “beauty of execution” of some of the select, yet unnamed pediments and friezes. Despite the fact that “crowds of holiday folk” have determined the marbles “very ancient” and “very curious” it will not be until these treasures have “entered the synopsis” that they will “[attract] the notice their importance demands.”<sup>103</sup> This author places special and explicit emphasis on the role guidebooks and museum catalogues play in the education and meaning-making processes of museum goers. Yet, their very review of the exhibition illustrates how a visitor can begin to do this on their own if and when they recognize how valuable the space itself is as a teacher. While much of this essay encourages Lycian-Greek comparisons, they do leave the door open for visitors to think critically about and transfer what they see and learn from ancient Near Eastern collections like the Egyptian Gallery to these Lycian exhibits.

Then as now, there were a slew of guidebooks being published, updated, and republished, geared towards the entire British Museum or select galleries and collections, such as those of the Department of Antiquities. Alongside essays in periodicals, these guidebooks conditioned visitors on how to encounter the Lycian artifacts for the first time. One, if not the earliest, guide to the British Museum that discusses the Xanthian Marbles is *The People’s Handbook to the British Museum*, published in 1843. This guidebook presents the Lycian acquisitions as only “scarcely inferior to those in the Elgin Collection” and speculates that while they are of a somewhat uncertain date” it is likely that they are “three centuries older than those from the Parthenon, at Athens.”<sup>104</sup> In fact, it

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> *The People’s Handbook to the British Museum* (London, June 1843): 91-92.

is only the Harpy Tomb that predates the Parthenon, and it only does so by forty or so years. This desire to see the Xanthian Marbles as older— more archaic or primitive— than the Elgin Marbles (itself presented as a pinnacle of Western cultural achievement) is fascinating. The Xanthian Marbles are not allowed to stand on their own, here, as their meaning must be decided based on this other, more famous and consequential national treasure. In the Phigalien Saloon for example, the Nereids, here described as “seven mutilated female figures in thin loose drapery,” are described as “similar in costume and action to those of the Winged Victory in the Elgin Collection.”<sup>105</sup> Though comparison to the Elgin Marbles drives much of this guide to the exhibition, the cataloging of artifacts such as the Harpy Tomb borrows heavily from Fellows’ interpretations. *The Odyssey* is explicitly named as an important literary reference for deciphering (and therefore understanding Fellows’ interpretation of) the Harpy Tomb placed in the middle of the Grand Central Saloon, and this interpretation is presented as definitive. No mention is made of Egypt or other Near Eastern influences— the Persians are only discussed at any length insofar as they are depicted as violent conquerors under the direction of Harpagus. In conclusion, the Xanthian Marbles section of the guidebook leads up and transitions into the Elgin Marbles gallery itself. The ordering and presentation of the narrative created by the guidebook reflects its attempt at historicizing the artifacts according to an idealized timeline where Xanthos only exists as a precursor to the ultimate Greek achievement upon the Athenian Acropolis.

Now that we have established how the artifacts were acquired and initially exhibited in the British Museum, it is possible to examine specific visitor accounts and

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 93.

trace how these exhibitions evolved and were received over time. The narrative of reception this section maps out is organized temporally, moving chronologically between the texts themselves and important changes to how the museum was updating or altering these exhibition displays. While it is impossible to account for every single observer account between 1843 and the end of the century, it is possible to examine in the accounts we do have how their perspective is influenced by their individual background knowledge, the surrounding exhibits, and/or their intended audience or purpose for writing.

### **The 1840s: Early Reception, the Establishment of the Lycian Room, & Fellows'**

#### ***Ionic Trophy Monument***

Well before the novelty of the Lycian antiquities came close to wearing off, many of the most dedicated and focused reception accounts were written and published in the early years of their exhibition. Egyptologist Samuel Birch was one of the first antiquarians to publish an essay of observations on the Xanthian Marbles. Birch had been employed by the British Museum since the mid-1830s, but it was in 1844, that he would become the assistant keeper of the Department of Antiquities. Birch would hold this post until 1861, when departmental restructuring would place Birch as the keeper of Oriental Antiquities. Writing to the Society of Antiquaries in 1843, a year before this promotion, Birch sought to consider the Xanthian Marbles “in respect to art, mythology, and the local history of the Xanthians” rather than simply rehash Fellows’ findings or the contexts of their removal.<sup>106</sup> This is the earliest attempt at a scholarly work on this topic

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<sup>106</sup> Samuel Birch, *Observations on the Xanthian Marbles Recently Deposited in the British Museum* (London, 1843): 3.

undertaken by someone affiliated with the British Museum but not with the discovery and excavation itself. Due to his involvement with the museum, Birch is positioned quite differently from the non-affiliated, visiting public. That said, I believe it is necessary to include Birch in this survey because his approach is in direct conversation with other reception accounts. Much of Birch's effort lies in his tracing the mythic history of Lycia from Sarpedon's exile and emigration from Crete through the Roman Empire; not unlike many nineteenth-century readers, much of his knowledge comes from classical sources, including the literature of Homer and Herodotus, though he also supplements his historical survey with more recent antiquarian scholarship.

Despite what we might expect from Birch's background as an Egyptologist, Egypt is not centralized as a Lycian influence in his study of the Harpy Tomb and other marbles. He does, however, make increased room for Persia. In terms of the marbles themselves, one of Birch's most helpful observations is in regard to the equestrian procession relief that Fellows identified in a footnote as bearing strong Persepolitian influence without providing any concrete evidence for his claim. Examining the horses, Birch states that "their hair is gathered in the same manner as on the staircase at Persepolis," and he cites an illustration from Sir R. Ker Porter's *Travels in Persia* (1821) as support.<sup>107</sup> His examination of the rest of the frieze ends with the assertion that the procession of the chariot and draped figures, who he reads as "divinities of the highest order... or else priests and sacerdotal functionaries" as a decisively Persian work, which "from the absence of all emblems must be considered a civil or religious one."<sup>108</sup> Instead

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 11.

of looking solely to Herotodus, or even Porter, to make sense of “the Persian character of this frieze,” however, Birch turns to Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* (written c. 370 BCE) in order to interpret the frieze as a sacrificial procession led by the monarch Cyrus. Yet, unlike Fellows, he does not present this sole interpretation as fact, and is willing to backtrack on his reading of Cyrus, however convincing, to make it a point to emphasize the number of figures depicted in Lycian, rather than Persian attire. Birch’s concluding thoughts on this frieze stress Lycia’s cultural hybridity rather than attempt to mask it as decisively Greek or Persian:

consequently [these figures] would represent the Satrap or Lyciarches, attended by the usual personages of a Person-Greek procession in honor of the local divinities. These monuments are probably not older than the Persian invasion, 546 B.C.; although, perhaps, some of the earliest executed after it, exhibiting a mixed kind of treatment, allied on the one hand to the early Greek or Phoenico-Greek, and on the other to the Person-Egyptian, such as occurs on the staircase at Persepolis, for the Persians and Medes derived their arts from their vassals of Greek blood in Asia Minor, and from Egypt, and had no original development of native art.<sup>109</sup>

Birch presents the Persians themselves and their art as a fusion between East and West, further complicating how we might understand or define the “Persian” influence on Lycia.

Birch then transitions into his ruminations on the Harpy Tomb, an artifact that sustains his interest for much of the rest of the essay. Aside from a novel discussion of evidence of polychromy, Birch spends much of his time recapping Fellows’ interpretation of the myth of Pandareus; however, he quickly begins to question the verity of Fellows’ reading, taking issue with two figures in particular. The first, the warrior appearing before

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 12.

the seated male subject on the northern relief, complicates the attribution of the Pandareus myth in that “in [this] myth... the goddesses are only mentioned as presiding over their destiny; but the figure, here, is evidently, even under archaic Lycian treatment, a warrior, not a female.”<sup>110</sup> Instead, he interprets the presence of the bear aside the throne as evidence that this scene is Jupiter “bestowing a helmet upon Mars or some hero,” potentially Bellerophon or Sarpedon who were, in what Birch later calls a “national tradition,” the two principal heroes of Lycia.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, Birch questions Fellows’ identification of Diana on the east relief, writing “there is considerable difficulty in making out the mythology of this side. Mr. Fellows, indeed, has conjectured the standing figure and the dog to represent Diana but it is not certain this figure is a female. On the hypothesis of the whole subject being in connection with the Harpies, it would be admissible— but there can be little doubt that detached myths are intended.”<sup>112</sup> Birch, therefore, explicitly opens up how this tomb can be interpreted in a mythological sense; he is willing to go beyond the limitations of Fellows’ Pandareus reading in order to consider how a vast array of mythological figures could be read into the reliefs.

Further, Birch argues that if we are to read certain figures as “treated according to Lycian art” specifically, then “the whole scene must then receive a different interpretation” altogether.<sup>113</sup> Even though much of his discussion of the Xanthian Marbles is rather recursive in the sense that he, too, often prioritizes the marbles’ Greek cultural influence, Birch’s examinations are highly intertextual, linking back to what he

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 16; 22.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 18.

has read of Fellows, Homer, and Herodotus; however, he also maps a new set of classical and contemporary travel writings onto the “harvest of Greek art” obtained by Fellows from Xanthos. What Birch ultimately does, then, regardless of his intentions, is start to open up how these artifacts can be read in a more explicit Near Eastern context.

William Watkiss Lloyd, a writer whose interests spanned a wide variety of classical and literary concerns, published his *Xanthian Marbles: The Harpy Monument, a Disquisitional Essay* in 1844. This essay is not a direct response to Birch; however, it does share similar concerns with mythological interpretations of the tomb. Lloyd’s essay is interesting for two reasons: it engages with conversations about the politics of the marbles’ display and considers the tomb as a representation of “the peculiarity of race and character of the people by whom it was raised and preserved,” as well as the “relation of Hellenic civilization to the intermediate and archaic forms through which it verges towards the conterminal barbarian and oriental.”<sup>114</sup> Debbie Challis places Lloyd’s pamphlet as an important node in the discourse surrounding the Xanthian Marbles placement within the Great Chain of Art. The Great Chain of Art was used by the British Museum as “a classificatory and chronological model” derived from the natural sciences that “could be used to determine the historical period to which an object belonged and to judge it accordingly.”<sup>115</sup> As Challis and the very placement of the Xanthian Marbles in the museum space suggest, this Hellenocentric chain was linked to Classical Greek art—

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<sup>114</sup> William Watkiss Lloyd, *Xanthian Marbles: The Harpy Monument, a Disquisitional Essay* (London, 1844): 2.

<sup>115</sup> Challis, *British Archaeologists*, 41.

the paragon of which was, of course, the Elgin Marbles. But, as we know by now, the Xanthian Marbles were not pedigreed Greek artifacts.<sup>116</sup>

Lloyd's approach emphasized "the common stock of the mythology of all, whatever may have been the process of transference and modification, by migrating colonists or wandering Aoidoi."<sup>117</sup> This common mythology, though, is an inherently Greek mythos, one that "possessed a most active vitality— powers of assimilation, reproduction, and acclimation, by which acquired in every new locality a character as distinctly local as its spirit was universal, and only to be interpreted with minuteness by the aid of a genuine local tradition."<sup>118</sup> Yet, Lloyd's reading of the Harpy Tomb begins by circling back to Homer because "from the decided predominance of Greek style and detail in these sculptures, Greek legend and literature have the first title to be consulted for explanation of their significance."<sup>119</sup> Lloyd upholds that the myth of Pandareus is the obvious place for such interrogation to commence; however, he interprets the female figures as indicative of one of the fables that "symboliz[es] the great annual alternation of nature."<sup>120</sup> According to Lloyd's reading, the two figures identified by Fellows as Juno

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<sup>116</sup> This curatorial methodology seems to privilege similarity in ways that make it difficult to observe and, therefore, articulate how exactly one perceives the artifacts as different from Hellenistic or Eurocentric ideals. In a rare moment where John Ruskin recorded his engagement with the Xanthian Marbles, he wrote a journal entry on January 24, 1844 that he "went to British Museum. Felt the Phigaleian Frieze for the first time, and understood the difference between it and the Lycians." Though the brevity of this account does not give us much in the way of understanding what exactly Ruskin meant by difference or how this might speak to his perception of the Xanthian Marbles within the Great Chain of Art discourse, the physical touch afforded by the proximity between these Lycian and decisively Greek artifacts would lead Ruskin to better differentiate between them. See John Ruskin, *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, eds. Joan Evans and John Howard Whitehouse, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956): 261.

<sup>117</sup> Lloyd, *Harpy*, 6.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

and Venus are, instead, Demeter and Persephone, therefore in “perfect congruity with the attendance [of] the Erinnyes” or Furies, sometimes associated with the Athenian Semnai Theai, or goddesses of earth and fertility.<sup>121</sup> Further, Lloyd rationalizes that the symbols identified as Egyptian by previous writers support his reading of fertility and the seasons:

In the cow, we have the all but universal symbol of the year, of prolific nature, of the fruitful earth. In the seven kine of the Pharaoh, typifying seven years, we meet with the symbol on perhaps its native ground. The recurrence of the lotus and other Egyptian details on the Harpy monument would justify the reference, though the analogy could be brought no nearer. But the cow was sacred to Isis, who was represented with the horns of a cow, like the Io of the Greeks, with whom, indeed, as with Demeter, or Earth Mother, she was originally the same, or very early in the annals of mythology identified.<sup>122</sup>

Lloyd eventually rejects the tomb as a decisively “Homeric illustration” of the daughters of Pandareus; instead, the standing three female figures, described as “more exalted personage— Fanny Burneys of immemorial antiquity,” most “undoubtedly” represent the “Seasons, the Moirai, or personifications of the divisions of the year, which were originally threefold.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. For further discussion of the association of the Semnai Theai with the Erinnyes, see A. L. Brown, “Eumenides in Greek Tragedy,” *The Classical Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1984): 262-263.

<sup>122</sup> Lloyd, *Harpy*, 7.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 8.



Fig. 5. *West side of marble reliefs from the Harpy Tomb*, British Museum, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/103254001>.

Lloyd’s reading of the other Harpy Tomb reliefs continues to illustrate his desire to link this tomb to the Great Chain of Hellenic art. His reading of the north bas relief (depicting the warrior before the seated male figure), for instance, interprets the seated figure as Hermes, based on his readings of Johann Winckelmann and comparisons made to unnamed sculptures in the Townley Gallery of classical antiquities. One thread that can be traced throughout this essay is Lloyd’s insistence on visiting the galleries for oneself; he directs his reader with the simple aside of “(Compare Townley Gallery)” and states earlier in the essay that “no description can supersede the necessity of reference to the original monument, or authentic copies from it.”<sup>124</sup> By privileging Greek mythological

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 11; 4.

readings and comparisons between the Xanthian Marbles and its unquestionably Greek neighbors in the museum, Lloyd makes a strong case for the tomb's placement within the Great Chain.

By the time 1844 came to a close, the Tomb of Payava and the rest of the Nereid Monument had arrived in London, so there were now more artifacts to debate in terms of Hellenism and their resistance to this assimilation. Scholars would debate whether the Nereid Monument was a temple or a tomb; today, however, the monument is understood as a tomb for Erbinna, the satrap of Lycia circa 430-400 BCE, in the style of an Ionic temple. In keeping with Lycian tomb architecture, the temple-tomb was lifted atop a podium or base. Free-standing Nereids were placed between the columns; much of the rest of the decorative program features Greco-Persian warfare. The Nereid Monument would play a major role in how the Lycian marbles were to be exhibited.

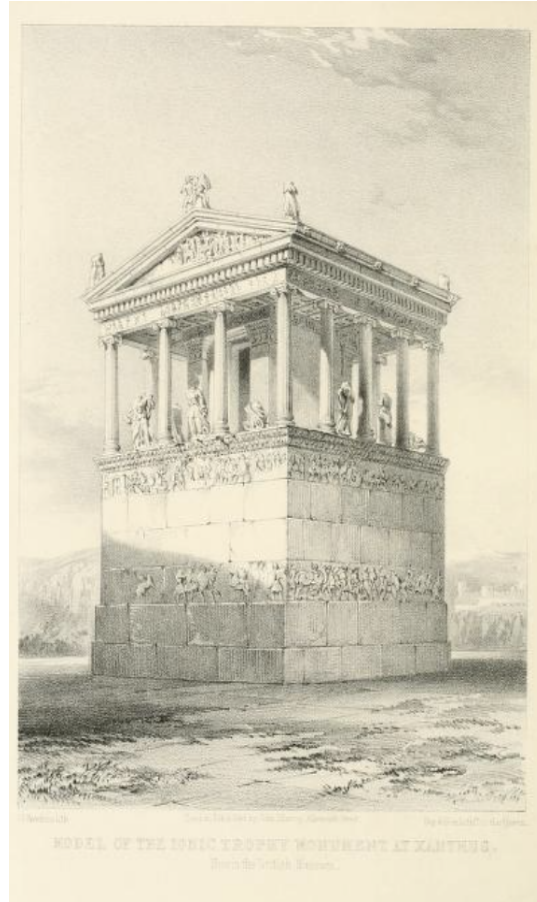


Fig. 6. “Model of the Ionic Trophy Monument at Xanthus.” Drawing, in Charles Fellows, *Account of the Ionic Trophy Monument Excavated at Xanthus*, frontispiece, London, 1848.

Fellows, along with Neoclassical sculptor Richard Westmacott and Edward Hawkins (the present Keeper of the Department of Antiquities), submitted potential floor plans for a permanent Lycian Gallery in June 1845.<sup>125</sup> To say the least, Westmacott was passionate about classical sculpture, and his own works as a sculpture were a revival of the order and clarity of style of Classical Greek art. The floor plans both parties proposed would spark quite the conflict: Westmacott, unsurprisingly, favored Hellenistic

<sup>125</sup> Challis, *British Archaeologists*, 42.

storytelling that assimilated Xanthos into a larger, clearer narrative concerning ancient Greek art, while the other was more intentional about scientific classification, or the chronological ordering of the artifacts as determined through Fellows' archaeological process. According to Challis, "Fellows and Hawkins both wished to see the majority of the Lycian antiquities and the "Greek-style" Nereid Monument displayed in separate rooms. This was so that the Lycian antiquities would not be discriminated against in favor of the artistically 'Greek' [Nereid] monument."<sup>126</sup> Westmacott's plan, on the other hand, would have the remains culled together in the same room, disregarding Fellows' archaeological experience and desire for separation and for the artifacts to be displayed in an orderly, chronological fashion. It was ultimately Westmacott's plan-- one that was insistent upon Hellenism-- that would be accepted. There was certainly something admirable and rational about Fellows' and Hawkins' desire to classify and order the artifacts chronologically; yet, it was the sculptor Westmacott's interest in telling a Hellenic story of Xanthos that was ultimately the most persuasive to the Trustees because it allowed the artifacts to appear more clearly within the schema of the Great Chain of Art.

Though Fellows wouldn't publish his own examination of the ionic trophy monument until 1848, three years after the great floorplan debate, Lloyd was quick to rise to the occasion, following up his essay on the Harpy Tomb with a much more extensive publication on the Nereid Monument in 1845. Writing before any permanent Lycian gallery opened, much less one that segregated the Nereid Monument in this way, Lloyd's essay still reinforced the idea that the Nereid Monument was more closely linked to its

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

more fully Greek neighbors (both literally and in the British Museum) than any of the other Lycian artifacts. Much of *Xanthian Marbles: The Nereid Monument; An Historical and Mythological Essay* concerns itself with matters of nation or national character and identity. Lloyd presents Lycia as an assimilative space, where its “original materials, borrowed, and from all quarters” (including the Mede, Persian, and the Greek) fused together to form an “unusual harmony with which parts so various, [are] blended and combined into an operative whole.”<sup>127</sup> Though much of his energy is devoted to understanding how this fusion of heterogeneous parts creates a distinctly Lycian whole, Lloyd does acknowledge that “Greek elements are still most salient, as well as chiefly attractive.”<sup>128</sup> The Lycia of the British Museum then becomes a site of dual interests—on the one hand, Lycian archaeology can reveal its own distinct national character. His reading of the Nereid Monument, for instance, interprets the scenes of battle on upper and lower friezes of the basement as a representation of the Sack of Xanthus recounted in Herodotus’s *The Histories*. Further, he argues that the reestablishment and recovery of Lycian independence “are precisely the events that give the impulses to national spirit as well as prosperity, from which such works as the Nereid Monument proceed.”<sup>129</sup> The edifice of the Nereid Monument, then, must have been “erected by genuine Xanthians, or those who would pass for such, to commemorate alike the valor and catastrophe of their ancestors, and their own gratitude to the divine powers for recovered numbers and prosperity.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> William Watkiss Lloyd, *Xanthian Marbles: The Nereid Monument; An Historical and Mythological Essay* (London, 1845): 2; 1.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

Additionally, Lloyd spends much of his effort examining “geographical position and historical legend [to] give sufficient local and national explanation of the selection of the presiding Goddess” Kour-aphroditè, or a Lycian fusion of Aphrodite-Persephone, who he identifies as the seated female figure on the eastern pediment. However, he has difficulty at first explaining the sea nymphs’ presence in Lycian mythology.<sup>131</sup> Lloyd decides that while it makes sense for the Nereids to symbolically appear alongside sea-born Aphrodite, “no national propriety, such as is indispensable for a complete analysis, has yet been developed.”<sup>132</sup> Further, while he acknowledges that most museum spectators and readers of his likely won’t care about this speculation or attempt at nuance, some might not find this a completely hopeless or uninteresting pursuit: “the ranks of my readers, are probably by this time already thinned of those who would think this inquiry to be ‘to consider too curiously,’ and therefore without apology, and whether accompanied or alone,— Eastward hoe!”<sup>133</sup> His study, then, eventually leads him to consider the Nereids as *Glaucidae*, or related to the sea-god Glaucus and therefore connected to “the royal race of Xanthus.”<sup>134</sup>

On the other hand, placing this attention to localized myths aside, artifacts such as the Nereid Monument also can be read to reveal “evidence of the reception of a deep and decided tinge of Hellenism, by a race entirely unallied,” as well as evidence of the

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 81. The sea-god Glaucus is not to be conflated with the Lycian Glaucus (hero of the Trojan War) discussed earlier. Lloyd, however, does discuss how the hero Glaucus’s lineage traces back to Poseidon, the father of Glaucus’s grandfather Bellerophon. Lloyd cites Karl Otfried Müller as saying “Glaucus is a favorite epithet of the sea... one can no longer doubt that originally the father of Bellerophon was styled Poseidon-Glaucus” (81).

Greeks' "earliest foreign relations" indicative of "an age of mutual receptiveness and transfusion, in striking contrast to the antagonism that succeeded it."<sup>135</sup> Lloyd summarizes this as "the age of Greek and Barbarian plasticity."<sup>136</sup> Despite Lloyd's best intentions to reveal what is uniquely Lycian rather than purely Greek about the monument, he circles back to make comparisons between the Lycian monument and the Elgin and Phigalien marbles. By the end of the essay, the "honorable enshrinement in the British Museum" of the Nereid Monument solidifies the Lycian collection's worth based on their "classical interest" and association with the Elgin Marbles, both in terms of their distinguishable Hellenism and in terms of the "circumstances of their acquisition."<sup>137</sup> The acquisition of the Nereid Monument, therefore, cements Fellows as a national hero whose work contributed to the premier British collection of classical antiquities. Ultimately, Lloyd's attempt to privilege what makes these artifacts distinctly Lycian is undermined by his return to their final placement in the Hellenistic Great Chain of Art.

Early attempts to interpret the elusive artifacts as they appeared in the museum did not stall out, and it was time for art historian and critic Anna Jameson to join the conversation. Jameson published her own "The Xanthian Marbles" essay in 1846 (one year before the permanent Lycian gallery opened), positioning herself in explicit dialogue with earlier writings on the matter.<sup>138</sup> But before discussing how her work resonates with her predecessors, I wish to first outline what makes Jameson's approach to viewing and

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 3; 4.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>138</sup> A note on chronology: Jameson's essay itself is dated as being written, or at least begun, in May 1844; however, Jameson explicitly cites Lloyd's 1845 Nereid Monument essay, as well as John William Burgon's *Some Remarks on Art, with Reference to the Studies of the University*, published in 1846.

receiving the marbles unique. Jameson begins her essay by identifying or locating Xanthos off the Syrian coast.<sup>139</sup> Syria was certainly part of the Ottoman Empire during this time, as was Turkey, but Xanthos is located too far north-west from the Syrian coast for this to be an accurate representation of geographical or even historical space. Though Jameson's geography is curious, it might speak to how she was associating Turkey with Syria as being under the span of Ottoman control. It also speaks to how such distance makes interpreting and historicizing the artifacts all the more difficult. Jameson stresses quite frequently throughout the essay how peculiar these artifacts are, despite the fact that they have become familiar to the museum space and have had their share of scholarly speculation by Fellows, Birch, Lloyd, and the Trustees themselves. The Xanthian Marbles are variously described as "invested with... vague, solemn interest" possessing the "strange charm [of an] indefinite age" and an "enigma and stumbling-block."<sup>140</sup> In fact, the title of this chapter derives from Jameson's own pitting of the Xanthian Marbles against their Athenian counterparts: "the Acropolis of Athens is a picture in the mind's eye, fixed there since infancy: but the land from which these Xanthian marbles come to us is comparatively an unknown land— a far-off, alien shore— a land of poetic dreams."<sup>141</sup> Jameson's description of this seemingly unreachable land is certainly Homeric in the sense that Xanthos' distance inspires both intrigue and a sense of mythic power.

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<sup>139</sup> Anna Jameson, "The Xanthian Marbles" in *Memoirs and Essays Illustrative of Art, Literature and Social Morals* (London, 1846): 125.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-126.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

Imagination and the pursuit of knowledge frame Jameson's approach to the artifacts. The museum becomes a space where learned spectators such as antiquarians and artists arrive to "investigate, to examine, to compare; some anxious to prop up old theories;— others full of some new hypothesis which is to invalidate old systems."<sup>142</sup> At this moment in time, only a few years after the artifacts' arrival in the British Museum, these relics lie "unarranged as yet— as yet but half-explained, half-understood."<sup>143</sup> Time and the establishment of dedicated gallery spaces are necessary precursors for historical and cultural inquiry to become fully possible. Additionally, Jameson makes it clear that this quest for understanding takes place specifically on British soil. Though she plans to survey conflicting theories about the marbles coming out of England, France, and Germany in this essay, she does make it abundantly clear that these artifacts, though temporarily unarranged, are "gathered together within the walls which are to contain them, as long as England remains a nation."<sup>144</sup> Though she might argue that she will "[borrow], without scruple" from European scholarship more broadly, all of this work is ultimately for the benefit of the marbles' new owner— the British Empire.

Not unlike Lloyd, Jameson presents Asia Minor as "a land of wondrous beauty and fertility" whose ancients demonstrated an "unconquerable spirit of independence."<sup>145</sup> The land is presented as highly contested in antiquity, where "successive nations" fought for possession, leaving behind the tools of assimilation that Lloyd similarly outlines.<sup>146</sup> Jameson's approach to historicizing these hybrid artifacts, though, is much more

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 130.

structured or organized than Lloyd's own rambling and, at times, difficult to follow prose. Jameson divides the whole of the Xanthian Marbles collection into four classes: Greco-Lycian (the earliest works), Greco-Persian, Greco-Roman, and Byzantine and early Christian. She does, however, propose a fifth category to include Fellows' and Scharf's own drawings of the artifacts in that they provide some degree of context as to the appearance of their original locations.<sup>147</sup> In the interest of relative brevity, I want to turn to how Jameson classifies three key objects that have grounded much of this chapter's discussion: the Harpy Tomb, the Tomb of Payava, and the Nereid Monument.

Jameson immediately classifies the Harpy Tomb as one of the most important Greco-Lycian works displayed at the British Museum. While she does go on to summarize Fellows' and Gibson's mythological interpretation of the tomb and reinforce this reading by providing an extract of the Pandareus story from *The Odyssey* translated by Elizabeth Barrett, she does not step in to assert her own interpretation of the other, more ambiguous reliefs. Jameson is upfront that because scholars—the “authorities”—have not agreed on the significance of much of the tomb's decorative program, “I will not presume to anticipate learned opinions.”<sup>148</sup> Where Jameson does contribute, though, is in her critical inquiry into the display and periodization of the Harpy Tomb. She begins her discussion by briefly contextualizing the tomb in terms of its position in scholarly discourse and in the exhibition space, for we learn that this tomb is considered to likely be the first and “earliest extant specimen of the heroic age of Greece” and that its friezes are depicted in the museum aside a small wooden model of the tomb.<sup>149</sup> The wooden

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 131-132.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 134

model was intended to guarantee that visitors would be able to visualize how the tomb would have stood in its original context; the placement of the reliefs by the model ensures “that the form, as well as the external ornaments of this extraordinary relic, have become familiar to the most uninformed of the visitors to the Museum.”<sup>150</sup> Additionally, Jameson informs us that the wooden accompaniment is not the only model or replica that has been placed by the tomb for the purpose of informing visitors of the tomb’s broader context. Placed near the bas-reliefs is a cast of the Leucothea Relief procured by Fellows himself from the Villa Albani, the site of what Winckelmann has deemed the only other example of the “most ancient specimen of Greek sculpture known in the world” to reside in Europe.<sup>151</sup> It is through the juxtaposition of this cast that the viewer is left with “no doubt of the identity of [the tomb’s] age and style.” Jameson is consciously aware of how display will shape how the tomb is received; she disagrees with plans to reconstruct the entire tomb as it once stood, as its vast height would make examination of the tallest sculptures impossible.<sup>152</sup> She also argues that truly reconstructing the tomb is impossible: “for how would it be possible to reproduce the effect of the same sculpture when seen, in the open air, under the brilliant skies of Lycia?”<sup>153</sup> Instead, she favors small-scale replicas like the one already constructed because that is all that is necessary to give a visitor a sense of how the tomb would have looked when it was fully constructed.

Alongside the Harpy Tomb, Jameson classifies the Tomb of Payava as one of the early Greco-Lycian artifacts. Unlike Fellows, whose reading of the Payava tomb was

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 135

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

characterized by a longing for Christian and British figures, Jameson largely looks backward rather than forward in time to inform her reading. While she believes this tomb is of equal interest to the Harpy Tomb, she acknowledges that its “style of art is wholly different, free and animated, vigorous, and full of action,” diverging from the stiff formality of archaic Greek art.<sup>154</sup> And unlike Lloyd, Jameson is willing to look at Lycia through the lens of this tomb as less of an assimilative space and more as an independent, albeit primitive, one. “What is most strange and unique,” she argues “is, that in the external form, [this sepulchre is] imitative of wooden constructions... they remind one of nothing so much as of enormous wooden chests or cabinets.”<sup>155</sup> Jameson asserts that this quality is uniquely Lycian, lacking any sort of parallel to the architecture of the “Indians, Egyptians, Etruscans, and Greeks, which are known to us.”<sup>156</sup> Once again, Jameson returns to thinking about how this knowledge can be made and furthered within the museum space. She notes that Fellows made note of similar rock tombs across other Lycian cities, casts and drawings of which had been brought back to London following the last expedition to also be placed in the museum.

Jameson turns to the Nereid Monument to introduce the second classification: Greco-Persian artifacts. On its most basic level, the decorative program is inspired by Greco-Persian conflict. But even though “the subject is a Persian conquest,— the style and the workmanship [is] pure Greek.”<sup>157</sup> According to Jameson, these observations are not up for debate. Further, this discrepancy between content and form reveals that, in the

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 152.

Great Chain of Art, form is the victor and the ultimate test of how strong or pure an artifact's Greek influence is. Despite classifying this monument in hybrid terms, it becomes clear that the Nereid Monument cannot be exhibited or discussed in isolation, or, more specifically, without relation to the Elgin Marbles. Jameson, for the final time, argues for the importance of models and replicas in helping the public to better understand the monument, and her point of reference circles back to the Elgin Marbles: the model "will assist the public to a comprehension of their import, and greatly add to the interest of the collection, in the same manner that the elegant and accurate models of the Parthenon now placed in the gallery of the Elgin Marbles help us to illustrate those wonderful remains."<sup>158</sup> This manner of display, and the acquisition as a whole, is what will cement their rescue from "the silence and the oblivion of the ignorant rescue" and give the artifacts the chance to be seen, to be heard, in the same manner that visitors bestowed upon their Athenian forebearers.<sup>159</sup>

When the permanent Lycian gallery opened its doors in 1847, the layout of the Lycian antiquities reflected the Trustees' support for Westmacott's Hellenistic design. Located south of the Elgin room, the Lycian gallery was organized so that visitors would encounter the Harpy and Payava Tombs in the center of the room; however, instead of functioning as the central anchors of the room, they were merely attractions along the way to the Nereid Monument, displayed in grand fashion at the end of the room. Much as Jameson suggested would be the case, by 1848, Henry Clarke's handbook for museum visitors would agree that "the excellent model of this work must be of great assistance to

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 157.

the tyro visitor, as it is creditable to the taste and erudition of the artist.”<sup>160</sup> With the aid of models and Scharf’s careful drawings of the discoveries, visitors had a wealth of supplementary material to consult as they examined the marbles.

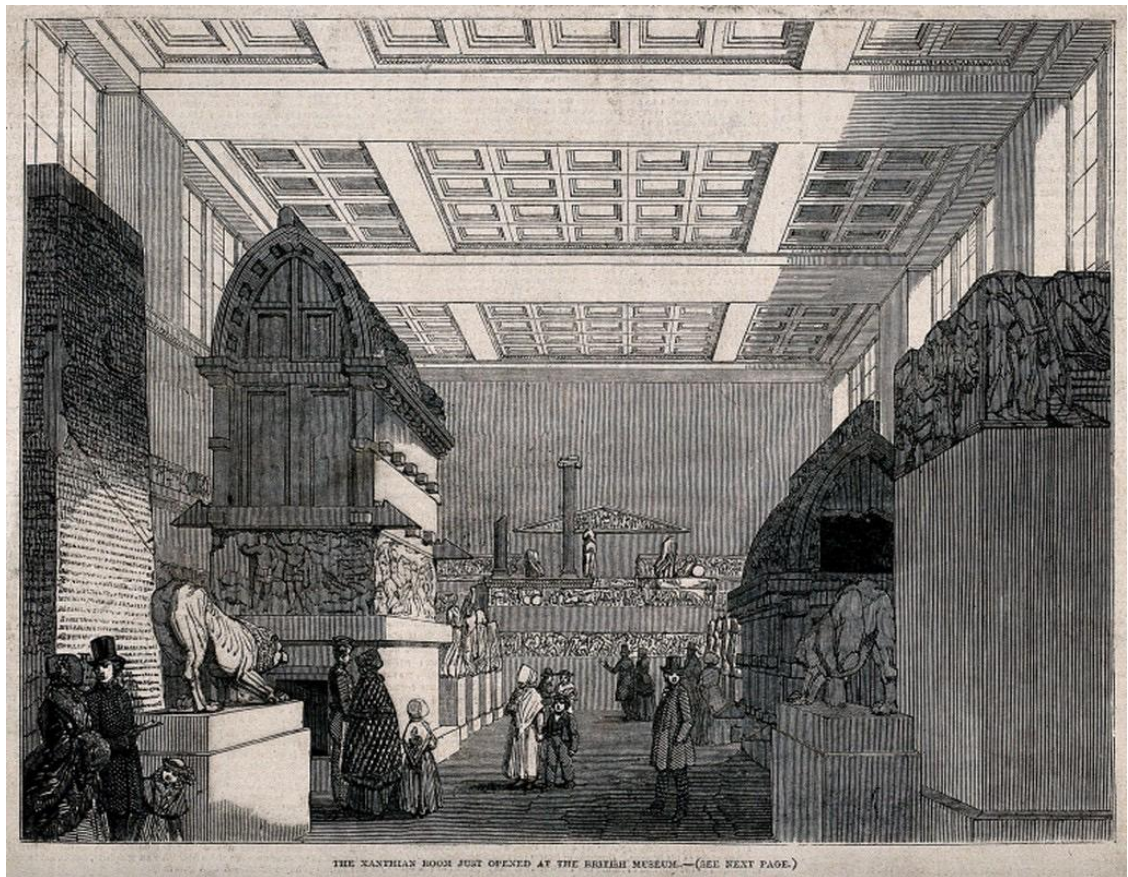


Fig. 7. *The British Museum: the Xanthian Room, with visitors.* Wood engraving, 1847.

Fellows, unsurprisingly, felt slighted by the museum’s acceptance of Westmacott’s neoclassical design and its emphasis on taste rather than archaeological precision, for the space. His observations and criticisms about the displays went unheard. It is important to note, though, that this was not simply a matter of pride for Fellows; he

<sup>160</sup> Henry G. Clarke, *The British Museum: Its Antiquities and Natural History, a Hand-book Guide for Visitors* (London, 1848): 8.

himself had traveled to other encyclopedic museums to understand how exhibitions could be successfully arranged chronologically. He also argued that the British Museum's recent acquisitions of so many important works from antiquity "represented a unique opportunity for a scientific arrangement to make 'our National Institution of Instruction the envy of all others.'"<sup>161</sup> Other European nations, with their own teams of archaeologists, were watching, so why not capitalize on this moment to make a claim for archaeological, and therefore scientific, advancement on behalf of the British nation?

In addition to this seemingly one-sided debate, the last major scholarly development concerning the Xanthian Marbles in the 1840s was, again, Fellows' own doing. Fellows finally published his *Account of the Ionic Trophy Monument Excavated at Xanthus* in 1848. Aside from rehashing the now familiar Herodotian historical context, Fellows "assume[s] positions perhaps too bold for the archaeologist," moving beyond careful scientific record keeping to capture a series of interpretive impressions.<sup>162</sup> Just as Jameson classified the Nereid Monument as the sole indicator of the Greco-Persian period or style of Xanthian art, Fellows similarly asserts "no other sculpture of similar art or age is found amidst the ruins of the city"; however, Fellow's manner of classification is less precise, instead positioning the monument between the generalized "peculiar art of the early inhabitants" and "the well-known sculpture of the imperial Roman and the Christian aera."<sup>163</sup> Fellows presents three important impressions of the monument: its style is foreign, it bears resemblance to the tomb of Mausolus, and it must have been a

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<sup>161</sup> Slatter, *Xanthus*, 332.

<sup>162</sup> Charles Fellows, *Account of the Ionic Trophy Monument Excavated at Xanthus* (London, 1848): 5.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

trophy and tomb, but not a temple.<sup>164</sup> Turning to Benjamin Gibson once again to do much of the interpretive heavy lifting, Fellows cites Gibson's February 1848 paper delivered to the Royal Society of Antiquaries in a way that contradicts Lloyd's own mythological reading:

[Gibson] tells us that ten cities of Ionia supplied Harpagus with troops. Here we have between the columns ten statues, apparently of the same female figure,—perhaps Venus, the popular deity of Ionia; each of these statues is borne up by an emblem beneath its feet; and these emblems Mr. Gibson detects as being the same as those seen on the coins of the maritime cities of Ionia... We thus have registered, as it were, the arms of the different cities engaged in this conquest, surmounted by the tutelary deity of the country.<sup>165</sup>

In addition, Gibson suggests that the group of three boys presented in the pediment's apex possibly signify "the legendary founders of the provinces of Caria, Lydia, and Mysia,— thus giving nationality to the whole Monument."<sup>166</sup> While both Gibson and Lloyd consider the monument's decorative program as indicative of nationalism, Gibson's reading favors the presence and commitment of Ionia to Harpagus rather than the native Xanthian's fight for independence. Fellows, therefore, is able to capitalize on his identification of the monument as Ionic, going so far as to say that "if my position be admitted, the evident similarity of the sculpture of many groups in the larger frieze, as well as in the treatment of the statues, to the Athenian and Phygalian sculptures, must convict these later workmen of plagiarism... and indicate the employment of Ionians as

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 6. Lloyd, in his essay on the Nereid Monument, previously compared this monument and the Halicarnassus mausoleum and suggested the former inspired the latter. In 1845, the British Museum had acquired some slabs from the mausoleum that had been used to reinforce the Bodrum Castle by the Knights of St John after 1402. Ten years later, Charles Newton would discover and excavate the site of the mausoleum itself.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

the designers of the finest of Athenian works.”<sup>167</sup> Not only does Fellows ultimately work to reify the Nereid Monument’s position within the Great Chain of Art, he takes it a step further by insinuating the grandest of the Xanthian Marbles is a mere copy or reproduction, thus negating all previous attempts to show what makes this work distinctly Lycian.

As a whole, these early reception accounts engage with, repeat, and build off of each other, showing how quickly new interpretations were being proposed and which bits of knowledge were being cemented as fact. What Homer and Herodotus made imaginable, Fellows made tangible. These early visitors to the British Museum, regardless of their background or approach, sought to make these artifacts knowable, approachable, by contextualizing these artifacts in literary, mythological, and nationalistic terms that a vast readership could understand or, at the very least, find intriguing. Now that a seemingly permanent gallery for the Lycian marbles had been established, the next decades would take note of the influence of space on the reception of these artifacts.

### **The 1850s: Clarke’s Guidebook & Fellows’ Final Stand**

Imagine walking into the British Museum for the first time in 1850, accompanied by Henry G. Clarke’s latest edition of *The British Museum: Its Antiquities and Natural History: A Hand-Book Guide for Visitors*. Upon entering the Gallery of Antiquities, or the southwestern and western portion of the ground floor Quadrangle, visitors were shepherded to the Lycian Room from the Townley, then Nineveh galleries; leaving the Lycian Room, one would find themselves in the Grand Central Saloon before moving

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 15.

into the Phigalien and Elgin Saloons and ending in with the Egyptian Saloon and Ante-Room. The Nineveh Gallery was a new addition to the museum following Layard's excavations in the mid- to late-1840s, causing a necessary and major revision of Clarke's 1848 guide. Two years earlier, Clarke's guide directed visitors to the new Lycian Gallery directly through the Townley Gallery, a collection Clarke summarized as possessing "some of the finest extant specimens of Grecian and Graeco-Roman art from the Phidian era to the times of Trajan and the Antonines:— i.e. from B.C. 450 to A.D. 116."<sup>168</sup> In the 1850s, the organization of the museum was still in flux, but Ancient Near Eastern antiquities were taking up more space in the museum and pushing towards the principal entrance. In this case, though, visitors moved from Nineveh to Lycia to Greece; any attempt at creating a cohesive narrative of Ancient Near Eastern art was interrupted by the Phigalien and Elgin Saloons, not to mention the extensive list of Greco-Roman artifacts dominating the Grand Central Saloon at this time.<sup>169</sup> The Assyrian galleries were not yet complete, making it less likely that casual viewers were stopping to forge connections between the Nineveh and Lycian rooms than they were between the Lycian and subsequent Greek exhibitions.

Not only does the restructuring of the guidebook reflect updates to the museum's exhibition spaces; the descriptions of the Lycian artifacts themselves are revised in interesting ways. No longer does the Harpy Tomb "tell its own story," as it was

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<sup>168</sup> Clarke, 1848, 3.

<sup>169</sup> Clarke, 1850, 9. Aside from an Egyptian cast from the Rock Temple of Ipsamboul and "several curious sculptures and casts of bas-reliefs from the ruins of Persepolis" in the room's eastern recesses, the saloon in 1850 was dominated by Greco-Roman artifacts. The guidebook explicitly presents "a correct list of the most interesting objects as were are able to give, from their want of arrangement occasioned by the unfinished state of the museum" beginning with a "colossal head of Minerva" and "Bust of Trajan."

introduced in the 1848 edition.<sup>170</sup> In the new edition, Clarke leads with calling attention to the usefulness of the model replica that Jameson so lauded, and, instead of providing brief descriptions of the mythological stories depicted in its reliefs, Clarke emphasizes what he calls the unfinished or broken state of the artifacts. “This monument was never finished,” he writes, “the projection for raising the shaft still remaining, and the shaft having been polished only half-way up. Its base was shaken; probably by one of those earthquakes by which the country is known to have been visited, and two of the slabs on the western side thrown on the ground.”<sup>171</sup> This is the information that now proceeds any description of the tomb’s decorative program; instead of being led to the monument on the grounds of its mythological wonder and the speculative interpretations it has inspired, visitors are taught to see the artifacts as broken and incomplete. This framing is peculiar because instead of approaching the Harpy Tomb as an artifact that has been rescued and protected from further ruin for the benefit of the British people (à la Fellows), it is here presented as unfinished before it ever had the chance to be made whole or perfected. It is as if the tomb’s condition is a defect of the people who created it and unlike what visitors would have been conditioned to believe a structure like the Parthenon had once been.

Clarke’s approach to the Nereid Monument is the reverse of his treatment of the Harpy Tomb. In the 1848 edition, the very first description of the monument is that its sculpture is “fine though mutilated.”<sup>172</sup> He then gestures towards the models as necessary assistance to the unlearned visitor. The 1850 edition says nothing about the monument’s

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>171</sup> Henry G. Clarke, “Lycian Room,” in *The British Museum: Its Antiquities and Natural History: A Hand-Book Guide for Visitors* (London, 1850).

<sup>172</sup> Clarke, 1848, 8.

mutilation. The sculptures and architectural objects that appear simply “formed part of the building at Xanthus, of which a restored model, with a ground plan of the remains as they were found *in situ*, and a picture of the scene of discovery, are placed in this room.”<sup>173</sup> The descriptor “restored” when leading the visitor to the replica model does imply that these artifacts are only some parts of a greater whole, but the language is much less violent and does not emphasize the state in which the sculptures are in. Clarke makes no mention of the headless, eroded state of the female figures that stood between the columns; he simply describes them as female figures “having at their feet marine emblems... and passing through the air rapidly, as we see by the action of the drapery.”<sup>174</sup> Additionally, he interprets these figures as “reference to the arrival of Latona, with her children, Artemis and Apollo, at Xanthus, or to the naval victory over Evagoras.”<sup>175</sup> Despite the seeming certainty of his interpretation, Clarke does acknowledge that there is still much conjecture and disagreement over the purpose for and subject of this monument.

The 1850s would also witness Fellows’ final stand. Fellows’ published his two final works during this decade, beginning with the collected volume of his Asia Minor travel journals published in November 1852 and ending in 1855 with a new proposal for dating the Lycian marbles. As he states in the preface to the collection, the republication of the journals was both “at the request of several of my friends, and in accordance with the

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. This is likely based on the association of Leto/Latona with Xanthos, as there was a sanctuary dedicated to Leto south of Xanthos alongside the river, but it is unclear how exactly Clarke is reaching this conclusion.

spirit of the present era in literature.”<sup>176</sup> Debbie Challis asserts that this final collection was an attempt to “combat the ‘unscientific’ aesthetic snobbery of the British Museum trustees and their artistic adviser, Richard Westmacott” and reoccupy the position of hero-traveler.<sup>177</sup> The abridged journals omitted lengthy and complicated discussions of Greek and Lycian inscriptions, which certainly could afford greater interest and accessibility, while still emphasizing Fellows’ discovery and study of the ruins. I argue that abridgment allowed the journals to better mimic the “sketch book” style of travel writing in which Fellows, as traveling observer to a distant land, “situates [him]self in a relation to those observed which is charged with ideological implication.”<sup>178</sup> Further, David Seed argues that “the very implication of wealth and leisure time in the act of traveling... immediately sets up a distance from those encountered which might be exacerbated by the kinds of discourse used to describe them.”<sup>179</sup> In Fellows’ case, this distance reinscribes the Turks as peculiar and, at times, even barbaric; the Turks are always lesser than, simply on the grounds that they lack and thus cannot identify with Fellows & Co.’s “importance as Europeans.”<sup>180</sup> Additionally, the abridged and collected journals might also reflect the midcentury transition from travel to tourism, where travel increasingly became an increasingly passive spectator sport rather than an intense and expensive kind of athletic or scholarly expedition.<sup>181</sup> The 1855 publication entitled *Coins*

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<sup>176</sup> Charles Fellows, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, particularly in the Province of Lycia* (London, 1852): iii.

<sup>177</sup> Challis, *British Archaeologists*, 48.

<sup>178</sup> David Seed, "Nineteenth-Century Travel Writing: An Introduction." *The Yearbook of English Studies* 34 (2004): 1.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> Fellows, 1852, 17.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

*of Ancient Lycia Before the Reign of Alexander with an Essay on the Relative Dates of the Lycian Monuments in the British Museum* marked a return to scientific classification and cataloging and the generic conventions of the scholarly essay, respectively. Here, Fellows presents a reading of the coins to support his chronology of the Lycian Marbles— his final contribution to the academic discourse surrounding the artifacts.

Charles Fellows died in London on November 8, 1860 with curatorial longings that were ahead of its time; he was not consulted by the British Museum regarding any revisions for the Lycian exhibition before his death.

### **The 1860s - 1880s: Establishing the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities**

Thanks to the work of archaeologists like Fellows, by 1860, the museum was overcrowded with antiquities. Overcrowding called for order and reorganization. A proposal was then made to split the general Antiquities department into three separate departments: the Department of Oriental Antiquities, the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, and the Department of Coins and Medals. While Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities were shepherded into their new Oriental Antiquities department, the Lycian Marbles were not recognized as belonging in this explicitly Near Eastern space. Instead, and despite their cultural hybridity, their Hellenic resonances seemed to outweigh any uniquely Lycian or even Persian influence, and the collection became part of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, where they remain to this day. Even if the physical curation of these exhibits would move away from the Great Chain of Art model, the departmentalization of the Lycian marbles, as well as their spatial proximity to Greco-Roman collections, would continuously reify this connection.

Space and chronology would become ever important components of the guidebooks that were being revised and published throughout this period. Clarke's 1864 guidebook edition revised its title in addition to its content: *The British Museum; What to See and How to See it: A Hand-Book Guide for Visitors*. No longer was the text marketed as a simple supplement or means of navigating the galleries; the new title explicitly reflects how powerful such a document was in shaping or influencing how the artifacts were understood, alone and in relation to one another. Clarke's guidebook begins with a map of the ground floor plan. Walking out of the entrance hall to the western side of the Quadrangle, the Lycian Gallery is spread out over two connected rooms, what Clarke calls the Lycian Room and Zanthian Room; the northernmost room, the Lycian Room is entered via the Roman Gallery and opens directly into the Elgin Room. Following Clarke's lead, the reader is directed to move through the Roman and Greco-Roman galleries before encountering the earlier Lycian artifacts, as the Roman Gallery is positioned "immediately to the left of the principal entrance."<sup>182</sup> We can assume that the effect of confronting Roman, then Greek, art immediately before being led to Lycia made it difficult to see the Xanthian Marbles as distinctly Lycian or expressing any eastern influence. Clarke's introduction to the Lycian Galleries positions the Greeks as influential colonizers "at an early period before the epoch of the Trojan War," and, despite saying these "works of art [are] of greater importance in enlightening much that has hitherto been obscure with respect of Lycia," Lycia is only presented through this Greek lens or as an extension of Greek cultural dominance.<sup>183</sup> No sense of historical chronology is upheld

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<sup>182</sup> Henry G. Clarke, "Gallery of Antiquities," in *The British Museum; What to See and How to See It: A Hand-book Guide for Visitors* (London, 1864).

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, "Lycian Gallery."

in Clarke's guide, despite the fact that his introduction to the museum's antiquities states that the galleries are intended to be visited in chronological order. The guide itself is organized in a completely different manner, privileging spatial proximity over chronology.

Clarke's spatial consciousness and orientation would prove to be more limiting than that of the Trustees, however. The British Museum Trustee's guide and synopsis of its collections published in 1869 clarifies this arrangement and gives the visitor the power to choose how they encounter ancient history:

The arrangement of the series of Sculptures is still incomplete. So far, however, as that arrangement has been carried, the collections are so disposed as to admit of being visited, with few exceptions, in chronological order, from the earliest monuments of the Egyptian Pharaohs down to the latest memorials of the Roman dominion in this country. The peculiar form of the galleries has made it necessary to place the most ancient remains at the North-western extremity, which is farthest from the Entrance Hall; so that a visitor, wishing to pursue the more natural historical course, is recommended to descend the North-western staircase from the Gallery of Minerals and Fossils, on the Upper Floor by the Egyptian Vestibule, proceeding through each apartment in the reverse order to that adopted in the ensuing description, which commences with the latest, or Roman monuments, and is continued through the Lycian, Greek, and Assyrian, to those of Egypt.<sup>184</sup>

While both Clarke and the Trustees recognize the power of space and movement in shaping a visitor's experience at the museum, the organization of Clarke's guide book prescribes a particular route that requires critical thinking on the part of the viewer if they wish to make a break and instead engage with antiquity in a chronological manner.

Clarke's route might be understood as affording viewers to think outside the limitations

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<sup>184</sup> Trustees of the British Museum, *A Guide to the Exhibition Rooms of the Departments of Natural History and Antiquities* (London, 1869): 63.

of chronology to make their own cross-cultural and historical connections; however, the very fact that the Lycian Marbles are displayed in close proximity to the definite Greek and Roman antiquities they are departmentalized with makes it impossible to see the Lycian Marbles completely outside of this context.

Aside from the new departmental structure, the biggest changes made to the exhibition of the Lycian Marbles during this period began in 1879 with the breaking up the old Lycian Gallery into the Room of Archaic Sculpture and the New Lycian Room. According to the Trustee's 1879 synopsis, the Room of Archaic Sculpture contained the Harpy Tomb and some of the Xanthian reliefs, while the New Lycian Room held "architectural and sculptured remains from the ancient cities in Lycia," including the Tomb of Pavaya and Nereid Monument.<sup>185</sup> No longer could a visitor walk into one designated Lycian Gallery and glean a "comprehensive" understanding of what Lycian art or culture might have been. Not only were the Lycian Marbles split into different rooms; the rooms themselves were spread across the west wing of the ground floor. The New Lycian Room was located between the Entrance Hall and the Reading Room. Separating the New Lycian Room and Room of Archaic Sculpture was the direct path created by the Roman Gallery (directly left of the entrance hall) and three Greco-Roman Rooms.

The eclectic Room of Archaic Sculpture would continue to evolve throughout the 1880s. Though a substantial portion of the Xanthian Marbles would find a home in this room, these marbles were surrounded by artifacts from Ancient Greece, Italy, and

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<sup>185</sup> Trustees of the British Museum, *A Guide to the Exhibition Galleries of the British Museum* (London, 1879): iv.

Anatolia. In 1879, the Harpy Tomb occupied the west side of the room; the north and south walls exhibited artifacts from the Temple of Apollo at Branchidae, acquired by Charles Newton south of the Carian city Miletus in 1858. These Branchidae marbles are presented by the Trustees as “among the earliest and most important extant specimens of Greek sculpture in marble... [dating] from B.C. 580 to B.C. 520.”<sup>186</sup> The east side of the room displayed early examples of Etruscan art, and the center of the room displayed a variety of other so-called Archaic specimens, including other Xanthian reliefs and artifacts from Sicily and Attica. This room would remain fluid throughout the 1880s; the Etruscan artifacts, for example, would be removed and be placed in their own room by 1882. While Walter Pater would later call the Archaic period a “somewhat empty period in the history of Greek art,” the room was anything but.<sup>187</sup> Even though the majority of the objects in this Archaic room were created after what historians tend to periodize as the Archaic Orientalizing period (the mid-8<sup>th</sup> to mid-7<sup>th</sup> BCE), the Xanthian artifacts in particular provide evidence for continued associations between the Greek Archaic and the Near Eastern.

### **The 1890s: Revised Rooms & Pater’s *Greek Studies***

By 1890, the exhibition of the Lycian Marbles underwent another major revision. The former Lycian Room was reframed as the Room of Greek and Latin Inscriptions and the Nereid Monument was relocated in its own room, while the Room of Archaic Sculpture largely stayed the same. According to the 1890 Trustee’s guide, the Payava and Chimera Tombs were positioned in the center of the new Inscriptions room; the synopses

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 80. It is helpful to note that Miletus was thought of as an important Greek city in the Archaic period, which is a bit unlike how we understand Lycia.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

for both tombs emphasize the appearance of Lycian inscriptions on both tombs that still need to be deciphered, unlike the body of “representative” Greek and Latin inscriptions that surround them.<sup>188</sup> In this new exhibit space, the linguistic mode was privileged over the visual, emphasizing the fact that Lycia was still not fully understood in the same comprehensive ways Greece and Rome were. The tombs, then, seem out of place— islands in the middle of a gallery that privileges linguistic over visual literacy as the ultimate means of decipherment and knowledge making. Moreover, the synopses pay no explicit attention to the cultural or historical context or significance of the tombs, further allowing Lycia to become a lost or diminished presence in the first space visitors would encounter it.

The excision of the Nereid Monument and the allowance of a dedicated room to house it, on the other hand, was a curatorial decision of the opposite extreme. Just as the Elgin Marbles were provided their own gallery space, the Nereid Monument now stood alone. This new Nereid Room was the final room exhibiting Greek and Roman antiquities on the ground floor. The synopses of the partially reconstructed monument directly responds to Fellows’ 1848 musings on its purpose or function— was it a tomb? A trophy? The Trustees acknowledge Fellows’ interpretation that the monument might have been “a trophy in memory of the conquest of Lycia by the Persians under Harpagos, B.C. 545; but this is not possible, as the style of the architecture and sculpture shows that it must be assigned to a later date.”<sup>189</sup> The monument, then, is conclusively identified as a

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<sup>188</sup> Trustees of the British Museum, *A Guide to the Exhibition Galleries of the British Museum (Bloomsbury)* (London, 1890): 4.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

derivative of Classical, rather than Archaic, Ancient Greek art, justifying its separation from the Harpy Tomb and the rest of the Xanthian Marbles. Though the monument is isolated, the guide signals to its relationship with artifacts in nearby rooms: to the left, the Elgin Marbles occupy their own gallery, to the north, two crouching lions from the Nereid pediment “flank the doorway of the Mausoleum room,” inviting the visitor to make comparisons to the ancient world wonder and recognize the chain of influence from Athens, to Xanthos, to Halicarnassus, another important site for examining Anatolia’s liminality.<sup>190</sup>

Published posthumously following his death in 1894, Walter Pater’s *Greek Studies* (1895) would make a place, however small, for Lycia in his survey of Greek architecture and sculpture. Pater asserts that funeral monuments provide the opportunity to “follow closely enough the general development of art in Greece from beginning to end” but maintains that “the Lycians were not a Greek people.”<sup>191</sup> That said, the Lycians and their tombs can be read as evidence of ““barbarians’ dwelling on the coast of Asia Minor [who] became lovers of the Hellenic culture, and Xanthus, their capital... may be judged from the beauty of its ruins,” as the Xanthian ruins “managed to have a considerable portion in Greek art, though infusing it with a certain Asiatic colour.”<sup>192</sup> The placement of the Harpy Tomb within the Room of Archaic Sculpture frames Pater’s discussion and how he places the tomb within this timeline of Greek art. That said, he also acknowledges that the tomb’s refined, intelligent expression of death might allow it

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>191</sup> Walter Pater, *Greek Studies: a Series of Essays*, ed. Charles Lancelot Shadwell (London, 1895): 285; 287.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 287.

to “fairly be placed between the monuments of Assyria and those primitive Greek works among which it now actually stands.” In this way, the Harpy Tomb might be allowed to stand between East and West without being mindlessly grouped into, and overshadowed by, the latter that Europe had for so long lauded.

In conclusion, one of the most interesting facets of Pater’s reading of Lycian art is his negotiation of these vast cultural influences. His understanding of what constitutes “Oriental” (or near Eastern) influence is distinct from that of Egypt, instead privileging the role of Assyria, Phoenicia, and Asia Minor; he argues that some Archaic Greek works “show that the development of Greek art had already proceeded some way before the opening of Egypt to the Greeks circa 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and point, if to a foreign source at all, to oriental rather than Egyptian influences.<sup>193</sup> In addition, he makes it clear how fluid the boundaries— cultural, political, geographical— are between Asia and Greece, for “we can hardly make a sharp separation between Asia and Greece, nor deny, besides great and palpable acts of importation, all sorts of impalpable Asiatic influences.”<sup>194</sup> Instead of falling into a trap of viewing Lycia as a proxy for Greece and favoring elements of its art and architecture we can identify as “purely” Greek, we are encouraged to consider how near Eastern cultures influenced the production of Archaic and even Classical Greek art on both Anatolian soil and in Greece itself.

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 226.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### LAYARD AND HIS REMAINS: READING AND EXCAVATING ASSYRIA

I added land to Assyria, and I added people to its people. I extended the border of my land and ruled over all their lands.

-King Tiglath-pileser I (1115-1077 BCE)

The bewildering antiquity of its origin,— the immensity of its dominion,— the splendour and gigantic bulk of its cities,— and the utter desolation that, for long ages, has overspread them, invest the subject with the character of a magnificent dream.<sup>195</sup>

-Edwin Atherstone, *The Fall of Nineveh* (1828)

The Neo-Assyrian Period that ushered in and came to define the first major empire would set the stage for later imperial models, including the British Empire that would, two millennia later, come to possess and exhibit the very Assyrian artifacts that testify to the grandeur and power of the ancient empire. Situated off the western banks of the Tigris River in modern day Iraq's Al-Shirqat District, the ancient city of Assur, established in the middle of the third millennium BCE, was the heart of Ancient Assyria. The word Assyria derives from Assur, a name that "reflects the ideological centrality of the city of Assur" and its "city-god, henceforth also the national god."<sup>196</sup> Aššur the god was understood to be the creator and sovereign force over the Assyrian pantheon of gods, its people, and the nation at large. Though Aššur can be thought of as the Assyrian national god, this is not to say that Aššur was the god of or for the people. The king was

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<sup>195</sup> Edwin Atherstone, *The Fall of Nineveh*, bk. 1 (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1828), vii.

<sup>196</sup> J.N. Postgate, "The Land of Assur and the Yoke of Assur." *World Archaeology* 23.3 (1992): 251.

most closely aligned with Aššur, acting on the god's behalf as a spiritual leader and military commander. In fact, "the king attributed all his accomplishments, and especially his military victories, to the god Ashur, for not only his authority but his intelligence and resources were granted to him by divine favor."<sup>197</sup> As J.N. Postgate suggests, "This one-to-one correspondence between the god and the city is underlined by the fact that, unlike most other major deities of the Mesopotamian scene, Assur has no other temples."<sup>198</sup> Though the capital city of the Neo-Assyrian Empire would move to Kalhu in 879 BCE under the reign of Ashurnasirpal II, the city of Assur did not lose all importance. It continued to be an important religious center and ceremonial site for the Assyrian kings. Together with the cities of Kalhu (or what today we call Nimrud),<sup>199</sup> Nineveh, and Arbela, the "Assyrian triangle" would remain central for the empire in both geographical and political terms. Nineveh itself would be renovated as the new capital city during the rule of Sennacherib (704-681 BCE).

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<sup>197</sup> A.K. Grayson, "Assyrian Civilization," in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to Sixth Centuries B.C.*, edited by John Boardman et al. Second edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3.2: 223.

<sup>198</sup> Postgate, 251.

<sup>199</sup> For clarity moving forward, I am going to refer to Kalhu as Nimrud, as this is the name Austen Henry Layard and others used in the nineteenth century.



Fig. 8. “Map of the Assyrian empire at its greatest extent during the reign of Ashurbanipal (668 BC to c. 627 BC), The British Museum, <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/introducing-the-assyrians/>

The capital cities of Nineveh and Nimrud would become two of the most important archaeological sites in the nineteenth century. To the luck of archaeologists, the Mediterranean climate of the Assyrian heartland was such that mud-brick structures would come to define Assyrian construction; the continuous collapse and rebuilding of these structures over time would create mounds of densely packed strata or layers of history, one on top of the next. Not only were the structures themselves constructed via mud bricks, but the Assyrian royal court kept careful records, preserved for us today in

cuneiform-scripted clay tablets. The excavations of these materials at Nineveh and Nimrud, alongside the rise of Assyriology as a field of scholarly inquiry, would allow for an improved understanding of Assyrian history and culture and would work to re-establish Assyria as the first great world empire, unrivaled in power and reach from the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century BCE to its downfall in 612 BCE. There were two major phases of expansion during this Neo-Assyrian period: “a first in the ninth century, which essentially restored Assyria’s reach to that of the late second millennium, and a second, longer lasting, phase that started in the mid-eighth century and turned it into the foremost power of the Near East.”<sup>200</sup> At the ultimate peak of the Neo-Assyrian period, the empire laid claim to and conquered “all of Mesopotamia, part of western Iraq, southeastern Anatolia, Syria-Palestine, and finally, Egypt.”<sup>201</sup> Despite the fact that Assyrian warfare and conquest “did not produce a military genius— there was no Assyrian Alexander, Genghis Khan, or Bonaparte whatsoever,” they were still able to establish an empire that united a diverse body of lands, peoples, and cultures under its “vision of universal kingship under the national god Aššur”.<sup>202</sup> The language of many preserved clay tablets speaks to what Mario Liverani calls the Assyrian “*reconquista* ideology,” or the Neo-Assyrian kings’ imperial programs of both expansion and reclamation of the lands lost following the Late Bronze Age Collapse and death of king Aššūr-bēl-kala in 1056 BCE, which brought an

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<sup>200</sup> Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East ca. 3000-323 BC*. Third edition. (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 246.

<sup>201</sup> Gérard Chaliand, *A Global History of War: From Assyria to the Twenty-First Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 48.

<sup>202</sup> Andreas Fuchs, “Assyria at War: Strategy and Conduct” in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* eds. Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 380; Virginia R. Herrman and Craig W. Tyson, “Introduction: The Construction of the Imperial Periphery in Neo-Assyrian Studies” in *Imperial Peripheries in the Neo-Assyrian Period*, ed. Tyson and Herrman (Louisville: University Press of Colorado, 2018), 3.

end to the Middle Assyrian Empire.<sup>203</sup> King Tiglath-pileser I (1115-1077 BCE) initiated this language circa 1100 BCE: “I added land to Assyria, and I added people to its people. I extended the border of my land and ruled over all their lands.”<sup>204</sup> Neo-Assyrian kings such as Adad-nirari II and Ashurnasirpal II would further this rhetoric in ways that stressed the rightful homecoming of Assyrian peoples and territories that had been lost to the neighboring Aramaeans and famine, for example, alongside the expansion of the empire’s boundaries that incorporated entirely new lands into its reach.<sup>205</sup>

Due to an array of internal weaknesses and vicious attacks by the Medes and Chaldeans from 614-610 BCE, however, the collapse of the Assyrian empire “was not only fast but complete.”<sup>206</sup> Liverani summarizes this collapse as “the metropolis of Nineveh, by far the biggest city of that time, and the other Assyrian cities (Assur included) were razed to the ground forever. The Assyrian countryside remained depopulated for centuries [as] the center of the world shifted elsewhere.”<sup>207</sup> As Liverani suggests, the center of the world did, in fact, shift to Babylon then Persia, creating empires which I argue are central to nineteenth-century understandings of the Ancient Near East; however, I want to make clear that this central chain connects as far down as Britain, one of the last world empires that would come closer to being more “universal” in scope than Assyria ever imagined. The rediscovery and excavation of Assyria’s

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<sup>203</sup> Mario Liverani, “From City-State to Empire: The Case of Assyria,” in *The Roman Empire in Context: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. J.P. Arnason and K. A. Raafslub (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), 257.

<sup>204</sup> Liverani, “City-State,” 257.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid. Texts such as the Tiglath-pileser I tablet quoted above were introduced to the west after the excavation of the Library of Ashurbanipal in Kouyunjik by Layard.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

capitals in the nineteenth century was, at its core, an archaeology of empire. I argue that this archaeology of empire occurs on two levels, in terms of the historical context of the discovery—allowing us to *see* the remains of this first empire—and in terms of the contemporary national and imperial ambitions that fuel such excavations and acquisitions in the first place. What archaeological inquiry into this region would ultimately afford the British is a means of conquest over the remains of the most ancient of empires.

But even before the British Museum could possess the artifacts discovered by Austen Henry Layard and further cement Britain's dominance as a universal power within the space of the encyclopedic museum in both a geographical and temporal sense, Assyria existed, however peripherally, in both classical and biblical sources. Both Ancient Greco-Roman histories and the Bible conditioned nineteenth-century readers to imagine what the Assyrian Empire once was before the material, linguistic, and iconographic remains of Assyria were revealed by Layard. Classical depictions would inform how both real and mythical Assyrian rulers, including Semiramis, Sennacherib, and Sardanapalus were depicted in early-nineteenth century literature and culture prior to the excavations. Such sources, spanning diverse contexts for their creation, would play a major role in determining what notions the British had about Assyria, including its place in history—both secular and religious-- and continued, if any, relevance in the nineteenth century before Layard's revolutionary discoveries.

### **Reading Assyria in the Early Nineteenth Century**

Much of the pre-archaeological understanding of Ancient Assyria derived from classical sources, particularly histories written by the Greek historians Herodotus (484-

425 BCE), Ctesias (c. 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE) and Diodorus Siculus (c. 90-30 BCE). Some of these sources have not been preserved in full; many of the fragments concerning Assyrian history that have been preserved from Ctesias's history of Persia, for instance, exist because of their replication in Diodorus's text. Though the earliest classical source that deals with Assyria is Herodotus's *The Histories*, Assyria does not feature as prominently as the later Persia— Herodotus's main concern. That said, as Robert Rollinger suggests, what makes Herodotus's account of the Assyrian palaces so influential is the way his concept that “world history is structured by a succession of empires” and that the first, Assyria, was followed by the Median, then Persian Empires would “become a definite part of all world histories, at least until the 18<sup>th</sup> century CE.”<sup>208</sup> In Herodotus' *The Histories*, the Assyrian Empire is defined by its longevity and by a limited procession of rulers, including Ninus the founder of Assyria, Sardanapalus, and perhaps the most famous Sennacherib, that oscillates between mythology and reality.<sup>209</sup> Further, as Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones suggests, it is clear that Herodotus “drew on clichéd events from Near Eastern history, which were already common currency in the Greek-speaking world” and were written “with the deliberate aim of ‘Othering’ Eastern societies,” including both Assyria and Babylon.<sup>210</sup> Many of the legends surrounding the rule of the mythical Ninus and Sardanapalus would be furthered by Ctesias's work and would come to define how later readers would imagine Assyria.

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<sup>208</sup> Robert Rollinger, “Assyria in Classical Sources,” *A Companion to Assyria*, ed. Eckart Frahm (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 570.

<sup>209</sup> Rollinger, 570.

<sup>210</sup> Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, introduction to *Ctesias' History of Persia: Tales of the Orient*, ed. Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones and James Robson (London: Routledge, 2013), 50.

While Herodotus's text was translated and read widely throughout the nineteenth century, the history of Assyria believed to originate from Ctesias's *Persica* and preserved in Diodorus Siculus's *Bibliotheca historica* proved to be equally influential in determining how Assyrian history was remembered. Ctesias, a doctor in the Persian court of King Artaxerxes II (r. 404-358 BCE), has variously been dismissed "as a dangerous Orientalist gossipmonger" on the one hand and a "less than satisfactory historian" on the other.<sup>211</sup> In the span of twenty-three books, Ctesias surveyed the history of the Near East, moving from the reign of the mythical Ninus of Ancient Assyria to the present-day state of the Persian Empire under Artaxerxes II. In many ways, his account is informed by his own experience as a member of the Persian court: "his aim was not solely to write a history of the Near East, but to meld the legendary aspects of Eastern history (especially in terms of fictitious or semi-fictitious characters) with personal observations of recent historical events and add to it local colour and flavor."<sup>212</sup> When compiled, this text is an important example of *Persica* as a literary genre interested in tracing Persian history back to the older Assyrian and Median Empires while combining the allure of the East and its seeming decadence with the intrigue of mythological grandeur.<sup>213</sup>

Though fragments of Ctesias's *Persica* were not translated into English until 1888 by classicist John Gilmore, compilations were being translated and read across Europe during the nineteenth century. Two German editions, by Albert Lion and Johann Christian Felix Baehr, appeared in the 1820s, and Carl Müller compiled a Latin

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<sup>211</sup> Llewellyn-Jones, *Ctesias: History of Persia*, 28.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>213</sup> For a survey of the editing and publishing the Ctesian fragments, see Llewellyn-Jones, 20-22.

translation of the fragments between 1841 and 1870. Translations of the *Biblioteca historica*, on the other hand, were far more popular: George Booth's translation, for instance, appeared in print by 1700 and a new edition was published in 1814. While much of what remains of Ctesias has been passed down via Diodorus Siculus (and was cited by Diodorus himself as such), it is important to note that the *Biblioteca historica's* representation of the word of Ctesias is very likely untrustworthy. For example, according to Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones:

Diodorus certainly used the sections from Ctesias' *Persica*, which dealt with Assyrian and Median history, but he merged them with other sources, especially the writings of Cleitarchus, the (firsthand) historian of Alexander the Great, and the historian Dinon of Colophon (Cleitarchus' father), himself the author of a *Persica* and an adaptor of Ctesias' material... Diodorus' account of Semiramis's Indian War, for example, is based on Alexander's real-life campaign in India as recounted by Cleitarchus and so cannot be taken solely from Ctesias, although it is possible that Cleitarchus reworked the Alexander narrative in the manner of Ctesias' work (and it is possible, even probably, that Ctesias had written extensively on an Indian war of Semiramis).<sup>214</sup>

What Llewellyn-Jones proves, here, is the unreliability of these composite narratives that combine both mythology and historical fact to construct a legendary portrait of Assyrian history. Throughout Diodorus's account of Assyrian history, included in Book II of the *Biblioteca historica*, his fixation on certain figures mentioned by Ctesias is indicative of his support for and contribution to such mythologized historiography. The narratives of Semiramis and Sardanapalus thus dominate much of his discussion, which greatly informed many of the early nineteenth-century perceptions of Assyria.

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<sup>214</sup> Llewellyn-Jones, *Ctesias: History of Persia*, 39.

Semiramis, Sardanapalus, and Sennacherib co-existed as a highly charged cast of Assyrian figures; their extravagance and provocative theatricality in classical sources were easily appropriated in nineteenth-century literature, especially by authors such as Lord Byron who were enamored with oriental or exotic fantasies. Literature that beckoned to Assyria's mythical rulers was part of the Romantic vogue for Oriental tales, and the nineteenth-century dramatization of these characters was made possible because of Assyria's mythological wealth: texts that had been passed down and translated for centuries before Layard's excavations ever took place.

According to Rollinger, for example, "the legend of Semiramis as an Assyrian queen was shaped by Ctesias" and thus "became part of the classical tradition."<sup>215</sup> Semiramis, in Diodorus's account, was "so famous above any of her sex, (as in history it is related)" that it is impossible to provide any account of Assyrian history without saying "something of her here in this place."<sup>216</sup> Lauded for her beauty and cunning, her tactical exploits in these early sources "read like a Hellenized rendering of the Assyrian royal annals."<sup>217</sup> Diodorus spends much of Book II tracing Semiramis's accomplishments: not only is she responsible for the construction of the city of Babylon and its infrastructure, but he also catalogs her bravery in militaristic matters. Culminating in her marriage to Ninus and resulting queenship, it is her act of disguise on the way to the city of Bactra to join her soon-to-be former husband Onnes (the Assyrian general who hangs himself after refusing to give his wife to the king) and her self-imposed reconnaissance mission along

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<sup>215</sup> Rollinger, "Assyria in Classical Sources," 572.

<sup>216</sup> George Booth, *The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian*, vol. 1 (London, 1814), 102.

<sup>217</sup> Matt Waters, "Semiramis, Queen of Battle" in *Ctesias' Persica and Its Near Eastern Context* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2020), 48-49.

the way that affords Ninus's Assyrian victory over the Bactrians. As her narrative winds down, despite her ultimate defeat and withdrawal during the India campaign, the image of Semiramis as warrior queen is solidified by Diodorus's account of her idea to "offset the advantage afforded by [King] Strabrobates' elephants, Semiramis resorted to a stratagem of dummy elephants: straw-stuffed hides mounted upon camels, concealing men who manipulated and directed them."<sup>218</sup>

By all accounts, Queen Semiramis is highly and consciously performative, a thread we can trace in the ancient accounts of Sardanapalus and that will inform how their characters are portrayed in the nineteenth century. Yet, it is also worth noting that the queen's intrigue is linked to the broader reception of female rulers during the period. Nineteenth-century Britons were certainly invested in narratives of ancient and contemporary queens. Semiramis was no exception, as she was understood as an exotic figure who was cunning and powerful but ultimately less successful than their own folk hero, Boudica. Boudica "is memorialized by both Tacitus and Dio as a powerful model of barbarian female leadership in early imperial history" and that in these texts "her words... captivate her audience, as she condemns the effeminacy of the enemy, defends the superiority of her cause, and challenges her men to unite in the contest for *libertas* from the lustful tyrant, Rome."<sup>219</sup> Boudica explicitly distinguishes herself from Semiramis in Dio's *Roman History* (w. 211-233), as she believes her leadership style is ultimately more successful offensively than her Assyrian predecessor.<sup>220</sup> Gillespie, then,

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<sup>218</sup> Waters, "Semiramis," 50.

<sup>219</sup> Caitlin Gillespie, "The Wolf and the Hare: Boudica's Political Bodies in Tacitus and Dio," *The Classical World*, 108, no. 3 (Spring 2015): 403.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 422-423

positions Semiramis as an “anti-model for Boudica, despite [her] political successes” because the Assyrian queen failed to “inspire men to break the bonds of servitude.”<sup>221</sup> In this way, it is possible to read Boudica as the antithesis of not just Semiramis, but also of Sardanapalus, the effeminate and extravagant king whose corrupt behavior was the detriment to the empire.

Unlike Semiramis, whose rule in the earliest years of the empire was characterized by her agency and power, Sardanapalus, the “thirtieth [king] from Ninus, and the last king of the Assyrians, exceeded all his predecessors in sloth and luxury.”<sup>222</sup> Diodorus’s major criticism of the last king fixates on his “most effeminate” lifestyle, for Sardanapalus is described not just as “wallowing in pleasure and wanton dalliances” but he is said to have “imitated, likewise, a woman’s voice” and physically dressed himself in women’s clothing, adorning his body with makeup and jewels that “decked his whole body... like a strumpet.”<sup>223</sup> In his corrupt luxury, which the author goes so far as to describe as a display of “sordid uncleanness,” Diodorus characterizes the king as “without a sense of modesty, abusing both sexes” as he “daily injured himself” in his sexual gratification by a host of “whores and strumpets.”<sup>224</sup> Sardanapalus’s moral failings come at the cost of the first great empire: “being thus corrupt in his morals, he not only came to a miserable end himself, but utterly overturned the Assyrian monarchy, which had continued longer than any we read of.”<sup>225</sup> Robert Rollinger argues that

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 423, 422.

<sup>222</sup> Booth, *Diodorus*, 119.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

Sardanapalus's Assyria as presented in classical documents was less a reflection of historical fact and rather symbols of "the contemplation of downfall and demise, fugacity and transience, and the everlasting question how to live one's life."<sup>226</sup> Further, this mythological narrative, I argue, reflects a tension between the personal and the political—namely, the threat of the personal to the status and security of the empire that will continue to reverberate as these figures as adapted in literary and cultural decades in the next millennia.

Falling chronologically between Semiramis and Sardanapalus lies Sennacherib, the Assyrian king known for his Levantine campaign and moving of the Assyrian capital to Nineveh. Ruling during the Sargonid dynasty between 705 and 681 BCE, Sennacherib, despite his legendary status, is much more firmly grounded in historical reality than the other rulers I have mentioned. That said, there exist different theories or accounts of Sennacherib's campaigns in these records. On the one hand, according to Herodotus, Sennacherib's Egyptian campaign fails, despite his "huge army of Arabians and Assyrians," because Sethos, the Egyptian king and priest of Hephaestus, prays for protection and is rewarded when a covert army of field-mice destroy the enemies' supplies during the dead of night.<sup>227</sup> On the other hand, Sennacherib's presence in the Bible allowed readers to better understand Assyria in a Judeo-Christian context; the Bible's position in the Western cultural consciousness is too critical to ignore.<sup>228</sup> In the case of British readers Assyria struck familiarity with "every literate Briton in an age

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<sup>226</sup> Rollinger, "Assyria in Classical Sources," 578.

<sup>227</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 151-152.

<sup>228</sup> Van de Mieroop, 245.

when the Bible was not just an aid to devotion but a school textbook.”<sup>229</sup> While six Assyrian monarchs in total are referenced in the Hebrew Bible, Sennacherib features the most prominently in the encounters between Israel, Judah, and Assyria as the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE drew to a close.<sup>230</sup> Unlike Ctesias’ *Persica* or Diodorus’ *Bibliotheca*, texts that frame themselves as histories of those in power, the biblical narrative memorializes Assyria from the perspective of its victims.<sup>231</sup>

Sennacherib’s march against Israel and Judah followed a period of anti-Assyrian revolt following the death of Sargon II in 705 BCE. 2 Kings 18:13 through 19:37 records Sennacherib’s campaign, first against Babylon’s king Marduk-apla-iddna II, then Hezekiah of Judah. The narrative of utter destruction would later be supported, at least to a degree, by the clay tablets excavated in Nineveh that attest to his graphic conquest of the Judaeian city of Lachish.<sup>232</sup> Despite Isaiah’s prophecy that Sennacherib would fall and the biblical account that the siege on Jerusalem was prevented by “the angel of the Lord [who] went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses,” in reality, Sennacherib succeeded in transforming Judah into a vassal state,

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<sup>229</sup> Timothy Larsen, “Nineveh” in *Cities of God: The Bible and Archaeology in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. David Gange and Michael Ledger-Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 113. See also Timothy Larsen, *A People of One Book: the Bible and the Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>230</sup> Eckart Frahm, “Assyria in the Hebrew Bible,” in *A Companion to Assyria*, ed. Eckart Frahm (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 557-558.

<sup>231</sup> Van De Mierop, 245.

<sup>232</sup> See 2 Kings 19:11 for language of the land’s “utter destruction” under Assyrian rule. See also J. Edward Wright and Mark Elliot, “Israel and Judah Under Assyria’s Thumb” in *The Old Testament in Archaeology and History*, eds. Jennie Ebeling, J. Edward Wright, Mark Elliot, and Paul V.M. Flesher (Waco, Baylor University Press, 2017), 451-457.

defeated and destroyed Babylon, and rebuilt the capital at Nineveh before eventually being murdered by his own sons in 681 BCE.<sup>233</sup> As Eckart Frahm suggests, the angel's defeat of the Assyrian camp is "the most severe historical 'distortion' in the Biblical account," creating tension between historical fact and the mythological narrative invented to 'present Hezekiah as a pious hero who was rewarded for his faithfulness with divine favor.'<sup>234</sup> Although the Bible does not present a detailed account of Sennacherib's later reign, 2 Kings 19:37 does mention his returning to dwell in Nineveh and subsequent murder by his sons.

However different Sennacherib's history in these ancient texts is from that of Semiramis and Sardanapalus, each of these figures would play important roles in how Assyria and its major players were conceived by nineteenth-century writers. Lord Byron's Assyrian tales centralize Sennacherib and Sardanapalus, respectively, and can thus be considered as major Romantic-era case studies for the ways Assyria was being narrativized in poetic and dramatic forms. Written as part of the *Hebrew Melodies*, in "The Destruction of Sennacherib" (1815) Byron retells the biblical account of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem.<sup>235</sup> While Byron centralizes the verse in which the Lord's angel intervenes, he turns the event into a spectacle of Assyrian suffering that the Bible itself does not provide. Byron's version makes a visual spectacle of the Angel of Death stopping the Assyrian army in its tracks; the Angel of Death does not merely go

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<sup>233</sup> 2 Kings 19:35 King James Version

<sup>234</sup> Frahm, "Hebrew Bible," 559.

<sup>235</sup> For an overview of the reception and debate concerning *Hebrew Melodies* as "national melodies," see Jeremy Davies, "Jewish Tunes, or *Hebrew Melodies*: Byron and the Biblical Orient," in *Byron and Orientalism*, ed. Peter Cochran (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), 197-214.

out and smite the Assyrians as described in the King James Version of the Bible. The Angel “spread[s] his wings on the blast,” breathing death into his foes that seems to freeze head, heart, and body on impact.<sup>236</sup> The visual spectacle that is the Assyrian army coming “down like the wolf on the fold” in the first stanza is overtaken by the supernatural power of the Angel; no longer is the army, with “the sheen of their spears... like stars on the sea,” rolling like a wave “on deep Galilee.”<sup>237</sup> The army once as powerful as an ocean’s tide is eclipsed by the Angel’s power to freeze its motion in its tracks. In death, the horse that accompanied one valiant Assyrian is described by “the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf, / And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.”<sup>238</sup> The gasping so quickly turns to silence that it seems like the riders themselves and those at their camp do not have time to react: “And the tents were all silent, the banners alone, / The lances unlisted, the trumpet unblown.”<sup>239</sup> The army itself met seemingly instantaneous, quiet suffering; however, Byron quickly pivots to the subsequent Assyrian domestic suffering that the biblical account seems unwilling or uninterested in recognizing. “The widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,” Byron writes, as their “idols are broke in the temple of Baal.”<sup>240</sup> Byron seems to recognize, here, the both private and national effects imperialism and its failed campaigns have domestically. The poem shifts from the death of a single Assyrian standing in for the entire regiment to

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<sup>236</sup> Lord Byron, “The Destruction of Sennacherib.” In *Selected Poems*, edited by Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning, 355. London: Penguin, 2005, lines 9-10.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 1, 3-4.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, line 16.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, line 20.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 21-22.

a brigade of wailing widows being punished by the Judeo-Christian God for their idol worship and crusade against the Holy Land.

Unlike “The Destruction of Sennacherib,” which is in explicit dialogue with events of the Hebrew Bible, the dramatic tragedy *Sardanapalus* (1821) draws heavily on the performative nature of the title character as portrayed by Diodorus, and therefore, Ctesias. Additionally, a major contributing factor to Byron’s project was his conscious engagement with not only Assyrian legend but also the “contemporary discourse on gender and the fate of empire.”<sup>241</sup> Susan J. Wolfson points out that “Sardanapalus’s effeminacy is represented as concealing, but not canceling, a masculine character,” a “latency” that she argues is a revision of Diodorus’s account in which the king is rendered as “a monstrous hybrid, a man not only effeminate, but also given to fetishistic transvestitism and bisexuality.”<sup>242</sup> Nationalism is another major concern of Byron’s in *Sardanapalus*, as the play’s Assyrian setting cannot override its clear “contemporary representations of war, British monarchy, and Napoleonic Rule.”<sup>243</sup> But what is perhaps the most interesting is the text’s evocation of Semiramis as “the Man-Queen” and grandmother of Sardanapalus. In the opening scene, Salemenes fears bearing witness to

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<sup>241</sup> Susan J. Wolfson, “‘A Problem Few Dare Imitate’: *Sardanapalus* and ‘Effeminate Character.’” *ELH* 58, no. 4 (1991): 867.

<sup>242</sup> Wolfson, “Problem,” 871. Additionally, *Sardanapalus* would also come to feature in Edwin Atherstone’s *The Fall of Nineveh* (1828-1847). Atherstone decided to tackle the subject of *Sardanapalus* despite Byron’s recent treatment because of the friendly encouragement of artist John Martin, who painted *The Fall of Nineveh* in 1829. Atherstone’s treatment of *Sardanapalus* is sympathetic; his delineation rests on the assumption that *Sardanapalus* “has within him a fire that, wisely tended, might have given warmth and splendor, and enjoyment; but which, uncontrolled, becomes a conflagration that consumes him” (ix). Alongside Byron’s version, we might consider the ways in which Atherstone’s work is part of Romantic understandings of *Sardanapalus*.

<sup>243</sup> Daniela Garofalo, “Political Seductions: The Show of War in Byron’s *Sardanapalus*.” *Criticism* 44, no. 1 (2002): 43.

Sardanapalus's demise, watching "the blood of Nimrod and Semiramis / Sink in the earth, and thirteen hundred years / Of Empire ending like a shepherd's tale."<sup>244</sup> She is described by her grandson Sardanapalus as "a sort of semi-glorious human monster" and by Beleses as a ruler who "liked no sharers of the kingdom, / Not even a husband."<sup>245</sup> It is this blood and body of the empire banished underground that Layard would bring back to life; through his excavation of the Assyrian composite beasts I will soon discuss, his narrative of excavation would recall to life the monstrosity associated with the ancient orient and imagined by Byron and his readers.

Though Semiramis's appearance in Byron's play is spectral, she would be reincarnated on real and fictional stages throughout the nineteenth century. Performances of ancient Assyrian rulers were not limited to poems and plays; both Madame de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807) and Geraldine Jewsbury's *The Half-Sisters* (1848) feature theatrical performances by women in the role of Semiramis. Despite this shared role, the novels' performances are based on two very different Italian theatrical and operatic adaptations of Semiramis's legendary history. Instead of relying solely on ancient accounts of her character, both novelists adapt theatrical versions of her narrative, allowing us to cast a broader net over the different kinds of cultural productions that centralized Semiramis during the period. The versions of Semiramis that are performed in the novels are very much rooted in the lustful queen's sexual prowess, though to varying degrees. Semiramis as grieving, incestuous mother will come to inform the reception of

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<sup>244</sup> Lord Byron, *Sardanapalus*. In *Selected Poems*, edited by Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning, 635-734. London: Penguin, 2005, 637.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 644, 673.

La Fornasari's performance in *The Half-Sisters*, while the same queen as a savage coquette is the driving force behind Corinne's showcase of her acting abilities before her beloved Lord Nelvil.

Shortly after arriving in Venice, de Staël's Corinne consents to showcasing her performative genius for Nelvil for the first time; together, they decide that she is to perform in Carlo Gozzi's *The Child of the Air*, "or Semiramis in her Youth" in which its title character is described by the narrator as: "a coquette, endowed by the celestials and infernals to subjugate the world; bred in a desert, like a savage, cunning as a sorceress, and imperious as a queen, she unites natural wildness with premeditated grace, and a warrior's courage with the frivolity of a woman."<sup>246</sup> Performing the queen as exoticized and othered, Corinne distances herself from her fears of grief and lost love and fear itself; she becomes enraptured in her performance, commanding the submission of her male charges and reveling in her ambitious, witty despotism. Gozzi's piece allows her to reanimate Semiramis as more than just a legend—the queen in Gozzi's adaptation of the myth is a vehicle for intense animation and the exotic Corinne's performance is larger than life, not unlike the Assyrian sculptures buried underground. For de Staël, Gozzi as dramatist "gave himself up freely to his genius; mingling buffoonery with magic, imitating nothing in nature, but dealing with those fairy chimeras that bear the mind beyond the boundaries of this world."<sup>247</sup> Semiramis, figured as the daughter of the air,

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<sup>246</sup> Madame de Staël, *Corinne; or, Italy*, trans. Isabel Hill (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1884), 287.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

“rules over... the elements almost.”<sup>248</sup> She is the daughter of the dangerous East, figured as the one who consumes and terrorizes those she commands.<sup>249</sup> In this way, Corinne’s performance prefigures the revelation of the Assyrian lamassus that would shock and petrify those who witnessed their unburial.

The adaptation Jewsbury adopts for the actress La Fornasari to perform was Gioachino Rossini’s *Semiramide*, produced in Venice for the first time in 1823, which features Semiramis choosing a successor to the throne. After falling in love with Arsaces, the Commander-in-Chief of the Babylonian army, Semiramis elects him as the worthiest successor and demands they marry immediately. It is soon revealed, however, that Semiramis was responsible for poisoning her husband, King Nino, and that her son, Ninia, had not been killed in the aftermath, as she once speculated. Arsaces is revealed to be Ninia, the son of Nino and Semiramis, who had been whisked away by a priest to safety following the death of the King and raised as the priest’s own son. Though shocked by the revelation of his true identity, Arsaces forgives his mother out of a sense of familial duty. The queen goes into the tomb of Nino to pray, asking for forgiveness and for the eternal protection of her son; soon after she is accidentally slain by Arsaces, who meant instead to attack the prince Assurus, a competitor undeserving of the throne and accomplice in the killing of his father, the king. Semiramis dies; Arsaces becomes King.

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<sup>248</sup> Robert Casillo, *The Empire of Stereotypes: Germaine de Staël and the Idea of Italy* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 224.

<sup>249</sup> For discussion about Semiramis, the East, and the Roman plague, see Casillo, 224.

This narrative is not entirely Rossini's, however. Rossini's version of the Semiramis legend is itself an adaptation of Voltaire's tragedy *Semiramis*, written in 1748 and later translated for performance at the Golden Lion in London as early as 1760. Semiramis' rule, as Voltaire imagines it, is immediately characterized by passionate or "hysterical" displays of grief at the loss of her son and husband that persist long after their supposed deaths. From the first scene, it is clear that Semiramis, despite her famous, courtly performances of exotic grandeur, mourns the loss of her family: "She often to the sepulcher approaches, / And strikes her aching bosom bath'd with tears. / Breaking the horrid silence, oft her lips / Articulate the names of son and husband."<sup>250</sup> Rossini's adaptation does ground itself in Semiramis's anxieties about the future and whether or not she will be able to seduce Arsaces and marry him with the support of the Oracle; however, Semiramis as mother is not an aspect of her character that is revealed until Act II Scene I, in a conversation with Assurus, a prince and co-conspirator in the death of Nino, where the queen laments: "I had then, / A Son, my only and my sweetest home; / He perished."<sup>251</sup> When asked if she would give up the throne to become his living mother once more, she makes it clear that she would immediately surrender it to her son. The suppression of this information concerning the queen's maternal history becomes a subtle, yet important plot device for La Fornasari's performance in *The Half-Sisters*.

In the decades leading up to the massive Assyrian and Babylonian archaeological discoveries, these ancient rulers and their legends are creatively reimagined to suit contemporary purposes and understandings of antiquity. Romantic orientalism revealed

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<sup>250</sup> Voltaire, *Semiramis: A Tragedy* (London: G. Kearsly and the Golden Lion, 1760), 2.

<sup>251</sup> Gioachino Rossini, *Semiramide* (New York: Douglas, 1848), 31.

the desire to reach towards Assyria as a place that was simultaneously historic and exotic, yet forgotten and underground in ways that allowed it to become all the more mysterious, if not supernatural. While these performances and adaptations attest to the lasting power of Assyria's ability to capture the public's imagination, it would be the work of archaeologists and the international competition for antiquities that would reveal the very material artifacts that could attest to William Mitford's characterization of Assyria as a powerful empire.<sup>252</sup> Archaeology and the conscription of its artifacts into British service would realize Assyria in a material sense, just as it would alter the perception of its monstrosity. In the section that follows, I trace the discoveries made by Austen Henry Layard and his team in Nimrud and Nineveh, centralizing how the human-headed lamassu became emblematic of the ancient empire.

### **The Assyrian Excavations of Austen Henry Layard**

In 1840, Austen Henry Layard arrived in Mosul, twenty miles north of the mounds of the ancient city of Nimrud. During his service to the consulate under Sir Stratford Canning, Layard began excavating Nimrud in 1845. Layard was greatly influenced by Charles Fellows, who had been a recurring presence at his family home. Cultivating Layard's interest in archaeology, Fellows served as an early mentor for the burgeoning archaeologist: "Fellows was always friendly and helpful, 'and the accounts he gave me of his wanderings and explorations inspired me with the strongest desire to follow his example. He very kindly gave me many valuable hints, and urged me to visit parts of that country into which he had not penetrated, and where, he believed, important

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<sup>252</sup> See William Mitford, *The History of Greece*, vol. 1 (London: 1838).

ruins were yet to be found.”<sup>253</sup> Layard saw himself walking in Fellow’s footsteps, but instead of turning to Anatolia, Layard was capable of becoming the face of Assyrian archaeology.<sup>254</sup> While Fellows’ project was not religiously motivated, Layard’s (despite, perhaps, his own desires) became deeply intertwined in debates about the use of archaeology to verify Scripture. “Bathed in the sacred light of the Old Testament,” Shawn Malley writes, “the material legacy of Assyria also indicated a world worthy to be excavated as a distant ancestor. The cultural chain-of-being, crowned by Great Britain and neatly mapped out in the sculpture galleries of the British Museum, now extended beyond Rome, Greece, and Egypt to Assyria.”<sup>255</sup> The British Empire, however, was not uncontested in this pursuit, and, as we will see in the next chapter, Assyria’s position within the museal chain was initially shoddy and unceremonious.

Layard was not the only archaeologist excavating Northern Mesopotamia in the name of empire, nor was he the first. On behalf of the French, Paolo Emilio Botta began excavating at Kouyunjik in December 1842. As representative imperial institutions, both the British Museum and the Louvre were in competition to acquire and exhibit antiquities from the largest empires of the ancient world.<sup>256</sup> The ambition to acquire antiquities for showcase in the national museums did not begin in Mosul or Kouyunjik, however. With the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, the British made it clear that the French

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<sup>253</sup> Mogens Trolle Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria: Excavations in an Antique Land, 1840-1860* (London: Routledge, 1996), 36; Austen Henry Layard, *Autobiography and Letters from his childhood until his appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*, ed. William N. Bruce (London: John Murray, 1903), 104-105.

<sup>254</sup> M. Larsen, *Conquest*, 42.

<sup>255</sup> Shawn Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain: The Case of Assyria, 1845-1854* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 2.

<sup>256</sup> For more on France, the Louvre, and imperial art acquisitions, see M. Larsen, *Conquest*, 21.

looting of antiquities and other art objects from European countries such as Italy was an unacceptable form of plunder; however, both nations agreed that the archaeological pursuit of the Near East and lands under control of the Turks were fair game.<sup>257</sup>

Botta excavated Kouyunjik for almost a year in hopes of finding evidence that the site was that of the biblical Nineveh; however, he abandoned Kouyunjik for Khorsabad, revealing the ancient capital Dur Sharrukin, established by Sargon II circa 716 BCE, instead.<sup>258</sup> It was no secret that Botta was receiving ample financial support from the French government; although this must have frustrated Layard who was continually hoping for the Trustees of the British Museum to be more forthcoming with funding and support for Layard's archaeological and managerial dedication, Layard maintained a positive relationship with the French archaeologist. Throughout Layard's writings, he seems to downplay the French-English imperial rivalry over Mesopotamia simply because Botta was so unexpectedly kind and liberally shared with Layard his findings and ideas.<sup>259</sup> That said, after Layard began to make major discoveries at Nimrud, the French Consul opposed to his plan to excavate Kouyunjik next, claiming that the ruins of Kouyunjik were French property, as Botta was the first to excavate the mounds (albeit unsuccessfully).<sup>260</sup> Layard, rather amusingly, refutes this claim to the property; while Botta, in fact, "also dug into the mound," he did so "in another direction."<sup>261</sup> The

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<sup>257</sup> M. Larsen, *Conquest*, 21-22.

<sup>258</sup> Rachel Hallote, "'Bible Lands Archaeology' and 'Biblical Archaeology' in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *The Old Testament in Archaeology and History*, ed. Ebeling, Wright, Elliot, & Flesher (Waco, Baylor UP, 2017), 117.

<sup>259</sup> Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, vol. 1 (London: 1849), 13. See also M. Larsen, *Conquest*, 24-25.

<sup>260</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 1, 132.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

differing claims to Kouyunjik, but even more importantly the competing assertions of the true location of Nineveh that fluctuated between Nimrud, Khorsabad, and Kouyunjik, led W. Francis Ainsworth to ridicule that “there will be a native Nineveh, a French Nineveh, and an English Nineveh.”<sup>262</sup> After 1847 when Layard took over the site, however, Kouyunjik was determined to be the site of ancient Nineveh. Layard was much more successful in excavating Kouyunjik than Botta, who was most successful at Khorsabad. At Kouyunjik, Layard would most notably uncover the palace of Sennacherib and library of Ashurbanipal, which would be further excavated by his assistant Hormuzd Rassam in later years.

While the Near East was an archaeological battleground between the British and French Empires in their quests for stocking their national institutions with treasures from the past, this competition was, in fact, playing out on lands controlled by the Ottoman Empire. Malley reveals that “possession of material Assyria naturalized colonial operations abroad” and that such operations were, ultimately, a “surveillance tactic in a region that assumed increasing strategic importance for Britain: protecting the overland route to India and deterring Russian expansion to the Black Sea.”<sup>263</sup> Layard’s work was critical for imperial policy development in the Near East, and, as Kevin McGeough argues, “the political ramifications of Layard’s books should be considered as... one of the earliest loci where formal imperialist governance and archaeological practice are institutionalized.”<sup>264</sup> If archaeology and the acquisition of foreign antiquities is an

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<sup>262</sup> W. Francis Ainsworth letter in the *Literary Gazette* (17 October 1846), 890.

<sup>263</sup> Malley, 2-3, 7.

<sup>264</sup> Kevin McGeough, *The Ancient Near East in the Nineteenth Century: Appreciations and Appropriations: 1. Claiming and Conquering* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 129.

“ultimate imperial act,” then Layard’s portrayal and treatment of the Arabs and Turks in Mosul and throughout the region is predicated upon the belief that it was necessary to educate and otherwise civilize these populations.<sup>265</sup> The language of the 1853 *Fraser’s Magazine* review “Layard’s Second Visit to Nineveh” is quite poignant: “to recultivate the waste, to repair the havoc of centuries, to succor the oppressed, to civilize the barbarous, to make truth and justice supreme in the place of rapine and fraud — this is an imperial work, and worthy of England. Meanwhile, Mr. Layard and such as he are the avant-couriers of the new crusade.”<sup>266</sup> Yet such imperial influence was not limited to British engagement with Ottoman Turks.

In the preface of the first volume of *Nineveh and Its Remains*, Layard goes so far as to dehumanize indigenous tribes such as the Tiyari, who he believes *must* be Assyrian descendants, as “indeed, as much the remains of Nineveh, and Assyria, as are the rude heaps and ruined palaces.”<sup>267</sup> Layard, however unconvincingly, gestures towards the value of ethnography for acquiring information about the ancient past, writing that “a comparison between the dwellers in the land as they now are, and as the monuments of their ancestors lead us to believe they once were, will not perhaps be without useful results.”<sup>268</sup> That said, Layard’s “archaeological desire” or “gaze” ultimately “reduces the whole region, with all its varied histories, peoples, territories, and economies, into a homology of past greatness and a tangible model for present regeneration.”<sup>269</sup> *Nineveh*

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<sup>265</sup> John MacKensie, *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 53.

<sup>266</sup> “Layard’s Second Visit to Nineveh,” *Fraser’s Magazine* 47 (1853), 434-444.

<sup>267</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 1, x.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> Malley, 40-41.

*and Its Remains*, then, becomes a text in which material ruins, local labor, and their potential for the benefit of the British are privileged above all else. If the literary precedents to Layard's work employed Assyria as a vehicle for a sublime, exotic fantasy, then Layard's narrative was more invested in its material and imperial commodification at the expense of indigenous Assyrian, Arabic, and Turkish populations.

Layard's *Nineveh and Its Remains* was published in two volumes in 1849.

*Nineveh's* "effusive" reception was the result of Layard shifting archaeology from its prior antiquarian domain to public accessibility; the text was one of the first large-scale archaeological narratives aimed at a wide Victorian reading public, arguably the largest literate group that had existed up until that time.<sup>270</sup> The first volume, while it did account for many of Layard's major discoveries during the October 1845 to June 1847 expedition, was largely an adventure tale. The second volume, in scope and tone, was much more academic and was thus removed from the popular, abridged edition that was published in 1852. Not only recognized for its generic hybridity, *Nineveh* was also highly intertextual. The preface of the first volume acknowledges the narratives of Ninus, Semiramis, and Sardanapalus that the reader is likely already familiar with:

The Bactrian and Indian expeditions of Ninus, the wonderful works of Semiramis, and the effeminacy of Sardanapalus, have been described over and over again, and form the standard ingredients of the Assyrian history of modern authors. The narratives framed upon them convey useful lessons, and are, moreover, full of romantic events to excite the imagination. As such they have been repeated, with a warning that their authenticity rests upon a slender basis, and that it is doubtful whether they are to be regarded as history, or to be classed amongst fables.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> T. Larsen, "Nineveh," 111; McGeough, 127.

<sup>271</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 1, xx.

Layard states his expectation that readers share with him a childhood familiarity of the Assyrian legends presented in biblical and classical sources, such as that of Herodotus, Ctesias, and Diodorus and their eventual appropriations and adaptations; however, he is forthcoming in asserting that this romanticized knowledge fails to translate to a true understanding of Assyrian history and geography.<sup>272</sup> Layard's purpose, then, is to take what he has learned from his excavations and distill his findings into a working knowledge of ancient Assyria, though he does acknowledge the difficulties of doing such public-facing scholarship while away from the resources (such as a ready supply of books) that London affords him.<sup>273</sup> While Layard acknowledges that some of his examinations might not be correct, he includes them anyways "whilst still fresh in [his] memory." In doing so, *Nineveh* becomes a narrative that reflects the "index case" British spectator's experiences and revelations in "real time." By concretizing how he is coming to know Assyria, he is proposing an epistemological bank that might be helpful to "others who may engage in similar enquiries."<sup>274</sup>

Layard's project is one of discovery and recovery. He laments the destruction caused by fires in antiquity and, eventually, Botta's excavations at Khorsabad. Though Botta discovered the first "Assyrian edifice... which had been exposed to the view of man since the fall of the Assyrian Empire" and despite Layard's appreciation for Botta's communication of his discoveries, much of the initial burden of destruction is placed upon the French, as many of the artifacts that for so long had preserved "the records of

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid., xx, xvi-xvii.

<sup>273</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 1, viii.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

victories and triumphs, which had long attested the power and swelled the pride of the Assyrian kings” were exposed and rapidly crumbled to irreplaceable pieces.<sup>275</sup> Further, Layard writes that “a regret is almost felt that so precious a memorial of a great nation should have been thus exposed to destruction, when no precaution could keep entire or secure the greater part of it; but as far as the object of the monument is concerned, the intention of its founders will be amply fulfilled, and the records of their might will be more widely spread, and more effectually preserved, by modern art, than the most exalted ambition could have contemplated.”<sup>276</sup> On behalf of the British Empire, Layard asserts his duty to do his best to record, preserve, and transport what he can to the safety of the British Museum. It becomes, then, the duty of the British empire, in competition with the French and the Ottoman, to liberate and protect, if not define, the legacy of the first great nation, the first great empire.

From obelisks and cylinders to tablets and bas-reliefs, the catalog of Layard’s findings at Nimrud and Kouyunjik is massive. As we will soon see, these excavations greatly increased the amount of space that the British Museum had to devote to Assyria. An overview of the extent of Layard’s findings is a project in itself, however. Not unlike Shawn Malley, I propose a case study that centralizes the various lamassu figures that were discovered and then transported to the British Museum between the time of Nineveh’s publication and the erection of the permanent Assyrian galleries. Lamassus became icons of Assyria; flanking in pairs the entrances to throne rooms and palaces, these massive composite figures were understood as deified guardians of the empire.

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 13.

Combining a human head atop the winged body of a bull or lion, the five-legged lamassu, often measuring upwards of eleven feet in height and width, could be confronted from the front or in profile. No matter how one positioned themselves to gaze upon these figures, the lamassus' size and stature could instill fear, civic or imperial submission, and pride in one fell swoop.



*Fig. 9 Colossal statue of a winged lion from the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal II,*

© The Trustees of the British Museum

Mogens Trolle Larsen, Frederick Bohrer, and Shawn Malley have each written studies of Layard and the Victorian reception and adaptation of Assyria and often discuss the colossal lamassus as emblematic of both Assyria and nineteenth-century Near Eastern

archaeology more broadly.<sup>277</sup> While Malley in particular examines representations of the bull and lion lamassu or colossoi in the context of Victorian periodical culture, scholars have paid less critical attention to what it means to collect, contain, and display the gigantic. The lamassus greatly exceed the proportions one might expect of any of the animals that make up these composite creatures; they are variously described by nineteenth-century and recent scholars alike as colossal, gigantic, massive, and enormous. I, therefore, wish to shift the focus to the verbal, visual, and spatial rhetoric of the colossal that emerges in the narratives concerning the discovery, transportation, and excavation of these artifacts. Not only does this language speak to the tension between text and image in representing the verisimilitude of the artifacts for the British spectator who has yet to see the lamassu in person, but it also influences how Layard himself as a cultural and political presence is described to this day. In 2017, Layard was described by Georgina Herrmann as “one of the giants of the Victorian age”; the same year, Ada Cohen and Steven E. Kangas assert that Nineveh’s “autobiographical tone... contributed to Layard’s reception as a ‘great man.’”<sup>278</sup>

The sheer size of the lamassu is all the more striking when we consider the state of the Assyrian holdings at the British Museum prior to Layard’s excavations. During his service to the East India Company at Baghdad, Claudius James Rich did some superficial exploration of the Mosul mounds in 1820. His findings, including pottery fragments,

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<sup>277</sup> See also Frederick Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>278</sup> Georgina Herrmann, *Ancient Ivory: Masterpieces of the Assyrian Empire* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2017), 20; Ada Cohen and Steven E. Kangas, *Inside an Ancient Assyrian Palace: Looking at Austen Henry Layard’s Reconstruction* (Hanover: Hood Museum of Art and University Press of New England, 2017), xi.

cylinders, and other small remains, were acquired by the museum where they were displayed in a small glass case “as one of the extremely few concrete testimonials to the existence of the ancient cultures in Assyria and Babylonia.”<sup>279</sup> Combined, if not conflated, with Babylon in a three-by-three feet square display case, the museum’s initial attempt at materially rendering the history of Assyria did little to represent the buried grandeur of the Assyrian empire; however, Rich’s display case did influence France’s initial interest in the region.

While Rich’s findings did little to convey the magnitude of what was buried and preserved beneath the mounds at Nimrud and Kouyunjik, Layard’s knowledge of Botta’s success at Khorsabad, inspired his own dream-like visions of what was underneath: in one of Nineveh’s earliest scenes, Layard writes of the “visions of palaces under-ground, of gigantic monsters of sculptured figures, and endless inscriptions, [that] floated before me.”<sup>280</sup> The Assyrian unknown, with its gigantic lamassus guarding the ruins, is monstrous, where other ancient ruins are grand and colossal, but in a less terrifying way. Mogens Trolle Larsen describes the juxtaposition between the initially visually unimpressive mounds of Mosul which failed to “evoke memories of past greatness” with

The mighty ruins of Persepolis — the rows of tall pillars, the delicately carved reliefs and inscriptions which were plainly visible — [which] made it possible for visitors to relate directly to the ancient grandeur; the ruins of Palmyra in the Syrian desert had inspired Count Volley to tearful musings about the fate of human labors... and, of course, the pyramids and Egyptian temples could be visited and claimed, and there was a centuries-long scholarly tradition which had tried to find a way to understand them, penetrate to the core of their secrets.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> M. Larsen, *Conquest*, 9.

<sup>280</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol.1, 25.

<sup>281</sup> M. Larsen, *Conquest*, 10.

Because these Near Eastern ruins live above ground and have been sketched, described, reproduced, and circulated so often, there exists a consistent and generalizable visual referent for ancient ruins. Their visual reproduction and consequent familiarity, I argue, also make them less terrifying, though the sheer scale and power of the ruins retain their ability to inspire awe and contemplation in their beholder. While the Egyptian pyramids, for example, are sublime in that their ruins testify to the fragility of empire and the harsh physical and cultural realities the passage of time imposes, the ruins of Assyria have the added effect of evoking Burkean terror because they are invisible underfoot. While the mounds are visible indicators of promising dig-sites, they almost fade into the landscape, while the tangible, colossal remains of Assyria lie in the obscure darkness of the strata that cover them until someone is brave enough to explore.

In Layard's account, such exploration requires the intervention of the European (but most obviously English) archaeologist, as the Arabs, Turks, and indigenous Assyrian tribes have walked this earth without attempting to unbury the ancient empire. Layard records the enthusiastic reaction of the Arab Sheikh to the excavations:

I have lived on these lands for years. My father and the father of my father, pitched their tents here before me; but they never heard of these figures. For twelve hundred years have the true believers... been settled in this country, and none of them ever heard of a palace underground. Neither did they who went before them. But lo! Here comes a Frank from many days' journey off, and he walks up to the very place, and he takes a stick... and makes a line here, and makes a line there. Here... he shows us what has been all our lives beneath our feet, without our having known anything about it. Wonderful! Wonderful! Is it by books, is it by magic, is it by your prophets, that you have learnt these things?<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 2, 84-85.

Yet, the vastness and magnitude of the underground ancient palaces, much less their sheer existence, are impossible to truly conceive by anyone without excavation.

Similarly, the Leviathan-like “gigantic monsters” that Layard initially envisions grow and warp in readers’ imaginations who have begun to take news of Botta’s own findings of colossi into account. It is not until the lamassu are excavated and brought to the British Museum that their colossal scale can truly be understood by the British spectator, as “the body is our mode for perceiving scale.”<sup>283</sup> The textual descriptions and visual renderings of these sculptures by Layard, the artists in his crew, and the periodical and guidebook authors writing in London are inconsistent and make their true scale difficult to visualize, and the spectator vacillates between the various verbal, visual, and spatial rhetorics through which the lamassu is reproduced or transported into. By the time the lamassus are contained within the British Museum, the “guardians of civilization,” are co-opted and domesticated as the new protectors of the national museum and are, thus, perception of their physical and ideological significance changes.<sup>284</sup>

How do we shift from Layard’s evocation of the monstrousness to their re-establishment and containment as domesticated guardians? I consider the ways in which the rhetoric of the colossal shapes, and is shaped by, the excavation and reception of the Assyrian lamassus, beginning with Layard’s writings and moving through the various texts spectators were likely exposed to prior to seeing the artifacts on display at the museum. *Nineveh and Its Remains*, as well as the museum and its accompanying textual

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<sup>283</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), xii.

<sup>284</sup> Malley, 75.

artifacts, inscribe in space the very objects Layard removes; first, *Nineveh*'s writing leaves a trace of the colossi in the ground in which the lamassus are uncovered.<sup>285</sup> Their transport divorces the artifacts from their native context and Layard's physical engagement with the way the artifacts visually and spatially occupy the palace; however, the text works to memorialize this configuration to the extent that it can—albeit as Layard perceived it.

Layard's first discovery of a lamassu becomes Nineveh's "giant head" episode. The workmen had succeeded in uncovering the head of what Layard immediately knows as belonging to the lamassus that had been discovered by Botta at Khorsabad. This is Layard's own first encounter with an iconic "gigantic monster" from the Assyrian underground, yet his initial description of the artifact is vastly different in tone from the dream he once had. "The expression was calm, yet majestic," Layard writes, "and the outline of the features showed a freedom and knowledge of art, scarcely to be looked for in the works of so remote a period."<sup>286</sup> The language that he personally uses to describe the head ignores its size and instead privileges its beauty and execution over scale, as if he is already considering how Assyria will neatly fit into the Great Chain of Art that organized the British Museum.

Sublime terror is instead communicated through the reactions of the Arab workmen; it is only through these characters that the lamassu head resumes its spectral, otherworldly presence. Layard's racism and anti-Islamic bias is clear in this episode; he is much more invested in adopting the tone of Romantic orientalism to tell this story to

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<sup>285</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 31.

<sup>286</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 1, 65.

British readers than he is worried about taking seriously the Muslim attendants' fear. Layard unsurprisingly refuses to centralize their consciousness, revealing their terror only as a means of dramatizing this moment. Layard "was not surprised that the Arabs had been amazed and terrified at this apparition. It required no stretch of imagination to conjure up the most strange fancies. The gigantic head, blanched with age, thus rising from the bowels of the earth, might well have belonged to one of those fearful beings which are pictured in the traditions of the country, as appearing to mortals, slowly ascending from the regions below."<sup>287</sup> Layard, again, describes the colossi as a monster, qualified by its frightening one of the Arabs so badly that he abandoned his work and ran "off to Mosul as fast as his legs could carry him"; the monstrosity of the lamassu is only consequential in that it threatens the progress of his workforce and forces Layard to delay his operations until fear in the town began to subside.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.



DISCOVERY OF THE GIGANTIC HEAD.

Fig. 10. George Scharf, “Discovery of the Gigantic Head.” Drawing in Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 1849.

The giant head is understood as symbolic of Assyrian transcendence in that the empire, its culture, beliefs, and history, never truly stopped “inhabit[ing] the earth.”<sup>289</sup> The making visible of the lamassu-as-giant is striking because it realizes material proof of the existence of the Assyrian palaces in which god and king are so closely, if not idolatrously, intertwined before the advent of the Abrahamic faith traditions. Because the empire has become an underground graveyard, there are no living ancient Assyrians, so,

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<sup>289</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 73.

in Layard's estimation of the Arabic perspective, the revelation of such colossal material iconography ranges from fantastical to demonic and otherworldly.

When the sheik is finally convinced to bear witness to the giant head, he must "convince himself that the image he saw was of stone. 'This is not the work of men's hands,' exclaimed he, 'but of those infidel giants of whom the Prophet, peace be with him! has said, that they were higher than the tallest date tree.'<sup>290</sup> The accompanying illustration by George Scharf (fig. 8) illustrates the Arabs' suspicion of the artifact but fails to render the degree of terror that Layard's writing recounts. Malley reads the spear in this image as "cutting diagonally across the picture [as] a physical and ideological barrier that severs the workers from their labor" and that, further, the Arabs' presence in the image helps to reproduce pictorially what Layard describes as the lamassu's "ancient majesty."<sup>291</sup> As we will see with other illustrations of lamassu as they are transported and finally exhibited, however, the scale of these colossi, forged in the sheik Abd-ur-rahman's eyes by giant hands, and the terror it evokes seem to fluctuate. In Scharf's "Discovery of the Gigantic Head," the Arab workers that split the center of the composition confront the artifact, quite literally, head on. The head alone stands taller than the workmen, though the head was only between one and one and a half meters tall, while the body that lies beneath is of an unknown height and mass.<sup>292</sup> The initial terror seems the result of the Arabs directly confronting the lamassu's ancient gaze-- a space where Layard argues time and history seem to collapse, as he believes "before those

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<sup>290</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 1, 66-67, 68.

<sup>291</sup> Malley, 52,

<sup>292</sup> M. Larsen, *Conquest*, 90.

wonderful forms Ezekiel, Jonah, and others of the prophets stood, and Sennacherib bowed; that even the patriarch Abraham himself may possibly have looked upon them.”<sup>293</sup> Yet, as moving as Layard might find this encounter with antiquity in his subsequent confrontations with the lamassu, in his eyes, the colossi never recuperate the terrifying monstrousness they once did.

After recording the Arab’s terror at the giant head, Layard explains his contemplation of the lamassus’ function and significance in antiquity. Layard is more forthcoming with the scale of the monument, but he does so abstractly, situating the lamassu in the “spacious hall” of the ancient city.<sup>294</sup> As “mysterious emblems” and “noble forms,” the lamassus “had awed and instructed races which flourished 3000 years ago... they may have been buried, and their existence may have been unknown, before the foundation of the eternal city. For twenty-five centuries they had been hidden from the eye of man, and they now stood forth once more in their ancient majesty!”<sup>295</sup> Awe and majesty fail to truly communicate the artifacts’ scale; the role of Scharf’s image is to visually and spatially represent the ways in which ancient colossi exemplify the grandeur and power of past empires. The revelation of the monuments by the British archaeologist on behalf of his own empire testifies to a new power that is able to rescue, exhibit, and to some degree appropriate, the artifacts that speak to “the luxury and civilization of a mighty nation that had given place to the wretchedness and ignorance of a few half-barbarous tribes.”<sup>296</sup> It is as if part of how he perceives his educational duty lies in his

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<sup>293</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 2, 110-111.

<sup>294</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 1, 70.

<sup>295</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 1, 69.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*

ability to so quickly pivot to render the scale of the colossi as evidence of imperial grandeur rather than the sublime terror of some ancient magic.

This is not to say the language of the sublime disappears from *Nineveh and Its Remains* altogether, however. After more progress is made in the Nimrud excavations, a visit from English travelers results in a “graphic” letter from a Mr. Longworth who describes his own first encounter with the lamassu:

still faithfully guarding the portals of the deserted halls, the colossal forms of winged lions and bulls, with gigantic human faces. All these figures, the idols of a religion long since dead and buried like themselves, seemed actually in the twilight to be raising their desecrated heads from the sleep of centuries: certainly the feeling of awe which they inspired me with, must have been something akin to that experienced by their heathen votaries of old.<sup>297</sup>

Longworth’s language, then, validates the idea that it is possible, even expected, for the British spectator to be overwhelmed by the colossi the first time they are confronted. That said, Longworth has the privilege of encountering the lamassu on its native soil, within the burial remains of its ancient context. As we will see in the next chapter, once the lamassu is displaced, secularized, and newly contextualized within the British Museum, spectators are often pictorially represented as much more apathetic.

When it became time to transport the excavated lamassus, Layard became frustrated with the pace in which the Trustees of the British Museum were acting. The size of the lamassu made them difficult to transport— a difficulty that Layard seems not to accept given the extent of Britain’s naval power.<sup>298</sup> While, thankfully, the Trustees did

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<sup>297</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 1, 370-371.

<sup>298</sup> M. Larsen, *Conquest*, 146.

not want the lamassu sawed into pieces for ease of transport as the French did, Layard was forced to wait for an opportune time to ship the largest of the lamassu, including the pair of lions found with the “Discovery of the Giant Head.” Left to his own devices, Layard “resolved upon attempting the removal and embarkation of two of the smallest and best preserved” colossi— the human-headed lion and bull that would arrive at the British Museum after becoming stuck in the mud at Basrah in October 1850.<sup>299</sup> The transport of these artifacts become a public spectacle in Mosul, just as their arrival in London would be. After purchasing iron axles that had been used by Botta to transport his own lamassu from Khorsabad, Layard did, in fact, cut away the backs of the bull and lion to make them lighter.<sup>300</sup>

The removal and transportation of the bull from the site of its discovery is one of the most chaotic and cinematic spectacles of the entire volume. As Layard and the workmen begin inserting their wedges and ropes, the removal was off to an easy start. As “the mass descended gradually” from its upright position onto its side, Layard narrates the sights and “discordant” sounds of the other mass— that of the Kurdish and Arab spectators— that have gathered to watch the lamassu’s removal.<sup>301</sup> “It was a moment of great anxiety,” Layard writes,

the drums and shrill pipes of the Kurdish musicians increased the din and confusion caused by the war-cry of the Arabs, who were half frantic with excitement. They had thrown off nearly all their garments; their long hair floated in the wind; and they indulged in the wildest postures and gesticulations as they clung to the ropes. The women had congregated on the sides of the trenches, and by their incessant screams, and by the ear-piercing tahlehl, added to the

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<sup>299</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol. 2, 74.

<sup>300</sup> See Layard *Nineveh* vol. 2, 75-77.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82.

enthusiasm of the men. The bull once in motion, it was no longer possible to obtain a hearing.<sup>302</sup>

The cacophony of the swell of bodies that Layard describes, however, is met with an astonishing silence, as the ropes break under the weight of the sculpture. The lamassu tumbles to the ground as “a sudden silence succeeded to the clamour.”<sup>303</sup> Miraculously, the lamassu is unbroken, and, in Layard’s opinion, could not have been a happier accident, as the bull lies now “precisely where I had wished to place it!”<sup>304</sup> The Arabs resume what Layard describes as “their war songs” and “most mad dance.”<sup>305</sup> The visual illustration of this scene, however, lacks the energetic chaos that Layard has described.



Fig. 11. “Lowering the Great Bull” in Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, vol. 1 frontispiece, 1849.

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 82

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

The frontispiece of *Nineveh and Its Remains* volume one (fig. 9) illustrates the lowering of the bull; however, the event is depicted much differently than in Layard's description.<sup>306</sup> In the frontispiece, the bodies of the workforce are calmly and purposefully arranged, lining up to pull the ropes; likewise, the spectators that overlook the removal are still and nondescript. The illustration conveys an organized workforce, not the overstimulating mob chaos that Layard describes in the moments before and after the bull's fall. The initial illustration presents Layard's ability to manage or oversee the Arab workforce and the removal of antiquities for safe transport; it is not until a reader is well into volume two of *Nineveh* that they are to understand, in Layard's eyes, the naive overexcitement palpable in the environment in which he was working.

At last, the lion and bull are placed on rafts as they leave Mosul for London.

Layard's final musings as the artifacts disappear behind a bank consider their imperial destiny:

I could not forbear musing upon the strange destiny of their burdens; which, after adorning the palaces of the Assyrian kings, the objects of the wonder, and may be the worship, of thousands, had been buried unknown for centuries beneath a soil trodden by Persians under Cyrus, by Greeks under Alexander, and by Arabs under the first descendants of their prophet. They were now to visit India, to cross the most distant seas of the Southern Hemisphere, and to be finally placed in a British Museum. Who can venture to foretell how their strange career will end?<sup>307</sup>

But the lamassus' significance within Victorian culture were only beginning. Instead of the succession of empires trodding over the soil that buried Assyria, the British Empire

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<sup>306</sup> Bohrer discusses additional text-image discrepancies in *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, 144-146.

<sup>307</sup> Layard, *Nineveh* vol 2, 104-105. For more on the artifacts' visit (and subsequent unintended exhibition) in Bombay, see Sudeshna Guha, "'Nineveh' in Bombay and Histories of Indian Archaeology." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh* 62, no. 1 (2017): 65-85.

does the work of re-evaluation and rehomeing these icons into their own national institution. Joined by the pair of human-headed lions that would arrive in London in 1852, Layard “knew that in some deeply significant sense that it was wrong to remove these monsters from their old place and drag them to London where they would stand in a different world as dead messengers exposed to the careless glance of bored visitors. As some of these ancient animals from Nimrud stand now in the noise of the British Museum, squeezed by a children’s bookshop, it is hard not to regret their fate.”<sup>308</sup> M. Larsen’s observation illuminates how the lamassu evolved from the exotic, terrifying monsters of the first empire to the domesticated props of the British Empire. In the next chapter, I examine how the colossi were received once they were safely contained within the museum space and how they were transformed as links within the Great Chain of Art.

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<sup>308</sup> M. Larsen, *Conquest*, 232.

CHAPTER FIVE  
 CONSCRIPTED COLOSSALS: THE EXHIBITION & RECEPTION OF LAYARD'S  
 LAMASSUS

It often takes a bit of nudging from influential people for institutional rhythms to speed up. This was the exact case with the colossal bull and lion, Layard's celebrated finds, which were still stuck in Basrah when *Nineveh and Its Remains* was published in 1849. Mogens Trolle Larsen records that it took both Prince Albert and the cabinet touring the part of the Assyrian collection that had already successfully been transported and museum secretary Edward Hawkins declaring "that 'these things are without price; no thousands could buy them and they have cost the country nothing'" for the government to "decid[e] that a suitable ship should be sent to Basra[h] to fetch the large bulls and lions which have been lying there for years."<sup>309</sup> By October 1850, the pair finally arrived in London to be met with an announcement in *The Illustrated London News* that would hone in on how massive the newly domesticated creatures were.

If the actual scale of the bull and lion colossi was difficult to imagine by reading *Nineveh and Its Remains*, then the *ILN* account provided another means of visualizing their dimensions. As a periodical, the *ILN* succeeded in "providing illustrative immediacy between reader and object," and this immediacy was fixated upon attempts to quantify

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<sup>309</sup> Mogens Trolle Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria: Excavations in an Antique Land, 1840-1860* (London: Routledge, 1996), 192.

the scale of the colossi both verbally and visually.<sup>310</sup> While the account describes the bull as both “enormous” and “of colossal dimensions,” these descriptions are supported by two kinds of numerical measurements. First, the reader is told the bull measures ten feet square by two feet in thickness. Additionally, the flat surface on of the gypsum slab upon which the lamassu is carved is noted as “covered with cuneiform inscriptions; there being twenty-two lines between the fore legs, twenty-one lines in the middle, nineteen lines between the hind-legs, and forty-seven lines between the tail and the edge of the slab.”<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Shawn Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain: The Case of Assyria, 1845-1854* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 60. Both Frederick Bohrer and Shawn Malley have written extensively about the Layard’s archaeology and the periodical press. See, for example, Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>311</sup> “Nimrud Sculptures, Just Received at the British Museum,” *Illustrated London News* (October 26, 1850), 332.

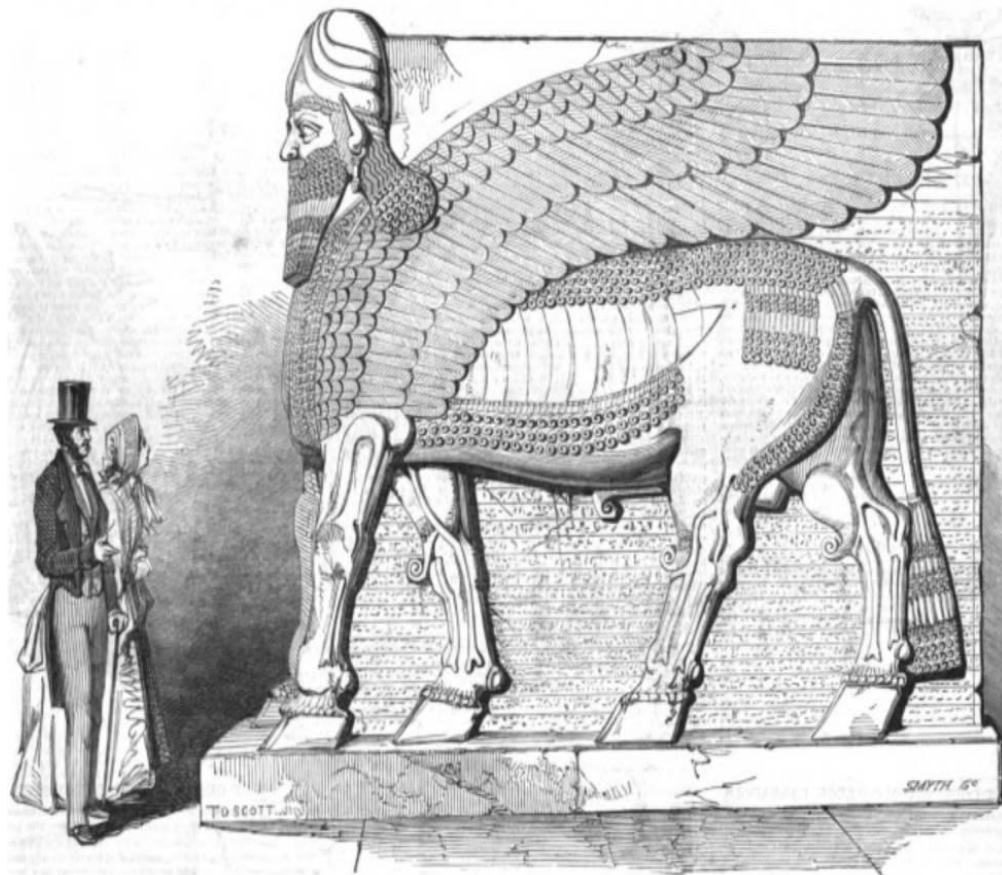


Fig. 12. *Human-Headed and Eagle-Winged Bull*. Engraving in the *Illustrated London News*, Oct. 26, 1850.

The lion is described in a similar fashion: we learn that this lamassu is nine feet square in length and height and that “upon the flat surface of this slab, as in the last, is a cuneiform inscription; 20 lines being between the fore legs, 26 in the middle, 18 between the hind legs, and 71 at the back.”<sup>312</sup> For readers familiar with the general scale of cuneiform inscriptions featured in artifacts that were already on display in the museum, this information provides another means of visualizing the scale of the figure, especially given the fact that the cuneiform inscriptions are not apparent in *Nineveh*’s own

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

illustrations. While the dimensions in feet that the descriptions begin with help the reader to imagine the scale of the lamassu relative to the dimensions of the space it inhabits, the inscriptions become a means of measuring the proportions of a lamassu's body and position.

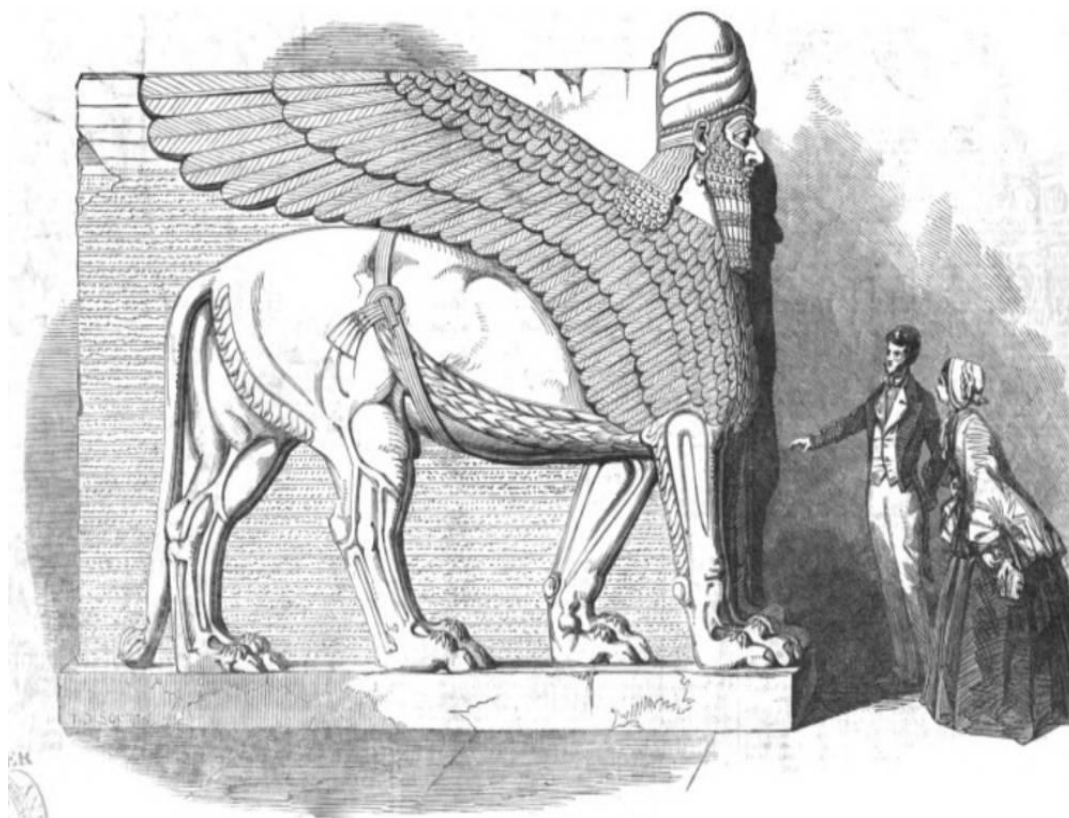


Fig. 13. *Human-Headed and Winged Lion*. Engraving in the *Illustrated London News*, Oct. 26, 1850.

If numerical dimensions and the cuneiform “system” of measurement that the *ILN* describes are too abstract, the illustrations of both the bull and lion feature both a male and female spectator for scale. Layard’s *Nineveh* most prominently features humans in the illustrations as a means of conveying the size of the artifacts; however, unlike *Nineveh*, no additional context is provided by the presence of the environment in which

the artifacts are set. In *ILN*'s coverage, the background setting is obscured, if not fully removed, from the illustration. While the *ILN* in this moment does not visually represent the sculptures as they would come to occupy the thresholds of the museum space, their account of later arrivals and exhibitions of the Assyrian lamassu would become more conscious of both the literal and metaphorical implications of such objects' assimilation into the museum space.

Flash forward two years: the larger lion lamassu that had provoked the *Nineveh*'s Giant Head episode arrived at the British Museum in February 1852, and the *ILN* was once again enamored with its size. The *ILN* account of its reception immediately begins with an attempt at quantifying the weight of the artifact: "Amongst the recent arrivals from Nimroud," the author writes, "the most striking is a colossal Lion, the weight of which is upwards of ten tons."<sup>313</sup> Further, the author of the article goes on to explain the effort it took to transport the lamassu from the dock to the museum, as "the piece of sculpture itself was brought from the Docks on a truck drawn by eleven horses, and when in the courtyard was lifted from the carriage and placed securely on a massive framework of wood."<sup>314</sup> Layard's own portrayal of the removal and transport of lamassus on Ottoman soil, including those smaller than the lion that arrived in 1852, was generally much more chaotic. The *ILN*'s verbal and visual depictions of the lion's arrival in London portray the British workers as highly skilled laborers:

The subject of our Engraving represents the Lion in its transit from the courtyard in front of the Museum into the building, and shows the inclined plane up which it

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<sup>313</sup> "Reception of Nineveh Sculptures at the British Museum," *Illustrated London News* (February 28, 1852), 184.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

was drawn, and the workmen busily engaged at their labour... This operation was skillfully performed, and the process of dragging up the incline to a level Landin under the portico did not occupy more than one hour.<sup>315</sup>

There is no threat of destruction as the lion is loaded into the museum, despite this being the “largest monolith” to arrive from the Near East.<sup>316</sup> The British are firmly in control of the retrieval, transportation, and domestication of the lamassu.

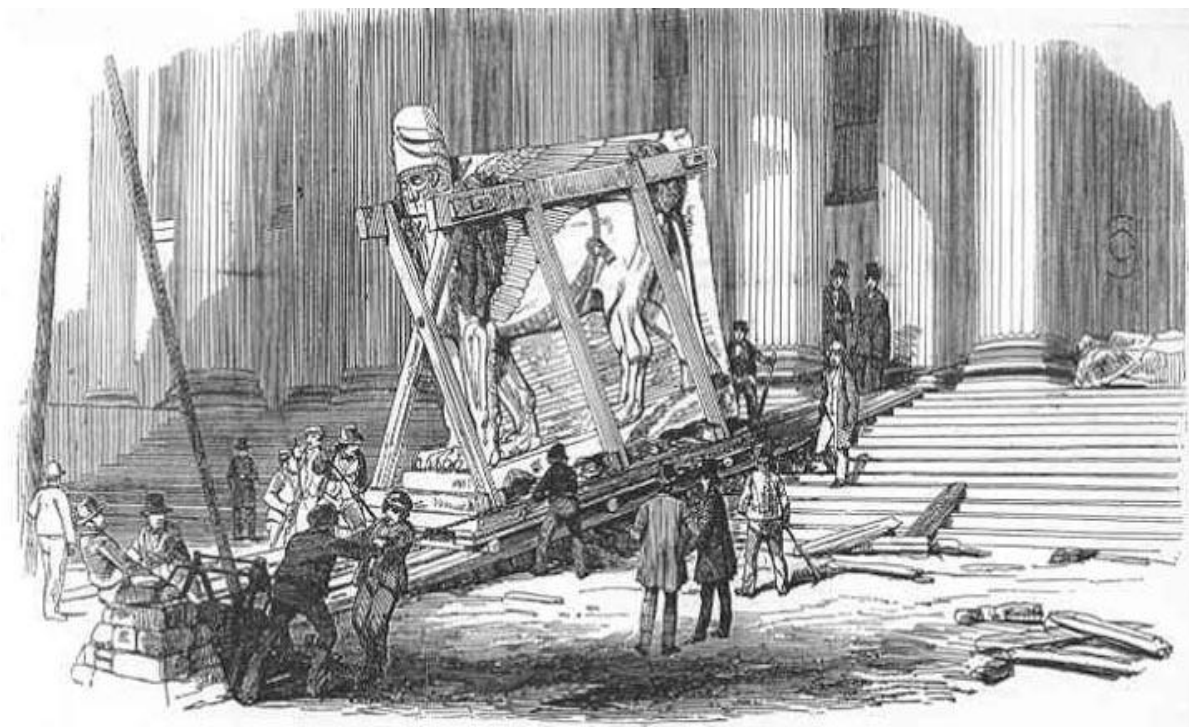


Fig. 14. *Reception of Nineveh Sculptures at the British Museum.* Engraving in the *Illustrated London News*, Feb. 28, 1852.

As the lion is dragged into place, the museum space becomes a container of the gigantic, and this caging of the lamassu is not without theoretical implications nor public spectacle. Larsen, for instance, describes how the building’s edifice reflects the

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

Eurocentric, classical systems of valuing art: “Anyone who has stood in front of the imposing entrance to the British Museum in Great Russell Street in London will realize the power of this ideology, for here we have a magnificent building designed to contain the treasures of the nation, which is shaped like a gigantic Doric temple.”<sup>317</sup> As I will discuss in a later section, this is the moment in which the lamassu is physically inscribed in the British Museum’s vision of the Great Chain of Art. Malley similarly understands this moment as the taming or domestication of the lion, writing

the royal lion, a secular and temporal guardian of the massive imperial palace described by the prophet Jonah, is tamed. Indeed, it is caged. Conscripted into the service of British culture, it has become a curiosity penned in the British Museum. The columns of the museum facade contribute to the image of incarceration, an externalization of the authority of the museum to shape interpretation and social practices within its walls.<sup>318</sup>

For both Larsen and Malley, the museum edifice is symbolic of the way art and archaeology feed this greater national and imperial program. Possession is a necessary prerequisite for the communication and propagation of such ideologies. That being said, it is possible to further differentiate between containment and conscription as dual processes or functions of possession, as both have their own implications in relation to the rhetoric of the colossal.

To contain the lamassu is to not merely transport the Assyrian portal guardians to a threshold on foreign soil. Containment is a deliberate political act—the colossal size of the museum structure must overtake that of its acquisitions. Empire is not measured by

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<sup>317</sup> M. Larsen, 103.

<sup>318</sup> Malley, 62-63.

the size of individual artifacts but rather the size of their container, and the scale of the museum must be so grand that Britain's imperial spoils can be securely detained. In this way, the colossal becomes emblematic of the achievements of imperial archaeology. The colossal scale of the institution, in terms of its square footage and what it represents, is signaled by the very pillars that make up its facade. While the *ILN* illustrates the loading of the lion into the museum in such a way that stresses the lamassu's exact dimensions and the machinery required to make such safe transport of the gigantic creature possible, the illustration obscures the full height of the edifice's columns. The height of the columns is cropped, allowing the edifice and the institution it represents to be perceived as even larger. Architecturally speaking, the pillars have to be taller than the lamassu for its literal containment to occur. Additionally, as the *ILN* seems to imply in its description of the "huge mass" that this containment is no way temporary, as the lamassu is "dragged at once to the spot it was intended it should ultimately occupy... its resting-place" with an air of finality.<sup>319</sup>

Conscription, then, becomes a more specific way to describe the process of the artifact's metaphorical containment. By witnessing the act of its physical containment, the public becomes better able to understand how artifacts are conscripted as both symbols and guardians of imperial archaeology. In reality and in print, the lamassu is appropriated and paraded by the state, becoming the object of spectacle because, as Susan Stewart suggests, "the appearance of the gigantic within the context of the city must be linked... to the creation of public spectacle."<sup>320</sup> Periodicals such as the *ILN* recreate these

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<sup>319</sup> "Reception of Nineveh," 184.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*

moments of spectacle for those who did not or have not yet had the privilege of seeing the acts of containment and conscription in person. The narrative of the artifact's containment is conveyed by both text and image, and it is the framing of such narratives that dictates how the public is to understand how the artifacts are being conscripted for British use.

### **Close Encounters of the Colossal Kind: Visiting the Assyrian Galleries**

Once a lamassu had been placed in the museum, it assumed its role as a portal guardian of the British Empire. Removed from the ancient grandeur of the palaces they once inhabited, the lamassus were essentially integrated into the museum's architecture upon their placement and display in the Nimrud Central Saloon (opened in 1852) and the Assyrian Transept (opened in 1853). The Assyrian antiquities that had been excavated by Layard, and later by Hormuzd Rassam, were installed in "the Assyrian transept at the south end of the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery and in two long narrow galleries specially prepared for them on the west side of the room, to the north and south of a central saloon also dedicated to Assyrian sculpture."<sup>321</sup> The Assyrian galleries would continue to evolve after the Trustees agreed "to display the Assyrian sculptures in a reasonably logical sequence."<sup>322</sup> While the placement of the Assyrian galleries has major implications for the reception of Assyria, as well as the Ancient Near East, within the Great Chain of Art, I want to first detail how illustrations of these rooms depict early visitor engagement with the colossals.

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<sup>321</sup> David M. Wilson, *The British Museum: A History* (London: British Museum Press, 2002), 109.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*

By 1853, four lamassus, including the lamassu featured in the Giant Head episode, anchored the transept, facing each other as visitors walked in from either entrance.<sup>323</sup> One of the key images for understanding the layout of the Assyrian Transept and its reliance on the lamassu in the early 1850s comes from the March 26, 1853 issue of the *ILN*. The illustration testifies to the domestication of the lamassu as a process that eclipses the magic, wonder, and curiosity the artifacts were once imbued with. Instead of being overwhelmed by the sight of the lamassus that once evoked sublime terror from its viewers, the viewer's eye is drawn to the top half of the composition which is fixed upon the gallery's architecture, where the coffered ceilings and columns dwarf the Assyrian colossals. The artifacts that once looked gigantic as they were raised from the earth seem to no longer possess the same otherworldly aura. The conditions of the cage are such that the eye is given so many other objects to observe—including the container itself. Additionally, the museum cannot replicate or preserve the lamassus' natural context which is what made the beings initially appear so powerful. One giant lamassu is grouped with many—where one might expect a pack of these creatures to overwhelm or threaten the spectator with their towering grandeur, the reality is that visitors were becoming desensitized to their power. While the rhetoric of the colossal served as a means of quantifying scale in terms that the reader could understand, this repetition of this language, in tandem with the sterilized museum environment, familiarized the spectator

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<sup>323</sup> The transept would include two lion lamassus, as well as two bull lamassus excavated by Henry Rawlinson at Khorsabad. Rawlinson continued the Assyrian excavations that Layard initiated for the benefit of the British Museum. He was appointed the Consul-General at Baghdad in December 1851, a position he held through February 1855.

to the extent where the artifacts themselves no longer had the power to shock or intimidate them.

Once again, as in the case of Layard's own illustrations and the prior rendering of the artifacts' scale in the *ILN*, human figures serve as a means of communicating their massive scale; this time, however, the visitors could not appear to be less taken by the lamassus once the guardians have been settled into their new contrived British context.



Fig. 15. *The Nineveh Room, at the British Museum.* Engraving in the *Illustrated London News*, March 26, 1853.

What little magic do the lamassus seem to have left! In the foreground of the illustration, one seemingly inquisitive child is blocked by his mother, but her gaze is cast down on his in such a way that makes his looking past her to admire the backside of the lamassu unlikely. All but perhaps one man in the transept turn their backs to or look entirely past the composite figures. There are perhaps two female figures that gaze upon the colossals, but the women are either relegated to the background (and thus are too small for us to glean anything from their expressions) or have their backs to the viewer.

The rendering of these visitors' viewing experience can be dramatically contrasted to the reactions of those who witnessed the raising of the Giant Head. In some ways, it appears that the *ILN*, consciously or not, illustrates an ideal or, at least, more refined response to engaging with the Assyrian galleries. At the cost of removing the fantastic wonderment at experiencing these artifacts for the first time, the *ILN* sketches what it is like to passively engage with Assyrian antiquity in a controlled, regulated space that is situated within the educational and broader cultural program of the encyclopedic museum. Instead of replicating the "terrifying exotic" that captivated the imaginations of Layard and Longfellow, the lamassus become less the stuff of dreams and more a catalog of remains that the Empire has successfully claimed for itself.

This sentiment is amplified when we consider how the reception of these artifacts is visualized in a contemporaneous journal cutting of the Nimrud Central Saloon. There are five human figures in this illustration, including a woman who looks past the lamassu as she enters the next room, a man and child studying the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, and a male spectator with his head down, reading a guidebook. Perhaps not even a guidebook can convey the power these artifacts once had.

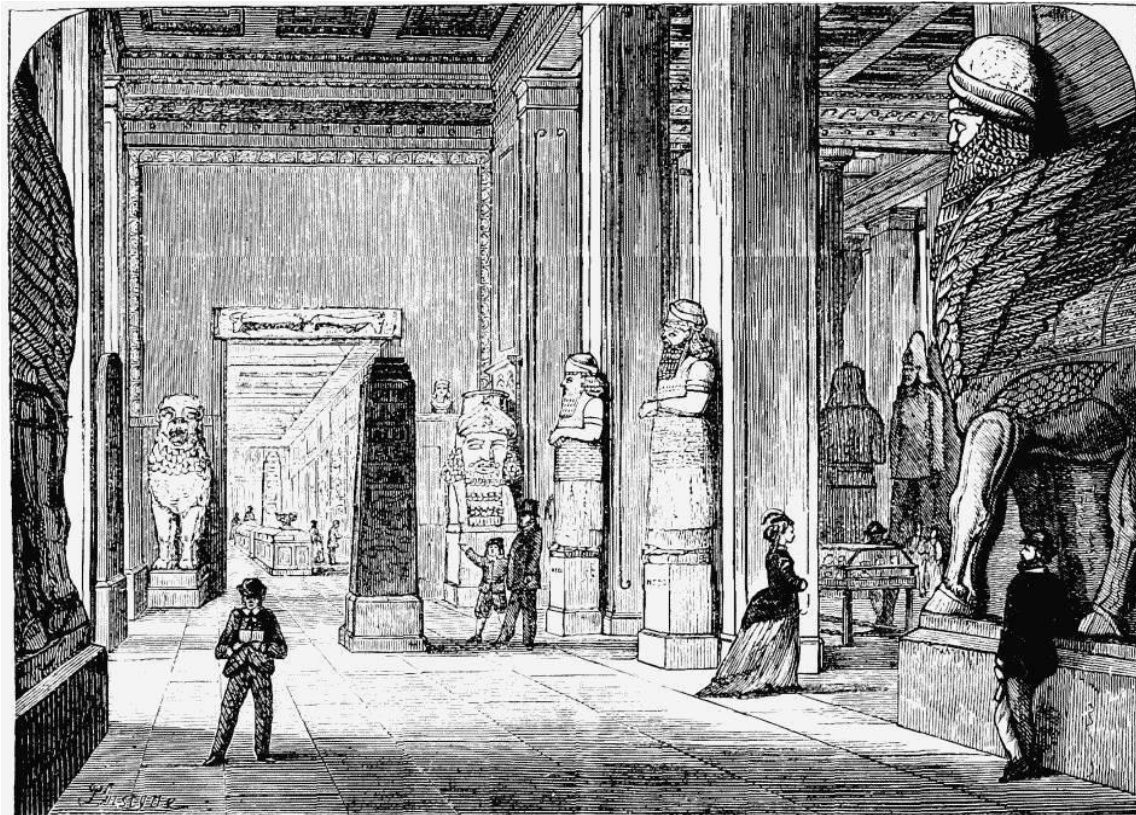


Fig. 16. *Nimrud Central Saloon*. Journal Cutting, British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.<sup>324</sup>

Both the Trustees (1859) and H.G. Clarke guidebooks (1864) gloss over the lamassus, generally regarding them as colossal before moving on with the rest of the Assyrian catalog of artifacts. But what is most striking about this image is the fifth man, a visitor whose behavior is similarly passive and detached yet less controlled and refined. The man goes so far as to physically support himself against the base of a bull lamassu as he pauses to rest and look in another direction. The ancient artifact becomes invisible as it serves the practical function of a railing. The deliberate inclusion of this act by the

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<sup>324</sup> Malley, 73.

illustrator speaks volumes; it is not simply an embarrassing mistake the man made before realizing what he was doing. Rather, his action seems to reflect the extent of the spectators' increased desensitization towards the artifacts, despite their age, size, and cultural significance.

While these illustrations provide a general glimpse into what the process of reception might have looked like for the everyday visitor, it is in the writing of William Henry Stone where recovery, exhibition, and reception is considered from the imagined perspective of the lamassu itself. Such creative liberties are unique to the Assyrian guardians; no similar narratives of Xanthian sculptures exist. Rather, in the case of Xanthian sculpture, mythology is read onto the sculpted figures in often limiting ways. What these literary texts allow us to understand, then, is how the significance of the lamassu's continued existence transcends what bored spectators are willing to consider.

### **Literary Lamassu: Fictive & Critical Engagements by Victorian Writers, 1851-1857**

Published in the February 8, 1851 issue of Charles Dickens' weekly magazine *Household Words*, W.H. Stone's short story "The Nineveh Bull" was the first literary text to focalize the perspective of a lamassu on its excavation, containment, and conscription. Classified by Frederic Bohrer as a captivity narrative, the bull is positioned as a spectator to history and the chain of empires.<sup>325</sup> In the beginning of the narrative, the lamassu describes the act of carving as the process of becoming sentient and capable of feeling "myself the guardian of a nation's history, the emblem of its power."<sup>326</sup> For the guardian,

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<sup>325</sup> Frederic Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 174.

<sup>326</sup> W.H. Stone, "The Nineveh Bull," *Household Words* (February 8, 1851), 468.

its scale is a means of conveying its emblematic status, as its height rises to meet that of the grand palace. Such descriptions are nothing new; however, instead of the bull serving only as something to be looked at, Stone's narrative empowers the bull as an active witness to history, its gaze never breaking from the goings-on of the space it inhabits, including the other sculptures that commemorate Assyrian history.

The bull, then, becomes capable of narrativizing imperial memory. Malley argues that the lamassu's "memory is decidedly European" and that "as if awakened from a dream, the bull remembers its native country being visited by the Persian king Cyrus, the Athenian historian Xenophon and Alexander the Great, brief punctuations of civilised interest in a geographical region traversed by Arabs: 'at times a dark figure flitted by, cursing me as the unbelievers' idol.'"<sup>327</sup> While the lamassu does, in fact, specifically "name drop" these figures and events that a Victorian reader would easily be able to make sense of, we also cannot ignore that the lamassu is a student of the reliefs wrought by Assyrian craftsmen that decorate the palace. Though the bull generalizes the battles and rites that are pictorially depicted in this space, we know that these visuals hold space in the artifact's memory. From its portal position, the lamassu studies the sculptured walls:

Here raged the battle; there, in exulting pomp, moved the solemn triumph;  
there was the strong warrior, here the sad captive. I beheld the awful rites  
of worship, the forms of holy men, the symbols of mighty gods. There  
were figures as of kings before me... They were a voiceless company

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<sup>327</sup> Shawn Malley, "Nineveh 1851: An Archaeography," *Journal of Literature and Science* 5.1 (2012): 25.

around me, and yet they had an utterance, not by the passing sound of tongues, but with the enduring memorial of the glittering characters that shone forth among them.<sup>328</sup>

It is in this moment that the lamassu voices its status as a guardian of empire and of its past. Malley asserts that “the success of the conceit – of a speaking human-headed bull – depends upon overcoming the central archaeological problem that artefacts are by their very nature inert, incommunicative things.”<sup>329</sup> But what I argue is of equal importance to the artifact being given a voice is that it is also imbued with vision— the ability *to watch* rather than simply *be watched*. What endures upon the story’s close is the promise of the lamassu’s enduring spectatorship— however silent— of Britain’s imperial future.

As history tells us, the Assyrian Empire must inevitably fall and take with it its stoic protector. Though the palace decays and is buried around it, the lamassu “stands firm,” however sleepily, underneath the “silent ruin” of Assyria waiting to be uncovered. By the time the excavations begin, the bull is reverted back to its watchman status, “gaz[ing] with waking eye” upon the archaeological scene. The watcher, once again, becomes the watched: “around me were half-clad wild seeming men, viewing me with wonder and awe. Presently came one who seemed a lord among them; his dress was strange, unlike what I had seen before. Joy was in his face as he gazed on me, and I rejoiced in spirit, for I saw he knew me and my history; I was again awake and restored to the world.”<sup>330</sup> The lamassu recognizes the people’s reactions to uncovering such a

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<sup>328</sup> Stone, 468.

<sup>329</sup> Malley, “Nineveh 1851,” 25.

<sup>330</sup> Stone, 469.

grand, ancient artifact; yet, this restoration only leads to containment and conscription.

After all, the people are chanting for Layard, not for the ancient figure.<sup>331</sup> In a prophetic moment that closes the text, the lamassu laments how it becomes possessed by the

British:

I saw my country desolate, my dwelling a prey to strangers, I was tossed many days on the heaving waters. Now I stand in a strange land, the wonder of earth's younger children. They say I am far from my violated home, in a city prouder, greater, more glorious than my native realm; but boast not, ye vain-glorious creatures of an hour. I have out-lived many mighty kingdoms, perchance I may be destined to survive one more.<sup>332</sup>

What I believe Stone's text intensifies are the haunting qualities of the previous illustrations of museum visitors engaging (or not) with the creatures. A visitor who had read "The Nineveh Bull" short story might have, at least in the back of their mind, the feeling of being watched. Any passive British spectator that roams the Assyrian galleries might ignore the lamassus, but they certainly are being watched in return. This experience may seem supernatural, but what is perhaps even more haunting are the imperial insinuations of this voyage. Less critically minded visitors might fail to realize what the lamassu and its excavation really represent from a foreign point of view— not just that the British Empire has the power and capital to excavate the remains of a most ancient empire but that the lamassu is a testament to the burial of the seemingly infallible. Passive spectatorship takes for granted what has been made available. The ability, even privilege, to choose to engage or not is a reflection of the assumption that such artifacts are "ours" now; the arrogance of such ownership implies the viewer can always come

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<sup>331</sup> See Stone, 469: "I was borne down beside my own ancient river, amidst strange voices and shouts 'Layard! Layard!' they seemed to cry."

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

back when they are ready or interested and that the lamassu's prophecy has in no way registered with them.

In any case, Stone's narrative is the lesser well-known of the two mid-Victorian literary portrayals of the Nineveh bull; the lamassu was not only relegated to the domain of the short story and was finding its way through a variety of print media. Five years later, in 1856, Dante Gabriel Rossetti published the first version of his poem "The Burden of Nineveh" for the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. The poem would be revised and republished in his 1870 collection *Poems*. Rossetti is less direct about the scale of the lamassu. There is no description of the figure being colossal or gigantic in those specific and direct terms; the absence of such a description from the opening stanzas (of either version) where the speaker first lays eyes on the bull is unlike previous descriptions of the figure. Though scale is not directly conveyed through the kind of rhetoric we have come to expect, Rossetti does make clear the bull is a burden to be "hoist[ed] in," which in its own way can vaguely imply mass or weight.<sup>333</sup> What is the most striking about this poem, though, is the speaker's likening the bull to a sundial; the shadow the lamassu casts over history and its figures can be understood as a more metaphorical rendering of scale.

Where Stone's narrative tells the excavation and arrival of the bull from its own imagined perspective, Rossetti's poem reveals how a museum visitor must come to terms with what this acquisition means for, not just the forged link between Assyria and Britain, but Assyria and the Western world's classical past. According to Linda Hughes, "the

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<sup>333</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "The Burden of Nineveh," *Poems* (London: F.S. Ellis, 1870), line 10.

principal ‘burden’ of Rossetti’s poem is transience,” including “the disappearance of Nineveh beneath the dust of centuries until Layard arrived [and] the similar disappearance of ‘Greece, Egypt, Rome.’”<sup>334</sup> But these civilizations never truly disappear, as the first stanza of the poem attests: “In our Museum galleries / To-day I lingered o’er the prize / Dead Greece vouchsafes to living eyes,— Her Art for ever in fresh wise / From hour to hour rejoicing me.”<sup>335</sup> The material artifacts testify to the existence and vitality of ancient civilizations; the civilizations themselves may be transient, yet what is perhaps most important to acknowledge is that the museum as an institution is ordered, solidified, born out of these remains.

Within the museum, ancient civilizations never truly disappear, and visitors learn to understand one by looking at the remains of the others, tracing threads of connection and continuity. They are what anchor the organization of the museum, just as they live on in the criteria we use to judge and receive art. It may be too soon to tell how transient the encyclopedic museum is as an institution; like Stone’s, Rossetti’s text is similarly prophetic in the suggestion that London itself will become a relic of the past, of the British Empire that one day will fall. Though Ancient Greece is similarly dead, its artifacts have a freshness and inspirational purpose in the modern world; the Assyrian bull is, instead, described as “the mummy of buried faith” and the “very corpse of Nineveh.”<sup>336</sup> Yet this mummy preserves and “speaks” of the past; the bull is a relic of a

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<sup>334</sup> Linda K. Hughes, “Poetry and Empire,” in *The Cambridge Introduction to Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 208.

<sup>335</sup> Rossetti, 1870, lines 1-5.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 3, 16, 20.

period in which Sardanapalus, Sennacherib, and Semiramis knelt in the bull's shadow.<sup>337</sup> The bull seemingly makes real Assyria's mythical history. As in Stone's version, the bull is presented as a witness to history, and it very well may stand long after London falls.

In the meantime, however, the museum is actively acquiring its archaeological spoils of Assyria, as the speaker turns from his study of Grecian marbles towards the event immortalized in the *ILN*: the loading in of the lamassu into its new imperial cage. What I argue is most insightful about this poem is its insistence that the speaker confronts Assyria after studying Greece and insinuates how Assyria must be a link in the Great Chain of Art. Not unlike what we came to expect from Charles Fellows' initial survey of Xanthian sculpture, the speaker, in his first viewing of the bull, likens the composite figure to a similar creature from Greek mythology: the "mitred Minotaur."<sup>338</sup> When the speaker does not have the language to name the creature within an Assyrian context (the bull cannot yet be named *lamassu* or *shedu*), the Eurocentric schema which so lauds and centralizes Classical Greek antiquity must suffice. Rossetti's poem, then, testifies to broader trends in Assyrian reception that attempt to understand the lamassu— not just as colossal figures of an obscure or unfamiliar Near Eastern mythos— but as representatives of artistic similarity across time and space. In this way, Rossetti's poem mimics the process of discovery that recalls the adventure and exploration narratives of archaeologists like Fellows.

Aside from fictional and poetic encounters with the Nineveh bull, the art criticism of both John Ruskin and Anna Jameson discusses the lamassus within a broader art-

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid., lines 60-64.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 14.

historical context. While neither author provides an individualized, sustained engagement with the lamassu by itself, they do weave these figures into larger conversations about artistic continuity from across the ancient world to the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Ruskin especially seems desensitized to the lamassus' colossal grandeur, reflected in the comparisons he makes between the bulls and a vast array of other priceless artifacts. In *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853), Ruskin writes:

The same leaves, the same animals, the same arrangements are used by Scandinavians, ancient Britons, Saxons, Normans, Lombards, Romans, Byzantines, and Arabians; all being alike descended through classic Greece from Egypt and Assyria, and some from Phoenicia. The belts which encompass the Assyrian bulls, in the halls of the British Museum, are the same as the belts of the ornaments found in Scandinavian tumuli; their method of ornamentation is the same as that of the gate of Mycenae, and of the Lombard pulpit of St. Ambrogio of Milan, and of the church of Theotocos at Constantinople: the essential differences among the great schools are their differences of temper and treatment, and science of expression.<sup>339</sup>

Ruskin is less concerned with the bulls as mythical, composite figures than he is with their ornamentation. In doing so, he is able to trace the bulls as part of a larger art historical genealogy in which the art of the Ancient Near East is a precursor to Classical Greek and Christian art. Ruskin ignores the lamassus' scale—the rendering of the human-headed bulls as colossal is, perhaps, an implied example of one of the differences in the creative liberties that are taken in the rendering of nature and its beings that he gestures to. Though his description of the lamassu simply as “Assyrian bulls” hinders them from

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<sup>339</sup> John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903), 427, retrieved from <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/media/lancaster-university/content-assets/documents/ruskin/9-11StonesofVenice.pdf>.

standing out in the catalogue he provides, Ruskin does confidently assert Assyria's early position within the Great Chain of Art.



Fig. 17. Illustration of Tetramorph in Anna Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art*, 1857.

Where Ruskin identifies similarity in ornamentation, Anna Jameson, in the 1857 revised edition of *Sacred and Legendary Art*, explores the significance of lamassus as early examples of divine composite figures—precursors, in fact, to the Christian tetramorph, a composite arrangement of the animal or natural symbols of apostles Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The iconography of this tradition derives from the Book of Ezekiel, in which Matthew is represented as a man, Mark as a lion, Luke as an ox, and John as an eagle.<sup>340</sup> The tetramorph, Jameson tells us, is “a four-faced creature, with wings full of eyes, and borne on wheels of living flame.”<sup>341</sup> She traces the composite

<sup>340</sup> Ezekiel 1:10 KJV

<sup>341</sup> Anna Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1857), 135.

creature back to the earliest or most “ancient” Christian representations in which the Evangelists were “sometimes... the heads only of the mystic creatures on an azure ground, studded with stars, floating as in a firmament; or the half figure ends in a left scroll, like the genii in an arabesque... or the creature is given at full length and entire, with four wings, holding the book, and looking much like a figure in heraldry.”<sup>342</sup> Later, in early Medieval and Romanesque art, the traditional iconography of the Evangelists would become concretized, combining the human figure with representative animal parts, most often the head. Represented in this fashion, the Evangelists would become symbolic reminders of Christian virtue.

Yet, in Western art, the tetramorph, or this combination of human and animal “has in some instances become monstrous, instead of mystic and poetical.”<sup>343</sup> According to Deborah Thomas, the colossal lamassus appealed to “Victorians fascinated by hybrids yet uneasy about the freakishness of certain heterogeneous combinations.”<sup>344</sup> Jameson shows her reader why and how not to be afraid of these creatures by teaching her audience how they fit within a broader cultural context; she intervenes to suggest the perception of monstrosity can be tempered by a greater understanding of the use of composite figures historically in religious art. She writes,

We must remember, that however monstrous and grotesque such figures may appear to the eye, they are not more unnatural than the angelic representations

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<sup>342</sup> Jameson, 137.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Deborah Thomas, “Assyrian Monsters and Domestic Chimeras,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 48, no. 4, (2008): 897-909.

Thomas argues this fascination was manifested in the Nineveh Court at the Sydenham Crystal Palace (c. 1854), the composite creatures of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), and Edith Nesbit’s treatment of the Assyrian creatures in *The Story of the Amulet* (1906).

with which we are so familiar that we see in them beauty only— not considering that men with the wings of birds are as merely emblematical and impossible as men with animal heads. It is interesting, and leads the mind to many speculations, to remark that the Babylonish captivity must have familiarized the Israelites with the combination of the human and animal attributes in the same figure. The gigantic bas-reliefs from Nineveh show us winged bulls with human heads and the human form with the eagle's head and wings.<sup>345</sup>

While Jameson, then, directly likens the eagle-headed figure to early depictions of St. John, the broader insinuation in this passage is that Christian art is linked back to earlier Assyrian manners of representation. Though she, like Fellows, traces connections between the pagan Ancient Near East and the Christian tradition, she uses Assyrian art to read Christian art, rather than vice versa. Composite figures become less monstrous when one understands how this manner of representation was an established concept or tradition across the Ancient Near East. She takes great pains to suggest that such “animal symbols, whether alone or in combination with the human forms, were perfectly intelligible to the people, sanctified in their eyes by tradition, by custom, and by the most solemn associations.”<sup>346</sup> This discourse is perhaps another means of desensitizing British viewers to the Assyrian figures; one is less taken aback by the divine, colossal predecessors when it is made clear Christianity would adopt a similar means of representation in their own iconography.

Renaissance and Baroque painting, then, become for Jameson another means of illustrating the Western world's continued usage of composite figures in later religious artwork. Mythical composite figures were never simply consigned to the domain of antiquity. According to Jameson, the best painters, from the Renaissance onwards,

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<sup>345</sup> Jameson, 138.

<sup>346</sup> Jameson, 140.

avoided mimetic imitations of nature in order to better capture the ecclesiastical power inherent in emblems such as composite figures.



Fig. 18. Raphael, *Ezekiel's Vision*, c. 1518. Oil on panel. Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

She lauds Raphael's painting of *Ezekiel's Vision* (c. 1518) for capturing the essence of the "Four Creatures— mysterious, spiritual, wonderful beings, animals in form, but in all eye unearthly, and the winged ox not less divine than the winged angel!"<sup>347</sup> The substitution of such emblems for their realistic counterparts, such as the ox and lion portrayed in Peter Paul Rubens' *The Four Evangelists* (c. 1614), is exemplary of a painter who "piqued himself upon the imitation of nature [so that] the mystic and venerable

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

significance was wholly lost.”<sup>348</sup> Jameson acknowledges that our eye is drawn to Rubens’ renderings of the Evangelists in “colossal” forms, but these figures do not provoke fear.<sup>349</sup>



Fig. 19. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Four Evangelists*, c. 1614. Oil on canvas. Sanssouci Picture Gallery, Potsdam.

The power of the colossal’s scale is undermined by Rubens’ substitution of the Evangelists’ ethereal, composite emblems with the animal forms as they would be seen in nature. It is clear from Jameson’s study that the Assyrian lamassu as a composite figure is part of the root of an early tradition that would come to influence Christian iconography. In many of these literary and critical treatments, therefore, we can see how Assyria and

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

its lamassus figured, however briefly, into conversations regarding the Great Chain of Art. With this context in mind, we can begin to contemplate how the museum space itself, memorialized in guidebooks, reflected this schema.

### **Guided Tours: Museum Guidebooks, Assyria, and the Great Chain of Art**

By now, we understand the role guidebooks play in allowing us to reconstruct likely, if not predetermined, paths between rooms that were dedicated to certain geographic and temporal links on the Great Chain. Here, I will reconstruct how these documents placed Assyria within the Great Chain of Art. Various guidebooks attest that visitors entered the Assyrian galleries from the Second Elgin Room and Hellenic Room (also known as the Phygalian Saloon). Yet, it should be noted that not all guidebooks are created equal— not all are illustrated, not all make explicit cross-exhibit comparisons, and not all authors elaborate past providing a simple catalogue of artifacts.

Take, for example, the 1859 Trustee's *Guide to the Exhibition Rooms of the Departments of Natural History and Antiquities* as compared to H.G. Clarke & Co's 1864 *The British Museum; What to See and How to See It*. The Trustee's guide considers the Assyrian Galleries as a self-contained entity:

A suite of three long and narrow apartments, running North and South to a length exceeding 300 feet, with an additional room or transept, crossing from their Southern extremity, contains the collection of sculptures excavated, chiefly by Mr. Layard, in the years 1847-1850, on the site, or in the vicinity, of ancient Nineveh. To these has recently been added a further collection from the same region, excavated in 1853-55, by Mr. Hormuzd Rassam and Mr. W.K. Loftus, under the direction of Sir H. C. Rawlinson... This latter collection is as yet only temporarily arranged, partly in a small room adjoining one of the long galleries,

and partly in an apartment on the basement floor, whence it will hereafter be transferred to a spacious room now in course of construction.<sup>350</sup>

The Assyrian Galleries were evolving with a post-Layard influx of acquisitions; despite the exhibitions' lack of permanence, the Trustees do explain the museum's present attempt at organizing the artifacts. The guidebook outlines the three sites from which the majority of the artifacts were excavated: Nimrud, Khorsabad, and Kouyunjik or Nineveh. The Trustees clarify that the internal organization of these galleries reflect their attempt to periodize Assyrian history, writing “the classification of the localities, which correspond broadly with three successive periods in Assyrian history, forms the basis of the arrangement adopted for the sculpture.”<sup>351</sup> It is clear, then, that the Assyrian galleries themselves are intended to be organized in a manner that reflects Assyrian history, but the Trustees express no explicit potential for cross-cultural comparison. The human-headed bull and lion located in the Nimrud Central Saloon are described “both in delicacy of execution and excellence of preservation, amongst the finest specimens of Assyrian Art.”<sup>352</sup> To be sure, the lamassu are icons of Assyrian art—critics and the lamassus' appearance in the periodical press made that quite clear. Of all the texts considered thus far, the Trustees are the most reserved, failing to gesture from the lamassus to comparable subjects across the encyclopedic museum, therefore failing to acknowledge not just that Assyria is a link in the Great Chain but, rather, *how* Assyria is linked.

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<sup>350</sup> *British Museum: A Guide to the Exhibition Rooms of the Departments of Natural History and Antiquities* (Printed by Order of the Trustees, 1859), 68.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

In both tone and execution, the Clarke guidebook differs from the Trustee's unaffected treatment of the Assyrian artifacts. At times, it is almost as if Clarke is calling out to the bored spectators who paid little attention to the lamassu, and this begins with the narration of the previous room, the Phygalian Saloon. Consider how the author explicitly connects this Hellenic room to the Elgin rooms the visitor would have just passed through on their way to Phygalia: "The beautiful marbles in this apartment were found by Mr. Cockerell in the ruins of a temple of Apollo, on a hill near Phigalia, in Arcadia, and were purchased in 1814 at Zante. This temple was built by the same architect as the Parthenon, at Athens, and the sculptures bear the same marks of spirited, masterly execution."<sup>353</sup> There is an immediate identification of the Phygalian sculptures from the Temple of Apollo Epicurius as derivatives of the Parthenon's excellence. First, the Greek geographer Pausanias (c. 110 CE-180 CE) recorded in his *Description of Greece* that Ictinus, who co-designed the Parthenon alongside Callicrates, was also the architect of the Temple of Apollo.<sup>354</sup> Additionally, the first illustration the guidebook presents in this section is that of a bas-relief depicting the battle between Lapiths and Centaurs.

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<sup>353</sup> *The British Museum; What to See and How to See It: A Hand-book Guide for Visitors* (London: H.G. Clarke and Co., 1864), 25.

<sup>354</sup> Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 8.41.



Fig. 20. Drawing of *Battle Between Centaurs and the Lapithoe* in *The British Museum; What to See and How to See It*, 1864.

The Phygalian reliefs are similar to the Lapiths and Centaurs Parthenon metopes that are the first artifacts listed and illustrated in the previous Second Elgin Room chapter. Both chapters, then, that precede the guidebook's introduction to the Assyrian galleries lead with illustrations of mythical composite figures.

Consequently, it must come as no surprise that the lamassu is the first illustration of the Assyrian section, taking up half the entire page dedicated to introducing these Near Eastern galleries. In the opening paragraph of the section, the author writes that "there is perhaps no portion of the treasures of this truly national establishment of such important interest as the sculptures in the Assyrian Galleries. These marbles, whether we consider them as works of art, as engraved histories, or as corroborations of the truth of scripture, are every way remarkable."<sup>355</sup> From the start, Clarke is willing to acknowledge the different roles these artifacts serve as testaments to the history and culture of the Ancient

<sup>355</sup> *The British Museum; What to See and How to See It*, 27.

Near East and the different ways Victorians could find meaning in them. Yet, the text also goes so far as to position the Assyrian sculptures as the most interesting and important treasures of the museum as a national institution. The reader is called, compelled, to pay attention; the guidebook explicitly directs the reader's attention while acknowledging the different ways viewers can find value in them. In this way, Clarke inspires a much more passionate and engaged reception of the lamassu— this could not be more different than the passive illustrations that depicted their reception a decade earlier.

In his walkthrough of the previous Hellenic rooms, Clarke credits and notes the sculptor as the link between the Phigalian and Parthenon Marbles. While, unlike the Parthenon's Ictinus, Callicrates, or Phidias, there is no one Assyrian sculptor to be named, Clarke still acknowledges their presence: "The first feeling is that of astonishment at their wonderful state of preservation,— many of them appearing as clear and sharp as if they had only just come from the studio of the sculptor."<sup>356</sup> It is because of the sculptor's careful work and the preservation of these artifacts underground that the British could excavate and bring these creatures before the Western world; the sharpness and clarity of the artifacts are worthy of being carefully observed. Further, Clarke's description is evidence of an emerging pattern where writers about ancient art emphasize the humans, named or not, behind the artifacts. This is not unlike Stone's description of the artist imbuing the lamassu with life. Though we lack concrete portraits of the Assyrian artist, it is still possible to gesture towards the fact that the lamassu, for instance, are man-made creations and that archaeology affords the excavation of past civilizations,

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

not just ancient artifacts. In a post-Winckelmann world, what Clarke mimics (albeit in a Near Eastern context) is the “passionate urgency and almost missionary zeal of the Enlightenment” that Hugh Honor suggests breaks out of Winckelmann’s own writings on art “as he stresses again and again that antique statues are not merely relics of a vanished civilization, but living works of art of relevance to his contemporaries.”<sup>357</sup> Where Winckelmann did so in the context of the Greek artifacts as “embod[ying] the essence of the Greek spirit,” Clarke made clear that this is not simply a phenomenon limited to the art of Greece.

Clarke’s description makes it impossible for readers to continue to see through or past the lamassus; the figures are just as worthy of attention as their idealized Greek counterparts. In one of the most fascinating moments of Clarke’s description of Assyrian art, the author goes so far as to describe “the perfection of the forms, not only as displayed in the delineation of the human figure, but in the various groups of animals— [which] next forces itself on the attention.”<sup>358</sup> This moment is compelling for two reasons: first, the vivid vitality of these perfect figures imposes itself upon the viewer. For Clarke, it is as if the figures are empowered by their form to tell the viewer they are going to be looked at. Even more importantly, the guidebook acknowledges that perfection can exist outside of a Greco-Roman context. Interestingly, within the two sections devoted to the Elgin marbles which for many were and are the pinnacle of Greek and therefore Western art, Clarke only uses the word “perfect” in the context of what mythology the Eastern pediment had once represented: “when perfect, the miraculous

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<sup>357</sup> Hugh Honour, *Neo-Classicism* (London, Penguin, 1991), 58.

<sup>358</sup> *The British Museum; What to See and How to See It*, 27.

birth of Minerva from the head of Jupiter.”<sup>359</sup> In its perfect state, the pediment once represented a clear narrative. Moving forward, Clarke does variously describe the Parthenon marbles as “remarkable,” “admirable,” and “of the finest workmanship.”<sup>360</sup> The moment he gets the closest to articulating perfection, without using that term, is in the description of Illyssus, the river god of Attica: “The whole effect of this figure is admirable. It combines ideal beauty with the truth of nature; and even anatomically speaking, the muscles are allowed to be invariably true to the attitude.”<sup>361</sup> While the author is able to articulate the achievements and idealization of Greek art, Clarke only sparingly uses the adjective perfect two times and perfection once in the Antiquities section of the guidebook.<sup>362</sup> Two of the combined three uses are in regard to Assyrian art: the case I have mentioned above and in the context of a relief depicting Sardanapalus (this time, however, “perfect” is used to describe the state of the relief’s preservation, though its form and workmanship is also “admirable”).<sup>363</sup> The difference between discussing perfection of preservation and form is that the latter only ever occurs for Clarke in the context of Assyrian, rather than Greek, art.

Additionally, unlike in the case of Ancient Greek art where there are clearly delineated periods or stages, Clarke insists that the earliest Assyrian art is just as good, if

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>362</sup> Of the three uses of “perfection” throughout the entire Clarke guidebook, only one is used in regard to the art of a particular period or ancient civilization. The first use is supplied by a quotation from Lord Jefferey to discuss the perfection of Shakespeare as a literary figure (4); the other non-Assyrian use is in regard to engravings and card-making found in the Grenville Library (5). Neither case, then, occurs in the context of Antiquities.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 34.

not better, than the latest. Where the Trustees suggest the Assyrian rooms are organized by period, Clarke insists that there is little difference in the perfection of execution noticeable to visitors as they pass through the different galleries and that this is unique to Assyrian art, writing “it is also singular that the supposed oldest of these marbles is equal, if not superior, in spirit of design and execution, to the more modern.”<sup>364</sup> This is a reversal of how we have come, through Johann Joachim Winckelmann, to understand the stages of phases of Ancient Greek art, where sculpture moves through “cycles of growth and decay.”<sup>365</sup> Yet, despite Clarke’s insistence on the perfection of Assyrian art, there is “a distinctly marked difference between the style of those early times and every other school of art: to the peculiarity of the development of the anatomical forms we would particularly direct attention.”<sup>366</sup> Having died almost a century before Layard’s excavations, Winckelmann’s historiography does not take into account Assyrian art. That said, it is possible to assume that Assyrian art would be, for Winckelmann, less than perfect due to differences in climate, democracy, and the way freedom shaped or influenced artistic thought and production.<sup>367</sup> In any case, Clarke’s guidebook makes it possible for viewers to think about Assyrian art as attaining perfection, or, at the very least, attaining a form of artistic superiority that makes the Assyrian galleries worthy of

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>365</sup> Honour, 59.

<sup>366</sup> *The British Museum; What to See and How to See It*, 27.

<sup>367</sup> Scholars such as Ashish Sinha et. al. have suggested that the demise of the Neo-Assyrian Empire might be related to dramatic climate change. Further study might consider Winckelmann’s theories of the influence on climate on the production of superior ancient art. See Johann Joachim Winckelmann, “Art of the Greeks,” in *History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006) and Ashish Sinha et al., “Role of Climate in the rise and fall of the Neo-Assyrian Empire” (2019) <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.aax6656>.

careful study. After reading this particular guidebook, it becomes impossible to ignore the colossal lamassu because they are symbolic of how incredible Assyrian, and Ancient Near Eastern art more broadly, is outside of a Greek lens or context. Perfection, then, does not have to be reflective of an Ancient Greek standard.

To return to the composite creatures that have inspired this study, the reader's entry into the Assyrian Transept is met with another large drawing of a lamassu, this time the smaller lion-bodied creature. Unlike the Trustee's sober, more straightforward description of the creature's delicacy, Clarke provides a biblical quotation before discussing the lamassu's artistic merit: "The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings,"— Daniel, vii. 4. In the first style of Assyrian workmanship; the body and limbs are admirably portrayed, and the muscles and bones though strongly developed show a correct knowledge of the anatomy of the animal."<sup>368</sup> The reference to the Book of Daniel, set in the sixth century BCE and written during the second century BCE, moves beyond the self-contained periods of Assyrian civilization and culture outlined by the Trustees. Even if viewers agree with Clarke that all ancient Assyrian art was of an equal artistic standard, it is in these brief allusions that the visitors make connections to the ancient world outside of Assyria and, importantly, outside of an idealized, marble vision of Ancient Greece.

In this case, Clarke is making a gesture towards the Neo-Babylonian Empire (626-539 BCE) in a post-Assyrian Mesopotamia where such composite figures continued to thrive; the figure described in this verse is representative of Babylonia within Daniel's

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<sup>368</sup> *The British Museum; What to See and How to See It*, 38.

apocalyptic dream state. Daniel's vision predicts the succession of power from Babylonia to Persia, then to Greece and Rome, culminating in the Antichrist as the future ruler of the world:

And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this, I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.<sup>369</sup>

In this vision, Greece, like Babylonia, is depicted not just as a beast, but as a composite creature, combining the bodies of leopard and bird with four heads. This biblical appropriation of composite figures is perhaps one of the strongest influences on what some perceive as a legacy of monstrosity that Jameson works to debunk. Composite figures are not inherently monstrous; it is the artist's intention that can make them scary. Composite figures like the lamassu, then, could indicate more than just ancient pagan deities but rather, in the context of an apocalyptic vision, the "moral degeneracy of the respective [human] kingdoms they represent."<sup>370</sup> If we can look beyond the frightening intent of this prophecy, what becomes so fascinating is that this passage is evidence of composite figures being linked to or used to represent the chain of empires reaching as

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<sup>369</sup> Daniel 7: 5-8 KJV

<sup>370</sup> *Holman King James Version Study Bible*, ed. Jeremy Royal Howard (Nashville: Holman, 2012), 1422.

far back as antiquity. Babylonia would fall to Persia, just as Persia would fall to Greece under Alexander the Great. Clarke's invocation of Daniel's apocalyptic vision of world domination is the most dramatic connection between Assyrian iconography and the empires that would follow, and it requires a degree of extensive biblical knowledge to quickly clarify that Daniel is not standing before one of the Assyrian palace guardians but rather considering the lamassu more broadly as a symbol of Mesopotamian imperial succession.

At last, we have established how the lamassu were exhibited within the various Assyrian rooms; we know how spectators engaged (or not) with the creatures. In the images, literature, and criticism surveyed in this chapter, it is clear that the lamassu as heralds of Assyrian art are often positioned or considered in relation to familiar biblical and classical contexts. By collaging together the bits and pieces of Assyria's periodization and cross-cultural comparisons, the ways Assyria is linked within the Great Chain, of both art and empire, becomes all the more visible. Imperial archaeology makes this possible. But just as the British Museum has established itself as a domesticating force and protector of the national treasures and imperial spoils surveyed here, the lamassus that Stone gave voice to--these agents of ancient imperial history-- testify to how fragile these institutions and the nations they serve can really be. After all, the Great Chain of Art, like the Great Chain of Empires, is not finite; neither structure has reached or will reach a point of complete finality or closure, especially in a manner that all could agree on.

The visual and textual artifacts that testify to the Assyrian artifacts' acquisition and evolving exhibition in the museum communicate that no matter how the museum

frames their purpose, they have ultimately put on display the heralds of their own undoing, their own eventual demise. Archaeology-- the very field that fuels the purpose of the museum-- teaches us that material artifacts can outlive not just the empire in which they were crafted but also the succession of empires that come after them. The museum, then, becomes a space that dramatizes this very fact, even as the institution and all of its agents work tirelessly to convince both itself and its visitors of its own infallibility. This is what makes the museum and the imperial memento mori it contains so seductive. But what is perhaps even more suggestive is how the body of writings on these artifacts works to question and, eventually, undermine the institution's own confidence. It is through reading these narratives and cross-comparing critical perspectives across a variety of genres that one becomes best equipped to question the version of events that the museum carefully curates. After having read all of the different ways that visitors and critics engaged with both Assyrian and Xanthian artifacts, it becomes impossible to look through or past objects like the lamassu as the oblivious Victorian in the *Nimrud Central Saloon* image did, just as it becomes difficult not to feel a sense of unease as they tower above you. By acknowledging in print the power of these objects, which might begin as simply as an acknowledgement of their scale, we are forced to reckon with everything that they have outlived.

## CHAPTER SIX

## CODA: RECEPTION FROM A DISTANCE

“Museums are more than just physical places designed to house collections. Their purpose is to shape identity and memory. They do not and cannot represent complete stories, but the distilled narratives they propose often contain the most treasured and the most contested facets of identity, national or otherwise.”<sup>371</sup>

-- Alice Proctor, *The Whole Picture: The colonial story of the art in our museums & why we need to talk about it* (2020)

“Imperialized Antiquities” began and ended during a global crisis. During the formative months of this project’s creation, the coronavirus pandemic halted all research travel, making an in-person visit to the British Museum and its archive impossible. Not only that but access to the University of Georgia Libraries was incredibly limited for a span of five months. Working on a project that is so invested in the affordances and limitations of physical space becomes all the more difficult when access is made impossible by circumstances outside of your control. Despite these conditions, the unpredictability of access to required materials could not deter the completion of this project, just as it could not diminish my enthusiasm for unveiling the layers of narrative that have been placed upon the Ancient Near Eastern artifacts I discuss in the previous chapters. Instead, it pushed me to become more flexible and patient in the way I pieced together incomplete stories of discovery, acquisition, exhibition, and reception in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>371</sup> Alice Proctor, *The Whole Picture: The colonial story of the art in our museums & why we need to talk about it* (London: Cassell, 2020), 9.

First, it is necessary to acknowledge that there are certain limitations to a project of this type primarily tied to my inability to access the physical museum space or the museum archives that hold a wealth of material concerning lesser-known acquisition and exhibition histories. In *The Whole Picture: The colonial story of the art in our museums & why we need to talk about it* (2020), Alice Proctor reminds us that:

None of these stories is in the museum by accident. Someone has chosen every object on display, categorized it, and placed it on a plinth or behind glass. Someone wrote the labels. Maybe you were involved in one or more of these processes, maybe you weren't. Perhaps you feel you already spend enough time thinking critically about every other thing in the world, and for you a museum should be a place you can go to just wander around and look at beautiful things. But you still have to remember that, however invisible they may be, there is someone directing you around that space, shaping your interpretation, and choosing what you may look at and how.<sup>372</sup>

For starters, archival research would help to make these hands more visible: the ones that were directly involved in curating the evolving exhibitions, rather than discovery or reception of the Xanthian and Assyrian artifacts across the period. Any future revisions or expansions of "Imperialized Antiquities" must begin with on-site research that more tangibly brings physical space into the conversation and, most importantly, reveals additional narrative threads that support and further the readings I have already begun. Though traditional archival research was made impossible by the global pandemic, with flexibility and patience I reoriented this project to focus on the popular texts that *were* available-- ones that produced and were produced by imperial archaeology. After all, archaeology becomes undeniably imperial when it is interpellated as such through the act of writing.

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<sup>372</sup> Proctor, 10.

My study of the texts related to the excavation, display, and reception of Ancient Near Eastern artifacts was made possible by the digitization efforts of academic and research institutions worldwide. Digital archival research makes the imperial legacies of archaeology and its material, but especially textual, remains all the more clear. For instance, digitization provided access to a wealth of guidebooks that tell the stories of these objects' exhibition and conscription that otherwise would have been inaccessible. While there is no real shortage of Victorian texts in the public domain and available in digital form, including the periodicals and literary works discussed in the previous chapters that have a broader scholarly appeal, access to antiquated museum guidebooks that testify to cultural memory would be too tightly restricted, if not lost, without these efforts.

It is thanks to the digitization of most of the primary sources required for this study that I have been able to replicate, to the best of my ability, the layers of narratives that Victorian viewers themselves would have encountered as they were introduced to these artifacts. Experiencing the restrictions I did allowed me to prioritize the narratives rather than the physical spaces or artifacts themselves in productive ways. In doing so, I was able to recognize in my own research process the temporal and spatial distances that separate myself from the Victorians who were themselves separated, even more drastically across space and time, from the Ancient Near East. I replicated the Victorians' chronological process of coming to know Xanthos and Assyria: first, by examining how classical texts shaped mythological and historical knowledge; then, by reading in order the adventurous narratives of discovery that were captivating the public's attention at home. I consulted the guidebooks before engaging with specific visitor accounts to get a

sense for the different ways visitors were primed prior to their own physical engagement with the artifacts in their new exhibitionary contexts. A large component of this project, then, was carefully replicating the chronology of these artifacts' new contexts, from rediscovery and excavation through their lives and afterlives in Victorian print media.

In the Assyria chapters, I centralize what I call the rhetoric of the colossal as a means of narrativizing how spectators imagined the scale of the Assyrian lamassus prior to their first physical encounter with the creatures. Working from my home office in Berkeley Lake, GA, I, too, was drawn to how Layard and the periodical press depicted the gigantic composite figures in illustrations and quantified their monstrosity. Throughout this process, I was having to manage my own expectations for scale, taping a ten- to eleven-foot-tall mockup of a lamassu to the floor in order to get a sense of how the creature would tower over a human visitor. Fortunately, virtual access to the British Museum is possible-- I was not left entirely to my own devices to attempt any further physical replications of these artifacts or the spaces in which they were displayed.

Through the British Museum's partnership with Google Arts & Culture, it is possible to view current exhibitions of Assyrian sculptures, spread across a series of four rooms. In rooms 6A and 6B of the British Museum, for instance, it is possible to view two lion-bodied lamassus removed by Layard from the Nimrud palace of Ashurnasirpal II as they flank a reconstructed Balawat Gate. The virtual tour invites guests to this room to explicitly "marvel at the huge winged beasts that guarded the palaces of Assyria."<sup>373</sup> The lamassus continue to man the museum's thresholds, and it is possible for visitors in this

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<sup>373</sup> "Room 6: Assyrian sculpture and Balawat Gates," *The British Museum*.  
<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/galleries/assyrian-sculpture-and-balawat-gates>

simulated space to orient the screen in such a way that you can look up at the creature. The virtual interface is easy to navigate; however, moving as a disembodied, floating eye through space distorts the scale of the artifacts, further diminishing their mythical power.

The Xanthian artifacts are also available for viewing in this digital format. Now, virtual visitors can observe the Harpy Tomb now placed in Room 15's "Greece: Athens and Lycia" exhibit. Athenian pottery is underwhelmingly combined with Xanthian bas-reliefs. *Abandon all hope, ye who enter* the museum hoping for Xanthos to be recontextualized as uniquely Anatolian and not just an extension of the Greek capital. The description of this exhibit describes the Lycians as "among those pressed into joining Athens' tribute-paying" and, therefore, "so-called allies of the empire" after the Greeks defeated the Persians in 479 BCE.<sup>374</sup> Such a description muddles the fact that at the time of the Harpy Tomb's creation, Lycia was newly under the control of Greece. Today, the Harpy Tomb is described as the Tomb of Kybernis, a Xanthian king who, according to Herodotus, served under Xerxes during the Greco-Persian Wars with the Lycian fleet. There is a placard that contextualizes Kybernis in front of the tomb; however, the text is not readable in the virtual tour, making it difficult to determine to what extent-- if at all-- the curator, and therefore the public, acknowledges Lycia's liminality and hybridity.

Aside from debates about how spaces like Xanthos are framed within the museum, the benefit of virtual tours is that they provide access (however constrained) to institutions that are the first to shutter in times of crisis. Of equal importance is the way "such virtual galleries offer remotely accessible records of museum displays and reify the

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<sup>374</sup> "Room 15: Greece: Athens and Lycia," *The British Museum*.  
<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/galleries/greece-athens-and-lycia>

physical museum as an authoritative context for art and artifacts.”<sup>375</sup> Virtual tours are a new kind of historical record; one that will allow future researchers unprecedented access and the tools required to more efficiently (re)visualize past exhibitions. Yet, I imagine there is a space for digital humanities to recreate, using photographs, illustrations, guidebooks, and other archived documentation, nineteenth-century exhibits. We have enough data to begin this work, however imperfect it may be at first; it is just a matter of making the effort to render these virtual spaces and see what this additional process can reveal about the institutions that shape how we engage with both antiquity and empire.

A digital humanities approach to extending this project is not the only possibility. While the pairing of Xanthos and Assyria has helped reveal the process by which Ancient Near Eastern artifacts were received more broadly across the period, I imagine an extended version of this project divided into two separate parts, united under a shared methodology. There is so much more to be said regarding Anatolia’s liminality in the nineteenth century, and Xanthos is not the only archaeological site critical for the expansion of the British Museum’s holdings. To this end, I imagine a volume that could replicate the process of unveiling the narratives of discovery through narratives of reception while centralizing multiple cities along the Anatolian coast. Like Xanthos, Halicarnassus was a site of interest to nineteenth-century archaeologists and the encyclopedic museum they helped to feed. Additionally, most, if not all, artifacts acquired along the coast were departmentalized as Greco-Roman.

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<sup>375</sup> Caitlin Chien Clerkin and Bradley L. Taylor, “Online Encounters with Museum Antiquities,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 125, no. 1 (January 2021): 166.

Halicarnassus, excavated by Sir Charles Newton, was an often-nearby presence in the British Museum's exhibition of Lycian artifacts. Following the Lycian acquisitions, excavations at Halicarnassus by Newton during the 1850s resulted in the museum's purchase of remains of the Tomb of Mausolus, the ancient wonder that had likely collapsed due to earthquakes by the fifteenth century. Halicarnassus is a complex exemplar of Greco-Persian hybridity in both a political and cultural sense. Despite a strong Ionian Greek influence, Halicarnassus was located in the Carian region of Anatolia and under Persian rule from the sixth century BCE. This hybridity is apparent in the artifacts excavated in the region from the time of Mausolus, who ruled between 377 and 353 BCE. Remnants from the Mausoleum can be read in dialogue with the Lycian marbles, particularly the Nereid Monument.

In order to map out Victorian responses to the Halicarnassus artifacts, I would begin with Sir Charles Thomas Newton's *History of Discoveries at Halicarnassus, Cnidus, and Branchidae* (1862-1863) and his *Travels and Discoveries in the Levant* (1865). In response to the excavations, James Fergusson, a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, published *The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus Restored in Conformity with the Recently Discovered Remains* in 1862, providing a survey of how ancient texts and comparable or derivative monuments could be used to inform how the Mausoleum may be reconstructed and exhibited within the British Museum. Percy Gardner's essay "The Chariot-Group of the Mausoleum" (1893) also speaks critically about the impact of exhibition and restoration on the visitor experience once "the re-arrangement of the

sculptures at the British Museum has now reached the Mausoleum room.”<sup>376</sup> In terms of visitor reception, Ruskin’s responses to the mausoleum remains are the most vocal in expressing disdain; Ruskin asserts that Newton’s discovery and its placement in the British Museum “have entirely corrupted and thwarted the uses of the British Museum Art Galleries.”<sup>377</sup> A major task for this section of the chapter will entail breaking down Ruskin’s complicated reception, comparing it to other visitor accounts, and exploring how such an emotionally charged response influences the reception of other antiquities exhibited by the British Museum. Ultimately, juxtaposing the British Museum’s treatment of objects from across the western coast of Anatolia would further showcase how the museum conditioned the visitor’s understanding of the relationship between the Greeks and their eastern neighbors while also allowing us to think critically about the departmentalization of Greek & Roman and Ancient Near East antiquities in new ways.

In the subsequent volume, I would follow my reading of Layard’s Assyrian excavations and the reception of Assyrian artifacts such as the lamassus with the Babylonian discoveries made during the nineteenth century. I would account for how the Assyrian galleries evolved in response to the major Assyrian and Babylonian discoveries made by George Smith and Hormuzd Rassam in the 1870s and 1880s. Smith revolutionized cuneiform studies with his famous translation of the Gilgamesh Flood Tablet in 1872. The decipherment and translation of cuneiform, then, would serve as an additional narrative layer needed to understand not just the contents of ancient text

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<sup>376</sup> Percy Gardner, “The Chariot-Group of the Mausoleum,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* vol. 13 (1892-1893): 188.

<sup>377</sup> John Ruskin to Rev. F. A. Malleon, April 23, 1881, in *The Letters of John Ruskin*, vol. 2, ed. George Allen (London: George Allen, 1909): 353.

rendered in stone but the cultural valuation and reception of the material artifact itself within the museum. Rassam, a member of the initial Layard excavations, continued the excavation work in Nineveh, Nimrud, and Babylon into the early 1880s long after Layard retired from archaeology to become a politician. There is much to uncover regarding Rassam's place following his predecessor. This expansion would grant me the space to interrogate his being a native of Mosul and a subject of the Ottoman Empire who contributed greatly to the British Museum's collections yet has been controversially overshadowed by the seemingly mythological presence and power of Layard.

To begin tracing the narratives of discovery and acquisition, I would consult the various publications authored by Smith and Rassam detailing their findings. Smith's publications include his cuneiform translations in the *History of Assurbanipal* (1871) and *Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries on the Site of Nineveh, 1873 to 1874* (1875). Rassam's papers include "Recent Assyrian and Babylonian Research" (1881), "Babylonian Cities. Being a paper read before the Victoria Institute" (1884), and the account of his discoveries entitled *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod* (p. 1897). Continuing my larger project's interest in the influence of space on public reception, I would then interrogate what it meant to pair artifacts from Ancient Assyria (northern Mesopotamia) with Babylon (southern Mesopotamia) in shared gallery spaces, sometimes divided into separate sections and, at other times, mixed together.

Ultimately, though my approach can be productively applied to various sites across the Near East, what my methodology reveals is an argument for the role close reading plays in unveiling textual legacies of imperialism. Close reading is the mechanism through which we can reveal the role of language and literature in imperial

archaeology-- a field otherwise dominated by the visual and the material. The narratives I discuss in "Imperialized Antiquities" are an integral part of the legacy of imperial archaeology and should be recognized as such. It is not about reading Homer or Herodotus for the sake of understanding the contents of a classical nineteenth-century education. Rather, close reading provides a way to understand how this education and later reading across a vast array of genres informed their participation as viewers in national and imperial institutions like that of the encyclopedic museum. Close reading, then, provides a means of inhabiting the Victorian body to view-- to read-- antiquity, nation, and empire as they once did.

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