

M. J. Finley

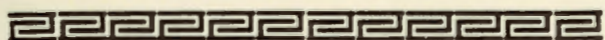
ASPECTS OF
ANTIQUITY

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ASPECTS OF ANTIQUITY

Discoveries and Controversies

by
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M. I. Finley



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LOST: THE TROJAN WAR

THE capture of Troy and the wanderings of Odysseus have had an unrivalled hold on the imagination for more than twenty-five hundred years. The chain of tradition is an unbroken one, through antiquity and the Middle Ages down to our own day, when the word 'odyssey' is a common cliché along with 'Achilles' heel' or 'Trojan horse'. As far back as 500 B.C. or earlier, the Etruscans had a predilection for scenes of the Trojan War on the Greek painted pottery which they imported into central Italy. The Romans then went further and linked themselves directly with the Trojans by fashioning a new foundation legend, incompatible with their older myth of Romulus, from whom the city was supposed to have taken its name. Their new hero-founder was Aeneas, one of the Trojan survivors, and it was around him, not Romulus, that Virgil wrote the great Roman epic, the *Aeneid*. The Roman example later spread, and during the Middle Ages it was commonly believed that English history began with Brute (or Brutus) the Trojan, and that the Franks were descended from Francus, son of Hector.

Our oldest and fullest information about the Trojan War comes from the two poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, some sixteen and twelve thousand lines in length, respectively, and both attributed to Homer (though modern scholars on the whole believe in two 'monumental composers', and place them in the eighth century B.C.). Yet they provide nothing like the whole story. The *Iliad* is devoted to a few weeks in the tenth year of the war, ending not with the fall of the city but with the death of Hector, the greatest of the Trojan warriors. The *Odyssey* narrates the wanderings of Odysseus for ten years after the victory, before he could return to his

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lived through the entire war, was apparently permitted to return to Athens when it ended, and died not many years later.

When he died, someone (his daughter, one tradition has it) published the manuscript exactly as he left it, and there are some very puzzling aspects about the shape of the work at that stage. The whole of the last book is utterly unlike the preceding seven: it has the look of a collection of notes, organized but not worked up. It breaks off abruptly in the year 411 B.C., nearly seven years before the war ended. One might reasonably surmise that Thucydides had stopped writing when he reached that point in his story. However, there are substantial portions early in the volume that could not have been written until after 404, such as the discussion of the exact dating of the war and its duration. Thucydides was obviously working away at his *History* long after 411. But instead of continuing with the narrative, he revised and refashioned some of the earlier parts, and he wrote long chunks in them for the first time. There can be little doubt, for example, that both the Funeral Oration, which Pericles is said to have delivered in the first year of the war, and his last speech, in 430, were written by Thucydides not contemporaneously but nearly thirty years later. They are the old historian's retrospective views of the strength and great possibilities of Athens when the war began, written in the light of his city's complete, and unnecessary, defeat. And even earlier, in the first book with its detailed account of the incidents leading up to the war, there are some sentences that look very much like marginal notes Thucydides had made for himself, for still further recasting and rewriting.

We shall never know what was going on in Thucydides' mind in those final years; what it was that drove him back to the earlier years at the cost of a complete neglect of the ending. It is necessary to make some sort of reasonable guess, however, in order to get at his thinking in general. There

THUCYDIDES THE MORALIST

accuracy which, commonplace as it may seem today, was quite extraordinary in the fifth century B.C. "So few pains," he complained, "do most men take in the inquiry for the truth, preferring to accept the first story that comes to hand." Only one possible model comes to mind, the Hippocratic school of medicine which was then at its height on the island of Cos. Thucydides' description of the great plague which struck Athens in 430 is so clinically precise and so technical in its language, that only the Hippocratic books on epidemics provide an adequate parallel. But even this will not explain why Thucydides transferred this passion for accuracy to the field of history. Like all such personal matters, the question defies explanation. Whatever the reason, it left him an exceedingly lonely figure in the history of ancient historical writing, for not one man after him, among either the Greek historians or the Roman, shared his passion. In this sense, Thucydides' kind of history was a dead-end street. Only among a few scientists, Aristotle and his disciples, for example, do we find anything comparable, and they never took history seriously.

From the beginning, too, Thucydides took still another extraordinary step. Human history, he decided, was a strictly human affair, capable of analysis and understanding entirely in terms of known patterns of human behaviour, without the intervention of the supernatural. It is impossible to say what his religious beliefs were, except that he detested the soothsayers and oracle-mongers who were a plague in wartime Athens. As a historian he recognized their existence in several brief, utterly contemptuous remarks. Otherwise, apart from a few not easily explained references to Fortune (*Tyche*), his *History* unfolds without gods or oracles or omens. Again the Hippocratic writings are the only parallel, and on this score it is scarcely credible that the lives of Herodotus and Thucydides overlapped.

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These were matters of fundamental outlook, and they gave Thucydides' work its tone. But they could not provide the techniques. How does one go about writing the history of a long war? Thucydides had no precedent to fall back on, no book, no teacher from whom he could learn the business of being a historian. Not even Herodotus, for he was too diffuse, interested in too many things, while Thucydides proposed to concentrate very narrowly on the war and its politics. Apart from everything else, this difference in scale and intensity made Herodotus an unsatisfactory model.

Consider something as elementary as dates. We say that the Peloponnesian War began in 431 B.C. An Athenian had to say that it began in the archonship of Pythodorus, which was meaningless to a non-Athenian, and indeed even to Athenians twenty or thirty years later, unless they had a list of the archons (who held office for only one year) before them while they read. In a large-scale war, furthermore, with many things happening in different places at the same time, dating by years alone would not give the right kind of picture for Thucydides. All the little connections and sequences, the day-to-day causes and consequences, would be lost. Introducing months would not help. Every city had its own calendar: the names of the months were not all alike, nor was the order, nor even the time of the new year. To write a coherent narrative, therefore, Thucydides had to invent a system. After fixing the beginning of the war, he dated all subsequent events first by counting the number of years that elapsed from the start, and then by dividing each war year into halves, which he labelled summer and winter. Simple enough, yet the scheme was unique and the difficulties in making it work are nearly unimaginable today.

Fixing the beginning was almost the hardest problem of all. Wars do not erupt out of nothing on one particular day. The first shot or the formal declaration of war can con-

the narrative, the moral and political issues, the debates and disagreements over policy, the possibilities and the mistakes and the motives, his main device was the speech. Sometimes he chose a single speech out of a number which were made in an assembly or conference, sometimes a pair, which by their diametrical opposition presented the sharpest possible choice of actions. These speeches are in direct discourse, and are very much abridged—a perfectly legitimate procedure. But they are also, without exception, written in the language and style of Thucydides, and that gives the modern reader, at least, some twinges of conscience.

In fact, the speeches in Thucydides raised grave doubts among ancient critics as well. Their effectiveness is beyond doubt: the total impact is overwhelming. The reader is quite carried away; not only does he feel that he has seen the Peloponnesian War from the inside, but he is certain that he knows exactly what the issues were, why things happened as they did. More than that, his understanding seems to come from the actors themselves, not from the historian. To Thucydides' contemporaries, far more than to us, this seemed a natural and intelligible procedure. No people have elevated talk and debate into a way of life as did the ancient Greeks. They talked all the time, in public and in private, and they talked with enthusiasm and persuasiveness. Their literature was filled with talk, from the long speeches and monologues of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to the equally long speeches and debates in Herodotus. And in the very years of the Peloponnesian War there was Socrates, who did nothing *but* talk—a philosopher without parallel, for he never wrote a line in all his long life. But no enlightened reader of Homer or Herodotus believed for one moment that the speeches recorded in their books were anything but the creations of the author, whereas Thucydides gave the impression that he was reporting, not creating.

Even Thucydides' warmest admirers must concede that the speeches, which make up a substantial portion of the work as a whole, are not reporting in the same sense as the narrative. The process of selection has gone too far: the historian has taken responsibility not only for choosing the salient points from actual speeches but also for having the "speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions". That is what Thucydides often did in the speeches. No one can be certain of his motives in so doing, of course; but given his great integrity and dedication, it seems to me that the only satisfactory explanation for this odd procedure was his desire to penetrate to the final and general truths, his fear that they would not emerge from the details unless he underscored and heightened them in this way. How successful he was is shown by the fact that, to this day, the image of Pericles or Cleon that the world preserves is the one Thucydides created by means of the speeches he had them make.

In a sense Thucydides was too successful. He left no ground for re-examination or alternative judgment. So ruthless was he in stripping away whatever he thought was "romance", or irrelevance, that we simply lack the documentation with which to evaluate Cleon, for example, in any way but Thucydides' own. This man led Athens for several years after the death of Pericles, but Thucydides gives him four appearances only, one of them restricted to a single sentence and one a speech. The picture that emerges is complete and dramatic—but is it right? We do not know. More than that, the picture is intended to represent not only Cleon but the demagogue as a type, the kind of leader who took over when Pericles died and, in the historian's judgment, led Athens to folly and destruction. Having summed up Cleon, Thucydides ignored the others, just as he summed up civil strife in general by one example, that of Corcyra.

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bitterest picture of a tyrant in the eighth book of the *Republic*, modelled on the elder Dionysius (whom he does not actually name). Such a tyrant, wrote Plato, comes to power as a demagogue and then finds it to be "his inevitable fate either to be destroyed by his enemies or to seize absolute power and be transformed from a human being into a wolf". True, the younger Dionysius had not seized power; he had been born to it, and the cynic might laughingly suggest that he had not yet been transformed into a wolf and there was hope he could be transformed into a philosopher-king. All other sources are unanimous in their insistence that the young Dionysius was an incorrigible drunkard, Plato alone seeming to be unaware of the fact. Aristotle, for one, says that Dion held Dionysius in contempt precisely because of this grave weakness of his.

As the modern scholarly arguments go on about these difficulties with the two letters, nearly everyone seems to have lost sight of the realities of Sicilian politics. What was actually happening at the moment in Syracuse and what remedies was Plato proposing? Dion's friends, in despair at the turn of events created by Dion's assassination in 354, wrote to Plato for advice. What steps should they take next? In reply they received the long seventh letter, which consists of a few pages of autobiography; some waffle about the great things Dion would have accomplished had he lived, not specified except for the negative point that he would not have permitted a return to democracy; and finally a long disquisition about metaphysics and the theory of knowledge. I doubt if anyone could compose a more useless or empty reply to a request for practical advice. So they wrote again and they received the brief eighth letter, which repeats some of the same ground but finally makes a concrete proposal, namely, that the factions should be reconciled and set up a triumvirate consisting of Dionysius II from one side, and from the other

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believe, at some point became a Carthaginian agent, which is precisely what the younger Dionysius charged him with when he exiled him.

A possible explanation of these many weaknesses is that the two letters are spurious (as at least two others in the collection surely are). However, the great majority of scholars now hold, against a small but stubborn minority, that they are authentic. I myself have been unable to come to a firm conclusion on this question. In any event, if Plato did not write them himself, then they were written not long after his death by one of his disciples, perhaps by Speusippus, his nephew and successor as head of the school. Whether they emanated from Plato himself or from his immediate circle, the reason they were written and circulated seems fairly clear. Plato and his Academy must have had a bad press for their connection with the whole sordid mess in Sicily, in which several men associated with them in the public mind were implicated. An *apologia* seemed called for; hence the two letters. In the long run they have proved to be an effective *apologia*, whatever their immediate impact, about which we know nothing.

Such an *apologia* raises interesting moral questions; nothing in either letter, however, warrants the view that Plato proposed to convert Dionysius II into a philosopher-king and thus realize on earth the ideal state of his *Republic*. If there is any truth behind the saga, then Plato was surely thinking of the kind of state he envisaged in the *Laws*. But he proved to be wholly incapable of judging, or even of reporting, either the situation or the possibilities realistically. To repeat: none of this bears on Plato the philosopher *as a philosopher*. There have been other great men whose genius deserted them (or blinded them) when they stepped out of their own fields into other subjects, or into the market-place.

DIOGENES THE CYNIC

There is an interesting paradox here: in his search for man Diogenes time and again looked to animals for a model. Animals, too, were natural beings even if inferior, and their behaviour was altogether natural. What was natural was good—that was the great law of the universe, and the wise and virtuous man was he who knew the natural from the unnatural, and who then had the discipline to live according to his knowledge.

This was no new idea of Diogenes's. Nature or human convention (custom)? Which is the correct guide to life? That question had been debated for half a century and more before Diogenes, especially among the Sophists. One had only to look about, and especially to look at Persians and Egyptians as well as Greeks, at Spartans as well as Athenians, to realize instantly that civilized societies had developed a great profusion of rules and regulations, not a few of them flatly contradictory. How was one to judge among them, to sift the good from the bad, the better from the inferior?

Nature and self-sufficiency were the two standards by which Diogenes judged. Not even the Oedipus story could stand up to the test of nature as he applied it. Oedipus's crime was that he married his own mother unwittingly. So what? asked Diogenes. *Domestic fowl do not object to that, nor do dogs or any ass, or the Persians who pass for the elite of Asia.* Here we have the double test of naturalness of which he was so fond, the appeal to animal behaviour on the one hand, and on the other hand the argument that whatever is practised by one group must be natural human behaviour and is therefore proper for all men, their man-made laws (or customs) to the contrary notwithstanding. And here, too, is the perfect example of how far Diogenes was prepared to go, for the Oedipus taboo was as near to untouchability as anything in Greek traditions or beliefs.

There is a child-like simplicity in this kind of reasoning, but then, simplicity is exactly what Diogenes sought. *Happi-*

DIogenES THE CYNIC

contradicted notions frequently discussed and sometimes advocated by other philosophers, from Socrates to Aristotle, but he made no fundamental break with the tradition. Nature and self-sufficiency were familiar concepts, freedom from excessive reliance on externals a familiar virtue. Diogenes's extremism may have been shocking, but it was still permissible. After all, Plato with whom he traded insults unsparingly (at least in the legend) was just as radical when, in the *Republic*, he proposed the abolition of the family and private property for the Philosopher-Guardians.

But then there came the point at which Diogenes pushed too hard and too far. Asked where he came from, he replied, *I am a citizen of the universe*, a phrase which the Greek language expresses in a single word, a *cosmopolitan*. Diogenes coined that word and thereby turned his back on centuries of Greek history. It had been an axiom among the Greeks that their moral superiority rested on citizenship in the free city, whether Athens or Corinth or Thebes or Syracuse. Socrates went to his death rather than leave his city. Plato hated the way Athens was governed and proposed radical reforms, but they were all addressed to the single autonomous city. Even Aristotle, despite the conquests of his pupil Alexander, said that no city could be well governed if its citizens were so numerous that they did not know each other, and its size so great that the herald's voice could not be heard throughout. Diogenes threw all this away, deeming the city but another unnecessary external, like wealth and marriage.

In part, therefore, Diogenes disowned philosophy, for, ever since Socrates, at least, the Greek philosopher had been a critic of society. The arrangements of society were a recognized branch of his subject along with the nature of man. Diogenes's criticism, by contrast, was purely destructive. He merely attacked—politics, social habits and customs, religious practices. Like his hero Heracles he cleaned out the

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Augean stables, but he felt no need to put anything new in place of the rubbish. As a cosmopolitan he was bound to no state: a citizen of the universe is a citizen of no place. Therefore he need not find a good form of political organization to replace defective forms.

Nor was that all. Diogenes also disowned most learning, religion and culture. *I marvel that the grammarians investigate the ills of Odysseus when they are ignorant of their own; that the musicians tune their lyre strings while the disposition of their souls is discordant; that the mathematicians gaze at the sun and the moon and ignore matters close at hand.* Like rhetoric and avarice, with which he compares them, they are idle externals, contributing nothing to virtue. Similarly with ritual: to a man performing a purification rite he said, *Unfortunate man, do you not know that lustrations cannot wash away errors, in conduct any more than in grammar?*

In short, Diogenes was a philosopher with very little philosophy, a preacher of virtue who endorsed what most men called vices, a sneerer and destroyer, Socrates gone mad. In the search for man, he brought man very close to the beasts and in his intense concentration on nature, he subordinated ethical interests to bodily needs, much as he would have denied both charges. The wonder, then, is that the Diogenes legend arose in his own lifetime and has remained fresh and strong ever since. Here we are in the realm of hard fact. He was buried near one of the main gates of Corinth and a monument of the finest Parian marble was erected over his grave. It was still standing five hundred years later. Even his native Sinope, which had exiled him, eventually honoured him with a bronze statue inscribed with a verse epigram: Your fame will live on forever Diogenes, for you taught mankind the lesson of self-sufficiency.

The marble monument at Corinth was a dog mounted on a

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pillar, for 'cynic' was a common Greek word meaning 'dog-like'. When asked why he was called that Diogenes replied: *I wag my tail to those who give me anything, bark at those who don't, and clamp my teeth in rogues.* Actually the name was originally applied to the Cynics by their enemies, as a sneer, and then adopted by Diogenes and his followers in pride. The sneer was thrown back at the sneerers (much like the word Quaker in more modern times). What the Cynics said in effect was: The grounds on which you call us dogs are just the qualities which make us superior in the one thing which counts, natural self-sufficiency and hence genuine virtue.

There are conflicting explanations given by ancient writers about the origin of the label *Cynic*. But whichever is correct, the important point is that Diogenes drew his following chiefly from the beatniks of fourth-century-B.C. Greece, and it was inevitable that respectable people should have thought them doglike. The Cynic way of life, visible to anyone who cared to look (for they lived and preached in public places, in the open, not in special cafés and clubs), had all the signs of a too literal interpretation of Diogenes's favourite animal analogies. We can only guess what it was that attracted his disciples individually, motives ranging from legitimate and understandable dissatisfaction with the prevailing ideologies and beliefs in some cases, to personal failure, decadence and pure viciousness in others. Parallels are not hard to find throughout history, and in our own time.

What was not inevitable, however, was the long-term success of Cynicism, and its quick rise to perfect respectability. The Stoics, for example, claimed direct ancestry from them: Diogenes's chief disciple, Crates, a wealthy Theban who voluntarily gave up his riches and adopted the Cynic way of life, was the teacher of Zeno, the founder of Stoicism. No effort was made to hide this chain, or to apologize for it. On the contrary, it is in the writings of later Stoics, men like Dio

them properly and you end with more questions than answers, but at least they will be the right questions.

The Etruscans themselves believed that they had come to Italy from western Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Greek and Roman writers, from Herodotus on, accepted that tradition, with scarcely an exception. So do modern authorities, also with few exceptions—one of whom, it is only fair to record, is Professor Pallottino. In Italy they found a mixed population, scattered and disunited, unlettered and quite primitive in comparison with the civilizations farther east. By about 700 B.C. much of the region now called Tuscany and Umbria and some parts of Latium had become Etruscan—'become', not just 'ruled by', for the Etruscan language was spoken in all classes of society, and their culture was Etruscan too. From that base, Etruscan influence, colonization and political domination spread north to the Po Valley, south beyond Pompeii. In the course of the sixth century, when the Etruscans attained their apogee, they controlled Rome and it was then that some of the institutions were formed, or transformed, which subsequently helped build Rome into the greatest world power. Yet, so far as the very sparse evidence goes, the Etruscans themselves never united into a single state.

The Etruscans who became the leading force in Italy were not, except for an irrelevant biological component, the Etruscans who came from Asia Minor (if that tradition is correct). As Professor Boethius stresses repeatedly, "If they were immigrants, they merged in town and country with the older population to become an entirely new people." What we call Etruscan culture was a new creation, fashioned in Italy. If one had to hazard a guess as to what the immigrants from Asia Minor contributed which made the new amalgam so dynamic, mine would be in the first instance their ability to exploit the rich metal deposits of the region, and then

perhaps a social system better fitted for political expansion, aggression and organization.

At more or less the same time, southern Italy as far north as Naples was being settled by Greeks, beginning about 750 B.C. The Greek sphere marked the southern limit of Etruscan authority, which was overstretched anyway. Rome broke away at the end of the sixth century, the Samnites in Campania half a century later; the Gauls were causing trouble at the Po end; and then the Romans began their steady reversal of roles. Little was left of Etruscan independence by 300 B.C.; nothing, effectively, after 200. Roman conquest also meant gradual Romanization; by 100 B.C. even the Etruscan language was gone except in isolated rural pockets and among antiquarians, while the society in the old Etruscan centres was no longer distinguishable from that of the rest of Italy. Only certain religious practices and notions remained alive, among Romans as much as among people who might still, nostalgically, call themselves Etruscans.

The Greek and Roman literary references we possess to the Etruscans date for the most part after 100 B.C. They look back to a dead past. Although a streak of *etruscheria* seems to have appeared among the Romans then, the prevailing stress was on two aspects, the gluttony, both gastronomic and sexual, of the Etruscans (and especially the licence accorded their women), and the overriding control of religion over their daily lives, including their practice of discovering the will of the gods by examining the livers of animals. Modern writers, almost with unanimity, respond in an odd way: they reject the first aspect as the inevitably false propaganda of the victors defaming the defeated, and they accept the second *in toto*, even exaggerating it until one wonders when an Etruscan, so busy with the performance of compulsory rituals, could have found time to eat, sleep and copulate.

As usual, we turn to Pallottino for a note of sanity: "The

ETRUSCHERIA

other than the unacceptable one implicit in the choice of the phrase, "indecent pictures". No doubt one cannot expect conquerors, least of all the Romans, to be respectful or even honest about a people who gave them so much trouble. It does not follow, however, that everything they said is therefore a lie. There is at least some visible support for the over-eating charge. From the later centuries we have hundreds of reclining, obviously well-fed, fat Etruscan gentlemen in stone on the lids of cinerary urns and sarcophagi. There may be, as Boethius insists, "good reasons for evaluating impartially the peacefully civic life in Etruria's beautiful towns brought into disrepute by the Romans," but we must have the facts right before we evaluate (which, in this instance, means 'judge', a dubious activity anyway). Among the many tens of thousands of Greeks and Romans depicted on pottery, in stone, and in bronze, fat men are very rare and they are always figures of comedy or of contempt. The Etruscans were unlikely to have chosen the coffin as the proper locale for poking fun at its occupant.

The better Roman writers, Livy for example, emphasized that the Etruscans had undergone considerable degeneration after their great age, and that brings us to a central weakness of current *etruscheria*. "Derivative, often downright bad, Etruscan art was always triumphantly Etruscan and never simply uninspired imitation." That sentence from the opening page of Mrs Richardson's central and longest section, on art, typifies the false start from which it is impossible to recover. Imitation is never *just* imitation; that is a truism which by itself does not advance understanding. What is the specifically *Etruscan* quality which makes even bad art "Etruscan", let alone "triumphantly" that? We must get our time-scales right. The period 700-100 B.C. is considerably longer than the history of the Americas since Columbus. Are we to believe that there was something fixed and omnipotent, uniquely 'Etruscan', working unchanged and always revealing

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itself through all those centuries? No one believes that, of course. But if 'Etruscan' is a quality which is fluid, then we may no longer dismiss out of hand the Roman insistence that there had been change for the worse; nor may we reserve the Etruscan label solely for the better (a judgment which invariably rests on our standards, not theirs). Read, say, 'German' for 'Etruscan' and it becomes painfully apparent how pernicious an approach this is. And that is without adding the further, more difficult, complication of trying to distinguish between purely external differences (such as can be found in equal abundance between the products of one Etruscan centre and another) and something which one can defend as being qualitative, as revealing national character or specifically Etruscan concepts.

When the Etruscans met the Greeks in southern Italy about 700 B.C., there began a cultural invasion of a scale, intensity and duration for which I cannot think of a parallel. The Etruscan capacity to consume Greek pottery and sculpture, and to make their own in imitation, was boundless. It was also alive, responding to new developments among the Greeks, at times almost instantaneously. Great masses of the stuff made in Etruria were effectively "uninspired imitation" and little else. It is perverse to deny a phenomenon which every student is only too familiar with, though it is unnecessary to go all the way with Berenson's brutal "Only through the originality of incompetence can [Etruscan art] be distinguished from the art of the Greeks." It would be equally perverse to deny that there were also departures from the Greek models, and sometimes rejection. Two questions then present themselves urgently. First, why this passionate addiction to the Greeks, which went so far that the Etruscans preferred to illustrate Greek myths rather than their own on painted pottery and in stone reliefs? Second, what meaning are we to assign to the departures, small or large, whenever

Whose conceptual world, given the alien-ness of Etruscan life and thinking? The lion was long a favourite subject in Etruscan art. Few if any Etruscan artists ever saw a live lion, and that may explain certain crude blunders, such as their adorning lionesses with the full mane of a lion and with the teats of a bitch, mistakes which their Asiatic prototypes never made. But what explains either the persistence of the lion motif or the transformations the Etruscans imposed on their models? As Llewellyn Brown wrote in his splendid book on the subject, "Throughout this period . . . Etruscan artists were working in highly formalized traditions in which the essential features of the subjects portrayed were reduced to conventional formulae or stylizations, often of pattern-like quality." This applies not only to lions but to Apollos and fat men and sarcophagi and hair-dos. Nearly everywhere we turn we are confronted by this wall of formalism and stylization, and we lack the conceptual key with which to begin an explanation.

That is equally true of politics. We know, for example, that in the earliest period there were kings. But what we know about them is strictly external—that they wore a crown, carried a sceptre and so on. For their functions and powers, in Pallottino's words, "all we may do, is put forward certain suppositions based on analogy with what little is known . . . of the Roman monarchy." The starting-point must be Italy, or sometimes the broader Mediterranean complex, not the obsession with the "triumphantly Etruscan", and everything must be considered within its time. There is no place in this subject for eternal verities. Peculiarities will emerge, in what they refused to adopt or adapt as well as in what they took over, sometimes considerably reshaped. Occasionally we can suggest the historical circumstances which may help to explain what happened. But always by analogy and therefore tentatively, until the day when the Etruscans speak to us in their own words—if such a day ever comes.

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ROME produced no Homer. This is another way of saying that the Romans, unlike the Greeks and many other peoples, lacked the tradition—transmitted orally by bards for many centuries—that once upon a time there had been an age of heroes who performed deeds of valour against foes of equal calibre. This is the theme of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as of the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* and the French *Song of Roland*. Virgil's *Aeneid* is something very different, the work of a highly sophisticated poet writing with a considerable literary experience behind him (more like Dante or Milton than like the usually anonymous heroic poets), and writing specifically to fill the gap that the Romans, by then thoroughly imbued with Greek literature and Greek traditions, had become only too conscious of.

Heroes fight heroes—that is a pretty universal law. Homer's Trojans are indistinguishable from his Greeks, except that they are destined to defeat. But if one asks about Rome's greatest enemies in its formative and later in its conquering years, a very different picture emerges—as in Livy's *History*, written in the same political and intellectual atmosphere as the *Aeneid*, about five hundred years after Rome broke free from the Etruscans and two hundred years after they defeated the Carthaginians under Hannibal. Both the Etruscans and the Carthaginians had effectively disappeared as peoples by Livy's time. They had become, apart perhaps from a few isolated pockets, indistinguishable within the composite population

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goddess as such; the importation of foreign deities and their assimilation with native gods and goddesses was an unending process in antiquity, inevitable in a polytheistic world filled with contending and clashing peoples. Hence Alexander the Great, for example, was able not only to have himself declared the son of Zeus at a shrine in the Libyan desert dedicated to Zeus-Ammon (the second component being the great Egyptian sun-god), but also to have the announcement quickly accepted by many Greeks without serious opposition.

Now what the excavators of Pyrgi have found so far—and most of the site is still untouched—is not one temple but the foundations of two, lying parallel to each other and facing the sea. The ground plans are typically Etruscan, and they date the older and smaller temple at about 500 B.C., the other perhaps twenty or thirty years later. Eight seasons of the most meticulous digging, photographing, testing and restoring have produced a wealth of stuff of special interest because the site is a great rarity in Etruscology—it is not a cemetery. But nothing touches the discovery of 8 July 1964, in a niche between the two temples: the three tablets already mentioned, carefully folded and of pure gold, no more than one-third to one-half a millimetre in thickness, which, when opened, were revealed to have expertly engraved inscriptions in Punic and Etruscan on them. Even the bronze, gold-headed nails with which the tablets were affixed (conceivably to the doors of the older temple) were preserved. However, no dedicatory objects of any kind accompanied the tablets, and so one plausible suggestion has been offered that the older temple was taken down to be replaced by the larger one and the tablets deposited for permanent preservation on that occasion.

This idea must be treated with considerable reserve at present, as must most other inferences. That I am able to write anything at all detailed on the subject so soon after* the

* Written in 1965.

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naval battle in the waters off Sardinia, it was a Pyrrhic victory. The Phocaeans lost so many men and ships that they had to withdraw, leaving Corsica to the Etruscans and Sardinia to the Carthaginians. Herodotus tells a story that the Etruscans from Agylla (Caere) who were involved in the engagement, then stoned all their prisoners to death, bringing down the wrath of the gods on themselves. They finally sought advice from the Delphic oracle, who told them they could expiate their crime only by instituting regular sacrifices to the spirits of their victims and holding games in their honour. Which, Herodotus continues, they are still doing (that is, in the middle of the fifth century B.C.). And so we have further evidence, in the familiar guise of myth, of a Greek cult in the district of Caere, precisely in the period of the Pyrgi tablets.

524 B.C. The Etruscans, with the support of some of their Italic subjects, attacked Cumae, the oldest Greek settlement in the west and the most powerful Greek community in Campania. They failed, and this marked the end of any serious Etruscan effort to expand southward. It also set off bitter class conflict within Cumae.

509-508 B.C. Rome revolted from Etruscan overlordship, expelled her Etruscan king, Tarquinius Superbus, and set herself up as an independent republic under the Senate and two consuls. (It is characteristic of the tradition that the revolt should be sparked by a personal affront, the rape of the matron Lucretia by the king's youngest son, Sextus, an incident that has become famous in drama and song.) One of the first acts of the new Roman regime was to sign a treaty with Carthage, the effect of which was to define and delimit the movement of Roman traders in Libya, Sardinia and Carthaginian Sicily, and to obtain recognition by Carthage of Rome's political claims in Latium.

494 B.C. After the Persians had suppressed the revolt of the Ionian Greeks in Asia Minor, many Phocaeans fled west

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port? Or was that the price he was paying for help already given? Help against whom? Whatever the answers, Caere and Pyrgi prospered. They were still rich and under Etruscan rule when Dionysius of Syracuse looted them in 384 B.C. It is anyone's guess as to which deity was in possession of the temple then—mine is that Astarte had long since departed and that the cult was Greco-Etruscan, though perhaps that of Uni-Hera rather than that of Eileithyia.

From the longer historical view, of course, the most important event of the whole complex is the emergence of an independent Rome. The Roman traditions about their own origins and early history did not attain their final form for another five hundred years. No one doubts that the account is filled with improbabilities and outright fictions: it is enough to point out that the city had two different—and equally legendary—founders, Romulus and Aeneas. But how much truth remains at the kernel? That question, long argued by modern historians, has recently become the subject of heated debate again, thanks primarily to Einar Gjerstad, doyen of Swedish classical archaeologists, who is re-examining the archaeology of the city of Rome systematically. He plans a six-volume publication, of which three large tomes have appeared so far under the title Early Rome. His main historical conclusions are already known: they have received some support and much criticism, to which the 90 words of the Pyrgi texts have a modest contribution to make.

In bald outline the Roman tradition is that the city was founded in 753 B.C., came under Etruscan rule in 616 (the king being Tarquinius Priscus), freed itself in 509, proceeded to consolidate its position as head of the Latins, and then never looked back. There were few ancient cities without legendary founders, and in this case we need not take either the stories or the date seriously. Archaeology does suggest, however,

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experience as a whole, not on Diocletian's reign alone, and it must be stated conditionally.

A political organism which requires the permanent, forcible subjection of large groups of its population is likely to end by totally brutalizing and stultifying itself. I am not saying that it will therefore destroy itself physically, only that it may destroy itself morally and culturally, which is not the same thing. The question-mark rests largely (though not solely) with the submerged people. Will they just grumble, and accept their fate, or not? Aldous Huxley once said that "the abject patience of the oppressed is perhaps the most inexplicable, as it is also the most important, fact in all history". In Roman history it was virtually a universal fact.

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III Silver Tongue

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V Socrates and Athens

VI Plato and Practical Politics

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For the current discussions of Plato and politics, see R. H. S. Crossman, *Plato To-day* (London: Allen & Unwin 1937, rev. ed.

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X The Silent Women of Rome

The epitaph is quoted from R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1942, reprint, 1962).

XI The Emperor Diocletian

XII Manpower and the Fall of Rome

The standard work on the later Roman Empire is now A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602* (3 vols., Oxford: Blackwell; Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964). The best introduction to Diocletian will be found in A. H. M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe* (London: English Universities Press, 1948; New York: P. F. Collier, Inc., 1962), and in the chapters by H. Mattingly, N. H. Baynes and W. Ensslin in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. XII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939). Selections in translation of the 'edict on prices' are published in Tenney Frank, ed., *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, vol. V, *Rome and Italy of the Empire* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940; reprint Paterson, N.J.: Pageant Books, 1959). The anonymous *De rebus bellicis* has been edited with translation and commentary by E. A. Thompson, *A Roman Reformer and Inventor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1952). On Diocletian's persecution of the Christians, see also G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, 'Aspects of the "Great" Persecution', *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. XLVII (1954), 75-113; W. H. C. Frend, 'The Failure of the Persecutions', *Past & Present*, no. 16 (1959), 10-30.

XIII Aulus Kapreilius Timotheus

For a bibliography on ancient slavery see the analytical essay at the end of M. I. Finley, ed., *Slavery in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: