

Two Victorian Egypts of Herodotus

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By 1830 the famous flashpoints of Napoleonic Egyptomania - the Battle of the Nile and acquisition of the Rosetta Stone - were remembered with pride as evocative tableau in Britain's national narrative. However, they were recognised as belonging to a previous generation. The visions of Egypt (ancient and modern) that survived them were rarely flattering. Through the 1820s and early 1830s most Britons who wrote about Egypt were dismissive at best and at worst hostile: their Egypt was primarily biblical, the oppressor described in Exodus and the prophets. Whether in art, in diverse articles for the periodical press or in books of ancient history tinged with scripture, evangelical angst often bubbled beneath the surface of Egypt's representation. Looming up from amongst 'the wrecks of time' the fate of biblical Egypt was wielded as a warning against hubris and luxury.¹

By 1900, with major British excavations underway, readers consumed a different Egypt. This was still run through with biblical imagery, but it was the civilisation that taught Moses its wisdom, taught the Hebrews the arts of civilisation, and shaped classical Greece.² The first generations of institutionally organised British excavators aimed to enthuse their public with unrelentingly sunny visions of the old Egyptians.

This chapter explores the impact of Herodotean Egypt in the complex and contested decades between these two moments. It explores a shift from an early Victorian Herodotean Egypt associated with attempts to understand the natures of history and myth, to a late Victorian alternative that coalesced in response to the rediscovery of Naukratis. These are the two Egypts of the title. The decades this chapter covers span a period when Egyptian displays in museums finally began to be taken more seriously and when renderings of Egypt began to diversify.³ In particular, these decades saw the rise of an Egypt written into classical as much as biblical history. Over this period, nineteenth-century interpretations of Mesopotamia coalesced into two competing, sometimes contradictory traditions, one within a biblical framework, the other classical: mid-century writing on Egypt, however, could rarely be so easily divided.⁴ This interest was marked by a refusal, particularly from scholars outside the Anglican establishment, to accept narratives that either overestimated Greek originality or separated out histories of Greece from those of eastern Mediterranean nations. The period was also characterised by tensions between scholars who resisted the influence of Germanic historical criticism and those who argued that the British must learn the 'New Calculus' of German critics and 'enter the lists with them' or else give up any hope of setting scholarly

¹ For the idea of Egypt emerging from 'the wrecks of time' see Thomas Carlyle, 'Voltaire' in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (London, 1839), 1:120–83, first printed as a comparative review in *Foreign and Quarterly Review*, 6 (1829). For particularly intense warnings concerning hubris, see E. B. Pusey, *Minor Prophets* (Oxford, 1860).

² For this argument in full see David Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead* (Oxford, 2013) chapter 5.

³ e.g. Stephanie Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities: Ancient Egypt at the British Museum* (Chicago, 2006) and Elliot Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities* (Durham NC, 2007).

⁴ e.g. M.T. Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria* (Abingdon, 1996).

agendas.⁵ Traditional visions of ancient Egypt were quickly losing ground not because of new developments in understanding Egyptian scripts or archaeology but because of new habits in the intermixing of classic and biblical modes as well as new interaction (and new tensions) between British and German thought.

The writers on Egypt associated with these transitions were heavyweight scholars with large audiences. They were not, however, figures whose names are familiar from the history of Egyptology. Many of those who nudged reception of Egypt in new directions over the mid-century combined the roles of theologian and Herodotus scholar. They were divines who published Herodotean commentaries or built Egyptian histories with Herodotus at their core. They often noted that Herodotus' second and third books provided unique potential for integrating the ancient historian with other textual traditions. Drawing comparison with the most prolifically reprinted books (those covering the Persian Wars), one such author insisted that

for an academical praelection, and for the purpose of combining the study of ancient history with that of the classics, the account of Egypt is far better adapted...It needs detailed illustration more than any other part of the work; the materials for this illustration are more ample; it contains some of the best specimens both of the descriptive and narrative powers of Herodotus; and the recent discoveries in Egyptian antiquities and history have given a new interest to the most ancient written memorials of this extraordinary country.⁶

In this way, those scholars who interpreted the discoveries of French, German and Italian archaeologists for British audiences dressed them in layer after layer of thickly interwoven Herodotean and Old Testament ideas.

The interpreters of Herodotus treated here were not just clergymen (as, of course, most of those inside the scholarly establishment were) but major exegetes of scripture or leading lights of religious denominations. This was a persistent link that could be illustrated from quotes about many an academician. Handley Moule, for instance noted his memories of the leading Cambridge theologian of the second half of the century, J.B. Lightfoot:

No man ever loitered so late in the Great Court that he did not see Lightfoot's lamp burning in his study window; though no man either was so regularly present in morning Chapel at seven o'clock that he did not find Lightfoot always there with him. But to us he was not the divine, but the tutor whom we consulted about our questions and troubles, and our admirable lecturer in Herodotus.⁷

⁵ Thomas Price, 'The Egypt of Herodotus', *Eclectic Review*, 14 (October, 1843), 433.

⁶ John Kenrick, *The Egypt of Herodotus* (London, 1841), vi.

⁷ Handley Moule, *My Cambridge Classical Teachers* (Durham, 1913). Moule continues with material revealing of Lightfoot's classical-biblical extrapolations: 'I hear him still expounding that curious

This multicompetence expected of the church historian or exegete of New Testament Greek is a reminder (if any were needed) of how far the entanglements of Herodotus and theology were institutional, formed in the university combination room and lecture hall. The Herodotean theologian was as common a hybrid in college corridors as the poet preacher or theologian of nature.

These links inspired and shaped the newfound attention that Herodotus' writings on the Bible lands received at mid-century. The famous thirst for cartography around 1800 had seen several attempts to map Herodotus' Egypt, involving speculative identification of cities such as Naukratis.⁸ Dozens of travellers over the following decades aimed to conjure Herodotean atmospheres at these sites on the same tours that saw them act out their faith in biblical locales. The rhetoric of such Herodotean and biblical performances could be remarkably similar. The 'correct' response to Rennell's supposed Naukratis (which did not fit descriptions from ancient authors even approximately) was to muse on the idea that this wealthy and sensuous city, home of the courtesan Rhodopis, now lay in such ruin that even a traveller with the raw curiosity of Niebuhr had found nothing to interest him there.⁹ This was precisely the response expected at the pyramids: Egypt could not, as E.B. Pusey put it a little later, have 'become barren except by miracle'. Naukratis, in this period, was 'sinful' and hubristic as much as it was 'industrious'.

By the late 1860s Herodotus book two would be used as a tourist guide (including in Cassell's inexpensive, portable and attractive edition complete with advertisements for every luxury a traveller in Egypt could need). This commercial version of Herodotus's Egypt adapted a long tradition of using standard multivolume editions of Herodotus and the Old Testament as favoured guides for independent exploration, dictating wealthy travellers' expectations of the places they 'discovered' and the people they met. This was the orientalist

passage in Herodotus' account of Egypt where he tells us of the Pharaoh who, by isolating new-born babes from sound of speech, endeavoured to discover the primitive language – Lightfoot illustrated this by narrating a similar experiment tried, I think, by the royal wisdom of James I. And the result, so he informed us, in a grave voice all his own, was interesting: 'the poor little children spoke pure Hebrew'. See also G.R. Eden & F.C. Macdonald, *Lightfoot of Durham: Memories and Appreciations* (Cambridge, 1932), chapter 1.

⁸ Substantial discussion of Naukratis, associated with the cartographic ambitions of travellers such as James Rennell, can be observed around 1800. After a brief respite they can be seen again in the late 1820s (when a modest increase in travel to Egypt generated several narratives). Another resurgence occurs around 1850 when the new body of heterodox writing on Egypt explored below took off; further peaks in interest can be observed after 1868 when the city received new attention in literature and the arts, and in the 1880s when new interest in locating the city (spurred by Schliemann's successes in archaeologically illuminating classical literature) resulted in Petrie's discovery of the site. At the beginning of the century 'Naucratis' was the preferred spelling; by 1850, Naukratis and Naukratis were more or less interchangeable; by the 1880s Naukratis seemed to have fallen out of use (although that spelling underwent an unexpected revival in the 1890s).

⁹ James Silk Buckingham, 'A visit to the Ruins of the Ancient City of Naukratis...from an unpublished manuscript of J.S. Buckingham' in *Original Papers Read Before the Syro-Egyptian Society of London*, 1 (London, 1845), 71.

baggage that prevented sojourners seeing the present people and places before their eyes.¹⁰ The voyeuristic gaze of aristocratic travellers such as James Silk Buckingham, who styled himself a modern Herodotus, sought Greek nobility in the forms of men near Herodotean sites and scrutinised women for indications that they were heirs of Rhodopis: travellers even found manipulative ways to glimpse behind their veils.¹¹

Travellers to Egypt, however, were not those who set the agenda for thinking with Herodotus in this period. This chapter will have at its heart a text in this mixed Herodoto-Mosaic genre, John Kenrick's *The Egypt of Herodotus* (1841). This is a commentary on Herodotus books two and three, but it is the eighty-page introductory essay, and the response to it, that provides most interest. Kenrick was a leading Unitarian thinker described by *The Times* as 'indisputably the greatest Nonconformist of the day'.¹² He was a close associate of several other Unitarian scholars of Herodotus and Egypt among whom Samuel Sharpe was best known and most prolific. Epitomes of what it meant to be an extremely-moderate radical in the mid-century, Kenrick and Sharpe were the acceptable public face of Unitarianism. Trained in Glasgow and Göttingen, Kenrick was an admirer and associate of many significant nineteenth-century polymaths including Baron Christian Carl Josias von Bunsen who had nurtured his youthful historical enthusiasm.¹³ A diplomat, historian, philologist, orientalist and theologian, Bunsen was most influential as a mediator and networker who facilitated many great collaborations and friendships as well as brokering Anglo-Prussian joint ventures. As Bunsen's acolyte, Kenrick had access to scholarly, theological and commercial networks perpetuated through the Baron's society events, including the informal social institution of his famous London breakfasts.¹⁴

Kenrick published his *Egypt of Herodotus* as well as several other Herodotean books on Egypt at a very particular moment in British history. The 1840s and 50s came after a period of surprisingly low interest in ancient Egypt: the years from the decipherment of hieroglyphs in 1822 to the mid-1830s had been among the quietest parts of the century in publishing on the civilization. Access to Egyptian texts was promised but not yet delivered and all bets were off as to what could be written under their influence. Most travellers who published on

¹⁰ Derek Gregory, 'Performing Cairo: Orientalism and the City of the Arabian Nights' in Nezar Al-Sayyad, Irene Bierman and Nasser Rabat (eds), *Making Cairo Medieval* (Lanham MD, 2005), 69–93.

¹¹ Buckingham, 'A visit to the Ruins of the Ancient City of Naucratis', 71.

¹² Obituary, *Times*, 26 May 1877.

¹³ 'Notes of the Early Part of the Life of the Rev. John Kenrick, written by him for his Wife', Sharpe Papers, UCL.

¹⁴ Anyone researching mid-century historical scholarship is likely to come across Bunsen's society occasions sooner or later: these events brought together banking families, historians, politicians, artists, museum curators and theologians, conjuring the particular commercial and intellectual milieu that Kenrick became part of. Bunsen's breakfasts sometimes culminated in visits to panoramas or museum galleries: the designer and Egyptologist, Joseph Bonomi, for instance, records taking Bunsen with him on one such post-breakfast trip to tour his own panorama of ancient Egypt in Leicester Square.

Egypt, including Buckingham, showed little interest in hieroglyphs and treated Egypt as a palimpsest of the literatures - biblical and classical - on which they had been brought up. The idea that Champollion's decipherment suddenly opened up ancient Egypt to direct scholarly analysis, after centuries of reliance on unreliable second-hand information, is simply unsustainable.

However, the period from 1837 (when John Gardner Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* became a bestseller) saw growing interest in Egypt. During the 1840s and 50s novels, plays, operas and reams of scholarship began to pour forth, almost all from people who had no access to the hieroglyphic script or the Egyptian language. These productions relied primarily on the twin authorities of the Old Testament and Herodotus. The first English-language history of Egypt written with really substantial input from hieroglyphic scholarship appeared only in the 1880s. Herodotus' status as a key authority was not ended by the advent of scholarship on Egyptian scripts and language. Indeed, Herodotus' influence waxed in this period: for writers like Kenrick, who prided themselves on their scholarly (but not sceptical) approach to scripture, Herodotus could even gain equality with the Old Testament as an authority on points in which biblical texts had previously been unrivalled.

Both radical confidence and establishment fears of radicalism grew through the 1840s so that Kenrick's contributions to Herodotus were published at tense moments in British history. Not just social crisis and poverty but political struggle, anti-Catholic, anti-Islamic and misogynist feeling were perhaps more prominent than in any other decade of the century. In this febrile atmosphere, any political, theological or historical heterodoxy carried significant social implications. The question of who was using Herodotus's Egypt and to what ends, scholarly and political, needs to be tied into social context. That so many 1840s and 50s commentators were opponents of mainstream trinitarian theology, and were critics of existing Church-State solidarities, allows us to see scholarship and social history intertwined.

It is crucial to note, however, that treatments of Herodotus' Egypt did not just occur between the covers of learned tomes. The mid-century upturn in interest in Egypt and in Herodotus was manifest throughout culture, in painting and literature but also in a glut of Egyptian-themed plays between 1845 and 55. These are worth exploring in some detail since they offer clear demonstrations of the cultural intertwining of mid-Victorian ideals, the Old Testament and Herodotus.

This was the first heyday of ancient-historical spectacles and lavish toga plays, in which menageries of live animals, dozens of named actors and hundreds of extras could be expected alongside stage sets designed by the most celebrated artists and scores written by composers of the stature of Mendelssohn. The actor managers who dominated this phenomenon placed greater emphasis on historical accuracy than ever before, when

'completeness of detail' and 'emphatic realism' were among the greatest compliments that could be levelled at plays. This increasingly scientifically-ordered society, in the era of statistics and political economy, demanded scientific rigour even in its leisure pursuits and the fabrication of an ancient authority was now required for every modern director's whim.

But staging Egypt was deeply problematic. The law insisted that no biblical character could appear on stage and the spirit of this law extended far beyond delineations of character: anything suggestive of religious controversy could have its license denied. Yet managers knew that nothing sold like the Bible. The strange result was that biblical themes and atmospheres evocative of scripture were often presented behind a thin veneer of Herodotus. Alongside the first successful *Anthony & Cleopatra* (a play the nineteenth century generally disliked) several huge Egyptological extravaganzas were staged. In the decade from 1845 to 1855 these included *The Bride of the Nile*; *Azael the Prodigal*; *The Egyptian* and *Nitocris*.¹⁵ Each one flirted with the censors in its efforts to approach the Bible sideways through texts such as Herodotus.

Nitocris for instance claimed all the authority of Herodotus, calling him, in a phrase, we might not expect but that is typical in this period, 'the truest and remotest authority'. The play was praised as 'a vehicle of gorgeous processions equally remarkable for their splendour and correctness – we lose ourselves in a dream of ancient history, a reality of yesterday'.¹⁶

Given all this emphasis on authority and correctness, the plot comes as something of a surprise. Elements of Herodotus survive the playwright's Victorianising urges, but the essentials of the Herodotean narrative are turned on their heads. Where, in Herodotus the drowning of revellers in a basement hall is enacted by Nitocris herself, in an 1840s play she has to be preserved as a model for conventional femininity: her only real agency is in persuading men not to kill each other. Suicide was, along with infanticide, one of the few violent acts this period gendered feminine. (It is one of the mid-century's many quirks that although more men committed suicide than women, press coverage of female suicides was expansive, whereas that of male suicides was almost non-existent.) In 'Britain, infamous for suicides' it seemed the expected cause of a crime still conceptualised as 'self murder' was errant military officers cheating young women of their honour.¹⁷ In this play, however, Nitocris is not even permitted the agency to kill herself effectively. Her suicide attempt having failed, she is reunited with her lover before a triumphal, morality-strewn finale celebrating Victorian values.

¹⁵ For an assessment of these performances in the context of nineteenth-century theatre history see Jeffrey Richards, *The Ancient World on the Victorian Stage* (Basingstoke, 2009).

¹⁶ 'Nitocris', *The Era* (14 October 1855).

¹⁷ e.g. Amelia Santry, 'The Blood-Soaked Spectacular: Murder, Execution and Suicide as Popular Sensation, 1818-1853', BA dissertation, University of Birmingham (2014).

In *Azael the Prodigal* the authority of Herodotus is also played up. 'All is correct according to Herodotus, even to the most minute particular' wrote the *Athenaeum*.¹⁸ Yet the biblical motivation here is hidden even more carelessly. Azael is the son of the Hebrew patriarch Reuben. He is fascinated by descriptions of Memphis and he goes there to live a loose life with lying priests and lascivious women. In a turn more reminiscent of Ctesias than Herodotus, he is captured while watching what is the great spectacle of the play, orgies in the temple of Isis – and thrown into the Nile. Eventually he goes home, marries and becomes patriarch of a nice Victorian family, fanfared with the obligatory celebration of Victorian virtue. Such modern virtues are possible in a Hebrew, but not an Egyptian setting. As in so many mid-century plays, family is the core value that must be present in any happy ending.

According to reports of this play its emotional impact was far greater than a modern reading of the script would suggest. The audience spontaneously bursts into floods of tears at appropriate moments, and many modern prodigals apparently discovered the virtues of chastity at the theatre. In celebrating their success, the mastermind behind *Azael*, Edward Fitzball, even seemed to suggest that presenting Herodotus on stage was a kind of activism against censorial opposition to staging scripture:

Eventually, *religious* people of almost all denominations came to witness this spectacle, and I am quite sure, from the general burst of tears, into which I have seen, over and over again, the house dissolve at its conclusion, that if religious pieces were allowed to be produced by *proper people*, at *proper seasons*, in this country, it would do more to soften humanity, than all the lectures that the finest orator ever yet poured forth from the rostrum.¹⁹

Herodotus in these mid-century Egyptian plays was a smokescreen and a pseudo-authority used to distract from what was really going on: biblical morality plays, sermons as spectacle, and spectacles as sermons.

Much of the scholarship on Herodotus' Egypt being produced at this moment was doing precisely the same thing as these plays. It used ostensible discussion of Herodotus book two to approach controversial issues of theology, history and science. Yet there are also huge differences between Herodotus as theatrical red herring and as scholarly smokescreen. One principle difference is that where the actor-managers responsible for grand spectacles were largely people of orthodox religion who sought the most enthusiastic approval from the most expansive and devout audiences, scholars expounding Herodotus' Egypt were almost all dissenters. Many were exactly the kind of writers that conservatives feared as disruptive during a period when the presumption of links between religious dissent and political radicalism was only just beginning to erode. These scholars were from the British

¹⁸ 'Azael the Prodigal', *Athenaeum* (22 February, 1851), 225-6.

¹⁹ Edward Fitzball, *Thirty-Five Years of a Dramatic Author's Life* (2 vols, London, 1859), II, 275.

social and intellectual milieu that were most open to continental influences, including the historical criticism of scripture.

Writing about Egypt in this period was often a more subversive project than most scholarship on Greece. Herodotus book two was entangled in a different set of debates from the other books. Those in radical and Nonconformist circles who wrote about Egypt often considered Greece and Rome to be establishment possessions. Egypt, sometimes valorised as 'the most ancient classics' could be seen as an alternative: up for grabs by less established interest groups. This is part of the reason why industrialists, whether in Newcastle or Leeds, employed so much Egyptian imagery: they endeavoured to claim some ancient glamour of their own where the landed powers in parliament, who impeded free trade and belittled northern interests, were the same people who claimed authority in the Greek and Roman classics.²⁰

These decades were crucial in debate over the age of the earth and the origin of civilisation. Even if many of the themes in geological debate were not new, the frenzy excited by them was unusually intense. At a moment when any piece of information about the age of the earth and its prehistoric development was as likely to become the stuff of bitter polemic as of considered debate, Egypt had an unstable, liminal status between history and the new sciences of prehistory. Seeming to bridge the historic and prehistoric, and with its most fabulous achievements (such as the pyramids) apparently dating from its most distant period, it was not at all clear where Egypt belonged in the rapidly developing array of historical and scientific disciplines. As the work of geologists from Charles Lyell onwards demonstrated, ancient Egypt was just as likely to crop up in geological discourse as in historical or classical scholarship.²¹ This was another way in which Egypt had radical potential beyond that of Greece and Rome. Its analysis, often through Herodotus, could once again become a smoke-screen that provided a way of talking coyly about prehistory.

It was in the midst of this uncertainty over Egypt and its radical potential that Bunsen published his most famous work: *Egypt's Place in Universal History*. This text would become key to 1850s and 60s writing on Herodotus' Egypt. Bunsen argued that accurate chronology could, at a stretch, be traced back to the age of Solomon: beyond that the monuments of Egypt were a unique source of chronological and linguistic evidence that the Bible could not provide. The delusion that a chronology of the early world existed was, he insisted, 'the melancholy legacy of the 17th and 18th centuries; a compound of intentional deceit and utter

²⁰ e.g. Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 68-71.

²¹ Ancient Egypt appears frequently in seminal works such as Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (3 vols, London, 1830-33); for contextualisation of this phenomenon see 'Review Symposium: the Geohistorical Revolution', *Metascience*, 16 (2007), 359-95; and Martin Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time: the Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution* (Chicago, 2005); 'Transposed concepts from the Human Science in the early Work of Charles Lyell' in L. J. Jordanova & R. S. Porter (eds), *Images of the Earth* (Chalfont St Giles, 1979), 67-83.

misconception of the principles of historical research'.²² Bunsen's aim was to construct a history of language: 'to discover the law by which new languages are formed out of a declining one'.²³ Tracing the application of such a law back into prehistory would determine the timescale required for all the languages of the world to be reconciled with their single source. This one point of origin was, he claimed, 'a fact as much beyond the possibility of mistake, as is their early separation'.²⁴ Origins were not, however, to be found in Egypt, which was a mere bridge between the primeval and historical orders. Humanity had originated in China, then begun to disperse around 15,000 BC, before the Flood around four millennia later. So he wrote:

The religion of Egypt is merely the mummy of the original religion of Central Asia. The mythology of the Egyptians is the deposit of the oldest mythological belief of mankind, which...was petrified in the valley of the Nile by the influence of an African sky, and by the overpowering force of solar symbolism.²⁵

Bunsen's theories were a major step in the contested development of an ancient Egypt 'anterior to chronology, and connected with the primeval ages of the world'.²⁶ He made Egypt a crucial source of evidence for scholars whose method combined 'historical faith' (which he defined as a metaphysical capability which extrapolated forwards from revealed divine origins) and 'historical science' (an intellectual project which progressed backwards from the known facts, the fixed point of Herodotus, and classical languages).²⁷ He saw the decipherment of hieroglyphs as the first step in a revolution in biblical interpretation because it suggested that it was possible to restore 'the genealogy of mankind, through the medium of language'.²⁸ Just as Bunsen did not privilege Egypt as a source, he did not assign the civilisation much importance as a historical agent. He explicitly rejected the impious impulse that led seventeenth-century divines like John Spencer 'to look for an Egyptian origin in the religious institutions and symbols of the Jews': every argument adduced in support of this idea, he claimed, 'is a fallacy'.²⁹

Bunsen occasionally turned his withering gaze to Herodotean themes. For instance he was instrumental in overturning the once fashionable idea that the third pyramid at Giza was the tomb of Herodotus' Rhodopis (an idea that had resulted from reading Menkaure as Menkaura, Herodotus' throne name for Nitocris). Bunsen's attitude to Herodotus was, however, controversial. One of the major criticisms the British press threw at him was that while directing scepticism towards scripture he was often credulous towards Greek and

²² C.C.J. von Bunsen, *Egypt's Place in Universal History* trans. Charles Cottrell (London, 1848), I, viii.

²³ *Ibid.*, ix.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, xvi.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 159-166.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, viii.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 231ff.

Latin authors from Herodotus to Livy. For instance, in reviewing Bunsen, Edward Hincks insisted that 'a more untrustworthy writer' than the Baron would be difficult to imagine. This untrustworthiness stemmed, Hincks wrote, from the fact that one who was so critical towards everything he read in scripture took an attitude of almost Herodotean credulity to Graeco-Roman historical sources. William Smith employed a similarly strident tone when insisting that, *pace* Bunsen, anyone who wrote about Egypt must 'examine the grounds upon which Herodotus, Diodorus and Strabo themselves believed in what they related'.³⁰

Bunsen's identity as a scholar is impossible to define in any straightforward way because the roles he performed in Prussian and British culture were remarkably different. These differences were shaped by issues of disciplinary division and definition. In Prussia, Bunsen was treated as an Orientalist. He seemed to be defending the relevance of the Bible to Orientalist scholarship, stretching its timescale but advocating its continued importance. Since few German Orientalists favoured short chronologies, this was far from a radical position. In Britain, however, Bunsen was treated as a theologian. Since the vast majority of British theologians favoured chronologies far shorter than Bunsen's he seemed to them to be stretching the parameters of biblical time to breaking point or beyond. Bunsen therefore performed two apparently contradictory roles: conservative German Orientalist and radical British theologian.

Bunsen encouraged a great deal of writing on Egypt in the British radical circles that were his natural constituency. Much of this writing concerned the beginning of Egyptian history, but a comparably large amount dwelt on the history of Greek interaction with Egypt. These were narratives that began with Herodotus and ended in early-Christian Alexandria. The historian Samuel Sharpe, by far the most prolific writer on ancient Egypt in this period, wrote several such works.³¹ For him, Alexandrine Egypt was the melting pot where the later trajectory of Christian European history was decided. Like Kenrick, Sharpe was a leading Unitarian. And his purpose was to discover how Trinitarian ideas entered (in his view, infected) early Christianity. The source of this superstition was Egyptian religion.

A disproportionate number of Unitarians wrote works on Herodotean and Ptolemaic Egypt. This was a group with a very strong presence in leading antiquarian organisations such as the Syro-Egyptian Society of London. The Unitarian movement was a branch of rational dissent that broke away from Presbyterian congregations in the eighteenth century, and had an intellectual presence far greater than its numbers would suggest.³² Unitarianism's public

³⁰ William Smith, 'Bunsen's Egypt and the Chronology of the Bible', *Quarterly Review*, 105, (1859), 382.

³¹ e.g. Samuel Sharpe, *The Early History of Egypt from the Old Testament, Herodotus and Manetho* (London, 1836); Samuel Sharpe, *The History of Egypt from the Earliest Times till the Conquest by the Arabs* (2 vols, London, 1846); Samuel Sharpe, *Egyptian Mythology and Egyptian Christianity* (London, 1863).

³² On Unitarianism in context see David Young, *F.D. Maurice and Unitarianism* (Oxford, 1992); John Seed, 'Theologies of power: Unitarianism and the social relations of religious discourse 1800-50' in R.J. Morris (ed.), *Class, power and social structure* (Leicester, 1986); Kathryn Gleadle *The early feminists: radical Unitarians and the emergence of the women's rights movement 1831-1851* (Basingstoke, 1995);

image blended profound religious earnestness with frequent disdain for 'popular theology' and unusual openness to heterodox opinion and radical theology. It was a tenet of the order that Unitarianism could only exert influence over those who were permitted membership: no strict requirements in relation to belief or dogma should be demanded as a prerequisite for entry. Rational interpretation of scripture was permitted, leading the sect to nurture some of the most innovative theologies of the century. This could result in greater parity between biblical and classical texts than that supported in any other denomination.

The permissive nature of Unitarianism allowed innovations to take very different forms. Individuals could pursue the historical criticism of scripture to very different degrees without endangering their Unitarian identity. It is therefore difficult to generalise Unitarian beliefs beyond the principle that most Unitarians considered the Bible to be a set of texts containing divine inspiration but also containing fallible human interpolation. This could result in an impulse to dismiss individual Bible verses as later additions, to challenge the canonical status of books like the Epistle to the Hebrews, or more radically still, to write off the whole Old Testament. Unitarians were often at the forefront of endeavours to measure and itemise the impact on the interpretation of early Christianity of discoveries of new biblical manuscripts, such as those found in Egypt by Robert Curzon and Constantin Tischendorf. In the hands of Kenrick and Sharpe this interest extended beyond the manuscripts of Egypt to its monuments. Alongside this, many Unitarians took an early interest in comparative mythology, exploring the relationship between different ancient religious traditions in order to better identify the mark of God in history: the 'holy hieroglyph' of divine revelation or intervention.³³

One Unitarian claim that might appear to diminish the importance of Christ – that Jesus was human, born at the moment of incarnation, hence without any previous existence – in fact served to sever New and Old Testaments more fully than ever before. It made Genesis, in particular, an expression of the unfulfilled Hebrew quest for knowledge of the divine. For advocates of this belief, Hebrew opinions 'respecting cosmogony and primeval history' were an antiquarian and historical topic more than a theological or existential one. They need not be paid much special attention by an age that had developed advanced geological and historical thought. They occupied a status that was not all that different from the less extensive literary remains of Babylonians or Zoroastrians. Ancient belief and 'mythology' of

Michael Ledger-Lomas 'Unitarians and the dilemma of liberal Protestantism in Victorian Britain: the Free Christian Union (1867-70)', *Historical Research*, 83 (2010), 486-505.

³³ The phrase 'holy hieroglyph' (meaning specifically evidence of God's action in the human past) was one of Leopold von Ranke watchwords. It is often forgotten today that his famous historical method, treated as the most positivist and rationalist vision of history imaginable, was calculated to have theological significance. The 'holy hieroglyph' could be deciphered by a process of negative deduction: history minus scientifically adduced human processes equals the role of God in the human past. It is no surprise that Unitarian historians are among the earliest British writers to begin referencing Ranke's work. See J.D. Braw, 'Vision as Revision: Ranke and the Beginning of Modern History', *History & Theory*, 46 (December 2007), 45-60.

all kinds were ripe for historical, anthropological and critical analysis. This was not an advocacy of Enlightenment universalism: it was often based on the principle that all mythologies were expressions of 'national' identity and that the 'essence' of a people, including its distance or proximity to God, could be established through analysis of myth. Societies developed through the working out of internal forces, the 'genius' of the race, not through interaction or external (including supernatural) intervention. Romantic historiography was rarely without its theological elements (although modern scholarship often downplays these) and by mid-century Unitarian histories often fit neatly into the Romantic mould in contrast to the rational, anti-mythic history of George Grote.³⁴

Deeply religious and often intensely committed to those parts of the Bible they did accept, many Unitarians were open to critical approaches to the Pentateuch that they rejected for the Gospels. Few embraced the sceptical rationalism associated with names like Strauss, but their adoption of 'constructive' critical traditions drawn from Göttingen scholars like Michaelis, Eichhorn and Ewald was still rationalistic enough to scandalise many British audiences. What was most dramatic about this for our purposes was that for a Unitarian writer like Kenrick or Sharpe, Herodotus could become an equal authority to the Old Testament. The reason these historians were so interested in Herodotus' time and place was devotional, yet devotional texts had no automatic precedence over *The Histories* because the Old Testament itself was now much closer to being read as a non-divine text.

John Kenrick was author of *Ancient Egypt under the Pharaohs* (1850) as well as *The Egypt of Herodotus* (1841) and large numbers of Herodotean and Egyptological articles. In the 1810s, he had studied at Göttingen with some of the most resonant names in Higher Criticism. He had a long, volatile friendship with Bunsen that began in stormy fashion after the Baron published a controversial article equating Unitarianism with Deism. But Kenrick always remained a vocal advocate of Bunsen's approach to ancient chronology.

In some of his early works Kenrick used ancient Egypt as an ethnological, philological and historical resource to imply that the Old Testament was the mythology of an honest but primitive people whose ideas should not be expected to have any concord with the discoveries of modern scholarship. Drawing heavily on Bunsen, he argued in his chaotic *Essays on Primaeval History* (1846) that the origins of humanity could not be found within the traditional historical period, and that a vast expansion of human history was required. Egyptian history became the rational scientific control against which experiments in reconstructing the corrupted chronology of the Hebrews might be tested.

³⁴ The most compelling links between Kenrick and traditions of Romantic historiography can be found in Alice Kennedy, 'John Leitch, John Kenrick, History and Myth: the Textbook as a Signpost of Intellectual Change', *Paradigm*, 2.4 (December 2001), 1-13.

In all his historical works Kenrick practiced a Romantic historiography focused around a relationship between mythology and history in which myth was a powerful source for revealing the distinctive characteristics of ancient societies.³⁵ His analysis of mythology was predicated on deterministic parallels between the lifecycles of individuals and societies: Greece, like Egypt or Israel had a childhood in which imagination rather than reason shaped its interaction with the world. As Kenrick noted in *The Egypt of Herodotus*, 'the imagination and passions are developed at an earlier stage in the progress of men than the reason and the judgement'.³⁶ Unlike most Romantic historiographers, however, Kenrick brought the practices of Unitarian criticism to his texts. Like Bunsen, he was eager to trace multiple mythologies back to single origins and to seek out original sources that could present these myths in 'uncorrupted' form. This produced a complex interplay between myth and history in which Kenrick was fascinated by the prospect of historicising the myths themselves. Indeed, some of Kenrick's first publications had set out the method by which he felt the pure unadulterated and localised versions of particular components of Greek mythology could be located, prior to their consolidation into a larger system by the poets. Typically, Kenrick felt that existing British views on the nature and origins of myth were defined not by scholarship but by 'sciolism', 'fancy' and, most significantly, 'theological prejudice'.³⁷ In precisely the same way as Bunsen, he advocated a dual process: he aimed to use 'historical faith' to identify the pure kernels of corrupted myth and to use 'historical science' to explore the roles of myth in historical development. In typical Unitarian fashion he was eager to stress the 'natural' development of all mythologies. Societies progressed towards their distinctive forms through the working out of a people's internal 'genius' not through any kind of human or divine external agency. Myths were the mechanisms whereby the 'mind' of a society was adapted to its temporal conditions; but myths took time to develop and could not be quickly reoriented. This was as true of the Hebrews as of any other people: there was, he insisted, nothing to indicate that the Hebrew 'national character was formed by any other than natural influences'. The Old Testament became the means by which the Hebrew people harmonised their identity as a chosen people with the tragedies of their tortuous past. These theories on myth and nation run through Kenrick's career, evident in articles and books published over a period of more than thirty years. Whether dealing with Elizabethan England, Augustan Rome or Homeric Greece, Kenrick was attentive to relationships between religion and national character, tracing periods in the 'development' of this character and in its 'corruption'.

³⁵ This vision of mythic national characters has close affinities with the Germanic Romanticism of Heyne and Muller, picked up by Kenrick in Gottingen, but also parallels an older tradition in Kenrick's native Scotland which accorded to every people of the ancient world a unique providential characteristic which defined their purpose in the world. The latter was a tradition perpetuated in numerous mid-century ancient histories such as Robert Wilberforce's *The Five Empires* (London, 1840).

³⁶ John Kenrick, *The Egypt of Herodotus* (London, 1841), i.

³⁷ e.g. Kenrick's most acerbic article: John Kenrick, 'Forster's Primæval Language', *Prospective Review*, 9 (1853), 33-48.

Perhaps because of its apparent distance from his theology, Kenrick's *Egypt of Herodotus* was his most widely and positively received contribution to scholarship on Egypt: following multiple editions, reviews continued to appear for several years. Yet the distance from theology that a work on Herodotus seemed to imply was, again, illusory. This book, and its reception, is packed with anti-Trinitarian barbs. For instance, the Cabiri (mythic sons of the Olympian blacksmith Hephaestus) had been argued by classical scholars to demonstrate a Samothracian memory of the Holy Trinity; Kenrick took great pleasure in presenting them in the most insulting manner he could muster: mere 'pigmy and deformed idols'.³⁸ He managed to shoe-horn assaults on the established church into his discussion of Herodotus' sources through reference to the overgrown and dogmatic 'sacerdotal caste' that had caused the decline of Egypt.³⁹ And the influence of German critical scholarship was brought to bear in his blunt dismissal of heroic Greece whose kings and warriors, he insisted, were the inventions of later Hellenes who (like post-exilic Hebrews) mistook religion for history.⁴⁰

One view that Kenrick shares with other Unitarian scholars including Sharpe, is that Herodotus is somehow exceptional among the writers of antiquity. These nineteenth-century nonconformists were deeply attentive to the potential of scribal errors and transmission of traditions through self-interested institutions and shifting ideologies, to transform the content and nature of ancient texts. 'Received tradition' was a very dirty phrase, used to imply a process of loss, accretion and manipulation whereby a once meaningful text would inevitably lose its identity. Particular historical periods were more complicit than others in this process of destruction: among Unitarians, the age of church fathers and church councils was considered unique in the scale of its obfuscation.

This meant that those classical texts which had been in widest circulation during that period were most suspect. The best sources on early history were those which had either been lost or else so well established before the church fathers that their works could not be manipulated. Unitarian writers implied that Herodotus now belonged to a separate intellectual tradition from many classical authorities because of his reception history. His work was, they argued, untainted by the meddling of the church fathers and the superstitions that ultimately gave rise to the Catholic Church and the end of early-Christian simplicity. The Church fathers had been duped by Ctesias, who peddled superstitious courtly romances from the Assyrian empire, and they had therefore ignored true-hearted Herodotus.

Kenrick's *Egypt of Herodotus* received a large number of reviews in the major periodicals. Many were written by other dissenters and these puffed Kenrick as some kind of hero, not so much against the establishment, as against lazy traditional approaches to ancient history.

³⁸ See Kenrick, *Egypt of Herodotus*, 265ff; Thomas Price, 'The Egypt of Herodotus', *Eclectic Review*, 14 (October, 1843), 439.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Among the book's most expansive and revealing appraisals was an article in *The Eclectic Review*. This journal, run by the Baptist divine Thomas Price, was a major vehicle of Nonconformist thought. The great Congregationalist Josiah Conder had been the journal's previous editor, and contributors included leading nonconformist theologians from the Methodist Adam Clarke to 'Wee Free' Thomas Chalmers.

The Eclectic presented Kenrick's Herodotus as a potent force in the battle to set historical scholarship on a sustainable critical footing. The reviewer echoed Thomas Carlyle's pronouncements on the era-defining potency of German historical thought. To Carlyle, the new German historical scholarship was as important an event as the Italian Renaissance or the European Reformations.⁴¹ *The Eclectic's* pieces insisted that Kenrick was leading a revolution against the lazy, 'frigid...mechanical...barrenness' of Cambridge classical scholarship.⁴² England's scholars could no longer neglect, the review warned, the 'moral science' of ancient history which they had tended to overlook in their pursuit of practical affairs like 'astronomy, chemistry, magnetism, geology, physical geography and physiology'.⁴³ The great recent developments in moral knowledge had been triumphs of the German universities with their 'host of unfettered talent'. However, a review in the Nonconformist press was far less likely than Carlyle to present this scholarship as an unmitigated benefit to mankind. The German universities were hotbeds of error and excess: they were 'democratic, drunken, irreligious, neological'. Yet despite this, German academies had developed new methods and priorities in the study of ancient history that had enormous social implications.⁴⁴ European culture was an endangered entity unless the level-headed tendencies of British thinkers could be brought to bear in putting Germanic innovations to conscientious use. Price echoed Kenrick's own assessment: 'we must either learn this 'New Calculus' of criticism ourselves, and enter the lists with them, or fall behind, worthless and despised'.⁴⁵ Dissenting ideals suffuse this review and it is telling that this challenge to the classical establishment comes through Egypt, just as it did in many other places.⁴⁶

However, the reviewer goes on to undercut any expectations of thorough-going radicalism. He sifts the German talent on offer in search of a valid parent for the 'manly and sound criticism' of the future. And he settles on the singularly un-revolutionary figure of Christian Gottlob Heyne whose example could make the ancients into 'materials for making *us* better informed and wiser than *they* were, using their opinions as facts, while judging of their supposed facts for ourselves'.⁴⁷ Heyne has more or less slipped out of the canon of German

⁴¹ Thomas Carlyle, 'Signs of the Times', *Edinburgh Review*, 49 (1829), 439-459.

⁴² Price, 'Egypt of Herodotus', *Eclectic*, 432; Richard Porson, Price insists, was 'a man without a heart'.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 430.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 433.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*, ch.1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

criticism because he left no really substantial publication, but in the 1840s his presence, uncontroversial enough to be co-opted by almost anyone, was pervasive. In fact, he was a primary influence on Kenrick's vision of mythology.

Like Kenrick, Heyne was a Göttingen scholar. That town was regarded as 'London *en miniature*' and Hanover *en masse* retained a reputation as an outpost of English fashions. It was a borderland where the radical tendencies in German criticism and the conservative proclivities of the English washed into one another, producing ancient history that could be called 'enlightened' and critical while evading charges of scepticism.⁴⁸

What this reviewer, and indeed Kenrick, were using Herodotus to suggest, was the wholesale import of Göttingen-style scholarship to Britain. This was partly inspired by fear that Tübingen was the alternative. *The Eclectic* invoked Thomas Arnold's *Thucydides* as the first British work to adopt techniques compatible with Heyne's criticism. These techniques included the vast inter-historical comparison embodied in Arnold's famous claim that 'the period to which the work of Thucydides refers belongs properly to modern and not to ancient history'.⁴⁹ Indeed, this insistent presentism might even explain why Arnold's version of Thucydides made so many rhetorical appearances in the House of Commons at mid-century (despite the Greek historian being contrasted disparagingly with *Times* journalists by Cobden in 1850).⁵⁰ As these flighty parliamentary evocations hint, Arnold had not embarked on a wholesale adoption of critical techniques; his was little more than a grudging recognition that the Germans might not be wholly mischievous.⁵¹

The *Eclectic's* review revealed an important point about the priorities of Unitarian historians when it insisted that Kenrick's *Egypt of Herodotus* was the first work since Arnold to follow up the noble cause of reshaping German ideas for British readers. Part of what this emphasised was that Kenrick engaged more fully with his German models, showing that the

⁴⁸ Thomas Biskup, 'The University of Göttingen and the Personal Union, 1737-1837' in Simms & Riotte (eds) *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History* (Cambridge, 2007); one Egyptological illustration can be found in the Göttingen Egyptologist Max Uhlemann's thousand-page dream-sequence, *Three Days in Memphis* (following the Greco-Roman models of Barthelemy and Becker). This was translated into a three-volume English edition (1858) by E. Goodrich Smith and marketed as an antidote to destructive theories issuing from the Berlin of Lepsius.

⁴⁹ Thomas Arnold, 'Preface to the Third Volume of Thucydides', *Miscellaneous Works of Thomas Arnold: Collected and Republished* (London, 1858), 396.

⁵⁰ The most famous example is probably Disraeli's attempt to secure support for the Enlistment of Foreigners Bill in 1854 by encouraging Parliamentarians to 'refresh their memory' of the issues at stake 'by turning to the pages of Thucydides'.

⁵¹ Intriguingly, in a lecture delivered at Eton Matthew Arnold referred compared the skill and imagination shown by Bunsen's son Georg when discussing Herodotus with the inferior vision of English schoolboys.

principles of criticism might eventually be held as dear 'by practical England as by speculative Germany'.⁵²

But Price also saw fit to comment on the distaste that some might feel for the willingness of Kenrick to take ancient Egyptian thought seriously: not as correct religion but as the honourable, philosophical wandering of the human mind in its search after truth. The Egyptians here think much like moderns: in particular they are capable of abstract religious thought.

This shift in the traditional balance between the Old Testament and Herodotus, and the claiming of Herodotean Egypt by those who wished to renegotiate traditional British attitudes to the Old Testament, is key to the changing attitudes to Egypt that followed. The 1870s saw a substantial reaction against the dangerous myth-history of Unitarian divines. The *History of Ancient Egypt* by the leading translator of Herodotus in the next generation, George Rawlinson, was inflected by his profound distaste for Unitarianism and was an effort to produce a safe text in contrast to the 'misplaced ingenuity' he associated with Bunsen, Kenrick and Sharpe.⁵³ The fact that Rawlinson seemed so outdated to his reviewers, who dismissed his work as a throwback to unscientific early-Victorian apologetics as well as a study based on obsolete material, demonstrates just how far Unitarian Egypt had carried its readers.⁵⁴

The period from the late 1860s to the 1880s also saw another wave of popular enthusiasm for Herodotean Egypt. Like the enthusiasms of the 1820s this centred around Naukratis and its most famous residents. 1868, for instance, saw George Frederick Watts paint a brazen Rhodopis and William Morris create his Rhodope, a nostalgia-swathed ancient Cinderella, as part of *The Earthly Paradise*. Periodical pieces presenting Rhodopis as 'The Probable Origin of Our Cinderella' soon abounded, although faith in Rennell's geography had evaporated: 'most modern authorities', as the *Saturday Review* noted in 1885, had come to the conclusion that 'the site of Naucratis is unknown'.⁵⁵ As British Egyptology slowly gained its institutional underpinnings, including the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF) in 1882, the name of Naukratis was mentioned with increasing frequency. Once again, the city appeared alongside a host of biblical names (such as Goshen) when commentators discussed the priorities for discovery in Egypt.

In 1883 the EEF commissioned the young and unproven William Matthew Flinders Petrie to dig at a site that combined Greek and biblical associations, Tanis (biblical Zoan). This was a dig in which Petrie claimed to have suffered 6 of the 7 plagues of Egypt. It involved staying up shooting field mice because they wouldn't walk into his traps; white ants ate his

⁵² Price, 'Egypt of Herodotus', *Eclectic*, 435.

⁵³ e.g. George Rawlinson, *The Historical Evidences of the Truth of Scripture* (London, 1860), 267.

⁵⁴ e.g. Amelia Edwards, 'History of Ancient Egypt', *Academy*, 483 (6 August 1881), 99-100.

⁵⁵ 'Naucratis', *Saturday Review* (29 Aug 1885), 288.

hieroglyphic dictionary, and heavy rain that flooded the site alternated with burning sun that made excavation impossible. This was not a triumphal excavation for the EEF to trumpet to the world. That season in Egypt did, however, begin the heroic story on which much of Petrie's early reputation would be based: the rediscovery of Herodotean Naukratis. The city's excavation in 1884 provided a narrative of ingenuity that rivalled the standard Egyptological yarn of Mariette's discovery of the Serapeum thirty years earlier.⁵⁶ Petrie's discovery was soon mythologised. It was narrated differently in the press from, for instance, in Amelia Edwards' lectures on Egyptology. The tale told in the newspapers held that on being shown an alabaster figurine 'of Egyptian form but Greek feeling' in Cairo, Petrie recalled the city of Rhodopis and, sleuth-like, set about tracing the artefact to its source.⁵⁷ The idea of 'Egyptian form but Greek feeling' harked back to those travellers of the 1820s who claimed to find, at whichever supposed site of Naukratis they favoured, people with Greek grace and finesse. In both cases, unexpected Greek 'feeling' was thought to enliven a stiffer Egyptian aesthetic.

Petrie was led by the discovery of his alabaster figurine to Nebireh on the Canopic branch of the Nile and was soon marvelling over the profusion of 'archaic pottery, Athenian coins and Greek inscriptions' that even a perfunctory survey revealed. Painted potsherds, Petrie enthused, strewn the ground 'thick as leaves in Vallombrosa'. Able to muster forty workers on day-work and another hundred on piece-work Petrie was soon uncovering buildings he identified as those described by Herodotus and piecing together networks of mutual influence between the great powers of the Eastern Mediterranean in the sixth century BC.

The Naukratis Petrie conjured was not so much the city of Rhodopis as a thriving hub of trade for the Mediterranean world and beyond: Strabo's 'only emporium in Egypt'. Petrie's personal goal with this discovery was to demonstrate the sophistication of ancient communication, the huge scale of trade, and the sheer 'modernity' of the pre-Christian world. He therefore emphasised the exchange and manufacture of luxury goods. As one of his reviewers noted, what Petrie described was not the exotic world of sensuous Rhodopis, but 'a sort of Hellenic Sheffield'.⁵⁸ This idea took off, Egypt itself soon being incongruously labelled 'the Yorkshire of the pre-Christian world'.⁵⁹ Courtesans had until now been central to Naukratis' image among both disapproving clerics, such as Pusey, or lascivious wanderers like Silk Buckingham but they play little role in Petrie's descriptions of the ancient city. He dwells on the pragmatic gift of the town by Pharaoh Amasis to win the favour of enterprising Greek merchants who'd previously sided against him. Terms like 'practical' and 'enterprising' pepper his writing on the site.

⁵⁶ This was a detective story sparked by a limestone sphinx in an Alexandrine garden. See F. Auguste Mariette, *Le Sérapéum de Memphis* (Paris, 1882).

⁵⁷ 'Naukratis', *Saturday Review* (29 Aug 1885), 288.

⁵⁸ J.H. Middleton, 'Naukratis', *Academy* (1886), 193.

⁵⁹ e.g. Francis Cope Whitehouse, 'Lake Moeris, From Recent Explorations in the Moeris Basin and the Wadi Fadhi', *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York*, 14.

Petrie's new site was easy for the press to adapt for popular consumption. The *Saturday Review* noted that the town had no luminaries with quite the emotive weight of Moses, Aaron or a Bible Pharaoh but insisted that Herodotus attached Naukratis to some of his most sensational tales of betrayal and conquest. They mentioned Rhodopis, but also Pharaohs Psammitichus, Amasis and Hophra, the traitor Phanes and the Persian conqueror Cambyses: an extraordinary cast-list for an ancient city in their words 'lost till yesterday'.⁶⁰ Phoenician sailors were evoked as the agency through which all the artifices of the known world had been gathered at this wealthy trading post. Rhodes, Cyprus, Ephesus, Palestine, Assyria, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean were evoked as part of a huge trade network of which Naukratis was presented as the centre. And the cosmopolitan wares Petrie excavated now flowed from his trenches into temporary displays in the Bronze Room of the British Museum, the EEF's new rooms at the Royal Archaeological Institute, and the 'Gallery of Lady Artists at the Piccadilly Egyptian Hall'.⁶¹ In keeping with Petrie's ideals, the *idée fixe* of this coverage was the sophistication and integration of the ancient world: the vast, complex nature of trade which showed the ancient world's similarity to the present and therefore, in R.S. Poole's words, 'collapsed time'.

Despite this, the press coverage the EEF was able to secure for a classical find was narrow when compared with the extraordinary presence of their first excavation at biblical Pithom. A handful of highbrow periodicals, in particular the *Academy* and *Athenaeum*, account for the overwhelming majority of the site's coverage. These journals were willing to focus on trade. Those few less austere journals that published articles focus, like the *Saturday Review*, on Herodotus' personalities such as Rhodopis, who was once again 'Cinderella in Egypt'.⁶² When compared with the dozens of fascinated journals for biblical discoveries this serves as a reminder that much of the 1880s periodical press remained dominated by religious agendas and defined by religious identity.

Initially, then, treatments of Herodotean Egypt seem to have changed a great deal between the 1850s and the 1880s. Some of that change is, however, illusory. The intertwining of Victorian religious values, scriptural narrative and classical history was as strong as ever. Herodotus was still habitually drawn into debates concerning critical approaches to the Old Testament. Yet the prevalent uses of Herodotean Egypt were no longer on the same side in this debate. This was caused as much by the cultural shifts since the era of Kenrick as by the demonstration of the power of archaeology in the undisputed discovery of the Herodotean city. Naukratis, like Pithom, provided opportunities for scholars to crow over the

⁶⁰ Rhodopis in particular had a modern literary pedigree, most notably through William Morris' *Earthly Paradise* (London, 1868): 'Argument: there was in a poor land a certain maid, lowly but exceeding beautiful, who, by a strange hap, was drawn from her low estate, and became a queen and the world's wonder' (277).

⁶¹ 'Tanis', *Saturday Review* (1888), 590.

⁶² e.g. an illustrated short story, credited to 'J.R.W.' and entitled 'Cinderella in Egypt' was printed in several periodicals including *Harper's Bazaar* and *The Graphic* in 1887.

archaeological noose that seemed to tighten around the neck of radical textual criticism. Percy Gardner, in *The Quarterly Review*, declared that his tendency to take the side of Herodotus against modern critics was proved justified. Gardner's rhetoric was much less celebratory of the ancients than that which accompanied biblical excavations such as Pithom. Critics, he claimed, 'err through supposing that people in ancient days acted reasonably, and valued motives according to the scale of Bentham'.⁶³ Gardner conjured the awe that abashed Greeks must have felt beneath the wonders of 'vast size and venerable antiquity' built by Egyptian masons. He rehearsed the put-downs that Egyptian 'masters' gave to precocious Greek 'children': even Solon, he recalled, Plato's 'wisest of the Greeks', was chided for naivety by an 'aged Egyptian priest'.⁶⁴ It was no wonder that Herodotus had been cowed into believing that his own culture copied everything from the Pharaohs. But Gardner's point was that it was not so clear at the time Naukratis was established, as it is to 'we moderns' that the future belonged to Greece and that Egypt ruled only the past.⁶⁵ The disdain for Egypt that had dominated the 1820s and 30s resurfaced when Gardner drew his observations into a typically-1880s imperial hierarchy of races: 'a Greek in Memphis or Thebes as much represented a higher race and a nobler order of ideas, as...an Englishman in Canton'.⁶⁶

Naukratis was usually celebrated as a boon to 'Hellenic students', not to those interested in ancient Egypt, just as 'biblical scholars' were noted as the beneficiaries of excavations at Pithom, San, Goshen and the EEF's other early sites. Naukratis marked the beginning of a substantial 'Greek turn' in British Egyptology, of which the young David Hogarth was at the forefront. However, by the 1890s, Egyptologists and their publicists were making enormous claims for their Herodotean city. They argued that Naukratis could be used to prove that ancient Egyptian influence on later history was far greater than had been recognised.

Most important...is the evidence here brought to bear upon the origin and growth of the ceramic arts of Greece. Patterns which we had long believed to be purely Greek are now traced back, step by step, to Egyptian originals. The well-known "Greek honeysuckle" pattern, for instance, is found to be neither Greek nor honeysuckle. The Naukratis pottery furnishes specimens of this design in all its stages. In its most archaic form, it is neither more nor less than the stock "lotus pattern" of the Egyptian potters. Taken in hand by the Greek, it becomes expanded, lightened, and transformed. Yet more important is the light thrown upon the origin and development of Greek art. We have long known that the early Greek, when emerging from prehistoric barbarism, must have gone to school to the Delta and the Valley of the Nile, not only for his first lessons in letters and science, but also for his earliest notions of architecture and the arts. Now, however, for the first time, we are placed in possession

⁶³ Percy Gardner, 'Naukratis and the Greeks in Egypt', *Quarterly Review*, 164 (Jan 1887), 67.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 68.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

of direct evidence of these facts. We see the process of teaching on the part of the elder nation, and of learning on the part of the younger. Every link in the chain which connects the ceramic art of Greece with the ceramic art of Egypt is displayed before our eyes in the potsherds of Naukratis.⁶⁷

In sentiments like this we see the relationships between Greek texts or artefacts and ancient Egypt being renegotiated. Perhaps surprisingly, excavation and interpretation of this Herodotean site proved to be a key set piece in the development of an Egypt that was not a product of classical or biblical literature.

The transition from early-Victorian to late-Victorian Herodotean Egypts was certainly not a simple one. It did not involve clean breaks with any of the major debates concerning theology, historicism or myth of the mid-century: continuity is far more striking than change amidst major innovations such as decipherment and the beginnings of modern archaeology. What changes there were stem from small and hesitant steps towards viewing ancient Egypt as a society worthy of study in its own right: those who wrote about Egypt were now more likely to praise 'Egyptian genius' rather than 'Greek originality', Hebrew wisdom' or 'the simplicity of the first Christians'.

⁶⁷ Amelia Edwards, *Pharaohs, Fellahs and Explorers* (London, 1892), 30-1.