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Special Issue: "Re(Orient): Reception, Power, and Asian Experience"
Guest-edited by Arum Park, Chris Waldo, and Tori Lee

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NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

Res Difficiles, the Journal (*Res Diff)* was co-founded in 2024 by Hannah Čulík-Baird (University of California, Los Angeles) and Joseph Romero (East Texas A&M).

Res Diff is currently edited by Hannah Čulík-Baird (culikbaird@humnet.ucla.edu) and Joseph Romero (joseph.romero@tamuc.edu). Project management and editorial support for *Res Diff* 1.2 was provided by Mitzvah Villeda.

Since 2020, the *Res Difficiles* conference series has been a venue for addressing inequities within the field of Classics, examining issues arising out of intersectional vectors of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, class, socio-economic status and beyond. An outgrowth of this conference series, *Res Difficiles, The Journal*—an imprint of *Ancient History Bulletin*, a Green Open Access Journal—invites submissions from individuals, pairs, or groups, addressing "difficult things" within the discipline of Classics and related fields. *Res Difficiles, The Journal* seeks to publish the "traditional" argumentative forms of inquiry standard to the discipline, but also reflections upon pedagogical concerns as well as contributions of a creative, personal, or experimental nature, including interviews. In addition to individual submissions, we welcome pitches for guest-edited special issues.

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Please direct submissions to Hannah Čulík-Baird: culikbaird@humnet.ucla.edu.

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NOTES TO READERS

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Introduction / Re(Orientation)

Arum Park, Chris Waldo, and Tori Lee

Friday, January 4, 2019, would prove to be a momentous day for the future Asian and Asian American Classical Caucus. The morning featured a panel on classical reception and national identity at the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) and the Society for Classical Studies (SCS) in San Diego, California, where Chris Waldo, one of the editors of this issue, met Kelly Nguyen and Stephanie Wong for the first time. As Wong later recalled, "Kelly Nguyen was presenting on classical reception in Vietnamese diasporic literature. I had gone to support her, the only person of color and woman speaking to a room of white faces. In an experience well known to people of color in white classrooms, I locked eyes with the only other nonwhite person in the room: UC Berkeley graduate student Chris Waldo."[1] Wong's sentiments of isolation in the field were shared by a group of Asian American graduate students and recent alumni of UC Berkeley, including Waldo, Caroline Cheung, and Elizabeth Wueste, who gathered later that evening and were eager to hear about the earlier panel. Inspired to keep the conversation going and galvanized by whispers of racist incidents at the conference, the group met again the next day to discuss their experiences as Asian Americans in the field of Classics.[2] Ultimately, that group of graduate students and junior faculty members went on to found the Asian and Asian American Classical Caucus (AAACC) as an organization committed to resisting the colorblind orthodoxy of the discipline.[3]

Since 2019, AAACC has grown into a community that includes previous generations of Asian American classicists as well as the ones succeeding. Both generations are represented by the other editors of this special issue, Arum Park and Tori Lee, who aim to carry on the founders' vision. Park has called the AAACC "the community [Asian classicists of my generation] lacked and would have loved in our own educational upbringing."[4] For Lee, it was inspiring to see junior scholars a cycle ahead of her starting the AAACC at the critical moment of her entry into the professional space of Classics, and it is now a privilege to follow in their footsteps.

The AAACC's founders believed that a crucial intervention could be made in our scholarly understanding of antiquity and its relationship to and with modernity.[5] In addition to investigating how the ancient world has influenced contemporary society, they were also determined to examine how the structural forces governing modern life, including race, have shaped our view of antiquity. The subfield of classical reception, itself premised on the

[1] Wong 2019.

[2] Nguyen had to leave the conference early, but she was heavily involved in organizing the AAACC, eventually becoming the organization's first mentorship coordinator. For more on the founding of the AAACC and its mentorship program, see Wong 2019, Lye and Cheung 2021, and Waldo 2021.

[3] Dan-el Padilla Peralta was accosted by Mary Frances Williams during the panel on "The Future of Classics," and the co-founders of the Sportula, Djesika Bel Watson and Stefani Echeverría-Fenn, both women of color, were detained by security at the Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina on the suspicion that they were not registered attendees of the conference. See Poser 2021 for discussion of the exchange between Williams and Peralta and Pettit 2019 for an account of both incidents.

[4] Waldo 2021.

[5] The other founding members were Kristina Chew, who resigned due to time constraints and was replaced by JaShong King and Tessie Sakai.

reciprocity between ancient and modern cultural artifacts,[6] was expanding to encompass receptions by ever more diverse communities of writers and artists. There had been a noticeable surge, for instance, in publications exploring the staging of Greek tragedies by marginalized communities, while several prominent Black scholars had focused attention on the emergence in the twentieth century of dialogues between the literatures of the Black Atlantic and classical antiquity.[7] This expansion invited consideration of how race specifically colors reception. The AAACC hoped to broaden the discourse of classical reception by considering cultural productions emanating from east, south, and southeast Asia, as well as from the community of Asian Americans. An SCS panel at the Annual Meeting seemed to be a fitting venue for this scholarship.

The first of these panels, which Chris Waldo and Elizabeth Wueste co-organized at the 2020 Annual Meeting, was entitled "Classical Reception in Contemporary Asian and Asian American Culture." This initial panel introduced the issues and questions that were most important to us as Asian Americans in the field of Classics. Waldo noted in his introductory remarks that "All of the participants in this panel, including two organizers and a respondent, identify as Asian American, and, in this light, we assert that our lived experiences as philologists and field archeologists constitute individual embodiments of Asian American classical reception. Whether we are scrutinizing the text of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* or excavating sherds of Roman pottery, everything that we do signifies as Asian American." Several of those who attended the panel observed that this was the first time that the community of Asian American classical scholars had been assembled in the same room, which felt liberatory. The AAACC had been founded as an advocacy group with a dual mission of promoting scholarship on classical reception in Asian and Asian American culture and bringing together the vibrant community of Asian and Asian American classicists. The panel, which included an especially generative Q&A session, addressed both halves of the mission and demonstrated that they are entwined. Why, for instance, do so many Korean American classicists study Greek literature? Attendees cited the peninsular characters of both the Greek mainland and Korea with the tragic sensibility inherent in the Korean concept of *han*.[8] This first panel left attendees energized at the prospect of others to come.

Subsequent panels have explored thematic resonances between the legacies of the ancient Greeks and Romans and the cultures of both ancient and contemporary Asia.[9] The 2021 panel, entitled "Classics in/out of Asia," which was organized by Kelly Nguyen and Chris Waldo, explored, broadly, how Classics has moved through Asia. Following Claudia Moatti, they understood movement to be a "structural component of human experience and the human mind...[that] influences ways of thinking, relations of [people] to space, time, tradition, and the organization of societies, like an anamorphosis, movement modifies the perception of things and of human relations."[10] The 2022 panel, entitled "Orientalisms," which Arum Park and Stephanie Wong organized, highlighted Edward Said's contention that "Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the

[6] Hardwick and Stray 2008, 4.

[7] See Greenwood 2010, Andújar 2015, Powers 2018, and Murray 2019.

[8] Bannon 2008 notes that "*Han* is frequently translated as sorrow, spite, rancor, regret, resentment or grief, among many other attempts to explain a concept that has no English equivalent."

[9] We submitted the first panel at the 2020 Annual Meeting as an at-large panel, but all subsequent panels have been affiliated group panels. The AAACC received its charter as an affiliated group from the SCS in 2019.

[10] Moatti 2006, 110.

difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')."[11] Ethan Ganesh Warren and Helen Wong organized the 2023 panel, "Dreaming of the Silk Road: Narrative Conversations," which drew on the themes of narrative and contact between East and West in the manner of the Silk Road imaginary across Eurasia. For the 2024 panel, "Taking Stock: Stereotypes in the Ancient Mediterranean," panel organizers Katherine Lu Hsu and Tori Lee drew inspiration from the crude stereotyping that Asian Americans often experience. In Greco-Roman antiquity, as today, race-based caricatures intersect with typecasting rooted in other identities (gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, occupation, etc.), forming conventions that manifest as stock characters in Roman comedy, for example, or targets of invective. The question was raised of whether stereotyping always functioned to exclude. Can stereotyping by a dominant group be harnessed by a marginalized group for its own aims? When do stereotypes hurt the stereotyper instead of, or as well as, the stereotyped?

The AAACC's annual SCS panel has become a vibrant space that stretches the boundaries of the discipline. A polyglot approach to philology has emerged throughout these five panels, which have showcased the careful exegeses of texts composed in classical Chinese, Korean, Sanskrit, and other languages. The diversity of presenters has also borne witness to the fascinating appeal of this material: while the initial AAACC panel was intentionally composed entirely of Asian American speakers, the organization's confirmation as an affiliated group by the SCS has required that all subsequent panels select papers anonymously. Astounded by the innovative spirit of the many abstracts submitted to the AAACC panels, organizers strive to produce a selection each year that will help guide the field of Classics into a brilliant future.

The experimental spirit of the AAACC's panels permeates this special issue of *Res Difficiles*, *The Journal.* The founding of the AAACC and its annual panel has occasioned and inspired innovative publications on Asian receptions of Classics, but this is the first publication to bring together such work in a single volume. Three of the four articles in this issue were originally presented as papers in the AAACC panels. Hardeep Dhindsa explores 18th-century British reactions to the excavations at Pompeii, which reflect the orientalism endemic to European colonialism and imperialism. As Dhindsa notes, the vibrant colors of the wall paintings, coupled with the sexual themes present in the paintings and sculptural artifacts, often provoked surprise or even disgust on the part of their British onlookers. These negative reactions reveal an exoticization of Southern Italy influenced by stereotypes of the East. Thus, Dhindsa brings to light how 18th-century British perspectives on travel, both within and outside of Europe via the Grand Tour and trips to the Pacific and beyond, reflect their expanding networks of imperial epistemologies.

Like Dhindsa, Helen Wong discusses the intertwining of Classics and power. In her examination of classicizing elements found in the architecture of Kaiping, China, Wong explores the implications for cross-cultural interaction such elements reflect and makes the astute observation that these largely decorative elements do not directly imitate anything from Greco-Roman antiquity. Rather, they echo post-antique structures that are themselves adaptations of ancient Greek and Roman architectural elements. Unpacking the many layers of reception contained in the Kaiping buildings, Wong provocatively argues that the classicizing elements of these buildings suggest an intention to evoke the West and, by extension, the colonial and imperial power encoded in the cultural products of the West.

[11] Said 1978, 71.

This power is signaled by Westerners themselves through evocations of ancient Greece and Rome.

Maria Ma also explores the relationship between Western Classics and China reflected in the Chinese poet Haizi's reception of Sappho. Ma situates Haizi's poem *To Sappho* in the context of Sappho's reception in China, documenting how Chinese translations of Sappho's poems came to reflect the evolution of Chinese society during the 20th century. Ma demonstrates the influence of these translations on Haizi's conception of Sappho and argues that his embrace of her queer identity represents a departure from this scholarly tradition. Sappho's lyric sensibility resonated with Haizi, whose life of social isolation concluded with his suicide in 1989 at the age of 25.

While these three articles range broadly across time, space, and genre/medium, the common thread they share is reception and the dynamics of power that can emanate through reception. Receptions of Pompeii, for example, are refracted through the orientalizing lens of British colonialism, as Dhindsa notes. Western imperialism has a similarly distorting effect on the echoes of Greco-Roman architecture that appear in the Kaiping buildings Wong examines, in which accuracy of the imitation matters less than the sheer power of the West that "classical" culture exudes. In the poetry Ma's article examines, the aesthetics of power–or perhaps the power of aesthetics–is displayed. Haizi's experience of Sappho was filtered, first through the British aesthetics of the English translations available in China, then through the Chinese translators/translations of the English. Yet while both filters tended to downplay Sappho's queerness, Haizi embraced it, just as he embraced the lyric "I," thus bucking the collective "we" of the Cultural Revolution. Through the layers of classical reception that Dhindsa, Wong, and Ma explore, we can see the dynamics of state and social power at work.

By examining the interplay of classical reception, power, and Asian experience, the first three articles in this issue exemplify the intellectually expansive mission of the AAACC, which emerges from the intersection of Classics and Asia. In shifting the contours of Classics as a discipline, they also represent the spirit of *Res Difficiles*. So as a fitting finale to this collaboration between the AAACC and *Res Difficiles*, Dominic Machado's article, born as a keynote address to *Res Difficiles* 5, invites us, even calls on us, to consider Classics in an Asian way. He proposes a vision of what we can hope to achieve by approaching Classics from our unique perspectives as Asian and Asian American scholars. Pushing us towards an Asian American hermeneutics, Machado reveals the intellectual possibilities of investigating Latin texts through the lens of Asian American Studies, which itself is premised on Asian American experience(s). This experience is manifold and diverse, of course, but involves the recurrent theme of outsider identity, precipitated in various and complex ways by immigration, imperialism, and colonialism.

We hope that you will enjoy these inventive articles, which represent the fruits of our labor and the provocative spirit of our mission. We have been inspired by the imaginative spirit with which scholars from around the world have received our organization's call to reconceive the ancient world and its tangible legacy in the increasingly global society that we inhabit today. We are committed to the AAACC as a site of continued experimentation for envisioning the future of the field, and we invite you to join us in pushing against the geographic and temporal boundaries of Classics as it has traditionally been defined. Such exploration reveals an ancient world vastly richer than what can be contained in Greece, Rome, and the Mediterranean, as well as a concept of "the classical" that moves beyond antiquity, understanding the necessary continuity between past, present, and future.

Although this work, like the work of *Res Difficiles* writ large, is by definition difficult, we hope that articles and issues like this embolden other scholars to undertake their own daring intellectual exploration.

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'Strange and Uncouth': Exoticism and Orientalism in British Responses to the Eighteenth-Century Excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum

Hardeep Singh Dhindsa

Abstract: In the mid-eighteenth century, the Roman towns that were buried under the debris from the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE began to be excavated. The findings drew an unparalleled number of travelers to Naples, eager to visit the Bourbon excavations and see for themselves the remains of the best-preserved example of daily Roman life. The immediate impact that Pompeian wall paintings and decorative arts had on eighteenth-century interior design is well studied, but what remains relatively underexplored are the reactions of shock (and horror) to the artefacts being unearthed in towns like Pompeii and Herculaneum. Here I show how some British travelers understood the artefacts through a distinctly colonial lens. Some likened the vividly-colored wall paintings to Indian or Chinese art, while others were deeply disturbed by the proliferation of erotic statues which recalled the phallic objects described in recent reports from the South Sea islands. My research brings to light a different experience of the British Grand Tour, where travel to the Mediterranean drew heavily upon foreign tropes found in contemporary colonial travel literature.

Keywords: colonial travel literature, Grand Tour, orientalism, primitivism.

Introduction[1]

In 1740, Horace Walpole travelled to Naples and witnessed Herculaneum being unearthed in front of his very eyes. 'There is nothing,' he said, 'of the kind known in the world; I mean a Roman city entire of that age, and that has not been corrupted with modern repairs.'[2] The rediscoveries of the towns that had been buried by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE attracted the attention of travelers, historians, and scientists alike from across Europe and influenced Neoclassical decorative arts for decades afterwards.[3] This paper, however, is not concerned with the popularity of the sites as a topic of intrigue and charm. Instead, it reveals the underexplored responses to them by British travelers, which characterized Pompeian objects as oriental in their color and form. I argue that these travelers, and the Grand Tour

[1] This paper is adapted from research presented at the Society for Classical Studies and the Archaeological Institute of America Annual Meeting 2023, and forms part of the second chapter of my doctoral thesis, 'Agents of Empire: Cultural Imperialism, White British Identity, and the Eighteenth-Century Grand Tour' (unpublished at time of writing). I would like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council [AH/R012679/1], the Leverhulme Trust [SAS-2022-046\5], and the British School at Rome for funding this research, and Professors William Fitzgerald, Phiroze Vasunia, Edith Hall and Abigail Brundin for their support as supervisors.

[2] Horace Walpole, *Correspondence* [Lewis (1965), 13:224].

[3] See D'Alconzo and Cragie (2015).

as a wider phenomenon, were influenced by contemporary colonial travel narratives documenting the South Seas and Asia. In doing so, I encourage a reframing of the tour into a phenomenon that offers a nuanced reading of global knowledge production that is staged within the confines of Europe, yet still blurs the boundaries of European and non-European cultures. As such this paper explores the 'excessive, dangerous and exotic' image of Southern Italy in the context of the Vesuvian excavations, as well as travel accounts that documented shock towards the vividly colored wall paintings there, and finally analyzes the comparisons between ancient societies and colonized territories based on perceptions of sexual excess.[4]

The aim of this paper is to offer a new perspective on the Vesuvian excavations through a comparative approach, which reconsiders reactions of shock and horror at Pompeian art through global networks of ethnographic cultural exchange. Equally as important, however, is acknowledging what this paper does not set out to do. Many of the primary sources presented below have already been written about by Grand Tour historians in the context of different research interests, and my intention is not to override those readings by suggesting all negative comments made about Pompeii and Herculaneum are exclusively 'colonial.' It must be noted that the comments analyzed only represent a small portion of visitors' thoughts and feelings about the excavations, and should not be taken to imply that there has been a severe misunderstanding of popular receptions to Pompeian art. It makes no claim to suggest that travelers were actively mimicking their fellow countrymen in the colonies, or that there is a distinct group of sources that need to be recognized as a singular body. Rather, this paper visualizes a way of expanding the boundaries of Grand Tour studies through speculative enquiry: what new understandings of the Grand Tour can we gain through weaving new threads into existing fabrics? How does our relationship to existing classical historiographies of the eighteenth century change when they are reframed using global anthropological frameworks? This paper then, reimagines the Grand Tour as a confrontation between the familiar and the foreign by focusing on a case study that is severely under-represented in wider discussions of global art histories in the eighteenth century.

Pompeian Red and Eastern Imagination

Between 1734 and 1806, Naples was ruled by the Spanish branch of the Bourbon dynasty. While the remains of Herculaneum had been discovered in 1709, systematic excavations only began under the Bourbons in 1738 to enrich King Charles' new villa at Portici, with those at Pompeii beginning ten years later in 1748 (though the latter site was only identified as Pompeii in 1763). Some of the greatest and most consistent attacks on Italian archaeology were directed at the work being undertaken at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Both Britons and Germans alike were highly critical of the excavations, employing racial stereotypes of the temperaments of the workers to undermine their work. 'It is a thousand pities,' Goethe wrote in 1787, 'that the site [Pompeii] was not excavated methodically by German miners, instead of being casually ransacked as if by brigands, for many noble works of antiquity must have been thereby lost or ruined.'[5] In a similar vein, Hester Piozzi, a Welsh writer and socialite, recounts her Venetian friend's remarks that 'an English hen and chickens' could excavate faster than 'these lazy Neapolitans.'[6] Sir William Hamilton's remarks are also noteworthy,

[4] Calaresu and Hills (2013), 1.

[5] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Italian Journey* (1816) [trans. Auden and Mayer (1970), 202].

[6] Piozzi (1789), 2:36-7.

since he was the British envoy to the Bourbon court and had special access to the excavations due to his friendship with Ferdinand IV. In a letter to Doctor William Robertson, an educator and historian at the University of Edinburgh, he wrote:

> Sir
>
> ...It would grieve you to see the dilatory and slovenly manner in which they process in the researches at Herculaneum and Pompeii. Were they to proceed as they sho'd do, every day might bring to light matter sufficient for a new volume [*Le antichità di Ercolano esposte*].
>
> At Herculaneum they have in a manner given over searching tho' it is very certain farther discoveries might be made, and they have filled up every part which they had cleared, except the Theatre.
>
> At Pompeii they employ about 10 or 12 men only and those improperly, for instead of entering the principal gate of the Town which was discovered above 5 years ago they dip here and there in search of pieces of Antiquity and then fill up...Judge, Sir, How curious and interesting it wou'd be were they to disclose the whole City, which I am convinced might be done at a very trifling expense, as this rubbish is removed with infinite ease.[7]

His critique of the practice of filling the site up again after excavations appears in other sources. Writing to Henry Seymour Conway in 1765, Hamilton thought that 'The Marquis Tanucci, who has the direction of the Antiquities here, has lately shown his good taste by ordering that for the future the workmen employed in the search of Pompeii should not remove any inscriptions or paintings from the walls, nor fill up after they have search'd.'[8] These remarks suggest that the Italians only began to show good taste long after excavation works had started, since the Italians' general lack of taste made them unable to make good archaeological decisions in the first place.

Alongside the methods of excavation, the laborers themselves at these sites were also subject to criticism. In 1750, one Mr. Freeman, about whom we know little beyond his name, was not impressed by the tunneling systems at Herculaneum, insisting that the ground should be dug up so that the 'fine things' might be seen in daylight: 'They having slaves enough, of the rascally and villainous sort, to complete such a work. What a fine thing it would have been to have come directly down to the roof of the building, instead of digging around.'[9] His comments on the role of enslaved people at the Bourbon sites are repeated in 1751, after he dismissed the speculation that the theatre at Herculaneum was full when Vesuvius erupted: 'The labour of clearing the place is performed by slaves, who work chained together, two and two.'[10] Freeman was not alone in these remarks, for Katherine Dunford,

[7] Letter from Naples, 5 May 1767. [Ramage (1992), 654].

[8] Letter from 12 November 1765 [Ramage (1992), 655].

[9] "XVII. An Extract of a Letter, dated May 2, 1750, from Mr Freeman at Naples, to the Right Honourable Lady Mary Capel, Relating to the Ruins of Herculaneum," *Philosophical Transactions* 47 (1753), 151. While the term 'slave' is used to describe the laborers, it should be noted that they were by and large convicted prisoners and conscripts. See Moormann (2015), 18-9.

[10] "XXI. Extract of a letter from Naples, concerning Herculaneum, containing an account and description of the place, and what has been found in it", *Philosophical Transactions* 47 (1753), 156.

the first woman to provide written descriptions of the excavations at Herculaneum, also noted the presence of enslaved laborers performing excavation work.[11]

Shifting away from the laborers themselves to the items they were excavating, this section considers the reception to the wall paintings that were dug up. Examples of Roman wall paintings remained relatively sparse in Britain—that is until the discoveries of Herculaneum and Pompeii, which influenced a new style of neoclassical interior decorations almost immediately. Britain in particular paid close attention to these excavations at both an individual, connoisseurly level and a more general, public one. Not only was Packington Hall, designed by the Earl of Aylesford in the 1780s, the earliest example of a private 'Pompeian' room in Europe, but *Gentleman's Magazine* was publishing regular status updates on the excavations around the Bay of Naples for a wider middle-class audience, many of whom would never have stepped foot in Italy.[12] In Naples itself, several British figures were in close proximity to both the excavations and the royal court, namely Sir John Acton, Emma and Gavin Hamilton, and William Hamilton. This is on top of the mass of British Grand Tourists who were travelling to Italy, a phenomenon which peaked in the years following the excavations at Pompeii (which in itself was a contributing factor to the tour's popularity).

The various visitors to the sites, however, did not get to see the wall paintings *in situ*, a fact that was heavily criticized. Instead, the panels were cut from the wall, framed, and displayed at Portici, meaning that visitors had to visit both the tunnels and the museums in order to see all that the sites had to offer.[13] The early excavations of La Città, around what is known today as the Amphitheatre, yielded few objects of interest to King Charles (we must remember that the primary goal of the excavations was to furnish his palace rather than systematically map the site). From the 1750s, however, as higher quality art objects were found at the House of Julia Felix and the Villa of the Papyri at Pompeii and Herculaneum respectively, the Museum of Portici was founded for visitors to see these objects for themselves, a visit made all the more desirable by the fact that there were strict rules against drawing on site. By 1754, the publication date for Ottovio Bayardi's *Catalogo Degli Antichi Monumenti Dissotterrati Dalla Discoperta Citta di Ercolano*, 738 paintings had been catalogued, and Winckelmann gives detailed descriptions of the paintings that were on display at Portici.[14]

While the critiques of archaeological practices were reflective of the contemporary Bourbon monarchy, there is an entirely new historical dimension to the receptions towards the panel paintings themselves. Confronted with a Roman world brimming with saturated color, Britons, and indeed other Europeans, were brought face to face with objects from the everyday that directly contradicted the light-colored marble fantasies of imperial Rome. It is well-documented the immediate impact Pompeian wall painting had on neoclassical

[11] Guzzo et al. (2018), 25-7. These observations should also be contextualized alongside the common belief that Catholics lacked liberty; a religious trope that regularly pictured them as enslaved under the oppressive hand of the Pope. Sermons after the Glorious Revolution, for instance, praised England's freedom from the 'intolerable yoke of Popery and Slavery.' See Hertzler (1987), 581.

[12] Coltman (2009), 112 and Mattusch (2011), 17.

[13] Also worth noting is the performative brightening of the colors that guides did by throwing water over the frescoes, saturating the bold colors but inevitably speeding up their decay. See Forsyth (1835), 313.

[14] In *Letter*, for example, he describes the paintings found in 'a round temple [known today as the Porticus]' depicting Theseus and the Minotaur, the Birth of Telephos, Chiron and Achilles, and Pan and Olympus. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Letter* (1762) [tr. Mattusch (2011), 79].

interiors and the decorative arts, but what has received relatively little interest is how European shock at these paintings manifested itself through a discourse of exoticism and oriental Othering.[15] It had certainly not escaped the attention of Coltman, who has written extensively on the influence of Pompeii and the collection of classical antiquities in Britain, and rightly identifies a 'Vasarian notion of progress' in the lukewarm attempts to describe the wall paintings.[16] Mr. Freeman's critiques of Bourbon practices, for example, extended not only to the treatment of fresco panels at Portici, but to the frescoes themselves. The following is from an anonymous letter attributed to Freeman, written in 1751:

> The King is now employing a person to take drawings of all the statues, and principal paintings; with the intent to publish them, together with an account of Herculaneum. The statues cannot be made to appear more beautiful than they really are: but the writer imagines the world will be vastly deceived with regard to the paintings. For the man is a very nice drawer; and has also managed the colouring to advantage; so that he has made exceedingly pretty things, from originals, which are miserable daubings. The company having seen the drawings first, were extremely disappointed, when they afterwards came to view the originals.[17]

His dismay at the fresco panels is more explicit in another part of the same letter:

> To speak the truth, much the greatest part of them [wall paintings] are but a very few degrees better than what you will see upon an alehouse wall...These pieces are now framed; and there are above 1500 of them, but not above 20, that are tolerable. The best of them are 3 large pieces...but even these best, if they were modern performances, would hardly be thought worthy of a place in the garret.
>
> ...The designs of the greatest part of these paintings are so strange and uncouth, that it is difficult and almost impossible, to guess what was aimed at. A vast deal of it looks like such Chinese borders and ornaments, as we see painted upon skreens.
>
> ...All the paintings are either upon black or red grounds; and such, that the writer cannot help suspecting, that it is their antiquity alone, that has recommended them to their admirers.[18]

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[15] Exoticism here is used in accordance to its seventeenth and eighteenth-century definition, meaning something 'strange or novel' but inherently fascinating to a European audience (See Porter [2002], 404). Orientalism takes into consideration Edward Said's argument that the East is culturally constructed through a distinctly Western gaze, 'not so much the East itself as the East made known.' See Said (1979), 60.

[16] Coltman (2006), 104. The visual language, Coltman argues, that viewers resorted to in their descriptions of the panels was drawn from stereotypical depictions of Eastern art, which often situated the Pompeian style 'in opposition to the ideal classical canon.'

[17] "XXI. Extract of a letter from Naples, concerning Herculaneum, containing an account and description of the place, and what has been found in it," *Philosophical Transactions* 47 (1753), 159.

[18] "XXI. Extract of a letter from Naples, concerning Herculaneum, containing an account and description of the place, and what has been found in it," *Philosophical Transactions* 47 (1753), 156-58. With regards to what Mr. Freeman actually saw, his letters tell us that he visited the tunnels of a theatre at Herculaneum and was even present on the day excavations at the Villa of the Papyri began (2 May 1750).

What merits particular interest here is his assertion that the paintings do not hold artistic value because they are painted on 'black or red grounds', implying an imbalanced relationship between the use of color and artistic merit. This is made all the more probable since he describes the drawings of statues, which, of course, had lost their pigment, as being exceedingly 'beautiful.' Sir William Forbes, a Scottish banker and philanthropist writing a few decades after Freeman, approaches his critiques of the paintings from another angle, instead identifying the style as a symptom of Augustan decline, leading to 'the ornaments in Architecture in those paintings [which] are universally in a bad taste; the Columns Slender & out of all Proportion; with no sort of regard to perspective.'[19]

What we can witness, though, are acknowledgments of the 'non-classical' nature of Pompeian ornamentation as being reflective of the changing attitudes towards the Gothic (and to some extent, Moorish) style in Northern Europe in the second half of the century. In Cochin and Bellicard's *Observations upon the Antiquities of the town of Herculaneum*, published in 1753, there is explicit condemnation of the architectural details, similar to Freeman and Forbes: 'Generally speaking, the pillars are double or triple the length of the natural dimensions: the profile of the mouldings of the cornishes, chapiters and bases, is of a wretched Gothic taste; and most of the Arabic mixture in the architecture is as ridiculous as any Chinese design.'[20] This comment lies in contrast with later visitors who were uncritical of the paintings, supporters even, while still acknowledging that the frescoes were not traditionally 'classical.' When Horace Walpole looked at the wall paintings, he saw 'a light and fantastic architecture, of a very Indian air, [which] made a common decoration of private apartments.'[21] Lady Anne Miller and her husband Mr. John Miller embarked on their Grand Tour in 1770, spending just under a year in Italy. Lady Miller published her letters upon their return, and from these emerge more Orientalizing perceptions of Pompeii. According to her, the wall paintings exhibited:

> A strange mixture of the Gothic and Chinese taste; and some views in particular of country-houses or villas, situated on the margins of the sea (probably at Baja) where there appears Chinese ornaments, such as pales, bridges, temples &c. represented as belonging to gardens. That these people should have any knowledge of the Chinese and their gardens, ornaments, &c. is surprising.[22]

In Winckelmann's *Report*, published in 1764, the tailpiece illustration is in the style of contemporary Chinese ornamentation. In *Antichità di Ercolano esposte*, the royal collection of volumes that illustrated all the finds in Herculaneum published between 1757 and 1792, the following description is given:

> It does not, however, follow, that because they are whimsical and irregular, they are therefore of no value...The order bears a resemblance to the Ionic;

[19] Journal of Sir William Forbes [Sweet (2015), 271].

[20] Cochin and Bellicard (1753), 84. These comments contrast heavily with the general craze for Chinoiserie which characterized English and French furniture design during the mid-century, popularized by publications such as Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director* (1754).

[21] Walpole (1771), 4:113.

[22] Miller (1776), 2: 280-81.

> but the errors and defects in the architecture disfigure it very much. This very deformity, however, adds value to the piece.[23]

Thus strangeness, or foreignness, did not hold particularly negative connotations for some of these visitors, nor for Northern European aristocratic society at large, which for the most part actively engaged with architectural styles coming in from Asia. Indeed, Horace Walpole, who, as mentioned above, was fascinated with the oriental aspects of Pompeii, also found pleasure in the Orientalizing aspects of 'English prints coloured by the Indians' as well as a Minerva painted red.[24] Difference, though, is still articulated through a nonclassical lens, and that remains an important point. Rowland lists surprise as one of the primary reasons visitors had such strong reactions to seeing these wall paintings. Not only were paintings held in higher regard than sculpture in classical eyes—known to eighteenth-century connoisseurs through the writings of Pliny the Elder—but Raphael, the greatest of the Renaissance painters, was known to have been inspired by the Roman wall paintings at the Domus Aurea. Indeed, 'the very kinds of figures that captivated Raphael and his companions were the ones that shocked the later explorers of Herculaneum.'[25] This sentiment was certainly reflected in the priority of classical acquisitions for British Grand Tourists. In a letter to Mrs. Howe, Viscount Palmerston argues for the superiority of sculpture over painting after seeing the wall paintings at Pompeii:

> Sculpture, though not a more easy art than painting, if one may judge by the very small number who have attained any great degree of merit in it, yet is a more natural and simple one. For this reason the ancient sculpture at Rome generally has its turn of admiration sooner than the works of the great painters, many of whose beauties are so obscured by time and others originally of such a nature as to be quite imperceptible to an unpractised eye.[26]

The majority of these comments center color as the main factor that characterized the panels as oriental—or, at the very least, different. That the Roman wall paintings around Vesuvius could be considered oriental relied heavily on Early Modern reactions to Indian arts. It should be noted, however, that the comments were not inherently negative, but color still remains as a defining factor in their Otherness.[27] But color, in particular red, would also come to dominate discussions of Eastern art and would signify the decadence and luxury that

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[23] Martyn and Lettice (1773), 170-71.

[24] Horace Walpole, *Correspondence* [Lewis (1965), 28:65].

[25] Rowland (2014), 67.

[26] Viscount Palmerston, Letter to Mrs Howe, Venice 22 June 1764 [Coltman (2009), 49]. The disappointment at seeing the frescoes and floor mosaics was also attributed to the expectation that masterpieces by Apelles, Zeuxis, and Parrhasius, known only by name in the writings of Pliny the Elder, would be discovered. This hope was quickly dashed when it became apparent that the Vesuvian towns documented for the most part quotidian life. See Moormann (2018).

[27] When writing explicitly about Pompeii, William Gell even defended the use of color on Greco-Roman sculptures: 'No nation ever exhibited a greater passion for gaudy colours, with which, in the absence of the rare marbles, they [the ancient Greeks] covered the surface of the beautiful pentelic. Blue is mixed with white in one of their best examples, the temple of Minerva Polias, at Athens; while even their statues were seldom left colourless.' See Gell (1817), 272.

characterized its stagnation.[28] An interesting comment is made, for example, about Johann Zoffany in relation to his luxurious wealth after his success in India:

> 'The celebrated Zoffany is so well received in India that it is expected that he will acquire a fortune in a few years. For every pair of eyes capable of receiving a luster from his pencil, he receives a brace of diamonds, for every cheek that he displays a carnation blush, he is to be paid with a ruby!'[29]

As Eaton argues, the conflation between 'material wealth with the portrayal of their own bodies' firmly locates redness as a visual characteristic of the East through a lens of colonial acquisition and commerce.[30] Here we find these characteristics described in a negative light, highlighting the colorful decadence that not only characterized Zoffany's paintings, but also his Indian riches. The decadence of Eastern art is also written about by Goethe, a follower of Johann Caspar Lavater's early work on proto-racial physiognomy and the soul, who wrote the following:

> ...it is also worthy of remark, that savage nations, uneducated people, and children have a great predilection for vivid colours; that animals are excited to rage by certain colours; that people of refinement avoid vivid colours in their dress and the objects that are about them, and seem inclined to banish them altogether from their presence.[31]

Goethe also expresses his preference for whiteness: 'he[...]whose surface appears most neutral in hue and least inclines to any particular and positive colour, is the most beautiful.'[32] In the eighteenth century, this debate on color is inextricably bound with mental pleasure and taste, which uncoincidentally was prescribed according to European taste.[33] This was justified not just through contemporary philosophical writings, but also through consultation with ancient authors. Aristotle, for instance, believed 'a random distribution of the most attractive colours would never yield as much pleasure as a definite image without colour.'[34] Rousseau echoes this sentiment in *Discourses and Essay on the Origins of Language*, published in 1781:

> colours, nicely modulated, give the eye pleasure, but that pleasure is purely sensory. It is the drawing, the imitation that endows these colours with life and soul, it is the passions which they express that succeed in arousing our own, the objects which they represent that succeed in affecting us. Interest and sentiment do not depend on colours; the lines of a touching painting

[28] See Chen (2004) on the changing perceptions of Chinese civilization as the eighteenth century progressed.

[29] *Morning Herald*, August 6 1784 [Eaton (2006), 240].

[30] Eaton (2006), 240.

[31] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours* (1810) [trans. Eastlake (1970), 55].

[32] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours* (1810) [trans. Eastlake (1970), 265].

[33] This topic is the subject of the third chapter of my doctoral thesis.

[34] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450b.1 [trans. Barnes (1984), 2321].

> touch us in etching as well: remove them from the painting, and the colour will cease to have any effect.[35]

In line with this, we find parallels, both positive and negative, between descriptions of painted caves in India and descriptions of Pompeian wall paintings as a way of situating the panels within a known aesthetic framework that makes the unfamiliar familiar. Frederic Dangerfield, for example, draws the classical and the Indian together when he describes the Bāgh caves, located in the Vindhya Range in central India, using classical frames of reference: 'Few colours have been used...the figures alone, and the Etruscan border (for such it may be termed), being coloured with Indian red.'[36] A soldier and a writer, Dangerfield regularly submitted reports to the Literary Society of Bombay concerning recent discoveries in the region. More importantly, he was also a founding member of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1823, to whose London-based membership his reports would be sent. It comes as little surprise then, that his descriptions made use of artistic references that would be legible to an audience who may have never seen examples of Indian architecture in the flesh. Writing earlier in 1788, Pierre Sonnerat, a French naturalist who made several trips to India, China, and Southeast Asia, would also disperse classical references in his travel accounts. In *A Voyage to the East-Indies and China*, he immediately begins with a description of India by 'the ancients', and notes the region's philosophical attractiveness to figures such as Pythagoras and Alexander.[37] The following description of Indian painting by Sonnerat, which reiterates the trope, popular in this period, of the East as a culturally-stagnant region, could conceivably be written about Pompeii had he not mentioned India:

> Painting is, and ever will be, in its infancy with the Indians. A picture where red and blue are predominant, with figures dressed in golds to them admirable. They do not understand the chiaro obscuro, the objects in their pictures have no relief, and they are ignorant of perspective...In a word, their best artists are no more than bad colourists.[38]

His description recalls Cochin and Bellicard's attacks on perspectival inaccuracies, as well as the common palette noted in Pompeian wall paintings, praised by William Gell but criticized here. The objects with a lack of relief could also be reminiscent of Pompeian grotesques. Pompeian and Roman culture at large are not mentioned in his text beyond passing reference to historical anecdotes, so the above comment must not be read as a direct parallel between Pompeii and India; rather, I use it as an example to address the potentialities of such readings and explore how our understanding of Pompeii can develop through such speculative comparisons.

The varying nature of these comments in this section—which oscillate between admiration and contempt, classical and oriental, nostalgic and primitive—emphasize the fierce debates that the discovery of Pompeian wall paintings fueled. Yet all of them revolve in some way around color. The discovery of the wall paintings at Pompeii threatened to contaminate the classical world with the Eastern world through the forceful introduction of color in classical discourse. For those who found the wall paintings transgressive, their

[35] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourses and Essay on the Origins of Language* (1781) [trans. Gourevitch (1986), 279].

[36] Captain Frederic Dangerfield, *Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay* (1820) [Mitter (1977), 168].

[37] Sonnerat (1788), 1:i-v.

[38] Sonnerat (1788), 2:121.

observations fall under what David Batchelor identifies as chromophobia.[39] The characteristics of chromophobia are easy to spot in the negative reactions to Pompeii, and even, to an extent, in the comments which actively praised the paintings. For the former group, the classical body in the eyes of these eighteenth-century British Grand Tourists was a fixed idea that the wall paintings in Pompeii and Herculaneum directly challenged. They did not adhere to the classical canon that had been established after the sixteenth century, and, for a vocal minority, this was dangerous because it destabilized the institutions of taste and identity. In Bakhtin's words:

> [the classical form is] an entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body, which is shown from the outside as something individual. That which protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off is eliminated, hidden or moderated. All orifices of the body are closed. The basis of the image is the individual, strictly limited mass, the impenetrable facade. The opaque surface of the body's "valleys" acquires an essential meaning as the border of a closed individuality that does not merge with other bodies and with the world. All attributes of the unfinished world are carefully removed as well as all signs of inner life.[40]

In the case of Pompeian wall paintings, the unfinished world became a new reality that was, for the most part, welcomed—but as the reactions above have shown, could also be a cause for concern.

Pompeii, Naples, and the Pacific

Beyond the wall paintings, contemporary European perceptions of the Roman world were further challenged by the presence of phallic objects across the sites. In tandem with anthropological observations on modern Neapolitan culture more broadly, this section explores the influence of travel accounts coming from the newly 'discovered' South Seas on the Grand Tour experience. For eighteenth-century British Anglican-Protestants, sexual excess was the domain of the Other—in this case, not just the non-European, but also the non-Protestant. But while it had been common knowledge since the sixteenth century that the pagan Roman conception of sex was vastly different from that of Christian Rome, the sheer number of erotic objects unearthed around Vesuvius was a shock, materially evidencing the abundance of sex and erotic pleasure in daily Roman life.[41] The comments discussed below, however, must also not be taken at face value. Travel in the South of Italy adopted a proto-anthropological stance in the eighteenth century, and by contextualizing these distinct receptions to Pompeii within a more imperial reading of the Grand Tour, we can better understand how the concept of difference was articulated through expanding

[39] 'Chromophobia manifests itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture, to devalue colour, to diminish its significance, to deny its complexity. More specifically: this purging of colour is usually accomplished in one of two ways. In the first, colour is made out to be the property of some 'foreign' body—usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological. In the second, colour is relegated to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic. ' Batchelor (2000), 22-3.

[40] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (1965) [trans. Iswolsky (1984), 320].

[41] Rowland (2014), 74.

networks of imperial epistemologies.[42]

Perhaps Enlightenment philosophers would not have spent so many words binding sexual desire to the Asian and African Other had they known what objects would be unearthed around Vesuvius. But there is no shortage of examples from the 18th century that explicitly connect the two.[43] In some cases, it was not just British travelers who found the objects from the Bay of Naples distasteful. In Winckelmann's *Letter*, published in 1762, there is a revealing anecdote about the discomfort that such sculptures could induce. Giuseppe Canart, the royal sculptor at Portici in charge of restoration, showed him the marble group depicting Pan penetrating a she-goat (now housed in the Naples Archaeological Museum), which had been found in the Villa dei Papiri:

> This marble represents a satyr with a she-goat, just over three Roman palms in height, and they say that it is very beautiful. Immediately after its discovery, it was boxed up and sent to the king at Caserta, where the court was at the time. Right away it was boxed up again and delivered into the custody of the royal sculptor at Portici, Mr Joseph Canary, with the sharply worded orders that I mentioned.[44]

The order in question was mentioned before the description of the sculpture: 'my access was limited in what I was allowed to see...But my understanding is that it refers to the antiquities in the vaults beneath the royal castle, consisting primarily of one obscene figure...No one is shown the figure except by personal order of the king.'[45] The obscenity of the sculpture was such that the king refused to house it in his palace where his family resides nor keep it on public display at Portici. King Francis I of Naples visited the collection in the early nineteenth century and suggested only allowing 'people of mature age and respected morals' to view it. This aversion to Pompeian sexual excess, or perhaps a suppressed fascination with it, also traveled to the newly-formed United States, which was already implementing Roman Republican models of law and liberty, and influenced the objects being collected there, since 'a new nation bent on acceptance abroad could ill afford to fill its salons with any but the noblest traditions of the West.'[46] The presence of these objects also prompted intense discussion over the nature of Pompeii's destruction, which many argued was biblically charged, centered around the punishment of sexual decadence.[47]

Sexual excess was one of the ways Britons differentiated modern Italians from their imperial ancestors. Exacerbated by the Reformation, British worries concerning homoeroticism in particular, known at the time as 'the Italian Vice,' was often understood through the lens of Catholicism, and to a lesser extent climate. That does not mean, however, that they were 'simply...part of an imperialistic project and the Italians...victims of an Orientalist practice,' but rather these concerns played an important part in shaping British

[42] The ethnographic nature of the Grand Tour is explored fully in my doctoral thesis and is only summarized here.

[43] See Bindman (2002).

[44] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Letter* (1762) [trans. Mattusch (2011), 87].

[45] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Letter* (1762) [trans. Mattusch (2011), 87].

[46] Anderson (1992), 95.

[47] Syme (2004), 81. See also Cocks (2017), 192.

views of Italy in this period and affected how such cultural differences were approached.[48] In some instances, Britons saw a hypocrisy in the 'excessive freedom and immodesty with the regard to sexual mores,' that they witnessed both in the Church and Catholic society at large, compared to the 'unwarranted modesty over inanimate works of art.'[49] But if Pompeii was proof that the ancient Romans shared similar erotic tendencies to the moderns, then did that mean Roman culture should be seen as debauched and indecent, or should the southern Italians be seen as closer to the ancients than Britons would like to believe? William Hamilton expressed the latter in a letter in 1781:

> Sir,
>
> Having last year made a curious discovery, that in a Province of this Kingdom, and not fifty miles from its Capital, a sort of devotion is still to Priapus, the obscene Divinity of the Ancients (though under another domination), I thought it a circumstance worth recording; particularly, as it offers a fresh proof of the similitude of the Popish and Pagan Religion.[50]

The Gramscian idea that southern Europe and its people could be considered an internal European Other during the eighteenth century has been a common theme in Grand Tour studies stretching back to the twentieth century. Noakes, though writing about nineteenth-century travelers, acknowledged the centuries-long tradition of picturing Naples as 'the liminal space between what was European and what was not.'[51] In the same volume, Brettell introduced class as a key factor marking southern populations as distinctly 'primitive' in their way of life (a term that could also have positive connotations as an embodiment of Rousseau's 'noble savage' while still acknowledging difference).[52] This image of a 'backwards' south has also been understood by historians as reflective of a greater geopolitical shift beginning in the seventeenth century, when the Atlantic usurped the Mediterranean as the principal waterway that would power European colonial economies.[53] These readings have been heavily influenced by Montesquieu's division of Northern and Southern Europe, with the north populated by 'peoples who have few vices, virtues enough, and much sincerity and candor,' compared to the south, where 'morality [is] left behind; more intense passions with multiple crimes.'[54] For Dainotto, Montesquieu's translation of the dichotomous relationship between Europe/Asia, or freedom/despotism, to describe the North/South divide marks 'a new idea of Europe' whereby the role of the Asian Other in (Northern) European identity formation can in fact be played by the South.[55] Andreu and Bolufer also map this fast-growing geopolitical divide into one between ancient and modern.[56] These differences are perhaps

[48] Beccalossi (2015), 203.

[49] Sweet (2012), 58.

[50] Letter from William Hamilton dated 30 December 1781. [Knight (1894), 3].

[51] Noakes (1986), 146.

[52] Brettell (1986), 159.

[53] See Moe (2002), 14 and D'Auria (2015), 44.

[54] Baron de Montesquieu, *On the Motives that Should Encourage Us toward the Sciences* (1725) [trans. Carrithers and Stewart (2020), 32].

[55] Dainotto (2019), 63-4.

[56] Andreu and Bolufer (2023), 2.

best encapsulated in the metaphor of 'the warm south,' or 'sun-burnt nations' as Byron would describe it in *Don Juan*, which drew together imagery of picturesque ruins, unbridled sexual desire, and a sense of danger to create an alluring vision of southern Europe.[57]

Travel literature from the eighteenth century locates the South as an entity to be considered separately from the rest of Italy. In his *Travels in the Two Sicilies*, Henry Swinburne expresses his disappointment in the very normal, or familiar, flat landscape of Taranto, 'totally different from the bold beauties of the Italian landscape.'[58] In this case, the expectation of the 'bold' reveals a desire for foreignness in these travels. Chard similarly states that these 'necessary elements' allow for spatial separation between the viewer, who is used to the 'tame and familiar,' from the foreign.[59] The distance of the region from Britain is also mentioned as a way of signifying its geographic marginalization, where the changing landscape enabled the traveler to psychologically enter a new territory.[60] Joseph Spence only travels as far south as Naples, but his language in doing so paints the journey as an incredible distance: 'Naples is the very farthest point we are to go from England; and the Morning we set out to return from thence hither, 'twas a common observation among us all, that we were then first returning homeward again.'[61] In another letter written a few months later, he firmly locates Naples as a liminal space where reality and myth seamlessly blend: 'This Horror and Beauty of the Country so oddly mixt together, made the old Poets perhaps place their Hell and Elysian Fields both in the neighbourhood of Naples. Don't be frightend if I tell you that I have seen both.'[62] Here he reinforces the notion of Naples as the border between the European world and whatever lies beyond, invoking geographies from antiquity to present the region as fantastical and foreign.

In a 1775 edition of the *Monthly Review*, the following comment was made about the phallic objects found at Pompeii: 'The proofs are of the most extraordinary kind, and quite on the level with those which Captain Cook found in some of the South Sea islands.'[63] As well as evidencing the colonial networks of knowledge that informed continental travel, the comment points to the universalization of natural history that proliferated Enlightenment thought. Though separated temporally and geographically, the grouping of both objects could be dictated by the same governing laws of taxonomy. In this sense, they subscribe to Heringman's concept of 'deep time,' articulated as capturing 'an unfamiliar aspect of the conventional trope of exploration as "time travel."'[64] As he argues, the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, in particular the introduction of the study of everyday life and 'cultural empathy,' would influence how Pacific travelers conducted their anthropological research. We see this in the comparisons made by the antiquarian Giovanni Giovene between neolithic jadeite axes found in southern Italy and contemporary tools brought back from the

[57] Lord Byron, *Don Juan* (1819) [Schor (2009), 237]. The warm South, in Holland's terms, can also be seen as a 'laboratory or theatre for articulating cultural change in Britain.' Holland (2020), 26.

[58] Swinburne (1790), 2:46.

[59] Chard (1983), 11.

[60] Sweet (2012), 165.

[61] Letter from Rome, 16 April 1732. [Boulton and McLoughlin (2012), 111].

[62] Letter from Rome, 22 May 1732. [Boulton and McLoughlin (2012), 115-6].

[63] *Monthly Review* (1775) [Coltman (2006), 108].

[64] Heringman (2017), 95-6.

Pacific Islands, as well as in William Hamilton's interest in Tahitian volcanic rocks modeled on his research on Vesuvian eruptions.[65]

We find further examples of deep time in the writings of Herder, who in response to Kant's *Determination of the concept of a human race* (1785) rejects the Linnaean classification system of humanity. His method of argument takes much inspiration from Winckelmann's concepts of art and freedom. On the South Seas population, he believes that 'the Fates alone can tell, whether a second Homer will be given to the new Grecian archipelago, the Friendly Islands, who will lead them to an equal height with that, to which his elder brother led Greece.'[66] The familial link to Homer's Greece also points to his monogenist views. Franklin offers an explanation for the phenomenon of viewing remote Pacific geographies through the lens of classical antiquity. If 'the profusion of unknown natural objects in America [and elsewhere] placed an extra burden on the traveler's mind and language,' then conveying it within known geo-temporal frameworks offered a sense of understanding to those back home.[67]

This intrinsic connection between the Grand Tour and colonial travel was also noted by Smith, who argued that travel to the Pacific Islands, as popularized by narratives of Cook's voyages, was seen almost as a natural evolution to the Grand Tour.[68] We can also turn to the work of Richard Payne Knight to explore further how Pompeian objects were used to engage in contemporary natural histories. Knight's *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, first published in 1786, used the phallic objects found in Pompeii as a starting point for his hypotheses that all religions around the globe shared a common desire to worship 'generative powers.'[69] His conclusion that this type of ancient worship, which centered on generative powers, was common to all people before the spread of Christianity was controversial at the time, but it remains a noteworthy example of how pagan religious ethnographic studies evolved after the discovery of Pompeii. Knight's method of analyzing Indian erotic imagery, particularly through a classical lens, evidenced the intricate relationship between the 'expansionist policies' of the Society of Dilettanti and the East India Company.[70] This is made even more relevant when we remember that his *Discourse* was published only a few short years after he became a member of the former. In d'Hancarville's words, which greatly influenced Knight, 'it must, no doubt seem astonishing to find that monuments in Greece, which are impossible to explain using Greek mythology, are explained by ancient Indian theology.'[71] But while approaching these erotic objects from a more inquisitorial perspective, Carter rightly argues that his methodologies point to a colonization of indigenous knowledge, since he frequently lamented native Indian lack of knowledge over archaeological sites, meaning that 'the empirical data collected and visualized under the

[65] Heringman (2017), 103.

[66] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (1787) [trans. Churchill (1966), 355].

[67] Franklin (1979), 2.

[68] Smith (1985), 200.

[69] See Mitter (1997).

[70] Carter (2020), 51.

[71] Baron d'Hancarville, *Supplément aux Recherches sue l'origine et le progrès des arts de la Grèce* (1785) [Carter (2020), 54].

auspices of Europeans was considered more reliable.'[72]

The parallels between Pompeii and the East were reflective of the perceived foreignness of Southern Italy as a whole during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. James Johnson, to name one example, compared a natural disaster at Lake Lugano with a storm in China, since he 'had witnessed a Chinese tiffoon, an eastern tornado, and a western hurricane; but the scene which for seven hours passed under our eyes, might claim kindred with the wildest of these.'[73] Drawing on a different colonial geographic tradition, William Beckford, the owner of four sugarcane plantations in Jamaica, compared the Jamaican landscape to 'those picturesque and elegant ruins which so enoble the landscape of Italy.'[74] When it came to Neapolitans, Grand Tourists found natural comparisons between them and other remote populations. Louis Simond was particularly scathing in his *A Tour in Italy and Sicily*, published in English in 1828, where he wrote:

> The manners of the Neapolitans are those of Otaheite [Tahitian], or of nature. They do wrong without shame or remorse whenever it suits their immediate purpose, enjoying animal life day by day without the smallest care about the next.[75]

Piozzi's *Observations and reflections*, conversely, introduces comparisons between Neapolitans and Indigenous Americans, whom she calls 'Indians.' She laments in great detail the region's transition from a land overflowing with classical importance to one that had been 'overwhelmed by tyrants, earthquakes, Saracens!'[76] Piozzi uses the shock of northern Italians at the traditions that Neapolitans picked up over the centuries by these 'Saracens' to justify her perceptions. Interestingly, she calls the act of burning effigies a 'half-Indian custom' even though she had never traveled outside of Europe, further highlighting the influence of colonial travel literature on everyday observations.[77] It is, however, later in the account when describing the Lazzaroni (the poorest of the lower class in Naples) that Piozzi's comparisons become more explicit:

> One need not however wander round the world with Banks and Solander, or stare so at the accounts given [to] us in Cook's Voyages of tattowed Indians, when Naples will shew one the effects of a like operation, very very little better executed, on the broad shoulders of numberless Lazzaroni.[78]

She later incorporates Pacific Islanders into her observations when she is told of a female lazzarone's 'semi-barbarous' conduct by a Milanese officer:

> His account of female conduct, and that even in the very high ranks, was such reminded me of Queen Oberea's [Puria, or, Tevahine-'ai-roro-atua-i-Ahurai]

[72] Carter (2020), 56.

[73] Johnson (1831), 60.

[74] William Beckford, *Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica* (1790) [Casid (2005), 60].

[75] Simond (1828), 431.

[76] Piozzi (1789), 2:6.

[77] Piozzi (1789), 2:6.

[78] Piozzi (1789), 2:17.

sincerity, the Sir Joseph Banks joked her about Otoroo.[79]

These travel accounts evidence that there was a flourishing exchange of knowledge between the metropole and the colonies, and that these New World encounters were at the forefront of these travelers' minds when they were in Southern Italy. It also suggests that the Grand Tour was being approached in a similar framework of colonial observation and understanding, in a way 'elaborated to frame the consideration of the relative merits of nature versus civilization, and a mirror in which [Northern] European readers might rediscover fading aspects of their own selves.'[80] Indeed as Hunt observes, the derogatory language of alterity used to characterize colonial and would-be colonial subjects first appeared to describe Britain's imperial neighbors and the English poor.[81] By the close of the century, Italy was counted among the non-European and peripheral 'contact zones' of the Romantic movement, offering the chance to reimagine European identity through the absorption of non-European imagery.[82]

Conclusion

Roland Barthes writes, 'Current opinion holds sexuality to be aggressive. Hence the notion of a happy, gentle, sensual, jubilant sexuality is never to be found in any text. Where are we to read it, then? In painting, or better still, in color.'[83] The vivid reds and elongated 'Eastern' decorative elements in Pompeian frescoes were certainly 'aggressive' in the eyes of some polite British travelers to Naples. Expecting the Vesuvian excavations to unearth a society that mirrored the virtuous image of Britain's imagined Roman ancestors, travelers were instead forced to face jarring visions of sex and color. The Other that they were encountering in the travel accounts of their countrymen in the South Seas had materialized in front of their very eyes, transforming modern Naples and ancient Pompeii into a theatrical stage that allowed for a confrontation which existed in the liminal space between Europe and what lay beyond.

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[79] Piozzi (1789), 2:28.

[80] Harvey (2010), 166.

[81] Hunt compares Edward Long's criticisms of Africans ('a brutish, ignorant, idle, crafty, treacherous, bloody, thievish, mistrustful, and superstitious people') with his slurs for the French ('base, vengeful, superstitious, avaricious, slavish, luxurious, and promiscuous'), American Indians ('base, vengeful, cruel, alcoholic, slothful, superstitious, foolish'), and the English poor ('base, factious, promiscuous, superstitious, indolent, alcoholic, disobedient, thievish, and grasping'). Hunt (1993), 339.

[82] Pratt's definition of the contact zone is as follows: 'the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.' Pratt (2008), 8.

[83] Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975) [trans. Howard (1994) 143].

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Classicizing Architecture and the Kaiping Diaolou*: Diasporic Identity in Guangdong, China*

Helen Wong

Abstract: The county of Kaiping, located in Guangdong Province, China, is well-known for the local watchtowers called *diaolou* which are commonly found throughout its landscape. The *diaolou* is a form of defensive architecture first developed in the Ming era. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Kaiping saw a boom in *diaolou* building, accompanied by rising numbers of local people migrating to the West or Western colonial spaces in East Asia and then later returning home. The *diaolou* built during this period display a unique mix of Western architecture, often recognizably Classical or Classicizing, set in a traditional Chinese structure. This article argues that the reception of Western/Classical architecture in these buildings was multivalent, structured along the following themes. First, the Western/Classical references were not drawing from true antique Classical architecture, but rather, on contemporary Neoclassical architecture in Asian colonial spaces, Australia, and North America. Second, the designs of these buildings reference how their owners and builders experienced overseas migration into Western spaces during this period. And lastly, these *diaolou* have served as enduring foci of cultural memory regarding the diasporic experiences of the local community over time.

Keywords: architecture, Classical reception, diaspora, migration, Neoclassical.

Introduction[1]

This article investigates the historical reception of architectural Classical and Classicizing elements as found in the *diaolou* (碉楼) ("watchtowers"), a category of traditional Chinese defensive architecture which invites questions about diasporic identity, migrant experience, and cultural exchange. Informed by the postcolonial critique of Homi K. Bhabha and Edward Said, I argue that these structures evidence what I am terming an "occidentalism of power": the construction of Western-coded material, in this case tied directly to the phenomenon of Western colonialism during the 18th-19th centuries, for a local, non-Western audience.[2] The structures under consideration, the *diaolou*, are located in the county of Kaiping in the southwestern part of Guangdong province, China, situated along the Tanjiang River (Fig. 1).

[1] I am grateful for the support of Arum Park, whose guidance was absolutely invaluable; for the kind, constructive feedback offered by two anonymous reviewers; and for the members of my ABD writing group, whose generous comments on my earliest draft were a great help.

[2] Particularly influential for my study are Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (London, Routledge: 1994) and Said's *Orientalism* (New York, Vintage Books: 1978). If Said's orientalism is about a created body of theory and practice which constructs images of the Orient or the East directed towards those in the West, leading to the proliferation of stereotypes, then my treatment of occidentalism is to consider it as the construction of images of the West directed towards those in the East, also leading to stereotyping.

The position of Kaiping near the coast and the busy Pearl River Delta has historically facilitated ready access to the sea and encounters with foreign influences. Starting in the early 1800s, people from Guangdong began to seek opportunities overseas due to pervasive regional famines and economic instability at home, traveling to places such as South Asia, Australia, and North America. Kaiping and its surrounding counties became the ancestral home of many in the Chinese diaspora.

By the late 1800s, Kaiping had developed a tradition of migration that became embedded in its local culture.[3] Most families had at least a few close members, usually men, who had left to work overseas. Money was continually sent home, and the aim was to eventually return. While not everyone came back with enough of a fortune to build the grand fortified tower-mansions called *diaolou* (碉楼), those who did do so set new standards for architectural taste and the expression of wealth in Kaiping. From the first decades of their construction to the present time, they have served as enduring foci of cultural memory regarding the diasporic experience in this community, while also being continuously instrumentalized to reflect changing cultural values over time. The *diaolou* that were built in the late Qing and early Republican periods (c. 1840 to 1937) are a distinct, unique mix of Western (often recognizably Classical or Classicizing) and traditional Chinese architecture. They embody specific cultural norms and experiences from the time of their construction and, most intriguingly, they reference how their owners and builders experienced overseas migration into Western spaces during this period.

There is a fascinating piece of Classical reception happening in these buildings as a result of those experiences: the Classicizing elements are not drawing on true antique Classical architecture, but rather, on the Neoclassical architecture which was so common in Asian colonial spaces, Australia, and North America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The connection between the architecture of the Classical canon and the Kaiping *diaolou* is not a straight thoroughfare. Rather, it is one interrupted by other receptions of Classical architecture, embodied in Neoclassicism and its Renaissance predecessors. The architecture of the *diaolou* is a response to a response, like an architectural game of telephone, which cannot be separated from the immigration experiences of the people who made them.

In this study, I trace how these buildings resonated in the community over time. I begin with outlining the historical background of the *diaolou* and the contexts of their development. Then, in order to illustrate the integration of Western-coded material in the *diaolou*, I identify and categorize Classical/Classicizing elements, including those which derive from post-antique rather than Classical sources. This is followed by a discussion on the relationship between *diaolou* architecture and vernacular architecture, leading into an analysis of community reception and use of the *diaolou*. This analysis is framed chronologically, proceeding first through the major period of their construction (1890-1937), then from 1940-1980 in the times of World War II and the Cultural Revolution, and finally, from 1980 to the present day. I take a qualitative approach to my overall analysis, grounding it in the material features of the *diaolou* themselves while also drawing on phenomenological observations and informal conversations with local residents. As I will demonstrate, these buildings represent a rich opportunity to explore a case of historical Classical reception in a

[3] For an in-depth treatment of this, see Bo-wei Chiang, "Landscapes of Memories: A Study of Representation for Translocal Chinese Cultural Heritage in Kaiping, Guangdong, China," *Translocal Chinese: East Asian Perspectives* 15, no. 1 (July 1, 2021): 5–37, https://doi.org/10.1163/24522015-15010002; link accessed Nov. 15, 2024.

non-Western locale, shaped by complex historical relationships with migration, colonialism, and intercultural contact.

The *diaolou* of Kaiping: historical background and overview

Diaolou (碉樓) literally translates to "carved-stone tower," but is usually translated as "watchtower." Colloquially, the *diaolou* are called *paolou* (炮楼), or "gun towers," referring to the rifles and small firearms they were meant to withstand.[4] The *diaolou* reflect a longstanding regional tradition of organized, village-based self-defense in Kaiping, which developed in response to frequent banditry, kidnapping, and a lack of government presence and protection. The apocryphal story behind the construction of the first *diaolou*, recorded in the Kaiping County Annals in the early 1500s, emphasizes the use of these buildings as a response to widespread violence. That first *diaolou*, called the *Fengfulou* (奉父楼) or "father-honoring tower," was built because of a man called Xu Long, whose wife was taken by bandits. The son, Xu Yi, gathered a large ransom for his mother, but his mother told him through the mediator that the money should be spent on a fortified tower to protect his father. The virtuous mother then died by suicide, and the filial son built the *diaolou* according to his mother's wishes.[5]

The *Fengfulou* is lost, but a roughly contemporary example, the *Yinglonglou* (迓龍樓), still stands as an example of how the oldest *diaolou* were designed and built. The *Yinglonglou,* or "greeting-dragon tower," was built during the late Ming Dynasty in 1644.[6] It is a massive, rectangular structure made of fired brick and tile, with three stories and a flat roof (see Fig. 2). By any measure, the *Yinglonglou* is a type of fortress. Its architecture was a response to violent circumstances under which villagers were responsible for protecting themselves. Although the *diaolou* were often built and used by a single family, it was also common for them to be collectively paid for by the village, so that anyone could find refuge there in times of danger. A popular regional saying goes, "Without watchtowers, there is no village" (無碉樓不成村). Some of the larger villages have as many as ten towers, and most mid-sized villages had at least one.

The *diaolou* remained a central component of local architecture from the Ming Dynasty down to the Qing-Republican period, as the dangerous circumstances for which they were built never abated and in fact, worsened in the late 1800s-early 1900s. The second half of the 19th century brought the Opium Wars, revolts against Qing governance, and warfare between local clans and ethnic groups, all of which had major impacts in Guangdong. The collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 triggered only more instability. Guangdong technically became part of the new Republic, but the emergence of the Warlord Era in 1912 meant that social circumstances continued to be fraught with violence and fluctuating economic conditions. Local records reported that "between 1912 and 1930 there were more than a hundred murders, over a thousand abductions, and 71 major robberies, in addition to the countless thefts of buffalo and other goods...In addition, between 1912 and 1926, eight schools were attacked, leading to the abduction of over a hundred pupils and teachers."[7] There was a heightened need during this period for the *diaolou*, coinciding with growing

[4] Guoxiong Zhang, 開平碉樓與民居, 老房子 (Jiangsu Fine Arts Publishing House, 2002), 5.

[5] Patricia R. S. Batto, "The Diaolou of Kaiping (1842-1937)," China Perspectives 2006, no. 4 (July 1, 2006): 10, https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.1033; link accessed Nov. 15, 2024.

[6] Chiang, "Landscapes of Memories," 13.

[7] Batto, "The Diaolou of Kaiping (1842-1937)," 9.

waves of people who were leaving to work overseas, sending money home, and/or then returning with newfound wealth (or, not uncommonly, disappearing or dying without a body to be sent back). Thus, Kaiping saw a boom in *diaolou* building.

Classical architecture and the *diaolou*

The architecture of the new *diaolou* looked substantially different from their earlier predecessors in many ways, of which perhaps the most obvious was their incorporation of new, foreign materials and motifs (see Fig. 3). The *diaolou* still served the same purposes (protection, prestige, village identity, etc.) that they had always had—but the changes in their appearance were reflections of how immigration and life overseas had changed the communities who built them. The new *diaolou* incorporated Classicizing elements, reflecting increased interaction with the West as well as, I argue, an adaptation of the power encoded within Western colonialist architecture.

I use "Classicizing" broadly to describe any architectural element which is recognizably Classical (Vitruvian), Neoclassical, or otherwise related to those styles. It is worth noting once again that Classicizing elements in the *diaolou* were not inspired directly by antique Classical architecture, which no immigrant from Kaiping was likely to have seen. Rather, they reference Neoclassical and Classicizing architecture in North America and colonial southeast Asia. Keeping this layer of reception in mind helps frame how and why these elements appear as they do in the categories of elements I have identified below. The *diaolou* commissioners were never concerned with producing "correct" or canonical renditions of Classical/Neoclassical architecture. They were, rather, actively using visual vocabularies of Western power to which they were exposed overseas and adapting it as needed within their home communities—thus engaging in an occidentalism of power. The builders, all local craftsmen under the direction of master masons, were shown images like postcards and photographs brought back from abroad or did their best according to oral descriptions.[8] The resulting architecture was not a result of ignorance of canonical Western architecture, as has been sometimes suggested,[9] but of adaptation and response, intentionally performed for the local community.

In the remainder of this section, I provide a qualitative summary of categories of Classicizing architectural features among the *diaolou*, drawing from two sources: first, from 11 examples which I had the opportunity to examine in person in Zili and Majianlong Villages, and second, from a comprehensive collection of diaolou photos published in the Kaiping volume of the academic *Old Houses* (老房子) series.[10]

Columns

In contrast to the earlier *diaolou*, which lack columns entirely, columns are ubiquitous among the Qing-Republican examples. They are usually either placed along the uppermost level of the building, supporting loggias and roof structures, or framing doors and windows, where

[8] Batto, 30.

[9] A. A. Kim, "The Origins of the Formation and Features of the Manifestation of the Chinese Europeanized Architecture in Mid-19th–Second Half of the 20th Century," in *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*, vol. 962 (IOP Publishing, 2020), 032060, https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1757-899X/962/3/032060/meta; link accessed Nov. 15, 2024.

[10] Zhang, 開平碉樓與民居.

they tend to be decorative rather than load bearing. In those contexts, it is especially clear that the columns are simply add-ons whose value is not in physical need, but in visual signaling of power through the incorporation of a Western aesthetic. Also, their use is not restricted to the building's exterior. When used in the interior, they are usually in doorways (Fig. 4) or, more rarely, produced in miniature for the household ancestral shrine (Fig. 5).

The columns on some *diaolou* are plain, but Classicizing columns seem to have been a popular choice in general. All three of the major Vitruvian orders appear in recognizable ways, but often with some modifications in unique local variations. For example, see Fig. 6: the column on the far left seems Ionic at first glance, but closer inspection reveals that the shaft lacks fluting, the necking is very long, and the abacus is unusually thick and topped with a Chinese-style rosette. These kinds of stylistic modifications were common, but the nature of the modifications varied from tower to tower, highlighting individuality even as *diaolou* architecture became its own cohesive category of architectural vocabulary.

The doorway in Fig. 7, by contrast, displays relatively fewer modifications than the columns in Fig. 8. The culturally layered appearance of Classicizing columns in each tower seems to have been a collaborative matter between the commissioner's personal taste and the skill of the craftsman. Direct Western references for these designs can sometimes be found in Neoclassical buildings of the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly for the decorative window-framing columns (see Fig. 9).

Roofing

The roofs of the Qing-Republican *diaolou* are generally flat, untiled, and made of reinforced concrete (as opposed to the traditional stone, brick, or mudbrick). These features were a major departure from conventional Chinese roofing in the local style, which was gabled, tiled, and edged with ceramic figurines depicting mythological creatures or figures.[11] However, the new flatness of these roofs meant that there was room for more to be built on top of the structure. The stereotypical Qing-Republican *diaolou* has a multi-tiered upper edge: the top floor of the tower extends into a protruding loggia, sometimes turreted at the corners. On the flat top of the loggia, there is usually a rooftop enclosure with a surrounding balcony or a cupola on top. In the summer, when the heat in Guangdong is especially humid and oppressive, the wind travels through the tower, caught in the loggia and the openwork structure of the upper building.

The columns, arches, cupolas, balconies, and domes all have direct parallels in Classical or Neoclassical architecture. Modifications to these forms in the *diaolou* draw on not just traditional Chinese styles, but others as well. Islamic petal arches and domes, Gothic arches and ornamentation, stereotypical Western castle architecture, and Baroque accents are common in *diaolou* roofs. In conversations with locals, several people mentioned casually that these features can be used to guess where their owners went overseas. Domes, petal arches, and loggias are associated with Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, and other southeastern Asian colonial spaces (where colonial architecture was widespread and long-established, with clear parallels to some *diaolou* styles; see Fig. 10, the Tamsui Red Castle in

[11] Edward Yee Wah Leung, "Roofs of Clans: Chinese Roofs of Vernacular Architectures of Branches of Communities in Hong Kong and Respective Restoration Techniques," in *East Asian Architecture in Globalization*, ed. Subin Xu, Nobuo Aoki, and Bébio Vieira Amaro (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 396, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-75937-7_30; link accessed Nov. 15, 2024.

Taiwan, for an example). The more castle-like *diaolou* with turrets, battlements, and slit windows are said to suggest America or Canada. Although I was not able to systematically investigate it,[12] this etiological rumor is still of interest—it indicates a persistent communal memory regarding which families or individuals migrated where, preserved through the architecture of these buildings and the oral history surrounding them.

Decorative elements

The architectural decoration of the *diaolou* is typically found on roofs, windows, and doorways, each of which had its own conventions in the existing traditional local architecture. The Qing-Republican *diaolou* demonstrate how those conventions could be maintained and elaborated upon using foreign—especially Classical/Classicizing—decorative motifs, visually signaling the power associated with Western colonialism.

A characteristic feature of traditional roofing in the local style, sometimes called Lingnan architecture, is the use of elaborate ceramic figurines around the edges of the roof.[13] The *diaolou* roofs maintained this tradition but adapted it for the new flat roofing and little overhangs which could be found over doors or windows. The ceramics which decorate the *diaolou* roofs are ornate and incorporate traditional Chinese motifs like mythological creatures, narrative stories, or objects representing luck and fortune (see Fig. 11). At the same time, many of these ceramics include Western motifs such as curling Baroque vines and Roman garlands. Aside from the ceramics, other roof decorations do the same seamless incorporation of Western elements into Chinese conventions: for example, most *diaolou* have a character plaque set into the top, front-facing edge of the roof to display the name of the tower. The Qing-Republican *diaolou* frame that character plaque with eclectic, yet cohesive mixes of Chinese and Western motifs. Of the latter, some of the most popular include Baroque vegetation, empty shields, false arches, Dutch gables, and flagpoles.

The windows and doors display similar decoration within different conventions from the roofing. Windows are relatively narrow, shuttered with metal or thick wood, and barred with iron. Decoration around them is focused on the frame. Pediments (Neoclassically pointed, curved, and broken) were extremely popular. The most elaborate decoration was concentrated in the tympanum, where some of the most complex stucco reliefs and stone-carving in the tradition of *diaolou* architecture can be found. Once again, the aesthetic reflection here demonstrates the same remixing and ownership of various Western and Chinese motifs: phoenixes and gourds appear as frequently as fruit-bowl still lifes. The same is true for the doorways, which are structured traditionally: recessed in several layers and stone-carved. The outer recess is often framed with Classicizing columns supporting a pediment or arch, with elaborate reliefs of the same type surrounding the windows and roof set above or within the tympanum.

The striking thing about the architectural decoration is that it is so consistently elaborate from building to building, even in the less wealthy examples. The quality of the reliefs, carvings, and ceramics are exemplary. This should be taken not just as a testament to the skill of the local craftsmen who made them, but as evidence of skill adaptation in the face of new tastes and influences. Kaiping already had longstanding traditions of complex

[12] These conversations were casual and while I made notes, I did not record them. Formal interviews are planned for a future follow-up study with more comprehensive data analysis.

[13] Leung, "Roofs of Clans," 397.

craftsmanship in carving (especially ivory and stone), woodworking, and ceramic production.[14] The Qing-Republican *diaolou* are evidence of how those traditions of local craftsmanship, like other elements of local culture, adapted to a society deeply changed by increased migration and exposure to foreign influences.

Vernacular echoes

The *diaolou* were, in many ways, community projects, regardless of whether they had been paid for by a single family or a village as a whole. Their importance to the landscape of Kaiping cannot be understated. Even now, it is difficult to find a single remaining village of note in Kaiping which does not have a *diaolou* or the remnants of one. They were highly visible structures by intention, meant to be seen and to deter banditry or violence. This same visibility meant that there was a sort of trickle-down effect in terms of their architecture and decoration. More relatively mundane structures, like regular homes and ancestral halls, took on elements from *diaolou* designs. In any village with large portions of its historical architecture intact, which in Kaiping is a high number, one can see these elements in every range of use, in every type of building from the Qing-Republican era. Relatively humble houses which are otherwise in the fully traditional style—gabled, made of brick, three stories at maximum and usually less—often have Baroque and Classicizing reliefs over their windows, under the eaves of their roofs or over their doors (see Fig. 12 for an example).

The middle step, so to speak, between the traditional house and the *diaolou* is represented by the *lu* (廬) mansion, often translated as "villa" and contemporary to the Qing-Republican *diaolou*. The *lu* are explicitly residential.[15] The *diaolou* could be used residentially, especially if they were paid for by a single family, but it was also common for them to be inhabited only in times of crisis, like attacks and floods. The *lu* are distinguished from the *diaolou* in terms of architecture mainly by their smaller size and broader, flatter layout. In all other respects, the *lu* are functionally a house version of the Qing-Republican *diaolou*, translated into a fully domestic space. Thus, the cultural changes represented by the *diaolou* were not limited to that particular form of fortress architecture. Rather, they were pervasive throughout the community, permeating the architectural expression of local identity to the point of ubiquity.

Community resonance: reception in practice over time

The *diaolou*, from their first appearance to the modern day, have been foci of cultural cachet. Throughout their existence, they have been instrumentalized to display and embody common social values in Kaiping, even as these values have changed significantly over time. In order to illustrate the various ways in which these buildings and their unique architecture were received by their communities, this section, which covers a significant period of time, takes a chronological approach. While I acknowledge that my treatment of the material here is broad (in part because this study is a first step in what I hope will be a larger work in the future), I nonetheless aim to give a clear outline here of the most relevant points.

[14] Jian Hang and Qiuhui Guo, *Chinese Arts & Crafts* (中信出版社, 2006), 91.

[15] Jin Hua Tan Selia and De Hua Zheng, "The Architectural Style and Cultural Connotation of Lu Mansions in Kaiping of Guangdong," *Advanced Materials Research* 598 (2012): 12–21.

The late Qing-Republican period (1840-1939)

As discussed above, this was a time of sociopolitical unrest and rampant banditry. The banditry issue was tied up in a feedback loop with increasing migration in the late Qing period. Rising numbers of returned overseas Chinese, called *jinshanke* (金山客) or "Gold Rush Guests" regardless of where they had been overseas, developed a reputation for being very wealthy, which drew the attention of more bandits, which spurred the construction of more *diaolou.*

With the construction of more towers came increased organized defense, centered on the growing network of towers. Village *diaolou* began to muster their own armed militias and to communicate with each other when attacks occurred. For example, in December 1922 the Kaiping Secondary School in Chikan Town was attacked by bandits who kidnapped the schoolmaster along with 16 students. The local *diaolou* corps, associated with the *Hongyi diaolou*, raised an alarm to the neighboring village, whose own militia confronted the bandits and rescued the hostages.[16]

The infrastructure of defense around the towers became increasingly sophisticated over time. Kaiping residents used the influx of overseas money to buy guns and ammunition, and to outfit the towers with floodlights, power generators, and sirens to improve their mutual warning systems. By the late 1930s, when the *diaolou* building boom was coming to an end, the defense systems around the *diaolou* had become well-established,[17] as had the archetypal form of the Qing-Republican *diaolou* in particular: three to five stories tall, thick-walled, made of reinforced concrete, and built in a distinct, ornate style which seamlessly incorporated broadly "Western" architectural motifs from the overseas places people had worked in. The influence of this style was such that when the *Yinglonglou* of 1644 was renovated in the 1920s, more "modern" *diaolou* touches were added, such as the Neoclassical pediments over the windows. The new conception of what a *diaolou* should look like had already settled in the community, who projected it onto the older building.

World War II and the Cultural Revolution (1940-1980)

Diaolou construction halted almost entirely in the 1940s, primarily because of the continuous historical turmoil of that decade: the Second Sino-Japanese War, World War II, the Chinese Civil War, and the victory of the Communists over the Nationalist government in 1949, followed by the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1950. Despite the large-scale chaos, the *diaolou* continued to be used and maintained as well as possible. They were places of refuge during the Japanese attacks in particular—many *diaolou* still have bullet pockmarks and artillery damage from this period. Oral history in Chikan Town even remembers how the pockmarks on the face of their *Nanlou diaolou* were made by the Japanese execution of seven townspeople resisting the invasion.[18]

In the 1950s-60s, further disruption came when the PRC instituted widespread land reforms and nationalized the economy after the Soviet model. The Great Leap Forward in 1958 resulted in one of the worst famines in history, the Great Chinese Famine, which did not end until 1961. Guangdong was not one of the provinces worst affected by the famine,

[16] Zhang, **開平碉樓與民居**, 11.

[17] Xiongfei Liang et al., "The Spatiotemporal Evolution of Kaiping Watchtowers and Village Defense Function Pattern," **地理研究**, no. 36 (2017): 121–33.

[18] Zhang, **開平碉樓與民居**, 12.

but the general turbulence of the 1950s put a permanent end to *diaolou* construction. The *diaolou* did, however, remain centers of community gathering and thus were well-maintained. They were used frequently as classrooms or teaching centers, and it was very common to find them used as *nui uk* (女屋), or "women's house," which was a type of traditional gathering-house for young, unmarried women to learn gendered skills like sewing, cooking, and childcare. In the plains areas, where summer and autumn floods are frequent, the *diaolou* were a practical place of refuge. In many ways, the *diaolou* became community centers. When the Communist movement began, it was in the *Shidiaolou* of Xiabian Village, Baihe Town that the first peasant association in Kaiping was formed.[19]

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) brought a new kind of large-scale social unrest. Its stated goal of purging capitalism and bourgeois elements led to a full decade of chaos and violence which is still within living memory. Although the Revolution was arguably never as strong in the south of China as the north, Guangdong still experienced the purges and abuses of intellectuals and "bourgeois" elements. I was surprised to learn in the course of my research that the *diaolou* were largely left alone during the Revolution, despite their overt display of foreign elements and what would have been considered "bourgeoisie values." When I asked locals directly about this, I was told that no one wanted to destroy them. Artifact and material destruction during the Revolution was technically mandated at the government level, but was generally carried out more or less at the community or county level, depending on how many people were invested in enforcing it. In Kaiping, people simply did not want to destroy the *diaolou*, so they remained. The *diaolou* were still useful—as shelters from floods, community centers, representations of familial history and prestige, exemplars of local stonework, etc. The *diaolou* (and the villas) did not escape the Revolution fully unscathed, however. Remnants of the occasional Mao poster or Communist slogan can be found in flaking paint on the sides of some towers.

Modern receptions and cultural memory (1980-2024)

The *diaolou* slowly fell out of active use in the 1980s. There was no longer a need for their fortress capacities, and the Kaiping community changed as immigration increased again with China's new open policies. Many people, mostly young, left for Hong Kong, Australia, Canada, and the U.S. There were increasingly fewer people who needed the *diaolou* as community centers or flood refuge, and even fewer who needed or chose to live in them.

Despite the lack of active use, the majority of the remaining *diaolou* are in fairly good condition, in large part because the overseas Kaiping community still cares about their maintenance. Most of these *diaolou* remain in family hands and are maintained by relatives who still live in the county. The *diaolou* are functionally treated as family heirlooms (although I am aware of at least one instance in which a tower is being used as a bed-and-breakfast for tourists). It is also very common for Kaiping immigrants and their families, including members born and raised overseas, to return to their ancestral village once a year or more to visit their family shrine and to check on their *diaolou* if they have one. A local publication, the Tanxi Monthly, is dedicated to reporting on stories of return visits and other happenings around Kaiping specifically for the overseas Kaiping community.

In 2007, the Kaiping *diaolou* were collectively designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Through this, the *diaolou* gained more protections and attention, leading to several

[19] Zhang, 12.

outstanding examples (such as the Fang Clan *diaolou*) being transformed into museums. Perhaps this quote from the UNESCO nomination file best summarizes how the *diaolou* are perceived today: "The *diaolou*, or multi-storied defensive village houses of Kaiping, display a complex and flamboyant fusion of Chinese and Western structural and decorative forms...the selected groups of *diaolou* in their landscapes...reflect the culmination of almost five centuries of tower-building and the still-strong links between Kaiping and its diaspora."

Conclusion

The Classicizing and Western architecture used on the *diaolou* are reflective of the worlds through which migrants passed and lived. They are also directly indicative of how these migrants saw and engaged with the visual language of the stereotypical West during a particular historical period and in the context of diasporic experience. This engagement, expressed through the formation of new architectural vocabulary, was predicated on the transformation of those experiences in Western spaces into physical forms meant to signal specific things to a local audience. This messaging of the new *diaolou* was achieved not through the Western elements in themselves, but through the adaptation of these elements into a new form of the *diaolou* tradition. At the time of their construction, the *diaolou* were ultimately about projecting power, and their form is telling of what constituted power in late Qing-early Republican Kaiping: a grand stone fortress that could protect community members, accented with references to the architectural vocabulary of Western colonial rule—another type of power, encountered overseas during immigration experiences. To the community, these *diaolou* represented general concepts such as wealth, tradition, and protection, but also more specific immigration experiences depending on the individual commissioner. The underlying message among all of them, however, implies survival of those immigration experiences. The people who built the *diaolou* were those who successfully "made it," so to speak, overseas and then at home.

This is ultimately why the degree of "accuracy" of the Western elements does not really matter in terms of understanding why the *diaolou* look the way they do. In fact, their lack of accuracy illuminates exactly what processes gave rise to their appearance. To draw on Homi Bhabha's "third space" concept of cultural interaction, the contact zones—physical or conceptual—between two cultures is created through imperfect understandings of each other. These imperfect understandings, for better or worse, form the basis of communication rather than getting in its way. The local stonemasons who built Classicizing/Classical architectural elements into the *diaolou* by referencing postcard photos and listening to oral accounts did technically misunderstand the "correct" forms of Western architecture. But this misunderstanding facilitated communication between them and the *diaolou* commissioners and by extension, the West as it was experienced by those commissioners. This misunderstanding also highlights what I mean by the *diaolou* embodying an "occidentalism of power." The *diaolou* designers engaged in occidentalism in that elements of the West were made stereotypical, but this stereotyping was done in service of projecting a locally understood idea of power.

This stereotyping, and the material features of the Western elements of the *diaolou*, is telling of how Classicizing/Classical architecture was received culturally in this particular historical context. The *diaolou* columns, pediments, etc. are not accurate to actual antique Classical architecture because they were not encountered through direct interactions with that material. Classical architecture has a long history of underwriting the aesthetics of Western power. Immigrants from Kaiping saw the iterations of this colonial architecture that

came to permeate the buildings of modern Western imperialism in spaces like southeast Asia and North America. They never saw the Parthenon or the Pantheon or any other exemplar of Classical architecture from antiquity. The kind of reception which I describe here invites a reevaluation of the entire concept of "Classical reception," demonstrating how such interaction has not only been possible through direct encounters with materials from antiquity, but also with its legacy branch-offs, most of which are tied inextricably now to the aesthetic of modern Western imperialism. Those legacy branch-offs—English colonial buildings in Hong Kong, Dutch government structures in Indonesia, etc.—held their own representations of Western power, tied back to Classical antiquity. The builders of the *diaolou* took and transformed those representations for themselves. It was not the Western elements accenting the *diaolou* that gave them their power, but the cohesive whole of the *diaolou* itself, creating meanings meant for the Kaiping community and not for the West or anyone else. Those meanings changed significantly over time, transforming the *diaolou* from fortress to flood refuge to community center and finally, to museums and heirlooms.

The use of Classicizing architecture in the *diaolou*, brought there via exposure to colonial architecture and Western spaces, is an indication that migrants experienced cultural contact and were changed by it. When they returned to their villages and built the *diaolou*, which were a fundamentally Chinese structure with an explicitly local function, they ornamented them with the things that they had seen abroad, perhaps to communicate not only worldliness, but that their experiences overseas had changed them and their conceptions of opulence or power. Readjustment and reintegration back into the community took place, becoming especially complex in the face of community traumas stemming from how a significant portion of those who left never came back and were never heard from again. For those migrants who made it back to Kaiping and who were rich enough to build the *diaolou*, engaging in those projects was a major part of re-establishing themselves and "fitting" into the community again now that they themselves were different. One *diaolou* in Zilicun Village has a character plaque next to the door that reads, "Strength to the yellow man" (**黃種**图强), (see Fig. 13). This is somewhat unusual, as while "yellow man" is used in Chinese origin mythology (people of the Yellow River), this context may also be referencing the derogatory phrase from Western race discourse. The family who built that *diaolou* had made their fortune in San Francisco. To place this statement right by the door built with the wealth they had gained in the U.S. seems both poignant and deliberate.

Over time, the *diaolou* took on great significance in their communities, being used and cared for in different ways as social values and political circumstances changed over the course of generations. These structures are physical manifestations of diasporic identity, migrant experience, and cultural exchange, echoing both Chinese and Classical antiquity during a transformative historical period.

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Appendix of figures

Fig. 1. Map of Kaiping within Guangdong, China.
Image by Klugbeisser from Wikimedia Commons licensed under CC-SA 3.0.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Location_of_Jiangmen_within_Guangdong_(China).png; link accessed Nov. 15, 2024.

Fig. 2. The *Yinglonglou*. Image from Wikimedia Commons licensed under CC0 1.0.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sanmenli_1.jpg; link accessed Nov. 15, 2024.

Fig. 3. Two mansions and a typical Qing-Republican *diaolou* from Tangkou Township, Kaiping. Image by Stefan Fussan from Wikimedia Commons licensed under CC-SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zili_Village_Yangxian_Villa_SF0004.jpg; link accessed Nov. 15, 2024.

Fig. 4. Interior of a *diaolou* in Baihe Village, Kaiping. Referenced from Zhang 2002, 318.

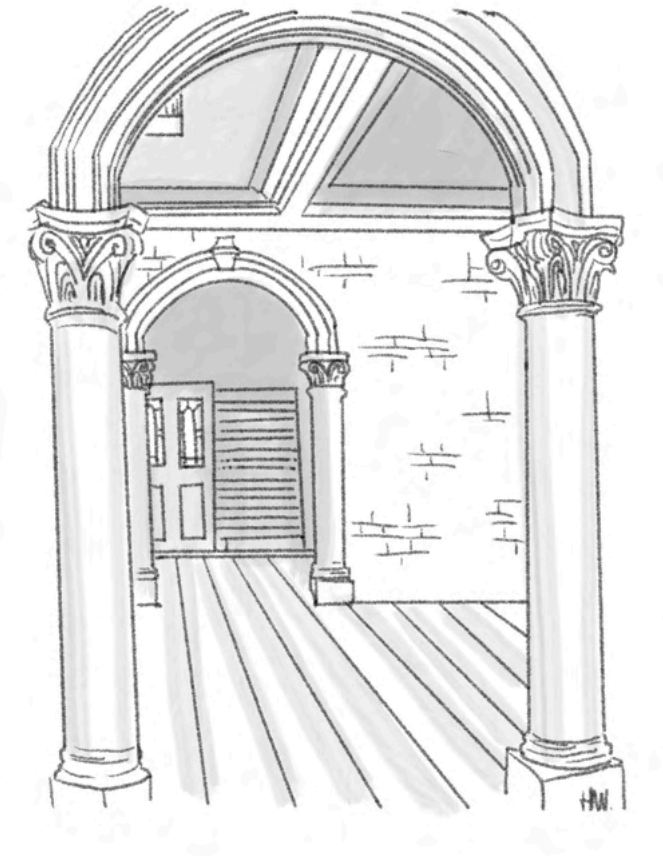

Fig. 5. Ancestral shrine inside a *diaolou* from Baihe Village. Referenced from Zhang 2002, 321.

Fig. 6. Columns from a *diaolou* in Zili Village. Own image.

Fig. 7. Doorway of the *Fengcailou* in Dihai Village. Referenced from Zhang 2002, 407.

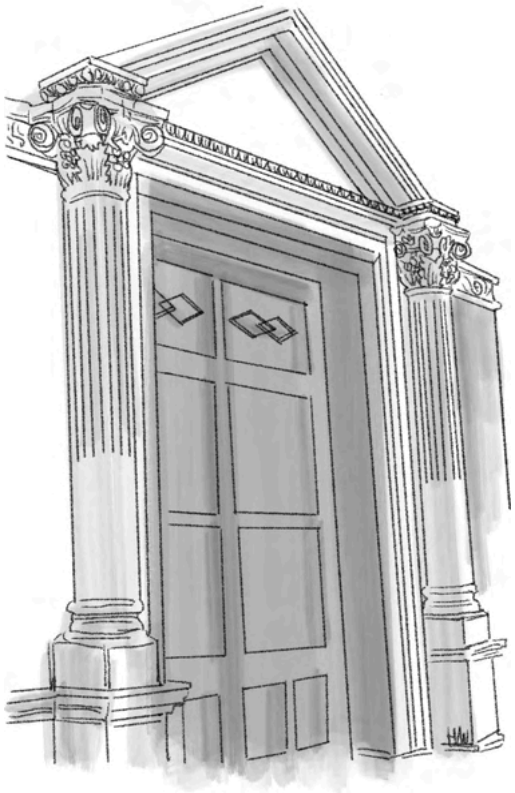

Fig. 8. Doorway from a *diaolou* in Tangkou Village. Referenced from Zhang 2002, 419.

Fig. 9. :Left: Neoclassical window frames.
Image by Hugh Nelson from Wikimedia Commons under CC 3.0 license.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Four_Windows_(55877520).jpeg

Right: A window frame from a *diaolou* in Baihe Village.
Referenced from Zhang 2002, 474.

Fig. 10. The Tamsui Red Castle in Taipei, built in 1899.
Note the Western-style arched façade and the Chinese-style interior walls. Own image.

Fig. 11. A ceramic element of a *diaolou* roof edge. Referenced from Zhang 2002, 481.

Fig. 12. Ceramic decoration over a doorway in a vernacular house, Zili Village. Own image.

Fig. 13. Plague from a Zili Village *diaolou*. Own image.

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"Time and again I hear the youths mutter": Hybrid Traditions of Reception in Haizi's To Sappho

Maria Ma

Abstract: This article examines the contemporary poet Haizi's response to a hybrid Chinese and Western tradition of mediating Sappho in his short poem *To Sappho*, and pays particular attention to the routes of transmission and translation through which Haizi encountered the Greek poet. For Haizi, Sappho comes to represent an elusive lyric ideal as he strives for affective poetic language in the wake of the Cultural Revolution's impact on Chinese literature. Echoing and reconfiguring imagery from her available poetry and biography, Haizi domesticates Sappho into his symbolic, rural landscape of poetry, thereby creating a paradigm to contemplate his own poetic identity and legacy.

Keywords: Contemporary Chinese Poetry, Haizi, Reception, Sappho.

Around 1986, a young Chinese poet's encounter with Sappho was recorded in his own poem:

给萨福[1]

美丽如同花园的女诗人们
相互热爱，坐在谷仓中
用一只嘴唇摘取另一只嘴唇

我听见青年中时时传言道：萨福

一只失群的
钥匙下的绿鹅
一样的名字。盖住
我的杯子

托斯卡尔的美丽的女儿
草药和黎明的女儿
执杯者的女儿

你野花

[1] Text from Haizi 2009: 138.

的名字
就像蓝色冰块上
淡蓝色的清水溢出

萨福萨福
红色的云缠在头上
嘴唇染红了每一片飞过的鸟儿
你散着身体香味的
鞋带被风吹断
在泥土里

谷色中的嘤嘤之声
萨福萨福
亲我一下

你装饰额角的诗歌何其甘美
你凋零的棺木像一盘美丽的
棋局

To Sappho[2]

Beautiful as the garden itself are the poetesses
Loving each other, sitting in the grain barn
Plucking a pair of lips with another pair

Time and again I hear the youths mutter: Sappho

Separated from its flock
a green goose under a key
—a name like that. It covers
my cup

The beautiful daughter of Toscar
The daughter of herb and dawn
The daughter of cupbearers

Your wildflower
name
As if upon blue ice
The pale clarity of water overflows

[2] All translations from Chinese are mine.

Sappho Sappho
Head swathed in red clouds
Lips staining red every patch of birds flown by
Bearing the fragrance of your body
your shoelaces blown by the wind breaks
in the soil

In the barn a low muttering
Sappho Sappho
Give me a kiss

Your poems adorning the brows
—how nectarous they are
Your withered coffin is as if a beautiful
chess game

The name of this poet was Zha Haisheng. Born and raised in a small rural village in East China to a farming family, Zha was known for his love of books from an early age. In 1979, two years after the reinstatement of university entrance examinations post-Cultural Revolution, fifteen-year-old Zha was admitted by the prestigious Peking University to study law.[3] As a student and later as a lecturer of law after graduation, Zha increasingly dedicated his time to writing poetry under the pen name Haizi, and immersed himself in the heightened spirit of literary production that characterized Chinese universities at the time. In his seven years of poetic production prior to his death in 1989, he composed more than 200 short poems and 7 long poems, comprising 800,000 words.

Haizi composed *To Sappho* in 1986 alongside a series of works dedicated to admired artists who inspired him and whose works informed a theoretical, classicizing turn in his poetry.[4] In many of these poems, Haizi immediately treats the dedicatees as close, tangible, and even as a part of himself. His intellectual connection with these artists and their works frequently manifests in his poetry as somatic, visceral interactions: for example, he embodies

[3] Implemented in 1952, the Nationwide Unified Examination for Admissions to General Universities and Colleges is the annual undergraduate admission exam through which the vast majority of students gain entry to universities in China. During the tumultuous Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), universities were either closed or operating under limited capacity, only enrolling students selected by a committee rather than through academic evaluation. The Examination was experimentally resumed in 1977, and formally re-established in 1978. The first few Examinations saw a great number of examinees following the eleven-year suspension, and this new generation of university students played a key role in the "culture fever (wenhua re 文化热)" and "aesthetics fever (meixue re 美学热)" of the eighties, where large-scale literary production and debates about the succession of cultural traditions permeated all levels of society. For a detailed discussion of the Chinese literary scene after the devastating impact of the Cultural Revolution, see Hong 2007, particularly Part II.

[4] See Haizi 2009: 1027. In his poetry, Haizi often takes scenes from agricultural work and his personal, lived experience as points of departure, and distills them into dreamlike imagery imbued with symbolic significance. Around 1986, as Haizi professes in a series of essays titled "diaries" such as the one cited here, he increasingly reflects upon a wide range of philosophers and poets in formulating his way of life as well as his poetics.

Van Gogh,[5] ventriloquizes Mozart,[6] and in one long poem even presents himself as violently beaten up by a club-wielding Henry David Thoreau.[7] In contrast, this poem *To Sappho* shows Haizi repeatedly reframing Sappho's image, name, and poetry, as he contemplates and searches for the elusive poetess. In this paper, I situate Haizi's engagement with Sappho within the literary landscape of Chinese Sapphic transmission and recent Chinese literary history more broadly, thus filling a scholarly gap.[8] Against this background, I will explore the ways in which Haizi negotiates his own poetic identity through constructing an image of "Sappho," one that clearly interacts with prior Chinese translations, but departs from this tradition in embracing her queer identity.

Looking at Haizi's poem, one finds many elements reminiscent of the Lesbian poet—the garden and flowers, herbs and dawn, cool waters and cupbearers, and above all her poetic circle and same-sex love. Sappho, however, inhabits an ambiguous space between the real and the poetic world among familiar imagery. While Haizi treats the sound of her name as something close and tangible enough to "cover [his] cup," he also transplants her into an imagined "grain barn" (谷仓, 2) and above the "soil" (泥土), both key terms in his work. Haizi, who is now referred to as "the poet of wheat" in popular culture, often anchors his identity and ideals to a highly symbolic rural poetic landscape. In this charming yet fabricated "order and homeland that exists outside of time,"[9] the grain barn and the soil are entwined with life, love, and death. This imagery is most clearly elucidated in his theoretical essay titled "The Barn," where Haizi constructs a metaphorical, almost primeval terrain centered around a barn that is theorized as the container of all human consciousness, experience, and fate. The grain barn simultaneously "traps [Haizi] as a prisoner" as a subject that demands attention, and "cannot be reached,"[10] a tension that he elsewhere also applies to women.[11] Sappho and her companions thus sit at the intersection of all these ideas in

[5] Haizi 2009: 4, "阿尔的太阳——给我的瘦哥哥" [The sun of Arles—for my thin brother]. Haizi applies the same imagery to Van Gogh as he does to himself: fire, the wheatfield, the love of harvest, etc. In another poem, "死亡之诗（之二：采摘葵花）" [The poem of death (two: picking sunflowers)], sunflowers bloom on the body of the first-person narrator as he simultaneously seems to die and live on in Van Gogh-esque imagery.

[6] Haizi 2009: 175, "莫扎特在《安魂曲》中说" [Mozart says in *Requiem*].

[7] In Haizi 2009: 166, "梭罗这人有脑子" [This guy Thoreau has a brain], the narrator says, "梭罗手头没有别的 / 抓住了一根棒木 / 那木棍揍了我 / 狠狠揍了我 / 像春天揍了我" [Thoreau has nothing else in his hands / but a wooden club / that wooden club beat me up / it beat me up heavily / it beat me up like the season of spring].

[8] Liu 2012 provides the most comprehensive overview of Sappho's well-known translations into Chinese, alongside insightful comments on the trends within Chinese studies of Sappho, but does not touch on the historical context of their translation. Tian 2003 raises Sappho's Chinese reception history at different points in her edition of Sappho that includes translation, commentary, and analysis. Chen 2021 introduces major Sappho translations in 20th century China, with special focus on Zhou Zuoren. Chen references several lines of Haizi's *To Sappho* in relation to the issue of Sapphic sexuality in her Chinese and Japanese transmission.

[9] Zhao 2011: 150. "海子虚构的"家园"，在某种程度上建立了一种"时间之外"的秩序……" Also see Haizi 2009: 704-8, "家园" [Homeland], in his epic poem "太阳·七部书" [The Sun: Seven Books].

[10] Haizi 2009: 1147-1150. "我被囚禁在谷仓……谷仓不可到达。"

[11] Haizi 2009: 1030-1033, "日记 1987 年 11 月 14 日" [Diary (14 November 1987)]. In this essay, Haizi speaks of the topics and themes he'd like his poetry to cover, including women he has met, about whom he writes, "她们是白天的边界之外的异境，是异国的群山，是别的民族的山河，是天堂的美丽灯盏一般挂下的果实，那样的可望而不可即。" [They are the other realm beyond the edges of daylight, the mountain

Haizi's poetic barn, nebulously embodying an eternal yet unattainable state of being. The framing as an unreachable ideal similarly characterizes Haizi's only other mention of Sappho in a 1986 diary entry that details his turn to classical material as inspiration for a new, pure, and superior lyric language. In Chinese, lyric poetry is called 抒情诗, literally "poetry that expresses emotions," and Haizi believes that such an expression ought to be spontaneous and intuitive, driven by experience and passion. He calls lyric poetry "the kingly throne in the depths of a lake,"[12] and says:

> As I walk from the contemporary and modern to the classical, I follow the truth of the stream. There, lyric is still in a clear, unclouded state, the self-examination of the watery crown. With Sappho, the throne in the water never tilts. Your shepherd leans on the doorstep. The terracotta jar draws down water between the rocks.[13]

In Haizi's poetic landscape, then, the name of Sappho stands in for the height of lyric in the use of language and imagery. It also stands for a time in which lyric could be supreme. Haizi is able to see both of these things but cannot yet reach them. Haizi's strong desire to achieve the command of poetic language he senses in Sappho, and to inhabit her ideal poetic space, is evident in his sudden shift from the third person to the second person when referring to Sappho (line 12). By summoning her and the world of her poetry into his contemporary one, Haizi seems to be seeking a possibility for his future in her enigmatically hallowed past. As much as I'd like to agree with this sentiment of Sappho's supremacy, this does raise a question: among all the lyric poets that the last 2500 years have produced, and among all the writers Haizi heartily lauded, why was Sappho of such a singular, unmatched appeal to Haizi? To answer this question, it is necessary to first step away from the poem and consider the context of its composition.

The year 1986 not only marked Haizi's turn to the classical, but it was also a turning point in the Chinese transmission of Sappho, when two new translations of the Greek poet started to be undertaken. One is by Luo Luo, who was the first to produce a complete Chinese edition of Sappho's poetry based on Mary Barnard's 1958 English translation;[14] and the other is by Shui Jianfu, who was the first to translate a selection from the original Greek text.[15] In Haizi's time, however, the most accessible text of Sappho is a 1979 anthology of world literature that includes a selection of Greek poetry. The anthology is largely neglected in studies of Sappho's Chinese reception,[16] and is heavily reliant upon prior Chinese interpretations of Sappho. I would like to take a look at these early, formative stages of

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ranges of foreign lands, the landscapes of different nations, the fruits hanging like the beautiful lights of paradise, in sight but so inaccessible].

[12] Haizi 2009: 1027-28, "日记 1986 年 8 月" [Diary (August 1986)]: "湖泊深处，抒情就是，王的座位。"

[13] ibid. "(2) 古典：当我从当代、现代走向古典时，我是遵循泉水的原理或真理的。在那里，抒情还处于一种清澈的状态，处于水中王冠的自我审视。在萨福那里，水中王位不会倾斜。你的牧羊人斜靠门厅而立。岩间陶瓶牵下水来。"

[14] Luo 1989. The translation is based on Mary Barnard, Sappho*: A New Translation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958.

[15] Shui 1988. Shui's collection of ancient Greek poetry includes thirteen poems by Sappho.

[16] Liu 2012 and Chen 2021 both relegate this edition to the footnotes.

Sappho's introduction in China that led to our period of the 80s, before examining the anthology's intertexts with such traditions and Haizi's poem *To Sappho*.

In Ellen Greene's edited volume *Re-Reading Sappho*, she writes that "the history of Sappho imitations, translations, and scholarship is a history of images and perceptions, fictions and fantasies."[17] The century of Sapphic transmission in China since 1902 is no different.[18] The earliest introductions to Sappho often looked to her English tradition as a basis, and brought to the Chinese audience a "Victorian Sappho" that Yopie Prins has identified and deconstructed in her 1999 book.[19] In this period, an obsession with the poet's life produced ever lengthening accounts of her biography, and constructed an image of Sappho as the paradigmatic Victorian-esque poetess.[20] Her poetry became her biography, which in turn helped editors fill the gaps in her fragments with "plausible" names and narratives, consequently giving rise to many "facts" about Sappho's life that endure to this day. Sappho's transmission in China *is* a practice in the reception of this highly mediated rendition of Sappho, as the Victorian aesthetic judgement of Sappho overwhelmingly informed which of her poems and versions of her biographies were chosen for Chinese translation.

Of the earliest Sappho enthusiasts and translators in China, the most influential were Shao Xunmei and Zhou Zuoren. Both men were among the wave of Chinese students that sought education abroad in the early 1900s, many of whom later returned to China to become the driving force behind twentieth century Chinese publishing, translation, and literary criticism. The former, Shao Xunmei, was himself a modernist poet. He professes to have been "stunned by [Sappho]'s divine charm" when he saw the so-called "Sappho" fresco in Naples in 1925,[21] which led him to seek out Sappho's poetry through the Cambridge scholar and Sappho editor J. M. Edmonds.[22] It is worth noting that Edmonds' Loeb edition of Sappho featured what David Campbell later called "excessive eagerness to fill the gaps",[23] the traces of which show up in Shao's own works. Shao launched his poetic career by both passionately imitating Sappho and treating the poet as a highly eroticized subject of his poetry. He

[17] Ellen Greene ed., *Re-Reading Sappho*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. 3.

[18] The first appearance of her name is in Liang Qichao's translation of Byron's "The Isles of Greece." As Chen 2021 points out, lamenting Greece became a substitute for lamenting China in the eyes of Chinese intellectuals witnessing the tragedies in their country at the turn of the twentieth century.

[19] Prins, *Victorian Sappho*, 1999.

[20] Ibid.

[21] The fresco is National Archaeological Museum of Naples, no. 9084. The chances of it being Sappho is miniscule, and this identification is no longer accepted by scholars.

[22] Shao records his obsession with Sappho in the preface to his poetic collection, *Twenty-Five Poems* [诗二十五首]. He speaks of how the "divine charm" of the fresco "Sappho" led him to seek out his poetry, which he found comparable in form to some ancient Chinese poetry. "一张壁画的残片使我惊异于希腊女诗人莎茀的神丽，辗转觅到了一部她的全诗的英译; 又从她的诗格里，猜想到许多地方有和中国旧体诗形似处" [A fragmented fresco stunned me with the divine charm of the Greek poetess Sappho, then led me to seek out a complete English translation of her poetry; then, from her poetic form and meter, I conjectured there are many similarities with old forms of Chinese poetry].

[23] See David A. Campbell 1992 in *Greek Lyric, Volume I: Sappho and Alcaeus* (LCL 142).

incorporated the Sapphic stanza into his own Chinese verses and published several articles with mentions of Sappho's poems and brief accounts of her popular biography.[24]

Meanwhile, Zhou Zuoren, an influential essayist, translator, and lifelong admirer of ancient Greek culture, began his efforts to introduce Sappho from 1914. He wrote multiple pieces on Sappho for widely circulated Chinese publications, each containing translations of a few poems, short introduction of Sappho and her poetic style, and commentaries on his approach to translation.[25] His primary source of Sappho's poetry was the 1907 fourth reprint of Henry Wharton's incredibly successful book, *Sappho: Memoir, Text, Selected Renderings, and a Literal Translation*, initially published in 1885. In this edition, Wharton not only provides a detailed introduction to Sappho through extrapolative biographical readings of her poetry, but he also follows each poem and his prose translation with poetic renditions by English writers, with more "popular" poems such Sappho 31 filling up to eight pages of various translations and derivative works, thus making the literary taste of the time visually clear.

Shao Xunmei and Zhou Zuoren's selective renderings of Sappho were largely informed by such sources in translation that they utilized, and capture within them the already palimpsestic history of transmission. Shao and Zhou's early piecemeal translations were then solidified into something of a small "canonical" selection of both poetry and biography that was translated, adapted, and reinterpreted again and again, both from other languages into Chinese, and Chinese further into another writer or translator's Chinese. This early stage of Sappho's introduction to China culminated in Zhou Zuoren's publication of *The Greek Poetess Sappho* in 1951. The book is a mixture of Zhou's commentary and selective translations of Arthur Weigall's 328-page biography of Sappho,[26] with small additions from C. R. Haines and, once again, Henry Wharton.[27] Weigall's hefty edition presents extensive biographical readings of Sappho's poetry, supplemented with lengthy, narrativized and sensationalized descriptions of Lesbos' and Mytilene's customs, natural surroundings, and notably, agricultural production. Zhou's book attempts to breach the cultural distance between the two lands by bringing in Chinese comparanda for unfamiliar ancient Greek dates and customs, and, as the first Chinese book dedicated to a single Greek poet, it likely had a significant role in establishing Sappho as the model of a Greek lyric poet to the Chinese audience.

Publication of Sappho ebbed during the Maoist era, but the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and Deng Xiaoping's policy of "Reform and Opening-up" in 1978 ushered in a new era for Chinese literature. As a response to the dry, monotonous, and "unnaturally transparent" language that resulted from political pressure and propagandistic purpose during the Cultural Revolution,[28] translators took up a wide variety of foreign

[24] See Yuan 2014 for a detailed examination of Shao's entanglements with Sappho in his own poetic career. See also Chen 2021 and Liu 2012.

[25] Liu 2012: 116-120.

[26] Weigall 1932.

[27] As recounted in the preface to his book, Zhou Zuoren owned the 1907 reprint of Wharton's book, as well as C. R. Haines 1926: *Sappho: The Poems and Fragments.*

[28] Zheng 1993. Zheng's incisive, influential essay theorizes three "ruptures and changes" in the modern history of the Chinese language. The first one is the Vernacular Movement in the 1920s, which she argues often "rudely cast aside all classical literature"; the second one started in the 50s and culminated in the Cultural Revolution from 1966-1976, when political pressure and propagandistic purpose stripped the language of variety and substance, rendering it "unnaturally transparent", dry, and uncreative. The third one came

literature, and writers were eager to experiment with their use of language. This is the context in which poetry was revitalized by the writers that emerged from the underground poetic circles of the previous decade. This is also the environment that produced the most accessible translation of Sappho during Haizi's time, which came in the form of a short biography and nine poems collected in volume one of *Selected Foreign Literary Works*, edited by Zhou Xuliang and published in 1979. As Haizi started university, the four-volume set entered many university libraries as a supplementary textbook for world literature courses.

In this volume, Homer and Sappho were selected as the only two examples of ancient Greek poetry, respectively representing epic and lyric, a choice that sees influence from the essays of Zhou Zuoren discussed above. Zhou Xuliang's two-paragraph introduction of "Sappho, the ancient Greek lyric poet" includes her wealthy background, political exile, the fictive tradition about her love for Phaon and alleged suicide, the scarce survival of her prolific oeuvre, and the extremely high regard for her poetry among other ancient Greek authors. "Sappho's lyric poetry," Zhou writes, "primarily takes love as a theme; her style is unembellished and natural, her emotions true and intense."[29] Zhou Xuliang selects nine poems for translation, eight of which have featured regularly in earlier introductions of Sappho and were the core of what I have previously dubbed the small Chinese "canonical selection" of her poems. Approximately half of the chosen pieces highlight imageries of nature, and half are focused on love and longing.[30]

The first intertext between Haizi's *To Sappho* and Zhou Xuliang's edition is the shared transliteration of Sappho's name as 萨福 sà fú, which has since become standard. Prior to this edition, each translator of Sappho chose different Chinese characters for her name, yielding at least six versions.[31] A further examination reveals that Zhou Xuliang's translation of Sappho's poetry was primarily, if not solely, reliant upon the Wharton edition, which was also a major source for Zhou Zuoren. Starting from Wharton's English, Zhou Xuliang further re-interpreted and altered Wharton's many editorial choices as he translated with careful consideration of both Greek meter and Chinese rhyme scheme. The resulting language flows well musically and is poetic yet easy to read. Some quirks of Zhou Xuliang's edition especially seem to have echoes in Haizi's poem *To Sappho*. For example, in the first poem of the selection he combines Sappho 105a and b, following Wharton's edition.[32] Building upon an earlier version by the translator Zhu Xiang, Zhou presents the poem as follows:

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organically after Deng Xiaoping's policy of "Reform and Opening-up" in 1978/1979, when a wide variety of literature entered China and people were eager to experiment with new forms and write without constraints.

[29] Zhou Xuliang 1979: 34. "萨福的抒情诗歌，多半以恋爱为主题，风格朴素自然，情感真挚强烈。"

[30] The selected poems are: third stanza of 2, 31, 34, 55, 96, 102, 104a, 105a and b, 168b.

[31] Liang Qichao 1902: 撒芷波 (sā zhǐ bō, a confounding transliteration that I believe resulted from a mistaken reading of the Japanese サッフォ [Saffo], which appears in Liang's source material. He misread the geminate consonant marker ッ as ツ [tsu]); Shao Xunmei 1927: 莎茀 (shā fú), two characters that have plant connotations and read as quite feminine; Zhou Zuoren 1914, 1925, 1951: 萨复 (sà fù), 萨普福 (sà pǔ fú), 萨波 (sà bō), Zhou's approach aims more for the accuracy of sound; Yang Yixian 1932/1995: 沙浮 (shā fú), though likely not intentional, Yang's "Sappho" uses two characters that could be taken together to mean "floating sand." See Liu 2012 for Shao, Zhou, and Yang's transliterations of Sappho's name.

[32] Wharton's edition renders the two segments into one poem:

οἷον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἐρεύθεται ἄκρῳ ἐπ' ὔσδῳ,

一个少女[33]

好比苹果蜜甜的，高高的转红在树梢，
向了天转红——奇怪摘果的拿她忘掉——
不，是没有摘，到今天才有人去拾到。

好比野生的风信子茂盛在山岭上，
在牧人们往来的脚下她受损受伤，
一直到紫色的花儿在泥土里灭亡。

One Maiden

Like an apple honey-sweet, turns red high up in the boughs,
turns red towards the sky—strange the pluckers forgot her—
no, just unplucked, none picked her up til today.

Like a wild hyacinth flourishing on the hills,
she who the passing foot of shepherds wound and hurt,
until the purple flower perishes in the soil.

From its language to the use of the dashes in the second line, this in turn appears specifically influenced by the English translation of D. G. Rossetti, included in the Wharton edition.[34] The translation emphasizes the redness of the fruit up high, and presents a more extreme end of the purple flower than any other Chinese translation to date. In comparison, the section from lines 16-21 of Haizi's *To Sappho* has a curiously equivalent progression of imagery: the invocation of Sappho is followed by a repetition of redness, both the red cloud on her head and her lips staining red the birds. Just like the purple flower that "perishes in the soil," Sappho's shoelaces "break in the soil" in Haizi's poem. Both use the Chinese phrase "**在泥土里**," a construction that appears only once among Haizi's myriad mentions of this

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ἄκρον ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ, λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδρόπηες·

οὐ μὰν ἐκλελάθοντ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐδύναντ' ἐπίκεσθαι.

οἷαν τὰν ὐάκινθον ἐν ὤρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες

πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον ἄνθος . . .

[33] Zhou 1979: 34. The translator is noted as Zhu Xiang.

[34] D. G. Rossetti's translation runs as follows (note the punctuation, added title, and the expansion of the second "stanza" into three lines partly for the appearance of completion despite the Greek having only two lines extant):

One Girl

I

Like the sweet apple which reddens upon the topmost bough,

Atop on the topmost twig,—which the pluckers forgot, somehow,—

Forgot it not, nay, but got it not, for none could get it till now.

II

Like the wild hyacinth flower which on the hills is found,

which the passing feet of the shepherds forever tear and wound,

Until the purple blossom is trodden into the ground.

symbolic substance.[35] Moreover, Zhou's edition, following Wharton, gives the title "A Maiden" (**一个少女**) to the two stanzas combined,[36] encouraging the readers to construct the image of a young woman, sweet, "unplucked," flourishing but cruelly trodden, even beyond what the body of the poem suggests. One wonders if such an evocative presentation colors Haizi's portrayal of Sappho. Given that Haizi's poetic dedication to Tolstoy reimagines the Russian author as the elderly peasant of his novels, this reimagining seems possible. There's also an entanglement between nature, poetic image, and poet in Haizi's vision of Sappho that echoes Zhou's explicitly gendered treatment of the fruit and flower simile: The Chinese translation chooses the feminine animate/human pronoun "**她**" (lines 2 and 5) in reference to the "sweet apple" and "hyacinth,"[37] whereas the English version by Rossetti utilizes "which" (lines 2, 5) and "it" (line 3). In Haizi's poem, personhood and natural imagery flow into one another as clouds encompass Sappho's head, as her red lips extend out towards the sky, and her scent finds its way into the land through fallen adornments of her body. Names and sounds gain materiality, becoming a lost goose or key (lines 1-2), or icy water (14-15) and wildflower (12), which coincides with "wild"ness of the hyacinth that is in Zhou's translation after Rossetti, though not present in the original Greek.

Zhou Xuliang's translation of Sappho 31, here titled "To the Beloved," also re-interprets parts of Wharton's prose translation. Much could be said for this rendition, but for the sake of the present argument, I'd like to draw attention to a couple of things that are emblematic of this process of mediated translation that shaped Haizi's poem. Wharton renders the fourth stanza in prose as "sweat pours down, and a trembling seizes all my body; I am paler than grass, and seem in my madness little better than one dead,"[38] while Zhou's version says "Cold sweat pours down all around; bouts of shivers / Run down my limbs, My visage / is paler than winter grass; in my eyes I see only death and madness."[39] The shared word of

[35] Other constructions expressing similar ideas are "在泥土中" and "在泥土上," respectively 2 and 5 occurrences.

[36] Wharton's edition also combines the two stanzas, but notes it is a combination and separates the two parts with the numbers "I" and "II." Zhou's edition, following Zhu Xiang's translation, does not give this indication and presents 105a + b as a single poem with two stanzas.

[37] Since the non-human pronoun 它, or even no pronoun in the case of line 5, would suffice, the use of the feminine pronoun reads as a conscientious poetic choice, especially since the translation otherwise follows that of Rossetti quite closely.

[38] Wharton's Greek is printed as follows:

…

ἀ δέ μίδρως κακχέεται, τρόμος δέ

παῖσαν ἄγρει, χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας

ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης

φαίνομαι [ἄλλα].

[39] "我周身淌着冷汗；一阵阵微颤

透过我的四肢；我的容颜

比冬天草儿还白；眼睛里只看见

死和发疯。" Zhou 1979: 36.

"madness," which is present neither in the original ancient Greek nor in any other contemporary translations I could find, was inserted by Wharton possibly due to the resemblance of φαίνομαι to μαίνομαι. It could be simple poetic license, but it appears Zhou picked up this peculiarity, and further made the word "madness" along with "death" the direct objects of the transitive verb "see," which turns Wharton's introspective, and reflexive "seem" into an outward facing action. Zhou also introduces a theme of coldness through his use of "cold sweat" and "winter grass," the former of which might be drawing upon the translation of Ambrose Philips in Wharton's book, whose rendition of ὀππάτεσσι δ' οὐδὲν ὄρημ' as "over my dim eyes a darkness hung" also finds correspondence in Zhou's "before my eyes a darkness."

It seems to me that the vocabulary choices, omissions, misreadings, and poetic exaggerations Zhou's edition makes create a version of Sappho and Sapphic poetry that—however incidental it might have been—maps easily onto Haizi's poetic ideals and the language he uses to express them. In this particular instance of Sappho 31, the twice adapted verse yields the imagery of winter, and the notion of "seeing" the abstract concepts of death and madness, which finds resonance within Haizi's works, especially those in the second half of his poetic career. In a poem titled "Dedication to the Night," Haizi writes that "in the darkness of the barn the grains pile high / in the barn it is too dark, too quiet, too bountiful / also too desolate, in the bountiful harvest I see the eyes of [the god of] death."[40] In the last poem the poet composed before his death, titled "Spring, Ten Haizis," he characterizes himself, addressed both in the first and in the second person, as "the son of the dark night, immersed in winter, enamored of death / unable to pull away, in love with the cold and empty countryside,"[41] which is a fitting summary of many of his most prevalent poetic motifs.

Whereas Haizi's understanding of Sappho's poetics appears to closely follow these highly mediated transmissions, his reaction to her sexuality is notably different. His emphatically positive framing of Sappho's homosexuality is the first of its kind in published Chinese literature.[42] Previous introducers of Sappho suppressed the traditions of her sexuality in various ways, most commonly through omission.[43] Zhou Xuliang's 1979 book, discussed above, only mentions her alleged love for Phaon in the biography and subtly talks around the subject in the footnotes under Sappho 31 and 96.[44] Zhou Zuoren, who was the

[40] Haizi 2009: 548, "黑夜的献诗": "..... 稻谷堆在黑暗的谷仓 / 谷仓中太黑暗，太寂静，太丰收 / 也太荒凉，我在丰收中看到了阎王的眼睛....."

[41] Haizi 2009: 540, "春天，十个海子"："……这是黑夜的儿子，沉浸于冬天，倾心死亡 / 不能自拔，热爱着空虚而寒冷的乡村……"

[42] Chen 2021: 483.

[43] Shao Xunmei, Zhou Xuliang, and later Yang Xianyi, Luo Luo, and Shui Jianfu all omit this aspect; her anecdotal relationship with Phaon often receives attention even though it is also frequently dismissed after mention.

[44] Under 31, Zhou's succinct footnote explains the identity of the "you" and the "him." Under 96, titled "A Lost Friend," a lengthy footnote gives the popular "Sappho, school mistress" narrative reconstruction of the poem involving Sappho's relationship with Atthis and Anactoria. What Zhou writes is not explicit, but could certainly be homoerotically construed: "据考证，阿狄斯是萨福的一个女学生。萨福起初不喜欢他，后来才发见她美，但是阿狄斯却喜欢了别人……" [According to research, Atthis is one of Sappho's female pupils. Sappho was not initially fond of her, and only later saw her beauty, but Atthis preferred someone else...] Zhou 1979: 37.

only one who did not shun a direct discussion of this tradition, comments in reference to Sappho 31 that "her relationships with her female companions were not necessarily that perverse (变态), and neither can we tell the whole story from a mere few lines...In any case this is a good poem... the other aspects we can disregard."[45] His book briefly summarizes Weigall and Wharton's discussion of the matter, and follows with his own conclusion, in which he brings in an ancient Chinese example to make the unfamiliar reception of Sappho's sexuality more easily conceivable. He writes, "That it is said many women of Lesbos practice the vice of homosexuality, called "Sapphism," is a rumor made especially malicious by the Medieval Christian church. A Chinese proverb states that it is considered a woman's virtue to be ignorant...[like how] Song dynasty poetess Li Qingzhao enjoyed great fame in her time, but slander came out of nowhere..."[46] In Zhou Zuoren's narrative, Sappho's poetry is sublime separate from, or even *in spite of*, her sexuality. In fact, the complex tradition of Sappho's queerness wasn't treated until Tian Xiaofei's 2003 book *"Sappho": The Making of a Western Literary Tradition*, in which she examined how social norms and male desire suffocated female same-sex love in Chinese circulations of Sappho.[47] In Haizi's poem, however, Sappho's presence is introduced and then emphasized by her companions' same-sex affections towards her, and her poetic identity is entangled in her sexuality, recalling Haizi's construction of an idealized, beautiful poetic terrain elsewhere in his theoretical essays that featured "people lean[ing] in to kiss, regardless of gender."[48] I do wonder if the "underground" circulation of Sappho alluded to in line 4 of Haizi's poem, "Time and again I hear the youths mutter: Sappho," was accompanied by discussions, maybe even acceptance, of her sexuality that have not survived in written records. Is it possible that the socially isolated poet, whose poetic aspirations "deviated" from the contemporary mainstream, felt some affinity for his ancient Greek precursor? For someone whose transmitted biography focuses on exile and loss of love, and whose poetry was variably stigmatized for its portrayal of "deviant" sexuality?

In his engagement with and idolization of Sappho, Haizi joined many contemporary Chinese poets in seeking a predecessor, a "soulmate" of sorts, in foreign literature.[49] Scholars have noted that after the violent break in Chinese language and literary history due to war and revolution, poets found a spiritual poetic lineage in the experience of suffering and the sense of alienation passed down in the works and biographies of foreign poetic "martyrs."[50] In this very poem, we see Haizi placing Sappho as the source of such a lineage: before casting her as the daughter of herb, dawn, and cupbearer—all elements familiar to early Greek literature and Sappho's works—Haizi finds her in "the beautiful daughter of Toscar," which in turn reproduces a poetic line about a young woman mourning lost love that Henry David

[45] Zhou 1925. "……女友的关系未必是那样变态的，我们也不能依据了几行诗来推测她们的事情。总之这既是一篇好诗，我们只要略为说明相关联的事，为之介绍，别的都可以不管了。"

[46] Zhou Zuoren 1951: 9-10. "后来更传说勒斯婆斯的女人多有同性爱的恶习，称作萨波党，这又由于中古基督教会的造成更是变本加厉的谣言了。中国俗语说女子无才便是德……宋朝女诗人李清照有名当代，被无中生有的说……" Zhou concludes regarding such traditions of biographical reception that "perhaps things of the same nature happen just about everywhere." Li Qingzhao was arguably the most famous ancient Chinese poetess, and like Sappho, she is the only ancient poetess who is widely known in her culture.

[47] See also Chen 2021: 483.

[48] Haizi 2009: 1147-1150, "The Barn." "探头亲吻。不分男女。"

[49] Zhao 2011: 65.

[50] ibid.

Thoreau quotes as he ponders loneliness and personhood.[51] As Haizi embraced the lyric "I" in defiance of the Cultural Revolution's collective "we," and announced that the "true" lyric poet has to be "first a lover, then a poet,"[52] he encountered Sappho. The Sappho he met was not only presented through her most passionate and inwardly-turned poetry and biography, but was moreover applauded and heroized for them. Haizi, then, legitimizes his particular poetic ideals by echoing Sappho's language and integrating her into his own contemporary Chinese poetic landscape just as countless Western poets through the ages have done, thus participating in a tradition of which he may not even have been fully aware. The idiosyncrasy of Haizi's Sappho experience was likely also informed by the dearth of available Chinese materials, further filtered down from two millennia of fragmentation, reconstruction, and cross-cultural reception. This curtailed and curated Sappho does not give Haizi a plain answer in his search of "pure" lyric language, but, through a tantalizing glimpse, opens up a world of lyric possibilities that he voyeuristically reaches for.[53] By closing *To Sappho* with "your withered coffin is as if a beautiful / chess game (26-7)," Haizi indeed seems to hint at the puzzling nature of Sappho's fragmentary legacy, but in "chess game" we might also see an open-endedness, an invitation for a willing reader to join in constructing its meaning.

Haizi would not live to see the publication of the new Sappho editions that were underway in 1986. In the spring of 1989, he laid himself on a stretch of railway tracks near Shanhaiguan and died under an oncoming train. Largely unknown outside of poetic circles in his lifetime, Haizi became an overnight sensation upon his death, and numerous biographies sprang up alongside his extensive oeuvre in publication.[54] Different aspects of his characterization as a mythologized "poetic martyr," both of passionate ideals and of lonesome desperation, variously steer interpretations and applications of his poetry.[55] Haizi's brief but fervent poetic career, haltingly ended by his "timely" death prior to the social upheavals of 1989, aided in the public construction of him as a paradigmatic poet and image of "the 80s," an era and a symbol that occupies an unattainable place in the modern

[51] From chapter 5 of Thoreau, *Walden*. The line is taken from James Macpherson's "translation" of a purported Scottish epic titled *Fingal* by one Ossian: "Mourning untimely consumes the sad; / Few are their days in the land of the living, / Beautiful daughter of Toscar." Macpherson's epic is widely acclaimed for its high literary merit and influenced many contemporary writers, although the current scholarly consensus is that Macpherson was the sole composer of the epic he claimed to have discovered. There is, I dare say, something poetic about Haizi using this circuitously transmitted line to characterize his Sappho.

[52] Haizi 2009: 1027-28. "我是说，你首先是恋人，其次是诗人。"

[53] In discussing "the Classical" in lyric poetry, where Haizi considers Sappho's eminence unshakable, he frequently calls for a return of focus to language itself, and expresses frustration over the state of language in his own works and in contemporary Chinese poetry at large. See Haizi 2009: 1027-28.

[54] Haizi's initial launch to fame owes much to the commemorative essays published by his then much more well-known poet friends such as Luo Yihe, who gave his poetry high praise and offered insight into the circumstances leading up to his suicide. See Jin 2012 for a succinct summary of the publication history of Haizi's works and biographies as well as scholarship on Haizi following his death. Zhao 2011 discusses representative works in detail throughout her book.

[55] In high school textbooks and political slogans, his most widely cited poem "面朝大海，春暖花开" [Facing the Sea, Spring Flowers Bloom] exemplifies "healthy and positive attitude towards life"; in countless seaside real estate advertisements, the titular one-liner evokes an enviable middle-class lifestyle; in most of recent scholarship, however, the poem's overtly bright imagery belies a deep despair towards the future.

Chinese literary imagination.[56] For many looking back through layers of nostalgia and cultural mediation, Haizi has come to embody a time of pure pursuits and open possibilities, not dissimilar to what Sappho represented in Haizi's own poetics.

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[56] For in depth discussions of this complex era in Chinese literary history and Haizi's place in it, see, for example, Hong 2007 and Zhao 2011. Zhao offers a good bibliography on the phenomenon of nostalgia towards "the 80s" prevalent in generations of Chinese people and analyzes the historical contingency of Haizi's exceptional posthumous fortune.

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Tam magnus ex Asia veni:
Towards an Asian American Hermeneutics in Classics

Dominic Machado

Abstract: Riffing off Vincent Wimbush's directive to consider Blackness in biblical studies, this article imagines what it might mean to center Asian Americanness in the study of the classics. I offer two brief case studies that offer one possible vision of what an Asian American hermeneutics for classics might look like. These two case studies focus on two Asian immigrants in Roman culture—Aeneas (as well as his fellow Trojans) in Vergil's *Aeneid* and Trimalchio in Petronius' *Satyrica*—and how reading them through an Asian Americanist lens can shed light on these figures and, more broadly, on contemporary Roman social, cultural, and political structures. The article concludes by considering the ethics that might attend further attempts at developing an Asian American hermeneutics in classics.

Keywords: Asian American hermeneutics, *Aeneid*, disciplinary reform, freedmen, Petronius, racialization, romantic capitalism.

"We have been running for so long. We are tired. We want to rest.
We don't want to wake up tomorrow and pack our bags. We have gone 10,000 miles.
We have boarded a row boat, tug boat, bus, freight train. We have a cell phone
And some bread.

Our eyes are dry. Our breath needs washing. What next? You are
Putting up a wall on your Southern flank? What an irony. The country that
accepts refugees do not want us. We qualify."

— Indran Amirthanayagam, *The Migrant's Reply* (2020)

Introduction: (Re)Orienting the Classics

A decade ago, the idea of an entire special issue of an academic journal devoted to Asian and Asian American perspectives on classics would have seemed unimaginable. The existence of this special issue is a testament to the unerring determination of Asian-identifying scholars to not only find a place for themselves within the field, but to transform the discipline so that others can follow in their footsteps. For instance, the likes of Yung In Chae, Mathura Umachandran, Nandini Pandey, and Stephanie Wong, among others, have brought to light their own experiences in the discipline to reveal the white-norming and white supremacist face of the 21st-century Classics and sound to clarion call for disciplinary reform.[1] Similarly, Kelly Nguyen and Chris Waldo have challenged and entrenched notions of the classical canon by publishing a number of path-breaking articles that analyze how Asian and Asian American writers have engaged with classical traditions to meditate on experiences of empire,

[1] Chae 2018; Pandey 2018; Umachandran 2019; Wong 2019.

marginalization, and diaspora.[2] Perhaps, most significantly, Asian and Asian American classicists have stridently pushed back against the individualist models of scholarship by developing communal structures like the Asian and Asian American Classical Caucus (AAACC) that support, mentor, and connect Asian-identifying scholars of the ancient Mediterranean.[3]

By challenging exclusionary disciplinary practices, radically expanding the temporal and geographic boundaries of classical scholarship, and building enduring communal support structures, Asian-identifying classicists have contributed meaningfully to a larger reconsideration of the academic study of the Greco-Roman world. This article seeks to build on the pioneering work of these Asian and Asian American scholars. Riffing off Vincent Wimbush's directive to consider Blackness in biblical studies, I want to imagine what it might mean to center Asianness—or, more precisely, Asian Americanness—in the study of the classics.[4] By moving the periphery to the center, I hope to disrupt the discipline's long-standing entanglements with white supremacy, colonialism, imperialism, and racial capitalism and its epistemic privileging of white ways of knowing and being. As such, this paper functions as a very partial answer to Dan-el Padilla Peralta's call to develop "an oppositional set of communities of inquiry, understanding Greco-Roman classics in its Euro-American iteration as bedeviled by the same absences and silences that mark other white-centric epistemic projects."[5]

New Perspectives: Asian and Asian American Hermeneutics

What exactly do I mean by centering Asianness and Asian Americanness in classics? I mean developing a way of reading, writing, and teaching about the classics that takes the experiences of Asian and Asian Americans as a primary vehicle for understanding the Greco-Roman Mediterranean. The idea of such an identitarian hermeneutic for the study of classics, particularly one centered around Asianness, may seem shocking to some. To some skepticism, I offer the following response: Classics as an academic discipline already uses an identitarian hermeneutic, just one that has long escaped notice. Classics, as it is dominantly practiced, centers post-Enlightenment Euro-American whiteness as its primary vehicle for understanding the Greco-Roman past.[6] Consequently, offering and naming oppositional hermeneutics to that of whiteness serves a critical function. It both lays bare the unnamed identitarian politics that has shaped the discipline of classics and offers an alternative to them.

Thankfully, as Padilla Peralta has noted, such work is not unprecedented in ancient Mediterranean studies. For nearly four decades now, minoritized scholars in biblical studies have developed communities of inquiry that have called into question the "absences and silences" of their own discipline by developing numerous identitarian hermeneutics for reading biblical texts. The likes of Renita Weems, Delores Williams, Mitzi Smith, Cheryl Sanders, and Nyasha Junior have developed womanist and Black feminist interpretations of

[2] Nguyen 2020, 2021; Kim 2022; Waldo 2023; Johnston 2023. See also Chew 1997.

[3] On the foundation of the AAACC, see Wong 2019.

[4] Wimbush 2000: 1-43, esp. 2-7.

[5] Padilla Peralta 2022.

[6] Padilla Peralta 2019a; Stewart and Machado 2019; Eccleston and Padilla Peralta 2022; McCoskey 2022; Umachandran 2022; Umachandran and Ward 2023.

biblical texts, while Gail Yee, Benny Liew, Kwok Pui-Lan, and R. S. Sugirtharajah have advanced Asian and Asian American ways of reading such texts.[7]

The benefits of developing these identitarian hermeneutics for biblical studies have been many. First among these are moral and ethical benefits. According to Mitzi Smith, by adopting an identitarian hermeneutic, scholars "become iconoclasts, breaking up, deconstructing oppressive iconic knowledge, but also constructing, resurrecting, retrieving, and affirming epistemologies that allow black women and other oppressed peoples to survive and thrive."[8] Second, identitarian hermeneutics simultaneously disrupt the idea of an ancient world that can be recovered unblemished by the gaze of modernity and troubles the claim that Western epistemologies hold some sort of universal value. Yii-Jan Lin, in her recent article on violence against Asian American women, has argued that identitarian approaches "[reject] the claim that the moment for textual, scriptural creation ended with" the past, "and that the only valid form of interpretation comes from the methods of European men of the last few centuries."[9] Identitarian hermeneutics establish the study of the past as a necessarily bidirectional process, in which the ancient and modern are inextricably entangled, and acknowledge that alternative ways of being lead to alternative ways of knowing.[10]

In order to do this work of constructing, resurrecting, retrieving, and affirming alternative epistemologies that move beyond Euro-American centric forms of disciplinary inquiry that fetishize the Greco-Roman past, I propose an Asian American hermeneutics based on two interrelated intellectual foundations: 1) the robust theoretical underpinning of Asian American studies and 2) my own experience as an immigrant who has been racialized as Asian American.

My rationale for the former is two-fold. First, Asian American studies is concerned with critiquing the white-centering logic of liberalism, exposing the invisible workings of white supremacy, and unearthing the deep impacts of colonialism in its various guises. As Lisa Lowe writes, "the force of Asian American studies is not the restoration of a cultural heritage to an identity formation, *but rather the history of Asian alterity to the modern nation-state highlights the convergence of nationalism with racial exclusion, gendered social stratification, and labor exploitation* (emphasis added)."[11] Second, it offers alternatives to current social, cultural, and political formation. Asian American cultures, Lowe argues, "[are] the site of more than the critical negation of the U.S. nation; [they are] a site that shifts and marks alternatives to the national terrain by occupying other spaces, imagining different narratives and critical historiographies, and enacting practices that give rise to new forms of subjectivity and new

[7] Womanist and Black feminist hermeneutics (e.g.): Weems 1988; Williams 1993; Sanders 1995; Smith 2015a; Junior 2018, 2020. Asian and Asian American hermeneutics (e.g.): Sugirtharajah 1998, 2001; Pui-Lan 2000, 2005; Yee 2006, 2009; Liew 2008.

[8] Smith 2015b: 120-121.

[9] Lin 2022: 768.

[10] I borrow the framing of bidirectionality from Hendricks 2021: 368-369.

[11] Lowe 1998: 30. Asian American studies, as part of the larger umbrella of ethnic studies, functions in the words of Lorgia García Peña 2022: 83-84 "as a critical, anticolonial site of knowledge, learning, and teaching ... charged with filling in the immense gaps left by our Eurocentric education system, contradicting its violence, changing the narrative."

ways of questioning the government of human life by the nation state."[12] The deep engagement of Asian American studies with these questions makes it well-suited (though, I should add, not uniquely suited) as a theoretical grounding for both an identitarian critique of the white norming nature of classics and for the construction of epistemologies that offer alternatives to it.[13]

The means by which this critique occurs leads us to our second point. Asian American studies is premised in part on granting epistemological standing to the experiences of those racialized as Asian American.[14] Consequently, abstracting the theory of Asian American studies without discussing my complex positionality as an Asian American obscures the particular perspectives, concerns, and histories that I bring to the engagement with and theorization of the ancient Mediterranean world. What's more, the very term Asian American is exceedingly complex. Any attempt to interpellate peoples who come from a wide variety of countries and religious traditions, who speak thousands of languages, and who have very different social, cultural, and economic standing is bound to fail.[15]

I write as a Sri Lankan American immigrant who has enjoyed significant economic and educational privileges as a result of my upper-middle class upbringing.[16] I write as the son of a Tamil father who fled discrimination in Sri Lanka in the 1970s and whose brothers and sisters were scattered across the globe in diaspora after barely surviving the terrors of the Black July riots in 1983. I speak as the son of a mixed-race mother, whose Sinhalese father was a civil servant and whose Burgher mother was the descendent of Dutch colonizers who overran the island in the 17th century. I thus speak as an individual whose histories, whose personhood have been triangulated by imperialism, colonialism, and racism, and I firmly believe that bringing these complex entanglements to bear on my scholarship is a strength.[17]

To be clear, the model that I propose is in no way definitive; the development of an identitarian hermeneutic cannot be the work of a single individual. Here I borrow from Benny Liew, who writes the following of his endeavor to develop an Asian American hermeneutics in biblical studies: "I am fashioning an account of an ongoing conversation, in which I am only one participant, so that afterwards a larger community can join in for another conversation…my ideas do not represent the views of all Asian Americans; they are meant to stimulate multiple projects simultaneously rather than to suggest a single project

[12] Lowe 1996: 29.

[13] See Umachandran and Ward 2023: 3-34 for another vision of an oppositional hermeneutics inspired by Critical Muslim Studies.

[14] E.g. Takaki 1993: 1-3; Min and Kim 1999: 11-14

[15] For more on the difficulty of deciding who or what constitutes the Asian Americans in Asian American studies, see among others Chin et al. 1974; Palumbo-Liu 1999: 1-13; Chang 1999: 1-8. Chuh 2003 offers a powerful argument for treating Asian American studies as a field without a subject (see below).

[16] South Asians have often been excluded from Asian American studies (cf. Shankar and Srikanth 1998: 1-24).

[17] A cue taken from Padilla Peralta 2019b: "*I should have been hired because I was black*: because my Afro-Latinity is the rock-solid foundation upon which the edifice of what I have accomplished and everything I hope to accomplish rests; because my black body's vulnerability challenges and universalizing pretensions of color-blind classics; because my black being-in-the-world makes it possible for me to ask new and different questions within the field, to inhabit new and different approaches to answering them, and to forge alliances with other scholars past and present whose black being-in-the-world has cleared the way for my leap into the breach."

of a monolithic dimension or direction."[18] For Liew, identitarian biblical hermeneutics are not prescriptive, but prefigurative. They open possibilities for interpretation, rather than foreclose them.

What does the "ongoing conversation" of an identitarian-oriented hermeneutics look like in practice? I will present two brief case studies that offer one possible vision of an Asian American hermeneutics for classics. These case studies focus on two Asian immigrants in Roman culture—Aeneas (as well as his fellow Trojans) in Vergil's *Aeneid* and Trimalchio in Petronius' *Satyrica*—and how reading them through an Asian Americanist lens can shed light on these figures and, more broadly, on contemporary Roman social, cultural, and political structures.

Exsulibusne? Racializing the Refugee in Vergil's *Aeneid*

In recent years, Asian American studies, long interested in matters of migration, has turned to consider a type of migrant that been overlooked, both by the academy and the state: the refugee.[19] This attention has been a productive one, leading to the development of a new field, critical refugee studies, that interrogates the various roles played by the figure of the refugee within society. This field, in the words of Yến Lê Espiritu, "challenges the solidarity and primacy of the nation-state and the promise of inclusion and recognition within it."[20] As such, critical refugee studies "flips the script, positing it is the existence of the displaced refugee, rather than the rooted citizen, that provided the clue to a new model of politics."[21]

Such is the case for the Romans too, as it is an Asian refugee who figures at the very heart of Rome's core foundational myths. Aeneas is described by Vergil as "a refugee by fate who first came from the shores of Troy to Italy" (Vir. A. 1.1-2*: Troiae qui primis ab oris Italiam fato profugus*).[22] Although he is "buffeted about on both land and sea by the violence of the gods, on account of the begrudging wrath of ruthless Juno" (1.3-4: *ille et terris iactatus et alto vi superum saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram*), Aeneas comes to the shores of Lavinium with a specific purpose in mind. As Vergil tells us, he is to "found the Roman race" (1.33: *Romanam condere gentem*), a task that we learn was "a real struggle" (*tantae molis erat*).

The matter of founding a race cues another important similarity between the story of Aeneas and the history of Asian American refugees.[23] Central to both is what scholars of

[18] Liew 2008: 2.

[19] On the centrality of immigration to Asian American Studies, see Lowe 1996: 7: "... the life conditions, choices, and expressions of Asian Americans have been significantly determined by the U.S. state through the apparatus of immigration laws and policies, through the enfranchisements denied or extended to immigrant individuals and communities, and through the processes of naturalization and citizenship."

[20] Yến Lê Espiritu 2021:4

[21] Yến Lê Espiritu 2021:4

[22] Lee-Stecum 2008: 69-91 discusses the place of refugees in Rome's foundational mythography (cf. Dench 2005: 14 on the way that it differs from other Mediterranean myths, on which see Dougherty 1993).

[23] The topic of race in the *Aeneid* has largely been avoided (e.g. Wimperis 2024's use of ethnicity instead of race as the core concept in his discussion of community construction in the epic). Notable exceptions are Haley 2009; Haley 2021; Giusti 2023. Reed 2007: 8-9 discusses how shores tend to police ethnic boundaries throughout the poem.

critical race studies have termed *racialization.* Michael Omi and Howard Winant define racialization as the "process of selection, of imparting social and symbolic meaning" to particular group differences for the purpose of social and political ordering.[24] In other words, racialization is the process by which race is socially constructed and societally embedded. By race here, I refer not to the epidermic and physiognomic permutations that have dominated modern understandings of the concept, but rather to a transhistorical entity used for the dividing and ordering of populations for the project of power. Following Falguni Sheth, I understand race as a "vehicle of division, and an engine of political power" that "seeks and utilizes" essentialized differences, be they physical, religious, status-based, or cultural, "in order to produce a certain consequence: to eliminate or manage potential challenges to the social and political organization of a society."[25] As Rebecca Futo Kennedy writes, such a definition frames race as "historically contingent and fluid," allowing us to understand and compare the mechanics of various forms of oppression in different eras and cultures.[26]

In Vergil's telling, Aeneas' arrival on the shores of Latium is met with immediate racialization. When the native Latins first see the Trojan embassy heading towards the palace, they quickly race ahead to tell King Latinus of "giant men" (7.167-8: *ingentis…viros*) dressed "in some unknown garb" (7.167: *ignota in veste*). King Latinus, though, is not concerned with their appearance. Rather, he focuses on a different racial characteristic: their descent.[27] The second word of his address to the Trojan ambassadors is the patronymic *Dardanidae* (7.195), which signals not just Trojan descent from Dardanus, but their possible connection to the Italic peninsula.[28] Latinus notes that he heard rumors from "old Italian men" (7.206: *Auruncos…senes*) that Dardanus, long before heading to Phrygia, had been born on Italian soil, a claim which the Trojan ambassador, Ilioneus, seconds in his response before adding that they are also directly related to Jupiter. This claim of shared descent is backed up with other claims of familiarity with the Trojans; immediately after invoking their Dardanian descent, Latinus states that he is "not unaware of their city and their race" (7.195: *neque enim nescimus et urbem et genus*) nor of their travails in the years after Troy's destruction.

These Trojans are, for Latinus, "good refugees," of good birth and of good repute. But as Lê Espiritu argues, the positive racialization of refugees always serves a political purpose; for instance, the focus on the economic and academic success achieved by Vietnamese refugees reframes the Vietnam War as a "good war" that produced positive outcomes rather than an imperialistic endeavor.[29] For Latinus, the appearance of the Trojans offers political opportunity as well. As he gleefully remarks after the speech of Ilioneus, the arrival of the Trojans marks the fulfillment of an oracle that says Lavinia is to marry a foreigner who will help his kingdom grow. King Latinus is fated "to have future progeny outstanding in war and

[24] Omi and Winant 2014: 111 (cf. Giusti 2023: 54-6; Padilla Peralta 2024: 248-9 for the utility of the concept of racialization in the ancient world).

[25] Sheth 2004: 80-1.

[26] Kennedy 2021.

[27] For descent as a crucial component of ancient racial thought, see McCoskey 2012: 27-31, 49-61.

[28] Reed 2006 and Nakata 2012 discuss the genealogical manipulations evident in this scene and elsewhere in the second half of the poem. Tori Lee has also pointed out to me that the alliterative *Dicite Dardanidae* has a strongly Ennian flavoring to it (cf. Nethercut 2020), which further bolsters the Italic claims of the passage.

[29] Lê Espiritu 2014: 81-104.

who will colonize the whole world with his men" (7.258: *totum quae viribus occupet orbem*).[30] The mixing of Trojan and Latin blood "will carry our name into the stars" (7.98-99: *qui sanguine nostrum nomen in astra ferant*). The positive racialization of the Trojan refugees, thus, serves a larger imperial end and ensures that history remembers Latinus and his people.

Refugees, however, are never racialized only in positive terms. To quote Lê Espiritu again, refugees constitute "objects of state suspicion and threats to security."[31] Aeneas proves no exception. Shortly after King Latinus' oration, Queen Amata delivers an impassioned speech of her own that calls into question the suitability of Lavinia's marriage to Aeneas by racializing the Trojan refugees as a threat to the solidity of Latinus' kingdom:

> ***exsulibus****ne datur ducenda Lavinia Teucris,*
> *o genitor, nec* ***te*** *miseret nataeque* ***tuique****?*
> *nec matris miseret, quam primo Aquilone relinquet*
> ***perfidus*** *alta petens abducta virgine praedo?*
> *at non sic* ***Phrygius penetrat Lacedaemona pastor****,*
> ***Ledaeamque Helenam Troianas vexit ad urbes****?*
> *quid* ***tua sancta fides****? quid cura antiqua* ***tuorum***
> *et* ***consanguineo*** *totiens data dextera* ***Turno****?*
>
> "Is Lavinia to be given to be married to these Trojan exiles? Have you, 'father,' no pity for your own daughter or yourself? Have you no pity for her mother, when this treacherous man will leave for the sea with the first north-wind with the girl as prize? Wasn't this how that Phrygian shepherd entered Sparta, and snatched Leda's Helen off to the Trojan cities? What of your sacred promise? What of your long-held care for your people of your own race, and your oath given again and again to your blood brother Turnus?" (7.359-366)

Amata's speech holds nothing back. She begins by reframing the refugees as criminals; they are *exsulibus*, people who have been banished from their homeland for political reasons.[32] Amata doubles down on her characterization of the Trojans as criminals in the very next line. According to her, Aeneas is totally untrustworthy (*perfidus*) and will abscond with Lavinia the first chance he gets. The word *perfidus*, it should be noted, is a term with strong racial connotations. The language of perfidy featured centrally in the racialization of Rome's foremost enemies during the Republic: the Carthaginians and the Gauls.[33] She further underscores this point by noting that snatching women is something Trojans do: "Wasn't this how that Phrygian shepherd entered Sparta, and snatched Leda's Helen off to the Trojan cities?" As is typical with racial stereotyping, Amata takes one well-known anecdote—Paris' abduction of Helen—and attributes the qualities of a singular individual to an entire people. In doing so, Amata takes Latinus' point about Aeneas' good Trojan lineage and flips it on its

[30] Zanker 2019: 153-163 offers insight on the larger intellectual trends in the first century BCE that figure behind this line.

[31] Lê Espiritu 2014: 12 (cf. also Gandhi 2022 for a discussion of the discourse of "good" and "bad" refugees in modern-day Israel).

[32] Nappa 2022: 93-95 shows this accusation of criminality resounds in numerous speeches in the *Aeneid.*

[33] Carthaginians: Isaac 2004: 327-333; Levene 2010: 99-103, 216; Gruen 2011: 115-140; Gauls: Murphy 1977: 238-242; Riggsby 2006: 56, 174.

head, locating a more immediate relative for Aeneas whose behavior as a foreign guest was notoriously bad.

The comparison to Paris also contributes to the racialization of Aeneas and the Trojans in another way. As brought out more fully in Iarbas' speech in Book 4 and Numanus Remulus' speech in Book 9, the comparison to Paris, to quote Shelley Haley, "endows Aeneas with racialized gender," as a half-man, whose version of masculinity is far inferior to that of his Italic rivals.[34] In a similar vein is Lavinia's use of the verb *penetrat.* As Chris Nappa has argued, the verb offers insight into the type of rhetoric that Amata uses to explain the Trojan threat.[35] Indeed, the verb certainly connotes the idea of an invasion of the state by a foreign entity, suggesting that Aeneas' arrival may lead to him seizing power. But, as Nappa argues, it is also sexually suggestive: Aeneas' prospective penetration of Lavinia is an act of miscegenation that disrupts the solidity and purity of the Latin regnal line.

In addition to racializing Aeneas, Amata also offers a brutal indictment of her husband's judgment. Amata argues that a marriage between Aeneas and Lavinia will mean the end of *fides* ("faithfulness"), one of the core cultural values of the Latins (and Vergil's Roman readership).[36] Further, she reminds him of the promise (*data dextra*) that he made to Turnus. She also points out the blood-ties between Latinus and Turnus (*consanguineo...Turno*), referring to the ethnic heritage they share with the Rutulians; in doing so, she essentially accuses Latinus of effectively becoming a race traitor. The idea of Latinus as a race traitor is further reinforced throughout the scene by Lavinia's repeated use of the second person to emphasize the kinships he stands to violate: accepting the Trojans means that he has no pity for "[himself] or [his] own daughter" (*te...natae...tuique*), no respect for "[his] own cultural values" (*tua sancta fides*), and no "concern for [his] own people" (*cura...tuorum*).

Commixti Corpore ... Subsident: Assimilation and Erasure

The dueling visions of the Trojans and their potential for integration, as Michael Fontaine has pointed out, lingers over the rest of the epic, with the war between Aeneas' men and Turnus' troops playing out the debate on the battlefield.[37] As such, it embodies the complexity of Roman views towards refugees, migrants, and foreigners, reflecting, on the one hand, a narrative of Roman inclusivity and on the other, as Dan-el Padilla Peralta puts it, "centuries of unease at Rome about the presence and role of foreigners."[38] Along similar lines, Yasmin Syed has written that these passages show that Roman views of ethnicity were discursive; that is, they were constantly subject to change depending on what the local circumstances demanded.[39] I would add that this discursivity is fundamentally political in nature. The Trojans appear, at once, as an asset for Rome's world domination and a challenge to the cultural and racial purity of the native Italians. Through this rhetoric, the Trojans find

[34] Haley 2021: 127. Iarbas' speech: 4.211-218. Numanus Remulus' speech: 9.598-620 (cf. Nappa 2022: 93-94; 100-103).

[35] Nappa 2022: 97.

[36] For custom as a marker of racial difference in the ancient world, see McCoskey 2012: 62-75 and Kennedy, Roy, and Goldman 2013: 65-79.

[37] Fontaine 2015.

[38] Padilla Peralta 2015.

[39] Syed 2005: 206-209.

themselves triangulated into questions related to palace power dynamics between Latinus and Amata, regional power struggles between the Latins and Rutulians, and Rome's imperial future, not to mention divine marriage politics. In short, their presence offered a flexible and malleable rhetorical tool that Romans could use to stoke passionate and emotional responses in support of their own political endeavors. It is certainly striking that Roman views on migrants and refugees—both positive and negative—remain a talking point, not only within the field of classics but in political discussions of immigration today.[40]

The aftermath of this debate is war: *bella, horrida bella* (6.86: "wars, horrible wars"). Scores of Trojans and Italians, as the poem tells us, meet gruesome deaths due to the inability of Amata and Latinus to resolve the dispute. Ultimately, it is Latinus' side that wins out, a reality that is so disconcerting to Amata that she dies by suicide rather than see the marriage of her daughter to Aeneas. The Trojans get to settle in Latium and Aeneas marries Lavinia, events that, as the reader is well aware, set in motion the ineluctable rise of Rome as a dominant Mediterranean power.

The ultimate acceptance of Aeneas by the Latins comes at a cost. "Successful" integration, as Asian American studies has shown, is a double-edged sword. Since the 1970s, Asian Americans have been tagged as model minorities, "singled out," according to Gale Yee, "as a group that has successfully assimilated into American society, becoming financially well-off and achieving the American dream."[41] The so-called model minority myth is problematic for a number of reasons, but, in particular, I want to draw attention to one troublesome aspect of this stereotype. The myth of the model minority papers over the fact that integration by means of assimilation requires cultural loss. Lisa Lowe explains that this narrative of the assimilated model minority is contingent on a "modern American society that 'discovers,' 'welcomes,' and 'domesticates' them."[42] Wen Liu has put it even more bluntly: the racial inclusion of Asian Americans necessitates their "racial erasure."[43] This centrality of loss, according to Anne Cheng, turns the racialized Asian American into a "ghostly figure" who is overwhelmed and overcome by "racial melancholy."[44]

This sense of loss is part and parcel of my own autoethnography. My trilingual parents, speakers of Sinhalese, Tamil, and English, chose to teach me only English, something that they thought was necessary for me to survive, succeed, and thrive. What use were languages that people had never heard of? It was far more practical to learn French or Spanish. Far more prestigious to know Latin. So too did Sri Lanka's rich culture—the lights at Wesak, the elephants at the Kandy Perahera, the sounds of the Papare band at the Premadasa, and the reveries of Pongal—flash before me like an apparition. My parents' own fragmented and incomplete stories could recover just a fraction of the sights, sounds, and tastes that I would never get to experience.[45]

[40] Dench 2005: 10-11; Padilla Peralta 2015.

[41] Yee 2009: 124 (cf. Lee 1999: 145-179 and Wu 2002: 39-77 for more on the myth of the model minority).

[42] Lowe 1996: 5.

[43] Liu 2019: 179.

[44] Cheng 2000: 23.

[45] Cf. Waldo 2023: 520-1 for other reflections by Asian American authors on the loss of their native tongues and its impact on their engagement with the worlds they inhabit.

This kind of cultural loss was also what the Trojans had to face when they settled in Latium. Juno, whose opposition to the Trojans has been clear since the very beginning of the poem, states that total assimilation is the necessary precondition for Trojan settlement in Latium:

> *ne vetus indigenas nomen mutare Latinos*
> *neu Troas fieri iubeas Teucrosque vocari*
> *aut vocem mutare viros aut vertere vestem.*
> *sit Latium, sint Albani per saecula reges,*
> *sit Romana potens Itala virtute propago:*
>
> "Do not order the indigenous Latins to change their ancient name or become Trojans and be called Teucrians—or that the men change their language and their clothing. But let Latium, let Alban kings throughout the ages exist; let Roman offspring hold power through Italian manliness. Troy is dead, and let it stay dead along with its name." (12.823-828)

The realities of assimilation are not sugar-coated in this passage—it is not a pathway to cultural integration; it is not a pathway to achieve economic or political success; it is not the collapsing of perceived cultural differences.[46] Assimilation is a divine dictate, as evinced by Juno's commands and hortatory subjunctives. Most arrestingly, assimilation signifies cultural death (*occidit, occideritque*): the Trojans lose their name, their language, their clothing.

Jupiter does not put up a fight. Rather, he not only concedes to his wife's demands, but he offes an even more harrowing vision of assimilation.

> *sermonem Ausonii patrium moresque tenebunt,*
> *utque est nomen erit; commixti corpore tantum*
> *subsident Teucri. morem ritusque sacrorum*
> *adiciam faciamque omnis uno ore Latinos.*
>
> "Ausonia's sons **will keep** their father's speech and manners, as their name is, so it **will be**: the Trojans **shall sink, merged into the mass** alone. I will add sacred laws and rites, and make them all Latins of one tongue." (12.834-837)

As is made clear by Jupiter's repeated use of the future tense, assimilation for the Trojans is an inevitability. Further, the assimilation of the Latins will not only lead to the disappearance of the Trojan customs and culture, but to their total erasure. By assimilating, the bodies of the Trojans are "merged into the mass" (*commixti corpore…subsident*), resulting in the complete and total subsumption of their Asian identity.[47]

Can we speak, apposite to this loss, of a sort of racial melancholy on the part of the Trojans? The *Aeneid*, of course, does not relate the life of the Trojans after the war ends. But I would suggest, following Aaron Seider, that the poem as a whole is suffused with melancholic remembrances of a Trojan past.[48] Trojan ghosts haunt Aeneas throughout the

[46] Nappa 2022: 105.

[47] As Jewell 2019 has shown, this language of mixing and agglomeration echoes Late Republican rhetoric of urban displacement.

[48] Seider 2013: 66-95 treats the question of remembrances of Troy through the lens of memory and trauma studies.

epic. Creusa and Hector both appear before Rome's future founder in Book 2, and in Book 6, he meets the shades of Palinurus, Anchises, and countless other Trojans who died defending the city.[49] Furthermore, traumatic memories of the destruction of Troy resound throughout the epic, not only in the stories that Trojans themselves retell, but through a variety of inter- and intratextual references that Vergil weaves throughout it. Aeneas' lamentation "O, three and four times blessed were those who died before their fathers' eyes beneath the walls of Troy" (1.133-135) takes on new meaning when read in light of forced Trojan assimilation.

We will return to consider Aeneas' response to this divine directive of assimilation from an Asian American lens later on. But for now, we turn to our second ancient narrative of Asian migration and assimilation in Italy, that of Petronius' first-century CE novel, the *Satyrica.*

Beyond Satire: Trimalchio and Alien Capital

At the heart of Petronius' *Satyrica*, as it remains to us, is a lavish dinner feast at the house of a freedman by the name of Trimalchio. Trimalchio, like Aeneas, is an Asian migrant. As he tells us: "I came [to Italy] from Asia when I was as tall as this candelabra" (Pet. *Sat.* 75.10: *tam magnus ex Asia veni quam hic candelabrus est*). After decades of enslavement, Trimalchio gained his freedom and, at least according to his account of affairs, enjoyed substantial financial success. Due in large part to the ostentatiousness of the party he holds and his failed attempts to appear cultured, the character of Trimalchio is often read as a satirization of the freedmen who had become prominent in Roman society in the first century CE.[50] Others have read the death and underworld imagery that dominates the dinner party as a commentary on the impacts of enslavement on freedmen.[51] What I'd like to suggest here, however, is that there are other aspects of Trimalchio's portrayal that emerge when we read his character in light of Asian American studies.

In her 2016 monograph, *Alien Capital*, Iyko Day argues that a key part of the racialization of Asian Americans and Asian Canadians from the 19th century onwards has been their abstraction as capital. As she shows, Asian Americans and Asian Canadians have been characterized as and compared to commodities and technologies. Day demonstrates how "economism" plays a central role in this particular stereotyping of Asians; they are efficient, compliant, and technologically savvy and, to borrow a repugnant neologism, they add value. The result of these racialized associations is that the humanity of Asian Americans is erased.[52] The abstraction of Asian Americans as capital, Day contends, is part and parcel of North American settler colonial ideology. It correlates directly with the mediating role that Asian Americans and Asian Canadians played in North American settler colonial projects. Together with African slaves, Asians were the alien capital needed to power a settler colonial state as it sought to exterminate the land's indigenous inhabitants.

[49] Feldherr 1999: 116-22; Sugar 2019: 172-90.

[50] E.g. Walsh 1970; Conte 1996; Goldman 2008.

[51] E.g. Bodel 1994; Padilla Peralta 2024.

[52] Day 2016: 1-40. See also Luis 2024, who shows the history of Asians as migrant capital (free and unfree) in the Americas far predates the late 19th century.

In addition to subtending settler colonialism, this particular racialization of Asian Americans, Day argues, functions as a key part of justifying North America's capitalist logics by way of romantic anticapitalism. According to Day, romantic anticapitalism refers to the "misperception of the *appearance* of capitalist relations for their essence."[53] Romantic anticapitalism glorifies the concrete "thingly" dimensions of capitalism, "the dusty workboots by the door, the reliable pickup truck" while casting as evil and morally destructive its more abstract elements like "capital accumulation, surplus-value, and money."[54] To this "opposition between a concrete natural world and a destructively abstract, value-driven one" is added a dynamic racial opposition between whites who embody the former and Asians who embody the latter.[55] Day offers the example of American rhetoric around Japanese workers during their internment, noting that the stereotyping of Japanese Americans as machine-like in their ruthless efficiency and obedience not only dehumanized them but also justified their displacement to labor camps.[56] The framing of Asian Americans as abstract capital in such narratives casts them as agents of moral decline while cloaking the role that the whites play in a capitalist, greed-driven society.

The same dynamics appear to be at play in Petronius' characterization of Trimalchio. Case in point is his story of his manifold successes after manumission as told in Chapter 76:

> *Ceterum, quemadmodum di volunt, dominus in domo factus sum…Quid multa? coheredem me Caesari fecit, et accepi* ***patrimonium laticlavium****. Nemini tamen nihil satis est.* ***Concupivi negotiari….quinque naves*** *aedificavi, oneravi* ***vinum****—et tune erat contra* ***aurum****—misi Romam. Putares me hoc iussisse: omnes naves naufragarunt, factum, non fabula. Uno die Neptunus* ***trecenties sestertium*** *devoravit. Putatis me defecisse? Non mehercules mi haec* ***iactura*** *gusti fuit, tanquam nihil facti. Alteras feci* ***maiores*** *et meliores et feliciores, ut nemo non me virum fortem diceret. Scitis,* ***magna navis*** *magnam fortitudinem habet. Oneravi rursus* ***vinum, lardum, fabam, seplasium, mancipia****. Hoc loco Fortunata* ***rem piam*** *fecit;* ***omne enim aurum suum****,* ***omnia vestimenta vendidit*** *et mi* ***centum aureos*** *in manu posuit. Hoc fuit* ***peculii mei fermentum****….Uno cursu* ***centies sestertium*** *corrotundavi. Statim redemi* ***fundos omnes****, qui patroni mei fuerant. Aedifico* ***domum****,* ***venalicia*** *coemo* ***iumenta;*** *quicquid tangebam, crescebat tanquam favus. Postquam coepi* ***plus habere****, quam tota patria mea habet, manum de tabula: sustuli me de negotiatione et coepi libertos* ***faenerare****….*
>
> "Then, as the Gods willed, I became the real master of the house….I need only add that I was joint residuary legatee with Caesar, and came into an estate fit for a senator. But no one is satisfied with nothing. I conceived a passion for business….I built five ships, got a cargo of wine—which was worth its weight in gold at the time—and sent them to Rome. You may think it was a put-up job; every one was wrecked, truth and no fairy-tales. Neptune gulped down thirty million in one day. Do you think I lost heart? Lord! no, I no more tasted my loss than if nothing had happened. I built some more, bigger, better and more expensive, so that no one could say I was not a brave man. You know, a huge ship has a certain security about her. I got another cargo of wine, bacon,

[53] Day 2016: 8.

[54] Day 2016: 10.

[55] Day 2016: 16.

[56] Day 2016: 128-42.

> beans, perfumes, and slaves. Fortunata did a noble thing at that time; she sold all her jewellery and all her clothes, and put a hundred gold pieces into my hand. They were the incitements to my earnings.... I made a clear ten million on one voyage. I at once bought up all the estates which had belonged to my patron. I built a house, and bought slaves and cattle; whatever I touched grew like a honey-comb. When I came to have more than the whole revenues of my own country, I threw up the game: I retired from active work and began to finance freedmen.... (trans. Heseltine)

The narrative above is one of capital accumulation, the creation of surplus-value, and, of course, money. Trimalchio tells us that he not only won his freedom but came into a massive estate upon his master's death. We learn that this bequest of capital is particularly valuable because he "wanted to do business" (*concupivi negotiari*). A blow-by-blow account of his shipping endeavors is packed with references to capital (his building of ships and his shipping of various goods) and audacious sums of money (he lost 30 million sesterces on one occasion and won 10 million on another). Even the good deed (*rem piam*) that his wife, Fortunata, does for him is expressed in terms of capital and money—she sold all of her gold (*aurum*) and clothes (*vestimenta*) so that she could put one hundred gold coins (*centum aureos*) in his hand.

His success in shipping leads to surplus-value and, in turn, to the accumulation of more capital. He buys up "all the estates" (*fundos omnes*) of his former master, builds a massive home of his own, and soon ends up with more money than even his *patria*. Even though Trimalchio decides to retire at this point, his association with capital accumulation continues: he takes on the task of providing capital (*faenerare*) to his fellow freedmen.

Reading the life story of Trimalchio attuned to the broader framework of the abstraction of capital challenges a strictly satirical reading of the *Cena*. Rather, it opens the door to seeing Petronius' characterization of Trimalchio as something more sinister, as a part of a larger elite tactic of racializing freedmen to obscure Roman freeborn greed and thereby ensure their place at the top of Roman moral and social hierarchy.[57] We find similar stereotyping of freedmen as obsessed with stockpiling and showing off their newfound wealth in other imperial-era authors.[58] Juvenal's first *Satire*, for example, savagely critiques freedmen from Egypt and West Asia for their ostentatious display of their financial success.[59] Similarly, Martial pillories the freedmen from Syria, Parthia, and Cappadocia for their accumulation of wealth while freeborn citizens of birth and intelligence lack even a suitable cloak.[60]

[57] Padilla Peralta 2024: 249-52 offers a robust justification for seeing freedmen in the Roman world as a racialized group, drawing on the work of Anne Cheng and José Esteban Muñoz: "The first and most fundamental is that Roman manumission is a species of racial formation. Or, to package this idea in somewhat different language but with a roughly equivalent thrust: racialization attends the progression from enslavement to freedom....This chapter will test the proposition that Roman antiquity's closest analogue to contemporary states of "feeling brown" can be found in the melancholy of the manumitted." For another example of a non-descent based group being subject to racialization, see Kennedy 2021 which makes similar arguments about metic women in Athens.

[58] Habinek 2005: 178-80; Ritter 2019: 257-67.

[59] Juv. *Sat.* 1.24-30, 97-116.

[60] Mart. *Ep.* 10.76.

This stereotyping of foreign freedmen in terms of their material wealth, business acumen, and comparative success should be read against a broader Roman discourse on the "right" way to accumulate wealth. The Roman elite put out a story that they earned their wealth not by engaging in trade and mercantilism, but rather by more concrete, morally pure forms of business-like agriculture.[61] Cato the Elder notably began his *de Agricultura* with the claim that "it is true that to get money by trading is sometimes more profitable, were it not so dangerous; and likewise money-lending, if it were as honorable" (Cato *Agr.* praef.: *est interdum praestare mercaturis rem quaerere, nisi tam periculosum sit, et item* ***fenerari****, si tam* ***honestum*** *sit*). So too Cicero writes in *de Officiis* 1.150 that there were occupations that were regarded suitable for *liberales* ("free men") and dirty ones (*sordidi*) better suited to the enslaved or formerly enslaved.[62] First among the sordid occupations that Cicero names were those directly related to money and capital accumulation: tax-collectors (*portitoria*) and lenders at interest (*faeneratores*), a term that harkens back to Trimalchio's retirement gig.

Though I want to be careful about claiming that the Romans adopted some sort of romantic anticapitalist ideal, it is nonetheless clear that freedmen were racialized as immoral accumulators of capital in direct opposition to the morally pure economic endeavors of a Roman freeborn elite. This dynamic opposition worked in two ways. First, it occluded the role of the Roman elite in capital accumulation. After all, it was the political and economic prerogative of the Roman elite to conquer new lands, loot them for spoils, and traffic their inhabitants in a Mediterranean-wide slave trade. Second, it allowed for the casting of freedmen, much like Asians in the Americas, as agents of moral chaos and decline. Hence, we find the rising prominence of freedmen at the heart of narratives of a corrupt Imperial Rome, as evinced by the central role played by *liberti* in the courts of Claudius and Nero in the accounts of the Roman senatorial elites like Seneca, Pliny the Younger, and Tacitus.[63] Thus, we can read the *Satyrica* not only as a send-up of the freedman nouveau riche, but part of a larger discourse of pinning the blame of the state's moral decline in the mid-first century CE on them and *not* the Roman elite.

In as much as it offers us commentary on Roman elite racializations of freedmen, this passage in Chapter 76 also pertains to the issue of assimilation. From a narratological perspective, it is, of course, Trimalchio who tells his life story. His shipping success and lending business are seen as a source not of shame or reductionist racialization, but of immense pride. This is further confirmed in the description of the funeral monument that is to be built for him (71.1-12), which features a monumental representation of the story of his rise from a poor ex-slave to a wealthy, powerful freedman. In the monument, various forms of capital are central: ships that carry his goods to potential buyers, the adornments that he can purchase with his newly found wealth, and the money that he hands out to the urban *plebs*.[64]

Trimalchio's pride in his business accomplishments and his desire to display them publicly is not unique. Countless funerary epitaphs and monuments of freedmen and freedwomen not only relate stories of their occupational success but depict themselves

[61] D'Arms 1981: 1-19 lays out the evidence for the (contradictory) attitudes of the Roman elite towards business dealings (cf. Mouritsen 2011: 206-47 for *realia).*

[62] Joshel 1992: 68-69.

[63] E.g. Sen. *Ap.* 15; Plin. *Ep.* 7.29, 8.6; Tac. *Ann.* 11.38, 12.53, 14.64; Suet. *Cl.* 25 (cf. Joshel 1992: 81-83).

[64] Prag 2006: 538-47 discusses in detail the many resonances of the ships that show up in his funerary monument, with pertinent bibliography.

triumphantly engaging in this work.[65] Furthermore, Devon Stewart has argued that these epitaphs share more than just subject matter but exude a broader "aesthetic of sameness."[66] All of this suggests that many freedmen and freedwomen bought into and cultivated their associations with various forms of work and labor as positive. On this point, comparison with Asian Americans is once again revealing. Many Asian Americans have willingly accepted as positive their stereotyping as hard-working, efficient, and high-achieving. As Kandice Chuh writes: "significant numbers of those of us racialized as Asian Americans have increasingly organized and defined our lives and communities in terms of socioeconomic status, which is regularly defined in terms of credentials from the most prominent colleges and universities."[67]

Indeed, the "hard-working" immigrant narrative is certainly something that my family willingly wore as a badge of pride.[68] Upon my graduation from college and graduate school, my parents insisted upon buying a frame for my diplomas. After forking over an exorbitant fee to the campus bookstore, they proudly hung my diplomas (written in Latin, of course) in our family home, as a sign of a generational ethic of hard work and achievement. My assimilation to a reductionist Asian racialization of the hard-working immigrant was viewed as a triumph rather than some sort of deep cultural betrayal. My family's racial subjectivity, much like that of Trimalchio, was grounded in an acceptance of larger racial narratives imposed from above.

Asian Complicities: Ancient and Modern

How should we understand these moments, both ancient and modern, where an oppressed group internalizes narratives imposed by an oppressor as central to their racial subjectivity? One might see this move by ancient and modern Asians alike as a moment of resistance, a repackaging of reductionist logic for self-empowerment and, perhaps, evidence of group solidarity amidst oppressive circumstances. Alternatively, one might read the scenes somewhat more pessimistically as evidence of complicity with these oppressive structures. As Dan-el Padilla Peralta has put it in the case of the Roman freedman, "claiming dignity within this system of structural oppression thus requires full acceptance of its logic of valuation" and thereby works to legitimate those structures of power.[69] Or is it, as Anne

[65] Joshel 1992: 85-91.

[66] Stewart 2019: 135-52.

[67] Chuh 2019: 129.

[68] On the ever-presence of this narrative of "hard work" in South Asians immigrant to the United States, see Bhatia 2007: 74-111, 115-183.

[69] Padilla Peralta 2024: 265. The question of complicity has been hotly debated among Asian Americanists. The likes of Fujikane and Okamura 2008 and Kim 1999, 2023 have argued that the initial subjugation of Asian Americans does not exempt them from participating in oppressive state structures. Others, most notably Day 2016, have pushed back against carte blanche statements of Asian American complicity in such projects. They argue that claims to Asian American complicity covers over the vast social and economic disparities among Asian Americans, let alone properly accounts for geographic and temporal differences.

Cheng claims, some mixture of the two, "a web of negotiation that expresses agency as well as abjection"?[70]

The case of Trimalchio seems to favor the more pessimistic reading or perhaps more accurately a reading that attends to the dangers of accepting such stereotyping. Indeed, Trimalchio's attempted assimilation and his financial successes are attended by various forms of violence. Most apparently, Trimalchio's wealth and prominence are tied up in the practice of slavery. Not only does he own numerous slaves, so many that they must be organized into "companies of ten" (47.11: *decuriae*), but, as the passage above makes clear, he also seems to have been actively involved in the slave trade (*mancipia*). Nor do his experiences as a formerly enslaved person lead to better treatment for those he has himself enslaved. Throughout the *Cena*, there are numerous instances of Trimalchio ordering and threatening brutal punishments for his slaves—his dinner guests are greeted by a notice that any slave who leaves without his permission will receive 100 lashes (28.7); he orders his cook to strip down in order to receive a lashing (49.6); and he tells a young boy who accidentally drops his cup to kill himself (52.4-6).[71]

Trimalchio's attempts to become a member of the Roman elite, are thus deeply entangled with and dependent on continuing the violence of the very institution that oppressed him in the first place, slavery. The trafficking of slaves as objects to be bought and sold and the brutal punishments that they are subjected to reveal, to quote Padilla Peralta, Trimalchio's internalization of "a foundational ideological premise of Roman slavery, namely that the enslaved person lacks personhood."[72] Additionally, Trimalchio's autobiographical narrative also attests to his belief that his financial success can "dislodge the stigmatization of the past," a past that included sexual abuse at the hands of both his *dominus* and *domina*, as memorialized by his *candelabra*.[73] Yet, as the elite perspective of Petronius reveals, Trimalchio is bound to fail in these endeavors. His bumbling attempts to appear a man of class only serve to lay bare the *macula servitutis* ("mark of slavery") to those in the know.

A similar kind of violence-cum-assimilation can be seen in the example of the diplomas discussed above. The diplomas that hung on my parents' wall, written in Latin just like Trimalchio's tombstone, do not just symbolize a familial narrative of pluckiness and hard work. They also reveal my family's internalization of a foundational ideological premise of 20th- and 21st-century American racial thought: that of the model minority. As Jean Claire Kim has written, the myth of the model minority substitutes a cultural explanation for a racial one in explaining social inequalities.[74] By pointing to cultural differences between Asians and other non-white races (e.g., hard work, desire to succeed, the importance of intelligence), the narrative of the model minority implies that race/skin color is not an impediment to the achievement of the American dream of upward social mobility. In this narrative, the reason that other non-white races have not been as "successful" is not because

[70] Cheng 2000: 42.

[71] See Donahoe 2016: 380-400 for a broader discussion of violence against slaves in the narrative of the *Cena Trimalchionis*.

[72] Padilla Peralta 2024: 262.

[73] Padilla Peralta 2024: 263.

[74] Kim 1999: 119.

of systemic disadvantages and racial oppression, but rather a cultural lack of work ethic, intelligence, and discipline.[75]

As such, the model minority narrative substantiates white supremacy by offering another rationale for believing Blacks and other racial minority groups are inferior to their white counterparts. Ironically, however, this myth is harmful to Asian Americans as well. It homogenizes disparate groups of immigrants, without regard for class, gender identity, or ethnicity, simultaneously reducing them to a simplistic stereotype and obscuring the realities of discriminatory practices against Asian Americans.[76] This simplistic stereotyping, which gives way to satire and caricatures, serves as a veritable *macula servitutis* for Asian Americans and thereby ensures their exclusion from American society's innermost circles. By monumentalizing my diploma, my family served to perpetuate the triangulation of Asian Americans in a narrative that works to subtend white supremacy.

The interconnectedness of violence and assimilation leads us back to Book 12 of the *Aeneid* discussed above. Although we do not get to see the impact that the divine dictate of assimilation has on the Trojans as a people, we afforded a glimpse at how it affects one of them: Aeneas. And indeed, Aeneas' very first act after Juno and Jupiter strike a deal to ensure Trojan assimilation is violence. Immediately following the denouement between Juno and Jupiter, Aeneas fells Turnus with a spear. Totally at the mercy of Aeneas, Turnus begs for his life, causing Aeneas to momentarily relent. However, the sight of Pallas' baldric causes a change of heart in Aeneas. Filled with rage, Aeneas drives his sword right through Turnus' chest, killing him and bringing Vergil's epic to a stunning close.

The poem's climactic final scene, however, is marked not just by Aeneas' change of heart, but also by a change in his identity that matches the divine dictates of Juno and Jupiter. First, Aeneas' behavior and language evoke and mirror the actions of Italy's inhabitants. Several of his actions in the final scene are reminiscent of those of his Rutulian rival, Turnus. Just as Turnus kills Pallas with a spear, so too is the *hasta* the weapon that Aeneas uses to send Turnus tumbling to the ground. Additionally, Aeneas is "incensed with rage and terribly angry" (12.946-947: *furiis accensus et ira terribilis*), a rage that likewise links him to Turnus, whose anger and irascibility is not only central to his portrayal in the poem, but displayed in his final breath (*indignata*).[77] Even more pointedly, Aeneas literally takes on the identity of another one of Italy's denizens, the recently killed Pallas, as he strikes Turnus with his final blow: "Pallas sacrifices you with this wound; Pallas takes his revenge from your wicked blood" (12.948-949: *Pallas te hoc volnere, Pallas immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit*). This Aeneas is not the effeminate *semivir* ("half-man") that Queen Amata and others accuse him of being, but rather the raging and spiteful Italian warrior that Juno insists upon.

But there is another transformation afoot. In the very last line of the poem, Vergil tells us how Turnus' "life resentfully takes refuge under the shades with a groan" (A. 12.952: *vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras*). The verb *fugit* here, as numerous scholars have noted, harkens back to the opening lines of the *Aeneid* where Vergil described Aeneas as a

[75] Kim 1999: 118.

[76] Kim 1999: 118-119.

[77] For a contextualization of Aeneas' anger within the context of the poem and broader cultural trends, see Galinksy 1988.

fato profugus ("refugee by fate").[78] Yet this time, it is not Aeneas who is seeking refuge. Rather, Aeneas has become the one who puts others to flight, the root cause of Turnus's forced migration (fugit) from his Italian homeland to the shores of the river Styx. Consequently, the wordplay brings a fitting conclusion to Aeneas's metamorphosis from helpless migrant to violent colonizer that, according to Sharilyn Nakata and Keith Fletcher, Vergil advances in the second half of the epic.[79] Aeneas has not only displaced but killed the native who stands between him and his divinely promised colonial future. The formerly oppressed has now adopted the tools of oppression for his own benefit and, in the process, become the oppressor.

Thus, when read through an Asian American lens, the final lines of the *Aeneid* offer a sobering reminder of the realities of assimilation and its proximity to violence. They signal the very thin line between oppressor and oppressed, reminding the reader that past oppression does not preclude them from participating in oppression.

Conclusion: Future Considerations

This thin line between oppressor and oppressed is something that troubles me as an Asian American who possesses significant privileges because of my gender, education, and upbringing. I frequently ponder the way that the work that I do unwittingly ensures the continuance of the structures of racial capitalism, imperialism, and settler colonialism. And indeed, similar concerns are very much present in my mind as I lay out my vision for an Asian American hermeneutics in this essay. Might the project of Asian American hermeneutics that I propose aid and abet a toxic and predatory academic ecosystem? Might it become, for instance, an example of the gold rush mentality of which Hannah Čulík-Baird and Joseph Romero warned us in the first volume of *Res Difficiles, The Journal*? Will it be a means by which established scholars "enrich and enhance their own prestige, while individuals who live in the realities of the inequities under discussion are systematically marginalized or excluded from the scholarly archive"?[80]

There is no straight forward answer to this question, but I do find some solace in the fact that the bedrock of the proposed hermeneutic is Asian American studies. Asian American studies, as discussed above, is a field which values not just the critical, but the *self*-critical. That is, the field takes as foundational to its outlook an awareness of Asian American privileges and complicities and, as such, prioritizes anti-racist and anti-imperial praxis in its epistemological maneuverings. As Kandice Chuh has written, Asian American studies is not a field defined by racial subjectivities, but rather by a commitment to "advancing and engaging in practices of liberation and freedom" with a deep attention to question of power and relationality on a transnational scale.[81] To my mind, Chuh's description of Asian American studies as a subjectless and political endeavor very much echoes the words of the

[78] On the connection (and others) between the beginning and end of the poem, see Hardie 1997; Putnam 2010: 20-23.

[79] Nakata 2004; Fletcher 2014.

[80] Čulík-Baird and Romero 2024: 3.

[81] Chuh 2003: 115.

Black poet, essayist, and activist, June Jordan, who called on her readers "to stop cooperating with our enemies.... to stop the courtesies and to let the feeling be real."[82]

Drawing from Jordan and Chuh's observations, I see Asian American hermeneutics as an expressly political endeavor, aimed at "advancing and engaging in practices of liberation and freedom." Further, as Jordan's "our" suggests, I believe that Asian American hermeneutics cannot do this work alone. One way to build towards Jordan's "our" is through the building of alliances. Asian American hermeneutics can only perform its political purpose when allied to other minoritarian ways of being and reading. Then and only then can it truly work towards disrupting our discipline's centuries-long entanglement with white supremacy and settler colonialism.[83] However, if we are to truly reach Jordan's communal "our", Asian American hermeneutics cannot be in anyway territorial. As I have argued above, Asian American hermeneutics is way of seeing the world that all disciplinary practitioners, regardless of racial identification, ought to engage with in their own reading, writing, and teaching of the classics.[84] The methods and approaches made visible by Asian American studies and Asian American experiences not only offer alternative and heretofore unconsidered ways of understanding ancient pasts, but also disrupt the white identitarian hermeneutics that have guided our study of ancient Greece and Rome. The wide dissemination of such perspectives is essential for developing a form of classics that does not perpetuate white supremacy, settler colonialism, and racial capitalism. Gatekeeping Asian American hermeneutics will only result in ghettoizing of critical perspectives and ultimately led to the recentering of white identarian hermeneutics as the dominant way of reading, writing, and teaching about the Greco-Roman past. And that is something we desperately need to avoid.[85]

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[82] Jordan 1981: 187.

[83] Liew 2008: 14-15.

[84] Cf. Liew 2008: 16-17 for a similar argument regarding Asian American biblical hermeneutics.

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