



ESSAYS: DIPLOMACY, ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

GERMANOPHILES AND GERMANOPHOBES: FRENCH ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AFTER THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR

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Recent scholarship on the nineteenth century has addressed the theme of a politicized archaeology, torn between the conflicting tendencies of nationalistically-orchestrated politics of identity and an impulse to gain international pre-eminence.¹ These tensions came to a head in the fraught years before and following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. In this essay, I explore the cultural aftershocks of the war as it affected opposing spheres of archaeological practice, the official (institutional) realm versus the individualized private domain. The war—I shall argue—bared the uneasy relationship between the two spheres, exploding the apparent cohesiveness of institutional responses and foregrounding the random subjectivity of individual reactions.

Centering on a comparative case study of two French archaeologists, members of the French School at Athens, Edmond About and Salomon Reinach, whose work revolved around Greece and Turkey, I further suggest that the implications of this shift may be critical for our understanding of certain changes in the perception of the classical ideal, in particular its increasingly splintered nature in the last quarter of the century.

In the nineteenth century, archaeology—especially in Germany, France, and England—emerged as a reformed field of study, organized and institutionalized, scientific in its

¹ Étienne 2000; De Haan, Eickhoff, and Schwegman 2008; “Greek Archaeology” 2002-2003.

methods, and government-controlled and financed.² In a century of nation-building and of imperialist deployment both within the parameters of Europe and further abroad, archaeology also played an important role as a vehicle of national identity politics, serving as the cultural extension of official government foreign policies. The two agendas, political and cultural, met in the so-called “schools” or institutes—the national archaeological institutions dedicated to the exploration and study of antiquity founded by the most powerful European nations, especially England, France, and Germany, and spread out widely throughout the Mediterranean and the Middle and Near East.³ In Greece, the focus of my talk, foreign schools sprouted in quick succession from the 1840s onward: the French School at Athens was founded in 1846, the American School of Classical Studies was created in 1881, and the British School was established in 1886. After its victory in the Franco-Prussian War and in the exhilarating climate of national unification that followed, Germany moved into the field as well, with the foundation of the German Archaeological Institute at Athens in 1874.⁴ Like their sponsoring nations, schools existed in a state of permanent competition for prestige and privileges granted by the Greek government, which was ruled throughout the century by foreign-born kings—first by the Bavarian King Otto I, a Wittelsbach, and then by the Danish King George I, a Glücksburg. Greek territory was literally partitioned into “national fiefs”: the French took over Delphi, Delos, Thasos, and Argos, the English controlled most of the Peloponnese and part of Crete, the Americans were in charge of Corinth, and so forth. Through the efforts of the German classical philologist and archaeologist Ernst Curtius (1886-1956), who was well-connected with the German academic establishment, a protégé of Kaiser Friedrich William IV, and a favorite with the court of King George I of Greece, the German School was granted the stellar site of ancient

² Schnapp 1993; Schnapp 2002; Dyson 2006.

³ Jansen forthcoming.

⁴ See Adolf Borbein, “Griechische Forschungen aus Berliner Sicht” in Étienne 2000, 15-24.

Olympia in 1875, as well as permissions to excavate in Athens, Thebes, and Samos.

After the Franco-Prussian War, the rivalry between the two warring nations, France and Germany, was replayed in the arena of their archaeological activities. “It seems certain that the Germans want to have a foothold in the Greek kingdom by approaching it indirectly through the venue of archaeology,” observed the director of the French School at Athens, Émile Burnouf, in 1874.⁵ And from the German side a report to the German ministry stated, according to Christian Jansen, that “the gunboats of Germany will facilitate the landing of archaeologists in Athens.”⁶ Indeed, official reports from both sides were tellingly cast in war-like vocabulary when describing archaeological progress abroad. Thus, Albert Dumont, who succeeded Burnouf as head of the French School in 1875, referred to the city of Athens as a “poste d’avant garde” from where the school’s “pensionnaires” (fellows), fired with patriotic zeal and a noble “esprit de conquête,” would launch research projects described as “expeditions” in “Turkey, Syria, Palestine and Egypt.”⁷ In his 1877 annual report to the French Ministry of Culture, Dumont assimilated the relations between the French and German “schools” to a “war,” albeit a civil one: “We are engaged in a polite war [“une guerre polie”], concealed under manners that avoid the appearance of a conflict. War is amusing when one is the winner!”⁸ In a letter of 1872, Curtius linked German imperialistic forays in the Middle East with German cultural advances in engineering and archaeology:

The time is ripe. In the whole Orient, as far as educated men live, it is expected that Prussia will make good its new position of power in honorable and strong representation of the interest of art and science in the classical lands...Can one imagine what could be achieved if our available energies could be harnessed together in the right way: the steam power of the navy, the technical know-how of the General Staff, the expertise of archaeologists and architects!⁹

⁵ Valenti 2006, 62.

⁶ Jansen forthcoming.

⁷ Radet 1901, 186ff.

⁸ Ibid. 191.

⁹ Marchand 1996, 92.

But such partisan pronouncements on the official institutional scene were far from representing a cohesive orthodoxy uniformly embraced by the school's fellows. In the conflicted post-war years, individual members of the "battling" schools thought of their mission in at once larger (universal) and narrower (individual, particular) terms that often defied pre-conceived notions of polarized national loyalties. The rest of my paper therefore explores such contradictory responses to official national politics within the precincts of a single school, the French School at Athens, and as exemplified by two of its "pensionnaires": the archaeologist, writer, and art critic Edmond About (1828-85), and the archaeologist and art historian Salomon Reinach (1858-1932). Their respective careers unraveled at the height of anti-German and *revanchiste* sentiment in France in the 1880s and 1890s and reflected competing ideologies of nationalism versus internationalism and of elite versus popular approaches to the joint notions of the classical ideal and a classicist aesthetic.

Edmond About was the son of a grocer from Dieuze, a small town in the Lorraine region.¹⁰ In 1848 he entered the *École normale supérieure* as a student in classics. A two-year fellowship at the French School at Athens took him to Greece in 1851. His work there revolved around the island of Aegina (he wrote a scholarly memoir about the temple of Athena Aphaia). Returning to Paris, he launched himself into journalism, becoming in 1872 the much respected editor-in-chief of the journal *Le XIXe siècle*. In 1870-71, he witnessed with intense patriotic grief France's defeat in the war with Germany and the subsequent German annexation of his beloved French provinces, the Alsace and the Lorraine: "A Lorrain by the hazards of birth, an Alsatian by choice and by a residence of twelve years, I saw Germany confiscate in one stroke my native land and my adoptive homeland, the two little towns of Dieuze and Saverne," About mourned in

¹⁰ Sébastien and Lacambre 1985; Bonnefond 1915.

his autobiographical book *Alsace*, published in 1873.¹¹ His resentment against Germany was to last a lifetime.

Considerably younger than About, Salomon Reinach was born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, just outside Paris, to a family of assimilated Jews who had emigrated from Germany under the July Monarchy.¹² Like About, he was trained as a classical philologist in the *École normale supérieure*. From 1879 to 1882 he was in Athens as a fellow of the French School, leading excavations to important sites in mainland Greece and Asia Minor (in 1880, along with his colleague Edmond Pottier, he excavated the necropolis of Myrina, famous for its Tanagra-like clay figurines) and on the islands of Delos, Thasos, Lesbos, and Imbros. In 1887 he moved back to France to take on a position as curator and then director of the *Musée des antiquités nationales* in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. He was also a co-founder of the *École du Louvre*, where he taught courses in art history.

Although significantly apart in age, About and Reinach knew each other and traveled in the same social and intellectual circles. They both were ardent republicans and patriotic French citizens. But when it came to French–German relations and to Hellenism versus classicism, the two stood at opposite ends. While About evolved into a bitter foe of Germany (and anything Germanic), Reinach, while profoundly patriotic, remained a lifelong Germanophile who embraced German culture and intellectual achievements. About developed into a French nationalist (albeit within the parameters of the republican party; he rejected royalists); Reinach, by contrast, believed in the ideal of an internationalist intellectual and cultural community in which nations met in an everlasting spiritual truce. About’s view of the classical ideal—which emerges by reading his Salon reviews from 1855 onward—was narrow and elitist, aligned with French academicism (his favorite painter was Paul Baudry, whose work

¹¹ About 1875, 13.

¹² Basch, Espagne, and Leclant 2008.

he hailed as “immortal” in his reviews, he was close friend with Jean-Léon Gérôme and Gustave Boulanger, and he admired the work of Ingres, Flandrin, and Henner). Reinach, by contrast, approached classicism expansively, embracing its manifold aesthetic potential, from primitive abstraction to Hellenistic naturalism.

The crucible of their diverging positions became the German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann (1822-90) and the prehistoric Greek culture he uncovered. In the 1870s and 1880s Schliemann’s stunning discoveries in Troy, Mycenae, and Tiryns resonated throughout the Western world. But at the same time, controversy flared. Schliemann’s finds shocked the public with their crude primitivism, which overturned established perceptions about pristine ideal beauty, as sanctioned in the writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Moreover, located outside the institutional parameters of German academic archaeology, Schliemann’s achievements were perceived by conservatives as an affront and a provocation to the official archaeological establishment.¹³

About found in Schliemann an ideal scapegoat on which to vent his anti-German feelings. The Frenchman never missed a chance to heap insults on his German colleague, often going to implausible extremes to make his point. For example, during a trip to Istanbul, which he visited as part of the inaugural voyage of the Orient-Express train in 1883, and about which he left a witty memoir titled *De Pontoise à Stamboul* (1884), About blamed the poverty and misery he observed in the Turkish capital on the presence of German officials working for the Turkish government. Recounting his impressions from Istanbul’s archaeological museum, known as Tchimli –Kiosk, he inveighed against the German government for, as he alleged, stealing antiquities found on Turkish soil and therefore robbing Turkish museums of their rightful possessions: “Most recently the Germans of the North have stolen [“ont fait main basse”] the

¹³ Marchand 1996, 118-24.

admirable frieze of Pergamon which is more than one hundred meters long...[In exchange] The Prussians have given Hamdi-Bey a few meters, of plaster casts we should note, of this beautiful frieze.”¹⁴ In About’s eyes, Schliemann was the German thief *par excellence*: “The savant grocer Schliemann has traded the treasure of Priam and the relics of Agamemnon without offering anything to Turkey.”¹⁵

Aside from Schliemann’s Germanic origins, About’s dislike extended to Schliemann’s actual discoveries, the prehistoric artifacts found in Troy, Mycenae, and Tyrins. To About’s classically-trained eyes, the crude aesthetic of these objects, such as the flat marble idols excavated in Troy (fig. 1), was an insult to the ideal of classical beauty. It is no surprise, then, that a painting like Georges Rochegrosse’s *Andromache at the Siege of Troy* (fig. 2), which About saw at the Salon of 1883, had the critic up in arms. Using a loose, painterly style and a fiery palette reminiscent of the Romantic painter Eugène Delacroix (whose name was anathema to classicists), Rochegrosse represented the storming of Troy as a scene of horror and mayhem. Framed by dismembered bodies, severed heads, and charred, blood-smearred structures, a grotesquely distorted, half-naked Andromache struggles with iron-clad Greek soldiers who attempt to pry her son Astyanax from her arms. Compared to Jacques-Louis David’s canonical antecedent, *Andromache Mourning Hector* (fig. 3), Rochegrosse’s scene would have struck a conservative classicist like About as lacking two key prerequisites of the classical aesthetic: ideal beauty (“le beau idéal”) and a moralizing purpose. The archaeologist-turned-art-critic balked at what he regarded as an unwelcome intrusion of horrific, mundane realism into the serene realm of lofty classicism: “Undoubtedly the figure of Andromache, with her huge breasts, her large thighs and her inflated belly [“son ventre ballonné”] only recalls from afar the ideal princess

¹⁴ About 1884, 105.

¹⁵ Ibid. It will be noted that in using the term “grocer,” intended to belittle Schliemann, About is strangely oblivious to the fact that it was he, not the German scholar, who had been born the son of a grocer.

whose misfortunes have touched us in Racine's tragedy. There are too many cadavers on stage, too many cut heads, too much congealed blood, too many hanged men."¹⁶ In About's mind the culprit for such transgressions was the newly-revealed Homeric civilization (or barbarism, as About preferred to think of it) and the infamous Schliemann who had brought it to light. Rochegrosse's painting, About concluded, was undoubtedly "directly borrowed from the treasures unearthed by the diligent and learned grocer Schliemann."¹⁷

An admirer of German culture since his years at the *École normale supérieure*, Reinach typified that class of French Jewish notables who, although loyal French citizens, were devoted to the German intellectual heritage of their ancestral origins and remained so despite mounting anti-Semitism combined with anti-German sentiment in France after 1870.¹⁸ Thus, as a student in the *École normale supérieure* in 1876, Reinach published an overview of the state of modern studies on Kant, which he followed with the first French translation of Schopenhauer's *Über die Freiheit des menschlichen Willens* in 1877.¹⁹ He espoused the ideology of liberal Franco-Judaism and universalism prevalent among the Jewish intellectual elites of the Third Republic.²⁰ Accordingly, he viewed archaeology as a worldwide intellectual partnership. In the introduction to his *Monuments nouveaux de l'art antique*, a collection of his articles about new archaeological discoveries first published in the *Gazette des beaux-arts*, Reinach celebrated international archaeological activity in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, from Greece to Persia, as a triumphant eastward march of European science and knowledge.²¹ In the same spirit, he denounced the Turkish law of 1884 prohibiting the export of antiquities found by foreign archaeologists on Turkish soil as an extreme nationalist measure that undermined the wider

¹⁶ About 1883, 18.

¹⁷ Ibid. 17.

¹⁸ Birnbaum 1992; Digeon 1959; Renaud 1922.

¹⁹ Duchêne 1994.

²⁰ Rodrigue 2004; Marrus 1971.

²¹ Reinach 1924.

dissemination of scientific knowledge.

In Reinach's eyes, Schliemann was a heroic figure. He deeply admired Schliemann's writings and accepted fully Schliemann's theories about prehistoric Greece. In an article published in the *Revue archéologique* of 1883, Reinach defended Schliemann against About, pointing out the unfounded nature of About's accusations of Schliemann's alleged trafficking of antiquities and insisting instead on the absolute integrity of Schliemann's character. He wrote:

Throughout the world there are many people who... imagine that the celebrated explorer [Schliemann] has become wealthy using the proceeds of his excavations. On the contrary, 1o Mr. Schliemann has not made a profit from selling the treasure of Priam since, after having retrieved it from the Turks and paid 50.000 francs of indemnities plus interest to the Museum of Constantinople, he gave the said treasure to the Berlin Museum; 2o M. Schliemann has not sold for profit ("trafiqué") the relics of Agamemnon, since Mycenae is in Greece and all the objects that he has discovered are conserved at the Polytechnic School, in Athens where M. About can go to admire them ... One can see that M. About's information was incorrect and that 'the grocer Schliemann' is not as good a speculator as [Mr . About] maintains.²²

Indeed, Reinach shortly thereafter proceeded to reverse entirely About's theory of theft by revealing that Schliemann had been harassed by the Turkish authorities while excavating in the Troad and that "the discoveries of the German scholar were seized upon in great part by the director of the Ottoman Museum [Osman Hamdi Bey]."²³ Reinach's obituary for Schliemann published in the *Revue archéologique* of 1890 reads like a dithyramb extolling the German archaeologist for "bringing to light—in Troy, Mycenae and Tiryns—a whole era of civilization and of history" and concluding that "the civilization that preceded the times of Homer, the one we now agree to call Mycenaean, has had its Christopher Columbus in the person of Schliemann."²⁴

Further still, Reinach fully endorsed the primitivizing aesthetic of pre-classical Greek

²² Reinach 1883.

²³ Reinach, "Archaeology and the Turkish Officials," *The Nation*, July 10, 1884. He did, however, discreetly draw the curtain over the German appropriation of the Pergamon reliefs mentioned by About. See Eldem 2004; Reinach 1910.

²⁴ Reinach 1890.

art revealed by Schliemann as integral to a trans-historical notion of Hellenism. He thus opposed the prevailing belief that early Greek art had developed under influences from Eastern (Babylonian, Assyrian, Chaldean) and Egyptian cultures (a theory he denounced as “an oriental mirage”). “It is surprising to observe,” he noted, “the huge difficulty scholars have had to recognize an indigenous character in the civilizations that Schliemann’s excavations have revealed. For the majority among them [the scholars] the words of ‘primitive civilization’ are synonymous with the Chaldeans, Egypt, even China.”²⁵ For Reinach, by contrast, the crude artifacts found in Mycenae and Tiryns demonstrated three major points: 1. the deepest antiquity of ancient Greek art; 2. its independent, singular development; and 3. its comprehensive aesthetic multiplicity.

After his return to France, Reinach gave lasting and powerful visual form to his beliefs in his multivolume repertoires of Greek and Roman statuary (*Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine*), first published in 1897-98. The books take on the look of albums, with page after page of vignette-sized linear drawings recording famous Greek and Roman statues lined up in superimposed tiers (fig. 4). The images are organized into groups according to iconographic types: gods, goddesses, draped women, rulers, athletes, figures on horseback, etc. Each type unravels chronologically and stylistically from simple stick idols to sophisticated figures with a complex design. A single page thus offers a condensation of the historical and aesthetic trajectory of ancient Greek art, allowing us to take in at a glance its multifaceted nature, and indeed, its aesthetic contradictions—at once primitively crude and ideally beautiful—as integral to its identity. Reinach’s acceptance of this duality, of both the grotesque and the sublime as inherent characteristics of the classical aesthetic, resonated with the new dichotomous vision of Hellenism propounded by Friedrich Nietzsche, especially in his *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus*

²⁵ Reinach 1893.

dem Geiste der Musik (1872). Since their first appearance in French translation in the late 1880s and wide diffusion and popularization by the 1890s, Nietzsche's writings had become extremely influential among French intellectual and artistic circles and would have been well known to Reinach, the Germanophile intellectual and translator of Nietzsche's spiritual "mentor," Schopenhauer.²⁶

But the abbreviated drawings of the *Répertoires* were meant to signify even further. Designed to look like abstracted ideograms, indexical symbols of Greek originals, lined up as if on the ruled pages of a notebook, and intended to be read in a left to right progression, the drawings suggest linguistic notations. Reinach indeed conceived his repertoires as a dictionary or comprehensive index of ancient art ("une sorte d'index," as he wrote in his introduction to the 1906 edition of the first volume of his *Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine*) and saw his mission as that of antiquity's lexicographer. The underlying purpose of his massive undertaking was educational. By turning Greek art into a universal language, understood by and accessible to all, he brought knowledge to the masses, bonding together an imagined community that transcended contentious temporal political divides of nations, races, and social classes. His work addressed all humankind, as Reinach put it, from "the traveling archaeologist, to the humblest of students, to the school teacher, to the country priest,"²⁷ all united by their common passion for Hellenism.

Edmond About and Salomon Reinach stand as examples of the splintered intellectual loyalties commanded by the political contingencies of their times. Their case demonstrates the new status of archaeology as a world driven by its own ideological dynamics. These dynamics sometimes contravened, derailed, subverted, and even overrode conventional national and international partnerships and political alignments. Within the larger historical continuum,

²⁶ Le Rider 1999; Nematollahy 2009.

²⁷ Reinach 1906.

archaeology carved out its own micro-history, obeyed its own imperatives, marched to its own drum, a drum that, in the case of some of its members, such as Reinach, rallied a community of minds dedicated to a single cause whose noble call rose above time and place.

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Illustrations

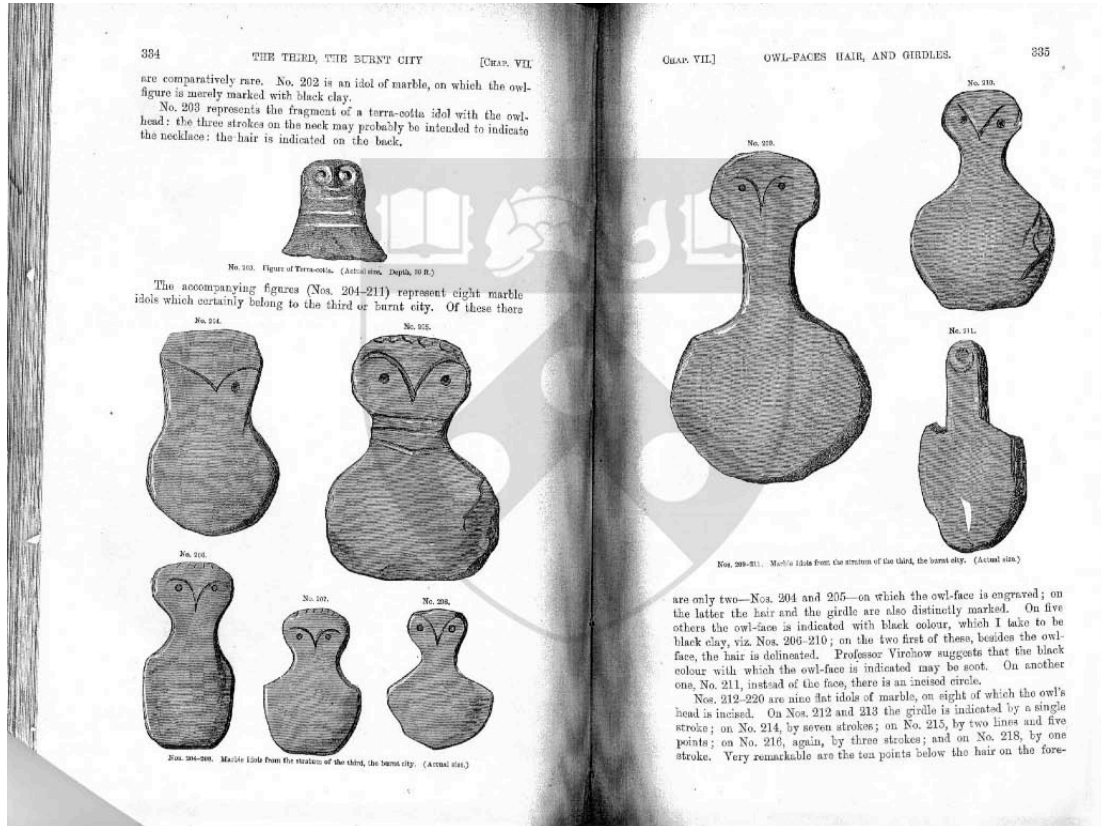


figure 1. Marble idols from Troy, from Henry Schliemann, Ilios. The City and Country of the Trojans, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1881, pp. 334-335 (photo: author).

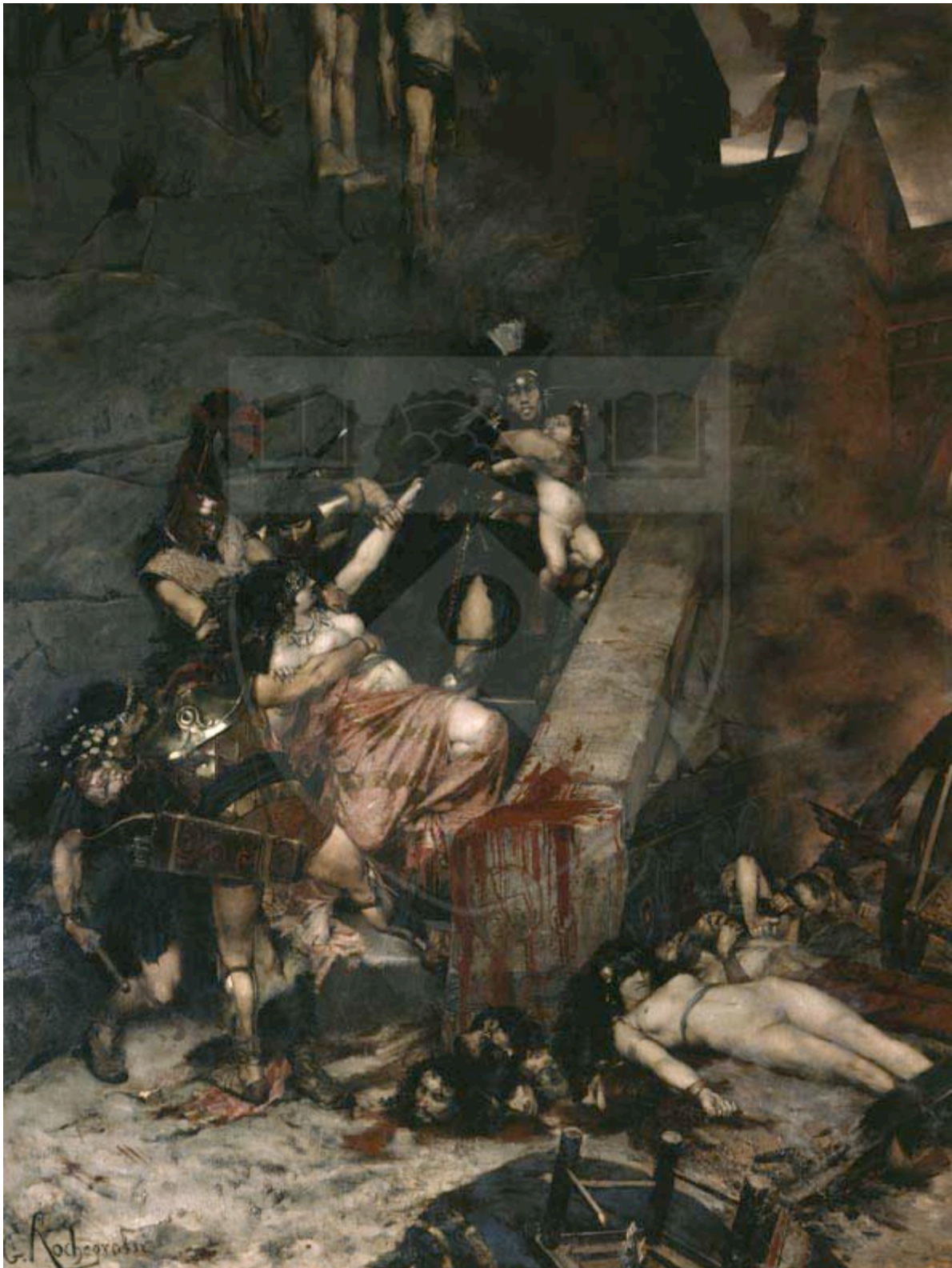


figure 2. Georges Rochegrosse, Andromaque, Salon of 1883, Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts
(photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux)

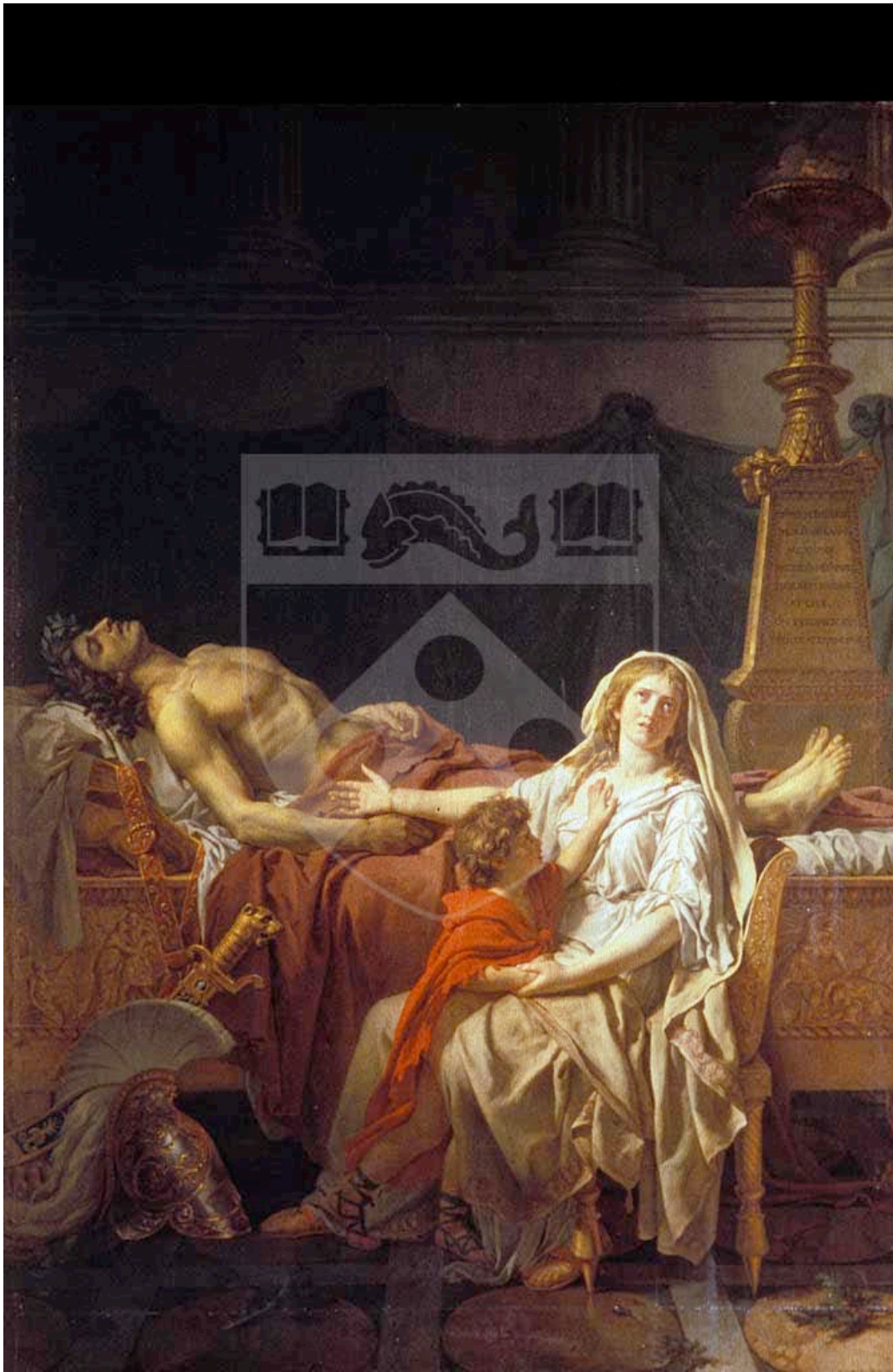
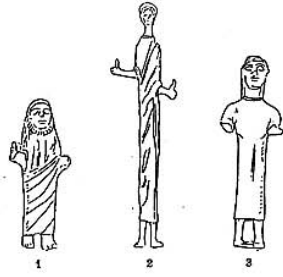


figure 3. Jacques-Louis David, *Andromache Mourning Hector*, 1783, Paris, Louvre Museum
(photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux)



1. B. Genève. *Ra.* 1912^a, p. 39. — 2. B. Louvre 322. — 3. B. Genève. *Ra.* 1912^a, p. 39.
— 4. B. Louvre 169. — 5. B. Genève. *Ra.* 1912^a, p. 39. — 6. Venise; Pal. ducal. A. 2410.
— 7. Pal. Margherita à Rome. A. 2098. — 8. Autrefois au palais Doria-Pamfilii. Phot.
envoyée par Helbig. — 9. Trèves. E. 5111.

1. Valence. Albertini, p. 7. — 2. B. Montepulciano; Florence. *Ausonja*, 1919, p. 87.
— 3. Florence. Milani, p. 328. — 4. Ny-Carlsberg. *Album*, pl. 10, 551 a. — 5. B. New-
York 360. — 6. Ny-Carlsberg. *Album*, pl. 10, 552. — 7. Golgoi. New-York. Cesnola, II,
pl. 118. — 8. A Paris chez Geladakis en 1912. Phot. Espérandieu. — 9. Ny-Carlsberg.
Album, pl. 10, 552 b.

figure 4. Salomon Reinach, *Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine*, vol. 1, Paris, E. Leroux, 1906, pp. 372-373 (photo: author)