

1 | Troy

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Nineteenth-century Britons fought over the landmarks of Jerusalem and Troy with greater intensity than any others. One might ask, parodying Tertullian, ‘what has Troy to do with Jerusalem?’¹ However, nineteenth-century archaeology and scholarship subverted this injunction to separate the church from the history and thought of Greece to such an extent that it would be difficult to capture the changing relationships between city and text without first discussing the city of the *Iliad*, that ‘Bible of classical times’.² The famously besieged and destroyed city was, for decades, the proving-ground for techniques that were subsequently applied to Scripture, while travellers often visited the Troad *en route* to the Holy Land, or *vice versa*. This correlation between belief in Homer’s veracity and faith in the Bible runs throughout British responses to the search for Troy, underpinned by connections between biblical criticism and classical scholarship. Homer’s Troy – a city located at the crossroads between mythology, epic and history – highlights the contested authority of both classical and biblical texts. Such disputes reached fever-pitch with the claim of Heinrich Schliemann (1822–90) to have uncovered the city of Homeric epic because uncertainty about the authenticity of Homeric epic had become entwined with increased alarm about higher critical scepticism from the 1850s onward. Once located and excavated, the remains of Homer’s Troy could symbolise the triumph of the literary imagination – both classical and biblical – over sceptical criticism.

The most sensational events in Troy’s archaeological history, Schliemann’s excavations at Hisarlik, occurred at the moment, in the 1870s, when controversies concerning the relationship between secular and sacred knowledge were most intense. Thanks to texts from Thomas Henry Huxley’s ‘On the Physical Basis of Life’ (1868/9), Charles Darwin’s *Descent of Man* (1871) and John Tyndall’s ‘Belfast Address’ (1874) to Huxley’s ‘On the Method of Zadig’ (1880) the idea that ‘science’ and ‘religion’ were in direct conflict was aired

¹ Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, ed. Pierre de Labriolle (Paris, 1907), p. 16: ‘*Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?*’ (‘What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?’)

² Richard Engelmann and William Anderson, *Pictorial Atlas to Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey* (London, 1892), p. iv.

with new confidence in the British press. Classical literature played crucial roles in the invective of the early 1870s. Tyndall's 'Belfast Address' famously invoked Lucretius and the 'atomism' of ancient Epicureans, while William Kingdon Clifford's vain attempt to subvert the quickly solidifying divide between rationalism and faith used the siege of Syracuse in the Peloponnesian War to demonstrate the 'universal duty of questioning all that we believe'; an imperative that 'no simplicity of mind, no obscurity of station, can escape'.³

Lucretius and Thucydides provided occasional historical illustrations and analogies in these debates; Homeric Troy was a constant presence. Readers soon understood that what was said of this city could pose nagging metaphysical questions. As early as 1857, Elizabeth Barrett Browning had presented the critical deconstruction of this single pagan text as a rebellion against the divine nature of the cosmos itself:

Wolff's an atheist;
 And if the Iliad fell out, as he says,
 By mere fortuitous concurrence of old songs,
 We'll guess as much, too, for the universe.⁴

Her husband Robert put it less snappily, but in terms more revealing of the complexes of enchantment and disillusionment that coalesced around this city-as-symbol which, in his words, enabled 'truth and falsehood [to be] known and named as such':

And, after Wolf, a dozen of his like
 Proved there was never any Troy at all,
 Neither Besiegers nor Besieged, – nay, worse, –
 No actual Homer, no authentic text,
 No warrant for the fiction I, as fact,
 Had treasured in my heart and soul so long –
 . . . though Wolf – ah, Wolf!
 Why must he needs come doubting, spoil a dream?⁵

The philologist Friedrich August Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795) was by far the most frequently cited sceptical text on Troy. It was directly

³ Helen Small, 'Science, Liberalism and the Ethics of Belief', in G. N. Cantor and S. Shuttleworth, eds., *Science Serialized: Representations of the Sciences in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), p. 240; W. K. Clifford, 'The Ethics of Belief', *Contemporary Review* (January 1877), 307–8.

⁴ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (London, 1857), p. 226.

⁵ Robert Browning, 'Development', in John Pettegrew, ed., *Poems* (2 vols., London, 1981), II, pp. 918–21.

modelled on one of the most controversial contemporary products of higher criticism, J. G. Eichhorn's *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (1780/3), and asserted the oral composition of Homer's epic poems, raising questions over their authorship, dating and authenticity, and kick-starting the 'Homeric Question'.

The loss of imaginary, often 'childhood' Troys under the scrutiny of scholarship that aimed, in Robert Browning's words, to 'sift the grain from chaff' became a familiar lament of Romantic and post-Romantic poetry. Almost a century after the *Prolegomena*'s publication, its effects on those who believed in a single author of the *Iliad* was still vividly recalled by *The Examiner* as 'so very shattering . . . that their old firmness of faith is gone for ever, and doubt and distrust reign triumphant in its stead'.⁶ When John Ruskin (1819–1900) had felt himself in this spiritual 'mess' in 1864, it was to the topographer of Troy, Henry Acland (1815–1900), that he turned to ask whether the Athenians were 'all wrong' in building the Parthenon, and if so, whether those who designed the spire of St Mary's in Hinksey could be equally misguided. By this time, the appetite for scholarship that might liberate Athens from the rationalism of the 'vulgar materialist' George Grote and Homer from the scepticism of Wolf was extensive.⁷

This parallel between Homeric and biblical narratives – which placed Troy in the same imaginative landscape as Jerusalem – was only strengthened when the same travellers and scholars contributed to debates over Troy's location and to arguments over sites such as that of Christ's Tomb. The Cambridge mineralogist Edward Daniel Clarke (1769–1822), for example, having 'found the situation where Ilium once stood', proceeded to Jerusalem, where he visited 'the possible site of our Saviour's tomb'.⁸ He disputed both its location at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the site of the springs which supposedly identified Homer's Troy. Meanwhile, Philip Hunt (b. 1770) and Joseph Dacre Carlyle (1758–1804), who were attached to Elgin's embassy with a view to collecting New Testament manuscripts, visited the Troad both with him and subsequently in March 1801, when they were only three days behind Clarke and his student Cripps. The two cities were frequent subjects of comparison: the first modern topographer to

⁶ 'Mr. Gladstone's Last Homeric Study', *Examiner* (8 April 1876), 407.

⁷ E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, eds., *Works of John Ruskin* (31 vols., London, 1903–12), XXXIV, p. 18.

⁸ 'Dr Clarke's Travels', *La Belle Assemblée* (1813), 306 ff.; Edward Daniel Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa: Part 1, Russia, Tartary, and Turkey* (Cambridge, 1810), pp. 342–6; J. M. Crook, *The Greek Revival: Neo-Classical Attitudes in British Architecture 1760–1870* (London, 1972), p. 27. See further Simon Goldhill, *Jerusalem: City of Longing* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), p. 21.

propose the site now accepted as Troy claimed that ‘Hissarlik [*sic*], if proved to be the true site of Homer’s Ilium, becomes consecrated ground [since] . . . Ilium was for a considerable period to the Heathen world, what Jerusalem is now to the Christian’.⁹

The chapters of this book show different biblical cities rising to prominence at specific moments in the nineteenth century: Sodom, for instance, was found most useful in the angst-ridden, radicalised 1840s. The Romantic travels of Clarke, Hunt, Carlyle and Byron represent one such peak for discussion of Troy, but the city became most relevant to Protestant thought later, interest in it building through the 1860s until it exploded into full view after 1870. The reason was not just archaeological discoveries, but also changes in the questions asked of pre-classical history and literature, which were in turn brought about by developments in biblical interpretation. Ruskin’s personal crisis came in the same year as the Oxford Declaration collected signatures of 10,906 churchmen denouncing all those who doubted that any part of the Bible was the Word of God. This was the same moment at which leading Church of England clerics stood trial at the Court of Arches for heresy: the culmination of the *Essays and Reviews* (1860) controversy. One of the ‘seven against Christ’ who contributed to the volume, Charles Wycliffe Goodwin (1817–78), was known primarily as an Egyptologist; another, Rowland Williams (1817–70), used his contribution to review Baron Christian Carl Josias von Bunsen’s perspectives on pre-classical languages and chronology. Bunsen and his British followers insisted that secular history was the ‘external shell’ to which Scripture was the ‘kernel’: the two had grown together, were entirely symbiotic, and the former must provide the framework in which the latter was interpreted.¹⁰ Over the following decade, Troy reappeared in every new crisis of biblical authority. W. R. Cassels (1826–1907), for instance, dismissed the *Iliad* as ‘base anthropomorphic mythology’ in *Supernatural Religion: An Inquiry into the Reality of the Divine Revelation* (1874), a text with the primary purpose of challenging the historicity of the gospels.¹¹

From the opposite perspective, churchmen and public figures renegotiated the relationships between ancient history and Revelation, in terms that still favoured the latter, in works with titles such as *The Place of Ancient Greece in the Providential Order of the World* (William Ewart Gladstone’s valedictory address of Rector of the University of Edinburgh, 1865). After

⁹ Review of Charles Maclaren’s *Dissertation: ‘The Plain of Troy Described’*, *Athenaeum* (9 May 1863), 616.

¹⁰ C. C. J. von Bunsen, *Egypt’s Place in Universal History* (5 vols., London, 1848–67), I, p. 176.

¹¹ [W.R. Cassels], *Supernatural Religion* (3 vols., London, 1874), I, p. 111.

1870, Heinrich Schliemann, the German businessman excavating at Troy, and George Smith (1840–76), the bank-note engraver deciphering Deluge Tablets in the bowels of the British Museum, provided fresh material for archaeological intervention in these debates. They consolidated and extended the role of pre-classical history in the theological soul-searching that accompanied both the rise of scientific naturalism and the popularisation of higher critical ideas.

Even before Schliemann, the imaginative capital of these tropes was enormous: the ‘Homeric’ poetry of the Brownings was the tip of a vast iceberg of verse. Large numbers of justifiably forgotten poets also used Troy to ‘Get truth and falsehood known and named as such’, often uncritically conjoining the classical and biblical in the process. From the dozens of instances that could be cited, two particularly earnest examples will suffice. John Box was master at Dorking Grammar School, author of several works of biblical literature and handbooks to arithmetic. His enormous epic poem, *The Deluge* (1881), began with the obligatory Miltonic appeal:

Triune Lord of all! Whose spirit moved
 That giant of our English song to sing
 Of man’s first disobedience

and ‘the loss / Of Paradise and all its perfect bliss!’. This divine aid was petitioned for assistance in recounting

Eden’s happiness; its sin;
 And all the sorrow that with sin returned!

As soon as this biblical invocation is complete, however, Box embarks on a lengthy account of Homeric geography, recalling ‘infantine navies of the ancient world’ that accomplished heroic deeds ‘twixt’ the limits of the Mediterranean Sea. The prose preface to later editions of this multi-volume work set out the author’s thesis: ‘Eden and Paradise are now covered by the Mediterranean.’¹² Around this sea ‘Each cape, each cove is monument that marks / Heroic deed’; but ‘greater things’ lie hidden beneath the waters. When Box recounts the journey of a bold ancient mariner, the rapid juxtaposition of Homeric and biblical vicinities such as Charybdis and Tarshish (the city Jonah reached on his biblical odyssey) hints at the dramatic affinities he wants to draw: Odysseus’ route away from Troy carried him over a biblical landscape. Through such re-working of the long-standing equation between Eden and Troy the geographies of pre-classical

¹² John Box, *The Deluge* (3 vols., London, 1882), I, p. ix.

literature – Pentateuch, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* – become identical. This was an equation that had, until Schliemann, been the preserve of the sceptical – ‘researches’ concerning Troy were ‘equally idle and hopeless with those . . . respecting the position of the garden of Eden’ – but which was now employed from new, more traditionalist, angles.¹³ Another forgotten poet, William Watkins Old (Royal Society Fellow and Plantagenet historian) also published verse that refracted Homer through the Protestant lens of Milton. In his pastiche *Il Penseroso*, Old suggested that the original blind bard, aware of the true nature of creation, had spoken allegorically of biblical events. Penelope is Eve; Odysseus is Adam. Old’s poem concludes with Penelope’s vision of the tree of life: the ‘mystery of Eden’ is disclosed and ‘Wisdom Divine’ reveals that ‘these two things’ – Hellenic and Hebraic learning – ‘were one, in truth’.¹⁴

Writing amidst the convulsions of the modern Eastern Question, Alexander Kinglake (1809–91) described Box and Old’s palimpsestic Eastern Mediterranean as a ‘grand, simple, violent world’.¹⁵ Precisely because of the mass of overlaid Homeric and biblical traditions that these poets exploited, travellers could imbue almost any of the region’s ruins with biblical and Homeric auras. As Ruskin’s friend and correspondent, Henry Acland, had emphasised in *The Plains of Troy* (1839), the ruins of Alexandria Troas (built by Alexander to emulate Homer’s city) were known as ‘Priam’s Palace’ and ‘it was from this Troas that St Paul sailed into Macedonia. Here also on his return he restored to life Eutychus’ (Acts 20:9).¹⁶

These classical–biblical confluences were endowed with new and more problematic implications during the 1860s. Homeric–biblical parallels were tied to questions of identity that became increasingly divisive after Matthew Arnold’s essays on *Culture and Anarchy* (1867–8).¹⁷ Arnold’s adapted Herderian categories – Hebraism and Hellenism – were not simply metaphors in the generation when Box wrote his *Deluge*: they were used until the early twentieth century as vital tools of social and historical analysis. ‘The essential identity of European civilisation with the Greek’ rubbed up against Ruskin’s assumption that the English were the ‘Israel of all the Earth’.¹⁸ As this chapter will demonstrate, identities built on these legendary genealogies, which fused the classical and biblical into their supposed modern composite, the Victorian Briton, can be found throughout the British

¹³ Charles Maclaren, *The Plain of Troy Described* (1822; Edinburgh, 1863), pp. v–vi.

¹⁴ William Watkins Old, *New Readings of Homer* (London, 1860), pp. 139–42.

¹⁵ Alexander Kinglake, *The Invasion of the Crimea* (8 vols., London, 1863–87), I, p. 37.

¹⁶ Henry Acland, *The Plains of Troy* (Oxford, 1839), p. 14.

¹⁷ David DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian Britain* (Austin, TX, 1970).

¹⁸ Cook and Wedderburn, eds., *Works of John Ruskin*, XXIX, p. 92.

press. Even as Troy's appearances in critical discourse threatened to consign these identities to the status of fanciful myth, mapping and digging Troy showed how myth could be restored to the status of scientifically verified fact. As we shall see, this conflict had been fought out by travellers and antiquarians for decades, but Arnold's categories placed it in particularly stark relief.

As this contest between text and topography caused Troy to stutter out of myth into material reality, and then back again, the city was discussed in the language of 'faith', 'revelation' and 'inspiration'. Nowhere did entanglement between Hellenism and Hebraism become more intractable than at this site; and no other site demonstrates how flimsy the partitions between the categories of sacred and secular remained. From Arnold and Carlyle to Gladstone and Ruskin, the great names of the age made heartfelt interventions in debates that interrogated the nature of archaeological knowledge itself. To such evangelistic apologists for Homer and the Bible, the disputed textual evidence lacked substance next to rivers and hills, walls and weapons, pots and palaces which all seemed to stand in the exact spots that 'Homer' or 'Moses' had said they would. The techniques of mapping and digging were tested here against textual analysis as tools for deciding where the character traits of Europeans had come from and what the British could know of their origins.

These heady debates involved, and encouraged, some unexpected assumptions about the social functions and literary genre of the *Iliad*. This included the widespread insistence that the *Iliad* was to the Greeks what Scripture was to Jews or Christians. This 'Greek's Bible', the fount of Hellenic 'theology', could easily become a modern secular Bible in the sense that Homer's 'genius' made it heretical to question his grasp of history or geography, while an 1892 *Illustrated Atlas to Homer* would literalise this analogy by describing itself as 'a Greek illustrated Bible'.¹⁹ Kinglake's earlier description of his relationship with Homer captures a more playful version of this trope:

as an old woman deeply trustful sits reading her Bible because of the world to come, so, as though it would fit me for the coming strife of this temporal world, I read, and read the *Iliad*.²⁰

¹⁹ W. H. Mason, 'Homer and Dr. Schliemann', *Macmillan's Magazine* (September 1876), 448; Engelmann and Anderson, *Pictorial Atlas*, p. iv.

²⁰ Alexander Kinglake, *Eothen: Or, Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East* (London, 1844), p. 56.

The British press repeatedly scrutinised these trusting attitudes to classical literature, often in tandem with other cultural crises. Bunsen's ancient history was, according to the British Museum curator Samuel Birch, the 'most critical work yet published' on ancient Egypt; yet William Smith in the *Quarterly* (writing in that most resonant of years, 1859) excoriated the Baron for his failure to grasp the difference between human classics and divine Scripture.²¹ 'A kind of halo', he wrote, rests on Greek and Roman texts, making it 'almost as presumptuous to question the tales of Livy as the statements of the Bible'. Ancient historians had proved incapable of developing 'laws respecting the value of evidence' or of examining 'the grounds upon which the ancients themselves believed in the stories which they related'.²² Bunsen, Smith implied, had failed to appreciate the difference between human and divine in according too much credit to authors outside providential traditions. In 1864, the outgoing Home Secretary and editor of *The Edinburgh Review*, George Cornewall Lewis (1806–63) penned a satirical pamphlet in which he applied the outmoded 'credulity' of ancient historians like Bunsen to modern history and demonstrated that Charles I and Charles II were one and the same.²³

The efforts of Smith and Cornewall Lewis had little impact on the generation that followed them and the reasons for their failure are among the core concerns of this chapter. Schliemann's comment in *Troja*, that he believed in the *Iliad* 'as in the Gospel itself' became one of his most quoted but least examined dicta.²⁴ It inspired one of the most prolific writers on Homer of the century, William Ewart Gladstone, and filtered into reviews of his work: Gladstone, *The Examiner* insisted, made the *Iliad* 'an object more of devotion than mere study, of reverence more than of dry enquiry'.²⁵

Strikingly, in the hands of this four-times Prime Minister, analogies between Homer and Scripture were much more than self-conscious rhetorical devices. Gladstone considered it self-evident that as the two great texts of the early world, the Old Testament and the *Iliad* could be used to elucidate one another; the details of society left out of one could be filled in from the other. More striking still, Homer was raised unequivocally to the

²¹ [William Smith], 'Bunsen's Egypt and the Chronology of the Bible', *Quarterly Review*, 55 (1859), 382.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ George Cornewall Lewis, *Suggestions for the Application of the Egyptological Method to Modern History* (London, 1862).

²⁴ Anon., 'Troy and its Remains', *Morning Post* (18 September 1875), 3; Anon., 'Dr. Schliemann's Trojan Antiquities', *Edinburgh Review* (April 1874), 513; the passage in question is the *Edinburgh Review's* translation of a phrase from Schliemann's *Einleitung*, p. xi.

²⁵ Anon., 'Mr. Gladstone's Last Homeric Study', *Examiner* (8 April 1876), 407.

status of sacred history with the argument that elements of divine revelation could be unpicked from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.²⁶ Gladstone's colossal *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age* (3 vols., 1858) stands as the most sustained assertion that divine providence had been universally distributed in the early world, and that the Homeric poems contained the most complete recollection of this primordial golden age.

While this idea received short shrift on publication in 1858, it is significant that its influence (and the number of its imitators) grew substantively. This was in part because Gladstone's status as one of the century's greatest public figures meant that, amidst the archaeological enthusiasm of the 1870s, he was able to appoint himself as mediator between archaeologists and the public; but it was also a result of the mounting polemic – associated first with Darwin and *Essays and Reviews*, then with the more aggressive statements of Cassels, Huxley and Tyndall. In these decades, the debate over the relation of biblical and classical texts shifted significantly. In the 1850s, scholars such as William Smith had countenanced the deconstruction of ancient texts like Homer and Livy while assuming that the Bible stood apart and could remain intact. Tension was raised as churchmen such as Samuel Wilberforce (in the aftermath of *Essays and Reviews*) insisted that critical assaults on Livy were preparatory work for attacks on the Old Testament. Like Wilberforce in his riposte, Gladstone believed that all forms of pre-classical written authority stood or fell together. In 1858 this idea appeared eccentric and reactionary. The biblical and Homeric discoveries of archaeologists gradually altered the balance of power between these two perspectives. By 1880, statements concerning the authority of ancient texts that had once looked improbable and dogmatic could be presented, with confidence, as empirically true.

The reception history of German higher criticism in Britain provides one framework for this development. Classical texts and remains had been used to elaborate and elucidate Scripture for generations. The enlightened *Altertumswissenschaft*, developed notably in Göttingen and then applied to the Old Testament by scholars from Michaelis to Heyne, had done exactly this.²⁷ Mid-century German-influenced thinkers in Britain, particularly Unitarians such as John Kenrick (1788–1877) in his *Egypt of Herodotus* (1841), had taken up this Hanoverian mantle. The challenge to this mode

²⁶ For instance W.E. Gladstone, *Studies on Homer* (3 vols., London, 1858), II, p. 8: the poems of Homer 'afford a most valuable collateral support to the credit of the Holy Scripture, considered as a document of history'.

²⁷ Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Oxford, 2005); Michael Carhart, *The Science of Culture in Enlightenment Germany* (London, 2007).

came from more radical, and sceptical, criticism of the New Testament such as that championed by D. F. Strauss. British engagement with this criticism, which was essentially internalist and literary rather than archaeological or geographical, expanded only gradually; it began in radical circles but eventually infiltrated larger intellectual constituencies through works like George Eliot's translation of Strauss' *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (1846) and heterodox statements such as Francis William Newman's *Phases of Faith* (1850). These ideas, which challenged the supernatural in all its forms, interpreting supernatural occurrences as evidence of the unreliability of a text, were more widely publicised in the 1870s than ever before. The growing concern of this criticism with the gospels as well as the Old Testament is key to the panic it increasingly engendered. Events of the 1860s showed that the law had no teeth against heresy, especially when, unlike the essayists, lay offenders such as Cassels were not subject to the jurisdiction of the Court of Arches. The Brownings' impassioned response to Wolf, when his work on Homer was already half a century old, shows the same process occurring in classical scholarship; it parallels the equally neurotic reception of Spinoza in the 1870s.²⁸ Archaeological popularisers, including Archibald Henry Sayce (1845–1933), now built their public identities around the defence of ancient texts from newly publicised critical attacks. In works that culminated with the best-selling of his many volumes – *The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments* (1897) – Sayce gave a highly partial history of the higher criticism which observed that critical thought had taken decades to filter through to the public; he charged himself with the task of ensuring that archaeological counter-arguments struck home with the instantaneous impact of lightning, not the distant, delayed rumbling of thunder.

As these debates indicate, where other cities in this volume allowed thinkers to negotiate ideas such as order and chaos; civilisation and wilderness; authority and liberty; or faith and doubt, investigations of Troy confronted the starkest such dichotomy. The contested ground that Troy occupied was that between truth and lie, reality and non-existence. Whereas few doubted the actual existence of biblical cities such as Sodom and Gomorrah (whatever their opinions as to events said to have occurred there, or where the cities' remains might be), a host of scholars doubted that Troy 'had any existence, except in the brain of Homer'.²⁹ Others, with

²⁸ David Katz, *God's Last Words: Reading the English Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism* (London, 2004), pp. 248–67.

²⁹ H. M. Westropp, *The Age of Homer* (London, 1884), p. 25.