

Book Reviews

World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives, edited by Alain Schnapp, with Lothar von Falkenhausen, Peter N. Miller, and Tim Murray. Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2013. Pp. 464. US\$60.00 (paper).

What was antiquarianism? Since Arnaldo Momigliano's well-known article "Ancient History and the Antiquarian" (*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13, 1950), antiquarianism has been recognized as more than an auxiliary discipline, providing coins, pots, curiosities, and other material trinkets to enliven the lofty narratives of historiography. Its premodern shortcomings have been paraphrased most concisely as the "learned credulity" (in the words of Joseph Trapp) that resulted in millennial origin myths based on shards from local backyards. In the eighteenth century, antiquarianism exploded with many amateur projects, ultimately eroding its academic status.

Of late, however, the disciplines of art history, archaeology, and heritage studies have rediscovered antiquarianism in the project of writing their own histories. This follows the "material turn" in the humanities and a growing concern with "tacit knowledge," the agency of objects, and artefact-actor assemblages. (In addition, Krzysztof Pomian has emphasized the nonliterate status of the digital world.)

While the term "philology" witnesses a revival (see the review of James Turner's book elsewhere in this journal), something similar is happening with its more practically minded twin. Philology may be interpreted to mean writing the history of words; antiquarianism meant writing the history of things. As is captured in the German term *Realphilologie* (philology of things), artefacts have for a long time been more important pieces of humanistic and scientific evidence than texts or even natural objects. While the survival of texts depended on the wiles of copyists, antiquities were the tactile past itself. Natural objects that could shed light on the past, such as stones, bones, and fossils, were of little use without the scientific methods of dating them. By contrast, artefacts—works of visual art, craft, and material culture—were the most reliable historical evidence since through their inscriptions, styles, and techniques they could be submitted to dating and interpretation. Antiquities were essential in, for instance, the great debate about

chronology at the onset of the Scientific Revolution. How to reconcile the biblical account of history, in particular the Universal Flood, with the histories of other civilizations? As long as the foreign languages were unknown, antiquities made a greater impact than texts.

Two new books draw attention to the role that antiquarianism has played across different cultures, in particular in Europe and Asia. Antiquarianism may indeed be one of the most interesting parallel developments of Western and Chinese civilizations, as was pointed out in a 2012 volume edited by Peter Miller and François Louis (*Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China, 1500–1800*, University of Michigan Press). Not only did this book draw similarities between different “cults of history” such as the Latin *antiquitates* and the *jinshixue* of the Northern Song dynasty; it also (thanks to the scholarship of Joan-Pau Rubiès and David Mungello) identified key moments when Western and Eastern accounts of the past clashed, most notably in the Chinese Rites and Malabar Rites controversies around 1700.

The twenty-one essays in the volume under review, *World Antiquarianism*, are even more ambitious, both in geographical scope (the Middle East, Europe, East Asia, Polynesia, and the Americas) and in historical range (from prehistoric “hunter-gatherer antiquarians” to present-day Indian antiquity worship). This comprehensive ambition is also the volume’s greatest drawback. As the scholar of Islamic studies, Michael Cook, suggested, only Europe and China had a true antiquarian tradition before 1800. For the other regions, the analysis has therefore to be somewhat derivative.

The volume’s inclusive approach even seems to be self-defeating when it turns to written documents, rather than material remnants of the past, to argue that in India and the Islamic world, developments took place that paralleled Chinese and European antiquarianism. There are obvious cases in which it is hard to draw the line: texts, calligraphy, and epigraphic documents share the materiality of objects. But by expanding the category of antiquarianism too far, it loses its interpretive force. Thus, antiquarian antecedents are attributed to the entirety of “our cultural sciences” (if not the humanities at large [318]). Moreover, high and low culture, from Giorgio de Chirico to J. R. R. Tolkien, are portrayed as drawing from the antiquarian well.

The global approach of *World Antiquarianism* is, despite its subtitle, not so comparative. Outside of Peter Miller’s chapter, “A Tentative Morphology of European Antiquarianism, 1500–2000,” the book hesitates to draw parallels (or identify false friends) in terms of methodological principles and the *longue durée*. A comparative discussion on, for instance, the role of forgeries (and the status of authenticity) in different civilizations would have been welcome. There is only one analysis of a historical actor’s confrontation with the antiquarian practices and ideals of another culture: Hiroyuki Suzuki explores the Japanese adventures of the American Edward Morse (1838–1925).

The question remains open: Did Western scholars learn from Chinese antiquarianism and vice versa?

These complaints may be pedantic in the light of the compilation of such a massive treasure trove of erudition, which obviously contains many nuggets. Yun-chiahn Sena portrays the Song statesman and collector Ouyang Xiu (1007–72) as a pivotal figure in pondering the “metaphysics of antiquity” (212). Lothar Falkenhausen draws attention to the portability of Chinese antiquities versus the European emphasis on real estate. Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s suggestion to differentiate historical “regimes of antiquarianism” (383) may prove helpful for modern disciplines that seek to combine practices and ideals of the past and of other cultures.

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Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities, by James Turner. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014. Pp. xxiv+550. US\$24.95 (paper).

James Turner’s book is a much-needed one. In fact, it is two: a history of the humanities in Europe, ending somewhere around 1850, and a history of the humanities in the Anglo-Saxon world, beginning roughly around 1800. The two overlap in the middle, and so *Philology* has three parts: before 1800, 1800–1850, and after 1850. Particularly for the Anglo-Saxon world, it fills a glaring gap in the literature; the history of scholarship in Britain and America is a rather fragmented lot compared to its French and German counterparts. For the history of the humanities at large, there are two precedents: Georges Gusdorf’s thirteen-volume *Les sciences humaines et la pensée occidentale* (1966–88), and more recently Rens Bod’s *A New History of the Humanities* (Dutch version 2010, English translation 2013). Still, Turner’s is the first overview history with a linear narrative structure, dramatic effects, and flesh-and-blood characters; or, in his own words, “a sustained argument about change over time, cast in the form of an empirical description” (381). Gusdorf’s is rather a very long *capita selecta*, full of rhetorical questions and exclamation marks, and Bod’s a more schematic analysis of methods and patterns in four periods, ten disciplines, and several regions.

Turner is a great narrator. In all its broadness and comprehensiveness, *Philology* never gets handbookish; Turner peppers each chapter with the right amount of anecdote and pointed remarks without losing himself in digressions. True to his belief that the humanities are a unitary whole and have a common origin, he crosses disciplinary boundaries with impressive ease and ends with a heartfelt plea against compartmental-