

CHAPTER 1



Adventures in Ancient Greek and Roman Libraries

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Libraries are commonly regarded as serious, even austere environments, so it may come as a surprise that it is in a comedy, indeed our earliest surviving and rather raucous Aristophanic comedy, that the first certain literary response to a library occurs. The library belongs to Euripides, one of the three great tragedians of Athens, and the play is Aristophanes's *Acharnians*, first performed in Athens in the late winter of 425 B.C. Athens and Sparta have been fighting the Peloponnesian War for six long years. The hero of the comedy, like many in his audience, is a peasant farmer who has suffered intensely as a result. His name is Dikaiopolis, which roughly translates as “the right way to run a city-state,” and he wants to put the case that the Athenians need to make immediate peace with Sparta. He has decided that the most rhetorically effective outfit in which to address his fellow citizens and appeal to their pity consists of a poor man's rags. Since the famous dramatist Euripides was well known for writing tragedies in which royal heroes suffered from straitened circumstances and appeared in rags, Dikaiopolis's first port of call is the house of this tragic poet.

He knocks on the door and asks Euripides's slave—who turns out to be phenomenally intellectual—where his master is. The poet is apparently upstairs, hard at work writing a play. With the aid of some kind of stage machinery, Euripides, sitting elevated in his study, is “rolled out” into view and appears seated in the upper storey of his house. It is time for Dikaiopolis to make his request. But what he actually asks for is not a

stage costume as such, but “the tatters of some old drama” (*μοι βράκιόν τι τοῦ παλαιοῦ δράματος*); as he says to Euripides, “I have to treat the chorus to a long oration (*ῥήσιν μακρὰν*), and if I do it badly it will mean death for me” (415–17).

The comic action that ensues plays on the double meaning of the word for “tatters” here, *rhakion*, which alludes both to scraps of papyrus and to ragged old theatrical costumes.¹ Euripides seems to be sitting in a paper jungle constituted by papyri containing his own plays and tells his slave to get the “strips” (*spargana*, 431) of the play featuring the most ragged hero of them all, his famous (and alas, lost) *Telephus*: they are to be found, he says, close to the scraps of two other plays, “on top of the tatters of Thyestes, mixed up with those of Ino” (432–4). While Dikaipolis does collect a hat and other theatrical props from Euripides, the scene only makes sense if he also departs with a papyrus roll containing a famous speech from the tragedy *Telephus*. It is a comic and topicalized subversion of this oration that he shortly performs before the Athenian people.

In this wonderful theatrical episode we can see the invention of the type of Western comedy that creates laughter at the expense of tragedy. We can also see the very birth of the comic image of the library as a place inhabited by cerebral individuals who seem inherently funny to ordinary people of common sense. But the scene also demonstrates how the very *idea* of book assemblage could stimulate artistic inventiveness: the notoriously bookish Euripides’s papyrus collection inspires a dazzling scene of comic metatheater. This scene may actually be the ultimate source of the ancient tradition, recorded in Euripides’s Hellenistic biography, that he was the first recorded owner of a large personal library, and that this informed the very nature of his plots and poetry (see also Aristophanes’s *Frogs* 943, 1049). In this tradition, we can see that the ancient Greeks were aware that the invention of book collections inevitably affected the contents of books, at least where dramatic poetry was concerned.

Since I am a scholar who has specialized in literature, my discussion in this essay will mainly address the relationship between the ancient library and ancient poetry rather than ancient geography, science, or philosophy. Unlike many accounts of ancient libraries, it will not be addressing the nuts and bolts—although they are inherently fascinating—of the cataloguing systems that the poet and librarian Callimachus pioneered

more than two millennia before Melvil Dewey created decimal classification. I will not be discussing explicitly the parallels between the ancient library and modern digital projects such as Google Books and Europeana, although excellent examples of such discussions, by classical scholars, are available.² It is the *idea* of the library, which we inherit more or less directly from the ancient Mediterranean and near Eastern worlds, that constitutes my primary concern. I would have liked to write about the depiction of libraries in ancient Greek and Roman drama, poetry and fiction, along the lines of Debra Castillo's *The Translated World: A Post-modern Tour of Libraries in Literature* (1984), but there are, sadly, few enough libraries actually evoked or even described in surviving ancient literature.³ But the dearth of literary representations of ancient book collections is out of all proportion to the vast amount of factual information we possess about them. The finds at Qumran alone have revealed far too much about the physical, material realities of the painstaking ancient process of book reproduction to discuss in a single essay—not just in the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves, but in the ink wells and even the plaster coverings of the desks at which the scribes labored.⁴ The subject matter is enormous, even if we focus exclusively on the libraries of the pagan Greeks and Romans, to the exclusion of the Babylonians and Assyrians from whose library organization systems they learned, or of the Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Jews, let alone the early Christians, who inherited their basic library building plan from their pagan precursors.⁵

One man in antiquity was brave enough to attempt to write a comprehensive three-volume treatise on libraries. This was the erudite Varro, an Italian from the venerable Sabine settlement at Reate in central Italy, who in the mid-first century B.C. compiled his study *de Bibliothecis*. Varro's book must have been very substantial, at least to judge from his surviving three-volume work on agriculture. Varro was an encyclopedist, whom Julius Caesar appointed public librarian in Rome in 47 B.C. He was the only known ancient author to be granted the privilege of having a bust in his likeness installed in one of the main Roman libraries while he was still alive (Pliny, HN 7.30.115). His treatise may have been commissioned as an ideological accompaniment to Caesar's quest to expand the incipient Roman realm, "to connect world-literature with the world-empire."⁶ The uneasy relationship between libraries and imperialism, indeed, will

be a recurring theme in this essay, closely tied up with the relationship between libraries and cultural creativity. But first it is important to underline the sheer scale of the topic of the library in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. Even as early as the first century B.C., before the great surge in library-building that was to occur under the high Empire, notably under the Emperor Trajan in the early second century A.D., Varro's project in compiling a universal historical treatise on libraries would have daunted anyone but him. And the history of great pagan libraries was to continue for several centuries thereafter, until 543 A.D., when the Emperor Justinian finally closed down the temple of Isis at Philae in Egypt, built under the same Ptolemies who built the library at Alexandria. Behind the massive colonnade of the Philae temple at least one massive room had functioned as a library.

The papyrus on which most ancient Greek and Latin books were recorded, as an organic material, was extremely vulnerable to rotting and wear and tear. Aristotle bequeathed his personal library to his student Theophrastus, but two generations later the collection of rolls ended up in the hands of some "ordinary people" of Scepsis in Asia Minor, who did not know how to store its precious contents (Strabo 13.1.54). When they realized that the books were actually extremely valuable, they hid them from the book collectors sent out by the rich Attalid dynasty at nearby Pergamum, who wanted to build up the collection in their library. Unfortunately, the uneducated owners of the books decided to conceal them as if they were gold or coins, in a dug-out trench. They were damaged dreadfully by both moisture and moths. When they were finally purchased, it was by a man who loved to collect books rather than by a philosopher, and he "restored" the texts in such an amateurish way that, when they were eventually published, they were found to be full of mistakes.

On the other hand, forgers sometimes stained brand new papyri to make them look like authentic ancient texts, perhaps those actually written by one of the famous canonical writers, in order to increase their monetary value. The ancients were very clear that there was a difference between the materialistic bibliophile who collected books as commodities, and the cultured person who actually understood their contents. The nouveau riche Trimalchio whose banquet is described by Petronius

boasts that his libraries rivalled those of the emperor.⁷ Some rich men did indeed use banquets as opportunities to display books that they had never studied (Seneca, *Dial.* 9.9.4). Lucian wrote a diatribe attacking a Syrian, *Against the Ignorant Book-Collector*. This rich man buys shiploads of books, is never seen without one in his hand, and endlessly glues and trims them, applying cedar oil and saffron, and keeping them in purple silk and leather cases. But he is deluding himself because “he thinks that by the multitude of books” he can rectify his “deficient education.”

Libraries held many different kinds of collections. Some of the most important to advances in ancient intellectual life were the specialist libraries that mainly or exclusively collected the writings of members of a particular philosophical school, such as the Stoics, whose center of learning was on the island of Rhodes. There the great Stoic polymath scholar Posidonius, usually called “the Rhodian” but actually a native of Apamea in Syria, practiced during the first half of the first century B.C. Pompey, Caesar, Cicero, and Brutus all studied there. Rhodes was also renowned as a center of astronomical studies, a particular interest of the bookworm Emperor Tiberius, who spent several years on the island.⁸ Other archives might house a special collection of, for example, theater scripts. The most famous of these was the depository in Athens, organized by the theater-loving orator and statesman Lycurgus, ruler of Athens from 336 until 324 B.C. It was probably housed in the old Athenian *Metron* in the marketplace (originally a council house rather than a collection of papers), along with other documents related to the history and activities of the state. Lycurgus probably began the collection of plays because there were so many emendations being made by contemporary actors to the authentic texts of the plays of the great three tragedians of the previous century—Aeschylus and Sophocles as well as Euripides. Some of these plays were very popular in the performance repertoire, and thus vulnerable to creative adaptation.⁹

Libraries varied massively in scale as well as contents. On the one hand there were small book collections that could be carried around in handy containers, like the portable *scrinium* or *cista* on a Roman mosaic in Tunis shown in figure 1.1.

It is probably to be imagined as holding the “parts” or whole plays in which the actor portrayed here specialized, or that had been written or



Fig. 1.1. Portable *scrinium* or *cista* on a Roman mosaic in Tunisia. Reproduced by kind permission of the Musée archéologique de Sousse, Tunisia.

enjoyed by the seated man, depending on whether he represents an author who has collaborated with the actor or, more likely, his patron.¹⁰ At the other end of the scale, there were vast libraries containing hundreds of thousands of papyrus rolls, housed in magnificent, purpose-built architectural edifices. In between these extremes there were private libraries in which solitary misanthropes hid from the world, like that of the tragedian Euripides; Xenophon remarks on the unparalleled size of the book collection amassed by the philosopher Euthydemus (Mem. 4.2.8). Other private libraries were large enough to accommodate the leading lights of a whole philosophical school comfortably, such as the “Villa of the Papyri” found in 1752 at Herculaneum. This was the vacation villa of no less a figure than Julius Caesar’s father-in-law, Calpurnius Piso, where

the famous philosopher Philodemos of Gadara supervised his patron's magnificent collection of Epicurean texts.¹¹ The modern technology of multispectral imaging has allowed the remains of some of them, burnt by same volcanic eruption that destroyed Pompeii in 79 A.D., to be deciphered and published by modern scholars.

The first public library of all may have been established by Clearchus, tyrant of Heraclea on the south coast of the Black Sea, who died in 353 B.C.¹² This Pontic despot had been educated at Athens by the two leading intellectuals of the time, Plato and Isocrates, and the tradition that he built a library is connected with the ancient perception that the Greeks of the Black Sea were anxious to avoid the accusation that they lived in a cultural backwater. But it was the people of the first two generations after Alexander the Great who saw the establishment of the first libraries that can be described as "public" in the modern sense, even though scholars disagree on the nature and degree of public access, especially given that literacy rates in many ancient cities may not have exceeded 10 to 20 percent of the population. Moreover, we are not in a position to tell whether most public libraries allowed borrowing of books at all, even to respected and trusted members: an inscription believed to have belonged to the library that Trajan built at Athens in 132 A.D. specifies its opening hours and proclaims, "No book shall be taken out. We have sworn it!"¹³ The first great public libraries were set up in the kingdoms established by Alexander's successors, notably the Ptolemies' near-legendary library in the Egyptian Greek city of Alexandria, founded by the Macedonian conqueror himself in 331 B.C. He had been instructed on the precise location by the shade of Homer, who visited him in a dream (Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* ch. 26).

The Alexandrian library was said to have been designed with the assistance of the Athenian Peripatetic philosopher Demetrius of Phaleron, who brought with him to Egypt authentic Aristotelian intellectual credentials, having been taught by Aristotle's student Theophrastus. The library was either adjacent to or (at least originally) constituted part of the Alexandrian "Museum" (*Mouseion* or "temple of the Muses"); other book collections, of all sizes, were often attached to or housed within temples. Indeed, in the late fourth century, Demetrius had educated himself by reading Aristotle's own books, assembled in another *Mouseion*

at Athens. Some libraries could be housed in public baths, which served as the ancient equivalent of a “leisure center,” where social and sexual transactions could be made with ease in a pleasant environment; Caracalla’s imposing baths, built at Rome in the second decade of the third century A.D., contained one room of texts in Greek and another one in Latin. Some libraries also served as public records offices, as bookshops, restaurants, and scientific laboratories. The library of Pantainos at Athens seems to have supported itself by renting out shops within the building complex, including one to a marble mason.¹⁴ Libraries under Augustus could host meetings of the Roman Senate; large ones with a colonnade often provided a place to take quite a lengthy stroll. Libraries penetrated the unconscious mind to feature in people’s dreams: Tiberius dreamt about the vast and beautiful statue of Apollo Temenites, which he brought from Syracuse to adorn the library of the New Temple (Suetonius, *Life of Tiberius*). You could build a library to serve as a sepulchre for your eminent family or forebears. Celsus buried his father, who had been governor of the province (Roman Asia), in a lead coffin, encased within a marble sarcophagus that he had set into a vaulted recess of the Ephesus library;¹⁵ Dio Chrysostom interred his wife and child in the courtyard of the library at Prusa in northwestern Turkey. Libraries could even be used in courtship rituals: in his attempt to impress Cleopatra, Mark Antony made her a present of the great library of Pergamum, all two hundred thousand volumes of it, collected by the ancestral rivals of Cleopatra’s Ptolemy family—the Attalids.

The evidence for these heterogeneous libraries of ancient Greece and Rome is equivalently diverse. We have dug up large library buildings with no books left, like the beautiful Roman provincial library excavated in the grid-city at Timgad in Algeria by the French in the early twentieth century. This quickly became the colonial set for avant-garde Modernist actresses from the Comédie Française, such as Mme. Silvaine, who performed a version of Sophocles’s *Electra* there in 1907. We have dug up a rubbish dump containing whole libraries, but not a single brick, at the site of the ancient Greek town of Oxyrhynchus on a branch of the Nile in Upper Egypt. The “Oxyrhynchus papyri” include some of the contents of at least one impressive Oxyrhynchite private book collection, which contained copies of esteemed poetic works such as Euripides’s *Hypsipyle*,

Pindar's *Paeans* and an extensive collection of prose writers. On the other hand, we know about some fascinating libraries even though they have disappeared altogether, along with their entire contents, because they were discussed as institutions in surviving written sources. One example is of course the Library of Alexandria, but another, later, and more typical instance is the library that Pliny the Younger funded lavishly at Comum (now Como) in northern Italy, north of Milan, in about 97 A.D.

The reason we know about Pliny's library is because there survives an inscription recording his benefactions to the town (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 5.5262), along with a letter to a friend about it (*Epistle* 1.8, to Pompeius Saturninus), which accompanied a copy of the speech he delivered to some of the town magistrates at its inauguration. The speech itself does not survive, but the letter does.¹⁶ Now this Pliny was a rich and well-regarded imperial administrator and senator. His quandary in the letter is whether he should publish the speech, given that in it he fulsomely praises the munificence of his ancestors. He fears that this praise of his own forebears, if circulated outside Comum, will offend against canons of modesty. He also describes some of the other themes the missing oration addressed: the presence of the library would itself encourage his townsmen in virtuous studies; his own contempt of riches and freedom from the chains of avarice; the commendation his benefaction deserved because it was the result not of a passing fancy but of deliberate resolution; his decision to bestow on his townsmen a library rather than shows or gladiators. This last point is particularly interesting, because another inscription shows that a city's populace might have reason to hope that the sort of benefactor who gave them a library might also donate gladiators: one such euergetist capped a gift of a library to his grateful public with no fewer than twelve pairs of these violent public entertainers (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 3.1.607).

Regardless of whether the citizens of Comum would have preferred a benefactor more focussed on live spectacle, Pliny's gift is important in the history of ancient libraries. It seems to have been the first library ever donated by a private individual to a town in the Roman Empire, but it preceded "a spate of library-building throughout."¹⁷ In libraries like that bestowed on Comum by Pliny, the benefaction signalled the importance of an individual statesman, from a particular landowning senatorial

family, and his role in fostering the maturity and cultural prestige of what was (in the case of Comum) still a relatively new *colonia* of the Roman Empire. The selection of the books within it might be assumed fundamentally to reinforce, rather than question or undermine, the values, self-definition and self-framing through historiography of that individual, his family, and the imperial regime he served. The selection or *deselection* of books for inclusion in a library's collection was already acknowledged by historians in antiquity to have been a charged political issue. Suetonius tells us that if the Emperor Caligula had been allowed to have his way, Homer, Virgil, and Livy, whom he loathed, would have been expelled, both their works and their images, "*ex omnibus bibliothecis*" ("from all libraries," Suetonius, *Life of Caligula*, 34):

He even considered destroying the poems of Homer, demanding to know why he should not be allowed the same right as Plato, who excluded Homer from his ideal republic. Moreover, he very nearly took away the texts and statues of Vergil and of Livy from all the libraries, for he criticised Vergil as being a writer devoid of literary skill and erudition, and Livy as a wordy and inaccurate historian.

On the other hand, we may have so much of the historian Tacitus solely because his namesake, the third-century Emperor Marcus Claudius Tacitus (who was actually no relation), ordered all the libraries to make comprehensive collections of his works (*Historia Augusta*, "Tacitus" 10.3).

The social and political role of the ancient library, however, was not just a matter of whose written versions of history, reality, and experience were made available to the grateful public. Of far more lasting significance, it seems to me, is the actual concept of the library as an institution where the whole resource constitutes something infinitely greater than the sum of the parts. The parts are the individual records left by individual writers; the whole is something far more ambitious: an instrument designed to preserve intact the memory of humankind. The scholars at the library of Alexandria undoubtedly undertook the Herculean task of preserving the entire literary output of the Greek, which is why they went to such extreme lengths to obtain a copy of every known work, even placing all books that arrived in the port of their city under embargo

until copies could be made. By conceiving this idea, the ancient Greeks also had to have conceived the opposite idea, that such a memory could be lost—a new, literate version of the universal myth of the fall or of the apocalypse. That is, the ancient experiment in the creation of collections of texts that could even *attempt* to include everything that had ever been written in the history of the world changed our mental landscape forever, and so did the idea that the entire memory of the human race was vulnerable to complete erasure. And because there really were attempts in the library at Alexandria to include at least Greek translations of the great works of other cultures and religions, notably the great books of the Jews, it has become possible, at least by our twenty-first century, for libraries to fulfill a new sociopolitical role as symbolizing a cosmopolitan and tolerant ideal.

This is an ideal represented by the ancient library of Alexandria in, for example, the Spanish movie *Agora* (2009). The thoughtful actress Rachel Weisz leapt at the role of Hypatia, an Egyptian Greek scholar in the fourth century A.D. Hypatia was the daughter of the Euclidean mathematician Theon, alongside whom she worked at the library of Alexandria. In the film she attempts—in vain—to save the library’s unique collections from destruction when the Roman administration allows angry Christians to destroy the institutions symbolizing what they regarded as abominable pagan lore. But in this twenty-first century reading, Hypatia virtually personifies the library, as representative of an admirable, questioning, science-based, intellectual culture failing to withstand the arrival of an ignorant and fundamentalist strain of Christian religion. Weisz has said that she was attracted to the role because the science and philosophy physically embodied in Hypatia as she worked at the library represent at least the possibility of a tolerant multicultural future for humankind. Weisz claims that the film is “about today,” because the conflict it portrays is analogous to the struggle in America of “Christian fundamentalism vs. science.” Hypatia stands for “teaching Darwinian evolutionary theory or stem cell research.” She is “trying to come to grips with our place in the universe and she’s thinking not existentially of herself, she’s thinking of the planet Earth . . . it’s a humanist film.”¹⁸

I do not know whether Weisz, any more than the scriptwriter Mateo Gil Rodríguez and the film’s director, Alejandro Amenábar (who also

collaborated on the script), are aware of Hypatia's cultural lineage. Their female intellectual lead is a direct descendant of the heroine of Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia* of 1853, a novel that first put her on the map of popular culture as a romantic figure.¹⁹ Paradoxically, for Kingsley, Hypatia and her library did not so much represent Greek humanism as his own brand of highly adversarial and combative theology; he reassures us that his pagan Hypatia does indeed convert to an esoteric brand of Christianity before she is destroyed. But Kingsley's "muscular Christianity," although embracing science and celebrating sex, was anything but tolerant toward other denominations and religions. It was a strident polemic against Roman Catholicism and High-Church Anglicanism, the "New Foes with an Old Face" of its alternative title.

Kingsley's novel was enormously popular and produced several spin-offs in the Victorian theater, including a famous stage adaptation performed at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, in 1893 (see figure 1.2).

The novel, the plays, and the recent movie all describe the Library of Alexandria and the woman who represents it in very similar terms. The fall of the library is epitomized by the sadistic assault on Hypatia's inevitably beautiful, fragile, papyrus-like white body, finally narrated in Kingsley's chapter 29. But readers have first met her in chapter 2, evocatively entitled "A Dying World," which finds the heroine at work in "that famous library," which "towered up, the wonder of the world, its white roof bright against the rainless blue; and beyond it, among the ridges and pediments of noble buildings, a broad glimpse of the bright blue sea." Hypatia is as beautiful as her environment:

Her features, arms, and hands were of the severest and grandest type of old Greek beauty, at once showing everywhere the high development of the bones, and covering them with that firm, round, ripe outline, and waxy morbidez of skin, which the old Greeks owed to their continual use not only of the bath and muscular exercise, but also of daily unguents. There might have seemed to us too much sadness in that clear gray eye; too much self-conscious restraint in those sharp curved lips; too much affectation in the studied severity of her posture as she read, copied, as it seemed, from some old vase or bas-relief. But the glorious grace and beauty of every line



HYPATIA—MISS JULIA NEILSON
ORESTES—MR. WALLER. ISSACHAR—MR. TREE
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY ALFRED ELLIS

Fig. 1.2. Hypatia on stage. Photograph by Alfred Ellis in theater program for *Hypatia*, by G. Stuart Ogilvie, produced by the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, Monday, January 2, 1893.

of face and figure would have excused, even hidden those defects, and we should have only recognised the marked resemblance to the ideal portraits of Athene which adorned every panel of the walls.²⁰

When we hear Hypatia's thoughts in this section of Kingsley's novel (and its later imitations), she is contemplating the destruction of the library that she now fears is imminent: she visualizes in her mind the smashing of the statues: "The libraries are plundered. The alcoves are silent." She pledges to "struggle to the last against the new and vulgar superstitions of a rotting age, for the faith of my forefathers, for the old gods, the old heroes, the old sages who gauged the mysteries of heaven and earth."²¹

Of course Hypatia herself, as a Greek-speaker, did not call the library a "library," but a *bibliothēkē*, a "place to put rolls made out of papyrus (*byblos*)." This Greek word itself was not the sole contender: we might instead have inherited the word *bibliophylakion*, used in Greek of the royal archives in Egypt, which as a place to *guard* papyri rather than just *put* them might have been preferred by a certain stereotype of the possessive librarian. The Greek word that came to be universally used in antiquity, however, is preferred in German (*Bibliothek*), Russian (библиотека), French, Spanish, Italian and many others. The English word has different resonances: its root is *liber*, the ancient term for the skin, bark, or rind of plants. It was used to designate the thin rind of the ancient Egyptian papyrus,²² and eventually, much as the term for tree trunk *caudex* was adopted in the word for a codex, the bark itself, the *liber* (with a short "i") became the book. But our idea of the library in English-speaking lands is ultimately if unconsciously affected by our adoption of a word from another semantic root than the factual, descriptive *bibliothēkē*.

There has been considerable confusion between the idea of books and the foliage-related Roman god *Liber Pater*, whose name was connected with the root *liber* where the "i" is long, an adjective that means "free": *Liber Pater*, associated with adult rights to free speech, was a favorite of the plebeian class and the recipient of the great festival of the *Liberalia* on March 17. But the false etymology, disguised by the variation in length of that vowel "i," seems already to have been causing problems in antiquity, since *Liber Pater* is often depicted with accoutrements that remind the

viewer of botanical bark. A fine example comes from Dacia in modern Romania, the last province to be added to the Roman Empire and one of the first to leave it. The capital of Dacia was Apulum, where a major sanctuary and statue of the Roman god Liber Pater has been discovered: his *thyrsus* is clearly decorated with bark.²³ And in English-speaking lands, the visual rather than aural similarity between the words *library*, *liberty*, *liberalism*, and *liberal arts* has been one of the most ideologically potent results of a completely false etymology that can be imagined. I speak as a regular user of the online and alliteratively entitled *Library of Liberty*.²⁴

We have already noted the possibility that Julius Caesar saw the potential of libraries as a tool or at least adornment of empire. But he is also one of the several putative villains in the long-standing and multiply authored mystery tale *Who Destroyed the Library of Alexandria?* (The other main suspects are anti-intellectual Christian bishops in the years after the death of Hypatia and the Arabs in the seventh century A.D.)²⁵ Caesar has therefore sometimes been seen in a more philistine light. In act 2 of Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, there is a dialogue in the royal palace of Alexandria between Julius Caesar and Theodotus of Chios, a historical figure whom Shaw found in Plutarch's *Life of Brutus* 33.3 and the surviving summary of Livy book 112. Theodotus is characterized as an unscrupulous rhetorician and tutor to the young King Ptolemy; he is also one of the opportunist and brutal murderers of Pompey. Theodotus brings news to Julius Caesar that fire has spread from his ships and the "library of Alexandria is in flames." Caesar's response is simply, "Is that all?" Theodotus is incredulous, outraged: "All! Caesar: will you go down to posterity as a barbarous soldier too ignorant to know the value of books?" Caesar answers that although he is an author himself, "it is better that the Egyptians should live their lives than dream them away with the help of books." The dialogue continues:

THEODOTUS: What is burning there is the memory of mankind.

CAESAR: A shameful memory. Let it burn.

THEODOTUS (WILDLY): Will you destroy the past?

CAESAR: Ay, and build the future with its ruins. But harken,
Theodotus, teacher of kings: you who valued Pompey's head
no more than a shepherd values an onion, and who now kneel

to me, with tears in your old eyes, to plead for a few sheepskins scrawled with errors. I cannot spare you a man or a bucket of water just now; but you *shall* pass freely out of the palace.²⁶

This tragicomic scene crystallizes the tensions surrounding the legend of the destruction of the great ancient library at Alexandria, and metonymically the idea of the library defined far more widely. Shaw here puts his finger on the psychological wounds that lie just beneath the charged symbolism of the lost library of Alexandria and of all lost libraries everywhere.

The context is imperialism—indeed, the advance into northeast Africa of the Roman Empire, destined to become the greatest empire the West had ever yet seen. Ethnicity is a crucial issue; Shaw has Caesar refer to the users of the library not as Ptolemaic or Macedonian Greeks but rather patronizingly as “Egyptians,” a term that bore a particular meaning to an audience of Britons at the play’s premiere in 1898; their armed forces had themselves bombarded and ruined Alexandria in 1882 and were currently occupying the country. But Shaw also sets up a series of antitheses that the idea of the library triggers in his ancient interlocutors’ minds: memory versus action, the past versus the future, vicarious experience versus firsthand experience of life, dream versus reality, the rights to survival of living humans over the right to survival of the thoughts of dead humans, recorded on the skin of dead animals. Even the toxic issue of social class is lightly touched on: Theodotus suggests that Caesar, unlike cultured Greek teachers of rhetoric, is but an ignorant, barbarous soldier: Caesar retorts that Theodotus’s cavalier attitude to Pompey’s life reduces him to the status of a shepherd. Here the contrasting images also insinuate the conflict between war and peace, the man of action versus the passive recluse, the soldier’s weapon and the shepherd’s staff, between European war stories and European pastoral.

In this scene, the ancient library becomes a sign of infinitely more than a collection, however large, of papyrus rolls. The destruction of the library of Alexandria—whoever was really responsible—becomes overdetermined: it *must* vanish because the tensions it crystallized have never yet been resolved. It is evidence that time can never be reversed because the dead are divided by silence from the living, even as it transcends time

in representing a form of dialogue between them. It takes on a quasi-metaphysical status. Just as the Sumerians called libraries “the ordainers of the universe,”²⁷ the Romans could even envisage the goddesses who determine human destiny, the Parcae or Fates, as librarians: in the fifth century A.D. the late pagan writer Martianus Capella described the Parcae as “librarians of the gods and the guardians of their archive, *“utpote librariae Superum archivumque custodes”* (1.65).

The library as an idea does indeed unify opposites: like rhetoric, it has no immanent ethics, no immanent qualities of virtue or vice, but is a tool that can both liberate and oppress. Bernard Shaw had of course not read Michel Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), in which book collections or archives of any kind were subjected to their first major critique as institutions for the collation of knowledge, created by mechanisms of power, and further reinforcing the exercise of that power. Shaw did not know that by the late twentieth century there would emerge a powerful feminist and postcolonial suspicion of the universal, monolithic repository of knowledge. He did not know that people would claim the impossibility in any ideologically conflicted world, let alone a truly democratic one, of a single institution accommodating the inevitably antithetical subjectivities of its inhabitants. Nor had George Eliot read Foucault when in *Middlemarch* (1874) she made the library of the classical pedant Edward Casaubon stand for everything that prevented the flowering of real intellectual enquiry, let alone love, in the education-starved Dorothea’s soul.

When he claimed that Alexandria was the cultural capital of the world by founding its library in the early third century B.C., Ptolemy I Soter had certainly not read Foucault any more than Eliot or Shaw. Ancient creators of libraries were always either very powerful (like Ptolemy or Trajan) or just rich (like Pliny): for equally obvious reasons, they always presented the creation of a library, whether public or private, as a self-evidently good thing. They would all have decried the destruction of the libraries of Alexandria or anywhere else in univocal chorus with Shaw’s brutal hyperintellectual professor of rhetoric, Theodotus of Chios. Most of the voices we can hear from antiquity, almost by definition the voices of well-read men, talked about libraries only in ways that imply that they improved and refined the quality of their own literary outputs. The

orator and philosopher Cicero greatly valued his own collection of books and regarded the library as the “mind” or “brain” of a household (*ad Atticum* IV.8). The famed rhetorical teacher and literary critic Longinus was described wholly flatteringly by Eunapius in his *Lives of the Sophists* (456 B) as a “living library (*bibliothēkē empsychos*) and a walking museum.” So it is important to ask whether there were, in fact, voices in ancient Greek or Latin that ever foreshadowed Shaw’s Caesar or Foucault in suggesting that there might be negative consequences for culture or civilization—politically, intellectually, or aesthetically negative—in the uncritical adulation of libraries. Did the ancients ever ask whether the existence of libraries might actually be detrimental to the kind of writing and scholarship that were produced by the culture that had created these collections, let alone detrimental to its emotional and spiritual health?

The answer is “yes, a few.” When it comes to historiography, there is one early voice raised loudly against the use of libraries by the writer. It is the voice of Polybius, a Greek from Arcadia who rose to prominence at Rome at the time of the Republic in the second century B.C., and travelled incessantly. In his *Histories* he launched an assault on an earlier Greek historian, Timaeus of Sicily. Timaeus is said to have spent four decades in Athenian libraries writing a massive forty-book *Histories* of Greece from earliest times to the Punic Wars. Polybius has at least two axes to grind against Timaeus, one political and one more private and Oedipal, but even so, what he says about libraries reveals in the ancient discourse one strand to which we rarely have access:

Nature has given us two instruments, as it were, by the aid of which we inform ourselves and inquire about everything. These are hearing and sight, and of the two sight is much more veracious. . . . Now, Timaeus enters on his inquiries by the pleasanter of the two roads, but the inferior one. For he entirely avoids employing his eyes and prefers to employ his ears. Now the knowledge derived from hearing being of two sorts, Timaeus diligently pursued the one, the reading of books, as I have above pointed out, but was very remiss in his use of the other, the interrogation of living witnesses. It is easy enough to perceive what caused him to make this choice. Inquiries from books may be made without any danger or hardship, provided

only that one takes care to have access to a town rich in documents or to have a library near at hand. After that one has only to pursue one's researches in perfect repose and compare the accounts of different writers without exposing oneself to any hardship. Personal inquiry, on the contrary, requires severe labour and great expense, but is exceedingly valuable and is the most important part of history. (Polybius 12.27).

Polybius certainly had a point: how many of us have had our perspectives altered on a poem or historical event by visiting a physical place related to it or talking to an eyewitness? The experimental although different ways in which the traveller Herodotus and the soldier Thucydides write history, in an era before libraries on any scale and with few predecessors in historiography, might have become severely compromised if they had stayed in Athens all their adult lives.

When it comes to poetry rather than prose, there were also a few who seem to have believed that libraries were not always beneficial to the artistic quality of new works produced. The most famous of all is the Sceptical Pyrrhonist and satirical poet Timon of Phlius (near Corinth), who spent time in Asia Minor and then Athens. He was a coeval of the famous poets associated with the early decades of the library in Alexandria under Ptolemy II: Theocritus (most famous for his pastoral *Idylls*), Apollonius (author of our only surviving Greek epic, albeit a short one, on the theme of Jason and the Argonauts), and Callimachus. The independent-minded Timon despised their great project of editing all the texts of the old poets, along with Zenodotus, the first librarian and "corrector" or critical editor (*diorthōtēs*) of Homer. When Timon was asked by Aratus how best to obtain the "pure" text of Homer, he replied that the only way would be "If we could find the old copies, and not those with modern emendations."

Timon, who was *not* financially supported at Alexandria, sarcastically expressed his views on its library in another famous quip. This is traditionally translated, "Many are feeding in populous Egypt, scribes on papyrus, ceaselessly wrangling in the bird-cage of the Muses" (fr. 12 Diels, quoted in Athenaeus 1.22d). Timon's brilliant image was often understood as deriding this generation of versifiers as unimpressive

poetasters who were salaried but caged, suggesting that they were somehow censored by the blue pencil of the autocratic Ptolemy family. It is true that these poets were very self-conscious about their craft, and discussed their disagreements within their poems. But Alan Cameron has argued that the famous image of the cage is a misleading translation of the *talaros* of the Muses, which means something plaited out of twigs or wicker, but usually in the shape of a dish, and therefore is more likely to suggest “nest” than “cage.”²⁸ The image is, rather, of rivalrous chicks in a nest, trying to out-squawk each other to get the most feed. It may also be relevant that the term *talaros* is often used of women’s workbaskets, especially those containing wool ready for weaving, thus implying that these dependent poets are or have become somehow effeminized. The possibly unmanly poets, who are being financially supported in Ptolemy’s library and guzzling his food, are all scribbling on the papyri, but are also, of their own free will, *vying* for attention and stipends, perhaps in contrast to Timon’s own far more independent and freely spoken satires. These, interestingly, did *not* survive for us to read in more than pitiful quotations. Perhaps not enough librarians believed that they were worth copying out for posterity.

Yet the most important question here is this: might we have enjoyed better poetry from these men if they had *not* been so immersed in the contents of the library, let alone so focussed on praising the monarchy that bankrolled it? The aesthetic and the political became entwined in early Alexandria in a wholly new way, completely different from the panegyric literature of earlier praise poets such as Pindar and Bacchylides, precisely because of the presence of all those old books. The weight of the past Hellenic literary tradition necessarily exerted an influence over the new poetry of the new political order. That first generation of Hellenistic poets certainly produced fascinating new mixtures of preexisting genres, and created new and sometimes striking aesthetic effects in the process. In the case of Theocritus, the dialogue-rich pastoral poem whose subject matter is actually poetics is perhaps the one truly original type of poetry to have emerged from the library. But almost as quickly as Ptolemy had brought the great poets of his new empire to its headquarters in Alexandria, innovation in Greek poetry ceased almost altogether; the only genre in which really experimental advances are subsequently perceptible

is the epigram. The tonal variety of late epigram is indeed remarkable. In 1975, Tony Harrison published his translation of a selection of epigrams by Palladas, a fourth-century citizen of Alexandria, and one of the last pagan poets, whose uniquely cynical voice Harrison has described as “the authentic snarl of a man trapped physically in poverty and persecution, and metaphysically in a deep sense of the futile.”²⁹ But this epigrammatic form itself was of course of great antiquity and had been first brought to one type of sonorous, melancholy perfection centuries before by Simonides of Ceos.

I must tread carefully here. While my own aesthetic taste has always run to larger-scale artistic projects of the archaic oral epic poets and the fifth-century democratic dramatists, there have always been admirers of Hellenistic Greek literature, with its self-consciousness, irony, allusiveness, erudition, and often challenging new juxtapositions of inherited literary tropes. There are many scholars who are not put off by its ideological project, which was to celebrate the new political order, and show how the old poetic forms and themes were adaptable to suit a monarchical society newly centered on the north coast of Africa. Indeed, interest in Hellenistic Greek poetry, much of which was produced at the Alexandrian library, has been massively increased over the last couple of decades, at least within Classical scholarship, for three particular reasons. First, there have been some undeniably exciting new finds on papyrus, especially the poetry book of Posidippus of Pella, which has given us 102 poems by this contemporary of Theocritus, Apollonius, and Callimachus, only two of which were known before. This amazing papyrus was not published until 2001: it had been sitting in Milan for many centuries, having been used to wrap an Egyptian mummy in Fayum in about 280 B.C. (Milan Papyrus P.Mil.Vogl. VIII 309). The second reason for the current high profile of Hellenistic poetry has been the current postcolonial fascination with hybridity, migration, and diasporas, which has renewed interest in the whole Ptolemaic project of creating a new Greek cultural metropolis in Egypt, with all the cultural syncretism in relation to indigenous Egyptian religion and ceremonial practices that that entailed. The third reason is more aesthetic—our own postmodern aesthetics are arguably far too welded to past forms of literature: at the cinema, we have entered a whole new age of nostalgia and remakes and

pastiches of old movies and television programs, as if seams of truly new creativity have run dry.³⁰ Our current obsession with endless recycling of inherited artefacts inevitably makes us relate to the highly wrought, allusive pseudo-archaic *Hymns* of Callimachus, or the whimsical, precious response to the atavistic genre of dactylic hexameter epic in Apollonius's *Argonautica*.

The fourth reason for the increased recent interest in Alexandrian literature connected with the library is that it has become all too clear to scholars of Latin literature that many of their greatest poets, from Catullus and Virgil to Propertius, Horace, and Ovid, themselves were responding at every turn to the Hellenistic Greeks. Studying Callimachus and his coevals can therefore only enhance our understanding of the Augustans, who so admired them. What the Roman poets heard in the Alexandrians was an allusiveness, a sophisticated knowingness, a style, a grace, a literariness, the appeal of the miniature, of chiaroscuro, of studied asymmetry, and a delicate, refined sensibility. They yearned to make these qualities possible using the much smaller vocabulary, rougher consonants and more limited metrical precedents available in their Latin tongue. To do so, they needed books to fertilize their poetic imaginations and refine their literary sensibilities: Catullus implies that the personal library he needed to help him write poems contained a myriad of texts (68.36). In order to write satire, Horace felt he needed copies of Plato, Menander, Eupolis and Archilochus at hand, as well as creative energy (2.3.11–12). By the mid-first century B.C., Greek Literature had been in existence for at least seven centuries, but literature in Latin for not much more than two, and the simple quantitative difference between the outputs in the two languages must have become painfully obvious with the opening of the first public Roman libraries in the early Augustan era, especially as it was customary to shelve works in the two languages separately, often in quite different rooms. The Augustan poets consciously strove to fill up the “Latin” shelves erected for the desired new Latin canon with their new works. Their frequent claims to having deserved immortality, or to being heirs and descendants of the Alexandrian bards, underlines how much the existence of libraries was encouraging them to compose.³¹

In doing so, I can't help thinking that their achievement was far greater than that of the scribblers out-tweeting and out-smarting one

another in the financial safety of the Ptolemaic birds' nest. One day, moreover, those old mythical themes really would run out of steam, as Juvenal vituperates in the famous opening to the first of his *Satires*. He can't stand listening any more to all that old stuff about Theseus, Tel-ephus, and Orestes, the grove of Mars and the cave of Vulcan, Aeacus, and the golden fleece: all the new poems on these themes, he snorts, are just so much wasted paper. But Juvenal may have put his finger on at least part of the reason why these themes proved so difficult to dislodge and replace—or at least supplement—with new ones. Under Ptolemaic monarchs or Roman emperors alike, the old stories were the safest: you don't have to worry about incurring the wrath of the mighty if you stick eternally, however inventively, with the heroic adventures of Aeneas or Achilles.

If I have come perilously close to claiming that the emergence of great libraries of literature had a hand in killing off innovation and experiment in Greek poetry, I need to stress that I am convinced that they were a crucial fertilizing agent for many genres of scholarly prose—geography, scientific treatises, biography, Lucianic dialogue. The third director of the Alexandrian Library, for example, and the successor of the poet Cal-limachus, was Eratosthenes of Cyrene, an incomparable geographer who succeeded in calculating the circumference of our planet to within fifty miles. It is almost inconceivable that Claudius Ptolemy could ever have made the advances in astronomy that resulted in his *Almagest* (more correctly known as his *Mathēmatikē Syntaxis*) without the earlier treatises on cosmology, trigonometry, and geometry that he could consult in the libraries of Roman Egypt. But I am also convinced that the libraries of the ancient Greek world, which may have stifled innovation in Greek poetry, were a crucial fertilizing agent for poetry in *Latin*. For by 30 B.C., the time of the deaths of the last Ptolemies on the Egyptian throne, Cleopatra VII and her son by Julius Caesar, Ptolemy Caesar or “Caesarion,” the Romans were implementing “the most momentous cultural appropriation that has ever taken place anywhere in the world. They conducted the wholesale transfer of the major elements of Hellenic religion, myth, legend, philosophy, literature, manners, customs, and plastic arts to Roman setting and their translation into a Roman idiom, through which they have come down to us.”³²

In order to illustrate this conviction, I want to explore two poems by Ovid, written nearly three centuries later than Callimachus. When Ovid wrote them he had been sent into exile, as punishment for some misdemeanor closely connected with his love poetry, to Tomi, now Constanta in Romania. The idea of the library, for Ovid, had indeed become representative of civilization as a whole. The first and last poem of the third book of his *Tristia* could never have been written without the abstract *idea* of the library, as well as his memories of concrete libraries at Rome, although part of the bitter point Ovid is making is that in the Euxine he is desperately deprived of intellectual stimulus of any kind whatever.

The first poem of the book mostly takes the form of a speech by the book itself. The book, like Ovid, is homeless, and desperately seeking a library shelf on which to settle: it opens by addressing the reader as if s/he is a person in the street from whom the animate book is asking for directions (*Tristia* 3.1.1–4):

“I’m a frightened new arrival in town, a book sent here by an exile;
Please lend me a gentle hand, dear reader: I’m exhausted.
Don’t cringe away from me, in case I bring shame upon you:
Not one verse on this paper teaches anything about love.”

The book is shabby and lame, with one pace longer than the other, and begs to be excused: “perhaps it’s my elegiac metre, or perhaps the length of my journey.” But despite its tatty appearance and elegiac limp, the volume succeeds in finding one man who can point out the libraries of Rome. At this chronological moment there were three public libraries, and Ovid’s poetry book visits each of them in turn. First it approaches the Palatine Hill, home of the Temple of Apollo, with its library that had been established by Augustus himself. This library refuses the book entrance. Then the book fails to be allowed into the Library at the Portico of Octavia, Augustus’s sister. Third and last, the book is refused entrance to the oldest of the three, the library in the Atrium Libertatis, created by Gaius Asinius Pollio and opened no later than early in the year 28 B.C. Ovid’s poem shows us a literary reflection of the truth that the great public libraries of Rome partly functioned, if obliquely, as instruments of censorship.³³

The trope of the literary tour of central Rome was not itself Ovid's own poetic invention. The most famous of all examples comes in *Aeneid* 8, when Evander shows Aeneas and Ascanius round the site of the future Rome, the grove of Romulus, the wolf's cave, the Tarpeian rock and the capitol, "now all gold, but once bristling with wild thorns." Evander himself lives in poverty, surrounded by cattle lowing where the Roman Forum would later stand. What is so brilliant about Ovid's version, however, is that the tour is from the viewpoint of a book of poetry, and is focussed primarily on the libraries rather than the most imposing landmarks of Rome. The Romans loved to think about how their great city had transformed the simple rural environment: Ovid displaces that primitive poverty from the temporal past to his spatial place of exile, among the nearly bookless and completely library-less Getae. Yet the very simplicity of this poetry, its straightforward emotional voice and absence of dense mythological allusions, have perhaps only become *possible* in an environment where books are so scarce. Perhaps, just perhaps, the *idea* of the library is more generative for literature than the actual contents of the library itself.

To underline this intuition, I conclude with the final elegy of the same book by Ovid, *Tristia* 3.14. It is addressed to some kind of senior librarian, perhaps to be understood as working at one of those four libraries that Ovid's personified book itself had approached in the first poem of this cycle. Augustus died in 14 A.D., to be replaced by the Emperor Tiberius, and Ovid died about three years later: we do not know the exact date of *Tristia* 3. But we do happen to know the name of the man whom Tiberius appointed, at some point before 37 A.D., to the august office of commissioner of libraries as well as the less well-defined role of "adviser": Tiberius Iulius Pappus, a freeborn Roman citizen from the Greek East. This superlibrarian's tomb inscription survives, having been discovered east of Rome on the Via Praenestina.³⁴ It is just possible that the prestigious post may not have existed during Ovid's lifetime, but its creation soon after his death indicates the cultural power that the men in charge of the imperial book collections were already accumulating. Ovid's voice from the Pontus was addressed to a man or men just like Commissioner Pappus:

To the Keeper and Overseer of Learned Men:

Sir, what have you done to help me as my friend?

You *used* to sing my praises when I was a “safe” poet;
 Do you do *still* do anything to make sure I don’t disappear altogether?
 Do you do *anything* to obtain my poems (except for the ones about the “Arts”
 which did so much damage to their author)?
 Actually, what I want to say is this: I *beg* you, as an enthusiast for new poets,
 To do *anything* in your power to keep my corpus of work in town.
I was sentenced to exile, but no exile sentence was passed on my books.
 They don’t deserve to be punished along with their master.
 Fathers are often enough deported to remote shores,
 But their children are still allowed to live in town.
 Like Pallas Athene, my poems were born from me without a mother;
 They’re of my family line; they’re my descendants.
 Into your hands I commend them: the longer they’re deprived of their father,
 The heavier a burden they’ll prove to you as their guardian.
 Three of my children have been laid low by my infection:
 Make sure that the rest of the rabble are looked after by you *publicly*.
 There are also fifteen volumes of metamorphosed forms,
 Songs seized from their master at his last rites.
 That work might have gained a more secure reputation
 If I’d put the finishing touches to it before I met my end.
 Now it has arrived on people’s lips unrevised,
 —that is, if *anything* of mine is on their lips at all.
 Add this little something to my books, as well:
 it is delivered to you from a distant world.
 I don’t know whether anyone will read it, but if anyone does,
 he needs to bear in mind when and where it was composed.
 He’ll be fair-minded about poems he realises were written during a period of exile in a barbarous place.
 And he’ll be astonished that in such adversity I produced any poem at all,
 trying to keep writing in my hand of sorrow.

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My problems have destroyed my talent; it wasn't even that
 abundant before, and flowed only in a small trickle.
 But whatever it was once, it's run away since nobody kept it working,
 and dried up completely in this far-flung place.
 There are few books here to entice or nourish me;
 the sounds are made by bows and weaponry instead of books.
 In this country, if I recite my poems, there's nobody around
 who can listen to them with any comprehension or discernment.
 There's nowhere for me to be alone. The guards on the wall
 and the bolted gates keep out the restive Getae.
 I often try to remember a word, a name, a place-name,
 but there's no one I can ask to check that I am right.
 I often try to put something into words, but I'm ashamed to say
 that the words elude me; I have *un*-learned how to speak.
 I'm virtually surrounded by the sound of the Thracian and Scythian
 languages;
 I'm convinced I could write in Getic metres.
 Believe me, I'm scared that you'll read Pontic words in my writings,
 all mixed up with the Latin ones.
 And so, please deem this little book, however mediocre, worthy of
 indulgence;
 excuse it on the ground of the fate which has befallen me.

This is a great poem in its own right. It is a clear, emotionally authentic, elegiac expression of cultural isolation, intellectual loneliness, and the poet's terror of his works falling into instant and permanent oblivion. It is written in concise, beautiful Latin, the plangent effect of which my humdrum translation fails to convey. But it is also, to my mind, the most profound statement of the importance of libraries to have survived from antiquity. In closing book 3 of his *Tristia* with this direct appeal to the "Keeper of Learned Men" back in Rome, while lamenting the problems of keeping his poetic creativity alive in the absence of the culture of the library, Ovid's voice speaks as none other from Mediterranean antiquity of the vital symbolic role that great book collections played in its imaginative life.³⁵

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NOTES

1. Colin MacLeod, "Euripides' Rags," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 15 (1974): 221–22, reprinted in his *Collected Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 47–48.
2. E.g., Monica Berti and Vergilio Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria: Storia di un paradiso perduto*. [= *Ricerche di filologia, letteratura e storia* 10.] (Roma: Edizioni Tored, 2010), ch. 5.
3. Debra A. Castillo, *The Translated World: A Post-Modern Tour of Libraries in Literature* (Tallahassee: University of Florida Press, 1984).
4. See James A. Sanders, "The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Quarter Century of Study," *Biblical Archaeologist* 36.4 (1973): 109–48; Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002).
5. Janet Charlotte Smith, "The Side Chambers of San Giovanni Evangelista in Ravenna: Church Libraries of the Fifth Century," *Gesta* 29.1 (1990): 86–97.
6. Theodore W. Koch, "New Light on Old Libraries," *Library Quarterly* 4 (1934): 246.
7. *Sat.* 484; see Raymond J. Starr, "Trimalchio's Libraries," *Hermes* 115.2 (1987): 252–53.
8. George W. Houston, "Tiberius and the Libraries: Public Book Collections and Library Buildings in the Early Roman Empire," *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 43.3 (2008): 248.
9. Pseudo-Plutarch, *Lives of the Ten Orators*, "Lycurgus" 841F; see Edith Hall, *The Theatrical Cast of Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 51; and Johanna Hanink, *Lycurgan Athens and the Making of Classical Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
10. The image is also reproduced and discussed in greater detail in Edith Hall, "Tragic Theatre: Demetrios' Rolls and Dionysos' Other Women," in O. Taplin and R. Wyles, eds., *The Pronomos Vase and Its Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 159–79.
11. See S. Sider, "Herculaneum's Library in 79 A.D.: The Villa of the Papyri," *Libraries and Culture* 25.4 (1990): 534–42.
12. Herodorus in *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, ed. F. Jacoby, 434, trans. A. Smith on *Attalus* website, section title "Memnon: History of Heracleia" at www.attalus.org/translate/memnon1.html.
13. Quoted in Michael H. Harris, *History of Libraries in the Western World* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 63.

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14. G. P Stevens, "A Doorsill from the Library of Pantainos," *Hesperia* 18 (1949): 269–74. On the many different functions served in antiquity by libraries, see especially Yun Lee Too, *The Idea of the Library in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

15. Wilhelm Wilberg, *Forschungen in Ephesos*, vol. 5.1, *Die Bibliothek* (Vienna: A. Holder, 1953).

16. See N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 102–6.

17. T. Keith Dix, "Pliny's Library at Comum," *Libraries and Culture* 31.1 (1996): 85.

18. Ron Messer, interview with Rachel Weisz on *Collider* website, May 2010. Online at <http://collider.com/rachel-weisz-interview-agera-face-value-the-invisible-x/29455/>.

19. Kingsley was not, of course, the first to adopt Hypatia as a heroine and indeed mouthpiece in the wars between different religious groups, and between religious people and freethinkers, from the Enlightenment onward. In the wake of his novel, however, numerous plays that made Hypatia the center of a love interest were written, especially in German, by, e.g., the Gräfin Adele Bredow and the dramatist Arnold Beer (both 1878).

20. Charles Kingsley, *Hypatia* (London: Parker, 1853), 22–23.

21. Kingsley, 24.

22. See Pliny 13.11.21, § 69: *antea non fuisse chartarum usum. In palmarum foliis primo scriptitatum, dein quarundam arborum libris.*

23. I. Haynes, A. Diaconescu and A. Schafer, "Apulum: Romania," *Current World Archaeology* 10 (2005). Illustrated summary available online at <http://www.world-archaeology.com/features/apulum-romania/>.

24. The *Online Library of Liberty*, available at <http://oll.libertyfund.org/>.

25. On this long-standing scholarly conundrum, see the widely divergent views expressed in the highly readable study by Luciano Canfora, *The Vanished Library: A Wonder of the Ancient World*, trans. Martin Ryle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); and in Bojana Mojsov, *Alexandria Lost: From the Advent of Christianity to the Arab Conquest* (London: Duckworth, 2010). For further discussion, see also Edith Hall, *Introducing the Ancient Greeks: From Bronze-Age Seafarers to Navigators of the Western Mind* (New York: Norton, 2014), 204–27.

26. George Bernard Shaw, *Caesar and Cleopatra* (New York: Brentano's, 1906), 49.

27. Steven Roger Fischer, *A History of Reading* (London: Reaktion, 2003), 25.

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28. Alan Cameron, *Callimachus and His Critics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 32.
29. Tony Harrison, *Palladas: Poems* (London: Anvil Press, 1984), 10.
30. Frederic Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983–1998* (Brooklyn: Verso, 1998), 15–17.
31. Nicholas Horsfall, “Empty Shelves on the Palatine,” *Greece and Rome*, 2nd ser., 40.1 (1993): 58–67.
32. John Rodenbeck, “Literary Alexandria,” *Massachusetts Review* 42.4 (2001–2): 535.
33. Anthony J. Marshall, “Library Resources and Creative Writing at Rome,” *Phoenix* 30.3 (1976): 262–63.
34. George W. Houston, “Tiberius and the Libraries: Public Book Collections and Library Buildings in the Early Roman Empire,” *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 43.3 (2008): 250–58.
35. Since this essay was written, an outstanding collection of essays stressing the diversity of ancient libraries has been published by a team led by researchers in the School of Classics at the University of St. Andrews. See Jason König, Katerina Oikonomopoulou, and Greg Woolf, eds., *Ancient Libraries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).