

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS

1) Abstract of G. Longley

In this paper I wish to highlight the common preoccupations of Greek authors, including Thucydides, Xenophon, Demosthenes, Plato and Aristotle, on the causes of imperial decline. I will examine the causes emphasised by these authors and offer some conclusions as to why. 'Causes of imperial decline' does not simply imply the reasons why imperial control may fail and the empire consequently may be lost, destroyed or fragmented. Rather, it can be degeneration in the nature and conduct of the rule of the hegemonic power both with regards to governance over the subject peoples and the state's internal politics, such as harsher or more aggressive policies.

In this paper I will consider Greek authors' stress on the removal of the dominant power's main rival (the so-called *metus hostilis* of Latin authors) as an explanation for the decline of an empire. Existing studies on the subject of imperial decline have focused more generally upon Roman authors. However, by the 5th and 4th centuries Greek authors were already aware of this potential threat to the maintenance of imperial rule. For example, Aristotle has much to say about this phenomenon in the *Politics* (1334a-b), as does Polybius.

Greek authors frequently cite the nature of a state's internal politics as an explanation for imperial decline. This may be responsible for the decline both of the empire itself and the leading power's rule over it for several reasons. Firstly, if a state is divided by conflict, it is not capable of effectively resisting attacks against the empire or providing stable governance for its subjects. This theme appears frequently in Polybius. Secondly the problem may lie in the very nature of a state's political organisation, directly affecting how decisions are made, resulting at times in disastrous consequences. Thucydides and Isocrates both explore this angle. Finally, a state may simply become neglectful of the principles that made it successful resulting in a change in the mode of rule or the loss of the empire altogether. This seems to be the explanation offered for Thebes' decline in a fragment of Ephorus preserved in Strabo.

I will conclude my paper by examining phenomena such as 'divine intervention' and 'chance' (for which Herodotus is an especially revealing source) and will assess the relative importance of these causative factors against the others outlined above.

2) Abstract of C. A. Farrell

When discussing the end of ancient empires, there is a tendency to focus upon discontinuities of temporal power. One such example is the decision of Pompey to not recognize Antiochus XIII Asiaticus, and the Roman commander's subsequent decision to annex Syria in 64 BC. Both events traditionally have been used to signal the end of the Seleucid Empire. Absent from such considerations, however, are discussions of the Imperial ideologies/propaganda that ancient rulers used to assert claims to authority, particularly dynastic succession. This paper evaluates what the continued utilization of imperial ideology to claim authority long after the loss of *imperium* might tell us about the end and/or transformation of ancient empires. To this end, I offer a case study of the traditional fall of the Seleucid Empire, and posit that on the basis of royal lineage and ideology, (as exhibited by: epigraphic, literary, numismatic and funerary evidence) the last known Seleucid 'king' was buried at Athens c. AD 116, one-hundred and eighty years after Pompey's annexation of Syria.

3) Abstract of T. D. Barnes: not available yet.

4) Abstract of E. Almagor

This paper presents the depiction of the decline and fall of the Persian Achaemenid Empire found in the works of the Greek author Plutarch. Corresponding to the general contemporary nostalgic fascination of Greeks with their heroic past, from the Classical period down to Alexander, Plutarch's attention was drawn to the eastern Empire and to the time when Hellenic identity was molded in response to the Persian threat. In particular he was interested in the demise of the Achaemenid Kingdom as part of his treatment of virtue and vice and his concern to trace the successes and failures of rulers and states to their moral excellence or failings, respectively.

In Greek imagination, though historically speaking perhaps not accurate, the fourth century BCE reigns of Artaxerxes II Mnemon, Ochus and Darius III Codomannus were seen as a period of decay and degeneration, in comparison with those of former sovereigns, especially Cyrus the Great and Darius I. In Plutarch's portrayal, this period may be seen as the time when the unrestrained barbarian destructive force of Persia was directed not against Hellenic heroes (e.g. Themistocles, Alcibiades) or in opposition to the Greeks, but versus the Persians themselves.

These years are detailed in several works of Plutarch, notable among them are the *Life of Artaxerxes II*, sections from the *de Iside et Osiride* about the rule of Ochus, and the *Life of Alexander* on Darius III. Many anecdotes about these three kings and their times are scattered in other works. The most significant source is the *Artaxerxes*. Besides displaying a decadent court, filled with murderous intrigues and brutal manipulations by women, courtiers and eunuchs, whimsical royal decisions, incestuous relations and cruel and unusual punishments, the biography also portrays the story of the decline and fall of an empire through the figure of one person. The *Life* shows a hero whose psyche is composed of two conflicting parts, one which echoes the generous and kind nature of his grandfather Artaxerxes I, and another that anticipates the savage and ruthless character of his son, Ochus. This portrayal also symbolizes the place of Artaxerxes between the glorious achievements of his ancestors and the breakdown of the empire at the time of his descendants.

It might be said that Plutarch's depiction of Achaemenid Persia may insinuate an attitude towards contemporary Rome. In the Greek literature of second century CE, the Imperial institutions of Rome were sometimes referred to in the terms used by Classical authors to depict the Persian system (such as 'satraps' or 'Great King'). One can assume that Plutarch too entertained this association. Thus, while ostensibly addressing the time of Artaxerxes and his successors, he may implicitly be referring to the western empire, thus allegorically presenting the Roman emperor as the Persian king in order to point at a possible course of events.

5) Abstract of A. Nagel/R. Sheikoleslami

Persepolis in southwestern Iran was the spectacular heartland capital of the Achaemenid Persian Empire between c. 520 and 330 BCE. First excavated between 1931 and 1939, it was classified as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979. Though the first excavation reports have also documented on the final destruction of the site in c. 330 BCE, some archaeological evidence has long been overlooked. Recently conducted scientific analysis on the monuments offers new data for the end of the largest Empire of antiquity.

Though historical sources such as Diodorus Siculus refer to the physical destruction of the Achaemenid Persian residential capitals of Susa and Persepolis through the troops of the Macedonian general Alexander, new interdisciplinary research combining various scientific analytical methods and approaches can provide important new information for historically attested events in the Achaemenid Empire capitals of Persepolis and Susa. The first part of our paper reports on recently conducted survey work on the surface of the architecture of the Hall of Hundred Columns in Persepolis. White layers identified on many columns are evidence for damage and have influenced scaling, cracking and loose in the surface of the stones. The results of scientific analysis (X-ray diffraction, XRF analysis) and a DTA temperature will be presented, thus enabling us for the first time to identify the cause of various damages on the site. As a result we can determine that high

temperature between 600~895 °C has caused much of the surface of the limestone to change. Based on this analysis, additional new data and a re-evaluation of historical sources, the second part of our paper will put the archaeological evidence for the physical destruction of the Achaemenid capitals Persepolis and Susa on new grounds.

6) Abstract of L. Gregoratti

Between the last years of the 1st century B.C. and the beginning of the 1st century A.D. the Arsacid kingdom went through a period of serious political instability. Royal authority was reduced to a mere formal power at the mercy of Parthian noble houses which struggled with each other to gain the throne for their own candidates. For decades Rome was able to interfere in the Arsacid national policy supporting his own pro-Roman candidates and causing internal strife and rebellion to burst all over the kingdom. The new Great King Vologeses I managed to put an end to this ruinous situation. Renovating previous attempts already made by Artabanus II, he regained for the Crown the control over the main economic centres and the sources of tax incomes. To fight the power of aristocracy he searched for support among the kings of Parthian vassal states. In order to ensure royal control over minor kingdoms he appointed two of his brothers to the thrones of Armenia and Media, conceiving a sort of enlarged government system which enabled Parthia to successfully confront Rome in Armenia only few years later. Vologeses' new political organization, basically followed by his 2nd century successors, as epigraphical sources tend to confirm, was probably one of the main reasons which made the Arsacid empire capable of withstanding Trajan's and Verus' invasions without crumbling to pieces.

7) Abstract of A. Collar

I use the theory of networks to explore the transmission of the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus from its origins in Syria across the limes of the northern provinces of the Roman Empire in the second century. The cult of Jupiter Dolichenus has been long associated with the military, but the explanations for its success with the army have relied on assumptions that are no longer tenable. The developing methodological framework of network theory focuses on the processes by which innovation spreads: how interconnectedness facilitates change. Using this framework (see Collar, 'Network Theory and Religious Innovation', *MHR* 22, 2007) in combination with that of the social processes of religious conversion (Stark and Bainbridge 1980) demands the rethinking of the reasons for the success or failure of cults in the ancient world. Instead of assuming that there were intrinsic qualities of a cult that ensured its success, this approach focuses on the strength and connectivity of the social networks as the driving force for the spread of new religious movements.

Using the epigraphic data for the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, I reassess the reasons for the spread of the cult in the west, showing that the traditional explanations – the participation of western legions in eastern campaigns, the presence of Syrian recruits in the army or Syrian traders in the east – are unsupported by the inscriptions. I demonstrate instead that the communicative networks of the officer class formed a cohesive social system that accounts for the speed and profundity of the cult's diffusion through the Roman army. This paper concludes by explaining the end of the cult as a consequence of the fracture and disconnection of these cohesive Roman military structures in the third century.

8) Abstract of K. Petrovicová/J. Bednarikova

The work *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* by Martianus Capella has raised a number of controversial questions in the scientific discourse. The author, the evaluation of whom ranges from a

denunciation of his strangeness – reflected in the thoughtlessness and disproportionate diversity of his work [see esp. Lewis, C. S., 1938². *The Allegory of Love. A Study in Medieval Tradition*. Oxford, 78f.] and corresponding to the decline of the Roman empire – to the recognition of his irreplaceable role in transmitting the ancient heritage to the Middle Ages, gave his primarily educational work the frame of a narrative about the marriage of the learned earthwoman Philology and the Roman god Mercury. In this narrative, the author combined an allegory with the witty Menippean Satire, whereby he eased the seriousness of his textbook, following the principle *docere et delectare*, but also made his text difficult to interpret. One way to interpreting the large-scale “fable” is examining the situation, in which it was composed, and searching for its actual addressee.

In the presented paper, following the approach mentioned above, we will try to examine the challenging assumption that Martianus was not only a mediator of the model of *septem artes liberales* acknowledged by the Middle Ages scholars, but perhaps also a mediator between the Roman and Vandal worlds. Our considerations are based on the assumption that Martianus’ work was written later than it is traditionally acknowledged: in Carthage reigned already by Vandals (i.e. after the interval 410-439 AD); [thoroughly examined for example by Schanzer, D., 1986. *A Philosophical and Literary Commentary on Martianus Capella’s De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii. Book 1*. Berkeley, 5-28.] To be able to prove this assumption, we will re-examine several published sources of dating the work (e.g. references to Paulinus’ consulate in the subscriptions of some manuscripts; the occurrence of the collocations *proconsul Africae* and *felix Carthago* in historical sources; various references in poems, inscriptions, and on coins from the Vandal period). Thereafter, we will consider whether the shift in dating can give us the reason to believe that Martianus wrote his work intentionally for Vandals, or at least for the Afro-Roman and Vandal students in the common schools of the Vandal state. Validation of this assumption might enable us to explain some exceptional or incomprehensible features of the plot (such as the contrast between the relative simplicity of the encyclopedic texts and the elaborate introductory passages in them, or the impressive defile of gods confronted with human weaknesses, which “consume” them gradually in course of the narrative).

Our analysis will also focus on additional indirect sources of comparison: the mode of addressing the Vandals in the extant writings of Fulgentius and Eugenius; poetical ornaments used during the Vandal period, especially by Dracontius; the function of mythology by Basil the Great and Sidonius Apollinaris; the style of Ennodius’ panegyric of Theodoric and Merobaudes’ panegyrics of Aëtius. Finally, we will focus on the Vandals’ relation to religion (as suggested mainly in the writings of Salvian, Victor of Vita, Procopius of Caesarea and the *Notitia provinciarum et civitatum Africae*) and on the extent of Vandal Romanization (as indicated by written sources and archaeological evidence).

9) Abstract of G. Kelly: not yet available

10) Abstract of H. Ziche

The notion that the Roman Empire (in the West) actually declined and fell has been put back onto the academic agenda by the recent monographs of Bryan Ward-Perkins and Peter Heather [Ward-Perkins, B., *The Fall of Rome: And the End of Civilization*, 2005 and Heather, P. J., *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians*, 2005] – to name just two outstanding examples. However, the results of more than a generation of research on the late Empire, working within the framework of transformation and transition, cannot simply be brushed aside. The vitality of late antique culture, the dynamism of the late economy and the high degree of loyalty and professionalism of the army cannot, in my opinion, be denied. Thus Heather's and Ward-Perkins' theses just re-confront the “transformation-historian” of the late Empire with the familiar problem of

how to account for the fact that by the end of the 5th century imperial state structures are gone in the West, and only briefly return in the 6th century.

This paper proposes to modelise the systemic links between economic and institutional development between the 4th and the 5th century. The primary focus will be on the Roman West, but the contemporary development of the East serves as a crucial point of comparison, necessary for the development of a successful model which combines economic growth with gradual institutional weakening. The determining factor of such a putative model, I would suggest, is the allocation and efficient use of economic surplus, which in a preindustrial economy like the Roman empire has always been a critical factor, where small variations can produce important changes.

Two theoretical models will be confronted for plausible performance. In the first, relative surplus allocation to institutional and private consumption remains constant. To produce a result where economic growth (or at least non-decline) is compatible with the gradual disappearance of state institutions, it is necessary here to modelise surplus usage in the two domains. Does surplus use for private consumption become more efficient, producing forces which strengthen structures of non-state power: private patronage against administrative power for instance? Does surplus consumption for institutional usage become increasingly inefficient: a reworking of MacMullen's old corruption thesis [MacMullen, R., *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 1988]? Both trends could of course be combined and would then reinforce each other.

Alternatively we can assume that the decoupling of economic and institutional development begins with a shift in relative surplus allocation. This model would constitute a departure from the still popular thesis of A. H. M. Jones [Jones, A.H.M., *The Later Roman Empire: A Social Economic and Administrative Survey*, 1964] of increasing fiscal efficiency and oppression. The model again would be auto-reinforcing because once the state loses part of the economic surplus allocated to the functioning of its institutions, it becomes increasingly unable to gain access to economic resources. The problem with this model is to find a factor which can account for the initial relative redistribution of available surplus between institutions and private consumption. However, from a conceptual point of view the model is more elegant: few factors in the combined model of private and institutional consumption have to be modified to produce the result observed in the 5th century West: strong elites and weak institutions.

11) Abstract of F. Haarer

In the debate about whether Late Antiquity was a period of decline and fall, transformation, change or continuity, the question of change in the governance of provincial cities has become a central issue. Concern focuses on the extent to which the traditional forms of the classical *polis* continued; for example, government by the local élite of the curial (or bouletic) order, tax collection, the tight organic link between the built-up urban centre and surrounding territory, and the appearance of the city (grand public buildings celebrating patronage in the epigraphic record). In the series of late antique urbanism conferences held in the late 1990s (published by Luke Lavan, ed. *Recent Research in Late-Antique Urbanism*, JRA suppl. series 42, Portsmouth, RI 2001), one of the sessions focused on The use and abuse of concepts of 'decline' in later Roman history (or, was Gibbon politically incorrect), in which J.H.W.G Liebeschuetz, Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, Mark Whittow and Luke Lavan all consider the use of the terms 'decline' and 'fall' with regard to changes within late Roman cities. In particular, one key issue concerns the local governance by the curiales increasingly replaced by other officials, such as the provincial governor, defensor, sitona, pater tes poleos, vindex, and groups such as the shadowy principales and council of notables. Despite a growing bibliography on late antique cities, problems remain: the identity of these officials, the process of their appointment, and the date from which they, along with the bishop, began to predominate in provincial cities. And the significance of the changes is also still disputed between,

for example, Liebeschuetz (following A.H.M. Jones) who sees the change from governance by the curiales to notables as hugely significant for the fall of the ancient city (and therefore the empire) and Whittow, who sees it as merely an institutional rearrangement.

This paper will consider in detail the relevant reforms of Anastasius and Justinian concerning the governance of provincial cities and examine some of the literary and epigraphic evidence to illuminate further these changes within the late Roman city. Evidence from cities such as Scythopolis and Caesarea, both flourishing at the turn of the fifth/sixth century, shows that while benefactions were still made and recorded in inscriptions, there were far fewer from private individuals and many more from provincial governor, the Church, and even filtered down from the emperor himself, thus indicating that to some extent change in the distribution and circulation of wealth was masked by the outward appearance of continuity. On the other hand, it is clear that a change in style of government and appearance of the city does not necessarily mean a decline in prosperity or disintegration of the fabric of empire which would result in its fall.

12) Abstract of M. S. Bjornlie

Historians attempting to locate the horizons of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire have often cited the administrative letters of Cassiodorus' *Variae* as an index for either the extended continuity of imperial administration in Italy or its final desuetude. For some scholars, the distribution of offices, the levying of taxes, minting of coins and restoration of public buildings portrayed in the *Variae* depict the Ostrogothic governance of Italy as having seamless continuity with late-Roman imperium or, at the very least, as being a short-lived recrudescence of that past. Interpretations of continuity in particular have been mobilized to reinforce a periodization that positions the break between late-imperial and early-medieval Italy either with the advent of Justinian's Gothic War or the subsequent arrival of the Lombards. For other scholars, evidence in the *Variae* for the spoliation of urban fabric, increased ecclesiastical administration of civitates, the 'barbarization' of the military and even Cassiodorus' epistolary style all indicate the depth of the gulf separating Italy from its imperial past.

In keeping with the theme of this year's conference, I propose to present a paper examining the fiscal profile of Ostrogothic Italy. The regularity and scale of fiscal habits determined the extent to which a state could represent its authority in constituent communities. Similarly, the redistribution of taxes as emoluments for administrative and military personnel and for urban leaders could deflect the attachment of various social groups to the state. It is particularly in the *Variae* that we encounter the exaction of taxes portrayed as the exercise of governmental tradition and their payment as loyalty to that tradition. In this sense, the maintenance of the fiscal apparatus in Ostrogothic Italy determined not only the ability of the state to function, but also the extent to which inhabitants of Italy identified with an ideology of traditional empire. This paper will suggest that the overt rhetoric of empire embedded in the *Variae* was, in fact, a proportional response to the increasing difficulty of maintaining administrative structures. Rather than view these difficulties as the direct consequence of a 'barbarian' regime, this paper will provide grounds for understanding how the Ostrogothic regime merely responded to social and economic realities that it inherited from the *longue durée* of the preceding fifth century. Conclusions will further suggest new directions for understanding the post-Roman *civitas* administration, land tenancy and barbarian settlement in sixth-century Italy. This paper will draw from my current book project, provisionally entitled *Italy and Her Depicters: A Study of Cassiodorus and the Variae*.

13) Abstract of P. Wynn

Constantius of Lyon's *vita* of Germanus of Auxerre, written about 480 for his patron Bishop Patiens of Lyon, has long been used by historians in an attempt to shed some light on our otherwise meager knowledge of fifth-century Britain after the disappearance of Roman authority. In particular, there has been focus on the account in the *Vita Germani* of Germanus's so-called "Alleluia" victory over an invading army of Saxons and Picts.

Other scholars have pointed out the dangers of using hagiography as a straightforward historical source and especially in this case. Recently there have been attempts, building on the earlier work of Nora Chadwick, to determine what the original purpose was of the *Vita Germani* at the time of its composition. In other words, rather than a picture of fifth-century Britain, it is now recognized that the *Vita Germani* can be interpreted best as a historical source for late fifth-century Gaul. René Borius, A.S. Christensen, and Maurizio Miele have helped in their work to illuminate the original circumstances of the composition of the *Vita Germani* in a Romano-Burgundian kingdom struggling to accommodate barbarians with Romans in an atmosphere of cultural and religious division.

The present paper proposes to interpret the episode of the "Alleluia" victory in the *Vita Germani* as giving us not a glimpse of fifth-century British history, but as expressing a cultural and political reframing of the concept of the "enemy" in the new circumstances of the post-Roman kingdom of the Burgundians. In the imperial period, the concept of the "barbarian" came to encompass all non-Romans who were the natural enemies of the state. Although a number of barbarian *gentes* appear in it, the *Vita Germani* is noteworthy for not once using the term in its former imperial sense, unlike the similar *Vita Severini* written thirty years later. Instead, in this work written less than a decade after the last Roman authority had disappeared in the area, already the "enemy" against whom wars could legitimately be waged appears as non-Christian rather than non-Roman. Even the fabulous aspects of the "Alleluia" victory, such as the fact that the British army secured its victory by its being recently baptized rather than by the use of weapons, illustrate the changed circumstances of the immediate post-Roman world, where already religious rather than ethnic affiliation was becoming of greater significance in the political/military sphere. This reframing of the category of the "enemy" seems to have occurred, at least among some circles, almost immediately upon the end of the empire in the West, and persisted thereafter throughout the medieval period. The link made in the *Vita Germani* between conversion and success in war also helps to illuminate the ideological background in Gaul for the conversion of Clovis and the Merovingian Franks some twenty years after the *vita*'s composition.

14) Abstract of A. Roberts

This paper contextualises three narratives relating to the transfer of hegemony – of destruction, decline and development - in George Grote's account of the conquests of Alexander the Great in his *History of Ancient Greece*.

Grote, a committed Hellenophile, regarded Alexander as the destroyer of Greek political freedom. He argued that the concomitant end of Greek civilisation marked the termination of instructive history and human accomplishment in its most excellent form. In pointed contrast to Gustav Droysen's narrative of hellenization in Asia, Grote saw instead an apparent asiatization of the Greeks in the centuries after the Macedonian conquests. Emolliated through contact with Asia, there was steady cultural decline before the death of Greece's 'productive genius'.

Despite the wide promulgation of the Greek language, only a 'faint and partial' semblance of Hellenism passed across into Asia. Far from any development of the continent, Grote thought that the subsequent Asian and Greek conglomeration offered nothing to affect the 'destinies of the future world' and therefore marked a step backwards. The final balance sheet of Alexander's conquests also included an assessment of his achievements as an administrator and plans for the structure of the Persian Empire. Grote damned Alexander's conservation of the Persian administrative and political

systems. Even his limited improvements of existing communications and military capabilities did not go far enough, and the strengthening of the coercive authority of the king was condemned as despotic. Above all, Grote vehemently criticised the lack of concern for the development of ‘useful’ government in Asia.

With direct reference to the British in India, I will analyse how these various narratives relating to the destruction of the Greek and Persian world, as it was perceived by Grote, qualified the purpose and form of British imperialism in the nineteenth century. Grote and the Utilitarians, imbued with a sense that they were the inheritors of Athenian culture, intended to work towards political and cultural development in Asia that was not achieved by their predecessor.

15) Abstract of R. Bryant Davies

Carthage is most famously Rome’s rival: the city that Cato the Censor wanted destroyed, a city annihilated by Scipio Aemilianus in 146 BC so completely that it could be rumoured its fields had been ploughed with salt. For Virgil, Carthage is a young city, but already a threat to unborn Rome: Dido is rebuilding the city she has been forced to flee as Aeneas will recreate Troy in Italy. But Dido’s curse on the departing Aeneas initiates and foretells the subsequent enmity between Rome and Carthage which would end in Carthage’s destruction.

Nineteenth-century ideas of Carthage revel in this complexity. Drawing on the striking images (and poetry) inspired by classical accounts, this paper will explore the dialectic between representations of the destruction of Carthage and the imaginative potency of its (apparently now surviving) ruins. In an age of unprecedented urban development, this allowed the figure of the classical/mythological city to be reconceptualised as a focus of anxiety about the monumentality, urban destruction and the transience of power.

Whereas travellers and scholars focused on pinpointing Homer’s Troy, a lost site even in antiquity, through topographies, maps and later, excavations, Virgil’s Carthage, built over by Romans, was definitely located but yet could not be visited or excavated. This seems to have led to a freedom of artistic expression of the kind that the acrimonious Troy-debate could not allow, and so there are many nineteenth-century images, from a variety of sources, which engage in differing ways with the destruction of Carthage and its aftermath. For example, William Turner explored Carthage’s founding, wars and destruction in 10 paintings with imagery reminiscent of contemporary allegorical readings mapping the Napoleonic Wars onto the Punic Wars.

In other sources, two figures insistently recur: Scipio Aemilianus and Gaius Marius. Scipio is found in engravings illustrating history-books and didactic anecdotes in travelogues, weeping at Carthage’s destruction as he quotes Homer’s prediction of Troy’s fall (Iliad 6.447-8) and, according to Polybius (Histories 39), dreads the same fate befalling Rome. One traveller latched onto Polybius’ idea of the transfer of empire, applying it to Britain: as early as 1813, Scipio’s sack of Carthage became a way to explicitly foretell the end of ‘Britannia’s glory’.

The motif of Marius sitting amidst the ruins of Carthage, exiled by Sulla and also imagining Rome’s own downfall, is the subject of several poems published in the periodical *Belle Assemblée* in the 1830s, depicted in numerous engravings, for instance by William Rainey and Hermann Vogel, and even crops up in serialised stories. This paper will compare these persistent topoi with that of Macaulay’s equally popular *New Zealander*, who is imagined (and engraved by Doré) sketching the ruins of St. Paul’s from London Bridge. By examining these in the light of other “imaginary future ruins”, this paper will argue that envisaging such destruction – of which Carthage was the ultimate symbol – was a powerful way in which the nineteenth-century could imagine its own ruins.

16) Abstract of D. Engels

Oswald Spengler, though possibly one of the 20th century's most prominent philosophers of history, is nowadays only seldom accounted for in the scholarly debate on the fall of the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, his contribution to a broader understanding of the history of the first millennium AD can scarcely be overestimated, as the assumption of close cultural, social and religious bonds between Late Roman, Byzantine, Sasanian and Early Islamic history can hardly be challenged, despite the still deplorable lack of intercultural and interdisciplinary research on the Late Antique society of the Near and Middle East. But whereas the caesurae between Roman, Persian and Islamic culture seem much less clearly marked today as they were assumed to be a century ago, we have to wonder if it still is arguable to maintain, as Spengler did, that Actium signified the end of Classical Antiquity, whereas the great migrations and the fall of Rome in 476 were mere minor accidents, punctuating rather than disjoining the great continuity of Late Antique culture, spanning from Marc Antony via Justinian to Harūn ar-Rašīd.

This paper therefore proposes first an investigation into the origins and general outlines of Spengler's main interpretations of "fall" and "continuity" of the Roman Empire in the West and the East. It then will be discussed to what extent later scholarly research seized or ignored these suggestions, opposing for example Becker's violent rejection of Spengler's convictions and Toynbee's careful and balanced appreciation of Spengler's interpretation of the first millennium AD as not only a transitional phase between Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages, but as an autonomous cultural entity. Finally, it will be examined if recent research on the material breakdown of the Roman West, the unity of Aramaic culture on both sides of the Euphrates and finally the roots of Islamic society in the Late Antique and Sasanian world may contribute to either confirm or invalidate Spengler's key assumptions.