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A philologist, a traveller and an antiquary rediscover
the Samaritans in seventeenth-century Paris, Rome and Aix:
Jean Morin, Pietro della Valle and N.-C. Fabri de Peiresc

In the first place therefore, by occasion of the aforesaid Edition of the Bible newly begun, he was not content to have given notice of, and procured from Rome to be sent to Paris a Samaritan Bible, which was in the custody of that learned man and advancer of all good literature, Pietro della Valle, a Senator of Rome; but he sent, himself, into the East, a sagacious person, Theophile Minuti of the Order of Minims to search for further helps [...].¹

There are many seemingly simple sentences, like this one, in Pierre Gassendi's *Viri Illustris Nicolai Claudii Fabricii de Peiresc [...] Vita*, each only the tip of a great iceberg submerged in the wide sea of learning. This one recounts Peiresc's involvement in Samaritan studies, an inquiry that was itself spun off from another microhistory of stunning messiness, the project to make a Polyglot Bible in Paris. It is not my intention here to follow the centrifugal forces barely contained by Gassendi's narrative. Instead, I want to plunge in still deeper and show just how much we can learn about the practice of scholarship in the seventeenth century from one sentence.

We can do this because of the survival of Peiresc's correspondence with Pietro della Valle and Jean Morin, the editor and translator of the Samaritan Pentateuch. And once we encounter the events at the level of detail in which they were lived, a whole series of issues unfold. The three-cornered relationship between Peiresc in Aix, della Valle in Rome, and Morin in Paris is a concrete demonstration of the mechanics and geo-politics of scholarship. It shows us the lengths to which European scholars went to satisfy their bottomless hunger for manuscripts. With their attention turned eastwards, the advancement of learning became linked to the advancement of other goals: commercial, theological, and political. It is also, finally, a lesson in the different kinds of knowledge possessed by three very closely-related inhabitants of the learned republic: the philologist, the traveller, and the antiquary. It is only because there is now widespread recognition that the convergence of their intellectual

¹ Pierre Gassendi: *The Mirrour of True Nobility and Gentility* (London 1657), year 1628, p. 32 (pagination discontinuous). This article continues a discussion I began in: »An Antiquary between Philology and History: Peiresc and the Samaritans«. *History and the Disciplines*, ed. Donald R. Kelley, Rochester 1997, p. 163–184. The best life of Peiresc remains Gassendi's. For a good summary and judicious use of unpublished material, see Henri Leclercq: »Peiresc«, in: Henri Leclercq, Fernand Cabrol (eds.), *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie et de liturgie*, Paris 1939, XIV, p. 1–39.

labor had a decisive impact on the history of modern historical scholarship – the landmark treatment is, of course, that of Arnaldo Momigliano and, more recently, Anthony Grafton – that we can turn to the task of trying to discern the subtle *differences* between their very similar approaches.²

The Samaritans, the focus of this story, were brought back to history from a thousand years of silence by Joseph Scaliger in the 1580s in the course of his encyclopedic attempt to coordinate all the world's calendars.³ The Samaritans came to fascinate Scaliger for two reasons. First, he recognized that the resemblance between the Samaritan alphabet – the paleo-Hebrew used by Jews before the Babylonian Captivity – and what was known as »Phoenician« offered a concrete starting point for a reconstruction of a single ancient history that wove together Biblical and Classical civilization. Second, – though this insight was really developed in the generation after Scaliger – because the persistence of a Samaritan textual tradition reaching back to biblical antiquity offered a prized contemporary vantage point on ancient Judaism and early Christianity.⁴

The Paris Polyglot, which began to be printed in 1628, differed from its predecessors, the Alcalá (c. 1517) and Antwerp (c. 1572) Bibles in two ways: it was a work of private patronage and it was published very, very slowly (the last volume was only finished in 1645) after years of unremitting suits and counter-suits – and without any scholarly apparatus. Indeed, only ten years later, the appearance of the London Polyglot Bible, with more languages and now presented for the first time in parallel columns, accompanied by an extraordinary constellation of *prolegomena*, glossaries, and discourses, doomed the Paris Bible, despite its magnificent ten double folio volumes of specially-made paper and beautiful fonts, to a fate even worse than being remaindered: sold for paper-weights!⁵

² Arnaldo Momigliano: *Ancient History and the Antiquarian*, *Contributo alla storia degli studi classici*, Rome 1955), p. 67–106; *L'eredità della filologia antica e il metodo storico*, *Secondo contributo alla storia degli studi classici*, Rome 1960, p. 463–480; *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1990; Anthony Grafton: *The Footnote. A Curious History*, Cambridge MA. 1997. Other important recent works include: Alain Schnapp: *La conquête du passé. Aux origines de l'archéologie*, Paris 1993; Paula Findlen: *Possessing Nature. Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, Berkeley 1994; Simon Ditchfield: *Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Mario Campi and the Preservation of the Particular*, Cambridge 1996; Francis Haskell: *History and its Images. Art and the Interpretations of the Past*, New Haven and London 1993; *Documentary Culture. Florence and Rome from Grand-Duke Ferdinand I to Pope Alexander VII*, E. Cropper, G. Perini, F. Solinas (eds.), Bologna 1992.

³ The classic study is Anthony Grafton: *Joseph Scaliger. A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship. II: Historical Chronology*, Oxford 1993.

⁴ For Peiresc's debt to Scaliger see Miller, *An Antiquary between Philology and History*, p. 165–168.

⁵ See (as in n. 4) Miller, *Les origines de la Bible Polyglotte de Paris: philologia sacra, Contre-Reforme et raison d'état, XVII^e Siècle* 194 (1997), p. 57–66; *Making the Paris Polyglot Bible: Humanism and Orientalism in the early Seventeenth Century*, *Gelehrtenkultur im Zeitalter des Konfessionalismus*, A. Grafton, H. Jaumann (eds.), Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, forthcoming.

Yet, if the bankrupted promoter of this generally sad enterprise could have boasted of one success it would have to be publishing the *editio princeps* of the Samaritan Pentateuch. In addition to its value as a critical source, the acquisition, study and debate about the Samaritan manuscripts and their preservation offers us insight into the process whereby Renaissance humanism, learned travel and the commitment to reconstruct the cultures of the Mediterranean past combined to create oriental studies and so reshape the study of both the Bible and the classical tradition. The central figures in this narrative are the Paris-based editor and translator, P. Jean Morin of the Oratory (1591–1659), the famous Roman traveller Pietro della Valle (1586–1652), and Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637), the great antiquary from Aix-en-Provence. As we follow this exchange we can see how they studied ancient languages, handled, transported, printed and evaluated ancient manuscripts, and how all this was affected by quirks of personality, the facts of geography and subtle differences of intellectual taste.⁶

I. The Mechanics of Advancing Learning

This story begins, literally, with the completion of another. On February 19, 1628, Peiresc reported reading the preface of P. Morin to his edition of the Septuagint.⁷ In a letter to Aleandro of March 1628, Morin explained that a letter from Aleandro and copies of that preface to the Paris edition of the Sixtine Septuagint (1628) arrived in his hand at the same time. In this work – really a mini-treatise of 24 folio pages – Morin outlined his view that when and where the Hebrew, Greek and Latin versions differed, the Greek was to be preferred, and supported this with evidence drawn from the Samaritan Pentateuch, a copy of which existed in the library of the Oratory in Paris. The Septuagint project was the direct precursor, intellectually and practically, of the Polyglot enterprise and Morin's argument led its sponsors to include the Samaritan amongst the other »oriental« versions, the Arabic and Syriac. Aleandro had sent Morin a copy of his study of an ancient gem, the *Navis Ecclesiam* (1626), which included a brief resumé of learned opinion on the resemblance between the Samaritan character *tau* and the cross. Aleandro had referred to Samaritan inscriptions on ancient coins and Morin, in turn,

⁶ The basic source for this story is the published collection of Jean Morin's letters, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, ed. Richard Simon, London 1682. For details, see Jacques Lelong: *Discours Historique sur les principales éditions des Bibles Polyglottes*, Paris 1713. I hope to discuss this volume more extensively in a forthcoming study of Morin as one of the first historians of post-Biblical Judaism.

⁷ Peiresc to Dupuy, 19 February 1628, *Lettres de Peiresc*, I, p. 536f.

asked for copies and further information.⁸ Aleandro, in reply, addressed himself to the scholar's basic needs: new sources and useful contacts. He alerted Morin to the existence of Samaritan Pentateuchs in Rome belonging to the late Cardinal Scipione Cobelluzzi's (held in the Vatican Library) and Pietro della Valle, »which was not only written in Samaritan characters, but also in the Samaritan language«. He also promised to send other copies of Samaritan inscriptions on ancient coins.⁹ In an unpublished letter of 9 June 1628, Morin acknowledged receipt of Aleandro's materials and offered his initial assessment of the relationship between these characters and those in his manuscript.¹⁰ Aleandro held out the possibility of a connection to della Valle and to Peiresc, and Morin seemed pleased for these introductions.¹¹ And yet, the hand of Peiresc was in this correspondence from the start, for it was he who had arranged the transport to Paris of what became Morin's copy of the *Navis Ecclesiam* and to Rome of Morin's letter of March 1628.¹²

The Paris-Rome-Aix conversation about the Samaritans began soon after and was at its richest and most dense between 1628 and 1631. In this year, della Valle's sought-after text reached Paris, printing of the sixth volume of the Polyglot was completed and Morin published his learned comment on the Samaritans, their texts and Jewish history: *Exercitationes Ecclesiasticae in utrumque Samaritanorum Pentateuchum*. Almost immediately, the attention of the principals wandered, discussion of the Samaritans occupied a smaller and smaller part of their correspondence and Peiresc, for one, turned to broader questions of comparative linguistics.

The most basic problem for studying the oriental versions of the Bible was the language. Peiresc explained to della Valle that the great Scaliger had

⁸ Morin to Aleandro, 14 March 1628, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 141, referring to Girolamo Aleandro: *Navis Ecclesiam referentis symbolum in veteri gemma annulari insculptum*, Rome 1626, p.108–110. In a letter to Pierre Dupuy of 23 February 1627, Aleandro wrote that printing of the *Navis Ecclesiam* was finished and that he would soon be sending them their copy, via Peiresc (Paris, B.N., MS. Dupuy fol. 93r). Sure enough, in his register of out-going correspondence for 1 April 1627 Peiresc noted sending a letter to Dupuy with a copy of the *Navis Ecclesiam* (B.N., MS. N.a.f. 5169, fol. 24v). But the Dupuy only passed the book along to Morin in mid-December 1627, though with the express mention of Aleandro's name (Morin to Aleandro, 18 December 1627, Vatican, B.A.V. MS. Barberini-Latina 2185, fol. 51r). The letter of Aleandro's to which Morin's first, printed one refers, might have been written in reply to Morin's of December 1627.

⁹ Aleandro to Morin, 1 May 1628, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 143: »quod non caractere tantum, sed & idiomate Samaritano conscriptum est«

¹⁰ Morin to Aleandro, 9 June 1628, Vatican, B.A.V., MS. Barb.-Lat 2185, fol. 54r.

¹¹ Aleandro to Morin, 13 July 1628, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 147; Morin to Aleandro, [summer 1628], *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 149: »Habeo tibi gratias maximas quod litteris tuis apud Doctissimum & Ampliss. servatorem Peresium in mei gratiam intercedere voluisti [...] Plurimum praeterea gaudeo quod clarissimus Petrus à Valle Pentateuchum suum publicae utilitari non invidet«.

¹² In his register of out-going post, Peiresc recorded sending a letter to Aleandro on 7 April 1628 »avec le paquet du P. Morin« (B.N. Paris, MS. N.a.f. 5169 fol. 32r).

made his progress in Samaritan by acquiring a Psalter written in Samaritan, whose alphabet and grammar he then deduced and »which he showed me several times«. ¹³ How much easier it would have been for him, and a fortiori, Peiresc implied, for mere mortals, if he had had access to materials like della Valle's. Peiresc couched his request in a way that was sure to appeal to della Valle, emphasizing the importance of travel for language learning, and presenting his doubts about Morin's skills as a translator in terms of his failure to travel. Diligence alone, Peiresc concluded, could not overcome the disadvantage of learning his Samaritan from books, not from Samaritans living in the Levant or – a second best, to be sure – in Europe. It was a task worthy of the most mighty of princes to sponsor scholars to travel to the East to learn their languages or to bring native speakers to Europe (Archbishop Laud did just this, sponsoring Edward Pococke's stay in Aleppo).¹⁴

Where Morin desired a copy of della Valle's Samaritan Targum only, Peiresc's agenda was broader. Already in his first letter to della Valle, in September 1628, he noted that he had heard of della Valle's acquisitions of »Pentateucho in Lingua Samaritana, et di certi Fragmenti d'un altro in Lingua Egittia antica«. He wished to print both and thought that this was possible within the framework, and at the expense, of the Polyglot project underway in Paris.¹⁵ In a letter to Aleandro two months later, Peiresc asked for a specimen of della Valle's Samaritan and Egyptian texts. He repeated this request in a letter to della Valle sent with the same courier.¹⁶

From the beginning Peiresc also developed a strategy to cope with failure – always a possibility when one needed the cooperation of touchy egos. He had, therefore, »reduced his expectations« (»ho ridotto le mie pretensioni«) for immediate publication in the event della Valle proved reluctant to

¹³ Peiresc to della Valle, 26 November 1628, Carpentras, Bibliothèque Inguimbertaine MS.1871, fol. 242v; Aix, Bibliothèque Méjanes 213 (1031), p. 64. The documents in Aix are faithful seventeenth-century copies made by a descendent of Peiresc's and have been used to fill lacunae in the Carpentras manuscripts.

¹⁴ »[...] sarà difficile di persuadersi che vi possa basare la diligenza di quel buon Padre [Morin], non sendo mai stato in Levante ne havendo egli mai praticato con quelle Famiglie Samaritane che vi sonno ancora, ne con altri ch'habbino fatto studio in quell'Idioma in quei Paesi« (Peiresc to della Valle, 26 November 1628, Carp. Bibl. Inguimb. MS.1871 fol. 242; Aix, Bibl. Mejanés MS. 213 (1031), p. 63). For Laud's sponsorship of Pococke see *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Right Rev. Brian Walton*, ed. Henry John Todd, London 1821), 2 vols., I, p. 217.

¹⁵ Peiresc to della Valle, 25 September 1628, Vatican, A.S.V. Arch. Della Valle-del Bufalo 52, fol. 1r.

¹⁶ »[...] una rigga solo del suo testo Samaritano, et d'altre tanto, del suo Psalterio Egittio, con la versiona Arabica. Copiate su gli originali, con l'alfabeto dell'una et l'altra lengua, et se fosse lecito ancora una ò due paroline di quella lengua Egittia, con la spositione contenuta nel vocabulario Arabico« (Peiresc to Aleandro, 27 November 1628, Vat. MS. Barb.-Lat. 6504, fol. 226r; also Peiresc to della Valle, 26 November 1628, Carp., Bibl. Inguimb. MS. 1871, fol. 243r). The samples reached Peiresc on 6 June 1629 with della Valle's letter of 11 May 1629.

allow his manuscripts to leave Rome. Peiresc thought that he could eventually find Samaritan texts through his own channels – P. Theophile Minuti was soon to leave for the Levant carrying Peiresc's shopping list – and »Egyptian« ones in the Vatican Library with the help of Cardinal Francesco Barberini.¹⁷

In a letter of late February 1629, after della Valle agreed in principle to make his text available, Peiresc expressed his pleasure in seeing that there was no disagreement between them about the place of publication. Of course, if della Valle were minded to allow his manuscript to be published in France he would have the gratitude of posterity »and especially our Nation«. But, more importantly, if it were done in Paris, Peiresc undertook »to work on P. Morin« (»ad operare il P.Morino«) to get him to do the edition.¹⁸ Della Valle put it most succinctly in a later letter to Morin: »nihil ad me refert an liber Parisiis, an Romae sit excusus«.¹⁹

Agreement on place of publication did not, however, preclude disagreement, or at least hard bargaining, about transportation and conservation. Peiresc outlined, in great detail, the two types of risk that della Valle's manuscript faced: in transit and at the print shop. Transport risk could be overcome, he thought, by sending the manuscript with a person of quality who was used to travelling the route from Rome to Paris. A small package would be less likely to attract undue attention from highwaymen and bandits, especially now that the war in Italy had moved into the mountains and the civil disturbances in the south of France gone to ground. But, he thought all the same, a cover letter from Cardinal Barberini addressed to the vice legate couldn't hurt. Peiresc even provided a list of prospective couriers.²⁰

As for printer risk, Peiresc thought the surest way to conserve the manuscript was to keep it out of the hands of the printers and securely in those of

¹⁷ »Ma se V.S. riconoscesse che fosse grave à quel gentilhuomo di concedere questo saggio di quelli suoi libri, la supplico de non fargliene maggior Instanza, che per il Samaritano, si potrà supplir un giorno la mia voglia per altra via, & da altre copie che sono altrove. Et per l'Egitto scriverò all' Ill.me Card.al Padrone, acciò comandi al Custode della Vaticana, di permettere che si cavi detto Alfabeto Egittico et qualche rigga, del testo de' libri scritti in quella lingua Egittia che si ritrovano nella Bibliotheca« (Peiresc to Aleandro, 27 November 1628, Vatican, B.A.V. MS. Barb.-Lat. 6504, fol. 226v).

¹⁸ »[...] se non che venga in luce suo Pentateuco Samaritano, sperando che le impronti poco che si stampi in Parigi ò altrove, purchè il Publico ne riceva il beneficio« (Peiresc to della Valle of 28 February 1629, Carp. Bibl. Inguimb. MS. 1871, fol. 245r–v; Aix, Bibl. Méjanes MS. 213 [1031], p. 70).

¹⁹ Della Valle to Morin, 12 April, 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 162.

²⁰ Peiresc suggested that his friend and associate, François-Auguste de Thou, son of the late, great President of the Parlement of Paris and then in Rome on his return from the Levant could pick up the manuscript. The French ambassador was another possibility, as was Louis de Bonnaire, brother-in-law of the late John Barclay, the poet and Peiresc's friend (Peiresc to della Valle, 4 March 1630, Carp. Bibl. Inguimb. MS. 1871, fol. 247v–248r; 2 May 1630, fol. 248v). He kept proposing possible couriers until his letter of 9 October (Carp. Bibl. Inguimb. fol. 249v; Aix Bibl. Méjanes, MS. 213 [1031], p. 84), by which time the Pentateuch was already in transit – it reached Aix on the 24th of the month!

the one person who could appreciate its value, Morin. The printers could easily work from a copy. Only at the proof stage would there be a need to confront the printed page with the original.²¹ The problem of quality could be managed by engaging a printer who was »most learned« in foreign scripts and a diligent type-cutter used to working with him. And, if it were simply a matter of della Valle having a favorite printer, Peiresc went so far as to suggest that it would be of »pochissima consideratione« to bring him to France and have him do the work there. In a letter to Aleandro from this period Peiresc even offered to pay the copyist's costs himself if that would secure della Valle's cooperation.²² In this case, though, it was up to della Valle to ascertain the cost of the punches and matrices while Peiresc would take responsibility for negotiating »con quei di Parigi per aggiustargli insieme, et fargli convenire, se sarà possibile«.²³

Della Valle was immensely satisfied with Peiresc's degree of detail. In his reply of July 1629 he even represented Peiresc as his agent in France: »à promover con ogni diligenza questo negotio del Samaritano«. »Attenderò«, he wrote, »solo per li ordini & avisi di V.S. III.^{mo} cioè del modo, delle persone, per mezzo di chi si ha da mandare, e del resto« (underlinings are Peiresc's). Della Valle also agreed to use the Parisian matrices and punches, as long as they were »belli e corretti«, since those in Rome able to do this work were being kept busy by the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide. If all this went well, della Valle wrote, he would agree to publish his Egyptian texts in Paris as well.²⁴

In the event, Morin worked out his own travel arrangements with della Valle – another example of the disorganization that dogged the project – relying on the same P. Bertin, »noster Amanuensim« Morin called him, who carried his letters to Aleandro back and forth.²⁵ Bertin's role illustrates how personal loyalties and jealousies could affect the fate of large, complex projects. In a letter to della Valle of 25 October 1630 Peiresc reported that the previous

²¹ Peiresc to della Valle, 7 June 1629, Carp. Bibl. Inguimb. MS. 1871, fol. 247r.

²² »Et che si contenti l'III.mo S.r P.o della Valle che vi si possa aggiungere il suo in vera lingua Samaritana, onde si può sperare giovamento notabile al publico, stimando giustiss.o che non si prive quel Sig.re del suo originale, et che sia grandiss.a la gratià ch'egli degna concedere, che se ne cavi coppia. A che volentieri contribuirò io la mia industria, et le spese del coppista se sene trova alcuno costi, che habbia avvinco [?] di transcriber quell'opera« (Peiresc to Aleandro, 27 July 1628, Vatican, MS. Barb.-Lat. 6504, fol. 216r).

²³ Peiresc to della Valle, 28 February 1629, Carp. Bibl. Inguimb. MS. 1871, fol. 246v.

²⁴ Della Valle to Peiresc, 27 July 1629, Paris B.N. MS. F.fr. 9542, fol. 142r–v; copy Dupuy MS. 705, fol. 189r. Despite Peiresc's assurances, and his own claim not to care about place of publication, della Valle remained deeply concerned about unnecessary wear and tear on his manuscript and about receiving due acknowledgement for having acquired the manuscript. He spelled out these concerns in a letter to Morin of April 12 1630 (*Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 164).

²⁵ This letter of 13 September 1630 gives the route from Italy to Paris but makes no mention of Peiresc (p. 183f.).

day Bertin and the Nuncio had visited him in the country at Belgentier. P. Bertin delivered a letter from della Valle in which he was delighted to read that della Valle had finally decided to send the Pentateuch to Paris. But, Peiresc continued, he would have been a lot happier if P. Bertin had deigned to show him the manuscript! For, as he discovered later, upon reading the letter, Bertin had it in his possession the entire time. Peiresc could not refrain from observing that »la fretta di questo buon padre non ha comportato ch'io godersi questo suo favore«. ²⁶ This polite account was written to della Valle in the immediate aftermath of the meeting. But to his friends, Jean-Jacques Bouchard and Pierre Gassendi, he told a different story. Bertin had »quelque jalousie de moi«, ²⁷ and so »me fist à croire qu'il ne l'avoit pas avec luy de peur de me le monstrer«, even though carrying della Valle's »ordre de me faire voir son livre«. ²⁸

Having negotiated on the details, much remained to be done – and much, therefore, to be disappointed about. The failure to fulfill expectations was a constant source of tension among scholars. Della Valle had expected Morin to publish his Pentateuch in its entirety with a Latin translation, while Morin simply used it to give variants, claiming that it so closely matched his Pentateuch that there was no need to print it in its entirety. Della Valle also wanted to make the text that he had discovered known across the learned world, but Morin included it in a large and costly folio that seemed to guarantee a miniscule circulation once it was eventually published, seventeen years later. ²⁹ Peiresc, too, felt exploited by the behavior of Morin, Vitré and Le Jay, who asked him for manuscripts with no intention of publishing them and no time to study them properly. ³⁰

But the single greatest cause of tension and resentment came from the slow return of borrowed materials. There was not much a lender could do when feeling wronged except threaten future non-cooperation. This is exactly what della Valle did in an undated letter of mid-summer 1631. In the absence of a promise for quick return of the exemplar della Valle hinted to Morin that would have to re-consider the future of this collaboration. ³¹ He would later act on this, much to Peiresc's discomfiture. Not only did della Valle blame the French, but he held back the »Egyptian« manuscripts that

²⁶ »Ma haverei havuto molto maggior gusto se ci fosse stato lecito di vedere detto suo libro, et confrontarne qualche folio con l'ultima colonna del mio Trilingue« (Peiresc to della Valle, 25 October 1630, A.S.V. Arch. Della Valle del Bufalo 52, fol. 3r).

²⁷ Peiresc to Bouchard, 15 December 1633, Lettres de Peiresc, IV, 94f.

²⁸ Peiresc to Gassendi, 24 December 1633, Lettres de Peiresc, IV, 398.

²⁹ Della Valle to Morin, 10 July 1631, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 210.

³⁰ See for example the letter to the brothers Dupuy of 26 December 1631, Lettres de Peiresc, II, p. 292.

³¹ Della Valle to Morin [1631], *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 204f.

Peiresc so desperately wanted to lay hands on but which held little appeal for Morin. In a letter to Jean-Jacques Bouchard of 15 December 1633 Peiresc complained that the Parisians' dilatoriness forced him to work even harder »pour conserver le credit de la nation parmy les estrangers«. ³² Eventually, Peiresc wrote directly to della Valle (9 February 1634), explaining that he had himself been excluded by Morin and was not to blame for the other's display of bad manners. He now told della Valle of Father Bertin's deception – »gli non mi volse far la grazia« – which he had withheld in the earlier letter so as not to create further trouble – noting that P. Morin »forzi non era consapevole di tal male creanza« (emphasis added). The whole episode could have been avoided if della Valle had only sent the volume through him, »conforme agli primi ordini«, because »io son geloziss.^{mo} di conservare il credito apprezzo gli amici«. ³³

II. The Geo-politics of Learning

Personal contacts, like these, made the learned world, but they were also shaped by it. Two salient features of the geo-politics of the early seventeenth-century Republic of Letters can be discerned in this correspondence and each brings out less well-known aspects of much better known narratives. The centralization of intellectual talent in capital cities is a familiar theme; this correspondence sheds light on the conditions of the provincial intellectual.

³² Peiresc to Bouchard, 15 December 1633, Lettres de Peiresc, IV, p. 94. To Gassendi, Peiresc complained that Morin was planning to move to Rouen as Superior, which could not but slow his Samaritan scholarship. Peiresc's misgivings about Morin found another source when he discovered that neither Morin nor his bookseller remembered to provide Jacques Dupuy with a copy of the *Exercitationes Biblicae* after its publication. Discourtesy, it seemed to him, had become the norm. Peiresc to Dupuy 28 February 1634, Lettres de Peiresc, III, p. 43.

³³ Peiresc to della Valle, 9 February 1634, Vat, A.S.V., Arch. Della Valle – Del Bufalo 52, fol. 8v. Only much later did Morin get around to explaining the delay in returning his Pentateuch. He claimed to have used it for four years in order to compare all the available editions. After he had just finished he received Peiresc's triglot which differed in words, though not in sense, from della Valle's, entailing further comparison and re-doing of the version destined for print. He explained his reasons for including asterisks, à la Origen, in his text. For those words found in one edition or another or that were extremely difficult, or where the Latin differed from the Samaritan. Finally, when his edition was complete it had to wait for the completion of the remaining volumes of the Polyglot as they were all to be published simultaneously. Typical »negotiis litterariis« bore the blame, though anyone familiar with the soap opera story of Gabriel Sionita, Antoine Vitré and Guy Michel Le Jay would find this a grand understatement. While all this was ongoing he held on to the versions he was sent, both Peiresc's and della Valle's (Morin to della Valle, 16 July 1637, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 260–263).

Second, while we talk about the *translatio studii* that moved the center of learned gravity across the Alps and into France and the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, these letters show us what was happening in Rome whence learning had migrated, and why.

Peiresc was a provincial intellectual. After returning from Paris in 1623 he never left Provence and rarely strayed from the hinterland of Aix and Belgentier. Even as he maintained his mastery over the republic of letters through force of personality and constant correspondence, aspects of the isolation that he strove against can be discerned. For example, Peiresc seems to have heard about the Paris Polyglot project from his friend Aleandro in Rome, not directly from Paris.³⁴ And it was only in October 1629, more than a year after Morin first began work, that Peiresc was approached by the sponsor, a Parisian lawyer and parlementaire, Guy Michel Le Jay – though indirectly, through Gassendi – for help in obtaining della Valle's Targum for inclusion in the Polyglot project.³⁵ Another year passed before Peiresc was finally approached directly by the printer, Antoine Vitré, and the scholarly editor, Morin.³⁶ It was Dupuy's recommendation of Peiresc as »le vray patron« of all men of letters that had led Vitré to appeal directly for help with the Polyglot. Vitré was just beginning the printing of Arabic and Syriac versions of the New Testament and wanted Peiresc to send copies of the New Testament in Arabic, as well as his newly-acquired Samaritan »Tritaple« (Samaritan-Hebrew, Samaritan-Aramaic, Samaritan-Arabic).³⁷ Peiresc's unusual failure to reply prompted a pair of almost-irritated letters from Le Jay.³⁸

What was responsible for this uncharacteristic failure of prompt generosity? At just this time Peiresc was hostage to the two great perils of the seventeenth-century countryside: plague and revolt. It was Plague, he explained to della Valle in May 1630, that kept him in the country at Belgentier and prevented him from retrieving other Samaritan manuscripts for comparison with della Valle's sample. It also made it impossible to respond immediately to Vitré and Le Jay. Similarly, he was unable to get at recently arrived materi-

³⁴ Peiresc to Dupuy, 19 May 1628, *Lettres de Peiresc*, I, p. 617.

³⁵ Gassendi to Peiresc, 23 October 1629, *Lettres de Peiresc*, IV, p. 230.

³⁶ Gassendi to Peiresc, 21 July 1630, *Lettres de Peiresc*, IV, p. 243. The letters of Vitré, Morin and Le Jay to Peiresc, located in B.N., MS. Latin 9340, are printed by Leon Doréz: *Notes et Documents sur la Bible Polyglotte de Paris*, *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de Paris et de l'Île-de-France* 17 (1890), p. 84–94.

³⁷ Doréz, *Notes et Documents*, p. 85f. Vitré's letter contains a useful chronology. Six months before beginning the printing of volume 6 of the Polyglot (Arabic, Syriac, Samaritan) which was continuing, he wrote, the staff had to be trained. Afterwards, it took upwards of three months of constant attention to insure that the type and typesetting was accurately executed.

³⁸ Le Jay to Peiresc, 12 November 1630, Doréz, *Notes et Documents*, p. 87f.; Le Jay to Peiresc, 16 December 1630, p. 88f.

als because Marseille was closed by quarantine.³⁹ As one peril passed, another arrived. Over the winter of 1630–31 Peiresc was again cut off, this time by an urban revolt in Aix. His house, across from the Palace, had been threatened with destruction and communication with the outside world interrupted. This was a disadvantage of headquartering the republic of letters in the provinces.⁴⁰

And yet, if Peiresc's Provençal address put him on the periphery of Parisian concerns, he lay at the very center of the Mediterranean. Moreover, if, as Peiresc and his friends believed, learning was moving north from Italy, it was doing so through Provence. It was Peiresc's proximity, and close links, to the ports of Marseille and Toulon, as well as to Avignon on the Rhone, that explains his access to so much information.

The letters to della Valle illuminate the conditions of intellectual life in earlier seventeenth-century Rome from which learning was supposedly in flight. The involvement of Peiresc in the Paris Polyglot project is itself evidence for the centrality of Rome: this is where manuscripts and their interpreters were to be found. But a close look at the correspondence shows that this situation was changing beneath the protagonists' own feet. In his letters to Aleandro, Peiresc often invoked the work of Joseph Scaliger. But Aleandro had, already ten years earlier, complained that he could not lay hands on Scaliger's book because »essendo in queste parti carestia di questi libri sospesi«. He was »dying« to have intellectual commerce with those considered heretics, like Scaliger, Casaubon and Heinsius, but it was simply too difficult.⁴¹ This was the result of a much more far-reaching suspicion, as he explained in a later letter, and it discouraged the publication of new texts.⁴²

It was this opinion that Aleandro had communicated to della Valle and which led the latter to send his Pentateuch to be published in Paris. In Rome, publication faced three problems. First, there was only one printer that he trusted, Stefano Paulini, who learned the trade of oriental letters in the shop of G.B. Raimondi, the man whose enthusiasm for oriental letters actually lies at the beginning of the history of the Paris Polyglot. But, second, even if Paulini were not so busy serving the Propaganda Fide, there was no one in Rome capable of doing a translation of Samaritan into Latin (this is hard to belie-

³⁹ Peiresc to della Valle, 2 May 1630, *Carp. Bibl. Inguimb.* MS. 1871, fol. 248v.

⁴⁰ It was this, he insisted in a letter to the brothers Dupuy, that explained his failure to respond to Messieurs de Thou, Rigault, Grotius and to Le Jay and Morin »for the Pentateuch that we could not send«. Peiresc to Dupuy, 18 February 1631, *Lettres de Peiresc*, II, p. 268.

⁴¹ Aleandro to Peiresc, 1 May 1618, *Correspondance de Peiresc & Aleandro*, eds. Jean-François Lhote and Danielle Joyal, 2 vols, Clermont-Ferrand 1995, I, p. 182; 9 March 1620, II, p. 170.

⁴² Aleandro to Peiresc 10 February 1619 (*Correspondance de Peiresc & Aleandro*, II, p. 22): »In questa Città niuno pensa piu di stampar niente di nuovo per la rigida censura, che vien fatta da chi è soprastante«.

ve). Finally, and perhaps decisively, there was great difficulty in obtaining the permission of the Church to publish anything that diverged from the Vulgate in the slightest.⁴³ The »scrupulous censures of the Superiors« prevented the publication of his other works.⁴⁴ It was in response to Peiresc's praise of his relation about the reign of Shah Abbas that della Valle launched into a long and sad explanation. He contrasted his nature with that of the dominant tone in Rome, established by religious. »Io non son frate«, he wrote, »ne mi posso indurre a parlar come tale; sono huomo di cappa e spada, fo professione d'ingenuo, e come tale bisogna che parli. Alla virtu morale, e cavalleresca è dovere che mi oblihi, ma alla religiosa o fratesca, che non e da par mio, non mi posso obligare, non havendo tanto spirito«. But the *Kulturkampf* in late Barberini Rome had definite implications for the kind of scholarly programs that could be undertaken. »Qui vogliono che le penne si cattivino sotto al gusto de gli altri, io non posso soggettar la mia a leggi tanto strette, e ment[re] la tengo dentro a i termini dell'honesto, mi par di fare a pieno il mio debito si che tutte queste cose mi son di fieno nel pensare a pubblicare alcune delle mie fattiche«. After thanking Peiresc for the interest in his work and for distributing copies to friends in France, della Valle returned to his local circumstances as if to signal to Peiresc not to expect further publications any time soon. »Ma in Roma ci hanno usato tanto rigore, io non voler che ne vengono, che io stesso ho stentato e stento assai per poterne havere alcuno di nascosto da servirne qualche amico e padrone e mentre sia cosi, chi serve à stampare?«⁴⁵

The question of technical resources also needs to be addressed. There can be no denying that making a Polyglot Bible was a complex technical venture: matrices, punches and type all had to be designed and cut. But Rome was still the capital of European polyglot publishing through the seventeenth century, especially after the printing office of the Propaganda Fide was established (1626). Della Valle's explanation that for a long time he had been unable to find anyone able to fabricate Samaritan typefaces, and then only one man, and that he had failed to find anyone able to produce a Latin translation

⁴³ »Illum vero Latine qui redderet, Romae non erat; & si fuisset, uti sibi persuadebat optimus amicus noster sacrarumque litterarum studiosissimus Hieronymus Aleander qui ex hac migrans vita, magnum sui nobi desiderium reliquit, Romae fortassis non facile futurum erat, ut hujusmodi Liber imprimi a superioribus impetraretur, praecipue si textus iste a vulgata editione in aliquo tantisper discordaret; haec omnia praestituerunt ut ad hanc usque diem nihil amplius sim molitus [...]« (della Valle to Morin, 12 April 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 161).

⁴⁴ »[...] sed Romae difficilis admodum librorum promulgatio experitur, ob nimium scrupulosas superiorum censuras« (della Valle to Morin, 13 September 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 189).

⁴⁵ Della Valle to Peiresc, 27 July 1629, Paris, MS. F.fr. 9542, fol. 143r-v; copy MS. Dupuy 705, fol. 190.

of his text, is shocking, even if he only believed it to be true. His comments suggest a relationship between technical capacity, intellectual freedom and original scholarship: censorship discouraged intellectual inquiry and so diminished the likelihood that those asking new questions, in this case about the Bible as history, would be doing so in Rome.

Della Valle's account of censorship and closed-mindedness encourages us to reflect on the subtle but decisive loss of momentum that is discernible in the cultural history of learning in seventeenth-century Rome. It is startling that Rome produced no Polyglot Bible in a period in which its intellectual and technical might was supreme. The fate of the proposed publication of the Arabic version of the Bible helps us explain this. The idea was first mooted under Gregory XIII – by Raimondi – at a time when the power of philology to serve the Church through the establishment of »scientific« editions and a »sacred philology« was recognized and honored. Indeed, the Paris Polyglot project originated in this milieu. But whereas north of the Alps this comparative, historical study of texts became one of the most sophisticated forms of intellectual inquiry, it languished in Rome, slowly being reduced to the dimensions of a tool for missionaries. The publication of the Arabic version of the Bible, based on comparing ancient manuscripts, was first proposed in Rome in 1624. But delay after delay led the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide to decide to do an edition that simply translated the Vulgate back into Arabic. And even this was subject to excruciating delays with the volume only seeing the light of day in 1671. In the meantime, the Arabic version, with all its many departures from the canonical text, was printed in Paris, in the same volume of the Polyglot that contained the Samaritan Pentateuch. How different was the Roman attitude from Peiresc's, who was especially interested in the Arabic Pentateuch *because* it diverged most from the other versions and was capable, therefore, »de fournir de tres belles conceptions à ceux qui y voudroient mediter, & rechercher l'energie des unes & des autres«.⁴⁶

The Roman resistance to the careful examination and comparison of non-canonical versions for fear of the variations that would be revealed testifies to the fear that crippled its intellectual productions. It was this loss of the intellectual self-confidence that characterized Rome from Gregory XIII to the early years of the Barberini Papacy, and the simultaneous rise of learned centers in the North, that Peiresc summed up in a letter to Pierre and Jacques Dupuy: »Et puis les Muses semblent avoir abandonné les pais chauds longtemps y a pour chercher le frais en vos quartiers«.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Peiresc to Jean Morin, 8 November 1631[2], *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientales*, p. 186f.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Marc Fumaroli: *L'Age de l'Éloquence*, Paris and Geneva 1980, p. 526, n. 223. Note that, as far as Peiresc was concerned, he too lived in the South.

III. Different kinds of knowledge: the bible scholar, the traveller and the antiquary

It would be easy to describe the relationship between Morin, della Valle and Peiresc as a simple one: della Valle provided new texts, Morin the technical skills necessary to read them, and Peiresc the good offices to facilitate the transaction between borrower and lender. This exactly reflects the interpretation of Peiresc as a »master facilitator« that Pierre Bayle first offered and many modern scholars still repeat. In fact, things were much more complicated. The philologist was limited by the constrained horizons of book learning and bookish tradition. The traveller possessed invaluable information that could only be obtained »on-site«, but whose value was linked to the older, familiar texts it could then reinterpret. The antiquary was often land-locked, like the professional philologist, and like the traveller, may have lacked specialized technical skills necessary for each and every question. Peiresc's niche in this learned eco-system was to know enough of the books to make the most sense of the traveller's tales, and to have enough contact with the extra-European world to adjust his book-learned knowledge. His knack, which made him Bayle's »procureur-général« but also a fascinating intellectual figure in his own right, was for marshalling breadth of learning to formulate interesting questions that lay down fruitful lines of inquiry for others to pursue. A closer look at the kinds of knowledge possessed by these different types of scholars enables us to begin to formulate a more exact understanding of what we mean by »antiquarianism«.

In the survey of the state of research in oriental studies that was folded into his *Prolegomena* to the London Polyglot Bible (1657), Brian Walton argued that Scaliger and Morin did more to advance knowledge of the Samaritans than anyone since Josephus.⁴⁸ Morin used the Samaritan Pentateuch as an ancient support for a critical assessment of the Hebrew Bible. His commentary on their comparison, a sample of which he provided Aleandro in a letter from the Fall of 1628, had the political effect, and perhaps was so intended from the start, of discrediting the Hebrew Bible to the discomfiture of all supporters of *Hebraica veritas*, whether Jewish, Protestant or Roman Catholic.⁴⁹ Morin's preface to the 1628 Latin-Greek Bible first deployed the Samaritan Pentateuch as a tool of Biblical interpretation from a historical point of view. Earlier scholars had recognized the connection between the Samaritan and Phoenician alphabet; Morin's argument triggered a heated debate and deeper investigation of the possibility that the script itself could provide clues to the region's historical development.

⁴⁸ Walton: The Considerator Considered, in: *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Right Rev. Brian Walton*, II, p. 193.

⁴⁹ Morin to Aleandro, [Autumn 1628], *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 152.

Morin put his ideas into clear and concise shape in the letter that he sent to Peiresc in July 1630 seeking his good-will and his manuscripts. He, too, began by invoking Dupuy's celebration of Peiresc's efforts to import rare books from the Orient (»J'ay sçeu de Monsr Dupuy le grand soin que vous avez pris de faire venir d'Orient plusieurs livres tres rare, et entre autres un Pentateuche des Samaritans, en trois langues«). He proceeded to note the extreme literalness of the Samaritan Targum, as he had already surmised from the specimen della Valle had sent him, and then surveyed the various Samaritan manuscripts found in Europe. Morin summarized the argument of his 1628 Septuagint preface, and commented on the antiquity of the Samaritan text and the occasional divergence, already noted by the Church Fathers, between it and the Hebrew Pentateuch. He added that in several of these passages the Samaritan disagreed with the Hebrew only to agree with the Septuagint, suggesting a more ancient source for the text that was the corner-stone of the early, Greek-speaking Church. Its divergences, sometimes found in no other version, constituted an inner-textual commentary on the Pentateuch.⁵⁰ In a letter to della Valle from this same period, Morin put his argument most concisely: »utrumque Samaritanum in nonnullis cum 70 interp. editionis Romanae consentire & ab Hebraeo Judaico dissentire«.⁵¹

Morin's textual criticism represents the extension to the Bible of a historical approach to texts that had been perfected by the great humanists of the previous generation, Lipsius, Casaubon and Scaliger. Establishing a historical context often provided invaluable assistance in reconstructing damaged or fragmentary texts. This was, as Grafton has termed it, the path »from philology to cultural history«. And, indeed, Morin's claim that the ancient Hebrew text preserved for posterity in the Samaritan Pentateuch was more accurate than that preserved in the modern Hebrew Bible itself led him to an increasingly thorough and elaborate history of late antique and medieval Judaism built on reading of the Jewish sources, despite his deep, highly polemical distaste for Judaism.⁵² This historical framework was then used to evaluate the results of the comparison of manuscripts.⁵³

⁵⁰ Morin to Peiresc, 23 July 1630, in Dorez: *Notes et Documents*, p. 91–93. The date, which Dorez does not give, can be established from manuscript copies of this letter preserved in Peiresc's papers (for instance, Aix, Bibl. Méjanes 207 (1025), p. 257) and from internal evidence provided in Peiresc's response of 8 November 1632.

⁵¹ Morin to della Valle, 6 May 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 170.

⁵² Morin explained this as a consequence of later Jewish distortions: »Masoreticas censuras, leptomologias, superstitoisa & ridicula mysterii« (Morin to della Valle, 6 May 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 170). Morin's pronounced anti-Judaism is also reflected in his attack on the authority of Benjamin of Tudela's and Abraham ibn Ezra's comments about the Samaritans: »ista Judaeorum calumniae sunt« (Morin to della Valle, 6 August 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 180).

⁵³ The step from this study of the Samaritan Pentateuch to a full-scale historical contextualization of the Hebrew Bible is marked in the move from Morin's *Exercitationes ecclesiasticae in utrumque Pentateuchum Samaritanorum* (1631) to the *Exercitationes biblicae* (pt.1 1633 and pt. 2 1660).

For, like a »true church antiquary«, to use Thomas Fuller's contemporary characterization, Morin worked by comparison. When he received a sample of della Valle's text in May 1630 he reported that the comparison of their two Pentateuchs showed della Valle's »exactly corresponding word for word« with his own.⁵⁴ This devotion to accuracy in textual transmission led Morin to link the Samaritans with the other famous ancient and modern Jewish literalists, the Sadducees (»Butaeos«) and the Karaites. These heretics – who were, as Richard Popkin and others have shown, to exert such an appeal for some seventeenth-century Protestant thinkers – were worshippers »of the dry and dead letter« (»aridaeque literae mordicus adhaerent«).⁵⁵ Yet, in the absence of other texts it was impossible to assess this argument and, thus, to develop a clearer picture of the place of the Samaritans in the history of religion, and of the accuracy of their text.

This is where the traveller's knowledge was pre-eminent. For della Valle had seen both Karaites and Samaritans and had learned enough about each – through personal contact rather than books – to answer questions that the scholar in his study simply could not address. He could reject Morin's conflation of the two because he had actually met members of both groups and could describe their practices and beliefs. He began by recounting the history of the Samaritans' translation from Assyria by »Sennacherib sive Salmanassar« and the antiquity of their pagan ritual. Hence, »a Judaies omni tempore, usque ab aevo Servatoris nostri pro haereticis sunt habiti«. As for texts, they contained only the Pentateuch and nothing else: neither the books of the Prophets, nor the Writings. The Karaites, on the other hand, accepted all the books of the Hebrew Bible, but only interpreted them in a different, purely literal fashion. He contrasted the practice of the Karaites to sit in the dark all day on the Sabbath – a strictly literal interpretation – with that of modern Jews who lit their lamps on Friday so as to be able to use them that evening. As for the »Cuthaeim«, whose identity Morin had queried, he could not say much since he had encountered none in Asia.⁵⁶

The traveller-as-anthropologist was able to supplement scanty European book-knowledge of the Samaritans in other ways, too. He reported the existence of Samaritan communities in Cairo, Gaza, Sichem [sic], or Naplus

⁵⁴ »[...] comparavi Pentateuchi tui Samaritani specimen cum eodem loco Pentateuchi nostri Samaritano-Hebraei; tuus versio est Samaritana verbum verbo ad admissum respondens, nostro Samaritano-Hebraeo versio exactior & rigidior fingi non potest« (Morin to della Valle, 6 May 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 169).

⁵⁵ Morin to della Valle, 18 October 1629, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 158f. For the broader discussion see R.H. Popkin: *The Lost Tribes, the Caraites and the English Millenarians*, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37 (1986), p.213–227; Yosef Kaplan: *Karaites in Early Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam, Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews*, David S. Katz, Jonathan I. Israel (eds.), Leiden 1990, p.196–236.

⁵⁶ Della Valle to Morin, 12 April 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 165f.

(the historical Samaria) and Damascus. In Cairo, there were approximately seven families of Samaritans, including a priestly line that traced its lineage back to the ancient Levites. Della Valle also examined their homes and synagogues, which were on the cities' outskirts amidst pleasant gardens. Their facades were plain and poor-looking, out of fear of Turkish persecution, but the interiors were truly elegant, especially the sacred places, which were covered in Samaritan inscriptions.⁵⁷

One of Morin's most insistent questions concerned the Samaritans' pronunciation of Hebrew. If they had preserved the ancient Hebrew script after the Jews had altered theirs under Ezra, was it not possible that they had also preserved the ancient (and therefore, by Morin's definition, more accurate) Hebrew pronunciation? Pronunciation could point to hidden meanings but it is also a paradigmatic instance of the limitations of a textual scholar.⁵⁸

As an observer, della Valle could have heard those long-dead languages being spoken. Unfortunately, lacking the requisite technical preparation, when he met the Samaritans he could not understand what he was hearing (»eo enim tempore quo Samaritanos adivi, harum Linguarum notitia nulla mihi erat«). But what he could address was the very different pronunciation of Hebrew by Oriental as compared to European Jews. Their consonants sounded much more like that of Arabs and »Chaldaeans« and »omnes Orientales« and differed greatly from »nostrates Hebraei & Europaei omnes«. Europeans who learned oriental languages were laughed at by the Orientals for their pronunciation of the letters 'ayin and het. Della Valle tended to believe that the pronunciation of the Oriental Jews was »genuino quodam modo, & antiquissimo«, though he also fell back on the authority of the Syrian Christian scholar relocated to Rome, George Amira.⁵⁹

Della Valle thought the vertical lines in the Samaritan text were similar to the accents found in Arabic, the language spoken by Samaritans, and which were designed to eliminate ambiguous pronunciation. In this, they might have served to distinguish the vowels, otherwise absent. He noted that the Masoretes and other »recentiores«, amongst the Jews, as amongst the »Chaldaeans«, had added vowels while the Arabs, »qui priscarum consuetudinum tenaciores fuerunt«, and whose language shared many similarities to

⁵⁷ »Ibi domus eorum & Synagogas inspexi, quae sunt extra civitatem, inter hortos amaenissimas; extrinsecus quidem pauperam more, ob metum Turcarum, qui divitiis ad modum inhiant, intus vero elegantes, praesertim aedes illis sacrae, picturis & auro decenter coonestatae, pluribusque in locis inscriptionibus Samaritano caractere insignitae« (della Valle to Morin, 12 April 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 166).

⁵⁸ »[...] miror quomodo in tam contemnenda paucitate librum legis, & ceremonias suas conservare potuerint« (Morin to della Valle, 6 May 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 170f.).

⁵⁹ Della Valle to Morin, 10 July 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 176.

Hebrew and Aramaic, had only three vowels, A, V, and I – over which letters the Samaritans placed those little lines.⁶⁰ But where Morin viewed the change in languages, especially Hebrew, as an instance of willful corruption, in this case by the Masoretes, della Valle argued that change was common, whether because of »the corruption of Languages, or diversity of dialects, or fear or some other cause«. ⁶¹ It was this commitment to the living character of spoken language that led della Valle to the extraordinarily sophisticated claim that anyone wishing to discover the ancient pronunciation of a word had to look outside of the community of its modern speakers since regular use exposed pronunciation to change. Only in foreign languages where a loaned word was sheltered from the historical experience of a living language could one hope to come across older pronunciations.⁶² Even the implicit claim that non-natives might be the better preservers of a national heritage has an astonishingly familiar, if contentious, ring. Della Valle's argument about the mutability of pronunciation reflected a deeper view of the human universe – words, clothing, rituals – in which those who lived these changes were least able to perceive them and preserve anything from them.⁶³ The transformation of Latin into Italian and ancient into modern Greek were examples of time's work on a language. The most striking instance of this, to della Valle's mind, was the fact of Armenian: it had altered so much that living speakers could not understand their ancient language at all.⁶⁴ As an example of his view that the »correct pronunciation of the ancient Language« was best preserved among foreigners, della Valle suggested that the Roman pronunciation of Caesar that was lost in the West was preserved in Arabic, Persian and other Oriental languages as Kaiser. All this led him to believe that anyone, like

⁶⁰ Della Valle to Morin, 13 September 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 184f.

⁶¹ »[...] neque in hac tantum parte novatores illos posteris imposuisse arbitror, sed in alia quoque, vocales nimirum immutando, & aliam pro alia saepe usurpando in quamplurimis dictionibus sive corruptela Linguae, sive diversitate tos dialecte, sive temeritate, sive alio quovis casu« (della Valle to Morin, 13 September 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 186)

⁶² »Ad hoc credendum me persuadet illud argumentum; priscam scilicet, rectam genuinamque pronunciationem complurium vocum earum Linguarum quae corruptelas passae sunt, apud externos potius, quam apud propriae gentis homines, reperiri; si quidem exteri dictionum sibi peregrinarum pronunciationem fere semper eandem retinent, quam ab initio ab iis, quibus Linguae illae propriae erant, audivere, nulla adhuc in eorum idiomata corruptione illapsa:« (della Valle to Morin, 13 September 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 186).

⁶³ »[...] contra vero cujuscunque nationis homines priscas proprii sermonis voces, non nisi corrupte, pronunciare solent, immutata admodum annorum cursu, non minus sermonis, quam vestium, aliarumque rerum omnium consuetudine« (della Valle to Morin, 13 September 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 186).

⁶⁴ »Armenia vero, ut de aliis regionibus taceam, tantopere majorem, ut qui hoc saeculo vivunt Armeni priscorum suorum Linguam, nisi illam addiscant, multo minus quam Itali, Latinam, intelligant« (della Valle to Morin, 13 September 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 187).

Morin, who was seeking the ancient Hebrew pronunciation ought to look to Arabic where they were sheltered from »temporis injuria, vel Masoretarum, aliorumque recentiorum temeraria innovatione«. ⁶⁵

The antiquary stood between the traveller and the textual critic, often responsible, as in Peiresc's case, for acquiring new information but also able to integrate it into the existing, textually-grounded discourse. Peiresc's work on the Samaritan Pentateuch shows to advantage the full range of his intellectual talents and interests: serving as an intermediary between scholars of different nations and promoter of their efforts, as an organizer of learned expeditions and steady consumer of new information in the form of objects and manuscripts and, finally, as an interpreter best placed to compare new and old information and suggest fruitful lines of inquiry. In the end, it is this continuous practice of comparison that stands out.⁶⁶

In Peiresc's work on the Samaritans we see comparison invoked as both an ideal to be served by scholarship and as the ideal form of scholarship itself. In a letter to Pierre Dupuy of 1629 that touched on John Selden's use of Archbishop Ussher's Samaritan Pentateuch in his *Marmora Arundelliana*, Peiresc noted in passing that Morin would best be advised to compare his copy with Ussher's as well as della Valle's.⁶⁷ Later, he added those Pentateuchs in the Imperial library in Vienna and the collection of Jacob Golius in Leiden.⁶⁸ Peiresc explained to della Valle that the purpose of obtaining his, like the other manuscripts, was »to compare it with the others«. ⁶⁹ To make sure that della Valle did not feel that this hunt for additional manuscripts reflected badly on the integrity of his own, he explained that it facilitated comparison, which alone could establish truth. »Et la comparatione darà commodità di sciegliere ciò che sarà più à proposito et più conforme al Testo Hebraico«. ⁷⁰ To Morin, he explained that it was necessary to compare all the available Pentateuchs, including his own, Golius's and della Valle's, »car il importe de ne la point publier que bien correcte & bien complete«. ⁷¹ Even the smallest details that might emerge from such comparison could

⁶⁵ Della Valle to Morin, 13 September 1630, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 187. I have discussed this theme at greater length in Peiresc's *Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century*, New Haven and London 2000, ch. 5: History as Philosophy: Time and the Antiquarian.

⁶⁶ See this author's *The Antiquary's Art of Comparison: Peiresc and Abraxas*, in: *Philologie und Erkenntnis*, ed. Ralph Häfner, Tübingen 2001 (in press).

⁶⁷ Peiresc to Dupuy, 27 June 1629, *Lettres de Peiresc*, II, p. 121.

⁶⁸ Peiresc to Holstenius, 13 October 1630, *Lettres de Peiresc*, V, p. 353, and 14 March 1631, V, p. 368.

⁶⁹ »[...] per confrontarlo con gli altri che si sonno havuti da' diversi luoghi, et sopra lequali l'haveva da fare l'editione« (Peiresc to della Valle, 2 May 1630, Carp. Bibl. Inguimb. MS. 1871, fol. 249r).

⁷⁰ Peiresc to della Valle, 9 October 1630, Carp. Bibl. Inguimb. MS. 1871, fol. 249v.

⁷¹ Peiresc to Morin, 8 November 1632, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 185.

anchor important explanations: the fact that della Valle's Samaritan was written on paper, for example, seemed to Peiresc to explain why it contained so many more scribal errors than his own, on parchment, since the latter would have been intended for use in the synagogue and therefore been copied out more carefully.⁷² Of course, the very idea of doing a Polyglot Bible implied comparison and, even, enshrined it as a theological principle. As the printer, Vitré, remarked to Peiresc in 1630, the utility of a Polyglot was that »toute la traditive [sic] des Juifs se verra par ce moyen«.⁷³ Peiresc could not have pressed Morin more forcefully concerning »l'importance de la publication d'un si rare monument de la plus haute antiquité lequel nous avoit fourni un entretien des plus agreables que nous eussions jamais favoure en matiere de livres«.⁷⁴

It was Morin's resistance to comparison, made concrete in his unwillingness to publish neither the complete version of della Valle's text nor Peiresc's Arabic version in Samaritan script, that raised Peiresc's concern. If he did not compare them, Peiresc opined, »je me doute que l'entreprise ne reussira guieres bien«. It was intellectually short-sighted bordering on the non-sensical to do only a partial comparison, since this was likely to produce more error than none at all. »En effect, quoique cez grandes bibles ne semblent se faire à autre dessein que pour avoir toutes les diverses conceptions et interpretations que peuvent fournir diverses versions, je ne vois pas pourquoy on veuille avoir les unes et negliger les autres, principalement celles cy, qui se trouvent accompagnées de tant de circonstances notables et de tant de diversitez considerables et utiles«. That Morin and Le Jay did not share his understanding of comparison only undermined the value of their project. Peiresc concluded with the view that »Ils en feront ce qu'il leur plaira, et s'ils ne font l'edition complete, quelqu'un se mettra possible un jour en peine de l'entreprendre.«⁷⁵

Peiresc did not fear the textual divergences among different versions of a sacred text that could be exposed by comparison. Rather, he saw variation as opening up the possibility of greater and deeper understanding. In a letter to the brothers Dupuy of the following year, Peiresc wrote that in his Samaritan-Arabic Pentateuch »il y a beaucoup de diverses leçons au texte pour ce peu que nous en avons veu, et plusieurs choses qui ne sont point dans le texte Hebraïque des Juifs, de sorte qu'il pourroit bien meriter la peine de le conférer comme les autres«.⁷⁶ The more divergence the better – hence his fascina-

⁷² Peiresc to Morin, 8 November 1632, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 186.

⁷³ Vitré to Peiresc, 22 May 1630; see Dorez, *Notes et Documents*, p. 85–87.

⁷⁴ Peiresc to Morin, 8 November 1632, *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Orientalis*, p. 187.

⁷⁵ Peiresc to Dupuy, 23 May 1631, *Lettres de Peiresc*, II, p. 278.

⁷⁶ 10 January 1633, *Lettres de Peiresc*, II, p. 409f. The desire to lay hands on these led to Le Jay's letter to Peiresc of 27 December 1632, F.fr.9542, fol. 175; quoted in Dorez, p. 89f.

tion with the Arabic Pentateuch. His »Tritaple«, with its parallel columns of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic Bible all in Samaritan characters, like the Polyglot Bible itself, offered the possibility of extracting more information than could be from any one of them singly.

The commitment to a comparison that was as inclusive as possible was one that Peiresc took with him to the grave. In his second, and last, letter to Morin, written three weeks before his death, he »greatly regretted« the failure to fill the lacunae in the second and third columns of his Tritaple with the texts he had himself sent to Paris for this purpose. Morin acted as if he thought it not worth the effort. Peiresc's almost religious belief that the greater the supply of information the greater the likelihood of learning something new made it difficult to comprehend this indifference. »Toutefois«, Peiresc wrote in a cross between admonition and prophecy, »il pouroit bien advenir un jour qu'on desirast en meilleure saison d'en faire une edition avec toutes les autres langues avec leur Version Latine pour exercer les plus Curieux«. It was precisely for this reason that Peiresc had offered to pay the copyist's cost for filling in lacunae in his manuscript, »pour l'interest du public, attendant un tems plus calme & plus propre à telles entreprises«.⁷⁷

Peiresc's work lay the foundation for European studies of the Samaritans. Indeed, the nucleus of the Bibliothèque Nationale's Samaritan collection came from Peiresc.⁷⁸ But all this marked only the beginning of his serious »oriental studies«. Peiresc was soon pursuing his own acquisitions, developing his own procurement network and asking friends like the rabbi of Carpentras if they had any books in Samaritan script or about the Samaritans.⁷⁹ Gassendi himself mentioned the most striking example of this commitment: the fitting out of a personal agent, the Minim monk Theophile Minuti, to travel to Egypt and Syria with lists of questions to ask, goods to buy and money with which to do it. It is in letters like those we have been examining that we can observe Peiresc developing broader lines of argument. What fascinated him was the possibility of reconstructing the relationships between Hebrew, Phoenician and Greek civilization through the textual and material evidence that survived.⁸⁰

We can follow Peiresc's train of thought through his letters to Aleandro in the summer and fall of 1628. Already in the first one to mention the Samaritan project he expressed his approval of the news – passed on from

⁷⁷ Peiresc to Morin, 2 June 1637, *Antiquitates*, p. 256–259.

⁷⁸ Jean-Pierre Rothschild, *Catalogue des manuscrits Samaritains* (Paris, 1985), p. 12; James G. Fraser, *A Checklist of Samaritan Manuscripts Known to have Entered Europe before A.D. 1700*, *Abr-Nahrain* 21 (1982–83), p. 16f.

⁷⁹ »S'ils en ont aucuns qui fussent escripts en caracteres Samaritains. Et s'ils ont aucuns livres ou memoires concernant la secte desdits Samaritains« (Paris, B.N. MS. Lat. 9340, fol. 45).

⁸⁰ »Et qui plus est une partie de la Bible, qu'il a en langue OÉgyptienne antique, escripte par colonnes, avec la version Arabique è region qui seroit chose bien plus exquise, pour estre

Rome! – that the plan was »to accelerate« publication of the Pentateuch, and his hope that della Valle would agree to contribute his text »in vera lingua Samaritana«. ⁸¹ But what seems really to have fired his imagination was the news that della Valle had brought back texts »in the Egyptian language, with opposed Arabic translation«. This would truly be »a treasure of the richest and most noble of all antiquity«. He also wanted Aleandro to find out if spoken Egyptian had somehow survived in an inaccessible interior region. ⁸²

Why might news of della Valle's Samaritan Targum have sparked off this discussion of ancient »Egyptian«? In part, it reflects an emotional response: if one long-presumed lost Near Eastern language could turn up, so, too could another one. In the same way, just as spoken Latin had disappeared, though traces persisted in Italian, Provençal, Spanish and French, and the ancient Gallic language had vanished but with vestiges preserved in Basque, Breton, Welsh and Walloon, Peiresc thought that something of ancient Egyptian might also have survived. ⁸³ It was unlikely that an imperial language, which ancient Egyptian must have been, could have disappeared without a trace. The hard part was to find the out-of-the-way corners where the past lived on into the present. But, Peiresc, continued, »tengo per certo che chi ne facesse

aujourd'huy cette langue entierement perdue comme la Punique. Feu Mr Scaliger auroit tiré de belles choses de cez reliques là, s'il en eust eu la veu« (Peiresc to Dupuy, *Lettres de Peiresc*, I, p. 670).

⁸¹ »Ho havuto ben à cara d'intendere che sia per accelerarsi l'editione del Pentateuco Samaritano del P. Morini, Et che si contenti l'Ill.mo S.r P.o della Valle che vi si possa aggiungere il suo in vera lingua Samaritana, onde si può sperare giovamento notabile al publico, stimando giustiss.o che non si prive quel Sig.re del suo originale, et che sia grandiss.a la gratià ch'egli degna concedere, che se ne cavi coppia. A che volentieri contribuirò io la mia industria, et le spese del coppista se sene trova alcuno costì, che habbia avvinco [?] di transcriver quell'opera« (Peiresc to Aleandro, 27 July 1628, Vatican, MS. Barb.-Lat. 6504, fol. 216r).

⁸² »Ma«, Peiresc continued, »io son rimasto attenito alla nuova che V.S. mi da, di quella parte della biblia in Lengua Egittia, con la versione Arabica di rimpeto, ch'io stimo un thezoro, de' piu ricchi et piu nobili di tutta l'Antiquità' [...] Et vorrei pur imparare dadedto Sig.re se stima che sia talmente perduta hoggidi la Lengua Egittia antiqua, che non ne resti ancora alcune reliquie, in qualche luogo dell'Egitto, ò altre regioni d'intorno« (Peiresc to Aleandro, 27 July 1628, Vatican, MS. Barb.-Lat. 6504, fol. 216v). For a survey of Peiresc and Egypt, see Sidney Aufrère: *La Momie et la tempête. N.-C. F de Peiresc et la »curiosité égyptienne« en Provence au début du XVII^e siècle*, Avignon 1990.

⁸³ »Si come se ben è perduta volgarmente la lingua Latina, se ne veggono reliquie indubitabile, nella volgar Italiana, Provenzale, Spagnuola, & Francese. & se ben è perduta similmente la Greca, ne restano ancora altri vestigii grandiss.i nella Greca volgare, benche con alterationi & corruptioni d'importanza. & si come anco se ben par che sia totalmente abolita la lingua Gallica antiqua, se ne sommo [?] verificati nondimeno li vestigii evidentiss.i nelle Lengue di Biscaya, Bassa Bretagna, et paesi di Valles in Inghilterra, et Valloni in Fiandra. Sarà facil cosa che un Sig.re di tanta virtù et di tanto merito, n'habbia preso qualche informatione, in quelle sue nobilissime peregrinationi si come fa della stato perdute della Lengua Samaritana in Levante« (Peiresc to Aleandro, 27 July 1628, Vatican, MS. Barb.-Lat. 6504, fol. 216v).

perquisitione, in que'contorni del Nilo se ne trovarebbero sicuramente di gran reliquie, per che si scostasse un poco dalle città maggior d' Alexandria, & del Cairo, dove la lingua Greca & Romana haveva fatto maggior progresso, et dove più l' Arabica ha predominato tanto tempo.« ⁸⁴ In his next letter to Aleandro, Peiresc again speculated that some vestige of ancient Egyptian could be found in »qualche contrada dell'Egitto piu interiore, et men frequentate dall'altre nationi predominanti. & chi ne farebbe perquisition ben essatta io tengo per certo che sene trovarebbe, qualche altre reliquie benche degenerate, in Grecq ò in Arabico«. ⁸⁵ And, indeed, the expeditions to Upper Egypt by the Capuchin monks Gilles de Loche and Agathange de Vendôme undertaken at Peiresc's behest sought just these traces. It was the survival of Samaritan that served as the model. »Et l'istesso mi par haver inteso altre volte della Lengua Samaritana ben che di questa è sicuro che sonno restate persone che n'hanno conservato in parte la religione sino alle giorni nostri, con molta cura di conservar l'intelligenza della Lengua antiqua Samaritana.« ⁸⁶ Peiresc continued, and the train of thought confirms what we have been discussing, »L'osservatione parimente della Lingua Samaritana conservata à alcune famiglie del Levante, mi par molto notabile et degno di non esser negletto«. ⁸⁷

But Peiresc's Samaritan project also refocused his interest on Egypt because it suggested a model for cultural interaction in the ancient Near East and also a method for studying it. Coptic, or the Egyptian vernacular, with its essentially Greek alphabet, seemed an artifact of a lost moment when Greek and Egyptian civilizations were once one. Just as Peiresc's »Tritaple« excited him both as a model of cultural interaction and as a particular document of it, Aleandro's description of an Egyptian language written in Greek characters seemed to hold the key to understanding Egyptian-Greek cultural contact, if only the metaphor could be made literal – which Peiresc tried to do. »Ma ho inteso con gusto grande que' particolari che V.S. m'accenna di quelli voci Greche miscolate in quella Lengua AEgyptia del Pentateuco, il che conviene beautissimo al tempo del Giustianesimo, ò di que' Re AEgyptii successori d' Alessandro magno, sotto i quali si fece la Version Greca delli 70 Interpret. Sopra tutto è notabile quella forma de' Caratteri Greci la maggior parte, alla quale par che fossero costretti que' popoli, poi che con le lor Hieroglyphici, si potevano esprimere in certo modo gli concetti humani, ma non già le parole precise come era necessario in una versione esatta di detto Pentateuco.« ⁸⁸ When Peiresc asked della Valle for copies of a few lines

⁸⁴ Peiresc to Aleandro, 25 September 1628, Vat. MS. Barb.-Lat. 6504, fol. 219v.

⁸⁵ Peiresc to Aleandro, 26 October 1628, Vat. MS. Barb.-Lat. 6504, fol. 224v.

⁸⁶ Peiresc to Aleandro, 25 September 1628, Vat. MS. Barb.-Lat. 6504, fol. 219v.

⁸⁷ Peiresc to Aleandro, 26 October 1628, Vat. MS. Barb.-Lat. 6504, fol. 224v.

⁸⁸ Peiresc to Aleandro, 25 September 1628, Vat. MS. Barb.-Lat. 6504, fol. 219v.

from his Samaritan and Egyptian texts, he emphasized those characters that were not based on Greek.⁸⁹ In a later letter, Peiresc repeated his desire to publish della Valle's »Egyptian« grammar and lexicon. He reflected, again, on those non-Greek letters. »Una cosa sola mi lascia qualche scrupolo di vedere che le sei ultimi caratteri non siano ben conformi nell'uno et nell'altro Alphabetto, cioè in quello che passa per numerale.«⁹⁰ And, in his reply, della Valle confirmed that these »sei o sette ultime lettere dell'Alfabeto« were not the same as the numerals.⁹¹ Peiresc's enthusiasm for »Egyptian«, or Coptic, which would lead him to sponsor the researches, first Athanasius Kircher and then Claude Saumaise, is reflected in his aside – unfounded, as far as can be ascertained – to della Valle that »P. Morino haveva fatto gran studio nella Lingua de Cophiti.«⁹² When antiquaries like Peiresc looked at alphabets like Samaritan and Coptic they saw not graphemes, but historical narratives, however much compressed, of an essential past.

Looking back, Peiresc's Samaritan studies might seem a bit of a side-show, or perhaps a mere preliminary to the really important work on Egypt. What this vertical plunge into the Peiresc archive reveals, however, is the importance for Peiresc's Egyptology of it following from his work on the Samaritans. For Peiresc's work with travellers like della Valle to recover texts, and with philologists like Morin to compare them with each other and create the historical framework that would facilitate the work of others marks the extension of the practices developed by Renaissance humanists beyond the »Classical« world. When Peiresc turned to Coptic in the 1630s it was with a clear sense that ancient Egypt needed to be approached in the same systematic and comparative way. This marks the beginning of oriental studies as we know it, and the end of Egyptomania, as the Renaissance knew it.

⁸⁹ Peiresc to della Valle, 26 November 1628, Carp. Bibl. Inguimb. MS. 1871, fol. 243r.

⁹⁰ Peiresc to della Valle, 7 June 1629, Carp. Bibl. Inguimb. MS. 1871, fol. 247v.

⁹¹ Della Valle to Peiresc, 27 July 1629, Paris, B.N. MS. Dupuy 705, fol. 189r–v.

⁹² Peiresc to della Valle, 4 March 1630, Carp. Bibl. Inguimb. MS. 1871, fol. 248r; 2 May 1630, fol. 249r.

Paul Nelles

Historia litteraria at Helmstedt: Books, professors and students in the early Enlightenment university*

The means and modalities of professorial teaching in the German university world between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries appear to be relatively straightforward and in little need of elucidation. This remained, in many ways, a traditional world where the practices of the Renaissance and Baroque were as yet unchallenged by the ideas of the Enlightenment. It was a world of classical texts and commentary lectures spanning semesters and some times years, of rote dictation and textbook teaching, apparently little evolved, since the immediate post-Reformation era. In a period neatly divided by modern historians into the »Republic of Letters« and »Enlightenment Thought«, the traditional universities appear as little more than a blight on the intellectual landscape. Though widely accepted, this picture fails to account for many of the new technical, institutional and intellectual developments within the German universities: the advent of learned journals and other print initiatives; the rise of literary and scientific societies within existing institutional frameworks; the incorporation of experimental science into traditional curricula; and the introduction of new subjects such as statistics and *historia litteraria*. How do the German universities measure, as »traditional« seats of learning, against the background of contemporary European ideas? This question, when asked at all, is usually put to the new institutions on the landscape most closely associated with the Enlightenment, Halle and Göttingen. What occurred at the older centers, particularly during the forty-odd years, which fall between the establishment of the two new universities? The late polyhistorical movement and the discipline most closely associated with it, *historia litteraria*, furnishes a useful rubric with which to address this question. The fortune of *historia litteraria* at the university at Helmstedt in the early eighteenth century reveals a quixotic blend of tradition and innovation in university teaching. Helmstedt professors, though bound to the statutes and deep-rooted traditions of the university, nonetheless proved responsive to student demand and to the wider world of European learning.

* Research for this article was carried out during tenure of a research fellowship at the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.

Die Praktiken der Gelehrsamkeit in der Frühen Neuzeit

Herausgegeben von
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Max Niemeyer Verlag
Tübingen 2001

