Remembering Roman Syria: valuing Tadmor-Palmyra, from 'discovery' to destruction[1]

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Perhaps no site is as emblematic of Roman Syria as Tadmor-Palmyra. While the extent to which it is fair to characterize this oasis settlement as 'Roman' is debatable or—at the very least—selective, it nonetheless has come to symbolize the Roman East in popular and scholarly accounts.[2] In this article we look at one of the earliest Western descriptions of the site to ask: how did this come to be so? The descriptions in question are those found in the documents relating to the travels of James Wood and his fellow travellers to the site in the eighteenth century. The site became well known after their 1753 publication, *The Ruins of Palmyra*, the text of which was accompanied by elaborately detailed engravings which visually introduced the site to the West. Looking at the original notebooks and drawings of the expedition, now held by the Combined Library of the Institute of Classical Studies and the Hellenic and Roman Societies in London, we examine the relationship between those first documents, the publication, and some of its afterlives.

To write of 'Roman Syria', as we do in the title of this issue, is in some ways to create a false unity for this region. Even if we think only in terms of the administrative structures by which Rome governed the provinces, this region encompassed shifting, and not always unified, territory during the time it was under Roman rule. Initially a single *provincia* called Syria,[3] this rule took various forms that were not always direct, and whose sequence is something that is not fully understood.[4] This issue of the *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* brings together a series of articles that examine some of the variability of that space and the ways it has been described, remembered, and occluded in both the past and the contemporary world. Contributors explore a range of memory practices—from the way an image on a coin might have evoked a particular embodied ritual viewscape (Butcher) to the complexities of temples on the slopes of Mount Lebanon in the Roman era and the twentieth century (Newson), and from the memory practices of the Jews of Dura-Europos in their local and wider contexts (Stern) to the writing of memories of Christian persecution (Andrade), contributors engage with a range of the ways in which memory functioned in particular communities and in which calls on memories of the past were used to shape the contemporary world. Two other contributions, in addition to this article, address Tadmor/Palmyra specifically, moving from some of its earliest and least well understood archaeological remains (de Jong) to the legacy of archaeological approaches in the present day (Munawar).

The very name of the modern nation-state of Syria is evocative of its long history and conjures a link to this past. As with the name 'Syria', calling the site 'Palmyra' matters because it evokes a particular history and culture. In the first centuries CE, for which the site is best known, the many public inscriptions found there carry both Palmyrene Aramaic and Greek: thus, the civic entity of Roman-era Tadmor-Palmyra was truly bilingual in its self-

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[2] The bibliography on Palmyra is vast, but for recent work see, *e.g.*, Kropp and Raja 2016. The work of the Polish expedition under Gawlikowski has been key in recent decades, including that published extensively in *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*. Among the recent works are Veyne 2017—the German original was published in 2016. Also aimed at a broad audience is the book by Sartre and Sartre 2016. For an assessment of the future of Palmyrene studies, discussing both Veyne and Sartre and Sartre, see Kaizer 2016.
[3] A story still perhaps best told by the venerable Millar 1993: 27 ff.
[4] *E.g.* with regard to the third century. Recent work on the problems of periodization includes Edwell 2008 and Kaizer 2017.

representation and expression.[5] Tadmor-Palmyra has thus been proposed as the most authentic rendering of the site's ancient place name due to the city's habit of bilingual public inscriptions. James Wood also noted that the local people living there in the eighteenth century called it Tadmor,[6] something he himself does throughout his preserved notes. Yet it is by the classical name— Palmyra—and not the Semitic one—Tadmor—that the site is usually known in the West. Wood's published book presumably took the name Palmyra because it was classical, but, as Wood was well aware, Tadmor was not only a feature of the ancient past but also its present at the time he visited. Indeed, local settlements held fast to the name Tadmor until the place was reinvented as an archaeological site in the twentieth century, as will be discussed later in this article. In what follows, we choose to refer to the site by both names.

As an archaeological site, Tadmor-Palmyra has a long history of study. Although it is mentioned in ancient texts, it left fewer traces in the classical canon than other major cities of antiquity and, as a result, its modern Western reception has been largely filtered through and framed by its 'discovery' by early travellers. Many foreign archaeological expeditions have taken place, including those under the French mandate[7] and, more recently, those from a range of nations, including Poland, Italy, Japan, and Austria. Partly as a result of foreign expeditions, but also as a result of a long history of 'collecting' objects from the site, Palmyrene material culture can now be found all over the world. Notable among these objects are examples of Palmyra's characteristic sculpted funerary reliefs, many having departed the site via the system of dividing artefacts (*partage*) between foreign expeditions and Syria, and others having found their way onto the antiquities market, both 'legally' and by other means.[8] Many aspects of the way in which the site has been excavated, represented, and interpreted in scholarship and for tourists can be traced back to the eighteenth century. The story of claims upon the ancient past and on Tadmor-Palmyra could begin in many places, but here we will begin in 1749, when the British antiquarian Robert Wood set out with James Dawkins, wealthy heir to Jamaican sugar plantations, and another prosperous young Oxford scholar named John Bouverie who would not survive the trip. They were joined, on the way, by the Italian draftsman Giovanni Battista Borra.[9] The voyage would be the basis for the earliest modern account of Tadmor-Palmyra as a ruined archaeological site, Wood's 1753 publication *The Ruins of Palmyra, otherwise Tedmor in the Desart*.

How Tadmor became otherwise: Wood's Palmyra in archive

The Wood collection includes diaries, notebooks, sketchbooks, and published works. These relate to a tour of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant made between May 1750 and June 1751 by Wood, Dawkins, Borra, and Bouverie. The collection remained in the possession of Wood's descendants until the twentieth century and was donated to the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies in 1926.[10] Here, we examine selected parts of the collection which relate to Tadmor-Palmyra as a means of exploring interventions at the site and the legacies of these interventions, and of studying the way in which value was apportioned and memories evoked or occluded with respect to aspects of the site and its visual reception.

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[5] A point made by Kaizer 2017.

[6] Wood 1753: 2. In late antiquity, Jerome called the place 'Tedmor', which Wood knew and cited.

[7] Gelin 2002, Gillot 2010.

[8] The 'Palmyra Portrait Project' run by Kropp and Raja, and based at Aarhus, has been working to bring together in a database the entire corpus of known examples. See https://projects.au.dk/palmyraportrait/ and Kropp and Raja 2014.

[9] For a biography of Dawkins, see Parker 2016. Dawkins also paid for the publication of Wood's *The Ruins of Palmyra* as well as *The Ruins of Baalbec*; his slave plantation wealth also financially supported Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens* in the following decade. See Nelson 2016: 135–36, and Parker 2016. On Bouverie's death (as recorded in the notebooks of the Wood collection) and the survival of his art collection, see Turner 1994.

[10] Hutton 1927; Butterworth 1986; National Register of Archives, handlist no. 35452.

In the Wood collection, there is a variety of material, but not all of Wood's notebooks are known to have survived.[11] The collection includes some original notebooks made during Wood's travels, but not those detailing his initial encounter of the site. These are preserved in a later text—the 'Approach to Palmyra'—which can be found in the Wood collection, in notebooks written by Wood's daughter, who copied or epitomized much of her father's work, written longhand in ink.[12] Small sketchbooks, mostly in pencil, of Borra's drawings made during the voyage, including those of Tadmor-Palmyra, also survive in the archive.[13] The precise relationship between this preserved material and the published tome of Wood and Dawkins is not always clear—it is possible that intermediary material existed and was lost. Nonetheless, in the relationship between the earliest documents (which were what we might now call 'field notebooks', of a kind) and the published volume (which remains canonical to this day), it is possible to explore how it is that we have come to know what we know about Palmyra.

Dawkins' daughter, known in the archive only as Miss Wood but is elsewhere named as Elizabeth, copied (or rewrote) from original documents of her father, which are not held in the ICS Wood collection, and these have been bound as volume 18a of the Wood collection.[14] These have no date on them. Within that volume, in Miss Wood's hand, is a four-page section titled 'The Approach to Palmyra', a transcription of which is appended to this article. The exact status of this part of the Wood collection is not clear: the account does not read as field notes nor as part of a day-by-day diary, as is the case in the other volumes of the archive. Rather, this account seems to be based on a summary written by Wood some time after visiting Tadmor-Palmyra (that is, based on his own remembrance), and rewritten by his daughter as she compiled her own notebooks, based in part upon documents that are not known to survive. Reading this account together with the published version further suggests that Wood's daughter copied a draft version of her father's text which was to become the published text of *The Ruins of Palmyra* (see text comparison in Appendix 1). We cannot, however, be certain that relationship is not retrospective (*i.e.* that Wood's daughter's text is in fact influenced by her own reading of her father's published works). In any case, the survival of this account of 'The Approach to Palmyra' in volume 18a provides an opportunity to explore some of the complexities of how Robert Wood's observations and memories of his trip turned into the published texts which became an authoritative version of the site's archaeology and history.

The textual comparison in Appendix 1 demonstrates that although there are numerous points of overlap between the two documents, establishing the links between them, they also diverge in significant ways. In a small number of cases (see Appendix 1), the texts show areas of disagreement. These occur where additional details are provided (*e.g.* the exact number of Ionic columns at the site and their locations), site details differ (*e.g.* three sulphurous streams compared to two; the date of the mummies in relation to Zenobia), and accounts of their experience conflict (as when a rain shower with 'prodigious large drops' becomes a 'small shower'). As well as these small but specific points of disagreement, there are also broader differences between the two texts. One simple observation is that the published account is significantly longer and has been furnished with much more detail. The same is true of the differences between Borra's drawings made on site and the engravings in the published volume,

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[11] Wood's library was sold in 1772 following his death the previous year. It is possible that material has survived but has not been publicly catalogued.

[12] The 'Approach to Palmyra' is in Wood collection no. 18a, which is bound together with no. 18. The bindings are modern. They are titled 'Extracts from my Father's Manuscripts' in the same hand in which they are written.

[13] Borra's sketchbook including Palmyra and Damascus is Wood collection no. 17.

[14] Wood lived until 1771. Later in his life, he was a member of parliament:
http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/wood-robert-1717-71. Wood and his wife Ann had two sons and a daughter; one son, also named Robert, was to become a member of parliament himself. On his daughter being named Elizabeth: White, D.M. 2010: 'Wood, Robert (1716/17–1771)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Available from <https://doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/29891>. Accessed 6 June 2018.

as discussed below. In both instances, this begs the question: from whence did these additional pieces of detail come? From Borra's fellow travellers? From other notebooks which are not preserved? From the memories (or even imaginations) of the authors and engravers? Whatever the answer, clearly there were steps in the creation of the authoritative, published account of Tadmor-Palmyra that are now invisible to us. By the same token, there are also quite large sections of the account in volume 18a that do not appear in any form in the publication, but which strongly indicate that they came from Wood's notes and were not inventions of his daughter. The published account does not include, for example, stories on a range of topics: the herb Wood calls 'Kili'; the execution of an Emir by the Pasha of Aleppo; the supposed reason for the naming of the aqueduct. Such stories are a clear indication of the engagement of Wood, or at least of his entourage, with local peoples in what was then known as Tadmor. The provision of such information was largely occluded in the published account. This may be seen as a part of a wider process of erasing local people and their recent history from archaeological accounts, particularly as sources of knowledge, as discussed further below.

In addition to these clearly observable differences between Wood's daughter's text and the published account, there is also a distinct difference in tone. While Wood is not as glowing about the qualities of the architecture at Tadmor-Palmyra as he might have been in the published work, he does describe Diocletian's Camp as 'magnificent' and the capital on Plate XV as being '…finished in as high a manner as marble is capable of'.[15] In contrast, his opinion of Tadmor-Palmyra's architecture preserved in volume 18a is scathing, for example this description of the Temple of Bel:

> the windows, doors, of all the pieces of frieze and cornice are loaded with ornament, most of it extremely well finished, in short every thing looks like the work of Power & Riches & surprises, no doubt, greatly with its magnificence, but seem'd I think to show the decline of good taste, there is no such thing as an elegant simple piece of architecture, ornament and expense seem to supply the place of proportion…[16]

The observations preserved in the volume 18a account thus reveal a very strong bias towards what Wood believed to be the simpler and more elegant architecture of Rome and, especially, Athens. While there is awe in the published version, the account in 18a suggests that Wood was underwhelmed when he entered the city for the first time. In both accounts, the reader is made fully aware that Wood believes architecture to be in decline after its Greek heyday, but the sheer distaste he shows for Tadmor-Palmyra's architecture is better disguised in his published account. This is no doubt related to the fact that the status of Palmyra would have been linked to his own status as its 'discoverer' and his wish for his book to be a success. Nonetheless, it is also apparent that Wood was operating within a wider school of contemporary thought concerning continuing decline from Athens into the Roman period (see discussion below).

In addition to glossing Wood's experience of contemporary Syria and its antiquities, the documents in the Wood collection provide evidence for the instability of what are now considered to be archaeological records and facts. Between the site itself and the published account was an act of translation, a translation that was shaped not only by its source—the site of Tadmor-Palmyra on the ground—but by the status of its author and his eighteenth-century context and mores.[17]

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[15] Wood 1753: 13, 44.

[16] Volume 18a, 7 (reverse; see Appendix 1).

[17] Salmon notes a similar intermediary phenomenon in relation to James Stuart's *The Antiquities of Athens*—that the work '…resulted not from simple transcription of data taken in the field onto published plates, but rather from working assumptions about Greek architectural practice or from mathematical calculations on Stuart's part, some made whilst in Greece and others during the years that elapsed back in London before the first volume was published…'. Salmon 2018: 74.

Engraving the classical: Wood's Palmyra in publication

In *The Ruins of Palmyra*, the author describes his own work as showing: 'How far the taste and manner of the architecture may give any light into the age which produced it, our engravings will put in every person's power to judge for himself…'.[18] That is, the engravings were presented explicitly as being evidentiary in nature, presenting an authentic view of evidence on which the viewer could base their own evaluations of the architecture. Images were taken to be the most accurate way of conveying information, where 'information will be more full and circumstantial, as well as less tedious and confused, than could be conveyed by the happiest precision of language'.[19] Yet, Borra's sketchbooks depicting Tadmor-Palmyra (Wood collection volume 17), like the notebooks of Wood's daughter, show a significant disjuncture between the sketchy drawings he made by autopsy in Syria and the more elaborate architectural views published as engravings in *The Ruins of Palmyra*.

The illustrations, therefore, were provided as a way in which the readers could 'fact check' Wood, as they were presented as an objective and accurate representation of Tadmor-Palmyra. Part of this fact-checking effect was meant to come from the presentation of general views alongside restored architectural plans. Wood tells us that 'the first [*sc.* a plan] gives an idea of the building, when it was entire, so the last [*sc.* a view] shews [*sic*] its present state of decay, and (which is most important) what authority there is for our measures'.[20] The views, therefore, are supposed to add additional authenticating weight to the plans, with the different styles in plates reinforcing each other, functioning, on the one hand, through their reconstruction of the ancient past and, on the other, aesthetically presenting the current site in a state of ruination. To what extent, though, should readers have trusted these views?

The trustworthiness was, of course, being constructed by the published work itself.[21] As the text describes well, the images of the publication, with picturesque views and architectural plans, were key in this. In the introduction to *The Ruins of Palmyra* we learn that 'It was agreed that a fourth person in Italy, whose abilities as an architect and draftsman we were acquainted with, would be absolutely necessary…The drawings he made, have convinced all those who have seen them, that we could not have employed any body more fit for our purpose.'[22] That fourth person was Piedmontese architect Giovanni Battista Borra who had accompanied Wood, Dawkins, and the ill-fated Bouverie on their journey. The images included in *The Ruins of Palmyra* were engraved plates based on Borra's drawings made with reference to further details recorded by other members of the team; his skills had been honed earlier in the production of images of the ruins of the Palatine.[23] Which is to say, from the picturesque site views incorporating *staffage* to the recording of architecture for his earlier writing on engineering, Borra would have had an idea of what the site should look like in his drawings long before he arrived there.

We know little of the precise relationship of the drawings made by Borra on-site in Syria and the engravings published in *The Ruins of Palmyra*. The engravings, by Paul Fourdrinier, J. R. S. Muller, and M. M. Muller Jr, were made in London. Borra's drawings preserved in the Wood archive are skilful but sketchy: for the most part those that survived are small, delicate pencil drawings. The engravings, by contrast, were large-scale and detailed. It is generally supposed that on the return voyage from the Middle East Borra made intermediary drawings

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[18] Wood 1753: 15.

[19] *The Ruins of Baalbec* preface: with specific reference to the methods employed in the Palmyra volume.

[20] Wood 1753: 35. Also note that in the description of Plate XXI: B, Wood states that 'we could not get up to their capitals to take measures of them', suggesting that views were also expected to be measured (1753: 45).

[21] On the discourses of truth and accuracy in Wood and his contemporaries Stuart and Revett, see Yeomans, Kelly and Salmon 2014; Salmon 2018: 73.

[22] Wood 1753: a 'The publisher to the Reader'.

[23] Zoller 2017: 268–69. On the visual language of architectural drawings and their relationship to text and the re-use of elements, Arnold 2002, 460-461.

which were the basis for the engravings, made in 1751, yet the basis for this presumption is unclear.[24] In any case, we have no evidence that most of the detail that appears in the engravings was recorded on site. This is important due to the way in which *The Ruins of Palmyra* has been treated as evidence of the site: major leaps were made between the drawn records made on site and their later fixity as engraved and published images. As an architect, Borra was also likely to have had a desire to record elements of the architecture that he encountered which might be useful in his designs. He was later known as a designer of houses (*e.g.*) in London, with mixed Palmyrene and Italian Rococo themes, his travels informing his designs.[25]

Borra's drawings of Palmyra preserved in the Wood collection, like the published engravings, occlude contemporary occupations. For instance, even though a number of the large plans (*e.g.* of the temple of Bel) carefully denote which parts are extant, they often do not depict the modern human occupation, even though this is repeatedly mentioned in the text, as though it was invisible to Borra's eye.[26] The people who do appear in the drawings and engravings are exoticized figures or decorative *staffage*, who belong in a tradition of paintings of picturesque ruined landscapes; this is why they appear in the 'views' but not in the architectural plans, which have a different visual lineage.[27] While the rhetoric might have gestured towards the evidentiary qualities of Borra's work, he was less concerned with accuracy or geometry but rather with the 'perspective sense exploited as a means of artistic expression'.[28]

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Just as he had pointed to the skills of his architect and draftsman Borra, Wood was keen to emphasize the accuracy of the measurements in his published work. For example, he noted in the preface that Dawkins (not Borra), who took the measurements, was 'indefatigable in his attention to see every thing done accurately'.[29] Furthermore, Wood is, seemingly, very honest in the descriptions of the plates where the engravings are not accurate, even pointing out in the description to Plate XXVI that C (portico) and D (sepulchre) are 'a little misplaced, by a mistake in finishing the drawing'.[30] There are several issues at stake here. First, this plate—a view of the arch from the east—is one of the illustrations that is, as discussed above, supposed to allow fact-checking against the plans; if there is a mistake, this illustration can no longer fulfil that purpose. Secondly, and perhaps most pertinent in our discussion of memory creation, this plate is a version of one of the drawings that survives in Borra's notebook, and that drawing is ostensibly the same at points C and D (see Figures 1 and 2). This, then, begs the question of what Wood means by 'a mistake in finishing the drawing'. When did this mistake occur? Were the drawings we have in Borra's notebook not made on site, but finished afterwards? Or was

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[24] 'First of all there is the draft drawn on site, then the revision composed probably on the ship where there is a completion of the ornamental motifs, and, at the last, the preparatory drawings for the etchings. The engravings are then inserted into the volumes, made in London in the autumn of 1751': Matta 2015: 258. It does seem likely that there were other documents, as (for instance) nothing in the Wood archive is comparable to the numbered plan of Palmyra which appears on p. 41 of *The Ruins of Palmyra*. Zoller 2017: 269 also says Borra prepared his drawings for the publication based on his own records and the measurements of Wood and Dawkins, and while this is a reasonable assumption, no specific evidence is cited for this.

[25] On Borra more widely, see contributions in Dardanello 2013. On a house with a 'Palmyra ceiling' in Lincoln, see Hewlings 1988. On Borra's use of Palmyra as inspiration, see Matta 2015: 258. On the impact of his travels with Wood and Dawkins on this later work, see McReynolds 2008: 171.

[26] Sometimes modern occupation is noted, if in a dismissive way: see, *e.g.*, 'The huts' on plate 2.2, the main plan of Palmyra.

[27] On the eighteenth-century picturesque and its relationship to classical authors, see, *e.g.*, Elsner 2010.

[28] Matta 2015: 258.

[29] Wood 1753: preface.

[30] Wood 1753: 46. For other comments on interpolation in the illustrations, see Wood 1753: 44 (Plate XVI); 45 (Plate XXI); and 46 (Plate XXVIII).

the mistake that of the engraver? What other slips might have been made? How was this slip identified? Did another member of the expedition team raise doubts over its veracity prior to publication, or does Wood trust his memory more than these images? Or is he protecting his good character from the possibility of other travellers checking his measurements? These questions are impossible to answer using the Wood collection, but do give us a hint as to how knowledge was being created, and thus a way into challenging and unpicking the processes by which the observations on site became the authoritative, published version of it. (The eighteenth-century context for Wood's focus on accuracy is discussed in more detail below.) We are also given information on how to read the plans that are provided:

> The parts of this plan which are marked black, shew [*sic*] what is still standing, but the ruined part is marked by out-line only. Every thing else may be understood by the measures, without further explication, which we shall always avoid where it is not absolutely necessary, and leave it entirely to the reader to make his own remarks upon the architecture.[31]

Here it is clear again that a heavy weight is put upon the drawings and the measurements, in the form of scales and annotations of dimensions in English feet and inches included on (some of) them. The reader is expected to do nearly all the interpretive work without written support from the author. This emphasis on the innate explanatory power of the engravings is also reflected in the descriptions of the plates provided in the text, which vary greatly in length and detail, from a few paragraphs to a sentence to no title at all, though a key to the illustrations is always provided. In general, even the longer captions lack anything that would be classed as architectural description by a modern reader, but much of this function came from the illustrations. Furthermore, although the reader is regularly reminded of the objectivity of the illustrations as a representation of Tadmor-Palmyra, they are also given a brief glimpse that all may not be as it seems:

> Nothing less entire than a column standing, with at least its capital, is marked. Almost the whole ground within the walls is covered with heaps of marble; but to have distinguished such imperfect ruins would have introduced confusion to no purpose.[32]

A strong editing process was thus undertaken in the creation of the illustrations, potentially while being drawn on the site. The site was deliberately (and in some ways, openly) visually edited in order to present a place that was aesthetically and intellectually ordered. Decisions were made over what was considered important and worthy of illustration—this is a very particular construction of objectivity, though one that may not have been strange in the eighteenth century.[33]

Occluding memories in Wood's Palmyra

Wood, intentionally or not, very effectively silences many of the contemporary Syrian voices he encountered, and in his final publication and in volume 18a makes invisible much of the contemporary human presence. This has the concomitant effect of removing memory of them from the histories of Tadmor-Palmyra. He achieves this removal in various ways: by conflating past and present inhabitants; by writing out the Arab historians from the historiography of Tadmor-Palmyra; by generally denigrating the people he meets and with whom he travels; and

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[31] Wood 1753: 42, relating to Plate III.
[32] Wood 1753: 41, with reference to Plate II.
[33] On shifting interpretations of objectivity over time, see Daston and Galison 2007, particularly 98–105 on the contemporary habit of tweaking observations from nature in scientific atlases to aestheticize them.

by taking a highly Eurocentric view of the ruins, with comparisons to Rome and, especially, Athens. Might it be possible, in turning our attention to things recorded but neglected in the Wood collection, to enable different remembrances?

Wood, for example, summarily dismissed the accounts of Tadmor-Palmyra by Arab historians at the beginning of his work as 'fable and wild conjecture' and so justifies removing them from the place's historiography in favour of biblical and classical sources.[34] This is compounded by his discussion of Arab names for sites, in which he says: 'we follow their pronunciation'.[35] This suggests that the names are not (able to be) written down, whereas in actual fact, it is him who cannot read Arabic, which, along with Syriac, he says are 'languages we do not understand' in the preface.[36] Indeed, this is relevant for his discussion of the only Arab historian, Abulfeda (Abu Al-Fida' Isma'il Ibn 'Ali Ibn Mahmud Al-Malik Al-Mu'ayyad 'Imad Ad-din), whom he mentions by name and who is given extremely short shrift:

> Of the Arabian writers, some take no notice of Palmyra, and of those who do, Abulfeda prince of Hamah, a city in its neighbourhood, who wrote about the year 1321, seems to be the only one worth quoting. … He was very probably ignorant, both of its Greek name and history, and only calls it Tedmor.[37]

The assumption in the final sentence gives no room for the possibility that it may have been a conscious and deliberate choice (less still the only or obvious one) on Abulfeda's part to use the local name to claim the town as Arab and not Greek. In making this assumption Wood is effectively rendering invisible any knowledge and local memory from the Arab historians. Similarly, Wood dismisses the information that he is given in person by contemporary local people. For example, when he is told about the extent of the old city, he believes there are 'better reasons for this opinion, than meerly [sic] their authority'.[38] This can be compared to the generally gentler and more forgiving treatment that he gives to his Western contemporaries, with the possible exception of Seller.[39] Moreover, he is scathing of the local inhabitants who are not willing to hand over antiquities (and gladly takes from those who are willing to participate). He attributes this to 'avarice and superstition', seemingly giving no thought as to whether those locals might have any desire for, or right to, the past of the place they inhabited (which we would now call heritage).[40] For Wood, local people were simply impediments to his desires to obtain objects.

The unpleasant trope of the greedy, superstitious Arab is supplemented by numerous other typical ways of denigrating Arabs throughout Wood's writings. He draws, for example, direct comparisons between the contemporary locals and past inhabitants.[41] For instance, he compares women on Palmyrene monuments with those around him, saying their hairstyles are exactly the same as those 'by Arabian women at this time' the strong implication being that there are no signs of progress.[42] He also reduces people to ethnographic specimens, describing men and women as 'well shaped' and the women as having 'good features', 'though very

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[34] Wood 1753: 2. Indeed, they were equipped with a library '…consisting chiefly of all the Greek historians and poets, some books of antiquities…': Wood 1753: a 'The publisher to the Reader'. Passages throughout the preface similarly discuss how he and his colleagues were imagining ancient authors on their travels and reliving what those authors describe (and how such travel helped them understand those classical ancient authors better). On early travellers, including Wood, and development of Western Hellenism, Constantine 1984.
[35] Wood 1753: a 'The publisher to the Reader'.
[36] Wood 1753: preface.
[37] Wood 1753: 14. Also see volume 18a, reverse of p. 8 (Appendix 1).
[38] Wood 1753: 38.
[39] Wood 1753: 14; 25.
[40] Wood 1753: preface.
[41] Wood 1753: 18.
[42] Wood 1753: 22–23. On the links made between ancient and modern inhabitants of Middle Eastern archaeological sites and those implications, see, *e.g.*, Baird 2018: 39ff.

swarthy'.[43] The consequence of Wood's limited worldview, typical of the time though it might have been, is that virtually all agency of local inhabitants, both past and present, is removed. This is encapsulated in the conclusion to his 'Taste and architecture' section, in which he states: 'Their funeral customs were from Egypt, their luxury was Persian, and their letters and arts were from the Greeks…'.[44] In one sentence, Wood strips away all of the creativity and skills of the Palmyrenes, reducing them to mere borrowers of others' cultures and expertise. There is nothing here to make the Palmyrenes (ancient or modern) worthy of memorialization.

In spite of the bleakness of the text for memorable inhabitants of Tadmor, there is, however, one part of the publication in which the more recent past and contemporary world has been less thoroughly erased: the illustrations. Although, as attested by his comments on plates XVI and III, Wood is often frustrated by the presence of these later buildings, they are, nevertheless, recorded in some illustrations.[45] So, on the main view and plan of the city, plates I (letters) and II (numbers), the following are also included:[46] B: 'A square tower built by the Turks'; D: 'Ground cultivated by the Arabs, whose olives and corn are divided by little enclosures of dried mud'; F=4: 'A ruinous Turkish mosque, with its minaret' = 'A Turkish mosque'; Q=25: 'Seems to be the ruins of a Christian church' = 'Ruins of a Christian church'; X=19: 'Ruins of Turkish fortification' (same description with both plates); Z=34: 'The Turkish castle on the hill' = 'Turkish castle'; 2: 'Its [*sc.* Temple of Bel] court, with the huts of the Arabs' (also marked on plate XXI, C); 39: 'A water-mill, where the Arabs grind their corn'; and 40: 'Arab burying ground'. In addition, plate XXXV, F includes the intriguing observation: 'Piece of column put up here by the Turks, to what purpose we could not learn'.[47] From these plates and their captions, we can uncover a far richer history of recent occupation and religious diversity among people who were actively living, farming, and dying in what we now consider to be an archaeological site.

<Typesetters: Fig 3. here>

In addition, although there is such deeply embedded racism in the writings, it is possible to use these same texts to draw out a different reading of the people Wood and his party encountered on their trip, which included an escort from Haffia and Carietein provided to them by the Aga, villagers in places where they stopped along the way, and the inhabitants of Tadmor-Palmyra itself. We can hear, instead, of people who are holders of local knowledge that they are willing to share with visitors to their home, both in terms of practical knowledge of material remains, but also in the form of songs and stories about local history and the natural world.[48] Moreover, given that Wood and his friends were not able to speak Arabic, in order for these stories to be passed on to them, someone in their wider entourage must have acted as a translator and must have been bilingual.[49] In addition to this, some of the locals are skilled horsemen and are willing to use those skills to protect their visitors.[50] Others are capable farmers, growing a range of crops in a difficult environment and climate.[51] Their skills extended to being able excavators and, in some cases, staunch guardians of their physical past,[52] the past

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[43] Wood 1753: 37. See also volume 18a: 8 (Appendix 1).
[44] Wood 1753: 23. Also note that Wood deems Zenobia to have 'had something of the Persian luxury' (1753: 21); it is doubtful that this was meant as a compliment.
[45] Wood 1753: 44 in reference to plate XVI: 'The ornaments belonging to those divisions within the cell are so choaked [*sic*] up with Turkish buildings that we could only copy the soffits of A and B and a basso relieve from an architrave.' Also, see description of rubbish (Wood 1752: 42) in relation to plate III.
[46] Wood 1753: 36; 41.
[47] Wood 1753: 45; 47.
[48] Material remains: Wood 1753: 38; 40. Songs and stories: Wood 1753: 35; 39; volume 18a: 8 (Appendix 1).
[49] On interpreters and translators in later periods, see Mairs and Muratov 2015.
[50] Wood 1753: 33; volume 18a: 7, reverse of 7, 8.
[51] Wood 1753: 40.
[52] Wood 1753: preface.

which they called by the same name as their contemporary home: Tadmor.[53] Finally, we hear of their depth of hospitality, such that were Wood and his party to have stayed longer, there would have been no more goats and sheep to feed them: the local people gave them nearly everything they had.[54]

Wood's Tadmor-Palmyra in context

Wood was clearly operating in a specifically eighteenth-century scholarly and social milieu. First, he was not, as he himself acknowledges, the first English-speaking traveller to visit Tadmor-Palmyra and to publish an account of that visit.[55] In 1678 and 1691 Mr Timothy Lanoy and Mr Aaron Goodyear, often referred to as the English Merchants of Aleppo, travelled to Tadmor-Palmyra. The diaries of their trip were published in 1695 in *Philosophical Transactions*, together with an account of the inscriptions they found written by E. Halley.[56]

   The influence of the English Merchants on Wood should not be underestimated, as we find in their diaries many of the tropes and types of stories that we also find in Wood nearly 60 years later. The story Wood tells in volume 18a about ashes from weeds used for soap is recounted, for example, in both the 1678 and the 1691 diaries of the English Merchants.[57] This raises the possibility that this may have been an incipient 'patter' among guides taking Western travellers to see the site, or indeed that anecdotes were borrowed wholesale from earlier publications. In addition to this quite specific story, we also find that particular aspects of the travellers' stay at Tadmor-Palmyra are commented on in both the accounts of the English Merchants and that of Wood. These include: an unusual shower of rain, the description of an aqueduct, the contemporary dwellings inside the Temple of Bel, and a fountain called Abulfarras/Aboufouyres.[58] This suggests that Wood's account was feeding into a way of visiting and talking about the site that was developing at the time. Furthermore, we see more insidious tropes emerging at the time around the remoteness of Palmyra and the character of the locals encountered.[59] Setting up Tadmor-Palmyra as 'separated from the rest of mankind' begins a process of detaching the place from its wider Syrian locality, thus making it possible for it to be claimed by the West.

   The English Merchants and Wood were, of course, not alone in holding such views and attitudes. England in the eighteenth century saw a growing fascination with the 'Orient', particularly through the rise of the 'oriental tale' with, for example, Galland's translation of *Arabian Nights* in 1704–1717, which became a household title, and Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* in 1721.[60] Indeed, the term 'orientalism' was first used in English in 1726 by Joseph Spence in his *Essay on Mr Pope's Odyssey*.[61] This seems to have been a time when such fascination with the 'oriental other' had the potential to create a positive narrative, for example Robert Lowth's conviction that Hebrew was superior to Greek.[62] Yet this must also be set against a backdrop where it was possible to be expelled from Cambridge for being too pro-

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[53] Wood 1753: 12.
[54] Wood 1753: 37.
[55] Wood 1753: 14.
[56] [English Merchants] 1695; Halley 1695. Note: the journal gives the authors as the English Merchants in the title, but does not list them as such; their names appear in the text on p. 129.
[57] [English Merchants] 1695: 130; 142.
[58] [English Merchants] 1695: 132 (rain); 133 (aqueduct); 134 ('in the Ruins of a great Palace, the Wall yet standing very high, the Town within but small, and the Houses excepting two or three no better than Hog-styes'); 147 (fountain called Abulfarras).
[59] [English Merchants] 1695: 138 ('…we entred [sic] the Desart [sic], and were to take our leave of Mankind, at least of an inhabited Country for some days…'); 148 (lack of modesty of the locals).
[60] On the 'oriental tale' see Aravamudan 2011; Ballaster 2007; Conant 1967. On the complex question of 'orientalism' in Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, see, *e.g.*, Lowe 1990; Pucci 1985.
[61] Kalmar 2012: 68; Spence 1726: 214–15.
[62] Kalmar 2012: 70.

Islam, as was the case with William Whiston in 1709.[63] Furthermore, Montesquieu's other writings, for example *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), also see him giving rise to ideas that Arabs have no politics, only family, and that people from hotter climates have weak natures.[64] In addition, many of Montesquieu's negative ideas about 'oriental despots' relied on reports of contemporary travellers, such as Jean Chardin, who believed Muslims were incapable of governing, and Paul Rycaut, who wrote about the supposed whims of such despots.[65] Such views were often couched as warnings for governments 'at home' against these 'oriental' forms of government.[66] The type of negative commentary that we see in the English Merchants and Wood, then, can be seen as part of a set of views that were not uncommon in the period, that paved the way for Napolean's ventures in the region at the turn of the century, and became a precursor to the nineteenth-century 'orientalism' discussed by Said.[67]

Wood also noted in the preface to the 1753 publication that he took inspiration from 'the measures of the ancient buildings of Rome, by Monsieur Desgodetz'. This refers to the 1682 volume by architect Antoine Desgodetz: *Les Edifices Antiques de Rome: dessinés et mesurés très exactement.* The style of the drawings published by Desgodetz are very similar to the Borra drawings, with the inclusion of, for example, the detailed measurements of architectural mouldings. The importance of accuracy to Wood and its role in the creation of the Tadmor-Palmyra narrative has already been demonstrated above. This focus on accuracy seems to have been part of a rise in emphasis on empiricism in the eighteenth century that is also found in James Stuart and Nicholas Revett's volumes, *Antiquities of Athens*, in which they also claim to present their drawings with 'accuracy and fidelity'.[68] It is possible that Wood may have been influenced by Stuart and Revett, in spite of Wood publishing earlier: he may have been familiar with Stuart's hundredth inch measurements of the obelisk in Rome in 1748, the year before Wood himself came to Rome.[69] Regardless of the direction of influence, the desire for accurate surveying seems almost to have been competitive in this period: Wood, following Desgodetz, measured in fractions of the English inch to the twelfth, whereas Stuart used the even more precise decimal division of the English inch to the hundredth.[70] Nevertheless, in spite of his rhetoric of accuracy, Stuart also seems to have taken some liberty over what constitutes accuracy as he appears to have adjusted Revett's measurements on several occasions to fit with his preconceived ideas drawn from ancient authors such as Vitruvius.[71]

It also seems possible that Wood would have been familiar with other current writing on architecture and art, such as the influential 1722 work by Jonathan Richardson and his son (also Jonathan Richardson)—*An Account of Some of the Statues, Bas-Reliefs, Drawings, and Pictures in Italy*—which was popular with those on the Grand Tour. Harloe argues that Richardson's 1725 *Essay on Theory of Painting* had a strong influence on the work of Winckelmann later in the century.[72] It is tempting to see Wood's obsession with simplicity and with Athens as the pinnacle of artistic and architectural achievement as foreshadowing the '*edle Einfalt und stille Größe*' ('noble simplicity and quiet grandeur') championed by Winckelmann in his 1755 publication: *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst.* This placement of Greece at the pinnacle of cultural achievement reflects numerous contemporaries of Wood. Robert Sayer in 1759, for example, claimed that

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[63] Said 2003 (1978): 76.
[64] Kalmar 2012: 84; 123.
[65] Kalmar 2012: 85; 94; 102.
[66] Kalmar 2012: 118.
[67] Said 2003 (1978). On the effects of writers, such as Montesquieu on later thinking, especially of Hegel, see Anidjar 2003: 133, and Kalmar 2012: Chapter 8.
[68] Stuart and Revett 1762: vii. See also Salmon 2018; Kelly 2009: 167–69; 185; 187; 189–92.
[69] Salmon 2018: 75.
[70] Salmon 2018: 75. Note that Desgodetz was using French feet and inches.
[71] Salmon 2018: 74; 77.
[72] Harloe 2013: 71–77; 86–94.

Roman antiquities were of less value than Greek ones as they were based on Greek precepts.[73] This mode of thinking seems to have been influenced to a large extent by the writings of George Turnbull, who himself was influenced by Shaftesbury. In his 1740 *Treatise on Ancient Painting*, which was designed to 'prepare young travellers', Turnbull made it clear that he considered Greek painting superior (and on a par with the likes of Michelangelo and Caravaggio) and that the Romans were mere copiers of Greek works.[74] Indeed, he devoted most of a chapter (five) to expounding the reasons for the decline of painting in the Roman period, where he makes an explicit link to a decline in morals.[75]

We also have glimpses of how Wood's own book was received in the scholarly world in a letter sent from Christ Church, Oxford, from Rev. Mr John Swinton on 30 May 1754 to Rev. Thomas Birch in which he notes that:

> Several copies of the *Ruins of Palmyra* reached Oxford, towards the close of December 1753; one of which was purchased by the Reverend Mr. Godwyn, Fellow of Balliol College, a gentleman of great learning, and an eminent tutor of that house. At his invitation, I looked over with him the finished plates, exhibiting to our view those noble remains of antiquity, which gave both of us infinite pleasure and delight;…[76]

It is clear, then, from this brief overview that Wood's attitudes towards and writing about Tadmor-Palmyra were strongly influenced by the world views and scholarship prevalent at the time and, as we will go on to explore further, strongly influenced them in turn. Walpole, in a 1753 letter, wrote that '…Palmyra is come forth, and is a noble book; the prints finely engraved, and an admirable dissertation before it. My wonder is much abated: the Palmyrene empire which I had figured, shrunk to a small trading city with some magnificent public buildings out of proportion to the dignity of the place.'[77]

Legacies of Wood's Palmyra

At the outset of the 1753 publication, at the beginning of the preface, Wood makes it clear that he had little interest or regard for the contemporary world of the places he visited, including Palmyra: 'what engaged our greatest attention was rather their antient [*sic*] than present fate'.[78] In so doing, Wood set the stage for future disregard of contemporary inhabitants at Tadmor-Palmyra. This phenomenon would continue from Wood into the centuries that followed, ultimately foreshadowing the expulsion of the local inhabitants from the Temple of Bel in 1929 under the French mandate, the erasure of Christian and Islamic uses of that structure so that its ancient and classical elements could be foregrounded, right up until the present day and the casting of the site as one with UNESCO World Heritage status. The presentation of the Temple of Bel as a classical site, rather than a Near Eastern one, is reflective of very selective framings of its past and neglects its Christian and Muslim pasts as well.[79]

<Typesetters: Fig 4. here>

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[73] Cited in Crook 1995: 67.

[74] Turnbull 1740: xv (on purpose of book); 127 ('Romans were at best but copiers').

[75] In this, he draws heavily on Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury, referencing his work on Hercules (Cooper 1713) and quoting at length from the same's 'Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author', written in 1710 (Cooper 1711). Turnbull 1740: 80 (Hercules); 101–02 (Soliloquy).

[76] Swinton 1753. There seems to be some confusion over dates as the journal date is 1753, but the letter is dated 1754.

[77] Walpole Letter 89 to Richard Bentley, Esq., Arlington Street, Dec. 19, 1753. In *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford* —Volume 2.

[78] Wood 1753: preface. Note: the preface has no page numbers.

[79] On the erasure of Christian and Muslim heritage at Palmyra by the French, see Mulder 2017.

The clearance of the modern inhabitants from what is now referred to as 'the Temple of Bel' is well known. At the time Wood visited, he recorded what he referred to as 'huts of the Arabs'.[80] In the 1920s, the dispossessed villagers who had lived in the structure which we have come to know as the Temple of Bel were provided with some compensation when they were forcibly resetttled. Unsurprisingly, they were not always satisfied with their new dwellings, which did not accommodate their ways of life; this was but one of several examples of the reshaping of physical space under Mandatory powers in Syria.[81] Few visitors to Tadmor-Palmyra's World Heritage site during the time it received many tourists would have known the history of Tadmor-Palmyra as an Islamic settlement or a garrison town, implanted there by the French in the 1920s, which, as in Algeria, followed a orthogonal design to bring colonial order to perceived native disorder.[82]

Many pasts at Tadmor-Palmyra have long been occluded from authoritative accounts, from the written histories of the site, from its interpretation by the Syrian Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) and UNESCO.[83] Until very recently, for instance, there was little focus on the extensive Islamic heritage there.[84] While the colonnaded streets of Tadmor-Palmyra are well known, few would be aware that those same streets were not empty ruins in late antiquity but places full of life, nor that they became a *suq* in the seventh/eighth centuries CE.[85] Post-Roman material has been long neglected by archaeologists at the site, the result of which is that its dating is not well understood. One of the problems in dating the material and understanding these post-Roman phases of the site are presumptions wrapped around value judgements: as has been pointed out, it is usually presumed that for the post-Roman material, the well-built structures are Byzantine and the 'badly built' architecture must be Arab.[86] In considering Tadmor-Palmyra's remembrances, we need, then, to acknowledge the multiplicity of understandings of places. While 'Palmyra' conjures a grand ruin in the Western imagination, for many Syrian people it has other, darker, resonances: to many Syrians, Tadmor is most well known for its infamous prison, and the name Tadmor became synonymous with torture under Hafez al-Assad.[87]

In some senses, the lineages of the differential value placed upon the classical past are the same ones harnessed more recently by ISIS to create the spectacle of its destruction[88] or by those able to use it as an economic resource.[89] That is, one of the reasons it was worth destroying the monuments of Tadmor-Palmyra is precisely because of their recognizability and the value placed on them in the West, and their construction as something the West viewed as its inheritance. Another reason was their link to the nation-state as implemented via Mandatory powers.[90] Our contention is that not only has the preferential treatment of 'Roman' Tadmor-

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[80] Wood 1753: 37.
[81] Neep 2012: 4, 143.
[82] Neep 2012: 142, 146–47.
[83] See, *e.g.*, https://en.unesco.org/syrian-observatory/news/site-palmyra, where the description of the site is of an ancient place: 'An oasis in the Syrian Desert, north-east of Damascus, Palmyra contains the monumental ruins of a great city that was one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world. From the 1st to the second century, the art and architecture of Palmyra, standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, married Greco-Roman techniques with local traditions and Persian influences.' On the use of Palmyra by Russia in 2016, see Meskell 2018: 176–81.
[84] On an early mosque at Palmyra and an overview of Islamic text and archaeology there, see Genequand 2008.
[85] Genequand 2008: 6. See also Al-As'ad and Stepniowski 1989.
[86] Genequand 2008: 4. He also highlights the lack of proper publication of 'Arab-Islamic' material, which obliged him to date parts of the site from (*e.g.*) objects that happen to be visible in site photos.
[87] On Syrian cultural responses, see Cooke 2013. On the Syrian and international notoriety of Tadmor and human rights abuses there, see Sherry 1997; Haugbolle 2008. Amnesty International, 'Torture, Death, and Dehumanization in Tadmur Military Prison', https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE24/ 014/2001/en/.
[88] Harmanşah 2015.
[89] Brodie and Sabrine 2018.
[90] On ISIS's destruction and its relationship to Syrian nationalism, see Jones 2018.

Palmyra done a disservice to the other periods of the site, but that this myopia has contributed to narratives which weaponized the site itself as a focal point of Western memory.

This legacy continues. Where once Wood travelled to Tadmor-Palmyra to be able to possess it (literally, in collecting material, but also by publishing it), a new form of taking possession of particular Palmyrene pasts might be seen in the scramble to make and display reconstructions, both digital and material.[91] Indeed, Wood's wish, expressed in the preface to his 1753 publication—to 'rescue from oblivion the magnificence of Palmyra'—seems to be echoed strongly in the rhetoric that surrounds many of these reconstruction projects. Wood reported the local inhabitants did not approve of his 'collecting', writing that 'Inscriptions we copied as they fell in our way, and carried off the marbles whenever it was possible for the avarice or superstition of the inhabitants made that task difficult and sometimes impracticable.'[92] Wood was, in some ways, an early example of a long line of looters at Tadmor-Palmyra.[93] That is, he was in no way 'authorized' to collect or document, and local people, by his own record, objected to his collection of materials. We might go so far as to say that people are considered collectors when they come from the West, and looters when they do not.

Conclusion: discovering Tadmor-Palmyra, again and again

In 1758, the slave owner Henry Dawkins commissioned a painting from Scottish artist Gavin Hamilton following the death of his older brother, James. James Dawkins had died within years of returning from his journey to the East, aged 35. Although long on public display, until recently it was owned by the Dawkins family until acquired by National Galleries Scotland in 1997.[94] That painting, *Wood and Dawkins Discovering Palmyra*, was a fanciful enactment of the moment Robert Wood and James Dawkins discovered Tadmor-Palmyra. Hamilton had been an obvious choice for the commission, as he was a painter who generally selected his themes from the classical past. The two men who are the focus of the painting, wear classical drapery and have profiles which themselves are torn from classical imagery, although they wear 'Arab boots' for an extra dash of exoticism alongside their camels.[95]

<Typesetters: Fig 5. here>

In the painting, which also circulated as a print,[96] what is striking is the way in which Dawkins and Wood are themselves portrayed as classical men and the heirs to classical culture, in marked contrast to the Arabs, depicted as wild, who guided them on horseback.[97] The two togate men are presented as heroes, explorers, and dilettantes in a manner we might expect monarchs or generals.[98] That they had been preceded to the site by other Englishmen or indeed an entire settlement of local people hardly mattered, and the narrative of discovery prevailed.[99] Beside Dawkins and Wood in the painting is a figure who must be meant to be Borra, the Italian draftsman who accompanied them, with his face barely visible, wearing a turban, and sketching.

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[91] For a critique of one such reconstruction, see Kamash 2017.

[92] Wood 1753: a 'The publisher to the Reader'. They also purchased antiquities (*e.g.* manuscripts) from a priest. Wood 1753: 34.

[93] On others as looters, *e.g.* William Wright, nineteenth-century British traveller, see Thompson 2017.: 153–54. The 'English Merchants' also took objects from Pompeii (there is explicit mention of taking some porphyry).

[94] Pace 1981. National Galleries Scotland, NG 2666: 'Acquired by private treaty sale, with support by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and with the assistance of the Art Fund 1997'; https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/48550/james-dawkins-and-robert-wood-discovering-ruins-palmyra

[95] Pace 1981: 271, 279–80. On this painting, see also Thompson n.d.: 163–66.

[96] *E.g.* the 1773 version by John Hall; see, *e.g.*, the V&A, no. 22012; and the British Museum, no. 1877.0609.1780.

[97] Pace 1981: 284.

[98] Pace 1981: 272.

[99] The English merchants who travelled to Tadmor from Aleppo.

Holding the reins of one of the horses is young black man, who has been referred to as a 'Negro page', whose presence in the painting we might attribute to Dawkins' slave ownership, the figure alluding to the family's Jamaican plantation-based wealth.[100]

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The painting claims the site, called Palmyra, for Wood and Dawkins but also for the West and reinvents it as something that is classical and not Eastern. Its Syrian context is evident only in the exoticism of Dawkins' entourage and boots, the geography hinted at by the swaying palms. The image of the site of Tadmor-Palmyra glimpsed between palm trees in the painting is that of a colonnaded street and a monumental stone arch. In this painted tableau the image of the site beyond the trees was probably based on a plate from *The Ruins of Palmyra* which had been published just a few years previously in 1753.[101]

The painting conjures a number of archaeological tropes that persist to the present day.[102] These include narratives of discovery and the inheritance of a classical legacy by the West. For such narratives to be successful, and for 'discovery' to occur, it is necessary to presume certain people and pasts do not matter or to erase them. The painting gives no hint that there was a contemporary population at the site, for example. In order to discover the archaeological site this living population had to be wiped away. Sir Mark Sykes, of Sykes-Picot infamy, generations later in the early twentieth century (but before the Temple of Bel was emptied) also wrote of Tadmor-Palmyra as an empty place, where 'The real attraction of Palmyra is its solitude; the great noisy money-proud city overturned, shaken and deserted, the sand-worn colonnades, the crumbling temples, the ruined tombs, unprepossessing in themselves, have been beautified by decay and rendered pathetic by their forlornness and silence.'[103] From Wood to Sykes, the idea of Tadmor-Palmyra as an empty ruin was created by a deliberate unseeing of the peoples who lived there, the occlusion from memory of the very people who inhabited the landscape.

Looking in detail at just one part of the Wood collection is perhaps another version of pointing through the palms, by continuing to study and value this account. Our hope is that we have contextualized and problematized some aspects of this work, and that we will have shown that the archive of the Wood collection holds possibilities for examining aspects of the site which have been otherwise expunged. When Wood and Dawkins visited the site it had a living population who were clearly knowledgeable about aspects of the site's past but this has faded from view. Wood, Dawkins, and Borra recreated Palmyra as a classical site in the Western imagination—it is not such a site in the classical textual canon—and it was eventually cleansed of those things which did not fit with this reading, becoming more Roman over time, with an emphasis on classical monumentality.

This matters not only as we reconsider archaeology's own history, but also because the 1753 publication is still being used as an unproblematic source.[104] It matters too because of the long shadows cast, creating the footings for foreign expeditions and archaeological fieldwork.

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[100] Pace 1981: 271. On James Dawkins' slave-owning family and the legacies of this wealth, see UCL's 'Legacies of British Slave-Ownership' online database: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146633416.

[101] Not long afterwards, by the late eighteenth century, this view had become canonical, for example appearing front and centre in Volney's *Les Ruines, ou méditations sur les révolutions des empires* published in French and then English translation in the 1790s.

[102] On tropes in archaeology, see, *e.g.*, Holtorf 2007.

[103] Sykes' comment come at the end of a chapter on his own Journey to Palmyra, itself savagely racist. Sykes 1904: 21.

[104] Crouch 1975: fig. 26, for example, reproduces the aqueduct section from plate XXVII. As recently as 2018, Silver, Fangi and Denker reproduce five illustrations from Wood; it is also worth noting that the first illustration in this book is the Hamilton painting. Silver, Fangi and Denker 2018: figs 3.17 (Wood 1753: plate II), 6.8 (Wood 1753: plate IV), 6.15 (Wood 1753: plate III), 7.2 (Wood 1753: plate XXVI), and 10.3 (Wood 1753; plate LII). The Hamilton painting is fig. 1.1.

Some claim that World Heritage sites such as Palmyra 'pre-date any living faith, offering a neutral foundation upon which to negotiate and rebuild a fractured [Syrian] identity'. [105] But as we have seen, Palmyra predates living faiths only in the sense that mandate-era archaeology swept it clean of those and only by forgetting such histories could it be conceived of as neutral. The shadows are also evident in the creation of particular regimes of value which we can trace over centuries, from the clearance of Arab villages, to the creation of the World Heritage site, to the destruction of monuments by ISIS. The need to have authority over certain pasts, and to possess them, continues. Exhibitions too continue to expunge the later (Islamic, Christian, and contemporary) histories from their version of the site, which moves from antiquity, to discovery, to modern excavation histories.[106] The lessons we might draw from the mistakes of early archaeologists and antiquarians, in many cases, are not learned.

Wood remarked, in *The Ruins of Palmyra*, that 'It is the natural and common fate of cities to have their memory longer preserved than their ruins…But here [*i.e.* Palmyra and Baalbek] we have two instances of considerable towns out-living any account of them. Our curiosity about these places is rather raised by what we see than what we read, and Baalbeck and Tadmor-Palmyra are in a great measure left to tell their own story.'[107] The story, of course, was not told by those mute stones but by Wood himself. And it was his representations, in text and image, that have shaped both how we have remembered Tadmor-Palmyra and what has been occluded.[108]

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Appendix 1: Approach to Palmyra

Volume 18a (bound with 18): section titled 'Approach to Palmyra'
Original ink in longhand text. Annotated in a second hand with page numbers in pencil. 'X' denotes 'X' mark made in same pen as rest of text; the reason for such marks is unclear.

A text comparison with the version published as Wood 1753. Italic text denotes similar passages in both texts. Bold text denotes disagreement between texts.

Volume 18a	Wood 1753
[p. 7] *We enter'd a plain extending itself northward of & little to the East a porte de vue, & having on our right & left a chain of hills which might be about ten miles or more distant from each other*: this plain is like the desart that I pass'd in going to the Euphrates, being gradually, though not equally or, some parts being hard, others soft or sandy with tufts of wild thyme here and there of a fine small, also great quantities of Kili, particularly towards Palmyra. This herb which the	[p. 34] Our course from Carietein to Palmyra, was *a little to the east of the north, through a flat sandy plain (without either tree or water the whole way) about ten miles broad, and bounded to our right and left by a ridge of barren hills*, which seemed to join about two miles before we arrived at Palmyra.

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[105] Lostal and Cunliffe 2016: 254.
[106] *E.g.* 'The Legacy of Ancient Palmyra' online exhibit by the Getty Research Institute in 2017: http://getty.edu/research/exhibitions_events/exhibitions/palmyra/index.html.
[107] Wood 1753: 1.
[108] Indeed, we might describe the erasure and occlusion of particular pasts as a form of colonial violence, such as those described by Neep 2012.

inhabitants burn to make soap ashes of has no leaves that I could see, but a tuft of round stalks resembling the wild white asparagus, the word Kele or Kili signifies ashes in arabic from hence comes Alkali. *The above mentioned plain having neither Tree nor water* we were obliged to proceed for 24 hours without stopping pretty much in the same direction and without any variety of appearances; *the hills of the east of our journey met together*, forming a circle and after we had ascended these gentle risings we first discover several ?****? which gave us a poor idea of the ruins as we fear'd there was nothing more to be seen as we had the same time the prospect of a most extensive desart plain to the S but advancing a little farther we discover'd the Ruins of the City which the hill had covered. *I was vastly struck with so surprising a number of stately columns without any other part of building*, all whitish, but of a stone which when it has lost its polish discovers a coarse view, though it looks extremely well. We were led to what they called the castle, which is a most magnificent temple with a vast colonnade which has been built up in some parts to make a place of strength by the Turks. *Within are about twenty or thirty mud houses* which contain all the present inhabitants of Palmyra, making the wall round the temple area a defence against the wandering Arabs: upon the first survey that we made of those ruins I observ'd in general a most immoderate profusion of expense in the buildings that remain, *no order appeared but the Corinthian except* **a few** *Ionic pilasters* mixed	[see quote above] [p. 35] … about noon we arrived at the end of the plain, *where the hills to our right and left seemed to meet.* [p. 35] *It is scarce possible to imagine any thing [sic] more striking than this view: So [sic] great a number of* **Corinthian** *pillars, missed with so little wall or solid building, afforded a more romantic variety of prospect.* [p. 37] *we were conducted to one of the huts of the Arabs, of which there are about thirty in the court of the great temple.* The contrast between the magnificence of that building and the poverty of our lodgings, was very striking. [p. 15] It is remarkable, that *except* **four** *ionick* **half columns in the temple of the sun**, *and* **two in the mausoleums** [sic], the *whole is Corinthian*, richly ornamented with some striking beauties, and some as visible faults.
[reverse of p. 7] with the former in the Great Temple: the windows, doors, of all the pieces of frieze and cornice are loaded with ornament, most of it extremely well finished, in short every	

thing looks like the work of Power & Riches & surprises, no doubt, greatly with its magnificence, but seem'd I think to show the decline of good taste, there is no such thing as an elegant simple piece of architecture, ornament and expense seem to supply the place of proportion: not but that there are some things that might please even Athens or in Ionia; there is a particularity which I never before saw, which is that most of the columns have about the middle of the shaft a sort of modillion sticking out sometimes of the same stone with the shaft, and sometimes fixed in a hole cut in the column. It is I think that *they served as pedestals for statues*, for most of the honorary inscriptions are either upon the face of where those Modillions or immediately under those on the column & on the top of the modillions *are two marks for Iron Cramps with the places cut for feet*, one foot a little before the other in the usual position of statues.	[p. 44]…those projections from the shafts of the columns were undoubtedly *intended to support statues, the irons still remain in some of them*, by which the statues were fastened; and on some the *marks of the feet are still seen.*
Those buildings which I have seen in Greece of the best architecture are almost all of the more simple plain orders, Doric and Ionic, surely the Corinthian which came later in vogue upon the decline of taste I observe that order is most essential and still more ornamented than before, and I believe if we examine a little into the rise of progress of all the fine arts, architecture, painting, music and we may add poetry and in countries where they have flourish'd we shall find that *after their happiest period* the first step to decay is always by too much never by too little ornament. X	[p. 16–7] it would induce me to fix the date of its [sc. Palmyra] *after the happiest age* of the fine arts
Three little Rivulets water Palmyra, they are all of these *sulphureous*, but so slightly impregnated as to *serve all the purposes of the inhabitants*. X Two of them run through the ruins, *we saw about 30 Huts in the Temple of the Sun* whose Inmates appear'd to be extremely idle, they can shut	[p. 40] They are **both** of hot *sulphureous water*, which, however, the *inhabitants find wholesome and not disagreeable.* [see p. 37 noted above]

themselves in & have over the entrance two sorts of ?Swivel gun but no powder, we pass'd the ditch by an elevated rugged causeway made across, I suppose there had been a drawbridge, they talked to us about the Emir who was executed by the Pasha of Aleppo for robbing the English as	
[p. 8] having happened in the memory of some of the oldest of them, and *they had Songs which they sang on the subject*.	[p. 35] When the business of the day was over, coffee and a pipe of tobacco made their highest luxury, and while they indulged in this, sitting in a circle, *one of their company entertained the rest with a song or story*, the subject love, or war, and the composition sometimes extemporary. [This mention of songs relates to the journey to Palmyra.]
The Women are well made and *several of them had fine features, they are very swarthy, they paint their eyelashes and eyebrows black* **as do several of the men**, *their lips blue*, (**for they say that red lips look like raw flesh**), and *the ends of their fingers and nails red* as do the Turkish women, our escort from the Aga (who is glad of any pretence to fleece them), procured us great civilities & we had an opportunity of using every thing without interruption; they seem'd displeased at our taking away some traces, but could not oppose it.	[p. 37] The inhabitants, both men and women, were well shaped, and *the latter, though very swarthy, had good features*. **They were veiled, but not so scrupulous of shewing [sic] their faces, as the eastern women generally are**. They *paint the ends of the their fingers red, their lips blue, and their eye-brows and eye-lashes black*, and **wore very large gold or brass rings in their ears and noses**. **They had the appearance of good health, and told us, that distempers of any sort were uncommon among them.**
For the sepulchres at Palmyra are several Mummies **of perhaps Zenobia** who was *proud of being descended from Cleopatra might affect to imitate Egyptian customs*.	[p. 22] Zenobia was originally of Egypt; she spoke their language perfectly well, and *affected much to imitate in many things her ancestor Cleopatra*. But that they borrowed some of their customs from Egypt **before her time**, seems plain from a discovery we made, to our great surprise, of *mummies in their sepulchral monuments*. [p. 23] *Their funeral customs were from Egypt*, their luxury was Persian, and their letters and arts were from the Greeks.
X The water which is convey'd by *a very solid antique aqueduct* does not come within a mile of the town, but	[p. 40] and the stream which runs from it [a spring] in a pretty smart current is about a foot deep, and more than three feet over,

for want of repair *deposits a considerable Stream of very fine water in the earth* of rubbish which is no more heard of, and the country is so insecure that they dare not to go so far from their fortress to fetch it. The aqueduct is called by the natives Abufoyres, which signifies the father of good Horsemanship, from a remarkable Skirmish which happened there between the Arabs in which such feats were performed in *their way of fighting with lances on horseback*. X Such other ruins of Palmyra the most considerable remains of ancient expense & magnificence perhaps in the world, though both Rome and Athens no doubt other pieces of architecture are much more worth seeing for taste and proportion. As the ruins of Palmyra consist almost entirely of columns standing without any wall, except at the great temple, its appearance from whatever part you look at is very striking and solomn: but particularly from the first approach to it where it appear'd upon us between the hills like a piece of Scenery which it is hard to describe when the sun was almost set. I never saw such beautiful effects of light and shade before, every particular view of which would make an excellent subject for scene painting, the profound silence & endless dreary uncultivated waste add to the solemn majesty of the prospect of which the mind is strongly prepar'd by being led to it through the sepulchral monuments.	confined in some places by *an old paved channel*, but *after a very short course soaked up in the land eastward of the ruins*. [p. 33] with an escort of the Aga's best *Arab horsemen, armed with* guns and *long pikes…* [This account of horsemen relates to their journey from Haffia.]
[reverse of p. 8] *Abulfeda mentions perpetual springs, salt, fruits, corn at Palmyra & that the olive and palm from there is plenty*, there are now a few olives, the only trees there.	[p. 14] Of the Arabian writers, some take no notice of Palmyra, and of those who do, *Abulfeda* prince of Hamah, a city in its neighbourhood, who wrote about the year 1321, seems to be the only one worth quoting. *He mentions very shortly its situation, soil, palm and fig-trees*; its many antient columns, and that it had a

	wall and castle. He was very probably ignorant, both of its Greek name and history, and only calls it Tedmor.
While we were at Palmyra there was a *shower of rain* of **prodigious large drops, (but falling widely),** for about 2 minutes, **at the same time** *excessive strong whirlwinds which in an instant filled the whole air with sand* of which I observed considerable bodies carried like the clouds over the desart.	[p. 37] Nothing could be more serene than the sky all the time we were there, except one afternoon, that there was a **small** *shower*, **preceded by** a *whirlwind, which took up such great quantities of sand from the desart, as quite darkened the sky*, and gave us an idea of those dreadful hurricanes which are sometimes fatal to whole caravans.

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