



2014 HAWAII UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES  
ARTS, HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES  
JANUARY 4, 5 & 6 2014  
ALA MOANA HOTEL, HONOLULU, HAWAII

# ANACHARSIS: REDISCOVERING HISTORY IN THE 18TH CENTURY

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### **Anacharsis: Rediscovering History in the 18th Century**

Barthélemy's *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* steeped his fictional Anacharsis into a complex matrix of alleged authoritative classical sources, architectural drawings, coins and maps. According to Jacques-Charles Brunet, Barthélemy explored aspects of early Syrian, Jewish, and Palestinian life. Within his autobiography in 1760, Barthélemy recounted his travels and exploration of the ruins of Antiquity. In 1788, Barthélemy's five-volume *Anacharsis* struck a chord with readers quickly generating additional editions. Certainly not a singular example, it was illustrative of the changing place of history in western culture.

## *Anacharsis:*

# Rediscovering History in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

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Classical, modern, and mythological threads converge in the name *Anacharsis*. The semi-legendary Anacharsis traveled from Scythia to Athens in the days of Solon. Jean-Jacques Barthélemy's fictional *Anacharsis* traveled fourth century Greece.<sup>1</sup> Carlo Ginzburg revisited Barthélemy's *Anacharsis* in his work *Threads and Traces* (2012). As in his previous works, Ginzburg pursues new avenues in exploring historical processes. Throughout his works, Ginzburg avoided Hegel's Universal Idea but offered suggestive historical examples of the "continual awakening of expectations through unfulfilled promises."<sup>2</sup> As he mined Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1953) and Siegfried Kracauer's *History* (1969), Ginzburg emerged with two gems: Auerbach's coupling of *reality* with the literary in a meaningful historical narrative and Kracauer's critique of the "chimera of universal history."<sup>3</sup> Viewed through these lenses, Barthélemy's *Anacharsis* reflected, projected, and helped define the popular historical consciousness of late 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Comparable with Hegel's idea of "*figurative representation*," Barthélemy's *Anacharsis* became history in the making. Within the pages of this article, Ginzburg's own historical method is explored and tested against Barthélemy's *Anacharsis* as European intellectuals rediscovered history in the 18th century.<sup>4</sup>

There is a clear historical foundation for the place of Anacharsis in our historical consciousness. Classical authors from Herodotus to Plutarch sprinkled shadowy references to the semi-legendary Anacharsis into a variety of works. After denouncing Scythia as the most barbarous of peoples, Herodotus elevated Anacharsis as the only redeeming figure to emerge from their ranks. Esteemed for his wisdom and extensive travels, Anacharsis fell victim to his own countrymen after his return and attempt to infuse elements of Greek culture into the ranks of the Scythians.<sup>5</sup> According to Michael Grant, fourth century BCE Greek admiration of

the “noble savage” placed Anacharsis alongside the semi-mythological Seven Wise Men. Roman authors discussed Anacharsis in much the same manner as Tacitus discussed the virtues of Germanic tribes. Acknowledging Herodotus as a father of history, Cicero described the Scythian Anacharsis as Epicurean in nature, unmoved by pecuniary gain and living as a Stoic should live.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, Seneca aired only his agreement with Herodotus in rejecting Anacharsis as the inventor of the potter’s wheel.<sup>7</sup> Within his biography of Solon, Plutarch coupled Solon’s path with both Anacharsis and Thales. According to Plutarch, Solon ridiculed Anacharsis’s intention to civilize Scythians with a dose of Greek law and legal procedure. In response, Anacharsis “expressed his wonder at the fact that in Greece wise men spoke and fools decided.”<sup>8</sup> In the third century CE, Diogenes Laërtius raised the mythology surrounding Anacharsis an additional step. Following Herodotus’s lead, Diogenes believed Anacharsis to have been of Scythian nobility of the highest order and to have befriended Solon in Athens. Although his works were lost, Anacharsis allegedly wrote extensively on Scythian and Greek laws. Diogenes preserved all that remained in a selection of rather pithy sayings attributed to Anacharsis.<sup>9</sup> Barthélemy's fictional *Anacharsis* builds upon parallels and common assumptions extended to the progeny of famous historical figures. As with his semi-legendary counterpart, Barthélemy's *Anacharsis* is the intelligent observer and outsider, experiencing first-hand life within fourth century BCE Greek circles. Integrating a plethora of classical sources into his fictional tale, Barthélemy endows his fictional narrative with authenticity.

Seen through a broader lens, eighteenth-century Europeans proved voracious consumers of detailed travel accounts -- largely French -- within Europe as well as to foreign countries. Protestant missionaries recounted their travels to China and Brazil.<sup>10</sup> Celebrating

both Roman and Greek history, Andrew Tooke's *The Pantheon* celebrated a tenth edition in 1726. *The Pantheon* blended Homeric accounts of the gods and heroes with classical authorities, including Thucydides, Plutarch, Ovid, and Diodorus Siculus. As with many works, *The Pantheon* straddled the Rubicon, blurring the literary with the historical.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, religion, art, commerce, science, manufacturing, morals, and geography filled the sixty-plus volumes and multiple editions of *Histoire Générale des Voïages* in the mid-1750s alone.<sup>12</sup> *The Annual Register* for 1789 printed a letter vividly describing the exploration of the famous Labyrinth of Gortyna, the mysterious cavern where the Minotaur had once devoured its victims.<sup>13</sup> Captain James Cook's voyages to the Pacific from the late 1770s captivated readers for decades.<sup>14</sup> Less demanding readers might avail themselves of works such as Hester Lynch Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (1789).<sup>15</sup> A growing interest in regional archeology, exploration and discovery brought the globe to eager readers and narrowed the gap between past and present.

As evident in the aforementioned example, eighteenth-century authors also helped sustain popular knowledge of classical authors and history. Abbé Ladvocat's *Dictionnaire Historique Portatif* (1752) adopted Herodotus's account of Anacharsis's life without recognizing Herodotus yet implying Homeric credentials.<sup>16</sup> William Mitford's *The History of Greece* (1795) represents one of many works sustaining popular interest in Greek history.<sup>17</sup> Robert Walpole's own works reveal his fascination with Antiquity and his expectation that Antiquity has yet to surrender valued philosophical and historic insights.<sup>18</sup> Eighteenth-century scholarly reluctance to accept Herodotus's *Histories* as more literary than historical finds little resonance in this brief historical portrait. Educated eighteenth-century readers, however, readily immersed

themselves in new translations of classical authors, including Alexander Pope's multi-volume translation of *The Iliad of Homer* (1715 - 1720), and newer editions of François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon's *The Adventures of Telemachus* (1754 (1699)).<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, Jacques Benigne Bossuet's *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle* (1704) and Johann Hübners' *Kurze Fragen aus der politischen Historia* (1723) delegate no mention whatsoever of Anacharsis.<sup>20</sup> Compared with Bossuet and Hübners, Abbé Lenglet Dufresnoy's *Tablettes Chronologiques de l'Histoire Universelle* (1763) added only Anacharsis's alleged arrival in Greece during the fourth year of the 47<sup>th</sup> Olympiad, namely, 592 BCE -- a point also made in earlier references to Anacharsis.<sup>21</sup> Although popular interest in Greek culture exploded during the Renaissance, Greek historical and cultural figures personified individual freedom later during the Enlightenment. Ideas of freedom and justice propelled Jean-Jacques Rousseau's fame throughout Western Europe with the release of his long-overdue work *Of the Social Contract* -- probably finished in 1756 but published in April 1762.<sup>22</sup> Two decades later, however, popular interest grasped at Rousseau's humanity in his posthumously published *Confessions* (1782) -- and probably tales of his dog Turc.<sup>23</sup> Similar to the appeal of Rousseau's *Confessions*, Jean-Jacques Barthélemy's *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* (1788) -- translated into English in 1791 as *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece* -- carried readers on a personal journal but into fourth century Greece through the eyes of Anacharsis's fictional ancestor. Despite Philhellenism's debt to Barthélemy, Philhellenes existed throughout Europe's leading thinkers and political leaders long before Barthélemy. But where Alexander Pope and François Fénelon steeped their subjects more in mythological terms, Barthélemy steeped his fictional Anacharsis into a complex matrix of alleged authoritative classical sources, architectural drawings, coins and maps. Popular in

Western Europe, Greece, and Armenia, some eighty edited, abridged, and simply new editions of Barthélemy's *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* circulated before it fell out of view in the latter decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Jacques-Charles Brunet, Barthélemy explored aspects of early Syrian, Jewish, and Palestinian life. Within his autobiography in 1760, Barthélemy recounted his travels and exploration of the ruins of Antiquity. Almost three decades later in 1788, Barthélemy's six-volume *Anacharsis* struck a chord with readers quickly generating additional editions within the first decade of its appearance.<sup>24</sup>

Largely forgotten by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (less passing references in French encyclopedias), Carlo Ginzburg read Barthélemy's *Anacharsis* as one of those anomalous cases securely anchored in its own history while Jules Michelet and Jacob Burckhardt joined Barthélemy with recognizing the “first, decisive step toward the modern world” made in fourth century Greece.<sup>25</sup> Within *Threads and Traces* (2012), Carlo stressed multi-disciplinary sources and perspectives favoring the “anomalous case” -- not simply an “isolated oddity.”<sup>26</sup>

Inspired by Michel de Montaigne's *Essais* (1580), Ginzburg heard a voice close to his own. Passionate yet natural, Montaigne's essays diminished geographic, cultural, and historical distance in a humanistic critique of 16<sup>th</sup> century society. Montaigne also relished the interplay of classical figures in discussions about contemporary issues. Proper table etiquette demanded no less an authority than Alcibiades. Ginzburg found a similar inspiration in the reissue of Erich Auerbach's classic *Mimesis* (1953) in 2003. Although Auerbach's pursuit of reality as depicted in western literature raced from Homer to Virginia Woolf, Ginzburg extended Auerbach's analysis of Voltaire's commentary on the Lisbon earthquake of 1750. Paralleling Montaigne's *Essais*, Voltaire draws out moral, ethical, and religious questions in his critique of injustice. Historical

accuracy is tightly woven into Voltaire's finger on the pulse of injustice. Voltaire's moral force, however, rests with the authenticity and implied authority of his narrative over the claim of historical certainty. In the end, it is the sense of authenticity within the historical narrative rather than the choice of individual facts that provide the reader with a meaningful encounter with a historical event. Popular historians, including Edward Gibbon, Peter Massie, Barbara Tuchman, and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and their professional counterparts generally satisfy expectations of a meaningful narrative. However, the vast majority assume the need to demonstrate a clear series of tightly woven inter-connected events, causes, origins, and effects. Against these overarching ascertains, Ginzburg attempts to isolate the authentic historical narrative beyond any grand formal or informal systematization. Barthélemy's *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce*, however, drew Ginzburg's attention for an additional reason, namely, "its improbability."<sup>27</sup>

Barthélemy's career and intellectual aspirations moved him away from theology into archeology, and into Voltaire. Traveling throughout southern France and into Italy, Barthélemy's interest in Herculaneum and his friendship with Johann Joachim Winckelmann – art historian and fellow philhellene – may have found further inspiration in Fénelon's *The Adventures of Telemachus*. Ginzburg sees the link as only "vaguely inspired." Considering the era when Barthélemy could have read Fénelon's work, popular interpretations of Fénelon inclined towards understanding *The Adventures of Telemachus* as a satirical assault on Louis XIV and his Court. In league with Jacques Bossuet, on the other hand, Fénelon attacked Nicolas Malebranche's attempt to reconcile Greek philosophy with Augustinian theology in *De la recherche de la vérité* (1674-75). Explored and analyzed by Jonathan I. Israel, French spiritual



and intellectual leaders presented less a united front than a cacophony of semi-conservative critical voices.<sup>28</sup>

In the decades between Fénelon's *Telemachus* and Barthélemy's *Anacharsis*, Enlightenment thinkers saturated the intellectual landscape with satirical assaults on almost all aspects of their existence elevating the critique from the exceptional to the normative, including, Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721) and Voltaire's *Candide* (1759). Turning to the 1780s, Barthélemy lacked the social status of Fénelon. His *Anacharsis* lacked the explosive potential of an act of *lèse-majesté*. Instead, Barthélemy's *Anacharsis* trumpeted the freedom and intellectual triumphs of fourth century Greece implicitly projected onto life in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Contrary to Barthélemy's *Anacharsis*, the notes and commentaries added to Fénelon's *Telemachus* thrust the reader headlong onto a philosophical cross of action, morals, and poetry. In a manner befitting Homer, Virgil, and Horace, Fénelon's discourse on epic poetry emphasized "Unity of the Design," action "worthy of the Hero," and an "Unravelling [sic]." Approaching morality, the commentators (allegedly Dutch and *others*) castigated the divisive systems of Thomas Hobbes (English), Niccolò Machiavelli (Italian), Samuel von Pufendorf (German), and Hugo Grotius (Dutch). Humanity, it was argued, should embrace "Mankind as an indivisible Whole." Dutch and *other* critiques of the Sun King aside, Fénelon's text is sufficiently vague as to apparently require commentators capable of identifying concealed traces of *lèse-majesté*. Fénelon's political enemies may well have played more than a passing role in expediting popular awareness of Fénelon's alleged short-comings.<sup>29</sup>

Almost a century later, Barthélemy's *Anacharsis* captivated a new generation of readers, who continued to demand new editions of Fénelon's *Telemachus*. Although French salon

discourse may not have valued Barthélemy as it did David Hume earlier, it circulated a steady diet of social criticism in a manner judged appropriate for high society. The popular impact of Barthélemy's *Anacharsis* could be equated as similar in impact to J. K. Rowling's seven-volume *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007). A more detailed analysis of the parallels deserves our attention at another time. The central focus here is the difference between the various receptions of Fénelon's *Telemachus* and Barthélemy's *Anacharsis*. Fénelon faced a world defined by the Louis XIV and what future critics defined as Absolutism. Years into the reign of Louis XVI, Barthélemy witnessed the decline of monarchical authority and experienced first-hand the flood of rising expectations in 1788 – but clearly not the revolution itself. Against Barthélemy's merchant class origins, Fénelon's high-level position attracted greater scrutiny. In contrast with Fénelon's stylistic flairs, Barthélemy eased the reader into an anticipatory sense of something truly human, romantic and historical – almost as if one were telling a bedtime story. Similarly, Fénelon provided his readers with a single map whereas Barthélemy embellished his work with a final atlas-volume, including images of Greek coins, examples of Greek architecture, and detailed maps. Where Fénelon sent a message, Barthélemy enjoyed the journey. Collectively, these differences underscore the need to understand both author and work within the context in which they were composed and critiqued. The essentially understanding of each changed with the winds of fortune and historical context. Where Fénelon endured a cause, Barthélemy sustained his humanity.

Since the late 1960s, Carlo Ginzburg has wedged doubts into our contemporary assumptions about the nature of historical facts and the alleged links between them -- the "chimera of universal history." Without embracing deconstructionism, Ginzburg interpreted

history as a parade of largely disconnected collages best understood through narratives anchored in primary sources. Throughout Ginzburg's writings, Hegel's shadow persists behind events pregnant with implications. Siding with Kracauer over Hegel, however, Ginzburg avoided the glass bubble of universal history – a theme reinforced in his books and articles. Without stoning advocates of universal history, Ginzburg presented research and analysis gently corralling readers within the limits of primary sources and away from more grandiose assumptions. In the process, Ginzburg preserved the humanity of his subjects. For example, Ginzburg's *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (1989) stressed traditional primary sources for probing the socio-cultural forces driving the event or theme in question. In his account of the Modenese trial of Chiara Signorini, Ginzburg found that Chiara's unsavory character and peasant origins adhered to the sixteenth-century self-selected profile throughout the interrogations. As this trial evolved in the early months of 1519, Chiara's testimony confused her interrogators by straddling two worlds. On the one hand, her testimony counted the Virgin Mary as the primary apparition associated with saints and not sinners. Her peasant pre-Christian superstitions quite likely blurred the Christian theological pre-occupation with separating the divine from the diabolical. On the other hand, testimony offered against Chiara reinforces the image of the malicious peasant casting evil spells upon Margherita Pazzani, a woman whose social status clearly exceeded that of Chiara, with the expressed assistance of the Devil. Contrary to the invocation of the Virgin, Chiara's deal with the Devil places the full ones of responsibility onto Chiara, whose "extreme hardship, and absolute poverty, the invocation of the Devil may have offered the only hope."<sup>30</sup>

As popular piety blurred the heavenly and diabolical, these kinds of trials forcefully defined the appropriate possibilities. Chiara's interrogators invoked and employed torture to obtain a confession. Failing to extract the desired confession but succeeding in breaking the defendant's will to resist, her life was spared. Ginzburg completes his argument leaving untouched the issue of what gave legitimacy to one set of depositions over another. One might conclude that socio-economic status defined which observations and interpretations would be endowed with the aura of legitimacy. Accused by more refined elements within society, no question is raised about the validity of their statements. Rather, they become the nails virtually insuring Chiara's demise. It is, rather, *her* conflicting testimony that must be tested against this reality.<sup>31</sup>

Where popular piety blurred the heavenly and diabolical, Aby Warburg and his intellectual progeny believed antiquity blurred into and through the Renaissance. Warburg's methodology cut a broad path in the collection of documentation. Defined by Ginzburg as "eclectic," it included a vast array of it from everyday life. Applied in Florentine history of the latter 18<sup>th</sup> century, "Warburg sought to reconstruct the connection between artistic representations and the social experiences, taste, and mentality of a specific society." Encapsulated within the concept of *Pathoformeln* (or "genuinely ancient formulae of an intensified physical or psychic expression in the Renaissance style, which strives to portray life in motion"), Warburg perceived the key to the "historical psychology of human expression." Defined further as "Dionysian pathos," Warburg departs from accepted traditions of the classicists' vision of Florentine society for an era dripping in a "Dionysian pathos." An undeniable individuation of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) behind this thought, these

two poles, the Apollonian and Dionysian, juxtapose the worlds of structure, rationality, and uniqueness with the emotional and chaotic within the individual. As such, the antiquity inherited by Florentine society included “traces of violent passions experienced in the past.” These myths of antiquity were then transformed into images; “permanent traces of the most profound emotions in human existence.”<sup>32</sup>

Warburg’s vacillation between the psychology of a historical materialism and a philosophy of history seemed an invitation to the successes of his method to complete his vision. Ginzburg singled out Fritz Saxl and Ernst Hans Gombrich (founders of the Warburg Institute) for taking up the challenge. Saxl applied Warburg’s method to the question of Hans Holbein’s piety. Holbein’s woodcuts for a sixteenth-century edition of Erasmus’s *Praise of Folly* incline the viewer to detect clear sympathies for Martin Luther although he suspected a stronger influence emanates from Erasmus. Ginzburg remained very suspicious of Saxl’s methodology. The evidence is not “convincing.” The slayer in this “reading of artistic documents” remains with the historian, who “reads into them *what he has already learned* by other means.” In contrast to Saxl, Ginzburg found in Gombrich a more realistic application of the Warburgian method. Ginzburg was particularly attracted to Gombrich’s *Art and Illusion* (1960). Gombrich took the position of “testing the image on the basis of actual experience.” Gombrich began by placing the artist firmly within a historical context. Within these limits, the artist cannot create a “faithful record of visual experience but [only] the faithful construction of a relational model.”<sup>33</sup>

Ginzburg continued his argument through a return to Italian witch trials. As a subject of research, witchcraft moved from the margins of history into the realms of the “fashionable.”

Ginzburg centered his argument on the “inquisitor’s urge for truth.” It is not an objective truth so much as it is the inquisitor’s own conceptualization of evidence. Ginzburg reduces the inquisitor’s questions into a sort of comparative mythology. In an effort to extract his truth from the statement and confessions given at these trials, the inquisitor actively seeks and extracts those elements considered with his expectations. Evidence contradicting these expectations is appropriately re-evaluated or stopped. Equally fascinating, however, is the visions of such a trial as a *clash* of cultural beliefs. The inquisitor remains the authority and power. The victims, however, stem from a parallel culture with similar but not identical beliefs. Even within the confessions rendered, these individuals save away evidence of their own unique understanding of both the divine and Christianity. As largely drawn from lower class beliefs, there stood at odds with those of the apparently eternal cities. The problem Ginzburg brings our attention to what he sees as “referential fallacy.” As Ginzburg stated in his preface, “I have permitted myself to be guided by chance and curiously, not by a conscious strategy.” Applying this to the “question of restoring to the purview of history not so much obviously atemporal as apparently negligible phenomena,” Ginzburg approached his subjects, in particular witch trials, desiring to “demonstrate that an irrational and at least for some -- atemporal phenomenon -- and one thus historically irrelevant – could be studied in a rational, but not rationalistic key.”<sup>34</sup>

Preceding *Threads and Traces* (2012), Ginzburg’s *The Night Battles* (1985), *The Cheese and the Worms* (1992), *The Judge and the Historian* (2002), cast historical subjectivity as overcome best by an ongoing diverse (bordering on *divisive*) narrative, which balanced the sophistication of solid historical research with the accessibility of Stephen Jay Gould’s

*Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* (1990). Parallels between Ginzburg's approach to history and Gould's reflection on natural history dovetail well in Gould's own final assessment of the evolution of human life. Gould stated that "our origin is the product of a massive historical contingency and we would probably never arise again even if life's tape could be played a thousand times." Returning to Hegel's idea of "*figurative representation*," Ginzburg's choice of Barthélemy's *Anacharsis* embodies the conceptual historical contingency denouncing the "chimera of universal history."<sup>35</sup>

Europe's visual arts in the pre-revolutionary eighteenth-century added new expressions to the sense of historical contingency. Whether Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii* in 1785 or Giovanni Paolo Panini's *Picture Gallery with Views of Modern Rome* in 1757, popular interest had turned away from the Renaissance fascination with Greek culture, reflected in Raphael's *The School of Athens* along with the architectural studies of Andrea Palladio and Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, but towards romanticized and politicized visions of what remained of the grandeur of Rome. Within this gallery, Barthélemy's *Anacharsis* bridged the gap between a literary and individualized encounter with the past as opposed to the romanticized images of an unrecoverable past. Within this window, it is also worth remembering the significance of Greek and Roman ruins in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, namely, the favoring of the marble, monuments and memorials over the literature when it came to hard evidence of life in Antiquity.

Ginzburg's decoupling of links used in discussions of universal history assumes serious limits to historical consciousness, aspirations to objectivity, and no necessary long-term historical process. Rather, Ginzburg discards a strict scientific materialism and Hegelian idealism

while approximating a focused Habermasian communicative discourse on the historical narrative.<sup>36</sup>

Though fundamentally outside the realm of the scientifically testable, it is reasonable to ask how well Ginzburg's ideas might apply to a collection of historical documents, negotiations, and/or memoirs, including Maximilien de Béthune duc de Sully's *Memoirs of the Duke of Sully*. Beginning with Sully's memoirs, Sully quickly fell from political favor after the assassination of Henry IV in 1610. Three decades later he published his memoirs. Operating *au château de Sully*, Sully oversaw the secret publication of his memoirs, identifying "Aléthinosgraphe, etc." as the publisher, "Amsterdam" as place of publication, but offering no date of publication (1638). Translated into various languages, Sully's memoirs went through at least twenty editions by 1819. Corrections and critical commentary within the 1819 edition identified Sully's failure to differentiate between what he has experienced personally as opposed to have discovered at a later date – or simply embellished. Nevertheless, Sully bequeathed posterity his perspective on the events of his life, best understood within the historical context from which it emerged.<sup>37</sup>

A greater challenge to Ginzburg's collage vision of historical contingency might be found in classical primary sources and supporting materials. Jean Rousset de Missy's *Recueil Historique d'Actes, Negotiations, Memoires et Traitez, Depuis la Paix d'Utrecht jusqu'au Second Congrès de Cambray inclusivement* counted twenty volumes published between 1728-1752. Wedged in between the War of Spanish Succession and the Seven Years War, Rousset packed these small volumes with copies of the agreements and select correspondence. Diverse agreements governed the post-war peace as well as efforts to cast new alliances. For example,



representatives of Frederick William I (King in Prussia) and Sweden's Ulrica Eleonora concluded formal peace agreements in Stockholm on January 21, 1720, addressing a variety of issues dating back to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Within three documents, religious issues dating back to before the Thirty Years War had retained a nominal staying power, Prussia continued its quest to reconfirm Frederick William's (the Great Elector) acquisitions from Poland and Sweden, and gave Frederick William I (King in Prussia) the peace he craved to rebuild his army and treasury.<sup>38</sup>

However, diplomatic exchanges and agreements rarely reveal their face-value. The immediate context betrays the intentions of the parties involved whereas distance will necessarily alter the context in which the content of the agreements would be understood and reassessed. Throughout these volumes, Rousset avoids historical analysis or assessments. Rather, Rousset offers readers the end results of complicated negotiations. It is clearly assumed that any meaningful application of these records demands an ongoing interaction with the documents where the original meaning and intent of the authors may play only a limited role in determining how these agreements will affect future behavior. However, as these agreements recede in active memory and are displaced by future events, so too shall a meaningful historical assessment of diplomatic agreements and other primary sources shift. Any analysis projecting into a future where events have already revealed to the researcher or diplomat would be inherently flawed – and further confirmation of Ginzburg's sense of historical contingency.

As demonstrated, Ginzburg's historical method bears curious affinity with aspects of 19<sup>th</sup> century ideas. In Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's famous "Preface" in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), Hegel dipped his hand in the stream of Jacob Boehme's religious mysticism,

Hegel perceived the emerging Absolute and denounced classical notions of logic. In contrast, Marx grounded his vision in a progressive historical materialism but denounced religious thought as inherently illusory. Circling back to Ginzburg's use of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872) but then reissued as *The Birth of Tragedy, Or: Hellenism and Pessimism* (1886), twenty-first century *clouds* (as in the *technology*) embody the historical as the base from which our collage of historical consciousness draws periodic inspiration. Performed initially in City Dionysia, Aristophanes' *The Clouds* answered Socrates' arguments from logic with the Dionysian laughter of the theater. Where Ginzburg generates his own Dionysian laughter in seeking a more honest understanding of history and the historical, we find in Jean-Jacques Barthélemy a more romanticized tool to revisit the past that readers might reclaim the present.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Jacques Barthélemy, *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce, dans de milieu du quatrieme Siecle avant l'ère vulgaire* (Paris, 1789 (1788)). The English version used subsequently in this article appears as *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece, during the middle of the fourth century before the Christian Era* (London, 1791).

<sup>2</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces* (Berkeley, 2012), 115-125 and 167. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford, 1997 (1807)), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, 2003 (1953)) and Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (Princeton, 1995 (1969)), 143.

<sup>4</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1997), 18.

<sup>5</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories* (New York, 1977), 286, and 295-296.

<sup>6</sup> Cicero, *On the Good Life* (New York, 1984), 100-101 and 178.

<sup>7</sup> Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic* (New York, 1979), 171-172 and 245.

<sup>8</sup> Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (New York, 1930), 99-100.

<sup>9</sup> Diogenes Laërtius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (London, 1853), 46-49.

<sup>10</sup> *Being a Collection of Letters from the Protestant Missionaries* (London, 1718).

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Tooke, *The Pantheon. Tenth Edition* (London, 1726).

<sup>12</sup> *Histoire Générale des Voyages* (Didot, 1759).

<sup>13</sup> *The Annual Register or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1789* (London, 1802), 90-98.

<sup>14</sup> J. King, *Capt. James Cook's Third and Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (Philadelphia, 1796).

<sup>15</sup> Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (London, 1789).

<sup>16</sup> Abbé Ladvoat, *Dictionnaire Historique Portatif* (Paris: Didot, 1752), 43.

<sup>17</sup> William Mitford, *The History of Greece*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (London, 1795).

<sup>18</sup> Robert Walpole, *The Works of Robert Walpole. Earl of Oxford. Volume IV* (London, 1798).

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- <sup>20</sup> Johann Hübners, *Kurze Fragen aus der politischen Historia* (Leipzig, 1723) and Jacques Benigne Bossuet, *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle* (Amsterdam, 1704), 43.
- <sup>21</sup> Abbé Lenglet Dufresnoy, *Tablettes Chronologiques de l'Histoire Universelle* (Paris, 1763), 46 and 435.
- <sup>22</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* (New York, 1978), v.
- <sup>23</sup> David Edmunds and John Eidinow, *Rousseau's Dog: Two Great Thinkers at War in the Age of Enlightenment* (New York, 2007).
- <sup>24</sup> Jacques-Charles Brunet, *Manuel du libraire et de l'amateur de livres. Tome Premier* (Paris: 1820), 95.
- <sup>25</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces* (Berkeley, 2012), 117-222.
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- <sup>27</sup> Ibid and Michel de Montaigne, *Montaigne's Essays in Three Books* (London, 1738), 389. Ibid., 34-53 and 96-114. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, 2003). Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, 1989), 115-117.
- <sup>28</sup> Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York, 1977), 84-85. Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2001), 102n and 485. The edition of Nicolas Malebranche's *De la recherche de la vérité* used here is the new revised third edition from 1678 whereas the first edition appeared in 1674-75.
- <sup>29</sup> Fénelon, *The Adventures of Telemachus* (1754), i-xlii and 242-280.
- <sup>30</sup> Kracauer, *History* (1995), 143. Ginzburg, *Clues* (1989), 13 and 115-125.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Ginzburg, *Clues* (1989), 19-21.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid, 35, and 52-59, and E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (Princeton: Princeton, 2000 (1960)).
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- <sup>39</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1977).