Imaginary Histories: Ancient Egypt in the writings of Marguerite Yourcenar and Philippe Derchain[1]

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(evtl. mit Taf. X)

In memory of Philippe Derchain
Monsieur, que tout cela est passionnant! Et vous racontez si bien!
(Derchain, Deux amies, in: Le souvenir imaginaire,
Verviers 1996, 65)

Abstract
This published version of a memorial lecture in honour of Philippe Derchain discusses Marguerite Yourcenar's treatment of Ancient Egypt in her writings, and compares Derchain's literary writings in order to suggest similarities and differences in their handling of Ancient Egyptian sources, especially the Monte Pincio obelisk. An examination of Yourcenar's sources shows how she, as a 'queer' writer, prioritised Hadrien's emotional experiences over factual accuracy and official heteronormative expectations. Both authors championed a self-reflexive use of imagination in dealing with ancient sources, and a concern for the 'inner life' of ancient people.

Introduction

Philippe Derchain (1926-2012) is best known as an Egyptologist, but I here consider some literary aspects of his writings. In particular, I discuss his admiration for, and intertextual dialogue with, the French author Marguerite Yourcenar (1903-1987). Yourcenar wrote about Ancient Egypt principally in her *Mémoires d'Hadrien* (1951), especially in the episodes concerning the death of Antinous in Egypt in AD 130[2] and the emperor's subsequent visit to the colossus of Memnon. She carefully distinguished her work as an imaginative writer from that of a historian, but her imagined life of the emperor has proved so influential that her novel had, for example, to be included in the British Museum exhibition 'Hadrian: Empire and Conflict' of 2008, which offered a less mid-20th century,

[1] This is a revised version of the first Derchain memorial lecture given at Cologne on 23.10.2013. My thanks are due to Françoise Labrique for the invitation to speak; to Ursula Verhoeven-van Elsbergen for supplying photographs for the lecture and for much support; to Alexis Derchain and to Marie-Thérèse Derchain-Urtel for much kindness and for comments on a draft. I knew Professor Derchain only in his later years, and I glimpsed only some aspects of him. I am grateful to Erhart Graefe, Luigi Prada, and Vera Rondano for discussions about the Monte Pincio obelisk; to J. B. Heidel of the Antinoupolis foundation; to Jean-Pierre Corteggiani for conversations many years ago about his friend Marguerite Yourcenar; to Paolo Liverani for a copy of his forthcoming paper; to Biri Fay and Richard Keresey; to Marie-Claire Cuvillier; to Christina Riggs for advice on Roman period burial practices; to Estate of Yousuf Karsh (http://karsh.org); to Ann Gill for help with editing; to Christelle Alvarez for checking and correcting my French; to Anne-Claire Salmas for comments on a draft; to Helen Whitehouse for invaluable comments and help with bibliography; to Achmy Halley and Joan E. Howard for much Yourcenarian empathetic support. All the errors remain mine. For clarity, I use 'Hadrien' to designate Yourcenar's fictionalised character and 'Hadrian' for the historical emperor.

[2] For the historicity of Antinous see recent overviews: M. J. Versluys, Making meaning with Egypt: Hadrian, Antinous and Rome′s cultural renaissance, Supplemento a Mythos Rivista di Storia delle Religioni [n. s.] 3, 2012, 25-39; C. Häuber, Augustus and the Campus Martius in Rome: The Emperor′s rôle as pharaoh of Egypt and Julius Caesar′s calendar reform, the Montecitorio Obelisk, the Meridian Line, the Ara Pacis, and the Mausoleum Augusti, in honour of Eugenio La Rocca on the occasion of his 70th birthday, Fortuna Papers 2, München 2017, 452-55; R.R.R. Smith, Antinous: Boy made god, Oxford 2018.

post-war view of the historical figure.[3] Historians who stress the role of imagination in history-writing are more willing to see the two activities as closely linked than Yourcenar herself did in the 1950s; as the classicist Keith Bradley has remarked: 'all history is fictive, a construct of the historian's imagination'.[4] Such concerns with the roles of personal imagination and memory were also shared by Philippe Derchain as both writer and Egyptologist.

Yourcenar and Egypt

Yourcenar's interest in Ancient Egypt was early: in *Quoi? L'éternité*, the final volume of her family trilogy *Le labyrinthe du monde*, she recounted her fascination as a child at reading the description of a barque on the Nile in a historical novel by Marie Reynès-Monlaur,[5] and also at seeing the mummies from Albert Gayet's excavations at Antinoopolis/Antinoe displayed in the Musée Guimet.[6] In the 1910s and 1920s she wrote several poems on Egyptian themes, including two about female mummies and 'Une cantilène de Pentaour', based on the 12th Dynasty 'Dialogue of a Man and his Ba'.[7]

In writing *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, Yourcenar drew on studies of the monuments and texts relevant to Antinous and Hadrian, the Oxyrhynchus papyri and publications of the site of Antinoopolis, many of which were listed in the bibliographic 'Note' to the published novel.[8] Remy Poignault's *L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar* has analysed her use of classical sources,[9] and I here concentrate on her Egyptian and Egyptological sources, assessing the evidential dilemmas that face both the fictional and academic writer. As presented by the 'Note', Yourcenar's reconstruction of the emperor's life was ostensibly highly normative and scholarly, but it was also an intensely personal and imaginative work. Her research for the Egyptian aspects of the novel was based on publications: when she was writing, she lacked direct experience of the Egyptian sources and landscape, unlike with Greece or Italy. She visited Egypt only once, in 1982, almost three decades after completing the novel. Surprisingly, there is no direct record that she saw the colossus of Memnon on her cruise: it is not mentioned in her summary of her travels in the 'chronologie' of the Pléiade edition, nor in the unpublished agenda of her travelling companion Jerry Wilson. It is possible that her age and a dislike of crowds of tourists prevented her from seeing much on the trip, and Jerry Wilson noted that she visited Karnak

[3] T. Opper (ed.), Hadrian: Empire and conflict, London 2008, 29-30. See also: A. Halley (ed.), Marguerite Yourcenar et l'empereur Hadrien: Une réécriture de l'antiquité, Gand 2015.

[4] K. Bradley, Recovering Hadrian, in: Klio 94, 2012, 135.

[5] Après la neuvième heure: see M. Yourcenar, Essais et mémoires, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 378, Paris 1991, 1346-1347, 1378; compare M. Galey, Marguerite Yourcenar: Les yeux ouverts, Paris 1997 [1980], 48.

[6] Yourcenar, Essais et mémoires, 1368; see F. Calament, La révélation d'Antinoé par Albert Gayet: Histoire, archéologie, muséographie, BdEC 18, Cairo 2005, 293-294, 311-316.

[7] See R.B. Parkinson, 'Une cantilène de Pentaour': Marguerite Yourcenar and Middle Kingdom literature, in: T. Schneider/K. Szpakowska (eds.), Egyptian stories: A British egyptological tribute to Alan B. Lloyd, on the occasion of his retirement, AOAT 347, Münster 2007, 301-308. See also A. Halley, Marguerite Yourcenar en poésie: Archéologie d'un silence, Faux Titre 268, Amsterdam/New York 2005 (on the 'cantilène' see 357-358).

[8] M. Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 303, Paris 1991 [1982], 543-545. In later editions, including the Pléiade, the 'Note' is more extensive than in very early editions, including the second: Mémoires d'Hadrien, le club du meilleur livre, visages de l'histoire, Paris 1953, [459]-[469]. The 'Note' in the English translation of 1954 is a different version from that issued in the Pléiade: Grace Frick (trans.), Memoirs of Hadrian and Reflections on the Composition of Memoirs of Hadrian, Penguin 2000, 249-265.

[9] R. Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar: Littérature, mythe et histoire, Collection Latomus 228, Brussels 1995.

only as far as the hypostyle hall, before being obliged to turn back.[10] The highlight of the trip was the 'inoubliable' visit to Antinoopolis with the Egyptologist Jean-Pierre Corteggiani,[11] and this may well have overshadowed her visits to other sites relevant to her novel.

The death of Antinous

The varied texture of the novel gains much from the range of Egyptological publications that she consulted, and results from a creative collage technique, consciously choosing and manipulating the sources. Her choices do not necessarily produce a unified or unconflicted narrative, and her treatment of the death of Antinous exemplifies her celebration of the fissures and gaps in any official or historical life. In the novel, the uncertainty of both ancient and modern historians about Antinous' death becomes an uncertainty in the minds of the various characters about what actually happened on 'une certaine après-midi sur le Nil'.[12] Her chosen scenario is a sacrificial suicide,[13] and although Antinous' decision is narrated clearly by Hadrien,[14] the circumstances are presented as an instance of the unknowableness of human motivation. In the bibliographic 'Note', she states that 'sur certains points controversés, … il a fallu choisir entre les hypothèses des historiens; on s'est efforcé de ne se décider que pour de bonnes raisons. Dans d'autres cas, … mort d'Antinoüs, on a tâché de laisser planer sur ce récit une incertitude qui, avant d'être celle de l'histoire, a sans doute été celle de la vie elle-même'.[15] One unpublished notebook contains a set of notes under the heading 'faits historiques modifiés ou faits imaginés (i.e. sans source historique directe)', and in this she commented on the death: 'fond authentique, détails imaginés, soigneusement tirés de sources secondaires de la même époque'.[16]

In the section entitled 'Saeculum aureum', the ritualised suicide of Antinous takes place when the imperial boat is moored in the area of 'un temple pharaonique à demi abandonné … à proximité du rivage' from which the emperor can hear the 'collège de prêtres' mourning Osiris.[17] The 'temple pharaonique' with its priests and oracle is evoked again near to the end of the novel.[18] This temple is apparently based on the Ramessid temple at Sheikh Abada, which was later subsumed in Hadrian's city of Antinoopolis (Fig. 1). To judge by details of phrasing, she closely followed Albert Gayet's excavation reports here and elsewhere.[19] Gayet had argued that 'le temple où furent célébrés les mystères institués en

[10] See Parkinson, in: Schneider/Szpakowska (eds.), Egyptian stories, 306-307.

[11] J.-P. Corteggiani, La visite de Marguerite Yourcenar à Antinoé, in: G. Sion (ed.), Les voyages de Marguerite Yourcenar, CIDMY Bulletin 8, Brussels 1996, 207-215.

[12] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 357.

[13] Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 448-451. Accessible overview: A.R. Birley, Hadrian: The restless emperor, London 1997, 247-249.

[14] E.g. Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 429.

[15] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 545-546.

[16] Houghton Library, Harvard, bMS Fr372.2 (213); I am grateful to T. Opper and Charo Rovira for drawing this to my attention.

[17] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 439.

[18] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 509.

[19] In the bibliographic 'Note' appended to the novel, she refers to his publications from 1896 to 1914 as 'fort utiles' despite his lack of method: Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 555. See G. Rosati, The temple of Ramses II at Antinoe revisited, in: C.J. Eyre (ed.), Proceedings of the seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3-9 September 1995, Leuven 1998, 975-981. For recent work at the site see e.g. The Antinoupolis Foundation: http://antinoupolis.net/.

l'honneur d'Antinoüs ne fut autre qu'une basilique funéraire bâtie par Ramsès II'.[20] Nothing in the Ramessid temple decoration, however, supports this characterisation of the building as specifically funerary, and the modern excavators have found no evidence to connect its later re-use within the new city with the cult of Antinous.[21] Yourcenar, however, took up Gayet's idea and made Hadrien assure the temple's priests that it would become 'pour toute l'Égypte un lieu de pèlerinage'; this echoes Gayet's discussion of 'ces pèlerinages de l'Egypte entière vers la tombe du dieu'.[22] Gayet stated that 'Antinoüs avait sa barque sacrée, promenée solennellement à certaines fêtes par un collège de prêtres' and that the Christian Epiphanius 'avait fulminé contre la procession de la barque promenée dans le grand temple'.[23] Yourcenar may well have drawn on this passage when her Hadrien speaks to the priests of the temple, referring to 'leur collège', and foreseeing that 'chaque année, la barque sacrée promènerait cette effigie sur le fleuve' where Antinous died.[24] Her description of the temple 'à demi abandonné' may even owe something to the picturesque state of the ruins in Gayet's publications,[25] the cover of the *Petit Journal* in 1904,[26] or the photographs of the temple in an English article by John de Monins Johnson that she cited in the 'Note'.[27] The actual Ramessid temple is not on the riverside itself, and the novel respects this location. Antinous' drowning is accomplished not in the temple, but close by, in an imaginary 'série de réservoirs, qui avaient dû servir autrefois à des cérémonies sacrées, [qui] communiquaient avec une anse du fleuve', near to 'une chapelle située sur le rivage, petit édifice isolé qui faisait partie des dépendances du temple'.[28] It is perhaps relevant that Gayet referred to the main temple itself as 'une chapelle funéraire',[29] and also that his report mentioned some 'substructions d'une chapelle d'Aménophis IV' as being some 600 metres north of the Temple of Ramses II.[30]

Despite this archaeological precision, Yourcenar showed great freedom in handling facts, and many details were apparently sourced in a less direct manner. Antinous' suicide echoes an earlier fictional episode in the novel at Canopus, where a falcon is ritually drowned in 'une cuve remplie d'eau du Nil', so that it will be assimilated with 'l'Osiris emporté par le courant du fleuve'; this draws on a Greek magical papyrus.[31] The subsequent incident of a child dying while Hadrien is grieving at Philae is explicitly taken from a later

[20] A. Gayet, L'exploration des ruines d'Antinoë et la découverte d'un temple de Ramsès II enclos dans l'enceinte de la ville d'Hadrien, Annales du Musée Guimet 26.3, Paris 1897, 50, also 16-17.

[21] J. Heidel, pers.comm. 2013. For a monument mentioning Antinous in the centre of the city see J. B. Heidel and J. B. McClain, Traces of a vanished cult: A rare inscription from Antinoupolis, in: Egyptian Archaeology 52, 2018, 34-37.

[22] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 441 (also referred to on 509); A. Gayet, L'exploration des ruines d'Antinoë, 54, drawing on the inscription of the Monte Pincio obelisk (see below).

[23] A. Gayet, L'exploration des ruines d'Antinoë, 16; see also 7.

[24] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 441.

[25] A. Gayet, Antinoë et les sépultures de Thaïs et Sérapion, Paris 1902, 3, 7.

[26] Petit Journal, 10 January 1904; e.g. Calament, Le révélation d'Antinoé par Albert Gayet, fig 16a.

[27] J. de M. Johnson, Antinoë and its papyri: Excavation by the Graeco-Roman Branch, 1913-14, in: JEA 1, 1914, 168-181, esp. pl. 23.4, 24. Cited: Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 555.

[28] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 440. The temple itself is situated 'à proximité du rivage' (439).

[29] Gayet, L'exploration des ruines d'Antinoë, 16-17.

[30] Gayet, L'exploration des ruines d'Antinoë, 55; he gave no indication of the relative proximity of this chapel to the river (which lies to the southwest of the main temple).

[31] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 437-438: Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 474-477. Later the mummified Antinous will be described as a 'jeune faucon': 450. For the papyrus (PGM I, 1-42) see e.g. H.D. Betz, The Greek magical papyri in translation including the Demotic spells, Chicago 1986, 3-4.

papyrus from Oxyrhynchus; the location at Philae was presumably inspired only by the well-known gateway of Hadrian there, which Yourcenar would have known from any guidebook or general illustrated volume on Egypt.[32] However, as Wilhelm Weber (one of her cited sources) noted, the existence of the gateway does not prove that Hadrian was ever present himself at Philae, as she imagines.[33]

At the start of the relevant section of 'Saeculum aureum', the date of Antinous' death is given as 'le premier jour du mois d'Athyr, la deuxième année de la deux cent vingt-sixième Olympiade … C'est l'anniversaire de la mort d'Osiris, dieu des agonies'.[34] As Poignault notes, this phrasing presents the date itself as a syncretism between Egypt and the classical world, just like the cult of the dead Antinous, and his death is 'pluri-culturel'.[35] The date of his death is generally reckoned by modern historians to be around 28th October, a few days before the recorded founding of Antinoopolis on 30th October; 28th October corresponds to 1st Athyr.[36] Her mention of the 226th Olympiad is, however, wrong by one Olympiad and places the death in AD 126, as opposed to AD 130; this is clearly an unconscious error, which remained uncorrected in all editions.[37] More strikingly, Plutarch and other authorities with which she will have been familiar give the death of Osiris as 17th Athyr and not 1st Athyr.[38] The novel makes this sacred date significant, since Hadrien states that Antinous' death coincided with the exact hour and date of the god's death and that this fact inspired him to commemorate his dead lover with a cult;[39] this emotive and resonant coincidence of dates is, however, a result of rewriting documented facts to create literary meaning.

Poignault has argued that her presentation of the date is indebted to other influences, including a poem of Constantine Cavafy ('Durant le mois d'Athyr'), and the European tradition of All Souls' Night of 2nd November.[40] As he notes, other details of Antinous' suicide apparently draw on a personal recurrent nightmare of a lake inviting suicide, as described in *Les songes et les sorts*,[41] and even on a passage of Oscar Wilde's *Portrait of Dorian Grey* evoking a picture of Antinous: 'crowned with heavy lotus-blossoms you had

[32] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 544; Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 484-485. For the gateway, connected with the cult of Osiris, see e.g.: PM VI, 254-255.

[33] W. Weber, Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisers Hadrianus, Leipzig 1907, 257, n. 925 (mentioned as 'admirable' in the 'Note': Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 549). It is uncertain if Hadrian visited anywhere south of Luxor, and if he did, the sequence of events is unknown: Yourcenar placed the incident at Philae in the far south after the visit to Memnon, but it is also possible that the emperor visited Memnon after visiting the south and when already returning northwards to Alexandria: e.g. Birley, Hadrian: The restless emperor, 250-252.

[34] E.g. Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 438. The date is evoked again close to the end of the novel: 509.

[35] Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 504, 505. It is often assumed that the Egyptian divinisation of Antinous may derive from the death having happened by drowning on a date that coincided with a relevant ancient Egyptian festival: e.g. G.H. Renberg, Hadrian and the oracles of Antinous (Sha Hadr. 14.7), with an appendix on the so-called Antinoneion at Hadrian's Villa and Rome's Monte Pincio Obelisk, in: MAAR 55, 2010, 159, n. 1.

[36] Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 505, n. 33-34. See discussion in Birley, Hadrian: The restless emperor, 247-250; Renberg, in: MAAR 55, 2010, 159, n. 1.

[37] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 438.

[38] Plutarch, De Iside et Osiride, 13, 39, 42; G. Griffiths, Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride, Cambridge 1970, 139, 179-180, 185. This discrepancy is not noted by Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 504-505.

[39] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 440.

[40] C. Dimaras/M. Yourcenar, Constantin Cavafy, poèmes: Précédé de présentation critique de Constantin Cavafy, Paris 1978, 139 ; see Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 505, n. 35.

[41] M. Yourcenar, Essais et mémoires, 1547-1548; see Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 480.

sat on the prow of Adrian's barge'.[42] There is another (hitherto unnoted) allusion to Wilde in the novel's mention of an ancient poem composed by Mesomedes of Crete to entertain Hadrien at Alexandria in a lotus-filled evening with Antinous. This is '*La Sphinge*, oeuvre inquiétante, sinueuse, fuyante comme le sable au vent', a description which matches closely the tone and style of Wilde's decadent 'The Sphinx' of 1894.[43] The location of Antinous' death at a temple might even owe something to the temple in the final act of Racine's *Phèdre*, which was familiar to Yourcenar from the age of eight.[44] The young handsome Hyppolyte meets his end close to a temple: 'aux portes de Trézène, et parmi ces tombeaux, / Des princes de ma race antiques sépultures, / Est un temple sacré formidable aux parjures' (V.1).

Yourcenar's full emotional engagement with the death is also clear from a sheet with a list of personally significant dates, including not only the deaths of family members and pets, but also: '1 novembre - mort d'Antinoüs'.[45] It is clear that she (incorrectly) regarded Athyr as being exactly equivalent to the modern November, noting in her 1958 book of Cavafy's poems, 'le mois d'Athyr (notre novembre) était celui de la fête égyptienne des morts'.[46] Ironically, when visiting Egypt in early 1982 she witnessed the mourning for a young man who had drowned on the same day that she visited the site of Antinoopolis in Middle Egypt.[47]

Hadrien's visit to Memnon

The novel is not only a highly personal but also arguably a 'queer' work, influenced by Yourcenar's own non-heteronormative sexuality. This subversive aspect is exemplified in the scene at Thebes, where Hadrien visits the colossus of Memnon.[48] The historical source, the 'point de départ' for this, is explicitly given in the 'Note' as the poems by the empress Sabina's companion Julia Balbilla which were carved on the colossus to record a sequence of official visits by various members of the imperial party.[49] Balbilla has sometimes been considered to have been a romantic companion to the empress;[50] despite this, Yourcenar seems not to have felt much sympathy with this ancient woman writer, possibly due in part to the poor quality of her poems (see below).

[42] J. Bristow (ed.), The complete works of Oscar Wilde, III: *The picture of Dorian Gray* the 1890 and 1891 texts, Oxford 2005, 264; see Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 480, n. 134. The iconic gay Wilde was the subject of an essay 'Wilde rue des Beaux-Arts' (1929/1982): Yourcenar, Essais et mémoires, 499-509.

[43] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 432-433; she mentions the poem in her essay on Wilde: Essais et mémoires, 508. See B. Fong/K. Beckson (eds.), The complete works of Oscar Wilde, I: Poems and poems in prose, Oxford 2000, 180-194.

[44] M. Galey, Marguerite Yourcenar: Les yeux ouverts, 32.

[45] Opper, Hadrian: Empire and Conflict, 28.

[46] Note to a poem in: Dimaras/Yourcenar, Constantin Cavafy, Poèmes, 250. Poignault describes her correlation of Athyr and November in relation to Antinous' birth as showing 'quelque licence': L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 505.

[47] Agenda of Jerry Wilson, January 22; J. Savigneau, Marguerite Yourcenar: L'invention d'une vie, Paris 1990, 427-428; Corteggiani, La visite de Marguerite Yourcenar à Antinoé, 214.

[48] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 444-445.

[49] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 548. On the poems in general see e.g. T.C. Brennan, The poets Julia Balbilla and Damo at the colossus of Memnon, in: The classical world 91.4, 1998, 215-234.

[50] E.g. Birley, Hadrian: The restless emperor, 251.

Yourcenar's Hadrien remarks, when narrating the arrival of the empress in Egypt, that 'la confidente du moment, une certaine Julia Balbilla, faisait assez bien les vers grecs'.[51] At Thebes, Hadrien says that the colossus failed to sound for the empress and her party when they visited the colossus on two occasions, and so he was urged to accompany them. He rises 'vers la onzième heure' and travels to the colossus before dawn. Then, 'le son mystérieux se produisit par trois fois', and 'l'inépuisable Julia Balbilla enfanta sur-le-champ une série de poèmes'.[52] In the 'Note', Yourcenar mentions Jean-Antoine Letronne, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte* II, Paris 1848, and René Cagnat, *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes* I, Paris 1901, nos. 1186-1187.[53] I here consider the actual ancient sources in some detail to suggest the complexity inherent in any imaginative treatment of them, and also Yourcenar's process of selecting and rewriting the sources as they were available to her in the mid-twentieth century. The standard modern edition of the texts by André and Étienne Bernand, published a decade after the novel,[54] includes the following poems and inscriptions, often with different readings from the sources cited by Yourcenar:

- No. 28, a poem by Balbilla, in 'when … Hadrian heard Memnon' as he sounds once at dawn, and then twice more.[55]
- No. 29, a poem by Balbilla, who has accompanied the empress Sabina to Memnon; there is no explicit mention of any sound.[56]
- No. 30, a poem written by Balbilla 'puisque le premier jour nous n'avons pas entendu Memnon': 'hier Memnon a gardé le silence pour recevoir l'époux, afin que la belle Sabine revienne ici'. Letronne's restoration of the text is based on early copies, and reads differently: 'hier, [n'ayant pas entendu] Memnon, nous l'avons supplié de n'être pas une seconde fois défavorable …'. Memnon then sounds out of respect for Hadrian, although the emperor is not explicitly said to be present.[57]

[51] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 433.

[52] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 444; the detail of the three soundings derives from the multiple soundings mentioned in no. 28: A.J. Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, Paris 1848, 352; A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, BdE 31, Cairo 1960, 81, 85. See Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 617, n. 10.

[53] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 545, 548. Cagnat includes only two of the series of texts and is the only source mentioned in earlier editions; however, it is clear that she consulted the full series when composing the novel (otherwise she could not have said Balbilla improvised 'une série de poèmes' or said that the statue had initially failed to sound).

[54] A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon.

[55] A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, 80-85; R. Cagnat, Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes: Auctoritate et impensis Academiae Inscriptionum et Litterarum Humaniorum collectae et editae I, Paris 1906, no. 1187; Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 351-356 (no. 343). According to A. and E. Bernand, Hadrian 'laisse pour la postérité des vers qui montrent tout ce qu'il avait vu et entendu' (81), but in Letronne's reading of the graffito, the inscriptions are made by Balbilla, not Hadrian (352).

[56] A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, 86-92; Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 367-368 (no. 347) and 356-360 (no. 344).

[57] A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, 93-96; Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 361-364 (no. 345, quote from 362).

- No. 31, a poem by Balbilla, saying that she has heard Memnon at the first hour, having accompanied Sabina on 24th Athyr. This inscription is dated to 25th Athyr.[58]

Other inscriptions not by Balbilla mention Sabina hearing Memnon at the first hour (no. 32),[59] and Hadrian hearing Memnon twice at the second hour (no. 33).[60]

The actual chronology of the inscriptions is not immediately clear: the Bernands suggest that the first visit on 23th Athyr was unsuccessful (the visit mentioned in no. 28); the next day Sabina and Balbilla visited and heard Memnon at the first hour (no. 28, 29, 30, 31); at the second hour (no. 33) Hadrian also heard Memnon (no. 28), having joined the empress; the following day Balbilla visited alone (no. 31) and left her dated inscription on the foot of the statue.[61] On this reading, the visits cover 23-25th Athyr, but others have suggested a more extensive schedule of multiple visits.[62] Letronne had envisaged that 'Sabine a donc entendu Memnon le 24 et le 25 d'athyr …, ou le 20 et le 21 novembre … Balbilla a visité le colosse plusieurs fois, tant avec Adrien qu'avec Sabine. Il paraît que cette impératrice n'a pas accompagné chaque fois son mari'.[63] He noted of Hadrian that 'il dut entendre Memnon plusieurs fois, et à des jours différents'.[64] Yourcenar's version does not match the historical events as reconstructed either by Letronne or later by the Bernands, but it is unclear if this is a deliberate choice, poetic license, or the result of an accidental misunderstanding. There certainly seems to be some conscious dramatic compression, since Hadrien is only at the statue once. Yourcenar was, however, clearly aware of the general historical sequence of events that is implied by the known dates, so that she could imagine her emperor still grieving at Thebes in late November.

Yourcenar makes no mention of the actual historical 'graffiti' by the imperial party in the novel. This is of course historically plausible: Balbilla would presumably have composed the poems and had them formally inscribed later than the actual events of the visit that they describe: even if Graffiti 28-30 were carved on 24th Athyr,[65] they would still have been un-inscribed at the moment when Hadrian was at the statue. Letronne commented 'je soupçonne qu'elle les a fait graver un jour où elle était venue en vain pour l'entendre. Notre poëtesse avait tellement la manie des vers, qu'elle en faisait à toute occasion'.[66] Yourcenar's staging of the episode gives it immediacy and provides a sharp characterisation of Balbilla, which echoes Letronne's dismissive attitude to this '*bas bleu*' with 'sa veine abondante et facile mais pédantesque et prétentieuse'.[67]

[58] A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, 96-98; Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 364-367 (no. 346).

[59] A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, 99-100; Cagnat, Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes I, no. 1186; Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 369-370 (no. 349).

[60] A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, 101; Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 368-369 (no. 348).

[61] A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, 83-84, 98; Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 616-619.

[62] E.g. Birley, Hadrian: The restless emperor, 250-251.

[63] Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 366-367.

[64] Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 351.

[65] As suggested by A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, 83-84, 98.

[66] Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 356.

[67] Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 350-351.

Yourcenar places the imperial visit 'plus de vingt jours' after the death of Antinous on 1st Athyr, and 'quelques jours après l'arrivée à Thèbes'; the vagueness of her phrases may be significant as a way of accommodating a conscious alteration of the historical dates (see below).[68] After Balbilla has improvised her poems, the empress' party undertakes 'la visite des temples' but Hadrien is 'excedé par ces figures colossales de rois tous pareils … par ces blocs inertes'; he returns to rest 'à l'ombre du colosse avant de remonter en barque'.[69] He has heard how the Egyptian priests know only the names of the former kings, and now sees the names left by earlier visitors on the legs of the colossus, some of which are explicitly taken from Letronne: 'des noms, des dates, une prière, un certain Servius Suavis, un certain Eumène …, un certain Panion …'.[70] Instead of leaving another official inscription, Hadrien gives way to a fantasy, and carves simply his name:

> l'empereur qui se refusait à faire graver ses appellations et ses titres sur les monuments qu'il avait construits prit sa dague, et égratigna dans cette pierre dure quelques lettres grecques, une forme abrégée et familière de son nom: AΔPIANO. C'était encore s'opposer au temps: un nom, une somme de vie dont personne ne computerait les éléments innombrables, une marque laissée par un homme égaré dans cette succession de siècles.[71]

In the modern or older publications, there are no graffiti with just 'Adriano'.[72] Here, Yourcenar directly contradicted the published historical evidence, making Hadrien subvert the inscriptions of the state monument with a small inscribed sign of the importance of the inner world of an individual, independent of all official history. Same-sex desire, with all the alienation that an individual can feel, is here set in contrast to the official monumental record. In effect, she replaced the official graffiti that she had used as historical sources with a purely personal ('familière') assertion of singularity. Hadrien's use of Greek recalls his declaration elsewhere that he has thought and lived in Greek, and implicitly sets this mark against the alien Egyptian monument.[73] Balbilla's poems, the underlying source, were of course also in Greek, although the reader is not explicitly told this by the novelist.

An indication that her re-writing of the published sources was a conscious strategy (and not an unconscious error) may be detectable in her presentation of the graffito in the early editions as 'AΔPIANO…' with the name followed by an ellipsis.[74] The ellipsis may evoke a

[68] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 444. Poignault interprets differently: L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 616.

[69] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 444-445.

[70] As mentioned in the 'Note', which specifies that Eumène is imaginary: Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 545. The other names are now read differently: Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 618-619. Servius is from graffito no. 20, and Panion from graffito no. 12: A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, 66-67, 49-51 = Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 347-348 (no. 340); 392-393 (no. 371).

[71] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 445.

[72] As Birley says, 'no trace of an inscription by Hadrian himself survives': Hadrian: The restless emperor, 251; Poignault also lists it as fictional: L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 620. The actual graffiti (as now published) increase the contrast, since in Graffito no. 28 l. 9-12 Balbilla claims that 'il laisse pour la postérité des vers qui montrent tout ce qu'il avait vu et entendu': A. and E. Bernand, Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, 81. Yourcenar, however, probably understood this passage differently, since in Letronne this action of leaving verses is assigned to Balbilla: Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 352.

[73] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 312.

[74] E.g. Mémoires d'Hadrien, le club du meilleur livre, visages de l'histoire, Paris 1953, 293. The ellipsis was removed in the authorised 1982 and later 1991 Pléiade editions, but is retained in the English translation: Frick (trans.), Memoirs of Hadrian, 174.

literary sense of unfinished business and ongoing identity, but it also can be read as a textual indication that the name has been excerpted from a longer text, such as is indeed recorded in the publications: the graffiti of Servius mentioned by Hadrien is dated to year 7 of Hadrian, which is read by Letronne as year 7 of 'Ἁδριανού [τού κυριου, …..]'.[75] Yourcenar wrote the name with the same ellipsis as in the early editions of the novel also on a decorative sheet from a manuscript of the novel, together with other phrases in Latin and Greek; some of these features are from the novel itself but some are taken directly from her ancient sources, such as 'flevit muliebriter' from the *Historia Augusta*.[76]

Having carved his name, Hadrien is struck by the fact that that day is the date of Antinous' birthday, 'au vingt-septième jour du mois d'Athyr, au cinquième jour avant nos calendes de décembre'. Once again, the date is presented in cross-cultural form. 'Tout à coup' the emperor collapses in grief.[77] This birth-date is based on an inscription of the collegium of Diana and Antinous in Lanuvium, giving V a.d. Kalendas Decembres as his date of birth; this Roman date is equivalent to 27th November, which Yourcenar would have translated into 27th Athyr (incorrectly: see above). She listed the Lanuvium inscription in the 'Note', noting her trust in it despite 'des érudits … hypercritiques' such as Theodor Mommsen.[78] As the only date mentioned in the official graffiti are 24th and 25th Athyr (equivalent to 20th-21st November), she has deliberately altered the historical date of Hadrian's visit to Memnon by a few days to 27th Athyr. As Poignault has noted, 'cette légère entorse au calendrier donne à l'épisode une plus grande densité affective'; even more than this, her alteration underlies (and creates) the whole episode through a strategy of subversion.[79] Her conception of the event was indebted to sources and dates which she reshaped and effaced from the narrative. The dated graffiti of Balbilla have been replaced with a personal, dateless graffito, which itself then inspires Hadrien's realisation about the significance of the date. Her recreation of the emperor's interior world as he stands before Memnon is based on an awareness of the dates of the inscriptions and of the earlier date of Antinous' death, which she then altered in order to provide an opportunity for Hadrien's overwhelming realisation of grief. The official, normative, dated historical sources are thus kept invisible, but inform the narrative, and are rewritten to enable the recreation of her emperor's non-normative, personal feelings. For all its ostensible respect for traditional scholarship, this is a free and subversive attitude to historical records, which 'queerly' prioritises same-sex love over academic facts and dates.

The tomb of Antinous

[75] Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines d'Égypte II, 347 (no. 340); the Bernands read differently, as 'Servius Serenus': Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon, 66-67 (no. 20).

[76] Houghton Library, Harvard, bMS Fr 372.2 (231); see S. Lonoff de Cuevas, Marguerite Yourcenar, croquis et griffonnis, Paris 2008, 21-23; R.B. Parkinson, A little gay history: Desire and diversity across the world, London 2013, 119.

[77] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 445.

[78] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 548; Weber, Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisers Hadrianus, 248, n. 900. The inscription is CIL 14.2112; see e.g. A. Bendlin, Associations, funerals, sociality, and roman law: The collegium of Diana and Antinous in Lanuvium (CIL 14.2112) reconsidered, in: M. Öhler (ed.), Aposteldekret und antikes Vereinswesen: Gemeinschaft und ihre Ordnung, WUNT 280, Tübingen 2011, 207-296.

[79] Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 616.

Another historical issue for the novel was the burial place of Antinous. The location of this tomb remains unknown, but scholarly opinions have included Antinoopolis, Rome, and Hadrian's villa in Tivoli.

The suggestion of Antinoopolis as a burial place was made early. In the Napoleonic *Description de l'Égypte*, a building on the main north-south road, immediately inside the north gate, was labelled as 'restes d'un édifice qui paroit avoir servi de Tombeau' and, more simply, 'Tombeau'.[80] When Yourcenar's Hadrien first describes Antinoopolis among his building projects in 'Tellus stabilita', he talks of 'une avenue triomphale qui va d'un théâtre grec à un tombeau',[81] which exactly matches the 'Tombeau', beside the city gate and at the end of an avenue on the plates of the *Description*. The fourth century account by Epiphanius of Salamis had stated that Antinous 'died in the city and was buried in a pleasure boat'.[82] Adolf Erman dismissed this account, arguing that this 'boat'-tomb was a reference to the cult of Antinous in a bark (taken up by Gayet, cited above), and he thought that the body must have been moved to Rome.[83] Recently, scholars such as Gil Renberg and Chrystina Häuber have argued that the tomb was indeed most probably in Antinoopolis.[84]

Another suggestion is Rome, which was the location for Hadrian's own imperial mausoleum.[85] The main evidence for this proposal is the existence of an obelisk in Rome with a hieroglyphic inscription about the cult of Antinous; this was discovered in the 16th century broken into three parts, near the Porta Maggiore, having been used to decorate the spina of the circus Varianus by Elagabalus (fl. 218-22 AD) (Fig. 2).[86] It is now on the Monte Pincio, but the original placement remains highly controversial, because of a problematic passage which apparently alludes to Antinous' tomb. Various locations for the obelisk have been proposed, along with various readings of the final phrase of this passage, which is complicated by a lacuna in the text. The passage reads:

nṯr ntj jm ntj ḥtp m jȝt tn nt(j) m-ḫnw n sḫt tȝš n nb[.] *wȝs* [..]*hȝrm*ˁ

The god (Antinous) who is yonder (deceased), who rests in this mound which is within the field of the border of the lord of might [..]Rome.[87]

The inscription goes on to describe a city named after Antinous and a temple dedicated to him there, which may or may not be in the same location as 'this mound'.[88] I here summarise these competing interpretations in order to indicate the continuing and intractable nature of the dilemma that faced Yourcenar. In 1838 Karl Richard Lepsius had

[80] Description de l'Égypte IV, 1822, pl. 53, 54.1; reproduced in e.g. S.H. Aufrère (ed.), Description de l'Égypte … publiée par les ordres de Napoléon Bonaparte, Tours 1997; http://descegy.bibalex.org/.

[81] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 387.

[82] Ancoratus I, 130b HOLL; see C. Hülsen, Das Grab des Antinous, in: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 129; Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 15, n. 27; Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 714; Renberg, in: MAAR 55, 2010, 185, n. 101.

[83] A. Erman, Der Obelisk des Antinous, in: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 121; A. Erman, Römische Obelisken, Abhandlungen der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin 1917 (4), 11. See Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 742-743.

[84] Renberg, in: MAAR 55, 2010, 159-198, esp. 185-186; C. Häuber, Augustus and the Campus Martius in Rome, 449-50.

[85] Convenient overviews in: A. Grimm/D. Kessler/H. Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos: eine kommentierte Edition, Munich 1994, 14-19; J.C. Grenier, L'Osiris Antinoos, CENiM 1, Montpellier 2008, 37-45.

[86] Modern edition of the texts: Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos. For the possible original location of the obelisk see e.g. Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 14-20, 102-105; Renberg, in: MAAR 55, 2010, 186-190; C. Häuber, Augustus and the Campus Martius in Rome, 422-452.

[87] IVa: Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 60-61, pl. 19-20. An overview of the various restorations is given by e.g. Renberg, in: MAAR 55, 2010, 187, n. 116.

[88] IVb-c: Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 62-65.

considered that the obelisk had been erected at Antinooplis, and in 1842 Luigi Maria Ungarelli also had taken the text as referring to Antinoopolis.[89] More recently, it has also been suggested that the obelisk was both carved and erected at Antinoopolis and moved to Rome only in Severan times.[90] In 1897, Yourcenar's preferred authority, Gayet, connected the passage describing both 'this mound' and the temple with Antinous' burial place in Egypt and the temple of Ramses II at Antinoopolis.[91] In 1896, however, Hülsen and Erman suggested that the obelisk was originally placed relatively close to the Renaissance findspot in the outskirts of Rome, and Erman read the phrase as *n-sḫt-t3š n-nbt-w3s h3rmˁ* 'die im Grenzfelde der Herrin des Genusses(?) Hrome liegt', assuming that no preposition was lost in the lacuna.[92] Later, after Yourcenar's novel, Erik Iversen also located the obelisk in Rome but at a temple to the Fortuna Roma, translating the phrase 'in the campus of the precinct of the mistress of the luck of Rome'.[93] More recently, Jean-Claude Grenier has read the phrase as *sḫt-t3š n-nb{t}-w3s* [*m*]*-h3rmˁ* 'des Jardins du Prince dans Rome', and scholars such as Filippo Coarelli have suggested that an imperial garden was the original location such as on the Palatine (the Vigna Barberini) or, as Liverani plausibly argues, the Horti Domitiae in the area of Hadrian's own mausoleum.[94] Other scholars lessen the topographical relevance of the mention of Rome, such as Alfred Grimm who restores the lacuna as [*n*] and reads 'im Inneren des Grenzfeldes der 'Herrn des Wohlergehens' (= Princeps) [von] Rom'.[95] From an examination of the obelisk's faces, Erhart Graefe has argued that the lacuna is too small to contain any lost signs. He reads *sḫt-t3š n-nb-w3s h3rmˁ* 'the border-field (Grenzfeld) of the lord of might: Rome',[96] but one might also understand this as a direct genitive as referring to a location belonging to 'the lord of might of Rome'. As Liverani notes, the 'mound' that is mentioned in three passages could refer to two different locations: to the city of Antinoopolis (3a, 3c) and to 'this mound' which is linked with Rome in some way (4a).[97] In any case, the mention of '*this* mound' could well refer to

[89] Cited by Erman, in: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 113; Ungarelli, Interpretatio obeliscorum Urbis, ad Gregorium XVI pontificum maximum digesta, 181, n. 137.

[90] Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 19-20, 117-129; Renberg, MAAR 55, 2010, 189-191: Häuber, Augustus and the Campus Martius, 446.

[91] Gayet, L'exploration des ruines d'Antinoë, 52-54.

[92] Hülsen, in: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 120-121; Erman, in: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 119; see also Erman, Römische Obelisken, 17 ('ager suburbanus'), 44-45. Given the orthography and lacuna, readings as *nb*, *nbt*, *nb*(*t*), *nb*[*t*] and *nb*{*t*} are all possible.

[93] E. Iversen, Obelisks in exile I, The obelisks of Rome, Copenhagen 1968, 161-173, quote from 163; see also Häuber, Augustus and the Campus Martius, 445-446.

[94] J.C. Grenier/F. Coarelli, La tombe d'Antinoüs à Rome, in: Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Antiquité, 98.1, 1986, 217-253 (on passage: 217-229); Grenier, L'Osiris Antinoos, 8, 37-45. See also J.C. Grenier, The Barberini Obelisk, in: E. lo Sardo (ed.), The she-wolf and the sphinx: Rome and Egypt from history to myth, Milan 2008, 118-121. See P. Liverani in: P. Liverani and G. Spinola, 2010, Le Necropoli Vaticane: La città dei morti di Roma, Milan 2010, 16-18; P. Liverani, La diffusione e la localizzazione del culto di Antinoo a Roma e in Italia, in: F. Chausson (ed.), Proceedings of Antinoos: La fabrication d'un dieu (Égypte, Asie mineure, Grèce, Rome, Latium), forthcoming. See also the overview in Häuber, Augustus and the Campus Martius, 442-452. It has even been suggested that the 'field' could refer to the desert at Antinoopolis: P. Romeo, Ancora sull'obelisco adrianeo del Pincio, AANSA, 2007, 92-98; see Häuber, Augustus and the Campus Martius, 449.

[95] Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 61, 82, n. 176, pl. 20.

[96] E. Graefe, Der Kult des Antinoos und die Stadt Antinoupolis in Ägypten: Beiträge aus der Sicht eines Ägyptologen, in: A. Hartmann/G. Weber (eds.), Zwischen Antike und Moderne: Festschrift für Jürgen Malitz zum 65. Geburtstag, Speyer 2012, 211-232, esp. 224-227.

[97] Liverani, forthcoming.

a cenotaph as opposed to an actual burial place,[98] meaning that it is possible that Antinous was buried in Antinoopolis, but that the obelisk was carved and erected at a cenotaph in Italy.[99]

In 1898 Wilhelm Max Müller had suggested the Roman countryside as the original location.[100] Christian Hülsen and Heinz Kähler (both cited by Yourcenar) suggested a location for the obelisk near its findspot of outside the walls.[101] From the 1970s onwards, other scholars suggested a burial place at Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, a location first suggested for the obelisk by Antonio Nibby in 1839.[102] In 1998, excavations at Tivoli revealed a building with Egyptianising elements and the remains of a base that the excavators have suggested was intended for the obelisk. The building has been identified as a shrine to Antinous, and possibly even the tomb, [103] but as several scholars have noted, this remains highly uncertain. The complex there could well be a chapel to Antinous or an Egyptianising nymphaeum, and the central base need not have been intended specifically for the Monte Pincio obelisk.[104]

In terms of the tomb, Yourcenar did not simply choose one of these competing historical hypotheses (wisely, given the intractable nature of the controversy). Instead, in 'Saeculum aureum', she has Hadrien consider each of the historical hypotheses as possible options. After the death, he immediately decides to commemorate Antinous with a cult, and to found a city:

> Je marquais dans le sable la place de l'arc de triomphe, celle de la tombe. Antinoé allait naître … Mais, sur un point, ma pensée flottait. Il semblait impossible d'abandonner ce corps en sol étranger. Comme un homme incertain de l'étape suivante ordonne à la fois

[98] As suggested early by Hülsen, in: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 129

[99] See Liverani, forthcoming; Häuber, Augustus and the Campus Martius, 451-452.

[100] W.M. Müller, Zum Obelisken des Antinous, in: ZÄS 36, 1898, 131-132.

[101] Hülsen, in: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 122-130 (cited: Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 552); H. Kähler, Hadrian und seine Villa bei Tivoli, Berlin 1950, 155 (cited: Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 554). Yourcenar noted that the two scholars disagreed, the issue being whether the obelisk inscription referred to the burial place or a cenotaph (Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 552; in the English translation, Yourcenar specifically refers to H. Kähler, Hadrian und seine Villa bei Tivoli, 179 n. 158 where he noted his disagreement with Hülsen who gave more weight to the account of Epiphanius: Frick (trans.), Memoirs of Hadrian, 260).

[102] A. Nibby, Roma nell'anno MDCCCXXXVIII: Parte II. Antica, Roma 1839, 275 ('fatto da Adriano forse per qualcuno degli edificii della sua villa'); nothing suggests that this publication was known to Yourcenar. See e.g. M. Malaise, Les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des cultes égyptiens en Italie, Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 22, Leiden 1972, 423, n. 1. See also Renberg, in: MAAR 55, 2010, 181, n. 80; the claim repeated there that the villa was first suggested as a location in 1842 is not correct: see L.M. Ungarelli, Interpretatio obeliscorum Urbis, ad Gregorium XVI pontificum maximum digesta, Rome 1842, 165-191, esp. 181, n. 137.

[103] E.g. Z. Mari/S. Sgalambro, The Antinoeion of Hadrian's Villa: Interpretation and Architectural Reconstruction, in: American Journal of Archaeology 111, 2007, 83-104; Z. Mari, The 'Egyptian Places' of Hadrian's Villa: The Antinoeion and the Palaestra, in: E. lo Sardo (ed.), The she-wolf and the sphinx: Rome and Egypt from history to myth, Milan 2008, 122-131; Z. Mari, 'L'Egitto a Villa Adriana: l'Antinoeion e la considetta Palestra, in: M. S. Ragni (ed.), Villa Adriana: Una storia mai finite, Milan 2010, 129-137; Opper, Hadrian: Empire and conflict, 178-181; M. J. Versluys, Making meaning with Egypt: Hadrian, Antinous and Rome′s cultural renaissance, Supplemento a Mythos Rivista di Storia delle Religioni [n. s.] 3, 2012, 25-39; B. Frischer, G. Zotti, Z. Mari, G., Capriotti Vittozzi, Archaeoastronomical experiments supported by virtual simulation environments: Celestial alignments in the Antinoeion at Hadrian′s Villa (Tivoli, Italy), in: Digital applications in archaeology and cultural heritage 3, 2016, 55-79. See also B. Adembri (ed.), Suggestioni egizie a Villa Adriana, Milan 2006.

[104] E.g. Renberg, in: MAAR 55, 2010, 182-184; Häuber, Augustus and the Campus Martius, 447-448.

> un logement dans plusieurs hôtelleries, je lui commandai à Rome un monument sur les bords du Tibre, près de ma tombe; je pensai aussi aux chapelles égyptiennes que j'avais, par caprice, fait bâtir à la Villa, et qui s'avéraient soudain tragiquement utiles.[105]

Earlier, in 'Tellus stabilita', Hadrien had mentioned these chapels at the villa as primarily places of mourning rather than burial: 'les chapelles d'Antinoüs, et ses temples, chambres magiques, monuments d'un mystérieux passage entre la vie et la mort, oratoires d'une douleur et d'un bonheur étouffants, étaient le lieu de la prière et de la réapparition'.[106] Several pages later in 'Saeculum aureum', he says 'j'hésitais encore au sujet de l'emplacement de la tombe', remembering the hostility of Rome towards his favourite: 'je me dis que je ne serais pas toujours là pour protéger cette sépulture. Le monument prévu aux portes d'Antinoé semblait aussi trop public, peu sûr'.[107]

Ultimately, as novelist, Yourcenar had to make her Hadrien decide on a site for the tomb. She had Hadrien place Antinous 'au flanc d'une montagne de la chaîne arabique' close to the city in 'une de ces cavernes destinées jadis par les rois d'Égypte à leur servir de puits funéraires'.[108] Again, this is apparently derived from Gayet who said that Antinous, 'enterré selon les préceptes du rite égyptien, aurait, lui aussi, sa tombe creusée aux alentours de sa ville, dans quelque coin perdu de la *montagne*' (my emphasis), and that 'le rite officiel était conforme à la tradition du pays'.[109] It is perhaps notable that in the case of this controversy Yourcenar ultimately favoured the French authorities she knew, following Gayet with his 'ardeur', and also the plates of the *Description* with its 'émouvantes images'.[110] Her description of the caverns is, however, historically implausible, and it evokes a rather stereotypical touristic image of the Egyptian landscape in which every wadi in the desert hills is a potential Valley of the Kings. Her 'caverne' may have been in part suggested by images of some 'grotte d'anachorète' in another of Gayet's publications about burials that he had discovered in the 'montagne' of Antinoopolis.[111]

Yourcenar commented in the unpublished notebook mentioned above that 'les détails sur la tombe représentent un effort pour concilier les interprétations divergentes des archéologues'. This remark underplays her own creative imagination: she took an unresolved historical uncertainty and used it to evoke 'une incertitude qui … a sans doute été celle de la vie elle-même'.[112] This is arguably not just a 'contaminatio' of distinct sources,[113] but a conscious imaginative strategy. She mentions this strategy several times in the 'Carnets de notes' containing her reflections on the novel, remarking that she had tried to 's'arranger pour que les lacunes de nos textes, en ce qui concerne la vie d'Hadrien, coïncident avec ce qu'eussent été ses propres oublis'.[114] Among 'les règles du jeu', she included: 'lorsque deux textes, deux affirmations, deux idées s'opposent, se plaire à les concilier plutôt qu'à les annuler l'un par l'autre', aiming by these means for 'une réalité

[105] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 441-442.

[106] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 385.

[107] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 450. Other earlier mentions of the tomb: 403, 430.

[108] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 450.

[109] Gayet, L'exploration des ruines d'Antinoë, 17. For the actual Egyptian aspects of Antinous' divinisation see e.g. Renberg, in: MAAR 55, 2010, 174-179.

[110] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 555.

[111] Gayet, Antinoë et les sépultures de Thaïs et Sérapion, 59; A. Gayet, Fantomes d'Antinoë: Les sépultures de Leukyoné et Myrithis, Paris 1904, 9, 45.

[112] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 545-546. Summary in Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 713-716.

[113] See Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 447-448.

[114] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 528.

convaincante parce qu'elle est complexe, humaine parce qu'elle est multiple'.[115] The literary impact of the indecision about the tomb is effective psychologically, evoking the uncertainty and horror of the death in human terms, as Poignault has observed: 'les tombes d'Antinoüs sont comme multipliées ... en tentative pathétique pour déjouer la mort'.[116] Historical uncertainty becomes an expression of the uncertainty of lived experience.

The Funeral of Antinous

Yourcenar's Antinous is mummified at the nearby city of Hermopolis, during a period of two months.[117] Many details of the description of his funeral reflect well-known traditional pharaonic evidence, such as 'un attelage de boeufs traîna le sarcophage', which was presumably taken from much-reproduced Book of the Dead vignettes.[118] Likewise, the gilded fingernails that Hadrien is called on to admire are features of mummies that have often attracted modern literary attention.[119] Many other details, however, derive from the account of mummification in Diodorus Book I, rather than Egyptian sources: the description of Hadrien gazing into the mummified face and still recognising the shadow cast by 'les cils ... sur les joues' recalls Diodorus' account of the mummy being returned to its relatives so well preserved 'that even the hair on the eyelids and brows remains' so that people can 'gaze face to face' on ancestors.[120] Likewise the priests enacting the deceased's proclamation of his virtues recalls the performative aspects of Diodorus' account of the judgement of the dead, although the fact that the speaker here is 'le mort' himself suggests that she had also consulted Egyptological accounts of the negative confession as a first person declaration.[121] Some details in her account might result from her misconceptions about Egyptian practices; one example of this is the funerary mask. She mentions that wax was used to create a mould directly from the deceased's face to fashion a gold funerary mask, which is unlike the idealised faces of Egyptian masks, but may relate to the more naturalistic painted portraits on Roman-period mummies and also to Roman wax ancestor masks.[122] On a literary level, wax is later evoked as a metaphor for the mummified Antinous, 'comme de ces tablettes de cire desquelles on efface un ordre accompli', recalling 'l'ordre de ciel' of Antinous' death (see below).[123] Her narrative of the funeral also implies that the mask is placed directly onto the uncovered face rather than onto the

[115] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 528.

[116] Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 714.

[117] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 440-442; one possible source for this location is Erman who noted Hermopolis was mentioned on the obelisk because of its proximity: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 114.

[118] E.g. Book of the Dead spell 1: P. BM EA 104777.5.

[119] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 450-451. On mummies' hands see e.g. A. Briefel, The racial hand in the Victorian imagination, Cambridge 2017, 81.

[120] I, 91: C.H. Oldfather, Diodorus of Sicily in twelve volumes I, Books I and II, 1-34, Loeb classical library 278, 1968, 312-313.

[121] I, 92: C.H. Oldfather, Diodorus of Sicily I, 312-315. On this see now e.g. M.A. Stadler, War eine dramatische Aufführung eines Totengerichts Teil der ägyptischen Totenriten?, in: SAK 29, 2001, 331-348; J.F. Quack, Nochmals zu Balsamierung und Totengericht im großen demotischen Weisheitsbuch, in: Enchoria 34, 2014/2015, 105-118.

[122] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 441, 450. Roman wax ancestor masks are mentioned by the elder Pliny (H.I. Flower, Ancestor masks and aristocratic power in Roman culture, Oxford 1996, 6-7, 39), and 'le buste de cire du mur des ancêtres' is mentioned in 'Varius multiplex multiformis': Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 309.

[123] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 456.

bandaged head, as one would expect.[124] In a similar manner, the 'passes magiques' of her priests are based on the 'Opening of the mouth' ceremony, but they are here intended not to open the mouth of the mummy but are instead means by which the priests 'forcent l'âme du mort à incarner une parcelle d'elle-même à l'intérieur des statues qui conserveront sa mémoire'.[125] This misunderstanding—or reconfiguration—links the funeral rites to Hadrien's later obsession in 'Disciplina augusta' with commissioning statues to embody his memory of Antinous: 'je pensais amèrement aux passes par lesquelles les prêtres égyptiens avaient attiré l'âme du mort à l'intérieur des simulacres de bois qu'ils utilisent pour leur culte; j'avais fait comme eux'.[126] I am unable to suggest direct sources for the 'bouquet d'acacia' placed on the mummy's chest at the end of the funeral ceremony,[127] but acacia flowers are known from funerary garlands placed on coffins,[128] and the sprig may in part derive from childhood memories of seeing flowers and palms on the Christian mummies from Antinoopolis displayed in the Musée Guimet.[129]

For the ceremony, Antinous' 'mince cercueil de cèdre' is placed inside 'une cuve de porphyre, dressée tout debout dans la salle la plus secrète du temple', and it subsequently requires 'une douzaine d'hommes' to place the lid on it.[130] Imperial 'porphyre' is thematically appropriate for an imperial burial, and the stone derives from the Egyptian desert south-east of Antinoopolis. One of Yourcenar's cited sources mentions a porphyry sarcophagus found in Hadrian's mausoleum,[131] and the stone was used in Hadrian's Pantheon and Temple of Venus at Rome, as well as in later imperial sarcophagi now in the Vatican and Ravenna.[132] However, while the mummy is shown upright during the funerary rituals in many Book of the Dead vignettes,[133] her image of a huge stone sarcophagus standing upright during the funeral and then being lent 'contre une paroi de roc' in the tomb is hard to parallel from ancient Egyptian sources.[134] It derives instead from Diodorus' account of mummifications, where people who lack a private sepulchre are said to build a chamber in their house and 'stand the coffin upright against the firmest wall'.[135] Yourcenar

[124] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 450.

[125] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 450.

[126] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 464; see further below. I am unable to suggest why Yourcenar specifies wood here, unless she was thinking of Tutankhamun's wooden guardian statues or shabti figures.

[127] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 450.

[128] V. Loret, La flore pharaonique d'après les documents hiéroglyphiques et les spécimens découverts dans les tombes, Annales de la Société botanique de Lyon 15, Paris 1887, 84; Lucas, Ancient Egyptian materials and industries, 442, n. 9. For the known uses of acacia see e.g. R. Germer, Flora des pharaonischen Ägypten, SDAIK 14, Mainz 1985, 90-91.

[129] The bouquet recalls the Christian mummy of Thais which held a palm and a rose of Jericho in her hands: e.g. Gayet, Antinoë et les sépultures de Thaïs et Sérapion, 44-49. See Yourcenar, Essais et mémoires, 1368; for the displays see Calament, La révélation d'Antinoé par Albert Gayet, 293-294, 311-316.

[130] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 449-450. The word 'cuve' recalls the scene at Canopus: Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 437.

[131] S. R. Pierce The mausoleum of Hadrian and the Pons Aelius, Journal of Roman Studies 15, 1925, 77, 88 n. 2.

[132] E.g. L. Manniche, Ægyptisk porfyr til romerske kejsere, in: Papyrus: Ægyptologisk tidsskrift 33, 2013, 22-37. For a contemporary overview see A.A. Vasiliev, Imperial porphyry sarcophagi in Constantinople, Dumbarton Oaks Papers 4, 1948, 3-26.

[133] E.g. Book of the Dead spell 1: P. BM EA 10477.6

[134] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 451.

[135] I, 92: C.H. Oldfather, Diodorus of Sicily I, 316-317.

may also have been thinking of museum displays where stone lids of sarcophagi were often placed upright against walls, as in the British Museum which she had visited as a child.[136]

The merging of classical and Egyptological sources is dramatically appropriate for a burial at this historical period, especially when recounted by a Roman emperor. Some of these details were probably unconscious imprecisions, but they were used for poetic effect, and often so effectively that one cannot be certain that they were not conscious re-writings in order to increase the sense of the burial as a 'symbole inerte d'immortalité' in contrast to the living Antinous. In particular, the placement in the historically unlikely cavern in the desert mountain allows Antinous' mummy, 'un atroce chef-d'oeuvre … que l'air et le soleil ne toucheraient jamais plus', to be placed 'sans air, sans lumière, sans saisons et sans fin',[137] the opposite of all the vital humanism that is embodied in her Hadrien. For Hadrien, the country of Egypt will have 'un rôle éternel d'embaumeur', and the newly founded city will impose 'sur cette terre sinistre une cité toute grecque' which will conquer death with the apotheosis of the beloved.[138] She draws a contrast between her favoured Greek vision of the world and those of other cultures: the living Greece with its respect for 'la passion pour l'ami', and 'l'Égypte funéraire'.[139] This image of Egypt also recurs on a personal level in the English translation of the 'Carnets de notes', where Yourcenar described working on the novel isolated and enclosed in a train compartment 'as if in a cubicle of some Egyptian tomb'.[140]

The obelisk of Antinous

With her treatment of the Monte Pincio obelisk, Yourcenar for once drew on native Egyptian textual sources directly, albeit through translations. The 'Note' lists her sources as Erman's paper 'Der Obelisk des Antinous' (which has a full translation but no hieroglyphic text) and a volume by Orazio Marucchi (with a partial text and translation).[141]

In two places, Yourcenar quotes the Monte Pincio obelisk inscription, but both passages are removed from the original context of the monument. The freedom of these translations is characteristic of her general attitude towards poetic translation from any language.[142] One quotation, in 'Disciplina augusta', is as follows: 'cette phrase que les prêtres égyptiens

[136] E.g. one early photograph of the British Museum Sculpture Gallery: P. Usick/R.B. Parkinson, The history of the Nebamun wall paintings: An archival investigation, in: A. Middleton/K. Uprichard (eds.), The Nebamun wall paintings: Conservation, scientific analysis and display at the British Museum, London 2008, 13. For Yourcenar's familiarity with the Museum see Parkinson, in: Schneider/Szpakowska (eds.), Egyptian stories, 77-78.

[137] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 441, 451.

[138] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 441; see in general Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 673-679.

[139] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 411 and 385. On her attitude to Greece see e.g. A. Halley (ed.), Yourcenar et la Grèce = Desmos/le lien 25, 2007.

[140] Frick (trans.), Memoirs of Hadrian, 275. The original French is simply 'comme dans un hypogée' (Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 526). Frick's translation was very much a collaborative process with Yourcenar and has authorial authority: see Joan E. Howard, We Met in Paris: Grace Frick and her life with Marguerite Yourcenar, Columbia 2018, 190-200.

[141] A. Erman, Der Obelisk des Antinous, in: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 114-121 (note that another of his publications contains the hieroglyphic text: A. Erman, Römische Obelisken, 10-17, 28-47); O. Maruchi, Gli obelischi egiziani di Roma, illustrati con traduzione dei testi geroglifici da Orazio Marucchi, Roma 1898.

[142] E.g. R. Jouanny, Yourcenar, de la Grèce antique à Cavafy, in: P.L. Fort (ed.), Marguerite Yourcenar: Un certain lundi 8 Juin 1903, Paris 2004, 93-109, esp. 103-105; Parkinson, in: Schneider/Szpakowska (eds.), Egyptian stories.

avaient fait graver sur le cercueil d'Antinoüs: *Il a obéi à l'ordre du ciel'*.[143] The phrase is based on the obelisk's *šsp.n:f wdt nt nṯrw r tr ȝw:f* 'when he received the order of the gods at the time of his death',[144] translated by Erman as 'er empfing den Befehl der Götter wie …',[145] and by Marucchi as 'prese egli l'ordine degli dei …'.[146] Yourcenar's free translation or paraphrase of 'gods' as 'ciel' allowed her to imagine a dramatic context for Hadrien meditating on Antinoopolis: 'debout à une fenêtre ... dans la nuit semée d'astres, je songeais à cette phrase que les prêtres égyptiens avaient fait graver sur le cercueil d'Antinoüs: *Il a obéi à l'ordre du ciel*'. Immediately after this quotation, Hadrien reflects: 'se pouvait-il que le ciel nous intimât des ordres, et que les meilleurs d'entre nous les entendissent …'.[147] Removed from its specific context on the obelisk, the phrase becomes part of a more generalised reflection on humanity.

Later in 'Patientia', while Hadrien lies waiting for death, he quotes the obelisk text again as he tries to summon up the spirit of Antinous, recalling how 'la sotte Julia Balbilla croyait entendre la voix mystérieuse de Memnon':[148]

> je me suis rappelé les ordres chuchotés par les prêtres à l'oreille du mort, l'itinéraire gravé sur la tombe: *Et il reconnaîtra la route ... Et les gardiens du seuil le laisseront passer … Et il ira et viendra autour de ceux qui l'aiment pour des millions de jours …*[149]

This is derived from the original:

> *šm.n:f r bw-nb mr.n:f jrjw-ʿȝ nw spt-jwgrt ḏd:w n:f jȝw.tw:k sf:sn q(ȝ)rwtj:sn wn:sn sbȝw:sn* (*m*)-*ḫȝt:f m ḥḥj n rnpwt n ḥḥj n rnpwt rʿ nb*
>
> He goes wherever he wishes; the doorkeepers of the underworld say to him 'Praised be you!'. They will draw their bolts, they will open their doors before him for millions and millions of years, every day.[150]

Of her two sources, Erman's translation reads 'er geht zu' jedem Orte, zu dem er gehen will. Die Thürhüter des Ekergaues, sie sagen ihm jedes Lob (?). Sie lösen ihre Riegel, sie öffnen ihre Thüren vor ihm, in einer Million von Million von Jahren, täglich …';[151] Marucchi reads 'egli va in qualunque luogo egli vuole abdare … I custodi delle porte dicono a lui ogni lode … essi aprono le lora porte innanzi a lui in millioni di anni ogni giorno'.[152] Hadrien's mention of the whispered 'ordres' recalls the earlier quotation from the obelisk mentioning 'l'ordre du ciel' that was carved on the coffin. Here, she re-shapes the passage into an assurance that the dead Antinous will be able to visit specifically '*ceux qui l'aiment*', which is dramatically relevant to the fictional context of the emperor's grief. The rewritten quotation leads to an immensely resonant quotation from a passage of Arrien's *Periplus Ponti Euxini* that had been cited earlier at the start of 'Patientia'—'*et l'ombre de Patrocle apparaît aux côtés d'Achille*'—evoking two male lovers separated by death. With

[143] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 456.

[144] Obelisk IIa: Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 40-41, pl. 7-9.

[145] Erman, in: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 116. Neither of Yourcenar's sources translated the mention of the time of Antinous' death.

[146] Marucchi, Gli obelischi, 135. Neither of the passages that she quotes are included in Gayet's discussion, L'exploration des ruines d'Antinoë, 52-54.

[147] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 456.

[148] As Poignault notes, Hadrien has, characteristically, a more rational attitude to the sound than Balbilla: L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 617.

[149] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 510.

[150] Obelisk IIf: Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 50-51, pl. 10-12; see Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 624-625.

[151] In: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 117.

[152] Marucchi, Gli obelischi, 135-136.

this passage Arrien had offered the dying emperor ‘une image de ma vie telle que j’aurais voulu qu’elle fût’.[153]

The inscription on the obelisk itself is not explicitly mentioned in the novel, but Yourcenar seems to have imagined the obelisk not as part of the actual tomb, but as part of a cenotaph to Antinous in Rome, initially commissioned while Hadrien was uncertain where to bury Antinous: ‘un monument sur les bords du Tibre, près de ma tombe’.[154] When meditating on architecture in ‘Tellus stabilita’, Hadrien states: ‘l’Égypte funéraire a ordonné les obélisques et les allées de sphinx du cénotaphe qui impose à une Rome vaguement hostile la mémoire de l’ami jamais assez pleuré’.[155] And later, in ‘Disciplina augusta’, as he extends his own mausoleum: ‘je m’employais aussi à orner le cénotaphe élevé au Champ de Mars à la mémoire d’Antinoüs et pour lequel un bateau plat, venu d’Alexandrie, avait débarqué des obélisques et des sphinx’.[156] Yourcenar was presumably thinking of the Monte Pincio obelisk as one of a pair, flanking the entrance of a building, as had been suggested as a possibility by Hülsen.[157] These descriptions of Egyptianising architectural elements apparently derive from the obelisk inscription itself, which describes a temple of Antinous in the city named after him as follows: ‘sphinxes are in its surroundings and statues, and numerous columns as made by the ancestors before, and as made by the Greeks’.[158] Yourcenar would have known this not only from the translations of Erman and Marucchi, but also from Gayet’s discussion (‘entouré de sphinx, de statues, ainsi que le faisaient les anciens et les Ptolémées après eux’).[159] Gayet had believed this temple to be the Ramessid one in Egypt, but he mentioned (incorrectly) that Erman had identified its location as being in ‘le Champ de Mars’;[160] J. B. Heidel and J. B. McClain now relate it to a newly discovered temple in Antinoopolis.[161] In line with her association of Egypt with all things funereal, Yourcenar also claimed that the Mausoleum itself had Egyptian aspects for Hadrien. In ‘Tellus stabilita’, Hadrien states that this was modelled on the tombs of the Appian way,[162] but later after Antinous’ death, when he has it extended, she has him claim (not very plausibly) that ‘l’Égypte m’inspirait ces galeries circulaires, ces

[153] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 500.

[154] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 442.

[155] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 385.

[156] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 462.

[157] Hülsen, in: MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 129. Renberg has supported a slightly unlikely scenario of the Monte Pincio obelisk being a copy of an original erected by the tomb at Antinoopolis: MAAR 55, 2010, 189-191; see also S. Ensoli Vittozzi, Musei Capitolini la collezione egizia, Milan 1990, 49-50. On the suggestions that a fragment of a second obelisk survives in the Capitoline Museum see: Häuber, Augustus and the Campus Martius, 449.

[158] Obelisk IVc: Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 64-65, pl. 20-23.

[159] Erman, MDAIR 11.2, 1896, 120; Marucchi, Gli obelischi, 137; Gayet, L’exploration des ruines d’Antinoë, 53.

[160] Gayet, L’exploration des ruines d’Antinoë, 53. The article by Erman that was known to Yourcenar, however, does not include this identification of the location, and he elsewhere identified the temple as being in Antinoopolis: Römische Obelisken, 17. As Marucchi noted, the Campus Martius was actually suggested by S. Birch, in: J.H. Parker, The twelve Egyptian obelisks in Rome, Oxford 1879, 60-61: Marucchi, Gli obelischi, 137-138. See also Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 16.

[161] J. B. Heidel and J. B. McClain, Egyptian Archaeology 52, 2018, 34-37.

[162] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 385. The ‘gigantesque’ tomb has begun to rise early in ‘Saeculum aureum’: 418-419.

rampes glissant vers des salles souterraines';[163] at the very end of the novel mention is made of the 'pyramide noire' formed by its cypresses.[164]

Although both passages of the obelisk's inscription are rewritten and the obelisk is all but removed from the main narrative, Yourcenar stated explicitly in the 'Note' that the phrases were taken from '[le] grand texte hiéroglyphique de l'obélisque du Pincio'.[165] The inscribed source remains in the text to some extent: the first passage is said to have been carved on the coffin, and although the words of the second passage are whispered they are also part of 'l'itinéraire' carved on the tomb, just as they were carved on the obelisk. Yourcenar thus alludes to this inscriptional source indirectly, parallel to her evocation of the Greek graffiti on Memnon. These transferences of the obelisk's inscription to other contexts avoid various practical problems for the novelist. As Yourcenar will have known from Gayet and Erman, it was (and is) highly controversial where the obelisk was erected, as well as how it related to the location of Antinous' tomb (which she had located in Egypt, as noted above). Yourcenar's relocation of the quotes onto the coffin and tomb perhaps assimilate the hypothesis that the obelisk had been part of Antinous' burial and tomb.[166] Her erasure of the obelisk from the novel was probably not due to her unfamiliarity with the original language of its inscription, even though such factors were important to her as a writer.[167] Rather, as with the Memnon graffiti, she made the text more relevant to the living moment of the drama—the words of the obelisk become vividly whispered in the ear, and carved on the coffin or tomb close to the beloved body. She absorbed the surviving sources, and imagined the events behind them, and then re-narrated these without directly presenting the sources but with details which nevertheless evoked the original sources. In such a way, queer desire recontextualised, transformed and rewrote historical texts; emotions rewrote and replaced epigraphy.

Yourcenar's and Derchain's view of Egypt

In 'Varius multiplex multiformis', Hadrien declares that he has thought and lived in Greek, in contrast to 'des prêtres égyptiens'; these priests showed him 'leurs antiques symboles, signes plutôt que mots, efforts très anciens de classification du monde et des choses, parler sépulcral d'une race morte'.[168] For him, the Egyptian language is one of those which are 'pétrifiées',[169] matched by the 'destin pétrifié' of Thebes, 'sainte[s], mais révolue[s]'.[170] He

[163] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 462, echoing the description of the descent of Antinous into his tomb in Egypt: 451. This idea presumably derives from a cautious remark in S.R. Pierce, The mausoleum of Hadrian and the Pons Aelius, Journal of Roman Studies 15, 1925, 88 n. 2 (an article that is cited in Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 553); the (un-Egyptian) curving galleries of the mausoleum, however, are not mentioned by Pierce in connection with Egyptian architecture. On possible Egyptian echoes in the architecture of the mausoleums of Augustus and Hadrian, see now P.J.E. Davies, Death and the emperor: Roman imperial funerary monuments from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius, Cambridge 2000, 51-61.

[164] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 514.

[165] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 548.

[166] In the English translation of 1954, the two passages are both said to be 'carved on Antinous' tomb' (and not his coffin) and 'written on the tomb': Frick (trans.), Memoirs of Hadrian, 186, 242; compare Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 548.

[167] In the 'Carnets de notes', she stated that one reason for not writing about Omar Khayyam was that she did not know his language: Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 525.

[168] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 312.

[169] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 312. Compare Derchain's evocation of 'l'hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère, celui qui autrefois lisait mes inscriptions, celui pour qui les écrits étaient faits et qui ne se trahit plus, celui qui a connu les voluptés vaguement évoquées, les plaisirs crapuleux, les tâches harassantes, a

also voices a parallel contrast between Greek and Egyptian visual art when viewing royal statues close to the Memnon: 'ces blocs inertes où rien n'est présent de ce qui pour nous constitue la vie, ni la douleur, ni la volupté, ni le mouvement qui libère les membres, ni la réflexion qui organise le monde autour d'une tête penchée'.[171] The Egyptian priests who show these statues to Hadrien are described as 'mal renseignés', displaying in their temples only 'hiéroglyphes monotones', a parody of human history as a sequence of 'existences abolies'.[172] This symbolic polarity between the sepulchral Egypt and the living Greece that Hadrien voices presumably reflects in part Yourcenar's own preoccupations and education, and is part of the general European reception of Egyptian culture. Yourcenar apparently found it easier to engage with classical statues rather than Egyptianising ones: her Hadrien does not mention any Egyptian forms of Antinous as he lists the various embodiments that the beloved takes in his cult in 'Patientia'; in a similar manner Yourcenar chose only one statue of Antinous that was in an Egyptianising style for inclusion in an illustrated edition of 1953.[173] Her narrative of Antinous' funeral suggests a reliance on and/or preference for classical rather than Egyptian sources. In the novel overall, however, any inescapable prejudices of the novelist's culture and sources are transformed by personal feeling: this cultural stereotype of 'l'Égypte funéraire'[174] is animated through the dramatic context. In the Theban episode, Hadrien's hostility to Egyptian culture is psychologically convincing as an expression of his grief and bias against the world, having lost his beloved. Later, in 'Patientia', he says 'je pense avec dégoût aux noirs symboles des tombes égyptiennes ...'.[175] The word 'inerte' that is used of Egyptian monuments in Thebes is also applied to the dead Antinous' limbs, and his mummy assemblage is a 'symbole inerte d'immortalité'.[176] This motif is part of a theme that runs through the novel, as the emperor attempts to recapture his lost love through stone statues,[177] and it is also an image of the historian's attempt to return life to the world of antiquity, writing at one point in an enclosed space like an Egyptian tomb (see above). In the 'Carnets de notes', one of the 'règles du jeu' is: 'tâcher de rendre leur mobilité, leur souplesse vivante, à ces visages de pierre'.[178] In this sense, the Egyptian petrified monuments are not exceptional, but instead embody the obstacles that face a historian in an extreme form, and reflect a general cultural issue that, as Hadrien says at the start of 'Patentia', 'ce qui compte est ce qui ne figurera pas dans les biographies officielles, ce qu'on n'inscrit pas sur les tombes'.[179] The ideal emotional life represented by Greece is

eu peur de la mort, celui pour qui l'égyptien n'était pas une langue morte': Le souvenir imaginaire, Verviers 1996, 12.

[170] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 371.

[171] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 444.

[172] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 444. Compare P. Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, Brussels 1987, 19: 'reliefs monotones'.

[173] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 508; illustrated edition: Mémoires d'Hadrien, le club du meilleur livre, visages de l'histoire, Paris 1953, 320-321. In the latter, she included the Dresden Antinous (AB 423): see e.g. M. Goslar, Antinoüs: De la pierre à l'écriture de *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, Brussels 2007, 24-25; P. Curtis/C. Vout, Antinous: The face of the antique, Leeds 2006, 76-77.

[174] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 462.

[175] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 511.

[176] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 444, 449, 450.

[177] E.g. Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 662-667.

[178] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 528.

[179] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 500.

symbolically opposed by Pharaonic culture, just as Hadrien's ideals are opposed in a political sphere by Jewish intransigence.[180]

This explicit lack of sympathy for the world of Greco-Roman Egypt differed from that of Philippe Derchain, despite his admiration for Yourcenar's works. His response to this reception of Egyptian culture was *Le dernier obélisque*, published in 1987. The inspiration for this fictional work was a philological comparison of the texts of the Monte Pincio obelisk with that of a stela dedicated by a lector-priest of the temple at Akhmim, named Petehornebkhem, fictionalised as Pétarbeschénis.[181] The opening page of the volume states that it was the result of two seminars on the stela in Cologne in 1985-1986.[182] In his narrative, Derchain rewrote Yourcenar's episode of Hadrien in Egypt, and in effect restored the primacy of the Egyptian inscription that Yourcenar had drawn on and almost suppressed from the novel.

Earlier, in 1975, Derchain had published an academic analysis of the passage on the obelisk referring to the location of Antinous' tomb/cenotaph, and he read the controversial phrase *sḫt-t3š n-nb{t}-w3s-h3rmˁ* as 'la villa de l'Empereur de Rome',[183] referring to Tivoli, a location that had also been suggested by Michel Malaise around this time.[184] Also in 1975, Kähler argued that the obelisk and tomb had been erected at the villa, near the supposed Canopus; this hypothesis had been developed in conversations with Derchain in Cologne.[185] In *Le dernier obélisque*, Derchain stated that 'pour situer le tombeau d'Antinoüs, j'ai adopté l'hypothèse de H. Kähler, que les fouilles de Tivoli n'ont ni étayée, ni infirmée. Cependant, l'inscription même de l'obélisque plaide sans aucun doute en sa faveur'.[186] *Le dernier obélisque* contains a translation of the text of the stela, but not of the obelisk, and in 1991 he published an annotated full translation of the obelisk in the article 'Un projet d'empereur'.[187] In this, he followed Grenier's reading *sḫt-t3š n-nb{t}-w3s* [*m*]-*h3rmˁ*, and translated 'le domaine campagnard de celui qui détient le pouvoir à Rome'.[188] In his discussion of the obelisk's original location, Derchain prioritised the importance of the text, noting that 'la découverte même de la base in situ ne serait d'aucun secours pour interpréter le texte puisque celui-ci est antérieur à l'érection'.[189] Ironically, excavations at Tivoli in 1998 revealed the remains of a base that was possibly for the obelisk, although this claim is disputed (see above). Derchain's interpretation was based on philology, but it may also have been influenced by his admiration for Yourcenar and by the prominence of the chapels

[180] See Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 509.

[181] Berlin inv. 22489 (now destroyed): A. Scharff, Ein Denkstein der römischen Kaiserzeit aus Achmim, in: ZÄS 62, 1927, 86-107. On the points of similarity between the two texts, see below.

[182] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, [0].

[183] P. Derchain, À propos de l'obélisque d'Antinoüs, in: J. Bingen/G. Cambier/G. Nachtergael (eds.), Le monde grec, pensée, littérature, histoire, documents: Hommages à Claire Préaux, Brussels 1975, 809-813.

[184] M. Malaise, Les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des cultes égyptiens en Italie, Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 22, Leiden 1972, 423, n. 1. See n. 102 above.

[185] H. Kähler, Zur Herkunft des Antinous Obelisken, Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historian Pertinentia 6, 35-44; note that Kähler's earlier opinion was different in his 1950 Hadrian und seine Villa bei Tivoli (cited by Yourcenar in Oeuvres romanesques, 552, 554). For the origin of his revised opinion see Derchain, in: Bingen/Cambier/Nachtergael (eds.), Le monde grec, pensée, littérature, histoire, documents, 810.

[186] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 53.

[187] P. Derchain, Un projet d'empereur, in: D. Mendel/U. Claudi (ed.), Ägypten im afro-orientalischen Kontext: Aufsätze zur Archäologie, Geschichte und Sprache eines unbegrenzten Raumes: Gedenkschrift Peter Behrens, Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere, Sondernummer, Cologne 1991, 109-124.

[188] Derchain, in: Mendel/Claudi (eds.), Ägypten im afro-orientalischen Kontext, 116, see also 110.

[189] Derchain, in: Mendel/Claudi (eds.), Ägypten im afro-orientalischen Kontext, 111.

of Antinous at the villa in her vision of Hadrien and in her evocation of his grief there.[190] In *Le dernier obélisque* 'un obélisque ornerait le tombeau d'Antinoüs, près de l'exèdre qui borde 1e canal canopique du jardin de Tibur'.[191]

As Renberg has noted, any direct relevance of the mention of 'Rome' on the obelisk to the actual location is unclear from the passage, regardless of the readings, since it can relate to the description of the emperor rather than the location of the *sḫt-t3š*; he describes the passage as a 'non-issue'.[192] The passage can, however, be considered to be an example of the sort of gap that requires imagination to make good; as such it is a useful reminder that much of what philologists and historians do is by necessity a leap of imagination, as is exemplified both by Yourcenar's poetic approach to antiquity and by Derchain's part-literary, part-academic treatment of the monument.

Academic or subversive attitudes

Despite its origin in university seminars and despite the fact that it was published by the Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, Derchain's *Le dernier obélisque* is strongly literary in its inspiration. It is highly Yourcenarian in its paratext: it comprises a fictional narrative with an explanatory account of its genesis, a 'second récit ... l'histoire du premier'.[193] This mirrors the structure of Yourcenar's *Mémoires* in its final form, which contains the 'Carnets de notes' reflecting on the process of composition and the detailed bibliographic 'Note'. He included phrases and passages from Yourcenar's novel directly in his re-writing, and cited them in italics, along with other quoted texts, just as Yourcenar had cited her Ancient Egyptian texts.[194] His intertextual approach treated both ancient historical sources and modern fictional ones in exactly the same manner. His book is also Yourcenarian in its 'travail passionnant qui consiste à rapprocher les textes';[195] he joined fragmentary sources together (just as Yourcenar had explored coincidental relationships between dates) in order to create a humane narrative, which focussed on issues of translating between different cultures and languages. His account was developed from coincidences that are more philological but broadly similar to those in Yourcenar. An unusual writing of Hadrian's name with an initial *h* on the scene on one face of the obelisk[196] is found only once elsewhere, on the stela of Petehornebkhem, leading him to suggest a common authorship. This daring argument *ex silentio* is complemented by other similarities between the two texts, such as the mention in both texts of the 'craftsmen of Thoth',[197] and the use of an uncommon word *ꜥnt*.[198] As he noted, 'proposer dans une notule pour une revue savante que les deux monuments fussent l'œuvre du même auteur n'eût été

[190] E.g. M. Cavazzuti, La Villa Adriana entre réalité et vision créatrice, in: B. Deprez (ed.), La ville de Marguerite Yourcenar, Brussels 1999, 153-164.

[191] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 27.

[192] In: MAAR 55, 2010, 186-189; quote from 188.

[193] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 37. Yourcenar cited Racine as a precedent for her practice: Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 543.

[194] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 1, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20, 31.

[195] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 530.

[196] Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, pl. 1; the name is in lacuna in the main text: pl. 5.

[197] Stela main text l. 10: Scharff, in: ZÄS 62, 1927, 104; Obelisk IIIb: Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 54-55, 80 n. 154, 117-119, pl. 14. See Derchain, in: Mendel/Claudi (eds.), Ägypten im afro-orientalischen Kontext, 120, n. 752, 65, n. 15.

[198] Wb. I, 188.11 in: Stela main text l. 8: Scharff, in: ZÄS 62, 1927, 103; Obelisk IId: Grimm/Kessler/Meyer, Der Obelisk des Antinoos, 46-47, pl. 8. See Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 52, 65, n. 15.

qu'une hypothèse de plus à laquelle personne n'eût pris garde, comme tant d'autres'.[199] His literary hypothesis has been subsequently followed by scholars such as Grenier, and the proposed authorship has even occasionally been cited as an established fact without comment or qualification.[200] Such silent transformations from literary hypothesis to scientific fact caused him to smile,[201] and they also attest to the permeable boundaries between objective scholarship and imaginative history.

Derchain re-wrote Yourcenar as confidently as she had rewritten her academic sources. He was explicit about the extent and nature of his rewriting:

> il sera moins difficile qu'on ne pourrait le croire de faire accepter la mascarade a l'égyptienne par cet Hadrien peu sensible à l'art égyptien des admirables *Mémoires* que Marguerite Yourcenar a rédigés pour lui (cités plusieurs fois en italique dans mon premier récit) car on sait aussi qu'il était curieux de faits religieux … Malgré la contraignante authenticité des *Mémoires*, je crois qu'Hadrien a dû, à quelque moment, justement dans les jours qui suivirent la mort d'Antinoüs, éprouver un attrait réel pour les croyances égyptiennes. Comment comprendre sinon les hiéroglyphes de Tibur?[202]

From Derchain's perspective, a conversation between the emperor and the priest who had composed the text became a necessity in order to explain the history of the text,[203] and this conversation in effect parallels an intertextual dialogue between the two authors. The roles of academic editor and imaginative author are blurred.

For Yourcenar, the accounts of the 'mal renseignés' priests in Thebes had wearied her Hadrien, but Derchain defended the Egyptian priesthood by saying that the emperor at Thebes met only 'les drogman incultes racontant sur les rois du passé des histoires ridicules'.[204] This re-writing may allude to the scholarly controversy over Herodotus' sources, and perhaps gently rebuked Yourcenar for her reliance on predominantly classical sources.[205] Derchain implied that if Yourcenar's Hadrien had met with a well-educated priest, he would have related a happier experience. His Pétarbeschénis guides this Hadrien through the temple of Panopolis and explains to him Egyptian iconography and the achievements of 'ces dynasties d'autrefois'.[206] The emperor is taught to see that 'ce monde exotique' could provide him with a 'cosmologie consolante'.[207] Derchain also rewrote details of Yourcenar's rewriting of the imperial visit to Memnon. His emperor carves also his name on the colossus, but 'par sarcasme ou par désoeuvrement'[208] —a version that does not reflect the queer interiority of the novel, but was perhaps intended as an account of how Hadrien's actions might have appeared to another person, such as his Pétarbeschénis. Derchain also mentioned imperial restoration work on the colossus that resulted from the

[199] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 39.

[200] Calament, La révélation d'Antinoé par Albert Gayet, 64.

[201] Labrique pers.comm. 2013. Another example: Renberg cites a passage in the 'highly speculative and largely fictional' Le dernier obélisque (5) as a reference for Derchain's belief that a monument to Antinous existed close to Hadrian's mausoleum, but he is apparently unaware that this passage is a quotation of Yourcenar, in: MAAR 55, 2010, 181, n. 83.

[202] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 42.

[203] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 42.

[204] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 22.

[205] On Herodotus' Egyptian sources, and the discussion of his access to high or low ranking priests see: e.g. A.B. Lloyd, Herodotus book II: Introduction, Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 43, Leiden 1975, 94-95.

[206] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 15-20; quote from 15.

[207] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 15, 20.

[208] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 23.

visit, perhaps drawing on the implication from the graffiti that Hadrian increased the importance of the statue, as opposed to the existential disengagement from the statue that is felt by Yourcenar's Hadrien.[209] To Derchain, Thebes would not have seemed a 'petrified' city at this period, and accordingly his emperor is attracted to Egyptian monuments; among his walks, 'ses yeux s'étaient souvent attardés sur la pointe des obélisques, dont l'un, solitaire à l'est de la ville, dominait tout'.[210] By making Hadrien notice the solitary obelisk in the temple of Amunre-Harakhti at the east end of the Karnak complex,[211] he emphasised the singularity of the Monte Pincio obelisk, in contrast to Yourcenar's assumption that it had been one of a pair. There are, however, also underlying similarities in the two writers' attitudes. Derchain mentioned the imperial party and 'leurs goûts futiles de touristes en vacances'.[212] Despite the ancient records of sight-seeing in the Memnonia, this is perhaps a lapse of linguistic tone for a historical novel, but the potentially anachronistic word 'touristes' is effective for an Egyptological audience, normally scornful of organised tourism. It is also in sympathy with Yourcenar's recorded attitude to modern groups visiting sites, and her scorn for the empress' party in the novel.[213] The fundamentally sympathetic dialogue between Yourcenar's and Derchain's narratives is embodied in the relationship between Derchain's emperor and priest. In Derchain's re-writing of the episode, Pétarbeschénis becomes—touchingly—the consoler of the grieving Hadrien, who, after speaking with him, 'trouva moins vide la cabine qu'il avait partagée avec l'*enfant*'.[214]

One significant difference between the parallel techniques of the two writers is perhaps that Yourcenar was more explicitly seeking to undermine the official histories that the ancient sources presented by expressing the ruptures and fissures in Hadrien's life in order to explore the uncertainty at the heart of any identity. Derchain instead produced an imaginative history that unifies apparently unrelated sources through 'la cohérence de l'écrit'.[215] In the contexts of their different intended audiences, however, Derchain's vision arguably also has a subversive quality for its academic readers that parallels that of Yourcenar's. The imaginative aspects of the narrative in his study of the relationships between ancient texts and modern readers have a potentially destabilising effect for an Egyptological reader who is unused to such a vision. It explicitly offers a set of 'réflexions sur la méthode et le sens de l'égyptologie'[216] and a challenge to the concerns of traditional philology, as voiced in the aphorism on the opening page declaring: 'le lecteur-modèle d'aucun Egyptien n'est un égyptologue'.[217] This aphoristic style is, of course, comparable to Yourcenar's pronouncements in the 'Carnets des notes'. Derchain expressed the same sentiment in a more overtly Egyptological style in his later academic article 'Allusion, citation, intertextualité': 'pour trop d'égyptologues les textes égyptiens ne sont que les

[209] On Hadrian's attitude to the cult of the colossus , see Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 618.

[210] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 24. As noted above, the idea that there were originally multiple obelisks has resurfaced in scholarship (see n. 157).

[211] PM II, 213, VII, 409 (1); Iversen, Obelisks in exile I, 55-56.

[212] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 23.

[213] Yourcenar, Essais et mémoires, 695-696; Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 433, 446.

[214] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 20-21.

[215] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 38.

[216] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, [0].

[217] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 1.

pourvoyeurs d'exemples de grammaire ...'.[218] The dialectical nature of the literary book, setting an imaginary history against a scholarly translation of the fragmentary textual sources, provides a dynamic means of avoiding 'certaines apories de notre métier'.[219] In this sense, in its 'forme insolite',[220] it is arguably as subversive or counter-cultural as Yourcenar's poetic narrative.

Le dernier obélisque was published in the year of Yourcenar's death (17th December 1987). He had sent a copy to her, and had received no answer, but many years later he heard from her friend the Egyptologist Jean-Pierre Corteggiani that she had been pleased with the gift.[221]

Sharing lived experiences

Another aspect linking the two authors is the use of personal memories in writing histories. This is exemplified in Derchain's *Le souvenir imaginaire* of 1996, illustrated by his son Alexis Derchain.[222] The volume evokes atmospheres and experiences, ranging from the amorous to the obscene, as with the anecdote of 'Abou'l omar'.[223] One detail of a fictional ancient journey is explicitly taken from the author's personal experiences of Egypt, 'du souvenir d'un retour de Nubie'.[224] This parallels Yourcenar's citing of experiences in modern Athens and Tivoli as sources for the *Mémoires*: 'matins à la Villa Adriana; innombrables soirs passés dans les petits cafés qui bordent l'Olympéion …'.[225] Yourcenar famously remarked that the life of her own father was more distant to her than Hadrian's,[226] and Derchain likewise saw his past self as being as distant as the ancient past, stating that the volume was made up 'de vestiges du passé conservés par le même hasard dans le sol égyptien que les autres dans ma mémoire'.[227] In this book, short prose works evoke 'une Egypte qui n'est pas dans les livres savants',[228] again providing a counter-cultural vision for academic Egyptology. Like Yourcenar, he voices an awareness of the limitations of the academic profession's outlook on the world: in one anecdote about a trip to see some ancient blocks that are now built into a village, the narrator (the young Derchain) becomes entangled in village affairs, and concludes: 'les blocs ... ont été publiés ... Mais que sont-ils auprès de cette aventure?'.[229] This attitude recalls that of Yourcenar towards Egyptian 'blocs inertes'.[230] Both writers shared a defiant distrust of narrow academic certainty (such as Yourcenar on Theodor Mommsen, cited above), and instead embraced an aesthetic

[218] P. Derchain, Allusion, citation, intertextualité, in: M. Minas/J. Zeidler (eds.), Aspekte spätägyptischer Kultur: Festschrift für Erich Winter zum 65. Geburtstag, AegTrev 7, Mainz 1994, 69. Compare R. B. Parkinson, Reading Ancient Egyptian poetry: Among other histories, Chichester 2009, 238.

[219] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 55.

[220] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, [0].

[221] Derchain, pers. comm.

[222] Derchain, Le souvenir imaginaire.

[223] Derchain, Le souvenir imaginaire, 40-41.

[224] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 53.

[225] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 520.

[226] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 527.

[227] Derchain, Le souvenir imaginaire, 97.

[228] Derchain, Le souvenir imaginaire, [1].

[229] Derchain, Le souvenir imaginaire, 59.

[230] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 444. Derchain uses the word 'inerte' to describe the cult statue of Min in the temple of Panopolis: Le dernier obélisque, 14.

exploration of a full range of lived experience, as is suggested in his later aphorism: 'Tant de livres! Toujours se heurter au collègue sans jamais rencontrer l'Égyptien'.[231]

In the most substantial of the pieces in *Le souvenir imaginaire*, Derchain once again used philological coincidences to (re)-create a life-story: that of the God's father and priest of Amun in Ipetsut Ahmes, who stated in his self-presentation on a Karnak statue that he had inscribed the propylon of the temple of Khonsu, under Ptolemy III Euergetes.[232] In Derchain's fiction, Ahmès also influenced the creation of the great temple of Edfu. As with *Le dernier obélisque*, the academic and literary investigations are presented as parallel and complementary strategies: an academic discussion of Ahmes was published in the *Tempeltagung* volume of 1995 and also in the *Festschrift Winter* of 1994,[233] while in the fictional account of 1996, there are two pages of 'Note sur Ahm[è]s' giving sources with references and carefully noting the parallels between the gate and the temple.[234] Here, however, the narrative 'Ahmès' is not divided into a fictional narrative and an account of the modern study, as in *Le dernier obélisque*, but it is more extensively through-written. Memories of Egypt and reflections on the scholar's role both begin and finish the piece, perhaps representing a stylistic development on the earlier imaginary history towards a more fully integrated expression. In the final passage, Derchain moves in a few paragraphs from the description of the temple inscriptions in dark corridors, 'où jamais plus on ne pourrait les lire', to the modern publication of the temple and his own highlighted photocopies that reveal 'citations', 'formules' or perhaps the work of a single author. He then relates this to his own story, which the reader has just read, and he moves with a poetic grace to memories of returning from evenings at Luxor to the house in the enclosure by full moon.[235] The final pages present a fusion of ancient text, modern scholarship, poetic style and remembered experience.

Shared strategies

For both authors, intertextual detail is one method of creating narratives through a fluid mixture of scholarship and imagination. Although Yourcenar would happily correct details in her novels when minor errors were pointed out,[236] the freedom of her translations and the use of her sources reveals an unpedantic attitude and a willingness to rewrite documented facts, as discussed above.[237] Derchain's aesthetic concern was with an artist's intentions, and the single author behind the text. This emphasis sometimes involved assumptions about individual authorship, unity, and singularity that have been increasingly questioned: the creation of texts is now often considered to be more multiple and contingent than is implied

[231] P. Derchain, Aphorismes, Privately printed and distributed 2006, 28.

[232] Statue JE 37075: http://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/cachette/ no. CK 170 (accessed 20.3.2019). For the Porte d'Evergète (PM II^2, 225-227), see e.g. F. Labrique, Rapiéçage ou réécriture? La porte d'Evergète, in: W. Clarysse/A. Schoors/H. Willems (eds.), Egyptian religion the last thousand years: Studies dedicated to the memory of Jan Quaegebeur II, OLA 85, Leuven 1998, 883-902.

[233] P. Derchain, La justice à la porte d'Evergète, in: D. Kurth (ed.), 3. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Systeme und Programme der ägyptischen Tempeldekoration, ÄUAT 33.1, Wiesbaden 1995, 1-12; Derchain, in: Minas/Zeidler (eds.), Aspekte spätägyptischer Kultur; also P. Derchain, Auteur et société, in: A. Loprieno (ed.), Ancient Egyptian literature: History and forms, PÄ 10, Leiden 1996, 90-91.

[234] Derchain, Le souvenir imaginaire, 97-98.

[235] Derchain, Le souvenir imaginaire, 94-95.

[236] J.P. Corteggiani, pers. comm.

[237] On translating see e.g. R. Jouanny, in: Fort (ed.), Marguerite Yourcenar: Un certain lundi 8 Juin 1903, 93-109, esp. 103-105.

by his argument that 'someone must have written them'.[238] Recent interpretations emphasise the possibilities of shared phraseology and intertextuality, rather than seeing quotations as indications of common authorship: Fredrik Hagen, for example, has identified a quotation of *The Teaching of Ptahhotep* on the gateway of Euergetes and also on the walls of Philae, but plausibly argues that the phrase was cited directly only in the Ramessid period and then entered the literary tradition, being disassociated from its original text.[239] Derchain's emphasis on individual agency and creativity was arguably part of a general movement in the 20th century from structure towards agency, as Ruth Finnegan has noted in her discussion of oral poetry: 'one theme is a greater concern with individual voices, repertoire and creativity. Another is an emerging interest in work on the emotions and in aesthetic and expressive facets of human activity'.[240] Derchain's interest in aesthetics may also be partly due to having been the grandson of a painter (Philippe Derchain 1873-1947). It is characteristic that the final word of *Le dernier obélisque* is 'beauté',[241] a word that of Yourcenar's Hadrien choses to sum up his ideal.[242]

The distinction between the literary and academic styles of approach that both he and Yourcenar expressed in the structure of their works has weakened in much post-modern scholarship since the 1980s. In *Le dernier obélisque*, Derchain noted, 'devant un fait historique curieux, dont l'explication selon les procédés ordinaires de la science me paraît très improbable, pourquoi ne pas risquer une interprétation littéraire?'.[243] The choice of the word 'risquer' implies much about his awareness of the conventions and expectations of contemporaneous academic Egyptology. Derchain's histories were explicitly imaginary in their treatment of historical uncertainty, and like Yourcenar's they paid homage to the lived experiences of their historical individuals. This self-awareness was also made explicit in 'Ahmès' as he ends his tale of the priest's mission 'que je viens de raconter, qui peut-être n'eut pas lieu'.[244]

Derchain's Yourcenarian impulse was also integral to his academic works. His article on the author of Papyrus Jumilhac suggested ways of appreciating 'sa poétique personnelle', and opened up 'une immensité à peine explorée'.[245] In this paper of 1990, he juxtaposed different details of the text in order to suggest the nature of the presumed author/scribe of the manuscript: this academic reconstruction of a specific cultural context can be read as a demonstration of Yourcenar's maxim from the 'Carnets de notes': 'l'une des meilleures manières de recréer la pensée d'un homme: reconstituer sa bibliothèque'.[246] To this discussion, he added—without any real comment in the text—a photograph of the head of a statue from the Christos G. Bastis collection with the caption 'l'auteur du Papyrus

[238] E.g. Derchain, in: Loprieno (ed.), Ancient Egyptian literature, 94.

[239] F. Hagen, Echoes of "Ptahhotep" in the Greco-roman period, in: ZÄS 139, 2009, 130-135.

[240] R.H. Finnegan, Oral traditions and the verbal arts: A guide to research practices, ASA Research Methods, London and New York 1992, 51.

[241] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 62.

[242] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 390.

[243] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 38.

[244] Derchain, Le souvenir imaginaire, 89.

[245] P. Derchain, L'auteur du Papyrus Jumilhac, in: RdE 41, 1990, 28. Compare the conclusions of J.F. Quack, Corpus oder Membra disjecta. Zur Sprach- und Redaktionskritik des Papyrus Jumilhac, in: W. Waitkus (Hrsg.), Diener des Horus: Festschrift für Dieter Kurth zum 65. Geburtstag, Aegyptiaca Hamburgensia 1 (Gladbeck 2008), 203-228.

[246] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 524.

Jumilhac?'.[247] This provocative question is an encouragement to the academic reader of the article to think in material, specific, and human terms, and exactly echoes Yourcenar's attitude to statues, cited above. The statue bears a noticeable similarity to Derchain himself, when compared, say, to the drawing of him by his son Alexis Derchain published in 1992 (Fig. 3).[248] In this article, Derchain mentions priests who loved Greco-Roman texts, who urged scribes to copy them, who were careful 'de les expliquer parce qu'il les aimait';[249] these descriptions are reminiscent of himself, and recall his claims to be in a sense their successor, leur 'semblable, … frère'.[250] Such reflexivity is distinct from the self-concern of scholars whom he criticised in *Le dernier obélisque* for constructing model readers that were simply unthinking reflections of themselves.[251] Instead, this approach is resorting to the 'I'—to personal experience—as first point of reference, which is itself highly Yourcenarian: 'comme point de contact avec ces hommes ...'.[252] In their high respect for humanism and individualism, both authors, who were both born in Belgium within 25 years of one another, were perhaps representative of their generation and social background.

Viewing Antiquity

Many aspects of these shared strategies for recreating an ancient inner world are evoked in Yourcenar's response to the etching by Giovanni Battista Piranesi of the so-called 'Tempio del Dio Canopo' from his series *Vedute di Roma* (around 1769).[253] A copy of this print hung over the mantelpiece of the living room of Petite Plaisance, the house in Maine that she shared with her life-partner Grace Frick (Fig. 4).[254] This was one of four Piranesi prints that 'vers 1941, j'avais découvert par hasard, chez un marchand de couleurs, à New York' and which she and Frick bought, and it is the one image by Piranesi that she described in detail in the 'Carnets des notes'.[255] The 'Tempio' was for long thought to be an architectural representation of the Canopus in Egypt, drawing on ancient descriptions of the Villa in the *Historia Augusta* as containing a 'Canopus'.[256] The building has often been associated with the Egyptianising works of art from the villa,[257] and Derchain and Kähler suggested that the obelisk was erected close to it.[258] For Yourcenar, in this etching 'le génie presque médiumnique de Piranèse a flairé là l'hallucination, les longues routines du souvenir,

[247] [247] P. Derchain, RdE 41, 1990, 29. See: Sotheby's, Antiquities from the collection of the late Christos G. Bastis (Auction, Thursday, December 9, 1999 at 6:30 pm), New York 1999, 43 (Cat. no. 24); it was formerly on loan to the Brooklyn Museum of Art 1976-1999, and is now in a private collection.

[248] As a frontispiece in M. Broze/Ph. Talon (eds.), L'atelier de l'orfèvre: Mélanges offerts à Ph. Derchain, Leuven 1992, 6.

[249] Derchain, in: RdE 41, 1990, 28.

[250] Derchain, Le souvenir imaginaire, 12.

[251] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 2.

[252] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 529.

[253] E.g. British Museum PD 1914,0216.148: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3002459&partId=1&searchText=1914,0216.148&page=1(accessed 24.8.2017); J. Wilton-Ely, Giovanni Battista Piranesi: The complete etchings II, San Francisco 1994, 223.

[254] Y. Bernier, Petite Plaisance: Marguerite Yourcenar 1903-1987, Maine 2000, 11.

[255] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 522-523; also evoked in Essais et mémoires, 85. The four prints were initially hung by Frick in Hartford Junior College: Joan E. Howard, We Met in Paris: Grace Frick and her Life with Marguerite Yourcenar, 97. For her use of Piranesi in her novels see N. Saint, Marguerite Yourcenar: Reading the visual, Oxford 2000, 79-132.

[256] Hadr. XXVI,5. For a recent summary of the traditional view, see J.C. Grenier, Hadrian's Canopus, in: E. lo Sardo (ed.), The she-wolf and the sphinx: Rome and Egypt from history to myth, Milan 2008, 112-117.

[257] As alluded to by Yourcenar in Oeuvres romanesques, 522.

[258] Derchain, Le dernier obélisque, 27.

l'architecture tragique d'un monde intérieur'.[259] Piranesi's print is a carefully captioned view of the structure, reflecting his concerns to document the 'speaking ruins' of ancient Rome,[260] but it also possesses a romantic quality that appealed to Yourcenar (Fig. 5). The view of the ruin places two fallen masses of the vault symmetrically in the foreground like jaws; they still lie in the area today. As Nigel Saint has noted, the composition's central axis allows the viewer to look from the outside into, as it were, the interior of the emperor's private world (as Yourcenar attempted),[261] and the strikingly symmetrical composition creates a sense of mystery: as Yourcenar's Hadrien says of his villa in 'Tellus stabilita', 'chaque édifice était le plan d'un songe'.[262] The three tiny figures in the centre of the monumental arena are engaged in some activity, perhaps reading palms. The tree on the left seems playfully to echo a gesturing figure on the right, who seems to have been thrown to the ground by another figure.[263] Monument, nature and humans are all parts of a single grandiose phenomenon. These contemporaneous figures in Piranesi's prints appealed to Yourcenar's desire to explore ways to mediate between the living present and the past, through '[les] milliers de vies silencieuses, furtives comme celles des bêtes …, bohémiens …, pilleurs de ruines, mendiants, chevriers … qui se sont succédé ici entre Hadrien et nous'.[264] For her, Piranesi's depiction of such ruins becomes 'une méditation à la fois visuelle et métaphysique sur la vie et la mort des formes', echoing Hadrien's concern to collaborate with time.[265]

In 'Patientia', 'cette chapelle de Canope où son culte se célèbre à l'égyptienne' is evoked as Hadrien attempts to summon up the ghost of Antinous, remembering Balbilla's credulity before Memnon and the orders whispered by the priests.[266] Mention of the chapel also recalls the episode at Canopus in 'Saeculum aureum' with its foreshadowing of Antinous' drowning.[267] Yourcenar herself employed meditation techniques at times in trying to imaginatively recreate her characters,[268] so her description of Piranesi's genius carries a particularly authorial resonance. Yourcenar had productively used academic uncertainties over the date and purposes of the building as a source for the sense of complex reality through Hadrien's mention of these 'chapelles' that had become tragically useful (cited above); and when the chapel is evoked in 'Patientia', Hadrien mentions that he has allowed there to be established 'les pavillons de Plaisir du faubourg d'Alexandrie qui porte ce nom', as if qualifying the certainty of any identification of it as a cult-place.[269] The archaeological reality has inevitably become even more uncertain than she envisaged in the 1950s, as excavations and research continually change the picture: the traditional idea that this

[259] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 523. The motif of interiority and 'le monde intérieur' also occurs on 526-527.

[260] Piranesi in Prima Parte di Architetture e Prospettive (1743), quoted in R. Wendort, Piranesi's Double Ruin, in: Eighteenth-Century Studies 34.2, 2001, 162; see e.g. Yourcenar, Essais et mémoires, 83-85.

[261] Saint, Marguerite Yourcenar: Reading the visual, 82.

[262] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 386.

[263] I owe this interpretation to Joan E. Howard (pers. comm. 2018).

[264] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 539.

[265] Yourcenar, Essais et mémoires, 81.

[266] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 509-510.

[267] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 436-438. The existence of a 'Canopus' at the villa presumably inspired the location of this episode, which is 'purement fictive' (Poignault, L'Antiquité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, 474).

[268] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 528, 857; Savigneau, Marguerite Yourcenar: L'invention d'une vie, 298-299.

[269] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 509.

building was the original location of many Egyptianising art-works has, for example, been disputed from a re-examination of Francesco Piranesi's annotated plans of the site, making any identification of the building with Hadrian's 'Canopus' uncertain.[270] Architectural historians have argued that the building was probably a scenic triclinium for the summer months.[271] The architecture is no longer 'tragic'. The print thus exemplifies that any historical certainty is uncertain and evanescent, and that any reading is mutable.

Like this visual work of art, the fictional narratives discussed here are embedded in the specific worlds of their composition and their receptions. The sustaining principle of the imaginary histories of both Yourcenar and Derchain is, however, not only the plausibility of the scholarship but the imaginative focus on the inner world of individuals, and the aesthetically sophisticated prose style that ensures that these histories continue to appeal to readers even though the facts on which they were based evolve, are updated and disproven. These histories were constructed in a complex and self-aware manner, as a creative dialogue between author and sources, with aesthetic qualities that are more usually associated with ideas of art rather than academic scholarship. In this respect, Derchain allied much of his own work with the aesthetic and intellectual impulses of the ancient authors, and he too sought to reconstruct 'un monde intérieur', a world that academia has often neglected, perhaps in part because it cannot easily be analysed by traditional scholarly procedures. Any attempt to negotiate the lacunae of history—as with the lacuna on the obelisk—necessitates a degree of imagination and empathy.[272] Like Yourcenar, Derchain attempted to 'refaire du dedans ce que les archéologues du XIXe siècle ont fait du dehors'.[273] This aspect of his work is perhaps the most literary, but in its attempt to analyse a once-living culture, it may also be the most profoundly and inspiringly Egyptological.

[270] E.g. E.S.P. Ricotti, The Canopus, 2006, http://www.espr-archeologia.it/articles/26/The-Canopus (accessed 20.9.2013); E. S. P. Ricotti, Villa Adriana: Il sogno di un imperatore, Roma 2001,374-5

[271] E.g. W.L. Macdonald/J.A. Pinto, Hadrian's Villa and its legacy, New Haven/London 1995, 108-116.

[272] On the role of Yourcenarian empathy see e.g. R. B. Parkinson, Reading Ancient Egyptian poetry, 273-278.

[273] Yourcenar, Oeuvres romanesques, 524.

Figures:

Fig. 1: The temple of Ramses II at Antinoe, © James B. Heidel 2006.

Fig. 2: The Monte Pincio obelisk, © Paul D. Wordsworth 2017.

Fig. 3: Philippe Derchain by Alexis Derchain, in M. Broze/Ph. Talon (eds.), L'atelier de l'orfèvre: Mélanges offerts à Ph. Derchain, Leuven 1992, 6, © Alexis Derchain.

Fig. 4: Yousuf Karsh, Marguerite Yourcenar at Petite Plaisance in 1987, © Estate of Yousuf Karsh.

Fig. 5: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Avanzi del Tempio del Dio Canopo nella Villa Adriana in Tivoli*, Rome, *c*. 1760-1778, © Ghent University Library.