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Three rooms

Archaeology and performance

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ABSTRACT

This article interweaves the archaeology of three rooms from very different historical contexts – the Greek city of Corinth, nineteenth-century Wales and contemporary London. One aim is to raise questions of how archaeologists construct narratives around the remains of the past and to confront alternative ways of dealing with archaeological empirics. Another aim is to connect archaeology as a discipline with a much broader archaeological theme at the heart of modernity. Themes of power and performativity surface throughout in relation to individual agency and community.

KEYWORDS

archaeology ● historiography ● performance

INTRODUCTION: ORIGINS

This article has two origins. The first is a project to understand the early Greek city state. In several works (most notably Shanks, 1999), I attempted

an archaeological interpretation that began with ceramic design, production and consumption. Outwardly, this took the form of a study of artifact lifecycles. Close up, the study was a contextual archaeology in the sense of a spiral of associations tracked through archaeological material and all sorts of contexts – empirical, spatial, conceptual, metaphorical.

Traditional categories of rank and social class, resources, trade, state formation, urbanization and manufacture I found too connected with long-standing tendencies to emplot archaeological material in standardized metanarratives (here of the expansion of the city state as a component of ancient imperialisms, as well as the cultural florescence of ancient Greece). My interpretive and analytical categories were just too blunt (Shanks and Tilley, 1987). My work suggested that a revitalized archaeology of Graeco-Roman antiquity requires an approach that challenges many of these components of conventional narratives (economy, trade, colonization, acculturation, stylistic expression of ethnic and political identities) and indeed the narratives themselves.

In its early stages, the project worked with a relatively familiar historiography of the early Greek city state (expansion of the polity form explained through structures and discourses related to class cultures) and I presented a systemic model of artifact design. But the material led me into quite a different cultural field of faces, animals and monstrosity, corporeality, potters wheels and brushes, physical and imagined mobility, flowers, food and consumption, sovereignty, violence, alterity, gender, ships, armor, clothing and much more. Here, arguably, I came up against the limits of any interpretive project – too much is ultimately not open to interpretation, or at least overflows an analytical or interpretive project. Interpretation always risks *overly* reducing the richness of historical and archaeological detail to structure, plot, account, cause, effect.

Social archaeology is often considered as modeling the past. Some social or cultural process or logic is held to account for – to explain – what is observed in the archaeological record. Interpretation, as another mode of social archaeology, may be conceived as reading though archaeological traces to perceive some deeper understanding of what was going on in the past. Social archaeology may present a model of an ancient economy, or an interpretation of a prehistoric ideology: in both, the empirical traces of the past are, necessarily and indeed appropriately, *reduced* to a process, *subsumed* within the model, or *seen through*, treated as *symptoms* of some underlying reality. This reduction can be part of what I have called the fallacy of representation or expression (Shanks, 1999: ch. 2). In my work on the Greek city I added to analysis, explanation and interpretation *manifestation* – letting the material display itself (though this heretical empirics is not merely descriptive, see particularly Shanks, 1999: ch. 3).

This article continues such an exercise in empirics. Along the lines of the historiography of Benjamin (1999) or of Gumbrecht (1997), it attempts to

compound its sources, layering them in the presentation rather than redescribing them as a working model, or seeing through them to what may be conceived as really going on. I want to try to hold on to the empirical texture of our archaeological sources. A broad context is therefore the search for a method that is specific to its object (Shanks and Tilley, 1992: 47–9, on this argument in Critical Theory). More generally, I am drawing on an old classical, indeed philological, tradition of source commentary and critique (see Shanks, 1996: ch. 4).

The second origin of this article is a collaboration, now over 10 years old, with an arts company, 'Brith Gof', that produces site specific performances. It began with the realization that archaeology and performance share a common problem of documentation – what comes after the event (of performance or of social practice), what is left behind and how this constitutes (or not) a record of the event. Among other things, our collaboration has focused on the character of performance, as part of the recent growth of the disciplinary field of performance studies (Pearson and Shanks, 2001). Performance, ceremony and ritual have, of course, come under close scrutiny in much recent postprocessual or interpretive archaeology and tied to issues of signification, of the embodiment and corporeality of social actors, agency and the constitution of social structure and social norms (consider Barrett, 1994 as an early example). This is a article about how we might work with notions of the performative character of social practice.

Let me now clarify with an indication of the article's arguments.

ARGUMENT – ON PERFORMANCE

My topic is performance and the performative. For me, this raises some vital questions about (social) archaeology. First, because performance is a root metaphor for social and cultural process – for example, in the concept of social actors. Second, because both archaeology and performance share a concern with documentation – for example, the question of the relation of dramatic text to performance, of how performance may be documented, of how an archaeological project may be documented. Third, because archaeology may be conceived itself as performance, one where the remains of the past are mobilized in practices, often conceived as mimetic, of representing or restoring behavior.

The concept of performance is often used to refer to heightened experience, to ceremony, formalized practice and play. It is connected to the liminal, experience at the edge and to identity, questions of who we are. I see less value in going further and ascribing particular attributes to a tightly defined concept of performance. Crucially, for me, performance and the performative are part of a contested cultural field; people do not agree

about the word. The uses of concepts like power, community and discourse, also at the heart of this article, are similarly varied and often loaded. Rather than attempt to unpack and define precisely, I prefer to play on the ambiguities and stress the gaps and inconsistencies. For me, this is part of the significance of these concepts – they are *essentially* contested.

Compare the mimetic and the eidetic, in relation to performance and the performative. The former concerns a set of questions about the real and the represented. The second takes the matter further. The *eidetic* refers, in psychology, to mental imagery that is vivid and persistent, though not memory or afterimage. I note the fascinating etymology, with roots in the Greek *eido* and its cognates (to know, see, experience; that which is seen, form, model, type, image, phantom) and hold that performance is also eidetic because it raises questions of what is real and what is simulated, what persists, what is at the heart of experience (knowledge, impressions, physical materials). The eidetic is ironic – in its act of representation performance is this *and* that, simulated *and* real. Performance is ironic in drawing upon theatrical metaphors; for while we might suppose a script, performance has no such sole origin and there is always the gap between script and act, as well as between performer and audience. What is being acted out in performance? We should answer that there is only ever the irony of reiteration without an origin, simulation without an original. And in these iterative chains the question of performance is immediately the question of how we may speak and write of performance. Performance is about re-iterating, re-mediating, re-working, re-presenting, re-storing.

For me, this is archaeology. We seek in vain a representation that will explain the ruin of history. In dealing with remains, the archaeologist is always working upon *relationships* between past and present that circle around the impossible irony of trying to turn action and experience, material form and body, remediated, into representation. There can, of course, be no finality to mimesis, only constant reworking and restoring. Performance and the performative are always archaeological: that is, there is always, with performance, the question of origin or precedent (what came first? what holds precedence? script? event? character? author? audience?) and the question of document and trace (what remains? what is left after the performance? how is its material and physical presence to be represented?).

How then, as archaeologists, are we to represent performance, that is, conduct our social archaeology? I have attempted an answer to this question in this article. I focus on textuality (on other modes of representation, see Shanks, 1991 and the work of the metaMedia Lab at Stanford, at: metamedia.Stanford.edu). Rosemary Joyce (Joyce et al., 2002) has recently done an excellent job of reframing archaeology in terms of this determinate practice of writing. She is contributing to that reflexive self-consciousness about the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology

represented by the collections of Clifford and Marcus (1986) and Marcus and Fisher (1986). This article is offered in this context as another experiment in writing about the remains of the past. Specifically it deals with matters of narrative and chronotope, Bakhtinian concepts that Joyce places at the heart of the archaeological project.

ARGUMENT – PERFORMANCE AND POWER

The article interweaves materials associated with three rooms. I have approached each with an interest in how people, in these three sites, dealt – performatively and in everyday settings – with matters of identity and agency in the face of institutional structures and powers and changing forms of the cultural imaginary.

Since I have given as one origin of this article my interest in the Greek city state, I mention here an argument that we might well look to performative moments as crucial components of those sociocultural changes – the city state is about the way you hold a perfume jar (on such matters in a model of class cultural conflict in the early city state, see Morris, 2000).

ARGUMENT – MODERNIST TROPES

This article is about the way that narratives are pursued and constructed and particularly in relation to archaeological themes of time, tradition and the modern world. Each room references mystery and discovery. The room in nineteenth-century Wales belongs with that period of the reworking of an urban-rural and modern-traditional distinction; it foregrounds the supposed mystery of rural tradition and its questioning. The room in London is an explicit trope of modernist detective fiction – the mystery of the locked room (Shanks, 1991: 58). It tells of the making of interiority and self in quotidian existence. The room discovered by archaeologists concerns the shaping of the quotidian past in a comforting form that answers questions of urban origins and civil values, questions interior to notions of Western civilization. In each room, mystery is both created and then resolved in mundane modernity just as it becomes disturbing. Modern distinctions are confirmed even as the interior force of otherness or alterity is acknowledged. The argument is to disrupt this tendency and to open space for other readings and perceptions. (I owe many of these points to an anonymous reviewer for JSA.)

ARGUMENT – EMPIRICAL METHOD

The three rooms are not analogies of one another, though the juxtaposition is not thereby arbitrary. This is a comparative study, but not in the usual sense. The three rooms have in common an archaeological theme such as that I have just described – the remains of something that lingers in different ways and something that may be called the performative. The technique I have used here is one described elsewhere as *parataxis* and *katachresis* (Pearson and Shanks, 2001: 25; see also Shanks, 1991: 188–90), a forcible juxtaposition designed to produce frictions. I have not taken an explicitly *interpretive* strategy of peeling back the layers, digging deep for significance. Rather, layer is piled on layer so that the weight will create metamorphosis or *decomposition*, as the pieces grind at each other, as catalysts (words, themes, images, metaphors, whatever) take effect and amalgams or connections emerge, where there probably should be none. So my aim is not primarily an *epistemological* one of establishing knowledge of these three rooms and their associated people and events. I am not developing a *model* of the archaic Greek sanctuary, or of nineteenth-century medical science, or of postmodern London, or of something between. The aim is more an *ontological* one of *making manifest* some of the features of these conglomerations of people, things and events. I see this as potentially complementary to the explanatory and interpretive strategies of a social archaeology. This *rhizomatic* method is outlined in the methodological chapter of my book on the Greek city state (1999).

A BEDROOM

It is a room 12 ft by 8 ft, at one end of the thatched farmhouse of Lletherneuadd-uchaf, in the parish of Llanfihangel-ar-arth, near Llandysul in west Wales. At the other end is a cow house. In the middle, a large kitchen, with dairy to the back. The windows in the thick stone walls are typically small, the interior dark.

A girl is lying on a bed which faces a fireplace, well-stocked bookshelves above, a corner cupboard, wardrobe and another bed to the left. A linen press partly screens the girl from the window. The floor is hardened clay. No fire has been set in the grate for nearly 18 months and the room is damp. It is March 1869.

The Rev W. Thomas MA and Mr John Jones, solicitor, of Llandysul, are visiting. This is how they describe the girl: 'She had a silk shawl, a victorine round her neck, a small crucifix attached to a necklace and little ribbons (one blue on the right) above the wrists. She was lying on her back, a child's

comb in her hair, which was brushed back and lying down on the sides. She had drab gloves on, while her bed was nearly covered with books – picture books especially'. They place a shilling on her chest. Many others before them have left flowers. 'Dressed as a bride', they say. More visitors wait in the kitchen to go into the bedroom. They too are strangers.

Evan and Hannah Jacob maintain that their daughter has taken no food since 10 October 1867, that she cannot swallow, that the very mention of food in her presence makes her excited, that any offer of food will bring on a fit or make her ill. By March 1869, Sarah Jacob is known internationally as the Fasting Girl of Wales.

A DINING ROOM

It is on the uppermost of a series of terraces built up the hill to the east of the harbor of Perachora, on the peninsula opposite ancient Corinth. The stone foundations are still there. They were excavated by Humphry Payne and members of the British School at Athens between 1930 and 1933. It is a rectangular single-roomed building, 17 ft by 30 ft. Inside in the middle was an oval hearth, 5 ft long; it is now gone. Reused dressed stones ringing the hearth bore inscriptions recording the dedication of *drachmai* (metal spits) to the goddess Hera Leukolene (Hera with the white arms). There was little else remaining.

Payne concluded in his report of 1940 that the building was an early temple to the goddess, with an altar on the inside – a *Herdtempel*. Down on a shelf of flat ground between the harbor and the tall inaccessible cliff that shuts it in from the north, were the traces of an earlier round-ended small building. Payne took this to be the first temple to Hera. She had been known as Hera Akraia (dwelling on the heights), but inscriptions referring to Hera Limenia (Hera of the harbor) led him to think there were two cults of the goddess here, in two separate shrines.

Some 40 years later, R.A. Tomlinson thought again about the hearth, with its stones mentioning *drachmai*. These were a kind of standardized weight and currency, but also actually spits for the cooking of meat. The room has an off-center doorway on the north side, not the usual arrangement for a temple, but often found in dining rooms. The dimensions are right too – the room can hold 11, 5 ft by 2 ft 6 inch couches, four along each long wall, two across the end and one behind the door.

Dining rooms are a standard feature of ancient Greek sanctuaries. This one was built sometime early in the seventh-century BCE, perhaps a little earlier.

A GARRET

It is 1980 in a run down part of the East End of London. Up a damaged staircase above an abandoned synagogue, a door is unlocked for the first time in 11 years. The room is in a mess, some later recalled; it had been exposed to the elements; people had been in. But Douglas Blane, who worked for the new owners of the building, Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust, is there at the opening and later recalls – the room is orderly, stuffed full of things, books, notes on a table, a pan of porridge on the stove, pyjamas on the bed, all covered in dust.

A man called David Rodinsky lived there until 1969, when he walked out one day and never went back.

ORIGINS – ILLNESS?

Sarah Jacob was born 12 May 1857. In February 1867, she woke with frothy blood in her mouth and complained of pain in the pit of her stomach. On Sunday, 17 February, the pain, mostly on the left side, became severe and lasted until evening. A week later Dr H.H. Davies of Llandysul was called and attended to the girl for the next 6 weeks. When he arrived she was in bed – and thereafter never left it. The doctor diagnosed inflammation of the pleura, restricted her diet to rice, milk and oatmeal gruel and relieved the pain, though it lasted 2 weeks longer. By then, Sarah was having convulsive fits: they lasted a month and she appeared unconscious throughout. They thought she was dying.

By May, Sarah had recovered consciousness, was very emaciated and had lost her hair – though it later grew back. The fits became temporary losses of consciousness, with sudden awakenings when she would throw her arms about. The father: 'she could move her arms about like wind, but only move the right leg, the left leg being rigid'. Until August, she was eating four to six cupfuls of rice and milk, which, again according to the father, was 'cast up immediately and blood and froth with it'.

Then, on a diet of boiled apple and milk, or apple dumplings, she began to object to any food being offered to her. On 10 October, it was claimed she had ceased to take any food. By the end of the year, it was reckoned she took no liquid either.

URBAN REDEVELOPMENT

Property values were rocketing in the 1980s in London. The city center was being opened up with expensive new remodeled apartments replacing the

old slums and commercial buildings. Cultural critics took up the issue: Robert Hewison (1987) bemoaned the rise of the heritage industry (a new museum opening every day); Patrick Wright (1985) and Raphael Samuel (1994) exposed the ideologies of living in this renovated old country.

No. 19 Princelet Street, Whitechapel is now a Heritage Center celebrating the silk weaving industry of old London. The museum website mentions the 'sad and mysterious' Rodinsky as the last lodger of the weavers' garrets.

FOUND BY THE DINING ROOM

Several large dumps of material, mostly on the terraces between the temple by the harbor and the dining room.

- Ivory seals, carved with figured scenes.
- Bronze metalwork – birds, horses, human figurines – many perhaps attachments upon the rims of tripods (frequently found in sanctuaries). Most of these are from the east – Phoenicia and Asia Minor.
- Jewelry.
- Pins.
- Pottery – drinking and dining ware, ceramic baskets and boxes, perfume jars. Payne estimated that there was 'well over ten tons and not far from twenty'. Among the many undecorated and plainly decorated items are the first of their kind with figurative images of animals, flowers, birds, men in armor, monsters.
- *Koulouria* – ring shaped ceramic cakes.
- Terracottas – human figurines, models of buildings, models of carts.
- Scarabs and faience from Egypt.

There was an altar outside the temple by the harbor.

Between the two buildings was a clay-lined depression that Payne called the 'sacred pool'. It contained more than 200 bronze phials. There is no trace of the pool today.

VISITORS

By the end of October 1867, the neighbors began to visit Sarah Jacob. She had been in bed 9 months. The mother thought it was a miracle; the father talked of the 'Great Doctor' protecting his daughter. The local vicar of the Anglican Church of Wales arrived in November, though the parents were members of the local congregational chapel. Sarah had wanted to take

communion. He was skeptical and protested at the way the girl was dressed, but was told that it was her only pleasure. By February 1868, he was as credulous as everyone else and wrote to the national press to say so. Sarah's fame was spreading.

In the spring of 1869, visitors to Lletherneuadd increased significantly. They all left a gift of some sort: flowers, clothes, books – prayer books, testaments, Welsh hymn books, picture books and above all, money, maybe sixpence or a shilling – though two English ladies left gold sovereigns in April 1869.

THE ARTIST

Rachel Lichtenstein was born Rachel Laurence in April 1969. She changed her name a week after her grandfather died; he had wanted to be an artist, like her. She was working with material from her Jewish cultural roots and an interest in emigration took her to 19 Princelet Street, the Heritage Center, in 1989. Its synagogue, the third-oldest still standing in England, was built in 1870. Between then and 1914, 120,000 Polish and Russian Jews arrived in London seeking asylum. Her parents had escaped from Poland in the early 1930s and had lived in Princelet Street, number 32, before affluence took them to Westcliff in Essex.

Rachel became an artist in residence at the heritage center. She started giving guided tours to the neighborhood. She exhibited sculptures based upon her grandfather's life. Example in a local shop window – objects from his watchmaking shop, displayed sealed in resin and steel.

She began going through Rodinsky's things, by 1969 in archival boxes, and was captivated. She researched Rodinsky, tracked his relatives, those who had visited the attic when first opened, interviewed local historians, talked to everyone with any interest. She made installations based upon the objects found in the attic. Example at the Slaughterhouse Gallery – on a large wooden table over the hole in the floor that led directly to the Victorian sewer, laid out on velvet, photographs of Rodinsky's things.

THE ARCHAEOLOGIST

The 1920s and 1930s was a golden age of archaeology. Carter in Egypt, Woolley in Mesopotamia, Evans publishing his discovery of Minoan Crete. Humphrey Payne, fresh from Oxford, was the young Director of the British School at Athens, one of the institutes set up by western governments in the late nineteenth-century, to research ancient Greece.

Payne's books on the history of Corinthian ceramic art are milestones in

the definition of the cultural florescence of classical Greece and established a secure chronology for the Greek Mediterranean in the first millennium BCE. He died tragically young. His life and the times of those adventurous Englishmen who loved Greece were celebrated by his wife, Dilys Powell, in two romantic novels written after the war.

WHERE VISITORS ALIGHTED – THE RAILWAY STATION

The station at Pencader was where the visitors alighted. It had been a little used stop on the Carmarthen and Cardigan Railway, up a single-track branchline, well off the Great Western route out of London's Paddington Station. But now it was often crowded and only because of Sarah Jacob. Men and boys would meet the trains offering themselves as guides – strips of paper attached to their large caps read 'Guide to Lletherneuadd' or 'To the Fasting Girl'. The house was 2 miles of walk away, over rolling meadows.

PERFUME JARS

By the dining room in the dumps were found some classic items from the new city states of Greece.

The sanctuary of Perachora had belonged to Corinth, across the gulf. By 750, the walls of a wine cup were eggshell thin, pale buff and covered with ruled black lines, reserved spaces for triangles, outlined lozenges, schematic water birds lined in soldier files. A tight and terse visual vocabulary. With carefully regulated techniques, using multiple brushes and a turntable, the potters had it worked out – there was little risk of spoiling the decoration as they painted.

And then, within a generation, they did something radically new. First, they made miniatures a specialty, particularly the famous perfume jars that were sent all over the Mediterranean. Second, they began painting polychrome figures free hand and incised details through the paint. At the risk of messing up the design, the potters made daring displays of technical facility in tiny scenes of animals, monsters, men fighting and stylized flowers.

THE MOVIE

When Lichtenstein first visited the heritage center, the National Film School was making a movie called *The Golem of Princelet Street*, about a cabbalistic scholar and his friendship with a Muslim boy – it was about

Rodinsky. The synagogue was often used as a film set because it had the right atmosphere.

URBAN FABRIC

Evidence for the early city of Corinth. It is fragmentary – the city was completely destroyed by the Romans in 146 BCE and little has been excavated.

- Very few traces of houses. A mould for a spearhead by one – perhaps a metal workshop.
- Public amenities – water facilities.
- A monumental stone temple on Temple Hill in what was later the center of the city. Architectural fragments indicate squared stone masonry, painted ceramic wall decoration, a tiled roof.
- A formal cemetery to the north, towards the harbor, established by 750 BCE – a new civic space for the dead. Graves had previously been scattered across the settlement, between the houses, when they were more varied and contained a lot more things. They stopped putting weapons in graves. Instead, they started giving weaponry to the sanctuaries.
- An area 1200 yards to the east of Temple Hill was excavated in the 1940s. From the quantity of pottery it was called the *Kerameikos* (potters' quarter) by the excavator. Though some ceramic production did take place there, the current excavator, Charles K. Williams II, thinks this was just a relatively self-contained and well-populated residential area with its own cult-sites and cemeteries, well away from the center.
- A cutting in the bedrock by the later west wall of the city may indicate an angle tower of a circuit wall built in the seventh century. If so and if the walls surrounded the whole city, the circuit would have been several miles long.
- Some form of cult of Aphrodite, associated with Astarte, an eastern goddess. Evidence: later literary tradition, terracotta figurine fragments, early pottery fragments in later cult sites spread round the city, including the famous temple on Acrocorinth, with its sacred prostitutes.

WHAT WAS LEFT BEHIND

Things in the attic.

- Handwritten notebooks, many on language and code, some containing poems by Rodinsky.
- Thousands of scraps of paper, more notes.
- A library of books on languages: Sumerian, Arabic, Japanese, Hebrew, Yiddish, Greek, Russian, Egyptian hieroglyphics.
- A notebook full of Irish drinking songs written in red capital letters.
- Kosher food packets.
- A battery operated razor.
- A shopping list for Shabbat: two challahs, candles, meat, six eggs, Kiddush wine.
- A rent book dating back to 1936.
- Foreign travel books.
- A London A–Z map with numerous annotations and sketches of streets in the spaces missed by the map.
- Maps for journeys round London written on scrap paper: Clapton to Hendon, Hainault to Chigwell.
- An envelope addressed to Mrs C. Rodinsky, postmarked Essex, January 1961.
- A letter from St Clements Hospital Social Services concerning the death of his sister Bessie Rodinsky, requesting that he collect her possessions – one pair of gold earrings.
- A weighing machine ticket used as a bookmark, dated 2 August 1957. Recorded weight: 12 stone 12 pounds.
- A Letts Schoolgirl's diary translated into Rodinsky's own system of universal time and language: Julian, Georgian and Armenian versions, Indian, Latin, Sumerian markings. The work ends with 'KI-BI-MA . . . SPEAK! by he she/aren't so to take'.
- Bubblegum cards of Iceland and Venezuela.
- A letter dated August 1961, never sent to his landlord, in which he asserted his right to tenancy, having lived at 19 Princelet Street since 1932.
- A calendar with a print of Millet's *Angelus,* hanging on the wall.
- A pan of porridge on the stove.
- Clothes upon the bed and in the wardrobe. He was probably 5 ft 9 in tall.

DRESS AND COMPORTMENT

They showed it in the scenes upon the pots – in about 650 there is a change of fashion when the sword disappears as an item of civilian dress. A new type of cloak, the *himation*, appears; men carry spears and swords are reserved for battle. The *himation* is not pinned and requires constant attention, hitching it up and holding it in place. It is an item that prevents much activity – except watching, listening, talking and taking decisions. The cloak enforces and proclaims leisure.

Several of the perfume jars show horse races or processions, a robed figure watching or overseeing, sometimes with a tripod nearby – a traditional victor's trophy.

Others show soldiers fighting, dressed in the new standardized equipment of the *hoplite* – bronze cuirass, crested helmet, greaves, spear held over-arm, over the large round *hoplon*, the shield that gives its name to the soldier, the heavy infantryman of Greek city warfare. One by the dining room shows also a piper providing accompaniment to battle.

Some, with heads modeled upon the top, are distinctively like canopic jars from Egypt that contained the intestines and inner organs of the deceased. The modeled hairstyles too are eastern – a layered coiffure that German scholars called *Etagenperücke*.

Tiny scenes, a fraction of an inch high, of grand events upon miniature perfume jars – to be held and scrutinized in the palm of your hand.

Wine cups carried such pictures too. And at about this time it became the style to recline on couches to eat, another eastern custom. Hence the identification of this dining room.

DIAGNOSIS

Dr Pearson Hughes, Llandovery, writing in the newspaper *The Western Mail* 21 December 1869, reporting a visit on the 9th March.

> The subject under notice is a good-looking girl, features straight, forehead high, eyes prominent, pupils large, eye-lashes long, a plump face and rosy cheeks; pulse, 85; temperature normal to hand; body well nourished, all organs perfectly healthy and functions of body properly performed. She is fatter and heavier than she was before she is said to have given up taking food. . . . Gurgling is distinctly heard over the stomach and intestines (infallible signs of fluid and air). . . . The above symptoms, together with the general character of the case, the ease with which she goes into 'fits', the sobbings, the *inability* to do things which she easily does next minute, &c., point to the case being that of HYSTERIA.

RICHES OF THE EAST

The changes were widespread. Some relished the new lifestyles: 'I love luxury; and love has given me the beauty and brilliance of the sun' (Sappho: Lobel and Page 58). Some did not like them at all. This is Xenophanes (West 3):

> They learned useless luxuries from the Lydians. A thousand of them, no less, would enter the assembly all boastful, glorying in their coiffured locks, drenched in the scent of exotic perfumes.

PHOTOGRAPHS

There is no surviving photograph of Rodinsky. Photographs of his room appeared in newspapers. This is a description of one by Iain Sinclair:

> The series of photographs taken by Danny Gralton defined the set. Defined number 19 Princelet Street *as* a set. Slow light processed through a large format camera nudged Rodinsky's attic out of the mundane stream of time. It was removed, fixed in the eternal now, anchored by a catalogue of particulars. Shimmering particles revealed the board ceiling with its warped timber; a dusty bottle of medicinal wine, strategically arranged rugs and rags, the Angelus print like a pious window. Gralton foregrounded newspapers that acted like subtitles: ISRAEL REBORN. Sorry shards of scholarship were heaped on the table. The photographer's gift for documentation was at odds with an expressionistic impulse towards direction, arrangement, presentation. The room provoked this very natural response. It was a dim interior, untouched for years, in which a correct display of objects would expose some terrible narrative secret.

SOVEREIGNTY AND THE CITY

The extant poetry and histories are witness to a political crisis in the early years of the city of Corinth. Cypselus, an aristocrat on the periphery of the ruling oligarchic elite, the Bacchiad family, usurped power with popular support and became a tyrant – a (relatively) benign dictator. He oversaw major building and cultural programs. His son Periander, on some accounts, was the typical oppressive tyrant, ruthlessly eliminating rivals. He is supposed to have killed his wife Melissa, had sex with her dead body, then stripped the fine clothes off Corinthian women to burn for her spirit (as instructed by an oracle, perhaps that at Perachora). On other accounts, he was one of the seven sages, acted against the conspicuous consumption of

wealth (those luxurious garments) and oversaw the growth of Corinthian maritime interests. Nevertheless, opposition grew and the tyranny was deposed in the sixth century.

THE FIRST WATCHING

On 15 March 1869, the Eagle Inn, Llanfihangel-ar-arth. A meeting of local men, at the request of the father, Evan Jacob. A committee was established to oversee the watching and testing of Sarah Jacob, to take place between March and April of 1869.

Seven men visited the house and watched the girl. One dozed off. One was dismissed by the committee for being too credulous. Another got drunk. Thomas Davies of Llwynfedw, Llanfihangel-ar-arth, was the most skeptical and watched for 12 days. 'Sarah never called for anyone except for her sister and I really believe that if there was any secret her sister possessed it. . . . Previous to and during the watch, I believed Sarah obtained nourishment some way or the other, but after the watch I was in great doubt. I do not believe Sarah was an angel on earth – as to what she is at the present I cannot say'.

MISE-EN-SCÈNE

It is a classic narrative locale: the locked room, notebooks in code, maps, scribblings, all saturated in the Cabbala, the detritus of a life posing questions. And the absence of the man, present in what he has left behind. A time capsule. Scene of crime, where anything might be relevant. Incitement to narrative.

THE POET AND PERFORMER

According to the later historian Herodotus, the poet Arion of Methymna was artist in residence at the court of the tyrant of Corinth, Periander (1.23–4). The finest singer of the time, he was the first to compose a choral song, rehearse it with a choir and produce it in performance. This was the *dithyramb* – a cult song for the god from the east, of wine, of drama, of cultural license, Dionysos.

Arion, the story goes, made a voyage to Sicily and Italy. On the way back, the crew threatened to lynch him for his money. He narrowly escaped

by distracting them, singing in the full finery of his ceremonial robes and jumping into the sea; he was rescued by a dolphin.

THE SURGEON'S LETTER

The Times, 7 September 1869. A letter from Robert Fowler MD, District Medical Officer of the East London Union, writing from the Black Lion Hotel, Cardigan, 4 September 1869.

> Sir – Taking my annual outing in the picturesque neighbourhood of the Tivy, I was a few days ago enabled, through the kindness of my friend Mr. Thomas Davies, jun., solicitor, Cardigan, to visit and examine the now far-famed Fasting-Girl of Wales. . . . The first impression was most unfavourable and to a medical man the appearance was most suspicious. The child was lying on a bed, decorated as a bride, . . . There was that restless movement and frequent looking out of the corner of the eyes so characteristic of simulative disease. . . . The whole case is in fact one of simulative hysteria in a young girl having the propensity to deceive very strongly developed. . . . I am inclined to believe that Sarah Jacob in reality deceives her own parents.
>
> During the last Parliamentary Session, we heard a great deal of the influence of the ministers of religion and of the power of the territorial aristocracy in Wales. Now, here is a common ground on which the eloquence of the former and the persuasiveness of the latter, may very legitimately conjoin so as to beneficially affect a suffering fellow-creature. I in vain tried to convince the father that at this young age such a case was in all probability perfectly curable. He shook his head, stating 'that none but the Great Doctor could cure his child'.
>
> Admitted to a London Hospital, or into the Carmarthenshire Infirmary, this poor child would, doubtless, be quickly relieved from a malady, which in a year or so may not only become chronic, but also be the forerunner of some physical or some more severe form of mental disease.
>
> The silly father's answer to my advice and offer was, 'How can you London doctors make my child eat without making a hole in her?'

THE LUNCHEON CLUB

In the early 1990s there was little left to see of the Jewish East End, apart from the buildings themselves. One place was still going – the Kosher Luncheon Club in Greatorex Street, just to the east of Brick Lane.

A typical lunch: barley soup, herring, gefilte fish.

On the back of a menu:

> During the eighteenth century, eating houses started up all over the East End. They were at first little more than soup kitchens, but as the community prospered, so the variety of the menus improved, reflecting the regional dishes brought over by the refugees. The downfall of these eating houses was in fact due to the business success of the refugees they so faithfully served. The community moved on the better areas and the eating houses closed down. This is the last of its kind to survive in London.

The luncheon club closed in 1994.

BORDERS PERFORMED

Perhaps once a year they crossed the gulf to attend the festival, to watch the priests make sacrifice of burning meat, to ask a question of the goddess, to make an offering of a painted perfume jar; and some, but by no means all, would dine in the room beyond the pool. Perachora is one of several such places in the land of the Corinthians. Others are Isthmia of Poseidon (site of the panhellenic games), Solygeia, the temple of Apollo in the city center, Penteskopuphia, a sanctuary to Demeter and Kore within the city walls, one to Astarte/Aphrodite upon the citadel.

These come with the crystallization of the urban community in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. With their festival gatherings, ceremony, processions of civic members and representatives across the city territory, the dedications and feasts, the sanctuaries are focal points of community activity. Performances at the center and periphery, they embody civic space and territorial sovereignty. Citizens burning and eating meat bring together the components of the sacred city.

THE WELSHMAN

John Griffith of Cardiff, well known in Wales as *Gohebydd*, as a writer to the national Welsh press, twice visited Sarah Jacob in April and September 1869. He did not like what he saw.

The first watching had not been enough. Some 30 or 40 farmers, tradesmen and others interested in the matter attended another meeting at the Eagle Inn at the end of November. As usual, the press reported. *Gohebydd* said that he was not a Carmarthenshireman, nor was he a 'Cardi' (a man from Cardiganshire – they laughed at this). He was a *Welshman*, jealous for the honor of his native country, for the good name of his countrymen and his countrywomen. He said he was sick and tired of the matter, 'this week

a letter from a London Doctor, next week from a Welsh Bard – from somewhere, giving their "opinion" on the case of this girl'. This was not a question of opinion, but a matter of fact, *Gohebydd* said. It was a question for men of science and not for the public to discuss.

He wrote to a Welsh physician at Guy's Hospital in London to settle the matter once and for all with another watching, this time by trained nurses.

PEOPLE WHO REMEMBERED

People who think they remember seeing Rodinsky.

- Bill Fishman, local guide and historian.
- Charlie from Wilkes Street who answered an advertisement Rachel Lichtenstein placed in the window of the Market Café in Fournier Street.
- The owner of Rossi's café in Hanbury Street.
- A man from a local taxi firm in Brick Lane.
- Mr Katz, owner of C.H.N. Katz: String, twine, cord and paper bags, Brick Lane.
- Ian Shames of Stamford Hill, son in law of the Princelet Street Rabbi.
- Bella Lipman who had lived on the floor below Rodinsky and had moved out in 1981 to Dobson's Place E1, behind Brick Lane.
- Mrs Carol Wayne, formerly Ethel Rodinsky, David Rodinsky's cousin who had moved from Princelet Street in the 1930s to Stamford Hill and then Hendon.

REMEMBERING AND MARKING

Out in the southeast of the territory is Solygeia, a ridge overlooking the sea. What appeared to be a round-ended building in a sanctuary precinct was found here in the 1950s. To many, it looks like another temple, built of mud brick on a stone footing, with a hearth or altar inside. Over 1000 vases were found, many miniatures, 50 figurines, mainly seated goddesses and poppies, *koulouria* and offering trays. A bit like Perachora.

Nearby are six Mycenaean chamber tombs from the second millennium BCE. Several centuries after they were built and when the shrine was in use, someone placed a cache of Corinthian pots in one of the entrance passages, in remembrance of heroic times past.

The shrine at Solygeia seems to mark the spot of a legendary battle between native Corinthians and invaders that led to the refounding of the community under a new king, Aletes, founder of the Bacchiad dynasty. This story was invented in the eighth century, or later.

THE COMMITTEE

At that same meeting at the Eagle Inn, Llanfihangel-ar-arth in November 1869, the men made a new committee to oversee the second watching of the girl. Principles were agreed: the room was to be searched, the parents' bed to be removed, the girl's bedstead replaced with a plain iron one, two nurses to be present at all times, watching in 8-hour shifts (2–10 pm, 10 pm–6 am, 6 am–2 pm), one always awake; three local girls to be present to set the girl at ease (the father's request), a committee of doctors to supervise, the nurses to ascertain whether the girl partakes of any food, to offer food only if requested, the action of the bowels and bladder to be especially noted, a report to be presented at the end of a fortnight to the local committee and to Guy's Hospital.

A local solicitor drew up a legal agreement and the father signed that evening.

THE WRITER

Iain Sinclair is a located writer. He has spent much of the last 20 years mapping the urban imaginary that runs through London. Hawksmoor churches, Sherlock Holmes, Fu Manchu, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Cable Street marchers for and against Mosley, Truman's brewery in Brick Lane (crocodiles in the ullage tanks), Jack the Ripper, the Jewish burial ground off Brady Street, the gangster Kray Twins and Watney Street Mob, novelist David Litvinoff: the Victorian Gothic, the East End, the London underworld. In the 1980s he took a series of laboring jobs (a trajectory through Stratford East, Hackney Marshes, Limehouse, Poplar and Canning Town, Whitechapel) to listen and ask about these mythical geographies in a search for unrecorded traces of unofficial culture, underworlds of lives without evidence.

In 1987 he heard of David Rodinsky. For Sinclair, the room and the man had become iconic of the radical reworking in the 1980s and 1990s of London and its cultural imaginary.

WAR MACHINE

The new shield is called Argive, the new helmet Corinthian. It has long been clear that the cites of Argos and Corinth in the north-east Peloponnese were at the center of innovation in warfare in these times. But it is more than just warfare.

In a scene upon a perfume jar found at Perachora, soldiers fight to the accompaniment of a piper. The Spartan poet Alkman (Davies 41) describes it as: 'counterbalanced against the iron of the spear is sweet lyre-playing'. Archilochus, the traveling mercenary, connects his life with the way one should eat and drink: 'By spear is kneaded the bread I eat, by spear my Ismaric wine is won, which I drink, leaning upon my spear' (West 2). The word he uses for leaning (upon his spear) is the same as that used for reclining (on a couch to eat). He says: 'I would as soon fight with you as drink when I'm thirsty' (West 125) – war is his lifestyle. For a man to bear arms is to claim civic representation, to have the right of participation in cult, to walk the streets, to eat and drink in the way one should.

THE ROOM SEARCHED

It started in Paddington Station, London. Sister Elizabeth Clinch and nurses Sarah Palmer, Sarah Attrick and Anne Jones attracted a great deal of attention on their 8–hour train journey to Pencader. After an overnight stop in the village, they arrived at Lletherneuadd on the morning of 8 December 1869.

The search and report were made and a health certificate issued. Nothing of the nature of food was found anywhere, saving an old shriveled-up turnip under the parents' bedstead.

THE CHANGES

The city of Corinth at its beginnings: here are some components of a narrative.

- New urban and political spaces are built – monumental stone architecture, figurative imagery, public areas, processions, gatherings, displays, places to watch and listen.
- Formally designated and sacred places appear: springs, temple sanctuaries.
- There are new ways to dress, walk and talk. Reworkings of personal

space – eating, scrutinizing tiny pictures upon a perfume jar held close, hitching up a cloak, bearing arms, wearing armor in the summer sun.

- New axes through the community's territory – city walls, roads, procession ways, views across the gulf, from the heights.
- Goods and people are on the move – pots exported far from the city, new settlements in northern Greece and Sicily (Corcyra (Corfu) and Syracuse), conventionally called colonies.
- New lifestyles – clothes, ornamentation (or not), hairstyle, the cultivation of skills of hunting, riding, athletics, music, poetry at a drinking party, speaking, drinking, eating, violence, sexuality, how to behave. And not everyone agreed on what was proper.
- Myths and legends of personal and collective sovereignty are told, written and pictured.

The conventional plots:

- an archaic Greek cultural renaissance of city state from dark age
- the ancient Greek miracle
- a founding moment in the story of the West.

CHARACTERS AND PLOTS

Five plots conceived by Sinclair for the mystery of the locked room.

- Rodinsky went out, had a heart attack and was swept away as some urban derelict.
- Rodinsky reached a point in his cabbalistic studies where he had begun to achieve the Great Work, a kind of invisibility or moving into another dimension and disappeared that way.
- Rodinsky is still there in the room, you just cannot see him.
- Rodinsky got so into debt buying books that he had to 'do a runner'.
- Rodinsky was eliminated by the CIA and the secret state.

Lichtenstein's plot – a search for identity, with the twist that, in her own obsession, she becomes Rodinsky.

Hooks in the plot – ritualistic obsession with mysticism, the melancholy of urban anomie and cultural dislocation, the individual swept away, lives lost in the tide of history.

Characters:

- Rodinsky as Harold Pinter's Davies, the Caretaker.

- Rodinsky as *Golem*, grey creature of mud, in an urban myth of discovery, survival and magic.
- Rodinsky as *lamed vavnik* – one of the 36 secret righteous men who keep the world from destruction.
- Rodinsky as *dybbuk*, tied to the past, waiting for a soul to possess him to release him from sinful misery.

THE REAL AND THE IDEAL

The new weaponry is painted upon the perfume jars, but the figurative naturalism is as much a fantasy world of heroes, legend and myth. Lions, sphinxes, fabulous creatures, exotic flora (lotus and palmette) – and men dressed in the armor of the citizen soldier.

A favorite story at Corinth was that of Bellerophon, his winged horse Pegasus, found by the fountain of Peirene at Corinth and the Chimaera. It appears upon one of the most exquisite of the perfume jars that has survived.

THE SECOND WATCHING

No fire had been lit in the bedroom for 2 years. Jars of hot water and hot bricks kept the girl and nurses warm. The nurses took no food into the room. The door was kept open at all times. The watching began on 9 December at 5 in the afternoon. Elizabeth Clinch kept a diary.

Friday 10 and Saturday 11 December. Days 1 and 2.

Sarah Jacob was in good spirits and read aloud from her books to the nurses. She was unconcerned that the local girls had not come to keep her company.

Sunday 12 December. Day 3.

Visited by Dr. Davies. He found the girl flushed and with a pulse of 112.

Monday 13 December. Day 4.

The nurses found the girl had passed a great quantity of urine. She appeared confused at this.

Tuesday December 14. Day 5.

Dr Davies noted the ‘same variation in pulse’.

Wednesday December 15. Day 6.

Sarah Jacob awoke at 6 with a flushed face and sunken eyes, her nose pinched and voice much lower. She was unable to read.

That night Sarah was very restless, frequently wishing to be raised. The nurses noted a peculiar smell about the bed. On kissing the child the Sister noted her breath was smelling. The bed had to be remade at 3 in the morning.

Thursday December 16. Day 7.

Her cheek bones were more prominent. The Vicar visited and found the girl weaker, paler and restless, moving her arms a great deal, even the left, previously supposed paralyzed. He suggested to the parents that they should send the nurses away.

Dr. Davies arrived, noted the pulse and left. He asked the girl's uncle to persuade the mother and father to send the nurses away, wired Lewis in Carmarthen and returned to Lletherneuadd later in the day. Meanwhile John Daniel, the uncle, arrived to find the girl had rallied a little. He offered her food. Lewis and Hughes arrived at 4pm and attempted to persuade the father to stop the watching.

The doctors could not agree on what to do. Lewis saw no symptom of real danger other than the pulse, unlike Hughes, who withdrew from the medical committee that night. And Davies said explicitly at 9.30 pm that there was no danger.

Friday December 17. Day 8.

Sarah Jacob became delirious at midnight. She was very chilled, even with two hot water bottles. The nurses applied hot flannels. The bed smelled strongly of eau-de-cologne, but no bottle could be found (it later turned up in the bed). The girl's breath now smelled offensive. At 3 in the morning Sarah's sister of six was put in the bed to try to warm her. A nurse went to the parents at 4 and suggested some brandy and water be given to the girl. They again refused, said it made her faint. Sarah awoke at 6. The farm servant was sent to bring Dr. Davies. He came between 8 and 9. At 10 the Vicar arrived to find her speechless. Davies appealed again for the watching to be called off, but the father said he had nothing to do for his child. The nurses now reported that she was sensible and in a condition to take food, if offered. John Daniel arrived at 11.30. His wife moistened the girl's lips.

There was a change of watch at 2 pm. The girl appeared in a stupor. The parents left the bedroom at 2.30 pm. Sarah Jacob died a few minutes past three. She was twelve years, seven months and five days old. Her fast had lasted two years, two months and seven days.

The nurses immediately left Lletherneuadd.

LAST TRACES

1. At the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Lichtenstein discovered the record of death for a 44-year-old David Rodinsky:

5 March 1969 – broncho-pneumonia, II epilepsy with paranoid features.

It was reported at Longrove Hopital, a mental institution in Surrey. There is no more information – the hospital records were destroyed in a fire.

2. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys held the birth certificate:

February 1925 at 73 Hanbury St., London; father: Barnett Rodinsky, tailor, from Kushovata, Poland.

3. The last letter, discovered in the room.

From Social Services Department, St Clements Hospital, Bow Road, London E3.

April 8 1968.

To Mr. D. Rodinsky, Jewish Shelter, 63 Mansell Street, London E1.

Dear Mr. Rodinsky,

Thank you for your letter of the 5th of April.

There is no cause for concern about your rent at 19 Princelet Street, as the Ministry of Social Security will continue to pay this along with the cost of your stay at Mansell Street. If you run into any difficulty about obtaining this money, please contact the Ministry of Social Security to get in touch with us.

The keys to your flat have been retained at the hospital so that the Public Health Department can have access for the purpose of cleaning and redecoration. The keys will be returned to you as soon as possible.

Over the top of the headed notepaper, in red capital letters:

DIABOLICAL CONCENTRATION CAMP, A. MORTE.

4. The grave: at Waltham Abbey, cemetery of the United Synagogues Burial Society. Paupers' section, dated 5 March 1969, WA25, row T, number 708.

POST MORTEM

Thomas Lewis of Carmarthen in the *British Medical Journal*, 8 January 1870. Sarah Jacob. Post-mortem examination: 72 hours after death.

Length of the corpse: four feet five inches and a half. Face tolerably plump. Eyeballs sunken. Eyelids closed. Some little colour in the cheeks. A small portion of yellowish fluid had escaped from the nostrils on the upperlip. The posterior aspect of the body was slightly livid from venous gravitation, but there was no emaciation, no appearance of bed sores ever having existed. On making the incision through the integuments, from the larynx to the pubes, a considerable layer of subcutaneous fat was cut through. The scalp was covered with abundant, long, very dark hair. . . . Both lungs perfectly

> healthy. Heart of moderate size. Valves all healthy. The stomach and whole tract of the intestines were removed together from the body. . . . At different parts of the transverse and descending colon a large quantity of hardened faeces was found. During the dissection the oesophagus was lost sight of, but a portion attached to the lower part of the trachea was examined. It was quite natural. The teeth were white and perfect. The spleen was firm, of usual size. The kidneys were of natural size. The bladder was perfectly empty.

Mr Phillips of Newcastle Emlyn added the following in the *Medical Times and Gazette* for 8 January 1870: '. . . left axilla more than usually hollow, as if a bottle or other hard substance had been kept there . . . '.

MYTHOPOESIS – THE URBAN IMAGINARY

Rodinsky's room, for Sinclair, is an emblem of a familiar urban mythopoesis. We find it in Dickens, Gustav Meyrink (*Der Golem* 1915) and Franz Kafka, Poe, Peter Ackroyd, the antiquarianism of Borges, even the urban middle-classes of Woody Allen. Its geography is, in Sinclair's words, 'of dust heaps, bone shops, candlelit domesticities enacted against a curtain of fog', with spooks in the attic, ghettos and garrets, forgotten memories and associations, ghosts and hauntings, overwhelming feeble understandings of the present, the Law and its twistings, the unfathomable machinations of bureaucracy, everyday life overloaded with information and constantly offering challenges to figure out the logic.

INQUEST

Inquest, 21 December: 12 noon, in the house of Ann Charles of New Inn. Coroner: George Thomas. The jury had reviewed the body in the morning. On 25 December the Coroner directed the jury: 'the doctors are not to blame, having been deceived by the father'. The verdict returned was that Sarah Jacob 'died from starvation, caused by negligence to induce the child to take food on the part of the father'. A warrant was issued for the committal of Evan Jacob for trial on a charge of manslaughter.

JOURNEYS AFAR

In her search to decode herself and Rodinsky, Rachel Lichtenstein made journeys to Israel, to Poland, revisited the pogroms and ghettos, researched

family histories, diaspora, immigration, Nazi persecutions, the holocaust. She was (almost) converted to orthodox Judaism.

CEREMONY AND THE GAMES

A few dined at Perachora. They made dedications of pottery and fine goods to the goddess. What else was going on at these sanctuaries?

The games were institutionalized in the new cities, more specifically, the sanctuaries. Corinth's Isthmia hosted one of the four great quadrennial meetings, along with Delphi, Nemea and Olympia. The games were cosmopolitan gatherings of *agathoi,* the wealthy and high born, those who could afford the horses, the time to practice and compete, removed from the everyday, the quotidian. The games made of the sanctuaries rallying points, places where hospitality might be exchanged and alliances made, theatres of ostentation, like medieval fairs. They embody mobility and marginality – people traveling from near and far, to meet and compete, dedicate, sacrifice, eat, talk, show off, to represent their community, in places at the edges of those communities.

QUOTIDIAN INDETERMINACY

Can Rodinsky be reassembled piece by piece from the material remains, like some cyborg, some Golem, as man becomes room and room man? If his walks could be repeated, would this bring him back to life? Would we know him?

He left and died in a hospital. The rest is simply the mess of the everyday, the quotidian. What could be the plot to this *mise-en-scène*? The remains, conceived as evidence, make us think we might be able to say something of what happened, colluding somehow with the material. But really, there is only the retelling of a search, rummagings, incitements, connections engendered through the insinuating detritus. For Sinclair, Lichtenstein's autobiography is the only possible tactic in this overdetermined location.

DELICACIES

Semonides – seventh-century poet:

> you've made quite some preparations Telembrotos,

now here's a fabulous Tromilian cheese
that I brought back from Achaia. (West 22–3)

Those items by the dining room: little items like scarabs from Egypt, tiny perfume jars, delicate drinking cups, bronze phials for the sacred pool, food for the festival drinking party – delicacies and rarities from afar.

MAGISTERIAL INQUIRY – THE QUESTIONS PURSUED

A Magistrates' Inquiry was held in March 1870. The question – whether to send the doctors and parents to trial. The issues – responsibility, duty and legality, judgment, conspiracy and complicity.

C.E. Coleridge acted for the Crown. 'The fantastic dress of the child for the purpose of exhibition, the money, the books and everything, it appears to me to be a sort of dramatic performance'. For him the case was about conspiracy, incompetence on the part of the doctors who were agents acting for the Committee, negligence on the part of doctors and the parents. The Committee he accused of being an illegally constituted society. He quoted the decision of Justice Littledale in the case of *Rex* vs *Perkins*, 4, *Carrington's Reports* – a prize fight that resulted in death, the principals of the fight found guilty of manslaughter, but *also* all the bystanders.

Robert Fowler MD (Edinburgh), who had visited the girl, was called as expert witness. Would force-feeding have worked? Was mental illness involved? What was the cause of death? The symptoms observed at the end – what should they have indicated to the doctors?

The post mortem had revealed no apparent cause of death. No comparable cases could be cited (though they discussed a prisoner in Toulouse and noted observations made on the Irish potato famine of 1847). Too little was known about starvation. No case could be made against the doctors. The nurses were taken to be under their authority. Both parents were sent for trial on a charge of manslaughter and admitted to bail of £50 each.

REWRITING THE PAST

Hardly anything is left of the writings of the Corinthian poet Eumelos – a few scraps recorded by later writers. But we do know that in the 700s he set out to provide his community with its own epic history. He attached to Corinth a large body of epic poetry loosely associated with a place called Ephyre mentioned in the cycle of the Trojan Wars. He rewrote the story of the Argonauts' voyage to the far north and included Corinth. He provided

heroic genealogies for the Bacchiad family, the ruling Corinthian aristocracy, with a story of its first king, Aletes.

HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

Rosemary Weinstein of the Museum of London supervised the photographs of the room when it was opened and the removal of Rodinsky's things for conservation.

> The most interesting things were the vestiges from the pre-revolutionary days in Russia; there were lots of roubles in his wallet and things like that. I remember the wallet, it was very spooky when we found it, left in his jacket still hanging in the wardrobe, full of personal artifacts, bits of paper with hand-drawn maps on them, cigarette packets covered in strange diagrams. Historically speaking, the most interesting thing for me was his bar mitzvah certificate.

PERFORMING THE BODY POLITIC

To be a sovereign member of the community is to take the boat across the gulf to the sanctuary. To eat in style and to leave a perfume jar painted with eastern designs and images of the soldier citizen.

To be a member of the community was to bear arms – 80 pounds of bronze, iron and leather. Cuirass molded as torso, shield, stabbing spear, helmet. Beaten from a single sheet of bronze, the Corinthian helmet is a remarkable achievement of the metalworkers' craft. All have attachments for crests of display. Encasing the head, the helmet gives protection at the expense of hearing and visibility. The face becomes a system of holes and slits. Cheek pieces frame the nose guard between eyes cut out from the sheet metal.

The importance of the eyes – a late eighth-century grave in Argos excavated in 1971 contained a bronze helmet with two extra eyes embossed upon the forehead.

Lined-up fellow citizens in the standardized equipment all look alike on the summer field chosen for battle. They stare at each other over the rims of shields: the experience of fighting is focused upon this gaze – the only mark of the individual, apart from shield devices and things done that mark out the doer as special. There is pushing and jostling; the spears come over or below the shields – typical wounds are to the neck, face and groin. And afterwards, the bodies lay hours or even days in the sun before they are

recovered. Disfigured by the wounds to the face and with bloated bodies cooked in the cuirass, there were always problems of identification.

SIMULATION – AN EXCHANGE ON HYSTERIA

The cross-examination of Dr Pearson Hughes at the trial of Hannah and Evan Jacob.

> And the result of that examination was that you considered the child was suffering from hysterical disease?
>
> Yes.
>
> Is hysterical disease simulative? Does it put on the form of other diseases?
>
> Certainly it does.
>
> All other diseases?
>
> Yes, I think so.
>
> May you have feigned paralysis?
>
> Yes, certainly.
>
> Is it not very common with girls when they have hysterical disease, to feign all kinds of diseases that they are acquainted with?
>
> I believe a number do.
>
> And especially to secrete objects?
>
> I cannot go so far as that really.

Hysteria – a protean disease continually changing its character, simulating, deceiving. Evidence: inconsistencies of behavior in the girl (the supposed fits, the supposed paralysis). Evidence: the absence of bed sores, the health and condition of the child. Was she a 'night feeder'? Who was deceived? Who, or what, was deceiving who? Did the father believe the girl? Did the mother?

Hysteria, described by James Thomas (expert witness) as 'perverted function'. Issue: the 'will' of the girl – was it perverted, was it morbid? Was the girl's will so strong as to prevent her parents acting for her health?

What is the physical location of hysteria? The brain or the nervous system? Examination of the brain showed nothing. Why was there no post mortem examination of the spinal cord?

Can hysteria be acute or chronic? Can starvation be acute or chronic? Could starvation leave no physical trace? Evidence: John Philips (who had conducted the post mortem) reported his microscopic examination of the intestines and the presence of minute traces of starch (arrowroot) and fish

bone, invisible to the naked eye. Question: could a hysterical person live on an amount of food that would be insufficient for a normal person?

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Sentences translated by Rodinsky into Hebrew:

Are you leaving already?

Must you go now?

Is it really absolutely necessary for you to go?

You've only just come.

It's early yet, stay a little longer.

You seem to be in a hurry.

I am very busy today.

I have a lot to do.

I have important business.

I have a long way to go.

I have many roads to take.

I have an important interview to attend.

I'm afraid I'm late.

When will we see you?

Very soon.

Well, as soon as I possibly can.

You'll be back after the interview of course?

I'll let you know.

I'll come eventually.

INDECISION AND VERDICT

At the post mortem the body appeared healthy. The courts and doctors could not agree on the condition, the illness, if it was that, or on the cause of death, proximate or ultimate, of Sarah Jacob. In spite of the lack of evidence, the judge, in summing up, argued from common sense and from the failure of doctors to make full and appropriate tests at the post mortem,

that starvation was the cause of death. Did the parents collude in deception? How else could it be so, the mother dressing her daughter the way she did, the father taking gifts of money and goods, the family living together in such a room?

Evan and Hannah Jacob were found guilty of the manslaughter of their daughter. The motivation: that their deception might not be discovered. They were sentenced to 1 year and 6 months of imprisonment and hard labor respectively.

A NOTE ON SOURCES AND COMMENTARY

The case of Sarah Jacob was widely covered in the press in its time and was published in various standard medical serials. I have used the original publication by Robert Fowler (1871) and a collection of the primary sources (court transcripts, press cuttings, medical reports) produced in 1904 by publishers W.H. Roberts (London) and D. Jones (Pencader). The same material was reworked by John Cule (1967) and Sian Busby (2003). Recent discussions of context and comparable cases can be found in Brumberg (2000) and Stacey (2002).

Primary sources for the room at Perachora are the excavation reports (Payne et al., 1940; Dunbabin et al., 1962) and reviews by Salmon (1972), Tomlinson (1977, 1990, 1992) and Morgan (1994). I have covered the context in detail in my book on the city of Corinth (Shanks, 1999).

For Rodinsky's room I have relied upon the book by Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair (1999).

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