

PROOF AND PERSUASION IN *BLACK  
ATHENA I*

The case of K.O. Müller

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'Non tali auxilio' (Virg. Aen. II, 521)

*Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

When in 1824 the German classical scholar Karl Otfried Müller (1797-1840) set down to write a review of Champollion's first *Letter to M. Dacier* (1822),<sup>2</sup> he was profoundly interested. For several years he had been working on Egypt, and as he told his parents in 1820,

'I have come to love Egyptian antiquity so much, that, if I were not constricted by the schedule of my classes, I would have set myself to the decipherment of the hieroglyphs, which I would not deem impossible by the clues I have found.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A concise version of this paper was published as 'Proof and persuasion in *Black Athena*: The case of K.O. Müller', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57 (1996), 705-724; I am grateful to the Johns Hopkins University Press for the kind permission to publish a more extensive version here. Moreover, I am much indebted to the program 'Standards of Proof and Methods of Persuasion in the Discipline of History' of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center of Historical Studies at Princeton University, in which I participated in 1994; to Glen Bowersock, Suzanne Marchand, Joan Wallach Scott, Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Donald R. Kelley, Wim van Binsbergen and the members of the Historische Kring at Groningen for stimulating discussions; to Stefan Radt and Henk Versnel for reading the draft; and to Wim van Binsbergen for his editorship. The survey of Müller's works by Wolfhart Unte, 'Quellen zu einer Biographie Karl Otfried Müllers', unpublished paper for the K.O. Müller-Tagung (Bad Homburg; March 1994), has been an invaluable checklist.

<sup>2</sup>*Lettre à M. Dacier relative à l'alphabet des hiéroglyphes phonétiques employés par les Egyptiens pour inscrire sur leurs monuments les titres, les noms et les surnoms des souverains Grecs et Romains*; par M. Champollion le Jeune (Paris, 1822). This was the work in which Champollion first set down his decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs.

<sup>3</sup>On his own studies of these fields, e.g. Müller to his parents, March 26, 1820;



Fig. 1. Carl Oesterley's portrait of Karl Otfried Müller (1830)<sup>4</sup> presenting Müller primarily as an art historian/ archaeologist, casts of the Elgin Marbles appear in the background

In the same years 1820-1825 when he wrote his early books on ancient Greece, he reviewed sixteen studies on Egypt alone.<sup>5</sup> In his review of the *Letter*, then, he wanted to draw 'the attention of (the) readers to this,

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*Carl Otfried Müller: Lebensbild in Briefen an seine Eltern, mit dem Tagebuch seiner italienisch-griechischen Reise*, ed. O. Kern and E. Kern (Berlin, Weidmann, 1908) (henceforth cited as *LMK*), no. 42; p. 70; on his various publications on Egyptian culture and art, see E. Müller's biographical sketch (henceforth *EMB*) in *K.O. Müller's Kleine deutsche Schriften über Religion, Kunst, Sprache und Literatur, Leben und Geschichte des Alterthums, nebst Erinnerungen aus dem Leben des Verfassers*, ed. E. Müller (2 vols. Breslau, J. Max, 1847-1848), p. lv and note (henceforth *KdS*); his innumerable reviews of studies on Egyptian antiquities in *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* (henceforth *GGA*); and see below.

<sup>4</sup>As reproduced in *LMK*, T. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Of his reviews in *GGA* of 1822 one concerned Egypt, in 1823 two, in 1824 seven, in 1825 six; add another six in 1826.

certainly not unfounded, discovery,<sup>6</sup> though he feared the author was inclined to jump to conclusions. But in August 1824 he reviewed Champollion's more complete publication of his findings of the same year<sup>7</sup> extensively, and, after recalling his previous anxiety, commented:

'Now, however, the reading of the present work has totally convinced me that the use of hieroglyphs to indicate sounds is as ancient as this writing system itself. [This discovery should also mean that] the history of Egyptian religion and state will be reconstructed and expanded.'<sup>8</sup>

From that moment he sided unequivocally with Champollion, politely but clearly reminding German colleagues who still stumbled on with decipherments of their own, that they were wasting their time.<sup>9</sup>

With these facts in mind, Martin Bernal's rendering in *Black Athena*<sup>10</sup> is bound to surprise:

'...unlike Humboldt, Niebuhr and Bunsen [Müller] disregarded the sensational scholarly developments between 1815 and 1830. There is no indication that he paid any attention to Champollion's decipherment...'<sup>11</sup>

The contradiction between Bernal's statements and the sources on Müller's life and work turns out not to be an incidental error, but part of a more general pattern. As an introduction to an analysis of this pattern and its objectives, let me first summarise Bernal's argument and my own.

In the two volumes of his challenging *Black Athena*, Bernal argues that the ancient Greek world was founded on the colonisation of Greece by Phoenicians and Egyptians in the second millennium BCE. The material which is to prove his thesis is offered, in part, in volume II, though volume I includes a summary of what the author claims to be his basic findings admittedly without his substantiation. In this first volume Bernal expounds that from late Antiquity until the eighteenth century awareness of the Afroasiatic roots of ancient civilisation had been retained as the heritage of ancient Greece itself. Hence Bernal labels this perception underlying

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<sup>6</sup>GGA March 1824, pp. 353-359; p. 356.

<sup>7</sup>*Précis du système hiéroglyphique des anciens Egyptiens ou Recherches sur les élémens premiers de cette écriture sacrée, sur leurs diverses combinaisons, et sur leurs rapports de ce système avec les autres méthodes graphiques Egyptiennes*, M. Champollion le Jeune (Paris, 1824).

<sup>8</sup>GGA Aug. 1824, pp. 1257-1271; 1258, 1261.

<sup>9</sup>On the late F.A.G. Spohn, GGA 1825, pp. 1225-1230; on his successor G. Seyffart, GGA 1826, pp. 825-836; on J.W. Pfaff, GGA 1826, pp. 837-840, Müller siding with Champollion against J. Letronne; but compare M. Bernal, *Black Athena. The Afroasiatic roots of classical civilization. vol. I. The fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985* (New Brunswick/ London, Rutgers University Press, 1987), p. 253.

<sup>10</sup>M. Bernal, *Black Athena I*; M. Bernal, *Black Athena. The Afroasiatic roots of classical civilization, vol. II. The archeological and documentary evidence* (New Brunswick/ London, Rutgers University Press, 1991). Two more volumes are promised.

<sup>11</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 316.

Western classical scholarship of the early modern period the 'Ancient Model'.<sup>12</sup> By or soon after the 1820's, however, it was replaced by the 'Aryan Model', taking Greek civilisation to be partly autochthonous and partly shaped by invasions coming from the North. To show that the fall of the Ancient Model was not the result of internal developments in classical scholarship but of externalist influences, notably the belief in progress, the defence of Christianity, Romanticism and foremost racism, is the core theme of volume I. Bernal sustains this argument by contending that historical source criticism was not really or entirely an internal development, but had been created internally in order to serve these external ends; Bernal therefore has to present Müller as the embodiment of Romanticist racism, who was allegedly responsible for overthrowing the Ancient Model and inaugurating its Aryan successor. By thus designating Müller as the axis around which the overall turn of classical scholarship revolved, Bernal seeks to prove that the fall of the Ancient model was unjustified in terms of scholarship but only occurred due to ideologies at least one of which, racism, was dishonourable.<sup>13</sup>

Discussing a limited number of representative issues, I want to argue that Bernal's rendering of Müller and the context of his work is untenable in the light of the source material. This argument implies that Bernal's explanation of the fall of the Ancient Model is untenable as well. My aim is not just to clear Müller's name of Bernal's accusations, and far less to criticise Bernal's views<sup>14</sup> by presenting a 'true' reading of Müller instead.

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<sup>12</sup>Throughout *Black Athena I*, the 'Ancient Model' is assigned a status of plausibility and consistency which it certainly does not deserve. Since, however, neither the Ancient, nor the Aryan nor any other Model is the subject of this article, I just retain Bernal's terminology here.

<sup>13</sup>In addition, Bernal presents the other three as to become so closely associated with racism, that they got thus tinged with similarly ignominious motives.

<sup>14</sup>For an overview of critiques unto 1992, see Molly Myerowitz Levine, 'The use and abuse of *Black Athena*,' *American Historical Review*, 97 (1992), pp. 440-64, who recurrently mentions the silence of classical scholars on *Black Athena I*, beside discussing the effect of *Black Athena* on ethnicity debates in the US; cf. Molly Myerowitz Levine, 'Bernal and the Athenians in the multicultural world of the Ancient Mediterranean', in *Classical studies in honor of David Sohlberg*, ed. R. Katzoff (Ramet Gan, 1996) pp. 1-56; Robert L. Pounder, '*Black Athena 2*: History without rules,' *American Historical Review* 97 (1992), pp. 461-4; Robert Palter, '*Black Athena*, Afrocentrism, and the history of science,' *History of Science*, 31 (1993), pp. 227-87; P.O. Kristeller, 'Comment on *Black Athena*,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56 (1995), pp. 125-127. To many of these texts Bernal has written a reply. *Black Athena Revisited*, ed. Mary Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1996), offers a survey of critical responses to *Black Athena*, including essays which confront the historiography of classical studies as presented in *Black Athena I*: Robert Palter, 'Eighteenth-century historiography in *Black Athena*,' pp. 349-402; Robert E. Norton, 'The tyranny of Germany over Greece? Bernal, Herder and the German appropriation of Greece,' pp. 403-10; Richard Jenkyns, 'Bernal and the

This is not because Müller's work allows of course for different readings,<sup>15</sup> even if some readings are more true than others as measured

nineteenth century,' pp. 411-20; Guy MacLean Rogers, 'Multiculturalism and the foundations of Western civilization,' pp. 428-43, touching on George Grote. In his review of Mary Lefkowitz's *Not out of Africa: How Afrocentrism became an excuse to teach myth as history*, (New York, Basic Books, 1996), in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* on Internet (April 5, 1996), Bernal reiterates that

'since the 1820's, when hieroglyphics were first deciphered, there have been ideological reasons why they [lexicographers of Greek] should not have wanted to find Egyptian etymologies for significant or fundamental Greek words. It should also be pointed out that it is precisely this historiographical or ideological aspect of my work that has been most widely accepted.'

And again later on:

'(in the quarter of a century after 1820, in which the modern discipline of Classics was formed). In this period, young scholars dismissed the 'Ancient Model' and denied the ancient traditions of massive Greek cultural borrowings from Egypt. Their dismissal was not the result of the decipherment of hieroglyphics, as these classicists only accepted Champollion's work in the 1850's. Not did it come from archaeological excavations of Bronze Age Greece, which were not carried out until the 1870's. The Ancient Model was dismissed for ideological reasons. It was not seemly for Greece, now seen as the cradle of Europe, to have been (...) civilized by Africans and Asians, who were known according to the new 'racial science' to be categorically inferior.'

I thank Froma Zeitlin for bringing this review to my attention.

<sup>15</sup>On Müller see the theme issue of *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore de Pisa (ASNSP)* s. III, p. 14 (1984); K. Nickau, 'Karl Otfried Müller, Professor der Klassischen Philologie 1819-1840,' *Die Klassische Altertumswissenschaft an der Georg-August-Universität Göttingen: Eine Ringvorlesung zu ihrer Geschichte*, ed. C.J. Classen (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), pp. 27-50; W. Unte, 'Karl Otfried Müller,' *Classical scholarship: A biographical encyclopedia*, ed. W.W. Briggs and W.M. Calder, vol. III (New York, Garland, 1990), pp. 310-20; A.D. Momigliano, 'A return to eighteenth-century "Etruscheria": K.O. Müller,' in: A.D. Momigliano, *Studies on modern scholarship*, ed. and tr. G.W. Bowersock and T.J. Cornell (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1994), 303-14 (orig. Italian, 1985); and K.O. Müller *Reconsidered*, ed. W.M. Calder III, H. Flashar, R. Schlesier (Urbana, Illinois Classical Studies) forthcoming; in particular on myth, W. Burkert, 'Griechische Mythologie und die Geistesgeschichte der Moderne,' *Les études classiques aux XIXe et XXe siècles: Leur place dans l'histoire des idées*, ed. O. Reverdin, B. Grange [Fondation Hardt, 26] (Geneva, Vandoeuvres, 1980) pp. 159-207, 162-163; R. Pfeiffer, *History of classical scholarship: From 1300 to 1850*, (Oxford, Clarendon, 1976) pp. 187ff.; G. Pflug, 'Methodik und Hermeneutik bei Karl Otfried Müller,' *Philologie und Hermeneutik im 19. Jahrhundert: Zur Geschichte und Methodologie der Geisteswissenschaften*, I, ed. H. Flashar, K. Grüder and A. Horstmann, (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), pp. 122-40; A.D. Momigliano, 'K.O. Müller's *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie* and the meaning of "myth" ', *ASNSP* s. III, 13 (1983), pp. 671-689; M.M. Sassi, 'Ermeneutica del mito in K.O. Müller,' *ASNSP* s. III, 14 (1984), pp. 911-936; H.J. Gehrke, 'Karl Otfried Müller und das Land der Griechen,' *Athenische Mitteilungen*, 106 (1991), pp. 9-35; and J.H. Blok, 'Quests for a scientific mythology: F. Creuzer and K.O. Müller on history and myth,' *Proof and Persuasion in History*, ed. A. Grafton and S. Marchand [*History and Theory*, Theme Issue 33; 1994], pp. 26-52;

against the available evidence. The main reason is that not Müller is the subject of the present article, but Bernal's use of this evidence. Thus focusing on this pivotal case I want to clarify why *Black Athena* conveys Bernal's political views but cannot be regarded as acceptable history.

### *Conditions of scientific change*

Bernal's analysis of the fundamental turn in classical scholarship relies on distinguishing two kinds of scientific developments, external and internal.<sup>16</sup> Referring to his own experience as a scholar, Bernal points out that paradigms in any field have to supplant each other over time, as scholars raise new questions, offer alternative interpretations of the existing corpus, or produce and respond to new material. Internal developments, then, are normal and indeed valuable features of a scientific discipline. Simultaneously, scholars respond to external influences, whose impact cannot be estimated unambiguously. Sometimes, outsiders may affect important changes in a field; Bernal considers himself to be such an outsider.<sup>17</sup> But also shifts in contemporary ideologies as held in the world at large reverberate within a scholarly discipline. Whether the effects of such a change are to be valued positively or negatively depends on the value one assigns to the ideology concerned. On the whole, Bernal considers internal developments to be both necessary and legitimate, while external developments are liable to a different kind of judgement, that is, the agreement of the author with the ideas that informed them.

Although this model of scientific change may seem straightforward enough, the practice of historical scholarship is far more complicated. Usually it is very difficult to make a clear distinction between external and internal factors. Only in a few cases such a distinction could be plausibly argued: e.g. historical source criticism may be regarded as an internally developed skill, the majority of political opinions as externally originating ideologies. Yet even here a different point of view, notably a discourse analysis cutting across the boundaries of the discipline, could call the distinction I just made into question again. Obviously, historians are likely to share the values and concerns of their social environment. If they did not, their work would be meaningless to the readers whose questions concerning history they hope to answer. But supposing that one would classify this cultural influence as truly external, its effects are mediated by

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J.H. Blok, '“Romantische Poesie, Naturphilosophie, Konstruktion der Geschichte”: K.O. Müller's understanding of history and myth,' ed. Calder et al., *K.O. Müller Reconsidered* (forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup>Bernal, *Black Athena I*, Introduction, and *passim*.

<sup>17</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 1-5.

internal modes of evaluation, created by historiography as a discipline. The extent to which, or rather the ways in which external points of view are allowed to inform historical interpretations, are estimated in principle by an assessment of the source material.

There are, on the whole, two kinds of such an assessment. The most simple kind is carried out by refutation rather than by confirmation. As alleged support of any historical claim may be gleaned from strategically selected material, a critique depends on showing how and why the sources contradict this claim. The example I just offered, where Bernal denies any interest on Müller's part in Champollion's decipherment and I show the reverse to be true, is a case in point. Such cases are rare, though. The complicated kind is by far the most common, since as a rule the sources do not offer an unambiguous *tertium quid* which decides *per se* whether one historical interpretation is true and the other is not. Instead, this kind of historical debate focuses on the question what information a source *predominantly* contains, and thus operates with judgements on plausibility rather than on absolute truth. Debates of this kind are concerned with the question what kind of conclusions the source allows in relation to other sources. The answers are highly dependent of the interpretative framework within which the sources are examined. Criteria of methodology and consistent argumentation are fundamental to decide on the degree of plausibility. This interaction between interpretative framework and assessment of sources is particularly relevant in cases of what Bernal calls 'competitive plausibility', where rival views on the same issue are offered which not so much complement, but rather exclude each other.

Here we are back again at the initial mixture of internal and external factors, because this type of disagreement involves points of view which only rarely can be classified clearly as external or internal. To what extent, for example, is a preference for either isolationism or diffusionism a truly internally or externally defined position in the estimation of cultural development? Is the historicising approach to myth an internal view, and a structuralist reading an external one, or vice versa? One should note, moreover, that historical scholarship itself has come to include an increasing range of such divergent perceptions, each creating its own estimation of what should be termed as internal or external.

The complex relationship between both factors is also exemplified by the fact that sometimes the one, and sometimes the other seems to take the lead in changing historical perceptions. The development of historical source criticism, for instance, was indebted to such diverse incentives as the influx of manuscripts after the fall of Constantinople, the impact of Protestantism on the reading of the Scriptures, and changing views on the

meaning of historical, legal documents for political theory.<sup>18</sup> Among the effects of historical criticism, notably as applied to Biblical texts, one could mention the loss of faith in the Christian revelation among many European intellectuals. In its turn, this religious scepticism added to an increased historical awareness.<sup>19</sup> (Bernal does not discuss this effect, arguing only for a connection between the impact of historical source criticism and a *defence* of Christianity). If in this case some factors may be designated as truly external or internal, many more defy such a classification, and most conspicuous are their interlocking effects.

In sum, considering Bernal's insistence on making a clear distinction between internal and external factors, the reader wonders why and when he wants to do so. In volume II of *Black Athena*, where he claims his legitimate right to argue in favour of his own interpretation of the source material, he relies on the possibilities of competitive plausibility and on the reader's awareness that internal and external perspectives influence each other. Yet when it comes to the judgement of classical scholarship in *Black Athena I*, he is eager to distinguish between both factors, and shows himself confident on how to decide on this matter. Thus he states:

'... a clear distinction has to be made between the fall of the Ancient Model, which can be explained only in externalist terms — that is, through social and political pressures — and the rise of the Aryan one, which had a considerable internalist component — that is to say, developments within scholarship itself played an important role in the evolution of the new model.'<sup>20</sup>

Here, we meet with a concise verdict which is meant to sustain the overall argument of *Black Athena*.

Throughout *Black Athena I*, Bernal presents the Ancient Model as a purely internal argument: scholars who worked in this Model did so not due to external influences, but because of its truth inherent in the sources. The Aryan Model is a mixed phenomenon. Its creation was influenced by external convictions, and certainly wrong ones, but it also had an internalist component; these elements are to be included in Bernal's Revised Ancient Model. We perceive that Bernal uses an underlying framework, in which 'internal' represents 'truth' and 'scholarship', while 'external' invites a further questioning of motives and values. Obviously,

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<sup>18</sup>On these developments and their effects on the critical study of texts, see for instance A. Grafton, *Defenders of the text. The traditions of scholarship in an age of science, 1450-1800* (Cambridge, Mass. / London, Harvard UP, 1991).

<sup>19</sup>On these developments and their effects in the confrontation between Christian faith and reason, see for instance F. C. Beiser, *The fate of reason. German philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass./ London, Harvard UP, 1987). In particular their effects on the perception of history, see for instance P. Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the rise of historicism* (Berkeley, 1975).

<sup>20</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 330.



in this way the Ancient Model, and in its wake the Revised Ancient Model, need no such further questioning; they are simply true. On the other hand, by the same token Bernal proceeds to isolate one internal development which was altogether wrong, since its creation was due to external influences and led to the fall of the Ancient Model: historical source criticism.

Introducing 'source criticism' in quotation marks, Bernal briefly explains what it is about:

'This involved the historian assessing the value of different historical sources according to their author and social context, and basing his interpretation largely or solely on the reliable ones.'<sup>21</sup>

Bernal is cautious not to discredit this method altogether, since his own argument involves a judgement on reliability according to author and social context. In showing that it was wrong nevertheless, Bernal uses the same strategy as he does later on when incriminating Müller. Before this method is introduced, he gives the reader extensive information about the external developments which prepared both the creation of source criticism and the fall of the Ancient Model (on the way he does so, see below). Next, Bernal embodies this discourse in an individual, presenting Chr. Meiners (1747-1810),

'later to be honoured by the Nazis as a founder of racial theory',<sup>22</sup>

as the creator of this method. By asserting the admittedly disreputable character of its origins, Bernal tries to discredit by association the entire discipline of ancient history as it subsequently evolved.

Now the choice of Meiners is odd, because usually the methods of source criticism are attributed to the philologists of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, instead of this rather obscure philosopher-anthropologist who had nothing to do with it. Indeed, Bernal does not quote Meiners on historical method,<sup>23</sup> but instead he describes Meiners' racist historiography. Here Bernal draws on L. Poliakov, but omits the latter's observation that Meiners' views did not match the common ideas, for example on 'progress' in history, in Germany, and that Meiners was the first one to assume the origins of mankind to have been in Africa.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 217.

<sup>22</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 217.

<sup>23</sup>C. Meiners, *Geschichte des Ursprungs, Fortgangs und Verfalls der Wissenschaft in Griechenland und Rom* (1781-1782) is listed in the bibliography, but Bernal's note refers to a quote in L. Braun, *Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris, Ophrys, 1973).

<sup>24</sup>L. Poliakov, *The Aryan myth: A history of racist and nationalist ideas in Europe*, tr. E. Howard (London, Chatto & Windus/ Heinemann, 1974), pp. 178-9.

Bernal also neglects to say that Meiners worked in the Ancient Model, taking the Egyptians — and the Jews, Meiners also notes — to be an ‘original people’ who developed out of barbarism by their own efforts, in contrast to ‘mixed peoples’ like the Greeks, who did so due to the influence of others. For this reason Meiners argued that the Egyptians did not spring from the Ethiopians, nor from any other people.<sup>25</sup> But Meiners worked in Göttingen, which Bernal designates as the centre of classicist, Romantic, racist German scholarship. Here the reader will also meet Müller.

### *K.O. Müller in Black Athena I*

Müller is the first classical scholar whom Bernal mentions,<sup>26</sup> and he is introduced as ‘the man who destroyed the Ancient Model.’<sup>27</sup> Müller ‘used the new techniques of source criticism to discredit all the ancient references to the Egyptian colonization,’<sup>28</sup> a phrase strongly suggesting that Müller abused an internal tool for an ‘externally’ motivated aim. Throughout the first part, general remarks are scattered which simply designate Müller as a racist. For instance,

‘The question of “Semitic blood” leads us to Chapter VIII, “The rise and fall of the Phoenicians, 1830-85”. K.O. Müller, writing in the 1820s, had denied that the Phoenicians had had any influence on Greece, but he was extreme in his Romanticism and ahead of his time in the intensity of his racialism and anti-Semitism.’<sup>29</sup>

In brief, the first forty-odd pages sketch a picture of classical studies in the decades around 1800 as involved in a general thrust towards ‘racial purity.’ This thrust is embodied in particular in Müller, who saw to its enforcement in the overall perception of antiquity.

This role of Müller’s is confirmed by hints on the reception of his work in the course of the nineteenth century. While the context suggests that Müller refuted the legends of Egyptian colonisation by his striving for ‘racial purity,’ his point of view was ‘quickly accepted... the Aryan

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<sup>25</sup>C. Meiners, *Versuch über die Religionsgeschichte der ältesten Völker, besonders der Egyptier*, (Göttingen, 1775), e.g. p. 24 (on the Jews), p. 28 and extensively in ch. 3. And see Friedrich Lotter, ‘Christoph Meiners und die Lehre von der unterschiedlichen Wertigkeit der Menschenrassen,’ *Geschichtswissenschaft in Göttingen*, ed. Hermann Wellenreuther (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), pp. 30-75.

<sup>26</sup>In fact, James Frazer and Jane Harrison have been mentioned briefly as laudable exceptions in the field of classical studies, as they worked on a comparative basis. In this paragraph (*Black Athena I*, p. 4) all emphasis falls on Müller.

<sup>27</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 31.

<sup>29</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 33.

Model... followed his success...'.<sup>30</sup> By the end of the century two extreme 'Aryan Model' scholars, J. Beloch — a violent anti-Semite — and S. Reinach — a Jew — denied any influence of Phoenicia on Greece; both 'recognized Müller as a forerunner'.<sup>31</sup> Later on Bernal returns to this issue. His remark that Müller and Reinach both saw Sanskrit and German studies as a challenge to classical studies<sup>32</sup> is rather ambiguous, since it leaves room on their part to take an interest in these disciplines. But by mentioning 'threats' in the preceding lines, Bernal suggests foremost that these classical scholars responded to evidence of other cultures not by engaging in debates but by defending their terrain.

After this judgement on Müller, partly created a priori and partly in retrospect, Bernal discusses the rise of Romantic classicism more or less in chronological order.<sup>33</sup> Initially, Romanticism is introduced as being

'...concerned with the local and particular, rather than the global or general. There is also an oversimplified, but useful, contrast to be made between the 18th-century Enlightenment, with its interest in stability and the ordering of space, and the Romantic passion for movement, time and "progressive" development through history. Outstanding examples of Enlightenment achievement are the accurate mappings of the world's coasts, Linnaeus' systematic arrangement of natural species, and the American Constitution, which is supposed to last forever.'<sup>34</sup>

Next, Romanticism is revealed in these chapters to *consist of* belief in progress and racism, instead of being a factor among and in debate with the others, as stated elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, no outstanding achievements of Romanticism will be offered, nor will the reader be warned again of useful oversimplification. Thus racist, progressive Hellenocentrism was institutionalised in Humboldt's educational system, whose veneration of a 'pure' Greece explains Müller's 'attacks' on the now 'intolerable' Ancient Model, since Müller himself was 'one of (its) first products'.<sup>36</sup>

Müller now gets a lengthy treatment of his own. His Romanticism is beyond doubt; even his 'untimely' death is 'Romantic'.<sup>37</sup> Bernal has not read Müller's thesis of 1817, *Aeginetica*,<sup>38</sup> but he declares it to be,

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<sup>30</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 32.

<sup>31</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 34.

<sup>32</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 230.

<sup>33</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. ch. IV-VI.

<sup>34</sup>*Black Athena I*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>35</sup>E.g. *Black Athena I*, p. 204.

<sup>36</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 282.

<sup>37</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 309.

<sup>38</sup>*Aegineticorum liber*, scripsit C. Mueller, Silesius (Berlin, 1817). Copies of the published book are rare (a copy of the unpublished original was only recently rediscovered), but a summary was included in K.O. Müller, *Kunstarchäologische Werke, 1817-1840*, (Berlin, Calvary, 1873), (henceforth *KW*) I, pp. 1-19, under the title 'De arte Aeginetica'.

'a perfect example of *Romantic-Positivism*', '[t]hough partly inspired by the marbles recently brought to Germany from there'.<sup>39</sup>

The latter phrase refers to an 'internal' motivation, namely new material, which is however subjected to the former, 'external' and by now unsavoury objective. That the external objective was what actually drove Müller to write his thesis in this manner Bernal suggests

- by citing G.P. Gooch, who in 1913 quoted E. Curtius as mentioning a resemblance<sup>40</sup> of the *Aeginetica* to the study of Osnabrück by 'the Romantic-conservative Justus Möser'.<sup>41</sup>
- by observing that Aegina is an island and thus 'convenient for exhaustive study,' and that 'it was inhabited by Dorians and faced Athens, the chief city of the 'corrupt' Ionians'.<sup>42</sup>

That the Ionians sustained the legacy of the Ancient Model, and thus were corrupted by Eastern influence in the eyes of Müller and his Aryan colleagues has been suggested earlier.<sup>43</sup> A few pages after his comment on the 'corrupt Ionians' (in Müller's view), however, Bernal takes Müller to regard the Athenians as 'pure-blooded'.<sup>44</sup> That in addition there might have been some problem in Müller's having seen the Ionian Athenians as 'corrupt,' while he wrote 'voluminously on ancient art and archaeology,'<sup>45</sup> does not seem to occur to Bernal, who of all people accuses Müller of 'confused and confusing argument'.<sup>46</sup>

Describing his happiness to be at Göttingen, Müller<sup>47</sup> uses a 'surprisingly Hebrew turn of phrase'.<sup>48</sup> Thus Bernal suggests that Müller, as an allegedly ardent anti-Semite, cannot be expected to use words related to the Jewish tradition. The impact of Müller's Protestant education is not

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<sup>39</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 309; emphasis added.

<sup>40</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 309, though Bernal omits its date, 1768.

<sup>41</sup>No doubt, Justus Möser (1720-1794) was a conservative; the *Osnabrückische Geschichte* (2 vols.) appeared in 1768 and a revised edition in 1780; the latter was reprinted in 1819, that is after the *Aeginetica* was written and included in the *Sämtliche Werke* (10 vols.; 1842-1844), that is after Müller's death. I have found no reference to author or work in Müller's writings unto now. Bernal, in his reference to Gooch, does not make reference to the fact that the latter quotes Curtius and does not draw the comparison himself.

<sup>42</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 309.

<sup>43</sup>E.g. *Black Athena I*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>44</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 312.

<sup>45</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 309.

<sup>46</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 313.

<sup>47</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 309; emphasis added.

<sup>48</sup>'[T]he place of places for me...'; a quote Bernal derives from J.W. Donaldson, 'Introduction' in K.O. Müller, *A history of the literature of Ancient Greece*, (London, 1858) 3 vols.; vol. 1, p. vii.

mentioned at all. He is described as protected by several German states and using his wide-ranging professionalism to attack the Ancient Model. Müller's main books between 1820 and 1825 are proclaimed to have become 'the pillars of *Altertumswissenschaft*'.<sup>49</sup> The influence of Müller's writing has already been suggested to be extensive indeed:

'...the year after the publication of *The Minyans*,<sup>50</sup> the book in which [Müller] set out his arguments, the Greek War of Independence broke out... In such anti-Asian and African Hellenomania, defence of the Ancient Model became almost unthinkable...'<sup>51</sup>

So far Bernal's picture of Müller is made up only by suggestions of this kind. When next Bernal rightly shows Müller to refute the impact of non-Greek civilisations on the Greek ones, he for the first time offers some quotations, mixing selections from the three works into one argument. But he glosses over the fact that Müller is concerned here with the earliest stages of Greek culture. Throughout, Bernal renders Müller views on the Greekness of Greek myth as either malicious or ignorant. He dismisses Müller's insistence on proof by denouncing 'distinct proof' as

'dubious in any branch of knowledge... absurd in such a nebulous region as the origins of Greek mythology'.<sup>52</sup>

To show that Müller was wrong and wilfully misreading his sources, Bernal has only his own readings to offer, which are concerned precisely with the nebulous origins of Greek mythology, notably concerning Kadmos and Danaos.

Allegedly motivated by his racist wish to overthrow the Ancient Model, Müller is pictured as eager to attack his opponents, as a champion bred and set in the forefront of Romantic-Positivist racism. Attacks on himself are mentioned just once by Bernal: the case of H. Usener, as late as only 1882. Bernal does not mention that Müller started writing his *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie* (1825) to defend his views in the face of the harsh criticisms of the *Geschichten hellenischer Stämme und Städte*, namely *Orchomenos und die Minyer* (1820) and in particular *Die Dorier* (1824), though the German edition is clear on this matter and also Gooch relates this fact.<sup>53</sup> In the seven pages<sup>54</sup> on Müller, not including the

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<sup>49</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 309.

<sup>50</sup>The title of Müller's work was not *The Minyans*, as Bernal puts it here, but *Orchomenos and the Minyans*; see below. Though I would agree that minor errors of this kind are not essential to the contents of an argument, *Black Athena* contains too many of them, which often precludes a thorough assessment and is puzzling when occurring in essential sections like the one on Müller.

<sup>51</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 282.

<sup>52</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 314.

<sup>53</sup>G.P. Gooch, *History and historians in the nineteenth century*, (New York/

notes, the following words set the tone: 'arrogant,' 'despise' (twice), 'pathology' (twice), 'demolish,' 'challenge' (twice), 'dismiss' (twice), 'attack' (five times), 'sleight of hand', 'bluff'.

Bernal touches up his picture of Müller's objectives and impact in two ways. On the one hand, Müller had to be heralded by scholars who consciously elevated this un-innovative upstart as 'scientific' and as the true founder of 'racist' *Altertumswissenschaft*. On the other hand more recent classicist interpreters and/ or those who were connected with Semitist scholarship knew better. In the latter cases, if they praise Müller, they are misguided, if they denounce him, they are right<sup>55</sup> For instance, R. Pfeiffer and G.P. Gooch are first called in to show their admiration of Müller; by thus implying Müller's impact on classical scholarship, Bernal presents him to be a terrifying problem indeed.<sup>56</sup> Later on, both scholars are clever enough to see Müller's racist conservatism (Gooch<sup>57</sup>) and the weakness of *Die Dorier*.<sup>58</sup> It does not occur to Bernal that Pfeiffer's comment implies that *Die Dorier* was at the time not considered to be the 'pillar of *Altertumswissenschaft*' Bernal must take it to be. Jane Harrison is denounced for staying within the 'bounds' set up by Müller's *Prolegomena*<sup>59</sup> and praised for preferring the 'brilliant Semitist' Robertson Smith to the classicist Frazer.<sup>60</sup> The extent to which this picture is created almost entirely by means of suggestion is illustrated by Bernal's discussion of C. Thirlwall's work on Greece in the 1830's, which figures as a step towards the Aryan Model in England. In doing so

'...Thirlwall summarized Müller's argument, though without mentioning him by name. He also added a fascinating note on Müller's motivation:

"(...) [the early colonization of Greece by foreigners] might never have been questioned *if the inferences drawn from it had not provoked a jealous enquiry into the grounds on which it rests.*"

Thirlwall did not specify what these inferences were, but, given Müller's work, it is hard to see any alternatives to Romantic and racial ones.'<sup>61</sup>

Thirlwall does not mention Müller; yet he is supposed to clarify the unnamed Müller's motivation, this motivation being given as 'jealous enquiry' into the foundation of the colonisation-model. This jealous enquiry cannot be an internal motivation — new questions, new methods

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Bombay/ Calcutta/ London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913) 2nd. ed., pp. 37-38.

<sup>54</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 308-314.

<sup>55</sup>*Black Athena I*, pp. 315-316.

<sup>56</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 308.

<sup>57</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 309.

<sup>58</sup>Pfeiffer, *Black Athena I*, p. 315.

<sup>59</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 313.

<sup>60</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 493.

<sup>61</sup>*Black Athena I*, pp. 324-325, emphasis added by Bernal.

— but has to be an external influence, that is Romanticism and racism, ‘proven’ by the unnamed Müller’s work which was ‘proven’ to be racist.

The main target of Müller and his ‘admirers’ had been to denounce the influence of ‘African’ Egypt, according to Bernal.<sup>62</sup> Yet some surprises are in store. In getting on with his story, Bernal sees some differences between Müller and the proponents of the Aryan Model, although Müller is still held responsible for the change.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, Müller is now ‘probably anti-Semitic’.<sup>64</sup> Here for the first time Bernal refers to Müller’s own work (*Orchomenos*) on this issue, hence the reference is worth quoting:

‘[W]hy is it the intention of many scholars] to transfer every greatness of Greek prehistory to the Levant [*das Morgenland*] [and] place everything authentic at the very end? Then, when one has quitted the way of earlier scholars, to tie everything to the writings of the Old Covenant and make paganism into nothing else than a fractured Judaism that has lost its nature: then not a few, and highly inspired [interpreters], exactly like the ancient ones, turn their eyes steadily only to Egypt, Phoenicia, the Levant [*Morgenlande*]... [instead, it were a better principle to see...] Greek and Oriental life, in their distinct authenticity and unmitigated truth, each by itself, completely founded and represented.’<sup>65</sup>

It is difficult to read this as ‘intense anti-Semitism.’ What Müller, though a deeply pious Protestant, here defies is the tradition of understanding pagan religions as degenerated remnants of Judaeo-Christian monotheism.

To continue Bernal’s argument: Reinach, a complicated figure whom Bernal has difficulty in classifying, worked on India and the Near East (positive) but was also critical about interconnections between East and West (negative). Thus, he is a follower of Müller,<sup>66</sup> but also he is not.<sup>67</sup> But Beloch, who ‘knew no Semitic language’<sup>68</sup> follows Müller and F.A. Wolf (who did) in their rejection of the idea of the Homeric epics having started out as written texts with strong links with Egypt and Phoenicia — an idea put forward by Bernal.<sup>69</sup> Thus Bernal suggests that Beloch fortified his anti-Semitism by way of Müller. The classical scholars U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and A.D. Momigliano, who elsewhere are denounced as in league with Eurocentric classicism,<sup>70</sup> are now called in to

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<sup>62</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 313, 326.

<sup>63</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 313, 326.

<sup>64</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 359; emphasis added.

<sup>65</sup>*Orchomenos*, I, 8; tr. mine.

<sup>66</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 371.

<sup>67</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 373.

<sup>68</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 375.

<sup>69</sup>*Black Athena I*, pp.85-88; p. 487, n. 3. Bernal submits here as well ‘the most plausible Egyptian etymology for [Homer’s] name, or a general word for poet, from ‘art of utterance’’. He refers to Ch. III, n. 61, but this reference must be an error; I could not locate a more extensive explanation of Bernal’s etymology of Homer’s name in *Black Athena I*.

<sup>70</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 374.

denounce Beloch.<sup>71</sup>

In the post-World War II situation, however, Bernal discerns the emergence of a Model of Autochthonous Origin, which goes back to Müller (!).<sup>72</sup> This model describes cultural difference on assumption of cultural equality, of a kind underlying the quote from *Orchomenos*. Bernal nevertheless asserts that the model implies northern superiority, and that, by denying colonisation of Greece by Egypt and Phoenicia, it is in alliance with the Aryan Model. Therefore, the differences between the Autochthonous and the Aryan Model are not 'relevant' to *Black Athena*.<sup>73</sup> Finally, the 'anthropological approach,' which entails 'seeing the parallels [in mythology] as coincidental manifestations of the human psyche' is the 'most satisfactory' of those views that still deny the colonisation model. Again it goes back to Müller (!) and was 'pioneered by...Frazer and Harrison'.<sup>74</sup> In both cases Bernal omits that these approaches focus on congruences between cultures by assuming the fundamental equality (not identity) between them. To allow for such a feature seems not to be his aim, and it is at odds with his portrayal of Müller.

#### *Assessment (1): Müller's writing*

In order to make his picture of Müller as a staunch racist seem true, Bernal has to make several assumptions. These are scattered throughout the pages dealing with Müller.

- 1) Müller must reject the interest in Egypt of the Greeks themselves as 'disorders' and 'delusions' since<sup>75</sup> the Egyptians were 'barbarians'.<sup>76</sup>
- 2) Müller must be committed to the racism and perceptions of progress that Bernal holds to be the cornerstone of Romanticism in general and of

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<sup>71</sup>Bernal has labelled this chapter on the denial of Phoenician influence on Greece between 1885 and 1945 'The final solution of the Phoenician problem' (ch. IX). Though taste is hardly susceptible to scholarly debate, I think that the term 'final solution' should not be used as a metaphor.

<sup>72</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 407.

<sup>73</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 408.

<sup>74</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 413.

<sup>75</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 309-310.

<sup>76</sup>For instance, Müller's quoting from Pausanias illustrates his rejection of the 'besetting sin' of the Greeks, 'later given the pathological names of "Egyptomania" and "barbarophilia".' (*Black Athena I*, pp. 309-310) Again Bernal juggles the words of others to bear on Müller; he does not attribute the word 'Egyptomania' to someone in particular here, but the word 'barbarophilia' he borrows from Plutarch, who lived not later, but earlier than his fellow-Greek Pausanias; quoted Plut., *De malign. Her.* 13-14, though the word *philobarbaros* occurs in fact in 12.



Göttingen University in particular.<sup>77</sup>

3) Müller must be aware of 'two enemies' whom he must 'attack': on the one hand the Ancient Model as represented by the Masons and C.F. Dupuis; and on the other hand the Indophilia of F. Schlegel, F. Creuzer<sup>78</sup> and other 'Heidelberg' scholars.<sup>79</sup>

4) Müller must ignore on purpose 'facts' that sustain the Ancient Model and despise the fields that generated them.

5) Müller must be un-innovative where his material is concerned, and narrow-minded in his reading. Bernal, who discusses only four of Müller's several hundred publications,<sup>80</sup> declares:

'[Müller was] deferential to the future, [but] arrogant towards the past. The only previous works he considered worthy of favourable note were publications from Göttingen and the writings of French Royalist scholars like Petit-Radel and Champollion's great enemy, the Classicist Raoul Rochette'.<sup>81</sup>

And with more emphasis, later on:

'The most striking feature of Müller's work for us is that it was based entirely on traditional material... None of the 19th-century extensions of knowledge was involved'.<sup>82</sup>

Though Müller is excused for not knowing material discovered after his death,

'...unlike Heyne and Heeren, he was not particularly interested in the 18th-century explorations; and unlike Humboldt, Niebuhr and Bunsen he disregarded the sensational scholarly developments between 1815 and 1830. There is no indication that he paid any attention to Champollion's decipherment, and his hostility to India meant that despite his close contact with the Grimm brothers and other Indo-Europeanists, he did not apply the new Indo-European linguistics to his work'.<sup>83</sup>

This account is to prove that Müller did not work on the basis of changing internal views, but was propelled by external factors only, and among them primarily racism.

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<sup>77</sup>*Black Athena I, passim*, pp. 215ff.

<sup>78</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 310.

<sup>79</sup>This is the only mention of Creuzer, whose *Symbolik* is mentioned in the first edition (1810-1812) only, although Müller responded to the second, revised edition of 1819-1820. This choice may be due to Bernal's reliance here on Momigliano's article on Creuzer, 'Friedrich Creuzer and Greek historiography' (1946), reprinted in *Studies in modern scholarship*, ed. Bowersock & Cornell, pp. 1-14.

<sup>80</sup>I.e.: the three volumes of the *Geschichten* (*Orchomenos*, *Dorier I* and *II*) and the *Prolegomena*; the *Aeginetica* only as discussed by Gooch; and on 'Orion' (the 'attack' on Dupuis) see below.

<sup>81</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 308.

<sup>82</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 315-316.

<sup>83</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 316.

A confrontation between Bernal's account and the original documents concerning Müller's life and work shows that not one of Bernal's assumptions holds true. Again a few examples must suffice, in which I combine some of Bernal's points under one heading. Some issues will be discussed in a more general assessment of Müller's writing.

*Müller's alleged rejection of Egypt, dismissal of knowledge sustaining the Ancient Model, and lack of scholarly innovation*

Müller was not only committed to Egyptology, he was also fascinated by the cultures of the Far and Near East.<sup>84</sup> One of the reasons why he impressed his own and later generations was his exceptional capacity to be well informed of all fields connected with classical studies, and to understand the rapid developments that were taking place. His immediate response to Champollion's work was no coincidence, but an example of his general attitude. He was familiar with Sanskrit,<sup>85</sup> with the Indo-European and other etymologies and with the scholarly fields that sustained them, as is exemplified in his review of Creuzer's *Symbolik* and his introductory chapter to the *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*.<sup>86</sup> He considered new material to be of primary importance, to whose accessibility and interpretation he himself contributed a great deal. Like few others before him he emphasised the importance of archeological material in connection with written sources. In this respect he proved to be a true pupil of August Böckh (1785-1867), who endeavoured the interpretation of antiquity based on new, epigraphical sources to an unprecedented degree but who does not figure in *Black Athena* at all. In fact Müller's 'Romantic' death was the result of exhaustion, culminating in a fever he got because of copying inscriptions in Delphi at midday. Before he could go to Greece himself, however, Müller responded to all new discoveries on the ancient world, including the Near East, reviewing an average of twelve books a year published in five different languages in the

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<sup>84</sup>On the courses he gave, see e.g. letter by K.J. Sillig to C.A. Böttiger, 20 Nov. 1822: Sillig relates how he enjoys Müller's course on mythology, with its survey of Indians, Egyptians, Near Eastern peoples, Persians, Hellenes, Italians. Quoted in *C.O. Müller, Briefe aus einem Gelehrtenleben, 1797-1840*, ed. S. Reiter (2 vols. Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1950) (henceforth *BMR*) no. 36 vol. II, p. 31.

<sup>85</sup>On his learning Sanskrit, letter to Böttiger, Nov. 21, 1820; *BMR* no. 22.

<sup>86</sup>K.O. Müller, 'Friedrich Creuzer's *Symbolik und Mythologie. Mit einem Heft Abbildungen zum ganzen Werk auf 60 Tafeln und mit mehreren eingedruckten Holzschnitten*. Leipzig und Darmstadt 1819. Zweite, völlig umgearbeitete Ausgabe. Th. I und II (1819-1820)', first published in *GGA St.* 95, 1821; reissued in *KdS* II, 3-20. *Karl Otfried Müller's Geschichte der griechischen Literatur bis auf das Zeitalter Alexanders. Nach der Handschrift des Verfassers herausgegeben von Ed. Müller* (Breslau, J. Max, 1841) 2 vols.; vol. I, pp. 4-17.

*GGA*<sup>87</sup> and working this information into his own historical writing. Again, his use of newly discovered marbles in his *Aeginetica* was no coincidence, but indicated the methods he deemed necessary for the *Altertumswissenschaft*. By his insistence on a meticulous observation of material culture, and his preference for eye-witnessed evidence to preconceived theories, he elevated art history and archaeology to a new level of criticism. This is particularly relevant in his article on the Egyptian king Osymandyas, where he refers to the latest findings and autopsies on Egyptian monuments.<sup>88</sup> He read a lot in the travel literature of the eighteenth century and his own time.<sup>89</sup> He knew many languages well, including Italian, Modern Greek, and Hebrew.<sup>90</sup> His profound knowledge of Arabic was indispensable to his writing on the Near-Eastern city of Antioch (1839),<sup>91</sup> a book Bernal does not seem to know.

Müller's research on this book was inspired by collaboration with his close friend A.H.L. Heeren (1760-1842), whom we just met as, in Bernal's view, the living contrast to Müller. Heeren figures in *Black Athena* as a 'transitional figure.'<sup>92</sup> Heeren's professional life in Göttingen is to account for his 'exhaustive scholarship' only, but somehow did not preclude his writing on 'Carthage, Ethiopia and Egypt.'

'Heeren was not treated well by those of his contemporaries who have had an influence on posterity. ... [He] was punished by the Romantics not merely for his choice of subject but for staying with the Ancient Model too long. Only black historians read him today.'<sup>93</sup>

No evidence is offered to show the validity of the last statement. Nor does Bernal seem to know that Müller, whom Bernal would certainly count among 'the contemporaries who had an influence on posterity,' appreciated Heeren deeply. Or did Bernal choose not to tell this? In his

<sup>87</sup>*Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, o.ſ.

<sup>88</sup>K.O. Müller, 'Osymandyas und sein Grabpalast' (orig. 1836), *KW* IV, pp. 161-182. For comparable work on Near Eastern material, 'Sandon und Sardanapal' (orig. 1829), *KW* III, pp. 6-21; 'Ueber Dipönos und Skyllis nach Armenischen Quellen' (orig. 1835), *KW* IV, pp. 66-70.

<sup>89</sup>A survey of his reading of travel accounts on Greece, Egypt and the East in the years 1820-1825, based on his reviews in *GGA*: Choiseul-Gonfrier to Greece, 1820; E. Dodwell in Greece, 1820; R. Walpole to Turkey and the East, 1821; F. Pouqueville to Greece, 1821; G. Belzoni on Egypt and Nubia, including the excavations, 1822; Th. S. Hughes to Sicily, Greece and Albania, 1822; new volume by Pouqueville, 1824; M.C.D. Raffanel on Greece and Turkey, 1824.

<sup>90</sup>On the courses he took at Breslau University, *LMK* no. 17, Oct. 29, 1815, where he studied, beside of course Latin and Greek, Hebrew and Italian.

<sup>91</sup>See G.W. Bowersock, 'The search for Antioch: K.O. Müller's *Antiquitates Antiochenaë*', in K.O. Müller *revisited*, ed. Calder et. al. (forthcoming), who also discusses some differences between the Latin and the German versions of this study.

<sup>92</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 297.

<sup>93</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 297.

discussion of *Orchomenos*, he mentions Müller's refutation of an Egyptian origin of Danaos as a historical figure. Müller knew of course of the legend that the Danaids came from Egypt, but

'this ... did not grant the legends historical status, given the "facts" of the general north-south direction of cultural flow and "the Egyptian abhorrence of all travel and seafaring".'<sup>94</sup>

In full, though, the passage quoted by Bernal runs as follows:

'... in spite of the abhorrence of the Egyptians of all travel and seafaring, except on the holy Nile...'

for which last statement Müller refers among others to Heeren.<sup>95</sup> This and many more references to Heeren's work by Müller Bernal has omitted.

On the other hand the 'fact' of the north-south direction of cultural flow is absent on these pages of *Orchomenos*, though his text suggests this 'fact' to be voiced by Müller. Since Bernal reiterates that Müller, as a Romantic, always preferred North to South,<sup>96</sup> a reader recalling the yearning of many northern Romantics for the Mediterranean as a source of spiritual life would be interested to see if Müller expresses such a view. Bernal's reference in the footnote to the *Prolegomena* suggests again that indeed Müller himself says 'that vitality flows from north to south.' A check reveals, however, that this is not the case at all. The same goes for Bernal's 'proof' concerning cults, myths or names in Greece and the Near East in this context which he attributes to Müller. We must conclude that the argument on the Romantic, and hence Müller's, preference of the North to the South here<sup>97</sup> is fabricated by Bernal himself.<sup>98</sup> This way of dealing with the sources is less surprising if one observes that Bernal has done so before, for instance where he expounds that Müller's

'main technique for removing what he saw as these late accretions was "the argument from silence"... especially when Müller was attacking the Ancient Model'.<sup>99</sup>

The footnote after the seemingly quoted 'argument from silence' actually does not refer to Müller, but to Bernal himself.

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<sup>94</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 312; plus note.

<sup>95</sup>*Orchomenos*, p. 108; Bernal refers to p. 112.

<sup>96</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 311.

<sup>97</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 311.

<sup>98</sup>Note 127 and 128, *Black Athena I*, p. 311, referring to *Prolegomena* 232-4 and 239-40 respectively; the final section of this paragraph on 'North and South' without reference. The first note claims to refer to Müller's views on the relationship between the Dorians and Apollo. The pages of *Prolegomena* mentioned by Bernal do not deal with this issue at all, but on *Prolegomena* p. 227 we find a discussion of the myth of the Hyperboreans — in an entirely different way from what Bernal can possibly mean.

<sup>99</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 310, plus n. 123.

Müller's references to 'facts sustaining the Ancient Model' are simply too numerous to attempt at a significant selection. This is not at all surprising, because Bernal is certainly right in arguing that Müller wanted to understand Greek and Egyptian (and other) civilisations to be originally different. So in order to advance his own views, Müller had to mention those facts and to explain why he interpreted them differently from those scholars, who read the evidence in the light of Egyptian or Indian influence on Greece. Bernal's suggestions that Müller ignored those facts, and his argument that Müller destroyed the Ancient Model by repeatedly attacking it, are in principle incompatible. The same holds true for Müller's alleged dismissal of the fields, old or new, that sustained them. This incompatibility is exemplified in Bernal's construction of his argument. For instance, he claims that

'Indo-European philology has failed, over the last 160 years, to be of any help in explaining Greek myth and religion. This state of affairs is in striking contrast to the hundreds of plausible etymologies from Semitic and Egyptian. Many of these, including those for Thebes, Kadmos, Kabeiroi, and the element *Sam* — in Samothrace — were known to Müller, but he seldom confronted them directly, preferring to dismiss them out of hand.'<sup>100</sup>

The footnote following this last sentence refers, among other works, to Michael Astour's *Hellenosemitica*.<sup>101</sup> There the reader finds a series of etymologies of the names mentioned from mainly West-Semitic languages, but no reference to Müller at all. Again the footnote seems (to a trusting reader) to prove Müller's biased approach, but in fact does not do so. And it could not, since Müller did not dismiss these etymologies out of hand, but discussed them, including those he thought to originate in Egyptian and Phoenician as far as he knew, and next explained why he interpreted the ancient traditions the way he did.<sup>102</sup>

What remains, then, is the reason why Müller interpreted the evidence in this way. Bernal insists that he knows why: because Müller was a racist, more precisely an anti-Semite.

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<sup>100</sup>*Black Athena I*, pp. 314-5.

<sup>101</sup>M.C. Astour, *Hellenosemitica: An ethnic and cultural study in West Semitic impact on Mycenaean Greece* (Leiden/ New York, Brill, 1967), pp. 128-158. The other reference is to R. Edwards, *Kadmos the Phoenician: A study in Greek legends and the Mycenaean age* (Amsterdam, Hakkert, 1979) pp. 64-114; non vidi, but even if Müller's 'dismissal' is mentioned by Edwards, my comment in the text is still valid.

<sup>102</sup>For instance, Müller, *Prolegomena* (1825), p.174: preferring the etymology of Busiris from Aegyptian Pe Osiris; pp. 174-5: explaining the supposedly ancient relations between Saïs and Athens, including the connection Neith-Athena, as dating from the time of Psammetichos onwards; pp. 182-187: explaining Epaphos, the son of Zeus and Io, from Egyptian Pe Apis, whence the change of Io into Isis; pp. 186-7: Belos, from Baal in Phoenician, changed into the brother of Agenor, the father of Kadmos 'with a long renown as a founder of colonies'.

Since according to Bernal the Ancient Model fell because of racism, because Müller was the core of this racism and because anti-Semitism was the core of Müller, one would expect Bernal to prove Müller's anti-Semitism by numerous, unflinching quotes from his writings. But this is not the case. In fact, except for the few selective quotes I mentioned earlier, all Bernal's judgements on Müller and his work are based on readings by others,<sup>103</sup> and Müller's anti-Semitism is not borne out by this secondary literature. After an investigation of the 430 letters by Müller I have seen to this date and the diary of his journey to Italy and Greece, I found two brief remarks.

The first occurs in a letter from Berlin of 1816 to his friend E.F.J. Dronke, asking for collections of his notes he had lent to fellow students:

'Please greet all the old fellows and friends of the Seminar... Would [Klossmann] soon send my notes on Plato to my parents! I have also lost here my notes on *Naturphilosophie* to the Jew Heilborn.'<sup>104</sup>

Heilborn was one of a group who had come from the Brieg Gymnasium to Breslau. As Müller told his parents in a letter of his freshman year there:

'I have made many acquaintances and renewed many, also only now perceived whoever are here from Brieg. In all we are 15: Groth, Klein, Krummer, back from the field, likewise Jany, whom I was sitting next to at the fair, Boy, who has now become Praeses, Pratsch, Müller, Barth, the gloomy Cöster and Gravert, Heilborn, Jäkel, Grüttner, and me.'<sup>105</sup>

The second remark occurs more than twenty years later in his diary on his travel through Italy.

'Yesterday, I had dinner at Rothschild's, where food and drink was outstanding, yet conversation precisely such as one can expect from a Jewish Baronet and his *gentleman* son, who has been educated in the schools of the most modern *Bildung* (the same one who was at Göttingen). Yet I must say that throughout much more pleasantness and naturalness was to be found here than at the Duke of Torlonia's in Rome.'<sup>106</sup>

Set against Bernal's accusations on the one hand and the anti-Semitism current at the time (it was nothing new, as Bernal takes it to be) on the other, Müller's remarks are actually surprisingly few and temperate.

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<sup>103</sup>Donaldson, 'Introduction', in Müller, *A history of the literature of Ancient Greece*, 1858; Gooch, *History and historians*, 1913; Pfeiffer, *o.c.*; two contributions to *Philologie und Hermeneutik im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. II, ed. M. Bollack and H. Wismann (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983, but once quoted 1984).

<sup>104</sup>*BMR* no. 3, 4; Oct. 18, 1816; cf. no. 2, 3; July 1816.

<sup>105</sup>*LMK* no. 11, 16; Oct. 19 and 20, p. 1814.

<sup>106</sup>Diary of his travel through Italy and Greece, Jan. 16, 1840; *LMK*, p. 309.

Although he designated Heilborn as 'Jew' to Dronke, he did not do so to his parents, to whom he was very frank. The reasons for this difference can only be guessed at, if we take the designation to be meant more unkindly than was considered normal at the time. Apparently he was still in touch with Heilborn and lent him his notes, just like he kept in touch with Jäkel when he was in Berlin.<sup>107</sup> So much for Müller's intense anti-Semitism.<sup>108</sup> Likewise his light irony on the *Bildung* at German universities, including Göttingen, may be multiplied with other references from his letters.<sup>109</sup>

If the reception of an author is as revealing of his true intentions as Bernal holds it to be, the edition of Müller's letters by S. Reiter is equally revealing. Reiter, who had previously published letters by F.A. Wolf, finished editing his collection of Müller's in 1940. Reiter was a Jew, who apparently did not take much offence to the 'racism' of the two classical scholars. The Nazis, however, prohibited the publication of Müller's letters. In 1942 Reiter was imprisoned in Theresienstadt, then sent on to Poland where he perished. After the war, K. Svoboda, to whom Reiter had entrusted his material, took much trouble to publish Reiter's work, which eventually saw the light in 1950. It is noteworthy that the Nazis did not ban the Jewish scholar only to hand over the material to an 'Aryan', as they did in other cases. They banned the whole publication of Müller's letters. In brief, they did not regard his writing as very supportive to their cause.

I can only understand Bernal's suppositions as resulting from the popularity of *Die Dorier*, which was used to promote a racist view of Sparta in the context of Nazi history on 'Aryan' forebears.<sup>110</sup> If this historiography illuminates the concerns of later readers, it hardly reveals that the book was heavily criticised when published, and even less that later in his life Müller himself became deeply dissatisfied with both parts of the *Geschichten*.<sup>111</sup> Initially, Müller wanted to write a full history of

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<sup>107</sup>See *BMR* II, pp. 1-3.

<sup>108</sup>C. Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum im Werk deutscher Althistoriker des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leiden/ New York etc., Brill, 1988; *Studies in Judaism in Modern Times*, 9) offers an *argumentum e silentio*: no reference is made to Müller in this work, which examines the intersection of scholarship on Judaism and the disposition towards the Jews, including of course anti-Semitism, among German ancient historians.

<sup>109</sup>E.g. Müller to his parents, Nov. 21, 1819; *LMK* no. 39; pp. 54-55.

<sup>110</sup>For a full discussion, see V. Losemann's contribution to *K.O. Müller reconsidered*, forthcoming.

<sup>111</sup>For his own sense of failure to interpret Dorian culture, see letter to Ludwig Tieck, April 12, 1821; *BMR* no. 24, p. 36. On Müller's later dissatisfaction with *Orchomenos* and *Die Dorier*, see *Aus dem amtlichen und wissenschaftlichen Briefwechsel von Carl Otfried Müller ausgewählte Stücke mit Erläuterungen*, ed. O. Kern (Göttingen, Vorarbeiten zur Geschichte der Göttinger Universität & Bibliothek, 1936)

Greece based on local histories, but he broke off the project after *Die Dorier*. He intended to return to his plan after his travel to Greece but was prevented from doing so by his death in Athens in 1840.<sup>112</sup> Already in 1827 W.J. Hamilton (1805-1867), an English geographer and former student of Müller, had suggested to him to have *Orchomenos* translated, which Müller did not want to do without substantial revisions.<sup>113</sup> He did make revisions in the English translation of the *Dorier*<sup>114</sup> but apparently did not like the result either. He insisted time and again that he would do the whole enterprise anew after he had studied the Greek landscape and its antiquities *in situ*.<sup>115</sup>

*Representatives of the Ancient Model and of Indophilia as Müller's alleged two enemies*

Müller's disagreement with Creuzer was a historical fact, but in a vastly different way than Bernal has suggested. Müller met with some difficulties, in Göttingen (which on the whole did not approve of Romanticism at all) as elsewhere, because of the kinship between his own ideas and Creuzer's on the formative role of religion and nature in the creation of culture. Among the many 'attacks' on Müller were those by admirers of Creuzer, who were adamant against Müller's ideas on local origins which were the main point of difference between the two scholars.<sup>116</sup> Bernal locates the 'attack' on Creuzer in the epilogue of the *Prolegomena*,<sup>117</sup> where in fact Müller summarised the views on myth of six influential scholars, including his teacher P. Buttmann (Berlin) and the late J.H. Voss, Creuzer's enemy from Heidelberg. Thus he wanted to clarify his own principles by comparing them with those of others. All the same, Bernal is not interested in Creuzer, as the latter pleaded for India instead of Egypt.

I have not found an 'attack' on Masons by Müller until now; Bernal does not bring evidence of one either.<sup>118</sup> The lines on Dupuis occur in an

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(henceforth *BMK*), 200, letter to A. Schöll, June 1833; his relief that both books were nearly sold out, and his wish not to reissue them, *BMR* no. 230, from his publisher J. Max, Jan. 3, 1839; his reply *BMR* no. 231, March 4, 1839.

<sup>112</sup>Cf. Gehrke, 'Karl Otfried Müller und das Land der Griechen'.

<sup>113</sup>*BMR* no. 74 from Hamilton to Müller, July 15, 1827 and comm. *BMR* II, pp. 55-56.

<sup>114</sup>K.O. Müller, *The history and antiquities of the Doric race*, tr. H. Tufnell and G.C. Lewis (2 vols. London, 1830).

<sup>115</sup>Gehrke, 'K.O. Müller und das Land der Griechen', pp. 28ff.

<sup>116</sup>For details and sources, see Blok, 'Quests for a Scientific Mythology'.

<sup>117</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 310; n. 122, on p. 492.

<sup>118</sup>Müller mentions the Masons once, in a context when others alleged them to have prevented a scholar to get a tenured position, allegedly on the grounds of having betrayed their secrets. He just relates these allegations to his parents, without passing



article on the myths around the stars of Orion (1834), the only publication of Müller's Bernal claims to have read beside the *Histories* and *Prolegomena*. The 'attack' is worth quoting:

'In Dupuis this way of interpreting the ancient sagas of religion [the popular interpretation of Greek myths as based on the zodiac] was a revolutionary attack against positive religion [i.e., the formal abolishing of Christianity, including its calendar, in the French Revolution]; he intended to show that Christian belief was also futile, while all religions could be traced back to one calendar, represented in images. One cannot accuse our German mythologists of aims of this kind; to them, the world of sagas seemed to gain in value and was rendered sublime by the connection with the firmament. But they did not realise how often they puzzled out a hollow game with isolated relations and dry abstractions, instead of true and natural feelings, as the foundation of meaningful myths.'<sup>119</sup>

In its later pages, the essay pays due attention to influences of Phoenician and Chaldaean astrology on Greek perceptions, and to a parallel between Greek and Hebrew ideas on Orion. Clearly Müller disagrees with his German colleagues as well. Bernal's silence on these points leads me to wonder how much he has read of this article, or if he was willing at all to account for aspects that might complicate his views.<sup>120</sup>

#### *Assessment (2): Müller's views on culture*

One may observe that Müller was not interested in race, but in religion.<sup>121</sup> He was indeed a true Romantic in his search for cultural authenticity, which he held to be created by the religious *Geist* of mankind in response to local, natural surroundings. Bernal has justly observed the Romantic concern for the local and particular, and Müller too held any culture, Greek or otherwise, to be ultimately its own before cultural exchange would take place. That as a result he sometimes clarified the complicated mythological tradition, while sometimes making unjustified and biased judgements, I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>122</sup>

Müller's pietist Protestantism shaped his political views, including the principles of the separation of church and state, and freedom of conscience and expression. Not that he was a liberal; in this respect he shared several, strikingly contradictory opinions with his Romantic contemporaries in

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judgement or taking sides; *LMK* no. 62, p. 143; Oct. 1823.

<sup>119</sup>'Orion', *KdS* II, 113; tr. mine.

<sup>120</sup>Bernal in *Black Athena I*, n. 122 on 492 does not quote, but referring to the article as a whole suggests that it was devoted in full to an 'attack' on Dupuis.

<sup>121</sup>For a full discussion of the impact of his religious views on his historical scholarship, see Blok, 'Romantische Poesie, Naturphilosophie, Konstruktion der Geschichte'.

<sup>122</sup>For a specific case of Müller's bias, see Blok, 'Quests for a scientific mythology'.

appreciating the Greeks as the particular embodiment of freedom, while adhering to a conservative position with regard to German society. Bernal depicts Müller as an uncritical servant of several German states:

'it is striking that [he] was not dismissed along with his friends and colleagues ... who had protested against the illiberal actions of the King of Hanover'.<sup>123</sup>

But this judgement is wide off the mark. The protest against the reactionary government of Hanover and subsequent dismissal of the 'Göttinger Seven' in 1837, among whom the brothers Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859) were his close friends, deeply disturbed Müller's peace of mind. Müller, who objected to despotism and believed in the constitutional autonomy of the University, sympathised with the ideas of the Seven, but disagreed with the political means they had chosen.<sup>124</sup> Not having signed the declaration of the Seven, he nevertheless drew up a protest against their dismissal with five colleagues, disregarded the decree against support of them and helped to create a fund to assist them financially.<sup>125</sup>

The Romantic ideal of cultural authenticity could easily slide into a feeling of cultural superiority. This is exactly why modern readers often have mixed judgements about Romantic thought. Müller is no exception. For instance, his estimation of the Dorians is out of proportion and all too clearly reflects his Protestant and conservative ideals.<sup>126</sup> He seems not to have been fully aware of this effect, however, for he did not identify the Germans with the Greeks, even if he thought that German scholarship had achieved most in historical understanding of antiquity. His assumption of cultural and historical difference precluded any intentional equation.

More interestingly, he was fraught with mixed feelings himself. His beloved, austere Dorians had been less prolific than the Ionians in either

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<sup>123</sup>*Black Athena I*, n. 117 on 491.

<sup>124</sup>On the background of Müller's political position and his uneasiness about political activism as the result of experiences in his youth, see Blok, 'Romantische Poesie, Naturphilosophie, Konstruktion der Geschichte'.

<sup>125</sup>On the risks taken by the Seven, the Six and their supporters, see F. Ranke, 'C.O. Müller, ein Lebensbild', *Programm der königlichen Realschule* (Leipzig, Duncker & Humblot, 1870), and the lively account in a letter (Dec. 15, 1837) by J.J. Bachofen, who was at Göttingen at the time, of the 'Lebehoch' by students for the protesting professors and the threat of dismissal of the Six as well. Müller is mentioned explicitly in both contexts. J.J. Bachofen, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10, *Briefe*, ed. F. Husner (Basel, Benno Schwab & Co., 1967) pp. 8-10 (I owe this reference to Suzanne Marchand).

<sup>126</sup>Letter to his parents, *LMK* no. 46, p. 87; received Dec. 30, 1820:

'In my next volume of the Greek histories [= *Dorier*] I hope to present the example of a religious cult, which is the most sublime, the most pure as well as morally the most perfect to be imagined in paganism, that of Apollo.'

the visual arts or literature, which he studied as a scholar and loved as expressions of the human soul and in which he dabbled as an amateur himself. He deeply appreciated Ionian art, though he thought it was a mixture of Greek and Eastern (in particular Persian) elements which loosened the solemn quality of religious commitment he held to be the prerequisite of true art. Egyptian art impressed him as unequalled in its inspiration by nature and originally completely connected with religion. Yet compared to the Greeks, the Egyptians seemed to him effeminate, weak and subdued, because of the timeless oppression of the Egyptian people by indigenous and foreign rulers alike. Though his own piety informed his appreciation of antiquity and in particular of its religions and myths, he occasionally felt a friction between paganism and his own Christian faith. This friction he tried to accommodate, not always successfully, in his ideas on cultural authenticity based on religious inspiration.

From the outset his views contained a tension between the universality of the human mind (*Geist*) and the specificity in time and place of historical cultures, a tension he never fully solved. In brief, in his ideas on the origins of culture he assumed all people to be endowed with identical mental, ultimately religious equipment. It is in the application of this equipment that cultures would develop their distinctive authenticity, responding to the natural landscape and first historical experience. The development of this cultural, mental core he labelled 'internal history,' politics and economics 'external history' (compare his comment on Egyptian history above: first religion, then the state). The impact of cultural exchange would merge with the original characteristics and Müller insisted on clear arguments as to how and why one deemed such an exchange to have taken place and how to classify the origins of a phenomenon. Sometimes he also evaluated cultures as different in a sense that implied their inequality, sometimes not at all; his ideas appear to be inconsistent on this matter. Throughout, however, his respect for the Jewish tradition is profound.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup>For instance, in the closing chapters of the *Prolegomena* Müller addresses a fictional student of mythology, asking that this reader would try to immerse himself in the authentic religious feelings of all peoples. Müller describes a wide range of different religions and their expressions of belief, which the mythologist should make mentally his own.

'And should I say just how wholesome it would be for you to befriend God the Father of Israel; the infinite creator of heaven and earth, who even in the most acute conditions shares in the family concerns of the Patriarchs: whose simple and pure religion, though surrounded from all sides with the orgiastic cult of Baal and touched by it in many ways, yet remains true to itself in its main aspects for a long time and only slowly, and never completely, loses its original nature.'

Given the fact that Bernal wants to prove Müller's pervasive 'racism', he seems to have missed the passages which shed the most unfavourable light on Müller's ideas in this respect. A revealing instance from Bernal's point of view would be Müller's lecture 'On the alleged Egyptian origins of Greek art' (1820).<sup>128</sup> Here Müller took sides with J.J. Winckelmann who had been severely criticised for his belittlement of the dependence of Greek on Egyptian art. Greek and Egyptian art, according to Müller, were totally different. He explained this perception with recourse to the difference between the strength of the Greek and the weakness of the Egyptian representations of human forms, due to the issues I summarised above. Why did Bernal not select this lecture as a definite proof of his case?

Müller disagreed with Winckelmann in his argumentation: to the latter, Egyptian art was a stage before Greek art; to Müller, it was a matter of independent development of two different cultures. The same problem, though pertaining to myth instead of art, he had discussed in *Orchomenos*, published hardly a year before. Müller's vehemence in the lecture had to do with defending his ideas on local, cultural authenticity and his concomitant rejection of the idea of progressive stages. Indeed, to make him a case of racism one would have to base one's arguments on Müller's idea of authenticity as *opposed* to the idea of progress. But Bernal has put all his cards on the *equation* of racism with the idea of progress. So instead of fitting Bernal's argument, the lecture on Egyptian art contains a refutation of his construction of Romantic racism.

A similar case would be Müller's handling of linguistics and the role of etymology in unravelling ancient traditions. According to Bernal,

'Müller *admitted* that one of the best ways of distinguishing the historical elements of myth or legend was through etymology',<sup>129</sup>

though he asserts as well that Müller did not apply the new linguistics to his research (compare the problem of incompatibility mentioned above). We may conclude instead that Müller did not apply the new etymological explanations in the way Bernal thinks he should have done.<sup>130</sup> Müller

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*Prolegomena* (1825), p. 283; translation mine (JB).

In this survey of authentic religious beliefs, Müller does not mention Christianity.

<sup>128</sup>K.O. Müller, 'Ueber den angeblich ägyptischen Ursprung der griechischen Kunst,' *Kunstblatt, Beiblatt zum Morgenblatt* (1820) no. 79; *KdS* II, pp. 523-537.

<sup>129</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 314, emphasis mine.

<sup>130</sup>Bernal (*Black Athena I*, p. 314) quotes Müller:

'But alas! Etymology is still a science in which blind guesswork is more practised than methodical investigation; and in which because we wish to explain everything too soon, our labours more frequently result in confusion than elucidation' (*Prolegomena*, p. 290).

shared the Romantic preconceptions of language as an index to a people's spiritual qualities, which Bernal has aptly described,<sup>131</sup> and in the introductory chapter to his *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* Müller explained these current ideas on historical linguistics. Yet he looked for additional proof: if language were a sign of a people's mentality, there should be other indications within a people's history as to confirm observations based on language. Since he, too, took a great variety in inflexions and temporal forms to indicate mental energy, he held the same energy to be mirrored in the extension of this language-group, that is in the number of different languages belonging to it.

'Indeed, the language family that is closest to it [the Indo-European] in its perfection of structure and ability to poetical expression, the Semitic (to which Hebrew, Syrian, Phoenician, Arabic and other languages belong) is also closest with regard to its extension, albeit that thus in one important aspect [that is, extension, JHB] it is inferior..<sup>132</sup>

Nevertheless, later on he warns that the meaning of a richness of inflexion should not be exaggerated, taking Chinese and English as examples of languages without inflexion which yet lend themselves to poetry and philosophy.<sup>133</sup>

Obviously, these ideas can only be classified as racist, and can be recognised as meant to confirm Müller's explicit bias in favour of ancient Greek as a language unequalled by all other ancient or modern languages alike. But again Müller's views include some notable differences from those of some of his colleagues as well, while he resists several racist assumptions and conclusions. He did not think that mental phenomena such as language were 'attached to a particular place, landscape and climate,'<sup>134</sup> but held this view to be a major, prejudiced error. See for instance Müller's judgement of Winckelmann's ideas on race and progress:

'One cannot acquit Win[c]kelmann's inherent, unconscious philosophy of history of all bias, since also here the prominent point of view is to be found, which derives the physical and mental authenticity of peoples mainly from climate and other local conditions — a point of view which, if not also by taking account of human freedom, is limited first of all by the fact that man is as much an immediate product of a higher nature as is the mineral soil and the vegetation.'<sup>135</sup>

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Bernal uses this quote to underscore Müller's failure, but the text strikes me as quite a sensible remark, considering the state of knowledge and the ways of practising etymological explanation at the time.

<sup>131</sup>*Black Athena I*, pp. 226-233.

<sup>132</sup>Müller, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, p. 5.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 8-9.

<sup>134</sup>See *Black Athena I*, p. 226.

<sup>135</sup>K.O. Müller, 'Die Geschichte der griechischen Kunst und ihre neuesten Darsteller' (review, orig. 1826 and 1827) in *KW II*, pp. 91-185, p. 126.

This example clarifies how Müller's Romantic ideas on the *Geist* of mankind could both sustain assumptions on cultural variety and preclude racism in the modern sense of the word.

*Assessment (3): Secondary literature and language in Black Athena I*

How and why could Bernal come up with a picture of Müller that is untenable in the light of a thorough assessment of the source material? The most insufficient explanation is a practical one: the availability of information. Until about 1980, interest in Müller was very limited due to later responses to his work. The developments in classical scholarship after the 1840's could no longer accommodate Müller's religious Romanticism. Only his name continued to serve as a symbol of an all-encompassing approach to classical studies until early in the twentieth century, though never without some critical comment. One of Müller's few books to remain popular from the second half of the nineteenth century onward was (the translation of) *Die Dorier*, notably in England where it was used to encourage elitist, masculine virtues. I have already mentioned what happened with the original in Germany in the context of Nazi ideology. Set against Müller's initial ideas and his own later judgement of this work, the selection and usage of *Die Dorier* may truly be called a historical irony. But it also explains why for a long time Müller acquired an understandable ill-repute among liberal-minded scholars, who consequently either ignored or critically dismissed his work. In all these currents in the response to Müller, however, merely selected parts of his work circulated, cut off from their context and for the most part used in contradiction with his ideas. Only recently a renewed interest in his work has emerged, which may have to do with current questions about the relation between the universal and the particular, notably in the study of myth and history. The problems of historical hermeneutics which are inherent in this set of questions and which Müller had recognised and tried to solve, are crucial to historians working in this field. Müller presents a fascinating case of what Romanticism meant to the study of myth and history, exemplifying both what was gained and what we would rather do without, and why.

In sum, in the years Bernal was preparing *Black Athena I* secondary literature on Müller was relatively scarce, notably in English. Although this historiographical scarcity should have mitigated his ideas on the 'pillars of *Altertumswissenschaft*,' Bernal manages to use it against Müller. A.D. Momigliano, who is portrayed throughout as 'seeking to stress the rational aspects of his discipline,' is suggested to have omitted Müller from his

historiography (1982) because of Müller's 'questionable aspects'<sup>136</sup> and hence is situated suddenly on Bernal's side. Thus he passes over in silence that Momigliano published extensively on Müller in 1983, 1984 and 1985, including an assessment of Müller's questionable aspects.<sup>137</sup> In a book with the scope of *Black Athena*, one might excuse a reliance on secondary literature on several topics. But given the crucial role he attributes to Müller, Bernal would have had to use the primary sources for the essential aspects of Müller's work. This he did not do. Instead, he has read and quoted his selection of Müller's writing in an extremely selective way. In addition, Bernal professes to have read his choice of Müller's work in the original. In those cases I have checked his references to the German editions and the fact that they often do not fit at all leads me to wonder what role these originals have actually played in his argument.

This turns our attention to another, though related problem. Bernal never offers quotes in the original language.<sup>138</sup> In particular he fails to quote the original German texts that make up the core of his argument. The recourse to translations in the main text is probably due to the publisher's policies. Yet even if for this reason Bernal might be excused for offering translations only, translation itself entails a sincere responsibility. The German vocabulary often changes significantly by translation into English; this change can assume various qualities. In my experience,<sup>139</sup> German Romantic prose rendered into English tends to become more flat and matter-of-fact than the original. Nazi German prose, on the other hand, looks — or even sounds — more innocent in English than it does in the original German. In both cases the specific meaning, dependent on cultural context and reverberating in the original words, tends to disappear in translation. In addition to this, the cultural meaning of words changes considerably over time. Though later meanings are often embroidered on top of old ones, it goes against the purpose of historical understanding to identify the latter with the first.

A vital example of this problem is Bernal's use of the word 'race' to show the racism of classical scholarship. Usually, Bernal just writes 'race' without recourse to the original language, though in the case of German

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<sup>136</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 315.

<sup>137</sup>For full references, see my note 14. The article of 1985/ 1994 is an excellent example of Momigliano's often unfounded tendency to 'stress the rational aspects of his discipline': his argument that Müller was not a Romantic and was little influenced by religion is unconvincing in the light of Müller's public and private writing.

<sup>138</sup>Thanks to Bernhard Scholz for discussing these questions with me.

<sup>139</sup>Among the few who have commented explicitly on this problem, Carl Diehl, *Americans and German scholarship 1770-1870* (New Haven/ London, Yale University Press, 1978), ch. 1, discusses e.g. the insurmountable difficulties of the translating the word *Geist*, which is also crucial in Müller's work.

scholars he sometimes uses *Volk*. The Romantic use of *Volk* came first to the fore as a prefix, to mark the difference with 'court' or even 'bourgeoisie' in their creation of *Kunst* ('high' art).<sup>140</sup> This *Volk* evolved into a regular usage as noun, referring to the whole people as a cultural, autonomous unity on a par with *Nation*, both adopted and elaborated by the Nazis. Romantic usage *might* lead to a hierarchical difference between *Völker* but not necessarily so; if an author wanted to say this, he or she had to say so *explicitly* (some did). In Nazi usage, *Volk* always implied race and always hierarchy; if — hypothetically and not very likely — an author writing in the context of Nazi Germany did *not* want to say this, he or she had to say so *explicitly*. The same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for the English word 'race'. Throughout the nineteenth century, 'race' could be and has been used as an equivalent to 'people'. But it could also — and indeed, would increasingly from the second half of the century onward — be used in the sense of 'race' as we know the word today. So precisely in cases like these, where vital and sensitive issues are concerned, it is highly important to try to understand as faithfully as possible what an author meant to say and to render it in a vocabulary that is as true as possible to historical intentions. All this is obvious to any historian but Bernal seems to have discarded this principle. Two instances from *Black Athena* may illustrate his usage of language in this respect.

#### *Bernal on race*

As a rule, Bernal simply uses the word 'race' as if it had the same, that is modern, meaning over the centuries. After over 200 pages of seeing the word 'race' without any historical qualification as to its contextual usage, we find, as we draw near Romanticism, suddenly and only once,<sup>141</sup> 'ethnicity'.<sup>142</sup> This is, to my mind, in general much closer to the Romantics' generic sense of the term. Bernal, though, merely declares:

'in many ways, *Rasse* (race) or *Geschlecht* (kind) were merely the "scientific" terms for the Romantic *Volk* (people) or *Gemeinschaft* (community). [Herder's notion of 1774 that] the *Volk* was the source of all truth... appears in the 19th century as the "racial truth" which supersedes all others.'<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>See also the entry of Reinhard Koselleck on 'Das Volk' in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (8 vols.; Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1972-93), VIII.

<sup>141</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 254.

<sup>142</sup>In fact, this is the second time, but the first time Bernal renders it in inverted comma's (*Black Athena I*, p. 224), unlike racism, which is used throughout without any such orthographic distance.

<sup>143</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 305.



Bernal thus denies that a change of vocabulary might well imply a significant change in meaning and politics, and uses later ideas to clarify earlier ones, just as he has done when evaluating Müller. Bernal's remark that *Rasse* was the scientific term used in the modern sense of 'race'; and his statement to the effect that

'With Müller's capture of the academic "high ground" from which he could demand "proof" from challengers, the destruction of the Ancient Model was secure.'<sup>144</sup>

— all this would lead us to expect Bernal to show Müller's recurrent use of *Rasse*. But that is not the case. As a rule Müller used *Volk*, *Nation* and *national*, which do not evoke the same meaning of racism.

But in the context of *Rasse* we also find Bernal's only caveat:

'...there is a contradiction between the Romantic ideal of racial authenticity and the racist right of a master race to conquer'.<sup>145</sup>

This insight, though he knows that the claim of authenticity was used to fuel wars of liberation as those against Napoleon and in Greece, has not tempted Bernal to opt for a more delicately graded interpretation of the impact of Romanticism and its 'racism'.

### *Bernal on 'Volk'*

Bernal denounces F.A. Wolf (1759-1824) for substituting the individual writer Homer with a creation by 'the Greek/ European *Volk*,'<sup>146</sup> implying a racist assumption by the now notorious word *Volk*. How could Wolf, whose second edition of the *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1804) is mentioned but not quoted, have used this German word in his Latin text? What would Bernal make of the fact that Wolf used recent work on Hebrew scriptures as a comparative model for his own source criticism?<sup>147</sup> A sincere reading of the *Prolegomena* would have yielded, in addition, that Wolf developed his views due to new material.<sup>148</sup> If Bernal had done so, his views on Wolf would have become more complicated.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 314.

<sup>145</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 305.

<sup>146</sup>*Black Athena I*, p. 283.

<sup>147</sup>See F.A. Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer (1795)*, ed. and tr. A. Grafton, G.W. Most, J.E.G. Zetzel (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 18-26.

<sup>148</sup>Notably the edition of the A-scholium to the *Iliad*, by J.B.G. d'Ansse de Villosion, *Homeri Iliad ad veteris codicis Veneti fidem recensita*, (Venice, Coletus, 1788).

<sup>149</sup>And likewise his views on Müller as an alleged 'follower' of Wolf. Bernal knows of Müller's personal antipathy towards Wolf, but keeps emphasising Wolf's influence on Müller, (*Black Athena I*, p. 308) — an assumption that is refuted both by Eduard Müller's biographical account of his brother (*EMB* xx) and, more importantly, by Müller's own writing, for instance on 'Africans and Asiatics'.

On the other hand, why did Bernal not select one of the appalling passages from Wolf's course-book in German, in which he denied 'Africans and Asiatics' to have created a literary civilisation (a true *Kunst*) and in which he did use the word *Volk* frequently?<sup>150</sup> It is tempting to ascribe the misjudgement of Bernal's argument to his reliance on secondary literature in English, here in particular the lemma on Wolf in the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.<sup>151</sup> An inquiry reveals, however, that none of the references he quotes to sustain his interpretation of Wolf's Homer as representing the *Volk* actually does so.<sup>152</sup> In sum, in the case of Wolf's *Prolegomena* Bernal has added both the argument and the word *Volk* himself.

Bernal constructs the connection between racism and historiography by identifying both with the idea of progress, although tracing the ways Bernal handles this subject would require a separate article. Briefly, it turns out that he understands 'progress' to be the overall perception of historical development in stages and more in particular a specific version of this perception of history, which saw historical development as progress in the strict sense. This is clearly the Enlightened version before it changed its face into Romanticism, and Bernal identifies it without much ado with the evolutionism of the later nineteenth century. He seems to be unaware of Romantic criticism of the stage-theory, as voiced among others by Müller, as well as of its variety which assumed instead of progress a gradual decay. This latter current often merged with the traditional perception of a primeval monotheism scattered into the religious variety of (ancient) history, which we saw briefly above. Instead of looking into the many strands of the stage-theory, Bernal in fact has progress *and* Romanticism begin in the early eighteenth century,<sup>153</sup> in order to connect 'progress' to

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<sup>150</sup>E.g. from Wolf's *Darstellung der Alterthums-Wissenschaft nach Begriff, Umfang, Zweck und Werth* (Berlin, 1807), selected by the editorial board of *Der Neue Pauly* to illustrate the arrogance and limitations of Hellenocentrism; *Der Neue Pauly. Reallexikon der Antike. Encheiridion mit Vorstellung des Unternehmens und Hinweisen für Autoren*, ed. H. Cancik & H. Hofmann (Stuttgart-Weimar, J.B. Metzler, 1993), p. 20. On Wolf's exclusion of the Jews from the truly civilised peoples of antiquity in his *Encyclopädie der Philologie* (1798-99), see Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum*, p. 38. The difference with Müller's views on ancient Judaism is clear.

<sup>151</sup>D.B. Monro, 'Wolf, Friedrich August,' *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 11th. ed. vol. 28, pp. 770-771. See also next note.

<sup>152</sup>Note 4 on 487 refers to Pfeiffer, *History of classical scholarship*, pp. 173-177; and to F.M. Turner, *The Greek heritage in Victorian Britain*, (New Haven/ London, Yale University Press, 1981) pp. 138-139. Instead, Turner documents and explains the British mixture of indifference and displeasure towards Wolf's findings, mentioning explicitly the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in this respect, whose eleventh edition of 1911 is quoted by Bernal to prove the insignificance of Wolf's *Prolegomena* (*Black Athena I*, p. 284, note 6 on p. 487).

<sup>153</sup>Cf. *Black Athena I*, p. 283.

racism and then to identify the two. This idea is both rather idiosyncratic and allows Bernal to lump together positions which in fact considerably differ from one another. In this way he is led to downplay the ambiguity of the Romantic concept of ethnicity, which could further either ideas of superiority or of egalitarian difference, and limit it to racist hierarchy only.

### *Conclusion*

Even if a distinction between internal and external developments in scholarship may be useful in the context of specific questions, most historians would agree that historiography in general entails a complicated mixture of both. Internal and external criteria merge into a perception of the past, which is finally to be estimated by assessment of the source material. Bernal, however, presents his Ancient Model to be entirely 'internal' and hence 'true'; the only legitimate reason for revising this Model, then, would have been an internal one. But the methods of historical source criticism, which together with new material in fact contributed to this revision, would have been precisely such an internal argument. This result he could not allow: it would explode his ultimate aim of showing that the denial of Egyptian and Phoenician colonisation of Greece was due to racism only and had nothing to do with internal developments within the scholarly field of ancient history and classics. So when it came to the fall of the Ancient Model, he identified the method of historical source criticism with external ideologies he objects to. But when he used it himself in his depiction of classical scholarship, he has dropped several essential rules of historical inquiry. His construction of Müller's role as the embodiment of the racist attack against the Ancient Model depended on five assumptions, which I have shown to be untenable in the light of the source material. The refutation of Bernal's case against Müller undermines his entire argument 'on the fabrication of Ancient Greece' in the early decades of the nineteenth century and the reasons for the fall of the Ancient Model. It shows, moreover, the extent to which he allows his political views to determine the results of his inquiry. Therefore the reader should be cautious of what Bernal has to say in *Black Athena* as a whole, including his reading of the source material regarding the actual historical exchanges in the Eastern Mediterranean in the second millennium BCE.

One may regret that Bernal has taken to these means to address an issue that is worth serious consideration. There are today few ancient historians who do not deplore the former Hellenomania of classical studies. In particular the Eurocentrism and its frequent racism, the impact of which increased in the second half of the nineteenth century until far into the twentieth century, have evoked a powerful reaction within classical

scholarship as well as without. The search for different approaches including a systematic interest in the interconnections between Greece, Egypt and the Near East, has now been going on for several decades. But this situation does not make Bernal's account of the Ancient Model and the reasons of its replacement accurate and convincing. To advance a global perspective in the writing of history, fairness of argument and decency in proof are equally indispensable.