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Stone writing in ancient Paphos: Theatre, Basilica and House

Diana Wood Conroy

University of Wollongong, dconroy@uow.edu.au

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Abstract

At a time when I write in light on an electrified screen, this is a story about writing in stone. Inscriptions, not only in Cypriot archaeology, embed understanding intellectually through the interpretation of texts and also through eye and touch in the subtlety of their petrified materiality. Watching inscriptions emerge from the earth and documenting them has a poetic resonance for both scholars and artists. This essay teases out that poetic resonance, showing how the significant inscriptions associated with the theatre relate to great imperial forces and also to an emotional and private individuality.

DIANA WOOD CONROY

Stone Writing in Ancient Paphos: Theatre, Basilica and House

At a time when I write in light on an electrified screen, this is a story about writing in stone. Inscriptions, not only in Cypriot archaeology, embed understanding intellectually through the interpretation of texts and also through eye and touch in the subtlety of their petrified materiality. Watching inscriptions emerge from the earth and documenting them has a poetic resonance for both scholars and artists. This essay teases out that poetic resonance, showing how the significant inscriptions associated with the theatre relate to great imperial forces and also to an emotional and private individuality.

Inscribing text in resistant stone is laborious, so that ancient inscriptions are by their nature succinct, although I have seen heaped piles of closely written slabs at a forgotten city near Antalya in Turkey, as if stone were as easy to write on as paper. Reading almost erased letters in often broken stones is slower than reading paper and because the reader has to bend or climb around the stone, rather than holding the text in the hand, the force of the text seems stronger when it is eventually deciphered.

First, the context: Cyprus has a venerable history of reading and writing. Some of the earliest inscriptions in the eastern Mediterranean world (1600–1400 BC) are found in Cyprus. Phoenicians, Persians, Egyptians and Greeks colonised the coast and settled on the island, so close to the arc of early settlements in Anatolia and Syria in the eastern Mediterranean, and also to Egypt. Decoding these arrivals is helped by fragmentary texts in clay and stone. ‘The science of epigraphy (concerned with the interpretation and classification of inscriptions) has a fundamental value. Inscriptions together with literary sources form the richest and most accurate sources for the knowledge of ancient life, civilisation and history’ wrote the Cypriot scholar Ino Nicolaou (1971 1).

Nicolaou summarised the complexities of language for an epigrapher in her book *Cypriot Inscribed Stones*. Cypro-Minoan texts inscribed into baked clay, and related to a stage in writing between Linear A and B¹ were found in Kourion, Katydata and Enkomi and have still not been completely deciphered. Greeks settled in Cyprus around the eleventh century BC and at this time the syllabic Cypriot script appeared. Because of similar phonetic values it contributed to the famous decipherment of Linear B by Michael Ventris in 1954. The language used in Cypriot syllabic texts was an Arcadian Cypriot dialect of Greek, as well as an indigenous Cypriot language called Eteocyprian. Greek letters first appeared on

coins — for example, those of Nikokles King of Paphos in 325 BC — and the two scripts were used together all through the time of the independent Cypriot kingdoms until the abolition of the kings under Ptolemy 1 in 312 BC. The Egyptian Ptolemy was one of the successors of Alexander the Great, and the Paphos theatre was built around 300 BC, parallel to the building of Alexandria in Egypt. The Cypriot syllabic script was abandoned at this time, as it was overtaken by the Greek ‘koine’, the language of the Hellenistic rulers. Rome governed Cyprus after 58 BC and the long allegiance to Roman emperors continued until the Byzantine era emerged in the sixth and seventh centuries AD. Greek continued to be a principal language, with some Latin inscriptions evident as well (Nicolaou 1971 1–3). As Cornelius Vermeule has pointed out, Cyprus became a prosperous part of a vast imperial as well as local metropolitan organisation (86).

Since 1995 I have participated in the University of Sydney excavation of the theatre in Paphos, in western Cyprus, directed by Professor Richard Green and Dr Craig Barker. Season after season the team gradually uncovered first the *cavea*, or seating, then the *orchestra*, stage building and entrances of the Greco-Roman theatre on the edge of Fabrika Hill.² Slowly they lifted the chaotic tumble of collapsed walls caused by earthquakes, as well as thick layers of earth and rubble that had built up after more than a millennium of farming and small industry. The



Fig. 1. The Paphos Theatre 2006. (Photo: Rowan Conroy: time exposure by moonlight.)

inimitable semi-circular structure emerged into the light, with its stepped seating focused around the central orchestral floor, and fragments of a stage building among scattered column drums (some spirally fluted) and battered capitals. A few shards of statues had escaped the lime-kilns of later times; a marble hand bent as if holding an apple or a bird; half a foot in a sandal; a columnar altar. Even though so fragmentary, these glimpses had an imperious authority, indicative of a wider pattern of thought. Every year more trenches yielded densely packed potsherds and finds of metal and glass, even painted plaster, showing a continuous habitation of the site from the fourth century BC. And yet the archaeologists longed for the authority of inscriptions.

The theatre was a place for speech, for declamation and rhetoric and even for the roaring of gladiatorial games with wild animals brought from Africa in its changing history of use over more than six hundred years. It seemed no word remained out of all the words that must have resounded there. In that shape like a great amplifier set into the hill, poetry and music reverberated and ricocheted from the smooth plaster and marble surfaces so that every one of a possible eight thousand people in the theatre could hear.

A few engraved letters — *omega*, *iota*, *delta* — appeared in sequence; then *pi* and *omicron* cut into the limestone bedrock of the seating offered clues to the date of the theatre but only a twitter of meaning. In the saturated light of midday even these letters tend to vanish, while the low raking light of dawn and dusk revealed the shadowed hollows of the letter forms engraved in the surface, amongst odd dimples, scratches and tiny plants. An epigrapher, Michael Osborne, visited from Melbourne but left shaking his head over the scattered letters, though he was able to clarify their forms; particularly the distinctive *pi* (π) with one short leg and the open form of the high-set *omega*, as characteristic of a time around 300 BC (Green and Stennett 183 and 185).

Near the western area of the orchestra lay a quite beautiful ‘threshold’ stone of smooth marble more than two and a half metres long, which seemed to have been placed in an entrance as part of a later overbuilding of the theatre. I had walked over it for several seasons, but when I arrived on the site in 2001 a breathtaking discovery had just been made. Brush, the team geologist and marble specialist, had been thinking about the distinctiveness of this stone lying there. Proconnessian marble, slightly streaked with grey, is rare in the limestone environment of the theatre.³ The top surface of the marble was smooth with wear, but its underside? He scraped away earth from underneath it, and felt ridges and indentations with his fingers in the narrow hole without being able to see anything. With great excitement the stone was carefully lifted and proved to be the first substantial inscription found on the site. It recorded the dedication and rebuilding of the theatre by the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius and his son Marcus Aurelius Antoninus between 139 and 161 AD. By a marvellous chance, the other half of the inscription was in the storerooms of the Paphos Museum. This block had



Fig. 2. Diana Wood Conroy, 2009, 'Traces of the Ancient City: The Sacred Metropolis'. Graphite on rice

been found in the early 1900s, a hundred years earlier, in the yard of the house of Ioannis Tsenieris on Fabrika Hill, the site of the theatre (Nicolaou 2003 306).

Richard Green the director of the theatre excavation and Ino Nicolaou have reconstructed the full text, which belonged to the façade of the *proscenium*, the *scaenae frons* of the theatre. The serifed Greek letters of the two long lines of text vary in height, and the words are not spaced but form a continuous line, with some abbreviations for titles. The *omicron*, (the short O), the *phi* φ (the F) and the *omega* (the long O) are classically rounded circular forms, with the upper line of letters slightly larger (11 cm) than the lower line (9 cm).

The translation reads:

To God Zeus Capetolius and to Emperor Caesar T Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius and his son M Aurelius Antoninus Caesar for benefactions (rendered to her) Augusta, Claudia, Flavia Paphos, the Sacred Metropolis of the cities of Cyprus, the proscenium, the statues and the approaches to the parodoi constructed from her own funds. (Nicolaou 2003 308; Green and Stennett 2002 188.)

The text refers to the help that the Emperor Antoninus Pius and his son, the future emperor Marcus Aurelius gave to the reconstruction of the theatre after a severe earthquake. The city of Paphos, with all its honorific titles named after great imperial women Augusta, Claudia and Flavia (a city is feminine) and indeed the 'mother city' of Cyprus expressed her gratitude for 'the proscenium, the statues and the approaches' of the theatre. The great deity of Rome, called here 'Zeus Kapetolios', was Jupiter Capitolinus, whose ancient temple was on the Capitol in Rome. These 'approaches' would have included the painted western entrance, the *parodos*, with its vivid images of fillets and architectural ornament.⁵

Rubbing the inscription gently with soft graphite over a light rice paper documents every inflection of the carving, the flecked and slightly rippled surface made by the chisel and the hollow of the letters rendered in reverse tone, white rather than shadow, like a photographic negative. The rubbing does not show the elegant moulding along the length of the stones above the inscription, but clearly delineates the horns of the serifs at the edges of the letters. The transient paper simulacrum gives a precise sense of the touch of the ancient hand tool over the surface of the marble.

To have the name of Marcus Aurelius inscribed on a central part of the theatre architecture seemed like a direct, tangible connection between that renowned and

reflective emperor, always writing from a military tent on the edges of Empire, and my trajectory between Australia and Cyprus as part of a reverse kind of movement of empire, in the postcolonial wake of the British in Cyprus. Marcus Aurelius's private journal which became famous as the 'Meditations', explored rules for living within the vagaries of existence. His philosophy has been described as 'Platonic stoicism' — discovering what is the 'good' life and accepting whatever comes with fortitude. The book now known as 'Meditations' was originally called 'To himself' and it is an introverted, almost autobiographical text for a ruler who must maintain forceful control across a vast geographical area, encompassing people of many affiliations and languages (Staniforth 7). The 'we' and 'us' in the quotes below refer to the educated Roman aristocratic class, well read in Plato, Epicurus, Epictetus and the Greek dramatists of Athens whose works continued to be played in theatres across the span of the provinces. His imperial sensibility asserted the primacy of reason but he was also aware of unpredictable fortune and the mystery of the gods. Like any archaeologist, Marcus Aurelius was acutely conscious of time and space, and the shortness of life, accentuated by the loss of four of his children. (The only one of his five children who did survive became the detested Emperor Commodus.)

The volume of the 'Meditations' published in 1558 became enormously popular throughout Europe as a work of 'comfort and instruction' (Meredith 712). Shakespeare might have read these extracts, which are taken from Maxwell Staniforth's 1964 translation in Penguin Classics:

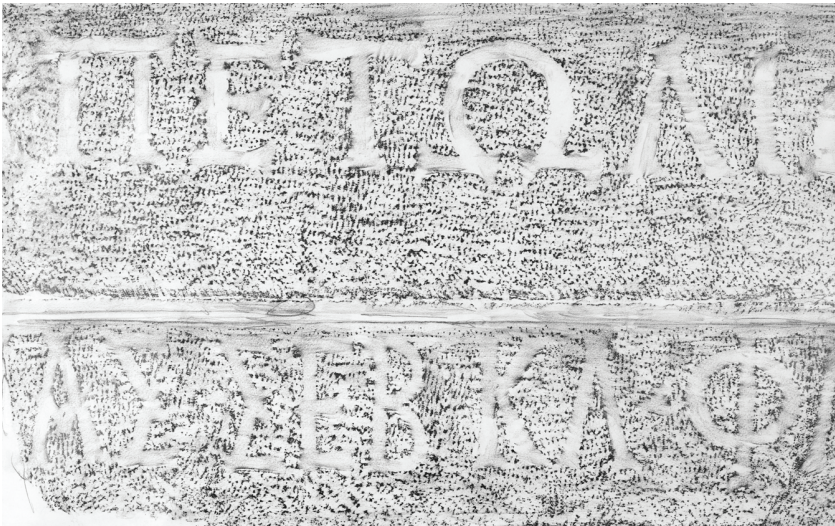


Fig. 3. Diana Wood Conroy, 2009, 'Traces of the Ancient City: The Sacred Metropolis'. Detail. Graphite on rice paper. Approx. 80 cm x 45 cm. (Photo: Tom Williams)

Book 1:9. My debt to (my tutor) Sextus include kindness, how to rule a household with paternal authority, the real meaning of the Natural Life, an unselfconscious dignity, an intuitive concern for the interests of one's friends, and a good natured patience with amateurs and visionaries. (37)

4:3. Keep before your eyes the swift onset of oblivion and the abysses of eternity before us and behind... For the entire earth is but a point, and the place of our own habitation but a minute corner of it. (63)

9:3. Like other natural processes that life's seasons bring us, so is our dissolution. (138)

9:7. Erase fancy, curb impulse, quench desire, let sovereign reason have the mastery. (139)

9:12. Desire one thing alone that your actions or inactions should be worthy of a reasoning citizen. (141)

9:28. Soon earth will cover us all. Then in time earth too will change; what issues from this change will itself incessantly change. (144)

9:36. The substance of us all is doomed to decay; the moisture and the bones and the fetor. Our precious marble is but a callosity of the earth, our gold and silver her sediments, our raiment shreds of hair, our purple, fish's gore. (146)

10:27. Reflect often how all the life of today is a repetition of the past and observe that it also presages what is to come. The performance is the same – only the actors change. (159)

The *Meditations* were informed by a deep reading of the Greeks: Homer (*Odyssey* in bk 5:31, 11:31, *Iliad* in bk 10:34); Hesiod (*Works and Days* v. 197 in bk 5:33, 11:32); Empedocles (bk 8:41, bk 11:12); Plato (the *Republic* in bk 7:35, the *Apology* and *Georgias* in bk 7: 44–46), the *Sceptics* (bk 5:10), the Cynics (bk 4:30); and the Roman Stoic Epictetus (bk 11:32–36). Among the classical Greek poets he mentioned the tragedians Sophocles (*Oedipus Rex* in bk 11:6), Euripides (*Chrysippus* and *Suppliants*; bk 7: 38–42), as well as the comic playwright Aristophanes, with the work of Cratinus and Eupolis, now lost (bk 11:6). He discussed New Comedy and Mime (bk 11:6).

In an interesting connection, the school of philosophy that primarily influenced Marcus Aurelius, Stoicism, was founded by Zeno about 300 BC in Kitium, now Larnaca in Cyprus, at exactly the same time as the Paphos theatre was built. The name *stoa* indicated the colonnade in Athens where Zeno discoursed (Staniforth 9). The *Pax Romana* that Marcus Aurelius inherited in the second century was often under threat with 'barbarian invasions, bloody civil wars, recurrent epidemics, galloping inflation and extreme personal insecurity' (Dodds 3). The Stoic tenet of dealing with constant change and the passions of the soul through rational control and calm underpinned the *Meditations* (Dodds 3, 4). Marcus Aurelius himself died of an infectious disease at the age of fifty-nine.

The names of the two emperors Marcus Aurelius and his father Antoninus Pius are part of the canon of European history and art, enmeshed in the glorious conquest and terror of Empire, inscribed on public monuments celebrating victory over the 'barbarians' who were always pushing at the boundaries. The principles of the 'Meditations' such as forbearance, justice and endurance in the struggle to

maintain and enlarge provinces carried on into the British Empire. I can imagine Marcus Aurelius' little book, written on campaign, accompanying civil servants and military personnel to Calcutta or Madras (now Kolkata and Chennai).

The symbolic terms and regal proclamation of the Antonine inscription above the theatre stage evoked the public realm for the theatre audience. But what of writing by or for women? Rome had no female generals or administrators. The city of Paphos is referred to as 'mother' (metropoleos), and 'nature' in Marcus Aurelius is feminine. The dominant deity in Paphos was Aphrodite, Venus to the Romans, who was understood to be the ancestor of Aeneas, the founder of Rome, so that all the Roman emperors could claim descent from the goddess, as Virgil had proclaimed in his foundation epic, *The Aeneid*. The key to understanding gender roles at the time is to comprehend not only the genealogical role of the mother but also the encompassing and engrained rituals of religion.

An image of the Aphrodite sanctuary of Palaepaphos on a coin of Emperor Caracalla was found by the archaeologists in the soil beneath the marble Antonine inscription (Green and Stennett 188). This open air, walled sanctuary seventeen kilometres from the theatre, in 'Old Paphos', had been in existence since the Bronze Age and is mentioned by the geographer Strabo (born a Greek in 64 BC in the Pontus in Asia Minor). 'Palaepaphos situated about ten stadia above the sea, has a mooring place and an ancient temple of the Paphian Aphrodite. Then one comes to Paphos, which was founded by Agapenor and has both a harbour and well-built temples. It is sixty stadia distant from Palaepaphos by land; and on this road, men together with women, who also assemble here from other cities, hold an annual procession to Palaepaphos' (Strabo bk 14.6.3).

In the centre of the open *temenos* of the temple where the pilgrims gathered, the coin shows an aniconic (without representation) shape, a pyramidal stone. This remarkable stone, 1.22 metres high, still exists in the Museum at Palaepaphos, and is rubbed smooth by generations of offerings of olive oil; it is an abstract, unwritten and uninscribed stone redolent with the endless desire for fertility. The stone is dark green gabbro, a rock from the magma usually found in the Troodos Mountains of central Cyprus and was the focus for the extensive homage to Aphrodite throughout the time of the theatre. The conical Aphrodite stone, 'venerated under the shape of an *omphalos* (a navel)' probably dates from the Chalcolithic period, the 'age of stone', about 2400 BC (Servius *Ad Aeniadem* 1.274 qtd in Karageorghis 30). Another famous *omphalos* or navel stone was central to the cult of Apollo in Delphi. Apollo Hylates was his representative in Cyprus, with a sanctuary not far from the Paphos theatre described by F.G. Maier and V. Karageorghis in 1984 (232). Paphos was said by Hesychius, writing a lexicon in the first century, to have been another navel of the world parallel to that of Delphi in Greece, the centre of the earth (Mlnarczyk 25).

The mute, chthonic power of the aniconic stone contrasts to the *dignitas* and authority in the graven letters of the theatre inscription. Both have a strong aesthetic

impact. The evidence of imagery on coins and statuettes shows that the devotion to resourceful feminine deities underpinned the public realm, but individual women are not named in the archaeology of the theatre. The activities of women had to have another kind of emphasis. Richard Sennett, in his exploration of the binary associations of flesh and stone, body and city noted that the Greeks thought that cold, wetness and passivity indicated the female, even from the earliest moments of conception. If the developing embryo was warm in the womb it became male, otherwise it became female 'more soft, more liquid, more clammy-cold'. Male qualities were heat, dryness and light, but both male and female represented 'two poles of a bodily continuum' (Sennett 42). The monuments of the public spaces were bright, the place of male activity, while dark private houses were the domestic feminine realm.

How intriguing to imagine both 'phallic' and 'omphalic' sensibilities intersecting and interacting in the long time span of the Greco-Roman theatre. Each letter is inscribed into the bedrock of the seating. The sign of the omega is curved, turning in on itself and looks like a navel, or like a wreath of string. The shape of ω , *omega* reflects the plan of the theatre. It does not have the one-point perspective, the direct upward movement of the 'I', but is part of a wider pattern where self is not differentiated from the community. Always part of a binary with *alpha*, the first letter, *omega* is at the end of the Greek alphabet, belonging to the tomb and the earth rather than the bright light of every day.

Orality, the sung and spoken word, must have been the milieu of most ancient women. A culture of speech, as Marcel Detienne has observed, has more to do with ear and memory than it does with letters and writing (21). Orality was the essential counterpoint to written texts in tragedy, comedy and even mime. The great literature of Greek women, said the poet Peter Levi, was embodied in the lament for the dead, that female chorus that also draws out and comments on the momentum of the drama.⁶ *Rembetica* or *zeimbekiko* music that sings of larrikin and outcast may have its roots in ancient tragedy, and it is still heard in the bars of Paphos in haunting contralto and soprano voices. Patrick Leigh Fermor, scholar and traveller, wrote about the remote region of the Mani in Greece in the mid-twentieth century — parallel in many ways to Cyprus in the continuance of ancient dialects — and described the long rhyming couplet sung as a dirge by graves specifically by women. These laments were called $\mu\omicron\iota\rho\lambda\omicron\tau\iota$, literally in Greek 'the words of fate'. He noted 'the similarity of these *miroloyia* with the themes of ancient Greek literature, most notably with the lament of Andromache over the grave of Hector' (Fermor 58).

The series of stone writings to emerge from the last phase of the theatre in the sixth century AD seem to find a place between these polarities, between the public formality of the Antonine inscription and the unwritten rituals of the private domains of Paphos. A remarkable sequence of significant inscriptions came to light in 2006, when a cluster of recycled stones that formed a perimeter

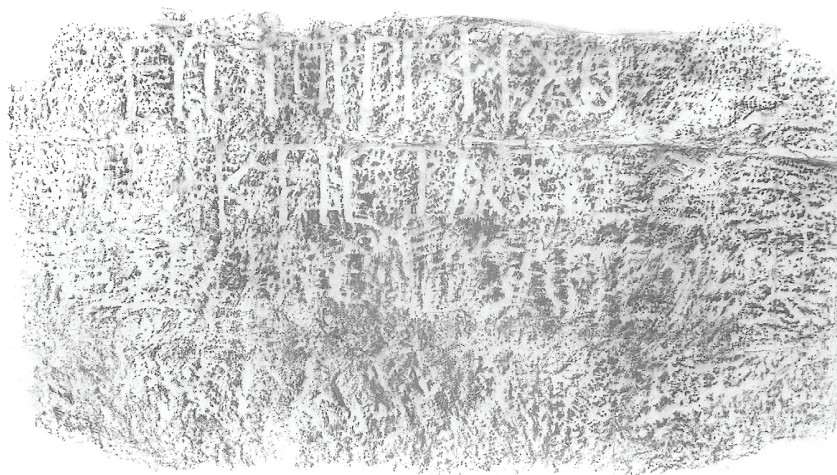


Fig. 4. Diana Wood Conroy, 2006, 'Rubbing of the Mamonian limestone base Paphos theatre', graphite on tissue paper. 32 x 55 cm (Photo: Diana Wood Conroy)

wall of the theatre orchestra were finally unearthed. This wall was built in the Antonine period (139 – 198 AD) to make a containing barrier so that water events could be held in the orchestra. Richard Green and Eric Handley (2010) have situated the three inscriptions within their archaeological and historical context, through the detailed grammatical scrutiny of each word (showing the primacy of epigraphy, not only to archaeology but also to exegetical analysis at the heart of literary scholarship). Green and Handley describe how the three texts were carved into re-used stones probably about 542 AD, that is, four hundred years later than the Antonine inscription. The theatre was devastated by a catastrophic earthquake about 365 AD that affected the whole west coast of Cyprus and after this it became a great abandoned ruin and a prime resource for building materials. The archaeological evidence suggests it was still a place where people might assemble and squat in makeshift dwellings with their animals and even small workshops (203).

The two inscriptions in the theatre, one on a granite column and one on a red limestone base (the stone is found in the mountains in SW Cyprus) include the same name 'Eustorgis'. The one on the column reads 'Eustorgis of Cyprus rebuilds...'. The base had already been used before, and the erased letters below the Eustorgis text are visible but not legible. Once there must have been a bronze statue inserted into the holes. This time Eustorgis is in the vocative case 'Eustorgis, lover of building' from the verb $\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$ (ktizo) (Green & Handley 204–205).

Building or 'Creation' appears as the bust of an allegorical female figure in a fifth-century mosaic in the House of Eustolius at Kourion, another important Early Christian complex 30 km from Paphos. As in the earlier phases of the



Fig. 5. Mamonian limestone base in orchestral wall, Paphos theatre, 2006. (Photo: Diana Wood Conroy)

theatre, the individual woman is not identified, but her dignified femininity is named as KTISIS (Creation personified, again from the verb ktiso, to build) holding a standard measuring tool for the Roman foot.

Unlike the order and balance of the classical rounded letters with serifs, the engraving of the narrow letters of the Eustorgis inscriptions is irregular and wavering with something of the quality of an individual's handwriting. The lettering is a mixture of capitals and handwriting; the *lambda* (L) lower case, the *rho* (R) curiously narrow. There is no straight base line of text; the letters vary in height between 5 and 6 cm.

The third Eustorgis inscription was found by Richard Green in 2006 high up on another granite column, similar to the one in the orchestra wall, but this time it was not in the theatre itself but in the nearby Early Christian Chryssopolitissa basilica, the largest basilica on Cyprus, where numerous acanthus-leaved column capitals and column shafts from the theatre were re-used in the late fourth century. Because it is not on eye level the inscription disappeared into the flicker of uneven stone. Only the eagle eye of the archaeologist could discern what was already actually open to sight, if one knew what to look for. The distinguishing character of each kind of stone, its colour, shape and surface, alerts the mind



Fig. 6. *Ktisis (Creation)* 5th-century floor mosaic, Kourion, Cyprus.⁷ (Photo: Diana Wood Conroy)

— the ruined blocks themselves are like letters that can be put together into words and grammar.

The conversion of Cyprus to Christianity was widespread by the end of the fourth century, although some remarkable pagan mosaics, such as those of Ariadne and Theseus in the late fourth (renovated in the fifth) century House of Theseus, less than a kilometre from the Paphos theatre, testify to the continuing strength of the old stories. Yet the artist who made the labyrinth mosaic made Theseus almost womanly (in contrast to the heroic ferocity of the early myths), beardless with long curly hair and large dreamy eyes which appear to look inwards as well as outwards. The bust of Ariadne watches the killing of the Minotaur, and each entity has the name picked out in the marble *tesserae*.⁸ In the fifth century, when the mosaic of Theseus' head had been restored after an earthquake to its present form, pagan beliefs were in competition with Christian ideas (Michaelides 6). The labyrinth, according to Wikto Daszewski who excavated it in the 1960s, had become an allegory, a symbol of the difficulty of life, of the long and painful road to truth, a symbolic place of transformation, of initiation, final victory and the end of desire. The victory of the hero over the monster foreshadows St George and the dragon, where spirit triumphs over material values (Daszewski 59–63).

There is a blurring between pagan and Christian in the stylistic continuity of mosaics and architecture. Other buildings in the city such as the Odeon and the Agora as well as the theatre were never rebuilt after the cataclysmic earthquake. 'The city, celebrated by the poets, destroyed by frequent earthquakes, has now

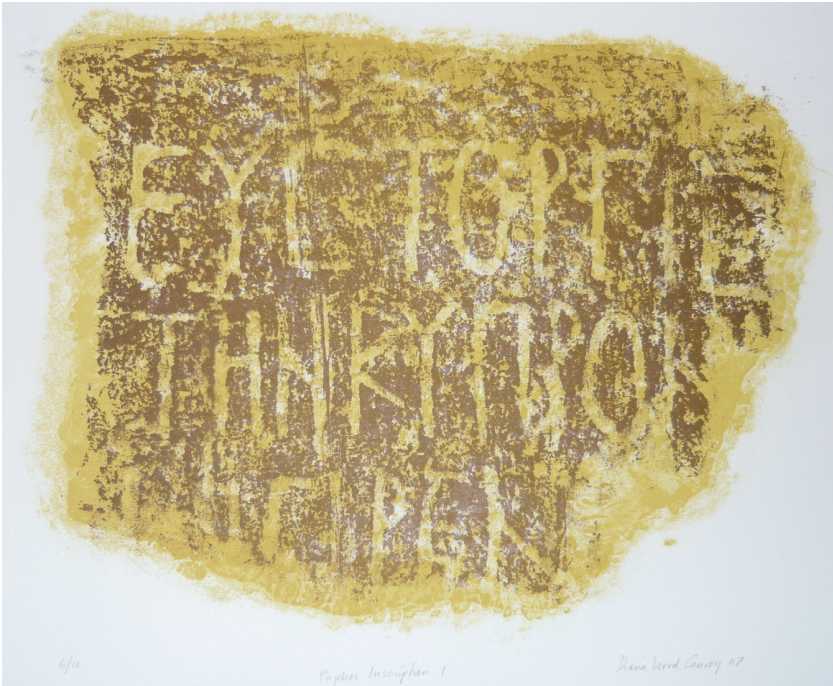


Fig. 7. Diana Wood Conroy, 2007, 'Eustorgis 1'. Paphos theatre column inscription. Two colour lithograph printed by Tom Goulder, Duck Prints Port Kembla 49 x 60 cm.⁹ (Photo: Diana Wood Conroy)

only its ruins to show what once it was' wrote St Jerome about Paphos in 391 AD (Maier and Karageorghis 285).

Despite the damage of earthquakes, the Paphiot Bishopric was able to build the huge basilica, which had seven aisles to hold the congregation. The theatre's architectural elements lived again, recycled in the new dramatic fervour of Christian ritual. Built at exactly the time the theatre was ending its life, the basilica was remodelled in the sixth century only to be destroyed in 653 AD by Arabs. Arab inscriptions show they had a continued presence here (Maier and Karageorghis 301). The small fifteenth century church of Ayia Kyriaki perches on the northern aisle of the once vast basilica or cathedral, and outside it the granite column with Eustorgis' name overlooks a carpet of floor mosaics of twining rosettes and ribbons, inset with Biblical texts.

I wanted to re-present the Eustorgis inscriptions as contemporary prints to highlight the mystery of the obliteration of the past, except for almost unreadable fragments of heart-rending brevity.

It's most likely that Eustorgis himself belonged to the new faith, and was possibly an influential man in the church, write Green and Handley in their detailed examination of the text. His name means 'loving well' from the verb



Fig. 8. Diana Wood Conroy, 2001, 'The Theatre of Ariadne Gouache', gesso and graphite with earth pigment (Wollongong coalwash) and tapestry fragment in linen, wool and silk, on canvas, 178 x 184 cm. Collection of the Flinders University Art Museum South Australia. (Photo: Diana Wood Conroy)

stergo to love in the Christian sense of 'natural affection, the mutual love of parents and children' (*Classic Greek Dictionary* 1949). The basilica inscription reads 'Eustorgis may he never thirst'. The references evoked by this phrase bring the text right out of the context of Marcus Aurelius's Stoic Platonism and into the ambit of St John's Gospel, as the thirst is a spiritual thirst, using the verb 'dipsao'. The authors point to St John's Gospel 4:13–16, where Jesus at Jacob's Well says to the woman of Samaria: 'Whosoever drinketh of the water I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up into eternal life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw'. The connection to thirst is heightened too because not far from the Eustorgis column inscription is a damaged floor-mosaic image of a deer bending to drink. The fragmentary text above the animal refers to Psalm 42: 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks,



Figs 9 and 10. Theseus, Ariadne and the Minotaur: labyrinth mosaic from the House of Theseus, Paphos, with detail of central tondo. 4th–5th century AD, 6 metres in diameter. (Photos: Diana Wood Conroy)

so panteth my soul after thee (O God)’ (Green & Handley 207). It’s just possible to read the last phrase ‘psyche mou pros se’.

The Eustorgis inscriptions speak of a different kind of individual emerging, where the power of the state so evident in the Antonine inscriptions is replaced



Fig. 11. Diana Wood Conroy, 2007, 'Eustorgis 11', Chryssopolitissa inscription. Two colour lithograph printed by Tom Goulder Duck Prints Port Kembla. 45 x 56 cm (Photo: Diana Wood Conroy)

by an emotional and personal agency. Peter Brown has traced the changing nature of 'divine power' (14) between 200 and 400 AD through the idea that divinity could be represented on earth through individual human agents who had a stable relationship to it, sometimes sorcerers, sometimes saints. He posits that the 'Christian church was the impresario of a wider change' (15), with individual holy men who were believed to be the tangible links between heaven and earth, and who could speak directly with the oracular power of healing. 'The individual leaps into focus' after the third century (Brown 26). Eustorgis inherited the legacy of the writing saints — Augustine (born Thagaste now Algeria 354, died 430), Anthony (born Egypt 251, died 356), and Jerome (born Stridon on the Adriatic coast 347, died 420) — who were informed by, but moved away from, classical philosophers like the Stoics loved by Marcus Aurelius. Perhaps Eustorgis was just such a charismatic leader, encouraging and supporting Cyprus, rebuilding not only physical structures but also tending to the new longings of the soul.

In this overview of the inscriptions in stone and their discovery in the Paphos theatre and nearby monuments, the fragmentary evidence shows Rome as an implicitly imperial power and brings home forcefully how the immensity of the



Fig. 12. Floor mosaic, Basilica Chryssopolitissa, Paphos. Late 4th or 5th century AD
(Photo: Diana Wood Conroy)

past can mirror the (colonial and postcolonial) present over the six hundred year life of the theatre. The inscribed names of the Antonine emperors and the poetic resonance of the name of Eustorgis are points of focus, a tangible visual presence in what Susan Sontag has called ‘time’s relentless melt’ (qtd in Gilbert 420).

Influences of writers from all over the Roman Empire came together in Paphos, through the common language of Greek.

The past can reflect the present: in a postcolonial mirroring of displacement of autochthonous cultures there was, for example, the disappearance of Eteo-Cypriot languages in Cyprus. Invasions from the east and west, (from Persia, Phoenicia, Egypt, Greece, Rome to mention a few of the ancient invasions) must have caused diaspora and an assimilation of original peoples just visible in the archaeological record with the interweaving of languages and writing systems. The Ptolemaic conquest overwhelmed the Cypriot kingdoms yet led to the building of the Paphos theatre. Earthquakes caused famine and disease, countered by the fact that the colossal Roman peace did restore and maintain prosperity and stability, with a unifying language and government shown clearly in the Antonine inscription.

The very rare Early Christian inscriptions from the theatre indicate a new trajectory of belief. Travellers came from the edges of the Empire, like Strabo (who studied with the Peripatetic philosophers). Even though Strabo's map of the world never conceived of such a remote geography, the Australians coming from the Antipodes and excavating the material evidence of the Paphos theatre are successors to a long trajectory of travellers, artists and scholars drawn to Cyprus. I am not sure that the electronic writing of this point in time will outperform the stone writing.

NOTES

- ¹ Linear A and B are the names given to the Bronze Age scripts discovered by Arthur Evans in Knossos, Crete. Linear A has not been fully deciphered, but Linear B was interpreted by Michael Ventris in 1952 as Mycenaean Greek
- ² I would like to express my great appreciation for the generous scholarship of Professor Richard Green, University of Sydney Director of the Paphos Theatre Excavation since 1995, who has consistently linked archaeology and art. Many thanks are due to Associate Director Dr Craig Barker, and to my longstanding colleagues on the team for their support and advice. Faculty of Creative Arts Research and Study Leave Grants, as well as a Vice-Chancellor's Challenge Grant from the University of Wollongong, Australia immensely helped in travelling to the Cyprus excavation and the making of artwork. My book explores the context further: *The Fabric of the Ancient Theatre: Excavation Journals from Cyprus*.
- ³ Proconnēsus = Προκόννησος, an island in the Propontis, off Turkey, gives its name to marble exported from the island of Cyprus.
- ⁴ 'Traces of the Ancient City' was exhibited in *Breathing Space: Liz Jeneid and Diana Wood Conroy*, Wollongong City Gallery, 2010. The installation was reviewed by Belinda von Mengerson 'Breathing Space: Liz Jeneid, Stephen Ingham and Diana Wood Conroy'.
- ⁵ The western parodos decoration is described in Diana Wood Conroy, 'Roman Wall Paintings in the Pafos Theatre', 275–300.
- ⁶ I knew Peter Levi at the British School of Archaeology in Athens in 1966, before he became Merton Professor of Poetry at Oxford University. His obsession at that time

was to understand the shadows of antiquity in the language and customs he found travelling all over Greece in the footsteps of Pausanias.

- ⁷ V. Karageorghis, *A Guide to Kourion*. Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation with the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus 1987, fig. 32, p. 39.
- ⁸ Ariadne used a thread to help Theseus through the labyrinth of Crete to kill her brother the Minotaur. After being abandoned by Theseus in Naxos, Dionysos carried Ariadne off as his bride. Dionysos was the god associated with all the rituals of theatre, and the theatre plan is like a labyrinth. This piece was a reflection on the mosaic labyrinth in the late Roman House of Theseus not far from the Paphos theatre excavation, grounded in the earth of the Illawarra region in Wollongong, Australia.
- ⁹ The two lithographs *Eustorgis I* and *Eustorgis II* were exhibited in the Faculty of Creative Arts Print Exhibition, University of Wollongong July, 2009.

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