Apollonius of Tyana, according to the testimony of Philostratus, derided the images of the Egyptian gods as "ἵττοσα καὶ γέλειω", absurd and grotesque (V.Apoll.VI, 19). Pliny would call them **monstrificae effigies** (HN 36, 84); Lactantius would label them *monstruosa* (Div. Inst. I, 20); for Philo of Alexandria the Egyptian animal cult was a disgusting and unclean cult of the brute beasts. The two Pagans (one Greek, one Roman), the Christian, and the Jew all shared exactly the same opinion on this issue. In the light of the materials collected by Hopfner for his valuable anthology, *Fontes Historiae Religionis Aegyptiacae*, such opinions may be regarded as typical, the universally enunciated ones. Socrates Scholasticus recorded a recollection of a statue of Thoth, a monkey god from the Serapeum of Alexandria, left by Bishop Theophilus for future generations as a proof of how ridiculous Egyptian Pagan worship was (HE V, 16). Even today, when we look at the selection of images of the monkey divinity assembled by A.Roullet in her admirable book, *The Egyptian and Egyptianizing Monuments of Imperial Rome*, we may feel a perverse kind of sympathy with Theophilus. The second-rate antique handicrafts business widespread throughout Italy for the manufacture and distribution of fake Egyptian *objets d'art*, albeit in a wide range of quality, could come nowhere near the supreme perfection of the genuine Egyptian sculpture of, say, the New Kingdom; neither could it match the standards of the collection gathered together by that arch-snob and connoisseur, the Emperor Hadrian. In the eyes of Western intellectuals the religion of Egypt, and also its religiously derived, majestically beautiful art full of a symbolic sense and substance, would often be accorded the monstrous shape of caricature. The 18th-century drawings of the Egyptian gods reproduced in Roullet's book offer corroborating evidence for the
contention that the learned men of Wickelman’s times, under the spell of their own cult of the Classics, read the heritage of Greek and Roman letters as their creators had intended it to be read. Apollonius of Tyana had contrasted the Classical beauty of Hellenic marble divinities with the monstrosity of Egyptian images (V. Apoll. VI, 19). This passage openly manifests the exclusivist attitudes held by the Greek scholars and rhetors, who were infatuated with the beauty of Post-Phidian art, a beauty treated as absolute and unique. But for all this Apollonius’ remark carries the characteristics of an invective. Aesthetics are only of secondary importance here.

Oddly enough the literary material regarding the Syrian art reveals the same patterns. They may be traced, for instance, in the cursory description of the miraculous moving statue of Apollo of Hierapolis, to be found in the essay “The Syrian Goddess” by an anonymous Syrian Greek author, probably writing at the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D.:

ξοάνον Ἀπόλλωνος, οὐκ οἴον ἐσθήσει ποιόσωκι. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ὄλλοι πάντες Ἀπόλλωνα νέον τε καὶ πρωθήβην ποιόσωκι. μόνοι δὲ οὕτωι Ἀπόλλωνος γενειτέω ξοάνον δεικνύοσαι, καὶ τάδε ποιόσωκες ἔσοντος μὲν ἐπαινέσον, Ἑλληνον ὡς κατηγορέουσι καὶ ὄλλων, ὥσοι Ἀπόλλωνα πάγια θέμενοι ἱλάσκονται... μόνοι Ἀπόλλωνα εἴμαι κοσμέωσι

DS 35: “an effigy of Apollo of an unusual character. All other sculptors think of Apollo as a youth, and represent him in the flower of his age. These artificers alone exhibit the Apollo of their statuary as bearded. They justify their action, and criticize the Greeks and others who set up Apollo as a boy, and appease him in that guise... they, and they alone represent Apollo as robed...” [translated by H.A.Strong].

This description, brief though it is (its gist amounting to the picture of the bearded and robed sculpture of a divinity) lays emphasis on the Oriental aspects of the idol’s shape. First by stressing its strange appearance, and secondly by contrasting the technique and aesthetic principles applied by the Oriental sculptors who, to paraphrase the words of R.Lee, “showed no interest in formal beauty”[1], but focused their attention on bringing out the religious, symbolic and hieratic qualities of their works. The Greek commentator observes the striking contrast between the Oriental art and the workshop of the Greek sculptors, who sought to bestow an idealized beauty upon their work, thus expressing their sensitiveness attuned to earthly beauty, as may be seen in many Greek images of the gods (Lessing’s körperliche Schönheit). We may readily understand what the author of “The Syrian Goddess” meant through his comparison, thanks to a brilliant discovery by J.Pirenne, who identified the Apollo of Hierapolis with Bel of Hatra,

basing on a rather detailed description in Macrobius (Sat. I, 17)\(^2\). This noteworthy achievement affords a clear view of the pictorial representations underlying the verbal expression. In other words, it helps us to comprehend exactly the very essence of the comparison between two mutually exclusive concepts of beauty (Figs. I - II).

My preliminary short-list of selected extracts shows what might aptly be called a sense of alienation and misunderstanding in the aesthetic categories, a reluctance or inability to transcend the aesthetic barriers to cross-cultural communication. The alien beauty of the Orientals proved inconceivable and psychologically impenetrable to the Western intellectuals whether of Greek or of Latin origin. To them the Oriental architecture appeared barbaric. They saw in it a testimony of vain monumentalism, deprived of all charm or beauty (Strabo 17, 1, 28; Plin. HN 36, 79; Hdt. II, 125 - 8). In their view the forms of the Oriental fine arts were odd, if not monstrous and abhorrent.

In their turn the Orientals, worshippers of their native gods in idols endowed with an ancient beauty, could in no way accept the Greek aesthetics, which stripped the gods of their proper dignity and divinity, as may be surmised from the opinions expressed by the author of the essay de Dea Syria.

Alongside the intrinsic aesthetic barriers to cross-cultural communication we frequently encounter evidence of misinterpretation of Oriental works of art by Classical authors, or in other words barriers that are ideological. In the account from Diodorus' Library we find a description of a painted wall relief belonging to a class of popular compositions in the royal monumental art of the New Kingdom: a scene showing the bringing in of captives before Pharaoh (I, 48). The prisoners of war themselves, as described by Diodorus, were armless and deprived of the membra virilia. It is not unlikely that what Diodorus had in mind was a variant of the scene which we know from Medinet Habu, the one which shows a count of hands and phaluses that have been severed off the captives before the king\(^3\). The allegorical explanation adduced by Diodorus (the captives were effeminate in spirit etc.) reveals some scruples which elsewhere would be considered unnecessary as to the image of the ancient Oriental monarchs. There is no reason to doubt their extreme brutality. Such treatment of prisoners of war as registered by Diodorus' testimony appears to have been general practice in the ancient Near East. Suffice it to mention the Assyrian royal art, wellknown to us e.g. from the art galleries of the British Museum. The Orientals showed no understanding or feeling for what the Greeks called πρέπον (decorum), a ruling

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Fig. 1. Apollo Belvedere.
Fig. 2. Apollo of Hierapolis.

principle in the Classical art from Phidias to the Hadrianic school. This Greek author, namely the author of the original account incorporated into the Library of History, sharing the pro-Egyptian sympathies of the contemporary royal and intellectual circles, seems, as neatly expressed by Stephanie West, to have "naturally linked" them "with the respect for Egypt's heritage fostered in the early years of Ptolemaic rule, when the dream of some kind of cultural synthesis encouraged idealization of the country's past." Consequently he did his utmost in the service of the king, turning to allegory in order to explain an image which must have been intolerably brutal to the Greek reader. In fact such scenes were by no means allegorical. On this point Assyrian and Egyptian artists were realistic to the extremity allowed by their formal conventions. It was simply one of their manners of expressing the glory of their monarchs, then apparently regarded as proper, which today may be looked upon as a fossilized piece of the Aegypto-Assyrian imperial esprit du temps. This is not to say that the Greeks or Macedonians were any less cruel than the Egyptians or Assyrians. Suffice it to recall the scene of mass execution of prisoners of war captured at the battle of Aigospotamoi, or the

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resolution passed by the Council of the People at Athens to cut off the hands of any sailors of the Symmachy of Sparta they should catch. As time went on, supposedly not without Oriental influence, this motif would make it into the Classical art, as borne out by the macabre scene of execution of Germanic prisoners immortalized of the memorial of Marcus Aurelius that towers over the Piazza Colonna.

Macrobius' interpretations of the attributes of the Syrian divinities reveal a similar degree of misunderstanding, for example in his analysis of the properties of the Heliopolitan idol of Jupiter (Sat. I, 12). In Syria the thunderbolt was the attribute of the rain god, not of Helios. Similarly the whip, a symbol of lightning, was a natural prop in the hands of the rain god; while the ear of corn was widely known in the ancient Near East as the attribute of fertility deities. But for Macrobius all of these were features of the Sun god. Hajjar saw fit to call Macrobius' method un syncrétisme aveugle. In the relevant section of the Saturnalia Macrobius identified the Sun god successively with Apollo (I, 17), Liber (18), Mars and Mercury (19), Asclepius, Hercules, Salus, Serapis (20), Adonis, Attis, Osiris and Horus (21), and a host of other divinities.

The iconography of the Orientals frequently remained as inscrutable as their writing systems. This problem is not the reserve exclusively of Egyptians or Syrians. Within the realm of art we may also apply the same pattern to the Jews, even though their culture was, at least in principle, aniconic. According to a popular version which gained currency in intellectual circles as well, the Jews were said to venerate a golden asinine head as the most holy object of their religion, and kept it hidden in the inaccessible precinct (the Holy of Holies) of their Temple in Jerusalem. The most interesting passage referring to the golden asinine head can be found in the apologetical text by Josephus Flavius, contra Apionem (II, 80), a quotation drawn from Apion's Aegytiaca:

\[ \text{in hoc enim sacramento Apion praesumpsit edicere asini caput collocasse ludaeos et eum colere ac dignum facere tanta religione, et hoc affirmat fuisse depalatum, dum Antiochus Epiphanes expoliasset templum et illud caput inventum ex auro compositum multis pecuniis dignum} \]

"Within this sanctuary Apion has the effrontery to assert that the Jews kept an ass's head, worshipping that animal and deeming it worthy of the deepest reverence; the fact was disclosed, he maintains, on the occasion of the spoliation of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, when the head, made of gold and worth a high price, was discovered" [translated by H.S.J. Thackeray].

Even a superficial review of the Classical authors concerned is enough to demonstrate convincingly that all the clues converge in late Ptolemaic and early Imperial Alexandria. In that period Alexandria emerged as the intellectual hub of Greek and Roman anti-Semitism. Yoyotte has satisfactorily proved this in his

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admirable paper "L'Égypte ancienne et les origines de l'anti-judaïsme". The question arises whether Manetho may be regarded as the oldest source of the anti-Jewish accounts - indeed, of all anti-Semitic literature in the Greek tradition. It seems that both on the philological as well as historical grounds we can speculate that the Manethonian source was a demotic or hieroglyphic text or texts from the 8th - 7th centuries B.C. Cognizance of this the intellectuals of Alexandria inherited from their Egyptian forbears; and through the mediation of the former it came to be widely accepted in the Pagan Graeco-Roman learned circles, if we are to judge by the number of often quite outstanding names associated with it.

Even this modest and fairly random selection from the range of Oriental art descriptions manifests several component parts which are also to be found in the descriptions of the peoples of the Orient as compiled by Classical authors. These characteristic features, which comprise as it were a speculum of the popular image of the Oriental, are also reflections of the relations between the peoples of East and West during the Graeco-Roman period. Stephanie West has described that stereotypical counterfeitas "the Hellenic view of the Orient as characterized by luxury, decadence, weakness, lack of restraint, cruelty and treachery".

According to the testimony in the fictitious letter of Hadrian, which was in fact an invective fabricated by the author of Historia Augusta, the Egyptians were the most vain, harmful and insolent of all nations. They were light-minded, greedy for any novelty, cocksure, arrogant and totally mad (Quadr. Tyr. 7, 4 - 8, 10).

Just as devastating a characteristic of the Syrians can be found in the History by Herodian, himself a Greek brought up in an Oriental milieu (II, 7, 9-10):

φύσει δὲ κύριφον τὸ Σύρων ἔθνος, ἐξ κανονομίας τε τῶν καθεστηκότων ἐπιτήδειον... φιλέορτοι δὲ φύσει Σύροι; ἦν μῶλιστα οἱ τήν ἄντικχειαν κατοικοῦντες, ...σχεδὸν παρὰ πάντα τὸν ἐνιαυτὸν ἐφορτάζοντοι ...

"The Syrian nation is by nature light-minded and always ready for subversive activities in its eagerness for change ... they have an inborn passion for feasting and easy living; this is true particularly of the Antiochians, who revel all year long ..."

Herodian went as far as to touch up the highlights of disgrace in his portrait of Oriental luxury and corruption by contrasting it with the moral nobility and physical vigour of the peoples of the North, all soldiers born (Herod. II, 9, 10). By this antithesis he succeeded in stressing the physical and mental degeneracy of the Syrians. Herodian’s anti-Syrian feelings are even better visible in his portrait of Heliogabalus, which constitutes a sequence extended beyond all limits which may seem justified in a purported historical narrative. The reader may easily notice the individual perverse pleasure he draws from the running up of beefy descriptions of Heliogabalus’ extravagancies in dress and behaviour, his religious fanaticism, his

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8 Ibid.
9 A private letter.
10 See also: Aem. 22. 1 - 3; Quadr. Tyr. 8. 5.
reprensible religious practices, his sexual intemperance and mental disorder (Elag. V, 5, 3 - 6, 10). The account of mascara, painted eyelids and rouged cheeks on an otherwise naturally young and vigorous face - a detail shocking for the Romans - makes for a cadence in this protractedly vituperative characteristic of the Emperor.

Apuleius has preserved a caricature counterfeit of the priests of the Syrian Goddess - as greedy, deceitful, importunate and licentious beggars (Met. 8, 24, 2). The appearance of their aged leader with a hairstyle rather like the coat of ashaggy dog is by no means any better than that of his young, stupid and vulgar Syrian followers (Met. 8, 26). Eroticism is another element of the popular image of the Orientals, and it is particularly prominent in Apuleius’ jibe. It served as a more or less obligatory component of the popular image of the Oriental, whether Semitic or African, and it had always been present in the Greek writings. The subject has also influenced the Oriental art description as attested by a series of pictures of divinities *cum pene erecto*, as for example the Egyptian Osiris (Plut. de Iside 18; ibid. 51), Chnum (Diod. I, 88) or a “Syrian Bes” in the temple of Atargatis in Hierapolis (de Dea Syria 16).

While speaking of Apuleius and his vitriolic characteristic of the Orientals it might be noteworthy to add that the language of the immortal invective has always loved comparisons with the animal kingdom, as is illustrated by the following colourful passage of a Pagan scurrility quoted by Origen (C.Cels. IV,23):

“the race of Jews and Christians ... cluster like bats or ants coming out of a nest, or frogs holding council round a marsh or worms assembling in some filthy corner ...”\(^{11}\)

In both Herodian’s and Apuleius’ tableaux Oriental music can be heard played on exotic instruments. It is music performed in a religious trance, and received by Westerners as an irritating stridor and noise, as attested to by both Greek and Latin writers (Herod. Elag. V, 5, 4).

The Oriental response whether from Semite or African, was tit for tat. The Western onslaught had again and again assailed a variety of different and sometimes impregnable barriers of language, religion, mentality, local customs, meeting not infrequently with a backlash of open hostility or only superficially veiled reluctance.

So how did the East see the Greeks? Herodotus observed that the Egyptians kept the ancestral laws adding none other (II,79), that they avoided the use of Greek customs of all other men (II,9), and called barbarians all those who could not speak their language (II,159). Dio Chrysostomos regarded the whole of Egypt as a mere “appendage” (προσθήκη) of the Greek metropolis, Alexandria (Or. XXXII 36). The Egyptians, who called the city *Rhakote*, took a diametrically opposite attitude towards the same problem. The author of a text which was already popular in Antiquity judging by its Greek translation, *The Oracle of the*

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Potter, an Egyptian Pagan apocalypse, expressed this attitude in his awesome language: “Agathos Daimon will abandon the city ... it will be deserted, that city of foreigners dwelling in Egypt will disappear like leaves falling from a tree in autumn. And the city of the belt-wearers [sc. the Greeks] will be deserted... on account of the impieties they have committed”\(^\text{12}\).

One can hardly refrain here from drawing a comparison with the vision of the destruction of Rome as revealed to St. John (Rev. 18: 6 ff.). H. Fuchs gives an expressive account of it: “Da erscheint das römische Kaiserreich in der Gestalt des altorientalischen Chaosstieres als ein siebenköpfiges Ungeheuer, das aus dem Meere aufsteigt”\(^\text{13}\). Rome is visualized as a den of luxury and vice, as the Harlot clad in purple, gold, and pearls sitting astride the Beast. This image contains all the ingredients of the popular view of the Orient current in the West, as already quoted. One might ask the question whether it is the Orient observing itself in the mirrors of the West, or the Occident viewing its own reflection in the glass held up for it by the East. The vision of the Apocalypse has a long tradition in Jewish literature, going back to an original source in the Book of Daniel (7-8) in which, significantly for this paper, after the first three beasts have been annihilitated, a fourth appears, the most terrible of all:

\[
\text{διαφθείροντας πάντα καὶ ὑπερφόβου καὶ οἱ ὄνυχες αὐτοῦ σιδηροὶ καὶ οἱ ὄνυχες αὐτοῦ χαλκοὶ κατεσθίοντες πάντας κυκλόθεν καὶ καταποτώντες τοὺς ποσὶ}
\]

“all-destroying, terrible, with teeth of iron and claws of bronze; it devours all within reach and tramples everything underfoot”.

This fourth beast represents the Greeks and their kingdoms in the Hellenistic period. The text was probably composed in the years immediately after the Jews’ confrontation with Antiochus IV Epiphanes, some time around 160 B.C.

Returning to Egypt one can notice that Greek papyri describe Egyptian priests as ἀγρόμματοι, “unlettered”. In his fascinating book, *The Egyptian Hermes*, Fowden comments on this fact in the following way: “The priesthood in particular, virtually undiluted as it was by Greek blood, remained deeply absorbed in its own tradition”\(^\text{14}\). One has the impression that this state of affairs in theocratic milieu closed off from the exterior world was later passed on in bequest to the Christian monks of Egypt. Rufinus mentioned that the monasteries had to supply interpreters for visitors who knew no Coptic (Hist. monach. 7)\(^\text{15}\). MacMullen provides a very apposite comment: “As Syrian monks generally used their mother


\(^13\) H. Fuchs, *Der geistige Widerstand gegen Rom*, Berlin 1938, p. 20.

\(^14\) Fowden, op. cit., p. 15.

tongue, not Greek, so Egyptian monks used Coptic. People of the upper classes made up a minority in the monasteries, occasionally an isolated Greek-speaking enclave, while on the other hand St. Anthony, the real founder of monasticism, and Pachomius its legislator, spoke only Coptic. The majority of the provincial Syrian and Palestinian Christians spoke a “rustic vernacular”, as Millar puts it. For many centuries that dialect - Syriac - made do without its own system of scripture. Hunt describes a routine way of communicating the liturgical readings and sermons during religious celebrations in the Church of Jerusalem: “The Jerusalem services witnessed by Egeria were conducted in Greek, which was interpreted, for the benefit of the main body of the congregation, into what she calls ‘Syriac’, i.e. the local Aramaic dialect; while for those who knew only Latin, there were bi-lingual brethren on hand (fratres et sorores grecolatini) to translate for them.” The reasons for this were palpably clear. The majority of the Christian population in Syria and Palestine, coming from the countryside, spoke the already quoted “rustic vernacular” - Syriac. Hunt points out a fact of signal importance, that the overwhelming majority of the pilgrims visiting the Holy Land came from the depths of Asia beyond the Imperial borders, where individuals with a knowledge of Greek were very few and far between.

No wonder, then, that in a world in which permanent, impenetrable language barriers persisted for many centuries radicals would appear and insist on their separate linguistic, national, and religious identity. They took a hostile attitude to Hellenism. They included writers, priests both Pagan and Christian, monks, and ordinary people. The already cited Oracle of the Potter was written by an Egyptian Pagan, but it is marked with the same strains as those distinctly audible much later in the writings of St. Ephraem of Edessa, or Tatian the Gnostic, who was also Syrian by origin. Proud of his native Syrian Christianity which spoke the Messiah’s language, Ephraem warns his flock, “Blessed is the one who has never tasted the poison of the wisdom of the Greeks” (de fide, CSCO 154: 7), and somewhat later (154: 268) employs even stronger phraseology: “The accursed dialectic is vermin from the Greeks”. “We have renounced your wisdom”, Tatian would write, thereby radically rejecting Hellenism in its entirety (Or.I). “We bid farewell to ... the idle talk of the Athenians. I embraced our barbaric philosophy. I began to show how this was more ancient than your institutions [viz. the Graeco-Roman]”, he would pursue the motif in another work (Or.35). The same words had been used three hundred years earlier by an anonymous Egyptian author: “All the Greeks have is empty speech”. Such texts manifest a radical abjuration of Greek culture. Like the different colours in the spectrum, at this point the

16 MacMullen, p. 8.
19 Ibid.
20 Friend, pp. 284 f.
21 Fowden, p. 37, CH XVI.
literatures of the diverse languages and religions of the East merge into a homogeneous, translucent beam of light. The same is said by the Egyptian Pagan as by the orthodox Syrian Christian, the Syrian Gnostic, and the anonymous Jewish author of the *Sybiline Oracles*. Incidentally, it should be borne in mind that both Ephraem and the Syrian Gnostic Bardesanes, who preceded him by a century and a half, had an excellent knowledge of the Greek language and literature. Consequently in both cases the reasons for the rejection of Hellenism must have gone much deeper than just simple ignorance of the language. One can hardly refrain from making the following observation. If similar sentiments towards the Graeco-Roman West were shared by the Egyptian Pagan, the Syrian Gnostic whether of the Pagan or Christian orientation, the Orthodox Jew, and the Christian saint whether Syrian or Egyptian, the inevitable conclusion must be that the Christian repudiation of Rome, or in general of all that was Helleno-Roman in the East, could not have had sufficient grounds merely in the specific attributes of the new religion, just as the Jewish antagonism towards Rome could not have stemmed solely from the characteristic features of Judaism. Undeniably what unites all of these writers is their reaction to the brute force employed by the invader, whether Macedonian or Roman, but also their fundamental sense of alienation with respect to the world of the Graeco-Roman West.

This *geistige Widerstand gegen Rom*, as put by H. Fuchs, could also take the shape of forgery and imposture, fabrication and distortion, as widely claimed of the religiously and patriotically inspired Jewish writers, not excluding personalities as prominent as Philo of Alexandria or Josephus Flavius. Artapanos, for example, “discovered” that Moses and Musaios were one and the same person. Others were excessively fond of quoting fake verses by Homer, Hesiod and Linos, or other words of admiration for Mosaic monotheism allegedly expressed in forged writings by Pythagoras, Aeschylus, Sophocles or Diphilos. Aristobulus held that Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato came to possess a pre-Alexandrian translation of the Pentateuch, and consequently that the great men of the Classical literatures were no more than plagiarists of Moses. Greek Jewish apologists maintained that the *Sybiline Oracles*, composed in hexameter, made up a model for the Homeric verse. The Hebrew poetics, which we know fairly well, is in fact utterly alien to the Greek quantity verse, its metric structure and accentuation. The late chronology of the *Sybiline Oracles*, which according to Speyer “waren ein Kampfmittel der östlichen Welt, besonders der Juden, gegen Rom”\(^2\), is another matter. The *Oracula Sibyllina* express a hope that the political status quo will change in favour of a liberation from under the foreign yoke, or even of an ultimate triumph of East over West (*Orac. Sibyll. 3,350-361*). Again the self-same points may be encountered in writings by scions speaking for the various nations of the ancient Orient: in the *Books of Daniel* and *Esdras*, in the Iranian prophecy


\(^{23}\) Ibid. p. 165.
of Hystaspes preserved in Lactantius\textsuperscript{24}, and also in the already - quoted Oracle of the Potter or Corpus Hermeticum XVI. All of them see the newcomers from the West, whether Roman or Greek, as invaders, cruel tyrants, avaricious and evil. All the texts bear an overt desire for vengeance (Orac. Sybhill. 3, 350 ff.):

\begin{quote}
\text{"thrice as much as Rome hath taken from Asia in tribute shall Asia take back from Rome, and the pernicious arrogance of Rome shall bring vengeance on her. Twenty times as many Italians shall labour as miserable slaves in the East as there have been Asians enthralled in Italy; they shall pay a hundredfold for everything".}
\end{quote}

Occasionally it happened that what was usually a peaceful rivalry transformed into bloody confrontation, as evidenced by the series of Jewish Wars; the endemic guerilla war going on in Upper Egypt against the Macedonians, and against the Romans in the Delta; by the Syrian separatism which erupted violently during the civil wars at the end of the 2nd century A.D.; or by Zenobia’s ephemeral Oriental principality. I have focused attention chiefly on the Graeco-Oriental relations as presented from the aspect of writings on art, language, and religion. These matters were inevitably connected with the context of confrontation in the political dimension. This is a separate issue, the importance of which should be noted at least by a brief remark. The material assembled in the Sibyline Oracles is related directly to the Rebellion of the Machabees; and in part to the wars of Mithridates VI against Rome; the vision of Daniel has associations with the conflict between the Jews and Antiochus IV Epiphanes; while The Oracle of the Potter, which made such a name for itself under the Empire, is connected with the guerilla warfare in Upper Egypt in the 3rd and 2nd century B.C. The political setting for these texts is fairly patent.

Naturally it was not art, from which we started this review of the materials available, that is of key importance in the history of relations between East and West, but primarily language and religion, the fundamental components of national identity. Art has its meaning, of course, particularly as the art of the Orient is chiefly religious art. Hence, as religious motifs are virtually the only subject in the Greek literary description of Oriental art, these descriptions may be viewed against a general religious background. In the discussion of the alleged asinine cult among the Jews and of the Syrian solar deities - two clear cut causes of alienation on the part of the Greeks and Romans - we have already touched upon the problems evoked by religion. Milne calls religion “the best test” by which it is possible to

\textsuperscript{24} Fuch s. Anm. 19, p. 32.
show quite clearly that in Egypt "the scheme of Hellenization had failed"\textsuperscript{25}. In Egypt’s confrontation with Hellenism, he continues, the principle of "passive resistance had been effectual"\textsuperscript{26}. Fowden has given a concise definition of the nature of relations between the native Egyptians and the Greek inhabitants of Egypt: "the two cultures often contrived...to exist in contiguous isolation"\textsuperscript{27}. This picture is confirmed by other, more recent research\textsuperscript{28}. The same may be said in the most general terms of the outcome of the confrontation between Hellenism and Judaism in the religious dimension.

One of the essentially significant attributes of the presented material is its chronological, geographic, and linguistic dispersion. However, what is most important is the fact that this material may still be grouped as a distinct category. For example, we have a Greek letter from the 2nd century A.D. which shows that a mother could not understand what her son had written to her; she could neither read it herself, nor understand it when it was read out to her. The letter came from 2nd-century imperial Egypt\textsuperscript{29}. We know that a bishop’s Greek sermons were not understood by his congregation (this was in 4-5th-century Syria)\textsuperscript{30}. We are also told that in Upper Egypt a monk had to communicate with his superior through the services of an interpreter\textsuperscript{31}. This is also noted for Syria. The basic problem - notwithstanding the diversity of countries, languages, and religions - is the same: communication barriers. Although centuries had passed, a considerable part of the Orientals never learned Greek sufficiently, either to speak or to write it adequately. This is evidence of a passive resistance in the Oriental world against Hellenism. The Orient was quite successful in isolating the Greeks off into separate enclaves - even if those Hellenist enclaves were big, as was the case with Alexandria or Antioch, and tried to function as nurseries fostering the cult of Classicism in its pure form until the very end of Antiquity, as was the case in Antioch.

The question thus arises how was it possible that in the West under Roman rule what persisted were the Romance languages and a permanent contribution of Latinity to culture; whereas Hellenism, which had enjoyed three centuries of political and cultural predominance in the East, and was buttressed by the Empire for a further five centuries, failed to leave any enduring traces whatsoever, and moreover was hastily rejected upon the demise of the Imperial bureaucracy and military dominance in Syria, the Holy Land, and Egypt. What was to be observed in the ordinary people was an attitude of passive resistance, and a deliberate rejection of Hellenism on ideological grounds by the educated classes. It is even

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} Fowden, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{29} Bagnall, \textit{Egypt}, p. 234.
\textsuperscript{30} Mullen, n.9, p. 5; S. Silvae peregrinatio 47 (CSEL XXXIX).
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ep. Amm. 4-7}, 17, 28-29; Bagnall, \textit{Egypt...}, p. 245.
possible to pinpoint organized centres of opposition to Classicism. Their practitioners were the Pagan Egyptian priests, and the Coptic and Syrian monks. Written sources may sometimes lead astray into the drawing of erroneous conclusions. The fact that the Syrians only started to use written records in the early 3rd century A.D. does not mean that that was when they first started using spoken speech. They had been exercising their vocal chords for many centuries before. The same may be said of Egypt in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. The documentary evidence available consists of a handful of demotic texts, what is more copies of much older originals - side by side with a substantial accumulation of Greek papyri. It might seem that Egypt had been Hellenized, but in fact according to a calculation presented by R. Bagnall in his book, “Egypt in Late Antiquity”, only 20% of the population of Egypt spoke Greek. In Upper Egypt, for all intents and purposes, Greek was hardly ever more widely spoken. After centuries of silence as regards the written sources in Egyptian, we are suddenly faced with a flourishing literature in the Egyptian language, known as Coptic literature. It was a development also achieved at the expense of Greek. The Council of Chalcedon and the Coptic Schism were symptoms of divisions not only in theology, but also in language and culture, one of the signs of an anti-Greek reaction in Egypt.

I would not like to be understood as either for or against Classicism; nor conversely - for or against Orientalism. It is just that what we observe is a body of materials which depict two mutually exclusive attitudes: on the one hand a cult of Hellenism, with a far-reaching fastidiousness over purity as patent in some of the writers of the Neo-Hellenic renaissance of the period under the Antonines and Severi; and on the other an utter rejection of Hellenism, manifested in texts as different as The Oracle of the Potter and St. Ephraem’s de fide.

The material presented above has been sifted and selected from its huge context of both written and archaeological sources for Graeco-Oriental relations. One should never forget about the wide range of this perspective. Its huge size is shown in Cumont’s Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain, a book still unsurpassed by later work. The syncretic tendencies have been described in Morenz’ Die Begegnung Europas mit Ägypten. Bowersock in Hellenism in Late Antiquity, and Bidez in Vie de Porphyre, address the phenomenon of Syrian Neo-Platonism, the Helleno-Oriental religion of the intellectuals. Turcan’s Les cultes orientaux dans le monde romain is a contemporary publication parallel to the already-mentioned Cumont. There are numerous monographs and papers on the subject of Orientalism and Orientalization in the culture of the West. In this paper I have concentrated only on a selected body of testimonials picked out of the vast field of Greek-Oriental relations. The full picture is, of course, highly complex. The cited work by Turcan, Bowersock, Cumont, and Bidez illustrates that vastness, and its polymorphous nature.