

## Nabonidus, King of Babylon

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It may seem anomalous to devote this column, which should contain the portrait of someone who contributed to the issue's main topic, to the last Neo-Babylonian king, having at disposal a considerable number of renowned scholars, explorers, philologists, and archaeologists who could well have deserved this attention: Pietro Della Valle,<sup>1</sup> Carsten Niebuhr,<sup>2</sup> Georg Friedrich Grotefend,<sup>3</sup> Paul-Émile Botta,<sup>4</sup>



William Blake (1757-1827), *Nebuchadnezzar* (Tate impression), ca 1795-1805. Color print, ink and watercolor on paper (543 x 725 mm; frame: 661 x 829 x 50 mm). © Tate Gallery, London 2014 (Reference N05059).

Austen Henry Layard,<sup>5</sup> Robert Koldewey,<sup>6</sup> and Ernest Renan<sup>7</sup> are just some of the many possible illustrious candidates. There is basically one reason for the choice of Nabonidus: he is one of the very few characters involved with cultural heritage as both agent and object. As agent, he has been considered the first archaeologist ever, and—even if his description as “archaeologist” may be extreme—his use of

the past for ideological purposes is undeniable; as object, he—or rather his acts, attitudes, and dispositions—were reinterpreted and transmitted to modern times through different literary testimonies.

**Keywords:** Nabonidus; Neo-Babylonian Dynasty; Biblical and Parabiblical Literature; Greek Historians; Archaeology; Ancient Near East in Modern Culture

### Nabonidus and the Neo-Babylonian Dynasty

Before turning to these testimonies, a short history of his reign and that of his predecessors is necessary. It must be kept in mind that this brief historical introduction does not aim to evaluate the historical character of Nabonidus, nor to shed new light on the evidence we already have.<sup>8</sup> There are many open questions about his reign and his personality which will not be discussed here, because they are beyond the scope of this paper.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire is conventionally understood to begin with King Nabopolassar (Akkad. *Nabû-apla-ušur*), who in 612 BC was able to take Nineveh, thus inheriting a considerable part of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. His son Nebuchadnezzar (or Nebuchadrezzar; Akkad. *Nabû-kudurri-ušur*) expanded the reign and affirmed his control over the Levant in its entirety: in Jewish tradition, this monarch became famous for the siege and capture of Jerusalem in 587 BC, and for the ensuing deportation of the city's ruling class (see e.g. Sack 53-59).

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son Evil-Merodach (Akkad. *Amēl- or Awīl-Marduk*), who was murdered after only two years of reign by his brother-in-law Neriglissar (Akkad. *Nergal-šarra-ušur*).

Upon the latter's death, in 556 BC, his very young and weak son Lābāši-Marduk became the victim of a conspiracy after just a few months of rule. One of the conspirators, Nabonidus (Akkad. *Nabû-na'id*), ascended to the throne, apparently with no claim to legitimacy. Despite a number of arguments to the contrary (see e.g. Dougherty 51-63; Mayer), Nabonidus' kinship with the Babylonian royal line remains far from proven and does not in fact seem to be likely (see Beaulieu, *The Reign* 67-86). Nabonidus' father was a certain Nabû-balāṣu-iqbi, otherwise unknown to historical sources (68);<sup>9</sup> his mother, who was far more relevant for Nabonidus' career, was Adda-guppi, probably an Aramaean priestess from Harran, and specifically a devotee of the moon god Sin. Adda-guppi claimed, in her well-known "autobiographical" inscription that was actually promoted by her son after her death,<sup>10</sup> to have introduced her son to the court (no mention is made of her husband). If she had, as claimed, been born under the last major Assyrian King Ashurbanipal, she was ninety-five years of age when her son became ruler, and it is therefore likely that Nabonidus himself was rather advanced in years at the time of his accession to the throne.

Nabonidus is famous for his attempts to bolster the cult of the moon god Sin to the

detriment of Marduk, the main deity of Babylon, and for his extended stay in the Arabian oasis of Tayma<sup>11</sup> following a military campaign to Lebanon, Transjordan, and Arabia.

The reasons for his voluntary "exile"—strategic, religious, economic, or possibly a mixture of all these explanations—have been long debated, but ultimately remain unclear.

Somewhat clearer are the consequences that such a prolonged absence from the Babylonian capital entailed. In the first place, Nabonidus aroused the hostility of the priests of Marduk and the Babylonian intellectual milieu, who kept repeating sharp criticisms of his absence, his malfeasance, and his "impiety" (in reference to the loss of centrality of the Babylonian god Marduk) in a remaining literary document concerning his reign known as *Verse Account*.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, he was forced to appoint a substitute in Babylon; his choice fell upon his son Belshazzar (Akkad. *Bēl-šarra-ušur*), who became governor of Babylon and co-regent at the same time (the Belshazzar of the Book of Daniel).

On October 12th, 539 BC, Babylon was conquered by Persian troops, apparently without any resistance. Cyrus entered the city seventeen days later, putting an end to the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and to Nabonidus' reign. Belshazzar was possibly

killed,<sup>13</sup> while Nabonidus, no more in Tayma, apparently escaped death.<sup>14</sup>

### The Archaeologist/Antiquarian

As stressed by Beaulieu (*The Reign* 139-43), Nabonidus is the only Neo-Babylonian monarch who makes references in his inscriptions to both Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs, tracing an ideal royal line in which some kings are overlooked. This practice testifies to his willingness to interpret the past through a historical perspective, and to use it for political purposes. His interest in the past is also manifested by the excavations he undertook in several cities, from Ur to Larsa, and to Sippar and Harran, in order to restore/rebuild temples. It is true that other kings before him reported identifying previous building phases in temples, and mentioned the kings involved in them—but his descriptions are far more accurate and complete, and in some cases he even tries to date the monarchs who reigned before him and whose buildings and artefacts he unearthed in his excavations.

In nineteenth century literature, Nabonidus' interest for archaeology was overestimated: depicted as completely absorbed in his diggings and antiquarian studies, he with this attitude was nearly accused of facilitating the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus (Hommel 779). This gro-

tesque picture of the king was immortalized in a movie which is a milestone of the silent era, David Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916). The main character during the fall of Babylon is Belshazzar, while Nabonidus is shown announcing the discovery of the foundation stone of King Narām-Sîn (third millennium BC). Griffith (1875-1948), who depicted Belshazzar in an unusually positive way, as the champion of tolerance, had studied the most recent discoveries about Babylonian civilization before making this episode of his movie, and this was evidently the picture of Nabonidus he got from his readings.<sup>15</sup>

This image of Nabonidus as Romantic antiquarian was corrected by Goossens in 1948. Goossens rightly pointed out that the finding of the oldest foundations was necessary in order to properly rebuild the temples, and that Nabonidus was more engaged than his predecessors because he was very religious. However, *pietas* alone is hardly responsible for the accurateness and the interest in the past shown by the king, and for his archaeological activity, which were considered almost maniacal in the nineteenth century<sup>16</sup> and are still described as “bordered on the obsessive” (Oates 131). Nabonidus' concerns about the past, his predecessors, and the restoration of temples and cultic traditions certainly had religious

motivation;<sup>17</sup> but they were also related to a desire to legitimate his rule, and to build his authority upon the past, as suggested by many scholars (cp. e.g. Beaulieu, *The Reign* 138-43; Roaf; Garrison 46, with further literature).

Moreover, historical interest is not absent from Nabonidus' reports, as admitted also by Goossens. In this context, it may be useful to have a look at some of Nabonidus' reports on his excavations, which could have been taken, *mutatis mutandis*, from a nineteenth century archaeological report. The episode of Narām-Sîn quoted in *Intolerance* is taken from an inscription of Nabonidus, possibly known by Griffith through the summary of Morris Jastrow (Drew 43; Jastrow 295; for the text, see now Schaudig, *Die Inschriften* 422, 438). In this text, Nabonidus tries to date the foundations of the temple of the sun god in Sippar, which were laid by king Narām-Sîn who he thought reigned 3,200 years before him. That timespan is overestimated, since Narām-Sîn ruled in the twenty-third century BC (according to the middle chronology), and he was not the son of Sargon of Akkad, as stated by Nabonidus, but rather his grandson. However, this effort of dating a predecessor is uncommon for his time, and it does not seem to be connected with a religious explanation.

In another report, Nabonidus narrates that he assembled many workers (the competence of his craftsmanship is stressed in several passages) in order to locate the foundations of the E'ulmaš Temple in Akkad. The efforts of his predecessor were apparently unfruitful,<sup>18</sup> as were his own efforts, at least for three years—but then (Nabonidus speaks in first person):

(The craftsmen) spoke to me: “We have been looking for the foundation, but we have not found it. But there has been a downpour of rain and we have seen (that) it has made a hole.” I spoke to them as follows: “Dig in this hole until you have found the foundation there!” They dug in this hole and they certainly found the foundation of the E'ulmaš (laid) by Narām-Sîn [...] and they reported it to me. My heart rejoiced and my face shone [...]. (2.14 II: Schaudig, *Die Inschriften* 456 (Akkadian text), 464 (German translation); translation by Schaudig, “The Restoration” 160-61)

Another famous episode relates that he found a statue of Sargon<sup>19</sup> during the restoration of the Ebabbar temple in Sippar. The head was broken, but

In order to revere the gods and to show respect to kinship, he (scil. Nabonidus) summoned skilled craftsmen, renovat-

ed the head of this statuette, and restored its face. (Royal Chronicle III-IV<sup>20</sup>: Schaudig, *Die Inschriften* 592, 594; translation by Schaudig, “The Restoration” 158)

Besides the fact that the “respect to kingship” seems to be, once again, associated with a political interest in the past, this second text is among the most ancient ones that relate the restoration of an archaeological artifact by specialized craftsmen (Podany 13).

Nabonidus had no successors, and he did not establish any archaeological school, but his methods were not significantly different from the ones used in archaeology for centuries to come and until some decades ago. Moreover, the two examples quoted above seem to denote a certain degree of personal involvement. Of course, we are far from Fabrizio Del Don-go's rapture for the discovery of a bust of Emperor Tiberius in Miseno (Stendhal, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, chapitre 7), and also far from the absent-minded antiquarian of Romantic origin. However, Nabonidus' dramatic report about the discovery of the foundation of Narām-Sîn is hardly the result of mere religious concern, which could have been expressed in a shorter and less theatrical way. The king seems to have been genuinely concerned and in-

terested in his discoveries, and tried to create a bridge with the past.<sup>21</sup>

One may argue, of course, that his excavations were not archaeological (Schaudig, “The Restoration” 155-61; “Nabonid”). However, a purely academic interest in archaeology is a recent phenomenon, and it is even questionable if archaeology may be free from political and religious motivations.<sup>22</sup> Also the idea that his relation with history is not historical<sup>23</sup> is rather problematic because we are not dealing with a modern scholar. The idea that past peoples had different cultures, and were not “just like us” ultimately goes back to the Renaissance. Before the Renaissance, no break was perceived between the ancient world and the modern one.<sup>24</sup> Nabonidus could see no break between Sargon, Nebuchadnezzar, and himself—quite the contrary, he considered himself their heir. If it is true that the modern study of the past begins with the Renaissance, and modern archaeology much later, it would be unfair to deny that the last Neo-Babylonian king did have a historical perspective, as well as some perception of the importance that cultural traditions may have for the construction of a political identity—and for legitimating someone's own power, an idea by no means out of fashion.

Nabonidus likely deserves the place Paul Bahn (1-2) and Alain Schnapp (13-18) gave

him, at the very beginning of *The Cambridge History of Archaeology*, and in the first pages of *La conquête du passé*, respectively. Actually, his name is nowadays known, apart from a restricted group of Assyriologists, mainly for his antiquarian and archaeological interests. However, his most significant legacy in modern culture is somewhat hidden under a name that is not his own, but rather the name of his illustrious predecessor: Nebuchadnezzar, whom he apparently admired. Some ancient writers maintained memory of the king, even if they did not always record his name. However, at a certain point some narratives and motifs with Nabonidus as the main character started circulating with Nebuchadnezzar as protagonist. This is likely due to the fact that these stories were transmitted by Jewish communities, and if Nebuchadnezzar was well known to the Jews as the destroyer of Jerusalem and the source of Jewish exile in Babylon, Nabonidus was not, since he was irrelevant for the history of Judah.

#### Ailing Kings and Misplaced Names

Greek historians seem to have had at least partial memory of the king, even if they do not mention him by name. He and his son are possibly hidden behind the name Labynetos in Herodotus' *Histories* (I, 74, 77, 188; fifth century BC), and while in Cy-

*ropaedia* by Xenophon (fifth-fourth century BC) the kings who sat on the Babylonian throne before its fall are anonymous, they are two and were said to be father and son.<sup>25</sup>

In Mesopotamia itself, king Nabonidus was definitely still remembered: after the death of Cambyses (522 BC), two usurpers took the programmatical name of Nebuchadnezzar (III and IV), both pretending to be Nabonidus' sons. Even in Hellenistic Mesopotamia the memory of the king lived on: on the one hand, exponents of the clerical milieu of Babylon were still writing against him at the end of the fourth century BC (*Dynastic Prophecy*: see Grayson, *Historical-Literary Texts* 24-37); on the other hand, the historian Berossos—whose account is preserved in works of Eusebius (third to fourth century AD) and Josephus (first century AD)—and who was active in Babylonia between the fourth and the third century BC, provides the correct order of all the monarchs in the Neo-Babylonian dynasty.

The testimony of Josephus is quite interesting, because it reflects the problems that this Jewish historian of the Flavian era had to face in describing the fall of Babylon. In his *Contra Apionem* (I, 20), he quotes Berossus, and states that after the murder of Lābāši-Marduk, the kingship was conferred to Nabonidus (for more de-

tails, see Grassi 197-98). In his *Jewish Antiquities*, on the other hand, he affirms that after Lābāši-Marduk, Belshazzar “who was called Naboandelos<sup>26</sup> by the Babylonians” (X, 1) took the throne and was defeated after seventeen years of reign (the number of years of Nabonidus' kingship). The differences between the two versions of Josephus need explanation.

Josephus evidently had Berossus before him; but he must have had the Bible as well, particularly the Book of Daniel. It is actually the Bible—and a set of biblical and parabiblical motifs emanating from the Jewish communities—that conditioned later traditions and perceptions about the fall of Babylon, as well as our own perception. If asked who was the king of Babylon during the fall of the city, our memory would probably recall the scene of Belshazzar's feast, perhaps through Rembrandt's brush. This happens because in the Bible, no mention is made of Nabonidus, and the last king of Babylon here is Belshazzar, who was historically never a king, but just a crown prince. However, the situation of co-regency of Nabonidus and his son may well have created ambiguity about the name(s) of the king(s) reigning over Babylon immediately before its fall, both among the Greek historians and in the Bible.<sup>27</sup>

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Josephus did his best to reconcile the two testimonies, and considered Belshazzar the alias of Nabonidus. The name Belshazzar was the first of Nabonidus' literary aliases: once the historical memory of the Neo-Babylonian Dynasty was completely lost, the aliases became several: in the lists provided by the Byzantine chronographer George Syncellus/Syncellos, the aliases of Nabonidus became three, and none of them is related to the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, but rather to the Median and Achaemenid ruling houses (see Grassi 199).

Not explicitly being mentioned in the Bible, Nabonidus—differently from his son Belshazzar—does not occur in later Jewish traditions. But he was not entirely cancelled out by the biblical author of Daniel, who just provided him with another kind of alias: Nabonidus lies behind the king who in the Bible is said to be the father of Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar.

The tale of Nebuchadnezzar's madness in 4 Dan. is very close to the tale of Nabonidus' disease, as found in some Aramaic fragments from Qumran Cave 4 published in 1956 by Milik, the so-called "4Q Prière de Nabonide," a fragmentary and difficult Jewish narrative text. The similarities with the madness of Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel are striking: both kings are afflicted by a disease for seven years, both of them are in the desert (or at

least, in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, driven out of human society and dwelling with the wild beasts), both of them are aided by a Jew, and both of them are allowed to recover their health by abandoning impious behaviour and praying to the "true" God.<sup>28</sup> Another parallel is the terminology used for the idols described in 5 Dan., during Belshazzar's feast, and in the *Prayer of Nabonidus* (for more details, see Grassi 190-91).

Almost all scholars agree that Nebuchadnezzar's madness is the reinterpretation of Nabonidus' disease;<sup>29</sup> which was not, however, insanity. Even the critical *Verse Account* does not state that Nabonidus was mad, albeit his strange behavior is often stressed. Possibly some aspects of the nature of the king, perceived as odd, and his erratic life (the stay in the desert at Tayma) produced this legend of madness/disease and retirement from the civil world (cp. Beaulieu, "Nabonidus the Mad King" 137-38), a retirement that in the case of the Bible is represented by a king eating "grass as oxen" (4 Dan., 25 and 33; and Nebuchadnezzar is actually disguised as an oxen in the short story *Le taureau blanc* by Voltaire<sup>30</sup>). Another example of the influence of the memory of Nabonidus in the portrait of Nebuchadnezzar resides in the importance accorded to the interpretation of dreams in the two episodes con-

cerning the latter in the Bible (2 and 4 Dan.). In fact, it is known that Nabonidus fostered a great consideration for dreams and that he is "the only Neo-Babylonian ruler who reports dreams in his inscriptions and who claims to have made important decisions based on their ominous content" (Beaulieu, *The Reign* 218). In inscription 13 he pretends to have left Tayma after a nightmare; in inscription 1, after declaring himself "the strong delegate of Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar, my royal predecessors," he reports an interesting dream in which he declares to have seen his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar, whom he asked to relate favorable signs for his accession to the throne (see Beaulieu, *The Reign* 152, 110-12).

Curiously enough, the usurper Nabonidus, who considers himself the true political successor of Nebuchadnezzar, and seeks in this dream "a posthumous confirmation of his rule by his prestigious predecessor" (Beaulieu, *The Reign* 112),<sup>31</sup> is transmitted to later cultural traditions mostly with the name Nebuchadnezzar. It is Nabonidus who ultimately lurks behind the lonely, troubled king errant in the desert, well-known from the Bible, and later on from the color prints by William Blake (see Seymour, "The Artistic Legacy"), and from the third opera—and first masterpiece—of young Verdi.<sup>32</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Pietro Della Valle (1586-1652) traveled for twelve years in Asia (Turkey, Palestine, Persia, India, Oman) during the 17th century. He provided important descriptions and reports of the places he visited, which may be found in his book *Viaggi di Pietro Della Valle il Pellegrino* (cp. Della Valle, with introduction and commentary), published with enormous success mostly after his death. For a short biography, see Micocci.

<sup>2</sup> Carsten Niebuhr (1733-1815) was a German traveler, versed in both languages and sciences (mathematics, astronomy, geography), and known for his participation as cartographer and geographer to the Danish expedition to Arabia of 1761, of which he was the only survivor. For the life and travels of Carsten Niebuhr, see, e.g., Wiesehöfer and Conermann, and particularly Lohmeier in that volume.

<sup>3</sup> Carsten Niebuhr in 1778 produced accurate copies of the trilingual (Old Persian, Elamite, Akkadian) texts of Persepolis, which were used in 1802 by the classical scholar and philologist Georg Friedrich Grotefend (1755-1853) to lay the foundation of the decipherment of cuneiform: by supposing that the inscriptions probably contained some royal names of the Achaemenid dynasty, he was able to identify the names of Darius and Xerxes in the Old Persian texts, as well as some royal titles, and to establish the phonetic values of some signs. In 1835 and again in 1844, the British Orientalist (and army officer) Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1810-1895) copied a long trilingual text, inconveniently positioned on a cliff hanging 122 meters from the ground in Behistun (Iran), and was thus able to provide a translation of the Persian text. Later on, in 1857, Rawlinson himself—together with the Irish reverend and Assyriologist Edward Hincks (1792-1866), the German-French Assyriologist Jules (or Julius) Oppert (1825-1905), and William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) who was far better known as a photography pioneer—took

part in a famous experiment promoted by the Royal Asiatic Society, at the suggestion of Fox Talbot: They were given a copy of an Akkadian inscription and asked to provide a translation. The four translations were essentially similar (the versions of Rawlinson and Hincks were the closest), and Akkadian cuneiform was considered deciphered. See e.g. Bahn 108-09; Larsen, esp. 468-69; Schmitt 722-23.

<sup>4</sup> The French-Italian archaeologist Paul-Émile Botta (born Paolo Emiliano Botta; 1802-1870), son of the historian Carlo Botta, was French consul in Mosul. During his mandate he did excavations in Nineveh (Kuyunjik) and later, with greater success, in Dur Sharrukin (Khorsabad), where Botta located the palace of Sargon II—the first Assyrian palace to be unearthed. The great majority of his finds were sent to Paris where they were displayed for the first time in 1847: the Louvre was the first museum in Europe that displayed Assyrian monuments (see Parrot). For Botta, see Parrot; Larsen, esp. 28-53.

<sup>5</sup> Botta's "heir" and a friend, the English archaeologist and politician Austen Henry Layard (1817-1894), excavated Nimrud and Nineveh where he found the palace of Sennacherib and the famous library of Assurbanipal. For Layard, see Fales and Hickey; Larsen.

<sup>6</sup> The German architect and archaeologist Robert Koldewey (1855-1925) excavated Babylon, and developed modern archaeological methods (in particular, a new method in excavating mud bricks). For Koldewey's excavations, see Seymour, "Robert Koldewey."

<sup>7</sup> The great French writer and Orientalist Ernest Renan (1823-92) has been sharply criticized for his ethnical (and political) theories. However, his work made an important contribution to Oriental studies, and particularly to Semitic epigraphy: In 1867, he presented to the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, of which he was a member, his project aimed at publication of the *Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum* (CIS). On this project of Renan, apparently his favorite one ("De tout ce que j'ai fait, c'est le *Corpus* que j'aime le mieux"), see Dupont-Sommer (the quotation is taken from page 539); on Renan, see recently van Deth.

<sup>8</sup> The bibliography on Nabonidus is endless and cannot be fully cited in this paper. For the history of Nabonidus and his reign, the most important study is Beaulieu, *The Reign*. For a shorter study, see e.g. Beaulieu, "King Nabonidus"; Dandamayev. Still very useful is Dougherty.

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→ <sup>9</sup> Nabonidus has been considered the chief of an Aramaean tribe (Dandamayev), or even a brother or half-brother of Nabopolassar (Mayer)—although there is absolutely no evidence for this.

<sup>10</sup> For this text and its literary genre, see Longman 97-103. Adda-Guppi is considered by Mayer an Assyrian princess, but, as in the case of Nabonidus' father, there is no proof of a royal origin.

<sup>11</sup> For the archival and literary sources about Nabonidus' sojourn in Tayma, see Beaulieu, *The Reign* 149-85. For the recent excavations in Tayma, see e.g. Hausleiter. For the North-Arabian inscriptions of Nabonidus, see Hayajneh; Müller and al-Said, "Nabonid in taymanischen Inschriften"; "Nabonid in thamudischen Inschriften."

<sup>12</sup> The product of the intellectual and the religious milieu, it was written after the fall of Babylon. A real piece of propaganda, it describes the reign of Nabonidus in negative terms, magnifying Cyrus' merits (for the *Verse Account*, see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften* 563-78). For the new theology of Nabonidus and his difficult relationship with the intellectuals, see Beaulieu, "Nabonidus the Mad King."

<sup>13</sup> According to the Bible (5 Dan.), Belshazzar was killed in circumstances which mix up historical events and folktales (see Grassi); we lack any Akkadian source concerning the end of Belshazzar.

<sup>14</sup> Berossos tells us that the king, after surrendering in the siege of Borsippa, was sent into exile in Carmania (cp. Verbrugge and Wickersham, F10b, 61), while the *Chronicle of Nabonidus* or *Nabonidus Chronicle* (a chronographic text, preserved on one tablet, which describes the events of Nabonidus' reign from his accession to the period following the fall of Babylon; for the text, see Grayson, *Chronicles* 104-11) states that he was captured in Babylon. The so-called *Dynastic Prophecy* (II, 20-22) confirms Berossus' statement that Nabonidus was sent into exile (Grayson, *Historical-Literary Texts* 25).

<sup>15</sup> On Griffith's interest in the last discoveries from Babylonia, his readings, and the image of Nabonidus (portrayed by actor Carl Stockdale, 1874-1953) and Belshazzar (portrayed by actor Alfred Paget, 1879-1925) in the movie, see Drew 43-45. The movie, which in its author's aim was a manifest against intolerance, is formed by four episodes: a contemporary story; Jesus' mission; Bartholomew Day; and the fall of Babylon. For this movie, see Drew.

<sup>16</sup> According to Hommel, Nabonidus' archaeological interest conducted him "zu einer wahren Manie" (778).

<sup>17</sup> He also installed his daughter En-nigaldi-nanna as high priestess of the moon god in Ur, a practice well-documented before him, but no more current in his time (Beaulieu, *The Reign* 122-23).

<sup>18</sup> He goes so far as to quote unlikely—and presumably invented—incriptions (cp. Schaudig, "Nabonid" 475-78; "The Restoration" 155) of his predecessors confessing their failure. However, he was apparently also interested in actual ancient inscriptions: quite a few of those were copied during his reign as can be shown by their respective colophons. See recently Bartelmus and Taylor.

<sup>19</sup> At least, a statue that he thought was that of Sargon: Schaudig denies the possibility that it was a statue of Sargon, and he takes this deposit of Sippar as a *pia fraus*, arranged by the priests or the intellectuals of the city ("The Restoration" 158).

<sup>20</sup> Of the four literary texts dealing with Nabonidus' reign (*Nabonidus Chronicle*; *Verse Account*; *Dynastic prophecy*; *Royal Chronicle*), the *Royal Chronicle* is the only one which provides chronological information about the building activities of the king. For this text, see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften* 590-95.

<sup>21</sup> As observed by Schnapp about the restoration of the Ebabbar of Larsa, "Le roi (scil. Nabonide) ne désire pas seulement faire effectuer des recherches pour identifier un lieu hautement chargé de symbolisme, un monument qui atteste de la continuité du pouvoir. Il cherche explicitement à s'installer dans la longue durée et l'expression du temps ici revêt une dimension matérielle. La fouille est nécessaire non seulement pour découvrir le lieu de mémoire, mais aussi et surtout pour le faire fonctionner." (18).

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→ <sup>22</sup> “[...] archaeology is always political. I argue that scholars should not try to deny this fact or obscure it behind a veil of false objectivity.” (McGuire XI). The recent book by McGuire offers further literature and stimulating examples.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. Schaudig, “Nabonid” 493: “Ähnlich, wie die Grabungen Nabonids nicht eigentlich archäologisch sind, ist der Umgang mit der Geschichte nicht eigentlich historisch.”

<sup>24</sup> On the birth of archaeology and perception of the past, see Schnapp. To put it with Panofsky's poetic words: “The Middle Ages had left antiquity unburied and alternately galvanized and exorcised its corpse. The Renaissance stood weeping at its grave and tried to resurrect its soul. And in one fatally auspicious moment it succeeded” (113).

<sup>25</sup> As regards the elder king, the first remarkable detail is that he is said to have led a successful war against Syria and Arabia (*Cyropædia* I, 5, 2), information that well fits with the well-known fact that Nabonidus actually left for a military campaign in 553 BC to Lebanon, Transjordan, and finally Northern Arabia, where he lived for ten years. For Nabonidus and Belshazzar in Herodotus and Xenophon, see Grassi 195-97.

<sup>26</sup> Note that Nabonidus is called Nabonnios in *Contra Apionem*, Naboandelos in *Jewish Antiquities*; the name of Nabonidus, as well as the name of other Babylonian kings, is often distorted in the Greek testimonies (see Grassi).

<sup>27</sup> For Belshazzar and his role in ancient and medieval testimonies, see Grassi.

<sup>28</sup> In the *Prayer of Nabonidus* we have only the diviner who suggests Nabonidus to pray to God, but it is likely that the lost part of the work contained the exaltation of the true God as in 4 Dan. (see Collins, “4Q Prayer” 86).

<sup>29</sup> Literature on the *Prayer of Nabonidus*, as well as that concerning the relation between the two texts, is endless: see e.g. Beaulieu, “Nabonidus the Mad King”; Collins, *Daniel* 217-18; “4Q Prayer”; Eshel 887-88; Flint; Kratz; Lemaire 126-28.

<sup>30</sup> “Conte philosophique,” *Le taureau blanc* was published in 1774. In this masterpiece, “le seul conte de critique biblique du XVIIIe siècle” (Pomeau, XXXV), Voltaire mixes characters and situations of the Bible in a narrative full of humor and vivacity. The metamorphosis of Nebuchadnezzar into oxen lasts for seven years, and it is caused by the prophet Daniel. On the intertextuality of *Le taureau blanc*, see Cotoni.

<sup>31</sup> We may also note that Nabonidus reverts to some cultic practices from the time of Nebuchadnezzar (Beaulieu, *The Reign* 122-23). It is interesting to notice that also Saddam Hussein considered himself deeply bound to Nebuchadnezzar (cp. e.g. Fales 172).

<sup>32</sup> *Nabucodonosor* (later *Nabucco*), opera in four parts, was composed by Verdi to a libretto by Temistocle Solera (after *Nabucodonosor*, play by Auguste Anicet-Bourgeois and Francis Cornue), and first performed in Milan at La Scala on 9 March 1842. The first Nabucco was baritone Giorgio Ronconi (1810-1890).

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