
Tourists, Archaeologists, and Goddesses The Palace of Knossos in mid 20th century travel literature

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Abstract

Knossos, a Greek archaeological site, is an important remnant of the Minoan civilization of Bronze Age Crete. In part due to its partial reconstruction by excavators in the early 20th century, the site is important for tourists as well as for archaeologists. This paper examines tourist reactions to the site and its reconstruction, as presented in six examples of mid 20th century travel literature. These reactions are found to be heavily informed by a division of human experience into masculine and feminine values. These gendered ideas, it is argued, are fundamental to the tourist authors' experiences of the site as authentic or unauthentic. Current understandings of discourses of authenticity do not adequately account for the complexity of tourists' experiences of Knossos.

On the Greek island of Crete countless tourists flock to the ruins of Knossos, an important archaeological remnant of what is generally seen as Europe's first civilization. The site is the second most visited archaeological site in Greece (Harrington 1999: 32), not only because of its importance in the study of Greek prehistory and its role in classical mythology, but also due to the partial reconstruction of the ruins, which offers tourists a notably different experience from the many other prehistoric sites scattered throughout Greece. This reconstruction is not always seen in a positive light. Tourists have described the site as a moving evocation of the past. They have also described it as a fraud.

Knossos means different things to different people. As an important symbol of prehistoric civilization, the site and the society it represents are subject to diverse and conflicting interpretations. It is these varied interpretations, which condition

tourists' reactions to the site and its reconstruction, and shape the debate surrounding it. This debate takes place according to an identifiable set of criteria, which ostensibly determine the site's authenticity or unauthenticity. I will argue, to the contrary, that tourists to assert their particular visions of Greek prehistory selectively manipulate the criteria of authenticity, which inform the Knossos discourse.

After providing an overview of the excavation and reconstruction of Knossos, I will briefly examine the scholarly debates surrounding the site, both to locate the tourist discourse in a broader context and to provide a comparison between the two. I will then turn to an analysis of the portrayals of Knossos in the travel literature of the mid 20th century. These portrayals, I will argue, are heavily informed by gendered values, and it is these values, which provide the driving force behind the Knossos debate.

Sir Arthur Evans' Excavation and Reconstruction

On March 23, 1900, Sir Arthur Evans began his famous archaeological excavation of a large bronze-age building complex called "Knossos" near Heraklion, Crete. The site had been occupied from roughly 2500 B.C.E. until roughly 1100 B.C.E. (Pentreath 1964: 114). Evans believed that he was uncovering the Royal Palace of Minos, the legendary king of Crete. This identification was supported by the discovery of clay tablets at the site identifying it as "Labyrinthos", the maze in which, according to classical mythology,¹ civilization that he named "Minoan" after its king (Evans 1964).² The picture he paints is that of a highly advanced, affluent civilization. Evans' Minoans were just and peace loving and worshipped a mother goddess.

There is strong evidence that Evans' account of bronze age Crete has as much to do with his own assumptions and desires as with the archaeological evidence. In the first place, the very identification of Knossos as a royal palace has been

questioned. This identification, it has been argued, was based on the obsessions of Evans and his predecessors with classical mythology, especially with Homer. Evans, in this view, went to Greece to find Minos' palace, and interpreted the evidence in light of this desire (Castleden 1990: 18-26). Moreover, Evans' picture of an idyllic, peaceful Utopia has been seen in terms of his own desire for an escapist alternative to post-World War I modernity (Harrington 1999), and as "an idealization of late Victorian or Edwardian London" in which "a great king ruled not only a prosperous island but a whole empire of overseas colonies" (Castleden 1990: 36). His background may also have conditioned Evans' interpretation of Minoan religion. He bases his claims of a Goddess religion on the famous "snake goddess" figurines, which he uncovered at the site, at least, one of which has become a well-known image in popular culture. However, the figurines' meanings are obscure and Evans' interpretation has been criticized as being based on "Victorian notions of prehistoric matriarchy" (Lapatin 2001: 33). These notions were reinforced by forgers who, capitalizing on the public and academic interest in "goddess" figures, manufactured a large number of fakes, which were taken as further evidence of a Minoan Earth Mother religion (Lapatin 2001).

Evans' interpretations are not necessarily wrong, nor is his evidence necessarily flawed. One might well argue that Homeric myth is a potentially useful (albeit difficult to interpret) source of historical data; that Knossos may well have been peaceful and undefended; and that a large number of female figurines constitute substantial evidence for a female religion. However, the evidence can also be interpreted in other ways. Evans' interpretation is not invalid but like all interpretations it is conditioned by its author's world view, in this case, by his desire to uncover the origins of Homer's stories, his need to see prehistoric civilization as peaceful and happy, and his Victorian concepts of gender. Several of these concerns will reappear in tourist interpretations of Knossos.

Evans' work at Knossos was not limited to excavation and interpretation. As he began to uncover the ruins, he quickly

discovered that they were very vulnerable to Cretan weather, and would soon decay. Rather than simply building protective roofs, Evans chose to reconstruct parts of the palace as protection for the ruins. It is this reconstruction, which is responsible for the site as it appears to tourists today. A striking feature of Evans' account of the process (Evans 1927) is his absolute confidence in the accuracy of his reconstructions. He does not argue that his architecture matches that of the original. Rather, he simply assumes it, describing the entire process as if he were copying an exact plan. Evans also makes it quite clear that he considers his reconstructions to be practical decisions with no aesthetic component. "The lover of picturesque ruins," he tells the reader, "may receive a shock" from the reconstructions (Evans 1927: 258), but this is irrelevant since the procedure is necessary for science. In light of more recent scholarship, it seems safe to say that Evans' confidence is misplaced. For instance, commentators have often noticed the major influence of the 1920's Art Deco style on the architecture and frescoes of the reconstructed palace (Garrett 1994: 173). Contemporary aesthetics clearly played a role in their creation.

A further criticism that has been levelled against Evans' reconstruction is that it was guided by his desire to see Knossos as a palace. For example, in the room which he named the "Throne Room," Evans reconstructed a fresco of formalized, regal griffins where it is now widely believed there was only one griffin of minor importance. Evans, the argument goes, thus created a royal image to match what he believed was the room's royal function. In other cases he added furnishings, decorations, and even staircases and rooms which conveniently fit his expectations (Castleden 1990: 33-5). This was not a deliberate deception:

It was rather that Evans developed a very sure sense of what Knossos was and what the cultural traits of its builders were; as a result, he literally built his interpretation of both the building and the culture into his reconstruction and restoration work (Castleden 1990: 34-4).

The contemporary tourist thus encounters Knossos largely through the interpretations of Arthur Evans. Not only is the physical site a combination of the ruins that he excavated and the palace that he built, but also most available information on Minoan culture comes from his work. The portrayals of Knossos presented in the tourist literature at times accept Evans' interpretations, but at other times contest them. Before turning to these portrayals, however, we will examine how attitudes towards ancient Greece have informed the academic debate surrounding the site.

The Academic Debate

Perhaps the most striking feature of the academic response to Evans' reconstruction is its virtual nonexistence. Immediately after Evans presented his work to the Society of Antiquaries, several archaeologists attacked it as "ugly" and "wrong," accusing him of creating a "movie city" (Horwitz 1981: 201). However, the academic community seems to have soon settled into the view that the reconstructions were quite simply necessary to save the site from destruction, and left it at that.

There are a few notable exceptions to this silence. Rodney Castleden (1990), for example, suggests that the implicit rejection by academics of the relevance of Evans' interpretations may be a mistake. Castleden argues that Evans' assumptions are built into his reconstruction of the palace, and that it is for this reason that archaeologists have not questioned the basic nature of the building. The reconstructed site has a palatial feel, and its rooms have been given names such as "Hall of the Double Axes," which "evokes an atmosphere of martial power wielded by a great king" (Castleden 1990: 48). Working on such a site, Castleden suggests, one cannot help but see it in palatial terms. He argues that, when one ignores the reconstruction, the archaeological evidence points to the building having been a temple, not a palace. Whether or not he is correct, his analysis provides a strong argument that archaeological interpretations of

the site can be heavily influenced, consciously or not, by aesthetics.

At the same time, Castleden's work resembles that of Evans in that it seems to be based largely on its author's preconceptions of ancient Greece. While Castleden provides an excellent criticism of Evans' assumptions regarding the nature of the building, its rooms, and its architecture, he accepts without question Evans' equally problematic description of female figurines as goddesses:

The statuettes, now reconstructed and deservedly among the most famous and memorable relics of the Minoan culture, show us how the Minoan Snake Goddess was visualized, her High Priestess ritually and ecstatically transformed into an epiphany of the goddess (Castleden 1990: 82).

This selective criticism of Evans allows Castleden to advance his own view of Minoan culture as a matriarchal theocracy. His project thus becomes clear: his criticism of Evans' view of a Utopian monarchy is a criticism of the patriarchal and colonial values underlying that view. Instead, Castleden prefers a more feminist prehistoric society. Such a critique is useful and admirable. It is also based just as much on preconceptions as the view of Evans himself.

In contrast, Hans Georg Wunderlich does question Evans' goddess figures, arguing that they represent mourners, not deities (Wunderlich 1974: 235). He further questions the view of ancient Crete as a "gay and graceful island kingdom" (Wunderlich 1974: xii). He argues instead that Knossos is in fact a "necropolis" - a vast tomb. His reason for making his argument is plainly stated; he feels that Knossos represents the dark, primitive forces of humanity and that Evans' interpretation denies this reality:

Thus the myth of the Minotaur, with its theme of human sacrifice, remained banished to regions of the unconscious where the spirits of the past await their hour to walk abroad. Then they burst forth, seize upon those who have bottled them up and force them to bloody acts in the name of ideologies, races or religions, urge them to *auto-da-fés*, show trials and

concentration camps. Let us not deceive ourselves. Even in the most enlightened of centuries the heritage of the stone age still dwells within men. And it does not help at all to drive this sinister legacy into the abysses of the human psyche (Wunderlich 1974: xiv).

Thus, just as Evans and Castleden want to see the origins of civilization as peaceful and idyllic, Wunderlich wants to see them as dark and sinister. Each interprets the evidence as supporting his own view.

Clearly then, aesthetics play a major role in academic interpretations of Knossos. Whether researchers tacitly accept Evans' reconstruction of a peaceful, patriarchal Utopia, or prefer alternate visions, their analyses are conditioned by what they want Knossos to symbolize. Nonetheless, the academic debate is structured for the most part on the notion that its participants are analysing the empirical evidence, and each presents his or her arguments largely in those terms. Tourist discourse, to which we will now turn, is another matter.

The Tourist Literature

Travel writing is a constantly evolving genre. Arguably originating as a part of the colonial project, it has undergone significant changes over the course of its history. "The most successful travel books," Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan tell us, "are arguably those. . . that identify a middle-class readership and then pander skilfully to its whims," "retail[ing] mostly white, male, middle-class, heterosexual myths and prejudices" (Holland and Huggan 2001: viii). Yet the specific "myths and prejudices" of interest to travel writers have varied historically.

In the post-World War II era, the encroachment of modernity emerged as a major theme of travel writing. Many travel writers began explicitly exploring the sense of being the last of their kind, witnesses to the replacement of legitimate travel experiences by Coca-cola uniformity (Cocker 1992). In later travel writing, this fear of modernity's totalizing force gave

way to a more post-modern recognition of multiculturalism, hybridity, and the fragmented and dislocated nature of the geographies and cultures through which the tourist travels (Holland and Huggan 2001: 22).

The heyday of the Greek travel book occurred during the fifteen to twenty years following the Second World War (Eisner 1991: 218; Cocker 1992: 174-5). Such writing was thus produced at a particular historical moment when a concern with modernity and its implications was still accompanied by an understanding of cultures and geographies as unified and distinct. I would argue that this is no coincidence. Greece stands in the Western imagination as an origin point of “our” civilization. As such, it provides a medium for exploring conceptions of the origin and nature of modernity. Knossos, as a political centre of one of Greece’s oldest (and most conveniently extinct) large-scale societies, is particularly available as a symbol. It can easily be constructed as a culturally, geographically, and historically bounded origin point for modern civilization. Indeed, all of the tourist literature that I will examine is concerned with the symbolic and moral meanings of Minoan society and culture.

Hence, if travel writing works by pandering to the myths and prejudices of the middle class, mid-twentieth century travel writing on Knossos is specifically concerned with myths of origin, which use dehistoricized, totalized societies as ways of understanding the past and the present. Yet it is equally concerned with contesting the content of such mythology. Different tourist authors present markedly different accounts of the nature and meaning of Minoan society, even as they implicitly affirm its ability to provide such meaning.

I have selected six books published between 1947 and 1978, which together represent a reasonable sample of Greek travel literature from the post-World War II period. Each book gives historical and cultural overviews of Greek tourist sites, and describes the author’s reactions to them. My hope is that these books are thus representative of the reactions of individuals who have no professional relation to Knossos, but who as tourists

seek to find its historical and cultural meaning. I will examine how tourism writers' preconceptions of and hopes for Greek antiquity inform their reactions to the reconstructed ruins.

Like scholars, tourists bring their own expectations to Knossos, and it is these expectations that determine their experiences of the site and their reactions to its reconstruction. Each of the six authors that I will examine has a particular conception of ancient Minoan civilization, which is partially stated explicitly and partially implicit in their presentations of Knossos. Perhaps the most striking aspect of these conceptions is the fundamental importance of gender to all six accounts. Although there is significant variation within the overall framework, all six authors associate certain values, such as peace, nature, luxury, and beauty; with women, and others, such as power, justice, order, and mystery; with men. Portrayals of Knossos and of the people who lived there vary dramatically depending on an author's attitudes towards these gendered concepts.

Peace-Loving Matriarchs: The idealization of femininity

Gender-based values are most clearly articulated by Colin Simpson. He emphasizes the religious aspects of Evans' Minoan account, telling us that "Minoans worshipped the earth goddess, the Mother" (Simpson 1969: 368) and explicitly downplaying any potential role of the patriarchal pantheon of classical Greece:

Bulls were sacrificed, in Crete, as they were all over Greece, and especially to propitiate Poseidon the Earth-Shaker, bringer of earthquakes. . . but it is not certain that Poseidon was worshipped in Minoan Crete before 1400. The Olympian deities don't show up, or not recognizably, in Minoan art (Simpson 1969: 369).

Simpson thus emphasizes the evidence against male Minoan deities, while de-emphasizing the evidence, which is usually interpreted as masculine, such as the importance of bulls in Knossos art. He later dismisses bull vaulting, an extremely common Knossos motif, as having no religious significance

(Simpson 1969: 373). While this is certainly a plausible interpretation, it is not one that is shared by most scholars.

Simpson is thus, at the very least, focusing exclusively on evidence, which supports the notion of a female religion, much as Evans himself does. However, he goes further than Evans, directly linking Knossos' femininity with its peaceful and civilized nature:

As a people the Minoans appear to have been nothing like as god-bothered as the Greeks of Homer's *Iliad*. This ties in with their society being less male-dominant and not addicted to war and, in a word, more *civilized* (Simpson 1969: 369; emphasis original).

For Simpson, being civilized is characterized by a love of peace and pleasure (Simpson 1969: 40) and an advanced technology, especially that which is related to comfort (he repeatedly mentions indoor plumbing) (Simpson 1969: 365). Even Minoan paintings, he tells us, "still look sophisticated" (Simpson 1969: 40). Simpson ends his discussion of Knossos by quoting another writer's claim that Minoan art shows "a taste for flowers and animals [and] for scenes that please the eye and refresh the spirit," and is "imbued with a poetic atmosphere" (Demargne in Simpson 1969: 374-5). This aesthetic, the writer claims, represents a mentality opposite that of classical Greek art. Simpson identifies these opposing mentalities as belonging to women and men (Simpson 1969: 375).

Monica Krippner (1957) also portrays Minoan society as a peaceful, advanced civilization. "The essayists have called Crete the 'Cradle of Greek civilisation,'" she tells us, and they were right, since "nothing of importance was bad in Knossos" (Krippner 1957: 170):

[The Minoans] never prepared for war - their cities were undefended and unwallled since they admitted to no enemy and held animus towards none. Their economy was geared to improving life. . . for artistic development, for the purity of body and soul, and they loved nature (Krippner 1957: 170).

This picture strongly resembles that of Simpson, and like Simpson, Krippner praises Minoan technology, with an emphasis on plumbing (Krippner 1957: 170-1). Although she refers to “the kingdom of Minos,” she claims that “the Minoan society was matriarchal, and the fertility of woman and the rites of motherhood were revered and respected” (Krippner 1957: 170). Thus, both authors link femininity with civilization and peace. However, while for Simpson the feminine influence is demonstrated by a sophisticated artistic taste and love of natural beauty, Krippner praises more Victorian notions of fertility and motherhood. Both accept Evans’ portrayal of Minoan society as civilized and peaceful, and as having a female-based religion, but each interprets the relation between the two in their own way.

Justice and Danger: The idealization of masculinity

Robert Payne (1960) has very different views than Simpson and Krippner on gender and ancient civilization. He begins by describing what he had hoped to experience at Knossos:

The first glance at that formidable Palaeolithic wall gives promise of excitement. . . We know a little about the legendary sea king who ruled by the sign of the double axe. . . We have heard of [Theseus killing the Minotaur]. There will be a vast stairway leading to the Hall of the Double Axes. We shall be permitted to sit on the throne of Minos and dance on the ancient dancing-floor. . . We shall bathe in the springs of western civilization (Payne 1960: 32).

Instead, Payne is disappointed; the palace is not large enough, the stairways not grand enough (Payne 1960: 32-3). Clearly, the origin of “civilization” to Payne means something very different than Simpson’s peace-loving, comfortable lovers of art and nature. Payne wants primitive power and glory. Elsewhere, he is much more enthusiastic about ancient art dealing with sacrificial rites and mysterious resurrections (Payne 1960: 36-7).

Payne makes explicit the link between his conceptions of ancient civilization and of gender when he interrupts his complaints about Knossos to describe *Zorba the Greek*

(Kazantzakis 1953), a Greek novel. Payne praises Zorba's "fiery eyes and hollow cheeks" and his "fine taste in women." Had Zorba visited Knossos, Payne opines, "he would have said that double axes are admirable weapons for frightening reluctant widows" and "cast a sly glance at the maidens who wandered into the bull-ring with such an air of presumptuous innocence" (Payne 1960: 33). Payne thus both reclaims Knossos as a masculine area - his presumptuous maidens seem quite out of place in the implicitly male bullring, and defines that masculinity in terms of weaponry, fiery eyes, and sexual experience. In short, for Payne Knossos is about stark, primitive, evocative power, and that power is masculine. It is no wonder, then, that he makes no reference whatsoever to Evans' goddess religion.

Lawrence Durrell shares Payne's concern with primitive, mysterious power. He prefers the nearby site of Phaestos to that of Knossos because it is more "evocative in its brooding stillness" and "uncomfortably full of suggestive mysteries" (Durrell 1978: 78). Unlike Payne, however, Durrell links this power with law and order. He focuses on Knossos as the location of the king's judgement, and speculates about its role in executions and gladiatorial training (Durrell 1978: 65). "The codification of laws is one department in which the Cretans made history" (Durrell 1978: 91), he tells us, and goes on to describe those laws in detail. Durrell's ancient civilization may be shadowy and mysterious, but it is also just and ordered.

Although Durrell does not explicitly deal with gender (he is the only one of the six authors that does not), it is significant that he makes no mention of the goddess religion which forms so prominent a part of Evans' Minoan culture. He also deals in much more detail than the other authors with the legends of King Minos, especially regarding his promiscuity and his links to male Olympian gods (Durrell 1978: 64-5). Durrell's Minoan society may not be explicitly masculine. However, it is a society in which women have no role worth mentioning and in which the just, ordered rule of the king is of paramount importance. The same gendered concepts which are stated in the other authors'

works thus seem to be implicitly present in Durrell's portrayal of ancient civilization in terms of its legal system.

Luxury and Law: Balancing the genders

Simpson, Krippner, Payne, and Durrell all espouse some variation of a gendered division of values. Femininity, in this view, is related to peace, nature, and sophistication; masculinity involves power, order, justice, and primitive mystery. The first two authors prefer feminine values and ascribe them to Minoan culture; the second two do the same with masculine values. The last two authors that I am examining also accept variations of the masculine/feminine division, but rather than espousing one side over the other, they take more ambivalent approaches.

Osbert Lancaster, like Simpson and Krippner, sees Knossos as feminine. He speaks of "the dualism that runs through all Greek art. . . between the representational, feminine genius of the Ionians and the formal, masculine conception of the Dorians", arguing that the art of Knossos belongs to the former category (Lancaster 1947: 97). His descriptions of Minoan art and culture echo those of Simpson and Krippner, but in a more ambiguous tone. Like them, he emphasizes the Minoans' technological achievement (indoor plumbing once again receives a prominent place) and admires their comfort, convenience, and luxurious standard of living (Lancaster 1947: 204). He, too, portrays Minoan society as peaceful, although his phrasing, "defence did not, apparently, even have to be considered", gives less credit to Minoan values and more to practical circumstance (Lancaster 1947: 204). More interesting is Lancaster's portrayal of Minoans themselves:

These people, one feels, were a race of happy little extraverts unshadowed by [an] inhibiting preoccupation with the future life. . . and quite unconcerned with the intellectual problems which engaged the fascinated attention of the classical Greeks (Lancaster 1947: 205).

Lancaster's Minoans are thus content, artistic, and peaceful, but rather boring and perhaps even intellectually backward. That

Minoan art lacks “ferocious animality” (Lancaster 1947: 205) may well be a statement in their favour, but to say that their art is “quite devoid of the power to trouble the emotions with a suggestion of a mysterious inner life” (Lancaster 1947: 205) is a much more problematic, perhaps even sarcastic, claim. Lancaster ascribes to Knossos feminine characteristics similar to those of Simpson and Krippner, but seems to feel that a healthy dose of masculinity would not have gone amiss.

Guy Pentreath also attempts to strike a balance between the genders, but unlike Lancaster, he ascribes both masculine and feminine characteristics to Minoan society. On the one hand, “women appear to have had an influence on society to which we may attribute much of the grace and elegance and love of natural beauty, of flowers and colour, of comfort and cleanliness [of ancient Crete]” (Pentreath 1964: 110). Like the writers who argue for a feminine Knossos, Pentreath accepts at face value Evans’ claim that Minoans worshipped “the Earth Goddess” (Pentreath 1964: 111). Interestingly, he recognizes that Evans’ description of female figurines as Goddess figures may be inaccurate, but only to the extent that “it may be her priestess” (Pentreath 1964: 110). On the other hand, Minoans were a “well-ordered people” (Pentreath 1964: 109) who had “a flair for organization and administration, with its implication of discipline” (Pentreath 1964: 110), characteristics which the other authors associate with masculinity.

Like Simpson and Krippner, Pentreath portrays ancient Crete as peaceful. However, he is the only author of the six who associates peace with male, rather than female, influence:

Remarkably few weapons date from the earlier phases of the Minoan period nor did fortified walls surround the palaces at any time. For the palaces and great houses were not the homes of rival chieftains but centres of *organized leadership under the king at Knossos*. . . It is true that to meet the possibility of a sudden piratical attempt upon the palace its entrances were guarded and [altered to be made more defensible] (Pentreath 1964: 111; emphasis added).

Thus, while Pentreath postulates a peaceful, sophisticated, happy, and artistic Minoan society similar to that of Simpson and Krippner, he attributes this success not so much to female influence as to a balance between men and women. Each gender makes important and distinct contributions to the society.

Reconstruction and Authenticity: The tourist experience of Knossos

Analyses of tourism often focus on the construction of authenticity, the process by which some experiences come to be seen as genuine and others not. The general assumption tends to be that authenticity is based on certain culturally defined values. For example, Orvar Löfgren argues that elements such as stillness, nonutility, picturesqueness, and a large number of significant associations mark authentic experiences. The precise nature of these elements varies depending on the era and community (Löfgren 1999: 97-8). I will call such elements “criteria of authenticity”, characteristics of a tourist site which are used to judge whether it is authentic. In the case of Knossos, the question of authenticity takes a particular form: Do the reconstructed ruins provide an authentic experience of the original building and of the culture which built it? Following analyses such as Löfgren’s, we might expect that each tourist author would base his or her judgement of the Knossos reconstruction on whether it met whatever criteria of authenticity dominated the tourist discourse surrounding the site.

In the tourist literature the main criterion of authenticity for Knossos seems to be whether Evans’ reconstruction allows one to “visualize” (Pentreath 1964: 117), “feel” (Simpson 1969: 372), or have an “aesthetic experience” (Durrell 1978: 70) of Minoan civilization. The goal is to experience Knossos on an emotional rather than intellectual level; Durrell comments on the limitations of the “factual approach” (Durrell 1978: 70), and Payne lambastes a scholar who has had the nerve to inflict factual information upon him (Payne 1960: 126). The tourist discourse thus contrasts with the academic discourse. The latter emphasizes empirical accuracy and, with a few notable

exceptions, tends to downplay or ignore aesthetic considerations. Several of the tourist authors do comment on the ability of the Knossos reconstruction to provide accurate information. However, even for those authors who mention it at all, this criterion is secondary to that of aesthetic power.

Lancaster and Pentreath, who do not have strong feelings on the importance of masculine or feminine principles, seem to respond to Knossos largely in terms of its ability to evoke a sense of a past civilization. They thus behave like Löfgren's tourists, judging their experience in terms of the dominant criterion of authenticity of the Knossos tourist discourse. Despite similar approaches, however, the two authors come to opposite conclusions. Lancaster complains that "the elaborate restorations. . . set too strict limits on the play of fancy" (Lancaster 1947: 116), concluding that "the so-called palace of Minos, though infinitely less moving than Mycenae [an unrestored Greek ruin], is undoubtedly of even greater interest" (Lancaster 1947: 201). Unable, thanks to the reconstruction, to be "moving," Knossos instead fulfils the lesser function of being "interesting." Pentreath, in contrast, feels that without the "conscientious" and "skilful" reconstruction of Knossos, "it would not be possible to visualize" not only Knossos, but other, unrestored Minoan palaces, "as they were" (Pentreath 1964: 117). Both authors wish to experience Knossos through an imaginative act of visualization. For Pentreath the reconstruction enables this process; for Lancaster it prevents it.

Like Pentreath, Simpson feels "immensely grateful to Evans," who provided "a very skilful simulation of what [Knossos] must have been like" (Simpson 1969: 370). He supports this judgement with the same criterion of authenticity as Pentreath, claiming that "without restoration the Palace would have been a meaningless heap of ruins" (Pendlebury in Simpson 1969: 370). However, equally important to Simpson's positive appraisal seems to be the fact that the reconstruction evokes a particular meaning which coincides with his own view of ancient Minoan civilization:

I have twice been through this place and on neither occasion have I felt for a moment any evocation of the omnipotent, cruel, Zeus-fathered, bull-spirited Minos of the myths. . . . Would he have been likely to have had blue monkeys and flowers and griffins on the wall? What the decoration evokes. . . is a palace atmosphere which is. . . *feminine*. Could it be that male dominance had yet to triumph in Crete? . . . Is it the taste and spirit of a priestess-queen that the place reflects? (Simpson 1969: 372; emphasis original).

Simpson thus judges Knossos, not simply on its power to evoke, but on its power to evoke the feminine influence which is so essential to his conception of a peace-loving, artistic civilization. This selective use of criteria of authenticity to support his own views is even more evident in Simpson's opinions on the empirical accuracy of the reconstruction. He accepts this accuracy without question, *except* for the "Veranda of Shields, which is pure Evans to add a bit of décor" (Simpson 1969: 372). Thus, as soon as a military motif appears, Evans' work ceases to be "skillful" and becomes a false addition. Knossos is authentic only when it evokes what Simpson wants it to evoke.

The remaining three tourist authors share Lancaster's dislike of the reconstruction. For Krippner, as for Lancaster, this dislike seems to be based on an inability to evoke an imaginative experience. Interestingly, she argues that the reconstruction is accurate, but dismisses this accuracy as unimportant:

My disappointment was due to Knossos being so essentially a restored site. . . . Doubtless the brilliant archaeologist, Sir Arthur Evans, and his associates, are almost one hundred per cent accurate. . . . Yet copies inevitably lack conviction. The characteristic Minoan columns, formerly made of Cyprus timber, now reconstructed in cement, look false. It is the touch like this that distracts the observer who often prefers to draw on his own imagination to reconstruct the former building or temple from its remains (Krippner 1957: 174).

It is interesting that Krippner so strongly emphasises the accuracy of the reconstruction, despite feeling that it is unimportant next to the site's lack of imaginative potential. I

suspect that this is because her view of Minoan culture, like that of Simpson, is very similar to Evans' peace loving, Goddess-worshipping Utopia. Since, for her, the Knossos site does not successfully evoke an imaginative experience, Krippner needs another way to assert the accuracy of Evans' analysis. The factual criterion of authenticity, despite being unimportant next to the imaginative one, provides the means to support this assertion.

Payne and Durrell, on the other hand, seem to dislike Evans' work because it does not match their own expectations. Like the other authors, they base their judgements of the site on its evocative power, but just as Simpson likes the site because it evokes what he wants to see, Payne and Durrell dislike it because its aesthetic does not match their own views of Minoan culture. As we have seen, Payne expects Knossos to reflect grand, primitive power. He compares the site to Phaestos, a nearby, unrestored Minoan ruin:

Knossos is something of a fraud, a deceptive and ingenious reconstruction. . . Phaestos. . . is authentic to the last stone and broken column. . . Sir Arthur Evans found a small stairway in Knossos, about five feet wide; he called it the Great Stairway. At Phaestos there is a stairway forty feet wide, and no one has troubled to give it a name. . . Knossos suggests a delicate aristocratic country house, the summer villa of one of the minor princes. Phaestos suggests royal power (Payne 1960: 39).

Similarly, Durrell, who also ascribes sinister power to ancient Crete, praises Phaestos for being "dense and exciting" and "uncomfortably full of suggestive mysteries" (Durrell 1978: 78). The Knossos reconstruction, in contrast, is "insipid and in poor taste" because it is not a good "guide to the spiritual temper of these far away Minoan people" (Durrell 1978: 74). Both Payne and Durrell, then, find Phaestos more authentic than Knossos, not because the latter is not evocative, but because it evokes the wrong things.

However, Payne and Durrell take very different approaches to the factual accuracy of Evans' restorations.

Durrell argues that the restoration is accurate, at least insofar as it represents the “true position of things” (Durrell 1978: 74). Like Krippner, he thus dismisses accuracy as an unimportant criterion of authenticity. Payne, on the other hand, uses accuracy as an important criterion by which to further attack the site:

Though there is no doubt that Knossos was the palace of Minos, we shall never know what the palace looked like. Evans shored up the ruins, furnished them, decorated them, gave them impossible names and stamped them with his own excessively Victorian imagination. . . [Knossos] is a very intricate Victorian contrivance (Payne 1960: 33).

Thus, although there is “no doubt” when it comes to the building’s regal function, the only aspect of Evans’ vision which matches Payne’s, in every other respect the site is a fraud. Payne, whose aesthetic vision of Minoan society is the least like that of Evans, is the only author of the six to question the overall accuracy of Evans’ reconstructions. He uses accuracy as a criterion of authenticity to support a judgement based entirely on other factors.

Payne, Krippner, and Durrell all introduce a third criterion to their descriptions of Phaestos, the unrestored Minoan ruin, to reinforce its authenticity. All three populate the scene with friendly lower-class locals. Payne is transported to Phaestos by a bus driver who “skim[s] on two wheels round corners” and shouts “Phaestos!” and “Zeus!” to indicate landmarks; the traditional good-luck charms on the windshield are emphasized (Payne 1960: 38-9). Krippner also travels with local Cretans, and is warned by “peasants sunning themselves on a bench” that the road is impassable. When her jeep becomes stuck in the mud, a “small enthusiastic boy” offers to help (Krippner 1957: 175). Durrell travels alone, but receives a “jovial welcome” from a peasant who offers him traditional food cooked over an open fire and “looks shocked and aggrieved” when offered money for it (Durrell 1978: 78). In tourist discourse, cheerful peasants are often a criterion of authenticity. In this case, however, the authors do not seem to be judging Phaestos as more

authentic based on the presence of peasants. Rather, they use peasants as a way to demonstrate authenticity to the reader. Such narratives of adventurous encounters with the locals are conspicuously absent from the same authors' descriptions of Knossos. By leaving out this criterion of authenticity, they implicitly portray Knossos as artificial.

Thus, the standard model of authenticity exemplified by writers such as Löfgren, in which authenticity is judged based on culturally defined criteria, applies only to the works of Lancaster, Pentreath, and to a degree, Krippner. Although these three authors seem to judge the authenticity of Knossos based on its ability to evoke an imaginative vision of the past, the dominant criterion in the discourse around the site, the other three works are not so straightforward. Simpson, Payne, and Durrell judge the experience of Knossos in terms of their gendered conceptions of Minoan civilization. They do not merely want to have genuine experiences of bronze age Crete; they want to have genuine experiences of their own particular images of bronze age Crete. They judge Knossos as authentic or unauthentic according to its ability to meet their expectations, and they use criteria of authenticity to give authority to that judgement.

Conclusion

The academic discourse surrounding Knossos centres on questions of empirical archaeological evidence. Scholars generally phrase their arguments about the site in terms of that evidence, rarely mentioning aesthetic concerns. Despite the way in which the debate is constructed, aesthetic factors can play an important role in determining how scholars interpret the site. Empirical fact is thus not the only factor influencing academic interpretations; rather, it is the criterion by which those interpretations are judged, and scholars thus use it to give authority to their arguments.

Like the academic discourse, tourist discourse has its own criteria for demonstrating the validity of an interpretation of Knossos. Those criteria consist, first and foremost, of the site's ability to evoke an aesthetic, imaginative vision of ancient

Minoan society. Secondary criteria include the empirical accuracy of Sir Arthur Evans' reconstruction, and the role of local lower-class Cretans in the experience of the site. It is these criteria which tourist authors use to express and support their views on the authenticity of Knossos as a tourist experience. However, like academic interpretations, tourists' experiences of Knossos as authentic or unauthentic are influenced by other factors, which are not explicitly acknowledged as criteria. Many of the authors which I have examined judge the site based on its ability to reflect their own expectations of bronze age Greek society, and these expectations are highly gendered. The criteria of authenticity defined by tourist discourse are used to assert the validity of these implicitly gendered interpretations, just as, in the academic discourse, empirical criteria are used to assert the validity of partially aesthetic views.

I can thus see three reasons to study a phenomenon as seemingly unimportant as the reactions of tourists in the mid 20th century to a reconstructed archaeological site. In the first place, by exposing the strong influence of aesthetics on analyses of Minoan society, we can better understand the nature of past archaeological analysis of Minoan sites. An examination of tourists' preconceptions can help to demonstrate some of the biases which archaeologists may have also, consciously or not, carried with them to the field. Examining how archaeological knowledge has been produced helps to improve the reflexivity of our understandings of prehistoric societies.

In the second place, a study of the tourist literature provides insight into mid 20th century notions of Greek prehistory and its relation to gender. By studying people's conceptions of their culture's roots, and ancient Greece is unquestionably seen as one of the roots of modern Western society, we learn about how they see themselves, their culture, and the world in general. Conceptions of gender and prehistory play important roles in contemporary issues as diverse as literature, neo-pagan religion, anthropological theory, and evolutionary psychology. Tourist accounts provide a medium

through which to examine some of these conceptions and the ways in which they influence our experience of the world.

Finally, the study of the tourist literature of Knossos has suggested a new theoretical framework for the analysis of tourist discourses of authenticity. Tourism scholars such as Löfgren tend to see authenticity as being determined by culturally defined criteria which inform a tourist's experience. This approach is inadequate for Knossos. Although the tourist discourse does broadly define the sorts of criteria which ostensibly determine the authenticity of a Greek archaeological site, tourists do not simply accept and apply these criteria. Instead, they manipulate, selectively apply, and sometimes reject criteria in order to present the vision of a site which best meets their own preconceived notions. A theory which accounts for this more complex view of the role of criteria of authenticity might also be applicable to other analyses of tourism.

Where, in all these debates, preconceptions, and criteria of evidence, is Minoan society itself? Can we pull aside the layers of bias and error to uncover an empirically valid account of what Knossos was really like? It is tempting to simply answer "no": after three thousand years, the historical reality of the Minoans has been lost forever. In a sense, perhaps, this is true. To give up on the site, however, would be to misconstrue the nature of historical inquiry. We investigate the past, not simply to know the facts, but to *understand* them, to find the meaning that they have for us, today. That meaning is inevitably a product, in part, of our own desires and values, but this does not render it useless. Each of the six tourist authors examined in this essay learned from their visits to Knossos, and found ways in which its inhabitants spoke to them across a three-thousand-year gulf. If each author heard something different, this does not devalue the importance of the messages. As tourists, as archaeologists, or as anthropologists, we too are free to encounter on our own terms the evidence unearthed at Knossos.

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Endnotes

- ⁱ The term “classical” refers to the period of Greek history characterized by the literature and philosophy, which is famous today. Knossos was occupied during the bronze age, well before the classical period. Works of classical mythology, such as those of Homer, were composed in the classical period but often refer to the “heroic age.” It is to this age that Knossos belongs.
- ⁱⁱ The Egyptians, it has since been learned, called the civilization “Keftiu,” and this is probably what the Minoans called themselves. However, Evans’ designation is still used, even by those who question whether Minos ever existed (Wunderlich 1974: viii-ix).