



ON RECONSTRUCTION

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It is thoroughly conventional to begin this lecture by professing my profound gratitude of being bestowed with this honour. There is, however, believe me, nothing conventional in how I feel by having my humble name being connected with the gigantic figure of George Sarton. From Sarton and I. Bernard Cohen a line may be drawn to Thomas S. Kuhn whose work on paradigms has been deeply inspirational to everyone including me, but that is, I think, the extent to which I may claim any influence from Sarton on my practice as a historian of science. Yet, I seek a certain comfort in the fact that for Sarton, the history and philosophy of science and the sociology of science are not separate endeavours. *Isis*, the journal he founded was to be and I quote

“ at once the philosophical journal of the scientists and the scientific journal of the philosophers, the historical journal of the scientists and the scientific journal of the historians, the sociological journal of the scientists and the scientific journal of the sociologists” (Sarton, 1959: 69, quoted in Garfield 1985: 245).

Today, I will be concerned with a topic which I have only begun to exploit, and thus I will be concerned *not* with the history of the idea of reconstruction. The history of reconstruction has recently been the subject of an impressive paper by Jeroen van Pottelberge of this university, and I am happy to refer you to this paper and the extended references there for a brilliant account. I will only be concerned here with the *logic* of reconstruction. This is because I shall argue that the logic of reconstruction may give us a glimpse of the enigmatic nature of historicity as such, and I hope to show you that reconstruction merits a thorough study which will unite the various uses that this practice has been put to, and still is put to. In studying the practice of reconstruction in detail, I hope to live up to the famous phrase that Ferdinand de Saussure used in a letter to Antoine Meillet in which he laid out the purpose of the

book he would be trying to finish as 'montrer au linguiste ce qu'il fait'. I hope to show you some of the things we do, when we reconstruct.

1. Delimitation of the problem

For reconstruction to become a viable practice at all, you need at least two preconditions (cf. Van Pottelberge 2003:307): First we need some elements which are considered variants of the same. In the case of manuscripts, this is often on the face of it trivial since some of them have actually been catalogued as being 'the same' in the sense that they contain the same text. Take for instance the histories of Livy or the letters of Cicero to his friend Atticus. Since a cursory inspection of the manuscripts themselves will show that they are *not* the same in the sense that what in one manuscript is the text of a certain letter from Cicero in the other does not contain the same words, the same letters, the same letter types and so on and so forth, we may conclude that there is variation. Variation, on the other hand, only makes sense if there is some notion of sameness involved.

The other precondition is *a sense of history*, or more precisely *a sense of change*. This makes it possible to arrange the variants as participating in an evolution and very often it leads to the notion of authenticity. I stress this point since this has recently been denied as the basis of philology in the so-called new philology with its *éloge de la variante*. I shall come back to this later.

Take again the Cicero letter. We speculate that if this is really a letter from Cicero to his friend Atticus, then Cicero must have sat down to write a specific wording which is then to be considered the authentic version of the Cicero letter. In some cases, we do indeed have the authentic or original version - but then there is, alas, no need for philology! In most cases, however, the philologist feels compelled by the fact that there are several variants of one and 'the same' text. Which is the true one, or the better one? he or she asks.

So we have to have our two preconditions in place, and then we can start the reconstruction process ultimately resulting in a reconstruction. Reconstruction may then be defined as the systematic

search for - that is *the process of reconstructing* - and the finalized result of, that is *the product of reconstruction*, of the authentic, or the first, or the best, version of the element in question. Note that we have both a process of reconstruction and a result of the process which is the reconstructed item. In this broad sense, reconstruction is a tool used in all the historical sciences, whether they be concerned with texts, musical scores, archaeological remains or historical facts in general.

2. Example 1: Indo European comparative linguistics with special emphasis on August Schleicher

Indo-European comparative linguistics stands out as the gigantic effort of the historical 19th Century and has been seen as the most brilliant result of any human science. Part of its success lies in the use of the tool of reconstruction. But one might well ask whether the preconditions were met at the start of the century, i.e when Rask, Bopp and Grimm actually founded the science of comparative linguistics. I have only studied Rask, so I shall limit my introductory remarks to him in order to elucidate the early history. Obviously, we have in this case to meet precondition one, to see the various languages as variants of a same, before we can progress any further. And this was not an easy task. The huge masses of evidence amassed by Pallas and Adelung did not order themselves neatly in families and subfamilies, it took the methodical and systematic genius of a Rask (1787-1832) to discover the relationships. I shall not go into details here, just note that there is an important logical difference between ordering languages in families - so that we know which languages are versions of 'the same' - and reconstructing the ancestor which they are supposed to be variants of, and the reason I underline this is that Rask did not take this last step¹, only prepared it for later generations. In fact, his prize essay, which has recently been elegantly translated into English by my first teacher of linguistics Niels Ege, aims at ordering the relationships between old Norse and the neighbouring languages, and only Rask's vast knowledge brought him to provinces as distant as Indo-Iranian, so that the picture he ends up drawing, stunningly reminds us of

¹ Van Pottelberge 2003: 318 notes that Bopp did not either: "Das letzte Ziel war für Bopp die Etymologie der Beugungsformen, nicht die Wiederherstellung einer Ursprache".

later *Stammbäume*.

So the difference between the historical 19th Century and the previous ones was not that the previous researchers had not speculated on a possible unity behind the many different languages, but rather that they had sought the mother tongue of all mother tongues, as it were, in the Bible, pointing to Hebrew, or in their own national pride, thus pointing to whichever language they happened to speak themselves.

With August Schleicher (1821-68) Indo European comparative linguistics enters a new stage and actually this new step brought it to the centre stage of contemporary historical sciences. This is a paradox, since Schleicher firmly believes that Indo European linguistics is not a historical science at all. Listen to his words in his 1850 treatise on *Die Sprachen Europas in systematischer Übersicht*:

“Der Philolog hat es mit der Geschichte zu thun, die eben da anhebt, wo der freie menschliche Wille sich Dasein giebt, das Object der Linguistik dagegen ist die Sprache, deren Beschaffenheit eben so sehr ausserhalb der Willensbestimmung des Einzelnen liegt, als es z. B. der Nachtigall unmöglich ist ihr Lied mit dem der Lerche zu vertauschen. Das aber, woran der freie Wille des Menschen so wenig in organischer Weise etwas zu ändern vermag, als an seiner leiblichen Beschaffenheit, gehört nicht an das Gebiet des freien Geistes, sondern in jenes der Natur.

Demzufolge ist auch die Methode der Linguistik von der aller Geschichtswissenschaften total verschieden und schliesst sich wesentlich der Methode der übrigen Naturwissenschaften an.”
Schleicher 1850:2

Collinge in his brief history of comparative linguistics in the *Encyclopedia of Languages and Linguistics* (Asher 1994) has drawn attention to the fact that there are various logically different strains of thought involved and that in the early period of comparative Indo European linguistics, they were conflated in interesting ways. Collinge distinguishes first a T-strain. T stands for typology. This strain is concerned with the structure of language irrespective of historical

relationship, i.e. what we now call language typology. The gospel of analytic languages, having only roots as words, agglutinative languages, where endings are so-to-speak glued onto roots, and finally inflectional, or fusional, languages where the root and the endings are so interwoven that it is difficult to separate them, is the typological Old Testament.

Secondly, the E-strain - for Evolution. This leads to generalizations of the development of actual forms or changes between stages of languages finally resulting in universal statements of permissible developments. This is more like present day grammaticalization theory.

Finally, the G-strain is the well known genetic investigation of which languages are historically related to which other languages. It is mostly with this G-strain I shall be concerned today, but the interesting thing about August Schleicher is that his stance is a very ingenious mix of strains rolled into a unitary theory.

Schleicher introduces his topic with some sweeping statements about the function and historicity of language. The essence of language is to express meaning ('Bedeutung') and relation ('Beziehung'), and the particular nature of a specific language is evident in how it performs this function. Now, meaning resides in roots, whereas relation is expressed by endings or what would later be called grammatical morphemes, and of course syntax. This gives the clue to the particular fusion of the T-strain with the E-strain and the G-strain in Schleicher: he insists that the analytical languages where a root can make up a free linguistic element, with Chinese as the prime example, are the oldest ones, but that the development of language goes from that stage through the stage of agglutination and resulting in the final and most refined stage, that of inflexion. Prime examples of inflecting languages are Sanskrit and Latin. Now, it has not escaped Schleicher that the modern languages all tend to revive some sort of analyticity or agglutination and that leads him to a final and most influential conclusion, viz. that prehistory led to perfection, but that history is the witness to the ever present decay of languages. History and prehistory is in this sense the opposite of each other: Prehistory led to the perfection that history undid.

It took all the polemical talent of an Otto Jespersen to dispose of

this notion of the Golden Age lying far behind us (Jespersen 1891: in particular 11ff). In his vindication of the modern languages, Jespersen, just as lopsidedly, argued that history on the contrary led to perfection, in that English had dropped all the cumbersome and tedious stuff at the end of the words - and had become all the more effective for it. If Schleicher had appealed to the nature of language and had maintained that linguistics was a natural science, Jespersen trumped by calling upon a more or less vulgar version of Darwinism²: Language evolved and only the fittest survived. English was alive and kicking, whereas Latin and Sanskrit weren't. Hence, English was the more fit for life.

August Schleicher, according to most informed observers (most prominently K.F.K.Koerner 1983 and Van Pottelberge 2003), forged the paradigm that was to form the backbone of comparative Indo European linguistics. I reconstruct it as involving the following steps:

1. Only comparative research can lead to anything but before you can compare you have to be sure that you have to do with likes. Only likes may be compared.
2. Make every effort to get to the earliest attested stage of the language before you compare it with anything at all.
3. Now analyse the forms of the language: separate the roots from the endings and take care to isolate each ending so that it corresponds to a minimum of meaning.
4. List the roots and order them so that their meanings and their expressions are ordered separately.
5. Compare the lists with equivalent lists for the other languages and take care to compare only forms that have explainable resemblances.
6. Resemblances may be explained by sound laws as to the expression and by reasoned etymologies as to the meanings.

² Cf. Diderichsen 1958 (1966), in particular section 9

7. Now conclude as to which resemblances are closer than others and by this move create subclasses, classes and families.

8. In this way, you are able to reconstruct an earlier version of what you have chosen to compare, thus working your way downwards towards the distant past.

There are of course, numerous pitfalls in this procedure, but I am not concerned with them here. Rather, I want to lay bare the logic of the endeavour. The *modus operandi* is as stated to work backwards, taking care each time to group only languages which resemble each other in some specified respect and then adhering to the same principles all the way down, as it were. But the interesting thing is that for the modern mind (and I might add for the general public) the construction of the reconstruction has been so successful that we tend to take it for granted. Hence, we believe that the reconstructed forms actually *explain* the attested forms, whereas it is in fact the other way round. We *posit* the existence of the reconstructed forms in order to be able to unify certain characteristics of the forms we have picked out for analysis. We might rather say that this is the way we try to *account for* the forms.

3. Example 2. Indo European comparative linguistics 2: The reconstruction of the laryngeals by de Saussure

Schleicher's reconstructions have thus attained a reality never anticipated, I am sure, by their inventor. Volumes of etymology, thousands of dictionaries and libraries of treatises have hammered out the success of the Indo European reconstruction. By now, we think that we know all this - it has become an accepted reality. Thus, it was a revolutionary moment in the history of the discipline when Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), with his 21 years being even younger than Schleicher himself when he wrote his 1850 work, in his *Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-européennes* from 1878, reconstructed formulas for which he claimed no reality at all. Only years later, much later, the reconstructed coefficients, as de Saussure called them, would turn out to be manifested in the then unknown Hittite language. The story goes like this:

In order to create some order in the inflectional paradigms in the

reconstructed Indo European, de Saussure notes that certain forms may be accounted for if we posit a *coefficient sonantique* which regulates the emergence of the Ablaut vowel as *e, *o, or nil. These coefficients are not themselves sounds but elements which regulate the Ablaut process and thus so to speak colour the vowel.

The theoretical implications of this move are enormous and while the *Mémoire* was immediately hailed as a major contribution to scholarship in general, and to the knowledge of the early Indo European vowel system in particular, it would apparently last until the advent of structuralism until de Saussure's insights got the proper recognition. They deserve to be mentioned here precisely because they show that the method itself does not stop you from reconstructing elements which you only know by their function, or their effect on other more substantial elements. It is crucial that the novelty is precisely *not* that the reconstructed elements turned out to have counterparts in Hittite - it is the other way around: Precisely because he did not care at all whether they had ever had an expression, de Saussure got it right. They were necessary elements even if they had never been found.

In this way, de Saussure paved the way for the deep reconstructions of recent years, reconstructions which try to combine what we know of prehistory from archaeology and geology with the results of following through on Schleicher's comparative endeavour.

4. From classical philology to New philology

Some observers have hinted that the young August Schleicher got his rigorous method from his studying philology with Nitschl (Koerner 1983:XLIX, quoting Dietze 1966:18) and it is a tempting suggestion to follow up³. If we go back to the original schema of reconstruction:

First, consider the variants, then compare them, taking care to

³ Van Pottelberge gives some interesting examples showing that both Georg Curtius and Michel Bréal used the similarities between the two kinds of linguistics, probably in order to persuade the classical philologists that comparative Indo European was not such a strange animal at all (Van Pottelberge 2003:318f).

order them as faithfully as possible with the chronologically older ones as the most worthy exemplars, and on the basis of this comparison then reconstruct the earlier version - this accords, of course, very well with what philologists do. In this brief section, I shall try to bring out the resemblances and the differences.

First, remember, if you please, that for Schleicher all philology remained a historical discipline, whereas linguistics was a natural science. For Schleicher, the advent of writing seems to have marked the advent of decline. For the philologists, however, the advent of writing means business. The industry of editing texts traces its origins back to Alexandria when the earliest commentators on Homeric texts explained the meaning of various words. As with comparative reconstruction, it needs to be stressed that the logic of stemmatology, i.e. the invention of a reconstructed text from which all known texts stem, marks the *qualitative* difference between the scientific philological procedure of modern times, which in this case means from historicism and onwards, and, on the other hand, the practice of emendation and correction so characteristic of earlier practice. The work by the researchers from the Renaissance who purged the Bible of the many translation errors was, I gather, driven by the same intentions of creating a pure and uncorrupted text as present day critics, but they did not have in their tool box the reconstruction of an otherwise unknown X, the mother manuscript of all its fragile and corrupted offspring.

We see here the same qualitative leap when the philologists posit an unknown version to account for the known ones in a systematic fashion, as we did with the Schleicherian reconstruction of an unknown and unattested Indo European mother tongue to account for all the known languages of the same family.

The philologists study texts. Some of these texts have literary qualities which actualize aesthetic judgements. Which text is the better one? Some of the texts have historical importance and the history of a nation may depend upon a single word in one of them. Small wonder that philologists take every care to reconstruct only the authentic text. Now, this would not have been worth the mention if a new version of philology had not come into existence which denies the very preconditions which

the earlier practice was based on, first and foremost the idea of authenticity. Through the work of scholars such as Cerquiglini and Stephen G. Nichols, a paradigm has been created which insists that, at least for the Middle Ages, the idea of a unique mother X manuscript is simply misleading. Let me take a simple example with which I am familiar from the work of my former Ph.D. student Jakob Povl Holck, the example of the earliest Danish medicinal books ascribed to one Henrik Harpestreng. Holck shows very convincingly that the idea of one original, authentic medicinal book as the mother X of all the various versions which we have, runs counter to the facts of book production and even more to the idea of knowledge in the late Middle Ages. The Danish medicinal books only make sense as being works which form an integrated part of a *tradition of thought* that both in both form and content stretches back to Galen and probably all the way to Hippocrates and Ancient Egyptian medicine. To separate what is a Danish original and what is taken over from the Germans - who took it over from the Romans - who adapted a Greek tradition, and so on and so forth, simply cannot be done. It is the wrong question, so to speak. The texts are interwoven with translation loans and themselves exhibit a mixture of Latin and Old Danish, a prime example of the stuff that the new philologists use to challenge the old ones: What good would a reconstruction of what text do here? Maybe there was once a cleric called Henrik who sat down with a handful of manuscripts to integrate their stories or rather to order the knowledge that he had in front of him and in his own head, but surely to reconstruct that text is tantamount to reconstructing nothing significant. Rather, what we must do is study what life the texts that we have had handed down to us, have been through. What sea of manuscripts were they part of? fluid and changeable as it was - as well as impermanent, for most of it has long since evaporated out of existence.

5. Architectural reconstruction and its problems, the case of the Alhambra

The new philology argues that it is impossible to reconstruct one single text and that one should rather try to reconstruct the body of texts that this particular text formed part of. In this section, I try to document an equivalent problem in the case of the so-called Muslim fortress and

palaces of the Alhambra in Granada, Andalusia in Spain.

Since there is not so much time left, I shall argue more tightly and since by now I suppose that you are all familiar with the basic logic of reconstruction I shall limit myself to a few remarks.

In 1492 Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel of Castile completed the *reconquista* of Spain by conquering the Alhambra. Until then, not very many had seen the interior of the palaces at the red hill perched above the town of Granada, and apparently what the catholic monarchs saw, awed them into a rare move. Instead of tearing down the Alhambra, they appointed the count of Tendilla to be the guardian of the palaces and left it virtually untouched. Charles the Fifth, however, duly built his palace right in the middle of the structure, thereby giving evidence of an unheard of show of his much proclaimed love of the Alhambra. If that be love, then beware of lovers! The Charles palace fits the Alhambra as the boxing glove fits an eye.

Be that as it may, the problem of the reconstruction of the Alhambra is no different from that of any other late Middle age fortress, except precisely that here we have more of the structure from when the Alhambra was alive than is usual. This would seem to be an advantage, but it is not so. Rather, it pinpoints the crucial question: What Alhambra of the many possible Alhambras is to be reconstructed as being *the* Alhambra? Obviously, taking away all later additions (notably first the Charles Palace, please), would be quite impossible for when to stop? There seems, furthermore, to be agreement among Alhambra scholars that the later palace additions are what make the Alhambra the jewel of the crown. Obviously, then it would be completely foolish to reconstruct the earlier phases.

Oleg Grabar who is my main authority, states this succinctly when he talks about the problem of understanding a building which is so clearly additive (Grabar 1978 (2004):90). The later kings took what was already there and turned it into a building of an even higher complexity.

There is just one complexity which has not been noticed very much although it has been commented upon, and this is the problem of colour.

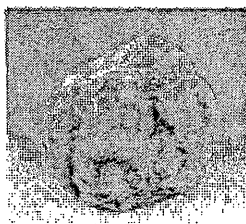
All that we know of the Alhambra tells us about a splendour based upon ornament riches and underlined by a daring and original use of colour. And yet, what meets the eye when the visitor turns up, is virtually - nothing. (fig. 1) With the exception of the tiles, which indeed are a precious chapter by themselves, we may state that what impresses the visitor is completely the opposite: the clarity of structure, the stern adherence to symmetry of even the most intricate patterns, and the absence of any addition of colour to the ceilings and the stuccoed vaults of which there are a multitude, believe me. By now, you will be tired of listening and accordingly, I will show you some pictures of the Alhambra in order to document my point. Here first, we have a window. (fig. 2) Complicated, yes, but not complicated enough, apparently, for in the official guidebook of the Alhambra we read that only one place in the whole structure we find a ceiling which has preserved the original - whatever that may mean now - type of windows, i.e. with coloured stained glass. Imagine what a palace with hundreds of windows would look like with the Andalusian sun pouring in through that type of windows. Undoubtedly, quite another story than we actually get.

Here again is the famous ceiling of the Comares hall. (fig. 3) This is a central hall of the whole complex, and we know that it once looked like this: (fig. 4)

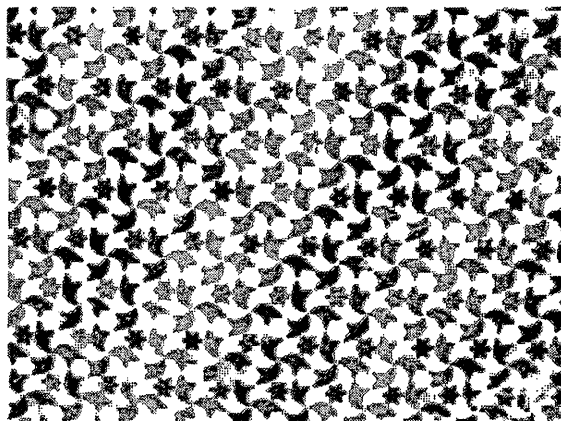
Two final examples. The drawing by P.J.Girault de Prangey from as late as 1837 showing the original colours of one of the porticos of the palace of the Lions (fig. 5) and Owen Jones' reconstruction of one of the alcoves of the Court of the Myrtles. I underline that both of these may be seen only in the guidebook, the actual colour in Granada is gone forever. (fig. 6).

So here we have a new paradox. It is customary to speak of the lack of evidence for reconstruction, but in this case we have the opposite situation. We have abundant evidence that the palace originally was multicoloured and yet the restoration has produced an Alhambra, which, when we except the tiles, is conspicuously monochrome. There may be all kinds of financial matters involved here, and I shall not speculate on the reasons for the decision, just offer some preliminary and brief thoughts on the effect.

Patio de los Arrayanes (zócalo de alicatado)
Tiled wainscot in the Courtyard of the Myrtles



Turquesa / Turquoise



p1

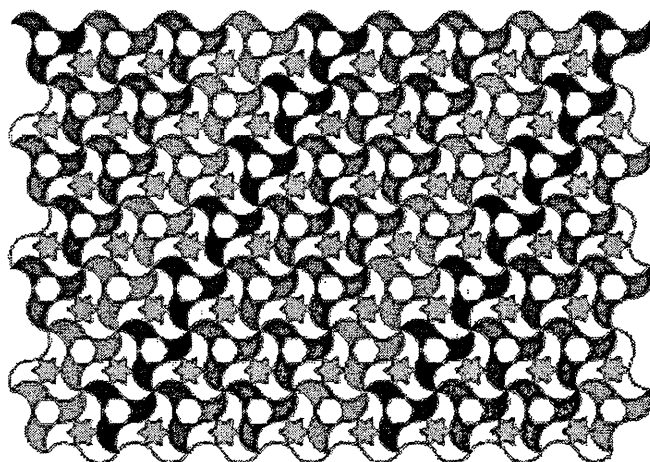


Fig. 1. Source: Purificación Fenoll Hach-Ali e Alberto López Galindo: simetría en la Alhambra, Universidad de Granada, 2003.

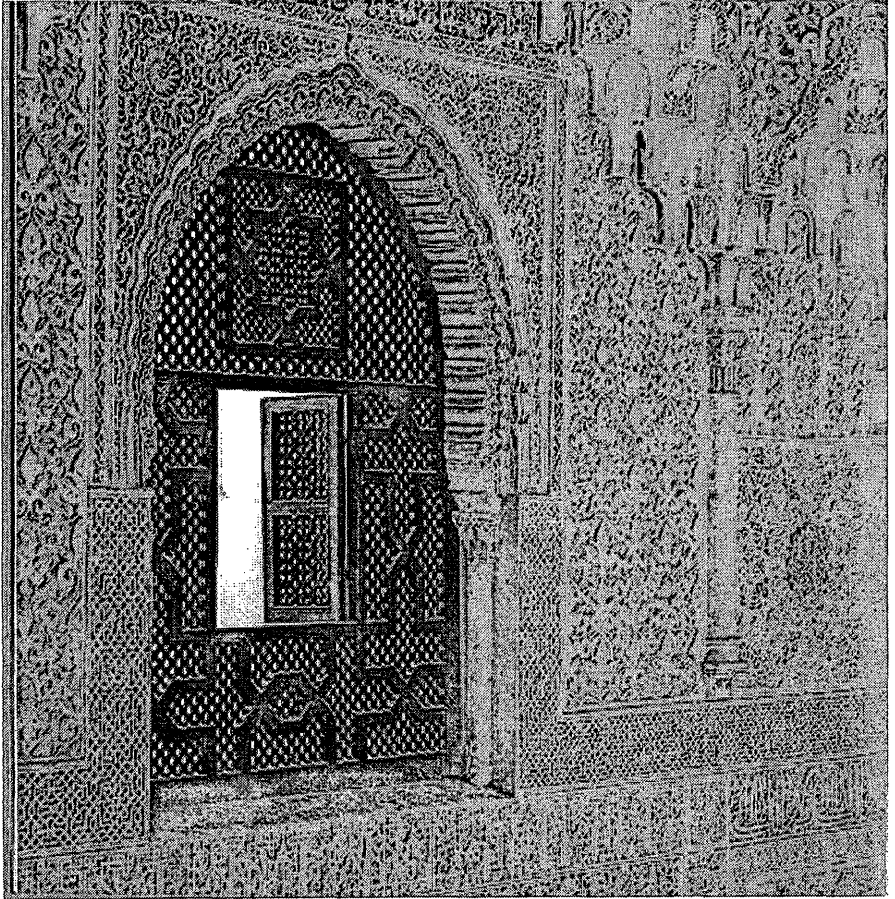


Fig. 2. Source : Lluís Casals : The Alahambra of Granada and Felix Bayón, 2000.

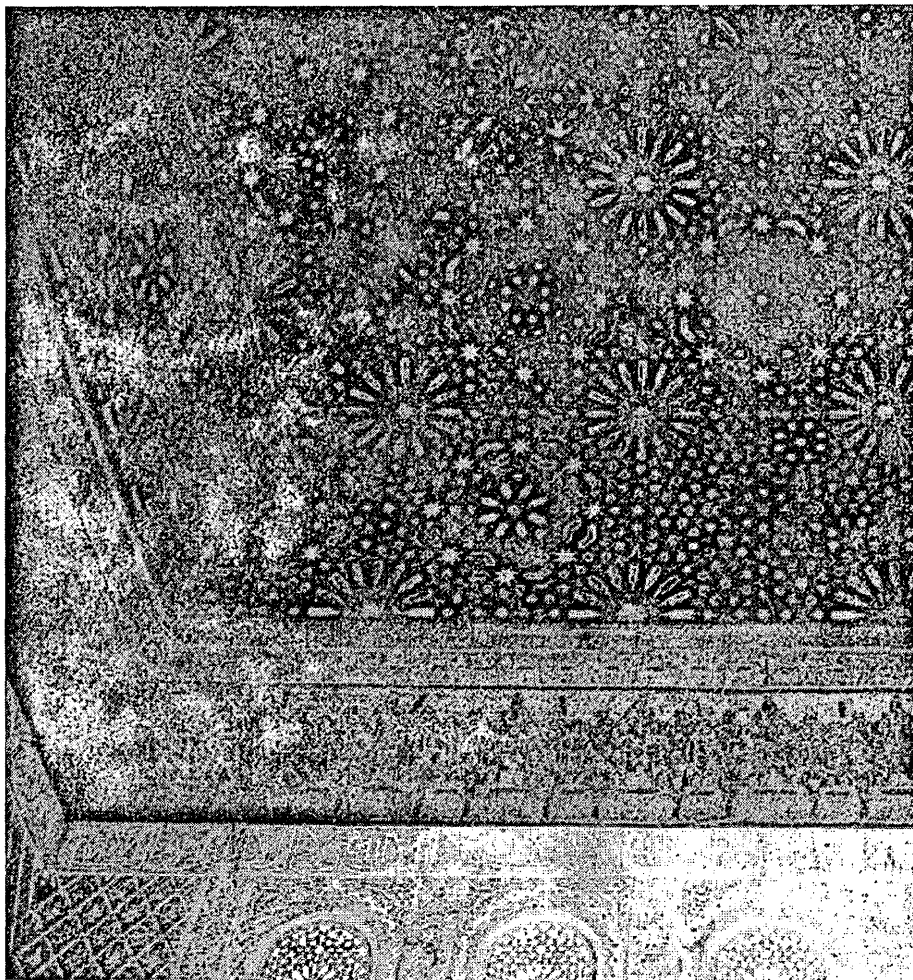


Fig. 3. Source: Grabar (see references).

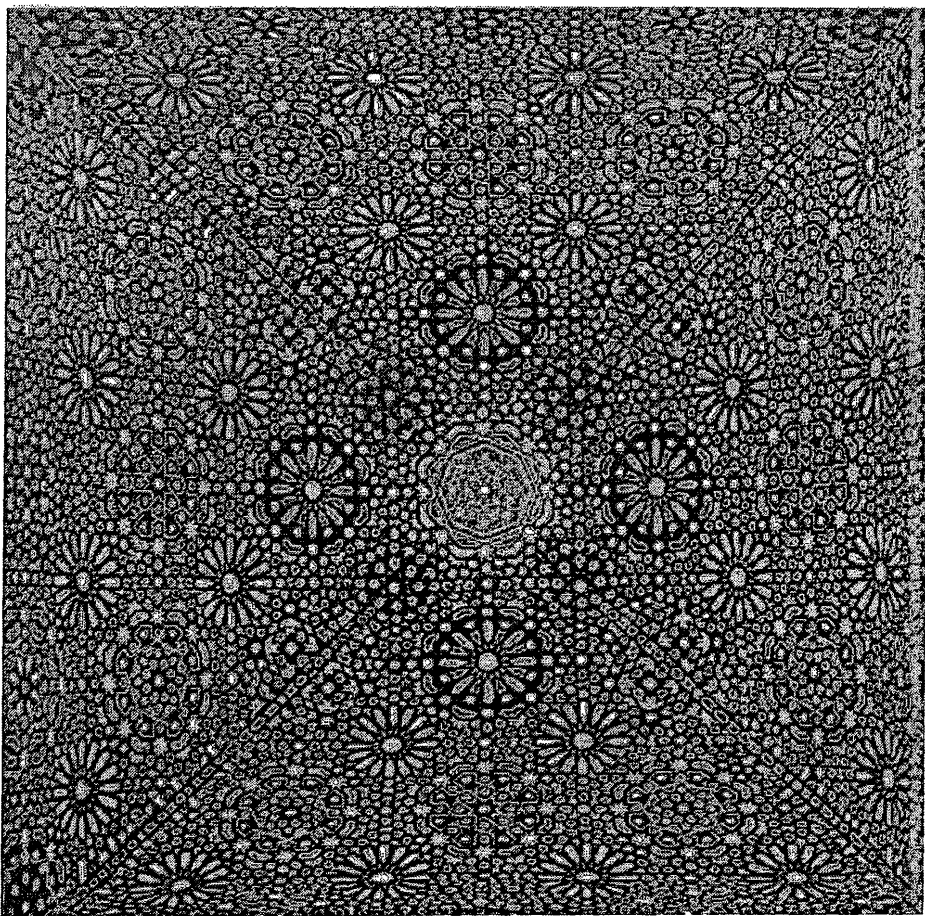


Fig. 4. Source: Official Guide. The Alhambra and Generalife.

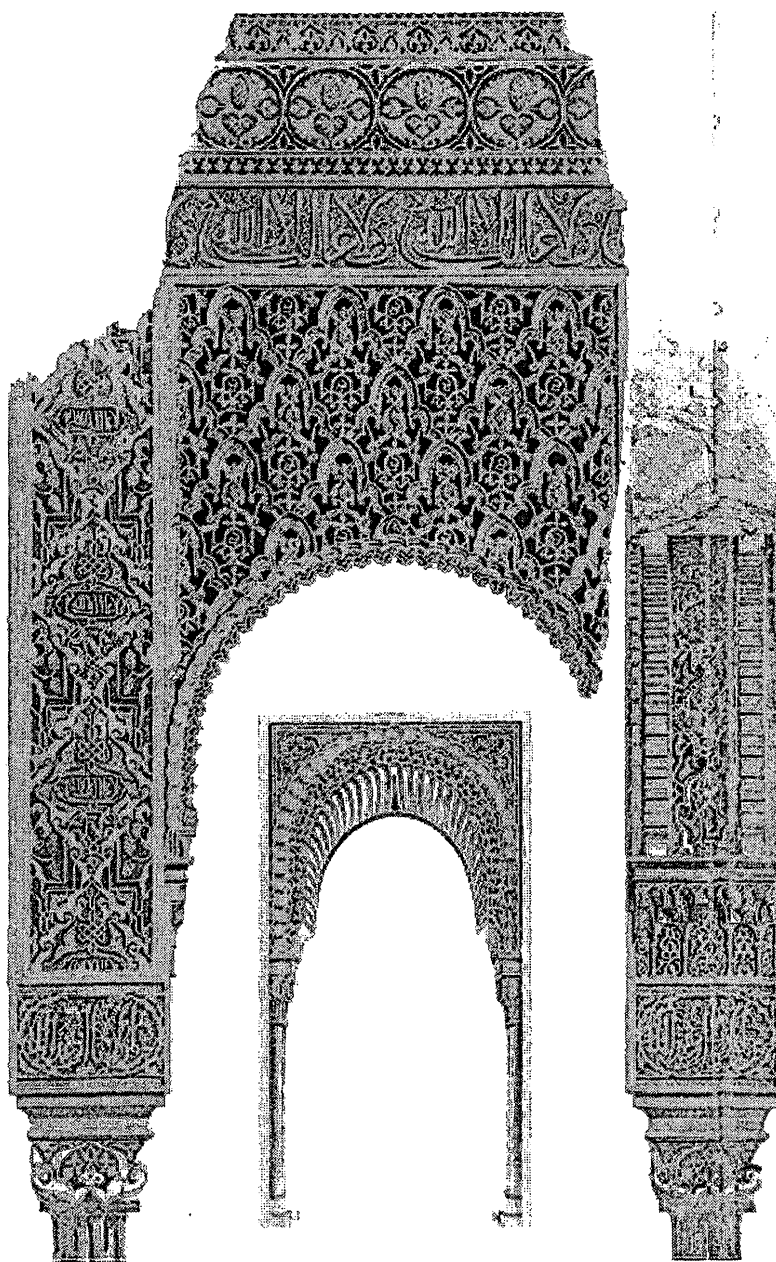


Fig. 5. Source as fig. 4.

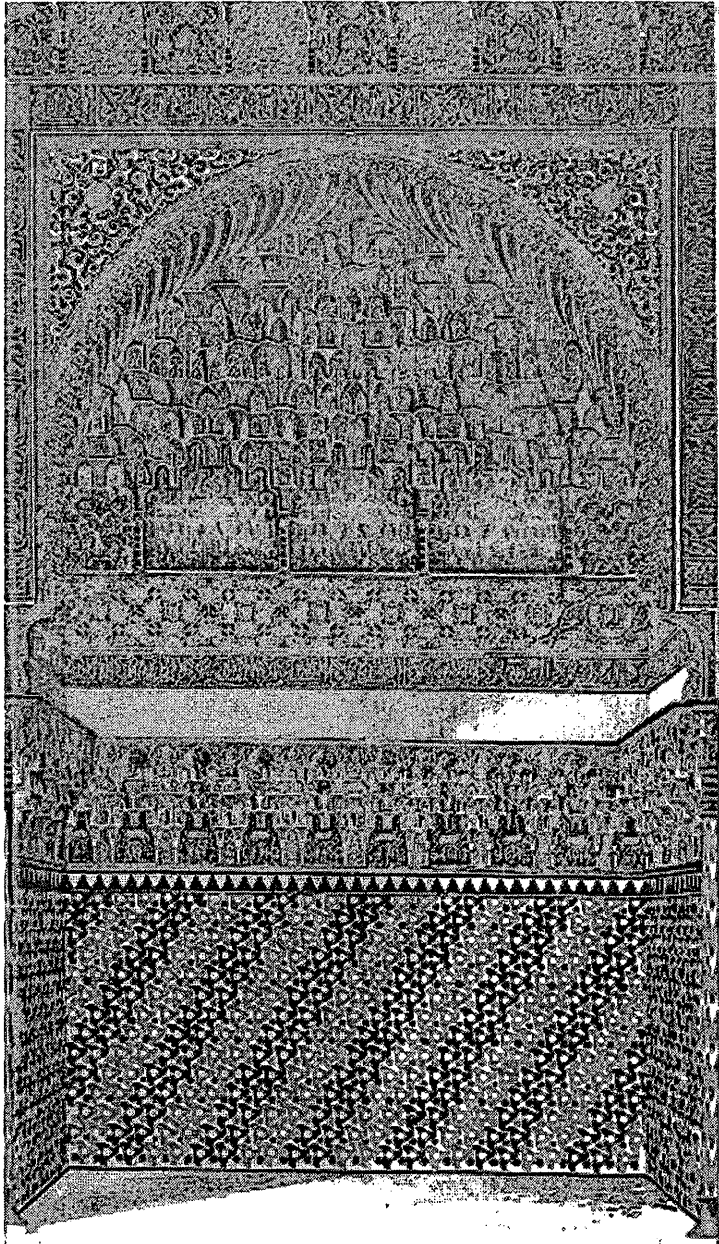


Fig. 6. Source as figs. 4 and 5.

Obviously, the lack of colour gives us an Alhambra which is much more structural and much more focussed on architectural details than on the ornament. It is as if the restorators have striven for a noble, purified work of art, devoid of too much of the orientalism that is so hated from both sides. The result is a sort of structuralist version of architecture which has been very influential and very successful as a kind of forerunner of the international style of modernism. The ornament is there, the elegance is unsurpassed, but it is white and thus fits perfectly as second in rank to structure.

6. Once more on the problem of colour, the case of classical painted figures

In the previous chapter, we concluded that whatever the reasons for *not* reconstructing the Alhambra as we know it, must have been, the consequences were that structure defeated ornament and that colour as an ornament was subdued. In this section on the classical sculptures, we shall look a bit closer at the problem of colour.

The history of the problem of colour in antiquity is strange. As pointed out by Stubbe Østergaard 2004 (cf. Stubbe Østergaard 2004a and 2004b as well as Bukdahl 2004 who all of them agree to point to Winckelmann as the founding father and best defender of the faith in the whiteness of classical sculpture), the controversy of whether or not the antique sculpture was coloured was settled conclusively by 1863. In that year, the so-called panser statue of Augustus was excavated in Prima Porta very close to where the empress Livia's villa was once situated. And the statue was so well preserved that noone could miss the traces of paint on its surface. Twenty years later, a reconstruction of what the statue must have looked like, appeared in a German work on *Dorische Polychromie* - and the whole matter was forgotten. True, noone forgot to mention that 'by the way, classical sculpture had been painted as well' but the pictures and the descriptions continued as if nothing had happened.

Clearly, we are facing a blockage to reconstruction even more serious than in the case of the Alhambra, if it is not in a deeper sense the

same⁴.

In 2004, the Danish museum of the Glyptotek, the Vatican in Rome and the Antikensammlung in München joined forces in putting on a show called ClassiColor. The show featured numerous examples of reconstructed classical sculpture in polychrome versions. I will show you two examples of Roman sculpture, as it is now and as it presumably was, and conclude by commenting briefly on the pictures.

First, we have here the panner statue of Augustus from Prima Porta. It looks like this when it is on show at the Vatican Museum in Rome. (fig. 7)

And like this when the reconstruction has been carried to its logical conclusion. (fig. 8)

Next example is the head of Caligula from the Copenhagen Glyptotek. It looks like this and if you look carefully enough at the original you may still see remnants of brushstrokes at the ears. (fig. 9) These and other traces have been put to full use in this reconstruction: (fig. 10)

I am sure some, if not all, of you would hate to have all the classical sculptures treated like this. I am sure I would. But it is rather interesting to speculate on why⁵. One obvious reason is that the reconstructions look more like Jeff Koons or other pop artists making fun of the tourist industry. But why, again? Because they are realistic, and classical sculpture by now - and now in this case means since

⁴ It has come to my attention that there may be a connection between the two that I had overlooked: The work on colour in the Alhambra was done originally by the architect Owen Jones in his *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details from the Alhambra* which I have not seen (London:1842-45). Apparently, the same (?) Owen Jones was active in the debate on classical color (Stubbe Østergaard 2004a: 32).

⁵ A fact almost too obvious to mention, is that the colour paint in the case of the reconstructions was put on by restorators, not artists. In the classical world, it seems, they had artists who specialized in working with particular sculptors and were regarded as indispensable for the artistic result



Fig. 7. Source: Classi Color (see references), Musei Vaticani Città del Vaticano.



Fig. 8. Same source as fig. 7.

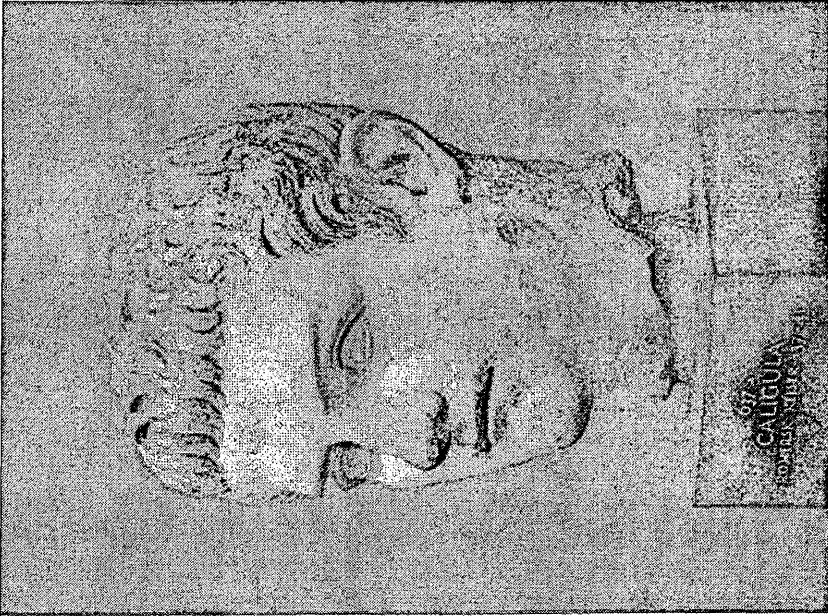


Fig. 9. Same source as figs. 7 and 8.

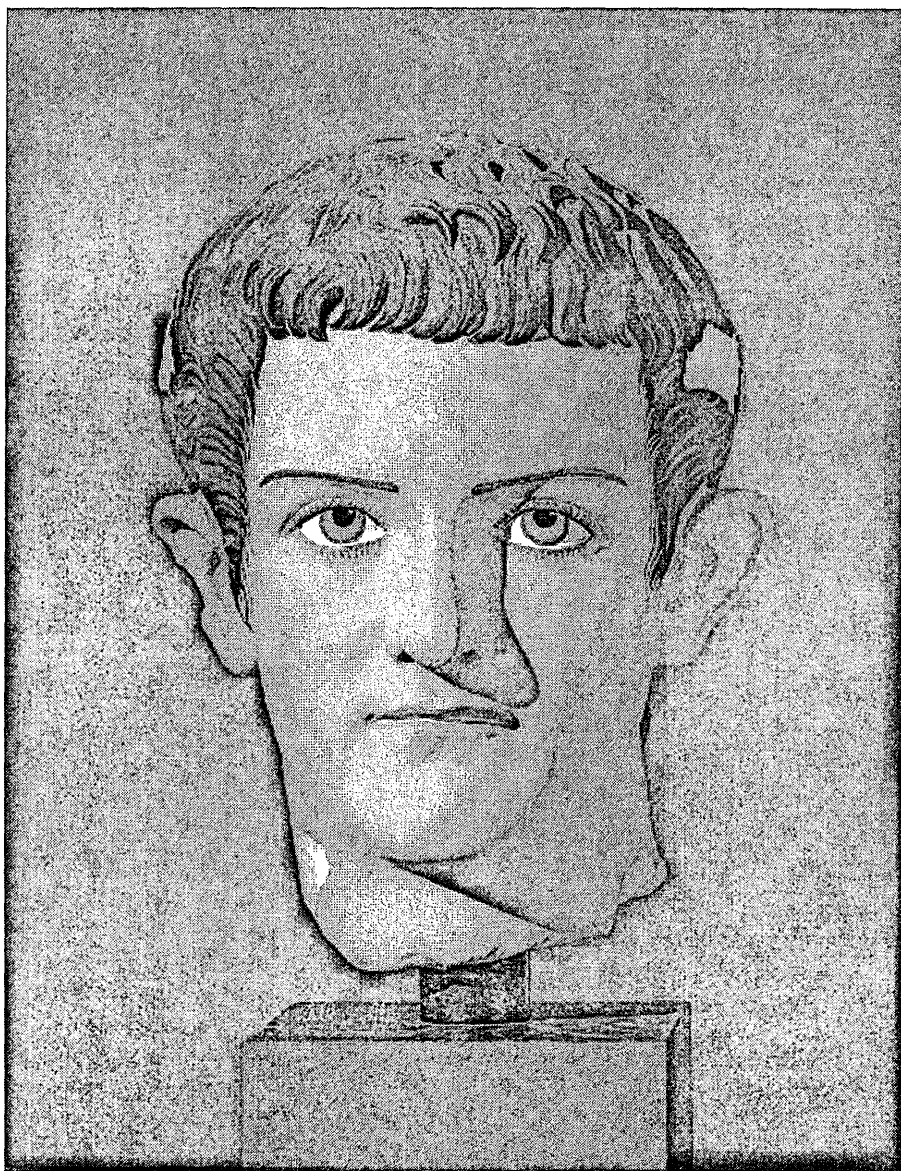


Fig. 10. Reconstructed portrait of Caligula. Same source as figs. 7 and 8.

Winckelmann and Herder (Stubbe Østergaard 2004: 9ff) - is assumed to be quite the opposite. It is the ideal representation of idealism - as far from any reality as any platonic idea would be. The bust seems to sum up the essence of man precisely because it cannot be mistaken for a representation of the particular person that it happens to portray. The classical busts simply do not portray in any modern sense, at least they do not do so - now.

In a more profound sense this may be a version of the perennial fight against realism in aesthetics but that will, I am certain, take us too far afield.

Conclusion: The enigma of historicity

I have attempted to show that reconstruction is only possible under some version of historicism. But historicism cuts both ways - when it is accepted. It is not only a matter of time and the ordering of events. And it is certainly not only a matter of finding the authentic version of the object, perception cannot be exempted from historicity. On the contrary, perception is also historical as I have argued in the final chapters. And we cannot reconstruct the original perception as we can reconstruct the object perceived.

We may reconstruct - and then in some cases we may not. Whether we do it or not, we cannot hope to turn back the irreversible passing of time. In a fundamental sense, we cannot go back, and all reconstruction is a projection of the present into the past. Even if we play the Mozart sonatas on instruments stemming from Mozart's own time, even if we go by contemporary accounts of how he played his own music (How fast and how loud was he? And how in the absence of any gold standard for tempo and intensity would we know how to interpret the comments?) we cannot alter the fact that a CD of the event can be turned on so frequently that we can hear the sonatas infinitely many more times than Mozart himself - let alone anyone else in his time - ever did. Classical music has become a commodity in every version of the word. The reconstructed items are of the present and thus merely reconstruct the present's view of the past, not the past itself. That is irretrievably lost.

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