The Ancient World

Coins, Cults, History and Inscriptions V

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C. P. Cavafy (1863-1933), the great modern Greek poet of Alexandria in Egypt, wrote numerous poems set in ancient times, especially the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods. His skill and his knowledge of sources were such that he has received favorable treatment in articles by ancient historians, including contributions to this very journal by its earlier editor Al. N. Oikonomides. "A Little Known Poem by C.P. Cavafy: Coins with Indian Inscriptions" appeared in AncW 9 (1984) 35-37, while "Hellenistic Numismatics and 'The Philhellene' of C.P. Cavafy" came out in AncW 13 (1986) 47-53. Of other studies, I know offhand of G.W. Bowersock, "The Julian Poems of C.P. Cavafy", Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies 7 (1981) 89-104. For many years in my own teaching of undergraduate ancient history courses, I have enlivened certain class meetings with readings from the poetry of Cavafy, either from the translations of Rae Dalven or those of Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Cavafy sometimes speaks in his own voice, sometimes as the omniscient narrator, but often he takes on the persona of a character (historical or fictional) in the poem itself – or he may move back and forth between such alternatives within the same poem. An ironical tone is very often present.

In recent years, as I have yielded more and more frequently to the impulse to write poetry, I have occasionally ventured into attempting Cavafy-style treatments of topics appropriate to my areas of ancient historical interest. Although Cavafy and I share an interest in Hellenistic themes, I have also been particularly attracted by the poetic possibilities in, for example, Herodotus and the Bible. Herewith, a few offerings of my poetic efforts, produced mostly within the last couple of years, along with a paragraph or so of commentary on each poem, describing its ancient sources and the present-day circumstances prompting its writing.

Black Clio

Pontius Pilate
was an Ethiopian Jew.
Proofs abound,
for those with eyes not
whitened to the second cataract.

Did he not rule
a region packed with Jews?
And are not some
Jews Ethiopian?
Is not ritual hand-washing
a rite of ancient Jewry?
(Enough to get one burnt
in pious Lisbon!)

And is not Pontius
derived from Pontic,
that kind-to-strangers
Sea called Black?

Too long the whitening-over
of Clio’s eyes,
and of that other Cleo’s
countenance.

Did she not converse
in Egyptian? -- ask Plutarch --
and in Hebrew as well?
Well, sure, also in Greek,
sometimes: one has to
issue orders.

And what of snub-nosed Socrates?
O Attic Afric martyr,
that pale mob that lynched you
had dark unstated motives.
Strange fruit indeed,
small gratitude
toward democracy’s
dark Mother.

February 27, 1992

ISAAC

It’s no wonder that I never amounted
to much, and now my trickster son
has shown me for a doddering fool,
and bilked his brother – more stupid,
if it’s possible, even than I am –
out of all his rights and blessings.
No doubt he’ll bypass everything that all of us have ever done – certainly his thickish brother, no match for him, although they’re twins. Probably even his grandfather. Me? I’ve done so little some will doubt I ever lived: the family history hardly needs me in it.

What could anyone expect, after the horror Father put me through? He had his god to make him feel righteous in just obeying voices no one else could hear. And I, his only, long-awaited son (discounting the Egyptian’s bastard), was nothing to him but a sacrificial beast!

Then he spots a ram that happens to be caught in the bushes, and concludes his god conveniently has changed the victim. He’s relieved, and feels all vindicated in believing everything that he’s imagined. But what of me? I was still, and I would never cease to be, the son a madman planned to kill in order to placate his fantasies.

I have been a husband manipulated by the wife a servant chose for me, and certainly an inept father, but at least I never contemplated murdering my sons – not even that one I could never trust. My stolen blessing on him then, for all the good that it will ever do him!

July 15, 1999
"HIPPOKLEIDES DOESN'T CARE!"

An Athenian aristocrat he was, and finalist in the year-long contest for the hand of Agariste, daughter of the tyrant Kleisthenes of Sikyon. But on the day of final decision between the suitors, after the feast, he danced upon a table, and got involved so wildly in it that he stood on his head and flailed his dancing feet in the air. Disgusted, the tyrant bellowed: "Athenian, you have danced away your marriage!"

His reply became a proverb. Agariste's son - by another, not by Hippokleides - was given his grandfather's name, and founded the democracy.

A byword for frivolity, that Athenian's comment; it's only from this incident his name is known. But when a generation greedy for experiences has given way to one that's merely greedy, frivolity seems almost idealism. Those who missed Woodstock, and never have danced naked in the moonlight, with every form and movement of glorious bodies gyrating solo and in ever-changing combinations, react only out of ignorance and fear, if they join in the tyrant's condemnation.

Hippokleides may have been right. Maybe marriage, power, and influence - translate conventional involvement, wealth, and respectable propriety - are poor replacements for sensual pleasure and the freedom of self-expression. One life we have on earth, regardless of our generation. We couldn't stockpile Woodstocks against the deadly combination of zealotry and greed that has ruled us since the eighties. But we can be like Hippokleides: do what we wish and pay the price and not care what it is.

February 13 and August 25, 2000
NOTES AND DISCUSSION

DIARY OF PTOLEMY VIII PHYSKON

In a garbage dump near Memphis, papyrus fragments from the diary of the strangest, most perverse of all the Macedonian Ptolemies, kings of Hellenistic Egypt for three hundred years. He called himself Euergetes, “Benefactor”, borrowing the epithet of the third Ptolemy, but so foul was his reputation that contemporaries called him “Malefactor”, Kakergetes – those who did not name him for his large, distended belly, Physkon. Brother-sister incest was the norm among the Ptolemies, a habit they took over from the native Pharaohs, but here as elsewhere Physkon broke all records. His older sister Kleopatra was married off sequentially to both her brothers, then our hero took a second bride – another Kleopatra, offspring of his siblings’ marriage – without bothering even to divorce her mom (his sister), and fathered with her yet more Ptolemies and Kleos. Inscriptions cite King Ptolemy, Kleopatra the Sister, and Kleopatra the Wife, three recognized joint rulers.

Thus far, no cause for censure: standard dynastic practice, only moderately expanded. Incest was no malefaction in this context, no grounds for evil reputation; Ptolemy worked hard to earn his epithet, in the half-century-plus he intermittently was king. His first taste of power came in his teenage years, when the mob in Alexandria, alarmed that his brother Philometor had become the willing or unwilling client of the invading king of Syria, Antiochos Epiphanes, proclaimed him joint ruler with his absent brother’s sister-wife. Sources fail us, but his appetite for domination apparently was whetted, since reconciliation was shortly followed by the expulsion of the elder brother. The Roman Senate had to intervene to patch things up, partitioning the kingdom. Cyrene in Libya being Physkon’s portion, though he had wanted also Cyprus, and vainly schemed to get it via Roman help.

A few years later, he accused his brother of trying to kill him, even showed his scars before the Senate, and precautionarily (or propagandistically) bequeathed Cyrene to the Romans, if he should die still childless – meanwhile appealing to them for protection against supposed further plots. Magnanimously, Philometor reacted with friendly gestures. But the gesture that really counted was the designating of his own son as his heir.
Physkon, now bereft of prospects locally, paid court to an eminent and wealthy Roman widow, Cornelia, mother of the brothers Gracchi, but she scorned her portly suitor. Only his brother’s fateful dabbling in affairs of Syria revived his chances. Playing kingmaker in Antioch, Philometor died in his prime, thrown from a horse. Immediately, Physkon appeared in Alexandria, overwhelmed the troops of Kleopatra’s Jewish generals, and made himself his sister’s second brother-husband. He promised to protect his youthful nephew – whom he quickly of course had killed.

Familial murders were ancient Macedonian practice, so sister Kleo was not expected to hold an undue grudge, and anyway no one solicited her feelings in the matter. One year later, she bore him his first child, called Ptolemy Memphites, since Physkon was just then in the Old Kingdom’s capital, being crowned as Pharaoh. Already he’d begun to build an extra-Alexandrian power base, and soon he staged a purge of intellectuals associated with the great library and museum (and with his sister). Next he married – first seducing, maybe even raping (our sources are ambiguous) – his sister-wife and brother’s daughter. Who knows what specific insult (there were so many) prompted the elder Kleopatra, some years later, to stir the city mob again to drive him out, along with his younger wife? But his revenge was grisly, even by the standards of the royal family. He sent to her a birthday-present basket; in it, the dismembered remains of her – and his own – son, Memphites!

Soon Physkon was in the countryside, sending his Egyptian generals to battle against his sister’s Greeks and Jews, posing as the champion of the oppressed Egyptians against the conquering invaders (himself excluded). His propaganda may underlie the phrasing of the nationalistic “Oracle of the Potter”, existing now only in a late Greek copy of the original demotic. Kleopatra finally had to flee to the doubtful protection of a royal son-in-law in Syria (Physkon backed a pretender against him for a while), and Ptolemy recaptured Alexandria. Luckily for her, she had taken along the entire treasury, a bargaining chip for reconciliation with the murderer of her two sons (one by each brother). Thus was an amnesty proclaimed, and the rule of Physkon with both Kleopatras – an amnesty that had to be renewed some six years later
after further strife among them. Ptolemy the Benefactor
died in his bed (our sources do not say with whom)
in the fifty-fifth year since he'd been first proclaimed as king.

The fragment of his diary seems to date from his period
of exile in the countryside, before his retaking of the capital
or either amnesty. The lines that are preserved say this:
"Malefactor", they have the nerve to call me,
ridiculing my ancestor and namesake, the one
who could have taken Syria and all the Syrian
empire, if he had wanted to. Well, no worse
than my other whispered epithet (I admit somewhat
well-earned) – gut, pot-belly, paunch!
I'll show them malefactions! I'll be the people's
ruler, I mean the Pharaoh of the Aigyptioi,
not the basileus of the accursèd Greeks, or
the more-accursèd Jews – where would my sister
be without their help? By Isis, they'll make up
prophecies about me, once I've ruled for fifty
or fifty-five years. I'll be their Agathos Daimon,
their savior, the one who rid them of
the Macedonian interlopers, beginning with
my sweet and doting sister...
Here the document breaks off.

April 13, 2000

RING COMPOSITION

Polykrates, tyrant of Samos,
was alarmed at the run of his luck.
The gods, he knew, are envious
and grudging of mortals' good fortune.
So he sought to bring upon himself
a limited degree of evil, in hopes of
averting catastrophe unmitigated.
Into the deepest sea he cast
the bauble he most treasured,
a magnificent gold-and-emerald ring.
"Perhaps they'll be assuaged with that",
he prayed, and all his courtiers
reassured him. But divinity's
depths of malice were unsatisfied. The story can only end one way, of course – the fisherman’s beaming presentation of his great catch, the royal cook’s amazing discovery, the tyrant’s realization that his doom is quite inevitable – Herodotus tells it.

Is such theodicy all mythical? Does anyone’s continual prosperity offend something embedded deep in nature, in the way things are? Current beneficiaries of such runs of luck can only pray that those Hellenic gods are really dead.

May 22, 2000

MID-TERM STUDY GUIDE

What did you – Oswyn my Murray! – tell about the bold Danaans, Achaians, and of the warlike Doriates of Pelops’ isle, inheritors of Menelaos great in war-cry and most of all the seed of all-conquering glorious Herakles?

Crumbled, buried now their stately palaces, their heroes’ memory is scarce preserved in songs of bards and chanters of old stories: the basileis, the elders, the quarrelsome demos, the black ships borne on every wind of Aiolos carrying Hellenes toward Kolchis and beyond Sikelia, even to the shores of circling Okeanos.

The duelling ways of valiant, noble champions change, adapt, live on in lines of clashing shields and merciless thrusting lances. The mad king, drunk as Polyphemos on unwatered Skythian wine, is succeeded by his father’s noblest son, and he the noblest of all who battled with the hordes of Priam’s furious children bent on vengeance.

October 11, 2000
EARTH AND WATER

"Earth and water shall you give,
by land and by sea shall you be bound
to follow the commandments and the lead
of the Great King, King of Kings,
Darius. Shahinshah of Persia"
- with this demand were the ambassadors
of the new democracy confronted.
Desperate, expecting the Spartan king
Cleomenes to invade again, they accepted
the barbarian's terms. Back in Athens,
the treaty they had made was repudiated.

Later, a bolder Athens, mother city
of the Ionian lands, sent by sea assistance
to her rebel children, incurring thereby
royal Persian vows of vengeance.
Invading Greece along the north Aegean,
Mardonius, nephew of Darius, sought
to conquer Thasos with his fleet, then
Macedonia with his army on the land.
But storms around the point of Athos
and a Thracian attack on his camp by night
defeated him in both elements.

Darius sent heralds to demand
earth and water from all the Greeks,
and almost all of them complied.
But the Athenians hurled those who came
to them into a pit, and in Sparta the heralds
were thrown down a well, and told to
fetch their earth and water there!
Soon by sea to Attica came Datis and
Artaphrenes, only to fall before the infantry
of Athens on the plain of Marathon.

Xerxes son of Darius inherited
his father's enmity. He too sent heralds
seeking earth and water from the Greeks
- but not from Athens or from Sparta.
By this time, the omen-fearing Lacedaemonians,
regretting the blasphemy involved in
killing sacred heralds, had offered recompense.
Xerxes had refused, preferring to keep them in the wrong. Athens made no such offer. The Great King advanced with fifty myriads of troops by land and sea, bridging the Hellespont with a road and digging a canal across Mount Athos. But Artemisium and Salamis destroyed his hopes upon the waters, and on land Thermopylae was but prelude to Plataea. By the time Mardonius his cousin died there, Xerxes had already fled back to Asia.

So the exultant Greeks triumphed, and those who'd yielded earth and water soon had Athens lording it over them by sea and Sparta dominating on the land. Finally the victors came to blows themselves, and ultimately the Lacedaemonians traded the freedom of the Ionian land for the help of the barbarians in defeating Athens at sea.

Once Lysander had starved Athens into surrendering, terms of peace were dictated: “By land and by sea shall you follow the lead of hegemonic Lacedaemon”. The stones of the Long Walls linking Athens with its port were toppled, lying strewn on the black earth of Attica like the debtors’ mortgage-stones that Solon had removed so long before, while from the water all save a dozen ships were dragged.

November 13, 2000

DUBYA’S DEUTERONOMIST

The parallel’s not perfect: Amon now follows Hezekiah and precedes Manasseh, and only then does Amon’s son Josiah come to power. So in our new Salvation History, short-reigning Amon, in sticking with his predecessor’s policies, becomes the ideological opposite of his scriptural model. Long reigns in our new dynasty are maxed out at eight years, while short ones are generously conceded four. But otherwise it mostly works.
Hezekiah comes to power in nationalistic ardor, pledging war on sin and sinners. He confronts the Evil Empire and proclaims his triumph in the conflict, and obligingly we overlook his bankrupting of the country in the process. His memory is cited reverentially by those his policies benefited, and foolishly by some they didn’t—such is the power of belief!

Amon, although re-sequenced, is still a trivial footnote, important only for his son. But meanwhile comes the counter-revolution. The evil Manasseh, cooperating in the evil international order, fills the land with innocent unborn blood, and even the hallowed halls with fornication. (How did Jezebel get in here too? Wrong story. Go back and look on from your upper-story Manhattan window, and plot your reincarnation as Athaliah.)

But now the people of the land—guided very ably by pillars of the political and religious establishment—have placed Amon’s son Josiah on the throne. Now comes at last the glorious reformation, now the definitive cleansing of the national temple, with Jeremiah as Attorney General. What matter if it leads again to downfall and destruction? What if another Necho comes? We’ll fix all that. We’ll write the history.

January 22, 2001

“Black Clio”, the only poem here that predates 1999, was quite specifically a reaction to a cover story in Newsweek magazine of September 23, 1991, which began (p. 49) with the questions “Was Cleopatra black? Was Socrates?” Not surprisingly, the article’s authors reached negative conclusions. What moved me, however, was the fundamental dishonesty of pretending that such questions even deserved serious answers, since both are grounded in simplistic
Afrocentric reinterpretations that are either completely ignorant of Ptolemaic and classical Athenian history, or dishonest and utterly uninterested in historical accuracy. So I constructed an ironic analogy: if ruling an area in which some of the population would be of what the Greeks called “Ethiopian” descent makes the Macedonian-descended queen “black”, then surely the Roman procurator of Judaea should have his ethnicity determined by similar means. Having made up the desired conclusion, then I (like the Afrocentrists) set about shoehorning illusory “evidence” (such as the specious derivation of “Pontius” from the name of the Pontic/Euxine/Black Sea) to “prove” my case, just as the fact of Cleopatra’s having learned the Egyptian language (Plutarch, *Antony* 27.3-4) “proves” her Egyptian-ness. Statements made about Socrates are even sillier, based merely on Platonic and Xenophontic descriptions of his face and late carved images obviously based on these literary sources. Having referred to Socrates’ condemnation as a “lynching”, I go on to evoke lynchings in the American South by borrowing the song title “Strange Fruit”. Democracy, of course, is too good an invention to be left to the Greeks, so it too is claimed for Africa.

“Isaac” reflects thoughts that have bothered me ever since encountering Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling* during a year of theological study back in the 1960s. Acting as referee for a textbook that was ultimately published in 2000, Margaret L. King, *Western Civilization: A Social and Cultural History*, I was reawakened to the problem when the author opened her first chapter with a summary of events in Genesis 22 and praised the story for the wonderful lessons it supposedly teaches (p. 4), an interpretation that recurred at several points within the textbook. I could not help visualizing the incident from the standpoint not of Abraham, but of Isaac, so my poem has him looking back, as an old man recently victimized by the trickery of his son Jacob, on the trauma that scarred his youth. He is as inept in (implicitly) concluding that his blessing will be of no benefit to Jacob, as he is in everything else since his experience of being nearly sacrificed.

“Hippokleides Doesn’t Care!” – the title is a quote, the reply shouted by the protagonist at Herodotus 6.129 – is a meditation on America since 1980, when the counter-revolution associated with the election of Ronald Reagan as president began the process (still continuing) of rejecting and reviling the freedoms proclaimed by my sixties generation. My bias is obvious; I think most of the moral and religious posturing of Reagan and his heirs is sanctimonious and probably dishonest (how many of the moral crusaders have been caught with their own pants down?), and I think what has really happened is a huge shift in governmental favoritism toward the affluent, with life made tougher and tougher for the poor and the middle class – a change for which all the moral/religious rhetoric has been a quite effective smokescreen. I call for the spontaneity and sensuality exemplified by Hippokleides’ words and actions.

“Diary of Ptolemy VIII Physkon” began as simply the imaginary document “quoted” at the end, supposedly written by Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (170-163, 145-115 BCE). The idea was to produce something on the lines of Cavafy’s “They Should Have Cared” – which in fact refers to this Ptolemy as Kakergetes (for his conflicts with his brother Ptolemy VI Philometor, see also “Envoys from Alexandria” and “The Displeasure of the Son of Seleukos”). Then I concluded that most of my potential audience could not possibly make the connections that Cavafy’s Alexandrian Greek audience could make, so I added an introduction, which grew until it virtually took over the poem. The background data is taken essentially from Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, q.v. for sources – I sent Green a copy of the poem, to which he responded
favorably – with a few leaps of inference. I do not really know that Physkon neglected to divorce his sister Kleopatra II before marrying her daughter Kleopatra III, but the idea seems consistent with his callous character. Nor do I know that there is any connection between Physkon and the “Oracle of the Potter” (see the handy translation of Stanley M. Burstein, *The Hellenistic Age* #106, pp. 136-139; documents #104-108 in this collection are all relevant to the career of Physkon). The dramatic date of the poem would be around 130 BCE.

“Ring Composition” is based on Herodotus 3.39-43, which attributes the suggestion that Polykrates should deprive himself of his most precious possession to his ally Amasis of Egypt, who is said to have renounced the alliance after hearing of the recovery of the ring.

“Mid-Term Study Guide” is a mock-Homeric poem I composed and read to my Fall 2000 lecture class on “Early Greece” just prior to its mid-term exam, prompted by going over the readings thus far assigned, in the process of devising the exam questions. Oswyn Murray’s *Early Greece* was a text in the course, and I found myself ruminating on a possible pronunciation of his first name in a way that reminded me of an epithet – “O my swineherd!” (always interjected between dashes) – for the loyal slave Eumaios in Robert Fitzgerald’s translation of Homer’s *Odyssey*, another class text. The students had also read a book on prehistoric Greek archaeology and several sources relating to the history of Sparta prior to the Persian Wars, and we had discussed the evolution of warfare from Homeric-style “heroic” single combat into the tactics of the hoplite phalanx as exemplified by the Spartan army. The Spartan kings referred to at the end are of course Kleomenes I and his half-brother Leonidas. Herodotus treats Xerxes’ Persian-led army as the heirs of the Trojans.

“Earth and Water” was first presented to my “Early Greece” class just prior to its final examination. Persian demands for earth and water, as well as Greek responses to those demands, are referred to in several books of Herodotus. Precisely what the demands symbolized is not explained by Herodotus, nor by the commentators and translators I have consulted, but I am writing on the plausible assumption that they symbolize acceptance of Persian leadership by land and by sea – much as many Greek alliance treaties refer to the requirements of giving aid “both by land and by sea”. The “quotes” at beginning and end are made up, designed to capture the feel of diplomatic language; I know that the Persian monarch called himself “King of Kings”, so I felt free to plug in the modern equivalent title borne by the Shah of Iran. Herodotus does not specifically say that the treaty of stanza 1 was repudiated, only that the envoys were censured. My last lecture in the class provided a brief summary of fifth-century developments through the Peloponnesian War, emphasizing the dominance of Sparta on land and Athens on the sea, thus maintaining my “earth and water” theme, culminating in the Spartan victory and dictation of peace terms – not specifically a Persian-style demand for earth and water, but a dependent-ally status that amounted to much the same thing, with the destruction of Athens’ defensibility by land (breach of the Long Walls) and by sea (reduction of the large navy to a mere twelve ships). I use the stones taken from the Long Walls and now littering the Attic earth to symbolize the reversal of Solon’s removal of the *horoi* in Attica two centuries earlier, when he had announced: “Before, Earth was in bondage, now she is free” (Plutarch, *Solon* 15.5; cf. *Ath. Pol.* 12.4).

“Dubya’s Deuteronomist” probably requires the most explication of any of these poems for an audience whose specialties lie largely in the Greek and Roman areas. Like the poem on Hippokleides, it is the lament of a sixties survivor at the apparent triumph of knee-jerk political
and religious conservatism in the United States at the turn of the millennium, seeing George W. Bush ("Dubya") as the true heir of Ronald Reagan, attaining power in a coup (the stealing of the 2000 presidential election in Florida) and pledged to an ideological agenda that I find repellant. The viewpoint of the poem shifts between my own, as omniscient narrator, and that of a Bush apologist or "spin doctor", the unnamed person mentioned in the title. The parallel the reader is asked to accept is between the series of late kings of Judah whose reigns are described in 2 Kings 18-23 (Hezekiah 727-698, Manasseh 698-642, Amon 641-640, and Josiah 639-609) and the series of recent U.S. presidents (Reagan, George Bush Sr., Bill Clinton, and George W.), with the unimportant Amon (George Sr.) shifted by literary license to a position before, rather than after, Manasseh (Clinton). The central point is that the right-wing Republicans of America today view history just as ideologically, and just as unpragmatically, as the editors of the biblical books of Kings – and with similarly disastrous results, already thus far and potentially in years to come. All that counts to them is that a president (or king) must uphold certain political/economic/religious beliefs, not whether any effort is made to govern effectively or reasonably; failures and successes in effective government are ignored, since only ideological purity and moral/religious transgressions matter. Obviously, I regard this attitude as irresponsible and dangerous.

Specific parallels may be evident from the foregoing, but I will spell them out briefly. Hezekiah versus Assyria resembles Reagan spending the Soviet Union into dissolution – producing a power vacuum whose consequences in our own case are still unknown, but definitely imposing on the US an unprecedentedly-onerous national debt (as Hezekiah stripped Judah bare to pay tribute to Sennacherib). Manasseh, the loyal Assyrian vassal who brought Judah over fifty years of peace and prosperity, yet was denounced by the biblical editors, for religious reasons, as the worst of all Judah's kings, seems a good parallel for Clinton and his treatment (including even a trumped-up impeachment attempt) by the right-wing Republicans. The practice of child sacrifice under Manasseh (as under many kings) probably seems no worse to many of today's religious rightists than Clinton's refusal to follow the no-exceptions anti-abortion line of Reagan and his heirs, while Clinton's sexual escapades in the White House might be equatable with the reintroduction of the customary cult prostitution under Manasseh. I could not resist the anachronistic references to Jezebel, Phoenician wife of Ahab, king of northern Israel 873-852 (1 Kings 16-22), and to Athaliah (2 Kings 11), a princess of their line who seized power in Judah and ruled there 842-836, since many critics of Bill Clinton seem to hate and despise Hillary Clinton, recently elected Senator from New York, even more than Bill, and to suspect her of grandiose designs. Jezebel was looking from an upper-story window in the palace when the religiously-motivated regicide Jehu ordered her thrown down (2 Kings 9.30-33). Amon was murdered after barely a year as king (a loose equivalent of Bush Sr.'s failing to win reelection as president despite the advantages of incumbency), and the coterie who put the very young Josiah on the throne (asserting that the coup was a popular uprising) presumably intended to rule in his name. It was they who "found" a "book of the law" (which most scholars identify with at least the core of the book of Deuteronomy) in the temple in Jerusalem during his reign, and who cooperated with (or led) the king in bringing about the so-called "Deuteronomic reformation", whose viewpoint is generally believed to be followed in the editing of the main historical books of the Hebrew Bible. The prophet Jeremiah (here compared with Bush appointee John Ashcroft, a militant religious-rightist) began his activities under Josiah; members of
families of persons associated with the Deuteronomic reformation protected him when he was beset by enemies in later reigns. Like Hezekiah, whose policies his resembled, Josiah was depicted in the biblical narrative as a heroic, great king, despite the fact that his policies were notably unsuccessful, in fact ultimately disastrous for Judah. He was himself ignominiously killed by Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt, and within a generation Jerusalem was destroyed and its monarchy brought to an end by the Babylonians.

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