

"The Destruction of the Depraved Age: Orientalism and Modernity in Louis Le Roy's *De la vicissitude ov variete des choses en l'univers . . .*"¹

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The recent move in early modern scholarship toward the study of the interrelationship between Europe and "the East" raises some important questions of theory and methodology. On the one hand, critical employment of postcolonial categories of East and West can privilege colonialism as the primary condition structuring history and social relations neglecting basic historical facts, particularly in the case of mercantile expansion in the Levant. Ottoman Turkey was never actually colonized, yet its social and cultural configurations share important structural features with those countries which were. This raises the question whether a critical focus on colonial identities informed by postcolonial theory—the West and its Other, Metropole and Colony—is adequate to situate early modern representations of the East, and the Ottoman empire in particular, within their material conditions of possibility. On the other hand, recent readings of the relationship between capitalist modernity and early modern cultural production have not always considered the shaping role of Europe's "others" in the dynamics of capitalist expansion and the accompanying discourse of modernity. Hugh Grady's argument is exemplary of this position. Drawing upon the Frankfurt School, Grady defines modernity in particularly Eurocentric terms, as the transition from feudalism to capitalism in which "autonomous rationality, power politics, the market, appetitive desire" govern the "desacralized spaces of the West."² Yet, terms like "desacralized spaces of the West" function as spatial categories that make apparent the spatial and geographical logic underpinning the discourse of modernity. By reproducing a Eurocentric discourse of modernity, we neglect the constructedness of the spaces of East and West, obscuring analysis of the ways spatial distinctions are employed to support and sanction the political and economic power of capitalism. And, I would add, we reproduce the triumphalist narrative of the West's domination of the East, even as we critique it.

I wish to present a brief reading of Louis Le Roy's 1575 treatise known as the *Vicissitude*, to demonstrate that the production of a distinction between East and West emerges in relation to one of the primary determinants of modernity, the social relations of expanding mercantile capitalism in the early modern period. Inasmuch as Le Roy's historiographical method is structured by an articulation of the discourses of modernity and orientalism, I argue that his spatial differentiations are central to his conception of the modern age. While it has been noted that Le Roy's text provides an early example of "modern" progressive historiography³ (situating him along with Jean Bodin, Montaigne, and Francis Bacon), I argue here that the *Vicissitude*'s progressive historiography is embedded in a foundational orientalist spatial differentiation which is easily overlooked if we focus exclusively on intellectual history or "modernity" and neglect issues of space and geography.

In his 1575 treatise *Of the Interchangeable Course, or Variety of Things in the Whole World . . .* (translated to English by Robert Ashley in 1594), French humanist Louis Le Roy celebrates "the excellence of this age," his purpose being "a comparison of this later

age, with all antiquity in Armes, in Learning, and all other Excellency.”⁴ To establish his position, Le Roy makes a definitive break with the venerable ancients, distinguishing the modern⁵ from the ancient past, and situating his own forward-looking narrative of the progress of civilization against a Providential historiography.⁶ Le Roy’s primary concern in the treatise is to develop a comparative model for the history of civilization, a model that will apply universally to all civilizations, and twentieth-century scholars have noted that his real innovation is his employment of the trope of arms and letters as a structuring device for this new comparative method.⁷ Yet, largely Le Roy’s employment of a spatial opposition between East and West has gone largely unremarked in the scholarship on intellectual history. Le Roy reads the concurrence of arms and letters (a common humanist topos) through the binary opposition of East and West, troubling his own universal model from its very inception: as arms rise in the East, so learning increases in the West: In the second half of the *Vicissitude*, Le Roy’s descriptions clearly equate Greece and Rome (eventually generalized as “the West”) with the rise of learning. By contrast, the excellence of Asia and the East are, on the other hand, defined by the rise of arms, albeit paradoxically: the excellence of Asia is evidenced by the great warriors who have conquered the East. Le Roy establishes the rise of learning in the West and its counterpart, the conquest of Asia, as the twin engines of the progress of civilization, and as the definitive characteristics of the modern age.

Le Roy celebrates this new age as the age of Tamburlaine, linking the rise of the fifteenth-century Central Asian warrior and his defeat of the Turks with the new age.⁸ Following Poggio Bracciolini, whose Florentine history *De varietate fortunae* (1448) initiated a comparison of Tamburlaine to great Greek and Roman leaders of antiquity,⁹ the fascination with Tamburlaine intensified throughout the sixteenth century, resulting in a genre through which a standard pattern of the biography was established. The originator of this standard biography was Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405-1464), who served as Pope Pius II from 1458-1464.¹⁰ Central to each reiteration of the story is Tamburlaine’s rise from his origins as a lowly Scythian shepherd, accounts of his early success in winning followers and territorial expansion into Anatolia, anecdotes illustrating Tamburlaine’s cruelty in conquest, Tamburlaine’s humiliation of the Turkish tyrant, Bajazet, whose defeat by Tamburlaine is avowed to mark and distinguish the new age as superior to antiquity.¹¹

Thus, the tensions in Le Roy’s model arise in part out of a conflict between, on the one hand, an assertion that temporal comparisons between present and earlier ages may provide an objective basis to evaluate the progress of civilization, and, on the other, a framework grounded in an orientalist differentiation between the spaces of West and East. My question then is why? Why does Le Roy use the terms “East” and “West” and employ this binary opposition as a structural device for his historiographical method? Sixteenth-century chronicle histories of the Turks resist such a binary schema, and I argue that the *Vicissitude* takes up this opposition in a way that marks a significant departure from earlier representations and a shift toward our own modern sense of orientalism. I argue that the explanation lies in his image of the global market as the ultimate expression of civilization and his modern age.

'The Excellence of This Age': Le Roy and Modern Progress

Loys Le Roy (1510-1577), a colleague of the French humanist Du Bellay, was trained in the humanistic curriculum, moved from Paris to Toulouse in 1535 to study law, and returned to the court in 1540 to enjoy the patronage of Guillaume Poyet, Chancellor of France and reformer of the French judicial system under Francis I.¹² Working in the tradition of Hellenistic French humanism, by 1555, Le Roy had established a strong reputation as a translator.¹³ Le Roy's career as a humanist scholar coincided with those of Erasmus, Rabelais, Montaigne, Sir Thomas More, and Juan Luis Vives, and he is versified by Joachim Du Bellay who contributed translations of poetic passages for the commentary of Le Roy's 1559 translation of Plato's *Symposium*. What little is known about him is derived from his translations and the *Vicissitude*,¹⁴ and Le Roy's works bear traces of his travels and receptions at court, including an account of a trip to England in October 1550, where he was received by the child king King Edward VI, and served by William Paget, First Lord. Following this stay, Le Roy published his translations of Isocrates in 1551. The *Vicissitude*, Le Roy's most serious and significant work, was produced late in his life, two years before his death, and achieved great popularity in France and abroad.¹⁵

The *Vicissitude* participates in the language and concerns of other humanists of his time. Le Roy advances the conventional argument of the concurrent rise and fall of arms and learning¹⁶ and distinguishes his age through the use of the commonplace metaphors of humanist historiography. Le Roy's metaphors of reclamation—the restitution of tongues, the 'restauration' of good letters and the arts, and recovery of 'auncient' learning—situate his text in a long tradition of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Renaissance humanists whose historiography employed the metaphor of light and darkness to redraw the "Dark Age" as the antithesis of their own time.¹⁷ Observing the scheme initiated by Petrarch, Le Roy fixes the beginning of a "dark" age around the time when classical, or "pagan" Rome was superseded by the Christian chapter of the empire and marks its end with the emergence of his present age: "in this age have bin restored the tongues, and knowledge, after they had surceased about almost twelve hundred yeres" (sig.A.iiii.) Yet, Le Roy represents another step in this discussion of the merits of Antiquity: positioning the achievements of his present age against the venerable ancients, Le Roy rejects the authority of ancient knowledge and by negation of both the "dark age" and antiquity instantiates his "present age," the modern.

Yet, as I have noted above, Le Roy does not associate his "present age" exclusively with the humanist recovery of the knowledge of classical Rome. Rather, Le Roy follows his scheme of the concurrent rise of arms and letters, dating the new age at the year 1400 with the rise of the fifteenth-century Central Asian warrior Tamburlaine and his defeat of the Turks.

As we have marked thother ages by some famous warriour, and notable power that hath bin in every mutation; so it seemth that the mervailles of this age ought to begin at the great and invincible TAMBERLAN, who affrighted the world with the terrour of his name, about the yere of Christ 1400. (107v⁰)

Central to each reiteration of the story is Tamburlaine's humiliation of the Turkish tyrant, Bajazet, whose defeat marks the age. Tamburlaine's rise marks the present age, an age that emerges in opposition to 'the depraved age' of Bajazet, emperor of the Turks. As my opening epigraph indicates, Le Roy links the advent of the new age with the destruction of another:

During the raigne of TAMBERLAN, began the restitution of the tongues; and of all sciences. . . . TAMBURLAN said he was the wrath of God, and the destruction of the depraved age. (108 v^o, 120 r^o)

Le Roy's contrast between Tamburlaine and Bajazet marks a broader pattern of his text; throughout, Le Roy's treatise is structured by spatial and geographical distinctions between East and West that gesture toward a geopolitical logic that anticipates the ideology of contemporary modernization theory. Tamburlaine's ascent in the East, inscribing the East in a relation of subordination to a universal "selfe same citie," marks the restitution of knowledge in the West.

Le Roy's modern age culminates in the unification of the world through commerce and trade, figured as a "selfe same citie." Le Roy concludes his treatise with a celebration of the advancements of western knowledge of the world, technology, exploration and commerce, declaring:

In such sort that we may truely affirme that the world is wholly manifested, at this day, and all mankind entierly knowen: for now all men may communicate one to another their commodities, and supply their mutual wants; as inhabiting all the selfe same citie, and common wealth of the world. (123V).

Rejecting a nostalgic look backward to a Golden Age, Le Roy grounds his utopian vision in the contemporary ventures of merchants. The expansion of commerce underlies both the forward orientation of Le Roy's progressive historiography and provides an ideal spatial referent for Le Roy's modern age. His selfe same citie anticipates a new view of the global community as an emporium that would emerge in the next two decades, evidenced in texts such as Giovanni Botero's 1589 *Ragione d'estato*,¹⁸ John Wheeler's 1601 *A Treatise of Commerce*,¹⁹ or later, in Gerard Malynes 1622 English treatise, *Lex Mercatoria*,²⁰ in which trade and trafficke are envisioned as the foundation of global harmony, and the law of commerce "precedes even the very morall Law itself, as written by Moses" (sig. B.i.). Marx gestures toward the particular relationship between space and time in his vision of the dynamics of capital accumulation. Marx reminds us that "a constantly expanding market . . . must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. . . In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations" (Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 39). Capital accumulation proceeds ever forward, through a "constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation" (Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 38). The global expansion of capital thus links spatial constructs with progressive, temporal narratives,

gesturing toward the processes by which notions of time and progress are implicated in the production of space. David Harvey has convincingly demonstrated that the processes of economic growth under capitalism involve internal contradictions which become visible in changing spaces.²¹ Harvey argues:

Capital thus comes to represent itself in the form of a physical landscape created its own image, created as use values to enhance the progressive accumulation of capital on an expanding scale. The geographical landscape which fixed and immobile capital comprises is both a crowning glory of past capital development and a prison which inhibits the further progress of accumulation because the very building of this landscape is antithetical to the 'tearing down of spatial barriers' and ultimately even to the 'annihilation of space by time.' . . . As a consequence, we can expect to witness a perpetual struggle in which capitalism builds a physical landscape appropriate to its own condition at a particular moment in time, only to have to destroy it, usually in the course of a crisis, at a subsequent moment in time (247).

Le Roy's *Vicissitude* discloses a complex spatial and temporal logic that situates East and West in relation to this selfe same citie or global marketplace. Le Roy's spatial differentiations, a depraved East and a modern West, are defined in relation to a single scale of temporal progress, universalizing Western modernity by subsuming Eastern space to a homogeneous temporality. The temporal figure of "a depraved age" functions as a sign for the space of the East, marking a contradiction in Le Roy's universal progressive narrative. Throughout the text, Le Roy brings the reader back to a second primary topos: Tamburlaine's triumph over Bajazet, emperor of the Turks. Le Roy declares: "TAMBURLAN said he was the wrath of God, and the destruction of the depraved age" (108 v^o, 120 r^o).

In this way, Le Roy's treatise initiates figural connections between the degraded body of Asia, the unification of the world through trade and commerce, and the restitution of languages, in other words, the Renaissance. The rise of Tamburlaine and the modern, "the new age" is linked to the destruction of the depraved age of Bajazet. Le Roy's "selfe same citie, and common wealth of the world" . . . (123v^o), functions as a universal spatial and temporal construct, a totalizing vision of a global market that draws upon the ideological construction of an earlier medieval Christian tradition of Augustine's City of God. Just as the City of God represents "a world community, unified and at peace, striving for the salvation of men's souls,"²² whose always anticipated and ever deferred End of the World functioned to guarantee the stability and unity of the Holy Roman Empire, so does Le Roy's "selfe same citie" represent a global community in which the anticipation of future profits and prosperity legitimates and resolves the contradictions of the free market.²³ The notion of time characteristic of expansion of capital embodies precisely the same contradiction inherent in the mythical City of God; the medieval Church expressed its real, material territorial ambitions by figuring the earth as the incarnation of Christ and the singular mystical body of the Christian church, situating infidel difference outside and alien to its own universal space and time of salvation. Likewise, the temporality of capital universalizes space in relation to the progress of

time, producing a consciousness of the synchronic coexistence of self and other within "homogeneous empty time."²⁴

Consequently, Le Roy's modern age is produced here through an erasure of competition between merchants (the selfe same cite is an idealized space of harmony and good will) and a displacement of this conflict onto the various Eastern empires of the Tartars, Turks, Mamlukes and Persians. In so doing, Le Roy reestablishes the opposition between the East and the West as primordial.

'Timeless' Comparisons

Throughout Le Roy's treatise contrasts between East and West complement Le Roy's temporal comparison of ancients and moderns, and gesture toward a complementary spatial logic integral to the argument of the treatise. As Le Roy compares the ancients to the new age, he situates the geographical differentiation of East and West within a more general temporal framework, essentializing these spatial constructs as primordial, timeless contraries. As I noted in my introduction, Le Roy's historiographical method is actually grounded in this distinction: As knowledge rises in the West, so do great warriors rise up and conquer the East. In this way, Le Roy's spatial distinctions provide a new criterion against which to situate "the modern," one that enables the universalization of the concept of modernity. Le Roy's conception of modernity, situated as it is against its contrary, must continually reproduce the terms of the opposition "East/West" as a primordial, timeless opposition.

Following a logic of comparison, Le Roy sets the clash between Tamburlaine and Bajazet in an allegorical relation with the most famous ancient battles between East and West. Le Roy argues: "as we have marked thither ages by some famous warriour," the emblem of the new age is Tamburlaine:

Hee was in fortune like to Alexander; who never fought battaile but he wan it; neither besieged fortresse but hee tooke it: having both of them received continuall favour of fortune, without any adversitie. As Alexander when he had overcome the East, prepared great armies by sea, and by land, to conquer also the West . . . (119v^o)

In an exemplary manner, Alexander's defeat of the Persian Darius merges with Tamburlaine's conquest of Asia, and his defeat of Bajazet: As Astyages the King of the Medians was bound in chains by Cyrus, and Darius King of Persia, was shut up in a golden cage after being vanquished by Alexander,

So Bajazet being overcome by TAMBERLAN, remained prisoner untill his death, and was kept in chaines. . . . And as were the great battles between Alexander and Darius of Persia, so unto which wee may compare that which TAMBERLAN gave unto BAJAZET OTTOMAN. (120r^o)

Le Roy's illustrations recall famous battles of antiquity, and through a relation of resemblance they link Tamburlaine and the present age allegorically to the famous ages

of antiquity. The epoch of Hellenism, the referent in this case, is marked by the famous Battle of Issus of 333 B.C. in which Alexander the Great defeated the Persians. The absence of the specific historical context of conflict creates a sense of a "timeless" comparison by eliminating the temporal difference, collapsing Le Roy's present age into a Hellenistic past.

Reinhard Koselleck argues that a specific form of temporality is produced by allegorical representations. Governed by a logic of resemblance rather than a modern historical sense of time, exemplary relations function to enclose present and past within a single historical plane, eliminating historical difference. Past and present historical figures "merge in an exemplary manner," and "the space of historical experience enjoys the profundity of generational unity."²⁵ Thus, exemplary figures are read through sameness and identity, determined by a singular notion of origin. Yet, a temporal difference is not eliminated which was once apparent. Rather, as Koselleck notes, the temporal difference that we understand as a modern historical sensibility is simply "not at all apparent" (4) in the allegorical representation. Tamburlaine's conquest of Asia is not only contemporary; it assumes its place as a sign of the primordial conflict between Greek and Persian, West and East, a conflict that not only appears timeless, but appears to mark each new age. Le Roy's exemplary comparisons thus produce a forward-looking historiography embedded in a foundational orientalist spatial differentiation.

Yet Le Roy's exemplary comparison discloses a complex temporal and spatial logic; the treatise's logic of comparison is disrupted by the subsumption of its own foundational orientalist opposition to a singular, progressive narrative. Le Roy's spatial differentiations, a depraved East and a modern West, are defined in relation to such a single scale of temporal progress: modern inventions, great warriors, and the completion of all knowledge proceed in and through the progress of time. Time, "a depraved age," functions as the sign for the space of the East; spatial differences are subordinated to a singular, homogeneous empty time. A foundationalist spatial logic governed by the comparison of East with West overlaps and augments Le Roy's temporal distinction between the present age and antiquity. The new age emerges in opposition to "the depraved age" of Bajazet's East.

Le Roy's link between the temporal and the spatial not only serves to establish the putative unity of the spaces of the West and the East as objects of knowledge. Le Roy's use of a single secular criterion for comparison also situates West against East in a developmental narrative of relative progress. Representing a departure from a medieval Christian historiography that stressed the moral distinction between "Christian" and "infidel," Le Roy's comparisons link "natural" progress to spatial categories. In Book One, for example, the "variety and alterations in man" are read through the categories of East and West:

Concerning the East and West, all doe agree, that the Oriental or Easterly situation, in the same aspect of heaven, and seated in the like place, is better than the Westerly or Occidentall: and that all thinges growe fairer, and greater in thone then thother. Notwithstanding we see the Westerne people to

excell in force of body: and the others in vigour and sharpnesse of understanding. . . . The Gaules or Frenchmen have often sent great armies into Italy, Greece, and Asia: The Italians never overcame France till they brought their Empire to his full height and force, and that under Julius Caesar who founde them devided into factions. The Italians overcame the Grecians without great difficulty. (14r^o)

Le Roy's contradictory principle of climatologically-determined human types depends upon and further instantiates the organic distinction between East and West, and the continuity that binds spatial referents to bodies is here grounded in an evaluative criterion. "Force of body" functions as the universal, objective criterion by which East and West are compared, rooting Le Roy's illustrations of the principle of "Western excellence" in a developmental model of physical growth. As the western Gaules are opposed to the Italians, so are the Italians opposed to their eastern neighbors, the Grecians. Later, in Book Seven, Le Roy again draws upon Ptolemaic climatic theories of human differentiation to explain the rise of learning in Rome, this time linking "force of body" to the development of culture and civilization. Le Roy argues that because Rome is situated in Italy, in a middle seat between the south and the north, nature has more favored the Italians than any other people: "making them not onely strong, comely and courageous, but also ingenious, and prudent: And consequently excellent in maners, lawes, artes, and workemanships" (84 v^o). Thus, Le Roy's comparison of West and East operates on two levels. The peoples of West and East are measured, as representative of their cultures, against a singular criterion, "force of body," a secular evaluative criterion suggesting not moral but "natural" difference. Yet, this "natural" difference has a temporal dimension: as the human body develops over time, from a state of weakness to strength, so do cultures develop what Le Roy refers to as "excellence." Consequently, Le Roy's argument produces a cultural comparison grounded in a single, linear narrative of development and progress, ranking cultures not only in terms of a simple static hierarchy but also temporally, as advanced or behind.

Le Roy's criterion of "force of body" structures the more general argument of his treatise, producing a foundational orientalist differentiation grounded in the body. In the second half of the *Vicissitude*, Le Roy's descriptions clearly equate Greece and Rome (eventually generalized as "the West") with the rise of learning. Asia and the East are, on the other hand, defined by the rise of arms, albeit paradoxically: the excellence of Asia is evidenced by the great warriors who have conquered the East. Thus, Le Roy establishes the rise of learning in the West and its counterpart, the conquest of Asia, as the definitive characteristics of the modern age. Harry Levin notes that Le Roy's use of the trope of the concurrence of Arms and Learning is paradoxical and troubling here, linking the modern progress of civilization and culture with advances in the art of war. "This was more humanist than humane, and it sorted ill with the conviction that golden ages brought peace . . ." (146). If we take Levin's analysis a step further, however, we can see that Le Roy's geographical distinctions between East and West are central to his theory of the progress of civilization.²⁶ In Book Five, entitled "Of the Learning, Poesy, Eloquence, Power, and other excellencies of the Grecians," Le Roy establishes a geographical dimension to his argument about the concurrence of arms and learning, juxtaposing Asia

and Greece. As a warrior rises up and subdues Asia, so does knowledge, wisdom and eloquence ascend in Greece:

At the same time that the Persians swaied by their armes in Asia, and that Cyrus founded the Persian Monarchie, good letters and Learning were raised up in Greece, and the countries there about, aswell in the Isles, as in the maine land: and by the learning, and renowned Pythagoras began Philosophie. (57r^o)

Le Roy links Rome in a line of succession from Greece, in Book Six, stressing the rise of knowledge in Rome "as it had before in Greece" (70v^o). Greece and Rome are figured in general terms as "East" and "West" in Book Ten when Le Roy turns to his comprehensive description of the present age. Here the concurrence of arms and letters is read through the geographical distinction: as arms rise in the East, so learning increases in the West:

As the Tartarians, Turkes, Mammelucs, and Sophians, have gotten into the East by their valiancy the glorie of Armes, So have we in these partes towards the West recovered within these two hundred yeares, the excellency of Learning; and set up the studies of the sciences, after they had long time remained in a manner extinguished. (107r^o-107v^o)

Le Roy's correspondence draws upon a personification of the classical dichotomy of Greek versus Persian, figured in the historic battle between the emperors Alexander and Darius, and linked here to the rise of Tamburlaine:

They were indeed a great multitude, but unprofitable in fight; as it was clerely knowen by the valiancy and hardiness of the Macedonian ALEXANDER, who with xl. or l. thousand fighting men at the most, overcame three times DARIUS the last King of the Persians. . . . They seemed to divide the world with the Romaines, thone ruling in the East; thither the West. . . . when the Tartarians came out of their countrey, who in a little time seised on the greatest part of the north; the East, & the South: of whom came the invincible TAMBERLAN, who made the whol habitable earth afraid. (48v^o, 49r^o).

The conquest of Asia is emblemized in the degradation of the Persian body:

By which rough and hard usage the Persians being degenerated, suffered themselves to bee overcome in many parts of Asia . . . For it is impossible (saith Isocractes in his Panegyricke speaking of them) to find in people so brought up, and goverened, any virtue or prowes to triumphe over their enemies. How should there be amongst such maners, either valiant Captaine, or good Souldiers; the greatest part of them being but a confused multitude, and no accustomed to perills; being too soft for warre, and fitter to make slaves and drudges then our owne servants? The most honourable amongst

them never lived equally, familiarly, or civilly, but continue all their life to doe outrage unto some and service unto others; as people of depraved natures. By their abundance of riches, they decke their bodies magnificently, having their mindes base and vile . . . How should they not then become more effeminate, and faint in matters of war, then they were before? (47r^o, 48r^o).

Through the criterion of "force of body," Le Roy recounts the decline of the Persian empire of the East, linking the Persian body to civil and political life: having "degenerated" and "being too soft for warre," the Persians devolve into "people of depraved natures" fit only for slavery.²⁷

By this so magnificent victory over him [Darius], ALEXANDER brought under his obedience almost al the countries of the East: and transported the Monarchy out of Asia into Europe. So the Macedonians tooke away the Empire of the East from the Persians . . . They became so mighty that for a time they ruled over all Asia, possessing not onely the unmeasurable plaines, but also the abrupt downfalls of the mountains (48v^o).

Even while celebrating the conquest of the East by Alexander, Le Roy's modern age is produced here through the erasure of historical conflicts between Europe and Asia. The contemporary conflicts remain absent from Le Roy's narrative: Constantinople and Lepanto, the Christian Crusades, the Spanish expulsion of Jews and Muslims play no role in the narrative. Instead, conflict is displaced onto the East through the figure of "the glorie of Armes" and contrasted with the West through the topos of the concurrence of arms and learning. The correspondence between a West emblemized by the rise of learning and an East characterized by its "depravity" naturalizes the dichotomy between East and West. Consequently, Le Roy's argument for the perpetual progress of arts and learning subsumes space to time: the spatial distinction between East and West is subsumed to a singular, progressive temporal narrative.

The 'destruction of the depraved age': Aporia of the Modern

And so, we may ask, what purpose do these distinctions serve in Le Roy's overall argument that the modern age has arrived? In the battle of the ancients and moderns, the moderns recognized both their debt to the knowledges of antiquity and the necessity to transcend their masters. Consequently, Le Roy's logic is paradoxical; while he draws a comparison between his contemporary world and the ancients, Le Roy's call to transcend the knowledge of the ancients looks forward to the new gifts of knowledge that nature "can againe bring foorth" in times to come. Le Roy's proclamation of modernity is thus established through a contradictory logic of sameness and difference. While Le Roy compares his own age to the ancients, his argument for "the coming of the age" necessitates a break from those authorities in order to establish the discrete identity of "the modern." Furthermore, Le Roy's claims are forward-looking, not merely celebrating the knowledge of the present but anticipating the knowledge in future times. Thus, the writer is confronted with the lingering possibility that even his own age could fall back

into ignorance, only to be overtaken by an even more modern age, if not for the vigilance and watchfulness of scholars. Even as Le Roy celebrates the advent of the new age, his text exhibits high anxiety about the possibility of decline.

In the end, as his comparison makes clear, Le Roy anticipates that the moderns will serve posterity just as the ancients have served the moderns, not only as models of true knowledge, but also as the past which posterity will exceed and eventually reject as outdated. As Gundersheimer notes, "Le Roy's erudition finds its ultimate justification in the very assertion that tomorrow it might be surpassed."²⁸ It is precisely this prospect that generates anxiety for any theory of modernity. In his critique of the "secularization thesis," Hans Blumenberg points out that a genuine theory of progress involves the establishment of "a continuous sequence of surpassings of what at each point has already been achieved."²⁹ Thus, Le Roy's establishment of "the new age" in contrast to the ancients represents only a single moment in a chain of identical moments casting themselves into an infinite future. According to the terms of a forward-looking temporality, the very claim "we are modern" is immediately subject to question as each moment passes on to the next. As Peter Osborne argues, modernity is best understood not as a discrete historical period, but rather as a specific quality of historical consciousness with its own political logic. Implicit in the logic of modernity is an anxiety about its own termination. "Indeed, one might say that in its perpetual anxiety to transcend the present, modernity is everywhere haunted by the idea of decline."³⁰ Unlike the sense of time born of a logic of resemblance, the modern sense of time must continually validate itself through the discovery of "the new" and a distinction from an ever-expanding past. As Blumenberg argues, "the idea of progress is precisely not a mere watered-down form of judgment or revolution; it is rather the continuous self-justification of the present, by means of the future that it gives itself, before the past, with which it compares itself" (32).

Le Roy doesn't simply contrast East and West, but rather, the spatial differentiation is subsumed to a universal, linear progression of time—the depraved age is succeeded by the new age. Habermas argues that such oppositions are characteristic of an "oppositional consciousness" that distinguishes modern historical time from other conceptions of time and causality such as the Greek cyclical time or medieval theories of providential causality. The problem with modernity, Habermas argues, is that once it makes a break from a past, in order to establish itself, it must continue to create its normativity out of itself.

"Modernity can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch; *it has to create its normativity out of itself*. Modernity sees itself cast back upon itself without any possibility of escape. This explains the sensitiveness of its self-understanding, the dynamism of the attempt, carried forward incessantly down to our time, to 'pin itself down' (6-7).

In other words, modernity stares out into an empty, infinite future, and by means of that future, it must find some justification of its own present. Thus, claims of

modernity must employ criteria other than temporal distinction from the ancient past in order to universalize themselves. The chronological or temporal distinction between ancient and modern alone could never be the measure of historical progress. Rather, the emergence of modern historical consciousness, and Western claims about modernity in particular, are inextricably linked to the production of global spatial differentiations—like East and West, First and Third World, and so on. "Modernization theory, as Peter Osborne notes, notoriously finds its *content* in a combination of quasi-spatial (geopolitical) and economic criteria."³¹

Le Roy's conception of modernity, situated as it is against its contrary, must continually reproduce the terms of the opposition "East/West" as a primordial, timeless opposition. In this way, the conflict between Tamburlaine and Bajazet serves as both sign of the modern age, and a sign of that which will guarantee the West's own modernity, the depravity of the East.

NOTES

¹ Versions of this essay have been presented at the 6th Annual Claremont Early Modern Studies Graduate Symposium, Claremont Graduate University, March 2002; at the Conference on Europe and the Islamic World: Cultural Transformations, 1453-1798, Early Modern Research Centre, University of Reading, July 2004; and at the 13th Annual Conference of the Group for Early Modern Cultural Studies, University of Texas at San Antonio, December 2005. I wish to thank Carlton Floyd, Edith Frampton, Lauren Copfer for their generous comments on this essay.

² Hugh Grady. Shakespeare's Universal Wolf: Studies in Early Modern Reification. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1996. p. 32.

³ Werner L. Gundersheimer's monograph, The Life and Works of Louis Le Roy, published in Geneva in 1966, is part of a shift (began in the 1920s) away from a focus on the accuracy and lineages of scholarly influence of humanist translations of the classics, considering instead the role of humanist writing in the early modern development of modern theories of causation and the idea of progress. Following Abel LeFranc, "Le Traité 'De la Vicissitude ou Variété des Choses' et sa Véritable Date," Mélanges à Lanson (Paris, 1922), J.B. Bury's The Idea of Progress (London, 1920), and Herschel Baker's The Wars of Truth (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), Gundersheimer views the *Vicissitude* as an important document in modern historiography. Gundersheimer began his study of Le Roy under the direction of Professor Harry Levin, author of The Overreacher (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), the groundbreaking study of Christopher Marlowe. For more on the history of Le Roy scholarship, see Gundersheimer's introduction.

⁴ Le Roy, Loys. De la vicissitude ov variete des choses en l'univers et concurrence des armes et des letters par les premieres et plus illustres nations du monde, depuis le temps ou a commencé la civilité & memoire humaine iusques à present (Paris, 1575). Of the Interchangeable Course, or Variety of Things in the Whole World . . . Trans. Robert Ashley. (London, 1594). English quotations from this text have been taken from the Huntington Library copy of Ashley's translation. All French quotations from the text are taken from Blanchard Bates, ed. De la vicissitude ou variété des choses en l'univers. Princeton Texts in Literature and the History of Thought, (Princeton, 1944). In France, editions of the *Vicissitude* appeared in 1575, 1576, 1579, 1583 and 1584. An Italian translation was published by The Aldine Press in 1585, and a reprint in 1592. Robert Ashley's important English translation appeared in London, in 1584, just three years after the establishment of the Levant Company of English merchants.

⁵ Throughout his text, Le Roy uses the term "moderne" to contrast his age with the ancients. "Ce siecle est comparé aux precedens plus illustres en faits d'armes, conduite d'estats, excellence des letters, perfection d'ouvrages, nouveauté d'inventions, navigations non attentées jamais au paravant, & decouvrements de terres neuves incongneues à l'antiquité: pour sçavoir en quoy sommes inferieurs ou egaux aux anciens, & quoy devons estre preferez. . . . Puis suyt la comparaison des Royaumes, Empires, Monarchies & Republiques modernes avec les anciennes" (Sommaire de L'oeuvre).

⁶ Later in the chapter I will discuss the ambiguous relationship between the forward orientation and materialist causality of Le Roy's historiography and his use of a Providential vocabulary.

⁷ See Gundersheimer; and Levin, Harry. The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance. (New York, 1969), 146.

⁸ Hallett Smith, in 1945, noted that Le Roy's text was fundamental in establishing that the Central Asian warrior Tamburlaine was associated with the modern age before Marlowe wrote the Tamburlaine plays and that internal evidence from the plays suggest that Marlowe was familiar with Le Roy's *Vicissitude*. See Hallett Smith. "Tamburlaine and the Renaissance," Elizabethan and Other Essays in Honor of George F. Reynolds, (Boulder, Colorado, 1945), pp. 126-131. See also Harry Levin, The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe. (Cambridge, 1952). For excerpts from the most widely circulated texts containing the Tamburlaine story, see Vivien Thomas and William Tydeman. eds. Christopher Marlowe: the plays and their sources. New York: Routledge. 1994.

⁹ Voegelin cites the eighteenth-century Paris edition, Florentini Historiae de varietate fortunae: Libri quatuor (Paris, 1713).

¹⁰ Later appropriations of the Tamburlaine story by English writers indicate its continued usefulness for purposes of national allegory. In John Foxe's Acts and Monuments, the story of Tamburlaine's debasement of Bajazet appears alongside a portrait of Henry VIII enthroned with the Pope under his feet in a long digression on Turkish history within Foxe's account of the reign of Henry VIII, an appropriation promoting Tudor dynastic power. The digression into Turkish history first appeared in the second English edition of

the Acts and Monuments, published in 1570 in two volumes, and in two subsequent editions in 1576 and 1583. The edition of 1570 was ordered by Convocation to be placed in every cathedral church in England. William Brown argues that Foxe's text is an important and overlooked source for Marlowe's dramatic characterization of Bajazet. See William J. Brown, "Marlowe's Debasement of Bajazet: Foxe's Acts and Monuments and Tamburlaine, Part I in Renaissance Quarterly, vol. 24, no. 1 (Spring 1971): 38-48. Shakespeare's *Henry V* will appropriate Marlovian themes and structures, relocating history on English soil for a Shakespearean model of national history. See James Shapiro. "Revisiting Tambourlaine: Henry V as Shakespeare's Belated Armada Play" in Criticism vol. 31, no. 4 (Fall 1989): 351-366.

¹¹ Voegelin, Eric. "Machiavelli's Prince: Background and Formation." Review of Politics 13 (1951): 142-168. Voegelin's purpose in this essay is to develop and explain the historical determinants of Machiavelli's The Prince, and he makes the novel claim (one important for my own argument in particular) that "Asiatic events" form a fundamental, but largely overlooked context for Western political theory (153). In his association of Tamburlaine with the new age, Le Roy participates in what Eric Voegelin has described as a lineage of Western literary and political works written in the wake of traumatic conquests by Asian empires threatening Western cultural and political integrity. In particular, the rise and expansion of the Ottoman empire was symbolized most powerfully in the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and the Turks' westward expansion to Vienna. Thus, it is in the context of "European-Asiatic struggle," Voegelin argues, that Italian humanists developed a literary genre based on the life of Timur, the Central Asian warrior who defeated Bayazid I, emperor of the Ottomans, in the Battle of Ankara in 1402. The trauma of the disintegration of Christendom prompted a literary preoccupation with the *Vita Tamerlani*, through which the Italian humanists could evoke once again "the image of the man of destiny" (155), "a man without purpose beyond conquest" (163) who appears (like the Turks) out of nowhere to conquer the enemy of Christendom. Humanist historians responded to this collective trauma by fashioning the life of Timur into a universal mythical image of a destroyer and creator of order: "the *virtu* of the conquering prince became the source of order . . . the only ordering force experienced as real, [and] acquired human-divine, heroic proportions" (165). Thus, Voegelin concludes, through the allegorical relations instantiated by the *Vita Tamerlani*, "a European-Asiatic historical relation was reactivated which had been dormant in the Hellenistic-Roman time and again in the centuries of imperial Christianity following the migration period. The Roman-Christian universalism with its linear construction of history was now seriously disturbed by the emergence of Asian powers and of an Asiatic 'parallel' history" (160).

¹² The two most important scholarly works treating Le Roy's biography are Werner, Gundersheimer. The Life and Works of Louis Le Roy. (Geneva, 1966) and Blanchard Bates, Introduction, De la vicissitude ou variété des choses en l'univers. (Princeton, 1944).

¹³ Le Roy worked in the tradition of Hellenistic French humanism, and was best known for his translations. In 1540, Le Roy produced a work on Budé, and followed with translations of Greek writers including Isocrates, Xenophon, Demosthenes, Plato's Symposium, Timeé, Republic, and Aristotle's Politics. Le Roy also translated Nicomachaen Ethics and De Anima but the texts were never published. See Gundersheimer, 10-17.

¹⁴ Gundersheimer notes that the little we know of Le Roy's life must be gleaned from his published works. "No portraits or family records remain, no chronologies, no physical descriptions, few autobiographical glimpses." From Le Roy's own dedications and appended passages of his translations, Gundersheimer reconstructs Le Roy's career as a well-traveled secretary, who followed the court, and at times spent years vainly seeking patronage. Gundersheimer goes to some length in his study to investigate rumors of literary and personal quarrels with fellow humanists such as Du Bellay, demonstrating that nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars have largely repeated rumors initiated in the sixteenth-century that have little basis in textual evidence or the scholarly practices and networks of Le Roy. Le Roy oddly remains silent about the major historical events of his time; nothing is written about the St. Bartholomew's Day massacres, perhaps due to Le Roy's recent appointment as Royal Professor of Greek in 1572, a post which he combined with responsibilities in the court of Charles IX and Henry III until his death in 1577.

¹⁵ While the idea for the *Vicissitude* may have come to Le Roy as early as 1559, it is generally agreed that he proposed the subject for his book no later than 1572. In the first edition, Le Roy stated that he first proposed the project to the Duc d'Anjou three years earlier. From the epistle dedicatory we read that the *Vicissitude* was presented to the Duke, by then, Henry III, in honor of his return from Poland, an event that occurred in September of 1574. The privilege was issued on May 10, 1575, and the first edition appeared soon after. In France, editions of the book appeared in 1575, 1576, 1579, 1583 and 1584. The Aldine

Press published an Italian translation in 1585, and a reprint in 1592. In 1584, Robert Ashley's important English translation appeared in London. See Gundersheimer, 95, 22.

¹⁶ While the idea of the concurrence of arms and learning was a literary commonplace in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century (see Castiglione, Ariosto, Rabelais, Spenser, Cervantes), Gundersheimer suggests that Le Roy was the first to apply it systematically to the study of history. (Works, 106).

¹⁷ As Theodore Mommsen notes, humanists like Boccaccio, Filippo Villani, Lorenzo Ghiberti and others contrasted the "rebirth" of arts and sciences with the preceding period of cultural darkness, effecting a reversal of the metaphor to privilege the pagan/secular rather than the Christian age. "Antiquity, so long considered as the "Dark Age," now became the time of "light" which had to be "restored"; the era following Antiquity, on the other hand, was submerged in darkness." See Mommsen, Theodor. "Petrarch's Conception of the 'Dark Ages'" in Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Eugene F. Rice, Jr. ed. (Ithaca, 1959), 108.

¹⁸ In a work published one year earlier, Delle cause della Grandezza delle Città (1588), Botero envisions the city as an emporium: "an assembly of people, a congregation drawn together to the end they may thereby the better live at their ease in wealth and plenty"

(On the Magnificence of Cities translated by Robert Peterson, London, 1606)

¹⁹ Wheeler, John. A Treatise of Commerce Wherein are shewed the Commodities arising by a well ordered and ruled Trade . . . (London, 1601).

²⁰ Malynes, Gerard. Lex Mercatoria. or the Ancient Law-Merchant. (London, 1622).

²¹ David Harvey. "The Geography of Capitalist Accumulation," reprinted in Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography. New York: Routledge. 2001.

²² Papal Bull, the Unam Sanctam, issued in 1302 by Pope Boniface VIII.

²³ Reinhard Kosselleck argues that the basic allegorical figure of the "End of the World" remained constant in various regions throughout the Middle Ages, serving an important ideological function to stabilize the Church in the face of inconsistencies and corruption. "The history of Christianity is a history of expectations, or more exactly, the constant anticipation Roman Empire remained a permanent feature: as long as it existed, the final Fall was deferred" (6). The figure of the end functioned to guarantee the stability and unity of the Church. "The Church utilized the imminent-but-future End of the World as a means of stabilization, finding an equilibrium between the threat of the End on the one hand and the hope of Parousia on the other The unknown Eschaton must be understood as one of the Church's integrating factors, enabling its self-constitution as world and as institution. The Church is itself eschatological. But the moment the figures of the apocalypse are applied to concrete events or instances, the eschatology has disintegrative effects. The End of the World is only an integrating factor as long as its politico-historical meaning remains indeterminate" (8). See Reinhard Kosselleck, Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time, (Cambridge, 1985).

²⁴ Walter Benjamin defines "homogenous, empty time" as the consciousness of time characteristic of universal history: Its method is additive; it musters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time" (262). See "Theses on the Philosophy of History" Illuminations. (New York, 1969), 253-264.

²⁵ Kosselleck, Reinhard. Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time, (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 4.

²⁶ See Levin, Harry. The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance. (New York, 1969), 146.

²⁷ The legend of the emperor Darius thrown into a cage, signifying the conquest of the "empire of the East," links the Persian Darius to the Turkish Emperor Bajazet, who is similarly defeated and humiliated by enclosure in an iron cage by Tamburlaine. Referring to the final defeat of Darius, Le Roy recounts the legend of the golden cage, "thinking to reunite himself in the third overthrow, he was traitorously taken by BESSUS, governour of Bactria, which had the principall charge under him, who put him in a golden cage, and cast him on a chariot, meaning to carry him to Bactria" (48r^o).

²⁸ Gundersheimer, p. 121.

²⁹ Blumenberg, Hans. The Legitimacy of the Modern Age. MIT Press. 1983. Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought. Thomas McCarthy, general editor. Translated by Robert M. Wallace. Originally appeared in German Die Legitimität der Neuzeit. Frankfurt, 1966. In Part I of his book, Blumenberg develops an extended critique of the "secularization thesis," the foundation of so many arguments and theories about the transition from feudalism to capitalism in early modern studies. Defining the concept, Blumenberg notes that secularization has become a commonplace in historical studies; secularization is the "designation for a long-term process by which a disappearance of religious ties, attitudes to transcendence, expectations of an afterlife, ritual performances, and firmly established turns of speech is driven onward in

both private and daily public life" (3). Blumenberg notes that what was once a nostalgic lament about the world's becoming "more worldly," has transformed into an assertion that "the modern age is an epoch of pure 'worldliness,' and its body politic is accordingly the secular state" (3). Blumenberg draws upon Hannah Arendt's critique in *The Human Condition* (Chicago, 1958), pointing out that Arendt's critique demonstrates the inadequacy of our tendency to collapse "modernity" into a generalized idea of "worldliness." As Blumenberg notes, "However one may assess the weight of these statements, they do in any case show that the 'worldliness' of the modern age cannot be described as the recovery of a consciousness of reality that existed before the Christian epoch of our history. There is no historical symmetry according to which this worldliness would be, as it were, a disposition for the return of the Greeks' cosmos. The Renaissance was only the first misunderstanding of this sort, an attempt to forestall the new concept of reality that was making its entrance by interpreting it as the recurrence of a structure already experienced and manageable with familiar categories. . . . [The] 'world' is not a constant whose reliability guarantees that in the historical process an original constitutive substance must come back to light, undisguised, as soon as the superimposed elements of theological derivation and specificity are cleared away. This unhistorical interpretation displaces the authenticity of the modern age, making it a remainder, a pagan substratum, which is simply left over after the retreat of religion into autarkic independence from the world" (8-9).

³⁰ See Osborne, Peter. "Modernity is a Qualitative, not a Chronological Category" in Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen, eds. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1992. p. 33.

³¹ Osborne, 33.