

# HOMER

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*edited by*

Katherine Callen King

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Katharine Callen King

藏 书 章

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## SERIES PREFACE

**Ward W. Briggs**

With the proliferation in the last generation of courses in Western Humanities or Great Books of the Western World, the need to demonstrate the continuity from ancient to modern culture is ever more pressing. Recent years have seen phenomenal interest in the area of studies known as the Classical Tradition, with at least one major journal well established (*Classical and Modern Literature*) and at least one other in the offing. The Institute for the Classical Tradition at Boston University continues to thrive with conferences and publications both here and abroad. The recent bimillennium of the death of Virgil brought forth a number of volumes in his honor and many of their contributions dealt with his *Nachleben*. Much the same will undoubtedly be true of the bimillennium of the death of Horace. Despite this interest, there have been no volumes designed to survey the influence of various ancient authors throughout European and American history.

This series will present articles, some appearing for the first time, some for the first time in English, dealing with the major points of influence in literature and, where possible, music, painting, and the plastic arts, of the greatest of ancient writers. The editors are published authorities on their authors and they provide introductions that summarize the scope of each author's impact on Western literature and art.

## PREFACE

This volume includes essays on Chapman, Milton, Racine, Pope, neo-classical painter Angelica Kauffmann, Goethe, Keats, Gladstone and Tennyson, Tolstoy, Cavafy, Rilke, Joyce, Yourcenar, Kazantzakis, Seferis, East German poet Erich Arendt, and recent Nobel-prize winner Derek Walcott. Other important figures are briefly discussed both in the introduction, which summarizes and situates the essays in a social or artistic context, and in the essays themselves. The essays are preceded by illustrations (fourteen from John Flaxman's monumentally influential series) that have graced various translations of Homer's texts.

Many important authors who have been influenced by Homer are not represented: William Blake, for example, and Borges, d'Annunzio, Erskine, Giraudoux, H.D., Marivaux, Nabokov, Pound, Yeats. Many more artists, too, would have been welcome: Bryson Burroughs, David, de Chirico, Delacroix, H. Fuseli, G. Hamilton, Ingres, Le Corbusier, Rubens, Max Slevogt, the Tischbeins, Wedgwood—to name only a few. And there is a complete absence of musicians: for example, von Gluck, Offenbach, Saint-Saëns. The reasons for their absence are varied: constraints of space and budget, the unavailability of appropriate essays, the fact that my specialty is literature.

I have selected essays that would show Homer's influence on a wide range of genres—epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry, novels, essays, short stories, and the visual arts—from many countries: England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Russia, Spain, United States and the West Indies. I looked for a spectrum of critical approaches—historical, biographical, feminist, formalist, marxist, post-structuralist—in order to demonstrate the interest Homer still holds for a wide variety of important scholars. I hope that most of the essays will not only

enlighten readers about the importance of Homer to western culture but will enable new insights into the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as well.

I would like to thank the many people who helped me search out and prepare these essays: my two research assistants Caroline Austin and Amy Sapowith; librarians Miki Goral, Tim Strawn, and David Zeidberg; colleagues Albert Boime, Stathis Gourgouris, Thomas Häußler, Kathleen Komar, Marilyn Manners, Marc Silverman. Thanks, too, to Ward W. Briggs, Jr., the general editor of the Classical Heritage Series, for his patience and support.



## INTRODUCTION

Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have inspired poetic imitation, been the subjects of paintings and sculpture, supplied quotations to fit contemporary situations, and provided models for contemporary behavior since at least the fifth century B.C. A brief hiatus in the poems' popularity in western Europe during the Greekless thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was quickly ended once Petrarch and Boccaccio persuaded their refugee tutor to translate them into Latin. From then until the present day, European and American artists and writers have continually found the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* relevant to their aesthetic and political concerns. This collection of nineteen essays by modern scholars explores how Homer influenced the expression of those concerns.

### Poets of Medieval Europe and the Italian Renaissance

The first essay, which was written specifically to introduce this collection, offers a brief summary of Homer's fortunes in late antiquity and the Middle Ages and examines in some depth the rebirth of his poems in the Italian renaissance. Available to most readers only in a poor Latin digest and hampered by being on the wrong side of European ancestry, Homer nonetheless remained the Trojan War poet of record until the mid-thirteenth century, when Benoît de Ste Maure's monumental redaction of Darys's version, the *Roman de Troie* (1160), swept away all competition. Homer's influence was at this point nearly extinguished, but not for long. Translations by Leonzio Pilato (1360) and Lorenzo Valla (1444) and an increasing knowledge of Greek among scholars enabled educated fifteenth-century readers to

read the originals in all their complexity. The payoff came in the sixteenth century when increasing familiarity bred admiration and imitation: Ludovico Ariosto used Homeric similes and scenes throughout his *Orlando furioso* (1532), and Giovanni Trissino and Luigi Alamanni composed epics about Italian history that were almost translations of Homer. A two-pronged debate ensued: was Homer or Vergil the superior poet and was modern Christian poetry better than pagan classical poetry? Unlike his encomiast Paolo Beni, Torquato Tasso, whose *Gerusalemme liberata* (1575) and prose writings reveal a detailed and sensitive reading of the Greek epics, was unwilling to judge poets or poetry on the basis of religion and found a way thoroughly to integrate both the Homeric and Vergilian poems into his Christian epic.

### George Chapman (1557–1634)

English scholars had begun learning Greek in Italy in the late fifteenth century and had seriously begun to teach it in Oxford, London and Cambridge by the middle of the sixteenth. By the end of the sixteenth century, many translations of the Herodotus and Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle existed to influence the non-scholar's life.<sup>1</sup> But for English writers who, like Shakespeare, had "small Latin and less Greek" Homer was inaccessible until George Chapman produced his translations of the *Iliad* (1608) and the *Odyssey* (1614).<sup>2</sup>

John C. Briggs shows how Chapman used his "preview" translation of Books 1, 2, 7–11 of the *Iliad*, published in 1598 as the *Seaven Bookes of the Iliades*, to convince a prospective patron, the Earl of Essex, that he was Achilles incarnate. Interweaving Elizabethan politics, contemporary views of Homer, and Essex's own tumultuous career as successful soldier and rebellious courtier, Briggs argues that

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<sup>1</sup>For the coming of Greek to England see J. Churton Collins, *Greek Influence on English Poetry* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1910) 33–52.

<sup>2</sup>All that was available previously was the Greekless Arthur Hall's 1581 translation of the French verse version of *Iliad* 1–10 by Hugues Salel (1537). For an insightful brief analysis of Hall's translation see Reuben A. Brower, *Hero & Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) 81–83. See Robert Kimbrough, *Shakespeare's Troilus & Cressida and its Setting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964) 25–46, esp. 36–38, for what versions of the Troy story Shakespeare did have available and how the appearance of Chapman's *Seven Bookes* might have influenced *Troilus & Cressida*. Brower's chapter on "Achilles Hero," especially pages 50–81, give a splendid analysis of Elizabethan theory of the heroic poem and of Chapman's achievement in his final versions of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Chapman modifies and expands his basic text in order “to emphasize and exaggerate specific parallels between Achilles and Essex” and “to temper as well as encourage Essex’s rise to greater power.” Despite Chapman’s belief that his Essex-inspired expansions of the Greek text revealed Homer’s true meaning, he removed them from his complete translation of 1608 in response to Essex’s execution for treason in 1602.

### John Milton (1608-1674)

Homer is ubiquitous in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1662): speech and simile, character and scene evoke the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as paradigmatic of a fallen world that Christian epic transcends. Mary Nyquist explores the effect of one such evocation on the interpretation of Adam and Eve’s behavior in the central passage of book nine, specifically on the interpretation of a simile that compares their post-coital awakening to Samson’s awakening in the lap of Delilah. Milton’s allusion to Zeus and Hera’s lovemaking and awakening in *Iliad* 14 and 15 provides a context in which readers can easily divide Adam and Eve into Zeus-Samson and Hera-Delilah, ignore the logic of the simile that identifies them both with Samson, and obliterate the difference between intellectual temptation and sexual seduction. Such an equation produced the misogynistic misreadings by eighteenth century-critics Joseph Addison (*Spectator*), Thomas Newton (edition), and Pope (*Iliad*) that have been repeated by twentieth-century editors. Nyquist argues, however, that Milton’s allusion to Homer here has been mediated by Plato’s criticism of the scene in his *Republic*, and that therefore what is at issue is not the “patriarchally structured polarity of male and female but the spiritually structured opposition between the sacred and profane,” or between “a divinely created original innocence and its fallen imitation.” In Nyquist’s post-structuralist terminology, one could say that although the phallocentric (male-supremacist) reading is possible, both text and historical context suggest that the purely logocentric (authoritarian) reading is the more powerful.

### Jean Racine (1639-1699)

In the latter half of the seventeenth century French intellectuals quarreled fiercely over whether Homer should retain his crown as Prince of Poets or be dismissed as a distasteful barbarian. Academics opposed to Homer asked “if this anger of Achilles, this deadly passion

of a hero who was not, except in the Trojan War, either of highest social rank or morally best among the Greeks, was worth having an epic poem dedicated to him.”<sup>3</sup> They questioned the value of “useless digressions” and whether Book 24 was a satisfactory ending. Lay people opposed Homer on Christian grounds, on political grounds (Agamemnon is a weak and shamed king), and on moral grounds (Achilles is insubordinate, Odysseus commits adultery with Circe and Calypso). What united these groups was the idea that Homer did not conform to current ideas about religious, political and moral *order*.

In the midst of this *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, a few authors remained neutral, keenly aware of the value of Homer but aware, too, that both social and poetic mores had changed. One such was Jean Racine. Noémi Hepp, in a short selection from her monumental book, *Homère en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, discusses how Racine, an avid reader of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, used Homer to “nourish” his seventeenth-century versions of Euripidean drama even though he knew that many Homeric values would not be acceptable to the public for which he wrote. She shows how the early *Andromache* (1667) evokes *Iliad* 6, 7, 15 and 24 to present a more refined Achilles who is not only violent but also magnanimous and compassionate, and a Hector, “knight without reproach,” who is strong as well as gentle and wise. The mature Racine uses Homer even more complexly in *Iphigénie* (1674), creating an extended imitation of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon into which he infuses more emotion (specifically that of love), tighter logic, and a nobler tone. Racine may have declared that “Parisian taste conforms with that of Athens,” but Hepp shows how his careful changes to Homer belie that affirmation.

#### Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

“The Quarrel between Ancients and Moderns” was known in England as “The Battle of the Books.” In her attempt to assess how well Alexander Pope’s *Iliad* (1715-1720) reproduced Homer “within the semantic and ideological constraints of his time,” Kathryn L. Lynch argues that the “battle” combined with the new “anthropological” scholarship of Bentley and Theobald put unique historical pressures on the translator. Drawing on comparisons with translations by Chapman (1608), John Ogilby (1660), Dryden (1700), and Anne

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<sup>3</sup>Noémi Hepp, *Homère en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968)

Lefèvre Dacier (1711), she argues that Pope tampers with Homer more than any other translator: his more epigrammatic couplets turn his Jove into a lofty and omnipotent God, his Agamemnon into "a kind of Jacobite hero," and Achilles' soul into a tripartite battleground in which Passion draws Will away from Reason. Why did Pope insist on making Homer's universe into "a mirror and idealized version of his own"? Because he was committed to the unity of Nature, a concept undermined by the new scholarship that posited a vast distance between past and present. Unlike Homer's previous translators, Pope had "to persuade his public that the Greek poet was worth reacting to personally . . . to convince an audience that there was a community of values shared by classical and Christian poets and that the reading of the Greek poet somehow required a commitment of oneself to those values."

### Angelica Kauffmann (1741-1807)

The years 1750-1825, commonly labeled the Neo-Classical period, produced a huge increase in the number of Homeric subjects in art. There seem to have been at least three contributing factors: First, Giambattista Vico's influential *Principii di una scienza nuova* (1725) praised Homer and helped bring him into favor<sup>4</sup>; Second, with the publication of *Tableaux tirés de l'Iliad, de l'Odyssée d'Homère et de l'Eneide de Virgile, avec des observations générales sur le costume* in 1757, the Comte de Caylus started a reform movement to go back to the simpler classical ideals of the seventeenth century<sup>5</sup>; and third, as Albert Boime argues, the English victory in the Seven Years' War (known in the United States as the French and Indian War, 1756-63) encouraged the English ruling class to identify with the heroes of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Because of this identification, artists such as John Flaxman (1755-1826), the sculptor whose outline drawings of Homeric scenes quickly achieved international fame, and Angelica Kauffmann, a founding member of the Royal Academy of England, could get rich by illustrating Homeric subjects. Boime points out Kauffmann's unique interpretation of her Homeric and other subjects: all are woman-centered, feminine, erotic, which seem to have pleased patrons who wanted their heroic wall-hangings to be decorative rather than tragic.

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<sup>4</sup>Michael Levey "Tiepolo's Treatment of Classical Story at Villa Valmarana" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 20 (1957) 304.

<sup>5</sup>See Dora Wiebenson "Subjects from Homer's *Iliad* in Neoclassical Art," *Art Bulletin* 46 (1964) 25-26, 32.

### Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

*Wo bist Du hin, Kindheit der alten Welt, geliebte süsse Einfalt in Bildern, Werken und Worten? Wo bist Du, geliebtes Griechenland, voll schöner Gotter = und Jugendgestalten, voll Wahrheit im Truge und Trug voll süsser Wahrheit?—Dein Zeit ist dahin. . . .*<sup>6</sup>

“Where have you gone, childhood of the aged world, lovely sweet innocence in images, works and words. Where are you beloved Greece, full of the beautiful forms of gods and youth, full of truth in illusion and illusion full of sweet truth?—Your time is lost and gone. . . .” So lamented Johann Gottfried Herder in 1777 in response to the late Johann Winckelmann’s call to turn to the ideals of ancient Greece for artistic inspiration.<sup>7</sup> Such nostalgia, which pervaded the second half of the eighteenth century in Germany, encouraged and was in turn encouraged by the research and writing of the highly influential *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer* by Robert Wood (1775) and *Prolegomena to Homer* by Friedrich A. Wolf (1795). These works were essentially romantic in mood, making Homer into the supreme, primitive imitator of Nature and, in Wolf’s work, turning Homer into a collectivity of folk poets. The latter is apparently what encouraged Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) to attempt a continuation of the *Iliad* and to create a bourgeois German equivalent of the *Odyssey*.

David Constantine takes up Goethe’s “creative attempt (and failure) to copy Homer” as part of “the whole late eighteenth century’s wish and failure to realize a supreme ideal in the form of Ancient Greece.” He focuses on Goethe’s early *Nausikaa* (1787) and his final Homeric effort the *Achilleis* (1798–99). Through analysis of Winckelmann’s, Wood’s, and Wolf’s writings, the work of other poets and thinkers of the time, Goethe’s letters and other prose, and the fragments of *Nausikaa* and *Achilleis*, Constantine explores the paradoxical imperative to be both original and imitative. He links what small success Goethe achieved in both abandoned poems to his experience of

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<sup>6</sup>Johann Gottfried Herder, “Denkmahl Johann Winkelmanns,” in *Herders Sämmtliche Werke* ed. Bernhard Suphan, (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1892) vol. 8, 481.

<sup>7</sup>In Winckelmann’s *History of Ancient Art* (1764). Rudolf Pfeiffer has called Winckelmann the initiator of “a true new Hellenism” of which Goethe provided the consummation (*History of Classical Scholarship: From 1300-1850*, [Oxford: Clarendon, 1976] 170). Martin Bernal prints the relevant passage in *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, Volume I: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987) 214.

the "Homeric" landscape in Sicily and in books--that is, to the imaginative potency of landscape that "surviving, links a degraded present with an ideal past."<sup>8</sup>

### John Keats (1795-1821)

In the first decades of the nineteenth century English poets were not so entranced with Homer as was Goethe. William Blake, who had started his life as a fervent neo-classicist, turned against Homer and the classics in 1804 and devoted his subsequent work to counteracting their insidious influence on English culture.<sup>9</sup> Tranquil William Wordsworth mentions learning Homer in school (*Prelude* 5.202) but rarely evokes and never emulates "the great Thunderer" in his own poetry.<sup>10</sup> Percy Shelley's lyrics do not touch on Homer much, though he did translate several Homeric Hymns. Of the Romantic poets, George Gordon Lord Byron, whose genius flowed more toward epic, is the one who uses Homer the most, modelling the structure and many episodes of his mock epic poem on the *Odyssey*<sup>11</sup> and evoking the *Iliad* when bloody battle scenes occur:<sup>12</sup>

The Russians now were ready to attack;  
 But oh, ye Goddesses of war and glory  
 How shall I spell the name of each Cossaque  
 Who were immortal, could one tell their story?  
 Alas! what to their memory can lack?  
 Achilles self were not more grim and gory  
 Than thousands of this new and polished nation,  
 Whose names want nothing but--pronunciation.

*Don Juan* 7.14

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<sup>8</sup>For more details of Goethe's experience with Homer see E. M. Butler's highly entertaining *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935) 121-35 and Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) 22.

<sup>9</sup>See William Richey, *The Covenant of Priam: Blake's Re-Visions of the Homeric Epic*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1990.

<sup>10</sup>Byron's amusing comparison of Homer and Wordsworth is perhaps apt in this context: "We learn from Horace, Homer sometimes sleeps; / We feel without him: Wordsworth sometimes wakes . . ." (*Don Juan* 3.98,1-2).

<sup>11</sup>Hermione de Almeida details the many episodes of *Don Juan* based on the *Odyssey*: *Byron and Joyce through Homer* (London: MacMillan, 1981) 14-16.

<sup>12</sup>See especially 7.78-80.

As this example shows, the irreverent Byron uses Homer as both touchstone and punching bag, to use Hermione de Almeida's apt formulation.<sup>13</sup>

The poet most famous for reading Homer in the early nineteenth century is John Keats. Keats had already experienced Homer in Pope's translation before the exciting night he spent reading aloud with a friend Chapman's translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Bernice Slote brings the magic of that night before our eyes and then shows the various ingredients that went into the creation of "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" the next morning. Differences between Pope's and Chapman's translations, the contents of mythological handbooks, historical accounts of the exploration of the Americas—all are examined to see why Keats reacted so strongly and why it was natural for him to make his central metaphor "imaginative discovery seen as geographical discovery in Apollo's world." For Keats, Chapman gave access to Homer and the metaphorical gold of Apollo's realm just as the Pacific Ocean gave access to more literal realms of gold for Cortez, Balboa, and Pizarro.

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)

William E. Gladstone (1809–1898)

Greece and Homer gained ascendancy over Rome and Vergil in nineteenth-century England due to a combination of political and intellectual factors. Athenian democracy supplanted the Roman Republic as the political system of record as Britain became more liberal in the 1830's. Robert Wood's late eighteenth-century *Essay*, which had so affected Goethe, and Thomas Blackwell's *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735) had located Homer in an historical space and made him worth studying as historian as well as poet. Also, poetic theory veered toward nature as opposed to art and put a new emphasis on originality.<sup>14</sup> In the Victorian period Homer was far from being just an academic subject or object of reading enjoyment. Prominent politicians were intensely interested in his relevance to the proper governing of their polity. Member of Parlia-

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<sup>13</sup>Almeida argues that if Homer "is the point of direction he is also point of divergence, if he is authority he is also reason for rebellion . . ." (20).

<sup>14</sup>Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) 135-186, and "Why the Greeks and not the Romans in Victorian Britain" in *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*, ed. G. W. Clarke (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 61-81, esp. 69-71.



ment and Prime Minister William Gladstone, the author of five books and several articles on Homer, continually pointed to the poet as a supporter of his views and wanted the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which he felt were excellent texts for teaching the arts of government, to be a constant in the studies of Oxford undergraduates.<sup>15</sup>

Liberal William Gladstone and Tory Poet Laureate Alfred Tennyson were utterly opposed in politics but united in admiration of Homer. Gerhard Joseph, in "The Homeric Competitions of Tennyson and Gladstone," discusses their "lifelong intellectual competition" over the relevance of the Homeric mythic system to their contemporary world. Gladstone, who felt there was an essential continuity between the classical Greek and nineteenth-century British cultures, read Homer as a secular Bible and precursor of Christianity; Tennyson's poems on classical themes, all of which focus on humankind's relation to ruinous Homeric or Lucretian divinity, reveal a sense of disjunction, of "fundamental irreconcilability."

### Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910)

As early as the seventeenth century there were influential advocates of studying the Greek and Latin classics in Russian schools,<sup>16</sup> and Homer was translated into Russian during the reign of Catherine the Great (1762–96).<sup>17</sup> In the nineteenth century Homer was required reading in the exclusive universities that were intended to prepare aristocrats for their responsibilities as high civil servants.<sup>18</sup> Ancient Greek, however, was not a requirement, and Tolstoy did not learn Greek and read Homer in the original until he was 42, a year after finishing *War and Peace*.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Richard Jenkyns (note 8 above) 199–204.

<sup>16</sup>J.L. Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland: Education, Educators, and Pedagogical Ideals in Eighteenth Century Russia* (Boulder, CO: East European Quarterly, 1979) 20–22.

<sup>17</sup>Catherine wrote to Voltaire, who had been urging her to learn Greek, that she would do so but that she could begin her classical Greek education with the translation currently being produced. [Letter 63, as quoted by Chula Chakrabongse, *The Education of the Enlightened Despots: A Review of the Youth of Louis XV of France, Frederick II of Prussia, Joseph II of Austria, and Catherine II of Russia* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1948) 137].

<sup>18</sup>James C. McClelland quotes a disgruntled conservative as complaining that a new regulation (put into effect in 1809) required high-ranking civil servants to know all sorts of useless things, among them Homer and Theocritus (*Autocrats and Academics: Education, Culture, and Society in Tsarist Russia* [Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1979] 24).

<sup>19</sup>Sophia Tolstoy has recorded in her diary how her husband "suddenly decided he wanted to learn Greek" (December 9, 1870) and how, after immersing