Abstract: Daniel FOLIARD

The lion of Nineveh: Henry Layard, radicalism and the reflections of fallen Empires

Henry Austen Layard's Mesopotamian discoveries in the late 1840s granted him a celebrity he rapidly used to become a political figure of the mid-Victorian times. After his election as M.P. in Aylesbury in 1852, he joined a short-lived alternative party, the Goderichites, advocating a radical agenda. Layard regularly drew upon his Assyrian expertise to comment on the flaws and shortcomings of his times. His oriental experience legitimated his harsh criticism of British incompetence in the Crimean war and his attacks against nepotism. In a context of heated discussions that eventually led to the further franchise extension of 1867, Oriental Antiquity became a discursive space where his contestation of the Victorian political order could develop and prosper.

Daniel Foliard, Université Paris Ouest La Défense
daniel.foliard@gmail.com