

CHAPTER 33

The Reception of Ancient Greek Literature and Western Identity

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*My heroes are no longer the warriors and kings but the things of peace equal to one another
the drying onions being equal to the tree trunk crossing the marsh.
But no one has so far succeeded in singing an epic of peace.*

These words belong to “Homer,” the elderly storyteller in Wim Wenders’ 1987 movie, *Der Himmel über Berlin*. As we listen to “Homer’s” thoughts on the difficulty of creating art out of the experience of peace, we are shown footage from the end of World War II. Soldiers supervise women trying to identify the corpses of their children after the bombing of Berlin. The camera lingers on a tiny cadaver, with eyes closed and mouth open, screaming noiselessly. The baby lies beneath a high wall scarred with bombardment. Behind this shocking image lurks the original Homeric epic of warriors and kings, the *Iliad*, in book 6 of which we meet the infant Astyanax on the wall of Troy from which he will be thrown.

This pivotal moment in Wenders’ film constitutes a “reception” of ancient Greek literature. Regardless of whether all the spectators of the film knew Homer’s *Iliad*, we can’t dispute the intensity of the relationship between ancient epic poem and screenplay, on which Wenders collaborated with Peter Handke. There is, however, room for debate as to the nature of that relationship. Is Wenders making an admiring statement about Homeric epic as the foundational text in the history of war literature, thus anchoring his own film in a cultural tradition that reaches back to archaic Greece? Or is his stance more critical? Is he resisting Iliadic values, holding the tradition they represent accountable, attributing responsibility for Western civilization’s lamentable history of warfare to the values celebrated in the ancient epic? Or perhaps the overriding impulse, rather, is an emotional one, of grave compassion? The humane tone of Wenders’ film, with its sympathetic angels supporting humans who suffer in the city kept apart by warring superpowers, places it in a similar category to the *Iliad*. Or, to be precise, it places it in a similar category to the more reflective moments of the *Iliad*, such as the meeting of the two bereaved men from opposing sides, Achilles and Priam, in its last book.

This tone resonates with the humanist reading of the epic proposed in an important essay, Simone Weil’s “The Iliad, or the Poem of Force,” written in the ominous year of 1939.¹ The same encounter is eloquently retold in David Malouf’s delicate novel *Ransom* (2009). While

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the Western fatalities in Afghanistan rose inexorably during the summer when I wrote this essay, the nature of the Iliad as a commemoration of men's death in combat was also refocused by Alice Oswald in her poignant 2011 poem *Memorial*. The psychological disturbance undergone by Iliadic heroes, as discussed by the North American psychiatrist Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (1994), put ancient Greek portraits of traumatized warriors (in Euripides' *Heracles* and Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* as well as epic) on the contemporary cultural radar.²

Yet there is another interpretation of Wenders' filmic sequence. The lines quoted above are preceded by images of "Homer," sitting in a Berlin library. Gazing on a model of the revolving planets, he says that he is speaking "as in the beginning, in my sing-song voice which sustains me, saved by the tale from present troubles." He then reflects that if he abandons storytelling, then humanity will forget its storyteller, and thus also its childhood (*Kindschaft*). This alludes to the way that German Romanticism defined ancient Greece ever since J. J. Winckelmann and Karl Marx. Wenders' "Homer" self-consciously reflects on the role of the maker of art – poet or film director – in the mediation of reality. The artist is somehow protected, by the tale he tells, or retells, from the contingent troubles of his era. He is also the agent and repository of art: storytelling is memory. If humans forget their story-teller, then they lose all recollection of their childhood.

In this mournful cinematic sequence we can identify the presence of at least four modes of "reception" of Greek literature. (1) The archetypal text is authoritative, foundational, generative, and infinitely susceptible to emulation and renewal. (2) The ancient text creates generic expectations and values which, on the contrary, are implicated in the perpetuation of a mindset which produces unnecessary human suffering: it is in the *difference* between the original and the new artefact or "reception" that the importance lies. Either in form or content, it resists or reacts *against* the archetype. (3) The ancient text provides a stance or viewpoint on the world; it is a cultural phenomenon crystallizing an emotionally charged reaction to life; it is the source of a worldview inflected by a particular psychological tone. In this type of "tonal" reception the ancient genre is often replaced by a new medium – cinema or lyric poetry instead of epic, prose fiction instead of drama.³ (4) The ancient text provides a point of departure for self-conscious thinking about aesthetics – the nature and purpose of art. Such thinking often shows the "receiving" author engaging with an additional ancient text – one of the "classics" of literary criticism which were written in Greek – Aristotle's *Poetics*, or *On the Sublime* attributed to Longinus. These four basic modes of reception – emulative, resistant, tonal, and self-consciously aesthetic – can all be present in the same artwork, interacting with and confirming, or alternatively undermining, one another.

More than 30 major authors of pagan literature survive who wrote in dialects of ancient Greek. In a discussion of their reception in connection with "Western" identity, the problem of the definition of "Western" arises. The concept refers to no intelligible geographical, political, religious, or economic category, was invented in the early nineteenth century by white northern Europeans, has historically both incorporated and excluded several countries (notably Russia, Israel and areas of Latin America), and has posited several different antitypes including the Moslem world, the non-Christian world, "Asia," "the Orient," "primitives," all non-capitalist economies, countries which do not explicitly subscribe to vaguely defined notions of "democracy," "liberty" or "freedom" (Meier 2011), and "the Eastern bloc" or non-NATO members during the Cold War (cf. the excellent survey of this problem by Bavaj 2011).

The second question is which organizational principle to adopt in surveying the reception of ancient Greek literature, even assuming a critical understanding of the term "Western." Each nation has responded differently to the ancient Greeks. The Hellenism of French baroque theater (Racine),⁴ and twentieth-century philosophy (Sartre, Foucault, Derrida),⁵ is not identical

to the Hellenism fused with Slavic Christianity which inspired Catherine the Great to found cities with ancient Greek names, and rediscover the ancient inhabitants of the Crimea – the Amazons, the Tauric Iphigenia, and Mithridates Eupator.⁶ In North America, where the model of the Roman Republic dominated the Early Modern reception of antiquity (Onuf and Cole 2011), cultural possession of ancient Greece was acrimoniously contested: in the nineteenth century the model of democratic Athens depicted in Thucydides was claimed by both Basil Gildersleeve, the champion of the Confederate South and founding father of American Classics, and by his opponent Abraham Lincoln.⁷ Later, Hellenism was associated with the American Modernists' staking of a claim to a national literature to rival that of the old world, above all in the self-consciously local recontextualization of the *Oresteia* by Eugene O'Neill as *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931). Yet certain broad aesthetic and intellectual developments – the Nietzschean, Frazerian and Modernist fascination with ancient Greek ritual, for example – have transcended national and ethnic boundaries (see Ackerman 1991).

Even more difficult would be a dissection of “Western” identity in terms of the *multiple* identities of people who have lived in the “West” and responded to ancient Greek literature – “Hebrew” may have signified something contrasting with “Hellene” to many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Christian “Westerners” who saw themselves as descended from an Aryan, Indo-European *Ur*-community which embraced both Indian and Greek culture but excluded Jews.⁸ Yet the “West” has also long been home to Jewish artists and intellectuals whose responses to the ancient genres are hardly less valid. Another obvious set of sub-headings would relate to the ancient genres – not only epic but lyric, tragic, comic, rhetorical, historiographical, philosophical, pastoral, epigrammatic, and so on. A fourth would be to use the modern, “receiving” category of genre, medium or discipline, such as opera, ballet, or film,⁹ anthropology, philosophy or psychology. A fifth would be to take discrete areas of subject-matter or urgent interest to the third-millennial world – the reception of the myths relating to Troy,¹⁰ or of ancient representations of sex, gender, and sexuality. This would have the advantage of making more room for the presence of the ancient Greeks in contemporary debates, for example those surrounding homosexual rights,¹¹ or inequities connected with social class (Hall 2008c). But it would reduce the space available for considering the role of other ancient literary texts in earlier periods. Euripides' *Hecuba*, for example, although not often performed today, was a crucial text in the invention of Renaissance revenge tragedy.¹²

Most of the ancient authors who have exerted influence on posterity date to the archaic and classical periods. This lends logic to the simplest solution, which is to discuss their afterlives in the chronological order in which the originals were produced. But I refer intermittently within that framework to the four fundamental types of reaction identified as contributing to the impact of the “Homer” sequence in Wim Wenders' movie: emulation, resistance, adoption of tone, and aesthetic self-consciousness. I have also, unashamedly, indulged my own preferences in terms of the selection of both ancient and modern artworks, since in an essay of this length, on such a vast topic, there is no hope of achieving either comprehensive or balanced coverage.

The chronological framework is further vindicated as organizing principle because reception is cumulative. The reception of ancient Greek literature begins at the point that it is first “received,” which means by its first audience member or reader. There is, for example, no instantiation of ancient Greek literature (or Latin, for that matter) which does not “receive,” in however subterranean a manner, the poems attributed to Homer. These formed the basis of the education of ancient Mediterranean society from the seventh century BCE; that curriculum was in turn adopted by Western humanists. It does not matter whether Homer is actually read, said John Ruskin, since “All Greek gentlemen were educated under Homer. All Roman gentlemen, by Greek literature. All Italian, and French, and English gentlemen, by Roman literature, and by its principles.”¹³ Hegel (1837/1923, 5.29) had foreshadowed Ruskin's diagnosis in saying that “Homer is that element in which the Greek world lived, as a human lives in the

air.” For a thousand years, schoolboys living under the Macedonian or Roman empires, even those whose first languages were Syrian, Nubian, or Gallic, copied out Homeric verses, summarized individual books, and committed swathes of Homeric hexameters to memory (in Xenophon’s *Symposium* 3.5 Niceratus says that his upper-class father required him to learn *all* of Homer by heart); they studied them when they were learning to be statesman, soldiers, lawyers, historians, or artists (see Marrou 1956, 162, and Kindstrand 1973).¹⁴ In the case of the *Iliad*, no later author could make a fresh start when shaping a representation of heroes in combat, a funeral, an embassy, gods in colloquy, or a review of an army by people standing on a wall. In the case of the *Odyssey*, the same applies to a representation of a voyage, a metamorphosis, an altercation with savages, an encounter with anyone dead, a father–son relationship, a recognition token, or a reunion between husband and wife.

Reception is a continuous process which began in antiquity and has, with interruptions, continued ever since; our responses to a text are also conditioned by earlier responses. Every new response to a classic text alters the total picture of its influence. Some ancient texts have engendered such definitive receptions, which become “classics” themselves, that they interfere forever with responses to the Greek original: it is difficult to think about the heroine of Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris* without interference from Goethe’s morally enhanced *Iphigenie auf Tauris* (1786). It is almost impossible to stage Sophocles’ *Electra* without acknowledging the tenacity in the public imagination of the psychotic Modernist heroine in the one-act opera *Elektra* by Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1909).¹⁵ When a great artwork like the *Odyssey* stimulates the production of others, such as Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Monteverdi’s *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria* (1640), Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) or Ralph Waldo Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952),¹⁶ cultural history changes irrevocably. According to T. S. Eliot, collectively such “existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves.” But this will always be “modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them.” Thus Eliot would have seen Derek Walcott’s more recent reaction to Homeric epic in *Omeros* (1990) as changing forever how we see its precursors: “for in order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered.”¹⁷

The extent of the cultural penetration of the *Odyssey* is partly a result of its use in books aimed at children. In 1808, William Godwin published Charles and Mary Lamb’s *The Adventures of Ulysses*, the first ever children’s *Odyssey* and the one which inspired James Joyce. But three years before that commission, Godwin had published his own version of the ancient Greek fables of Aesop, *Fables, Ancient and Modern*. He was motivated by Locke’s recommendation in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) of Aesop’s Fables as “the best, which being stories apt to delight and entertain a child, may yet afford useful reflections to a grown man” (Locke 1705/1968, 259; 256). Indeed, Aesop’s *Fables* and the *Odyssey* have been the two ancient texts which have been turned into more children’s books – and therefore imbibed at a more impressionable age by a wider public – than any others. They are also the two most susceptible to transformation into other media – there were both Aesop and *Odyssey* animated cartoons by 1950, and they can both be watched on television, listened to on audiobooks, and seen in all kinds of theater.

Most people’s access to Aesop’s *Fables* is restricted to under a hundred of his short stories or narratives, mostly featuring talking animals and strong moral messages. A few almost always appear in post-Renaissance collections – the mouse and the lion, the fox and the grapes, the tortoise and the hare. Because the fables were retold in Latin by Phaedrus, however, and used in ancient and medieval education, no single canonical text has ever emerged from the confusing manuscript recensions. Yet these simple little tales for children, as they are stereotyped, have been admired by famous thinkers from Democritus, Socrates, Martin Luther, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Malcolm X (Hall forthcoming c).¹⁸ Aesop also has a greater claim to be a global cultural property than any other Western classic author. Judging by the inventories of

books distributed in the New World by the Spanish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Aesop has been taken wherever Europeans have gone (Revello 1957, 175).

Most of the fables are set in a rural, peacetime, context, and in antiquity were associated with a lower-class, anti-heroic worldview. In art aiming at a more elevated tone, however, ancient authors used personnel from higher up the social scale, where masculinity was inseparable from militarism. The question of the impossibility of an epic of peace, by Wenders' "Homer," was already asked soon after the *Iliad* emerged. The Greeks had in Hesiod a hexameter poet whose *Works and Days* assembled verses relevant to the everyday concerns of the archaic peasant farmer, but can it be described as an "epic" in the sense meant by Wenders' "Homer"? In an ancient text incorporating lines poem in the same "epic" meter, *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, exactly this question is posed. Homer pits exciting verses about weapons and violence against Hesiod's didactic expositions of agricultural lore and folk wisdom. The internal audience think Homer should win, on the aesthetic ground that his poetry excites them and "goes beyond the level of the ordinary," but the wise king bestows the prize on Hesiod, on the moral ground that the poet who invited men to live peacefully should defeat the poet – Homer – who lingered on slaughter (*Contest* § 14, ed. West 2003) The first great reception of this statement of the rival claims of art to engender pleasure and to be useful occurs in the competition between martial and pacific genres of poetry won by the peasant vintner Trygaeus in Aristophanes' comedy *Peace* (421 BCE):¹⁹ this play itself has a fascinating reception culminating in Peter Hacks' adaptation, staged in the GDR (1962), where the ancient Greek classics had a distinctive, politicized reception (Seidensticker 1992 and 2007).

Outside academia, Hesiod's works are not imitated much today, although he is studied as evidence for mythology, farming, and astrology. But his *Theogony* contains nothing less than the founding text of the Western concept of the poet's vocation (22–35; cf. on these lines Hose, ch. 24, pp. xx2–3 in this volume): Hesiod says that the Muses once taught him when he was shepherding his lambs in the foothills of Helicon. They complained that shepherds are lowly creatures who only think of their stomachs, while they, the Muses, have superior knowledge:

We know how to speak about many things which resemble the truth,
But when we want to we also know how to utter the truth.

Giving Hesiod a laurel branch, they breathed into him a wonderful voice in which "to sing of the future and the past." They ordered him to hymn the immortals, but to address themselves, the Muses, first and last.

This account of Hesiod's realization of his poetic calling is profound. The Muses' description of their capacities reveals an intense self-consciousness, already in the Archaic period, of the nature and function of art. The Muses know that poetry can take people into a mental realm which transcends the material, bodily aspects of existence. They know that it can represent things which are not empirically discernible, and may not be real or have happened at all: on the other hand, poetry can represent absolute truth. Poetry allows the poet to range across time, allowing abstract thought, historical record and prophecy. One function of this gift is to celebrate the immortals, themselves not empirically discernible, and immune to temporal categories as understood by human beings. But the poet must always invoke the Muses who bestowed this gift of transcendence upon him. Hesiod demonstrates that what makes ancient Greek poetry great is not just its power, diversity, beauty, or exciting content. It is its inherently self-reflexive nature – its own awareness of its status as cultural phenomenon, repository of knowledge, and thrilling medium which can both disguise and reveal the truth.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of Hesiod's visitation by the Muses to Western poetry. The episode underpinned the self-conscious programmatic statements of aesthetics in

much subsequent Classical literature. Mount Helicon had become the key symbol of poetic inspiration by the Roman Imperial period (Hurst and Schachter 1996), when the tourist Pausanias followed a trail to the Hippocrene fountain and Hesiod's tomb (Pausanias 9.28–37). The encounter on Helicon has been an enduring image for a poet's first awakening to the urge to create poetry, from the anthology of poems in English collected by John Bodenham and first published in 1600 under the title *Englands Helicon*, to poets alive in the third millennium. One of the best is Seamus Heaney's 1966 poem "Personal Helicon." He remembers a moment, as a child, when his senses were transfixed as he witnessed a bucket crash into a well:

As a child, they could not keep me from wells
And old pumps with buckets and windlasses.
I loved the dark drop, the trapped sky, the smells
Of waterweed, fungus and dank moss.

One, in a brickyard, with a rotted board top.
I savoured the rich crash when a bucket
Plummeted down at the end of a rope.
So deep you saw no reflection in it.²⁰

Heaney's "I" here is a direct response to Hesiod's "I," receiving the laurel branch on Helicon. Hesiod's "I" inaugurated a key characteristic of the lyric, elegiac, and iambic poets between Homer and the first surviving Greek tragedy: the strong presence of the authorial persona, an individual subject putting their own stamp on well-known myths, or expressing personal responses to love and politics. It was through thinking about these poets that the ancient Greeks, moreover, invented the self-conscious theorizing of the "I" voice, in Plato's assault on the speciousness of *oratio recta* in his discussion of mimesis in *Republic* (book 2–3).²¹ This was followed by Aristotle's perceptive treatment of how assuming another persona can allow an author to express controversial views, as Archilochus (so Aristotle says) used the *ēthos* of Charon the carpenter in order to denounce wealth and tyranny.²²

The archaic Tyrtaeus's name and martial elegies have been invoked by patriot warriors including the imagined audience of Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle's lyrics for *Le Marseillaise*, 1792 (Vidal-Naquet 1995, 95; 101).²³ Anacreon's actual poems have been less influential than his reputation as the poet who celebrated parties, drinking, and sex, a reputation apparent in the title *Anacreontea* given to the ancient collection of poems falsely attributed to him, and the label "*Anacreontic*" given to a seven-syllable verse line which he was misunderstood as using by some Early Modern poets. He also appeared as an erotic hero in danced entertainments such as Rameau's *Anacréon*, 1754 (Gillespie 1988, 68–77). Stesichorus has recently attracted a leading author with an interest in the relationship between poetry and subjectivity, since Anne Carson's brilliant "novel in verse," *Autobiography of Red*, is a narrative inspired by the fragmentary *Geryoneis* (Carson 1997; see Hall 2009b).

However, Sappho, as the archetypal female poet, has dominated the reception of Greek lyric (see Michelakis 2009). Her reputation was secured by the admiration later antiquity felt for her poem, "He seems to me to be equal to a god" (F 31 V).²⁴ Catullus produced his own heterosexual version (Catullus 51), and the author of *On the Sublime* (see below) identified it as an example of sublimity in the selection of details which collectively expressed the emotions (Ps.Long., *De subl.* 10). In the Early Modern and eighteenth-century period, Sappho stood not for women poets but for an ecstatic posture in lyric self-expression, which could be shared by the male poet (Maxwell 2001), and in this she exerted an impact on, for example, Tennyson (Reynolds 2001). Victorian, Modernist and subsequent Lesbians have found the poetry of Sappho inspirational;²⁵ the classically trained poets Josephine Balmer (1992) and Anne Carson (2003) have produced outstanding translations.

The influence of Pindar has been narrow, aesthetic, and felt most in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Curiously, the term “Pindarick” often designated lyrical poetry free of metrical laws (that is, the opposite of the strophic and triadic uniformity which Pindar actually exemplified), or inventive and imaginative, rather than specifically encomiastic (Gillespie 1988, 186–93; Wilson 1989, 26–9). A better understanding of the form and performance context of epinician odes followed the publication, in 1749, of the first major English translation of twelve odes of Pindar, by Gilbert West, especially since it was accompanied by his treatise on the Olympic Games. A Pindaric ode in ancient Greek by Oxford classicist Armand d’Angour was commissioned to celebrate the 2004 Olympics in Athens, where it was performed on August 29.²⁶

Some plays by the three great Athenian tragedians have enjoyed, since the late 1960s, a renaissance as performance scripts in the professional theater not only of the West but of the world. Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*, Sophocles’ Theban plays, *Philoctetes* and *Electra*, Euripides’ *Medea*, *Trojan Women*, *Bacchae* and *Iphigenia in Aulis* have all become standard constituents of the performance repertoire, attracting titanic figures in the theater and film industries such as Peter Stein, Peter Hall, Ariane Mnouchine, Fiona Shaw, Tadashi Suzuki, Yukio Ninagawa, and Michael Cacoyannis.²⁷ The tragedies have been translated or adapted by major poets and writers in several languages, including Heiner Müller, Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes:²⁸ Tony Harrison has not only translated the *Oresteia* and other Greek plays, but created a new play about class struggle from the story of the discovery of the papyri containing Sophocles’ satyr play *Ichmentae* in his *Trackers of Oxyrhynchus*, 1988 (see Taplin 1991, Hall 2007a). But many scholars regard the moment at which Greek tragedy first achieved cultural prominence as the mid-nineteenth century, when it chimed in tune with the emergent identity of Modernity. Evolutionary biology marked the shift from a belief in a providential *status quo* to a doctrine that humans can only ameliorate suffering, just as in the Greek tragic universe virtue is not necessarily rewarded. After Darwin, the Greeks’ pagan, polytheist acceptance of human misery could be mapped onto the modern anti-providential outlook, with its emphasis on random and arbitrary causation. Moreover, Greek tragedy fascinated all three other great architects of the modern Western identity, Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche.

For Marx, the supreme tragedian was Aeschylus, especially the *Prometheus Bound* attributed to him. The technocratic Titan who breaks the chains of subjection to despotism lurks behind the imagery of the *Communist Manifesto* and Marx’s pictorial self-representation as editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*.²⁹ Yet Aeschylus, the earliest of the tragedians, was the last to become well known, since almost all his plays were not translated into modern languages until the later eighteenth century. Although the subterranean influence of *Agamemnon*, as mediated through the Senecan version, can be felt theatrically between 1600 and the mid-eighteenth century (Ewbank 2005, Hall 2005), the play which drew attention to Aeschylus in the age of the French revolution and the European abolition debates was *Prometheus Bound*. The possibility that Aeschylus might profitably be translated was entertained after the appearance of Pompignan’s French version of 1770 (Macintosh 2008), and the first English rendering of *Prometheus Bound* appeared in 1773. It was followed by J. G. Schlosser’s German translation *Prometheus in Fesseln*, Ferenc Verseghy’s in Hungarian (1792) and Melchiorre Cesarotti’s in Italian (1794). The sudden accessibility of Aeschylus’s play explains why Prometheus became a political icon for the Romantics, representing the ultimate triumph of liberty through steadfastness and courage against the evils of tyranny (Curran 1986, Hall 2005).

The line of defiant Prometheuses stretches from Goethe’s unfinished “Prometheus” (c. 1773) and Shelley’s visionary *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) to Tony Harrison’s feature film *Prometheus* (1998), a rewriting of the ancient tragedy as a lament for the death throes of the mining industry in the UK; it takes to unprecedented levels the art of matching tightly edited visual sequences to poetic rhythm (Hall 2002a). The other Aeschylean play which inspired the revolutionaries of

the early nineteenth century, including Shelley in his *Hellas* (1821), was *Persians*, in which another, more problematic aspect of the Western identity was rooted: the hardy, freedom-loving, masculine self as defined against the perceived “oriental,” decadent, tyrannical “other” – a divisive conceptual scheme which still dogs international relationships. *Persians* relates how the Persian court reacted to the news that its forces had been defeated in 472 BCE by the Greeks at the battle of Salamis near Athens. It is the earliest Western text to assemble many images of Asia as soft, effeminate, despotic, decadent, extravagant, and hierarchical – that is, the opposite of how the “West” has come to define itself (Hall 1989, ch. 2). In the Renaissance *Persians* was rediscovered as a prefiguration of the triumph of Christianity over Islam; Hellenism during the Greek War of Independence it became a manifesto of Hellenic nationalism. More recently, it has been used by theater directors including Peter Sellars and Claudia Bosse in a resistant manner, to explore the ideological undercurrents of the wars in the Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan.³⁰

The reception of *Persians* is intertwined with the reception of the accounts of the Persian wars in Herodotus’s *Histories* (see below, and Bridges, Hall, and Rhodes 2007), and, to a lesser extent, with the Persian war epigrams of Simonides, which have attracted the attention of contemporary poets.³¹ Aeschylus’s tragedy is also one the two Greek plays which vie for the title of having been the first to be performed since antiquity. It was recited at an event which equated Achaemenid Persia with the Ottoman Empire, thus reading ancient Asia through a lens triumphally conditioned by Christian views of Islam. This appropriation of ancient Greek literature as the cultural property of the Christian West was to remain unchallenged until postcolonial thinkers investigated the reception and preservation of ancient Greek writings, literary as well as philosophical, in the Arab intellectual tradition.³² The performance of *Persians* in 1571, in Italian or the Latin version of Saint-Ravy, celebrated the victory of a Western naval alliance, including the Venetians of the Heptanesian islands and led by John of Austria, which had defeated the Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Lepanto,³³ a feat which came to represent the defining moment in the creation of Western liberty.

The tragedy which received a more full performance 14 years later was the version of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* staged on March 3, 1585 in Vicenza’s Olympic Theater, designed by Palladio himself (see Fiorese 1984).³⁴ The choice of play was connected with the reception of Aristotle’s treatise *Poetics*, which treats Sophocles’ Oedipus as the paradigmatic tragic hero. Sixteenth-century Italian intellectuals had expended energy examining Aristotle’s prescriptions for drama, including his so-called unities, especially the reference to the action taking place “within a single revolution of the sun” (1449b9–16). Key texts had been Francesco Robertelli’s 1548 commentary and Ludovico Castelvetro’s *Poetica d’Aristotele vulgarizzata* (1570). Staging the play which Aristotle most admired was intended to test the validity of these “rules”; an adaptation by Giovanni Rucellai of the play which Aristotle discusses with equal enthusiasm, Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris*, had probably been performed in the 1520s in Florence.³⁵

The impact of the Aristotelian “unity of time” has been immense, but has taken the form of both emulation and resistance. Imitation of temporal unity has produced some of the best crafted plays in the repertoire, for example Racine’s *Athalie*, with its compression of retrospective and prospective viewpoints.³⁶ But the idea of temporal unity has also played a role, through reactions *against* it by authors such as Lope de Vega (Crino 1961), in the development of dramaturgical practice. By the eighteenth century, the experience of Shakespeare in the English tradition and the influence of Lessing on the Continent underlay the debate on the “unity of time” which permeated other media than drama, above all fiction.³⁷ In the twentieth century, this discussion of time in art informed the experiments of avant-garde directors in the cinema, such as Alain Robbe-Grillet.³⁸

Oedipus Tyrannus became a favorite of French Enlightenment writers including Voltaire, who interpreted it as an allegory of the damage a corrupt monarchy can inflict on its subjects (see Macintosh 2009, 73–81). But the thinker who made the word “Oedipal” along with

“complex” central to the Western mind was Sigmund Freud. Freud’s psychoanalytical reading was partly a response to the actor Jean Mounet-Sully’s 1885–6 performance in Lacroix’s *L’Oedipe roi* at the Comédie-Française in Paris.³⁹ When it comes to the theater history of the twentieth century, however, the Sophoclean tragedy that has dominated is *Antigone*. This process began when the philosopher Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Mind* and *Aesthetics* identified the irreconcilable conflict between the institutions of the family and the civic order portrayed in *Antigone* as the quintessential example of the ethical collision he viewed as definitive of tragedy and indeed of the dialectical view of history. As a result, modern-language translations of *Antigone*, performed to music by Mendelssohn, became an international rage in the 1840s.⁴⁰ But it was World War II that elicited the two great, politically contrasting adaptations, by the Frenchman Jean Anouilh (1944) and the German Bertolt Brecht (1947, which used as its starting-point Hölderlin’s translation). Versions of *Antigone* are now performed more frequently and in more countries of the world than those of any other Greek tragedy.⁴¹

To Friedrich Nietzsche⁴² in section 9 of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Oedipus represents magnificent passivity in the face of Dionysian wisdom, while Prometheus’s agency unites the Apollonian and Dionysian (Silk and Stern 1983, 252ff.). But the most significant tragedy for Nietzsche’s revolutionary vision of the Greeks, with its emphasis on the demonic, ecstatic and counter-rational in their culture, was Euripides’ *Bacchae*. Although Nietzsche claims that *Bacchae* is critical of the Dionysiac, his stress on the threat the Dionysiac presents to reason shows that Euripides’ Bacchic drama had informed his vision of tragedy. This emerges from his account of the genre as a vehicle of Dionysian emotional enchantment rooted in the dithyrambic chorus, of the Dionysiac desire “to sink back into the original oneness of nature”; it lies behind his description of the “vision” in which “the chorus beholds its lord and master” and becomes “an attending chorus” (Segal 1983, 102–4).

Euripides took time to establish his post-Renaissance reputation as a master of the genre. Although his capacity to elicit pity brought him admirers during the cult of sentiment in the mid-eighteenth century (Hall and Macintosh 2005, 64–98), the derision of his works in A.W. Schlegel’s lectures on drama (1809–11) discouraged imitators. *Medea* was alone in being constantly adapted, a legacy of the French classical line leading via Corneille to Seneca rather than Euripides, but the important feature of Euripides’ play, that Medea kills her children in cold blood, was consistently obscured (Hall 2000). It was not until the rediscovery of Greek tragedy as a performance medium that could work in modern-language translations (rather than adaptations), a development delayed until the late nineteenth century, that the theatrical power of Euripidean tragedy was acknowledged. The first use of a Greek tragedy to make a political protest was the 1905 production in London by Granville-Barker of Gilbert Murray’s translation of *Trojan Women*, which equated the atrocities committed against the women of Troy by the Greeks with the abuse of Boer women and children by the British in South Africa. Two years later, the same team’s *Medea* spoke of the anger of campaigners for women’s suffrage, some of whom had been gaoled (Hall and Macintosh 2005, 508–20).

There are three fifth-century dramatists who founded tragedy for the West, but there is only one comic playwright, Aristophanes. This makes him hard to avoid. There is so much self-conscious scrutiny of comic theater in Aristophanes’ plays that he can be described as the founding father not only of comedy but of the theory of the Comic (Silk 2000, ch. 2, 7, 8). Intercultural comparisons of forms of comic humor juxtapose non-European models – Japanese Kyogen, contemporary Japanese comic fiction, the masked Yuyachkani festive drama of Peru – first and foremost with Aristophanes. Arab playwrights stress that the pagan ancient Greeks contributed to the cultural base of both the Eastern and Western Mediterranean, and use Aristophanes in discussions of comic dialects and the role of laughter in public life (references in Hall 2007d, 26 n.4). Precedents for every tradition of humor in the West have also, with justification, been identified in Aristophanes: personal and philosophical satire, mimicry,

parody, puns, *double entendre*, Saturnalian role inversion, Rabelaisian and Bakhtinian carnival, drag acts and cross-dressing, stand-up, bawd and scatology, slapstick, farce, and knockabout.⁴³ In addition, Aristophanes is routinely invoked as ancestor in discussions of Shakespearean comedy and romance, W.S. Gilbert's operettas, the grotesque Absurdist theater of Alfred Jarry (especially *Ubu Roi* of 1896), the anti-war comedy of Shaw, Brecht's distancing narrative modes, the Theater of the Absurd of Beckett and Ionesco, the plays of Friedrich Dürrenmatt, and the Surrealism of Spike Milligan and Monty Python (further references in Hall 2007d, 26-7 n.6).

Not that the acknowledged influence of Aristophanes has been confined to entertainments advertising themselves as "comic theater": Aristophanes has been identified behind the birth of Western Literary Criticism, the Western notion of Freedom of Speech, Juvenalian vituperation, Swift's satire, Sterne's novels, eighteenth-century German classicism, humorous journalism, and the genre of the political cartoon. Historians of science fiction claim a genealogy reaching back to the supernatural "journeys to other worlds" undertaken by Aristophanic heroes to Olympus, Cloudcuckooland, or the Underworld; Marcel Duchamp traced the roots of Dada's farcical spirit to Aristophanic scenarios; *Birds*, *Frogs*, and *Wasps* are invoked in connection with fables of zoomorphism from Apuleius to Kafka and Orwell; *Acharnians*, *Peace*, and *Lysistrata* are mentioned in connection with musical agitprop and the politicized revue theater of Joan Littlewood, especially *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1963).⁴⁴

In Herodotus and Thucydides, the fifth-century Greek world also produced two models of historiography which have informed all subsequent Western attempts in that genre. Herodotus's *Histories* have become eponymous of a genre and a discipline (Hartog 2000), and the ultimate source for the narrative of the Persian wars, including the last stand of the Spartans at Thermopylae. This has been subject to hundreds of laudatory retellings from antiquity to the ludicrously violent movie directed by Zack Snyder, *300* (2007).⁴⁵ The Renaissance Herodotus was, like Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*, first read as a moralist and mirror of princes; his reliability (at least as an ethnographer) was however taken seriously once Stephanus had in his 1566 *Apologia pro Herodoto* pointed to the similarities between some of his barbarians and the savages in ethnographic reports arriving from the New World. Herodotus's first English-language translation (1584), a version of books I–II attributed to Barnaby Rich, recommends him to the reader as often strange, "but for the most part true." Yet the Early Modern and eighteenth-century Herodotus was turned into a novelist (his 1709 translator, Isaac Littlebury, was inspired by the success previously enjoyed by his translation of Fénelon's rites-of-passage novel *Télémaque*); Herodotus was contrasted by serious thinkers like David Hume with Thucydides, the father of "real" history. The self-contained narratives that Herodotus embedded in his work were ransacked by playwrights and Romantics rediscovering oral traditions, most famously in Schiller's ballad *Der Ring des Polykrates* (1798). The rehabilitation of Herodotus as a serious thinker in the nineteenth century was related to the rise of anthropology and imperial ethnography. By 1874, in his *Social Life of Greece*, the Irish scholar J. P. Mahaffy (no anticolonial thinker), challenged the superiority of Thucydides as historian. In the twentieth century, Arnaldo Momigliano and Isaiah Berlin illustrated the unparalleled achievement of Herodotus in the philosophy as well as the practice of history (Momigliano 1958). This makes it paradoxical that within popular culture, as demonstrated in *300*, the "grand narrative" of the liberty-loving West's defeat of an eternally despotic Oriental foe, a narrative for which Herodotus is indeed partly responsible, remains perniciously seductive (Hall 2006, ch. 7; Hall 2007b).

In the twentieth century, both fifth-century Greek historians have been adopted as forefathers by journalists and news reporters (Kapuściński 2007; Carey 1987); Thucydides has also been used in military training (Rahe 2006). Indeed, in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the tragic tone and insistence that causation needs to be understood in terms of human psychological or economic factors, rather than theology, make him sound eerily modern. His greatest impact has been on other historiographers, especially in France and Britain (Archambault 1967;

Hicks 1996), and on political theorists.⁴⁶ His emulators have included Machiavelli, Hobbes (whose translation of Thucydides was published in 1628: see Slomp 2000), Max Weber (cf. Hennis 2003), and more recently analysts of the Cold War, who have heard resonances in the opposing portraits Thucydides painted of Athenian and Spartan self-definition and imperial strategy.⁴⁷ Although Thucydides' grimness has produced fewer receptions outside serious analytical writing than Herodotus's more variegated style, some passages have affected more literary genres: Pericles' funeral oration has been imitated in countless public speeches, including not only Lincoln's Gettysburg address and the inaugural speech which Ted Sorensen wrote for J. F. Kennedy; Thucydides' description of the plague at Athens underlies Defoe's account of the London plague of 1665 in his *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722).⁴⁸ Thucydides himself appears as a character, alongside Pericles and Sophocles, in Gore Vidal's novel of the fifth-century diplomatic world, *Creation* (1981).

The classical Greeks also invented philosophical prose dialogue. Socrates himself wrote nothing, although his influence, through his students Xenophon and Plato, has been incalculable. But even Xenophon's *Memorabilia of Socrates* has been overshadowed in influence by his account of the retreat of ten thousand Greek soldiers from central Asia in his *Anabasis*. As Rood (2004) has shown, this stirring account of military endurance, culminating in the great cry "The Sea, the sea!" when the "marching army" reaches the southern coast of the Euxine, has contributed to the construction of North American masculinity and military identity. The impact of the Platonic dialogues in terms of Western philosophy can't be discussed here, but a few have developed an afterlife of a more artistic kind. Plato's *Symposium* has inspired paintings and literary discussions of eros;⁴⁹ the discussions of poetic inspiration in his *Ion* and *Republic* have fascinated poets including Samuel Taylor Coleridge and novelists including Iris Murdoch (Vigus 2009; Zuba 2009); the prison dialogues *Crito* and *Phaedo* inaugurated a tradition of literary and dramatic scenarios set behind bars; the dialogues which discuss the lost civilization of Atlantis, *Timaeus* and *Critias*, have cast a shadow over the development of utopian and science fiction writing ever since Francis Bacon's 1627 essay *The New Atlantis* (Berneri 1982; Brown 2008).

Formal rhetoric used to be studied more than it is nowadays, and the major speeches of Demosthenes were important models. Translations have been used in propaganda wars since the Elizabethan English attacks on the reputation of Spain (Sullivan 2004). They made an impact in style, tone and content on the British activist and political philosopher John Stuart Mill, as his polemic *On Liberty* reveals. Demosthenes became entangled in World War I when Engelbert Drerup, in *Aus einer alten Advokatenrepublik* (1916), depicted Demosthenes as a career demagogue exploiting common people, like the rhetorically adept British and French politicians David Lloyd-George and Raymond Poincaré (Adams 1963, 149–52).

The surviving texts of Menander's comedies were not discovered until too late to exert an equivalent influence on Western culture as the other great names in ancient Greek literature, although we can feel his submerged influence through his impact on the Roman comic tradition and other Latin genres including love elegy. Moreover, the papyrus finds, especially the *Dyskolos*, have allowed acknowledgement of Menander's claim to be the founder of the European "comedy of manners" (Webster 1959), still a living form in televised situation comedy. The aesthetic influence of Callimachus' lapidary poetry, likewise, has been exerted through his Roman emulators, Catullus, Propertius, and Ovid. The Hellenistic poet with the greatest direct impact on Western culture is Apollonius the Rhodian, whose epic *Argonautica* has made the story of Jason and the golden fleece familiar. Important receptions include Grillparzer's *Das golden Vließ* (1821), a dramatic trilogy which fuses the *Argonautica* with Euripides' *Medea* in an emotional and atmospheric theatrical experience, and William Morris's lyrical, melancholy narrative poem in rhyming couplets, *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867). Morris, as a visual artist, responded to the ecphrasis and colorful imagery of Apollonius. Two films have

ensured that Apollonius's epic has penetrated deep strata of global popular culture. The revolutionary special effects created by animator Ray Harryhausen for *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963, dir. Don Chaffey) turned the ancient epic into a foundational text for innovation in the twentieth century's most important new cultural medium. On the other hand, Pasolini's *Medea* (1969) resists Apollonius's negative portrayal of the Colchians to offer a critique of Western cultural imperialism.

Amongst Theocritus's *Idylls*, the pastoral examples have been much admired, but usually exerted their diffuse influence on the pastoral in the visual arts and opera, as well as in poetry, through or alongside the Latin *Eclogues* of Virgil and Longus's pastoral novel *Daphnis and Chloe*. But of equal significance in the history of poetry has been the aesthetic idiom of Theocritus's *Idylls*, as medium-length poems imitating direct speech, with a paradoxical combination of simplicity, faux-innocence, intimacy, authorial self-consciousness, sophisticated artistry, wistfulness, and nostalgia.⁵⁰ This aspect of Theocritus's presence was felt in late eighteenth and especially nineteenth-century poetry. Great "Theocritean" idylls include Leopardi's poems "To Silvia," "The solitary thrush" and "Saturday in the village" (1828–1829), and Tennyson's "English Idylls," especially "The Gardener's Daughter" (1835).

One text in ancient Greek whose role in the creation of Western culture is often underestimated is the treatise *On Sublimity* attributed to "Longinus." After a French translation by Boileau was published in 1674, the text was devoured by European thinkers, craving for insights into art's psychological effects.⁵¹ The quest of "Longinus" for the "sublime" – the moments when literature elevates the hearer to a higher level of consciousness and sensory delight than is possible in ordinary life – was to underpin the project of Romantic art to instate "imagination" at its core, and the invention of philosophical aesthetics by Burke and Kant. But it was also instrumental in encouraging imitation of the ancient Greek classic authors "Longinus" admired – Herodotus, Plato and Demosthenes as well as Homer and Sappho (this volume, chs. 13–14).

"Longinus" may have been Jewish. He finds the sublime not only in Greek literature, but in the first book of Genesis. His date is disputed, but he probably worked in the late first century CE, like the Jewish historiographer Flavius Josephus of Jerusalem. Josephus's literary achievement has begun to be better appreciated (Redondo 2000), along with his importance to Romantic poetry including Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Bilik 1989). Josephus's works *The Jewish War* and *Antiquities of the Jews* have since antiquity provided essential information about religious origins to both Christians and Jews. In the Middle Ages Josephus was consulted as an authority on matters including astronomy, natural history, and chronology, and provided Christian Crusaders with the seminal account, in the legend of Alexander, of Alexander's apocryphal encounter with the High Priest at Jerusalem, for example in Gautier de Chatillon's twelfth-century epic *Alexandreis sive Gesta Alexandri Magni* (Sanford 1935). Indeed, Josephus was often read alongside the ancient *Alexander Romance*, which was one of the Greek texts to exert the widest influence over literature in non-Western languages including Armenian, Georgian, Syriac, and thence Arabic, Persian, Ethiopic, Hebrew, and Turkish (Stoneman 2008). More recently, the authority of Josephus alerted the world to anti-Semitism in Lion Feuchtwanger's trilogy of novels *Der jüdische Krieg* (1932), *Die Söhne* (1935) and *Der Tag wird kommen* (1942).

The contribution made by slightly later imperial Greek literature to the culture of posterity includes romantic fiction, understood as intricate and exciting narratives depicting heterosexual couples kept apart until a climactic reunion. Heliodorus's *Ethiopian Story* and Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon* informed Renaissance and Early Modern experiments in prose fiction;⁵² Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* has been published in more than a staggering 500 editions, was admired by Goethe and illustrated by Marc Chagall.⁵³ Yet amongst authors writing in Greek under the Roman Empire, Plutarch's biographies and Lucian's humorous sketches have no

rivals in the making of Western culture. They both featured on school and university curricula in the Renaissance and Early Modern periods.

Plutarch of Chaeronea in Boeotia was prolific, but it is his *Lives* rather than his ethical treatise (*Moralia*) which have attained the status of all-time classics. Collected biographies of distinguished men have sometimes identified themselves as following his example, as in Thomas Mortimer's *The British Plutarch: being a select collection of the lives at large of the most eminent men, natives of Great Britain and Ireland, from the reign of Henry VIII to George II* (1762). Anecdotes from the *Lives* fed the Renaissance craving for data about ancient education, art, and theater (Hall 2002b). But Plutarch has informed later literature most through the adoption of individual *Lives* in drama and politics. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus* use Plutarch's biographies of Caesar, Brutus, Marcus Antonius, and Coriolanus, in the English translation by Thomas North of the 1559 French translation by Jacques Amyot, Bishop of Auxerre.⁵⁴ In the context of the revolutions in France in 1789 and Haiti in 1791, attention was paid to Plutarch's biographies of heroes claimed by the causes of republicanism and anti-slavery, Cato, Brutus, the Gracchi, and the account of Spartacus's slave revolt in the *Life of Crassus*.⁵⁵ The portrait of the Spartan constitution and militaristic way of life in Plutarch's *Life of Lysurgus* has also excited admirers from Machiavelli to the Zack Snyder, director of *300* (2007).⁵⁶

If Plutarch bequeathed to posterity moralizing biography, Lucian's legacy has been a literary stance characterized by satire, rationalism, absurdism, and knowing parody. Lucian was himself much influenced by the scenarios of Aristophanes, the dialectic of Plato, and the scathing ridicule he derived from the (lost) works of Menippus, the Cynic satirist of the third century BCE. Lucian's *True Histories* (a fictional account of a journey to the moon and ancestor of science fiction) and *Dialogues of the Dead* seminally impacted Renaissance authors – More's *Utopia* (1516), Erasmus's *Colloquies* (1518), Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532–52), Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, Jonson's comedies (Duncan 2010), Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), and Fielding. Voltaire's *Candide* (1759) and *Conversation between Lucian, Erasmus and Rabelais in the Elysian Fields* (1753) imitate Lucian's elevation of philosophy over ignorance and superstition. The same can be said of Wieland's later works, especially his satire on provincial life in *Die Abderiten, eine sehr wahrscheinliche Geschichte*, 1774 (Robinson 1979). Lucian dropped ambiguous, contradictory clues relating to his own life history, which spawned a specialist genre of biographies. The most important was Dryden's *Life of Lucian*, 1696 (see Richter 2005).

Even my inadequate survey here of some responses to ancient Greek literary authors may have provided some sense of their contribution to Western identity, or at least to the cultural forms, idioms, images, and tones of voice in which that identity has been imagined and articulated. Part of that identity has been derived from Europe's historical role as the center from which world empires have been built and administered; the canon of classical authors was also the basis of the curriculum of the era of Western imperialism from the first Portuguese expeditions to Atlantic islands in the fifteenth century. This association has inevitably elicited a conflicted response amongst communities exploited by Western empires. At one end of the spectrum there has been an angry rejection of the authors who symbolize the European domination of the planet. Aristotle's recommendation that the action of a tragedy take place within a single revolution of the sun has become the target of Postcolonial and African American literary theorists who have launched critiques of Western aesthetic ideals from a politicized perspective. Okur, for example, has shown how the "unity" of African American drama is related to a circular concept of action, rather than the linear one privileged by the European tradition (Okur 1993, esp. 97).

Yet many postcolonial authors have seen their hybrid identities, their cultural bilingualism, as an opportunity. Some stress that ancient Greek literature was one of many literatures the world has known, and indeed was preceded by more ancient texts in Mesopotamian and Egyptian languages. Others draw parallels between the indigenous mythologies of non-Western

lands and narratives and those of the ancient Greeks, for example in the Nigerian Wole Soyinka's fusion of the cults of Dionysus and the Yoruba god Ogun in his *Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973), or Jatinder Verma's *Ramayanan Odyssey* (2001).⁵⁷

There is a new response to the challenge of disentangling the Western classics from the legacy of empire in the strategies of contemporary "transcultural" writers. Acutely aware that the ancient Mediterranean was an ethnic and cultural melting-pot, they argue that the literature it produced has the potential to liberate rather than restrict the contemporary project of a transcultural art.⁵⁸ Take one recent response to Moschus's epyllion *Europa* (second century BCE), which used elaborate pictorialism to ornament the story of the abduction of Europa by Zeus disguised as a bull. The poet Moniza Alvi, a Briton of Pakistani origins, has transformed Moschus's hexameters into a sequence of free-verse poems, *Europa* (2008), which explores the trauma caused by divisions between men and women, colonizer and colonized. The figure of Europa, torn from her Levantine homeland to be raped in Crete, symbolizes the historical fracture between East and West. Moschus's picture of Europa, her yearning arms stretched towards to the friends from whom the bull had separated her, becomes the figure for Alvi's awareness of her lost language and community:

Her friends were there – Then they'd gone,
spirited away like childhood.
She wrapped their voices
around her, tucked them under her arm.
Aloneness – like a thistle on her tongue.

(Alvi 2008, 25)

Europa's Phoenician playmates are both a presence and an absence. Europa takes their voices with her, but the immateriality of her ancestral memories only underlines her cultural isolation.

In rewriting Moschus's *Europa* in her first-person voice, Alvi also challenges the exclusion of female subjectivity from the reception of ancient Greek literature. Until the twentieth century, few women had access to education in the ancient Greek language or literature, although there were always prodigious counter-examples – Anne Dacier (1654–1720, the translator of Homer, Anacreon, Sappho, and Aristophanes); Elizabeth Carter, who produced the definitive eighteenth-century translation of Epictetus; George Eliot, the most intellectual of all the great nineteenth-century novelists in English, who studied Greek tragedy intently.⁵⁹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning translated *Prometheus Bound* (1833) and by 1856 had fulfilled her childhood dream of becoming the "feminine of Homer" by making a travelling quest heroine the narrating subject of her verse epic *Aurora Leigh* (Hardwick 2000b and Hurst 2006).

Creative responses to ancient Greek literature by women remained rare until the Modernist period, when Euripides appealed to North Americans including Isadora Duncan (in her choreography to *Iphigenia*), "H.D." (Hilda Doolittle), whose translation of choruses from *Iphigenia in Aulis* (1915) and *Hippolytus Temporizes* (1927) show how much her pioneering lapidary "Imagism" owed to Euripidean diction and imagery. In the novelist Willa Cather's masterpiece, *The Professor's House* (1925), Professor Godfrey St. Peter is himself based on her understanding of Euripides as an isolated, depressed, but brilliant intellectual able to analyze but not actively intervene in the unrolling tragedy of human civilization (Hall forthcoming *b*). It became inevitable that feminists would engage with Greek literature once Simone de Beauvoir had pointed in *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949) to the significance as charter text for patriarchy of Athena's vote for Orestes and Apollo against the claims of Clytemnestra and the Erinyes in Aeschylus's *Eumenides*. In the last three decades, ancient Greek authors have been systematically reappraised by creative artists as well as academics, who have self-consciously read them "against

the grain” to discover how texts created in (and received under) conditions of patriarchy can be recuperated for a more gender-sensitive epoch. Inge Merkel’s novel *Eine ganz gewöhnliche Ehe: Odysseus und Penelope* (1987), Ariane Mnouchkine’s production of *Iphigenia in Aulis* and the *Oresteia* as *Les Atrides* (1990), and Christa Wolf’s *Medea: Stimmen* (1996) are among the most significant examples.⁶⁰

It was partly in response to the feminist reassessment of literature by ancient Greek men that Knox labelled them ODWEMS, the Oldest Dead White European Males.⁶¹ But he was also responding to the allegation that classical culture was hijacked by Western imperialism. Other, less critical labels long been attached to our dialogue with the Greeks. An antique rhetorician liked the image of Homer “sowing the seeds of art” (Browning 1992, 136). The notion of the Classical “tradition” or “heritage” implies a legacy, passed down generations like the family teaspoons.⁶² Judith Kazantzis defines herself more rapaciously as a “pirate,” with ancient poetry being “perennially open to plunder.”⁶³ The theater director Peter Sellars sees each classic text as an antique house that can be redecorated in any era’s style, while remaining essentially the same.⁶⁴ Taplin (1989) proposes the volatile image of “Greek Fire,” a substance that burns under water. Greek culture, according to this analogy, is present in invisible yet incendiary forms. For the Prussian scholar Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1908, 25; cf. Lloyd-Jones 1982, 177–8), the metaphor of necromancy came from the Homeric scene before Odysseus enters the world of the dead: “We know that ghosts cannot speak until they have drunk blood; and the spirits which we evoke demand the blood of our hearts.” But for the world citizen for whom the Greeks have stopped belonging exclusively to the West, perhaps the most potent image is Derek Walcott’s description, repeated in poems including *Omeros*, of “All that Greek manure under the green bananas.”⁶⁵ The Greek legacy is left behind – it is excrement – but it has also fertilized his Caribbean imagination. This beautifully captures the paradoxical nature of classical literature to peoples colonized by “Western” powers.

NOTES

¹ Weil’s essay was first published in French in 1940. It has been translated and included in many anthologies and in the critical edition of Holoka 2003.

² See also Shay 2002; Riley 2004; Crimp 2004; Hall 2008a, ch. 13; Hall 2011a.

³ On transforming epic into lyric verse, see Murnaghan and Roberts 2002; on the use of ancient Greek tragedy in contemporary fiction, see Hall 2009a.

⁴ On which see Mazouer 2010.

⁵ On which see Leonard 2005.

⁶ Hall 2012a chs. 1 and 8.

⁷ See the essays in Hall, Alston, and McConnell 2011, especially those by Monoson, Malamud, and Vandiver and Lupher.

⁸ See Prickett 1989; Rajak 1999; Goldhill 2002, 1–3, 36–7, 95–100.

⁹ On ancient Greek literature in opera, see Goldhill 2008, Brown and Ograjenšek 2010, Hall 2012a, ch. 8.; in dance, see Hall 2008b and especially Macintosh 2010; in cinema, see McDonald 1983; MacKinnon 1986; Michelakis 2004; Boschi and Bozzato 2005; Winkler 2001.

¹⁰ Individual mythical names supply the organizing principle in the standard work of reference for the reception of classical mythology, Reid 1993. Some Greek mythical figures have elicited a tidal wave of interdisciplinary studies, for example Medea, on whom see e.g. Macintosh, Hall and Taplin 2000; Bätzner, Dreyer, Fischer-Lichte, and Schönhagen 2010; Bartel and Simon 2010.

¹¹ See Dowling 1994; Verstraete and Provencal 2005; Orrells 2011.

- ¹² Heath 1987; T. Harrison 2009.
- ¹³ “The Mystery of Life and Its Arts” (1868), first published as Ruskin 1869.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Nünlist, this volume ch. 19, xx13.
- ¹⁵ Goldhill 2002, 108–77.
- ¹⁶ On which see Rankine 2006.
- ¹⁷ “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” in Eliot 1975, 38.
- ¹⁸ Hall forthcoming a.
- ¹⁹ Richardson 1981; Hall 2006, ch. 11. The contest also informs the competition between Aeschylus and Euripides in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*: see Rosen 2004.
- ²⁰ Published in Heaney 1990.
- ²¹ Cf. Schenker, this volume ch. 20, xx13–14.
- ²² *Rhet.* 3.1418b30 = Archilochus F 19 IEG. See also Hdt. 1.12.2; Ford 2002, 147; Hall 2007c.
- ²³ Vidal-Naquet 1995, 95, 101.
- ²⁴ See on this fragment Wells, this volume ch. 10, xx17–23, and Willi, this volume ch. 29, xx11–12.
- ²⁵ Grahn 1985; Prins 1995 and 1999; Williamson 2009; Collecott 1999.
- ²⁶ The ode can be accessed at <http://www.armand-dangour.com/pindaric-odes/>. Accessed April 6, 2015.
- ²⁷ The bibliography on the reception of ancient drama in performance is vast. Early, pioneering studies include Solomos 1974, Walton 1984, Smith 1988, McDonald 1992, and Flashar 1991. For more surveys see Hall 2004a, 2010a, ch. 8; and Hall and Harrop 2010; for the history of Greek tragedy on the British stage, Hall and Macintosh 2005; for Greek drama in Africa, Wetmore 2001; for drama of the African diaspora, see Wetmore 2003; Goff and Simpson 2007, Greenwood 2010; for tragedy, Brown and Silverstone 2007; for female roles in modern performances, Dillon and Wilmer 2005; for earlier German performances of the *Oresteia*, see Fischer-Lichte 2004 and 2008. There are also relevant articles in Hardwick and Stray 2008.
- ²⁸ On Müller see Lefèvre 2000 and Birringer 1990; on Heaney, Taplin 2004; on Hughes, Hardwick 2009.
- ²⁹ Harrison 1998, xvi–xviii; Hall 2011b with fig. 8.9.
- ³⁰ See Van Steen 2007; Hall 2004b, 176–83; 2007b; 2010a, 248–32.
- ³¹ See Carson 1999, Don Paterson’s poem “The Reading” in Paterson 2003, and Crawford and MacBeath 2011.
- ³² Lyons 1982; Badawi 1987; Gutas 1998; Etman 2008.
- ³³ On the Zante *Persians* see Hall 2007b; on importance in the Renaissance of the Latinized Aeschylus by Jean de Saint-Ravy (“Sanravius”), Ewbank 2005.
- ³⁴ See Fiorese 1984.
- ³⁵ Rucellai’s *Oreste* is printed in Rucellai 1772; see Hall 2012a, ch. 8.
- ³⁶ Campbell 1991. The plot of *Athalie* also constitutes a “reception” of Euripides’ *Ion*.
- ³⁷ See e.g. Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759) Book 3 ch. 12, Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749) book 5 ch.1, and Samuel Johnson’s crucial argument in *The Rambler* 156 (1751).
- ³⁸ Alter 1964, 366. On the impact of Aristotle’s temporal “unity,” see Hall 2012b.
- ³⁹ See Frankland 2000, 30–32, 68, 142–3, 206; Macintosh 2009, 111–12, 130–45, 159–61.
- ⁴⁰ Steiner 1984; Flashar 1991, 60–81; Hall and Macintosh 2005, 316–49.
- ⁴¹ Hall 2004a, 18–19; Mee and Foley 2011.
- ⁴² Cf. Wilson, this volume ch. 32, xx3–7.
- ⁴³ Cartledge 1990, 72–6; further references in Hall 2007d, 26 n. 5.

- ⁴⁴ For Aristophanes in Germany, see Holtermann 2004. Van Steen 2000 traces the history of Aristophanic performance in Greece; Gamel 2002 draws connections between Aristophanic classical scholarship and performance practice.
- ⁴⁵ Bridges, Hall, and Rhodes 2007.
- ⁴⁶ Recent surveys of the influence of Thucydides include Fromentin, Gotteland, and Payen 2010; Iglesias-Zoido 2011.
- ⁴⁷ See Tritle 2006 and the chapter “Kissinger and Thucydides” in Burns 2010.
- ⁴⁸ Rubincam 2004.
- ⁴⁹ See Paz 1995, Wang 1997 and the articles by Leshner, Clay and O’Connor in Leshner, Nails and Frisbee 2006. For Plato’s presence in the poetry of C.P. Cavafy, see Zamarou 2005.
- ⁵⁰ Gillespie 1988, 207–14; Kegel-Brinkgreve 1990.
- ⁵¹ Wood 1972; Hall and Macintosh 2005, 52.
- ⁵² Skretkovicz 2010; Beardon 2011. See also the chapter “Heliodorus and early modern literary culture” in Mentz 2006.
- ⁵³ Barber 1989; Hardin 2000. The Chagall lithographs are reproduced in Paul Turner 1994.
- ⁵⁴ Pelling 2011, 64–7; Bajma Griga 2007; the essays by Roe and Braden in Martindale and Taylor 2004. On *Coriolanus*, see Pelling 2002, ch. 18.
- ⁵⁵ On Crassus / Spartacus, see Hunnings 2007. See also Hall, Alston, and McConnell 2011, 3, 66–8, 29, 67, 85 and n.4, 281, 310–11, 359.
- ⁵⁶ Rawson 1969. Thanks to Chris Pelling for helpful advice on the reception of Plutarch.
- ⁵⁷ On Soyinka, see Bishop 1983; on Verma, see McConnell 2010.
- ⁵⁸ See the sensible remarks of Galinsky 1992, 150–52 and the articles collected in Hardwick and Gillespie 2007. On Homer, see also Graziosi and Greenwood 2007 and Hall 2008*a*, chs. 5–6.
- ⁵⁹ Jenkyns 1980, ch. 6; Easterling 1991; Hall and Macintosh 2005, 331–2.
- ⁶⁰ See especially Komar 2003; Foley 2004; Hall 2005; Hall 2008, ch. 9; Macintosh 2009 181–7.
- ⁶¹ The title of Knox 1993.
- ⁶² See the titles of Highet 1949 and Bolgar 1954.
- ⁶³ Kazantzis 1999, 7. See also Hardwick 2000, 19, on the metaphor of retrieving buried treasure.
- ⁶⁴ Quoted in Lahr 1993.
- ⁶⁵ Walcott 1949, 15; see also Walcott 1990, 271.

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