

“The Horror and the Glory”: Euripides Among the Victorians

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in English
York University
Toronto, Ontario

May 2023

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the literary and cultural impact of Euripides in the long nineteenth century. The project tests Victorian theories of translation and appropriation against a diverse array of media (including poetry, prose, drama, non-fiction, and Pre-Raphaelite art) in multiple European languages (primarily English and ancient Greek, but also Latin, German, Italian, and French). Emphasizing ancient texts in their original languages, I examine how a wide array of Victorians (including Matthew Arnold, J. M. Barrie, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Jane Harrison, Walter Pater, Frederick Sandys, Bram Stoker, J. A. Symonds, R. Y. Tyrrell, A. W. Verrall, Augusta Webster, and Oscar Wilde) engage with Euripidean tragedy to express the perceived tribulations and monstrosities of their rapidly changing era. Three of Euripides's most widely read tragedies form the centre of the analysis, *Bacchae*, *Medea*, and *Hippolytus*, all of which are underpinned by Euripides's associations with the god Dionysus. Although Ernst Behler's 1986 article persuasively claimed a "nineteenth century *damnatio* of Euripides," I argue that Euripidean texts were nevertheless widely read, translated, and appropriated into Victorian literature as a vehicle through which writers expressed ideas about aspects of ancient Greece antithetical to Matthew Arnold's more popular notions of its "sweetness and light." Through a theoretical framework inspired by Bakhtin, Foucault, Burkert, and Sedgwick, I analyze ancient and Victorian discursive formations; the material conditions of Victorian life, which prompt identification with Euripidean drama; and the socio-political institutions which Euripidean-inflected Victorian texts critique.

Acknowledgments

It only seems right that I first thank my partner, Ray Tong, for his care, patience, and quiet reassurances through all my highs and lows in the pursuit of this degree. Any shred of sanity I have maintained through this process I owe to him, the home we have managed to create together, and our shared, crazy-cat-people love for Breakfast, K'Ehleyr, and Zuul.

I chose to attend York University for the opportunity of working with my graduate supervisor, Lesley Higgins, to whom I owe so much for her erudition, encouragement, and mentorship throughout this process. She has consistently, and kindly, pushed my capabilities to their limits, challenging me at all times to be satisfied only with my very best. I have learned so much, and become a better writer, researcher, and general scholar through her guidance. I would also like to thank my interdisciplinary committee members, Tina Choi and Sarah Blake, whose invaluable expertise and feedback kept this project grounded in both Victorian Studies and Classics. I am grateful to Judith Fletcher for serving as my external examiner—it was such an honour to have you read my work.

Throughout my academic career, I have been inordinately fortunate to have many supportive and inspirational mentors. My love for Athenian drama was kindled as an undergraduate student at Trent University by Ian Storey, who first introduced me to the importance of the word “version” when studying classical myth and literature, and who has continued to this day to advise, guide, and advocate on my behalf. (I’m sorry about all the Bakhtin, Ian.) I also want to thank my fellow former members of the Trent Classics Drama Group (2007–2011), whose community and friendship allowed my love for classical theatre to flourish. In particular, I want to thank George Kovacs, the CDG director and faculty advisor, who has also been an invaluable mentor and advocate over the years.

I am grateful to Trent (2020–2021) and Queen’s University (2021–2022) for the opportunities to teach in their Classics departments as I worked to complete the final chapters of this dissertation. I am also thankful to the English department at Acadia University, where I am now. All three faculties have given me tremendous support and guidance. I am particularly grateful to my friend and former Queen’s colleague, Beatrice Poletti, for all her help in editing my Italian translations. For the past eight years I have been part of the editorial team for the ten-volume *Collected Works of Walter Pater* project (OUP), involvement with which has shaped this

dissertation in countless ways. I therefore would also like to thank the project's general editors, Lesley Higgins and David Latham, as well as the editors for whom I worked as a research assistant, Matthew Potolsky, Ken Daley, Laurel Brake, Hilary Fraser, Lene Østermark-Johanson, and Daniel Orrells. Thank you all for the opportunities; I learned so much from working with each of you.

My mother, Anne, and father, Jeff, have been encouraging me to follow my passions for as long as I can remember. The network of support they both have provided throughout my life has given me the freedom to pursue my dreams, and I do not (for once) have the words to express how grateful I am to have the parents I do. I would also like to thank my stepfather, Marc, and stepmother, Patti, both of whom have also given me nothing but encouragement and support throughout this process. From helping me move for the millionth time, to blowing off steam at a convention, or just chatting over a nice glass of wine, my siblings, Simon, Daniel, Nichole, Abigail, Thomas, and sister-in-law and friend, Emma, have all, each in their way, given me the resilience needed to complete this degree. I am also grateful to my friends Jessica Flath, Colleen Johnston, Christina Bell, Jeryn Daly, Kyle Dixon, and Ashley Shuttleworth for making sure I made time for fun, for keeping me grounded, and for ensuring that I never took myself too seriously. Thanks also to my friend and cohort ally, Jo Holiday, for all the stimulating conversations and exchanges of ideas over good wine and delicious food.

I would also like to commemorate friends and family who have passed away over the last few years. I wish beyond anything to be able to call my Grandpa, Grandma, Opa, and Oma to tell them of this accomplishment. The four years I spent as an undergraduate learning Greek were enriched by my friend and classmate Shalini Tandon, whom we lost to cancer this past summer. My interest in Victorian literature I owe in large part to my late Uncle Philip, who gave me my first text by Oscar Wilde when I was twelve years old. My Uncle Greg, one of the kindest and most generous people I have ever known, will be missed deeply by his friends and family.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my Oma, Sieglinde Osterle Kurtz, who passed away in the spring of 2007. It is to her I owe my love of languages and literature, from her I first received encouragement to make it a career, and it is with her I most wish I could share this creation, the culmination of all those cozy evenings drinking coffee and reading poetry together. Beauty is but the beginning of terror.

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Abbreviations

<i>App</i>	Pater, Walter. <i>Appreciations</i> . 1889.
<i>AB</i>	Eliot, George. <i>Adam Bede</i> . 2008.
<i>BE</i>	Verrall, A. W. <i>The Bacchantes of Euripides</i> . 1910
<i>CA</i>	Arnold, Matthew. <i>Culture and Anarchy</i> . 2006.
<i>CPW</i>	Arnold, Matthew. <i>Complete Prose Works</i> . 1960.
<i>CS</i>	Pater, Walter. <i>Classical Studies</i> . 2020.
<i>DD</i>	Eliot, George. <i>Daniel Deronda</i> . 2014.
<i>DG</i>	Wilde, Oscar. <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> . 2008.
<i>DK</i>	Müller, K. O. <i>Denkmäler der alten Kunst</i> . 1832.
<i>DP</i>	Wilde, Oscar. <i>De Profundis</i> . 2005.
<i>Drac</i>	Stoker, Bram. <i>Dracula</i> . 1998.
<i>EHA</i>	Murray, Gilbert. <i>Euripides and His Age</i> . 1913.
<i>EFPE</i>	Verrall, A. W. <i>Essays on Four Plays of Euripides</i> . 1905.
<i>ER</i>	Verrall, A. W. <i>Euripides: The Rationalist</i> . 1967.
<i>FH</i>	Eliot, George. <i>Felix Holt</i> . 2009.
<i>GLZA</i>	Müller, K. O. <i>Geschichte der griechischen Literatur bis auf das Zeitalter Alexanders</i> . 1841.
<i>GM</i>	Preller, Ludwig. <i>Griechische Mythologie</i> . 1854.
<i>GP</i>	Symonds, John Addington. <i>Studies of the Greek Poets</i> . 2018.
<i>GS</i>	Pater, Walter. <i>Greek Studies</i> . 1894.
<i>HAK</i>	Müller, K. O. <i>Handbuch der Archäologie der Kunst</i> . 1852.
<i>HLAC</i>	Müller, K. O. <i>History of the Literature of Ancient Greece</i> . 1840.

- IP* Pater, Walter. *Imaginary Portraits*. 2018.
- JE* Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. 2014.
- LEC* Arnold, Matthew. *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*. 1865.
- ME* Verrall, A. W. *The 'Medea' of Euripides*. 1881.
- PGE* Symonds, John Addington. *A Problem in Greek Ethics*. 1901.
- PGS* Verrall, A. W. "Pater's Greek Studies." 1895.
- PP* Barrie, J. M. *Peter Pan*. 1995.
- PSGR* Harrison, Jane Ellen. *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*. 1991.
- QA* Ruskin, John. *Queen of the Air*. 1893.
- SMAV* Creuzer, Friedrich. *Symbolik und Mythologie der Alten Volker*. 1810.
- SV* Ruskin, John. *The Stones of Venice*. 2007.
- TR* Pater, Walter. *Studies in this History of the Renaissance*. 1980.
- WJR* Ruskin, John. *The Works of John Ruskin*. 1903.

Introduction:
Revisiting the Nineteenth-Century *damnatio* of Euripides¹

illum admiramur, hunc legimus

We admire one, but read the other.

—Richard Porson

In an 1846 review of George Grote’s *History of Greece*, John Stuart Mill pushed the audacious claim that “the Battle of Marathon, even as an event in English history, is more important than the battle of Hastings” (343). Although the Victorians recognized that the Romantics had imagined ancient Greece as historically and culturally significant to their modern England, eighteenth-century “high English culture” (Olverson 2) was still dominated by associations with Latin literature and the Roman Empire. The Victorian period, conversely, was distinguished by a shift towards the adaptation of Hellenism “as an integral part of British culture” (Olverson 1). By 1853, Matthew Arnold was able to insist on a direct cultural relevance between the England of his age and fifth-century BCE Athens, based on an emerging cyclical view of history that his father, Thomas Arnold (and Edward Gibbon), adapted from the generally accepted Positivistic view (Turner 10ff). They argued that a nation at the height of its intellectual and material progress has more in common with another advanced nation at some distant chronological point than with one less developed in its own time. This historicist adaptation enabled the Victorians to identify the concerns and achievements of classical Athens with their own, and to appropriate discourse surrounding the ancient world as a vehicle—or even veil—to discuss themselves. For people like Matthew Arnold, who were looking for a way to retain a rich, moral inner life independent of Christianity, the emphasis of their Hellenic studies was on the Apollonian “sweetness and light” described in Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* (1867–69).

Yet, as Walter Pater insists, also in 1867, to focus only “on the sharp, bright edge of high Hellenic culture” is to overlook “the sombre world across which it strikes” (*TR* 159). T. S. Eliot puts it more simply when he states: “The vision of the horror and the glory was denied to Arnold” (106).

The Greek poet with whom the Victorians most commonly associated the “horror and the glory,” or at least the more dangerous elements of ancient Greece, was the fifth century BCE Athenian tragedian Euripides. In his essay titled “The Bacchanals of Euripides,” Pater vividly responds to the Greek dramatist’s tendency “to let the darker stain” of ancient religion and culture “show through” in his tragedies (*CS* 159). This unflinching portrayal of the “darker stain” is precisely what made Euripides seem threatening to a Victorian England trying to identify itself with an idealized, “white marble” version of antiquity.² Classical popularizers such as Matthew Arnold conspicuously favour Euripides’s contemporary, Sophocles, and omit mention of Euripides, whom the majority of Victorian scholars consider, as Gilbert Murray points out, “a destructive thinker” (*EHA* 8). Periodical reviewers, such as a writer for *The Penny Magazine* (1839), often accuse him of being a “sophist of philosophical pretensions, who sought to insinuate his own libertine opinions and skepticism amidst those fabulous marvels connected with religion which were the subject of his plays” (461).

In 1831, Goethe angrily describes an “Aristokratie der Philologen” (aristocracy of philologists), who “nicht begreift” (did not value) Euripides merit (*Tagebücher* 175–6). One of the more prominent of these philologists is Benjamin Jowett, the Oxford don most responsible for the revamping of the Oxford Greats curriculum to include a larger focus on Greek texts, especially Plato. He once wrote in a letter to the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne, who also did not enjoy Euripides, that the tragedian was “no Greek in the better sense of the term” (Swinburne

252). Jowett's distaste is both conventional and mildly surprising. Considering the close association made between Euripides and Socrates by ancient writers, one would expect the renowned translator of Plato to express more of an interest in the playwright. Yet, despite his generally accepted "bad reputation," in the ensuing chapters I demonstrate that Euripides remained enormously significant to perceptions of ancient myth and contemporary culture in the long nineteenth century, while his versions of popular myths were widely adapted. Authors of texts aimed at the general populace, who were uneducated in Greek, incorporated his tragedies into explanations of various myths and even quoted translated excerpts from them. Eliza Robbins's popular book *Classical Tales for Children* (1833), for example, quotes seven lines of the *Bacchae*, and relies heavily on the play to explain the myths surrounding the god Dionysus. The youth and impressionability of her designated audience in and of itself serves, to some extent, to debunk the prevailing theory that Euripides was considered too immoral to be read seriously. Euripides was, in fact, studied and enjoyed in the nineteenth century, both privately and at Cambridge and Oxford, where his linguistic style was used as a pre-eminent example of Greek rhetoric.³ Considered a "treasure-house of Attic style and ancient maxims" (*EHA* 11) he is quoted more by subsequent writers than the other two tragedians combined. Richard Porson (1759–1808) puts it best when he says of Sophocles and Euripides: *illum admiramur, hunc legimus*, "we admire one, but we read the other" (qtd. *EHA* 9).

Works on Euripides's reception throughout the centuries, notably by Ann Norris Micheline (1987), Edith Hall and Fiona Macintosh (2005), and Kathleen Riley (2008), touch on his reception by a Victorian audience, but have merely supplemented the foundational article by Ernst Behler, who establishes "the nineteenth century *damnatio* of Euripides" (1986). While Richard Dowgun (1982) and Thomas Prasch (2012) have explored Euripidean presences in

aestheticism at the *fin de siècle*, little has been done since 1986 to offer a counter-narrative to Behler's article. On account of this assumption that Euripides was "unpopular" in the nineteenth century, a comprehensive study of Euripidean reception throughout the Victorian period has yet to be written. This omission is largely bolstered by the methods through which modern academics usually approach the study of classical reception in the long nineteenth century. The earliest works in the field, by David DeLaura (1969), Richard Jenkyns (1980), and Frank Turner (1981), have created a substantial, multifaceted, and cross-disciplinary foundation for all subsequent scholarship. They have established a tradition of studying how the Victorians, in the manner of Matthew Arnold, use the classical world in order to identify nineteenth-century England *positively* with an idealized version of ancient Greece. Turner, for example, thoroughly documents a type of popular classicism that conflates classical Athens with nineteenth-century England as the leading intellectual, cultural, military, and political capital of Europe. Other studies have explored how communities outside traditional Victorian power structures also try to identify positively with the "sweetness and light" of Greece as a way to justify their pursuits and gain acceptance into the wider community, such as the diverse homosexual community analyzed in Linda Dowling's *Hellenism and Homosexuality* (1994), or female communities in Isobel Hurst's *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics* (2013) and Yopie Prins's *Ladies' Greek* (2017). This emphasis on positive identification and justification, by Victorian and modern academics alike, has led critics to dismiss or ignore Euripides as significant to the period, based on the fact that the Victorians viewed the dramatist as a *negative* voice, a dangerous and destructive commentator on his own time, whose canon is irreconcilable to the more popular Victorian conception of an idyllic classical Athens. Yet this dismissal ignores how the study of

classics evolved throughout the century, and how the emergence of archaeology as a field changed the ways by which a large and prominent group of commentators approached antiquity.

For at the same time that Matthew Arnold was writing *Culture and Anarchy* (1867–69), Pater was calling attention to the “sombre world” (*TR* 159) of ancient Greece in his essay on “Winckelmann” (1867), the eighteenth-century German Hellenist. Critics have yet to explore the growing Victorian awareness of another, far less ideal, version of ancient Greece, and how particular authors begin to identify the *negative* elements of their society with those of the ancient world. This dissertation, therefore, is not only the first substantial study of Euripides and the Victorians, but also one of the first investigations of this dissenting, non-progressive, and destructive association many writers attempt to create with antiquity. The project examines how a wide array of Victorians appropriate the tragedies and “destructive” style of Euripides to express “the horror and the glory” of the nineteenth century through the lens of three of Euripides’s most widely read plays: *Bacchae*, *Medea*, and *Hippolytus*.

Putting Euripides in Context

Although much of the content and themes present in ancient texts feel timeless, and very often eerily relevant to the later eras in which one reads them, it is important to be aware that the ancient Athenian theatre is also an alien entity, a medium of language very far removed from a Victorian drawing room or modern film set. The strangeness of classical texts is something of which the Victorians were quite aware, if one is to judge by essays such as George Eliot’s “*Antigone* and Its Moral” (1856), in which the novelist challenges the common perception that Sophocles’s tragedy is too far removed from contemporary concerns to be relevant. In classical Athens, tragedy represented much more than just a genre of literature—it was a physical space in

the polis, it was part of one of the biggest religious festivals in Attica, and it was, perhaps most importantly, a competition. Competition means that there were strict rules would-be dramatists had to follow, and certain expectations audience and judges required them to meet.

When one discusses “Greek drama,” one generally means Athenian drama performed at the City Dionysia in Athens in the fifth century BCE. The City Dionysia was Athens’s annual religious festival held in honour of the god Dionysus;⁴ it took place in early spring during a period of five days. It was instituted and formalized by the Peisistratids, a tyrant family who ruled Athens from the 560s to 510 BCE. Day one included a parade and a dithyramb contest—a large-scale choral song normally associated with Dionysus—for men and boys. On the second day, five comic poets would each stage one play. The next three days were devoted to the three competing tragedians, who would each produce three tragedies and a satyr play.⁵ An elaborate judging system would choose the winner of both the comic and tragic competitions, granting, among other things, the *choregos* (wealthy sponsor) of the victorious plays the privilege of building a monument in his own honour.

Playwrights were required to follow the three-actor rule—that is, they were only granted three speaking principal actors for their productions. There exist many practical reasons for the restriction, but one of the main motives was aesthetic: the Athenians thought more than three people talking separately on stage would sound unpleasant. The rule often meant that actors would double their roles, the implications of which began to be explored by German philologists in the 1840s, notably by K. F. Hermann (1840), Julius Richter (1842), and C. Beer (1844). Hermann was particularly fascinated by how the redeployment of the same actors could result in almost ghostlike hauntings contained in the performance:

The effect would be heightened still more when the spectator saw the same actor, who earlier in the play had been led forth to the tomb in the character of Antigone, return in the character of the Messenger to relate her death... the spectator would feel that the ghost of Antigone was speaking through the mask of the Messenger. (14)

Of course, the role-doubling was made possible by the costume of the tragic actor, which included an elaborate mask. These actors were always male, and it is likely that the audience was all male as well.

In the twenty-first century, the words “tragedy” or “tragic” are usually used synonymously with “sad” or an exceptionally unhappy event. In terms of genre, Renaissance scholars too have co-opted the term, applying it to the plays of Shakespeare, in which there is a “sad” ending that involves someone’s (or many someones’) death. By this criterion, for example, *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy, but *Twelfth Night* is a comedy. The word “tragedy,” however, has no original connection with “sad.” The Greek word is *tragoidia*, which breaks down etymologically into *tragos*, “goat,” and *ode* “song.” While many Greek tragedies do end with the deaths and devastation of the characters in the story—*Agamemnon*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Antigone*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Bacchae*, etc—there are an equal number that do not: *Eumenides*, *Philoctetes*, *Helen*, *Suppliant Women*, *Ion*, *Iphigenia at Taurus*, etc. These latter plays are still, incontrovertibly, Greek tragedies. Rather than a sad story, Greek tragedy is, as Aristotle asserts, “the mimesis of a serious (*spoudaios*) action” (*Poetics* 1449b). A Greek tragedy does not have to end in sorrow and destruction—although Aristotle maintains that this is the best plotline for a tragedy to dramatize.

Unlike comedy, the subject matter of tragedy is almost always the mythical past, the stories of which the audience would arrive already knowing. Rather than wondering how the

tragedy ends—the audience would already know that—the pleasure of the experience was grounded in seeing how the tragedians alter the myth in getting there. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, for example, all wrote a tragedy about Electra’s reunion with her brother Orestes, and all three versions end with the siblings’ murder of their mother, Clytemnestra. But there the similarities end. Euripides goes the farthest in frustrating his audience’s expectations. His *Helen* is the most striking example, which he premises on the supposition that Helen never went to Troy at all—Zeus sent a mirage to Troy while she waited virtuously in Egypt for Menelaus to come rescue her.⁶

Although ancient theatres were not unique to Athens (Argos and Syracuse boast sizable fifth-century structures), it was in Athens that drama was formalized and, in the opinions of many, perfected. Yet, as is so often the case with classical history, the study of Greek drama is inhibited by the lack of extant material. Theatrical spaces either mouldered into ruin or were added to and changed by the conquering Romans, while visual representations of performances faded. Worst of all, the literary texts themselves were almost all irretrievably lost due to their inevitable decay over time and a series of religiously motivated purges. All of this means that when one discusses “Greek drama,” one cannot even really mean classical Athenian drama, because it can only be represented by five extant playwrights: Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, and then in the fourth century, Menander.

ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ δι’ Εὐριπίδην ἐσώθησαν⁷
“They Were Saved for the Sake of Euripides”

Plutarch, writing in the first century CE, relates an anecdote about Athenian prisoners in Syracuse during the Peloponnesian War. He recounts that although most of the Athenian prisoners died working in Sicilian stone quarries, some prisoners were released for the rather

charming reason that they could recite snippets of Euripidean tragedy to their Sicilian captors, who “longed for” (ἐπόθησαν) his poetry (29.2–3).⁸ The veracity of this story is suspect, but whether it is true or not is beside the point. This example, one among a surprising many in the ancient reception of the poet, illustrates an important trend in the Euripidean tradition that has endured for millennia. Euripides’s tragedies have always been regarded as contemporary works,⁹ with the ability to exercise enormous influence over the here and now.¹⁰

Euripides’s reception during his own lifetime is perhaps the most widely misunderstood.¹¹ As is the case with the vast majority of classical biography, it is very difficult to separate fact from fantasy. For example, Euripides was born in Salamis in 480 BCE to Mnesarchides and Kleito of Phyla, but that his mother was a vegetable seller (a joke Aristophanes makes in at least three of his extant comedies)¹² is probably, at best, a half-truth. His reputation for reclusiveness springs from stories about a cave in Salamis in which he was said to live alone; his so-called misogyny, from the infidelity of his wife Choirile with his friend Kephisophon (*Euripides Vita* 24). It is also hard to know whether stories of his intimate association with philosophers hold any truth, or are just wishful thinking. He is most closely associated with Socrates: by rumours that the notorious philosopher only attended the City Dionysia when Euripides was producing; by (again) the jokes of Aristophanes;¹³ by quotations from his plays in Plato’s dialogues;¹⁴ and even by the perceived philosophical discourses located in his works. In *Medea*, for example, scholars have read a challenge to Socrates’s aphorism that “no one does wrong knowingly” when Medea admits,

καὶ μανθάνω μὲν οἷα τολμήσω κακά,
θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων.

I know indeed what wrongs I do

but my rage is stronger than my reason. (ll. 1078–80)

He was said to be the friend of Protagoras; Vitruvius, writing in the first century CE, calls him the *auditor Anaxagorae* (disciple of Anaxagoras), whom Athens named the *philosophum scaenicum* (philosopher of the stage) (8.0.1). From these bits and pieces has emerged in modern scholarship a rather distorted image of the tragedian as a reclusive, innovative, and daring dramatist who was unappreciated by his peers because he was so far ahead of his time. Although his plays most certainly pushed the boundaries of a literary genre steeped in tradition, to claim that Euripides was “unpopular,” or indeed anything *but* a product of his time, is a gross misrepresentation of what we know of the poet’s career.¹⁵

Two main pieces of “evidence” are used to bolster this romanticization of Euripides’s life. First, that of the (approximately) twenty-two productions in which he competed at the City Dionysia, he won five. This success rate is unfavourably compared to Sophocles’s enviable eighteen triumphs (out of roughly thirty productions), and Aeschylus’s thirteen (out of twenty-one or so productions). This comparison ignores the rather rigorous processes required by the Athenian state to produce at the City Dionysia at all. Tragedy was an expensive (to produce), high-profile event in the Athenian polis. Would-be playwrights were required to audition for the official in charge of the festival to be “granted a chorus,” the official term for acceptance into the event. Being granted a chorus meant that a *choregos* (wealthy sponsor) was legally required to provide the extensive funds requisite to perform the four plays at the festival. Competition was fierce: there is evidence that even Sophocles was sometimes not chosen to take part.¹⁶ Euripides produced his first tetralogy in 455 BCE, and his last in 405 BCE. During these five decades, he wrote approximately 90 plays, which amounts to roughly 22 or 23 productions at the City

Dionysia. Put another way, he was granted a chorus almost every other year. He was hardly, if ever, denied one.

The second reason people are inclined to believe that Euripides was unappreciated in his own time is, in the words of Goethe, “berechtigt durch den Hanswurst Aristophanes” (justified by that buffoon Aristophanes) (*Tagebücher* 176). Aristophanes’s comedies, the only extant examples of Old Comedy, often delight in poking fun at the tragedian. In some plays Euripides appears as a character, while in others, Aristophanes rather brilliantly parodies some of his peer’s more famous tragedies.¹⁷ He is a main character in *Thesmophoriazusae*, who is desperately trying to find out if the women of the assembly are going to execute him for “exposing their secrets” and so uses various plots from his own tragedies in his attempts.

to infiltrate them. The beginning of *Peace* features an hilarious parody of Euripides’s *Bellerophon*, in which the main character rides to Olympus on the back of a giant dung beetle, instead of the winged horse deployed in the tragedy. The comedy most damning to his reception has always been *Frogs*. In this production, the god Dionysus goes to the Underworld with the intention of bringing Euripides back from the dead, because he is frustrated by the poor writing of the remaining, living poets. When he finally arrives in Hades, Dionysus is confronted not only with Euripides, but with Aeschylus and Sophocles as well. Ultimately, he decides that Aeschylus is the “weightier”¹⁸ poet and takes him instead.¹⁹

Classicists, especially German Romantic and conservative Victorian classicists, have a habit of taking Aristophanes’s humour too seriously. Many Victorian scholars, for example, prompted by A. W. Schlegel, accept without question that Euripides was a misogynist, willfully ignoring some of his best tragedies. It is baffling how anyone could read a play like *Trojan Women* and think Aristophanes was being serious. The absurdity of the claim was, however,

apparent to a much larger group of Victorians than the traditional history of Euripidean reception would suggest. Take, for example, the following excerpt from an 1874 edition of *Blackwood Edinburgh's Magazine*, titled “The Ancient Classics”:

Euripides, even, we are told, was a misogynist, a hater and reviler of women; notwithstanding which he has left behind the matchless figure of Alcestis, and the great, sad, and terrible Medea, the self-sacrificing and self-avenging woman, each perfect in her kind, and each so infinitely superior to the man with whom she is connected and contrasted, that the reader might suppose the contrary to be the case, and accuse the poet, as female writers of fiction are sometimes accused, of having celebrated the wife at the expense of the husband. (378)

The author of the article does not even reserve his praise for the so-called “good woman” character of Alcestis in his defense of Euripides, but praises equally the “great, sad, and terrible” character of Medea. There is every reason to believe that Aristophanes’s lampooning of Euripides stems from a place of irony, rather than truth. Indeed, reading *Frogs* as the final rebuff of Euripides ignores the fact that this play is the very first time the “Tragic Triad”²⁰ gets canonized in the ancient world, which is a likely factor in why the three poets were selected as preeminent and preserved in a way none of their peers were.²¹ Finally, the very fact that Aristophanes could quote or parody Euripides so often in his comedies suggests that the tragedies were well-known and well-remembered during his lifetime—how else would the audience laugh at the jokes? Even Aristotle, who is often cited as a harsh critic of Euripides, called him the “most tragic of the poets” and named *Iphigenia Among the Taurians* one of his favourite tragedies (*Poetics* 1456a ff).

After Euripides's death in 407 BCE, his popularity gained momentum. He won his fifth victory at the City Dionysia with a posthumous production of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Alcmaeon*, and *Bacchae* in 405 BCE. Johanna Hanink's pivotal book on the canonization of the "Tragic Triad" in Hellenistic Athens provides compelling insight into how powerful ruling class citizens regarded his work. Lycurgus, the Athenian politician who is generally credited as responsible for the revitalization of Athens in the fourth century BCE, actively adopted the tragedian, far more than either Aeschylus or Sophocles, in his own rhetoric as well as in the iconography of his Athens. He established Euripides as a figurehead of model citizenship and incorporated Euripides's plays into legal speeches against his political rivals.²² In imperial Rome, Seneca began to "translate" Euripidean plays into his own (inferior) versions, which in turn preserved the Athenian's idiosyncratic plot-structures for later Renaissance authors.²³ His impact on French neo-classical tragedy is well-documented in such plays as Corneille's *Médée* (1635) and Racine's *Phèdre* (1677), while in the eighteenth century his tragedies were appropriated into popular operas such as Gluck's *Alceste* (1767), *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1778), and *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1774). From where, then, does his alleged unpopularity in the nineteenth century spring?

Winckelmann, Schlegel, and the So-Called *damnatio* of Euripides

The prevailing thesis that Euripides was unpopular in the Victorian period relies heavily on German classicists and modern commentators' interpretation of how blindly British Victorian writers followed them, especially Johann Joachim Winckelmann's contributions to fine art and A. W. Schlegel's to literature. Winckelmann's body of work, particularly *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764), is generally considered to be the beginning of an idealistic conception of ancient Athens into which it is impossible to fit Euripides favourably.²⁴ Winckelmann

popularized the conception of a Greece filled with naked white marble, symbolic of a calm and aloof *genos* of people prizing “Edle Einfalt, stille Grösse” (noble simplicity and quiet greatness)²⁵ in their conceptions of beauty. Winckelmann’s appreciation of Greek art and sculpture is for how it has survived in the modern era, and bears almost no relation to what it was in context: brightly painted and immediately relevant to the society of which it was a product.²⁶ The result was a damnation of what Mark Ringer calls “Euripides’s colourful variety” (9),²⁷ and a “whitewashing” of Aeschylus and Sophocles, “whose scantier surviving work made them easier to generalize about” (9).²⁸

At the turn of the eighteenth century, August Wilhelm von Schlegel began a series of lectures (1809–11) which effectively, at least according to Behler, “inaugurated a phenomenon that we may describe as the nineteenth-century *damnatio* of Euripides” (359). Using Winckelmann’s theories of fine art as a model for their own,²⁹ August Wilhelm and his brother Friedrich popularized a theory of *Verfall* or “degeneration” in literature, beginning with the Greeks and descending into the contemporary era.³⁰ For August Wilhelm, the Tragic Triad represents a microcosm of this phenomenon, in which Aeschylus epitomizes tragedy on its trajectory to greatness, Sophocles its perfection, and Euripides, its degeneracy (Schlegel 112). Schlegel’s eighth lecture, “Euripides—His Merits and Defects—Decline of Tragic Poetry Through Him,” is a veritable invective against the third tragedian, claiming that “of few writers can so much good and evil be said with truth” (111), but mostly preferring to inform his audience of the latter.

Schlegel’s opinions (and the difference between his and his brother’s portrait of Euripides) have been well documented in Behler’s influential 1986 article; it is unnecessary to belabour the arguments again in this introduction. Behler determines that the lecture establishes Euripides as an amoral, effect-mongering sensationalist, a sophist who was responsible for the

degradation of his own medium. There is one element of Schlegel's argument, however, in which I am most interested—Schlegel's professed didactic purpose in writing about the ancient poet at all: to halt what he perceives as degradation in the art (and morals) of his own era. He complains of the familiarity Euripides is capable of breeding between the past and the present:

[Euripides] endeavours to fill up, or build over the chasm that yawned between his contemporaries and that wondrous older world, and to come upon the gods and heroes in their undress, a surprise of which no greatness, it is said, can stand the test. He introduces his spectators to a sort of familiar acquaintance with them. (Schlegel 114)

Schlegel's complaint that Euripides bridges the gap between classical Athens and the mythological Age of Heroes can be easily extrapolated to what I argue is his main concern regarding Euripidean tragedy: it, too, closes the distance between the classical world and Schlegel's present, deftly destroying the white marble of the German Romantic imagination. Like Lycurgus and Plutarch before him, Schlegel recognizes the power these tragedies wield over the here and now:

We have, besides, a particular reason for censuring without reserve the errors of this poet; the fact, namely, that our own age is infected with the same faults with those which procured for Euripides so much favour, if not esteem, among his contemporaries. In our times we have been doomed to witness a number of plays which, though in matter and form they are inferior to those of Euripides, bear yet in so far a resemblance to them, that while they seduce the feelings and corrupt the judgement, by means of weakly, and sometimes even tender emotions, their general tendency is to produce a downright moral licentiousness. (112)

Lycurgus regarded the verses of Euripides as a means by which he could encourage his populace to become fine, upstanding, and patriotic citizens. Plutarch, as evidenced in his many anecdotes, held Euripidean tragedy as something so powerful in its calls for peace and compassion that it could make captors release prisoners of war and promote friendship and understanding across political and national boundaries (2.29–23). Schlegel felt the same immediacy, but for him, its consequences were dangerous. Euripides’s “talents were not united with a mind in which the austerity of moral principles, and the sanctity of religious feelings, were held in the highest honour” (Schlegel 121). According to Schlegel, Euripides’s verses could even be quoted out of context to justify amoral action: “‘For a kingdom it is worthwhile to commit injustice, but in other cases it is well to be just,’ was frequently in the mouth of Caesar, with the like intention of making a bad use of it” (118). For Schlegel, Euripides was a critic of the established, conservative social order; Schlegel was frightened that the Athenian poet could somehow make his contemporaries critics as well.

Behler’s interpretation of the resulting Victorian “*damnatio*” of Euripides due to Schlegel’s lectures has been enormously influential in the field of classical reception in the Victorian period. The generally accepted “next-step” in the story of Euripidean reception jumps to the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1872, wherein Friedrich Nietzsche uses Euripides as the proverbial “whipping boy” and blames him for the genre’s destruction (Ringer 9). In this gap of about sixty years—during which the focus of classical education at Cambridge and Oxford was specifically retailored with an Hellenic focus—one is left to assume that this enduring tradition of imbuing Euripides’s canon with an almost supernatural power of effect was either ignored, or, due to the supposed low opinion of the poet, resisted. One is left to assume that the Hellenophiles of the nineteenth century, who predominate in Victorian scholarship, were content

to ignore one of only three examples of tragic playwrights preserved in the canon, whose extant body of work comprises more plays than the other two combined and the only existing example of a satyr play. At the very least I must question why—if Euripides was already so well-established as a degenerate—Nietzsche’s condemnation of him is *still* considered a radical analysis.

The denunciation was radical because, despite what most Victorians themselves pretended was the case, German Romanticism’s *damnatio* of Euripides was not nearly so effective and entire as is generally supposed. Goethe, a poet enormously popular in Victorian Britain, was unapologetic and almost bellicose in his enthusiasm for the third tragedian. His fervour was due partially to his identification of the “ungeheure Wirkungen” (tremendous effect) Euripides had “zu seiner Zeit” (on his own time), and his belief that Euripides’s tragedies could provide guidance in his: “Ich las hernach den Ion des Euripides abermals zu neuer Erbauung und Belehrung” (I read again the *Ion* of Euripides for new edification and direction) (*Tagebücher* 176). Goethe directly engages with A. W. Schlegel in a conversation recorded by Johann Peter Eckermann, in which, in conformity with the pattern I have been identifying, he judges Euripides’s merit based on the magnetic quality of his reception:

Ein Dichter aber, den Sokrates seinen Freund nannte, den Aristoteles hochstellte, den Menander bewunderte und um den Sophokles und die Stadt Athen bei der Nachricht von seinem Tode Trauerkleider anlegte, mußte doch wohl in der Tat etwas sein. Wenn ein moderner Mensch wie Schlegel an einem so großen Alten Fehler zu rügen hätte, so sollte es billig nicht anders geschehen als auf den Knien.

But a poet, whom Socrates called his friend, whom Aristotle extolled, whom Menander venerated, and for whom Sophocles and the city of Athens mourned upon hearing of his

death, must certainly be something. If a modern man like Schlegel must find faults in so great an ancient, he should only do it upon his knees. (Eckermann 494)

Goethe's *apologia* for Euripides in this conversation utilizes the very element of his poetry Schlegel was most anxious to inhibit: its effect on its readers.

In Britain, despite his overt and obvious admiration for Winckelmann, Pater is fully aware in his various essays on antiquity that the ancient Greek world was *colourful*.³¹ One writer from *The Saturday Review* remembers that, "Though all three tragedians press her into their service, Milton has singled out Euripides as 'sad Electra's poet'" (247). F. A. Paley was able, despite the alleged irrelevance of Euripides, to break with Schlegel's influence and begin the Introduction to his 1857 commentary on Euripides's dramas with the statement: "Not one of the ancient Greek Poets, with the single exception of Homer, appears to have enjoyed a more general and a more lasting popularity than Euripides" (v). There is clearly another story to tell with regards to Euripides's reception in the nineteenth century.

Matthew Arnold and Euripides: An "Unplumb'd Sea"

The most generally acknowledged evidence in support of Euripides's apparent irrelevancy is what Riley terms "Matthew Arnold's silence" on the topic (12).

Arnold relied heavily on translations of German Hellenists, especially Winckelmann and Schlegel,³² when it came to his own analyses of Greek culture, but he was, as Turner has identified, "largely uninformed by recent classical scholarship. Arnold had read widely in Greek literature, but not deeply in contemporary classical studies" (22). Victorian classicists, often delighting in the new evidence provided by the burgeoning fields of archaeology and anthropology, offer a much more complex and informed picture of the ancient world than

Matthew Arnold's prose *opus* would suggest. Despite the inevitable and resulting departure of academics from the white marble fantasy of earlier German Hellenism, Arnold's idyllic prose continues to eclipse "what most people believe constituted the Victorian concept and understanding of Greek culture" (Turner 18). Like Schlegel, Arnold was concerned with what he considered to be the degradation of art and culture in his contemporary world; his critical theories were constructed with the purpose of improving art and culture. In other words, Arnold was not interested in Greece; he was interested in Greece's implications for England.

In his 1857 inaugural lecture as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, "On the Modern Element in Literature," Arnold announces his crusade for "intellectual deliverance" (*LEC* 19) and declares Greek literature as his "mighty agent" (*LEC* 20). Among these cultural champions, Arnold includes Homer and expounds upon the merits of Aeschylus and, especially, Sophocles, but only mentions Euripides briefly in passing (he is merely a tragedian whose work survives). Riley and Jenkyns have playfully commented that Arnold's general silence on Euripides may have in fact done the Athenian's reputation more good than harm (Riley 162; Jenkyns 105). Jenkyns emphasizes a point in Arnold's lecture where he states: "The peculiar characteristic of the highest literature—the poetry—of the fifth century in Greece before the Christian era, is its *adequacy*; the peculiar characteristic of the poetry of Sophocles is its consummate, its unrivalled *adequacy*" (*LEC* 55). By excluding Euripides from the dull, whitewashed title of "adequate," Arnold has unintentionally preserved the dappled, or *poikile* quality of his tragedies. When Arnold does break his silence on Euripides, he is careful to distance himself from the German scholarship upon which he relies. In his Preface to *Merope*, for example, he hedges: "I entirely dissent from the unreserved disparagers of this great poet" ("Merope" 300). In this Preface, Arnold unconsciously echoes Porson's *illum admiramur, hunc legimus*, when he warns that

Euripides exemplifies “an art of less moral significance than the art of Sophocles and Aeschylus” (“Merope” 300), while simultaneously relishing in the “entirely bad” (“Merope” 300) characters of Euripidean tragedy: “we must go to tragedies like the *Hecuba*, for villains like Polymestor” (“Merope” 300). In his prose, therefore, Arnold clearly *enjoys* Euripides, but does not find in his works the “intellectual deliverance” he needs for his optimistic and ameliorative endeavour of bettering society.

The speakers in Arnold’s poetry, however, are another matter, and often betray an imaginative engagement with Euripides and the worldview he comes to represent in the nineteenth century. The most poignant—and overlooked—example of this engagement is present in “To Marguerite: Continued” (1852). Arnold’s speaker begins the poem with the metaphor of humans as islands, in dialogue with John Donne’s famous Meditation XVII (*Devotions* 1624). The constant ebb of the ocean current as it flows around the islands (ll. 5–6) serves to remind “we mortal millions” (l. 4) of the impenetrable isolation of the human condition. Then comes sound, the “lovely notes” of the singing nightingale, which, for a moment, cause these isolated entities to feel connection and longing for an earlier time when—much like the early humans of Aristophanes’s story in Plato’s *Symposium*—we were but “parts of a single continent” (l. 16). This “longing’s fire” (l. 19), however, proves futile, for the same God who “kindled” it has made true connection impossible, forcing between humanity “the unplumb’d, salt, estranging sea” (l. 24). For Donne, “no man is an island” because humanity is united in his God; for the speaker of “To Marguerite: Continued,” all people are islands, because “a God” has “their severance ruled” (l. 22).

The speaker of this poem lacks the optimism and Wordsworthian joy Arnold is capable of expressing in his prose. This speaker begins alone and ends by confirming that his isolation is

eternal, and beyond his control. The very starkness of this worldview reflects some of the most nihilistic of Euripides's tragedies, in which humans behave so awfully that even the gods, the *deus ex machina* for which Euripides is famous, cannot right things at the end satisfactorily (such as in *Orestes*), or where the gods themselves stop mortals from ending the tragedies in balance (such as in *Suppliant Women*). But Arnold invites comparison to Euripides in a much more direct manner in the final lines of the poem. His “unplumb’d, salt, estranging sea” (l. 24) is in fact a rather beautiful translation of a line from the chorus of one of Euripides's darkest, most controversial, and certainly powerful tragedies, *Medea*: ἐφ’ ἄλμυρὰν / πόντου κλῆδ’ ἀπέρατον (ll. 211–12). Like the final couplet of a Shakespearean sonnet, Arnold’s final line challenges the readers to rethink the entire poem once they identify the echo of *Medea*.

Just as in Arnold’s poem, the speech of which this final line is a part describes how Medea rails against the god who has isolated her from her kindred and homeland:

θεοκλυτεῖ δ’ ἄδικα παθη
παθοῦσα τὰν Ζηνὸς ὄρ—
κίαν Θέμιν, ἃ νιν ἔβασεν
Ἑλλάδ’ ἐς ἀντίπορον
δι’ ἄλα νύχιον ἐφ’ ἄλμυρὰν
πόντου κλῆδ’ ἀπέρατον.

[Medea] cries out to the goddess in her unwarranted suffering, to the daughter of Zeus, Themis, guardian of oaths, she who brought her here to Hellas, over the *unplumb’d, salt, estranging sea*. (ll. 208–12)

By appropriating this final line, Arnold distills one of the most compelling topics of *Medea* and then explores it in his own poem: isolation. Medea’s isolation as a foreign woman in Corinth

becomes ever more pronounced as the tragedy progresses. Abandoned by her husband, she is forced into exile by his new father-in-law. Her rage causes her to amplify this isolation, lashing out at all around her and ultimately committing a crime that will forever separate her from her own humanity: murdering her children.³³ Although interference from the gods spurs Medea to betray her homeland and eventually to live as Keats's Ruth, "among the alien corn," and although she blames Themis for Jason's ability to break unequivocally his oath to her, the gods are actually curiously absent during the play. Unlike most tragedies, there is no on-stage god plotting in the background of *Medea*, either culpable for the tragedy or punishing Medea for her culpability at the end. Rather than a *deus ex machina*, Medea herself becomes deified, riding from Corinth victorious in the chariot of the sun, in some ways more painstakingly isolated than ever. This deification reinforces the argument that Medea is responsible for her own actions, for her own isolation ("I know indeed what wrongs I do"). By choosing a line from a speech describing how Medea blames, incorrectly, a god for her isolation, Arnold destabilizes his own speaker's authority when he concludes that "a God" is responsible for his loneliness.

The identity of the god of Arnold's poem is elusive. Arnold capitalizes his "God," which suggests he is referring to the Christian one, but he also emphatically prefaces it with the indefinite article: "A God, a God their severance ruled!" (l. 22). The combination suggests a sort of hybrid, a god and the God, who is more powerful than a Greek deity, but equally vindictive. Just as Medea's immortal heritage manifests at the end of the tragedy (Helios is her grandfather), Arnold's speaker becomes conflated with "a God," responsible for the "estranging sea." The poem does not affirm that isolation is out of humanity's control, but fully within it, which somehow makes it more permanent and hopeless than when it was a god's doing.³⁴ Perhaps Arnold was more aware of the "horror and the glory" than T. S. Eliot gave him credit for.

Other Fish in the Unplumb'd Sea

The presence of a direct, albeit unattributed, quotation from Euripides in a poem by Matthew Arnold is a striking *coup* against one of the most pervasive arguments of Victorian disengagement with the ancient tragedian. Of course, Arnold is not the only example. Engagement with Euripides's tragedies is as varied and dappled as the colourful variety of his body of extant work. Other popular poets are more overt in their admiration: Robert Browning mounts a fully-fledged defense of Euripides in his dramatic monologue "Aristophanes' Apology" (1875), while earlier in the century Elizabeth Barrett Browning celebrates him as "Euripides the human" in her poem "Wine of Cyprus" (1844). Poet laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson refers to Euripides's *Iphigenia at Aulis* in his poem "A Dream of Fair Women" (1842). Staged versions of *Alcestis* (1887, Oxford), *Ion* (1890, Cambridge), and *Iphigenia Among the Taurians* (1894, Cambridge) were performed in their original Greek at both Cambridge and Oxford.³⁵

Even elements of Victorian realism, especially as espoused in George Eliot's famous chapter seventeen in *Adam Bede* (1859), seem to echo the Athenian playwright. One of the favourite ancient anecdotes in the nineteenth century concerning classical tragedy comes from Aristotle's *Poetics*. Aristotle claims that Sophocles once explained the difference between himself and Euripides as: αὐτὸς μὲν οἴους δεῖ ποιεῖν, Εὐριπίδην δὲ οἷοι εἶσιν, "[Sophocles] portrays people as they should be, Euripides as they are" (*Poetics* 1460b 34). This differentiation between the two dramatists lies at the heart of Schlegel's critique of Euripides: he faults him for providing the audience with characters who do not model noble behaviour. And yet, it is Sophocles's mode of ameliorative writing that George Eliot denounces in *Adam Bede*:

“This Rector of Broxton is little better than a pagan!” I hear one of my readers exclaim. “How much more edifying it would have been if you had made him give Arthur [Donnithorne] some truly spiritual advice. You might have put into his mouth the most beautiful things—quite as good as reading a sermon.” Certainly I could, if I held it the highest vocation of the novelist to represent things as they have never been and never will be. Then, of course, I might refashion life and character entirely after my own liking But it happens, on the contrary, that my strongest effort is to avoid any such arbitrary picture, and to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. (*AB* 193)

Victorian realism cannot, of course, be simplified to one passage in an Eliot novel, nor can its origins be distilled into one anecdote from Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Eliot’s realist mode, however, one which is undeniably significant in the development of the Victorian novel, at the very least is sympathetic to that of Euripides’s, and decries, in no uncertain terms, the mode generally associated with Sophocles. Most intriguing of all, it takes the elements of Euripides that usually cast him as morally questionable, and rather than trying to attribute other “good” elements to the style, instead celebrates the “bad” ones. It should not, therefore, be denied that Euripides—even as a celebrant of the horror and the glory—is an important classical presence in the nineteenth century, nor that a more thorough investigation into his reception is necessary—not to debunk Behler’s *damnatio*, but at the very least to offer another narrative.

Locating the Destructive Thinker

By the end of the nineteenth century, several prominent classicists began writing a series of texts in Euripidean criticism that attempted to re-evaluate the prevailing negative opinion of

the poet. Both A. W. Verrall (first professor of English literature at Cambridge) and Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff (a prominent German philologist and open critic of Nietzsche) offered arguments that Euripidean texts had poetic value, despite the general consensus that they carried the same flaws as modern, “degenerate” poetry.³⁶ The classicist Gilbert Murray (1866–1957), appointed Oxford’s Regius professor of Greek in 1908, offers one of the first modernist interpretations of Euripidean tragedy (1913), which was immediately informed by his Victorian heritage and education. Murray’s analysis is innovative in that he reminds his audience that Euripides must be studied in context, as a product of his own era, rather than a Victorian one. He begins his book by arguing that Euripides is “generally—though by no means always—loved by poets and despised by critics” (*EHA* 7). This argument is perhaps best encapsulated in the single figure of Matthew Arnold, who, as I have demonstrated, celebrates Euripides in his poetry, while simultaneously criticizing him in his prose. Murray continues his argument by asserting:

As a thinker [Euripides] is even to this day treated almost as a personal enemy by scholars of orthodox and conformist minds; defended, idealized, and sometimes transformed beyond recognition by various champions of rebellion and free intellect.
(*EHA* 8)

Murray’s argument offers insight into the popularized version of Euripidean reception in the nineteenth century. A citizen of Athens during the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE), a war which Athens ultimately lost, Euripides became a vocal critic of the policies and politics of his society. Yet, Murray argues, this criticism is not motivated by his lack of acceptance of Athenian ideals—“free thought, free speech, democracy, ‘virtue,’ and patriotism” (*EHA* 17)—but by Athens’s failure to exemplify them.³⁷ Euripides’s habit of highlighting the failings of his Athens became inconvenient to a Victorian society, “Periclean in its lack of self-examination” (*EHA* 16),

which wanted to use Athens as a mirror to reflect its own triumphs of art, culture, science, and military glory. When it is Euripides who holds up that mirror, the idyllic reflection cracks, revealing more than the majority of Victorians were willing to acknowledge. His texts, therefore, became a connection to the classical past through which unorthodox thinkers could channel their own critiques and protests for change, rather than an avenue through which outsiders could find a way to fit into the *status quo*. Euripides, in the Victorian mindset, was a poet of destruction (*EHA* 7), which was both frightening and exhilarating.

Euripides is problematic to Victorian values due to the ways in which his tragedies deal with destruction on multiple levels: destruction as a solution within the plays (*Bacchae*), destructive characters who are not punished (*Medea*), and destruction of domestic and sexual norms (*Hippolytus*). Rather than suggesting an ameliorative critique of how society can be improved, Euripides instead pushes his characters, his plots, and the very rules of tragedy to their limits, until all three inevitably collapse into unsatisfying, because ambivalent, conclusions that resist cathartic feelings of closure. As A. W. Schlegel complains (157), Euripides's tragedies pose alternative answers to questions the Greeks/Victorians thought they had already answered, offering new definitions for concepts such as femininity, masculinity, and the legitimacy of English (Athenian) supremacy. In the course of this dissertation, I argue that authors appropriate Euripides as a reaction against Hegelian, Positivist, and Darwinian theories of progress, instead adopting the tragedian's arguments of destruction, magnifying some of the most important issues of the age through his tragic lens and repositioning them to reflect the nineteenth century.

Murray's claim that Euripides is loved by poets and despised by critics is a dichotomy that has been central in post-nineteenth-century studies of his reception. Analyses of Euripidean reception have fallen into two general categories: commentary on writing pursuant to classical

scholarship on the subject of Euripides and Euripidean drama; and fictional or poetic texts which appropriate or adopt elements of his tragedies. Behler's article, for example, focuses on the manifold academic discussions of Euripides inside the academy or published in academic periodicals. These studies use a New Historicist approach to come to the same consensus in terms of Euripides's unpopularity as a whole. Recent publications in Victorian classical presences, however, have been developing a different—albeit unidentified—trend. Kostas Boyiopoulos's contribution to *Oscar Wilde and Classical Antiquity* (2018) explores how Oscar Wilde uses Euripides's *Hippolytus* in order to invert classical tragedy in *Salome*. The essay is part of a larger narrative happening in the collection, in which Euripides plays a significant role in the authors' analyses of Wilde's collected works. Yet, even when his presence is identified, it is considered as an outlier of the general trend.

This separation is an issue prevalent in the study of Victorian classical presences as a whole, which is, fortunately, beginning to be addressed. Charles Martindale, for example, writes of Pater and classicism in general:

Pater is a model of what one important type of classicist could and should be This is because of the way that, in addition to his particular insights into classical antiquity, Pater also engaged, often in fugitive and oblique fashion, with many of the pressing intellectual issues and debates of his own day, and understood why Classics—not a term he used, incidentally—needed to be approached within the wider context of humanities generally, in connection with a modernity which was cosmopolitan in scope. Who knows Classics who only Classics knows? (1)

Martindale argues that Pater does not approach classical studies in order only to contribute to classical studies, but to offer a broader interpretation of his contemporary society through

classical discourse. This approach is unsurprising given that the Victorians, as I have already established, created a close association with classical Athens in order to identify their own cross-disciplinary achievements. It is imperative, therefore, that any inquiry into Euripidean reception in the period not be sequestered to non-fiction writing about him specifically—rather, that this scholarship be informed by a broader engagement with his canon, and by how it manifests in contemporary nineteenth century issues; nor should Victorian texts be mined for spurious references to his tragedies through close readings in isolation. A vital part of this study, then, is to detach Euripides from a strictly “academic” history, and to fuse it with his adaption or appropriation into popular literature—to approach the Euripides of the Victorian period in a context “cosmopolitan in scope.”

Methodology and Synopsis

This dissertation is organized into four chapters. Chapter One introduces the Greek deity Dionysus and his significance in the Victorian reception of Euripides, with specific emphasis on Pater’s “A Study of Dionysus” (1873). The subsequent chapters centre on the engagement of various Victorian authors with one of Euripides’s tragedies: Pater, Stoker, and Harrison with *Bacchae*; Frederick Sandys, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot with *Medea*; and John Addington Symonds, Pater, Wilde, and J. M. Barrie with *Hippolytus*. Each of these latter three chapters begins with a critical summary of the respective tragedy, an overview of its classical context, and a survey of its transmission and translation histories into the nineteenth century. My methodology connects the theoretical frameworks of Foucauldian sexualities, counter-conduct, and praxis to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s delineations of desire; Walter Burkert’s ideas about the transmission and reception of myth; and Bakhtin’s theories of “great time” and the dialogic.

Classical reception has long served as an intersection for critiques in feminism and sexuality in the Victorian period. Classics and classical scholarship were specifically gendered as a masculine endeavour. Mid-century classically educated female authors, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning and George Eliot, were treated as outliers to this general rule, and rather than celebrated as women of intellect and genius, were instead given credit for having masculine minds—by both nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics.³⁸ Isobel Hurst expounds: “by emphasizing the outstanding quality of Barrett Browning’s and Eliot’s classical achievements, critics endorse the gendered stereotypes associated with the classics: a woman may study Latin and Greek to a high standard but only if her intellect is so powerful that it may be described as ‘masculine’” (5). Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar explain how, in “Essay on Mind,” Barrett Browning must reimagine her joy of discovering the Greek spirit as “a schoolboy and *his* exultant response to the classics” (70).

The Greek tradition itself serves as justification for the subjugation of women. Olverson suggests that “what the ancient sources provided was the model of a politics of exclusion, based on sex, class, and ethnicity” (6). Symonds uses the dismissal of women in Plato’s *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* as his own argument in favour of homosexuality—to love men is simply to love what is superior. According to Aristotle, a woman is simply a genetic, albeit necessary, monstrosity.³⁹ The problematic sexual politics of the Greek heritage in Victorian Britain were exacerbated by the very fact that women were by and large barred from studying the texts. Dorothy Mermin argues that “women’s access to the classics were restricted in order to keep women out of the club, which was partly defined precisely by that exclusion; and women ambitious for literary accomplishment, just as naturally, yearned to get in” (51). Recent work done by Edith Hall (2005), Isobel Hurst (2006), T. D. Olverson (2007), and Yopie Prins (2017)

has successfully demonstrated how women-led campaigns for access to classical educations, especially in the latter part of the century, intersect with their enfranchisement and suffrage. Precisely because fluency in Latin and Greek was considered to be suitable only for the superior masculine mind, women associated access to the two venerated tongues with independence and empowerment. In part, it was a way to gain access to and a voice within the legacy which demanded they be subordinate.

If one is in any way to accept Gilbert Murray's contention that Euripides was "defended" by "various champions of rebellion and free intellect" (8), it is unsurprising that his tragedies were translated and appropriated by feminist writers looking for a discourse through which they could critique the ways by which they perceived their society to be failing. These critiques are not limited to how women engage with classical discourse in general, or Euripides in particular. I also locate Euripidean ideas within the work of male authors as a discourse to explore restrictions placed on sexuality in their patriarchal society. According to Foucault, new discourses surrounding sex and sexuality were re-codified and explored in the nineteenth century, no longer as something strictly personal, but "political, economic, and technical" (*Introduction* 23). Rather than dwindle in importance, sex and sexuality were perceived as a gateway to finding truth:

The society that emerged in the nineteenth century ... did not confront sex with a fundamental refusal of recognition. On the contrary, it put into operation an entire machinery for producing true discourses surrounding it As if it suspected sex of harbouring some fundamental secret As if it was essential that sex be inscribed not only in an economy of pleasure but in an ordered system of knowledge. Thus sex gradually became an object of great suspicion; the general and disquieting meaning that

pervades our conduct and our existence, in spite of ourselves; the point of weakness where evil portents reach through to us; the fragment of darkness that we each carry within us; a general signification, a universal secret, an omnipresent cause, a fear that never ends. (*Introduction* 69)

The Dionysian, gender-blurring underpinning of Euripides's tragedies, however, made the "truths" revealed in his plays transgressive and dangerous. In the *Bacchae*, Pentheus quite literally fears the ambiguous sexuality of the god Dionysus, and regards acceptance of his unclear gendering as "a point of weakness" (Foucault 69) through which Thebes could be corrupted, a fear which also provides the impetus for the vampire slayers' resistance to the titular Transylvanian villain of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Medea's victorious attempt to address sexual double-standards and be included within a masculine heroic ethos likewise becomes a threat to the traditional Victorian family and cult of domesticity. Hippolytus's rejection of this same cult and embrace of what Symonds labels "maiden-piety" (*GP* 19) both intrigued and troubled male writers at the *fin-de-siècle*.

This project tests Victorian theories of translation and appropriation against a diverse array of texts, media, and authors. Furthermore, these selected texts are not, by and large, obscure. My decision to use canonical Victorian texts is intentional, in order that I might make my case for the importance of Euripides in the nineteenth century as blatantly as possible. My method enables me to analyze ancient and Victorian discursive formations, the material conditions of Victorian life, which prompt identification with Euripidean drama, and the socio-political institutions which Euripidean-inflected Victorian texts critique. Recent publications such as *Pater the Classicist* (ed. Martindale, Evangelista, and Prettejohn 2017) and *Ladies' Greek* (Prins 2017) indicate a renewed interest in Victorian classical presences. By locating the

study of Euripides within broader discourses of gender, religion, imperialism, and sexuality, my dissertation provides hitherto unexamined insights into how the Victorians engage with ancient texts and claim them as their cultural heritage as a means to make sense of their society and the myriad of changes happening in the period. By positioning Euripides as representative of a growing Victorian awareness of a less ideal version of ancient Greece, my approach also offers a counter-narrative to the more traditional study of classical reception in the Victorian era

Chapter 1: Dionysus

As a figure of gender and sexual dissidence, the representation of the god Dionysus in the nineteenth century is vital to my analysis throughout subsequent chapters. The god for whom tragedy was originally written and performed, Dionysus is perhaps one of the most complex deities in the Greek pantheon, whose worship “is strangely conditioned by the gender of the worshipper—men exalted him by drinking wine in the symposia, while women danced apart on the mountain” (Faraone 1). Historically, Dionysus translated into the post-classical era has endured more as a concept, and scholars were apt, as Albert Heinrichs argues, to ignore his place as an actual divine entity—a god with form, power, and immortality (“He Has a God in Him” 15, 18). Just as Euripides did not sit well with popular Victorian conceptions regarding an idealized Greece, the religion of Dionysus too posed conservative scholars with fundamental problems. Matthew Arnold celebrates the Apollonian “light,” or reason, of the Greek collective mind. Dionysus—especially as portrayed in Euripides’s *Bacchae*—is, as J. Michael Walton identifies, a god that celebrates unreason (193).

Walton has suggested that prior to Pater’s “A Study of Dionysus” (1876) and “The *Bacchanals* of Euripides” (1889), little effort was made by Victorian commentators to understand this Greek god; rather, the problematic deity was instead relegated to identification

with his easier, far less elusive, Roman counterpart Bacchus (187). Walton draws attention to “how few classical scholars seemed willing to interrogate the paradox between the marble-white, disinfected image of Victorian Athens and the absence of reason in the Euripidean Dionysus” (191). In actuality, however, the figure of Dionysus was not only extensively considered by Victorian commentators, even before the publication of Pater’s essays, but taken quite seriously by them. In Chapter One, I explain how and why Dionysus comes to be connected to Jesus Christ, due to his associations with joy, suffering, and rebirth. Pater’s intervention does not remove the god from the buffoonish Bacchus of Aristophanes’s *Frogs* and transfer him to the *Bacchae* (this had already been done); rather, Pater instead pushes this Dionysus/Christ conflation to its limits. To do so, Pater weaves together the predominant theories of his contemporaries, whose work ranges from the burgeoning fields of archaeology and anthropology to the more venerable disciplines of philology and literary criticism. Through his analysis of Euripides’s tragedy, Pater reveals a god not only of joy and sorrow, but Dionysus Zagreus, a god of dangerous “hunger and thirst,” whose destructive potential Pater transgressively links with the Christian god—and, as the author of the *Bacchae*, Euripides himself.

Chapter 2: Bacchae

Pater surmises that the legacy of Euripides’s *Bacchae* is “as central for the legend of Dionysus as the Homeric hymn for that of Demeter” (CS 155). Throughout the nineteenth century, perceptions of the play’s enigmatic protagonist shifted from a sorrowful precursor to Jesus Christ to a decadent and ultimately threatening figure of violence, release, and horror. Originally considered to be proof of Euripides’s final concession to the rational superiority of classical Athens, the *Bacchae* slowly emerged as a text which could fundamentally undermine middle-class Victorian values. Some understood the possible advent of the Euripidean Dionysus

in England as a subject fit only for a gothic horror story; others celebrated and welcomed the upheaval his arrival might precipitate. The play's central motif of *change*, however, made it of pressing consequence to writers contemplating the turn of what had been a momentous and innovative century.

Chapter Two continues to examine the associations made between the Euripidean Dionysus and Christ in the nineteenth century. I argue that these associations become increasingly subversive through examination of Pater's "The *Bacchanals* of Euripides" (1888) and "Denys L'Auxerrois" (1886), Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and Harrison's *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1908). By exploring the specific and very marked engagement that Pater, Stoker, and Harrison have with the *Bacchae*, I explain how I connect this reconsideration of Euripidean drama to the growing awareness of the "darker stain" hidden behind "high Hellenic culture," and why this was so important for numerous Victorian writers trying to express the rapid, and often frightening, changes taking place in the period. Through Pater's aestheticism and Stoker's reactionary novel, the Dionysus of the *Bacchae* becomes a Victorian vampire, a representative of Greece as "other," as opposed to an idealized version of Greece with which Britain took pride in identifying itself. As Harrison's "immigrant god" (*PSGR* x), Dionysus complicates Olverson's assessment of Greek literature as a "model of a politics of exclusion, based on sex, class, and ethnicity" for the Victorians (5).

Chapter 3: Medea

Sophocles's portrayal of Antigone as the embodiment of familial duty and religious observance dominated the English imagination from the 1840s to late 1850s, but by 1857 her extreme opposite, Medea, the notorious, and problematically unapologetic, infanticide had taken

her place (Hall 2005). The production of Euripides's *Medea* on the British stage is a comparatively "new" phenomenon; the first *unaltered* translation of the tragedy was not performed in England until 1907. On the Victorian stage, however, the myth of the jilted and murderous mother thrived in a series of adaptations and burlesques. All these adaptations interact with three "authoritative utterances" (Bakhtin 88), or significant interventions that Euripides makes in the mythological cycle of the Argo: Medea's murder of her children, Jason's unheroic characterization, and Medea's ultimate victory over her lacklustre spouse. Victorian audiences were not necessarily troubled by the infanticide, I suggest, but by Euripides's heroic characterization of Medea at the expense of Jason. Thus, two Victorian "authoritative utterances" become prominent in the nineteenth century: Medea gradually becomes Orientalized as a means both to rationalize her actions in the Euripidean drama and to dismiss her in Victorian adaptations. Schlegel and Verrall comment explicitly on her foreignness (a trait shared with Dionysus); Pre-Raphaelite depictions of her, beginning with Frederick Sandys's 1868 eponymous painting, also emphasize her as "other" through associations with middle Eastern iconography and witchcraft. The nameless Corinthian princess, who supplants Medea as Jason's wife, is also given greater significance than in the Euripidean tragedy, eventually becoming Medea's literary Victorian foil. In the final sections of this chapter, I examine how these Victorian interventions in the myth unfold in *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë and *Adam Bede* (1859) by George Eliot. Brontë, although a student of classical literature in translation, was unable to read Greek, which impacts her adaptation of *Medea*. She relies on racist characterizations of Medea as "Oriental" (something not present in the actual tragedy) in her construction of Bertha Mason and follows the broader outlines of Euripides's plot in *Jane Eyre*. Eliot, who was proficient in Greek, portrays her Medea character, Hetty Sorrel, as a British

milkmaid; she subtly twists the nuances of Euripides's original character, especially her pretensions to a (masculine) heroic ethos, into someone vain and petty. In both novels, Medea becomes representative of an alternate version of antiquity which challenges identifications of Greece as part of a British heritage. For Brontë, she, like Dionysus, unlocks a threatening "othering," becoming a dangerous antithesis to British identity that must be resisted. For Eliot, she represents issues prevalent in British culture, an insidious force that threatens Victorian values pertaining to class, gender, and domestic hierarchies.

Chapter 4: Hippolytus

For my final chapter, in which I examine *Hippolytus*, I shift from the previous chapter's focus on female Victorian gender norms to masculine ones. Although the Athenian custom of pederasty, as Linda Dowling has demonstrated, inspired (or was cited to justify) male homosociality in the late nineteenth century, certain male writers at the *fin-de-siècle* were uncomfortably aware that Athenian custom still required male citizens to marry women and procreate in order to safeguard the polis, the family, and the individual. In Euripides's *Hippolytus*, a chaste young man faces a terrible death after he rejects a heterosexual union, choosing instead to worship fanatically the goddess Artemis, eschewing the duties of home and state and instead spending his days hunting in the wild.

My final chapter considers how four Victorian authors, Symonds, Pater, Wilde, and Barrie, engage with Euripides's dialogical examination of the masculine virtue *sophrosyne*⁴⁰ ("self-restraint") in the tragedy. They adapt what I call Euripides's "anti-normative manhood myth" into their own works in order to explore the relationships between manhood, sex, aestheticism, and the demands of English society. Symonds and Pater incorporate the figure of

Hippolytus into their expressions of aestheticism and masculinity in *Studies of the Greek Poets* (1873–76) and “Hippolytus Veiled” (1889), respectively. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and *Peter Pan* (1904), both Wilde and Barrie implement features of the ancient tragedy to trace out the inevitable consequences that accompany masculine counter-conduct and the pursuit of eternal youth and alternative sexualities.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study highlights how these authors’ approaches to the classical world, and through it to their own, culminate in the destructive figure of Euripides’s Dionysus—the god for whom all tragedy was originally performed. In his “*Bacchanals* of Euripides,” Pater explores one of the most compelling themes in *Bacchae*, in which the young king Pentheus is presented as a disturbed young man (*pace* Hippolytus) refusing an essential liberating force that Dionysus embodies in the tragedy. This liberation can only happen, however, when Pentheus relinquishes old traditions and worldviews; the tragedy ends, when he fails to let go of them, with his own destruction. The release promised in *Bacchae* is a new religious feeling of the wild and the unfettered, open to all of humankind: to woman and man, barbarian and Greek, young and old, rich and poor, strong and weak (Arrowsmith 192). In this play, more than anywhere else in Greek literature, one perceives Dionysus in his guise as the god who dissolves boundaries. Through him, the binaries so closely guarded by Victorian patriarchal structures are dissolved: men/women, rich/poor, upper class/lower class, etc. Harrison identifies the “intrusion” of the “immigrant god” Dionysus as “the great significant moment for Greece” (*PSGR* x). Both Harrison and Pater interpret his potential for “rebirth” at the end of the century as symptomatic of another “great moment,” this time for England—but whether this incursion is desirable

remains uncertain. The Dionysian potential is also a dangerous one in its possibility to destroy popular conceptions of British identity. Euripides, I conclude, infuses Victorian thought throughout the nineteenth century, but as emblematic of a Greek “Other,” he and his tragedies remain dangerous.

Chapter 1

The Tripartite God: Walter Pater and the Nineteenth-Century Dionysus

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

—W. B. Yeats, “The Second Coming” (1919)

Introduction

In “The Myth of Demeter and Persephone” (1876), Walter Pater advises that we must “feel our way backwards” (CS 73) from fragments of “aesthetic beauty” (CS 73) in order to reach the “original meaning of the myth” they describe (CS 73). Following Pater’s advice, I begin my own history of the nineteenth-century Euripides at the apogee, so that I may, in later chapters, feel my own way backwards from Pater’s essays, which are most certainly works of aesthetic beauty. In “A Study of Dionysus” (1876), Pater fashions a complex rendering of Dionysus which will forever link the god not only with Euripides and tragedy, but with “a deep under-current of horror” (CS 167) that streams beneath the critical imagination of a variety of Victorian writers. I move backwards because it is Pater at the close who gives the name of Dionysus to this cultural under-current and portrays him as a unique creation of Euripides; but it is not Pater who invents it. Euripides has always been identified as a poet of power, and throughout the nineteenth

century that power is of dissent and quiet rebellion. The dangerous themes of his tragedies appear throughout Victoria's reign in literature that holds up the cracked mirror of hypocrisy to England's mien. I start with Pater because he not only identifies this Euripidean under-current, but envisages it as a "single, imaginable form" (CS 91) that he names Dionysus, the ancient god of madness, ecstasy, and drama.

Pater's studies of Greek religion have not fared well under the scrutiny of twentieth-century critics, and he is generally denied any lasting impact in the classical field. Modernist poet and essayist T. S. Eliot suggests in 1933 that Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* has not "influenced a single first-rate mind of a later generation" (442). By 1980, Richard Jenkyns is blatantly dismissive of the Oxford don and his contemporaries, declaring that "in the heyday of Arnold and Pater there was, as it so happened, no classical scholar in England of genuine originality of mind" (173). In 1986, Albert Heinrichs, although a little friendlier, compares the results of Pater's efforts with the Dionysian unfavourably to Friedrich Nietzsche's, ultimately deciding that "A Study of Dionysus" is "one of the most impressive and probing interpretative efforts made on behalf of the god in the nineteenth century, but because of its pervasive nature symbolism, which was already out of date in 1876, and because of its tortured style, the essay had next to no influence on the modern study of Dionysus" ("Detractors" 250–51). More recently, Robert Fowler has suggested that Pater's scholarly approach to the study of Greek religion "has many aspects that might recommend it to a modern scholar of the subject" (249), although still conceding to tradition when he reiterates that Pater's "influence on professional students of Greek religion was quite limited, and the credit is normally given to Nietzsche among philosophers, and to the pioneering anthropologists" (249–50).

But can credit and impact really be used so synonymously? As Lesley Higgins articulates, “knowing Pater’s works intimately and accrediting them are two very different phenomena” (“No Time” 44). Higgins has successfully established that, despite Eliot’s overt disdain for Pater, “there is a sustained, sometimes intense discursive engagement with key Paterian concepts and resonant, almost haunting phrases” (“No Time” 47) in his works; that “the extent of ‘under-currents’ flowing in Eliot’s canon is quite astonishing” (“No Time” 47). Even if Pater is not named as the source of these “under-currents”—a term he uses in “The *Bacchanals* of Euripides”—it does not negate the impact his oeuvre has had. Should, then, Pater’s interventions in the field of classics be confined only to purely academic classical criticism? How does one delimit Pater’s impact when the subject of classics has exerted such widespread consequences across disciplines? A professional classicist Pater certainly was (although he never calls himself so), but it has been demonstrated time and again that, for the Victorians, classics was not only to be evoked within the walls of academia. Pater’s Greek essays were not written solely for a concentrated and select group of multi-degree holding academics, nor was his discipline one that had already been meticulously distilled. His reach extended to the educated public; although classics is the medium through which he channels his ideas, the implications of his essays are contemporary as well as ancient. As Stefano Evangelista argues,

For Pater the modern knowledge of Greece is rooted in the nineteenth century’s own cultural achievement. To know Greece is to know “the element it has contributed to our culture” and so, by extension, it is to know our own modernity. In Pater’s idea of history, the past cannot be divorced from the present: the *meaning* of Greece is always created in the present. (*British Aestheticism* 307)

Charles Martindale suggests that Pater's polymathic approach to classics should be emulated by scholars in the twenty-first century "if the subject is to survive in any meaningful form in the general culture" (*Pater* 1). The broad scope of Pater's intellectual endeavours must, at the very least, be accounted for when analysing his contributions to classics and classical reception.

Classics belongs to more than just the professional researcher.¹

Pater published two lecture-based Greek essays in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1876: "The Myth of Demeter and Persephone," over the span of two months (January and February) and "A Study of Dionysus," ten months later in December. Although the essays were, ultimately, not published in a collection until January 1895,² Pater had reached out to Alexander Macmillan in 1877 in order to propose a volume of essays that included them. The collection Pater planned encompassed a wide range of topics, not limited to classical studies, including "The School of Giorgione," "Wordsworth," and "Romanticism." Initially, Pater suggested the title *The School of Giorgione and Other Studies* for the dappled volume, but he eventually settled on *Dionysus and Other Studies*, before deciding to abandon the project altogether.³ I offer Pater's decision to brand this odd assortment of essays with the name "Dionysus" as a pertinent parable to my own analysis of Euripides in the nineteenth century. Dionysus so closely informs the works of Euripides, in both a fifth-century BCE and nineteenth-century CE context, that it is impossible to understand his plays properly, and their reception in Victorian literature, without first understanding—as much as is possible—who this elusive god is. Following in Pater's footsteps, therefore, I also begin with a portrait of the god Dionysus.

In "A Study of Dionysus," Pater unearths, for what is likely the first time in centuries, the visceral ugliness that forms an integral part, not only of Dionysus, but of the Greek pantheon in general. Pater retreats from his discovery—but he cannot, as the repellent saying goes, put the cat

back in the bag. The “horror and the glory” which Eliot demands—the ugliness which inspired several modernists—get released from their Penthean chains and Dionysus “*Devourer*” is unleashed once again upon Western civilisation. Pater’s evaluation of Dionysus goes beyond a more traditional appreciation for the duality of the gods, for their aspects of death as well as of life, and uncovers, instead, the darker shades of both. “A Study of Dionysus” is an exercise in Dionysian fusion: an amalgamation of ideas, the scope of which reaches far outside the realms of Oxbridge. Fowler suggests that Pater “was the kind of scholar who tries to devise a scheme to accommodate all ideas that seem to have value” (243), a statement that rings resoundingly true in his Dionysus studies. The essay is its own kind of *cento*, piecing together the prevailing notions of Pater’s contemporaries, fusing literary criticism with innovations in archaeology and anthropology, and combining all aspects of the god himself. The result is emphatically *not* a failure, as subsequent critics have suggested, nor is it unoriginal. If anything, the essay results in an almost Frankensteinian release of a monster who personifies some of the greatest anxieties of the late nineteenth century—a monster who, as I discuss in Chapter Two, takes the form of a Transylvanian count in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*.

I begin this chapter with a description and analysis of two significant ancient traditions in the Dionysian *mythos*: the traditional, “Olympian,” version, and the more elusive Orphic stories, which were accessed and emphasized by several German philologists whose work helped shape parallel British traditions. Both versions of Dionysus become connected with public discourses that conflate the Greek god with Christ through their shared aspects of joy, suffering, and resurrection. Having established these popularized Victorian receptions of the Greek god, I then move into an expansive analysis of how Pater interacts with these traditions in his essay “A Study of Dionysus.” Through his engagement with Dionysus as a god of ecstasy and a god of

sorrow, Pater uncovers a third aspect of the deity, centred around violence and dread, previously ignored in the modern era. To each of these three aspects, Pater attaches an illustrative work of fine art and a topographical delineation: an engraving by Girolamo Mocetto for the joyful Dionysus *Meilichius* of the Attic countryside; a sculpture by Michelangelo for the sorrowful Dionysus *Achaea* of the city; and finally a painting by Simeon Solomon for the dread Dionysus *Omophagus* of the wild regions of northern Greece.

Pater's starting point for "A Study of Dionysus" is Euripides's *Bacchae*, wherein the character of the god seems to him so psychologically complex that Pater feels he might "be reading a modern poet" (CS 165). The familiarity of Euripides is, as I mentioned in the Introduction, deceptive, but Pater remains fully alive to the strangeness of tragedy as he carefully constructs his history. And yet his story of Dionysus is also very familiar, mostly unconsciously so, even to a twenty-first century audience. The "deep under-current of horror" that Pater finds running "below all through this mask of spring" (CS 167) has seeped, unidentified, into the popular imagination. *Fin-de-siècle* Europe eventually became very interested in the horror of the god—in the smiling stranger who brings with him madness and destruction and ultimately reveals himself to be no stranger at all. Pater is, however, also interested in the sunnier god—the god of Euripides's ecstatic chorus—as well as the tragic one who returns to the grave of his mother only to find that her family has rejected them both. As I feel my way backward, therefore, I also feel my way forward; as I chronicle the "horror and the glory" of the nineteenth century, I also look for those rays of brighter beauty that Pater hopes his "new, strange, romantic god" (CS 156) can carry into the future.

Anything to Do with Dionysus?

Aristotle declaims in his *Poetics* that tragedy developed ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον (from those who led the dithyramb), while comedy came ἀπὸ τῶν τὰ φαλλικά (from those who led the phallic songs) (1449a). Both the dithyramb and the *phallika* are sung in honour of Dionysus, meaning that Attic theatre—at least according to Aristotle—has always been inextricably linked to the worship of the god, even before it was institutionalized at the City Dionysia. Tragedy evolved a long way from the traditional Dionysian hymn, however, and eventually ancient sources began to worry that drama had, in fact, οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον, “nothing to do with Dionysus.”⁴

Dionysus survives as a character in Athenian drama in only two extant plays: Aristophanes’s *Frogs* and Euripides’s *Bacchae*.⁵ Although the portrait of Dionysus in *Frogs* is an humorous caricature, the comedy’s plot reinforces the god’s connection to drama. The play was first performed in 405 BCE at the Lenaia,⁶ shortly after the death of both Euripides and Sophocles, and very likely in the same year that the *Bacchae* was produced (posthumously) at the City Dionysia. In the prologue, Dionysus confesses to his brother Heracles that, after reading Euripides’s *Andromeda*, an ἔμπερος (passionate desire) overcame him: δέομαι ποιητοῦ δεξιοῦ. / οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὐκέτ’ εἰσίν, οἱ δ’ ὄντες κακοί (I stand in need of a clever poet. The clever ones are all dead; the living ones are just terrible) (ll. 72–73). This conversation is the first extant literary example of how Euripidean tragedy moves its audiences with an ἔμπερος to take action in the “real” (in this case, Under–) world, much like in the later anecdotes of Plutarch discussed in the Introduction. Because tragedy was a method of Dionysian worship, it stands to reason that the god would be concerned about the quality of the drama performed at his festival. Aristophanes’s

playful imagining of the god's reaction to "terrible" contemporary poets provides insight into how the Athenians understood the performance of tragedy and Dionysian religion.

Greek religion is immensely complex and multifaceted. Pater begins "A Study of Dionysus" with the perceptive observation that "[w]riters on mythology speak habitually of the *religion* of the Greeks. In thus speaking, they are really using a misleading expression, and should speak rather of *religions*" (CS 91). The term "religion" in contemporary parlance carries a great weight of expectations and usually evokes a strictly (at least compared with the Greeks) organized system of beliefs in a deity, codified in a key text such as the Torah, the Qur'an, or the Bible. There is no such organization in the Greek beliefs, and certainly no such prescriptive central text. Religions varied from region to region, *polis* to *astu*—certain areas giving the names of the Olympians to their own local, private deities. Ian Storey and Arlene Allan discern that,

In the ancient world the lines were not distinctly drawn between "religion" and "philosophy" or "morality" or "ethics." Greeks worshiped their gods not from any sense of personal guilt or fervent belief or in an attitude of humility, but because the gods of their myths represented forces beyond humanity in the universe, forces which had control over mortals, and which (it was felt) could be influenced by human worship and offerings. (24)

Indeed, it can be quite shocking for a reader new to classics to encounter the Greek gods. They are all far from perfect beings (morally, if not physically)—emphatically vindictive, petty, disloyal, and jealous—nor do they demand humankind to be morally perfect. This pantheon requires only that mortals worship them according to their fickle demands, with no guarantee that meeting those demands will have any positive effects.

The Greeks' engagement with their pantheon is playful. The average classical Athenian would not have believed in a literal interpretation of the manifold myths associated with Greek religion. Zeus did not run around disguised as a bull, raping or seducing women; Athena did not engage in sewing competitions with arrogant spinsters—at least, not anymore. Rather than a subject of dogma and doctrine, the gods and their associated stories were a fount of creativity and variety in Greek literature and art, a source from which they drew inspiration to invent new versions of constantly changing *mythoi*. In Athenian theatre, Dionysus is not the only god to appear on stage, or to be portrayed in a comical caricature—although he is one of the very few to be portrayed as the main protagonist (the only others to come to mind are Prometheus and Heracles, pre-apotheosis). Even in a tragedy such as Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, the gods Athena and Apollo appear on stage as agents of law. Although the portrait of Athena is largely respectful, Apollo, acting as Orestes's lawyer, is a pompous ass, who, when the going gets tough, gets going—he leaves the trial and abandons the young man to a fate from which he promised to protect him. The characters of *Prometheus Bound* are almost entirely comprised of immortals, with the exception of Iô, and they offer a scathing condemnation of Zeus (who does not appear on stage) as an arrogant tyrant.

This is not to suggest that the Greeks did not take their religions seriously; rather, it is to insist on an ideological difference between religions and myth. Albert Heinrichs identifies three main aspects of a god in the Greek perception: “immortality, superhuman power, and the capacity of self-revelation” (“He Has God in Him” 18). The most important of these aspects is immortality: in literature, the adjective ἀθάνατος (deathless) is used substantively and synonymously with words such as θεός (god) or δαίμων (deity). More often than not it is juxtaposed with a plethora of words for mortals that simply mean doomed to die (which is of

course what “mortal” means). Death is, linguistically and ideologically, the chief difference between humans and gods. The superhuman power these gods wield is often intangible, changeable, vague, and difficult to classify. The idea that each god represents an element of nature, or one particular concept or power, is naïve. Zeus, for example, is the god of thunder and famously wields the thunderbolt—but then, so does Athena. To misquote a phrase from Walt Whitman, Zeus “is large, he contains multitudes”—and most certainly contradicts himself. He is a god of justice, oaths, hospitality, sports, authority, and so much more. Yet even these categories are too broad, for Zeus is the god of a *particular aspect* of each of these concepts, differentiating himself from other deities, such as Dike, Styx, or Themis—also gods of justice and oaths. And of course, Zeus’s relationship with these concepts is often contradictory: in *Prometheus Bound*, for example, he is not a dispenser of justice, but an unjust tyrant.

Zeus is not a concept in the ancient mindset, but a real, tangible *god*. Self-revelation, Heinrich’s final characteristic, is connected to the anthropomorphic and manifest nature of these deities. The gods appear to mortals disguised as people of their acquaintance, as strangers, as animals, and sometimes, disastrously, in their true forms. Unlike the Christian God the Father, these deities are knowable and tangible, manifest and present in the mundane world. Pater offers a rare Victorian insight into this manifestation when he declares, in “A Study of Dionysus,” that “the name of Dionysus recalled to the Greek mind, under a single imaginable form, an outward body of flesh compacted together, closing in, as its animating soul, a whole world of thoughts, surmises, greater and less experiences” (CS 91–92). The god is, as Pater imagines him, a vast multitude of *psyche* contained within a physical body of “flesh” and blood—or, should one say, ichor.

Dionysus's appearance as a character on stage, therefore, is not unique to him alone, and is not, in itself, an argument that drama had "something to do with him." The premise in *Frogs* that the god is directly concerned with the quality of drama performed in his name, however, suggests that tragedy and comedy were still associated with Dionysian worship in the late fifth century BCE, even if the festivals had evolved beyond something immediately perceivable as a sacred ritual. Indeed, for a parallel one need look no further than Christmas in the twenty-first century: ostensibly a religious celebration, but grown into something much more secular in practice for a large majority of those who celebrate it.

While each of the major Olympians (and the Titans, Chthonians, and lesser deities) are vastly complex, it can still be argued, without much controversy, that the god Dionysus is by far the most elusive. He is considered the last to join the major Olympians; unlike his divine relatives, his *mythos* is primarily composed of his struggle to establish his identity as a god. Although he is believed to be a "new" god in myth, historically he is actually one of the oldest. His name appears on three fragmentary Linear B tablets of the late Bronze Age (*ca.* 1300 BCE).⁷ He is associated briefly with wine in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (*ca.* 700 BCE) and is the subject of *Homeric Hymn* I, VII, and XXVI (*ca.* 600 BCE). He is not a significant figure in either of the Homeric epics, but Homer mentions him twice in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (*ca.* 750 BCE). The subsequent conflation of Dionysus with his lesser Roman counterpart, Bacchus, has simplified him in twenty-first century popular culture to a god of wine and weekend partying. While wine and revelry are, of course, significant elements of his godhood, they are in fact only a portion of what this god represents in the Greek—and Victorian—mindset. Pater places him at the pinnacle of the "hierarchy of the creatures of water and sunlight" (*CS* 93); the seer Teiresias, in Euripides's *Bacchae*, calls him the god of the "wet" as opposed to Demeter's "dry" (ll. 275–

80)—a god of the liquidity of all life. Above and beyond everything, Dionysus is a fertile god of creation who dissolves boundaries, both literal and figurative—yet another reason he becomes so dangerous to the nineteenth-century *status quo* and plays such a crucial role in the writings of Euripides and Pater.

Literature has preserved two distinct traditions in the god's legendary origins. The first and older version correlates largely to the story told in Euripides's *Bacchae*; the second version belongs to the Orphic theogony. In the former version, Zeus is both Dionysus's mother and father. Zeus, sexually aroused by the mortal Theban princess Semele, begets a child with her. Hera, murderously jealous of her husband and his myriad affairs, convinces Semele to ask that Zeus grant her one wish. In an act of silliness typical of Greek myth, Zeus assents to the request (swearing an unbreakable oath to grant it) without first establishing what Semele's one wish will be. Prompted by Hera, Semele asks that Zeus reveal himself to her in all of his divine glory. Unwilling, but bound by his oath, Zeus fulfills the request, and the fire of his true form (the thunderbolt) blasts the pregnant Semele into an eternally smoking skid mark on the floor of her razed house. Zeus saves their unborn child by taking the fetus from the dead woman, bathing it in the river Dirce, and sewing it into his leg.⁸ A few months later, Dionysus is born again, this time with a fully divine pedigree.

In the Orphic traditions, Dionysus *Zagreus* is the son of Zeus and his daughter/niece, Persephone, Queen of the Underworld. Hera, jealous in both stories, convinces the Titans to capture and devour the infant during an uprising. Zeus destroys the Titans in retribution, from whose ashes is born the human race—a combination of the degenerate Titans and the divine god-child.⁹ Later attempts to correlate this version with the more traditional one explain either that Demeter puts the child back together so that he may be reborn (DS 3.62.6) or that Zeus saves the

infant's heart and feeds it to Semele to impregnate her with the god to be reborn (*Fab* 167). In both versions, however, he is Dionysus the “twice-born.”¹⁰ As the late Victorian commentator A. W. Verrall notes, “Dionysus was of both natures; he proceeded from the Supreme Deity¹¹ (Zeus) not by a single but by a double generation; he was born first as a man from the body of a woman, and secondly as a god from the body of the Deity himself” (*BE* 2). Even from his origin story, therefore, Dionysus complicates the traditional paradigm of godhood in ancient Greece. Children born of a union between god and mortal are not usually divine, merely human heroes (such as Sarpedon, Perseus, Heracles,¹² and Helen). More importantly, the most significant aspect of the gods is that they cannot die.

Despite the fact that, in the traditional and Orphic stories, Dionysus is undeniably a god with solid Greek heritage, he is invariably considered a foreigner. His name combines the root of Zeus (“Dio-”) and the mythical eastern, non-Greek, mountain of Nysa (“-nysos”), where Dionysus spent his childhood.¹³ In “A Study of Dionysus,” Pater claims that Dionysus was named “from the brightness of the sky and the moisture of the earth” (*CS* 93), associating Zeus with the sky, and Mount Nysa with the water nymphs who raised the god in his infancy. Other terms associated with him are also generally considered to be of “barbaric” (not Greek) origins. Dionysus's thyrsus is connected with the Hittite word *tuwarsa* (grape vine); his alternate title, Bacchus,¹⁴ with the Lydian name *Bakivali* (Storey and Allan 26). Thus, despite his Hellenic parentage, there was something decidedly “un-Hellenic”—and therefore unsettling to the xenophobic Greeks—about the god, no doubt contributing to the theme prevalent in his *mythos* of a need to establish, prove, and gain acceptance for his godhead.

Another element of Dionysus's godhood that is rather problematic, to contemporary and Victorian classicists alike, is his fear—both felt and inspired. In Homer's *Iliad*, Diomedes

describes to Glaucus how, as a child on mount Nysa, Dionysus and his nurses are attacked by the Thracian King Lycurgus (6.130–40). Lycurgus’s attack causes the young god to flee in fear (δεδιότα), κρατερὸς γὰρ ἔχε τρόμος ἀνδρὸς ὁμοκλή (for he was trembling with terror on account of the threat of that mortal man) (6.137). Timothy Gantz has called attention to how remarkable it is that “any god, even a young one, should fear men” (113). Gods are sometimes harmed by mortals in myth, even in the *Iliad*, such as when Diomedes cuts the wrist of Aphrodite with his sword (5.318–62) or when Achilles, enraged, battles the river Scamander (21.211 ff). Homer sings that Diomedes perceives Aphrodite to be an ἄνακτις (weak in battle) goddess, unlike her sister Athena (5.331), and that after Diomedes wounds Aphrodite she “flees” (ἄπεβήσεται), “is beside herself” (ἄλυσσ’), and is much “distressed” (τείρετο) (*Iliad* 5.352). None of those terms, however, suggest *fear*; they suggest, rather, that Aphrodite is shocked and angered that Diomedes would dare to harm her (*Iliad* 5.352). Conversely, in the Lycurgus episode, it is not Dionysus who is angered by the king’s behaviour, but “those up on Olympos” (Gantz 113). It is Zeus, not Bacchus, who punishes Lycurgus with blindness in the *Iliad* for his transgressions against a divine son. The fearful god-child fleeing from the wicked mortal king has some traits in common with the adult Dionysus, and suggests a vulnerability present in his godhead. Ludwig Preller calls him “ein verfolgter, gequälter, getödteter Gott” (a persecuted, tortured, slain god) (537). When a fully-fledged adult god, however, Dionysus works his own, idiosyncratic revenge—and inspires an unsettling feeling of fear wherever he is present. This creeping horror of the Dionysian *ethos* exists alongside the exuberance and release of his rituals. Charles Segal surmises, in rather Paterian language, that “Dionysus operates as the principle that destroys differences” (234). Although a god of creation and fertility, his nature—one that seeks to dissolve boundaries—means that he is also a god of death and destruction. The implications of

this contradiction are understood implicitly by a variety of Victorian authors engaging with him through the works of Euripides, but it is not explicitly named until Pater writes “A Study of Dionysus.” Pater makes it clear that the complicated character of the god is nowhere more fully realized than in Euripides’s *Bacchae*, but, as the following chapters reveal, it is also an undercurrent which connects the Victorian imagination to *all* of Euripides’s oeuvre.

Dionysus, Christ, and the Orphic Tradition

The Victorians inherited their fascination with Greek myth and religion from their Romantic forebears. Poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats interpreted problems of modern life and spirituality through the manifold stories the ancients told about their gods and heroes.¹⁵ Frank Turner summarizes that,

Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley, as well as many lesser figures, had regarded the Greek myths and mythical thought in general as constituting not mere conventional window dressing for literature but rather forms and symbols once alive in the human mind and spirit and still capable of new life. For the romantics, mythical thinking was an alternative to an overly rationalized Christianity and the thoroughly mechanized world view of Newtonian physics. (78)

Turner argues that although the Victorians continued to incorporate Hellenic myths into their own writing, “the vital link between myth and the autonomous poetic imagination languished in the climate of scientific rationalism and empirical inquiry, and the myths again became primarily conventions or allegories” (78). The majority of nineteenth-century writers did not read Greek myth seriously as a form of religion, and did not care to understand ancient theatre as an act of worship. Attention given to the religious elements of Greek history amounted, usually, either to

lamentation over paganism or efforts to mine Greek literature for evidence of their own deity (Turner 80).

Stripped into allegories and stories, however, the myths took on a different kind of importance. The Victorians were not necessarily worried that exposure to Greek myth would result in a conversion to paganism from Christianity, but “they recognized that what they said about the Greek myths and religious experience might bear directly on Christianity and the moral and intellectual life derived from it” (Turner 82–83). Dionysus himself was connected with Christ as early as the fourth century CE, during the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire under Constantine. Heinrichs suggest that “[a]fter the rise of Christianity” in the Roman period, Dionysus became “the leading pagan antagonist of Christ” (“Loss of Self” 212), due to their many commonalities. Both deities are born of a mortal mother and fathered by a god; both travel through foreign lands in order to establish themselves and in so doing meet with hostility; both are killed and then revived; both conflate blood and wine, using the latter in sacred rituals alongside the consumption of flesh; and both promise salvation after death. Dionysian iconography and motifs (vines, cups, peacocks) were used in Christian decoration (Heinrichs, “Loss of Self” 213); by 692 CE, the Trullian Synod in Constantinople warned its parishioners that Dionysian rituals were a forbidden commodity; that transvestitism was not allowable; that Dionysian masks were not to be worn; and that his name was not to be spoken (Dunbabin 173–95; Heinrichs, “Loss of Self” 213).

The god of Euripides’s *Bacchae* notably became linked with Christ in the fourth century CE, in the Byzantine play *Christus Patiens*, generally attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus (329–90 CE).¹⁶ Marigo Alexopoulou refers to the play as a κέντρον (Greek) or *cento* (Latin)—a patchwork made from an assortment of other sources (125). The tragedy, written in Greek,

appropriates its lines from diverse texts, ranging from classical Attic tragedy to the Christian scriptures. It is, however, by far most indebted to Euripides, taking approximately 870 of its 2600 lines from the Athenian. The debt to Euripidean tragedy is declared openly in the prologue: νῦν κατ'Ευριπίδην τὸ κοσμοσωτήριον ἐξερω̃ πάθος, “and now I shall speak of the world-saving pathos in the manner of Euripides” (ll. 3–4). Although the main protagonist of *Christus Patiens* is Mary—rather than Christ—the tragedy’s plot,¹⁷ structure, and theme correlate closely to its Athenian forebear. Both focus on the god’s epiphany, on the manifold miracles each performs to establish his religion, and on the need to abandon reason in order to be saved. Dionysus’s miraculous escape from Pentheus’s chains (ll. 689ff) is mirrored in Christ’s empty grave (l. 2046). Messengers in both tragedies, having witnessed the power of each deity, urge religious conversion at their speeches’ close, in almost identical language:

τὸν δαίμον' οὖν τόνδ' ὅστις ἔστ', ὃ δέσποτα,

δέχου πόλει τῆδ' : ὡς ἐγὼ τὰ τ' ἄλλ' ἔστιν μέγας,

κακέϊνω πασιν αὐτόν, ὡς ἐγὼ κλύω,

τὴν παυσίλυπον ἄμπελον δοῦναι βροτοῖς.

This god, therefore,—whoever he is—oh Master,

receive him into this city; for in other respects he is great,

and it is said of him, as I hear,

that he gave the pain-ending grape to mortals (*Bacchae* ll. 769–72)

and

Τὸν ἄνδρα γοῦν τόνδ', ὅστις ἔστιν, ὃ φίλοι,

δέχεσθε κἂν νῦν: πάντα γὰρ δοκεῖ μέγας,

κακεῖνό πασιν αὐτόν, ὡς ἐγὼ κλύω,

τὴν παυσίκανον δωτίνην δοῦναι βροτοῖς.

This man, at least, whoever he is, my friends,
receive him even now; for in all things he is great,
and it is said of him, as I hear,

that he gave the evil-ending gift to mortals. (*Christus Patiens* ll. 2262–65)

These two passages are among many in which the substitution of only a few words in descriptions of Dionysus, such as παυσίκανον (evil-ending) for παυσίλυπον (pain-ending), suffice to change the passage into a description of Christ (Alexpoulou 131).¹⁸

In the nineteenth century, however, those attempting to correlate Christ with Dionysus focused less on his appearance in fifth-century Athenian tragedy and more on his story in the Orphic tradition. The young son of Zeus, set upon his father's throne and declared the new king, but eventually betrayed, dismembered, and consumed by the Titans, and then brought back to life through the ministrations of his father,¹⁹ represents a fruitful point of comparison for scholars hoping to argue the inevitability and longevity of Christianity. Radcliffe Edmonds, prompted by the intensity of these connections, has more recently even gone so far as to suggest that the story of Zagreus,

is, in fact, a modern fabrication dependent upon Christian models that reconstruct the fragmentary evidence in terms of a unified “Orphic church,” an almost Christian religion with dogma based on a central myth—specifically, salvation from original sin through the death and resurrection of the suffering god. (30)²⁰

The legitimacy of the Zagreus myth was not questioned by nineteenth-century commentators, but Edmonds's argument is illustrative of the close connections between the two religions. These Orphic stories and their focus on the old chthonic gods were especially a subject of careful

examination to early nineteenth-century German philologists, including Friedrich Creuzer, K. O. Müller, and Ludwig Preller—all of whom had an enormous impact on English scholarship, the latter two of whom were particularly significant to Pater. Creuzer and Müller were especially prone to ransacking Orphic religion for precursors to Christianity. Creuzer focuses on the chthonic Mystery cults of Dionysus and Demeter and Kore in his *Symbolik und Mythologie der Alten Völker* (1820) as one of the earliest stages in the evolution of Western faith.²¹ Both he and K. O. Müller emphasize Dionysus as a figure of *dolores*, “the personified expression not only of the most rapturous pleasure, but also a deep sorrow for the miseries of human life ... from whom the liberation of soul was expected” (*SMAV* 306). For Müller, the difference between the Olympians and the Orphics is an historicist question of development. The former theogony, as “representatio[n] of the moral order and harmony of the universe,” belongs to a later, more developed stage of Greek culture; the latter, embodying “the creative powers of nature” (*SMAV* Müller 16) belongs to a tradition much older. Preller is less focused on the hierarchical categorization of myth, but is still deeply engaged with Dionysus as a god of joy and sorrow, death and rebirth. These prominent classicists, therefore, with their attention especially on the Orphic tradition of myth, locate Christ in the sufferings of the young god who was, impossibly, killed and then brought back to life.

The Arnoldian Dionysus

David DeLaura has argued that one of the main characteristics of Matthew Arnold’s Hellenism,²² heavily influenced by these German Romantics, is its “search for an alternative to Christianity”:

*Culture and Anarchy*²³ is symptomatic in hesitating between synthesis and a Hellenism above Christianity. The ideal is everywhere “moral” and smacks more of Herder’s ethical humanitarianism than of Goethe’s or Schiller’s more aesthetic humanism. (171)

DeLaura, however, concludes that Arnold gravitates toward the more serene, Winckelmannesque, Olympian gods—the “sunlit Apollonian” (171)—rather than the sorrowing figures of Demeter and Dionysus. This conclusion is true in the context of Arnold’s prose, where Arnold conflates Apollo with Christ (Keefe 64), though in a manner very different from Dionysus. Rather than focusing on death and rebirth, Arnold draws comparisons between the father/son relationship:

[Zeus and Apollo] had come to designate a Father, the source of ideas of moral order and right; and a Son, his prophet, purifying and inspiring the soul with these ideas, and also with the idea of intellectual beauty. (“God and the Bible” 208–4)

The Hellenic ideal of Arnold’s prose and his need to find “moral order and right” outside of his era and its religious orthodoxies are nowhere more naked, and nowhere more optimistic. But as I have demonstrated already in the Introduction, the speaker of Arnold’s poetry is quite another matter. Arnold himself describes the writing of his best poetry rather perfectly—and a little on the nose, for my purposes at least—as a process of “tearing oneself to pieces”²⁴ (*Letters* 63). As Joyce Zonana argues, because Arnold “expected poetry to be capable of consoling human suffering” (60), DeLaura’s “sunlit Apollonian” paradigm does not necessarily fit the classicism of Arnold’s verse. In prose, Arnold’s classicism is typified by the key terms identified by DeLaura (171) such as “noble serenity” (*CA* 59) and “harmonious acquiescence of mind” (*CA* 28). This idealizing of the Hellenic world fits the theme of Arnold’s ameliorative critical writing, the purpose of which is not to understand Greece better but to highlight and to praise

characteristics which he believes his own society to be lacking. In poetry, however, it is clear that a different Muse is singing through Arnold. To give her form he turns, as Zonana establishes, “to the Chthonian earth gods and their train—Dionysus, Demeter, Marsyas, Silenus, Tiresias, and Orpheus—associated, not only with nature and the underworld, but also with human suffering, redemption, and immortality” (60). Arnold does this deliberately, demanding that “Empedocles on Etna” be read with a knowledge of the Orphic tradition, calling the poem “one of the family of Orpheus and Musaeus (*CPW* I, 1). Thus directed, one has no choice but to interpret the poem through the Orphic context (Zonana 64). Oscar Wilde certainly recognized the Orphic in Arnold’s verse:

I hear much in modern art of the cry of Marsyas Even Matthew Arnold, whose song of Callicles tells of “the triumph of the sweet persuasive lyre,” and the “famous final victory,” in such a clear note of lyrical beauty, has not a little of it; in the troubled undertone of doubt and distress that haunts his verses, neither Goethe nor Wordsworth could help him, though he followed each in turn, and when he seeks to mourn for “Thyrsus” or to sing of the “The Scholar Gypsy,” it is the reed that he has to take for the rendering of his strain. (*DP* 186)

This contrast between Arnold’s prose and his poetry is suggestive of Müller’s own distinction between the Olympians and the Chthonians: the emphasis of Arnold’s prose is on Olympian “moral order and harmony”; the emphasis of his verse, on the Orphic “creative powers of nature.”

Unsurprisingly, however, Dionysus himself does not fit easily into Müller’s dichotomy. He is both an Olympian and a Chthonian. He is at once one of the newest and oldest gods in the Greek pantheon.²⁵ He is, as Preller highlights, a god of both joy and sorrow (*GM* 419–25).

Creuzer, Müller, and through them, Arnold (who tries to popularize classicism), do, however, allot Dionysus more attention, more depth, and more understanding than most previous scholarship credits them. J. Michael Walton, for example, argues that the Dionysus of the Arnoldian school is primarily the “frivolous” god of Aristophanes’s *Frogs*, “clearly a god that the nineteenth century could accommodate” (190). Dionysus as a figure of sorrow and suffering, however, juxtaposed with rebirth and joy, is too evocative of Christ for the Victorian engagement with him to be “frivolous”—even if these interpretations, especially of the Orphic tradition, are extremely problematic from a classical perspective.

There remains, however, a major element to Dionysus’s godhead largely ignored by the Arnoldian tradition of classicism, in both prose and verse, and that is his fear—fear felt in the Orphic stories, and inspired in the more traditional ones. German classicism in the nineteenth century—and by extension, British—still operated within the legacy of Johannes Winckelmann (the subject of Pater’s major 1867 essay, republished in *The Renaissance* in 1873). For Winckelmann, one of the greatest triumphs of Greek art was its *Heiterkeit* (cheerful equanimity) (Potolsky 5), the ability to maintain mental serenity even in the face of physical agony.²⁶ There is no room for fear in this ideal—indeed, the presence of fear destroys it completely. Yet it is more than obvious that the Dionysus of Euripides’s *Bacchae* is not solely a god of sorrow, nor indeed is he particularly frivolous—he plays with some exceptionally high stakes in the drama. The god’s presence in Thebes is a disruptive one—one that distorts the mundane world and, significantly, fills the other characters with fear and dread. The latter, however, are two emotions that do not belong in Arnold’s Greece, as it disrupts the childlike innocence (exempt from Old and New Testament doctrine that teaches one to fear God) he claims is the key to their genius.

In 1861, six years before Arnold began publishing *Culture and Anarchy*, the equally prominent John Ruskin states his opinion of the Greek genius even more forcefully in *Queen of the Air*:

Greek art is never frightened at anything, it is always cool It differs essentially from all other art, past or present, in this incapability of being frightened. Half the power and imagination of every other school depend on a certain feverish terror mingling with their sense of beauty;—the feeling that a child has in a dark room, or a sick person in seeing ugly dreams. But the Greeks never have ugly dreams. They cannot draw anything ugly when they try. Sometimes they put themselves to their wits’-end to draw an ugly thing—the Medusa’s head, for instance,—but they can’t do it,—not they,—because nothing frightens them... for there is no dread in their hearts. Pensiveness; amazement, often deepest grief, and desolateness. All these; but never terror. (*QA* 128)

Euripides’s *Bacchae* is in many ways, however, “an ugly dream.” It is a play in which the god has the power to corrupt minds and distort reality. The high volume of paranormal power—miracles—which dominate the action lends itself to the nightmare. A. W. Verrall remarks that nowhere else in Greek literature is the “apparition” of the god “so repulsive” (*BE* 11) as in Euripides’s final masterpiece. Dionysus’s mission is unusually supernatural and dispassionate for the tragic genre, “nor does he show any interest in those moral pieties which half redeem the violence of his devotees. The sole concern of the deity is to dominate; ... [his adherents] can hardly bear to look upon the horrors which he does not scruple to inflict” (*BE* 13). Far from the fearful god-child of the early stories, the Dionysus of Euripides’s *Bacchae* is one of the most frightening and inevitable figures in Western literature. The question that follows, then, is

whether the Victorians were as willfully insensible as the doomed Pentheus to this aspect of the god. Where does the Dionysian “fear” manifest in nineteenth-century classical reception?

Combining Opposites: Pater’s tripartite god in “A Study of Dionysus”

Pater’s most significant critical source for “A Study of Dionysus” is Preller’s chapter on Dionysus in *Griechische Mythologie* (1854). Preller bases his analysis of the god on the supposed “Verschmelzung von Flüssigkeit und Feuer” (fusion of liquid and fire) (*GM* 519) the god instantiates, which Pater appropriates into his essay’s subtitle, “The Spiritual Form²⁷ of Fire and Dew.” This appropriation may at first glance seem to reinforce a dual-natured analysis of Dionysus, but Pater’s essay is actually structured around multiple sets of three. The first of these triads is a very specific paradigm he explains at the beginning of “Demeter and Persephone”:

There is first its half-conscious, instinctive, or mystical, phase, in which, under the form of an unwritten legend, living from mouth to mouth, and with details changing as it passes from place to place, there lie certain primitive impressions of the phenomena of the natural world. We may trace it next in its conscious, poetical or literary, phase, in which the poets become the depositaries of the vague instinctive product of the popular imagination, and handle it with a purely literary interest, fixing its outlines, and simplifying or developing its situations. Thirdly, the myth passes into the ethical phase, in which the persons and the incidents of the poetical narrative are realised as abstract symbols, because intensely characteristic examples, of moral or spiritual conditions.

(*CS* 64)

This structure, as Connor has identified, “seems to echo the scheme outlined in Ruskin’s *Queen of the Air*” (29). Ruskin compares Greek religion to “a root with two branches”: the root

comprising the origins founded in the physical world, “in physical existence, sun, or sky, or cloud, or sea” (*WJR* 800). Its two branches represent the personal and the universal: the former embodying “the personal incarnation of that [physical existence]; becoming a trusted and companionable deity, with whom you may walk hand in hand, as a child with its brother or sister” (*WJR* 800); the latter encompassing “the moral significance of the image, which is in all the great myths eternally and beneficially true” (*WJR* 800). Both schemes argue that myth begins in “physical existence” or in “the natural world”—a starting point which they borrow in large part from Preller’s “drei Abschnitte” (three phases) of religious development (*GM* 3).

For Preller, too, the earliest forms of myth are “Naturpoesie” (nature poetry) which “zeugen von einer ... tiefinnigen Sympathie zwischen der menschlichen Seele und dem Naturleben” (confirm a profound sympathy between the human soul and the life of nature) (*GM* 1). Unlike his German and British precursors, however, Pater refuses an Hegelian approach to understanding ancient religion, which would regard these three phases as a form of improvement or development. His outline, as Potolsky articulates, does not “pertain to the relative sophistication of mythic expression ... but to its changing function in the larger culture” (20). Connor notes that in “A Study of Dionysus,” Pater begins to complicate the “clear and orderly view of myth” expressed in “Demeter and Persephone” because he “became more interested in the anomalous interrelations between the three stages” (29). A study of Dionysus cannot but help lend itself to such an aim—Dionysus complicates everything “clear and orderly.”

The greatest complicating factor of the essay is Pater’s ultimate discovery of a tripartite god, rather than the dual nature Dionysus is usually afforded by critics looking for a precursor to Christianity. Ruskin’s second phase, for example, which identifies “moral significance,” subscribes to the Greek ideal traceable back to Winckelmann, and would reduce the ancient

figure to “high-minded ideals and proto-Christian precepts” (Fowler 243). Pater, conversely, remains interested in that “darker stain of high Hellenic culture” (CS 159); for him, the ethical “encompasses all cultivated thought and aesthetic experience, including darker emotions and earthly reality” (Fowler 243). Pater fuses the long-held belief in the Greek ideal with his own investigations into “the spectre of death and the depths of sorrow” (Fowler 243). The topics of death and sorrow are not, as I have already established, innovations in classical discourse concerning Dionysus when Pater first writes “A Study of Dionysus”; nineteenth-century considerations of the Orphic gods seem almost to relish the sorrow and death for which they are representative. Pater’s innovation is to bring the sorrow and death into his analysis alongside the more widely acknowledged “sunlit Apollonian” of German idealism, through which he detects a third under-current of violence and madness. His three phases—instinctive/oral, literary, and ethical—complement the three aspects of the god. First, Pater portrays the rural Dionysus, a god of ecstasy, joy, and pleasure; then he brings Dionysus to the city, where the human element of his mythos creates in him a god of sorrow. Preller’s original notion of a dual god collapses when the two are combined; Pater’s Dionysus Zagreus is not a refinement on the god of sorrow, but something distinct—something frightening, dangerous, and distinctly Euripidean.

Pater’s god of Aestheticism

The religion Pater ultimately reveals in “A Study of Dionysus” also suggests a transference of some of the more radical aesthetic notions he articulates in his “Conclusion” to *The Renaissance*. Pater begins the “Conclusion” with the workings of the physical world, constantly in flux. “What is the whole physical life in that moment,” Pater inquires,

but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names? But these elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibres, are present not in the human body alone: we detect them in places most remote from it. Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the wasting and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of the tissues of the brain by every ray of light and sound Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us; it rusts iron and ripens corn. Far out on every side of us these elements are broadcast, driven by many forces; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few out of ten thousand resulting combinations. That clear perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later in their ways. (*TR* 118)

In his description of the physical world, Pater paints a rich picture not only of flux, but of fathomless connectivity, where bodily forms and elements meld into one another, constantly dissolving and reassembling, all a small thread in the web of the whole. But when “reflection begins to act upon those objects” (*TR* 118) to which all are connected, “the whole scope of observation is dwarfed to a narrow chamber of the individual mind” (*TR* 119). There is, then, a contradiction in all of this existence, a severing in the mind from what remains connected in the “perpetual motion” of the body.

Pater implies this same sort of connectivity and severance in his descriptions of Dionysus. He suggests that to the early Greeks, Dionysus “is the soul of the individual vine, first . . . afterwards, the soul of the whole species, the spirit of fire and dew, alive and leaping through

a thousand vines” (CS 93). Echoing his description of the physical in the “Conclusion,” Pater emphasizes the connectivity of the god’s *animus*, both in the singular and the plural, its constant motion, its “leaps” through the physical, “gush by little gush” (CS 93). The image of the vine is rife with implications of connectivity, but through its very association with Dionysus, the connectivity transitions into something equally isolating. Carolyn Williams describes how Pater’s “spirit of the vine” is first “generalized” and then “‘condensed’—fixated and totalized—as a personal spirit” (241). Through Dionysian worship, each devotee is supposed to channel and become one with the god, creating an experience shared across a community but also one that is deeply personal. In the “Conclusion,” each experience, especially of art, contains the mind in order to produce a subjective, highly personal, “quicken sense of life” (TR 190) or “ecstasy” (TR 189).

In “A Study of Dionysus,” Pater has a more concrete form to give this concept in the figure of the Greek god: “the name of Dionysus recalled to the Greek mind, under a single imaginable form, an outward body of flesh compacted together, closing in, as its animating soul, a whole world of thoughts, surmises, greater and less experiences” (CS 91–92). He is, therefore, “the soul of a whole species” (CS 93), all the elements of which we are all composed, while also a “whole world of experience” (CS 92) enclosed in a mind. In both Dionysian ritual and in Pater’s “Conclusion,” it is the actual experience itself that is venerated: “Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself is the end” (TR 119). The goal is “to burn always with the hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy” (TR 120), whether it be found in the intoxication of the grape or in the *Mona Lisa*. “Success in life” (TR 120), as Pater describes it in *The Renaissance*, transforms into the religion of Dionysus in this later essay. Tapping into the divinity of the god creates moments of extreme ecstasy that are shared physically, but are extraordinarily separate

within the mind of each worshipper. Pater asks his audience to “think what the effect would be, if you could associate, by some trick of memory, a certain group of natural objects, in all their varied perspective, their changes of colour and tone in varying light and shade, with the being and image of an actual person” (CS 104). This “trick of memory” is the Bacchanals—and Dionysus, as representative of hedonism, joy, and pleasure, is the god of Pater’s Renaissance.

Part I: Dionysus *Meilichius*

This ecstatic god of *The Renaissance* is the first of the three aspects Pater unveils in “A Study of Dionysus.” He begins his analysis, like Preller, by positioning Dionysus within the religion of people who pass their lives among the vines ... the religion of Dionysus carries us back to [Greece’s] vineyards, and is a monument of the ways and thoughts of people whose days go by beside the winepress, and under the green and purple shadows, and whose material happiness depends on the crop of grapes (CS 91).

The image Pater paints is decidedly bucolic; lush language and leisurely sentences contribute to a pastoral existence similar to that of the shepherds in a poem by Theocritus or Marlowe. This early stage of worship by people “who seem oddly in love with nature” (CS 92) is Pater’s adaption of a Winckelmann-infused idealization of Greece. Potolsky notes that underlying Winckelmann’s Hellenic view is the concept of *Allgemeinheit*, “signifying a breadth of vision and intellectual outlook” (5) for which the German Romanticist feels nostalgia. Pater melds Winckelmann’s nostalgia with a newer area of criticism—what he terms “the comparative sciences of religions” (CS 192) as championed by renowned historian George Grote,²⁸ Pater’s Oxford colleague Max Müller, and British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (Inman, *Pater 1874–1877*, 241). Grote traces the origins of myth to a Greek “childhood,” interpreting the

stories as “the spontaneous and poetic projections of the primitive mind” (Potolsky 18). Müller’s theory identifies Greek myth as a symptom of “diseased language . . . an erroneous confusion of metaphor with reality” (Potolsky 18). While Pater distances himself from Grote’s popularized notion of early myth as a “childhood,” and mostly rejects Müller’s theory of degeneration, he does adapt their view of “the Greek gods as a spontaneous poetic expression” (Potolsky 18) to work with Tylor’s Darwin-inspired *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871. Tylor introduces “primitive tree-worship” (as mentioned by Pater [CS 92]) as a mode of animism. Pater describes this early phase of tree-worship as “growing out of some universal instinctive belief that trees and flowers are indeed habitations of living spirits,” stating that it “is found almost everywhere in the earlier stages of civilisation, enshrined in legend or custom, often graceful enough, as if the delicate beauty of the object of worship had effectually taken hold on the fancy of the worshipper” (CS 92). Shawn Malley refers to this connection as Pater’s “archaeological aestheticism,” a connection which is “a hybrid narrative form that folds art history and archaeology into the familiar essay” and which, in true Dionysian fashion, “crosses and blurs . . . disciplinary boundaries” (92). In Pater’s hands, Winckelmann’s aesthetic and Tylor’s cultural anthropology work side-by-side, uncovering in the origins of the religion of Dionysus something notably rural.

Pater endeavours to consider Greek religions as practicable systems of beliefs and sacred rites. He analyzes the gods as gods, instead of allegories or corruptions of language. Rather than focus on momentous occasions and individuals, Pater instead “attribute[s] the prehistoric origins of religion to the conditions of humble, everyday life, on which he was quite well-informed” (Fowler 241), and in so doing “paints vivid pictures of ordinary Greek folk in their villages and farms performing simple pieties” (Fowler 241).²⁹ Williams describes Pater’s analyses of Greek

myths as being “grounded in the historical sense, though they tend finally toward a myth of history” (238). His assertion that the Dionysian is one of “a complete religion” (CS 91) is a claim that he tempers with appeals to more comfortably held notions about the Greek world. Pater borrows K. O. Müller’s notion of Dionysus’s coterie being a “peculiar and distinct Olympus” (GK 488) and instead terms it a “little Olympus, outside the greater” (CS 91). K. O. Müller also associates Dionysus with what he terms “nature-worship,” with “nature overpowering the mind and hurrying it out of the repose of a clear self-consciousness” (HAK 488). For Müller, Dionysus is an old god, but not, strikingly, an Olympian. In *Denkmäler der alte Kunst* he is listed under the heading of “The Other Deities,” directly following the discussion of “The Twelve Olympian Deities.”³⁰

Pater’s initial reference to a “little Olympus” (CS 91) reinforces the connection to the rural he so painstakingly portrays in the first part of the essay. The change from Müller’s “peculiar and distinct” to Pater’s “little” calls to mind two of Athens’s most important festivals: the Greater Dionysia, also known as the City Dionysia; and the Little, or Lesser, Dionysia, which took place in the Attic countryside. This “little Olympus outside the greater” is a rural coterie which exists, as Müller’s categorizations suggest, outside the more urban community of the Olympians. The “little Olympus” itself, which Pater describes at length, is appropriately comprised of wild deities—nymphs and satyrs—including Marsyas and Pan, the latter of whom Pater depicts as the “homely shepherd[d]” (CS 94) and “the *spiritual form* of Arcadia” (CS 94), that imaginary pastoral paradise Theocritus and Virgil create overtop the far less idyllic reality. Unlike Müller, however, Pater’s nod to the Greater and Lesser Dionysia suggests that Dionysus can belong in both spaces: in the city and in the wild, among the Olympians and the Chthonians.³¹

Part II: Dionysus *Dolores*

The correlation between this “little Olympus outside the greater” and the two Athenian dramatic festivals is made evident in the second phase of Pater’s essay. Following this pattern of movement from the rural wilderness to urban civilization, Pater begins to bring Dionysus into the city. An exceptionally Ovidian paragraph, in which the most important word—the crux of the passage—gets delayed until the very end, is utilized for this task. It begins, unsurprisingly, in the country, where Pater reiterates that “[t]he religion of Dionysus takes us back into that old Greek life of the vineyards” (CS 96). This early life of the rural Dionysian is partly imbued with a certain childlike curiosity:

We detect in that primitive life, and under that Greek sky, a nimbler play of fancy, lightly and unsuspectingly investing all things with personal aspect and incident, and a certain mystical apprehension of unseen powers, beyond the material veil of things, now almost departed, corresponding to the exceptional vigour and variety of the Greek organization. (CS 96)

As the paragraph continues, Pater drops small hints regarding the final destination of this Dionysian progression: the ritual cry of “Iacchus” (CS 96); the “little or country” Dionysia, as opposed to the “greater ceremonies of a later time” (CS 97); the mythical mortal man, Keramus, son of Dionysus and Ariadne (CS 97); and Aristophanes’s *Acharnians* (CS 97). In addition to their associations with Dionysus, all of these elements have something important in common: the city into which Pater is bringing Dionysus. The city of this *nostos* is not, however, Thebes. Pater ends the paragraph by describing the arrival of the Dionysian procession into Athens (CS 97).

Pater’s imagined landscape in “A Study of Dionysus” is undoubtedly and avowedly Attic. The countryside and the vineyards he depicts as he fleshes out the complete body of

Dionysian religion are located in Attica, and belong to the Athenian polis. This landscape is historically inaccurate, of course: the Athenians themselves claimed that Dionysus was a religion imported to their *polis* from Eleutherae, on the Boeotian border.³² Pater acknowledges this pilgrimage:

Through the fine-spun speculations of modern ethnologists and grammarians, noting the changes in the letters of his name, and catching at the slightest historical records of his worship, we may trace his coming from Phrygia, the birthplace of the more mystical elements of Greek religion, over the mountains of Thrace. On the heights of Pangæus he leaves an oracle, with a perpetually burning fire, famous to the time of Augustus, who reverently visited it. Southwards still, over the hills of Parnassus, which remained for the inspired women of Boeotia the centre of his presence, he comes to Thebes, and the family of Cadmus. From Boeotia he passes to Attica; to the villages first, at last to Athens; at an assignable date, under Peisistratus; out of the country, into the town. (*CS* 105)

Although Pater meticulously details the various places from where Dionysus came to Athens, the symbolic significance of the journey he describes is clear: “out of the country, into the town.” Phrygia, Pangæus, Boeotia, and the Attic countryside are ideologically all one: they are the home of the rural Dionysus, the first of the three phases Pater introduces in this essay.

Pater vividly connects the literary history of Greece with the physical remains being found, reconstructed, and analyzed by those in the nascent fields of anthropology and archaeology. Malley describes his process as one which “teases symbolic systems out of Greek material culture and challenges the notion of Greek repose by drawing archaeology and mythography into a narrative of continuity that places artifacts in a double relation between Greek antiquity and European modernity” (94). The Greece Pater inherits from Winkelmann is

largely conceptual, based essentially on Roman replicas of statues and artifacts taken out of their original context, enormous flights of fancy (something which Pater also encourages), and, most importantly, literature. As Evangelista points out, Winckelmann actually refused to visit Greece, despite being given several opportunities to go (*British Aestheticism* 61). In fact, very few of the prominent German and British philologists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ever made the pilgrimage, and when they did, were often disappointed. Goethe himself, as Evangelista also explains, “reacted with perplexity in front of the coarseness and general un-Greekness” of the temples at Paestum³³ in 1778 (*British Aestheticism* 62). The Greece of the philologist and artist, therefore, was extremely disconnected from the Greece being slowly unearthed by enthusiastic excavators. Pater’s classical essays connect the two. Although he never made the trip to Greece either, Pater was fascinated by its historical physical reality, and essays such as “The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture” and “The Aegean Marbles,” focusing on the colourful variety found in Greek art and architecture, reflect a lively and well-informed engagement with its archaeological—not just literary—relics. An example of this interaction in “A Study of Dionysus” appears in Pater’s description of the death of Semele. Pater mentions the “venerable relic of the wood which fell into the chamber of Semele with the lightning-flash, and which the piety of a later age covered with brass plate” (*CS* 98), which is a reference to Pausanias’s description of a real, physical object attached to the myth (9.12.4). The piece is, as Pater notes, a connection between fictional literature and physical remains: “the legend attaches itself, as in an actual history, to definite sacred objects and places” (*CS* 98). In order to offer his verbal illustration of Dionysian religion in its early stages, Pater makes a broad sketch of metaphorical and literal environments. He then colours this outline with his knowledge of Greece’s literary and imaginative legacy—a legacy dominated by Athenian literature—and his

own assumption that, in Fowler's words, the "classical believer was a person like us, only with a different outlook conditioned by context" (242). The end result of this particular fusion is an account of Dionysus's arrival into Athens, and, by extension, into England.

Fowler aptly calls this aspect of Pater's scholarship "the historicist sympathy" (241), something which Pater couples with his own aesthetic criticism, "which enables Pater to identify ancient and modern feeling without evident embarrassment." (242). This assumed sympathy between human beings made it permissible for him in his classical essays, as Fowler argues, to "illustrat[e] his meaning not with an ancient artefact but with a Renaissance or modern painting" (242). In "A Study of Dionysus," Pater uses three works of art in order to delineate the three aspects of Dionysus. He ties the first aspect—joyous, rural—to Renaissance depictions: "The artists of the Renaissance have treated Dionysus many times, and with great effect, but always in his joy, as an embodiment of that glory of nature to which the Renaissance was a return" (CS 107). A sculpture of the god by Michelangelo (figure 1) "has represented him in the fulness, it seems, of this enthusiasm, an image of delighted, entire surrender to transporting dreams" (CS 96). The sculpture, which resides in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence, depicts the god lifting a winecup in his right hand and holding a lion skin by his hip in the left. Percy Bysshe Shelley describes this image of the god as being "drunken, brutal, and narrowminded" and "altogether without unity, as was the idea of the Deity of Bacchus in the conception of a Catholic" (*Essays and Letters* 145). As Evangelista notes, Shelley's critique of the statue is rooted in Winckelmann's Apollonian classicism ("A Revolting Mistake" 202), something which Pater is both accommodating and challenging in the essay. The comparison between the two deities is overt: "Dionysus is the *Deliverer*; and of such enthusiasm, or ecstasy, is, in a certain sense, an older patron than Apollo himself" (CS 96). This remark continues to complicate and

combine the various critical voices with whom Pater interacts throughout the essay. Pater takes the fleshly example of Dionysus to which Shelley is so adverse and calls it “true to the finer movements of old Greek sentiment” (CS 96), while at the same time incorporating newer archaeological evidence indicating that Dionysus is in fact one of the oldest gods in the Greek pantheon. Michelangelo’s statue, as an example offered by Pater of delight, is also significant in the figure of Dionysus’s attendant. A young satyr stands beside the god, eating a bunch of grapes from his hand. The satyr is part of the little coterie outside of Olympus that Pater is at such pains to distinguish; he is a pastoral deity.

When Dionysus is removed from nature into an urban space, Pater begins to identify his Dionysus *dolores*. In an engraving by Girolamo Mocetto (figure 2) he notes an exception to the Renaissance representations of the god:

But it is in an early engraving of Mocetto there is for once a Dionysus treated differently. The cold light of the background displays a barren hill, the bridge and towers of an Italian town, and quiet water. In the foreground, at the root of a vine, Dionysus is sitting, in a posture of statuesque weariness; the leaves of the vine are grandly drawn, and wreathing heavily round the goodly hair of the god, suggest the notion of his incorporation into it. The right hand, holding a great vessel languidly and indifferently, lets the stream of wine flow along the earth; while the left supports the forehead, shadowing heavily a face, comely, but full of an expression of painful brooding. One knows not how far one may really be from the mind of the old Italian engraver, in gathering from his design this impression of a melancholy and sorrowing Dionysus. (CS 107)³⁴

If Michelangelo’s sculpture is, at worst, of a drunken Bacchus, full of revelry and joy, then at worst, the Mocetto image depicts the god the morning after. He is slumped against a grapevine

with what is clearly a hangover, a hand holding his temples as though he has a headache. The significance of the picture is in the scenery Pater describes so carefully: Mocetto has portrayed Dionysus “out of the country and into the town” (CS 105). Pater interprets the god’s pose in Mocetto’s engraving as one of “statuesque weariness” (CS 107), locating in this rare portrayal of an urban Dionysus “a melancholy and sorrowing” (CS 107) representation of the god.

The setting, therefore, of the second phase of the Dionysian is the city. Pater combines the rural god of ecstasy and pleasure with a god of sorrow by bringing him to Athens. As the cultural and literary epicentre of the ancient world, the literature of which dominates modern understandings of ancient Greece in general, Athens is an obvious symbol of transition into Pater’s second, literary, phase in the religion of Dionysus. It is also the birthplace of tragedy, of which Pater makes ample use as he lays out his three versions of Dionysus: “gradually [Dionysus’s] rough country feasts will be outdone by the feasts of the town; and as comedy arose out of those, so these will give to tragedy” (CS 106). These “rough country feasts” are oblique references to the dramatic festivals held in the Attic countryside, which eventually become the Lesser Dionysia and the Lenaia, the dramatic focus of which were on comedies. The “feasts of the town” are again conflated with the City Dionysia and its dramatic competitions for tragedy:

For his entrance upon this new stage of his career, his coming into the town, is from the first tinged with melancholy, as if in entering the town he had put off his country peace. The other Olympians are above sorrow. Dionysus, like a strenuous mortal hero, like Hercules or Perseus,³⁵ has his alternations of joy and sorrow, of struggle and hard-won triumph. It is out of the sorrows of Dionysus, then, of Dionysus in winter, that all Greek tragedy grows; out of the song of the sorrows of Dionysus, sung at his winter feast by the chorus of satyrs, singers clad in goat-skins,³⁶ in memory of his rural life, one and another

of whom, from time to time, steps out of the company to emphasise and develop this or that circumstance of the story; and so the song becomes dramatic. (CS 106)

Pater's innovation is clear: he is combining the religious history of Dionysus with the literary history of Athens. Whereas early nineteenth-century critics found it incomprehensible that a tragedy should be written about Dionysus at all,³⁷ Pater is making god and drama inextricably linked. For Pater, Dionysus *is* theatre, *is* comedy, and *is* tragedy, and so each play, regardless of subject matter, is an expression of the god.

It is also clear that Dionysus's connection to humanity, rather than to divinity, makes him a subject of grief. The town is the sphere for the Dionysus *dolores* because it is a human space, a space dominated by human mortality and emotion, as opposed to the "Edle Einfalt, stille Grösse" of Winckelmann's Olympus. Unlike Creuzer, Müller, and Preller, Pater does not turn to the Orphic story of Dionysus's death and dismemberment for representations of Dionysus's sorrow, because this account focuses on an immortal, pre-human realm: Dionysus born of two immortal parents and murdered by the immortal Titans. Instead of the divine death of the godling, and the Orphic promise of resurrection, Pater turns to "the double birth of the vine-god" (CS 99)—a birth, not death, that tinges him with mortality. Although he turns away from the Orphic myth, Pater is still interested the god's implications for Christianity. Inman argues that Pater's "overriding concern" in "A Study of Dionysus" is "the reconciliation of pagan and Christian ideals and motifs" (*Pater 1874–1877* 111). Pater's connection to the Germans' identification of Dionysus with Christianity is similar to the Byzantine tragedy *Christus Patiens*: a focus less on Christ and Dionysus, more on Mary and Semele.

Locating the motif of the *mater dolorosa* in Greek mythology is a recurring tactic in nineteenth-century classicism, which usually focuses on Demeter. Both K. O. Müller and

Ludwig Preller identify her as the *mater dolorosa*; nor was the comparison isolated to philologists. The acclaimed British historian George Grote (1.35ff) and the famed archaeologist Charles Thomas Newton (420) both identify the Mother of Sorrows with the Greek goddess of agriculture. Inman argues that while the overt ambition of Pater's "Demeter and Persephone" is an account of the development of the myth, the selective manner in which Pater excerpts his sources—"he has selected parts from them that are maternal, pathetic, mystical, and poetic" (*Pater 1874–1877* 114)—indicates that the essay is, instead, "a celebration of maternity" (*Pater 1874–1877* 114). This maternity is actually, as Higgins suggests, a proto-feminist moment of empowerment, matriarchal rather than maternal ("But who is 'She'?").

Pater's treatment of Semele in "A Study of Dionysus" is a topic that has not received much attention. Inman merely states that "[m]aternity ... enters as a minor theme into 'Dionysus,' where Semele's death represents the transformation of the 'travails of nature' into the 'pangs of the human mother'" (*Pater 1874–1877* 114). Pater's interest in Semele, I would counter, is not in her implications for maternity or matriarchy—nor, really, Semele herself—but in the implications of the specific, physical moment of her parturition. In Semele's death, Pater argues that "the story of Dionysus has become a story of human persons, with human fortunes, and even more intimately human appeal to sympathy" (*CS* 98) because his birth places him "within the sphere of human chances" (*CS* 108). This "human sympathy" is for the "'seven months' child, cast out among its enemies and motherless" (*CS* 98) and for "the human anguish of the mother" (99) who dies "in shame" (*CS* 108) and "ignorant to the glories of her son" (*CS* 108). The fascination Pater finds with his Dionysus *Achaea* (an epithet Pater applies to Demeter which means "of grief") is not in the aloof calm of Winckelmann's Olympians, but in the present, earthly agony the god shares with his mortal mother.

This causal relationship between Semele's death and the Dionysus *dolores* depends heavily on Pater's understanding of Dionysus's own relationship to tragedy—especially Euripidean tragedy. While Pater makes comprehensive use of ancient sources and artefacts outside of Athens, the clear thread of the tales he weaves for Dionysian religion is that of the Attic dramas performed in his honour. Pater's history of Dionysus is told in both direct and implicit relation to the development of the Athenian dramatic festivals—at times they are one and the same in the essay. It is important for Pater that the Dionysus *Achaea* be linked with (to borrow a phrase from Nietzsche) the birth of tragedy. Pater does this rather successfully through his delineation of the country comedy festivals and the City Dionysia, but also rather problematically through his inevitable involvement of Euripides's *Bacchae*.³⁸

It is, in fact, impossible to delineate Pater's Dionysus without briefly considering the tragedy in this chapter. Throughout the first two thirds of "A Study of Dionysus," Pater struggles to make the Dionysus of the drama a figure of sorrow through the invocation of his mother's death. When he describes the traumatic double birth of the god as a "story of human persons" (CS 98), Pater goes on to remark that "Euripides, pre-eminent as a poet of pathos, finds in it a subject altogether to his mind" (CS 98). The comment is misleading, implying that the tragedy is, in fact, about the death of Semele, rather than the violent *nostos* of her son in Thebes and his orchestration of the brutal death of Pentheus. "All interest now," Pater suggests,

turns on the development of its points of moral or sentimental significance; the love of the immortal for the mortal, the presumption of the daughter of man who desires to see the divine form as it is, on the fact that not without loss of sight, or life itself, can man look upon it. The travail of nature has been transformed into the pangs of the human mother; and the poet dwells much on the pathetic incident of death in childbirth, making

Dionysus, as Callimachus calls him, a ‘seven months’ child, cast out among its enemies motherless. (CS 98)

Pater is focusing on two very specific parts of *Bacchae* in this description: Dionysus’s prologue and the odes of the maenad chorus. In the prologue of *Bacchae*, there are some small instances of gentleness, maybe sadness, spoken by the god for his mother. In “The *Bacchanals*,” Pater describes Dionysus’s account of his mother as “touching because simple” (CS 158). The god praises (αἰνῶ) his grandfather, Cadmus, for making the site of his daughter’s tomb sacred (ἄβατον) (ll. 10–11). He shows tenderness, perhaps, when he decorates her grave with his emblem of the vine (ἄμπέλου δε νιν πέριξ ἐγὼ ἴκλυσα βοτρυώδει χλόη) (ll. 11–12). He may even address the “presumption of the daughter of man” when he proclaims δεῖ ... Σεμέλης τε μητρὸς ἀπολογίασθαι μ’ ὕπερ φανέντα θνητοῖς δαίμον’ ὄν τίκτει Δί (it is necessary that my mother, Semele, be defended by my appearance to mortals as a deity whom she bore to Zeus) (ll. 41–42). Although the speech, as a whole, mostly combines expressions of the god’s anger and necessary exposition, Pater attunes his initial treatment of the play to the tiny moments of kinder feeling conveyed by the furious deity.

Pater’s attention to these rare, tender moments in the god’s speech reinforce the structure of “A Study of Dionysus.” Euripides’s play emphatically begins at the transition from the first into the second phase of the religion Pater sets out; the first word of the tragedy (ἦκω, “I am come”) is a literal expression of arrival into an urban space. Dionysus’s descriptions of the non-Greek lands through which he has come are mostly not of cityscapes,³⁹ but of πολυχρύσους γύας (gold-rich fields) (13), ἡλιοβλήτους πλάκας (sun-scorched plains) (14), and δύσχιμον χθόνα (wintry lands). His presence in all these places inspires activities of joy and ecstasy; he χορεύσας, “sets them dancing” (21)—a word which has connotations of choral circles and

country feasts. The descriptions Dionysus makes of Thebes possess, at the very least, sorrowful elements. It is upon his arrival in the city that Dionysus faces his mother's tomb and the disbelief of her family. It is in the city of Thebes that Cadmus will confront his daughter Agave with the murder of her son. Pater's characterization of the *dolores* in *Bacchae* is based on maternal pain and its humanizing implications for the mother's offspring. It is convincing within the essay itself, but fails to catch the actual spirit of Dionysus's prologue—the vocabulary of which is dominated by violence, anger, and coercion.

The pathos Pater evokes is far more in tune with the odes of the maenad chorus. When Pater suggests that “the poet dwells much on the pathetic incident of death in childbirth” (CS 98), he is directly referencing the first choral ode of the *Bacchae*. During the *parados*, the chorus reiterates the story Dionysus tells of his birth:

ποτ' ἔχους' ἐν ὤδινων
 λοχίαις ἀνάγκαισι
 πταμένας Δίος βροντᾶς
 νηδυος ἔκβολον μά-
 τηρ ἔτεκεν, λιπουσ' αἰ-
 ῶνα κεραυνίῳ πλαγᾷ

once his mother held within her in the inescapable pains of childbirth, when the thunder of Zeus flew and she thrust him premature from her womb, and she left her life at the stroke of thunder and lightning[.] (ll. 88–93)

Pater reveals a remarkable interest in the physicality of childbirth represented in these lines, and incorporates it into his own discussion of Dionysus's “double-birth”:

He is πυρτιγενής,⁴⁰ then, fire-born, the son of lightning; lightning being to light, as regards concentration, what wine is to the other strengths of the earth. And who that has rested a hand on the glittering silex of a vineyard slope in August, where the pale globes of sweetness lie, does not feel this? It is out of the bitter salts of a smitten, volcanic soil that it comes up with the most curious virtues. The mother faints, and is parched up by the heat, which brings the child to the birth; and it pierces through, a wonder of freshness, drawing its everlasting green and typical coolness out of the midst of the ashes; its own stem becoming at last like a tangled mass of tortured metal. (CS 99)

Pater captures the spirit of the ode in the way he juxtaposes images of joy and anguish. The maenads sing of πόνον⁴¹ ἠδὺν (pleasant anguish) (l. 66) and κάματόν εὐκάματον (weary unweariness) (l. 67) in their devotions to their god in the first strophe. In the first antistrophe they sing of Semele's agony and death in childbirth, and then immediately, in the next strophe, name Thebes Σεμέλας τροποὶ (the nurse of Semele) (l. 105), an appellation again referring to child-rearing. They tell the city to

στεφανοῦσθε κισσῶ

βρυέτε βρύετε χλοήρει

μίλακι καλλικάρπω

καὶ καταβακchioῦσθε δρυὸς

ἢ ἐλάτας κλάδοισι

wreath yourself with ivy / quicken! quicken with the verdant / bryony, pregnant with berries, and crown yourself with Bacchic frenzy—with branches of oak or pine! (ll. 106–10)

In these stanzas Euripides shifts the mother's agony onto the life of her child, juxtaposing death with new life. Pater's rendition of Euripides's "pleasant anguish" and "weary unweariness" are his "light and lightning" and "parched birth." The "quickening" Pater describes is that of mortal things transformed into beauty by death, and therefore comes with pain (piercing) and suffering (tortured metal). In his description of childbirth Pater contrasts his two established elements of Dionysus: joy and anguish. In both the choral ode and Pater's description, the natural pains of childbirth are ambiguously combined with the divine agony of Zeus's thunderbolt—itsself an oblique reference to copulation. It is unclear which phenomenon brings the baby to term, or whether both are equally responsible. The boundaries between the natural and the supernatural, between life and death, are dissolved at the moment of Dionysus's birth. Each image Pater creates combines beauty with pain; "smitten volcanic soil" produces "virtues"; the parched (a word with "barren" connotations) and fainting mother results in the birth of the child; "a wonder of freshness" rises from ashes and "tortured metal." The moment of Dionysus's birth is a moment of simultaneous opposites—in which the immortal god is tainted by human mortality. It is the clearest moment of representation for the intrinsically contradictory nature of the god. Pater focuses on this small episode in *Bacchae* because it is, for him, the precise moment when the Dionysus of ecstasy and the Dionysus of sorrow exist simultaneously, and Semele is the medium which connects the two.

Part III: Dionysus Zagreus

This combination produces a third Dionysus, whom Pater identifies with the Orphic Dionysus Zagreus—"the Hunter." This Dionysus is the "ugly dream" of the *Bacchae*. Fowler argues that Pater's identification and inclusion of the chthonic Dionysus Zagreus is a refinement

upon Preller's perception of the duality of the Greek gods, "in which the two sides have degrees, shade into each other, and coexist in troubling, often terrifying ways" (Fowler 246). At first, Pater certainly seems to try to contain this chthonic manifestation of Dionysus within Preller's original concept of duality: a god of fire and dew, joy and sorrow. Immediately Pater emphasizes Dionysus as "the double god of nature" (CS 107), "the dual god of both summer and winter" (CS 107), "twofold" (CS 108), "a *Doppelgänger*" (CS 108), who "like Persephone ... belongs to two worlds" (CS 108). He calls this aspect "the gloomier⁴² element in the being of Dionysus" (CS 109) in an attempt to associate it with his Dionysus of sorrow. "He is a Chthonian god," Pater tells us, "and, like all the children of the earth, has an element of sadness" (CS 108). Nevertheless, in the same sentence Pater also asserts that this Dionysus is "hollow and devouring, an eater of man's flesh" (CS 108). The "gloom" associated with this god is not his own, nor is it sympathetic to others'. It is that which he inflicts *upon* others. As Pater works through these dualities, it eventually becomes evident that he has, in fact, broken from Preller and identified a third aspect of the god, rather than a nuance of the *dolores*.

All three of these aspects of Dionysus are, of course, connected and coexistent, but they are also "peculiar and distinct." Pater showcases them most successfully through his delineation of topical spaces (countryside, Athens) and his identification of the god with two pieces of Renaissance art. His rural Dionysus is embodied in the Michelangelo sculpture; his city Dionysus, in the Mocetto engraving. It is clear that Pater perceives this third Dionysus as also something "peculiar and distinct" because he attaches to him a third classical *topos* and a third non-classical artwork. In order to introduce Zagreus, Pater invokes a contemporary painting of Dionysus by the "young Hebrew painter" Simeon Solomon, born and raised in London, which Elizabeth Prettejohn notes could be one of two paintings (figures 3–4) of the god first displayed

at the Royal Academy in 1868 (38–39). The identity of which painting, however, seems almost inconsequential in Pater’s pseudo-ekphrastic description of it. Pater suggests that the painting(s) is a visual representation of the combined opposites already established in his imaginings of Dionysus’s fire-birth. In Solomon’s work, Pater recognizes “the god of the bitterness of wine, ‘of things too sweet’; the sea-water of the Lesbian grape become somewhat brackish in the cup” (CS 107). Evangelista has noted that “things too sweet” is a phrase used by Swinburne (207–8) in the final stanza of his 1866 poem, “Fragoletta”:

O bitterness of things too sweet!

O broken singing of the dove!

Love’s wings are over fleet,

And like the panther’s feet

The feet of Love. (ll. 65–70)⁴³

The speaker of the Swinburne poem is an hermaphrodite, another Greek figure of duality with whom Dionysus was often associated. Evangelista correctly identifies the sexual implications of the associations with Solomon and Swinburne in Pater’s description of the painting, but this allusion to Dionysus’s androgynous body is also an historical detail that Pater uses to reinforce the connections among Dionysus, topography, Athenian drama, and Euripides.

Just before he introduces the painting, Pater describes Dionysus’s transformation from a bearded adult man into a figure of “dazzling whiteness; no longer dark with air and sun, but like one ἐσκιατροφηκῶς ... like the delicate people of the city, like the flesh of women” (CS 106). In Euripides’s *Bacchae*, Pentheus describes Dionysus as being effeminate, taking specific notice of his pale skin. The feminine form Pentheus criticizes, however, is a disguise Dionysus dons upon his arrival into the city. Pater’s description highlights yet another example of the distinctions

between rural and urban spaces and their effects on Dionysus. Early representations of Dionysus depict an adult man, complete with ruddy skin and beard. His appearance changes into ‘ἐσκιατροφηκώς’—a term which means “raised in the shade” in a literal sense, and “effeminate” in a derogatory one—only when his cult is imported into Athens from Eleutheræ during the reign of the Peisistratids (546–510 BCE), a timeline which also coincides with the formalization of Attic drama.⁴⁴ In Pater’s invocation of Swinburne’s final stanza, he once again establishes the moment when Dionysus is both a god of the country and of the city—an ἀστυχώρικος, if you will, or *locus hermaphrodite*. The allusion to “Fragoletta” layers the collocations Pater imagines in Solomon’s painting of bitter wine and brackish grapes. Wine and grapes are the trappings of Pater’s rural, ecstatic god; bitterness—the brackish water of tears—the trappings of the *dolores*. Solomon’s painting(s), therefore, holds both aspects of Dionysus in the frame, which are combined into the “single imaginable form” of what emerges as a third aspect of the god. This third Dionysus encompasses the darker side of the figurative fire and dew. The rural Dionysus embodies the ecstasy, joy, and release found in the consumption of wine; Zagreus embodies wine’s madness, its “fierce hunger and thirst” (CS 109). The urban Dionysus grieves with the mortality and agony of humanity; Zagreus is the source of both—his “human sympathy” (CS 98) lost as he becomes “an enemy of human kind” (CS 109).

At this point in the essay Pater pauses, as though to check himself from projecting too much of the “modern motives” (CS 107) he finds in Solomon’s painting onto the classical past. This third aspect of the god is new to classical criticism—he is not the frivolous and fleshly Bacchus, the aloof Olympian, nor the sorrowful precursor to Christ. For this “subtler melancholy” Pater detects in Dionysus is tainted with something dark. Pater asks, “is anything similar to be actually found, we ask, in the range of Greek ideas?—had some antitype of this

fascinating figure any place in Greek religion?” (CS 107). His answer to this question is a straightforward, although perhaps surprised, “Yes” (CS 107). This Dionysus does not dwell “in the sunny villages of Attica” (CS 109), nor does he recognize himself in the “image of the beautiful soft creature” (CS 109) who lives in Athens. Pater finds him in the mountainous northern poleis of Thrace and Macedonia, where “in those wilder northern regions people continued to brood over his darker side, and hence the gloomy legend descended into Greece” (CS 109). He is a different kind of rural Dionysus—not the carefully cultivated, pastoral god of the Attica vineyard, but a truly wild one—who reaches just as far back into Greek history, “as a tradition really primitive, congruous with the original motive of the idea of Dionysus” (CS 107).

Although Pater rarely mentions it, the *Bacchae* is never far from his mind in “A Study of Dionysus.” The thread of Athenian drama that Pater follows throughout the essay, like Theseus in the labyrinth, suggests that one of Pater’s main analytical aims is not only to decipher the history of the god’s cult, but through this to grasp better the intricacies of Euripides’s last tragedy. Pater betrays his preoccupation with *Bacchae* at the same time he introduces the *topos* of the monster that he, also like Theseus, eventually uncovers:

But it was among the mountains of Thrace that this gloomier element in the being of Dionysus had taken the strongest hold. As in the sunny villages of Attica the cheerful elements of his religion had been developed, so in those wilder northern regions people continued to brood over his darker side, and hence a current of gloomy legend descended into Greece. The subject of the *Bacchae* of Euripides is the infatuated opposition of Pentheus, king of Thebes, to Dionysus and his religion. (CS 109)

The transition from the “wilder northern regions” brooding on the “darker side” of Dionysus to “the subject of Euripides’s *Bacchae*” is abrupt, and seems completely unrelated to the ideas

coming before it, nor does any overt connection reveal itself as the paragraph progresses.

Euripides is an Athenian poet, and Pater has just revealed that this Dionysus does not dwell “in the sunny villages of Attica.” Although he does not mention it in this essay, the train of thought that Pater follows in this transition is what begins his “*Bacchanals* of Euripides”:

[Euripides] is writing ... not at Athens, nor for a polished Attic audience, but for a wilder and less temperately cultivated sort of people, at the court of Archelaus, in Macedonia.

(CS 109)

Suddenly, the trajectory of “A Study of Dionysus” becomes clear. The essay follows the evolution of the rural dithyramb into the tragedies of the City Dionysia, and then the tragedies into a single, particular tragedy written in the “wilder northern regions” of Greece. Read in this way, the essay transforms into a specific analysis of Dionysus in the *Bacchae*: a deep delving into the many masks Euripides is able brilliantly to reconcile into the “single, imaginable form” (CS 91) of his Dionysus. The maenad chorus freely worship their god of joy in his rural rites of ecstasy; side-by-side, however, they sing of the Theban women, whom he has turned into ravenous monsters and driven into the “wild mountains” of Cithaeron. Two messengers announce the glorious miracles of spontaneous nourishment the god grants his followers, while also explaining how the Theban women become “hollow and devouring” as they consume raw flesh and sack villages. Those whom Dionysus “stings” with madness are all driven to the mountains—even Pentheus is led there when Dionysus enchants him. Yet Agave’s insanity abates upon her return to the city, only to be replaced with grief. Dionysus himself speaks of his sorrow when he dons his human disguise upon his arrival into Thebes,⁴⁵ and his audience watches in horror at the speed by which this grief turns into violence as he confronts Pentheus. Dionysus’s formerly passive sorrow becomes active and exaggerated as he inflicts pain upon the

Theban royal family. At the end of the tragedy, Cadmus tells Dionysus ἐπεξέρχῃ λίαν, “you proceed against us excessively” (l. 1346); or as Pater translates, Dionysus “exhausts these sufferings” (CS 109). Madness and irrationality warp joy and sorrow into something devastating.

The Keefes argue that in “A Study of Dionysus” Pater “refuses to dwell on” what they term the “impersonal ferocity of the bacchanalian song” (81). It is true that Pater has Dionysus “recove[r] from his mid-winter madness” (CS 110) rather suddenly after naming him “a hunter of men’s souls” (CS 110). “[It] is that triumphant Dionysus,” Pater pronounces, “cured of his great malady, and sane in the clear light of the longer days, that Euripides in the *Bacchae* sets before us” (CS 110), but these words do not necessarily mean that Pater ultimately rejects “the madness and ferocity” (Keefe 82) he uncovers in his essay, nor that the Dionysus of the *Bacchae* is a static, triumphant god throughout. What Pater describes in these lines is a narrative: the *Bacchae* portrays the transformations of Dionysus *Meilichius* into Dionysus *Achaea* into Dionysus *Omophagus*. The event that cures the god of his “mid-winter madness” is the brutal death of Pentheus, which slakes his hunger—“appeases” him “with costly sacrifices” (CS 110). By the end of the tragedy the madness *is* gone—Pentheus is dead and Agave has come to her senses so that she may learn that she murdered her own son. All that is left is human grief and a god who, having sated himself on it, is again *meilichius*. In describing Dionysus’s *return* to sanity, however, Pater has not dismissed his madness. The sentence continues:

It is that triumphant Dionysus, cured of his great malady, and sane in the clear light of the longer days, that Euripides in the *Bacchae* sets before us; *still really Zagreus*; though he keeps the red streams and torn flesh away from the delicate body of the god, in his long vesture of white and gold, and fragrant with all Eastern odours. (CS 110; my emphasis)

Pater fully acknowledges that Dionysus is always the dangerous and frightening Zagreus, just as he is always ecstatic and sorrowful. The god does not transform from one aspect to the next, but holds them all within himself—he is trans-substantial. Pater cautions that the dark and irrational undercurrent of this third aspect is not deeply buried, but imminently close to breaking through the surface.

Conclusion

Pater was unable to design or complete his portrait of Dionysus and Dionysian religion without recourse to Euripides's *Bacchae*. As Chapter Two demonstrates, it is equally impossible to comprehend the *Bacchae*, and its Victorian reception, without knowing of this fully formed, tripartite god. This Dionysus has implications for more than just the *Bacchae*, however; these conceptual aspects of the god seep into all of Euripides's oeuvre, including *Medea* and *Hippolytus*. Homicidal madness at being spurned creeps into the revenge plot of *Medea*, wherein the heroine's sorrow warps into the unthinkable murder of her children. The inevitability of his ecstasy—of the release he promises his followers and violently forces upon the Theban women—rises from the sea and rips apart the controlled eponymous protagonist of *Hippolytus*. The Victorians come to connect Euripides to this long shadow of horror through his conflation with the god he stages in *Bacchae*. Pater himself attaches Dionysus to the monstrous:

This transformation, this image of the beautiful soft creature become an enemy of human kind, putting off himself in his madness, wronged by his own fierce hunger and thirst, and haunting, with terrible sounds, the high Thracian farms, is the most tragic note of the whole picture, and links him on to one of the gloomiest creations of later romance, the were-wolf, the belief in which still lingers in Greece as in France, where it seems to

become incorporated in the darkest of all romantic histories, that of Gilles de Retz.⁴⁶ (*CS* 110)

The following chapters will reveal the prescience of Pater's description. Throughout the century, Euripidean drama becomes a medium through which Victorian writers process "the horror and the glory" of their societies, until—at the turn of the century—Euripides's Dionysus is reinvented by Bram Stoker, not as Pater's were-wolf, but as the decadent vampire of *Dracula*.

***Bacchae*: Dread and Ugly Dreams**

Euripides wrote the *Bacchae* during a period of exile at the end of his life. A scholion to Aristophanes's *Frogs* reports that the play was produced posthumously at the City Dionysia by Euripides's son, probably in 405 BCE, alongside *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Alcmeon* (Schol. Ar. *Frogs* 67). The production garnered Euripides one of his five victories at the festival. Because it is generally accepted that Euripides spent his final years in the Macedonian court of Archelaus, the Victorians took it for granted that he wrote the *Bacchae*, as Pater puts it, among this "wilder and less temperately cultivated sort of people" (CS 155). Pater, in fact, begins his analysis in "The *Bacchanals* of Euripides" upon this premise of a "wild" audience, as opposed to "a polished Attic" (CS 155) one. Yet, given the tragedy's success at the City Dionysia, even this "polished" audience was captivated by the story of the avenging god and his violent *nostos*.

In this chapter, I first outline the critical reception and translation of the *Bacchae*, which indicate that the popular perception of the tragedy in the early half of the nineteenth century was overwhelmingly positive. Specifically, English, German, and French commentators admired the beauty of the play's choral odes and its unusually (for Euripides) conventional plot structure. This adherence to traditional tragic structure and form was subsequently applied to the content of the tragedy, as these critics decided that the dramatization of Dionysus's return to Thebes was Euripides's final palinode—a widely held belief that the *Bacchae* represents Euripides's capitulation to the Athenian *status quo*. Towards the mid to late century, however, the palinode theory began to be contested and dismissed by critics (notably R. Y. Tyrell and A. W. Verrall) interested in Euripides's perceived rationalism and agnosticism. This debate effectively reoriented the tragedy away from being a concession to conservatism and opened the *Bacchae* up

to implications for counter-discourses regarding an “othering” of the classical past and its implications for the present, which I explore through the works of three late-Victorian authors: Walter Pater, Bram Stoker, and Jane Harrison.

Pater subverts the traditional palinode analysis of the tragedy in “The *Bacchanals* of Euripides” as a means to collocate and trouble Dionysian and Christian discourses. (He transfers this association into a medieval setting in “Denys L’Auxerrois,” in which both traditions are blurred into the single, troubling figure of Denys, revealing a transgressive suggestion that both deities are part of the same enduring cycle of death and rebirth.) The dangerous elements of the Christian and Dionysian, unveiled and combined by Pater, are subsequently infused by Stoker into his iconic gothic horror story, *Dracula*, in which he reimagines Dionysus as its titular villain. Having established *Dracula*’s intertextual similarities to the *Bacchae*, I move on to an exploration and comparison of Dionysus’s vampiric implications for aestheticism and decadence in both men’s works. For Pater, the idea of Dionysus’s transmigration and reincarnation throughout human history represents potentiality and artistic renewal—renaissance. Stoker instead capitalizes particularly on Dionysian associations with decadence and madness, recasting the classical Greek past from an idyllic bastion of western civilization into something dangerous, something fundamentally “other,” something which needs to be resisted. Unlike Stoker, however, Harrison does not present the dangerous quality of Euripides’s Dionysus as something to be rejected, deported, and destroyed; nor does she ignore it. For Harrison, the *Bacchae* and its “new, strange, romantic god” (CS 156) provide language and precedent for the disruption of the *status quo*, a path to female emancipation through Dionysus’s promise of freedom through destruction.

While the translators, commentators, and critics I discuss in the earlier sections of the chapter target their work to a more elite, educated audience, Pater, Stoker, and Harrison all address a broader readership. Pater's essays incorporate classics and classical discourses into larger contexts, effectively popularizing ancient texts and making his analyses of them accessible to less erudite readers. Harrison, too, spent much of her career marketing her research to audiences more casually interested in the material culture of ancient Greece and Rome, both through the engaging tone of her written works and her enormously popular public lectures. Unlike Pater and Harrison, Stoker was not a professional classicist, but he, too, was interested in the popularization of classical culture through his novels. The incorporation and dissemination of classical content by these three were not, of course, in and of themselves unique. The history and literature of ancient Greece and Rome were generally ingrained into Victorian culture as a part of British identity and perceived heritage. By recasting Euripides's *Bacchae* not as a palinode but as a showcase of the "otherness" of the ancient world, however, these three popularizers link *fin-de-siècle* Britain not with "sweetness and light," but with dread and "ugly dreams." One must then, as Pater urges, "listen and watch the strange masks coming and going, for a while, as far as may be as we should with a modern play. What are its charms? What is still alive, and really poetical for us in the dim old Greek play?" (CS 158). More pertinently, perhaps, what is still "un-dead"?

"The dim old Greek play"

The *Bacchae* begins with Dionysus himself speaking the prologue. ἤκω, he says emphatically: "I am come."¹ There is an untranslatable immediacy in Euripides's choice of verb, and something unequivocal in its placement—first—in the sentence. Dionysus is come, the audience learns a few words later, to his birthplace of Thebes, but he is also *here*, on stage² in *his*

sanctuary at *his* festival. The theatre is his temple; the altar in the orchestra, *his*. In true Dionysian fashion, Euripides is able to blur the boundaries of drama and reality in this one word, and convey what is at the heart of Bacchic ritual: that humans, through Dionysian worship, can themselves channel the god and become temporarily divine. This immediacy is highlighted, too, by the diction and meter of Dionysus's prologue. The tragedy's language and style as a whole are uncharacteristically archaic and stylized for Euripides;³ A. W. Verrall notes, however, that Dionysus's prologue has "but as little elevation as is compatible with the form of poetry. It could not satisfy, and was not (one would suppose) designed to satisfy, as the style for a god, those who had seen gods presented by Aeschylus and Sophocles" (*BE* 35). This plain speech, contrasted with the "luscious vocabulary" (*CS* 159) of the play's beautiful choral odes, intensifies the immediacy of the god, and troubles the boundary set between Dionysus, the supernatural avenger, and the human priest, his disguise for much of the play.

In a structure typical of classical drama, Dionysus continues in this prologue to outline the plot and motivations of the ensuing action. First, he sees the tomb of his mother, Semele, still smoldering with Zeus's fire, and offers rare praise to his grandfather, Cadmus, for making the sacred ground ἄβατον, "not to be trodden" (ll. 6–12).⁴ While proving an almost autochthonous relationship to Thebes in the description of his mother's burial, Dionysus also highlights his extreme foreignness to this polis, and to Greece, through his description of the eastern, non-Greek lands through which he has come: Lydia, Phrygia, Persia, Bactria, Media, Arabia, and "through all of Asia, / where its fair-towered cities lie along the coast / and Greeks and barbarians mingle" (ll. 17–19).⁵ This final line would have been disturbing to an Athenian audience: Euripides uses the adjective μιγά, "mixed or mingled," to describe the relationship between "Greeks and barbarians" in Asia. μιγά forms the root of a Greek verb indicating sexual

intercourse (μίγνυμαι), the use of which broadly hints that “Greeks and barbarians” are doing more than cohabiting in a city—with the inevitable result that this “mingling” results in offspring of “mixed” parentage.

In 451 BCE, the Athenian leader Pericles had passed a law decreeing that only children born of two Athenian parents could be citizens, reflecting a social anxiety over parentage and citizenship in the democratic polis.⁶ Many of the characters in Euripides’s plays offer severe criticisms to Greeks who marry outside their polis. In *Suppliant Women* (423–20 BCE), Theseus is horrified when Adrastus admits that he knowingly married his daughters to foreigners (and exiles to boot), remonstrating that, λαμπρὸν δὲ θολερῶι δῶμα συμμείξας τὸ σὸν / ἤλκωσας οἴκους, “Having mixed your illustrious home with foulness, you harmed your house” (*Supp.* 222–23).⁷ In *Ion* (ca. 410), the titular character exhibits surprise and censure to Creusa when she admits that she, an Athenian, married a foreigner, despite her husband Xuthus’s lofty ancestry (the son of Hellen and Orseis; brother of Aeolus). This concept of Greeks and “barbarians” mingling, however, is yet another example of the ways by which Dionysus in the *Bacchae* destroys dichotomies upon his arrival in Thebes—the first of the Greek cities he visits. The Greeks considered the “not Greeks” as much their opposite as up is to down;⁸ the Athenians prided themselves in their own autochthonous claims on Attica. Pater’s delineation of Euripides’s audience, Macedonian or Athenian, is therefore quite relevant. The *Bacchae*, like Bacchus, was established in the “barbarian” court of Archelaus and it returned, triumphant, to the land of its creator.

Upon his return to Thebes, however, Dionysus finds that his godhood has been rejected by his mother’s family (Cadmus excepted). In retaliation, the god drives his maternal aunts (Agave, Ino, and Autonoe) mad and banishes them to the mountain (an undomesticated space).⁹

Disguised as his own mortal priest, he awaits a meeting with the son of Agave, Pentheus, the newly appointed king. Cadmus and the aged, blind seer Teiresias have already accepted the god and donned the youthful apparel of his rite (albeit on some logically shaky and ethically questionable grounds). When Pentheus arrives on stage from the distant *eisodos*—implying that he has been out of town—he is already furious with the changes Dionysus/priest has wrought in the city. The sight of his grandfather dressed in ποικίλαισι νεβρίς (dappled fawnskins; l. 249), enrages him, and he derides the two old men, calling them both πολὺν γέλων (laughable; l. 250), and chastising Cadmus: ἀναίνομαι, πάτερ, τὸ γῆρας ὑμῶν εἰσορῶν νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον (I reject, old father, the sight of your old age so lacking in sense; ll. 251–52).

Pater describes the Teiresias and Cadmus episode as an “humorous little scene” (CS 160), in keeping with what he identifies as the comic origins of the Dionysian festival. There is, however, something of what he recognizes—however briefly—as the “grotesque” in it as well (CS 160), a combination of the “ludicrous” and the “fearful” (SV 126).¹⁰ The two illustrious and aged men dressed in the clothes of young peasants would have been unusual, perhaps even shocking, to a fifth-century BCE Athenian audience, accustomed to seeing legendary kings dressed in elaborate and expensive costumes.¹¹ The former king and the prophet of Apollo enter the scene in fawnskins, painfully awkward as they attempt to join in the Bacchic dance, very aware of their frailty as they contemplate the long walk to Mount Cithaeron. This episode adds to the growing list of merging differences in Thebes since Dionysus’s arrival: barbarians mingling with Greeks; a god masquerading as a mortal;¹² women dominating masculine spaces; and now, royalty dressed as peasantry, old men pretending to be young. This compounding of the bizarre helps to generate the tension and terror that build throughout the tragedy.

The “grotesqueness” of the episode peaks when Cadmus and Teiresias explain to Pentheus their reasoning for embracing Dionysus as a god. Teiresias’s argument emphasizes clever wordplay over any meaningful discussion of divinity—a tactic which associates him unfavourably with sophism. He defends the somewhat far-fetched story of Dionysus being born from Zeus’s thigh by arguing that the word μηρός (thigh) is actually a mistake for ὄμηρος (hostage). Far from being nourished in Zeus’s thigh, he was in fact held hostage by the jealous Hera (an account which in some respects points toward the Orphic story) (ll. 286–97). Cadmus is more transparent in his arguments, essentially appealing to his grandson that even if Dionysus is an imposter, having a god in the family is good for their reputation (ll. 181ff, 333ff). These explanations are simultaneously humorous (making the old men’s words as silly as their actions and costume) and dreadful—punishment awaits Cadmus’s disingenuity as much as it awaits his grandson’s hostility. Certainly Pentheus, bristling with righteousness, is far from convinced.

Instead, he demands that the god’s priest be brought, bound, before him. Faced with the disguised Dionysus, Pentheus’s dialogue adds to the growing list of hybridity and danger inspired by the god’s presence:

ἄτὰρ τὸ μὲν σῶμ’ οὐκ ἄμορπος εἶ, ξένε,
 ὡς ἐς γυναῖκας, ἐφ’ ὅπερ ἐς Θήβας πάρει:
 πλόκαμός τε γάρ σου ταναός, οὐ πάλης ὕπο,
 γένυν παρ’ αὐτὴν κεχυμένος, πόθου πλέως:
 λευκὴν δὲ χροιάν ἐκ παρασκευῆς ἔχεις,
 οὐκ ἡλίου βολαῖσιν, ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ σκιᾶς,
 τὴν Ἀφροδίτην καλλονῆ θηρώμενος.

Your body is not ill-formed, stranger, at least as regards women's tastes, and it is for them that you have come to Thebes. For your hair is long—clearly, you're not a wrestler¹³—and tumbled about your face, full of lust. And you have a white complexion, not naturally, but due to personal care, eluding the shafts of sunlight and staying in the shade, hunting Aphrodite with your beauty. (ll. 453–59)

Pentheus infers that the priest's aspect would be pleasing to women, and that he cultivates such an appearance for that very reason, while simultaneously *conflating* him with women. Pentheus's description of the priest is detailed, sensual, and suggestive of an unwilling attraction to the stranger's sexually ambiguous form, which he corrects by adding a quick *proviso* to dispel any notion of admiration. Most tellingly, Pentheus dwells on the priest's white skin, an attribute that was, both by custom and by artistic representation, reserved for women. In pottery, for example, women are identifiable—even if all that is left of the pot is an arm or a leg—by the white paint used exclusively for them. Men, in contrast, are ruddier in Greek art, reflecting the fact that unlike women, who spend most of their lives “staying in the shade” of the *oikos* they are not allowed to leave, men boldly go to meet the “shafts” hurled down to earth by Helios. Even more strangely, Pentheus's attempts to feminize Dionysus do not take away from his power in the scene. In *Suppliant Women*, for example, King Adrastus is feminized by Theseus as a means of diminishment, a tactic which enables the young king to take up the mantle of dominant leader.¹⁴ Pentheus's attempts, however, seem to confer yet more power into the hands of the effete Dionysus.

In the stichomythia following, Pentheus continues to reject the god's mysteries and rites and accuses him of establishing a religion in order to gain sexual access to women, but he also continues to betray his own attraction to the disguised priest. After a series of questions about the

nature of the mysteries, to which Dionysus/priest responds that Pentheus would need to be an initiate to receive an answer (they are *mysteriēs*, after all), Pentheus seals his fate by ordering his guards to imprison the priest in his stables (off-stage). From his holding cell, Dionysus begins to reveal himself as a god. His voice calls upon Earthquake and destroys Pentheus's palace, a move eerily similar to his own birth when Zeus's thunderbolt destroyed the home of Semele.¹⁵ The palace, however, does not simply crumble; the chorus of maenads describes how the stones of the building are διάδρομα—the palace is “wandering apart” and thus “going mad.”¹⁶ Dionysus returns to the stage and recounts to the chorus how he caused Pentheus to mistake him for a bull while he was trying to bind him—a description which conflates the god not only with beast, but with Pentheus himself, for Dionysus explains that Pentheus “exhaled his fury,” trembled in sweat, and “gnashed his teeth” as he grappled with the bull (ll. 620–21).¹⁷ During the earthquake, when Pentheus rushed at him with shield and spear, Dionysus then sent a φάσμα, “phantom” (l. 630), to confuse him. Pentheus emerges into the scene recklessly excited, demanding to know how the priest escaped his bonds, strangely insensible to the massive earthquake, and still refusing to acknowledge Dionysus as a god.

The two are interrupted by the appearance of the first messenger, who comes bearing tales of yet more marvels witnessed on Mount Cithaeron. He has seen Agave, Autonoe, and Ino there, among the other women Dionysus drove away, dressed in the fawnskins which they have fastened with live snakes. He has seen some of them suckling animals at their breasts; others produce water, wine, milk, and honey from the rocks, earth, and *thyrsoi*. He has seen them rip cattle apart with their bare hands and devour the raw flesh. Most frighteningly of all, when he and the other men from the village attempt to ambush the women, they are viciously overcome by the unarmed bacchantes, who, in retaliation, ransack the town. The men trying to defend their

homes are unable even to wound the women, whose skin, charged with Dionysus's divine power, deflects all swords and missiles.

Upon hearing the messenger's speech, Pentheus is impatient to do battle with the maenads himself—until he is irresistibly halted by a single word from Dionysus: ἤ, “Ah” (l. 810). This small sound is spoken outside the meter of the stichomythia, which gives it “special emphasis” (Seaford 213) and marks it as a turning point in the play. Pentheus, entrapped by this one syllable, is further seduced when Dionysus asks him: βούλη σφ' ἐν ὄρεσι συγκαθημέναις ἰδεῖν; “Would you like to see their assembly on the mountain?” (l. 811). Instantly entranced by the offer, Pentheus completely shifts from his overt hostility to a rather unsettling kind of docility. Pater also labels this scene “grotesque” (CS 160), “in which the humour we noted, on seeing those two old men diffidently set forth in chaplet and fawn-skin, deepens into a profound tragic irony” (CS 164).¹⁸ Dionysus has the newly meek and biddable Pentheus dress in the costume of a maenad, successfully reversing Pentheus's earlier attempts to feminize him as a means of diminishment, and obtaining almost complete control over the young man through this cross-dressing.¹⁹

Richard Seaford has summarized a popular argument that Pentheus, acting as Dionysus's dramatic foil, begins the tragedy “by insisting on boundaries between himself and Dionysus (e.g. 341–4), between male and female, between inside and outside. He vehemently rejects what is alien (‘other’) to himself” (34). It is striking that the resolution of the tragedy and the establishment of a Dionysian religion can only happen through the gradual “combining of opposites” (Seaford 34) within Pentheus himself—not within the god.²⁰ Dionysus causes Pentheus to inhabit the subject positions of man and woman, hunter and prey, human and animal. He “drives him from his wits” (ἔκστησον φρενῶν) (l. 850) and parades him through Thebes in

his womanly costume “to incur laughter from the Thebans” (γέλωτα Θηβαίοις ὀφλεῖν) (l. 854), much in the same way that Pentheus found Teiresias and his grandfather “laughable” in their fawn-skins. Pentheus, in his new manic state, finally sees the god within the priest, but is still unable to acknowledge him outright:

καὶ μὴν ὄρᾶν μοι δύο μὲν ἡλίους δοκῶ,
 δισσὰς δὲ Θήβας καὶ πόλισμ' ἐπτάστομον:
 καὶ ταῦρος ἡμῖν πρόσθεν ἠγεῖσθαι δοκεῖς
 καὶ σῶ κέρατα κρατὶ προσπεφυκέναι.
 ἀλλ' ἦ ποτ' ἦσθα θήρ; τεταύρωσαι γὰρ οὔν.

But I seem to see two suns and two Thebes—both a seven-gated city. And you—who lead the way before me—you seem to be a bull—horns grow from your head. But when were you a bull? For you are certainly now a rough-looking beast.²¹ (ll. 918–22)

Pentheus’s madness is unnerving. His vision of Dionysus as a bull, in addition to an admission of divinity, is also a betrayal of his unwilling attraction to the god: bulls, in Greek ideology, are symbols of unrestrained masculine sexuality. Dionysus now has complete physical and psychological authority over the young king, helping him to perfect his female disguise but all the while hinting darkly at the grim fate awaiting the mortal. The two leave the stage in order to make their way to Cithaeron.

The next time Pentheus appears on stage, he is a severed head in the hands of his crazed mother, Agave. A second messenger has arrived to tell the chorus of the Theban king’s grisly death. He describes how Pentheus returned somewhat to sanity when he realized that he was “close to disaster” (l. 1113) and tried to force recognition from his mother. She, however,

mistook him for a mountain lion, her mouth ἀφρός ἐξιῖσα “dripping foam” (l. 1122). ἐκ Βακχίου κατείχετ’ (“possessed by Bacchus”), she was unable to distinguish her son:

λαβοῦσα δ' ὠλένης ἀριστερὰν χέρα,
 πλευραῖσιν ἀντιβᾶσα τοῦ δυσδαίμονος
 ἀπεσπάραξεν ὦμον, οὐχ ὑπὸ σθένους,
 ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς εὐμάρειαν ἐπεδίδου χεροῖν:
 Ἴνῳ δὲ τὰπὶ θάτερ' ἐξειργάζετο,
 ῥηγνῦσα σάρκας, Αὐτονόη τ' ὄχλος τε πᾶς
 ἐπεῖχε βακχῶν...

... ἔφερε δ' ἦ μὲν ὠλένην,
 ἦ δ' ἴχνος αὐταῖς ἀρβύλαις: γυμνοῦντο δὲ
 πλευραὶ σπαραγμοῖς: πᾶσα δ' ἡματομένη
 χεῖρας διεσφαίριζε σάρκα Πενθέως.

Grabbing his left elbow with her hand, propping her foot against the wretched boy's ribs, [Agave] tore off his arm, not through her own strength, but with hands given ease by the god. Ino did her work on his other, rending his flesh, while Autonoe and all the other bacchantes closed in on him One carried an arm, another a foot still in its shoe; his ribs were splayed and stripped of flesh; and in their bloodied hands they all played catch with the broken body of Pentheus. (ll. 1125–36)

This macabre speech is followed by the entrance of Agave, dancing through Thebes with her son's head fixed to the end of her thyrsus, still compelled by Dionysus into thinking she carries the head of a lion. When Cadmus returns to the scene, followed by the eccyclema, which bears the gathered remains of his grandson, he must slowly restore Agave from her divine madness, a

scenic reversal of Dionysus's enchantment of Pentheus. Once Agave is made to realize the enormity of her "prize," Dionysus appears on the *theologeion*, decreeing the miasmic future of Cadmus's line, and distilling the whole motivation for this elaborate and gruesome tragedy into a single, simple, line: καὶ γὰρ πρὸς ὑμῶν θεὸς γεγὼς ὑβριζόμεν, "Because I, born a god, was insulted by you" (l. 1347).

The *Bacchae*'s Victorian Critics

Invoking the nineteenth-century classicism inspired by A. W. Schlegel, J. Michael Walton concludes that "Dionysus and his portrayal in Euripides's *Bacchae* ... [are] either too strong meat, or too strange fruit, to be served very often" (190–91) at the proverbial Victorian dinner table. To be sure, Schlegel's derisive treatment of Euripides in his lectures had a well-established negative impact on Euripides's reputation in the 1800s. It is, however, a poor choice to invoke Schlegel in this particular instance, for he in fact offers nothing but rare praise for the *Bacchae*:

The *Bacchae* represents the infectious and tumultuous inspiration of the worship of Bacchus, with great sensual power and vividness of conception. The obstinate disbelief of Pentheus, his blindness, and dreadful punishment by the hands of his own mother, form a bold picture. The effect on the stage must be extra-ordinary.—Imagine, only, a chorus with flying and disheveled hair and dresses, tambourines, cymbals, &c. in their hands, like the Bacchantae on bas-reliefs, raving up and down the orchestra, and executing their inspired dances amidst tumultuous music, which was altogether unusual, as the choral odes were generally delivered with a solemn step, and without any other accompaniment than a flute. Here the luxuriance of ornament,²² which Euripides always affects, was for

once in its proper place. When therefore several of the modern critics attempt to depreciate this piece, and to assign to it a very low rank, they do not seem to me to know what they themselves would wish. I cannot help admiring in the composition of this piece, the harmony and unity which we so seldom observe in Euripides, the abstinence from everything foreign to the subject, so that all the effects and all the motives flow from one source, and contribute to one object. After *Hippolytus*, I should be inclined to assign the first place to this among all the remaining works of Euripides. (184–85)

Far from condemning the play's "strangeness," Schlegel is in fact impressed by its "harmony and unity," and defends it against disparagement. Although it took many years for Schlegel's appraisal of the play to gain traction in Germany (notably in G. H. Meyer's *De Euripidis Bacchabus*, published in 1833), by the early Victorian period the "detractors" had mostly been silenced, especially in England, and the play was generally understood to be one of Euripides's best.

The disparagers to whom Schlegel refers were, surprisingly, confused by the mythological material that Euripides chose to dramatize. Early critics, including French classicist Pierre Brumoy (1688–1742), took issue with the *Bacchae* due to the so-called ridiculous subject matter of the myth—they did not understand why Euripides would put Bacchus (understood to be the more trivial, Roman god) on stage at all. His gestation in and delivery from the thigh of his father, Zeus, were derided by most European critics, who were made uncomfortable by the gender-blurring elements of Dionysus's masculine birth. Brumoy suggests, as a solution to the problem, that the tragedy is actually a satyr drama: "Elle tient quelque chose du spectacle satyrique, si elle n'en est pas un, aussi bien que le Cyclope" (this tragedy has a resemblance to satyr drama, if it is not one completely, in the way *Cyclops* is) (450). The rationale is

disingenuous: *Bacchae* is very specifically a tragedy both in its length and in its production position (satyr plays were performed last).²³

In *Études sur les tragiques grecs* (1843), Henri Patin, a French translator of classical texts, sums up the general attitude towards the *Bacchae* in western Europe prior to the Victorian period:

Par un contraste singulier, cette même pièce, si admirée des anciens, n'a pas plu, il s'en faut, aux critiques modernes. Brumoy la défend à peine, Prévost la condamne plus hardiment, La Harpe la rejette avec mépris, Métastase en plaisante; W. Schlegel seul, revenant, non sans quelque exagération, au sentiment de l'antiquité, la proclame le chef-d'oeuvre d'Euripide.

In singular contrast, this same play [*Bacchae*], so admired by the ancients, has not pleased modern critics. Brumoy defends it barely, Prévost condemns it more boldly, La Harpe rejects it with complete contempt, Metastasius with jokes; W. Schlegel alone, returning to ancient sentiment, proclaims it the masterpiece of Euripides, though not without some exaggeration. (239)

Patin's commentary on the *Bacchae* is a turning point in critical assessments. He is one of the first to argue that the play's subject matter is fundamental to the genre in which Euripides is writing:

Il était naturel qu'à Athènes, où la tragédie était sortie du dithyrambe, où ses représentations étaient restées un des accessoires du culte de Bacchus, où les acteurs s'appelaient artistes de Bacchus, où, sur les murailles du temple voisin de cet édifice, et aussi consacré à Bacchus, étaient peintes les principales aventures du cycle Dionysiaque, l'histoire du dieu fournit beaucoup de sujets aux poètes tragiques.

It was natural that in Athens—where tragedy evolved from the dithyramb, where its performance remained a fixture of the cult of Bacchus, where the actors were called the artists of Bacchus, where on the walls of the temple next to the theatre (also dedicated to Dionysus) are painted the principal occurrences of the Dionysian cycle—that here the history of the god would provide a fruitful subject for the tragic poets. (Patin 233)

Patin, as he himself describes Schlegel, “revenant au sentiment de l’antiquité,” recalls to his reader that tragedy was created as a form of Dionysian worship, which makes the subject matter of the *Bacchae* anything but puzzling. He also reminds one that Euripides is not the only tragic poet to write on the subject—he is just the only poet whose play survives.

Schlegel’s *apologia* for the *Bacchae* became the standard for positive criticism of the play in the early Victorian period, even while his general contempt for its author dominated classical discourse. Those who wanted to defend Euripides were left in the awkward position of trying to discredit Schlegel’s summation of ancient tragedy *and* using Schlegel as an authority when discussing the *Bacchae*. F. A. Paley, for example, who published an important three-volume commentary on Euripides’s plays from 1857 to 1860, defends Euripides generally from his detractors, including Schlegel (whom he identifies by name), while returning to what Schlegel observes about the *Bacchae* in order to support it particularly. Through reference to Schlegel, Paley and other prominent classicists began to popularize the “harmony and unity” of the *Bacchae*. This stance is one persistently repeated in the Victorian press, from reviews in periodicals to articles written by British classical editors.

Walton’s assumption that the *Bacchae* was unpopular (or ignored) in the Victorian period, which he argues through reference to the apparent dearth of translations compared with some other tragedies (although he misses a few versions),²⁴ is based on a modern assumption that

the *Bacchae* is unique to Greek drama, *avant-garde*, a “play that in the twentieth century has seemed arguably more malleable than any other classical tragedy in reflecting the mood of the time, yet one whose Victorian translation history is surprisingly flimsy” (Walton 186–67). By as early as the 1840s, however, the play’s subject matter was considered perfectly “*naturel*” for tragedy. The *Bacchae* was fairly and consistently well-liked by Victorians throughout the period, in large part because it is structurally one of Euripides’s most conventional texts. Richard Seaford labels its structure “unusually coherent” for Euripides (28); its chorus, “unusually central to the action” (28); and its language, in the grander style of Aeschylus and Sophocles. In this sense, there is much in this tragedy to satisfy Victorian tastes.

It is likely that the Victorians were actually unaware of any shortage in commentaries or published translations of the play. J. E. Sandys²⁵ confesses in the preface to his commentary on the *Bacchae*, which he published in 1880, that he had begun “a foundation for an edition of the play” in 1869, but that he refrained from finishing the work because “after the publication in 1871 of Mr. Tyrrell’s edition, which, together with Mr. Paley’s already existing commentary on all the plays, appeared likely, for some time to come, to meet the wants of English students” (i–ii). Victorians also widely believed that Euripides, due to his less effusive style (generally imagined to approximate spoken Attic Greek more closely than Aeschylus or Sophocles), was more easily translated and so, it would follow, required fewer attempts to get it right. By the final decade of the century, a reviewer of Edward P. Coleridge’s *Euripides’ Plays* (1891) comfortably declares (to readers that he assumes agree with him):

We open a new translation of Euripides with a good deal of interest. Like Homer, like Browning, like Victor Hugo, unlike Sophocles and Vergil and Keats, Euripides can bear translation without any really ruinous loss of charm. His greatness does not lie in

instinctive beauty of language or in any of the impalpable fragrances which cling about the subtlest poetry of the imagination: it lies in his extraordinary width and activity of intellect and his inspired insight into the strongest and simplest as well as the most refined or morbid development of human passion. (*The Speaker* 591)

Euripides is, according to popular Victorian opinion, a poet who can be enjoyed both in Greek and in translation, making him one of the ancient world's more accessible writers.

Reviews of new translations were also apt to include sentiments similar to this earlier 1872 *Fortnightly Review* article, indicating a general insensibility to the apparent dearth of translations of the *Bacchae*:

Everybody knows how of all the plays of Euripides, [*Bacchae*] is one of the most exciting, full of fire, movement, poetical intensity, and intoxication; how it has unsurpassed passages both of descriptive energy and choric sweetness, and has, in consequence been commented, admired, and translated on many hands. (610)

Walton discounts one of the most popular of these “hands,” Henry Hart Milman²⁶ (1865), due to his “cavalier attitude to the original” (191). Milman’s translation of the *Bacchae*, however, was, for the most part, positively received and reviewed in Victorian periodicals. An 1866 reviewer in *The Reader*, for example, effuses that, “Dr. Milman has succeeded in combining ... accuracy of scholarship with elegance of expression” (141), indicating that, although his rendering of Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon* leaves much to be desired, his *Bacchae*, due to the easier nature of Euripidean translation, “is far better” (142).

Reviewers warier of Milman’s fidelity to the original still praise his ability to catch, overall, the “classical spirit.” The mid-century marked a point in classical translation when

extremely literal renditions became quite popular—often with almost unreadable results. A reviewer for *The Christian Remembrancer*, however, celebrates Milman’s poetry:

Dean Milman’s mission, so far as concerns poetical translation, is clearly defined; and it is devoutly to be hoped that the present rage for translation from the classics will be wholesomely toned and leavened by the cultivated freedom, if we may so term it, of his Muse. His own style, in prose as well as poetry, has been conspicuously based on antique patterns. To start with, he has had in him more of the poet than the translator. But he has chastened his composition by the surest process—to wit, deep study and frequent imitation of ancient authors: and hence his original composition breathes a classical spirit, while his translations evince the ease and dexterity of a master of English literature. (430)

Milman’s translation of the *Bacchae* was so admired that, seven years later, when James Rogers published his own, an 1872 reviewer for the *Athenaeum* proposes that “it was perhaps rather audacious to enter the lists, or seem to do so, against Dean Milman; and the Dean must remain in possession of the field, if only one can possess it” (145). Nevertheless, the critic believes that Rogers “certainly still deserves complimenting at the result,” for the translation “has great merits” in that “it is fairly accurate and it is readable” (145). Although the statement smacks strongly of Matthew Arnold’s accidental condemnation of Sophocles as “adequate,” it is by no means a hostile review.

Milman prefaces his translation of the *Bacchae* with reference to a notorious quotation about Euripides by the early nineteenth-century historian Thomas Babington Macaulay: “The sure sign of the decline of an art is the frequent occurrence, not of deformity, but of misplaced beauty” (Macaulay 65). Milman himself declares that, although he is aware of the “defects” of

Euripides “as compared with the proper ideal of Greek tragedy” (97), he “could never agree” with Macaulay’s condemnation (97).²⁷ Rogers also introduces his translation of the *Bacchae* with an *apologia*, defending him by name against Schlegel, K. O. Müller, and even Aristophanes. Of the *Bacchae*, Rogers protests: “There is no play of Euripides, not even the ‘Hecuba’ or ‘Troades,’ which is more painfully real than the ‘Bacchae’ is, none which more thoroughly bears out Aristotle’s criticism, that Euripides is the most tragic of the poets” (xxi). Theodore Alois Buckley’s 1850 *Euripides’ Plays* also includes an introduction that does, to a much lesser extent than Rogers’s, try to salvage the Schlegel-inspired reputation of the poet. He begins, unpromisingly, by confirming that Schlegel’s analysis of Euripides’s canon is “masterly” (vi), suggesting that Euripides “took delight in the black side of humanity” (vi), and stating impossibly that “[i]t has been truly remarked, that tragedy, in no small degree, owed its downfall to Euripides” (vi–vii). Although harsh throughout (to the point where one may wonder why translate him at all), Buckley attempts to offer reasons for the public to read Euripides, focusing on him as “a great admirer of nature” (vii) who “has more of illustrative philosophy, more of regard to the objects of the animated creation, the system of the universe, than his greater rivals exhibit” (viii). And, of course, Buckley makes a special allowance for the *Bacchae*, a play he describes offhandedly, as a matter already established, “our author’s noble play” (vi). The shift towards a more sympathetic reception of Euripides as the century unfolds is easily traced through the introductions to the various translations of these editions. The *Bacchae* specifically, however, was undeniably being published, discussed, praised, and made available throughout the long nineteenth century.

“Riddle of the *Bacchae*”: The Palinode Theory

I have already established that one of the central reasons the *Bacchae* was acclaimed in the nineteenth century, even by Euripides’s general detractors, is because of its perceived conformity to the “proper ideal of Greek tragedy” (Milman 97), its cohesive structure, the relevance of its choral odes, and its more “elevated” language. More important, however, is the rather obstinate perception that the *Bacchae*, written at the end of Euripides’s life, represents a fundamental change in the poet’s character—an indication that he was no longer endeavouring, as Schlegel complains, “to build over the chasm” between old gods and the contemporary world. In the *Bacchae*, the Victorians read an abandonment of Euripides’s “excessive rationalism” and a long overdue acceptance of the power of religion. For much of the nineteenth century, the *Bacchae* was considered to be Euripides’s palinode.

Heinrichs attributes the origin of the palinode theory to Thomas Tyrwhitt (famous for editing Chaucer) in 1762²⁸ (“Detractors” 391). Tyrwhitt argues, rather fancifully, that the *Bacchae* “was written to defend Euripides against the impiety which was soon to overwhelm his friend Socrates” (qtd. Dodds, *Bacchae*, xi). The idea was adapted into a less pragmatic argument by the prominent nineteenth-century German classicists Karl Otfried Müller (1841) and Karl Friedrich von Nägelsbach (1857), both of whom transformed Euripides’s creation of the *Bacchae* into a conversion narrative. Müller argues that the *Bacchae* “geben ... merkwürdige Ausschlüsse in Bezug auf Euripides Meinungen über göttliche Dinge in seiner letzten Lebenszeit” (gives new insights into Euripides’s opinions about religious matters at the end of his life) and “Er erscheint darin gleichsam zum positiven Glauben bekehrt” (he appears, so to speak, converted to positive faith) (*GLZA* 176). Nägelsbach claims that Euripides, in a remarkable change of heart,

“geflissentlich zur Bekämpfung der Sophistik bestimmt” (deliberately intended to oppose sophistry) and “schanden warden lassen” (put to shame) “alles menschliche Vernünfteln” (all human reason) “der realen und objektiven Macht des Göttlichen” (in favour of the true and objective power of the divine) (463). Ultimately, by the mid-1800s the play had become a *Widderuf* (retraction) of not only Euripides’s perceived atheism, but of his so-called commitment to extreme rationalism and sophistry—of all the characteristics that made his works frightening and degenerate to a Victorian audience. The tragedy was, to nineteenth-century critics, a surrender of dangerous Euripidean “free thinking” to the orthodoxy of classical Athens.

Much in the way that Winckelmann’s “Edle Einfalt, stille Grösse” (81) “became a byword” among early Victorian classicists (Michellini 4), the palinode theory was widely accepted into early Victorian parlance about the tragedy. For Paley, “[t]he *Bacchae* is especially remarkable for exhibiting clearly and prominently the theological opinions of the poet in his later days,” when “human reason and philosophy had entirely failed him” and he no longer found “satisfaction in his unbelief” (392). The same *Athenaeum* review of Roger’s translation of the tragedy states uncompromisingly that in the *Bacchae*, a play in which the author writes “in his own voice” more than any other, Euripides “distinctly deprecates and denounces rationalism” (145). Even as late as Nietzsche’s bombastic *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1871, the palinode theory was still the standard interpretation of the *Bacchae*. Heinrichs has illustrated that “[a]s the prophet of a new ‘Dionysian world view’ Nietzsche could hardly afford to ignore a play whose subject matter was so germane to his theory of tragedy, even though its author was Euripides” (“Detractors” 391). The play should have been a “serious stumbling block” for the young classics professor,

But far from it: with almost reckless aplomb, he disposes of the potential obstacle in a single page, one of the least rewarding of the whole essay. As Nietzsche sees it, the life-long champion of unmitigated rationalism had finally lost confidence in the power of reason, made his peace with Dionysus, and written the *Bacchae* as a recantation. (391)²⁹

The palinode theory was exploited by Euripides's detractors and defenders alike. In his 1867 senior thesis, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (who would continue to be one of Euripides's most significant champions) also used the palinode theory in his analysis of the *Bacchae* (Heinrichs 392)—as did Pater in the 1870s.

In Defence of Rationalism: Tyrell and Verrall

An anti-palinode reviewer of John Edwin Sandys's 1880 *Bacchae* commentary in the *Academy* wonders how “the mind of so wise and good a man [Euripides] could have any real sympathy with the extravagant story about the premature birth of the infant Dionysus and his concealment till the full time in the thigh of Zeus” (349). This objection distills one of the most remarkable and contradictory aspects regarding the palinode theory and its Victorian popularity. The standard view of Greek religion in the nineteenth century was one of derision. F. Max Müller, prominent philologist and Pater's Oxford colleague, notably marvels: “To those who are acquainted with the history of Greece, and have learnt to appreciate the intellectual, moral, and artistic excellencies of the Greek mind, it has been a wonderment how such a nation could have accepted, could have tolerated, such a religion” (421). Why was Euripides's late conversion to a pagan creed so immensely necessary for the Victorian audience to take him seriously, when by and large they did not take that same religion at all seriously?

Conformity to the established social institutions of a nation or polity figures high on the list of answers to this question. The palinode reading of the *Bacchae* suggests that one of Athens's most notorious rebels (second, perhaps, only to Socrates and Diogenes) ultimately found peace and wisdom at the end of his life by submitting to the *status quo*. The play, of course, argues for the opposite. Dionysus is not a champion of the *status quo* in the tragedy; Pentheus is the character staunchly against the new social and religious freedoms Dionysus brings into Thebes, and he is horrifically punished for it. Yet the Victorians had another vested interest in the "conversion of Euripides" narrative, for although they did not take Greek religion seriously, they were very serious indeed about Christianity. I have already established that Dionysus was consistently connected to Christ throughout the period. An analysis of the *Bacchae* as a story, not of Pentheus's, but of Euripides's conversion to "Glauben bekehrt" (*GLZA* 179), creates a parallel to the story of western Europe's conversion to Christianity.

By 1871, however, the palinode theory was being successfully contested by classicists. Heinrich asserts that R. Y. Tyrell's commentary, *The Bacchae of Euripides*, published in the same year as Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, "conclusively laid to rest" (392) the *Widderuf* interpretation of the play, after which time it became almost a non-issue. Tyrell himself credits J. A. Hartung (1844) and Eduard Pfander (1868) as the first critics to dismiss the palinode theory. Hartung identifies the similarities between the portrayal of Dionysus with that of Aphrodite in *Hippolytus*, a play Euripides had written nearly thirty years earlier. Both gods are bent on vengeance because Hippolytus and Pentheus, respectively, are unwilling to worship them. Both gods exact their revenge, and both are told by mortal characters that, since they are gods, they should be better than mortals.³⁰ These similarities suggest to both Hartung and

Pfander that Euripides, *sapiens severusque senex* (Hartung 542), had not changed his religious views (Hartung 542; Pfander 2).

Tyrrell accepts the Germans' arguments and additionally attacks the palinode theory for its rejection of Euripides's rationalism, an analysis which he argues is mistakenly based on the repeated condemnations of τὸ σοφόν in the tragedy.³¹ Proponents of the palinode generally translate the word anachronistically as "rationalism," but do not, according to Tyrrell, differentiate between constructive and destructive rationalism (xxv). Tyrrell labels the Sophists as the perpetrators of destructive rationalism in that they "apply rationalism to the received facts of belief themselves, or leave their moral deformities untouched, recognising in them neither ethical import nor instruments of regeneration" (xxviii). Constructive rationalism, however, typified by Socrates, "accept[s] these facts, but in conformity with this basis endeavour[s] to raise and deepen popular views" (xxix). Tyrrell suggests that the rationalism Euripides condemns in the *Bacchae* is the destructive kind:

It is the neglect of this distinction between the Sophistic and Euripidean points of view which has fostered the opinion that the *Bacchae* is a recoil from the Aufklärung³² of his earlier works, and a reaction towards a dogmatic orthodoxy; whereas in truth the rationalism which he condemns in the *Bacchae* is the rationalism of the Sophistic standpoint, and *that* he condemns in the *Medea* and the *Hippolytus*, written thirty years before; and the rationalism of his earlier works is the Socrato-Euripidean rationalism of which traces may be found in the *Bacchae*, the work of the poet's extreme age. (xxix)

In his defence of Euripides and rejection of the palinode theory, therefore, Tyrrell also reidentifies Euripides as a constructive poet, whose rationalism encompasses an understanding of the defects of his society while trying, through his tragedies, to improve it. This particular

defense is not, as I have previously established, a portrait of the poet that is in any way common in nineteenth-century England (where the prevailing opinion was that Euripides was a symptom of degeneracy and therefore destructive), nor is it one that completely gains a lasting foothold in Euripidean criticism.

A. W. Verrall celebrates rather than condemns Euripides's "excessive rationalism" in his pivotal study *Euripides the Rationalist: A Study in the History of Art and Religion* (1895).

Although the *Bacchae* is not explicitly discussed in the work, Verrall's later publication, *The Bacchantes of Euripides* (1910), aggressively resists orthodox religious readings or biblically-charged translations of the text. While he dedicates the work to Gilbert Murray, for example, Verrall makes a particular point of condemning Murray's translation of Dionysus's opening prologue (*BE* 35): "Behold, God's son is come unto this land" from Ἦκω Διὸς παῖς τήνδ'ε Θηβαίων γῆόνα, which is literally "I am come, son of Zeus, to the Theban land" (l. 1). It is in an 1895 review of Pater's *Greek Studies* (posthumously collated and published by Charles Shadwell) that Verrall formally criticizes the palinode theory and Pater's mention of it. In the review, Verrall praises the volume in eulogistic terms: "It is with the gratitude and reverence due from every lover of letters, and from me in particular as one to whom from my schooldays until his latest year he showed consistent kindness—it is in this spirit that I would review for the last time a book from Walter Pater" (*PGS* 228). The respect Verrall retains for the late Oxford don is ostensible throughout. Yet, while he calls the collection of essays not only "fine and subtle to a supreme degree, but also exquisitely true" (*PGS* 225), Verrall takes issue with Pater's essay on the *Bacchae*:

And the like praise might be extended to the ensuing article on the "Bacchanals" of Euripides, if we could accept Mr. Pater's assumption that Euripides in that play "has

undertaken to be the poet of' Bacchus, and a servant of "the tradition." To Mr. Pater the *Bacchae* is primarily and essentially a document for the religious conceptions of the myth. Adopting the view that the play is an *amende honorable*³³ offered by Euripides to popular religion, he sets himself to distil from it the spirit of that belief and worship which Euripides (*ex hypothesi*³⁴) desired sympathetically to represent. (PGS 225)

It is unsurprising that Verrall is frustrated by Pater's revival of the palinode theory.³⁵ In England the idea had been more or less laid to rest by Tyrrell.³⁶ Although Pater likely wrote "The Bacchanals" around the same time as "A Study of Dionysus" (first published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1876), by 1895 the *Widderuf* was not a popular interpretation of the play.

Verrall's own crusade against the palinode theory is inspired by a particular aspect of Tyrrell's argument. Tyrrell (as well as Hartung and Pfander) features Teiresias as an example of how Euripides uses constructive rationalism in the *Bacchae*:

[For] instance in [the *Bacchae*] 314–318 ... we have Tiresias' answer to the charge of immorality which Pentheus brings against the Bacchic orgies. The uneducated man would have defended the immorality incurred in the service of the god; the Sophist would have uprooted the belief which entailed unchastity: Euripides does neither, he leaves the belief untouched, and shows that unchastity is not its necessary concomitant. (Tyrrell xxix)

The blind seer's lack of response to Pentheus's charge of promiscuity is an argument for Euripides's continued reliance on the "proper" kind of rationalism. Verrall, too, focuses on Teiresias in his discussion of the *Bacchae*, but unlike Tyrrell, he emphasizes how Apollo's prophet *does* respond in the tragedy. Rather than two kinds of rationality, Verrall argues instead that Euripides portrays two kinds of religion (PGS 226). Teiresias represents the popular, state

religion of the ancient world, which Verrall stresses by calling him “the Apolline prophet” (*PGS* 226). Verrall maintains that if the *Bacchae* were really a recantation, it would follow that Teiresias be the mouthpiece of Euripides because he represents the acceptance of Dionysus into the religion of the Olympians. Teiresias, however, “accepts Dionysus, not perhaps dishonestly, but simply from deadness of heart and lack of spiritual insight, just as one figure more in a legendary pantheon which would accommodate him and digest him very comfortably” (*PGS* 226).

I have already discussed the uncomfortable way Teiresias argues for the case of Dionysus, through a trick of sophism rather than through religious conviction. Teiresias’s argument prompts Verrall forcefully to advocate:

It is surely not permissible, it would not be so even if in other respects Euripides appeared to have painted Teiresias with affection and sympathy, to hold that Teiresias speaks for Euripides here, where he is made to use language so palpably inappropriate and inadequate to the situation in which he is placed by the dramatist. That language represents correctly enough the way in which religious innovation has actually been treated again and again by prudent politicians. An enemy of the Catholic Church might well put such language *mutatis mutandis* into the mouths of Popes or Cardinals debating about St. Francis or St. Catherine, St. Theresa or St. Ignatius Loyola. But if it were attributed to them by a professed friend, we should be forced to accuse either his good faith or his intelligence. Whatever else in the play may truly represent the views of Euripides, this passage alone would show that he does not agree with Teiresias. (*PGS* 226)

Verrall is reacting to a point in “The *Bacchanals*” where Pater refers to Teiresias as the “fitting” “interpreter of Dionysus” (CS 161) who “explains the true nature of the visitor” (CS 161) to Pentheus. Verrall’s exasperation with Pater’s interpretation of this scene featuring Cadmus, Teiresias, and Pentheus is very understandable, as it does indeed seem to suggest that one must “accuse” either Pater’s “good faith or his intelligence.” As both these attributes are, however, well established on his behalf, it is perhaps a better idea to understand the effect of Pater’s gloss over the blatant awkwardness of this exchange.

The Riddle of “The *Bacchanals* of Euripides”: Pater and the Palinode

What, then, is the significance of Pater’s inclusion of the palinode theory? Is it an example of Pater’s own retraction—an *amende honorable* for the frightening and irrational god he produces in “A Study of Dionysus”? Intermittent between Pater’s return to a religiously orthodox reading of the *Bacchae*, however, are clear and increasing discussions of Dionysus Zagreus. In fact, he quite straightforwardly states that “from the first, amid all this floweriness, a touch or trace of that gloom is discernible” (CS 159) in the *Bacchae*, and that “Euripides crosses the Theban with the gloomier Thracian legend, and lets the darker stain show through” (CS 159). A sharp discrepancy exists between Pater’s return to a traditional, Christian-inspired criticism of the play and his inclusion of the play’s “grotesques, mingled with and heightening a real shudder at the horror of the theme” (CS 157).

The Christian-inspired analyses of the *Bacchae* that Pater evokes are overt. In addition to the inclusion of the palinode theory, Pater dwells, for example, on “the glorious version of [Semele’s] story” (CS 158), of a woman who, like Mary, gave birth to the son of a god. Like Christ, Dionysus is “on a journey through the world to found a new religion” (CS 158) and

makes himself known to his followers “by a gradual revelation” (CS 162) of his true nature—language which mirrors Jesus’s own gradual revelation to his disciples in the *Condessio Petri* (Matthew 16; Mark 8; Luke 9). Pater’s most illuminating reference to Christian-inspired criticism, especially in regard to his problematic discussions of characterizations in the tragedy, appears in the first line of the essay. Pater describes the *Bacchae* as “a sort of masque or morality” (CS 155), and later a “mediaeval mystery” (CS 160)—a rather surprising lens through which he proceeds to examine the tragedy.

The morality play was a genre of religious drama popular in England during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, consisting of “a simple message of Christian salvation,” “comic scenes,” and, most importantly, “dramatized allegories,” in which “personified virtues, vices, diseases, and temptations struggle for the soul of Man as he travels from birth to death” (Baldick). Because they represent particular concepts, the characters of morality plays are simple and uncomplicated—they are, to paraphrase Pater, exaggerated impersonations (CS 161). Potolsky suggests that Pater’s comparison of the *Bacchae* to a morality “does not imply that he sees it as allegorical, but rather as the staging of a grand conflict between competing religious and political principals” (315). Pater does, however, take several liberties with the play in order to transform this classical Athenian masterpiece into a morality drama: he alters its characters into basic medieval “types.” Agave, Ino, and Autonoe become uncomplicated malefactors, “sinning against natural affection” (CS 158) as they besmirch the “true and glorious” story of their dead sister Semele, virtuous mother of a god. The problematic and cynical Cadmus becomes “the aged king, always secretly true to [Dionysus]” (CS 160). Pater’s blatant mischaracterization of Teiresias as “the prophet” who “fittingly becomes the interpreter of Dionysus, and explains the true nature of the visitor” (CS 161), with which Verrall takes such

issue, begins to make some sense under the umbrella of Pater's rather inventive thesis. By simplifying (and re-fashioning aspects of) these secondary characters, Pater creates the "good" and "bad" agents of the morality drama.

Pater's deliberate mischaracterization of Teiresias reinforces an equally problematic characterization of Pentheus—another aspect of "The *Bacchanals*" of which Verrall does not approve. Pater's rendering of Teiresias and Cadmus as uncomplicated—if slightly ridiculous—devotees of the god casts Pentheus as an uncomplicated villain, mercilessly persecuting the "meek," Christlike Dionysus. For Pater, Pentheus is "like the exaggerated diabolical figures in some of the religious plays and imageries of the Middle Age, an impersonation of stupid impiety" (CS 161). In the essay, Pentheus is always "cruel" in relation to Dionysus: he threatens Dionysus "with cruel forms of death" (CS 161); his reason "sickens" with "judicial madness gathering over it" (CS 161–62); and then ultimately

comes the full contrast, with a quite *mediaeval simplicity and directness*, between the *insolence of the tyrant*, now at last in sight of his prey, and the *outraged beauty of the youthful god, meek, surrounded by his enemies*[.] (CS 162; my emphasis)

Pater's medieval-inspired exaggeration of the austerity of these characters, especially of Dionysus, seems at first to belie the complex deity he portrays in "A Study of Dionysus." The "meek" and "youthful god," who is "surrounded by enemies," suggests that Dionysus is powerless and afraid during this encounter with Pentheus, which even a superficial understanding of the play immediately contradicts. This portrayal does, however, encapsulate the rare fear of the child god during his encounter with Lycurgus, described in Homer's *Iliad* (6.137). When read with an understanding of Pater's conception of the tripartite Dionysus, these

overly simplified characters in fact capture and reference, in a remarkably ingenious way, the many conflicting aspects and *mythoi* surrounding the manifold god.

Although the parallels Pater draws between Christianity and the *Bacchae* are overt, they are also subversive and exquisitely complicated. The “simple message of salvation” important to the morality play to which Pater compares the *Bacchae* becomes haunted and dark under the aegis of the vine god. The *Bacchae* is “almost wholly without the reassuring calm” (CS 157) of a Christian morality (or, as Pater suggests, a typical Greek tragedy), and is instead “excited, troubled, disturbing—a spotted or dappled thing, like the oddly dappled fawn-skins of its own masquerade, so aptly expressive of the shifty, twofold, rapidly doubling genius of the divine, wild creature himself” (CS 157). Pater “rapidly doubles” his basic morality version of the play with “something of a real shudder” (CS 77), in the same way he argues that Euripides “crosses the Theban with the Thracian legend [of Dionysus], and lets the darker stain show through” (CS 159). For the very fawn-skin Pater uses as his metaphor,

composed now so daintily over the shoulders, may be worn with the whole coat of the animal made up, the hoofs gilded and tied together over the right shoulder, to leave the right arm disengaged to strike, its head clothing the human head within, as Alexander, on some of his coins, looks out from the elephant’s scalp, and Hercules out of the jaws of a lion on the coins of Camarina. Those diminutive golden horns attached to the forehead represent not fecundity merely, nor merely the crisp tossing of the waves of streams, but horns of offence. And our fingers must beware of the *thyrsus*, tossed about so wantonly by himself and his chorus. The pine-cone at its top does but cover a spear-point; and the thing is a weapon—the sharp spear of the hunter Zagreus—though hidden now by the fresh leaves, and that button of pine-cone (useful also to dip in wine, to check the

sweetness) which he has plucked down, coming through the forest, at peace for a while this spring morning. (CS 159–60)

Beneath Pater's caricatures lurk the spear points. The "humorous little scene" (CS 160) of the medieval morality play, which Pater describes between Cadmus and Teiresias, transforms into "a grotesque scene" (CS 164) between Pentheus and Dionysus, "in which the humour we noted, on seeing those two old men diffidently set forth in chaplet and fawn-skin, deepens into a profound tragic irony" (CS 164). While Pater describes Dionysus, when bound by Pentheus, to be "like some fair wild creature in the snare of the hunter" (CS 162), he almost immediately afterwards refers to him as "some dangerous wild animal, in a dark place near the king's stables" (CS 162). The "fair wild creature" is the young god, blasphemously hunted and made afraid by King Lycurgus; the "dangerous wild animal," the adult god who takes cold vengeance on a different king.

After the death of Pentheus, Pater clarifies that Dionysus sheds his "meek" demeanour, and that "from this point onwards, Dionysus himself becomes more and more clearly discernible as the hunter, a wily hunter, and man the prey he hunts for" (CS 166). I suggest, therefore, that Pater's exaggerated renderings of Cadmus, Teiresias, Pentheus, and Dionysus during their respective exchanges are not conceived through insensibility, but in order to emphasize a wider argument Pater is making with the essay:

[I]n the conception of Dionysus also a certain transference, or substitution, must be made—much of the horror and sorrow of Agave, of Pentheus, of the whole tragic situation, must be transferred to him, if we wish to realise in the older, profounder, and more complete sense of his nature, that mystical being of Greek tradition to whom all these experiences—his madness, the chase, his imprisonment and death, his peace again,

really belong; and to discern which, through Euripides' treatment of his subject, is part of the curious interest of this play. (CS 166)

In superimposing the framework of the Christian morality play onto the *Bacchae*, Pater distils its characters into varying aspects of the god Dionysus himself. The essay shrewdly draws attention to the similarity of Pentheus's massacre at the hands of his family—torn limb from limb—to Dionysus's own dismemberment at the hands of Hera and the Titans. Rather than the “diabolical villain” Pater initially portrays, Pentheus is instead a part of Dionysus: his mad rage and pathetic suffering exist together with the chorus's ecstatic joy. Verrall's complaint that “[t]o Mr. Pater the *Bacchae* is primarily and essentially a document for the religious conceptions of the myth” is a valid claim. But, according to Pater, Euripides, too, has “a theory how myths are made” (CS 155) and has managed to contain all the incongruous aspects and stories of Dionysus into his final play. Unlike other palinode enthusiasts, Pater does not argue that Euripides denounces his rationalism. Instead, Pater suggests that “the sophism of Euripides” is what melds the varying aspects of the god together, in order to portray “the old tradition in its completeness” (CS 167). The Dionysus of the *Bacchae* is, for Pater, all accounts and versions of the god.

Pater's inclusion of the palinode theory, therefore, at once invokes earlier *Bacchae* criticism and subtly subverts it. Unlike the *Widderuf* critics, Pater takes the religion of Dionysus seriously in his analysis of the *Bacchae*; he considers Greek religions as “credible or practicable thing[s]” (GS 152). According to “The *Bacchanals*,” Euripides's *amende honorable* does not mean a concession to the white-washed, Olympian religious ideal of Winckelmann, nor to the pseudo-Christian conformity suggested by earlier palinode criticism; instead, it embraces the chthonic, dangerous, sublime power of a truly wild god and his promise of an ecstatic freedom open to everyone. Pater explains that:

Dionysus *Omophagus*—the eater of raw flesh, must be added to the golden image of Dionysus *Meilichius*—the honey-sweet, if the old tradition in its completeness is to be ... our closing impression; if we are to catch, in its fulness, that deep under-current of horror which runs below all through this mask of spring, and realise the spectacle of that wild chase, in which Dionysus is ultimately both the hunter and spoil. (CS 166–67)

Finally, Pater’s comparison of the *Bacchae* to an explicitly Christian dramatic genre results in a final fusion: Dionysus with Christ. Pater’s embrace of the god in all his aspects is done through consistent connections to Christ and Christian-inspired criticism, with a last, tantalizing suggestion that Dionysus *becomes* Christ as the myth develops, that “the expression of a strange ineffable woe” and a “long-pent agony” in Euripides’s final tragedy were “adopted into his paler work by a Christian dramatist of the fourth-century, and have figured since, as touches of real fire, in the *Christus Patiens* formerly attributed to Gregory Nazianzen” (CS 167).³⁷ Christianity is ultimately revealed to contain its own Zagreus, its own “devouring god” (CS 110).³⁸

This less favourable connection between the two religions was not lost on subsequent authors. Jane Harrison, for example, notes the similarities between Euripides’s maenad women “who suckle the young of wolves and deer” and the conflation of baby Jesus with the lamb (PSGR 594). “It may be,” she muses, “that each [maenad] thought her nursling was a Baby-God. Christian children to this day are called Christ’s lambs because Christ is Lamb of God” (PSGR 594). To illustrate her point, Harrison quotes Clement of Alexandria:

“This is the mountain beloved of God, not the place of tragedies like Cithaeron, but consecrated to the dramas of truth, a mount of sobriety shaded with the woods of purity. And there revel on it not the Maenads, sisters of Semele the thunderstruck, initiated in the

impure feast of flesh, but the daughters of God, fair lambs who celebrate the holy rites of the Word, raising a sober choral chant.” (qtd. *PSGR* 594–95; *Protr.* 7.119)

Yopie Prins has effectively argued for the authority of Pater’s classical aestheticism for writers such as Harrison, Vernon Lee, and Michael Field (Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper). Bradley and Cooper were especially drawn to “Pater’s aesthetics and eroticised vision of ancient Greece” (“Greek Maenads” 46), which allowed them to express ideas of gender dissidence and freedom through Pater’s conceptions and explorations of Dionysus and Dionysian ritual. “Maenad,” as Prins argues, was a more liberating term than “spinster” (46).

In Field’s posthumous collection *Dedicated*, published in 1914 and featuring poems dating from 1900 (Thain and Vadillo 193), “Dionysus Zagreus” furthers Pater’s connections of Christ with pagan ritual. Olverson remarks that “this poem represents the unification of Christian, pagan, and pantheist values, in the protean figure of Dionysus” (*Women Writers* 115). The speaker, Zagreus, identifies himself in a manner similar both to Dionysus’s prologue in the *Bacchae* (especially Murray’s translation) and to Christ: “I, the son of a god, in the form of man” (l. 32). At the same time, Field channels Pater’s (and through him Preller’s) expansive analysis of the god in the self-description: “I of such sorrows, greater than a man’s, / I, the rejected, hunted, mad, unwelcome” (ll. 82–83).³⁹ Zagreus “weave[s] ... tragic bunches in a wreath, / Fit crown for ever, of [his] misery” (Field ll. 83–84), a crown which Olverson suggests conflates Dionysus’s garland and Christ’s crown of thorns, creating a “symbiosis with Nature and [Christ’s] pagan roots” (*Women Writers* 115). With their god of “all darkness [in] motion” (l. 95) and “all mad pain” (l. 95), Field connects Dionysus to Christ not only through his much-belaboured anguish, but through his darkly Euripidean invective: “To show amid you to the world my grief, / My conquest—you subservient” (ll. 103–4).

The Second Birth: “Denys L’Auxerrois”

In his imaginary portraits “Denys L’Auxerrois” (1886) and “Apollo in Picardy” (1893), Pater continues to channel ancient Athenian dramatists in his imaginative engagement with and reinvention of ancient myth. Specifically, he appropriates that which Schlegel dislikes most about Euripides: “build[ing] over the chasm that yawned between his contemporaries and that wondrous older world” (Schlegel 114). By reimagining the two old gods in “more familiar territory,” as Caroline Vout articulates, Pater “fosters this sense of proximity” (166). The proximity is troubled, however, by what Lene Østermark names the “diaphanous” quality of the imaginary portraits’ “ghostly” characters; they are “luminous spirits of a future aesthetic revolution” but they often draw back “into the state of evanescent shades” (Østermark, *IP* 16).

Steven Connor describes the subject of “Denys L’Auxerrois” as “the Golden Age transformed and diminished by its conflict with a later world” (42). Denys’s “old pagan spirit,” lessened and dimmed through his reinvention in medieval Auxerre, echoes Pater’s unflattering comparison of the *Bacchae* to the *Christus Patiens*, and transfers from “The *Bacchanals*” his provocative suggestion that Christ’s own *mythos* begins with Dionysus. The story is told as a pseudo-ekphrastic description of a stained-glass window in a Catholic cathedral, from which the narrator “feel[s his] way backwards” (*CS* 73) in order to recreate the history of Denys. The figure on the glass is remarkably Christlike in his depiction, “a suffering, tortured figure,” who “with all the regular beauty of a pagan god... has suffered after a manner of which we must suppose pagan gods incapable” (*IP* 84). Through his Christian framing of the narrative, Pater, a self-identified “student of *origins*” who “follow[s] faint traces” (*CS* 72) in order to discover the

geneses of religion and its poetry, tantalizingly insinuates that the religious origins the narrator is rediscovering are not those of Bacchus alone.

The connections between Denys and the Dionysian canon are, as Connor phrases, “numerous and obvious” (36). Denys’s mother, like Semele, is seduced in a similarly problematic way. She is “taken from her people” (*IP* 86) by the local lord (suggesting violence), but “not unwillingly”; the ambiguity of the double-negative is perhaps a nod to the Greek verb δάμνημι/δαμάζω,⁴⁰ which means both to seduce and to rape, and is often used to describe Zeus’s libidinous interactions with women. Like Semele also, Denys’s mother “wished to see the great lord” (*IP* 86). Although the Count of Auxerre’s true form is not the thunderbolt, the splendour of his way of life and the “anger of the true wife” (*pace* Hera) cause her to flee into a storm, where she gives birth prematurely and dies “by lightning-stroke” (*IP* 87). The description of Auxerre seems to combine all of Pater’s Dionysian topography. It blends Zagreus’s “cisalpine and northern” (*IP* 81) backdrop with the joyous Bacchus’s gentler hills of “vineyard sloping upwards gently to the horizon,” “a veritable country of the vine” (*IP* 83), whose “physiognomy,” nevertheless, “is not quite happy—attractive in part for its melancholy” (*IP* 83). Pater refers to Auxerre as a “complete realization” for the “wanderer” (*IP* 81), an epithet commonly given to Dionysus (Πλαγκτήρ). The narrator describes how the villagers call Denys “*Frank*” (*IP* 87), an old French word meaning “free,” whose Greek and Latin equivalents (Ἐλευθέριος, *Liber*) are titles given to the god, and are specifically mentioned in Pater’s Dionysus-themed essays.

The connections between Dionysus and Denys are also very specifically details referencing Euripides’s *Bacchae*. The first sentence of the story identifies its theme as one of “return” (*IP* 81), a *nostos* borrowed from the opening line of the tragedy. Denys surfaces in Auxerre when the town “had its turn in that political movement which broke out sympathetically,

first in one, then in another of the towns of France, turning their narrow, feudal institutions into a free, communistic life” (*IP* 85) that is full of “personal freedom” (*IP* 85); a political movement which mirrors Dionysus’s journey through the cities of Asia and Greece, where he liberates the citizens and “sets them dancing.” The “humorous little scene” (*CS* 160) between Cadmus and Teiresias reappears in Pater’s fiction when,

The aged Dean of the Chapter ... held up his purple skirt a little higher and stepping from the ranks with an amazing levity, as if suddenly relieved of his burden of eighty years, tossed the ball with his foot to the venerable capitular Homilist, equal to the occasion.⁴¹

(*IP* 86)

Pater’s characterization of Teiresias in “The *Bacchanals*” as the prophet fit to explain the true nature of Dionysus to Pentheus resurfaces in “the sage monk Hermes”⁴² (*IP* 87), who, Pater observes, “would fain have discovered the secret of his charm, partly for the friendly purpose of explaining to the lad himself his perhaps more than natural gifts with a view to their profitable cultivation” (*IP* 87). Later, the townsfolk attempt to kill Denys “for a sorcerer” (*IP* 91), which is how Pater translates Pentheus’s accusation that Dionysus is a γοής (*CS* 159; *Bacchae* l. 234). It is even insinuated that Denys is the muse responsible for the *Christus Patiens* (or something of its ilk), as his presence in Auxerre “suggested to the somewhat barren penmen of the day a ‘morality’ adapted from old pagan books—a stage-play in which the God of Wine should return in triumph from the East” (*IP* 88–89). The details of Denys’s massacre are almost identical to Pentheus’s: he is torn apart by a mob of hunters who perceive him to be “an unholy creature” and “tos[s] him hither and thither, torn at last limb from limb” (*IP* 95). Hermes, channelling Cadmus, seeks “in vain next day for any remains of the body” (*IP* 95). The imaginary portrait is an

“updated” adaption of the *Bacchae*, in which Pater is able to collocate Christianity through his new medieval setting, rather than through the superimposition of the medieval morality drama.

Associations linking Denys and Christ are also numerous. The most significant moment of connection is Pater’s description of the day that a “sort of golden age” (*IP* 85) returned to Auxerre. Masons, the narrator recounts in very specific detail, unearthed “a finely-sculptured Greek coffin of stone, which had been made to serve for some later Roman funeral” (*IP* 85).

“Within the coffin,” he describes,

lay an object of a fresh and brilliant clearness among the ashes of the dead—a flask of lively green glass, like a great emerald. It might have been “the wonderous vessel of the Grail.” Only, this object seemed to bring back no ineffable purity, but rather the riotous and earthy heat of old paganism itself. Coated within, and, as some were persuaded, still redolent with the tawny sediment of the Roman wine it had held so long ago, it was set aside for use at the supper which was shortly to celebrate the completion of the masons’ work. Amid much talk of the great age of gold, and some random expressions of hope that it might return again, fine old wine of Auxerre was sipped in small glasses from the precious flask as supper ended. (*IP* 85)

The oddly tangential detail that the Greek coffin had been repurposed is a subtle gesture to the continuous chain of rebirth Pater explores in the story. Is it too fanciful to perceive a connection between the Greek coffin and Dionysus’s first death, repurposed by “some Roman” to contain the body of Christ? The coffin holds a vessel the narrator likens to the Holy Grail, which caught the blood of Christ on the cross, a substance later consumed as wine by his initiates. This cup, too, holds wine, “redolent” of “the riotous and earthy head of old paganism,” a drink of the Dionysian mysteries. The iconographies are so entwined in these minute details of exhumation,

itself a gesture to both gods' resurrections, it is impossible to distinguish to which creed the sarcophagus belongs.

By positioning Dionysus “within an alien, Christian context” (39), Connor argues that “Pater shows the distortion of his character as in part brought about by the confrontation of pagan gaiety with Christian melancholy” (39). “Melancholy” is, however, an aspect of Dionysus Pater clearly identifies within his ancient contexts, and one that, far from exhibiting “disjuncture” (Connor 39) from a Christian milieu, has consistently *connected* the god to Christ. The confrontation Pater explores in “Denys” is the same one he illuminates in “A Study of Dionysus” and “The *Bacchanals*,” that of gaiety and melancholy with a very violent demonstration of cruelty. Dionysus, the previously defined god of both joy and sorrow, is an easy point of comparison to Christ, complicated and endangered by Pater’s revelation of Zagreus’s inherent brutality.

Some of the violence is more straightforwardly inspired by its Greek sources. Denys’s presence stimulates women “in mere wantonness” to drown their children (*IP* 90), an echo of Agave’s mad slaughter of her son; a comparison to Exodus 1, in which Pharaoh decrees that all male Hebrew children be drowned at birth, is also apposite.⁴³ Yet the descriptions of Denys in winter, however brutal, are still tied to a kind of tender sadness inherent in the young god’s confrontation with Lycurgus. “It was,” the narrator explains, “as if the wine poured out for them had soured in the cup” (*IP* 90), a description which repeats Pater’s description of Simeon Solomon’s *Bacchus* (in “A Study of Dionysus”): “a god of the bitterness of wine” (*CS* 107), “the sea-water of the Lesbian grape become somewhat brackish in the cup” (*CS* 107). Denys does not glory in “the coarseness” (*IP* 90) and “savage taste” (*IP* 90) that comes over the town through his presence, but rather aches alongside the villagers. Hermes the monk “was whimsically reminded

of that *after-thought*⁴⁴ in pagan poetry, of a Wine-god who had been in hell. Denys certainly, with all his flaxen fairness about him, was manifestly a sufferer” (*IP* 90). This winter Dionysus is not a god who inspires fear, but one who feels it; unlike Euripides’s protagonist, placidly unconcerned by Pentheus’s repeated, failed attempts to imprison him, Denys “feared to be brought back a prisoner” (*IP* 90).

The tangible cruelty in the story comes from its Catholic setting, when, after a “religious ceremony,” the townsfolk participate in a pageant and pretend to hunt the frightened winter god in the street. The pageant escalates to a real, brutal murder of a man, and shifts the pathos of the *Bacchae* from Pentheus to Dionysus in the way Pater suggests is necessary “to realise in the older, profounder, and more complete sense of his nature” (*CS* 166). Dionysus incites Pentheus’s family to rip him apart because Pentheus refuses to acknowledge him; a mob ravenously dismembers Denys as he makes a last desperate attempt to gain acceptance within his community. The brutality of “Denys L’Auxerrois” is as connected to Christianity as it is to Dionysus Zagreus. As Sloane Frazier argues,

[As] Denys dies a beautiful victim of the blood-lust of the crowd, the basic savagery of Christian Auxerre reaches its highest expression and we see the eternal need for a redemptive figure to assuage that violence which truly never dies. Pagan and Christian then have no absolutely exclusive meaning. Denys must come to terms with death and despair and he attempts to come to rest within a Christian community. But Christians lack faith in the fixed and absolute magic of one supreme redemptive act and so Christ is set aside in favour of freshly rent flesh and blood. Denys was truly “needed” and that fact more than the death itself makes for the brooding tone of the story’s end. (282)

Frazier accurately conflates the murder of Denys with Christ's sacrifice, suggesting that both deaths in a sense redeem humanity from sin and madness. The portrayal is also the reverse of the murder in the *Bacchae*: Pentheus's death does not redeem or save either himself or his family, but instead "recovers [Dionysus] from his mid-winter madness" (CS 110). Denys's death, I suggest, is a combination of both Christ's crucifixion and Pentheus's massacre (transferred, as Pater insists, onto Dionysus).

Although the death of Denys closely resonates with the climax of Euripides's *Bacchae*, Pater ends the story with "the heart of Denys" being brought to the monk Hermes, "still entire" (IP 95). This final detail draws from the Orphic tradition of Zagreus, wherein the heart of the dead god is saved by Zeus and given to Semele to consume, which impregnates her with Dionysus (*Fab* 167). Denys's heart, the narrator muses, "must long have mouldered into dust under the stone, marked with a cross where [Hermes] buried it in a dark corner of the cathedral aisle" (IP 95).⁴⁵ Connor suggests that the mouldering heart indicates that "Pater's story thus seems to pull the reader's sympathies in two opposed directions. As a fantasy, it seeks to compel belief in the return of a transcendent reality to a mundane world, while as a self-acknowledging fiction it seems sadly to admit that such a return is impossible" (37–38). He defends the position by citing Pater's opening paragraph (Connor 38), in which the narrator advises that although one longs for a "return" of old legends, "we might well question the advantage" (IP 81) of a such a return, so greatly have our contexts changed.

The "brooding tone of the story's end" (Frazier 282) does not necessarily suggest, however, that another rebirth of Dionysus is impossible—but gestures forebodingly at its "advantages" (IP 81) or desirability. The constant flux of humanity, the subjective changefulness in its perception of the natural world that Pater explains in *The Renaissance*, means that the god,

in each reincarnation, must necessarily change as well. What monstrous corner of the human soul might be released with his next reawakening? Although the narrator imagines that the heart of Denys, the symbolic promise of his rebirth, has decomposed in the church, Pater's diction intimates that this does not matter. "Mouldered" is, in fact, a loaded term, one which Pater uses to describe the underworld kingdom of Persephone in "Demeter and Persephone" (CS 65; a phrase he translates directly from Homer: οἰκία... εὐρώεντα [*Iliad* 20.64–65]), a place of coming and going for the Chthonians. He blends the imagery of the underworld with that of the cross—the Christian symbol of death and resurrection—finally and fully emphasizing that Denys belongs to both religions. The very "dust under stone" into which the heart "moulders" recalls the exhumed coffin in which the villagers of Auxerre find the "flask of lively green glass" that heralds the return of the ambiguous "genius" (IP 85) of an earlier age. The flask lies "among the ashes of the dead" (IP 85). Far from concluding that Dionysus/Christ/Denys can never live again in a later age, the narrator instead imagines "to have seen the tortured figure," "to have met Denys l'Auxerrois in the streets" (IP 95). Whether as Østermark-Johansen's "ghost," haunting the medieval streets of Auxerre, or as someone new, "lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his" (Hopkins 129), roaming the streets of London, is left ambiguous. The story leaves its audience with a sense that Denys's next birth is both inevitable and frightening in its possibilities. Who will he become among the Victorians?

"Some dual life": *Dracula* and the *Bacchae*

Derek Hughes has briefly considered the similarities between Stoker's Transylvanian vampire and Dionysus, maintaining that the connections between the two texts are unconsciously created. "*Dracula*," he insists, "is almost the last study of the Dionysiac to be innocent of the

idea of Dionysus” (205). Hughes argues that “without any evidence of deliberate textual interplay, the anxieties which shape *Dracula* produce a narrative whose outlines recreate that of [the] *Bacchae*” (204). The evidence of Stoker’s source material for the novel is abundant; his research notes for *Dracula*, preserved in the Rosenbach Museum & Library, were first noticed by Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu in 1972. The notes list many of the documents Stoker used for his research, but they make no reference to any of his literary inspirations (Eighteen-Bisang and Miller 309). Convincing and generally accepted cases have been made for overtly vampiric precursors, such as Polidori’s “The Vampyre” (1819), Rymer/Prest’s *Varney the Vampire* (1847), and Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872). Texts with less obvious vampiric characters, however, have also been credibly suggested as inspirations for *Dracula*, including Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1859), Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).⁴⁶ Hughes rightly determines that the cultural significance of ancient Greece and its literature in the nineteenth century makes intertextual reverberations between Dionysus and *Dracula* relevant, even if they are not explicitly named by the author, but Stoker’s engagement with the Athenian tragedy is nevertheless direct and detailed.

The novel’s general outline closely parallels Euripides’s *Bacchae*. A disguised stranger from the east arrives in London with supernatural powers and plans of domination, which threaten fundamentally to disrupt the Victorian norm. His followers are outcast women and strange, “oddly grown” (*IP* 88) men, both of whom feast upon raw flesh and “dr[i]nk blood” (*CS* 110). Like Dionysus, Dracula is a figure of cultural and sexual ambiguity, passionate in his anger but also strangely aloof and voiceless for most of the novel (Byron 24; Auerbach 63). He has an autochthonic relationship with his homeland, symbolized by his necessary boxes of earth. His

coming is heralded by madness (Renfield) and inexplicable behaviours in women (Lucy), who terrorize the people of the countryside (e.g. the “bloofer lady,” who abducts children [*Drac* 214–15]). The rites he introduces to his followers involve eating raw flesh and drinking blood. The three female vampires, as Hughes suggests, evoke Dionysus’s maenads (204). As Hughes overlooks, however, they also correspond to Agave, Ino, and Autonoe—mad women unwillingly enthralled to Dracula and compelled by him to hunt and to devour children.⁴⁷ He blurs boundaries carefully guarded by the British patriarchy, including that of master and servant, man and woman, human and animal. Just as Pentheus perceives Dionysus to be both man and “rough beast” (*Bacchae* l. 922) so too is Mina unable to identify the shadowy form of Dracula bent over Lucy: “what it was, whether man or beast, I could not tell” (*Drac* 125).

Like the *Bacchae*, *Dracula* is a story of arrival: Harker’s arrival in Castle Dracula, Dracula’s arrival in England, and finally the mad race of the vampire hunters to arrive back in Transylvania at the same time as the Count. In Dracula’s first appearance, he is disguised as his own envoy (the driver) and reveals supernatural abilities that fundamentally unsettle Harker. He confesses that discovering Dracula and the driver are the same person “gave [him] a fright”:

for if there is no one else in the castle, it must have been the Count himself who was the driver of the coach that brought me here. This is a terrible thought; for if so, what does it mean that he could control the wolves, as he did, by only holding up his hand in silence?
(*Drac* 58–59)

Like Pentheus, by the time Harker finally believes the fears and “superstitions” of the local people, it is ostensibly already too late for him: he is a prisoner in the castle. Dracula promises the three vampire women that “when I am done with him you shall kiss him at your will” (*Drac*

71). They are three mad women under the thrall of the Count, who wish to tear Harker apart in a sexualized manner reminiscent of the notorious Bacchanalian orgies.

The Count's motivation for keeping Harker alive during his first encounter with the vampire women is due to Dracula's only nascent grasp of English pronunciation. Katy Brundan argues that Dracula's early mastery over Harker is primarily due to his fluency in the many languages of Transylvania—languages which Harker himself cannot speak with fluency (*Drac* 7). “Well I know that,” Dracula confesses,

“did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble; I am *boyar*, the common people know me, and I am master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not—and to know not is to care not for. I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stops if he see me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words, to say, ‘Ha, ha! a stranger!’ I have been so long master that I would be master still—or at least that none other should be master of me.” (*Drac* 51)

Dracula creates a very specific dichotomy between “stranger” and “master,” suggesting that one cannot be both simultaneously. Repeatedly, he is referred to as a “stranger” throughout the novel, both by himself and by others—although his eventual mastery over English makes his outsider status ambiguous. Harker refers to the Count as a stranger when he first appears disguised as the carriage driver (*Drac* 40); when Lucy and Mina see Dracula's “dark figure” sitting in their “little seat” by the graveyard, “it seemed for an instant as if the stranger had great eyes like burning flames” (*Drac* 129). When Harker and Mina encounter Dracula ogling a pretty woman in London—Mina still ignorant of the events of Castle Dracula—she again calls him a “dark stranger” (*Drac* 210). In the *Bacchae*, characters oblivious of Dionysus's identity (especially

Pentheus) likewise ironically refer to him as a ξένος (“stranger”), even though he is of Theban origin.⁴⁸ “Stranger” is, in fact, the word used by most Victorian translations and commentaries when referring to Dionysus disguised as his own priest.

Mastery, too, is an important theme in both the *Bacchae* and *Dracula*. Dionysus’s mission in the tragedy is to dominate—to be recognized as a god and worshipped by the Thebans—and he is resisted in large part because of his foreignness. Although the main target of *Dracula*’s ire and desire are the male vampire hunters—the men of England—he plans to dominate them entirely through the bodies of women:

“You think to baffle me, you—with your pale faces all in a row, like sheep in a butcher’s. You shall be sorry yet, each one of you! [...] My revenge is just begun! I spread it over centuries and time is on my side. Your girls that you love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine—my creatures, to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed! Bah!” (*Drac* 347)

In the prologue of the *Bacchae*, Dionysus also reveals his plan to subjugate Thebes through the persecution of its female population:

καὶ πᾶν τὸ θῆλυ σπέρμα Καδμείων, ὅσαι
 γυναῖκες ἦσαν, ἐξέμηνα δωμάτων·
 ὁμοῦ δὲ Κάδμου παισὶν ἀναμειγμέναι
 χλωραῖς ὑπ’ ἐλάταις ἀνορόφους ἦνται πέτρας.
 δεῖ γὰρ πόλιν τήνδ’ ἐκμαθεῖν, κεῖ μὴ θέλει,
 ἀτέλεστον οὖσαν τῶν ἐμῶν βακχευμάτων...

And all the female seed of the Thebans, as many as were women, I drove mad from their homes; entwined⁴⁹ as they are with Cadmus’s daughters, now they sit under the silver firs

and rocks. For this city must be taught, willing or no, what it is to be initiated into my mysteries... (ll. 35–40)

While Dracula, like Dionysus, spends most of the novel disguised or in hiding, his goal, too, is to become “master” and to be worshipped as a god. Renfield, in the throes of a Dionysian, “religious mania” (*Drac* 135), proclaims: “I am here to do Your bidding, Master. I am Your slave, and You will reward me, for I shall be faithful. I have worshipped You long and afar off” (*Drac* 137). Later, Renfield confesses that Dracula ““seemed to be saying: “All these lives will I give to you, ay, and many more and greater, through countless ages, if you will fall down and worship me!””” (*Drac* 319). Despite Renfield’s greedy, *do ut des* devotion and willingness to “fall down and worship,” he is still punished by the Count, killed without being infected with the vampire blood. Cadmus’s self-serving, early acceptance of Dionysus, similarly, does not save him from the miasmatic future the god foretells at the end of the tragedy.

The topography of *Dracula* also closely relates to that of Dionysus. The novel opens with Harker’s impression “that we were leaving the West and entering the East” (*Drac* 31). The countryside through which he travels in order to reach the castle is lush and abundant with fruit and vegetation, redolent of Pater’s description of people who pass their lives “among the vines” (*CS* 91): “There was everywhere a bewildering mass of fruit blossom—apple, plum, pear, cheery; and as we drove by I could see the green grass under the tress spangled with the fallen petals” (*Drac* 37). Yet Dracula himself, that reimagined Zagreus, lives in one of those “mountainous northern regions” (*CS* 109), among “a wilder and less temperately cultivated sort of people” (*CS* 155)—or as Harker puts it, a people “more barbarian than the rest” (*Drac* 33). Harker sees the Carpathian mountains looming over the countryside profusion, “bringing out all the glorious colours of this range, deep blue and purple in the shadows of the peaks” (*Drac* 38)—

which are hauntingly similar to Pater's vineyards "under the green and purple shadows" (*CS* 91). Geographically, Transylvania is located just beyond (northeast of) Macedonia and Thrace. The mountain on which rests Castle Dracula, "on the very edge of a terrible precipice" (*Drac* 57), is evocative of the mythical Mount Nysa or the Theban Mount Cithaeron—a mountain which the locals even call "'Isten szek!'—God's seat!" (*Drac* 38).

There is a distinct wine motif throughout the novel. Harker, in his description of his journey through Transylvania, takes particular note of the vintages he drinks, and how much of them. At Bistritz, for example, "The wine was Golden Mediasch, which produces a queer sting on the tongue, which is, however, not disagreeable. I had only a couple of glasses of this, and nothing else" (*Drac* 36). When the disguised Count arrives in his carriage, he offers Harker "a flask of slivovitz" kept under the seat (*Drac* 41). During Harker's first evening in the castle, he sups upon "a bottle of old Tokay, of which [he] had two glasses" (*Drac* 48), during which time the Count asks "many questions" (*Drac* 48). Dracula gains uninhibited access to Lucy's home by drugging a bottle of sherry intended for her maids (*Drac* 181). The moment most striking, however, and most evocative of the Dionysian, happens between Dracula and Mina. "'And you,'" he threatens her,

"their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood, kin of my kin; my *bountiful wine-press* for awhile; and shall be later on my companion and my helper.... When my brain says, 'Come!' to you, you shall cross land or sea to do my bidding; and to that end, this!" (*Drac* 328; my emphasis)

While Dracula's speech is an overt mimicry of the Eucharistic liturgy ("flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood"; again, combining Catholic and Greek ritual), the "'bountiful wine-press'" to which he compares Mina suggests a pagan plenitude which contrasts sharply with the Catholic

austerity of communion. Once initiated into Dracula's contagious madness, Mina will join him as a "companion," an intoxicated maenad.⁵⁰ Considering a similar ritual in Dionysian religion, Jane Harrison muses:

How is it a man *can* become one with the god? By virtue of the fact that his soul is a particle of the divine nature. Dionysus Zagreus is torn to pieces; each of us has a fragment of him within us, and by virtue of this divine spark or atom each of us is a potential Bacchus. ("Rohde's *Psyche*" 165)

When Mina drinks Dracula's "wine" ("and to that end, this!"), she internalizes a part of him through which Dracula gains access to her mind and body—she becomes one with the vampire in the manner of a Dionysian ritual.

Even the wolves over whom Dracula has such peculiar control have their counterpart in the *Bacchae*. Cadmus warns Pentheus of the fate of Actaeon, whom ὠμόσιτοι σκύλακες (flesh-eating hounds) tore apart when he bragged that he was a better hunter than Artemis (*Bacchae* ll. 337–40). The mad Theban women on the mountain, as the messenger announces, ἐδίδοσαν γάλα (gave milk) to σκύμνους λύκων (wolf cubs) (ll. 699–700). Pater suggests that Dionysus becomes linked "to one of the gloomiest creatures of later romance, the were-wolf" (CS 110); Harker hears the Transylvanians call the Count a "wrolok" and a "vlkoslak," Slovak and Serbian terms "for something that is either werewolf or vampire" (*Drac* 36). In his research notes for the novel, Stoker records that the modern Greek word βρυκόλακας "is closely related to vampire—after death lycanthropist becomes vampire" (*Notes* 131).

Although Van Helsing is ostensibly from Amsterdam, the so-called "Dutchman" (*Drac* 188, 189) mutters and exclaims in German, a tongue which creates specific classical associations in several of Van Helsing's speeches. He describes the situation of Lucy's peculiar vampirism as

“some dual life” (239) to John Seward, which is immediately suggestive of German philologists such as K. O. Müller, Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker, and Ludwig Preller, and their conception of the “duality” of Greek gods, to which Pater consistently reacts in his classical essays. Lucy in her “un-death” is like Persephone, Pater’s “strange dual being” (CS 66), simultaneously “sweet” and “malign” (*Drac* 239), “the goddess of summer and the goddess of death” (CS 66); or the Dionysian “dual god of both summer and winter” (CS 107).⁵¹ Van Helsing’s most telling evocation of German classical criticism is in his repeated references to Dracula’s “child-brain” (a phrase he repeats, in some iteration, more than twelve times in the novel) and its inferiority to the “man-brain” of the English men. That the origins of myth belonged to a Greek “childhood” was a popular conception in German scholarship; the idea was eventually adapted into a “scientific” study of mythology by several scholars in England, including George Grote and Max Müller. Potolsky comments on how Grote, in a pattern which should be becoming obvious, uses the Greek childhood motif to “compar[e] the myths with saints’ lives and the medieval folklore collected by scholars like Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, works intended to convey religious feeling, to teach lessons, or simply to entertain” (18). Müller’s idea of the “child-brain” is specifically linked to discourses of degeneration—another overlapping theme in *Dracula*. Mythology, “belonging to the primitive ages of man’s childhood” (Müller 391), is a “disease of language” which “reflects a process of degeneration, and it is the scholar’s job to trace divine personalities back to their origins and debunk the harmful mystifications that let them thrive” (Potolsky 18). Dracula’s “child-brain,” therefore, identifies him as one of those degenerative, yet divine, personalities of the ancient world, threatening through his survival to deteriorate the present. Van Helsing is the “scholar” whose job it is to expose and destroy him.

Degeneration, Dionysus, and *Dracula*: Pater's undead Greek gods and Stoker's vampires

The nineteenth century was a period of myriad, often rapid change for British society, which was a source of pride and apprehension for its patriarchal establishment. Pater's work on Dionysus (which exposed the "darker stain" hidden behind "high Hellenic culture") and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* both engage, in different ways, with growing *fin de siècle* anxieties through the Euripidean figure of Dionysus. By the end of the century, advancements in science and medicine, growing protests for women's emancipation, the fraught emergence of the labour union movement, and foreign influences filtering into London from England's far-flung colonies seemed, to conservative thinkers, to threaten the carefully distinguished boundaries of Victorian culture. Progress could, according to psychiatric and social Darwinists such as Henry Maudsley (1835–1918), Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), and E. Ray Lankester (1847–1929), easily become regress, through the very channels opened up by technology and empire. Glennis Byron notes that new Darwinian theories of evolution "dissolved the firm boundaries between human and animal, leading to the inevitable conclusion that if something—individual or nation—could evolve, it could also devolve or degenerate" (20). The title of the English translation of Austrian physician and social critic Max Nordau's *Degeneration*,⁵² published in 1895, popularized a term for these anxieties, especially with reference to aestheticism and Pre-Raphaelite art. Nordau associates "aesthetic instincts" with "two well-defined conditions of disease": "degeneration" and the distinctly feminized mental illness of "hysteria" (15). "There is," Nordau warns,

a sound of rending in every tradition, and it is as though the morrow would not link itself with to-day. Things as they are totter and plunge, and they are suffered to reel and fall, because man is weary, and there is no faith it is worth an effort to uphold them Over the earth the shadows creep with deepening gloom, wrapping all objects in a mysterious

dimness, in which all certainty is destroyed and any guess seems plausible. Forms lose their outlines, and are dissolved in floating mist. The day is over, the night draws on. (5–6)

The diction of the treatise is that of dissolution, contagions, and disease; Nordau continuously animalizes figures whom he deems degenerate. The first “symptoms” of this degeneracy, for example, are women, who “revolt against the law of organic harmony,” and whose bodies, bedecked in the aesthetic fashions of the age, “resemble now a beast of the Apocalypse” (Nordau 8).

Although not explicitly named in the text, Euripides was, as I established in the Introduction, long associated with German ideas of *Verfall* and *Entartung*, mostly due to the theories of Athenian drama put forward by Friedrich and A. W. Schlegel in 1809 and reinvigorated by Nietzsche in 1871. (Ironically, Nietzsche himself is labeled a degenerate and discredited by Nordau.) At the end of the century, Euripides’s “degenerate” label was in part due to links made between him and aestheticism and decadence by various commentators. Nordau may not mention the Athenian tragedian, but he discusses Henrik Ibsen’s contributions to degeneracy at length, a playwright with whom Euripides was frequently associated. English author W. L. Courtney, for example, describes

a very general analogy between the historical condition of Athens when Euripides was the popular dramatist and the historical conditions of our age. There is the same break up of old ideas owing to the solvents applied to them by philosophy and science. There is the same substitution of a purely aesthetic aim in works of art for the older religious and ethical aims.... Perhaps I should not be altogether wrong if I called Euripides an ancient Ibsen, or Ibsen a modern Euripides. (36; qtd. Dowgun 83)

Richard Dowgun explains that “Euripides’ philosophical sophistication and ambiguity were felt to have a special relevance for troubled thinkers at the end of the century” (71). Thomas Prasch has successfully demonstrated how “the aesthetes waged a consistent campaign, from Walter Pater to John Pentland Mahaffy forward to Wilde and Gilbert Murray, to insist on the modernity and value of Euripidean drama” (648). Peter France notes wryly that “the *fin de siècle* had something for everyone, including a version of Euripides the Aesthete, spread by way of Walter Pater” (315).

Glennis Byron condenses the anxieties of the *fin de siècle* as fear of “the progressive dissolution of boundaries, of hierarchies, the dissolution of distinctions between male and female, life and death, primitive and civilized, human and animal, natural and unnatural, self and other, the blurring of all those categories upon which the security and comfort of the middle-class Victorian world depended” (16). Byron’s phrasing so closely resembles the critical diction of Dionysus and the *Bacchae* that the statement could easily be mistaken as one defining the central ideas of Euripides’s tragedy. Instead, the description is a summary of the core themes and anxieties presented in Stoker’s *Dracula*. “Dissolution” was a technical term used at the end of the century by social Darwinists and psychiatrists to describe degeneration (Saudo 49). Henry Maudsley (who incidentally compares degenerative madness to the “foredoomed” heroes of Greek tragedy [*Pathology*, 88]), defines degeneration as “a process of dissolution, the opposite of that process of involution which is pre-essential to evolution” (*Body and Mind* 240). The term is used twice in *Dracula*, a text which directly invokes both Nordau and Maudsley, but it appears to be redemptive rather than degenerative. Abraham Van Helsing and Mina Harker describe a look of “gladness” and a look of “peace,” respectively, before the “final dissolution” (*Drac* 412, 418)

of a now-reclaimed vampiric form into dust. The term is, nevertheless, conspicuously tied to the transition between vampire and human.

Vampires were established figures of decadence and degeneration well before Stoker published *Dracula* in 1897, with important connections to the aesthetic movement. “If the vampire represents the body without substance or ‘lived’ reality,” Andrew Eastham postulates, “then it betrays some of the primary values espoused by the aesthetic Hellenists that emerged from Victorian Oxford” (80). Pater’s *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), a defining text for late-century aesthetes, abounds with vampiric imagery and a “fascination with blood and corpses” (Wallen 1039). Jeffrey Wallen describes how Pater “is fascinated by moments of contact and transmission, by possibilities of combination and reconciliation, and especially by instances of re-vitalization” (1037). In Chapter One, I demonstrate how Pater’s interest in combination and separation in *The Renaissance* is connected to Dionysus in the classical essays; associations with renewal (*renaissance*) in turn suggest vampiric undertones to his analysis of the god. Wallen effectively emphasizes the link between Pater’s figures of “connection, transmission, vitality, and living on” and vampiric metaphors (1039). “Rather than images of plenitude and primordial unity,” Wallen reveals, “we get images of separation, cutting, violence, dismemberment, and blood” (1039).

In the “Pico della Mirandola” essay, Pater suggests that reading one of della Mirandola’s “forgotten books” is “like a glance into one of those ancient sepulchres, upon which the wanderer in classical lands has sometimes stumbled, with the old disused ornaments and furniture of a world wholly unlike ours still fresh in them” (*TR* 24). Pater’s descriptions of these old tomes resonate with the “wonder of freshness” growing from “tortured metal” (*CS* 99) in “A Study of Dionysus” and the green wine flask found in the sepulchre of “Denys L’Auxerrois.” All

three examples describe moments in which the boundaries between life and death are so troubled that they melt altogether, resulting in unsettling hybridity: a fresh old world, new life birthed from recent death, the spirit of renewal enclosed in a grave. The juxtapositions of life and death, beauty and decay, are central to Pater's aesthetic theories. Pater concludes his essay on della Mirandola:

And so while his actual work has passed away, yet his own qualities are still active, and he himself remains, as one alive in the grave, *caesiis et vigilibus oculis* [...] with that sanguine clear skin, *decenti rubore interspersa*, as with the light of morning upon it[.]
(*TR* 28)

Wallen interprets that “the portrait of Pico, then, is finally ‘one alive in the grave’—the life that remains, the vitality of human interests and passions that is ‘the essence of humanism’ and central to the Renaissance, is here framed by the grave (which is figured by ‘his actual work’ that ‘has passed away,’ rather than by the death of his body—he is entombed by his own writings!)” (1042). Della Mirandola's “survival” in the contemporary world is not due to his literary or artistic output (Pater barely mentions his sculptures), but due to his vitality, his life-force, which lies, undecayed and preserved, in his grave, waiting to be reawakened.

Pater makes explicit reference to vampires twice in the *Renaissance* and both examples openly connect them to Greek gods. In his description of the *Mona Lisa*, Pater recommends that one set the painting beside

one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed? All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece,

the lust of Rome, the reverie of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern thought has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea. (*TR* 70–71)

Like Dionysus, “Lady Lisa” travels through familiar and “Eastern” lands. Pater’s vampire is inherently a wanderer, a Πλαγκτήρ or Φοιταλιώτης (both titles of Dionysus), through space, but also through time, through life. She survives, like della Mirandola, as a “fancy” or a “life force,” but has, like the Chthonians, walked the ἐπαινή (*CS* 65) underworld halls of Hades and Persephone. Dionysus is “a single, imaginable form” which represents “a whole world of thoughts, surmises, greater and less experiences” (*CS* 91–92); the *Mona Lisa* makes “expressive the outward form,” a figure in whom “all the thoughts and experience of the world have [been] etched and moulded.” Dionysus and the *Mona Lisa* are both components of a continuous chain of vampiric resurrection, connecting the Hellenistic spirit to the Renaissance, to the present.

Just as in “Denys L’Auxerrois,” Pater is creating bridges between old and new worlds, using images of maternity to symbolize continuous rebirth. As Donald Hill glosses, Pater’s “old

fancy” is that of the “transmigration and reincarnation of souls,” while the “modern idea” he also perceives is that of evolution (Hill 381). Pater signifies a continuum between ancient myth and modern Christianity, but also creates a connection between them to modern discourses on Darwinism and decadence. Much like his suggestion that Christ is a rebirth of Dionysus, he infers that Christ’s grandmother, Saint Anne, is a reincarnation of Leda (a troubling parallel which connects Mary to the notorious Helen). Although it is the *Mona Lisa* that Pater labels a “vampire,”—and through her Leda and Saint Anne—the moment, through its maternal-themed similarities to “A Study of Dionysus” and “Denys L’Auxerrois,” underscores Pater’s understanding of Dionysus’s rebirths as vampiric also. Like Semele, “Lady Lisa” is not “a central player in the classical or Christian drama, either as virgin (Mary) or whore (Helen), but rather the seemingly infinitely fertile progenitor (both Anne and Leda) of those central female figures” (O’Malley 167).

Suggestions of fertility and their connection with death and resurrection (“she has been dead many times”) foreshadow Pater’s 1875 essay “Demeter and Persephone.” Mother and daughter goddesses are vividly described: “on the one hand, Demeter, as the perfectly *fresh* and blithe goddess of the fields, *whose children*, if she has them, must be as the perfectly discreet and peaceful Kore; on the other hand, we have Persephone, as the *wholly terrible goddess of death*” (CS 66; my emphasis). Pater’s portrayal of the two again re-emphasizes connections between freshness, death, and maternity. Lesley Higgins has persuasively identified an “uncanny resemblance” between Pater’s *Mona Lisa* and the statue of *Demeter Knidos* (ca. 350 BCE) housed at the British Museum—another “seated figure,” “another non-smiling, mature, mysteriously impassive female figure whose surface placidity belies a turbulent personal and cultural history” (“But Who Is ‘She’?”). As Higgins points out, Pater invokes da Vinci in his

description of *Demeter Knidos* in “Demeter and Persephone” (CS 87), a description that uses similar diction and structure to that of the *Mona Lisa*: Demeter, too, has seen “the seed fall into the ground and die, many times” (CS 88). He never explicitly compares the goddess to a vampire, but does call her a “goblin” (CS 71), an “Erinnys” (CS 71), and a “haunting presence” (CS 77). Demeter, a mother goddess of fertility and decay, death and renewal, a Chthonian alongside Dionysus, is the archetype of Pater’s vampiric painting.

Pater’s second reference to vampires is more explicitly tied to Hellenism and Greek gods. In the “Pico della Mirandola” essay, Pater quotes a lengthy translation of Heinrich Heine’s *Die Götter im Exil* (1854), in which the god Apollo must live “as a shepherd in Lower Austria” (TR 19). “Here however,” Pater translates,

Having become suspected on account of his beautiful singing, he was recognised by a learned monk as one of the old pagan gods, and handed over to the spiritual tribunal. On the rack he confessed that he was the god Apollo; and before his execution he begged that he might be suffered to play once more upon the lyre and to sing a song. And he played so touchingly, and sang with such magic, and was withal so beautiful in form and feature, that all the women wept, and many of them *were so deeply impressed that they shortly afterwards fell sick*. And some time afterwards the people wished to drag him from the grave again, *that a stake might be driven through his body*, in the belief that he had been *a vampire*, and that *the sick women would by this means recover*. *But they found the grave empty*. (TR 19; my emphasis)⁵³

Pater’s debt to Heine for “Apollo in Picardy” and “Denys L’Auxerrois” has already been well documented. This translation also bears some striking similarities to Stoker’s *Dracula* (hypnosis, mysterious female maladies, empty graves, wooden stakes) and to the *Bacchae*.⁵⁴ Like Dionysus

and Dracula, Apollo enchants local women and causes them to behave erratically; he is able to transcend the boundaries of life and death. In both “Pico della Mirandola” and “Leonardo da Vinci” (as well as “Denys”), Pater essentially desacralizes ancient deities, strips them of a contextual organized religion that prescribes their (and their devotees’) behaviour, and then explores the human confrontation with this gothic-infused “other.” Fascinatingly, these desecrated gods tend to metamorphose into decadent vampires.

There is no evidence that Stoker and Pater ever knew each other, but the two men belonged to the same social *milieu*, and shared similar cultural and aesthetic interests, which situates the manifold intertextual gestures between their writings. Pater was an infrequent attendee at the Lyceum theatre while Stoker worked there as the theatre’s business manager (1878–1905) and Henry Irving’s personal assistant. Stoker’s position at the theatre, Matthew Sturgis emphasizes, made him an important acquaintance for those seeking an entrée into London’s artistic and social circles (137). He was close with many prominent figures belonging to aesthetic and decadent movements (his personal library contained several volumes of the infamous *Yellow Book*), including the novelist Henry Hall Caine, to whom he dedicated *Dracula*, and who lived with Dante Gabriel Rossetti until Rossetti’s death in 1882. Although it is also uncertain whether Pater knew Caine personally, Pater was at least familiar with his *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (1882), which he quotes in an 1888 letter to Arthur Symonds (Evans 79 n2).⁵⁵ As a member of the Arts Club, Stoker would have met habitually with its Pre-Raphaelite and aesthetic affiliates, who included John Everett Millais and James MacNeil Whistler.⁵⁶ Oscar Wilde, a former suitor of Stoker’s wife Florence (née Balcombe) and enthusiastic reader of Pater’s work, was a frequent guest at the Stoker household when he first moved to London (1878). Wilde was introduced to Stoker by his brother, Willie, who had been

friends with Stoker while they were both attending Trinity College, Dublin (Sturgis 137). Stoker markedly broke with Wilde after the scandal of his highly publicized trial in 1895, but the two men “had an intimate and varied history lasting for at least twenty years” (Schaffer 381).⁵⁷

Pater’s description of Pico della Mirandola, “alive in the grave,” with eyes “sharp and alert” (*caesiis et vigilibus*), and pale, “sanguine clear skin,” nevertheless “interspersed with some becoming ruby” (*decenti rubore interspersa*) is darkly echoed in Stoker’s descriptions of Count Dracula in his coffin. Jonathan Harker, with a Paterian interest in the conjunctions of what is fresh and what is decaying, chronicles his walk through a “a dark, tunnel-like passage, through which came a deathly, sickly odour, the odour of *old earth newly turned*,” where he finds a box, in which “on a pile of *newly dug earth*, lay the Count” (*Drac* 79; my emphasis). Harker finds the Count in a state of intersection, either (neither) “dead or asleep” (*Drac* 80); Dracula’s “eyes were open and stony, but without the glassiness of death,” and his cheeks betrayed a “warmth of life through all their pallor” (*Drac* 80). On his second foray to the un-asleep, un-dead monster’s coffin, Harker re-emphasizes the *rubore interspersa* on Dracula’s face after he feeds: “the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath” (*Drac* 83). The Count’s eyes, *caesiis et vigilibus*, or “deep, burning” (*Drac* 83), when alerted to danger, turn towards Harker “with all their blaze of basilisk horror” (*Drac* 84).⁵⁸

Stoker’s *Dracula* is another vampiric text that focuses almost manically on immortality through motherhood, a text which directly evokes the “awful” (*CS* 70) goddess as the name of the ship on board which Dracula travels to England.⁵⁹ Unlike Pater, who understands that the vampiric Mona Lisa is a symbol of continuation and renewal through her connection to death and rebirth, Stoker’s masculine-birthered creatures are instead agents only of sickness and evolutionary degeneration, masquerading under a thin mask of voluptuous beauty. Just as

Nordau warns, the signs of Dracula's sickness and decadence are first discernable in women, who quite literally become "beasts of the Apocalypse." Stoker's female vampires are defined primarily through their perversion of maternity, overtly sexual women who, it is broadly hinted, are barren. The three women in Dracula's castle devour rather than create children (as does Lucy once she is "turned"). Vampires procreate, instead, through a male's body, a process hauntingly akin to Dionysus's double birth: born mortal from the body of a woman, and reborn immortal from the body of a male (an element of Dionysus's *mythos* which was widely derided by the Victorians). The Count is the one who births immortal children and the one who suckles them. John Seward recounts how Dracula's "right hand gripped [Mina] by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom.... The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink" (*Drac* 322). Hughes explains how Dracula's sexual ambiguity and power underscore one of the main anxieties of what Geoffrey Wall identifies as a primarily "anxious text" (Wall 15): "the creation 'of a new order of beings'" (Hughes 207).

The connection between vampires and Greek gods is compounded and focused specifically to Dionysus by the intertextual resonances between *Dracula* and the ending of "Denys L'Auxerrois." The moment of Denys's death is precipitated by a tiny drop of blood from his cut lip, which drives the Catholic villagers of Auxerre into a murderous frenzy. Connor notes how "the end of the story sees a quickening of pace and a sudden intensity of focus" (37) on this specific detail. As Denys wraps "a rough haircloth about his throat... it happened that a point of the haircloth scratched his lip deeply, with a long *trickling of blood upon the chin*. It was as if the sight of blood transported the spectators with a kind of mad rage, and *suddenly revealed to them the truth*" (*IP* 94–95; my emphasis). Jonathan Harker, too, learns the "truth" from an encounter

that is evocatively similar to Pater's imaginary portrait. After only three days have passed since his arrival at Castle Dracula, Harker is surprised by the Count into cutting himself while shaving. When "the cut had bled a little, and *the blood trickling down [his] chin*" (*Drac* 56; my emphasis), Harker sees the Count betray a "mad rage": "his eyes blazed with a sort of demonic fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat" (*Drac* 56). Harker, in his growing unease, focuses intently on this specific detail, this moment of "trickling blood," which "suddenly reveals" to him the truth of his situation: "The castle is a veritable prison, and I am a prisoner!" (*Drac* 57).

In "Denys L'Auxerrois," as I have established, Pater transfers Pentheus's macabre death onto Dionysus, and in so doing conflates Denys's murder at the end of the story with the crucifixion of Christ—a death that both condemns the human mob of Auxerre and redeems them from their "midwinter madness" (*CS* 110). Just as in Heine's *Die Götter im Exil*, Pater's Christian villagers perceive this Greek god as an evil to be exterminated, yet both Pater and Heine entrench the pathos of these stories in the executed gods. The Christian context of Victorian England inverts the traditional Greek narrative of sacrifice: the old gods now must die for the sake of humanity, not the other way around. Pater interprets the name Zagreus as "*The Hunter*" (*CS* 78), identifying the name's etymology with ζάγρη ("pitfall"). Hunting as sacred ritual and sacrifice is a central motif in the Dionysus essays as well as in "Denys L'Auxerrois." The moment of Denys's death is a movement from sacred ritual to hunt: "The pretended hunting of the unholy creature became a real one, which brought out, in rapid increase, men's evil passions" (*IP* 95). His "sacrifice" results in a violent and troubling return to the "normalcy" of medieval France, which indicts the entirety of the community.⁶⁰

Hughes has highlighted a similar motif of Christian ritual and pagan sacrifice in Stoker's *Dracula*. Like Pater, Stoker inverts the traditional role of the immortal by killing the female vampires in a ritualistic manner—no longer the reapers of blood and sacrifice, they are instead dispatched as them. “The symbols of the Christian sacrifice, the cross and the communion wafer” (Hughes 207) are employed by Van Helsing, who acts as the pagan priest, in order to return the female vampires to their humanity. In the case of Dracula's death, however, the passive sacrifice of the incapacitated female vampires is transformed into a Zagrean chase, reminiscent of Agave and her sisters' mad slaughter of the disguised Pentheus. Hughes reveals how there is “a regression from sacrifice to the hunt,” where “after a desperate pursuit, Dracula is dispatched with the Bowie knife of Morris and the kukri knife of Jonathan” (207). The moment is hauntingly akin to the death of Denys: he participates as the mock quarry of a ritualized chase only to become the real victim of a deadly hunt. In order to kill the reincarnated god, the mob must dismember Denys and scatter his remains, leaving behind only his heart, which “long since must have mouldered into dust” (*IP* 95). “Like a miracle,” the vampire hunters, too, watch as Dracula's “whole body crumbled into dust” (*Drac* 418).

While the resonances between the two stories are undeniable, the pathos of “Denys L'Auxerrois” (and *Die Götter im Exil*) is inverted in *Dracula*. Stoker portrays his Transylvanian immortal as the French and Austrian villagers view Denys and Apollo—a corruptive figure of evil that has lived too far past his original contexts. “In [Dracula's] life,” Van Helsing tells Seward, “he was a most wonderful man” (*Drac* 342), but in the nineteenth century he is a “monster” (*Drac* 342). Like della Mirandola, “alive in the grave” (*TR* 28), Dracula's “brain powers have survived the physical death” and have, in fact, “advance[d]”—but this survival only confirms to Van Helsing “the necessity to utterly stamp him out” (*Drac* 342). If Pater

contemplates the “advantage” (*IP* 81) of the return of an age long past, and obliquely wonders who Dionysus will become among the Victorians, Stoker provides an unsettling answer.

The novel’s protagonists, who thoroughly prize modernity, use advances in English technology ultimately to thwart Dracula’s plans. Ironically, the anxieties at the core of the novel are tightly wrapped around a fear of “newness”—the “New Woman,” typified by the overtly sexual vampire women, featuring high on the list. Just as Dionysus is simultaneously an old and new god, who brings with him to Thebes both a promise of release and freedom, and a threat of dissolving old patriarchal power structures, so does Dracula bring promises (threats) of the ancient and modern, of freshness and decay, of a new and alarming way of life based upon the old “glories of the great races” (*Drac* 61) and completely disruptive of the traditional Victorian *oikos*. Van Helsing explains to Jonathan and Mina:

“But there are things old and new which must not be contemplate by men’s eyes, because they know—or think they know—some things which other men have told them. Ah, it is the fault of our science that it wants to explain all; and if it explain not, then it says there is nothing to explain. But yet we see around us every day the growth of new beliefs, which think themselves new; and which are yet but the old, which pretend to be young—like the fine ladies at the opera.” (*Drac* 22)

Led by a figure of German Enlightenment, the vampire hunters are a troupe of Pentheoi, aggressively protecting their *status quo*. For Pater, the vampiric vitality of his Renaissance artists staying “alive in the grave” (*TR* 28) is a hope of artistic renewal. For Stoker, it is simply a symptom of degeneration, which can only be conquered by the masculine virility of the British (and American) upper class. Dracula’s degenerative, “child-brain” has overt connections also to

discourses of late-Victorian psychiatry. Ultimately, the clearest link between Dracula and Dionysus is in their respective associations with madness.

Wandering on the Borderland: the *Szekler* and the mad god

In the ancient world, madness was linguistically, mythologically, and ideologically linked with wandering. The Greeks called madness “the wandering illness” (φοιτὰς νοσος, μανίας φοιταλέος), both in that it wanders from person to person, and in that it causes its victims to wander the earth (Montiglio 65). In the prologue of Sophocles’s *Ajax* (ca. 440 BCE), Athena brags to Odysseus: ἐγὼ δὲ φοιτῶντ’ ἄνδρα μανιάσιν νόσοις ὄτρυνον (I have impelled the man [Ajax] to wander in manic madness) (ll. 59–60). Driven by the terrifying Furies, who are roused from the underworld by his crime of matricide, Orestes madly wanders across Greece until his trial before the Areopagus in Athens (Aeschylus’s *Eumenides*; 458 BCE). The wanderer differs from the traveller in her/his lack of destination—Io’s journey is aimless because she is goaded all over Greece by the gadfly; Odysseus’s ten-year journey is meandering, but he retains the goal to return home to Ithaca.

Dionysus, the well-established god of madness, is one of two deities⁶¹ forced to wander madly as mortals do (Montiglio 73), earning him such epithets as Πλαγκτήρ (Wanderer), Νυκτιπόλος (Night Wanderer), and Φοιταλιώτης (Roamer). He is “the god who comes” (Otto 79) but is also the god who is “always leaving, always about to go” (Montiglio 73). His first word in the *Bacchae* is ἦκω, “I am come,” but it is soon followed by μεταστήσω πόδα—“I shall go” (l. 50; Montiglio 73). Wandering is part of his internalized identity as both Greek and foreigner—what Marcel Detienne calls “l’*étranger de l’intérieur*” (33). Silvia Montiglio summarizes the connection:

Wandering ... not only provides a biographical explanation for Dionysus's strangeness, but is also the very image of it. Dionysus is the stranger because he is the Wanderer, that is, because he cannot be pinned down. Humans cannot identify his presence or track his movements, and therefore, they call him Wanderer Far from enrolling an army of good citizens, he leads a host of wanderers, or *aletai* like himself. Dionysus does not care for stature in either the literal or the metaphorical sense—because his very identity has no fixity Hence, to say that Dionysus wanders, that he is always going, is tantamount to saying that he cannot be stopped, summoned, grasped. (74–57)

Dionysus's lack of physical fixity is what makes Pater's analysis of the god's geography so compelling. He wanders to and from the town, into the countryside, and across the barbarous northern mountains, simultaneously belonging and not belonging in each of them. Jane Harrison, remarkably, associates his wandering with metamorphosis and the *ethos* of tragedy: "And to him (i.e. Dionysos) they sing *dithyrambic* measures full of suffering and metamorphosis, which metamorphosis has in it an element of wandering and distraction" (*PSGR* 440). In her analysis of the god's origins, madness is integral to the very genre of tragedy.

In the *Bacchae*, even Dionysus's physical appearance and gender "wander." Throughout the tragedy Dionysus shifts between man and woman, mortal priest and immortal god, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic being. Those who follow him wander similarly, and they perceive these changes in varying states of madness. The Theban women occupy the masculine mountains and fight like men; they suckle animals and produce miracles from the earth. Pentheus transforms into a maenad and then a lion. Teiresias and Cadmus become young. The meandering fluidity of identity in the play is a symbolic manifestation of disturbed minds. State of mind is typified by space: those who are mad must leave the city (the Theban women, Cadmus,

Teiresias, and Pentheus); sanity is restored upon their return to Thebes. The mad, symbolized through their wandering, forgo civilization and domestication in order to amble through the wilderness. They reject the societal *status quo*.

Unsurprisingly, the language of Greek madness is reflected in nineteenth-century psychology texts. John Conolly's 1830 *Indications of Insanity*, for example, lists the symptoms of insanity as "an indifference to society, and a wandering of thought" (235); the lunatic is usually found "wandering about" (484) with a "wandering mind" (163). By the end of the century, the lunatic is still manifestly a wanderer. Maudsley describes how "youths of eighteen or nineteen years of age" (*Pathology* 454) are "disposed to solitary ways, wandering about listlessly alone" (*Pathology* 455). In a particular case study, one "gentleman could only make life endurable by wandering from place to place day after day, not staying more than one night in the same hotel" and "got into various trouble on account of his vagrant life" (Maudsley, *Pathology* 374). The "vague feeling of unspeakable misery" common to some patients would have been explained by "an ancient Greek" as "Orestes-like, to be pursued by the furies" (Maudsley, *Pathology* 360). The most common diagnosis for female mental illness was hysteria, an originally Greek illness which could be used to diagnose a "wandering womb."

Early nineteenth-century asylums attempted to treat patients by "domesticating insanity," which "involved a taming of the brutish lunatic, an assimilation of madness into the spectrum of recognizably human experience" (Showalter 28). As Showalter explains, wardens considered that the "most important feature of the asylum ... is its 'homishness'" (28). Early psychiatrists attempted to cure madness by metaphorically bringing the mind and habits of the patient out of the wilderness and back into British civilization, typified by the Victorian cult of domesticity. Later Darwinian psychiatrists named this wilderness "the borderland, the shadowy territory

between sanity and madness” (Showalter 105). “The imagery of the borderland,” Showalter clarifies, “reflected the anxieties of late Victorian psychiatrists, who felt that they were in a temporal and sexual limbo where the traditional boundaries of gender, labor, and behavior were being challenged by New Women and decadent men” (106). Madness in the nineteenth century was defined in terms of “dissolved differences”; the “borderland” and its inherently dangerous lack of binary distinctions carries with it the same idea of Dionysian wandering as can be found in the *Bacchae* and *Dracula*.

A striking visual representation of this wandering ambiguity and its cognitive connections to the Dionysian appears in Richard Dadd’s 1855 *Sketch for an Idea for Crazy Jane* (figure 5). “Crazy Jane” was a popular Romantic figure of “a poor servant girl who, abandoned by her lover, or bereft of him through death, goes mad as a result” (Showalter 12). Showalter suggests that Dadd’s use of a male Bethlem inmate as his model for the sketch indicates that Jane was “not only the image of madness for women but the model for insanity for men as well” (14), reinforcing Showalter’s general argument that madness was intrinsically understood as feminine and feminizing. Although Showalter comments on Crazy Jane’s iconography in the drawing (she is “crowned with her traditional wildflowers, feathers, rags, and straw” [14]), she neglects its blatant Dionysian elements. The figure’s “patched robes” (Showalter 14) are draped and fastened about her/him in the manner of a Greek chiton. Over her/his head she/he clutches what can only be described as a thyrsus, around which twines unmistakable grape vines. Even the crown is a Dionysian hallmark, from which protrudes his sacred peacock feather. Dadd’s “idea for Crazy Jane” is undoubtedly Dionysus, the sexually ambiguous, wandering god of wine.

Dracula shares the anxieties of the psychiatric Darwinists and personifies them in a nineteenth-century would-be god of evolutionary degeneration and madness. Stoker’s

engagement with psychiatry is overt throughout the novel: he even identifies Maudsley and Lombroso by name. Throughout Dracula's stay in England, he wanders between his many "lair" (*Drac* 331), which are hollow husks that he leaves undomesticated, redolent of "neglect and dust" (*Drac* 337). Brundan points out that Dracula identifies himself as a "*Szekler*" to Harker (Brundan 8; *Drac* 59), which Emily Gerard (one of Stoker's source texts) translates as "on the frontier" (282)—suggesting that Dracula himself is a physical incarnation of the psychiatric borderland. Dr. John Seward is the warden of an asylum, beside which is Carfax, the English home procured for Dracula by Harker. It is there, in the house of Victorian psychiatry, that the vampire hunters assemble and study the Count, and there that Van Helsing discloses the "cure" for Mina's impending vampiric madness. Dracula's initial points of ingress, both into England and into the asylum, are women because, the Victorians believed, women are more susceptible to insanity. When Pater calls Dionysus "especially a woman's deity" (*CS* 160), it is important to remember the cultural milieu in which he is writing. Dionysus is a god of madness, and in Victorian England, as Elaine Showalter has established, madness was "the female malady" (14).

Both Dionysus and Dracula, therefore, wander in a liminal borderland where they threaten the ordered regularity of civilization. By the end of the nineteenth century, Dionysus was no longer a trivial or pathetic figure of sorrow, nor was the *Bacchae* any longer a story of conversion to a religious orthodoxy or *status quo*. The Dionysus of the *Bacchae*, in this *fin de siècle* mindset, is degeneracy: the god's presence in Thebes challenges "every tradition" and creates "monstrous" women; he literally causes Pentheus's palace—a symbol of patriarchal authority—"to wander apart" (διάδρομα; l. 592). Pater unveils the undercurrent of horror in Euripides's tragedy, which Stoker appropriates into his genre-defining horror novel. Stoker engages with Pater's Zagreus, but rejects—destroys—him rather than embrace him. *Dracula* is a

novel in which the “new, strange, romantic god” (CS 156) attempts to initiate London into his revelry, into his sexual freedom, but whom, ultimately, is driven out again by Pentheus. Rather than rendering him Pater’s “diabolical” villain (CS 161), Pentheus’s resistance to the “immigrant god” instead makes him emblematic of the last bastion of a Victorian middle-class ideology in danger of not surviving the turn of the century. Stoker’s appropriation of ancient Greek art and literature no longer emphasizes rationality and calm, but *otherness*. Greek gods, no longer sacred, confront humanity in a world no longer “mad” enough to accept and worship them.

“They called her ‘Bloody Jane’”: Harrison and the feminine Dionysian

Stoker’s final rejection of Dionysus and his maenad coterie (and their associated aestheticism and decadence) was not shared by the central figure of *Dracula*’s overwhelming anxieties: the “New Woman.” Prins emphasizes that maenads were often invoked in “discourses about the New Woman in *fin de siècle* England,” celebrated as “the spirit of a new age” by first-wave feminists and condemned by conservatives as insurgent “wild women” (*Ladies’ Greek*, 207). In an 1884 review of Michael Field’s *Callirrhoë*, three years before *Dracula*’s publication, aesthetic writer Mary F. Robinson proudly declares that “the cult of Dionysus is new-born” at every momentous turn in history (395). Field anticipates and *celebrates* Stoker’s sacrificial female vampires when her eponymous speaker declares: “I am come / Humbly to supplicate I may receive / Initiation in the Bacchic rites, / And die his Maenad” (ll. 117–19). These female writers did not shrink from the darker, more troubling version of antiquity revealed by Pater (and reviled by Stoker) in order to return to the “sweetness and light” of earlier classical criticism, but instead enthusiastically embraced the chaos and freedom represented in the *Bacchae*. By the time Stoker had his vampire women ritualistically killed in order to save the good women of England

from corruption, the maenads of the *Bacchae* were already a symbol of female enfranchisement and emancipation.

One of the most iconic of these “New Women” figures was Jane Ellen Harrison, who was a keen reader of Pater’s essays. Prins has suggested that “Harrison’s sense of style—in her classical scholarship, and in her life as a classical scholar—can be understood as a reworking of Pater’s late-Victorian legacy from a feminine and increasingly feminist perspective” (*Ladies’ Greek* 211). Harrison’s early work focuses on the sensory experiences she imagines were central to Dionysian ritual. Like Stoker, she juxtaposes the aesthetically enlightened maenad with “the thoroughly British Pentheus” (“Rohde’s *Psyche*” 165), but, unlike Stoker, she refuses to reimagine the end of Euripides’s tragedy in order to justify Pentheus’s “spiritual blindness” (“Rohde’s *Psyche*” 165). Instead, Harrison (prophetically) condemns the conservative *animus* that informs such a large part of *Dracula*. In her 1894 review of Erwin Rohde’s *Psyche-Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen*, Harrison ridicules the *fin-de-siècle* anxieties centred on degeneration and change:

The way is hard: πολλοὶ μὲν νάρθηκοφόροι, παῦοι δὲ τε Βάκοι. “Many bear the narthex but few there be that are made one with Bacchus.” And what a madness it must have seemed! To the rational self-contained carefully poised Greek, what foolishness! And since we do not understand, let us condemn without delay, let us dub it dangerous, disreputable, immoral, a peril to hearth and home. So common sense, so the thoroughly British Pentheus[.] (“Rohde’s *Psyche*” 165)

A large part of Harrison’s contribution to classical studies *was* to understand the irrational and mad elements of ancient ritual, and so cease to condemn or ignore what lurks underneath the bright veneer of Olympian Greek religion.

Like Pater, Harrison was fascinated with “the darker stain of high Hellenic culture” (CS 171). In her memoirs, she confesses: “A thing has little charm for me unless it has on it the patina of age. Great things in literature, Greek plays for example, I most enjoy when behind their bright splendours I see moving darker and older shapes” (*Reminiscences* 86–87). Many of these “darker and older shapes” were the remains of the *Mutterrecht* (mother cults) Harrison spent her academic career uncovering from beneath the patriarchal temples of the Olympian gods. In the *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903), Harrison finally rejects the generally accepted nineteenth-century contention that early Greek religion is represented by the Olympians of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Instead, she argues that it is only the insistent idealization of Greek culture as the highpoint of human rationality that allowed scholars to ignore what she considered overwhelming evidence that the Olympians are but a culmination of a religious process which began much earlier, and which was rooted in irrationality and nightmare (Ackerman xx). When visiting the archaeological site of Knossos, Crete, Harrison describes in a letter to Gilbert Murray: “Zeus is nowhere! I always knew he was a tiresome parvenu & I have been doing my best to discredit him for years” (21 April 1901; qtd. Wade 154).

Initially, Harrison’s emphasis in the *Prolegomena* was on the ἀποτροπή (“apotropaic”; literally “a turning a way”), the *Keres* (female death spirits), and “the theological shapes into which they are developed and discriminated” (*PGSR* 165). Harrison herself admits, however, that the book took a massive “turn away” from this intention. In 1900 she met Gilbert Murray (a classical scholar and famous translator of Athenian drama who became Oxford’s Regius Professor of Greek in 1905), who was at that time working on the *Bacchae* section of *Euripides and His Age*. Her long-professed enthusiasm for the renegade poet (as a student she flabbergasted William Gladstone when she told him Euripides was her favourite)⁶² was reignited

by her friendship with Murray. The focus of the *Prolegomena* consequently became a long discourse on the Dionysian. “It is rather dreadful,” she teases Murray in a 1902 letter,

the whole centre of gravity of the book has shifted. It began as a treatise on Keres with a supplementary notice on Dionysus. It is ending as a screed on Dionysus with an introductory talk about Keres. Whose fault is that? *Never, never* again will I ask you to lecture when I am writing a book, a nice sound one too, it was, till last autumn. (10 September 1902; qtd. Ackerman xxvii)

Her debt to Euripides in the volume is openly acknowledged in the introduction of its second edition (“Plutarch and Euripides have been laid under special contribution” [*PSGR* 2nd ed. xii]).

It is also the authority of Euripides that she evokes to justify her attention to the malevolent *daimones* of early religion:

Euripides, instant in his attack on the Olympian gods, yet treats with respect the two divinities of Orphism, Dionysus and Eros.... In any case, a religion whose chief divinities were reverently handled by Euripides cannot be dismissed as a decadent maleficent superstition. (*PSGR* xii)

Harrison straightforwardly admits that any study of Dionysus is plagued by an “ultimate inevitable vagueness” because “Dionysos is a difficult god to understand” (*PSGR* 364). It is, therefore, “to poets and philosophers that we must finally look for help” (*PSGR* 364).

Specifically, Harrison locates her analysis of the Dionysian in Euripides’s final play, in which, like Pater, she recognizes a complex rendering of his contradictory nature and elaborate *mythos*.

While Harrison is upfront and firm regarding the irrationality of these early gods and the minds, “alien to our own” (*PSGR* 164), that conceived them, it is remarkable that she refuses to label

either Euripides or the Orphics decadent. Her ridicule is instead reserved for the “lovely dreams” she uses to describe the Olympians, and her contemporaries who glorify them (*PSGR* 363).⁶³

It was in fact this very irrationality that drew her to the cults of Dionysus. Like Pater, “she was fascinated with Dionysus Zagreus in particular” (Prins, *Ladies’ Greek*, 212) and, like Pater, she sought to trace the god’s manifestations through the *Bacchae*. Zagreus is the darker shape lurking behind Attic tragedy which so fascinates Harrison; he embodies the strange and frightening undercurrent of Greek civilization she is at such pains to reveal. “Zagreus appears little in literature,” she admits,

he is essentially a ritual figure, the centre of a cult so primitive, so savage, that a civilized literature instinctively passed him by, or at most figured him as a shadowy Hades.

But religion knew better. She knew that though Dionysos as Bromios, Braites, Sabazios, as god of intoxication, was much, Dionysos as Zagreus, as Nykteios, as Isodaites, he of the night, he who is “a meal shared by all” was more. The Orphics faced the most barbarous elements of their own faith and turned them not only quâ theology into a vague monotheism, but quâ ritual into a high sacrament of spiritual purification. (*PSGR* 481)

The ritual to which Harrison refers is the ὠμοφαγία (Omaphagia), which she translates as “the feast of raw flesh” (*PSGR* 482). Although Zagreus’s cult is rarely portrayed in literature, Harrison nevertheless suggests that it characterizes the religion of the maenad chorus in the *Bacchae*, who sing of their ὠμοφάγον χάριν (“joy in eating raw flesh”) (*Bacchae* l. 139), and the enchanted Theban women on the mountain who devour δαμάλας σπαράγμασιν (“rended cattle”) (*PSGR* 482; *Bacchae* l. 739). The Omophagia, according to Harrison, recreates the death of the child Zagreus at the hands of the Titans and their subsequent cannibalistic feast. A fifth-century

BCE vase-painting housed in the British Museum (figure 6), “too revolting for needless reproduction,” and depicting “a Thracian tearing with his teeth a slain child” while “Zagreus stands by approving” is not necessarily evidence “that human children were slain and eaten” (*PSGR* 488), but it suggests to Harrison that “the vase painter ... believed such a practice was appropriate to the worship of a Thracian god” (*PSGR* 488).

The similarities of the Omophagia to the Eucharist and Catholic theories of transubstantiation were not lost on Harrison. Zagreus is “a meal shared by all” through which humans experience a “sacrament of spiritual purification” with the god (*PSGR* 481). Euripides’s representations of the Omophagia (fr. 472, 475) additionally confirm historical similarities between Zagreus and Christ. Regarding a fragment generally attributed to Euripides’s lost *Cretans*, Harrison invokes the commentary of Clement of Alexandria, who asserts that “Euripides, the philosopher of the stage, has divined as in a riddle that the Father and the Son are one God” (*PSGR* 480). Harrison further suggests that “Another philosopher before Euripides had divined the same truth, and he was Orpheus, only he gave to his Father and Son the name of Bacchos, and, all important for our purposes, gave to the Son in particular the title of Zagreus” (*PSGR* 480). Zeus is another connection between Zagreus and Christianity: Zagreus, like Christ, was sacrificed on account of his paternity, in order to redeem humanity, and under the sanction of his father.

Harrison’s descriptions of the Omophagia also gesture towards vampiric motifs. She reiterates Murray’s translation of Euripides’s τὰς ὠμοφάγους δαΐτας (fr. 472, l. 12), “red and bleeding feasts” (*PSGR* 479), as an alternate title for the ritual. Euripides’s maenad chorus in the *Bacchae* celebrates αἶμα τραγοκτόνον, ὠμοφάγον χάριν (*Bacchae* 138), which Murray renders, “The joy of the red quick fountains, / the blood of the hill-goat torn” (*PSGR* 482). Murray’s

rendition lingers on the bloodiness he imagines in the consumption of raw flesh—the Greek lines translate literally as “the raw-flesh feasts” and “the blood of slaughtered goats, the joy in eating raw flesh,” respectively. One is reminded of the subtitle to *Varney the Vampire*, “*Or, the Feast of Blood*”; of Jonathan Harker’s description of himself as a “banquet” for the vampire women (*Drac* 83); of Van Helsing’s obtuse reference to the Count having “banqueted” at Mina’s breast (*Drac* 335). The triangulation of Dionysus Zagreus, Christ, and the vampire leaps from the page when Harrison irreverently suggests that the rawer the meat the better, “for the blood is the life” (*PSGR* 483)—a repurposed line from Leviticus 17, which famously forbids the consumption of blood, “for the life of the flesh *is* in the blood” (Leviticus, 17:11; *KJV*). Her reference also poignantly echoes Renfield’s mad chant, “The blood is the life! The blood is the life!” (*Drac* 178). Harrison playfully comments that the Omophagia “filled the Christian Fathers with unholy joy” because its bloodiness “was an indefensible argument against paganism” (*PSGR* 483), which she undermines throughout the section by highlighting the uncanny similarities between the Christian and pagan consumption of blood and flesh.

Harrison carefully separates Dionysus Zagreus (and the Omophagia) from her more general analysis of the god. Zagreus, she emphasizes, “is especially an Orphic name” and his “full content can only be understood in relation to Orphic rites” (*PSGR* 480). Nevertheless, she recognizes how the madness and violence of the god inform all his aspects. She identifies Pater’s tripartite god specifically in Euripides’s protagonist, stressed through a version of the *mythos* in which he shares a genealogical connection to Ares:

[Euripides] knows of Harmonia, “daughter of the Lord of War,” Harmonia, bride of Kadmos, mother of Semele, and though his Dionysus is at the outset all gentleness and magic, his kingdom scarcely of this world, Tiresias knows that he is not only Teacher,

Healer, Prophet, but “of Ares’ realm” [...] Dionysus, for all his sweetness, is to the end militant, he came not to bring peace upon the earth, but a sword[.] (*PSGR* 377)

Once again Harrison subversively compares Dionysus to Christ, not only through his roles as “Teacher, Healer, Prophet” but through his violence. “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth,” the so-called King of Peace says in Matthew 10: “I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34; *KJV*). Harrison’s analysis of the Dionysian historically and archaeologically legitimizes the violent vampiric motifs Pater and Stoker recognize in *Bacchae*.

Harrison, too, stresses that Dionysus is primarily a woman’s deity (*CS* 156); that he in fact prefers the company of his female attendants—unlike his brother Apollo. Phoebus, Harrison suggests cheekily, “took the name of ancient Phoebe, daughter of earth, nay more he was forced, woman-hater as he always was, to utter his oracles through the mouth of a raving woman-priestess” (*PSGR* 394). Harrison’s characterization of Apollo as a “woman-hater” carries significant implications for more than just the god. Apollo was emblematic of Winckelmann’s marble-white ancient Greece. He is Greek reason, art, and “sweetness and light” personified. As the archetypal “good son,” who will never attempt to overthrow his father, Phoebus was a preserver of patriarchal authority and *status quo*, the extreme antithesis of his erratic and irrational brother. His designation as a “woman-hater” who must be forced to interact with women is suggestive of this same *status quo*’s value and treatment of them; the Pythia at Delphi could only speak with Apollo’s voice, not her own. Conversely, Dionysus’s coterie is mostly made up of the maenads, free and roaming women “inspired by his spirit” (*PSGR* 388), not dominated by it, and granted superhuman power that could “frighte[n] the men out of their senses” (*PSGR* 398).

Much like the Victorian “New Woman,” however, these maenad worshippers were at risk of persecution by their societies. Fifth century BCE Athens, Harrison explains, was rendered “dreary” for women by Periclean interpretations of the sixth-century Athenian lawmaker Solon (*PSGR* 400). New legislation was “directed against the excesses of women” (*PSGR* 400), among which “comes the characteristically modern touch that they are not to go out at night ‘except in a carriage and with a light before them.’ It was the going out at night that Pentheus could not bear” (*PSGR* 400). (In the *Bacchae*, the nocturnal setting of Dionysus’s rites is, after all, what confirms to the young king that this new, false prophet is simply trying to gain sexual access to the Theban women.⁶⁴) The “oriental seclusion of the Periclean woman” (*PSGR* 400) contributed to Victorian assumptions that the maenad rites represented in the *Bacchae* were largely mythological, thereby preserving the narrative of a quiet, ordered, and *familiar* society, which could be positively identified with nineteenth-century England. But the maenads were very real, “more than real” (*PSGR* 393), for Harrison. She acknowledges that Euripides takes liberties with the origins of the god and his religion, but through his representations Harrison believes she can locate historical exemplifications of his rituals. “The Thyiades,” Harrison instructs,

are the historical counterparts of the Maenads of countless vases and bas-reliefs, the same mad revelry, the same utter exhaustion and prostrate sleep. They are the same too as the Bacchant Women of Euripides on the slopes of Cithaeron [*Bacchae* 1.683 ff] [...] In the reverence shown by the women of Amphissa we see that though the Thyiades were real women they were something more than real. (*PSGR* 393)

Thus, the maenads were not mere myth, but “actual women, named ‘maenad’ to represent ‘a state of mind and body’” (Prins 214). In her wonderfully no-nonsense style, Harrison criticizes

her colleagues illogically clinging to a convenient, but fundamentally untrue, notion of the ancient world:

We are so possessed by a set of conceptions based on Periclean Athens, by ideas of law and order and reason and limit, that we are apt to dismiss as “mythological” whatever does not fit into our stereotyped picture. The husbands and brothers of the women of historical days would not, we are told, have allowed their women to rave upon the mountains; it is unthinkable taken in conjunction with the strict oriental seclusion of the Periclean woman. That any woman might at any moment assume the liberty of a Maenad is certainly unlikely, but much is born even by the husbands and brothers when sanctioned by religious tradition. (*PSGR* 397)

Periclean Athens is only one polity and one small moment in a very long history. With reference to Plutarch (*Life of Alexander* 2), Harrison concludes that Macedonian fathers and husbands, for example, did not have much choice in whether their female kin participated in the bacchanalia. The female worshippers were “possessed, magical, and dangerous to handle.... however much the Macedonian men disliked these orgies, they were clearly too frightened to put a stop to them” (*PSGR* 398). Consider, after all, what happened to Pentheus when he tried.⁶⁵

Harrison’s overwhelming interest in both the *Bacchae* and Dionysus focuses on their affinities for women and non-conforming representations of femininity. Yet, Dionysus’s maenad followers are not the only feminine element of the *Bacchae* Harrison uses to explore the Dionysian *mythos*. Semele, too, is a figure of interest, whom, like Pater, Harrison compares to Demeter. Harrison’s Semele, however, is not Pater’s pathetic *mater dolorosa*, but instead a powerful example of the “matriarchal, husbandless goddesses” (*PSGR* 155) who formed “the heart of community life” (Wade 155) in early Greece, “not mocked or feared but reverently

worshipped” (Wade 155). Before she was a mortal victim of Zeus’s rapacious libido, she was Semele *Keraunia*, an “ancient Earth-goddess” (*PSGR* 407) who was “probably at Olympia long before the coming of Zeus” (*PSGR* 404) and about whom Euripides wrote “some of his most splendid poetry” (*PSGR* 407).⁶⁶ The thunder with which she is associated is not only a weapon of Zeus, but also the original source of her own power and identity; she was “Earth the thunder-smitten,” worshipped by “a cult of thunder” at sacred places where the earth was “struck by lightning” (*PSGR* 407). Harrison suggests that Dionysus’s vengeful earthquake in the *Bacchae* is enacted through the ministrations of his smouldering mother rather than the power of his father Zeus: “his Epiphany is marked by a manifest thunderstorm, a storm that takes the shape of a resurgence of the flame on Semele’s tomb” (*PSGR* 409).

Reconsidering Pater’s description of Dionysus’s birth from the “smitten, volcanic soil” from which he grows, “a wonder of freshness,” out of “the midst of the ashes” (*CS* 99), Harrison suggests that it is Dionysus’s first, maternal birth that is the source of his divinity and power. Her burial ground, Harrison emphasizes, is more than “merely the effective scenic setting of a play” (*PSGR* 407); it is also the site of Dionysus’s delivery, which is emphasized throughout the tragedy (*PSGR* 436). His emergence from the “earth-mound” of Semele renders him a “male Kore” (*PSGR* 405), a counterpart to Persephone, daughter of Demeter (another earth goddess), but also an androgynous description of the god as the earth’s male daughter (*kore* being the Greek word for daughter as well as an alternate name for Persephone). In the *Bacchae*’s prologue, Dionysus claims he comes to Thebes both to redeem his mother’s name and punish her irreverent family for insulting his divinity. Harrison’s analysis of the earthquake, of the force which topples Pentheus’s palace, suggests that Semele avenges herself.

Conclusion

“Matriarchy,” Harrison concludes, eventually “pales before patriarchy, and from henceforth the name ‘Dionysos, son of Zeus,’ is supreme” (*PSGR* 411). Yet, although Semele “was gradually effaced and Dionysus became known as the son of Zeus” (Wade 155), Euripides’s “immigrant god” still remained a chthonic figure of powerful femininity. Like Victorian “mad women,” Dionysus’s maenads throw off the constraints of their patriarchal societies and, like Victorian “New Women,” they resist, however temporarily, men’s attempts to gather and re-domesticate them. Rather than tame and familiarize Euripides’s tragedy to fit a constrictive Victorian narrative, Harrison, Pater, and Stoker emphasize the strangeness of the *Bacchae* as they market it to a wider public. Stoker focuses on this “otherness” in his popular novel as a warning *against* the Dionysian spirit; Pater, on Bacchus’s boundary-blurring aesthetic possibilities. Harrison’s analysis of his bloody rites and the powerful femininity of his followers suggests unflattering and hypocritical comparisons to restrictive Christian doctrines and provides an historical precedent for a religion which can countenance and accommodate the “New Woman.”

For Pater, Stoker, *and* Harrison the *Bacchae* is fundamentally a frightening text, a precursor to the emerging genre of horror of the twentieth century. (Consider the similarities of the swarming, fleshing-eating maenads tearing apart Pentheus to any modern zombie film.) For Harrison, however, the intrinsic fear of the text is directed at the patriarchal norms that subordinate women and seek to constrain them further. Agave’s murder of her son is tragic and gruesome, but it is also a symbolic act of emancipation. Her hunting of Pentheus rejects his attempts to contain her, and it liberates her from a being defined solely through her masculine offspring. The madness of Dionysus provides an almost acceptable circumstance for this

liberation, for Agave is ultimately not mentally responsible. But what happens when infanticide is committed by a mother who freely admits “I know indeed what wrongs I do”? Does Euripides’s *Medea* offer an even more frightening alternative for conservative masculine anxieties?

Chapter 3 *Medea: A Dreadful and Insistent Clamour of Hate*

Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure.

—Coventry Patmore, “The Wife's Tragedy”
(*The Angel in the House*, 1854)

The Beginning of the End

In a 1907 review of Gilbert Murray's translations of Euripidean tragedy, R. Y. Tyrrell labels *Medea* an example of the “early efforts of a great genius” (158). Produced in 431 BCE (alongside the lost *Philoctetes*, *Diktys*, and *Harvesters*), *Medea* is admittedly one of the poet's earliest extant works. It is, however, a mistake to consider *Medea* an early play in Euripides's actual career. Ancient sources suggest that Euripides was born sometime between 480–475 BCE, meaning that he wrote *Medea* in his late forties. Following his debut in 455 BCE,¹ Euripides likely produced at the City Dionysia every other year; one may estimate, therefore, that he had written forty to fifty plays prior to the staging of *Medea*.

Medea is, as Aristophanes decries of all Euripidean drama,² a domestic tragedy. Although still idiosyncratically irreverent in its treatment of myth, the drama lacks the scathing criticism of Athenian policy decipherable in his later plays, such as in the fragmentary *Bellerophon* (ca. 420 BCE) or extant *Trojan Women* (415 BCE). Victorian and twentieth-century critics did not detect in one of its most famous choral odes, which Denys L. Page calls “the noblest of [Athens's] songs of praise” (vii), Euripides's usual irony when flattering his native city.³ Instead, Euripides describes Athens as the current seat of Harmonia, Aphrodite, Wisdom, and the nine Muses:

Ἐρεχθείδαι τὸ παλαιὸν ὄλβιοι
καὶ θεῶν παῖδες μακάρων, ἱερᾶς

χώρας ἀπορθήτου τ' ἄπο, φερβόμενοι
 κλεινοτάταν σοφίαν, αἰεὶ διὰ λαμποτάτου
 βαίνοντες ἀβρῶς αἰθέρος, ἔνθα ποθ' ἀγνάς
 ἑννέα Πιερίδας Μούσας λέγουσι
 ξανθὰν Ἄρμονίαν φυτεῦσαι:
 τοῦ καλλινάου τ' ἐπὶ Κηφισοῦ ῥοαῖς
 τὰν Κύπριν κλήζουσιν ἀφυσσαμέναν
 χώρας καταπνεῦσαι μετρίους ἀνέμων
 ἡδυπνόους αὔρας: αἰεὶ δ' ἐπιβαλλομένην
 χαίταισιν εὐώδη ῥοδέων πλόκον ἀνθέων
 τᾶ Σοφία παρέδρους πέμπειν Ἔρωτας,
 παντοίας ἀρετᾶς ξυνεργούς.⁴

The sons of Erechtheus are old in wealth, children of prosperous gods, birthed from an holy land undespoiled, nurtured on wisdom most glorious, beneath brightest skies ever do they step with grace; it is here where once, they say, the sacred nine, the Pierian Muses, brought into being golden-haired Harmonia; here, they say, where Cypris, by the gentle flow of clement Cephisus, draws upon its waters and breathes upon the land sweet and balmy breezes; here, where she ever with a fragrant wreath of rose-blooms crowns her loose tresses, sends the Erotes to sit enthroned beside Wisdom—for together they work a universal excellence. (*Medea* ll. 824–45)

Athens is the home or birthplace of all those gods whose “universal excellence” can easily be determined to culminate in the arts (τέχναι). Testament to the extraordinary output of dramatic

talent in the *polis* during this period is the astonishing fact that the trilogy of which *Medea* was a part finished the last (of three) at the City Dionysia—Sophocles himself placed only second.

According to Aristophanes of Byzantium, *Medea* was produced in late March 431 BCE. It is, in retrospect, a most striking date. Athens was at its pinnacle of cultural, economic, and martial power, but teetering on the brink of a long, anguishing fall from which it would never fully recover. Mere weeks following the City Dionysia, on 8 April, the city of Thebes attacked Plataea, a close ally of Athens and member of their Delian League. The attack was the precipitating spark that would ignite the Panhellenic world into conflagration—into the Peloponnesian War. The certainty of nascent war was undoubtedly in the air at the time of the festival, but Euripides and his audience could not know how closely it would follow the production of *Medea*; they could not know that it would last 26 grueling years; they could not know that Athens would face defeat and never again be the unequalled home of θεῶν μακάρων (prosperous gods).

Proponents of that trend of *damnatio* revealed by Behler, who suggests that writers of the nineteenth (and early twentieth) century charged Euripides with the degradation of Athenian tragedy, often point to this specious coincidence of *Medea*'s production date and its proximity to the outbreak of the war. “The poet who sang thus of Athens’ greatness was himself a prophet and partner of her decline” (viii) declares Page, who, although writing in 1938, is consciously following in the critical tradition of his Victorian forebears. His influential—and derivative—Introduction to the play is particularly reminiscent of A. W. Schlegel’s theories of *Entertung*: “In *Medea* the decline [of Athenian society] is only at its beginning. It is of extraordinary interest to us that we possess this document written on the eve of decay and dissolution. We can observe in it the shadow which the future casts before it” (ix–x).

The tragedy's chorus of Corinthian women, immediately following their song of Athenian praise, does worry how such an enlightened and sacred city as Athens could possibly receive a παιδολέτειραν ("child-murderer") (l. 849), as Medea was imminently proposing to become. These associations of "decay" and "dissolution" align the play and its tragedian with concerns consistent with Stoker's adaptation of the *Bacchae* into his fin-de-siecle novel *Dracula*, in which, as discussed in the previous chapter, he worries that England, like Athens, is on a degenerative path. Although fallacious, these connections between Athens's very real decline after the production of the tragedy and its portrayal of so dangerous a figure as Medea planning to seek refuge there align Page and his sources with the Greek tradition of recording what is elegant over what is true.

Euripides's production of *Medea* may not have won him an enviable first prize, but it did have an impact so profound on the myth that one may comfortably suggest all literature written about the Colchian princess after 431 BCE is a reaction to, or against, the tragedy. "It is not the 'creation,' not the 'origin' of myth which constitutes the basic fact," suggests Walter Burkert, "but the transmission and preservation" of these traditional stories:

A tale becomes traditional not by virtue of being created, but by being retold and accepted A tale 'created'—that is, invented by an individual author—may somehow become 'myth' if it becomes traditional, to be used as a means of communication in subsequent generations, usually with some distortions and re-elaborations. (2)

These "distortions and re-elaborations" are a result of the "multivalent" qualities of Greek mythological archetypes, qualities which keep *mythoi* significant through each "transmission" (Burkert 4). They are part of Bakhtin's "*great time*," stories that "break through the boundaries"

of their own epochs to “live in centuries” where “their lives are more intense and fuller than are their lives within that one time” (Bakhtin 4). Yet in each of these epochs, Bakhtin maintains,

There are always authoritative utterances that set the tone—artistic, scientific, and journalistic works on which one relies, to which one refers, which are cited, imitated, and followed. In each epoch, in all areas of life and activity, there are particular traditions that are expressed and retained in verbal vestments There are always some verbally expressed leading ideas of the “masters of thought” of a given epoch This is why the unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others’ individual utterances. (88)

The literature of the ancient Greeks and their mythological archetypes, therefore, are able to be transmitted to “subsequent generations,” not as “true” myth, canonical, dead, and stagnant, but as something still “fully alive”—able to be “shaped and developed” to meet the needs of each new cultural epoch, while reciprocally shaping each era’s cultural identity.

Despite Burkert’s odd dismissal of the tragedy as an “abnormal continuation” in the “complex Argonaut tradition” (10), Euripides’s *Medea* is one such “authoritative utterance.” Euripides did not “invent” the story of Jason’s betrayal, but his peculiar “expression” of it created the “leading ideas” that shaped the traditional ways through which subsequent generations “cited, imitated, followed” the story, with their inevitable, culturally-infused “distortions and re-elaborations.” Medea’s filicide, which was likely one of Euripides’s unique interventions in the myth,⁵ has been pervasively “accepted and retold.” Deborah Boedeker declares that it is Euripides who “gives Medea her canonical identity: the woman who kills her children in vengeance when her husband deserts her” (“Becoming Medea” 127). After *Medea*’s production at the City Dionysia, earlier variants of the myth seem to vanish—the death of the

children at the hands of the Corinthians, at the hands of Creon, or through the ministrations of Hera all give way to the mother's deliberate murder of her children. In subsequent literature that covers earlier moments in the Argonaut Cycle, such as Apollonius of Rhodes's *Argonautica* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, this foreknowledge of the outcome of Jason and Medea's union is omnipresent; authors who side-step the filicide do so subversively, knowing that their audiences now expect Medea to kill her children.

This chapter explores how Medea is transformed from a powerful, triumphant figure into one degraded and disempowered in order to fit nineteenth-century narratives of proper femininity. My analysis focuses on three significant interventions attributed to Euripides in Medea's mythological tradition and Victorian reactions against them: Medea's infanticide, Medea's victory, and Jason's unheroic characterization. By tracing the histories of translations, adaptations, and Greek editions of the play, I reveal that post-classical Athenian audiences were not necessarily troubled by the death of the children, but by Euripides's heroic characterization of Medea. Victorian writers attempted to undermine this portrayal with two key innovations of their own. They consistently code Medea as "Oriental," a racist characterization which both rationalizes her actions and dismisses her, while simultaneously coding the Corinthian princess (for whom Jason abandons Medea) as an ideal British wife, ultimately creating an unflattering contrast between them. I illustrate this emphasis on Medea's Oriental status through analyses of nineteenth-century academic commentaries, including those by Schlegel and Verrall, and Pre-Raphaelite depictions of her, beginning with Frederick Sandys's 1868 eponymous painting. The growing importance placed upon the role of the Corinthian princess is clarified through my discussion of adaptations of the play undertaken by writers from the Renaissance onwards. By the nineteenth century, "Creusa" or "Glauce" (as she is alternately named) becomes emblematic

of the Christian “angel in the house,” the archetype of British domesticity, with whom the foreign, wild, and independent Medea is unfavourably contrasted.

Prior to 431 BCE, Jason was a typically heroic character in myth—a doer of labours and undertaker of quests—not, as he is portrayed by Euripides, an unscrupulous philanderer with a Sophist’s problematic rhetoric. Euripides’s characterization of him in *Medea* enduringly tarnishes Jason’s heroic appeal and deprives him of associations with other epic figures like Agamemnon, Theseus, or Heracles, who retain their heroic status. Whether as the thoroughly underwhelming leader of the Argonauts in Apollonius of Rhodes’s third-century BCE epic, the *Argonautica*, or the child-support-dodging father in Mark Lemon’s 1856 CE burlesque, *Medea: or, a Libel on the Lady of Colchis*, Jason never fully recovers his reputation after patronizingly underestimating his much cleverer wife at the City Dionysia. Gilbert Murray labels Euripides’s characterization of Jason as “the most cruel touch of all” in this dark tragedy, because “one feels this man to be the real Jason. It is not that he has fallen from his great past. It is that he was really always like this” (ix). “Euripides, even, we are told,” asserts a writer for *Blackwood’s*,

was a misogynist, a hater and reviler of women; notwithstanding which he has left behind the matchless figure of Alcestis, and the great, sad, and terrible Medea, the self-sacrificing⁶ and self-avenging woman, each perfect in her kind, and *each so infinitely superior to the man with whom she is connected and contrasted*, that the reader might suppose the contrary to be the case, and accuse the poet, as female writers of fiction are sometimes accused, of having celebrated the wife at the *expense of the husband*. (378; my emphasis)

The Victorians recognized this thoroughly disappointing Jason as a third intervention in the story, and found it almost as problematic as—if not *more* problematic than—the other two.

T. C. Olverson, Isobel Hurst, and Shanyn Fiske have argued that Medea is adopted by female Victorian writers as a proto-feminist figure of female empowerment; Edith Hall, that the slew of adaptations of the tragedy in the mid-nineteenth century made a compelling argument for revising England's divorce legislation. In the final sections of this chapter, I offer a counter-narrative which suggests that Euripides's Medea is in fact *sacrificed* in order to preserve the Victorian patriarchal family. In the mid-century novels *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë and *Adam Bede* (1859) by George Eliot, Medea becomes a catalyst, not of vengeance, but of redemption for the novels' Jason-figures, Edward Rochester and Arthur Donnithorne, through their renewed devotion to these idealized, domestic Creusa figures (Jane Eyre and Dinah Morris).⁷

Brontë's and Eliot's novels offer fascinating examples of the tragedy's two strains of reception in the nineteenth century. Brontë was unable to read Greek and engage directly with Euripides's text; she was, therefore, dependant on the flawed translations and adaptations of the tragedy, which emphasize Medea's foreignness and connections to the supernatural. Neither of these elements are significant in Euripides's version, but they nevertheless are the primary characteristics of Brontë's Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*. The novel, as I illuminate, interacts extensively with the plot of Euripides's *Medea*, while also incorporating these contemporary and reactionary characterizations of the eponymous heroine. Conversely, Eliot was an accomplished classicist, fluent in Greek, who almost certainly read the tragedy. *Adam Bede*'s Medea figure, Hetty Sorrel, is identifiable not through foreign or supernatural stereotypes, but through Eliot's own sympathetic portrayal of a woman pushed, through the extremes of her situation, into a terrible resolution. While Eliot's engagement with *Medea* is more direct and nuanced than Brontë's, both authors pull back from the subversive finale with which Euripides ends the

tragedy. Instead, they reaffirm the Victorian *status quo*, via an inevitable marriage, at the expense of Medea's terrifying, tantalizing, break from patriarchal subjection.

The Euripidean Medea is one of the most reviled figures in the Western canon, ostensibly due to the murder of her sons. My analysis of *Medea's* reception in the nineteenth century, however, reveals that while Medea's filicide remains one of the most enduring "authoritative utterances" from the tragedy, it is not the most controversial. Filicide is a common staple of classical mythological cycles—more profuse, in fact, than even stories of Zeus's libido. The exposure of infants is rarely considered in this category (although pertinent to nineteenth-century concerns discussed in this chapter) because it is acknowledged as a normalized, albeit unsavory, aspect of ancient culture. Thus, Hecuba is not condemned for attempting to kill Paris, nor Laius for trying to destroy Oedipus. But what of the mothers who murder their children past infancy? What of Agave's horrific hunting of Pentheus? Ino's boiling of Melicertes alive? Themisto's blind slaughter of her sons? Althaea's ruthless burning of Meleager's life-bough? Why is Philomela the Romantic poets' darling, even though she and her sister Procne not only murder the latter's children, but also try to feed them to their father? The actual action of filicide is not what people have condemned or forgiven—it is the characters and circumstances of those who commit it. Agave and Ino were mad; Themisto was fooled; Philomela raped and mutilated. All four of them ultimately reinforce patriarchal norms of feminine vulnerability, acting only after they are physically or mentally overpowered. All four of them regret and repent after the fact. All four of them are punished. Medea's crime in Euripides's disturbingly compelling tragedy is that she wins.

Beware the One-Sandaled Man

The mythological cycle of the Argo, in which Medea is a central figure, was popular in the ancient world. With its assemblage of all the greatest heroes of the age, the voyage of the very first ship in search of legendary treasure was a fruitful subject for the literary imagination. Most of these accounts are no longer extant. Apollonius of Rhodes's Greek epic, the *Argonautica*, is the most complete and detailed surviving version of the myth, but, written in the third century BCE, it was not one of Euripides's sources. The mythological cycle is at least as old as the oral traditions from which Homer composed his epics, for Jason is mentioned twice in the *Iliad* (7.468–69; 21.40–41), and once in the *Odyssey* (11.235–59). George Huxley persuasively posits extensive treatments of the myth in the lost epics *Corinthiaca* (Eumelus; between 760–40 BCE) and *Naupactia* (anonymous; sixth or fifth century BCE) (Huxley 60–73). Hesiod discusses the marriage between Jason and Medea in the *Theogony* (992–1002.).⁸ Pindar's *Fourth Pythian Ode*, written around 462 BCE, is the most complete extant source that could have informed Euripides's own treatment of the myth. These early sources concur that Jason brings Medea to Greece (although the *Naupactica* tantalizingly suggests she is Greek, not a *barbaros*), without elaboration on her character, nor on crimes later attributed to her. Instead, her arrival in Greece is, as Hesiod declaims, μεγάλου Διὸς νόος (the will of great Zeus) (l. 1002).

The mythological cycle in which Medea is an integral part was also popular in classical Athenian drama. It is generally accepted that one of the plays in Euripides's debut tetralogy was *The Daughters of Pelias* (455 BCE), the plot of which dramatized Medea's scheme to kill Pelias by deceiving his daughters into dismembering and boiling him. Sophocles's *Root-Cutters*, date unknown, likely also took this episode for its subject matter. Both Euripides and Sophocles wrote an *Aegeus* (both lost), portraying Medea's attempts to persuade the King of Athens to exile or

execute his son, Theseus. Sophocles's *Colchian Women* and *Scythian Women* offer, as far as may be gleaned from their fragmentary remains, two iterations of the death of Apsyrtos at the hands of his notorious sister. Several *testimonia*, written several hundred years after the death of Euripides, accuse the poet of plagiarizing a play by Neophron in his extant *Medea*, though these accusations have been largely disproven/disbelieved by both Victorian and contemporary critics, who consider Neophron likely to have been active in the fourth century.⁹ This wide literary interest in the Argo, its crew, and its aftermath has produced varying, often contradictory accounts of the myth, yet the central details remain tolerably consistent.

The story begins with Pelias, the son of Tyro and Poseidon, who in early life secured the unenviable enmity of Hera by murdering his great aunt, Sidero, on one of Hera's altars (Hesiod *Theog.* 995ff; Apollod. 1.90ff; Sophocles *Tyro*). Pelias eventually succeeds to the throne of Iolcus, in some versions legitimately (*Odyssey* 11. 256ff; *Ehoiai* 37.17ff; Apollod. 1.107; Apoll. Rhod. 1.3) and in other versions at the expense of his brother, Aeson, the rightful king (*Pythian* 1.150ff).¹⁰ Hubrist (ὕβριστης; *Theog.* 996) that he is in both cases, however, Pelias receives an oracle upon his coronation, predicting Hera's revenge upon him through the agency of the "one-sandaled man" (*Pythian* 4.71–78; Pherecydes FGrH 3, F. 105; Apollod. 1.107; Apoll. Rhod. 3.64). The one-sandaled man is Jason, the son of Pelias's sometimes-supplanted brother, Aeson. To shield Jason from Pelias's attempts at circumventing fate, the guardians of young Jason whisk him away to study heroism under the tutelage of the enlightened Chiron. In almost every account of the myth after Euripides's tragedy, the results of the centaur's mentorship fall well short of his usually impressive standards (Achilles and Asclepius both benefited from his tutelage). Jason does not have the ἀρετή (*arete*), the right heroic mettle, the right *stuff*, to pull off the kind of

punishment Hera has in mind for Pelias. Hera instead uses him as a means to convey her real Fury, Medea, to Greece.

When the adult Jason and his single sandal resurface, Pelias attempts to sidestep prophecy (never a good idea) by sending his nephew away from Greece on a fool's errand. He must retrieve the golden fleece, an holy item left in the far-off, barbarian, and half-legendary realm of Colchis by the Greek hero Phrixus. The latter had consigned the fleece to the care of the Colchian king, Aeëtes, the divine son of Helios and Perse, who hung it in the Grove of Ares as a symbol of his enduring reign. Faced with this daunting task, Jason commissions a ship, the Argo, and assembles a crew to accompany him on the voyage to Colchis. The crew is almost *too* impressive—so full of demi-gods (and soon-to-be fully-fledged gods) that Jason, young and untried, is at best overwhelmed and at worst entirely outclassed by the men (and sometimes woman—Atalanta the Amazon) under his command. The ship's manifest changes regularly depending on the source, but its most illustrious figures remain consistent, and include Heracles, Orpheus, Castor, and Polyneices—all four of whom have become deities in their own right by the fifth century BCE.

The voyage to Colchis is replete with varying adventures, and once the heroes arrive, Jason is required to perform a series of labours at the behest of King Aeëtes before the king will allow him to take the golden fleece. Luckily, Aphrodite agrees to do Jason a favour: she causes Aeëtes's daughter, Medea, to fall in love with him. Medea's wisdom and sorcery, gained as a priestess to the moon goddess Hecate, make her a valuable ally. She provides Jason with all he needs to finish the labours, and, when Aeëtes still refuses to part with the fleece, assists her beloved in stealing it, in exchange for his marrying her and bringing her with him to Greece. As the Argonauts flee Colchis, they are pursued by Medea's brother, Apsyrtos, whom she kills and

dismembers, flinging his body parts into the sea so that her father must give up the chase in order to collect the fragments and give his son a proper burial. When Medea and Jason return with the fleece to Pelias, Medea avenges Jason (and Hera) by tricking Pelias into believing that if his daughters boil him in a magic potion, he will be reborn immortal. Of course it does not work: Pelias dies and stays dead; Jason and Medea are forced to flee from Iolchus as exiles. They go to Corinth, which is where Euripides's tragedy begins.

“Immoral tendencies of plot”

Medea is a difficult play to summarize. Its power and intricacy come more from subtle explorations of Greek ideations and customs than action; its remarkable use of language, meter, and diction emphasize this action in a way that does not translate into English as well as a play like the *Bacchae*. The speaker of *Medea*'s prologue, Medea's nurse, is a far cry from the glorious, angry, and supremely powerful character of the *Bacchae*, but in keeping with the domestic themes of the play. Both prologues begin with the chronicle of a journey from Asia; with the indictment of a royal family for inhospitable welcomes; and with the danger of retribution for this insulting treatment. Both introduce—although the audience cannot know—circumstances which will result in the murder of sons by their mothers. Yet the tenor of these prologues—and tragedies—is very different. The divine Dionysus's concise but emphatic indicative, ἦκω (I am come), in the first line of the *Bacchae* is replaced by the domestic nurse's protracted contrary-to-fact wish, lasting eleven lines. “Would that,” she mourns,

Ἄργοῦς μὴ διαπτάσθαι σκάφος

Κόλχων ἐς αἶαν κυανέας Συμπληγάδας,

μηδ' ἐν νάπαισι Πηλίου πεσεῖν ποτε

τμηθεῖσα πεύκη, μηδ' ἔρετμῶσαι χέρας
 ἀνδρῶν ἀριστέων οἱ τὸ πάγχρυσον δέρος
 Πελία μετῆλθον: οὐ γὰρ ἂν δέσποιν' ἐμῆ
 Μήδεια πύργους γῆς ἔπλευσ' Ἰωλκίας
 ἔρωτι θυμὸν ἐκπλαγεῖσ' Ἰάσονος:
 οὐδ' ἂν κτανεῖν πείσασα Πελιάδας κόρας
 πατέρα κατώκει τήνδε γῆν Κορινθίαν
 φίλων τε τῶν πρὶν ἀμπλακοῦσα καὶ πάτρας.

the hull of the Argo had never soared through the indigo Symplegades to our Colchian lands; would that hewn pine had never tumbled in the glens of Pelion, nor been whittled to oars for the hands of heroes, who, at Pelias's command, quested for the golden fleece; for, if not, my lady Medea would not have sailed to the towers of Iolcus, her heart wracked by love for Jason; nor would she have persuaded the daughters of Pelias to kill their father, nor would she now live in Corinth—estranged from her own father and kin.

(ll. 1–11)

The nurse regrets the entire voyage of the Argo in her fear for and *of* her mistress' current domestic difficulties. For it is the culmination of these events that results in Medea and Jason's current situation of exile in Corinth.¹¹ The betrayal of her family, especially the murder of her brother, has alienated Medea from her *patria* (πατριά); her murder of Pelias has, likewise, alienated Jason from his. Exile from Colchis and Iolcus, however, is not the pinnacle of woe in the nurse's speech. For although the couple "at first had even a good life [in Corinth]" (l. 11),¹² they seem incapable of escaping a repeating cycle of familial betrayal. Once again "all is enmity

[ἐχθρά], and that which is dearest [φίλτατα] has sickened” (l. 16),¹³ this time between husband and wife.

Jason, the nurse reveals, “has betrayed my mistress and his own children” (προδοὺς γὰρ αὐτοῦ τέκνα δεσπότην τ’ ἐμὴν) (l. 17) and is currently εὐνάζεται (in bed with) (l.18) a *new* wife, the anonymous Corinthian princess. Amid Medea’s cries from off-stage, the nurse describes her mistress’s anguish at her husband’s betrayal: Medea “evokes” (ἀνακαλεῖ) (l. 21) “the great pledge of [Jason’s] right hand” (δεξιᾶς / πίστιν μεγίστην) (l. 21–22) and calls upon the gods to witness her husband’s ingratitude for all she has done on his behalf (l. 23–24). Initially, the nurse portrays a suitably distraught Medea, whose grief takes the form usual for women in tragedy. A. W. Schlegel remarks approvingly that Medea’s “desperate situation is depicted ... by her own heart-rending wailing behind the scene” (175). Medea is refusing food (ἄσιτος) (l. 24), dissolving into tears (συντήκουσα δακρύοις) (l. 25), and lying insensible on the floor, silent to her friends, but occasionally moaning with regret for her lost Colchian home (ll. 25–33). This type of useless self-mortification is common to tragic female characters. In Euripides’s *Hippolytus*, Phaedra, too, refuses food and “means to die in silence” (ἀπόλλυται / σιγῆ) (l. 39–40). Sophocles’s eponymous *Electra* has more or less spent the entirety of her life in grief-induced abstemiousness.

The nurse’s description of Medea’s state, however, takes an *uncommon* and decidedly ominous turn from the description of her helplessly passive anguish:

στυγεῖ δὲ παῖδας οὐδ’ ὀρῶσ’ εὐφραίνεται.

δέδοικα δ’ αὐτήν μή τι βουλεύση νέον:

βαρεῖα γὰρ φρήν, οὐδ’ ἀνέξεται κακῶς

πάσχουσ’ ἐγῶδα τήνδε δειμαίνω τέ νιν

. . . .

τυράννους τὸν τε γήμαντα κτάνη

κᾶπειτα μείζω συμφορὰν λάβη τινά.

δεινὴ γάρ: οὔτοι ῥαδίως γε συμβαλὼν

ἔχθραν τις αὐτῇ καλλίνικος ἄσεται.

She loathes her children, takes no joy in seeing them. I am afraid of her, afraid that she plots some new evil, for she has deep passions (trust me), and bears neither offense nor abuse. I fear lest she murder the royal family and her former husband, and thence even some greater calamity. For she is dangerous and clever [δεινὴ]. A man who battles *her* would sing no easy song of victory! (ll. 36–45)

This abrupt *volta* is a shift from passive grief to active fury; the end of the nurse’s speech is both foreboding and portentous. Medea has been obviously “wronged by her husband” (πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἠδικημένη) (l. 26); the nurse, the tutor, the Corinthian women, and eventually the king of Athens, Aegeus, are all agreed on this point. Indeed, only Creon (the princess’s father), and Jason will deny it. Yet, despite the nurse’s description of Medea’s traditional prostration in response to this wrong, she articulates an impending threat to the particular man attempting *συμβαλὼν / ἔχθραν* (to engage in enmity) with her mistress. This juxtaposition of a passive sufferer with a *δεινὴ* (clever and dangerous) adversary, more than a match for any man, begins a process of unravelling the orthodox femininity that Medea complicates throughout the tragedy. Medea is not described using masculine compounds (e.g. “man-plotting”) in the way Clytemnestra is in Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon* (as a way to explain the Argive queen’s ability not only to murder her husband with a battle axe, but also to take sexual delight in doing so).¹⁴ Medea instead suggests

throughout the play that feminine behaviour is, contrarily, heroic, and demands that men and women be held to the same standards regarding traditionally masculine ἀρετή and sexual fidelity.

The nurse ends her monologue when she notices the arrival of Medea’s children—two sons—accompanied by their tutor. She and the tutor engage in a discussion which further elucidates the extent of Medea’s predicament. “She knows nothing of her newer woes” (l. 62),¹⁵ he confides to his fellow slave, for Creon, shrewdly wary of Medea’s cunning and murderous proficiency, plans to exile Medea and her children from Corinth immediately. Jason’s crimes have increased: not only has he violated the “oath of his right hand,” but he is now also harming—or allowing harm to come to—his φίλοι (*philoï*), his immediate family. Jason, the tutor explains, “is no longer a *friend* (*philos*) to this household” (κούκ ἔστ’ ἐκεῖνος τοῖσδε δώμασιν φίλος) (l. 77). The exchange between the tutor and the nurse propounds a common dichotomy of φίλοι (friends) and ἐχθροί (*ekhthroi*, personal enemies), first introduced by the nurse in the prologue. Greek principles of heroic ἀρετή demanded that one must ὠφελεῖν τοὺς φίλους καὶ βλάπτειν τοὺς ἐχθροὺς, “help one’s friends and harm one’s enemies.”¹⁶ Yet Jason, the nurse goes on to repeat, κακὸς γ’ ὦν ἐς φίλους ἀλίσκεται, “has been caught being wicked to his *philoï*” (l.84), one of many instances in the play in which Jason disappoints any pretensions to the heroic *ethos*. The conversation establishes yet another central question explored in the tragedy: what happens when one’s φίλοι *become* one’s enemies? when one has *philoï* in common with *ekhthroi*?

As Medea’s cries from offstage become coherent, the nurse’s formless trepidation becomes more defined. Medea interchangeably wishes for her own death (ll. 98, 146–47), for Jason’s (ll. 113–14), and for her children’s (l. 114). Yet her repeated wails (ἰῶ [l. 95], αἰαῖ [l. 111, 143]) and the nurse’s descriptions of her madness and self-mortification are disturbingly

incongruous with the cool, self-possessed woman who eventually arrives on stage. Schlegel complains that this Medea is a “cold substitution” for the one anticipated by her offstage cries; her mouth is full of “general and commonplace reflections” (175). Her words in fact indicate soundness of mind and full comprehension of her vulnerable situation—a mother in exile, estranged from her paternal family by μίασμα αἵματος (blood-guilt), now abandoned by the father of her children, who has revealed himself κάκιστος ἀνδρῶν, “the worst of men” (l. 229). She tells the Corinthian women that she must, as a ξένος (foreigner), take pains to “comply with the city” (προσχωρεῖν πόλει) (l. 222), because people judge others “by sight” (δεδορκῶς) but are blind to “a man’s inward nature” (ἀνδρὸς σπλάγχνον) (l. 220). False compliance is, ultimately, Medea’s strategy for vengeance—Creon, Aegeus, and Jason are all lulled into forgetting her “inward nature.” The statement may also suggest that the mad and wailing woman from behind the scenes was another performance, enacted to satisfy both the chorus and the audience’s expectations of womanly distress and dishonestly to gain their sympathy.

Schlegel, one of the earliest critics to comment, calls the content of Medea’s first speech “commonplace,” but his distaste is more likely caused by the opposite—by its perceived subversiveness, at least by nineteenth-century standards. First complaining that women must passively accept masters for their bodies (δεσπότην σώματος) (l. 233), Medea then contends that those same bodies are capable of a feat more formidable than thrice standing in the line of battle: childbirth, a feminine act made militant by the comparison (ll. 250–51). Mastronarde suggests that rather than subverting gender roles, Medea is actually using a metaphor easily accessed by the City Dionysia’s predominately male audience (239). Medea is asserting that women, like men, undergo travail for the sake of the *polis* (Mastronarde 239). The association—or juxtaposition—of childbirth and warfare is actually quite prominent in Greek religion and

literature. Jean-Paul Vernant contends that commonly held assumptions prompted the ancients to parallel the two as necessary culminations of gender:

Marriage is for the girl what war is for the boy: for each of them these mark the fulfillment of their respective natures as they emerge from a state in which each still shared in the nature of the other. Thus a girl who refuses marriage, thereby also renouncing her “femininity,” finds herself to some extent forced toward warfare, and paradoxically becomes the equivalent of a warrior. This is the situation in myth of females like the Amazons and, in a religious context, of goddesses such as Athena: their status as warrior is linked to their condition as a *parthenos* who has sworn everlasting virginity. (*Myth and Society* 34)

Medea’s position in the Argonaut Cycle as mother (therefore not *parthenos*) and warrior complicates Vernant’s theory, but the comparison between feminine and masculine duties is nonetheless embedded in Greek religious, cultural, and imaginative thought. Judith Mossman rightly elucidates that “Athenian men knew that childbirth was difficult and dangerous” (239). The pain of labour was a common motif in tragedies, including Sophocles’s *Electra* and Euripides’s *Electra*, *Hippolytus*, and *Bacchae*, and recognized as such by at least *some* Victorian authors.¹⁷ Lesley Dean-Jones has identified how parturition and its dangers are acknowledged in many Greek medical texts (34–35, 211–15). In the *Memorabilia*, for example, the Athenian general and Socratic philosopher Xenophon (430–354 BCE) suggests that men are not instructed by “lust” (ἄφροδισίων) to select their wives, but by the prospective bride’s ability to bear the pain of childbirth, risk her life in labour, and raise the thankless offspring without rancour (2.2.4–5). Athenian women who died in childbirth were memorialized with special grave *stelai*, often depicted with grieving male relatives (Mossman 239; Loraux 23–43). Mossman points out

that childbirth is used as a “paradigmatic example of pain” (238) in one of the *Iliad*’s most famous heroic similes:

But after the sore place was dry, and the flow of blood stopped,¹⁸ the sharp pain began to break in on the strength of Atreides. As the sharp sorrow of pain descends on a woman in labour, the bitterness that the hard spirits of childbirth bring on, Hera’s daughters, who hold the power of the bitter birthpangs, so the sharp pains began to break in on the strength of Atreides. (*Iliad* 11.267–74, tr. Lattimore)

If Homer can compare the strength and fortitude of Agamemnon to the endurance of women in childbirth, it must follow that Medea’s comparison between childbirth and warfare is likely more subversive to a Victorian or contemporary audience than to a classical Athenian one.

At the close of her famous speech, Medea enjoins the chorus of Corinthian women to swear themselves to silence regarding any detail of her plans for revenge against Jason. The chorus, unequivocally declaring ἐνδίκως ἐκτείσει πόσιν (“it will be just to take vengeance on your husband”) (l. 267), swear the oath and keep silent when Creon appears on stage to deliver his decree for Medea’s immediate exile (ll. 271–76). Medea promptly appears to lose her cool self-possession in conversation with Creon, reverting back to her traditional feminine lamenting. Her first two speeches to Creon begin with the sorrowful exclamations αἰαῖ (*aiai!*) (l. 277) and φεῦ φεῦ (*pheu pheu*) (l. 292), but the grief is undercut by the articulate deftness of her dialogue. In response to Creon’s statement that she is too cunning to be left brooding in Corinth safely, Medea self-deprecatingly declares that her reputation for cleverness is baseless—using the sophisticated rhetoric of high poetry:

σοφῆ γὰρ οὐσα, τοῖς μὲν εἰμ’ ἐπίφθονος,
τοῖς δ’ αὖ προσάντης, εἰμί δ’ οὐκ ἄγαν σοφῆ.

Clever as am I, I am envied by some, while

for others I am inconvenient, but I am not very clever. (ll. 304–5)

The flawless chiasmus/antimetabole¹⁹ in these two lines is diminished in translation, but this almost ostentatious flourish in Medea’s pretense of humility not only undercuts the claim that she is “not clever,” but also recalls her earlier hint to the chorus that seeming compliance to expectation can blind people to one’s inner nature. Her responses in this exchange to Creon’s concerns and accusations are measured, reasonable, and superficially adorned with concessions of her vulnerability and Creon’s power—they are, as Creon concedes, ἀκοῦσαι μαλθάκα (soothing to hear) (l. 316). By the end of the encounter, Creon has forgotten that an ὀξύθυμος (overtly passionate woman) (l. 319) is much easier “to guard against” (φυλάσσειν, l. 320), for he has been lulled by the σιωπηλὸς σοφῆ (quiet, clever one) (l. 320). When Medea formally supplicates him to allow her just one day in Corinth before being exiled, he relents, despite his admission, “I see even now that I am making a mistake” (νῦν ὁρῶ μὲν ἐξαμαρτάνων, l. 350). He is correct—it is a catastrophic mistake, and one which Medea immediately exploits.

When Creon exits, the chorus—possibly also fooled by Medea’s seemingly desperate supplication—echo her cry of φεῦ φεῦ and attempt to console her. But Medea drops the act as quickly as she took it up. “Do you think [δοκεῖς],” she asks them scornfully, raising herself from her suppliant’s position,

ἄν με τόνδε θωπεῦσαί ποτε

εἰ μὴ τι κερδαίνουσαν ἢ τεχνωμένην;

οὐδ’ ἂν προσεῖπον οὐδ’ ἂν ἠψάμην χεροῖν.

ὁ δ’ ἐς τοσοῦτον μωρίας ἀφίκετο,

ὥστ’ , ἐξὸν αὐτῷ τᾶμ’ ἐλεῖν βουλευματα

γῆς ἐκβαλόντι, τήνδ' ἐφῆκεν ἡμέραν
 μεῖναι μ', ἐν ἧ̃ τρεῖς τῶν ἐμῶν ἐχθρῶν νεκροὺς
 θήσω, πατέρα τε καὶ κόρην πόσιν τ' ἐμόν.

I would have fawned on him unless I gained some advantage—unless I were plotting something? No, I would not even have spoken to him, nor touched him with my hands. And *he* has reached such heights of idiocy that, though he could have upset all my plans by immediately expelling me from his land, he instead permits me to remain here for one day—one day in which I shall bury the three corpses of my enemies: the father, his daughter, and my husband. (ll. 368–75)

This speech is arguably Medea's most honest (troubling and disconcerting as it is), but it must certainly dilute the audience's sympathy for her. She openly admits to exploiting the sacred ritual of supplication (ἰκετηρία)²⁰ in her interaction with Creon, which Mastronarde and Mossman argue effectively makes her a hypocrite: she charges Jason with the same crime.

After her bitter mockery of Creon's concession, Medea falls immediately into planning aloud how best to make use of her additional day. She deliberates between setting fire to the bridal house, stabbing the couple while they lay extended in their marriage bed (λέχος), or simply killing them with *pharmaka* (φαρμάκοις) (l. 376–85)—her supernatural arts.²¹ The aftermath worries her—what city will offer her shelter after the deed is committed? Without an escape plan she runs the risk of incurring what is, above all else, most intolerable to her: ἐχθροῖς γέλων (l. 383; my emphasis), the *laughter* of her enemies when they catch her. She decides to wait, to see if a “safe tower appears” to her (πύργος ἀσφαλῆς φανῆ) (l. 390). No matter what, she tells herself,

οὐ γέλωτα δεῖ σ' ὀφλεῖν

τοῖς Σισυφείοις τοῖς Ἰάσονος γάμοις,
 γεγῶσαν ἐσθλοῦ πατρὸς Ἥλιου τ' ἄπο.

You shall not be *ridiculed* because of Jason's Sisyphean marriage, you who were born of a noble father—you, a granddaughter of Helios. (ll.404–6; my emphasis)

Medea's anger with Jason stems from her determination to take part in a traditionally masculine heroic *ethos*, what Bernard Knox calls the "heroic temper."²² Knox has chronicled her use of heroic diction, her concern for glory, and her intolerance of insult (198–99). Above all, however, Medea's "greatest torment is the thought that her enemies will laugh at her (γελός)" (Knox 199). This fear of ridicule—a line of reasoning she will later use to convince herself to murder her sons—is evocative of more traditional heroes in Greek literature, such as Homer's Achilles and Sophocles's Ajax. The latter, after being driven mad by Athena and tricked into mistakenly killing sheep he thinks are the Greek leaders, commits suicide, but not because he is ashamed of his attempted murder. The Greek generals insulted him; their deaths would be in keeping with heroic ἀρετή. He kills himself because he cannot stand to hear them laugh at him for accidentally killing the sheep.

The chorus, Creon, and Jason all attribute Medea's rage to sexual jealousy: deep *eros* turned to ugly hate. "You are vexed (λυπή)," Creon has just told her, "Because you are deprived of your husband's bed" (λέκτρων ἀνδρὸς ἐστερημένη, l. 286). The motif of the bed and its inherent symbolisms of both marriage and sex (introduced in the prologue when the nurse explicitly tells the audience that Jason is "in bed with" [εὐνάζεται] his new wife) is overwhelmingly prominent throughout the drama. Iterations of the three Greek roots εὐν-, κοιτ-, and λεχ- appear at least twenty-nine times in the approximately 1400 lines of the tragedy.²³ Medea's anger over Jason's betrayal is credited to sexual jealousy and sexual frustration by the

other characters—their assumption that Medea is grieved by the absence of sex with her husband is accounted for as a character flaw. When one studies Medea’s “own words,” however, there is “little reference to jealousy and love gone wrong” (Boedeker, “Euripides’ *Medea*” 95). There is, conversely, a great deal of reference to the sanctity of oaths and supplication.

There are two oaths, specifically, that Medea accuses Jason of breaking. The first is mentioned by the nurse in the prologue: δεξιᾶς / πίστιν μεγίστην, “the great pledge of his right hand” (l. 21–22). Judith Fletcher defines this type of oath as “a promise guaranteed by invoking the gods and offering an implicit or explicit conditional self-curse” (3). Oaths witnessed by the gods (in this case, Zeus Horkios and Themis) and sealed by the clasping of the right hand were “of fundamental importance in Greek society” (Mossman 42). As Anne Burnett emphasizes:

Oaths in [the Greek] world were no mere human conveniences, like a business man’s contracts; they were absolutely necessary to society, but more than that, they were divinely ordained and magically protected. Oaths stood like the primeval pillar that supports the sky, a link that could at the same time hold off a possibly angry weight. The oldest doctrine was that oath-breaking was twin to kin-murder The broken oath, like the drop of kin blood, brought an Erinys into being (Hes. *Erg.* 804) and the demon was not to be appeased until the wrongdoer had been made to suffer. (13)

The suffering enacted metaphorically or literally by the Erinys (Fury) could vary, but the most common punishment for oath-breaking was childlessness (Rickert 106–13; Kovacs 59–60; Mastronarde 28). The oath Medea accuses Jason of breaking is complicated in two integral ways: it is one made to a woman and a barbarian, as opposed to a “an equal participant in an exchange-relationship” (Mossman 31), and it was made to solidify the unconventional marriage between Jason and Medea. The recognition of marriage in classical Athens was more social than legal—it

had no formal legal definition or recognition, no legal registry, nor was it solidified by a formal oath (Patterson 108–9).²⁴ Instead, as Medea complains in her first speech, Athenian women were betrothed to husbands selected by their fathers (or substitute patriarchs), as political, social, and often monetary exchanges. The bride’s family paid the husband a dowry as insurance that he keep her (and treat her well); should the marriage dissolve and the bride return to her father’s household, the husband would be obliged to distribute a refund.²⁵ In Medea’s case, of course, no such transaction has taken place—she and Jason absconded from Colchis very much against her father’s wishes. Instead, “the connection between this Greek and this barbarian took its whole substance from its defining, extraordinary oaths, for it existed outside society as a thing sanctioned only by the gods the two named” (Burnett 13). Some critics, both contemporary and Victorian, have used these circumstances to argue that a Greek audience would not have considered Jason and Medea really married, thus lessening Jason’s culpability. It is important to note, however, that no one in *Medea* makes this argument, not even Jason himself, who has ample opportunity in the *agon*. The nurse, the tutor, the chorus, and Aegeus all agree that Jason had married her, and therefore has earned the severest of punishments for breaking his oath to her. This punishment, Jane Harrison rather brutally surmises, “was always incomplete unless the offender was cut off with his whole family root and branch” (*PSGR* 368).

The second oath Jason breaks to Medea is that of the suppliant to his benefactor. Medea reveals that Jason came to her first as a suppliant, requesting her aid and “laying him[self] under a lasting obligation to his protector” (Mastronarde 29):

ὄρκων δὲ φρούδη πίστις, οὐδ’ ἔχω μαθεῖν
 εἰ θεοὺς νομίζεις τοὺς τότε οὐκ ἄρχειν ἔτι
 ἢ καινὰ κεῖσθαι θέσμι’ ἀνθρώποις τὰ νῦν,

ἐπεὶ σύνοισθ' ἄ γ' εἰς ἔμ' οὐκ εὖορκος ὄν.
 φεῦ δεξιὰ χεῖρ, ἧς σὺ πόλλ' ἐλαμβάνου
 καὶ τῶνδε γονάτων, ὡς μάτην κεχρώσμεθα
 κακοῦ πρὸς ἄνδρος, ἐλπίδων δ' ἡμάρτομεν.

Regard for your oaths is gone, nor can I learn if you think either that the gods no longer rule or that they've made a *new set* of rules for mortals, since you clearly know you've broken your oath to *me*. Alas for my right hand! and for my knees, too, which you often would grasp—how vainly was I supplicated by this wicked man, how robbed I am of his promises! (ll. 492–98)

Exploitation of the suppliant ritual was a grave crime in the ancient world, but it is one Medea also commits in her interaction with Creon. She will use the favour of the one day he grants her against him. Burnett points out that as “the official author of [Medea’s] exile ... Creon too [is] one who insults the authority of oaths” (15). King Aegeus, certainly, is shocked that “anyone could have offered a new alignment, as Creon had, to a man already solemnly bound” (Burnett 15; *Medea* l. 701). If one understands Medea as the divine instrument of Jason’s punishment for his impiety—as the Fury born from the drop of spilled kin blood—are her own seeming impieties sanctioned? Does Creon’s involvement in Jason’s lack of suppliant reciprocity excuse Medea’s deceit? Moral and religious ambiguity, one of the most powerful themes of this tragedy, are the centrepiece of this monologue—inescapably unsettling.

Following Medea’s monologue, the chorus sing their first stasimon.²⁶ The ode is, like so much of this play, a careful and deliberate balance of traditional masculine *ethos* and classical Athenian modernity. Mossman’s observation that “there is a sense in which this ode seeks to begin the process described in it—the rehabilitation of women in song” (257) is well expressed.

The ode begins broadly with generalizations about women and men, and then focuses specifically to Medea and Jason. The world, they sing, has gone topsy-turvy; rivers are running uphill, what is unjust has become just, and *women* are going to be the ones with good reputations, for it is now men, not women, who practice deceit (ll. 410–20). For too long the great poets of old have maligned women in their songs; now is the time for women to raise their own voices in poetry and defend themselves (ll. 421–430). The interchanging meter of each strophe reinforces the shift to which the Corinthian women refer. The first strophe and antistrophe, written in dactylo-epitrite (or doric), the meter of epic and lyric poetry of the sixth-century, typified by Stesichorus (Boedeker “Euripides’ *Medea*” 108; Mastronarde 240), echo themes in Hesiod’s *Theogony* and *Works and Days* (Mossman 257ff). The second strophic pair, however, moves away from the meter and diction of the *μοῦσαι παλαιγενέων ἀοιδῶν* (poetry of the ancient poets) (l. 421) and becomes distinctly aeolic in its specific descriptions of Medea’s plight and Jason’s faithlessness (Mastronarde 240). Jason arrives on stage just as they finish the final strophe, in which they echo Medea’s contempt for Jason and Creon’s disregard for traditional honour: βέβακε δ’ ὄρκων χάρις, “the grace of oaths has departed” (l. 439). If, after all that, the audience still has any hope of being confronted with an heroic Jason, they are swiftly disappointed.

Jason enters proselytizing about the benefits of sacrificing personal honour for the sake of comfort, and infuriatingly assuring Medea that, despite her bad behaviour towards him and his new family, he forgives her. As for the debt he owes to his soon-to-be-abandoned wife—she exaggerates it. In this formal *agon* between the former husband and wife, Jason tells Medea that if there is a debt to anyone for his success in Colchis, it is to Aphrodite and Eros, who σ’ ἠνάγκασεν τόξοις ἀφύκτοις τοῦμόν ἐκσῶσαι δέμας (forced [her] with inescapable arrows to

save [Jason's] person) (ll. 530–31). Indeed, according to Jason, Medea “received more than [she] gave” in rescuing him (ll. 534–35), because she no longer lives in a βαρβάρου χθονὸς (barbarian land), but in Greece, where she has learned about δίκη (justice) and νόμος (law) (ll. 536–37)—both of which ironically show Jason to be in the wrong and deserving of punishment. Lastly, through her association with the Argonauts, Jason has given Medea κλέος (glory, renown), for without him, οὐκ ἂν ἦν λόγος σέθεν (there would be no tale about you) (l. 541).

Jason also denies that his new marriage betrays his first one. His decision, he condescends, makes him “wise” (σοφός), “self-controlled” (σώφρων), and a “powerful friend to [Medea] and their children” (μέγας φίλος / καὶ παισὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖσιν) (ll. 548–50). He does not marry the princess because he “hates [Medea's] bed” (ἐχθαίρων λέχος), or because he finds fault with the children he has by her, but ὡς, τὸ μὲν μέγιστον, οἰκοῖμεν καλῶς / καὶ μὴ σπανιζοίμεσθα (for the most important reason, that we might live well and not be in want) (ll. 559–60).²⁷

Currently, they are exiles—his new marriage secures his position and will eventually give his sons by Medea royal half-siblings. Mossman suggests that in this line, Jason at last shows his “real motivation: comfort” (275). He marries, above all, so that εὐδαιμονοίην, “I might be happy” (l. 565). If Medea objects to his reasoning, he concludes, it is solely because of sexual jealousy. σοὶ τε γὰρ παίδων τί δεῖ; he asks her, “What need have *you* of children?” (l. 565).

Medea and the chorus call Jason's arguments by what they are—empty sophistry. “You have dressed your words up well” (εὖ μὲν τούσδ' ἐκόσμησας λόγους), the chorus responds to this speech, “but you do not do justly in betraying your wife” (ll. 576–77).

After Jason leaves his wife and the Corinthian women unconvinced of his righteousness, Medea encounters the very thing she lacks to execute her revenge: an escape plan. Aegeus, the King of Athens, enters from the distant *eisodos* and greets Medea as an old friend. He is on his

way back from Delphi, to where he has traveled in order to consult the oracle on the “best way to father sons” (l. 669). The anecdote fits this seemingly coincidental and serendipitous meeting into the broader mythological cycle, as Aegeus confides to Medea that he passes through Corinth in order to consult Pitteus, king of Troezen, regarding the oracle’s riddle, which he cannot decipher. (In Troezen, Aegeus will father Theseus with Pitteus’s daughter, Aethra.) Medea exchanges his confidences with one of her own, confiding in the king that her husband has abandoned her for a new wife (l. 694), whose father, Creon, “drives her as an exile from Corinth” (ἐλαύνει φυγάδα γῆς Κορινθίας) (l. 706). Aegeus, like everyone else, is shocked and appalled by Jason’s behavior. “Surely,” he exclaims, “he has not dared to do this most shameful (αἴσχιστον) deed?” (l. 695). Medea manipulates Aegeus’s outrage and sympathy to extract from him a promise of refuge, in exchange for her help with Aegeus’s problems begetting children. She has Aegeus make her a formal oath that he will receive her in Athens under any and all circumstances, and never give her up to her enemies (l. 749–50)—the second oath she extracts via sympathy and subsequently exploits.

With this final contingency in place, Medea confides to the chorus the entirety—the enormity—of her plans for vengeance. First, she will pretend to reconcile with Jason, entreating him that her sons may stay with him in Corinth, rather than face exile with her. In order to convince the princess to accept the children, she will offer her a valuable gift, a λεπτὸν πέπλον (delicate *peplos*) and a πλόκον χρυσήλατον (gold headdress) (l. 786). The gifts, however, will be anointed with deadly *pharmaka*, which will cause the young bride to die horribly should she wear them. Second, she tells them, starkly, τέκνα κατακτενῶ, “I shall kill my children” (l.792), after which she will flee Corinth and take refuge with Aegeus in Athens. Although she bewails

the deed (οἰμώζω), it must nevertheless be undertaken—to preserve, ironically, the κλέος for which Jason has taken the credit of giving her:

μηδεῖς με φαύλην κάσθενῆ νομιζέτω
μηδ' ἠσυχαίαν ἀλλὰ θατέρου τρόπου,
βαρεῖαν ἐχθροῖς καὶ φίλοισιν εὐμενῆ:
τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων εὐκλεέστατος βίος.

Let no one think me pathetic and weak or passive, but of the opposite character, cruel to my enemies and kindly to my friends; for the life of such people is praised most.

(ll. 807–10)

The chorus begs her to reconsider, but Medea is obstinate. Jason, called back into the scene, is easily convinced of Medea's change-of-heart, self-righteously confident as he is in the pre-eminence of his own comfort. The children are duly tasked with the delivery of Medea's poisonous gifts, which they will deliver off-stage.

In the presence of the boys, Medea is wracked by indecision. When she “sees the bright faces of the children” she wavers, affirming that she will bring them with her “out of the country” (ll. 1044–45). One moment she declares χαιρέτω βουλεύματα, “farewell to my plans!” (l. 1048), but in the next she asks, καίτοι τί πάσχω; (“What is the matter with me?”):

βούλομαι γέλωτ' ὀφλεῖν
ἐχθροὺς μεθεῖσα τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἀζημίους;
τολμητεόν τάδ' . ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐμῆς κάκης,
τὸ καὶ προσέσθαι μαλθακοὺς λόγους φρενί.
χωρεῖτε, παῖδες, ἐς δόμους
χεῖρα δ' οὐ διαφθερῶ.

Do I want to make myself a laughingstock by letting my enemies go unpunished? I must have the endurance to do this; what cowardice, even to admit soft words to my mind. Go, children, into the house I will not weaken my hand. (ll. 1049–55)

Vacillating between her love for her children and her hatred of Jason, Medea agonizes over the two boys as she sends them off-stage with the gifts. Ultimately, however, hatred wins out. “I know indeed what wrongs I do,” she declares before exiting, “but my rage is stronger than my reason” (μανθάνω μὲν οἷα δρᾶν μέλλω κακά / θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων) (ll. 1078–79).

After another choral interlude, a messenger enters the scene and explains to a gloating Medea that her gifts caused not only Jason’s new wife to die, engulfed in fire, but also Creon, who clutched his writhing daughter, causing the flames to spread to him. Medea has passed the point of no return. She understands that if she does not kill her children, the people of Corinth will (which is the traditional version in myth), in retribution for the death of the royal family. She leaves through the *skene* door; the cries of her children, pleading for help from within, are heard by the chorus. Jason enters, furiously searching for his former wife, and learns from the chorus that, if he opens the doors to their home, he will see τέκνων φόνον, the murder of his sons (l. 1313). He does not open them, but Medea appears with their bodies, like a god, above the *theologeion*, riding in her grandfather’s chariot of the sun. Jason calls her ἐχίστη θεοῖς, “most hated by the gods” (l. 1323), but Medea declares that Zeus understands the necessity of her actions (l. 1350–53). “What god or power will hear you?” she asks him, “the oath-breaker and deceiver that you are?” (l. 1391).

On not Translating Euripides

Prior to the twentieth century, translations of Euripides's *Medea* have been, despite the play's popularity, surprisingly sparse. The Roman poet Quintus Ennius (239–169 BCE) reputedly was the first to translate the tragedy into Latin, but the text is lost and likely a liberal adaptation. Seneca, who also claimed to “translate” Athenian tragedy, offered a Latin version in 50 CE, but it is far from faithful to the superior original, and was likely not meant to be performed. Seneca's play lacks the psychological complexity that makes Euripides's tragedy so compelling. In the Roman text, Medea is significantly “Other”—her associations with magic and barbarity heightened and transfigured into madness. Nevertheless, Seneca's exaggerated rendition of Medea is a more familiar character in Western reception than Euripides's uncomfortably sympathetic and coolly reasonable heroine. Few Renaissance scholars had access to Greek, meaning that, by and large, it was Seneca's Latin play that was initially read and widely adapted. H. B. Charlton has identified at least twelve separate editions of the Roman play produced in Latin in Europe before 1500 (xxxi–xxxii). John Studley published a translation of the text in 1566; Edward Sherburne, in 1648. Katherine Heavey notes that there is even evidence of Seneca's “closet-drama” being performed at Cambridge in the early 1560s (42).²⁸

Despite the wider access to the Latin of Seneca, however, Euripides's *Medea* was still in circulation. Early-modern publications of academic Greek commentaries flourished. The first printed edition in the original Greek was made in Florence in 1496, heralding the subsequent eighteen editions produced in the sixteenth century (Saladin 164; Hirsch 138–46; Heavey 42). Joshua Barnes published the first complete edition of Euripides's tragedies, *Euripidis quae extant omnia*, in 1694, “an intelligent piece of scholarship and a spectacularly beautiful volume” (Hall and Macintosh 71).²⁹ George Buchanan produced a close translation in Latin in 1544;³⁰

Cornelius Schonaeus, a manuscript prose summary in English between 1540 and 1611 (Harbage 694). The nineteenth century experienced a similar boom in the production of *Medea* commentaries, beginning with Richard Porson's significant 1801 edition.³¹ In 1818, Peter Elmsley³² published his *Medea* with its traditionally Latin introduction and explanatory notes.³³ F. A. Paley's 1857–60 volumes, complete with English introduction and commentary, made the play's Greek more accessible for British students. John Hogan also produced a *Medea* with English explanatory notes specifically “for schools” in 1873, hoping that the play would “not prove unacceptable” (iii) for the British education system. A. W. Verrall is careful to credit Porson, Elmsley, and Paley in the English introduction of his own 1881 edition of the play. Verrall admits an additional debt to Nikolaus Wecklein's 1874 German edition—considered by him the best of the manifold commentaries published on the continent during the nineteenth century.³⁴ The educated middle and upper classes³⁴ of England, therefore, had access to the Greek of Euripides's *Medea* from at least 1496; less erudite British students could make their way through the play with the help of English commentary as early as 1857. Those without the learning or patience to read the original Greek, however, were left to experience the events that Euripides made infamous through the comparatively meagre translations or plenteous adaptations produced throughout the centuries.

In 1866, a critic for *The Saturday Review* called the *Medea* of Euripides “by no means a bad field for translators” because “the ground has hitherto lain well fallow” (247).³⁵ The most recent attempts at translation he can remember are those by the American classicist Robert Potter (1860),³⁶ condemned as “poor, loose, and stilted” (247), and Michael Wodhull (1782)—“poetic,” but “apt to run wide the meaning of the Greek” (247).³⁷ Wodhull's 1782 rendition of *Medea*³⁸ remained popular in the nineteenth century, was often reprinted, and was included in Henry

Morley's *Universal Library* publication series and Sir John Lubbock's famous *Hundred Books* list. Essentially the first of the now ubiquitous "must-reads," this latter catalogue was first delivered by Lubbock in a speech to the members of the London Working Men's College in 1886. When it was later published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, along with editorial responses to the list, it created a sensation—selling more than forty thousand copies in three weeks (Hutton 581). Lubbock's *Hundred Books* encouraged members of the literate working classes to flock towards his recommended English translations of classical texts—including Wodhull's *Medea*.

Wodhull's preface to his volume of translations is full of enthusiasm for Euripides. "It would here be easy," he muses,

to fill many pages with testimonies highly honorable to him, both from the ancients and moderns: but the merits of Euripides are so generally known, that I shall not attempt to enter on a minute discussion of them, being sensible that the translator of a favourite

Author is of all men least adequate to the province of impartial Criticism. (v)

His relish for Euripides contrasts sharply with the poet's next notable translator, Theodore Alois Buckley, whose Introduction to his own monumental translation project (1850) is full of little but contempt for the tragedian (one continues to wonder why he bothered to translate all nineteen plays). I have mentioned previously that, in a rare moment of praise, Buckley calls the *Bacchae* "our author's noble play" (vii). He appreciates that in *Alcestis*, although "the scene between Death and Apollo" cannot be "surpassed in vulgarity, even by the modern school of English dramatists" (vii), Euripides has yet provided "the only real example of genuine conjugal affection on the Greek stage" (vii). This obtuse interpretation of the pseudo-satyr drama comes after what can only be called his profoundly stupid description of "the gentle revenge of Medea" (vii). One wonders if he bothered to read the tragedy while he translated it.

John Cartwright attempted a translation of *Medea* in his 1866 publication *Translations from Euripides*. It was poorly received. “The wish to translate,” writes a condescending reviewer for the *Athenaeum*, “does not necessarily imply the power” (28 July 1866, 109). *The Contemporary Review* finds that the “sole point upon which we can compliment Mr. Cartwright is in his choice of dramas . . . saving the ‘Bacchae,’ there is, perhaps, not one of this poet’s plays so calculated to assert for its author an equal rank with his great rivals, as the ‘Medea’” (March 1867, 419).³⁹ Appreciation for *Medea* (and Euripides) is pervasive among the highly regarded translation of the *Bacchae* by Henry Hart Milman (1865), which the critic for *The London Review* remembers fondly (at the expense of Cartwright) as “a beautiful version of the ‘Bacchae’ of Euripides, from the pen of an accomplished scholar” (August 1866, 160). The *Westminster Review* laments Cartwright’s attempt, prophetically hoping that either Anna Swanwick,⁴⁰ whose well-received translation of Aeschylus’s *Oresteia* had been published a year earlier, or Augusta Webster, who had just published her rendition of Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound* (1866), “may be induced to attempt the task in which he has failed” (October 1866, 534).⁴¹

The reviewer’s remark, whether a sly, sexist insult to Cartwright or sincere compliment to the two adept female translators, articulates a common assumption among Victorian *intelligentsia* that women would sympathize with Euripides’s controversial heroine despite her “unnatural” crime. The *Athenaeum* (26 September 1868) comments that *Medea*, “the most tragic of [Euripides’s] tragedies,” is a play “which a lady might naturally be expected to handle with success” as she would be able “to enter fully into the feelings of the unfortunate heroine in her distressing condition,” although “there are not many ladies possessed of Greek scholarship enough to translate Euripides with accuracy” (394). It was Webster who met the challenge,

publishing *The Medea of Euripides, Literally Translated into English Verse* in 1868, to great critical acclaim. The same *Westminster* reviewer who requested her translation later lauds the edition:

Just a year and a half since, when noticing Mr. Cartwright's version of the "Medea," we expressed a hope that Mrs. Webster might be induced to undertake the task in which he had broken down. We have no reason to repent our wish. Mrs. Webster's translation surpasses our utmost expectations. It is a photograph of the original, without any of that harshness which so often accompanies a photograph. She has combined, what is the despair of the translator, accuracy with freedom. (April 1868, 607)⁴²

Trinity Fellow and Corpus Professor of Latin, Robinson Ellis, who patronizingly ranked *Medea* as one of the "very few masterpieces of ancient art in which the feminine passion is delineated" (20 October 1894), called Webster's *Medea* "a model of what a translation ought to be" (qtd. 15 September 1894, 355).

Commentators were surprisingly touched by both Euripides's *Medea* and Webster's version of it. The more generally expressed revulsion for the notorious filicide disappears when confronted with Euripides's rendering of her, giving way to fascination and almost unwilling sympathy. "This play," ruminates a writer for *The British Quarterly Review*,

from its very nature, affords ample scope for the full sweep of womanly feelings. In it are depicted emotions at once most violent and most tender, self-denying devotion, and cruel revenge, artful concealment, and deadly resolve, the jealousy of a divorced and outraged wife battling with the deep affections of a mother. The representation of the struggle in *Medea's* breast between her plans of revenge and her love for her children is the most touching and impressive that was produced on the stage. (October 1868, 569).

There are few Victorian translations of note after Webster. Edward Coleridge includes *Medea* in his 1891 prose translations of Euripidean tragedy, which he hopes will “appeal to the general reader” as well as the to the academic one. Reviewers were lukewarm and generally unhappy about Coleridge’s choice to render Euripides’s poetry as prose.⁴³ The translation is not “in any way remarkable” but “may be followed with sufficient confidence by those who need the help of a translation in getting up a Greek play” (*The Saturday Review*, 26 September 1891, 366). Not until Gilbert Murray’s 1907 rendition would the play really come alive in translation on the English page—or stage. In the background of all these academic endeavours, however, lurk quantities of burlesques and adaptations of *Medea*, which were making its heroine infamous and of valuable cultural currency.

When Is It Okay to Kill the Children?

The dramatization of a filicide was not novel or taboo in the fifth-century BCE context. While the murder of kin was not encouraged in practice, dysfunctional, murderous families were a staple of Greek literature precisely because they produce such a profound emotional effect. Knox offers a small sampling of the most prominent of these broken familial relationships:

Orestes and Alcmaeon, the matricides; Clytemnestra, Eriphyle, Deianira, husband-killers; Oedipus the patricide; Medea, Ino, Althaea, Procne, and Agave, who brought about the deaths of their own sons; Agamemnon, a father who kills his daughter; Scylla, a daughter who kills her father; Heracles, who butchers his sons, and Oedipus and Theseus, whose curses have the same effect on theirs; the fratricidal brothers Polyneices and Eteocles and the only slightly less murderous Atreus and Thyestes; twin sons who kill their

stepmothers, Pelias and Neleus, Amphion and Zethus; mothers who expose their children, Creusa, Hecuba, Jocasta. (*Word and Action* 21)

While this list includes many infamous villains—Clytemnestra, Atreus, Scylla—the vast majority of these kin-slayers—Oedipus, Heracles, Theseus—are sympathetic male heroes in their respective mythological cycles. Almost every family in myth operates under the auspices of hereditary *μίασμα αίματος* (blood *miasma*), punished for the sins of their ancestors and/or fated to repeat the murderous cycle. The ancients were not monsters—the suffering of children was for them a moment of extreme pathos, often deployed in Euripides’s tragedies for the emotional payoff.⁴⁴ The murder of children at the hands of their parents is admittedly the most serious of the crimes Knox lists, especially when at the hands of a mother (although the murder of a father by the son is a very close second). Yet the infamy of Euripides’s *Medea* cannot stem solely from her filicide: she is far from being the first woman in Greek myth or tragedy to murder her children, but she is the one most often condemned and reviled for it. Mothers who murder their sons, such as Themisto and Aedon, in addition to Knox’s Ino, Althaea, Procne, and Agave, abound in classical stories. Considered together, these examples are illuminating: Ino and Agave kill their sons in fits of god-sent madness; Procne as revenge against her husband for his rape and mutilation of her sister Philomela; Althaea as revenge for her son’s murder of her brothers; Themisto and Aedon as the results of tragic mistakes. All six of these women are Greek. All six of these women experience debilitating remorse and punishment. Themisto, Ino, and Althaea commit suicide; Aedon, Procne, and Philomela are transformed into birds; and Agave is exiled from her native city. *Medea*, conversely, coldly plots the murder of her children in retribution for her husband’s infidelity and triumphantly flies away in a golden chariot.

Medea was not even the only tragedy to dramatize filicide in the 430s BCE; Thomas Webster has suggested that Sophocles's *Tereus* was produced around the same time. Sophocles's tragedy depicts Procne and Philomela's murder of the former's children in vengeance for Tereus's rape and mutilation of the latter. The *deus ex machina* at the end of the play clarifies that while Tereus deserves this punishment, Procne and Philomela must also pay for its distribution—punishment remains firmly in the purview of the gods. Conversely, the line between mortal and divine vengeance in *Medea* is unsettlingly woolly. Euripides's play deals with the same divine laws that require Tereus to be “cut off with his whole family root and branch” (*PSGR* 368), but their exaction is stripped of emotional, physical, and psychological extremes. The characters of *Medea* are simply more recognizable as people, whose actions live in the grey area between right and wrong until they devolve into a single, brutal act, made senseless by lack of any remorse, either from the perpetrator of the infanticide, or her feckless husband whom she punishes. Nicola Goc suggests that it is this “combination of sympathy, power and repulsion that has seen Euripides' *Medea* endure down through the ages” (30), but it is also what has encouraged later authors continuously to alter it, to attempt changes that make its subject matter somehow more satisfying—more *cathartic*. In his beautiful introduction to the tragedy, Gilbert Murray muses:

The dramatic effect of this kind of tragedy is curious. No one can call it undramatic or tame. Yet it is painfully unsatisfying. At the close of *Medea* I actually find myself longing for a *deus ex machina*,⁴⁵ for some being like Artemis in the *Hippolytus* or the good Dioscuri of the *Electra*, to speak a word of explanation or forgiveness, or at least some sound of music in our ears to drown that dreadful and insistent clamour of hate. The truth is that in this play Medea herself is the *dea ex machina*. The woman whom Jason

and Creon intended simply to crush had been transformed by her injuries from an individual human being into a sort of living Curse. She is inspired with superhuman force. Her wrongs and her hate fill all the sky. And the judgement pronounced on Jason comes not from any disinterested or peace-making God, but from his own victim transfigured into a devil. (xi)

There is absolutely nothing Romantic or ideal about *Medea*; no “plaintive anthem” of the nightingale for John Keats to hear “on the viewless wings of Poesy” as there is in Sophocles’s *Tereus*, only that “dreadful and insistent clamour of hate.”⁴⁶ There is no Aristotelian cathartic release in its culmination. There is no angle at which a Victorian can hold up the mirror to this play and feel satisfaction in the reflection. The problem is not the infanticide—it is everything else.

A slew of rewrites, therefore, not translations, follow *Medea* throughout its post-classical reception history. Jean Bastier de la Péruse (1553), Maffeo Galladei (1558), and Lodovico Dolce (1560) all attempted their own versions of the tragedy in the sixteenth century; Pierre Corneille (1635) and Hilaire-Bernard de Longepierre (1694) in the seventeenth century. In addition to the eighteenth-century attempts by Richard Glover (1761), Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter (1775), and Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger (1775), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing produced a modernized and extraordinarily popular German adaptation titled *Miss Sarah Sampson* in 1755. These adaptations generally do not flinch from depicting Medea’s filicide, but rather recoil from depicting Euripides’s version of the Colchian princess, following in the footsteps of Seneca in their attempt to diminish, villainize, and “other” her.

Seneca’s *Medea* is the first (extant) play about Medea in which “something resembling our conception of a witch first appears” (Knox, *Word and Action* 213). His Medea participates in

a lengthy incantation to Hecate, claiming “the same powers to raise the dead, curse, blight, transform, and prophesy” (*Word and Action* 213) as the medieval witches who invoke the Devil. Seneca’s Medea wears her hair, “flowing free as is the custom of [her] race” (l. 751), her feet are “bare” when she “trods” sacred spaces (l. 752); she is wild and uncivilized, unlike her kempt Corinthian counterparts. She is also a Tereus—an irredeemable and easily categorized villain. Hers is a crescendo of evil, which depends on Seneca’s exaggerated characterization of her as mad, mystic, and barbarian. Medea comes onto the Roman stage raging and she leaves it hurling the corpses of her children out of her chariot and down to Jason, who ends the play with the final words: *nullos esse, qua veneris, deos*, “wherever you go, there are no gods” (l. 1027).

Like Seneca, the sixteenth-century dramatists la Péruse, Galladei, and Dolce exaggerate Medea’s connections to magic and the arcane, dramatizing scenes of incantations and the summoning of spirits, or even—in the case of Dolce—the raising of the dead. The other *dramatis personae* do not fear Medea’s cunning or wisdom, but her sorcery. In these later plays, Medea’s actions and connections to the divine are clear: her vengeance is undertaken on behalf of either the gods or the ghost of her brother, Apsyrtos, to punish Jason’s crimes. She is no longer an independent agent of her own revenge. The triumph Euripides gives to Medea is almost always taken away from her in post-classical works. Galladei, for example, positions the filicide as a punishment for both Jason *and* Medea. On behalf of Apsyrtos, the Fury Megaera drives Medea insane so that she will murder her sons:

Con questo io te dispoglio
 D’ogni pietà, d’ogni ragion humana
 Empia con questo io t’empio
 Di quel furor insano

Che ti sprona & conduce

Misera & disperata

Inanzi tempo à vergognosa morte.

With this I divest you of all pity, of all human reason; I fill you, unholy one, with that insane fury that spurs and leads you, miserable and desperate, to your shameful, untimely death. (28)

By transforming Medea from the coolly rational character of Euripides's tragedy into an insane, raging sorceress, these rewrites not only succeed in lessening her culpability for the murders, but in lessening her in general. Medea becomes another Ino or Agave, driven mad by the gods so that she will kill her children as a punishment for the earlier crimes of the Argonauts. More importantly, Medea, too, is punished—unlike in the Euripidean version.

In the nineteenth century, *Medea* adaptations exploded in Europe. From 1845 to the 1870s, Edith Hall and Fiona Macintosh explain,

Medea was everywhere—in serious spoken tragedy, witty sung burlesque, and proletarian spectacular. She appeared in venues ranging from the elegant Olympic to the downmarket Grecian Saloon. For the first time ... a single Greek tragedy produced, within the space of a few years, a greater number of separate performed adaptations in

English than any other Greek tragedy inspired during the entire period 1660–1914. (393)

Hall and Macintosh's work on Medea's implications for nineteenth-century divorce legislation has compellingly established that the Victorians *did* hold up the mirror and find a way to identify themselves with the events and characters Euripides dramatizes. In order to do so, however, they needed radically to change her from Euripides's intelligent, proud, and heroic figure into someone either more pathetic or less familiar, which was accomplished through the productions

of these manifold adaptations and burlesques of the Greek tragedy. The versions of Medea portrayed in these dramas are almost unrecognizable from the original. Euripides's Medea was not being staged—Victorians were watching the historic culmination of rejecting this character, whose only similarity to the Athenian tragedy is her infanticide. It was okay to kill the children; it was not okay to be Medea.

Hall has established that the common nineteenth-century reaction to *Medea*'s infanticide was hostile. Actresses approached to re-enact her struggle in burlesques or adaptations were wont to reject the role because “this heroine was ‘unnatural’” and they feared they would be conflated with her (Hall and Macintosh 56). Academic commentators on the play's Greek were, conversely, quite in sympathy with Medea. K. O. Müller forcefully declares that Euripides has depicted Medea with such sympathy that “all of our feelings are enlisted on the side of the incensed wife,” that “we follow with the most eager sympathy her crafty plan ... for the destruction of all that is dear to the faithless Jason” (*HLAC* 367–68). Unexpectedly, Müller's sympathy extends to Medea's *entire* plan: “[T]hough we cannot regard this denouement without horror,” he continues, “we even consider the murder of her children as a deed necessary under the circumstances” (*HLAC* 368). Müller does not expand upon which “circumstances” have rendered filicide “necessary,” though the context of the statement suggests it is an historically and textually infused conclusion: Jason has broken a religious oath and therefore must be punished. British academics writing after Müller were happy to follow his lead. Citing Müller, Paley reiterates that Jason's punishment, “if a terrible one, is not undeserved” (8).

From a nineteenth-century perspective, the necessity of the children's deaths may also be related to concerns of illegitimacy. The ambiguity of Medea's legal relationship with Jason was a source of unease to some Victorian audiences. “Mr. Euripides, to the best of my belief,”

admonishes a writer for the *Academy*, “nowhere makes it clear *whether or no Medea was legally married to Jason*. The inference is obvious. *She was not!*” (26 October 1907, 65). In many ways, bastard children in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England existed under a *miasma* similar to the various cursed family lines of Greek mythology—forced, as William Blackstone explains, to bear the social and financial punishment of their “parents’ crimes” (459). Although illegitimate children “get through the world with more trouble” and are “more likely to be poor” (Henriques 124), legislation, such as the New Poor Law of 1834, actively excluded them (and their mothers) from state or charitable succor. As physical proof of illicit sex, these children were considered to possess a “moral taint” which could infect English society; their very existence undermined sanctified Victorian notions of marriage, family, and respectability (Hopkirk 105). They were “a danger to society’s primary institutions, the law and the family, and as such... deserved to suffer” (Shutt 14).

The desire to expunge, or at least correct, these results of sexual and social transgressions is reflected in nineteenth-century literature. The inevitable fate of bastard children in Victorian novels (with few exceptions) is an untimely death, a *topos* which, much like the standard marriage finale, serves to reinstate troubled societal norms. Indeed, this is the very ending of *Medea* demanded by the *pseudo-Censor* in the *Academy*. Although the letter, published 16 October 1907, is more than likely a satirical invective against the Lord Chamberlain, its exaggerated moral outrage nevertheless highlights the ethical impetus of these pervasive tropes. “Let Medea die,” outlines the *pseudo-Censor*,

of heart disease on the eve of Jason’s marriage. She will, of course, die repentant and ashamed of her past errors, and full of gratitude to Jason for the kindness and protection he has so long extended to her. Jason’s bride should be brought on to receive Medea’s

dying apologies. If further pathos is demanded, let the children both die of chicken-pox or measles, *after* (not *before*) Medea's death. It would be too painful for her to be aware of their unhappy end. Jason will then be able to deliver an edifying speech on the penalties that always follow illicit amours, and the clergyman who is about to perform the wedding ceremony (if they have clergymen in Greece—otherwise, the registrar) may conclude with a few moral reflexions. These improvements, together with the careful excision of all vulgar words, such as *bed, flesh, body*, etc., will render the play, not only fit for public performance, but even beneficial to the English public. (65)

This “slight alteration of the play” (65) obliterates the elements of *Medea* most troubling to a Victorian audience and attempts to force Euripides's unconventional tragedy to conform to established literary and cultural structures. In this version, Medea is not only punished, but remorseful; Jason righteously marries the virtuous princess. The status quo is reinstated. In both versions, the children die—indicating yet again that it is Medea's victory, rather than her filicide, that is wholly unacceptable.

While moral concerns of bastardy may have influenced these classical critics, such anxieties do not adequately clarify Müller's (and Paley's) specific countenancing of Medea's revenge. Blame for illegitimate offspring was, after all, uniformly placed on the mother's conduct, rarely the father's. Verrall's late-century Introduction to *Medea* finally, and blatantly, illuminates the reasons behind the surprising tolerance—endorsement—of Medea's revenge: Medea is a barbarian. “By her eastern blood,” Verrall emphasizes,

her unscrupulous cunning and mystic science, and by the reckless vehemence of her nature in hate as in love, Medea was a fit performer for such a part of wild and deadly

revenge. She is a creature of savage and ungovernable impulse, in all her powers and passions above or below the type of civilized Greek humanity. As Jason says (1339),

οὐκ ἔστιν ἤτις τοῦτ' ἄν Ἑλληνίς γυνή

ἔτλη πότε [There is no Greek woman who would ever have dared to do this].

For such a character the very want of self-control is in a manner its own excuse. The spectator is unwilling to judge so strange a being altogether by the common rule, and we are able to feel a certain sympathy for Medea, as for Othello,⁴⁷ in spite of crimes which would destroy pity if committed, so to speak, by one of ourselves. (*ME* xvii–iii)

Both Jason and Verrall are objectively wrong. There are, as I have established, *at least* six Greek women who dared to murder their children in myth, some of them—I no—mentioned within the actual tragedy.

English women were also killing their children. The infamous bastardy clause of the Malthusian 1834 New Poor Law, which foisted all responsibility for illegitimate children upon their mothers while simultaneously denying those mothers meaningful financial assistance from either the state, the parish, or the fathers, resulted in an alarming spike of infanticide across England. In 1866, Edwin Lankester, coroner for Central Middlesex, estimated (hyperbolically) that there were 16,000 women currently living in London who had killed their babies (221).⁴⁸ Deaths of infants at the hands of mothers made desperate by poverty and social censure was at the forefront of Victorian media from the 1850s onwards. Sensationalist newspapers and periodicals, identified by Goc (34ff), describe mid-century London as a hell-scape, straight out of a Bosch painting, through which one could scarcely traverse without stumbling over the bodies of murdered babies. In 1861, Dr. Thomas Wakley (Lankester's immediate predecessor) luridly depicts “the bodies of 500 children” found within the last five years, “taken from the Thames, or

from the neighbouring ponds or canals. More than 100 were discovered stowed away under railway arches, upon the door-steps of houses, or in cellars and other out of the way places” (qtd. Ryan 49). According to Henry Humble, these bodies were “bundles left lying about the streets” or dumped so numerously into the Thames that “the metropolitan canal boats [were] impeded, as they [were] tracked along, by the number of drowned infants with which they came in contact” (169). These horrifying descriptions are exaggerated, but “Mid-Victorian fears of wide-spread infanticide inspired real reform sentiment” (Behlmer 426). While the number of convicted infanticides had deflated somewhat by the time Verrall publishes his *Medea* in 1881, Behlmer estimates that there were, nevertheless, between 90 and 120 women convicted of the crime that year (424). The evidence that so-called “civilized” women, ancient Greek and English, could be driven to infanticide was all around Verrall.

Woman, Witch, Barbarian: Orientalizing Medea

Verrall’s comments on Medea’s crime are nevertheless illuminating. The pervasive Victorian identification of ancient Greece with England is exposed in his protest that Medea remains sympathetic because she is not “one of ourselves”—a consistent, post-Romantic cultural echo of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “we are all Greeks” (452). The identification of Medea as exaggeratedly *not* “one of ourselves” is equally stark. “Medea,” Verrall begins, “was an Oriental” (*ME* xvi). Her “eastern blood” makes her “savage” and “strange,” prone to “mystic science” and to act outside of “civilized Greek humanity” (and outside the purview of Arnoldian “sweetness and light”). Medea’s violence is due to her heritage, to an alienation from the civilized British woman that makes her actions understandable and, to a degree, fit for the British

stage. Ernest Legouvé, French author of one of the most popular nineteenth-century adaptations of *Medea* in England, explains his version of the character in similarly racialized discourse:

J'ai fait d'elle, en m'appuyant sur l'histoire, non pas une Grecque plus ou moins farouche, mais un véritable *barbare*. Les travaux si curieux des Allemands sur les religions sanguinaires de ces races de la mer Noire m'ont permis d'éclairer cette tragique figure d'une lueur nouvelle et sinistre, de la rendre à la fois plus terrible et moins atroce, d'expliquer enfin son crime en le rattachant au culte où elle a été nourrie, à la contrée dont elle est sortie: je lui ai donné ses dieux pour complices.

I made her, based on her history, not more or less savage than a Greek, but a true barbarian. The German scholarship on the blood thirsty religions of the Black Sea allowed me to illuminate this tragic figure with a new sinister glow, to make her more terrible and less atrocious, finally to explain her crime by linking it to the cult where she was nurtured, to the country whence she came: I gave her gods for accomplices. (150)

For Legouvé and Verrall, *Medea's* "Otherness" both excuses and condemns her.

This sentiment reverberates throughout *Medea* scholarship, culminating in Page's often quoted, yet highly derivative, Introduction to his 1938 commentary of the play. *Medea*, he essentially argues, begins the play with three strikes already against her: she is a woman, she is a witch, and she is a foreigner. *Medea* is, Page summarizes, "a woman scorned, depicted at that stage of emotion in which her first torment of misery has passed into vindictive hatred" (xviii). Yet, she is not *just* a woman, for "the poet has described not a Greek woman but a barbarian" (xviii), meaning that "though her emotions are natural, to all women of all times in her position, their expression and the dreadful end to which they lead are everywhere affected by their foreign origin" (xvii).⁴⁹ It is "because she was a foreigner she could kill her children; because she was a

witch she could escape in a magic chariot” (xx1). “An Athenian of the fifth-century BC,” Page ultimately concludes,

was inclined to attribute to foreigners features by which they could be recognized immediately. The women were especially queer and unwomanly Euripides’ *Medea* is just such a woman as his audience would expect a foreign princess to be. She has nearly all the features of the type—unrestrained excess in lamentation, a readiness to fawn on authority, the powers of magic, childish surprise at falsehoods and broken promises *She embodies the qualities which the fifth-century Athenian believed to be characteristic of Orientals.* (xix, xx1; my emphasis)

These observations, not at all descriptive of Euripides’s actual play, pertain rather to the various ways *Medea* has been rewritten and re-imagined since the inception of Euripides’s tragedy. Latterly, *Medea* is *recreated* to embody the qualities which a *nineteenth-century* imperialist believes to be characteristic of Orientals.

The British imperialist understanding of the East is as a “fundamentally female entity” (Fleming 39). It is characterized, as Eleonora Sasso describes, by “its mystic aura, criminal underworld and feminine sensuality, or to put it into Arabic terms, of its *aja’ib* (marvels), *mutalibun* (treasure-hunters) and *hur al-ayn* (*femme fatales*)” (2). Edward Said has famously argued that the fantasized domination of Oriental women by European colonizers “stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West” (6). Anne McClintock also suggests that “the transmission of white, male power through control of colonized women” is one of three “governing themes of Western imperialism” (2–3). It follows therefore, that Orientalized women, in literature and art, must eventually be “mastered” by a white male counterpart—a need that Euripides’s version of *Medea* frustrates.

The Oriental, Said elaborates, characterized by femininity, is “erotic, exotic, and savage” as well as “irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different,’” the binary opposite of the masculine Occidental, “rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal” (40). Oriental men were routinely feminised, characterized in art and literature according to these binaries—tricky, clever, and untrustworthy, or servile, childish, and doggedly reverent of their European counterparts. While existing under the “unnatural, criminal, mystical” umbrella of the East, Oriental women were also objects of fetishization and mystery to European imaginations, especially in relation to the “secluded world of the [Islamic] harem” (Herath 31). Thisaranie Herath argues that the “obsession with breaching ... the cultural barrier” of the harem “became one of the defining features of European interaction with the Middle East, leading to a rich production of visual art and textual narratives that imagined in vivid yet inaccurate detail, the forbidden mysteries of the harem” (32). These “forbidden mysteries” were, of course, exclusively voluptuous, simultaneously depicting Oriental women “as objects of pity, deprived of liberty” (Herath 32) and as licentious, highly sexualized seductresses of “libidinous nature” (Ramli 266).

My critical summary of *Medea* in this chapter clarifies why Verrall and Page’s Orientalizing analysis of the tragedy is inadequate. Their approach to *Medea* has been more or less debunked by late twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics, including Dihle (1976), Hall (2000), Macintosh (2000), and Mastronarde (2002). Mastronarde effectively highlights “the restraint of Euripides” in his depiction of Medea’s foreignness and her deployment of *pharmaka* (22ff). The word βάρβαρος (barbarian) is used only four times in the play, spoken by Medea (ll. 259, 591) and by Jason (ll. 536, 1330), but never by the other characters (Mastronarde 24). Medea worships the same gods and speaks the same language as the Corinthians. Similarly, Medea’s use of magic is consistently restrained in Euripides’s version of the story—the

supernatural quality of her aid to Jason is minimized, her poisoning of the princess's garment is completed offstage. If anything, Jason is the specious, weak, and untrustworthy counterpart to the more traditionally heroic example of *arete* Medea exhibits. Knox mocks Page's insistence that Medea escapes at the end of the play because she has access to a "magic chariot"—that she is "just a witch on a glorified Hellenic broomstick" ("The *Medea*" 212).⁵⁰ "[S]upernatural winged chariots," he rightly points out,

are hardly an identifying mark of witches: they are properties, in Greek mythology, of gods, of Apollo, of the Attic divinity Triptolemos, above all of Helios, the sun (who is, of course, Medea's grandfather) The term "witch," with its medieval overtones of black magic, ugliness and malevolence, has no place in a description of Euripides's Medea. ("The *Medea*" 212–13)

Even Verrall had to admit the inconvenience of Euripides's portrayal of the Colchian princess. "Considering the rich fabric of romance with which [Medea's] name had been interwoven," he sighs, "it is not a little curious to observe how strictly it is reduced by the dramatist to its human and ethical elements" (*ME* xviii). Allusions to the "splendid and marvellous story of the Argonauts" are "so curt and so colourless, that, even with the story before us, it is sometimes a matter of difficulty to interpret them" (Verrall, *ME* xviii). Euripides's ascetic use of references to her role in the Argonaut Cycle reinforces his controversial characterization of Medea as "one of ourselves," as a proud and heroic *human* driven to extremes. It is not the Medea imagined by Euripides that Verrall and Page describe as "witch, woman, barbarian," but later adaptations and representations of Euripides's tragedy, the authors of which, uncomfortable with "the ordinary humanity of her essential actions" (Mastronarde 25), relentlessly attempt to "Other" her.

Considering the Pre-Raphaelite preoccupation with the Middle East, it is unsurprising that Medea was a popular motif in many of their paintings. Frederick Sandys (1868), Valentine Cameron Prinsep (1880), Evelyn de Morgan (1889), and John William Waterhouse (1907) all took the murderous Colchian princess as a subject. All four of the paintings emphasize Medea's connections to the East through the iconography of witchcraft. Sandys is the first of the Pre-Raphaelites to depict the infamous mother, breaking critical ground in doing so. The painting (figure 6) was controversial. Although initially accepted for the 1868 Royal Academy exhibition, "it was withheld from view, presumably on the grounds that its subject was too macabre and threatening to fit easily with the prevailingly bland pattern of exhibits at the Royal Academy" (Wilton and Upstone 162). The decision was reversed a year later, but critics were divided—not regarding the painting's technical merits, which were widely praised, but on its subject matter. A commentator for *The Saturday Review* (5 June 1869) worries that this version of Medea is not fitting for a British audience:

Mr. Sandys will, we should suppose, find it hard to reconcile an English public to "Medea," though this time the Hanging Committee has been induced to reverse the verdict by which this abnormal picture was excluded a year ago. The style is wholly exceptional; its merits may possibly be unexampled, but to the uninitiated the flesh would seem waxy and the expression spasmodic. (744)

The painting depicts an unusually pale Medea crafting an ambiguous potion. The light from the fire creates an eerie, under-lit effect, heightening her pallor. Her thick, curly dark hair is held away from her face by a beaded band. Her right hand agitatedly clutches at the long, bright red strings of a coral necklace, while her left pours poison into a small, burning bronze bowl. Before her are scattered the recognizable implements of witchcraft: a warty toad, a dried stingray, a

religious idol, browned pages filled with what look like Chinese characters, branches of berry-bearing nightshade, and a pearlescent shell. All of these arcane artefacts are joined and encircled together by a long red thread. The Argo and the golden fleece loom behind her on a two-dimensional “goldback,”⁵¹ where a border of Egyptian roundels separates a “decorative art” background with Japanese, Chinese, and Egyptian styled elements (Prettejohn 101). Over her left shoulder lurks an Eastern-styled dragon.⁵²

The poet and dramatist Alfred Bate Richards was so moved by the dangerous beauty of Sandys’s *Medea*, which he calls the painter’s *chef d’oeuvre* (v), that he published an ekphrastic poetic tribute to it in 1869. The poem dwells upon the unnerving and conflicting elements of the painting, which are identifiable as nineteenth-century conceptions of Orientalism. *Medea* is simultaneously seductive and repulsive, pitiable and dangerous:

Dread pictured Sleeplessness!
Sad beautiful Semblance, half divine,
 Half mortal in thy *loveliness*!
 Queen of undying *jealousy*,
 So *piteous* in thy *wan distress*—
 What *Horror* creeps thy bosom nigh,
 ‘*Gainst Nature*’s tenderest suppliants proof?
 What *lurid* purpose lights thine eye,
Weird, wild, mysterious, subtle, dire
Dire Witch of Colchis say!
 As thus I linger o’er thy *beauty dread*,

What plectra on thy heart-stings play,

Stirred by the living, or the dead?—

Hast yet thy tapestry begun

Of Death and fierce Insanity,

Lewd, shameless Bacchanalian twain? (1–9; 25–31; my emphasis)

Although the overblown verse is mediocre at best, Richards effectively recognizes and translates the Othering with which Sandys's painting engages. This Medea, like the fetishized harem women, is "piteous" and "beauteous," but also "lurid," "weird,"⁵³ "wild," and "mysterious." She is "unnatural," "proof" against the "tender" affections of the female Occidental. Fascinatingly, Richards's phrase "Bacchanalian twain" links Medea as the Orientalized complement to an Orientalized Dionysus, removing Medea's clarity of purpose ("I know indeed what wrongs I do") and replacing it with the Dionysian madness of Agave.

Like Richards, Sandys's fellow Pre-Raphaelite, Algernon Charles Swinburne, admires Sandys's painting upon similar principles, relishing particularly in its most "macabre" elements:

Pale as from poison, with the blood drawn back from her very lips, agonized in face and limbs with the labour and the fierce contention of old love with new, of a daughter's love with a bride's, the fatal figure of Medea pauses a little on the funereal verge of the wood of death, in act to pour a blood-like liquid into the soft opal-coloured hollow of a shell.

The future is hard upon her, as a cup of bitter poison set close to her mouth; the furies of Apsyrtus, the furies of her children, rise up against her from the unrisen years; her eyes are hungry and helpless, full of fierce and raging sorrow. Hard by her, henbane and aconite and nightshade thrive and grow full of fruit and death; before her fair feet the bright-eyed toads engender after their kind. Upon the golden ground is wrought in

allegoric decoration the likeness of the ship Argo, with other emblems of the tragic things of her life. (Rossetti and Swinburne 44)

Swinburne lingers not only on the implements of Medea's magic, on the wonderful details of her role in the Argonaut Cycle, but also on her sensuality and "fatality." Sandys, Richards, and Swinburne characterize her as a "fatal figure" or, to borrow the term from Sasso, as a *hur al-ayn* (*femme fatale*). An 1869 *Athenaeum* review of the painting echoes these sentiments, troubled by the "withered, ivory-like look of her skin and the deep, hard anger and woe of her eyes . . . the ruthless, parted lips;—expression that deepens in force with the observer because of the beauty of the features, which are transformed but not debased" (670; qtd. Upstone 162). Again, like the harem women, she is simultaneously pitiable ("helpless," "withered") and predatory, Dionysian ("fierce and raging," "ruthless").

While they differ vastly in linguistic ability, both Richards and Swinburne engage with one of the more difficult elements of Sandys's painting: chronology. Richards's Preface to his poem makes an argument evocative of Walter Pater's "historicist sympathy," discussed at length in Chapter One. Like Pater, Richards suggests that art, literature, and general humanity transcend time. "Human nature and motives," he begins,

vices and virtues, heroisms and crimes, are similar in all ages, though modified by manners, laws, customs, climate, education, and religious training and enlightenment. . . . In my humble opinion, modern poets must colour antiquity as they best they may . . . I wish merely to show what had influenced my treatment of Medea as a world-wide theme. (vi).

Richard proffers this *apologia* to explain his use of "modern and middle-age allusions, illustrations, and even names" (vii) in the poem, which range from Petrarch to Byron to Thomas

Moore. In a similar vein, Swinburne's description of Sandys's *Medea* encompasses the entirety of the heroine's complicated and violent story as though it were happening simultaneously. "[T]he furies of Apsyrtus, the furies of her children," Swinburne observes, "rise up against her from the unrisen years" (44). Swinburne's phrasing indicates that as he inspects the painting, he beholds the entirety of Medea's story concurrently—her life not just up to the point Sandys portrays, but beyond, into "unrisen years."

Elizabeth Prettejohn suggests that Sandys's painting is itself a "generally" ekphrastic tribute to a scene from William Morris's *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867),⁵⁴ in which Medea prepares the potion she will give to Jason to protect him from the labours set for him by her father, Aeëtes:

So, now again the fire flamed up bright
 The smoke grew thin, and in the brazen bowl,
 Boiling, the mingled herbs did twine and roll,
 And with new light Medea's wearied eyes
 Gleamed in the fireshine o'er those mysteries;
 And, taking a green twig from off the ground
 Therewith she stirred the mess, that cast around
 A shower of hissing sparks and vapour white
 Sharp to the taste, and 'wilderer to the sight;
 Which when she saw, the vessel off she drew,
 And cooling for a while she let it stand,
 But at the last therein she laid her hand,
 And when she drew it out she thrust the same

Amidst the fire, but neither coal or flame
 The tender rosy hand could harm a whit,
 Nor was there mark or blemish left on it.

Then did she pour whatso the bowl did hold
 Into a fair gemmed phial wrought of gold... (pp. 111–12)

The passage fosters many resonances with Sandys's *Medea*, notably the descriptions of her various potion-making implements. Morris's poem, however, does not include one of the most visually striking elements of the painting: the long red thread. Prettejohn argues that the "red thread might simply represent a magic circle within which Medea mixes her potion" (104), the precedent for which appears in Theocritus's second Idyll, wherein the witch Simaetha tells her maid to "wreath ... the brazen bowl with crimson fillets of lamb's wool" (qtd. Prettejohn 105). Upstone, conversely, suggests that the painting depicts Medea creating the poisoned dress with which she will present the Corinthian princess (161). This interpretation, too, has precedent; Sandys's *Morgan le Fay* (1864) depicts the legendary witch weaving a murderous spell into a garment she will send to King Arthur. Neither the former nor the latter scene, however, antecede Medea's murder of Apsyrtus or her sons. Nevertheless, Swinburne sees "the furies of Apsyrtus, the furies of her children, rise up against her from the unrisen years" in the 1868 painting. "[T]he shifting time frames in [Swinburne's] passage," suggests Elizabeth Prettejohn, "its web of proleptic and retrospective images, cast the scene as an epitome or summary of Medea's entire history; the complex expression of the figure, in Swinburne's interpretation, encompasses both memory and prophecy" (105). Sandys, Richards, Swinburne, and Morris, are all involved in Burkert's theories of mythological transmission and adaptation. As Pater states in his review of Morris's *Life and Death of Jason*, these works are "like a strange second flowering after date"

(*App* 300). Yet the “great time” of Sandys’s painting, for which Prettejohn effectively argues, hinges entirely upon that single, “authoritative utterance” Euripides makes in the fifth century BCE. No matter where one is in the story, Medea is *always* about to kill her children.

The Mater un-Dolorosa

Sandys’s painting sets a precedent for the three subsequent Pre-Raphaelite painters who would take Medea as the motif for their own works: all four paintings centre on Medea’s *pharmaka* or potion-making. Prinsep’s 1880 depiction (figure 7) displays a red-clad Medea gathering mushrooms (crucial potion ingredients) in a forest. De Morgan’s 1889 Medea (figure 8), also attired in a long red robe, carries a phial of red liquid through a sumptuous marble hall. In Waterhouse’s 1907 painting (figure 9), Jason watches closely as a red-gowned Medea, seated next to a lit tripod, prepares the potion with which he will anoint himself to overcome Aeëtes’s trials. Prior to Sandys’s painting, however, Medea is never (or at least rarely) depicted mixing potions; instead, her supernatural quality is expressed by the chariot of the sun upon which she victoriously exits Euripides’s tragedy.⁵⁵

One striking motif does, however, connect these Pre-Raphaelite paintings to other depictions of Medea. That long red thread encircling the *pharmaka* in Sandys’s *Medea* reaches back at least as far as the early eighteenth century to clothe Medea in its vibrant colour. Although bright pops of red are a general touchstone of Pre-Raphaelite art, the consistency of Medea’s red robe suggests another significance. Charles Antoine Coypel’s sparsely coloured 1715 sketch of her (figure 10) features a red hairband holding back wild black hair, revealing the unsettling, Medusa-like gaze echoed in Sandys’s version.⁵⁶ J. M. W. Turner’s 1828 *Vision of Medea* (figure 11) features the sorceress raising aloft a magic staff, her red robe billowing out behind her. The

1838 *Medea about to Kill her Children* (figure 12), by Eugène Delacroix (“a painter much admired by Rossetti and his friends” [Prettejohn 105]), reveals Medea hidden in a cave, tensely glancing over her right shoulder. Clothed up to her waist in a thick red robe, she clutches her two squirming sons to her chest, a dagger glinting forebodingly in her fist.⁵⁷ Paintings contemporaneous with the Pre-Raphaelites also attire Medea in this iconic red. The German painter Anselm Feuerbach’s 1870 *Abschied der Medea* (Medea’s Farewell) (figure 13) portrays a red-clad Medea clutching her two boys, nursing one and embracing the other. In the Spanish painter Germán Hernández Amores’s 1887 *Medea in her Chariot* (figure 14), the notorious heroine stands in her escape vehicle, holding the corpses of two golden-haired children, her red chiton and long dark hair fluttering behind her. The 1904 painting by Herbert James Draper, entitled *The Golden Fleece* (figure 15), luridly depicts a red-trimmed Medea murdering her brother Apsyrtos aboard the Argo.

Although this almost ubiquitous red attire might be a nod to Medea’s paternal grandfather, Helios, these paintings, especially the two by Delacroix and Sandys, also suggest gestures to a *post*-classical religion. Delacroix’s red-robed Medea, clutching her struggling sons in her lap, evokes uncomfortable comparisons to traditional depictions of the Virgin Mary, who is often represented holding the baby Jesus on her lap, and whose iconography includes the absurdly expensive lazuli blue paint, which was exclusively designated for her in the Renaissance.⁵⁸ Likewise, the goldback of Sandys’s *Medea* is a touchstone of early Renaissance religious paintings, wherein Christian figures are placed before a gold leaf background.

Prettejohn argues that because goldback “is strongly associated with religious subject matter[,] in this format [Sandys’s] Medea appears as a kind of occult version of the Virgin Mary” (102). I would suggest, however, that these religious invocations instead provoke an understanding of

Medea as the antithesis of the *Mater Dolorosa*; a woman who sacrifices her sons to punish, not to save, and who triumphs in, rather than mourns, their deaths.

Like Christ with Dionysus, Mary has an history of association and conflation with ancient deities. “During early centuries CE,” Kyra Belán and Ernest Renan establish, “the image of Mary was frequently equated to and even confused with the image of the Egyptian goddess [Isis], whose religion had [already] been in existence for several thousand years.” As in depictions of Mary and the infant Christ, Isis’s young son Horus is often depicted upon his mother’s lap. Both Mary and Isis “conceived their sons in unusual ways”; many of Mary’s temples were built overtop sites dedicated to Isis (Belán and Renan). The Near Eastern goddess Cybele, too, was often conflated with Mary, and early rituals would sometimes worship the two side-by-side (Belán and Renan). More enduring still are the associations of Mary with the Greek goddesses Demeter and Semele.

I have, in Chapter One, established the Victorian connection of Semele with the *Mater Dolorosa*. Semele’s association with Mary predates the nineteenth century, and is emphasized and juxtaposed with Medea by her consistent, blue attire. Early modern depictions of Semele most often portray her about to be raped or obliterated by Zeus. In Dosso Dossi’s 1520 *Jupiter and Semele* (figure 16), the aggressive god of thunder, a red robe covering his left leg, holds a thunderbolt above a timid, blue-clad Semele. Cornara Carlo’s seventeenth-century rendition of the same name displays a red-robed Zeus grabbing Semele as she flees, her blue chiton falling from her body (figure 17). Paolo Pagani’s attempt at a *Jupiter and Semele* (1693) presents a naked Semele laying upon a blue and white garment, cowering under a red-draped Zeus. Odoardo Perini (1671–1757) continues the tradition—same name, same scene, same colour palette (figure 19). This sustained juxtaposition of red/aggressor and blue/victim does not

specifically correlate to Mary, who is never depicted in such straits as Semele, but the blue is nevertheless evocative of her. The “Jupiter and Semele” tradition climaxes in the startling 1894–95 *Jupiter and Semele* by the French Symbolist painter Gustave Moreau (figure 20). Like Sandys’s *Medea*, the crowded, almost cacophonous canvas utilizes traditionally Christian iconographies and techniques in order to create a conversation between the classical and Catholic. Jupiter sits enthroned, crowned in red light, with a bleeding Semele swooning on his lap. In this instance, Semele is not clothed in blue, but to the left, below her, sits a cowed, blue-robed figure, holding a kerchief to her weeping face with one hand, and cradling a bloodied sword in the other: Death, but also very evocative of (the *Mater*) *Dolorosa*. Mirrored on the right sits another blue-clad woman, provocatively crowned with thorns.

Using the submissive, nurturing mother as a literary foil to an aggressive, murderous one is a strategy not necessarily specific to Medea and Semele, or Medea and Mary, or any one particular myth or story. Instead, the doubling follows what Gilbert and Gubar famously identify as the “extreme images of ‘angel’ and ‘monster,’” motifs of patriarchally engendered femininity (17). In the Common Era, “mankind’s great teacher of purity was the Virgin Mary,” who, over time, evolves into a type, into the more secularly domestic “angel in the house,” immortalized by Coventry Patmore in the nineteenth century (Gilbert and Gubar 20). The angel’s role was to live a selfless life in the service of “pleasing men” and silent devotion “to the good of others,” and never to have a story of her own (Gilbert and Gubar 24). The monstrous woman, “the antithetical mirror of the angel,” threatens “to replace her angelic sister” and “embodies intransigent female autonomy” (Gilbert and Gubar 28). The monster-woman is primarily associated with “unnatural” motherhood; Gilbert and Gubar’s examples of the monster-woman, or the witch, are all child-killers—the Evil Queen, Lilith, Philomel, Procne. In order for the angel to stop herself from

transforming into the monster, she must “kill herself into art” (Gilbert and Gubar 14). The only way for the monster to triumph is “through the self-annihilating madness of her death dance” (43).⁵⁹ The great problem of *Medea* surfaces once more—the woman of “significant action” is never killed, never silenced, never driven to madness, never punished. She triumphs. Medea’s infanticide may have been one of Euripides’s “authoritative utterances,” but it is not why the play’s history of reception is so uniquely crowded with re-engagement and reworking, rather than with translations. Later authors had to find a way to punish or kill Medea—an act which has ironically kept her alive.

Sympathy for the Princess

One does not necessarily need to reach outside of the Argonaut Cycle to Semele or Mary to find Medea’s “angelic” counterpart. While Medea is warped and exaggerated by dramatists in each new variation, her dramatic foil also begins to take a shape not formed in Euripides’s play. In *Medea*, the Corinthian princess is nameless, voiceless, and faceless. She never comes on stage and never meets with the woman whom her union with Jason supplants. Her fate is unknowingly delivered to her by her step-sons, and her brutal, agonizing death (shared with her father) is only real in the mouth of the messenger, who minutely describes the scene to a gloating Medea. The death of the princess, however, is not the play’s emotional climax; the audience likely feels more pity for Creon, whom they have at least seen and heard on stage. The effect of the princess’s anonymity is calculated—audience sympathy is still in Medea’s arsenal afterwards and during the infamous monologue in which she fluctuates over the decision to commit filicide. The princess’s anonymity also lessens Jason and Creon’s accusations that Medea is motivated solely by sexual jealousy, rather than the more masculine provocations of oaths, honour, and *arete*. The

death of the boys, begging for mercy from offstage, is the clear, terrible centerpiece of the tragedy.

Later authors, however, give the princess a name. Hyginus (64 BCE–17 CE) identifies her as Glauce (*Fab* 25), Seneca as Creusa, effectively adding a new element to the story of Medea’s revenge: sexual jealousy, a motif that becomes increasingly intensified in the play’s various adaptations. While Euripides’s Jason dispassionately insists that he marries the princess for expediency’s sake alone, subsequent versions take pains to suggest that Jason abandons Medea for a more attractive (and submissive) spouse. Dolce’s 1560 version, for example, introduces an aging Medea, supplanted in Jason’s affections by the young and beautiful Creusa. “Che Creûsa,” Medea rants,

Figliuola di Creonte

S’ha congiunta per moglie, non curando

Ne del ciel, ne di me, ne de’ suoi figli.

Così un poco di comodo, e un diletto

Fuggitivo e fallace, di tenere

Nel letto genial nuova consorte,

L’ha quì condotto a romper i legami

Del primiero Himeneo ...

For Creusa, daughter of Creon, Jason has joined to him as his wife, caring neither for heaven, nor for me, nor for his children. Thus, a small comfort, a delight fleeting and false, a sojourn in the genial bed of a new consort, leads him here to break the bonds of primeval Hymenaeus. (Dolce 15)

In addition to her sexual jealousy, Dolce's Medea also intimates that Creusa is culpable alongside Jason for participating in his bigamy (an important theme developed in the nineteenth-century novel *Jane Eyre*). In the seventeenth century, Creusa/Glaucé becomes a principal character. Corneille creates a Creusa so infatuated with Jason that she breaks off her previous betrothal to Aegeus and participates in a political manoeuvre that will keep Jason in, and remove Medea from, Corinth. Longepierre's Jason admits in the first lines of the play, "Je sais ce que je dois à l'amour de Médée" (I know indeed what I owe to the love of Medea),⁶⁰ but he cannot resist his infatuation with Creusa:

Je la plains; mais, Ami, j'adore la Princesse,
 Du destin de Jason souveraine maîtresse,
 Elle asservir mon ame à son pouvoir vainqueur:
 L'éclat de ses beaux yeux triomphe de mon cœur;
 Et ce cœur embrasé d'une ardeur violente,
 Ne sauroit s'affranchir du charme qui l'enchanté.

I pity [Medea]; but, Friend, I adore the Princess. The sovereign mistress of Jason's fate, she enslaved my soul to her conquering power: the glow of her beautiful eyes triumphs over my heart; and this heart, ablaze with violent ardour, cannot free itself from the charm that enchants it. (Longepierre 1)

Creusa is less culpable in this reimagining—afraid of Medea's sorcery, she only admits her reciprocal love for Jason as she is dying.

By the nineteenth century, Creusa becomes the literary foil of Medea's Orientalized re-characterization. In the plays of Grillparzer⁶¹ and Legouvé, the Corinthian princess is emblematic of comfortable, civilized domesticity, a model Medea tries and fails to imitate. In a strange scene

between the two women, Grillparzer's "Kreusa" attempts to teach Medea to play the lyre, so that she may sing Jason his favourite song. Medea not only fails to learn, but breaks the instrument in a fit of frustration and anger. The virtues of "Kreusa," who is coincidentally Jason's childhood sweetheart, are more in line with Christian, than Hellenic, archetypes. In Medea's description of the princess, "one is reminded of the ideal of medieval Christianity" (Dunham 219):

Du Gute, Milde, schön an Leib und Seele,
 Das Herz wie deine Kleider hell und rein.
 Gleich einer weißen Taube schwebest du,
 Die Flügel breitend, über dieses Leben
 Und netzest keine Feder an dem Schlamm,
 In dem wir ab uns kämpfend mühsam weben.
 Senk einen Strahl von deiner Himmelsklarheit
 In diese wunde, schmerzzerrißne Brust.
 Was Gram und Haß und Unglück hingeschrieben
 O lösche es aus mit deiner frommen Hand ...

 Die Stärke, die mein Stolz von Jugend war,
 Sie hat im Kampfe sich als schwach bewiesen
 O lehre mich, was stark die Schwäche macht.

You good, mild one, beautiful in body and soul, your heart, like your clothes, is bright and pure. You soar like a white dove, spreading your wings over this life and wetting not a feather in the mud in which the rest of us struggle. Lower just one clear ray of light into this aching, pain-torn chest. All that grief and hatred and misfortune have written, erase

with your pious hand The strength that has been my pride since youth, she has shown weak in this battle. O teach me what makes weakness strong! (Grillparzer II.695–708)

Grillparzer's Medea is unsuccessful in shaking off her barbarous independence and never learns the so-called strength of feminine weakness. In the face of her rival's womanly successes, Medea "renounce[s] her humility and become[s] once more the proud, furious Colchian" (Dunhan 220). For Legouvé, Medea and Creusa possess the potential to become friends before they realize that they love the same man. The abandoned Medea, who is offered shelter by the princess, is full of love's woes and wrongs, a sharp contrast to Creusa, who, on the eve of her marriage, is bursting with her hopes for the future. The friendship quickly sours when Medea realizes Creusa's intended is her feckless husband—when she watches the comfortable, domestic Creusa entice not only her husband with her proper femininity, but also her children.

Introducing Creusa as a prominent character, one whose demure, Christian charms offer respite for Medea's husband and children, is arguably the alteration to Euripides's *Medea* most effective in distorting Medea's character. In some cases, the presence of the princess on stage makes Medea less supernatural and more pathetic—an aging, socially obsolete woman supplanted by younger one. Menopausal women, Elaine Showalter elaborates, were

openly ridiculed [in early nineteenth-century England], and more punitively treated than any other female group, particularly if they were unmarried. In this age group, expressions of sexual desire were considered ludicrous or tragic. (*Female Malady* 75)

Creusa's presence emphasizes Medea's overly passionate sexuality—a trait associated not only with non-Europeans, but with madwomen. Showalter illuminates how "uncontrolled sexuality seemed the major, almost defining symptom of insanity in women" (*Female Malady* 74).

Victorian psychiatrists closely linked female anatomy with madness and its associated moral illnesses of nymphomania, masturbation, puerperal depression, suicide, and even infanticide. This latter crime, “the worst that could be imagined by a society that exalted maternity,” was difficult “to account for ... in a way that maintained the mythology of motherhood and the maternal instinct” (Showalter, *Female Malady* 58), but was nevertheless, as I have previously established, an increasing issue in the nineteenth century.

Insanity was an easy way to explain a problem actually rooted in “the social problems of unmarried, abused, and destitute mothers and the shocks, adjustments, and psychological traumas of the maternal role” (*Female Malady* 59). “Rather than looking at the social meaning of infanticide and at its contexts,” Showalter concludes, “doctors, lawyers, and judges categorized it as an isolated and biologically determined phenomenon, an unfortunate product of a woman’s ‘nature’” (*Female Malady* 59). The only way to safeguard women from succumbing to the madness of their bodies was by cultural, moral, and religious indoctrination. Psychiatrists agreed that “religion and moral principles alone give strength to the female mind,” without which, “the subterranean fires become active, and the crater gives forth smoke and flame” (Bucknill and Tuke 273; qtd. Showalter). Thus, docile, civilized, and domestically sane Creusa transforms into the archetypical British lady, whose presence on the stage throws the older Medea’s inferior, wild, “Oriental” upbringing into unflattering relief.

“Hunger, Rebellion, and Rage”: *Jane Eyre*

This contrast of the domestic, British Creusa with the mad, Oriental Medea forms the centre of the plot of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. Matthew Arnold laments the lack of “sweetness and light” in Brontë’s novels, famously condemning the author of *Villette* for having

a “mind [that] contains nothing but hunger, rebellion, and rage” (*Letters* 34). Conversely, William Makepeace Thackeray (to whom *Jane Eyre* was eventually dedicated in its second edition) detects a sophistication to Brontë’s inevitable classical undertones. “Who the author can be I can’t guess,” he writes in a letter to the novel’s editor, William Smith Williams, “if a woman she knows her language better than most ladies do, or has had a ‘classical’ education” (141). Brontë was not able to read Euripides’s *Medea* in its original language, but this fact hardly means that she was unable to engage with the play or the centuries-long conversation about it taking place in manifold commentaries, translations, rewrites, and re-imaginings. As Rachel Bryant Davies argues,

There has, until recently, been a general misperception that knowledge of, and familiarity with, the Classics in the nineteenth century was restricted to the social elite. Debates over both archaeological discoveries and circus performances, along with the other cultural forms ... show that classical antiquity actually mattered for a much wider range of participants, and for a much wider range of reasons, than just class identity: one’s position on Troy’s existence or location, for example, could define what it meant to be a British Christian. (8)

Educated men like Walter Pater were tapping into the ubiquitous British fascination with classics and classical myth in order to market their scholarship to the wider public; Jane Harrison was cultivating celebrity and currency through her public lectures on classical archaeology. H. Rider Haggard was fabricating potsherds with elaborate Greek inscriptions in his best-selling novels. Even in this early, 1840s phase of the Victorian era, periodicals, magazines, and newspapers were bursting with content related to classical literature, language, history, philosophy, and archaeology, all targeted at educated and amateur readers alike.

Classics and classical content were an integral commodity for Victorian consumerism—and it was not just the elite who were propping up this enormous market. As Davies demonstrates, *everyone* had an opinion on Troy, whether they paid a penny or a pound to see the latest Homeric or Virgilian burlesque in Drury Lane. “Focusing on the cultural impact,” Davies concludes, “rather than just the creative process, of these classical appropriations reveals not only a greater social dispersal of knowledge of classical mythology but also a much more complex model of interaction with the Classics” (9). Far from making an author exceptional, knowledge of and engagement with classical literature and themes were almost impossible to avoid. This need to engage with classical literature and mythology, however, becomes problematized when figures—especially Euripidean figures—do not fit the societal narrative certain Victorians writers try to perpetuate through them.

Brontë, poor by middle class standards and wealthy by working class ones, was by no means uneducated. Although she did not enjoy the formal classical education given to her brother Branwell by their father, Juliet Barker maintains that she likely sat in on at least some of the lessons (147, 166). Patrick Brontë kept his personal library well-stocked with translations and adaptations of classical literature, “which were regularly read in the Brontë household” (Fiske 64), and subscribed to circulating libraries and classically-dominated periodicals such as *Blackwood’s*, *The Contemporary Review*, *The Quarterly Review*, *Fraser’s Magazine*, and *London Magazine* (Barker 147–48). Brontë’s breadth of literary exposure was put to good use when she studied under Constantin Héger with her sister Emily after their move to Brussels in 1842. Héger purportedly favoured a style of instruction similar to that of the Oxford “Greats” curriculum, in which students were encouraged to consider authors from disparate eras and nationalities concomitantly. Elizabeth Gaskell, Brontë’s friend and biographer, chronicles how

[Héger] read to them various accounts of the same person or event, and made them notice the points of agreement and disagreement. Where they were different, he would make them seek the origin of that difference by causing them to examine well into the character and position of each separate writer, and how they would be likely to affect his conception of truth And from these conflicting characters he would require them to sift and collect the elements of truth, and try to unite them into a perfect whole. (175)

Despite the popular myth that “the Brontë children were ... isolated from the cultural and intellectual currents of their age” (Fiske 64), Brontë’s “*juvenilia* show that she was familiar with such figures as Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus, and Virgil, probably in translation by Dryden or Pope” (Alexander 22). Well-read and trained to consider ancient texts and histories concurrently with modern ones in order to adapt them into her own writing, Brontë did not need Greek to know Euripides.

Although Brontë never explicitly writes about *Medea*, a preserved *devoir* written under the tutelage of Héger alludes to Euripides’s *Electra* (Fiske 78). The composition, “Athènes sauvée par la poésie” (“Athens Saved by Poetry”), is set just after Athens has lost the Peloponnesian War to Sparta. Before the Spartan generals, led by Lysander, destroy the city and enslave its people, they hold a banquet at which they force an Athenian poet to perform. He gives a protracted performance of the death of Agamemnon, which, far from stimulating his audience, leaves them sleeping in drunken stupor. Although “the downbeat and ironic ending was disapproved of by M. Héger,” suggest Robert and Louise Barnard, “Charlotte leaves us with the possibility that the names of Agamemnon and Electra, ‘continually ringing in his ears’ during his drunken sleep, [were] what changed Lysander’s mind so that instead of destroying Athens he negotiated a treaty with it” (13). The actual subject matter of the poet’s song may recall

Aeschylus's pivotal *Oresteia* trilogy more than Euripides's *Electra*, but Brontë's poem has borrowed its plot from the anecdote recorded by Plutarch about the power of Euripidean tragedy. As I have explained in the Introduction, Plutarch describes how, during the Peloponnesian war, Athenian prisoners in Syracuse were spared after they recited the poetry of Euripides to their Sicilian captors (29.2–3), who were touched by the poet's eloquent calls for peace.

At the time of *Jane Eyre*'s publication in 1847, the Medea frenzy, documented by Hall, had already begun. James Planché's farce, *The Golden Fleece: or, Jason in Colchis and Medea in Corinth*, had been staged in London just two years before the novel's release, with what one reviewer proclaims "complete success" (29 March 1845, 197). "This important drama," explains Hall, "based on Grillparzer as well as Euripides ... inaugurated a tradition of entertainments based on the Medea myth which lasted throughout the period" ("British Legislation" 53). *Medea in Corinth*'s action follows Euripides's tragedy closely, the dialogue a playful interchange of direct translation from Attic Greek and anachronistic original lines penned by Planché. The nurse's opening speech, for example, is taken directly from the nurse's prologue in Euripides's tragedy:

Oh, that the hull of that fifty-oared cutter—the Argo,
 Between the Symplegades, never had passed with its cargo!
 Indeed, I may say that I wish, upon Pelion, the pine trees
 Of which it was built had remained, as they were, very fine trees;
 For had there been never a boat in which man could have brought her,
 My poor ill-used missis had never come over the water;
 Nor—having, for that wicked Jason, cut all her connections—
 Seen another young lady possessing her husband's affections. (Planché ll. 25–32)

Although it is unlikely that Brontë attended a performance of Planché's burlesque, *Medea in Corinth* nevertheless contributes to the renaissance of the character in the early century. The murderous mother from Colchis was in the air and on people's minds at the time of the inception of Brontë's inaugural novel.

Brontë does not explicitly link *Jane Eyre* with Euripides's *Medea*, but the novel's intertextual resonances with the tragedy are substantial, specifically the parts of its plot pertaining to Edward Rochester and the half-Creole Bertha Mason. The story Edward tells of his marriage and early life with Bertha corresponds to the events which form the backdrop of *Medea*. As a young man, Edward, far away from his native land, is forced by expediency to marry a foreign woman, who, like Medea, turns out to be impossible to control. When Edward finally accepts that he cannot live in comfort with his barbarian wife, he attempts to exile and conceal her at Thornfield, so that he may "be considered free to love and be loved" and to find "some woman ... willing and able to understand [his] case and accept [him], in spite of the curse with which [he] was burdened" (*JE* 339). Essentially, both *Medea* and *Jane Eyre* are about a man who attempts to commit bigamy due to dissatisfaction with his foreign first wife and who is consequently punished by her.

Like Edward, Jason describes his marriage to Medea as a curse, a κακὸν μέγα (great evil) (l. 1331), and κῆδος ἐχθρὸν ὀλέθρον τ' ἐμοί (a marriage hateful and deadly to me) (l. 1341). Medea's pretensions to the heroic ethos are corrupted in Bertha, who is also described in masculine terms. Bertha, a "big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband," exhibits "virile force"⁶² when she engages in a physical "contest" with Edward (*JE* 320). Both women are physically violent. Excluded from wisdom by reason of her female gender, Bertha, like Medea, is instead described repeatedly as "cunning," an attribute which, combined with her madness and

foreignness, becomes supernatural. ““She is so cunning,”” Grace Poole explains to Edward’s wedding party, ““it is not in mortal discretion to fathom her craft”” (*JE* 320). The innkeeper at the Rochester Arms labels her much more straightforwardly: ““cunning as a witch”” (*JE* 486). Even Bertha’s name evinces links between her and the notorious Colchian princess. Bertha, from the Old High German *berhta*, meaning “bright one,” evokes Medea’s paternal grandfather Helios (i.e. *the* bright one). Mason, a skilled craftsman, is suggestive of the etymology of Medea: μῆτις, “cunning,” but also “skill” or “craft.”

Edward’s dramatic entrance into the novel is particularly evocative of Jason’s “one-sandaled” homecoming to Iolcus from his youthful exile and education with the centaur Chiron. Edward, returning to Thornfield after a protracted absence, retains both of his boots, but flamboyantly sprains his ankle when he falls from his horse. Just as Jason’s lack of a shoe is the catalyst which begins the quest for the golden fleece, so too does Edward’s sprained ankle “mar[k] with change ... [Jane’s] monotonous life” (*JE* 124). Jason’s status as an explorer, as captain of the first ship, is echoed in Edward’s repeated identification as a “traveller.” When Jane first encounters him, she realizes that “no Gytrash was this,—only a traveller” (*JE* 121), a title by which she identifies him until belatedly learning that he is the master of Thornfield. The scope of his travels is broad, not just spanning “the continent of Europe,” but to more “barbarian” lands and “distant shores” (*JE* 206). He takes part in a “fearful voyage” with “a monster in the vessel” (*JE* 338) and then “pursue[s] wanderings as wild as those of the March-spirit. [He] sought the Continent, and went devious through all its lands” (*JE* 339).

Similar too is Edward’s quest for domestic comfort after his travels. Jason openly admits that he marries the Corinthian princess ὥς, τὸ μὲν μέγιστον, οἰκοῖμεν καλῶς / καὶ μὴ σπανιζοῖμεσθα (for the most important reason, that we might live well and not be in want) (l.

559–60), as a way to end his furtive exile from Iolchus after Medea’s murder of Pelias. Edward, too, divulges that he attempts bigamy to replace his “demon” with a “good angel” (*JE* 344). With Bertha, he confesses to Jane, “I perceived that I should never have a quiet or settled household” (*JE* 334). “That is *my wife*,” he sardonically introduces Bertha to his failed wedding party,

“Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know—such are the endearments which are to solace my leisure hours! And *this* is what I wished to have” (laying his hand on [Jane’s] shoulder): “this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon. I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout.” (*JE* 321)

Unlike Euripides’s Jason, however, *Jane Eyre*’s audience is invited to sympathize with Edward over his brutalized, mad first wife. Locking her up in the windowless attic room is a method of treatment mete with the period;⁶³ the narrator takes pains to admire Edward’s restraint in never physically harming her. When Edward tells Jane that hiding Bertha at his second holding, Ferndean Manor, caused “a scruple about the unhealthiness of the situation, in the heart of a wood” and “made my conscious recoil from the arrangement” (*JE* 329), one cannot help but recall Jason’s self-righteous protestations to Medea that he marries the princess “because I wanted to save you” (1.595–96). “Possibly,” Edward elaborates, “those damp walls would soon have eased me of her charge; but to each villain his own vice; and mine is not a tendency to indirect assassination, even of what I most hate” (*JE* 329). Euripides’s Medea and the chorus would have had none of it, but it is one of the many details recorded by Jane which seem to establish Edward as being, at heart, a good man. The narrator invites her reader to regard Edward’s control in in his tussle with Bertha, in which “he could have settled her with a well-planted blow: but he would not strike: he would only wrestle” (320). The innkeeper at Millcote

also emphasizes Edward's self-sacrificing nobility in his attempts to save his "mad wife" from the fire she herself started (*JE* 469). The Victorian husband's right to expect domestic comfort and a subservient wife is inviolable; even his attempt at bigamy, while not permissible, is deemed sympathetic under these expectations. Edward's faults, Jane assures her reader, "had their source in some cruel cross of fate" (*JE* 159)—namely, in Bertha's contagious degradation.

In line with other, post-classical, incarnations of Medea, Bertha's madness is tied inextricably with her female body. It is an illness inherited from her Creole mother, who was "both a madwoman and a drunkard" (*JE* 319); since, as Showalter describes, "the reproductive system was the source of mental illness in women, women were the prime carriers of madness" (*Female Malady* 67). Showalter notices the congruity of Bertha's "worst attacks" with the "periodicity of the menstrual cycle"; she always strikes when "the moon is 'blood-red' or 'broad and red'" (*Female Malady* 67). Bertha's coherence to the phases of the moon triangulates her madness and menstruation with Medea's connections to Hecate, a moon goddess, for whom she was a priestess. Gilbert and Gubar have famously suggested that Bertha Mason is "Jane's truest and darkest double," who "acts not only *for* Jane," in rebelling against Edward's mastery, "[but] also acts *like* Jane," paralleling her youthful angry outbursts. (360). Showalter, however, makes the important point that "Jane, unlike the contemporary feminist critics who have interpreted the novel, never sees her kinship with the confined and monstrous double, and that Brontë has no sympathy for her mad creature" (*Female Malady* 68–69). Rather than Jane's "avatar" (Gilbert and Gubar 359), the resonances between Jane's youthful outbursts and Bertha's "lunacy" are due to their common female anatomy. The *differences* between their adult selves are founded in nationality and education. While both women retain the capacity for madness and excess, only one of them succumbs.

The xenophobic othering with which *Jane Eyre* engages is pervasive throughout the novel and is not restricted to the mad Creole women. Upon her arrival at Lowood, Jane condemns the French teacher, Madame Pierrot, as “the foreigner[,] harsh and grotesque” (*JE* 45). The awful Blanche Ingram, although a British lady, is as “dark as a Spaniard” (186), and more bluntly described by Edward as “a real strapper . . . big, brown, and buxom; with hair just as such as the ladies of Carthage must have had” (238). She is also overtly compared by him to Bertha (*JE* 333). Edward’s various European mistresses are summarily condemned by their national stereotypes: Céline, “the Gallic sylph” (*JE* 152) is frivolous, vain, deceitful, and greedy; Giacinta, the Italian, “unprincipled and violent” (*JE* 340); and poor German Clara, “honest and quiet; but heavy, mindless, and unimpressible” (*JE* 340). Young Adèle is similarly categorized,⁶⁴ having “inherited probably from her mother,” not madness, but a “superficiality of character . . . hardly congenial to an English mind” (*JE* 157). Richard Mason is feminized and diminished in the manner of Orientalized men—wholly submissive to the active Edward (*JE* 228–29; 235).⁶⁵ St. John River’s “errand from God” is to work as a missionary in India, as a means of “carrying knowledge into the realms of ignorance—of substituting peace for war—freedom for bondage—religion for superstition—the hope of heaven for the fear of hell” (*JE* 409).

Bertha herself represents a warped version of the English harem fantasy. Like the secluded women of the seraglio, she is strictly confined and kept locked away from prying eyes, but is simultaneously “alluring” (*JE* 334), “intemperate,” and “unchaste” (*JE* 335). Edward’s failed bigamy suggests a distorted attempt at harem *building*, adding Jane to Bertha, Céline, Giacinta, and Clara, and promising her “a happy, and *guarded*, and most innocent life” (*JE* 332; my emphasis) at his villa in France. With his degraded proclivities, symptomatic of Bertha’s

strange, moral contagion, Edward is unable to understand his desire for Jane beyond Orientalized metaphors. “I would not exchange this one little English girl,’ he tells her, “‘for the Grand Turk’s whole seraglio, gazelle-eyes, houri forms, and all!’” (*JE* 293). The “thoroughly British” Jane, however, is insulted by these exotic fantasies:

The Eastern allusion bit me again. “I’ll not stand you an inch in the stead of a seraglio,” I said; “so don’t consider me an equivalent to one. If you have a fancy for anything in that line, away with you, sir, to the bazaars of Stamboul without delay, and lay out in extensive slave-purchases some of that spare cash you seem at a loss to spend satisfactorily here.”

“And what will you do, Janet, while I am bargaining for so many tons of flesh and such an assortment of black eyes?”

“I’ll be preparing myself to go out as a missionary to preach liberty to them that are enslaved—your harem inmates amongst the rest. I’ll get admitted there, and I’ll stir up mutiny; and you, three-tailed bashaw as you are, sir, shall in a trice find yourself fettered amongst our hands: nor will I, for one, consent to cut your bonds till you have signed a charter, the most liberal that despot ever yet conferred.” (*JE* 293)

Jane actively resists Edward’s attempts to Other her as he calls her a “witch” and a “sorceress.” To Edward, she is an “inscrutable Oriental Other, whose ‘sphinx-like expression’ masks her deeper feelings and sinister intentions” (Cass 205). When charged with these Eastern characteristics, Jane “shakes her head” in various dissenting ways (*JE* 330). “I will not be your English Céline Varens,” she remonstrates (*JE* 293). Not only does Jane “dissapat[e] Rochester’s ‘othering,’ a process by which women become objects of his colonialist Oriental fantasies” (Cass

202), she proposes to remedy the disease by indoctrinating the “harem inmates” with British values.

Jeffery Cass suggests that Jane’s rejection of Edward’s persistent othering “blunt[s] the criticism that Jane Eyre’s fullest emergence as the Englishwoman occurs” (202) at what Valerie Kennedy calls “the expense of the identity of the colonized woman” (124; qtd. Cass 202).⁶⁶ I propose, instead, that Jane’s resistance to these exotic temptations exemplifies the key, xenophobic way in which she differs from these other women and avoids the moral and mental depravities of their feminine bodies. “Religious and moral principles alone give strength to the female mind,” mandate the psychiatrists John Charles Bucknill and Daniel Hack Tuke in 1858 (273). Jane’s English upbringing, her tutelage, not under the falsely-Christian Brocklehurst, but the saintly Helen Burns and “refined” Miss Temple, teaches her to control “the subterranean fires” (Bucknill and Tuke 273) of her womb, which are responsible for her childhood outbursts. Without the civilizing bridle of Anglican education, Jane, too, runs the risk of having her “crater” give forth “smoke and flame” (Bucknill and Tuke 273). The mad wombs of Medea and Bertha, conversely, quite literally set their worlds ablaze.

Adèle, too, is redeemed from her decadent French proclivities by her British education. Much in the way that Jason speciously congratulates himself for giving Medea the advantage of living in Greece, rather than “the world’s edge” (l. 541), Edward describes to Jane how, “‘I e’en took the poor thing out of the slime and mud of Paris, and transplanted it here, to grow up in the wholesome soil of an English country garden’” (*JE* 157). The first school Adèle attends is inadequate, but Jane reveals at the conclusion of the novel,

As she grew up, a sound English education corrected in great measure her French defects; and when she left school, I found in her a pleasing and obliging companion: docile, good-

tempered, and well-principled. By her grateful attention to me and mine, she had long since well repaid any little kindness I ever had it in my power to offer her. (*JE* 495)

Ultimately, Adèle becomes what the Athenians called a *metic*: a docile immigrant, subservient to her British masters. Conversely, Bertha, raised in Jamaica, is never given “a sound British education.” Edward insists that “it is not because she is mad” that he hates her (*JE* 329); “she cannot help being mad” (*JE* 329), for her madness is inherited from her mother.⁶⁷ Bertha’s unrestrained madness, however, is also a symptom of her moral and intellectual failings. Edward is careful to mention that Bertha’s “intemperate and unchaste” excesses “had prematurely developed the germs of [her] insanity” (*JE* 335). Jane and Bertha may have fundamentally similar urges, as Gilbert and Gubar argue, but Jane does not succumb to her mad, female body because of her strict British education. Jane’s youthful passion turns into the feminine strength that Medea wishes Creusa could teach her in Grillparzer’s *Medea*—submissive unless fighting for the redemption of her and her master’s Christian souls. If Medea, as Page states, could kill her children “because she was a foreigner” (xxi), then it is because Bertha is a Creole that she tries to eat her brother.⁶⁸ Jane, conversely, is the newly sympathetic, Christian Corinthian princess of the nineteenth century, participating in the doubling of “good” and “bad” women with which Euripides’s tragedy refuses to engage. His *Medea* flies beyond the reach of good and evil.

The ghastly visitation Bertha makes to Jane and her bridal clothes on the eve of the failed wedding evokes comparisons to Medea’s poisoned *peplos* and headdress,⁶⁹ the fatal bridal gifts brought to the princess by Medea’s similarly doomed children. Edward subtly alludes to *Medea* when he asks Jane (displeased by the extravagance of the veil), “[B]ut what did you find in the veil beside its embroidery? Did you find poison, or a dagger, that you look so mournful now?”

(*JE* 307). Robert Martin proposes that “the significance of the Medea allusion here makes one consider ... that it is Rochester who is the poisoner—and that it is Bertha who *saves* Jane by destroying the veil” (92). The suggestion assigns Bertha a savior’s role that is not implied in the novel. Bertha is the Fury, not the guardian angel. The destruction of the veil does not hinder Jane from marrying Edward; it instead forebodes the consequences of Jane’s choice between physical gratification (being with Edward, symbolized by the embroidered veil) or spiritual sacrifice (leaving Edward, symbolized by the square blonde veil), with which Jane will soon be presented. Jane, of course, frustrates the traditional Greek plot and chooses the latter. She has continuously refused the riches in which Edward tries to decorate her, absolving herself of the vanity and greed the Corinthian princess displays in her eager (and rather dense) acceptance of Medea’s bridal gift. Bertha does not save Jane, Jane saves herself from Bertha.

Edward’s allusion to the poison and dagger combines with Jane’s two portentous dreams and Bertha’s night-time visit to Jane’s room as a warning—or threat—of what is to come should she carry out the marriage. Jane dreams twice of a child prior to finding Bertha in her room, nocturnally examining her wedding dress and veil. Gilbert and Gubar identify the child (“young and feeble” and “wail[ing] piteously” [*JE* 307]) with Mrs. Reed’s description of Jane as an infant, “a sickly, whining, pining thing!” (*JE* 252). The infant, they suggest, is Jane’s “orphaned alter ego” who “divid[es] her from Rochester” and subversively resists “a marriage of inequality” (358). This analysis does not account for Jane’s previous mentions of children in her dreams (which she explicitly labels “presentiments” of death [*JE* 239]) or their presaging of Bertha’s presence in the room (unless as some meeting of the various alter-egos). R. McClure Smith points out that dreams of children in the novel act as “anticipations of a displaced matricide. When Bessie dreams of a baby her elder sister dies. When Jane first dreams of a baby

her stepmother [aunt] dies” (127). Margaret Homans suggests a figurative death: “Jane Eyre will have to die in giving birth to Mrs. Rochester The ‘trouble’ with which all the novel’s dreamt and figurative children are associated may originate in this vision of motherhood in which the mother vanishes as the child is born” (121). Rather than an “other” self, Jane’s frequent dreams of children instead connote “a loss of self” (Homans 121). She is not, however, only at risk of a figurative death. Jane is literally at risk of dying at the hands of Bertha—if she follows the trajectory of Euripides’s *Medea* and marries Edward.

In both dreams, as Jane tells Edward, the dark landscapes and the children cause her to feel ““a strange, regretful consciousness of some barrier dividing us”” (*JE* 307). In Jane’s first dream, her ““movements were fettered”” by the ““charge of a little child”” whose presence causes the gap between her and Edward to grow ““farther and farther every moment”” (*JE* 307). The second dream reveals Thornfield Hall ““a dreary ruin”” and ““the unknown little child”” again impedes Jane from reaching Edward. ““I might not lay it down anywhere,”” she relates to him,

“However tired were my arms—however much its weight impeded my progress, I must retain it. I heard the gallop of a horse at a distance on the road; I was sure it was you; and you were departing for many years and for a distant country. I climbed the thin wall with frantic perilous haste . . . the child clung round my neck in terror, and almost strangled me; at last I gained the summit. I saw you like a speck on a white track, lessening every moment. The blast blew so strong I could not stand. I sat down on the narrow ledge; I hushed the scared infant in my lap: you turned an angle of the road: I bent forward to take a last look; the wall crumbled; I was shaken; the child rolled from my knee, I lost my balance, fell, and woke.” (*JE* 308)

The dreamscapes are evocative of a kind of limbo or underworld, in which Jane is trapped by the burden of the two children impeding her movements. When Jane wakes, she finds Bertha examining the symbolic wedding dress and veil. After destroying the latter garment, Bertha approaches Jane in her bed, clutching an ominous candle—a threat of what is to come should Jane follow through with the marriage. The “barrier” which threatens to divide Jane and Edward is Jane’s death, pulled into the underworld by Bertha’s unborn children.⁷⁰

But Jane departs mid-way from the tragedy, still alive. Unlike Creusa, she does not just tell Edward, “I will not be your English Céline Varens,” (*JE* 293), she flees rather than do so. Jane’s refusal to “marry” Edward after the discovery of his foreign wife causes the novel to fragment; Jane goes off on her personal journey, while the events of Euripides’s *Medea* continue to unfold at Thornfield. In the manner of Greek drama, the destruction of Thornfield Hall happens off-stage, so to speak; the events are recounted to Jane second-hand by an innkeeper acting as the iconic messenger. Shortly after Jane’s flight, the innkeeper later tells her, Bertha makes good on her threat:

“She set fire first to the hangings of the room next her own, and then she got down to a lower storey, and made her way to the chamber that had been the governess’—(she was like as if she knew somehow how matters had gone on, and had a spite at her) and she kindled the bed there; but there was nobody sleeping in it, fortunately.” (*JE* 468)

The παμφάγου πυρός (all-devouring fire) (*Medea* l. 1185), which bursts from the Corinthian princess’s poisoned veil and gown, is mirrored in Bertha’s pyromaniacal attempt to set fire to Jane’s bed: there she would have died, “burning” (πυρουμένη) in her “governess’ seat” (θρόνος)⁷¹ (*Medea*, l. 1190), but the bed is empty. The Anglican Jane kept “the law given by God” (*JE* 346) when faced with temptation; she, unlike Creusa, unlike Bertha, unlike the rest of

the Rochester harem, “hold[s] to the principles received ... when [she] was sane” (*JE* 346) and so not only saves herself from the distinctly pagan, “revengeful Fury” (*JE* 464) embodied by both Medea and Bertha, but shifts the story so that Edward, too, can be redeemed.

Brontë often describes the noises Bertha makes, her yells, her growls, her “goblin ha! ha!” (*JE* 226), but she is never given actual speech—reversing roles with the silent Corinthian princess. Bertha is therefore unable to make the same proclamations her Greek counterpart reveals before her departure from Corinth. Medea’s prophecy is, nevertheless, heard in the end. Before her triumphant exit, Medea predicts Jason’s ignominious demise:

σὺ δ', ὥσπερ εἰκός, καθανῆ κακὸς κακῶς,
 Ἄργους κάρα σὸν λειψάνῳ πεπληγμένος,
 πικρὰς τελευτὰς τῶν ἐμῶν γάμων ἰδών.

And you, as is fitting, will die a coward’s death, struck on the head by a beam of the Argo, having seen the bitter end of your marriage to me. (l. 386–88)

Jason’s fate is an ignoble, cowardly death after a barren life, deprived of his children and his young wife, the latter of which inhibits him from fathering any more sons. It is a Greek punishment: brutal, complete, and un-redemptive. Edward, already grown “quite savage” (*JE* 468) due to the loss of his own young bride, still deserves a physical “punishment ... for keeping his marriage secret, and wanting to take another wife while he had one living” (*JE* 470). Unlike Jason, the innkeeper-messenger reminds Jane, Edward is no coward, but he is nevertheless dealt a similar blow from his own Argo: Thornfield, as tied to his identity as the ship is to Jason’s. “It was all his own courage,” the man tells Jane,

“and a body may say, his kindness, in a way m’am: he wouldn’t leave the house till everyone else was out before him. As he came down the great staircase at last, after Mrs.

Rochester had flung herself from the battlements, there was a great crash—all fell. He was taken out from under the ruins, alive, but sadly hurt: *a beam had fallen* in such a way as to protect him partly; but one eye was knocked out, and one hand so crushed that Mr. Carter, the surgeon, had to amputate it directly. The other eye inflamed: he lost the sight of that also. He is now helpless, indeed,—blind and a cripple.” (*JE* 470; my emphasis)

Edward’s is not a pagan punishment, which allows no room for redemption, which demands he be destroyed entirely, “root and branch.” It is a Christian one, which promises that through self-sacrifice one may be saved. Selflessly, the audience is encouraged to believe, Edward ensures the safety of his dependants and the bane of his existence before his own, and in so doing loses a limb and his sight. ““You shall yourself pluck out your right eye; yourself cut off your right hand”” (*JE*325), Jane demands of herself and accomplishes figuratively; Edward does so quite literally. It is an echo of Matthew 5:29: “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (*KJV*). Where Jason is defeated in an “insistent clamour of hate,” absent of gods or mercy, Edward repents, ““I thank my Maker, that, in the midst of judgement, He has remembered mercy. I humbly entreat my Redeemer to give me strength to lead henceforth a purer life than I have done hitherto!”” (*JE* 492). His thump on the head saves, rather than obliterates, him.

After her failed attempt to murder her absent usurper, Bertha appears on the roof of the manor, a degraded echo of Medea’s appearance in the chariot of the sun (above the *theologeion* in the *mechane*) at the end of *Medea*. Jane learns that

“[T]hey called out to [Edward] that [Bertha] was on the roof, where she was standing, waving her arms, above the battlements, and shouting out till they could hear her a mile

off: I saw her and heard her with my own eyes. She was a big woman, and had long black hair: we could see it streaming against the flames as she stood.”⁷² (*JE* 469)

Bertha does not triumph, does not apotheosize. Like Dionysus in *Dracula*, she becomes another victim of the Victorian de-sacralization of transgressive Euripidean figures. Dracula must die to save the good women of England from his insidious, Eastern influence; Bertha must die to reimpose societal norms, to reinstate the marriage *topos* of the Victorian novel, to protect the Victorian family—thwarting the plot of the tragedy from which Brontë draws. Lacking Medea’s divine grandfather, the madwoman cannot escape the scene in a dragon-pulled chariot. Instead, “she yelled, gave a spring, and the next minute she lay smashed on the pavement” (*JE* 469). Nor is Bertha allowed to be the agent of Edward’s complete annihilation; instead, she becomes the catalyst of his conversion and redemption.

“Some sound of music in our ears”: *Adam Bede*

Whereas Brontë was exposed to the classics by a father educated at Cambridge, George Eliot’s father was likely a model for Mr. Tulliver in *Mill on the Floss*—not only ignorant of classical languages, but generally uncomfortable with the written word (Hughes 13). As a result, Eliot’s considerable grasp of the classics was the result of independent study and haphazard tutelage, rather than the guidance of a benevolent paternal philologist (“unlike most of the [female] writers who read Latin and Greek” [Hurst 172]). Eliot was not only fluent in ancient Greek and Latin, but acknowledged as a classicist of considerable merit. Christopher Stray has chronicled her study of Latin through Locke’s *System of Classical Introduction* (115–21); Gordon S. Haight, her tutelage in the same language with Reverend Thomas Sheepshanks (the rector of St. John’s Church at Coventry and Headmaster of its Free Grammar School), as well as

her study of Greek with an Oxford undergraduate during his holidays (25, 35, 62). Her interest in tragedy's implications for the novel has been commented upon extensively, Isobel Hurst noting a recognition in Eliot's novels "that every life has tragic possibilities," and that these possibilities "are more important than any individual's tragic end" (176). The fact that these calamities are often averted in the novels does not lessen their classical import, as disaster is also often eluded in Athenian drama. Tragedy, after all, requires a serious tone, not an unhappy finale.

When Vernon Rendall broke critical ground in 1947–48 with his essays on Eliot's classical sources, he emphasized Eliot's engagement with Aeschylus and Sophocles, who are more overtly incorporated into and quoted in her writing.⁷³ P. E. Easterling argues that "Aeschylean contexts ... must have been Eliot's ultimate model" (60),⁷⁴ especially "with that concept of Nemesis which pervades her novels" (Wisefarth 91). The author herself declares a partiality for Sophocles due to his "delineation of the great primitive emotions" (qtd. Jebb 156). Joseph Wisefarth summarizes Eliot's "Sophoclean control, Horatian wit, Aeschylean nemesis, and classical allusion" (Wisefarth 91). Rendall includes a list of Eliot's classical readings, catalogued from her notebooks and letters, to which Haight (1954–55) and Wisefarth (1982) have since added. While their analyses and lists are extensive,⁷⁵ they rather unsurprisingly omit Euripides, despite many mentions of him in her letters and journals.⁷⁶ More specifically, Eliot's interest with Euripides's *Medea* bookends her career, suggesting that one may add "Euripidean cynicism" to her "Sophoclean control" and "Aeschylean nemesis"—at least as regards her many delineations of disappointing Jason archetypes.

At the same time that burlesques like Lemon's *Medea* and Robert Brough's *Medea: or, the Best of Mothers, with a Brute of a Husband* (1856) were humorously maligning the infamous adventurer, Eliot was also exploring the implications of Jason's character on the women in his

orbit in a post-classical setting. Easterling has noted an overt connection Eliot makes to *Medea* in her 1866 novel, *Felix Holt* (63), via a comparison of Mrs. Transome to Medea and Matthew

Jermyn to Jason:

The fortunate Jason, as we know from Euripides, piously thanked the goddess [Aphrodite], and saw clearly that he was not at all obliged to Medea: Jermyn was perhaps not aware of the precedent, but thought out his own freedom obligation and the indebtedness of others towards him with a native faculty not inferior to Jason's. (*FH* 426)

This allusion, an emphatic example of Eliot's prolonged interest in *Medea*, is not sustained throughout the novel, but the conflation of Jason with another unsavory, self-serving male character is significant. Wisenfarth has also noted Eliot's overt parallels to *Medea* in *Daniel Deronda* (215–20). Lydia Glasher's delivery of the "poisoned gems" (*DD* 300) to Gwendolen Harleth on her wedding day with the "poisonous" note evokes Medea's deadly gift to the Corinthian princess. Mr. Vandernoodt makes the comparison outright while in conversation with the eponymous Daniel Deronda:

"It's rather a piquant picture ... Grandcourt between two fiery women. For depend upon it this light-haired one has plenty of devil in her. I formed that opinion of her at Leubronn. It's a sort of Medea and Creüsa business. Fancy the two meeting! Grandcourt is a new kind of Jason: I wonder what sort of a part he'll make of it. It's a dog's part at best. I think I hear Ristori now, saying, 'Jasone! Jasone!' these fine women generally get hold of a stick." (*DD* 365)

As Easterling points out, "Grandcourt is killed by a blow from the boom of his yacht as Jason, according to Medea's prophecy, would be hit by a beam from the *Argo*" (63). In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot's point of intertextuality is Jason's bigamy, rather than Medea's filicide. Unlike

in *Jane Eyre*, the Creusa-figure, Gwendolen, marries the sinister Henleigh Grandcourt despite her knowledge of Mrs. Glasher and her children. The novel explores her remorse in going through with a marriage she knows is wrong.

Eliot's most sustained interaction with *Medea*, however, is also in her inaugural novel. Many critics have noticed the Medea story as a model for *Adam Bede*. Easterling notes an "oblique reference to the stricken princess" (63) in the narrator's suggestion that

It is too painful to think that [Hetty] is a woman, with a woman's destiny before her—a woman spinning in young ignorance a light web of folly and wain hopes which may one day close round her and press upon her, a rancorous poisoned garment, changing all life at once her fluttering, trivial butterfly sensations into a life of deep human anguish. (*AB* 273–74)

Ultimately, Easterling decides that "the notion of the creator being destroyed by her own creation is closer to Deianira in *Trachinae* than to the princess in *Medea*" (64), but Hurst maintains that "the Euripidean parallel is crucial," for this incident establishes Hetty as "Medea as well as Creusa," because "she kills her own child" (181). Eliot herself claims, in a November 1868 journal entry, that "the germ of Adam Bede" was inspired by an anecdote told her by her aunt, who had "visited a condemned criminal, a very ignorant girl who had murdered her child and refused to confess" (*Journals* 296). Josephine McDonagh has established an impressive list of other texts to which Eliot was exposed that depict a mother's murder of her child, including William Wordsworth's "The Thorn" (1798), Sir Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), Goethe's *Faust* (1808, 1832),⁷⁷ Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843),⁷⁸ Charles Dickens's *The Chimes* (1844), Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" (1848), and Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Maud* (1855) (229–31).⁷⁹

This variety of infanticidal sources does not diminish *Adam Bede*'s connections to the Medea story, but does complicate the ways in which Eliot engages specifically with Euripides's tragedy. In this novel, Eliot, like Brontë, sacrifices her Medea character in order to redeem her Jason, although Arthur Donnithorne is not given quite as happy an ending as the one enjoyed by Edward Rochester. In *Adam Bede*, the titular character undergoes moral growth through his somewhat superfluous involvement in a romantic plotline which takes *Medea* as its model: Hetty Sorrel, believing she will marry Arthur Donnithorne, unmaliciously—desperately—kills the child she bears him when she realizes her belief is mistaken. Adam's involvement in the story, as Arthur's rival for Hetty's affections, changes him from a rigid, unforgiving man into one capable of forgiveness and sympathy. He is in some ways the spectator of the tragedy, undergoing an Aristotelian catharsis which serves to cause this shift in character. This cathartic moment of self-awareness is also an argument against the vengeance-driven plot of *Medea*. Adam learns that vengeance is not the path to justice; only through forgiveness can wrongs be kept from spreading.

Hetty Sorrel is a version of Medea degraded in ways quite different from the various dramatic adaptations of the Euripidean play I have surveyed. She is not mad, she is not actively evil, and she is not even foreign. Rather than heightening or exaggerating the Colchian into unsavory extremes, in the tradition begun by Seneca, Eliot instead diminishes the strength of Euripides's character, shrinking her heroic pretensions into something vain and narrow. Euripides likens Medea repeatedly to a wild "lioness with her cubs" (τοκάδος ... λεανίης) (l. 187); Brontë brutalizes Bertha into a *chained* lioness, which "grovel[s], seemingly, on all fours ... snatche[s] and growl[s] like some strange wild animal ... [with] a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane" (*JE* 320–21). Eliot, on the other hand, completely declaws Hetty. Far from

the dangerous lioness, Hetty is repeatedly compared to a kitten, “a distracting kitten-like maiden” (*AB* 92).⁸⁰ Although Hetty’s kinship to a kitten is far less intimidating than Medea’s or Bertha’s to a lioness, the implied selfishness of her kitten-beauty nevertheless forebodes something sinister in the young milkmaid.

It is Hetty’s prettiness, rather than her wisdom or cunning, that fools the men around her and keeps them from detecting “the moral deficiencies hidden under the ‘dear deceit’ of beauty” (*AB* 170). “I find it impossible,” confesses the narrator, “not to expect some depth of soul behind a deep gray eye with a long dark eyelash, in spite of an experience which has shown me that they may go along with deceit, speculation, and stupidity” (*AB* 168). Adam Bede sees in “the dark liquid depths of [Hetty’s] wonderful eyes” confirmation that “she will dote on her children! She is almost a child herself, and the little pink round things will hang about her like florets round the central flower” (*AB* 167); Arthur Donnithorne “felt sure she was a dear, affectionate, good little thing” (*AB* 168). The opposite, however, is true, for Hetty’s beauty has fostered in her unsympathetic selfishness: “It was wonderful how little she seemed to care about waiting on her uncle, who had been a good father to her” (*AB* 169) and she could not understand “how anybody could be very fond of middle-aged people” (*AB* 169). Far from doting on children, Hetty prophetically detests them: “would have been glad to hear that she should never see a child again” (*AB* 169). Children “were worse than the nasty little lambs” of which she sometimes had care, because the lambs, at least, “were got rid of sooner or later” (*AB* 169). Hetty’s particular kitten-beauty is a form of *physical* cunning, which indicates, as Jill Matus and Nancy L. Paxton have elaborated, neither uxorious nor maternal fitness (Matus 175; Paxton 46–47). Thus, although both Medea and Hetty have learned to weaponize patriarchal expectations of femininity to manipulate men, neither possess the proper, empathetic, care-giving femininity embodied in

the Creusa-like figure of Dinah, whose understated, less fleshly beauty inspires love “rooted in genuine admiration” (Panek 133).

Medea’s heroic pride, too, gets warped under Hetty’s self-satisfied prettiness. The prime motivator of Euripides’s heroine is, in the line of Achilles and Ajax, to retain her dignity and not incur ἐχθροῖς γέλων (l. 383)—the laughter of her enemies. The fierce poise of Medea becomes small in her English counterpart, becomes first insipid vanity and then a sort of instinctual, animal fear. When Hetty is disappointed in Arthur’s absence at church, much of her discomfort derives from her determination that none should know he has hurt her. The omniscient narrator confides to her audience that

Hetty had a certain strength in her vain little nature: *she would have born anything rather than be laughed at*, or pointed at with any other feeling than admiration; she would have pressed her own nails into her tender flesh than people should know a secret she did not want them to know. (AB 217; my emphasis)

The prophesied “secret” is her illegitimate pregnancy, to which she applies “all the force of her nature” in her “one effort of concealment” (AB 396). When it becomes clear that concealment is impossible, she flees. Both of these instances, however, include moments of rancour and vengefulness. In the church, she “hated Arthur for giving her this pain—she would like him to suffer too” (AB 217). Even when she determines to seek out the young Captain, her pregnancy now something that cannot be disguised, “her imagination no longer saw happiness with Arthur, for he could do nothing that would satisfy or soothe her pride” (AB 396). Her apathetic decision to marry Adam is evocative of Medea’s arrangements of sanctuary with Aegeus at Athens. Hetty’s tendencies towards vengeance and self-preservation are instinctual and unconscious,

rather than deliberate and cunning, successful only because they lurk under the veneer of her beauty.

Like Brontë in *Jane Eyre*, in *Adam Bede* Eliot sacrifices her Medea and robs her of her triumph in order to redeem the Jason-figure through his self-sacrifice and repentance. Early critics of Eliot's first novel have taken issue with its "happy ending" (Diekhoff 221–27), Henry James considering it a structural problem and preferring either that Hetty be hanged or Adam "left to his grief" (17) without the solace of his marriage to Dinah. Lionel Stevenson deems Hetty's last-minute deliverance from execution by Arthur "the only touch of melodrama" in a novel which dwells on the merits of its own realism (339). Bruce K. Martin, conversely, has argued that Hetty's reprieve from hanging effectively re-centres the novel's sympathy back onto Adam by getting her "out of the way without the diverting pathos of execution" (745), echoing Euripides's decision not to introduce or name his Corinthian princess in order to emphasize Medea's filicide. Dinah, to some extent, takes on the role of Creusa at the end of the novel, participating in the angel/demon dichotomy anatomized by Gilbert and Gubar and eschewed by Euripides. Dinah is less of a sexual threat to Hetty than the nameless princess to Medea, her role as "usurper" subsumed as it is into her marriage, not with Arthur, but Adam, to whom Hetty becomes engaged but in whom she is never sexually interested. Dinah's devout, Christian intervention that Hetty "confess the wickedness [she has] done" so that she may "open [her] heart" to God (*AB* 488–87) nevertheless requires that Hetty finally humble herself—something Medea (and Bertha) refuses absolutely. Hetty's chariot of the sun is a penal ship, upon which she will die—exiled, alone, surrounded by strangers. Her defeat is entire and necessary to grant Arthur his redemption and final *nostos*.

Arthur evokes Jason in a subtler, more character-driven way than Hetty does Medea. Jason's great crime—the abandonment of his wife in favour of a new one—is not overtly mirrored in *Adam Bede*, certainly not in the way Medea's crime is. Arthur leaves Loamshire to forsake Hetty, but not to replace her with a Creusa, and not knowing that she is pregnant. Neither Jason nor Arthur, however, live up to the *ethos* to which they aspire. Jason, although the leader of the Argonauts, is no epic hero. Arthur, despite his intentions for his estate, fails to become the well-respected squire he desires to be upon his ascension to his grandfather's position. "All his pictures of the future," Eliot describes,

when he should come into the estate, were made up of a prosperous, contented tenantry, adoring their landlord, who would be the model of an English gentleman—mansion in first-rate order, all elegance and high taste—jolly housekeeping, finest stud in Loamshire—purse open to all public objects—in short, everything as different as possible from what was now associated with the name of Donnithorne. (*AB* 136)

It is an outward, sophistic dream of goodness and prosperity, built entirely upon people-pleasing—as shallow as Hetty's kitten-beauty. In Arthur's vision of prosperity, he gives only what he can easily afford and prioritizes his own wants, just as Jason self-righteously believes it right that Medea sacrifice her own position for his ease and comfort, labelling her refusal illogical. One finds in the narrator's wry description of Arthur, known by his tenants as "the captain," as "only a captain in the Loamshire Militia" (*AB* 68), the same undeserving pretensions to the rank as Jason's captaincy of the *Argo*, on which he is completely outclassed by his crewmen.

Arthur, like Jason, is incapable of understanding how his own ease and comfort do not guarantee the same for those around him. His idea of merit is tied inextricably with pleasure; his

idea of “goodness” with reparations after the pleasure is indulged, rather than with temperance and restraint. Eliot’s description of him as “a good fellow” or “nice” drips with irony, and significantly ends with a sailing metaphor:

You perceive that Arthur Donnithorne was a “good fellow”—all his college friends thought him such. He couldn’t bear to see any one uncomfortable Whether he would have self-mastery enough to be always harmless and purely beneficent as his good-nature led him to desire, was a question that no one had yet decided against him; he was but twenty-one, you remember, and we don’t inquire too closely into character in the case of a handsome generous young fellow, who will have property enough to support numerous peccadilloes—who, if he should unfortunately break a man’s legs in his rash driving, will be able to pension him handsomely; or if he should happen to spoil a woman’s existence for her, will make it up to her with expensive bon-bons, packed up and directed by his own hand The chances are that he will go through life without scandalizing any one; a seaworthy vessel that no one would refuse to insure. Ships, certainly, are liable to casualties, which sometimes make terribly evident some flaw in their constructions that would never have been discoverable in smooth water; and many a ‘good fellow,’ through a disastrous combination of circumstances, has undergone a like betrayal.⁸¹ (*AB* 136–37)

Jason, too, is easily able to remain faithful to his first wife while circumstances make her useful to him. When she becomes an impediment to his comfort, however, he abandons her while promising to “make it up to her” monetarily, offering to give, with an ἀφθόνη χερί (unstinting hand), τι χρημάτων ἐμῶν (some of my money) and a σύμβολον (a token of introduction) for Medea to gain accommodation with ξένοι (guest-friends) (ll. 610–13). Arthur uses the same balm for his conscience in his planned reparations for his treatment of Hetty: “Hetty’s husband,” he

promises himself upon learning of her engagement to Adam, “had a special claim on him—Hetty herself should feel that any pain she had suffered through Arthur in the past was compensated to her a hundredfold” (*AB* 478). Yet, both Jason and Arthur are destined to learn that some wrongs cannot be righted with the trappings of affluence. As Adam tells Arthur after Hetty’s trial, “A man should make sacrifices to keep clear of doing a wrong; sacrifices won’t undo it when it’s done There’s a sort of damage, sir, that can’t be made up for” (*AB* 508).

Hetty’s desperate exposure of their child and her subsequent trial become the catalyst of Arthur’s character development; he realizes “his weaknesses and the irrevocability of misdeeds committed before his limitations became apparent to him” (Martin 746). The death of the child does not *ἄπαιδ’ ἀπόλεσας* (destroy him utterly with childlessness) (l. 1326), but finally shows him how to become the country squire to which he aspires: through self-sacrifice and self-denial.⁸² Arthur, unlike poor Hetty, is not forced into exile (another traditional Greek punishment for wronging kin) but instead chooses it for the sake of his tenants. “I am going away; I’m going into the army,” he tells Adam,

“One of my reasons for going away is, that no one else may leave Hayslope—may leave their home on my account. I would do anything, there is no sacrifice I would not make, to prevent any further injury to other through my—through what has happened.” (*AB* 507)

Through Arthur’s actions, Eliot creates an argument against the vengeance-driven plot of the novel’s Athenian model. There may be some deeds “that can’t be made up for” but people “may make injuries worse by unreasonable conduct—by giving way to anger and satisfying that for the moment, instead of thinking what will be the effect in the future” (*AB* 509). Arthur’s decision to leave his home, so that those he has wronged may stay in theirs, stops the cycle of hurt his initial careless actions began and ultimately allows him an eventual *nostos*. The newly

minted “Colonel” Donnithorne’s return seven years later is ““very cutting”” (*AB* 590) to the people of Hayslope, but only inasmuch as he reminds Adam of their shared sufferings. They ““wilt see him smile”” (*AB* 589); his friends will be ““fine and joyful at having him home again”” (*AB* 590).

Eliot’s *Adam Bede* ultimately quells *Medea*’s “insistent clamour of hate” with its calls for Christian forgiveness in lieu of Greek vengeance. Vengeance, the novel purports, spreads wrongs rather than rights them, as the (ironically pagan-inspired) Mr. Irwine expresses to Adam:

“There is no sort of wrong deed of which a man can bear the punishment alone; you can’t isolate yourself, and say that the evil which is in you shall not spread. Men’s lives are as thoroughly blended with each other as the air they breathe: evil spreads as necessarily as disease. I know, I feel the terrible extent of suffering this sin of Arthur’s has caused to others; but so does every sin cause suffering to others besides those who commit it. An act of vengeance on your part against Arthur would simply be another evil added to those we are suffering under: you could not bear the punishment alone; you would entail the worse sorrows on every one who loves you. You would have committed an act of blind fury, that would leave all the present evils just as they were, and add worse evils to them. You may tell me that you meditate no fatal act of vengeance: but the feeling in your mind is what gives birth to such actions, and as long as you indulge it, as long as you do not see that to fix your mind on Arthur’s punishment is revenge, and not justice, you are in danger of being led on to the commission of some great wrong.” (*AB* 461)

Yet there is something “painfully unsatisfying,” to borrow the phrase from Murray, in this conclusion, for the “sin” Arthur commits is not against Adam, but Hetty, who is kept utterly silent until she humbles herself before Dinah after her trial. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that

the conclusion of *Adam Bede* is “a transaction of honor between men over the dead, discredited, or disempowered body of a women” (*Between Men* 137). The suffering of Hetty, as the character most wronged in the novel, is subsumed by Adam’s perceived ownership of her. Her “clamour of hate” is never really sung, never addressed, never allowed to rage *or* forgive. Eliot, like Brontë, sacrifices and silences her Medea to punish and then redeem her Jason, bestowing the body of the virtuous Creusa-figure, Dinah, as a prize for Adam’s personal growth. Through this reversal of Euripides’s tragedy, the Greek cycle of blood miasma halts because *Adam* is able to change—but it stops short of saving the vulnerable Hetty. She is, instead, replaced with her procreative counterpart, Dinah, and Adam’s new children—dug out from the novel “root and branch.”

Conclusion: “Dead, is he?”

In 1879, Augusta Webster writes a *coda* to Euripides’s *Medea*—a tragedy she had translated to critical acclaim in 1868. In “Medea at Athens,” Webster imagines the heroine’s reaction to Jason’s death, decades after the events of *Medea*. Webster’s Medea, it is inferred, had prevailed over her Jason at Corinth as completely as Euripides’s did, and she imagines his last days, “Decayed out of his goodliness and strength; / A wanned and broken image of a god” (ll. 47–48), as the final culmination of her triumph. In this Medea’s imagination, Jason dies, ““Ruined, ruined!”” (l. 120), regretting his abandonment of a woman who “would have made [him] what [he] would” (l. 88) for one who made him only “what she could” (l. 89). He dies not only longing for his dead sons, but calling once again for Medea’s aid: ““Where is Medea? Let her bind my head”” (l. 135). Everything that she willed in Corinth, in her awful tumult of rage, has come to pass—and yet, she is surprised to find, “I care nothing” (l. 25). Medea’s apathy, however, is not sustained. She grieves for how she has changed as a result of their encounter;

wishes that they both had died together at sea, “hand in hand” (l. 175); and declares with the old anger that, “Never could I forgive thee for my boys” (l. 240). In her narrator’s fluctuation of emotion, Webster catches well the nuance and complexity of Euripides’s version of the character—of the mother and wife torn between love for her children and hatred for Jason—in her old age. Although Medea *does* feel a sense of loss at the news of Jason’s death, the loss is for herself, not Jason: “Jason, Jason, / Come back to earth; live, live for my revenge” (ll. 162–63).

Yet, despite Webster’s incorporation of the totality of the Euripidean Medea’s victory at Corinth, in this epilogue she, like Brontë and Eliot, takes away Medea’s ultimate triumph. Webster’s speaker struggles with the realization that she could never free herself from Jason—that in exacting her vengeance, she tied her identity to him all the more firmly:

But lo, the man is dead: I am forgotten.
 Forgotten; something goes from life in that—
 As if oneself had died when the half self
 Of one’s true living-time has slipped away
 From reach of memories, has ceased to know
 That such a woman is. (ll. 164–69)

Medea, the speaker suggests, can never triumph over Jason, because she cannot exist in her own story. The poem, proposes Fiske, “resolves itself into an admission of her inescapable reliance on him as a basis for her own sense of cohesion” (56–57). “That such a woman is,” is only forged through her encounter with Jason, before which she was “a grave and simple girl” (Webster l. 202); now that she has left him, she is diminished by her comfortable life with Aegeus, “with all its useless talk / and useless smiles and idiots’ prying eyes” (ll. 131–14). Fisk argues that “Webster’s monologue seems to suggest that women’s visions of themselves have been so long

framed by the actions and thoughts of men that they cannot achieve the very independence for which they seem to long” (55). There is an anguished realization in this poem that, even when all the factors of Medea’s vengeance in Euripides’s *Medea* are kept intact, Medea still cannot triumph in Webster’s nineteenth-century world. Her final lines, “go to thy grave, / By which none weeps. I have forgotten thee” (ll. 282–83), are hollow. Even when her vengeance is carried out to the letter, a Victorian Medea is unable to triumph—simply by virtue of her womanhood. Medea cannot forget Jason, cannot let Jason be forgotten—or she, too, will disappear.

Like the *Bacchae* at the end of the century, then, Euripides’s *Medea* offers its Victorian audience a dangerous freedom, predicated upon destruction and the subversion of conservative conventions. In their engagement with this troubling tragedy, these nineteenth-century authors construct a classical Greece which differs strongly from traditional conceptions: neither *Medea* nor the *Bacchae* represent Winckelmann’s *Heiterkeit* or Arnold’s “sweetness and light.” These writers (and painters) reconstruct ancient Greece, usually appropriated into British heritage, and identified with British achievements, as “other” rather than as “one of ourselves.” This “otherness,” from which Euripides’s offer of Dionysian freedom seems to stem, becomes antithetical to a defensive construction of “Britishness” in these nineteenth-century adaptations: Pentheus becomes the British vampire hunters, who defeat the disruptive incursion of Dracula into England; Creusa becomes the British wife, fundamental to Victorian domestic bliss, who saves Jason from his entanglement with the wild, untamed, and no longer triumphant Medea. Medea’s defeat transforms into a British victory.

Chapter 4 *Hippolytus*: The Anti-Normative Manhood Myth

τέλος δὲ κάμψαμι ὥσπερ ἠρξάμην βίου
“May I end my life just as I was when I began it.”
—*Hippolytus*, l. 87

Introduction

The custom of Greek *paidierastia*, a custom which, as Linda Dowling has demonstrated, “provided the language of male love” that inspired male homosociality in the late nineteenth century (xv), was not necessarily the parable of sexual freedom (or licentiousness) that the Victorians worried about or wanted it to be. Although the ancient Greeks had no concept of “sexuality” per se, and sexual relations between young men and their mentors was a common and acceptable arrangement, the Athenian *polis* still required that male citizens, upon reaching manhood, marry Athenian women for the purposes of producing legitimate children ([Demosthenes] 59.122). In the ancient mindset, heterosexual unions were a civic duty enforced by society. Ancient myth is rife with stories featuring the gruesome consequences for men who reject this coming-of-age criterion.¹ Pre-eminent among these texts is Euripides’s tragedy *Hippolytus*,² first produced in Athens in 428 BCE. In this chapter, I examine how four late Victorian authors adapt the anti-normative manhood myth of Euripides’s *Hippolytus* into their own works to explore the intersections of manhood, sex, and the demands of English society. Specifically, I demonstrate how J. A. Symonds and Walter Pater incorporate the figure of Hippolytus into their articulations of Greek aestheticism and masculinity in *Studies of the Greek Poets* and “Hippolytus Veiled,” respectively; and how Oscar Wilde’s novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and J. M. Barrie’s play *Peter Pan* adopt elements of the ancient tragedy to trace the inevitable consequences that accompany a specific rejection of civic duty and “proper” manhood in favour of eternal youth and alternative sexualities.

Hippolytus has enjoyed critical acclaim since its initial production, winning Euripides one of his rare first prizes at the City Dionysia, and has since been acknowledged as a classical masterpiece. Michael R. Halleran aptly chronicles that “[t]he formal excellence of *Hippolytus* has never been challenged” (*Hippolytus* 38), agreeing with Gilbert Murray’s earlier summation at the turn of the twentieth century: “*Hippolytus* can be left to speak for itself. Its two thousand five hundred years have left little mark upon it” (*Euripides: Translated* xix). Indeed, one might suggest that the only mark left upon the play was created by Euripides himself. Unique in the Athenian dramatic canon, *Hippolytus* was Euripides’s second attempt at dramatizing the same mythological episode—his first attempt, now lost, having been produced to the rumoured disgust of his audience. A preserved hypothesis to the play, commonly attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium, documents the extant tragedy as the “second *Hippolytus*, the one also called *Crowned* [στεφανίας]”:

It is evident that it was written second. For what was unseemly [ἀπρεπές] and worthy of censure [κατηγορίας ἄξιον] has been amended [διώρθωται] in this drama. *This* drama is among the best. (Halleran, *Hippolytus* 63)

Just what was so unseemly and condemnable about Euripides’s earlier play, latterly titled *Hippolytus Kalyptomēnos* (καλυπτόμενος; “*Veiled*”) by ancient writers (e.g. Poll 9.50; schol. Theoc. 2.10), has tantalized scholars for centuries. Based on ancient testimonies and only nineteen or so extant fragments (none longer than four lines), most modern critics agree that it is the character of Phaedra whom Euripides “amended” from a brazen woman who propositions her stepson into a virtuous mother desperately fighting the destructive *eros* with which Aphrodite has cursed her. As Froma Zeitlin suggests, this second Phaedra “is now the paragon of female virtue, embodying the ideas of *aidos*, *sophrosune*, and *eukleia*—the *aidos* of shame and modesty,

the *sophrosune* of wifely chastity, and the *eukleia* of her good reputation” (*Playing the Other* 52).

Sparse ancient references to Euripides’s first rendition of *Hippolytus*, notably Satyrus’s (admittedly untrustworthy) *Euripides Vita* (5.4–7) and Aristophanes’s *Frogs* (ll. 1043, 1052–54), seem to confirm that the second play “corrected” Euripides’s so-called “un-seemly” characterization of Phaedra, the Cretan wife of Theseus and stepmother to Hippolytus. In *Frogs*, Aeschylus accuses Euripides of creating “whores [πόρνας] like Phaedra and Sthenoboea” (l. 1043). When Euripides counters the accusation by reminding his debate opponent that Phaedra’s story existed long before he chose to dramatize it, Aeschylus responds that it is nevertheless the poet’s job to “conceal wickedness,” not “to familiarize and teach it” (ll. 1052–54). This rebuttal provokingly evokes themes present in the second play—the didactic role of *eros* in what Zeitlin calls the “education” of Hippolytus (*Playing the Other* 55); and the desperate attempt of Phaedra to “conceal” her own “wickedness” by remaining silent and starving herself to death.

Pseudo-Aeschylus’s comparison of Phaedra to Sthenoboea, another of Greek myth’s so-called bad women, suggests that *Hippolytus Kalyptomenos* conformed to what is now called the “Potifar’s Wife” paradigm, named after the episode in the book of Genesis. Joseph, a handsome youth, comes to live with Potifar, a wealthy older man, and quickly becomes ingratiated into the household. The older man’s wife begins to lust after the newcomer, eventually propositioning him and, when the virtuous youth refuses her, accuses him of rape. Like Potifar’s wife, Sthenoboea—about whom Euripides wrote at least one tragedy—attempts to seduce young Bellerophon, who repulses the advance. Consequently, Sthenoboea accuses Bellerophon of rape to her husband, King Proteus, who, in a rage, dispatches his young friend on a perilous mission for King Iobates to slay the Chimera, a task he assumes is impossible to survive. Aristophanes’s

comparison of Euripides's Phaedra to this myth suggests that in the first iteration of *Hippolytus*, the tragedian portrayed the young queen directly propositioning her stepson, after which a shocked Hippolytus veils himself in shame.

The later reclamation of Phaedra's character, however, likely comes at the expense of Hippolytus's. In fact, Euripides's second play casts the story of Hippolytus's death in what I call an anti-normative manhood myth. Read in this way, the play becomes almost didactic in nature.³ Indiscriminate sexuality, typified by Aphrodite and Phaedra, and fanatical chastity, typified by Artemis and Hippolytus, are eventually resolved in a reaffirmation of reproductive heteronormativity—but only after the characters of excess pay a heavy price. Hippolytus's rejection of prescribed social norms is the direct cause of the breakdown of his father's, Theseus's, *oikos*, causing all its members to fall victim to unnatural impulses: incest, betrayal, and filicide. As Aphrodite complains in the prologue, Hippolytus's refusal of "sex and marriage" (l. 14) ultimately amounts to a rejection of adulthood and the public and private duties attached to the transition to maturity. Put bluntly, the tragedy is an exploration of what happens when a boy refuses to grow up.

Central to *Hippolytus* is a dialogical exploration of the Greek virtue *sophrosyne* and its connections to masculinity. The term, impossible to define adequately in English, was generally translated by Victorian classicists as "temperance," "chastity," or sometimes "self-restraint." In the years following George Grote and Benjamin Jowett's translations of Plato's dialogues, in which the implications and definitions of the virtue are discussed, *sophrosyne* becomes a critical question in Victorian articulations of masculinity and male identity. A Foucauldian analysis of both Symonds's and Pater's texts suggests that *sophrosyne* (adjectival form, *sophron*) becomes a process of fashioning manhood, a practice of self-knowledge and self-restraint through which

one attains a liberating aesthetic experience. Symonds and Pater especially were able to locate this experience in their contemplation of the beautiful youth, who becomes for them the embodiment of ideal manhood. The very essence of the *sophron* boy, however, is tied to evanescence, meaning that the aesthetic experience of him, that the non-conformative masculinity expressed through the contemplation of him, is transient and doomed.

Both Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904) feature eponymous characters who, much more literally than Hippolytus, refuse to age. When Dorian finally awakens to his youthful beauty under the combined influence of Lord Henry Wotton's seductive decadent discourse and Basil Hallward's portrait, he makes his fateful, Faustian wish: "If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! . . . I would give my soul for that!" (DG 28). Critics have already established the Hellenistic myth of Narcissus as a source for this episode: ancient youth and English young man become obsessed with their own beauty upon seeing it for the first time, and both are ultimately destroyed by their reflections. Like *Hippolytus*, the story of Narcissus is a cautionary one: devoting himself to his own likeness, Narcissus spurns the advances of the nymph Echo, whose embrace would have helped him to accept heteronormative adulthood. Euripides's *Hippolytus*, I am suggesting, is the earlier and most comprehensive exploration of the anti-normative manhood motif in the ancient canon. Wilde, who espoused a life-long fascination with Euripides, appropriates the tragedy for his novel in order to explore the implications of this male counter-conduct in his contemporary society.⁴

Throughout this chapter I use the term "boy" synonymously with "youth" and in the Greek sense; that is, a male who has not reached the recognized age of adulthood (usually eighteen to twenty). The Greek paiderastic relationships that Symonds and Wilde explore in their

respective texts were socially acceptable only when they took place between a man (who had reached his age of majority) and a “boy”—that is, a male child between the ages of twelve and nineteen. Culturally, adult men who engaged in sexual practices as the so-called passive partner were deemed unmanly, or womanish, nor was it culturally acceptable for the *eromenos* to be under the age of eleven.⁵ In *Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry Wotton describes a hypothetical clergyman as “a boy of eighteen” in the very first chapter (*DG* 7), immediately deploying the coded language of Greek *paidierastia* as a framework for the relationships in the novel.

Throughout *Dorian Gray*, characters continually refer to Dorian as a “boy,” and indeed the curse of the picture causes him physically to remain a youth just on the cusp of civic majority. (Henry tells his uncle that Dorian is “not of age yet” [*DG* 35] just after meeting him in Basil’s garden; Basil suggests he is in his early twenties at the beginning of the novel [*DG* 13].) It becomes doubly important that characters continue to call Dorian a “boy” throughout the novel, as it is not only indicative of his continuing youthful beauty, but of his status as a person who refuses to participate in the benchmarks of manhood. Despite his age, Dorian is physically and culturally still a “boy” until his death.⁶

Similarly, Peter Pan, despite Wendy’s many entreaties to come back with her to London, refuses to leave Neverland because he “always want[s] to be a little boy and have fun” (*PP* 4.1.235). Like Wilde, Barrie conflates his titular character’s eternal youth with the rejection of the traditional Victorian family, and in doing so writes his own cautionary tale. *Peter Pan* (first a play, and then a novel; I will be focusing primarily on the play in this chapter) immediately invites comparison to classical mythology due to Peter’s surname, “Pan,” the mischievous Greek god of shepherds and the wilderness—the preferred locale also of Peter and Hippolytus. Unlike Peter and Hippolytus, however, Pan is notorious in myth for his overactive libido, much to the

discomfort of the nymphs he pursues. Peter, on the other hand, seems irresistible to the three main female characters of the play, Wendy, Tinker Bell, and Tiger Lily, but completely rejects their advances as he associates them with “becoming a man” (*PP* 1.1.398).

A Study from Euripides

Hippolytus begins with a prologue spoken by the Greek goddess of sex, Aphrodite. To suggest that she is a little frustrated with the eponymous hero would be quite the understatement. Aphrodite describes how Hippolytus, the illegitimate son of “the Amazon” (l. 10, 351)⁷ and Theseus, Athens’s legendary king, has completely shunned her in order to devote his life to the worship of Artemis, the huntress goddess of chastity. Eschewing the duties of home and state, Hippolytus spends his days hunting in the wild. To punish him, Aphrodite has made Hippolytus’s stepmother, Phaedra, fall in love with him. Of course disaster ensues. The play follows the inevitable unravelling of the *oikos*, the king’s household. Phaedra hopes to die before her passion for her stepson is revealed, but eventually she is betrayed by her well-meaning and rather Oscar Wilde-like nurse, who decides that the best way to cure her lust is to succumb to it. Hippolytus, by all accounts a rather unpleasant young man, is disgusted by the proposition; despite the oath of secrecy he swore to the nurse, he threatens to tell his father. “My tongue swore,” he prevaricates to the nurse (in a line often parodied by Aristophanes), “but my mind remains unpledged” (l. 612). Phaedra, fearing the repercussions which would fall upon her children should her virtue come into question, commits suicide—but leaves a note accusing Hippolytus of rape to discredit him.

When Theseus arrives on the scene, Hippolytus does not, despite his earlier threats to do so, betray his oath of secrecy, and so Theseus rejects his son’s protestations of innocence.

Instead, he exiles Hippolytus, and then calls upon *his* father, Poseidon, god of the oceans, to curse Hippolytus with death. A messenger, as is customary in Greek tragedy, later comes on stage to describe in gleeful detail how “a bull from the sea” (l. 1214) caused Hippolytus’s horses to spook and eventually drag him to his impending demise. Dying, Hippolytus is wheeled back out in the *eccyclema* to confront his father, during which exchange Artemis at long last makes her appearance. She confirms Hippolytus’s innocence to Theseus, explains that she was not able to intervene in Aphrodite’s machinations, but will similarly wreak her vengeance upon her opponent’s favourite mortal, understood to be Adonis.

The tragedy operates thematically, structurally, and visually upon the distinction and necessary intermingling of the masculine and feminine. Hippolytus is the son of an Amazon—born from a tribe of monstrous women who live in the wilderness. They refuse to submit to men and become domesticated, and yet this woman has yielded at last to Theseus to produce a son. In the first half of the tragedy, the palace is rendered an entirely feminine space through the absence of its patriarch, Theseus. In a fascinating visual twist, the play also features two separate choruses, divided upon a gender binary: the women of Troezen, who gather outside the palace, and the hunter companions of Hippolytus, who have just returned with him from the wild. Like Hippolytus, these hunters are disinterested in the Athenian trajectory into manhood, content to follow the young man’s lead of forgoing the responsibilities of *polis*-life and indulging themselves in perpetual hunting. The women of Troezen, conversely, articulate their daily domestic activities, their concern for the *oikos* of Theseus, and the health of their queen. They sing their odes to “Eros, Eros, you who drip with desire” (l. 525) and the δεινά (“dangerous”) Aphrodite (l. 562); the men to the militantly—and safely—virginal Artemis.

Nevertheless, the boundaries between the chaste, masculine wild of Artemis, worshipped by Hippolytus and his followers, and the sensual, domestic *oikos* of Aphrodite are continually blurred throughout the drama. Hippolytus's "virgin meadow" (ἀκηράτου / λειμῶνος) (ll. 73–74) for example, from where he gathers flowers to weave his offerings to the goddess, is untouched by both shepherd and iron (ll. 75–76) but traversed by "a bee in spring" (μέλισσα ... ἡρινῆ) (l. 77). Ruth Padel describes the Greek understanding of the bee in relation to conceptions of *eros*, both being the bearers of "sweetness and pain," a description the nurse applies to love at line 348 (Padel 232). The pollinating bee in the virginal meadow is a sexual image, "an emblem of mature female sexuality [which] confirms the incursion of Aphrodite into the meadow sacred to Artemis and confirms the futility of Hippolytus's attempts to banish *eros* from his life" (Gregory 66). The very lushness of the meadow, the presence of the flowers that the youth offers to Artemis as a sign of his virginal devotion, is a representation of the goddess he refuses to acknowledge.

As the drama continues to unfold, these intersections become more and more pronounced. The masculinized ocean, from where Hippolytus's death eventually emerges, is the terrain of not only his paternal grandfather, Poseidon, but of Aphrodite herself—born as she is from the combination of sky and ocean, from Uranus's severed genitals falling into the waves. The *parados* of the female chorus, sung immediately after Hippolytus and his attendants intone their ode to Artemis, associates the ocean with domestic duties:

Ὠκεανοῦ τις ὕδωρ στάζουσα πέτρα λέγεται,

βαπτὰν κάλπισι πα-

γὰν ῥυτὰν προειῖσα κρημνῶν.

τόθι μοί τις ἦν φίλα

φορφύρεα φάρεα

ποταμία δρόσω
 τέγγουσα, θερμᾶς δ' ἐπὶ νῶτα πέτρας
 εὐαλίου κατέβαλλ'.

It is said that a certain cliff drips with the water of Oceanus, it pours out a flowing stream from the ridge, into which pitchers are dipped. There a friend of mine was washing purple robes in the clear river and laying them on a sun-warmed rock. (ll. 121–130)

Immediately before this song, however, Hippolytus, too, has sung of “river water” (ποταμίαισι δρόσοις; l. 78), which “shame” (αἰδῶς; l. 78) uses to water the flowers of his “virgin meadow”—diction which mirrors the women’s *parados*.⁸ There is “an immediate contrast,” Segal suggests, between this women’s world, with its pleasant domestic tasks, and Hippolytus’s troop of hunters. Here sea contrasts with woodland, ocean with pure river, the languid flowing of water over the rocks with the strenuous activities of the austere young men. (122)

The ocean/river streams not only into Hippolytus’s masculine “virgin meadow” (ποταμίαισι) but into the sphere of domestic duty he has forsaken, integrating the two. As Hippolytus tries to insist upon the boundaries between Artemis and Aphrodite, the motif of the ocean becomes increasingly aggressive (Segal 123), until at last it erupts into the bull, sent by Poseidon to kill the youth. The wave is not a manifestation of Hippolytus’s repressed sexuality, but rather the unavoidable revelation that the domains he struggles to separate—the city and the wild, the masculine and the feminine, the sexual and the chaste—are inherently, necessarily intermingled. The ocean merges with the women’s river, in which they dip the rich purple robes, and with the clear, unblemished spring, which waters Hippolytus’s meadow and nourishes the flowers.

The integration of these domains culminates visually in a final choral ode, in which the two choruses—male and female—unite to mourn for the royal family, but also in the post-

mortem blending of Hippolytus and Phaedra. Artemis appears upon the *theologeion* not to save Hippolytus from his death, nor to reassert the distinctions between genders he so desperately attempts to guard. Instead, she reaffirms reproductive heteronormativity, inducting Hippolytus into the very ritual he dies to avoid, eternally entwining his memory with the love of Phaedra:

σοὶ δ' ὦ ταλαίπωρ', ἀντὶ τῶνδε τῶν κακῶν

τιμὰς μεγίστας ἐν πόλει Τροζηνία

δώσω: κόραι γὰρ ἄζυγες γάμων πάρος

κόμας κεροῦνταί σοι, δι' αἰῶνος μακροῦ

πένθη μέγιστα δακρύων καρπουμένῳ.

αἰεὶ δὲ μουσσοπιὸς ἐς σὲ παρθένων

ἔσται μέριμνα, κοῦκ ἀνώνυμος πεσὼν

ἔρως ὁ Παίδρας ἐς σὲ σιγηθήσεται.

And for you, unhappy boy, as compensation for your sorrows, I shall grant the greatest honours in the city of Troezen. Unwed maidens will cut their hair for you before their marriage, and throughout the ages you will harvest the great lamentations of their tears. The songs of virgin girls will be of you, nor will Phaedra's *eros* for you fall away nameless and silenced. (ll. 1423–30)

Finally, Artemis declares she must depart, “for it is not right for me to see the dead nor to defile my sight with final breaths. And I see that you are now near this evil” (ll. 1437–39; trans. Halleran).

A question of *sophrosyne*

One of the key themes with which *Hippolytus* engages is the Greek concept of *sophrosyne* (σωφροσύνη),⁹ the root of which appears eighteen times in the tragedy.¹⁰ It is most often in the mouth of Hippolytus. He tells his father Theseus that there is no man (άνήρ) on earth more *sophron* (the adjectival form) than he (έμοῦ ... σωφρονέστερος γεγώς) (l. 995), a sentiment he repeats to the chorus as he leaves the orchestra to die, οὔποτ' άλλον άνδρα σωφρονέστερον / ὄψεσθε (never will you behold another man more *sophron*) (ll.1100–1); and again, when he returns in the *eccyclema* on his deathbed, ὄδ' ὁ σωφροσύνη πάντας ὑπερσχών (I, the man who surpassed all in *sophrosyne*) (l. 1365). Hippolytus attempts to use his reputation for *sophrosyne* to persuade his father that he is innocent of the accusations in Phaedra's suicide note (ll. 1004–7). *Sophrosyne* is, therefore, not only the defining feature with which Hippolytus identifies, but also the attribute he holds highest in his estimation of virtue. In his infamous speech against women after the nurse attempts to proposition him on behalf of her mistress, he denounces especially those who lack *sophrosyne* (ll. 617–68) and describes the concept as something innate only in men. Women, he elaborates, can only be virtuous under male guidance:

ἢ νύν τις αὐτάς σωφρονεῖν διδάξάτω,

ἢ κάμ' ἐάτω ταῖσδ' ἐπεμβαίνειν ἀεί

Either let a man *teach* women *to be sophron*,

Or let me trample them forever. (ll. 667–68; my emphasis)

Ironically, of course, it is Hippolytus who is “trampled” at the end of the tragedy, a death caused in large part by his inability grasp the full meaning of what it is to be *sophron*. Phaedra echoes

Hippolytus’s words in her suicide speech immediately following, but instead suggests that *she* will be the one to teach her stepson *sophrosyne*:

... ἵν' εἰδῆ μὴ ἄπι τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς
 ὑψηλὸς εἶναι: τῆς νόσου δὲ τῆσδέ μοι
 κοινῆ μετασχὼν **σωφρονεῖν μαθήσεται.**

... so that [Hippolytus] may learn not to be contemptuous
 of me in my misfortune; but by sharing my sickness
 in common, he *will learn to be sophron*. (ll. 729–31; my emphasis)

Hippolytus’s definition for the virtue becomes slightly less rigid only when he learns that Phaedra has taken her own life rather than face shame and dishonour. He admits that in this final act “she, although unable to be *sophron* (οὐκ ἔχουσα σωφρονεῖν), used *sophron* (ἔσωφρόνησε)” better than he who is actually in possession of the attribute (ll. 1034–35). One of the play’s fundamental questions—never decisively answered—is whether *sophrosyne* is something innate and cultivated or something learned. Hippolytus clearly suggests that it is innate in men, but external to women—something they can “use” but never “be.” Phaedra, conversely, argues that *sophrosyne* must be learned and arduously practiced by all genders. Even in these small examples it is clear that the definition of *sophrosyne* is mutable, uncertain.

Sophrosyne and its cognates were often translated as “temperance,” “self-control,” “moderation,” or even “chastity” into English, but its definition was the source of much philosophical debate in the ancient world, especially due to the value placed upon the quality in Greek societies. Helen North’s pivotal work on the subject in the 1960s emphasizes the complexity and masculinity of *sophrosyne*,¹¹ its lack of linguistic equivalents in modern languages, and its shifting connotations from early Greek epic to fourth century CE Christian

philosophy. In the epics of Homer, the concept is almost antithetical to the “heroic principle” (North ix, 1–31) because the fundamental quality of “restraint” embedded in the word certainly does not apply to men like Achilles and Ajax, the two greatest warriors in the Greek army in the *Iliad* (North 2). In later literature, however, the trait—formerly more commonly associated with Odysseus—becomes central to Greek ideas of proper manhood. Heraclitus celebrates that σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μέγιστη (“to be *sophron* is the greatest virtue [*arete*]”) (frag. 112). Antiphon suggests also that the term implies the ability to overcome temptation (frag. 59 D–K; Halleran 45). In Plato’s *Symposium*, Agathon defines the terms as “being in control of pleasures and desires” (196c; Halleran 45). Several attempts at defining *sophrosyne* form the central theme of Plato’s *Charmides*, but each is ultimately rejected.¹² In the *Republic*, Plato establishes *sophrosyne* as one of four “cardinal virtues,” relating to both “self-knowledge” and “self-restraint” (North 169ff). Francis E. Peters summarizes:

Its etymological meaning as “moral sanity” is discussed in *Crat[ylus]* 411e, but the true Platonic position of *sophrosyne* is rooted in the Pythagorean notion of *harmonia* (q.v.). The two concepts are brought together in *Rep[ublic]*¹³ [I]t is closely linked with Plato’s tripartite division of the soul . . . *sophrosyne* is the harmonious subjection of the two lower parts to the ruling, the rational part¹⁴ For Aristotle *sophrosyne* is the mean . . . between the extremes of pleasures and pains¹⁵ Zeno, like Plato, makes *sophrosyne* one of the four chief virtues[.] (179–80)

Central to the Greek conception of *sophrosyne* in the Classical period, therefore, is a lack of excess in favour of harmony, self-awareness, and self-control. Despite Hippolytus’s commitment to the virtue in the tragedy, however, it is clear that his behaviour creates the opposite effects: discord, misunderstanding, and passionate excess.

The difficult yet vital concept was personified into the Greek goddess Sophrosyne, who would later become Continentia (restraint, abstemiousness, continence, temperance, moderation, etc.) for the Romans. Just as the Greeks found the term difficult to define, so did the Roman orator Cicero express difficulty in rendering it into Latin, eschewing the name of the goddess and instead alternating between *frugalitas*, *moderatio*, *modestia*, and *temperantia*:

Indeed there is a probable definition of the temperate (*temperans*) man, whom the Greeks call σώφρων (*sophron*), and they call that virtue σωφροσύνη (*sophrosyne*), which I sometimes name temperance (*temperantia*), sometimes moderation (*moderatio*), and sometimes even modesty (*modestia*); but I am unsure whether that virtue may be properly called frugality (*frugalitas*), which has a narrower meaning for the Greeks[.] (*Tusculanae Disputationes* 3.8.16)

Cicero's difficulty in defining this essential Greek quality perpetuates the philosophical conversation begun by the Greeks themselves, but his preference for *temperantia* influences all subsequent interpretations of the term (North 212). The Stoic philosophers of the Roman period, including Musonius Rufus, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, all associate *sophrosyne* with "restraint of the appetites" (North 228). The ascetic possibilities of the concept defined in this way were enthusiastically adopted by the early Christian writers Lactantius, Ambrose, and Thomas Aquinas (North 151), who continue to use *temperantia* as its closest definition, emphasizing its associations with sexual self-restraint. Aquinas ultimately includes *sophrosyne* (translated as *temperantia*) with his own four cardinal virtues, alongside prudence, justice, and courage (*Summa Theologica* 2.1.61). In Renaissance paintings, the goddesses Sophrosyne and Continentia become the Christian Temperantia, "pouring water into a vessel of wine among the cupola mosaics of St. Mark's in Venice, holding an hourglass in the fresco of Good Government

in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, or sheathing a sword while she grasps a bridle between her teeth on the walls of the Arena Chapel in Padua” (North 151).

Although in 1872 Edward Burne-Jones could still recognizably depict *sophrosyne* as Temperantia dousing fire with her vessel of water (figure 21), by the mid-nineteenth century the term began to be understood again in its Greek context as a so-called “manly” virtue, as the union of self-knowledge and self-restraint, thanks in large part to a revitalization of interest in Plato’s dialogues.¹⁶ Earlier engagements, such as Anna Seaward’s “Ode to Poetic Fancy” (1781) and Susanna Blamire’s “The Lily of the Valley” (1786) emphasize the feminine, personified goddess Sophrosyne as a suitably mild companion for their virginal female speakers, interpreting the term in its feminized Christian adaptation as modesty, chastity, and obedience. A lively discussion of *sophrosyne* in British periodicals conspicuously increases in the years following Grote and Jowett’s translations of Plato’s texts in the 1860s and 70s, exploring its implications for masculinity and manly virtue.¹⁷ A contributor to *The Examiner* in 1878, for example, laments the lack of “the greatest Platonic virtue, σωφροσύνη—*temperantia*—self-control” among contemporary philosophers and scientists (939). In an 1866 review of Grote’s *Plato, and the other Companions of Sokrates*, Luard Henry Richards complains of the historian’s rendering of *sophrosyne* as “temperance” in Plato’s *Charmides*:

Charmides, or Of Sophrosyne, we must at first entitle this dialogue; for it is not at first clear what we are to give as the English of *Sophrosyne*. Mr. Grote renders it *Temperance*; but cannot go on far with this word before its insufficiency for the course of the argument becomes glaringly apparent . . . [For] Critias interposes, and says that Sophrosyne is *Self-knowledge*. This is a meaning very far removed from Temperance[.] (420)

Grote admits in a footnote that “Temperance” is a “very inadequate” translation of σωφροσύνη, but does not elaborate or clarify on the term’s expansiveness. Instead, he simply regrets that he knows “no single English word better suited” (482 n1).

Despite Richards’s criticism of Grote’s work, Jowett, too, favours “temperance” as the primary translation for *sophrosyne* in his 1871 English edition of Plato’s dialogues. Unlike Grote, however, Jowett includes a discussion of the elusive word in his introduction to *Charmides*:

The subject of the Charmides is Temperance or σωφροσύνη, a peculiarly Greek notion, which may also be rendered Moderation, Modesty, Discretion, Wisdom, without completely exhausting by all these terms the various associations of the word. It may be described as “mens sana in corpore sano,”¹⁸ the harmony or due proportion of the higher and lower elements of human nature which “makes a man his own master,” according to the definition of the Republic. In the accompanying translation the word has been rendered in different places either Temperance or Wisdom, as the connection seemed to require; for in the philosophy of Plato σωφροσύνη still retains an intellectual element[.]

(3)

Echoing Jowett in an 1880 essay for the *Westminster Review*, classicist Alfred William Benn defines *sophrosyne* as “the joint observance” of “two precepts” that “stand out before all others ... from the very soul of Greek experience: ‘Be moderate,’ [and] ‘know thyself’” (390). For Benn, *sophrosyne* is the measure of all other Greek virtues:

Let us suppose that each individual has a sphere of activity marked out for him by his own nature and his special environment; then to discern clearly the limits of that sphere and to keep within them would be Sophrosyne, while the discernment taken alone would

be wisdom. The same self-restraint operating as a check on interference with other spheres would be justice; while the expansive force by which a man fills up his entire sphere and guards it against aggressions may be called courage. Thus we are enabled to comprehend the many-sided significance of Sophrosyne, to see how it could stand both for a particular virtue and for all virtuousness whatever. (390–91)

Benn is stressing what Foucault would term the care of the self as a practice of freedom, centred on his term *praxis*, which includes these ideas of self-governance and self-restraint. This Victorian interest in Platonic *sophrosyne* stresses the term's connections to masculine identity through its emphasis on harmony between the physical and intellectual and its associations of masculine independence, individuality, self-reliance, and self-regulation.

Although Christian philosophers narrowed the expansive concept into something relating only to chastity, it is clear from texts like *Hippolytus* and *Charmides* that sex and sexual self-governance are nevertheless critical components of the Greek virtue. Socrates is called *sophon* in *Charmides* because, when tempted by a glimpse of the titular youth's beautiful body, he does not succumb to his obvious desire. Ed Cohen and George Mosse have both argued that Victorian conceptions of manliness also primarily revolve around sexual regulation, but Victorian emphasis on self-control, like the Greeks', was not limited only to the libido. James Eli Adams has compellingly highlighted that Victorian literary representations of masculine identity are an "ascetic discipline" (2), variously structured around means of self-governance—an attribute of "extraordinary prominence in nineteenth century culture" (4). This restraint is necessary to navigate the conflicting demands that Herbert Sussman identifies "between the male sphere and the domestic sphere, the opposition of bonds within the all-male world of work to the heterosexual ties of marriage" (4). And yet, Sussman suggests, "Victorian men felt a deep unease

in being compelled to move from a masculine bonding that exists on the boundary of the homosocial/homoerotic to a heterosexual bonding within marriage” (184). The celibacy of homosocial work life had to be tempered with the procreative, matrimonial virility that remained the traditional benchmark of bourgeois manhood and measurable manliness. Both Greek and Victorian conceptions of masculinity, I suggest, are defined, or are at least definable, by *sophrosyne*—a term which, ironically, is impossible to delimit.

Euripides’s Hippolytus fundamentally misunderstands one of the key components of the *sophrosyne* by which he sets such store. For Hippolytus, *sophrosyne* relates entirely to total sexual restraint and ἀγνός (“purity;” both religious and sexual). He tells his father,

λέχους γὰρ ἐς τόδ’ ἡμέρας ἀγνὸν δέμας:
οὐκ οἶδα πρᾶξιν τήνδε πλὴν λόγῳ κλύων
γραφήν τε λεύσσω: οὐδὲ ταῦτα γὰρ σκοπεῖν
πρόθυμός εἰμι, παρθένον ψυχὴν ἔχων.

For to this day my body is pure of sex; I do not know the act save through hearing stories and looking at pictures; nor do I relish seeing these at all, for I have a virgin spirit (*psyche*). (ll. 1003–6)

Hippolytus’s emphasis on his virginity, while seemingly normative to a Christian society, was both “unusual” (Segal 279) and even “astonishing” (Barrett 172) to a fifth-century BCE Athenian audience. Ancient commentators tend to characterize the emotion *eros*—intense sexual desire—as dangerous and destructive, an impulse which causes humans to lose self-mastery and to become “slaves” to their bodily functions (this approach is especially notable in Platonic philosophy). *Eros* unbound is an example of excess and is therefore antithetical to *sophrosyne* and proper manhood. Yet, the total abstinence propounded by Hippolytus is similarly too

extreme to be *sophron*. Indeed, for Athenian Greeks, lack of proper sexual expression in youths endangered the health of the individual, the family, and the state. Hippocratic texts diagnose prolonged sexual abstinence as unhealthy, and even the cause of insanity in young girls (Goldhill, “Sexuality and Difference,” 118; Lloyd 102, n84).¹⁹ Reproductive sex is also necessary to continue the *genos*, the familial line, and to pass on wealth, “the often expressed desire for the continuity of the *oikos* through children” (Goldhill, “Sexuality and Difference,” 118). Sex and marriage were central to the security and continuity of not only the *oikos*, but also of Athens itself: Athenian parents needed to provide legitimate, Athenian children to become future citizens, hoplites, and political participants in the *polis*. Due to its extremism, therefore, Hippolytus’s rejection of sexuality is not only unvirtuous, but dangerous to normative Athenian society, which requires its citizen males to embark upon a particular trajectory towards manhood and civic duty.

Victorian ideas of “proper” masculinity, when contextualized within the two spheres of homosocial public and heterosexual domestic life, can also be recognized in Euripides’s interrogation of *sophrosyne* in *Hippolytus*. Hippolytus’s commitment to the wilderness and to hunting, although aspects of Artemis’s *numen*, suspends him in a state of arrested development and prevents him from becoming part of the urban political processes of civilized society. As Pierre Vidal-Naquet explains, “‘definitive admission’ into society [for young men] took two forms, essentially, marriage and becoming a member of a phalanx of hoplites in the army, or, later on, a sailor in the navy” (50). In the tragedy, Hippolytus positions himself in extremes which hinder this admission, first in his total rejection of heterosexual marriage and second in his obsession with hunting as an end in and of itself, not as a rite of passage which eventually will transition him into the citizen soldier (hoplite) and member of the *ecclesia*. Building on Jean-

Pierre Vernant and Vidal-Naquet's understanding of the hunt as "a social activity which is differentiated according to the various stages of a man's life" (*Tragedy and Myth*, 151), Goldhill delineates that

Through the first hunt, first kill, the youth aspires to joining the world of men in an activity rigidly male Indeed, the hunt performs a primary function . . . in the self-definition of man and his world: he leaves the city, marking its boundaries, to face the wild animal, and brings the conquered animal back to the city to be cooked. So, for Vidal-Naquet, "hunting is an expression of the transition between nature and culture." ("Sexuality and Difference," 119)²⁰

Rather than a means of forming a *sophron* balance between domestic demands and the homosocial cohort of hunters with whom he enters the space of the orchestra, Hippolytus's devotion to the hunt is entirely for its own sake. The boy is supposed to leave for the hunt in order that he return to the city as a man, bearing the resources necessary for the nourishment of his *oikos* and *polis*, and practiced in the homosocial communion of military and political life. Thus, Hippolytus's denial of marriage and sex in favour of the eternal hunt is not simply a distortion of traditional sexual practices, but of the hunt itself, which is a vital component in the process of "entering a position and status in society" (Goldhill, "Sexuality and Difference" 120). "Hippolytus's rejection of Aphrodite," Goldhill continues, "is not just a desire for chastity or purity, but also a subversion of his passage to manhood" ("Sexuality and Difference" 120). Hippolytus is not just refusing sex; he is refusing to grow up.

Ironically, the trajectory into manhood, which Hippolytus rejects, falls into the purview of the goddess Artemis, whom Hippolytus claims to revere above all others and with whom he claims to enjoy special companionship (ll. 84–87). Vernant explains:

Artemis is a *kourotrophe* goddess, who presides over the delivery, birth and upbringing of children. Positioned as she is, at the intersections of the wild and the tame, her role is to take charge of the offspring of human beings ... She raises these children from their unformed state of newborn babes so that they may cross the decisive thresholds represented for girls by marriage, and for boys by the acquisition of citizenship. In the course of a series of trials completed in the context of the wild on the margins of the city, the young must have the power to break the ties that have bound them to this different world since childhood. First and foremost, here, at the ambiguous stage in which the separation remains uncertain, a clear dividing line must be drawn once and for all between the boys and the girls. (197)

Hippolytus's refusal of Aphrodite in the form of "sex and marriage" (as she complains in the prologue) is also a transgression against the very goddess he claims to value most. As a goddess of liminal spaces (from the Latin *limen*, "threshold"), it is Artemis who presides over the transition of children into adulthood. Her realm is "a place of margins, border zones where what is 'other' becomes manifest in the contacts made with it, where the wild and the civilized live side-by-side, coming into opposition, certainly, but thereby mutually infiltrating one another" (Vernant 196–97). By disdainfully rejecting "civilized life" in favour of eternal wilderness, Hippolytus is, in fact, rejecting Artemis in her most fundamental guise of liminality. In the young man's prayer to her, τέλος δὲ κάμψαιμ' ὥσπερ ἠρξάμην βίου ("may I make the last turn in the course of life just as I was when I began it") (l. 870), he bluntly expresses, as Goldhill identifies, his "hopes to avoid the passage, the stages of a man's life" ("Sexuality and Difference" 121), through which it is Artemis's prerogative to usher him. This distorted commitment to chastity

causes Hippolytus to reject the terms of both his favourite goddess and his favourite virtue, as both exist as the mean between opposing extremes.²¹

Christopher Gill identifies *sophrosyne* as “central to the informing dialectic” of *Hippolytus*, through which characters are demarcated by their interpretations of the term and through which the term is defined by interpretations of the characters who engage with it (80). “Hippolytus and Phaedra,” Gill suggests, “largely fail to communicate to each other, or to others, the way in which they are both powerfully motivated by (versions of) *sophrosyne*, a failure which contributes crucially towards their destroying each other and themselves” (85). This failure stems both from imperfect communication and from the word’s very indeterminacy (Gill 85). This flawed exchange of definitions, however, is better understood in terms of Bakhtin’s dialogism. *Hippolytus* does not eventually result in the harmonizing of various antithetical definitions for *sophrosyne*. As in the *Charmides*, Euripides does not offer a single, unifying distinction of what it is to be *sophron*, but rather plays on its various meanings in a manner that forms an overarching critique of Athenian social norms, especially with regards to masculine identity.

For Phaedra, *sophrosyne* is, in Foucauldian terms, a process of becoming, an habitual practice of maintaining her status as virtuous wife in opposition to what she calls her νόσος, “sickness” (l. 394, 405)—her god-inflicted *eros* for Hippolytus. *Sophrosyne* for her, then, is learned. It is the ability to conform to societal norms, to master one’s impulses so as to retain εὐκλεία, “a good name” (Gill 90). The nurse’s interpretation of this process is superficial: she argues that if a good name is all that matters, there is no harm in gratifying the desire—provided one has the control to keep it secret, to live a double life successfully (Gill 88). Yet Phaedra’s *sophrosyne*, although motivated by externality (by the shame culture of the Greeks),²² requires a

grappling with and suffocation of these unconventional desires, rather than an indulgence of them. She understands *sophrosyne* as a practice of self, as temperance and self-restraint through which she attains her freedom from the νόσος. Hippolytus, however, considers *sophrosyne* “a fundamental part of his nature, as something ‘assigned’ or ‘given’ to him (*eilechen*), innate perhaps, but also, in principle, a lifelong property” (Gill 86). In his prayer to Artemis, he describes his value:

ὄσοις διδακτὸν μηδὲν, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ φύσει

τὸ σωφρονεῖν εἴληχεν εἰς τὰ πάντ’ ἀεὶ ...

those for whom being *sophron* is not a learned quality, but one which has been assigned as part of their nature in every respect forever. (ll. 79–80; trans. Gill 86)

Phaedra believes she is *sophron* because she will keep her unchaste desire in check at any cost; Hippolytus, because his desires *are* chaste.

A fundamental question persists in the tragedy, “whether a virtue such as *sophrosune* depends on nature (*phusis*) or on the kind of teaching and habituation that ensures conformity with the laws or conventions (*nomoi*) of society” (Gill 92). Various interpretations and understandings of *sophrosyne* are never reconciled or privileged in the tragedy, and all pose difficulties for the implications of *sophrosyne* in relation to Victorian constructions of masculinity. As Sussman elaborates in Foucauldian terms:

At the center of the early Victorian occupation with the technology of the self as the management of energy, particularly of sexualized desire, lies a crucial problematic. While psychic discipline defines what the Victorians term manliness, if such discipline becomes too rigorous the extreme constraint of male desire will distort the male psyche and deform the very energy that powers and empowers men. Setting the intensity of

discipline, then, becomes the crucial issue within the practice of the self. The formations of Victorian manhood may be set along a continuum of degrees of self-regulation, and along this continuum the monk, the celibate male safely displaced into the past becomes the test or limit case. (3)

Sussman, of course, is primarily referring to the medieval idiom of the monastery, and never uses the term *sophrosyne* to describe these questions of Victorian masculinity, but he is nevertheless continuing a conversation that emerges in *Hippolytus*. The Victorians, the Greeks, and the characters of the tragedy are all searching for the limits of self-restraint, the mean between desire and abstinence, the “true” definition of *sophrosyne*, in their constructions of manhood.

“The lightning vision of the darling”: Symonds, Pater, and *sophron* desire

Hippolytus, whose self-identification with *sophrosyne* as παρθένον ψυχήν (“a virgin soul”) cannot survive the conformative demands of his society; Phaedra, whose suppression of her deviant desire eventually destroys her and those around her; and indeed the nurse, whose solution to all these issues of *sophrosyne* is to succumb to temptation and live a double life; all caught the imagination of several late Victorian writers exploring their own relationships to social convention and articulations of self. Hippolytus’s understanding, or misunderstanding, of *sophrosyne* in the Euripidean tragedy separates him from conventional masculinity. He is unable to harmonize the spiritual and the physical, he lacks procreative virility, and he does not struggle towards virtue through self-restraint. His intrinsic virtue, which he identifies almost exclusively with his virginity, is one which becomes conventionally feminine by the Victorian era. As Zeitlin proposes, Hippolytus’s obsession with his virginity (typified in his devotion to Artemis as *Parthenos*) “suggests the cultural values often embedded in the idea of maidenhood” (*Playing*

the Other, 235). His conflation of piety and chastity are recognized and romanticized by John Addington Symonds, who responds to this gender ambiguity in his discussion of the play in *Studies of the Greek Poets* (1873–76):

Side by side with the fever of Phaedra is the pure fresh health of the hunter-hero. The scent of forest glades, where he pursues deer with Artemis, surrounds him; the sea-breeze from the sands, where he trains his horses, moves his curls. His piety is as untainted as his purity; it is the maiden-service of a maiden-saint. In his observance of the oath extorted from him by Phaedra's nurse, in his obedience to his father's will, in his kindness to his servants, in his gentle endurance of a painful death, and in the joys with which he greets the virgin huntress when she comes to visit him, Euripides has firmly traced the ideal of a guileless, tranquil manhood. Hippolytus among the ancients was the Paladin of chastity, the Percival of their romance. Nor is any knight of mediaeval legend more true and pure than he. (*GP* 19)

Through his “maiden-service” and “untainted purity,” Symonds traces in Hippolytus the “ideal of guileless, tranquil manhood” and the epitome of the chaste medieval knight, “true and pure,” into the outline of the adolescent boy. Hippolytus's feminine-coded inexperience and lightness are tempered with the wild freedom and strength of “the hunter-hero.” Hippolytus's *sophrosyne*, as something innate within him, is not a Foucauldian practice of becoming, but a state of being, an innocence connected to his youth, which, by its very nature, is doomed.

Yopie Prins identifies Symonds's depiction of the Euripidean Hippolytus as “an ideal male aesthete” (“Ladies' Greek” 600). She highlights how Symonds lingers especially on the virginal meadow Hippolytus describes at lines 71–87, a “projection and spatialization of desire for Hippolytus, an adolescent boy (*parthenos*), who wants to remain forever a virgin” (Prins,

“Ladies Greek” 600). Symonds’s fascination with Hippolytus is part of a larger *fin-de-siècle* paradigm identified by Martha Vicinus, in which a preoccupation with the figure of the adolescent boy “signified the coming of age of the modern gay and lesbian sensibility: his protean nature displayed a double desire—to love a boy and to be a boy” (83–84). For Symonds, Hippolytus’s virtue does not flow from a space of self-denial or self-control in his “maiden-piety.” His *sophrosyne* is “a heart at peace,” a natural state of boyhood on the cusp of maturation, whose “pure companionship” with Artemis, is, as Prins describes, “a purification of heterosexual desire” (“Ladies’ Greek” 601).

The connection of the beautiful boy to Symonds’s ideal aesthete was first clarified in *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1883). The essay has a dramatic publication history due to its sensitive subject matter—Greek *paidierastia*—but in a footnote to *Greek Ethics* (included in the appendix to Havelock Ellis’s *Sexual Inversion* [1897]), Symonds makes it clear that this topic informed his analysis of *Hippolytus*: “The following treatise on Greek Love was not composed for the present volume. I wrote it in the year 1873, when my mind was occupied with my *Studies of Greek Poets*” (*PGE* 163). In the essay, Symonds associates *sophrosyne* generally with the perfection of young boys, essential to his interpretation of what he calls Greek aestheticism. Like Grote and Jowett,²³ he translates the difficult Greek term as “modest temperance and self-restraint” (*PGE* 38). When he introduces the theme as it appears in *Charmides*, however, he adds a few qualifiers, which fundamentally inform his discussion of *paidierastia*. Just as he describes Hippolytus as being “untainted,” so too does he consider the beautiful boy Charmides “unspoiled,” combining his physical virginity with spiritual purity, with “docility, modesty, simplicity, and healthiness of soul” (*PGE* 39), all of which recall Victorian discussions of *sophrosyne* following Grote and Jowett’s translation of Plato’s texts. Yet, rather than a process of

manhood and maturity, Symonds interprets the *sophrosyne* described by Plato in *Charmides* as embodied and inherent in the adolescent youth; or, more importantly, as attainable in the appreciation of the youth:

Physical perfection of [the boy] suggested to [the Greek pederast's] fancy all that he loved best in moral qualities. Hardihood, self-discipline, alertness of intelligence, health, temperance, indomitable spirit, energy, the joy of active life, plain living and high thinking—these qualities the Greeks idealised, and of these, “the lightning vision of the darling” was the living incarnation. (*PGE* 69)

The boy's connections to *sophrosyne* constitute the basis of Symonds's argument for “Greek love.” If the object of desire is by nature modest, temperate, and *mens sana in corpore sano*, then how can the desire itself be “hateful and unclean” (*PGE* 69)? Through his reliance upon the ancient tradition, Symonds is able to assert a counter-normative, yet ultimately essentialist, argument. “The morality of the Greeks,” he elaborates,

was aesthetic. To find the law of human energy, the measure of man's natural desires, the right moment for indulgence and for self-restraint, the balance which results in health, the proper limit for each several function which secures the harmony of all, seem to them the aim of ethics. Their personal code of conduct ended in “modest self-restraint:” not abstention, but selection and subordination ruled their practice. They were satisfied with controlling much that more ascetic natures unconditionally suppress. Consequently, to the Greeks, there was nothing at first sight criminal in *paiderastia* Finding it within their hearts, they chose to regulate it, rather than to root it out. (*PGE* 69)

Thus, there are two kinds of *sophrosyne*: the perfection of the boy and the controlled desire for the boy—“to love a boy and to be a boy.”

For Symonds, the beautiful Greek boy is the “living incarnation” of perfect masculinity and Greek “aesthetic morality” (*PGE* 69), someone whose aesthetic and spiritual completeness is heightened, or even enabled, by the transience of his youth, by “the lightning vision of the darling.” “The very evanescence,” Symonds poeticizes, “of this ‘bloom of youth’ made it in Greek eyes desirable, since nothing more clearly characterises the poetic myths which adumbrate their special sensibility than the pathos of a blossom that must fade” (*PGE* 68). Vicinus connects similar idealizations of the adolescent to queer-coded language circulating in the late nineteenth century. This is not to suggest that these men were pederasts, but that they saw in the figure of the boy a “free agent, who best expressed who they were” (Vicinus 84). The shadow of doom that heightens the boy’s “bloom of youth” reflects how “fin-de-siècle homosexual love is made more complete by the very fact of its transitory and dangerous nature” (Vicinus 85). The boy, in this sense, becomes the personification of homoeroticism, and desire for him the epitome of love described by Diotima in Plato’s *Symposium*: no longer a desire for the boy himself, but for the *sophrosyne* which he inherently embodies.

Nevertheless, according to Symonds, for the boy to remain *sophron* and an object of *sophron* desire, he must, as Hippolytus does, resist the normative transition into manhood. This coming-of-age, which is closely connected with the loss of virginity with a female partner, becomes a kind of—or literal—death. “So may I end my life,” Symonds translates from Hippolytus’s prayer to Artemis, “as I began” (*GP* 19; *Hippolytus* l. 870). The association of sex as a kind of death is usually made of maidens about to be married in Greek myth and literature: the death of the virgin in her husband’s bed and her rebirth as wife and mother.²⁴ But because these boys, and the desire for them, exist outside of procreative convention, there is no rebirth. Hippolytus’s chaste *sophrosyne* results in his death by “unbridled heterosexual *eros*” (Prins 601),

symbolized by Poseidon's bull from the sea and his own spooked horses. Rather than an ultimate escape from the constrictive sexual demands of his incipient manhood, however, this death results in his subsumption back into heteronormativity by the goddess whom he believed to value his celibacy most. In a speech translated by Symonds in *Greek Poets*, Artemis proclaims near the end of Euripides's *Hippolytus*:

σοὶ δ', ὦ ταλαίπωρ', ἀντὶ τῶνδε τῶν κακῶν

τιμὰς μεγίστας ἐν πόλει Τροζηνία

δώσω: κόραι γὰρ ἄζυγες γάμων πάρος

κόμας κεροῦνταί σοι, δι' αἰῶνος μακροῦ

πένθη μέγιστα δακρύων καρπουμένῳ.

ἄει δὲ μουσοποιὸς ἐς σὲ παρθένων

ἔσται μέριμνα, κοῦκ ἀνόνημος πεσῶν

ἔρωσ ὁ Φαίδρας ἐς σὲ σιγηθήσεται.

As guerdon for thine anguish, shalt henceforth

Gain highest honors in Troezenian land,

My gift. Unwedded maids before their bridals

Shall shear their locks for thee, and thou forever

Shalt reap the harvest of unnumbered tears.

Yea, and for aye, with lyre and song the virgins

Shall keep thy memory; nor shall Phaedra's love

For thee unnamed fall in oblivious silence. (*Hippolytus* ll. 1423–30; trans. Symonds, *GP*

20)

Artemis forces Hippolytus to become a ritualized aspect of “sex and marriage,” to become another conventional touchstone of the transition into maturity for both men and women—a sacrifice to Hymenaeus. Ironically, she forever links the young man with the woman whose lust for him forces his “tranquil” adolescence to a crisis point. To Symonds, this ending is not indicative of a willing return to the *status quo* of Athenian religions and ethics, but “an attack upon the ethics [Athenian culture] had sanctioned” (*GP* 9). Try as they might, these boys—and their admirers—can only escape social convention for so long. As a fleeting “bloom” or a “lightning vision,” the *sophron* boy is doomed not only to death, but to reabsorption into that which he tried to flee, whether that “death” be a Victorian marriage or a real, violent end.

Like Symonds, Pater explores the “maiden-piety” of Hippolytus as a relationship between chastity and aestheticism. A number of his works of fiction also equate a man’s sexual relations with a woman with death, including “Duke Carl of Rosenmold” and his only completed novel, *Marius the Epicurean* (1885).²⁵ In an 1888 letter to Arthur Symonds, Pater explains that he is “at work on a new Portrait—Hippolytus Veiled.” As Lene Østermark-Johansen points out, Pater’s use of the word “Portrait” links the text to four works he published in 1887, in the volume he titled *Imaginary Portraits*—suggesting that he considered the work another such story (28–29). “Hippolytus Veiled: A Study from Euripides” was subsequently published by *Macmillan’s Magazine* alongside his essay “The *Bacchanals* of Euripides” in 1888, which no doubt led Shadwell to include the odd story with the companion essay in *Greek Studies* (1894), despite its closer generic relationship to his other Greek-themed imaginary portraits “Denys L’Auxerrois” (1886) and “Apollo in Picardy” (1893). Unlike in the “The *Bacchanals*,” Pater makes no direct reference to Euripides or his tragedy *Hippolytus* in “Hippolytus Veiled”—he instead writes his own version of the Hippolytus myth, evoking only Plato, Pausanias, Thucydides, and Plutarch by

name. Nevertheless, the imaginary portrait does share its appellation with a tragedy by the Athenian playwright—not the extant *Hippolytus*, latterly titled *Hippolytus Crowned*, but with Euripides’s first, lost, attempt at the myth: *Hippolytus Kalyptomenos*, or, *Hippolytus Veiled*. The work, therefore, is not only an imaginary portrait of Hippolytus, but an *imagined* reinterpretation of what Pater *imagined* the lost tragedy to contain: a portrait which does not diminish the virtue of his *sophron* boy to reclaim the self-control of a *sophron* woman.

Pater frames the portrait in a manner evocative of Symonds’s contemplation of the *sophron* boy.²⁶ The speaker of “Hippolytus Veiled” conceives himself in the position of an admirer, “fired by certain fragments of [Greek art’s] earlier days, of a beauty, in truth, absolute, and vainly longing for more” (*IP* 160). Like Grote, Jowett, and Symonds, Pater also prefers the translation of “temperance” or sometimes “self-restraint” in his rendering of Attic *sophrosyne*, elaborating on the concept especially with regards to the titular youth of Plato’s *Charmides* in *Plato and Platonism*.²⁷ Through his identification of himself as “the student of Greek sculpture” who “indulges an ideal of youthful energy therein, yet withal of youthful self-restraint” (*IP* 160), Pater’s narrator, too, detects the “ideal” in the tempering of “energy” and “self-restraint” within the adolescent male. The story becomes a literary sculpture-portrait of the *sophron* boy, whom Symonds had identified as Hippolytus a decade earlier. “Hippolytus Veiled,” therefore, is both an imaginary portrait of the *sophron* boy and an exercise in adoring him—a process of *sophrosyne* for the speaker and his audience.

Symonds and Pater both imagine Hippolytus’s *sophrosyne* metaphorically as an idealized pastoral location. In *Greek Poets*, Symonds makes a point of translating the portion of Hippolytus’s entrance song in Euripides’s tragedy, in which he describes the “virgin meadow” from where he has obtained offerings for Artemis. The untouched plain serves as an allegory for

Hippolytus's religious celibacy and, as Prins has argued, as a "space of homoerotic spatialization" ("Ladies Greek" 601):

Lady, for thee this garland have I woven
 Of wilding flowers plucked from an unshorn meadow,
 Where neither shepherd dares to feed his flock,
 Nor ever scythe hath swept, but through the mead
 Unshorn in spring the bee pursues her labors,
 And maiden modesty [τὸ σωφρονεῖν] with running rills
 Waters the garden. (*GP* 19; *Hippolytus* ll. 73–82)

Symonds's translation of the gerund form of *sophrosyne*, τὸ σωφρονεῖν, as "maiden modesty" further demonstrates the "sexual anarchy" (Østermark-Johansen 187) contained within the young man's conceptions of *sophron* virtue, which Prins describes as "a feminized masculinity born from a masculinized femininity" ("Ladies Greek" 600). "Maiden modesty" ambiguously describes the meadow, Hippolytus, and Artemis herself, creating a tenuous link between place, man, and goddess.

For Pater, too, the pastoral world becomes a space of "feminized masculinity," a nurturing world populated by numerous mother figures and an homosocial "priesthood" (158), the members of which are—like Hippolytus—able to be "nearer the gods" (*IP* 159) due to their associations with celibacy.²⁸ The portrait begins with a rhapsodic nostalgia for "the early Attic deme-life—its picturesque, intensely localised variety, in the hollow or on the spur of mountain or sea-shore" (*IP* 157), when Greek religion was "a credible or practicable thing" (*IP* 157). In this pre-Classical deme-life, "the Greek, as his very name also, *Hellen*, was the title of a priesthood, had been religious abundantly, sanctifying every detail of his actual life with the

religious idea” (*IP* 158). The invasion of these “untouched,” dappled communities by a man, virile, strong, “uncompromising” (*IP* 161), which unifies them into a single body, “Attica,” is a violation of the innocent, pure deme-life, hitherto “unbroken” (*IP* 159):

It was Theseus, uncompromising young master of the situation in fear-less application of the “modern spirit” of his day to every phase of life where it was applicable, who at the expense of Attica, had given Athens a people, reluctant enough, as Plutarch suggests, to desert “their homes and religious usages and many good and gracious kings of their own” for this elect youth, who thus figures, passably, as mythic shorthand for civilization, making roads and the like, facilitating travel (how usefully!), suppressing various forms of violence, but many innocent things as well[.] (*IP* 161)

Just as sex and marriage begin the wild young hunter’s transition into civil and domestic manhood, so too does Theseus’s manly incursion into the virgin wilderness of Attica amalgamate its many demes into the *polis*, into so-called adulthood or sophisticated civilization, into the “transition between nature and culture” (Vidal-Naquet 151). To push Athens out of childhood, Theseus must “exterminate” the fierce and virginal Amazon, who, alongside the centaur (another kind of dual creature), comes to represent “the regret of Athenians themselves for something that could never be brought to life again” (*IP* 161)—a sentiment which foreshadows Hippolytus’s own inability to be reborn. It is in one of these decadent demes, “one of those doomed, decaying villages” (162), that Hippolytus lives in “pure companionship” with the women who occupy a safely maternal, rather than sexual, role in his life.

The deme-world of “Hippolytus Veiled,” as Østermark-Johansen has pointed out, is strongly maternal, populated by numerous mother figures for the “red and white boy” (189). He is nurtured in turns by his Amazon mother, who has been mellowed by her “quickened maternal

sense” (*IP* 162), and by Artemis in her guise of “a virgin, necessarily therefore the creature of solitude, yet also as the assiduous nurse of children, and patroness of the young” (*IP* 165). Both women rear children in seclusion, free from the invasive presence of a masculine, public influence, in one of the waning communities desperately holding out against Theseus’s amalgamation. As is the case in both “Demeter and Persephone” and “A Study of Dionysus,” Pater once again lingers on the pain of the mother in her parturition, on Antiope’s “birth of angry tears with which she had received [Hippolytus] into the world” (*IP* 162), and the transplantation of this maternal pain to the child as he “trace[s] with small fingers the wrinkled lines of her woe-begone brow, carved there as if by a thousand years of sorrow” (*IP* 163).²⁹ The sorrow of these mothers does not diminish the joy of the young man, but instead grants him a deep connection to the feminine-coded land. He honours both women and maintains his youthful status through his “maiden chastity”:

To [Artemis], nevertheless, her maternity, her solitude, to this virgin mother, who, with no husband, no love, not fruit of her own, is so tender to the children of others, in a full heart he devotes himself—his immaculate body and soul [i.e. *sophrosyne*]. Dedicating himself thus, he had the sense also that he become more entirely than ever the chevalier of his mortal mother, of her sad cause. The devout, industrious hands clear carefully away the dust, the faded relics of her former worship, renewed once more as the sacred spring, set free from encumbrance, in answer to his willing ministries murmurs again under the dim vault in its marble basin, work of primitive Titanic fingers—flows out through its rocky channel, filling the whole township with chaste thoughts of her. (*IP* 165)

Thus, his *sophrosyne*, his “immaculate body and soul,” forges his connection between goddess, mother, and earth, diffusing his chaste *sophrosyne* throughout the deme like a “sacred spring.”

But this *sophrosyne* is inevitably tied to death. Pater consistently emphasizes the inevitable shadow of Hippolytus’s doom, caused by the “chastity” which is “itself a kind of death” (*IP* 166, 167), himself a “creature of an already vanishing world” (*IP* 168). The Artemis of his worship becomes not the daughter of Zeus and Leto, but of Demeter, who, like Antiope and Semele, “had lain in the rock-hewn cubicle of the inner chamber, and, certainly in sorrow” given birth (*IP* 165). This version of the story is the “secret” to understanding the goddess’s paradox of “genial, all-embracing maternity” and “the arrow of death on a string”:

For the late birth of this shadowy daughter was identified dimly with the sudden passing into Hades of Persephone, [Demeter’s] first born. As [Hippolytus] scans her acts anew, an awful surmise comes to him; his divine patroness moves there as death, surely. (*IP* 165–66)

The Artemis of this myth is the fatal shadow of Hippolytus’s *sophrosyne*, the companion of his chastity reminding him that the youth it signifies is only fleeting. His mother Antiope is wary of this “seemingly dead goddess,” worrying that the “absolute chastity” of her piety is “itself a kind of death,” but reluctant to encourage its opposite in fear that she will lose the boy to manhood (*IP* 166). “Half selfish for a moment,” Pater describes, “she prays that he may remain for ever a child, to her solace, welcoming the promise of his chastity (though chastity were itself a kind of death) as the pledge of his abiding always with her” (*IP* 166–67).

It is the fourth mother who forces Hippolytus’s *sophrosyne* to crisis: Phaedra, “a fiery soul with wild strange blood in her veins,” who does not live in the chaste solitude of Attic deme-life, but as a wife in Athens, where Aphrodite “was just then the best served deity” (*IP*

169). In the clutter of civilization, the line between wife and “divine courtesan” (*IP* 170) is dangerously blurred. The Athenian queen’s apartments luridly mingle with the temple of Aphrodite (*IP* 170); her “sickly perfumes” (*IP* 170) replace the “sacred spring” of Artemis. Phaedra’s desire for her stepson confronts the speaker and audience with a mirror—all are attracted to the boy’s *sophrosyne*:

Ah! it was that very reluctance that chiefly stirred her. Healthily white and red, he had a marvellous *discretion* about him, as of one never to be caught unaware, as if he never could be anything but like water from the rock, or the white flowers of the morning, of the beams of the morning star turned to human flesh. It was the *self-possession* of this happy mind, the *purity of this virgin body*, she would fain have perturbed, as a pledge to herself of her own gaudy claim to supremacy. (*IP* 171; my emphasis)

Although Socrates, Symonds, and Pater’s narrator are able to practice *sophrosyne* through their controlled appreciation for Hippolytus, Phaedra is unable to regulate her desire. She resents the very virtue that attracts her and, in an echo of Euripides’s Aphrodite, resents too his deferment of maturity: “Is he indeed but a child still, this nursling of the forbidden Amazon, of that Amazonian goddess—to be a child always?” (*IP* 171). The “pining sickness of Phaedra” (*GP* 19), in the words of Symonds, is symptomatic of, or adjacent to, the shifting topography of Athenian life first initiated by Theseus. The “roads” the king makes to connect the dappled demes of Attica are implicitly sexual and violent, pushing the rural communities into a maturity, into civilization. These roads are mirrored in both Theseus’s rape of Antiope and in Phaedra’s attempted rape of the resultant son.

Hippolytus is expelled from the nascent civilization, but he cannot return to the “doomed, decaying villages” (*IP* 162) unscathed. His “old religion,” resonating in the land, “seem[s] to

turn against him now, the trees, the streams, the very rocks, swoon into living creatures” (*IP* 172). The boy gains reprieve from the wasting sickness immediately following his banishment, suggesting that the mistaken curse of his father does not kill him in this version of the tale. Yet, it is through the “ministrations of maternal love” (Østermark-Johansen 191) that Hippolytus returns to health, ministrations which continue to keep Hippolytus from reaching maturity. As he again begins to indulge in the activities of boyhood, racing across the countryside once more in his chariot, “a great wave leapt suddenly into the distance of the placid distance of the Attic shore” (*IP* 173), scaring his horses and resulting in a violent, painful death “for which he had longed for dimly amid the buffeting of those murderous stones” (*IP* 173). It is unclear whether the law of nature itself is reacting against the boy who will not grow up, or if, as Østermark-Johansen concludes, he is slain by the inescapable punishment of the gods (192), for whom eternal youth and sexual independence are their purview alone. Hauntingly, this boy also “dimly longs for” his own death, knowing it is the only way for him “to end [his] life as [he] began it.”

The inevitability of Hippolytus’s death emphasizes the “lightning vision of the darling,” heightens his “bloom of youth,” and consistently links the young man’s beauty with evanescence. This strange “congruence” between beauty and death is something Pater first explores in his review essay “Poems by William Morris” (1868), in which he imagines the effect of the “grace of Hellenism relieved against the sorrow of the Middle Age” as the “chief motives of The Earthly Paradise” (226). These associations are key also in his understanding of Dionysus in “A Study of Dionysus,” and “The *Bacchanals*,” discussed in chapters one and two. The imagined physical, geographical space of “Hippolytus Veiled” is, therefore, one which is condemned to a maturity Pater equates with death—a death from which, as with Symonds’s temperate boy, there can be no rebirth. Østermark-Johansen illuminates how Pater “toys with the

resurrection of Hippolytus as the Roman deity Virius in Aricia outside Rome,” but concludes that such a renaissance is impossible (188)—a different deity, immortal and “in old age,” would lack the very piquancy that is the allure of the *sophron* boy, the “lightning vision” of his youthful chastity. “Antiope’s mourning over her dead son,” Østermark-Johansen continues, “becomes the modern reader’s mourning over the loss of access to Greek life and religion” (188). Pater also seems to lament the death of Greek religion and its “deme-life” because an Hippolytus, a *sophron* boy and his chaste admirers, cannot flourish outside of it. But he also must conclude, sadly, that he cannot flourish within it, either. The very structures of society, both Greek and Victorian, prohibit the liberty of the *sophron* boy and his *sophron* admirer to last longer than a moment, lest they subvert the heteronormative pull to normative manhood, civic masculinity, and procreative marriage.

The narrator’s determination that Hippolytus cannot be reborn so that he may thrive in a later age sets the youth apart from the other two subjects of Pater’s Greek-themed imaginary portraits, “Apollo in Picardy” and “Denys L’Auxerrois.” In these latter stories, Pater imagines the two Greek gods outside their original contexts, resurrected and transplanted into a new society, ever ready to be born again, allowing his narrator to imagine “to have actually seen the tortured figure . . . to have met [him] in the streets” (*IP* 95). These immortal figures represent to Pater the long line that connects people and ideas across time and space. Like Leonardo da Vinci’s *La Gioconda*, they are “[t]he fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences . . . the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea” (*TR* 99). But the beautiful boys of Pater’s imaginary portraits simply die, snuffed out just before they are forced to transition into manhood, never to be renewed, only mourned or remembered as they,

like Hippolytus, “lay in heroic graves” (*IP* 159), embodying, like the old Attic deme-life, “something that could never be brought to life again” (*IP* 161).

This transience, this fatality, is tied to the aesthetic theories Pater articulates in the “Conclusion” to *The Renaissance*. The youthful joy of the *sophron* boy is the moment of *pure experience*, made beautiful by its ever-present doom:

those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. (*TR* 188)

For Pater, therefore, virtue—*sophrosyne*—is less a state of being or becoming, but a moment before the ending, one of a thousand experiences which are set to dissolve, to “un-weave” at the moment of their appreciation. The admirer of the chaste boy has only a fleeting moment to adore him, for the boy’s anticipated chastity “is itself a kind of death.” “What Pater has done,” Max Saunders concludes,

is to substitute for the traditional notion of the *soul*, as something timeless (immortal), moral, substantial enough to be judged, and fixed (in the sense that the eventual judgement is predetermined), *a self*: something which is transient; whose morality is to sustain an ecstasy of experience, rather than strive for “the fruit of experience”; and which, as soon as you concentrate on it, dissolves. (32)

Thus, the *sophron* admiration of the *sophron* boy is ultimately what destroys him: either as an inevitable push towards a transition to manhood—a figurative death, tied to the loss of his

sophrosyne, his innocent purity and homoerotic potential—or as a real death, triggered by one’s desire for him.

Wilde Boys Who Won’t Leave Neverland: Dorian Gray and Peter Pan

If Symonds and Pater emphasize the necessary evanescence of the *sophron* boy, his fate either to transition into a man or to die, two *fin-de-siècle* writers attempt to encase his “single moment” in amber—to prolong his “single moment” indefinitely and to save him from growing up at all, without the necessity of decay or death. Oscar Wilde and J. M. Barrie experiment with the notion of the eternal boy in their respective texts, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and *Peter Pan* (1904). The eponymous characters of both immediately invite classical comparisons through their names: Dorian, after one of the major ethnic clans of the Greek world, and Pan, after the mysterious god of the wild. Both Dorian and Peter vehemently reject traditional trajectories into manhood and maturity in their attempts to remain free and autonomous through their processes of *sophrosyne*. Both youths, however, ultimately fail to break free of the claustrophobic impetus of Victorian society and are eventually, like Hippolytus, subsumed back into its proscribed norms.

The emphatic impacts of Jowett, Symonds, and Pater on Wilde’s interpretation of classical texts has been well documented: Wilde avidly read and annotated the men’s works. Wilde’s special interest in the poetry of Euripides has also been effectively delineated by numerous critics, such as Thomas Prasch (2012), Iain Ross (2013), and Kostas Boyiopoulos (2018). The New Hellenists, of which Wilde was a member, had “a clear favourite” when it came to Greek writers: Euripides (Prasch 467). Wilde’s exploration of *Hippolytus* in his own drama *Salome* has also been convincingly elaborated by Boyiopoulos; he describes both as plays

that “pi[t] unrequited *eros* against *sophrosyne*” (142). Although Boyiopoulos focuses only on Hippolytus’s narrow understanding of the term as chastity, the interrogation of the variable and conflicting definitions of the virtue in *Hippolytus* are not necessary for his particular argument.

The fetishizing of youth and its connections to “Greek love” in *Dorian Gray* are not at all subtle. The name “Dorian,” as numberless critics have reiterated, is itself an oblique reference to the *paiderastia* which, it was widely believed, the Dorian invasion introduced to the Greek peninsula. Vicinus points out that late Victorian writers often celebrated “pedagogical eros in Greek literature” and repurposed classical allusions to Greek boys as “figures associated with Nature, youth, and freedom” (85). Dorian is repeatedly compared to the beautiful Greek boys of classical myth and history, an “Adonis” (*DG* 6, 110), and “Narcissus” (*DG* 6, 102, 110), but also the more explicitly queer “Ganymede” (*DG* 138),³⁰ “Hylas” (*DG* 139),³¹ and even “Antinous” (*DG* 13, 110), all examples of beautiful, desired boys who “died as [they] began.” Sedgwick has carefully delineated this fixation on the boy to a nineteenth-century shift from a Christian to Hellenic perspective of the desirable body:

Synecdochically represented as it tended to be by statues of nude young men, the Victorian cult of Greece gently, unpointedly, and unexclusively positioned male flesh and muscle as the indicative instance of “the” body, of a body whose surfaces, features, and abilities might be the subject or object of unphobic enjoyment. The Christian tradition, by contrast, had tended both to condense “the flesh” (insofar as it represented or incorporated pleasure) as the *female* body and to surround its attractiveness with an aura of maximum anxiety and prohibition. Thus two significant differences from Christianity were conflated or conflatable in thought and rhetoric about “the Greeks”: an imagined,

dissolving of the bar of prohibition against the enjoyed body, and its new gendering as indicatively male. (*The Closet* 136)

This “dissolving of the bar of prohibition against the enjoyed body” not only re-genders it as male, but melds the Christian “feminine” and Greek “masculine” together, resulting in the “gender anarchy” identified by both Prins and Østermark-Johansen in the writings of Symonds and Pater. Hippolytus is the feminized boy whose flesh is socially available as a “subject or object of unphobic enjoyment” (Sedgwick, *The Closet* 136), but whose attractiveness is equally dangerous when indulged in excess. “The crystallization of desire as ‘temptation,’” Sedgwick continues,

of the young body as the always initiatory encroachment of rose-red on rose-white shows that the “Hellenic idea,” insofar as its reintegrative power is supposed to involve a healing of the culturewide ruptures involved in male homosexual panic, necessarily has that panic so deeply at the heart of its occasions, frameworks, demands, and evocations that it becomes not only inextricable from but even a propellant of the cognitive and ethical compartmentalizations of homophobic prohibition. (*The Closet* 138)

Adoration of the boy simultaneously legitimizes the homoerotic and endangers it. Like the boy himself, it exists on the knife’s edge, a single moment of balance and harmony, of *sophrosyne*, that is propelled by its very transience.

In the first encounter between Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray, Henry rhapsodizes about the boy’s “marvellous youth” as “the one thing worth having” (*DG* 24). Contiguous to his admiration of the young man’s “unspoiled” beauty, however, is this same piquancy of impermanence and danger explored by Symonds and Pater. ““The world belongs to you for a season,”” the older man tells Dorian,

“For there is such a little time that your youth will last—such a little time. The common hill-flowers wither, but they blossom again. The laburnum will be as yellow next June as it is now. In a month there will be purple stars on the clematis, and year after year the green night of its leaves will hold its purple stars. But we never get back our youth.” (DG 25)

For Henry, as for Symonds and Pater, the *sophron* boy is fated to a total death after only a brief moment of contemplative beauty. In a less extravagant, but much more intense way, Basil also fetishizes Dorian’s youth as a moment of purity and chastity, and he laments the ever-present death attached to it. “He has a simple and beautiful nature,” the painter warns his friend, “Don’t spoil him” (DG 16).

Proof of Dorian’s eternal youth does not actually manifest itself until Chapter 8. Despite Dorian’s initial, “mad wish” (DG 100) in Chapter 2 that he not age, he shows every sign of following the prescribed transition into manhood. As John Tosh persuasively argues, there was a significant shift in the nineteenth century whereby the focus of masculine life moved from a strictly public sphere to one that placed a new emphasis on home and family. Marriage and domesticity (as opposed to career and public life) became the new hallmarks of the necessary passage into manhood. Dorian Gray, whom we are told by Lord Henry is “not of age yet” (DG 35), initially resists Henry’s arguments against heteronormative matrimony. Henry cautions Dorian “never [to] marry at all” (DG 47), advice that is, taken in the context of the Victorian “cult of domesticity,” in the established need for procreative matrimony, more corrupting than any of the other advice he has given to the young man. At first, Dorian is not despoiled: his love affair with the actress Sybil Vane, despite Henry’s aphorisms, results in an engagement by the end of Chapter Four.

Yet all too quickly, the engagement unravels, culminating in a scene that echoes Euripides's *Hippolytus*. Both Phaedra and Sybil Vane are exposed through their obsessions with the young men. In the tragedy, Phaedra feigns illness in order to disguise and curb her longing for her stepson, but is eventually unmasked through the well-meaning, yet disastrous, actions of her nurse. As an actress, Sybil Vane wears a disguise throughout her entire courtship with Dorian. Eventually, she loses her ability to "act love" when she recognizes that she feels the real thing. In both cases, the removal of the disguise results in a diatribe against them by their respective would-be lovers. Hippolytus's reaction to the nurse's proposition begins with "Women! The coin which men find counterfeit!" and ends, passionately, with, "Let someone teach them *sophrosyne* or let me trample them always" (*Hippolytus* ll. 616–18). Resonating with the hyperbole of Hippolytus's speech, Dorian's reaction to Sybil's declaration that real love has caused her to lose her ability to imitate it is swift and unforgiving:

"You used to stir my imagination. Now you do not even stir my curiosity. You simply produce no effect. I loved you because you were marvelous, because you had genius and intellect, because you realized the dreams of poets and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art. You have thrown it all away. You are shallow and stupid. My God! how mad I was to love you! What a fool I have been! You are nothing to me now. I will never see you again. I will never think of you. I will never mention your name. You don't know what you were to me, once. Why, once ... Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I wish I had never laid eyes on you! You have spoiled the romance of my life. How little you can know of love, if you say it mars your art. Without art you are nothing." (DG 85)

Perversely, Dorian is upset that Sybil's love is no longer "counterfeit." Like Hippolytus, Dorian is suddenly disgusted by the introduction of the actual, sexual body of a woman instead of the

illusiv e Artemis, “hearing [her] voice, though not seeing [her] face” (*Hippolytus* l. 86) or the “shadow of art” that was “the romance of his life” (*DG* 85).

Sybil Vane’s desire—she wants to relinquish her career in order to become Dorian’s wife—is the acceptable middle-class Victorian ambition for marriage and adulthood, which Dorian violently rejects. “I don’t suppose you will want your wife to act,” says Lord Henry to Dorian, ironically championing the Victorian *status quo*, ““So what does it matter if she plays Juliet like a wooden doll?”” (*DG* 82). For Dorian, Sybil is now diminished, shrunken into the Victorian prototype of the “wife,” rather than the immortalized and physically insubstantial heroines of tragedy with whom he identified her. The portrait becomes disfigured following the youth’s rejection of the woman; Dorian of course seems to stay the same. When he hears of the young woman’s death, he rushes to consult the painting for further disfigurement, but finds “no further change in the picture” (*DG* 101), and wonders whether this first change is prompted by his intentions (rejecting the prospect of a wife) or the results of his actions (Sybil’s suicide):

The vicious cruelty that marred the fine lines of the mouth had, no doubt, appeared at the very moment that the girl had drunk the poison, whatever it was. Or was it indifferent to results? Did it merely take cognizance of what passed within the soul? (*DG* 101)

Prompting Sybil Vane’s suicide is not the underlying cause of the portrait’s initial blemish. The “touch of cruelty around the warped lips” (*DG* 92) is the result of Dorian’s rejection of heterosexual, procreative marriage: Dorian’s first “crime.”

In *Dorian Gray*, Wilde engages with the same dialogical difficulties explored in *Hippolytus*, portraying and playing with various definitions of *sophrosyne* through the characters who engage with it. When Basil asks Henry, ““What do you mean by good?”” his irreverent friend answers, ““To be good is to be in harmony with one’s self”” (*DG* 76). The definition

Henry so flippantly provides is an echo of Jowett's explanation of *sophrosyne* in his translation of *Charmides*, which he explains as "the harmony or due proportion of human nature which 'makes a man his own master'" (3). Henry's emphasis on "individualism" as "really the higher aim" (DG 76) of masculinity is seemingly *sympatico* with traditional masculine ideals, but he obviously rejects the key component of self-restraint in his conception of proper manhood. "I should fancy," he quips, "that the real tragedy of the poor is that they can afford nothing but self-denial. Beautiful sins, like beautiful things, are the privilege of the rich" (DG 76).

Nevertheless, Henry appropriates the diction used in the delineation of *sophrosyne* to express his own theory of so-called virtue, which amounts, essentially, to the anti-*sophron*, or at least an indictment of the concept:

"I believe that if one man were to live out his life fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream—I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of mediævalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal—to something finer, richer than the Hellenic ideal, it may be. But the bravest man amongst us is afraid of himself. The mutilation of the savage has its tragic survival in the self-denial that mars our lives. We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind and poisons us. The body sins once, and has done with its sin, for action is a mode of purification. Nothing remains then but the recollection of a pleasure, or the luxury of a regret. The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful." (DG 21)

Far from suggesting a balance or harmony of the individual through self-restraint, Henry advocates for the opposite extreme, suggesting that self-awareness can only come through the *release* of temperate control. His idea of virtue deplores Phaedra's resistance to her attraction for Hippolytus—a resistance which quite literally causes the young queen to “gro[w] sick with longing.” Like Phaedra's nurse, Henry suggests that it is not necessary to choke off desire, for this denial leaves one's “own soul starved, and naked” (*DG* 20).

Sedgwick describes Henry's comments in this passage as “Paterian” (*The Closet* 137), due to his emphasis on “not the fruit of experience, but experience itself” (*TR* 188), but Wilde's character has articulated a philosophy that pivots fundamentally from Pater's. In his cautious review of the novel, Pater explains the departure:

A true Epicureanism aims at a complete though harmonious development of man's entire organism. To lose the moral sense therefore, for instance, the sense of sin and righteousness, as Mr. Wilde's hero—his heroes are bent on doing as speedily, as completely as they can, is to lose, or lower, organisation, to become less complex, to pass from a higher to a lower degree of development. (“A Novel” 59–60)

For Henry, to be in “harmony with one's self” is not, as Pater describes, a process of tempering youthful energy with self-restraint, but a harmonizing of one's desires with one's actions through an excess of self-license. Like Phaedra's nurse, he conflates virtue with reputation and outward image; she would rather Phaedra give in to *eros* and live than “grow sick” with the longing to do so. Succumb to the temptation, Henry advises Dorian, and “Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you!” (*DG* 25).

This exuberant free-for-all proposed by Henry is not the only depiction of an “Hellenic ideal” centred on the motif of the beautiful boy. To Basil, the young man also embodies “the

spirit that is Greek art. The harmony of soul and body” (DG 13). Basil is attracted irrepressibly to the boy he describes as “the most unspoiled creature in the whole world” (DG 105), with a “pure, bright, innocent face” and “marvellous untroubled youth” (DG 143). His explanation to Dorian of the power he has exerted over the painter’s life has often been interpreted as a “Platonic” admiration of artist for his muse:

“Dorian, from the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated, soul, brain, and power by you. You became to me the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream.” (DG 110)

Yet this confession is arguably as extreme as Henry’s interpretation of so-called harmony. Far from the measured, intellectual appreciation of Socrates for Charmides, Basil is entirely consumed by his obsession with the young man. His is not the tempered regard for the *sophron* boy of Symonds and Pater, but the same dangerous *eros* of Phaedra for her stepson, which, like Phaedra, he desperately—and unsuccessfully—attempts to hide in conformation with society.

“When our eyes met,” he confesses to Henry,

“I felt that I was growing pale. A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself. I did not want any external influence in my life ... *I have always been my own master, have at least, till I met Dorian Gray.*” (DG 9–10; my emphasis)

If, as Jowett defines, Greek *sophrosyne* allows a man “to be his own master,” then Basil’s infatuation with Dorian is certainly not *sophron*, not virtuous. Instead, Wilde conflates the illicit homoeroticism of Basil’s *eros* for the youth with the “pining sickness” of Phaedra. Basil is

cursed with Phaedra's νόσος, cursed in a manner subtler than Dorian, but just as deadly: “We shall all suffer for what the gods have given us,” he tells Henry, “suffer terribly” (DG 7).

Basil, like Phaedra, struggles with the self-restraint of curbing his *eros* for Dorian, most obviously in his avowal never to exhibit his portrait or confess his feelings for him (both of which he eventually attempts to do, and both of which Dorian rejects—with dire consequences for both men).

In a sense, Dorian also becomes an admirer of the *sophron* youth he had been on the morning Basil finishes his portrait. The painting depicts Dorian just as he steps into that fleeting moment before the ending, the momentary “lightning vision” before the inevitable death, when his physical purity harmonizes with a nascent self-awareness, which, both kindled and enflamed by Henry, eventually consumes him. The macabre thrill he finds in tracking the changes on the portrait are in equal measure a fascination with the body of the boy he once was (and thinks he will always be):

he would creep upstairs to the locked room ... and stand, with a mirror, in front of the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him, looking now at the evil and aging face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass. *The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure. He grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul.* (DG 124; my emphasis)

In this final and most extreme departure from the “harmony” that both Henry and Basil associate with “the Hellenic ideal,” Dorian relishes the discord and difference between body and soul, while examining the untouched form of the adolescent boy side-by-side with the “satyr” outline of his psyche. The portrait’s location in his old schoolroom further evokes this distorted,

internalized pederastia—the “pedagogical eros” identified by Vicinus—as Dorian’s sins instruct him in a slanted way of life:

That curiosity about life which Lord Henry had first stirred within him, as they sat together in the garden of their friend, seemed to increase with gratification. The more he knew, the more he desired to know. He had mad hungers that grew more ravenous as he fed them. (*DG* 124)

Dorian has attained the unconscious desire Vicinus describes embedded in this adoration of the adolescent. He both loves the boy and *is* the boy—but the result is anything but “virtuous” or “ideal.” Succumbing to temptation, feeding his “mad hungers,” do not, as Henry suggests, overcome them, but instead increase their urgency; thus, excess emphatically does not lead to harmony, to *sophrosyne*.

In *Hippolytus*, Poseidon enacts Theseus’s curse by sending a “bull from the sea” to spook Hippolytus’s horses. In Greek ideology, bulls and the sea symbolize extreme masculine sexuality, but also, through the sea’s connections to Aphrodite’s birth, the sexual merger of masculine and feminine. By implication, Hippolytus is killed by his own denied sexual maturity—by his rejection of marital congress with a woman—by the “chastity that is itself a kind of death.” In Wilde’s novel, Dorian’s death by stabbing his portrait suggests an inversion of the adolescent’s doom—that is, Dorian is destroyed by his own version of non-conformity, by the *disharmony*, the dismemberment of his body and soul. Although Henry disparages women because “they spoil every romance by trying to make it last forever” (*DG* 26), it is clear the author and his three male characters have spoiled the romance of the *sophron* boy by doing the same. He is *too* tempting, too alluring, to be allowed to live forever.

When *Dorian Gray* was first published in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in 1890, Wilde received a tumult of criticism, which suggest that the novel indulges in various forms of immorality, excess, and vices. On June 24, under the title "A Study in Puppydom," an anonymous reviewer (identified as Samuel Jeyes) in the *St. James's Gazette of London* complained that the novel's author "bores you unmercifully with his prosy rigmaroles about the beauty of the Body and the corruption of the Soul" (16). Wilde responded to the review in the same publication, suggesting, that *Dorian Gray*, is, in fact, "a story with a moral" (a surprising assertion, considering the statement he added to the novel's Preface in 1981 that "there is no such thing as a moral or immoral book"). "And the moral is this," he declares,

All excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment. The painter, Basil Hallward, worshipping physical beauty far too much, as most painters do, dies by the hand of one in whose soul he has created a monstrous and absurd vanity. Dorian Gray, having led a life of mere sensation and pleasure, tries to kill conscience, and at that moment kills himself. Lord Henry Wotton seeks to be merely the spectator of life. He finds that those who reject the battle are more deeply wounded than those who take part in it. Yes, there is a terrible moral in *Dorian Gray*—a moral which the prurient will not be able to find in it, but which will be revealed to all whose minds are healthy. (5–6)

Wilde's "moral," available only to the "healthy-minded," is here couched explicitly in the diction of *sophrosyne* and gestures to the dialogical exploration of its definition in *Hippolytus*. One must find a balance, a harmony, between "excess" and "renunciation."

And what of the boy who lost his shadow and shirked all social duties, the archetypal "boy who wouldn't grow up"? Barrie first committed Peter Pan to print in his 1902 novel *The Little White Bird*. In the latter, Peter's story is told by an older man to a young boy named

David,³² suggestive of the *paidierastia* paradigm of my previous examples. The play itself was first performed at the Duke of York's Theatre in 1904,³³ starring Nina Boucicault as the principal boy. Sarah McCarroll has explored the implications of the female "principal boy" as a means of "avoiding the presentation of a male body refusing to grow into its legitimate and ordained place in the structure of British gender roles," instead negotiating "a theatrical space that presented an eternal male youth without threatening the status quo" (30). The significant elements of cross-dressing in the production of the play (the Lost Boys were also all traditionally played by women) are among the elements that link *Peter Pan* with traditional British pantomime.

McCarroll defines the genre:

The story of a panto is a fable for children; the hero of the story undertakes a journey or adventure which requires him to defeat a villain, and the experiences of his quest help him reach maturity and to win the hand of the heroine. It is traditional to cast a cross-dressed woman to play the "principal boy," the romantic hero. (30)

The pantomime's typical plot is an echo of the hero's journey paradigm in classical mythology. The Greek hero, too, embarks on a quest into the wilderness, in which, isolated from his society, he must do battle with primordial female deities and other monsters (also usually feminine coded). He then returns to civilization, bringing with him a new awareness of himself, his limitations, and his role within society. This mythical paradigm is, of course, reflected in the ritual of the hunt as a masculine rite of passage discussed earlier. Euripides's audience knew that the boy leaves for the wilderness so that he can return to the city as a man ready to take his place in society.

Peter is more than happy to participate in the adventure portion of the hero's journey, but he adamantly refuses to return to civilization and its heteronormative onus. Rather than defeating

a monster, or monstrous figure, as part of a trajectory into manhood, Peter “is the boy who defeats his nemesis but chooses not to grow up. Peter’s character avoids the conventional pantomime resolution that affirms a society underpinned by ‘heterosexual’ romantic pairings” (McCarroll 31). Both he and Hippolytus instead choose to linger in the wilderness for its own sake. Neverland is a wilderness and represents the same sexual chastity—the “untouched meadow”—that one finds in *Hippolytus*. In order to retain his youth, Peter can only exist outside of society, in a place where he has no responsibility or civic duty. The play, however, ultimately concludes with the same reaffirmation of sexual norms displayed in *Hippolytus* and *Dorian Gray*. Peter’s rejection of Wendy’s romantic overtures begins the eventual exodus of all the people that comprise his society: the pirates are scattered after the death of Hook; Tinker Bell eventually dies; and Wendy leaves Neverland, taking the Lost Boys with her. Peter himself, through Wendy and her descendants’ annual “Spring Cleaning,” becomes part of the growing-up ritual in spite of himself.

There is something almost Dionysian in the construction of Peter’s stage persona: an adult woman pretending to be an eternal boy. His resultant sexual ambiguity is evocative of Euripides’s and Symonds’s *Hippolytus* and his “maiden piety.” James R. Kincaid describes Peter:

[N]ot in drag, being so genderless. One of the things he does not *know* is gender, or maybe it is one of the things we are allowed for the moment not to know. Peter is resolutely boyish and is customarily played by females; it could as well be reversed. His position is not so much androgynous as beyond gender[.] (282)

The play, however, is primarily concerned with the delineation of gender, gender roles, and gender expectations. Peter’s allure as an object of desire does not come from his transcendence

of a gendered body, but rather, as with Dorian and Hippolytus, his feminized flesh becomes an Hellenic “subject or object of unphobic enjoyment,” tinged with a Christian “aura of maximum anxiety and prohibition” (Sedgwick, *The Closet* 136), lest the enjoyment be anything but distant and controlled. The “anxiety” of adoring this eternal boy culminates in the “prohibition” against his ever being touched (*PP* 1.1.353).

Dorian is able to achieve an almost excessive degree of self-knowledge through the contemplation of his portrait. His fascination with how far he might push the limits of this knowledge causes him to lose his self-control: each new act of license alters his portrait and brings him new knowledge of his soul. Conversely, Peter lacks any sense of self-awareness, an obliviousness that makes him impenetrably chaste. As Kincaid outlines,

Ignorance really is ... a state that is blessed because it does not *know*, does not partake of the limitations of what passes for *knowing* among the grown-ups. With grown-ups, being is dispersed along various dribbles of knowledge. With the child, all is compact within the certainty of the not-knowing, refusing to know. (282)

Peter knows that “No one must ever touch me” (*PP* 1.1.353), but when Wendy asks him “Why?” (*PP* 1.1.354), he can only respond, “I don’t know” (*PP* 1.1.355). Wendy cannot touch Peter because he must remain chaste, but Peter’s lack of “knowing” even this detail is what allows him to remain in perpetual childhood. Euripides’s Hippolytus tells his father Theseus that his is the most *sophron* person alive because his “body is pure of sex” (*Hippolytus* l. 1003) and because he does not “know the act” save from stories and pictures (*Hippolytus* l. 1004). Peter exaggerates Hippolytus’s (already rather exaggerated) “virgin psyche” (*Hippolytus* l.1006): Hippolytus does not *like* to know about sex, but Peter is completely unaware that such an activity exists at all.

Phaedra's lust is threatening because Hippolytus knows what lust is; Wendy's kisses are really just thimbles and acorn buttons.

Like Dorian Gray, Peter also physically manifests this severance, rather than harmony, of soul and body—a severance which is key to his eternal youth. When Mrs. Darling confesses to her husband that she has seen a “little boy” in their children's room (*PP* 1.1.162), she reveals that “[t]he boy escaped, but his shadow had not time to get out; down came the window and cut it clean off” (*PP* 1.1.175–76). Even before meeting Peter, the audience is confronted with something disjointed—unharmonious—about his existence. The play's clear classical overtones invite several ways of interpreting the significance of Peter's shadow. In a Platonic sense, the shedding of the shadow evokes the allegory of the cave in the *Republic*, suggesting that Peter has achieved enlightenment. Plato advises his interlocutors to imagine themselves in a cave, chained together in such a way that they are unable to move their faces away from the shadows dancing on the rocky walls. Behind them burns a large fire, in front of which someone holds facsimiles of the real world as puppets, causing the people to mistake shadows for truth. If someone were to free himself from the bindings, he would first mistake the facsimiles for reality, and the fire for the sun. Only when he leaves the cave and its shadows behind does he enter the world of Plato's Forms. There he beholds the “Sun itself,” Plato's metaphor for the ultimate knowledge of the “Good.” It then becomes this man's duty to return to the cave and lead the rest of them out into the world of truth, however unwilling and skeptical they might be. This man, enlightened and able to lead others to the “Truth,” becomes Plato's philosopher king, ruler of his ideal state.

Neverland, then, might be thought of in terms of Plato's world of sunlight, and Peter the lone soul to escape the cave of Victorian culture, returning to London every now and then to conduct more children into this knowledge. He defines Neverland's geographical location with

the rising sun (“second to the right and then straight on till morning” [*PP* 1.1.342]); it is a place where the stars are “much stronger than our stars” (*PP* 2.1. 9–10). The entire realm “bestirs itself” (*PP* 2.1.23) in anticipation of Peter’s arrival, everything within it acting in accordance with what “they think he would like” (*PP* 2.1.13)—his “servants” (*PP* 2.1. 23). This boy who left the world of shadows behind now rules the Neverland as Plato’s philosopher king. Yet, Peter’s enlightenment is of a peculiar variety. Kincaid describes how Peter “is vitally tied to ignorance. Peter knows so very little, is maintained by his not knowing” (282). One wonders, in fact, whether Neverland is more closely akin to Plato’s cave. Barrie’s stage directions explain:

What you see is the Never Land. You have often half seen it before, or even three-quarters, after the night-lights were lit, and you might then have beached your coracle on it if you had not always at the great moment fallen asleep In the daytime you think the Never Land is only make-believe, and so it is to the likes of you, but this is the Never Land come true. (*PP* 2.1.26–32, stage directions).

Kincaid suggests that the play portrays two counter worlds: the world of play (Neverland) and the world of power (London) (276). These worlds are also exclusive as kingdoms of ignorance and knowledge, shadow and light. Neverland is the realm of darkness, dispersed by the light of day, a place where “what you see is not the beasts themselves, but only the shadows of them” (*PP* 2.1.12, stage directions). “The likes of you” are those who *do* know—those who were led out of the cave of innocence and “grew up.” When Peter is separated from his shadow, the shadow stays in the world of light, and Peter retreats to his realm of facsimiles. What, then, is Peter’s shadow really?

It is, of course, significant that Wendy is the one to reunite Peter and his shadow; even more so that she *sews* them together with needle and thread. When she first introduces herself to

Peter, it is as “Wendy Moira Angela Darling” (*PP* 1.1.335). “Moira” is the Greek word for fate; when capitalized, it becomes the name of one of the Fates, one of those goddesses who weave and sever the threads which represent the lives of mortals.³⁴ Although Greek “fate” can be interpreted as destiny, it is inextricably tied to (and often in context means) death—the death allotted one, destined, by the gods. Wendy’s weaving together of Peter and his shadow, immediately after identifying herself as “Moira,” becomes a sinister attempt at re-weaving the eternal Peter with the fate he tried to flee. This fate is, of course, Wendy herself, hinted at through her other name, “Angela,” an appellation which ties her to Coventry Patmore’s “angel in the house,” the young woman who threatens to domesticate and eventually marry him, forcing him into “knowing,” into adulthood, into death.³⁵ In a sense, Wendy also becomes Peter’s “shadowy daughter” of Demeter, that alternative Artemis whose liminal presence is a reminder that “chastity its itself a kind of death” (*IP* 165–66). Peculiar as the boy’s separation from his shadow is, however, its Frankenstein-like reconnection is equally unnatural. Peter might bring his *moira* to Neverland, but he will not let her bring him out of it.

Peter navigates this new, female element in his formerly homosocial environment by introducing Wendy as a mother for himself and his lost boys. The character of a mother, however, is also one which threatens Peter’s chaste unknowingness. At the outset of the play Peter admits that he ran away to Neverland “because I heard father and mother talking of what I was to be when I became a man” (*PP* 1.1.395 ff). At the end of the play, he refuses to adopt Mrs. Darling as a mother because she would “send [him] to school,” “and then to an office,” and then “soon [he] should be a man” (*PP* 5.2.125 ff). Although characterizing Wendy as a mother figure is an attempt to mitigate her sexuality, the very essence of motherhood is sexual in nature. Neverland is a place for *boys* not to grow old, while the female figures are in fact forced from

adolescence into sexual maturity. Barrie's stage directions suggest that Wendy has entered puberty while in Neverland. In Act 3, "she is slightly different in appearance now, rather rounder" (*PP* 3.1.25), round being associated with the pubescent and adult female body (as well as pregnancy).

In her guise as foster-mother to the Lost Boys, Wendy takes on a role parallel to that of Phaedra in Euripides's *Hippolytus*. She exhibits a similar incestuous desire for Peter, who, alongside the Lost Boys, is pretending to be her son. In his absence from the manufactured Victorian *oikos* Wendy has created, she foists the role of "father" onto Peter, but can only maintain the illusion until Peter enters the home. Rather than assume the role, as Wendy hopes, he insists, "It is only pretend, isn't it, that I am their father?" (*PP* 4.1.110). When Wendy tells him he does not have to be father if he does not wish it, Peter responds, emphatically, "I don't" (*PP* 4.1.110). Like Hippolytus and Dorian Gray, therefore, Peter rejects the lure of becoming the master of a home and family in order to maintain his youth and freedom. Ironically, based on the almost obsessive family-building activity that goes on in the play, Peter's presence—just as in the case of Hippolytus—results in the dismantling of the *oikos*. In London, Mr. and Mrs. Darling are left childless. In fact, Mr. Darling eventually begins to regress into childlike behaviour, while their children take on the roles of parents in Neverland.

The character of Mr. Darling is that of an overgrown Peter, sharing the young boy's immaturity and his imperiousness. He is childish in his refusal to take his medicine, insisting that it is "not fair" he has to drink more than his son (*PP* 1.1.235–37). His cruelty in the subsequent "joke" he plays on Nana is suggestive of Morris Fraser's summation of Peter as an "affectionless sociopath" (76). Both boy and man command their respective domains without much forethought or compromise. In the original productions of the play, the same actor who played Mr. Darling

also enacted Captain Hook, which suggests that Peter's nemesis, hounded by the ticking clock in the crocodile's belly, is in fact another adult version of Peter, an image of eventual fatherhood, which "he has substituted [with] an enormously appealing monster" (Kincaid 285). Hook, the sea-faring pirate who obsessively stalks the young boy, and his connections to Mr. Darling, also evokes Theseus and his father Poseidon in Euripides's *Hippolytus*. Theseus calls upon this god of the sea to curse the son whom he believes took his wife; Poseidon obligingly sends his curse from the sea in the form of a raging bull—a sexual symbol of all that Hippolytus tried to circumvent. The ticking crocodile, who hounds the wake of Hook's ship, is another sort of curse from the sea—a representation of what Peter has refused to know. Yet, time is supposed to be the doom of the *sophron* boy, not his admirer, and this "lightning vision of the darling" central to one's longing for him. The fulfillment of the crocodile-curse, however, reverses the paradigm. Barrie's stage directions describe the aftermath of the pirates' final battle with the Lost Boys:

Where is Peter? The incredible boy has apparently forgotten the recent doings, and is sitting on a barrel playing upon his pipes. This may surprise others but does not surprise Hook. Lifting the blunderbuss he strikes forlornly not at the boy but at the barrel, which is hurled across the deck. Peter remains sitting in the air still playing upon his pipes. At this sight the great heart of Hook breaks. That not wholly unheroic figure climbs the bulwarks murmuring 'Floreat Etona,' and prostrates himself into the water, where the crocodile is waiting for him open-mouthed. Hook knows the purpose of the yawning cavity, but after what he has gone through he enters it like one greeting a friend. (*PP* 5.1.213ff).

Peter, through his indifference to his own *sophrosyne* and to those who admire it in him, avoids the *moira*, the fate of the *sophron* boy and sacrifices his future self (Hook) to time, that he may

remain the same forever. The boy is supposed to be doomed, not his admirer. Does this mean Peter is the exception to the “lightning strike of the darling”? Yet the enticement of his company nevertheless ebbs for the Darling children and the Lost Boys, and perhaps even for Hook—each in their way abandons him after he refuses to die. Peter’s youth is not transient, thus the desire for him instead becomes fleeting.

Peter does not explicitly die, as Hippolytus and Dorian do, but by the end of the play, he is left in a state eerily reminiscent of the Greek Underworld and the river of forgetfulness, Lethe, that runs through the ancient landscape. Dorian, too, achieves a similar kind of forgetfulness; instead, his portrait does all the “remembering” by bearing the marks of his past. In this sense, forgetting seems to be central to this idea of eternal youth: both texts suggesting that remembering is a prerequisite to moral maturation and progress, to “knowing.” Peter exhibits increasing amnesia, unable to recall Tinker Bell, the Lost Boys,³⁶ or even Captain Hook, much in the way the dead spirits of Hades are forced to forget their past lives (they are condemned to drift in a state of mindlessness). In this sense, then, Peter’s timelessness becomes another kind of death, inasmuch as it isolates him from the rest of the world. Wendy’s yearly ritual of “Spring Cleaning” invites comparison to Hades and his abduction of Persephone, the goddess of spring who must annually return to her throne of death.³⁷

Wendy’s ritual is also, however, evocative of Hippolytus’s posthumous inclusion in Greek marital rites: Artemis decrees that girls about to be married must visit his grave and honour him with tears and their sheared hair (*Hippolytus* ll. 1423–30). The association is emphasized by Barrie’s later addition of an epilogue to the play, entitled “When Wendy Grew Up: An Afterthought,” first performed with *Peter Pan* at the Duke of York’s Theatre on 22 February 1908. Peter returns to the Darling house only to find Wendy “grown up” with a

daughter of her own, whom Peter eventually brings back to Neverland to continue the “Spring Cleaning” ritual. First Wendy, and then her daughter Jane, and eventually, when Jane grows up, “*she* will have a little daughter, who will fly away with him in turn” (“Wendy” 1.1.255). These visits to Neverland become a part of how these girls learn to grow up, to transition from girl to “mother” of the eternal boy (“Wendy” 1.1.246). Peter, in his refusal to “grow-up,” is nevertheless reabsorbed back into this process; Neverland becomes the hero’s grave at which maidens sacrifice before they become wives, before they reach the phase of “knowing.”

Conclusion

Both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Peter Pan* try to imagine a “new scheme of life,” (DG 126) one that rejects the prescriptive middle-class values of the nineteenth century’s “cult of domesticity” and attempts to immortalize indefinitely that which, by its very nature, is doomed and fleeting. They push the limits of *sophrosyne* as a touchstone of manhood, seeking to harmonize the extremes of self and desire, rather than temper them through self-restraint. The two works initially offer ecstatic fantasies of the joy such freedom could offer, but eventually conclude that these lives are dangerous and unsustainable. The texts by Pater, Wilde, and Barrie reveal how fantastic it is to assume that anyone can evade or ultimately outwit the forces of “normalization.” Adulthood is not something that can be avoided; with adulthood comes self-denial and the *onus* of marriage and reproduction—the affirmation of procreative heteronormativity. The only way to preserve one’s youth is not to leave the underworld-like Neverland, which is perhaps why Peter thinks of death as such an awfully big adventure and never can “quite get the hang of” life (PP 5.2.210, stage direction).

All four writers engage in the dialogical examination of *sophrosyne* that Euripides explores in *Hippolytus* and connect the virtue to the ideal, aesthetic masculinity of the adolescent boy just as he is on the cusp of maturity. Despite Wilde and Barrie's attempts to preserve him forever in that moment, the very allure of these boys is tied inextricably to their doom. It is, however, through the chaste appreciation of him that one may also engage is this practice of *sophrosyne*. Through their allocation of virtue to the chaste boy and his chaste admirer, all four writers offer a way of legitimizing a masculine counter-conduct that does not directly participate in heteronormativity through this paradigm drawn from classical culture. The aesthetic contemplation of the beautiful boy becomes a new way of "growing up," a safe because doomed way of resisting the cultural pull to reproductive matrimony. Through the boy's eventual inclusion in marriage and coming-of-age rituals, he and his admirers can contribute to this procreative ritual, without actually having to marry and father children of their own.

Conclusion: What Rough Beast?

As this dissertation has demonstrated, the tragedies of Euripides form an integral “under-current” in the imaginative landscape of Victorian literature. Rather than create positive associations with an idealized version of classical Athens, popularized by German Romanticism, nineteenth-century identification with Euripidean tragedy instead emphasizes ancient Greece’s implications for England as both seductive and potentially dangerous. In 1913, Gilbert Murray summarizes the reception history of Euripides in the nineteenth century:

As a thinker he is even to this day treated almost as a personal enemy by scholars of orthodox and conformist minds; defended, idealized and sometimes transformed beyond recognition by various champions of rebellion and the free intellect. The greatest difficulty that I feel in writing about him is to keep in mind without loss of proportion anything like the whole activity of the many-sided man. Recent writers have tended to emphasize chiefly his work as a destructive thinker. (*EHA* 8)

The “destructive” thinking of this “many-sided man” poses both problems and solutions to Victorian commentators. The “otherness” with which some identify him represents a threat to the fundamentals of perceived British identity; yet this threat of destruction also offers liberation from the constrictive qualities of Victorian culture. Euripides may not have contributed to the Hellenic “sweetness and light” of the popular Victorian imagination, but his texts nevertheless were read, cited, and appropriated by Victorians looking for avenues to express “the horror and the glory” of nineteenth-century Britain.

Dionysus, too, becomes representative of the “destructive” and “many-sided” characteristics with which the Victorians identify Euripides. Dionysus is first subsumed into a Christian ideology, identified as a proto-Christian figure of joy and suffering, who contributes to

the perceived longevity and inevitability of Christianity, as well as Western conversion to this faith. This subsumption, however, becomes problematic when Walter Pater begins to push these connections through his analysis of Euripides's *Bacchae*. Pater uncovers a tripartite god of joy, sorrow, and terrifying violence, whom he nevertheless resolutely continues to link to a Christian *mythos*. Thus, the Victorian identification with antiquity becomes dangerous through this Euripidean lens. The *Bacchae* presents Dionysian religion as both an incursion from abroad that incites change and as an essential liberating force born within Greece itself, simultaneously indigenous and "other." These troubling connections are viewed as exciting potentialities for aesthetic rebirth and even female emancipation by Pater and Jane Harrison. Bram Stoker, however, adopts Euripides's *Bacchae* and its "immigrant god" (*PSGR* x) as a means to identify Greece not as "one of ourselves," but as something foreign—something overwhelmingly seductive, but which must be resisted.

Even in the mid-century, the plays of Euripides complicate a positive Victorian identification with Greece as part of Britain's cultural heritage. The playwright's version of *Medea* becomes increasingly Orientalized in the nineteenth century as a means to create distance between conceptions of British femininity and Euripides's fierce, proud, and unnervingly sympathetic heroine. The voiceless Corinthian princess transforms into Coventry Patmore's "angel in the house," whose pious goodness redeems the reprobate Jason and reinstates domesticity as central to Victorian values. Charlotte Brontë's Creole Bertha Mason is more straightforwardly "other" than George Eliot's milkmaid Hetty Sorrel, yet both are depicted as antithetical to British values, symptomatic of a changing world, and both must be sacrificed to reinstate Victorian social norms. For the speaker of Augusta Webster's "Medea in Athens," however, this *status quo* reliance upon ineffectual Jasons to give women their identities is in

itself the tragedy. Although seemingly impossible in 1879, the upheaval of family and gender hierarchies, which Medea's victory instantiates, is nevertheless something for which Webster's speaker yearns.

Euripides's dialogical examination of *sophrosyne* and its connections to masculine identities creates similar problems for male writers in the latter half of the century. Although, as Linda Dowling has demonstrated, Greek literature provided an avenue for the expression of Victorian homosociality and queer desire, Euripides's *Hippolytus* complicates identification with classical Athens as a parable for sexual freedom. J. A. Symonds, Pater, Oscar Wilde, and J. M. Barrie all must confront the transience inherent in Greek conceptions of male love, through their interaction with the eponymous, doomed youth of Euripides's tragedy. The *sophron* balance between pederastic desire and abstinence becomes possible only through "the lightning vision of the darling"; both Greek and Victorian custom forces the conclusion that such lives are unsustainable amid the inexorable pull in both cultures toward procreative heteronormativity. A frustrated pull towards a Dionysian, destructive transformation emerges through the knowledge that neither Greek nor British precedent provides a language of freedom for these alternative sexualities and masculine counter-conducts. The plays of Euripides allow these dissenting Victorians to explore and identify the limits of intellectual creativity in their societies, providing them the language to expand beyond their narrow cultural settings and look beyond the horizon, to follow the "new, strange, romantic god" (CS 156) into something different.

I return to the epitaph of Chapter One, W. B. Yeats's "The Second Coming," in order to offer one, post-Victorian, example of how Pater's "darker stain" of the Euripidean Dionysus enters into the Western imagination in the early twentieth century. Yeats's familiarity with Pater is well-documented. His anthology *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936), for example,

begins with Pater's *Renaissance* description of the *Mona Lisa*, transformed by Yeats into a free verse poem. The original title for "The Second Coming" (1919–1920) was, tantalizingly, "The Second Birth" (Deane 179)—a phrase compellingly akin to Pater's own refrain of Dionysus's "double birth." In the manner of Pater's fascination with Semele's parturition, "The Second Coming" is haunted, as Seamus Deane argues, by the feminine costs of the "rebirth"—by "a horror at the consequences of its emergence, the suffering female figure who is represented by contextual reference and echo" (179). The "rough beast" (22) of the poem is, as Patrick J. Keane highlights, how Shakespeare describes the rapist Tarquin in *The Rape of Lucrece* (Keane 72–105; Deane 179). The inherent violence of Zeus's rape of Semele, of Mary's impregnation, and "the second coming of this male force" become a "violation that results in a monstrous birth" (Deane 179)—a mode of violence Yeats explicitly explores in "Leda and the Swan" (1924).

The poem begins, like the *Bacchae*, with chaos, with "things fall[ing] apart" (l. 3) as "[m]ere anarchy is loosed upon the world" (l. 4); the Cadmean "best lack all conviction" (l. 7) and the Penthean "worst / are full of passionate intensity" (ll. 7–8). The poem becomes more sinister as Yeats describes "A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun" (ll. 14–15) that emerges "in the sands of the desert" (l. 13). The description of the Sphinx channels Shelley's "Ozymandias" (1818) and identifies the sands as the Egyptian desert, a location of symbolic significance to the Christian overtones of the poem. The desert sands are also, however, reminiscent of the ἡλιοβλήτους πλάκας (sun-scorched plains) (*Bacchae* l. 14) of Dionysus's own eastern wanderings. Pentheus, whom Pater so adeptly conflates with Dionysus, is imagined as a lion by his mother in the moments of his death; only his mutilated head is recognized, later, to be "the head of a man" (Yeats l. 14) eyes "blank" (Yeats l. 15) in death. While Yeats's "twenty centuries of stony sleep" (l. 19) refer to Christ's death, the poem's

original 1920 publication in *The Dial* instead refers to “thirty centuries” (l. 19), suggesting a much older deity than Christ. And although Keane proposes a reference to *The Rape of Lucrece* in Yeats’s “rough beast”—what of Pentheus’s mad statement when he finally is able to see Dionysus behind his disguise in the *Bacchae*: τεταύρωσαι γὰρ οὖν, “for you are surely now become a rough beast” (l. 922)? Pater’s “A Study in Dionysus,” “The *Bacchanals*,” and “Denys L’Auxerrois” end with the potential rebirth and release of Zagreus; Yeats’s poem leaves us with the stultifying question: “what rough beast,” indeed?

Endnotes

Introduction: Revisiting the Nineteenth-Century *damnatio* of Euripides

¹ A note on translation: all translations in this dissertation, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

² Margot Talbot's 2018 article in the *New Yorker*, "Color Blind," grapples with the persistence of the "myth" of Greek marble figures' "whiteness" into the twenty-first century.

³ The Oxford notebooks of students such as Gerard Manley Hopkins (1863–67) and Robinson Ellis (1854–56) indicate clearly that Euripidean texts were part of the Greek curriculum. At Portora Royal School, where Oscar Wilde received his public education, translations of the chorus of Euripides's *Hecuba* were a part of the examinations set by Steele in 1859 (Ross 2013, 20). See also M. L. Clarke 1959, Christopher Stray 1998 and 1999.

⁴ There was also an important dramatic competition held at the Lenaia, another Dionysian festival, but it is generally regarded as the lesser of the two.

⁵ Satyr plays were short plays with a chorus of satyrs (half-human, half-animal followers of Dionysus known for lascivious behaviour and drunkenness) that were meant to poke fun at the seriousness of the myths treated by tragedy. Only one example of a satyr play survives, Euripides's *Cyclops*. His *Alcestis* occupied the fourth position in his 438 BCE production, but would have surprised his ancient audience when a chorus of old men walked on stage in *lieu* of the much more agile and virile satyrs demanded by the genre.

⁶ His plot for *Helen* was reworked by modernist poet H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) for *Helen in Egypt* (1961), a hybrid combination of poetry and prose.

⁷ Plutarch, "Life of Nikias," 29.2.

⁸ This anecdote was well known by the Victorians, and even appears in Charlotte M. Yonge's *Aunt Charlotte's Stories of Greek History for the Little Ones* (1880): "For seventy days the rest remained in the dismal quarry, scorched by the sun, half-starved, and rapidly dying off, until they were publicly sold as slaves, when many of the Athenians gained the favour of their masters by entertaining them by repeating the poetry of their tragedians, especially of Euripides, whose works had not yet been acted in Sicily. Some actually thus gained their freedom from their masters, and could return to Athens to thank the poet whose verses, stored in their memory, had been their ransom" (173).

⁹ I would like to differentiate between studies of Euripides's tragedy and studies of his tragedies' *reception*. My argument that Euripides has always been received as though he were a part of whatever later time period in which he is read is not an argument that he *should* be studied in this way. Works such as *Euripides Our Contemporary* (Walton 2009), which cast Euripides as a modern playwright, "ahead of his time" and therefore most easily accessible to a modern audience, can be misleading when it comes to the actual study of ancient texts. In the words of Mark Ringer, "Euripides is decidedly *not* our contemporary" (1); he was not "ahead of his time," and any assumption otherwise leads to specious interpretations of his canon. My analysis pertains strictly to his *reception*, and how scholars throughout history have interpreted and adapted his works into their own, activities which usually include this misleading assumption of familiarity.

¹⁰ A compelling modern example of this trend is the 2014 adaptation of *Trojan Women* by writer/director Yasmin Fredda, *Queens of Syria*, featuring an all-female cast of fifteen Syrian refugees, which went on tour in Europe in 2016 to bring awareness of the humanitarian crisis.

¹¹ The main sources for Euripides's biography include the *Euripides Vita*, an entry in the *Suda*, fragments from a dialogue by Satyros (third century BCE), Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights* (15.20, first century CE), and a fourteenth century CE summary of his life by Thomas Magister. All are very problematic; none were contemporary.

¹² *Acharnians* 478, *Thesmophoriazusa*e 387, *Frogs* 840.

¹³ Aristophanes fr. 392.

¹⁴ See D. Sansone, 35–67. Plato quotes from Euripides more than any other poet except for Homer and Simonides (41). For a list of Plato's citations, see L. Brandwood, *A Word Index to Plato* (Leeds, 1976).

¹⁵ Gilbert Murray was one of the first Euripidean scholars to emphasize this point: "He is first the child of a particular age, society, convention; of what we may call in one word a tradition. He is secondly, in one degree or another, a rebel against that tradition. And the best traditions make the best rebels. Euripides is the child of a strong and splendid tradition and is, together with Plato, the fiercest of all rebels against it" (15).

¹⁶ Cratinus fr. 17: "[the archon] wouldn't give Sophocles a chorus, but instead gave one to the son of Cleomachus ..."

¹⁷ Aristophanes quotes at least one phrase written by Euripides in almost all of his extant comedies.

¹⁸ There is a literal "weighing of words" during the competition, beginning at line 1365.

¹⁹ The character of Sophocles chooses not to take part in the contest. Sophocles died shortly before the production of *Frogs*, which is most likely why he appears only as a silent character, as a last-minute insertion.

²⁰ Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides as the three greatest tragedians in Athenian history.

²¹ See Joanna Hannink, *Lycurgan Athens and the Making of Classical Tragedy* (Cambridge UP, 2014).

²² See Hannink.

²³ Mark Ringer, for example, notes how Euripides's *Hecuba* provides a "paradigm" for the revenge play in the sixteenth century, culminating in *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd and *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare (9).

²⁴ Winckelmann's Hellenism was the topic of Walter Pater's second published essay, "Winckelmann," for the *Westminster Review*, January 1867 (revised and included in *The Renaissance*, 1873).

²⁵ Winckelmann 1755, 81: Michelini notes that the phrase "became a byword" among classicists.

²⁶ Archeological evidence indicating that Greek sculptures and architecture were brightly painted had already been discovered by the time Winckelmann was writing in the eighteenth century.

²⁷ This "colourful variety" may have contributed to the Aesthetic movement's attraction to Euripides's texts, due to its similarity to the Greek term *poikile*, a homosexually-coded term explored in Linda Dowling's *Hellenism and Homosexuality*.

²⁸ Thomas Babington Macaulay, who was influential in the early nineteenth-century condemnation of Euripides, illustrates this point perfectly in a letter to Lord Stafford. Macaulay, in his letters, recants his early dislike of Euripides, stating simply, "Euripides has made a conquest of me" and "It has been unfortunate for him that we have so many of his pieces. It has, on the other hand, I suspect, been fortunate for Sophocles that so few of his have come down to us. Almost every play of Sophocles which is now extant was one of his masterpieces. There is hardly one of them which is not mentioned with high praise by some ancient writer. Yet one of them, the 'Trachiniae' is, to my thinking, very poor and insipid. Now, if we had nineteen plays

by Sophocles, of which twelve or thirteen should be no better than the ‘Trachiniae’ and if, on the other hand, only seven pieces of Euripides had come down to us, and if those seven had been the ‘Medea,’ the ‘Bacchae,’ the ‘Iphigenia at Aulis,’ the ‘Orestes,’ the ‘Phoenissae,’ the ‘Hippolytus,’ and the ‘Alcestis’ I am not sure that the relative position which the two poets hold in our estimation would not be greatly altered” (392–93).

There are two main manuscript traditions for the preservation of extant classical tragedies. The first, what Ian Storey has called the “greatest hits” tradition, preserves ten plays by Euripides, seven by Aeschylus, and seven by Sophocles. The second manuscript (L) contains nine plays that are organized in alphabetical sequences (the English equivalent of H through K). While this manuscript has been invaluable in offering a more representative overview of the poet’s body of work, it has also contributed to the general maligning of Euripides as a whole, considering some of the plays in the second list—*Children of Heracles*, for example—are certainly not always his best.

²⁹ Behler suggests that F. Schlegel “sought to become the Winckelmann of Greek poetry” (1986, 336); see also Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe*, edited by Ernst Behler, Jean-Jacques Anstett, and Hans Eichnerr (Paterborn, 1958).

³⁰ See Behler 1983, Jenkyns 1980, Michelini 1987, and Riley 2018. The anti-Hegelian “degeneration” mythos was epitomized in Max Nordau’s *Entartung* (Degeneration), published in Germany in 1892 and translated into English in 1895 (two months before Oscar Wilde was sentenced to prison). The writers whom Nordau labels “degenerate” include Henrik Ibsen, Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Baudelaire, and Oscar Wilde (who even merits a separate section). Nordau does not mention Euripides in the book, but it is telling that each of the four writers I have just highlighted were compared to or associated with him in some way.

³¹ Pater's understanding, and indeed *fascination*, with colour in Greek art is one of the main themes in "The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture" and "The Aegean Marbles."

³² Schlegel's lectures had been translated into English by 1815.

³³ In light of Arnold's reference to *Medea*, the nightingale from line 16 also takes on a more sinister quality, as the bird is associated with either Philomela or her sister Procne, both of whom belong to another Greek infanticide myth.

³⁴ This idea of a god responsible for misfortune making the misfortune more tolerable is also a central theme in Thomas Hardy's sonnet "Hap."

³⁵ From 1882 (the date of the first performance of a play in the original Greek at Cambridge) to 1899, there were a total of seven plays performed, two by Sophocles (*Ajax* and *Oedipus Tyrannus*), two by Aristophanes (*Birds* and *Wasps*), one by Aeschylus (*Eumenides*), and two by Euripides (*Ion* and *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*).

³⁶ For a summary of both arguments, see Michelini 11–17.

³⁷ T. S. Eliot was very critical of Murray's translations of Euripides's plays, which he reviewed when he was trying to make a name for himself as a literary critic in the UK. "Euripides and Professor Murray" was republished in his first volume of criticism, *The Sacred Wood* (1920). It begins with a reference to a recent performance of *Medea* by the redoubtable Sybil Thorndyke. The swipes at Murray are razor sharp: "The Classics have, during the latter part of the nineteenth century and up to the present moment, lost their place as a pillar of the social and political system—such as the Established Church still is. If they are to survive, to justify themselves as literature, as an element in the European mind, as the foundation for the literature we hope to create, they are very badly in need of persons capable of expounding them. We need some one—not a member of the Church of Rome, and perhaps preferably not a member of the Church of

England—to explain how vital a matter it is And we need a number of educated poets who shall at least have opinions about Greek drama, and whether it is or is not of any use to us. And it must be said that Professor Gilbert Murray is not the man for this. Greek poetry will never have the slightest vitalizing effect upon English poetry if it can only appear masquerading as a vulgar debasement of the eminently personal idiom of Swinburne. These are strong words to use against the most popular Hellenist of his time; but we must witness of Professor Murray ere we die that these things are not otherwise but thus” (3). Eliot also mentions Jane Harrison in the essay, of whom Murray was a “friend and inspirer” (6).

³⁸ See Olverson 12 and Jenkyns 64.

³⁹ *On the Generation of Animals* IV, 767b.

⁴⁰ *Sophrosyne* is a complex Greek term, difficult to render into English, for which I offer several definitions in Chapter Four.

Chapter 1

The Tripartite God: Walter Pater and the Nineteenth-Century Dionysus

¹ In the twenty first century, this sort of imaginative engagement continues to exist and exert influence over contemporary identities. *The Song of Achilles* (2012), Madeline Miller’s queer reimagining of Homer’s *Iliad*, was a *New York Times* bestseller and recipient of the Orange Prize for fiction; her novel *Circe* (2018), a feminist reconsideration of the *Odyssey*, was also a #1 *New York Times* bestseller. *Kafka on the Shore* (2002), written by the internationally acclaimed surrealist fiction writer (and Harvard classics B. A.) Haruki Murakami, is a haunting and bizarre reinterpretation of Sophocles’s *Oedipus Tyrannus* in a contemporary Japanese setting. J. K. Rowling’s multi-billion-dollar brand owes its success, in part, to the conditioning Western culture has undergone in self-identification with classical themes and her own ability to exploit

this conditioning. The continued sympathy contemporary consumers perceive between themselves and the old Greek and Roman worlds make the universe of *Harry Potter*—a combination of the ancient and modern—familiar and relevant on both personal and public levels. Classically-themed films have been a significant part of the Hollywood box office for almost as long as its existence, while the popular media of nascent nerd culture—video games, comic books, manga, anime—are rife with mythological allusions and names borrowed from classical languages. Consumers of these classically imbued media are not dissecting their classical content for some new insight into ancient Greece; they are, as their Victorian precursors were, using it to understand “their own modernity.” Pater is not necessarily engaging with pop culture in the way that we understand it, but *Greek Studies* is awash with “under-currents” that flow well beyond the academic lecture hall or study.

² Pater’s friend and fellow Oxford don, Charles Lancelot Shadwell, collated *Greek Studies: A Series of Essays* and published it with Macmillan in January 1895. The collection includes “Demeter and Persephone” and “Dionysus,” along with “The *Bacchanals* of Euripides,” “The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture,” “The Marbles of Aegina,” “The Age of Athletic Prizeman,” and “Hippolytus Veiled.”

³ Pater’s cancelation of the volume coincided with the Whistler *v.* Ruskin trial of 25–26 November 1878 (see *Correspondences*).

⁴ The phrase is repeated throughout ancient sources. See Plutarch, *Queast. Conv.* 1.1.5; *Apostol.* 13.42; *Suda o 806 Adler*; *Phot.* 357.5; Zenobios Gott. 1.137 on 5.40.

⁵ There existed a large number of plays, now lost, that more than likely chronicled either the punishment of Pentheus (as is the case in *Bacchae*) or of Lycurgus, including Thespis’s *Pentheus*; Aeschylus’s tetralogy, *Edonians*, *Bassarae*, *Neaniskoi*, and *Lykourgus*, as well as his

Semele, Xantriae, Bacchae, Pentheus, and Trophoi; Sophocles's *Bacchae, Hydrophoroi*; Xenocles's *Bacchai*; Iophon's *Bacchae*; Spintharos's *Semele Keraunoumene*; and Kleophon's *Bacchae*.

⁶ The second largest Athenian dramatic festival, held in honour of Dionysus in Gamelion (January), with a focus on comedy. The name of the festival comes from the Greek word for “winepress.”

⁷ The language of Linear B—a proto-Greek, syllabic language used by the early Myceneans—was not deciphered until 1952 by Michael Ventris; the Victorians would not be completely aware of how far back the religion of Dionysus reached in Greek history.

⁸ Giving birth from the leg happened with surprising frequency in ancient literature. The Greek word for calf, for example, γαστροκνήμη, comes from the Greek words for “stomach” (*gastro*) and “leg” (*kneme*). In Lucian's *True History*, the narrator describes in detail how the people of the moon carry babies in their calves (instead of their wombs) as an aetiological anecdote. Zeus gives birth twice in myth, to Dionysus from his leg and Athena from his head. Commentators have often remarked on this significance: Athena, a goddess of wisdom, born from the seat of the mind; Dionysus, a god of virility, born from the seat of the genitals. This former attribution is specious, however. The Greeks did not know that thinking was done with the brain—rather, for them, the mind was located in the chest. The brain was an enigma—its literal translation into English is “in the head thing” (ἔγκαρως)—which led many Greeks to theorize that the head was a jug that stored sperm, which was filtered through the spinal cord and pooled in the thighs. Both Athena and Dionysus, therefore, were born from fertile areas of Zeus's body.

⁹ Preller describes the episode as: “Die Titanen aber warden durch den Blitz des Zeus su Asche verbrannt, aus welcher hernach die Menschen entstehn, welche also zum Theil titanischer zum

Theil Dionysuscher Abkunft sind, da die Titanen den Zagreus verschlungen hatten. Daher der Kampf des Guten und des Bösen im Menschen ...” (The Titans, however, were burnt to ashes by Zeus’s thunderbolt, whence came humankind—partly of Titanic, partly of Dionysian descent—since the Titans had devoured Zagreus. Hence the struggle of good and evil in man ...) (437). As Connor points out, Pater makes no mention of this aspect of the legend. Connor argues that an “unhesitating identification” of Dionysus “with the principle of ‘good’” would have limited the nuanced and complicated identity of the god Pater is at such pains to reveal in the essay (35).

¹⁰ Preller writes about the “Doppelgeburt” (double-birth) of Dionysus (in a passage that Pater follows closely in “A Study of Dionysus”), translating the Greek διμήτωρ (Alex. 283; Orph. H. 52.9; D. S. 3.62) and δισσότοκος (Nonn. D. 5. 199) as “zweimal geborne” (twice-born).

¹¹ Verrall’s reference to Zeus as “the Deity” has obvious Christian overtones that will be discussed within this chapter.

¹² Heracles is not born a god; he apotheosizes after his death.

¹³ Greek Νυσηϊον; the mountain was named after one of the nymphs who nursed Dionysus. It is mentioned in *Homeric Hymn II* as the Νύσιον πεδίων where Persephone was abducted by Hades (27); Herodotos associates Nysa with Ethiopia (“beyond Aigyptos in Aethiopia” 2.146); later sources refer to a city in Caria named Nysa, on the border of Lydia in a fertile wine region (Pliny *HN*. 5.108; Strab. 14.1.43).

¹⁴ The title “Bacchus” first appears only as an adjective, used to describe Dionysus at least as early as the fifth century in *Homeric Hymn XIX*: ὁ Βάκχειος Διόνυσος, “the Bacchic Dionysus” (46), as well as in a Pindar fragment (fr. 70b SM); “Bacchus” as a noun and actual alternate name for the god first appears in extant literature in Sophocles’s *Oedipus Tyrannus* (l. 211) and in a Euripidean fragment (477 N). See Gantz 117–18.

¹⁵ See Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (Norton, 1969).

¹⁶ The drama was generally attributed to Nazianzus until the nineteenth century; his name appears on the surviving manuscripts, as well as in the play's attribution in the *Suda*. Closer studies of the play, however, suggest that its style bears a striking dissimilarity to the rest of Nazianzus's works, and was probably written by a later author. Karla Pollmann postulates that the play was written as late as the twelfth century. See Pollman, Alexopoulou, and A. Tuilier.

¹⁷ For an extensive discussion of Mary in *Christus Patiens*, see: Rachel Bryant Davies, "The Figure of Mary Mother of God in *Christus Patiens*: Fragmenting Tragic Myth and Passion Narrative in a Byzantine Appropriation of Euripidean Tragedy," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 137, 2017, pp. 188–121.

¹⁸ Robert Sharrock and David Taylor further explore connections between Christ and Dionysus made in Nonnus's *Dionysiaca*. See *The Myth of Paganism: Nonnus, Dionysus and the World of Late Antiquity* (Bloomsbury, 2011).

¹⁹ A. J. Festugière suggests persuasively that the narrative was borrowed in the Hellenistic period from the Egyptian story of Osiris, who was also dismembered (44ff). Martin West points out that although Dionysus was correlated with Osiris due to this dismemberment, the two gods have little else in common. Osiris was not reborn, but instead left in the realm of the dead (141).

²⁰ Edmonds's argument continues to be contested by modern commentators (nor would nineteenth-century classicists have questioned Zagreus's legitimacy in ancient contexts). Heinrichs, for example, rejects Edmonds's argument, suggesting that there is ancient evidence for this version of Dionysus. See "Dionysus Dismembered and Restored to Life: The Earliest Evidence," *Tracing Orpheus*, edited by Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui et al., De Gruyter, 2012, pp. 61–9.

²¹ The book is on Arnold's 1845–46 reading list. See Kenneth Allott, "Matthew Arnold's Reading-Lists in Three Early Diaries," *Victorian Studies*, vol. 2, 1959, p. 262.

²² Pater was first exposed to Arnold's Hellenism as an undergraduate and young don when Arnold, then Oxford's Professor of Poetry (1857–1867), gave the lectures that were subsequently published as *Essays in Criticism* (1865). Arnold's "On Translating Homer" was published in 1861.

²³ *Culture and Anarchy* was first published as a series of essays in *Cornhill Magazine* from 1867–68 and then as a volume in 1869.

²⁴ In addition to the dismemberment of Dionysus himself, his maenad followers were also said to have torn sacrifices to the god apart with their bare hands—a ritual described as *σπαραγμός*, "tearing to pieces." Orpheus was torn apart by angry nymphs.

²⁵ Pater notably recognizes this: "The word wine, and with it the germ of the myth of Dionysus, is older than the separation of the Indo-Germanic people. Yet, with the people of Athens, Dionysus counted as the youngest of the gods ..." (CS 105).

²⁶ An idea which also associates the Greek god with the passion of Christ.

²⁷ Pater confesses that "the spiritual form" is an expression he "has borrowed from William Blake" (CS 104) but does not attribute his pairing of fire and dew to Preller.

²⁸ The twelve volumes of Grote's *A History of Greece* (1846) were carefully studied by Oxford undergraduates in the 1850s and 1860s. Grote's *Plato, and the Other Companions of Sokrates* (1865) was a source for both Pater and Benjamin Jowett.

²⁹ Pater presents the ancient (albeit derivative) religion of Numa in a similar way in *Marius the Epicurean*.

³⁰ Müller instead includes the goddess Hestia, who voluntarily vacated her place to Zeus's son to distance herself from all of the Olympian bickering.

³¹ The same tension of belonging does not seem to exist for Demeter. Her place among the Olympians is stable in myth, as is her place among the Chthonians.

³² Specifically Dionysus Eleuthereus, the incarnation most closely associated with the City Dionysia. Pausanias records that this particular cult was brought to Athens by Pegasus of Eleutherae (1.2.5; 1.20.3; 1.29.2; 1.38.8). Athens likely took control of Eleutherae in the sixth century BCE (although the exact date is unclear). Pausanias records that an ancient cult statue of Dionysus was brought from Eleutherae to Athens, a procession which the Athenians reenacted from the sixth century onwards (1.38.8), culminating in the chryselephantine representation of the original statue made by Alcámenes (9.5.8). The procession was a fundamental component of the City Dionysia. See Camp 319, and Buck 113.

³³ Paestum is a culturally Greek city (part of Magna Graecia), but is located in southern Italy.

³⁴ A print of the engraving was sold to the British Museum in 1859 by Walter Benjamin Tiffin, and so would have been an image available to Pater.

³⁵ Heracles and Perseus are both, like Dionysus, sons of Zeus and a mortal mother. Like Dionysus, both experience death—Perseus's mortal and final, Heracles's agonizing before his apotheosis. According to Pausanias (1.15.3), with whom Pater engages intensely in *Classical Studies*, it was the Athenians who first convinced the Greek world of Heracles's divinity—a struggle which Heracles has in common with Dionysus.

³⁶ This small detail may be Pater's version of an explanation for the name "tragedy," which translates from Greek as "goat-song." Pater seems to argue that the name comes from the goat-skins worn by a satyr chorus at these "rough country feasts." In Simeon Solomon's *Bacchus*

(1867), much admired by Pater, the god is draped in animal skins. For further discussion of the painting, see below.

³⁷ These critics and their views are discussed in Chapter Two.

³⁸ Euripides's characterization of Medea as the antithesis of the *Mater Dolorosa* is discussed in Chapter Three.

³⁹ Dionysus does, however, identify "Bactrian walls" (l. 15) and "fine-towered cities" (l. 19) in this description of his journey to Thebes.

⁴⁰ Pater's isolation of this adjective, used by Euripides, comes from Preller (414).

⁴¹ πόνος can mean toil or hard labour, but also the result of the labour, i.e. distress or anguish.

⁴² Pater takes the term "gloomy" from Preller's "düstern" (544).

⁴³ The phrase "things too sweet" is itself Swinburne's rendition of γλυκύπικρος, a term which Sappho uses to describe Eros.

⁴⁴ See Storey and Allan 14.

⁴⁵ Pater revisits this trope in his Imaginary Portrait, "Denys L'Auxerrois" (1886), in which the god is revived in medieval France.

⁴⁶ A companion-in-arms of Joan of Arc (including the Siege of Orléans), Gilles de Rais (*ca.* 1405–40), a baron, was hanged for being a serial child murderer.

Chapter 2

***Bacchae*: Dread and Ugly Dreams**

¹ ἦκω is also the first word in *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba* (and it introduces the speaker in the fifth line of *Ion*); the prologues of all three tragedies are spoken by gods (Hermes in *Ion*; Poseidon in *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*). Richard Seaford argues persuasively that its use in *Bacchae* "carries more significance" than in the other two, because "the entry to deliver a

monologue in front of the royal house represents the theme of the play—the *arrival* of D. in the city to which he already (2–9) in a sense belongs, an arrival which destroys the royal house. This is the first of many respects in which, in this Dionysiac play, theatrical convention coheres with theme” (149).

² I use “on stage” metaphorically; Greek theatres most likely did not have actual raised stages.

³ E. R. Dodds has compiled a discussion of the style and vocabulary of *Bacchae*; see 1960, xxxvi–xxxviii.

⁴ The Greek text is taken from Seaford’s addition of the *Bacchae* (1997) unless otherwise indicated.

⁵ Ἀσίαν τε πᾶσαν, ἣ παρ’ ἀλμυρὰν ἄλα / κεῖται μιγάσιν Ἑλλησι βαρβάροις θ’ ὁμοῦ / πλήρεις ἔχουσα καλλιπυργώτους πόλεις.

⁶ See Patterson 1998, 109–10; Walker 1995, 150; and Mendelsohn 2002, 158.

⁷ Mendelsohn (152–61) and Collard (144) argue that Theseus exhibits real shock in these lines. Some contemporary editors, including Kovacs and Leuders, have queried the legitimacy of these lines, finding them grammatically incongruous with the rest of the play. Others, including Dingle and Morwood, have retained them.

⁸ Thebes itself was generally depicted as an “anti-Athens” in tragedy (see Zeitlin 1990).

⁹ The wilderness is itself a boundary-blurring space in ancient literature. As an undomesticated space, populated by masculine hunters and shepherds, it can be interpreted as antithetical to proper femininity. As something dangerous, volatile, and in need of domination, however, it often becomes coded feminine (monstrous). As a divine space, hostile to mortals, the wilderness is also the realm of Artemis (and gender-blurring Dionysus).

¹⁰ Pater's use of the term "grotesque" is in the sense defined by John Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice*:

It seems to me that the grotesque is, in almost all cases, composed of two elements, one ludicrous, the other fearful; that, as one or other of these elements prevails, the grotesque falls into two branches, sportive grotesque and terrible grotesque; but that we cannot legitimately consider it under these two aspects, because there are hardly any examples which do not in some degree combine both elements; there are few grotesques so utterly playful as to be overcast with no shade of fearfulness, and few so fearful as absolutely to exclude all ideas of jest. But although we cannot separate the grotesque itself into two branches, we may easily examine separately the two conditions of mind which it seems to combine; and consider successively what are the kinds of jest, and what the kinds of fearfulness, which may be legitimately expressed in the various walks of art, and how their expressions actually occur in the Gothic and Renaissance schools. (*SV* 126)

The combination of "ludicrous" and "fearfulness" certainly applies to the scene Pater describes; the term's associations with medievalism and the gothic also contribute to Pater's re-casting of the *Bacchae* as a medieval mystery play, which I discuss in a later section.

¹¹ Dressing kings and queens in rags was admittedly an Euripidean hallmark, an idiosyncrasy for which Aristophanes notoriously castigates him. Notable examples include Hecuba in *Trojan Women*, Adrastus in *Suppliant Women*, and Telephus in *Telephus*, which Aristophanes mocks in his *Acharnians*.

¹² Gods disguised as mortals are common in Greek literature. This particular disguise, however, is rife with difficulty, for it seems at times that this priest is, in fact, an entity apart from the god. Pater is one of the first commentators to notice the haziness surrounding Dionysus's disguise as

his own messenger: “Up to this point in the play, there has been a noticeable ambiguity as to the person of Dionysus, the main figure of the piece; he is in part Dionysus, indeed; but in part, only his messenger, or minister preparing his way; a certain harshness of effect in the actual appearance of a god upon the stage being in this way relieved, or made easy, as by a gradual revelation in two steps” (CS 162).

¹³ Later in the exchange, Pentheus refers to Dionysus’s “curls” (βόστρυχος) as ἄβρός, “dainty” (a term favoured by Pater) (l. 493). Wrestlers were discouraged from long hair because it provided something onto which an opponent could hold. There may, however, be a small jab at Sparta in this insult. Spartan citizens were known for their long, beautiful hair; Thucydides records that when the Persian army came upon the famous Spartan 300 at Thermopylae, they were shocked to find the warriors brushing each other’s hair. Athens was still at war with Sparta at the time Euripides wrote the *Bacchae*.

¹⁴ As the leader of the Argive army and the king of Argos, the shrouded and weeping Adrastus (*Supp* 112) is not at all in keeping with convention. This first impression of him is similar to the first impression of Hecuba in *Trojan Women*: a prostrate figure weeping for the dead. Adrastus, who failed to die alongside the men in the attack on Thebes, now supplicates like a woman. He is also not allowed to go with Theseus when Athens marches on Thebes to reclaim the bodies of the Seven. Theseus tells him not to speak to the herald or to mix his words with Theseus’s. Adrastus’s lack of involvement in the “manly” affairs of the tragedy effectively relegates him to an effeminate (and by association, subordinate) status.

¹⁵ Although *Salome* is not a text discussed in this chapter, the intertextual resonances between Wilde’s play and this scene in the *Bacchae* are striking: a priest/religious figure is imprisoned off-stage, calls upon the world, and addresses the characters onstage in the voice of a god. This

conflation of Dionysian and Christian religious motifs is again indicative of a wider late-nineteenth-century trend.

¹⁶ “Wandering” and “madness” are usually synonymous in Greek, on which I elaborate in a later section of this chapter. Euripides’s use of διάδρομα to describe the fall of the Theban palace is significant not only in its terrifying implications for Dionysus’s effect on the very foundations of the city, but also in relation to myths surrounding the creation of Thebes itself. The walls of Thebes, as Euripides’s audience would know, were built by the music of Amphion, whose legendary skill with the lyre causes the cyclopean stones to become light and easily fitted together. In other words, Thebes is built through harmony and destroyed through chaos, sung into being, until, stricken mad, it falls apart.

¹⁷ The syntax of the Greek in these lines further blurs the lines between Dionysus, Pentheus, and the bull; it is not immediately clear who is exhibiting these behaviours.

¹⁸ The often abrupt, “grotesque” transition between a humourous scene and “fearful” drama is characteristic of a medieval mystery play, when the unrepentant sinner is dragged down to Hell Mouth by Satan or his representative.

¹⁹ The cross-dressing scene itself is a staple in Attic Old Comedy, one of several examples in the play in which Euripides also invites a Dionysian “dissolving” of genre itself.

²⁰ As I suggest in later sections of this chapter, this conflation of the two characters is central to Pater’s interpretation of the play.

²¹ The chorus also continue this conflation of Dionysus and a “beast” in the remarkably clever lines: ἴθ’, ὦ Βάκχε, θηρ ἀγρευτᾶ βακχᾶν / γελῶντι προσώπῳ περίβαλε βρόχον θανάσιμον ὑπ’ ἀγέλαν πεσόν- / τι τὰν μαινάδων (Go, oh Bacchus, beast with smiling face, around the bacchante hunter throw the fatal noose, as he falls beneath the herd of maenads) (ll. 1020–23). It

is impossible to translate the inflected succession of “Bacchus [Βάκχε],” “beast [θηρ],” “hunter [ἀγρευτᾶ],” and “bacchante [βακχᾶν]” into English syntax, but the quick succession of the nouns in the line again suggests a remarkably executed conflation of all four nouns.

²² “The luxuriance of ornament” was a stylistic element that, in the late nineteenth century, became characteristic of decadent discourse (including Pater’s). The connection is important when thinking about Pater’s and Euripides’s connections to decadence in Stoker’s *Dracula*.

²³ Euripides *did* take large liberties with satyr drama. In 438 BCE, he produced *Alcestis* in the fourth production position, alongside *Cretan Women*, *Alkmaion through Psophis*, and *Telephos*. Rather than a chorus of drunken and virile satyrs, *Alcestis* instead boasts one of shriveled old men. The production won second prize at the festival, losing to Sophocles.

²⁴ The 1871 translation by Evelyn S. Shuckburgh, at least, is missing from the list.

²⁵ Sandys was an eminent late Victorian Cambridge classicist and one of the few dons actually to visit Greece. He is best known for *A History of Classical Scholarship* (3 vols.; 1903–8).

²⁶ Henry Hart Milman (1791–1868) took a distinguished undergraduate degree at Brasenose College, Oxford; he won the Newdigate prize in 1812 and the English essay prize in 1816. He was elected a Fellow of Brasenose in 1814, made Oxford’s Professor of Poetry in 1821, and Dean of St. Paul’s in 1849.

²⁷ In the end, Macaulay did not stand by his statement—his letters are rife with positive references to Euripides, illuminating his slow conversion to the poet. In 1834, for example, he writes to Lord Stafford that “Euripides has made a complete conquest of me”; in another letter, he exclaims: “I could not bear Euripides at college. I now read my recantation. He has faults, undoubtedly. But what a poet! The ‘Medea,’ the ‘Alcestis,’ the ‘Troades,’ the ‘Bacchae’ are

alone sufficient to place him in the very first rank. Instead of depreciating him, as I have done, I may, for aught I know, end up editing him” (Macaulay 379).

²⁸ “Emendations in Euripidem” as reported by S. Musgrave, *Exercitationum in Euripidem libri duo* (Leyden, 1762), 151.

²⁹ Nietzsche’s disappointing handling of the *Bacchae* is one of many instances where “Pater offers a significantly more subversive version of antiquity than Nietzsche does” (Potolsky 33).

³⁰ At the end of the *Bacchae*, Cadmus tells Dionysus: ὀργὰς πρέπει θεοὺς οὐχ ὁμοιοῦσθαι βροτοῖς, “Gods should not be like mortals in their passions” (l. 1348). This statement mirrors the earlier *Hippolytus* when a servant tells Aphrodite: σοφωτέρους γὰρ χρὴ βροτῶν εἶναι θεοῦς, “gods should be wiser than mortals” (l. 120).

³¹ Iterations of the root σοφ– appear twenty-six times in the tragedy (ll. 30, 179 [twice], 186, 200, 203, 266, 384, 395 [twice], 427, 480, 489, 641, 655 [thrice], 656, 824, 839, 877, 897, 1005, 1151, and 1190 [twice]). As Tyrell argues, the term is used positively and negatively throughout the drama.

³² German for both “enlightenment” and “The Enlightenment.”

³³ The French equivalent of a palinode.

³⁴ “According to his proposed hypothesis.”

³⁵ The theory is articulated three times in Paterian terms: in 1889, when he publishes “The *Bacchanals*” in *Macmillan’s Magazine*; in 1892, when Tyrell includes the essay in his edition of the *Bacchae*; and posthumously in 1895, when Shadwell publishes *Greek Studies*.

³⁶ The theory was by no means quashed by 1876; Sandys’s 1880 commentary still argues forcefully for Euripides’s rejection of rationalism and acceptance of religious orthodoxy, but the theory’s popularity had already dwindled.

³⁷ Pater's use of "paler" to signify a diminishment in human imagination in the Christian era evokes Swinburne's "Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean" (l. 35) in his poem "Hymn to Proserpine" (1866).

³⁸ The irony of Christ as a "devouring god" is not, as I discuss in the final section of this chapter, lost on Jane Harrison. Metaphorically, he is devoured by the Jewish people who demand his death. Literally, for Roman Catholics at least, he is devoured in the eucharistic host. In James Joyce's modernist novel *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus refers to Roman Catholics as vampires, "chewers of corpses" (10).

³⁹ Compare Preller's "ein verfolgter, gequälter, getödteter Gott" (a persecuted, tortured, slain god) (537). All of them are echoing Isaiah 53: 3: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

⁴⁰ δάμνημι also has connections with "taming" or "breaking" animals; the linguistic overlap between animal and woman is also a common trait in Victorian pornography and gynecology. More pertinent to my analysis of Dionysus, the word is sometimes used to describe the effects of wine ("overpowered by wine," drunk).

⁴¹ One also detects in this episode a more sinister allusion to Pentheus's death, after which the maenads toss Pentheus's "foot, still in its shoe" around like ball.

⁴² The monk's divine namesake is best known as a messenger of Zeus, just as Teiresias is the prophet of Apollo.

⁴³ There is also a version in the Dionysian cycle in which Dionysus, in vengeance against Lycurgus, drives him mad and causes him to murder his wife and sons (Apollodorus 3.5.1ff).

⁴⁴ This "after-thought" is very probably the Orphics.

⁴⁵ Pater's (and later Stoker's) pre-occupation with the heart being cut out of the corpse and preserved separately is likely also inspired by the lurid story of Voltaire's re-burials. He was buried surreptitiously in 1778, before the Church could intervene (Voltaire refused to sign a death-bed recantation of his rationalistic ways); but the heart was cut out and given to his niece. The body was buried, stolen, and reburied several times during the nineteenth century, symbolic of ever-changing French government and political crises. In 1864 religious fanatics stole the body and buried it in a pit, a story which headlined in *The Times* on 2 February 1864. The heart was not rediscovered until the 1920s.

⁴⁶ Stevenson is the only author included in *The Catalogue of Valuable Books, Autographs, Illuminate and Other Manuscripts* collection sold after Stoker's death.

⁴⁷ They also correlate to the three Hyades who raised Dionysus on Mount Nysa (*pace* Castle Dracula). The number of the Hyades fluctuates in ancient texts, but they are consistently three in the plays of Euripides.

⁴⁸ The chorus of Asian women, in return, call Pentheus ξένος (l. 263), which ironically highlights their own foreignness to Thebes through their ignorance of its ruler.

⁴⁹ One of the main meanings for ἀναμειγμένα is "to have intercourse."

⁵⁰ One also notes the aural similarity between "Mina" and "maenad."

⁵¹ Stoker also suggestively uses the phrase "double-born" (*pace* Preller's "Doppelgeburt" [double-birth] and "zweimal geborne" [twice-born]; Pater's "double-birth of the vine-god") in his short story "The Dualists: or, the Death Doom of the Double Born," a tale of male twins which explicitly references Castor and Pollux.

⁵² *Entartung* (Degeneration), the book's original German title, was published in 1892.

⁵³ “Apollo scheint sich in dieser Not dazu bequeemt zu haben, bei Viehzüchtern Dienste zu nehmen, und wie er einst die Kühe des Admetos Weidete, so lebte er jetzt als Hirt in Niederösterreich, wo er aber, verdächtig geworden durch sein schönes Singen, von einem gelehrten Mönch al sein alter zäuberischer Heidengott erkannt, den geistlichen Gerichten überliefert wurde. Auf der Folter gestand er, dass er der Gott Apollo sei. Vor seiner Hinrichtung bat er auch, man möchte ihm nur noch einmal erlauben, auf der Zither zu spielen und ein Lied zu singen. Er spielte aber so herzerührend und sang so besaubernd, und war dabei so schön von Angesicht und Leibesgestalt, dass alle Frauen weinten, ja viele durch solche Rührung später erkrankten. Nach einiger Zeit wollte man ihn aus seiner Gruft wieder hervorziehen, um ihm einen Pfahl durch den Leib zu stossen, in der Meinung, er müsse ein Vampir gewesen sein, und die erkrankten Frauen würden durch solches probate Hausmittel genesen; aber man fand das Grab leer” (Heine 9). Pater’s translation is accurate to the original German.

⁵⁴ Pater’s Heine translation has several similarities to central moments in *Dracula*’s plot. Heine’s “aber man fand das Grab leer” (9), translated by Pater as “but they found the grave empty,” appears in Dr. Seward’s account of his and Van Helsing’s visit to Lucy’s tomb. After Van Helsing removes the lid of Lucy’s sarcophagus and encourages him to look inside, Seward recounts: “I drew near and looked. The coffin was empty” (*Drac* 235). Having convinced Seward that Lucy is now a vampire, Van Helsing confesses that he plans ““to drive a stake through her body”” (*Drac* 239) (Pater’s “that a stake might be driven through his body”; Heine’s “um ihm einen Pfahl durch den Leib zu stossen”). Like Apollo, *Dracula*’s “sickness” only seems to infect women (the vampire women, Lucy, Mina). Like the Austrian villagers, the vampire hunters resolve to kill *Dracula* believing it to be the only way to “cure” Mina of his vampirism.

⁵⁵ Pater quotes Rossetti's dictum, "Conception, my boy, FUNDAMENTAL BRAINWORK, that is what makes the difference in all art"; according to Evans, "Pater read this famous dictum in T. Hall Caine's *Recollections of Rossetti* (1882), p. 249." (Evans ed. 79 n. 2.)

⁵⁶ Millais and Whistler were members from 1878 to 1896.

⁵⁷ Schaffer suggests that Stoker's reaction to Wilde's scandal, which included the careful redaction of Wilde's name from all of his published and unpublished texts, was the result of Stoker's "fear and anxiety as a closeted homosexual man during Wilde's trial" (381).

⁵⁸ Eigheten-Bisang and Miller have also noticed some similarities to *Varney the Vampire* in Stoker's description of the Count (310–11). Varney's face is described as "perfectly white—perfectly bloodless," whose "glance of a serpent" comes from eyes "like polished tin" (Rhymer 6). Varney's face after feeding, like the Count's, also becomes "flushed with colour" (6). These intertextual resonances are again suggestive of vampiric themes in decadent discourses.

⁵⁹ Derek Hughes describes the young woman "berating" the Count for the return of her infant outside Castle Dracula as "an impotent Demeter confronting an inflexible Dis" (208).

⁶⁰ Pater's indictment of the Middle Ages, especially in terms of religious strictures, begins in "Poems by William Morris" (1868).

⁶¹ Montiglio has pointed out that Demeter is the only god, apart from Dionysus, whose wanderings are akin to those of mortals (i.e. external and mad) (73). Heracles, too, is driven insane by Hera and forced to wander, but this happens prior to his apotheosis.

⁶² See Mary Beard, "My Hero: Jane Ellen Harrison," *The Guardian*, 4 September 2019.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/sep/04/mary-ellen-harrison-mary-beard>.

⁶³ The book is framed as a response to Ruskin's assertion that "there is no dread in [Greek] hearts; pensiveness, amazement, often deepest grief and desolation, but terror never" (qtd. *PSGR* 1).

⁶⁴ Similarly, Lucy's night-time wandering was also something unbearable to the British public. After finding Lucy sleepwalking at the churchyard in the middle of the night, Mina feels almost as though she should "faint" with her "anxiety about Lucy, not only for her health, lest she should suffer from the exposure, but for her reputation in case the story should get wind" (*Drac* 126). It is, of course, during this nocturnal foray that the Count first infects her, that she is first inducted into the vampire mysteries.

⁶⁵ Hughes highlights a comparable, though negative, obsession with emerging evidence of "a primeval matriarchal system, which predated the advent of patriarchy" in Stoker's *Dracula*, evoked through the figures of Demeter and Catherine the Great, whose names are given to the ships bearing Dracula to and from England (206). Johann Jakob Bachofen, a Swiss anthropologist whose work greatly impacted the multi-lingual Harrison, interpreted the "Dionysian cult as a direct successor to Amazonian matriarchy: the weapons of the Amazon cede to the thrysoi of the Bacchanals, and the 'man-hating virgins become the invincible heroic horde of the phallic lord of Nature'" (qtd. Hughes 206; Bachofen 574–75). Bachofen's description of this Dionysian coterie, Hughes ruminates, "seems a fairly good description of Dracula's entourage" (206–7).

⁶⁶ Specifically, Harrison quotes Murray's translation of a strophe from a choral ode in *Hippolytus*:

O mouth of Dirce, O god-built wall
That Dirce's wells run under;

Ye know the Cyprian's fleet foot-fall,
 Ye saw the heavens round her flare
 When she lulled to her sleep that Mother fair
 Of Twy-born Bacchus and crowned her there
 The Bride of the bladed thunder:
 For her breath is on all that hath life, and she floats in the air
 Bee-like, death-like, a wonder.

(ὦ Θήβας ἱερὸν
 τεῖχος, ὦ στόμα Δίρκας, συνεί-
 ποιτ' ἄν ἅ Κύπρις οἶον ἔρ-
 πει: βροντᾶ γὰρ ἀμφιπυρῶ
 τοκάδα τὰν διγόνοιο Βάκ-
 χου νυμφευσαμένα πότμῳ
 φονίῳ κατηύνασεν.
 δεινὰ γὰρ τὰ πάντ' ἐπιπνεῖ, μέλισσα δ'
 οἷα τις πεπόταται.) (ll. 555–64)

Chapter 3

Medea: A Dreadful and Insistent Clamour of Hate

¹ This date, a year after Aeschylus's death, is too convenient for complete credibility; some commentators suggest as late as 445 BCE.

² In *Frogs*, the character Euripides boasts that he “introduce[d]” (εἰσάγων) “domestic matters” (πράγματ' εἰσάγων) to tragedy (l. 959).

³ Donald Mastronarde suggests that in the strophes following, in which the chorus worries how such a city could accommodate Medea post-murder, “glorious Athens of myth is exposed to irony by the collocation of a traditional source of Athenian pride (the protection of persecuted suppliants) with the disruptive pollution that will be carried there by Medea” (305).

⁴ Greek text for *Medea* is taken from Mastronarde’s 2002 edition, unless otherwise indicated.

⁵ There is some slight uncertainty as to whether the infanticide is Euripides’s invention, which I discuss in detail later in this chapter.

⁶ Alcestis sacrifices herself in order to save the life of her husband, Admetus. In exchange for his excellent hospitality, Apollo offers Admetus a rather creepy gift: he convinces the Fates to reprieve Admetus of his fated untimely demise, with the catch that he has to convince someone else to die on his behalf. Euripides’s produced a (*pseudo*) satyr drama of the episode in 438 BCE.

⁷ These two texts are by no means the only ones to appropriate the myth in the Victorian period. They do, however, run parallel to the trends identified by Fiske, Hall, Hurst, and Olverson, suggesting that the engagement of female writers with *Medea* was more fraught and conflicted than previously acknowledged. George Eliot alone returns to *Medea* at least three other times in her career: in *Romola*, *Felix Holt*, and *Daniel Deronda*. Thomas Hardy’s late-century *Jude the Obscure* also offers an interesting avenue for further study on this topic. Olverson has explored the Medea figure in Mona Caird’s *Daughters of Danaus* (1894) and in the writings of Amy Levy, notably her closet drama *Medea* (1881). Fiske also explores Levy’s engagement with Medea, arguing that she and Augusta Webster use the figure “to protest the mid-century sensationalization of female aberrances and its implicit reinscription of sexual binarisms while at the same time claiming her marginal status to represent their own status vis-à-vis traditional views toward gender relations” (49). Hurst argues that Medea becomes a “mouthpiece for the

wrongs of women” in the novels of George Eliot (164), an argument which this chapter interrogates and complicates.

⁸ Fragmentary mentions of the journey also survive in Mimnermus, fr. 10 and Pherecydes FGrH 105.

⁹ See Mastronarde 57–64 for full discussion of the claim.

¹⁰ Pelias is only considered a usurper in Pindar’s *Pythian Odes* 4.106ff, in which Aeson, Jason’s father, is the eldest son and is deposed by Pelias. In all other extant accounts, Pelias is the rightful king.

¹¹ Mark Ringer has suggested that, in a perverse way, the nurse’s wish will actually come true by the end of the tragedy:

The heroics of Jason will indeed be undone. The very beams of the Argo will ultimately fall apart and strike Jason dead (1387). By the time Medea leaves on her grandfather Helios’s dragon-harnessed chariot, Jason’s accomplishments will lie in complete ruin. Against all odds, the guilty Greek hero will shift places with his homeless, outcast wife. Only in the *Bacchae* will we again encounter so profound a reversal between two characters in a Euripidean tragedy. (53)

¹² πρὶν μὲν εἶχε κἀνθάδ’ οὐ μεμπτὸν βίον. The manuscript tradition of this line is uncertain; it is often left out.

¹³ νῦν δ’ ἐχθρὰ πάντα, καὶ νοσεῖ τὰ φίλτατα.

¹⁴ Lines 11, 351, 940, 1237, 1251.

¹⁵ οὐδὲν οἶδε τῶν νεωτέρων κακῶν.

¹⁶ Blundell (26–59) and Cohen (61–118) have written extensively on this precept and its pervasiveness in Greek culture; Kitto (243–47), Pearson (15–17), Dover (180–84), and Vlastos

(303–7) also emphasize its importance to Greek ἀρετή. More recently, Herman (7–27) and Harris (125–42) have suggested the principle was less ubiquitous than previously assumed.

¹⁷ In Chapter One I have demonstrated how Pater reacts to Euripides’s description of Semele’s ὠδίνων/ λοχίαις ἀνάγκαισι (“inescapable pains of childbirth”) in the *Bacchae*.

¹⁸ Pater’s description of Dionysus’s birth, discussed in Chapter One, resonates with Homer’s simile:

It is out of the *bitter* salts of a smitten, volcanic soil that it comes up with the most curious virtues. The mother faints, and is parched up by the heat, which brings the child to the birth; and it pierces through, a wonder of freshness, drawing its everlasting green and typical coolness out of the midst of the ashes; its own stem becoming at last like a tangled mass of tortured metal. (CS 99)

¹⁹ These lines are also what is referred to in Greek poetry as a *kuklos*, a rhetorical figure that begins and ends with the same word. Mossman points out that Medea uses this same device, far more elaborately, in her *agon* with Jason (245).

²⁰ The act of supplication was a formal, religiously protected process, in which the suppliant would crouch (καθέζετο), grab the person supplicated by the knees with the left hand, and take hold (ἐλοῦσα) of the chin with the right, in order to beseech mercy or aid. They would also sometimes catch the hands of the person supplicated and kiss them. See John Gould for a fundamental treatise on ancient supplication practices.

²¹ φάρμακον is a dense term. *Pharmaka* are often associated with the goddess Hecate (Medea’s patron deity) and her followers as the products of their craft—ranging from medicines and healing ointments to magic potions and poisons, spells, and enchantments. Sorcerers and witches

were called *φαρμακός* (*pharmakos*), in some ways a synonym for the *γόης* (sorcerer) Pentheus calls Dionysus in the *Bacchae*. In this context it is usually translated as “poison.”

²² Elizabeth Bongie makes an effective comparison between Medea and the traditional, masculine heroes typified by Homer’s Achilles and Sophocles’s Ajax. See pp. 28ff.

²³ *εὐν-*: *εὐνάζεται* (l. 18); *εὐνής* (l. 88, 265, 570, 642, 673, 1027, 1338); *εὐνέταν* (l. 159). *κοιτ-*: *κοίτας* (l. 152, 437). *λεχ-*: *λεχος* (l. 41, 155, 207, 380, 489, 491, 555, 568, 571, 591, 643, 672, 697, 887, 999, 1290, 1338, 1354, 1367).

²⁴ The connection between the oath Medea accuses Jason of breaking and marriage is nevertheless unclear. As just stated, oaths were not traditional part of the marriage transaction, something which makes this situation untraditional.

²⁵ There were, however, legal consequences and petitions needed for successful divorce. See Louis Cohn-Haft (1995) for a full analysis of Athenian divorce laws and practices. There is also an added complication of adultery (*μοιχεία*) in this scenario. In a modern sense, Jason’s relationship with the princess makes him a *μοιχός* (adulterer), but in an ancient sense his initial union with Medea is also an act of adultery (*μοιχεία*), as he has carried her off without her father’s permission. Kenneth Dover defines *μοιχεία* as “[the seduction of] the wife, widowed mother, unmarried daughter, sister, or niece of a[n Athenian] citizen” (209). Dover bases this definition on Demosthenes 23.53–55. David Cohen challenges the definition (100–7); Patterson temporizes that *μοιχεία* usually involves a marital violation, but that evidence also supports that it sometimes was used more broadly to encompass women under a man’s protection (125).

²⁶ A stasimon is an ode sung by the chorus after they have entered the orchestra (*parados*) and are therefore stationary.

²⁷ Although the verb οἰκοῖμεν is technically first-person plural, it could still be interpreted here as “So that *I* might live well.” Heroes in Greek tragedy are often given to utilizing the “royal we”; I have opted to translate the line charitably as a regular first-person plural, as Jason frequently uses first-person singular verbs in the same speech.

²⁸ See also J. W. Binns, 205–6 and George Charles Moore Smith, 57, 106. David Gowan posits that there may have even been a performance of Shelburne’s translation in 1648 (234).

²⁹ Hall and Macintosh notice that Charles Gildon’s *Phaeton*, produced seven years after Barnes’s edition, owes “most of its speeches and situations to Euripides’s *Medea*, in particular its emotive use of children” (71). See also Rothstein 153.

³⁰ Charlton calls it “almost a word-for-word translation” (xlix; qtd. Heavey 42).

³¹ As I mentioned in Chapter Two, Victorian classicists seemed hesitant to revisit commentaries and translations that they felt had already been edited by a reputable scholar. In a 1854 letter to Rev. Hugh Pearson, for example, author Mary Russell Mitford inquires which of Euripides’s plays had already been edited by Porson. “This seems an odd question,” she admits, “but one of my people in ‘Atherton’ is ... himself editing a play by Euripides. I had made it ‘Hecuba,’ and now I find to my great annoyance that Porson did edit that. So my Grecian being a Cambridge man, and an adorer of Porson, I must of course change the tragedy My date is about 1818 or ’19. Just send me word what plays were open ground in that period, not that my Dr. Glenham would have minded breaking a lance with anybody, except the great professor who had just passed away” (212).

³² Elmsley produced several editions of Athenian tragedies and meticulously collated the manuscripts of Sophocles and Euripides during an extended period of travel on the European continent from 1815 to 1818. After Porson’s death in 1808, he was generally considered

Britain's pre-eminent Greek scholar. He was made Camden Professor of ancient history and principal of St. Alban Hall at Oxford University in 1823.

³³ Most classical commentaries before the nineteenth century were written in Latin—the language of European philology—as it made the editions accessible to scholars across Europe, regardless of their first language.

³⁴ Notable nineteenth-century continental European editions include those produced by: J. F. A. Seidler (1812–13); J. Barnes (1812); J. Lenting (1819); A. Matthiae (1821); J. F. Boissonade (1825–26); F. H. Bothe (1825); C. Tauchnitz (1827); G. Hermann (1831–41) G. Dindorf (1833); A. J. E. Pflugk (1842); A. F. Didot (1844); F. G. Schoene (1853); A. Kirchhoff (1855); H. F. Witzschel (1858); A. Nauck (1854); R. Klotz (1867); J. A. Hartung (1878); H. Weil (1878); H. von Arnim (1886); T. Barthold (1886); and C. E. S. Headlam (1897). Frederic D. Allen of Harvard University also produced a notable edition of the play in the United States in 1882.

³⁵ Review of *Translations from Euripides*, by J. Cartwright. *The Saturday Review*, vol. 22, no. 565, 25 August 1866, p. 247.

³⁶ There were several American translations of *Medea* produced in the nineteenth century, in addition to Potter's, including those by D. A. Tallboys (1857); John Letcher Patterson (1861); George B. Goodwin (1878); and William Cranston Lawton (1889).

³⁷ He might also have mentioned Andrew Robert Fausset's 1851 *Medea*. Fausset was Senior Classical Moderator at Trinity College, Dublin; his translation "is designed for classical students rather than English readers" (iv).

³⁸ Wodhull was the first person to translate all of Euripides's extant writings into English, which include nineteen plays and a substantial collection of fragments. The work was completed in 1782, published in four volumes, and reprinted as three volumes in 1809.

³⁹ Review of *Translations from Euripides*, by J. Cartwright. *The Contemporary Review*, vol. 4, March 1867, pp. 419–22.

⁴⁰ Swanwick was a translator, writer, and social reformer who studied German, Greek, and Hebrew in Berlin in 1839. She became a noted translator of German when she debuted *Selections from the Dramas of Goethe and Schiller* in 1843. Her translation of Goethe's *Faust* (part 1, 1850; part 2, 1878) is still regarded as one of the best in English. Urged by Baron von Bunsen, she published a translation of Aeschylus's trilogy, the *Oresteia*, in 1865 and in 1873 a volume of his entire surviving works. Both works were highly lauded by reviewers, especially as the Victorians considered Aeschylus one of the most difficult subjects for translation. See: Barbara Dennis, "Swanwick, Anna (1813–1899), translator, writer, social reformer," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, on-line, Oxford UP, 2004.

⁴¹ John Chapman, editor. "Belles Lettres," *Westminster Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, October 1866, pp. 524–38.

⁴² John Chapman, editor. "Belles Lettres," *Westminster Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, April 1868, pp. 595–612.

⁴³ Andrew Fausset published a prose translation in 1851 that was mostly ignored for the same reason.

⁴⁴ E.g. *Alcestis*, *Heraclidae*, *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, *Suppliants*, *Hercules Furens*, and *Trojan Women*. Griffiths has recently argued that this pathos is also "inextricably linked to the dangerous potential of children," the "multiple future roles which adults foresee for any given child" (3).

⁴⁵ One of the main stylistic critiques made by Schlegel *et. al* is the so-called contrived quality of Euripides's use of the *deus ex machina*.

⁴⁶ An especially irksome problem with the tragedy for many nineteenth-century writers, considering both Euripides and Medea's associations with Romanticism. Stendhal argues in *Racine et Shakespeare* ("c'est le Romanticisme") that Sophocles and Euripides were essentially Romantic playwrights. Swinburne calls the character of Medea "the root of romance."

⁴⁷ The comparison of Medea to Othello is pervasive in nineteenth-century literature, a topic that invites further investigation. Ernest Legouvé introduces his *Médée* by suggesting "Médée est à l'amour maternel ce qu'Othello est à l'amour, l'image de la passion qui tue. (Medea is to maternal love what Othello is to [romantic] love, the image of passion that kills.) (149). Othello undergoes similar processes of Orientalization throughout the century.

⁴⁸ See also Behlmer 424ff; although the 16,000 figure was based on a "hazardous guess," Behlmer suggests that Lanekster's supporting, stark statistics were nevertheless representative.

⁴⁹ Page's "Introduction" is often bizarre in its misogyny and xenophobia. At one point he defends the idea that Jason's position is the one sympathetic to the Athenian audience because, "Doubtless there sat among the audience many a gentleman who was tired of the wife whom he brought back from his travels when he was young. But if he looked for a solution of his problem here he would be disappointed. His difficulty is not solved, but merely stated and described" (xiv).

⁵⁰ The image is evocative of Planché's 1845 burlesque *Medea in Corinth*, in which, when Jason learns that Medea has made her exit in "a dragon fly," responds, "A dragon fly! How dare she so presume! / A witch's carriage ought to be a broom" (40).

⁵¹ Prettejohn defines goldback as "the colloquial name given to religious painting of the very early Renaissance that place their figures on a ground of gold leaf" (101).

⁵² Prettejohn points out that “the curling tusks, shaggy eyes and three-clawed foot, as well as the way the dragon coiled through the picture space, are strongly reminiscent of numerous examples of Hokusai’s *Manga*, the vast drawing manuals that were just beginning to circulate in London at this date, following the first important display of Japanese objects in the International Exhibition at South Kensington in 1862” (103).

⁵³ *The Times* uses a similar vocabulary in its review of the painting: “Nothing can exceed the weirdness of the conception or the consummate finish of execution in this ‘uncanny’ picture.”

(12) It is a favoured term of the Pre-Raphaelites and aesthetes, used often by Pater in his classical writings.

⁵⁴ Morris’s volume is considered in Pater’s 1868 review, “Poems by William Morris,” the final seven paragraphs of which became the “Conclusion” to *The Renaissance*.

⁵⁵ See, for example, *An Episode from the Story of Jason and Medea* by John Dowman (1750–1824).

⁵⁶ One nineteenth-century critic compares the gaze of Sandys’s Medea to Caravaggio’s infamous *Medusa*: “The artist ... may have been impressed with the unwonted intensity of expression thrown into the heads of Medusa by sculptors of classic epochs, and by Da Vinci and Carravaggio [sic] in the middle ages” (35; qtd. Prettejohn 101). It is unlikely that Sandys had seen either the Caravaggio (who, as Prettejohn points out, was unpopular in the nineteenth century) or the Coypel sketch.

⁵⁷ Other notable depictions of Medea dressed in red include Carle van Loo’s *Jason and Medea* (1759) and his *Miss Clairon in Medea* (1759). This list is not exhaustive.

⁵⁸ For a social history of blue, especially how it was adapted for Christian art and iconography in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, see: Michel Pastoureau, *Blue: The History of a Color*, trans. Markus I. Cruse (Princeton UP, 2001).

⁵⁹ Gilbert and Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic* has to some degree been superseded (especially with relation to their outdated Harold Bloomian approach to "influences") by works such as Nina Auerbach's *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (1982) and Bram Djisktra's *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (1986). Their analyses of *Jane Eyre*, central to the work, still provide cogent insights about Bertha Mason, which nevertheless must be addressed in new considerations of Brontë's novel.

⁶⁰ This line is also an echo of Medea's famous "I know indeed what wrongs I do, but my rage is stronger than my reason" (ll. 1088–9).

⁶¹ Grillparzer's *Medea* was first produced in Vienna in 1821, the third installment of his trilogy *Das goldene Vliess*.

⁶² Virile comes from the Latin *vir*, "man."

⁶³ "[S]ince the medical men had pronounced [her mad, she had, of course, been shut up]" (*JE* 336). See Showalter 67ff for an explanation of early nineteenth-century treatments of "mad" women.

⁶⁴ Adèle suffers from the added flaw of being an illegitimate French child.

⁶⁵ Jane's description: "Lastly, I saw Mr. Mason was submissive to Mr. Rochester; that the impetuous will of the latter held complete sway over the inertness of the former: the few words which had passed between them assured me of this. It was evident that in their former intercourse, the passive disposition of the one had been habitually influenced by the active energy of the other: whence then had arisen Mr. Rochester's dismay when he heard of Mr.

Mason's arrival? Why had the mere name of this unresisting individual—whom his word now sufficed to control like a child—fallen on him, a few hours since, as a thunderbolt might fall on an oak?" (*JE* 228–9).

⁶⁶ Cass argues that Edward, Bertha, and Jane are based on the biblical story of Samson and Delilah.

⁶⁷ John Reed, who commits suicide, also inherits his character and dissipated disposition from his mother. "John does not at all resemble his father," Mrs. Reed tells Jane, "and I am glad of it: John is like me and like my brothers—he is quite a Gibson" (*JE* 252).

⁶⁸ Richard Mason, the only character actually to be wounded directly by Bertha, and who follows her from the West Indies to England, invites compelling comparisons to Medea's brother Apsyrtos, whom she murders and dismembers because he chases the Argo as they flee Colchis.

⁶⁹ Medea calls the headdress a *πλόκον*, made of beaten gold (*χρυσήλατον*) (l. 950). The word in this context has been variously translated into English, usually as "veil," "diadem," or even sometimes "necklace." It usually describes one's hair, or something on one's head, such as a wreath or crown.

⁷⁰ No literal children are murdered in *Jane Eyre*, but figurative ones are. The novel, of course, deals heavily with child abuse. Jane's description of her feelings after Edward's wife is disclosed is particularly pointed:

I looked on my cherished wishes, yesterday so blooming and glowing; they lay stark, chill, livid corpses that could never revive. I looked at my love: that feeling which was my master's—which he had created; it shivered in my heart, like a suffering child in a cold cradle; sickness and anguish had seized it; it could not seek Mr. Rochester's arms—

it could not derive warmth from his breast. Oh, never more could it turn to him; for faith was blighted—confidence destroyed! (*JE* 323)

⁷¹ ἑρῶνος usually means “seat” or “throne,” but is also used to denote the “chair of a teacher.”

⁷² One is particularly reminded of John Dowman’s (1750–1824) painting *An Episode of from the Story of Jason and Medea*.

⁷³ See Easterling (1991) for a comprehensive catalogue of Eliot’s references and quotations of Athenian tragedy.

⁷⁴ Easterling bases his contention on a quotation from *Romola*:

Our deeds are like children that are born to us; they live and act apart from our will: nay, children may be strangled, but deeds never; they have an indestructible life both in and out of our consciousness. (qtd. 60)

⁷⁵ Rendall finds Aeschylus, Aristotle, Epictetus, Homer, Nonnus, Pausanias, Sophocles, Thucydides, and Xenophon in Greek; Cicero, Horace, Juvenal, Livy, Persius, Plautus, Quintilian, Tacitus, and Virgil in Latin. Haight and Wisenfarth add Aesop, Aristophanes, Caesar, Hesiod, Menander, Ovid, Plato, Pliny the Elder, Pliny the Younger, Plutarch, Theocritus, and Zeno.

⁷⁶ She writes in a 1863 letter, “I was swimming in Comte and Euripides and Latin Christianity” (“Letters” 267); a few months later she reiterates the water metaphor, “I sit taking deep draughts of reading—‘Politique Positive,’ Euripides, Latin Christianity, and so forth, and remaining in glorious ignorance of ‘the current literature’” (“Letters” 269).

⁷⁷ Gretchen, in *Faust*, drowns her baby after Faust kills her brother in a duel.

⁷⁸ Carlyle examines “the infanticidal habits of the industrial working class” (McDonagh 231).

⁷⁹ “The Mammonite mother kills her babe for a burial fee” (II, l. 45).

⁸⁰ “It is a beauty like that of kittens,” the narrator states, “of very small downy ducks making gentle rippling noises with their soft bills, or babies just beginning to toddle and to engage in conscious mischief—a beauty with which you can never be angry, but that you feel ready to crush for inability to comprehend the state of mind into which it throws you. Hetty Sorrel’s was that sort of beauty” (*AB* 92). Elsewhere, Hetty is described in terms of “kitten-like glances and movements” (*AB* 167), a kitten’s “distractingly pretty looks, that meant for nothing” (*AB* 228), and a charming “pettishness” like “a kitten setting its back up” (*AB* 286).

⁸¹ Adam condemns this type of “goodness” at the end of the novel: “[L]et a man do what he will, if he knows he’s to bear the punishment himself, he isn’t half so bad as a mean selfish coward as makes things easy t’ himself, and knows all the while the punishment ‘ull fall on somebody else”’ (*AB* 460).

⁸² Both of these traits are translations for the important Greek virtue *sophrosyne*, on which I centre the argument of chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Hippolytus: The Anti-Normative Manhood Myth

¹ Other famous examples include the fates of both Narcissus and Orpheus, although there are many more.

² Greek text for *Hippolytus* is taken from Halleran’s 1995 edition unless otherwise indicated.

³ Zeitlin has identified the motif of education in the play, in which *Eros* is identified as a *didaskalos* (“teacher”; also the term used for playwright) (*Playing the Other* 55): “The true objective of the play (and Aphrodite) might be called the education of Hippolytus” (*Playing the Other* 56).

⁴ In Foucault’s 1977–8 lecture course *Security, Territory, Population*, he puts aside notions of “dissidence” or “resistance” to explore how “counter-conduct” modifies “force relations between

individuals” (Senellart xxx). “Counter-conduct” is used by Foucault “in the sense of struggle against the procedures implemented for conducting others” (Davidson 27).

⁵ Most artistic and literary references to Athenian paiderastia suggest that the *eromenos* was at least a teenager. See Mark Golden, 175–76; Johnson and Ryan, 3; Percy, 61; and Steiner, 215ff.

⁶ Kincaid elaborates on the malleability of the child role: “My ‘child,’ then, is not defined or controlled by age limits, since it seems to me that anyone between the ages of one day and 25 years or even beyond might, in different contexts, play that role. What a ‘child’ *is*, in other words, changes to fit different situations and different needs. A child is not, in itself, anything” (5).

⁷ Hippolytus’s mother is never named in the tragedy, although other sources identify her as either Antiope or Hippolyta.

⁸ Hippolytus uses the phrase ποταμίαισι ... δρόσοις, “in river water” (dative plural); the chorus ποταμία δρόσω, “in river water” (dative singular),

⁹ Some sources cited in this chapter transliterate σωφροσύνη as *sophrosune*; I will be using the traditional *sophrosyne*.

¹⁰ For the most complete study of the term see North 1966; for the function of *sophrosyne* in *Hippolytus* see Gill, 80; Goff, 39–48; Goldhill, “Sexuality and Difference,” 132–35; Halleran, 45–46; and Segal, “Shame and Purity,” 278–83.

¹¹ North argues that the female iteration of *sophrosyne*, generally relating to “chastity, modesty, obedience, inconspicuous behaviour,” is less complicated and “remains the same throughout Greek history. The word is not used to describe the *arete* of women in the Homeric poems; but when it is used (from the time of Semonides of Amorgos), the behaviour designated corresponds precisely to the *arete* of Penelope and Andromache, who, with Alcestis, become the

classical exemplars of this excellence” (1 n2). Athenian men generally assumed that women were incapable of self-control or self-regulation. Humorous examples appear in the guise of drunkenness frequently in the plays of Aristophanes; more serious examples are even embedded in Athenian law codes. Adultery (*moicheia*), for example, legally only applied to men, due to the assumption that women would be incapable of resisting seduction.

¹² Benjamin Jowett summarizes the definitions as (1) “Quietness,” (2) “Modesty,” (3) “doing one’s own business,” (4) “doing good,” (5) “self-knowledge,” (6) “the knowledge of what a man knows and of what he does not know” (*Dialogues of Plato* 3–4).

¹³ *Republic* 430e–432a; 442c.

¹⁴ *Phaedrus* 237e–238a; 246a–254e. Plato also elaborates on his conception of a tripartite soul through a comparison to a charioteer controlling winged horses. The charioteer represents *logos* or reason, which controls the horses who signify moral impulse and irrational passion, respectively. As a visual rendering of a soul in harmony, the chariot allegory becomes significant in terms of Hippolytus’s death. Hippolytus’s horses are spooked by Poseidon’s bull from the sea (itself a representation of unbridled *eros*), which cause them to overturn his chariot; he becomes entangled in their reins and is dragged to death—a literal representation of what happens to the soul when it cannot harmonize itself.

¹⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1107b.

¹⁶ Burne-Jones’s conceptualization of *Temperantia* (1872) as a feminine entity follows a long tradition, rooted at least partially in Greek and Latin grammatical constructions. Intangible concepts, such as wisdom, victory, peace, and indeed *sophrosyne*, are (with only a few exceptions) feminine nouns.

¹⁷ It is worth noting that the phrase “manly virtue” is redundant; virtue comes from the Latin *vir*, “man.”

¹⁸ “A sound mind in a healthy body,” adapted by Juvenal in *Satires* 10.358 from a saying attributed to Thales by Diogenes Laertius: τίς εὐδαίμων, ὁ τὸ μὲν σῶμα ὑγίης, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν εὐπορος, τὴν δὲ φύσιν εὐπαίδευτος, “What man is happy? The man with a healthy body, resourceful spirit, and well-educated character” (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 1.37).

¹⁹ Excessive sexual intercourse was also considered unhealthy, resulting in “the ‘drying’ which follows from loss of vital fluid” (Goldhill, 118; see also Onians, 109 n103 and Lloyd, 84 n102).

²⁰ See also Vidal-Naquet 151.

²¹ Vernant highlights the close connection between Artemis and the acquisition of *sophrosyne* through the Spartan ritual of the *agoge*, the masculine rite of passage for boys’ transition into manhood: “For example, the young boys had to practice a virtue known as *sophrosyne*. This involved walking in silence in the streets, hands hidden beneath their cloaks, never glancing to right or left but keeping their eyes fixed on the ground. They were never to answer back, never to raise their voices. They were expected to show that, even where modesty was concerned, the male sex was superior to the female” (198–99).

²² For an excellent discussion of shame culture, see Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Duke UP, 2003), 62ff.

²³ Symonds studied at Baliol College from 1858 to 1862; Jowett was his principal tutor and subsequent friend. Rictor Norton, “Symonds, John Addington [1840–1893],” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online.

²⁴ This association in Greek thought is dramatized in the repeated motif of “the bride of death” in myth and literature. In Sophocles’s *Antigone*, for example, the titular heroine performs her death

as a mock marriage ritual, and the sexual union becomes a terrible *tableaux* when her fiancé Haemon holds her in his arms as he, too, dies. More obvious is the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, in which the maiden Kore (Persephone) is literally brought to the Underworld in order to be the bride of Hades, lord of death.

²⁵ Interestingly, in the unfinished *Gaston de Latour*, Gaston marries and sires a child, but both (conveniently) die in the St. Bartholomew Day Massacre. One of the chapters of *Gaston*, “An Empty House,” is Pater’s most direct *riposte* to Wilde’s *Dorian Gray*.

²⁶ Pater and Symonds were direct contemporaries who knew, discussed, and reviewed one another’s work consistently, although with varying degrees of enthusiasm and passive aggression. They met as Oxford undergraduates in 1860 and maintained a passing acquaintance until, as Thomas Wright records, “there fell upon Pater and Symonds a mutual dislike of each other” (115). Pater was, however, friends with Symonds’s sister, Charlotte Symonds Green.

²⁷ “Temperance” is used consistently for *sophrosyne* in Pater’s translations and discussions of Plato’s dialogues in *Plato and Platonism*. See, for example, “Plato and the Doctrine of Rest,” 42; “The Genius of Plato,” 138; “Plato’s Aesthetics,” 277.

²⁸ Greek “priests” were not generally celibate, but to Pater and his contemporary audience the choice of identifier would carry connotations of the Catholic priesthood.

²⁹ This is a theme on which Wilde touches, only briefly, in *Dorian Gray*. Lord Henry Wotton summarizes Dorian’s birth as “[m]onths of voiceless agony, and then a child born in pain. The mother snatched away by death, the boy left to solitude and the tyranny of an old and loveless man” (*DG* 37).

³⁰ Ganymede alone among these examples does not die, plucked as he is by the eagle to serve as Zeus’s cup-bearer on Olympus.

³¹ Hylas is the lover of Heracles, from whom the Dorians claimed ancestry.

³² Marjorie Garber has discussed at length the implications of this “David” in connection with Barrie’s brother of the same name, who died just before his fourteenth birthday (see 169–70). Putting aside biography, however, the name is also evocative of Michelangelo’s famous *David*, a depiction of the boy from the story of David and Goliath in the Old Testament book of Samuel.

³³ Barrie novelized the play in 1911 as *Peter and Wendy*, which is also commonly referred to as *Peter Pan*. My focus in this chapter is on the play.

³⁴ The connection between Wendy’s middle name “Moira” and Sybil Vane’s given name both point to this claustrophobic notion of the “fate” of the Victorian man: “Moira” as his allotted and inescapable destiny, and “Sybil,” the prophetess who informs him of it.

³⁵ “Angela,” similarly, has associations with a death foretold. The word comes from the Greek ἄγγελος /*angelos*, a “messenger” or “herald.” The ἄγγελος is a stock character in Greek tragedy, the figure who comes into the orchestra to describe, in gruesome detail, the death of a character offstage.

³⁶ The exodus of the Lost Boys back to London, where they join Wendy’s family, also evokes the joining of the male and female choruses at the end of *Hippolytus*.

³⁷ For further exploration of how the myth of Persephone’s abduction inflects *Peter Pan*, see Holly Virginia Blackford, *The Myth of Persephone in Girls’ Fantasy Literature* (Routledge, 2011).

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Chronology of Primary Texts

- 1566 *Le Tragedie Di M. Lodovico Dolce (Medea)*, by Lodovico Dolce
- 1694 *Médée*, by Hilaire-Bernard de Longepierre
- 1755 *Miss Sarah Sampson*, by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing
- 1761 *Medea: A Tragedy*, by Richard Glover
- 1763 *Le theatre des grecs*, by Pierre Brumoy
- 1764 *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, by Johann Winckelmann
- 1775 *Medea*, Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter (libretto) and Georg Benda (composer)
- 1782 *The Nineteen Tragedies of Euripides*, by Michael Wodhull
- 1791 *Medea in Korinth* and *Medea auf dem Kaukasos*, by Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger
- 1801 *Medea*, by Richard Porson
- 1809–11 *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, by August Wilhelm von Schlegel
- 1810 *Symbolik und Mythologie der Alten Volker*, by Friedrich Creuzer
- 1821 *Medea (Das goldene Vliess)*, by Franz Grillparzer
- 1828 J. M. W. Turner's painting *The Vision of Medea*
- 1832 *Denkmäler der alten Kunst*, by K. O. Müller
- 1833 *De Euripidis Bacchabus*, by G. H. Meyer
- 1837 *Demeter und Persephone: ein Cyclus mythologischer Untersuchungen*, by Ludwig Preller
- 1838 Eugène Delacroix's painting *Medea about to Kill her Children*

- 1840 *Disputatio de Distributione Personarum inter Histriones in Tragoediis Graecis*,
by K. F. Hermann
- History of the Literature of Ancient Greece*, by K. O. Müller
- 1841 *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur bis auf das Zeitalter Alexanders*, by K. O.
Müller
- 1842 *Die Vertheilung der Rollen unter die Schauspieler der Griechischen Tragoedie*,
by Julius Richter
- 1843 Charlotte Brontë writes “Athens Saved by Poetry” for Constantin Héger
- 1844 “Wine of Cyprus,” by Elizabeth Barrett Browning
- Euripides Restitutus*, by J. A. Hartung
- 1845 *The Golden Fleece: or, Jason in Colchis and Medea in Corinth*, by James Planché
- 1847 *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Brontë
- 1850 *The Tragedies of Euripides*, by Theodore Alois Buckley
- 1852 “To Marguerite: Continued,” by Matthew Arnold
- Handbuch der Archäologie der Kunst*, by K. O. Müller
- 1853 “Preface to the Poems,” by Matthew Arnold
- Die Götter im Exil: und andere Schriften*, by Heinrich Heine
- 1854 *Griechische Mythologie*, by Ludwig Preller
- 1856 “Antigone and Its Moral,” by George Eliot
- 1857 *Die nach homerische Theologie des griechischen Volksglaubens bis auf
Alexander*, by Karl Friedrich von Nägelsbach
- “On the Modern Element in Literature,” by Matthew Arnold
- 1857–60 *Euripides, with an English Commentary*, by F. A. Paley
- 1858 “Merope: A Tragedy,” by Matthew Arnold
- 1859 *Adam Bede*, by George Eliot

- 1860 *Medea*, trans. by Robert Potter
 The Mill on the Floss, by George Eliot
- 1861 *Silas Marner*, by George Eliot
 The Queen of the Air, by John Ruskin
- 1863 *Romola*, by George Eliot
- 1865 *Essays in Criticism*, by Matthew Arnold
 Plato, and the other Companions of Sokrates, by George Grote
 The Agamemnon of Aeschylus and the Bacchanals of Euripides, by Henry Hart Milman
- 1866 *Medea*, trans. by John Cartwright
 Felix Holt, the Radical, by George Eliot
- 1867 *The Life and Death of Jason*, by William Morris
 “Winckelmann,” by Walter Pater
- 1867–69 *Culture and Anarchy*, by Matthew Arnold
- 1868 Frederick Sandys’s painting *Medea*
 The Medea of Euripides, by Augusta Webster
 “Poems by William Morris,” by Walter Pater
- 1870 Anselm Feuerbach’s painting *Abschied der Medea*
 Médée, Tragédie en trois actes, en vers, by Ernest Legouvé
 “Medea in Athens,” by Augusta Webster
- 1871 *Middlemarch*, by George Eliot
 Lectures on the Science of Language, by Max Müller
 The Bacchae of Euripides, by R. Y. Tyrrell
 “Pico della Mirandola,” by Walter Pater

- 1872 *The Birth of Tragedy*, by Friedrich Nietzsche
Bacchae, trans. by James T. Rogers
- 1873 *Medea*, by John Hogan
Studies in the History of the Renaissance, by Walter Pater
Études sur les Tragiques Grecs, by Henri Patin
Medea, by Nikolaus Wecklein
- 1873–76 *Studies of the Greek Poets*, by J. A. Symonds
- 1875 “Aristophanes’ Apology,” by Robert Browning
- 1876 *Daniel Deronda*, by George Eliot
The Medea of Euripides with Brief Notes for the Use of Schools, by F. A. Paley
 “The Myth of Demeter and Persephone,” by Walter Pater
 “A Study of Dionysus,” by Walter Pater
- 1877 *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, by Walter Pater
 “The School of Giorgione,” by Walter Pater
- 1880 “The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture I.—The Heroic Age of Greek Art,” by Walter Pater
 “The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture II.—The Age of Graven Images,” by Walter Pater
 “The Marbles of Aegina,” by Walter Pater
The Bacchae of Euripides: with Critical and Explanatory Notes, by J. E. Sandys
 Valentine Cameron Prinsep’s painting *Medea the Sorcerous*
- 1881 *The Hippolytus of Euripides*, by J. P. Mahaffy and J. B. Bury
The ‘Medea’ of Euripides with an introduction and commentary, by A. W. Verrall
- 1883 *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, by J. A. Symonds

- 1885 *Marius the Epicurean*, by Walter Pater
- 1886 “Denys L’Auxerrois,” by Walter Pater
- 1887 Germán Hernández Amores’s painting *Medea in her Chariot*
Imaginary Portraits, by Walter Pater
- 1889 Evelyn de Morgan’s painting *Medea*
“The Bacchanals of Euripides,” by Walter Pater
“Hippolytus Veiled,” by Walter Pater
Appreciations, With an Essay on Style, by Walter Pater
- 1890 *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by Oscar Wilde
- 1891 *The Plays of Euripides*, by Edward Coleridge
“A Novel by Mr. Oscar Wilde,” by Walter Pater
- 1892–93 *Degeneration*, by Max Nordau
- 1893 *Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures*, by Walter Pater
“Apollo in Picardy,” by Walter Pater
- 1894 “Rohde’s *Psyche*, Part II,” by Jane Ellen Harrison
- 1895 *Jude the Obscure*, by Thomas Hardy
Walter Pater’s *Greek Studies*, edited by Charles Lancelot Shadwell
Euripides: The Rationalist, by A. W. Verrall
“Pater’s *Greek Studies*,’ by A. W. Verrall
- 1897 *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker
- 1902 *Euripides: Translated into English Rhyming Verse*, by Gilbert Murray
Little White Bird, by J. M. Barrie
- 1903 *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, by Jane Ellen Harrison

- 1904 *Peter Pan* (play), by J. M. Barrie
Herbert James Draper's painting *The Golden Fleece*
- 1905 *Essays on Four Plays of Euripides*, by A. W. Verrall
- 1906 "The *Bacchae* of Euripides," by Gilbert Murray
The Medea of Euripides, by Gilbert Murray
- 1907 John William Waterhouse's painting *Medea and Jason*
- 1908 "When Wendy Grew Up: An Afterthought," by J. M. Barrie
Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion, Second Edition, by Jane Ellen Harrison
- 1910 *Bacchantes of Euripides*, by A. W. Verrall
- 1911 *Peter and Wendy* (novella), by J. M. Barrie
- 1913 *Euripides and His Age*, by Gilbert Murray
- 1925 *Reminiscences of a Student's Life*, by Jane Ellen Harrison

Appendix



Figure 1: Michelangelo, *Bacchus*, 1496–7, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, Italy.



Figure 2: Girolamo Mocetto, Print of *Bacchus Engraving*, 1490–1530, The British Museum, London, England. 1859.



Figure 3: Simeon Solomon, *Bacchus*, 1867, Birmingham Museums Trust.



Figure 4: Simeon Solomon, *Bacchus*, 1867, Private Collection.



Figure 5: Richard Dadd, *Sketch for an Idea for Crazy Jane*, 1855.



Figure 6: Red-figured hydria, 480–450 BCE, British Museum, 1885.



Figure 6: Frederick Sandys, *Medea*, 1868, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.

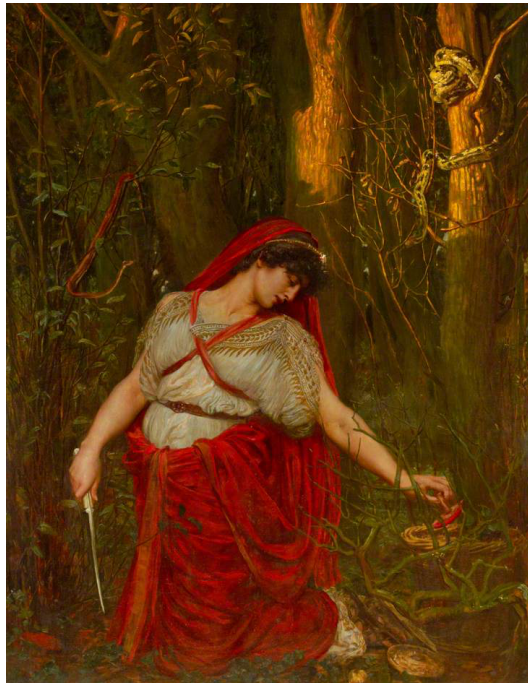


Figure 7: Valentine Cameron Prinsep, *Medea the Sorceress*, 1880, Southwark Art Collection.



Figure 8: Evelyn De Morgan, *Medea*, 1889, Williamson Art Gallery and Museum.



Figure 9: John William Waterhouse, *Jason and Medea*, 1907, Private Collection.



Figure 10: Charles Antoine Coypel, *Medea*, 1715, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 11: J. M. W. Turner, *Vision of Medea*, 1828, Tate Gallery.



Figure 12: Eugène Delacroix, *Medea about to Kill her Children*, 1832, Louvre.



Figure 13: Anselm Feuerbach, *Abschied der Medea*, 1870, Neue Pinakothek.



Figure 14: Germán Hernández Amores, *Medea in her Chariot*, 1887, Museo del Prado.



Figure 15: Herbert James Draper, *The Golden Fleece*, 1904, Bradford Museum.

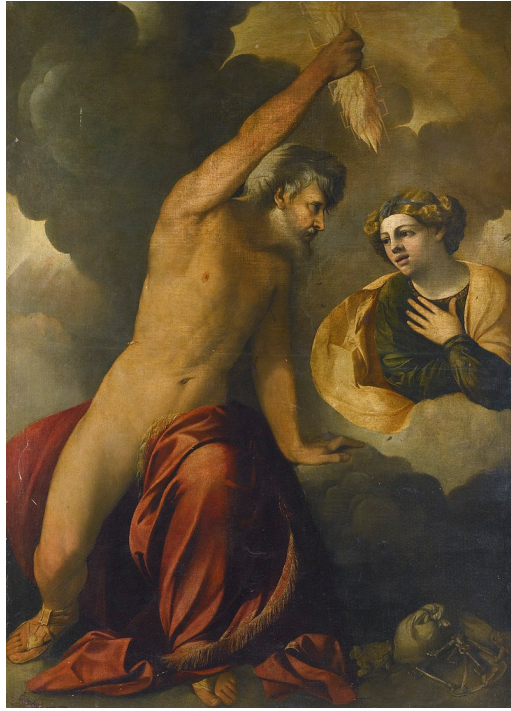


Figure 16: Dosso Dossi, *Jupiter and Semele*, 1520s, Private Collection.



Figure 17: Cornara Carlo, *Jupiter and Semele*, c. 1605–1673, Private Collection.



Figure 18: Paolo Pagani, *Jupiter and Semele*, 1693, Moravian Gallery in Brno.

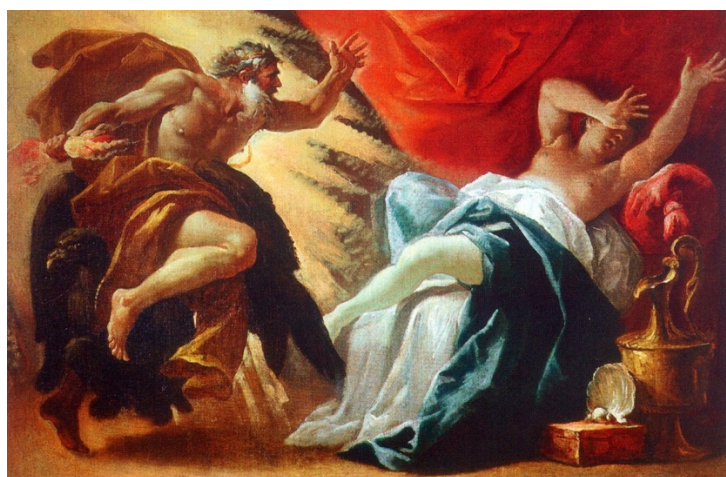


Figure 19: Odoardo Perini, *Jupiter and Semele*, c. 1671–1757, Museo di Castelvecchio.

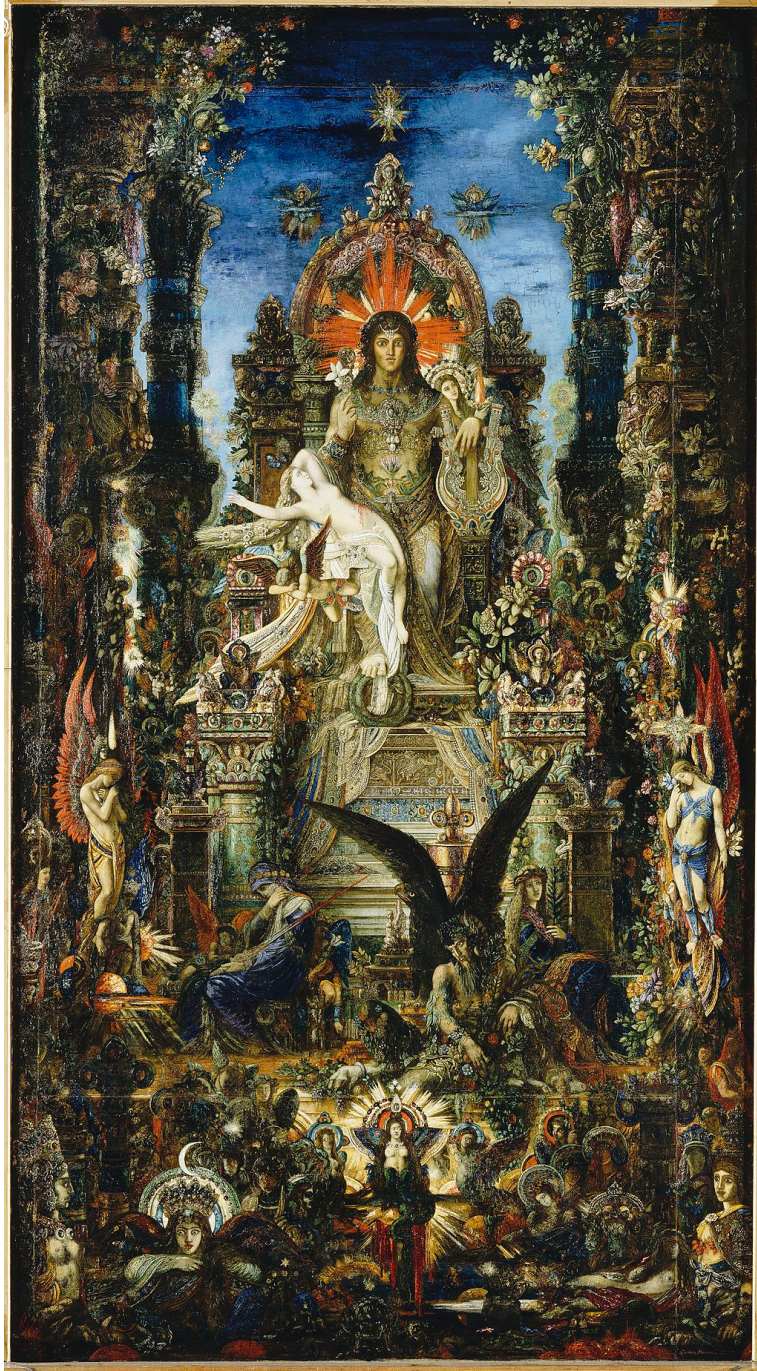


Figure 20: Gustave Moreau, *Jupiter and Semele*, 1894–95, Musée Gustave Moreau.



Figure 21: Edward Burne-Jones, *Temperantia*, 1872, Private Collection.