

Myth, Power, and the Other:
The Shared Rhetoric of Empire Between the Classical Mediterranean
and Victorian Britain

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ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the continuity of rhetoric concerning empire from ancient Greece, to Rome, and to Victorian Britain. Through examining theory, literature, and visual arts, this thesis will unpack both ancient and Victorian forms of representation and rhetoric. It charts the development of these forms of representation across centuries, exposing a persistence of thought and ultimately arguing for the force of this rhetorical tradition for defining societal status and bolstering imperial power. The thesis is divided into two main areas of focus: The Creation of the Other and Myth. The Creation of the Other section examines literature to demonstrate how Greek, Roman, and British thinkers created an image of the Other, defined themselves in relation to the Other and in relation to the past. It then examines how the respective societies, especially Rome and Britain, used this view of themselves to bolster their superiority and support their political hegemony. Following this section is an examination of the power of myth to structure a human understanding of the world, formulate social institutions, and structure reality. Within this section, the thesis deconstructs the Augustan imperial myth, looking at how Rome harkened to a glorious mythological past and revived Classical Greek artistic conventions in its art and architecture in order to imbue its empire with glory and grandeur. From this Roman focus, the thesis moves to show how Britain pulled from classical antiquity to create its own imperial myth. The two sections—the Creation of the Other and Myth—work jointly to argue that classical forms of thought and art have long been tied to perceptions of empire, becoming wed to notions of power. Starting with the formation of this classical verbal and visual rhetoric in ancient Greece, then charting its development in Rome and its later intentional employment in Britain, I argue that the classical tradition has given shape to nations, empires, and entire frames of thought, making it a formidable instrument of power.

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Introduction

Throughout history, the classical tradition has served as a language of power, a language that originated in ancient Greece, matured within the Roman Empire, and was later intentionally revived by Britain for the legitimization of its empire. The classical tradition infiltrated every facet of each society from political theory, to arts, architecture, literature, and cultural discourse, to education, and more. Greece marks the birthplace of this tradition, developing the notion of “classical” in its democratic political structure, advanced intellectual traditions and institutions, *poleis*, and elite art scene and style. It bequeathed upon the world a new tradition that would be emulated and adapted over centuries and millennia to come. Rome took what Greece did in its arts and culture and morphed it into something new, something that spoke more to empire and the political mechanisms that underlie empire. With this imperial slant, the classical tradition instilled in the Mediterranean by Greece grew and expanded out through the arms of the Roman Empire, reaching new peoples and cultures across Europe, Asia, and Africa. As Rome spread, so did this tradition’s influence spread, meaning that Rome and classical rhetoric became synonymous entities of power.

After the fall of Rome, the next most famed empire to rise in the Western tradition is that of Britain. Britain acculturated the classical tradition and embodied the power the rhetoric held through its association to the grandeur of Greece and Rome. The societal pillars of art, literature and architecture were the platforms on which Britain built its self-image. A careful manipulation of classical rhetoric, stylistic conventions, and forms of political representation in the arts tied Britain to a glorious past, turning it into the natural successor of the next age of empire. Britain wielded this image to define Britishness, bolster its power, legitimize its conquest, demonize the Other to validate subjugation, and perpetuate its political myth. British identity became so fused

with the classical tradition that the two became seemingly synonymous in the eyes of its people and much of the world. Therefore, I argue that the classical tradition has given shape to nations, empires, and entire frames of thought, making it a formidable instrument of power over the course of history.

To conduct my study, I broke the thesis into two main areas of focus: The Creation of the Other and Myth. Focusing first on the Creation of the Other, I conduct a thorough examination of literature and art from both the ancient Mediterranean and Victorian Britain to unpack notions of Otherness and its representation in the arts. I begin by looking at small scale group dynamics where I uncover the tendency for human groups to define themselves with reference to the Other while simultaneously distancing themselves from the Other. I then broaden my focus to include discussions of the Other on a societal and national scale, showing the significance of Otherness for the creation of empires. From this I move to explore concrete examples of the creation of the Other in both ancient Mediterranean and modern British texts. I start by examining ancient Greek conceptions of the Other and its manifestation in ancient epic then transition into the Roman view. The bulk of this portion of my study focuses on Homer's *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" and J.A. Cramb's historical lectures forming his *Reflections on the Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain*. Within each of these texts I closely investigate the language and imagery used to represent the Other as well as the Self, finding a pervasive commonality of rhetoric between the texts.

The second section builds upon the first and moves into an exploration of myth. Myth has served as a powerful force for conveying ideologies and structuring an understanding of reality in societies from ancient times to the present. My study specifically focuses on theories of myth that unpack the purpose of myth, looking at texts like Bruce Lincoln's *Discourse and the Construction*

of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification and Raphael Patai's *Myth and Modern Man*. They expose the pervasive nature of myth and the way metaphors help structure human existence and societies. I then build upon this theoretical framework and move into an analysis of myth in the ancient world, with a focus on the relationship between myth and history. Here I turn to the Augustan Era of Rome to explore how a mythic retelling of history can bolster the power of the present and examine literature including Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* and works of art including the *Ara Pacis Augustae*. Within this section I focus upon the Augustan imperial myth and explore how the myth was created, how the myth was perpetuated, and how history and the classical tradition are intentionally mythologized to support Augustus' imperial agenda.

From the discussion of ancient myth, I move to Britain, looking at the way Britain mythologized its past, turning the classical Mediterranean into its societal ancestor. Within this discussion I explore how creating a glorious origin myth empowers the present through association with a fantasized past and the way an illustrious heritage can be used to validate claims of superiority. I also look at the way the classical past contributed to the myth of West and East and how this fed into Britain's conception of its Self and the Other. This historical myth and myth of the Other coalesce to form the British imperial myth, a myth that cast Britain as the apex of civilization and the pinnacle of a longstanding tradition of empire. To explore the manifestation of this myth in a cultural production, I turn to the British Museum. I deconstruct its ideological significance and physical structure to expose how the very style of the building reflects the classical tradition, acts as a statement of imperial power, and fundamentally embodies the British imperial myth. The creation of the Other and utilization of myth are tactics symbiotically employed by both Rome and Britain to define themselves and endorse their superiority, creating the fundamental belief system necessary to forge and maintain an empire. From Greece, to Rome, to

Britain, Otherness and myth have been exploited in the service of empire to explain how and why the respective societies reigned supreme and deserved to conquer.

Part I: The Creation of the Other

THEORY

Before beginning to analyze, it is worth examining some theory concerning the creation of the Other and its role in human society and group dynamics. The differentiation between groups of people does not only arise in political encounters but is arguably a central facet in human group interactions from an interpersonal level to a national level. An “Other” at its fundamental level is someone who does not belong to the group and thus the existence of an Other involves “two or more parties that do not share the assumptions crucial to functioning within their particular systems of reference” (Rozbicki and Ndege 2018, 1). These varying systems of reference shape a group’s approach to the world and help craft their sense of a homogenous identity and group consciousness. This unique group identity therefore stands apart from other groups who likewise share their own individualized identity. Alfred Schuetz notes

any member born or reared within the group accepts the ready-made standardized scheme of the cultural pattern handed down to him by ancestors, teachers, and authorities as an unquestioned and unquestionable guide in all the situations which normally occur within the social world. (1944, 501)

Culture thereby can be considered a product of long-term shared experiences between groups and thus exerts a powerful force on all groups’ view of the world. Shuetz’s notion of the acceptance of the cultural pattern points to the significance of a culture’s history and its power to shape the worldview of a group as he argues that this longstanding tradition, passed through the hands of authorities, becomes an unquestionable truth. The story of the group’s identity is reiterated enough

to be seen as inherently indicative of the true nature of the world and acts as an authority for how to behave in the social sphere.

Each group will have a different history and therefore a different culture stemming from their individual experiences. As such individual cultures create a “prescription for living as well as a sense of order” for the individuals that constitute each culture (Rozbicki and Ndege 2018, 2-3). Because of this prescribed approach to life, there is not one universal cultural constant or behavioral precedent but rather a diverse range of cultures that each apply to a particular group. This therefore becomes the root of creation of the Other; a group or individual that stands apart from one’s own and does not align with one’s cultural pattern. The Other will not share the historical tradition by which the cultural pattern of the in-group¹ was created and therefore will not align due to a different scheme of orientation created from their own distinct history and culture. As noted above, culture helps to provide a sense of order through its stability and homogeneity. If an outside influence comes and disrupts this sense of stability, it often is seen as a threat for it questions what was previously taken as absolute (Rozbicki and Bdege 2018, 2-3). Because a culture assumes its norms and values to be absolute, due to their pervasive force in dictating the actions and beliefs of the culture, any Other that comes to question these supposed truths and prescriptions for behavior meets resistance. This conflict between strangeness and familiarity, unknown and known, creates the division between Self and Other that resonates in all aspects of the social sphere from an individual level to a national level.

Focusing upon this binary within the political realm, this tendency to define Self and Other, in-group and out-group, emerges on a national level. The Other within this framework becomes a body of people or nation that stands distinct from the home nation. When applied to notions of

¹ By “in-group” I refer to the culture or group that is actively creating the Other.

empire, this becomes a pervasive force for defining who is part of the empire and who is external and thus able to be conquered. As a nation expands with an imperial mindset, various peoples and cultures are inevitably encountered as the “globe does not belong to one homogeneous population but is divided among and shared by many different peoples that are organized in widely differing bodies politic” (Arendt 1946, 601). These differing bodies politic contribute to the formation of the Self and Other on a national level because each body politic views itself as having a collective national identity and by extension notion of Self and Other. When one of these body politics begins to pursue an imperial agenda, it will turn another body politic into an Other and use this to legitimize conquest. The conquering force historically exhibits a strong in-group favoritism, or ethnocentrism, which includes attitudes of superiority and contempt for out-groups and works to create a skewed power balance that fosters its imperial mission. Here the interaction of different cultures calls upon the “us” versus “them” binary as dominant groups tend to homogenize the Other, capitalize on the differences between themselves and this Other, and highlight single dimensions of the Other’s culture in order to legitimize their conquest (Patterson 1997, 87-88). As such, when approaching imperializing nations, one must take into account the body politic and the various peoples brought under the fold of the governing nation, whether it is through incorporation or colonization, and examine the power balance between the imperializing and conquered nations.

This act of creating an Other has a long-standing tradition in human societies, helping to organize group dynamics from those between disparate tribes and hunter-gathering peoples to entire nations. However, the period of classical antiquity has had quite a lasting and influential impact on how Self and Other are defined and conveyed for Western societies up until the present. Classicist Edith Hall studies the creation of the barbarian and cultural Otherness in Greece and notes that in the eighth to sixth centuries, Greece created a new Hellenic consciousness that

emphasized a burgeoning sense of a singular Greek ethnicity that went beyond the individual city-states (1989, 6). This developing notion of an ethnic identity supported the trend of Panhellenism², which created a sense of unity within the Greek cultural group that found its height during the fifth century when Greece and Persia came to a violent conflict. During this conflict with the Persian Empire, the Greek people needed to create a sense of cohesion so as to present a unified front to combat the onslaught of the Persians. However, prior to the fifth century, Greeks' were already engaging with notions of the Self versus the Other. During the eighth century, the myths of this early period were concerned with most of the "oppositions later assimilated to the cardinal antagonism of Greek versus barbarian—civilization against primitivism, order against chaos, observance of law and taboo against transgression" (Hall 1989, 51). The abstractions of Greek civilization later considered ethnically Other were often embodied as monstrous or stereotyped as entirely barbaric in order to explain the intense sense of difference the Greeks felt between themselves and the Other.³ This presentation of difference in the form of the monster or savage expressed a sharp divide between the world of the Greeks, making manifest their sense of order versus chaos, civilization versus primitivism and so on. A clear notion of Self and Other was not just the product of their worldview, however, but also came to shape their worldview through the perpetuation of a new rhetoric for describing the Other.

Greek representations of the barbarian have proven to be incredibly influential on conceptions of the Other for centuries, contributing to an enduring rhetoric of Otherness that has helped shaped societies that came after Greece. In his book titled *Inventing Western Civilization*, the historian Thomas Patterson examines the notion of civilized and uncivilized and comes to

² Panhellenism: a term to connote "all Greece" or "all of the Greeks", coming to define a cohesive Greek identity that revolved around a shared cultural tradition and similar forms of expression.

³ Mythical beings like the Cyclopes, Harpies, Laestrygonians, and so on embody this sense of the monstrous Other and provide hyperbolic metaphorical representations of the uncivilized from the Greek perspective.

define civilization as “the refined institutions, moral values, and cultures of states and their elites” (1997, 21). He then goes on to suggest that “uncivilized peoples represent the primary (primitive) or unrefined states of the human condition which, depending on how the civilized (ruling) classes portray their own history, they either avoided altogether or passed through at an earlier time” (1997, 21). The uncivilized becomes the Other to the civilized, which was an integral facet of the Greek understanding of its own identity in relation to the world around it. Greek society conceived itself as a highly civilized people and Others as barbarians who embodied the antithesis to Greek order and its moral and political institutions. Evidence of this line of thinking and self-definition can be traced back to the eighth century in the Homeric epics but comes to a head in the service of politics and international conflict in the fifth century.

During the fifth century, when the Persian wars were raging, the new Panhellenic ideology flourished, bringing this discussion of civilized versus uncivilized to the forefront of Greek thought and giving a face to the barbarian. At this time the Greeks realized that they were one united people with a common Persian enemy, which created a new ethnocentrism in the area that increasingly turned the Persians, into the archetype of the barbarian (Huang 2007, 119, 125). The Greeks believed that they were the apex of civilization with their stratified society, democratic political system, developed manners and morals, and attentiveness to their gods. Persia, however, stood as the antithesis to all that was Greek. Because the Persians did not have the same societal structure (instead they were ruled by an autocrat, worshipped gods deemed Pagan from the Greek perspective, wore different dress, and so on) they became the emblem of the barbarian, aligning with the longstanding Greek tradition of turning the Other into something savage. They were cast as an emotional, cruel, blasphemous, and most importantly tyrannical people, all of which are key words in the rhetoric used to describe the Other. Prior to this moment, the barbarian generally

stood for any people with a linguistic and cultural difference, but at this time the notion shifted to “acquire the generic sense denoting all non-Greeks which was to reflect and bolster the Greeks’ sense of their own superiority” (Hall 1989, 11). Greece became synonymous with civilization, and all non-Greeks, even those who had little linguistic or cultural difference, became synonymous with uncivilized barbarians. By grouping all Others under the title of barbarian, Greeks reinforced their superiority through belittling and vilifying the Other, casting them as an uncivilized, savage people.

Taking from the Greeks, this tendency to demote the Other to the status of barbarian and savage continues to develop in the ancient Mediterranean under the Roman Empire as Rome adopted and adapted Greek ways of describing the Other. Rome’s imperialistic agenda, however, separates it from Greece as it did not just encounter the Other in the process of migration or in fighting defensive wars, but actively sought to conquer foreign peoples. Therefore “Roman representations of foreign peoples often reveal the pressing need to justify attacks against them, and constantly present Rome as possessing the ‘correct’ cultural and religious values” (Bittarello 2009, 212). This deliberate creation of the barbaric Other in contrast to the “correct” Romans becomes a critical element of their political rhetoric as it works to legitimize their conquests and justify violent acts against the Other. Roman authors often re-crafted Greek representations of the Other in their imperial rhetoric, connecting this biased portrayal to a longstanding rhetorical tradition within the Mediterranean. These Others were framed as the antithesis to Roman ideals of order, piety, frugality, chastity, defined gender roles, and so on. Casting the Other in this light, Rome turned the Other into something contemptible and therefore worthy of conquest. From fundamental human interactions to entire nations, the tendency to create an Other profoundly

shapes a human's experience of the world and has come to mold entire nations and empires from Greece to Rome and beyond.

THE *ODYSSEY*

With the theoretical and historical framework of the creation of the Other now established, I turn to examine concrete examples of the employment of this rhetoric in ancient Mediterranean literature and later 18th and 19th century British literature. Over two millennia ago people began to explore their surroundings, encountering new societies and conveying their experience in the arts. Homer's *Odyssey*, written some time in the eighth century BCE, stands as the primary example of burgeoning thoughts about new peoples and differing ways of life, as it is one of the first textual sources to engage with notions of exploration and colonialism. Being deeply embedded in the Western canon, arguably the foundation of the entire canon itself, the *Odyssey* works to shape texts and contexts that follow and establishes a fundamental language for examining and discussing the Other.

While off on his twenty-year wanderings, the famed hero Odysseus explores the known world meeting people kind and hostile, monsters alluring and dangerous, and environments comfortable and foreign. The epic was written down⁴ during the eighth century BCE, meaning that the *Odyssey*'s roots reside within the period of massive expansion for Grecian society. Peter van Dommelen notes in his study concerning migration and colonialism in the ancient Mediterranean that the Greeks and the Phoenicians were the first societies to engage in the creation of permanent long-distance colonial settlements on a large scale (2012, 395). Expanding their presence across

⁴ Ancient epic had a long oral tradition so the date at which it was written down and whether the version we have is the "true"/"original" version is conjecture. Despite this, however, the written version is generally accepted to have come from sometime in the eighth century BCE.

the Mediterranean world, distinctions were created between what it meant to be Greek and what it was to be non-Greek. Defining themselves against those they came into contact with, certain ideals such *xenia*⁵, proper feasting behavior, agriculture, and so on became markers of civilization in the eyes of the Greeks. Given the historical context surrounding its creation, the *Odyssey* directly reflects circulating ideals of the Greek populace as it explored the Mediterranean for the first time.

Although the text is highly fantastical, rife with monstrous perils, wild adventures, and profuse divine intervention, thematically it explores expansion and a growing understanding of the vast nature of people and societies that inhabit the globe. Figures like Circe from Book 10 and the Sirens of Book 12 illustrate the allure and the dangers of the unknown as beauty and bestiality become fused. The Sirens act as the quintessential image of dangerous enticement as their melodic voices lure sailors to a violent death among their rocky perches while Circe entices with her womanly charm yet magically transforms men into beasts. While both of these examples are far from ordinary experiences of exploration, they do metaphorically illustrate the dangers of being too fascinated by the arresting beauty of the unknown.

Grounding the text more in Greek society is Homer's infusion of traditional Greek practices into the wildly adventurous tale. He takes common societal conventions and manipulates them throughout his text in order to explore societies that both align and dramatically depart from his native Grecian society. Acting as a central theme running throughout the text, the notion of *xenia*, one of the fundamental tenants of Greek culture referring to proper hospitality standards and treatment of guests, is employed to explore varying degrees of civility. A hallmark of a civilized people in the eyes of the Greeks, those who exhibit a perverted *xenia*, or worse no *xenia* at all are hailed as uncouth, lacking a sophisticated culture and society. Sometimes these perversions of

⁵ For more information about the details and practice of *xenia*, see Gabriel Herman, *Ritualized Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

xenia become so extreme that the society moves beyond being uncivilized and into a realm of danger, savagery, barbarism, and monstrosity.

The middle sections of the epic engage most directly with encounters with the Other and the principle of *xenia*. In Book 6, after being battered by storms and washing ashore on the coast of an unknown land, Odysseus awakes to the land of the Phaeacians. After his years of dangerous wandering through violent seas and lands, Odysseus finally stumbles upon a civil, hospitable community. However, ignorant of the civility of the land at the onset of his encounter with the Phaeacians, Odysseus immediately questions the nature of the land, asking; “What kind of land have I come to now?/ Are the natives wild and lawless savages,/ Or godfearing men who welcome strangers?” (*Od.* 6.118-120). Though a small moment, it directly points to an “us” versus “them” binary that circles around notions of civilized versus savage. Based on past experiences he is left questioning whether the new land will be one with a recognizable form of civilization, predominantly marked by an adherence to the Greek notion of *xenia*, or an unrecognizable form of society, viewed as uncivilized due to its uncouth treatment of guests. While Odysseus automatically assumes the role of the civilized, being as he comes from a refined Greek origin, those he meets inherently hold the potential of savagery. Though this is rather ironic given that Odysseus shows up battered and beaten by the storm, looking more like a ragged vagrant than a civilized noble. And yet, because he is Greek and the hero of the tale, his own civilized nature is never questioned. The diction of this moment, particularly the words “native,” “wild,” “lawless savages,” and “godfearing” all point to dominant trends in the rhetoric used in discussions of the Other as they serve to debase and devalue the encountered people. They indicate what Greeks valued as markers of civilization—laws, religion, and a domination of the wild—while typecasting the Other as lacking any of the integral elements of the civilized.

As noted above, instead of encountering a savage race or landscape, Odysseus stumbles upon a society that aligns with an Grecian societal ideals. The Phaeacians prove to be perfect hosts, upholding all of the tenants of *xenia*; they welcome him directly into their home, treat him as a friend, clothe and feed him, bestow gifts, as well as see to his longer-term well-being via taking him back to Ithaca. Meeting the Phaeacian princess Nausicaa by a stream outside of the walls of the city, Odysseus is greeted kindly by the young princess saying, “Since you have come to our country,/ You shall lack no clothing, nor anything needed/ By a sore-tired suppliant who presents himself” (*Od.* 6.196-198). Nausicaa, cast as a fair maiden, follows all of the respected conventions surrounding the treatment of guests, taking on the mantle of the pious and hospitable host. She approaches Odysseus demurely yet with respect and assures him that he shall want for nothing while upon the shores of her country. While dining as an honored guest amongst King Alcinous and the rest of his hosts, Odysseus is asked to share the story of his wanderings. By establishing this prime example of hospitality, Homer is able to more powerfully explore notions of barbarity, as they are set in direct contrast to the pristine society of the Phaeacians. Honoring the wishes of his hosts and the Phaeacian community, Odysseus recounts his journey to various territories and encounters with unique peoples that are cast as quite different from Odysseus himself. The violent and savage experiences he recounts conflict with the serene setting in which they are told, further accentuating the sense of difference between the Greek and the barbaric Other.

Each of the peoples he describes in his tale stand apart from Greek societal conventions, but the most distanced is the Cyclopes, embodying everything condemned by the Greeks. With the Cyclopes, Otherness is defined by their bestiality and departure from the behavior expected of a civilized being. Homer does not just make humans seem different and uncivilized but instead uses a monstrous creature to represent other societies external to Greece. Odysseus narrates:

We came to the land of the Cyclopes,
Lawless savages who leave everything
Up to the gods. These people neither plow nor plant,
But everything grows for them unsown:
Wheat, barley, and vines that bear
Clusters of grapes, watered by rain from Zeus.
They have no assemblies or laws but live
In the mountain caves, ruling their own
Children and wives and ignoring each other. (*Od.* 9.104-112)

According to Odysseus' telling, Cyclopes illustrate no markers of a civilized land: they leave their society lawless, their land unsown, and they focus on the individual rather than the community. Isolation and the lack of domestic agriculture makes them seem like relics of the past, uncouth and distant from modern societal conventions that dominated the Mediterranean from the eighth century BCE onward. With the rise of the Greek city-state, there came a greater focus on community, order, intensive agriculture, and expansive trade throughout the Mediterranean. This in turn created a more secure community and economic environ which allowed the arts and culture to flourish. The Greek world became a cluster of quickly developing states where the hallmarks of civilized culture became the norm, meaning that the rejection of these civilized traits marked the Cyclopes as profoundly Other and primitive in their foregoing of the developmental trends spreading through Greece.

Their lack of progress is emphasized in Odysseus' tale in the way that the Cyclopes do not pursue industry in any form and do not engage in trade. He notes, they "do not sail and have no craftsmen/ To build them benched, red-prowed ships/ That could supply all their wants, crossing the sea/ To other cities, visiting each other as other men do" (*Od.* 9.120-126). The Cyclopes show interest in neither ship building nor exploring across the sea and engaging with foreign peoples as other Mediterranean societies were doing during this era. Instead, they choose to remain isolated and developmentally stunted. Being as they do not follow the same arts as the Greeks and illustrate

no desire for progress, their society is viewed as inadequate and only through developing the arts of the Greeks could they turn “the island into a good settlement” (*Od.* 9.127). This definition that focuses strictly on what they lack suggests that there is nothing productive about the society of the Cyclopes. Therefore, they exhibit little to value in the eyes of the Greeks and are perceived as an inferior and uncivilized group.

These speculations and observations about the Cyclopes come prior to Odysseus retelling his actual physical encounter with one of them, thereby creating a bias against the Cyclopes in his audience before he discusses the core of his encounter with the “monsters.” Once Odysseus does physically engage with the Cyclopes, a new degree of barbarism arises from Polyphemus further distancing this Other from the society of the Greeks. The Cyclops Polyphemus completely abandons any form of hospitality, debasing the entire convention of *xenia*. Rather than welcoming Odysseus and his men into his home and offering them shelter and food as he should, Polyphemus accosts the men with violence and blasphemy, acting neither godfearing nor respectful of strangers. Polyphemus chastises Odysseus, saying ““You’re dumb, stranger, or from far away,/ If you ask me to fear the gods. Cyclopes/ Don’t care about Zeus or his aegis/ Or the blessed gods, since we are much stronger”” (*Od.* 9.265-268). This deliberate abandonment of hospitality and criticism of the gods is deplorable from the perspective of the Greeks. To make matters worse for himself, Polyphemus starts eating Odysseus’ men making him the ultimate savage without any hope of redemption. Whereas at the start the Cyclopes are viewed as savage by what markers of society they lack, it ends with their active barbarism being the ultimate differentiator between their savage society and the sophisticated Greeks. Both their society and behavior are criticized, making them into an uncivilized group through and through. By emphasizing this violent difference at the end

of Odysseus' tale, the Cyclopes become more than an uncivilized Other and become a dangerous foe, making any ill treatment of them by the hands of the Greeks seem justified.

However, Odysseus acts as the narrator during this tale of the Cyclopes and as such the way the encounter is relayed is entirely dependent upon his perspective. Odysseus can manipulate the story as he sees fit to legitimize his experience and demonize the Cyclopes in order to justify his cruelty. He consciously begins his tale by describing the uncivilized nature of the Cyclopes before recounting his actual encounter with them in order to establish their negative character. This in turn ingratiates his hosts and by extension Homer's audience to his side before he describes his physical confrontation with Polyphemus. His degrading depiction of the Cyclopes works to justify his behavior to come as it makes it seem that any ill treatment of Polyphemus, like robbing and blinding him, would be a direct response to his savage, uncouth ways. With this in mind, the degree of barbarity suggested by Odysseus may be a departure from reality and hyperbolized to support Odysseus' behavior, helping him to maintain his heroic and cultured status.

Evidence of this overly emphasized barbarism comes through the brief humanizing moments in the tale that work to evoke pity for the Cyclopes and glimpses of ill behavior on behalf of Odysseus and his men. Instead of acting like respectful guests, Odysseus and his men decide to welcome themselves into Polyphemus' home with the goal of obtaining gifts and proceed to help themselves some of his food stores (*Od.* 9.220-223). Later, after Polyphemus attacks Odysseus' men and they attack back, a gentler side of Polyphemus is exposed with the care of his sheep. When dawn comes the morning after Polyphemus' blinding, the rams desiring pasture began bleating in their pens. Despite suffering from his lack of sight, Polyphemus still tends to their well-being before his own and treats them kindly, or at least kinder than one would expect a monster to treat his animals (*Od.* 9.435-441). This moment of care and tenderness sharply departs from the

dangerous savagery thus far exposed and makes Odysseus' account of his entirely pitiless heart suspect. Odysseus too performs ills and allows his pride to get the best of him when he harshly taunts Polyphemus saying, "You savage! But you got yours in the end,/ Didn't you?" (*Od.* 9.477-478). This unnecessary taunting and gloating do not cast Odysseus in the best light and does not make him entirely blameless thereby complicating the image of complete barbarity for the Cyclopes and complete civility of Odysseus and his men. However, despite these moments of nuance and complication, if the audience is inclined to see Odysseus as civilized and a representation of all that is good about Greek culture, then they are inclined to side with him anyway. The subtle exceptions still help prove the rule, especially given that while Polyphemus takes good care of his sheep, he eats humans, showing he is still imbalanced in how he relates to the scale of human importance. Ultimately, Odysseus as the Greek will always be civilized while the Other will always be uncivilized.

THE *AENEID*

The entire notion of savagery and barbarism alongside the emphasis on supposed elevated qualities of one society versus a degraded Other comes to shape discussions of the Other in ancient Rome. It resurfaces in Virgil's famed Roman epic the *Aeneid* in a similar, though not identical manner as what we saw in the *Odyssey*, as Aeneas encounters many of the same societies on his adventure. Being as the *Odyssey* focuses strongly upon Odysseus' journey and only later his revenge, the interactions with new peoples serves as a larger focus in the text than what is seen in the *Aeneid* whose primary theme is predominantly that of founding an empire. Peter van Dommelen notes how "Greek and Roman perceptions of settlements established elsewhere did not coincide... given the notably different circumstances in which these settlements were founded"

(2012, 396). Greece, existing long before Rome, was one of the first societies to begin exploring the Mediterranean and given its political structure of small independent city-states, it did not have the expansionistic or imperialistic mindset of Rome. From the period of the Republic onwards, territorial expansion became a central focus of Roman leaders and the political engine for the state and later empire. Historically used as a way to bolster power, Republican consuls and later emperors set their focus on conquering neighboring territories then slowly expanding outwards from the sight of Rome with the goal of accumulating more land, riches, and power, all of which was done with an explicitly Roman mindset and purpose. However, despite this discrepancy in focus between the two epics, each employs a similar language and perspective of the Other. This similarity in rhetoric despite the differences in focus suggests a larger tradition within human thought concerning Otherness and the drive to conquer.

Prophecy lies at the center of the *Aeneid*, cropping up throughout and setting the course of the epic as well as the future for Rome. The entire fate of Rome following its inception is documented early in Book One placing the might and glory of Rome at the center of the text from start to finish. Within this initial prophecy, an echo of the language employed in the *Odyssey* arises. When asked by Venus whether the fate she had been promised for her son Aeneas was still to be, Jupiter responds by telling of the glorious destiny of Rome to come. Within this prophecy he states that Aeneas will “crush barbarous nations, and set up laws,”⁶ later building a grand walled

⁶ When looking at other translations, the use of the word “nations” in this moment is variable and sometimes the terms like “peoples,” “armies,” “race,” and “tribes” are used instead. However, the term “nations” seems to be the term that arises most often in several different translations. The terms besides “nations” did not seem to recur across different translations while the term “nations” is used in several different translations. The variation in terminology is a product of the translation but should the translator decide to employ the term “nations” as opposed to “peoples” or the like, they imbue their translation of the text with a more imperialist rhetoric. Robert Fitzgerald translates this moment as “In Italy he will fight a massive war,/ Beat down fierce armies, then for the people there/ Establish city walls and a way of life” (*Aen.* 1.260-261) However, the term “nations” does seem to arise more often than not. Rolfe Humphries’ translation reads, “Your son Aeneas/ Will wage a mighty war in Italy, Beat down proud nations, give his people laws”

city for “his own people” (*Aen.* 1.315, 1.316). Here, much like what is seen in the *Odyssey*, the places external to one’s own are viewed as lawless and barbarous, places destined to be conquered by the civilized. Though less extreme in this moment than what is seen in the *Odyssey* with reference to the Cyclopes, the notion of barbarism defining others likewise arises. This moment, however, also diverges from the *Odyssey* in its use of the word “nation.” Nation in the time of the *Odyssey* would seem to refer to an established state with a unified and structured governing body ruling over a population thereby suggesting a more civilized society. However, in this instance Virgil suggests that a nation itself could be barbarous despite its cultural-political unity and recognized autonomy. This deliberate word choice supports the Roman imperialistic agenda by stating that even nations can be uncivilized and worthy of conquest, thereby legitimizing the conquests of great nations like Carthage and Egypt. Rome does not just conquer small tribes and savage cultures, but entire nations as well.

Not only are the other nations here described as barbarous, but a further distinction between the two nations is established by the notion of building a wall for “his own people” (*Aen.* 1.316). Here the emphasis is placed on the notion of establishing a distinct space for Aeneas’ “own” people and demarcating them from others, suggesting a stark divide between the two. This indicated focus and preference for one group of people, here the conquering people, over another, the conquered, points to a strong in-group favoritism that underlies ethnocentrism. Ross Hammond and Robert Axelrod note that a central element of ethnocentrism is seeing one’s own group as virtuous and superior to a group other than one’s own (2006, 926). This supports what is seen in the *Aeneid* with Aeneas’ desire to separate the two groups of peoples so as to create hierarchy between the

(*Aen.* 1.274-276). Allen Mandelbaum’s likewise employs the term “nations” and states that Aeneas “shall wage tremendous war in Italy/ and crush ferocious nations” (*Aen.* 1.367-368).

conqueror and the conquered and legitimize the power of one over another.

Moving forward in the text, much like Odysseus landed upon the hospitable land of the Phaeacians and tells his tale, so too does Aeneas when he lands in Carthage. Carthage much like Phaeacia has a well-structured, civilized society that is used to contrast the uncivilized nations found within Aeneas' tale. When asked of his journey Aeneas notes that he lands upon the Strophades, the home of the Harpies. Once more foreigners are metaphorically represented through the lens of the monstrous. Like the Cyclopes of the *Odyssey*, the uncivilized become dehumanized and their savagery becomes synonymous with their fundamental nature. Though the two societies in all probability did not see the others as monstrous, the image of the monster poignantly conveys notions of savagery and a departure from established norms of civilization and creates a fear- or disgust-based reaction against them. By representing the Other as monstrous, this poetry displays the archaic Greeks' and later Romans' apprehension of other peoples through conveying them in an abusive tone and hyperbolically harrowing nature. These poems give sense to the resistance Greek colonizers must have faced in new lands but the experience "is highly mediated by the vocabulary of myth: it is embodied in supernatural creatures, monstrous Cyclopes or gigantic Laestrygonians" or as is seen the *Aeneid* vicious Harpies (Hall 1989, 50). To conceptualize this conflict with the Other, the Greeks and Romans turned to images of the subhuman, bestial or monstrous (Hall 1989, 50). However, in the Roman period, Rome deliberately went out across the land in pursuit of conquest which gives their representation of the Other as monstrous a political slant. By representing the encountered or conquered peoples as monsters, the Romans legitimized their conquests by suggesting they subdued the monstrous and tamed the savage.

Focusing in on Aeneas' experience with the Harpies, he recounts the entire experience but emphasizes the fetid and harsh nature of the creatures. He notes, "no monster, no curse, no plague

more grim/ Ever raised itself from the water of Styx” (*Aen.* 3.249-250). Before even describing the Harpies, he sets them up as monsters rising from the depths of the underworld. This works to the same end as Odysseus negatively describing the Cyclopes prior to recounting his time with them and casts the Other as a villain before the audience is told of the hero’s engagement with them. After landing upon the shores, Aeneas and his men see a welcoming sight of a rolling expanse of plains filled with “sleek cattle/ Scattered over the plains and flocks of goats/ Unattended in the meadows” (*Aen.* 3.254-256). Seemingly indicative of a safe space to land, as grazing herds and flocks often mark a domestic and agriculture-based society, a hallmark of civilization at this time, Aeneas and his men hold a feast after piously attending to the gods. Instead of respecting the dining customs that were central to Roman society, the Harpies swoop in and wreak havoc over the meal. They came down from the mountains “beating/ Their clanging wings, and plundered our feast,/ Fouling every dish with their filthy touch” (*Aen.* 3.261-263). Corrupting customs, these foreign beings are conveyed as being “filthy” and “foul” and thoroughly upsetting conventional Mediterranean societal conventions.

Interestingly, this moment is complicated by the behavior of Aeneas and his men as they do not act like proper guests illustrating their own sort of primitive behavior, much like Odysseus and his men in the cave of Polyphemus. Instead of trying to find the inhabitants of the land and approach as supplicants hoping to obtain a meal, they assume domination over the land. With “swords drawn,/ We rushed upon [the cattle], calling the gods/ And Jove himself to share the bounty” thereby taking their pick of livestock that is not their own and assuming the role of the conqueror (*Aen.* 3.256-258). However, from the perspective of Aeneas his acts are justified as he was following the requirements of piety, one of the most highly valued virtues of a Roman citizen. By killing the livestock and hosting the feast he takes care of his men, properly sacrifices to the

gods, and follows his duty to his country through ensuring that he and his men can continue to push forward to Rome. The Harpies, in contrast, convey a profound sense of savagery and barbarism through their complete disregard of customs, their abandonment of hospitality, and their uncivilized plunder of the feast. Within the introduction to *Dining in a Classical Context*, the book's editor, William J. Slater notes, "to go dining was to show by conversation and behavior that one knew and conformed to the ideals and traditions of a culture that remained a firm guide in an unstable world" (1991, 3)⁷. Dining thus acts as a vehicle for culture in which various social values are created and shared and group identity is solidified. Therefore, the conformity or rejection of certain dining habits becomes indicative of one's relationship to a particular culture; conformity relates to a sense of oneness while rejection leads to a sense of Otherness. Because the Harpies attacked the feast of Aeneas and his men, they perverted the sanctity of the social ritual and further marked themselves as outsiders to the civil society made manifest by the feast.

Despite crafting such pointed examples of savagery and the supposed uncivilized nature of foreign peoples, each of these accounts must be considered within the framework of their telling. Both Odysseus' account of events and Aeneas' are potentially problematic given that the narrative voice of these moments is inherently biased. In each the "civilized" speaker gives the account of the Other which does not allow for an authentic perspective from the foreign peoples to arise. Given their biases stemming from their individual experience within their own culture, the two figures consider any behavior that deviates from the norms established within their respective societies as a transgression of what it is to be civilized. As such, there is unequal representation

⁷ The rest of this text provides more information on the history and significance of dining customs in ancient Greece and Rome and explores topics like war and the symposium, the presence of foreigners at the symposium, the role of slaves at the Roman convivia and so on. For more information see William J. Slater, ed., *Dining in a Classical Context* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991).

within the texts resulting in a skewed power balance in which the “civilized” societies have sole power of representation allowing them to cast themselves and Others however they choose. Given this power, they craft their tales to each fit their particular agenda and do so quite effectively. The representation of the Other as uncultured and barbaric is so strong that it overcomes any complications or nuances that Odysseus and Aeneas divulge about the Other through their telling. Odysseus pointedly illustrates his superiority in order to engage with the cultural environment of exploration and expansion in eighth-century Greece, making the Greeks seem to be the apex of known civilization. Whereas Virgil crafts his propagandistic epic during the Roman Empire’s infancy in order to ennoble the status of Rome and belittle other nations in an effort to justify and legitimize Rome’s dominion.

AGGRANDIZING THE SELF

The way in which the texts describe the home culture, Greek or Roman, is as important for establishing the “us”/“them” binary as the language used to describe the Other. There must be a constructed notion of Self if there is to be an Other placed in opposition. As such, the story we tell of ourselves becomes as important as the story we tell of the Other. In the case of imperialism, if the Other is to be belittled and turned savage, one way to assume dominance is to focus upon the superiority of the Self. Therefore, a tendency to glorify the Self while demonizing the Other arises. By elevating the Self to a level of grandeur and glory, the imperializing nation further differentiates themselves from the conquered nations through highlighting the perceived difference between the two. Interestingly, this tendency to glorify the Self is applied rather differently between the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. Being as the *Odyssey*’s focus revolves around the experience of a single man, Odysseus, the focus on aggrandizing the Self works to separate an individual from Other. He

is not focused on a collective goal and only cares about the personal journey and elevating himself to a heroic level. In the *Aeneid*, however, the focus is upon a group of people and their quest to establish a nation. Therefore, the purpose of the aggrandizing language within this epic is to glorify an entire race of people, an entire nation, in order to elevate the nation as a whole above the Other. Obtaining a more dominant political implication in the *Aeneid*, this creation of Self and Other turns the Other into a barbarian and the Roman populace into a glorified and elevated state of superiority, legitimizing the rule of Rome.

The first prophecy in Book 1, previously examined for its representation of the Other, likewise works to establish a sense of the Roman nation, giving shape to the binary between the two groups. Aeneas' mother Venus comes to her father Jupiter worrying that her son's fate had been changed due to the hardships he was facing at sea caused by the wrath of Juno. Beginning the prophecy, Jupiter states, "Your people's destiny/ Remains unmoved" reassuring the worrying mother and promising the fate of Rome (*Aen.* 1.307-308). This immediately bolsters the image of Rome as it suggests that the gods and Fate favor Rome as it is not just its choice, but its destiny to conquer. Rome will establish an empire with no limits as the gods have "given to them/ Eternal empire, world without end" making them the "Lords of the world" (*Aen.* 1.322-323, 1.343). Coming directly from the god at the head of the Roman pantheon, these words concerning the glory of Rome obtain a further significance through its divinely prophetic nature. It is not a mortal prophet that speaks them, but Jupiter himself. Rome is portrayed as a nation destined to rule with divine support in all of their conquering of other peoples deemed lesser to Rome.

Rome's supposed right to rule acts as the scaffolding upon which the rest of the text is constructed. Throughout the epic Aeneas pushes onwards, ever in pursuit of founding Rome upon the shores of Italy in order to fulfill his and his people's fate. When sidetracked in Book 4 by his

affection for the Carthaginian queen Dido, the gods interfere pushing him onwards for “he should be the one to rule Italy, a land/ Pregnant with empire and clamorous for war,/ And produce a race from Teucer’s high blood,/ And bring all the world beneath the rule of law (*Aen.* 4.259-262). In this moment, Virgil suggests the notion that an individual “should be the one to rule” which can be extrapolated out beyond this particular context to refer to Rome itself when considered within the framework of the epic as a whole and the role of Aeneas as the emblem of Rome itself (*Aen.* 4.259). According to the Roman perspective, Rome should rule much like Aeneas, and as such their belief in their right to rule acts as a central facet of their identity and approach to the world. Perhaps more indicative of this supposed inherent right is the use of the phrase “pregnant with empire” (*Aen.* 4.260). The use of the term “pregnant” suggests something that is natural or an inherent facet of something’s being. Italy sits waiting for Rome to grow upon its soil (its metaphorical womb) while the notion of pregnancy proposes that its construction of an empire is a natural act of creation. Rome becomes the image of the empire that Italy will foster, meaning that its development and growth is both unavoidable and imbued with the notion of guidance, protection, and care that comes with the image of motherhood. Rome’s rise is cast as being as natural as reproduction. It also helps to suggest that Rome’s rule would be a great benefit to the conquered nations as it foregoes the image of violent conquest and replaces it with the image of protection. This moment, multifaceted in its approach to aggrandizing Rome, works to support an image of its inexorable rise to power and argues that in doing so, Rome will only follow through on what nature intended.

According to Virgil, Rome is a grand nation that is filled with glorious individuals. Book 6 documents the famed individuals of Rome’s history alongside the glory they bring to the empire. As a part of Aeneas’ journey, he must venture into the dark realms of the Underworld to talk with

the famed prophet Tiresias in order to receive a prophecy. While amongst the dead, Aeneas encounters his father, Anchises, who proceeds to show Aeneas the results of his journey by foretelling the future of Rome. Known as the Parade of Heroes, this account given by Anchises outlines “the glory that awaits/ The Trojan race, the illustrious souls” noting the most famed figures in Rome’s history to come (*Aen.* 6. 896-897). Rome, in the *Aeneid*, is a nation defined by glory and the famed men who made it so. It stems from a glorious Trojan race, filled with “illustrious” individuals. Later in the parade Anchises notes “Rome will extend her renowned empire/ To earth’s horizons, her glory to the stars” furthering the image of the expansive nature of the Roman Empire (*Aen.* 6.925-926). This rhetoric of expansion underlies the Roman approach to empire building and its desire to acquire continually more and more territory through endless expansion. The aggrandizing nature of stretching glory beyond the earthly realm further elevates the status of Rome and its citizens and reinforces the distance between itself and the Others conquered, especially when the demonization and belittling of the Other exhibited throughout the epic is considered alongside the glorified image of Rome.

Following this discussion of expansion, Anchises turns Aeneas’ gaze to “the man promised to you,/ Augustus Caesar, born of the gods,/ Who will establish again a Golden Age/ In the fields of Latium once ruled by Saturn” (*Aen.* 6.940-942). As one of the most famous figures in Rome’s long history, and the man in power when Virgil wrote his epic, it is quite fitting that Augustus surfaces here in the great list of heroes as the man promised by the gods. Within this moment describing Augustus, Virgil refers to a new “Golden Age” which harkens to Greek mythology and the age of man ruled by Saturn. This was an era of eternal spring in which peace and prosperity dominated the land. Harkening to a glorious past and referring to this moment in mythic history suggests that Augustus will bring in a new Golden Age in which Rome will abound with

prosperity, fertility, peace, and plenty, themes all central to his entire political ideology and propagandistic artistic production. Rome, under the rule of Augustus, is suggested to reach a height only dreamed of in mythology.

At the end of the parade comes another rhetorically charged statement outlining Rome's calling. Anchises states "Your mission, Roman, is to rule the world./ These will be your arts: to establish peace,/ To spare the humbled and to conquer the proud" (*Aen.* 6.1016-1018). The passage begins with a direct address to an individual Roman, not the nation as the whole. This focused call to action asks every individual member of the society to contribute to Rome's mission suggesting that each member plays a role in empire building and is equally given the inherent right to rule. Focusing on the individual and his impact on the collective in this moment, the epic and its political statements become personalized making it more influential on the creation of identity as the individual is pulled into the fold of the nation with all the grandeur it holds. Within this "mission statement" Rome is turned into both judge and executioner, capable of deciding between life and death, suggested by Rome's assignment to "conquer the proud," in order to bring peace and law to the world. Its very vocation is suggested "to establish peace,/ To spare the humbled and to conquer the proud" (*Aen.* 6.1017-1018). Acting as the presiding power, Rome is distanced from the Other through its ability to stand above and judge the Other, showing clemency to the humbled and complete dominance over prideful insubordination. According to the rhetoric of the *Aeneid*, Rome has both the right and ability to stand above and conquer all Others. Creating a powerful model for the employment of aggrandizing rhetoric in the service of empire, the *Aeneid* has profound implications on the way empires that follow it view and construct the image themselves, an idea that I will come back to within my section on myth.

BRITAIN

The rhetoric and creation of Otherness thus far explored, crops up much later in history within one of the largest empires the world has ever seen, the British Empire. In an article concerning the notion of Britishness, Linda Colley suggests “we usually decide who we are by reference to who and what we are not,” meaning that it takes an understanding of an Other to help shape an understanding of who we are (1992, 311). By examining how we behave with reference to differences as exhibited by other people and groups, we can come to a better understanding of our own defining features by uncovering what makes us unique and what makes us like other groups. Britain has engaged with peoples and nations across the globe throughout its history be it through exploration, trade, war, or colonial missions bringing its populace in contact with a plethora of diverse ideas and societies. With this broadening interaction with a wide array Others, the inhabitants of Britain began to focus more on what Brits had in common—i.e. language, history, location, rule, religion⁸—rather than what divided them. This focus on internal unity set in opposition to the Other beyond the bounds of their nation helped to define what it was to be British; to be educated, civilized, Western, progressive, English speaking, etc. Colley notes that by 1820 Britain had dominion over 26 percent of the world’s population and by 1920 had control to closer to a quarter of the world’s land surface meaning that they had power over both a large portion of the world’s people and wide swath of the world’s land and by extension natural resources for exploitation (1992, 323). With the possession of such a vast empire, the British came into contact with a plethora of peoples and cultures, exerted control over them, and amassed one

⁸ There was conflict concerning religion between Catholics and Protestants that led to a great degree of intra-communal strife within the confines of Britain. However, according to Linda Colley (1992), with rising globalization, these differences were focused on less as the British populace came into contact with people and cultures far more different from themselves, making the internal differences seem less significant when considered on a more global scale. For example, the differences within the Christian tradition were far less pronounced than the difference between entire faiths.

of the geographically largest empires the world has ever seen. The power they gleaned from this territorial and political dominance led them to see themselves as distinct, special, and greater than the alien peoples they ruled. Because of these encounters with the Other, the British “could contrast their law, their standard of living, their treatment of women, their political stability, and, above all, their collective power against societies that they only imperfectly understood but usually perceived as far less developed” (Colley 1992, 324). Within this discussion of their own superiority, the British often aggrandized themselves while debasing the Other to both legitimize their dominion but also to reflect an inherent belief concerning the nature of their society. They used the dichotomy between “us” and “them” in the service of political power, helping them to conquer territories and opposition. Britain then spread the ideology and rhetoric of it to such a great degree that it turned into an integral element of Britishness, both defining and creating their culture and view of themselves and the world in a self-perpetuating, cyclical process.

A classical education helped contribute to notions of Self and Other and became highly impactful on the conception of Britishness, especially within the upper echelon of the populace. One of the main subjects in British education was the study of the ancient Mediterranean with a focus on Greece and Rome including the arts, politics, philosophy, and beliefs that defined the respective societies. Victoria Tietze Larson (1999) examines the role of the study of Classics in Britain’s “Imperial Century” (1815-1914) and illustrates how central the Classical past was to the construction of British identity as well as its validation of power. She notes “it may be argued that during Britain’s imperial century classical studies were as much as, if not more than, any other subject in the curriculum, closely affiliated with both the acquisition and validation of worldly privilege and power” making it integral to any elite education (Larson 1999, 189). Because of this, the way the Classical Mediterranean viewed itself, its legitimacy to rule, and its foreign

competition was instrumental to the construction and validation of British imperial power. Alongside this development of Britain's imperial power likewise came the construction of its national identity as an imperial nation. British society took on the identity of conqueror with a similar perspective to the Romans by believing it was an obligation or right to rule the "inferior" and to impose British civilized, peaceful, and lawful rule their subjects. This notion of Otherness, supported by the examination of the ancient Mediterranean, does not just reside with theoretical and political thought but becomes an element of imperial validation and influential on the development of British culture; classical studies therefore became part of the cultural hegemony of Britain, profoundly shaping its culture and approach to imperialism (Larson 1999, 207). Ancient history was deliberately interpreted and used to legitimize the imperial pursuits of Britain and support the claim that they were following the precedent of some of the most studied and glorified empires of the past.

Being as this study of the ancient Mediterranean became so influential upon the political and cultural life of Victorian Britain, so too did it shape the cultural productions of the time. The study of the classical tradition manifests itself in the literature and art of the era in a way that resembles works of the classical past. When examining both nonfictional and fictional sources from this era in British history, a strong parallel arises with the language employed by ancient authors with reference to the Other and empire. One such historical study from this era is James Bryce's *The Ancient Roman Empire and the British Empire in India, The Diffusion of Roman and English Law Throughout the World; Two Historical Studies* published in 1914. This work of nonfiction illustrates the British tendency to examine the classical past and apply it to the modern context, especially with reference to Rome and later British rule in India. While the study does examine the political and historical realities of both the Roman and British Empire, what is most

striking is the rhetoric of the piece and how it echoes the language of the ancient texts explored. When discussing the imperial expansion conducted by various European countries during the last fifty years, Bryce notes that the “civilized nations” had spread so widely that they “have brought under their dominion or control nearly all the barbarous or semi-civilized races” (1914, 2). A dependency on describing the Other as barbaric once more becomes apparent. Much like the Cyclopes and Harpies were cast as savage emblems of foreign peoples, so too did Britain cast the Other as barbarian, something different from its civilized self. He discusses the nations of the ancient world external to Greece and Rome and describes them too as “barbarous,” “semi-civilized heathen,” and “backward races” which directly harkens to the language applied in the ancient epics (Bryce 1914, 3). However, he does not employ the image of the monster in the same way the ancients did and relies on images of barbarism in humans rather than savage fantastic beasts. During the era in which Bryce was writing, monsters were strictly relegated to the realm of fiction. Therefore, an inclusion of them in his nonfictional piece would strip it of its authority and challenge the claims to factuality he makes. Although this text does not wholly adopt ancient representations of the Other, it does draw on these ancient representations for inspiration. It adapts their discussion of barbarism by taking many of the traits the ancients applied to monsters and applying them to humans, making the human into a bestial savage rather than a fully-fledged monster.

Bryce focuses his discussion on India and turns it into a lowly Other that was inferior to Britain in every facet. According to Bryce, who himself was referring to British assumptions, Indians supposedly do not have the inherent ability to rule over themselves or to obtain the degree of civilization reached by Britain. He argues that “everyone admits in his heart that it is impossible to ignore the differences which make one group of races unfit for the institutions which have given

energy and contentment to another more favourably placed” (Bryce 1914, 32). Because India was unfit for the institutions of Britain, it lies so far below Britain in the imperial mindset of the British that Britain’s dominion over it was not only entirely justified but needed. To further degrade and marginalize the Indian population Bryce goes on to criticize the intellect of the entire population as one. He suggests that there are differing degrees of intellect but that even those who are not “intellectually backward” and whose “keen intelligence and aptitude for learning equals that of Europeans, are inferior in energy and strength of will” (Bryce 1914, 67-70). Because of this supposed intellectual vacuum, Bryce argues that India too was far behind in material civilization and lacking “proper” markers of developed culture as well. This tradition of characterizing the Other by the cultural norms that they lack once more draws upon an ancient Mediterranean precedent. The Harpies to not practice proper feasting behavior in *Aeneid* Book 3 and the Cyclopes grossly pervert *xenia* in both the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* to name a few instances of this tradition. India, much like the distant lands in the ancient epics, did not comport itself like Britain and did not have the same customs of religion, dress, dining behavior, and so on. Therefore, the British typecast India as Other because of the (British) cultural traditions it lacked and the supposed perversions it displayed.

Much like Rome was set out to “crush barbarous nations, and set up law” so too was Britain destined to spread “her language, her commerce, her laws and institutions forth from herself” (*Aen* 1.315; Bryce 1914, 4). The belief that expansion and conquest was an inherent right set in a peoples’ destiny connected Britain with Rome. In a theoretic text hailing from the early 20th century, J.A. Cramb, a professor of modern history at Queen’s College in London, provides his reflections concerning the origins and destiny of Imperial Britain in a series of lectures. Within his first lecture he discusses what he intends by the term “Imperial Britain” stating that there is an

unseen internal informing spirit within the race that shapes the empire. He then proceeds to suggest that this spirit gives rise to a consciousness of the British race's destiny to be an imperial people arguing that this spirit of imperialism is equivalent with a primal law of existence for the British populace (Cramb 1900, 6). While the *Aeneid* casts the gods as active figures in the outlining of Rome's destiny, Cramb here chooses to focus upon some spirit he believes to be inherent to the British people. This inherent spirit of imperialism manifests itself in the British people as an understanding of how to rule and the right to do so. Cramb argues, "the race dowered with the genius for empire is compelled to dare all, to suffer all, to sacrifice all for the fulfillment of its fate-appointed task" (Cramb 1900, 16-17). This sense of suffering and daring all for a certain destined goal lies central to ancient epic as heroes were compelled to follow the path of their destiny, no matter the consequences. Within the *Odyssey*, Odysseus, though not in pursuit of founding an empire, was fated to wander the seas with a restless drive to get back to his home, which he was fated to do. He unflinchingly followed his fate, pushing ever forward to its completion despite the innumerable obstacles he encountered. Aeneas, the face of the founding of Rome, was forced to suffer upon the seas for years, to sacrifice his personal desires and family ties, and dare all when he lands upon an unknown shore waging a great war in order to fulfill the fate he was appointed by the gods, the fate to found the entire Roman race. Here Cramb pulls from these epic tropes and applies them to Britain in a way that both suggests that Britain's destiny resided in founding an empire and that this mission was like those heroic missions found in ancient epic. Britain, with this reference to epic, is cast as a heroic figure, dowered with the genius needed to push forward to fulfill its fate-appointed task of building an empire.

THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

Now turning from the political, non-fictional accounts thus far explored, and delving into fiction, the same rhetoric once again arises. Although there are numerous works from the colonial era to analyze, I chose to remain within the poetic tradition as I did for the ancient texts in order to suggest the continuity of thought and rhetoric without focusing on divergences in literary style and conventions. Rudyard Kipling, one of the dominant writers of the Victorian Era, infused many of his works with the theme of Otherness and a similar diction to what is seen in the political discussions examined above. Perhaps one of the most evocative and influential of his works that fully embraces the British imperial ideal and representation of the Other is “The White Man’s Burden,” published in 1899. This poem, crafted as a response to America assuming control over the Philippines after the Spanish-American War, relates what it is to be a colonizer from a colonial perspective. Despite not being directed specifically at Britain, it nonetheless illustrates British imperial thought by acting as a guideline for other nations to take up the imperial role.

The politically and socially laden rhetoric suffuses the work from start to finish. Titled “The White Man’s Burden,” this work ties itself to the tradition of imperial rhetoric and literature at the onset, before the body of the poem is read. The inclusion of the notion of the “white man” in the title brings a new element to the discussion of Otherness and imperial power as it highlights a differentiation in race. In the ancient Mediterranean, race was not the defining feature of the Other and therefore not a significant element of their imperial discourse. While the ancients did discuss “savage races,” it was more of a discussion of other peoples and their supposed savage customs rather than the color of their skin. Much later in history, however, race does largely figure itself in imperial discussions. The color of one’s skin, or more specifically non-white skin, became highly prominent because it served as an emblem of Otherness and the symbol of a people deemed

different and lesser than white races considered civilized within this imperial British mindset. The nations Britain predominantly conquered—India, Kenya, Uganda, Yemen, Belize, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, etc.—were largely filled with non-white races meaning that white skin became synonymous with the conqueror and any other skin type with the conquered. Here the term “white man”, though racially laden, can be extrapolated beyond the confines of racial difference to represent peoples deemed as civilized, being as Kipling uses it to stand for Britain and other, largely white European, nations capable of conquest. This discussion of race must be acknowledged, as it is a central feature of modern imperial thought and has been widely studied, but it is too broad of a topic to broach in totality within this paper.

Another problematic element of the title is its use of the word “burden”. The term “burden” implies that the act of imperialism is not enacted by choice, but rather is an obligation that powerful nations must uphold. It is an imperializing nation’s, here represented by the white man, duty to spread their power across the globe. Much like Aeneas was duty bound to found Rome and his decedents destined to spread Rome’s reach across the globe, so too is it thought that the “white man’s” job is to spread their civilization across the world. This notion of the burden of imperializing once more ties to the ancient past as Aeneas showed a hesitancy to follow through with his fate, often responding to the weight of such a burden. Aeneas did not always welcome his appointed task and rather bemoaned his fate and the hardship it entailed. At the very onset of his journey he cries, “Three times, four times luckier were those/ Who died before their parents’ eyes/ Under Troy’s high walls!” (*Aen.* 1.112-114). The task of founding an empire demands a full commitment towards a cause, no matter the sacrifices, which leads Aeneas to believe he would have been better off dying a hero’s death at war than take on the hardship he was assigned.

Although Kipling's notion of the white man's burden does not have quite as dire of a tone, it does suggest that empire building is a highly demanding task that must be upheld.

In contrast to Aeneas' burden, the term "burden" in Kipling's poem does more than suggest the arduous nature of establishing an empire and works at a more nuanced level in order to both legitimize imperialism and lessen the sense of agency the imperializing nation holds. As stated above, burden connotes a sense of involuntariness that makes the act of imperialism seem less driven by personal gain and instead an inherent duty assigned to certain peoples. By stating that it is the white man's burden to extend his influence across the world, Kipling suggests a sense of hesitancy on the part of the white man to expand. The domination of Others is not deemed as something committed on the white man's own volition but rather something he is burdened to do. However, this suggestion of burden and hesitancy is mere rhetoric, creating an image of obligation to serve as a façade for the true motives of imperialism to hide behind. Rome and Britain both use this line of thinking as the foundation for their imperial rhetoric in order to extricate themselves from blame by suggesting they are fulfilling a larger involuntary destiny. Aeneas did not choose to found Rome but was given the burden to do so much like it is deemed the white man's burden to expand. Rome and Britain attempt to evade criticism concerning their conquests with this line of thinking by implying that they are only following their assigned destiny, or in Britain's case "informing spirit", not their own free will. The overall implication of this title is that Britain, and other imperializing nations, did not pursue imperialism for their own gain. Instead, they expanded so that primitive peoples deemed incapable of self-governance would become civilized with their guidance.

With such a rhetorically laden title, the poem sets out its fundamental theory of the inherent duty the civilized peoples face early on then builds upon it throughout. Each stanza begins with

the same saying: “Take up the White Man’s burden,” and then explains what constitutes this burden. The repetition of this phrase at the onset of each successive stanza both emphasizes the notion of the unwavering need to imperialize and helps construct the overall assertive and righteous tone of the piece as it repeatedly commands that the white man take up this task. Written from an imperial British perspective, the poem conveys the notion of mentoring as though Britain set the modern precedent and thus can serve as the guiding voice for imperial expansion, telling other civilized nations how to “take up the White Man’s burden.” With this privileged perspective the overarching effect of this poem is rather similar to the prophecies given by the gods in the *Aeneid*. Much like Jupiter, here Britain speaks from a heightened position of power and level of knowledge, telling another to take up its appointed burden and grow its influence globally. The first stanza begins stating “Take up the White Man’s burden--/ Send forth the best ye breed--/ Go bind your sons to exile/ To serve your captives’ need;” (Kipling 2000, lines 1-4). America is told, much like Aeneas, to assume its role as an imperial power, embrace the sacrifices it demands, and cast off the tethers of family and home in order to fulfill its duty. It is bound to this burden, much like the sons will be bound to exile in the realization of its imperial mission.

According to Kipling, once America takes up the mantle of imperialism and begins to expand, it will come into contact with diverse peoples and conquer those it deems lesser. Kipling suggests that it will hold power over “new-caught, sullen peoples/ Half-devil and half-child” much like Britain and Rome before it (Kipling 2000, 7-8). Reminiscent of previously explored representations of Otherness, both ancient and modern, the conquered peoples deemed “half-devil and half-child” are represented as savage, uneducated individuals incapable of independent care or success (Kipling 2000, 8). The notion of “half-devil” adds an otherworldly and sinister angle that pulls from the realm of the fantastic evoking a monstrous image much like the monsters of

ancient epic. The conquered peoples are not considered entirely human, but rather presented as a semi-monstrous fusion of evil and naivety. Much like a child or wild beast, they are believed to need taming by the guidance of a superior force, here automatically assumed to be the imperializing nation. Through this representation of Other and guidance, Britain assumes the role of the apex empire, coaching other nations how to follow in its path and conquer debased Others.

This poem continues to emulate ancient epics when it suggests that a conquering nation must bring peace to its empire. With expansion, the conquering nation is supposed “To veil the threat of terror/ And check the show of pride” similar to how Rome was “To spare the humbled and to conquer the proud” (Kipling 2000, 11-12, *Aen.* 6.1018). By doing so, the conquering force should instill a reign of peace in which insubordination is defeated and clemency granted to the humble displaying an equal amount of force and care. This focus on bringing peace is a story crafted to justify imperialism claiming that it is a noble enterprise that spreads the benefits of civilization across the globe. By suggesting that the imperializing nation is bettering the world while also connecting his poem to epic, Kipling evokes a sense of the heroic which is a central facet of ancient epics. Within epic, there is a clear hero who embarks on a grand fated journey often involving sacrifice and conflicts between good and evil. Through the shared rhetoric between Kipling’s work and ancient epic, phantoms of the same conventions linger within the more modern poem. Although there is no clearly demarcated hero in Kipling’s peace, the notion of a man forgoing a “lightly proffered laurel” in favor of hard-earned victories won by travelling across the globe and waging “the savage wars of peace,” conquering foe and instilling rule harkens to the heroes of old (Kipling 2000, 51, 18). As such, the white man becomes a hero-like figure, taking on attributes of an epic hero and the grandeur associated with epic. Much like how at the end of his great trials in the *Odyssey*, the hero Odysseus brings peace and civility back to his home and

the end of the *Aeneid* sees Aeneas founding the civilized Roman race after years of hard travels, so too does the white man bring peace to his realm. The white man is to “Fill full the mouth of Famine/ And bid the sickness cease” like Rome was to establish and bring a new Golden Age free of disease and hunger (Kipling 2000, 18-19). When expanded out to allegorically represent the modern imperializing nation, the white man becomes synonymous with empire suggesting that empire works for the greater good defeating evil and instilling peace much like a hero of old.

In the second to last stanza there is a reemergence of the notion of the necessity of following one’s duty to establish an empire and achieving the glory one is capable of, once more relaying a central theme of ancient epic. Line 42 asserts “Ye dare not stoop to less” which suggests that the nation cannot turn from its path to empire, to be less than it can be (Kipling 2000). To dare to go against it seems as wrong as Aeneas not continuing on his journey. Neither Aeneas nor Odysseus dared to balk from their fate despite bemoaning the lofty demands it made and as such they achieved great victories, eventually relieving themselves of their burdens. So too must the white man push on, never daring to subside in fulfilling the burden of building an empire. The second to last stanza argues that they cannot balk from their destiny by succumbing to their weariness as “the silent, sullen peoples/ Shall weigh your gods and you” (Kipling 2000, 47-48). Bringing in a religious element in this stanza, Kipling argues that the white man represents both his gods and his country. Religion arguably plays a much larger role in modern imperialism than ancient imperialism, especially in the case of Roman imperialism, as much of modern imperialism included the desire to convert foreigners to Christianity.⁹ But in both the people in power pushing

⁹ For more information on the role of religion in modern and ancient imperialism see: Thomas David Dubois, "Hegemony, Imperialism, and the Construction of Religion in East and Southeast Asia," *History and Theory* 44, no. 4 (2005): 113-31. <http://www.jstor.org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/stable/3590860>. Richard A. Horsley, "Religion and Other Products of Empire," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71, no. 1 (2003): 13-44. <http://www.jstor.org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/stable/1466302>.

for expansion were keenly aware of following the supposed will of their gods. Saying that the white man's gods will be judged by their action places even greater weight on the burden of expansion. This tie to the gods suggests that the white man's expansion stems from divine will, just as Aeneas and Odysseus both followed the wills of their gods.

Mixed reviews met Kipling's poem during the era in which it was written. There were both serious proponents of it and those who satirized it, criticizing the inherent hypocrisy it holds. One of Kipling's contemporaries, Richard Le Gallienne, wrote a piece about Kipling's works in which he praises the political and poetic prowess of Kipling, complementing many of his works including "The White Man's Burden." He notes that it is eloquently crafted and provides a clear picture of the positive image Britain constructs of its imperialism, even if that image is merely an illusion. However, he does say that "like any other nation we conquer countries for the purely selfish and natural purpose of extending our trade" suggesting that it is a natural law (1900, 133). Contrary to what the poem tries to have its readers believe, that expansion was for the benefit of the conquered peoples, Le Gallienne pointedly exposes the greed that underlies imperialism. However, he makes it clear that he does not mean to imply that Kipling's vision is insincere, just that he wants to be clear about the facts and methods of imperialism (Le Gallienne 1900, 134). He does not criticize Britain or America for their trade-centric focus, however, and instead states it is a natural law. So while he does suggest that Kipling's image of imperialism for the good of the primitive is false, he does not criticize the true motives of imperialism or the power of Kipling's poem.

However, not everyone was a proponent of his work, which suggests that even at the time it was published, it was not entirely un-problematic or universally accepted and respected.¹⁰ Henry

¹⁰ For more examples of criticism from the Victorian era see: Earnest Crosby, "The Real White Man's Burden," in *Swords and Plowshares* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1902), 33-35. Edmund Dene Morel, *The Black Man's Burden: The White Man in Africa from the Fifteenth Century to World War I*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969).

Labouchère, a British politician, publicist, journalist, and contemporary of Kipling, satirizes “The White Man’s Burden” with his poem “The Brown Man’s Burden.” He takes Kipling’s poem and completely turns it on its head, presenting the image of “The White Man’s Burden” from the perspective of non-white, conquered people called the “brown man.” Rather than saying, “take up the white man’s burden” each stanza begins with “pile on the brown man’s burden,” illustrating who bears the actual burden of imperial expansion. It also critiques the image of the Other Britain crafts in its imperial rhetoric, by presenting an alternative view to the one-sided, biased presentation of the Other. The negative presentation of the white man questions his superiority and the validity of his claim to elevating the supposedly inferior Other.

As the poem develops, it repeatedly comes back to the idea of imperial greed, saying “Pile on the brown man’s burden/ To gratify your greed” and “The brown man’s loss must ever/ Imply the white man’s greed” (Labouchère 1899, 1-2, 15-16). It pulls away the philanthropic mask of British imperialism in the third stanza where it reads:

Pile on the brown man's burden,
compel him to be free;
Let all your manifestoes
Reek with philanthropy.
And if with heathen folly
He dares your will dispute,
Then, in the name of freedom,
Don't hesitate to shoot (Labouchère 1899, 17-24).

The piece unveils the façade of British rhetoric, criticizing their manifestoes that “reek with philanthropy,” suggesting a negative representation to their fallacious claims of philanthropy (Labouchère 1899, 20). Overall the poem has overtones of greed, violence, and exploitation and unveils the true burden of imperialism, the burden felt by the dominated country and its people.

This example of criticism towards Kipling's poem suggests at least some complication and conflicting views concerning the discourse surrounding British imperialism during the Victorian Era. However, despite this glimpse into contradictory opinions, the overarching rhetoric and dominant opinion of the era aligns more with the vision of imperialism Kipling draws than that of Labouchère. Kipling's poem conveys and replicates the inherent biases, hypocrisies, and conceptions of the Other that underlie the British imperializing mission. "The White Man's Burden" conveys what the British would like to believe their imperialism to be while glossing over the gritty realities of it, realities explored by Labouchère's "The Brown Man's Burden." The rhetoric of Kipling's poem, though not reflective of reality, constructs a new reality for the British populace in which they depart from the true motives and harsh nature of their acts and create an entirely new image of their imperial power, one that both glorifies and legitimizes their desires.

According to ancient epic and Kipling's "The White Man's Burden," both Britain and its ancient predecessors Greece and particularly Rome were destined to overcome hardships, conquer the Other, and usher in a new age of prosperity. This connection between ancient and modern—from Greece, to Rome, to Britain—suggests not only a continuity of representations of empire but aligns Britain with a long-standing tradition of empire. With this perspective, Britain builds upon the imperializing tradition established by Rome, using history and a rhetorical tradition of "othering" to give itself an illusory historical legitimacy to rule. However, this connection to the ancient Mediterranean is deliberately manufactured and propagated to support Britain's imperialistic political agenda making this connection with a glorified past a form of political propaganda. Britain actively sought to create a connection with a famed empire of the past, particularly one of the Western tradition, in order to support a notion of heritage, making their modern imperial expansion seem the product of a long-standing history and the conquest over

Others an inherent element of their empire. Tracing the rhetoric of Otherness from its roots in Greece, to its development in Rome, and its intentional employment in Britain, it becomes clear that creating an Other is a powerful technique used to shape societies, mold cultures, and endorse imperial agendas.

Part II: Myth

THEORY

As suggested above, Britain told itself a particular story about its existence that shaped both its self-image and conception of reality. The notion of constructed realities, as mentioned at the end of the section above, leads to my second element of analysis, that of myth. When we think of myth we generally think gods and monsters, heroes and demons, a realm external to reality in which the fantastic thrives. We think of the Olympian gods, the heroes Achilles and Theseus, the harrowing monsters Scylla and Charybdis, the tales of the Minotaur trapped in Daedalus' labyrinth and so on. These stories have been passed down through the ages as legends and grouped in the genres of fiction and folklore, being taken as relics of a distant past and artifacts of ancient beliefs. Myth, for the ancients, was a collection of fantastic stories but they were perceived as indicative of the nature of the world and taken as truisms rather than cast off as fiction. They shaped and were reflective of an ancient understanding about natural phenomena, origins, and beliefs about existence. Since the Enlightenment, however, the modern age has supposedly moved far beyond the mythical and welcomed in the age of science and logic; an age in which myth merely serves as fantastical stories told to entertain and logic reigns supreme as the governing force in the universe. And yet, myth is so much more than the initial fantasies that come to mind. On the surface, the role of myth in modern society does not seem to retain the centrality that it did in the ancient world,

but as I explore in this section, myth has not lost its force and instead has remained an integral element of our understanding and construction of the world and reality.

Myth itself is a nebulous concept and is too complex, too multifaceted to accept a singular definition. Myth can be taken as a form of explanation, as a symbolic statement, as an expression of the unconscious or it may help create social solidarity, legitimize social institutions, support ritual, and more. But it is just this ambiguity, this amorphous quality of myth that lends it its power. Percy Cohen examines the different theories of myth that have developed over the course of history and posits that our modern popular usage of the term “myth” suggests that it is synonymous with fallacy and erroneous beliefs (1969, 337). In the modern era, myths are more often assumed to be fantastic stories than societally influential systems of belief. Because myths have been relegated to the realm of fiction, they have accrued this notion of fallacy or fantasy. He goes on to challenge this notion by exploring different theories concerning the significance of myth and finds that myth remains alive throughout history acting as a significant element of human understanding and structuring mechanism of the world and reality. Myth, at its most fundamental level in each theory, can be considered a human construction built from individual experiences and perspectives that is shaped by and gives shape to human understanding in a self-perpetuating cycle. Cohen goes on to suggest that myths are inherently narratives and it is this very narrative structure that is of primary importance (1969, 349). Myths tell stories that explain why the world is the way it is in a comprehensible format. Because narratives lie so central to a human understanding of the world and conception of reality, myths, in their narrative form likewise hold a great power to shape beliefs and culture.¹¹ With this view, they are essentially stories we tell others and ourselves rife

¹¹ For more information about the narrative construction of reality, see Jerome Bruner, “Narrative Construction of Reality,” *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1991): 1-21, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343711>.

with symbolic and metaphorical implications built upon different histories and experiences, values and beliefs. Myths as such can contribute to the creation and perpetuation of distinct ideologies, unique group histories, an understanding of the Self and Other, the formation of power, and more by crafting stories that explain why the world is as it is.

Bruce Lincoln also delves into the interpretation and use of myth as a narrative in his book *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* where he argues for the centrality of myth to our construction of society. He defines myth as a “small class of stories that possesses both credibility and *authority*” then goes on to define a narrative of authority as “one for which successful claims are made not only to the status of truth, but what is more, to the status of *paradigmatic* truth” (Lincoln 1989, 24, italics in original). Myths shape the undercurrent of beliefs in a way that is not immediately apparent but profoundly influential because they lend credibility to the order of the world and are used to explain, and often legitimize, why certain things are the way they are. Because they are used to describe and define existence, they accrue an authoritative status by bringing clarity to a human understanding of their world. If one accepts that humans perceive the world through narratives, then these sorts of mythic narratives become imbedded in human understandings of the world and possibly rise to the status as fundamental truths of existence.

Unpacking the notion of myths as narratives further, so as to better understand the power and nature of myth, it becomes clear that they rely upon symbols and metaphors to construct meaning and help foster human understanding. Symbols and metaphor conflate ordinary reality with a constructed reality that is free from ordinary constraints in order to convey information in a new light and craft meaning through association. In the book *Myth, Symbol, and Reality*, edited by Alan M. Olson, Jacques Waardenburg posits “insofar as meaning has indeed been perceived

through the symbol (and in a number of cases the meaning remains unclear or hidden), this meaning extends to the perception of reality at large, to put 'ordinary' reality in a different light and reveal different nuances of it" (1980, 44). Essentially, he argues that myths, and their constitutive symbols, work to reorient a certain conception of reality and frame it in a new manner in order to expose different elements of "ordinary" reality, or reality taken to be the accepted norm. This then becomes integrated into an individual or group's conception of existence as their ordinary reality becomes connected to the constructed reality. And because myth can be considered "either a symbolic construction of reality, or a construction of reality by means of symbols," these individual symbols and myths become heavily laden with meaning, obtaining a great power to shape an individual or group's conception of existence and the structure of their perceived reality (Olson 1980, 54). Greek myth serves as a prime example of this as the mythical stories become conflated with reality leading them to believe, for instance, that the divine caused some natural phenomenon. They took storms and droughts as symbols of divine will and thus used this mythic conception of reality to shape their actions and guide their society. However, this phenomenon is not confined to the ancient Greeks. In nearly all societies and groups of people, certain symbols and metaphors constitute myths that shape their reality and provide a foundation to their way of life, a foundation perceived as true by the group. With this inherently symbolic nature and the truth it often is attributed, it becomes not only a powerful force for conveying information that can then prompt actors to construct society but also a powerful discourse through which the fundamental sentiments that underlie the construction of the society are given authority.

By holding this power to build and shape societies, myth also can affect the construction of power balances and authority. Lincoln notes how all forms of discourses, such as the mythic, can be "strategically employed to mystify the inevitable inequities of any social order and to win

the consent of those over whom power is exercised, thereby obviating the need for the direct coercive use of force and transforming simple power into ‘legitimate’ authority” (1989, 4-5). When examining the role of myth as discourse in this framework, we can see that myth works to construct notions of authority by mystifying social order in a way that legitimizes power without the need of physical force. It does so by creating a system of beliefs and an image of power for the person or group that perpetuates the myth then spreads these beliefs throughout a culture. Thus, the creation and use of myth in a society is a cyclical process as myths are both the products of culture and the producer of culture. This very power to shape and be shaped by culture is what lends myth its power and authority because it creates a seemingly inescapable self-perpetuating cycle that transcends generations. As such, it remains present in all aspects of societal development, from initial conception through its development and because it holds the power to produce and maintain certain beliefs, it can become a powerful tool for those in power to affect social change.

When approached on a macro scale that examines entire societies rather than smaller social groups, this power to construct reality, shape society, and form power balances has profound implications on international interactions and political power. The myths and symbols that mold society can profoundly shape its perception of both itself and the Other set in contrast to the Self. Myths therefore can be employed to legitimize notions of supremacy and bolster images of power that create a skewed power balance between disparate groups. When this happens on the scale of entire nations, myth begins to work in the service of empire. By constructing an elevated sense of self through myth, one society can both build a myth about personal notions of supremacy while simultaneously creating a myth that degradingly defines the Other. An early example of this comes from ancient Greece with their elevated sense of self and degradation of unknown peoples, as represented in their literature by Odysseus’ ego and perception of his own civility and the barbaric

presentation of all non-Greek individuals. Rome later takes on this tendency to mythologize their greatness while simultaneously mythologizing the barbarity of the Other much like the Greeks and likewise perpetuates this belief system in their cultural productions and political rhetoric. This tendency to use myth in this manner continues onwards throughout history and becomes a key element of imperial discourse. Empires came to use these mythically constructed realities and perceptions to legitimize conquest and expansion, leaching from the power myth holds to structure the human understanding of existence.

One main avenue in which myths are crafted and contribute largely to group identity and the construction of societies is through the telling of history. As noted in the previous section discussing the theory behind the creation of the Other, culture is a product of long-term shared experiences that constitute a group's history. The retelling of this traditional story through successive generations leads to its integration into the group's identity as a fundamental aspect of their being and past. Therefore, the past becomes quite significant in the shaping of the present. With reference to myth, Cohen argues that, "one of the important functions of myth *is that it anchors the present in the past,*" meaning that the present obtains a historical backing and locks a set of current circumstances in an original set of events (1969, 349, italics in original). This in turn provides a background to the present and legitimizes the way the world presently is by telling a long story of how it came to be that way. Once more the idea of myth's cyclical nature arises as the present draws on the past to legitimize the current state while also carefully mythologizing the past so that it becomes something productive for the present.

This is not to say that all of history is a myth or that all of myth is history. Instead, as Raphael Patai notes in *Myth and Modern Man*, a historical event's significance resides in an objective reality whereas for a mythical event the significance rests on a subjective reality.

However, this distinction is not always clear as sometimes a subjective reality becomes conflated with an objective or ordinary reality in a way that challenges the notion of one being more real than the other. Patai goes on to suggest that “the mystical event is part of man’s subjective reality but is no less *real* for that. The difference between the objective reality of historical fact and the subjective reality of myth lies in the way one acquires one’s awareness of them and the way one relates to them” (Patai 1972, 72, italics in original). Therefore, myth crafts its own reality, drawing from both fact and from a subjective interpretation of fact, in order to create a reality that is more personally relatable to an individual. But this new reality is not any less valid than the objective reality as it also can profoundly impact the individual or group’s conception of its existence and the existence of other groups. Though it may not be considered the empirically knowable or objective reality, it retains elements of truth and creates a story of a group’s history that may not be entirely factual, but nonetheless is believed in as though it were. Patai too suggests that “it may come as a surprise to find that in many cases myths do have a historical kernel, or that historical traditions can and do assume mythical forms and survive as myths for a long time after the memory of the historical event itself has sunk into oblivion” (1972, 73). Myth, with its blending of truth and fiction, can become history and history can become myth in a cyclical pattern over the progression of time resulting in a fusion of subjective and objective perspectives. Myth therefore can have its own historical development and conversely can become indirect sources of historical knowledge.

ROME

Turning from the theoretical conception of myth and its relation to reality, empire, and history, my focus now shifts to examining concrete examples of myth being used in the service of

empire through its perpetuation in cultural productions with reference to ancient Mediterranean societies and Victorian England. The empires of the ancient Mediterranean, especially Rome, and Victorian Britain both relied upon myth to construct and convey power. Myth became woven into the framework of their empires shaping their development and becoming integral to the success of each. The way in which both empires use myth and the way they express myth in their cultures is strikingly similar. Both nations propagate their imperial myths in their construction of history, their language, their political maneuverings, their literature, their art, and in the physical presentation of their empire through architecture. Even more indicative of the power of myth for the two nations is the fact that the actual myths they perpetuate are so similar. The imperial myth the British Empire crafts ties itself so closely to the ancient Mediterranean that it seems to be an evolution of the Augustan imperial myth of Rome, suggesting both power in association and the self-perpetuating nature of myth.

Beginning with an examination of historical myths in the ancient Mediterranean, perhaps nowhere more clearly is the tendency for myth and history to blend demonstrated than in ancient approaches to history. When looking at ancient historical sources—Thucydides, Livy, Herodotus, Tacitus, Cassius Dio, etc.—it becomes clear that history for the ancient Mediterranean peoples was not treated as it is today. Unlike modern history’s focus on objective fact, ancient history was considered a didactic art form meaning it used the past to instruct the present and did so in a heightened literary style. As John Marincola suggests in his book concerning the authority claimed by ancient historiographers, historical narrative “is a largely third-person account that employs some element of creative imitation or representation (*mimesis*) to portray the actions, thoughts, intentions, and words of characters who are presumed, with more or less certainty, to have really existed and acted so” (1997, 6). The details of an event often held much less significance than the

virtues that could be gleaned from it while an eloquent retelling of the event usually trumped a strictly factual account. Ancient historiographers brought life to the events of the past by expanding upon them in a manner that took historical figures and events and portrayed them in a depth that would be impossible to do if they only relayed facts. They used creativity to convey the events how they presumed they would have been rather than strictly adhering to the information they had available.

Throughout the long history of the ancient Mediterranean the mix of history and myth was commonplace; however, during the reign of Augustus the true power of myth as history was discovered. Because of Rome's extensive history, I chose to focus on the age of Augustus, around the transition from the first century BCE to the first century CE, for it is in this age when imperial ideology first comes to the forefront of Roman thought and culture. It was a time in which the Roman state was brought back from the brink of collapsed and brought to new heights under its first emperor Augustus.¹² This belief in a mythical past as history became a key element in the creation of Augustus' imperial myth and helped build and support his regime. In the realm of literature, both Virgil's *Aeneid* and works of historiography such as Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, directly trace the Roman people's heritage back to the fall of Troy claiming Venus as the progenitor of the Roman race and her son Aeneas as the first founder of the Roman people. These texts present an aetiology for the origins of the Roman race tracing Aeneas' journey from the fall of Troy to his

¹² Calling Augustus an "emperor" is a bit anachronistic because there was not an established office for the "emperor" at this period in Roman history. Augustus had all of the trappings and power of an emperor but never claimed the title for himself and instead assumed the title of *princeps* ("first citizen"). He chose this title carefully in order to suggest that he was not becoming an autocrat, thereby protecting himself from the hatred and fear that led to his great uncle Julius Caesar's death. However, Augustus did lay the foundations for the office later known as "emperor" and is often referred to as Rome's first emperor so for the purpose of this thesis I choose to use the term "emperor," but am aware of the semantic complications of the title.

defeat of Turnus, conquest of Latium and the less developed aboriginal Others of the region, and the foundation of the Roman race.

Titus Livius (59 BCE- 17 CE), better known as Livy, is one of Rome's most famous historiographers and is known for his great work of history known as the *Ab Urbe Condita* (*From the Foundation of the City*). This work filled 142 books and covered the time from Rome's founding to the death of the elder Drusus. Livy's work is a central text for the study of historiography for the way it discusses the nature of historiography itself and for the way in which it brings myth and history together, providing a concrete example of the conflation of myth and history. In the preface of this work he suggests the writing of history is a time-honored task in which "each succeeding writer think[s] he will either bring greater accuracy to the facts or surpass his unpolished predecessors in artistry and style" (Livy, *Ab urbe cond.* Preface). There is not a complete abandonment of the facts as authors did attempt to reach a greater accuracy in their retelling, even if that accuracy had to do with retelling something mythic that was perceived as actually occurring, but at the heart of historiography was a desire to portray the events artistically and creatively. This drives historiography more into the realm of creative non-fiction than strictly accurate fictional accounts, though in the ancient world the mythical was often genuinely perceived as factual, or at least legitimate, complicating this division between fact and fiction. Because ancient history presents something that is based in historical fact yet fictionalized in its retelling, history became a place where the mythical was fused with the factual in a way that made reality and fiction blur. Therefore, the retelling of history led to both the perpetuation of mythical beliefs and created new myths about the past that could contribute to a certain understanding of the present.

Focusing on books one through five, known collectively as *The Rise of Rome*, this tendency to trace Rome's origins to a glorious past and mix myth and history becomes immediately apparent. Livy once more elucidates the nature of historiography and comments on the tendency for historiographers to blend myth, history, and what he terms "poetic fictions" later in his preface. He was not blind to the problems of mixing legend and history and clearly notes the problematic nature of historical sources suggesting:

Events before the city was founded or planned, which have been handed down more as pleasing poetic fictions than as reliable records of historical events, I intend neither to affirm nor to refute. To antiquity we grant the indulgence of making the origins of cities more impressive by commingling the human with the divine, and if any people should be permitted to sanctify its inception and reckon the gods as its founders, surely the glory of the Roman people in war is such that, when it boasts Mars in particular as its parent and the parent of its founder, the nations of the world would easily acquiesce in this claim as they do in our rule. (Livy, *Ab urbe cond.* Preface)

Here Livy shows an awareness of the complications he faces when searching for reliable sources and the longstanding tradition of mythologizing history or blending history and fiction. He suggests that he does not intend to deny or accept possible poetic fictions and that he is quite aware of the falsities that are often attributed to origins, suggesting commingling the human with divine is an indulgence. And yet he goes on to state that should any people be permitted to sanctify their past in this manner it would be Rome due to its grandeur and fortitude. The fact that Rome rose to the heights that it did makes its mythic claim of Mars as its parent seem somewhat believable and permissible to include in its history. By relating the myths of Rome's origins in his work, he nonetheless reinforces their value and significance for the notional history of the Roman people, whether they are accepted as fact or not. They become something easy to believe in as a possible account of the past and get integrated into Rome's history, becoming hallmarks in their beliefs about themselves and their heritage.

The very beginning of Livy's work documents the story of Rome's origin, which declares Aeneas as its first founder. He states, "there is a general agreement, first of all, that when Troy fell the Greeks punished the other Trojans mercilessly but refrained from exercising any right of conquest in the cases of two men, Aeneas and Antenor" (Livy, *Ab urbe cond.* 1.1). The inclusion of the statement "there is a general agreement" suggests that he is neither aligning himself to the idea that Aeneas was Rome's founder nor refuting it but acknowledging that there is a standing tradition behind this view. He then continues the story discussing Aeneas' journey to the shores of Italy from Troy and the battle that ensued between Aeneas and the Aborigines against the Rutuli led by Turnus. In the end Aeneas defeats Turnus and decides to unite the Trojans with the Aborigines calling them both Latins "thereby making the Aborigines henceforth as dedicated and loyal to Aeneas as were the Trojans," fostering the creation of the Roman people and initiating a tradition of dominating the Other (Livy, *Ab urbe cond.* 1.2). In the final war with the Rutuli, the Latins claimed victory and obtained control over the territory, settling the land and making way for Rome to come. Aeneas dies in this conflict and Livy notes "he is buried, whether he should be called man or god, on the banks of the Numicus River," further perpetuating the possibility of Aeneas' divinity and divine origins for Rome (Livy, *Ab urbe cond.* 1.2). Livy also notes how another name for Aeneas' son Ascanius was Iulius, which makes him the supposed founder of the Iulian or Julian line that later becomes the first family to rule Rome as emperors.

By recounting this glorious origin story with roots tracing back to the age of heroes who fought in the Trojan War and tracing lineage back to the goddess Venus through her famed son Aeneas, Livy perpetuates a glorious origin myth, upholds a long tradition of mythologizing self and Other, and recounts it as though it were history in order to infuse Roman history with a past to be proud of. However, Livy is careful to suggest that these mythic tales could be mere

fabrications. For example, when he discusses the birth of Romulus and Remus, he does not accept wholesale that their father was Mars and instead posits that it could have been a lie proclaimed by their mother to give her a more respectable story (Livy, *Ab urbe cond.* 1.4). Despite the fact that this myth cannot be proved to be empirically true, it still is told as a possible, if not plausible, part of Roman history. And, because the Roman populace was much less concerned with the question of truth than we are today, the fact that the myth may not be historically accurate was not a major concern. The inclusion of these quasi-historical myths in the works of Roman authors like Livy and Virgil made the myths into a defining feature of its people's identity and obtain increasing validity through their propagation. Creating this glorious past fostered a sense of pride in the Roman race and feeling of superiority over all other societies. Their society, within this mythic-historic framework, did not arise haphazardly but was the product of a divine figure, founded by one of the greatest heroes to ever live, destined to conquer, and guaranteed to achieve greatness. By creating and spreading this glorious mythic history, Romans bolstered their notion of superiority and elevated them to such a high status that all others were automatically seen as lesser, and depicted as so, when compared to the might of Rome.

Historiography is not the only medium in which myth and history are blended and this glorious history was presented. Ancient epics, especially that of the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid*, provide an interesting perspective on history that shaped ancient understanding of history and ancient historians to come. While the epics are not necessarily considered works of history and were not meant to, they were believed to hold true glimpses of the past and many of their depictions of events became integrated into more developed histories later on. Perhaps the most recognizable and ideologically influential event of the ancient world is that of the Trojan War. While the accounts of the war that we have come far after its supposed date and relate a highly fantastical

account of the event, there is a possibility that they do refer to an actual event, though not likely much like the accounts that remain.¹³ However, despite the confusion as to whether there was actually a Trojan War or not, the war as told in ancient epic and beyond became integrated into ancient Greek and Roman conceptions of their past and their identity. These stories, despite their highly mythical nature, were believed to document a people's past and as such became a part of their heritage meaning that myth became history and history became myth for ancient Greek and Romans. The *Aeneid* is particularly significant to Rome as it too claims Aeneas as Rome's founder much like Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*. Although it is far from a historical account and is a work of fiction, this epic does bring up an ancient legend and weave it into a new epic that was meant to be quintessentially Roman. It fuses historical legend that existed for centuries with a new artistic production creating a famed history for the Roman populace.

These mythic origins permeate into the visual arts as well and become key images in the perpetuation of superiority and power in monuments from the time of Augustus onward. The focus was upon aggrandizing the self to the degree that all Others were assumed inferior, unable to compare to the glory of the Roman people. When examining the visual arts of his era, we can see that this tendency to trace lineage back to divine or heroic origins as seen in the *Aeneid* and *Ab Urbe Condita*, once more arises and contributes to the heightened status of the Roman population. The images and styles employed in Augustus' artistic conventions coalesce to convey a political myth that connects the Julian line and hereditary succession with the prosperity of Rome by uniting the present with a glorious mythic past, much in the same way the literature of the era did. Kathleen Lamp notes that his imperial myth, created and spread through a particular iconography, was

¹³ For more information of the history of the Trojan War/explorations into whether there was a Trojan war or not see: Carol G. Thomas and Craig Conant, *The Trojan War*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2005) and Michael Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

infused into each of his imperial artistic commissions. It then was repeated in popular media and other avenues (e.g. coinage), meaning that popular media then reiterated and reified the political myth that was represented on imperial commissions (Lamp 2009, 22). Both the subject matter and the style of his artistic program contribute to creating and spreading his imperial myth. In order to create a style that would reflect his imperial program and reforms, he turned to the past and revived Classical Greek stylistic convention.

The stylistic choice both evoked the glory of fifth century Athens and the values that defined the society at that time, values Augustus sought to revitalize within Rome. The term “classical art” usually broadly refers to art hailing from ancient Greece and Rome. However, there are more specific artistic movements within the overarching category of classical art. Each of these aligned with a different period of history and had their own distinct stylistic conventions and trends. Three major periods mark the development of ancient Greek art: Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic. Archaic art came first and was often rigid, lacking in emotion, and not particularly naturalistic. Classical art then grew out of the Archaic period to reflect a shift towards naturalism and idealized beauty while later Hellenistic art fused the naturalism of the Classical period with a sense of dynamism. In order to more completely understand the reasoning for Augustus’ choice to revive the Classical period in his imperial commissions, a brief foray into the world of Classical art is necessary. According to art historians Tyler Jo Smith and Dimitris Plantzos, “the ‘mature’ Classical period (second half of the 5th c. BCE) represents the highpoint of Greek civilization, a highpoint which was achieved thanks to the democratic institutions of Athens and the corresponding developments in literature, the arts and philosophy” (2012, 16). Because of the stability and wealth of the city-state, literature, arts, and philosophy were able to thrive. Within this Classical period, art grew into a more refined state in which a sense of naturalism and dignity

were infused into the works with the goal of visually representing the ideal citizen. Sculpture was the primary medium in which these trends were expressed and as Smith and Plantzos explain, most of the Classical works depicted idealized figures that combined spiritual and physical beauty in a way that evoked the ideal of the eternal (2012, 16). These figures relied upon a carefully thought-out system of mathematical calculations to create perfectly proportional forms so as to convey a sense of harmony and idealism. Through representing figures with a perfect physical form, artists sought to imbue the sculptures with a sense of matching dignity and values; the perfect physical form was meant to personify the perfect mental and emotional state.

With this fusion of moral and physical beauty and the Athenian focus on the *polis* and its citizens, sculptures came to represent the paragon of the citizen. The ideal Athenian citizen was meant to show physical and mental strength and beauty as well strive for excellence in war, government, intellect, and physical form. The Persian Wars of the fifth century helped facilitate the rise of the Classical period and the production of Classical works of art, in Athens and beyond, as the military victories boosted the economy of city-states and elicited collective pride in the citizens. Within Athens, the prosperity and military power that arose out of the Persian Wars “made a significant contribution to the development of various forms of artistic production and of constructive technology, since they [Athenians] favored the planning and implementation of state building programs, the construction of fortifications, ships, and relevant equipment, the shaping of new artistic perceptions, and the creation of monumental works of art” (Smith, Plantzos 2012, 431-432). More and more public works were being commissioned resulting in the proliferation of Classical works across the city. The increase in the creation of monumental works of art changed the face of the polis and made works relying on Classical stylistic conventions (e.g. focus on harmony, proportionality, idealism, interaction between figures and the space around them,

mythological/metaphorical scenes, etc.) highly visible. Smith and Plantzos argue that “through the works of art that adorned the city and aided in promoting its virtues not only to citizens but also to allies and foreign visitors, the *ethos* and dignity of the *polis* were demonstrated” (2012, 431). Classical art came to represent the dignity, values, virtue, affluence, and victorious nature of the Athenian *polis* and its population. The style of art itself became ideologically laden through its connection to this era of Athenian history meaning that art made with the same stylistic conventions would evoke the grandeur and glory of the era in which it was first developed. Augustus, understanding the potential of art for expressing an ideology, wanted to imbue his empire with the same splendor and virtues of this period of society. As such, Augustus’ choice to revive Classical Greek stylistic conventions came to shape the art and thought of his empire, becoming a form of visual rhetoric that served as a vehicle itself for expressing his imperial myth.

One of the most poignant examples of this imperial artistic program is the monumental altar known as the *Ara Pacis Augustae* or *The Altar of Augustan Peace*. The *Ara Pacis Augustae*, commissioned by the Senate in 13 BCE as a celebration for Augustus’s triumphant return from wars in Spain and Gaul, stands as one of the most ideologically laden monuments of Augustus’s reign. Kathleen Lamp argues “the *Ara Pacis* is the most complete illustration of the Augustan



Figure 1- *Ara Pacis Augustae*, Source: Unknown. *Ara Pacis Augustae*, 9 B.C.E. Marble. Rome, Ara Pacis Museum. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) Accessed February 24, 2019. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/profzucker/7996654577/in/photostream/>

political myth in verbal or visual form, making it a significant, if not the most significant, rhetorical artifact of Augustus’s reign” (2009, 2). It infuses myth, history, and a Classical style into one cohesive design and is rife with iconographic significance and metaphorical implications. The monument consists of four Luna marble walls that enclose the central

altar space where sacrifices would have been performed. The materials used for the monument connects it to the Classical Greek artistic tradition because Augustus decided to forego the more traditional and native Italian building materials—such as concrete, terracotta, or brick—in favor of marble, the preferred building material in Greece. Each wall is carved inside and out with detailed reliefs that represent various facets of Augustus’ imperial program such as fertility, abundance, peace, and so on. The images and styles employed upon it all coalesce to convey a political myth that connects the Julian line with the prosperity of Rome by uniting the present with a glorious past and spreading an image of victorious abundance.

Two panels of this monument most clearly illustrate this desire to create a connection with a glorious mythical past. One panel is a large-scale relief set at just above eye level depicting Aeneas performing a sacrifice to the household gods with his son and the famed white sow from legend. The second, though significantly damaged, still has faint outlines of the scene preserved and is believed to depict Mars at the *Lupercal* where Romulus and Remus were nursed. Both scenes refer to the mythical founding of Rome and its population’s heritage, thereby setting the starting point for the narration of the Augustan political myth. Because Aeneas is often considered the father of the Roman people, “the narrative of the *Ara Pacis*, therefore, begins on a note of common ground with almost all of the Roman people, which would have invoked feelings of pride, heritage, and patriotism” (Lamp 2009, 10). Although it is dedicated to Augustus and intends to draw parallels between himself and Aeneas and Romulus, the monument expresses more than individual pride and exhibits something that the collective can take pride in, their shared roots.

Much like the *Aeneid* was meant to draw similarities between the hero Aeneas and Augustus, so too was the Aeneas panel. This panel with Aeneas, his son and the famed white sow, elicits notions of glory, pride, piety, divinity, and familial heritage while also inviting a direct

identification of Augustus with his mythic ancestor. The monument constantly invites comparisons between Aeneas and Augustus meaning that the representation of Aeneas was also a representation



Figure 2- Sacrifice Panel, Source: Unknown. *Ara Pacis Augustae*, 9 B.C.E. Marble. Rome, Ara Pacis Museum. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) accessed February 24, 2019 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/profzucker/7996669709/in/photostream/>

of Augustus. Therefore, Aeneas is crafted using Classical stylistic conventions including idealized proportions, a flawless physique, a contrapposto stance, an ethereal far-gazing expression, an ageless face, and an overall sense of naturalism.

This clear departure from the veristic tradition of the Republic, which emphasized a harsh realism and highlighted imperfections so as to suggest

wisdom and military prowess, separated this work from the tumultuous period of the end of the Republic and connected the present era with a more peaceful time of the past. By casting Aeneas in this Classical light, Aeneas and by extension Augustus, become associated with the values that were embodied in the Classical style, values such as peace, prosperity, a sense of timelessness, and an air of semi-divinity which all aligned with the values Augustus sought to represent as emperor.

This scene with Aeneas also brings to mind the passage in Book 6 of the *Aeneid* when Anchises tells Aeneas of the fated future of Rome. In this moment, Anchises states that Rome will extend her great empire to earth's horizons and the promised Augustus Caesar "will establish again a Golden Age/ In the fields of Latium once ruled by Saturn" (*Aen.* 6.941-942). Acting as the basis of the narrative on the *Ara Pacis*, the panel repeats the Augustan political myth as told by the *Aeneid* that "Augustus's rule and the conquests of the Roman Empire were fated from the moment Aeneas set out from Troy to found Rome" (Lamp 2009, 12). And, not only is Augustus' rule fated from the fall of Troy, but so too is the period of peace and stability that he brings to Rome

preordained. Overall the scene not only tells of Rome's great fate but also glorifies the Roman populace's heritage and draws a connection between Augustus and Aeneas in a manner that suggests that Augustus is taking up the heroic tradition of building up Rome as his ancestor Aeneas did before him.

Augustus sought to align himself with Aeneas in particular to exploit this fated image of Roman glory, the character of Aeneas, and the myths that revolved around the quasi-historical figure. Aligning himself with Aeneas shows Augustus and the Julian line's pedigree, tracing their origins back to the hero himself and his divine mother Venus, thereby legitimizing their claim to power. Aeneas was also a strictly Roman hero because he embodied the most valued traits for a Roman citizen such as piety, familial respect and devotion, fortitude in battle and above all devotion to his country and its destiny. By aligning himself with this figure and modeling himself after him, Augustus imbues himself with the power and prestige of Aeneas through association. He becomes part of a divinely founded family line, a man of great devotion and piety, and a figure worthy of fame like a hero of old. Aeneas' piety and fulfilment of his task is permanently memorialized in stone in a manner that evokes a sense of peace and stability suggesting a timelessness. Through this scene and its connection to Augustus, the monument suggests that Augustus and his empire will also bring eternal peace and stability to Rome much like Aeneas did before him.

The other panel of interest is the panel including Mars and Romulus and Remus, the descendants of Aeneas and second key element in Rome's origin story. Illustrating a more local Latin myth rather than Greek myth, this panel exhibits the second mythic founder of Rome, Romulus, and the origin story that comes with it. As described in Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, prior to the conception of Romulus and Remus, their grandfather Numitor's brother Amulius usurped



Figure 3- Lupercal Panel, Source: Unknown, *Ara Pacis Augustae*, 9 BCE. Marble. Rome. Ara Pacis Museum. Accessed February 24, 2019. <https://romesummerclass.georgetown.domains/items/show/450>.

Numitor's reign in Alba Longa. Fearing conflict, Amulius made Numitor's daughter, Rhea Silvia, become a vestal virgin thereby swearing an oath of chastity. However, Rhea Silvia becomes pregnant by an unidentified individual, though many myths claim that she was impregnated by the god of war Mars. As such, Romulus and Remus achieve a semi-

divine status much like Aeneas. Enraged but fearful of offending Mars should her claim be true, Amulius imprisoned Rhea Silvia and ordered Romulus and Remus to be drowned. However, a servant took pity on the children and sent them down the river in a basket rather than to their deaths. The boys then were found by a she-wolf and nursed, and eventually raised by a shepherd. Once they reached maturity, they went back to Alba Longa and through a series of events killed Amulius and reinstated Numitor on the throne. Following this they set out to establish their own city, which ended violently with Romulus killing his brother thereby becoming the sole ruler of the new city, Rome.

By incorporating this myth into his monument as well, Augustus once more connects himself with the mythical founding of Rome. He also emphasizes new themes such as the usurpation of power, the foundation of a new state, Rome's native Latin mythic roots, and the use of violence to achieve one's ends. It also "suggests a parallel between the divine plan for Romulus and the necessity for Rome to regain its political position at the center of the world under Augustus" and alongside the Aeneas myth allows "Augustus to introduce the themes of fate, pity, and violence legitimized in the mythic and collective history of the Roman people" (Lamp 2009,

13). Romulus was a Latin mythic hero rather than a Greek hero, which made this scene speak even more directly to the Latin population of Rome. It helped contribute to forming the collective myth of the Roman people, one that blended a glorious Greek and local Italic past. It also argues for the necessity of violence, helping to validate Augustus' violent acts by suggesting that violence has always be necessary for Rome's success, going all the way back to the founder of the city. The connection to Aeneas is emphasized more often than the connection to Romulus, likely due to the problematic fratricide and the way that it suggests a sense of civil strife that Augustus was keen on distancing himself from. Coins, for example, were minted that showed Augustus' profile on side and Aeneas on the other, thereby reinforcing their connection on a widely disseminated medium. Statues were another avenue through which Augustus materialized this mythic familial heritage as they were often thought to be modeled in part off of descriptions of Aeneas.¹⁴ However, despite the greater focus on Aeneas, both Aeneas and Romulus provide strong points of comparison for Augustus to exploit to legitimize his claim to power, create his political myth, and spread the image of himself as the bringer of peace and prosperity like a hero of old.

Aeneas and Romulus were not the only historical avenues that Augustus exploited to bolster his power and support his claim of legitimacy as he made deliberate stylistic choices to connect him to high points in history. As I have already suggested, the monument deliberately adapts Classical modes of artistic expression so as to revive the Grecian Classical era of the fifth century BCE and its focus on fertility, eternal youth, stability, peace, and so on. Abounding floral and vegetal reliefs decorate the *Ara Pacis* that evoke the notion of eternal spring and fruitful

¹⁴ An example of this is the *Augustus of Prima Porta* which is believed to be modelled after Aeneas from Virgil's depiction of Aeneas in the *Aeneid*. For a full exploration of the parallels between Aeneas/*Aeneid* and the statue of *Augustus of Prima Porta* see Louise Adams Holland, "Aeneas-Augustus of Prima Porta." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 78 (1947): 276-84. doi:10.2307/283499.

abundance. Vines gracefully wind their way across its surface in arcing patterns, naturally curling up and away from the base of the monument so as to suggest growth. Garlands arc across several segments of the monument while grapes, swans and other forms of life pepper its surface. The



Figure 4- Vegetal Reliefs. Source: Unknown. *Ara Pacis Augustae*, 9 BCE. Marble. Rome. Ara Pacis Museum. Photo courtesy of Mary Ann Sullivan. Accessed February 24, 2019. <https://www.bluffton.edu/homepages/facstaff/sullivanm/italy/rome/arapacis/arapacis.html>

refined aesthetic of the monument is created through delicate low reliefs that focus on organic shapes and symmetry and convey a sense of polished softness. Because the monument focuses more on delicate forms of movement and representations of life than dramatic manipulations of light and shadow, there are no sharp divisions between light and dark giving it a more subdued appearance overall. An artful fusion

of repeated geometric and natural forms results in a harmonious arrangement of space which also contributes to an overriding sense of balance and serenity. The reposed style of the monument fully embodies the imperial program of Augustus with its focus on fertility, abundance, prosperity, modesty, and peace.

While the Classical style influences all aspects of the monument, there is one panel that explicitly engages with the ideas of peace and abundance that Augustus sought to convey in his monument. This panel is dedicated to a female goddess most often identified as *Tellus*, the goddess of the earth or “Mother Earth.” By dedicating an entire panel to the goddess of the earth, Augustus connects himself to the divine and couples the natural prosperity and fertility that she represents with his reign. She is crafted similarly to Romulus and Aeneas with her classically draped garments and ethereal timelessness embodied by the idealized smoothness of her face and the naturalistic

carving of the rest of the relief. She holds two infants and is surrounded by vegetation and diverse animals, all of which coalesce to create an Eden-like paradise in which fertility, prosperity, and



Figure 5-Tellus Panel, Source: Unknown. *Ara Pacis Augustae*, 9 B.C.E. Marble. Rome. Ara Pacis Museum (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) Accessed February 24, 2019. <https://smarthistory.org/ara-pacis/>.

life abounds. By placing this scene on his victory monument, Augustus becomes conflated with prosperity and abundance, equating his empire with a paradisiac state. When taken as a whole, the monument dissociates Augustus from the tumultuous end of the Republic by steering away from the austere veristic tradition and revitalizing

Classical styles.¹⁵ Augustus becomes separated from Republican leaders like Sulla, Crassus, Pompey, and Julius Caesar, suggesting the birth of a new, less violent age of security and comfort. His visual program and rhetoric, with its references to himself and the glories of old and peaceful imagery, “reminds the people that the comforts they enjoy are due to his rule and the gods’ favor and that the Golden Age has arrived” (Lamp 2009, 19). He creates this new age by rehashing a past age, using history to support his new political agenda, and connecting his rule to the most successful part of Athenian history suggesting that he too will bring Rome into a Golden Age.

This notion of the Golden Age has an enduring tradition going back centuries before fifth century Athens meaning that Augustus pulled from a widely known and ideologically significant

¹⁵ Verism focused on hyper realism so as to convey the stern, patriarchal and aged wisdom of the individual and became associated with the warlords that brought about the end of the Republic and years of violent civil war. For more about the veristic tradition see: David Jackson, "Verism and the Ancestral Portrait," *Greece & Rome* 34, no. 1 (1987): 32-47, <http://www.jstor.org/colorado.idm.oclc.org/stable/642970>. Jeremy Tanner, "Portraits, Power, and Patronage in the Late Roman Republic," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 18-50. doi:10.2307/300199.

mythic tradition. The Greek Poet Hesiod (700 BCE.) explores this myth in his *Works and Days* and tells:

First of all, the deathless ones, who have their homes on Mount Olympos fashioned a Golden Race of mortal humans. These lived in the time of Kronos, when he was king in the sky. They lived like gods, without a care in their hearts, far away from pain and suffering. Now was there terrible old age, but always they were the same in their feet and their hands delighting in festivities away from every evil. They died as if overcome by sleep. All things noble were with them. The rich earth bore them its fruit abundantly and unstinting all by itself. They lived off their fields as they pleased, in peace, with many good things, rich in flocks, friends to the blessed gods. (Hes. *Op.* 98-107)

The Golden Age was a time of paradisiac abundance, fertility, and peace in which no pain came, and humanity was loved by the gods. The earth bore its fruits willingly, without the labor of humanity, and people only knew of joy, peace and pleasure. With such an evocative image of an idealized state of being, the Golden Age became a powerful myth and symbol used to describe flourishing eras and empires. It was imbued with an ethereal, semi-divine quality that made it the perfect representation of the apex of civilization. By conflating his empire with the Golden Age of Greece and by extension mythic Golden Age as described by Hesiod, Augustus craftily fuses history and myth to elevate his power and empire above the realm of mortals and instill his reign with a mythical quality. Through this carefully crafted visual and verbal rhetoric and imperial myth, Augustus conveys his reign and empire as being on par with the great Saturnian Golden Age and mighty Athens.

ROME'S LASTING IMPACT

Augustus' reign went down in history as one of the high points of civilization and left a lasting impression on the course of history, helping shape the rise of nations long after Rome's decline. Michael Silk, Ingo Gildenhar, and Rosemary Barrow argue that it "inspired classicizing

revivals, along with other responses, in great profusion” and “bequeathed to the Western world the concepts of urban renewal in the grand manner” (2013, 5-6). The Roman Empire under Augustus became romanticized by the Western world as the grandeur, glory, expansiveness, prosperity, and peace of the era were capitalized upon. The violent, dirty, and dictatorial elements were glossed over so as to make the Roman Empire and the rest of the ancient Mediterranean into the glory of the ancient world. As suggested earlier, Augustus is credited with saving a nation on the brink of collapse and making Rome great again. His revitalization of the Roman nation after the fall of the Republic—manifested through extraordinary public works, expansion, monumentalizing, infrastructure, and so on—became the image of urban prosperity and renewal meaning that Augustus’ imperial myth lived on long after his death. His empire became an image of both political and cultural success and fed into modern imperial myths like the myth of glorious origins, the myth of the Other, and the myth of the superior West.

Because of its widespread political influence, expansive territorial control, and abundant cultural productions, Rome’s political and cultural rhetoric and art became synonymous grandeur, power and affluence. As such, empires to follow sought to invoke the same glory and grandeur as Rome did for their own empire and often turned to it as an exemplar, much like Rome did with Greece and the heroes of old, turning it into a quasi-ancestor figure to give them a glorious origin and tradition. Silk, Gildenhar, and Barrow suggest that the impact of the classical tradition became such a central element to any cultural endeavor in the Western world up until the nineteenth century that it was often taken for granted (2013, 10). Because the classical past became the emblem of empire and repeatedly perpetuated as the birthplace of Western society for centuries, its significance to Western culture became overlooked. Through the course of time, the myth of the Western origin in a glorious Mediterranean past became reiterated enough for it to become a

defining force of Western thought, so central that it became accepted as an inherent facet of European identity and conception of Self. Much like the Romans identified themselves as the descendants of Aeneas, so too do Western nations identify themselves as descendants of the classical past.

However, despite being taken for granted, this classical tradition is still incredibly ideologically laden, shaping the face of European culture for centuries. The ideals embodied by the tradition have continually been exploited throughout history contributing to a mythic story for European development and identity. With its pervasive presence and ideological weight, the classical tradition has been wielded as a powerful and pervasive force to serve a spectrum of national agendas and political movements both revolutionary and authoritarian. Following the fall of Rome and rise of Western Christian writers, classical material became integrated into the Western organization of history in a way that “constitutes an impressive piece of cultural imperialism,” creating a myth of the West’s rise (Silk et. al. 2013, 18). Western society infused its culture with the cultural traditions of the classical past, adopting them as its own. People of power were also wielding this myth of the classical tradition as a political tool in order to elevate the status of their nation above others, much like Augustus did with Rome. Following the sack of Constantinople in 1453, “Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II, 1458-64) acclaims Christian Europe as a plurality of nations united not only by their religion, but also by their common roots in Greco-Roman antiquity and its values” (Silk et. al. 2013, 29). Just one of many examples from history, here a European figurehead glosses over the complex reality of the situation and employs the myth of Greco-Roman roots to argue for certain values and construct an identity that serves his goals. Europe was far from being unified and was filled with different cultures, ethnicities, political structures, religions, and more. The Pope’s desperate cry to the classical past was meant to enliven

the image of glorious classical origins and evoke this long-standing myth in order to elicit some form of societal change and sense of unity.

The classical past also came to shape the physical appearance of Europe through architecture. Architecture serves as a powerful art form for expressing values, representing different time periods and the ideas that defined them, and exhibiting progress. It acts as a language through which messages and ideologies can be conveyed in a highly visible, widely disseminated form. Classical forms of architecture became normative for later European architecture, uniting the two time periods through lasting physical markers. Christian churches, for example, derived their architectural style from Roman basilicas and centrally planned buildings and monuments like tholos style Greek temples and the mausoleum of Augustus. As discussed previously concerning the rhetoric of Otherness, the literature of Europe likewise reflected the classical past, invoking similar rhetorical strategies to convey similar themes. The classical tradition, therefore, acted as the backbone for much of European thought and contributed to the formation of myths of origins and of self-definition for the greater portion of the first millennia CE. This meant that the myth of European roots in the classical past shaped European culture and cultural productions for centuries in a self-perpetuating manner, coming to define what it was to be European and bolstering European claims of superiority through the power of association with great empires of old.

This myth became so influential on European society that it came to help define an entire school of thought and representation titled “Western” and helped to shape conceptions of self and Other in new terms of “West” and “East”. As more of the world was coming into contact with each other, different groups were being forced to create new understandings about themselves and others they encountered. As Nancy Bisha notes in her book about the creation of East and West:

The myth of East and West as polar opposites was introduced over two thousand years ago by the Greeks and adapted by the Romans. From about the eleventh century on, Europeans

used the terms 'Christian' and 'Infidel' to articulate this renewed sense of cultural division. By the modern colonial period Western European powers had come to view themselves as superior to Eastern peoples both militarily and culturally. (2004, 2)

As Bisha notes, Greece and Rome came to stand for all that was considered Western, and empires of the East, essentially those east of Greece, were deemed second rate. This division was patterned after the earlier rhetoric of Greece and Rome, focusing on differing appearances, ideologies, political structures, religion, and economics. This in turn made one party's customs seem valid and the Other's seem backwards (the West and the East respectively). Athens is attributed with having a democratic form of government, flourishing art scene, established judicial system, and rigorous intellectual and economic activity. Rome is attributed with developing Athenian ideals and customs, incorporating Greek cultural structures into the fabric of its existence, and adding a new more powerful militaristic and conquest-focused edge. Nations external to them, however, were cast as barbaric, savage, and lacking in a structured form of government or developed culture. Empires of the West that supposedly stem from the ancient Mediterranean began taking on the trappings of Greece and Rome artistically politically, judicially, economically, and so on. They did so to such a great degree that the perpetuation of these ideas and cultural traditions became normative and fundamental to the conception of Western identity. The East, in contrast, was attributed the values of the nations external to Greece and Rome and became synonymous with barbarian backwardness in the eyes of the West.

This supposed division grew wider throughout the course of history resulting in highly established ideas about the Self and Other in terms of West and East, Occident and Orient. The misconstrued rise of the West in contrast to the supposed stagnation of the East allowed for the creation of an Other to be played out on massive swath of the globe, supporting domination of foreign entities by Western powers. John M. Hobson argues for the invalid nature of this

Eurocentric belief system in his book *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* where he unpacks the myth of the West and Orientalism. He describes the central belief system of the West by saying “Orientalism constructs a permanent image of the superior West (the ‘Self’) which is defined negatively against the no less imaginary ‘Other’ – the backward and inferior east” (2004, 7). Throughout history, beginning in Greece, the East was imagined as the antithesis of the West, though these images of the East were based mostly on assumptions and myths. The East was assumed to be a place filled with despotic rulers, irrational institutions, pagan belief systems, stilted economies, passivity, and alluring peoples and beasts. The West, in contrast, was filled with democracy, rationality, organized religion, and a flourishing economy that was deemed dynamically progressive. The two constitute a binary that focuses on opposition rather than similarities and work to legitimize an image of Western supremacy over a degraded East.

Also central to this discourse is the belief that the West had pioneered its own development since the time of Ancient Greece, mythologizing its story of progress directly from the flourishing ancient Mediterranean while simultaneously ignoring any influence that came from the East. The story of Western development was just that, Western. The East was relegated to the sideline, cast as stuck in a stagnant state void of any drive for progress (Hobson 2004, 9). The self-centered aggrandizing notions of the West led to the assumption of the East as opposite and therefore lesser. Or one could say lesser and therefore opposite. Hobson also posits that the East became imagined as feminine, in contrast to the rational masculine West, and that “branding the East as exotic, enticing, alluring and above all passive (i.e. as having no initiative to develop of her own accord), thereby produced an immanent and ingenious legitimating rationale for the West’s imperial penetration and control of the East” (2004, 9). The effeminized East needed the helping hand of the masculine West in order to achieve progress, or so this discourse assumed. And thus the myth

of the West was created. The European nations had claimed since the time of Greece and Rome that they pioneered their own development, propelling their nations into a more advanced future while leaving the East behind in a state of passive inactivity.

Developments of the East are left out of the Western discourse as they would challenge the notion of the West's solo rise to power and question the legitimacy of the West's position in the world. As Hobson argues, "Western powers only appear to have been dominant because a Eurocentric view determined from the outset that no Eastern power could be selected in" (2004, 20). Eurocentric views dominated discussions of East and West meaning that a prejudiced perspective presided over and directed the discourse. Once more the cyclical nature of myth becomes apparent as myth is used to direct action which then gets built into the myth to shape future action in a self-perpetuating loop. Western views arise out of the myths it tells and also shapes the myths to better suit its needs. Much like Augustus fostered the myth of his glorious origins and Rome's "rightful" place in the world, so too did Western empires perpetuate the myth of their origins and of the West's "supremacy" above the East. The ancient Mediterranean became the age of heroes to the modern Western world, supporting its claim to legitimacy and supremacy, planting the seed of the Western mindset for the millennia that follow. This shared tendency to mythologize points to the centrality of myth to society and suggests that mythic narratives are inherently part of a human conception of the world and help to shape the lives of individuals, groups, and societies.

BRITAIN

Perhaps nowhere more clearly is this myth of the West and its roots in the classical past manifested than in the British Empire. The "British story constitutes the pivot of the Eurocentric

account” due to its status as the next great Empire in Western thought (after Rome that is) making it a prime example of the power of the myth of the West and its reliance on classical modes of thought and representation (Hobson 2004, 190). Britain was considered the first industrializer and therefore the first nation to propel itself into modernity. It also was the largest Empire to exist in the west since the fall of Rome which led it to become synonymous with Western power for much of modern history. As suggested previously in this thesis, the classical past was profoundly influential on Britain through its integration into the visual, intellectual, political, and verbal fabric of the nation and Empire. This engagement directly tied them to the longstanding tradition of adopting styles of the past and inserts the British Empire into the Western tradition that hailed the classical past as the birthplace of the West and indicative of the glory it was to achieve, a glory much like that of its ancestors, especially when considered nostalgically.

One of the most pronounced ways in the visual arts that Britain mimicked the classical past is in its architecture. Buildings serve as monumental, semi-permanent works of art that give shape to the image of a nation and as such are a powerful medium through which ideas and values are shared with a widespread audience. Art historians Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius note how during the Victorian Era in Britain, there was an “enormous increase in public and commercial commissions: town halls, hospitals, museums, banks, hotels, etc.” meaning that there was a plethora of opportunities to construct new buildings that aligned with the imperial agenda of the British Empire (1978, 9). Britain’s desire to align itself with the classical past, and thereby build upon the myth of the West through its relation to the classical past, resulted in the revival of classical architectural structures for many of its buildings. Dixon and Muthesius also note that there was a decent amount of variety with architecture in the nineteenth century, but “quantitatively speaking the classical—in one version or another—remained the most frequent choice in Western

countries up to about the middle of the twentieth century” (1978, 17). Although there were styles that rejected the classical tradition—Medieval, Tudor, Gothic, etc.—the classical tradition still reigned supreme in the grand scheme of Western and British architecture. For Britain, classicism stood for ideas of order and harmony much like it did in the past, creating a visual rhetoric that reflected the aspirations of its Empire. Its architectural forms directly reflected this with their attention to symmetry and proportionality alongside the revival of classical conventions including barrel vaults, columns, pediments, pilasters, porticoes and more. In styling its architecture in this manner, Britain visually embodied the ideals of peace, prosperity, decorum, civic duty, and so on, all of which have been associated with the classical tradition throughout history.

The structures erected during the period of increased commercial commissions in the Victorian Era acted as monumental expressions of the new wealth and prosperity flooding into the nation. They made a statement that the Empire had the wealth and resources to fund such expenditures and erect grandiose buildings for the public, creating a visual testament to its power and benevolence. As Richard Jenkyns suggests in *Dignity and Decadence: Victorian Art and the Classical Inheritance*, “civic architecture is a distinctive case: it is meant to be pomp-and-circumstantial and for this requirement a classical style did very well” (1992, 11). Much like Rome turned to Greece for inspiration in its monumental architecture, Britain turned to classical antiquity. From the façade of Buckingham Palace, to the Admiralty Arch, to the National Westminster Bank and more, the monuments of Britain directly appropriate styles of the classical tradition in order to infuse the British capital with the same triumphal grandeur as Greece and Rome before it (Jenkyns 1992, 17). The myth of the connection between the West and the classical past is materialized through these buildings, uniting Britain with classical antiquity and empowering Britain through this very connection. These classically inspired buildings also

emphasize Britain's role as part of the West as they continue the tradition, established during Augustus' time, of beautifying and monumentalizing the capitals of empire thereby perpetuating the visual rhetoric of the Augustan Age in the modern era.

These ideas of rehashing the past and using the myth of glorious origins, the myth of the superior West, and the myth of the Other arguably found their ultimate expression in the form of museums. Monumental in their own right, "museums and picture galleries had been considered of equal importance with government buildings since the Neo-Classical period" (Dixon and Muthesius 1978, 142). This meant that a great amount of resources were extended to the construction of museums, resulting in grandiose museums that exhibited a triumphal quality on par with the other political and public buildings of the British Empire. Much like many other buildings from capital buildings to personal residences, museums are highly ideologically laden institutions. They are storehouses of culture that fill their walls with antiquities and artworks from nations across the globe. They curate cultures and artistic productions to put on display and thereby hold the power to convey whatever message they so desire to the public. Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Carl Grodach probe into this subject in an article that discusses the role of ethnic museums in displaying the Other. They note "historically, museums have been deeply involved in the formation and interpretation of identity and history... the early museum functioned more as a civic temple—a space that authenticated and consecrated the values of the bourgeoisie and nation state as an objective reality for all to emulate" (Loukaitou-Sideris and Grodach 2004, 52). The bourgeoisie and nation were able to curate museums in a manner that supported their own ways of existence and supported their ideologies, whether it be notions about nobility, primitivism and elitism, ethics, political structures and so on. The notion of the museum as a temple ties directly to the power of myth and image as it conveys a certain elitism or sanctity to all that it holds lending

the materials and information stored inside a heightened significance and depth of meaning. Museums became a place to pay homage to and in a sense worship a particular view of the world. Therefore, the way in which a museum was set up and the information it conveyed became consecrated as a reality worthy of emulation, even if the message conveyed predominantly reflected and supported a myth perpetuated by those who ran the institution.

Historically, museum board members have set the standard of taste based on what they viewed as worthy of being displayed and created distinctions between what they considered to be elite or primitive. They were not always focused on an equal representation of cultures and instead often relied upon subjective markers of “good” and “bad” so as to reinforce the values of their society and perpetuate exclusive single-sided views. Many museums largely hold artifacts from afar, due to their exotic and alluring nature as something Other from their home culture. They have appropriated cultural products from around the world, curated them, and displayed them through the lens of the home culture. Within this framework, the presentation of foreign cultures can be corrupted by the biases of the curating museum meaning that notions of the home identity and the identity of other cultures can be distorted. Thus, museums have been both the result and creator of notions of Self and Other. They have presented different cultures based off of an ingrained understanding of their own culture and have reinforced notions of Otherness and self-superiority by classifying certain cultures as finer than others. With the tendency to segment cultures based off of culturally defined notions of Self, Other, civilization, primitivism and so on, museums “served not only as repositories of elite culture and national heritage, but also spaces that categorized cultural differences along a hierarchy of race and class” (Loukaitou-Sideris and Grodach 2004, 52). By physically taking both “elite” artifacts and “primitive” artifacts and conveying the two in a segregated manner, museums reinforce power balances and suggest that

the culture the museum stems from must be above all others due to their ability to physically (by actually taking possession of the artifacts) and metaphorically (by determining the value of other cultures) conquer other cultural traditions. Because they can house the products of other cultures on their soil and display them to the public, museums become quite ideologically charged images of power and reinforce notions of supremacy and Otherness by putting the Other on display.

Britain holds some of the most well-known and richly curated museums of the world. One museum in particular, the British Museum, encapsulates the problematic nature of museums and stands as a testament to the British imperial mission as well as notions of West and East. The museum was designed by the architect Sir Robert Smirke and completed during the Victorian Era in 1852. The core Quadrangle building was designed in the Greek Revival style, emulating classical architecture, specifically the architecture of temples, relating to the idea of a museum



Figure 6- The British Museum Main Entrance, Photo Credit: Cara Redalen

being a civic temple expressed by Loukaitou-Sideris and Grodach. The building draws directly from the Athenian Parthenon, a Doric peripteral octastyle temple that also served as a victory monument that celebrated the defeat of the Persians, turning the British Museum into a temple to culture, victory, and British cultural dominance. Despite not following the temple

model exactly, due to the museum serving a different purpose, it still heavily relies on the architectural conventions of temples and conveys a similar sense of grandeur and sacredness as the temples of ancient antiquity. By imbuing the museum with both the architectural significance of ancient temples and the stylistic elements of the classical tradition, the building as a whole

becomes a sacred space imbued with the symbolic implications of peace, prosperity, grandeur and empire that constitute the ideal of classical and Western traditions. This in turn supports Britain's imperial myth that cast it as the apex of civilization and evoked the same sort of imperial myth as Augustus; the myth of peace, prosperity, expansive power, and eternal glory.

In order to enter the museum, you must progress up a series of steps to arrive at the pronaos, or columned lined porch that extends outwards from the main entrance. This central porch includes eight columns that support the entablature and pediment much like what is seen on the Athenian Parthenon. A pediment that relies on the classical tradition for both style and iconography, sits atop these columns, capping off the porch and completing the façade of the building. This pediment is composed of symbolic figures that are meant to represent *The Progress of Civilization*, which is

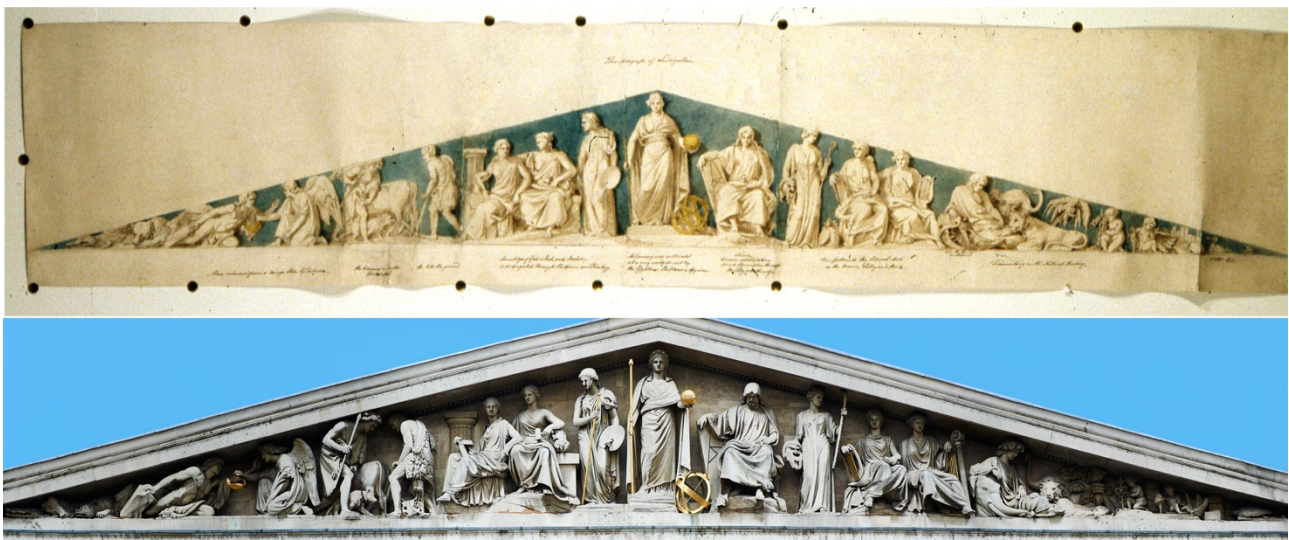


Figure 7-The British Museum Pediment, Source: The Pediment and its Original design by Sir Richard Westmacott. From British Museum, “29 Things You (Probably) Didn’t Know About the British Museum,” *British Museum Blog*, last modified January 14, 2017. <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/29-things-you-probably-didnt-know-about-the-british-museum/pediment/> (accessed February 24, 2019).

also the title of the relief. According to the British Museum’s webpage titled “The Museum’s Pediment in Detail,” the relief program begins on the left-hand side with the creation of man.¹⁶ Here an ignorant man emerges from the rock, reaching towards the right, or more symbolically,

¹⁶ I use the term man here deliberately, despite its complications, because it better aligns with the social values and linguistic norms of the world during the time that this monument was erected.

progress. The next figure is the Angel of Religion who holds a lamp that represents the spread of basic knowledge for humanity. As the program continues to the right, man is said to expand his knowledge and understanding through mastering architecture and sculpture, painting and science, geometry and drama, and music and poetry. These subjects marked the pillars of a man's education during the era in which this monument was erected and largely remain central to education to this day. The final human figure, on the right-hand side, represents man as the educated apex of civilization.

The British Museum's website describes this final figure by saying, "having expanded his knowledge, man can now dominate the world around him" and shows a man sitting amongst wild animals (specifically a lion and an elephant) and vegetation (The British Museum, n.d.). At this point, man sits at the zenith of progress, holding an elevated status of knowledge and control over the natural world, subduing beasts to his will and living in a world of plenty. The figures are all invoke the classical tradition, with their marble construction, cascading fabrics like the togas of old, serene and ethereal expressions, poses, and classicizing proportions. The central figure of the pediment who represents Painting and Science, for instance, is shown standing with a scepter in her right hand a globe in the left. This directly pulls from the classical tradition and resembles the famed statues of the gods, like the *Athena Parthenos*, and later Roman emperors such as the Statue of *The Emperor Octavian Augustus as Jupiter*, *Claudius as Jupiter*, and so on.¹⁷ These figures crafted in the classical style evoke the timeless grace and semi-divine nature of classical Greek and Roman sculpture and evoke the same images of peace, grace, abundance, and power. This pediment becomes an ideological statement that argues for British superiority over both nature and

¹⁷ For images of these see Appendix I

civilization and suggests that the British Museum is a sacred storehouse of human progress that hits its highpoint with British society.

The British Museum also holds another level of ideological significance in the way it curates some of the most prized artifacts from around the world and houses them on British soil. Famed artifacts from the Mediterranean (Parthenon sculptures), Egypt (Bust of Ramesses and the Rosetta Stone), the Middle East (Assyrian Lion Hunt reliefs), Oceanic (Easter Island Statue), the Far East (Samurai armor), and more line exhibition halls. The vast array of artifacts recalls the imperial nature of the British Empire because each shows the power of the British world through its ability to procure all of these treasures as their own. These artifacts were appropriated from their native soil and placed in the hands of the British in a way that shows profound cultural imperialism. During the era in which the museum was erected, the Empire was at its height and as such dominated a large portion of the globe meaning it was able to extract both resources from and artifacts from its conquered territories. The display of the artifacts became a product of the culture they were curated in and therefore reflected British biases, helping perpetuate the divide between the British Self and the Other. One example of this bias and preference towards cultures deemed elite, especially those in the Western classical tradition, is the imbalance in collections. The museum dedicates 21 individual galleries to Ancient Greece and Rome and only one room to African artifacts external to Egypt. These 21 galleries on the ancient Mediterranean show the British desire to literalize the myth of their origins and elevate the status of Greece and Rome by allocating them more attention than nations that do not relate to the British definition of its Self.

Another example of this appropriation of material culture, and Britain's fascination with the ancient Mediterranean, are the Elgin Marbles. These reliefs were taken off of the Athenian Parthenon early in the 19th century and eventually brought to the museum by Lord Elgin. Although

he initially intended to draw and make casts of the sculpture in order to decorate his mansion in Scotland, “he was eventually convinced (by his entourage and by the change in the balance of political power in the region) to request to ‘excavate’ and remove material from the monument” (Hamilakis 1999, 308). The marbles were eventually sold to the British Museum in 1816 for



Figure 8- Parthenon Marbles, Sculpture 327 Block XI from Pheidias. *The Parthenon Sculptures*, 438-432 BCE. Marble. London, British Museum. Accessed February 24, 2019. https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=461712&partId=1&sea.

£35,000 where they remain to this day. The British viewed these marbles as piece of British heritage as much as they were a piece of Greek heritage due Britain’s mythologized roots in the classical past. They viewed the marbles as an artifact of their own history thereby legitimizing their claim to housing them on British soil, at

least from a British point of view. However, as time has gone on these marbles have stirred up a great deal of controversy. The Greek community has repeatedly demanded them back, claiming them as their cultural heritage, and arguing for them to return to Greek soil.¹⁸ The British Museum, and museums in general, have become a great deal more culturally aware and are more attuned to the problematic nature of earlier museums as time has progressed. They are working to find the line between preservation and the dissemination of knowledge and respecting cultural heritage, however, this debate still rages on as the British museum still possesses the reliefs from the Parthenon. When looking at this museum at the time of its construction and its role during the Victorian Era, the museum stands as a testament to British imperial power and directly feeds into

¹⁸ Yannis Hamilakis dives into this issue in the article "Stories from Exile: Fragments from the Cultural Biography of the Parthenon (or 'Elgin') Marbles," *World Archaeology* 31, no. 2 (1999): 303-20. <http://www.jstor.org/colorado.idm.oclc.org/stable/125064>. In this journal article he discusses the discourse surrounding the restitution of the marbles and the cultural significance of the artifacts to Greece as well as the current social and political reality of modern-day Greece.

its imperial myth. The British Museum itself presupposes that it is the apex of civilization in its belief that it can more fittingly house the artifacts of Greece and Rome than they can. Much like the Augustan imperial myth, the British imperial myth relies upon public displays of power for support. The British Museum bolsters the myth of Britain's glorious origins through its massive collection of Greco-Roman antiquities, tying itself to the past and reawakening an image of the glorious societies and empires of old. It reinforces the myth of Britain as the apex of the Western tradition, and arguably all of civilization, in the architectural form it takes and through its extensive collection of artifacts from around the world. And ultimately, the museum speaks to the power Britain seeks to display in its imperial myth by acting as a monument to British imperial conquest and its ability to possess the artifacts of the world.

It is not to be forgotten that this notion of Britain as the apex of civilization, with roots stemming from a glorified classical past, and emblem of the West is a carefully crafted imperial myth that is fleshed out on a grand scale. There is no denying the power of the British Empire and the expansiveness of its territory because, as the saying goes, "the sun never set on the British Empire." It did have territories scattered throughout the globe and strongholds in places teeming with opportunities for resource extraction and either cultural appropriation or othering that helped foster its wealth and power. However, despite this power and the grandeur it did achieve, much of the image of its greatness is still a myth, a myth employed in the service of empire to legitimize authority and support skewed power balances and senses of superiority. Similarly to the Augustan imperial myth, the true nature of Britain was not equal to the image it cast of itself. It assumed a role of superiority and degraded the Other in its literature, art, and public buildings by rehashing the classical past, inserting itself into and supporting the notion the Western tradition, and revamping the glories of old to create a power through association.

However, the imperial myth that told the story of Britain's glorious independent rise from the birth of the West in the classical past up to its height during the Victorian age is an ingenious form of political rhetoric and propaganda that obscures the true nature of its rise. Britain would not have come to its position of power without the aid of the East, or Britain's conception of the East. The division between East and West misconstrued the nature of the world, negating the advances and power of the East in order to support an ethnocentric view of the West as represented by Britain and by extension ancient Greco-Roman antiquity. By depicting the East as the West's passive opposite, the West was able to pretend that it developed independently. John Hobson argues that this view "immunized the West from recognizing the positive influence imparted by the East over many centuries, thereby implying that the West had pioneered its own development in the complete absence of Eastern help ever since the time of Ancient Greece" (2004, 9). However, without the East, there could be no West despite the Eurocentric assumptions of independent progressive development. So much of Britain's success stemmed directly from the East and other conquered nations through the extraction of natural resources, labor, and technological advances that it is a fallacy to believe it developed independently despite what Britain's myth seems to claim. However, because of the myth of its independent rise, the West came to view the East as incapable of developing on its own and in need of a guiding hand which in turn fueled Britain's "civilizing mission." With this Eurocentric assumption, the British elites sincerely believed they were helping to civilize the East through imperialism "when in fact they were inflicting considerable repression, misery and unhappiness in all manner of ways – cultural, economic, political, and military" (Hobson 2004, 220). By casting the East as an Other, the Western British elites supposed they were taking up "the white man's burden" and sharing their enlightened civilization with peoples deemed as lesser and/or primitive. This once more is

embodied in the British Museum in the way Britain assumed that it was taking up the burden of spreading education and sharing the enlightened state it achieved with the public. The reality of the situation proved to be much the opposite as the artifacts were taken through violent conquests and Britain's "peak civilization" achieved through brutal means, much like it was in the day of Augustus with his peace only being won through ruthless violence.

Further deconstructing this myth of the independent developing West and the stagnant East, Hobson goes on to explore the great impact eastern nations had on the rise of Britain. He notes, the British "had a largely derivative capacity and were excellent at copying, assimilating and refining others' ideas" (Hobson 2004, 192). Britain pulled from other nations and cultures more often than they developed their own ideas independently, meaning that their culture was more so a product of appropriated cultural trends and technological advances than independent cultural advances. They would adopt and adapt foreign cultural trends and integrate them into their own culture, whether it be Greek and Roman forms of representation or cultural and technological trends in the East, to name a few. This trend is clearly manifested in the profound influence Chinese culture had on stimulating the British enlightenment. Hobson notes, "Chinese ideas influenced European ideas on government, moral philosophy, artistic styles (e.g. rococo), clothes, furniture and wallpaper, gardens, political economy, tea-drinking and many other matters," such as industrial inventions like agricultural machines, suggesting that the image of Britain's cultural independence is a façade (Hobson 2004, 194). This impact of Chinese society on British society exposes the illusory nature of Britain's imperial myth but does not discount the myth's effectiveness during the height of its employment during the Victorian Era. The myth, despite it construing a constructed reality that did not align with actual historical reality, did hold the power to shape an entire empire, mystify social order, and legitimize Britain's claim to power. The British

imperial myth successfully perpetuated the rhetoric of the classical past in order to construct the Other, to suggest a certain level of grandeur and glory for itself, and to imbue its empire with the same renown that was given to empires of ancient antiquity.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have shown that the classical tradition has been a formidable instrument of power that has been used to define nations, empires and entire frames of thought. The visual and verbal rhetoric of the tradition has become synonymous with empire and power, shaping the art and nature of empires from its origins in Greece, through its evolution in Rome, to its revitalization in Britain. It presents a framework upon which empires can build their image, imbuing each with a set of traditional classical values of harmony, balance, prosperity, sense of superiority, and grandeur. Classical art and thought acts a language in and of itself, a language that has an established vocabulary for defining the Self and the Other, for describing power, and for crafting myths that come to define an understanding of reality and the world in which one lives. The nations that have relied upon the classical tradition have used it to both define their culture and produce their culture, forming a closed-loop.¹⁹ For instance, the cultures described in this thesis used the classical tradition in order to inspire a sense of glory and power in their empires, and yet backed

¹⁹ The use of the notion of a “closed-loop” and the way in which self-definition and representation usually exists in a circular manner brings to mind Victor Pelevin’s novel *Homo Zapiens* and its discussion of identity formation. The text posits that humans come to define themselves by what they own and imbue certain material goods with character traits they would like to be associated with. However, this identity formation works in a loop because it suggests that the individual already possesses the traits the item represents and only buys the item because they already have the qualities it describes. The example in the text goes like this: “you need a million dollars to buy a house in an expensive neighbourhood, you need the house to have somewhere to wear your red slippers, and you need red slippers to provide you with the calmness and self-confidence that will allow you to earn a million dollars, in order to buy the house in which you can wear the red slippers, thus acquiring the qualities of calmness and confidence” (Pelevin 2006, 86). It is intriguing because it suggests the persistence of this way of thinking, arguing for its centrality to human existence, as the same cyclical type of identity formation appears in both ancient and modern sources.

up this classical tradition with the power their empire already held. Once set in motion, this closed-loop continued to spiral unremittingly onwards with time.

This circular thinking speaks to more than just the employment of the classical tradition and speaks to the way in which humanity describes life through culture and myth while also using myth and culture to describe their life. Greece, Rome and Britain defined themselves by placing themselves in opposition to an Other that they believed was fundamentally opposed to themselves. And yet, the Other was a direct product of an understanding of their own culture. Therefore, their cultures were both the product of a creation of an Other and the producer of the very same Other they used to define themselves. The same goes for myth. Each society created a myth to describe different elements of their existence and yet relied upon myth to explain their world. The classical tradition acted as an effective vehicle through which these tendencies were enacted, suggesting that humans have a tendency to validate and explain its current situation and desires through the selective adoption of historical traditions. Rome and Britain in particular represent this in the way in which they both carefully crafted an image of their empires by selecting elements of the past that supported or reinforced the values they sought to embody in their empires.

Overall, I strive to prove that the classical tradition is still relevant to the 21st century by exposing the lasting influence it has had on our society from the very birth of what has been known as Western society to the present. As suggested in my thesis, classical antiquity has established frames of thought that have become the foundation on which the society titled “Western” has built its entire existence. When examining works of art and literature of the Western tradition, we still turn to Greece and Rome to start our examination. The *Odyssey* remains the foundational text in the Western literary canon to this day while an education in the visual arts always turns to Greece and Rome to establish fundamental artistic conventions before turning to later art moments that

broke from these classical conventions. To this day so many of our cultural traditions have roots in classical antiquity whether it is in political theory, architecture, conceptions of West and East, the ideal of the proportional human form, and so on.²⁰

However, there is something even more significant to the endurance of the classical tradition and that is this continuity of thought patterns and rhetoric over millennia of time. This persistence in similar approaches to all forms of human interactions seems to point to a deeper fundamental truth of human behavior and moves beyond the bounds of Greece, Rome, and Britain. It seems that it is an inherent element of human nature to look to the past to define the present, create an Other so as to better understand oneself, and turn to myth to try and explain the world. These are tools that have been wielded by individuals, groups, societies, and nations throughout history and remain pervasive forces in our modern society. Today we still define ourselves by what we are not and establish dichotomies between us and them: white and black, women and men, native and foreign, American and Hispanic, Republican and Democrat, and so on and we use similar language to what I have explored in this thesis when we discuss these distinct groups. We also rely on cultural myths and use them to structure our understanding of existence and define our world. When looking at America, we can see a further continuity in the discussion of empire, though America does not often call itself an empire, and see how we still mythologize our political state, arguing for an political (if not imperial) myth that crafts an image of peace and prosperity like the empires before alongside a more American focus on freedom. The classical tradition is an avenue through which we can examine a longstanding history of self-definition and

²⁰ Even our popular culture still pulls from the ancient Mediterranean. European comedy can be traced back to the Greek and Roman comedies of Aristophanes, Menander and Plautus while our popular fiction and films like the *Red Rising Trilogy*, *Harry Potter*, *Oh Brother Where Art Thou?*, and *Troy* draw on the classical past for inspiration. Classical antiquity still colors modern imaginations and shapes more of modern society than may be initially perceived.

conceptualization of the universe, and as such it ultimately points to something deeper in human society; something inherently human and fundamental to our approach to the world and existence.

Appendix I:



Unknown. *Statue of the Emperor Octavian Augustus as Jupiter*. First half of first century. Marble, height (187cm) Russia, The State Hermitage Museum. Accessed March 1, 2019.



Unknown. *Statue of Claudius as Jupiter*. 50 CE. Marble, Rome, Vatican Museums, Pius-Clementine Museum, Round Room, 16. Photo Credit: Sergey Sosnovskiy. Accessed March 1, 2019. <http://ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=1203>



Replica of Original Greek Sculpture from 440BCE by Pheidias.

Unknown. *Varvakeion Athena Parthenos*. Late Roman. Pantelc Marble. Cambridge. Cambridge Museum of Classical Archaeology. Accessed March 1, 2019. <https://museum.classics.cam.ac.uk/collections/casts/varvakeion-athena-parthenos>

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