

REINVENTING THE BARBARIAN

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THE STORY OF THE Barbarian Other in modern scholarship has followed an arc. First, there was a heyday with the works, most prominently, of François Hartog and Edith Hall. Then there was a kind of secondary phrase, with the elaboration of the overall theme in smaller studies, or debates over the key trigger for the development of the Greek–Barbarian polarity (colonization, the Persian Wars, Athenian imperialism?).¹ And then, surprisingly quickly, there came a reaction. Already in 2002, James Davidson wrote in the pages of the *Times Literary Supplement* that the “fashion for alterity [in classics had] passed its peak”—though it “lingers still,” he continued (rather haughtily), “in general introductions . . . eager first books, and student essays.”²

There are a number of interlocking strands to this reaction. On the one hand, the Barbarian has been shrunk, seen more narrowly as an Athenian phenomenon; it is sometimes described as an “official” Athenian position.³ On the other hand, more widely, the idea that Greek identity was defined primarily in oppositional terms has been disrupted by the introduction of apparently contrary evidence: expressions of curiosity in, or approval of, the foreign; the use of the Other as the basis of a critique of the normatively Greek; or evidence of real-life contact between Greeks and non-Greeks, and the borrowing or appropriation of aspects of non-Greek culture. The move “away from binary oppositions”⁴ has become indeed almost a default scholarly manoeuvre. More broadly, for James Davidson, the most fundamental criticism of the Barbarian industry (as it has seemed) was the paucity of its results. “Most of the man and woman hours spent playing on alterity over the last twenty years have ended up in rather repetitive jingles”—[even if] “from time to time someone manages to get a decent tune out of the instrument.”⁵ Davidson then continued with a

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1. See, e.g., J. M. Hall 2002; Konstan 2001.

2. Davidson 2002, 13. See also the defensive note struck at Cohen 2000, 11–12 in the context of an excellent introduction to the treatment of alterity in classical scholarship, or the response of Malkin 1998, 16–18.

3. E.g., Thomas 2000, 273; Mac Sweeney 2013, 5–6. Coleman (1997, 176) countenances and then dismisses the hypothesis that ethnocentric attitudes were restricted to upper-class writers.

4. Antonaccio 2003, 60.

5. Davidson 2002, 13.

witty satire on the sterile reductionism of the worst of what he terms “Anglo-land Othering”:

When our Athenian citizen looks in the mirror, what he sees (we are told) is Thraitta: she’s a woman; she’s a slave; she’s from Thrace. That he isn’t a woman; that he isn’t a foreigner; that he is free. What does this mean for someone who is not Athenian? Inasmuch as he is a foreigner, there is something womanly about him; inasmuch as she is a woman, there is something foreign about her; inasmuch as he isn’t Greek, he isn’t free. Well, “yes and no” is the only answer to that.

The end point of this scholarly arc then is almost a reversal of the starting position. So, for example, for Erich Gruen in his 2011 *Rethinking the Other*, though we may concede that Greeks “periodically found reason to accentuate distinctions between themselves and the ‘Other,’” this is an occasional variation, an oddity almost, against a background of positive engagement: the Greeks’ “participation in a broader cultural scene,” the *embrace* of the Other.⁶

It is the aim of this article to question this end-point, and to fight a rear-guard action on behalf of the Barbarian: that is, on behalf of the idea that a Greek–Barbarian polarity—no matter the complex, multi-vocal nature of Greek representations—was widespread and significant across the Greek world. The argument proceeds less by the accumulation of evidence than through an exploration of the underlying assumptions of modern scholarship, and of the factors that may drive our scholarly reactions.

FALSE CHOICES?

It should be made clear at the outset that there are a number of ways in which developments in scholarship—as well as reflecting the changed world in which we are writing—have constituted progress. At the beginning of my scholarly arc, a focus on the representation of the Barbarian was sometimes maintained to the exclusion of evidence of Greek–Barbarian contact or borrowing; this self-denial may have been useful in moving beyond judging accounts of foreign peoples in terms of the accuracy of their depiction,⁷ yet it arguably now seems perverse. Just as recent work on Orientalism in the modern world has emphasized the pressure of religious commitments or of academic politics alongside imperial contexts,⁸ so also the Greek engagement with the Other cannot be reduced to a *mere* exercise in self-definition: recent work, by contrast, has revealed the variety of local, *polis*, or regional identities at a lower level than the Hellenic, the overlapping circles of Greek belonging,⁹ recognized more fully how the ethnographic spotlight is sometimes turned back onto

6. Gruen 2011, 356. Contrast Vlassopoulos’ (2013a, 2) characterization of scholarship, underestimating the reaction against “Othering.” For a response to Gruen parallel to mine, cf. Provençal 2015, 3–6 (even if we may be wary of the complex grid of ideas proposed by Provençal).

7. Dench 2005, 364–65. See esp. the opening of Hartog 1988, 3–5, for the intention to examine Herodotus’ Scythians without mapping his account against the archaeological data.

8. Marchand 2009. Cf. Dench 2005, 31 n. 87 on the “disillusionment with polarities as a total explanatory device”; Woolf 2011b, 16 on the range of purposes to ethnography.

9. Malkin 2011, 18. Cf. Malkin 2001, 13; Dougherty and Kurke 2003; and now Vlassopoulos 2015, with the response of J. M. Hall 2015.

the Greeks themselves,¹⁰ or attempted to restore agency to the subjects of ethnography.¹¹ Then there has been the tidal force of the *Corrupting Sea* and related work on Mediterranean connectivity¹²—the influence of which has even worked through to Herodotean studies, in the recent discussion of Herodotus’ Libyan coast as a “dynamic and fruitful ground for interaction,” or in the geospatial mapping of the *Histories* of the Hestia project.¹³

At the same time, it is clear—not least from the somewhat strained scholarly manoeuvres deployed in some recent work—that, at very least, a pendulum has swung too far. One strategy, for example, that has been used for eliding, or at least de-emphasizing the Greek–Barbarian polarity has been to present its appearance in any text as residual. So, for example, for Rosalind Thomas, in the context of an important discussion of sophistic and other influences on Herodotean ethnography, geographical polarities within the *Histories* are judged “safely reminiscent of an earlier world of crude and schematic map-making.”¹⁴ We should be wary, however, of any attempt to project an assumed intellectual teleology onto a single work, and so to prioritize the apparently contemporary over the apparently traditional; the concept of the residual, of the possibility that an idea may persist zombie-like after its time, is the other side of the coin of what Quentin Skinner has termed the “mythology of prolepsis,” that the particular expression of an idea anticipates, or foreshadows, its fuller realization in a later period.¹⁵ If a classical text presents what appear to be disquieting inconsistencies we should proceed on the assumption that it is “our problem,” rather than seek to clean up those inconsistencies.¹⁶

Another common approach to the elision of the Barbarian has been the presentation of false dichotomies. So, to continue with the same example, Thomas’ discussion of Herodotean ethnography repeatedly presents a choice between a disinterested scientific curiosity, on the one hand, and a crude ethnocentrism on the other.¹⁷ Of course, Thomas asserts, Herodotus “looked on with the eyes of a Greek observer, intrigued by those elements which ran counter to Greek experience— . . . it is hard to see how he could do anything else.” This passive Hellenocentrism, however—no different from the cultural baggage that we might all carry—is very different, she maintains, from the position of previous scholars such as Hartog and Hall: from “recent discussions which have tended to stress, rather, the Greek use of the foreign, the ‘other,’ to contrast with and emphasise

10. A point emphasized esp. by J. E. Skinner, e.g., 2012, 8.

11. E.g., Kim 2009, 24–29; 2013; or the emphasis of Moyer 2011 on Herodotus as dialogic and heterogeneous. As Vlassopoulos (2013b, 56) suggests, the focus on polarity has sometimes elided passages in ancient texts that present similarities between Greeks and barbarians.

12. Horden and Purcell 2000; also esp. Constantakopoulou 2007; Malkin 2011 (de-emphasizing polarity by contrast to Greek commonalities at, e.g., pp. 81, 218).

13. Gottesman 2015; Barker et al. 2013; Barker et al. 2016 (many of the best contributions to the latter volume are, however, at best lightly influenced by the spatial mapping project).

14. Thomas 2000, 200; cf. p. 112, suggesting that the analogy of Nile and Danube is a loose one or anomalous.

15. Q. Skinner 2002; the mythology of prolepsis, according to Skinner, is the “type of mythology we are prone to generate when we are more interested in the retrospective significance of a given episode than in its meaning for the agent at the time.”

16. Versnel 2011, 197 and *passim*.

17. E.g., Thomas 2000, 28–29. For a parallel critique of Thomas, see Harrison 2007, 52–54.

their own qualities.”¹⁸ But a choice of curiosity and ethnocentrism is a questionable one: Herodotus’ scientific discourse may itself have been informed by, imbricated with, ethnocentric assumptions, or by the “rhetoric of inversion.”

The most fundamental strategy apparent here, however, is the rejection of a position that is over-drawn and unsustainable. So, for Thomas, “[t]here is no simple bipolar scheme in Herodotus’ geography.”¹⁹ Or, for Erich Gruen, more broadly, the attitude of the Greeks was not one of “a blanket characterization of xenophobia and ethnocentrism, let alone racism.”²⁰ As Antti Lampinen has astutely observed, there may be a double standard at work here: examples of positive characterizations of foreigners indicate a “wider absence of negative imagery,” yet we “demand from an author a ‘blanket condemnation’ of negative attributes instead of being similarly content with individual negative assessments.”²¹ Of course, Greek attitudes were not monochrome—and, of course, Herodotus presents no simple bipolar scheme. His *Histories* reveal in fact multiple, overlapping polarities: between Asia and Europe, the Nile and Danube (2.33–34), between Greek and Egyptian customs (2.35–36), between Scythia and everywhere else (4.28), between islands and the mainland.²² Herodotus shows us, likewise, multiple assumed centers (depending on your perspective): Ionia has the most temperate climate (1.142);²³ the Persians see themselves as the most virtuous, and their neighbors the next most, and so on (1.134); and the Egyptians call all those who do not speak Egyptian *barbaroi* (2.158). Though at times, as with his discussion of the names of the continents in Book 4, Herodotus struggles to detect some pattern or order in this confusion of material,²⁴ he does not (again, *of course*) map these mirror images and concentric circles neatly into a single picture—one reason being that this discourse of inversion is simply too widespread, too dynamic, too *live* for any such order to be easily imposed. Indeed, it is arguable that (as with religious ideas) it is precisely the dizzying, inconsistent diversity of conceptions of foreign peoples that make them resilient.²⁵

This discourse is often represented as, in essence, an Athenian one. So, for Thomas again, the disinterested engagement with foreign cultures that she traces in Herodotus’ *Histories* can be contrasted with “the anti-barbarian obsessions of Athens,” the “clichés about barbarians which we find, for instance, in much Athenian literature.”²⁶ A number of regional studies have contrasted the fluid identities of the frontiers of the Greek world with a negatively idealized Athens.²⁷ Clearly, much of the relevant fifth- and fourth-century material—in this area as for so many other aspects of Greek history—derives from Athens, or has an Athenian

18. Thomas 2000, 44–45. Cf. the choice presented by Malkin: our focus should be on “overlap and mixture rather than contrast” (2001, 14).

19. Thomas 2000, 78.

20. Gruen 2011, 3.

21. Lampinen 2011, 236 on Gruen.

22. See esp. Constantakopoulou 2007, 17–18. The famous polarities of 2.35–36 find striking parallels at Soph. *OC* 337–41 and Anaxandrides frag. 40 K-A (*Poleis*).

23. Cf. Xen. *Poroi* 1.6 for a comparable claim of Athens being at the centre of the whole *oikoumene*; also Pl. *Epin.* 987d. Cf. J. M. Hall 2002, 203 on “Athenoconcentrism.”

24. See also Romm 2010, 218–20, giving more space to the “inchoate” nature of Herodotean thought.

25. Cf. Woolf 2011a, 266–67.

26. Thomas 2000, 96, 44–45. For the “topos-fallacy,” see, e.g., Rhodes 1994, 157–58.

27. See, e.g., Mac Sweeney 2013, 5–6; see further below, p. xxx.

and imperial inflection.²⁸ At the same time, to see this wider discourse as exclusively (or even predominantly) Athenian represents another false choice.²⁹ Unless we exclude Herodotus from our body of evidence on the basis of his generally favorable representation of foreign peoples (a position to which we will return), this stance depends on an assumption of the historian as operating almost as a proxy Athenian, which is difficult to reconcile with the conception of Herodotus, prevalent now, as a subversive commentator on empire.³⁰ More broadly, however, the Athenian invocation of the Barbarian could only have worked in so far as it exploited, harnessed a set of ideas of wider currency. Athenian imperial ideology in the fifth century worked by playing off a blurred distinction between Athens and Greece (“conquer Athens and you will conquer Greece”),³¹ or by presenting the Athenians as like other Greeks but *more so*—in Sophie Mills’ phrase, as “super-Greeks.”³² There are enough tantalizing fragments of evidence—Simonides’ Plataea elegy, for example, held both to be Panhellenic and exclusively Spartan in focus—to suppose that something similar is likely to have been true of Spartan and other claims to a central role in the Persian Wars.³³

Herodotus’ *Histories*, moreover, are just the tip of the iceberg of this Greek-Barbarian discourse. It is reflected already, for example, in the preeminently Panhellenic Pindar, in his analogy between multiple victories over different non-Greek enemies (Etruscans, Carthaginians, Medes) in *Pythian* 1,³⁴ or in the intriguing fragment on Scythian nomadism: that the Scythians despise those whose house is not on a wagon (Pindar frag. 105b). It is also a discourse reflected through material culture, as Joseph Skinner has amply demonstrated in his account of the origins of Greek ethnography,³⁵ or in texts and authors as geographically distributed as the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places*, Ionian Presocratics such as Heraclitus or Xenophanes, or the (west Doric, in dialect) *Dissoi logoi*, or *Contrasting Arguments*.³⁶ If we stand back and look at this wider canvas,

28. Cf. J. M. Hall 2006, 187, emphasizing variation between Greek *poleis*.

29. Cf. Dench 2005, 238; J. M. Hall (2002, 182–89) provides a balanced discussion.

30. Contrast J. M. Hall 2002, 182 with n. 44: “even the Halicarnassian Herodotus was addressing an Athenian audience much of the time.” The inappropriately named “encomium of Athens,” 7.139, the famous passage in which Herodotus asserts the pivotal character of the Athenian contribution to the war, so far from suggesting that Herodotus was an honorary Athenian, suggests precisely the *panhellenic* cast of his work: in so far as he makes his point to an implicitly sceptical wider audience. So too the passages in which he gives multiple geographical reference points from the Greek world: 2.10, 4.99 (contrast J. M. Hall 2002, 182 n. 44). For Herodotus as commentator on Athenian imperialism, see, e.g., Strasburger 1955; Fornara 1971; Moles 1996; 2002, and a number of contributions to Harrison and Irwin 2018.

31. Harrison 2000, 61–65. Contrast Mac Sweeney 2013, 32.

32. Mills 1997, chap. 2; cf. E. Hall 2006, 187; J. M. Hall 2002, 203.

33. Simonides: e.g., Boedeker 1998, 237–39; Aloni 2001, 102–4; Grethlein 2010a, 53. For Persian War commemoration in other cities, e.g., J. M. Hall 2002, 182–83; West 1970; I have been unable to make use of Yates 2019.

34. Delivered in 470 for Hieron’s victory in Pythian games; cf. Barron 1988, 622; Isaac 2004, 279–80; for synchronisms, esp. the observation of Dench 1995, 51 (“It is a small step from the synchronization of battles to a sense of a ‘common cause’, and, indeed, of a common enemy: it seems fair to see here the roots of the generalized Greek/barbarian dichotomy in its developed form”); contrast J. M. Hall 2004, 48–49 (cf. 2002, 122–23), suggesting that the “opportunity [to promote a sense of Hellenic consciousness] was not capitalized upon”—perhaps underestimating the extent to which local and Hellenic identities may have developed in equal step.

35. J. E. Skinner 2012.

36. Heraclitus DK 22 B 107; Xenophanes DK 21 B 16; *Dissoi logoi* DK 80 B 2.9–18. For discussion of the dialect in which the *Dissoi logoi* is written, and its likely audience, see esp. Robinson 1979, 41–54, with the additional cautions of Burnyeat 2011, 1: 346.

what we see is indeed a long way from simple or static polarities. If we take just the differentiation of foreign peoples in terms of language, they may be characterized in one moment as *aglossos*, without a language, in another as speaking “a barbarian language,” and in yet another as speaking in any of a cacophonous variety of sounds.³⁷ Talking of barbarian language (or of barbarians) as an undifferentiated entity in one moment does not preclude masterfully articulating the differences between peoples in the next: as Robert Parker has said of the variety of gods,³⁸ so foreign language (or again the idea of the Barbarian more broadly) is like a concertina that opens and closes depending on the context.³⁹ To continue the analogy with religion, it is arguable also that we need to approach ethnographic statements with some of the same caution as religious pronouncements. When we say (following Herodotus) that the Troglodyte Ethiopians have a language that resembles the screeching of bats (Hdt. 4.183), or (following Flanders and Swann) that the “Greeks and Italians eat garlic in bed,”⁴⁰ there is arguably an uncertainty over whether such statements should be seen as literal or figurative—or, in Dan Sperber’s phrase, whether they are “in quotes.”⁴¹

In emphasizing fluidity, context, and the possibility of a distinctive ethnographic register, the argument presented here might be supposed to be in line with the new consensus in moving away from the bad, old picture of stark, simple, absolute polarities—except that the extent to which anyone ever articulated such a picture is, at least, overstated. When Edith Hall talks in a passage that has been much cited (or loosely alluded to) of an absolute polarization between Greek and Barbarian,⁴² she does so with reference to one passage of Aeschylus’ *Persae*: the Queen’s response to the messenger’s account of Greek victory at Salamis (l.434) that “a great sea of troubles has erupted for the Persians and the whole barbarian race” (αἰᾶ, κακῶν δὴ πέλαγος ἔρρωγεν μέγα / Πέρσαις τε καὶ πρόπαντι βαρβάρων γένει)—not an unfair paraphrase. Hall, Hartog, and Paul Cartledge, all in different ways emphasized the deconstruction of the very polarities that they identified.⁴³ Indeed, to return from *Persae* 434 to the wider context, one of the oddities of our evidence is that we have (to return to Davidson’s analogy with music) endless variations but never really the “original” melody; we have a range of explorations, undercuttings, inversions, but never really a direct statement of polarization (except perhaps this glimpse and others like it) because it is the assumed basis of the wider discourse, the “ground” against which the variations are played. As Emma Dench has written, from her vantage-point examining the roots of Roman identity, if “tragedy stages a sophisticated play with the possibilities of inverting the ethical characteristics of

37. E.g., Soph. *Trach.* 1060; Aesch. *Ag.* 1050–52; see further, e.g., Harrison 1998, 14–21; Tuplin 1999, 50; Gera 2003, 191–92.

38. Parker 2011, 87.

39. Cf. Malkin 2011, 218–19 (cf. p. 170) for the suggestion of a “multipolar” contrast between Greek and Barbarian.

40. Flanders and Swann, “A Song of Patriotic Prejudice.”

41. Sperber 1996, 110. Cf. the fruitful focus of Dueck (2004; 2016) on the proverbial in ethnographic discourse (e.g., “Africa always brings something new”).

42. E. Hall 1989, 57.

43. E.g., E. Hall 1989, chap. 5, Hartog 1988, e.g., 212–59; Cartledge 1993a, 55–59—notwithstanding Dewald’s searching (1990) critique of Hartog as predicated on a “a fairly fixed and uncomplicated Same and Other” (p. 220).

Greeks and barbarians, . . . it is unclear that any of these organizational categories is in any way undermined by such an exercise.”⁴⁴ A Greek–Barbarian opposition is as fundamental in other generic contexts. It is striking, for example, that in discussing the absence of the term “Barbarian” from Homer, Thucydides explains this on the assumption of an oppositional (rather than “aggregative”) identity: the term “barbarian” was not used “because the Greeks had not, as it seems to me, yet been separated off so as to have one name by way of contrast” (διὰ τὸ μηδὲ Ἑλληνῶν πῶ, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, ἀντίπαλον ἐς ἓν ὄνομα ἀποκεκρίσθαι, Thuc. 1.3.3). A polarity is assumed, likewise, in the innumerable negatives of Herodotean ethnographies: the statements that the Persians do not anthropomorphize the gods (1.131–32), that Egyptians do not eat fish or cultivate beans (2.37), or that other peoples have no weapons (4.174), no personal names, or that they never dream (4.184).⁴⁵

A BARBARIAN BALANCE-SHEET?

The fact that our evidence presents elaborations but not the “original” theme—that a Greek–Barbarian opposition is not spelled out emphatically as if it were a doctrine—has perhaps led us to underestimating the force of such ideas, or of pejorative attitudes to the non-Greek. It has also arguably made us too confident in making assertions of change in attitudes to the Barbarian, in supposing that Aeschylus’ or Euripides’ inversions of the Greek–Barbarian polarity (notably in the *Trojan Women*: who are the barbarians now?) represent a “marked change” in Greek attitudes, reflective of political conditions.⁴⁶ Is the difference in emphasis between the Athenians’ well-known enunciation in Herodotus’ *Histories* of the constituents of Greek identity (common cults, blood, language, 8.144)—a passage almost infinitely complicated by its context⁴⁷—and Isocrates’ assertion of a cultural definition of Greekness that appears to allow others to make it across the drawbridge,⁴⁸ reflective of a more fundamental shift, or the result merely of the different textual contexts? Are these two formulations of Greek identity merely different faces (both exclusive, though in different ways) of a common discourse?⁴⁹ As Greg Woolf has highlighted in the Roman context, ethnographic tropes have their own currency, a life of their own;⁵⁰ so we cannot just extrapolate prevailing attitudes in any period from a sample, surviving literary work. It is tempting to assume a transition from a Persian-War world of stark polarities to their refraction in the later fifth century—except that the fragment of Pindar cited above or Heraclitus’ reference to those with “barbarian

44. Dench 2005, 245; cf. Pelling’s (1997, 56, 65) observations (e.g., “That does not mean that the categories do not exist, or that they are not important; but they are problematic from the start”).

45. Cf. Munson 2001, 146–48; Cartledge 1990b, 36.

46. Cf. Saïd 2002; Isaac 2004, 277; Mitchell 2006. See also the cautions of Whitmarsh 2013, 7.

47. Cf., e.g., Harrison 2011a, 71. See J. M. Hall 2003, 30 (cf. 2002, 190) for a salutary emphasis on the striking nature of Herodotus’ formulation (disguised by the seeming congruence of his conception of identity and our own).

48. As no longer a matter of birth but of intelligence (μηκέτι τοῦ γένους ἀλλὰ τῆς διανοίας, Isoc. *Paneg.* 50). See further esp. J. M. Hall 2002, 209–19. The exclusivity of Isocrates’ definition of Greekness was noted already by Diller (1937, 29).

49. Cf. Vlassopoulos’ (2013a) emphasis on the multiplicity of modes of interaction.

50. Woolf 2011b, 105, 112.

souls” (B 107) suggest that such polarities were already subject to playful manipulation in an earlier period.

A more fundamental assumption that needs to be addressed is that we could ever hope to distil any single attitude to the Barbarian in any—at least, any but the most distinctively polemical—of our surviving texts. “How sympathetic are Herodotus’ accounts of foreign peoples?” Some years ago, I stopped setting essay questions like that, on the basis that the best answers they might elicit in effect totted up positive and negative characteristics in a kind of balance-sheet. But that in effect is how much of the scholarship on the Barbarian envisages particular source-texts. For Jonathan Hall, as for Gruen (cited above), “the barbarian [in Herodotus] is not presented in an unremittingly negative light”; Herodotus does not “consistently portray foreign customs in pejorative terms,” or “conceive of barbarians as an undifferentiated mass of populations whose only common feature is the fact that they are not Greek.”⁵¹ Instead what we are customarily given is a picture in which any piece of evidence of understanding of, or “sympathy” for, foreign peoples is seen somehow to balance out more negative aspects. For Christopher Tuplin, images of black Africans in Athenian art include not only pejorative examples but “some rather impressive-looking negro warriors.”⁵²

What is wrong with this model? At one level, it is difficult to dispute. It is possible to *conceive of* an alternative version of Herodotus’ *Histories*, the ethnographic sections of which are entirely filled with tales of cannibalism, debauchery, and sacrilege. Herodotus’ barbarians, of course, reveal many of these aspects, but they are balanced by others: the gender equality of the Issedonians, for example, or the moralistic anti-imperialism of the Ethiopian king in Book 3 who straightens out Cambyses’ spies.⁵³ The shaded nature of Herodotus’ characterization of foreign peoples—the fact that it is indeed very far from presenting a “blanket condemnation”—needs to be acknowledged. At another level, however, this Barbarian balance-sheet misses the point. As post-colonial writers have recognized, positive and negative stereotypes are frequently part of the same complex of ideas. Would we deploy positive images of the loyal slave—like Mammy, the faithful slave embodiment of the values of the Old South in *Gone with the Wind*—as somehow *mitigating* the negative representations of antebellum African-Americans?⁵⁴ (In the heated discussion of the name of the Washington Redskins, “sentimental paeans to the noble savage” are seen not as balancing negative stereotypes but as reinforcing the culture of contempt.)⁵⁵ In his classic *Black Skin, White Masks* Frantz Fanon cites an American friend as describing the presence of black Americans alongside white, strikingly, as “an insurance policy on humanness. When the whites feel that they have become

51. J. M. Hall 2002, 180–81.

52. Tuplin 1999, 52.

53. Hdt. 4.26, 3.21. Cf. Gruen 2011, 203.

54. If the analogy seems shocking, it might be countered that there is a significant overlap in the stereotypes that occur in the ancient context and those reflected in Fanon 1986, e.g., the jabbering negro (p. 26), the black man as child (p. 27), the happy primitive, “backward, simple and free in our behavior” (p. 126).

55. Nunberg 2014; cf. Fanon 1986, 146 on the Bad Injun and the Noble Redskin. For a similar insight in the Roman context, cf. Dench 2005, 85.

too mechanized, they turn to the men of color and ask them for a little human sustenance.”⁵⁶

With the Greeks as with the modern world, we need to try to put positive representations in context, to trace the relations between ideas—even at the risk of psychologizing in speculative fashion—rather than just balancing out negative and positive characterizations. So, for example, in his account of Egypt, Herodotus may—so far from indulging in Hellenocentric “one-upmanship”⁵⁷—sometimes come over as like the holiday-maker who insists, on returning home, on lecturing his friends on the superiority of everything he has newly gleaned.⁵⁸ But, even if Herodotus elevates Egypt as the source of so much Greek culture, the Egyptian ethnography’s position—framed between notices of Cambyses’ invasion—casts the unruffled continuity of Egyptian history, reaching its peak with the reign of Amasis, as a phenomenon of the past. From the historian’s own vantage point, moreover, the Egyptians were coasting complacently toward an even greater disaster, the failure of the Nile inundation.⁵⁹ The Greek relationship with Egypt is a psychologically complex one—as their naming of obelisks, pyramids, and crocodiles after their miniature equivalents (spits, cakes, and lizards) might suggest. As Simon Gikandi has highlighted in the context of the Victorian culture of travel, a number of rhetorical schemata can coexist in the same work: Trollope lambasts the English abroad for their slavish devotion to English cuisine (“They will give you ox-tail soup when turtle soup would be much cheaper”), correcting what he presents as standard myths, but his irony is predictably bordered by a set of paradigms that predate his travel—and which also find confirmation there.⁶⁰ We should not be surprised to find at least the same level of complexity in Herodotus. More broadly then (looking, that is, at the range of Greek material on foreign peoples rather than at individual works), we cannot legitimately deploy one positive representation—such as the positive image of Cyrus in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*—as a trump card that “gives the lie to any notion that [in general] Hellenic writers perceived the Persians simply as the undesirable and unsavory enemy.”⁶¹ And nor does the use of what Kostas Vlassopoulos has termed the “barbarian repertoire” for purposes other than self-definition—as a source of alien wisdom, a site for utopias or for the theoretical exploration of kingship, as in the *Cyropaedia*—serve to balance the more negative representations of other sources.⁶²

CONTACT AND “RECEPTIVITY”

A further assumption that needs to be challenged is that contact between Greek and Barbarian worlds necessarily militates against pejorative stereotyping. A number of scholars—notably, Irad Malkin, Kostas Vlassopoulos, and Joseph

56. Fanon 1986, 129.

57. Cf. Gruen 2011, 84: “One-upmanship did not motivate his agenda.”

58. To paraphrase Lloyd 1975–88, 1: 154. The cliché of the individual who prefers the foreign over the Athenian can be detected in Theophrastus *Characters* 5.4, 5.9, 23.3.

59. Hdt. 2.13–14, with, e.g., Harrison 2003, 154.

60. Gikandi 1996, chap. 2.

61. Gruen 2011, 53–54; contrast Isaac 2004, 39–40 on praise for barbarian leaders.

62. Contrast Vlassopoulos 2013a, 30–31.

Skinner—have highlighted the ubiquity and depth of contact, pulling together vignettes of countless individuals who criss-crossed the “iron curtain” (in reality, nothing of the sort)⁶³ between Greek and Barbarian worlds. Regional studies, in particular those of “colonial” border-zones such as the Black Sea or Magna Graecia, have likewise emphasized the intensity of interaction between Greek and “native” peoples, and the seeming fluidity of identity as revealed through material remains or foundation myths.⁶⁴ Most strikingly perhaps, Margaret Miller has detailed, in painstaking fashion, a range of Greek borrowings from the archetypal Barbarian source, Achaemenid Persia: the imitation of Achaemenid metalware in pottery, the incorporation of items of dress of “Persian” origin, or the borrowing of architectural forms.⁶⁵ How, though, should we understand such contact and borrowing alongside the evidence of representations of foreign peoples?

For some scholars, the coincidence of evidence of borrowing with expressions of prejudice toward foreign peoples is simply “somewhat paradoxical.”⁶⁶ Overwhelmingly, however, borrowing and contact are seen as *trumping* the pejorative views of the literary sources. The evidence of “cultural receptivity,” for Miller, “disproves” the commonplace that “the Athenians hated and despised the Persians.” It “contradict[s] the contempt for the Oriental as expressed in Athenian public rhetoric.”⁶⁷ Studies of regional identity have proceeded likewise on the assumption that the rhetoric of Greek–Barbarian polarity and actual interaction are mutually exclusive, or have suggested that their regions are free from the binarism of the Athenian “centre,” preferring a model of “plurality, complexity and ambiguity.”⁶⁸ For Gruen, building on Miller’s study of *Perserie*, such evidence of borrowing can be adduced as evidence of the unlikelihood of any “orientalizing” strand in Aeschylus’ *Persae*: “The remarkable overlap and interconnections that linked the cultures would discourage any drive to demonize the high life of the ‘Oriental.’”⁶⁹

Some of the evidence curated by Miller, however, itself renders the conclusion that cultural borrowing simply contradicts the prevailing negative attitudes of Athenian rhetoric (and for that formulation, see my earlier comments) problematic. In particular, we might highlight the fact that parasols, say,—used by the Persian King “allophoretically” (in Miller’s term) on the doorjambs of Persepolis—become the “autophoretic” accessories of women on Attic vases; in one case, moreover, it is the Athenian *basilinna* who has a parasol held over her.⁷⁰ Miller terms this gender reversal “marginalisation”: a way of making acceptable what might have seemed unacceptably Persian, whilst allowing the

63. The phrase is used by D. M. Lewis (1985, 104) in the context of denying its applicability to the Greek context.

64. See, e.g., Lomas 2004; Petersen 2010; Mac Sweeney 2013.

65. Miller 1997. Cf. Mac Sweeney 2013, 26 for “Lydianising” in dress and other areas in Ionia.

66. Acheraïou 2011, 24 (paraphrasing Miller).

67. Miller 1997, 1; Miller presents different emphases at other points, e.g., pp. 257–58.

68. Mac Sweeney 2013, 202; cf. pp. 4–5, 22, 198–99, but contrast p. 5. See also Lomas 2004, 8; Small 2004, 282; Petersen 2010, 9, 33–38, 299.

69. Gruen 2011, 11. Contrast Allen 2003, 202, however, warning against privileging attitudes reconstructed from one context in interpretation of another.

70. DeVries 1973.

borrowed artifact to become a new (and unequivocally positive) weapon in the inter-aristocratic battle for prestige.⁷¹ A different emphasis is possible here, however. The gender transfer could be seen not just as a technique for obscuring the negative overtones of the original but actually as an expression—however knowing or ironic—of a prevailing ideology which contrasts Persian effeminacy with Greek simplicity of dress.⁷²

More broadly, it is questionable whether the mere fact of borrowing can be cited as evidence of a broader culture of “receptivity”—at least so long as that is understood as a positive or even a neutral phenomenon.⁷³ Gruen’s *Rethinking the Other* posits a choice between “rejection, denigration, or distancing,” on the one hand, and a more creative mode of fashioning one’s own identity, on the other, which he terms “appropriation.”⁷⁴ That he might adopt such a loaded term, redolent of culture wars on college campuses, in so breezy a fashion, seems remarkable; but it suggests a broader blindness to the ideological freight that borrowings bring with them, and to the importance of context. Writing of the Persian appropriation of Greek art (the famous image of the Tyrannicides or the fragment of Persephone described by A. T. Olmstead as the greatest treasure of Persepolis),⁷⁵ Gruen suggests that such appropriation represents a mutual regard between peoples: “Whether they came through exploitation, purchase, or gift, whether they served as tokens of conquest, means of understanding alien cultures, objects of admiration, or mere items of curiosity, they pique the imagination.”⁷⁶ All forms of contact, it seems, are equally an expression of regard—or at least may equally generate regard between peoples.

It is tempting here, in the face of such an optimistic outlook, to present extreme counterexamples to prove the ideological freight that *can* accompany physical appropriation: the case of Halford Mackinder, for example, the first Oxford geographer of modern times, whose expedition to the summit of Mt Kenya climaxed (after shooting eight Kenyan servants for insubordination on the ascent) with his cutting off of the peak with a hacksaw.⁷⁷ But really it should be enough to point to the ancient context. Receptivity, as Dench has brought out in the Roman context, is itself a trait of imperial success, and is conceptualized as such, not least by Polybius.⁷⁸ And the same applies in an earlier period. In the case of Persian appropriation, whether the objects in question were given or taken by force (and there is good evidence in the case of Persephone, the “Greek lady at Persepolis,” that she was given),⁷⁹ the phenomenon should surely be seen

71. Miller 1997, 249–50; cf. pp. 170, 184–85 for acknowledgment that some items of dress might have had a greater stigma attached to them. See also the different emphasis of J. M. Hall (2002, 201), on the appropriation of *orientalia* as Athenian and the “[neutralization] of their original social and ethnic significance.”

72. See, e.g., Kurke 1992; see, however, Tuplin 1996 for a corrective treatment of the place of Persia in Athenian literature, Lenfant 2001 for the hypothesis of a Persian origin for the idea of Persian decadence.

73. “Whatever the Greeks take from foreigners, they transform into a better result,” Pl. *Epin.* 987d–e, cited, e.g., by Dougherty and Kurke (2003, 4 and n. 17) (the translation is theirs).

74. Gruen 2011, 4.

75. A. T. Olmstead 1948, x–xi; see further C. M. Olmstead 1950.

76. Gruen 2011, 52.

77. At the end of the last millennium, the peak of Mt Kenya was used as a paperweight by the head of the Cambridge Geography Faculty: Kearns 1997; for Mackinder, see also Clarke 1999, 46.

78. Dench 2005, 88.

79. Palagia 2008.

against the backdrop of the imperial ideology of the Achaemenid Kings, in which gifts given to (or by) the King constituted his authority.⁸⁰ In the Athenian context, that empire brings with it attractive produce “from the whole world” is presented as a benefit in the Periclean funeral oration, in the *Old Oligarch*, or in the well-known fragment of the comic poet Hermippus, listing all the produce that comes to Athens.⁸¹ But these are not just incidental benefits—as we might imagine the trading advantages of the European Single Market. Still less is it reasonable to adduce such passages as evidence of a “striking readiness to adopt foreign culture traits,” or of a “fashion tendency” (the phrases of Margaret Miller)⁸²—unless we understand that fashion and trade themselves are “intimately linked with the ideologies of sovereignty and identity,” in the words of Michael Shanks.⁸³ Like the gifts of cows and panoplies that the Athenians demand from their subject-allies, these “precious spoils of empire”⁸⁴ are the expressions of Athenian power. And there are clear suggestions that this was something of which our sources were conscious. The Hermippus fragment may draw its humor not only from its mock-Homeric style or the political jibes stuffed into its list of products but from Persian overtones; we may think, for example, of the list of items—cedar wood, lapis lazuli, and so on—brought to the King’s palace in the Susa Foundation Charter.⁸⁵ Even if luxury, in a democratic context, may somehow be laundered of its associations,⁸⁶ Herodotus’ characterization of the Persians as “more than any other people inclined to foreign customs” (ξεϊνικὰ νόμια),⁸⁷ or the implicit contrast between Athens and Sparta that runs through both the Funeral Oration and the *Old Oligarch*, should alert us to the fact that when, for example, the *Old Oligarch* claims that “the Athenians have mingled with various peoples and discovered types of luxury” (from Sicily, Italy, Cyprus, Egypt, Lydia, the Black Sea, and the Peloponnese), this is morally contested ground.⁸⁸

In general, then, we have here a picture much more complex than just a battle between, on the one hand, pejorative stereotyping, and, on the other, borrowing

80. Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1989. Cf. Gruen 2011, 65, making play of Plutarch’s account (*Mor.* 329 b–d) of Alexander as the “impartial governor of all”; artistic representations of the harmony of the peoples of an empire are no more convincing in the context of ancient than modern empires; associated as this passage is with the tradition of the Opis banquet, *Arr. Anab.* 7.8–9, in which Macedonians and Persians sit at the heart of a formalized seating arrangement, it is likely also to derive from Achaemenid ideology and practice. See further Harrison 2019b.

81. Thuc. 2.38; [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.7–8; Hermippus frag. 63 K-A. On the Xenophonic *Athenaion politeia*, see Lenfant’s important recent (2015) article, stripping back textual “corrections” to 2.7.

82. Miller 1997, 243, 153; cf. p. 191, connecting the importation of peacocks with the fragment of Hermippus.

83. Shanks 1999, 209.

84. Parker 1996, 151.

85. Kent 1953, DSf; the same suggestion is developed by Vannicelli (2013, 31 n. 19). For other aspects of the “catalogue,” see Gilula 2000; Vannicelli 2019; Athenian parallels are touched on by Lenfant (2015, 274–75).

86. Cf. Wilkins 2000, 162: “Luxury, provided it is democratic, is ideologically desirable for the Athenian demos.”

87. Hdt. 1.135; cf. the characterization of the Persian King’s courtiers as searching the known world for new items to titillate his jaded palate, *Xen. Cyr.* 8.8.15.

88. [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.7–8 (trans. E. C. Marchant). Cf. Mills 1997, chap. 2 for an Athenian ideal of comfort tempered by moderation. The ideological freight attached to foreign imports is reflected, in a later period, in Theophrastus’ sketch of the man “apt to keep a pet monkey, and [buy] a pheasant, . . . and a tapestry embroidered with pictures of Persian soldiers” (*Char.* 5.9, trans. Diggle). At the same time, it is conceivable that other foreign borrowings may more simply have represented the exotic: I am thinking esp. of the Ethiopian and other remedies recommended in Hippocratic texts (e.g., *Hippoc. Mul.* 70, 101; for the wider context, Totelin 2009): for “ordinary Greeks,” was Ethiopia figured as much through cumin and sage as mythology?

as a manifestation of openness.⁸⁹ We see in fact a set of jostling ideas: imperial pride, and its ironic inversion; the desire for the fruits of empire, and yet also to maintain an ideal of simplicity (to touch pitch and not to be defiled). And, no doubt also, a healthy pragmatism: there is no reason to suppose that prejudices against barbarians would have long delayed Greek diplomatic overtures where self-interest was pressing.⁹⁰ Of course it is just conceivable—just as Mark Griffith has suggested that some aristocratic viewers of Aeschylus' *Persae* may have identified privately with the Persian King and his lifestyle⁹¹—to envisage fifth-century elite Athenian men and women for whom a peacock or a parasol was an unambiguous marker of political affiliation.⁹² It is just conceivable, but unlikely: because the codes that govern dress (and accessories like parasols or peacocks) are so much more complex.⁹³ How, for example, are we to understand the counter-cultural tendency on the part of Justinianic circus factions of adopting Persian beards or “Hunnic” dress—especially when “Hunnic” could signify silken luxury at one moment and austere simplicity the next?⁹⁴ The answer is surely more difficult than the fogleyish explanation offered by Alan Cameron: “the sort of extreme fashions that point to the young.”⁹⁵

A further complexity comes into play when contact or borrowing is set in the distant past. Is it legitimate to draw a straight line between the Greek adoption of foreign ancestors and a general openness to the foreign? For Gruen, the phenomenon of claiming foreign ancestry “suggests a powerful penchant for interconnection.”⁹⁶ Likewise, for Hyun Jin Kim, it amounts to a recognition of the Greek debts to the Near East,⁹⁷ and reflects the desire “to be acknowledged as part of that civilized world.”⁹⁸ But here, as with Herodotus' picture of Greek cultural debt to Egypt, it is notable, as Tuplin remarks sagely, that “much that is good about barbarians belongs in the past.”⁹⁸ Conversely, when the Greeks

89. Or between “interaction and exchange” and polarity, as posited by Vlassopoulos (2013a, 3) (suggesting a possibility of reconciliation, p. 4).

90. Allen 2003, 243.

91. Griffith 1999. Cf. J. M. Hall 2002, 199 for “othering” of barbarians as a means to marginalize the elite; E. Hall's (2006, 210–11) summary of Miller 1997.

92. Cf. Hdt. 5.88 for one (mythologically articulated) alignment of dress and identity, with Antonaccio 2003; 62–63.

93. Cf. Cohen 2011 for the long-standing practice of Athenian cavalrymen integrating items of exotic dress into their costume, e.g., p. 251. Even if the peacock symbolized oriental *tryphê*—as Miller (1997, 189–92) argues—our fragmentary evidence suggests that such associations could be neutered (by terming the peacock a “spangled bird” rather than the exotic loan-word *ταῖς*) or even reversed (if one let the public in to see the birds on the first day of each month, as at Antiphon frag. 12.2): Cartledge 1990a, 52–53; Braund 1994, 42.

94. Procop. *Anecdota* 7, 8–21; Priscus frag. 11.2 lines 407–18, 560–62 (Blockley 1983, 266–69, 274–75), with Pohl 1998, 48.

95. Cameron 1976, 76 (continuing: “Fancy clothes and hairstyles are a time honoured form of group identification among the young”), elaborated by Amory 1997, 341. Cf. Lurie 1981, 7, 94–96 for multiple uses of “ethnic chic” in dress; an accompanying illustration (p. 7) of the audience at a 1969 music festival has the striking caption, “A mixture of modern, archaic, native and foreign garments can suggest either creative originality or mental confusion.” Cf. Demosthenes 54.39 for the group of (allegedly sacrilegious) Athenian youths around Conon who styled themselves the “Triballians.”

96. Gruen 2011, 355; cf. p. 233, of Cadmus (“Greeks were quite comfortable and unembarrassed about those origins”). For barbarian ancestry, see also Miller 2005.

97. Kim 2009, 43.

98. Tuplin 1999, 61. The British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, can express (no doubt, genuine) pride in his own Turkish origins—his great-grandfather Ali Kemal, a liberal journalist and politician killed by a mob in the turmoil at the close of the Ottoman empire—at the same time as having rejected the possible accession of his “fellow

“stake a claim”⁹⁹ through mythological genealogies to the origins of the Medes, Persians, and others, it may strictly speaking run counter to the opposition of Greek and Barbarian,¹⁰⁰ but it would be unreasonable to expect too high a level of logical consistency. Genealogy, as Woolf has emphasized, can do different work: connecting peoples, creating hierarchies, promoting the role of particular families.¹⁰¹ There are different currents in play: the need to make sense of, as well as to domesticate, to master, foreign lands and peoples. To say that the Greeks were prone to “re-categorize as Greeks” the peoples¹⁰² they came upon perhaps underestimates this interplay, and also underestimates again the way in which the mythical context in which these connections are made can be both distanced and brought close. Mythical ties between Greeks and Barbarians are infinitely malleable depending on rhetorical context: Xerxes can appeal to his ancestry with the Argives to make common cause, or refer proprietorially to the Peloponnesians as the descendants of Pelops the Phrygian,¹⁰³ and yet in the *Menexenus* the Athenian boast is that their population does not include the descendants of Pelops, Cadmus, and so on, “barbarians by birth, but Greeks by custom” (φύσει μὲν βάρβαροι ὄντες, νόμῳ δὲ Ἕλληνες) so that their hatred of foreigners is undiluted (Pl. *Menex.* 245c–d).¹⁰⁴

THE HUMAN FACTOR

If the Greek–Barbarian discourse should be seen in relation to contact between Greek and Barbarian worlds, it is important that that discourse should likewise not be divorced from social reality in other respects.

With what terms, first, should we describe the attitudes that Greek writers evince toward foreign peoples? “Chauvinism,” the term preferred in Edith Hall’s *Inventing the Barbarian*, might seem rather coy, redolent of red-faced men in gentlemen’s clubs.¹⁰⁵ “Xenophobia” has a psychological explanation inbuilt, that contempt for the alien is born of fear—even if that is not how the term is commonly used.¹⁰⁶ “Racism,” we all know, is not an appropriate term to use in advance of the physical anthropology of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷ Even Benjamin Isaac, in his *Invention of Racism*, is guarded here, in many respects aligning himself with Gruen in his account of the Greek sources, seeing respect for the Persians wherever he can,¹⁰⁸ and setting out a precise set of criteria for what

Turks” to the European Union: <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2016/04/has-boris-finally-realised-why-turkey-shouldnt-join-the-eu/>.

99. In Gruen’s passing phrase, 2011, 225.

100. Hornblower 2008, 39–40; Gruen 2011, 224.

101. Woolf 2011b, 41. In the Greek context see especially the sophisticated discussions of J. M. Hall 2002; J. E. Skinner 2012, 124–28; see also Mac Sweeney 2013, emphasizing (p. 8) the role of myth as “rationalising the connection,” but perhaps underestimating possible distancing, between past and present.

102. Cf. Hornblower 2008, 39.

103. Herodotus 7.150, 7.8,γ1; cf. Gruen 2011, 226–32.

104. Cf. the boast at Xen. *Poroi* 1.8 of being more remote from barbarians than other *poieis*.

105. See, however, E. Hall’s (1989, ix) claim to be returning to the “authentic sense” of the word, “as a doctrine declaring the superiority of a particular culture, and legitimizing its oppression of others.”

106. Cf. Isaac 2004, 38–39.

107. E. Hall 1989, ix. Cf. Dench 2005, 9.

108. Isaac 2004, 302. This emphasis is missed perhaps in Gruen’s (2011, 3) summary of Isaac’s work. Kim (2009, 10) supports the case of Isaac that racism existed in antiquity but then opts for the term “ethnocentrism” “for the sake of convenience and to avoid anachronism.”

he terms “proto-racism”: that it should establish a hierarchy of groups, for example, and that it should not depend on any factors such as political organization, or environment, which might be subject to change. Tuplin has likewise undertaken a fine-grained analysis of relevant passages of ancient authors to test, for example, whether in any instance the discourse is ethical rather than physiognomical;¹⁰⁹ if the former is the case, the Greeks are effectively in the clear.

At one level, this position seems eminently reasonable. Of course, a term such as “racism” has to have some precision in order to be analytically useful. (Even if we may not agree with Tuplin that “there may be a sort of political correctness” in play “which wishes to extend the stigma of “racism” to as many phenomena as possible.”)¹¹⁰ At another level, however, there may be grounds for concern precisely in the precision with which we seek to analyse ancient prejudice: it seems possible at times that we are setting a threshold for ancient prejudice that would be difficult to meet in any environment—as if we were engaged in a courtroom process engineered for acquittal. For Isaac, for example, “the European movements hostile to immigrant communities,” who deny that they are racist and “demand that the immigrants conform to the traditional cultural and social values of the host country,” cannot be called racist because they conceive of the possibility of change; they may be intolerant, xenophobic even, but not racist. What this misses, however, is the malleability of racist discourse, its capacity, in particular, to find more publicly acceptable proxy forms.¹¹¹ To pursue Isaac’s example, how seriously should we take the implicit claims of contemporary Islamophobic rhetoric that Muslims only need to “conform” (a claim conveniently within the law) and that it is not the Muslims’ ethnic background that is in reality at stake?

When it comes to the ancient evidence, moreover, apparent expressions of racism or xenophobia are too easily whitewashed in terms that would jar in our own worlds. So, for example, for Gruen, janiform vases—fruitfully discussed by François Lissarrague as figuring the symposiast’s descent into barbarism through drink¹¹²—may contain “elements of exoticism,” a “fascination with the unusual and the distinctive,” but there is no “imposition of a preference.”¹¹³ One vase, from Akanthos, has contrasting tags accompanying the (white female and male African) faces: “I am the most beautiful Eronossa” and “Timyllos is beautiful like this face.” But, for Gruen again, this is no more than “good-natured joking . . . not a matter of sneering derision. It would be hazardous and unjustifiable to infer that African features were reckoned as unsightly or disagreeable.”¹¹⁴ But that is surely, in fact, what this “good-natured joking” takes for granted.

109. Tuplin 1999, 53. Isaac signals disagreement with Tuplin at 2004, 69 n. 54. Cf. Provencal 2015, 6 for a distinction between “ideological” and essentialist discourses, or Vlassopoulos’ (2013a, 191) vision of a near-racist position as one “use” of the barbarian repertoire.

110. Tuplin 1999, 47.

111. Contrast Tuplin 1999: “Racism flourishes best where clear physiological criteria define a single target.” So, e.g., it is through the conceit of *ventriloquizing* the Persians that Aeschylus’ “jingoism” works, for example; contrast Gruen 2011, 18.

112. Lissarrague 2002.

113. Gruen 2011, 216–17; cf. p. 213.

114. Gruen 2011, 219.

It is worth underlining also that such representations have a cost. If, as some would have it, the idea of the Barbarian can be seen in some sense as a pre-colonial discourse, then the cost of such representations is the violence wreaked by Alexander.¹¹⁵ Even in advance of Alexander's conquests, there may have been significant real-life consequences, however. It may be right to emphasize that, in general, the focus on color or on physiognomy within Greek discussions of foreign peoples is only occasional. But, in the light of passages like that in Xenophon's *Anabasis* in which a Boeotian-sounding man called Apollonides, who had spoken in favor of making a deal with the King, is run out of the camp when it is discovered that he has his ears pierced "like a Lydian" (*Anab.* 3.1.26–32),¹¹⁶ it is still surely appropriate to invoke parallels from the modern world in sketching what might have been the real-life effects of prejudice for those Syrians, Phrygians, and Lydians whom Xenophon says made up much of the metic population of Athens (*Xen. Poroi.* 2.3).¹¹⁷ "Shame. Shame and self-contempt. Nausea," wrote Frantz Fanon.¹¹⁸ "When people like me, they tell me that it is in spite of my color. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my color. Either way, I am locked into the infernal circle." "If a man is of good character it doesn't matter if he is an Ethiopian," according to a fragment of Menander.¹¹⁹

One aspect of the Barbarian that is rarely explored in detail is its relationship with slavery.¹²⁰ "Slavery was an essential institution of Greek societies," writes Kostas Vlassopoulos, "and most slaves were barbarians; it does not take much thinking to understand why the Greeks might have despised barbarians and consider them slavish and inferior."¹²¹ "Imperial warfare and its consequences moved people around as exiles, deportees and slaves, and settled them in new and unfamiliar territories."¹²² It all seems curiously clean, as if the association of barbarism and slavishness were merely abstract,¹²³ or the circumstances of migration made little difference (become a slave and see the world!).

Some context and sense of scale is perhaps in order. Against a background of maybe 30–50,000 adult male citizens, Athens—in so far as any such demographic estimates are reliable—may have contained a slave population of as many as, or more than, 100,000.¹²⁴ The relative density of slaves in the populations of other

115. Vasunia 2001, 245–61; E. Hall 2006, 187; contrast Moyer 2011, 9, critiquing the idea of Herodotus as "auxiliary to empire-building."

116. See here Vlassopoulos 2013b, 52–53, emphasizing how the distinction between Lydian and Greek here is "problematic in practice."

117. Cf. Theophr. *Char.* 3.3 for (as one example of "idle chatter") the complaint that there are lots of ξένοι around—foreign visitors rather than metics according to Diggle (2004, 201).

118. Fanon 1986, 116.

119. Frag. 612, cited by Tuplin 1999, 59.

120. As reflected by indexes: Harrison 2002 refers only to natural slavery; Malkin 2011 contains no entry for slavery at all. Contrast Coleman 1997, esp. 180–81, 201–2.

121. Vlassopoulos 2013a, 5. Cf. J. M. Hall 2002, 186; Cartledge 1993a, 41; Rosivach 1999, 129, 154.

122. Vlassopoulos 2013a, 18.

123. Contrast, however, the remarkable passage of Boardman 1980, 190 on the relationship of Sicilian Greeks and Sicels: "At any rate it is clear that in most places the Greeks and Sicels got on well enough, even if only in the relationship of master and slave . . . The natives weighed their new prosperity, brought by the Greeks, against the sites and land they had lost to them, and were generally satisfied—or at least had short memories." I am grateful to Eleri Cousins for drawing my attention to this.

124. See, e.g., the cautious estimates of Cartledge (1993a, 135), Rihll (2011, 48), and Finley (1959, 150). See Taylor 2001 for a defence of ancient testimonies on slave numbers.

cities will, of course, have varied, but there is no reason to suppose that Athens was exceptional;¹²⁵ cities were “bound to contain a large number of slaves, metics and foreigners,” according to Aristotle’s *Politics* (*Pol.* 1326a19).¹²⁶ How many of those slaves were non-Greek, or descended from non-Greeks, we cannot know for certain. Analysis of slave names by Vlassopoulos has found that the majority of slaves probably had names shared by citizens (though it should be noted: foreign slaves are surely more likely to be given Greek names than vice versa), but the names most associated with slaves—the names for which comic poets reached as a shorthand—were either ethnics (like Syros or Thraitta), stereotypically foreign (Manes), or referred to ideal characteristics (Dexios, Ergophilos, Pistos).¹²⁷ Even if a good number of Attic slaves were confined in the Laurion mines,¹²⁸ and even if the attributions of slaves to ethnicities were rough and ready—with slaves identified by their port of origin,¹²⁹ and with names like Manes the ancient equivalent of Fritz or Paddy¹³⁰—the consequences of this large-scale slave population for Greek “understanding”¹³¹ of foreign peoples are immeasurable.

Edith Hall comes closest perhaps to tracing these implications: “It is always a struggle to remind ourselves of the ubiquity of slaves in classical Athens, and what must have been the theatregoer’s almost daily experience of dealing with individuals who were both not Greek and almost completely powerless.”¹³² Beyond the theatre, however, how much of Greek ethnographic knowledge was filtered through—even directly informed by—the day-to-day experience of barbarians at home?¹³³ We can perhaps see glimpses of this relationship of ethnographic knowledge and slavery in passing moments: in the Herodotean characterization of Thracians as selling their own children, or in the anecdote in Xenophon’s *Anabasis* of the former slave who comes out from the ranks on hearing his own language, Macronian, spoken.¹³⁴ (Is the Thracian *willingness*

125. See, e.g., the larger figures for Aegina and Corinth at Athenaeus 272b–d, or the testimony of Thuc. 8.40.2, on the greater number of slaves in Chios (an issue of relative density rather than absolute numbers, according to Finley 1959, 115).

126. Cf. Hansen’s (2006, 109) verdict on the numbers of free non-citizens and slaves: “Every polis had plenty of both.”

127. Vlassopoulos 2010; cf. Fragiadakis 1988; Osborne and Byrne 1996. The naming of slaves is sometimes seen as a purely practical matter (so, strikingly, Fraser 2009, 104), but for slave naming as a symbolic undoing of a previous identity, recasting the slave in relationship to his new household and master, see, e.g., Patterson 1982, 54; Wrenhaven 2012, 31–38.

128. Xen. *Poroi* 4.14–15 for large mining slave-owners such as Nicias, 4.23–24 for the scale of his ambitions for state-ownership of slaves (from 1200 to 10,000 slaves), and his estimate of profits. It is likely that the 20,000 runaways of Thucydides 7.27 were predominantly from Laurion (cf. Xen. *Poroi*. 4.25).

129. Strabo 7.3.12, with Braund and Tsetskhladze 1989, 120.

130. According to Lewis 2011, 97; Lewis makes a compelling case for a reasonable level of correspondence between names and ethnic origins in the context of his argument for a Near-Eastern origin of a significant proportion of slaves. In one case, however, a manumission text (cited by Fraser 2009, 109), the identification “Said to be from Heracleia,” makes clear the uncertainty.

131. See esp. J. E. Skinner 2012, 120 for an account of popular stereotypes of foreign peoples.

132. E. Hall 2006, 202; cf. J. M. Hall 2002, 186–87, speculating (p. 187), on the basis of [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.10, that prejudice against foreigners may have been “particularly entrenched” among the lower classes in Athens. For the broader ramifications of slavery for Greek culture, see esp. Cartledge 1993b, or (surprisingly positive) Rihll 2011, 55–56.

133. See Mayor, Colarusso, and Saunders 2014 for the striking hypothesis that nonsense inscriptions on Greek vases in fact reflect the attempt to render fragments of Circassian, Abkhazian, and other languages phonetically, and that these may have been relayed through foreign slaves resident in Athens (e.g., p. 487).

134. Hdt. 5.6 (cf. Pollux 7.14); Xen. *Anab.* 4.8.4.

to give up their children simply the reflection of dire economic conditions, or—against the backdrop of the ongoing trade in slaves¹³⁵—a convenient trope to ease the slave-owners’ consciences?) In the context of the real fear of being murdered by one’s slaves and the practical concern to break up groups of slaves of the same language reflected in Plato,¹³⁶ or in a market environment in which slaves of different nationalities were perceived as having distinct skills, characteristics, or cachet,¹³⁷ it should be clear: within a slave-owning society, ethnographic knowledge mattered.

What of the slaves themselves? “Nothing is more elusive than the psychology of the slave.”¹³⁸ But, if Frantz Fanon can talk of the “massive psychoexistential complex” generated by the confrontation of white and black in the context of modern colonialism, how can we deny the existence of a similar complex in the context of a foreign slave population of such scale? Of course, we have no slave voices—or rather we have two: the unnamed individual who inquired of the oracle at Dodona “which god is it best to approach and if I will ever be free,” and the letter of the slave boy Lesis found in the Athenian agora.¹³⁹ Lesis appeals to his mother and a man named Xenocles to come to his masters and find something new for him—“for I have been handed over to a thoroughly wicked man; I am perishing from being whipped; I am tied up; I am treated like dirt—more and more!” (trans. E. Harris).

ANCIENT AND MODERN

Finally, how might we explain the scholarly backlash against the Barbarian? It might be put down simply to the natural seesawing of scholarship, to the temperament and outlook of individual scholars,¹⁴⁰ or to a discomfort at the apparent stigma attaching to our discipline. It seems likely also, however, that scholarship may reflect contemporary history here—even if the relationship is not one that can be mapped in a simplistic fashion.

Edith Hall, for one, in a reflective look back on her earlier work, has conceded the importance of the Cold War background to *Inventing the Barbarian*, questioning how that book would look now that “the image of the sinister technocratic Soviet communist has been replaced by . . . a far more medieval-looking and unknowable Islamic extremist.”¹⁴¹ It is perhaps not surprising—notwithstanding

135. What Finley (1962, 59) described as the “non-warfare, non-piracy procedure.” Taylor (2001, 34) strikingly describes “Herodotus’s ethnic mapping of Thrace and Scythia” as “in its bare essentials a commodities digest.”

136. Pl. *Resp.* 9.578d–79c, with E. Hall 2006, 203; Pl. *Leg.* 6.776–77; cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1330 a25–8. Cf. the observation of Rihll 2011, 71 (on *Leg.* 777d): “This principle of slave management fostered growth in the demand for and supply of slaves from a wide variety of foreign cultures.”

137. Braund and Tsetschkladze 1989, 119; Wrenhaven 2013 (though contrast Braund 2011, 124, emphasizing skills over origin). See, e.g., [Hippoc.] *Aer.* 24 for characterization of mountain-dwelling Europeans as adapted for endurance; Theophr. *Char.* 21.4 for the insistence of the man of petty ambition (*mikrophilotimia*) on having an Ethiopian as an attendant. See further (with parallels to the medieval Arabic and Atlantic slave trades) Harrison 2019a.

138. Finley 1959, 158.

139. Dakaris, Vokotopoulou, and Christidis 2013, 1395A; Harris 2004; there is no basis for judging whether he was foreign or Greek.

140. Cf. Gruen’s (1986) treatment of Roman imperialism.

141. E. Hall 2006, 189, 224. It is pointed out to me acutely by Antti Lampinen, however, that much of the imagery of the Cold War persists, and to some extent is reactivated and transposed in the light of new conflicts.

the dangers of reductionism—that the confused “unipolar” or multipolar world of the 90s was reflected in the fragmentation of the classical Greek Barbarian. The attack on the World Trade Center of 9/11 had no less profound an impact, but perhaps a contradictory one: spawning, on the one hand, the shameless perpetration of the idea of an East/West clash as timeless (notably in Anthony Pagden’s *Worlds at War*)¹⁴² and at the same time a contrary trend, toward generating alternative narratives:¹⁴³ giving emphasis to the medieval Arabic engagement with Greek thought, for example, or attempting to disrupt the lazy assumption of continuity from antiquity to the present day (the idea, as Vlassopoulos has put it, that the Greeks confronted “the cultures of the Near East from the same standpoint as western imperialist societies confronting the modern Orient”).¹⁴⁴

There are other dangers implicit here, however: of projecting our ideals, or a fuzzy multiculturalism, back onto history.¹⁴⁵ (As Emma Dench has observed archly, in the United Kingdom the term “multiculturalism” is generally used to refer approvingly to the London restaurant scene.)¹⁴⁶ “Alterity and ‘Otherness’ have too often plagued our world,” Gruen opens his *Rethinking the Other*—before then outlining an intellectual genealogy that goes from Said’s *Orientalism* through Huntington’s *Clash of Civilisations* (odd bedfellows, surely) to Anthony Pagden.¹⁴⁷ Post-9/11, it seems, we are going through a very particular cycle in which the ideal that contact breeds better understanding is one we have to hold on to—and in which the contrary evidence that in Brussels or Birmingham or San Bernadino it can also generate misunderstanding and violent hostility is too frightening fully to acknowledge. (It was not always so: where we tend to assume that a Carian-Greek milieu would necessarily have rendered Herodotus more curious and open, scholars of a previous generation spoke of Herodotus’ engagement with “other social systems” as making him a more “peculiarly ardent Hellenist.”)¹⁴⁸ Herodotus’ own model of historical development, from the Phoenician ship that wends its way from the Red Sea in the proem, charts the ill consequences that, nearly inevitably, follow on all contact.)¹⁴⁹

How should we respond? If our assessments of the ancient world are to be immune, in so far as they can ever be, to merely moulding to contemporary conditions, it is only by our engaging more directly with—rather than seeking to isolate

Cf. Lomas 2004, 1 for resonances of the Balkan conflict of the 1990s; Garland 2014, seeing ancient migration through a contemporary lens; or the observations of Almagor and Skinner 2013, 4–5.

142. Pagden 2008; see the comments of Harrison 2011b, 123–26.

143. I am informed here by the experience of participating, with Edith Hall and others, in the UN program, the “Alliance of Civilisations,” designed to generate alternative narratives of East–West dialogue and engagement in the light of 9/11—a program promptly then closed down.

144. Vlassopoulos 2013a, 321; cf. Kim 2009, 2, emphasizing “fear and anxiety in the face of imminent domination” rather than “confidence and contempt for the barbarian enemy”; Moyer 2011, 2–3, on Herodotus as dissimilar to the modern ethnographer; Mac Sweeney 2013, 203, on the categories of Asia/Europe or East/West as anything but “timeless and universal.”

145. Cf. Dench 2005, 5, 10.

146. Dench 2005, 9–10.

147. Gruen 2011, 1 (cf. his praise of Haarhoff 1948 for its “noble aim of promoting racial harmony,” p. 3 n. 12). There is a level—in so far as East and West are seen as broadly stable entities—at which both Said and Huntington do indeed run in parallel. I am grateful to the late Nick Rengger here.

148. Grundy 1901, 3; cf. Glotz 1948, 216, cited negatively by J. M. Hall (2004, 39).

149. Harrison 2007, 54–55; see also Herodotus’ characterization of Persian expansion as based on fallacious ethnographic knowledge, for which see, e.g., Grethlein 2010b, 2011; Harrison 2015, 30–33.

ourselves from—the contemporary dimension of our work. Otherwise we run the risk of our studies becoming a displacement activity, and of projecting an image of the ancient world as a (no doubt, flawed and partial) historical utopia: an age before racism. More specifically, if we are to relate the representation of foreign peoples to the world of real-life contact—as we surely must—we need to include the brutal realities of slavery in that backdrop,¹⁵⁰ to appreciate that the “barbarian repertoire” is implicated in them, and to move beyond the starry-eyed assumption that all contact equally dispels misunderstanding.¹⁵¹ In the meantime, it would be premature to deem that the Barbarian Other has outlived his (or her) usefulness.

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150. Cf. Demosthenes 21.49 for an Athenian traveling to barbarian lands and boasting of good treatment of slaves, a passage discussed appropriately by Harris (2004, 163); for violence toward, or “systematic humiliation” of, slaves, see, e.g., Hunter 1994, 154–84.

151. Contrast, however, Tuplin 1999, 56 on colonization.

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